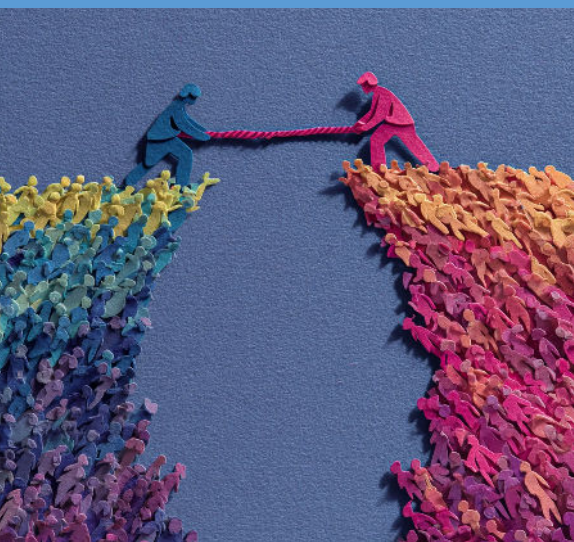




A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



TUG-OF-WAR OVER TALENT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

I'm still writing this from Eretz Yisrael, with one final Shabbos here. With much siyata dishmaya, we were finally able to get tickets to return home. Things here feel so normal, so beautiful—you could hardly imagine that just a short while ago, all of Klal Yisrael were storming the gates of Heaven because our people were in grave danger. Thank You, HaShem!

Let me share a true story with you.

Sam was a Jewish owner of a very successful technology company. He built a large and thriving business. There was also another Jewish owner of a huge technology company named Mark. Wanting to compete with Sam, Mark approached the top AI researchers at



MORALITY IS A REFLECTION OF IMMORTALITY

I wish to share Rav Hirsch's insight on the concept of the tuma (impurity) generated by coming in contact with a corpse of a person and why the Kohanim may not expose themselves to this tuma.

HaShem created Man in His image. Malbim explains that Man is a microcosm of the world, otherwise called "a miniature world" and the entire world is referred to as a "large copy of Man". Just as there are two components that make up Man; the physical and the spiritual, so it is with the world. There are two components; the physical material world including all the cosmos down to the bacteria along with the laws of physics, chemistry and other laws of nature, and there is the spiritual component, HaShem Himself.

So that we have two organisms; 1) Man with his two components, his physical and his soul and 2) The world with its two components, its physical and its spiritual namely HaShem. In other words the neshama of Man corresponds to HaShem in this remarkable parallel. As we follow this parallel further we will discover that just as HaShem controls Nature in whichever way He wishes, so it is with Man; by the choice of his neshama he is able to control the nature of his physical component.

Malbim explains how this parallel continues further. HaShem empowered Man by following his example, as follows. When Man chooses to control his nature to be in accordance with HaShem, HaShem follows Man's example and He controls the world's nature to be in accordance with Man. This remarkable concept is expressed in the words of the Psalmist 68:35 "Give strength to HaShem". As if to say that HaShem can only take control of Nature and use it in the way He wishes, only to the extent that His people take control of their nature.

Judaism places great importance on the notion that Man has free-will; he is not bound

Sam's company and offered them \$100 million to leave and join his company—and they did.

Sam went to Mark and said, "What are you doing? You can't just take my employees."

Mark responded, "You don't own them. You could also offer them more money. It's a free country, and I'm allowed to do this."

What is the Torah perspective on this situation?

There's the concept of ani hamehapech b'charara—you're not allowed to jump in and buy something if another person is in the process of acquiring it. There's also the principle of hasagas ge'vul—you are not permitted to encroach on another person's livelihood or property.

However, perhaps those principles don't apply here. Ani hamehapech b'charara typically refers to interfering when someone is actively trying to acquire something, and in this case, people cannot be "owned." Hasagas ge'vul might not apply either, since Sam's company remains highly successful and lucrative. Perhaps it is not forbidden.

What do you think the Torah's approach would be in this scenario? Is Mark allowed to "poach" and lure away Sam's employees?



to any laws of Nature. Even if his nature is to explode with road rage when someone cuts him off on the road, nevertheless he is able to control himself if he so desires. It is because he can exert free-will to control his base nature that he is held responsible if he does not control his nature. Contrast this fellow to the hungry bear who steals a baby walrus from its mother for supper. Nobody would say that the bear did anything wrong. Perhaps we would feel bad for the walrus family, but the bear behaved appropriately. That is how he was programmed. Man, however, who was endowed with a Gdly neshama can control himself and is therefore held to a moral standard.

