

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



BACKYARD CRUDE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion, HaShem tells Moshe to speak to the rock, to "Give water to the congregation and to their cattle." (Bamidbar 20,8) Rashi quotes our Sages that we see from here that HaShem is concerned about the property of the Jewish people. Therefore HaShem miraculously provided water to feed their cattle.

Just as HaShem cares for the property of His people, so should we. This leads us to the following story.

David and Ari were neighbors who shared a duplex home with a backyard. One day one of the kids was playing in the backyard and he came back to the house with black and grimy hands. David looked carefully at his son and the black grime. The grime didn't look like normal mud. After investigating, David realized that there was an underground crude oil well in their yard.



LEAVE NO SPACE EMPTY

This week's Parsha, Chukas, opens with the laws of Tumah, spiritual impurity, that is generated by the body of a deceased person. Only a Jew is rendered Tamei when coming in contact with a dead body. And only a deceased Jew generates such a high level of Tumah. Intuitively, we would assume that a more holy individual would generate less Tumah. In a similar vein, we find that a Torah scholar who leaves the ways of Torah is more damaging than the one who never studied Torah in the first place. Is this counterintuitive or maybe not?

Let us explore the nature of Tumah as described by the Ohr Hachaim.

All of creation finds its life source in HaShem. This applies to the material world and to the spiritual world. This applies as well to the Good and to the Evil. Yes, even the evil within the world needs its nourishment from HaShem, without which it would cease to exist. From where does all creation receive this nourishment? The vehicles which deliver this nourishment are the mitzvos and Torah study done by Man. When we perform mitzvos, daven to HaShem and study His Torah we generate kedusha which brings this much needed nourishment to the world.

This explains the nourishment of the Good, but from where does the evil get its nourishment? The source from where evil gets its nourishment is from the sources of Tumah, spiritual impurity.

Let us use mold and decay as the model to describe this process. If you have a solid block of wood it does not matter in what environment you place it, the inner part of

David contacted a representative from the oil company. The representative from the oil company came down and immediately made an offer to purchase and develop the property. Speaking to both David and Ari, the representative offered 20 million dollars to purchase the shared property and the nascent well. The oil rep gave them a week to think about the offer.

David was very eager to accept the offer. He and Ari would split the proceeds and they would move to a new home. They would make off with a very lucrative profit.

But Ari was not interested. "Yes, I will make a lot of money," he said, "but I don't have the headspace and strength to move to a new home. I don't want to sell my property."

"But Ari," David argued, "If you don't agree, you are making me lose this deal." You can refuse for yourself, but you don't have a right to refuse and make me lose \$10 million."

"What do you mean I don't have a right to refuse?" Ari argued. "You can't force me to sell my land."

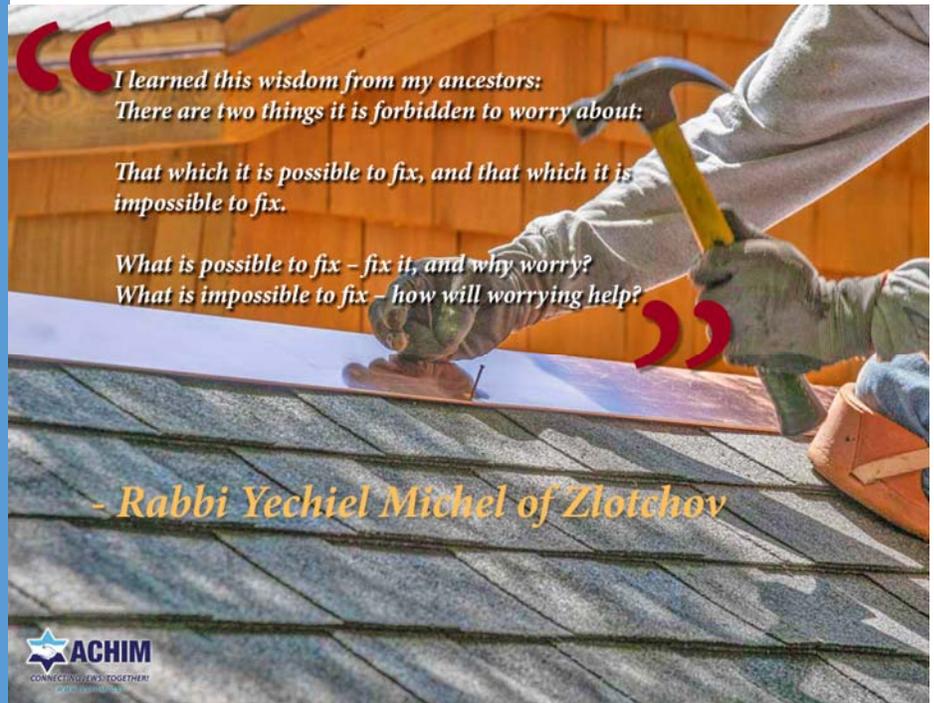
David responded, "You don't have a right to make me lose so much money."

