



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE CHAZZAN'S THOUSAND SONGS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Eli dreamt to become a professional chazzan, not just for one particular type of shul. He wanted to master the different tunes and styles used for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Shabbos, and Rosh Chodesh in many different communities. Wherever he traveled, he could serve as chazzan and hopefully earn a living from his skill. Eli approached a world-famous chazzan and asked if he would be willing to take him on as a student. The chazzan thought for a moment and told him, "I can teach you a thousand different songs and tunes, covering all kinds of communities and occasions." Eli's eyes lit up. That was exactly what he was looking for. Then the chazzan named his price. It was an astronomical amount of money.

Nevertheless, Eli began calculating. If he really learned a thousand different tunes and became a skilled, versatile chazzan, he could eventually earn back the money



A NATION BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

In his sefer, Haemunah v'hdeios, Rabbeinu Saadya Gaon explains the Shiras Haazinu to reflect the six stages of Jewish history. It begins with the Divine choice of Klal Yisroel to be His chosen people. The next stage is the period when HaShem bestowed blessings upon us from the Exodus through the desert and into the Land of Israel. The third stage is the period of our becoming fat with success and the subsequent rebellion and rejection of HaShem and His Torah. The fourth stage is the period of the punishments which He inflicted upon us. The fifth stage is the period of HaShem's punishing those nations who afflicted us. The final phase of our history that is reflected in this Shira is the period of the final redemption. This final stage begins with verse 39. "See now! It is I and there is none other with Me, I cause death and I bring to life, I smite (causing casualties) and I heal, there is none that prevents Me."

Rabbeinu Saadya Gaon mentions that one might interpret 'I cause death and I bring to life' as a reference to HaShem causing death to Klal Yisroel and bringing life to some other nation as a replacement, as some organized religions tend to think. However, he points out that the second part of the verse which states 'I smite and I heal' is a reference to the same party which He smites as the one whom He heals. This verse cannot refer to two different parties. Only the party which was smitten is the one whom He heals. Since the second part of the verse refers to the same party, so does the first part of the verse refer to the same party.

It therefore refers to HaShem's people. HaShem states that in the final period

**“Without Him,
there’s nothing
we can do...”**

**With Him,
there’s nothing
we *can’t* do!”**

— Rabbi Noach Weinberg



through the many opportunities that would become available to him. He agreed. Week after week, for several months, Eli met with this chazzan. He practiced the different nuschaos and melodies, carefully recording and reviewing everything he learned. Finally, one day, the chazzan closed his music book and said, “That’s it. I’ve taught you everything I know.”

Eli was surprised. “Everything?” He checked his records. “Wait a second,” he said. “You promised to teach me a thousand songs. I counted them. You taught me only a little more than eight hundred!”

The chazzan smiled. “When I said ‘a thousand,’ I didn’t mean exactly one thousand. People use numbers like that as a figure of speech. I meant that I would teach you a tremendous number of songs, close to a thousand. And that is exactly what I did.”

Eli strongly disagreed. “I paid you an enormous amount of money because you specifically told me I would receive a thousand songs. If you only taught me about eight hundred, then either teach me the rest or return part of my money!”

What do you think?

When the chazzan promised “a thousand songs,” was that a binding promise of exactly 1,000? If so, must he teach Eli the missing songs, or refund the portion of the tuition corresponding to what Eli never received? Was “a thousand” simply a figure of speech meaning a very large number, in which case the chazzan fulfilled his agreement and owes Eli nothing?

See Chashukei Chemed Nedarim, page 551.

of history, in the period in which the final redemption occurs, HaShem will cause death to His people, they will be viewed as dead, and He will then bring them back to life.

As we look back on the past century we see the unfolding of the first part of this verse. The people of HaShem were truly laying on their deathbed. In the early 1940’s would anyone believe that there was a future for the Jewish people? The European Jewish community was close to decimated. The Jews in America were also on their spiritual deathbed. In the early 20th century there was no hope for a future Jewish community in America. In Israel as well, there was little hope for a sustained thriving Jewish community that was committed to the values of our people.

After surviving the Holocaust and the religious wasteland of America we can now look back and see how that very na-

tion which was given to death was brought back to life. In American cities across the country there are Yeshivos that continue to grow with no end in sight. In our Land, there is a ground swell of Torah growth. Complete cities whose overwhelming population are committed to HaShem and to His Torah.

