

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE AFULA TRIP

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Last week we shared a story about a man who took a taxi and got stuck in traffic. This week, let's explore a similar story about a taxi, but one that has a very different ending.

Dovid, who lived in Israel, ordered a cab to take him to the city of Afula, which is close to Teveria. The taxi came, and the driver said he would make the trip for a flat fee of 400 shekel since it was a far trip. Dovid agreed.

A short while into the trip, the driver, Benny, began schmoozing with his passenger. "Why are you making this long trip? What are you planning on doing when you get to Afula?" he asked Dovid.

Dovid responded that there was a very large shopping center there, and he felt it was worth the trip.

As Dovid spoke, Benny realized that the shopping center that Dovid was talking about had recently closed down. Benny felt torn. He



'48, '56, SIX DAYS, YOM KIPPUR; NEVER WE COULD HAVE DONE IT!

How did the meraglim (the messengers that Moshe sent into the Land) fail to trust in HaShem's ability to take us into the Land? The commentaries explain that they knew that Eretz Yisroel would have to be conquered by natural means, not by miraculous means. In fact, with the only exception of the downfall of Yericho, which was an outright miracle, all the wars they fought were won through natural means.

So, although they experienced HaShem's miracles and they saw how He overrides the forces of nature, they could not comprehend how HaShem could grant them victory within the parameters of nature. The people of Cannan were simply stronger, fortified and more numerous.

Why did HaShem want us to conquer the Land by use of natural methods? Would it have not been more glorified had we not fought any wars at all. Imagine if our people would have blown the shofar upon crossing the Jordan River and all the inhabitants of the Land would perish. What a magnificent demonstration how HaShem controls the world!

Reb Simcha Zesil Ziv, The Alter of Kelm, explains that since the conquest of the Land was a miracle we needed to be worthy of earning that miracle. To be worthy of this miracle HaShem required us to implement the strategies and wisdom of warfare, to try to win. Even though it was truly against the odds, we must nevertheless plan and do our very best. In the end, HaShem will win the war for us. Once our victory is achieved and we return the credit of our victory to HaShem - our conceding the credit of the achievement back to HaShem earns us the merit for that victory.

In other words, at the time of our victory we are truly undeserving of victory, neverthe-

wanted the 400 shekel fare. But he didn't want this kind passenger to make the long trip for nothing. Benny decided that he didn't want Dovid to travel needlessly.

Benny spoke up: "My friend, I am familiar with the shopping center in Afula. But, unfortunately, it is no longer open. It closed down recently."

Dovid was disappointed but grateful that Benny told him before they had gone too far. Dovid asked Benny to please bring him back home. When they arrived home, Dovid said, "I am so grateful that you gave me this information and saved me from a pointless trip. We had settled on 400 shekel for this trip. So here's your 400 shekel."

Benny responded, "But I didn't drive you to Afula! You only owe me 100 shekel, for the time you were in the car. "

Dovid felt he needed to pay Benny the entire amount because that is what they agreed upon, and the fact that the shopping center was closed should not affect his commitment.

On the other hand, Benny did not feel right taking that much money for such a short trip.

Benny finally said to Dovid. I really don't feel comfortable talking the full amount. I will only accept it if you are halachically obligated to pay the full amount.

This question was brought to Rav Zilberstein.

What do you think?

Does Dovid owe Benny the full 400 shekels they had agreed upon in the beginning?

Or does he only owe him the smaller amount for the actual driving time? What do you think?



less, HaShem grants us victory 'on credit' because once we conquer we will express our recognition that it was not our strength and power but it was HaShem Who fought our war.

If the conquest would be purely miraculous and we would do nothing but blow the shofar, there would be no challenge for us to concede the victory as being that of Hashem. It would be absurd for us to claim the victory as being our own accomplishment. HaShem therefore required us to put in the effort and apply bravery and strength so that when victory would arrive we would recognize that although we did so much, it was nevertheless a gift from Above.

It is no wonder why in this week's Parsha Moshe cautions his people "lest you eat and be satisfied and build big homes and settle down, and your business ventures increase and succeed. Your heart will become arrogant and you will forget HaShem and you will actually claim 'It is my genius and my strength that has built up this fortune.'

