

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE VISIT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

We know that Yaakov received the brachos because he dressed up like Esav. This leads us to the following true story.

Avraham, who lived in Eretz Yisrael, was a successful businessman, and he was known as a philanthropist and a ba'al tzedakah. He generously supported many yeshivas and mosdos.

One Purim, as usual, many people came to Avraham's home to collect tzedaka, to give him mishloach manos, and to sit with him and have a lechaim.

While the home was filled with guests, Avraham saw out the window that a dark car pulled up. The driver opened the back door, and an elderly gentleman was supported out. To Avraham's surprise and delight, it was one of the Gedolei Hador, one of the great Rosh Yeshivas of Eretz Yisrael. The Rosh Yeshiva was escorted into Avraham's home by a small entourage of people.

Avraham was delighted to have a personal visit to his home by this Gadol. Avraham knew that he gave tzedakah to this Rosh Yeshiva's Yeshiva, and he assumed that the Gadol visited him personally to show his hakaras hatov, his gratitude, for Avraham's support.

The gadol sat with Avraham and shared a few Divrei Torah with him.

Avraham was so honored and delighted to have this personal visit. Before the gadol left, Avraham took out a large mishloach manos and a



FEEL THEIR INDIGNATION

This week's Parsha reveals a strong character streak that Shimon and Levi shared. In response to Dina's assault these two brothers killed out the entire city of Shechem. Their father Yaakov reprimanded them for this action, arguing that this action endangered the security of the family; "now the surrounding cities will attack us". It is difficult to refute this accusation. How can one endanger the security of the family for the sake of revenge? In response to Yaakov's reprimand they said "Can we allow our sister to be a zona?!"

Yaakov's silence following their response seems to indicate that he agreed with their reasoning. But, can it be that revenge truly justifies endangering the family's security?

We find that, in fact, that years later Yaakov does respond to Shimon and Levi's answer. At the end of Chumash Bereishis as Yaakov lies on his deathbed and calls his children together, he turns to Shimon and Levi and reprimands them for their action of destroying the city of Shechem. "Cursed be their rage and their fury for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob and will scatter them in Israel."

It appears that Yaakov is punishing them for their rage and fury by dispersing them. Rashi, however, explains the purpose of this dispersion was to designate the tribe of Shimon as the elementary school teachers and will therefore need to travel to all corners of Israel to do so. Their dispersion throughout the nation was for the purpose of teaching Torah to the young children of our nation, the future of our people.

bottle of brandy. The brandy was an expensive and rare bottle that cost more than 300 dollars. Avraham told the Gadol, "I'm so honored that you came to my home personally, and here is a special bottle of brandy in honor of your visit."

The Gadol thanked him and was escorted back to his car and driven away.

That night, after Purim, Avraham was reminiscing with his friend about the wonderful Purim and about all the guests that came. Avraham told his friend, "thankfully, one of the Gedolim, personally came to visit me, and I gave him an expensive bottle of brandy to express my gratitude."

The friend turned to Avraham with a smile and said, "you mean you didn't realize the shtick?" Avraham was surprised. "What do you mean?"

The friend said, "that wasn't really the gadol. It was actually Chaim, our neighbor from down the block. He dressed exactly like that Gadol, matched his voice and way of dress, and was driven around town by a driver and entourage as a Purim shtick."

Avraham could not believe his ears. He knew Chaim and he never in a million years would have thought the Gadol was really Chaim.

Avraham picked up the phone and called Chaim up. "Chaim, was it really you who was dressed up like the Gadol?" "Yes," Chaim said, "it was so nice that you played along so nicely, stayed in character, and didn't spoil the fun for everyone. Avraham said, "actually, you did such a good job that I really thought you were the gadol. One thing though, the bottle of brandy was very expensive and I saved it for a special occasion. Do you think you might be able to return it to me?" "Oh, I'm so sorry," Chaim answered, "I, together with my family and friends, finished the brandy tonight at our Purim meal. It was exceptional, thank you. We had no idea that it was expensive."

Avraham felt tricked. He wanted to ask Chaim to pay him the 300 dollars for the brandy. The only reason he gave it to Chaim was because Avraham thought he was the real Gadol. Perhaps he had a right to ask for the money back because the gift was given under false pretenses. Had Avraham really known that it was Chaim, he never would have given him the brandy.

But on the other hand, Chaim was not intentionally deceiving Avraham. He was just dressed for Purim, and was doing Purim shtick. Furthermore, Chaim never knew that it was an expensive brandy. Had he known he might not have accepted it. Perhaps Avraham did not have a right to ask for the 300 dollars back.

Avraham brought this question to a Rav. Did Avraham have a right to ask Chaim to repay him for the 300-dollar brandy that was given under false pretenses?

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“Empathy is about standing in someone else's shoes, feeling with his or her heart, and seeing with his or her eyes.”

- Daniel H. Pink



Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky asks how can Yaakov curse their rage and at the same time designate them as the teachers of our children. Would we want such people teaching our children?

Reb Yaakov explains that although their reaction to Dina's assault was wrong, nevertheless, it was motivated by a deep feeling of empathy for their sister. He explains that the response they gave Yaakov was not to justify their action because, in truth, they were wrong. Revenge never justifies endangering others and Shimon and Levi were not disagreeing with that. However, they were telling Yaakov that they could not control themselves, it was as if they were coerced into taking that action. Feeling Dina's pain and loss of dignity, they could not restrain themselves.

They acknowledged their wrongdoing and at the same time

they demonstrated an incredible commitment to the welfare of their sister. Although they knew how wrong they were, they could not control their response. Their empathy for Dina knew no bounds.

