

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE SIGNED POSTER

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha, Beshalach, teaches us that the Bnei Yisrael were given the mitzvos of dinim, (justice) at Marah. (Shemos 15,25) This was given even before the Torah was given. The Sfás Emes comments here that the reason why dinim, the mitzvos of interpersonal relations were given before the Torah is because having good midos, and observing the laws of interpersonal relationships is one of the prerequisites of being able to absorb the Torah. As our Sages teach in Avos, being ohev es habrios, ohev es hatzedakos and ohev es hameisharim are one of the kinyanim through which the Torah is acquired.

This leads us to the following timely question.

Noah owned a sports memorabilia business. He sold sports memorabilia online as well as through Amazon.

One day Noah received an order from a customer with a Jewish sounding last name. The order was for a signed poster of a famous bas-



QUALITY OF LIFE; OUR CHOICE

In this week's Parsha, Beshalach, the Torah portrays the value of one moment of life. HaShem has taken His people from Egypt and has punished the Egyptians with the Ten Plagues. These Plagues were the greatest demonstration of HaShem's continuing maintenance and involvement in His world. However, He was not finished, there was still more to accomplish.

HaShem tells Moshe "I will harden Pharaoh's heart and he will run after you and I will become glorified through Pharaoh and Egypt will know that I am HaShem." The stated purpose of having Pharaoh follow us into the Red Sea was two-fold. The first was to make HaShem glorified and the second was that the Egyptians should know that HaShem is the Almighty.

As the story unfolds we find the Egyptians following our people into the Sea, evidently, they still did not acknowledge HaShem's Omnipotence as the guiding force of our people. Only moments before they die under the crashing waters do the Egyptian officers proclaim "HaShem is the One Who fought for His people against us!"

Behold! The second purpose for which HaShem brought about the splitting of the Red Sea was for the Egyptians to acknowledge HaShem in their last breath! The last breath of those evil folks gave purpose to this world historic changing event.

The notion of the infinite value every breath of life carries, was brought home to me this week when I visited a unique individual, Reb Avraham Dovid Weisz shlit'a. Reb Avraham Dovid has been living with ALS for 15 years. Although this neurodegenerative disease took away all control of his body he nevertheless has control of the movement

ketball player who played for the Los Angeles Lakers.

The customer placed the order and entered his credit card information.

Noah now had a week to process the order.

Two days after Noah received this order for the signed NBA poster, the news broke that this basketball player was killed with his daughter in a sudden helicopter crash. Millions of people mourned his death.

Noah immediately realized that the value of the signed poster was now at least 100 times more than the price that he was getting.

Noah quickly notified the customer that he was going to cancel the sale.

Noah later told this story to his nephew who went to a Torah day school. The nephew wondered if Noah was allowed to cancel the sale, according to the Torah.

On one hand, you can say that had he known that the NBA player would pass away he never would have sold it. In addition, the customer never actually acquired ownership of the poster because he had not yet received it. All the customer did was place an online order.

But on the other hand, Noah agreed to sell it. Perhaps backing out would be considered an example of Mi Sheparah, where one is not allowed to back out of a deal after giving a verbal commitment to do so.

What do you think? According to the Torah would Noah be allowed to cancel the sale of the signed NBA poster?

Thank you to Rabbi Mordechia Soskil of Beth Tfiloh for telling us this story.

MITZVA MEME

*The Torah says "And you shall live by them (G-d's Laws)" – Vayikra 18:5
Simply, this means that we should live with the mitzvos and not die through them.*

Perhaps there is a deeper interpretation.

**“Vechai Bahem - you should have “chiyus” with them,
you should do it with liveliness and enthusiasm”**

**– Rabbi Menachem Mendel
of Kotzk**



and focus of his eyes. In spite of the disease Reb Avraham Dovid remains as sharp and aware as he was before the disease. Naturally, he is unable to speak as he is not even able to breathe (he lives on a respirator). However, by use of a transparent sheet with the Alef Beis printed on it, his family and chavrusas are able to understand what he wishes to say. His mind is completely enveloped in his Torah study and prayer. After davening his morning Shacharis he begins his studies with his eight chavrusas from 8:00 in the morning through 10:00 in the evening. He has already finished learning the entire Shas in this condition. He will be finishing the works of the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh and plans to make a siyum at the grave of the author in Yerushalayim later this year, with the help of HaShem.

He is an extremely happy person who loves his family and participates in their lives as any father and grandfather would. When meeting him I asked him to please give me a bracha to which he responded most generously. For the subsequent five minutes he

communicated with his son using that transparent sheet everything he wished to say to me.

There are few words that can adequately convey the inspiration generated by meeting a person who does not participate in the material world whatsoever and is nevertheless so connected to his surroundings, to his studies and to His Maker. He is filled with gratitude and joy which knows no bounds for being able to serve his Maker and continue living.

Reb Avraham Dovid provides a profound lesson that life is worth living even when one's health is less than perfect. As Western culture defines the worthiness of life as dependent upon the quality of life which is dependent upon good health, watching Reb Avraham Dovid is a living testimony that it has nothing at all to do with good health or quality of life. It is all about purposefulness. There is probably no person who lives with a higher quality of life than Reb Avraham Dovid and whose life is so worthy of living.

May HaShem's kindness continue to give Reb Avraham Dovid good health and opportunities to serve Him for many happy years together with his beautiful family.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE MYSTERIOUS AND WONDROUS STAR-NOSED MOLE

When you first see a star-nosed mole, you might think you're looking at a creature from science fiction. They look so strange that most people don't think they're real - but they are! They are small mammals with short dark hair that are usually about six to eight inches long. What makes them look so strange is that they have a very unusual nose; it almost looks like there's a small octopus sticking on their faces.

