



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE SHUL PLEDGE SALE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion makes reference to the prohibition of lying. The Parsha writes that Yaakov did not believe his sons that Yosef was still alive (Bereishis 45,26). This was because they told Yaakov earlier that Yosef was dead. Our Sages comment (Avos D' Rav Nossen 30,4) that this is the punishment of one who was caught lying; they are not believed even when they tell the truth.

This leads us to the following true story. Chaim was the gabbai of a large shul. He was privy to the shul's financial situation and was made aware that the shul was in dire need of funds and was unable to make its next major payment. It was really a problem of cash flow. There were many pledges that were made over the course of the year, pledges for aliyos and the like, and many of the people did not yet fulfill them. It seemed that there was an excess of \$10,000 in unredeemed pledges. If all those people would somehow honor their pledges, the shul would be in healthier financial shape.

Chaim had an idea. That Friday night, when the shul was full and they were about to start Maariv, Chaim went up to the bimah and made an announcement.

"Rabbosai, the shul will be having a once in a life-



THE SEED VAULT OF OUR PEOPLE

Excerpted from a talk from Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky zt'l

In the last 13 verses of our Parsha, Vayigosh, the Torah relates specific details regarding the manner in which Yosef managed the distribution of the food during the famine. It warrants investigation why should the Torah tell us of these details. There seems to be no relevance to the story of our people. Furthermore, if the Torah felt it was important why did she not mention these details in last week's Parsha at the beginning of the famine, which would be its place chronologically.

As we look at our existence in Egypt where we were enslaved under the worst conditions we must ask how did we survive and not become totally absorbed into Egyptian culture during those 210 years? Our Sages teach us that the tribe of Levi held the seeds of our nationhood through their study of Torah. Since they were not subjected to the slavery that the rest of our people were subjected to, they were able to establish institutions of learning through which they nourished their brothers with strength and encouragement. They held the seeds of survival.

But the question is how did it occur that Levi not be subjected to slavery. How was his tribe spared? The answer lies in these last verses found at the end of our Parsha.

These verses contain the insight as to how the Jewish slavery began. They also contain the secret as to how Yosef engineered that Levi and his tribe not be subjected. The Torah tells us that during the first two years of the devastating famine all Egyptians gave up their property, their land and even their own autonomy. The entire population of Egypt were indentured servants of Pharaoh. Everything they produced

MITZVA MEME

time sale". That got everyone's attention. "The shul is in dire need of funds. Anyone who gives in their pledge by this Tuesday can take 20 percent off their pledge. For example, if someone pledged 100 dollars, he can fulfill his pledge with just 80 dollars."

The "pledge sale" caused quite a stir. Sure enough before that Tuesday the shul received an excess of 8000 dollars in unredeemed pledges.

Chaim felt proud of himself. In the past when he went up and made an urgent appeal for shul funds, he did not get such an enthusiastic response. In his eyes the campaign was a great success.

A few days later Chaim was approached by a few members of the shul, who had the following question. "Chaim, we have no doubt you made your sale with the best of intentions. We are also grateful that the campaign was so successful.

But we are not sure if you are allowed to offer a sale on shul pledges. A pledge is between the one who made the pledge and HaShem. If you give them a discount, they still have a mitzvah to keep their pledge. It wasn't as if they bought something that can be forgiven by the seller. If a person makes a pledge to give 100 dollars to tzedakah, another person can't come and say he can deduct from his pledge."

In addition, they claimed, "Although you are a shul officer and a shul employee, you don't have the right to forgive such a large amount of money that belongs to the shul collectively. It is not your money to forgive."

But Chaim felt that offering the discount was better than not getting much of the money at all. That is what would happen if the status quo would have been kept.

What do you think? Did Chaim have the right to offer "a sale", a discount on the shul pledges?

See Hebrew Veharev Na Volume Two page 178

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



belonged to the king and they were allowed to keep 80% of their yield for themselves and 20% went to Pharaoh. We know that once Yaakov came to Egypt the famine stopped for the duration of his life. Upon his death the five remaining years came back. Yosef also lost his power as with the passing of Yaakov as is indicated by how difficult it was for him to get permission to bury his father in Canaan.

