



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE CASHMERE COAT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Esther's cousin from England sent her a beautiful long cashmere coat. When Esther received it she realized that it must have been very expensive. She decided it would be better to save it for Shabbos and not wear it on weekdays.

One cold day, Esther went into a small clothing store to look for a weekday coat. She asked where the coats were, and the shopkeeper directed her. She found one she wanted to try on. Esther took off her cashmere coat, set it aside on a rack temporarily, and went to the mirror to try on the new one.

While she was trying it on, another customer entered the store. The customer saw Esther's cashmere coat, admired it, and brought it to the counter. The store owner didn't recognize the coat, but he assumed it must have been older stock. When the customer asked how much it cost, he quickly



OPTION B

The Midrash relates the conversation between HaShem and Moshe when HaShem first informs him that he has been chosen to take the people out from Egypt. At one point Moshe asks HaShem 'In what merit will the people exit Egypt before the completion of the 400 designated years for exile?' To which HaShem replies 'You think they will leave Egypt and receive the Torah, however you need not worry for they will worship the Golden Calf and will be exiled once again. So, although the entire 400 years of exile has not been reached they will make up the missing years in later exiles.'

Behold! We merited to leave Egypt early in the 'merit' of the Golden Calf! It appears counterintuitive.

As we follow the development of Man from Adam we find many times how Option A fails and Option B is chosen by default. When Adam was created he was meant to live forever, never to die. However, they ate from the forbidden tree and Adam became mortal. When we received the Torah at Mount Sinai, we became immortal, never to die. However, once we fell with the Golden Calf we became mortal. The first set of Luchos made by HaShem Himself on which HaShem wrote with His Hand were broken and remain broken. Instead we were given the second set of Luchos made by Man

said, "Just 200 shekels." The customer happily paid and left with the bargain.

Meanwhile, Esther finished trying on the weekday coat and looked around for her cashmere coat, but it was gone. She searched everywhere and then asked the owner if he had seen it. The owner suddenly realized what must have happened. He told her, "I'm so sorry, I feel terrible. Someone must have just purchased your coat by mistake."

Esther was shocked. "What? That's my coat! How could you sell it?"

The owner apologized again, but Esther insisted, "You need to pay me. My coat is worth \$1,000."

The owner replied, "I'll do whatever the Rav says."

So the question became: Who is responsible for the coat?

Was it Esther's fault for leaving her coat on the rack, meaning the store owner doesn't have to pay anything?

Should the store owner at least pay the 200 shekels he received for it?

Or is the store owner fully responsible, since he sold something that wasn't his and should have checked more carefully, meaning he owes Esther the full \$1,000?

What do you think? Is the store owner responsible, or is it Esther?

See V'haarev Na Volume Four Hebrew Edition, Page 206

MITZVA MEME



written with ink.

The Gemara tells us that the reason Dovid Hamelech sinned was to teach his people that teshuva is always accepted.

There seems to be a thread that travels through the unfolding of our history that our destiny is not dependent on the best plan or on the ideal plan. The important factor in reaching our destination is not through being perfect but through being able to pick ourselves up after every time we fall.

Micha (7:8) states "I hope to HaShem, my anticipation is to the GD of my salvation. My enemies should not rejoice, because my falling is the cause

of my standing up". Behold! Micha is teaching us that falling and failing is the cause of our standing up.

HaShem created us with flaws and anticipates our failures. There is no disappointment when we fail. He created a door for us to use so that we return. He opens His arms wide to welcome us back.

In this context perhaps we can view Yom Kippur as the day we received the Torah as baalei Teshuva. Maybe this is the reason we celebrate Simchas Torah in the season of Yom Kippur and not on Shavu'ous. On Shavu'ous we received the Torah in its perfect state. That was a state which we were unable to maintain as we fell so quickly with the Golden Calf. Yom Kippur, on the other hand, we received the Torah after picking ourselves up.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and an easy fast.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE GREAT POTOO

If you walked through a rainforest in Central or South America, you might pass right by one of the strangest birds on Earth, and never know it. That's because the great potoo (pronounced poe-too) is the undisputed champion of camouflage. This feathered phantom doesn't just hide in the trees. It becomes part of them. With its stiff posture, mottled colors, and patience that could outlast even the sneakiest predator, the great potoo is nature's living statue. But this bird doesn't only hide. Once night falls, it comes alive with eerie calls, huge eyes that can see in the dark, and a mouth so wide it looks like a doorway into another world.

Let's step quietly into the rainforest shadows and meet the great potoo. The great potoo is the largest of seven potoo species, and it has earned a reputation as one of the best hiders in the animal kingdom. Instead of fleeing when danger is near, this bird chooses a different tactic: it freezes. Perched on a branch or stump, it stretches its body tall, points its beak skyward, and stays perfectly still. With feathers the exact color of bark and speckles that mimic lichens or cracks in wood, the great potoo looks exactly like a broken-off branch. (Pictured second from right) Even skilled birdwatchers sometimes miss them unless the bird blinks or swivels its head.

This isn't just a trick for a few seconds, it's a full-time lifestyle. Great potoos will remain motionless for hours, relying on their disguise rather than flight. And it works. Predators that might gobble up a bird will simply glide past, fooled by this master of crypsis (the scientific word for blending in). If there were an Olympic medal for hide-and-seek, the great potoo would win gold every time.

