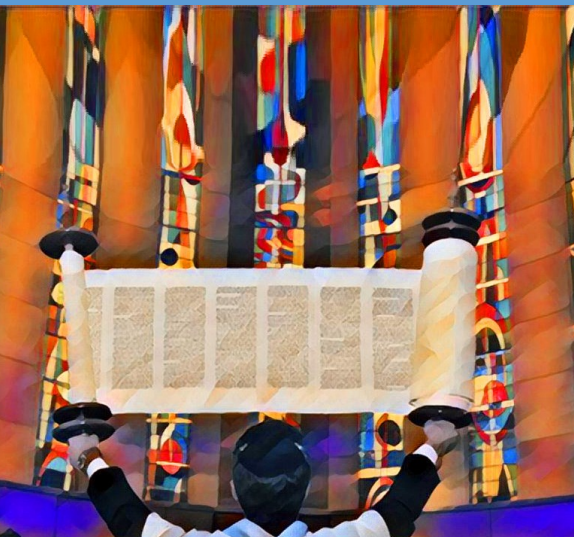




## A MITZVA DILEMMA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



## HUMBLED BY HAGBA

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion references the passuk, Vayehi Binsoa Haaron, (Bamidbar 10,38) that we quote when we take out the Torah to read in shul.

This leads us to the following fascinating true story. Before we begin this story it's important to know that it says in the Shulchan Aruch (124, 7) that if a person is talking in the middle of davening one is allowed to loudly rebuke them. (Go'arim Bo) This is true even if it causes the person some embarrassment. We see that in extreme cases it is permitted to embarrass somebody in order to stop them from talking during davening. This is because talking in shul is a severe aveira.

So back to our story. Ari enjoyed going to shul. But he also greatly enjoyed the social aspects of shul. Very often, Ari would talk to his friends throughout the prayer service. Behind Ari sat a man named Shimshon. Shimshon tried asking Ari to stop talking but Ari often rudely dismissed him. Ari was quite arrogant about it and he wasn't open to any reproof from his neighbor Shimshon.

One Shabbos, while Ari was still talking to his friends during the Torah reading, Ari was called up

## WANT AN APPETITE?

Our Sages teach us that there were ten incidents where the behavior of our people in the desert challenged HaShem's patience with us. One of those incidents is found in our Parsha was when "the people desired a desire to have meat". They complained to Moshe how in Egypt they were able to eat fish and watermelons and now in the desert all they have is the Manna. This complaint led them to complain about their dissatisfaction with the prohibition on the numerous forbidden marital relations that one may not have with their relatives. In response to these complaints the Torah tells us that "HaShem's anger flared up exceedingly".

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh explains that HaShem was contemplating their destruction and Moshe felt that he could not defend them. Moshe's inability to defend his people pained him so much that he actually asked HaShem to please let him die rather than watch the demise of his people.

It is understandable that this behavior was less than admirable, however, why should HaShem's anger flare up exceedingly? Were HaShem's people not human beings? Did they not have a natural proclivity and attraction to Man's more base needs? Why is Moshe unable to defend this misbehavior?

To appreciate the answer we must recognize what had transpired during the past year or so. Fifty days after leaving Egypt our people received the Torah at Mount Sinai. They encamped there for more than a year. During this time they lived through the most uplifting spiritual experiences. From direct communication with HaShem to eating the Manna which is the food from which angels get nourishment! Their water source was from a rock and their protection from the elements were some form of spiritual clouds of Glory.

to the Torah for Chamishi, the fifth Aliyah. However, he was so engrossed in this conversation that he didn't hear the gabei call his name.

Shimshon realized that he had an opportunity to perhaps teach Ari to never talk during the Torah reading again. Shimshon leaned over and told Ari, "They just called you up for Hagbah".

The shul was full, and between the men and women there were close to 500 people in the shul. Ari confidently strutted up to the bima as everyone watched. He went over to the Torah and picked it up as wide as he could, and loudly said "zos hatorah asher sam moshe". Ari was quite impressed with himself, and was proud of the smooth and wide hagbah that he did.

