

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE MYSTERY BAG

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Dovid was standing at a bus stop in Yerushalayim, waiting for a bus to Bnei Brak. While he was waiting, another man, Mr. Schwartz, approached him and asked, "Excuse me, are you going to Bnei Brak?" Dovid replied, "Yes, I am." Mr. Schwartz then asked, "Could you please bring a small package for me?" Dovid answered, "Okay, sure. I'm happy to help." Mr. Schwartz handed him a small black plastic bag and said, "Great. When you get there, I'll call you, and I'll have somebody pick up the bag in Bnei Brak." So Dovid gave Mr. Schwartz his phone number, and he and his wife boarded the bus. As they got closer to Bnei Brak, Dovid's wife suddenly began feeling very ill. She urgently needed to lie down. So as soon as the bus stopped, at the first possible stop, Dovid and his wife quickly got off and rushed home. In the confusion and haste, Dovid accidentally left the small black bag on the bus.

PROTECT US FROM OUR BLESSINGS

"HaShem shall bless you and protect you."

This is the first of the three brachos with which the kohanim bless the nation. This single bracha seems to mix two blessings into one; it offers both blessing and protection. This question is raised by the Midrash and several answers are presented. Rashi quotes one answer that the blessing itself needs protection. If HaShem were to grant a person much wealth, he would need protection from those who would want to steal it. Today we do not relate to this concern. However, before the banking system, where does one keep his wealth, assets and other belongings? Therefore, the first bracha offers the nation blessing, referring to material wealth. However, without the second component of protection the blessing will not be a source of bracha.

The Midrash in the name of Rav Yitzchok answers that the second component of protection refers to HaShem's protection from failure. When a person becomes blessed with material wealth he enters a danger zone. Human nature is such that upon the acquisition of material wealth Man becomes arrogant. The very same person who, before his wealth, was humble to all, was respectful to the rich and to the poor, was generous to all, and who was able to be happy with himself and the success of others, can turn around on a dime to become jealous of others, to be spiteful and un-

A little while later, Mr. Schwartz called. "Hi, this is the man you met in Yerushalayim. Thank you so much for bringing the package. Can someone pick it up?" Dovid responded, "Oh no. I feel terrible. My wife was sick, and in the rush to get off the bus, I accidentally left the bag behind." Mr. Schwartz exclaimed, "Oh no, that's terrible." Dovid asked, "Why? What was in it?" Mr. Schwartz replied, "There were two sheitels in the bag. Each sheitel was worth 8,000 shekels—about \$2,000. Altogether, the bag contained 16,000 shekels' worth of merchandise that I was supposed to deliver to a relative in Bnei Brak." Dovid felt awful. He said, "I feel terrible about what happened, but I hope you don't think I'm responsible for such a huge loss. I had no idea what was in the bag. Honestly, I thought it was a danish or maybe a shirt. Had I known it contained something so valuable, I would have been much more careful, or I might not have agreed to take it at all. You should have told me how valuable it was. "And besides, my wife was sick. We had to rush off the bus. It was practically an ones, an unavoidable circumstance."

On the other hand, Dovid had accepted responsibility for the package. Halachically, he may have had the status of a shomer chinam, an unpaid guardian. And leaving the bag on the bus could potentially be considered negligence, not merely an unavoidable accident. So the two men discussed the matter respectfully and agreed that whatever the Rav decided, they would accept. The question was brought before Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein: Was Dovid liable for the 16,000-shekel loss of the two sheitels? On one hand, he had accepted responsibility for the package and may have been negligent in leaving it behind. On the other hand, perhaps the owner had an obligation to disclose how valuable the contents were. And perhaps the fact that Dovid's wife became ill rendered the situation an ones, potentially exempting him from liability. That was the question presented before Rav Zilberstein.



Many who imagine that all things may be bought by their riches ...

