

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE VACANCY

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion makes a reference to the importance of showing gratitude to somebody who does you a favor. The Torah writes that Moshe was unable to initiate the first two plagues by hitting the water, because he was saved by the water. This teaches us that we have to feel gratitude for something or someone that helps us. This leads to the following true story.

Refael had a jewelry business that was doing well. He wanted to expand it so he rented a storefront from Shmuel, who owned a small retail stripmall. Shmuel offered Refael a deal. If he would pay for the year's rent in advance he would give him a significant deduction. Refael agreed and paid for the entire year up front.

Before Refael moved into the new storefront,



HUMILITY WELCOMES HUMILITY

Before bringing the seventh plague of Borod, hailstones, on the Egyptians, in which HaShem sent down from heaven fire within hailstones, Moshe warned Pharaoh, "This time I will send all My plagues upon your heart and on your servants and on your people so that you will know that there is none like Me on the entire earth." Why does Moshe refer to this single plague as "all My plagues" it was only one of ten?

Borod was a unique plague in that it came with instructions how to minimize one's losses. Moshe informed Pharaoh that if anyone wishes to avoid the onslaught of the hail they should stay indoors and keep their animals and slaves indoors. If the purpose of Borod was to mete out punishment to the Egyptians why would HaShem offer them a way to save themselves? Evidently, the purpose of Borod was to teach humility and submission to the Egyptians. The suffering from this plague was limited to those who stood tall in face of HaShem's Power. All that one needed to do was to pay attention to HaShem's instructions.

Even the vegetation that was struck was limited to those plants that stood tall and strong. The plants that were soft and supple survived the plague. "The flax and the barley were struck because the barley was already stand-

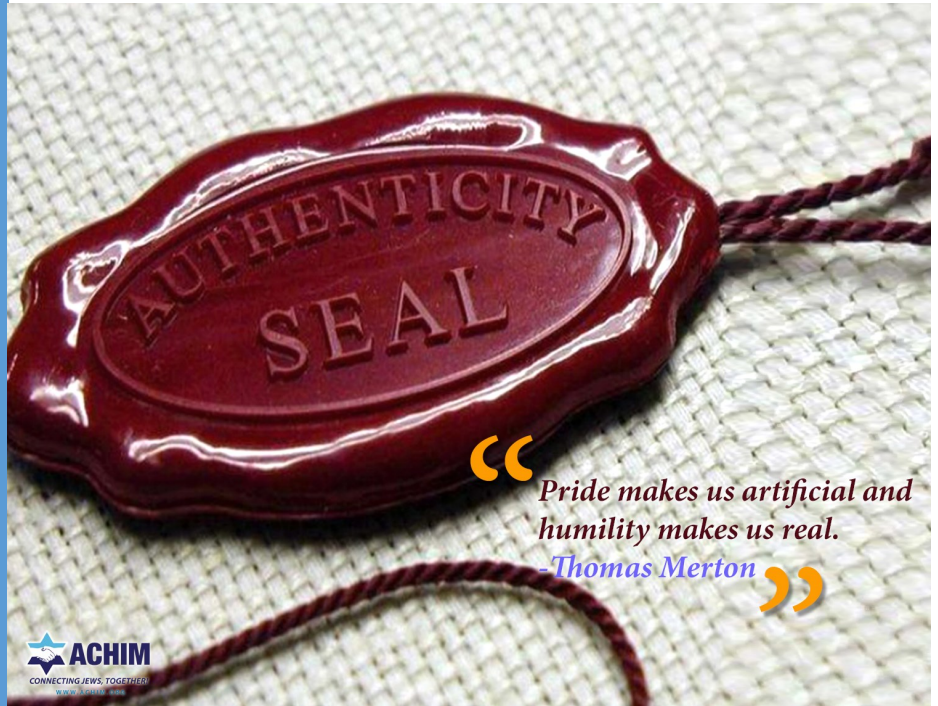
he realized that he didn't really need the new storefront anymore since most of his business was coming from online and phone purchases. Refael considered asking for a refund from Shmuel but decided that having the storefront was beneficial for him for tax purposes. The expense of the store gave him a tax deduction and put him in a lower tax bracket, saving him a lot of money. For a while Refael left the storefront vacant.

After a while, Shmuel, the owner of the stripmall reached out to Refael. "Refael why aren't you moving into the store? It has been empty for quite a while. Is something wrong with it?" Refael replied that things changed and that he didn't really need to use the storefront but he kept it for tax purposes. Shmuel replied, "I really hope that you move in soon. Having that storefront vacant, lowers the appeal and the value of my entire mall. When there's a vacant store other businesses won't rent my other available properties in the strip mall. Please move in because by leaving it vacant you are causing me damage".

