



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



MEET BABY NIMROD

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

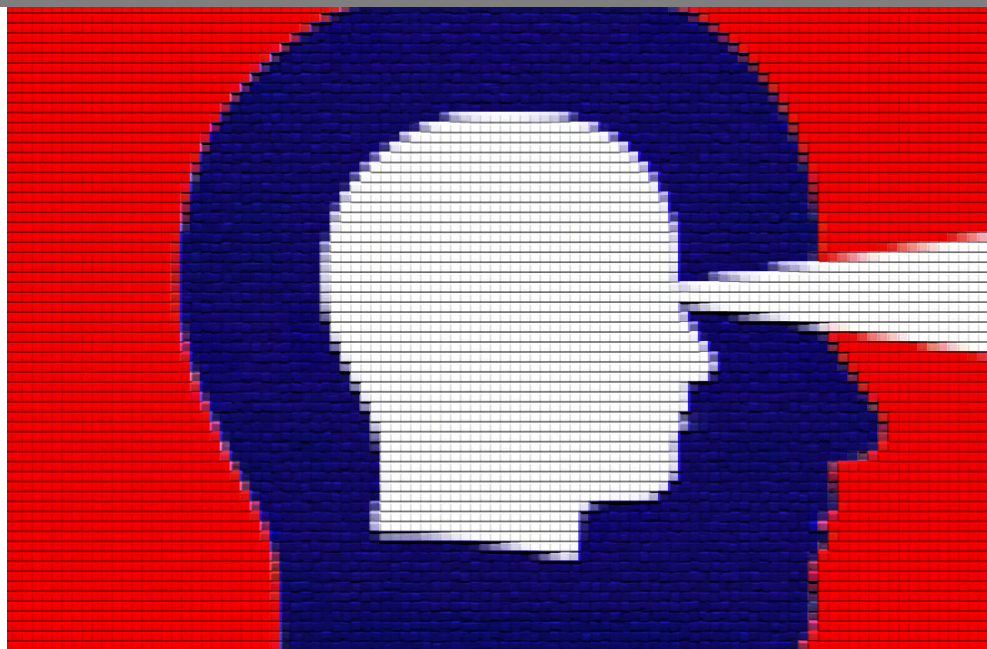
This week's Torah portion opens up with HaShem visiting Avraham after his bris milah. In last week's Parsha we learned about Nimrod, also known as Amrafel, who was a wicked king who tried killing Avraham. Nimrod was eventually defeated by Avraham in the battle of the four kings against the five.

This leads us to the following true story.

Rabbi Hurvitz was a popular mohel in Eretz Yisrael. He was often invited to the homes of secular Israeli Jews to perform the bris milah. While these Jews were not religious, they were knowledgeable and traditional enough to know that a Jew gets circumcised at eight days.

One day Rabbi Hurvitz was invited to the home of the Refaelli family. It was a small affair with a few close family members. Right before the bris Mr. Refaelli turned to Rabbi Hurvitz.

"My wife and I could not think of a name for the baby. So we had an idea. We opened up a Chumash for some name ideas. The first name we came across that we found interesting was 'Nimrod'. The Chumash says Nimrod was a giber. He was a Hero. That name



DIVINE INTUITION

Excerpted from Rabbi Aaron Lopiansky's talk

The importance of these parshios is that they introduce us to the Fathers and Mothers of our nation. They are the foundation of our people and as such, as we gain insight into their strengths and their personalities we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves.

As I read our Parsha, Vayeira, I am struck with a quandary. When HaShem informs Avraham of the impending destruction of Sodom, he pleads with HaShem to spare them. Later, when HaShem instructs Avraham to bring his son Yitzchok as an offering he complies with not a word on behalf of his only beloved son! How do we make sense of this?

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos teaches us; "Make His Will like your will in order that He will make your will like His Will."

At first glance the Mishna seems to be saying that you should cancel your own wishes and aspirations to do His Will so that He will make your wishes and aspirations to be His wishes. Naturally, this is an oxymoron. If my interests are to do His interests than I have no interest other than His. What will He do for me?

Let us contrast two relationships; the provider-client relationship and the husband-wife relationship. In the former, the provider wants the client to be a satisfied customer and will make sure that the client's needs are filled. He does this in order that the client will respond in kind and satisfy the provider's need for business. There remains two separate sets of interests which serve each other.

Contrast this with the latter. The husband's entire desire is that his wife should be happy. He has

sounds powerful and we liked the sound of it. We would like to call the baby Nimrod."

Rabbi Hurvitz tried to suggest some other ideas, but the couple was dead set on their idea.

Rabbi Hurvitz thought to himself that our Sages describe Nimrod as a cruel and evil person. Our Sages teach that the name one gives to a baby has a spiritual effect on the baby and it would be a bad choice to give a child that limitation. The parents didn't realize it, but they were harming their child.

