

A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



THE TECH PRODIGY

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion talks about the commandment to establish a Sanhedrin, a court system. (Bamidbar 11.16) This leads us to the following interesting question.

There was once a successful technology company in Israel that was run by religious Jews. The technology company had a brilliant coder, the best in his field. The coder was a genius and was the envy of the industry.

There was one problem though. The coder had no respect for the company's money. Even though he was very skilled at coding, he would often take



NOT EVEN THE HOME PLATE UMP

At the very end of this week's Parsha, Behaloshcha, Miriam, the sister of Moshe speaks to Aharon regarding Moshe. Miriam had learned that ever since Moshe became HaShem's prophet, his relations with his wife, Zipporah, diminished. Miriam and Aharon were also prophets and they knew that it is not required to abstain from one's spouse on account of prophecy. Therefore, out of concern for Zipporah they spoke among themselves about Moshe's misbehavior.

This discussion constituted loshon hara, negative talk, and Miriam was punished on account of this. HaShem gave her the plague of tzaraas and she remained in quarantine for a complete week.

The reason Moshe separated from his wife was because Moshe's prophecy was of a completely different nature than that of Miriam and Aharon. While Miriam and Aharon communicated with HaShem, it was only in an altered state of consciousness. HaShem did not come to them at any time of day and night. They needed to prepare themselves before receiving prophecy. Moshe on the other hand, was on call. Day and night he had to be prepared for prophecy. His vision was in an awake mode with no prior notice. Therefore, Moshe could not remain with Zipporah. In fact, HaShem condoned Moshe's abstinence.

The Torah uses this story of Miriam as a notice to all as to what happens when one speaks loshon hara. In fact, there is a special mitzvah to remember what HaShem did to Miriam in order that we should be careful with our own speech.

The question is how can we learn from Miriam's discussion with Aharon that we

food home from the office pantry, office supplies like staplers, office paper and even small technology samples.

He always assumed that nobody knew. But the owners and management were apprised of the situation and they felt torn.

On one hand they felt that if they would confront the coder he might get angry or embarrassed and might leave the company. Not only would that be a great loss for the company but he would probably get picked up by the competition and they would have a competitive advantage over them. On the other hand if they wouldn't say anything then they were condoning his stealing.

The owners wanted to know if they could simply not say anything and forgive the issue and pretend not to notice.

What do you think? Can they allow this worker to continue stealing small items from the company or did they have to confront him and risk getting him angry and potentially going to the competition?

See Hebrew Veharev Na Volume Two page 409



*The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.
The second best time is now.
- Chinese Proverb*

should not speak loshon hara? Miriam did not get her facts right. Her words were based on her understanding that Moshe shared the same form of prophecy as herself and Aharon. She had been wrong about that. Naturally she was culpable for what she said about Moshe. In the laws of loshon hara, however, one is not allowed to state something derogatory even if it is entirely accurate. So how does HaShem's reaction to Miriam indicate the severity of loshon hara when it is based on accurate information?

The answer is simple. Whenever we see a friend doing any action that appears to us as something wrong, we quickly jump to conclusions that they are wrong. The problem with that is that even when we have accurately viewed the action being done and even when that action as it stands alone is wrong, nevertheless, there are often extenuating circumstances that alter the de-

cision of whether such action should be taken. It is feasible that there are circumstances that allow an inappropriate action to be taken. There are also circumstances that mitigate the degree of "wrong" regarding certain actions.

Perhaps the Torah specifically chose Miriam's mistake to teach us that every case of loshon hara, even when all the details are completely accurate, just like Miriam who saw Moshe distancing himself from Zipporah, still constitutes loshon hara and is culpable as such. And if one will argue that Miriam made a mistaken judgement because she miscalculated the level of Moshe's prophecy, so it is with every case of loshon hara - we are all unable to make a reliable judgement. We are all subject to miscalculating the other person's situation. Is there any person who can make a reliable judgement regarding the actions of another person?

