

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE ANTIQUE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion talks about the halachos of doing business with a fellow Jew (Vayikra 25, 14). This leads us to the following story.

Aron lived in Israel. He walked into an antique store that was near his office and was impressed with the selection. He picked up an antique vase and admired it. Sadly, and inexplicably the vase slipped out of his



CAPTURED!

The Prophet Yirmiyahu tells his people in the name of HaShem "Return, my children, shovovim..." The word shovovim carries several connotations. It is used to refer to people who have returned to HaShem which, in this verse would be difficult to fit. Why would HaShem call on His children who have returned to Him that they should return? The alternate use of this word is unrighteous, in which case the word fits, as HaShem beseeches His unrighteous children to return to Him. The question remains why does the prophet use this word when there are many more common words which indicate unrighteous.

This week's Parsha, Behar - Bechukosai, discusses the relationships between slaves and masters. There are two types of mastership; one is where the master owns the actual body of the slave. Although he has no right to hurt the slave, nevertheless the slave is considered his property. Just as one owns his animals and property so too he owns his slave. The second type is where the master does not own the slave at all. He only has rights to what the slave produces. In the second relationship the slave is actually a hired hand who commits himself to work for the master. One distinction between these two arrangements would be if the slave can own his own property. In the first relationship he would not whereas in the second relationship he would.

The Torah teaches us in our Parsha that a "nochri", a non-Jew, can buy a Jewish slave and this Jew will be his slave as per the second arrangement. So that although the nochri will not own the Jew himself, he will nevertheless own all that the Jew produces for the duration of his slavery. A Jew may not sell himself to a nochri except under extenuating circumstances. If the Jew has a relative who is able to redeem him from the nochri master, the relative has an obligation to do so.

The Zera Shimshon references a Talmudic passage which indicates that the Yetzer

hand and broke.

The vase was very old and the asking price was a lot of money. Aron looked at the price tag which said 5000 shekels.

Aron offered to pay for the vase of course. But he wondered if he had to pay the retail price that the seller was asking, 5000 shekels. Maybe he was only obligated to pay the price to replace the vase? Because? Because antique items have a big markup and the seller's price was presumably much less, perhaps 2500 shekel.

What do you think? If someone damages an item in a store do they have to pay the replacement price, or the retail price?

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although the Yetzer Hara enslaves the Jew to the point that all that the Jew produces belongs to him, nevertheless, the Jew will never belong to the Yetzer Hara. A Jew cannot belong to anyone other than HaShem. Furthermore, the moment the Jew tries to free himself from the Yetzer Hara, his close relative, HaShem, has an obligation to redeem him from the Yetzer Hara. Naturally, his Relative will redeem him, but only if he wants to be free.

The word shovovim also carries in it the word shevi, which means captive. Let us return to the words of Yirmiyahu. HaShem tells His people "Return, My children, shovovim, those of you who are captured by the Yetzer Hara". HaShem is not addressing the children who are essentially unrighteous. Such children are not paying attention to what HaShem says to them. Rather, He is addressing the children who are captive to the Yetzer Hara and think that they belong to the Yetzer Hara. He tells them, you are My children, you are merely captured and not his property. If you will return I will redeem you.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind

MITZVA MEME



Hara, the Evil Inclination, is referred to by the Torah as the Nochri. The word nochri also connotes "a stranger". Nochri is an appropriate title for the Yetzer Hara because although he makes himself comfortable within us and we feel that he is part of our personality, in reality he is but a foreigner who has created a relationship with us. We often view him as a confidant. There are many folks who view their Yetzer Hara as themselves and authorize him to make decisions!

The Chovos Halvovos dedicates an entire chapter on this misconception which is a fatal error. The Yetzer Hara has only one mission - to destroy us in every aspect of life and in every relationship that we have. To the extent that a person is aware of him and his tactics, his effectiveness will be diminished.

The Zera Shimshon applies the laws regarding the nochri who becomes the master of a Jew to the circumstance of the Yetzer Hara, who is the Nochri, who takes control of the Jew. He explains that



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE ONAGADORI

Last week we learned about a dog that has unusually long hair. This week, let's look at a rare chicken that is known for extremely long feathers.

Take a look at one of the rarest chicken breeds on earth. The onagadori chicken comes from Japan. Onagadori roughly means "honorable fowl", as well as "long tailed chicken". What makes the Onagadori so special? Their trademark is their long, long tail feathers. Incredibly, these tail feathers can grow 25 feet long! In order to be classified as an Onagadori, the tails feathers must be at least 2 meters (6.5 feet) long. Most other kinds of chickens are bred for specific purposes such as egg laying but Onagadori were traditionally bred just for exhibition. They are considered calm, friendly and regal, and they are usually not allowed to mingle with other animals.

Why are their tails so much longer than other chickens? Most chickens molt every year when the days get shorter. Molting is a normal process of losing feathers and regrowing them. Although Onagadori hens do molt, the roosters do not. Because of this, their tail feathers can grow longer every year. The tail consists of about 16 to 18 feathers which can grow as much as 3 feet every year! This is what makes them so valuable and unique. Onagadori also have long saddle feathers. These are the feathers in front of the tail.

