

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE BEST WAY TO HONOR

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion we find Avraham davening to Hashem. This leads us to the following true story.

During one of Israel's recent wars against its enemies, an IDF combat unit was deployed in a wilderness area. The troop consisted of more than 10 men. One particular Thursday morning, they were davening together as a minyan. They reached the point in the davening where the Torah was read. Initially, they thought they didn't have a Torah, so they planned to read from a chumash.

However, one soldier surprised the group by revealing that he had a small Torah scroll in his duffel bag. He presented it, and it had immaculate lettering, in perfect condition, and with beautiful parchment. The group was thrilled to have the opportunity to read from an actual Sefer Torah.

However, a dilemma arose regarding how to read from the Torah. There was no bima or shulchan to place the table on. One person suggested that they can place the Torah on a



PREPARE FOR LANDING

Our Sages teach us that the reason our matriarchs, Sara Rivka Rochel and Leah, were unable to have children was because HaShem loves the tefillos of His righteous. He wanted them to daven with greater intensity so he made their physiological situation more difficult. Although we know that Sara, Rivka, Rochel and Leah would have davened even if they were able to bear children. Nevertheless, being that they knew that it would require a miracle for them to have children their tefillos were more intense. In other words, since HaShem yearns for their tefillos He placed them in a situation which would require a higher quality tefillah.

In Parshas Bereishis the Torah taught us that before HaShem could bring rain, Adam needed to daven for the rain. Just as the gift of rain could not be delivered without Adam's tefillah so it was with our mothers. Without their tefillos the gift of bearing children could not be given. And if their ability to bear children was a miracle based on their physiological condition then their required tefillah needed to be of an exceptionally high level.

In this week's Parsha we find the angel speaking to Hagar after she ran away from Sara. The angel tells her to return to Sara and she will bear a child to Avraham and the child should be named Yishmael. The Midrash (Pirkei d'Reb Eliezer 32) asks why HaShem wanted Yishmael to carry that name. The Midrash explains "because in the far future HaShem was going to hear the cries of His nation from the terror that the descendants of Yishmael will inflict on them. Yishmael means "HaShem will hear". HaShem therefore wanted him to carry the name Yishmael so that at the end of time His peo-

tallis on the ground and read it. That idea was rejected by the minyan, feeling that it was not respectful. Others suggested standing and holding the Torah up while reading it. Most of the minyan said that they never saw the Torah being read while being held aloft.

A third soldier offered a unique solution: "Place a tallis on my back, and I'll bend over. You can then read the Torah from there." Laughter erupted, with many thinking he was joking. But he asserted, "I'm serious. This demonstrates my profound respect and love for the Torah."

Faced with a question about what would be most respectful in such a situation, they sought the advice of Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein.

They asked: In situations where they were in the field without a bima, which would be more respectful - to read the Torah while standing and holding it aloft, to read the Torah placing it on a tallis on the ground, or to place it on someone's back over a tallis?

What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 402.

We apologize that the answer to the question about the thief's tools was not included in last week's print edition. It can be found here:

Regarding the question about returning the tools to the thief, Rav Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 61) writes that if one is certain that the ganav did teshuva for his theft, then there would be a mitzva to return it to him if he says it belongs to him.

If it is not certain that he did teshuva, then because he is a thief, we are not sure that these tools even belong to him. Therefore, the finder should make a public announcement that he found the tools, and if no one claims them, he should hold on to them in his possession, or sell them through a Beis Din.



ple would recognize that if they cry out to HaShem, He will listen."

Behold! The Midrash, written close to 2,000 years ago is still with us today informing us that 3,700 years ago Ha-Shem anticipated the current events that are currently unfolding in Eretz Yisroel and established a code for us to know that He will hear if we just cry out to Him.

When driving cross country from Baltimore to Los Angeles one must anticipate driving no less than 39 hours. If after 24 hours you ask the driver how come there are no signs to California on the road he will tell you that you won't see signs till you get much closer.

