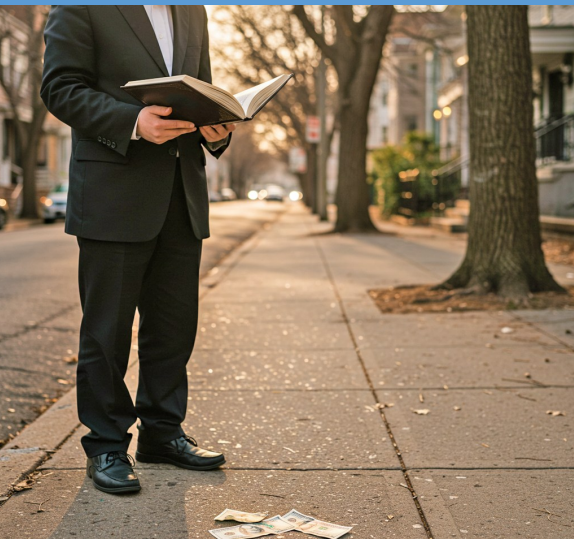


## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE DROPPED \$300

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Yoni was a yeshiva student studying in a yeshiva in Israel. One Shabbos afternoon, he was learning and needed a Bava Metzia Gemara that had many extra mefarshim (commentaries) in the back. However, he didn't have his own copy, so he borrowed a fellow student's Gemara that was lying in the beis midrash. The Gemara belonged to Eli, a new American student.

Suddenly, Yoni felt very tired and thought that some fresh air might help. He took the borrowed Gemara and stepped outside. While he was studying, he held the Gemara horizontally, and to his surprise, three \$100 bills fell out and landed on the ground. Yoni immediately realized two things: (1) it was Shabbos, so he couldn't pick up the money, and (2) he didn't want the owner of the Gemara, Eli, to lose it.

To safeguard the money, Yoni used his foot to push it into a secluded corner and covered it with an object he found outside. He intended to return after Shabbos to re-



### OUR FATHER'S BLOOD DOES NOT EXPIRE

יג) וְהָיָה הַדָּם לָכֶם לְאֵת עַל הַבָּתִּים אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם שָׁם וְרֵאִיתִי אֶת־הַדָּם וּפָסַחְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם וְלֹא־יָהִי בְכֶם נֹגֵף לְמַשְׁחִית בְּהַכְתִּי בָאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:  
 כג) וְעָבַר ד' לִנְגֹף אֶת־מִצְרַיִם וְרָאָה אֶת־הַדָּם עַל־הַמַּשְׁקֹוף וְעָל שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזֹת וּפָסַח ד' עַל־הַפֶּתַח וְלֹא יִתֵּן הַמַּשְׁחִית לָבָא אֶל־בְּתִיכֶם לִנְגֹף:

In preparing His people for the night of 15th of Nissan on which all firstborns in Egypt were to be killed, HaShem instructs them to place the blood of the Pesach offering on the doorposts of their homes. This blood was to be a sign that it is a Jewish home and that HaShem should skip over it. The word that is used to skip over is פסח which has two translations. One translation is "to skip over" and the other is "to have mercy". This idea is mentioned two times within the span of 11 verses.

In verse 13 (Chapter 12) the Torah states "And the blood shall be a sign on the houses in which you are found and I will see the blood and I will פסח upon you and there will not be a plague that will strike you". Contrast this with verse 23 "and HaShem will pass through to strike Egypt and He will see the blood on your doorposts and He will פסח on the doorway and will not allow the angel to enter.

Behold! The object of פסח switches; in verse 13 it is upon us whom HaShem will be "pasach" and in verse 23 it is the Jewish homes upon whom HaShem will be "pasach". Malbim therefore explains that in the former it should be translated to be that HaShem will have mercy upon the Jews of that home and in the latter it

trieve it. This was in line with halacha (Jewish law), which permits moving muktza on Shabbos in an unusual manner. It was the best he could do since he had no way to bring the money inside.

After Shabbos, Yoni returned to the hiding spot where he had secured the money, but to his dismay, it was gone. Someone must have spotted it and taken it.

Yoni had no choice but to approach Eli, the owner of the Gemara, and explain what had happened. He told Eli that he had borrowed the Gemara, taken it outside, and discovered the money inside. He also explained how he had tried to protect the money but that it had ultimately been lost.

Eli thanked Yoni for his honesty and for the zechus (merit) of having his Gemara used for learning. But then he said, "I expect you'll be paying me back the \$300."

However, Yoni wasn't so sure he was responsible for the loss. He argued that: 1) He had done his best to guard the money within the limitations of Shabbos laws. He couldn't pick it up and had protected it to the best of his ability. 2) It was Eli's fault for keeping money in the Gemara in the first place. Not only is it unusual to store money there, but it's also generally against halacha (see Mishna Berura 154:31) to keep money in a sefer (religious book).

