

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



ANOTHER TICKET PLEASE

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Parsha, we learn about the unique camels of Avraham. What was special about his camels? They were muzzled so that Avraham would not accidentally steal from other people's property if his camels would eat from their land.

That leads us to the following story.

Zev worked for a company that gave their employees a company car to drive to meet their customers. The company's policy was that if the car would get a ticket for anything that was the company's fault, like an expired registration or broken taillight, then the company would cover any fines. But if the driver gets a ticket for something that was the driver's fault, like a traffic infraction, then the driver is obligated to pay for it.

One day Zev was driving, and he did not pay proper attention to the speed limit where he was driving. The speed limit was much lower than usual because of nearby construction. Zev sped by a police cruiser that was waiting in a thicket. The police quickly turned his lights on and, on the loudspeaker, told Zev to pull over.

IT IS NEVER ENOUGH

When Avraham instructs Eliezer to go to Charan to find a wife for Yitzchok, Eliezer raises the concern that perhaps the woman will not want to come. Avraham tells Eliezer not to worry; "HaShem Who took me from my father's house and promised to me that my children will inherit this Land, He will send his angel before you." Armed with the blessing of Avraham, Eliezer heads out to Charan. When he arrives at the city well he turns in prayer to HaShem and pleads to please grant him success in finding the woman who is destined for Yitzchok.

How are we to understand Eliezer's prayer? Avraham, the individual about whom HaShem said that he is the source of blessing for the entire world, gave him a blessing that HaShem will send His angel to insure that the woman will be found? What concern did Eliezer have that compelled him to daven for this special intervention?

Shmuel Tamir, Israel's Minister of Justice in 1977, was considering introducing a law in the Knesset legalizing abortion. As you might imagine, there was an uproar in many communities around Israel about such a prospect. How can we allow a law that permits indiscretionate abortion? A large group of Rabbis organized and chose several Rabbis to speak to Mr. Tamir. Among the people chosen was Rabbi Michel Stern, the Rov of Ezras Torah and Rav Raphael Levine, the son of Rav Aryeh Levine. The latter was chosen because his great father, Rav Aryeh Levine was revered even in non-religious circles.

A few days before the scheduled meeting, Rabbi Levine sent an urgent request to all the Rabbonim to please do whatever they can in having their communities pray for the success of their mission. So much was riding on this meeting they needed tremendous syata d'Shmaya.

The police officer came to Zev's window and said, "do you know you were driving almost double the posted limit in a construction zone? The penalty is two points on your license and a doubled fine." That turned out to be 300 hundred dollars.

Zev went pale. He could not afford the extra 300 dollars. He also could not afford any more points on his license as it would likely increase the rate of his insurance premiums. Zev had nothing else to do but be completely honest with the officer.

"Officer, you are one hundred percent right. I did the wrong thing by speeding. I won't try to make any excuses for it. But I will be completely candid with you. I have seven children. I pay private school tuition for each of them. We have huge bills for clothing and food. I will be totally straight. I really can't afford a 300-dollar ticket. I also can't afford one more cent on my insurance premiums. My teenage children drive, and my insurance premiums are already sky-high, I beg you. Please give me a ticket. But can you please give me a ticket for something else that would not be that expensive and give me points?"

Zev's words came straight from his heart, and they penetrated the officer's heart. The officer pulled off his aviator glasses and gave a friendly smile. "I can relate to you, sir. Let me see what I can do."

The officer walked around the car and came back a minute later. "This is what I can do. Instead of a ticket for speeding, I can give you a ticket for the broken taillight."

Zev thanked the officer profusely for his kindness in giving him a less severe ticket.

On his way home, Zev thought about the ticket. Because he got a ticket for the taillight, his company would cover the costs of the ticket.

But then Zev wondered if he should pay for the ticket. Because although the taillight was the company's responsibility, the only reason why they got the ticket was that he was speeding and because he asked for another ticket.

Zev wondered if he had to pay his company for the ticket. What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Bereishis, page 441

“*Is the goal of prayer to change HaShem's attitude towards me or is it to change my attitude towards Him?*”



The day came and they came to Mr. Tamir's office. Once the Rabbonim were seated they introduced themselves. Rav Raphael introduced himself as the son of Rav Aryeh Levine. Upon hearing this Mr. Tamir's face lit up "your father was our Rav, tell me what would you like to say."

