



## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



## SPLIT THE MINYAN?

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

There were once two members of a shul who came to daven Maariv, and each of them had a Yahrtzeit. The custom is that when someone has a Yahrtzeit, they lead the tzibbur, the congregation, as the chazzan, as an elevation of the neshama of the deceased.

Both were members of the shul, and both had a Yahrtzeit on the same night. They were trying to decide who should have the opportunity to lead.

Chaim said, "You know what? Since we both have Yahrtzeits, let's split the minyan. There are 50 people in the shul. We'll divide the group, and each of us will lead our own minyan."



## NO ROOM FOR MEDIOCRITY

In this week's Parsha, B'chukosai, the Torah lays down in front of us what our blessings and otherwise depend upon. In great detail we are told that when we commit our lives to the study of and adherence to the Torah our blessing will be multifold and if we fail to live up to that commitment we will invariably fall very far away from HaShem and over time our connection to HaShem will deteriorate to complete rejection of Him and His Torah which will then lead to the worst tragedies.

This presents two questions. The first is that the implication is that there is no middle ground. We are expected to be totally committed and if not we will end up in total rejection. Must we always be perfect? Is there no room for mediocrity? Granted, mediocrity should never be a goal but can the Torah not tolerate mediocrity? If we lack that total commitment are we doomed to the other side?

The second question is that if our commitment to Torah study and adherence is somewhat lacking, why should we backslide into rejection of HaShem and His Torah?

If we view our Torah as a cannon of Jewish law to which we must commit ourselves just as any set of laws created by a state then our question is valid. Just as we would expect with any set of laws handed down to us by our governor. He expects us to observe his laws and maintain the law and order he wishes to create in his state. If there is some minor infringement against those laws it is not terrible. Nobody expects a harsh punishment if folks will drive 10 mph over the posted speed limit. Naturally there may be consequences but we certainly would not say that this behavior will lead the perpetrator to becoming a traitor.

But Dovid responded, "That's a good idea, but I'm not sure it's appropriate to split the minyan. There's a concept of b'rov am hadras melech, when more people come together to do mitzvos, it brings greater glory and honor to HaShem."

He continued, "So I think splitting the group wouldn't be ideal. Maybe one of us should lead, and the other should be mevater, willingly give up the opportunity."

They brought the question to a Rav.

What do you think is preferred in a case like this?

When two people have a Yahrtzeit, should the minyan be split so each can lead a smaller group?

Or is it better to keep the minyan whole and have one person step aside, making that very act of yielding their mitzvah and creating a b'rov am hadras melech an elevation of the neshama of the deceased?

Thank you to my friend Yair Mishory for bringing me this question.



However, our Torah is not simply a code of laws set by the Creator. The Torah is the instruction manual by which we maintain and develop our relationship with HaShem.

Judaism is a relationship that HaShem has with His people. Over 3,700 years ago He chose Avraham Avinu and created an eternal bond of loving relationship with him and his descendants. Like any strong relationship there was complete commitment to one another, between HaShem and Avraham. HaShem committed Himself to be the eternal Guide of Avraham's children and Avraham committed himself to teaching his children to follow in the ways of HaShem.

Relationships have two distinct qualities. First, they are dynamic and change from moment to moment. The relationship with someone may be strong one day and the next day it changes. One can never assume the status quo will remain the same.

The second distinct quality is that it never reaches absolute perfection; there is always room to grow. If a man were to say that his relationship with his wife has reached 100% perfection, that would mean that he cannot create a deeper relationship with her than he currently has. That would be a sad commentary. The reason is because relationships can always grow deeper and stronger than it was the moment before.

The Torah contains the rules governing the relationship between HaShem and us. Since the nature of relationships is that it is fluid and is always subject to change we must be vigilant to keeping our total commitment to the study and observance of His Torah. A couple who defines their relationship as mediocre should not expect to grow closer to each other with time. Actually, the reverse will occur. The nature of relationships is that they are always changing. If not drawing closer they will draw further away.

It is no wonder that without our ongoing vigilance to maintain and to grow our commitment we will actually backslide to a point where the worst could, Heaven forbid, happen.