Eli countered that, regardless of whether he should have kept money in the Gemara, Yoni had borrowed it and was therefore responsible for returning it in the same condition in which he had received it—including the money.

The two agreed to take their question to Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein for a halachic ruling.

What do you think? Is Yoni obligated to pay the \$300 because he borrowed the Gemara and was responsible for it, or is he exempt because he did his best to guard the money, and Eli shouldn't have kept it in the Gemara to begin with?

See Upiryo Matok Devarim Page 40



– King Solomon,  
Mishlei 15, 23

How good is  
a word rightly timed!

should be translated that HaShem will skip over the homes in which the Jews are found.

The question is why are there two functions of the blood. If HaShem will skip over why is there a need to have special mercy to protect the people in the home? If HaShem will have mercy on the inhabitants of the home why should He skip over?

Malbim explains that most of our ancestors had worshiped the pagan gods of Egypt and were not truly innocent. If HaShem would enter the Jewish homes they would need extra special protection to be spared from sharing the punishment of the Egyptians. Therefore when HaShem saw the blood upon the doorposts, that home merited to be skipped.

There were, however, many Egyptian families who wanted to protect their firstborns by having them spend the night in the homes of their Jewish neighbors. These families figured that

since the Jewish homes would be protected perhaps their children would also be protected. For those homes, HaShem needed to enter and the sign on the doorpost would not be sufficient to skip over the home. Therefore, HaShem told His people that in the event that He would enter the home to strike the Egyptian firstborns He would nevertheless, have mercy upon the Jewish firstborns. In this case the merit of the blood needed to create an extra special merit to separate the Egyptian firstborn and the Jewish firstborn who were sitting next to each other in the same house.

In verse 13 it is noteworthy that the Torah repeats "the blood" instead of using the pronoun "it". HaShem states "...the blood shall be a sign and I shall see the blood..." It would be more appropriate to state "...I shall see it..." The Torah is always careful to use minimum words.

Malbim suggests that the repetition of "the blood" is a reference to the blood of Yitzchok who was willing to give up his life for the Will of HaShem. In Egypt, 400 years later, when Yitzchok's children will endanger their lives to do the Will of HaShem by slaughtering the Pesach offering, HaShem will use that merit to save and to have mercy and spare them from the plague of the firstborns.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

**Paysach Diskind**





## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### HYDNORA AFRICANA

Last week, we learned about a fascinating local flower. Let's now explore one of the most unusual flowers in the world. Deep in the arid regions of southern Africa, where life seems sparse and the desert sun scorches the earth, an extraordinary plant performs its secret underground work. Meet *Hydnora africana*, a botanical oddity that is both mysterious and fascinating. This peculiar plant spends almost its entire life beneath the soil, emerging only to bloom in a manner so bizarre and ingenious that it leaves botanists and nature lovers in awe. Let's unearth the wonders of this strange and surprising plant!

When you think of plants, the image that likely springs to mind is a green-leaved marvel basking in the sun. Not *Hydnora africana*! This plant shatters every plant stereotype. Hidden almost entirely underground, it relies completely on its host plant for survival. Unlike most plants, *Hydnora africana* doesn't have chlorophyll, the green pigment that allows plants to harness the sun's energy through photosynthesis. Instead, it survives as a parasitic plant, attaching itself to the roots of certain *Euphorbia* species and siphoning water and nutrients directly from its host.

This stealthy underground lifestyle is perfectly suited to the harsh, dry climates where *Hydnora africana* thrives. By staying buried, the plant avoids the desert's scorching heat and conserves energy, focusing all its efforts on reproduction. It's a plant that truly flourishes by keeping a low profile—literally!

While most of *Hydnora africana* remains hidden beneath the ground, it does emerge once in a while to showcase its *pièce de résistance*: its flower. But this isn't your typical dainty blossom—it's a fleshy, otherworldly structure that looks more like a creature from science fiction than a flower. Thick, waxy petals protect it from the elements and help retain moisture, while its tubular shape is designed for one very special mission: attracting pollinators.

Here's where things get really weird. The flower emits a smell reminiscent of rotting flesh! In fact, scientists believe that *Hydnora africana* has the ability to slightly raise the temperature inside its flower. This heat intensifies its putrid odor, making it even more attractive to dung beetles and carrion beetles. It's like a built-in stink amplifier! Why, you might ask, would any plant produce such a foul odor? The answer lies in the plant's ingenious survival strategy. This stench is irresistible to certain insects, particularly dung beetles and carrion beetles, which are naturally drawn to decaying organic matter. To these beetles, the flower smells like a feast, but they're in for a surprise when they enter the flower's tubular trap.

