TABLETALK

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A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

THE BIG META-MITZVA DILEMMA

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Baruch Hashem, TableTalk has been met with wide appreciation. Many people share the Mitzvah Dilemma at their Shabbos table.
At the same time, we constantly get asked why we don't share the answers. Initially, we did share the answers in the subsequent week's edition. More recently we stopped giving the answers altogether. Why did we do this?
There are a few reasons why we have withheld the answers, but we decided that this question about the moral dilemmas is actually a meta-moral dilemma itself. We have therefore decided to present both sides of the dilemma about whether we should share the answers. We will then ask this question to Rav Tzvi Berkowitz and follow his decision.

Reasons not to give the answers:

- The purpose of the Mitzva Dilemma is to generate engaged discussion at the Shabbos table. Its purpose isn't simply to share a question and answer. When the answer is not given right away it encourages people to think about the Torah issue for themselves and debate and discuss it among themselves.
- Furthermore, aside from creating discussion and encouraging people to think about the answer for themselves, it can motivate people to delve

DON'T BE OLD AND SLEEPY

For the past three weeks we were focused on the loss of our Temple and of our Land. For over two thousand years we have wandered through the desert of nations throughout the globe as homeless beggars. We would spend a century or two sometimes three or four in one land and move on to the next. Every year we sit on the floor on the eve of Tisha b'Av and mourn this loss, because we know that it is only a temporary loss. We know that HaShem will take us home once again. But the question that begs to be answered is "What are we to do? How do we get it back? How do we renew our relationship with HaShem to the position that it used to be?"

How fortunate we are to be given the Parsha of V'eschanan the Shabbos following Tisha b'Av! In this Parsha we are told who the culprit for this exile is and how we fell into it. With some insight perhaps we can beat back the culprit to renew our relationship, bring HaShem back into our lives and ultimately return to our Land and Temple.

Moshe, on the cusp of sending his people into the Land of Israel gives them words of caution. "*When you shall have children and children's children and you shall become **old** in the Land and will practice depravity … you will be lost, quickly lost, away from the Land… and HaShem will scatter you among the nations and you will remain few in number…*"

There are two words in Hebrew which can be translated as old, yoshon and zaken. The former is used as the opposite of new and fresh, so that yoshon means old and worn, sleepy and tired, no longer fresh. The latter, on the other hand, is used as the opposite of young and inexperienced. So that zaken is to be understood as old with wisdom and experience. The word Moshe uses to describe the attitude of the later generations who will have been born in the Land is yoshon. The culprit of our demise will be that we have become yoshon, old and tired, sleepy and bored of

more deeply into the topic for themselves. They can look up the question in the source given, or they can do further research into other sources. They can also take the question to their rav for his direction. This can be a good opportunity to build a deeper relationship with their rav.

· Three, many of these questions are very complicated with multiple interpretations. In many cases there is not one answer. Different poskim have very different ways of resolving the shaila. Only sharing Rav Zilberstein's approach may be misinterpreted as the final word on the topic. There are other ways to approach the given question which may yield a different answer.

· Four, these are all complicated questions that sometimes involve severe, and even life and death, issues. We want to make sure that people do not use this format as a tool for practical halacha. By not giving the answers we make it more likely that people will speak to a competent Torah authority should a similar question arise. It would be reckless to rely on the answer found in a weekly newsletter to address this question.

Reasons to give the answers:

· On the other hand, there are compelling reasons why it is important to give the answers. First, it is important to understand the Torah approach to resolving these questions.

· Second, people often feel like they are "left hanging" without any way to satisfy their interest and resolve their Shabbos table discussion

· Third, we have found that the opposite can also be true. Some people may not share the question at their table if they know there is no answer given.

We therefore brought this question to Rav Tzvi Berkowitz to decide.

THIS IS WHAT HE ANSWERED:

In general, it is always a problem when "psakim" are posted in such a manner ... because they don't have havchana [ie. often small variables in a case will lead to a completely different answer.]

It is fine to present the questions and to present as the answer what are the different issues that the halacha would look at without a final psak.

You would have to play with the answer to careful write it without it being authoritative and final. You may have to use words like "this case **may be comparable** to such and such a case" and leave the reader wondering whether it really is. The point of the whole thing is to show that the Torah way of looking at things is not necessarily the way that the "man on the street" looks at it.

MITZVA MEME

our existence in the Land.