Rabbi Hurvitz had the following thought. Most couples he worked with didn't usually pay that much attention to the naming part of the ceremony. Perhaps when the name was called, he would call the baby a nice Jewish name like Avraham. The parents may not even realize. That way the official name of the baby's neshama would be Avraham. If we could speak to the neshama of this baby he would definitely prefer to be called Avraham rather than Nimrod. The parents may call him Nimrod, but at least that won't be the baby's real name as called by his bris. Perhaps the neshama's wishes would be more important than the parent's wishes.

On the other hand, however, the parents did not want that name. They wanted to call him Nimrod. Perhaps he needed to respect their wishes even if it wasn't good for the baby. Perhaps he needed to respect their wishes even if they would not realize what he did.

Whose wishes are more important? The wishes of the neshama of the baby, or the wishes of the parents, who are making a bad choice for their baby?

Rabbi Hurvitz eventually brought this question to Rav Zilberstein.

What do you think he should do? Name the baby Avraham without the parents realizing, or call him Nimrod like they requested, even though the baby's neshama would not want that?

See Chashukei Chemed Yoma page 294

If you have a true mitzvah dilemma that you would like us to share, please email it to rabiweiner@gmail.com

death of the wicked. HaShem wants that they repent and return to Him. Avraham therefore took the liberty to plead on behalf of those Sodomites that they be spared.

It is for this reason reason that Avraham prefaces his pleading with indicating that "I am but earth and ash". He was telling HaShem that he has no interest of his own. His entire interest is the Will of HaShem.

Regarding HaShem's request of Avraham to bring Yitzchok as an offering, Avraham intuited that HaShem's Will was, in fact, to bring Yitzchok as an offering. He, therefore, did not ask HaShem to change His wish. Quite to the contrary, Avraham wanted to fulfill His Will completely and had no desire to alter that Will.

If the Torah teaches us the incredible closeness and dedication of love that our Father Avraham had for HaShem, it is a lesson to us that every one of his grandchildren holds that deep love inside them. We need only to tap into it and bring it out. There is a second lesson as well. The love HaShem had for Avraham which gave Avraham the ability to intuit His Will continues with his grandchildren. Every grandchild of Avraham should know the infinite love HaShem has for them. We need only to be aware of it and connect.

Have a wonderful Shabbos

Paysach Diskind

MITZVA MEME



no other interest. (It becomes a bit complex because the wife's entire desire is that her husband be happy. She will therefore adopt his interests to be hers.) In this arrangement there is only one set of interests; the wife's. The husband, however, has one problem. He does not know what exactly are his wife's interests?

The Mishna teaches us that in our relationship with HaShem we should adopt the latter and make our entire interest to do His Will. There should be only one set of interests; His Will. Regarding the problem; how can we know what His interests are, the Mishna tells us that HaShem will make our will to correspond to His. The Mishna is teaching us that HaShem will grant us the gift of being able to discern His Will. He will make our will to reflect His will. We will be able to intuit His Will.

HaShem refers to Avraham as "My beloved". The relationship he had with HaShem reflected exactly the second relationship mentioned above. HaShem gave Avraham the gift of being able to intuit HaShem's Will. Although HaShem told Avraham of His plans of punishing Sodom, Avraham discerned that the true Will of HaShem was that He does not wish for the



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE BULL & THE OX

Let's continue with our exploration of common animals discussed in the Torah. What is the difference between a Bull and an Ox? Why is a bull called a wild bull?

Technically, the difference between a bull and an ox is as follows. An ox is a male bovine that is used for domesticated purposes. In order to be domesticated it is neutered. Today the vast majority of oxen are neutered. They are neutered when they are calves because this reduces aggressive behavior and prevents unwanted mating.

A bull is a male cattle that is not neutered. These are bred for the purpose of breeding. A bull that is not neutered is much more muscular and much more aggressive than a neutered ox. Neutered male oxen are physically similar to females, to cows, in build and horn shape.

The Torah prohibits us from neutering our cattle. In fact, the Torah prohibits neutering all animals whether it is ours or even if it belongs to nobody. This is called *Sirus*. This can also help us appreciate why the Torah places so much emphasis on the care an owner has to take to make sure his bull does not harm or gore anyone.

Bulls are much more muscular than cows, with thicker bones, larger feet, a very muscular neck, and a large, bony head with protective ridges over the eyes. These features assist bulls in fighting for domination over a herd. The neck and head often have a "mane" of curlier, woolly hair.

Bulls are usually about the same height as cows or a little taller, but because of the additional muscle and bone mass, they often weigh far more. Most of the time, a bull has a hump on his shoulders.

Adult bulls may weigh between 1,100 and 2,200 lb. Most are capable of aggressive behavior and require careful handling to ensure the safety of humans and other animals. Bulls of dairy breeds may be more prone to aggression. The Spanish Fighting Bull is particularly noted for its aggressive tendencies.

It is not true, as is commonly believed, that bulls have horns and cows do not: the presence of horns depends on the breed.

