

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE CEMENT BLOCK TRAP

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Shlomo was the owner of a successful and busy grocery store in Israel. One hectic Friday, he noticed a man in a fancy SUV parked illegally right in front of the path leading to his store, blocking the way. Shlomo approached the owner and politely asked him to move the car to a spot where it wouldn't obstruct the path, but the man refused to listen. The man got out of his car and went on his way, leaving it parked there.

The next Friday, which was another busy day, the same man parked his fancy car in front of the store again, blocking the path. Shlomo tried to talk to him and persuade him to park elsewhere, but the man completely ignored him and walked away. This happened a third time. Shlomo again tried to speak to the owner, but he was



### BREAKING THE BARRIERS

The first days of the Aseres Yemei Teshuva (the 10 Days of Repentance) begin with Rosh Hashanah. Our Sages teach that we do not mention any sin on Rosh Hashanah. The entire focus of Rosh Hashanah is on the coronation of HaShem as He rises to take His place on the Throne of His world on the anniversary of His creation of Adam and Chava. When celebrating coronation it is inappropriate to mention the notion of sin. Sin diminishes His Sovereignty. We wait for the subsequent days to mention it in the context of teshuva.

The question therefore is, if Rosh Hashana celebrates His coronation and not repentance for our sins, why begin the Aseres Yemei Teshuva with Rosh Hashana? Let there be only eight days of repentances starting the day after Rosh Hashana.

As we engage in the quest for teshuva we identify the Yetzer Hara as the enemy. We therefore set our sights on techniques and approaches to overcome him. We must, however, not get caught up with simply overcoming the enemy. It is important to keep the ultimate objective in mind.

The objective of teshuva is to draw ourselves closer to HaShem. No matter how close one might be to HaShem, there is always room to grow yet closer. The sins that we commit throw up barriers between us and HaShem. When it comes to the actual battle, the Yetzer Hara is the trouble maker

ignored once more.

## MITZVA MEME

Unsure of what to do, Shlomo decided to send the man a message, hoping it would remind him not to block the store in the future. Shlomo had his employees pick up a huge concrete block, about a meter tall and a meter wide, and they placed it immediately behind the man's SUV. In front of the car was a gate, and with the concrete block directly behind the vehicle, it would be nearly impossible for him to back out. Shlomo's intention was that the man wouldn't be able to reverse and would have to come into the store to ask for help in removing the block.

Shlomo watched as the man returned to his SUV. Instead of asking for help, the man backed up with full force and smashed the rear fender of his expensive car. It seemed that the man did not initially notice the large cement block behind his car. After several attempts, maneuvering back and forth, he finally managed to free himself from the spot.

Shlomo felt bad—this wasn't his intention. He didn't want the man to damage his car. He wondered if he had a responsibility to find the person and pay for the damage. On one hand, the man wasn't allowed to park there and should have seen the large concrete block. On the other hand, Shlomo had placed it there, indirectly causing the damage.

What do you think? Should Shlomo be required to find the man and pay for the damages?

See Upiryo Matok Devarim Page 328



because he keeps creating obstacles that cause us to sin and cause barriers to go up. However, just avoiding the aveiros (sins) will not get us to our goal.

It is possible to daven every tefilla with a minyan, and to learn every seder 60 minutes an hour and so on, and still fail to achieve teshuva! If after all the behavioral changes are successful there is no attitudinal change in the way we feel towards the fulfillment of the mitzvos then the Yetzer Hara is quite satisfied. His goal is to make sure that our relationship to HaShem remains distant. Therefore, in addition to making the behavioral changes we must focus on the real objective. Real teshuva is achieved when all our actions take us on a path of drawing closer to Him.

Rosh Hashana, the day on which we focus our entire attention on His Sovereignty, is specifically the first day of Aseres Yemei Teshuva. It is the day on which we focus on the objective of teshuva. It is the prerequisite of any teshuva. Once we realize that we want to love HaShem, we want to trust in HaShem, we want to be in His Presence then everything we do in service to Him becomes an act of drawing closer and closer to Him. Then we will have achieved teshuva. And then the Yetzer Hara has been beaten.

As we blow the Shofar and recite the special prayers on Rosh Hashana we are able to absorb the message of Rosh Hashana and become focused on where we really want to be; intimately close to HaShem with no distractions.

