

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE JEWISH GIFT OF THE MAGI

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses tzara'as and how the Kohen would determine if a person had tzara'as. Our Sages teach that the Kohen would not determine tzara'as during the holidays so as not to disturb the happiness of the holiday. This is a reference to the mitzvah of having simchas haregel, having joy on the festival.

Our Sages explain that one of the ways to fulfil the mitzvah of simchas haregel is for the husband to buy his wife clothing or jewelry before the festival.

This leads us to the following true story.

The Berger family were very happy, but finances were quite tight. One year before



THE SCULPTOR

This week's Parsha, Tazria, begins with the mitzvah of performing a Bris Milah on every Jew boy on the eighth day from his birth. I would like to discuss the purpose of Bris Milah and its implications.

The Ramban explains the reason for the Torah's prohibition of mixing species such as breeding a horse with a donkey is because we are interfering with HaShem's creation. If HaShem wanted there to be a mule, the product of this mixed breed, He would have created it. Evidently, He does not wish for there to be mules. The question we may ask on the Ramban is from the mitzvah of Bris Milah, in which we find that we are specifically instructed to alter the form of man in a way that he was not originally designed.

To answer this question perhaps we can suggest the following. There is a distinction between the totality of the world in general and the world as it interacts with Man. The world HaShem made is a perfect world and is in perfect balance. We must therefore not tamper with it. However, wherever Man interfaces and interacts with the world, there HaShem made the world imperfect. In other words; for all the creatures of this world with exception of Man, the world is complete missing nothing at all. However, with respect to Man, the world is not perfect. For Man to live in this world he must make changes to the world. He must cut down trees to build a home, clear space on which to plant. Harvest, thresh and other changes in order to eat. Shear the wool, spin the threads, weave material and sew the fabric to dress himself. Cook the meat, fry the eggs and bake the bread before eating.

MITZVA MEME

Pesach, Yanky Berger told his wife Esther that he set aside 200 dollars to buy her a new outfit for Yom Tov.

“Esther, I know it’s a stretch for us, but it’s a mitzvah to do this and I really want to make you happy.”

When Mrs Berger heard this, she was extremely gratified but responded as follows.

“Yanky, I’m so touched that you want to buy me an outfit for Yom Tov. But if you want to give me true simcha, I will get much more simcha from somethings else. You haven’t bought a new Shabbos suit in many years. I would love for you to use the money to buy yourself a new suit. That will give me more simcha than a new outfit for me.”

Yanky was very touched by his wife’s words but he wondered if he could fulfil the mitzvah of simchas haregel that way.

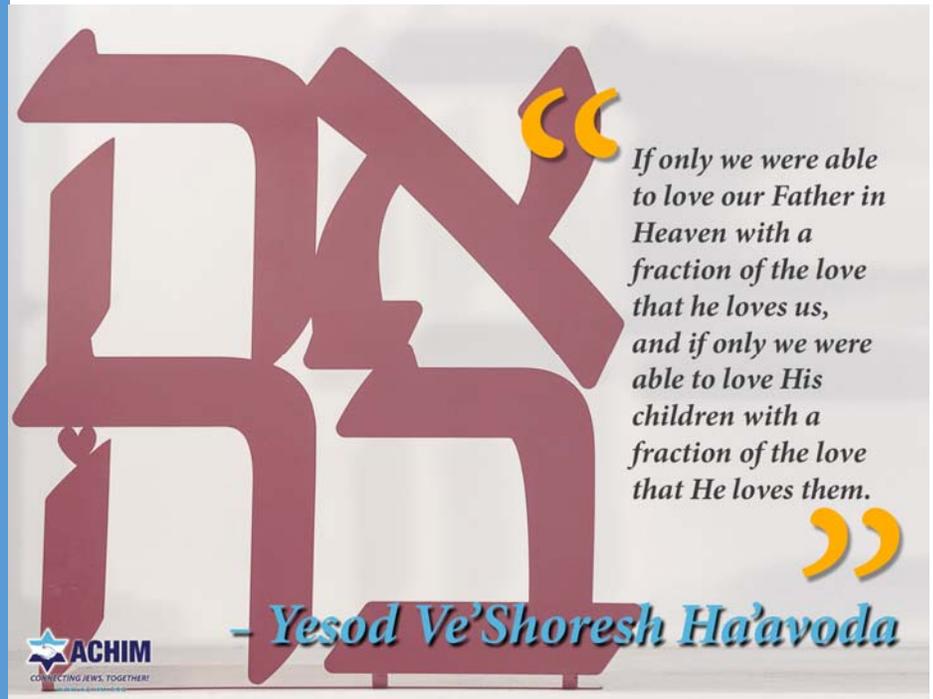
The mitzvah was to give his wife simcha by buying her new clothing. Could he fulfill the mitzvah by giving her the simcha of buying clothing for himself?

On one hand he is still giving her simcha through clothing. But on the other hand perhaps the clothing must be for her.

What do you think?

(See Hebrew Vhaarev Na Volume Three page 242)

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



For what purpose was the world not perfect for Man like his fellow creatures?

Everything in this world is purely physical. There is no spiritual component in any creature on Earth. The only exception is Man. He has two components; one physical and one spiritual. The purpose for this was so that Man can be the transformer who will transform the physical into spiritual. How does he do this?

Let us use the model of the sculptor who takes a large block of marble and chips and cuts until he creates an beautiful stone elephant. The stone was perfect before the sculpture touched it. It was smooth, it was strong, it was the perfect temperature; but it had no meaning. It was a meaningless block of stone. Through the sculptor’s alterations the stone was changed from its perfect form but now it has meaning.

