



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE RUSE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This month, we are looking forward to the joyous Yom Tov of Chanukah. With that in mind, let's appreciate the following fascinating story:

There was once a Judaica store in Israel that specialized in silver items. The store manager, Avi, handled the daily operations himself. One day, a customer entered the store, picked up an expensive silver menorah, and suddenly dashed out with it.

Avi immediately sprang into action, chasing after the thief. Strangely, as Avi got closer, the thief would slow down, allowing Avi to almost catch him. Just as Avi was about to grab him, the thief would speed up and run ahead again. This pattern of slowing down and speeding up repeated four or five times.

Finally, after an intense chase, the thief



IN CONTEXT

Our Parsha opens with our father Yaakov on his way to Uncle Lavan when he stops off at the Temple Mount. The second verse reads "And Yakov encountered the 'makom' (which translates as the 'place') and he slept there." Using the definite article, 'the', indicates a place that is already known to the reader. The commentators discuss the issue of which place it is referring to. One suggestion is that 'HaMakom' (The Place) is a reference to HaShem.

HaMakom refers to HaShem because He is the 'place' of the world. To illustrate this let us use the book that sits on my dining room table. The place of the book is my table. The place of my table is my dining room. The place of my dining room is my house, and so on.... The place of the United States is Earth and the place of Earth is the Solar System... until the place of the Milky Way is the Universe. Did we hit the end? No! The place of the Universe is HaShem. HaShem is the ultimate Place of everything in the world.

The prayer for the mourner who sits shiva over the loss of a relative references HaShem in the term 'HaMakom'. We turn to the mourners and say "May HaMakom console you among all the others who are mourning the loss of Zion and Yerushalayim." Why is this expression of HaShem used? How does HaMakom suggest some form of consolation more than any other Name of HaShem?

Place and context are closely related. What 'place' is in the physical location 'context' is in the abstract location. We often hear how a statement was made and it was taken out of context. That means to say that the statement was taken out of its proper location. The location of the statement was in a certain context and thereby had one meaning. When it is taken out of its original location it can have a different connotation.

seemed to give up. He dropped the menorah on the ground and disappeared into the distance. Relieved to have recovered the stolen menorah, Avi picked it up and returned to the store.

To Avi's horror, when he arrived back at the store, he found that every single silver item was gone. He quickly realized what had happened. The thief he had been chasing was part of a larger gang with a well-coordinated plan. While the decoy thief distracted Avi with the menorah, the rest of the gang entered the store, filled large bags with the remaining valuables, and made off with everything.

Although the store was insured, the coverage only accounted for a portion of the loss. Donny, the owner of the store, now faced an enormous financial burden.

After Donny heard the shocking news, he confronted Avi and said, "You were hired as a watchman, a shomer sachar. As such, you are responsible for guarding the store. This loss occurred under your watch, so you are liable for the theft and the financial loss I have incurred."

Avi, however, believed he was not at fault. "I only chased after the thief who stole the menorah. How could I have imagined that others would rob the entire store while I was gone? This was an unavoidable accident—something I could never have foreseen."

What do you think? Is Avi, the manager, responsible for this enormous loss?

See Upiryo Matok Devarim Page 456



*Judaism isn't all or nothing.
Every mitzvah is a gold mine.*

- Rabbi Noah Weinberg

Let us use a different application of taking something out of context and we will see how stark the difference is between being in its proper location and not being in its location.

A group of people dressed in white gowns resembling the KKK surround a bed with a sleeping person on it. They are wearing masks and are handling various types of knives and needles. While the lying person is still unconscious they remove his foot.

Observing this scene out of context might lead us to describe it as a sadistic horror. However, when we place this scene in its context, in an operating room in a hospital where the sleeping victim's life was threatened with septic shock and he is now on his way to good health then we would describe this scene as merciful kindness.

Everything that happens in the world is carefully designed and

managed by HaShem and it is always for our absolute best interests. Although we may not understand how HaShem allowed those animals to attack us on Oct 7, nevertheless we know that HaShem did allow it and it was for the good of His people. Even when we do not understand why we still know that it was for our best. If we would know the true context of that event it would be understandable.

When Eliyahu the prophet will prepare us for Moshiach we will be able to see that context. We will recognize how the past two millennia make sense.

Perhaps the reason we identify HaShem as HaMakom when consoling the mourner is because that Name indicates HaShem as being The Context for all that happens. Although the loss of the relative is painful we daven that HaShem show us the context so we along with all the other mourners of Zion of Yerushalayim may be consoled.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

SPOTTED LAKE: A MOSAIC OF NATURAL WONDER

Nestled in the Similkameen Valley of British Columbia, Canada, Spotted Lake stands as a remarkable natural and cultural treasure. Located northwest of Osoyoos, this lake's spotted appearance and ecological sensitivity make it one of the world's most captivating natural wonders.

Let's explore the fascinating story of Spotted Lake. For much of the year, Spotted Lake appears unassuming, a tranquil expanse of water reflecting the surrounding valley. But come summer, as temperatures soar, it sheds its ordinary guise to reveal an extraordinary spectacle. The Spotted Lake transforms to look like a Dr. Seuss creation. During the summer months, circular patches emerge across its surface, resembling a giant polka-dotted quilt. Each spot tells its own story, its color shaped by the unique balance of minerals. Deep blue signifies a rich presence of magnesium sulfate, while the green is a mix of magnesium sulfate and calcium carbonate. This mesmerizing display spans 37 acres, with spots morphing in size and shade as the minerals interact with sunlight.