Refael said, "You know there was never any clause in our contract that I had to occupy the property. It's enough that I paid you in full". Shmuel responded, "That is true, but you don't have a right to damage my entire real estate holding. By leaving it empty you are causing me a great deal of financial damage."

What do you think? Does Refael have a right to leave the storefront vacant? Or is he not allowed to keep it vacant as it is causing Shmuel damage?

See Chashukei Chemed Bava Basra Page 533



ing up and the flax was on its stalk, but the wheat and the spelt were not struck for they ripen later." The implication is that since they were not yet ripe they were still supple and were able to bend before the hail.

Behold! The punishment of Borod was limited to those who stood tall and strong in the face of HaShem. All others were spared.

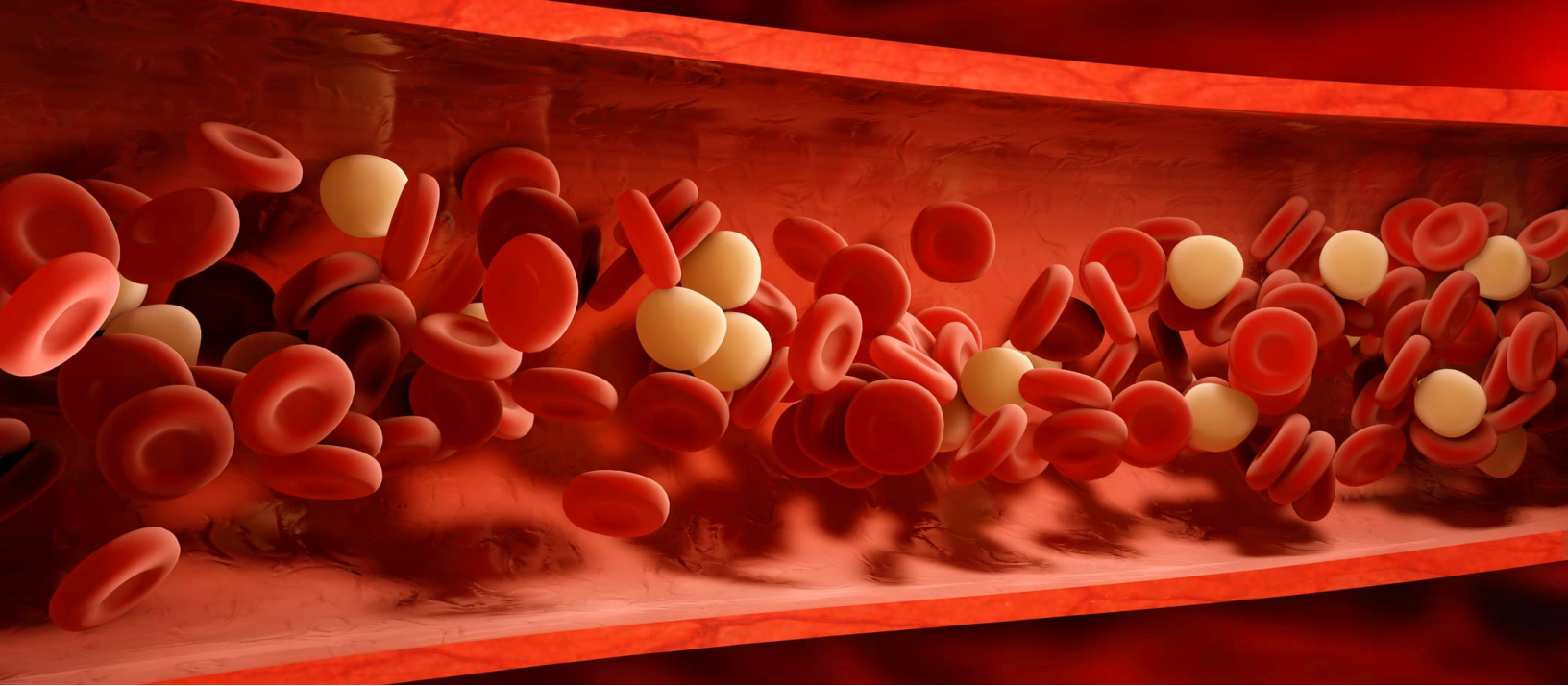
HaShem has no interest in punishing His creatures. He does only good for them. The hardship that is brought by HaShem is only to bring His creatures closer to Him. The only path for a creature to come close to his Creator is through humility. So long as the creature considers him-

self an equal to his Creator there is no path to approach. The reason HaShem expects obedience from us is not because He wants to be bigger but because He wants us to have a path by which we will be able to approach Him. It is HaShem's humility to be close to us which demands humility from us.

