



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



NAZI HUNTER

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses how Yaakov prepared for battle with Esav and his army. The Torah writes that Yaakov was "afraid and was distressed" (Bereishis 32,8). Our Sages teach that Yaakov was afraid that he might be killed and he was distressed that he might have to kill others.

This leads us to the following story that relates to the children of Esav. This story has a similar theme to the questions from the last two weeks about how we should prioritize our giving, although this has a much "darker" tone.

Immediately after the war, a Jew from Lithuania who we will call Elliot, approached Rav Ephraim Oshry, a survivor of the Kovno Ghetto with the following question. During the Holocaust he had witnessed his entire family murdered by the Lithuanian watchman of his apartment. Now, after the war, he had heard reports that this murderer was on the run and was hiding in the city of Marijampolė in the south of Lithuania.



CHAIN OF COMMAND

Adapted from Rabbi Aaron Lopiansky's talk

In this week's Parsha, Vayishlach, we find Yaakov having to wrestle with the angel of Eisov. The struggle lasts the entire night until the angel sees that he is unable to bring down Yaakov. In one final effort the angel succeeds in dislocating Yaakov's thighbone. Although, Yaakov is recognized as the victor, he nevertheless suffers injury. What is the significance of this story and how is it relevant to us?

Our Sages teach us that the human body is divided into three parts. The first is the head which is directed by the mind, the second is the upper torso which is directed by the heart and the remainder of the body which is directed by the liver.

Each part has its role. The head, under the direction of the mind, analyzes, recognizes and decides how to deal with relationships and situations. The heart internalizes those decisions and understandings and executes them. It is for this reason that the heart is the control center of feelings, passion and drive implementing what the mind decides. The role of the lower segment is just to take care of the logistics. It should have no input at all in terms of decision making or execution.

Let us take a football team as a parallel. The owner/general manager make the decisions. The coach and the players implement those decisions. The secretaries and office staff handle the office work making sure everything runs smoothly. If these roles are mixed up the organization will suffer. Imagine if the office staff would carry influence with the general manager in his decision making. Similarly, we do not want the lower body to influence the heart and the mind in their decisions. We want that they simply take orders and carry out what the mind decides and what the heart executes.

At that time Simon Wiesenthal and around 30 associates established the Jewish Historical Documentation Centre in Austria. Its purpose was to track down Nazis and bring them to justice. Ultimately their efforts helped uncover more than 1000 Nazi war criminals. They were also instrumental, along with the Mossad, in finding Adolph Eichman and bringing him to justice.

Elliot had some money saved up and wanted to know if he should give his money to help Simon Wiesenthal or one of his associates to track down the watchman and make sure that he would be brought to justice.

On the other hand, perhaps he should keep the money for himself, to get married or to pay for the Jewish education of his children.

He also asked this question in general. Should the surviving Jews be spending money to identify and pursue the murderers? On one hand bringing the Nazis to justice will send a strong statement to the world that Jewish blood is not cheap. We cannot be killed with impunity.

But on the other hand, should the community of survivors worry that perhaps supporting Nazi hunters would cause a backlash of hatred and danger toward the surviving Jews in Europe? Furthermore, perhaps the community should spend its money for causes like chinuch, teaching Torah, and helping people to start families?

What would you tell this man? Should a Jew become a Nazi hunter? Should the money be prioritized for other Torah causes?

See Shailos V'Teshuvos Mimamakim Part 4, Chapter 14

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



Growth begins when we start to accept where we fall short.



Our Fathers, Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov correspond to these three parts respectively. Avraham is identified as the great philosopher who through his searching discovered the Ribino Shel Olom. Avraham gave direction to our people based on his understanding and his relationship with HaShem. Yitzchok who represents avoda, actually served HaShem with his entire being corresponds to the heart. Finally, Yaakov who implements that which Avraham and Yitzchok generated corresponds to the lower part. With Yaakov the Jewish people should have acquired an imbedded nature to carry out the mission of our people as a second nature. Just like the liver secretes the necessary bile as the food enters the digestive system without deviating from its job, so too, our people should automatically carry out the mission of our people with no deviation.

Unfortunately, history has shown that we do not always carry out our mission as intended. There are times when we seem to behave like the office staff who fall out of their role.

The reason for this shortfall was the encounter with the angel of Eisov. Initially the angel attempted to topple Yaakov entirely but was unsuccessful. Yaakov remained steadfast in his understanding and relationship of HaShem, in his commitment to serve HaShem and in his role of implementing all of the above. As the night was coming to a close the angel successfully disjointed Yaakov's thighbone. The result of this was that now Yaakov's feet did not automatically go in the direction that they were programmed. Now the direction of Yaakov required special attention with each and every step. Although Yaakov remained steadfast in his commitment he was nevertheless vulnerable with every step he made.