This prized breed needs a lot of special care and accommodations because their tails will drag on the ground unless they are given high perches, and special high hutches to live in. Sometimes their tails are rolled up and tied with special silk ties for protection so that the tail feathers won't drag on the ground and get dirty or torn.

Their eggs are not allowed to be brought out of the country, and the chickens are not exported. The Onagadori that are found overseas have been raised from exports that were made before they were claimed as a cultural heritage. They were exported to Europe during the mid-1940's from Yokohama Port. At that time, any bird that was exported from this port would be called a "Yokohama", no matter what species that bird was.

When they arrived in Europe, they did not do well with the climate and habitat, which made it necessary for European breeders to cross them with local breeds. This resulted in a similar, but not as exotic, chicken, the phoenix. One downside, which was frustrating to the European breeders, is that frayed and damaged feathers are not replaced quickly, unlike other chickens, which will grow new feathers fairly quickly.

Onagadori do well in neutral temperatures, they will need shade where it's sunny, and heaters during cold winters.

Onagadori is so rare that it is almost unheard of in the US, although there are a few farms that own them. In particular, there is one famous one, named Hakuro. The Onagadori was recognized as a living National Treasure of Japan in 1952, and it's still almost exclusive to Japan. It has been protected by the Japanese government for many years. There are probably less than 300 of them alive today.

If you happen to be in Japan and want to see an Onagadori for yourself, you can visit the Long-Tailed Chicken Center.

“DO ME THIS SMALL FAVOR: REMOVE THE SALARY INCREASE FROM THE AGENDA”

At the outbreak of World War One in the summer of 1914, many of the Jews living near the war front in Poland escaped across the border to Slutzk, Russia. Living conditions were atrocious; most refugees were quartered in the local synagogues, lacking even basic necessities. Though life was somehow tolerable during the summer months, when winter arrived the situation became critical, with almost no fuel or clothing available. The Rav of Slutzk, Harav Isser Zalman Meltzer, took personal charge of the situation, carrying the entire financial responsibility for the refugees. In addition, his house was open at all hours of the day and night to allow those in need to find a receptive ear to their woes. The war impacted deeply not only the refugees, but also the entire Jewish community. When community leaders got word that their Rav's household was in a dismal state of affairs — that his salary did not suffice for even one quarter of his budget — they scheduled a special meeting to discuss the matter. The shammos got wind of the committee's special session, and hurried to notify the Rav that in the near future his financial situation hopefully would improve. The Rav made a note of the time and place of the meeting and thanked the shammos for bringing him the good tidings. When the day came, the Rav was there to join the meeting. The president opened the session with brief remarks, pointing out the dire circumstances of their beloved Rav and recommending that a substantial increase in his salary be approved. Immediately after, Rav Isser Zalman was given the opportunity to comment. “Dear committee members, leadership of the Slutzk Jewish community,” he began. “First, let me take this opportunity to thank you for having me and my family in mind. I have but one small plea and I respectfully request a unanimous vote on it. My request is to kindly remove the subject of my salary from the agenda. All of you, dear gentlemen, are familiar with the terrible conditions of the refugees who are living in squalor. They are exposed to hunger and need. Especially now during the bitter winter months, they lack even the most basic of human needs such as warm clothing and blankets. In no way do I underestimate your kind attention and contribution to our unfortunate brothers and sisters. My request is simple: the money you would have earmarked toward my salary should be given to them instead.” There was a brief debate among the committee members and a consensus was reached that both items were of equal importance. They would provide for both the Rav's needs and those of the refugees. The Rav, however, was adamant. “Pardon me for being so forceful, but I do ask each and every committee member to do me this small favor: remove the salary increase from the agenda”. The Rav continued “Thank G-d, I have sufficient funds for my family's needs. Should my salary be increased even incrementally it would automatically reduce the amount allocated to the poor.” With no alternative, the committee reluctantly acquiesced, and the entire session was devoted to the refugees' plight, with some important decisions reached to aid them significantly.

It is worthwhile to take a brief glimpse at Rav Isser Zalman's true financial picture when saying, “Thank G-d, I have sufficient funds for my family's needs.” As mentioned above, his salary did not come close to meeting his needs, and his Rebbetzin helped supplement their income. Throughout most of the night she baked rolls in her primitive oven, selling them in the morning to women who had access to the military personnel who could afford to buy fresh rolls. In addition, the Rav and the Rebbetzin rented out one room of their small apartment, with their entire family crowding into the little space left, so that an additional few rubles could be earned. Even with these “riches,” the family could not meet their barest minimum needs. Yet an increase in salary was out of the question, if it was at the expense of Jewish war refugees. The following summer, only after the authorities had relocated most of the refugees did Rav Isser Zalman finally agree to a salary increase. (From Noble Lives Noble Deeds Vol. One, By Rabbi Dovid Silber, Reprinted With Permission)



THE ANSWERS

Regarding last week's question about the oil change, Rav Tzvi Berkowitz answered that in general when one relies on the mechanic it would be the mechanic's responsibility because he was being trusted that it is ok to drive. In this case however, it is questionable if the mechanic is responsible. This is because the engine light should have caused the owner to at least investigate if oil was needed.

THIS WEEK'S ISSUE OF TABLETALK IS DEDICATED TO THE ZECHUS OF A REFUAH SHLEIMA FOR

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