

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE CHAZZAN

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion is Parshas Shemini, which talks about the korbanos. Our Sages teach that today our prayer has the same effect as korbanos. Last week was Purim. Purim is when the prayers of Esther and the Jewish people were answered and that is one of the reasons why Purim is known as a day that is especially auspicious for our prayers to be answered. Purim is also a time of great joy. This leads us to a humorous story about prayer.

Very high-pitched voices have the ability to vibrate glass and shatter it. In fact, Italian opera singer Enrico Caruso



THE PRESENT OF HIS PRESENCE

The Jewish people reached their apex in this week's Parsha, Shmini, with the completion and inauguration of the Mishkan. Finally, after all the preparations and building and practice, the first day of Nissan arrived and HaShem's Presence will fill the Mishkan, the handiwork of our people. At every step of the process, the Torah testifies that it was all done according to the strict rules and instructions and the proper intentions that HaShem instructed Moshe. In spite of their conscientious dedication to all the details, nevertheless, once everything was done and the inaugural offerings were brought, HaShem's Presence was nowhere to be seen. Our Sages teach that Aaron was shamefaced. He was certain that HaShem had not accepted his offerings and that the sin of the Golden Calf still hung over him. At that point Moshe and Aaron entered the Mishkan and davened to HaShem that He have mercy on them and rest His Presence on the Mishkan. After that prayer the Shechina descended.

Why did HaShem not bring His Shechina immediately upon the completion? What was the purpose of causing this anxiety?

The Chovos Halvavos teaches us that the pride one has in their spiritual/intellectual achievements can be found in two sorts. The first is the person who identifies his achievements as his own accomplishments. He associates

was able to shatter champagne glasses with his high notes.

Rav Zilberstein quotes the following story. There was once a famous professional chazzan in Yerushalayim who had an operatic, high pitched voice. He was once invited to a shul to lead the davening. In his earnestness to inspire the kehilla, his voice was so powerful that he broke several of the thin fluorescent bulbs in the Shul's light fixture. Thankfully no one was hurt, but the Chazzan had two questions.

First of all, did he have an obligation to pay the shul for the damage? On one hand he broke the glass, but on the other hand it was in the course of his doing his job for the shul.

Second of all, he wondered, was he allowed to raise his voice that high on Shabbos if it might break glass? One is not allowed to purposely break glass on Shabbos. Was he allowed to sing that high on Shabbos?

What do you think?

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



the people who are less accomplished than he as losers. The pride that rests in him is couched in self accomplishment. The second sort of pride is the person who recognizes his achievements as gifts that were granted to him by HaShem. He is proud that he received such gifts and appreciates them as such. The second fellow walks around with an air of gratitude. He knows that he is the recipient of HaShem's Goodness. He is happy to share it with others and has a positive perspective on other people. The first fellow, on the other hand, has a negative perspective on other people.

There is no greater achievement that Man could aspire to than creating a Mishkan in which HaShem's Presence resides. Perhaps the reason HaShem refrained from settling

His Presence immediately upon the completion of the Mishkan was to protect Moshe, Aaron and their people from any sort of inappropriate pride. By holding back His Presence, HaShem demonstrated to all that his Presence did not rest among His people because of their accomplishments, rather it was a gift granted to them by Him.

So often we do everything in our control to elevate our level of serving HaShem and it somehow eludes us. The story of the Mishkan should be a source of encouragement to us. Even when everything is done perfectly according to the prescribed instructions and nothing is missing, nevertheless, HaShem wants us to daven for mercy and grant success to our efforts. We can be sure that our tefillos will be answered just as He answered us then.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind

SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S NATION

THREE OPEN MIRACLES OF JEWISH HISTORY

Over 300 years ago, King Louis XIV of France asked Blaise Pascal, the great Christian philosopher, to give him proof of God. Pascal answered, "Why the Jews, your Majesty, the Jews!" That the Jewish nation—such a tiny group of people—survived two thousand years of exile and persecution is nothing short of a supernatural phenomenon, and it was predicted even before they existed! Let's explore three of the miracles of Jewish History.

ETERNAL NATION

It has been prophesied in the Torah that Jews would be an eternal nation. "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and your descendants after you, throughout the generations. An eternal covenant to be your God, and the God of your descendants after you" (Genesis 17:7).

And it has come true. Even though Jews did not have a homeland, faced the worst persecutions of any nation and are very small in numbers, they have still remained a distinct and eternal people.

In his essay on the Jews, Mark Twain writes:

If statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed; and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

The fact that millions of Russian Jews were able to maintain a Jewish spark and a Jewish Identity without any exposure to Torah, is a testimony to this miracle of the Jewish soul.

EXILE AND RETURN

It has been prophesied in the Torah that Jews would be exiled and dispersed:

"And you, I will scatter among the nations, at the point of My drawn sword, leaving your country desolate and your cities in ruins" (Leviticus 26:33).

