

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE STUBBORN TATTOO

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion the Torah says, "And you shall be clean in the eyes of Israel". Our Sages teach that this means that not only should you not sin but you should not even allow people to suspect that you are sinning.

This leads us to the following story. Yoni was a young secular rebellious millennial. Like 50% of millennials today, he decided to get a tattoo. Not only did he want to get a tattoo, he wanted to get the most challenging of tattoos. He decided to get a tattoo on his wrist, which is one of the most painful places to do that. Yoni wanted a tattoo with the colors blue, green and yellow. Those are the colors that are known to be the most difficult colors to remove with a laser. Sure enough he went to the most experienced tattoo artist in his city and had a large picture of his favorite music group tattooed on the inside of his wrist.

A year later he was invited to someone's house for Shabbos and slowly but surely he became more interested in becoming more observant. Eventually, he became fully observant. Some time later he began to have different feelings about his very conspicuous and colorful awful tattoo on his wrist. Wherever he went with a black hat and jacket dressed like a yeshiva boy, people



NO PLACE TO RUN

The Three Weeks of Mourning in which we currently find ourselves are referenced in the Book of Eicha, authored by the prophet Yirmiyahu. "Judah has gone into exile because of suffering. She dwelled among the nations, but found no rest; all who pursue her overtook her as she finds herself between the walls"

Our Sages teach us that these walls refer to the fast of Tamuz on one side and the fast of Tisha b'Av on the other side. This is a reference to the 22 days during which we mourn the destruction of both temples and the exiles that accompanied them. The prophet associates our vulnerability to be caught with these two fast days. What is the connection?

The fast of Tamuz commemorates the sin of the Golden Calf and the breaking of the Tablets. The fast of Tisha b'Av commemorates the sin of the spies, at which HaShem decreed that Jewish history will be destined to travel through thousands of years of exile. The suggestion that we are surrounded on both sides imply that the breaking of the Tablets plays an equally critical role in our exile as the sin of the spies.

The Talmud teaches us that we went into exile only in order that "geirim will be added to us". Geirim translates to converts. The implication is that we went into exile to collect converts. The great Ari z'l, however, explains that this is not the intent of this teaching. In fact, we discourage converts from converting and certainly do not see our mission to convert non-Jews into Judaism. Rather, our Sages are referring to the sparks of holiness that were lost throughout the world at the time of the breaking of

gave him a double look when they saw his wrist. He didn't mind the attention at all but it was clear that it wasn't what people expected.

Yoni decided that he wanted to get the tattoo removed. He didn't want to give the impression that he was a yeshiva boy that rebelled and got a conspicuous tattoo. He went to the dermatologist to discuss getting it removed. Unfortunately, he did not get the news that he wanted to hear. Because the tattoo was done by a professional and it was done very deep in his skin, with a lot of pigment, and because it was on his wrist, and it was far from his heart, it was difficult for the laser to break up the pigment. Because the colors that he had in his tattoo were blue, green and yellow, laser surgery would not be sufficient, and the ink would still remain (black and red are the easiest colors to remove).

The doctor said that there are other methods of removing a tattoo which include dermabrasion, which means to rub the skin, and injections of solutions under the skin, or tattoo removal creams, however the doctor said that those would not be effective in his situation. The only procedure that would work completely for his situation would be a skin excision. This refers to the surgical removal of the tattooed skin. Simply, this means that the surgeon will remove the skin and replace it with a skin graft.

It would be costly because it was a cosmetic procedure, and it would also be very painful.

Yoni wanted to know if he was allowed to do the surgery. One is not allowed to do a surgery simply for cosmetic purposes because it involves chavala, cutting of the skin. Would it be permitted if it was done to avoid giving the impression that he did the sin of getting a tattoo?

Furthermore, if he was allowed to remove the tattoo, was he obligated to endure this painful and expensive surgery in order to prevent people from getting the wrong impression about him?

What do you think?

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the Tablets.