Moshe is cautioning his people that there will come in point in time in the future after we will be in the Land for many years when we will no longer appreciate the charm of the Land and the value that we have as dwellers of the Land. Our focus will no longer be on the closeness to HaShem that we have achieved through living in His Land. Consequently, HaShem will send us out and disperse us throughout the desert of nations. And we will find no respite from our weary traveling. Like a hunted bird we will fly from one rooftop to the next waiting for the next stone to be hurled at us. We will be all alone with no one else to share in our misery.

Our eyes will constantly look heavenward with hope that our dear Friend with Whom we were so close will protect us from this loneliness. In this constant flight we turn our faces longingly three times daily towards that Land, the Land which symbolizes our closeness to Him even when it lies in desolation.

Moshe tells his people that this picture will continue till the end of days at which time " *When you are in distress and all these things have befallen you, at the end of days, you will return unto HaShem, He will not abandon you and He will not forget the covenant of your forefathers…"*

Moshe expresses his confidence that although our lonely flight will endure throughout history, nevertheless, it will finally come to an end after all these things have befallen us and we will return to Him.

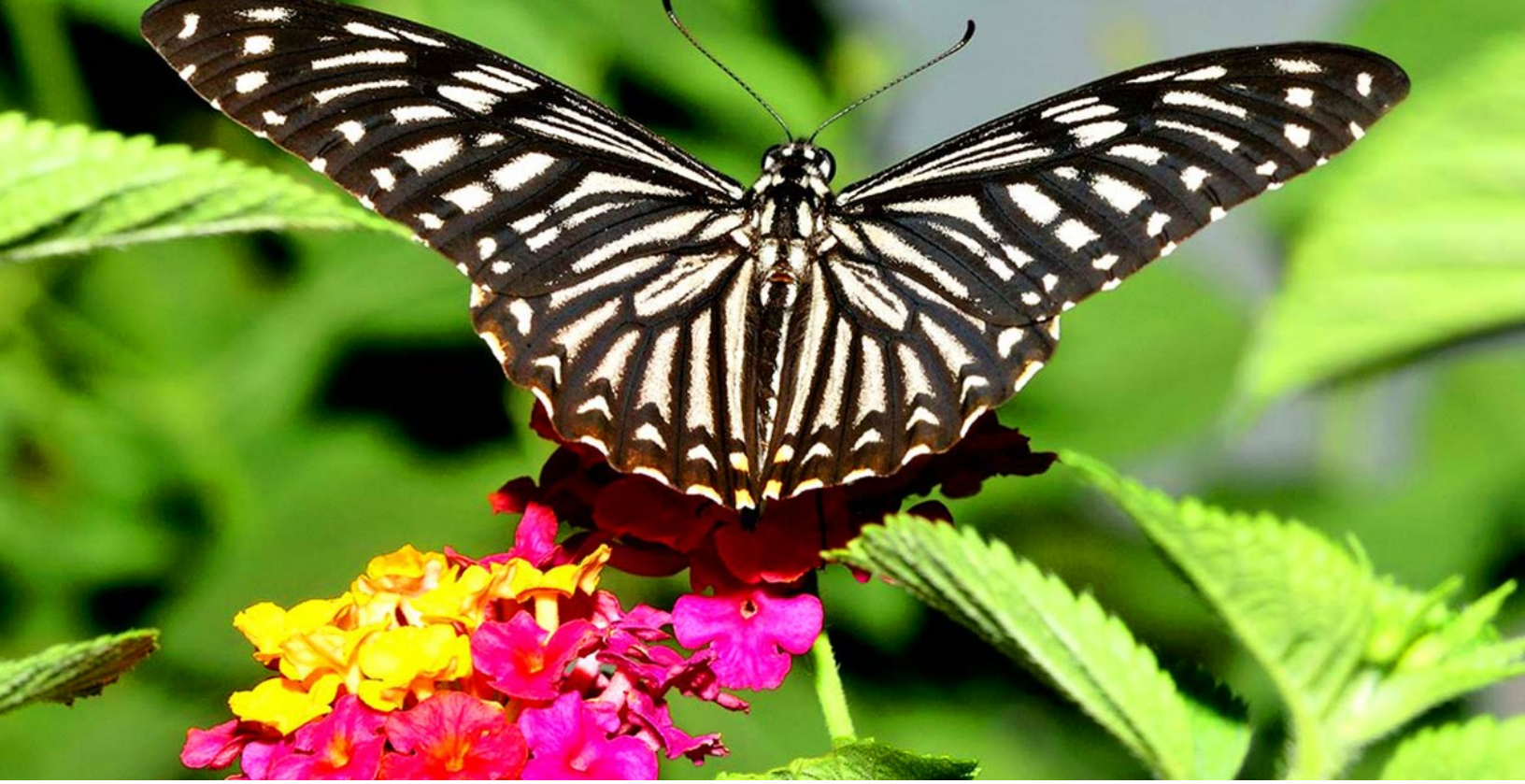
If the culprit of our exile is our becoming old and tired, sleepy and bored how can Moshe be confident that we will return to our original enthusiasm? From where will that fresh renewal come? Perhaps Moshe understood that all those years of yearning for closeness and turning our faces heavenward will condition us to always keep our focus on HaKadosh baruch Hu.

