

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE LARGE BACKPACK

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Rabbi Muller, a distinguished rabbi, flew with his family to Eretz Yisroel for a chasuna. He was there for a little more than a week.

On the Thursday before his planned return on Sunday, he intended to go with his family to the Me'aras HaMachpela.

He had bought a ticket for the 9:00 a.m. bus leaving from the Tachana Merkazit and needed to be back in Yerushalayim by 1:00 p.m. This was his last opportunity to visit the Me'aras HaMachpela.

He went upstairs in the Jerusalem central bus station, the Tachana Merkazit, to a quieter area. While learning and waiting for the bus, an Israeli fellow walked by. The man was wearing a yarmulke and looked perfectly normal and respectable, nothing suspicious at all. He asked Rabbi Muller, "Excuse me, could you watch my backpack for a few



CAN MY TREASURE HOUSE EVER BE FILLED?

There is one short back-and-forth conversation between Yaakov and Eisav that reflects the diametrically opposing worldviews of these two brothers. When Eisav receives the gifts sent to him by Yaakov, he tells his brother that he has very much and does not need the gift. Yaakov responds by saying that he certainly has no need for them, since he has everything. The implication of having everything is that there is no more room for additional assets, it is full.

What does Yaakov mean when he says "everything"? He certainly does not have everything there is to have, because Eisav has very much of everything. Presumably, "everything" is in the context of his needs. In other words, Yaakov is telling his brother that he does not need these gifts because he already has everything that he needs. There is no point in his having them. Yaakov's position justifies Eisav keeping the gift, since Eisav has space for these gifts, whereas Yaakov, who already has everything he needs, has no space for them.

In Yaakov's worldview, the role that assets play in a person's life is simply to provide for his needs. Once his needs are fully met, there is no place for additional assets. Therefore, Yaakov is telling Eisav that there is no room in his treasure house for those assets, since he already has everything he needs. Eisav, on the other hand, understands the role of assets as something more than fulfilling needs. Assets have a value of their own. They are collectibles, and therefore, if someone has many assets, there is always room for more.

Our Sages teach that when tzadikim daven to HaShem for their needs, they ask that HaShem provide for them as an undeserved gift. Even though they certainly

minutes?"

It was a huge backpack, the kind used for camping or long-distance travel.

Rabbi Muller said, "No problem".

The man left. Rabbi Muller assumed he had gone to the bathroom and expected him to return in a minute or two. But as time passed, it was getting closer to 9:00, the departure time of the bus to Me'aras HaMachpela.

As the time approached, Rabbi Muller faced a dilemma. He didn't want to miss the bus, since this was his last chance to visit Me'aras HaMachpela before returning to America. On the one hand, he wanted to go catch the bus and leave the package behind. On the other hand, he realized that such a large, unattended backpack would be considered a chafetz chashud, a suspicious object. Almost certainly, security would treat it as dangerous, and the bag would be destroyed. There was also a good chance that the entire bus station, with its crowds of people and its many buses and trains, would be shut down for a long time, causing a major disruption, all because he left the package unattended.

So Rabbi Muller wondered: what should he do? Could he simply leave the package in order to make his bus and go to the Me'aras HaMachpela as planned, knowing that doing so would cause the destruction of the backpack and likely much more disruption? Or did he have an obligation to stay, watch the package, and wait for the owner to return, even if it meant missing his trip entirely?

What do you think? Did he have to stay and watch the package, or was he allowed to leave?

This dilemma was shared with me by the protagonist.

MITZVA MEME

"The biggest segulah you can do is take out the garbage for your mother."

***-Rabbi Yosef Tendler
to his shidduch age daughter
who was talking about
different segulos***



have many worthy merits, they still ask that HaShem provide their needs as undeserved gifts. A popular explanation for why tzadikim do not ask in the merit of their good deeds is that they do not wish to use up the reward for those deeds; they prefer to keep that reward for the next world. The reward of the next world is eternal, while the reward given in this world is consumed within the limited lifetime of the recipient. It is therefore prudent to reserve the reward for the next world, and to request that whatever support they need in this world come as an undeserved gift.

However, the Sfas Emes explains this slightly differently. The tzadik is someone filled with endless appreciation to HaShem for all the goodness that HaShem showers upon him. He feels inadequate because he cannot repay HaShem for every moment of life that he is given. He knows that HaShem has no needs that he can fulfill. There is simply nothing meaningful he can give HaShem in return. The only thing he can offer is the

performance of HaShem's mitzvot. Naturally, then, every mitzvah he performs is done with deep gratitude to HaShem for the opportunity to do something meaningful in return for all the goodness he receives. When he thinks of receiving reward for his mitzvot, he shudders at the idea of being rewarded for something he owes HaShem.

The reason the tzadik does not invoke his merits when davening for his needs is because he genuinely feels undeserving of any reward. The mitzvot he performs for HaShem are acts that he owes to HaShem as an expression of gratitude. The notion of receiving reward for those mitzvot is blasphemous. How could HaShem reward him for deeds that he does as an expression of appreciation?!

