

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



“GIVING DEADLY INTEL TO TERRORISTS”

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses the plague of the frogs. The Gemara (Pesachim 53b) teaches us that our Sages have learned a lesson about Mesiras Nefesh, about being willing to make a personal sacrifice for HaShem, from the frogs of Mitzrayim. The Gemara teaches us that Chananya, Mishael and Azaria were forced to worship an idol under the threat of death. They said, "If the frogs of Mitzrayim were willing to give up their lives not to violate HaShem's will, then we should do the same and not reject our relationship with HaShem. They were thrown into a fire and they were miraculously saved. This is an illustration of the mitzva of Mesiras Nefesh. Normally one should violate a mitzva in order to



RESPECTING AN EVIL DESPOT

In this week's Parsha, Parshas Vayeira, as well as in last week's Parsha, and next week's Parsha, we find Moshe, the messenger of HaShem, addressing Pharaoh with great deference. One such example we have is when Moshe informs Pharaoh in the name of HaShem, "*Let us go for a three day retreat in the desert to serve our G-D lest we will be struck with plague and war.*" Moshe's intent was to say that if you do not allow us to go on this retreat, **you** will be struck with plague and war. However, out of deference, rather than say explicitly that **you** will be struck he said that **we** will be struck.

This is Moshe's conduct with Pharaoh throughout the entire year of plagues. How do we understand this? Pharaoh is a monster who has ordered the death of Jewish babies. He has enslaved HaShem's people in the most degrading ways. His sins to humanity will earn him a special place among those who are punished by HaShem's wrath. And yet Moshe shows respect to him? Our Sages deal with this question and explain that this show of respect is due to Pharaoh because he is the king. Royalty deserves honor. But why?! While he may be a king with royal blood, he is nonetheless a tyrant. Does that not count for anything?

Before we address this question let us diverge a moment.

How can Man have a relationship with the Creator of the universe? HaShem has no body, He occupies no space, He occupies no time. He is the absolute definition of abstract. How can we relate to the abstract in a meaningful way?

save his or her life. But in regard to three mitzvos, one should rather die than violate them, They are Murder, Incest/Adultery, and Idol Worship.

This brings us to the following true dilemma.

A group of Palestinian terrorists once kidnapped an IDF soldier named Gad. The terrorists threatened to kill him unless he would agree to reveal to them where an IDF weapons cache was hidden. This cache had a large stash of hand grenades. It was clear to Gad that the terrorists were planning to use the grenades to try to kill other Jews. It is likely that if he saved his life by revealing the location of the cache, then other innocent Israelis may be killed as a result.

One is normally not allowed to save his life by murdering another. For example, if a terrorist would tell a Jew, "murder this other Jew, or I will kill you", one should rather die than murder another.

But Gad wondered if in this case he would be allowed to reveal the information to save his life. He would be putting others in mortal danger, but it was not as direct as actual murder.

On one hand he can't save his life by helping to kill others, but on the other hand, he would not be killing the innocents, the terrorists would.

What do you think?

See Chashukei Chemed Pesachim page 199

Answer to last week's dilemma, "Pain-Less Needles"

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein answered that the doctor would have to offer the less painful needles, without charging extra. See Chashukei Chemed Bava Basra Page 384 for further explanation



Knowing what you are willing to give your life for, will help sharpen your focus on what you truly want to live for.

For this purpose HaShem set up society in a way that we find parallels to HaShem. For example, Man is born totally helpless with no chance of survival without the constant care of his parents for the first many years of life. There is no animal that is so helpless. Why? So that as man matures he will recognize how much he owes his parents. Once he comes to that recognition he will have the ability to project that relationship of gratitude and trust towards HaShem.

In the same vein, HaShem created the institution of Royalty to provide Man with the experience of recognizing authority. Without such experience Man will find it difficult to project that Awe and Fear that is due to HaShem.

Let us return to our quandary. Perhaps Moshe shows Pharaoh such deference because that will serve as the model to his people for recognizing authority. Even when the au-

thority seems so undeserving of our respect we must nevertheless submit our deference to him. This allows us to project truly deserving respect and awe to HaShem even when we do not understand why He does certain things. Even though we know HaShem does everything for our best, nevertheless, it is a great challenge to hold on to our awe of Him when we feel wronged. This was the lesson Moshe taught his people. It was a lesson for us to learn as we were on the cusp of establishing a relationship that would endure thousands of years. Many of those years were filled with challenging times when we could have abandoned our relationship due to the hardship to which we were subjected. But we knew that authority deserves our allegiance irrespective of how we feel about it. If we are able to maintain our allegiance to Him in times of hardship we will merit to rejoice with Him in times of salvation.

