

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



TAXI THEFT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Avi was a taxi driver in Israel. One day, at the dispatch center, he got a call for a pickup about an hour away. The fare would earn him a lot of money. His friend Yoni, also a taxi driver, overheard the call. Things were slow for him, so Yoni decided to try to get the job first. He took down the address and raced there before Avi.

When Yoni arrived at the address, he asked the waiting family, "Are you looking for a taxi?" They said yes, and got into his cab.

Two minutes later, Avi pulled up and saw Yoni taking the passengers that were supposed to be his fare. Avi re-



WATER IS DIFFERENT

From the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh

This Shabbos we will read Parshas Para, the Parsha in which we are instructed on the laws of tumah and t'hara (spiritual purity and impurity). The reason for reading this Parsha is to remind us to begin preparing ourselves for the Pesach offering which must be done in purity. Since there is a duration of time to purify ourselves we remind ourselves ahead of time to do so. The question is that the purification process is only seven days. Why must we prepare ourselves close to a month in advance?

The Parsha is introduced by the words "This is the chukah (law) of the Torah." The word chukah in this context, means a law for which we have no understanding what its purpose is. In fact, Shlomo Hamelech (King Solomon) the wisest of all men, concedes that even he has no understanding of this mitzvah. It is axiomatic that there is most definitely a reason and a purpose for this mitzvah, after all, it was designed by HaShem, the Creator of this most sophisticated world where every molecule has its designated role and purpose. Nevertheless, what its reason and purpose is, is beyond the scope of man's intellect. We therefore accept it without understanding it.

I was fortunate to study Torah at the feet of Rav Mendel Kaplan zt'l. From time to time we would encounter a difficult passage in the Talmud which although the lesson of the Talmud was clear, it was nevertheless, difficult to understand why it should be so. Reb Mendel would always say in his inimitable way "You like it? You don't like it? Tough luck!" His message was clear; the lesson of the Talmud was understood. Even though we may not understand why it should be that way, too bad!

alized Yoni had stolen his customers! He tried arguing with Yoni, but Yoni ignored him and sped off. Yoni would likely earn \$300 or \$400 for that long trip, while Avi wasted his time driving there for nothing.

Feeling angry, Avi headed home. But on the highway, he saw a taxi parked on the shoulder with its hazard lights flashing. To his surprise, it was Yoni's cab! Yoni was stranded with the customers still inside, needing a jump start.

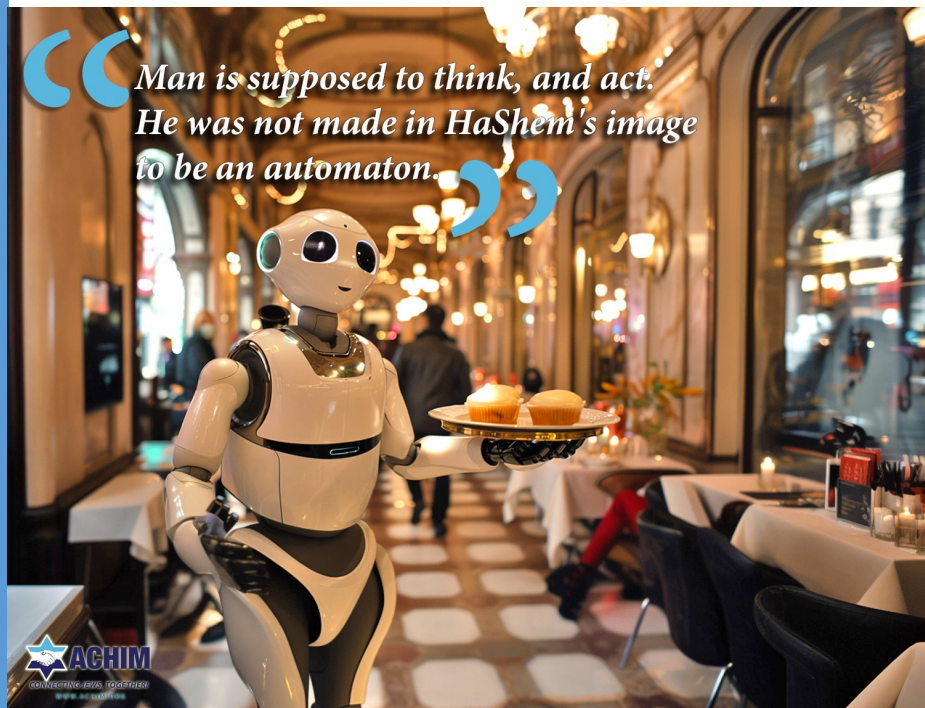
A dilemma flashed in Avi's mind. As a fellow Jew, he felt obligated to help Yoni who was in need. It was a fulfillment of the mitzvah of azov taazov imo.

