



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



MAZEL TUV ON
YOUR JOYUS WEDING.
MAY YOU ONLY HAVE
CONTINYOOD
NACHIS.

THE TYPOS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses Bikurim, one of the sources for the mitzvah of expressing gratitude. That brings us to the following true story:

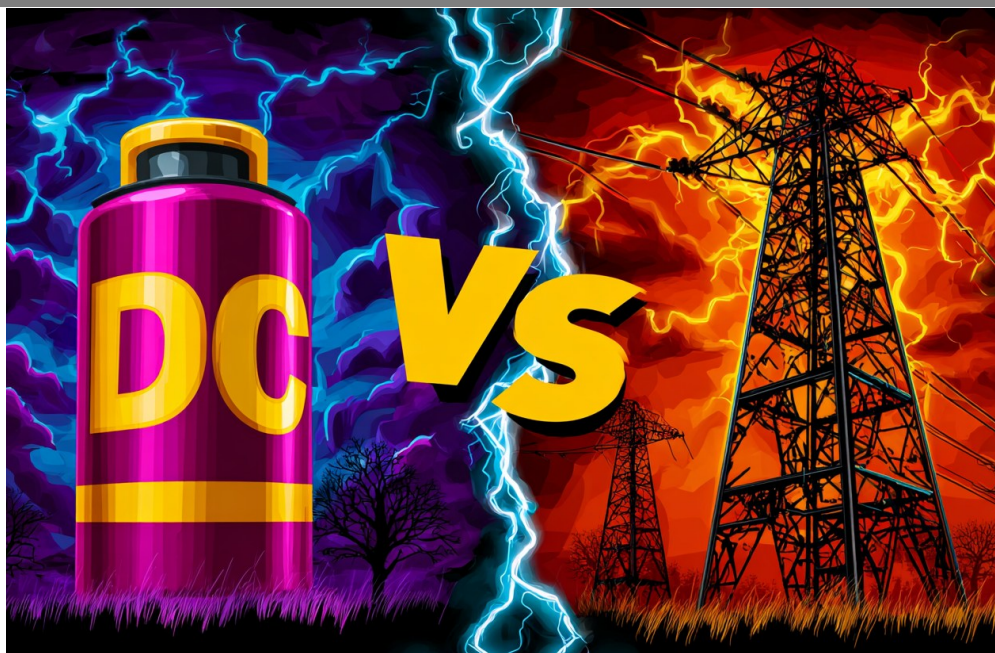
One day, Mordechai asked his neighbor, Yaakov, "Are you going to the Greenberg wedding tonight?"

"Yes," Yaakov replied.

"I really wanted to go," Mordechai said, "but I'll be out of town. Could I trouble you to bring this envelope to the chosson's father?"

"Of course, I'd be happy to," Yaakov answered.

The envelope was clearly a wedding gift. On the back, a short letter was written. That night, Yaakov attended the wedding.



DC vs AC

Moshe tells his people in this week's Parsha, "Every day we should see the Torah as if it was given today" (26:16, Rashi). The Sfás Emes asks: how can Moshe say this when the Torah was actually given over 3,000 years ago?

Koheles (Ecclesiastes) teaches that "there is nothing new under the Sun." Here, the Sun represents Nature—its cycles, patterns, and predictability. Nature constantly renews itself outwardly: a puppy is born, grows, gives birth, and the cycle repeats. Although today's puppy may seem new, the larger pattern remains unchanged. In the realm of Nature, all things repeat. Nothing here is fundamentally new; it merely appears so because it hasn't happened to us before.

However, Koheles is careful: "under the Sun"—in the domain of Nature—nothing is new. But if we look "above the Sun," in the realm of HaShem, everything is perpetually new. There is no endless, closed cycle. Each sunrise, each breath, each moment of existence is a unique creative act. As we recite daily in Shacharis and find in Tehillim (Psalms), HaShem "renews the world every day, always." To appreciate this, we must understand true creation: Yesh Me'Ayin, something from nothing. The world exists not on the basis of any pre-existing substance, but solely because God wills it so—continuously.

This differs fundamentally from a craftsman's table. A carpenter uses wood (which already exists) to make a table; once it is built, the table remains even if the carpenter departs. With creation, however, no prior material existed—the world only exists as long as HaShem desires it to exist. The moment His

When it came time to hand the envelope to Mr. Greenberg, Yaakov noticed the letter. It was written in block letters and filled with glaring spelling mistakes. While the message warmly expressed Mordechai's appreciation, the errors were so obvious that Yaakov worried it might embarrass Mordechai.

