

## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### CUSTOM MEAL REQUESTS

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion makes a reference to the importance of pursuing peace. The Torah says that when Aharon died "the entire house of Israel mourned for him" (Devarim 20,29). Rashi explains that this was because Aaron would promote peace between man and his wife. It is a Torah mitzvah to promote peace. This leads us to the following interesting story.

Eli applied for a new position in an office. He was experienced and was offered the job. Part of the terms of his employment offer was that his employer would provide lunches on the premises. In Eli's mind this was a great perk as he didn't have to spend time preparing lunch ahead of time and he didn't have to spend money to purchase a lunch. This perk helped tip his decision and Eli accepted the job.

On the first day on the job Eli looked forward to lunch. Lo and behold the lunch was sushi. It



### FIRM AS GRAVITY

This week's Parsha, Chukas, opens with the laws of tuma, the spiritual impurity that one contracts when coming in contact with a human corpse. It also discusses the manner in which one cleanses himself from this impurity, by means of getting sprinkled with special water on his body and after seven days immersing himself in a mikvah. In discussing these laws the Rambam writes; "It is clear that the rules of tuma and tahara are decrees from Ha-Shem for which there is human rationale and are therefore categorized as Chukim."

Chukim is the word used for 'law' or 'rule' to imply a law for which there is no rationale. For this reason this word is used to refer to the laws of nature. Gravity is most certainly a law of nature but there is no rationale why a larger object should attract a smaller object to itself. Although there is no rationale, it is nevertheless a law which is irrevocable. In the same way, there are a set of mitzvos for which there is no rationale, they are nevertheless, as firm as gravity and equally irrevocable.

The opening verse of our Parsha which introduces the laws of tuma and tahara reads "These are the chukim of the Torah..." The question is how can the Torah call the laws of tuma which are limited to a specific set of laws, the chukim of the Torah? Should it not have introduced these laws as "the chukim of tuma and tahara". There is so much of Torah which is completely rational. All the mitzvos that pertain to interpersonal relationships are filled with divine insight and absolute genius. The libraries of the world are filled with the wisdom that has been gleaned from the mitzvos of our Torah. Those mitzvos are not chukim. So why does our Parsha identify the small genre of laws of tuma as the chukim of the Torah?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the Torah is teaching us a profound lesson. It is giving us a perspective how we should relate to the Torah and to her mitzvos. With this single verse, the Torah equates all of her mitzvos to the laws of tuma and tahara. The Torah is telling us that

looked very nice, it was prepared nicely, but Eli wasn't crazy about sushi. He picked at it a little, but the lunch wasn't very satisfying for him.

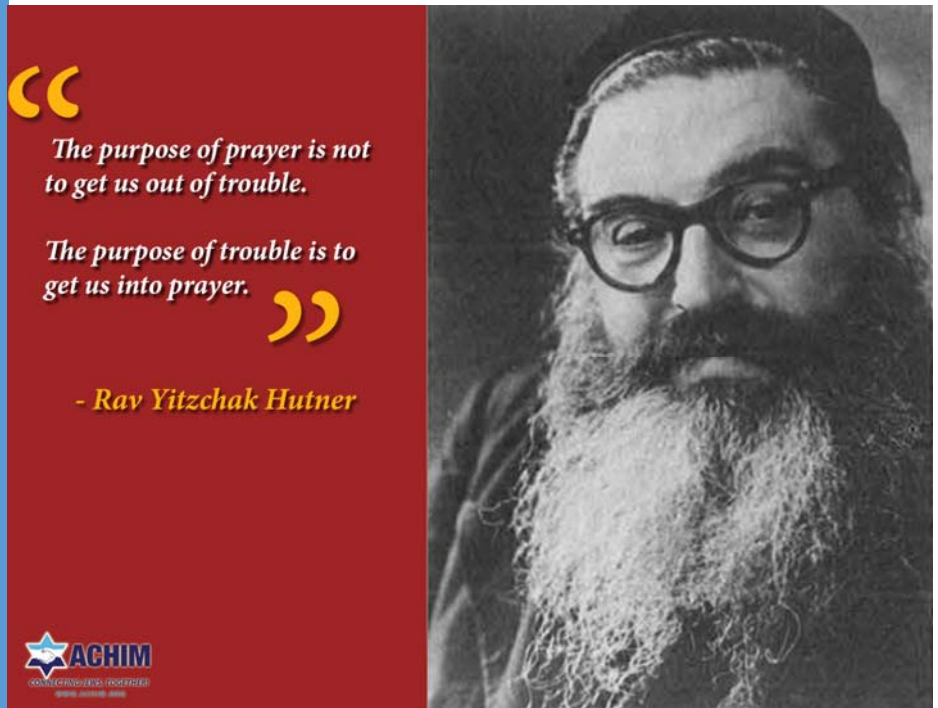
The next day, Eli went to lunch and once again it was sushi. It was a different type of sushi, it was prepared differently but it was sushi and Eli was getting kind of sick of sushi. The next day, sure enough, it was sushi again. Eli inquired why the office always served sushi. They explained that the office made an arrangement with a nearby sushi restaurant, they got a very good bargain on the meals.

