

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE PACKED BUS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha talks about the Yom Tov of Yom Kippur. Our sages teach that if one does teshuva, then Yom Kippur provides forgiveness, atonement, and an inner cleansing for nearly all sins. But there is one sin that is so great that even Yom Kippur cannot atone for. That is the sin of a Chillul Hashem, desecrating Hashem's name. (Yoma 86a)

This leads us to the following true story.

Avromi entered a city bus and sat down. Very quickly the bus filled up and all the seats were filled. Avromi had plans to travel across town and planned to be on the bus for a while.

Shortly after, an elderly man entered the bus. Every seat was taken, but no one moved to offer the elderly man a seat. Avromi very kindly asked the man if he would like his seat.

"No, thank you for your very kind offer", the man replied. "As long as I have these two feet I don't



### STAY WITHIN LIMITS

This week's Parsha, Acharei Mos, references the death of Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aaron, who died while bringing an unrequested offering. In explaining the cause for this death the Midrash describes it; "they died because they added love to love". The love that the Midrash refers to is their love for HaShem. The implication is that there is good love which comes in its proper measure and then there is extra love that goes beyond the limit. What is the limitation within which love is acceptable. Let us rephrase the question as follows. What is the container that holds love and when there is no more room in that container, further love must be restrained?

The Zohar as well as many later Sages teach us that the path to achieving love of Hashem is through the fear of HaShem. (For the sake of clarity, the notion of fear that we must have for HaShem is not limited to the fear of punishment, which is certainly appropriate. It is primarily the awe that we have of HaShem. Similar to the awe that we have when meeting an extremely wise man. Or perhaps the awe that one would feel when meeting a president of the United States.) At first glance it seems to be counterintuitive since we associate fear/awe and love as two opposites, however, upon delicate consideration we can discern how intertwined these two relationships could be and actually should be.

The Torah instructs us "Love your neighbor as you love yourself". The great Talmudic Sage, Hillel, explained this verse as follows. Do not do to your neighbor what you would not want done to yourself. It is strange why he explained this mitzvah in the negative form. Would it not be more expansive to describe it in the positive; give to your neighbor what you would like to be given to yourself? That would seem to place the mitzvah in its proper translation.

Give thought to the following notion. Is it possible to truly love someone and yet that person

mind using them”.

“Are you sure?”, Avromi confirmed. “Yes” the man replied.

Avromi continued sitting for a moment but then a thought struck him. The bus was filled. He was sitting at the front of the bus with an elderly man standing beside him. Perhaps staying seated was a Chillul Hashem, a desecration of Hashem’s name.

“But the man didn’t want the seat”, Avromi thought to himself. “And If I just get up without saying anything there is a good chance that another inconsiderate person might quickly take the seat”.

“Perhaps I can tell the elderly man that I plan to get off at the next stop, so he should take the seat. That way I will do the mitzvah, and avoid the Chillul Hashem”.

“But on the other hand”, Avromi thought, “if the man sits down and he sees that I didn’t get off, he might feel deceived and that might be a Chillul Hashem.”

Avromi wondered what the best course of action should be:

- 1) Should he just ignore it? But sitting might be a chillul Hashem.
- 2) Could he tell the man a white lie that he was getting off at the next stop? Perhaps that might be a chillul hashem.
- 3) Should he just get up and not say anything? But then the elderly man might not get the seat.

According to the Torah what do you think would be the best course of action in this case?

See Chashukei Chemed Yoma Page 429

If you have a true mitzvah dilemma that you would like to share, please email it to [rabiweiner@gmail.com](mailto:rabiweiner@gmail.com)



does not appreciate your love? As one travels through life this circumstance is encountered from time to time. How do we understand it?

Let us examine the starting point of love and contrast that with the starting point of fear. Love begins within me. Every person loves themselves and seeks ways to expand themselves and their positive feelings. When I discover a person who I identify as someone who will bring me joy and fulfillment, wisdom and inspiration I am attracted to them and I love them.

Fear and awe, on the other hand, originate from the other party. When I encounter someone whose presence is grand, I become very aware of them and restrain myself. When I recognize the other person’s presence my own interests are inhibited. I give that person consideration and limit my actions to conform with the other person’s rights and needs.

Love and fear are not necessarily intertwined because one can love based on the gain that they experience whether or not the other party shares that gain. It is conceivable to give to your neighbor the things

that you would give to yourself because you love them, it makes you feel good, and nevertheless refuse to acknowledge their displeasure when your parties continue till midnight. That love does not originate from fear, it is independent of fear. Such love the Torah does not condone.

There is however, a love that originates from fear. When you recognize the other person’s presence and acknowledge their needs and desires. From that point you come to appreciate them and derive pleasure from their company. The love that follows fear is healthy love. This is the love HaShem expects from us.

