

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE



## THE PEOPLE OF SCIENCE

In this week's double Parsha, Chukas Balak, there is a wonderful lesson to be learnt from the haftorah. The prophet, Micha admonishes his people to remember the incredible kindness that HaKadosh baruch Hu showered upon them. He took them from Egypt. He established for them great leaders; Moshe, Aaron and Miriam. And He protected them from the curse of Bilam. Micha thereby admonishes his people for not acknowledging HaShem's kindness. Why do you not show your gratitude to Him?!

Bilam was a non-Jewish prophet who used his powers to earn himself power, prestige and money. Being that he was able to project fatal curses upon individuals and even nations, he commissioned himself as a hit man. For the right price he would place a fatal curse on the subject. As we traveled through the desert the king of Moav hired Bilam to curse our people. HaShem in His endless kindness protected us from Bilam's curse.

This is the reference to which Micha is reminding his people to keep in mind and to respond in gratitude to HaKadosh baruch

## GIVING THEIR FATHER'S PLEDGE

BY RABBI YITZI WEINER

This week's Torah portion addresses the mitzvah to keep one's pledges. The Torah writes that the Jewish people pledged that if they were victorious against the Amalekites they would donate all of the cities to Hashem. (Bamidbar, 21,2)

This brings us to the following question.

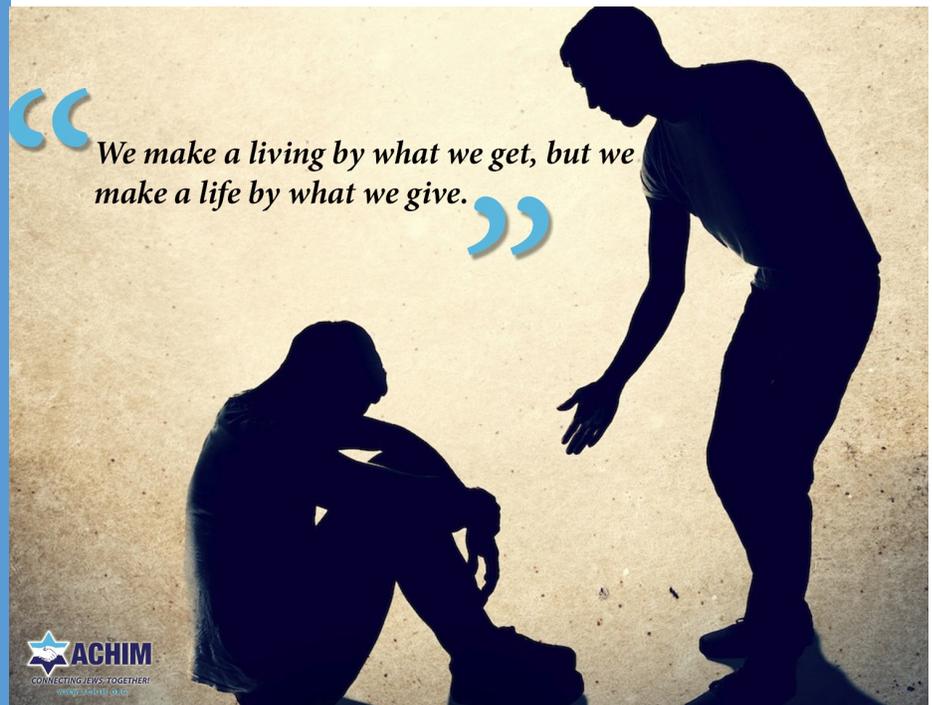
Sol Goldstein was a famous

## MITZVA MEME

Holocaust survivor who lived in Chicago. He was well known for organizing the 1978 protest against a Nazi march in Skokie. He also made a large pledge of more than a million dollars to the UJF, the United Jewish Federation, which he paid slowly, over time. When he passed away, there remained \$666,000 of the pledge that was still still unpaid.

Sol's children who inherited his estate refused to pay the remainder of the pledge.

