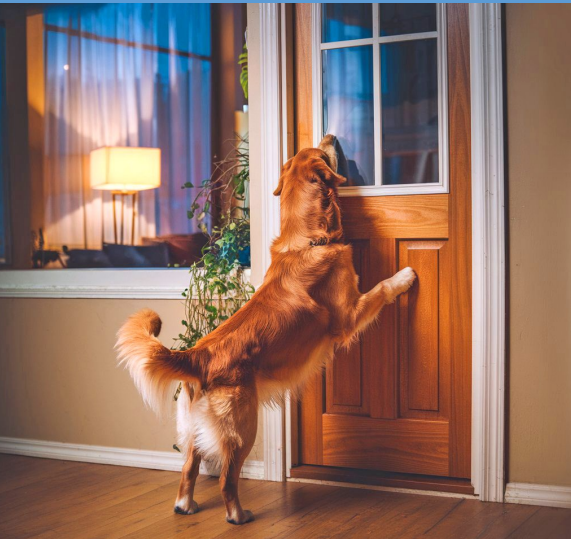




## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE LOCKED OUT DOG

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Last week we had an interesting story about animals. Here is another interesting question that involves an animal.

Avi who owned a golden retriever, once had to leave Israel for several weeks, so he called his friend, Meir, and said, "Meir, I know this is a huge favor to ask, but I have to leave the country, and I need someone to watch my dog. Could you please watch my dog while I'm gone?"

Meir replied, "You know, having a dog for a few weeks will be hard for me, but I'll do you this favor. You're my friend, so I'll do it for you. However, I can't accept any 'achrayos' (responsibility) for the dog. Do you accept this condition?"

Avi said, "Not a problem. I understand that taking responsibility will be hard, and you can take it without any 'achrayos'."

Avi thanked Meir and brought the dog over, and again, Meir confirmed, "I'm watching your dog, but I cannot assume any 'achrayos' or responsibility." Avi agreed, dropped off his dog, and took his flight.

A few days later, the beautiful golden

### THE MANY EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

The function of offerings in the Beis Hamikdash is to serve as a vehicle to bring us close to HaShem. The name 'korban' (offering) derives from 'karov' or l'hakriv' to be close or to draw close. Once we entered the Land we were allowed to bring these offerings wherever we desired. However, once a permanent location was chosen it became a severe transgression to bring those same offerings anywhere outside the chosen location. Why should the establishment of a permanent HQ for HaShem's Presence make the act of bringing an offering into a serious offense?

There are two forms of gratitude. The first is that of the fellow who is stranded on the highway with a flat tire and has no spare tire with him to change. A car stops to help him which happens to be the same model car as his. The kind person who stopped to help realizes that our poor fellow has no spare to replace his flat with so he offers his own spare tire and gives the fellow his contact information to pay him back when he gets a chance. This generous act certainly deserves a most gracious expression of gratitude.

The second is that of a fellow who was taken hostage by a terrorist and he knows that he may never see his family again. He knows his life is in balance. A soldier discovers his whereabouts and successfully saves him and brings him home. Even if the soldier had not endangered himself in rescuing him, nevertheless, his generous act deserves a far greater expression of gratitude than our fellow who got a flat tire.

The primary difference is that the fellow with the flat only had a flat tire; his life was not endangered. Although it was an act of self sacrifice, giving up his spare tire, nevertheless, life would go on without his assistance. By stark contrast, the hostage knew that his life was in balance and chances were that without the sol-

retriever became very spooked and irritable for some reason. He barked all through the night, preventing Meir from getting any sleep. Meir tried his best to calm the dog down, but it kept barking and barking. Something was clearly bothering him. Frustrated because he knew staying up so late would ruin the next day for him, Meir took the dog outside, left it outside the house, and closed the door. This way, he wouldn't have to hear the dog barking at night. He assumed the dog would just stay outside.

The next morning, when Meir went to get the dog, he opened the door and saw that the dog was not there. He looked all around, but the dog was nowhere to be found. It had vanished. Meir felt bad, but he reminded himself that he had not taken any responsibility for the dog.

Three weeks later, Avi returned from his trip and came to pick up his dog. Meir sadly told him, "I'm really sorry. The dog was barking all night one night, so I put it outside, and then it just disappeared."

Avi was, of course, very upset. "What do you mean you just put my dog outside, without closing the gate or locking it? This dog was very expensive! I expect you to pay me for it."

