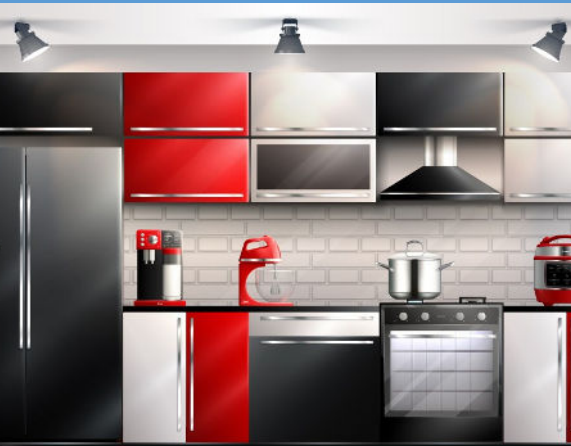


## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



## PRICE MATCHING

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

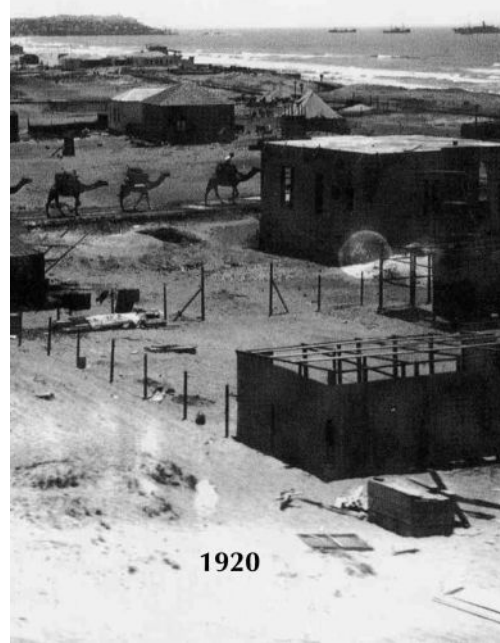
This week's Parsha makes a reference to the prohibition of theft. The Torah says that in the declaration one makes over maaser, he says, "I did not eat 'beonei' from it". Devarim 26,14. The Rashbam says that Oni means that "I did not eat from anything stolen".

This leads us to the following interesting story.

Avraham once went into a Jewish-owned appliance store. He saw a dishwasher that he liked and asked the owner for the price. "It's 600 dollars", Elazar, the store owner answered. "600 dollars, that seems like a steep price to me", Avraham countered.

Elazar replied, "The truth is this machine is the newest model and it is top of the line. 600 is actually the cheapest you can find for this model. But I will make you a deal. If you can find this model at any other local store for a cheaper price, I will match that price and take off an additional 100 dollars!

Avraham was intrigued by the challenge and told Elazar that he had a deal.



## MY CONVERSATION

In this week's Haftorah we read the prophecy of Yeshayahu (Isaiah) in which he talks to Yerushalayim in the name of HaShem "Lift up your eyes, look around and see that everyone is coming to you. Your sons are coming from distant lands and your daughters will be raised at their side."

As I review this portion I am reminded of a conversation I had in Kharkov, Belarus 200 years ago. (This conversation is actually a product of my imagination.)

I was sitting with a dear friend of mine who was not religious and although he believed that the Jewish people are distinct he nevertheless could not believe that Moshiach will usher in a new era in which the world will be enlightened recognizing HaShem in His Greatness and in the unique relationship that we have with Him. He asked me what it says in our siddur. I talked about the She-moneh Esrei gave and for an example I discussed 10th bracha. We pray to Ha-Shem to gather in all the members of our people and bring us to our Land. My friend looked at me incredulously "Do you really think that this will really occur?! Do you not realize that the Jews of Yemen have lived there for close to 2,500 years! The Jews of Persia have lived there for almost the same amount of time. The Jews of Morocco and the Jews of The Caucasus and so on have all been living in their respective countries for centuries. Do you also not realize that our Land which you refer to has not been settled for thousands of years. Do you really believe that all the Jews of the world will return to this

About a week later, Avraham walked into a competing appliance store. Sure enough, he saw the exact same dishwasher. Looking at the price tag, Avraham was pleased to see that the listed price was \$480. Avraham quickly took a picture of the price tag and went to Elazar's store. "Last week we made a deal and look what I found", Avraham said. "The same machine is going for 480".

Elazar looked at the picture and shrugged. "A deal is a deal", he said. "I will be totally honest that I'm surprised at the price, but I will honor my deal. You can take it for \$380, 100 less than their price."

Avraham was delighted that he was able to get such a steep discount of \$380, all the way from \$600. He saved 220 dollars.

