



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE KING & THE WISE DONKEY

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion the Torah talks about the mitzvah of sanctifying and redeeming a donkey. This mitzvah involving a donkey leads us to the following true story about a donkey, told by Rav Zilberstein.

During the Middle Ages there were once two non Jewish neighbors, Robert and Anthony, who owned land next to each other. One day Robert went away on a trip for many months. When he came back home he noticed that his land was a bit smaller than it had been before he left. The hedge of bushes that was a border between their yard was pushed up about 10 feet and his neighbor Anthony had moved his property into the land he usurped from Robert. When Robert approached Anthony about his theft, Anthony vehemently denied moving the border.

Robert decided he was going to bring Anthony before the King to adjudicate their claim. The King listened to both sides' arguments and wasn't sure how to judge. He asked his advisor, a Jewish sage, to help him determine who



LESS MAKES MORE

In this week's Parsha, Bo, we became a people. Not a regular people, but specifically the people of HaShem. This happened through the command Ha-Shem gave us and our fulfilling that command. There were two mitzvos in the command. The first mitzvah was to prepare and offer the Pesach offering to be eaten on the night of the 15th of Nissan. The second mitzvah was to circumcise every male in our nation. If, for whatever reason, they were not circumcised they were not able to participate in the first mitzvah. In fact, if one's child or slave was not circumcised the father/owner could not participate in the Pesach offering either.

What is the significance of the Bris-Milah that it forms the cornerstone of our becoming the People of HaShem?

When considering the title of "The People of HaShem" it sounds somewhat like an oxymoron. If we are a people, then how do we become something Godly? People, by definition, are human creatures. How does a creation become associated with its Creator?

The answer is that we have within us a soul that is more detached from the chomer of this material world. (Chomer was discussed a few weeks ago as being the base material of this physical world.) The souls of human beings have a tzura, while the souls of animals have no tzura. The souls of the Jewish people have an even greater tzura than the souls of other people.

was correct in this case.

The Jewish advisor and the King went to the land of the two neighbors and asked that the hedge be removed from between the two lands. After it was removed the advisor asked Robert to show them where he believed the original border was. Robert made a mark with a shoe to show where the border was. Then the Jewish advisor asked Robert if he could bring out one of his donkeys. The advisor told him to make the donkey run. Robert patted the back of the donkey and urged it to run. The donkey ran, but it did not stop where the hedge was. Rather it stopped running exactly where Robert had claimed that the original boundary was. The Jewish advisor exclaimed that it seemed that the donkey was used to running this far.

He said, "Let's investigate further". The Jewish advisor then asked that they dig the ground under where the donkey stopped. Underneath the ground they found the roots of a hedge. They found that the roots of this hedge went all the way across the yard. It seemed clear that this was a spot that originally had a hedge border going across the yard.

The Sage said "it seems clear that this was the original border of the yard and the evidence supports Robert's claim". Anthony was very ashamed. The King was extremely impressed at the wisdom of the Jewish sage and this caused a great kiddush Hashem.

Rav Zilberstein then asked what would happen if this story happened between two Jewish protagonists and one of them came before a beis din and tried to prove it was his by using the proof of the donkey and the roots. Normally, according to the Torah we say that in order to extract money from someone you need witnesses or a document. Would circumstantial evidence like this be enough to prove that his property was really larger? What do you think? Could such proof be used in any capacity in a Beis Din?

See Chashukei Chemed Baba Basra page 277

MITZVA MEME

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself,
it's thinking of yourself less.”

-C. S. Lewis



The chomer / tzura relationship we addressed a few weeks ago was illustrated with a block of wood that has no shape other than a perfect cube. This is pure chomer, a base physical material. When the sculpture chisels away a little wood here and a little wood there he adds tzura, he adds form to the block and it is no longer defined as a block of wood. It is defined as a wooden elephant. The elephant is the tzura. It is interesting to note that while adding tzura elevates the status from an nondescript wood to an elephant, it nevertheless requires diminishing the chomer, by chiseling away some of the wood. The only way to give form to the base material is by chipping away at the material thereby elevating its status.

In order to create the possibility for Man to elevate himself, HaShem created him with extra chomer. So long as he

identifies himself as nothing higher, there is no need to remove or to chip away at that chomer. However, when HaShem chose the Children of Israel to be for Him, to be His nation, to be the people who will carry His torch by which to illuminate the world, He needed that they should elevate themselves from chomer to tzura.