But what causes these iconic spots? Spotted Lake is an endorheic basin, meaning it has no natural outflows. Rainfall and small streams supply its water, but evaporation is the only way it leaves. Over centuries, this closed system has allowed minerals to accumulate, giving the lake its distinctive properties. Magnesium sulfate, calcium, sodium sulfates, and eight other minerals are found in high concentrations within the lake. During the summer, as water evaporates under the sun, these minerals crystallize, forming large circular patches. The colors of the spots—ranging from yellow and white to green and blue—depend on the specific mineral composition and the amount of precipitation that year.

One particularly fascinating process involves magnesium sulfate, which crystallizes in summer heat, amplifying the colors. These vibrant spots are surrounded by hardened mineral deposits,

which form natural walkways between the pools.

Spotted Lake's mineral bounty has been both a blessing and a battleground. During World War I, its minerals were harvested for use in ammunition production. For nearly 40 years, the lake and surrounding land were privately owned by the Ernest Smith family, who attempted to commercialize it by developing it into a spa in 1979. However, resistance from the Syilx First Nation thwarted these plans.

In 2001, a landmark event occurred when 22 hectares of land around Spotted Lake were purchased for \$720,000. This acquisition was funded largely by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, ensuring the lake's protection as a sacred and ecological site. Today, a fence surrounds the lake, preserving its fragile ecosystem and limiting direct human interaction.

Spotted Lake is not just a visual and cultural wonder—it's also a scientific one. Its hypersaline environment has drawn researchers studying extremophile microbes, organisms that thrive in high-salinity conditions. Such research offers insights into the possibility of life in extreme environments, including extraterrestrial settings like Mars. The lake's unique combination of minerals and microbial life has become a valuable natural laboratory for comparative planetology.

To the Syilx Okanagan Nation, Spotted Lake has long been revered as a sacred place. The Syilx people have attributed healing properties to its waters, using them for therapeutic purposes for centuries. Each mineral-rich pool is believed to address specific ailments.

What a wonderland HaShem has given us!

ON ALEX CLARE, MICROSOFT, AND SHABBOS

Rabbi David Ashear shared the following incredible story. Alex Clare, born in 1985, grew up in London with a totally secular background. He was passionate about music, and very talented. He played numerous instruments, sang, composed songs, and was determined to make music his career.

In 2007, at the age of 22, he started learning about Judaism and felt very spiritually connected. He began keeping kosher and then committed to observing Shabbos. When he eventually signed a contract with a major record label, Island Records, he told them up front that he would not perform on Shabbos. They were not happy about it, but they agreed because he was so talented.

He recorded his debut album with Island, but needed opportunities to promote it. As it happened, every event or appearance he was offered was scheduled for Friday night, and Alex turned them all down. Then, an excellent opportunity arose. He was offered the chance to do a world tour with a very famous British singer. His producers told him, "This is it, the chance you've been waiting for!" But Alex told them, "I'm sorry, it comes out on my holiday of Passover. I'm going to have to turn it down." His album was released that summer, but lack of name recognition precluded a positive response.

Several months later, right after Yom Kippur, Alex had a message on his phone from Island Records. "You're not going to believe this, but BBC Radio told us that they had a cancellation for one of their segments and they want you to play live. This will be in front of a national audience and broadcast throughout Europe. You will receive national coverage and gain thousands of listeners. This is what we need to promote your album. The best part of it is that it's on a Thursday night, so you can do it." Alex couldn't believe the opportunity he was hearing about. Thursday night, however, was the first night of Succos. With a lot of courage, Alex called his promoters and said he couldn't do it. This was the last straw. They told him, "If you turn this down, we are voiding your contract. This will result in your being blacklisted and will basically end your very short career."

At that time, Alex was penniless. He couldn't even make his next rent payment. But he began to think of the piyut he had read that day, on Yom Kippur, about Rabbi Amnon who gave up his life for Judaism. With tremendous strength, he said to himself, If he could give up his life, I can give up my music. He told his promoters that he would not play on his holiday under any circumstances, and indeed they voided his contract. His dreams were shattered in an instant.

Sorely in need of chizuk, Alex went to his Rabbi, Rabbi Dovid Tugendhaft. "Rabbi, I don't understand," he said. "All I have ever done since I came to religion is sacrifice for Judaism, and now I lose everything?" His Rabbi replied, "This reminds me of the story of Avraham Avinu. He invested his whole life toward changing the world and spreading the belief in One G-d, a loving and compassionate G-d Who doesn't want people sacrificing their children to idolatry. And then he was asked to sacrifice his own son, which would have made his teachings a mockery in the eyes of the world. Avraham would have to give up on his lifelong mission, but he did it and became great as a result. That was one of the greatest moments in Jewish history."

The Rabbi continued, "Alex, you are being asked to give up your dream for Hashem. It will make you great."

A few trying months passed, until one day, he received a phone call from Microsoft. They wanted to use one of his tracks to launch their new version of Internet Explorer. Of course, he agreed, and the song was used in an ad in March 2012. Soon the song was playing all over the world. It became the number one hit in Germany, number four on the U.K. singles chart and number seven in the U.S. His debut album sold over six million copies.

Alex Clare became a multimillionaire; he did not lose by keeping Shabbos.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the two taxis, Brooklyn Posek, Rabbi Moshe Yosef Weiner, answered that the taxi which arrived first should be the one used. However, the second taxi driver, who made the trip to pick them up, should be mollified with a small amount of money.

This week's Table Talk is dedicated in memory of

חיה לאה בת שמואל

whose 6th yearzeit was the first day of ראש חודש כסלו

by Dr. and Mrs. Michael Ring



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