But by jump-starting Yoni's car, he would be enabling Yoni to complete the theft of his customers.

Should Avi stop and jump start Yoni, even though Yoni had "stolen" from him?

On one hand, leaving someone stranded was dangerous. On the other hand, helping Yoni meant facilitating the theft he had committed against Avi. What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 311



Every student of the sciences recognizes this. The primary study of science is observing and understanding how matter works. To understand why it works in its given way is extra. Take the following for example.

With the exception of water almost all matter contracts when frozen. Water, on the other hand, expands. Why? Because of its unique molecular structure. Why should water have a unique molecular structure? "You like it, you don't like it, that is the way it is, tough luck! Accept it! Such is the nature of science. The laws are the laws whether they make sense to us or not.

The study of Torah is the same. Our primary concern is 'what is the Torah teaching' or 'what does the Torah expect from us'. To understand why HaShem teaches us this or why HaShem expects this from us, is only extra. Just as the mechanical engineer only needs to know the rate of expansion irrespective of why it expands at that rate, so it is with Torah. We only need to know

what HaShem expects from us, not why He expects it from us.

Naturally, there are many reasons why HaShem has certain expectations and it is certainly a mitzvah to study those reasons. However, our commitment to Torah should never depend on that.

With Purim behind us we have already begun our approach to Pesach in which we became the dedicated people of HaShem. In less than a month we will become His people, the ones who make Him beautified in this world. To properly fill this role it is critical that we understand Reb Mendel's lesson. To be the people of HaShem we must lead our lives predicated on our complete acceptance of HaShem's Torah, irrespective of our understanding of 'why'.

Perhaps the reason we read Parshas Para close to a month before Pesach is to inspire us to prepare ourselves for accepting the role of being HaShem's chosen people.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE COYOTE

Last week we learned about the Roadrunner. This week, let's explore an animal that is often paired with the roadrunner: the Coyote. Let's explore the fascinating world of coyotes together.

Coyotes are canines, which means they are related to wolves and domesticated dogs. Coyotes come in 19 different subspecies across their habitats. This variety has allowed them to thrive in almost every environment, from the freezing areas of Canada to the tropical regions of Central America.

Adult coyotes typically weigh between 15 to 46 pounds. They have bushy tails that hang down and distinctive pointed ears that stand up, giving them an alert look.

Originally from the dry regions of North America, coyotes have expanded their range dramatically, especially as human activities have changed landscapes. With wolves declining due to hunting and habitat loss, coyotes have become more common, filling the gap left behind. Eastern coyotes have bred with wolves and dogs, resulting in a larger, more adaptable hybrid animal.

One key to the coyote's success is its flexibility in diet. These omnivores eat a varied menu including small mammals like rodents and rabbits, insects, fruits, vegetables, and even human garbage or food waste. In urban areas, they've adapted to take advantage of plentiful rodents as well as discarded food. This ability to eat many things allows coyotes to thrive in habitats ranging from deserts and grasslands to suburbs and city parks. Their incredible sense of smell helps them locate carrion and other food sources.

This flexible diet has made them skilled at controlling rodent and rabbit populations. So their role in nature is balanced. On one hand, they help keep those pest rodent populations in check. But on the other hand, they've been known to attack livestock and even pets, which can upset humans.

Coyotes are impressive athletes. They can run at top speeds of 40 to 43 mph and jump over 13 feet, giving them an edge when hunting or evading threats. Their slim, agile bodies also allow them to navigate tight spaces in urban environments or while chasing prey. With excellent hearing and vision, coyotes are well-equipped for both hunting and avoiding danger. Their vocalizations, including howls, barks, and yelps, serve as a complex communication system for mating, marking territory, and coordinating pack activities.

Beyond controlling rodent populations, coyotes contribute significantly to their ecosystems through seed dispersal. Their diet includes fruits, and the seeds are spread over wide areas in their droppings as they travel. This seemingly small act plays a crucial role in maintaining plant diversity and health in various ecosystems.