The container which holds love is fear. As long as our love remains within the confines of the other person’s desires, our love is healthy. If more love is added, it will spill over the top and be wasted. HaShem was not interested in unwanted offerings. Although they were seeking spiritual growth but in was in conflict with what HaShem wanted from them. That love was fatal.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### THE NILE CROCODILE

We just celebrated Pesach and learned about the Plagues that Hashem caused in the Nile River. According to the Malbim and Abarbanel, the second plague, of Tzefardea, was not just frogs, but included a huge swarm of crocodiles.

The Nile Crocodile in particular, is one of the largest and most aggressive of crocodiles. Let's learn more about the Nile Crocodile.

Nile Crocodiles can be 18 feet long and 1,800 pounds. The largest crocodile ever held in captivity was 20 ft in length and weighed 2,456 lb. Just to appreciate that, 20 feet is the same height as a giraffe!

The crocodile spends most of its time in water. Hashem gave it special tools for this environment. It breathes air like us but they can still stay submerged underwater for a long time. After 30 minutes underwater, all of its metabolism slows down, with the exception of its heart and brain. In this way it can remain underwater longer. A crocodile can hold its breath and can stay underwater for up to 2 hours. Because it can hold its breath so long, this creates a large build up of acid in its blood. But Hashem designed it so that the acid gets diverted to the stomach to help it digest hard matter like bones, hooves and horns. Crocodiles have the most acidic stomach of any vertebrate. Because of this they can completely digest matter that other animals can't.

The crocodile has a special transparent eyelid that covers the eyeball when it is submerged. This way it can see well even underwater. The eyelid is designed with shiny skin behind the retina, in order to reflect light onto the retina. In this way it utilizes the small amount of light available at night to best advantage.

But even though it can see well underwater, it can detect prey, danger and intruders, even in total darkness. The upper and lower jaws are covered with sensory pits, called domed pressure receptors. They are visible as small, black speckles on the skin. These encase bundles of nerve fibers which respond to the slightest disturbance in surface water, detecting vibrations and small pressure changes as small as a single drop. This makes it possible for crocodiles to detect prey, danger and intruders, even in total darkness!

Humans have two sets of teeth. But crocodiles are polyphyodonts. This means they are able to replace each of their 80 teeth up to 50 times in their lifespan! Next to each full-grown tooth, there is a small replacement tooth and a stem cell that can be activated if required.

Many large crocodiles swallow stones called gastroliths or stomach stones. Why do they swallow stones? These stones act as ballast to balance their bodies in the water. This is similar to a submarine that uses ballast tanks to maneuver. The stones also assist in crushing food in its body.

Crocodiles often eat birds. How can they catch birds? Crocodiles are cunning. Sometimes crocodiles use twigs as bait for birds looking for nesting material. They place sticks on their snouts and partly submerge themselves. When the birds swooped in to get the sticks, the crocodiles then catch the birds.

However the Nile crocodiles have a symbiotic relationship with the Egyptian plover. The plover enters the crocodile's huge mouth with 80 teeth and picks leeches feeding on the crocodile's teeth. The bird will first fly around the crocodile's head to catch its attention. Seeing the little bird, the crocodile comes out on land, opens its mouth-and the bird walks right inside to give the teeth a good cleaning!

Crocodiles lay eggs. At the time of hatching, the young start calling out from within the eggs. They have an egg-tooth at the tip of their snouts, that helps them pierce out of the shell. Hearing the calls, the female usually excavates the nest and sometimes takes the unhatched eggs in her mouth, slowly rolling the eggs to help the process. The young is usually carried to the water in the mother's mouth.

The crocodile has by far the strongest bite of any animal. The jaws can bite down with immense force. The force of a large crocodile's bite is more than 5,000 lbf. Compare this to the bite of a Rottweiler, which is also renowned for a very strong bite. The force of a Rottweiler is only 335 lbf.

Interestingly, despite the strong muscles to close the jaw, crocodiles have extremely small and weak muscles to open the jaw. Crocodiles can thereby be subdued for study or transport by taping their jaws or holding their jaws shut with large rubber bands.

In captivity, some individual crocodiles are claimed to have lived for over a century. For example a male crocodile lived to an estimated age of 110-115 years in a Russian zoo in Yekaterinburg.

Thank you Hashem for showing us such brilliant design!

## YOU RAISED UP ALL THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE OUT IN THE FIELDS

Yom Kippur would not begin until the close of the following day but the journey to the town where the Baal Shem Tov lived was so long that a certain chassid decided to set out early. Just to be sure, he traveled all day and all night, and by daybreak on Erev Yom Kippur he was only a matter of miles away from his longed-for destination, Mezhibuzh.

"Now that I am so near the end of my journey, thank God," the Chassid said to himself, "and my poor old horse must be exhausted after such a long stretch, this is a good time for me to take a break and recite my morning prayers.

The horse can munch some grass and take it easy meanwhile.

