

Blank Notes

Special thanks to Revach L'Neshama for the story

Horav Chaim Brim, z'tl was once invited to speak at an event. The speaker who preceded R' Chaim at the event used notes that he referred to as he spoke. Rav Chaim was then called up to speak, and he also referred to his notes as he spoke. When he finished speaking and left the podium, he forgot to take his notes with him.

When the event was over, someone straightened up the room and he found the notes which R' Chaim Brim had left at the podium. To his puzzlement, he saw that the "notes" was a blank piece of paper. After a few minutes of thought, he realized what had occurred. Rav Chaim was known for his exquisite sensitivity to the feelings of others. When he had observed that the first speaker had referred to notes as he spoke, he had feared that he would embarrass him if he then spoke without notes. Therefore, he decided to refer to his "notes" as he spoke as well. ♦

A Lesson From Mishlei

“כִּן צְדָקָה לְחַיִּים...” - [משלי יא:ט]

כִּן is translated as “truth”. Who earns life for giving charity? The one who gives charity as “true charity”, without the pursuit of personal benefit.

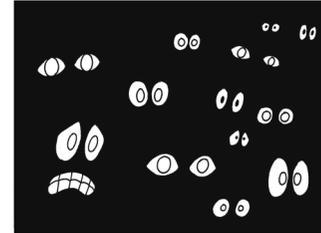
[see the commentaries of Rashi and Metzuda]

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Halacha Challenge



“...and there was *darkness*...” [Shemos 10:22]

Solving Darkness

by Shlomo Epshteyn, reviewed by Rav Chaim Malinowitz

On a Friday night, while the Silver family was singing zemiros, 2-year old Talia went around the room, exploring. She noticed an interesting object on the wall. She pulled over a chair, got on top of it and it didn't take long before the family stopped singing due to the surprise blackout in the dining room. "Talia! That was a light switch!" her brother Shimon screamed out. Now, the only light that illuminated the dining room was the soft, peaceful light coming from the Shabbos candles. Talia was happy that finally she did something right, which made everyone so excited! She wanted to keep up the good work, so she went to her father's beis medrash room and did the same thing there! "Oh, no,"- said the father - "after the meal, my chavrusa is coming over and we were going to learn in my beis medrash room! Now, it is completely dark there. Not even hallway or street lights are shining into that room." At that moment, Ms. Ziwwittu, knocked and was welcomed to walk in. She was the non-Jewish maid of Mrs. Cohen who lived next door. "I heard a lot of noise here. Is everything ok? Oh! And why are you guys sitting in a dim room?"

Question: Can the family hint to Ms. Ziwwittu to turn on the lights in the dining room and in the father's beis medrash room?

Answer: Dining room: Since even without the electric lights on, the family can still read and eat in the dining (i.e., because the room is slightly illuminated by the Shabbos candles), they can have Ms. Ziwwittu turn on the electric lights. They should say a general statement, such as "Indeed, it is difficult to eat it in a dim room." They may not hint to her that she is the one that should turn on the lights (see Explanation section for examples). The family may benefit from the electric light, turned on by Ms. Ziwwittu, as long as the Shabbos candles are burning. Beis medrash room: Since the room is completely dark, Ms. Ziwwittu should not be hinted in any way to turn on the lights there.



Dedication

This week's issue is dedicated by the Dimarsky family in memory of Sherry Dimarsky, on occasion of her 7th yearzeit.

EXPLANATION: In general, there are two prohibitions associated with *Amira L'akum*: "אמירה" - instructing / hinting a non-Jew to do a *melacha*¹, and "הנאה" - receiving benefit from the *melacha* that a non-Jew did on behalf of a Jew (i.e., even when a non-Jew performed the *melacha* without a Jew ever instructing / hinting him to do so).² Hence, if neither אמירה nor הנאה are being violated, then it is permitted to have a non-Jew perform a *melacha* on behalf of a Jew.

Like everything in the Torah, terminologies have their own specific definitions. We'll now learn about some things that do not fall under the definitions of אמירה and הנאה, and consequently, we'll be able to see how this can be applied to cases that are similar to ours.

