

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE MEAT COUNTER

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha mentions the regret and teshuva that Yosef's brothers did for not showing compassion on Yosef. The reference to teshuva leads us to the following true story.

Elisheva was happily married to a wonderful husband, Michoel. Michoel was the manager of the fish counter at a large local kosher supermarket. Elisheva had a wonderful relationship with her husband. He was kind, thoughtful, caring and sensitive.

But there was one thing that greatly bothered Elisheva. Every Friday Michoel would come home with fresh trays of all sorts of herring. When Elisheva would ask him if he got permission from the store to bring home fish for their family he would always say that they don't mind and that he works so hard for them, it's the least they can do for him. Once he justified it by saying that the Torah requires that an animal be able to eat while it is working and you can't muzzle it while it's



OUT FROM OPEN JAWS

As a child growing up in the 1960's every Shabbos I thought of the Jews of the Soviet Union. Our family always sang the Shabbos zemer of Ko Ribon Olam. The third stanza forms a prayer to HaShem in which we plead with Him to please save the sheep from the mouth of the lion, and take out Your nation from their exile.

What a picture! The lion's jaws are already open and the sheep is in his mouth. Once the lion closes his mouth there will be no more sheep. That is the illustration of HaShem's people in this exile. This picture was certainly not an accurate description of the exile I was experiencing in Baltimore. It was, however, a perfect illustration of the plight of the Jews of the Soviet Union.

In all fairness, the physical and material situation in the Soviet Union was not that dreadful. However, when contemplating what the future held for the Soviet Jews in terms of their Judaism, it was a most accurate depiction. After World War II the surviving European Jews immigrated to Israel and America building tremendous institutions of Torah study. Communities were built, schools and Yeshivos began to sprout up. The Judaism we have today which the young folk take for granted was planted and developed by those survivors.

However, while the survivors built up Judaism in America and Israel, the Jews of the Soviet Union were enveloped in a blanket of darkness. Before the War, the Jews of the Soviet Union practiced bris milah. People went to shul for holidays. By the end of the War, bris milah was no longer practiced in the European side of the Soviet Union. Shul was attended only by older folks who were not working. Any other Jew who would dare attend shul feared losing his job or worse. The notion of a Jewish commu-

working. For sure the same is true for a person.

Elishva knew that Michoel was just rationalizing it to himself, but the truth was without explicit permission from the store owner, taking food home without asking was theft.

One day Elisheva met the owner of the kosher supermarket. She thanked him for employing her husband. "There is one thing, though", she said. "He comes home every day smelling strongly of fish. Is there a way you can transfer him to a different department?" Elisheva's goal was that perhaps if her husband was not working in the fish department, he wouldn't have the same opportunity to bring food home.

The store owner gladly complied. But sure enough, Michoel was now put in charge of the butchery counter. And each week he would bring home delicious cuts of meat in honor of Shabbos. Elisheva felt that it was wrong to feed the stolen meat to her family. But every time she brought it up to her husband he dismissed it and rationalized it.

Elisheva had the following idea. Each week, she would take some of the money that her husband earned and return it to the supermarket, saying that it was owed to the store. She didn't ask her husband about doing this and when she gave the money she didn't say why she owed it.

She later wondered about this solution. Was she allowed to take the money her husband earned without asking him? Did giving the money to the supermarket even help to rectify the theft?

What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Shemos 443

mitzvos.

How appropriate it is to use this space of TableTalk on this Shabbos Chanukah to express our hodaa and halel to HaShem for never forgetting His people.

Consider how many generations passed since the Torah and her mitzvos were grabbed from their hands. And yet, once they are exposed to Torah and mitzvos they spring into life. How did that spark survive three and four generations in total darkness? HaShem instilled in the neshama of the Jew a very deep and protected spark of Torah that is ready to jump to life once it is exposed to the Torah. We must not take for granted our debt of gratitude to HaShem for instilling within us such a deep inextinguishable connection to His Torah.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and a lichtige Chanukah.

Paysach Diskind

MITZVA MEME

“*Sometimes a positive lie is better than a negative truth*”

Rav Avigdor Miller



nity was not comprehensible. While every Jewish person had their small circle of Jewish friends, to actually organize as a community was impossible.

Effectively, the Jews of the Soviet Union were placed in a religious crematorium. What a perfect picture was drawn by the author of that Shabbos zemer.

It was no wonder therefore that in 1989 when America opened her doors to allow 400,000 Jews from the Soviet Union to enter this blessed country, I leaped with excitement. What a miracle! HaShem listened to our prayers! The lion released the sheep!

