



## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### DON'T REVEAL THE GENDER

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha teaches us to be very careful with our words. The Torah says that the locations that are listed at the beginning of the Parsha are hidden allusions that Moshe gave regarding the transgressions that the Jewish people did. However, he didn't want to say them openly in order not to embarrass them. The mitzvah to be careful with our words leads us to the following true story.

Chaim and Esther were expecting a baby. It was their first child, and they were very excited. They decided together that they did not want to know the gender of the baby and that they wanted to be surprised when it was born.

They scheduled their first appointment with the obstetrician and planned to go together. The visit went well, and the doctor said that everything looked good.

They scheduled their second appointment after 15 weeks. When Esther made the appointment, she made it clear to the nurse that they did not want to know the gender of the baby when they did the sonogram. The



### REMOVE THE YEAST AND LIFT THE YOKE

We stand on the cusp of Tisha b'Av, our nation's day of mourning over the exile that we currently find ourselves in. Still under the impression of my visit to our Land, I am in a quandary. While there is no question that we are still in exile in spite of the fact that our Land is in Jewish control, nevertheless, it is somewhat awkward when we ask HaShem to rebuild the ruins of Yerushalayim. After all, with the exception of the Beis Hamikdosh there are no more ruins. It is also awkward when we ask HaShem to bring us back to our Land. We are already back. If anyone wants they can return tomorrow. We know that we are still missing much more than anything that we already have, but what is that?

The Talmud tells us of a special prayer that Rav Aleksandri, one of our Sages, would pray daily; "Oh HaShem! It is our desire to serve You properly but we are unable to do so because of the yeast in the dough (the yeitzer hara) and the yoke of the nations. May it be Your Will that these distractions be taken away so that we can serve You properly."

The Rambam explains what the hope and desire for Moshiach is for. "The prophets and our Sages did not yearn for Moshiach to control the other nations, nor did they do so to ride over them (in regards to prestige) nor did they do so to be able to eat and party but rather so that they could serve HaShem with total dedication with no distractions

nurse agreed.

They came to the appointment, and the sonographer did the sonogram. They told the sonographer that they did not want to know the gender, and she agreed.

Afterward, the doctor came in. He was an observant Jewish doctor. The doctor looked at them and, with a big smile, said, "so I see we are Baruch Hashem going to have a healthy baby girl b'sha'ah tovah."

Chaim and Esther looked at each other. Did they hear that right? Cham said, "Can you please repeat that?". The doctor repeated what he said.

Chaim became indignant. "Doctor, I'm honestly very disturbed that you told us that. We specifically told your office that we did not want to know the gender and we wanted to be surprised".

"Oops," the Doctor said, "you are right, I have that here in the notes. I'm so sorry I let that slip".

Chaim said, "I'm really upset. We are not going to pay for this doctor's visit. We made the appointment with the specific condition that we do not learn the gender of the baby. You did not keep that condition so you did not provide the service we requested. It is like a person who orders pizza from a restaurant and receives a calzone instead. You did not deliver what we requested".

The Doctor looked at Chaim in an amused way. He thought this young man's nerve and spunk were cute. "Well, Chaim," the Doctor said. "I hear your argument, I don't see it that way, obviously, and I think you should pay, but I'll, tell you what. Ask your Rav what he thinks and I'll do whatever he says."

This question was brought before Rav Yosef Elyashiv. What do you think?

Does Chaim not have to pay the doctor because the doctor did not provide the services that Chaim requested? Or does Chaim have to pay, because the primary service, checking that the baby was healthy, was provided?

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pulling them away from this service..."

Given the Rambam's insight, our yearning for the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdosh and Yerushalayim and the return to our Land is only so that we can have the confusion of all the other distractions be taken away. All we really want is to be able to serve Him with complete dedication.

Living in America and even living in Israel, there are so many distractions that pull us away from His service. Imagine there would be no "news update" or constant WhatsApp messages or any of the so many other distractions that we must deal with. Imagine being able to dedicate entire days to Torah study and have the inspiration to do so. Imagine after spending

12 hours of Torah study and a couple hours of prayer to be able to walk into the Beis Hamikdosh and behold the incredible sanctity.

We are really able to do all of the above if we did not have current distractions. It is humanly possible to accomplish such focus and awareness if we had the clarity of what our actions accomplish. The difficulty in doing so today is due to the yeast in the dough and the yoke of our society.

