

Tablin I' Shabbos

Mazal of Adar is fish
and eating fish on Shabbos

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In the previous mamorim, we have been discussing the custom to eat fish on Shabbos. As we are zocheh to begin the month of Adar this week, it is appropriate to continue with a related topic. It is brought down in the Sefer Yetzira and numerous other sources that "מזל" "אדר דגים". The mazal of Adar is fish. There is also a connection to Purim which is in Adar in the Medrash (Esther Rabasi 7:11).

"הפיל פור הוא הגורל לפני המן, בא לו מזל דגים שהוא משמש בחודש אדר ולא נמצא לו זכות, ושמח מיד ואמר אדר אין לו זכות ומזלו אין לו זכות, ולא עוד אלא שבאדר מת משה רבן, והוא לא ידע שבז' באדר מת משה ובז' באדר נולד משה, ואמר כשם שהדגים בולעין כך אני בולע אותן. אמר לו הקב"ה, רשע, דגים פעמים נבלעין ופעמים בולעין, ועכשיו אותו האיש נבלע מן הבולעין".

The lottery was brought before Haman. Adar's mazal, fish, looked unsuccessfully for a zchus for the Jews. Haman was happy, thinking that neither Adar nor its mazal could find a zchus and also Moshe died in Adar making it unlucky for the Jews. He did not realize that 7 Adar was also the birthday of Moshe. Haman thought that just like fish swallow, so too he would be able to swallow the Jews. But Hashem told him "You wicked person, fish swallow but sometime they are also spit out."

A beautiful thought from the Ostrovitzer ZT"L

Astrologists portray the fish that are the mazal of Adar as 2 fish facing in opposite directions. We need to understand why Hashem inspired them to be portrayed this way, why 2 fish and not one? And why facing in opposite directions?

We can try to explain this with a wonderful conversation between Rav Mayer Yechiel of Ostrov ZT"L and one of his Chassidim. In the sefer Mishmeres Kehuna printed at the end of the sefer Or Hatorah, there is a record of this conversation.

Oceanographers noted that whenever a fish is swallowed by another fish it is always found with its head facing the back of the fish that swallowed it. From the way this is explained, we can learn a beautiful lesson about bitachon when it comes to earning our own livelihood. When a fish is looking for smaller fish to eat, it chases them as they try to run from the bigger fish. So one would expect that if the bigger fish caught the smaller fish it was chasing, the tail of the fish it swallowed would be towards the back of the fish that swallowed it. But that is never the case, because that is not how fish catch other fish. When a fish eats another fish, it is not because he chased and caught it. Rather, Hashem prepares

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the smaller fish right in front of him and when the fish swallows the smaller fish; its head is towards the back of the bigger fish.

Our lesson in bitachon

As we endeavor to make a living, we must never think that it is our efforts that bring us success. Rather it us all from Hashem. Our livelihood is determined at Rosh Hashono for the following year. The efforts we must make are only the result of the punishment from Adam's sin (Berashis 3:19): "בועת אפיך האכל לחם". We can only eat if we work for it. But the reality is that Hashem really prepares our livelihood without our efforts.

The Osrovtzer added something else that we can learn from the fish based on the Zohar in Naso. Fish eyes are always open, a fish does not sleep like other creatures do. It is always awake and watching to be sure that it is not swallowed by a bigger fish. Since it is always watching it is not afraid of the fish that come in front of it, thinking that it can always run away as a bigger fish comes close enough to swallow it. But it does worry about fish that come from behind, that it can't see. To protect against fish coming from the back it has to rely on Hashem.

That is a powerful lesson for us. Fish are not afraid of the fish attacking from the back, because they trust that Hashem takes care of that. They only worry about fish attacking from the front and think that by never shutting their eyes and always watching, they can be protected with "כוחי ועוצם ידי", but the reality is that they are only attacked from the front, This is as a lesson for us- so long as we rely on Hashem, we will be protected. But when we start to think that we can take care of ourselves, we get into serious trouble.

A story from Rav Mayer Premishlan ZT"L

In the sefer Sfas Emes on Parshas Reeh, the Rav of Berezan ZT"L relates a story that he heard from Rav Mayer Premishlan ZT"L. One Shvuos, he said that he now understood something that happened to him with Rav Mordechai of Krements ZT"L. "Once during the winter, when I was very young, we were travelling in a wagon and were on a steep section of the road and I was sure that the wagon would flip over, and was prepared to jump out of the wagon, but Rav Mordechai grabbed my arm and said "שב" - "Don't worry, nothing will happen" and in fact nothing did.

When we reached another spot where the slope was not so bad, I was not nervous and did not even think about having to jump out. Suddenly, the wagon tipped over and we were all covered with snow. Rav Mordechai started to laugh and said "ראית" - "You saw". Until today I did not understand what he was saying. But now, I understand. He was trying to teach me that when a Jew is always nervous about falling under the influence of the Yetzer Hara,

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(who is always waiting for us to slip up), Hashem should protect us. But if a person walks securely thinking he is safe from the Yetzer Hara, he can easily get caught in the trap.

All Heavenly & earthly brachos take effect on Shabbos

So we now have another reason to eat fish on Shabbos. During the 6 days of the week, we work to earn a living. On Shabbos when we cannot work, we make no effort at all towards making money, And amazingly it is specifically from Shabbos that we earn our living for the entire week as it says in Brashis (2:3): **”וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ”**.

We can understand this with the Zohar in Yisro. **”כֹּל בְּרַכָּאן דְּלַעִילָא וְתַתָּא בְיוֹמָא שְׁבִיעָא”** - תליון - All brachos come from Shabbos, because during the week, when we are working we can think that it is our efforts that make us successful. But on Shabbos when we exert no effort we cannot possibly think that it is our efforts that make us successful. So Hashem shows us that everything comes from Shabbos, when we rely totally on Hashem.

This, then, is another reason to eat fish on Shabbos. Since we learn this beautiful lesson in bitachon from the fish, that Hashem protects them when they trust Hashem; so we eat fish on Shabbos as a reminder to ourselves that on the day that we rely on Hashem, he will take care of us for the entire week.

This relates beautifully to Purim, when the lottery fell on Adar, whose mazal is fish, Haman was happy, thinking as we said earlier, that just as fish swallow, he would be able to swallow the Jews. His mistake was that when the Jews realized how much trouble they were in, they understood that their only alternative was to rely solely on Hashem.

And as with the fish, only when they rely on Hashem to protect them (from the back), they are safe, but for danger from the front they think that they can “handle it” and that is when they get in trouble. Similarly, Haman who was confident in his own powers was swallowed up. The fact that the lottery fell on Adar was good for the Jews because like the fish who must rely on Hashem for protection from the rear, they relied on Hashem and were able to swallow their attackers and not be swallowed themselves.

Now we can understand why Hashem made the mazal of Adar, fish, 2 fish facing in opposite directions. This teaches us that the miracle of Purim, happened in Adar, as a reward to us for relying on Hashem, because we were not like fish, who when they are swallowed by another fish, it is from the front. When you rely on Hashem there is nothing to worry about, it is only when we think that “we are in charge” that we get into trouble.

We must always remember that we are only safe when we rely completely on Hashem. As soon as we think that our efforts, our armies and weapon are what keep us safe – we get into trouble. But when we trust Hashem, he will protect us and take good care of us.