

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE ACCIDENT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

There was a doctor in Eretz Yisroel who was traditional, but not religious. He was also a humanitarian. He had offices in different cities in Israel, and on different days he would travel to different hospitals to see patients. On Monday he would be in one city, on Tuesday in another city, and so on. That was his practice. One day, while he was driving in the course of his work helping people, a young boy suddenly ran into the street right in front of his car. The doctor tried to stop, but he hit the boy. Sadly, the boy passed away.

The doctor, who spent his entire day helping people, was completely distraught. He remembered a teaching he had once learned: *Megalilin zechus al yedei zakai, v'chov al yedei chayav*, that good things are brought about through good people, and difficult or painful things are brought about through those who are not worthy.

He began thinking, "Why in the world would Hashem cause me to kill somebody? How could this be?"

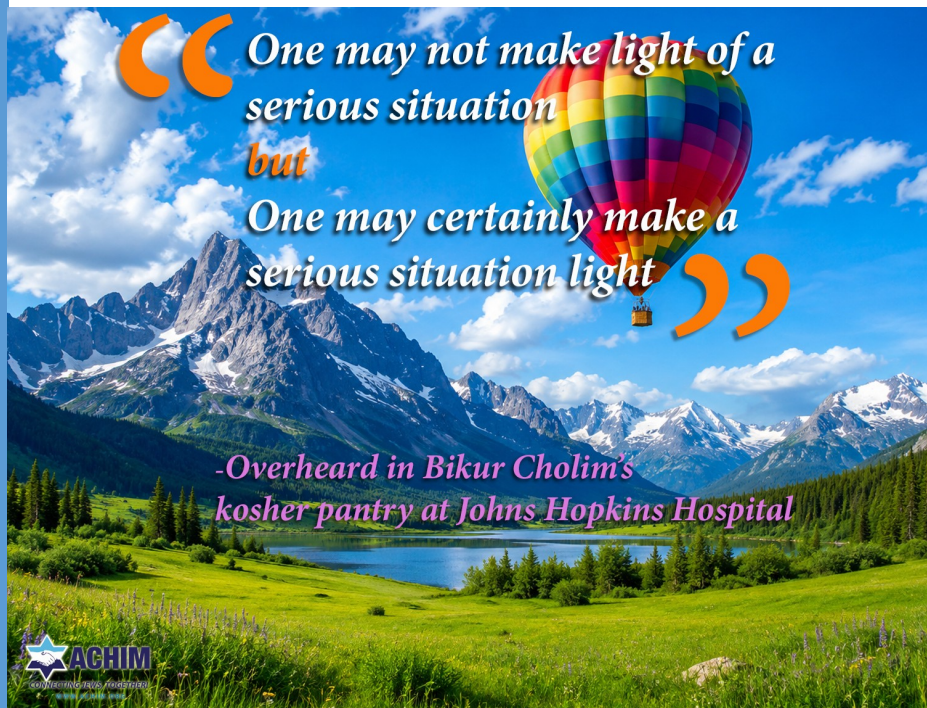


### THE ANXIETY OF FIRST STEPS

The Book of Bamidbar recounts many occurrences of how our people failed in their trust in HaShem throughout their journey in the desert. As we read the record of these stories, it boggles the mind. How could the people who witnessed the miracles of the Exodus and the revelation at Sinai, where every individual experienced with clarity of mind how HaShem instructed Moshe to teach His Torah to His people, fail to completely accept everything that would happen to them? Did they really think that HaShem had forsaken them? When they suddenly had no drinking water and faced other challenges, did they actually think that HaShem had abandoned them, after expressing in very clear terms that we are His chosen people?

Their first failure occurred immediately after leaving Mount Sinai, when they complained about the discomfort of traveling. When our people were encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai, the Aron Hakodesh was situated in the midst of the encampment. Everyone resided in close proximity to the Aron. On that fateful day when they complained against HaShem, it was the first time that the Aron moved from their midst to lead them along their journey. The Baal Shem Tov explains that when they saw the Aron leaving their midst, they panicked. They believed that they were not able to continue existing in the desert if the Aron was far from them. They thought that their continued existence in the desert was only because the Aron was within close proximity. They thought perhaps HaShem was no longer with them as He had been until now. How could they continue? Lacking the necessary trust, they complained.

The Baal Shem Tov explains that HaShem's guidance, to lead us and to train



He fell into a deep depression. He stayed home and stopped traveling to the hospitals. Patients were waiting for him in different cities, but he was not seeing anyone. A huge backlog built up, and no one was able to console him. One day, a friend came to him and said, "You know, there is a traditional idea that when someone passes away, people learn Mishnayos for the neshama. Maybe you should commit to learning Mishnayos for a year. Perhaps that will help you feel a little better about the whole situation." For some reason, the idea appealed to him. But he hesitated.

