



## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE LOJACK

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha talks about the mitzva of the Ben Sorer Umoreh, the rebellious son. Our Sages teach that the Ben Sorer Umoreh is liable after he steals from his parents. (Rashi Devarim 21,18) The topic of stealing leads us to the following interesting story.

Ari was next-door neighbors with Zev, and they were very close. One day Ari was walking outside at night and he was approached by armed robbers. "Give me the keys to your car", the robber said, "and no one will get hurt".

Ari was not going to risk his life to fight with the robbers and he reached into his pocket for his keys. Ari thought to himself, "how am I going to find these robbers and relocate my stolen car?"

But then he had an idea. His good friend Zev, who lived next door, had a LoJack anti-theft GPS Location Tracker installed in his car. What the LoJack did, was, in case a car was stolen, the police can locate its location at all times via gps satellite.

If the robbers would steal both his car as well as Zev's car, then the police would easily be able to find both cars. Ari wondered to himself if he was allowed to tell the robbers how to steal his friend's car in order to



### REMEMBER

In this week's Parsha Moshe instructs his people to remember how Amalek attacked them as they left Egypt and to blot out the memory of Amalek. It is noteworthy that although we no longer know who the nation of Amalek is, nevertheless the mitzvah remains to remember what they did and to blot out their memory.

Who was Amalek and why must we remember what they did? Why must we blot out their memory?

Amalek initiated a battle against our people shortly after we left Egypt. After the world witnessed the Ten Plagues which decimated the Egyptian economy, the largest most secure of its time and after the devastation of the Egyptian Empire's military force at the Red Sea, Amalek attacked us. The absurdity of such an advance is beyond belief. Did Amalek really think they would win a military campaign against HaShem's people? What drove Amalek to undertake such a campaign?

Every nation has their unique role in world history. Amalek adopted the role of creating apathy and indifference. HaShem uses historical events to shake up the world to the awareness of His Being. Amalek has set their role to be the ones who undermine that impression which HaShem creates through history. In other words, Amalek stands in direct opposition to HaShem.

When Amalek attacked us, they knew they would lose the battle. Their goal was not to win. Their goal was to show that Man need not be scared of HaShem. No matter what He will do, Man can do as he wishes. His goal was to demonstrate indifference to HaShem and His actions.

quickly retrieve both cars. On one hand, how could he harm his friend by aiding in the theft of his friend's car? But on the other hand, the police should find both cars quickly and the result will be that both cars are saved and the robbers taken off the streets.

Ari decided that he was going to go forward with his idea.

"Hey, I have an idea for you", Ari said to the thugs. "Why are you stealing my car? My car is worth less than ten thousand dollars. But my neighbor's car is worth at least 40 thousand dollars. Why don't you take his car and leave mine? I can show you where he keeps his keys."

One of the robbers turned to Ari. "That is such a good idea. Not only will we take your car, we will take the neighbor's car as well". Then raising his weapon to Ari, the thug said, "Where are his keys?"

Ari showed them where Zev hid a spare key and the robbers happily made off with both cars.

But not for long.

As soon as the robbers left, Ari called the police and the police were easily able to locate the two stolen cars. The police apprehended the robbers and returned both cars within 24 hours of their theft. The gang of thieves was locked up for a long time.

It seems that Ari's ingenuity saved the day and resulted in both cars being returned. And the gang of thieves being apprehended and locked up for a long time.

But later Ari sent this question to Rav Zilebrstein. Did he have a right to show the robbers how to steal his neighbor's car in order to retrieve his car and apprehend the thieves? He caused his neighbor to temporarily lose his car, but the result was the permanent apprehension of dangerous criminals and the retrieval of his car.

What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Shemos 174



*Happiness is not a Happening.  
It is a choice.  
A choice to identify and appreciate  
the good that you have.*



We, on the other hand, are fortunate to be the ones whom HaShem uses to demonstrate this awareness. The role of our people is to arouse within ourselves and, by extension, within the people of the world an awareness of HaShem.

We are therefore in an ongoing war with Amalek. When Moshe implores his people to blot out the memory of Amalek, he is not referring to the historical event of their initial attack. That event will be forever etched into history by virtue of it being a part of our eternal Torah. Moshe is referring to the ideology of Amalek. The "memory" of Amalek is a reference to Amalek's imprint of indifference and to the role of Amalek.

So while there may be nobody left to wipe out since there is no longer any identifiable nation of Amalek, nevertheless, the imprint of Amalek still lingers.

Immediately following 9/11 Americans sang only "G.D bless America" during the 7th inning stretch instead of "Take me out to the ball game". There was an awareness of the need for HaShem's protection. Twenty years later the 7th inning stretch is now used to sell more beer and popcorn and play some music. America's awareness of their need for HaShem's protection is gone. Within American culture Amalek succeeded in creating apathy and indifference to the lessons that were so heavily paid for twenty years ago. Even when the Taliban celebrates their most remarkable comeback, the world's reaction is at best timid.

We are charged with the ever renewing command to never forget Amalek. For us, our very existence rests upon our never forgetting what Amalek did, who they are and what their role in history is.

It is now 3,333 years since Amalek raised their arrogant head to challenge the inspiration of our Exodus. We may not forget our role and what we live for. We must blot out their arrogance and raise the banner of HaShem.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### FLAX AND LINEN

Last week we learned about wool. In this week's Parsha the Torah talks about the mitzvah of shatnez, of not wearing clothing that is a mixture of wool and linen. Let us therefore learn about flax and linen, the refined textile made from flax fibers.

Flax, also known as linseed, is a flowering plant. It is cultivated as a food and fiber crop in regions of the world with temperate climates. Textiles made from flax are known as linen, and are traditionally used for bed sheets, underclothes, and table linen. Its oil is known as linseed oil.

