



## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### STAY IN YOUR LANE!

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

There was once a yeshiva that took its students on a camping trip. The head of the yeshiva, Rabbi Bloom, organized various locations where the students would stay and visit. To ensure everything ran smoothly, he hired two professionals: a well-known, highly skilled chef to prepare all the meals, and a mashgiach (a kosher supervisor) to oversee the food's kashrus. Since this took place in Israel, strict adherence to kashrus laws was required. This included ensuring that all ingredients were tithed (terumos and ma'aseros) and complied with laws related to shem-itah (the sabbatical year). The standards were complex, so Rabbi Bloom wanted an experienced mashgiach to supervise everything.

The students visited various locations, and the chef prepared delicious meals at each stop. One day, they arrived at a particular site. As the chef began preparing dinner, the mashgiach, named Mordy, told the chef that something seemed off about the meat—it smelled slightly spoiled.

The chef, whose name was Aron, took offense. He replied, "Why don't you stay in your lane? Your job is to ensure the food meets kosher standards. Stick to that. My job is the food itself—I'm the expert here. Let me handle it."

Mordy, not wanting to argue, let the matter drop.



### SILENT CONFIDENCE

This week's Parsha is the story of Avraham's quest to find a shidduch for his son Yitzchok. To do so, he sent Eliezer to Aram to find an appropriate match for his son. Among the many lessons that we learn from the Parsha is the fact that there is tremendous hashgacha pratis (Divine Providence) in the process.

I want to share a story of tremendous hashgacha pratis and a verse in Tehillim that captures the thought. I heard this story from Yoel Gold who interviewed the protagonist.

There was a young lady living in Israel who was raised in an observant home and left the religious path of her family. Her journey took her to North Carolina, where she sold popular Dead Sea skin care products in shopping malls. Although she enjoyed the freedom away from home, she nonetheless missed her home. She was lonely. After some time, she decided she would turn to HaShem and ask Him to show her that He is really there for her.

Before Yom Kippur of 2023, she made a deal with GD. She was going to keep Yom Kippur, the entire fast, and He would have to show her that He cared for her. She was successful in keeping the whole Yom Kippur. Immediately after the fast, she turned on her cell phone to discover an incredible offer that looked too good to be true. If she sent two hundred dollars, she would get a return of double the money. Unfortunately, she fell for a scam and ended up losing \$400 of her meager savings. As you may imagine, her disappointment was beyond description; here she spoke to HaShem, made a deal, kept her side of the deal, and He allowed her to get scammed right after Yom Kippur!

In the meantime, her parents brought her back to Israel for Sukkos, and she was looking forward to joining her friends at the Nova Festival on Simchas Torah. However, because she lost most of her savings in the post-Yom Kippur scam, she was unable to attend and remained at home with her parents.

Of course, you can well imagine the incredible epiphany she experienced on Simchas To-

Later that day, Aron prepared a meal for the group: a delectable pepper steak, expertly seasoned and sautéed so that it smelled and looked delicious. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the meal. However, within 24 hours, the entire camp fell ill with food poisoning. Some students vomited, while others had to be hospitalized.

Curiously, only two people didn't get sick: the mashgiach, Mordy, and the chef, Aron. As it turned out, Aron himself hadn't eaten the food.

The head of the yeshiva, Rabbi Bloom, was furious. He was responsible for his students, many of whom were now ill or hospitalized. Confronting both the chef and the mashgiach, he first told Aron, "I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to let you go. You endangered the entire group, and people ended up in the hospital. On top of that, I won't be paying you your final wages."

Then, turning to the mashgiach, Rabbi Bloom said, "I think I should let you go as well. Your job was to oversee the food, and yet you let everyone eat spoiled meat. You're also responsible for what happened."