While there are people trained in identifying if the runner reached the plate before the catcher caught the ball, nobody can properly judge another person's actions.

Have a very safe and very wonderful Shabbos.

Paysach Diskind



SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

THE CORPSE FLOWER

Have you ever seen the biggest flower in the world? The corpse flower grows to around 10 to 15 feet and the leaves can be as big as 13 feet wide! According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the tallest bloom was a corpse flower that measured 10 feet 2.25 inches tall. It bloomed on June 18, 2010, at Winnepesaukee Orchids in Gilford, New Hampshire.

Why does it have such a strange name? Because it is designed to mimic a rotting corpse. The corpse flower is a plant that blooms rarely and only for a short time, but has an extremely strong odor when it is in bloom. That smell is the reason it's called the corpse flower. It smells similar to rotting meat. The exact combination of odors is meant to mimic an exact state of decomposition—something that is not fresh, but not so rotten that it is no longer attractive to carrion beetles, flesh flies and other carnivorous insects. These insects typically eat dead flesh, and they look for a place like that to lay their eggs. The smell, color and even temperature of corpse flowers are meant to attract these insect pollinators and help ensure the continuation of the species. The smell and the dark burgundy color of the corpse flower are meant to imitate a dead animal to attract these insects.

Corpse flowers are also able to warm up to 98 degrees Fahrenheit to further fool the insects. The insects think the flower may be food and fly inside. When they realize there is nothing to eat, they fly away, but they already have pollen on their legs. This process ensures the ongoing pollination of the species. Once the flower blooms, it lasts for a very short time, so that pollination can happen, and then the flower collapses.

The corpse flower is what is called an inflorescence — a stalk with many flowers, tiny male and female flowers grow at the base, which is surrounded by the spathe, a covering that is bright green on the outside and deep maroon inside when opened. If pollinated, it grows into a large club-like head of orange-red seeds.

Corpse flowers can take up to seven years to bloom; some corpse flowers only bloom once every few decades. The plant's energy is

stored in the corm – a swollen stem base. The corpse plant has the world's largest known corm, sometimes weighing up to 220 lbs. During the non-flowering years, a single leaf, the size of a small tree, shoots up from the corm. This leaf branches out into three sections with each of these sprouting more leaflets. Each year, this shooting leaf dies and a new one grows in its place. After many years, the plant finally gathers enough energy to bloom, and once it does, it can only hold the bloom for 24 to 36 hours before it collapses.

Since the flower blooms only once every 5-7 years, and stays open for just 24-36 hours, it is very exciting when it happens. These bloomings garner media coverage and large crowds of visitors. A 2014 blooming at the Denver Botanic Gardens was watched from all around the world due to a live feed posted on the garden's website. In August 2016, some 20,000 people lined up to see a blooming corpse flower at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

The corpse flower is classified as "vulnerable" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Plants. The flower could become endangered if the factors threatening its survival and reproduction do not improve.

The corpse flower was first discovered in Sumatra in 1878 by Italian botanist Odoardo Beccari, according to the UC Botanical Garden. The plant grows in the wild, only in tropical regions of Asia. In 1878, an Italian botanist named Odoardo Beccari "discovered" the titan arum in the dense equatorial rainforests of the island of Sumatra. Although the tubers that he sent to Florence died, some seeds survived, and a single seedling was sent to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. It flowered in 1889. But only recently has the horticulture world had success in raising the corpse flower in cultivation.

TZEDAKAH; IT'S ALL ABOUT THE OTHER FELLOW

Once a Rosh Yeshiva from Jerusalem who was on a fundraising mission in America, entered a shul on his itinerary and found it packed. At first the rabbi couldn't believe how fortunate he was. All of the town's potential donors were congregated under one roof.

