

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE FENDER BENDERS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Please enjoy another story that deals with the laws of damages. Akiva was driving on his way to work in Israel, and the car behind him was tailgating closely. Suddenly an animal jumped in front of his car, and Akiva had to make a quick shortstop. Seconds later, Akiva felt the car behind him hit the back of his car sharply. Akiva stopped the car and stepped out. The person who hit him ran up to him with a sheepish smile.

"Hi, my name is Eldad. I feel terrible about hitting your car. I see it's a relatively minor fender bender. I'll be honest. I cannot afford to report this to my insurance. But don't worry, I'll take care of everything. I'll take your car and have it fixed by tonight. Just give me the keys, and I'll take care of all the damage, and it will be just like before." Akiva had a sensitive heart and felt bad for Eldad, so he agreed. They exchanged phone numbers, and Eldad took the car. Eldad, who was in difficult financial straits, wanted to fix the car as cheaply as possible. He knew of an Arab-owned auto body shop that did cheap work, so he brought the car to that shop. Eldad waited while they made the repairs. True to his word, Eldad brought the car back to Akiva that night. "Here you go, as I said, it's as good as new. I'm so happy that we did not have



HOME BASE

In this week's Parsha HaShem instructs Moshe "They shall build for Me a Mishkan and I will dwell within them". Our Sages point out how these words indicate that although we are to build a Mishkan for the Shechina (His Presence) will rest within the people themselves.

The implication appears that the Shechinah's primary residence will not be the Mishkan but rather the people and their homes. The construction of the Mishkan was only a prerequisite to having the Shechina to dwell among them. However, it is clear that the Mishkan contains the Kedusha because it carries HaShem's Presence. From the laws of tumah it is evident that one who is tamei may not enter the environs of the Mishkan but is permitted to enter the Jewish homes. So was the Shechina dwelling in the Mishkan or in the midst of the people?

Tehillim chapter 90 was written by Moshe Rabbeinu. At the end of that Psalm Moshe turns to HaShem and requests "May You have nachas from us, and may our handiwork be based upon us and may our handiwork be His base."

The Malbim explains this prayer as follows.

When a builder constructs a home, the builder is not the base of the house. The earth or the foundation upon which he built the house is the

to involve our insurance companies". The next day Akiva had to make a relatively long journey in his car. He was driving quickly on the highway when the car hit a small bump. Suddenly, he heard a loud noise and watched in horror as the entire back panel of his car detached directly in front of oncoming traffic. The car behind him smashed into the detached piece of his car and slammed on his brakes. The car behind that one slammed into it, and the next car did the same. All in all, the piece that fell off led to a huge six-car pile-up.

Luckily no one was severely injured, but there was tremendous financial loss. The police came and gathered everyone's information. Everyone presumed that Akiva would be held responsible for the entire incident.

The next day Akiva called Eldad. "Eldad, please tell me the truth. What exactly did you do when you said you would repair the vehicle?" Eldad replied, "I am on a very tight budget, so I brought it to the cheapest place that I knew." Akiva replied, "Well, it looks like, in your quest to save money, you ended up being liable for a much larger amount. Because of the poor job of the repair person, the entire back of my car fell off, causing a six-car pile-up. You said you would have the car fixed as good as new, but it wasn't. I expect you to take responsibility for all of these damages, not only the damage to my car but to the other six cars as well.

But Eldad disagreed. "Tell me; it seems unusual for the entire back panel of a vehicle to fall off. Were you driving slowly? Maybe you were speeding, or driving recklessly, which led to the piece falling off. That's not my problem."

Akiva responded, "Yes, I was driving fast, but if you had fixed it properly, it still would not have fallen off."

This question was brought to R' Zilberstein.

Is Eldad liable for all of the damage caused to all six cars because he had not fixed the car 'as good as new'?

Or can we say that the damage was so far removed from his action that it was a 'gramah'? Or perhaps he should be exempt because the damage was partially caused by Akiva's speeding?

What do you think?

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base. The builder only put together all the components.

In contrast, when a person performs a mitzvah he becomes the base of that mitzvah. In other words, the existence of that mitzvah rests upon the one who performed it. The mitzvah actually rests upon the Jew himself. This explains "may our handiwork (the mitzvos we perform) be based upon us". The second half of this prayer is that our mitzvah should be accepted by HaShem to the extent that the mitzvah should serve as the base of HaShem.

