



## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE EARRING GIFT

By Rabbi Paysach Diskind

The following story took place in Eretz Yisroel on Shabbos Hagadol.

Rochel and her husband were marrying off their last son the Sunday before Pesach. Naturally, the aufruf was going to be on Shabbos Hagadol. Their oldest son lived out of town with his wife and eight children. They wanted to participate in the aufruf of their youngest brother but where would this family of 10 stay for Shabbos?

Leah lived next door to Rochel and the two neighbors were close friends. It happened to be that Leah and her family were going out of town for Shabbos Hagadol. Rochel asked Leah if she could have her son and family stay in her apartment for that Shabbos. Rochel understood that this was a mighty large request and she, therefore, told Leah that she would pay her a proper rent for using the apartment. Leah agreed and they decided on an amount that would be appropriate.



### PRAYER IS THE END NOT THE MEANS

Rav Hutner opens a window of understanding to the function of prayer and why HaShem presents us with the challenges that confront us.

Tehillim Chapter 116 which we read in Hallel begins with the following verse. "I love that You, HaShem, listen to my voice and to my requests, because you bend Your ear to me." We can paraphrase this verse "O' HaShem, I love that You answer my prayers because You pay attention to me."

Dovid Hamelech seems to have inverted the means with the goal. Let us apply this syntax to a different context. I enjoy going to NYC, I simply love the noisy busy city life. I get to New York by bus. It is a three and half hour ride which I love taking because it gets me to New York. The reason I love going on that bus is because it gets me to my goal. I have no interest in the bus ride per se; it is only the means to get me to my goal.

In expressing my love for the journey to New York I will not say that I love going to New York because I get to go on the bus. Rather, I will say that I love going on the bus because it gets me to New York.

If the function of prayer is to solicit HaShem's help in resolving the struggles which we are dealing with then what we love about prayer is that HaShem listens to our prayers and answers our requests. The statement reflecting this should read; I love that HaShem pays attention to me because He answers my requests. If Dovid Hamelech inverts the order he is indicating that the purpose of prayer is not to answer our difficulties. Rather, Dovid's goal is that HaShem pay attention to

Rochel paid Leah immediately for the rental and asked for one favor from Leah. "Please do not tell my son or daughter-in-law that I have paid for the apartment. They would be upset if they knew that I paid for their accommodations. Leah agreed.

Immediately after Shabbos Rochel's son and family returned home. Later Saturday night Leah and her family returned home and found their apartment in perfect order.

However, Leah noticed a note on the dining room table with an exquisite pair of earrings. The note has been left by Rochel's daughter-in-law expressing her gratitude for opening her home to this large family on Shabbos Hagadol. Her note continued saying that as an appreciation for this great chessed she hopes that Leah will enjoy the earrings.

