



## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### SELLING THE FREE BOOKS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Avrohom decided to undertake a project to serve as an *ilui neshama* (an elevation for the souls) of his deceased parents. He purchased boxes of a popular new *sefer* (book) written by a renowned halachic authority and distributed them to various shuls across the city. On each box, he noted that the books were free for the taking and asked that people keep his parents in mind as they studied from the *sefarim*. One of these boxes, placed in Yoni's shul, contained about 30 books. Yoni observed for two weeks as congregants picked up the books, only to put them back down. During that time, only one or two books were taken, while the rest sat untouched, gathering dust. Seeing this, Yoni came up with an idea.



### TALKING TO HIS HANDS

After successfully chasing the four mighty kings who had just conquered Sodom and the neighboring cities, Avraham returns home. He stops off in Yerushalayim to give ten percent of the booty to Malki Tzedek, who is Shem the son of Noach, who was a *kohein* to HaShem. When he finally gets home with all the booty the king of Sodom greets him and asks Avraham to return the captive Sodomites to him and offers the booty to Avraham. Avraham responds to the king's offer that he cannot take anything from him. "I raised my hands to HaShem, the Master of Heaven and Earth. If I will take even a shoe-lace from you, you will say 'it is I who made Avraham wealthy'."

We must ask why would the king of Sodom claim that he made Avraham wealthy? Although that booty originally belonged to the king, it was taken away by the four kings with no hope of ever retrieving it. Avraham won the battle and is the deserving owner of the booty. And if Avraham is afraid that the king would make a false claim anyway, is that a reason not to take what rightfully belongs to him?

Before the Malbim explains Avraham's response he asks what does Avraham mean when he says that he is "raising his hands to HaShem".

He explains Avraham's response as follows. Before responding to the king, Avraham identifies who the true victor of the battle was. While it is true that Avraham and his men were the warriors who fought on the ground against the four kings, however, the one who brought them victory was HaShem. The

He reasoned that the person who had placed these books likely intended for them to be used rather than left idle. So, Yoni took the remaining books and brought them to the largest Beis Midrash (study hall) in the city, where such books were in high demand. He placed a sign near the box that read, "Amazing price, only 50 shekels," and put the books up for sale.

Within minutes, the books sold out like hot cakes, and Yoni made 1,500 shekels. He thought, "Now the books are being used as intended, and this will surely be an ilui neshama for the people in whose memory they were distributed".

When Yoni got home, he showed the money to his wife. She asked, "Are you sure you can keep the money? Perhaps you can't keep it. The books were meant to be given away for free, not taken and sold."

But Yoni argued, "There was no specific rule saying I couldn't take them and sell them. Besides, what good were they doing just sitting in the shul? At least now they are being read and appreciated." They decided to bring the question to a Rav. Was it permissible for him to keep the money, or should he use it in another way?

What do you think he should do?

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booty belongs to the victor. The one who wins the battle is the one who takes the booty. It does not go to the foot soldiers but to the general. Avraham lifts his hands pointing them upward, indicating who won the battle.

Before Avraham responds to the king's offer he makes a clear statement that "I raised my hands to HaShem", I point to HaShem as the true victor and not myself. As for myself, how could I have succeeded in chasing these four mighty kings who have a long list of captured cities on their resume? It was clearly HaShem. My men and I are but foot soldiers.

Avraham continues his response by talking to his hands that he raised up saying "I will not take a shoelace from you (from his hands) lest you will say it is I (the hands) who made Avraham wealthy." In other words, Avraham turned

to his own hands saying that if he were to take any booty for himself it would be a statement of his deserving to be the rightful owner of the booty. Such a statement would be tantamount to claiming that he was the victor and it was not HaShem Who was the true victor.

When Avraham brought the gifts to Malki Tzedek, Malki Tzedek gave a bracha to HaShem for granting this miraculous victory to Avraham. His bracha was that when HaShem blessed Avraham with victory it was also a blessing for HaShem. When the recipient ascribes his success and his victory to the Source of that victory it becomes a blessing for HaShem. It is a blessing for HaShem when the world recognizes Him as the world Sovereign.

Considering our Land, our people and our current situation, may HaShem bless His people and may His people bless Him. May we be blessed and may He be blessed.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION WHIRLPOOLS AND MAELSTROMS

Have you ever stood by a bathtub and noticed a whirlpool form as the water swirls down the drain? These whirlpools also occur naturally in large bodies of water and are among nature's most captivating phenomena. When a whirlpool becomes large and powerful, it earns the impressive name maelstrom. Throughout history, whirlpools have captured human imagination. Ancient stories often described them as gateways to unknown worlds or homes to fearsome sea monsters. Even today, whirlpools evoke a mix of awe and mystery. Let's dive into the world of these swirling waters and uncover their wonders!

What exactly is a Whirlpool? A whirlpool is more than just swirling water; it's a natural dance created when opposing currents meet or when a current collides with an obstacle. This energetic interaction spins the water around a central point, forming a vortex. Now, imagine this on a grander scale—that's a maelstrom! The word maelstrom has Dutch roots, with *malen* meaning "to grind" and *stroom* meaning "stream." It perfectly describes the powerful, grinding swirl of these water giants. Not all whirlpools are found in the sea; lakes and rivers can also host smaller yet intriguing whirlpools. In fact, whirlpools can form after heavy rainfall when excess water drains rapidly into a stream or river, creating mini-vortices that mirror their larger oceanic counterparts.