Unlike carnivorous plants like the Venus flytrap that trap and eat insects, *Hydnora africana* has no appetite for its visitors. Instead, it's a master manipulator, using insects to carry out its reproductive plan. When a beetle enters the flower, it becomes trapped inside by the plant's bristled walls. Don't worry—the beetle isn't harmed. As it struggles to escape, it brushes against the flower's reproductive organs, either picking up or depositing pollen in the process. After a while, the flower loosens its grip, allowing the beetle to escape and continue its journey

to the next smelly bloom. This ensures that the plant's pollen is successfully spread, all without needing to chase after pollinators itself.

The surprises don't stop there. After pollination, *Hydnora africana* produces fruit—but not the kind you'll find dangling from a tree. Its fruit develops entirely underground, taking up to two years to ripen! Resembling a lumpy potato, the fruit contains a sweet, starchy pulp that's surprisingly edible. In fact, local wildlife such as jackals, porcupines, and baboons enjoy munching on the fruit, which is why it's sometimes nicknamed "jackal food." Even humans occasionally partake, baking the fruit or mixing it into desserts with cream. What's even more fascinating is how the fruit plays a role in the plant's survival. When animals eat the fruit, they help disperse the seeds in their droppings, ensuring that new plants can germinate in different locations. The animals consuming the fruit not only disperse seeds but also help fertilize them through their droppings, which enrich the harsh soil for seed germination. It's a clever partnership between plant and animal, showing just how interconnected life can be.

Patience is key when it comes to *Hydnora africana*. From seed to flower, it can take up to 5.5 years for the plant to grow and mature underground before producing its first bloom. Its fruits are even slower, taking up to two years to ripen underground. Often, *Hydnora africana* will only flower after significant rainfall or other optimal conditions when pollinators are more likely to be active. While many plants race to grow and reproduce quickly, *Hydnora africana* takes its time. Its slow growth allows it to conserve energy in its resource-scarce environment.

As if all this weren't fascinating enough, *Hydnora africana* is also a window into the ancient past. Scientists believe it belongs to one of the oldest lineages of flowering plants, making it a living relic of ancient history. The plant was first described by Swedish botanist Carl Peter Thunberg in 1775, during an expedition to southern Africa. Initially mistaken for a fungus, *Hydnora africana* has puzzled and amazed scientists ever since. Today, researchers continue to study it to better understand parasitic plants and their relationships with their hosts.

Though it's not endangered, *Hydnora africana* is a rare plant with specific habitat needs, thriving only in certain arid regions of Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, and Ethiopia. Its reliance on *Euphorbia* hosts and seasonal rainfall makes it vulnerable to habitat loss. For this reason, conservationists are keeping an eye on this peculiar plant, ensuring it remains a part of our world's natural heritage.

The underground fruit of *Hydnora africana* is not only starchy and sweet but also incredibly prolific. Each fruit contains up to 20,000 seeds! This ensures that at least a few of them will find a new host and successfully germinate, even in the tough desert environment.

Growing *Hydnora africana* in a greenhouse or garden is a monumental challenge. Its parasitic nature means it can only grow when attached to the roots of specific host plants, and even then, it requires arid, desert-like conditions. It's a plant that refuses to be tamed!

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!



## I HAD A SUSPICION IN MY HEART ABOUT YOU

Rav Ephraim Wachsman told over the following beautiful story. Rav Avraham Shaag (pictured) was a Hungarian Gadol and the Rebbe of Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. An old woman once came from Europe to Eretz Yisrael and went to visit the Tchebiner Rav and said, "I know you're a grandchild of Rav Avraham Shaag. Please take me to his grave on Har HaZeisim." So they took her there and asked, "Why are you so interested in visiting Rav Avraham Shaag's grave?" She said, "I'll tell you a story."

Rav Shaag was once sitting and learning when someone came in and wanted to leave a pikadon (a deposit of money) for safekeeping. Usually, when someone entrusted him with money, he would put it in a drawer. But this time, he was so engrossed in his learning that he put it inside a sefer, then put the sefer away. Later, he couldn't remember where he had put the money.

