

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



"MA AND THE MOTORCYCLE"

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion we find a reference to the mitzva to honor your parents. When Yosef asked his brother's about Yackov, they responded "our father your servant is at peace". (43;28) Our Sages teach (Sotah 13a) that Yosef should have protested when his brothers called his father "your servant" and Yosef was consequently punished for this lack of respect.

This brings us to an interesting true story that involves the mitzva of kibud av v'em, the mitzva to honor one's parents.

Aron was a lawyer who lived in Los Angeles. He worked in a large law firm downtown. The traffic during rush hour took between an hour to an hour and a half long. Aron spent an average of almost three hours in traffic each day.

Aron loved to learn and was very frustrated that he wasted so much time on the road. He decided that he had the perfect solution to solve his traffic problems: He bought a motor-



THE STRUGGLE

As we currently stand in the middle of Chanukah I would like to look past our weekly Parsha, Mikeitz, and keep our focus on Chanukah.

HaShem designed the human being with the capacity to train himself to do difficult activities that with enough practice those activities become easy. For example, anyone who changes their daily routine to wake up at 4:30 am will find this quite difficult and yet once it becomes routine the difficulty diminishes if it does not become natural for him. Similarly, this is true with learning a new discipline. A person can train himself to hear the fine differences between the various notes and octaves until it becomes second nature. This is truly a blessing.

This ability has a flip side that works against a person in regards to his relationships. Relationships are built on appreciation. The seeds from which a relationship grows is appreciation. When this appreciation is aroused the relationship sprouts. It will often give way to a new mode of conduct between the two parties. It may express itself by bringing flowers on a weekly basis. As the relationship endures over time very often the appreciation is lost because we become accustomed to it and take it for granted. The ability that we have to train ourselves is the very ability by which we become accustomed to our surroundings and very often what we appreciated last year or ten years ago no longer moves us. It is even conceivable that the flowers will continue to be delivered but the depth of that appreciation no longer exists. It becomes only action with no heart. Such is the consequence of allowing habit to enter our relationships. The only way to keep a relationship alive and fresh is by renewing it constantly as if today is the first day.

Our Sages teach us that HaShem allowed the Syrian Greeks to persecute the Jewish people as a consequence of their lackadaisical attitude towards their serving HaShem. Initially this sounds counterintuitive. How does it make sense that as a punishment for their relaxing their commitment to HaShem they were forced to give up their commitment!? If a child who is capable of doing well in school demonstrates laziness will the teacher punish him

cycle. The motorcycle was able to weave in and out of traffic (commonly known as lane splitting) and the commute now took a half hour.

To maximize the time that he saved, Aron set up a chavrusa (a study partner) for an hour in the morning, and another chavrusa in the evening. He now had two hours to learn with a chavrusa because of the time that he saved.

One day, after enjoying this new arrangement for a while, he mentioned on the phone in passing to his mother that he bought a motorcycle and rides it to work every day. His mother, a physician, was horrified.

"Aron, you are a grown man, and I will not tell you what to do", she declared. "But I just want you to know that every day you ride a motorcycle on the highway during the rush hour commute, I will feel anxiety about your safety. You know how dangerous motorcycles can be".

"Ma, don't worry, I'm good at this", Aron protested.

"Aron, don't fool yourself. We both know that even the best riders can easily get killed in a motorcycle accident", his mother responded..

Aron hung up the phone with a strong sense of doubt. He wondered if he was permitted to ride the motorcycle.

On one hand he saved two hours every day, and he was using that saved time very productively. On the other hand, he just learned that his mother will worry about him whenever he uses the motorcycle. He noted to himself that she didn't actually forbid him to ride the motorcycle, but she made it clear that she would be pained and anxious about it.

Aron wondered if he had to give up the motorcycle to fulfill the mitzva of kibud av va'em. Should concern for his mother's feelings override his desire to maximize his time for Torah?

What do you think?

See Veharev Na Volume Three 449

You can send me an email at Rabbiweiner@achim.org to receive the answer.

ed. Keeping kosher was no struggle, keeping Shabbos was no struggle, learning Torah was no struggle, raising Jewish children was no problem. There was nothing we had to fight for and consequently we lost our enthusiasm for our relationship with HaShem. He therefore challenged us with the prospect of losing our relationship entirely by force from the Greeks. At that point we suddenly woke up and rose for the fight. And fight we did. Our relationship took on a sense of urgency that was unparalleled in the history of our people. It was that renewed commitment to HaShem and His Torah that made our people worthy of HaShem's assistance in their fight.