**Why Does a Whirlpool Have Suction?** The center of a whirlpool is known as the vortex core. The pressure at this core is lower than in the surrounding water, which is why small debris or even sea creatures can be sucked down and trapped temporarily. However, in most natural whirlpools, this suction isn't strong enough to pull down large ships as many stories suggest.

**Earth's Most Famous Whirlpools.**

**Saltstraumen Maelstrom: (Bottom right)** Located near Bodø, Norway, this is the world's strongest maelstrom, with water speeds reaching up to 25 mph. The thundering currents here have fascinated onlookers and challenged adventurers for generations.

**Moskstraumen:** Situated just a bit further south between the Lofoten Islands of Moskenesøya and Mosken, this is the world's second-strongest whirlpool, with currents swirling at up to 20 mph. Norse legends believed that sea monsters lurked in these tumultuous waters, inspiring tales by Edgar Allan Poe and Jules Verne.

**Corryvreckan Whirlpool: (Bottom left)** Found off the Scottish coast between the islands of Jura and Scarba, this maelstrom produces waves that can tower over 30 feet and currents reaching 11 mph. Ancient sailors would steer clear, attributing its mighty roar to the breath of sea spirits.

**Old Sow Whirlpool: (Top)** North America's largest whirlpool, Old Sow, spins between Deer Island in New Brunswick and Moose Island in Maine. This whirlpool can stretch a dizzying 250 feet across—almost as wide as a football field.

**Whirlpool Accidents Through the Ages.** Whirlpools have long featured in sailors' tales, portrayed as monsters ready to swallow ships whole. While these legends often exaggerate the danger, whirlpools can still be hazardous. For example, in 1835, a schooner was reportedly swept into the depths of the Old Sow Whirlpool. In 1980, a drilling accident at Lake Peigneur in Louisiana created a massive whirlpool that pulled down trees, barges, and even land. More recently, in 2013, photographer Jacob Cockle tragically drowned while trying to film a whirlpool in England's Hayle Harbour. In 2024, three hikers were caught in a whirlpool near California's Kern River. These incidents remind us that while whirlpools can be beautiful, they demand respect and caution. Sailors and boaters are advised to steer clear of known whirlpool zones or navigate them with extreme care. Large ships, however, can usually cross them without trouble, despite legendary stories of ships being pulled under.

**Whirlpools and the World of Wildlife.** Despite their dramatic appearance, whirlpools aren't just about roaring waters; they're actually teeming with life. The swirling motion often concentrates nutrients, attracting fish and other marine animals for a feast. Fishermen have long known that waters near whirlpools can be prime spots for casting their nets. Small fish and creatures caught in a whirlpool's pull may become meals for larger predators lurking nearby. Even birds have learned to take advantage, swooping down for an easy catch as the whirlpool stirs up fish close to the surface.

**Whirlpools in Space?** Interestingly, whirlpools aren't exclusive to Earth. Astronomers have observed phenomena in space that resemble whirlpools, such as spiral galaxies with their swirling arms. These cosmic whirlpools, formed by gravity rather than water, still capture the swirling motion we see in Earth's oceans.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

**THE IRS ORDERED THE FIRM TO PAY HIM THE OWED MONEY PLUS EIGHTEEN YEARS' WORTH OF INTEREST, WHICH AMOUNTED TO FAR MORE THAN THE PRINCIPAL**

Rabbi David Ashear related the following story.

A man told me that once his business was going through a difficult period, at the same time that his daughter was to be married. He said that he has always had bitachon in Hashem, and during that difficult period, too, he trusted that Hashem would take care of his family's needs.

He made a respectable, though not lavish, wedding for his daughter, and then the bills started coming.

As he was going through the mail and trying to figure out how to pay the bills, there was one piece of mail that did not seem important and he was about to discard it. But then he decided to open it, and the envelope contained a check for nearly \$23,000. The check was from a firm for which he had worked years earlier, in 1995. The firm had recently been audited, and it was found that there was a certain refund due him that had never been paid. The IRS ordered the firm to pay him the owed money plus eighteen years' worth of interest, which amounted to far more than the principal.

Remarkably, eighteen years before the girl's wedding, when she was just an infant, Hashem was already arranging the means to provide the money for her wedding, and an audit took place eighteen years later so that the money would be there.



**THE ANSWER**

Regarding last week's question about the meat delivery driver, Rav Mordechai Shuchatowitz answered that Donny had a responsibility to disclose the fact that he worked for Hatzalah to his employer when applying for the job. He should not have waited to disclose this after accepting a time-sensitive delivery that he could not guarantee to complete on time. Similarly, Rav Akiva Meister stated that the employer has the right to require a reliable driver for the job and is not obligated to continue employing someone who cannot be dependable.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of Reb Pinchos Marder

**פנחס בן יצחק ז"ל**

By Tamar Marder

Reuven and Rachel Yablonovsky



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