The fulfillment of the Moshe's prayer comes when our performance of the mitzvah becomes the base of HaShem in this world and we are the base of that mitz-

vah. In other words, the Shechina is actually based upon us. We are the supporters of His Shechina!

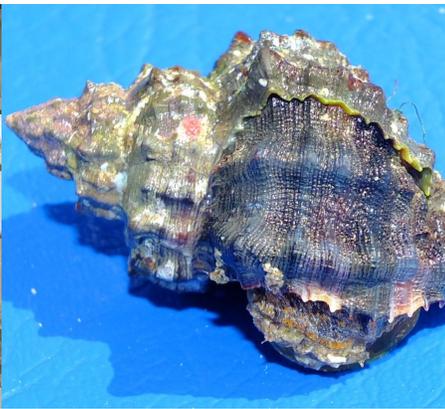
Hence, when we build the Mishkan for HaShem, the Shechina will dwell in the Mishkan and the Mishkan will be built up on us, and it is we who support the Presence of HaShem.

Let us go back to the teaching of our Sages. HaShem instructed Moshe to build a Mishkan so that HaShem will dwell among us, meaning since we are the base of the Mishkan, and the Shechina is dwelling in the Mishkan by extension the Shechina is dwelling among us.

How fitting it is that after the Bnei Yisroel completed the Mishkan Moshe blessed the people with this very verse from Tehillim 90.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE MUREX TRUNCULUS

This week's Parsha, Teruma, talks about the tcheiles, the blue color that was used to make the parts of the Mishkan, as well as the color that we have a mitzvah to place on our tzitzes. We know that the tcheiles comes from a sea creature known as the Chilazon. The Gemara (Menachos 44b) says the appearance of the body of the chilazon is like the sea, and its form is like that of a fish. The Gemara (Shabbos 26a) also says that the harvesters of the chilazon lived in the area between Tyre and Chaifa. Chaifa is near the area of Carmel. Our Sages teach that the tribe of Zevulun would harvest the Chilazon. Zevulun's plot of Eretz Yisrael was the area of Carmel.

So what is the creature called Chilazon? We do not know for sure. Rabbi Arye Kaplan in his Living Torah writes that there are at least three different opinions regarding which animal the chilazon was. It may be the Cuttlefish, which is a type of squid that emits bluish dye. This was the opinion of the Radziner Rebbe. It may be the Janthina, which is a purple sea snail. This was suggested by Rabbi Yitzchak Herzog. And finally, it may be a species of the "Purpura Snail" called the Murex Trunculus.

In more recent times, Rav Yisrael Belsky, the late Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vadaas, who wore tcheiles in his tzitzes, said that based on his research, he felt that it is Vadai, it is certain, that the chilazon was the Murex Trunculus. Whether or not one should wear tcheiles should be discussed with one's own Rav. However, let us learn a bit about some of the fascinating aspects of the candidates for the Chilazon. This week we will explore the Murex Trunculus (also known as Hexaplex trunculus).

The Murex Trunculus is a type of sea snail, also known as a rock snail. Just like a land snail is a slug that grows inside a shell, so is the Murex Trunculus. It is a slug that grows with a sea shell around it. It has a conical shell and grows to be between 1.5 inches to 4 inches long. The shell has a high spire with seven angulated whorls. This means that it looks like it is twisted seven times. When looking from the side, the shell is formed similar to the shape of a fish. (Pictured, middle.) The shell is often covered in algae, which camouflages it, making it appear very similar to the seabed. Some explain that this is what the Gemara means when it says, "the appearance of the body of this chilazon is like the sea, and its form is that of a fish." Until it is professionally polished, algae will remain on it, giving it a sea-like color. And the shape of the Murex shell is strikingly similar to the shape of a standard fish (the head, body, tail, etc.).

The Murex Trunculus lives near the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, particularly in shallow waters. Land snails are very tame, but the Murex Trunculus is a carnivorous, active predator that feeds on other snails, clams, barnacles, and sea urchins. How does the Murex Trunculus eat a clam? First, it bores a hole through the clam's shell utilizing a softening secretion. Then its radula, its rough tongue, scrapes the shell repeatedly. It then gains access to the soft parts of the clam.

The Murex Trunculus also attacks its prey in groups. They show no preference for the size of their prey, regardless of their hunger levels. Murex Trunculus will attack a clam that is even three times as large as it.

In some farmed areas of commercial clams, farmers consider

the Murex Trunculus a pest because they can cause considerable destruction to commercial beds of clams. Interestingly sea urchins can smell the chemistry of the carnivorous sea snail, and they take off at a speed of 15 centimeters per minute (nearly twice their typical leisurely pace of 8 centimeters a minute) to try to escape the Murex Trunculus.