We live in a world where observing the mitzvos and studying Torah is already habit. There is no real effort in going to shul, that is where everyone hangs out. We can so quickly lose our appreciation of what HaShem does for us and what His service means to us. And given the incredible distractions that draw us away from all relationships and certainly a relationship with Him we stand in a critical moment of history where Heaven forbid HaShem should not challenge us again.

As Chanukah continues to offer us her strength let us grab it and reignite our enthusiasm to serve HaShem and to love His Torah.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and a brilliant Chanukah.

Paysach Diskind

We are starting a new weekly program at the Knish Shop called "Learn & Chill" this Tuesday evening for men between 20-30. We will be serving great food and hear from great guest speakers and local business leaders. Please join us. More info at achim.org



by taking away his classroom time and send him out for extended recess? And yet this is exactly what HaShem did. He empowered the Greek emperor to force His people to give up their Torah!

To appreciate this form of punishment we need only to consider how we react when something dear to us suddenly gets taken away or is threatened to be taken away. The moment we are threatened to lose this thing we are struck with its value and what it really means to us. We will suddenly fight to keep it.

Consider the fellow who works hard to build his business and it eventually becomes very successful. This person soon becomes somewhat lax in his commitment to the business and he starts going on extended vacations spending more time abroad than in the office. His business will invariably take a downturn. The moment he realizes the downturn he will probably (or hopefully) return to his original diligence and return to his previous commitment.

This was the method by which HaShem brought us back from the brink. In the period of Chanukah we had taken our Judaism for grant-



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

Let's take a quick look at the creatures of nature and see the intelligence and design that they display. Think for a moment of the fish that inhabit the oceans. They are constantly subject to attack from their enemies from above—like the gulls that swoop down to make their meals off marine life. Do you know that fish have specially constructed eyeballs enabling them to look almost instantly in any and all directions? They see behind, below, above and on the sides.

Furthermore, fish eyes are designed to take into account the refraction of light. Yes, fish can see 30 percent farther than other visual instruments because Hashem designed the eyeball of the fish to take into consideration the refraction of light. We tend to think it is a wonderful accomplishment when the oculist manufactures special goggles for divers that compensate for refraction in the water, yet Hashem did it for fish long before.

In the waters of Malaya lives a fish with bifocal lenses built right in its eyes. This little sardine-sized fish is prized for food by the seagulls especially. They are constantly swooping down to gobble up this little fish if they can. So the little fish has to

FISH GOGGLES AND BIFOCALS

watch carefully for this approaching danger. It must have good distance vision, but since it feeds on the microscopic larvae that abound in the water, it must have very good "near vision" as well. So what did Hashem do? Hashem created a little membrane that comes halfway up on its eyes, giving it bifocal vision? That little fish can look up and see the gulls coming or look down and see those nearby bits of life that it can feed on!

We think it wonderful that the skilled optometrist and oculist can perfect glasses permitting us to see near and far away, yet here is a fish that has been created that way by Hashem from the very beginning.

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THE HOLY HERO

Reb Baruch Ber Liebowitz used to tell of a miracle that he experienced in Kremenchug, during World War One.

A Russian soldier once entered the house and wanted to confiscate the watch of his father, Reb Shmuel Dovid. But Reb Shmuel Dovid was not ready to give it up. The intruder started to wrestle with Reb Baruch Ber's father and eventually pulled out a dagger. When Reb Baruch Ber saw this, he jumped up and began to struggle with the soldier, saying, "Me, not him!"

Suddenly, a high-ranking officer, possibly a general, appeared at the door and ordered the soldier out of the house. Reb Baruch Ber attributed the miracle to his willingness to sacrifice his life for the mitzvah of honoring his father. (From Reb Baruch Ber by Rabbi Chaim Shlomo Rosenthal)

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We often get asked "is Achim a Kiruv organization?"

Our answer; We ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu daily, "*Veyached Levaveinu Le'ahava Es Shemecha*".

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

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