



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



CAR REPO

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

The Ten Commandments were divided into two luchos. The one on the right contained the mitzvos between Man and Hashem, and the ones on the left were the mitzvos between man and man. Our Sages teach that both tablets were of equal weight, to show that the mitzvos that govern how we relate to other people are just as important as the mitzvos that govern how we relate to Hashem.

This leads us to the following true story.

Avi had a neighbor, Shimon, whom he noticed didn't have a car. One day, Avi said to his friend Shimon, "I've noticed you don't have a car. I just got an extra one for work, and I don't need my private car. If you want to use my car, I can rent it to you for a small fee of \$50 a month."



LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

Taken from Pachad Yitzchak Shavous maamar 20

The Jewish people are defined as the people who have a unique relationship with HaShem through their acceptance of His Torah upon themselves. Using this definition we can argue that even Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov and his 12 sons were not Jews since they were not yet given the Torah. For that matter our ancestors who left Egypt were not yet Jews until they arrived at Mount Sinai and accepted upon themselves the yoke of Torah. This means that the holiday of Shavuos is not merely the time when we received the Torah. It is the time when our entire nation underwent a mass conversion - we finally became Jews. In fact, the laws governing giur are learned from what took place at Mount Sinai, since that is the prototype of all conversions.

This brings us to the following question. The Talmud teaches us that HaShem lifted the mountain above us telling us that if we refuse to accept the Torah we will be buried there. This is absolute coercion. The principle in giur is that a coercive giur is invalid. How then did our ancestors achieve a proper giur if they were coerced?

The Maharal answers that although coercive giur is invalid, the coercive giur at Sinai was acceptable. How are we to understand the distinction?

There is a principle that once a non-Jew converts to Judaism he is considered a newborn person from that moment on. The implication of this principle is that he is no longer related to his parents and family members. Although they gave birth to him nevertheless, with his giur he is considered reborn having no parents at all.

The Maharal therefore asks if we consider our acceptance of Torah at Sinai as a conversion we lose our relationship with our biological parents. In last week's Parsha, the Torah identifies the Jewish people as being organized by patrilineal descent. If the en-

Shimon was thrilled with the offer. He was very grateful and used the car for a while.

Everything went smoothly until, after several months, Shimon looked out at the parking lot at work one day and saw that the car was gone. He called the police, and they checked the license plate number, telling him that the car hadn't been stolen - it was actually repossessed due to lack of payments. Shimon was greatly distressed by this for two reasons. First, the loss of the car, but more importantly, he had left an envelope containing \$10,000 cash in the car. He never would have done so had he known that there was a risk of repossession.

Shimon confronted Avi, asking him why he hadn't mentioned that the car was being foreclosed. "I never would have left the money in the car if I knew about the foreclosure. I'd like you to please pay me the money", Shimon said.

But Avi replied, "Yes, I knew it was being foreclosed. But I never told you to leave money there. Furthermore, I didn't think they would take the money, I assumed they would simply take the car."

"What do you think? Does Avi have to pay the money to his friend, Shimon? On one hand, he should have told him that there was a foreclosure on the car. On the other hand, Shimon made the choice to leave a large sum of money in the car without informing Avi or seeking his advice. Should Avi be held responsible for Shimon's decision and its unfortunate outcome?"

See Upiryo Matok Shemos 272



“ *The Seal of Hashem is the Torah.
One can rise to a level where that seal is so much a part of
one, that it leaves an impression on others too.* ”



-Sfas Emes

tire nation underwent giur then there is no descent whatsoever. We have all been reborn at once!?

The Maharal explains as follows. The principle equating a convert to being reborn applies only when the conversion was done willingly. However, the Sinai giur which was coercive does not terminate relationships. The question is why is that the case?

Hence, we have two questions. Why is the Sinai giur valid under duress and why does that giur not terminate relationships?

