



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE NOISY SOMNAMBULIST

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha talks about the importance of protecting our ears from forbidden words. The Torah says **וַיִּתֵּן תְּהִיָּה לָךְ עַל אָזְנוֹךְ** this literally means you should have a shovel among your tools. But it can also be read "as you should put a peg in your ears." Our Sages (Kesubos 5a) teach that this means if one hears inappropriate things, like lashon hara or foul language, one should put their fingers in their ears to not hear it. This idea of protecting your ears leads us to the following true story.

Daniel was looking to purchase a condo from Eli. Upon inspection, the apartment looked impeccable. It was stylish, large, and had modern amenities. He met all of the neighbors, and they seemed like wonderful people, reinforcing Daniel's decision to buy the condo. Excitedly, he signed all the necessary papers and moved in.



PURE GENETIC CODE

An anthropologist would certainly identify the nation of Am Yisroel as an ethnic group of people. However, in terms of identifying us as a nation amongst other nations we probably do not count. This is because we are able to maintain our nationhood for two millennia dispersed throughout the civilized world with no central home. This feat has never been done before us or after us. It is, actually, inconceivable. Nevertheless, we are a distinct ethnic group by virtue of the fact that we all share the same ancestors. We are perhaps more of a family than a nation, an anomaly that has no parallel.

In spite of our being an ethnic group or a family, it is nevertheless possible for a foreigner to join the ranks of Am Yisroel and be completely recognized as a full member of the nation. Once a non-Jew completes their giur, there is no difference between him and any other native born Jew.

The reason for this is because the defining character of the Jewish people is the covenant that HaShem established between Him and His people at Har Sinai. The door to enter that covenant was not closed. It is available for anyone to enter. Therefore, even though an ethnic Indian will forever remain an ethnic Indian, nevertheless, if he enters that covenant he is a Indian Jew.

There are however, two sets of people who although they may convert to become members of our nation they may not marry within the nation. They may not mix into the genetic pool of our people. These are the male members of Amon and the male members of Moav. Although they may convert they may not enter into marriage with the members of the nation. (They are allowed to marry other converts.) Our Parsha teaches us the reason for this.

MITZVA MEME

However, on his first night, Daniel was jolted awake around 3 a.m. by the sound of crashing and screaming from the apartment above. Believing it might be a singular occurrence, he tried to dismiss it. Yet, the very next night, the same disturbance occurred at the same time. Curious and slightly unnerved, Daniel approached his upstairs neighbor the next morning, only to find him seemingly as ordinary as any other day.

Upon further inquiry, he discovered an unexpected revelation: his upstairs neighbor was a somnambulist, a sleepwalker. He would involuntarily wake in the middle of the night, hurling pots and pans onto the floor, screaming, and then returning to his slumber as if nothing had happened. He was otherwise completely normal, but this strange condition was greatly affecting Daniel's sleep.

When he confided in Eli about the issue, Eli admitted to being aware of the neighbor's nocturnal antics. Eli argued that the apartment itself was undeniably beautiful and everything else was in perfect order. As far as he was concerned, it was a good sale. However, feeling misled, Daniel wanted to back out of the sale, believing this pertinent information about the neighbor was deliberately withheld from him.

So, here lies the question: Does Daniel have a valid reason to consider the sale a mekach taus, a fraudulent or faulty sale? Does he possess the right to back out? Or is Eli's claim, emphasizing the flawless condition of the apartment itself, substantial enough to counteract Daniel's concerns? What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Shemos 397

The Romans, the Greeks, the Persians, the Babylonians and others at whose hands we suffered greatly are permitted to marry into our nation once they convert, but an Amoni or Moavi who have no sense of gratitude must be kept far from the Jewish genetic pool.