This is exactly the very test upon which HaShem determines our worthiness to inherit the Land. He wants us to work for it, to fight for it and to still recognize that it is not we who have achieved success. It is the Will of HaShem that determines our success.

The mission of our people is to be a demonstration to ourselves and to the world that the forces of Nature itself are nothing but the implementation of the Will of HaShem. The world may already recognize that HaShem can override the laws of nature, but they do not know that Nature herself is but an instrument of His.

Our mission is accomplished when our victories and successes are attributed to HaShem and only HaShem.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE TZIRAH AND THE ASIAN GIANT HORNET

In this week's Parsha, Hashem says that he will send the Tzirah against the Canaanim to help drive them out of Eretz Yisrael. What is the Tzirah? The Ibn Ezra says that Tzirah was a plague similar to tzara'as that would affect the Canaanites.

However, Rashi quotes our Sages that the Tzirah was a flying bug that would spray poison into the Canaanites eyes and blind them.

Do we know of a creature that sprays venom into eyes and causes blindness? Yes! It is called the Asian Giant Hornet, also known as the Murder Hornet. Rabbi Arye Kaplan, in his Living Torah, identifies the Tzirah as *Vespa Orientalis*, The Oriental Hornet. The Asian Giant Hornet is related to *Vespa Orientalis* and is known as *Vespa Mandarinia*. We will learn that, as our Sages described, this hornet sprays venom into people's eyes. It is possible that the Tzirah described by the Torah was either the Asian Giant Hornet or related to it.

The Asian giant hornet is the world's largest hornet. It is native to temperate and tropical East Asia, South Asia, Mainland Southeast Asia, and parts of the Russian Far East.

The hornet has a body length of close to 2 inches long and a wingspan around 3 in wide. That's five times bigger than a honeybee. The hornet's head is a light shade of orange, and its antennae are brown with a yellow-orange base. Giant hornets can fly up to 60 miles in a single day, at speeds up to 25 mph. Its stinger is a quarter of an inch long, and it injects a large amount of very strong venom.

(Pictured, bottom left.) It can kill a human if multiple hornets sting simultaneously.

The stinger injects an incredibly potent venom that contains mastoparan-M, which damages human tissue. Several of the chemicals within the poison are also toxic to the kidneys and can lead to kidney failure. Masato Ono, an entomologist at Tamagawa University, described being stung as "like a hot nail being driven into my leg." The extreme pain lasts for days. Some experts describe it as one of the most painful stings of any other creature in the world. The reason why it is so strong and painful is that it injects such a large amount of venom. They deliver ten times more venom than a regular bee.

As we mentioned above, besides using their stingers to inject venom, Asian giant hornets are able to spray venom into a person's eyes and cause long-term vision damage. Asian giant hornets have even been known to spray drone cameras filming them with their poison spray.

The Asian giant hornet is intensely predatory; it hunts medium to large-sized insects, such as bees, other hornet and wasp species, beetles, and praying mantises. Praying mantises are preferred targets in late summer and fall, and mantises are key protein sources to feed queen and drone larvae. The Asian giant hornet is not necessarily aggressive towards humans, livestock, or pets but will sting if provoked. However, giant hornets do give a warning before they sting: They fly back and forth, snapping their mandibles (jaws), **(top left.)** which is intimidating and gets your attention. It's the only species that does that.

Not only do giant hornets eat insects, but they also find lodging by co-opting and occupying pre-existing tunnels dug by rodents or nests made by bees. They can also dig their own nest or occupy spaces near rotten pine roots.

A single Asian giant hornet can kill as many as 40 bees per minute (!) due to its large mandibles, which can quickly strike. **(bottom middle.)** Giant hornets use these strong mandibles to remove the heads of their prey. The honey bees' stings are ineffective because the hornets are five times their size and heavily armored. A few giant hornets can exterminate a colony of tens of thousands of bees in a few hours.