Eli felt frustrated and misled. When he accepted the job he understood that the lunch provided was a typical lunch menu. Eli felt that sushi every day was not normal and he didn't feel like they were providing him with a reasonable lunch. When he brought this question to the manager the manager was apologetic, but he said it would cost the company a lot of money to get different types of meals. Eli felt that they had an obligation to serve a more typical lunch menu to honor the employee contract. Serving an exotic and gourmet menu was not "normal" and was not what he agreed to. Had he known this was what it was, he might not have accepted.

This question was eventually brought to Rabbi Zilberstein. Who was correct? When the contract said it would provide lunch did it mean a typical lunch that is served to employees? On one hand, had Eli known it was sushi he might not have accepted the offer. But on the other hand, is the company obligated to provide a special meal for Eli because he felt this was not a normal meal?

What do you think?

See Veharev Na Volume Three Page 140



just as the laws governing tuma and tahara are beyond any human rationale, so it is true with all of Torah - they are all beyond human rationale.

The source from which all of Torah comes is HaShem Whose intelligence is infinite. The depth of wisdom that underlies every detail of Torah is infinite. It is therefore impossible for Man to penetrate those depths. Although Man may very well be able to achieve some level of understanding he will never get to the bottom of it; it is infinite. There are also many mitzvos that are entirely beyond the scope of human understanding such as our laws of tuma and tahara.

Our Parsha introduces the laws of tuma by calling them the chukim of the Torah to teach us that just as we accept the laws of tuma and tahara without comprehending the rationale, so must we accept all of Torah, as if we have no comprehension.

One may ask, what difference does it make in our acceptance whether

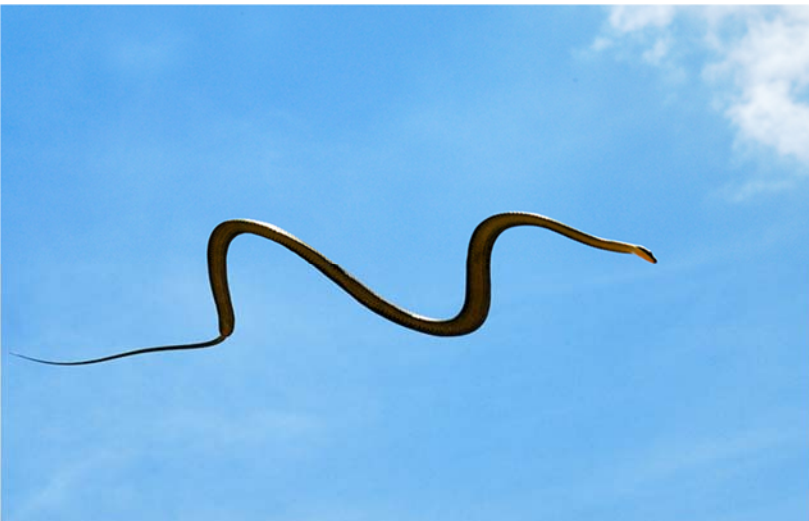
we have a comprehension or not? Furthermore, wouldn't our acceptance be stronger if we accept them based on our own understanding?

