

The Sultan's Sword and the Cave of the Machpeila

Special thanks for the content to the Jewish Community of Hebron organization

Once, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire made his way to the Cave of the Machpelah in Hebron. Adorned in the traditional ruling garb, the Sultan's gold sword, studded with diamonds and precious stones hung at his side. The Sultan wondered from room to room, finally entering the huge hall named after Yitzhak *avinu*. The center of attraction there was the small circular hole in the floor. It lead down into the caves themselves. The Sultan leaned over the opening, peering down into it. As he did that, his precious sword fell from his side, down into the hole. Hearing the clang of metal hitting the ground, the Sultan realized that his sword is now in the caves underneath.

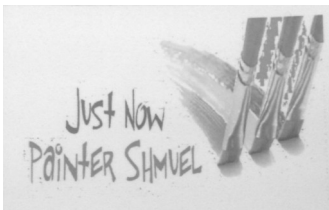
He immediately ordered an officer to lower a soldier through the hole into the caves below to retrieve his sword. Quick to respond to the Sultan's order, the officer selected a soldier nearby. Another soldier wrapped a rope around his waist and lowered the soldier underground. No sooner had they done so when, without a warning, piercing screams penetrated from inside the hole below. They quickly pulled up the soldier, but he was dead. The Sultan ordered that another soldier be lowered into the caves. So it was, but his fate was precisely as was of the first soldier. The Sultan continued to send soldiers into the caves until it became obvious that all who enter the caves do not exit alive. "Why not send down a Jew?" suggested one servant. The Sultan liked the idea, and the word went out to the Jewish citizens of Hebron. How could they send one of their own to his death? Rabbi Avraham Azulay, solved the dilemma. "I will enter the holy caves."

After praying and pleading before Hashem, Rabbi Avraham Azulay immersed himself in a *mikva* and dressed in white garments. He set forth to the Cave of the Machpelah. With a rope tied around his waist, Rabbi Azulay was lowered into the cave. When his feet hit the ground, Rabbi Azulay looked around him and found, standing by his side, three bearded men. "We are your fathers", they told him, "Avraham, Yitzhak and Ya'acov". Rabbi Azulay, was speechless. Finally, he said to them, "Why should I leave here and go back above. I am elderly, and here I have found my Avos. I desire only to stay here with you." The Avos insisted, "You must return the sword to the Sultan. If not, the entire Jewish community of Hebron will suffer." So the saintly Rav Azulay returned, bringing back the Sultan's sword.

Upon seeing their beloved Rabbi return alive, the Jews of Hebron declared the day a holiday. Rabbi Avraham Azulay spent the next week with his students, teaching them all he knew. Seven days after being lowered into the Cave of the Machpelah, Rabbi Avraham Azulay, returned his soul to his Maker, dying peacefully in his home. He was brought to rest in the ancient Jewish cemetery in Hebron, overlooking the Cave of Machpelah. ♦

Authors note: I was told that two direct descendants of R' Azulay live in Chicago.

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תשע"ד
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Halacha Challenge

A Havdala Candle Substitute

by Shlomo Epshteyn

reviewed by Rav Chaim Malinowitz



On motzei Shabbos, the Silverman family was busy getting everything ready for Havdala. They realized that one thing was missing - the Havdala candle. Last week, they used up the last bit of the old Havdala candle, and they forgot to buy a new one.

Rivky had an idea: "Let's light up two little Chanuka candles. I'll hold one candle in the right hand, and the other candle in the left hand. Before the bracha of "borei m'orei ho'eish", I'll connect the flames." Akiva objected: "Why bother? I'll just take two matches into one hand, press them together, and before the bracha I'll light them simultaneously. Isn't it a clever idea?!"

Question: Whose idea is better - Rivky's or Akiva's?

Answer: Rivky's idea is better.

Explanation: The Gemora in *masechet Pesachim* (103b) cites an opinion of Rava who teaches that to use a torch (*avuka*), as opposed to a candle, when performing Havdala is a *mitzvah min hamuvchar* (a preferred way to do the *mitzva*).

The Ran¹ explains the reason for Rava's teaching: A Mishna in Brachos (8:1) cites a disagreement between Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel regarding the *bracha* on the fire that we should make at Havdala. Beis Shamai holds that the ending of the *bracha* is "...*maor ha'eish* (a light of a fire)" – i.e. we give praise to Hashem for the light that is present in a fire. Beis Hillel maintains that the ending of the *bracha* is "...*m'orei ha'eish* (lights of a fire)" – i.e. we praise Hashem for the multiple lights that exist in a fire². Since we follow the opinion of Beis Hillel in this *halacha*, it's



This week's issue is dedicated

I'lui nishmat Nisan Ben AghaJaan

Halacha Challenge (cont.)

best to use an *avuka* by Havdala (as Rava taught), because in a fire of an *avuka* we can distinguish multiple lights. *

How big should the *avuka* be? The Beis Yosef cites a ruling from *sefer Aguda*, which states that even a double wick candle is considered to be an *avuka*³. The Rama brings this ruling of *sefer Aguda* as *halacha*⁴. We can then ask further - what type of "a double wick candle" is being referred to here? First of all, the *poskim* clarify that the flames of the two wicks need to be touching each other⁵. The Taz specifies further: Even though the flames of the wicks need to be touching each other, the wicks themselves need be separated from each other. In other words, a candle with just one thick wick (made up of multiple thin wicks) is not an *avuka*⁶. The Mishna Berura brings this ruling of the Taz as *halacha*⁷.

