



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



PRAYING FOR BOTH SIDES

By Rabbi Yitzki Weiner

Over the next few weeks, over Yom Kippur and Succos, we will be pouring out our hearts in prayer to Hashem. This leads us to the following true story.

Gavriel and Zevulun were two multi-millionaire business owners. A business deal they engaged in went sour somehow, and each side claimed that the other owed him a million dollars.

They were amicable about the dispute, and they both agreed to go to a Beis Din, a Jewish court, to adjudicate the case. The Beis Din was going to give a p'sak, a ruling, on the 15th day of Cheshvan.

Gavriel, of course, was very keen on winning the case. He went to his Rosh Yeshiva, his Rebbe, and told him the story. He then said, Rebbe, here is a 5000 dollar donation to the yeshiva. I'd like to ask you to please daven that I am successful in my upcoming case in front of Beis Din. The Rosh Yeshiva gladly agreed and said he would daven for Gavriel's success.



SONG OF OUR ENTIRE DESTINY

The Shira of Ha'azinu contains the entire destiny of our people. From the beginning when HaShem chose us to be His, all the way through to when we will arrive at our final destination when we will have accomplished the mission that was designed for us.

To appreciate the function of this Shira let us look at last week's Parsha where this Shira was introduced. HaShem tells Moshe "You are soon to die and after your death this nation will get up and serve foreign gods and they will abandon My covenant. I will become angered and I will forsake them and will hide My face from them and they will be eaten by the nations. They (your people) will say 'our demise is because HaShem is no longer in our midst'. However, I will certainly hide My face from them... So now, write this Shira, teach it to them and place it in their mouths in order that this Shira will testify to the Jewish people."

The flow of these verses seem to indicate that when the people shall say that their demise is because HaShem left their midst, they are wrong and the purpose of the Shira is to correct them. The problem is that HaShem Himself says that He will forsake them. Does that not mean that He will leave their midst? Why are they wrong?

The explanation is that immediately following HaShem's statement that He will forsake them He states that He will hide His face from them. If HaShem

The day of the court case arrived. The Beis Din came to a determination: The winner of the million-dollar case was Zevulun! Gavriel had to give Zevulun the money.

Zevulun was, of course, heartened, and Gavriel was chagrined. Nevertheless, Gavriel, of course, agreed to the Beis Din's decision.

As Gavriel walked away from the Beis Din, he overheard Zevulun talking on the phone. Gavriel could not believe what he was hearing. Zevulun was talking to a Rosh Yeshiva, and he thanked him for his tefilos for the success of his case. Zevulun was sure that it was in the merit of the Rosh Yeshiva's prayers that he was successful in the case. But to Gavriel's shock, Zevulun was talking to the exact same Rosh Yeshiva that he went to. It became clear to Gavriel that the same Rosh Yeshiva was davening for both parties to be successful in their case.

Gavriel felt hurt, and he went to the Rosh Yeshiva himself. "Rebbe, I gave you \$5000 to daven for me. Ok, I understand that I might not have won, but once you accepted my donation, how could you also daven that my opponent should win? That is like davening that I should NOT win. So perhaps you should return my donation because by davening for my opponent, you are doing the opposite of why I gave you the donation."

The Rosh Yeshiva felt, though, that there was nothing wrong with davening for the success of both parties. Both parties should have success; one will have the success that they will win the case, and the other will have the success that they will not violate the prohibition of keeping the money for the other.

The Rosh Yeshiva sent this question to another Gadol. Was it ok to daven for the success of both parties in a dispute? If one party gave him money to daven for him, was he allowed to still daven for the other party's success?

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*The weak can not forgive.
 Forgiveness
 is the attribute of the strong.*
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tells us that He will hide His face, He is telling us that He is still in their midst. If HaShem truly leaves their midst then there is no need for Him to hide His face, He is simply not there at all. Evidently, HaShem is saying that I will make it appear that I have forsaken them because I will hide My face. Therefore, when the people shall explain their demise as being a result of HaShem's leaving their midst that will be a very incorrect reason. HaShem tells us that He will never leave us, He will only make it appear that He has forsaken us. This is the function of the Shira.