Have a beautiful Yom Tov and a wonderful Shabbos.

K'siva v'chasima tova.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### PUMPKINS

Many of us will have pumpkin as a part of the simanim for Rosh Hashana. Also, some commentators believe that the Kikayon D'Yona, which we will read about on Yom Kippur, was a pumpkin. Let's dive into the amazing world of pumpkins.

Pumpkins have a long and storied past, originating over 5,000 years ago in Central America. Native Americans were the first to cultivate this remarkable fruit, recognizing its potential as both a food source and a versatile material. These early pumpkins were much smaller and more bitter than the large, sweet varieties we see today, but through careful selective breeding, Native Americans transformed them into the hearty, flavorful fruit that is now a beloved autumn staple.

The word "pumpkin" itself comes from the Greek word *pepon*, meaning "large melon." And while many people think of pumpkins as vegetables, they are, in fact, fruits—members of the squash family known as Cucurbitaceae, which includes cucumbers, melons, and other squashes. Pumpkins belong to a vast and diverse family that thrives in various climates and conditions. Incredibly, pumpkins are grown on every continent except Antarctica, adapting to diverse environments and cultures around the globe.

Pumpkins require full sun and well-drained soil to mature, which typically takes between 85 to 125 days from sprouting. These large, sprawling vines can produce multiple pumpkins, with each fruit containing roughly 500 seeds. But pumpkins don't just come in the iconic orange hue; they can be found in a variety of colors including white, red, green, and even blue. Some pumpkin varieties like Baby Bear, Ghost Rider, and Sweetie Pie are known for their unique appearances, while the Atlantic Giant variety can grow to enormous sizes.

The largest pumpkin ever recorded weighed a staggering 2,624 pounds, grown in Belgium in 2016. In the U.S., the record sits at an impressive 2,528 pounds, grown in New Hampshire in 2018. Some Atlantic Giant pumpkins are capable of growing up to 50 pounds a day! However, it's important to note that while the gigantic pumpkins grown for competitions are technically edible, they aren't very tasty. Smaller sugar pumpkins are the preferred choice for making pies and other delicious dishes.

From root to flower, every part of the pumpkin is edible, making it one of the most versatile crops. The yellow-orange flowers that bloom on pumpkin vines are not just pretty; they're also edible and often used in salads or fried as a tasty treat. The skin, leaves, and even the stem of pumpkins can be used in cooking. For example, in some cultures, pumpkin flowers are a delicacy, served raw, fried, or stuffed.

Historically, Native Americans found even more uses for pumpkins. Hollowed-out pumpkins were used as bowls for storage, and settlers would weave flattened strips of pumpkin shells into mats. Today, pumpkins are

most commonly used for their flesh in soups, pies, and breads.

Pumpkins are not only beautiful and versatile; they are also nutritional powerhouses. Their iconic orange color is due to high levels of beta-carotene, a powerful antioxidant that the body converts into vitamin A. This vitamin is crucial for maintaining healthy eyesight, skin, and a strong immune system. Eating pumpkin, whether in soups, breads, or pies, can help boost your health, especially during the colder months when our bodies need an extra dose of nutrients.

Surprisingly, pumpkins contain more potassium than bananas, making them a great choice for supporting heart health and regulating blood pressure. And if you're looking for a low-calorie snack, pumpkins are an excellent option—they're made up of about 90% water, making them filling yet light.

Pumpkin seeds, also known as pepitas, are another hidden gem of this fruit. Packed with protein, fiber, and essential minerals like magnesium, potassium, and zinc, these tiny seeds are a nutritional powerhouse in their own right. Rich in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, pumpkin seeds are beneficial for heart health and have even been linked to reducing the risk of certain cancers.

Native Americans were among the first to recognize the medicinal properties of pumpkin seeds. They used them not only as a food source but also as a remedy for various ailments, including kidney infections, bladder irritation, and even snakebites. Today, pumpkin seeds are roasted and eaten as a snack, added to salads, or ground into sauces, continuing a tradition of culinary and medicinal use that stretches back centuries. Pumpkins may help keep our blood sugar in check. Some scientists are looking into how the natural compounds in pumpkins could help people who have diabetes by helping them regulate their blood sugar levels. And here's the most exciting part: there's ongoing research that shows pumpkins might even play a role in fighting off certain types of cancer. Studies suggest that the antioxidants found in pumpkins could help slow the growth of cancer cells. While more research is still needed, it's clear that pumpkins are much more than a tasty fall treat—they might just be a superfood in disguise!