It is now over 30 years since that miracle occurred and as we look around at the Jewish communities in America and in Israel we are finding more and more members of this population involved in the growth of the Jewish communities in which they live. The Jews of the former Soviet Union are producing great talmidei chachomim who contribute to the growth of Torah and



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

LOT, LOTUS, & DUTCHMAN'S PIPE

Last week we discussed the Tzari and Lot that was carried by the Arab caravan to Egypt. We learned about Tzari, Balsam. What exactly is "Lot"? Rashi says that Lot is called Aristolochia. That is still its scientific name even today. The common names for Aristolochia are birthwort and Dutchman's pipe. Let's look at Dutchman's pipe a bit deeper. **(Pictured top left)**

Dutchman's pipe is a vine that grows in tropical forests, on the wooded slopes, edges of the forests, wastelands, areas near the roads and waterways. It requires moist, fertile soil and partial shade for successful growth. Dutchman's pipe is classified as weed in some areas due to its ability to quickly occupy new habitats and prevent growth of native plants. People cultivate Dutchman's pipe mostly for ornamental purposes.

Dutchman's pipe has slender stems that can reach 25 to 30 feet in height. It grows in height by tightly coiling the stem around all available structures.

The flowers are inflated at the base, continuing as a long tube, ending in a tongue-shaped, brightly colored lobe. These flowers have a special pollination mechanism. The plants are aromatic and their strong scent attracts insects. The inner part of the tube is covered with hairs, acting as a fly-trap. But it doesn't kill the insect. After being trapped in the hair, the hairs then wither to release the fly but it exits covered with pollen. That helps to pollinate the plant.

Why is it called Dutchman's pipe? This is because the flower looks similar to the old-fashioned meerschaum pipes that were once common in the Netherlands. **(Top middle and right.)** Why is it called Birthwort? This is because of the flower's shape that resembles a birth canal.

Rashi called it Aristolochia. Why is it called that? Aristolochia was highly regarded as a medicinal plant by the ancient Egyptians, and later by the Greeks, the Romans and the Chinese. Due to its resemblance to the uterus, doctors of the time believed that birthwort was useful in childbirth. Because of this, the scientific name Aristolochia was developed from the Greek word "Aristo" which means best, and "locheia", which meant childbirth. This connoted that taking the Birthwort would lead to an ideal childbirth.

Despite its use in ancient medicine, Aristolochia is today known to contain the lethal toxin aristolochic acid and Aristolochia has been shown to be a potent carcinogen.

Some creatures use the bad taste of Aristolochia to their advantage. The caterpillar larvae of swallowtail butterflies eat Aristolochia to make themselves inedible to most predators.

Aristolochia was also used by people as a reptile repellent and to

treat snakebite.

Because of Dutchman pipe's use in Egyptian medicine, it would make sense that it was being transported to Egypt along with Yosef.

However, there is another understanding of what Lot is. The targum Onkelus calls it "Lotum". Many understand this to be referring to the flower lotus, which was considered holy by the ancient Egyptians. **(Bottom left).**

The Lotus flower is regarded in many different cultures, especially in eastern religions, as a symbol of purity, enlightenment, self-regeneration and rebirth. This is because of the unique characteristics of the lotus flower. The roots of lotus are planted in the mud of a pond or river bottom while the leaves float high above on the water's surface or are held well above it. The leaf stalks can be up to almost 7 feet tall, allowing the plant to grow in water to that depth.

(Bottom middle). The flowers are found on thick stems rising several centimeters above the leaves protruding from the water. Lotus flowers come in beautiful white, pink, red, blue, purple, and yellow colors. Some cultures saw this as a perfect analogy for the human condition: even when its roots are in the dirtiest waters, the Lotus produces the most beautiful flower. The Lotus Flower grows in the deep mud, far away from the sun. But, sooner or later, the Lotus reaches the light, becoming the most beautiful flower ever.

The Lotus opens up during the day hours and closes at night. Because of this, Egyptian mythology associated the lotus with the sun, and they believed that it "gave birth to the sun". It was also an important symbol in ancient Egypt, where it represented the path from death to rebirth to the afterlife.

You might be familiar with the delicious lotus biscuits and lotus butter. **(Bottom right).** Are they made from the lotus flower? No. The truth is Lotus is simply the brand name of the bakery that makes it and lotus was chosen as the name to connote the purity of its natural ingredients. The original name of the Belgium bakery was "Lotus Pastry And Gingerbread Bakery". The bakery was opened in Belgium in 1932, when Jan Boone Sr. created a caramelized cookie with nothing but natural ingredients. He named it Lotus, after the lotus flower that symbolizes purity.

The seeds of the lotus may remain viable for many years, with the oldest recorded lotus germination being from seeds as much as 1,300 years old, recovered from a dry lakebed in northeastern China. Because of its viability and longevity, the Chinese regard the plant as a symbol of longevity.

