



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



HELP THE DISABLED NEIGHBOR?

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Sadly, people living in Eretz Yisroel have become all too familiar with the terrifying sound of an air-raid siren. When the warning sounds, every second matters. Families rush to their mamad, or bomb shelter, hoping to reach safety before the rockets arrive. Avi lived in an apartment building in the south, an area that had experienced frequent rocket attacks. His next-door neighbor had a serious physical disability and could not make his way down the building's stairs without assistance. One day, the neighbor approached Avi with a request. "If there is ever an air-raid siren, would you please help me get downstairs to the bomb shelter? I simply cannot get there by myself." "Of course," Avi replied. "I'll be happy to help you."

The day came when the sirens began to wail. Instead of immediately running for shelter, Avi hurried next door. He helped his neighbor out of the apartment and began slowly guiding him down the stairs. But Avi quickly realized how frightening the situation really was. On his own, Avi could reach the shelter in perhaps twenty seconds. Helping his neighbor,



WHAT DEFINES PURPOSE

When Avraham Avinu was young, he served idols like the rest of his society. That was the current stream of thought. Nobody entertained any other thoughts about the powers that controlled the world, and naturally, he was also in the flow. However, he was a thinker and gave much thought to the important question: Who is actually governing and controlling this world? After much deliberation, he recognized on his own that there must be a single Manager Who controls all the various powers that exist. Although it was clear that the sun has much power, as do the clouds, the wind, the rain, and the mountains, nevertheless, there must be One Who created all these elements and, with great wisdom, synchronizes all these powers to work in fantastic unison.

He also recognized that HaShem is a G-d of kindness and wants only the best for His creatures. He understood that the purpose of creation was to bring Man to this awareness. Avraham discovered the meaning of life and of creation itself. He and Sarah dedicated their life's work to teaching people Who HaShem was and to follow in His ways. Theirs was a life of perfect meaningfulness. When HaShem informed him that he and Sarah would have a child from whom a nation would come that would educate the entire world and bring it to its ultimate goal, there was no greater joy.

Thirty-seven years after the birth of Yitzchok, HaShem instructed him to take Yitzchok, who was the one from whom the future of mankind would unfold, and bring him as an offering upon the altar. Avraham understood that evidently HaShem had changed His plans, and his descendants would not bring the world to its ultimate goal. In spite of the obvious change of plan, which made no sense because HaShem does not change His mind, Avraham carried out HaShem's instructions with great alacrity. Not only was the obvious question unanswered, but everything Avraham had dreamed of, which was nothing for himself but entirely for the propagation of the knowledge of HaShem, was about to go up in smoke! With unwavering commitment to HaShem,



Avraham was ready to carry out the unfathomable.

Behold! Avraham's life, which had been dedicated to the meaning and purpose of the world, had suddenly turned 180 degrees. It was now dedicated to undoing everything he lived for! Why? Because HaShem had instructed him to do so. HaShem Himself expressed His wish that Avraham should turn his life into a completely meaningless life. And Avraham was ready to follow HaShem's instruction!

By submitting to the Will of HaShem, Avraham recalibrated his life's commitment. Before the Akeida, he was committed to a life of meaningfulness and purpose. After the Akeida, his life was a commitment to carrying out the Will of HaShem, even when it appeared to be purposeless! Of course, if it is the Will of HaShem, then that defines purposefulness. The change that the Akeida introduced was the definition of purpose. Pre-Akeida, purpose was defined by human understanding. Post-Akeida, it was defined exclusively by the Will of HaShem, even when it

was in direct opposition to human understanding.

The lesson Avraham taught his descendants was the lesson of Rosh Hashana: We live our lives for only one thing, to fulfill HaShem's Will. Even when that means living what appears to us to be a meaningless life, that is what we do.

When considering that with the act of the Akeida, the entire destiny of our people was being sacrificed on the altar of complete submission to the Will of HaShem, we can appreciate why the Kabbalists teach us that the spiritual DNA of the Jew is to submit to HaShem's Will.