Now Yaakov faced a dilemma. He considered three options:

1. He could deliver the envelope exactly as it was, but that might risk Mordechai's embarrassment.
2. He could open the envelope without reading its contents, copy the message onto a new envelope in his own handwriting, and correct the spelling.
3. Or he could refrain from delivering it altogether, and wait until Mordechai returned so that he could rewrite the letter himself.

Yaakov felt torn. According to the Torah, what was the right thing to do?

This question was eventually brought before Rav Zilberstein: According to the Torah, how should Yaakov act? Should he follow Mordechai's instructions precisely, risking his embarrassment? Should he take the initiative to rewrite the message and deliver it? Or should he hold off entirely and let Mordechai handle it later?

What do you think?

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Will withdraws, existence ceases.

Therefore, each instant of being is a new expression of His Will—not a rote recycling, but fresh, real creation. A helpful analogy: a battery versus AC power. A battery holds a fixed amount of energy; once depleted, it's done. It represents the natural world—pre-loaded, running down, limited. In contrast, AC power provides fresh energy pulse-by-pulse, moment-by-moment—each instant, a new, pulse. Existence through HaShem is like AC power: each moment is granted anew. Everything under the Sun is like a dying battery, but above the Sun, under HaShem, each second is independent and renewed.

This leads to a dramatic difference in attitude and expectation. Imagine two brothers. One lives “under the Sun,” setting goals and making decisions and compromises according to the limitations of Nature. The other lives with aware-

ness of HaShem's direct involvement, unconstrained by statistical odds. The first brother might feel pressure to compromise his principles for a business deal, believing that only through effort and perhaps bending the rules can success be achieved—since by natural means, his chances are slim. Conversely, the brother living “under HaShem” sees no reason to compromise integrity: success or failure depends on HaShem's Will, not on manipulating the odds.

Perhaps this is Moshe's message: Moshe tells the people to keep the Torah as if it had just been given because, living “under HaShem,” each day is, in truth, the day of receiving the Torah. The giving of the Torah, like creation itself, is an ongoing event. When we realize every moment—every breath, every mitzvah, every study of Torah—receives its power directly from HaShem, we truly grasp Moshe's instruction: live every day in renewed relationship with the Torah, as if today is the day it was given.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE QUOKKA: NATURE'S HAPPIEST-LOOKING ANIMAL

Two weeks ago I wrote about the Bobbitt worm. Several people came over to me and told me that the article terrified them. So I decided to try to find some of the cutest and most adorable creatures Hashem has created, and I hope to share them over the next few weeks.

On a sunlit island off the coast of Western Australia, a furry little creature hops through the brush, nose twitching, eyes bright. If you're lucky enough to spot one, you might think it's grinning right at you. Meet the quokka (pronounced qwa-ka), a marsupial so famously photogenic that people call it the "world's happiest animal." Behind that grin lies a story much richer than a selfie. The quokka is a survivor, a climber, a chewer of cud, and a master of making do in a tough environment. To understand why this small cousin of the kangaroo has captured hearts around the world, let's step into its world.

Imagine a housecat, but one that hops instead of prowls. That's about the size of a quokka, roughly 16 to 21 inches long, with a short, rounded tail. Scientists classify it as *Setonix brachyurus*, and it's the only species in its entire genus. That makes quokkas one of a kind. Though unique, they belong to the kangaroo and wallaby family, the Macropodidae. Like their larger relatives, quokkas move with bounding hops and carry their babies in a pouch. Yet their scale makes them feel like a pocket-sized kangaroo, familiar but different enough to feel like a discovery.

Most quokkas live on islands, especially Rottnest and Bald Islands off the coast of Western Australia. On the mainland, where predators like foxes and habitat loss have taken a toll, quokkas survive only in scattered pockets. The islands have become their safe haven, a kind of living museum where visitors can glimpse what Australia's marsupial world looked like before modern pressures swept across it.

Though they look sunny in photographs, quokkas are creatures of coolness and shadow. They spend the heat of the day resting in thick, spiky undergrowth, hiding out from the fierce Australian sun. When evening comes, they emerge to forage. Here's a surprising fact: quokkas can climb. While we imagine kangaroos rooted to the ground, quokkas sometimes scale shrubs and even small trees, reaching two meters up in search of tender leaves. For an animal that looks like it belongs on the ground, this tree-hopping trick is a reminder of their adaptability.

Their menu includes grasses, leaves, and shrubs such as *Guichenotia ledifolia*. During dry spells, quokkas turn to an internal pantry, fat reserves stored in their tails. They're also clever water conservers, able to pull moisture out of the plants they eat. In a parched landscape, those tricks mean the difference between thriving and vanishing.

