



## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THANK YOU FOR A JOB WELL DONE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

My friend, Shlomo Golfeiz, the owner of a local renovations company was finishing a kitchen renovation for a client. When it came time for payment, the client asked if he could pay in installments. Shlomo agreed without hesitation.

A few days later, the client showed up at Shlomo's home holding a very expensive bottle of whiskey. He said he had been moved by Shlomo's patience and customer service and wanted to express his gratitude. Shlomo thanked him and put the bottle aside.



### THE PARADIGM SHIFT TO AN EIGHT STEMMED MENORAH

The third chapter of Pirkei Avos teaches that the one who accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah, HaShem will remove from him the yoke of the monarchy and the yoke of derech erez, which refers to the responsibility of working hard to earn one's livelihood. In explaining this Mishna, Maharal writes that we find these three responsibilities represented in the Beis Hamikdash.

The Shulchan, which was situated in the Heichal, represents the yoke of the monarchy. The Menorah, which was also situated in the Heichal opposite the Shulchan, represents the yoke of livelihood. The connection of the Menorah to livelihood is that the Menorah with its seven stems represents the natural material world created in the seven days of creation. Therefore, the responsibility of working for our bread, which is a consequence of the reality of the natural world, falls under the purview of the Menorah. The Aron HaKodesh, which housed the Two Tablets and was situated in the Kodesh HaKodashim, represents Torah.

Maharal explains that the Heichal represents the material world while the Kodesh HaKodashim represents the upper world, the spiritual world. Therefore, when one accepts upon himself the yoke of responsibility of the upper world, that of Torah, the yokes of the material world will be removed from him.

As we approach the beautiful Yom Tov of Chanukah, whose eight days represent the world of spirituality and whose eight-stemmed Menorah displays that representation, the Maharal's insight seems somewhat difficult. The Maharal teaches that the Menorah represents nature and the world created in the seven days of creation. Yet it was the material world, with all its wisdom, that Greek ideology placed upon their cultural pedestal. The Greeks idolized the material world. How is it that the Menorah, which also represents the wisdom of Torah, can simultane-

Later that night, something bothered him. Was he allowed to accept the gift?

If a client gives a present during a normal business transaction, there is usually no issue. But here, once Shlomo agreed to installment payments, his fee essentially turned into a loan. That raised a question. Was the whiskey an added benefit connected to that loan, which could be a concern of ribbis? Perhaps the whiskey was an added benefit to the lender, given during the period in which the borrower owed money. If the gift was motivated by appreciation for being allowed to pay over time, then it resembles ribbis, an extra perk given because a loan was extended.

Unsure, Shlomo called the client. He explained that there might be a halachic issue with accepting the bottle and that he needed to find out what to do next.

What is the correct halachic course of action? Could Shlomo keep the whiskey, return it, or handle it another way?

## MITZVA MEME



ously represent the material world?

The answer to this question is the crux of the struggle between us and the Greeks.

Both images of the Menorah that stood in the Beis Hamikdash are accurate. On one side, the Menorah represents the wisdom of Torah, which transcends human experience and understanding. On the other side, it represents the natural material world created in seven days. Although this appears paradoxical, both images are accurate, as follows.

The Kodesh HaKodashim, the chamber in which the Aron HaKodesh was housed, stood adjacent to the Heichal where the Menorah stood. In that chamber, the laws of physics were suspended. Chazal teach that although the dimensions of the Aron were one and a half cubits by two and a half cubits, nevertheless it did not take up any space. The measurement from the northern wall of the chamber to the northern side of

the Aron was ten cubits, and the measurement from the southern wall to the southern side of the Aron was ten cubits. And yet the total distance from wall to wall was twenty cubits. The Aron existed while taking up no physical space. That chamber belonged to the upper world where there are no laws of physics.

When one saw the Menorah, which stood just outside the Kodesh HaKodashim, in the context and proximity of that chamber, then the entire natural world with all its wisdom became an extension of the word of HaShem. In this context, the Menorah represents man's portion in Torah, including all the creativity that Torah allows for man to develop his own understanding of the Word of HaShem. In the context of the Kodesh HaKodashim, the Menorah itself transcends the natural world.

The Greeks, however, severed the connection between the Kodesh HaKodashim and the Heichal. Their goal was to decapitate the Kodesh Hakadashim from the Beis Hamkidosh. When one views the Menorah stripped from that connection, it remains completely bound by the natural laws of the material world.

Through our conflict with the Greeks, we lifted the Menorah from its state of seven lights to eight lights. Even today, when we no do not have the Kodesh HaKodashim, we are able to connect the Menorah to her Source.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and a lichtige Chanukah.

**Paysach Diskind**





# SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

## THE SECRETS OF PLASMA

As we begin the Yom Tov that centers on light, it is worth pausing to appreciate an astonishing substance that appears even in the flame of a menorah. Plasma.

If you flip on a fluorescent bulb during a dark evening and the room fills with pale light, you have brushed against this fourth state of matter. We grow up learning about solids, liquids, and gases, and those lessons make it seem as if the story ends there. Ice melts into water, water boils into steam, and the cycle feels complete. Yet far beyond Earth, in the spaces between stars and deep inside the engines that power the sun, matter behaves in ways those three states cannot explain.

When atoms are pushed so hard that their electrons break free, the result is a glowing mix of charged particles. It looks like gas but behaves like something far more dynamic. This is plasma, and it turns out to be the universe's preferred state of matter.

