

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



## THE CANTEN TAB

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha references the camps of angels which Yaakov encountered at the end of last week's Parsha.

The reference to camp leads us to the following story.

Yanky went to a summer sleep-away camp. At the camp, there was a canteen. The canteen had a tab, a credit account for each of the customers and the campers would usually pay their tab after a few weeks.

Yanky went to the canteen regularly and racked up a significant bill.

## KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Taken from the thoughts of **Rabbi Ezriel Munk**, Rabbi of Adass Yisroel - Berlin

In this week's Parsha when Yaakov is alone, the angel (the spiritual source) of Eisov engages him in a wrestling match and tries to bring him down. The fight endures through the night and the angel is unable to topple Yaakov. At day-break the angel tells Yaakov that he must go. Yaakov refuses to release him unless the angel will bless him. The angel asks Yaakov what his name is to which Yaakov responds 'Yaakov'. The angel then tells him that his name will no longer be Yaakov but will be Yisroel. Yaakov then asks the angel 'and what is your name?' to which he responds that he has no permanent name. Rashi explains that the angel's name reflects the mission he is on. Since his mission changes his name changes as well.

We must ask ourselves for what purpose is Yaakov asking the angel for his name? Who cares what his name is? Furthermore, it is certain that Yaakov knew the principle that an angel's name changes with each mission; so what is the answer adding as a response to Yaakov's request?

Our Sages teach us that Eisov's angel is Satan. Satan's mission is to cause darkness and confusion; to take clarity away from Man. He appropriately represents Eisov as that is what Eisov stands for. Eisov's raison d'être is to bring Yaakov down from his own mission which is to serve HaShem and build his relationship with Him.

Yanky left camp early and sadly forgot to pay the balance of his bill with the canteen.

About six months later Yanky remembered that he still had an outstanding bill with the canteen.

He reached out to the canteen director and asked the director if he could tell him how much he owed the canteen.

The director replied that he no longer had the records from the summer and was unable to tell Yanky how much he owed,

Yanky told him that he knew that it was more than 100 dollars and not more than \$300. The director told him that he could split the difference and pay \$200.

Yanky was not sure what to do. He knew the director agreed to \$200, but if he owed less than that amount perhaps the excess would be ribis (interest).

What do you think?

This question was sent to Rav Mordechai Shuchatowitz.



“ *In every conceivable manner, the family is the link to our past, and bridge to our future.* ”

*Alex Haley*



Yaakov understood this and figured that now that he has Satan in his hands, he wanted to know Satan's name. He understood that if he knew Satan's name he would have a deeper understanding of the nature of Satan. Once he could get a deeper insight into Satan's nature, he would be able to get a better grasp of Satan which would enable him to better control and conquer Satan or at least overcome Satan's attacks.

Yaakov knew that angels' names change with each new mission. However, he thought that Satan has only one mission, namely, to cause darkness and confusion and would therefore have only one, unchanging name. That was the name Yaakov wanted to know.

Satan answered that although his mission to cause confu-

sion is constant, nevertheless, his approach to how he would achieve that confusion is always changing. He was therefore responding to Yaakov that in every chapter of history my approach changes and you cannot grasp that deeper insight into my nature. In every chapter of history Satan's name changes and we must figure out that name to overcome his challenges.

In one period his name may be communism and in another period it may be social progress. In one period he may be called crusades and pogroms while in another chapter it will be advanced technology.

We must constantly be vigilant in identifying Satan and not allow him to topple us.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### THE EILAH, ELM

In this week's Parsha we find the story of how the sons of Yaakov destroyed the city of Shechem. Afterward, Yaakov buries the avoda zara captured from the city under the Eilah tree near Shechem. Our Sages teach that the specific area that the tree and avoda zara could be found was on Har Gerizim, near Shechem. This Har Gerizim will later become famous as the mountain upon which the Jewish people received a bracha, and the nearby Har Eival was where they received the potential curses. **(Har Gerizim and Har Eival pictured first from left.)**

The commentaries explain that Yaakov buried it under a tree so that no one should accidentally come across it. He specifically chose a non-fruit bearing tree so that people would not eat fruit that drew sustenance from the avodah zara.

The Medrash (cited by the Chasam Sofer) cites an interesting historical development that happened because of the avodah zara under the tree. After the Assyrian conquest of the ten northern shevatim in Eretz Yisrael, the Assyrians brought in the Kussim, the Samaritans, to settle in the north of Eretz Yisrael. Our Sages (Midrash Rabba) teach that the Kussim found avodah zara in the form of a dove under the Eilah tree on Har Gerizim and they began worshipping Har Gerizim as a holy mountain. When the Bnei Yisrael returned to Eretz Yisrael after the first exile, the Samaritans claimed that they were the true children of Israel and that the returnees from the exile were illegal settlers. Eventually, the Samaritans succeed in convincing King Cyrus to refuse to allow the Beis Hamikdash to be rebuilt. (See Ezra 4) The ten sons of Haman were governors who oversaw that Beis Hamikdash not be rebuilt. This is the reason why we find that Achaverosh kept telling Esther that he will do anything for her, with the exception of rebuilding the Beis Hamikdash.