The tzadik therefore, cannot afford collectibles, on what merit can he ask HaShem for collectibles. The only thing the tzadik can request is sustenance. He has no room in his life for extras - when asking for undeserved gifts we can only ask for basics.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE SECRETS OF THE HUMBLE PEAR

Imagine picking a heavy, russet-colored pear from a bowing branch. It feels cool and solid in your palm. You take a bite. If it is a European variety, the flesh melts like butter and dissolves into a rush of sweet, floral nectar. If it is an Asian variety, it snaps with a crisp, refreshing crunch, like a water balloon made of sugar.

We tend to think of the pear as the apple's quieter, oddly shaped cousin. It sits humbly in the fruit bowl, often overlooked until it is perfectly ripe. But if you peel back its history, you will find that the pear is a fruit of emperors, monks, linguistic mysteries, and biological marvels.

Before we explore the biology, we have to look at the word itself. Why is it called a pear? The etymology of the name is a fascinating detective story that spans thousands of years. It did not start as a descriptive name. It began with a misunderstanding.

Linguists believe the word traces back through a chain of borrowing. The English "pear" comes from the Latin *pirum*, which came from the Greek *apios*. But where did the Greeks get it? The leading theory is that they borrowed it from a Semitic language, likely learning it from the Phoenicians during ancient trade. As an aside, the Phoenicians were the Canaanites. The Greeks called the Canaanites "Phoenicians," a term that meant "purple people," referring to their famous trade in the deep purple dye we know as argaman.

In ancient Semitic languages like Hebrew, the word *pirâ* or *pri* (פרי) simply meant "fruit." Here is the likely scenario. Ancient Greek traders encountered this specific delicious item in the Near East. They pointed to it and asked, "What is this?" The locals, perhaps confused by the specificity of the question, replied with their generic word for produce: *pirâ*—"It is fruit."

The Greeks, thinking *pirâ* was the specific name of that item, adopted it. So when you ask for a "pear" at the grocery store today, you are unknowingly using a Hebrew word that originally meant "the fruit."

The pear is ancient. It likely originated in the Middle East and the Caucasus region, growing wild long before humans decided to tame it.

As civilization expanded, so did the pear. Traders carried dried pears as high-energy snacks, accidentally or purposefully dropping seeds along the trade routes that connected the East and the West.

By the time the pear reached Rome, it was a superstar. The Romans did not just eat pears, they obsessed over them, developing more than fifty varieties. When the Roman Empire fell, the secrets of the pear might have been lost if not for the Cistercian monks of medieval Europe. In their quiet monastery gardens, these monks became the guardians of pear knowledge. They selectively bred the fruit, smoothing out the grit and enhancing the sugar, slowly turning the hard Roman pear into the "butter fruit" of the 1700s, named by Europeans because the flesh finally melted in the mouth.

When early colonists sailed to America, they brought pear seeds with them. But in the harsh reality of the New World, the pear took a back seat to the apple. Water was often unsafe to drink, and apples were easier to turn into alcoholic cider. The pear was a luxury; the apple was a necessity.

Even so, the pear endured. The Endicott Pear Tree, planted in Danvers, Massachusetts around 1630, is believed to be the oldest living fruit tree in the United States. It is still bearing fruit nearly four hundred years later.

The real American pear boom did not happen until the 1849 Gold Rush. When miners flooded the West Coast, they needed food. Farmers realized that the cool, wet winters and warm summers of Washington, Oregon, and California were perfect for pears. Today, these three states produce the vast majority of U.S. pears, and the pear is the official state fruit of Oregon.

The pear has a few tricks that set it apart. Have you noticed that slightly grainy texture in a pear, even a soft one? That grit comes from stone cells, or sclereids. These are the same hard cells found in walnut shells and peach pits, just in much smaller clusters. They give the pear its structure.

Pears are one of the few fruits that ripen inside out. If you squeeze a pear at the grocery store and it feels soft on the outside, it is probably already mushy in the center.

Pears also do not ripen well on the tree. If you leave a European pear on the branch until it turns yellow, it becomes gritty and mealy. To get that perfect buttery texture, it must be picked while green and firm, then allowed to ripen off the branch.

Here is a practical tip. Since pears ripen off the tree, you might buy them rock-hard. Do not wait weeks for them to soften. Put your hard pears in a brown paper bag with a ripe banana. The banana releases ethylene gas, which signals the pear to wake up and ripen. You will have a juicy treat in a day or two.

Like a bear, a pear seed needs a nap. Pear seeds require a process called vernalization. They will not germinate unless they go through a period of cold, a simulated winter that wakes them up.

Because they are easily digested and rarely cause allergic reactions, pears are often the first fruit recommended for babies.

In the world of music, the pear tree is prized not for its fruit but for its wood. Pear wood is incredibly stable, and it does not warp or shrink easily when humidity changes. This makes it the preferred wood for high-quality recorders and other woodwind instruments.