As such, we have learned that to achieve the effect where the multiple lights of a fire are visible, we need at least two wicks that are at a distance from each other, but whose flames join together. Hence, in our scenario, the two matches that would be held pressed together, would not constitute an *avuka*, since the condition for *mitzva min hamuvchar* of having the wicks separated from each other would be lacking here. ♦

[If all that's needed are two wicks separated from each other by a small distance, then why waste candles? Can't we just hold the two matches at a distance from each other, just like we can hold two candles? Stay tuned for the next issue of Menucha to find out.]

Further Thoughts: * What are the multiple lights of a flame? Rashi⁸ explains that Beis Hillel are referring to these three lights: red, white and blue. The Meiri explains that the red light is the flame that we see right at the coal (or at the match head, the wick, etc.); the blue light is right above the coal; and the white light is above the blue light (i.e. the main flame that has whitish-yellow color). Since the whole purpose for using the *avuka* by Havdala is to praise Hashem for the multiple lights of a fire, it makes sense to say that when we do Havdala, it's praiseworthy to actually look and recognize these three lights in our candle's flame¹⁰.

1. חידושי הר"ן פסחים קג: ד"ה אבוקה 2. ברכות נב: 3. ב"י א"ח סימן רחצ ד"ה ומצוה 4. רמ"א א"ח סימן רחצ סעיף ב 5. מג"א שם ס"ק ד, ט"ז שם ס"ק ב ופירוש לבושי שרד שם 6. ט"ז שם 7. מ"ב סימן רחצ ס"ק ח 8. רש"י ברכות נב: ד"ה הרבה מאורות 9. מאירי ברכות נב: משנה השישית 10. כן נ"ל

Wonders of Creation

Chimaeras

By Alex Isaacson

Chimaeras may be the oldest and most mysterious groups of fishes alive today. The Elephant shark chimaera may have one of the most curious faces in the animal kingdom (see image 1). They grow up to 5 feet in length and live on temperate ocean floors.

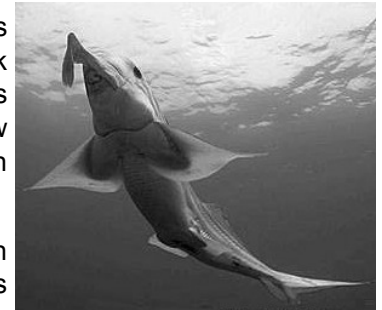


Image 1 - the Elephant Shark

Their massive eyes are able to locate shellfish buried under the sea floor. Some species, such as the long-nosed chimaeras (see image 2), have a greatly enlarged snout that provides extra room for electro-receptive pores, which they wave above the sea floor like a metal detector.

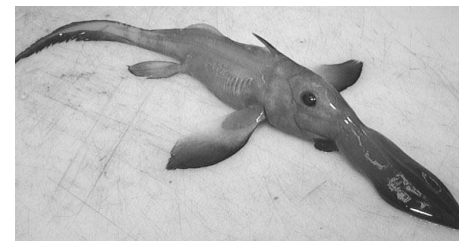


Image 2 - the Long-Nosed Chimaera

While their closest living relatives are sharks, they do differ from sharks in many ways. For one, their upper jaws are fused with their skulls and they lack sharks' many sharp and replaceable teeth. Instead of sharp teeth, their jaws are equipped with thick plates that can grind apart the shells of crabs and mussels that they root from the mud. ♦

Riddles

Riddle



Two look for one, but one does not look for two.

Yet, two don't stop for one, but one does stop for two.

Which *mitzva* is this referring to?

Answer to last issue's riddle:

(Riddle: Fanni the bride and Benni the groom Went to the moon for their honeymoon. Fanni is happy. Benni is sad. "I can't make that *bracha*! That indeed makes me mad." Which *bracha* Benni cannot make on the moon?)

ANSWER: Kiddush Levana. In order to make Kiddush Levana, the moon's light needs be noticeable on the ground (of planet Earth). [see Magen Avraham O.C. 426:1]

Kids Ask, Zeidy Answers



Zeidy, why does the Torah prohibit eating non-kosher animals - as we learned in this week's *parsha*?



One of the reasons is explained to us by *Sefer HaChinuch*: Non-kosher food is damaging to a human body! In order for the *neshama* to do its job properly in this world, its host—the body—needs to be healthy and strong. Hashem, as our loving Father and the best doctor in the world, made us stay away from damaging foods.