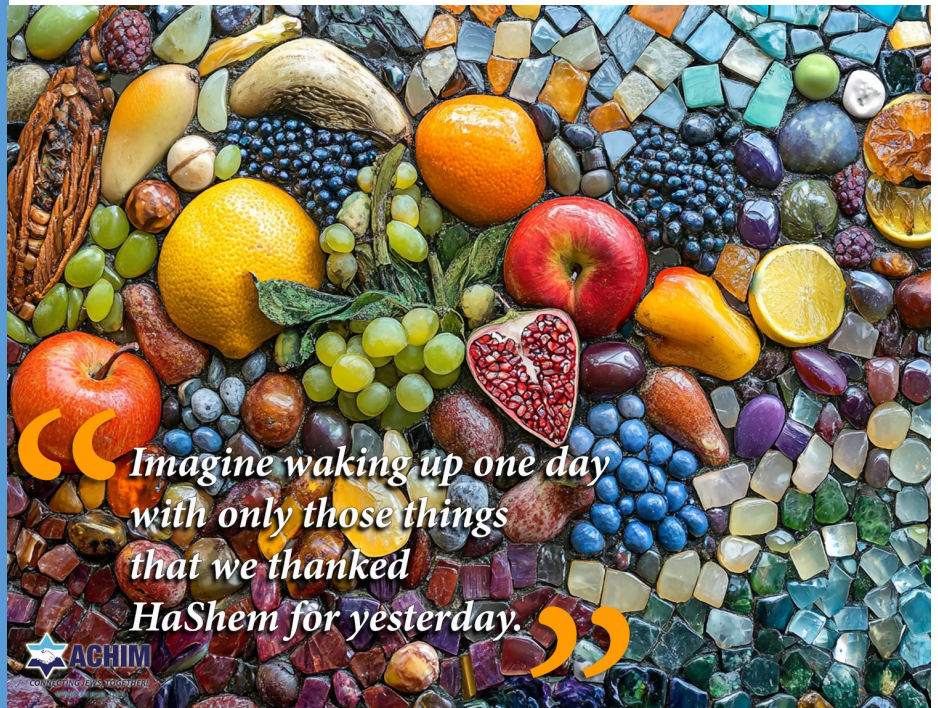
Mordy protested. "My job is to ensure the food is kosher, and it was. The meat was 100% kosher. I even brought up my concerns about it being spoiled, but the chef dismissed me and told me I didn't know what I was talking about. How is this my fault?"

The head of the yeshiva replied, "If you smelled that the meat might have been spoiled, you should have told someone else. You should not have stayed silent. Your silence contributed to people ending up in the hospital. I'm considering withholding your final payment as well."

Rabbi Bloom was uncertain about what to do, so they agreed to bring the matter to a rav for guidance.

What do you think? Was the mashgiach responsible for the spoiled meat? Or do we say his role was strictly to oversee the food's kosher status and not its freshness, meaning he was entitled to rely on the chef's expertise?

See Upiryo Matok Devarim Page 453



rah when she learned that HaShem was watching her very carefully after Yom Kippur. She kept her side of the deal, and He most certainly kept His side of the deal.

Psalm 65 opens with the following verse: "To You silence is praise, HaShem, to You promises must be fulfilled."

In explaining the second half of the verse, Malbim explains that when a person promises his friend to do something for him if the friend will save him, he need not fulfill the promise until his friend saves him. However, regarding any promises you make to HaShem for His help, you can fulfill them immediately because you can count on them happening. When trusting in HaShem, the question is not if He will come, rather the question is when He will bring the salvation. Therefore, there is no need to wait since we can consider it done already now. We need only to anticipate His salvation.

Perhaps, in light of this story, we might be able to appreciate the first part of the verse.

Let us imagine that this young lady had complete trust that HaShem

would demonstrate His care. Let us say that she had total confidence in Him. Certainly, the moment she made her deal with Him, she would have been anticipating HaShem's demonstration as she asked for. How would she sing HaShem's praise after being scammed out of her savings after Yom Kippur? Even if she were totally confident in His care, she would be unable to say anything. Although deep inside, her trust would remain strong, nevertheless she would be unable to express her praise for HaShem.

The only thing she could do would be to remain confident with anticipation. Perhaps the "silence" which King David refers to in the opening verse is the silence of quiet confidence in trust of HaShem. That silence of confident anticipation is the praise one offers to HaShem.

And now the second part of the verse extends that thought. For once the praise is confident silence, then one can already fulfill their promise immediately. There is no question that HaShem will keep His part of the deal.

May HaShem bless us with the strength of such great emunah.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**



# SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

## CATNIP

Imagine a plant so captivating that it can transform a huge lion, or any cat, into a bundle of joy, playfulness, and relaxation. Meet catnip, or *Nepeta cataria*, a humble herb from the mint family that's as fascinating as the cats it enchants. From its scientific roots to its quirky effects, catnip is a fascinating plant. Its name, *Nepeta cataria*, hails from "Nepeti," an ancient Italian city, and "cataria," Latin for "of a cat." This connection to felines has endured for centuries. Native to Europe and Asia, this perennial herb has spread across the globe, thriving in gardens, roadsides, and even cracks in the sidewalk.

Physically, catnip grows up to three feet tall, sporting heart-shaped leaves and delicate clusters of flowers in shades of white, lavender, or pink. While unassuming, it holds an extraordinary secret within its leaves and stems: nepetalactone, the active compound that casts a spell on cats.

Catnip is famous for its ability to turn even the most aloof cat into a playful, rolling, and purring furball. When cats sniff nepetalactone, it binds to receptors in their nasal tissue, setting off a cascade of neurological responses. Suddenly, cats are transported to a euphoric state, engaging in behaviors like:

**Rolling and Rubbing:** Cats may gleefully tumble on the ground, rubbing their heads and bodies against the source of the scent.