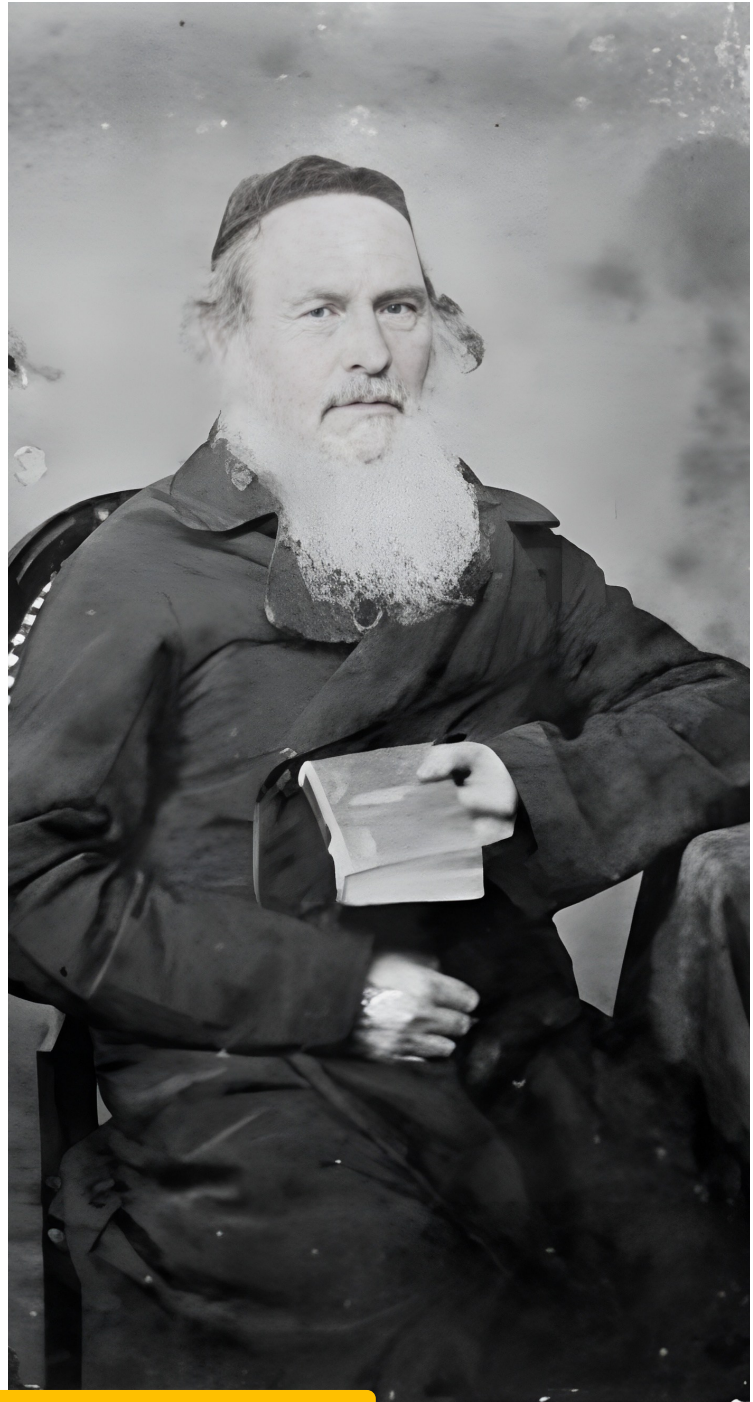
At the time, there was an older Jewish maid working in the house, and there was no one else in the room. There was no one else who could have taken it—it could only have been her. But how could he accuse her? He just couldn't do it. Instead, he decided that rather than accuse her, he would pay for it himself.

He didn't have the money, so when the owner of the pikadon came back, Rav Shaag asked for a few more days. He then borrowed a huge sum of money and spent years and years paying it back. One day, before Pesach, he was cleaning his sefarim and found the money in a sefer. Immediately, he called the maid—this was years later—and when she arrived, he burst into tears. "I have to ask you for forgiveness," he said. "I had a suspicion in my heart about you, and now I realize it was completely unfounded. Please forgive me." The maid replied, "I'll forgive you on one condition. I'm an old woman, and I have no children. Promise me that I will have a child, and I will forgive you."

Rav Shaag said, "Yes, I promise you a child." And she had a daughter.

The old woman standing at his grave finished her story and said, "I am that daughter. I was born because of that promise. That's why I came to Israel—to visit the grave of Rav Shaag."

The lesson here is to truly feel for another person, to understand the weight of having even a fleeting negative thought about someone else. That comes not just from being good but from being truthful, from realizing the emes.



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the person who placed an ad seeking to become a sandek: Rav Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Devarim Pag 31) answered that this is, in fact, a good and worthy practice. The individual found it difficult to fast and was willing to spend money to find a legitimate heter (halachic leniency) that would allow him not to fast. As for selling the right to be a sandek, if the purpose was simply to make money, that would be inappropriate and disrespectful to the mitzvah of selecting a worthy sandek. However, in this case, Rav Chaim Kanievsky said that since it was done as an act of kindness to fulfill the Torah mitzvah of chesed, it is indeed a worthy decision to grant him the right to serve as a sandek.

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