



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



MINYAN IN THE BASE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

I am writing this question from Eretz Yisrael (we are here for my daughter's chasuna, baruch Hashem), and I'd like to share a story with you that has particular relevance to Shabbos and Eretz Yisrael.

There was once a shul in a small settlement here in Israel whose ceiling collapsed. Thankfully, no one was hurt. However, the community needed a new place to daven. Someone who used to attend the shul mentioned that there was a nearby IDF army base that would be happy to host a minyan.

So a small group began going to the army base daily to form a minyan. Many soldiers, including some high-ranking officers, joined them. The minyan became a great source of inspiration, morale, and spiritual uplift for everyone on the base.



A DESIRE TO SACRIFICE

Our Parsha recounts the incident when our people “desired a desire... Who will give us meat to eat? We fondly remember the fish we ate in Egypt with cucumbers and onions But now our souls are dried up with nothing to eat but the manna”. Naturally, HaShem viewed this complaint most negatively. The complete lack of appreciation of what the Manna was and the incredible spiritual value it offered.

Just to digress a moment for the sake of our own appreciation of the value of the Manna; the Manna was essentially spiritual in nature, it was not an organic plant or creature from the material world. It came from the spiritual world. However, as it is with all members of the spiritual world, whenever they enter the world of physical reality they take on physical qualities. We find this with angels who enter this material world they carry a resemblance of human beings. So it was with the ‘food’ which angels eat in the spiritual world, when this food enters the material world it takes a physical form. It follows that people who are in tune with their elevated neshama get direct energy from this ‘angel food’.

When people ingest regular food from the material world they develop a connection and attraction to the material world. The material food can actually cause interference between the soul of the person and his connection to the spiritual world. Material food by its very nature conflicts with spirituality. Manna, on the other hand, which is angel food or spiritual food actually strengthens the bond between Man and the spiritual world.

We can appreciate why HaShem wanted the generation who would accept the Torah for the Jewish people should be people who ate Manna. Only people whose spiritual connection was strong could contain the gift of the Torah.

Initially, on Shabbos, the minyan participants would enter the base through a small side door. But as time went on, the guard at the front gate began recognizing the group and would open the main electronic front gate to let them in.

Eventually, this caused concern among the participants. While they were grateful for the minyan, they realized that by going through the main gate, the guard was operating an electronic door for them on Shabbos, which was a desecration of Shabbos.

They tried to explain to the guard that it wasn't necessary to open the main gate, and they preferred to enter through the side. However, the guard insisted on opening the main gate, saying it was disrespectful for them to have to make the effort to walk to the side entrance .

So now, the group faced a dilemma regarding whether they should continue coming to the base on Shabbos. On one hand, the minyan was bringing tremendous spiritual benefit to the base. On the other hand, their presence was inadvertently causing another Jew to violate Shabbos on their behalf.

They asked Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein if they should discontinue the minyan at the army base or look for a new location.

What do you think?

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Let us go back and consider the people's complaints for meat. Why did they desire to eat meat? If they were so connected to the spiritual world from where did they get such a strong desire?

Let us read the verse again; "and the people desired a desire...". The verse itself indicates that the people actually did not desire meat. Quite to the contrary, they desired a desire to eat meat. They remembered with great nostalgia how wonderful it was to eat the fish in Egypt. You can be certain that Jewish slaves were not eating delicious fish. But you could also be certain that the smelly fish that they ate was eaten with great relish and a strong appetite. Now, in the desert when their diet consists of Manna, which has no material basis and is spiritual in nature and the people's souls are inspired for more spirituality, nobody has any appetite for a juicy steak.

The Torah is telling us that the people did not desire meat, they desired a desire for meat. But why? If they were so connected to the spiritual world why would they want to have an appetite? The

pleasures of spiritual fulfillment far exceed the pleasures of material fulfillment. Why would they care to have a material appetite?

