

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



USING HER EQUIPMENT

This week's Parsha, Tazria, talks about the miraculous skin ailment tzaraas. Our Sages teach that in addition to the sin of Lashon Hara, negative speech, Tzaraas can also come because of Tzaras Ayin, stinginess and miserliness.

This leads us to the following true story. Penina was a successful portrait photographer. One day she was invited by Chaya, the owner of a popular playgroup and daycare center to take pictures of all of the children in the daycare.

Penina came to the playgroup with all of her photography equipment, including lighting, softboxes, and a brand new heavy cloth backdrop. The backdrop was stunning. It was a scene of trees and grass next to a blue lake. The backdrop looked like it was 3d, so when a person took a picture in front of the backdrop it looked exactly like they were in front of a gorgeous lake.

Penina set up the photography equipment in a designated room that was out of the reach of the children.

She took pictures of all of the children, and was ready to go. As she was finished, Chaya mentioned to Penina that 5 of the children were absent that day, and asked if it would be possible for Penina to come back the next morning.

Penina looked at her schedule and realized that she was open the next day.



ALWAYS FRESH, ALWAYS NEW

As this Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh Nissan, we will read Parshas Hachodesh which is the very first mitzvah that HaShem gave us as a people. It is curious that this seminal mitzvah should relate to our constructing a calendar. Would it have not been more appropriate to have the first mitzvah be something like the mitzvah to love HaShem or to fear HaShem.

The Parsha opens, "This month shall be for you the beginning of New Moons, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year." There is an obvious redundancy why does the Torah state twice within one verse that this month should be the first of the months. The Chizkuni explains that Nissan is to be the beginning of the Months of the year but it is not to be the beginning of the year itself. Therefore, the Torah reiterates that it is only the beginning of the Months not of the year. In fact, the beginning of the year is to be Rosh Hashanah in the seventh month of Tishrei. Hence, the Torah is instructing that Nissan is to be the first of the Months of the year but not of the year itself. The Torah therefore refers to the months in their ordinal numbers, so that Nissan is the first and Tishrei is the seventh month and Iyar is the third month and so on.

However, this is confounding. If the year, which is the sequence of the 12 months, begins with the seventh month, regarding what concern is Nissan to be considered the first? The answer might be that it begins the order of the months as they stand by themselves regarding who is Number One. That, however, seems somewhat meaningless if there is no relevance other than to be called Number One.

The cycle of the month is much more than just a cluster of 29/30 days with no other

"It's not a problem. I can come back tomorrow. Because it's the end of the day, would it be ok if we leave the photography equipment set up the way it is, and leave it for the shoot tomorrow?"

"Of course", Chaya said.

Penina left and prepared to come back the next day. After Penina left, Chaya admired the photography background scene. It was really pretty. She had an idea. She had a niece who just turned bas mitzva, she would love pictures near that backdrop.

Chaya called her niece and she was thrilled. She quickly came over, and Chaya took a bunch of great pictures on her own camera in front of the professional backdrop. Chaya was happy and her niece was even happier.

The next day Penina came back to photograph the last few children. After she finished the job, Penina began to pack up the equipment. As she was packing up, Chaya nonchalantly said, "Penina, I want to thank you so much for leaving the backdrop here last night. My niece came over and I was able to take such beautiful pictures of her. Here, look at these pics".

But Penina reacted in a way that Chaya did not expect. "Hmm, you mean you used the backdrop while I was gone? In that case, we will have to add \$250 to your invoice. You see, I rent out my equipment, and that is what it costs to rent out this backdrop. You might not realize it, but this backdrop is actually very expensive, and custom made"

"What do you mean you are going to charge me for using the backdrop, I didn't even touch it. How can you charge me?" Chaya replied.

If you look at our website, that is what we charge for this equipment rental. If you used the equipment, I'm afraid I will have to add that to your bill. It doesn't matter if you touched it or not, you used my equipment. This equipment is always used without touching it.

Chaya felt that it was not fair to charge her if she didn't even touch the equipment and just took a picture of it behind her niece, but she agreed to pay if that is what the Halacha required.

This question was brought to Rav Zilberstein. What do you think? Does Chaya have to pay for taking a picture in front of the backdrop?

See Upiryo matok, Bereishis 149



meaning than being a means of dividing the year into 12 segments. The month is a segment of time which has a beginning, a middle and an end. It begins with a sliver of light and grows to completion and then diminishes to nothing. It then begins the cycle of renewal again.