Have a wonderful Shabbos

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### THE SEA PIG

Way down at the bottom of the ocean, far deeper than a scuba diver can swim, deeper than sunlight can shine, lives one of the most unusual and mysterious animals in the world. This animal looks a bit like a marshmallow with legs and behaves like a pig in search of truffles. Meet *Scotoplanes globosa*, better known by its delightful nickname: the sea pig.

At first glance, you might think someone dropped a balloon animal into the deep sea. But this soft-bodied, slow-moving creature isn't here to party; it's here to clean up. With a snout-like mouth, squishy body, and odd-looking legs, the sea pig is one of nature's weirdest and most wonderful deep-sea recyclers. You won't hear any oinks in the deep ocean, but sea pigs earned their name from early scientists who thought their plump, pale-pink bodies and snuffling behavior looked a lot like little pigs rooting in mud. Their Latin name, *porcus marinus*, means "sea pig," and the name stuck.

But don't be fooled by their farm-animal nickname; sea pigs aren't mammals at all. They're sea cucumbers, a group of squishy animals in the echinoderm family. That makes them cousins of starfish and sea urchins. While they may look soft and jelly-like, sea pigs are tough survivors in one of Earth's most extreme environments: the ocean floor.

How deep do sea pigs live? Try more than 3,000 feet, and often much deeper. Some have even been spotted nearly 33,000 feet down in the Philippine Trench. That's more than six miles beneath the surface, in a place with crushing pressure, freezing cold, and complete darkness. But sea pigs aren't rare oddballs; they're actually pretty common down there, living on the abyssal plains of every major ocean, from the Atlantic to the Indian and Pacific.

In this pitch-black world, sea pigs shuffle across the soft ocean mud, always in search of something tasty.

Sea pigs are what scientists call deposit feeders, meaning they eat bits of organic material, called "marine snow," that sink down from the surface. This snow isn't made of ice but rather flakes of dead plankton, fish excrement, algae, and other particles that fall like slow-motion confetti through the water column. Sometimes even giant whale carcasses, called "whale falls," crash to the sea floor, offering a feast.

Unlike most sea cucumbers that slither or crawl, sea pigs walk. Yes, walk! Those squishy-looking "legs" are actually inflatable tube feet, and they work a lot like balloons. The sea pig fills them with seawater and then uses gentle muscle contractions to walk along the ocean floor. It's the only known sea cucumber that moves this way. This motion is powered by a system called peristaltic stride, a wave of movement that travels through the legs as fluid shifts from one foot to the next. Think of it like squeezing a water bottle: push one end and the water flows forward. That's how sea pigs walk.

If they get startled, they can float upward for a short time and swim away using flapping lobes on their sides. For a creature with no bones or real muscles, that's pretty impressive. Look closely at a sea pig through a deep-sea camera and you might notice something strange: you can see right through it. The skin is

translucent, so you can spot its internal organs and sometimes even parasites inside. That's not a weakness; it's a clever survival trick.

Pigmentation takes energy to produce, and in the deep sea, food is hard to come by. Sea pigs therefore save energy by skipping the pigments. Their jelly-like, see-through bodies help them blend into the darkness, and they don't waste energy on armor, shells, or color.

Sea pigs aren't just cleaners of the ocean floor; they're also mobile homes. Juvenile king crabs, snails, and even tiny shrimp-like crustaceans called tanaids often hitch a ride on sea pigs or burrow into their bodies. To some animals, a sea pig is both shelter and snack bar. One famous example involves king crabs that ride on the backs of sea pigs like surfers catching a wave. Scientists believe the crabs use the sea pigs for protection; after all, standing out in the wide-open mud makes you easy prey. About one in five sea pigs hosts a crab companion.

Not all relationships are friendly. Some snails and crustaceans bore holes into the sea pig's body wall and live inside, feeding on its internal fluids. It's not a great deal for the sea pig, but it shows how important these creatures are to deep-sea ecosystems, not just as eaters but also as habitats.

