# TABLE ALKACHIM CONNECTING JEWS, TOGETHERI



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## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



### THE WRAPPED GIFT

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha opens up with the phrase, "And it will be if you observe the mishpatim then Hashem will safeguard for you the covenant and kindness that he swore to your forefathers".

We know that Mishpatim are the mitzvos between man and man, the interpersonal mitzvos. This leads us to the following true story.

Elisheva had a friend, Zehava, who was engaged to get married. Elisheva wanted to buy Zehava a nice engagement present. She went to a gift shop and looked around. She saw many beautiful gifts on display. Then Elisheva noticed an expensive bottle of perfume that she knew Zehava wanted. The perfume had a price tag of 250 dollars. That was way out of her budget. Just then a voice came on over the loud-



#### WHO IS BLESSING WHO?

In this week's Parsha, after rebuking his people for the Golden Calf, Moshe tells them "Right now, all HaShem wants from you is to fear Him." Our Sages teach us that this is an allusion to the mitzvah of reciting 100 brachos a day.

The Nefesh Hachaim explains that the function of brachos is to actually bless Ha-Shem. It is to be understood in the same way a sick person will go to a great Rav for a bracha to daven for him that HaShem return him to good health. Similarly, when we make a bracha we are blessing HaShem that He should be blessed.

To compare the bracha of a great tzadik who blesses the simple Jew to our blessing of the Master of Universe needs clarification. How do we dare compare the two? The notion that us mortal beings can even daven to HaShem is beyond comprehension. That HaShem pays attention to our needs and listens to our tefillos is even more challenging to comprehend. How then can we understand that mortal man can offer a blessing to HaShem?! What is HaShem missing for which He needs or wants our blessing? If He is missing anything how can we possibly provide it?

From this verse, our Sages learn that everything is in the Hands of HaShem with the exception of Yiras Shamayim, the fear of HaShem. As much as HaShem controls every detail of creation and every detail of history, He has no control over Man's fearing G.D. HaShem allows Man to reject Him. Man has the ability to deny the existence of HaShem. (This might be the greatest miracle of creation. How can an intelligent thinking person who is fully aware of the genius of Nature with all her systems in all the areas of science, deny the existence of a designer? This is the gift of free will.) This is the reason why Moshe tells his people that HaShem has only one request from you, that you fear Him. Regarding all the rest, HaShem does not need our help.

speaker. "Everyone is reminded that all gifts today are 50 percent off".

Immediately Elisheva realized that the gift was within her budget. She picked up the bottle of perfume and brought it to the counter.

"Can you please gift wrap this perfume?", Elisheva asked the clerk. "I'm giving it as a present."

"Of course", answered the clerk., and he proceeded to wrap it up.

"Would you like us to take the price tag off the item?" asked the clerk.

"It's ok, it's not necessary", Elisheva answered, "you don't have to take it off".

The clerk nicely wrapped the gift and handed it to Elisheva. Elisheva happily paid and walked out with the gift in a bag.

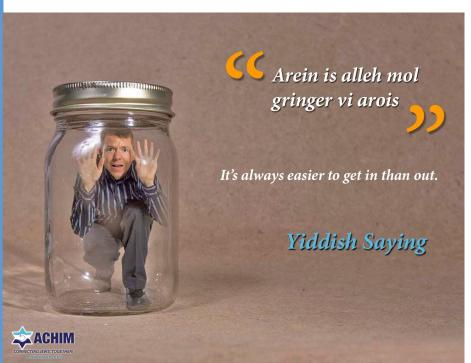
The next day, as Elisheva was driving over to Zehava's house to give her the present, she had the following thought:

Was she allowed to give the gift that had a price tag of 250 dollars on it if that was not the price that she paid?

One on hand, \$250 was the original price, she just happened to get it during a sale. But on the other hand, Elisheva would be giving the impression that she spent much more for her friend than she really did. Perhaps that was being deceitful. Perhaps that was geneivas da'as. Perhaps she would be making Zahava much more indebted to her than she really ought to be.

What do you think? Was Elisheva allowed to give her the gift with the price tag that was double the amount that she paid? Did she have to tell her what she really paid for it?