With this mitzvah, HaShem endowed us with the ability to look at the New Moon and become inspired to renew ourselves; to be able to reassess our relationships and our commitments and restart them with the same freshness that we had on the first day they began. The purpose of the lunar cycle is to grant us the opportunity to restart, refresh and renew.

Whenever we have a sequence of things or steps where one thing leads to the second and the second leads to the third and so on, we understand that everything that will follow is compacted into the first thing. Take for example the unfolding of an apple seed that is planted. Our seed will go through a series of

many stages from the moment it is placed in the ground until a sapling will emerge. At the outset, when the seed was planted all the millions of cells in the sapling were all compacted within that original seed, in some form. It contained everything that was to come from it. We apply this to the first Commandment of the Ten Commandments. The first Commandment contains the totality of Torah. The first word of the Torah, Breishis, contains all 613 mitzvos.

This month of Nissan always occurs in the Spring. It is the month which always occurs during the world's time of renewal. The animals come out from hibernation, the trees put forth their first buds and the bees begin to pollinate. The world is coming back to life. Perhaps, the Torah is telling us that all the months of the year should follow Nissan. Nissan should be the first of the months. It should be the seminal month from which all the subsequent months will carry their own unique renewal.

In this very first mitzvah that HaShem gives us, He is teaching us the critical lesson that applies to all relationships; renewal! Without renewal relationships grow stale. This mitzvah was given to us as HaShem prepares to take us out from Egypt to place His Great Name upon us. Only if this relationship will always remain forever fresh will it endure. He therefore endowed us with the ability to renew ourselves and our relationships.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

EIZOV, HYSSOP, ZA'ATAR, OREGANO, & AZOV

This week is Parshas Hachodesh in which we will read about the mitzvah to place the blood of the Korban Pesach on the doorposts and lintel using a bundle of Eizov plants. This week's Parsha also talks about people that have tzaraas. In the special procedure that a Metzora undergoes to become purified from tzaraas, he is sprinkled with water using an Eizov plant. Eizov was also used to make the Mei Chatas of the Parah Aduma, the Red Heifer.

What exactly is Eizov? Eizov is normally translated as Hyssop. (Pronounced Hih-Sup) . The English word Hyssop is derived from the Hebrew word Eizov (Hisob). There are several different species of Hyssop. Which species is the Torah referring to? Which plant did they use to place the blood on the doorposts in Mitzrayim?

Rabbi Arye Kaplan cites several possibilities regarding what the Eizov was. Two of them are Zaatar (cited by the Ibn Ezra) and Oregano (also cited by the Ibn Ezra). The other possibilities are Wild Thyme and Caper.

To begin, Zaatar, Oregano, and Wild Thyme are all related plants. They are actually all members of the mint family, called Lamiaceae. Other familiar plants in the mint family include basil, rosemary, sage, and lavender.

Let's look a bit deeper at Za'atar. **(Pictured, left and second to left.)** The scientific name for the plant Zaatar is *Origanum syriacum*, or Syrian Oregano. The Za'atar plant grows to a height of about 3 feet. It has small white or pale pink flowers. Zaatar is native to the Middle East. Za'atar is also known as a spice blend that includes the plant zaatar combined with sesame seeds and sumac. Some explain that the Rambam writes about the use of Za'atar as a household spice. In Parah Adumah 3,2 the Rambam writes "the Eizov referred to in the Torah is the eizov that is eaten by Balei Batim and is used to spice cooked dishes.

Za'atar has been used as a staple in Arab cuisine from medieval times to the present. Za'atar is now a common herb in Israeli cuisine. Some Israeli companies market za'atar commercially as "holy hyssop". Za'atar is commonly eaten with pita, which is dipped in olive oil and then za'atar. Za'atar is used as a seasoning for meats and vegetables or sprinkled on chummus, used as an herb mix for use in salads, spread on breads, or used as a dry rub for chicken or lamb.

Let's now look at Oregano, another candidate for Eizov **(Pictured, right and second to right.)** . As we mentioned, Oregano is a cousin of Za'atar, as well as mint. Oregano is a woody perennial plant, it grows to a maximum of 2.5 feet. Its flowers are purple. The word Oregano means Joy of The Mountain in Ancient Greek. Oregano was first used by the Greeks. They believed that this spice was given to Man to make his life happier. After the Romans conquered the Greeks, the Romans inherited the use of oregano. The Romans and later, the Italians were the ones responsible

for the extensive use of oregano throughout Europe and abroad.

