

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



NO POWER IN THE AIRBNB

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Sarah lived in Florida and owned an Airbnb home near the ocean. She fixed it up to look beautiful; it was renovated and had nice amenities like an arcade room and a hot tub. She had a good business renting out the home on Airbnb.

One day, a family named the Winklers rented the home for a Shabbos weekend. They paid \$1000 in advance for the weekend. The Winkler children were excited about the arcade room and the hot tub and were very much looking forward to spending Shabbos in this vacation home. The Winklers drove to the Airbnb, unpacked, and everyone got ready for Shabbos. They were greatly looking forward to the experience.



THE SILVER FOUNDATION

In this week's Parsha the Bnei Yisroel contribute all the material required for the building of the Mishkan. All contributions were given with a complete heart with no limitations. There was, however, one exception. Regarding the silver that was needed in the building. Every male adult had to contribute a half shekel. Nobody could give more than a half shekel and nobody could give less than a half shekel. What was it about silver that it was so controlled?

To take this question one step further we must appreciate that silver was the material that represents deep love and yearning. The Psalmist in 84:3 describes how his soul yearns to be in the house of HaShem. The word he uses to describe his yearning is 'nichsefa' which shares the same root as silver, 'kesef'. This teaches that silver is the material that expresses our love and yearning to be with HaShem.

More than a religion, Judaism is a relationship between HaShem and His people and love is at the root of this relationship. In fact, the Talmud states that the most important part of performing mitzvos is the heart, the emotional connection to HaShem. In other words, if our performance of mitzvos is lacking emotional feeling, the meaningfulness of our mitzvos is severely diminished. Why then, of all the materials needed for the Mishkan, should silver, the expression of love, be so regulated in terms of who gives and how much must be given?

Relationships come in many forms. There are husband-wife relationships, par-

About 10 minutes before sundown, all of a sudden, the power went out.

At first, the Winklers thought that it was just their house, but then they realized that the power went out in the entire town. It was cold and there was no light, but with optimism and good cheer, the Winklers were able to have a good time over Shabbos despite the power being out. Eventually, after Shabbos, the power came back on.

When Sarah, the owner, heard that the power was out the whole Shabbos, she felt terrible. She imagined that they didn't have a very good time. Sarah wondered if she was obligated to give them a complete refund for their visit.

On one hand, the house was perfectly fine; everything in the house worked, and it was the town's problem that the power went out.

But on the other hand, she wasn't able to provide what was advertised: a beautiful home with lights, heat, an arcade room, and those things were unavailable because the power was out. So, perhaps she did have a responsibility to refund them.

What do you think?



ent-child, master-slave, friend-friend and so on. In every relationship there are boundaries. Even though in a healthy relationship there is very much love, nevertheless, there are boundaries. How far one can go, what to expect, what are the responsibilities and more. In all healthy relationships there are positive emotional feelings. In some there are more feelings of fear and awe in others there are more feelings of love and less of awe. Every relationship has its unique mix.

When we consider our relationship with HaShem and keep in mind how our every breath is a gift from Him, how our every family member and friend is a gift from Him, we will be filled with an inextinguishable love. If you add to this consideration how our peoplehood in general and our communities and society is so blessed and it is all a gift from Him, that love continues to increase.

At the same time, however, when we consider how absolutely infinitely small we are and how we are nothing but a creature of the Creator we are filled with awe. When we further consider our responsibility to Him and recognize how there is nothing we can do that could possibly reciprocate His goodness, that awe continues to increase.

Given this tender balance that must be maintained, HaShem instructed every one of us to contribute a half shekel of silver as our expression of our love for Him. We are able to fill that contribution with infinite love. Every fiber of our emotion fills that half shekel. There is no limit to how much love can be packed into our gift. However, in spite of the extreme amount of love that is packed in, the gift itself must not exceed a half shekel.

Perhaps the reason why the silver was used exclusively in creating the foundation of the walls of the Mishkan was because the integrity of love must be found in the boundaries it creates. Our love of HaShem must be unlimited but it must also remain within its proper boundaries.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE CUCKOO BIRD

Recently, my wife bought me a cuckoo clock for my office. This inspired me to research the origin of the cuckoo clock and its progenitor, the cuckoo bird.

The cuckoo bird family includes over 140 species. The road-runner bird, made popular by the cartoon characters, is a type of cuckoo. These medium-sized birds, with their distinctive shades of brown, black, or gray feathers, short wings, and long tails, inhabit every continent except the chilly expanse of Antarctica. Most live in trees, while some are ground-dwelling.