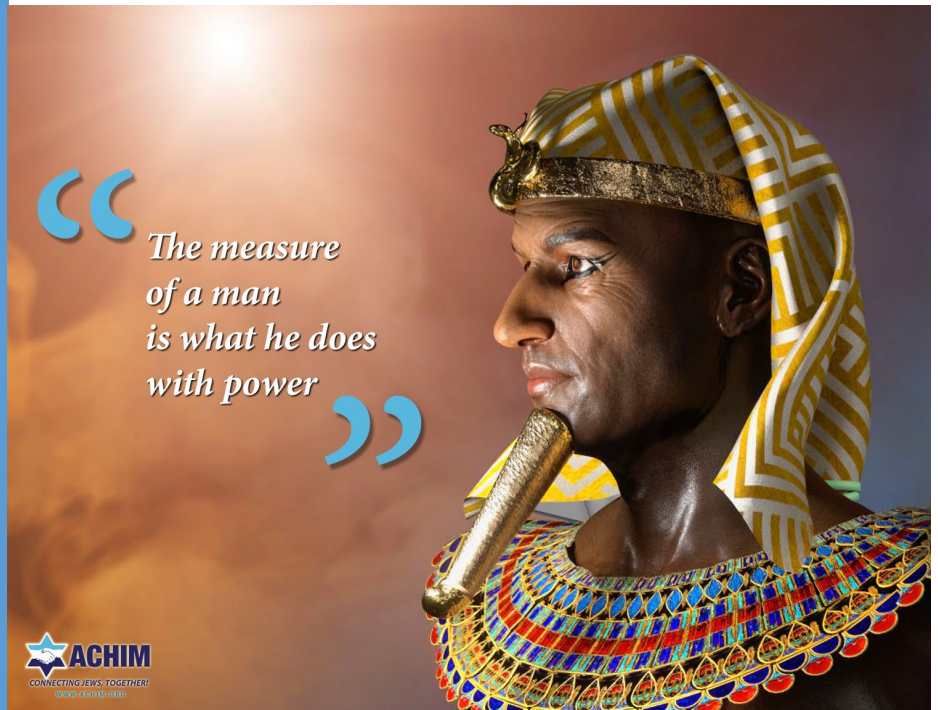
Now Leah was troubled. On one hand, she very much liked the earrings, they were truly beautiful. However, they were given to her based on the assumption that she had so graciously left her apartment for free, receiving no compensation. Had the guest known that her mother-in-law paid a full price for the rental she most probably would not have given such an expensive gift.

May Leah keep the earrings? Perhaps she should give them to Rochel, after all, it was Rochel who made the arrangements? Alternatively, perhaps Leah can reimburse Rochel the money she received from her as rent and thereby be worthy of the gift?

The question was brought before Rav Zilberstein.

See Veharev Na Vol IV

“*The measure of a man is what he does with power*”



him and the means by which he gets HaShem to pay attention to him is by praying for HaShem's help.

In other words, HaShem wants us to connect to Him in the most meaningful way which is through prayer. However, without having a difficulty to pray for it is impossible to pour one's heart in prayer to HaShem. Only when we have the stress and worry regarding a situation that is pressing on us does our heart open up. So HaShem generates difficulties which confound us so that we will open our heart in prayer and connect to him.

The syntax of the verse is now in perfect order. When my prayer is answered I know that HaShem paid attention to my prayer and hence "I love that HaShem answered my prayer because now I know that HaShem paid attention to my voice."

The verse of Shir HaShirim 2:14 "At the sea, HaShem said to

me (the Jewish people) 'O My dove, trapped at the sea as if in the clefts of the rock. Show Me your prayerful gaze, let Me hear your supplicating voice, for your voice is sweet and your countenance is beautiful."

The Midrash explains this verse to be referring to the Jewish people at the banks of the Red Sea in utter dread from the Egyptian army behind them and the Sea in front of them. The parallel is to a small bird who perches herself between the rocks so that the eagle cannot reach her, but no sooner then she lands between the rocks a snake chases her. She has nowhere to go. The Midrash explains that HaShem's intent with bringing His people to that state of absolute despair was to move them to the most heartfelt prayer. The reason He wants their prayer is because their voice is sweet and their countenance is beautiful.

The goal of the Jew is to connect to HaShem on the deepest emotional levels possible. It is for this goal that HaShem presents us with those challenges which tug at our heartstrings so that our deepest emotions become exposed and are then capable of reaching out to Him.

Have a wonderful Yom Tov.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### ROMAINE LETTUCE

Most of us have eaten romaine lettuce for maror. Where does romaine lettuce come from? Why is it called romaine? Why is romaine lettuce not bitter, and if it is not bitter, why is it used for maror?