When HaShem spoke to His people at Mount Sinai, the entire world was silent. A cow did not moo, a rooster did not cry, everything within creation was perfectly silent. Not one creature expressed itself when HaShem revealed Himself. The sound of HaShem that spoke through the Fire was heard everywhere in the world. Had the Tablets not been broken, those fiery words of HaShem would have remained among our people and the Torah would have been completely at home within her people. However, once the Tablets were broken, those fiery words of HaShem were shattered and remained in every place where they heard. The only way for them to be brought back would be if we entered the Land of Israel immediately thereafter. Had that happened, those sparks of holiness would find their way home to join their people in the Land of Israel. However, once the spies

sabotaged the entry into Israel which caused a 40 year delay and only the next generation would enter the Land, those sparks could no longer return and remained lost in those far flung places. Now, our people themselves would have to go out across the globe and personally retrieve every one of those sparks.

Hence we can appreciate the message of the verse. She sat among the nations, she had no rest, all those who chased found her trapped between the walls. With the breaking of the Tablets on one side which caused all those sparks to be dispersed throughout the world, and the sin of the spies on the other side which did not allow us immediate entry to our Land, we were now vulnerable to all who chased us. We now had to move to every place on earth to retrieve the sparks of Torah that remained captive in those foreign lands. Hence, all those who chased her overtook her and succeeded in exiling her to that foreign land.

May we merit our greatly awaited return home with all our sparks intact.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE YAK

What is a yak? Yaks are very large cousins of cows. They have been sources of food and fabric for centuries. There are two types, wild yaks and domestic yaks. The wild yak population is threatened while domestic yaks are thriving and rising in popularity as livestock as people look for alternatives to traditional livestock like cows. Wild yak adults are about 5 to 7 feet tall at the shoulder and weigh 650 to 2,600 pounds. The head and body length is 8 to 11 feet, not counting the tail which adds another 24 to 39 inches. They are known for their handlebar horns and long hair. Wild yaks have a bulky frame, sturdy legs, and rounded split hooves. They have long shaggy hair with a thick, woolly undercoat that insulates them against the cold. In males especially, this undercoat forms a long "skirt" that can reach the ground. The tail is long and horse-like rather than tufted like the tails of cattle or bison. The coat is usually black or dark brown covering most of the body, with a grey muzzle.

The Qiang people living along the Tibetan Plateau borderlands are considered to be responsible for the domestication of the yak.

Due to the thin air, rugged terrain and harsh weather in Tibet, the Yaks have been designed with lungs that have three times the capacity of typical cows. They live on a diet of grasses and sedges. They also eat some herbs, winterfat shrubs, as well as mosses, and lichen.

Yaks are considered an endangered subspecies by China, with an estimated population of 170 left in the wild. As recently as half a century ago, about a million wild yaks roamed the Tibetan Plateau. Today the International Union for Conservation of Nature puts the global population at under 10,000 wild yaks making it officially vulnerable to extinction due to poaching, habitat loss, and interbreeding with livestock herds. Commercial poaching is the biggest threat, but recent protection from poaching appears to have stabilized or even increased population sizes in several areas. In both China and India, the species is officially protected; in China it is present in large nature reserves.

Wild yaks are herd animals. Herds can contain several hundred individ-

uals, although many are much smaller. Herds consist mainly of females and their young, with a smaller number of adult males. Females with young tend to choose grazing ground on high, steep slopes. The remaining males live alone, or in much smaller groups of about six. Although wild yaks can become aggressive when defending their young, they generally avoid humans and will probably flee for great distances if approached.

Historically, yaks were essential to the survival of the people of the Tibetan Plateau. They are strong pack animals and can cross high mountain passes carrying heavy loads of up to 150 pounds and are called the "boats of the plateau."

Yak milk makes yogurt and cheese which is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, including chhurpi, a hardened yak milk cheese that can be stored for years. This cheese is very hard, and eating it can take a few hours, which makes it great for travelling across the grasslands.

