

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE SIDDUR

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha discusses the importance of Teshuva. We know that there is a prohibition against stealing and there is a mitzvah to return something that one stole. This leads us to the following true story.

Avi went out to Maariv. Since he was planning to come a few minutes early he brought a sefer with him to learn before davening started. After davening maariv a friend began to chat with him. Avi spoke with his friend for a few minutes and left the shul and went home, holding the sefer he brought.

When Avi arrived home he realized that he was holding two sefarim in his hand. One was the sefer that he took



POWERING THE MILL

Psalm 78 is dedicated to retelling the history of our people. In his opening verses the Psalmist invites the reader to join him in this study and tells the reader that the study of our history is actually the study of Torah. Malbim explains the distinction between the history of nations and the history of our people lies in the direct relationship that we have with HaShem, the Director of history. He explains that there is a natural course which governs the rise and fall of nations. It is through that nature that HaShem's runs history in general. He does not engage Himself directly. He, so to speak, leaves their destiny to nature. In contrast to our people, His chosen people, HaShem is intimately involved. Every step along the course of Jewish history is a direct intervention of HaShem. Therefore, explains the Malbim, a study of our history is actually a study of the ways of HaShem. And that defines Torah study.

The Psalmist uses a hindsight of Jewish history to understand HaShem's ways of management. This week's Parsha, in contrast, presents HaShem's way of management before that history plays itself out. Naturally, it is always better to know how HaShem will manage our destiny before it happens. With the latter, we can alter the outcome.

That said, what is the basis of HaShem's management of our destiny? The entire Parsha of Bechukosai is dedicated to this question. The Torah teaches us that there is only one primary component that will ensure the welfare of our people; the involvement in Torah study. The welfare of our people is directly proportional to the intensity of the Torah study our people are involved in. As we slip in our commitment to our Torah study we will begin slipping in our adherence to mitzvah observance which will begin a slipping in the respect we have for our Sages which will digress into preventing others from observing mitzvos until we will total reject HaShem Himself, G-D forbid.

with him, and the other was the siddur that he used in shul. He realized that because he was busy talking with his friend, he accidentally picked up the siddur to bring home in addition to his own sefer.

On the inside of the cover of the siddur it was written clearly: This siddur may not be brought outside the premises of the shul."

Avi realized that he had accidentally stolen the siddur.

He knew that he had a responsibility to return the siddur that he accidentally took. But he was tired and it was late, and he didn't feel up to going back to the shul that night.

He wondered if it would be permitted to keep the siddur with him overnight and return the siddur the next day? Or perhaps because he took it without permission, did he have an obligation to return the siddur as soon as he realized it?

On one hand, the members of the shul likely did not mind for him to keep it overnight. But on the other hand, perhaps the mitzva to return what he stole requires him to return it as soon as possible?

What do you think?



Why is intense Torah study so critical? Would it not be enough that our people are committed to eating kosher and observing Shabbos and Yom Tov and so on, without intensity of Torah study?

As we have discussed the distinction of our people relative to other nations in several TableTalks it is clear that our existence as a people is of a miraculous nature. Other nations receive their existence from those forces of nature that govern history. Our existence, on the other hand, gets its nourishment from our direct connection to HaShem. It therefore follows that the more connection we have to Him the greater our existence will be.

Perhaps the water mill may best illustrate this point. The water mill is positioned along the flowing river so that the rushing water powers the movement of the mill. If some form of blockage will occur upstream that slows the water the mill will lose its power. If that blockage is left unattended it will continue to pick up more

material and will enlarge the blockage until the water will find another path downstream and the mill will cease its movement entirely.

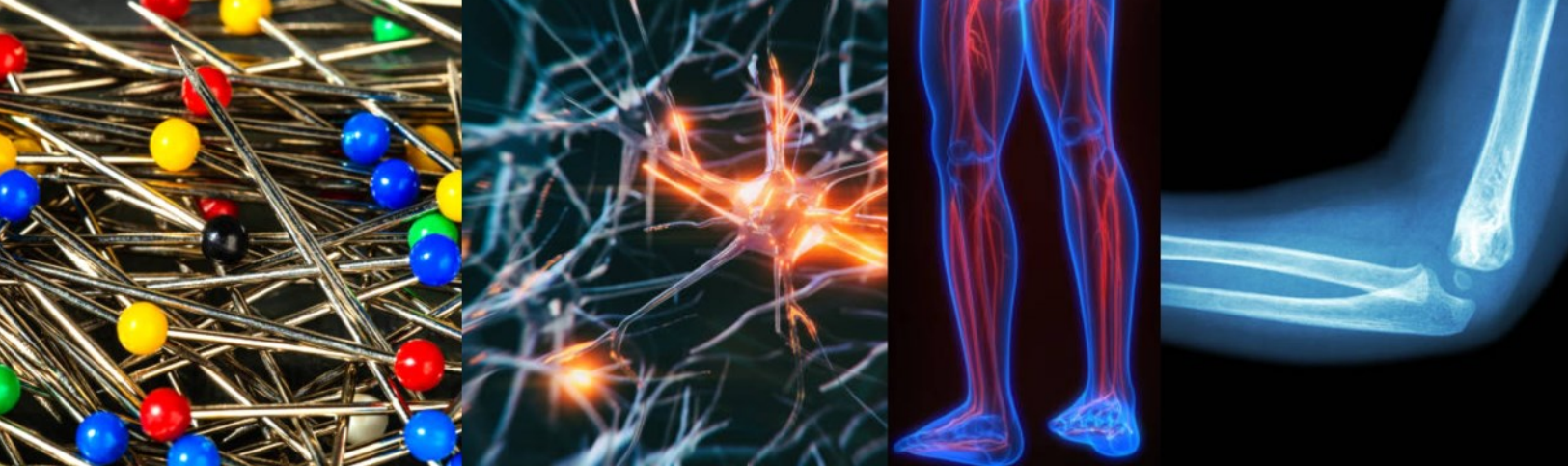
Although mitzvos connect us to HaShem, nevertheless, they do not provide the glue that attaches us. The real attachment can only come from Torah study. When we are solidly connected, the flow of His hashpa'ah flows freely and our existence is fully nourished. When our intensity diminishes the current diminishes in kind.