Perhaps the reason for reading the Akeida on Rosh Hashana is because there is no greater lesson of absolute acceptance of HaShem's Authority than Avraham Avinu's test of the Akeida.

Have a beautiful Yom Tov and a wonderful Shabbos.

K'siva v'chasima tova.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

RAM'S HORN SQUID: THE SQUID WITH A "SHOFAR" INSIDE

As Rosh Hashanah approaches, we hear the piercing sound of the shofar, a ram's horn that calls us to wake up, think, and return to Hashem. But deep beneath the ocean lives a tiny creature carrying something that looks remarkably like a miniature ram's horn inside its own body. Meet the ram's horn squid, *Spirula spirula*.

At first glance, *Spirula* looks like a small, pale squid with large eyes, ten limbs, and a pair of fins near the back of its body. Its mantle, the main body section, is only about 4 to 5 centimeters long. Yet hidden almost completely inside that soft body is its most amazing feature: a beautiful, pearly-white, tightly coiled shell shaped like a tiny ram's horn. That shell is the reason for the name *Spirula*. The name comes from the spiral shape of the shell. The animal is literally named for the little spiral it carries inside itself. But the shell is not there for decoration. It is an extraordinary piece of engineering that helps the squid survive in the deep sea. Inside the "ram's horn" are roughly 25 to 40 separate chambers, divided by thin walls called septa. Running through the chambers is a living tube of tissue called the siphuncle. As a new chamber forms, it begins with liquid inside. The siphuncle helps remove much of that liquid, and gas takes its place. Why is that useful? Because the shell acts like a built-in flotation device. A squid's soft body is heavier than the water around it and would normally tend to sink. *Spirula* solves that problem by carrying a rigid shell containing gas-filled chambers. These chambers reduce the animal's overall density until it becomes close to the density of seawater. The result is that the squid can become almost neutrally buoyant. In simple language, it can almost "hang" in the water. That is extremely important for an animal that lives hundreds of meters below the surface. *Spirula* often spends the daytime at depths of around 550 to 1,000 meters, then rises much closer to the surface at night, perhaps to 100 to 300 meters, in order to feed. That means it may travel hundreds of meters up and down through the ocean every day. Imagine how much energy it would take if the squid had to swim constantly just to keep from sinking. Instead, Hashem gave it a tiny internal flotation machine.

The shell has another advantage. A normal flexible gas sac would be squeezed smaller and smaller as the animal descended into deeper water, because water pressure increases dramatically with depth. But *Spirula*'s shell is rigid and mineralized, made largely from aragonite, a crystalline form of calcium carbonate. Its structure helps it resist the enormous pressure of the deep sea while keeping the buoyancy chambers from simply collapsing. As the squid grows, its little internal "shofar" grows too. It adds new chambers one by one, slowly extending the coil. Scientists have found that the shell is not simply a lump of mineral. It contains an organized biological framework that includes materials such as chitin and proteins, combining strength with careful structure.

And yet, strangely, most people will never see a living *Spirula*. Living ram's horn squids are difficult to observe because they spend much of

their lives in deep water. Their empty shells, however, are a different story. When a *Spirula* dies and its soft tissues decay, the lightweight chambered shell can float upward. Once it reaches the surface, ocean currents may carry it for enormous distances. These tiny white spirals can drift far from the place where the squid actually lived. As a result, ram's horn shells have washed up on beaches in widely separated parts of the world, including New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, the Caribbean, and many other tropical and subtropical coastlines. That creates a fascinating situation: for a long time, people knew the shell much better than they knew the animal that made it. Beachcombers could find the delicate white "ram's horns" scattered along shorelines, while the living squid itself remained hidden far below in the dark ocean.

Spirula has another surprise. At the rear of its body, between its fins, is a light-producing organ called a photophore. Because of this glowing organ, *Spirula* is also called the tail-light squid. Observations have described the light as pale greenish or yellow-green, and it may glow for long periods rather than only flashing for an instant. Why does it glow? Scientists are still studying exactly how *Spirula* uses its light. In the deep ocean, where sunlight is extremely weak, bioluminescence can serve many purposes, including signaling, camouflage, confusing predators, or interacting with other animals. Whatever its exact purpose, this tiny squid carries both a hidden "ram's horn" and a built-in lamp.