The Sfas Emes explains that the people wanted to serve HaShem with an element of self-sacrifice. They wanted to demonstrate their commitment to HaShem by giving up personal pleasures for the sake of HaShem. However, since the Manna depleted all material pleasures by enhancing their connection to the spiritual world, they had no pleasures to give up for HaShem. This is why they desired a desire; they wanted to sacrifice their desires for HaShem. They were looking for a challenge. Without meat in their diet there was no challenge. We now must ask that if their intent was purely to enhance their service of HaShem what did they do wrong?

The Sfas Emes explains that although they wanted a challenge to demonstrate their dedication to HaShem, nevertheless, a person should never place himself in a challenge. When considering the consequence of failing a challenge and the subsequent disappointment to HaShem's expectation one should never welcome a challenge. Our goal is not to overcome challenges, it is to do our best in avoiding disappointing HaShem.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE MYDAS HEROS, THE BIGGEST FLY

Imagine taking a stroll through a sunny South American forest and hearing a deep, buzzing sound slice through the air. You glance up, and there it is, a massive insect, nearly the size of your index finger or a Hot Wheels car, zipping by with the speed and precision of a rocket. You might jump back in surprise, thinking it must be some kind of giant killer wasp! But fear not. That enormous, fearsome-looking flier is actually a harmless and fascinating creature. Meet *Mydas heros*, also known as *Gauromydas heros*, the biggest fly on the planet and one of nature's most masterful mimics.

Let's zoom in on the marvelous life of this gentle giant and explore just how surprising, sneaky, and spectacular the world's largest fly really is. Compared to the houseflies and tiny gnats we're used to, *Mydas heros* is a true colossus. It can grow up to 7 centimeters long, about the size of an adult human finger, with a wingspan reaching nearly 10 centimeters, about as wide as the palm of your hand. That makes it more than 20 times the size of a common housefly.

Holding the record as the largest true fly ever discovered, this sky-sailing insect looks more like a creature from a prehistoric jungle than something buzzing around our present-day world.

But while its size is impressive, its appearance is even more astonishing. One glance, and it's easy to mistake *Mydas heros* for a wasp, not just any wasp, but one of the big, fearsome ones like the tarantula hawk. Its sleek black body is striped with bright orange or yellow bands that practically shout "Warning! Dangerous!" This flashy coloration helps it stand out and scare off predators.

Here's the trick: *Mydas heros* doesn't have a stinger. It doesn't even bite. In fact, it can't. This fly is all show and no sting. Its bold look is a bluff known as Batesian mimicry, where a harmless animal pretends to be a harmful one to avoid being eaten. Even the way it flies mimics the fast, darting movements of a real stinging wasp.

The disguise doesn't stop with its coloring. When threatened, *Mydas heros* lifts its pointed abdomen high and jabs it in the air, pretending to sting. It's like an actor playing a role so well that even the audience, whether bird or human, is fooled.

Imagine a hungry lizard darting toward the fly, only to slam on the brakes when it sees what it thinks is a wasp about to strike. That moment of hesitation is all the fly needs to escape into the sky. What a performance.

Despite its fierce image, the adult *Mydas heros* is a peaceful pollinator. Instead of hunting prey, it floats from flower to flower, sipping sweet nectar and nibbling on pollen, just like bees and butterflies. This behavior makes it an unexpected garden helper, spreading pollen as it feeds and helping plants grow.

Interestingly, the males do most of the flower-visiting. The females, however, skip meals entirely. A female *Mydas heros* is born with all the energy she'll need to lay her eggs. Once she emerges as an adult, her one goal is to find the right spot to place those eggs. Her time as a winged adult is very short, sometimes just a few days.