It is for the reason of elevating ourselves from base material beings to becoming the people chosen by HaShem, that we are commanded to circumcise our bodies. By chipping away at our chomer we become the greatest sculptures. While Michelangelo could turn a stone into a person with a chisel and a hammer, we are able to turn a human being from a base material creature into a Godly image!

It is no wonder that on the cusp of our becoming the people designated to hold HaShem's torch to light the world, that HaShem required that no Jew be left behind. Absolutely every Jew had to be circumcised before we could embark on our historic journey.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE MOON: AN EXQUISITE RENEWAL

By Avraham Cohen

In this week's Parsha HaShem instructs His people to make a lunar calendar based on the monthly renewal of the moon. How exactly does the moon "renew itself?" As we know, our moon does not generate its own light; but reflects the sun's light. However, the amount of light that reflects off of the moon that we can actually see here on earth, always changes.

When is the moon 'new'? When the moon is between the earth and the sun, all the light reflecting off the moon is reflected back towards the sun itself; the moon looks dark to us; and so, it is 'new'. And when is the moon 'full'? When the earth is between the sun and the moon, all the light reflecting off the moon is now reflected back towards the earth; the moon is totally bright; it is 'full'! The other phases of the moon (8 classic phases in all) reveal where the moon is on its monthly journey around the earth. Although the moon's appearance is always changing, it's not the moon that is changing but rather our view of the moon that makes it look different, passing through its phases.

Here are another nine amazing facts about our moon:

1. When the moon makes its monthly journey around the earth, it only turns once on its axis the entire month, and the same side of the moon (the 'near' side) is always facing the earth. This is because it has a perfectly 'synchronous rotation' with Earth! It was not until we sent a rocket to the moon that humans first saw the 'far' side of the moon, which is normally hidden from view!

2. The moon has no atmosphere, no air, and no 'weather'. If you were to stand on the surface of the moon with your friend, could you have a conversation? No, because the lack of atmosphere means no sound can be heard on the moon.

3. We are used to a blue sky. But on the moon, the sky is always black even when the sun shines. This is because the moon has no atmosphere.

4. The lack of an atmosphere has another effect. Where the sun shines directly on the moon, it's very hot: 260 degrees F! But when the sun goes down, it's colder than you can imagine: -280 degrees F!

5. Each lunar day and each lunar night are the same length, 14 of our days of daytime and 14 of our days of nighttime! Imagine a daytime that is two weeks long!

6. We know that the sun is much larger than the moon. Why then, do they look to be exactly the same size? This fact is remarkable. The moon is about 400x smaller than the sun (2,160 miles in diameter vs. 864,938 miles in diameter). But the moon is ~400x closer to the earth than the sun is (only 238,900 miles vs. 91,458,000 miles). It is these 400-fold differences in size and distance that makes these two very different sized celestial objects seem similar!

7. The moon's gravity pulls on the water in the Earth's oceans. It is the gravity of the moon that causes the ocean's high tides as the earth spins underneath. The moon's gravitational pull generates something called the tidal force. The tidal force causes Earth—and its water—to bulge out on the side closest to the Moon and the side farthest from the Moon. These bulges of water are high tides.

8. We are used to thinking of the tide of the sea. But can rocks have a tide? Fascinatingly, as the moon orbits the Earth it also causes a tide of rock to rise and fall in the same way as it does with the water! It is a measurable effect, with the solid surface of the Earth moving by several centimeters with each tide!

9. The gravitational force and resistance of the moon has another very important effect on Earth. It helps to slow down the day. Without the moon, a day on earth would only last 6-12 hours – there would be more than 1000 days in one year! If it was not for the gravitational force of the moon, our days would go by in a blink.

Mah rabu ma'a'se'cha Hashem, kulam b'chachma a'see'sa!

THIS YOUNG MAN WAS MOVED BY HIS CONSIDERATION AND LOVE FOR HIS FATHER. HOW COULD I BECOME UPSET BY THAT?

A young man once informed Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski that his father had applied for the post of rabbi in a nearby community, and that he was certain that if Rabbi Chaim Ozer would endorse his candidacy, he would be selected for the position.

