TABLETALK

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JULY 2025 BALAK | WWW.ACHIM.ORG | ISSUE 449 VOLUME 9

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

THE PARATROOPER

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

With gratitude to Hashem, my family and I have returned home. Thank you to all of you who were so welcoming and helpful while we were away and when we returned. The Baltimore community is truly so special.

This week's parsha talks about the war that Bnei Yisrael waged against their enemies, the Midyanim. Let me share with you another true story about Eretz Yisrael and modern-day Jewish soldiers.

Matan was a paratrooper in the IDF. One day, during a practice jump, he leapt from a plane as usual. But as he descended, a strong wind suddenly caught him and blew him far off

THE GUARDIAN OF ISRAEL

This week's Parsha offers us the insights of Bilam, the non-Jewish seer whose prophetic level was comparable to that of Moshe. In defining the nature of the Jewish people, he states, "The Jewish nation rests alone, distinct from all the other nations." As we look back over the past 3,300 years, history certainly attests to this. There is no other nation that has managed to live dispersed throughout the world, despised and hated by all, several of whom have attempted to destroy us—and yet, through it all, we continue to thrive so marvelously.

The basis of this unique status is that all other nations receive their spiritual energy from a corresponding spiritual entity. Our Sages teach that there are 70 such entities, each representing one of the 70 nations, from whom each nation draws its energy. Our people, however, do not receive our spiritual energy from any intermediary entity. Instead, we have a direct connection to HaShem, the Source of all energy. The energy of those 70 entities is granted to them by HaShem, and they, in turn, bestow it upon their respective nations. We, on the other hand, have a direct line from HaShem, the Source Himself.

While this may sound abstract, if we observe the events of our personal lives—and especially those involving our nation—we can perceive this unique relationship with HaShem in tangible ways. I would like to share a few illustrations of this relationship that I was fortunate to learn about earlier this week.

On Monday, June 16, at 4:00 a.m., an Iranian missile made a direct hit on a school on Rechov Hashmonaim. The school building was constructed with a miklat (bomb shelter), intended for both the school and the residential building adjacent to it. However, for some reason, the miklat in the school was locked, and the residents next door were unable to access it. As a result, all those families stayed in their homes during air raids.

On that fateful night, every window of 70 Rechov Hashmonaim was blown out. Interestingly, each window was sucked into the building, with the exception of one window,

course—away from the designated landing zone.

To his shock, the wind pushed him toward an area near the army base where bystanders often gathered to watch the paratroopers. Despite his efforts to steer away, Matan crash-landed into a young toddler, an adult woman, and a parked car, injuring the two people and damaging the vehicle.

Later, Matan began to wonder: according to halacha, is he obligated to pay for the damage?

On the one hand, this was clearly an accident. The wind carried him off course—it was beyond his control. But on the other hand, there's a Torah principle: adam mu'ad l'olam—a person is always responsible for the harm they cause, even unintentionally.

But what about the bystanders? They had voluntarily come to a place near a military landing zone. Even if the risk was tiny, they chose to stand where accidents could conceivably happen. Did that mean they accepted the risk?

What do you think? Is Matan required to pay for the damage caused by this parachuting accident?

See Chashukei Chemed, Bava Kama, page 217.

MITZVA MEME

which was blown outward. The rabbi of my sister's shul shared with his congregants that his grandchild had been in a crib directly underneath the window that was blown outward—and miraculously, the child suffered no harm whatsoever.

The personal attention of the Guardian of Israel was focused on the direction of every window.

In a different apartment at 70 Rechov Hashmonaim lives the Zilberman family—two parents and three children. At 4:00 a.m., when the bomb hit the school, a window and its frame flew straight across their room, above the heads of the frightened children, hit the opposite wall, shattered into countless shards, and tore off the closet doors. Immediately after the blast, the parents carefully cleaned the glass shards from their shoes, put them on, went to their children's room, and carried them out of the building.

Later in the day, the mother returned to retrieve clothing for the children. Everything she touched was covered with glass, and she returned empty-handed. Despite the shower of glass shards, not one member of the Zilberman family had even a scratch.