Today, there are more than 3,000 known varieties of pears in the world. From tiny sugar pears no bigger than your thumb (pictured middle) to Japanese giant pears that can weigh over six pounds (pictured right), the range is remarkable. Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

HE ALREADY PUT INTO THE PLAN THAT DOVID TRENK WOULD HAVE TO SIT FOR THREE HOURS IN TRAFFIC

Rabbi Yoel Gold told the following story. About 20 years ago, he was learning in the Yeshiva of Rav Shlomo Breuer when he got a phone call from his rebbe, Rav Dovid Trenk. His rebbe said, "I want to go from Lakewood to so-and-so's chasunah. Do you know where it is?" Rav Gold answered, "As far as I know, it's in Ateres Avrohom in Williamsburg."

The next day, Rav Gold met a friend who had been at the chasunah. He asked him, "How was the wedding in Ateres Avrohom?" His friend looked at him and said, "What? The wedding was in the Atrium in Monsey." Rav Gold said, "Oh no. I told Rav Dovid Trenk that it was at Ateres Avrohom in Williamsburg, Brooklyn." He was so embarrassed to call and find out what happened, but he called Rav Dovid to apologize.

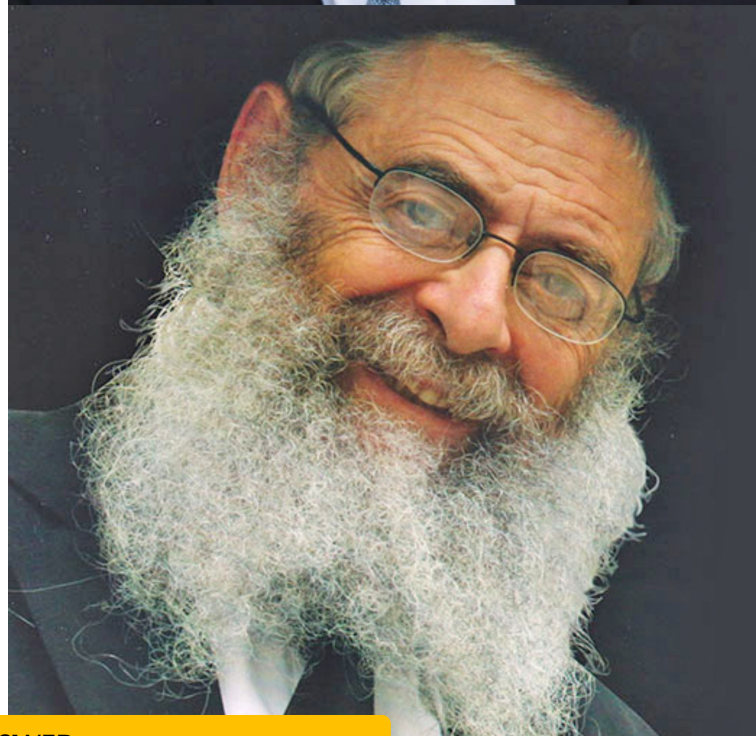
When Rabbi Gold called, Rav Dovid smiled and said, "Yes, I went to Ateres Avrohom, but don't feel the least bit bad. Do you know why? Because from sheishes yemei bereishis, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu created the world, He already put into the plan that Dovid Trenk would have to sit for three hours in traffic on the way from Lakewood to the chasunah, and three hours back. You were just the shliach of Hashem."

Rav Gold asked, "But what happened at the chasunah? What did you do?" His rebbe said, "I walked in, and it was a Ger's chasunah. I didn't recognize anyone. I got into the middle, grabbed the chosson, and danced with him, even though I didn't know a soul."

Rav Gold concluded that Rabbi Trenk would never have mentioned anything or said a word about it if he, Rav Gold, hadn't brought it up.

What do we take from this story? We see the incredible emunah and bitachon Rav Trenk had. He didn't view his talmid as the one who caused him to go to the wrong chasunah. He didn't see him as someone who caused him to waste time or sit in traffic for three hours there and three hours back. All he saw was one thing: HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the Ribbono Shel Olam, had already planned from sheishes yemei bereishis that this is what would happen.

That is what we have to take. Everything that happens in our lives was programmed from the moment the world was created. When HaKadosh Baruch Hu made the world and perfectly designed how it would run, everything that happens in our lives was already planned from sheishes yemei bereishis.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the person who donated money for books: Rabbi Zilberstein (VH"N Vol. 4 Hebrew Page 475) cites an opinion mentioned in the Mishna Berura that when someone gives tzedakah, he does not have the right to limit how the money must be used. Rabbi Zilberstein concludes that even those who disagree with this opinion would agree that, in this case, the money given for seforim may be used for glasses, since both purposes share the same intention, helping him learn Torah.

This week's Table Talk is dedicated in memory of

Rabbi Shlomo Porter, our Rabbi and friend.

His boundless love for Torah and Yiddishkeit, tireless chesed and enthusiastic teaching has shaped our lives. We will miss him so.

Yaakov Shlomo and Shari Trofimov



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