The potoo's camouflage makes it hard to see, but if you do spot one, you might be surprised by its size. Great potoos are the largest members of their family and the biggest bird in the entire order Caprimulgiformes, which includes nightjars and nighthawks. Stretching up to two feet long, with a wingspan that can exceed 30 inches, the great potoo is an impressive sight when it spreads its wings. Their bulk adds to the illusion of being part of the tree itself. A small bird trying to pose as a branch might look suspicious, but a hefty potoo perched upright really does resemble a stump.

Now imagine standing in the rainforest at night. The stars are hidden by the canopy, and the air buzzes with insects. Suddenly, from somewhere in the darkness, you hear a low, mournful call. "Bwaaaaarrrr..." It drifts through the trees, long and descending, like the wail of a ghost. That is the great potoo announcing itself.

Its call has startled countless listeners. To locals, the bird has often been a creature of superstition, its cries linked with wandering spirits or omens. But to other potoos, the eerie sound is simply a message: "This is my territory." By singing into the night, the great potoo warns rivals to keep away.

Though the sound may be spooky to us, it is a brilliant gift from Hashem. In dense forests where seeing far is nearly impossible, sound travels best. The potoo's strange voice carries through the darkness, letting it claim a space to hunt without ever being seen.

The great potoo's ghostly image isn't complete without its eyes, giant, glowing orbs designed for night vision. These eyes are so large that they take up much of the bird's head, giving it an alert, almost otherworldly expression. At night, they allow the potoo to detect

the faintest flicker of movement, perfect for tracking insects in low light.

But the most amazing feature might be the tiny slits hidden in the potoo's eyelids. Even when the bird closes its eyes during the day, those little peepholes allow it to keep watch. A predator could be creeping closer, thinking the bird is asleep, while the potoo is secretly watching through its "spy windows." Imagine being able to nap while still keeping an eye on the world, that's a survival skill worth envying!

The great potoo's head hides another surprise: its enormous mouth. At first glance, it looks almost comically oversized, stretching across the bird's face. But this gaping mouth is not for making noise. Instead, it's the bird's main hunting tool. When insects zip past in the dark, the potoo launches from its perch and opens its mouth wide, scooping them out of the air like a living net. The tiny beak at the tip is barely noticeable, the real business happens inside the cavernous gape. Beetles, moths, and katydids vanish in an instant. Occasionally, the potoo even snags a small bat or bird. With such an effective trap built right into its face, this bird doesn't need fancy chasing techniques. It just waits, swoops, and swallows.

Great potoos are nighttime hunters and daytime statues, but what about the rest of their lives? They are solitary creatures, preferring to spend their days alone except during breeding season. When a male and female pair up, they form a monogamous bond and defend their territory together.

Their nesting strategy is very minimalist. Instead of weaving a nest, the female simply lays a single egg in a natural depression on a thick tree branch. No moss, no sticks, no lining, just one egg balanced in a nook high above the forest floor. Both parents take turns incubating it for about 30 days, and once the chick hatches, they share the responsibility of feeding and protecting it.

Because the parents are so well camouflaged, the egg and chick also benefit from their disguise. A predator looking for a meal might climb right past without noticing the potoo family, still as stone in the treetops.

In a world full of flashy colors, rapid chases, and noisy displays, the great potoo reminds us that sometimes survival depends on silence and patience. Its camouflage is so perfect that it doesn't need speed to escape. Its calls are so eerie that it doesn't need bright feathers to make an impression. Its mouth is so wide that it doesn't need complicated hunting strategies.

Beyond its odd appearance and ghostly voice, the great potoo plays an important role in its ecosystem. By eating large insects, it helps keep populations of beetles and moths in balance.

Every part of the great potoo's body tells a story of incredible design by Hashem. Its stiff posture speaks of stillness as a shield. Its enormous eyes whisper about life in the dark. Its mouth boasts of efficiency. Even its nesting style shows how sometimes "less" is "just enough." The potoo is a living demonstration of how Hashem sculpts creatures to fit perfectly into their environments.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

THE OVERSIZED MACHZOR

The Steipler Gaon once made a surprise appearance at a bar mitzvah seudah to which he had not been invited. He wished the father “Mazel tov,” then sat down next to the bar mitzvah boy, spoke with him briefly, and left.

After the Steipler departed, the bar mitzvah boy explained what happened.

Several years earlier, the Steipler had seen him enter the Lederman Shul on Yom Kippur carrying a large sefer, which the Steipler assumed was a Gemara. He told the boy, “Yinge’le (young boy), now we are to daven; learning is for later.” The boy then showed the Steipler that he was not carrying a Gemara but an oversized machzor.

Since the mechilah (forgiveness) of a kattan (a boy under bar mitzvah age) is not valid, the Steipler wanted to make sure to ask for forgiveness at the first possible opportunity. He therefore noted the boy’s name and later made sure to find out when and where the bar mitzvah celebration would be held, so that he could personally attend and ask for forgiveness as soon as the boy reached the age to be able to forgive.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the COVID minyan, Rabbi Zilberstein (V'haarev Na Volume Four Hebrew Edition, Page 210) answered that the second group of 10 who joined the minyan are obligated to pay for the fine of the first ten because they caused the fine to be given. However, because this is a grama (an indirect action), they could not be forced by a human court (midinei adam), and they would have to pay m'dinei shamayim (according to the laws of Heaven).

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of the birthday of
Yosef ben Chaim
From his entire family who love him dearly



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