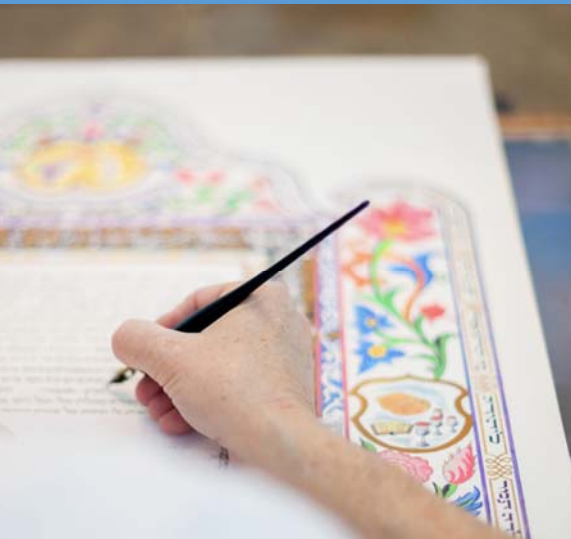


A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



ISABEL'S KESUBA

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week is Shabbos Chol Hamed Succos. The Sfas Emes writes that the succah is like a chuppah where we unite with Hashem. This leads us to an interesting question about a chuppah.

There was once a young Israeli woman named Isabel. Her official Hebrew name given at her birth was Izevel. Eventually Isabel became a Torah observant woman and was engaged to be married to a wonderful young man.



KEEPING CLOSE

The holidays of our calendar are more than days of commemoration, they are periods when we, as a people, and as individuals experience spiritual growth. The more we appreciate what the holidays express the more we can grow. If Shmini Atzeres and Simchas Torah are the conclusion of this period of holidays starting with Rosh Hashanah followed by Yom Kippur and continuing into Succos there must be some great opportunity of spiritual growth.

It appears random that after all these holidays we celebrate Simchas Torah and do not celebrate it on Shavuot when we actually received the Torah.

In explaining the difference between the fire offerings brought on the Altar and the water libations brought on the Altar, the Baal Hatanya highlights the difference between fire and water. Fire's natural state is alive, passionate and consuming while water's natural state is calm and quiet. He explains that Man's soul, whose source is the breath of HaShem, yearns to attach herself to HaShem. The one who is sensitive to his soul's needs will be driven by a fiery passion to attach to HaShem. The parallel would be the passion of a child who realizes how far away she is from her father. When she sees her father in the distance she becomes filled with passion that drives her to run as fast as she can until Papa will pick her up into his arms.

The fire of the Altar which expressed the heat of that passion burnt the offering, transforming it from physical meat to a "pleasing smell" offering before HaShem. It had the ability to attach the material world to the higher plane.

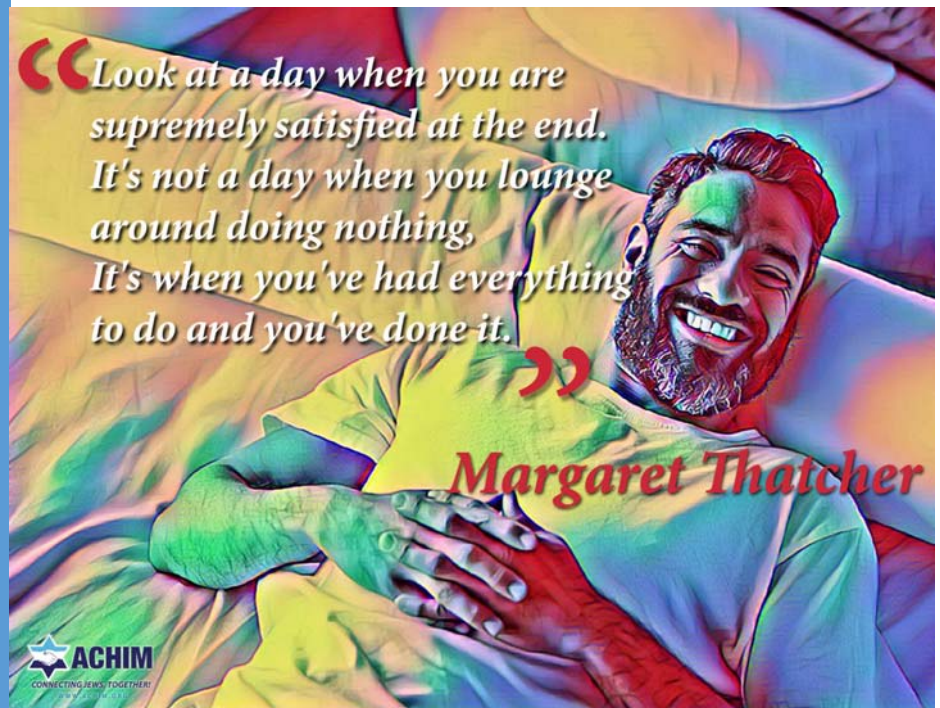
At the wedding, as the Mesader Kidushin was writing the kesuba, Isabel realized that the mesader kidushin would write her Hebrew name Izevel. Now that Isabel was more knowledgeable, she was embarrassed to be named after Izevel, the wife of King Achav, a wicked, evil queen who killed and persecuted prophets.

