



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



LOOKING TO BE A SANDEK

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Avi was the happy father of a new baby boy. Like many of his colleagues, he was planning to ask the head of his kollel to be the sandek (the person honored with holding the baby during a bris) at the bris. But a few days before the bris, he saw an advertisement in the newspaper that caught his eye. It read:

"Dear friends, I am looking to be a sandek at a bris on Wednesday. This is because Wednesday is a fast day, and fasting is difficult for me. However, I don't want to not fast and rely on another heter. Therefore, I am seeking to be a sandek, because it says in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 568:7) that a sandek is exempt from fasting. If someone is willing to allow me to do



WITH NO GLOVES AT ALL

In this week's Parsha, the Ten Plagues through which HaShem introduced Himself to the world begin. In the opening verse, HaShem distinguishes the way He communicates with Moshe from the way He communicates with the other prophets. Malbim points out that this very distinction also reflects the difference between the way HaShem governs the world and the way He governs His beloved people. In the next few paragraphs, I hope to share this distinction.

When HaShem created the world, He created Nature. Nature includes all the laws of physics, astrophysics, and all of science, with her powers and limitations. The laws of Nature are ironclad and unchanging. We can build bridges and tunnels based on these laws with confidence that they will not collapse. Nature is consistent and dependable; that is how HaShem made her.

Despite this unyielding adherence to her laws, there is still much room for reward and punishment to be delivered through Nature. We know that HaShem uses Nature to achieve His agenda. In describing how HaShem does this, Malbim uses the body and soul as a parallel.

Our bodies are composed of base material, which will, in time, decompose into the earth from which they came. Nevertheless, these bodies are animated by a neshama, which controls the body to do what we will it to do. The physical body has its limitations, but with the neshama at the controls, it can accomplish so much—whether for good or otherwise. Similarly, HaShem created Nature, a soulless entity, and then infused it with His Spirit, the spirit of Elokim. (It is noteworthy

this mitzvah, I will pay \$1,000."

Avi read this and thought, "\$1,000 could be a huge help right now!". He had a new baby and all the expenses that come with it. The money sounded very appealing.

But on the other hand, he felt uneasy about giving the honor of being the sandek to a random person from a newspaper ad, even if the man was willing to pay for it. It felt wrong not to give the honor to his rosh kollel, someone prestigious and deserving.

So, he brought two questions to a Rav, which were then asked to Rav Chaim Kanievsky:

Is the person looking to buy the rights to be the sandek to exempt himself from fasting doing the right thing or the wrong thing?

Is it acceptable to "sell" the sandek rights to someone willing to pay a lot of money, or should he forgo the money and give the honor of sandek to his rosh kollel?

What do you think?

See Upiryo Matok Dvarim Page 31



that the numerical value of Elokim is the same as that of HaTeva [Nature], as both equal 86.) Just as we use our neshama to govern our bodies, HaShem uses Elokim to govern Nature.

There is another expression of HaShem's governance—when He acts through His very Essence, causing events directly without utilizing Nature. Creation itself is such an example. Nature was not created through Nature; it was created by HaShem Himself. This second expression is referred to as Havaya, referencing HaShem's ineffable four-letter Name.

When HaShem communicates with prophets other than Moshe, He uses the Elokim mode. This means He conveys messages through images that carry a message. The image is the medium through which HaShem communicates. However, when HaShem communicates with Moshe, there is no image whatsoever; only a direct transmission of intelligence. To Moshe, He communicates using the Havaya mode.

In His relationship with the world, HaShem generally uses the Elokim mode; through Nature. In contrast, in His relationship with the Jewish people, He employs the Havaya mode.

Before the time came for HaShem to take His people out of Egypt, He never communicated using the expression of Havaya. He always expressed Himself through Elokim. It was through Elokim that HaShem governed the lives of Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Though their lives were filled with miracles, these miracles fell under the purview of Elokim. Now, as HaShem prepared to redeem His people from Egypt, He expressed Himself through Havaya; the expression of creation. The Jewish people, who were to become His people, were a new creation. The creation of His people had to come through Havaya.

I had the opportunity to ask Rav Yaakov Weinberg zt"l to explain the difference between the relationship HaShem has with the Jewish people and His relationship with the rest of humanity. He told me that when HaShem deals with the rest of the world, He wears gloves; but when dealing with us, He touches us directly. Perhaps he was reflecting the same idea as Malbim. Nature is the gloves of HaShem.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE CREPE MYRTLE

A frequent reader of Table Talk suggested that I research an amazing flower that grows in Maryland. I looked into it, and indeed it is quite extraordinary. Please meet the crepe myrtle!

The crepe myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) has been nicknamed the "Tree of 100 Days" because its flowers have an unusually long blooming season—lasting as long as four months. From June to September, this tree bursts into bloom, showcasing clusters of flowers that range from snowy white to delicate pinks, deep reds, and rich purples. Each blossom has a unique texture resembling crepe paper—a feature that inspired its name. Imagine an entire tree adorned with colorful, crinkled confetti! Some people call it the "firecracker tree" because of its vivid, explosive colors and flowers that resemble fireworks.

But the show doesn't stop in September. As autumn arrives, the crepe myrtle transforms again, trading its blossoms for fiery foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and red that rival even the most brilliant maples. When winter sets in, the tree's bark takes center stage, peeling away to reveal smooth, multi-colored trunks in tones of tan, gray, and cinnamon. It becomes even more enchanting when illuminated by winter sunlight or garden lighting.

