



## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE PLUMBER & COFFEE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Zev, who owned an apartment in Israel, received a call from Avi, his tenant. Avi reported that a pipe had burst in the apartment and needed emergency repairs.

As was standard, Zev, as the landlord, was responsible for major repairs. He told Avi, “No problem. I know a very good plumber—very talented, with excellent reviews. He’s an Arab, and he can come by tomorrow morning.”

Avi responded, “Thanks for sending him, but no one will be home tomorrow morning. My wife and I will both be out, and I don’t want him alone in the house, so that won’t work.”

Zev said, “No problem. I’ll come with him and stay while he works.”

Avi agreed.

The next morning, Zev came with the plumber, whose name was Fadi. Fadi began the repairs and seemed competent and professional. In the middle of his work, Fadi asked, “Would you mind making



### THERE IS NO SONG

In Psalm 137, the Psalmist illustrates the sentiment of the Jewish people living in Bavel after Persia conquered the Babylonians. Our people were already living comfortably and were well established. Their neighbors, the local native citizens, asked members of our people to sing the songs of Jerusalem. To this, our people answered, “How can we sing the songs of HaShem on foreign soil?” “If I forget Yerushalayim, may my right hand forget its skill. If I do not remember her on my happy occasions, may my tongue cling to my palate.”

Malbim describes the setting of this conversation as taking place 70 years into the Babylonian exile. Our people were comfortably settled and well established. In explaining what the neighbors were requesting, Malbim notes that every nation has songs expressing their glory and national success. These songs reflect their economic strength, military prowess, and political power—areas they view as essential to their national identity. Therefore, their national anthems and songs reflect these themes. For example, some American songs include America the Beautiful, This Land Is Your Land, and others.

The Babylonians turned to their Jewish neighbors and asked them to share the songs they sang when Israel was a world power, when they experienced their own national success. “Surely you must have had songs reflecting your national glory. So sing them for us now, here in Bavel, as you continue to experience greatness in your new land.”

me a cup of hot Turkish coffee?"

Zev looked around the kitchen but couldn't find any Turkish coffee. He told Fadi, "I'm sorry, there's none here." Fadi replied, "I'm so tired, I'd do anything for some Turkish coffee."

Wanting the plumber to do a good job and be in good spirits, Zev said, "No problem. There's a café on the corner. I'll be right back."

Zev went, bought a large hot Turkish coffee, and returned to the apartment. But when he arrived, the door was slightly open. Fadi was gone. The apartment looked like it had been ransacked. Upon closer inspection, it became clear that Fadi had stolen everything of value, jewelry, cash, and more, and disappeared.

Zev felt terrible. This was exactly what Avi had feared. He called Avi and explained what had happened, apologizing sincerely.

Avi replied, "Thanks for letting me know. So I assume you'll be covering the damages?"

Zev said, "I'm happy to pay what I'm obligated to, but I'm not sure I'm actually liable. I wasn't being paid to watch the place. I was more like a shomer chinam, an unpaid guardian. According to halacha, a shomer chinam isn't responsible for theft."

Avi disagreed. "I wouldn't have agreed to let him in if you hadn't said you'd stay with him. You left him alone. That's negligence. I think you are responsible."

They decided to take the question to a Rav.

So what do you think? Is Zev, the landlord, liable to pay for everything that was stolen by the plumber?

On one hand, he brought the plumber in and left him alone, which seems clearly negligent. On the other hand, he never explicitly accepted financial responsibility. Also, arguably he's not liable under the rules of shomer chinam. Maybe, at most, it's grama, indirect causation, which doesn't always carry liability.

What's the halacha? Should Zev have to pay for all of the loss?

## MITZVA MEME



As Malbim continues to explain their response, he describes how sad and forlorn our people were.

The Jewish people define success in very different terms than the rest of the world. While the nations of the world identify success through material wealth and physical power, we, the people of HaShem, define success in spiritual terms. Our success is when our hearts are bound in fear and love of HaShem. We are proud when our youth choose the path of morality and justice. We strive to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

The response of those Babylonian Jews to their neighbors was, "How can we sing the song of HaShem"—

referring to our yearning and striving toward HaShem—"on foreign soil?" The native Babylonians had no understanding of what our song was. They simply wouldn't get it.