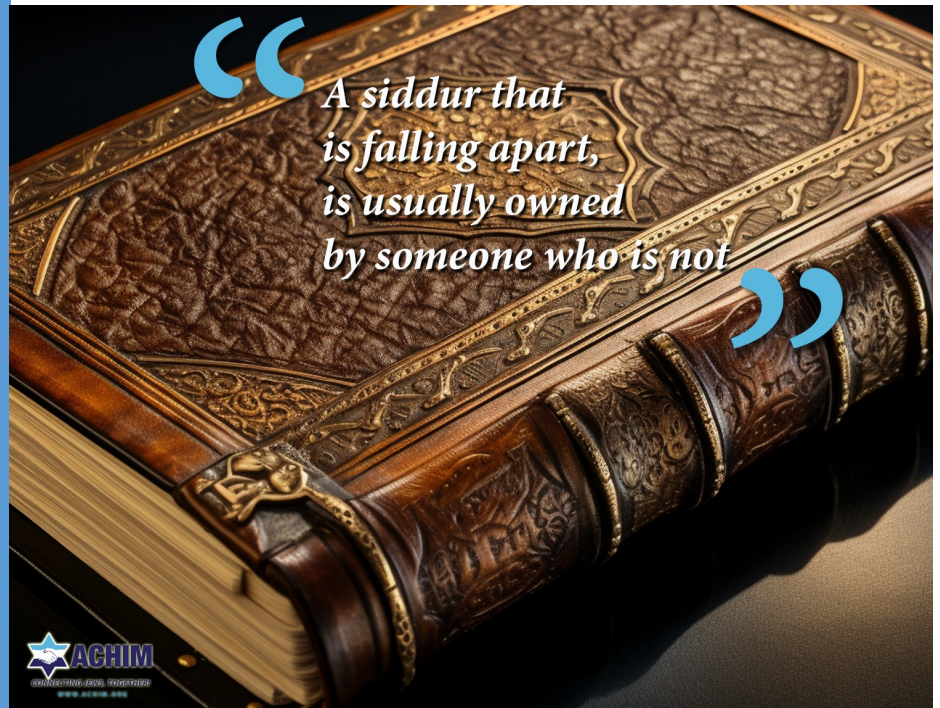
If our sense of gratitude is in any way compromised our people will no longer be viable. Gratitude is the primary trait that allows us to travel through history and survive all its vicissitudes, without which we would long be gone. We know the key to our survival is our relationship with HaShem. Without gratitude no relationship is possible.

As we approach the days of Awe, we are looking for ways to inspire us to return to HaShem. How fortunate we are to have inside of our Jewish psyche an innate sense of gratitude to those who benefit us. If we could recognize and appreciate how every moment of our life is so carefully balanced by HaShem and how great our debt of gratitude to Him is, the teshuvah process would come so naturally.

May HaShem grant us that appreciation and may we all merit a complete teshuvah speedily in our days.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



The ancestor of Amon and Moav is Lot, the nephew of Avraham Avinu. There were two situations where Lot's life was threatened and our ancestor, Avraham, saved him. The debt of gratitude owed to Avraham and to his descendants by the descendants of Lot is enormous.

When we were traveling through the desert on our journey to the promised Land we passed the nations of Amon and Moav. They had the opportunity to offer our nation, the children of Avraham, bread and drink and they did not take the opportunity to do so. They ignored their responsibility to return the generosity that our grandfather offered their grandfather.

The Torah teaches us that on account of shunning their responsibility of gratitude, they may not marry into our nation.



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE BIRDS OF BALTIMORE: BLUE JAYS

Let's continue with our discovery of the birds of Baltimore. Meet the Blue Jay. Blue jays, with their vibrant blue feathers and familiar "jay-jay" calls, are one of the most recognized birds in North America. But there's a lot more to these birds than meets the eye. From their unique behaviors to their incredible abilities, let's dive into the captivating world of blue jays.

One of the first surprising facts many people learn about blue jays is that their feathers are not actually blue! The chemical responsible for their blue color is melanin, which is brown. So how do they appear so vividly azure and cyan? Blue jays utilize a phenomenon called structural coloration. Their feathers contain layers that cause light to interfere and reflect specific wavelengths—in this case, blue. When a blue feather is wet or crushed, it loses its structure and reverts to its true brown color.

Blue jays are renowned for their beautiful blue plumage. How do they maintain this beauty? To maintain their feathers, blue jays bathe frequently by fluttering into shallow water or by taking dust baths. During a water bath, the blue jay rapidly flaps its wings while standing in puddles or other small sources of water. This fluttering action splashes water all over the bird's feathers, helping to dislodge dirt and parasites. For a dust bath, the blue jay rolls around in dirt or sand, spreading dust throughout its feathers; the dust absorbs excess oils and skin irritants. Through both water and dust bathing behaviors, blue jays are able to keep their vibrant blue plumage clean and healthy.

One key to their social nature and survival is the wide variety of vocalizations blue jays produce. They make sweet and quiet chirping sounds when feeding peacefully together. However, they can also utter remarkably loud, screeching alarm calls. These serve to warn each other and other birds of nearby predators. In fact, blue jays have a special talent for mimicry and often imitate the cries of hawks. This tricks other birds into fleeing, allowing the jay to steal an easy meal. Their mimicry is so accurate that it is sometimes hard to distinguish a jay from the real predator! Interestingly on the same topic of mimicry, blue jays sometimes steal feathers from birds of prey to decorate their nests. They like to do this to deter predators.

Beyond alarm calls, blue jays produce a diverse array of clicks, whistles, jeers, and pops. Their name comes from their "jay-jay" sounds. This is called an onomatopoeia, a word that mimics a sound. In captivity, these intelligent birds even learn to mimic human speech.

