

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



BEWARE OF DOG

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion we find the story of how Rivka and Yaakov used ostensibly tricky methods in order for Yaakov to receive the blessings that he rightfully deserved. Yaakov was a paragon of truth and what he did was truthful even though on the surface it appeared to be deceitful. As we discussed in previous TableTalks the Torah allows us to deviate from the truth in certain specific cases particularly when it promotes peace.

This leads us to the following timely true story. In Baltimore recently there has been a string of armed burglaries. This occurred in my neighborhood and armed burglars demanded the keys for peoples cars.

After one such incident occurred we had a discussion with a few people in my neighborhood about what might be done to prevent



KEEP THE KITCHEN STAFF IN THE KITCHEN

This week's Parsha, Toldos, presents us the story of Yaakov's stealing the blessings that were meant for Eisov from Yitzchok. We must point out that once Yitzchok realized what transpired he immediately agreed with Yaakov that the blessings should remain with him as Yitzchok explicitly expressed that.

When Eisov discovered that Yitzchok gave the blessings to Yaakov he begged his father for another blessing to which his father told him that it was already given away. The blessing Yaakov received was that his brother shall serve him, so there is nothing left to give. Eisov begged until Yitzchok told Eisov that when Yaakov fails to live up to his mission and will fall from his position, then you will reign supreme. But when Yaakov reigns you will be irrelevant. From this conversation our Sages teach us that never will Jerusalem and Rome (the capital of Eisov) share positions of world leadership. When Yaakov is supreme Eisov is reduced and vice versa.

With respect to Yishmael and Yitzchok we find a similar pattern. Both are sons of Avraham; Yitzchok is chosen to be the progenitor of the Jewish people and Yishmael is sent away. However, we do not find that Yishmael is rendered irrelevant compared to Yitzchok. Avraham gave Yishmael and his other sons gifts and sent them away. He separated them from Yitzchok. Why is Eisov's existence diminished next to Yaakov and Yishmael maintains his existence next to Yitzchok?

The Vilna Goan identifies two types of yeitzer hara (proclivity to do evil). The first type is the base desire to indulge in material pleasures. When Man follows this

this in the future.

One person suggested that perhaps we can each place a large sign in front of our homes saying "beware of guard dog" with a picture of a vicious dog. Perhaps if the burglars know that there is a guard dog watching, the burglars would go elsewhere.

On one hand it sounds like a very good idea, and it might help to keep us safe.

On the other hand, however, there are the following considerations.

If we were to give the impression that there was a guard dog on our block it would keep innocent people away out of fear of a non-existent dog.

Perhaps it would be bad chinuch, (education) for the young children to know that even though there was no dog we give the impression that there is one. They might not be mature enough to understand that you are allowed to be misleading in certain cases.

But on the other hand, maybe these drawbacks are trumped by the benefit of protecting the neighborhood.

What do you think? Is it OK to have a "beware of dog" sign when there really is no guard dog?

MITZVA MEME



*Let your smile
change the world*

*But don't let the world
change your smile*



yeitzer hara he abandons his higher calling and is pulled by his lower physical being. The second yeitzer hara actually uses his higher calling. He stands for honor, pride, justice and other noble causes but they are out of their appropriate context. While it is noble to display anger against one who disrespects HaShem it is horrible to display anger against someone who cuts you off while driving. The second yeitzer hara takes Man's higher calling and misdirects it.

Material pleasures are not evil in their own right. In fact, without them the world would not operate. People would not eat, would not have families and so on. The material world and the pleasures it offers are critical for the running of the world. The evil of indulgence comes when the material world becomes the *raison d'etre* for living. Without the kitchen staff the army could not fight. However, if the kitchen staff would be the ones to decide strategy, the war is lost. The general must decide the

strategy and the kitchen staff must remain purely ancillary. Yishmael represented the first type of yeitzer hara. He was therefore not rendered irrelevant, he was only separated from the position of leadership so that Yitzchok would maintain the proper parameters for material involvement.

The second type of yeitzer hara engages the higher calling of Man. The evil of this yeitzer hara is that it misdirects Man's noble qualities from serving HaShem and others to serving oneself and one's personal interests. There is never a place for this yeitzer hara; it takes Man's greatness and corrupts it. Eisov who represents this yeitzer hara is therefore rendered irrelevant in the face of Yaakov. Rome and Jerusalem cannot both reign. Either Man is directed Heavenward and uses his calling to serve HaShem and others or he is directed downward towards himself. Using the military parallel, the second yeitzer hara misdirects the troops to fight their allies instead of their enemies. There can never be a place for Eisov.

May we see the day that every Jew along with the entire world recognizes our mission and Eisov is no longer relevant.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

SAILING STONES

Racetrack Playa, a large, flat, dried-up lake in Death Valley National Park, California, is home to a fascinating and mysterious phenomena. Littered across the surface of this dry lake are hundreds of rocks, some weighing as much as 700 pounds, that seem to have been dragged across the ground, leaving synchronized trails that can stretch for hundreds of feet. What powerful force could be moving the rocks? Researchers have investigated this question since the 1940's. In recent years, as time lapse cameras have become cheaper, scientists have photographed and observed this wondrous occurrence. Sailing stones are part of the geological phenomenon in which rocks move and make long tracks along a smooth valley floor without the help of animals. For a very long time this remained a mystery.

