



A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



DUPED LOCKSMITH

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's parsha talks about establishing courts to deal with monetary disputes. This leads us to the following true story.

Avi was a locksmith who lived in Israel. One day, he received an urgent call. The man on the phone said, "It's freezing outside, and I can't seem to get into the house. Could you please come over quickly?"

Avi drove over and saw a sweet family, a father, mother, and two children, shivering in the cold, standing in front of a very nice, expensive villa. When he pulled up, they eagerly ran to him and explained that they had been trying to get into the house for a long



ONE REQUEST, ONE PURSUIT

Dovid Hamelech begins Psalm 27 by expressing how, in spite of all his challenges and adversaries, HaShem is always there for him. He has no fears and no darkness; he is completely attached to HaShem.

He then goes on to express that he has only one request from HaShem: to be attached to Him. He writes, "I have but one request to ask from HaShem, and that is what I seek; to sit in His House all the days of my life and to be in His Sanctuary." The desire to sit in the House of HaShem conveys Dovid's wish to be closely attached to HaShem and to His ways.

At first glance, this seems to be redundant. He tells us that he has only one request, and then he says that this request is what he seeks. Naturally, the request he asks from HaShem is the matter that he seeks. If Dovid is requesting to be attached to HaShem, then of course that is what he seeks.

Malbim explains that it is possible for someone to ask HaShem for attachment while, in truth, seeking something entirely different. How so? Malbim explains that the level of hashgacha pratis (HaShem's direct involvement in guiding an individual's life) is directly proportional to the level of attachment that one has to HaShem. An individual whose entire life is completely dedicated to HaShem, and whose every decision is based on what HaShem ex-

time but were unable to. They asked if he could please unlock the door for them.

Avi agreed and tried to open the lock. When he wasn't able to unlock it, he ended up breaking the lock on the door to let them in. They paid him for his services and expressed their gratitude.

The next day, Avi heard on the radio that an expensive villa had been robbed and completely cleaned out. The description matched the house he had visited the day before. Avi soon realized that he had been duped, the people who had called him weren't the homeowners but con artists. They were actually thieves who had tricked him into breaking the lock so they could rob the house.

Avi brought this question to Rav Zilberstein: Was he obligated to pay for all the losses caused by the theft, since he was the one who opened the door for them?

On one hand, he did open the door for the robbers. On the other hand, what was he supposed to do in that situation?

What do you think?

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The Chovos Halevavos writes that our worries and distractions interfere with our service to HaShem. So although Dovid Hamelech does want HaShem's hashgacha pratis to remove his worries and distractions, it is not for his personal comfort. Rather, it is so that he can serve HaShem with greater dedication. Dovid's singular quest is complete attachment to HaShem.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the tradition to read Psalm 27 twice a day from the beginning of Elul through Succos is because this is the period of time when HaShem's closeness becomes especially accessible.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind

MITZVA MEME



pects from him, will merit tremendous hashgacha pratis.

It is therefore conceivable for someone to request closeness to HaShem while really seeking something else—hashgacha pratis. In such a case, the person is truly looking to gain special Divine providence, but the way to gain that is through being attached to HaShem.

The reason for Dovid's repetition is to emphasize that his only request—to be close to HaShem—is genuinely the only thing he seeks. Nothing else. While it is true that Dovid will benefit from that closeness, that is secondary. Even though he began the Psalm by listing all the benefits of attachment, nevertheless, it is not the protection and comfort that he desires.



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE BOBBIT WORM: THE GLITTERING NIGHTMARE BENEATH THE SEA

Imagine strolling along a tropical beach and staring out into the warm, turquoise waters. Somewhere beneath those gentle waves, hidden in a sandy seabed, an alien-like predator lies in wait. It's not a shark or an octopus, it's not even a fish. It's a creature so bizarre, so mysterious, and so fearsome that it seems ripped straight from the pages of science fiction. Meet the Bobbit worm (*Eunice aphroditois*), one of nature's most jaw-dropping wonders, and perhaps one of its most terrifying.

This rainbow-hued ambush predator lives beneath the sand, invisible to most ocean-goers and marine life alike, until it decides to strike. And when it does, it's over in the blink of an eye, literally. With lightning speed and deadly precision, the Bobbit worm explodes from its burrow, grabs its prey with razor-sharp jaws, and yanks the poor prey underground, never to be seen again.

The Bobbit worm is one of the longest predatory worms on the planet. Most individuals grow between 1 and 2 meters (3 to 6 feet) long, but some exceptional giants have been recorded at over 3 meters (10 feet), longer than a great white shark pup! Some parts of its body can grow several inches thick, especially around its armored, nightmarish head.

This worm isn't the wriggly garden variety you might find after a rainstorm. The Bobbit worm is built like a creature from another world. Its shimmering body is covered in bristles called setae, and each segment glows with an iridescent rainbow sheen. Underwater, it appears to glisten with blues, purples, and greens, creating a stunning display that seems more sci-fi than sea life.

Despite its size and color, the Bobbit worm is rarely seen. That's because it spends most of its time buried beneath the sea floor, hidden in soft sediments like sand, gravel, or coral rubble. Only a small portion of its body, its antennae and part of its head, protrudes above ground, just enough to detect the slightest movement in the water.