Oregano's most prominent modern use is the staple herb of Italian cuisine. It is particularly popular in tomato-based dishes and pizza. Its popularity in the U.S. began when soldiers returning from World War II brought back with them a taste for the "pizza herb", which had probably been eaten in southern Italy for centuries. A US food industry publication in 1957 says of oregano, "Here is a spice that was unheard of in 99 out of 100 households just a few years ago." Its rise in the US coincides with the popularity of pizza.

Because oregano is identified with the Greeks and later the Romans, it is possible that this is explicitly rejected as being the Eizov of the Torah. This is because the Mechilta (cited by the Netziv) writes explicitly that the Eizov of the Torah is not the Roman or Greek variety of Eizov.

What exactly is the meaning of the use of the Eizov, to place the blood on the doorposts?

The commentaries (Ramban, Abarbanel) explain it in the following way. Placing the blood of the sheep on the doorposts was to demonstrate to the Bnei Yisrael that they were totally independent from the astrological sign Aries, or Tleh (It's depicted as a male sheep, a Ram). Aries was the first sign of the zodiac and it was seen to be the most powerful of all. This is why the Tleh was worshiped as a god in Mitzrayim and they would not eat it. (Archeologists found Ram-headed sphinxes flanking the entrance to the Egyptian temple of Amun in Thebes). Placing the blood of the sheep on the doorpost was a sign that the Bnei Yisrael rejected any belief in the power of Tleh. They recognized that their freedom was in no way a result of the power of Tleh. Rav Hirsch says that Eizov is symbolic of the smallest tree in Eretz Yisrael. Erez, the cedar, is the tallest tree in Eretz Yisrael. Eizov symbolizes humility and dependence. The eizov symbolizes that Jews did not leave Egypt because of their own strength and independence, but rather their dependence on Hashem. Their freedom was not because of the astrological forces, or their own strength but only on Hashem.

The word Azov might be familiar to you from current events. Azov is a name of a Ukrainian Ultra-Nationalist militia that is fighting the Russians. Their name comes from the Sea of Azov which is near the besieged city of Mariupol. What is unique about the Sea of Azov is that it is the most shallow sea in the world, with a depth of between 3 and 46 feet. The origin of its name is obscure and disputed. Some suggest it comes from a long-lost Kipchak language, which means "lowlands". Others suggest it comes from the name of a Kipchak or Turkic prince named Asuf. But perhaps it comes originally from the Hebrew word Eizov. This is because the Hyssop plant is native to the whole region surrounding the Caspian Sea, which is near the area of Azov. Perhaps?

“THEY COULD NOT ALL SATISFY THEIR HUNGER WITH ONE LOAF OF BREAD”

During The First World War, thousands of Jews were uprooted from their homes. Whole families were forced to move into single rooms in others' homes or into public buildings. The conditions were extremely hard. Organizations were created to deal with the hardships and alleviate the suffering of the many distressed, often penniless refugees.

At that time, the rabbanim and community leaders held a meeting which Rav Chaim Soleveitchik also attended. The topic of discussion was how to better help the refugees who had poured into every neighborhood in the city. They were suffering greatly from lack of supplies, some even going for days without proper food.

One of the rabbanim took the floor and asked, "Why are we only talking about the physical needs of these people? What about the fact that many may be without talleisim and tefillin. We should raise money to provide them all with these as well".

Those present nodded their heads, wondering why they had not thought of this as well.

However, Rav Chaim spoke up and dismissed these questions, insisting that they focus primarily on providing food. Rav Chaim said, "All of the refugees could fulfill their obligations sharing one pair of tefillin. But they certainly could not all satisfy their hunger with one loaf of bread".

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the security camera, Rav Zilberstein writes that the neighbor would not be obligated to share the footage for free, and he has a right to ask his neighbor to share the costs of the system.

This Table Talk is dedicated on the first yahrzeit of our beloved mother, grandmother, and great grandmother
Merle Rosin Tooch

פרידה מלכה בת בנימין בינוש ע"ה

May this dedication bring an Aliyah to her Neshoma.

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