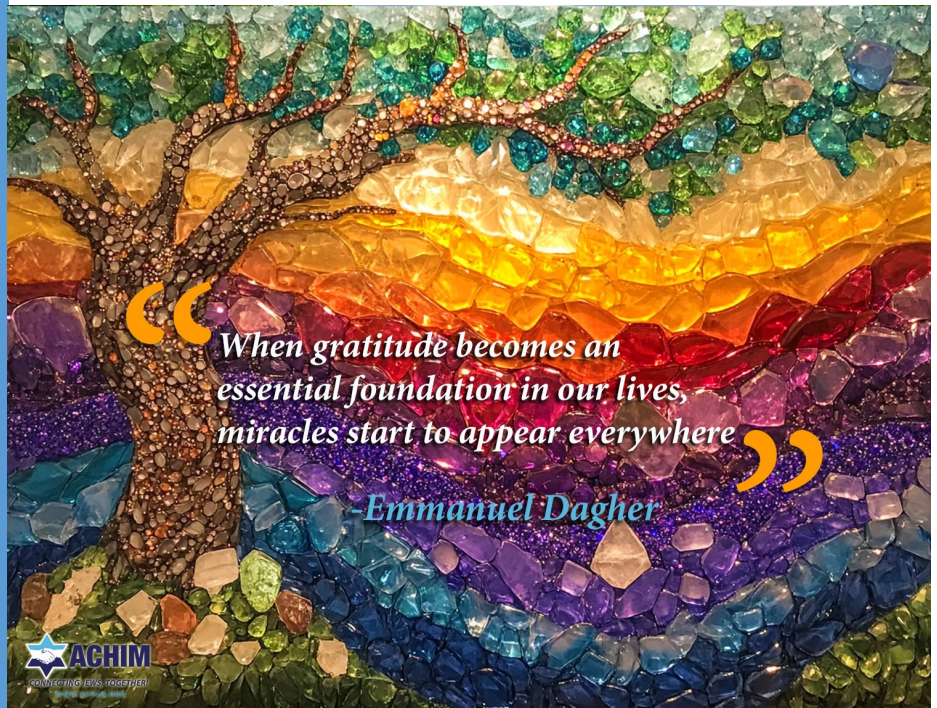
Meir responded, "What do you mean? You told me that I could watch it without any 'achrayos' or responsibility."

Avi replied, "No responsibility means you would not be responsible if it got stolen or lost, but you, with your own hands, threw it out. You lost it with your own hands. How could you say there's no responsibility for it? You actually caused the damage."

They agreed to bring this question to a Rav.

What do you think? Is Meir, who agreed to watch the dog without any 'achrayos' or responsibility, obligated to pay for the dog that he put outside because it was barking? On one hand, he did not accept responsibility for it. But on the other hand, he actually caused it to get lost through a negligent act.

See Upiryo Matok Devarim, Page 278.



dier's interception he would die. The difference in the expression of gratitude between the first and second situations is only a quantitative increase, perhaps a large increase but quantitative nonetheless. The expression of the hostage must certainly exceed the former's expression many times over. However, both are equally expressions that the recipient decides how to express. The recipient does not need to ask the benefactor how he should express his appreciation - it is his own choice how to do it, where to do it and when to do it.

Let us contrast these two with yet a third. HaShem created a world at His own discretion; He did not owe this creation to anyone. He created me as one of the players in His world. He chose a nation to be His Own which was destined to bring His world to its destiny and placed me as a player in that nation. My existence is due to His discretion; He owed me nothing. In fact, there was no me before He created me.

When I consider expressing my gratitude to Him for this in-

credible gift of life and gift of choice the decision how, when and where to make this expression cannot begin with my understanding because I have no understanding. Actually, I have no existence without His gift of existence. The form and fashion of my expression must conform with His direction. For me to form my own expression without His direction is to imply that my decision stands by itself and I have chosen this form, when in reality in the context of my existence who am I? In other words, when the gratitude reflects my appreciation for bringing me into existence, this cannot be based on a decision made by me.

Once HaShem establishes a permanent location where His Shechina resides it becomes antithetical to bring an offering whose purpose is to bring ourselves close to HaShem in a location that is convenient for me. The prerequisite to coming close to HaShem is recognizing that we have no existence without Him. It must therefore be on His location not ours. When offerings are brought on our terms and not on His they become cynical expressions of patronizing gratitude.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### MAINE BLOOD WORMS: A METAL-TOOTHED WONDER

Imagine a creature with translucent skin, exposing the hemoglobin-rich blood coursing through its body, and venomous jaws that are literally reinforced with metal. Meet the Maine bloodworm, a small but fierce inhabitant of marine environments that is as fascinating as it is formidable. These fascinating marine creatures, hidden beneath the surface of intertidal zones, are far from ordinary. They possess one of nature's most astonishing features: metallic teeth. Yes, you read that right—these tiny predators have teeth made from copper, a marvel of natural engineering that showcases the wonders of Hashem's world.