While some coyotes are solitary, they more commonly live in family packs led by a breeding pair. The pair and their offspring work

together to hunt, raise pups, and defend their territory. Coyotes typically mate for life and share parenting duties, with the male providing food while the female cares for the young. Litter sizes can range from 1 to 19 pups, though 6 is average. This cooperative social structure contributes to the species' success in raising the next generation.

While often portrayed inaccurately as foolish creatures in caricatures like Wile E. Coyote, real coyotes are cunning and intelligent. They exhibit behaviors showing their high intelligence and adaptability. For instance, varying their hunting techniques based on prey and environment showcases problem-solving skills. Urban coyotes demonstrate remarkable adaptability by adjusting their activity patterns to avoid humans, showing their ability to coexist near urban development.

One iconic aspect of coyote behavior is their vocalizations, which include howls, barks, yelps, and whines. While known for evocative howls, they have at least 11 distinct sounds. These facilitate complex communication within packs, including coordinating hunting, identifying individuals, establishing territory, and social bonding. Such sophisticated communication underscores coyotes' social intelligence and capacity for nuanced interactions.

Due to their intelligence and cunning, coyotes have rich cultural significance in Native American folklore and mythology. They often represent tricksters, guides, or wisdom figures, reflecting their intelligence and cunning in the natural world.

As human populations expand into coyote habitats, interactions between the two have increased, leading to more coyote sightings in urban and suburban areas. While coyotes have generally adapted well to urban environments, their presence near humans has led to conflicts, including attacks on pets and, rarely, on humans.

Despite threats such as habitat loss and direct persecution, coyotes have maintained and even grown their population in many areas. This resilience results from their adaptability, reproductive strategies, and ability to exploit new resources. Their status as a species of "Least Concern" reflects their success in navigating rapidly changing environments.

And as for that classic coyote vs. roadrunner rivalry? In the real world, it's a lot less dramatic. A coyote might catch a roadrunner if given the chance, but it's not a common meal. Both desert dwellers have their own survival strategies. Roadrunners are fast, agile birds capable of speeds up to 25 mph, making them challenging prey for predators like coyotes. These birds have adapted ways to avoid predators in the desert environment where they live, such as their remarkable speed and agility, camouflage, and even ability to fly short distances to escape danger. While coyotes might occasionally prey on roadrunners, it is not common, given the size and speed of these birds, which make them less appealing compared to other, more easily caught prey.

I DO NOT WANT MY RABBI TO SEE ME IN A CAR ON SHABBOS

Sam Margolin (pictured), a very successful lawyer in Memphis, was a proud Jew. Under the influence of Reb Nota Greenblat and Sy Kutner, Sam and his wife Rose sent their little girl, Gerry, to the Memphis Hebrew Academy.

One Shabbos morning, as the Margolin's were driving to shul with second grader Gerry in the back seat, they noticed one of the Rabbis from the Academy. He was on his way to shul as well. Naturally, he was walking.

When Gerry noticed that they were quickly approaching her Rabbi she jumped down from her seat and crouched down below window level. Her mother looked at the back seat and told her daughter to sit on the seat. (This was before seat belts.) Gerry said that was not going to sit on the seat until her Rabbi was out of sight. "I do not want my Rabbi to see me in a car on Shabbos."

When they arrived at shul and parked the car, Sam shut his door, looked over the hood to his wife. "Rose, I cannot drive on Shabbos if our daughter is going to be ashamed because of this. We will not be driving on Shabbos anymore." That Shabbos the Margolin family stayed on that side of town. That decision changed their lives.

True to his word, Sam never drove on Shabbos after that. They bought a Shabbos home near the shul. Sam who was a very well spoken businessman became a spokesman for Torah U'mesorah and promoted Torah observance in Memphis and around the country.

He would say "From where will come the future leaders of our people... if not from our children who have been properly trained in the ideals of Judaism... Jewish laymen must come to know the beauty and sincerity of traditional Judaism through actual practice and knowledge. Only in such an institution as the Memphis Hebrew Academy can such training be attained."

As told by Gerry Fink to Paysach Diskind



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the clerk who made the bully wait a long time in line, Rav Zilberstein ("Upiryo Matok Vayikra," page 297) answered that if there was no manager available to deal with the bully, the clerk had the right to do what he did, even though it caused the people behind the bully to wait longer. Everyone in the community has a responsibility to do their part to hold bullies accountable and bring them to justice, and therefore, the clerk was allowed to make those people wait.

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Paysach Diskind



Brad E. Kauffman Esquire and Kauffman and Forman P.A.
specializing in corporate and construction law,
estates, wills and trusts and business litigation.