Using specialized sensory structures, including five pairs of antennae lined with chemoreceptors (like taste buds) and mechanoreceptors (vibration sensors), the Bobbit worm can "smell" and "feel" prey that swims too close. Some scientists say its sensory powers are so refined that it can detect the difference between a swimming fish and a floating leaf, no eyes needed.

When something tasty comes within range, the Bobbit worm unleashes its hidden weapon, Jaws of Lightning. The Bobbit worm is famous for its jaws. These aren't ordinary jaws; they're part of a terrifying structure called the eversible pharynx. That means the worm can literally turn part of its throat inside out, launching its jaws outward like a spring-loaded harpoon. The jaws, technically called maxillae, are sharp, curved, and coated in a paralytic toxin that quickly stuns or immobilizes the prey. The entire strike can happen in less than 0.1 seconds. That's faster than a human can blink. High-speed cameras used by National Geographic had to slow footage down dramatically

just to capture the motion. In the blink of an eye, the worm grabs its victim and yanks it down into its mucus-lined burrow. Sometimes, the jaws are so powerful, they slice the prey clean in half. Divers who've observed this grim spectacle call it the "guillotine of the sea."

Before the Bobbit worm attacks, it often appears completely harmless, at least to the untrained eye. Its five antennae stick up from the sand like a strange sea flower or a piece of coral debris. In fact, it's this odd appearance that led some divers to nickname it a "demonic flower," beautiful yet deadly.

This blend of beauty and danger is one of the Bobbit worm's most incredible qualities. Its shimmering body reflects sunlight in vibrant hues, not for camouflage but possibly to warn predators, much like poisonous frogs or venomous snakes do. Some scientists believe this iridescence may mimic toxic creatures, helping the Bobbit worm stay safe from those brave (or foolish) enough to consider attacking it.

The Bobbit worm is also an impressive survivor. Like some lizards, it can autotomize, voluntarily shedding part of its tail when threatened. The severed tail wriggles and twitches, distracting predators while the rest of the worm escapes. Even more incredible? That tail might grow back in time.

Bobbit worms have made quite a name for themselves in the home aquarium world, but not in a good way. They sometimes hitchhike into saltwater tanks aboard pieces of live rock collected from coral reefs. Because they're so good at hiding, they often go unnoticed for months, or even years. Then one day, fish start disappearing. Crabs vanish. Snails are nowhere to be found. Only when the aquarist takes the tank apart do they discover the culprit: a massive Bobbit worm lurking in the gravel. In one documented case, a 1.5-meter-long worm devoured an entire reef tank's population overnight. And once established, removing them is a nightmare. Their deep burrows and stealthy behavior make them nearly impossible to catch.

Although the Bobbit worm is a top predator, it's not without its own threats. Parasitic isopods have been found burrowing into their bodies, sometimes taking over their nervous systems and affecting their movement, turning them into "zombie hunters" in a real-life horror story.

During mating season, in a rare, dazzling event, swarms of Bobbit worms leave their burrows to dance and writhe across the seafloor in search of mates. They release clouds of bioluminescent mucus, glowing green in the dark, as part of the spectacle.

They inhabit warm waters across the globe, from the Indo-Pacific to the Caribbean, usually at depths of 5 to 40 meters. They can be found near coral reefs, in sandy or muddy seabeds, and even in deeper zones. Wherever soft sediment allows them to burrow, Bobbit worms might be lying in wait.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world.

WHO SAYS THE VERY THING KEEPING ME ALIVE ISN'T THE FACT THAT I'M SPEAKING TO PEOPLE

The Steipler Rav's einikel, Rav Avraham Yeshaya Kare-
litz, told the following story:

He had the zechus to serve the Steipler when he was
already very old. People were coming from all over to
speak with the Steipler, but he saw that the Steipler was
becoming weak. So, after a few hours, he closed the
door to give him a break.

The Steipler looked up, saw that the door was closed,
and asked, "What's going on? Don't people want to
speak to me?" He got up and opened it. A few minutes
later, the einikel saw this and closed it again. The
Steipler got up once more and asked, "Who's closing the
door?", and again, he opened it.

Finally, the einikel said, "My job here is to protect your
health. I want you to stay strong and healthy, so I don't
want people coming in all day and night."

The Steipler responded, "You think you're helping me
live a long and healthy life? Who says the very thing
keeping me alive isn't the fact that I'm speaking to peo-
ple? Maybe, in truth, I've already completed my tachlis
in this world, but HaKadosh Baruch Hu is keeping me
alive because Klal Yisroel needs me, to listen, to give
them advice, to guide them. Maybe that's exactly what's
sustaining me."

The einikel thought he was helping the Steipler live
longer, but the Steipler said, "You might be doing the
opposite. This might be the very thing keeping me
alive."

(Heard on Chazak)



THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about replacing the baal koreh, Brooklyn posek Rabbi Moshe Yosef Weiner answered that if the baal koreh is trying his best to read, they are yotzei b'di'eved, and therefore they should not be mevazeh him by calling up a new, better baal koreh.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of Arkadiy Berezin

אהרון בן יצחק ז"ל

May the merit of gracing a thousand Shabbos tables with beautiful conversation bring an elevation to his neshama

By his beloved family



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