So often we hear inspiring speeches or experience inspiring trips which move us to alter our ways. Within a short time, however, we find lose that inspiration and fall back on old habits. We may vividly remember what we experienced, nevertheless, our feet drag along and do not seem willing to carry out what we learnt and what we felt. This was the impact Eisov's angel had on Yaakov. Our thighbone was somewhat dislocated and we must therefore struggle consciously to move our feet forward.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



Pictured: (clockwise from top right) Dolphin looking at itself in the mirror, A military dolphin, A pod of dolphins, dolphins porpoising, more dolphins porpoising, a dolphin with a sea sponge affixed to its snout to protect it

SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE DOLPHIN

In the past weeks we learned about some very intelligent animals. Lets now turn to another uniquely intelligent animal, the dolphin. Dolphins are often regarded as one of Earth's most intelligent animals.

Dolphins range in size from 5.6 ft long and 110 lb to as much as 31 ft and 20,000 lbs. In some species the females are larger than the males. Dolphins can travel at speeds of 34 mph.

Dolphins feed largely on fish and squid. But the Killer Whale or Orca, (which is actually not a whale but one of the largest species of dolphins) feed on large mammals like seals.

One common feeding method they use is called corralling. This is where dolphins chase fish into shallow water to catch them more easily. Dolphins also can drive their prey onto a beach to feed on it, called beach feeding. Some dolphins also whack fish with their flukes (each half of a tail), stunning them and sometimes knocking them out of the water.

Dolphins can be seen frequently leaping above the water surface, which is called porpoising. Why do they do this? Several reasons: 1) When travelling, jumping can save the dolphin energy as there is less friction while in the air 2) It's a form of non-verbal communication 3) for entertainment and 4) in an attempt to dislodge parasites.

Dolphins produce a variety of vocalizations in the form of clicks and whistles. They send out high frequency clicks from a special organ known as a 'melon'. This melon consists of fat, and it rests in a large depression in the skull. The clicks that it makes are amongst the loudest sounds made by any other marine animal.

We learned how Yaakov didn't sleep for 14 years. The Indus river dolphin has a sleep method that is different from that of other dolphin species. Because it lives in water with strong currents and potentially dangerous floating debris, it must swim continuously to avoid injury. As a result, this species sleeps in very short bursts which last between 4 and 60 seconds. Imagine only taking a nap for 4 seconds at a time.

A group of dolphins is called a "pod". In places with a high abundance of food, individual pods can merge, forming a 'superpod'; such groupings may exceed 1,000 dolphins. Dolphins establish strong social bonds; they will stay with injured or ill individuals, even helping them to breathe by bringing them to the surface if needed. In fact, (unlike the Chasida), this altruism does not appear to be limited to

their own species. Dolphins have been observed guiding a female pygmy sperm whale together with her calf out of shallow water where they had been stranded several times. They have even used this altruism to help people. They have been seen protecting swimmers from sharks by swimming circles around the swimmers or charging the sharks to make them go away. Some dolphins can survive shark attacks by using sophisticated combat moves as well as teaming up against a shark.

This notwithstanding, dolphins can engage in acts of aggression towards each other. The older a male dolphin is, the more likely his body will be covered with bite scars. Male dolphins get into disputes over companions and females. Acts of aggression can become so intense that targeted dolphins sometimes go into exile after losing a fight.

Let's explore some of the intelligence that the dolphin displays. Bottlenose dolphins teach their young to use tools. They teach them to cover their snouts with sea sponges to protect them while foraging among sharp plants. Interestingly, this knowledge is mostly passed from mothers to daughters, unlike with monkeys, where knowledge is generally passed on to both genders.

Bottlenose dolphins have been found to have signature whistles, a whistle that is unique to a specific individual. It can be seen as the dolphin equivalent of a name for humans. Bottlenose dolphins have a strong memory when it comes to these signature whistles, and they are able to relate to a signature whistle of an individual they have not encountered for over twenty years. Imagine being able to remember the name of someone you saw twenty years ago!

The most widely used test for self-awareness in animals is the mirror test, in which a temporary dye is placed on an animal's body, and the animal is then presented with a mirror. Dolphins are able to recognize themselves in the mirror!

The ancient Roman author Pliny the Elder wrote about how humans and dolphins cooperate to fish together. In fact this still occurs today in Brazil. Dolphins drive fish towards fishermen waiting along the shore and signal the men to cast their nets. The dolphins' reward is the fish that escape the nets. This cooperation continues today in the military arena. The United States Navy implemented a program to work with dolphins in order to help with defense, and mine detection. The bottlenose dolphins prized asset was their highly sophisticated biosonar, which can help the Navy to find underwater mines.

Thank you Hashem for showing us Your wisdom!

THE PASHUT PSHAT OF THE PASUK IS REFERRING TO YOU

When we think about the prohibition against murder, we often think that it will never apply to us. However we should realize that it can be more relevant than we expect. Particularly when dealing with end of life issues, we must be in touch with a competent Rav or posek to make sure that we don't inadvertently make a decision to end someone's life before they leave this world.