... forget they have sold themselves.

happy with what he has. This is reflected in several verses where the Torah associates this turnaround with achieving material wealth. One such example we find in the Shema "and I will give you pasture in the field for your livestock and you will eat and be satisfied. Beware, lest your hearts stray you away and you will serve foreign gods etc." Elsewhere in Devarim Moshe tells His people "And HaShem will bring you to the Land ... and to houses filled with all good which was not filled by you, and you will find wells of water that you did not dig... Beware! Lest you forget HaShem Who took you out from Egypt..."

What is it in human nature that material wealth can affect such a turnaround? Our sources teach us that Man is composed of two conflicting parts; his physical self

which pulls him down to his animal instincts and his spiritual self which is a spark of HaShem's GDliness. The latter draws him upwards towards holiness.

So long as one is not deeply connected to his base material self, his upper self yields more influence over him. However, with the increase of affluence and material assets, his lower self becomes heavier and gains stronger influence over him.

Perhaps the first bracha of the birkas kohanim, is actually one complete bracha in which the Kohein blesses us with much material blessing and for the protection of not allowing us to become corrupted from that very blessing. We all daven that HaShem bless us with our material needs but at the very same time we daven that He protect us and our families from the corruptness that often follows on the blessings footsteps.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE SECRETS OF THE TELESCOPEFISH

The telescopefish is one of the strangest and most amazing fish in the deep ocean, and it looks almost too strange to be real. It belongs to the genus *Gigantura*, which has only two known species, *Gigantura chuni* and *Gigantura indica*. Even though the name sounds like it should mean a giant monster fish, the telescopefish is actually small. Most adults are only about six to nine inches long, and even the larger species stays under about a foot. Still, for such a small animal, it has one of the most dramatic appearances in the sea. Its body is thin, silvery, scaleless, and ghostlike, with a long tail filament trailing behind it like a ribbon. It looks delicate, but it is really a skilled deep-sea hunter.

The telescopefish gets its name from its huge tubular eyes. These eyes point forward and upward, almost like built-in binoculars. Most fish have eyes on the sides of their heads, which helps them see danger from many directions. The telescopefish is different. Its forward-facing eyes help it judge distance, which is important when it is trying to strike prey in the dark. Its eyes also gather tiny amounts of light, like a telescope gathers distant light from the sky. In the deep ocean, where sunlight barely reaches, this is a matter of life and death.

Telescopefish usually live far below the surface, often around 500 to 2,000 meters down, and sometimes even deeper. That means they live in the mesopelagic and bathypelagic zones, also called the twilight and midnight zones of the ocean. Down there, the water is cold, dark, and under enormous pressure. Sunlight is almost gone. Many animals make their own light through bioluminescence, so the deep sea can look like a dark room filled with tiny flashes. The telescopefish uses its special eyes to notice those faint glows, or to spot the dark shape of prey swimming above it against the weak light coming from the surface.

One of the most fascinating things about this fish is the way it hunts. Scientists have observed telescopefish swimming vertically, with the head pointing upward, almost as if the fish is standing in the water. This is a brilliant design. If a small fish or squid passes above, it will appear as a shadow against the last traces of light. The telescopefish waits quietly, saving energy, and then strikes when the right meal comes close. In the deep sea, food is rare. A hunter cannot waste energy chasing every possible meal. It must wait, watch, and act at the right moment.

The telescopefish may be small, but its mouth is terrifying. It has long, fang-like teeth that help trap slippery prey. Its jaws can open very wide, so wide that it can swallow prey almost as large as itself, and sometimes even larger. Its stomach can stretch a great deal, which allows it to hold a huge meal. This is especially useful in the deep ocean, where the fish might not eat again for a long time. Some prey can even be folded inside its stomach. The telescopefish does not have ordinary scales. Its body is covered with smooth, reflective skin

that can look silvery or even mirror-like. This may help it blend into its surroundings by reflecting the dim light around it. In the open water, there is nowhere to hide. There are no rocks, plants, or caves nearby. A fish must survive by being hard to see. The telescopefish's reflective body may make it nearly invisible to both predators and prey.