But as soon as Ari picked up the Torah the whole synagogue opened up in an uproar "it's just chamishi!"

In a flash, Ari realized what happened. With the whole entire shul of 500 people watching, he did hagbah and lifted up the Torah when really it was the middle of the Torah reading and he should have made an aliya, not done hagbah.

Ari realized that his error happened because he was distracted by talking during the Torah reading. He was extremely humbled by the experience. He truly took it to heart and never again spoke during the Torah reading.

Shimshon who caused this situation felt extremely conflicted afterward.

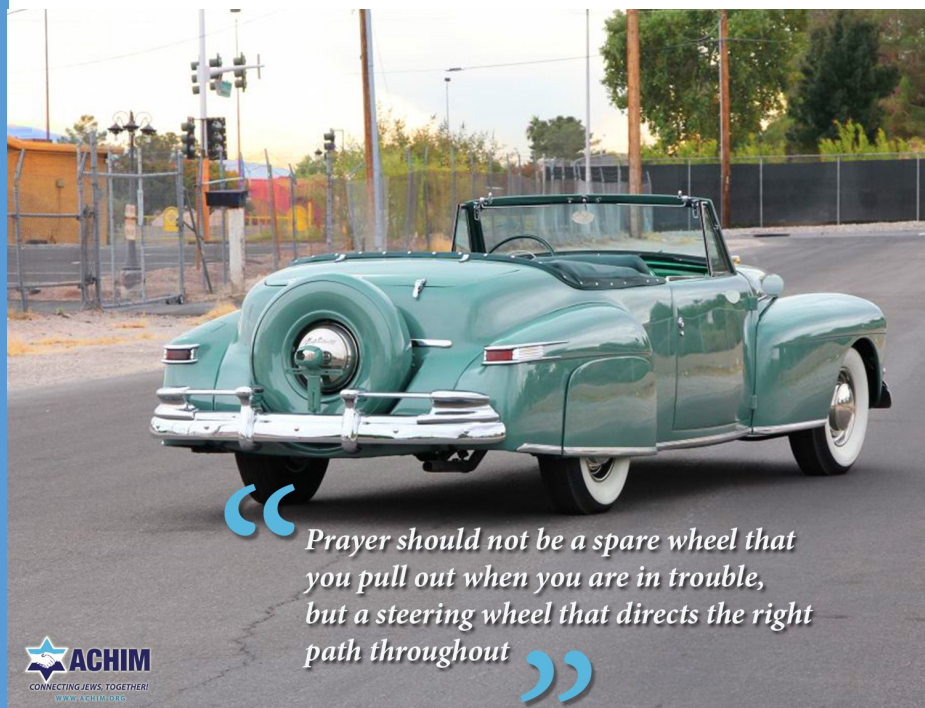
On one hand, the embarrassment he caused to Ari stopped him from talking. But on the other hand, even if one is allowed to embarrass somebody to stop talking, are they allowed to go to this extent?

Shimshon sent this question to Rav Zilberstein, asking if he did the right thing or the wrong thing.

What do you think?

See Upiryu Matok Bereishis 294

## MITZVA MEME



Living this type of life day in and day out, their bodily needs were significantly diminished. With the diminishment of these needs, their proclivity and attraction to these base needs diminished as well. They actually reached a point where they had no interest in eating meat and fish. They simply lost their appetite for these delicacies. As we look carefully at the verse "they desired a desire..." we see that they did not desire the meat and watermelons rather they desired 'the desire' to eat meat and watermelons!

There was a fellow who was overweight and both his wife and doctor were after him to lose weight. Unfortunately, he suffered from a very large appetite which challenged him greatly. His doctor prescribed an appetite suppressant which satisfies one's appetite. After taking it for several months he lost considerable weight and was doing well. His eating was under control and his health was restored. Some time later, he remembered the fun times he had at his summer barbecues where he was able to down four hamburgers with onions and tomatoes and several hotdogs with

relish and coleslaw and a juicy steak downed with a couple bottles of beer. Now, with his new eating habits he really missed it. He decided to quit the medication and get back to his old self.

