

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



## THE ONLY SON

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion makes reference to the importance of peace. The Torah says, "If two men argue and they will come to the courts". (Devarim 25, 11.) Rashi comments that this verse is talking about the danger of arguments. An argument can lead to a court case and eventually lead to violence. In contrast, the Torah often talks about the importance of pursuing peace. There is a principle that peace is so important that it is permitted to say something that is not exactly true for the sake of peace. But what are the parameters of the principles of telling something that is not true for the sake of peace? This leads us to the following interesting story.

One day Sarah was woken up by her ten year old son who said he had a very bad headache. He was having persistent headaches and Sarah was concerned that maybe something was seriously wrong with her son. She took her son to



## COOK THE BOOKS

The verse in Shir HaShirim regarding the Jewish people states "Your cranium is like a pomegranate". The word used for cranium carries a second meaning "empty". Our Sages explain the parallel as follows. The empty-headed folks of our people are like pomegranates. Just like a pomegranate is filled with seeds, so too, even the empty-headed folks are filled with mitzvos. The question is if they are filled with mitzvos why are they referred to as empty-headed?

We currently find ourselves in the month of Elul, the month in which we prepare ourselves for Rosh Hashanah. One way of seeing Rosh Hashanah is like having an annual audit. It is when our books are turned in and reviewed. There is a difference however. When doing an audit you cannot change any expenditures that were spent or any income that came in. Everything that occurred during the year must be reported accurately. With Rosh Hashanah, however, we are able to change the books before we hand them in. Not only may we change the books but we are actually encouraged to do so. Depending on how the books look at the time Rosh Hashanah comes around is how the decision will be rendered.

The method by which we make the necessary changes in our books is through the teshuva process. When I was young I thought that teshuva was a daunting task which only great tzadikim can achieve. However, as I grew older I realized that there are many levels of teshuva and with just a little mindfulness one can accomplish so much. The deeds which are a result of old habits which have found their way into our life are certainly difficult to change, but there are other areas of change which are more accessible. A change in those areas can significantly impact the outcome.

## MITZVA MEME

the emergency room. As is the case in many emergency rooms, it was busy and they were going to have to wait in line because of triage.

Sarah was very concerned about her son and did not want to wait. She wanted to be able to get him the best care as soon as possible. She went to the triage nurse and said, "My son is having extreme headaches, it is very urgent. He is my only son, born after 15 years of marriage. Please, he is my only son and this is so important to me, please can you see him immediately, and then have him seen by the best doctors in the hospital?" The triage nurse had pity on her and allowed her to jump the line. Her son was indeed seen immediately by the best doctor in the hospital. They indeed needed to do an emergency surgery and thankfully everything turned out well in the end. Later Sarah told the story to her husband. "How could you tell them that he is an only child, born after 15 years of marriage? That's not true. We also have daughters, and he was born without any difficulty". Sarah replied that she said he was their only son and she didn't mention that she had daughters too. It was also true that the son was born after 15 years of marriage. "I told a white lie to make sure he would be seen as soon as possible and that he would get the best care available. One is allowed to lie for the sake of peace, and making sure he would get the best medical care is an example of pursuing peace." Sarah's husband wasn't so sure.

What do you think? Is one allowed to tell a white lie for the sake of getting quicker and better care? Is that called lying for peace?

See Veharev Na Volume One page 139 for a similar case



Rambam writes regarding this audit; "A few debits can far outweigh many credits and a few credits can far outweigh many debits. The only one who knows how to properly weigh each deed is HaShem." Evidently, there are more factors that contribute to the weight of a mitzvah or an aveira than the deed itself. There are many books that fill the Jewish library that teach us how the attitude with which we perform a mitzvah contributes heavily to the value of that mitzvah. If one gives his dollar to tzedakah out of routine the weight of that mitzvah is considerably lighter than the one who gives it with the intent to emulate the ways of HaShem. And if he also keeps in mind the specific mitzvah of giving tzedakah to a needy Jew, that adds more weight to the deed. And if he will also keep in mind the mitzvah of giving tzedakah with a gracious heart, that will add even more weight to that mitzvah. Before long he will be able to turn that one dollar into a major gift! It will outweigh a much greater gift to tzedakah that was given without all these extras.

This adjustment can be done with all of our everyday activities at no

great sacrifice. When I pay my friend the ten dollars I borrowed from him there is no significant value to that deed. However, if before paying him the ten dollars I will consider the Torah's commandment to pay back one's creditor, I will have turned that act into a mitzvah. And if I do so with the excitement that I am fortunate to be able to fulfill a mitzvah of HaShem's Torah, then I have performed a mitzvah with great enthusiasm which adds considerable weight to that deed. When we clean the house for the Shabbos and when we feed our children and pay for their tuition. With every bracha we make there are a myriad of mitzvos that we could be accomplishing. All it takes is mindfulness.

The empty-headed folks are truly filled with mitzvos but they have no weight to them, just like the pomegranate seeds which fill the pomegranate but have little weight.

All we need to do to cook the books is to add some more weight to the mitzvos we already do.