Before they ever fly, *Mydas heros* larvae live an entirely different life underground, and it's full of surprises. Tiny, white, and grub-like, the

larval *Mydas heros* is a stealthy predator. These young flies live in soil, rotting wood, or, most amazingly, inside the trash piles of leafcutter ant nests. That's right. These giant flies raise their young inside bustling underground ant colonies. But the larvae don't bother the ants. Instead, they live quietly in the ants' waste chambers, feeding on beetle grubs and other small insects that lurk in the debris. Scientists believe this relationship is actually beneficial: the fly larvae clean up unwanted pests, and the ants hardly notice they're there. It's a perfect example of how even the strangest living arrangements in nature can work out beautifully. While adult *Mydas heros* live just a few fleeting days or weeks, their time as larvae stretches on, sometimes for up to three years. Hidden in the dark, they munch and grow, slowly preparing for their incredible transformation. Eventually, the larva builds a protective case called a pupa. Inside, it changes shape entirely and later emerges as the winged giant we've come to admire. This dramatic makeover is called complete metamorphosis. All that time in the soil leads to just a moment in the sun. No wonder seeing an adult *Mydas heros* is such a rare and special event.

If you're hoping to spot a *Mydas heros* in the wild, bring your patience, and a bit of luck. Even insect scientists can go their whole careers without seeing one in person. The flies emerge during a very limited time of year, and not many appear at once. But if you're in the right place at the right time, especially in the warm, dry habitats of Brazil, Bolivia, or Paraguay, you might just glimpse one buzzing by. They favor sandy or grassy areas where they can soak up the sun and where their larvae will have plenty of soil to dig into.

If you ever do spot one, consider it like discovering a hidden treasure of the insect world.

Look closely, and *Mydas heros* offers even more surprises. Its hind legs are thick, spiny, and strong, perfect for a quick takeoff or maybe even kicking away a predator. These leg "weapons" add to the wasp illusion and might just save the fly in a pinch.

Then there are the antennae. Unlike the feathery or thread-like antennae of most flies, *Mydas heros* has clubbed antennae with little knobs on the ends, much like a butterfly. Some scientists even think this odd trait helped inspire the insect's name, since the knobs stick out like donkey ears, just like the ones King Midas received in a Greek myth as punishment for having the judgment of a fool. There is another reason why it's named Midas. The golden-orange coloring on the fly's body reminded early scientists of the legendary king who turned everything he touched into gold. It's almost as if this fly was touched by King Midas himself and turned to gold.

Mydas heros might look scary, but it's actually one of our beneficial bug buddies. Its larvae help control pest insects that could damage crops or gardens, and the adults help pollinate flowers. It plays two helpful roles: predator below ground, pollinator above.

At every stage of life, this fly serves its ecosystem, and fools a few predators along the way.

Thank you, Hashem, for your wondrous world.