Beyond their culinary uses, pumpkins have been employed in various practical ways throughout history. Native Americans hollowed out pumpkins to use as bowls for storage, and early American settlers wove strips of dried pumpkin shells into mats. Pumpkins were also a crucial part of early American diets, and the Pilgrims learned to cultivate and cook them from the Native Americans, who had been growing and eating pumpkins long before the arrival of European settlers.

So next time you see a pumpkin, take a moment to appreciate the wonders it represents. Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

## CAN YOU DAVEN FOR ME?

It was Erev Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. R' Shlomo Friedman took his eight-year-old daughter, Hadassah, to visit the Rosh Yeshivah in North Plainfield, Rav Elya Meir Sorotzkin, for a berachah. At the time, the Rosh Yeshivah was already battling a serious illness but almost never indicated to his talmidim that he was unwell. R' Elya Meir greeted his talmid warmly. "And how is the Rosh Yeshivah doing?" R' Shlomo asked. With his trademark smile, the Rosh Yeshivah exclaimed, "Haflei va'fele!" (incredible). When R' Shlomo then asked if the Rosh Yeshivah would be davening at the amud, R' Elya Meir answered in the affirmative.

So far, the conversation was progressing exactly as R' Shlomo would have expected, with the Rosh Yeshivah acting as if he were robust and healthy, without giving any indication of illness or weakness. Then suddenly, the conversation shifted, leaving R' Shlomo with a lifelong lesson. The Rosh Yeshivah bent his head toward young Hadassah Friedman and asked her, "What is your name?" "Hadassah," she replied shyly. "And how old are you?" "Eight." "Do you know which Yom Tov is coming?" "Rosh Hashanah," she answered. "You know, Hadassah," the Rosh Yeshivah began to explain to the child, on her level, what Rosh Hashanah is all about. "On Rosh Hashanah, everything will be decided. Rosh Hashanah is the Yom HaDin. On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem decides whether someone will be healthy or sick, strong or weak, whether he will earn a living... That is why tefillah, davening, is so important on Rosh Hashanah. "Do you know," the Rosh Yeshivah continued, "how valuable your tefillos are on Rosh Hashanah? Let me tell you how valuable they are. You know, Hadassah, when I daven, when your father davens, or even when the Gadol Hador davens on Rosh Hashanah, their tefillos are not as special as the tefillos that YOU daven to Him. Yes, Hashem loves and values your tefillos, and the tefillos of all Yiddishe kinderlach, even more than the tefillos of the Gadol Hador." Looking her in the eye, the Rosh Yeshivah then said, "Can I ask you for a favor? I need a refuah sheleimah. My name is Eliyohu Meir ben Rochel. Can you daven for me for a refuah sheleimah? I am asking you because I know that your tefillos are the best tefillos that I can possibly get!"

R' Shlomo continued the story. It was nearly three years later when the Rosh Yeshivah took a terrible turn for the worse. After hearing the news, I came home and told my wife, 'The Rosh Yeshivah is not doing well.' Suddenly, my daughter (who was already ten) piped up, 'You mean Eliyohu Meir ben Rochel?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'how do you know his name?' 'What do you mean?' she asked in surprise. 'I daven for him every day, just like he asked me to!'



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the widow who asked to make an appeal, Rabbi Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok, Devarim, page 327) writes that we find in the Gemara (Bava Kama 113a) that Rav Nachman taught when people come to the Yarchei Kallah, a semi-annual learning event, they should not be summoned to Beis Din while they are there. This is because if people think they might be summoned to Beis Din, they will be discouraged from attending the Yarchei Kallah. Rabbi Zilberstein applies this same principle here: if, after promising that no fundraising appeals would be made, an appeal is still made, people may be reluctant to attend future learning events. Therefore, we should avoid making a public appeal. Instead, the president should privately seek donors for the widow. If this is not possible, a significant donation should be given from the shul's funds. However, he should not go against his word by making a public appeal.

Rabbi and Mrs. Eliyahu Shuman with their extended family wish their fellow TableTalk readers and the entire Baltimore community

כתיבה וחתימה טובה



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