



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



ALERTING THE KANA'IM

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion, Vayeilech, discusses the mitzvah of Hakhel. Hakhel was a mitzvah that was done every seven years to gather the entire Jewish people in one assembly to hear Torah taught. The gathering was a great unified expression of respect for the Torah.

This leads us to the following true story.

In Eretz Yisrael, there was once a Chief Rabbi who was a great gadol and talmid chacham. However within a circle of kana'im, (zealots) this Gadol was seen as controversial.

Unfortunately, whenever the kana'im



RETUNING OR RETURNING?

We currently find ourselves in the Ten Days of Teshuva which begins with Rosh Hashanah and concludes with Yom Kippur. Last week we used the analogy of the orchestra to address the theme of Rosh Hashanah as being the day on which we commit ourselves or perhaps recommit ourselves to the direction of HaShem as our conductor. With our commitment to Him, the Conductor is able to realize His vision and all the members of the orchestra together share in the creation of that vision.

Now the question is how does Teshuva/Repentance fit into this analogy? Yom Kippur is the day on which HaShem grants atonement but does that fit into our picture? What is the purpose of atonement in our role as the musicians of His orchestra?

To appreciate the value of atonement it is necessary to understand the handicap which sin creates. Aside from the consequences of sin which makes life in this world and in the next world very unpleasant, there is yet another serious consequence. Sin creates a separation between us and HaShem. We can identify two parts of every Jewish neshama. There is the inner core which has so much kedusha that it can never be tarnished by our actions, words or thoughts. Over the core there is the outer part which is subject to the contamination caused by deeds we do, words we say and thoughts we think. When that occurs the inner core of our neshama becomes covered with pollution and its sensitivity to HaShem and His messages becomes obscured.

The only way for the musician to properly play his role and accomplish his mission

would see the Chief Rabbi, they would shout at him. The gadol did not mind.

One day the Chief Rabbi walked into a beis medrash to learn. The Rabbi had many students and admirers in the room. However some of the kana'im were also present in the beis medrash.

A group of his students saw the Chief Rabbi and wanted to stand up for him. But the students had the following question among themselves.

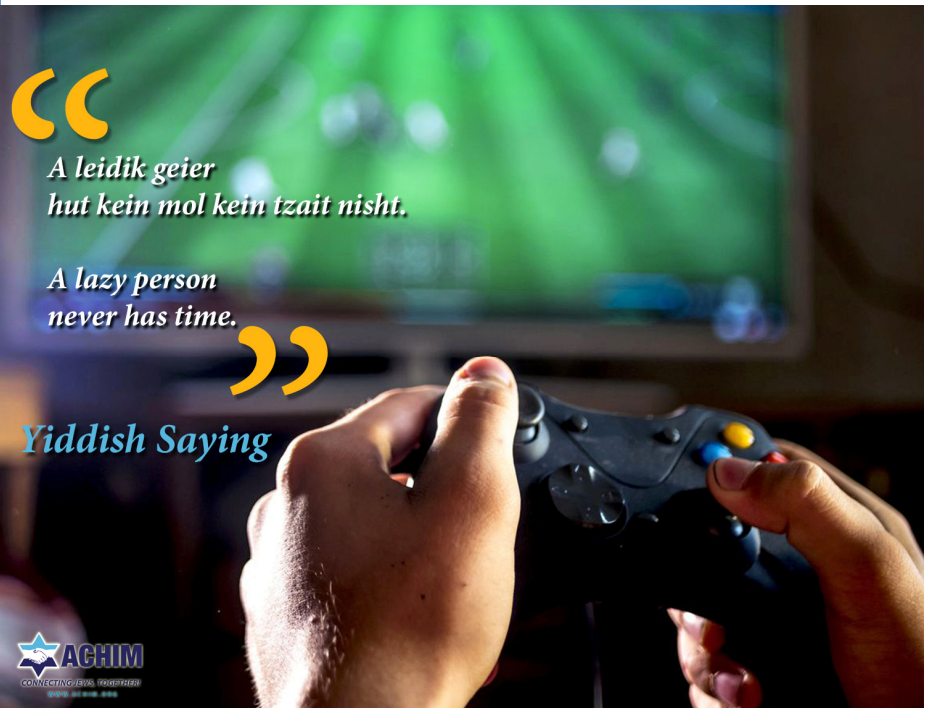
If they all stand up to honor him, the kana'im will notice him and will shout at him. If no one stands up the the kana'im may not notice him.

They wondered how to show their respect for the Rabbi. On one hand, to stand up would cause the kana'im to embarrass him, but not standing up for him was in itself a disgrace to him. They brought this question to Rav Zilberstein.

What do you think?

