

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE MYSTERIOUS WEDDING GIFT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha, Pekudei, talks about the audit that the Torah makes on all of the materials used to construct the Mishkan. Our Sages teach us (Yorah Deah 257) that a charity administrator should be transparent and give disclosure about how the funds are used in order to be "clean in the eyes of Hashem and Israel".

This leads us to the following story.

Yanky and Chanie were a newly married couple. As is customary, many of their family friends gave them checks and cash as wedding gifts. After the wedding Yanky and Chanie were sorting through the envelopes of checks and cash, and they came across a check with an unusual sum. In an envelope from a Mr. Steinberg, there was a check of \$10,000 made out to cash. It was signed by a Yoel Steinberg.

Yanky was shocked at the large sum. "Do you know this Mr. Steinberg?", he asked Chanie. "I know him vaguely," she said. "He is an acquaintance of my father. He is a very old man and he certainly isn't close to us." "Why would he give us such a huge check?" Yanky asked.

"Maybe he heard about how you are such a big



THE PICTURE AND THE PUZZLE

With the Ukrainian Russian conflict on everyone's mind how can we not address this issue in TableTalk? I am certainly not a person whose opinion regarding this conflict has much value. I do, however, have much sentiment invested in the conflict.

With Parshas Pikudei we will conclude the second Book of Shemos. The very last few verses jump ahead, chronologically, because they reflect an event that will not take place until the third Parsha of the next Book of Vayikra. Those last verses tell us how Moshe erected the Mishkan upon its completion in the beginning of their second year of leaving Egypt. The reason for this jump is because it is only with this momentous event that our people achieve their mission and it is this mission that marks the second Book.

The mission of our people is to build a home, a residence, which will house the Presence of HaShem in this world. This is a mighty feat which can only be achieved after the miracles of our Exodus, the splitting of the Red Sea, the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai and the other experiences we had during our first year in the desert. All of those experiences endowed us with keudsha, a holiness, which we were able to transmit into the building blocks of the Mishkan. The crescendo of that achievement was finally realized on the first day of our second year. Hence, the Torah jumps to that moment which will only occur later in the Book of Vayikra, to conclude the second Book.

The question that must be addressed is; if that Mishkan did not last, what did we accomplish? Do we see the Presence of HaShem resting among us, today? We know that the pain and exile we suffer is due to us for our misdeeds. For that we have no ques-

Talmid Chacham and he wants to support your Torah learning”, Chanie said, sweetly.

Yanky smiled at the compliment, but felt uneasy about cashing or depositing the check. Was it possible that there was an error? Mr. Steinberg was elderly, was it possible that he simply sent them the check by mistake? Yanky put the issue out of his mind but did not deposit the check for the time being.

About two weeks later there was a call at Yanky and Chanie’s apartment.

Chanie answered the phone. “Hello?”

“Hi, may I ask which business this is?”, the caller asked. Chanie said, “This is a private residence, can I help you?”

The caller said, “My name is Mordechai Steinberg, I am the son of Mr. Yoel Steinberg. My father passed away close to two weeks ago. We were going through his records, and we saw a check of \$10,000 written in the check registry, with your name next to it. Because the sum was so large, I assumed he was depositing these funds with you as an investment.”

Chanie replied, “Yes, we received the check which we have not yet deposited. But It was given to us as a wedding present.”

Mordechai replied, “there must have been a mistake. My father would never give such a huge amount of money as a wedding gift. He normally gave much smaller amounts. I’d like you to please return the check”.

Chanie replied, “Do you have any proof that he didn’t give it to us as a wedding present?”

Mordechai said, “My proof is that it is unheard of to give such huge amounts to strangers as a wedding gift. He also had a pattern of giving smaller amounts. That is pretty strong proof to me”.

“I want to do what is right”, Chanie said. I think there is a good chance that we are entitled to keep the check and use it, but I am willing to go with you to a Rav and I will do whatever the Rav says”.

This question was brought to Rav Zilberstein.

What do you think? Can Yanky and Chanie keep the check?

On one hand, it was given to them as part of their wedding gifts. But on the other hand, it was given to them by an elderly man, who did not know them very well, and it was not characteristic of him, or anyone else for that matter, to give such exorbitant wedding gifts.