#### **MITZVA MEME**



Dovid Hamelech compares the relationship of his soul and his body to the relationship of HaShem and His world. You might not be able to see your soul but it fills your body. It drives your body. The soul does not eat or drink and derives no nourishment from food and drink, but without eating and drinking the soul will leave. In a similar fashion, we are not able to see HaShem but He drives this world. He derives no nourishment from the mitzvos we perform or the brachos we recite, but without those HaShem would, G.D forbid, depart from this world.

Behold! It is our mitzvos and Torah study which maintain the health of the world by keeping HaShem securely in the world. Perhaps we can appreciate what HaShem needs and why He wants us to give Him a bracha. HaShem wants nothing more than to be connected to this world and to give only goodness to it. The only way He will be able to achieve that is through our fulfillment of His Torah and mitzvos. This is out of His control.

The Nefesh Hachaim teaches us that when we make a bracha we are blessing HaShem with our recognition that He is the Creator of the fruit of the tree, or that He is the one Who sanctified us with the mitzvah of lighting the Shabbos candles. With that expression of recognition, we increase a greater awareness in the world and more of HaShem's Presence fills the world.

The parallel to the sick man who wants a bracha from the Rav is quite accurate. HaShem wants our brachos for the welfare of His world which is in such desperate need of His connection. Without us, it will not happen.

When HaShem endowed us with the ability to utter the Name of HaShem and bring Him into our world, He endowed us with the ability to bring blessing to Him as well.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind** 



#### SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

#### **BARLEY**

Last week we learned about olives, one of the shivas haminim, the seven special fruits of Eretz Yisrael. Let's continue that theme and explore another of the shivas haminim, Barley. Barley, whose official botanical name is Hordeum vulgare, is actually a member of the grass family. Archeologists claim that barley was one of the first cultivated grains. Aside from being one of the major ingredients in cholent, barley is one of the main ingredients in beer and whiskey. In addition, as our Sages teach, barley is a ma'achal beheima, one of the main foods given to animals, particularly to poultry, cows and pigs.

What is the origin of the word barley? Barley is really a distortion of the adjective, baerlic, which means "things derived from bere". Bere is the original old English word for barley. Bere is also the origin of the word Barn. Barn originally meant the "barley house". Bere is also the origin of the word beer. This is because beer is primarily made out of barley. What is the origin of the word Bere? It is possible that it is derived from the Hebrew word for grain which is Bor.

Today there are two main types of barley, two-row barleys and six-row barleys (pictured in the center). As the words describe, two row barley has two barley spikelets in each row. But six-row barleys have six spikelets in each row.

Two-row barley has a lower protein content than six-row barley, and therefore it has more fermentable sugar content. That is why two-row barley is usually used to make beer. The six-row, high protein barley is best suited for animal feed. One exception to this rule is that some American lager-style beers use six row barley.

Interestingly Barley beer was among the first alcoholic drinks developed by humans.

Where does barley come from? Archaeologists say that the earliest evidence of wild barley in an archaeological context comes from remains found at the southern end of the Kinneret in Eretz Yisrael. Once again this is consistent with the fact that barley is one of the special grains of Eretz Yisrael. Barley was one of the first domesticated grains in the Fertile Crescent, the area of Eretz

Yisrael and Bavel. From there, barley spread throughout Eurasia by 2,000 BCE. Because it originated in the area of Eretz Yisrael and the Middle East, even today barley is used in a wide range of traditional Arabic, Israeli, Assyrian, Kurdish, and Persian foods, including kashkak, kashk barley soup and murri.

The ability to harvest barley has altered the course of history. Jared Diamond, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book Guns, Germs, and Steel, proposed that the availability of barley, along with the ability to domesticate animals, can explain why Eurasian civilizations, as a whole, have survived and conquered others that did not have barley and domesticable animals. Barley allowed civilization to domesticate animals as a source of food as well as animals used for war. This significantly contributed to the broad historical patterns that human history has followed over approximately the last 6,000 years.

Barley is a highly resilient crop, able to be grown in varied and marginal environments, such as in regions of high altitude and latitude. It is also a widely adaptable crop. It is popular in temperate areas where it is grown as a summer crop and tropical areas where it is sown as a winter crop. Barley is more tolerant of soil salinity than wheat. Barley has a short growing season and is also relatively drought tolerant.