This question was brought to Rav Zilberstein.

What do you think? Is Ari forced to sell the property? Is he allowed to refuse to sell it if it will make his neighbor lose this extremely lucrative deal of 10 million dollars?

See Chashukei Chemed, Baba Basra, page 64.

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



this block will not rot or decay. Any decay to the block will first occur on the outer part of the block. If, however, there is a hollow space inside the block you may very well discover decay in the inner part even before the outer part decays. Why is that? Because decay needs space.

The Jewish soul has much kedusha, no matter whether he is a Torah scholar or anything else, the Jew is a carrier of kedusha. When this Jewish soul passes away and its body is left lifeless there is a void in which the forces of Tumah find a home. Although the soul is gone, there still remains some kedusha from which the Tumah gets nourishment. Just as the honey jar when emptied from its honey will attract many insects, so too, the emptied Jewish body attracts many forces of Tumah who come to lick out the surviving morsels of kedusha.

When a person becomes a Torah scholar and his life is filled

with the words of the sacred Torah his soul is elevated to high levels of kedusha. If he were to, G.D forbid, abandon the ways of that Torah an enormous void would be created which would be filled by the forces of Tumah which feeds Evil. It is no wonder that the person who did not fill his life with kedusha does not cause as much damage as the one who filled himself with Torah and then emptied it.

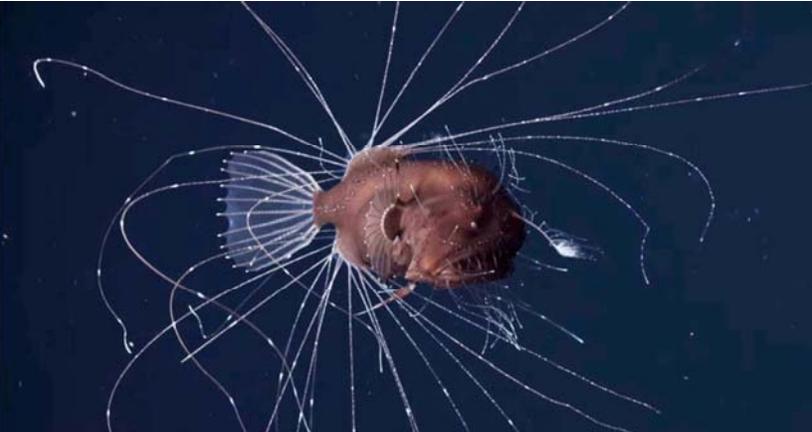
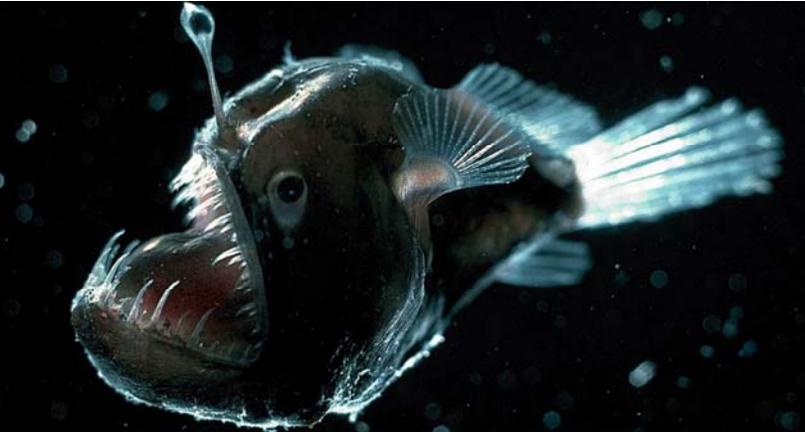
The Hebrew word for the hollow space in the block of wood is "ch'lal". When the Torah scholar abandons the ways of Torah he creates a "chilul HaShem", he has created a space that is void of kedusha. This allows the forces of Tumah to rush in and provide nourishment for Evil.

Perhaps this is why chilul HaShem is reckoned as the sin whose damage is far greater than any other sin.

May HaShem grant us the support we need to continue filling our souls with much kedusha leaving no empty spaces whatsoever.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE MYSTERIOUS ANGLERFISH

Among fish that live deep in the ocean (1,500 feet or deeper), are a variety of anglerfish. All anglerfish are carnivorous and HaShem has given them special tools for the capture of prey.

Anglerfish are fish with fishing rods sticking out of the upper front of their heads. A "light bulb" is on the end of some of these rods, while others have no lighting but only a round knob as an end-lure. The "light bulb" or lure is called an esca.

