

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion the Torah says "They shall not see when the holy vessels are covered over, lest they die" (Bamidbar 4,20). The Ramban says that this verse can also be read as "If one steals the holy vessels, he will deserve death".

This is a reference to the prohibition of stealing from the Beis Hamikdash.

The Ran in Nedarim 28a explains that the prohibition against theft is the source to the halacha of Dina Demalchusa Dina. Dina Demalchusa means that we are obligated to observe the laws of the land in which we live. The Ran explains that the rulers of the land who control the land and give us permission to live there have authority to dictate that we observe their laws.



HAPPY 3,331st ANNIVERSARY

Every Yom Tov has its unique theme and its own flavor. What is the flavor of Shavuot? Pesach, for example, has the flavor of gratitude and commitment to HaShem for choosing us and for taking us out of the house of bondage.

If our Sages named Shavuot 'The Period of the Giving of Our Torah' we must recognize that the theme of Shavuot lies in that name. The question is why not call it 'The Period of Our Receiving Our Torah'? The giving was done by HaShem, the receiving was done by us. Would it not be more appropriate to call the holiday by our role, not by HaShem's role?

Although we are celebrating our receiving His Torah and not His giving, nevertheless, for us to properly appreciate the flavor we should taste on this remarkable holiday we must first appreciate what HaShem gave to us.

Let us examine the nature of HaShem's giving of the Torah and from there we might appreciate what our response in kind should be. The very first word uttered by HaShem to us when giving the Torah was "Anochi" - I am (HaShem, your G.D who took you from the land of Egypt...) The Talmud teaches us that Anochi, is actually an acronym representing four words Ana Nafshi K'sovis Yehovis, which means I have written My Soul and given it to you.

The word Nafshi also carries an alternate meaning 'my desire'. This is because our desire is a function of our soul. Hence, at Sinai HaShem opened Himself up. With His first word, HaShem tells us that He has given us His Soul and His desire.

MITZVA MEME

This is one of the reasons given to explain why the laws of Dina Demalchusa Dina are found among the laws of theft; Choshen Mishpat 359.

An example of this principle is that one must pay taxes and obey speed limits.

Let's explore the limits to Dina Demalchusa.

Martin Luther King Jr. became famous when he intentionally broke certain laws in a non-violent way. This is called civil disobedience. One such example was in his Birmingham campaign in 1963 when he organized sit-ins at libraries and department store lunch counters. This means that protesters would sit down in libraries and department stores, and block the area, to protest.

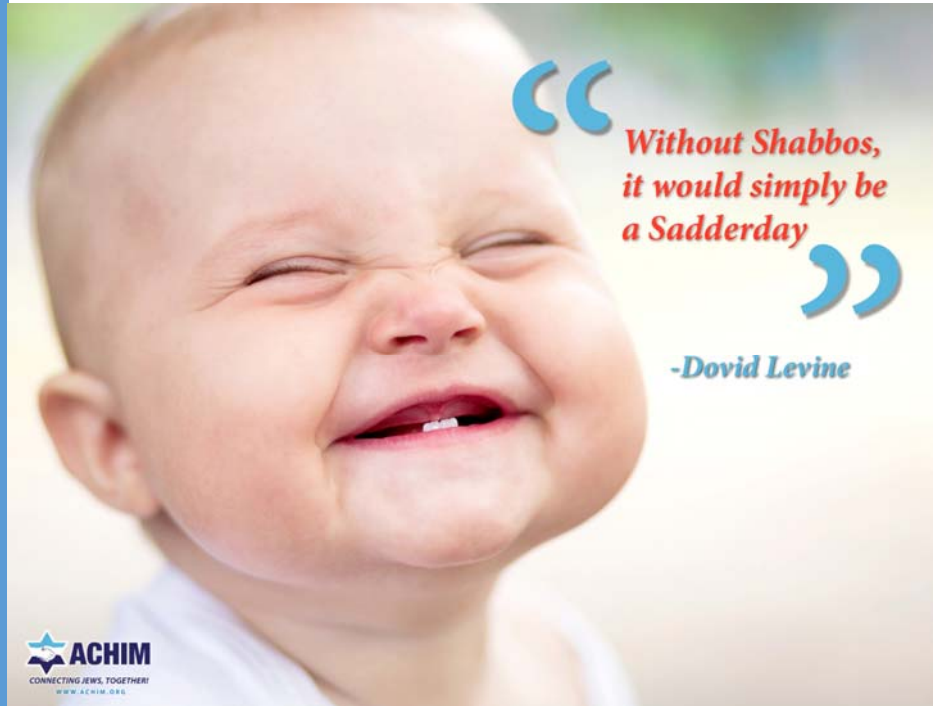
Martin Luther King Jr was calling attention to the lack of civil rights in America and to Jim Crow laws that discriminated against blacks in the South. Martin Luther King Jr. was knowingly breaking the law in order to protest the injustice in the South.

According to the Torah, would it be permitted for a Jew to participate or organize a sit-in today to protest an unjust or immoral law? Would participating in a sit-in be forbidden because of Dina Demalchusa?