One of the most remarkable aspects of cuckoo birds is their unique sound, from which their name is derived. The two-syllable "cu-ckoo" is recognizable around the world, though in Africa, the sound is interpreted as "pooh-pooh." Their calls are simple, whistle-like, used to attract mates and defend territories. In Europe, the cuckoo's call is often used as a symbol of the arrival of spring.

But cuckoos are not just unique for their calls or their appearance; they are known for a breeding strategy that sounds like it's straight out of a spy novel: brood parasitism. Unlike most birds, cuckoos do not build nests or raise their young. Instead, they rely on a strategy where the female lays her eggs in the nests of other bird species. The cuckoo mother is a master of deception, laying eggs in a host's nest that mimic the appearance of the host's eggs to avoid detection. A female cuckoo can lay between 12 and 22 eggs each season. Some cuckoo chicks take this deception a step further by ejecting the host's eggs or young from the nest to eliminate competition. They utilize various strategies to enhance their success. For instance, the cuckoo chick grows larger and faster than its host's chicks and has a voracious appetite, often persuading even birds other than its foster parents to feed it. Additionally, cuckoo eggs generally hatch earlier than those of the host due to an internal incubation period prior to laying, giving the cuckoo chick a head start. Some host species have developed the ability to recognize and reject cuckoo eggs, though about 80% of cuckoo eggs manage to evade detection. More than 120 species have been parasitized by cuckoos in Europe. Cuckoo breeding behavior is considered one of nature's wonders.

The cuckoo bird's diet is another area of interest. Many other bird species avoid hairy caterpillars due to their toxic nature, but cuckoos prefer them. This is because cuckoos have a unique digestive system that allows them to eat these and other toxic insects. This is actually a great benefit to humanity as cuckoos now play a crucial role in controlling insect populations in various ecosystems. Cuckoo birds have been introduced to new areas as a form of biological control, such as the common cuckoo in New Zealand to

control the populations of the introduced European gypsy moth.

Migration is another remarkable aspect of cuckoo behavior, with some species traveling up to 6000 miles yearly, without having first visited their destination. These long journeys are made possible by their adaptation to various habitats, including forests, woodlands, marshes, and deserts, and by their exceptional navigation skills. Adult cuckoos migrate back to Africa after the breeding season. Young cuckoos follow their parents to Africa weeks later. Juvenile cuckoos migrate to their wintering area without prior visitation, displaying remarkable navigation skills.

Cuckoos have unique zygodactyl feet. This means they have two toes pointing forward and two backward. This aids in their life both in trees and on the ground. The arrangement of zygodactyl feet allows for a stronger and more stable grip on branches and trunks. Zygodactyl feet are also particularly suited to climb tree trunks as they allow the bird to anchor itself securely to vertical surfaces. It also enables birds to move with agility through dense foliage or rugged terrains. In addition, it allows for more flexibility in movement, such as moving sideways or making tight turns, which can be crucial for hunting insects or escaping predators. It also allows for more accurate and efficient feeding.

Cuckoo birds are not only fascinating from a biological standpoint but also hold significant cultural importance. Their distinctive call has inspired the famous cuckoo clock. The essence of the cuckoo clock lies in its unique feature: at each hour, it emits a sound resembling the call of a common cuckoo, accompanied by an automated bird that moves in sync with each note. This distinctive characteristic has been captivating people since 1629. The origins of the cuckoo clock are shrouded in mystery, with its inventor remaining unknown. It is widely believed that the cuckoo clock was first conceived in the Black Forest area of Germany, a region renowned for its rich tradition in clockmaking. The Black Forest became the epicenter of cuckoo clock production by the 18th century, with early models featuring movements and gears crafted entirely from wood. The fascination with cuckoo clocks has led to the establishment of museums dedicated to showcasing extensive collections, such as the Cuckooland Museum in the UK and the Deutsches Uhrenmuseum in Germany.

Cuckoos are depicted in Greek mythology and Shakespeare. They have been featured in literature, art, and mythology, symbolizing luck, deceit, or unrequited love. Their calls and behaviors have inspired clockmakers, poets, and storytellers, embedding them deeply in human culture.