It also has enormous eyes for its size, useful in the dim deep sea, eight arms, two longer feeding tentacles, and a sharp cephalopod beak for eating small prey such as crustaceans. When it needs to escape danger, it can do what many squids do: force water through its funnel and suddenly jet away.

Scientists have studied *Spirula* for more than two centuries, yet many questions remain. Its unusual shell, deep-sea lifestyle, light organ, movement, and reproduction are still being investigated.

Think about that. A tiny creature, only a few centimeters long, carries inside itself a coiled, chambered, pressure-resistant flotation system, complete with living tissue that helps regulate the chambers. After the animal dies, that miniature "ram's horn" can travel across oceans and wash onto beaches thousands of miles away.

On Rosh Hashanah, when we hear the shofar, perhaps *Spirula* can give us one more reason to marvel at Hashem's world. Even in the dark depths of the ocean, far beyond where most people will ever travel, Hashem created a tiny animal carrying its own remarkable "ram's horn" inside.

Thank you Hashem for Your wondrous world!

THE MYSTERIOUS GAURD

A distinguished young Torah scholar, a great talmid chacham and a man of exceptional yiras Shamayim, once related the following story to us: "For many years, I have been learning in the 'Kollel Chatzos' at Kever Rochel, beginning at midnight and continuing until after Shacharis, which we daven at vasikin. One night, some time ago, I drove to Kever Rochel at midnight to learn as usual. When I arrived, however, the guard at the main entrance refused to allow me in. He told me that entry to Kever Rochel was not permitted. I asked him, 'How long will it be closed?' 'The entire night,' the guard replied. With no other choice, I turned around and drove home.

"When I arrived home, I discovered my daughter, who was then a kallah preparing for her wedding, in a terrifying condition. Her face had swollen badly and she could no longer breathe. She had apparently eaten something without realizing that she was allergic to it. She was completely unable to catch her breath and was already at death's door, Heaven forbid. I immediately called Hatzalah. They rushed her to the hospital, where, baruch Hashem, her life was saved.

"The following day, I came to understand two extraordinary things. First, I saw the incredible extent of the Hashgachah. I asked my friends and fellow members of the kollel where they had been the previous night. They had no idea what I was talking about. Everything had been completely normal! The gate had opened as usual, everyone had entered Kever Rochel, and they had learned there just as they did every other night. It suddenly became clear to me that this particular guard had been an emissary sent from Shamayim to save our daughter. My wife had been home, but my daughter, who could no longer breathe, was incapable of calling out even to the other members of the household for help. It was only because I walked into the house at exactly the right moment, at the very last possible moment, that I discovered her in that condition. Had I returned home later, there may have been no one there to save her at precisely the moment she needed it.

"Second, I learned that what I had thought was some 'chutspadik' guard blocking me for no reason was actually HaShem's Hand protecting my daughter. Everything in my life is guided by Him.

As told by Rav Meilech Biderman



THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of the "fake forgiveness," Rav Zilberstein (C" C Nedarim 704) ruled that it was not a valid mechilah. This case is different from what Aharon HaKohen did. Aharon actually brought the two parties closer together, until they met and genuinely reconciled. Here, however, Dovid only forgave Chaim because he believed that Chaim was deeply remorseful. At the same time, Rav Zilberstein cautioned that Eli must proceed carefully so as not to make the machlokes even worse. Eli should approach Chaim and tell him the truth that Dovid forgave you only because he thought you begged for it. He should then advise Chaim to approach Dovid directly and ask for a *complete* mechila, not just a begrudging one. From Dovid's perspective, it will seem as though Chaim is asking for mechilah a second time. But in reality, from Chaim's perspective, this will be the first time he is genuinely asking for forgiveness. This would be permissible.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of
Rabbi Sruli Slansky
From a good neighbor



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