We mentioned that barley is used to make alcoholic beverages as well as to feed animals. In the United States today, half of the barley production is used as livestock feed. About 25% of the United States' production of barley is used to make beer.

Interestingly, in medieval Europe, bread made from barley was considered peasant food, wheat products were consumed by the upper classes.

Eating barley has several health benefits. According to the US Food and Drug Administration, consuming at least 3 grams per day of barley can lower levels of blood cholesterol, a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases. Eating whole-grain barley improves the regulation of blood sugar.

#### GENUG, YOU SHOWED THEM WHAT WE HAVE HERE

Rav Shlomo Freifeld was a master at building people. Eli arrived in the Yeshiva after a long and difficult yeshiva career. Early on, he had been diagnosed with severe learning disabilities, and even as a teenager, he was unable to read English or Hebrew. The whole yeshiva experience had been a nightmare for him and he arrived in Shor Yoshuv with very low expectations. From the outset, Reb Shlomo treated him differently than he had ever been treated before. He spent hours with him, listening to his attempts to read and understand. One day, Reb Shlomo turned to him with a smile. "Eli, I don't think that you realize this, but even though you have difficulties reading, you are a tremendous lamdan with a razor sharp head. We are going to make you into a talmid chacham." Reb Shlomo found suitable chavrusos for Eli, and they would learn with him each day, working on his understanding of the sugya, not the actual reading. As he began to understand the sugyas, he would memorize the words by heart so that it seemed as if he could read. It was a difficult road for Eli. There were times when he grew completely despondent as he realized that people who did much less work than him were progressing much faster. He would exert himself three times as much as his friends would with little to show for it; they were completing whole masechtos and he was finishing lines. Every time he felt like he couldn't go on, he would speak to his rebbi. Reb Shlomo invested him with an appreciation for his unique challenge and a confidence that he would ultimately triumph. After years of hard work, he had mastered the first seven blatt in masechta Chullin, word for word, Reb Shlomo had tested him on each and every line and knew that he knew it perfectly.

And then Reb Shlomo decided that it was time that Eli taste the sweet fruits of his labors. It was at the engagement party for one of the bachurim, a "Shor Yoshuv vort." The celebrations were traditionally held in Reb Shlomo's dining room and he was the host; it was always his show, as he would lead the speeches and spirited singing, enlivening everyone with his contagious joy. The room was jammed with people: talmidim, guests and mechutanim. There were several distinguished rabbanim in attendance and they were speaking with Reb Shlomo about the Yeshiva. Reb Shlomo's eyes gleamed. "We have bachurim here who are literally geonim, true geniuses," he said. The illustrious guests looked on with interest as Reb Shlomo searched the room with his eyes. His gaze rested on Eli. "Eli, come here," he instructed. Eli stood near Reb Shlomo, and Reb Shlomo studied him. "Eli, start to say a gemara. Let's see, how about mesachta Chullin!" Eli closed his eyes and began to recite the words that had become his through blood, sweat and tears. "Hakol shochtim vshchitaso kesheira", he started, gathering confidence as he continued, rattling off line after line, kushyos and terutzim. The room grew completely silent as the chasan, the rabbanim and all the guests watched the spectacle before them. Daf beis became daf gimmel, and still he was going strong. Minutes passed and Eli was showing no signs of faltering, saying each word clearly and lovingly. The rabbanim were visibly astonished by this American boy who could recite gemara as fluently as an old Polish gaon, and they were respectfully silent.

A full fifteen minutes passed with Eli gathering steam, until he suddenly approached the end of daf ches, the extent of his knowledge. Just as he said the last word that he knew, Reb Shlomo held up his hand. "Genug, enough — you showed them what we have here." As Eli recalled, "Those fifteen minutes erased fifteen years of humiliation and suffering".

(From Reb Shlomo, By Rabbi Yisrael Besser, Published By Judaica Press, Reprinted With Permission From The Copyright

**THE ANSWER** 

Regarding last week's question about the money that was placed in the danishes, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the woman who paid would have to pay again. This is because if the recipient did not know she got paid, it is like she did not get paid.

Mazel tov to Rabbi and Mrs. Yehuda and Yael Zelinger and Mr. and Mrs. Shmuel and Ora Joseph on the upcoming marriage of their children

**Eli and Meira** 

May Eli and Meira be zoche to build a bayis ne'eman b'Yisroel