Traditional Tibetan butter tea is a drink which is meant to fortify against the thin, cold air of the Himalayan Mountains. It is made of Yak butter, yak milk and salt which are added to a special black tea from Pemagul. Some Tibetans are said to sip the high-calorie tea all day long, especially nomads of the higher plateaus above 17,000 feet. The energy boost from traditional butter tea so captivated one Western traveler, Dave Asprey, that he returned from Tibet and formulated Bulletproof Coffee, a brand that combines grass-fed butter with coffee.

Nomads have long survived harsh conditions on high-protein yak meat, sometimes even consuming fresh meat raw. Preserved yak meat, yak jerky, comes in handy on long treks, and is popular among tourists. Every summer, when the yaks shed their soft undercoat the Tibetan nomads comb out and process the soft, cashmere-like fiber. The coarse outer hair is used to make ropes, tents, and even theatrical wigs. Yak hide becomes bags and boots. Once a yak has died of natural means, the animal's bones are used in jewelry and tent-fastenings.

THE BEIS DIN AND THE MICE

Last week we shared a story about Reb Shayele of Kerestir. Reb Shayele is renowned for his connection to removing mice. This is the story behind that.

The large grocery store owned by Reb Shloime Engel in his native Tokay, Hungary, was overrun by mice. The rodents inflicted tremendous damage to his inventory, and there seemed to be no means of chasing them away. Reb Shloime hurried to his Rebbe, in Kerestir. "The Rebbe knows that I am careful about separating ma'aser. Aside from the ma'aser I bring the Rebbe each month, I add another tithe which I myself distribute to the poor. Chazal say that this sort of punishment is dealt to one who isn't careful with ma'aser. Why do I deserve this?" The Rebbe asked to see a written list of Reb Shloime's income and expenses. He found that Reb Shloime had indeed been donating not just a tenth, but an actual fifth of his income to tzedakah. "It seems that your claim is a good one, but I cannot sit in judgment alone. Come let us form a beis din and address your question." Reb Shloime grew frightened, suddenly afraid of participating in such a din Torah, but the Rebbe encouraged him. "Go into the beis midrash, where my two sons in law are learning and ask Rav Moshe Ginz, the Rav of Kerestir, to join them in ruling." Reb Shloime followed the Rebbe's instructions and repeated his claim for Rav Reuven Chaim Klein, Rav Yisroel Avraham Alter Landau and Rav Moshe Ginz. They ruled that he was correct. He had been especially generous with the poor and did not deserve such a penalty. However, they did not want to commit the verdict to writing, since even though it was true according to Halacha, they refused to involve themselves in the calculations of Heaven. Reb Shloime insisted that the Rebbe had instructed them to rule as on any din Torah and issue a pesak in writing. Finally, they acquiesced and he brought the verdict to Reb Shayele. The Rebbe added his agreement at the bottom of the paper and signed his own name as well; "Yeshaya ben Moshe, who was an attendant to the Rebbe of Liska and directed Reb Shloime to hang it on the wall of his store. Reb Shloime returned home and affixed the written pesak to the wall of the store. That night, he looked on in wonder as the mice left the store in single file, as if in a military procession, following the ruling of the beis din. Decades later, Rav Moshe Neuschloss, the revered dayan of New Square, New York, could still recall the yellowed paper hanging on the wall of Reb Shloime Engel's store. Similarly, the property of the rebbe's brother-in-law, Rav Tovia Meir Weiss, was overrun by mice. He mentioned the problem to the Rebbe, since the mice had caused him great damage. "Zei vellen avek-gein, they will leave," the Rebbe proclaimed. When Reb Tovia Meir returned home, his neighbors described how they had seen a row of mice exiting his home. The mice had continued until the banks of the river, where they disappeared.

(From Reb Shayaleh, By Rabbi Yisrael Besser, Reprinted With Permission)



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the steward/home aid, Rabbi Zlberstien writes that if the home aid was being paid by the son, and he was only working because he was being paid, then the inheritance should go to the son.

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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