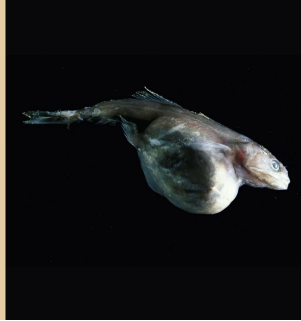
As we move forward into 5787 we must still remember that the second part of the verse is that HaShem smites and heals. We must utilize our closeness to Him, that we have during these 10 days of Teshuva, and pray that the moments of smiting remain few and the healing that follows should come quickly.

May we merit to see the realization of the final verse of the Shira “And He shall bring comfort to His people.”

Have a wonderful Shabbos, a beautiful Yom Tov and an easy fast.

K’siva v’chasima tova.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE BLACK SWALLOWER: THE FISH THAT SWALLOWS THE IMPOSSIBLE

In Sefer Yohan we read about a dag, a fish that swallows a man. Let's explore a fish that really stands out in its swallowing abilities. Imagine a fish only seven or eight inches long opening its mouth and swallowing a fish several times longer than itself. Not biting it into pieces. Not tearing off chunks. Swallowing the entire fish whole. It sounds impossible. Yet deep in the ocean lives a creature called the black swallower, and Hashem designed it to do exactly that.

The black swallower, *Chiasmodon niger*, is a small, dark deep-sea fish. Adults are usually only several inches long, and the largest recorded ones are about ten inches. Yet this little fish is capable of swallowing prey that can weigh around ten times as much as it does. To understand how unbelievable that is, imagine a 90-pound boy somehow eating a 900-pound meal in one sitting.

The black swallower's most famous feature is its enormous, expandable stomach. When empty, the fish looks fairly ordinary for a deep-sea creature. But after it swallows a huge meal, its stomach can stretch far below the normal outline of its body.

The stomach wall becomes so thin and stretched that the prey inside may actually be visible through it. Scientists have compared the swollen stomach to a giant transparent balloon hanging beneath the fish. This allows the black swallower to take advantage of a rare opportunity. Deep in the ocean, food can be difficult to find. A predator may not know when the next good meal will swim past. Instead of letting a large fish escape simply because it is "too big," the black swallower has the equipment to take advantage of the opportunity.

In Hashem's world, even a tiny fish can be designed to handle a gigantic meal.

One of the most famous black swallowers ever found shows just how extreme this ability can be.

In 2007, a dead black swallower was found floating near Grand Cayman in the Caribbean. The swallower itself was only about 7½ inches long.

Inside its stomach was a snake mackerel about 34 inches long.

That means the prey was about four and a half times the length of the predator!

How can a fish even begin swallowing something so much larger than its own head?

The answer is that the black swallower is not simply a little fish with a stretchy stomach. Its entire feeding system is built for oversized prey. It has an enormous mouth and a very long lower jaw. Its jaws can open extremely wide. Its mouth is filled with long, sharp teeth, many of which point backward.

Those backward-pointing teeth are important. Once prey begins moving into the mouth, the teeth make it difficult for the victim to slide back out. Some of the teeth can even fold or move backward as prey enters, helping make room for a meal that seems far too large.

Early zoologists proposed that the fish may grip its victim and gradually work its jaws farther and farther over the prey, almost as if it is "walking" its mouth over the fish until the entire animal disappears inside.

Scientists have rarely observed black swallowers feeding in their natural habitat, so the exact sequence is still not fully known. But the

mouth, jaws, teeth, and stomach clearly work together as one amazing system.

Here comes one of the strangest parts of the story.

Sometimes the black swallower may swallow a meal that is simply too large to digest quickly enough.

The prey begins to decompose inside the stomach. As it breaks down, gases can build up. The gas makes the fish more buoyant, almost like putting air into a balloon.

Then something amazing happens. The fish that normally lives thousands of feet below the ocean surface can begin floating upward.

Higher and higher it rises, until it may reach the surface dead, with its enormous meal still inside.

In other words, the black swallower can literally be defeated by its own success. It catches a meal so enormous that the meal eventually carries the predator out of the deep ocean.

The black swallower normally lives in the deep ocean, often around 2,300 to 9,000 feet below the surface.

