

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE WRONG NUMBER

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Our Sages teach that all of the money that we earn throughout the year is determined on Rosh Hashana. This leads us to the following story.

Yoni, who lived in Israel, was interested in purchasing a lottery ticket. He called the local convenience store and told the clerk "I don't have time to come in to pick up a lottery ticket but can I pay for it now and text you the numbers"? The clerk said that it was not a problem. The man took Yoni's credit card information and Yoni texted him the numbers.



THE TIE BREAKER

When HaShem judges the world there are two tracks of judgement. There is the tzadik (righteous) track and the rasha (wicked) track. When HaShem judges a person He identifies on which track the person is. Rambam explains the method by which HaShem defines people as being a tzadik or a rasha is by stacking up their good deeds against their bad deeds. Whichever one outweighs the other defines the person as either a tzadik or a rasha. Rambam continues to explain that it is not the number of deeds that establishes the status but rather the size of the deeds. There are good deeds that although are small in number nevertheless are so great that they outweigh the negative deeds and vice versa. In the event a person's good deeds and bad deeds are equal then it depends; if he does teshuvah he is counted among the tzadikim and if not, not.

What metric is used to determine the size of the deeds? Furthermore, if a person is half and half would it not be better to simply perform a few more mitzvos no matter how small they are and tip the scale? Why teshuvah?

There are many types of definitions by which to define people. A lawyer, a doctor, an artist, a stamp collector and so on. Not all definitions reflect the person's occupation. Some reflect how he makes his money and some reflect how he spends his money and some reflect what he enjoys doing. So what is the defining marker which defines a person as to who he is?

Perhaps the defining character of a person depends on how he sees his self worth. If a person sees his self worth in being a lawyer then he certainly is a lawyer. If he also collects

MITZVA MEME

Later that day, to Yoni's incredible excitement, the numbers announced on the radio were the ones that he chose. The prize was \$1,000,000! Yoni went to the store to pick up the ticket so that he could redeem it for the prize money.

To his utter dismay, on the ticket that he was given, one of the numbers was off. It turned out that the clerk copied the number from the text wrong, and was one number off. Because of that error Yoni lost the million dollar prize.

Yoni turned to the clerk and said, "I think you owe me \$1,000,000 because your mistake made me lose \$1,000,000". The clerk said, "I'm really sorry, I feel terrible about my mistake. I made a mistake, and I can pay you for the cost of the ticket, but I am not obligated to pay you a million dollars!"

This question was brought to Rabbi Zilberstein. What do you think? Does the clerk have to pay Yoni for the damage of copying the wrong number? Is he even obligated to return the money that Yoni spent on the lottery ticket?

See Hebrew Veharev Na Volume Three 378

“Who can be called pious? One who does not make what is the Ikar into a Tafel (primary to secondary), or does not make what is Tafel into the Ikar (secondary to primary).”

– Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk



stamps we would not say he is a stamp collector unless his self worth is built on his collection. We would not define someone as a coffee drinker even if he drank three cups of coffee daily.

There is an interesting halacha regarding foods that consist of two different brachos. For example, a lettuce salad that is mixed with mango, pineapple, tangerines and almonds. Will the bracha on this salad be established by the lettuce and be haadama or perhaps the fruits will establish the bracha and it will be haeitz? The general rule is that you follow the majority of the ingredients. The dilemma arises when you have a food which is half chocolate half almond, will the chocolate determine the bracha or the almond? Let us reframe the question; is this candy a chocolate candy with an almond inside or is it an almond candy with a chocolate coating?

The answer to this dilemma is that it depends what is more important to you. If you enjoy the almond more than the chocolate, it is an al-

mond candy and you recite a haeitz. If you enjoy the chocolate more than the almond, it is a chocolate candy and you recite a shehakol.

Perhaps the metric used to measure the size of the good deeds is how much does the person associate himself with the mitzvah he did. How much does the person associate himself with the bad deed he did? When he spoke lashon hara and he felt horrible after saying it, you know that he does not associate himself with lashon hara. If after learning his daf yomi he feels a sense of fulfillment and continues thinking about it after he gets to work then you know he associates himself with learning Torah. The same is in the reverse.

Perhaps the reason Rambam says that the fellow who is half and half must do teshuvah to establish himself as a tzadik is because he is exactly like the chocolate covered almond. Who is he; an almond or a chocolate? When he does teshuvah he identifies himself as a tzadik who made a few mistakes. If, on the other hand, he does not do teshuvah, he is identifying himself as someone who does not care to be associated with good deeds and hence he is a rasha.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos and I wish you a k'siva v'chasima tova.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

MOONBOWS

Last week we learned about a Rainbow Mountain. Here is another kind of rainbow.

