

Stories, Biographies & Wonders

Wombats

by Alex Isaacson

Wombats are short-legged, muscular creatures that Hashem placed in forested and mountainous areas of south-eastern Australia, Tasmania, and central Queensland. They weigh around sixty pounds and are about three and a half feet long. They have fur that varies in color from a sandy color to brown, or from grey to black.



Wombats generally move slowly, though when threatened, they can reach up to around 25 mph and maintain that speed for up to 90 seconds. But their primary defense is its toughened rear hide, made mostly of a tough cartilage. This, combined with its lack of a long tail, makes it difficult for any predator to cause any harm to a wombat.

What's most intriguing about this creature is where Hashem placed their pouch for its babies. Wombats have a distinctive 'backwards pouch'. The advantage of a backwards-facing pouch is that when digging, the wombat does not gather dirt in its pouch over its young. Seems simple, but this gift has ensured their survival.

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Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

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Halacha Challenge

Thinking About Phoning a Taxi After Shabbos

In the recent issues we discussed the halachos of speech on Shabbos—what we are and aren't allowed to talk about on Shabbos. Let's now explore a different, yet tangent topic: the halachos of thinking thoughts on Shabbos.



"Naftoli!" called out Naftoli's sister. "Yes, Shoshana. How can I help?"

"I don't need help. I just want to know what you're possibly thinking about with such concentration on this Shabbos afternoon."

"Oh! Ha ha. I am just thinking about...well, it's kind of a secret..." said Naftoli with a slight stutter. "We never keep secrets from each other. Please, tell me. Pleeese..." begged Shoshana.

Naftoli had no choice, but to tell. "Tonight, is my friend Baruch's Bar Mitzva. I am thinking what time I should call the taxi in order to arrive to the Bar Mitzva early and help Baruch's family to set up."

"But calling on a phone is not allowed on Shabbos. Can you think about that now?" wondered Shoshana.

Q. Is it permitted for Naftoli to think how will be calling a taxi after Shabbos?

DEDICATIONS

- by the Epshteyn family in honor of **Baruch Hellman's** Bar Mitzva

Special thanks to kehillas *Beis Tefillah Yonah Avraham*



Help: In order to understand *halachos* about thoughts on Shabbos, we need to understand *halachos* about speech on Shabbos. As we learned in the several previous issues, some laws of Shabbos are learned from a verse in the *navi* Yeshayahu that speaks about our need to honor Shabbos properly¹. The verse mentions that we should honor Shabbos by not ‘speaking about a matter’ וְדַבֵּר - דְּבָרִי. From this part of the verse, Chazal learned the following rule (Shabbos 113b): שלא יהא דבורך של שבת כדבורך של חול - *Your speech on Shabbos should not be the same as on a weekday.*

We saw in the previous issues that based on Rashi’s interpretation of this Gemorah, we are not permitted to talk on Shabbos about *melachos* or Rabbinically prohibited activities that we are planning to do after Shabbos – even if it is not benefiting the speaker or others in achieving that *melacha* (Shulchan Aruch OC 307:1, Bach ibid, Mishna Berura 307 §1).

To solve our challenge, think if דְּבַר דְּבָר applies only when one is speaking about the melacha that he is planning to do after Shabbos, or does it apply also when a person is thinking about it?

Menucha’s Answer*: Yes - Naftoli can think about phoning a taxi after Shabbos.

Explanation: The *halacha* about thoughts on Shabbos is taught in the Gemorah. Chazal point out that the *navi* Yeshayahu (see above) mentioned only דיבור (speaking). Based on this, Chazal derived that הירחור (thinking) is permitted. Thus, a person is permitted to think about a *melacha* that he will do after Shabbos (see Shulchan Aruch OC 306:8, Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchosa (new edition) ch.29 §67).

Having said that, this *halacha* is referring just to cases that are similar to the one in our challenge—i.e., where a person is simply thinking about a *melacha* that’s not related to his work or business. However, what still needs to be answered is if a person is permitted to think thoughts about his work and business on Shabbos. Don’t miss the next issue...

[1] אִם-תִּשִׁיב מִשְׁבֵּת רִגְלֶךָ עֲשׂוֹת תְּפַצֵּד בְּיוֹם קִדְשִׁי; וְקִרְאתָ לְשִׁבְתָּ עֲנֵג לְקִדּוּשׁ ה' מְכַבֵּד; וְכַבְדְּתוּ מַעֲשׂוֹת דְּרָכֶיךָ מִמִּצְוֹת תְּפַצֵּד וְדַבֵּר דְּבָרֶיךָ. (ישעיהו נח"ג)

* Note: Menucha’s answer is for Torah learning purposes only and not as a *halachic* ruling. To know laws of Shabbos on a practical level, the reader is encouraged to study them in depth, find out the *minhagim* of his/her family and community, and consult with a *halachic* authority. The opinions of the sources cited in the article may not necessary reflect rulings of other *halachic* authorities.

Tehillim



סוּר מִרַע וְעֲשֵׂה-טוֹב -- תהילים לד:טו

“Move away from the bad, and do good.” -- Tehillim 34:15

When the *yetzer hora* realizes that it cannot stop you from doing a *mitzva*, it engages in weakening that *mitzva* by making you recall your previous bad deeds and making you feel low, so that you will not do the *mitzva* with inner *simcha*.

Based on the above verse of Tehillim, Rav Mordechai from Lechovitch* is quoted to teach the following important lesson in *avodas Hashem*: When you are involved in doing something good (עשה טוב), you should remove from your mind bad thoughts about yourself. At that moment, you should pretend that you never did anything bad (סור מרע)! This is necessary so that you will always serve Hashem with true joy.

* Rav Mordechai from Lechovitch is one of the founding chasidic teachers from whom the Slonim chasidic dynasty sprouted.

Riddles



Chaim looked around and said to his friend Yaakov: “This looks so familiar. On Tisha B’Av, which was just about a week ago, no one in the shul was sitting on a chair during Shacharis, except for the person who did *hagbah*. And now here, it’s a very similar situation—everyone is standing, while one person—who looks young, healthy and strong—is sitting.”

“I’ll tell you even more,” said Yaakov back to Chaim. “The person who is sitting is the only person in the world who is allowed to sit here!” | *Where are Chaim and Yaakov standing now, and who is the person that’s sitting?*

Last week’s Riddle: In almost every shul, there is always one person who sits on a chair or a bench at some point during Shacharis of Tisha B’Av. *Who is that person and when does he sit?*

Answer: The person who did *hagbah*. After lifting the Torah, he sits down on a chair or a bench, and keeps sitting while the Haftorah is being read.