What is quite fascinating is that the Japanese honey bee was given an effective strategy by Hashem to protect itself from the Asian giant hornet. When a giant hornet scout locates and approaches a Japanese honey bee hive, she emits specific pheromonal hunting signals. When the Japanese honey bees detect these pheromones, 100 or so gather near the nest entrance and set up a trap, keeping the entrance open. This permits the hornet to enter the hive. As the hornet enters, a mob of hundreds of bees surrounds the giant hornet in a tight ball, completely covering it and preventing it from reacting effectively. **(bottom, right.)** Then the bees violently vibrate their flight muscles. This movement raises the temperature in the ball to the critical temperature of above 115 °F. In addition, the exertions of the honey bees increase the level of carbon dioxide (CO2) in the ball. The hornet cannot survive the combination of high temperature and high carbon dioxide levels, and the giant hornet scout gets killed. The bees' defensive response "cooks" the hornets to death. Some honey bees do die along with the intruder, but by killing the hornet scout, they prevent it from summoning reinforcements that would wipe out the entire colony.

I'M TAKING A BUS, I GAVE MY WORD

When Rav Aharon Kotler first started the Lakewood Yeshiva, he lived in Brooklyn and frequently traveled to New Jersey to be with his students. Rabbi Shalom Shechter was in charge of driving Rav Aharon back to New Jersey from New York.

One day R' Shalom went up to the apartment to take Rav Aharon, but the Rebbetzin was worried. The weather was a bit rainy. It was certainly still possible to drive, and most people would have considered it safe enough to drive in such weather, but still, the Rebbetzin was concerned about driving in the rain. She, therefore, requested that R' Shalom let Rav Aharon off at the Port Authority bus station in Manhattan. Rav Aharon would take the bus to Lakewood. R' Shalom would pick up Rav Aharon at the Lakewood bus station and bring him to the yeshiva. Of course, Rav Aharon and Reb Shalom agreed to the Rebbetzin's request.

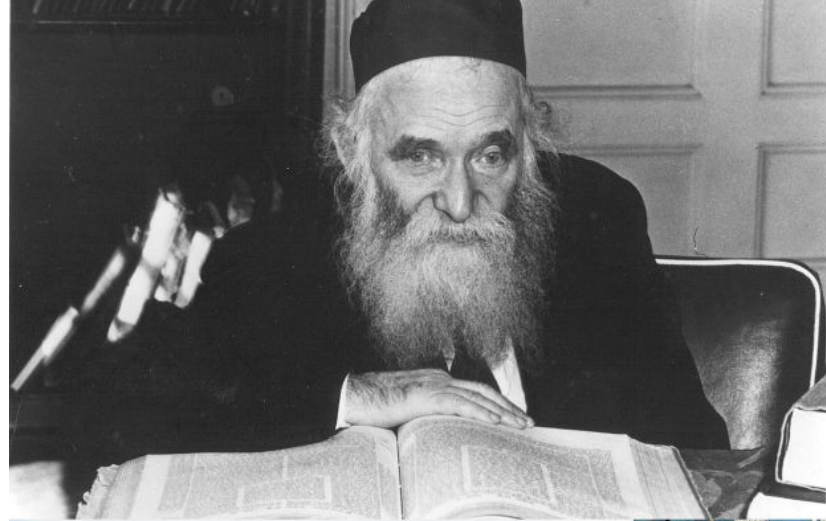
Shortly after they began driving, the weather cleared up. The sun came out. The streets completely dried up. All in all, the driving weather became perfect. What would the next step be? Reb Shalom assumed that obviously, now that there was no longer any hindrance to driving safely, they would revert back to the original and much less troublesome plan of going by car all the way.

Rav Aharon, however, felt otherwise. "Ich hub tzugezugt." I gave my word to my wife and a word obligates. Rav Aharon insisted on taking the bus because he gave his word to his wife.

After dropping Rav Aharon off at the bus, a remarkable thing happened. Rabbi Shalom's car broke down. He was unable to make it to Lakewood. Instead, R' Shalom had to call Lakewood to arrange for somebody else to meet the rosh yeshiva.

From The Living Mishnas Reb Aharon, By Rabbi Yitzchak Dershowitz

Pictured, Middle: The Port Authority Bus Terminal



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the taxi stuck in traffic, Rav Zilberstein answered that the cabby did not have the right to ask for more money than the meter showed. He could not charge for the time he would be stuck in traffic. The nature of charging based on the meter is such that the passenger only has to pay for the time in the car and not for any other complications that might arise.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory

Dina bas Yitzchok

on the occasion of her yaahrtzeit.

Mr. and Mrs. Gidon Israilov

Maya and Menachem Katz