See Chashukei Chemed Yoma page 355

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



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*A leidik geier
hut kein mol kein tzait nisht.*

*A lazy person
never has time.*”

Yiddish Saying



is only when there is clear communication between him and his conductor. Even when the conductor understands the musician and recognizes his strengths and challenges and directs him accordingly, his effectiveness will only be as good as the perception of the musician. If the musician is not heeding his directions he will fail. Even if the musician is doing his best to pay attention to the conductor, nevertheless, if the musician's eyesight is distorted he will not be able to achieve his role. It is therefore of paramount importance that the outer part of his neshama be purified and any pollution that distorts the connection between Man and HaShem be cleared. This is accomplished through the teshuva process and finally on Yom Kippur the cleansing is done.

This depicts the analogy of the Ten Days of Repentance. However, when we talk about what it is in real terms it is so much

more. HaShem, the Creator of the Universe, is personally interested in the welfare of every member of His people. He wants so badly to have a positive relationship with every member of His people. He, so to speak, needs the participation of every Jew to achieve His vision.

The gift of free-will which He bestowed upon every person is unfortunately abused and many individuals use it to drift away from Him. The bad choices Man makes create chains which weigh him down and his neshama cannot achieve what it wishes to. In spite of HaShem's infinite power, He never takes away Man's free-will and He must wait for Man to come back on his own. Nevertheless, He did create these Ten Days of Repentance during which teshuva is more accessible and HaShem is more accessible so that Man can more easily return back to HaShem.

How fortunate we are that we are given the opportunity to clear the clutter and reopen our sensitivity to His messages. I guess it is like having the opportuning of retuning our most sensitive musical instruments.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and successful Yom Kippur.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE POLAR BEAR

Polar bears are the largest land carnivores in existence. Current estimates put the global population of Polar bears at between 20,000 and 31,000 bears.

A polar bear's preferred habitat is the annual sea ice covering the waters over the continental shelf of the Arctic. The polar bear tends to frequent areas where sea ice meets water, to hunt the seals that make up most of its diet.

Because the polar bear lives on ice, it has special coarse pads of fur on its feet to keep them from freezing as it walks on the ice. These pads also protect it slipping.

Adult male polar bears weigh between 770–1,545 lbs and measure 7 – 9 ft in total length. Yet despite being nine feet and weighing 1,000 pounds, the polar bear can easily run up to 25 miles per hour on ice.

Diving into the ocean, the polar bear swims in water that is extremely frigid. Because it contains salt, ocean water does not solidify into ice until it is 26F. So it is very cold water! Yet despite the cold, the bear has no difficulty maintaining a body temperature of 99F.

How does it stay so warm in such cold water? First it has excellent fur. In addition, it has a layer of fat inside that is 4 inches thick! The fur and fat keeps all its body warmth trapped in its body. Interestingly, because it is so well insulated and little heat radiates from its body, it is nearly invisible under infrared photography.

Not only does its fat keeps it warm, but it also helps its 1,000 pounds to stay afloat. The polar bear is an excellent swimmer and will often swim for days. One bear swam continuously for 9 days in the frigid Bering Sea for 400 miles to reach ice far from land. Polar bears can swim at speeds of 6 mph.

This fat helps them in another way. Unlike brown and black bears, polar bears do not 'hibernate' any time of the year. They are capable of fasting for up to several months during late summer and early fall, when they cannot hunt for seals because the sea is unfrozen. When sea ice is unavailable they can live off fat reserves for months at a time. And in the summer they do not need the fat to protect them from the cold.

Thank you Hashem for showing us your wisdom!

YOU ARE IMPORTANT AND WE MISS YOU

Hakhel reminds us that it is so important to be a part of a Kehilla, part of a community. It is also so important that every person in the Kehilla feels that they are valued; that they make a difference and would be missed if they were away. Here are two sweet anecdotes that illustrate this idea.

Beis HaTalmud in Kelm had perfected the trait of welcoming others cheerfully. They made a science of it, with clearly outlined principles which were applied throughout the year. All guests were received with an outstretched hand, a hearty "Shalom Aleichem," and friendly conversation.

Reb Moshe Rosenstein, learned in Beis Hatalmud in Kelm and went on to become a mussar director of the Lomza Yeshiva. He described his first visit to Beis HaTalmud as a bachur.

When he entered the hall, a young man approached him, hand outstretched, face radiant and a smile on his lips. The young man inquired about his welfare, when he had arrived, and whether he had already found accommodations for eating and sleeping. He was so friendly that Reb Moshe assumed that he was an old friend of his, who for some reason he did not recognize.