A Glimpse Into the Life of Blood Worms. Their name, "blood worm," comes from their striking red color, which is due to a high concentration of hemoglobin in their bodies. This high hemoglobin content allows them to thrive in low-oxygen environments, such as the mudflats where they are commonly found. These mudflats, often submerged at high tide and exposed at low tide, create a fluctuating environment that is perfect for the adaptable blood worm.

Typically, these worms measure between 8 and 14 inches in length, although some can grow up to 24 inches or more. They are relatively slender, with a diameter ranging from 0.25 to 0.5 inches. Their size, combined with their remarkable teeth, makes them formidable predators in the microcosm of the intertidal zones.

The Secret Behind Their Deadly Bite. One of the most extraordinary features of Maine blood worms is their metal-infused teeth. These teeth are unique in the animal kingdom. How do they develop metal teeth? The worms accumulate copper from their environment—sediments, and water—which is then transported to specialized cells that form their teeth. This process results in copper teeth that are exceptionally strong, sharp, and durable.

The teeth are located at the tip of an extendable proboscis, a tubular mouthpart that the worm uses to hunt and feed. When prey is near, the blood worm shoots out its proboscis, lined with these sharp, metal-infused teeth, to grab and puncture its target. The metal provides them with the mechanical strength necessary to pierce through tough materials like the shells of crustaceans and other marine invertebrates.

In addition to their physical strength, these teeth are also incredibly wear-resistant, maintaining their sharpness over time, which is crucial for the worm's hunting strategy. Unlike regular teeth, made from organic material which can dull quickly, the metal-infused teeth of blood worms remain sharp and effective, ensuring that these predators can continue to capture and process their food efficiently.

The blood worm's teeth are not its only weapon. Associated with these formidable fangs are venom glands that produce a mild ven-

om. When the worm bites, it injects this venom into its prey, helping to subdue it. Although the venom is not dangerous to humans, it can cause a sharp, stinging sensation and localized pain if the worm happens to bite you. This pain is usually temporary, but in rare cases, some individuals may experience more severe symptoms due to an allergic reaction.

For the blood worm, however, this venom is a crucial part of its hunting toolkit. It allows the worm to immobilize its prey quickly, making it easier to consume. Blood worms are opportunistic predators, feeding primarily on small invertebrates such as amphipods, copepods, and other marine worms. They are also known to eat small mollusks and detritus, and in some cases, they may even display cannibalistic tendencies by preying on other blood worms.

Masters of Survival in Harsh Environments. The Maine blood worm is not just a formidable predator; it's also a master of survival in some of the harshest environments on Earth. These worms are commonly found in the intertidal zones of the northeastern coast of North America, ranging from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Mid-Atlantic states. The coastal waters of Maine, in particular, are home to abundant populations of blood worms, which thrive in the muddy or sandy substrates of intertidal zones.

Beyond their role as predators, Maine blood worms play a significant role in the ecosystems of the intertidal zones they inhabit. Their burrowing activity in the mud not only helps them avoid predators but also aerates the sediment, which is crucial for maintaining a healthy ecosystem. This aeration process enhances the exchange of oxygen in the mud, benefiting other organisms that live there and contributing to the overall health of the marine environment.

Blood worms are both predators and prey within their ecosystems, forming an essential link in the coastal food chain. They help maintain the balance of species in their habitat, supporting biodiversity by controlling the populations of smaller invertebrates and serving as a food source for larger predators.

In addition to their ecological significance, blood worms hold considerable economic value, especially in the state of Maine. They are harvested extensively from mudflats for use as bait in saltwater fishing, a practice that supports a thriving industry. Professional diggers venture into the mudflats, carefully extracting these valuable worms, which are then sold to anglers across the region.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