As the Mesader Kidushin was filling in the kesubah, she said to him, "Please can you change my Hebrew name to something else, and write it in the kesubah?"

The Mesader Kidushin was caught in a bind. What should he do? Should he write a name that the bride was embarrassed about? Or did he have the ability to give her a new Hebrew name on the spot?

What do you think?

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Let us return to the child running into Papa's arms. Once Papa scoops her up she is overcome with intense bliss; she is now in her father's arms, totally connected. She can't get closer.

The water libation expressed that calm bliss that we are now in Papa's arms. He is holding us tight and has brought us into His succah providing us Divine protection.

What does this small child do after she has achieved her father's embrace? This bliss cannot remain static. We are dynamic creatures, we do not remain in one state. This little child will then engage her father in conversation. She will tell him her stories and ask him her questions. Perhaps she will play a game with him and bounce on his lap. The purpose of all these activities is to be close to Papa. The activity itself is merely a means to be attached.

After we have brought our fire offerings and after HaShem scooped us up into His succah what do we do next? How do we retain that closeness? How do we continue developing that attachment?

Dovid Hamelech writes in Tehillim "If I did not have Your Torah as my plaything I would have perished in my affliction". Dovid is telling us that through all of his life's challenges he would have perished if he did not have HaShem's Torah as his plaything. He is not suggesting that Torah serves as a plaything to distract him from his difficulties. Dovid is teaching us that through HaShem's Torah he was able to maintain and develop his attachment to the Ribono Shel Olom. Just as this little child holds on to Papa through talking to him and playing with him, so too, Dovid is able to overcome all of his challenges by engaging in Torah study and keeping himself attached to Papa.

Perhaps, Shmini Atzeres / Simchas Torah in which we celebrate the Torah as our plaything, follows the fire offerings and water libations of Succos to keep our hold on Papa and carry on our attachment through the long winter months close to Papa.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shmini Atzeres and Simchas Torah.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

BAMBOO AND SCHACH

This succos, as many of us sit in the sukkah, we will likely be sitting under schach made of bamboo. Bamboo is such a convenient material for schach because it is light, durable and long lasting. Let's learn about some fascinating details of this amazing plant that HaShem gave to us.

Bamboo is the fastest growing plant on the planet. Some types can grow 3 feet in 24 hours, almost 1 inch every 40 minutes! One bamboo species, the *Dendrocalamus sinicus*, grows to be taller than 120 feet high.

Although bamboo is called a tree, technically bamboos are not trees but one of the largest forms of grass. When we think of Bamboo we usually think of a specific species. But in truth there are more than 1700 different species of bamboo.

Many trees take 10-20 years to reach maturity, but bamboo reaches maturity after only 3 to 5 years, making it a great replacement for other trees. Bamboo can survive more than 120 years in the wild.