See Upiryoh Matok Bereishis page 135



tion. Our question is that if we were not ready to achieve our mission at that point in time, what was the purpose of our completion of the Mishkan? It is more like a tease than anything substantial.

Perhaps, the completed mission that we achieved in that first year was only meant to be an image of what we have yet to accomplish. In other words, we did not actually arrive at our destiny; that still waits for the coming of Moshiach, may that be soon. The accomplishment of that first year was only a taste of the ultimate achievement that will occur soon in our days.

You may ask, who needs a taste if it has no lasting value. The answer can be found in doing a 1000 piece puzzle without the picture of what it will look like once it is finished. Without that picture there is no piece that has any meaning. Does this piece belong on the top left side or in the middle? When you have the picture you can use that as your reference point to direct you.

Every generation is dealt challenging pieces, all of which are critical for the completion of the puzzle. HaShem gave us that first year, filled with intense challenges; from the Golden Calf to the breaking of the Tablets. That first year was filled with intense revelations; the splitting of the Sea and the opening up of the Heavens, hearing HaShem speak directly to all of us. That first year was filled with intense educational experiences; the daily portion of the Manna and the flowing rivers of water from the rock. That first year was filled with incredible achievements; from doing teshuva on the Golden Calf to constructing the Mishkan.

We learnt so much. We learnt what HaShem expects from us and how we must pay for our mistakes. We learnt that HaShem is there to provide for us even when we may not deserve it because He anticipates that we will turn around. The biggest lesson we learnt was that He will never, never forsake us. We are His forever.

As the conflict continues we must keep our eye on the picture and draw from our lessons to bring Moshiach that much closer.

May HaShem grant us and all of Klal Yisroel a wonderful Shabbos of serenity and security.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

TACHASH, UNICORNS, AND NARWAHL

In this week's Parsha the Torah discusses the Oros Tachashim, the skins of Tachash that were used as one of the coverings in the Mishkan. What exactly is a Tachash?

Rashi writes that it was a type of animal that only lived during the time of Moshe, that had many colors. The Gemara (Shabbos 28b) gives some more details. Our Sages teach that this animal had six colors, and it was literally a "unicorn", it had one horn coming out of its forehead. Our Sages say further that the Tachash used in the Mishkan was very large, 30 amos (up to 60 feet) long. (Midrash Tanchuma, Terumah 6). Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch points out that the word Tachash is related to the word Chush, fast, and this teaches us that the Tachash was a swift animal. The Sifsei Chachaimin asks on Rashi: How can you say that the Tachash only lived during the time of Moshe, but the prophet Yechezkel, (Yechezkel 16) who lived hundreds of years after Moshe, discusses shoes made of Tachash?

The Chasam Sofer (Chasam Sofer, Niddah 51b) answers this question on Rashi by writing that really Tachash did live after the time of Moshe, and they may even exist today. What Rashi means is that in the time of Moshe there was a special type of Tachash which Hashem miraculously made kosher. That kosher kind only lived in Moshe's times. But usually, the Tachash is not a kosher animal, and the non kosher version may still exist.

So is it possible that the Tachash still exists today? But it was described as a unicorn with many colors, that moves quickly. What kind of animal is that?

Rabbi Arye Kaplan in his translation of Chumash, The Living Torah, brings many possibilities about what the Tachash may be. One of them is the Porpoise. One clue is that the Arabic word tukush, which is very similar to Tachash, means Porpoise.

You might ask, but is a porpoise a unicorn? Well, one species of porpoise known as a Narwhal (pronounced nar-wall) has a large horn on its forehead. In fact, the scientific name for narwhal is monoceros which means one horn. The narwhal is known as the Unicorn of the Sea. It is possible that the Narwhal is similar to the Tachash of the Mishkan.

You will ask, but how would the Bnei Yisrael get narwhal skins in the desert? The fact is that porpoises and narwhal, as well as the similar-looking dugong, can occasionally be found in the Red Sea right where the B'nei Yisrael dwelled.

How about the colors? I have not found out about a modern narwhal that has six colors at one time. It is possible that the miraculous Tachashim of Moshe's time had six colors at once, but not the modern-day version. But Narwhals can be at least five different colors over their lifetime. Narwhals change color as they age. 1) Newborns are blue-gray. 2) Juveniles are blue-black. 3) Adults are a mottled gray and brown. 4) Old narwhals are nearly all white. Regarding its speed, the Narwhal can travel 100 miles in a day. Also, needless to say, the Narwhal is not a kosher animal.