The personal attention of the Guardian of Israel was focused on every shard of glass.

Another young family living on the top floor of 70 Rechov Hashmonaim had an infant in her crib when a sheet of roofing material fell through the ceiling and landed directly on top of the crib. After the roofing sheet covered the crib, additional rubble fell through and landed on top of it. After the blast, the parents removed the rubble and then the roofing sheet—and found their infant unharmed.

The personal attention of the Guardian of Israel was focused on the order of the roof's collapse.

The first story was heard by my sister; the other two were shared with my nephew by the father of the Zilberman family.

May HaShem continue to shower us with His endless chessed, and may He soon rest His Presence in its final destination.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind

SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE NATURE OF TURBULENCE

Have you ever been on an airplane, sitting quietly, maybe sipping your juice or reading—when suddenly, the plane starts to bounce and move like a roller coaster? Your heart jumps! Your stomach flips! You grip your armrest. What just happened? You, just experienced turbulence. Let's take a sky-high journey into the world of invisible air waves, mountain winds, and super-powered jet streams. We'll find out what turbulence really is, where it hides, and why it's so cool.

What Is Turbulence? Think of the sky like a giant invisible ocean. The air isn't just sitting still up there—it's always moving. It swirls, it climbs, it dives, and sometimes, it gets wild! That wild movement of air is called turbulence. It's like waves on the sea, only in the air and invisible.

Turbulence happens when air currents are moving in different directions or speeds and they smash into each other. Boom! That's a recipe for a bumpy ride. Even if it looks like blue skies outside, that doesn't mean the air is calm. The sky might be smiling, but the air could be dancing a wild jig!

There's more than one type of turbulence—because there's more than one way nature stirs up the sky! Here are a few of the amazing ways turbulence gets started:

Thermal Turbulence: When the sun heats up the Earth, it doesn't do it evenly. Some parts of the ground get warmer than others. That warm air rises like steam from hot soup—and when it does, it pushes up against cooler air, making a bump! This is really common near the equator and on hot summer days.

Jet Streams: High above the Earth, there are super-fast rivers of air called jet streams. These can blow at over 250 miles per hour! When a plane flies near a jet stream, it can bump into air moving at a completely different speed. That's turbulence!

Mountain Wave Turbulence: Picture this: wind hits a big mountain range like the Rockies or the Himalayas. It can't go through the mountain, so it has to go up and over. That causes giant invisible waves of air on the other side—kind of like the ripples you see behind a rock in a river. Fly through those waves, and you've got a real sky roller coaster!

Mechanical Turbulence: Down closer to the ground, buildings, hills, and even cities can mess with the flow of air. When wind hits a skyscraper or races between hills, it gets all swirly. That's why takeoff and landing can feel bumpier than cruising way up high.

Storm Turbulence: Thunderstorms are turbulence factories! Inside those giant clouds, air is rising and falling super fast. Even just flying near a storm can feel like driving next to a freight train on a windy bridge.

Where does It happen? Turbulence can pop up anywhere, but there are hotspots where it's more likely to strike. Near the equator, warm air rises a lot, so planes crossing tropical zones might hit more bumpy patches. Over oceans like the Atlantic, planes often cross powerful jet streams that swirl unpredictably. And if you're flying over mountains? Buckle up! The Andes in South America, the Rockies in North America, the Alps in Europe, and the Himalayas in Asia are some of the bumpiest places on Earth—at least from the air! Even big cities like New York, Tokyo, or Mexico City can stir up turbulence with their tall buildings and bustling air traffic.

But the sneakiest kind of all? Clear Air Turbulence, or CAT. It happens way up high, usually near jet streams—and there are no clouds to warn you! Pilots call it the "invisible bump." When a plane is flying close to the ground, especially near cities or rugged terrain, buildings and landscape features can churn up the air. It's a bit like wind getting caught in a canyon. That's why takeoff and landing can sometimes feel bumpier than cruising high up.

