1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

This Week's Riddle: My first word is in Egyptian (Arabic) and not in לשון קדש and yet I have fourteen commandments to observe. What am I?

Answer is on the back

SHAVUOS – HOW TO CELEBRATE

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Gemara (Pesachim 68b) cites a dispute between Rebbi Eliezer and Rebbi Yehoshua on how to celebrate Yom Tov. Rebbi Eliezer maintains that preferably the day should be "kulo lashem" – entirely for Hashem. As much as possible the day should be spent learning and davening. Rebbi Yehoshua's opinion is to divide the day: chatzi lashem – half for Hashem in spiritual pursuits, and chatzi lachem – half for you by enjoying the day physically with food and drink. The halacha follows the opinion of Rebbi Yehoshua.

The Gemara goes on to assert that all agree – even Rebbi Eliezer – that on Shavuos we must also celebrate the part of "lachem" since it is the day on which the Torah was given to us. The obvious question is that if Shavuos commemorates such a sublime event as Matan Torah, why should it be celebrated with food and drink? The Meforshim offer numerous answers to this question.

A very profound and poignant approach is put forth by the Bais Halevi. The Gemara (Shabbos 88b) states that when Moshe Rabbeinu ascended to the heavens to receive the Torah, the angels protested: "What is a mere mortal doing here among us?" Moshe responded that he had come to receive the Torah. The angels were astonished and asked Hashem, "Are you going to give this hidden treasure to people of flesh and blood? 'What is frail Man that You should remember him…Place Your glory (the Torah) in the heavens.'" Hashem charged Moshe with the task of answering the angels. Moshe told them that the Torah's Mitzvos are geared only to people who have earthly pursuits and physical desires. The Torah was designed specifically for those made of flesh and blood who work, eat and are faced with physical temptations.

It is for this very reason that especially on Shavuos we should have a lavish meal and engage in enjoyable activities. Only because of these very human functions were we, and not the angels, the recipients of the Torah. It is we, not they, who need the Torah. The mandate of Matan Torah was to guide us how to live our very physical lives according to the dictates of the Torah and thereby elevate the physical world and our very beings into the spiritual realm. Indeed, this mandate is described in the mission statement conveyed to Bnai Yisrael in Parshas Yisro. "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Shemos 19:6). As a kingdom of priests, our mission is to be Hashem's ambassadors to the other nations. As a holy nation we are charged with living as a society of mortals who have invested kedusha into all their physical affairs.

Rabbi Chaim Meir Braun (Toldos Chaim) takes the message of the Gemara regarding Shavuos a step further. There is a custom to eat a dairy meal on Shavuos, and according to some, the dairy foods and meat dishes are eaten at the same meal. This gives us the opportunity to demonstrate how, when eating, we follow the guidelines of the Shulchan Aruch down to the very last detail. The dairy food is eaten before the meat. After the dairy dishes we wash our hands and clean our palates before proceeding to eat the meat. This demonstrates beautifully how we are fulfilling our mission of integrating the Torah into every situation of our eating and drinking.

So eat, drink and celebrate because we have the Torah that teaches us how to do it religiously and spiritually.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

Please contact R' Ungar (Ymungar@gmail.com) with questions or comments

QUESTION: Over יום טוב we had flowers adorning our table. Are flowers in a vase מוקצה? Is there a difference between שבת and יום טוב? May we move the vase? May we touch the flowers? May we remove a bad rose from between the good roses?

ANSWER: Flowers that are not growing in dirt according to all opinions are not מוקצה on שבת or יום טוב. They have a use, which is to beautify your house or table and are therefore not מוקצה. Some hold that plants growing in dirt are מוקצה since they are actually attached to dirt and growing. Although one may not add water to cut flowers, and one may certainly not put cut flowers into water for the first time on שבת, they are not מוקצה and may be moved on שבת. As long as they are fully opened, they may be removed and reinserted into its vase. If one wants to remove a withered flower from within a bunch of flowers, that is an act of בורר and may not be done, since the bad is being taken from the good. A way that you may remove a bad flower from within the good ones, is to grasp the bad flower and then pull the bunch of good flowers away from the one bad one. This act would constitute taking the good from the bad, by hand, and for immediate use, which is permitted even on שבת and certainly יו"ט.

ע' בכל הפוסקים לענין פרחים ולענין בורר עי' סי' שי"ט.

THE BATHTUB

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

We know that we're supposed to love our fellow Jew and not bear grudges. But sadly, we're human beings, and sometimes people get on our nerves.

There were two Yidden living in Eretz Yisroel, Avi and Shlomo. They lived in the same apartment building, but they didn't have good chemistry. Shlomo would always park in Avi's parking spot, and Avi would always make noise that bothered Shlomo. They didn't get along, and they never really said nice things to each other. It was not right, but that's how it was.