"I'm not so good at Mishnayos," he said. "That would be very hard for me."  
 "No, no," his friend said. "You can do it. You can take a Kehati Mishnayos, and you'll manage." With some hesitation, the doctor agreed. "Okay," he said. "I want to do that. I'll learn le'ilui nishmas this boy who passed away. I'll learn Mishnayos for a year."  
 He chose Pirkei Avos, something more manageable, but it was still a big undertaking for him. It was not easy. Still, it helped him feel a little better. Eventually, he went back to work, and things began to settle down.

A short while later, he learned the story behind the story. The boy who had run into the street was the son of a well-known Arab terrorist, a man who had killed or attempted to kill Jews. This was the terrorist's son who had run into the street and, tragically, had been killed.

Who knows what Hashem's plan was? But the doctor realized that the child had not been Jewish. He was the son of a terrorist, a murderer.

Now the doctor felt conflicted. He had committed himself to learning Mishnayos for the rest of the year for the soul of an ostensibly Jewish boy, but now he was no longer sure if he should continue. Was it appropriate? Was he still obligated? It was not an easy question for him.

So he brought the question to Rav Chaim Kanievsky. He asked, "What should I do in this case? I committed to learning Mishnayos for the child of a terrorist. What should I do?" What do you think?

See Chashukei Chemed Nedarim Page 264

us, was similar to that of a father teaching his small child to walk. Once the child is strong enough and capable enough to walk, the father holds his hands and carefully lifts him until the child stands. He will continue holding the child's hands and slowly move forward, with the child following along, hand in hand. As the child successfully walks with his father, and the father recognizes that his child is able to continue walking without holding his hand, the father will then release his hands from the child so that the child is now standing on his own. Next, the father will move a bit farther away from the child in order to encourage the child to follow him without any support.

HaShem's expectation for His people is to live their lives in this material world and interact with it for the express purpose of serving Him. In this manner, all of physical and material life becomes elevated upward toward HaShem. This

means that although our mission is to bring HaShem and G-dliness into our lives, He wants this to happen specifically through our interaction with the physical world. In the earliest period of our development, after our Exodus, HaShem held our hands, bringing us into the entirely spiritual world of miracles in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and at Mount Sinai, until He actually rested His Presence in our midst. Finally, after bringing us into the world of G-dliness, we were ready for the next stage. Now, HaShem moved His Aron out from their midst and moved a distance from them. Now, HaShem wanted His people to start moving in His direction without holding their hands. Now was the time for us to be strong and start walking on our own towards Him.

This was something they had never done before. They were frightened, just as a child is frightened when he sees his father leaving him all alone. In reality, the father is encouraging his child to continue moving forward. The father is always close by, even when he takes his hands away.

Perhaps, using the Baal Shem Tov's analogy, we can gain an appreciation for the struggles and challenges our people faced throughout their journey in the desert.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### COLORFUL GIANT: THE SECRETS OF THE MALABAR GIANT SQUIRREL

Our sages teach that there is no artist like Hashem, and we are constantly amazed to learn about new gorgeous creatures that Hashem created. Can you imagine a colorful squirrel? The Malabar giant squirrel looks like something Hashem painted to help us appreciate His artistry. It is also called the Indian giant squirrel, and its scientific name is *Ratufa indica*. Unlike the plain gray squirrels many of us see running around parks or backyards, this squirrel can have deep maroon, rust, tan, cream, beige, black, and even purplish colors in its fur. Some people see pictures of it and think the photos must be fake, because it looks almost too colorful to be real. But it is real, and it lives high in the forests of India.

One of the first amazing things about the Malabar giant squirrel is its size. It is one of the largest squirrels in the world. Its body can be about 10 to 20 inches long, and when you include its tail, it can reach close to 3 feet. That means it can be about as long as a small child's school desk. Even though it looks large, it usually weighs only about 3.3 to 4.4 pounds, though some can be heavier. It is big for a squirrel, but still light enough to race through the treetops.

Its tail is one of its most important tools. The tail can be up to 2 feet long, sometimes as long as the rest of its body. When the squirrel leaps from branch to branch, the tail helps it balance, steer, and stop itself from tumbling. Imagine a tightrope walker holding out a long pole to stay steady. The squirrel's tail works a little like that. When it runs quickly through the canopy, its tail helps it make sharp movements without falling.

The Malabar giant squirrel spends almost its whole life in the trees. It rarely comes down to the ground. The upper forest canopy is its home, its dining room, its highway, and its hiding place. It can leap about 20 feet between trees in a single jump. That is longer than many living rooms. It does not need a ladder, a bridge, or a sidewalk. Its strong paws, large claws, and powerful legs help it grip bark, climb quickly, and travel through the forest as if the branches were roads.