We have all heard of rainbows, seen during the day. But have you ever heard of a rainbow seen at night?

A moonbow, or lunar rainbow, is basically a rainbow that can only be seen at night. It's a rainbow produced by moonlight rather than direct sunlight. It's an incredibly rare natural atmospheric phenomena that only happens on nights with very specific conditions. Other than the difference in the light source, its formation is the same as for a regular, solar rainbow. It happens when the Moon's light is reflected and refracted off water droplets in the air, such as a rain shower or a waterfall, and is always positioned in the opposite part of the sky from the moon relative to the observer.

Moonbows are much fainter than solar rainbows because much less light is reflected from the surface of the moon than from the sun. Because the light is usually very faint, human eyes can rarely see the colors in a moonbow, it usually appears to humans as a white arch. This is because the light is usually too faint to excite the cone color receptors in human eyes. However, photographers who utilize longer exposure times are actually

able to capture the normal colors of the rainbow from the extremely elusive moonbow.

Moonbows are very rare because a lot of things need to come together to make them happen.

In order for a moonbow to happen, a full moon is needed. There needs to be enough sunlight reflecting off of the moon in order to create a nighttime version of a rainbow. The moon needs to be set very low in the sky, usually no more than 42 degrees from the horizon. It needs to be extremely dark, any bright light can obscure it. There needs to be just enough moisture in the air for the moonlight to refract through the water droplets, and those droplets must be present in the air in the opposite direction of the moon.

Currently, there are only two places on planet earth where moonbows can be seen on a consistent basis: Victoria Falls on the Zambia-Zimbabwe border and Cumberland Falls near Corbin, Kentucky. They can be seen less frequently in Yosemite National Park in California, Plitvice Lakes in Croatia and Waimea in Hawaii, U.S. All of these locations are waterfalls, which create some of the necessary conditions for a moonbow, such as mist in the air.

RAJE MARYLAND - PARTNERING WITH ACHIM FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

George's family came to the United States from Uzbekistan and the Ukraine in the 1980's and settled in Maryland. Growing up in the Soviet Union, George's father remembers being called "the Zjid" - essentially the Dirty Jew - in school. He learned how to defend himself from physical attacks on a daily basis. This was common fare for every Jewish child in the USSR. Nobody let them forget that they were Jews for a moment. George, on the other hand, was raised in Frederick, Maryland and was one of the only Jews in his class in public school. Unlike his father, he kept his Jewish identity a secret out of fear of reprisals from the numerous KKK members in school. "I just wanted to blend in and be like everyone else," he said. Unlike their parents, the second generation doesn't have the same sense of Jewish pride and unless they connect with Judaism in a meaningful way, assimilation is inevitable.

As a student in UMBC, George had no intention of getting involved with Judaism. He didn't realize that the day he met Rabbi Gavriel Horan on campus would change his life forever. George eventually became the president of the Jewish club on campus, participated in numerous Jewish learning fellowships, leadership retreats, and inspirational trips, and eventually got a kosher bris and a pair of tefillin. Last year, George met with a major Jewish philanthropist at a Jewish internship program in Lakewood, who encouraged him to start a program dedicated to Russian Jewish college students and young professionals like himself in Maryland. George is now working with Rabbi Gavriel Horan in building RAJE Maryland - a growth oriented community for young Russian Jews looking to explore their heritage.

This Rosh Hashana, in the merit of helping bring HaShem's children back home, He should blow the shofar gadol and bring all of us back home as well.

RAJE Maryland is the newest branch of the highly successful Russian American Jewish Experience movement that began 15 years ago in Brooklyn and has since exploded in Philadelphia, Chicago, Toronto and throughout the NY/NJ areas. RAJE engages over 400 Russian Jewish American college students and Young Professionals each year in Jewish educational fellowships, culminating in inspirational trips to Israel, Poland and the FSU. RAJE Maryland has quickly attracted dozens of young Russian Jews, ages 18-33, from Pikesville, Owings Mills, Reisterstown, Montgomery County and D.C. to participate in learning, trips, Shabbatons, and social events. Three decades ago, Achim blazed a trail connecting the first wave of Russian Jews to the greater Jewish community. RAJE is working in partnership with Achim to reach out to the next generation of young Russian Jews and connect them to their Jewish heritage, to the Jewish community, and to each other.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question of the bookshelf that did not fit, Rav Zilberstein wrote in a similar case that it was the buyer's obligation to measure the room before he ordered the furniture.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in memory of
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