The Shira, which HaShem guarantees will never be forgotten, will testify to her people that HaShem does not forsake His people. Quite to the contrary, the troubles that befall our people is because HaShem is in our midst and we are held to a higher standard.

Without the Shira, the people would, G.D forbid, believe that HaShem is no longer in our midst. This mistaken notion would spell the end of the Jewish people. The continuity of our people is tied to our knowledge that no matter what happens; whether we follow His Torah or do not follow His Torah, whether we are on an upswing or in the death camps, never does HaShem abandon us. Yes, He hides His face and It does not shine on us, but we are His and He is ours. We must try our very hardest to live up to that expectation that comes with having HaShem in our midst.

As we travel through the cleansing of Yom Kippur and our preparation for Succos we are ready to rejoice over the message of the Shira. HaShem has made His permanent residence among us; let us leave the security of our homes and join Him in the Succah.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos and joyous Succos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

CHELBONAH, GALBANUM OR STORAX

On Yom Kippur, one of the highlights of the avoda, the Kohen Gadol's service in the Kodesh Kedoshim, is that he burns the Ketores, the incense in the Holy of Holies in front of the Aron. The Ketores has eleven ingredients, and ten of them have sweet smells. One of them, the Chelbona, has a bitter smell. Rashi writes that the Ketores included Chelbona, which had a bitter smell to symbolize that we must include Klal Yisrael's sinners into our prayers and fasts. What is the deeper meaning behind this Rashi?

Rabeinu Bechayeh explains Rashi and says that all the Jewish people are responsible for each other. The sins of sinners of Klal Yisrael affect all of Klal Yisrael, even the most righteous. Therefore, the righteous are responsible for reaching out to the sinners to bring them back into the fold. Rabeinu Bechayeh continues and says this is the same idea expressed with the lulav and esrog. The aravos have no smell or taste to symbolize that the righteous must reach out to include them.

The Beer Mayim Chaim (cited in Sharei Aron) explains this idea of Rashi differently. He says that Hashem judges each of us relative to others. Therefore, we have to include the wicked in the ketores, and our prayers and our fasts to express to Hashem how, relative to the wicked, the rest of Klal Yisrael are tzadikim.

So what exactly is Chelbonah? Most commentaries say that Chelbonah is Galbanum. Galbanum is an aromatic gum resin that comes from the *Ferula gummosa* plant. It is an umbrella-like grass. The gum itself varies in color from amber to dark green. It's collected from the stems in small drops called tears. These plants grow plentifully on the slopes of the mountain ranges of northern Iran. Galbanum plants are related to carrots, celery, and parsley. Galbanum-yielding plants originally grew in the Mesopotamia area and were exported to India, China, Israel, and Egypt. Today Iran and Turkey are the primary sources of Galbanum.

As Rashi said, Galbanum has a disagreeable, bitter taste and a peculiar, somewhat musky odor. Perfumers have described Galbanum with the following terms as well. First, it has a strong earthy, green, or woody scent. It has a very intense green scent accompanied by a turpentine odor. The initial notes are a very bitter, acrid, and peculiar scent followed by a complex green, spicy, woody, balsamlike fragrance. When diluted, the scent of Galbanum has been described as reminiscent of pine (due to the pinene and limonene

content), evergreen, green bamboo, parsley, green apples, musk, or simply intense green.

Galbanum was highly treasured as a sacred substance by the ancient Egyptians. Hippocrates employed Galbanum in medicine. Pliny, of the earliest Roman scientists, writes about its great curative powers and concludes his account with the assertion that "the very touch of galbanum mixed with oil of hogweed is sufficient to kill a snake."

Even in modern times, Healthline and WebMD describe Galbanum as having curative properties. Doctors say that some use Galbanum for wound healing, cough, and digestion problems. Galbanum may have an effect on arthritis pain. Galbanum might reduce swelling and help fight certain types of bacteria.

