

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE INK STAINS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses the mitzva to set up a court system. The Torah writes that the judges should listen to a case "that is great and small" (Devarim 1,17). Our Sages teach that this means that the courts should deal with cases involving small amounts of money just as much as cases involving large amounts of money. This leads us to the following true story.

Avi, like many religious Jews, had many white shirts to bring to the cleaners. He brought his shirts to the cleaners and the cleaners had a sign saying "please make sure to remove all belongings from your garments." The cleaners did not wish to bear any responsibility for forgotten items.

Avi handed in 10 of his shirts and looked forward to getting them back in a few days. A few days later he went back to the cleaners. When he gave them his ticket the owner looked at him and said, "We need to talk". It turned out that when Avi gave in his shirts he left a blue pen in his shirt



THE LOVING SURGEON

With Tisha b'Av arriving next week, I anticipate spending much time wondering if there is anything I can do or perhaps anything that we can do to bring about the change we hope for; the coming of Moshiach. And if so, what is it?

The Talmud tells of a story where Rebeinu Hakadosh, the Sage who compiled the Mishna, encountered Eliyahu and asked him if there was anyone living whose prayers could bring Moshiach. Eliyahu told him that Reb Chiya and his sons were capable of accomplishing that with their prayers. Rebeinu Hakadosh immediately proclaimed the next day to be a fast day on which the community would spend the day wrapped in prayer. He then ordered Reb Chiya to lead the community in prayer. While this was happening down on earth, in heaven there was a tumult. "Who revealed to those down below how to bring Moshiach?" When it was learnt that Eliyahu was the culprit he was sent down to disrupt the prayers and he succeeded in avoiding the arrival of Moshiach. While there is much to discuss before fully understanding this piece of Talmud, nevertheless, it is evident that Reb Chiya had the quality needed to successfully bring about Moshiach. If we could discover that quality perhaps we could work in that direction and perhaps we could bring about the arrival of Moshiach ourselves.

The Talmud relates in great detail how Reb Chiya assured the eternal perpetuation of the Torah. First he planted flax seeds with which he made linen from which he created traps to catch deer. Once the deer were caught he slaughtered them properly and gave the meat to the poor and used the hides to make parchment on which he wrote several copies of the Torah. He then took five children and with each one he studied one book of the Five Books of Chumash. He then took six more children and with each one studied one set of the six sets of Mishna. With each of these 11 children becoming perfectly fluent with the wisdom of their respective portion of Torah, Reb Chiya secured the Torah from being forgotten.

Our commentaries explain the reason Reb Chiya started with planting seeds rather than simply

pocket. When the cleaners employees put his shirts into the laundry they did not notice the pen. When the shirt was being laundered the ink opened up and spilled out into the entire batch of laundry. The ink was permanent. Not only did it stain all of Avi's shirts with permanent ink, it stained all of the 90 other shirts that were in the machine. When those other patrons came to get their shirts and saw that their shirts were ruined they were understandably very upset at the owner. In all, 40 other cleaners patrons were very angry at the cleaners for ruining their shirts. The owner was apologetic but argued that he wasn't responsible for it because another customer left a pen in his pocket. The customers, however, were not pacified and he now had 40 very angry customers.

The owner wanted Avi to pay for the damage to all of the shirts. "What am I supposed to do? All these people are asking me for money.. It's not my fault it's your fault", he said.

Avi felt bad about the situation but he didn't feel that it was his responsibility to pay for all the shirts. Even though he made the mistake of leaving his pen in his pocket, the cleaners employee was the one who actually caused the damage. He was the one that put the shirts in the machine and turned the machine on. He was the one who should have found the pen. He was the one who actually caused the damage.

This question was eventually brought to Rav Zilberstein. What do you think? Does Avi have to pay for all of the damaged shirts, or does the cleaners have to pay for them?.

See Hebrew Veharev Na Volume One page 344



purchasing the parchment was because to be guaranteed success in spiritual matters there must be complete dedication from the very outset. No step in the process could be tarnished with any other motive. Behold! Reb Chiya had that quality to maintain an exclusive focus on the concerns of HaShem, leaving out all other intents.

In a similar vein, the Nefesh Hachaim teaches us that the most effective prayers are those that are focused on the pain of the Shechina. For example, when a friend becomes ill, there are several parties we could focus on. We could focus on our own pain, namely, I do not want to lose my dear friend. We could focus on his wife and children that they should not lose their beloved husband and father. Or we could focus on HaShem. He, too, suffers greatly if my friend were to pass away. In fact, His pain is greater than all the other relatives. Consider the surgeon who after diagnosing his son's infected foot recognizes that the only way to save his son is by amputating the leg. Naturally, he puts his son under anesthesia and amputates his son's leg. After years have passed and the son has learnt to walk with one leg and his life continues normally, the father

who cut his son's leg off will still experience the pain of removing his son's leg, while the son himself has moved on. The pain HaShem experiences when causing a woman to become a widow and causing small children to become orphans is far greater than their pain.

