

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE TRAPPED CRYSTAL THIEF

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

There was a store in Israel that sold crystal items—crystal vases, crystal tableware, crystal frames, crystal candelabras, and so on. One day, when the store was empty, and only the clerk was present, a man dressed in black walked in, carrying a duffel bag. Without saying a word, he began stuffing many of the crystal items into the bag. The clerk didn't want to physically confront the thief and didn't know what to do. If he called the police, the thief might escape before they arrived.

Then, the clerk had an idea. He quickly ran out the front door, locked it, and trapped the thief inside. The door was made of shatterproof, bulletproof glass. The thief tried to escape, but no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't break through it.

Realizing he was trapped, the thief called out to the clerk and said, "Okay, you got me. I'll leave everything in the bag if you let me go, and we'll call it even."

The clerk ignored him.

The thief, raising the stakes, said, "Alright, if you let me go, I'll leave everything behind. But if you don't unlock the door right now, I'll smash every item in the store. If I do that, you'll lose more than



### THAT EDIFICE STILL STANDS

When the Mir Yeshiva evacuated to Shanghai during the War, that Yom Kippur was a sweltering day. They did not have air conditioning and many bochurim actually davened in shirt sleeves. You can well imagine what it was like by the time they came to Neila. In spite of the heat, Reb Chatzkal Levenshtein was still daveing neila after the Yeshiva concluded Maariv. The bachurim decided that they would take a quick bite to break their fast and return immediately to the beis medrash for a seder so that when the Mashgiach would finish his neila he would see the beis medrash filled with everyone learning. They wanted to give the Mashgiach nachas.

Upon concluding his neila he was pleasantly surprised by their seder. He told them that he wanted to share with them a thought which they would appreciate. He touched on a common phenomenon which many people experience after Yom Kippur. The Yom Kippur experience, especially in a Yeshiva, is a very uplifting experience. Anyone who has experienced it would say that it is more than inspiring, it actually lifts you up and places you on a different level of spirituality. Often, shortly after Yom Kippur, a day or two later, it is not uncommon to feel pulled down from that high. One could feel that he lost everything he gained.

Reb Chatzkel addressed this sense of loss with an analogy. In a certain country it was customary when building a home, to have the final brick laid in its place by the owner. There was a wealthy fellow who was building a magnificent mansion. As they neared the end of construction he was given the final brick and he mounted the ladder. Unfortunately, as he neared the top he stumbled and fell to earth. Thankfully, he was okay but was confused. He shouted to the people who were by his side "The entire building collapsed!". They explained to him that in fact it was he who fell, not the building. The Mashgiach continued, "If you feel that you have fallen from your heights you must recognize that it was you who fell but the edifice you constructed is still standing. Just pick yourself up and go back to where you were."



\$100,000 in merchandise. But if you let me go, there won't be any damage or loss."

The clerk now faced a dilemma. He didn't own the store and didn't want his boss to suffer such a massive financial loss. At the same time, he was worried that if he let the thief go, the man might rob other stores—or even harm the clerk himself.

In the end, the clerk decided to keep the door locked and refused to negotiate.

Frustrated, the thief went from shelf to shelf, smashing every single item in the store. Before long, all that remained were shattered pieces of crystal scattered across the floor. Nothing was left intact.

Eventually, the police arrived and arrested the thief. However, the thief had no money, and the authorities were unable to recover any funds to cover the damages. Insurance only covered part of the loss, and the store owner was left with a substantial financial burden.

After everything had settled, the store owner confronted the clerk and said, "I heard what happened. You had a choice: let the thief go or let him destroy everything. Now I'm the one stuck with this huge loss because of your decision. I think it's only fair that you pay for my loss since it was your choice to keep him locked inside. I would have much preferred he just leave and leave my items in the store."

They agreed to bring this question to Rav Zilberstein. Was the clerk responsible for the damage by keeping the thief locked inside? Should the clerk have let the thief go to avoid the damage and save the owner from financial loss? Or did he have a right to keep the thief locked in, even though it would cause his boss a huge loss?

On one hand, the clerk was responsible for making sure no one damaged his boss's property. On the other hand, did the clerk have the right to let the thief escape into the community and put others at risk?

What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Devrim Page 339

## MITZVA MEME



What was the mansion that the Mashgiach was comparing in his lesson? Rabbi Yosef Berger explained that since the beginning of Elul, forty days before Yom Kippur we began reciting Psalm 27 in which Dovid Hamelech turns to HaShem in prayer. He tells HaShem that although his life is filled with challenges for which he turns to HaShem for salvation and assistance, nevertheless, at the root of all prayers he is only asking to be close to HaShem. There is nothing else that he wants. Dovid's sole desire is to sit in the presence of HaShem and bask in His Glory.