What's more, crepe myrtle blossoms are self-cleaning, dropping naturally after blooming. Even rain doesn't diminish its charm—the blossoms resist storms and remain vibrant no matter the weather.

Another remarkable trait of crepe myrtles is their adaptability. These trees are like nature's ultimate survivors, thriving in a wide range of environments. Whether planted in sandy soil, clay-heavy ground, or loamy earth, they grow happily and look stunning. From scorching hot summers to freezing winters, the crepe myrtle shows its resilience time and again.

Crepe myrtles tolerate drought conditions and withstand strong winds and storms with their flexible branches. They're even a great choice for urban areas, standing tall against pollution and greening up parks and streets.

Their roots, while strong enough to stabilize soil and control erosion, are non-invasive, so they can grow near sidewalks and buildings without causing damage. Some varieties grow no taller than 5 feet, while others stretch

to over 30 feet, creating grand canopies.

The crepe myrtle's resilience extends to its health, too. Resistant to common pests and diseases like powdery mildew, these trees don't require constant care or chemical treatments. To top it off, they're low-allergenic: unlike many flowering trees, crepe myrtles produce minimal pollen, making them a great choice for allergy sufferers.

The crepe myrtle isn't just a feast for the eyes; it's a boon for wildlife. Its nectar-rich flowers attract pollinators like bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. During summer, when many plants stop blooming, the crepe myrtle becomes a critical food source for these creatures. Birds, including finches and cardinals, enjoy its seeds, and small birds often nest in its branches, even repurposing the woody seed pods as nesting material.

This tree supports wildlife without competing with other plants. Its roots don't aggressively steal nutrients, and it provides cooling shade for a comfortable habitat. Plus, it's non-toxic to pets and wildlife, so everyone—human and animal alike—can enjoy its beauty without worry.

By stabilizing soil and filtering pollutants like dust and carbon dioxide, crepe myrtles also improve the environment. They're like natural air purifiers, contributing to healthier ecosystems in urban and rural settings.

The crepe myrtle also has a rich history. Native to Asia—particularly China, Korea, and Japan—this tree has been admired for centuries. In Japan, it's called *sarusuberi*, or "monkey slip," because its smooth bark is so slippery even monkeys can't climb it!

Its scientific name, *Lagerstroemia*, honors Magnus von Lagerström, a Swedish merchant and plant enthusiast who supported the botanist Carl Linnaeus. Lagerström provided Linnaeus with plant specimens from his travels, and in gratitude, Linnaeus named the genus after him. Having friends in high places pays off!

While crepe myrtles are the longest-blooming trees in temperate climates, some plants, like Knock Out Roses and Bougainvillea, bloom for longer in suitable conditions.

Thank you, Hashem, for your wondrous world!

WHEN THEY BUY A HOUSE OF THEIR OWN, THE ACCUMULATED MONEY WILL MEAN SOMETHING TO THEM

The young couple was ecstatic to finally move into their very own home. After years of living in a cramped basement apartment, they had saved diligently and purchased a modest house that, to them, felt like a palace. Their previous landlord, BMG Rosh Chabura, Rav Boruch Ber Ziemba, had been more than just a landlord—he had been like a wise and caring uncle. His warmth and genuine interest in their lives had left an indelible mark on them. But now they were starting a new chapter, eager to build a space that was all their own.

Shortly after they moved in, a knock came at the door. The husband opened it, surprised to find Rav Boruch Ber standing there, his familiar kind smile lighting up his face. In his hand was a plain envelope.

“Rav Boruch Ber! What a surprise!” the young man exclaimed, quickly inviting him inside.

The Rav handed the envelope to the couple. “This is for you,” he said simply.

“What is this?” the husband asked, opening it hesitantly. Inside was a stack of crisp bills—several hundred dollars.

The Rav, sensing his confusion, smiled. “Let me explain,” he began gently.

“When you lived in my basement, I noticed something special about you two. Any time something needed fixing—whether it was the leaky faucet or the cracked window—you insisted on paying for the repairs yourselves. You always said, ‘The rent is cheap enough, it’s only fair that we cover the costs of repairs ourselves.’”

The husband nodded, remembering the countless discussions they’d had about it.

“But I didn’t agree,” Rav Boruch Ber continued. “I always felt that as the landlord, it was my responsibility to take care of those things. You were paying rent; you didn’t owe me anything extra. We argued about it more than once, but you were so adamant that I finally stopped trying to convince you.”

He paused, his eyes soft with recollection. “One night, after yet another disagreement about who should pay for a repair, I turned to my wife and said, ‘What’s the point of fighting over a few dollars? Let’s put the money into an envelope, and when they buy a house of their own, the accumulated money will mean something to them.’”

“And so, every time you paid for a repair, we set that amount aside in an envelope. I have now come to give you back ‘your’ money.”

Based on a story in Chayeinu Magazine



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the dog that chewed the tefillin, Rabbi Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed Bava Kama Page 49) wrote that the full \$2,000 must be paid because this is an example of shen. This is because the Gemara in Beitza (15a) says that dogs want to eat tefillin. Rav Zilberstein explained that this is because they see it as an animal carcass.

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