Can Turbulence Hurt the Plane? Here's some super cool engineering news: airplanes are built tough. The wings can bend—a lot!—without breaking. In fact, airplane wings are tested to flap up and down like a bird's wings before they're ever allowed to carry passengers. Some wings can bend over 25 feet in either direction! So while turbulence might feel scary, it almost never damages the plane itself. It's like driving over a gravel road—you'll shake, but the car is still just fine.

Very rarely, severe turbulence can break a few things inside the cabin. If items aren't stored properly, like a coffee pot or a meal cart, they might clatter loose. But serious damage? That's rare.

What About People? Ah, now this is where turbulence matters most: not to the plane, but to the people inside it. If you're not wearing your seatbelt and the plane hits a big bump, you could go flying—literally! Most turbulence injuries happen when passengers are out of their seats or not buckled in.

How long does It last? Most turbulence is a quick shake—like a surprise wave in a swimming pool. It lasts only a few seconds or minutes. Pilots often change their altitude or route to find smoother skies. They're like sky surfers, always hunting for the gentlest air.

But sometimes, especially near big storm systems or over long mountain ranges, turbulence can last longer—20 minutes, 30 minutes, or even an hour. That's unusual, but it happens. Pilots, weather radar, and air traffic control all work together to track bumpy patches and steer around them when possible.

Has turbulence ever been really bad? In rare and extreme turbulence, a plane might suddenly drop 100, 200, or even 300 feet. Sounds scary, but pilots are trained for it, and modern airplanes are designed to handle it. These drops usually last just seconds, and the plane quickly returns to level flight. Most turbulence is over quickly, but sometimes—especially when flying through huge storm systems—it can last a while. A long stretch of unstable air can cause turbulence that goes on for 30 minutes or more. Pilots usually try to find a smoother path, but if the air is unstable over a wide area, sometimes you just have to ride it out.

Can we avoid it? Pilots do everything they can to avoid turbulence. Before takeoff, they look at weather maps and pilot reports. They choose altitudes and routes with the smoothest air. During flight, if it starts to get bumpy, they'll ask for permission to climb or descend. But some turbulence—like Clear Air Turbulence—can't be seen on radar. It's invisible and often appears without warning. That's why it's smart to always keep your seatbelt fastened when you're seated, just in case.

Is turbulence dangerous? It sure feels dangerous when your stomach flips! But here's the amazing truth: for a well-built plane and a buckled-in passenger, turbulence is more uncomfortable than dangerous. Think of it like driving over potholes. You wouldn't want to hit one at full speed, but your car won't explode either. Planes are designed to bounce, bend, and wiggle in the wind. Pilots are trained to fly through it with confidence.

The same swirling winds that jostle your airplane also carry seeds, shape weather systems, and help birds soar across continents. Eagles and hawks use thermal turbulence to ride up into the sky without flapping their wings. Glider pilots hunt for rising columns of warm air just like birds do.

Thank you Hashem for your wondrous world!

HE WOULD DASH AROUND THE SHUL, FISTS FULL OF CANDY, SEARCHING FOR THE SAD LITTLE FACES

We know that there is a custom to throw candies at a chassan during his aufruf. When Rav Shimshon Pincus celebrated his sons' aufrufs, he always came prepared. He would buy a large stash of candy and hide it under his seat in shul.

After everyone had thrown their candies at the chassan, and once the excitement had died down, Rav Shimshon would spring into action. Amidst showers of berachos and mazal tov wishes, he would dash around the shul, fists full of candy, searching for the sad little faces who hadn't managed to catch any sweets.

With a smile, he would drop candy into their outstretched hands—turning tears into smiles.

(From The LIfe of Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus, Published By Feldheim)

THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about Mark Zuckerberg and Sam Altman, The Minchas Yitzchak (5, 77) writes that poaching aways another person's employees is an "Avlah Gedolah, a great injustice". In the words of another prominent posek, "A blanket hetter to poach employees, could destabilize many businesses, and would enable those with deeper pockets to strangle their competition by soliciting away their critical staff. "

This week's TableTalk is dedicated to the memory of our father
Alexander Josef Katz
He was a great father who passed on his love of Yiddishkeit to his children

Leah and Leonid Turovskiy