Cultivated flax plants grow to nearly 4 feet tall, with slender stems. The leaves are green, 20–40 mm long, and 3 mm broad. The flowers are pure pale blue, 15–25 mm in diameter, with five petals.

Humans first domesticated flax in the Fertile Crescent region. As we learned with barley, the Fertile Crescent is the area of Eretz Yisrael and Aram Naharaim. The use of the crop steadily spread, reaching as far as Switzerland, Germany, China and India by approximately 5,000 years ago.

Flax was cultivated extensively in ancient Egypt. Egypt's temple walls had paintings of flowering flax, and its mummies were embalmed using linen. Egyptian and Sumerian (from the area of Ur Casdim) priests wore only linen, as linen was considered a symbol of purity. The Romans used linen for their sails. Linen was used mainly by the wealthier class of the society.

The word linen comes from the Greek name for the flax plant *linón*. This word has given rise to a number of other terms in English, like line, from the use of a linen thread to determine a straight line. It is also the origin of the word lining because linen was often used to create an inner layer for clothing.

Linen fibers and textiles have several benefits.

1. Flax fibers taken from the stem of the plant are two to three times as strong as cotton fibers. Flax is stronger than cotton fiber but less elastic.
2. Additionally, flax fibers are naturally smooth and straight.
3. Flax fiber is soft, lustrous, and flexible. Bundles of fiber have the appearance of blonde hair, hence the description "flaxen" hair.
4. Linen is very strong, absorbent, and dries faster than cotton.
5. Because of these properties, linen is comfortable to wear in hot weather and is valued for use in garments.
6. Wool has a drawback that moths eat it and make holes in it, because it is made from animal fibers (keratin). Linen, however, because it is not an animal product, is impervious to clothes moths.
7. Nowadays, linen is one of the most preferred materials for bed sheets due to its durability and hypoallergenic properties.
8. Linen fabric feels cool to touch, a phenomenon that indicates its higher conductivity (the same principle that makes metals feel "cold").
9. It is smooth, making the finished fabric lint-free, and gets softer the more it is washed.

10. Another distinctive characteristic is its tendency to wrinkle.

Today, flax fiber is a raw material used in the high-quality paper industry for the use of printed banknotes, rolling paper for cigarettes, and tea bags. United States currency paper is made from 25% linen and 75% cotton.

How exactly is linen produced from the flax plant? Flax is harvested for fiber production about 100 days after the plants flower. The bases of the plants begin to turn yellow. If the plants are still green, the fiber will be underdeveloped.

The plant is pulled up with the roots and not cut, to increase the fiber length. After this, the flax is allowed to dry, the seeds are removed, and it is then retted.

What is retting? In the Gemara we find a discussion of *mei mishra*, the water of soaked flax. The Gemara makes clear that flax needed to be soaked as part of its processing and that the *mei mishra* had a very foul odor.

This process is called retting. Flax fibers are naturally attached to their stalk. The flax fibers must be loosened from its stalk. Retting is an enzymatic action that uses bacteria to decompose the pectin that binds the fibers together. Natural retting methods take place in tanks and pools. When the retting is complete, the bundles of flax feel soft and slimy, and quite a few fibers are standing out from the stalks. When wrapped around a finger, the inner woody part springs away from the fibers. Pond retting is the fastest. It consists of placing the flax in a pool of water which will not evaporate. It generally takes place in a shallow pool which will warm up dramatically in the sun; the process may take from a few days to a few weeks. This form of retting produces quite an odor and pollutes the waters used for the process.

After retting, the stalks are ready for a step called scutching. Scutching is when you remove the woody portion of the stalks by crushing them between two metal rollers, so that the parts of the stalk can be separated. The fibers are removed and the other parts such as linseed, shives, and tow are set aside for other uses. Next, the fibers are heckled: This means that the short fibers are separated with heckling combs by 'combing' them away, to leave behind only the long, soft flax fibers.

After the fibers have been separated and processed, they are typically spun into yarns and woven or knit into linen textiles. These textiles can then be bleached, dyed, printed on, or finished with a number of treatments or coatings.

In 2018, the world production of flax (linseed) was led by Kazakhstan with 29% of the total. Other major producers are Canada and Russia.

## **"I WAIT UNTIL THE END OF THE DAY AND I SEE WHO DIDN'T GET ANY CHAVRUSA"**

Many yeshivos recently started the new zman. Many schools will once again be starting. At the beginning of a new zman, there is what is called a chavrusa tumult. This is when there is a frantic search for a suitable learning partner for the new session.

When Rebetzin Leah Trenk was newly married to Rabbi Dovid Trenk, she first heard the term "chavrusa tumult," and she asked her husband to explain it'. Rabbi Trenk described the scene, the intense -negotiations between potential chavrusos and match-makers, every person looking for the partner best for him -- whether in intellect, diligence, knowledge, or personality. "And what about you, what sort of chavrusa do you look for?" she asked her new husband. "Oh, I have my own routine during chavrusa tumult," Reb Dovid said. "I wait until the end of the day and I see who didn't get any chavrusa, the one with whom no one chose to learn. Then, I go to that person and make him my chavrusa. That's who I want to learn with!"

(From Just Love Them, The Life and Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Trenk, By Rabbi Yisroel Besser, Published By Artscroll Mesorah)

**Pictured:** The Chavrusa Tumult at Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood



### **THE ANSWER**

**Regarding last week's question about the aquarium, Rav Zilberstein writes that this is an example of a damage called "Shen", causing damage with an eating animal. The one who put the fish in the aquarium is liable for all the damages.**

This week's TableTalk is sponsored in memory of  
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