That was until he realized why they were there. The large and enthusiastic crowd had gathered to hear the celebrated guest speaker from overseas, the Ponevezher Rav, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman. As the Ponevezher Rav began to deliver his legendary electrifying appeal for greater learning and Torah observance, his colleague became crestfallen and began calculating his losses. The Rosh Yeshiva wearily girded himself for the Rav's segue into the wisdom of contributing to the Ponevezh Yeshiva.

He was thunderstruck when the Ponevezher Rav, having noticed the visitor's entrance into the shul, appealed for the audience to contribute handsomely to the Jerusalem yeshiva that he represented.

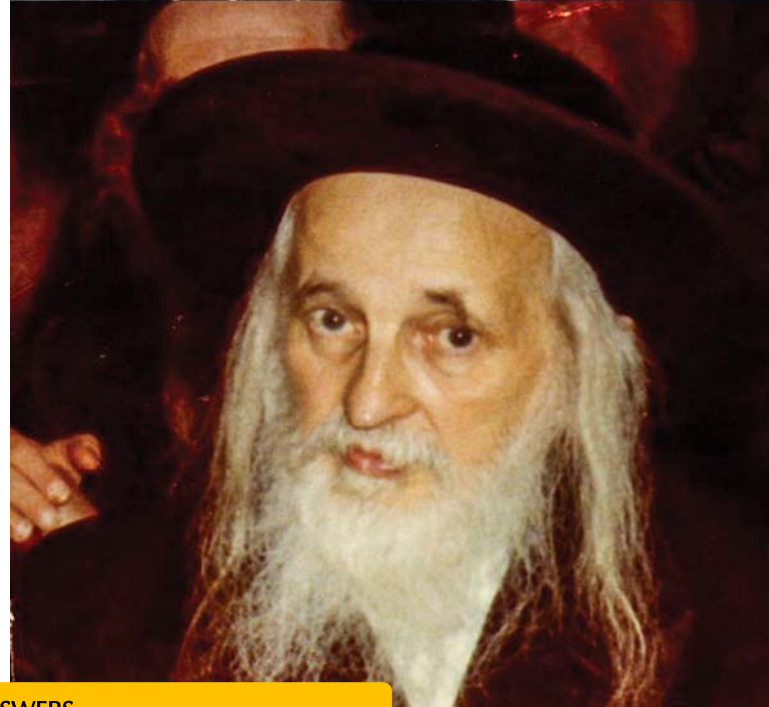
(For the Love of Torah, By Hanoch Teller, Published by Feldheim. Reprinted with permission.)

THE MORE YOU GIVE, THE MORE YOU GIVE!

Once there was an unsuccessful appeal for the Satmar Yeshiva in the Tzehlimer Beis Midrash; Afterwards, the Tzehlimer Rebbe said to the Rebbe, "I don't understand it. 'In your beis medrash there is an appeal for your Yeshiva every week, and it's always successful'" The Rebbe replied, 'I have already gotten my Kehillah members into the habit of giving; it has become their nature.'

Once, the Satmar Rebbe asked Rabbi Michoel Ber Weissmandl if he would be making his regular appeal for the Nitra yeshiva in the Satmar Beis Midrash that coming Shabbos. Rabbi Weissmandl replied that the Kehillah members had advised him to wait one more week, since the previous Shabbos there had been another appeal, and the chassidim were not likely to give generously so soon afterward. The rebbe said, "That's what a layman thinks, but the opposite is true. One mitzva leads to another. Since they were warmed up last Shabbos, they will give this Shabbos as well. But if you wait, they will cool off.

(The Rebbe, The Extraordinary Life and Worldview of Rebeinu Yoel Teitelbaum By Rabbi Dovid Meisels published by Israel Book Shop. Reprinted with permission.)



THE ANSWERS

Regarding the question of the wig stylist who took the trade secrets and clients and started a new business immediately, Rav Zilberstien wrote that what she did was wrong. He quotes the Minchas Yitzhac that the Beis din of the city should set up a non-compete period of a "number of years" and after those years the worker can start a similar competing business.

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

Ben Jessurun Agency



BJessurun@allstate.com • 410-443-0771

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