

Youthful

Woodpeckers

Wonders of Creation

by Alex Isaacson

Many of the foraging, breeding and signaling behaviors of woodpeckers involve drumming and hammering using their special beaks. Hashem created these birds with special features to prevent their heads from getting hurt from the rapid and repeated impacts during drumming and hammering. These include small brain size, the orientation of the brain within the skull, which maximizes the area of contact between the brain and the skull, and the short duration of contact.

Do little pieces of wood go in their eyes during drumming and hammering? Interestingly, their eyes remain clear. How so? A millisecond before contact with wood, a thickened membrane closes, protecting the eye from flying debris. By the way, the nostrils are also protected; they are often slit-like and have special feathers to cover them.

Woodpeckers have special feet which consist of four toes: the first and the fourth facing backward and the second and third facing forward. This foot arrangement is good for grasping the limbs and trunks of trees, which helps them to walk vertically up a tree trunk.



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◆ Please, don't read me during tefilla, kadish, etc. ◆

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

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Challenges

Halacha Challenge

TOPIC

Sweeping the Floor on Erev Shabbos

On *erev* Shabbos, the Singer family was busy getting things ready for their special guest – Shabbos Kodesh. Mrs. Singer was braiding *challah*, Mr. Singer was polishing the silver cup, and the kids were setting up the table.

"The floor looks pretty dusty. Let's sweep it up," proposed the younger sister Shiri. Her brother Aaron looked at the floor and said:

"It will get dirty again anyway on Shabbos. So let's wait with the sweeping until *motzei* Shabbos."



Question: Who is right - Shiri or Aaron?



Dedications

- by Josef van der Plaats and family, in honor of Benjamin ben Daniel's Bar Mitzva

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◆ requires geniza ◆

Help: In numerous places in the Torah we learn about the aspect of שמירה (safeguarding Shabbos), which is referring to our obligation to refrain from doing *melacha* on Shabbos. But where are we commanded regarding כבוד שבת (honoring Shabbos)? After all, there are so many things that we do, such as taking a shower and putting on special Shabbos clothes, which have no connection to the restriction of doing *melacha*, and are purely done to honor Shabbos. The *Rambam* [Laws of Shabbos 30:1] explains that the *mitzvah* of כבוד שבת was taught to us by the *navi* Yeshayahu [58:13] - "... וְקִרְאתֶם לַשַּׁבָּת... לְקְדוֹשׁ ה' מְכַבֵּד" - *And if you establish Shabbos ...the holy [day] of Hashem [to be] 'honored'...*

To solve the challenge think about the following: We know that being clean and looking nice is part of honoring Shabbos. Is making the home look nice also a necessary part of honoring Shabbos?

Menucha's Answer: Shiri. If the floor is, in fact, messy, it needs to be swept up before Shabbos.

Explanation: The source which teaches us that part of כבוד שבת is making one's home presentable for Shabbos *Kodesh*, is the well known *Braisa* of Rabbi Yosi bar Yehuda [Shabbos 119b] :

"Two Malachei HaShares escort a person from shul to his home on erev (i.e. leil) Shabbos...and when the man comes to his house and finds a lit candle, and a set table and a [nicely] covered bed, a good Malach says: 'May the will be that it will be like this next Shabbos'..."

Henceforth, the *Rishonim* and later *poskim* write about the need to make the house look dignified for Shabbos *Kodesh*. [see Rambam, Laws of Shabbos 30:5, Shulchan Aruch 262] For that reason, based on the *Chayei Adam*, the *Mishna Berura* teaches that as part of the *mitzva* of כבוד שבת, one needs to sweep away dust and dirt in his home on *erev* Shabbos. [Mishna Berura 250:3]

Further Thoughts: Of course, the essential parts of כבוד שבת are intentions and feelings. In other words, taking a shower, putting on nice clothes, cleaning the house and doing other things that are part of everyone's *erev* Shabbos 'routine,' should be done while having thoughts and feelings in the spirit of: "I am doing these things in order to honor my long-awaited, special guest - the Shabbos Queen!" What's beautiful about this is that a person who observes Shabbos, truly honors it and makes it a day of עונג, sees the fruits of his labor on Shabbos itself, as the *navi* Yeshayahu says (ibid. 13-14): "...[And if you establish] the holy [day] of Hashem [to be] 'honored'...then you will delight in Hashem..." The *Iben Ezra* explains that this "delight" is similar to the pleasure that a son feels when he is with his father.]

Riddle



There are five of us. Three of us are in this week's parsha. Two of us are not in this parsha and not in any parsha of the Torah. Who / what are we?

Answer to the last riddle:

RIDDLE: In last week's parsha we learn about the birth of Moshe Rabbeinu. What happens when a baby is born? Of course, people say "Mazal Tov!" Here is a trivia question: Where in his commentary on Chumash, Rashi says "mazal tov" ?

ANSWER: Rashi to Bereishis 30:11. That verse tells us that when Gad was born, Leah said: בָּא מַזַּל טוֹב. Rashi comments that those words mean: בא מזל טוב (good mazal has come).



Kids Ask, Zeidy Answers



Zeidy – on *leil* Shabbos, we sing "Shalom Aleichem" to greet the *malachim* who walked with our Abba from *shul*.

When a guest comes to our house, we greet him, and of course, we don't say "goodbye" right afterwards, because we want the guest to stay with us. But why are we saying "goodbye" to these *malachim* right away, by singing "Tzeischem l'Shalom" at the end of the "Shalom Aleichem" song?!



Good question, kids! I'll tell you something interesting that you might not have heard before. One of the *malachim*, who escorts your Abba from shul on a Friday night, is called "*malach tov*". As long as this *malach* is happy being in your home, he keeps on staying with you, and may end up being your guest for the whole Shabbos! When we sing "Tzeischem l'Shalom" we are simply saying to the *malachim*: "*When the time will come for you to leave, may your departure be b'Shalom.*"*

Ashreinu! We have Shabbos *Kodesh* - an entire day of hosting a *malach* in our home!

*[based on the opinion of the *Mahari"v*, cited by the *Magen Avraham* OC 262:1; *Machtzis HaShekel* ibid.]