

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



HARDLY HANDICAPPED

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Dovi was a generous businessman who lived in Israel. People often asked him for donations or loans. One day, Aron came to Dovi and explained that he needed a large loan of \$50,000. After doing his due diligence, Dovi gave Aron the loan with a contract promising repayment in six months.

Six months passed and Dovi had not heard from Aron. He tried reaching out but couldn't get through. Eventually, Dovi went to Aron's house. Aron played dumb and completely denied ever having received the loan. This continued, with Aron giving Dovi the runaround. Dovi realized he wouldn't get his money back easily.

After looking deeper into the matter, Dovi discovered that Aron was a swindler who had cheated many others out of money and never repaid them. Though Dovi wasn't the type to fight, he still wanted to recover his money in a more clever and dignified way.



IT IS ONLY A STOPOVER

The Talmud teaches us that the descendants of the house of the Choshmnyim were wiped out, nobody remained. The Ramban explains the reason for this awful fate was due to the fact that after the family of the Chashmonayim succeeded in overthrowing the Greeks they assumed the mantle of leadership and took the role of kingship. When Yaakov blessed his children he explicitly instructed that the scepter should remain in the family of Yehuda. Since the Chashmonayim took that scepter from Yehuda they suffered their fate. The question is why did they not return that position to Yehuda?

When the Jews returned to Eretz Yisroel together with Ezra after the Purim story they did not revert to speaking Hebrew. They had been speaking Hebrew for a thousand years. Even in Egypt they spoke Hebrew. For 70 years in Babylonia they began speaking Aramaic. Certainly the older folks spoke Aramaic as foreigners. Why upon their return to Israel did they not go back to Hebrew? Furthermore, all the classic documents that were codified in that period such as the Kesuba, the Get, the Pruzbul and many others were all composed in Aramaic. Why not Hebrew?

The Beis Hamikdosh that King Solomon built was different from the one that is described in the Book of Yechezkal. The latter are the plans of the future Beis Hamikdosh that we will see when Moshiach arrives. When Ezra returned to Israel following the Purim story he oversaw the building of the second Beis Hamikdosh. That Temple was a hybrid between King Solomon's and Yechezkal's plans. Why did they not follow the latter's plans or at least follow King Solomon's plans; why create a mix of them?

Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky explains that Ezra understood that the return to Israel and

One day, Dovi came up with an idea. He went to a medical gemach that lends out medical equipment and rented a wheelchair. He approached Aron while sitting in the wheelchair, pretending to be paralyzed. With a pained expression, Dovi tearfully explained:

“I was in a terrible accident and became a paraplegic. I can’t work and I’m completely disabled. I can’t support my family. I beg you, please return the money you owe me. I’m desperate.”

His plea deeply moved Aron. Struck by guilt or pity, Aron went to the back room, brought out \$50,000 in cash, and handed it to Dovi on the spot, saying, “I think I already paid you back, but here.”

Through this clever trick, Dovi managed to recover his money.

Some time later, while studying Daf Yomi, Dovi came across a teaching of our Sages at the end of Meseches Peah that warned:

“If a person pretends to be disabled, he will not leave this world until he actually becomes disabled.”

These words struck terror into Dovi’s heart. He realized that he had indeed pretended to be disabled to get back his money. Would this mean he might eventually face serious danger or even become disabled in reality?

With great trepidation, Dovi brought this question to Rav Zilberstein:

Was it wrong for him to pretend to be disabled to recover his money? Is there anything he should do to repent for his actions?

What do you think? Was Dovi justified, given that he had no other way to retrieve his money? Was his action permissible in such a desperate situation?

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the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdosh was not to be the final return. He understood this was not meant to be the Messianic period for which we await. He understood that the exile must still continue for many more years and only in the far future will we finally return. However, Ezra also understood that without the development of Torah she’baal peh, the Oral Torah, we will not survive that enduring exile. Until our exile to Babylonia we had the Davidic monarchy with the Beis Hamikdosh and prophets. Those components created an infrastructure which maintained our people. Once the original Beis Hamikdosh was destroyed and prophecy no longer continued and we were to be sent to all corners of the world there was no infrastructure that could secure our survival.