It also lacks a swim bladder, which is the gas-filled organ many fish use to control buoyancy. In the deep sea, a gas-filled organ can be a problem because of the intense pressure. Many deep-sea animals have reduced or unusual body structures that help them survive under conditions that would crush ordinary creatures. The telescopefish has also reduced certain skeletal parts, giving its head and jaws unusual flexibility. It seems built around two main needs: seeing in darkness and swallowing large prey.

Another amazing part of its body is the long ribbon-like extension from the lower part of its tail fin. This tail filament can be very long compared to the fish's body. Scientists are not completely sure what it does, but it may help the fish sense movement or pressure changes in the water, especially from behind. In a place where vision is limited and danger can come from anywhere, even a tiny warning may make the difference between life and death.

The young telescopefish looks so different from the adult that scientists once thought the larvae were a separate kind of fish. The larval stage was even given its own name, the "Rosaura" stage. The young are nearly transparent, which helps them disappear in the upper layers of the ocean. They live much closer to the surface than adults, often in shallower epipelagic waters. As they grow, they go through a dramatic transformation. Their body shape changes, their bones change, their jaws change, and their eyes move forward and become long tubes. This kind of metamorphosis is one of the most extreme known among fishes.

Telescopefish are rarely seen alive. Most of what scientists know comes from specimens caught in deep-sea trawl nets. Because their bodies are soft and delicate, they are often damaged by the time they reach the surface. This makes them difficult to study. Many parts of their life remain mysterious, including their lifespan, mating behavior, population size, and daily habits.

Although the telescopefish has a monster-like face, it is harmless to humans. It is too small, too deep, and too delicate to pose any danger. It also has no importance as a food fish. Yet it is important in another way. It teaches us how much hidden wonder there is in Hashem's creation.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

HE SAID HE IS MY FRIEND!

Rav Elimelech Biderman (top) recalls how Rav Yaakov Galinsky (middle) once received a letter from the Chazon Ish (bottom). The Chazon Ish addressed the letter, "With respect to my friend."

Rav Yaakov used to say that when he passed away, he wanted them to place this letter into his grave.

The reason was that when he would face the ultimate Judgment, he would know that he had a friend there with him. What better friend to have than the Chazon Ish?

Rav Elimelech continues:

One day, I met Rav Yaakov, and he informed me that he was retracting his original request. He no longer wanted the letter from the Chazon Ish to be placed into his grave. I was perplexed! What could have happened to change his mind?

Clearly, my reaction was noticed by Rav Yaakov, so he alleviated my concern.

Rav Yaakov explained that the reason for this change was that while davening, he noticed that it states, Yedidim he'evarta, "The beloved ones were brought across," referring to the Jews who crossed the Yam Suf. This is recited during the Shirah before She-moneh Esrei of Shacharis.

"In essence the verse is saying that every Jew is a beloved friend of Hashem's. There is no need to announce that you are a friend of the Chazon Ish!"

There is much to be gained from this short story. We should never become despondent; remember that every one of us can be comforted by realizing that Hashem is our "beloved friend."

From Experience Greatness by Rabbi Moshe Hubner



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the person who directed the plumbers to the wrong person's house, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein (C'C Bava Kama Page 612) answered that the person who directed them was obligated to pay for the bathtub installation.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in memory of

HaRav Peretz Avraham Dinovitz, z'l HaRav Peretz Avraham ben HaRav Binyamin Moshe z'l

The Torah, the Mitzvos, the g'mulas Chasadeem, and Maaseem toveem that HaRav Peretz Avraham taught live on in all of us whom he taught, for whom he davened, for whom he advocated, and whom he treated as his family of origin.

By Rabbi Yaakov Aaron and Shani Shuvalsky and family and Dr. Yehuda and Tzipora Frager and family.



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