

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE FRENCH FAMILY FUNERAL

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein received the following question: A young man in his twenties called with a tragedy. His mother, who was only forty-five years old, suddenly passed away. She was in the prime of her life, and her death came as a complete surprise.

All of her immediate family, her siblings and parents, lived in France. When they were notified of her passing, they said they didn't think they would be able to arrive in time for the funeral.

Keep in mind that in Eretz Yisroel it is customary to hold the funeral very quickly. Also, in Eretz Yisroel they often do not bury with a coffin; rather, the body, wrapped in a Talis or Tachrichim is buried directly in the ground.

Since the relatives said they likely would not be able to attend, the immediate family proceeded with the funeral. It was a very small affair, basically just the members of the Chevra Kadisha and enough people to make a minyan.



PRAYERS NEEDED

In the very first chapter of the Torah we are taught the value and necessity of tefillah, prayer. HaShem created all of Earth's vegetation on the third day of creation. However, it had not yet sprouted until the sixth day, only after Man was created. The vegetation could not grow earlier because it had not rained until Man was created. The Torah tells us that before Man was created there could be no rain because rain and for that matter all blessings cannot come to this world without prayer. Such is the necessity of tefillah. HaShem engineered the world in a way that Man should play the critical role in all the blessings that will come to the world - EVERYTHING needs the tefillos of Man before they can be realized. Even the initial rain for the newly created vegetation cannot come without Man's tefillah.

The people of Israel were created for the sake of bringing the world to its destiny. That will occur after the millennia of world history, after we have traveled throughout the world and held on to His Torah throughout all those challenging times. As we look out over world history we find the stark contrast of our people's status today as a nation and our people's status over the past 2,000 years. It certainly appears that

The funeral was conducted, and the mother was buried.

After the funeral, the son received a call from his relatives in France. They informed him that everyone had decided to charter a plane and come after all. They asked him to please hold off on the funeral, they had already made arrangements, paid for the charter, and were on their way with all the cousins and extended family.

The son then approached Reb Zilberstein and asked, "What should I do? My mother is already buried, and her whole family who is traditional but not observant is coming. I have no doubt that they will be extremely upset that they missed the funeral. I also know that attending a funeral could be a meaningful, positive Jewish experience for them.

If they arrive and realize they missed it, it will likely cause a great deal of family strife and arguments. I'm also concerned that they may develop resentment toward Rabbanim or religious Jews in general if they miss the funeral.

"Is there any halachic consideration to "unbury her" to exhume her and hold a new funeral? Sometimes exhumation is permitted under certain conditions, for example, to transfer someone to be buried in Eretz Yisroel. For the sake of avoiding all this conflict, is there room to unbury her and rebury her?"

"And if not," the young man proposed a radical idea, "if the issue is simply burying a body wrapped in shrouds, could we, without anyone knowing, bury a mannequin wrapped in shrouds? Potentially no one would know, and it would avoid all the fighting and strife."

That was the question Rav Zilberstein was asked. What do you think? What would the Torah perspective be? Would the Torah say, 'So sorry, but it's too late'? Would it permit reburial? Or would it allow a "mock" funeral? What do you think?

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we are nearing the coming of Moshiach very soon.

However, we also know that no blessing can come to this world without tefillah. Certainly the greatest blessing in the world; reaching its ultimate destination, cannot come without an outpouring of tefillah.

So often, HaShem inspires us to tefillah through tragic circumstances. However, there are other ways that we can be inspired; when His request to daven is delivered to us in an unambiguous articulate message.

Rambam writes the reason our Sages instituted

the holiday of Purim was to "teach our future generations that our we are like no other Nation. When we pray, HaShem is close to us and responds quickly". Behold! The purpose of Purim is to teach us the power of our tefillah.

On this very day of Purim 5786, HaShem arranged that the Jewish people should be pounding the nation who are the world's most outspoken Jew haters. This incredible scene is occurring to the Persian nation, the very people who were used to teach us the lesson of Purim. Could there be a more unambiguous articulate message that HaShem is requesting our tefillos!

May we merit to provide the enormous amounts of sincere tefillah needed to finally welcome Moshiach tzidkeinu soon in our days.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE SECRET LIFE OF THE BONE COLLECTOR CATERPILLAR

Deep in the remote forests of Hawaii lives a tiny, bizarre insect that sounds like something straight out of fiction. In April of 2025, scientists formally described a remarkable new creature in the *Journal of Science*. Entomologists from the University of Hawaii at Manoa had actually been tracking this insect for roughly two decades, but finding it was incredibly difficult. During more than twenty years of rigorous fieldwork, researchers managed to spot only sixty-two specimens. This incredibly rare creature is completely endemic to Hawaii and has only ever been found on the single island of Oahu. Scientists gave it a deeply unsettling nickname: the bone collector caterpillar.

The bone collector caterpillar is a part of a group of moths known as the genus *Hyposmocoma*. These insects are completely unique to Hawaii. They are also known as "fancy case caterpillars".

But unlike most caterpillars that spend their days happily munching on leaves, the bone collector is a strict meat-eater. This makes it a profound anomaly in the natural world. Out of the roughly two hundred thousand known species of moths and butterflies on the planet, less than one-tenth of one percent consume meat. The caterpillar earned its macabre nickname because of its habit of wearing its prey as armor. The name bone collector is technically inaccurate, since insects possess rigid exoskeletons on the outside of their bodies rather than internal bone skeletons, yet the effect is exactly the same.