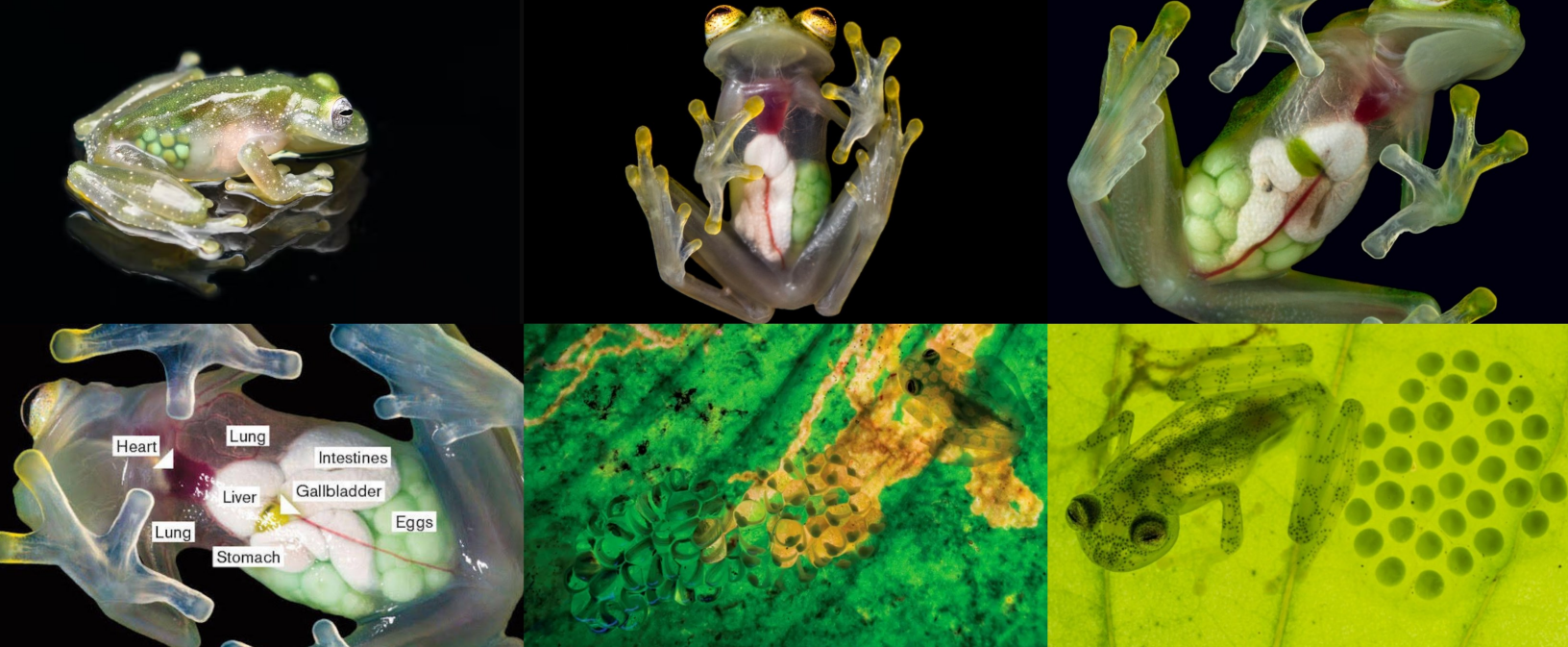
As we approach Tisha b'Av motzei Shabbos and consider how much of our 'to do' list is already accomplished, may we remember the Rambam's picture and mourn over what we are missing.

May HaShem grant us that desire, that yearning and ultimately that period where the yeast will be removed and the yoke will be lifted.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and an easy fast.

**Paysach Diskind**





## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### THE GLASS FROG

A few weeks ago, we learned about a partially transparent fish. Did you know that there is a similar land creature? Please meet the fascinating Glass Frog.

Why is it called a glass frog? No, it is not because it is fragile, but because the glass frog's abdominal area is transparent. While the general background coloration of glass frogs is primarily lime green, the abdominal skin is see-through. The internal viscera, including the bones, heart, liver, gastrointestinal tract, and intestines, can be visible through the skin covering their torso and limbs. You can even see its heart beating and see the heart pumping blood into the arteries. You can see many eggs inside the bodies of the females. And an observer can see food moving through the gut.

Glass frogs are generally small with adults ranging from 0.8 to 1.2 inches in total length. In a few species, adults are larger, attaining a maximum length of nearly 3 inches. It is a small frog the size of a quarter. Glass frogs are arboreal, meaning they mainly live in trees and only come out for the mating season. During the breeding season, they live along rivers and streams. They are found in the rain forests of Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and Ecuador.

The scientific name of the glass frog is Centrolenidae. "Centro" is Spanish/Latin for "center" and "Lenidae" refers to the webbing between the toes. This frog can slowly climb trees using its sticky webbed-feet and jumps away from predators in one jump that may be up to more than 10 feet long. Glass frogs have expanded digit tips that aid in climbing, and this trait allows it to live in trees or shrubs along forest streams. If a glass frog survives predator attacks, it can live from 10 to 14 years.