**Vocalizing:** Some cats meow, purr, or chirp in delight.

**Playful Antics:** Hyperactive cats might dart around or chase invisible prey.

But here's a twist: eating catnip often has the opposite effect. Instead of excitement, it can cause calmness and even sleepiness.

If you think catnip is just for house cats, think again. Its allure extends to the kings and queens of the jungle. Big cats like lions, leopards, and jaguars have been known to react to catnip in much the same way as their domestic cousins.

Interestingly, not all cats respond to catnip. About 30% to 50% of

felines are immune to its charms, thanks to genetics. Sensitivity to catnip is hereditary, meaning it's passed down from one generation to the next. Age also plays a role—kittens under six months and senior cats are less likely to be affected. Silver vine (*Actinidia polygama*), Tatarian honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*), and valerian root (*Valeriana officinalis*) are all known to elicit similar reactions in cats.

For those that do respond, the effects last about 10 to 15 minutes. Big cats like lions and tigers can experience effects lasting up to an hour or more.

Catnip's wonders aren't limited to its effects on felines. Humans have also found uses for this remarkable plant. Its leaves can be brewed into a calming tea, similar to chamomile, providing relief from insomnia, anxiety, and indigestion. Beyond tea, catnip leaves have been used in salads and soups, adding a minty twist to dishes. In medieval times, it was even used to treat fevers and stomach cramps.

Why does catnip produce nepetalactone in the first place? It's not for the amusement of cats. Scientists believe this compound is a chemical defense against herbivorous insects. By repelling pests, catnip protects itself while also offering humans a natural pest-control solution. Nepetalactone serves as a potent natural insect repellent, effective against mosquitoes, cockroaches, and termites. In fact, research suggests it may outperform DEET in certain situations, though its effects are shorter-lasting.

Though catnip sends certain insects packing, it plays a welcoming host to pollinators. Bees and butterflies are frequent visitors to its flowers, making it a valuable addition to any garden. But beware: its invasive nature means it can quickly take over if left unchecked.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

## 2.1 MILLION STEERING WHEEL LOCKS

Rabbi David Ashear shared the following beautiful story:

A businessman named Isaac was asked by a Rabbi to help his congregant Yosef, who was facing major financial problems. Isaac readily agreed, and Yosef drove from Monsey to Brooklyn to meet him.

Isaac welcomed Yosef to his office. After offering refreshments, Isaac asked his visitor, "How can I help you?"

Yosef explained that his non-Jewish partners had recently swindled him out of a great deal of money and merchandise. All that remained in his inventory was a huge supply of steering wheel locks ("The Club") — an item that was not selling at all. With 2.1 million locks and no buyers, he didn't know where to turn. Perhaps Isaac, a middleman who facilitated the sale of various types of merchandise, would be able to find customers for this product.

"I sell branded items, such as clothing," Isaac replied. "I've never dealt with this kind of merchandise and don't know anyone who would want it." He paused, then added thoughtfully, "But maybe you could melt down the locks and sell them as metal? I know this would greatly reduce the price, but at least it would cut your losses."

At that point, Yosef began to cry.

"I didn't mean to upset you," Isaac apologized. "Please forgive me."

Yosef took a moment to compose himself before thanking Isaac for his time and taking his leave.

Ten seconds hadn't elapsed before Isaac's phone shrilled. A business associate in India was on the line, the distributor for a major brand of footwear and sports apparel.

"Isaac," he said, "I have a strange request. I need steering wheel locks. Do you have access to any?"

Isaac almost fell off his chair. "Please hold on a minute!" he exclaimed, and sprinted down the hall after Yosef.

"I have someone on the phone who might want to buy your merchandise," he said to the startled man. "To give you extra zechus, I pledge to donate my entire commission from this sale to my son's yeshivah."

When Isaac got back on the phone, the man from India said, "My brother-in-law, who sells cars here, is in trouble. There's been an increase in auto thefts, and people are no longer buying cars. He needs steering wheel locks, and lots of them."

Isaac replied, "I have 2.1 million available, if you want."

"Perfect!" said his business associate. "We'll take them all."

And just like that, Yosef made the biggest sale of his life and was back on his feet. Isaac earned over \$500,000 in commission from that sale and gave every penny to the yeshivah, as he had pledged.

The Hashgachah here was amazing. To have someone call from across the world and inquire about steering wheel locks at that very moment is mind-boggling. But what made it so special to Isaac and Yosef was the absolute clarity that it was Hashem Who was bringing salvation.



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the wedding and the person who sold the extra bus tickets, Rabbi Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Devarim Page 445) answered that the money rightfully goes to the chasan, who paid for renting the bus.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated li'iluy Nishmas  
**Yehudah Leib ben Chayim Yitzchak.**

With much appreciation to the many individuals in the community  
for your support and friendship.

By the Adler, Bialik, Burr, Newmarks x 7, Scherer & Tisser Families



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