The Jews continued, almost speaking to themselves: "If I forget Yerushalayim" i.e. if I forget how to define the songs of Yerushalayim "may my right hand forget its skill. If I do not mention her on my joyous occasions" i.e. if joy is defined only by material accomplishments "then may my tongue cling to my palate."

Our ancestors, speaking in Psalm 137, recognized that as we endure the long exile, we might begin to adopt the mindset of our neighbors. We might start to sing songs of material blessing and lose sight of the songs of HaShem, which define us as His people.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**





## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### THE SUPERB LYREBIRD, THE BIRD THAT SOUNDS LIKE EVERYTHING

In Australia's southeastern rainforests, there lives a bird so mysterious, so dazzling, and so talented that it can copy the voices of the forest, and even sounds far beyond it. Meet the superb lyrebird.

Let's start with the name, lyrebird. No, it's not because it tells fibs! The name comes from the male bird's spectacular tail feathers. When he's trying to impress a female, he fans them out in a display that looks like an ancient musical instrument called a lyre, once played by the poets of ancient Greece.

But the tail isn't just for show. It's part of an entire performance. During courtship season, the male doesn't just look good, he sounds amazing. From a raised mound on the forest floor, he struts, sings, and dances in a display that can last up to 20 minutes. And the sounds he makes? Well, get ready to be amazed.

Most birds chirp, squawk, or sing their own tunes. Not the superb lyrebird. He's more like a one-bird band. He can mimic over 20 different bird species in a single performance. Bellbirds, kookaburras, cockatoos, you name it, he can fake it.

But wait, there's more. These birds don't stop with the wildlife. Superb lyrebirds are famous for mimicking mammals like koalas and dingoes, and even humans. That's right, human laughter, voices, and even the sound of crying babies have made their way into a lyrebird's setlist.

And then there's the truly wild stuff: chainsaws, camera shutters, car alarms, hammering nails, video game gunfire, and even jackhammers. Where do they learn these? Lyrebirds living near cities, zoos, or construction sites pick up sounds from their environment, and repeat them with stunning accuracy. Some mimicry is so perfect that even the original species gets fooled!

What makes this mimicry so jaw-droppingly good? The secret lies in the bird's anatomy. Unlike parrots, which use a single vocal organ called a syrinx, lyrebirds have a dual syrinx, meaning they can produce two different sounds at the same time. That's like a person being able to whistle one tune and hum another, at the same time! It also lets them create amazing layered sounds and even mimic the feeling of an entire flock of birds panicking.

Some male lyrebirds have been seen creating what scientists call acoustic illusions, playing alarm calls of many birds at once to trick a female into thinking danger is near. She stays close, and he gets a better chance at impressing her.

Lyrebirds don't hatch knowing all these amazing sounds. They learn from their surroundings, including other lyrebirds. Young lyrebirds often start with messy or simple versions of calls, improving over time. It takes six to eight years for a male to become a true virtuoso. That's a long apprenticeship in the world of birds, but worth it in the end. Older males often have the most diverse and convincing vocal libraries in the forest.

And just like people from different places speak in different accents, lyrebird populations develop regional dialects. One area's lyrebirds might sound slightly different from another's, depending

on the local birds, animals, and human noises they've been exposed to.

Superb lyrebirds aren't just cool because of their songs. Lyrebirds are powerful diggers, using strong legs and claws to scratch through leaf litter on the forest floor in search of insects, spiders, and worms. All that scratching does more than find lunch, it aerates the soil, spreads seeds, and recycles nutrients, helping the rainforest stay healthy. In this way, lyrebirds are ecosystem engineers, shaping their environment as they go about their day.

You might expect a bird this flashy to be brightly colored, but lyrebirds are dressed in subtle shades of brown and gray. Their plumage blends in perfectly with the forest floor, helping them avoid predators like foxes and feral cats.