The machine was delivered to Avraham's home and everything seemed fine.,

A short while later, Avraham walked into the second appliance store. He saw his dishwasher there and was surprised to see a price tag of \$600, just like it was in Elazar's store.

Avraham inquired about the price to the owner. "Wasn't the price \$480"?

"Oh, last week we had a once-a-year anniversary sale. Everything in the store was 20 percent off for a week. But these are our normal prices."

Avraham now felt that he had a dilemma. The cheaper price of the dishwasher was not a regular price, but a special unique promotion.

He wondered if he had the right to keep the 220 dollars that he saved, or was he obligated to return it to Elazar. On one hand, Elazar said that if he found a cheaper price, he would match it, and give an additional discount. But on the other hand, this wasn't the normal price of the machine, it was just a special promotion. What do you think, did Avraham have the right to keep the money that he saved?

See Upiro Matok Shemos Page 222



“  
Kind words can  
be short and  
easy to speak,  
but their echoes  
are truly endless.”

PICTURED:  
AN INFINITY  
CANDLE

Land and settle it?!"

I am a very understanding person and recognized that my friend did not accept the words of Yeshayahu as being the Word of HaShem. I responded to him that while I understand that he does not believe that this will happen nevertheless, as Jews we know that what the prophet says in the name of HaShem will not return empty. And since we know that HaShem has so promised us, we wait anxiously for the fulfillment of this. That is why we ask this request three times a day for the entire duration of our history.

Although this conversation did not take place 200 hundred years ago, it did occur 25 years ago. I did have a close friend who, like my friend from Kharkov, could not believe in the idea of Moshiach. It was with him that I shared my previous story. Upon concluding my story I turned to him

and explained that today we will not have that discussion because it already happened exactly as the prophet said! We are witnesses to the incredible fulfillment of Yeshayahu's prophecy. My friend from Kharkov, 200 years ago was justified for being skeptical about it. And yet it has happened. There are no Jewish communities left in Yemen, none in Iraq and very few Jews are left in Morocco as well as many other places. Our beautiful Land is truly populated and thriving, the likes of which nobody could have ever contemplated.

If the first part of his prophecy has already been fulfilled we can be certain that the second part will certainly happen.

As we approach Rosh Hashanah when we turn our focus on the revelation of HaShem's Sovereignty, this week's Haftorah makes this dream so real. May our uninterrupted waiting for his imminent arrival be met with great joy soon in our days.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: DATES, HEARTS OF PALM, PALM OIL FRUIT, COCONUT

## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### LULAVIM, DATES, HEARTS OF PALM, COCONUTS AND PALM OIL

This week's Parsha describes Eretz Yisrael as "the land flowing with milk and honey". Rashi explains that the honey referred to here is the honey of dates.

Let's take a deeper look at dates and palm trees.

To begin on an interesting note, have you ever eaten the honey of dates? Date syrup is commonly sold and it is called silan. It is used to cook chicken, sweets, desserts, and as a honey substitute. Interestingly, in Pakistan, a viscous, thick syrup made from ripe dates is used as a coating for leather bags and pipes to prevent leaking.

Lulavim, Dates, Hearts of Palm, Coconuts and Palm Oil all have something in common. They all come from palm trees. But most come from different species of palm trees.

Let's first look at the date palm. Its official name is *Phoenix dactylifera*. They typically reach about 69–75 feet in height. The tallest varieties of palm trees can grow up to 120 - 197 feet tall. The dates are oval-cylindrical and 1 to 3 inches long. Their natural color ranges from bright red to bright yellow, depending on their variety.

Like many other fruits that we have recently explored, dates originated from the Fertile Crescent region, the area of Eretz Yisrael and Aram Naharaim. There is archaeological evidence of date cultivation in the area of Arabia from as far back as 5000 years ago.

The English word date comes from the Greek word *daktylos* which means date. That in turn comes from the Greek word for "finger", because of the date's elongated shape.

The ancient Egyptians used the fruits to make date wine. Ancient civilizations also made dates into vinegar, bread, and cakes. When dried, date seeds were soaked and ground up for animal feed to fatten livestock. Historians cite that in Ancient Rome the palm fronds were used in triumphal processions to symbolize victory. This idea is recorded in the Midrash and is one of the symbolisms behind why we take the lulav, the palm frond after Yom Kippur. The date palm was a popular garden plant in Roman peristyle gardens.

Some date seeds can be fertile after extremely long periods. One cultivar, the Judean date palm, is renowned for its long-lived seed. This seed, interestingly called "the orthodox seed" was successfully sprouted after storage for 2000 years.

Date palms can take 4 to 8 years after planting before they will bear fruit, and start producing viable yields for commercial harvest between 7 and 10 years. Mature date palms can produce 150–300 lb of dates per harvest season.

