



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE 2 FOR 1 PACKAGE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

We will soon once again receive the Torah on Shavuot. This week's Parsha makes a reference to the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. This leads us to the following true story.

There was once a young man, Tzvi, who applied to two yeshivas in Israel. One was considered the top yeshiva in the country, while the other was also reputable but not as prestigious. To his delight, Tzvi received acceptance letters from both yeshivas.

A short while later he received a call from the director of the less prestigious yeshiva. The director mentioned that he had heard about a friend of Tzvi who was struggling to gain admission to any yeshiva. The director made Tzvi an enticing offer: They re-



RETURN TO SENDER

In the opening verse of Behar HaShem says 'When you enter the Land that I give you, the Land shall rest a Shabbos (Shmitta) for HaShem.' The implication seems to be that upon their entry to the Land, that first year will be Shmitta. However, it is clear from the subsequent verses that Shmitta will only occur after working the Land for six years.

The Sfas Emes offers a profound insight to answer this question. However we must go back in history to the point just before which the universe was created. At that point the universe was non-existent. There was absolutely nothing in existence other than HaShem. To say there was nothing is inaccurate because that would imply that there was just no thing, when in fact there was no space or time either. We will therefore say there was no existence, other than Hashem, of course. This means that all existence begins with HaShem. Nothing else.

However, once He created the universe there now is 'existence' in addition to him. Naturally, it is not an actual existence because it all comes from Him. Nevertheless, it does appear that there is existence outside of Him. It is for this reason why the world is called an alma d'shikra, a world of illusion, because, while it appears to have its own true existence, in reality it is only an expression of HaShem's Will.

The Sfas Emes explains that the goal of the Jewish people is to take the world which HaShem created and return it to HaShem. In other words, even though we understand that there is no existence outside of HaShem nevertheless, in the current state the world appears to exist outside of HaShem. The Jew's mission is to bring about the awareness that our world is in fact, nothing but the expression of HaShem's Will - nothing else.

ally wanted Tzvi to attend their yeshiva. If Tzvi agreed to attend their yeshiva, they would also accept his friend. It would be almost like two for the price of one.

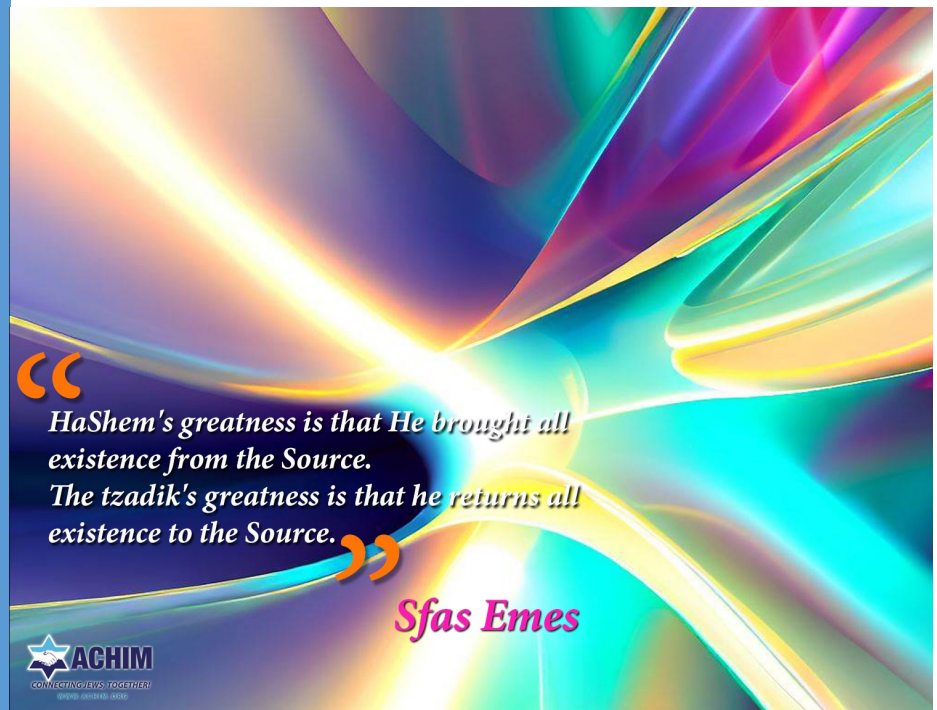
This put Tzvi in a difficult position. On one hand, he could help his friend by choosing the second yeshiva. On the other hand, he could choose the top yeshiva, which might be best for his personal growth and learning. Now, the fate of his friend was dependent on Tzvi's choice.