In all of human history, there have been less than ten exiles of an entire people out of their country. It is a highly unusual phenomenon to take a whole people and throw them out of their country.

Multiple exiles certainly did not happen because after the first one, the people generally disappear—they simply become assimilated among other peoples. In human history, multiple exiles and dispersion are unique only to the Jewish people.

It has been prophesied in the Torah that Jews would be exiled from the land and that they would return to the land:

The Almighty will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you; and He will return and gather you from among all of the nations where he has dispersed you. (Deuteronomy 30:1-5)

No other people has ever gone into exile multiple times, and survived for thousands of years to come back to re-establish a national homeland. The return of the Jews from exile to the land of Israel is nothing short of a predicted miracle.

LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

The prophet Yeshayahu says in the Name of HaShem that His people "will be a light unto the nations." Isaiah (42:6)

Despite being the most hated people, few in number and dispersed across the globe, Jews are the most influential people the world has known. Jews are responsible for the idea of ethical monotheism and the absolute moral standard that comes from a belief in one God. Much of the core moral ideas taught by Christianity and Islam, a majority of the world, come from the Torah that the Jews taught the world.

John Adams, The second President of the United States wrote:

"I will insist the Hebrews have [contributed] more to civilize men than any other nation. If I was an atheist and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations ... They are the most glorious nation that ever inhabited this Earth. The Romans and their empire were but a bubble in comparison to the Jews. They have given religion to three-quarters of the globe and have influenced the affairs of mankind more and more happily than any other nation, ancient or modern."

CONCLUSION

When we look at Jewish history, we see a history where the Jewish people have defied the laws of nature and the laws of history! Rav Yaakov Emden wrote that Jewish History in the diaspora is a miracle greater than the splitting of the sea. The splitting of the sea was a miracle that occurred in one day. Whereas Jewish history is an ongoing miracle running for over 2,500 years.

How fortunate we are to be the instrument of HaShem's greatest demonstration!

The watermark you see behind this text is a sneak preview of a special edition comic story that we will share next week. You will read a beautiful story about a Russian Jew from the Achim community and the miracle that occurred to him because of Shabbos.

COMING HOME

Back in 1918 with the Soviet revolution that overthrew the Tsar, the state of Yiddishkeit was thrown into the furnace. Over a short period of time there were no shuls, no yeshivos, no mikvaos and even bris milah ceased. The iron curtain was in place and there was no hope for any Jewish revival. It was just a matter of a few generations and the Jews of the Soviet Union would no longer be Jewish. With the exception of a handful of individuals the flame of Torah had been extinguished.

But HaShem, the Shomer Yisroel, created a state-sponsored campaign of anti-Semitism where the government identified every person by their nationality and the Jew was stamped JEW on his internal passport. The ploy worked. For the next seventy years every Jew knew that he was Jewish even though he had no Torah and no Jewish infrastructure. However, even with JEW stamped in his passport, one cannot maintain their connection to HaShem on that basis alone.

In 1988, just as this population was about to enter their fourth generation and the embers of Yiddishkeit were about to turn cold, America opened her doors and offered every Jew in the Soviet Union the opportunity to emigrate to America. It was one of those unexpected switches that occur throughout our history when the course of our future changes overnight.

Anyone watching this understood that HaShem had begun bringing his children home again. It was too much for too long. People do not change overnight and certainly the highly sophisticated intellectual Jew from the Soviet Union does not change overnight. Evidently, HaShem had a long term plan for His beloved children.

I was fortunate to recognize that with patience this population could be brought home and connect to their loving Father. But patience was critical. In 1989, Achim was founded with the understanding that only HaShem can inspire His children and only with patience will they follow their inspiration.

This year marks Achim's 30th year and as one looks around the Baltimore community they will discover that there are over 50 families from this population who are active members of our Orthodox community and hundreds more who are growing closer to their Father. Achim did not do this on its own. We had the support of the larger Jewish community. This is an effort that could only happen when we all work together - and we did and continue to do so.

This Tuesday/Wednesday we will be running our annual campaign and hope that everyone will be able to participate. Even if only a small contribution is made, it makes us that much closer together. **Let us connect Jews, together.** May we be zoche to go home and meet Father, speedily in our days, all of us together.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question regarding including an envelope with TableTalk, Rabbi Heber said that an envelope in its own right is not muktza as it can be used to store Divrei Torah. Nevertheless, TableTalk should not have an envelope stapled to them since it is not in the spirit of Shabbos. However, if they are taken before Shabbos it is fine, since the envelopes will be removed before Shabbos. Regarding the question of the tzedakah collector who got a tip about a Torah question the gvir had, Rav Chaim Kanievsky answered that the man was allowed to accept the money.

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