Because it has a very high tensile strength it is also one of the strongest building materials and it is comparable with steel. Also, bamboo has an impermeable protective layer on the outside which protects it from rotting due to water, which is a major problem for almost all organic material.

Bamboo can tolerate much more extreme conditions than most plants. An extraordinary example of bamboo's resilience is the fact that it was the only plant to survive the radiation of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima, Japan in 1945. The incinerating heat destroyed all trees and other plant life, except for one bamboo grove. The grove has since been removed, but culms from the grove are preserved in a museum in Hiroshima.

Bamboos flower but it happens very infrequently. It is every 60 to 130 years depending on the species! The long flowering intervals are largely a mystery. The bamboo puts all of its energy into flowering, and then dies. A particular species will flower and die at the same time worldwide, regardless of the geographic location. This means that the same plant in North America will flower

and die at roughly the same time as the same plant in Asia!

Bamboo is very good for the environment because it greatly decreases the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and cleans the air. This is because it releases 30% more oxygen into the atmosphere and absorbs more carbon dioxide than an equivalent stand of trees. It also prevents soil erosion because it has a wide and strong root system which keeps the soil stable.

Bamboo does not need fertilizer to grow well. Discarded bamboo leaves provide all the needed nutrients when they start to decompose.

Bamboos are evergreen perennial flowering plants. Most, but not all bamboo species, are native to warm and moist tropical or temperate climates. All continents except for Antarctica and Europe have bamboo.

Bamboo is extremely versatile. It can be eaten, and is often used in Asian cuisine, either as salad or soup. However, despite all their benefits, young bamboo shoots contain a poisonous toxin. They need to be cooked at high temperatures to kill the toxin before eating.

Pandas eat bamboo exclusively. Because it is high in fiber but has a low concentration of nutrients, pandas have to eat 20 to 40 pounds of it every single day. Gorillas and lemurs also eat bamboo as part of their diet. It is sometimes used as livestock feed as well.

Bamboo is widely used in the construction industry. Floors, furniture, walls, skateboards, bicycle frames and helmets are all things that are sometimes made of bamboo. Fibers for clothing and bed sheets can also be made from bamboo.

Bamboo is a funny word. What is its etymology? Some claim that the origin of the word Bamboo comes from a Malayan word "Bambu", that resembles the sound it makes when bamboo explodes in open fire. When bamboo is heated, the air in the sealed hollow internode chambers will expand and cause an explosive bam-boom sound.

HE WAS UNABLE TO SWALLOW & HAD TO FORCE HIMSELF TO EAT

A chassid who was destitute begged his Rebbe to bless him to become prosperous. The Rebbe said, "I will bless you, but first you must carry out what I instruct you. Then you may return for the blessing."

The Rebbe gave the chassid some money. "You are to buy the finest delicacies. You must eat them in the presence of your family, but you may not allow your children to partake of them. Then come to me for the desired blessing." The chassid did as instructed. When he set the delicacies on the table, the children were full of glee. They had little to eat that day. However, as the Rebbe had instructed, the father could not share the food with them. When the father began eating and saw the distress of his hungry children who craved the food, he was unable to swallow. He had to force himself to eat, and virtually choked with each bite.

When he returned, the Rebbe said, "I will bless you with wealth. But as you prosper, remember that you will be enjoying your wealth while others are destitute. What kind of pleasure can you have from your wealth? It will be like eating delicacies in the presence of your hungry children."

The man indeed became wealthy and gave lavishly to charity. He never ate at home. He would take his food to the soup kitchen and share it with the poor. He always remembered how he had felt when he had eaten while others were hungry.

R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev said this explains what the Torah means when it writes, And HaShem blessed Avraham with **all**" (Genesis 24:1). "This means that HaShem blessed not only Avraham but all those about him as well. If Avraham alone had prospered while those about him did not, Avraham would not have felt this to be a blessing." "Our Patriarch Abraham would not have considered his wealth to be a blessing if others did not prosper. True happiness must be unselfish."

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about sleeping in the Succah, Rav Zilberstein wrote that it would be better for the father to sleep alone and not sleep in a way that is uncomfortable.

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