

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE SCHLEP

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion talks about the mitzvah to love HaShem. (Devarim 6,5) Our Sages teach us (Yoma 86) that this mitzvah goes beyond feeling love towards HaShem. It includes an obligation for us to behave in a way that others will be motivated to love HaShem as well. Furthermore, this week is Tisha b'Av. We know that one of the causes of the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash was the altercation between Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, over a dinner celebration.

This leads us to the following story. One day Yehuda received a wedding invitation from his first cousin Eli. Yehuda lived in Baltimore and Eli lived in Lakewood. The wedding would be in Lakewood. Yehuda normally enjoyed attending his cousins' weddings and would often drive to Lakewood for those weddings.



EXTINCTION

In this week's Parsha, Va'eshchanan, Moshe tells his people "You will give birth to children and grandchildren and you will grow old in the Land. You will serve idols do what is evil in the eyes of HaShem to anger Him. I warn you today that you will be destroyed from that Land and you will not live long - you will be totally decimated."

The word 'to grow old in the Land' is 'v'noshantam'. In Hebrew, every word has a numerical value which relates to the definition of that word. The numerical value of v'noshantam is 852 which is the number of years after which we entered the Land that we were exiled by Nevuchadnezzar the emperor of Babylonia.

'To become old' implies that the end has arrived. The adjective 'old' is used when an object approaches its life expectancy. If the life expectancy of a tree is 100 years then at 70 years the tree is not yet old. It will be old as it approaches 100 years. By referencing 852 years as 'our becoming old in the Land' Moshe is telling us that after that point, our time will expire and we will have no Land any longer. He is stating that our lease expires after 852 years. It is noteworthy that we were not exiled from our Land 852 years after our entry to the Land but rather after 850 years. We actually left two years early. Our Sages point out that this was a remarkable kindness on HaShem's part. Had HaShem waited another two years to complete all 852 years, we would have been totally decimated as the verse states. However, since there were still two years left to our lease we were spared from total decimation.

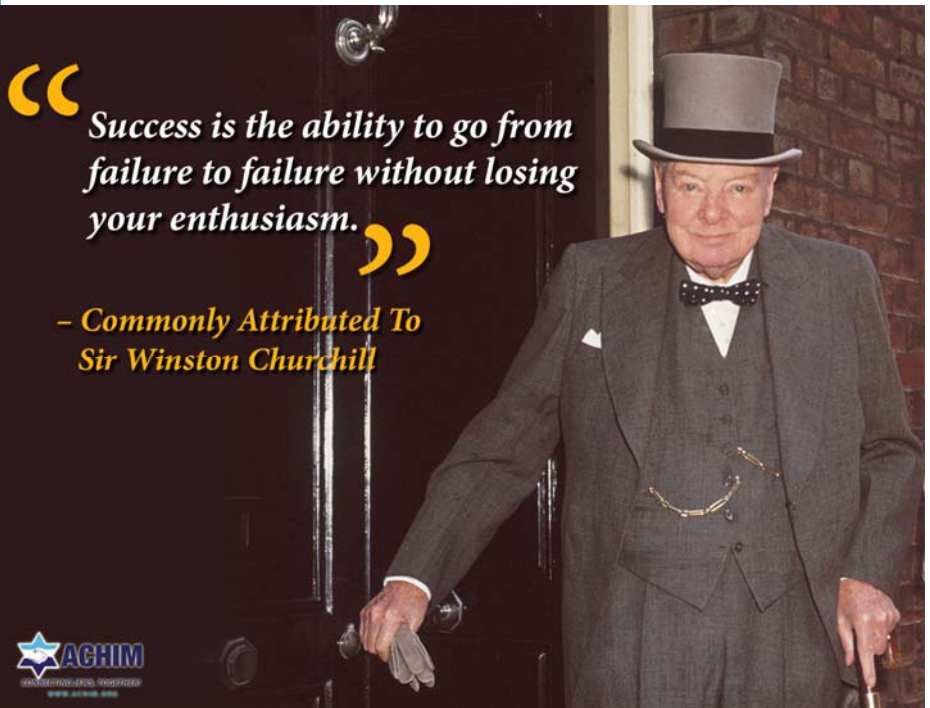
However, when it came to attending Eli's wedding he really didn't feel like going. The reason for this was because when he invited Eli to his own wedding, Eli did not attend. So Yehuda was planning not to go to this wedding and just sit this one out.

Some time before the wedding Yehuda started to think about it. He realized that there was a prohibition against taking revenge. The prohibition of taking revenge is not doing a favor to someone because they wronged you. Yehuda wondered if perhaps by his not attending the wedding he was taking revenge on his cousin for not coming to his wedding. Perhaps he was obligated to make the two and a half hour trip (each way) in order to prevent it from being revenge.

But on the other hand, perhaps one could say it's not revenge to not go to the wedding. He just didn't feel close to him and was not in the mood of attending. He did not have to attend the wedding of someone he did not feel close to, or did he?

What do you think? Does Yehuda have to travel to attend the wedding in order to avoid the prohibition of taking revenge?

See Chashukei Chemed Yoma page 189



How do we understand the value of this two year difference?