Rav Raphael told Shumel Tamir that he remembers how as a child a couple came to his father for advice. They had fallen into an argument whether to abort their child or not. The husband was in medical school and understood that with a child at home it would make their life difficult. The wife, however, insisted that they should have the child. After spending over an hour with Reb Aryeh, and Reb Aryeh's blessing the couple with a beautiful baby from whom they would have much nachas, the father agreed to go ahead with the birth.

Rav Raphael then leaned closer to Mr. Tamir and continued, "not long after that meeting with my father the couple had a

baby boy. They named the baby Shmuel, Shmuel Tamir. That was you." Mr. Tamir was in utter shock "This cannot be true I never heard of such a story." Rabbi Levine said "call your mother now". Mr. Tamir did just that and spoke to his mother. She was caught off guard and confirmed the veracity of the story.

Mr. Tamir told the delegation that as long as he is the minister of Justice this law will never hit the floor of the Knesset.

After they left, Rav Michel turned to Rav Raphael and asked him why were you so concerned that there should be so much tefillah, you had the perfect story. Of course we would have succeeded. Rav Raphael responded that no matter how guaranteed you may be in your success, without that extra tefillah you cannot count on it.

Perhaps that is why Eliezer, too, davened one last time as well.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

MEXICAN MOLE LIZARD

Recently in Parshas Bereishis, we learned about the nachash, the primordial snake that caused Adam and Chava to sin. Our Sages teach that the original nachash had legs. Today it is hard to imagine a snake with legs. But there is a mysterious creature that looks just like a snake with two front legs. Please meet the Mexican mole lizard.

The Mexican mole lizard is also known as the 5-Toed Worm Lizard. It is called this because it has five toes on each foot. It is part of the Bipedidae family. Bipedidae means bi ped, two feet. That is because this unique species only have two feet. It is one of the most unique creatures in the animal kingdom. It is endemic to Mexico's Baja California region.

It measures almost ten inches long and about a quarter of an inch wide. They live to be only one to two years old. Mexican mole lizard looks like a hybrid of an earthworm, mole, and salamander.

It has a blunt head, a slender, ribbed, pink body reminiscent of a giant earthworm, and two tiny forelimbs that it uses to burrow underground, which reminds us of a mole.

Mole lizards live underground, close to the surface, and only emerge at night or after heavy rains.

Its skin is closely segmented like earthworms. It uses the same method as the legless earthworms to move underground. It moves underground with a process called peristalsis, which is the symmetrical contraction and relaxation of its segments. Its blunt head allows it to burrow into the soil efficiently.

Its skin color can vary slightly from pale pink to bright pink. Sometimes the colors can be more gray-toned than pink. The reason why the colors are usually very light is that it lacks melanin, skin pigmentation, from living underground. Melanin is usually produced by exposure to the sun. Scientists believe that the light color of these lizards helps them do a better job of blending into the environment and hiding from predators and their prey.

Most lizards, in general, have very sensitive ears with delicate eardrums. The Mexican mole lizard, however, does not have ears. Scientists have observed that the lack of ears helps it dig into the soil more efficiently. If so, how does it hear? Hashem designed it so that its entire skin acts as an ear, and the skin can transmit vibrations to the

cochlea, the inner ear.

The Mexican mole lizard has two legs in the front. They are short, strong, and paddle-like. It has no legs in the back. Its tail is autotomous. This means that it can shed or discard its tail as a self-defense mechanism to elude a predator's grasp or to distract the predator and thereby allow escape. It also uses this for another clever strategy. Sometimes it loses a part of the tail while burrowing down, so it plugs up the hole behind it, preventing the predator from entering the hole and giving it time to escape.

However, if it discards its tail, it cannot regenerate, unlike a gecko, which can regenerate its tail and other limbs. Interestingly, even after the tail is removed from the body, the tail can still move. Snakes are the most common predators of mole lizards.

What does the mole lizard eat? It is a carnivore and eats ants, termites, ground-dwelling insects, larvae, earthworms, and even small animals, including other lizards. It mainly feeds on easily accessible prey found in soil, debris, and dirt. When it catches prey, it usually pulls its prey underground to start its meal. We know that some snakes swallow their prey whole. But mole lizards are not like snakes. The mole lizard bites and chews its prey rather than swallowing it whole.