Admittedly we don't know for sure what the Tachash is. The commentaries suggest many other possibilities (although most other suggestions do not have one horn). But let's learn a bit more about the "Unicorn of the Sea", the narwhal.

The narwhal is a medium-sized whale that possesses a large "tusk" from a protruding canine tooth. It usually lives in the Arctic waters around Greenland, Canada and Russia. It is closely related to the beluga whale. The narwhal males are distinguished by a long, straight, spiral tusk. The spiraled tusk juts from the head. Its total body size can range up to 18 ft, not including the tusk. Some tusks are as long as 10 feet, so if you include the tusk, the narwhal can be almost 30 feet long. A typical adult body weight can be up to 3,530 lbs. Narwhals, like most toothed whales, communicate with "clicks", "whistles" and "knocks".

Narwhals can live more than 50 years. They are preyed upon by orcas, killer whales.

Only the male narwhal grows a single long tusk. It protrudes through the lip and forms a left-handed corkscrew spiral. The tusk grows throughout life, reaching a length of up to 10.2 feet. The horn is hollow and weighs around 22 lb. About one in 500 males have two tusks. 15 percent of females grow a tusk as well.

What is the purpose of this long horn? Scientists have suggested at least eight purposes of this horn.

1. It can be used as a weapon.
2. It can be used for opening breathing holes in sea ice. Narwhals need to breathe, they drown if open water is no longer accessible and the ice is too thick for them to break through.
3. It can be used as an acoustic organ to make sounds.
4. It can be used to show it is a male.
5. It can be used for nonviolent assessment of hierarchical status on the basis of relative tusk size.
6. The tusk is a sensory organ with many millions of nerve endings that can connect seawater stimuli in the external ocean environment to the brain.
7. Male narwhals rub their tusks together as a method of communicating information about characteristics of the water each has traveled through.
8. Tusks are also used to tap and stun small fish, making them easier to catch for feeding.

Narwhals normally congregate in groups of five to ten and sometimes up to 20 individuals outside the summer. In the summer, several groups come together, forming larger aggregations that can contain from 500 to over 1000 individuals.

Is it possible to find a narwhal 30 amos long or 60 feet long? In modern times we have not found one, but in 1870, the author Jewels Verne described a "Unicorn of the Sea" that was 60 feet long, the same length as described by our Sages.

EVERY TIME SHE CALLS HIM WILL BE A DAGGER IN THE HEART OF THE NEIGHBOR

There was a family in Eretz Yisrael with a newborn son whom they planned to name Yehonatan. The day before the bris, their next-door neighbor's son, whose name was Yehonatan, tragically passed away.

The new parents were not sure whether or not to still use the name Yehonatan, and went to discuss it with Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. They explained the situation, and said that they were worried about possible bad mazal if they used the same name as the boy who was just niftar.

R' Shlomo Zalman advised them not to use the name.

After the couple left, Rav Shlomo Zalman's grandson asked him incredulously if there was really such a halachah or minhag not to name a child with the same name as a person who just passed away.

"You are correct to ask," R' Shlomo Zalman responded. "But I told them not to use the name for a different reason.

Imagine in a few years when this new mother calls out to her son, 'Yehonatan, please come home!' Every time she calls him will be a dagger in the heart of the neighbor who will be in pain whenever she hears the name. Therefore, although there is no such halachah or minhag, the baby should not be called Yehonatan." Such was the concern of R' Shlomo Zalman for a woman he never met.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the janitor who became very rich and wanted to back out of his contract, Rav Zilberstein writes that the Torah says "The Jewish people are servants to Me". Our Sages understand this to mean that we are not to be slaves to other people, and if this janitor could not back out, he would be like a slave. Similarly in Choshen Mishpat 333, 3 it states that a worker can back out in the middle of the day. The janitor should instead help the bank find a replacement if he can.

The printing of this week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of our dear mother, grandmother and great grandmother
Mrs. Eleanor Kolinsky, z'l

חיה בת אברהם

May the merit of hundreds and hundreds of Shabbos tables graced with beautiful Shabbos conversations be a zechus for the aliyah of her neshama.

Rosalyn and Franklyn Snitow and family

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