Rav Hutner explains as follows. When a person becomes obligated to bring a chatas, a specific offering, he must do so willingly. If the offering is brought against his will it is invalid. However, if the fellow refuses to bring the offering, the court beats him over and over again until he agrees. Even though he only agreed under duress and would never have agreed if not beaten, nevertheless, once he states that "I agree to bring it" it is now reckoned as being brought willingly. Why?

The Rambam explains the reason is because at the core, every Jew wants to do the right thing. Sometimes he has an urge to reject his responsibility and therefore refuses. However, once he is beaten and the urge to refuse goes away, albeit because of the pain, his agreement is considered genuine because that is truly what he wants to do.

From where does the Jew have this innate sense of doing the right thing? We get it from our ancestors, from Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. They embedded deep inside their genes an absolute proclivity to follow in HaShem's path. Every one of their descendants wishes to follow in the path HaShem leads him.

The reason our coercive giur at Sinai was valid was because we descended from Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov who bequeathed to us that innate desire to do what's right. It is for this very reason that this giur solidified our relationship to our ancestors rather than severing it.

Behold! The Sinai giur was built upon our ancestry and through it we became the nation of Abraham Yitzchok and Yaakov.

Have a beautiful Yom Tov.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE LESSER BLIND MOLE-RAT

The picture above depicts a long, cylindrical animal with a nose, but no visible eyes or ears. The truth is, it has eyes and ears, but they're under its skin and fur. Is this real? Yes, it is. Please meet the fascinating lesser blind mole-rat.

The lesser blind mole-rat is a species of rodent found in Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Turkey, and Ukraine. Their bodies are furred, cylindrical, and streamlined with short limbs and protruding incisor teeth. Blind mole-rats appear eyeless and earless, as these structures are covered by fur and are therefore not visible. Like the eyes and ears, the animal's minute stub of a tail is not externally visible. Blind mole-rats are medium-sized, weighing 3.5 ounces to 1.3 pounds and about 5 to 13.8 inches long. But despite appearances, blind mole-rats are not, in fact, completely blind as they do possess simple eyes 1mm in diameter located under a layer of skin and fur. These eyes serve a different purpose than typical eyes. The eyes under their fur act effectively as light meters, only sensing the level of available light. Thermoregulation, reproduction, and hibernation – all of these important behaviors in mammals require them to recognize light changes in the course of the day. Therefore, the small eyes of blind mole-rats have a significant function to help them understand the conditions around them. New research confirms they are even color-sensitive.

Unlike many other fossorial rodents, blind mole-rats do not have enlarged front claws and do not use their forearms as a primary digging tool. Instead digging is almost exclusively conducted using their powerful front teeth, which are separated from the rest of the mouth by a flap of skin. When a blind mole-rat closes its mouth, its incisors are still on the outside. The mode of excavation of these creatures has been described as "chisel-tooth digging," using their lower incisors for burrowing and the lower jaw as a shovel. They have been known to dig and live over 5 feet underground. Their burrows have been recorded to extend laterally for over 35,800 square feet.

The tunnels they dig show great thought and planning. They can be seen as architects of the underground world! They build intricate burrow systems with two levels of passageways. The uppermost level is for foraging, where the rodent searches for food. Its diet primarily consists of roots, tubers, and bulbs, but occasionally the animal emerges at night to forage for seeds and green plant parts. The second, deeper level of tunnels comprises their living quarters. The top-level passageways run about 8-10 inches below the soil surface and can stretch for a long way. The lesser blind mole-rats also occasionally integrate a few above-ground resting

mounds into the burrow systems that connect to their foraging tunnels. Their deeper residential passageways also include nest chambers, which are 8-11 inches, which they cushion with plant material for bedding. There are also multiple chambers for food storage and excretion. Because of their great digging skills, Israeli archaeologists are of the opinion that the lesser blind mole-rats can be competent team members to help them with excavating historical sites. This is because the mole-rats are great diggers and can dig up dirt almost ten times their weight. In doing so, they often dig out objects of historical interest from under the earth. Therefore, by systematically studying dirt from the mole-rats, the archaeologists get a pretty accurate idea about the areas they should concentrate on while carrying out their excavations. This strategy can save them days of survey work. The idea is simple: follow the dirt, check out where objects of interest have been dug up, and get a much better idea of where to focus their efforts.