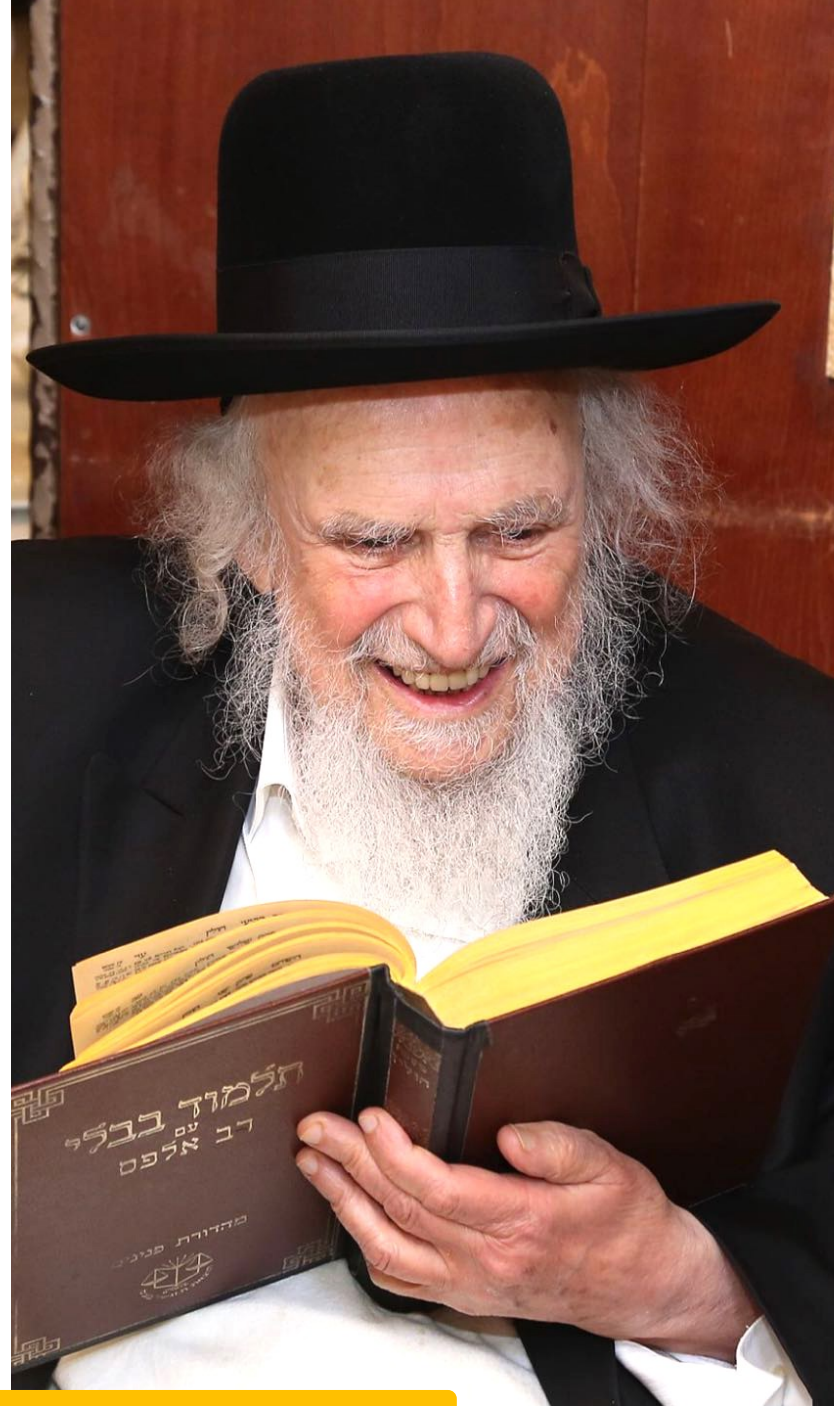
## HE FELT THAT AN ELUL-TYPE SHMUESS WOULD NOT BE BENEFICIAL FOR HIM

R' Eytan Kobre told over the following story:

Elul was an intense time at Yeshiva Maalos HaTorah, and Reb Shmuel Auerbach would give two shmuessen each week during that month.

One time, as he was making his way to the front of the beis medrash to deliver a shmuess, he made a slight detour to approach a talmid sitting off to the side. Taking the student's hand, he whispered, "Oz v'chedvah bimkomo! A Yid has to be happy above all, especially during the Y'mei Harachamim! I'm asking you to take your Gemara downstairs and learn there during my shmuess—but only b'simchah, b'simchah, b'simchah!"

Why did Reb Shmuel do this? He had discerned that this young man was going through a period of melancholy and felt that an Elul-type shmuess would not be beneficial for him in his current state.



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the security guard who shot a bear to protect the rare bird display, Rav Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Devarim, p. 275) wrote that the security guard is not obligated to pay for the loss of the bear. This is because his job was to protect the exhibit, and he was given permission to safeguard the animals based on his subjective judgment.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of

**Alex Drucker**

By his daughter Eve Drucker Messing Steger, his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren



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