When mole lizards breed, they lay their eggs in the soil underground. The female lays between one to four eggs. It takes about two months for the eggs to hatch. The eggs hatch in September, and when the baby lizards emerge, they weigh less than one ounce. Immediately after birth, the hatchlings already know how to burrow and can burrow through the soil.

Snakes can bite, but do Mexican mole lizards bite? Not really. Though the lizards have teeth, they rarely bite. Those bites should not cause pain or discomfort because their teeth are so small. You can usually grab the lizard's head with two fingers and carefully pry its mouth away from your body without hurting you or the lizard. These lizards are also not poisonous and are safe to touch and handle. Thank you, Hashem, for your wondrous creation!

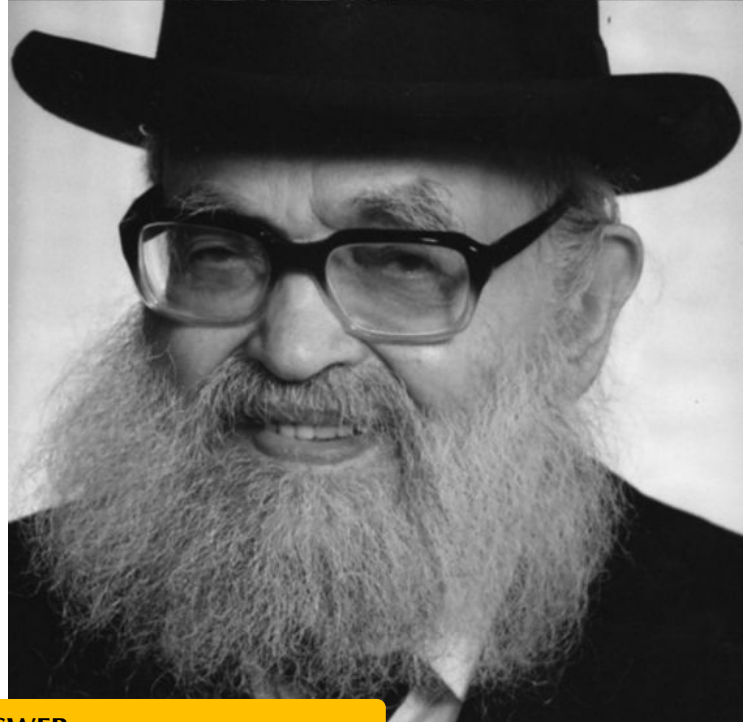
JUST AS I AM NOT PERMITTED TO SMOKE ON SHABBOS I AM NO LONGER PERMITTED TO SMOKE ANY DAY

If a doctor would tell Rav Baruch Ber Liebowitz (pictured, top) to do or not do something for the sake of his health, Rav Baruch Ber would comply without hesitation. Once, when a doctor told him to not eat a certain food, for it was not good for him, Rav Baruch Ber told his family that because it was a question of his health, that particular food now was forbidden to him "like treif meat".

There is a similar story with Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky. At one point, a doctor suggested that Reb Yaakov lose some weight and he prescribed a diet. At Reb Yaakov's next checkup, the doctor was shocked to find that he was losing weight too rapidly. When R' Yaakov insisted that he had followed the diet precisely, the doctor admitted that he had never met anyone who did not cheat on a diet, and had therefore told Reb Yaakov to eat less than he was really supposed to. By following the doctor's exact orders, Reb Yaakov had taken off too much weight.

Reb Yaakov used to smoke cigarettes and a lot of them. However, once the Surgeon General came out with the decision that smoking is hazardous to one's health he stopped immediately. "Just as I am not permitted to smoke on Shabbos I am no longer permitted to smoke any day."

From Reb Baruch Ber by Rabbi Chaim Shlomo Rosenthal, (Israel Bookshop), and 5 Great Lives By Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, (Artscroll/Mesorah). Reprinted with permission from the copyright holders.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the groom who invited extra guests to his wedding, Rav Zilberstein writes that the groom should not have to pay for the extra meals because they agreed initially to only 200 meals and made no agreement about extra guests. However, if the additional guests gave cash wedding gifts that are at least equal to the price of the meal, then the cash should be given to the caterer to pay for the extra meals. Please note that of course, a caterer has a right to stipulate in the initial contract that if extra guests come, the groom is required to pay for it.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to memory of
Blanche Danick
Beloved Mother, beloved Grandmother and beloved Great Grandmother

By Edythe Wagner, Jennifer London, Melissa Hilfers and family.