The star nosed mole is a small mole found in moist, low areas in the northern parts of North America. Living as it does, in complete darkness, the star-nosed mole is functionally blind. But HaShem has given it another tool to use to "see". This little mole has a star the size of a dime on its nose. With that star it is able to sense vibrations in the ground or in the water. As it digs, this mole stops and listens. It can sense the vibrations of an earthworm or similar creature and identify the direction it is coming from. The mole obtains both its food and water from earthworms.

The nose is hairless and ringed by a unique 'star' of 22 pink, fleshy tentacles. The star has 11 appendages per side that vary in length from 1 to 4 mm. Scientists call the tentacles "rays," and each set of 11 tentacles has a master ray to which the others react. From a neurological perspective, their sense of touch mirrors our sense of sight. Their star is the most sensitive known touch organ in any mammal. The distinctive star organ on the mole's snout contains more than 100,000 nerve fibers--five times the number of "touch" fibers in the human hand, all packed into a space smaller than your fingertip.

52% of their brain is devoted to the nose. This means that more than half of the brain is dedicated to processing sensory information acquired by this organ, even when the nose itself is only roughly 10% of the mole's actual size. This is because the nose substitutes the eyes, with the information from it being processed to produce a tactile map of the environment under the mole's nose.

In 1993, some scientists proposed that the star-like proboscis had

electroreceptors and that the mole was therefore able to sense the electrical field of its prey prior to actually touching it with its limbs. They demonstrated that moles preferred an artificial worm with the simulated electrical field of a live earthworm over an identical one without the electrical field.

A report in the journal, *Nature*, states this animal wins the title of the fastest-eating mammal. In fact the star-nosed mole was recently recognized in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's fastest forager. It can find and eat four insects or worms every second, taking a mere 8 milliseconds to decide whether an item is edible or not. They perform this feat in part due to the extremely efficient operation of their nervous systems, which convey information from the environment to the animal's brain at speeds approaching the top limit of neurons.

Because of this, some scientists aim to study the outstanding speed and precision at which the mole performs, for the sake of developing insights to the design of intelligent machines.

In addition to all this, the star-nosed mole has a sonar similar to bats. Opening its mouth and emitting a high-pitched squeak, as it runs forward through the tunnels, the returning echoes are sent to its brain, where they are interpreted and tell it what is ahead in the darkness.

It is a good swimmer and can forage along the bottoms of streams and ponds. They also have front legs and claws that are quite large and are like shovels. They use their shovel-like front limbs to tunnel through soggy, marsh-like areas. Little is known about the social behavior of the species, but it is suspected to be colonial.

These moles are also the first mammal known to smell underwater. How can they do this? Star-nosed moles blow bubbles into the water and then re-inhale them through the nose in order to sniff for prey!

Thank you HaShem for showing us your wisdom!

"JUST TODAY HASHEM PERFORMED A MIRACLE THAT SAVED MY LIFE AND JUST TODAY I WILL MISS WEARING MY RABBEINU TAM TEFILLIN?! "

Reb Avraham Dovid Weisz shlit'a (referenced in Rabbi Diskind's dvar Torah) has been living with ALS for 15 years. A few months ago he developed an infection in his lungs and went to his medical staff at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan for an evaluation. After scanning his infection his doctors recognized that there was no hope for clearing the infection and advised the family to place Reb Avraham David into hospice care. The family was not about to give up nor was Reb Avraham Dovid. They decided to go Mass General Hospital in Boston where the doctors were familiar with Reb Avraham Dovid and his case. The doctors at Mass General agreed to do their best to save Reb Avraham Dovid from the infection. After undergoing a long and enduring procedure the doctors felt that they were successful and sent him back home to Monsey.

They were planning on leaving Boston at 10:00 in the morning. Everyday, after Shacharis Reb Avraham Dovid puts on his Rabbeinu Tam tefillin. Given that they were leaving Boston at 10:00 that morning, his family figured that to expedite their trip he would put on his Rabbeinu Tam tefillin upon their return to Monsey. Unfortunately they were not able to depart from Boston at 10:00. It was only at 2:00 that he and his wife and close friend began their return to Monsey. In the transport ambulance, at about 4:00, Reb Avraham Dovid's heart rate began rising. Mrs. Weisz asked her husband, using their transparent Alef Beis sheet, if there was something bothering him. He told her that they would not make it back to Monsey before sundown. Once the sun goes down you cannot put on the tefillin and he was afraid that he would lose out on the opportunity of wearing Rabbeinu Tam tefillin that day. Mrs Weisz told her husband that it is okay to skip one day without Rabbeinu Tam tefillin. Her husband's heart rate sharply increased and she asked what the problem was. He responded to her "Just today HaShem performed a miracle that saved my life and just today I will miss wearing my Rabbeinu Tam tefillin?!"

Upon hearing that response Mrs. Weisz called her son in Monsey and he guided Reb Avraham Dovid's friend over the phone on how Reb Avraham Dovid ties his Rabbeinu Tam tefillin. After the tefillin were on, Reb Avraham Dovid's heart returned to normal.

(Told over to Rabbi Paysach Diskind by the family of the protagonists)



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the tefillin, we have to make a correction. The case that Rav Zilberstein cited was where the parshios were removed because they were found to be passul. In that case Rav Zilberstein answered that if one is concerned that it will appear that he is "mezalzel in the mitzvah of tefillin" if he davens without wearing them, then he may wear tefillin without the parshios inside. However if his intention is to appear to be pious, and appear to be a "medakdek in tefillin", he is not allowed to wear tefillin without the parshios. The answer regarding the Tehillim sponsorship has not yet been resolved.

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