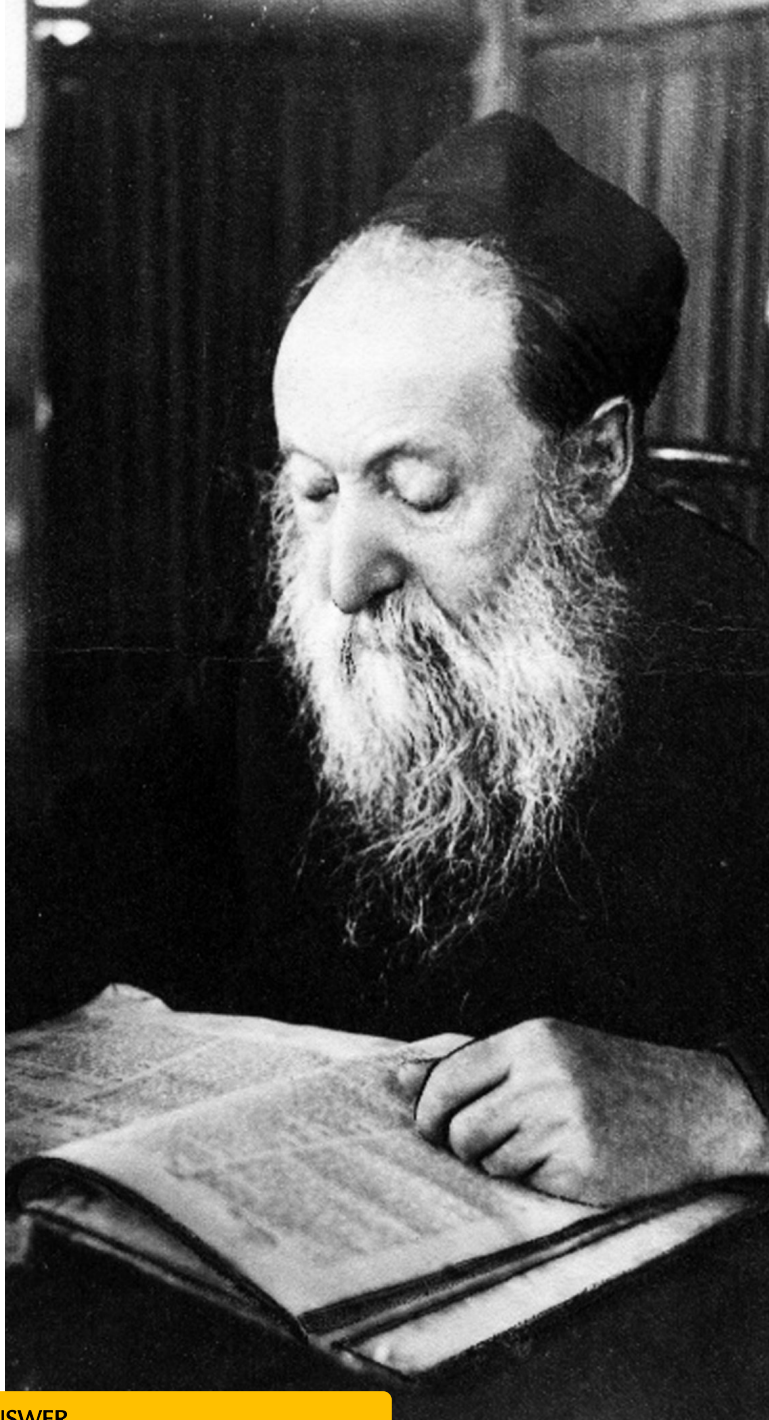
Rabbi Chaim Ozer felt that the candidate lacked the qualifications for the position, but wished to avoid saying this to the son. Instead, he tried to explain to the son that it was his practice not to interfere in the affairs of other communities, and that the elders would certainly make a good judgment.

The son then became enraged, and began shouting at Rabbi Chaim Ozer with brazen chutzpah, accusing him of being insensitive to his father's needs, and being derelict in his responsibility to support Torah scholars. Rabbi Chaim Ozer listened to this diatribe very quietly, trying to pacify the young man, whose disrespectful talk was now peppered with insulting terms. Rabbi Chaim Ozer then arose and politely excused himself.

The people who witnessed this scene were furious at the young man's unforgivable audacity, and later said to Rabbi Chaim Ozer, "Even patience and tolerance has its limitations. Why did you not simply silence this upstart?"

Rabbi Chaim Ozer said, "Why do you not understand? This young man was moved by his consideration and love for his father. How could I become upset by that?"

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about leaving a store vacant, Rav Zilberstein answered that it would not be permitted, as it damages the reputation of the mall. That would not be considered a Gramma, rather it would be a Garmi.

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