They had different charitable priorities and did not want to give it to the UJF. The children agreed to give the remaining amount to charity, but not the charity that their father chose. The UJF then brought suit, claiming that the pledge was to be regarded as a legally binding contract. Where would you think the Torah's position on this question would be? Should they be responsible to fulfill the father's



Hu by adhering to His Torah.

When Balak and Bilam plotted to curse our people, we were totally unaware of the plot. In fact, we would never have known about it had the Torah not told us. However, now that we are told about it and we recognize the unending kindness of HaKadosh baruch Hu, we are now held responsible to show gratitude for that kindness.

As science continues ceaselessly to progress and to discover more and more about nature and the human body, we continue to gain greater awareness

of how fragile our bodies are. There are so many systems within the human body that must be carefully regulated. Many of the chemicals and enzymes which the body secretes must be countered by other chemicals to keep the system in perfect balance. The same is true in cosmology. There are forces that could destroy our solar system without a perfect balance that must be maintained. In every area of nature there are so many forces and counterforces.

Just as Micha expects from us the show gratitude to HaKadosh baruch Hu for His kindness of protecting us from Bilam, Micha would expect from us the same show of gratitude to Him for His constant maintenance and balancing that He does for every one of us in our own personal lives. This constant maintenance is required on every level of existence. How great must our gratitude be!

There is some debate among the religions of the world whether the study of science is in conflict with religion or not. I refer to the Socpes monkey trial. Within the Jewish faith, however, science is an inte-



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

--The Hermit Crab is a small crab which lives in the shallower parts of the ocean. It spends its first year in the ocean as a gill breather. For its second year, it lives on trees and occasionally gets into the water to get its gills wet, even though it can already breathe out of water. Thereafter, it spends its full time in the ocean, often in rock pools near the ocean's edge. The hermit crab has no shell as do other crabs. Instead, it has to go out and find one. When it finds an empty snail or conch shell, it crawls inside to check it out for size. If it is okay, it then walks around, lugging the borrowed shell on its back. When enemies lurk near, it crawls back into its protective shell. Since its right claw is the larger, it will tuck that in front of it as a protective doorway across the shell's entrance. The left claw is smaller and used to tear up food, which consists of small plants and animals.

As it grows, it continues to be on the lookout for larger-sized shells. When it changes shells,

## HERMIT CRAB AND SEA ANEMONE

it moves rapidly! If the size is wrong, it quickly darts back into the safety of its previous shell.

The tentacles of the sea anemone are poisonous and sting those that touch it. But the little hermit crab and the sea anemone always know they are good friends. The crab crawls over to a small anemone and pushes on him. Instead of stinging the crab to death, the anemone carefully places its bottom suction cup onto the crab, and off they go, with the crab carrying the anemone around on its shell!

This arrangement helps both of them. It provides even better protection for the hermit crab, and additional food for the anemone. When the anemone catches a fish with its stingers, both share the food. The crab reaches his pincer out and takes part of the catch. When the crab catches a fish, it in turn shares part of it with the anemone. Sometimes the crab will carry two anemones

## THE HOLY CHEESE

Perhaps nothing better attests to the paramount importance that Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky placed on his wife's needs than his willingness to break his own minhagim to keep from hurting her feelings. Shortly after his second marriage, Shavuos fell on Friday. The Rebbetzin prepared an elaborate milchig Kiddush including a number of cheese dishes. She was unaware that Reb Yaakov had a family minhag not to eat cheese on Friday, and that he scrupulously followed this mining. His discomfiture must have shown as they served the Kiddush because she immediately asked, 'Is something wrong?' He quickly regained his composure and replied, 'No, no, nothing. I just wasn't prepared for such a beautiful Kiddush. As soon as the Rebbetzin left the room, Reb Yaakov turned to three talmidim and asked them to be matir neder (release him from an implied vow not to eat cheese on Friday) so that he could eat the cheese dishes. He explained to them that a heter was appropriate since he would never have accepted the minhag upon himself if he had known that one day it would cause someone else pain. Since it was their first year of marriage, during which a wife is particularly eager to please her husband, he felt that mentioning his minhag then would be perceived as a criticism — even though there was no way that the Rebbetzin could possibly



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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