The blind mole rats have incredibly unusual resilience features. Lack of air is not a problem for blind mole-rats, as they can survive in extremely low oxygen conditions. They can survive up to five hours in as low as 3% O₂ levels. When oxygen levels get really low, the mole-rats usually laze around in a metabolic trance-like state, and their heartbeats drop. But when the oxygen levels are restored, they recover completely and continue with their business. Scientists think that the mole-rat species survive without oxygen by figuratively turning themselves into plants. They do what the plants do. Other mammals, including us, break down sugar glucose to generate energy, but that process requires oxygen. Without it, brain cells start dying! But the mole-rats have a high level of fructose and sucrose in their bodies, as well as GLUT5, a molecule that can transport fructose into their cells. Like plants, the mole-rats use this fructose as fuel, instead of oxygen, in order to survive without oxygen.

A study about life expectancy highlighted the blind mole rat's incredible longevity, and cancer resistance. Blind mole-rats do not get cancer. Why not? Scientists have discovered that blind mole rats cells kill the cancer themselves with a poisonous protein when they multiply quickly. They can live up to 20 years, which is at least 10 times as long as a similar-sized mouse. Their resistance to cancer can explain this longevity to some extent. In fact, a study also found that all blind mole-rats have the ability to tolerate very high doses of chemotherapy drugs with minimal effects. Scientists are hopeful that if they can find out more about how exactly the blind mole-rats achieve this resistance, it may be possible to develop a cancer treatment for humans that can exploit the positive and beneficial aspects without generating any harmful effects.

HOW OLD DO YOU THINK THE PERSON IN THE PICTURE IS?

During Rabbi Avigdor Miller's early years in his shul, before his full schedule of shiurim, he was once talking to two close talmidim and told them with great excitement, "I am going on a vacation."

From the gleam in his eye, they were sure that he was traveling to a resort for the first time, and they were truly happy for him.

But he then explained his itinerary: "My family is going up to the country while I will stay behind. I will close the shades, take the phone off the hook, spread out the sefarim all over the dining room table, and learn ten hours straight. That's a vacation!"

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Shimon, who learned in kollel, was trying to help Yoram, an irreligious Israeli, tackle his questions about Judaism. After many months, Yoram was convinced intellectually that Judaism was true but was still reluctant to make the commitment to become fully observant.

Finally, Yoram asked, "Are religious Jews really happy?"

Thinking about how best to respond, Shimon's eye fell on a picture he had in a drawer. He took it out and asked the man, "How old do you think the person in the picture is?" Yoram looked at the picture and guessed that the man was about 55.

"And what if I told you he was close to 90?" Shimon said. Yoram couldn't believe it. Shimon explained to him that the happiness of the man in the picture kept him fresh and young-looking.

"Who is that, what is his name?" Yoram asked.

"Rabbi Avigdor Miller," Shimon replied.

This incident made a deep impression on Yoram, and he decided to become observant and began sending his children to yeshiva.

(From Rav Avigdor Miller, His Life and His Revolution, By Yaakov Y. Hamburger, Published By Judaica Press, Reprinted With Permission From The Copyright Holders)



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the flood in the office, Rav Tzvi Berkowitz answered that the owner should give a refund for the time it was flooded. To emphasize the point Rav Tzvi said: "What is he paying rent for? If the building burnt down he should also pay rent?"

L'aliyas neshamos for our parents Yecheskal & Rosa Roth
Yechezkal ben Yaakov HaLevi whose yahrzeit is on 3 Sivan
Miriam Rochel bas Yaakov whose yahrzeit is on 14 Sivan
by their children Idie & Isser Goldsmith.

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