Despite their camouflage, superb lyrebirds are among the largest songbirds in the world, measuring up to 3.3 feet from beak to tail tip. Most of that length comes from the male's showy tail, made up of 16 feathers, including two lyre-shaped outer feathers, two central "wires," and twelve lacy, veiled plumes that shimmer during display.

Because of their uniqueness, lyrebirds are honored throughout Australia. You can spot one on the 10-cent coin and even the \$100 banknote, a tribute to their role in the nation's natural and cultural heritage.

Lyrebirds can live up to 30 years in the wild, which gives them plenty of time to refine their songs and pass on what they've learned. This long lifespan also means that the mimicry of older birds can influence the forest soundscape for decades, echoing across generations.

Over the years, the superb lyrebird has inspired some truly wild stories, and some of them are actually true!

At the Adelaide Zoo, a captive lyrebird named Chook became famous for mimicking the sounds of construction tools like drills and hammers during the building of a panda enclosure. Long after the workers left, Chook continued performing his construction concert, much to the amusement (and perhaps annoyance) of zoo staff.

And who could forget Echo, the lyrebird at Taronga Zoo who went viral for mimicking the sound of a crying baby? Visitors couldn't believe their ears. "That's not a baby, it's a bird!" became the punchline in online videos that introduced the world to this feathered funnyman.

With their incredible mimicry, the superb lyrebird has no true rival. Parrots are talented mimics, yes, but mostly of speech and household sounds. Mockingbirds can mimic bird songs but rarely venture beyond the natural world. Only the lyrebird has mastered the art of both natural and artificial sounds, creating performances that are equal parts musical, mysterious, and mind-blowing. It might just be nature's greatest impersonator.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

**THIS MONEY COULD INFLUENCE ME NOT TO DO MY JOB RIGHT. THAT'S NOT PARNASSAH. THAT'S A BRIBE.**

Rav Zevy Golombeck told the following powerful story. My brother-in-law once came to my father's home a few days before Pesach. My father said, "I can't even afford basic necessities for Pesach. I'm going to have to borrow money." They were sitting together, talking about where to borrow from.

While they were discussing it, there was a knock on the door. A parent of one of my father's talmidim, my father was the mashgiach ruchani in the Philadelphia Yeshiva, walked in and said, "Pesach is coming, and I know the hanhalah needs help. So I'm giving you checks for all the rebbeim. But because you put in extra effort for my child, I'm giving you a double check."

My brother-in-law was amazed. Hashgacha pratis! They were just discussing how my father didn't have money, and in walks someone handing him exactly what he needs, double.

But after the man left, my father took the stack of checks, found the two that had his name on them, and tore them to shreds. My brother-in-law was shocked. "What are you doing? You just said you need the money!"

My father said, "I do need the money. But when HaKadosh Baruch Hu decreed how much money I'll make on Rosh Hashanah, He didn't have this in mind. Why? Because my job as mashgiach is to give mussar to the talmidim. If a parent gives me money, I might not treat his son properly. Let's say his son deserves a mussar shmuess—I might hold back because I feel indebted. That's called shochad. That's not fair. I must treat every talmid equally. This money could influence me not to do my job right. That's not parnassah. That's a bribe. And this is not what was meant for me on Rosh Hashanah. I'll find another way to pay for Pesach."

How do we understand such clarity?

There's only one answer: someone who lives with real emunah and bitachon. Someone who sees money not as a goal, not as a value in itself, but simply as a cheftza—a tool to serve Hashem.

And that's how he paskened, this money would not bring him closer to Hashem, it would pull him further. So he rejected it.



**THE ANSWER**

**Regarding last week's question about the Crocs, Brooklyn posek, Rabbi Moshe Yosef Weiner answered as follows: He said that the responsibility for the sale of two separate Crocs really lies with the seller, not the buyer. Technically, the buyer would not have to pay anything. However, in order to avoid the seller holding a grudge against the buyer, it would be best for the buyer to pacify him by offering to pay for half of the second pair.**

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in memory of  
**Blanche Sherman**  
**Rivka bat Shmuel Wolf**  
whose 49th yartzeit is the 7th of Av.

By Rosalyn and Franklyn Snitow, her grandchildren, great grandchildren, great great grandchildren and her great great granddaughter.



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