How fortunate we are to find ourselves in a Jewish world that honors and supports lomdei Torah who are committed to intense Torah study at the cost of greater comforts. Even those who are not committed to intense study are participating in so many areas of Torah study while supporting the serious lomdei Torah.

May HaShem appreciate the movement His people are making in the direction of attaching themselves to Him.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

PARESTHESIA, PINS & NEEDLES AND THE FUNNY BONE

This week my daughter had pins and needles and asked me why Hashem made that feeling. I told her I didn't know but I would look into it.

What exactly is pins and needles. What causes it? How does it benefit us?

Let's look at this a bit deeper. The feeling of pins and needles is called Paresthesia. This is pronounced Paris-thee-zia. Paresthesia comes from the word Para which means abnormal and aesthesia which means feeling. Together it means abnormal feeling. In contrast, the word anesthesia means without (ana) feeling (aesthesia).

Paresthesia can also present itself with the feeling of insects crawling on the skin.

A common cause of pins and needles is leaning or lying awkwardly on an arm or leg, which either presses against the nerves or reduces the blood supply to the local area. What is actually going on underneath your tingling skin? The biology behind those pins and needles is actually not completely understood.

We know that there are nerves throughout your body. They are biological superhighways whose job is to relay information between the brain and the rest of the body. The nerves are really like electrical wires that connect every part of your body to the brain.

If you place too much pressure on one of your arms or legs you could temporarily pinch the nerves that run through them. Meanwhile, you're also putting a little too much pressure on the blood vessels that supply those nerves, like crimping a garden hose to prevent the flow of water.

This causes your brain to be deprived of the information it expects from those nerve bundles, and the nerves themselves aren't receiving the oxygenated blood they need from your heart. When the nerves feel this pressure, and they lose blood flow, they activate a kind of electrical energy. That's right, you are full of electricity. The body and brain use electrochemical signals to send information to each other. However, the messages can't properly reach the brain. This is when your leg feels like it's falling asleep. Another term for falling asleep is compression tingling. What is happening is that the brain is doing something very much like hallucinating. It registers, inaccurately, that there is something going on, which feels like tightness, or sometimes a feeling of crawling. This feeling is important because if you compress your nerves for too long, it can damage your ability to sense the world. Numbness, or the feeling of falling asleep, is the body's useful strategy to protect your nerves and keep you healthy.

Then, when that pressure is relieved, blood floods back into your limb and the nerves begin firing information to and from the brain. The tingling and feelings of pins and needles is caused when your nerves are suddenly given access to blood again.

When the blood floods back into your limb the nerves begin firing information to and from the brain. The term for the second stage of pins and needles is called release pricking. When the block is removed, the nerve system becomes hyperactive as it is allowed to resume normal function, leading to the uncomfortable tingling. The reason why it can feel painful is that the nerves are sending delayed pain signals that were blocked earlier. Another way this phenomena has been described is that all the excitement of the nerves coming back online causes them to misfire as they reboot and restart, which the brain interprets as pins and needles.

Paresthesia can also be presented in a very quick and transient form when we tweak the ulnar nerve near the elbow. This is commonly known as bumping one's "funny bone". The ulnar nerve runs from the shoulder down to the ring and pinky fingers but is exposed (not protected by bone) at the elbow. It has hardly any bone protecting it. A quick blow to the nerve at this juncture sends tingles down the nerve's length. When hit, it causes a brief electric jolt-like shock down the whole nerve. This is an example of quick Paresthesia .

As an interesting aside, how did the funny bone get its name? Some say that it's a play on words. The upper arm bone, the one between your elbow and shoulder, is called the humerus (pronounced just like humorous), and hitting the nerve at the bottom of the humerus feels very strange. So it became called the Funny Bone. (Humerus and humorous, very funny when you're feeling punny.)