Once the five years of intense famine returned, with the passing of Yaakov, the Egyptians who conceded their property, their land and their self to Pharaoh were cared for by the State. However, who was going to provide the food necessary to sustain the family of Yaakov. With Yosef's loss of power who would care for them? They never contributed to the coffers of Pharaoh. Hence, the State as well as the citizenry demanded that the family of Yosef become slaves to the people if they expected to be fed.

As we read this last segment we note that there was a law which Yosef reinforced which entitled the priests of the nation with food stipends from the State. We are told that the priests never had to concede their property to Pharaoh because they were supported by the State. With Yosef reinforcing that law, Levi and his tribe were entitled to be cared for by the State and were therefore not required to become enslaved with the rest of our nation.

With the end of our Parsha, the story of our 210 years of Egyptian exile is set in place. Perhaps this segment was placed at the end of our Parsha to teach us that the root of our survival was set in place before it began.

Throughout our long and enduring history we always find the halls of Torah study are at the core of our existence and survival. It is interesting to note that by and large, the American cities that had institutions of Torah study became centers of Jewish populations and those cities that did not have such institutions evaporated and are no longer included among the strong Jewish communities.

It is no wonder that the heroes of Chanukah were the Kohanim from tribe of Levi. They are the seed vault of our nation .

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE GENTLE GIANT

Last week, in honor of Chanukah, we explored elephants from the perspective of the miracle of Chanukah. Let's now briefly explore some of the fascinating aspects of these normally very gentle creatures.

Elephants are the largest living terrestrial animals. African bush elephants are the largest species, with males being 11ft tall at the shoulder with a body mass of up to nearly 7 tons. That is close to 14,000 pounds! Scientists estimate that there are around 440,000 elephants living today. The heart of an elephant can weigh up to 46 pounds. A human pregnancy takes 9 months. How long does pregnancy last for an elephant? It typically lasts around two years! Baby elephants, called calves, are born weighing 260 pounds! An elephant's skin is generally very tough, and can be 1 inch thick in many places. The large size of an adult elephant makes it nearly invulnerable to predators. Spotted hyenas, wild dogs and lions instead choose to hunt baby elephants. Elephants can live up to 70 years in the wild. Elephants typically coexist peacefully with other herbivores, which will usually stay out of their way. However there are some recorded aggressive interactions between elephants and rhinoceroses, where elephants have killed the rhinos. Despite their enormous size elephants are capable swimmers. They have been recorded swimming for up to six hours without touching the bottom, and have travelled as far as 30 miles at a stretch and at speeds of up to 1 mph.

The trunk, also called a proboscis, is used for many functions. It is used for breathing, smelling, bringing food and water to the mouth, grasping objects, touching, and sound production. It is made of 150,000 separate muscles with no bone and little fat. Because of its trunk, its sense of smell may be four times as sensitive as that of a bloodhound. The current record for how much a human can lift over head is around 580 pounds. How much can an elephant lift with just its trunk? It can lift up to 770 pounds. It can use its powerful trunk to wrestle with other elephants. But at the same time, this powerful trunk can be used for delicate tasks, such as wiping an eye, and is capable of cracking a peanut shell without breaking the seed. With its trunk outstretched an elephant can reach items at heights of up to 23 feet and dig for water under mud or sand. The trunk allows elephants to suck up water both to drink and to spray on their bodies. An adult Asian elephant is capable of holding 2 gallons of

water in its trunk. They will also spray dust or grass on themselves. When underwater, the elephant swims using its trunk as a snorkel. The African elephant has two finger-like extensions at the tip of the trunk that allow it to grasp and bring food to its mouth. Elephants inhale mostly through the trunk, although some air goes through the mouth. Losing the trunk is detrimental to an elephant's survival, and they often die if it is cut off.

Touching is an important form of communication among elephants. Individuals greet each other by stroking or wrapping their trunks. It's similar to humans shaking hands. Older elephants also use trunk-slaps, kicks, and shoves to discipline younger ones.