The decision weighed heavily on Tzvi. He wondered whether he should prioritize his own learning at the more prestigious yeshiva, or whether he should attend the other institution to help his friend.

Tzvi questioned whether he was even allowed to turn down the second yeshiva's offer, as doing so might prevent his friend from attending any yeshiva at all. But on the other hand, perhaps he had an obligation to go to the best yeshiva where he might grow the most.

Torn between these options, this question was brought before Rav Chaim Kanievsky.

What do you think the Torah would say in such a case?



The method by which we achieve this goal is by using the world and all the gifts it provides within the limits that have been prescribed by His Torah. The moment we curb our usage to confine it to those limits we are making a statement that HaShem is the One Who gives permission to use this world - it is not ours.

There is no nation whose primary economy is based on agriculture that shuts down all farming for an entire year. The only reason for doing so is if they recognized that their land was given to them as a gift by some magnanimous benefactor who instructed them to do so.

In the opening verse of Bhar the word 'v'shuvsa' translates to 'rest' or 'to make a Shabbos'. The word 'v'shuvsa' can also be translated as 'to return'. Let us now return to that verse.

HaShem tells His people that when they will enter the Land

which He will give them, the Land will be returned to Him. In other words, until His people entered the Land, the Land was taken from HaShem. It was treated as if it had its own existence outside of HaShem. However, when the Jewish people enter the Land then the Land will be returned to HaShem. The subsequent verses explain how it will be returned to HaShem; by the entire nation working the Land for six years and then shutting it down for the seventh year. Through that nation there will be an awareness that the Land truly belongs to Him. The nation living on that Land will recognize that they are only guests in His Land.

One may ask; if Hashem created the world why should we send it back to Him? The answer is that when we choose to return the world to Him, it is our accomplishment that we have done on our own free will. It is a function of our decision to do so. In that way, we are the ones who reawaken the awareness that HaShem is One - that there is no existence outside of Him.

It is almost as if we are the ones who create HaShem within this world!

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

LEFTIES

Last week, we shared a beautiful story about how Rabbi Juravel would make sure to hole-punch papers on the right side for his students who were lefties. Let's learn a bit about the fascinating phenomenon of being left-handed.

Handedness is often defined by one's writing hand. Left-handers comprise about 9.6% of the population, with 10.5% of male children and 8.7% of female children being left-handed. This means that approximately nine out of ten people are right-handed. Men are 23% more likely to be left-handed than women. Ambidexterity, having equal ability in both hands is uncommon, with about a 1% prevalence.

There are several theories about how and why left-handedness develops, and it is not entirely clear to scientists.

One popular theory suggests that our brains divide tasks between the two sides, with the left side controlling speech for most people. This division of labor leads to right-handedness, as the left side of the brain also controls the right hand. However, the problem with this theory is that most left-handed people still use the left side of their brain for talking, like right-handed people. The way handedness is passed down through families is complicated. If both parents are left-handed, their child has a 26% chance of being left-handed too. Studies show that genes are responsible for 25% of the differences in whether people are right- or left-handed, while external environmental factors account for the other 75%. For example, studies have indicated that individuals who have had in-utero exposure to estrogen-based medication used between 1940 and 1971 were more likely to be left-handed over the clinical control group. Studies "suggest that estrogen can affect the developing brain, including the part that governs right and left dominance." Another theory is that ultrasound may sometimes affect the brains of unborn children, causing higher rates of left-handedness in children whose mothers receive ultrasound during pregnancy.

Studies have shown that a baby's position in the womb during the last months of pregnancy and their position at birth can affect whether they're right- or left-handed. Most babies have the back of their head facing left when they're born. This might be why early births result in fewer right-handed babies.

Most of the current research suggests that left-handedness is a combination of genetics, biology, and the environment.

Being left-handed brings with it many fascinating advantages but that is balanced out by several disadvantages. Here are some of the advantages that lefties may have. Left-handedness is associated with better divergent thinking. Divergent thinking is a thought process that generates creative ideas by exploring multiple possible solutions. It encourages thinking "outside the box" and is often used for brainstorming and problem-solving. The opposite of divergent thinking is convergent thinking, which focuses on find-

ing a single, correct solution to a problem or question. Convergent thinking is more linear and systematic, often relying on logic, analysis, and established rules or methods.