The job of the Anshei Knesses Hagedola, the Council of 120 Sages who formed the leaders of our people upon our return to Eretz Yisroel with Ezra was to begin the development of a formal system of teaching the Torah she’baal peh. The gift of the

second Beis Hamikdosh was only a stopover to allow us to regroup and prepare ourselves for the long road that lay ahead.

The Chashmonayim knew that the monarchy of Israel should be in the hands of the Davidic dynasty. However, they were concerned that if they were to return the leadership to that dynasty the people would think that Moshiach has arrived and would not properly prepare themselves for the demise of their autonomous state. Our Sages maintained the foreign Aramic to indicate to the people that we are still in galus; prepare yourselves. Our Sages recognized that if the Beis Hamikdosh would be built according to the plans of Yechezkal the people would believe that this is the final Temple just as Yechezkal prophesied. Our Sages knew that this period of the second Temple was only a preparatory stopover before the real brunt of the exile was to begin. The role that period of history was to prepare us and to create the Mishna and Talmud and all the subsequent books that followed.

These are the tools by which our people endure this unending exile. These are the tools which strengthen us and give us our vitality to build and grow no matter where in the world we find ourselves.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

COTTON

Parshas Mikeitz tells the story of how the Jewish people went down to Egypt. Chanukah is a time when many use cotton in their wicks. Let's learn about cotton, which has a strong Egyptian connection.

When you think of the clothes you wear, the sheets you sleep on, or even the money in your wallet, there's a good chance that the cotton plant played a part. This humble plant has a story woven through history, science, and everyday life. Let's explore the fascinating world of cotton.

Cotton has been with humanity for a very long time. Scientists say that ancient people in Peru were already crafting cotton fabrics more than 5,000 years ago. Today, cotton thrives in tropical and subtropical climates, stretching across more than 80 countries. It is one of the top five soft commodities globally, keeping company with coffee, cocoa, wheat, and sugar.

There are about 50 species of cotton, but only four major ones produce the soft, fluffy fibers we use. The stars of the cotton world include *Gossypium hirsutum* and *Gossypium barbadense*, with fibers in shades of white, brown, rust, and even light purple! Who knew cotton came in so many natural colors?

Why is cotton so popular? Soft, breathable, and hypoallergenic, cotton is a favorite for clothing. It keeps wearers cool by absorbing moisture while staying gentle on sensitive skin. From casual tees to elegant dresses, cotton's adaptability makes it a fashion superstar. Plus, it's machine washable, durable, and eco-friendly when composted. Cotton fibers can stretch up to 30% of their length when wet.

Cotton farming isn't without its challenges. It's extremely water-intensive, needing about 2,700 liters of water to make just one cotton T-shirt. Research, however, is underway to develop cotton plants that require less water.

"Cotton" comes from the Arabic word *qutn*, which originated from the Egyptian word for cotton. The term traveled through trade routes to become *cotone* in Italian, *coton* in Old French, and finally "cotton" in English. In Hebrew, cotton is called *tzemer gefen*, meaning "wool of the vine," because of its soft, wool-like texture and because the leaves of cotton trees look like the leaves of grapevines. A similar term exists in German, where cotton is *Baumwolle* (tree wool).

Long before it became a household staple in Europe and America, cotton was already famous in ancient civilizations like India and Egypt. In ancient times, cotton fabrics were considered luxurious and often reserved for royalty and the wealthy, so they were a symbol of wealth and status. India has the world's oldest cotton industry, producing and weaving cotton textiles as far back as 3000 BCE. Indian cotton fabrics were so finely crafted that they were prized by merchants from distant lands. Ancient Egyptians also cultivated cotton along the Nile River. They wove durable fabrics that became luxury goods traded throughout the Mediterranean.