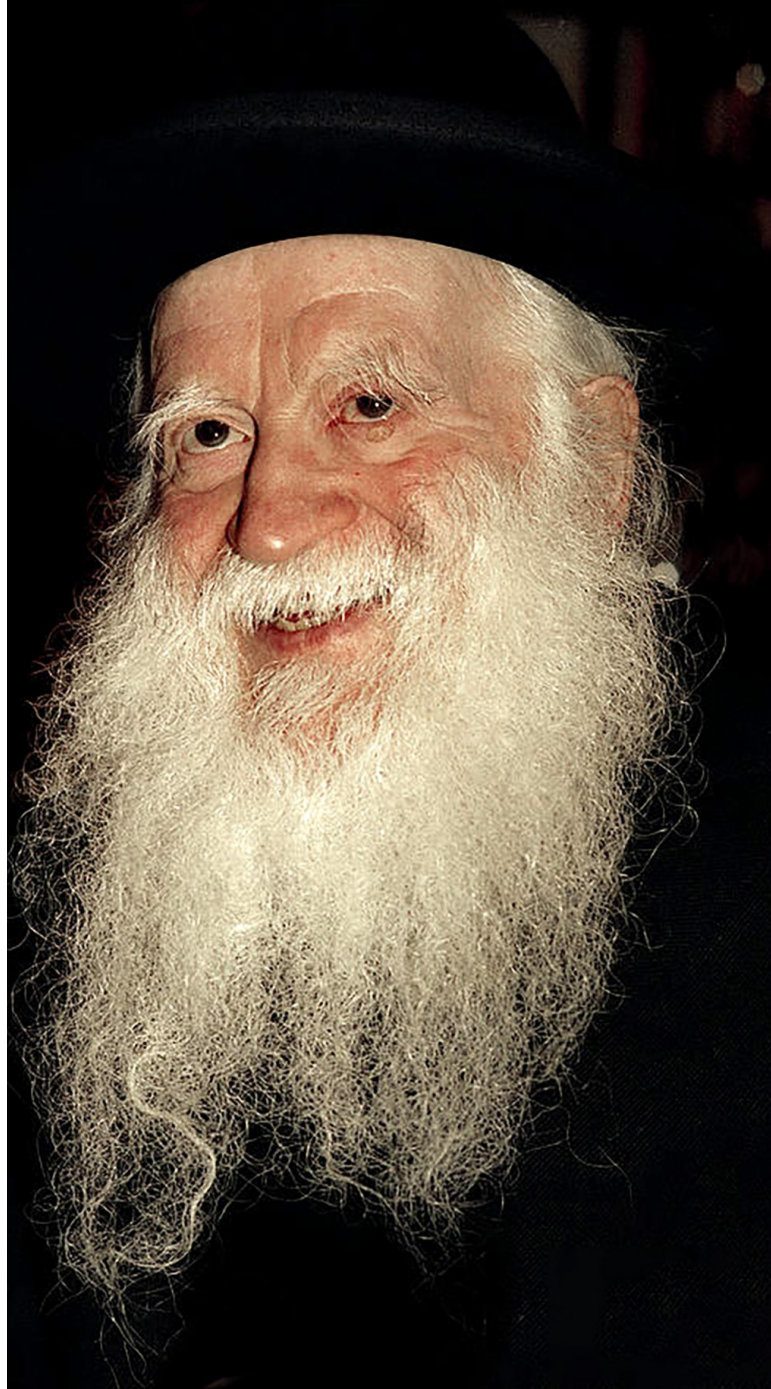
The Japanese variety of Lotus, Ohmi Myoren, can have between 2000 and 5000 petals. This is the greatest number of petals recorded for any species of plant.

LEARNING FROM A MIRACLE

Rav Yehuda Zev Segal found little interest in stories which told of miraculous cures and happenings. Though such stories can serve to strengthen emunah (faith), the Rosh Yeshivah preferred anecdotes which portrayed behavior that can and should be emulated. "The purpose of a maaseh (story)" he once said, "is the lemaaseh (practical lesson). He felt that stories of wonders had little lemaaseh, little practical use.

However, once in a shmuess, the Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Segal, told over a story about the brother of R' Chaim of Sanz. Once, this tzaddik was a Shabbos guest at someone's home and was honored with being served first. When the tureen of cholent was placed before him, he realized that some kerosene had somehow found its way into the dish, making it absolutely repugnant. In his desire to save the cook from embarrassment, the tzaddik ate portion after portion until there was nothing left of the cholent. He did this even though it made him look very silly, in order to save the cook from embarrassment. The Rosh Yeshiva concluded, "Now that is a mofeis (wonder) from which we can all learn!"

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the fire Rav Zilberstein writes that there is a concept that the partner can say, "I only partnered with you for its benefits and not its liabilities". In that case, he would not be liable to pay for the damage. But if he is exempt from the damages it's likely that he retroactively did not fulfill the mitzvah of lighting the menorah that day. In addition, it's possible that a menorah lighting that causes damage is not a proper fulfillment of the mitzvah.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of all the kindness with which HaShem continues to shower upon us.

Aryeh Leib and Shaina Shifra Goldstein

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