Bulls can be extremely dangerous. In Canada it has been noted that an estimated 42% of all livestock-related fatalities were a result of bull attacks. In those cases fewer than one in 20 victims of a bull attack survived.

Dairy breed bulls are particularly dangerous and unpredictable; the hazards of bull handling are a significant cause of injury and death for dairy farmers. The need to move a bull in and out of its pen to cover cows, exposes the handler to serious

jeopardy of life and limb. Before the 1940's, being trampled, jammed against a wall, or gored by a bull was one of the most frequent causes of death in the dairy industry.

Generally, bulls kept with cows tend to be less aggressive than those kept alone.

How are bulls and oxen used? Oxen are used for plowing, for transport (pulling carts, hauling wagons and even riding), for threshing grain by trampling, and for powering machines that grind grain or supply irrigation, among other purposes. Oxen may be also used to skid logs in forests.

Oxen are usually yoked in pairs. Light work such as carting household items on good roads might require just one pair, while for heavier work, further pairs would be added as necessary. A team used for a heavy load over difficult ground might exceed nine or ten pairs.

Interestingly, scientists suggest that oxen were first harnessed and put to work around 4000 BCE. That is the same time as Hevel, who domesticated animals.

Let's compare oxen to horses. Oxen can pull heavier loads, and pull for a longer period of time than horses depending on weather conditions. On the other hand, they are also slower than horses, which has both advantages and disadvantages. Their pulling style is steadier, but they cannot cover as much ground in a given period of time. For agricultural purposes, oxen are more suitable for heavy tasks such as breaking sod or plowing in wet, heavy, or clay-filled soil. When hauling freight, oxen can move very heavy loads in a slow and steady fashion. They are at a disadvantage compared to horses when it is necessary to pull a plow or load of freight relatively quickly.

For millennia, oxen would pull heavier loads because of the use of the yoke, which was designed to work best with the neck and shoulder anatomy of cattle. Until the invention of the horse collar, which allowed the horse to engage the pushing power of its hindquarters in moving a load, horses could not pull with their full strength because the yoke was incompatible with their anatomy. This is because yokes press on a horse's chest, inhibiting its breathing.

Trained oxen are also considered less excitable than horses.

A common misconception widely repeated in depictions of bull behavior is that the color red angers bulls, inciting them to charge. In fact, like most mammals, cattle are red-green color blind. In bullfighting, it is the movement of the matador's cape, and not the color that provokes a reaction in the bull.

THE KISS AT THE BRIS

Rena waited in her apartment, trapped behind the Iron Curtain. She was waiting anxiously. Where were they already? Finally, there was a knock on the door. Rena's husband, Uri, entered with a little bundle in his arms. Behind him was a man they had only recently met. He was known simply as Reb Avraham. "Mazal Tov, Mrs. Baruchov," said Reb Avraham. "Everything went just fine." "Yes," added Uri. "Reb Avraham performed the bris and everything went as planned. Baruch HaShem, no 'surprise guests' showed up. Here, Rena," and he undid the blanket around the infant whom he held, "hold our little Yosef. Finally, our child has a Hebrew name." Rena picked up the small crying infant, kissed him on the cheek . . . and fainted.

When Rena was revived she explained to those present what had occurred. Under the Communists, circumcising an infant was considered an act of "religious coercion." The Communists, always "concerned" for the rights of their citizens, declared it a crime to perform a bris until a boy turned eighteen, at which time he could decide for himself whether or not he wanted to be circumcised. Of course, until a boy turned eighteen, the Communists did a very good job of brainwashing him to despise religion and even to deny belief in the very existence of a Creator. When they turned eighteen, most Jewish boys had not the faintest notion what bris milah was about.

Rena had been raised in a religious home and understood the importance of bris milah. She knew that a Jewish boy without a bris was a spiritually impaired soul. However, she knew that it would be impossible to have her child's bris performed on the eighth day. First, a qualified mohel had to be found who was willing to undertake the great risk of performing this mitzvah. Then a plan had to be formulated through which the circumcision could be done in utmost secrecy. It would not be easy. Rena did not know how long it would be until her son could enter into the covenant of the Patriarch Avraham. She did however know one thing. The longer her son's bris was delayed, the greater was the danger that she would grow accustomed to his being uncircumcised. And what if it would be months or even years before the bris could be performed? The need to fulfill the mitzvah might, G-d forbid, become forgotten . . .

Rena decided to do something that would allow her no rest until her baby would have his bris. She promised herself that she would not kiss her little boy until he was circumcised. And so, from the day that he was born, Rena cuddled her baby, held him on her shoulder, rocked him to sleep — but never once did she kiss him.

And now, as she held her little Yosef in her arms, all the love and emotion that had been welling up inside of her for so long burst forth as she kissed him for the very first time. And then she fainted.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of which Rav to choose Rav Zilberstein said that there is no single preference. It really depends on the primary need of the community. If the community needs one to pasken halacha, that is preferred. However if the community needs someone to inspire and uplift them, then the second one would be preferred.

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