Greek historians like Herodotus wrote about cotton as an exotic fabric from India. Romans valued cotton for its softness and imported it through trade routes from the East. However, cotton remained rare and expensive in Europe for centuries. During the Middle Ages, Arab traders played a key role in spreading cotton throughout the Mediterranean. They introduced cotton farming techniques to Spain and Sicily, making southern Europe one of the earliest cotton-growing regions in Europe.

Cotton arrived in the English colonies by the 1600s. Settlers in the southern U.S. found that the region's climate was perfect for growing cotton, sparking early plantations. In 1793, Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin revolutionized cotton processing, making mass production possible. This invention helped cotton become America's most valuable crop. By the early 1800s, cotton was central to the U.S. economy, producing much of the world's supply. As cotton supplies increased from the Americas, European textile mills flourished. Towns like Manchester in England became booming industrial centers known as "Cottonopolis."

Let's conclude with some fun cotton facts. Did you know cotton made history in space? In 2019, a cotton plant sprouted on the moon during China's Chang'e 4 mission. Cotton also helps create U.S. paper currency—those dollar bills are 75% cotton! Cotton's versatility shines in countless products. Bookbinding, medical bandages, tents, and even coffee filters owe their strength to cotton fibers. Its super absorbent properties allow towels to soak up 27 times their weight in water! Cotton even makes nitrocellulose, a key ingredient in explosives—talk about a fiber with a punch!

Thank you, Hashem, for Your wondrous world!

THE CHANUKA PARTY THAT CHANGED HISTORY

Mr. Chiune Sugihara served as Japan's Vice-Consul in Kovno, Lithuania, during the early years of World War II. In 1940, as Nazi forces advanced through Europe, thousands of Jewish refugees fled to Lithuania, desperate for visas to escape to safe territories.

Despite opposition from the Japanese government, Sugihara defied orders and issued transit visas that allowed an estimated 6,000 Jews to escape the Holocaust via Japan. Working tirelessly, he handwrote visas day and night, even continuing his efforts from the train platform as he was being reassigned. Sugihara's moral courage and deep compassion earned him the title of "Japanese Schindler."

In interviews with people who actually knew him, Sugihara's kindness is often emphasized. The following story illustrates Sugihara's everyday goodness and compassion:

Shortly after arriving in Kovno, Mr. Sugihara entered a gourmet food shop owned by a Jewish woman, where he met her young nephew, Solly Ganor. Solly, like many other youngsters in Lithuania, had given all his Chanukah money to help the refugees streaming into the country. He stopped by his aunt's shop, asking her for a coin so he could go see a show, explaining that he had given all his money to tzedakah (charity).

To Solly's surprise, it was Mr. Sugihara who offered him a coin. At first, Solly was taken aback, having never seen a man with slanted eyes. He described Sugihara as having a kind aura about him. Solly said he could not accept money from a stranger, to which Sugihara replied, "Consider me your uncle; I'll be your uncle for the holiday."

Young Solly felt he should invite his newfound "uncle" to their family's Chanukah party, taking place at their house on Motza'ei Shabbos. To everybody's surprise, Mr. and Mrs. Sugihara showed up at the Ganors' Chanukah celebration.

Another guest, a refugee from Warsaw, was recounting his escape from Poland and broke down crying. This appeared to have made a very strong impression on the compassionate heart of Mr. Sugihara.

Soon after that, Mr. Sugihara began his heroic efforts to issue transit visas to the desperate Jews of Kovno.

(From Rav Mordechai Schwab; A Tzadik In Monsey, By Yehoshua Schwab, Published By Adir Press)



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the Rabbi who flew first class, Rabbi Zilberstein answered (Upiryo Matok Devarim 481) that because the philanthropist asked, "Did you fly first class?" instead of "Do you usually fly first class?" the Rabbi answered truthfully by saying he did not fly first class. Since the philanthropist only asked about that specific situation and then proceeded to give the donation, the Rabbi responded honestly and was not required to disclose how he normally flies.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of Elisheva's parents
Eugene and Rosa Levin z'l
By Aaron and Elisheva Gropper and family



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