One day, a bunch of plumbers came to the apartment building with a big, fancy bathtub. They asked Avi, "Can you tell us where the Schwartz family lives?"

Now, Avi should have pointed them to the actual Schwartz family. That would have been the right thing to do. But he had an idea. He thought, "Ah, here's a chance to play a nasty trick on the person who annoys me."

So he pointed the workers toward his enemy's apartment — Shlomo's. He assumed the apartment was open, since in Israel people often leave their apartments unlocked. He said, "It's over there, apartment D."

The workers went in. Nobody was home. They started taking apart the bathtub, uninstalling it, banging and smashing tiles, and doing all the work necessary to install this beautiful new bathtub.

In the middle of the job, Shlomo came home and said, "What is going on over here? What are you doing to my bathtub!?

They answered, "We were told to come to the Schwartz family."

Shlomo said, "This is not the Schwartz family. You have the wrong apartment. Who told you to come here?"

They described Avi, and Shlomo immediately realized what had happened. Avi had played a trick on him. So Shlomo told the workers, "Listen, you were sent here by someone who doesn't like me. He tried to play a trick on me. I'm not paying, because I never asked for this. Go to Avi — he directed you here. He should pay for it."

The workers finished the installation. The bathtub looked beautiful. The tiles were all brand new. It was definitely an upgrade. Then the workers went to Avi and said, "We heard this was all a trick. Shlomo never ordered this. We want you to pay."

Avi answered, "Me pay? What do you mean? I didn't benefit from it. He's the one with the fancy bathtub. Why should I have to pay? He's the one benefiting from the new whirlpool and jets."

The workers replied, "But he never ordered it and didn't want it. He was perfectly happy with his old bathtub. You benefited because you got the enjoyment of pulling off the prank. You should pay."

Avi responded, "I shouldn't pay. Shlomo should definitely pay. Maybe you yourselves should pay, because you went to the wrong apartment. You should have been more careful and gone to the actual Schwartz's. It's your responsibility."

Eventually, the question came to the desk of Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein: Was Avi required to pay for the bathtub installation? On the one hand, you could argue that he shouldn't have to pay because he never benefited from the bathtub itself and never used it. All he did was use words to direct the workers to Shlomo's apartment. On the other hand, you could argue that he intentionally directed the workers there in order to cause trouble and play a practical joke, and therefore he should be held responsible. What do you think? See Chashukei Chemed Bava Kama Page 612

Regarding last week's question about the political ad that got switched, Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein answered that in this case, where the car belonged to the campaign, the accident happened to the campaign owners and not to the driver. Therefore, the driver is entitled to be fully compensated for his time.

"YOU SAY YOU HAVE FEAR OF THEM, BUT THEY'RE EVEN MORE AFRAID OF YOU."

Last week we learned about the lion. Here is a related story that has a great lesson.

The Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Aharon Kotler, would also occasionally send Rabbi Yechiel Perr, (the brother of Rebbetzin Esther Tendler and later Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshiva of Far Rockaway,) to speak at fundraising events for the Lakewood Yeshiva. "Once," Rabbi Perr relates, "I told Rav Aharon that I have eimas d'tzibbura, fear of speaking in front of an audience.

So Rav Aharon told me the following story.

There was once a gentile who had a lion that he would show around, and people would pay to see it. One day, the lion died, so he hired a Yid to dress up like a lion, jump around in the cage, and make kolos.

One day, he was jumping around when the door to the cage opened, and in came a lion. The Yid took one look and cried out in fright, 'Shema Yisrael!' to which the newly arrived lion responded, 'Baruch Shem!'"

Rav Aharon laughed heartily at the vitz (joke) and said to me, "You say you have fear of them, but they're even more afraid of you."

When I spoke there, I told this very story and added, "I assume that you're afraid that I'll speak long. But don't worry, I'll speak briefly."

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ANSWER to the Weekly Riddle: The "Ten Commandments" (מצוות), in which there are

3- מצוות עשה Mitzvos Asei: אנכי ה' אלהיך, זכור/שמור את יום השבת, כבד את אביך

And 11- מצוות לא תעשה Mitzvos Lo Sa'asei:

לא יהיה לך, לא תעשה לך, לא תשתחווה להם, ולא תעבדם, לא תשא את שם, לא תעשה כל מלאכה, לא תרצח, לא תנאף, לא תגנב, לא תענה ברעך, לא תחמד בית

For a total of 14 Mitzvos (14 commandments)

The מדרש תנחומא פ' יתרו says* *אֲמַר ר' נְחֶמְיָה: מַהוּ אָנֹכִי? לָשׁוֹן מִצְרִי הוּא*

"I" in לשון קדש, is אני and in לָשׁוֹן מִצְרִי it is אָנֹכִי.

Hence the first word of the 14 commandments was in Egyptian and not לשון קדש

GOOD SHABBOS!