The truth is that in America, we think that the "main" variety of lettuce is iceberg lettuce. The reason for that is because iceberg lettuce is the most popular form of lettuce in America. It is crunchy, crisp, and has a mild taste. It gets its name because it needed to be transported in ice to prevent it from wilting. Do you know when iceberg lettuce was first developed? Only 129 years ago, in 1894, by the Burpee Seed Co. However, the "OG Lettuce", the original lettuce was none other than romaine lettuce. And guess who first invented lettuce? The Ancient Egyptians. Yes, lettuce was first cultivated by the ancient Egyptians. Romaine lettuce is depicted by ancient Egyptians on the walls of tombs dating back to at least 2,700 B.C. To the Egyptians, lettuce represented fertility. Its use in religious ceremonies resulted in its depiction in many images in tombs and wall paintings.

It was a bitter herb, and what they cultivated was what we know as romaine lettuce. The Greeks learned of lettuce from the Egyptians, and the Greeks taught it to the Romans.

When the Roman popes traveled to France in the 14th century, they brought lettuce from Rome with them and planted it in the papal gardens. In Europe, it became known as romaine lettuce, the Roman lettuce, because it was the variety of lettuce that came from Rome.

In Britain, Roman lettuce is known as Cos lettuce, because it came from the Greek island of Kos.

But the truth is, it would be more historically accurate to call romaine lettuce Egyptian lettuce, as the Egyptians were the ones who invented it.

The Egyptians used lettuce differently than we use it today. The leaves were often removed from the plant due to their bitter taste. Instead of being part of a meal, the seeds from the bud of the flowers were harvested and pressed for their natural oils which were used for cooking, medication—even mummification. Lettuce oil was a standard in the Egyptian materia medica and was used as a traditional remedy for hair regrowth.

The Greeks learned how to grow lettuce from the Egyptians. They used it medicinally as a sedative and served it as a salad at the beginning of meals to help with digestion. They also continued to cultivate it for tastier leaves.

The Greeks passed their lettuce-growing knowledge on to the Romans, who named the plant "lactuca," meaning "milk," for its white sap. In time, "lactuca" became the English word "lettuce," while the Roman name was preserved in the genus name for lettuce and its relatives. So, lettuce is a Roman word, and named for its milky juice.

Interestingly, Romans ate salted romaine lettuce and they called it "herba salata," "salted greens." That word became shortened to the modern English word "salad." So, salad really means salted romaine lettuce.

The Romans later popularized the leafy veggie as an appetizer during the 81-96 A.D. reign of Domitian. When they first introduced a set order of courses, the meal included a salad at the beginning to stimulate the appetite and also at the end to encourage digestion. It was considered a medicinal goldmine by the Greeks and Romans.

You might ask, why is romaine lettuce not bitter today? The answer is that it is due to how farmers cultivate it. Romaine lettuce in its natural state will be bitter. In fact, most homegrown lettuce will be bitter. Farmers go out of their way to make sure it's not bitter by not exposing it to the sun, providing ample water, and preventing it from bolting or reaching the advanced flowering stage. Once a lettuce plant bolts, or transitions from vegetative to reproductive growth and starts to flower, it becomes more bitter.

Here is an interesting side note: Romaine is a common salad green and is the usual lettuce used in Caesar salad. People think that Caesar salad means it was eaten by the Roman Caesars. But really, its name comes from a much more modern source. The salad's creation is generally attributed to the restaurateur Caesar Cardini, an Italian immigrant who operated restaurants in Mexico and the United States. Caesar invented Caesar salad in 1924, and it was named after him.

Romaine lettuce offers numerous health benefits. Romaine lettuce is rich in beta-carotene and vitamins A and C, supporting vision, skin health, and immune function. As a low-calorie, high-water-content food, romaine lettuce aids in weight management and hydration. It also contains significant amounts of folate, vital for pregnant women to prevent birth defects and promote fetal development. The potassium in romaine lettuce supports heart health and blood pressure regulation, contributing to overall cardiovascular wellness. Magnesium, another essential nutrient in romaine lettuce, is crucial for muscle and nerve function, relaxation, and stress reduction. Romaine lettuce also promotes bone health and blood clotting through its phosphorus and vitamin K content, with phosphorus building and preserving bone density and vitamin K supporting blood clotting and bone health. Manganese and copper in romaine lettuce are essential for metabolism and antioxidant activity. Manganese helps convert food into energy, while copper aids in red blood cell production and iron absorption. Lastly, the selenium found in romaine lettuce supports immune function and antioxidant activity.