Glass frogs are carnivores. They like to eat small insects that they can catch. This includes spiders, ants, crickets, moths, flies, and tiny bugs that crawl along the tree branches. They may also occasionally eat other smaller tree frogs. They have excellent eyesight, which helps them catch insects to eat. Their hunting style is to stay still and wait. They let their prey crawl up until it gets in range and then strike out with their tongue to gobble it up.

We are used to frogs making a croaking sound, similar to "ribbit". But when glass frogs want to attract a mate, they make a high-pitched whistling sound. Males can get pretty territorial, making squeaking noises to warn trespassing frogs to stay away from their leafy hangout spots. If an intruder doesn't leave, the frog will wrestle it to show who's boss.

What is interesting is that male glass frogs are stellar parents. This is actually a rare trait among vertebrates. Males not only protect

their eggs from predators but also actively care for them—sometimes for weeks.

When a female deposits her eggs, she does not do it within the water, because predators in the water may eat the eggs. Instead, the eggs are usually deposited on the leaves of trees or shrubs hanging over the running water of mountain streams, creeks, and small rivers. Others leave their eggs over stones close to waterfalls. After they hatch, the tadpoles fall into the waters below. Males are very protective of their mates' eggs. Glass frog males stay on guard. They watch the eggs 24/7 until they hatch, protecting them from enemies such as wasps. The frog has even been known to kick away wasps that get too close to the egg cluster! When an attacking wasp flies up and tries to eat a frog egg, the male glass frog kicks the wasp away in a quick sweeping move that sends the wasp flying into the nearby forest. The male will often call additional females to lay eggs. This way, the male may have several egg clutches in various developmental stages to guard. A male may guard as many clutches of eggs as will fit on the large laying leaf.

Despite the vigilant guard of the males, there still is a major predator that eats the eggs. They are parasitic maggots from "frog flies". Frog flies lay their eggs on the egg masses. The flies' eggs hatch quickly, and the maggots feed on the frog embryos.

Why does it have glassy, see-through skin? What are the advantages of clear skin? Translucency is a type of camouflage in which the edges of the frog blend with the relative brightness or darkness of its surroundings. This phenomenon, called "edge diffusion", softens the line separating the color of the frog's skin from the color of the background. Predators form a search image for the shape of their prey and look for a specific shape. So masking the body's outline is a very effective strategy to enhance camouflage. In addition, on their backs, they have a reticulated pattern of yellow spots. Those spots mimic the appearance of eggs within the female. This egg pattern helps confuse predators when the males guard the fertilized eggs. Predators want to eat juicy frogs, not eggs.

There is another interesting feature about the skin of glass frogs. Two members of the glass-frog family can reflect near-infrared light (700 to 900 nanometers). Most mirrors cannot reflect infrared light. Scientists are not sure why glass frogs do this, but they think it may help the frogs with thermoregulation and infrared cryptic coloration.

Let's close with an interesting fact. We know a group of fish is called a school. What is a group of frogs called? An army. An army of frogs.

## CONNECTED TO THE MIDDAH OF EMES

The regular daily mincha minyan organized for the Chazon Ish at his home was at 12:30. One day it was delayed until 12:45. Rav Shmuel Greineman approached the Chazon Ish with a dilemma. "I invited someone for a one o'clock appointment. If I daven mincha now, I'll be late. But if I leave there won't be a minyan. What should I do?"

Replied the Chazon Ish: "For anyone connected to the middah (trait) of emes (honesty) this isn't even a question. Cancel the minyan, but don't move one iota from speaking emes."

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R' Yaakov Kamenetzky went to great lengths to honor his word. He once agreed to attend the dedication of a new sefer Torah in Monsey. Later, the vort (engagement celebration) of one of his granddaughters was scheduled for the same day in Baltimore. Rav Yaakov now had a dilemma. He could not be at both events. Should he not attend the dedication of the new sefer Torah in Monsey so he could be with his family's simcha?

R' Yaakov would not break his word, even for a grandchild's simchah. Instead, he traveled to Baltimore for Shabbos, the day before the vort, to celebrate with his family and returned to Monsey on Motzei Shabbos so that he could attend the hachnasas sefer Torah the next day.

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**Pictured:** Top Left, Rav Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, The Chazon Ish, Top Right, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky. Middle picture, The Chazon Ish testing students. In the far left of the picture is Rav Shmuel Rozovsky, and to the right of the Chazon Ish, is Rav Elya Dessler. Bottom picture, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky on the left and Rav Yaakov Ruderman on the right.



**Wishing the entire community a meaningful and easy fast.**

**May we all be zoche to greet Moshiach tzidkeinu b'meheira v'yomeinu, Omeinu!**

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the loving memory of  
**Lyudmila bas David**  
Olga Rubin and Boris Vaynshteyn