On one hand they are breaking the law. On the other hand, however, it is only being broken to fix a problem in society.

What do you think?

If you have a true mitzvah dilemma that you would like us to share, please email it to rabbiweiner@gmail.com



The obvious response to this gesture is for us to respond in kind and give our soul and our desire to Him. It is no wonder that our Sages compare Mount Sinai to the chupah at which HaShem married His people. It is where HaShem and His people committed their dreams and aspirations to one another.

When considering our journey from Pesach to Shavuot the picture that emerges is that of a young woman who was held captive by the greatest force on Earth with no hope to ever be freed. Along comes a mighty nobleman who recognizes her beauty and fine character and frees her from her captors. He then decides that impregnable captor. At this point she owes her very life to this nobleman. She is filled with gratitude and commits herself to him. The next 49 days he prepares her to ascend the heights of nobility and on the 50th day he gives his soul to her. He ties his every hope, his every aspiration and all his dreams to

her. He ties his very destiny to her. Is there any way to properly describe the love that fills this young woman?

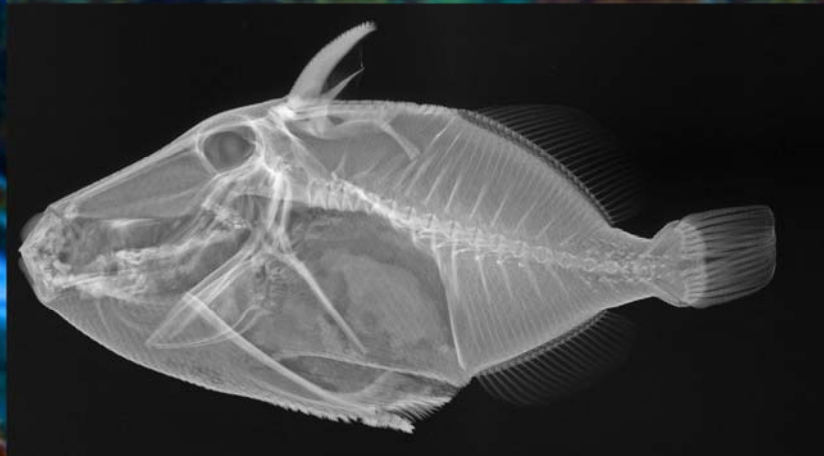
This is perhaps why in Shir haShirim, Shlomo Hamelech uses the metaphor of the husband-wife relationship to depict our relationship with HaShem.

Our journey from Egypt to Sinai is the journey from being indebted to HaShem to being in love with Him.

Mazel Tov! We are all invited to the wedding.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and a beautiful Shavuot.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE TRIGGER FISH

The trigger fish inhabits tropical waters and oceans throughout the world. Most are found in relatively shallow, coastal habitats, especially at coral reefs.

The trigger fish eats crabs which swing out with their claws when attacked. But Hashem designed the fish so that its eyes are located quite some distance above its mouth, this way the claws of the crab will not injure its eyes when it goes after a crab.

Every so often a larger fish chases after the trigger fish. It then uses a different means of self-protection. This fish has the ability to trigger its first dorsal fin (top front fin), which is shaped like a long sharp spike. When danger draws near, this fish raises the sharp spike, which is one of the bones of its spine, to an upright position and locks it in place. The sharp spine-spike swings out like a switchblade!

Seeing that sharp, raised spike, the larger fish gives up and leaves.

Young triggerfishes also use the locked dorsal fin as a tool to wedge themselves into crevices.

Thank you HaShem for giving every one of us exactly what we need!

THIS HELPED ME GAIN AN APPRECIATION FOR HOW GOOD AIR IS, EVEN IF IT'S SMOGGY

Rav Avigdor Miller's grandson once walked into his grandfather's house and found Rav Miller with his face submerged underwater in the kitchen sink.

After a while Rav Miller, pulled his head out of the water, gasping for air.

The grandson looked on with great alarm.

Rav Miller, in answer to his grandson's startled look, explained his mysterious behavior.

"I was walking outside and a man complained that the air was smoggy. I didn't want the complaint against Hashem's world to have an effect on me. So I came into the house and put my head under water. This helped me gain an appreciation for how good air is, even if it's smoggy. When your head is under water, any air will do."

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THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of turning off the electricity, Rav Zilberstien does not give a final psak, but he does share the following novel idea. We know one can kill a rodef, a pursuer. What would happen in the following scenario? Reuvein sees Shimon aiming to shoot and kill Levi. The only weapon Reuvein has to stop and kill Shimon is a hand grenade. However, if Reuvein throws the grenade it will definitely kill Shimon but will likely also kill Yehuda, an innocent bystander. Can Reuvein kill the rodef if it will kill an innocent bystander? The Damesek Eliezer says that he can. This is because killing the bystander is a grama, indirect.

Perhaps in the case of the hospice, one can argue that the electricity is a rodef. The electrician can "kill the electricity" that is a rodef even if it may cause innocent bystanders to be killed. Perhaps that would be considered a grama. However Rav Zilberstein does not give a final psak in this case.

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