The Nefesh Hachaim instructs us to always consider the pain our Father experiences whenever there is someone in pain, someone who is ill, someone in financial distress and other forms of distress. When we focus our intent on His pain, the prayers are far more effective.

Perhaps the reason Reb Chiya and his sons were so qualified to daven for Moshiach was because they were individuals whose entire focus was exclusively on the pain of HaShem's Presence being hidden. Therefore, the only way to prevent Moshiach from coming was to disrupt Reb Chiya's prayers.

May HaShem inspire us this year to sense the deep pain the Shechina endures being locked in solitary quarantine for the last 2,000 years. May we respond with deep felt prayers for HaShem's Honor to be restored and may we finally greet Moshiach.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and an easy fast.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE GENIUS OF SEED DISPERSAL; ANIMAL DISPERSAL

Seed dispersal is the movement, spreading and transporting of seeds away from the parent plant. Plants cannot really move so they rely on a variety of dispersal methods to transport their seeds. Dispersal of seeds is very important for the survival of plant species. If plants grow too closely together, they have to compete for light, water and nutrients from the soil. Seed dispersal allows plants to spread out to a wide area and avoid competing with one another for the same resources.

The five main methods of dispersal are gravity, wind, ballistic, water, and by animals. As we will learn together, some of these methods are very ingenious.

Let's look at one of the most complicated dispersal scenarios that scientists know about.

The emu is a large, flightless bird that lives in Australia and eats plants and arthropods. A favorite food of the emu is *Petalostigma pubescens*, a tree known as quinine tree, bitter bark or quinine berry. Quinine trees grow in the same open woodlands where emus live.

The quinine tree bears very small, yellow fruits, 2.0-2.5 cm in diameter, with a thin layer of flesh. The fruits are divided into six to eight segments, like a tangerine, and each segment contains a hard endocarp or pit. Each endocarp contains a single seed, 6-8 mm long. Left on the tree, the fruits will eventually dry up and open to release their seeds, but if ripe fruits are discovered by a hungry emu, it will eat the fruit.

An emu may eat dozens of fruits in one meal. It swallows the fruits whole, digesting the soft, fleshy part and letting the hard,

indigestible endocarps pass through their entire digestive system, and back out onto the ground. On an average day, an emu travels a lot, spreading

endocarps as it goes.

The endocarps sit out in the hot sun. As the endocarps dry, they explode. Just like the pod of a legume, the endocarp has fibers in its tissues oriented in opposite directions. As the fibers dry, they contract and pull the endocarp apart. It is a sudden explosion, sending seeds up to 2.5 m from where they started. Launching seeds away from each other is beneficial to seeds because the seedlings will be less likely to compete with each other.

But that is not the end of their journey. Each *Petalostigma* seed bears a small, oily food body, called an elaiosome, that is attractive to ants. Ants pick up the seed with its attached elaiosome and carry it back to their nest. Once at the nest, the ants will remove and consume the elaiosome and deposit the inedible seed in their garbage piles outside of the nest. It is the ants that disperse the seeds to their final destination.

This is a journey of a seed; from the tree, to an emu's mouth, through its digestive system, onto the ground, through an explosion, into an ant's nest, and back out where it will ultimately grow.

Based on: indefenseofplants.com

THE MONEY DRAWER

The Tchebiner Rav dispensed his money very willingly to others. But not only did he give money, he exuded deep sympathy, compassion and extraordinary respect to each individual in need.

He wanted to do his utmost to preserve their dignity in spite of their difficult circumstances.

The following is a beautiful illustration. Rav Eliyahu Kreitwirth related that he was once in the Tchebiner Rav's study when a needy Jew came to the Rav to request a donation. Turning to his talmid, the Tchebiner Rav asked if he could lend him five liras, which Rav Eliyahu gladly gave him. The Rav gave the poor man the money and he left, happily. But as soon as the poor man left, the Rav opened a drawer that had money in it and promptly returned the sum.

The talmid wondered why it was necessary for the Rav to borrow money if it was clear that he had a lot of money in the drawer.

Noting his talmid's bemused expression, The Rav explained that the drawer held a large sum of money that was designated for an urgent cause. He was concerned that if the man would see him open the drawer and catch a glimpse of the wad of bills, he would feel disappointed and hurt by the "measly" donation of five liras.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the tattoo, Rav Zilberstin wrote that it would not be chavala, to do a surgery to remove the tattoo, and in fact it would be a worthy thing to do. However there was no chiu, no obligation to do so.

With the shuls beginning to open, we will be placing the TableTalk's in the shuls as we did in the pre-Corona days and we will be minimizing the other distribution methods.

If you are unable to get your TableTalk from shul please let me know and we will try to accommodate you.

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