Its paws are also useful when it eats. The Malabar giant squirrel often sits upright on its hind legs and holds food with its front paws, almost like a little person eating a snack. Its long tail hangs down behind it for balance. Sometimes it will even hang upside down by its hind legs just to reach fruit or another tasty bite. It eats fruits, leaves, flowers, nuts, bark, and seeds. It may also eat insects and bird eggs when it has the chance. One of its favorite foods is wild jackfruit.

Seeds are especially important in its diet because they are available during much of the year and give the squirrel energy. Like other rodents, the Malabar giant squirrel has front teeth that keep growing throughout its life. It has to chew on hard seeds, bark, and other rough foods to keep those teeth worn down.

This squirrel does not only take from the forest, it also helps the forest. When it eats fruit and seeds, some of those seeds pass through

its body and later grow in new places. In this way, the Malabar giant squirrel helps spread trees and plants through the forest. It is like a tiny gardener in a colorful coat. A healthy population of these squirrels can be a sign that the forest itself is healthy, mature, and connected enough for animals to move safely from tree to tree.

The squirrel also builds amazing homes. Instead of simply living in holes in trees, it builds large round nests from twigs and leaves.

These nests can be about the size of an eagle's nest. A single squirrel may build several nests in its territory, sometimes as many as five. One nest may be used for sleeping, while another may be used as a nursery for babies. The squirrel is smart about where it builds. It often places nests on thin outer branches, where heavy predators have a harder time reaching them.

Even high in the trees, the Malabar giant squirrel has enemies. It must watch out for leopards, crested serpent eagles, owls, civets, tree-climbing snakes, and even lion-tailed macaques. When it senses danger, it may give loud, high-pitched alarm calls. Some people describe the sound as sharp and fast, almost like a toy machine gun echoing through the forest. It can also use tail twitches and scent markings to communicate.

One of its most interesting defenses is freezing still. Even though its fur looks very bright to us, those colors can actually help it blend into the broken sunlight and shadows of the forest canopy. If a predator is nearby, the squirrel may flatten its body against a tree trunk and stay perfectly still. From far away, it can look like part of the bark or shadow. If it is ever caught on the ground, it may run in a zig-zag pattern to confuse a predator before racing back up a tree.

The Malabar giant squirrel is usually solitary, which means it often lives alone. It does come together with another squirrel during breeding season. The mother gives birth after about 28 to 35 days, usually to only one or two babies, though sometimes there may be three. The babies are born blind, hairless, and helpless. They need their mother's care until they are strong enough to survive in the canopy.

These squirrels live only in India, especially in places like the Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, and the Satpura Range. There are four recognized subspecies, and they can have slightly different color patterns depending on where they live. In Maharashtra, India, the Malabar giant squirrel is the official state animal and is warmly called the "Shekru." It has very strong legal protection in India.

The Malabar giant squirrel is a gorgeous animal. It is also a climber, builder, gardener, alarm caller, mother, survivor, and living sign of a healthy forest.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

## THE JUDGES OF THE TORAH FEEL BEHOLDEN TO THOSE WHO BENEFIT THEM IN ANY AMOUNT

Rav Meir Chodosh, the Mashgiach of the Chevron Yeshiva, once met a member of Israel's Supreme Court, who asked him a question.

The justice wanted to know what amount of money would be considered shochad, the bribery that the Torah forbids a judge from accepting from litigants.

Rav Meir told him that even a few pennies would be considered shochad, disqualifying a judge from hearing a case.

The justice was disturbed by this answer. "Does the Torah have so little faith in man?" he asked. "Are the judges of the Torah so weak that a few shekels can cloud their judgment?"

Rather than answer, Rav Meir asked a question of his own.

"If I were standing before you in judgment, and just before the case I handed you the gift of a Parker pen, would that affect your verdict?"

The judge was offended by the suggestion. "Do you think that a pen that costs a hundred shekels could influence me?" he asked in disbelief. "Do you think we are such small people?"

"And what if I handed you an envelope with ten thousand dollars inside it?" Rav Meir asked.

"That is a different story," the judge conceded, "and I could hear that it might impact the judge's conclusion."

"So what you yourself are telling me," Rav Meir said, "is that the justice system in Israel is filled with judges who are so ungrateful that it would take ten thousand dollars to get them to feel some sort of appreciation toward another person, while the judges of the Torah feel beholden to those who benefit them in any amount.

Tell me," the mashgiach concluded, "who is the small person?"

From Reb Baruch Mordche, By R' Yisroel Besser, Published By Artscroll Mesorah



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the mystery bag and the two sheitels, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, in Chashukei Chemed, Nedarim, page 405, answers that the messenger is responsible to pay for the entire loss. Once he agreed to watch the bag, he had to assume that it might have had very expensive items inside.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of  
**Yaakov ben Beryl and Shifra**

By Albina and Leon Kisilenko



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