

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



HIGH CEILINGS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion the Torah says, "You should choose life in order that you live" (Devarim 30,19). The Talmud Yerushalmi (Kidushin 1,7) offers a fascinating interpretation of this verse. The Yerushalmi says that this refers to the importance of finding a trade to support yourself. That is one way a person chooses life.

This leads us to the following interesting question.

One of Mordechai's sources of livelihood was an apartment that he rented out. Dov was interested in renting the apartment. He spoke to Mordechai and inquired about the dimensions of the apartment. Mordechai described how it was



CONVINCE THE OTHER SIDE

In this week's Parsha, Nitzavim Vayeilech, we are given the mitzvah and the opportunity of teshuvah. The Torah writes "this mitzvah is not far away, it is in your heart and in your mouth to do it". This implication is that teshuvah is not that difficult; all it needs is the heart.

Many people, myself included, often feel frustrated when during this period of the year we make commitments quite earnestly and are unable to keep them for any long duration of time. One suggestion is to make small changes so we have a better chance of keeping them for a longer period. I would like to suggest an additional approach.

There are two advisors within every one of us. Our physical side is drawn to material aspirations. Our Godly side is drawn to Godly aspirations. For the sake of this article we will refer to the former as 'the other side'. We find ourselves in a constant conflict. With many of the choices that confront us we allow one side or the other to make the decision. If I decide to dedicate myself to a year of spiritual growth and therefore limit the amount of ice cream I will have, every time ice cream is presented my other side will argue that she never agreed to this arrangement; and she is correct! With every serving of ice cream I am waging a battle. Naturally, sooner or later I will fall.

Perhaps, if I could get my other side on board with this limited ice cream plan I would not have to contend with her argument each time; she already agreed to it. (I use ice cream only as an example, naturally it applies to every issue that will raise contention.) The only question is how do I get her on board?

very nice and that it had several rooms and it also had a tall, elegant 14 foot ceiling in the living room. Dov was interested. He signed the contract and prepared to move in.

After Dov moved his furniture in, he ordered a beautiful antique 14 foot bookcase to place in his living room. When the bookcase parts arrived he hired a handyman to assemble the bookcase. To Dov's chagrin, the bookcase, which was 14 feet, didn't exactly fit in the room. The handyman explained that the living room was slightly less than 14 feet tall, it was 13 3/4 feet tall and it did not fit. The handyman needed to get paid for his time and Dov was unable to return the bookcase. He lost a significant amount of money on the bookcase and the handyman.

Dov was upset at Mordechai who told him that the ceiling was 14 feet tall. When Mordechai heard Dov's complaint he replied, "I'm so sorry I didn't know that you needed exact measurements. When I said 14 feet I meant it in general terms. I rounded it up. I didn't mean to tell you the precise and specific measurements." Dov wanted to know if Mordechai was obligated to pay for his loss. What do you think?

See Chashukei Chemed Bava Basra Page 427 for a very similar case



“Whether you think you can do it or whether you think you cannot do it you are correct.”

A year ago I met Michael Poteshman, a wonderful person with whom I became very close. Michael is a successful individual in many ways. At one point in his life his health was suffering miserably and anything the doctors did for him only made his condition worse. Finally, he dedicated an entire year studying the effects of the many ingredients used in the production of processed foods to see if he could find the solution to his problems. His research paid off and he is now in extremely good health with no medications whatsoever! I am grateful to Michael for the book he authored which explains in great detail and with much research what those ingredients do to our bodies.

After meeting with Michael and reading his book, I suddenly had no problem limiting my intake of ice cream, which I still enjoy very much. Why? Because my other side was on board. There was no conflict. Although I still enjoy ice cream, I successfully educated my

other side about the consequences of my ice cream intake and my other side agreed that it was not in her interest either. No conflict!

Every person who recognizes the benefits of being close to HaShem and the work that is required to achieve that closeness will concede that it is truly worth the investment. The difficulty we often have is maintaining the clarity of those benefits. As we approach Rosh Hashanah and then Yom Kippur followed by Succos it is not too difficult to maintain that clarity. However, as we continue our trek through the year we lose that clarity and we begin to question if it is truly worth the investment. The difficulty in keeping the ice cream plan comes from losing the clarity. The successful teshuvah plan must include a continuing education component by which to keep the other side on board with the general plan.

The heart is considered the organ of awareness and clarity. The Torah is telling us that teshuvah is not difficult, it is all in the heart. While Patrick Henry proclaimed "Give me liberty or give me death", the Jew proclaims "Give me clarity or give me death."

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE RAINBOW MOUNTAIN OF PERU

Vinicunca, also called Montaña de Siete Colores (Mountain of Seven Colors), is located in the Andes in the Cusco region of Peru, with an altitude of 17,000 feet above sea level. It's a six mile, high altitude, difficult hike. In order to hike up there, a traveler would need to adjust to the high altitude in the closest town for a couple of days, and tour guides often bring oxygen with them to help tourists avoid altitude sickness. The local people and animals are very comfortable in those altitudes, and alpacas and sheep can be seen comfortably doing the climb. Being that it is so hard, and you need to be in excellent physical shape, what makes people do the trek?

Until about ten years ago, the mountain looked like any other mountain, covered with glacier caps. Recently, the ice has melted, due to global warming. When the ice melted, there was a surprise underneath, which made Rainbow Mountain into a very popular tourist attraction. The mountain is covered in stripes of various colors.

This is due to the mineralogical composition present on the slopes and summits. When the ice started to melt, the water mixed with

minerals in the ground, turning the earth into the many colors. The pink color is due to the red clay, mud, and sand on the mountain.

The white is from quartzose, sandstone and marls, which are rich in calcium carbonate.

The red is from iron and clays belonging to the upper tertiary.

The green is due to the compound of phyllites and clays.

The brown is a product of fanglomerate composed of rock with magnesium.

Lastly, the yellow color is from the calcareous sandstones rich in sulphurous minerals.

How beautiful is your creation, Hashem!

THE STACK OF LETTERS

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twersky related the following beautiful story about his father, Rav Yackov Yisrael Twerski:

During World War II, one of the families in our synagogue received word that their son was missing in action in the European theater. Needless to say, the family was devastated, assuming the very worst. My father, who was the Rav of the synagogue encouraged them never to abandon hope. He insisted that their son was alive and that he was a prisoner of war and would return one day. He used to visit the family every week to uplift their spirits. After the war was over, the son did indeed return, having been a prisoner of war. When he returned to his army base, he found a stack of letters from my father, who had written to him every week.

I am certain that my father wrote these letters prior to making his weekly visit to the family, to reinforce his own hope and faith that their son was alive, because his effort to keep the family's hopes high could be effective only if he believed in what he was telling them. That is an important psychological insight. You cannot convince someone of something that you do not fully believe yourself.

From *The Rabbi and The Nuns* By Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twersky, Published By Mekor Press

Pictured: Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twersky as a young Doctor



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the realtor, Rav Zilberstein wrote that since the first deal fell through because the fiancé passed away, the realtor was meyaesh, gave up hope, and the deal was over. When the man bought the house a second time it was a new deal and therefore the realtor is not entitled to his fee.

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