

A MORAL DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



“THE CREEPY TAXI DRIVER”

This week’s Torah portion discusses the troubled relationship between Yaakov and Lavan. The Torah writes that Lavan tried to change and withhold Yaakov’s wages more than 10 times. It is a mitzva in the Torah to do the very opposite, to make sure to pay an employee when payment is expected. (See Sefer Hamitzvos Hatzar Positive 66) This means that when we pay a taxi driver for example, and are mindful of the fact that we are performing a mitzva, we are not simply making a financial exchange, but we are also coming close to Hashem, and bringing holiness into the world with this important mitzva.

The following true moral dilemma relates to someone who had a question over whether he was obligated to pay his taxi driver for his service.

Donny was a well-dressed American businessman who arrived in Israel. He flagged down a taxi to get a ride to his hotel. The taxi driver quoted him a very high price of \$70 for the



THE ORCHESTRA AND THE ROLEX

This week’s Parsha, Vayeitzei, teaches us a great lesson in the unity to which we must aspire and achieve for us to accomplish our mission

The Parsha begins with a scene of our father, Yaakov, laying down for the night on the ground on the way to his Uncle Lavan’s home in search of a wife. “He took from the stones of the place and placed them around his head...And he took the stone which he placed around his head and set it as a monument.” Our Sages point out the seeming inconsistency. Initially he took multiple stones to place around his head and when he awoke he took the stone (singular) which he placed around his head; was it many stones or was it just one stone? Our Sages teach us that initially Yaakov took 12 stones to place around his head but the stones began to quarrel, each stone argued that it should be the one upon which Yaakov’s head shall rest. After all the stones made their argument they merged into one single stone. This story requires an explanation. What does it mean that a stone has a position on what it should be doing? Furthermore, the argument sounds competitive with each stone trying to claim that other stones are wrong. Is there competition among stones?

Everything in HaShem’s creation has its given purpose and it will accomplish its purpose by virtue of the fact that it was created for it. The bricks in my house were created to be in the walls of my house, and that is why they are there. These stones were created to participate in the founding of the Jewish people. The Midrash teaches us that these 12 stones were the very stones that were used in the construction of the alter upon which our father Yitzchok was elevated to be an offering by his father Avraham. The event of Yitzchok’s elevation was a watershed in Jewish history. Our survival as a people is attributed to that event. The prophecy Yaakov had as he laid his head upon those stones was also a watershed in our people’s history. These stones existed for the purpose of participating in the development of the Jewish nation. Their argument was not in the form of discussion nor was it a competition. Rather, it was an existential concern. Each stone knew that its existence on this world was to serve Yaakov in supporting his head for this prophecy. Every stone had this existential concern and since only a single stone could support his head they recognized that they have no existence if they remain separate, their very existence drew them into formation of a single stone. Each

ride, when the ride normally cost the equivalent of \$20. Donny pulled out a \$100 bill, showed it to the driver and asked him if he had any change. "No, I don't have any change" the driver said brusquely. Donny had an intuition that this driver was not honest. They arrived at the hotel when it was already dark. Donny started rummaging around the seats in the back. "I dropped the \$100 dollar bill under the seat", Donny said. "Do you perhaps have a flashlight to look for the \$100". "No! No flashlight", the driver said impatiently. Donny asked the driver if he can wait a minute while he gets a flashlight from the hotel. Donny walked into the hotel lobby holding his handbag. As soon as Donny walked in, the driver quickly sped away, intending to keep the entire \$100 in his car. It turns out that the driver was indeed dishonest.

Donny, however watched the taxi pull away and chuckled slyly to himself.

It turned out that Donny outsmarted the driver. Donny never truly lost the \$100 bill. After he dropped the bill, he put it back in his pocket. The driver, driving away trying to steal from him, ended up losing the entire fare.

That night, in the hotel, Donny told this story to his wife. Donny's wife seemed horrified though. She argued to him that he had a responsibility to try to track down the driver and pay him for his fare. "Even though he drove off, trying to steal from you, he did it because you tricked him. You still have a mitzva to pay him for his service."

Donny wasn't sure his wife was right. He was happy to pay the driver but the driver drove off without asking for payment. The driver fooled himself.

Who is right? Does Donny have a mitzva to track down the driver and the cab company to pay the driver for his service of driving him home from the airport?

See Veharev Na Volume One page 82

(You can go to achim.org for the answer)



*mken nisht a mentch biz mhandelt
nisht mit im -*

*You don't truly know a person until
you do business with him.*

Yiddish Saying



stone therefore gave up their independent individuality for the sake of realizing their ultimate purpose.

This event was the signpost for Yaakov and for his children how to understand the nature of our people. Every nation needs unity. Without unity there is strife and conflict. We are no different. However, there is greater need for our people to have unity - it is an existential need.

The purpose and mission of our people is to support the Shechina, the Presence of HaShem in this world. The Shechina is One and cannot be supported by a multitude. Her resting place must be a singular place, just like Yaakov's head could not be supported by a multitude of stones.