All living matter has its unique space without which, it cannot survive. This applies to plant life as well as animal life. The polar bear population cannot live outside of the polar region. Although you can raise a polar bear elsewhere, the species needs the polar region to survive as a species. The ecosystem which the polar bear requires is found only in the polar region. The Maharal explains that the same is true with nations. Every nation has its natural habitat which is its home. Outside of its natural home it cannot exist for any extended period of time. The natural region which is home to the Jewish people is the Land of Israel.

The Maharal explains that Moshe was informing his people that their right to the Land is only 852 years. After that point it will

cease to be their land. They will become a landless nation, the consequence of which is that G.D forbid, we will cease to exist. Just as the polar bears will cease to exist if global warming removes the polar regions we would cease to exist after those 852 years expire. HaShem therefore removed us two years early so that the Land should still remain our land, since there were still two years left to our lease. In this way, for the subsequent 2,882 years of exile we can survive, albeit a temporary existence, outside of our Land.

As the world continues to deal with Covid, everyone anticipates a return to normalcy sooner or later. We know that Nature will always balance herself out to resume her natural state. In the same way, we know that as long as the Land is ours we will return to her sooner or later. The Jewish people's existence outside of her Land is unnatural and she will return to her natural state.

May we merit to see that day soon in our days.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION THE GENIUS OF SEED DISPERSAL; BALLISTIC DISPERSAL

As we said last week, plants need to send their seeds far out into the wider world so that there is room for them to grow instead of just falling right near the plant, causing too many seeds in one area.

Last week we discussed a fascinating example of animal seed dispersal, dispersal by the Emu and the Ants.

Another seed dispersal method is ballistic seed dispersal. This is where the seed is forcefully ejected by the pod exploding. The Chinese Witch Hazel is a fascinating example of this, though it interests scientists more than the typical plant with ballistic seed dispersal, because it has a distinctly unique method. Let's take a look at how it works.

Chinese witch hazel is a flowering plant in the witch hazel family. It is native to central and eastern China. It is popular in gardens because of its pretty yellow flowers. The Chinese witch hazel plant shoots seeds out and sends them flying through the air.

How does it do this? As the fruits of a witch hazel plant dry out, the top part of a woody capsule around the seed splits open. The middle part of the capsule constricts, as if it is being squeezed by fingers, until the seed, about the size of a pumpkin seed, breaks free and flies out at about 28 miles per hour. You can actually hear a crack, and then the seed shoots out.

As it flies, the seed spins very fast at 12,000 to 25,000 revolutions a minute. Why does it need to spin? Just like the spiraling of a well-thrown football, the spinning lets the seed travel farther than it would have, landing several yards away.

What researchers don't understand is how seeds from different fruits on the same witch hazel plant can spin in different directions, as if a quarterback sometimes throws right-handed half of the time and left-handed half of the time. In addition to using high-speed cameras, the researchers also put the plants inside magnetic resonance imaging machines so that they could examine the hidden structures within the plant and the fruit without having to cut it apart. The researchers are trying to figure out how the witch hazel launches its seeds, in particular how it is applying a torque to make it spin. They are hoping that perhaps it could inspire engineers to design a new kind of sensor that detects when humidity is low and then opens a valve in response.

Source: the Journal of the Royal Society Interface, and The New York Times

RUNNING THE MARATHON WITH A TEN-POUND SACK ON ONE'S BACK

A Camp Agudah camper who knew Rav Yisrael Belsky related the following story:

There was a bachur who joined the Masmidim program in Camp Agudah and after the summer he went to learn in the yeshiva where I was learning at the time. He felt very attached to me, as I was the only person he knew in that yeshiva. It made me uncomfortable.

One day we got into a bit of an argument and he hurt my feelings. I decided to end the relationship. When he came over to me to ask mechilah I told him, "I am mochel, but we don't have to be friends." However, he wanted our friendship to continue.

One day, Rav Belsky came to the neighborhood of our yeshiva for Shabbos. The bachur approached Rav Belsky and requested that he speak to me on his behalf. Rav Belsky took me aside and said, "Without going into the details, I want to give you a mashal. Imagine someone is preparing to run a marathon and a person tells him, "I know the marathon passes through the Bronx where my aunt lives. Could you drop off a ten-pound sack of potatoes while you're passing through?" Of course, the idea of running the marathon with a ten-pound sack on one's back is ludicrous. And so I say to you: Do you want to run through life with a ten-pound sack of potatoes on your back? Why let this thing weigh on you? Accept his apology and renew the relationship and move on. Don't hold a grudge against him. Let go of it."

I was still somewhat reluctant but I tried. I approached the bachur and said, "Let's be more friendly."

This was clearly very important to him. On the day of that bachur's wedding he sent me a note stating that before he goes to the chuppah, he wants to make sure that I was mochel him. Of course, I sent back a note stating that I was completely mochel him.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding the question of the dry cleaners, Rav Tzvi Berkowitz answered that it is the cleaner's responsibility. He is responsible because he put all the shirts together so he has a responsibility to the other people.

Correction: Last week I mistakenly wrote that this question was brought to Rav Zilbebrsten. A similar case was brought to him, but it was not this case.

With the shuls beginning to open, we will be placing the TableTalk's in the shuls as we did in the pre-Corona days and we will be minimizing the other distribution methods.

If you are unable to get your TableTalk from shul please let me know and we will try to accommodate you.

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