Before Man entered the world, it is perfect and could continue in its natural state with no interference. However, it was meaningless. It served no purpose. HaShem therefore created Man with a spiritual side which drives Man to achieve greater heights. In his pursuit of those elevated heights Man takes his lower half with him. Man cannot achieve those heights without eating breakfast and wearing proper clothing and living in a house. Therefore when Man endeavors to attain these material mediums he brings sanctity to the material world around him. He gives purpose and meaning to all the changes he makes in the world, thereby elevating the entire world with him. But this mechanism can only work if the purpose of his physical pursuits is to elevate himself. If, however, his pursuit of material is to attain more material, then the changes he makes on this world are actually destructive as the Ramban indicates.

Bris Milah teaches us this lesson in stark terms. From his earliest moments in this world, every Jewish boy is given an imprint on his flesh that this world is only perfect for material concerns. But for anything higher, one must make necessary alterations.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

10 FASCINATING, LITTLE KNOWN FACTS ABOUT LIONS

On the very first page of the Shulchan Aruch we are told that in the morning we should be strong like a lion to wake up and serve Hashem. Let's explore the strength of the lion.

Even though the lion is often referred to as the "king of the jungle," it actually never lives in jungles. It only lives in grasslands and plains. Although there are animals that are larger than lions, lions have no natural predators. It will usually die a violent death only from other lions. This may be why the lion is called the King.

The average male lion weighs around 400 - 450 pounds, while the average female lion weighs around 290 pounds. The heaviest lion on record weighed an incredible 826 pounds.

At 114 decibels, lions have the loudest roar of any big cat species. Their roar can be heard from 5 miles away! Their roar helps them find other lions as well as to proclaim their territory. Lions most often roar at night.

Lions can run as fast as 50 mph in short bursts. By way of contrast, the world's fastest human runner, Usain Bolt, was able to reach 28 mph. A lion can leap as far as 36 feet. Just to understand this, that is the same length as a telephone pole!

Lions spend much of their time resting and are inactive for about 20 hours per day. This is because they have few sweat glands so they conserve their energy by resting during the day and become more active at night when it is cooler. They conserve their energy to release their energy in powerful controlled bursts when they need to. Although lions are very powerful, they don't have large amounts of sustained stamina. That is why they are ambush hunters, and try to kill their prey quickly rather than chasing them for long periods. It is interesting to note that human farmers found that lions are easily discouraged if they think their prey has seen them. With that knowledge in mind, to protect their cattle from such attacks, farmers have found it effective to paint eyes on the hindquarters of each cow. This is usually enough to make hunting lions think they have been seen and move on to easier prey.

African lions are the most social of all big cats and live together in groups or "prides." A pride consists of about 15 to 30 lions. The average pride includes several adult females and up to four males and their cubs. In the wild lions live for about 10-14 years. They begin to age and weaken at between 10 and 15 years of age. When the lion begins to age, he will get ousted by a younger male. Interestingly, the victor will usually proceed to kill all of the young cubs of the defeated lion. Male lions defend the pride's territory from any intruders or competing lions. The male lion is better suited for this purpose due to its stockier, more powerful build. Female lions do most of the hunting though. Interestingly, despite the fact that the females do the hunting, the males eat first.

Male lions are renowned for their large mane. Scientists have suggested that the main purpose of the mane is to serve as a protection of the neck and throat in territorial fights with rival lions.

Lions are also rivals with hyenas. Hyenas frequently challenge lions and steal their kills, obtaining food from as much as 60% of all lion kills. When confronted by lions on a kill, spotted hyenas may either leave or wait patiently at a distance of 100-330 ft until the lions have finished. Occasionally hyenas are bold enough to feed alongside lions and to force the lions off a kill. Lions also conflict with Nile crocodiles; Lions have been known to kill crocodiles venturing onto land, while the reverse is true for lions entering waterways. This has been evidenced by the occasional lion claw found in crocodile stomachs.

Lions communicate with other lions. Head rubbing – the nuzzling of the forehead, face and neck against another lion – is their form of greeting. Lions do this often after an animal has been apart from others or after a fight or confrontation. Social licking on the head and neck often occurs in tandem with head rubbing; it is generally mutual and the recipient appears to express pleasure.

In the story of Daniel, we find that the Persian king threw Daniel into a den of lions as a form of punishment. This was also a form of executions used in ancient Rome called *Damnatio ad Bestias*. Lions were kept by emperors for the purpose of these executions.

KAVANA IN THE AIRPORT

The Brisker Rav, Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik usually took a TWA (Trans World Airlines) flight back to Eretz Yisrael when he was overseas.

On one of these trips, the plane needed to make a stopover in Rome, Italy. When the plane stopped, it was time for Mincha, and The Brisker Rav looked around for a place where he could daven without distractions.

The Brisker Rav davened with such kavana, and was so engrossed in his tefilla, that he was still standing in prayer when the time came to get back on the plane. The captain and the crew were already in their places.

The Brisker Rav's traveling companions were at a loss — what should they do now? All their luggage was in the plane's baggage compartment; what would they do if the plane would leave them and The Brisker Rav at the airport? It was time to take off.

At that point help arrived from an unexpected source. Among the passengers was a prominent priest who approached the crew and told them that the Brisker Rav was a holy man, and they should wait for him rather than disturb his prayers.

The crew could not refuse the priest's request, and the crew and passengers waited patiently while the Jewish rabbi completed his prayers. Only then did the plane continue on its way to the Holy Land.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of the Chazan breaking the lightbulb, Rav Zilberstein answered that he was liable to pay for the damages because of grama benezikin, but it was permitted on Shabbos because it was "misasek".

Thank you for helping ACHIM reach its goal!