The acceptance of the Torah and the adherence to her mitzvos are intended to facilitate our connection to HaShem by submitting to His Will. If my adherence to His mitzvos is driven by my own understanding then such adherence is not submission to Him and hence does not generate the same connection. If however, I adhere only because He instructed me to do so and because I want to live up to His expectation of me then such adherence generates genuine connection.

This does not preclude us from learning the wisdom of the Torah that does relate to our understanding. It is specifically the mitzvos that relate to our understanding that teach us morals and uprightness that we have taught the world and with which they have filled their libraries. Nevertheless, those are only lessons learnt from the mitzvos and not the reason for our acceptance.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**



## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### FLYING SNAKES

This week's parsha talks about snakes. Have you ever seen a snake fly from one treetop to the next? Can snakes fly?

Technically snakes don't really fly. But it sure looks like it. Some snakes can glide through the air, which looks like they are flying. They use the speed of free fall and contortions of their bodies to catch the air and generate lift. Here's how it works. The flying snake climbs using ridge scales along its belly, pushing against the rough bark surface of tree trunks. This allows it to move vertically up a tree. When it reaches the end of a branch, it prepares for takeoff by slithering until its tail dangles from the end of the branch in a J shape. It leans forward to select the level of inclination and chooses a desired landing area.

Once it decides, it propels itself from the branch with the lower half of its body, and forms quickly into an S, and flattens to about twice its normal width, sucking in its abdomen and flaring out its ribs to turn its body into a "pseudo concave wing". This gives its normally round body a concave C shape, which can trap air. By undulating back and forth, the snake can actually make turns. The combination of forming a C-shape, flattening its abdomen and making a motion of undulation in the air makes it possible for the snake to glide in the air. This helps it save energy compared to travel on the ground. It also keeps it safe from earth-bound predators. The concave wing that the snake creates in flattening itself, flattens its body to up to twice its width from the back of the head to the end of the tail. Picture a frisbee.

A cross section of the snake's body at that point would look like the cross section of a frisbee. When a frisbee spins in the air, the designed cross sectional concavity causes increased air pressure under its center, causing lift for the frisbee to fly. The snake continuously moves in lateral undulation to create the same effect of increased air pressure underneath its arched body so it can glide. Flying snakes are able to glide better than flying squirrels and other gliding animals, without any wings, or any other wing-like projections. They can glide through the forest and jungle, going as far as 300 feet or more! Once they choose a destination, they can't do much to switch directions midair other than slithering a little.

Scientists don't know how often or exactly why flying snakes fly, but it's probably to escape predators, to move from tree to tree without having to go down to the forest floor, and possibly even to hunt prey.

Flying snakes like to eat bats, rodents, lizards, frogs and birds. They hunt for them in the daytime. They live high up in trees, and rarely come down.

Because their rear fangs are very small and fixed, flying snakes are not venomous to humans, although there are a few recorded instances of humans being bitten by them. Their venom is dangerous to their small prey.

The largest flying snakes are the Golden Tree snakes. They can be about 4 feet long. Their color ranges from yellow to bright green, sometimes with red or orange markings.

The most well known flying snake is the Paradise tree snake. This flying snake species reaches up to three feet in length and is popular in the European pet trade. Their bodies are black, but covered in rich green scales. They also have clusters of red, orange, and yellow-colored scales in the shape of flower petals from the base of the neck to the tail. They are the best gliders, and can reach 3 feet long.