Trails of sliding rocks have been observed and studied in various other locations too, including Little Bonnie Claire Playa, in Nevada.

The Racetrack's stones are scattered across the playa floor, mostly in the southern portion. Most of the stones are found relatively close to where they originally came from, but some have been found as far as 300 feet from shore. The rocks tumble down due to the forces of erosion, coming to rest on the parched ground below. Tracks are often up to 330 ft long, about 3 to 12 inches wide, and typically much less than 1 inch deep. Most moving stones range from about 6 to 18 inches in diameter.

Stones with rough bottoms leave straight striated tracks, while those with smooth bottoms tend to wander. Stones sometimes turn over, exposing another edge to the ground and leaving a different track in the stone's wake.

Trails differ in both direction and length. Rocks that start next to each other may travel parallel for a while, before one abruptly changes direction to the left, right, or even back to the direction it came from. Trail lengths can also vary. Two similarly sized and shaped rocks may travel uniformly, then one could move ahead or stop in its track.

In recent years the mystery was solved. In December 2013, scientists arrived in Death Valley to discover that the playa was covered with a pond of water three

inches deep. Shortly after, the rocks began moving.

They had expected to wait five or ten years without anything moving, but only two years into the project, they saw it happen.

Their observations show that moving the rocks requires a rare combination of events. First, the playa fills with water, which must be deep enough to form floating ice during cold winter nights but shallow enough to expose the rocks. As nighttime temperatures plummet, the pond freezes to form thin sheets of "windowpane" ice, which must be thin enough to move freely but thick enough to maintain strength. On sunny days, the ice begins to melt and break up into large floating panels, which light winds drive across the playa, pushing rocks in front of them and leaving trails in the soft mud below the surface.

On Dec. 21, 2013, the ice started to break up, with popping and cracking sounds coming from all over the frozen pond surface.

These observations upended previous theories that had proposed hurricane-force winds, dust devils, slick algal films, or thick sheets of ice as likely contributors to rock motion. Instead, rocks moved under light winds of about 10 miles per hour and were driven by ice less than 0.25 inches thick, a measure too thin to grip large rocks and lift them off the playa, which several papers had proposed as a mechanism to reduce friction. The rocks moved a few inches per second, a speed that is almost imperceptible when observed from a distance without stationary reference points.

Individual rocks remained in motion for anywhere from a few seconds to 16 minutes. In one event, the researchers observed rocks three football fields apart began moving simultaneously and traveled over 200 feet before stopping. Rocks often moved multiple times before reaching their final resting place. The researchers also observed rock-less trails formed by grounding ice panels – features that the Park Service had previously suspected were the result of tourists stealing rocks.

IF I DO NOT FINISH WRITING THE TESHUVA, WHO WILL TAKE PITY ON THIS WOMAN AND RELEASE HER FROM HER LONELINESS?

The heroine of our Parsha is Rivka as she protected the brachos from falling into the hands of Eisov. The following are several illustrations to appreciate our commitment to the women of our people.

A meeting with prominent mechanchim was once held in the home of Rav Shlomo Freifeld. Rav Freifeld began his address by saying, "I hope nobody minds if my Rebbetzin joins us. She is a college dean and understands these things extremely well." He called into the kitchen, "Rebbetzin, we are waiting for you."

Rav Freifeld would often speak of his respect for the wives of his talmidim. One evening, he was speaking to a group of young married talmidim in his home. His married daughter lived with him at the time. Her baby began to cry uncontrollably. Some of the talmidim grew nervous at the loud interruption. But Reb Shlomo simply shook his head in wonder. He then placed his hand above his head. "To me, a woman with small children is on a pedestal that starts here."

Rav Ovadia Yosef was not feeling well one day. Rav David and R' Aryeh Deri took him to the hospital to be examined. The doctors determined that he had suffered a heart attack, and they told him that he needed an emergency stent procedure to open his arteries.

"I need to go home for three hours," Harav Ovadia replied. "I will then return for the procedure." Rav David and R' Aryeh were concerned that the delay would be dangerous, and they tried to dissuade him from leaving the hospital. "Why does the Rav need three hours before the surgery?" R' Aryeh asked. Harav Ovadia explained, "I am not sure I will come out of this procedure alive, and I am in the middle of writing a teshuva to free an agunah. If I do not finish writing the teshuva, who will take pity on this woman and release her from her loneliness?" They brought him home, and he finished writing the teshuva permitting the agunah to remarry. Only then did he return to the hospital for the lifesaving procedure.

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Rav Shlomo Freifeld



Rav Ovadia Yosef

THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question of whether it is permitted to take the money from the bag of the thief, Rav Zilberstien wrote that it appears that he cannot take the money, because until the son gets the bag, the bag is still the property of the father, not the son.

This week's issue of TableTalk is dedicated to our dear cousins

Zipporah Freedman and family

Paysach Diskind and family

By Yale and Betty Zukerman

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