Perhaps Borod is called 'all my plagues' to teach us that all of HaShem's plagues, from those that He delivered in Egypt to those that we suffer from today, are only to instruct us to submit to His Will.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

BLOOD, THE LIFE-GIVING FLUID TISSUE

By Avraham Cohen

In this week's Torah portion, Hashem begins to afflict Egypt with the Ten Plagues, in order to begin the process of freeing the Jewish people from hundreds of years of slavery in that land, and in order to clearly demonstrate to Pharaoh and Egypt that He alone is Master of the Universe and Ruler of the natural world. Although the Egyptians may have believed the false report that Pharaoh was 'god', the Ten Plagues would come to prove decisively that there is only One G-d and only one Jewish People who have a unique Covenant with Him.

The Plagues begin with Hashem striking a severe blow at a key Egyptian deity, crippling the Egyptian economy and the faith the Egyptians had in their perpetual source of blessing – the Nile River (see last week's article). By turning the waters of the Nile to blood, G-d was also sending a message that spilling the blood of His People comes with a steep price.

The Torah teaches us that "the blood is the life" (Lev. 17:14). Modern science teaches us just how important blood is to any living organism: The blood that flows through the circulatory system of our bodies transports nutrients, oxygen, and water to every cell, and also removes their waste products. Although the blood's journey might 'begin' and 'end' with the mighty heart, our arteries, veins, and minute capillaries will take the blood to every vital spot to keep us alive every day of our sojourn on this earth.

The blood is a living fluid and circulates through a vast network of versatile tubing, some of which is akin to a major highway, while others better likened to an obscure one-lane country road. If you were to take all the blood vessels of your body and lay them out in a straight line, they would stretch for nearly 60,000 miles! And that's enough lineage to circle the earth almost three times over.

Blood is composed of 55% plasma and 45% "formed elements," including red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. Because these living cells are suspended in the plasma, blood is considered a fluid "connective tissue" (not a fluid); it is the only fluid tissue in the body. Let's learn about five fascinating jobs that blood performs.

1) Blood helps to transport oxygen. Blood absorbs oxygen from air in the lungs by bonding with the hemoglobin molecule present in red blood cells – turning the blood bright red – and the oxygen is then trans-

ported to cells throughout the body. Carbon dioxide (a by-product of cellular metabolism) is now removed from the cells and absorbed by the erythrocytes – turning the blood a dark red – and this CO₂ gas is released into the lungs during pulmonary circulation. It is a quiet miracle that occurs continuously without our conscious knowledge.

2) Blood acts as a delivery and waste removal system. Blood plays a large role in digestion, absorbing digested nutrients into the bloodstream (i.e. glucose, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, and fatty acids) and moving them to where they are needed. Blood also transports many hormones secreted by endocrine system glands to target organs and tissues. Passing through a specialized renal circulation network, blood brings metabolic waste products to the kidneys so that they do not accumulate in our bodies and poison us, *cv"s*.

3) Blood also acts like a "heater". Blood helps to maintain homeostasis in the body through the release or conservation of warmth. "Homeostasis" is a state of balance that is achieved by the constant adjustment of biochemical and physiological pathways. Blood vessels can either expand or contract, moving blood (and heat) closer to or farther from the skin surface (where heat is lost). Although we don't think of it, this process is critical for life (although we are all familiar with the feelings of being 'chilled' or 'overheated').

4) Blood also helps to stop injuries. Platelets in the blood, working together with other plasma proteins, work together to form a localized blood clot in damaged areas and thus stop blood loss. The blood of people with hemophilia (a hereditary disease) lacks this ability, causing the sufferer to bleed severely from even the slightest injury.

5) Finally, blood helps to battle disease. White blood cells, also called leukocytes, are the disease-fighting components of blood. They account for just 1% of circulating blood, but multiply during infection or inflammation. Without them, we would be severely handicapped in fighting off the invasion of bacteria and viruses, which constantly threaten our good health.

In this short essay, we have just touched the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the miracle of blood and the other functions constantly at work in our amazing bodies!

Hodu l'Hashem ki tov, ki l'olam chasdo!