The funny bone does have a "not so fun" aspect to it. Imagine that as you went about your day you were followed around by someone constantly striking a small mallet into your elbow, hitting your funny bone over and over and over again. That is what it feels like to someone who has cubital tunnel syndrome. Cubital tunnel syndrome occurs when the ulnar nerve becomes injured, inflamed or pinched. The ulnar nerve runs from your neck to your fingertips and passes through a tunnel of muscle, ligament and bone called the cubital tunnel. When it becomes pinched or injured, it creates pain that feels like you've hit your funny bone. It is not as common as the similar carpal tunnel syndrome in the hands, but cubital tunnel syndrome can actually involve a great deal of pain and discomfort, and in its most extreme cases can even impair a patient's use of their hand.

“HIS IDEOLOGY WAS SPAWNED AFTER BEING SPURNED FROM YOUR SCHOOL. HOW MANY COUNTLESS SOULS HAVE SUFFERED DUE TO THIS DANGEROUS IDEOLOGY? “

A well-respected man, a leader, an overseer of a large and thriving Jewish community once came to visit the Chofetz Chaim. Expecting to be welcomed with honor and respect befitting an important man, he was shocked when the Chofetz Chaim took one look at him turned away and had him escorted from his presence.

Such a thing was rare, especially for a community leader who was widely recognized and respected. More than being insulted, the man was frightened at the reaction of the Chofetz Chaim to his presence. What had he done to bring up such a reaction to incur the wrath of the great man? He searched his memory for any sort of incident but he came up empty-handed. Trembling, he decided that he could not leave Radin without finding out the source of the Chofetz Chaim's displeasure with him. With faltering steps, he knocked on the door and begged to be given one more chance to talk with the Chofetz Chaim. He finally managed to make his way inside and once again came face to face with the Chofetz Chaim.

Rebbe, he cried what have I done? What was my sin that you pushed me away and removed me from your home?

The Chofetz Chaim's eyes turned steely and spoke to the man. "You should just know that it is all your fault! All your responsibility! The fact that more than 3 million of our Jewish brothers are suffocating under the oppression of the Communist regime. All the depression, all the death, all the pain and suffering. It's all your fault! All your fault. All your fault!

The Chofetz Chaim's words hit him with the force of a locomotive train. The fate of millions of suffering Jews was on his soldiers. How can that be? What had he done? "But Rabbi", he began a stifled sob came from his lips.

But the Chofetz Chaim cut him off. "Now? Now you cry? Of course, now you lead a large congregation, you oversee the workings of your community and surely you wouldn't want any harm to come to it. But what about then? What all those years ago?

The man was unable to open his mouth? He truly had no idea what the Chofetz Chaim was talking about. "Surely you remember" continued the Chofetz Chaim, many years ago when you worked as administrator of the local school. There was a young boy in your school. He was an orphan. He had just lost his father and lived with his struggling mother. With those unfortunate circumstances, it was no wonder that the boy tended to act out and make trouble. He was wild, with a sharp tongue and difficult to control. In the end you lost your patience with him and had this orphan thrown out.

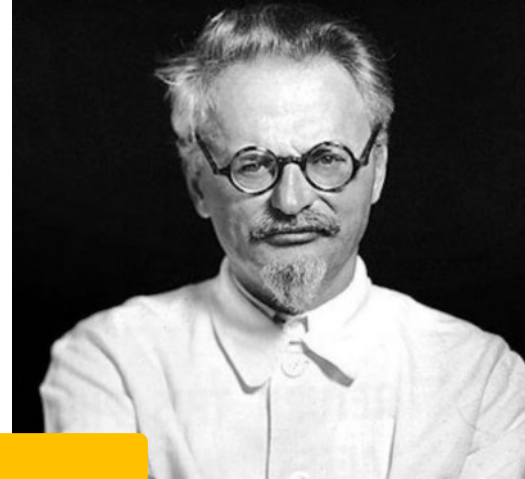
The man thought long and hard. Then he asked cautiously, what was the boy's name?

"Laibel" said the Chofetz Chaim. His name was Laibel Davidovich Bronstein. Since the school refused to keep him his mother had no choice but to put him in a non-Jewish school. But the boy was smart, brilliant perhaps. He may even have become a great Rosh Yeshiva given the proper guidance. Instead his sharp mind absorbed secular knowledge and grew to become a leader among the Gentiles. This young Jewish boy Laibel, also known as Leon Trotsky, became one of the founders of communism and a supreme commander of the Red Army during the Bolshevik Revolution. His ideology was spawned after being spurned from your school. How many countless souls have suffered due to this dangerous ideology?

Now I ask you, who is to blame? On whose shoulders is the enormous weight of history's unforgiving irony, if not yours?

From: Heroes of Spirit, 100 Rabbinic Tales of the Holocaust. By Rabbi Dovid Hoffman, Published By Israel Book Shop

Pictured: Laibel Davidovich Bronstein, Leon Trotsky as a child, a young man, and adult



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the boy who got a burn on his leg on shabbos, Rav Tzvi Berkowitz answered that the mother should call hatzola, or call a doctor, and follow exactly what they advise them to do.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of
Rabbi Hirsch Diskind zt"l

With hakaras hatov
Debbie and Lee Jay Lowenstein