A moment later, another young man approached him, smiling so warmly that he seemed also to have been his childhood friend. He too inquired about him, his apartment and all his needs. Reb Moshe began to feel frustrated that his memory had failed him once again. How could he not remember two of his childhood friends?

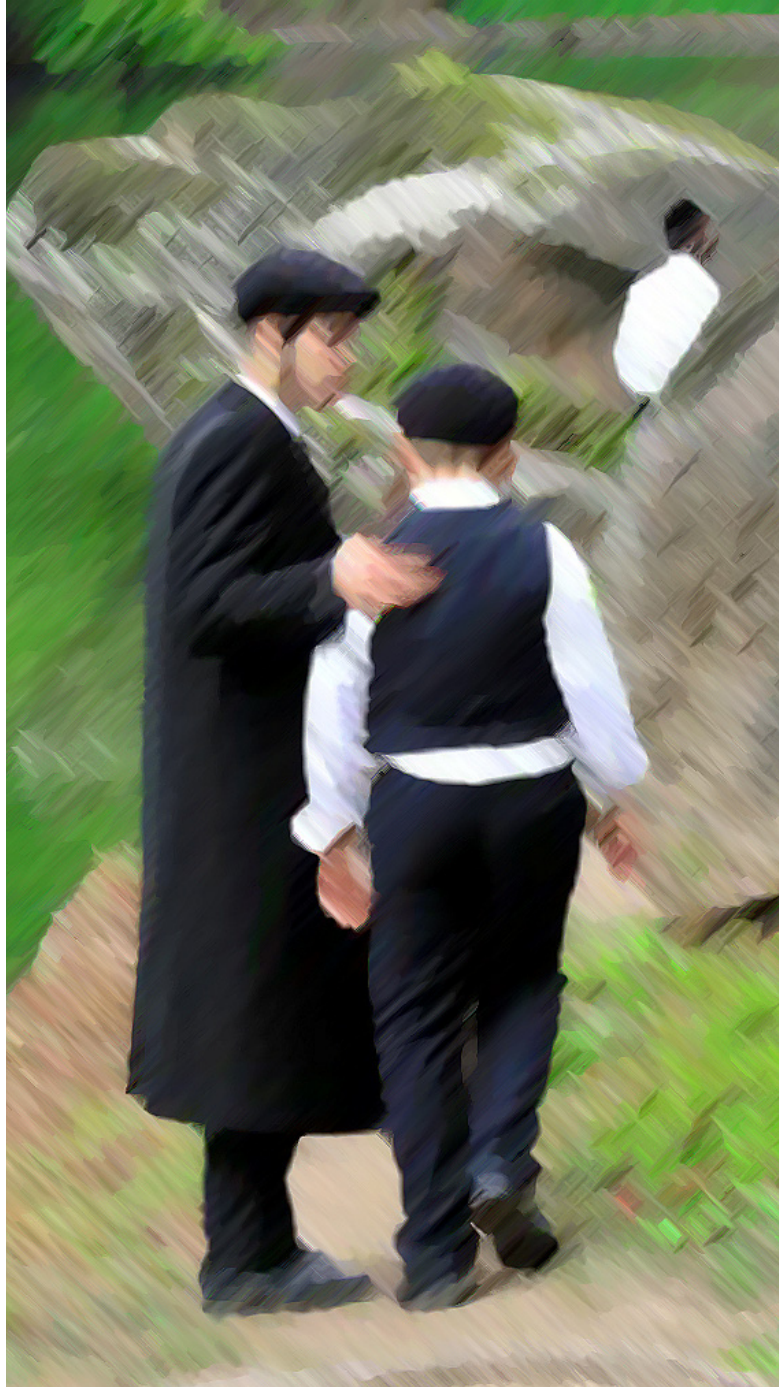
It was only after nearly every single talmid of Beis HaTalmud had greeted Reb Moshe in the same fashion with the same enthusiasm, that he realized that this type of greeting was the custom in Kelm.

Here is a more modern example. A bachur at Reb Leizer Geldzahler's yeshiva was sick at home. Reb Leizer called to ask him how he was feeling. The Rosh Yeshiva learned that no bachurim had called. That night, Reb Leizer delivered a shmuess. In the shmuess he asked how it could be that a bachur was away because he was sick and none of his friends had thought to call or visit.

"Just imagine," the Rosh Yeshiva said, "if you prepare to go to sleep and there are no linens on your bed, or if you wake up in the morning and your shoes are missing. You will react right away, notice it, and take action. Why? Because it's important to you.

A bachur from yeshivah who is missing should be no less important to you than your own comforts!" The surprised bachur received twenty phone calls within the next half hour.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of the water bottles, Rav Zilberstien answered that the water can't be taken, because it will create goodwill towards the ones offering it.

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