



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE CROCS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

As we know, Tisha Beav is around the corner. Please enjoy the following true story that relates to Tisha Be'av

It was right before Tisha B'Av, when Donny went to a Jewish shoe store because he wanted to buy a new pair of Crocs for Tisha B'Av. He bought the Crocs, but when he wore them on Tisha B'Av, he realized that the two shoes were actually different. They were the same size and color, but they were from two different brands.



COMPLETE COMMITMENT

As we approach the end of the Book of Bamidbar, HaShem tells Moshe to instruct the people: "As you will soon be crossing the Jordan River to the Land of Canaan, you must conquer the Land and destroy all their places of idol worship..." Rashi asks: this order has already been given several times, so what is being added here? He brings a teaching from our Sages that Moshe was informing the people that if they wished to safely cross the Jordan River, they must commit themselves to eradicating all members of the Canaanite nations. The only way for the kedusha of the Land to reveal itself is if there remains no vestige of its former inhabitants.

The Torah expresses concern that if the Canaanites are allowed to remain, we will become attached to their ways and stray from the path of HaShem. The Sages continue: "If you are not committed to carrying out this order, then the waters of the Jordan will drown you on the spot."

This presents a difficult question. In fact, after entering the Land, we never fully carried out this order. Several nations remained, and we suffered as a result. So why were we not swept away by the Jordan River? We did not live up to that commitment.

It turned out that he had accidentally taken one shoe from each of two different sets, which meant those other two sets were now unsellable.

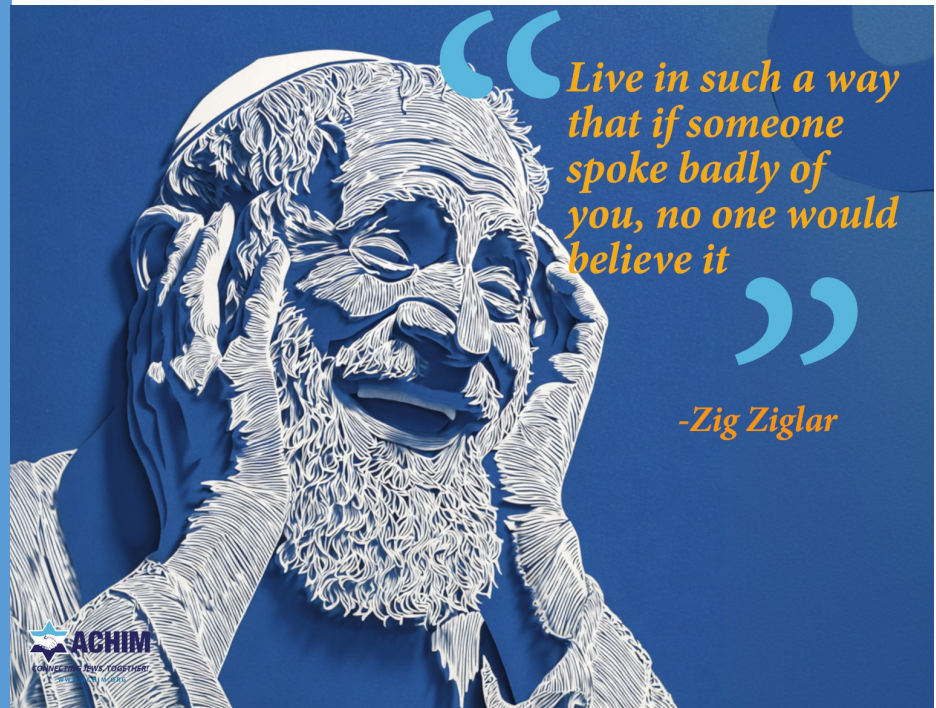
After Tisha B'Av, he went back to the store and said, "I feel terrible. I accidentally took one shoe from two different sets. What do you want me to do?"

The store owner replied, "I really appreciate your honesty, but I think you should pay for two pairs of shoes. Each pair costs \$40, so I think you should pay \$80."

Danny responded, "Why should I pay for two pairs? I only took one pair of shoes—just two shoes. Why should I pay for two full pairs?"