If you thought cows, sheep, and goats had a monopoly on chewing their cud, think again. Quokkas, too, regurgitate their food, chew it again, and swallow it once more. This digestive superpower

helps them wring every drop of nutrition from tough, fibrous plants. Imagine a quokka resting in the brush, its little jaw working methodically as it re-chews its meal under the stars. To us, that might look like simple chewing. In reality, it's a highly efficient survival system that Hashem gave them to squeeze life from sparse food.

Why do quokkas look so impossibly cheerful? Their mouths curve upward, their teeth peek out, and when they pant to cool down, the effect is a broad grin. It's not that they're happier than other animals; it's that their anatomy fools our brains into reading human emotions on their faces. That "smile" also has a practical side. The way their lips lift makes it easier for them to strip leaves and grasses. What helps them eat has also helped them charm the world.

Spend time on Rottnest Island and you'll notice something else about quokkas: they don't seem especially afraid of people. Some even wander into shops or restaurants, sniffing at tables or scrounging near bins. On an island without predators, wariness has faded. Quokkas aren't tame, but they're bolder than most wild animals. That boldness can lead to trouble. It's illegal to touch or feed quokkas. The rules are strict, with fines running into the hundreds of dollars, because human food can harm them and close contact spreads disease. Some quokkas carry salmonella, which is harmless to them but risky to us. And though they look cuddly, they're still wild animals with sharp teeth and claws. Corner one, and it might scratch or bite. The truth is, quokkas live best when admired at a respectful distance. Their charm works just fine from a few feet away.

But these smiling creatures do have a dark side. For all their charm, quokkas remind us that survival in the wild is not always gentle. One of the most startling examples comes from mothers under threat. If a predator chases a female quokka, or even if she just gets scared suddenly, she may eject her joey from her pouch. The predator is likely to seize the vulnerable youngster, leaving the mother free to escape and survive to raise more offspring later.

Like all marsupials, quokkas begin life in an extraordinary way. After just a month-long pregnancy, a jellybean-sized newborn crawls from its mother's womb into her pouch, where it latches onto a teat. There it grows, hidden and safe, for six months. Even after leaving the pouch, the joey continues nursing for another two months, staying close to its mother's side. Females can reproduce twice a year and, over their lifetimes, may raise around 17 joeys. That high reproductive rate helps balance out the many dangers quokkas face. By 18 months old, young quokkas are mature enough to start the cycle again.

It's easy to see a quokka and think, "What a happy little animal." But if we stop there, we miss the real marvel. The wonder lies not in a human-like grin but in how Hashem has given the quokka cleverness, resilience, and the ability to survive against the odds. Thank you Hashem!

**ALL OF THIS RIPPLE EFFECT,
GENEROSITY, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND
HEIGHTENED TORAH STUDY,
WAS TRACED BACK TO THAT ONE HEART-
FELT “GOOD MORNING”
SAID WITH A SMILE**

Rav Avigdor Miller often spoke about the importance of giving a warm greeting with a smile. He once shared the following story:

A man named Chaim passed away and came before the Heavenly Court. As he looked at his record, he was astonished. Page after page showed hours of Torah learning and chidushei Torah written in his name. He was bewildered, because he had been a simple man who had never accomplished such things.

It was explained to him that there was no mistake. One morning, as Chaim was leaving shul, he greeted another man named Moshe warmly. That cheerful greeting lifted Moshe's mood. Soon afterward, Moshe was approached by a rosh yeshiva for a donation. Since Moshe was in good spirits, he gave far more generously than usual.

The donation encouraged the rosh yeshiva, who entered the yeshiva uplifted. His happiness carried into his shiur, which he delivered with greater passion and energy. Inspired by his enthusiasm, the talmidim pushed themselves harder in their learning.

All of this ripple effect, generosity, encouragement, and heightened Torah study, was traced back to that one heartfelt “Good morning” said with a smile.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the e-bike that was replaced with an old bike, Rav Zilberstein (Vharev Na Hebrew Edition Volume Four Page 194) writes that we have a principle called *stam g'neiva yei'ush ba'alim*, which means there is an assumption that the owner gives up hope, is *meya'eish*, when something is stolen. Therefore, in both scenarios, whether the thief gave his own old bike or stole another bike, the replacement bike may be kept. This is because either it was given by the thief or the original owner had already given up hope of recovering it. However, while the finder may use the bike, it would be considered *lifnim mishuras hadin*, beyond the letter of the law, to make an extra effort by putting up signs in the area to see if anyone lost a bike. Still, in the meantime, the finder is permitted to use it.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in memory of
Reuven ben Yosef z'l
By Bella Balakirsky



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