Palm trees are strong and their roots extend deep into the soil. They are hardy trees and can live for 100 years. They are very resilient and grow easily. But interestingly their resilience and ease of growth can also have a downside. Not all cities and countries have benefited from the date palm's resilience and ease of growth. In some parts of the United States, Canada, and Australia their resilience has caused them to become an invasive species.

Dates are very sweet and contain 61–80 percent sugar by mass. But the balance provides a wide range of essential nutrients, like protein, fiber, and trace elements including boron, cobalt, copper, fluorine, magnesium, manganese, selenium, and zinc.

Lulavim come from the date palm as well.

Hearts of palm come from a different species of palm trees. The heart of palm is a vegetable harvested from the inner core and growing bud of certain palm trees, most notably the peach palm and coconut palms. Harvesting of single-stemmed palms results in the palm tree's death. However, the peach palm variety which is the most widely used for canning, produces many stems, forty on one plant, so harvesting several stems from a plant is not so expensive because the plant can live on.

The coconut tree is another member of the palm tree family. The term "coconut" comes from the old Portuguese word *coco*, meaning "head" or "skull", because of the coconut shell that resembles facial features. Coconut palms are ubiquitous in coastal tropical regions and are a cultural icon of the tropics. The coconut palm is actually the most widely grown palm tree in the world. There are several different elements of the coconut that are repurposed for a variety of uses. Coconuts are used for almost everything from medicine to floor coverings to skincare products. Many world economies rely heavily on trading coconuts, and it's a critical part of life on almost every continent in the world.

Palm oil comes from a different species of palm trees, *Elaeis guineensis*, also known as the African oil palm. This tree is native to west and southwest Africa, but has been introduced in southeast Asia and Central America. The oil is harvested from palm fruit or palm kernels. Palm oil is the most widely consumed vegetable oil on the planet. Palm oil can be found in close to 50% of the packaged products we find in supermarkets, everything from pizza, doughnuts and chocolate, to deodorant, shampoo, toothpaste and lipstick.

## ARE YOU ENJOYING THE LEARNING? NOW I WILL GIVE YOU A BERACHAH

The famed philanthropists and baalei tzedakah, the Reichmann brothers, once scheduled an appointment with Rav Shach to ask for guidance regarding which tzedakos were to be given priority. Rav Shach considered this to be very important, as there were large sums of money involved.

There was a man who came at the same time as the Reichmann brothers, requesting that Rav Shach see him for a brief moment to give his son a berachah. Rav Shach allowed the man to enter his room for just a moment, but he remained with them for one and a half hours while the Reichmanns patiently waited outside. By the time the father and son left, Rav Shach apologized but was too tired to meet with the Reichmanns.

His children were surprised by Rav Shach's decision to keep the boy so long. "Couldn't the Rosh Yeshiva have asked the father to wait for a half-hour, after the meeting with the Reichmanns?" they asked.

Rav Shach answered as follows. "The father only requested that I give the son a berachah to have a desire, which he currently did not have, to learn Torah. I learned with him for an hour and a half until I saw that he was enjoying it, and I saw the simchah in his eyes. "Are you enjoying the learning?" I asked him. "Yes," he responded. "Now I will give you a berachah!" Rav Shach had devoted an hour and a half of his limited physical strength so that a young boy could find enjoyment in learning Torah. This is what was more important than meeting with the Reichmann brothers.

Rav Yosef Tendler added to this story: "It is seemingly difficult to comprehend why Rav Shach made important people, who are baalei chesed and strengthen Torah, wait while he brought a young boy geshmak in learning. I thought that the explanation is as follows: The Shelah HaKadosh says that the obligation to be mikarev rechokim is derived by a kal vachomer from the prohibition of standing by while your friend's blood is spilled. If one must save someone's body, he certainly must save his soul. The body is only for Olam Hazeh, whereas the soul is eternal! Someone who does not enjoy learning will waste his life, as words of Torah are our lives. Rav Shach therefore felt that speaking with the boy took priority.

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Pictured Top To Bottom: The Reichman Brothers, Rav Shach with a visitor, Rav Yosef Tendler



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the Lojack, Rav Zilberstein writes that if it would not be a question of life and death, then one is not allowed to save himself with the property of his friend, and he could not give over his friend's car to save his own. (If taking the thieves off the streets would be a matter of life and death then it would be permitted.) However, because he used his friend's Lojack to save his car, he should pay his friend for a third of the cost of the Lojack.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in memory of **Ravin Balakirsky**  
**Reuven ben Yosef z'l**  
By his children Bella and Yosef Balakirsky

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