# "I DON'T SEE A THING!"

Rav Yehuda Davis, the founder of the Yeshiva of Mountindale, was a gadol who lived in Baltimore in the early 1900s. He was responsible for convincing Rav Avigdor Miller to learn in Slabodka. He was also responsible for convincing Rav Mordechai Gifter to leave America to learn in Telshe.

Possessed with a brilliant mind, young Yehuda earned a Phi Beta Kappa award to Johns Hopkins University. He was a star on the basketball team as well as a world-class swimmer. At Johns Hopkins, he attended classes on philosophy, which were taught by an unaffiliated Jewish professor. When it came time to take the exam, the professor warned Yehuda, "You can't take the exam unless you remove your Jew cap." Of course, Yehuda didn't listen, and the professor failed him. Not only that, but the professor convinced all the other professors to fail him, too. As a result of this incident, Yehuda decided to leave Johns Hopkins.

After Yehuda had learned in Slabodka for a year, the Rosh Yeshivah of Slabodka, Rav Eizik Sher, advised him to complain to the president of Johns Hopkins about what had transpired the previous year. Yehuda approached the president and confidently stated, "I didn't study for the past year, but I'm ready to take all of the exams right now!" Sure enough, Rabbi Davis took them, did superbly, and was awarded his degree.

When he was attending Johns Hopkins University, Rabbi Davis's class was once carrying out an experiment with an amoeba. The technician set up the microscope, and each student got a chance to look at the amazing species. Everyone oohed and aahed as they peered into the lens, marveling at the wonders of creation. When it was Rabbi Davis's turn to use the microscope, he looked in and proclaimed, "I don't see anything. There's nothing there." "What do you mean?" asked the professor angrily. "Everyone else in this room saw the amoeba!"

But Rabbi Davis insisted, "I don't see a thing!" Finally, the professor decided to ask the technician to come take a look. When the technician peered inside, he gasped and apologized. "I'm terribly sorry. I forgot to insert the amoeba into the microscope!" Though the rest of the class pretended to grasp what they thought the others did in order not to appear foolish, Yehuda, whose very being was emes, did not follow the crowd. He followed the truth.

From You Made My Life, By R' Nachman Rothenberg, Published By Israel Bookshop and Reprinted With Their Permission



## THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question of whether you can trust a box that has the words "toiveled" on it, Rav Tzvi Berkowitz answered as follows. The writing on the box has the same status as having heard it from a person. You have a right to assume that it was written by an adult. It is possible that the person who wrote it didn't do it themselves and asked a child to do it who is not believed or some other problem, but even if he were to hear from the person himself that it was toiveled he doesn't have to interrogate him. Therefore he has a right to believe that it was already toiveled. It certainly should not have a bracha. However, it would be better to toivel it to remove all questions since the item has a chezkas issur.

We know that all of you are bombarded with crowdfunding campaigns. We have Rachmanus. In lieu of running a crowdfunding campaign, Achim is soliciting the readership of TableTalk to support the important work we do in the Russian-speaking Jewish community. To contribute online go to [achim.org/donate](http://achim.org/donate) or send a check payable to

Achim  
6604 Amleigh Road  
Baltimore, MD 21209

If you are interested in hosting guests during the course of Yom Tov, for the sederim or other seudos please contact me at 443.286.9338

**Rosenbloom**  
**PEST-CONTROL**  
TOTAL CUSTOMER DEDICATION

**K&F**  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW  
406 W. Pennsylvania Avenue  
Towson, Maryland 21204

Brad E. Kauffman Esquire and Kauffman and Forman P.A.  
specializing in corporate and construction law,  
estates, wills and trusts and business litigation.