Left-handed people have an advantage in sports that involve aiming at a target in an area of an opponent's control, as their opponents are more accustomed to the right-handed majority. As a result, they are over-represented in baseball, tennis, fencing, cricket, boxing, and mixed martial arts (MMA). On average, left-handers have been found to have an advantage in fighting and competitive, interactive sports. In fencing, about half the participants are left-handed. In tennis, 40% of the seeded players are left-handed. Left-handers' brains are structured differently from right-handers' in ways that can allow them to process language, spatial relations, and emotions in more diverse and potentially creative ways. Also, a larger number of left-handers than right-handers are especially gifted in music and math. A study of musicians in professional orchestras found a significantly greater proportion of talented left-handers. Similarly, studies of adolescents who took tests to assess mathematical giftedness found many more left-handers in the population. Left-handers are overrepresented in high IQ societies, such as Mensa. A 2005 study found that "approximately 20% of the members of Mensa are left-handed, double the proportion in most general populations." Of the nine most recent U.S. Presidents, five were left-handed: Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, George H. W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, and Gerald Ford. According to a classic study, researchers observed that left-handed people showed a lower rate of error in a spatial orientation test than righties. This means that left-handed people have a knack for reading maps, remembering parking spaces, and figuring out how to get from Point A to Point B.

However, on the other side of the coin, scientists say that being left-handed brings with it disadvantages. Because the vast majority of the population (90%) is right-handed, many devices are designed for use by right-handed people, making their use by left-handed people more difficult. Many tools and procedures are designed to facilitate use by right-handed people, often without realizing the difficulties incurred by the left-handed. A study found that left-handed men were almost twice as likely to die in war as their right-handed peers. The study theorized that this was because weapons and other equipment were designed for the right-handed. Left-handed people are also more prone to certain health problems like cerebral palsy, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, heart disease, breast cancer, and bone fractures. A variety of neuropsychiatric and developmental disorders like autism spectrum disorders, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, and alcoholism have also been associated with left- and mixed-handedness.

GIVING UP THE JOB

Rabbi Yochanan Berman was a revered teacher at a Hebrew school in the United States during the early 20th century. He was dedicated to instilling Torah values and Yiras Shomayim, (fear of Heaven) in his students, most of whom came from backgrounds with little emphasis on religious education. One day, Rabbi Berman taught his students the laws of putting on shoes according to Kitzur Shulchan Aruch.

That night, the principal received a call from an irate father of one of Rabbi Berman's students. The father complained, "I sent my son to Hebrew school to get a quality education, not to be taught this medieval nonsense about shoes. If you don't put an end to this, I'll remove my child from the school." The principal promised to address the issue and spoke with Rabbi Berman the following day. He instructed him to avoid teaching halachos which might appear like nonsense to the parents. Rabbi Berman, however, respectfully replied that he could not alter the teachings of the Torah. Consequently, the principal asked him to leave the school, and Rabbi Berman reluctantly found employment elsewhere.

Philip, a student of Rabbi Berman who was raised in a home with little regard for Jewish tradition, went on to attend secular high school and college, eventually becoming fully assimilated. He asked his non-Jewish girlfriend, Donna, to marry him, and they became engaged. One morning before the wedding, Philip realized he had intentionally put on his shoes according to the Jewish custom he had learned from Rabbi Berman in Hebrew school. This action reminded him of his Jewish identity and prompted a surge of spirituality. He resolved to learn more about Judaism and, with a heavy heart, broke off his engagement with Donna, explaining that his faith was of utmost importance.

Donna was deeply affected by Philip's decision. Meanwhile, Philip fully embraced his faith and became a ba'al teshuva. He contacted Rabbi Berman to share his story, and Rabbi Berman was incredibly moved by the impact of a seemingly small halacha which he lost his job for. He thanked Philip for demonstrating the power of Torah.

A few years later, Philip was set up on a shidduch date with a young woman. To his astonishment, it was Donna, his former fiancée. She explained that his decision had inspired her to learn more about Judaism, and she had ultimately converted. The two rekindled their relationship and got married, all thanks to the transformative power of a single halacha.



THE ANSWER

Since last week's dilemma of the shortcut is an issue that comes up in many communities we were advised that printing an answer to this specific case could be a cause of machlokes. TableTalk was designed to generate interesting Torah discussion and not to be used in deciding actual questions that should be taken to a Rov.

In appreciation to my dear chaver, **Reb Yitzi Weiner**, whose professional work has made **TableTalk** become the Talk of 900 Shabbos tables not including the thousands of email recipients I dedicate this week's TableTalk.

I thank Reb Yitzi for the dilemmas, the science pieces, the stories, the meme's and the incredible high color, high resolution photos. It is a piece of art.

With much admiration, **Paysach Diskind**

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