It is specifically because our neshama comes directly from HaShem; it is the breath of HaShem, that we are able to develop a relationship with HaShem. We are not bound by the restrictions that Nature places upon us. Our neshama yearns to be close to its Source and it achieves this closeness through the performance of mitzvos and the study of Torah. All this can only happen so long as we remain cognizant that we are inherently Gdly, and not bound to the physical world.

The danger of coming in contact with a corpse is that it arouses the notion that Man is bound by the laws of nature and will sooner or later succumb to mortality. When looking at the body of someone who was alive just moments ago we feel the weight of our mortality and are at risk of losing our awareness that we are, in fact, not mortal. We do not die; our bodies die but we do not. Once a person experiences this exposure he may not enter the Beis Hamikdash, he may not engage in activities that require a heightened level of spirituality.

The Kohanim are the members of our people who are charged with inspiring our people to elevate themselves continuously higher. They must abstain from exposing themselves to this danger.

The Jew must know that we are alive. We serve HaShem through life, through immortal life and through our free-willed Gdly neshama.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

COLUGO: THE GLIDING MARVEL

Imagine a warm, quiet night deep within Southeast Asia's lush rainforest canopy. The moon casts silvery rays through tangled branches, painting everything in gentle shades of gray. Suddenly, in complete silence, a strange figure flies in the night sky, its wide body spreading into a graceful silhouette against the glowing moon. It's not a bird. It's not a bat. Meet the colugo—Asia's astonishing "flying lemur," a creature that doesn't truly fly but glides through the air with jaw-dropping skill and beauty.

When it comes to gliding, no mammal on Earth can match the colugo's prowess. Although often called "flying lemurs," colugos don't actually fly; instead, they glide effortlessly from tree to tree. How do they accomplish this remarkable feat? Hashem has equipped colugos with an expansive membrane of skin called a patagium. Stretching from the tips of their fingers to their toes, and even connecting their tail and limbs, this fur-covered cloak transforms each colugo into a furry kite, perfectly designed for soaring long distances through the treetops.

Just how far can a colugo glide? Incredibly, they routinely soar over 230 feet—about the length of two basketball courts. One remarkable Malayan colugo was observed gliding nearly 500 feet in a single graceful leap—almost the length of one and a half football fields! This skill far surpasses other gliding mammals, including flying squirrels. In fact, scientists widely regard colugos as the most skilled gliding mammals on Earth.

Gliding is a critical survival strategy for Colugos. By effortlessly sailing through the forest canopy, colugos save precious energy and avoid climbing down into dangerous territory. Their silent gliding also helps them evade predators like owls and snakes that lurk nearby, ensuring a safe and efficient journey through their nocturnal forest world.

Ironically, these skyward masters struggle with climbing trees, lacking opposable thumbs and relying instead on awkward hops and small sharp claws. On the forest floor, they're practically helpless. The word "colugo" itself comes from ancient local languages in Southeast Asia, first recorded hundreds of years ago. This historical name reveals how indigenous peoples have long admired and acknowledged this elusive creature, adding rich cultural depth to its story.

Colugos are relatively modest-sized creatures, about the size of a house cat or a very large squirrel, perfect for their life in treetops. Their soft, beautifully mottled fur patterns of gray, brown, and cream allow them to blend seamlessly with tree bark, making them masters of disguise.

One of their most striking features is their large, luminous eyes, set prominently in their small faces. These oversized eyes grant colugos superb night vision, perfect for navigating dense, dark forests and locat-

ing their plant-based meals.

Strictly nocturnal, colugos spend daylight hours resting quietly, hidden among branches or tucked inside hollows. When darkness falls, they awaken, stretching their extraordinary membranes as they glide quietly into their nightly adventures.

While generally solitary, colugos do occasionally gather in small groups, especially mothers with their young, suggesting that social bonds, while subtle, exist among these elusive animals. Male colugos are territorial, marking their space with scent signals to prevent conflict and ensure enough food and safe resting spots.

Colugos are strictly herbivores, feasting on leaves, fruits, flowers, and even nectar and tree sap. Their role in nature is essential—they help pollinate flowers and disperse seeds, directly supporting the rainforest's health and diversity.