At those depths, sunlight is extremely weak or completely absent. The water is cold, the pressure is enormous, and meals are unpredictable. Its appearance fits that world. The black swallower is almost completely black, making it difficult to see in the darkness. Its body is thin and scaleless. Unlike some famous deep-sea fish, however, it does not produce its own light. It has no glowing lure to attract prey.

Instead, its great tools are camouflage, enormous jaws, specialized teeth, and that incredible expandable stomach.

Young black swallowers are different from the adults. The babies live closer to the surface and have tiny prickly structures on their skin that disappear as they grow. As they mature, they move into a darker, deeper world.

Scientists studying hundreds of swallowers have found remains of squid and other cephalopods, as well as deep-sea fish such as dragonfishes, bristlemouths, and hatchetfishes.

Researchers have also found that black swallowers may actually prefer squid and other cephalopods while avoiding many crustaceans. So this is not simply a creature that blindly gulps down anything it meets. Even in the darkness of the deep ocean, it seems to be making choices about what to eat.

The black swallower teaches us something beautiful about Hashem's creation.

If we looked only at its stomach, we might say, "What an amazing stretchy stomach!" But the stomach alone would be useless. The fish also needs jaws that can open wide enough, teeth that can grip prey without letting it escape, a body that can expand, and a way to survive in the dark deep sea where these enormous meals are found. Every part fits together. It is an entire creature designed around one unbelievable ability.

A fish only a few inches long can meet an animal larger than itself and, instead of swimming away, open its mouth and say, in effect, "Dinner."

Thank you Hashem for Your wondrous world!

THE ROSENBAUMS' KABBALOS

Rav Simcha Yehudah Rosenbaum, a resident of Mattersdorf, Yerushalayim, is the rosh kollel of Kollel Mayim Chaim of Kiryat Sefer. One year, on Motzaei Yom Kippur, Rabbi Rosenbaum and his sons had returned from shul, after making Havdalah, sat down with the rest of the family to break their fast. Shortly thereafter, the Rosenbaum clan was set to head outside to place schach on their succah, as is customary. Each year, the children look forward to putting the finishing touches on their succah as the quasi-Yom Tov of Motzaei Yom Kippur gets underway.

But before the Rosenbaum kids could go outside, their father stopped them. He had an idea.

"It's been a long day. We spent hours engaged in heartfelt tefillah. We have all undertaken numerous kabbalos. We've accepted upon ourselves to improve in various ways. Let us each sit down for five minutes and put into writing our kabbalos for the coming year. This will help us concretize our commitment and ensure that we follow through on our pledges."

The children complied, sitting down at the table with pen and paper to write down their kabbalos as their father shepped nachas and did the same.

Not more than a couple of minutes had passed before they heard a loud crash outside their apartment. The noise had come from the direction of their succah.

Running outside, Rabbi Rosenbaum and his children were shocked by what they saw. A retractable roof had landed squarely on their succah. They quickly surmised that one of their upstairs neighbors had been opening his retractable roof, a feature quite common in apartments in that area, to work on his succah, and the roof had become dislodged. The roof slid off its tracks and fell to the ground below.

At the very moment that the roof plummeted down, Rabbi Rosenbaum and his children could have been standing in their succah, putting up their schach. It was only because of Rabbi Rosenbaum's creative idea for them to write down their Yom Kippur kabbalos that they were instead sitting inside.

It was clear to Rabbi Rosenbaum and his family that those kabbalos wouldn't only earn them zechuyos during their year ahead. In fact, those kabbalos were apparently already paying dividends, protecting them from a potential tragedy.

From Powerful Moments By Rabbi Yitzchok Hissiger by Artscroll Mesorah



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about whether one is obligated to bring his disabled neighbor down to the shelter during a rocket attack, Rav Zilberstein (C" C Nedarim 753) answered that this case is very different from the famous case of two people in the desert with only one bottle of water. In that case, both people are in equal danger. Here, however, the healthy person's risk of being struck by a rocket while helping his neighbor is less than one in a thousand. On the other hand, leaving the disabled neighbor alone during the attack would cause him enormous panic and terror, which itself could constitute a situation of *pikuach nefesh*. Therefore, Rav Zilberstein ruled that the healthy neighbor is obligated to help him reach the shelter. It would be forbidden to ignore his plight, and in this case we do not apply the principle of *chayecha kodmin*, that one's own life takes precedence.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of all the readers of TableTalk with wishes of a year of g'ulah and y'shua.
From the Sheynman family



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Wishing all readers a very good *Shabbos!*