Since Elul the Jewish people were focusing on becoming closer to HaShem. In the manner they conducted their daily lives and the way they interacted with other people, in every way we were focused on being in HaShem's presence. As we passed Rosh Hashana this awareness was heightened and on Yom Kippur we placed the crown on this state of mind. On Yom Kippur we completed an incredible edifice of creating a state of awareness of being with HaShem. This state of being was the edifice that was built. Even though the next day we feel lower, that edifice still

stands and we need only to pick ourselves up and climb into it.

Perhaps, the gift of Succos was given to us immediately following Yom Kippur to be the place where we can actually live in that edifice.

The Talmud compares the seven days and nights that we live in the Succah to the seven days and nights that Aharon and his sons lived in the Mishkan before becoming inaugurated to becoming Kohanim.

Behold! The succah corresponds to the Mishkan itself.

Have a beautiful Yom Tov.

**Paysach Diskind**





## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### AMAZING ANIMAL STRUCTURES (PART ONE)

This Succos, as we sit in huts, let us learn about some amazing huts and structures that birds, fish and insects create.

**The Picasso of the Sea: Pufferfish Sand Circles.** Meet the underwater artist with fins—a tiny pufferfish that sculpts jaw-dropping circles in the sand! Found off the coast of Japan, this little fish has a big talent. The male pufferfish carves stunning, symmetrical patterns on the seabed, creating sand sculptures that can measure up to 6 feet wide. And get this—he does it all with his fins! For days, the pufferfish works non-stop, swimming back and forth, carefully sweeping sand into rows of ridges and valleys. It's like an underwater sand castle! The circles are made to attract a female pufferfish. If she's impressed by the intricate design, she'll lay her eggs in the center of the circle. The soft ridges also help protect the eggs from strong currents, creating a cozy, sandy nest. So, these sculptures aren't just pretty, they're also practical. Each circle is unique. The patterns depend on the currents, the sand's texture, and, of course, the pufferfish's personal style. Some circles have wavy ridges, while others have delicate little grooves. It's like the pufferfish has its own art gallery on the ocean floor. When divers stumble upon these sand circles, it's hard to believe they're made by a fish. They look like something straight out of a modern art museum.

**Nature's Apartment Complex: Sociable Weaver Nests.** If birds had architects, the Sociable Weaver would be top of the class! These little feathered builders from southern Africa create some of the biggest and most amazing nests in the bird world. Picture a massive straw hut draped across a tree or telephone pole—that's a Sociable Weaver nest. It's not just a home for one family, though. It's like an apartment building for birds, with room for dozens—even hundreds—of weaver birds living together. What makes these nests even cooler? They're built to last! Weaver birds use grass, twigs, and leaves to weave a nest that can weigh over a ton. These nests don't just hang around for a season, they can last for years! Each nest has multiple chambers, and some even have separate "rooms" for different uses. The birds use softer grass on the inside to make the chambers cozy and warm, while the outer layer is spiky, making it hard for predators like snakes to sneak in. The nest also acts as a natural air conditioner. It stays cool during the scorching heat of the day and keeps the birds warm at night when the desert temperature drops. The nests are so sturdy that even other birds, like owls or kestrels, move in and make themselves at home. These nests aren't just practical—they're beautiful, too. They hang like giant golden baskets from acacia trees, glowing under the African sun. From the outside, the nest looks like a shaggy haystack, but inside, it's an intricate maze of tunnels and

chambers.

**Towering Architects: The Termite Mounds.** If you thought termites were just pests, think again! These little insects are actually some of nature's best builders, creating giant mounds that can reach over 30 feet high. That's like a skyscraper built by bugs. Found in places like Africa, Australia, and South America, these mounds are engineering marvels. They might look like big piles of dirt from the outside, but inside, they're full of tunnels, chambers, and even ventilation systems. These mounds stay comfy inside no matter how hot or cold it gets outside. Termites build special tunnels that allow air to flow through, acting like a natural air conditioner to keep the colony at just the right temperature. The walls are made from a mix of mud, chewed wood, and saliva, which dries into a rock-hard structure. That makes the mounds strong enough to survive windstorms and rain! The termite mounds are home to millions of termites, with each one doing its part to keep things running smoothly. There are worker termites that build and repair the mound, soldier termites that protect the colony, and a queen who lays thousands of eggs every day. It's a busy city under that mound!