On land, earthworms help gardens grow by tunneling through soil, mixing it up, and adding oxygen. Sea pigs do something similar under the sea. As they plow through deep mud, they re-oxygenate the sediment, keeping it healthy for other bottom-dwelling creatures. In this way, sea pigs act like underwater farmers, quietly shaping the deep-sea landscape.

Because of this, scientists now use sea pigs as indicator species. Their numbers and behavior can tell researchers how much organic carbon is reaching the ocean floor and how healthy a region of the abyssal plain might be.

Though they're not large, most sea pigs are about 4 to 6 inches long, they can grow up to seven inches. Despite their size, they are incredibly fragile. Their bodies are filled with water, and without the crushing pressure of the deep sea they can literally fall apart. That's why researchers study them using remote-operated submersibles or special pressurized chambers.

Unlike many other sea cucumbers that use a respiratory tree, a kind of water lung, sea pigs don't have lungs or gills at all. Instead, they absorb oxygen directly through their skin and their tube feet. This method works perfectly in their low-oxygen, muddy environment. Their thin, gelatinous body wall makes this type of respiration possible. Talk about a body built for the deep.

Look at a photo of a sea pig and you'll notice three pairs of floppy, antenna-like structures sticking up from its back. These are called papillae, and they're actually modified tube feet, not true sensory antennae. Scientists aren't sure what they do, but many believe they act as chemical detectors that help the animal "sniff" out food and possibly stabilize it, like a tightrope walker's pole.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world.

## LET'S SAY I TOLD YOU THAT I WORSHIPPED AVODAH ZARAH TODAY FOR A FEW SECONDS

Rav Yaakov Galinsky told the following story:

Let me share with you a story about Rav Yisrael Salanter during his final years, when he was living in Berlin. One day, Rav Naftali Ehrman came to visit Rav Yisrael at his small apartment and found him pacing back and forth. Rav Yisrael was visibly agitated. Immediately, Rav Naftali asked, "Rebbe, what happened? Why do you look so upset?"

Rav Yisrael responded, "I'll tell you what just happened. Two Yidden who recently arrived from Kovno came to visit me. As you know, I established a Beis Medrash there where people could learn Mussar with hispa'alus—intense emotional involvement. I founded the Mussar movement to create Batei Medrashim where people would repeat a pasuk or a teaching from Chazal over and over until it sank from the mind into the bones.

But not everyone appreciates that approach. There are misnagdim—opponents—who don't support it. These two Yidden told me that in the Beis Medrash I had set up in Kovno, people are now trying to change the rules and structure of how I intended the learning to be conducted.

And as they were telling me this I got angry and upset. They didn't notice it—maybe it was just a fleeting thought—but do you know what that means? Don't Chazal say, 'Kol hako'eis ke'ilu oved avodah zarah'—'Anyone who becomes angry is as if he worships idols'? Why? Because someone who truly believes that Hakadosh Baruch Hu runs the world, who understands that He controls every detail and that everything that happens is for the good, wouldn't become angry. Getting angry implies that you are, kaviyachol, upset with Hashem.

Can you imagine? I had a fleeting thought of being upset with Hashem. If He made these two Yidden come and tell me what's happening—that people are interfering with the Mussar movement—then that is His will. Yes, I'll do all the hishtadlus I can to defend it and ensure that no harm comes to it. But to get angry? That's like being upset at Hashem. That reveals a lack of emunah and bitachon.

Let's say I told you that I, Rav Yisrael Salanter, worshipped avodah zarah today for a few seconds. Wouldn't you understand why I'm so upset and agitated with myself? Well, that's exactly what happened. For a couple of seconds today, I was unhappy with Hakadosh Baruch Hu—rachmana litzlan. That's avodah zarah. That's a lack of emunah and bitachon. And because of that, I have no rest. I'm deeply agitated. I'm very upset."



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the phone that was confiscated by the principal: Rav Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed, Bava Kama 266) wrote that the confiscation is not considered a loss for which the borrower must pay. This is because the owner going to the principal's office to retrieve the phone and likely being reprimanded is, in truth, not a bad thing.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated as loving memory of my parents,  
**Israel Pismanik and Frida Kogan Pismanik**

By Efim and Yelena Shvarts



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