So they agreed to bring the question to a Rav. The question is: Does Danny have to pay for two full pairs of shoes, since he made two pairs unsellable? Or does he only need to pay for one pair, because in the end, he only took two shoes?

What do you think?



In addressing this question, the Sfas Emes (5633) quotes his father, Rav Avraham Mordechai Alter, who taught that every Jew must accept upon himself to be completely dedicated to HaShem—so completely that there should not be a moment when his mind wanders from that focus. Rav Avraham Mordechai continued: even though a person knows this level of focus is far beyond him, nevertheless, if his desire to carry out this commitment is sincere, he will succeed in fulfilling it to a significant degree—much more so than had he not committed himself at all.

The Sfas Emes continues this thought: even though our ancestors, after crossing the Jordan and entering

the Land, never fully fulfilled their commitment to eradicate all the inhabitants, that original commitment gave them the strength to eventually accomplish this mission before Moshiach's arrival. It gave them the spiritual power to resist the temptation to assimilate with the native inhabitants. The reason the Jordan River did not sweep them away was because there was a sincere commitment—and that commitment bore fruit.

The life of a Jew is a continuous journey of drawing ourselves closer to HaShem. In light of Rav Avraham Mordechai's teaching, this growth becomes far more powerful when it is grounded in a sincere commitment to rise above our current capabilities.

Have a wonderful Shabbos,
Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

SALT DOMES, SALT GLACIERS AND RAINBOW PEAKS OF IRAN'S ZAGROS MOUNTAINS

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As we know, Iran has been in the news for the past year. But Iran also holds one of the major Niflaos haborei. If you looked down at Earth from space, your eye might catch a strange pattern stretching across Iran: hundreds of long, rippling ridges running like waves through the land. This is the Zagros Mountains—a place shaped by slow-motion tectonic drama. If you zoomed in closer, something even stranger would appear. Gleaming white hills. Rivers of salt oozing across the land. Bright red and orange streaks that look painted by a divine brush. Welcome to one of the weirdest and most wonderful geological playgrounds on Earth.

This is the world of the Zagros salt domes and salt glaciers—a region where salt doesn't just sit in your shaker. Here, it rises from deep inside the Earth, bursts out of the ground like frosting from a tube, and spreads across the land like ice. These "namakiers," as locals call them, are unlike anything else on the planet. And believe it or not, they're still on the move.

It all starts far beneath the ground. The Arabian tectonic plate and the Eurasian plate have been colliding for thousands of years—and they're still crashing into each other today. This mighty collision squeezed layers of ancient seabed into folded mountains—the ridges and valleys of the Zagros. Think of it like two cars slowly pushing against a giant stack of blankets: the pile crumples, folds, and eventually pops upward. Hidden under those blankets is a strange and squishy layer: the Hormuz Formation, an ancient soup of rock salt, gypsum, clays, and even volcanic rocks. And here's the kicker: this layer of salt is less dense than the rock above it. Like a helium balloon under a heavy tarp, it wants to rise. Over time, this deep salt begins to ooze upward, squeezing between cracks and pushing aside harder rocks. The result? Giant underground "balloons" of salt that slowly rise and punch through the surface. When they finally break through, they form salt domes—also known as *kuh-e-namak*, or "mountains of salt."

In the Zagros, there are more than 130 of these salt domes, packed into a single region. That's more than anywhere else on Earth. But the salt doesn't stop once it reaches the surface. Instead, it starts to flow. Yep, that's right. Salt in the Zagros can actually move across the landscape like a glacier—slow, steady, and unstoppable. These are the namakiers, and some are over 14 kilometers long (about nine miles!). Namakiers are strange to behold. Some look like giant bowties or tongues, flowing out from a central dome. They're crisscrossed with ridges and gullies, almost like the cracked surface of a frozen river. And they move—though not fast. The leading edges creep along at just a few centimeters a year, about the speed your fingernails grow. Still, that movement is enough to shape valleys, push rocks, and even build 90-meter cliffs (that's taller than a 25-story building). The salt itself looks dark and muddy, not sparkling white. That's because it drags along all sorts of debris—clay, volcanic ash, iron minerals—from deep inside the Earth. Windblown dust also sticks to the damp salt, turning it gray or black over time.