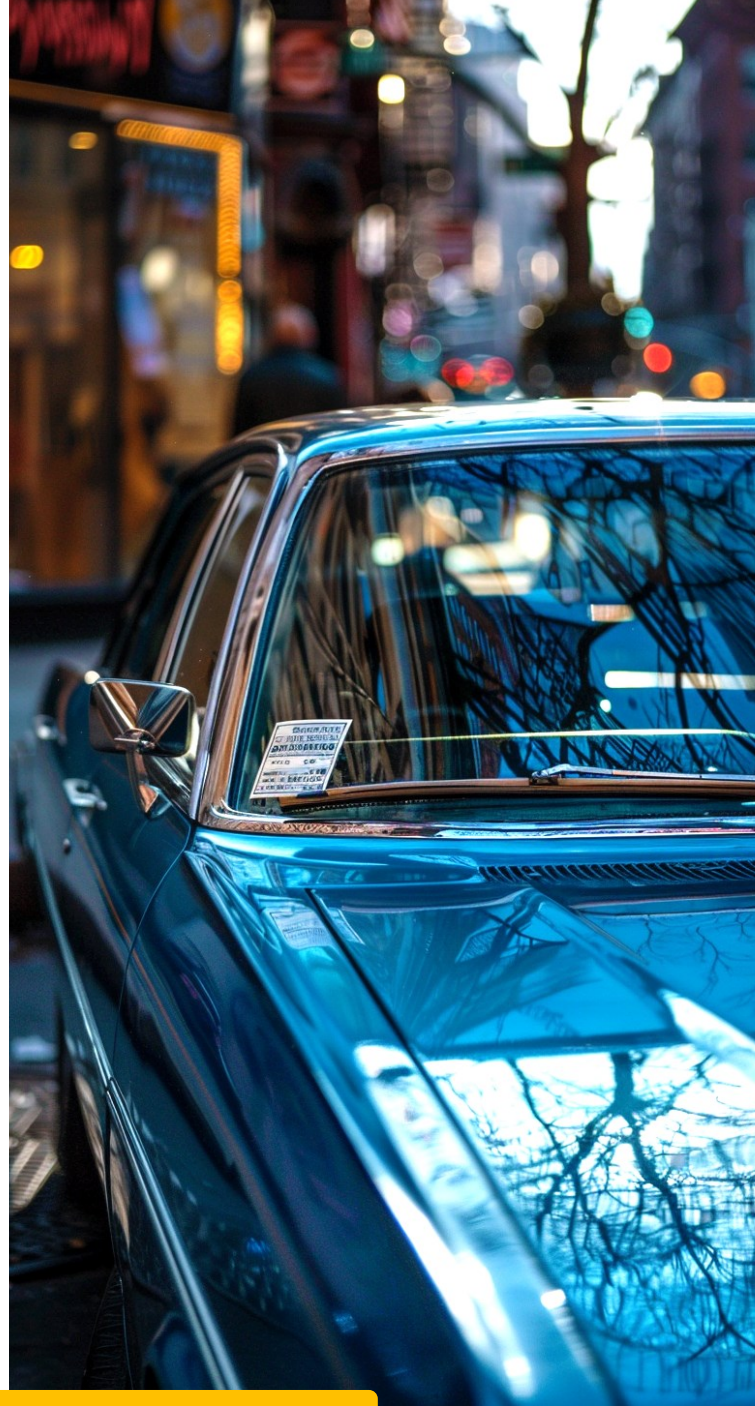
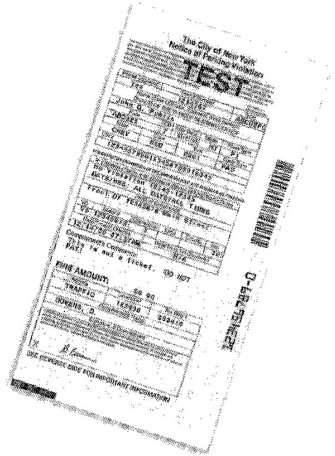
Thank you, Hashem, for your wondrous world!

THIS IS A TEST FROM HASHEM

Rabbi David Ashear told over the following beautiful story:

My relative had an appointment in the city, and as she made her way to the car after the appointment, she noticed a ticket on the windshield. At first, she was quite upset, as she had made a point of ascertaining that the spot was legal. But then she told herself, "I did my hishtadlus [effort], I did what I had to do, and if this happened, then this is a test from Hashem, and I am not going to let it disturb me."

When she got to the car, she read the ticket, and couldn't believe her eyes. It said, "TEST; this is not a ticket, do not pay." It was unbelievable; it was as though Hashem was speaking directly to her, informing her that this was really just a test. Since that day, my relative has kept the ticket as a constant reminder that Hashem is behind the scenes, testing us and hoping that we will become better people as a result.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about Anita Minyan, some rabbanim held that this was permitted because this was an example of when you can be meshaneh for the sake of peace, and there was very little chance that this would cause a chillul Hashem. But other rabbanim held that saying Kaddish is only a mitzvah derabanan, and it is not worth making a chillul Hashem which is a mitzvah deoraisa to fulfill a mitzvah derabanan. We assume that the man in this story did it after speaking to a Rav. Because this scenario involved many variables, one must make sure to speak to a rav before making decisions about any similar scenarios.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of my wife
Bonnie
for all the wonderful work she does for the community.

By Joey Pollak



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