The last well known species of flying snake is the Twin-banded tree snake or banded flying snake. This is the smallest flying snake species, reaching up to two feet long. It is black or dark grey, and the entire body is covered with thick red and thin yellow with black bands. It is tiny and is one of the rarest flying snake species.

Scientists are hopeful that this research will lead to the design of robots that can glide in the air from one place to another.

## "I WANT HER TO TEACH ME HOW TO MAKE WHOLE-WHEAT PIZZA"

A homeless man in his 60s named Eliyahu lived at the Kotel. He had two chairs—one to sit and sleep on, and one for his bags. He dressed in a raggedy, dirty shirt and trousers with an old black coat. After many invitations, one weekday Eliyahu agreed to come home with Rabbi Mordechai Machlis for supper. Eliyahu felt comfortable in the Machlis home. After that, he came often for supper, and sometimes he would even sleep over.

Eliyahu developed a special liking for Henny's whole-wheat pizza. It became his favorite food. He kept no regular hours, and often didn't show up for supper until late at night. Rabbi Machlis used to tell him, "You have to come by a certain time, like by 1 am." Eliyahu would respond, "I can't commit. I have a lot to do." Henny came up with a solution. She taught him how to make his own whole-wheat pizza. "This way, any time you come here, you can make your own pizza. The ingredients will be in the refrigerator, and we'll leave the front door open." It worked for several weeks.

Then, one night, at 3 a.m., there was a knock on Mordechai and Henny's bedroom door, which was totally off-limits. Mordechai woke up, scared. What emergency could this be? He opened his bedroom door and saw Eliyahu standing there. "Do you know what time it is?" Mordechai asked, perturbed. "There's food in the kitchen. Help yourself." "I don't want food," Eliyahu replied, "I want her to teach me how to make whole-wheat pizza. I forgot how to do it." Mordechai was exasperated. "At 3 o'clock in the morning, you need to remember how to make whole-wheat pizza?" By this time Henny was also awake. Mordechai turned to her and said, "This guy is insane, I'm going to throw him out of the house." Henny calmed him down. "Mordechai," she said, "this is a test. It's from HaShem. I don't mind doing it. I'll get up and teach him again." Mordechai was irate. "But, Henny, you're indulging him in wrong behavior. Tell him he's wrong. Tell him to get out of here."

Jewish thought frames reality according to three elements: time, place, and person. Three o'clock in the morning was the wrong time. Their bedroom door; was the wrong place. But the raggedy, homeless pauper was not the wrong person. He was a holy Jewish soul, and Henny would neither scold him nor turn him away. "I don't mind teaching him again," she said. She got dressed, came out, and taught him once more how to make whole-wheat pizza. How did she do it? How was Henny able to look at people who were so broken and even hostile, and see the Divine image in them? As Rabbi Machlis explains, "She was a visionary. She looked beyond what was immediately visible. She looked at problematic people, and she would see who they could be."

(From Emunah with Love and Chicken Soup, By Sara Yocheved Rigler, Published By Shaar Press)



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the man who brought the scooter into the apartment, Rav Zilberstein wrote that he would not be able to be forced to pay in Beis Din, but because it was a grama, he would be liable for the damage midinei shomayim.

We already have several families who have committed to provide curbside pickup for their neighbors, making TableTalk available in this time of distancing.

If you are interested in doing so as well, kindly contact me and the TableTalk's will be brought to you.

I can be reached at 443.286.9338 or [paysach@achim.org](mailto:paysach@achim.org)

**Ben Jessurun Agency**  
  
[BJessurun@allstate.com](mailto:BJessurun@allstate.com) • 410-443-0771

**Shabbos, Table Talk & Goldberg's Bagels.**  
**מעין עולם הבא!**  
  
1500 Reisterstown Rd. | Baltimore | 410-415-7001 | [www.goldbergsbagels.com](http://www.goldbergsbagels.com)

**Rosenbloom PEST-CONTROL**  
**TOTAL CUSTOMER DEDICATION**