

Shalom Bayis Newsletter Issue 8- Don't Fall into the Trap!



Nothing particularly noteworthy in this photo, right? That's exactly what the ant (in the upper left corner) is thinking, and it's exactly what the wormlion who made that little burrow wants him to think.

Yes, there actually is a creature called a wormlion, and for good reason! You see the wormlion is actually supposed to be a flying insect that looks like a cross between a horsefly and a dragonfly, and, of course, it is. But, you see, it only survives its adult state as such for less than a week. For the rest of its sojourn on this Earth, it

exists as a larva. And what this larva does is hunt small insects.

In a particularly unique way.

What the wormlion does is make a burrow in the ground and hide itself inside. Perfectly camouflaged by the grains of sand and flecks of rock. If you were to walk by a patch of ground under occupancy by wormlions, you might not even notice it. Just a bunch of little holes in the ground.

And that's exactly what the ant passing by thinks.

As he walks by the burrow, to the ant it's nothing more than another piece of uneven ground. No problem. Ants, as we all know (and abhor), are excellent terrain negotiators. Few and far between are the things that you could put in the way of an ant that it won't manage to navigate around. So a little indentation is nothing for the formidable ant!

But then... wham! Before the ant knows what hit him, the wormlion launches its attack and turns the ant into a delicious snack. Well, drink, really; but I'll spare you the gory details.

If we could only talk to that ant the moment before it makes its fatal flaw of descending into the burrow, surely what we would tell him is, "Stop! Don't fall for the trap! Keep your high ground!"

And I think that is exactly what Rav Nachman did when his wife Yalta once flew into a rage (Brachos 51b).

Ula was visiting. And, of course, when hosting such an illustrious guest, you honor him with leading the *bentching*. Now, Ula was of the opinion that only the host should get a sip from the *kos shel bracha*, not the hostess. What Ula did not know, though, is that Rav Nachman's own position on that matter was in accordance with the opinion that maintains that the hostess, as well, should be given to drink from the *kos shel bracha*; and, accordingly, that is what Yalta was accustomed to.

Mind you, Yalta was no ordinary woman. She was the daughter of the Reis Galusa (exilarch who wielded monarch-like powers amongst the Jewish populace) and she was a *very* important and influential personage in her own right. Suffice it to say, then, she did not at all take kindly to what she perceived as an unforgivable slight when Ula failed to send some of the *kos shel bracha* wine to the woman of the house.

Yalta became so enraged that she went to the wine cellar and smashed *four hundred* jugs of wine. Talk about an expensive outburst!

But Rav Nachman did not lose his cool. On the contrary. He made an attempt at appeasing his wife by suggesting to Ula that he pour some more wine and send it to Yalta. It didn't really go over that well (Yalta was too sharp to fall for it), but what is relevant for our purposes here is that Rav Nachman did not descend into the burrow.

You see, we all have our moods. It's just the nature of the animal. Sometimes we're feeling happy. Sometimes we're feeling optimistic. And sometimes we feel down in the dumps and we might even dig ourselves a little burrow of melancholy and anger.

Misery loves company. So there can be a tendency to, perhaps unwittingly, try to pull the significant other down into the burrow with you. Sometimes the "burrow" is barely noticeable. And sometimes the one occupying the burrow is "camouflaged". It can seem as if there is nothing to notice, and, before you know it, you've fallen into the trap.

I don't mean to say that people deliberately try to entrap their spouses like a wormlion ambushing its ant prey. What I am saying is that sometimes we may do this unconsciously. When you feel "ichy", it can be perfectly normal to try to pull your significant other into that ichiness without at all consciously intending to.

And that's when keeping the high ground and not falling for the trap – unintended as it may be – can be a helpful thing to keep in mind. When your spouse is in a nasty mood, don't be aloof. Don't be uncaring. For sure, be there for your spouse. Be supportive. Provide empathy. Do whatever you can.

At the same time, be careful that you don't accidentally get sucked into the burrow. If you all of a sudden feel as though you are getting attacked with a venomous sting, try not to fall into the trap. Keep your high ground. Stretch out a helping hand – to whatever extent you can – to lift your significant other out of that burrow.

But, still and all, try not to fall in there with them. After all, that won't help anybody.