But how do they manage to eat tough plant material? Hashem provides again of course! Colugos have an ingenious tool: a comb-like lower front teeth, called a toothcomb, which helps them scrape sap, extract nutrients from fruits and flowers, and even groom their silky fur. Their digestive system is another marvel. Hashem has equipped the colugo with incredibly long intestines, which are critical for digesting the tough plant matter that makes up their diet. The colugo's intestines measure several times the length of their bodies. This extensive digestive system, combined with their specialized cecum filled with helpful bacteria, helps them efficiently extract nutrients from leaves and other challenging plant material. Without this impressive tool, their plant-based lifestyle would be impossible.

Perhaps the most endearing colugo feature involves parenting. Born tiny and vulnerable, colugo infants cling securely to their mothers' bellies. The mother cleverly curls her long tail upward, folding her patagium to form a soft, secure pouch—a portable hammock for her precious cargo. This allows mothers to glide freely while keeping their babies safe and protected.

In captivity, these secretive creatures can live impressively long—one colugo lived 17.5 years! Although wild lifespans remain unknown, captive studies reveal their potential for longevity under ideal conditions.

Some might wonder if these mysterious, nocturnal animals could be dangerous. Rest assured, colugos are peaceful and harmless creatures. There are no records of aggressive interactions with humans. Instead, colugos shyly keep to themselves, quietly gliding through the night, entirely dependent on treetop safety.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

HE BEGAN DISCUSSING THE SUBJECT OF THE DERASHAH WITH HIM, GENTLY POSING QUESTIONS AND OFFERING INSIGHTS

Psychologist Yaakov Guttman, who works with youth at risk, related that he acquired his educational outlook from Rav Yaakov Edelstein. He related the following story.

It happened one Shabbos morning. An elderly Jew, around ninety years old, who had learned in a yeshivah in Europe as a young man before the Holocaust, approached Rav Edelstein and asked if he could share a short devar Torah before Krias HaTorah. This wasn't the usual routine, so Rav Edelstein told him he needed to ask permission from the gabbaim. However, the guest did not do this. After Kaddish, he stood up to deliver his devar Torah. "Birshus ha'gabbaim," he began. As far as he was concerned, this constituted permission. We were somewhat confused, but we prepared ourselves to listen respectfully.

It soon became clear that the elderly man's mind was no longer fully coherent. Although he had clearly learned a great deal of Torah in his lifetime, his words now lacked clarity and coherence. It was uncomfortable, and even somewhat embarrassing. As the guest continued his derashah, several minutes passed. Some men in the congregation started losing patience. A few began calling out to him to stop, but he persisted. Eventually, these interruptions intensified, becoming rude. Finally, the elderly man stopped and sat down, allowing us to proceed with the Torah reading. I felt uncomfortable with the situation. True, he had imposed on the tzibbur, but it was evident that he was speaking sincerely and from the heart. In his perspective, he felt obligated to deliver his derashah. Although I wasn't among those who shouted, I still felt badly about what had occurred.

Afterward, I noticed Rav Edelstein approaching the elderly man. He warmly thanked him for the devar Torah, then began discussing the subject of the derashah with him, gently posing questions and offering insights. I watched as Rav Edelstein patiently sat and discussed the sugya with the elderly Jew, despite the fact that the man's original presentation had lacked logical sequence. By treating his derashah seriously, Rav Edelstein provided him with a profound sense of dignity and self-worth.

In a world filled with challenges, this is where Rav Edelstein's greatness lay, in his ability to give others a feeling of importance and belonging. When I encounter struggling teens, I can't help but wish that this attitude could serve as a guideline for all of us: recognizing that every individual is important and worthy.

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THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein (Shabbos Besimcha Page 251) answered that normally it is forbidden to use such deceitful practices, as it is geneivas daas (deceit). However, when it comes to honoring one's parents, there is a difference. Honoring one's parents is actually a debt that we owe them. Just as when someone owes a debt and refuses to pay, it is permissible to use geneivas daas to reclaim that debt, so too with honoring parents: if children do not fulfill their obligation, it is permitted to use such a method to encourage them to pay that debt. May we all merit never having to resort to such practices to claim what is owed.

This week's TableTalk is sponsored by a family who really enjoys what TableTalk does to make their Shabbos seudos meaningful and fun.

I am very grateful.

Paysach Diskind

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