The largest recorded elephant tusk was 9 ft 11 inches long and weighed 86 pounds. Tusks, which are actually the incisor teeth of the upper jaw, serve both as weapons and as tools for moving objects and digging. As tools they are used for digging for water, salt, and roots; debarking or marking trees; and for moving trees and branches when clearing a path. When fighting, they are used to attack and defend, and to protect the trunk. Like humans, who are typically right- or left-handed, elephants are usually right- or left-tusked. Both male and female African elephants have tusks. However in the Asian species, only the males have large tusks. Female Asian elephants have very small tusks, or none at all.

Elephants are known to communicate with seismic vibrations produced by impacts on the earth. When detecting the seismics of an alarm call signaling danger from predators, elephants enter a defensive posture and family groups will pack together. Elephants can pick up communication from seismic vibrations from distances of 20 miles away. Communication from vocalization can travel 10 miles.

Like apes and donkeys, elephants can pass the mirror test and can recognize themselves in the mirror. Elephants are among the species known to use tools. An Asian elephant has been observed modifying branches and using them as flyswatters.

Thank you Hashem for showing us your wisdom.

FROM NOW ON, I WANT YOU TO EAT WITH MY FAMILY

Our Torah leaders were known to have incredible empathy, and were able to place themselves in others' shoes, despite their own personal greatness.

Rav Yosef Tendler, the Menahel of the Ner Yisrael Mechina, was a very perceptive educator. A young man once asked Rav Tendler for permission to go home for Shabbos. His request was denied. Shockingly the student picked up a large stone, threw it at Rav Tendler, and then defiantly went home anyway.

The boy brazenly returned on Sunday night to the yeshiva. Rav Tendler immediately understood that this boy was troubled due to a difficult family situation. Rav Tendler greeted him gently. "I know how important it is to you to be with family. From now on, whenever you are here for Shabbos, I want you to eat with my family." The young man then ate at Rav Tendler's home every Friday night until he left the yeshiva. The Tendlers treated him like a member of the family. They helped marry him off, and paid for his wedding with their own money.

Rav Pinchos Hirschprung was a gadol who lived in Montreal. He was a Torah giant, who had long ago rid himself of the need for physical comforts. He slept little, and ate less. But at the same time he could relate to the struggles of the regular person. Here is an example. One of Rav Hirschprung's sons had difficulty rising for early morning Selichos. Rather than responding judgmentally he looked at him sympathetically, and said, "I understand how difficult it must be for you to rise early, I am an old man and already accustomed to waking up early. But for you, a young person, it must be so hard."

From I Am Your Servant, By Rabbi Akiva Tendler, page 138 and From Warmed By Their Fire by Rabbi Yisrael Besser, Published By Artscroll Mesorah Reprinted With Permission From The Copyright Holders



THE ANSWER

Regarding the story of the man who raised the price of the oil, Rav Zilberstein answered in a similar case that what the man did was theft, because he didn't have the right to do business with another person's property. It was also theft from all of the people who paid extra for the oil, and he would have to find a way to return the money to them. Because it was theft, he would have to light again, but without a new Bracha.

Welcome To
The MAKE YOUR SIYUM HASHAS O'FISHEL SHABBATON

The world's one & only O'Fishel Siyum Hashas Shabbaton at the Delta Hunt Valley

Motzei Shabbos Program: LASAGNA AT THE ACHSAGNA

SUNDAY MORNING PROGRAM
 Sponsored by O'Fishel's Mitzvah Motivators
FREE TO THE COMMUNITY
 Reservations required:
443-660-9132

Motzei Shabbos & Sunday programs are FREE for anyone who's attended an O'Fishel event!
LISTING OF SHABBATON SPEAKERS & CELEBS PLUS FULL DETAILS: OFISHEL.COM

אמר אביי תיתי לי דכי חזינא צורבא מרבנן דשליים מסכתיה (גמ' שבת ק"י:)

Ben Jessurun Agency

 Bjessurun@allstate.com • 410-443-0771

Shabbos, Table Talk & Goldberg's Bagels.
מעין עולם הבא!

 1500 Reisterstown Rd. | Baltimore | 410-415-7001 | www.goldbergsbagels.com

Rosenbloom PEST-CONTROL
TOTAL CUSTOMER DEDICATION