

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



STEALING THE VIEW

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion, the Torah teaches us how precious peace is. Our Sages teach that peace is so precious to Hashem that He prefers that we erase His Name, (into the water of the Sotah) in order to bring peace and reconciliation between a man and his wife.

This leads us to the following true story.

Avi lived in a villa in Eretz Yisrael that had a breathtaking view of the Jerusalem hills. He loved sitting on his porch and looking out at the gorgeous view of Eretz Yisrael.



DRILLING DOWN

Condensed from the words of Rabbi Aaron Lopiansky

In this week's Parsha, Naso, HaShem instructs the kohanim to bless His people. The instructions read as follows. " And the kohanim shall place My Name upon the Jewish people and I will bless them." The implication is that the kohanim are to invoke HaShem's Name on the people and HaShem will bless the people. According to this understanding it appears that HaShem is the One Who blesses the people. What, then is the role of the kohanim? How does blessing work? Is it a prayer for success or is it an actual phenomenon.

We find blessing in the context of the increase of children, produce, livestock, financial investments and many other endeavors. Let us observe nature's way of blessing and perhaps we can extend our understanding from there. When you take a potato and bury it underground your potato will increase into many more potatoes. The same will happen with any other plant. The Earth is the source of growth and it is from there that potatoes grow. When we connect the potato to its source of growth, blessing will occur.

Similarly, when you tap into an underground wellspring you will get an unending water supply because you tapped into the source of the water.

In a similar fashion, but on a spiritual plane, when you tap into the Source of all existence then your endeavors will be blessed. HaShem is the Source of all existence. He is the sole origin of all energy and matter. When the kohanim place HaShem's Name upon us and we connect to that infinite Source we are set up for all sorts of blessing.

The question remains however, what is the role of the kohanim? Why are they the ones

One day, Chaim, Avi's neighbor from across the street came over.

"Avi, I hope that you are doing well. I just want to let you know that we are planning to do some construction and we will be extending our mirpeset, our porch. I know it is in front of your home, so I just wanted to check in with you to make sure it's okay."

Avi replied, "Actually I appreciate you letting me know. I would very much appreciate if you don't build the extension. One of the main features of my home is the view and what you are describing will obstruct our view."

Chaim felt very conflicted. His family needed the extra space and the new extension was very exciting to them. The extension was on his own property, and it seemed like he had every right to build it.

But on the other hand, did he have a right to block his neighbor's beautiful view? According to the Torah, was he allowed to build the extension now that he knew it meant so much to Avi?

What do you think? Is Chaim allowed to build

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



MITZVA MEME



Sometimes when you think things are falling apart

They are actually falling into place.

chosen to invoke that Name? While one could argue that the kohanim have a greater level of kedusha, nevertheless, there seems to be a deeper reason.

We always find birchas kohanim in the context of the avoda, the service, of the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash. For example, Aharon blesses the nation upon the completion of the Mishkan. Shlomo Hamelech does the same upon the completion of the Beis Hamikdash. The birchas kohanim is recited daily in the amidah in the segment corresponding to the avoda.

The function of the Temple service was to bring ourselves to an awareness that everything finds its origin and its destiny in HaShem. It is therefore appropriate that in the moment of avoda when they achieved a state of clarity that HaShem is the source of all existence, they should invoke HaShem's Name upon the nation opening them up for HaShem's blessing.

There is a practical application of this principle. When learning a piece of Talmud or even when we are trying to understand a general issue relating to business, there are two ways to approach this endeavor. One way is to focus on the problems which have to be settled without spending any energy on developing a deeper understanding of the general issue. Alternatively, one can focus on developing a deeper understanding of the general issue. By deepening his understanding he will invariably get a better grasp on the entire issue. When that is accomplished he will have a clearer picture and the solution will jump out at him. The difference is; do we focus on the small peripheral concerns or do we deepen our understanding of source of the concerns.

There are two types of speakers. There is the speaker who has a comprehensive grasp of his subject and can speak endlessly with remarkable clarity. And then there is a good speaker who knows his speech well but you can tell that he knows only the presentation he presents with no deeper understanding. The former is connected to the source and his speech flows freely. The latter is prepared just for what he has to say but no more.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE LUNGFISH, A FISH OUT OF WATER

Some creatures, like bears, hibernate to avoid the cold, adverse conditions of winter. But others undergo a similar process when faced with unusually hot temperatures during the summer or severe periods of drought. This 'summer hibernation' is known as estivation. In some cases, in response to drought, estivation can last for years.

In South America and Africa one can find several different species of lungfish. They live in stagnant pools which dry up in the rainless season. Normally, fish in such dried pools would die.

But HaShem gave the lungfish a special ability to survive without water. When the water dries up, the lungfish burrows down into the mud. It then makes a cocoon around itself made of mucus, and goes to sleep. Soon the lungfish is enclosed in clay that is baked dry and hard as a rock! The fish gets its air through a hole which extends from its burrow to the surface of the ground. The hole is sealed by a porous lid allowing the inward passage of air. Most fish are unable to breathe air. But the Lungfish can. Most lungfish species have two lungs that allow them to breathe air.

Why doesn't the fish dry up? The lungfish has skin glands that produce a varnish during the dry season when the fish is buried in the mud. This varnish oozes out and covers the entire surface of the skin. The varnish protects the fish from drying out, and losing the water inside it. The lungfish can stay entombed in this state for months if necessary.

Months later, when the rains fall again, the lungfish comes back to life. Once again it swims around in its pool of water.

Lungfish can live to be unusually long for a fish. A lungfish in the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago lived to be more than 83 years old.

How wondrous are Your creatures HaShem!

“AM I GOING TO PUSH THE BLANKET TO THE FIVE OTHER PEOPLE WHO DID NOT GET ONE, OR AM I GOING TO PULL IT TOWARD MYSELF TO STAY WARM?”

Howard Schultz, chairman and former chief global strategist of Starbucks was awarded the Botwinick Prize in Business Ethics by the Columbia Business School in September, 2011. He revealed in his acceptance speech how he—among others—had been educated by Reb Nosson Zvi Finkel. When I was in Israel, I went to Meah Shearim, the ultra-Orthodox area within Jerusalem. Along with a group of businessmen I was with, I had the opportunity to have an audience with Rabbi Finkel, the head of a yeshivah there. I had never heard of him and didn't know anything about him. We went into his study and waited ten to fifteen minutes for him. Finally, the doors opened. What we did not know was that Rabbi Finkel was severely afflicted with Parkinson's disease.

He asked us, “Who can tell me a lesson that we can learn from the Holocaust?” After some responses he said “let me tell you about the essence of the human spirit.”

As you know, during the Holocaust, the people were transported in the worst possible, inhumane way by railcar. After days in this corral with no light, no bathroom and cold, they arrived at the camps. The doors swung wide open, and they were blinded by the lights. Men were separated from women, mothers from daughters, fathers from sons. They went off to the bunkers to sleep.

As they went into the area to sleep, only one person was given a blanket for every six. The person who received the blanket had to decide, “Am I going to push the blanket to the five other people who did not get one, or am I going to pull it toward myself to stay warm?”

Rabbi Finkel said, “It was during this defining moment that we learned the power of the human spirit, because we pushed the blanket to five others.”

And with that he said, “Take your blanket. Take it back to America and push it to five other people.”

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THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of using sit-ins as civil disobedience, we brought this question to Rav Tzvi Berkowitz. Rav Tzvi answered, “The end does not justify the means”.

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