For the existence of our nation to achieve our mission we need every member of our people to merge into the nation in a way that allows every other member to exist within our nation. This is not the unity of an orchestra where if there is one musician absent the orchestra can achieve its mission albeit imperfectly. Rather it is the unity of a Rolex watch where if there is even a small seemingly insignificant part missing the entire watch will not work.

Every member of our people is needed to create a complete nation upon which the Shechina can rest. No one person can support it and if we are missing anybody our nation is incomplete. The unity we require is that every member allows all the other members to be a part of our nation. Our unity is existential.

The twelve stones represent the twelve tribes of the our people. As they surrounded Yaakov and supported his mission in this world they understood that we cannot accomplish that mission as we stand separate. We must form one nation that supports Yaakov and his mission. This can only be accomplished when we define ourselves as a single unit.

This does not require that any Jew should relinquish his personal identity and become a zombie. Quite to the contrary. Each Jew must maintain his personal identity and his unique talents and to bring that uniqueness into the totality of the people. Just as every component of the Rolex is unique but nevertheless submits itself to being a part of a greater cause in order to realize the unique self so too must every member of our people maintain their unique self but submit it to the greater cause.

This lesson our Parsha is teaching us is if we are to achieve our mission every Jew must recognize that without the other Jew he cannot achieve his mission. Only as a single unit in which all the components are present will any single component meet success.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

HASHEM'S A/C SYSTEM THE GULF STREAM

The tides and movements of water have been in perfect balance to contribute to mankind's comfort. Think of the mighty Gulf Stream, for instance. We don't know everything about it, but we do know life in the United States would be almost impossible were it not for the fantastic influence of this great stream. It comes out of the Gulf of Mexico, goes along the eastern seaboard, and up into the northern sections of the world. It is like a river, flowing through the midst of the sea, and can be seen distinctly from high above because of its different color.

In fact, this river is about 70 miles wide and nearly 3,000 feet deep. When it leaves the Gulf of Mexico, the water temperature is 84 F., and off the coast of the Carolinas it is still a warm 80 F. This warming influence actually makes the northern coastal regions of America and Europe inhabitable; otherwise, they would be frozen wastelands.

Now appreciate what happens as this warm river reaches the entrance of the Arctic region at

Baffin Bay, where it meets a frigid polar stream that is rushing southward. As a result of the titanic collision of these two giants, the polar stream is forced to dive down thousands of feet, where it continues its southward course, coming up finally in the West Indies during their hottest season, thus cooling down the terrible tropical heat. The Gulf Stream gets deflected eastward, going up along the British Isles, making these habitable.

Without that deflection of the Gulf Stream, some of those northern lands would be locked in eternal winter. This helps us appreciate the brilliance of Hashem's design for nature

THE GULF STREAM CONTINUES ITS SOUTHWARD COURSE, COMING UP FINALLY IN THE WEST INDIES DURING THEIR HOTTEST SEASON, THUS COOLING DOWN THE TERRIBLE TROPICAL HEAT.

HOLY PAY

In Tfas there was a tzaddik, a kabbalist, Rabbi Avraham Galanti, who once came to the Arizal with a request that he reprimand him and help him correct his misdeeds. The Ari refused, saying that he was hardly one who could give mussar to so great a tzaddik, but Rabbi Avraham persisted in his demands. The Ari then studied his face and said, "I see that you have a slight defect and that you are in wrongful possession of others' property." Rabbi Avraham was shocked, and promptly went home to don sack cloth and accept a fast, with intense soul-searching as to where he might have been dishonest, but to no avail. Rabbi Avraham operated a textile factory. He called together all his workers and asked, "Am I in arrears to any of you? Have I inadvertently withheld wages from anyone?" The workers responded, "Rabbi, whatever you give us is enough. The Divine blessing is in your money, and whatever we receive always goes far enough to cover our needs." ' Rabbi Avraham said, "Then that is the problem. I may have shortchanged you on your wages, but you have never complained. That is why the Ari found me sinful. Henceforth you must be specific and make certain you receive every cent that is due to you. "But I must make restitution for the past, " he said. Rabbi Avraham then placed money on the table and said, "Let anyone come and take as much as they feel is coming to him. Then I wish you to say, 'Whatever Avraham Galanti still owes me, I forgive him with all my heart!'" Except for one woman who took a few coins, no one touched the money on the table, and all recited the forgiveness formula as requested. Rabbi Avraham later returned to the Ari who said, "The stain has now been cleansed. It was the small amount of money that was due to that woman that had left its mark on your neshamah." (Not Just Stories By Rabbi Dr. Avraham Twersky)

I MAY HAVE SHORTCHANGED YOU ON YOUR WAGES, BUT YOU HAVE NEVER COMPLAINED. THAT IS WHY THE ARI FOUND ME SINFUL.



The Jewish people need connection; both a connection to Hashem as well as to each other, now more than ever. Achim is building a community-wide learning network for all members of our Jewish community in order to deepen their relationship with Hashem and deepen their relationship with each other.

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