Like other members of its fancy case family, the bone collector spins a silky, protective sleeping bag that it carries around everywhere. You can picture it acting very much like a hermit crab dragging its shell. However, the similarities to its relatives end when it comes to exterior design. While typical fancy case caterpillars decorate their tiny homes with bits of soft moss, lichen, or sand to blend in with their surroundings, the bone collector takes a much darker approach. It exclusively covers its portable case in the dismembered body parts of dead insects. Scientists studying these protective armors have identified severed parts from at least six entirely different insect families securely woven into the structures.

The specific trophies adorning these caterpillars are fascinating. A close look at a bone collector's case reveals a patchwork quilt made of severed ant heads, shimmering fly wings, hard beetle abdomens, and hairy spider legs. The caterpillar constructs this wardrobe with the careful precision of a master tailor. It never just sticks insect parts onto its case at random. Instead, the larva carefully probes and rotates each scavenged exoskeleton piece to find the absolute perfect anatomical fit for its armor. If a scavenged insect part happens to be slightly too large for the intended spot, the caterpillar will simply chew the piece down to the correct size before finally locking it into place.

To hold this unique armor together, the caterpillar weaves the stolen body parts into a tight matrix using a sticky mixture of its own silk and saliva. This aesthetic choice is hardwired into the creature's brain. When scientists observed the bone collector in laboratory settings, the caterpillars proved strictly loyal to their unique fashion. They completely ignored perfectly good natural

debris like dry leaves or small twigs, choosing only to adorn themselves with insect remains.

While it might seem completely bizarre to us, this coat of dead bodies serves a vital biological purpose. By covering itself in decaying insect parts, the caterpillar makes itself look and smell exactly like leftover garbage, effectively hiding itself from hungry predators like spiders.

One might wonder where a tiny caterpillar finds so many dead insects to wear. The answer lies in its choice of dangerous real estate. The bone collector is the very first caterpillar ever known to actively choose to live inside the active hunting grounds of spiders. These hidden habitats are usually located in thick cobwebs tucked away in dark tree hollows, fallen rotting logs, or deep rock cavities. Moving into a spider's web sounds like a terrible idea for a plump, juicy caterpillar, but the bone collector has an incredible trick to stay safe. To disguise itself from the host spider, the caterpillar frequently weaves the spider's own shed skin into its casing. This clever tactic completely masks the caterpillar's scent.

This brilliant camouflage is incredibly effective at tricking the landlords of these webs. Researchers have never found a single piece of evidence showing a host spider successfully recognizing, attacking, or eating one of these trespassing caterpillars. In fact, the caterpillars are so comfortable in these dangerous environments that they have even adapted to newcomers. Scientists have found bone collectors wandering safely through the webs of at least four different spider species that are not even native to Hawaii. This incredible resilience suggests that the larvae have very quickly adapted their survival strategies to deal with the sudden presence of invasive spiders in their forest homes.

Living in a spider web provides the perfect environment for the bone collector's scavenger lifestyle. The caterpillar survives by feeding off the weakened or dead insects that accidentally get ensnared in the host spider's web. As it navigates through the sticky, dangerous threads, the caterpillar moves with total confidence. If a strand of spider silk happens to block its path to a freshly trapped meal, the caterpillar simply chews right through the silk to reach its dinner. However, you will never find a pair of these remarkable creatures working together. You will never see more than one bone collector caterpillar sharing a single spider web, and there is a very violent reason for this intense isolation.

The reason they live alone is that bone collectors are ruthless cannibals. They have absolutely no tolerance for sharing their territory or their scavenged meals. If two bone collector caterpillars happen to cross paths inside the exact same spider web, a fight for survival instantly breaks out. The larger caterpillar will aggressively attack and consume the smaller one without hesitation.

After a few months of feasting on dead insects and growing larger, the caterpillar reaches the end of its larval stage. It seals off the open end of its bone-covered case, turning the gruesome shell into a highly protected cocoon while it transforms into a moth.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

I HAVE A SON IN THE YESHIVAH WHO'S STRUGGLING

Chazal teach us that “banecha elu talmidim”—students should be considered like children. To R' Simcha Kook's way of thinking, Chazal's dictum that talmidim are like sons was meant literally.

R' Simcha Kook was the chief rabbi of Rechovot. There was a bachur from Rechovot who struggled in yeshivah and was eventually expelled. Especially in the earlier years, R' Simcha kept tabs on each local bachur and knew them personally. When he heard what had happened, he dropped everything to intervene.

“What do I have scheduled tomorrow?” he asked R' Nachman, his assistant. The important meeting with the director general of the Religious Affairs Ministry was postponed, and R' Simcha drove to the boy's yeshivah in Zichron Yaakov, a journey of two hours each way.

Naturally, R' Simcha was treated like a celebrity when he arrived for an unscheduled visit. The rabbanim had no idea why he was there, but he was asked to give a shiur and meet the bachurim.

Hours into his visit, he finally got to the point. “I have a son in the yeshivah who's struggling,” he told them.

“Which son?” they asked in confusion, knowing that no one in the student body was a member of the Rav's family.

When R' Simcha explained that it was a member of his community whom he regarded as one of his children, the message got through. The boy was readmitted.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the thief, Rav Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed, Bava Kama 383) says that there is a mitzvah to stop a thief in order to prevent them from violating the prohibition of stealing. One is allowed to take certain actions to prevent the thief from continuing this prohibition. In addition, he writes that this would not be considered kidnapping, because everyone knows and can see where the toddler is.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated as a tefillah that we greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu soon in our days

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