Yaakov was confident that they learned the lesson of how restraint must be kept and hence he trusted them to be the school teachers.

Blessed with the ability to be empathic and feel the emotions of the other person there is no better person to teach our children.

A successful teacher of children must master the ability to understand the child and feel his feelings as well.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

BANANAS

Two weeks ago, we learned about the pineapple, which has an unusual way of growing. Let's learn about another fruit that similarly has an unusual manner of growing. The Banana. You are likely familiar with the fact that we make a Ha'adama on a banana because it does not grow from a tree. Let's look at the unusual and fascinating tree of the banana.

Let's start with a drop of history. The Banana is native to Indonesia, and Australia. Scientists say that it was likely first domesticated in Papua New Guinea, an island just to the north of Australia. From Papua New Guinea the banana eventually spread to India, Africa, and the Middle East. Bananas have been depicted in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. In 650, Islamic conquerors brought the banana to Eretz Yisrael.

Europeans first encountered bananas in Guam and the Philippines during the expedition of Ferdinand Magellan. Bananas were first introduced to the Americas in the 16th century by Spanish missionaries.

Let's turn to the banana itself. The truth is that the banana does not grow on a tree but on an herb. A normal tree's trunk is made of wood, but although the banana tree is tall and fairly sturdy with a treelike appearance, the banana tree's trunk is not actually made of wood, but of tightly wound banana leaves that just look like a trunk (see middle picture). The trunk is actually called a "false stem" or pseudostem. The banana plant is a bunch of leaves that masquerade as a tree. It is the largest herbaceous flowering plant. Herbaceous plants are plants that have no persistent woody stems above ground.

Banana plants are among the fastest-growing of all plants. In rare cases, it has been recorded to grow as fast as 1.4 meters to 1.6 meters in a day. That's more than 4 feet in a day! Most banana plants grow to be about 16 feet tall. The leaves are spirally arranged and are huge. One leaf may grow to be as much as nine feet long and two feet wide.

The way the bananas grow is fascinating. When a banana plant is mature, the "trunk" stops producing new leaves and begins to form a special long spike with an inflorescence at the top. The inflorescence is a dark purple-red heart-shaped structure or flower bud that is located at the end of the stalk. This inflorescence is also known as the "banana heart." The banana fruits develop from the banana heart in a large hanging cluster made up of tiers. Each tier can have 20 bananas wrapped around the stalk. Banana trees can have between 3–20 tiers. A single banana tree can produce up to 240 bananas.

After the fruit is removed, the stem producing the fruit dies. However, the entire plant does not die. Offshoots will normally have developed from the base so that the plant as a whole is perennial.

While we call a banana a fruit, technically, it is a large berry. We are familiar with yellow and green bananas, but they can also be red, purple, or brown when ripe. Did you know that bananas are radioactive? Bananas contain potassium. One of the isotopes of potassium is potassium-40 which is radioactive. But you don't need to worry about it harming you. For the radiation to be harmful, you need to eat close to 700 bananas daily for over 80 years.

The bananas we eat in the US are usually picked green and ripened in special rooms upon arrival in the US. These rooms are air-tight and filled with ethylene gas to induce ripening. In fact, the vivid yellow color we normally associate with supermarket bananas is, in fact, caused by the artificial ripening process.

There are more than 1,000 varieties of bananas grown in over 150 countries. Cavendish is the most commercialized variety, accounting for about 47% of global production. Nearly all the bananas supplied to the United States are Cavendish bananas since they are more resilient to the effects of traveling. The world's largest producers of bananas in 2017 were India and China, which together accounted for approximately 38% of total production. They are followed by the Philippines, Colombia, Indonesia, Ecuador, and Brazil.

Americans eat an average of 27 pounds of bananas per person every year. The Philippines has the highest per capita consumption, about 132 bananas per year. Bananas are a major part of a major part of Filipino cuisine.

Let's close with some fun facts. The term 'banana republic' was coined to describe Central American countries that depended on one single export (bananas) and were controlled by foreign businesses (sometimes American). These countries were usually run by corrupt dictators.

Bananas float in water, as do apples and watermelons. Thanks to its oil, rubbing the inside of a banana peel on a mosquito bite (or another bug bite) or on poison ivy will help keep it from itching and getting inflamed.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous creation!

TATTA WILL BE THERE

Rabbi Boruch Brull was the second grade rebbel at Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim for many years. Unfortunately, one year a father of one of his second graders passed away and naturally it was very difficult for this child. As the school year advanced towards Purim, Reb Boruch was concerned how he would teach this child to say the Ma Nishtaneh. Throughout the years he taught his children the Yiddish version with each question beginning with "Tata leibin..." (dear father). However, considering this child and how his seder will be missing a father, he was at a loss.

Reb Boruch turned to his Rosh Yeshiva, Reb Yitzchok Feigelstock zt'l from the Long Beach Yeshiva, and presented his dilemma. Reb Yitzchok suggested that he should teach this child to begin each question with "Mama leibin..." and address his mother.

After Purim Rabbi Brull had the opportunity to see Reb Shmuel Kamenetsky. Without wasting an opportunity he presented his dilemma to Reb Shmuel. Reb Shmuel told him that he should teach the child to begin the questions with "Tata leibin..." and tell his second grader that his father will be there and will be listening to him reciting the Ma nishtaneh.



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the embosser who made a mistake, Rav Zilberstein answered that the embosser would not have to pay for the mistake, because even if he would have followed the directions exactly, the benchers would not have been useable and would not be returnable.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in memory of Rosalie Zwagil
Rochel Aidel bas Baruch Shlomo z'l
From Bruce and Lois Kauffman and family.