Most anglerfish are broad, soft-bodied, and have a very large mouth. Their length can vary from about an inch to as large as 3.3 feet.

Some varieties of anglerfish live in shallow water near the shore. The shallow angler is a small tropical fish which displays what appears to be a wiggling worm at the end of the pole. Other types of anglerfish display different forms of "bait," such as an apparent shrimp or small fish.

The anglerfish displaying a 'shrimp' will move it backward in quick, darting movements -- just as a real shrimp would do. One with a "fish" will impart a rippling motion to it, as though it were moving through the water on its own. Shallow-water anglerfish species are ambush predators, and often appear camouflaged as rocks, sponges or seaweed.

Occasionally the lure works too well and is nipped off by a fish before the anglerfish can swallow him! In such instances, a new lure grows back within 2 weeks.

Recently, a deep-sea anglerfish was discovered with the lure hanging from the roof of its mouth! The lure is a "light bulb." The fish

swims around with its mouth open and small fish enter to examine the light.

How does the anglerfish power this "light bulb?" The source of luminescence is symbiotic bacteria that dwell in and around the esca. This bacteria is recruited by the fish to dwell in its esca. It is then enclosed in a cup-shaped reflector containing crystals consisting of guanine. In some species, the bacteria recruited to the esca are incapable of luminescence without the anglerfish; they depend on the fish to supply the chemicals necessary for their luminescence.

Since its bones are thin and flexible, the anglerfish is able to distend both its jaw and its stomach to enormous size allowing it to swallow prey up to twice as large as its entire body. Why does it need to do this? Because of the small amount of food available in the anglerfish's environment this tool allows the anglerfish to store food when there is an abundance.

Our Sages describe that when HaShem first made Adam and Chavah they were one being with a male and female side. Fascinatingly this is what the anglerfish does when it mates, using a process called Parabiosis.

When a male finds a female, enzymes digest and fuse the skin of both fish together at the blood-vessel level. They permanently become one fish! The male becomes dependent on the female host for survival by receiving nutrients via their shared circulatory system. The male can only live as long as the female lives.

Thank you HaShem for showing us such wisdom!

“THIS MUST BE MUSSAR”

Rav Eliyahu Dessler's son, Nachum Velvel, moved from Europe to the United States. One day, after being separated for awhile, Rav Dessler came to America to see his son. One of Rabbi Dessler's first questions for his son was: Who had helped him during the many years that he had been all alone in America?

Reb Nachum Velvel mentioned Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, the menahel of Me-sivta Torah Vodaath, where he had studied upon arriving in America and Rabbi Shlomo Heiman, the late Rosh Yeshiva.

He also told his father that Rabbi Eliezer Silver, Rav of Cincinnati and head of both Agudath Israel of America and Agudas HaRabbonim, had extended himself on his behalf. Rabbi Silver had been a close talmid of Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski. When Rav Silver heard that Nachum Velvel, a great-nephew of Reb Chaim Ozer, was in America he did everything he could for the young man.

Rabbi Dessler immediately told his son, "We must thank him." Hearing that, Reb Nachum Velvel took his address book from his pocket and gave his father Rabbi Silver's address and telephone number. Rabbi Dessler, however, would consider nothing less than a personal expression of hakaras hatov and insisted that Reb Nachum Velvel accompany him by train to Cincinnati, a trip of approximately nine hours. The two made the train trip together.

The Desslers arrived in Cincinnati around 5:00 am and went straight to Rabbi Silver's house. They sat patiently on the front porch until Rabbi Silver came out of the house on his way to davening. Reb Nachum Velvel introduced his father, and the three proceeded to shul.

After davening, Rabbi Silver invited his guests back to his house for breakfast. "So, Rabbi Dessler, what brings you to Cincinnati?" Rabbi Silver asked his guest. Rabbi Dessler told him that he had come for no other reason than to express his great appreciation for all the kindness that Rabbi Silver had shown his son.

Rabbi Silver mulled over this response for a few more minutes before asking again, "Nu, Rabbi Dessler what really brings you to Cincinnati?" Again Rabbi Dessler insisted that he knew nothing of Cincinnati and had come for only one purpose: to express his hakaras hatov in person.

For several minutes the conversation went off in other directions until Rabbi Silver could no longer contain himself and asked again, "Rabbi Dessler, what can I do for you?" Rabbi Dessler repeated for the third time that he had not come to seek anything from Rabbi Silver but only to convey his gratitude in person.

Rabbi Silver finally gave up and muttered, "This must be mussar."

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THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of whether the owner should hire his former boss who fired him, Rav Zilberstein answered, "It would be very fitting" to specifically hire him to overcome any lingering feelings of resentment. This would also show hakaras hatov for the role the former boss played in leading to the owner's current success.

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