As current events continue to unfold we are finding many signs that our destination is not far off. The miracles that

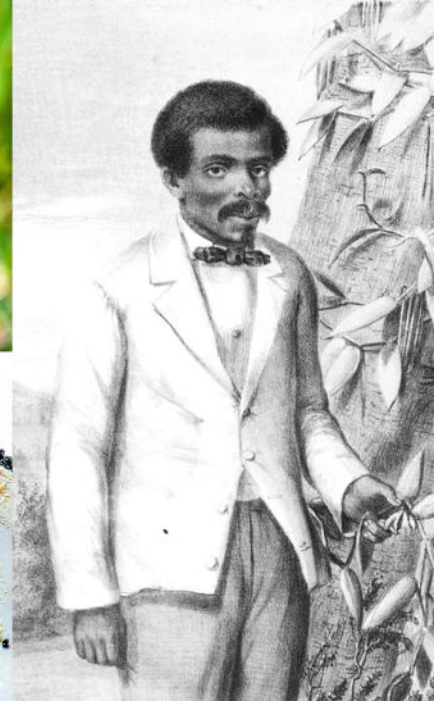
will have to happen to bring about the messianic era are of biblical proportion. Our Parsha teaches us that great miracles can only happen when they are preceded by intense tefillos.

It is no wonder that 3,700 years ago HaShem set up the instructions we will need when we arrive at this juncture.

May we continue davening with the necessary intensity and may HaShem accept our tefillos and bring about the fulfillment of all the prophecies of His returning home together with all of His beloved children.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

VANILLA

Do you enjoy Pride of The Farm's vanilla ice cream? Or do you perhaps enjoy adding vanilla extract to cake recipes? Please join me as we delve into the captivating history and background of one of the world's favorite flavors.

Would you believe that vanilla comes from orchid flowers? Vanilla originally came from Central America and was cultivated by the native Americans. The Totonac people of Mexico were among the first to domesticate vanilla, employing it for flavorings as well as fragrances. The Aztecs later flavored their foods and beverages with it. They even combined it with cocoa to create "xocolatl," a precursor to modern-day hot chocolate.

When Spanish explorer Hernón Cortés travelled across the Aztecs to Europe in the 1520s drinking cocoa mixed with vanilla, he introduced vanilla (along with chocolate). It is interesting that both chocolate and vanilla came to us via the Aztecs. The name "vanilla" originates from the Spanish word "vainilla," meaning "little pod". Initially used as a chocolate additive, the versatility of vanilla soon became apparent. The liquid extracted from vanilla pods was believed to aid in treating stomach ailments.

By the 18th century, the French had begun adding vanilla to ice creams, marking a significant shift in vanilla's culinary application. In fact, the term "French vanilla" often denotes a potent vanilla aroma and might contain vanilla grains and egg yolks, derived from the French custard-based method of making vanilla ice cream.

Despite its great appeal, vanilla cultivation remained confined to its native region until the 19th century. Why wasn't it brought to Europe as soon as it was discovered? Because vanilla orchids have unique pollination requirements, and Europeans couldn't determine how to cultivate vanilla outside its native environment. The breakthrough came in 1837 when Charles Francois Antoine Morren recognized the importance of pollination for vanilla cultivation. This insight paved the way for the 12-year-old African slave, Edmond Albius (Pictured), who in 1841 devised a method of hand-pollination. This discovery was revolutionary, prompting the global spread of vanilla cultivation.

Today, vanilla primarily thrives in regions near the equator, with Madagascar and Indonesia accounting for two-thirds of the global vanilla supply. As a climbing vine, it necessitates supports such as trees, poles, or other structures. The cultivation process is labor-intensive, from the hand-pollination of flowers to the daily harvest of ripening fruits.

High-quality vanilla results from both superior vines and meticulous production methods. Factors influencing vanilla's quality encompass its growth environment, the care bestowed upon the plant, and the post-harvest curing processes.