More than 99 percent of the visible universe is plasma. The stars scattered across the night sky are enormous spheres of ionized matter held together by gravity. The thin gas drifting between them is plasma as well, shaped by magnetic fields that stretch across entire galaxies. Compared to all that, Earth is the oddball, a small island of rock, liquid water, and neutral gas surrounded by an ocean of electrified matter.

Scientists did not always recognize what they were seeing. When Sir William Crookes studied this strange glowing substance in 1879, he called it "radiant matter." In the 1920s, Irving Langmuir renamed it "plasma" because the glowing electric gas reminded him of blood plasma carrying nutrients through the body. The comparison stuck, even though the two substances share only a name.

What makes plasma so unusual is what happens inside it. In a superheated gas, atoms gain so much energy that their electrons separate from their nuclei. The gas becomes a mixture of free electrons and positive ions. At that moment, it is no longer neutral. It becomes electrically active.

Because of this charge, plasma behaves in ways gases cannot. It conducts electricity with ease. It reacts strongly to magnetic fields. It can twist into spirals, form delicate filaments, or stretch into rippling sheets of light. These shifting structures often give plasma a strangely lifelike quality, as though the substance is breathing energy.

Plasmas vary widely depending on temperature. In stars, where the heat reaches millions of degrees, everything in the mix is intensely hot. In laboratory settings, or even in a novelty plasma globe, plasmas can be "non thermal." In these cases, electrons are extremely energetic while heavier particles remain relatively cool. A plasma can be cool to the touch even though its electrons carry enormous energy. This odd combination makes plasma flexible, surprising, and useful in ways ordinary matter is not.

One of the most dramatic examples on Earth is lightning. When a thundercloud builds up enough electrical charge, nature

releases it in a single burst. A bolt of lightning tears through the sky and turns a thin column of air into plasma. For a brief moment, that streak reaches nearly fifty thousand degrees Fahrenheit, hotter than the surface of the sun. The rapid expansion of air creates the shock-wave we hear as thunder. For that blink of time, the sky becomes a laboratory showing how easily gas can jump into the plasma state when enough energy arrives.

Another striking example appears near the poles. The Aurora Borealis and Aurora Australis are vast curtains of glowing plasma. Each day, the sun sends out a stream of charged particles known as the solar wind. When this wind reaches Earth, our magnetic field deflects most of it, but some particles slip through near the poles. They collide with oxygen and nitrogen in the atmosphere, transferring energy and creating shimmering red, green, and violet light. The silent movement of these sheets across the sky is one of nature's most beautiful plasma displays.

The sun itself is not a ball of fire, since fire requires oxygen and there is none in space. Instead, the sun is a giant sphere of plasma heated so intensely that atoms cannot remain intact. Deep within it, hydrogen nuclei crash together in a process known as nuclear fusion, releasing enormous amounts of energy. This energy travels outward and eventually becomes the sunlight and warmth that reach Earth. Understanding this process is one of science's major goals. If researchers can recreate controlled fusion on Earth, they could produce clean, abundant energy. In magnetic reactors called tokamaks, (pictured right) scientists heat hydrogen plasma to temperatures far hotter than the sun's core. Giant magnets hold the plasma in place, since no physical container could withstand such heat. In effect, they are suspending a miniature star inside a magnetic cage.

Plasma's electrical nature makes it practical in everyday life. A neon sign glowing red or a fluorescent bulb casting white light works by sending electricity through a gas and turning it into plasma. As electrons and ions collide, they emit light. Different gases create different colors. Many of the technologies we rely on use plasma more subtly. The microchips in phones and computers are etched using plasma, which can carve intricate patterns into silicon at microscopic scales. Without controlled plasma, modern electronics would not exist.

Even the familiar flame of a candle, including the flames on a menorah, contains a tiny amount of plasma. Most of the flame is hot gas, but at the upper region where temperatures peak, there are free ions that make the flame slightly conductive. With strong enough electric fields, current can pass through it. Magnetic fields can even disturb the ions and the flow of oxygen enough to extinguish the flame.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

## WHAT BETTER KADDISH CAN I SEND MY FATHER THAN TO HELP ESTABLISH A HOME OF TORAH?"

Every year, Rav Eliyhau Dessler had the practice that he would stay in Gateshead for the week of his father's yahrzeit so that he could spend the week immersed in learning and lead the davening in the Kollel.

One year, however, on the very evening of his father's yahrzeit, Rav Dessler asked Rabbi Waltner to accompany him to the train station. There were no cabs available, and they had to walk all the way to the Newcastle train station. Rabbi Dessler absolutely refused to permit his younger friend to carry his bag despite the very long walk. On the steps of the train, Rabbi Walter wondered why Rav Dessler was departing to London precisely at the moment when he should be davening at the amud.

Rav Dessler explained to Rabbi Waltner that he had received a call from a rosh yeshiva in London that a shidduch between a girl in Gateshead Seminary and a yeshiva bachur in London had run into difficulties, and that Rabbi Dessler might be able to save it. "I thought to myself," said Rabbi Dessler, "what better kaddish can I send my father than to help establish a home of Torah?"

Rav Dessler was prepared to give up his long-established hanhagos (ways of conducting himself) for the benefit of helping others. To him that was the best way to say kaddish.

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### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the man who left the bag on a bus, Rabbi Hopfer answered that it seems the rabbi did not have to miss his bus to watch the package. In practice, the rabbi told his wife to get onto the bus while he stayed back to watch the bag. A second before the bus left, the owner returned to pick up his bag.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of the recent engagement of our children  
**Aaron and Avigayil**

By the Borgen and Zelinger families



Brad E. Kauffman Esquire and Kauffman and Forman P.A.  
specializing in corporate and construction law,  
estates, wills and trusts and business litigation.