Because salt is so incredibly soluble, these domes don't just grow—they dissolve, too. Rainwater eats away at the salt like candy under a faucet. The result is a landscape full of salt caves, sinkholes, and even briny waterfalls.

One of the most magical places is Namakdan Cave, on Qeshm

land in the Persian Gulf. At 6.4 kilometers long, it's the longest salt cave in the world. Inside, you'll find glistening walls of pure halite, delicate salt stalactites hanging like icicles, and echoing chambers carved by rushing brine.

But don't get too comfortable—this cave is alive! Salt caves grow and collapse within human lifetimes, sometimes changing shape after a single rain-storm. That means Namakdan might look different next year... or even next week.

Some of the most eye-popping features of the Zagros salt domes aren't just their shape—they're their colors. As the salt rises, it mixes up the rocks around it like a giant Earth-blender. The result? Hillsides streaked with reds, oranges, yellows, pinks, and blacks—a painter's palette of minerals exposed to air and water. Red and orange come from hematite, an iron-rich mineral that literally rusts in the air. On Hormuz Island, this red soil is so rich it's used as a spice, a paint pigment, and even a ceramic glaze. Yellows come from goethite, another iron mineral. White and gray come from gypsum and anhydrite. Black layers are often dolomite or ancient oil-stained rock, brought up from deep below. Some of the minerals, like greenish apatite or gemmy zuniite, are so rare that mineral collectors from around the world take notice. It's no wonder Hormuz is nicknamed the "Rainbow Island."

You'd think a place made of pure salt would be lifeless—but think again. The areas around salt domes are home to halophytes—plants that don't just survive in salty soils, they love them. Some look like mini-succulents; others grow into thick tamarisk shrubs. All of them have special tricks to deal with the salt—like storing it in their leaves or pumping it out through special glands. And then there are the microbes. In the cracks and pools around the domes, and even trapped inside salt crystals, scientists have found halophiles—salt-loving microorganisms. Some can live inside tiny brine bubbles in a salt grain for eons, surviving extreme heat, dryness, radiation, and time itself. How? Some build special proteins that only work in salty environments. Others carry multiple copies of their DNA, so they can repair damage over time. These microscopic marvels are now a hot topic in astrobiology, the science of life in space. If life can survive in a Zagros salt dome, could it survive on ancient Mars?

The Zagros salt domes haven't just shaped the land—they've shaped human history, too.

Over 2,000 years ago, miners tunneled into salt mountains like the one at Chehrabad. When the tunnels collapsed, the salt entombed them—and preserved them. Today, they are called the Saltmen. Their skin, hair, clothes—even their boots—are still intact. These naturally mummified miners give us a window into the ancient world of the Achaemenid Empire of King Korush, and into the harsh, dangerous work of early salt mining.

Other caves were used not for mining but for worship. Hidden sanctuaries like Daya Cave served as temples for ancient Persian religions. Inside, archaeologists found paintings and scenes of ancient rituals.

So the next time you sprinkle salt your challah board, remember the Zagros. There, salt isn't just a seasoning—it's a reminder of Hashem's wondrous world.

I NEVER OPENED OR CLOSED A WINDOW IF THERE WERE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE ROOM WITH ME

As a testament to his deep sensitivity toward others, Rav Shimshon Pincus once let the following idea slip, seemingly unaware of the awe-inspiring nature of his nonchalant statement:

"I never opened or closed a window if there were other people in the room with me—even immediate family members. Just because I'm hot doesn't mean the other person isn't comfortable or even cold. Even if he wouldn't actually object to me opening the window, you never know if he just feels awkward about protesting."

"So what did you do instead?" Rav Pincus was asked.

He answered, "What's the question? If I was hot, I took off my jacket, and if I was cold, I put on a sweater."

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the electrician, Rav Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed Bava Kama 305) wrote that the electrician, midinei Shamayim, would have to pay for the electricity that was used due to installing the faulty switch and not returning for five days after he said he would, since it is considered a grama (indirect causation). However, he would not be responsible for the entire amount, because it was also the tenants' fault for leaving the light on. Therefore, the electrician would share the cost of the electricity with the tenants.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of the bris of
Zev Wealcatch
By the Zelinger and Wealcatch families



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