Interestingly in a nonmedical application, scientists say that the smell of Galbanum can be an effective insect repellent that is almost as effective as a store-bought repellent like OFF. Apparently, pests do not like the smell of Galbanum as well.

Some have described Galbanum as an effective means of removing unwanted hair, similar to modern 'waxing.'

There is an interesting irony in the fact that our Sages describe Galbanum as a bitter smell. In modern times, Galbanum resin is actually used extensively in modern perfumes and colognes as a fixative agent, an ingredient used to stabilize other perfume components. Not only is it used as a stabilizer it is sometimes steam-distilled to produce galbanum oil, which is used in some perfumes and cologne to impart a fresh, natural "green" scent. Modern perfumes such as "Must" by Cartier and Chanel No. 19 use galbanum oil to give them a distinctive smell. Either Galbanum oil smells better than the resin, or it may be another example of how modern society embraces things that our Sages consider bad as being good.

It is important to note that Rabbi Arye Kaplan (in *The Living Torah*) cites the Rambam as disagreeing that Chelbonah is Galbanum. Instead, the Rambam says it is Storax Balsam which comes from a Turkish sweetgum tree. Pliny notes that storax was used as a perfume. The Roman poet Virgil mentions storax as a fragrant hair dye. The Roman doctor Scribonius Largus, wrote about wine flavored with storax. In modern times some storax resin can be chewed like gum to freshen your breath and clean your teeth.

THE VALUE OF SILENCE

Reb Itzelle Blazer, otherwise known as Reb Itzelle Peterberg as he was the Rav in Peterburg, Russia, was a talmid of Rav Yisroel Slanter. He became Rov at the young age of 25 years. Among his many special traits, he was extremely careful and very limited with his words. He said little and every word he did say was carefully weighed before saying it.

There was a meeting of many great rabbonim to discuss some matter at hand. One of the Rabbis attending was the Beis Haleivi, Reb Yosef Dov Solveitchik, father of Reb Chaim and was greatly revered. The Beis Haleivi saw that the young Rov of Peterburg was in attendance. He heard much about Reb Itzelle and was looking forward to hearing words of wisdom from him.

While the Rabbonim were waiting for the others to arrive, a difficulty in a talmudic passage was raised. All the Rabbonim who had already arrived were involved in the discussion. This started a volley of questions and answers and further questions. The Beis Haleivi offered two answers to the original question.

All this time Reb Itzelle added nothing. He simply listened. The Beis Haleivi was confounded. While everyone in attendance participated with a question or an answer, Reb Itzelle had nothing to say. He was certainly not ignorant of the Gemara being discussed, why did he not contribute?

When the Beis Haleivi arrived home from this meeting he went to his bookcase to take the sefer Pri Yitzchok, which Reb Itzelle had authored. He opened it up and discovered that this very question that was discussed at the meeting was discussed by Reb Itzelle in his sefer. To the Beis Haleivi's astonishment, the answers that the Pri Yitzchok offered in explaining the difficult passage were the very two answers that the Beis Haleivi offered!

To Reb Itzelle, silence was more valuable than anything he could have said.

As told by Rabbi Noach Isaac Oelbaum on TorahAnytime

Pictured: Rav Yitzchock Blazer



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the gas leak, we asked this question to Rav Tzvi Berkowitz. Rav Tzvi said that we have to consider which option would cause more damage. He should have unlocked the door and turned off the gas and relocked the door without telling anyone. Calling the fire department caused more damage.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in memory of our dear father, Rabbi Abraham (Abe) Pelberg
Avrohom ben Yisroel Moshe on his 11th Yahrzeit.

He dedicated his life to showing the beauty of the Torah to Jews from all walks of life
throughout North and Central America.

May the lively Torah discussions generated from this week's TableTalk be an aliyah for his neshama.
Moshe and Adeena Pelberg