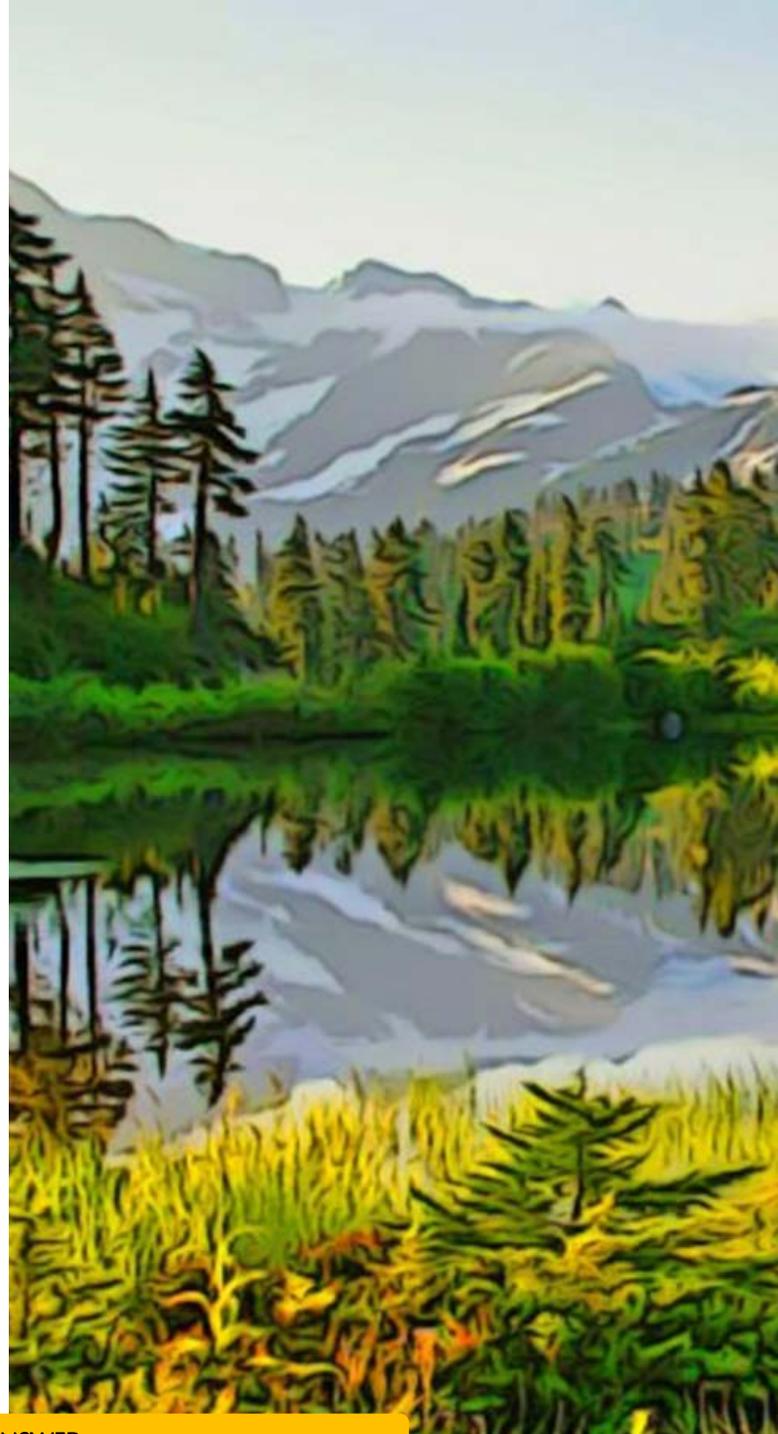
But the Chassid was so sleepy after his prayers that he thought: "Why shouldn't I take a nap here for an hour or two? The horse can rest too, and then we'll gallop along energetically and still get to town before midday." With that he sprawled out fatigued on his wagon. He was overtaken by a deep slumber, and slept soundly until dusk.

When he awoke and realized that the holy day had already set in, he was most perturbed. What a bitter disappointment! What effort and trouble had he gone to in order to make his exhausting journey so that he could spend this day of days in the presence of the Baal Shem Tov! And here he was, only a few miles out of Mezhibuzh, stranded out in the fields, alone, without as much as a minyan with which to pray.

All that night and throughout the next day he wept, torn by anguish.

Night came, and Yom Kippur was over. He bridled his horse and drove off quickly to Mezhibuzh, where he was greeted by the Baal Shem Tov. A smile lit up on the face of the tzaddik as he said: "Know, my good man, that with your prayer you raised up to the heavens the prayers of the people out in the fields who throughout this day did not join any congregation in prayer. And that is why Divine Providence so arranged things that you should spend Yom Kippur out there in the fields."

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### THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of the Chometz sold to the Christian who turned out to be a Jew, Rav Zilberstein said that that case we can 'bidieved' rely on the bitul that was made. Therefore the chometz was never sold because there was no intention to sell it to a Jew. Now that it wasn't sold, it was made ownerless with the bitul. Therefore the Chometz was not in a Jew's possession on Pesach.

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