The journey from vanilla flower to aromatic bean is both intricate and captivating. Each vanilla flower, equipped with both male and female organs, requires pollination to bear fruit. However, a membrane within the flower prevents self-pollination. This is where human intervention becomes essential. Using methods like the one devised by Albius, growers hand-pollinate each flower. This is a labor-intensive task because they don't have much time for pollination. Each flower lasts only one day, and it must be pollinated within that time period. Harvesting vanilla is equally meticulous. Each pod must be handpicked as it begins to split at the end. The vanilla plant also requires daily care for optimal flowering. Its labor-intensive growth process is why vanilla is the second-most expensive spice after saffron.

Once pollinated, the flower gives way to the fruit – the vanilla bean (pictured, center, top). Vanilla's flavor compounds are found in its fruit. One flower produces one fruit. Within each of these elongated pods lie thousands of tiny black seeds (center, bottom), which, when used in dishes, manifest as the signature black specks associated with natural vanilla.

Perhaps the most critical phase in vanilla production is the curing process, which transforms the green, scentless vanilla pod into the fragrant brown bean familiar to consumers. This process comprises four stages: killing, sweating, slow-drying, and conditioning. Techniques vary, with methods like hot water immersion, freezing, or direct sunlight exposure used to halt enzymatic activity during the "killing" stage. Subsequent stages, like sweating and drying, are essential for developing vanilla's signature aroma and flavor. The curing process spans several months to develop this signature aroma.

Vanilla's versatility in the culinary and cosmetic world is unparalleled. Often dubbed the "queen" of all flavors, whether it's the comforting scent of vanilla-infused aromatherapy or the indulgent taste of a vanilla-flavored dessert, this spice has cemented its place in global culture.

Interestingly, many products labeled "vanilla" use synthetic vanillin. Vanillin is primarily derived from lignin, originally produced from pine tree sap, but nowadays often sourced from wood pulp, a byproduct of paper-making. Tests, such as those conducted by Cook's Illustrated, reveal that in some cases, tasters couldn't differentiate the flavor of vanillin from real vanilla.

One final interesting fact: Vanilla is not always so sweet and cozy. The sap from most species of vanilla orchid can cause moderate to severe skin reactions upon contact. It contains calcium oxalate crystals, the main agent of contact dermatitis.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

TELL HER HOW YOU GOT YOUR SCAR

Once a bachur came to talk to Rav Chaim Kanievsky about his difficulty in finding a shidduch. While speaking, he pointed out the obvious: a large scar marred his face. "This is probably the reason I get so many rejections," he said despondently.

Rav Chaim asked, with passion in his eyes, "How did you get this scar?"

The bachur responded that a few years earlier, he was in the Old City of Yerushalayim and saw an Arab chasing a Jewish girl. In order to protect the girl, he pursued the Arab, and a scuffle ensued. During the fight, the Arab stabbed his face repeatedly, and when the wounds healed, his face was permanently scarred.

"When the next shidduch is arranged for you, tell the girl how you became scarred," Rav Chaim advised.

The young man followed these instructions on the next shidduch date. Upon the conclusion of his recital of this story, the girl asked for more details about the incident.

Finally, visibly moved, she exclaimed, "I am that girl, the one you saved! Ever since that day, I have wanted to find you and thank you for saving me."

The two married, and the young lady became very close to Rebbetzin Kanievsky.

"If a shidduch is bashert," Rav Chaim would conclude after repeating this incident, "Hashem works a unique chain of events to bring it to fruition."

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the antique dealer who sold cats, Rav Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Vayikra page 53) wrote that the sale is a good sale and the buyer cannot ask for his money back. Even though cats normally do not cost that much money, because the buyer purchased it knowing that it was not worth that much, with the intention of acquiring the silver bowl, then the buyer cannot claim that he was overcharged. In addition, even though it is clear that he only bought the cat for the intent of buying the bowl, that is considered devarim shebelav, (matters of the heart) which cannot have an impact in this case.

Nonetheless, Beis Din should order the seller of the cats to refrain from selling cats in that manner, because it causes a loss to the antique dealers.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of Reb Pinchos Marder

פנחס בן יצחק ז"ל

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