Not included in the prohibition of אמירה is hinting using expressions of general statement.³ For example, if one needs the lights to be turned off in a bedroom, he may say to a non-Jew: "It is difficult for me to fall asleep with the lights on." However, it is not permitted to hint as an instruction - e.g., it is forbidden to say to a non-Jew: "Why didn't you turn off the lights for me last Friday?"⁴ or "The one who turns off the lights will not lose out!"⁵

What does not fall under the definition of הנאה with respect to *Amira L'akum*? The answer is a benefit that a person does not absolutely need to perform the desired task.⁶ For example, let's take the above case where a person wants the lights off in the bedroom. Though with difficulty, a person can eventually fall asleep even with the lights on, and thus, turning off the lights only makes it easier for him to fall asleep. But it is not a benefit that a person is absolutely required to have in order to fall asleep.

We can now apply this to our case. The family can avoid אמירה by hinting to Ms. Ziwwittu in way of a general statement without an instructional hint - e.g., "It is not pleasant to eat in a dim dining room." When Ms. Ziwwittu will turn on the lights in the dining room, the family may benefit from it, due to the fact that the dining room was already slightly illuminated by the Shabbos candles and thus, it was possible to eat and read even without the extra light that Ms. Ziwwittu will add.⁷ However, once the Shabbos candles will finish burning, it will no longer be permissible to benefit from the light that Ms. Ziwwittu turned on (unless, of course, the dining room was also illuminated by a light besides the one coming from the Shabbos candles - e.g., light from the street lamps, hallway light, etc.).⁸

On the other hand, the family should not hint to Ms. Ziwwittu to turn on the lights in the study room, because it would be prohibited to read by that light. The reason being that it is impossible to read in a completely dark room, and hence, Ms. Ziwwittu's *melacha* would enable the father and his chavrusa to do a task (i.e., reading) that they weren't able to do prior to the performance of that *melacha* (assuming, of course, that there was no light coming from the street, the hallway, etc.).⁹ It makes no difference, whether the reading is casual or for a *mitzva* purpose (i.e., Torah learning).¹⁰ ♦

1. רמ"א א"ה סימן שז סעיף כב 2. שו"ע שם סעיף כ, מ"ב שם ס"ק עב, ששכ"ה פרק ל סעיף א 3. מ"ב שם ס"ק עו, ששכ"ה שם סעיף ג 4. ששכ"ה שם סעיף ה 5. ששכ"ה שם סעיף ו 6. מ"ב שם ס"ק עו 7. ששכ"ה שם סעיף ז וסעיף עא 8. ששכ"ה שם 9. ששכ"ה שם, סעי' מד-מו 10. ששכ"ה שם, סעי' מה

Ring-Tailed Lemur

by Alex Isaacson



The Ring-Tailed Lemur is a large strepsirrhine primate and the most recognized lemur due to its long, black and white ringed tail. Like all lemurs it is endemic to the island of Madagascar. Known locally in Malagasy as Maky it inhabits gallery forests to spiny scrub in the southern regions of the island. It is omnivorous and the most terrestrial of lemurs. The animal is diurnal, being active exclusively in daylight hours.

The ring-tailed lemur is highly social, living in groups of up to 30 individuals. It is also female dominant, a trait common among lemurs. To keep warm and reaffirm social bonds, groups will huddle together. The ring-tailed lemur will also sunbathe, sitting upright facing its underside, with its thinner white fur towards the sun. Like other lemurs, this species relies strongly on its sense of smell and marks its territory with scent glands.

Hashem created this Lemur to be one of the most vocal of all primates. It uses numerous vocalizations including group cohesion and alarm calls. The Lemur's complex arrays of distinct vocalizations are used to alert group members to the presence of a predator. Also, experiments have shown that the ring-tailed lemur, despite the lack of a large brain (relative to other primates), can organize sequences, understand basic arithmetic operations and preferentially select tools based on functional qualities. ♦

Riddles

Riddle



Answer to the last issue's riddle

[Special thanks to Rina Epshteyn for this riddle.]

In this week's parsha, Bnei Yisroel are given the precious *mitzva* of eating the Matza.

What non-food *mitzva* is similar to the *mitzva* of eating the Matza - in that you first make a *bracha* and then you bring something to the mouth?

[Riddle: Rashi cites the words of Chazal which tell us that Pharaoh commanded his servants to throw even the Egyptian babies into the river. If so, how did Basya know for sure that she found a Jewish baby?]

ANSWER: The Torah says that when Basya found Moshe, she heard the voice of a youth crying. The *meforshim* explain, that she heard the cry of Aaron. Basya asked herself: "This baby will be raised in a royal house. What's there to cry about?!" Then she understood: "This baby must come from a Jewish home, and one of his brethren is crying for the fact that this baby will not be raised in a Jewish home."