Have a very safe and a very wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### SEA CUCUMBERS - SHOOTING ITS GUTS OUT

In the past two weeks we learned about fascinating defense tools that HaShem gave to his creations.

Let's dive in and look at another one.

Sea cucumbers are marine animals with a leathery skin and a long, sausage shaped body. They are called sea cucumbers because they look somewhat like cucumbers. They are echinoderms, like starfish and sea urchins. One characteristic that distinguishes them from other echinoderms is their crown, which consists of 10-30 long tentacles around their mouth, which can be pulled back inside the animal. The tentacles can be shaped like fingers, feathers, umbrellas or shields. They help to sense, touch and hunt. Sea cucumbers move slowly and carry plankton, mud, and other organic material. They live all over the world at the bottom of the sea sometimes partially buried under it. In some parts of Asia people gather them for food and some species are considered a delicacy. Chinese medicine also uses them to treat a variety of ailments. They are usually between three inches and one foot long, but there are some that are over nine feet long. In America, the largest ones live in Florida reefs, and are about a foot long.

Their predators are crabs, sea turtles, sea stars and other kinds of fish, depending on their location.

These sea creatures have some fascinating defense mechanisms.

When threatened, some sea cucumbers discharge sticky threads to ensnare their enemies. Others can mutilate their own bodies as a defense mechanism.

The most dramatic defense is when they scare off their predators by literally spilling their guts, which regenerate within a few weeks. By squeezing their muscles, they can first stretch some of their internal organs, make them sticky, and then blow them out of their bodies, at a potential attacker. The predator, covered with the sticky organ of the sea cucumber, is confused and may even be temporarily blinded. The sea cucumber is not negatively affected by such an attack. The internal organs are recreated within a few weeks. It can continue breathing thanks to the sea water taken into the body cavity until the organs are renewed. Although scientists have known about this for a long time, the genetic elements that enable such a feat is still not fully understood.

Another unique and amazing defense mechanism of sea cucumbers is their ability to pass through narrow passages by literally liquefying their bodies. The sea cucumber can convert solid tissue into a fluid, and then go back to a solid state again. The special collagen fibers in the tissues make this possible. By "liquefying," a sea cucumber can flow through a small crack, and then it can return to its original state.

## FEELING OTHERS' PAIN

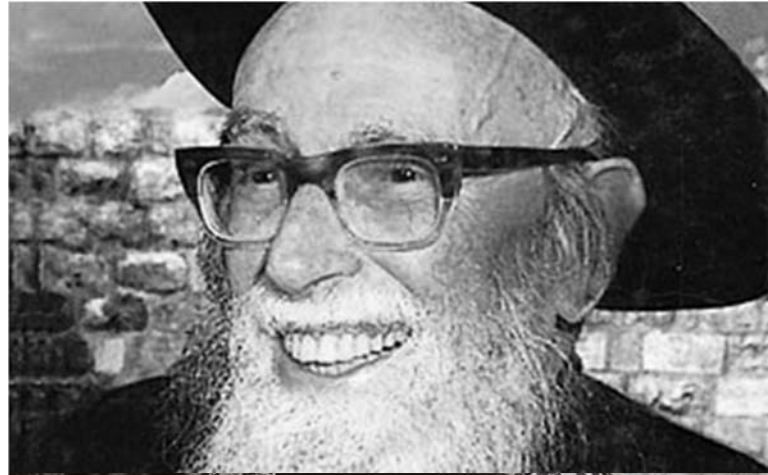
The Torah wants us to emulate HaShem's midah of Rachum, or having empathy. What follows are three great men who lived with empathy.

On one occasion someone told Reb Shlomo Zalman of the appalling plight of a particular woman. Several weeks later the situation straightened out and disaster was averted. When Reb Shlomo Zalman called up the family member who had brought him the bad tidings to inquire how things were developing, he was elated to hear the good news. After offering a heartfelt blessing that the family be spared any future hardship, he said as follows. "I wish you would have informed me the good news immediately without me having to do research and find out after all these weeks. You could have spared me untold grief, for I have been agonizing all this time over her plight."

Once, a freezing wind blew into the The Gerrer Rebbe's sukkah, causing The Gerrer Rebbe, the Beis Yisrael much discomfort. But the Rebbe was not surprised. He told his Chasidim, "From Heaven they are reminding me that I am not sufficiently distressed by the plight of the Jewish soldiers sleeping year round in the northern cold, on the Lebanese border."

Once the Alter of Kelm saw a chain gang of prisoners repairing the roads or building new ones in the vicinity of Kelm. The Alter wondered out loud, "How can anyone just walk casually on these roads which have been built at such a cost of the suffering of other human beings?" On his deathbed, his thoughts were on the welfare of others. Shortly before he passed away with many thoughts on his mind he instructed his family to be sure to wash all his clothes and then distribute them to the poor after his death."

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### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question of the fake snake, Rav Zilberstein wrote that if the snake looked realistic, then the neighbor who left it in the yard would have to pay the exterminator's fee, midinei shomayim. However the courts would not be able to force him to pay.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of the marriage of  
Yehudah and Emmy Wealcatch  
May they merit to build a bayis n'aman b'Yisroel.  
The Wealcatch and Zelinger Families

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