In the Murex Trunculus, there is a glandular structure called the hypobranchial gland. This gland produces mucus as well as other biologically active compounds. Blue and purple dye was obtained from the hypobranchial gland of living specimens of Murex Trunculus. (Pictured, right. The gland is exposed and purple oozes out.)

Ancient Mediterranean cultures, including the Minoans, Canaanites/Phoenicians, and classical Greeks, created blue and purple dyes from the Murex Trunculus. Normally the dye turns purple. However, the dye will turn indigo blue, similar to the color of blue jeans, if exposed to sunlight before the dye sets. Scientists say that it took 10,000 to 12,000 shells to yield only one gram of dye.

Because of this, the dye was highly prized and prohibitively expensive. It was also known as Royal Purple, and it was only used by the highest-ranking aristocracy. In Greece, its color was tightly controlled by legislation. Only high-ranking political figures could wear Tyrian purple. In Rome, only a select few were allowed the privilege of wearing the color. Roman senators were permitted to wear a purple stripe on their togas. The emperor Nero is known to have punished those who wore certain shades of murex-based purple clothing without permission or who sold it to commoners. Part of what made murex dye so valuable was that its colors remain brilliant after a long time. For example, 2,000-year-old pieces of murex-dyed wool found in caves near the Dead Sea are still vibrant today.

Ancient texts mention that Murex Trunculus were collected directly by hand on exposed rocky coasts or by diving. The process of dye extraction was complex and time-consuming, requiring knowledge and skill. As such, the process was a closely-guarded trade secret during ancient times.

Timing is also a huge issue, as the dye begins to degrade as soon as the snail is out of the water. As such, production facilities were historically right next to where the creature was harvested.

And here is a really fascinating twist to the story. In the 1960s and 1970s, in digs at Tel Shikmona, which is on the northern coast of Eretz Yisrael, near Haifa, and the Carmel, the area where Zevulun lived, archaeologists found heaps of Murex Trunculus snail shells and dozens of pottery vessels and shreds covered with purple and blue stains. They are dated to the time of the first Beis Hamikdash. (Pictured, left. Notice the blue and purple stains on the pottery.) This seems to be evidence that people were producing a coveted dye using liquid extracted from the glands of Murex Trunculus sea snails at the site.

This is not proof that tcheiles was from the Murex Trunculus, but it is strong evidence that Murex Trunculus was used to make a purple and blue dye.

"HOW CAN WE MOVE IN THERE WHEN EVERY DAY THEY WILL SEE ME HAPPILY MARRIED AND THEY ARE STILL SINGLE"

A number of years ago a recently engaged couple from Bnei Brak were looking to buy an apartment. The apartments they saw were prohibitively expensive. One of the fathers, (I am not sure if it was the chosson's father or the kalla's, PD) found a nice apartment and the asking price was within their range.

The kallah asked what neighborhood it was in. When he told her, she then asked what the address was. Upon hearing the address she immediately rejected the idea of moving to that apartment. The father asked why she cares so much not to live in that building. The kallah explained. "I have a friend and her older sister living in that building and both are having difficulty finding their shidduch. How can we move in there when every day they will see me happily married and they are still single."

They agreed to take this question to Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt"l and he said that he cannot answer this question. Instead, he suggested that they go to Reb Aaron Leib Shteinman zt"l.

When Rav Aaron Leib heard the question he told them to buy the apartment right away and rent it out to another family until her friend and her sister get engaged. After that they can move in. He then added that in the zechus of the kallah's sensitivity the two sisters will soon become engaged.

They followed his advice and everything worked out as Reb Aaron Leib suggested.

As heard from Rabbi Paysach Krohn

Pictured: Rav Aaron Leib Shteinman, top, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, bottom.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the Kallah chair, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the chair would be considered a "Bor" a pit, and one is exempt in court for damages caused to a "Kli", or clothes. Regarding whether the planner would be liable "Midinei shomayim", Rav Zilberstein writes that first of all the Chazon Ish holds that Bor is exempt for a Kli, even midinei shomayim. And even according to those who argue, in a case where it is not normal for a chassan to sit on such a chair, or if the chair was put to the side in a way that the wedding planner thought that no one would sit on it, then the wedding planner would even be exempt midinei shomayim.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of our most incredible readers in our community, from our seniors to our elementary school children.
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