**Love on Display: The Vogelkop Bowerbird's Bower.** Meet the Vogelkop Bowerbird from the forests of New Guinea—nature's ultimate decorator! This bird isn't just building a nest; it's crafting a masterpiece called a bower to impress potential mates. Think of the bower like an outdoor art gallery, created with twigs and leaves, and decorated with everything shiny, colorful, or eye-catching the bird can find. Male Vogelkop Bowerbirds are picky artists. They carefully arrange their bowers—two walls of sticks placed close together, forming a little tunnel or stage. Around the entrance, the bowerbird decorates with flowers, berries, beetle shells, leaves, and even bits of colorful plastic if he finds them! He spends hours rearranging his treasures until they're just right. What's the goal? To catch the eye of a female! If she likes the bower and how it's decorated, she might choose him as her mate. Some males even collect only certain colors, like blue or yellow, and make sure everything matches. And if another bowerbird builds a more beautiful bower nearby? No problem—this clever bird might sneak over and steal the best decorations for his own bower! Photographers love these bowers because they look like little natural art installations, with flowers and colorful objects perfectly arranged on the forest floor. They're not nests, though—just displays to impress prospective mates. Once the female is smitten, she flies off to build her own nest elsewhere, leaving the male to enjoy his bower alone.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!



## GREATNESS IN THE COLD

Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, renowned for his wisdom, compassion, and deep dedication to mitzvot, once had a guest visit during the Yom Tov of Sukkos. It was a particularly cold evening, and the wind that swept through the streets of Vilna carried a biting chill. Sitting in the sukkah was challenging, and Rav Chaim Ozer, known to be physically sensitive to the cold, explained to his guest that he was halachically exempt from the mitzvah of sukkah due to the discomfort. "Since the Torah does not demand that we suffer through the mitzvah," he explained gently, "I am permitted to fulfill the mitzvah indoors."

With that, the great sage excused himself and went inside to find warmth.

A few minutes later, however, to the surprise of the guest, Rav Chaim Ozer re-emerged from the house. The cold still hung heavy in the air, but Rav Chaim Ozer was now wrapped in his warm overcoat. He approached the sukkah with a smile that radiated warmth, despite the weather.

"I may be exempt from sitting in the sukkah," he said kindly, "but I am not ex-empt from hachnasas orchim—the mitzvah of welcoming guests."

Without hesitation, Rav Chaim Ozer sat in the sukkah with his guest. He made sure his guest was comfortable, offering food and conversation with joy and sincerity. Although Rav Chaim Ozer could have stayed indoors, he chose to return to the sukkah, braving the cold—not for his own sake, but to ensure his guest felt honored and welcomed.

One Sukkos, as the Lev Simcha, the Gerrer Rebbe, sat in his sukkah, a freezing wind blew through the fragile walls. The gusts cut through the air, making it impossible to feel comfortable. The cold gnawed at his bones, and those sitting near him noticed his discomfort growing. Yet the Rebbe remained seated, his face calm and reflective, as though the harsh weather carried a message only he could hear.

One of the attendants, worried for the Rebbe's health, suggested gently that he might go inside, away from the biting wind. The Lev Simcha, however, stayed put. After a moment of silence, he turned to his attendants and explained, "This cold wind is not for nothing. From Heaven, they are reminding me that I have not been sufficiently empathetic by the plight of the soldiers sleeping on the northern border, braving the cold night on the hills of Lebanon."



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about whether the man who was hard of hearing should have asked the guest to get up and move out of his seat, Rav Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Devarim Page 356) answered as follows: The mitzvah to love a stranger does not only apply to showing love to a convert but also extends to showing kindness to someone new to the community. Therefore, it would be very appropriate on this holy day to fulfill the mitzvah of loving a stranger by allowing the guest to sit in the seat. Furthermore, it has been observed many times that when guests are removed from a seat, they often end up being displaced repeatedly. In some cases, because of how they are treated, they never return to the shul. For this reason, it is best not to ask the guest to move. Instead, the man should be mevater (forgo his claim) and yield the seat to the guest. If he was unable to hear, he can ask the rabbi to review his drasha (sermon) privately with him later.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in memory of

שמואל בן ישראל

whose yartzeit is י"ט תשרי

By Reb Reuven and Naomi Miller

It is also dedicated in honor of the yartzeit of the Vilna Gaon זכותו יגן עלינו



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