Was there anything more challenging than the Holocaust? And yet a mere generation later we have our Land and have become a major positive influence in the world.

How fortunate we are to have the ability to hold on to HaShem even when we do not quite understand why.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

In a thunderstorm you can watch the rain pelting the neighbors' rooftops, while you sniff the damp dirt, hear the crackling thunder, taste the moist air, and revel in the water running down your face. A simple rain shower can engage all five senses. With each sense we can experience the wonderful world Hashem has made. We rely on our senses to tell us accurately about our surroundings. However, our five senses cannot detect everything. The world is full of information beyond our reach, but many animals have "sixth senses" - super senses that enable them to experience other dimensions of our world. These bonus senses help these creatures survive and thrive in their habitats.

One special sense is called mechanoreception. This sense allows web-spinning spiders to perceive minute pressure on their exoskeleton. Spiders have specialized organs called slit sensilla. These organs are small

SPIDER SENSE

grooves at the spider's joints, which change shape under stress. As the spider sits on its web, the slightest movement on the strand causes a slit to change shape, and mechanoreceptors in the slit detect the change.

The slit sensillum is so precise that the spider can determine the creature's size and weight, or establish if the strain was just a passing breeze. The slit sensillum and other special senses are possibly as important for survival as the spider's own eyes.

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LET OUR SACRIFICE SAVE THE WORLD

The Nazi invasion of Lithuania took place on June 22, 1941. Virtually all of the Jewish homes in the center of Kelm were destroyed by the German bombardment. By the next day, the Red Army had completely fled the area, leaving the way clear for the unimpeded entry of the Germans into Kelm on June 24. On July 1st, all of the able-bodied men between 14 and 60 years of age, including the men of the Talmud Torah, were ordered to gather in the granary of Zundel Luntz, a successful Jewish farmer, whose farm was on the outskirts of the town. The Jewish men of Kelm were put to work, by Lithuanian nationalists, clearing away rubble. The Nazi conquerors felt justifiably confident leaving the Lithuanians in charge. The night of the fifth of Av, Reb Doniel Movshovitz, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Kelm Talmud Torah, dreamt a horrible nightmare, and the next morning (July 29), he broke from his normal custom and recited hatavos chalom, a prayer to mitigate the effect of a bad dream. As he was doing so, a group of Lithuanian fanatics broke into the granary and ordered all the men to gather. Already the Lithuanians had savagely killed a number of Jews in Kelm. From the looks on the faces of the Lithuanians that morning, their victims could have had few doubts as to what lay in store for them. But as they marched at gunpoint, the men of the Talmud Torah sang and danced as if it were Simchas Torah. They were enraptured in the songs they had sung so often — "Vetaher libeinu l'ovdecha b'emes, Purify our hearts to serve You in truth," and "Ashreinu ma tov chelkeinu, How fortunate are we, how good is our lot." Held high on a chair was the Alter of Kelm's daughter Rebbetzin Nechama Liba, whom they carried just as if she were a Sefer Torah. When they reached their destination, the executioners ordered the men to start digging a large pit - a pit in which they would soon be buried. When the pit was completed and the extermination about to begin, Reb Doniel sought permission to address his flock for one last time.

He quoted the piyut recited on Yom Kippur that recounts how the angels themselves cried out upon seeing Rabbi Akiva's flesh raked by metal combs, "This is Torah, and this is its reward." Hashem replied, "If I hear another word, I'll return the world to the primordial void". What does that mean? Reb Doniel explained, at that moment, the world had lost any merit to justify its continued existence. Yet Hashem had promised not to bring another Flood, wiping out all of mankind, and so had chosen the Ten Martyrs mentioned in the piyut to bring atonement for the rest of the world through their Kiddush Hashem. If the angels forced Hashem to restrain His hand and spare the Ten Martyrs, they would, in effect, force G-d to destroy a world no longer worthy of existence. Turning to his students, Reb Doniel told them that they stood at that moment in exactly the same position as the Ten Martyrs: The world had lost the merit to exist. Only through the merit of giving their lives for Kidush Hashem would Hashem stay His hand and not return it to Tohu Vavohu, the primordial void. Therefore, he urged his students, "Let us be neither confused nor frightened, but rather let us accept upon ourselves this awesome responsibility with love." With that he turned to the chief of the murderers and told them, "I have finished. Now you can begin!" (From Rav Dessler, By Rabbi Yonason Rosenblum page 253)

AUSCHWITZ



Achim in a Nutshell:

"Veyached l'vaveinu l'ahava es Shimecha."

"Please bring our hearts together so that we can love Your Name".

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