So what are we to do? How to do we get back? We must continue our constant imploring and davening to HaKadosh baruch Hu. With every difficulty that comes our way we must use it as an opportunity to draw ourselves close to Him. With every assault against our brothers and sisters in our Land we must beseech Him to please bring us to the end this long exile.

May we see the day that every heart will be filled with the joy of recognizing how dear it is to be close to HaShem.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE COMMON MIME

The common mime is a butterfly that lives on the island of Sri Lanka, off the coast of India. Consider this interesting life history that required a lot of brilliant planning to originate. We find here five mimic stages in its life:

The golden egg is laid on the tender young shoots of a plant that is a similar color to the eggs.

The young larva, until it is half grown, is colored brown and yellow, with smeary-looking cream-colored marks with a wet-looking gloss. Always sitting on the upper leaves feeding, it looks just like a bird dropping.

During the second half of its larva stage, it is too big for that ruse, so it changes color to a gaudy black, yellow and red. Creatures with that color in Sri Lanka are often dangerous or poisonous.

Then the caterpillar changes into a pupa. It looks just like a short, snipped-off dead twig. Now it hangs outward from the plant stem. The base of the pupa appears to grow out of the stem it is fastened to, and the upper end looks like a broken-off twig end.

Emerging as an adult butterfly, it next takes one of two distinct and very different appearances both for males and females.

(5a) One type is brown with mottled yellow, just like the Eupioea butterfly, which is distasteful to birds.

(5b) The other type is striped black and blue like the Danais butterfly, which also has an unpleasant taste.

Normally, both types will fly in the slow, graceful way the butterfly they are imitating flies. When frightened, however, both types reveal their "true colors" and fly like a Mime butterfly.

HOLY BABY NAMING

The two oldest children of Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv received names from Rav Elyashiv's side of the family: The oldest son, was named after Rav Elyashiv's grandfather, the Leshem, and their second child, Batsheva Esther, was named after Rav Elyashiv's grandmother, the Leshem's wife.

One of the Elyashiv's neighbors on Rechov Chanan, an elderly widow named Sarah Rochel Goldman, never had children.One day, Mrs. Goldman dejectedly said to Rebbetzin Elyashiv, "Shayna Chaya, when I pass on from this world, what will I leave behind? I will never have anyone named after me, as I have no children. There will be no remembrance of me at all."

Rebbetzin Shayna Chaya was under 30 years old and expecting her third child at that time. Her empathy for her septuagenarian neighbor was so deep that she went home crying. She and Rav Elyashiv decided that if this child was a daughter, they would name her Sarah Rochel. Although according to Ashkenazi custom a baby is not named after a living person, Rav Elyashiv felt that in this particular case, the chesed of raising the spirits of the lonely widow took precedence over the custom. A short while later the baby was born - it was a girl. Mrs. Goldman was elated to learn that the Elyashivs had named their newborn daughter in her honor.

The baby brought new life to the older woman. Before every Yom Tov, she would visit and bring candy for her young namesake, along with apologies that she was unable to afford more expensive gifts.

One day, when Sarah Rochel Elyashiv was about 10 years old, she and her sister Batsheva met Mrs. Goldman, who was already past 80. Mrs. Goldman asked the two girls to stand next to each other, and she observed that Sarah Rochel was slightly taller than her sister, who was a year and a half older. The old lady quipped, "I assume that Sarah Rochel is taller because she has one virtue that Batsheva doesn't have: she was named after me!" Mrs. Goldman passed away about two years later, right before the bas mitzvah of her namesake. Rebbetzin Sarah Rachel (Elyashiv) Yisraelson once asked her father if he had had any reservations about having named her after Mrs. Goldman. After all, the woman was still alive when she was named in her honor, and Mrs. Goldman had had a very difficult life and was not blessed with children. Rav Elyashiv told his daughter, "If one does chesed, no harm will befall them!"

From Rav Elyashiv, Yehuda and Malky Heimowitz, Artscroll Mesorah, p. 109.

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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