To protect themselves from parasites and illness, blue jays practice a curious behavior called "anting." They will find an ant, spread its pungent formic acid across their feathers, and then eat the ant. The acid is thought to deter pests like mites and lice. This makes the ants easier to digest as well. Blue jays are resourceful in using tools at their disposal.

Beyond anting behaviors, blue jays are remarkably intelligent birds. In captivity, they craft simple tools out of scraps like newspaper or twigs to draw in food that is out of reach. Wild jays are also clever

opportunists. They have been observed watching farmers plant crops and then digging up the seeds after the humans leave. Their intelligence even allows them to operate simple mechanisms like locks when confined. Their playful nature extends to their fascination with shiny objects like bottle caps and aluminum foil.

Blue jays have a diverse omnivorous diet including seeds, nuts, fruits, insects, eggs, and small animals. They sometimes steal and eat eggs and nestlings from the nests of other birds. They have the ability to catch and eat insects from the air. However, their favorite food is acorns. This is how they make a significant contribution to the world and ecosystem by spreading oak trees. Jays gorge on acorns in the fall, able to carry as many as 5 acorns at a time in their sturdy beaks. They collect and cache acorns. Blue jays have expandable throat pouches that allow them to carry several acorns at once when collecting them. A single blue jay can cache between 3,000 to 5,000 acorns in one season. In the process, many of these acorns sprout and grow into trees.

Blue jays value family. They typically live in close-knit family groups and remain together even when they migrate. When it comes to mating, they form monogamous pair bonds, cooperating in building nests and rearing their young.

Parent blue jays condition their young ones to remain in the nest for up to two months. How do they keep their young from leaving early? They do this by denying them food if they venture out prematurely.

With eyesight eight times sharper than humans, blue jays can spot food from great distances. Additionally, their ability to see ultraviolet light helps them discover insects concealed under tree bark.

Despite their size, blue jays are fierce when it comes to defending their territory and nests. Their bravery extends to confronting larger animals, including hawks and cats.

Jays have a black bridle pattern seen across their face. Some scientists believe this may play a role in helping blue jays recognize individuals among the species. They have a crest on top of their head. Their crest behavior is a visual indicator of their mood. It is lowered during peaceful feeding and raised when alarmed or aggressive.

While adept at flying through trees and traversing short distances, the blue jay has a slower overall flight speed compared to many other birds. On average, blue jays only reach speeds of 20-25 miles per hour in level flight. This contrasts sharply with the rapid flying speeds of ducks, which can cruise at 50-60 miles per hour over long distances. The blue jay's relatively slower flying ability is likely related to its skill at maneuverability and taking advantage of short bursts of speed while moving among tree branches. Although they cannot match the swift pace of migratory waterfowl, blue jays are well suited for their lifestyle of frequent short flights in wooded habitats.

Jays can grow to be up to a foot long. The average blue jay lives 5-7 years, but some exceptional individuals have been known to live over 26 years in the wild.

Thank you Hashem for your wonderful creation!

"I WILL ONLY HAVE THIS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN A TOSAFOS WHEN I COULD HAVE BEEN LOOKING AT THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE!"

There is a well-known story about R' Shmuel Berenbaum that transpired not long after World War II. The Mirrer Yeshiva, after six years in exile in Shanghai, China, had finally boarded the ship to sail across the Pacific Ocean toward America. As the ship neared the port of San Francisco, California, the famed Golden Gate Bridge, one of the most enduring symbols of California, came into view. The Golden Gate Bridge is a giant suspension bridge spanning the Golden Gate, the one-mile-wide strait connecting San Francisco and the Pacific Ocean. At the time of its opening in 1937, it was both the longest and the tallest suspension bridge in the world. Of course, for the Mirrer talmidim, who grew up in poverty-stricken Poland and Lithuania, it was a sight the likes of which they had never seen. As the bridge came into view, everyone went out on the deck to gaze at this marvel of invention and engineering ingenuity that symbolized American greatness and innovation.

One talmid, however, stayed below, engrossed in his Gemara, learning with great diligence. That talmid was the young Shmuel Berenbaum. "Shmuel," one of his chavirim exhorted, "come look at that bridge! It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. When are you ever going to have the chance to see such a sight again in your life?"

R' Shmuel countered with a profound answer. "I will only have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn a Tosafos when I could have been looking at the Golden Gate Bridge!"

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the present that was given to the bar mitzva boy, Rav Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Shemos page 394) answered that if the boy is certain that they will be embarrassed, he should return the extra money in their mailbox with a note. But Rav Zilberstein wrote that it is likely that they won't be embarrassed about this mistake and it would be best to speak to them directly. He should not assume the money was meant for him.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of
Alex Drucker

By his daughter Eve Drucker Messing Steger, his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren



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