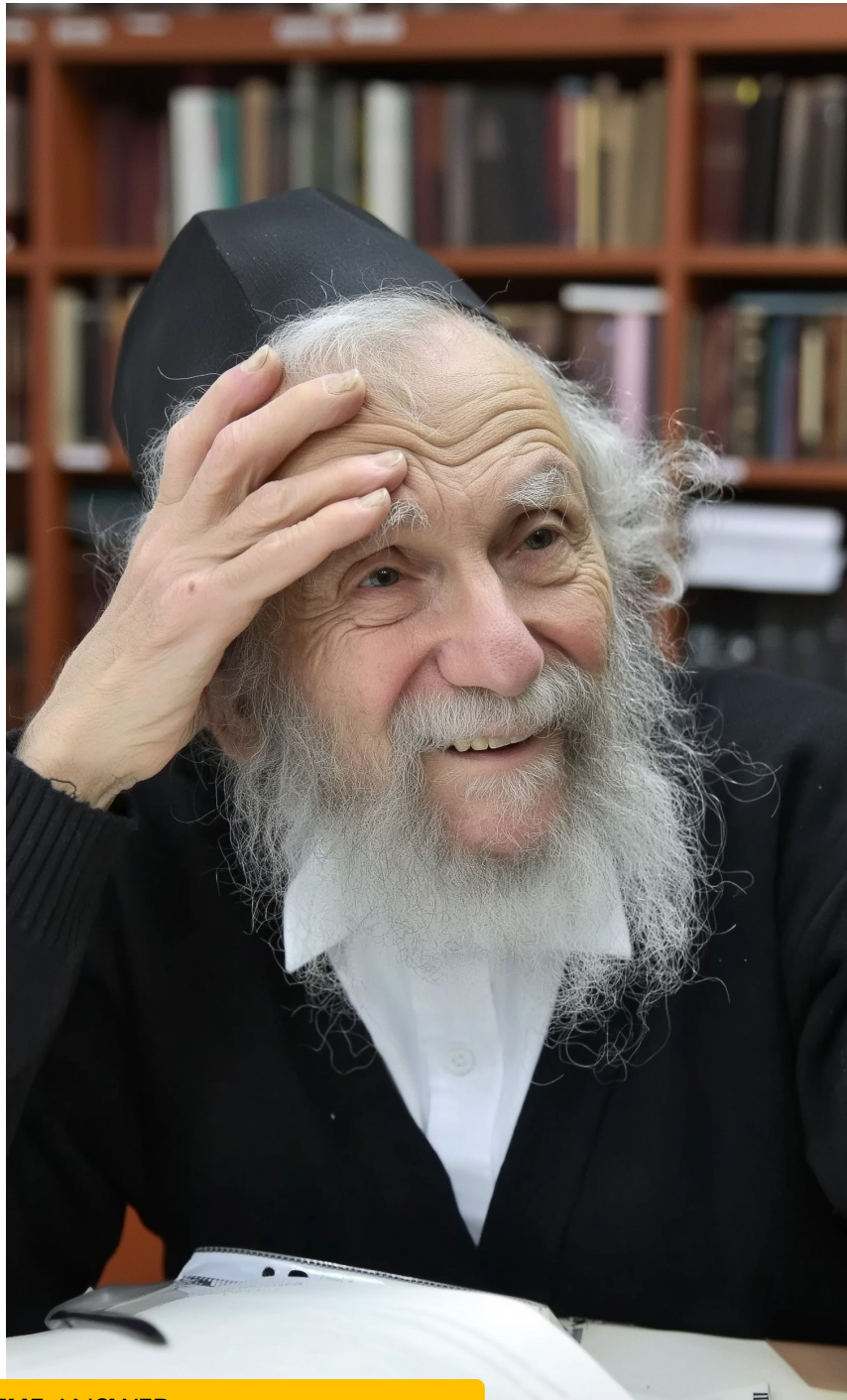
Thank you to my friend and neighbor Yaakov Muller for this fantastic idea!

IF HE ASKED FOR A BRACHA WE WANT ONE TOO

One Friday, Rav Yaakov Edelstein (the chief rabbi of Ramat HaSharon who was the brother of the Ponevitch Rosh Yeshiva Rav Gershon Edelstein) traveled to Bnei Brak for Shabbos. The taxi driver who came to drive him from his house in Ramat HaSharon was shirtless and wearing shorts. Rav Edelstein didn't say a word. On the contrary, when they arrived at their destination in Bnei Brak, in the neighborhood of Ne'ot Yosef the driver helped Rav Edelstein carry his things up the stairs to the apartment where he would be staying. Afterward, they went back downstairs, and Rav Edelstein turned to the driver and asked, in front of the surprised gazes of passersby and neighbors, that the driver give him a brachah before Shabbos.

It was a sight to see. There, in the heart of Bnei Brak, stood the elderly, prominent Rav, his head bent under the hands of a taxi driver from Ramat HaSharon who looked like he had just left the beach. The sight was so incongruous that several minutes afterward, the driver was surrounded by neighbors who came to him asking for a bracha as well. "If Rav Edelstein asked for a bracha," they said, "we want one, too."

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the stolen car and insurance, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed, Bava Kama 247) says that according to the Machaneh Efraim, the borrower is still responsible to pay. However, according to the Ohr Sameach, he would be exempt. As for what to do in practice, Rav Zilberstein says that this is a tzarich iyun (requires further study).

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of
Alexander ben Meir
by his brothers Boris and Roman Malachevsky



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