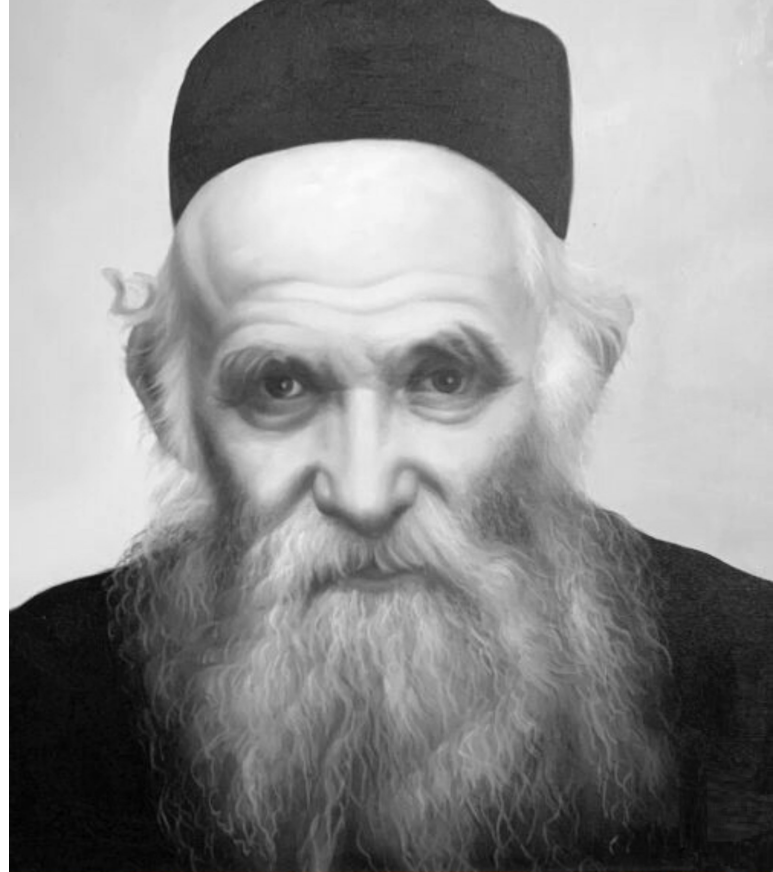
CHERISHING YOUR WIFE

Reb Chaim, a student of Rav Aharon Kotler, was going to Lakewood with his wife and was taking Reb Aharon Kotler with him. They had already started the car and were about to pull out when Reb Aharon said, "Excuse me but I must go back upstairs, I forgot something". Reb Chaim responded that it would not be necessary for the Rosh Yeshiva to go to the effort. He can go upstairs and take whatever was forgotten. The Rosh Yeshiva said, "No I must go out myself". The Rosh Yeshiva and Reb Chaim got out of the car, went into the building, up the elevator, into the apartment and then into the kitchen. The Rebbetzin was there standing at the counter. The Rosh Yeshiva walked over and said, "Have a good day", and then turned around and left. Reb Chaim said he would never forget the smile on the Rebbetzin's face when she realized what happened. She literally beamed with happiness over the Rosh Yeshiva's gesture. The Rosh Yeshiva was an older man and walking was tiring for him. Additionally, he was always pressed for time. He could have easily waited until they got to Lakewood and then called her up, but that would not have been the same.

Rabbi Avrohom Tannenbaum once ate at Rav Tendler's house one Friday night. He saw that Rav Tendler first cut the smaller challah. Someone mentioned that the halachah is to cut the larger one, which is considered more chashuv. "The small one was made by my wife" Rav Tendler responded. "It is therefore more chashuv to me."

In the last year of his life, on Erev Shavuos, Rav Tendler collapsed at home. He called for his daughter Berachah to come down to help. She ran down the steps and found Mrs. Tendler holding him in the kitchen. The ambulance crew arrived, but chose not to transport him to the hospital, and he was placed in his bed. As he was lying there, pale and shaken, he motioned for Berachah to come closer. "I didn't buy flowers for Mommy yet for Shavuos. Take my credit card from my wallet and pick out beautiful flowers." He was hospitalized shortly afterward. But during that time, he apparently forgot that he had made this request of Berachah, and then asked his son as well to buy flowers so that he could give his wife something special for Yom Tov.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the draft exemption, the Ragatchover responded based on Nazir 24A that a husband commits himself for anything the wife might need. However, for something that she has no need he never accepted responsibility. Based on this he said that the father was only concerned about his son's welfare. If he does not need it, it was never given to him, and therefore the proceeds should be split between all the children.

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