Here is a powerful anecdote that gives more context to this question.

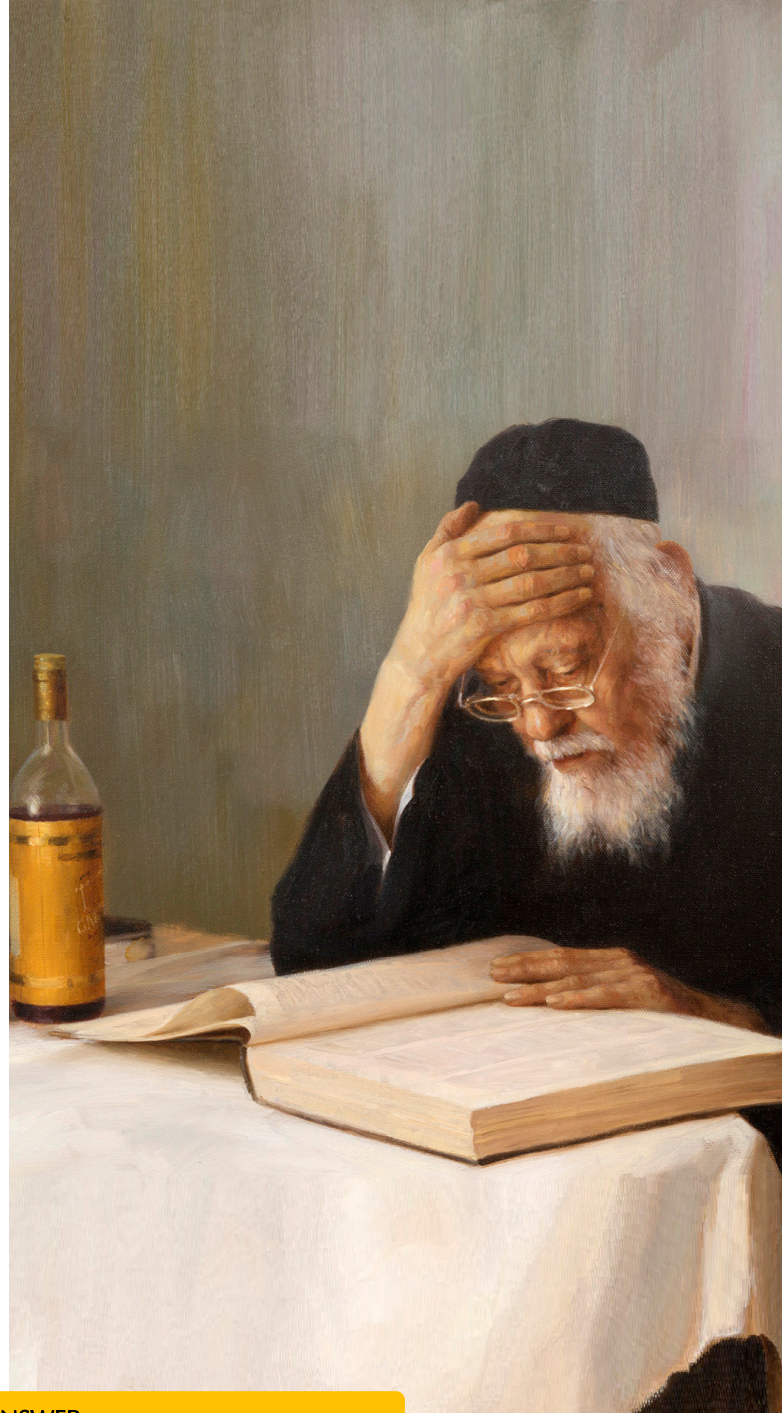
Once, an outstanding talmid chacham, who possessed tremendous yiras Shamayim, was stricken with an unbearable and painful illness. Rav Elyashiv came to visit him. The talmid chacham expressed the feeling that he was disgusted with living and did not want to continue like this.

Rav Elyashiv replied, "The Torah states, u'bacharta bachayim, you shall choose life. Many explanations have been given for this verse, because it is difficult to understand why the Torah has to give such a commandment. Every person wants to live! Is there anyone who would choose death?"

"The pashut pshat of the pasuk, (the simple explanation of the verse,)" continued Rav Elyashiv, "is that the Torah is referring to a person like you, who is suffering terrible pain and has reached a state in which he would be fed up with his life. The Torah commands us "u'bacharta bachaim"!.

Because the Torah has given us this commandment, every person has a great mitzvah to choose life, and not give up on continuing to live.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of which would take precedence, binding gemaras or repairing a Sefer Torah, Rav Zilberstein answered that the gemaras that will be used daily should take priority. He even says that in a hypothetical case where there is only enough money for a sefer torah or halacha sefarim, it seems that practical halacha sefarim would take precedence.

May the enhancement to the kedusha of Shabbos

brought about by this issue of TableTalk

be a zechus for a refuah shleima to Moshe ben Rachel

among all the other cholei Yisroel.

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