Of course, we know that after the story of Esther and Mordechai, the ten sons of Haman were hanged, and Esther's son, Emperor Darius, permitted the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash. The second temple period had begun.

Alexander the Great defeated Darius and conquered Eretz Yisrael. Under Alexander's rule, the Samaritans built a temple on Har Gerizim near this Eilah tree on top of the buried avodah zara. The Samaritans claimed that they were the true children of Israel and that their temple on Har Gerizim was the true Beis Hamikdash. During the second Beis Hamikdash period there was frequent conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans. (See Nechemia 4) When the Chashmanoim came to power, Yochanan Hurkenus, (Yochanan Kohen Gadol who was pious for many decades but who eventually became a Tziduki), destroyed the temple of the Samaritans on Har Gerizim. This day became a holiday. (Megilas Taanis, Kislev) The ruins of this Samaritan temple on Har Gerizim can be

seen today. **(Pictured second from left.)**

But the Samaritans would eventually have their revenge. During the Bar Kochba war against the Romans, the Samaritans pretended to side with the Jews but secretly sided with the Romans and helped the Romans break past the Jewish defenses. It is said that a Samaritan cut off Bar Kochba's head to bring to the Roman Emperor Hadrian.

But of course, the Bnei Yisrael had the last laugh. Despite the long Roman exile, the Jews returned to Eretz Yisrael, and today number close to 7 million Jews in Israel. The Samaritans still exist, and they still live on Har Gerizim. Their population is now less than 1000 people.

We see that the avodah zara buried on Har Gerizim led to extremely significant historical consequences. What would have happened had the sons of Yaakov not taken the avodah zara from Shechem?

What exactly is an Eilah tree is not entirely clear. Some say it is a type of Cedar (Sechel Tov), an Oak tree (Rav Hirsh), or a Terbinth tree (Rabbi Nosson Sherman). Rashi in Yeshaya (1,29) and Hoshea (4,13) says that Eila is Ulma in Old French, which means Elm Tree. Let's learn a bit about the Elm.

Elm trees flourished in Eretz Yisrael. An elm tree can grow to a great height, and some can reach the height of 115 feet. A healthy elm tree can survive 200 to 300 years in the wild. However, an elm that is affected by the pernicious Dutch elm disease cannot survive more than 30 years. Their external bark is grayish in color and shows the presence of scales, furrows, and ridges.

The wood of elm is unique in that it is bendable and resistant to splitting. This made it perfect for the construction of longbows during the Middle Ages. Longbows were large bows six feet tall that were so powerful that they could easily penetrate chainmail armor. The English used these on large groups effectively and defeated the French in the first half of the Hundred Years War, until the time of Joan of Arc. **(Pictured fourth from left.)**

From the 18th century to the early 20th century, elm trees were among the most widely planted ornamental trees in both Europe and North America. They were particularly popular as a street tree in avenue plantings in towns and cities, which would create the effect of a tall tunnel. **(Pictured third from left.)**

During the great famine of 1812 the rural population of Norway was sustained by eating the bark of elm trees. Elm bark was cut into strips and boiled. The seeds are also nutritious, containing 45% crude protein, and less than 7% fiber by dry mass.

## I'LL BE SUGGESTING TO HER THAT THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH WHAT HER HUSBAND DOES

Reb Mendel Kaplan was once discussing with his students the requirement to extend Shabbos into the week by delaying havdalah, when Reb Mendel related an experience that showed his great sensitivity towards other people's feelings.

"A neighbor of mine in Chicago went away one Shabbos. Towards the end of Shabbos his wife came over and asked if she could hear me make havdalah. In those days, few people waited even an hour after nightfall and this woman appeared at my door barely half an hour after sunset. When I asked her if it wasn't a little early for Havdalah, she told me that her husband made havdalah at this time every week. Although it was still Shabbos for me, I thought to myself, 'Her husband is also frum and if I tell her it's still Shabbos for me, I'll be suggesting to her that there is something wrong with what her husband does.' I remembered this Gemara that we were discussing and made havdalah for her without a candle."

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### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the tzedakah box filled on shabbos from a poker game, Rav Zilberstein said that the money should not be returned but it should not be used by the Gemach. Rather it should be designated to an organization that promotes the observance of shabbos.

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