While this parallel is not quite the same it gives us a window of what our people had done. HaShem had actually altered their needs to the point that they were able to address their spiritual needs and fill themselves with spiritual nourishment. If we could only imagine this; we were eating the same source of nourishment that angels eat. HaShem elevated us to a level that no Man since Adam had reached. We lost our attraction to our base needs as we were becoming more attached to our spiritual side.

Our longing for the days when we lived in Egypt when we were completely absorbed in the material world was tantamount to our total rejection of HaShem and the greatness He was bestowing upon us. We were rejecting the very purpose of our mission; to be His people and to carry His Presence in this world.

It is no wonder why HaShem's anger flared up and why Moshe could find no justification to excuse them.

Have a very wonderful Shabbos.

**Paysach Diskind**





## SHABBOS: CELEBRATING HASHEM'S CREATION

### BLACK PEPPER

Last week we learned about the spice sesame. This week, let's learn about a spice that changed the entire world as we know it, black pepper.

How exactly did pepper change the world? Also is black pepper related to the large green, yellow, or red peppers that we eat in salad? Is it related to a jalapeno or chili pepper?

Let's explore this together. Black pepper, officially called *Piper nigrum*, is a flowering vine cultivated for its fruit. It is also known as a peppercorn. It is usually dried and used as a spice and seasoning. Black pepper is a drupe. A drupe is a fruit like a cherry, olive, or peach, in which an outer fleshy part surrounds a single seed.

When fresh and fully mature, the fruit of the pepper is about a quarter of an inch in diameter. Looking like a small cherry, it is dark red, and contains a single seed.

But the black pepper we use for cooking is picked while it is small, still green, and not yet ripe, and then dried. The drupes dry in the sun or by machine for several days, during which the pepper skin around the seed shrinks and darkens into a thin, wrinkled black layer. Once dry, the spice is called black peppercorn. Have you ever tasted white pepper? It comes from the same exact plant. White pepper consists solely of the seed of the ripe fruit of the pepper plant, with the red colored flesh of the fruit removed. This is accomplished by a process known as retting, where fully ripe red pepper berries are soaked in water for about a week so the flesh of the peppercorn softens and decomposes. Rubbing then removes what remains of the fruit and the seed is dried. Because white pepper, the seed of the pepper, lacks certain compounds present in the outer layer of the drupe, it results in a different overall flavor than black pepper.

Ground, dried, and cooked peppercorns have been used since antiquity, both for flavor and as traditional medicine. Black pepper is the world's most traded spice, and is one of the most common spices added to cuisines around the world.

Its spiciness is due to the chemical compound called piperine. This is a different flavor of spicy from the compound capsaicin characteristic of chili peppers. It is also much less hot. Refined piperine is about one percent as hot as the capsaicin found in chili peppers.

Here is where we get to the part of how pepper changed the

world. In ancient times, spices, and particularly black pepper, were a much-prized trade commodity. It was often referred to as "black gold" and used as a form of currency. Pepper is native to South Asia and Southeast Asia, and has been known to Indian cooking since at least 2000 BCE. During the Middle Ages, pepper cost an exorbitant amount. This was one of the main triggers that led the Portuguese and Spanish to seek a sea route to India. Columbus wanted to find a new route to India, China, Japan and the Spice Islands. If he could reach these lands, he would be able to bring back rich cargoes of spices, particularly black pepper. Chili peppers are native to Mexico. When Christopher Columbus, who was desperately looking for black pepper, encountered chili peppers in the New World he called them "peppers" because the spicy taste was similar to peppers in Europe. This is why people refer to chilies and peppers as the same thing, even though they are not.

Contrary to what Columbus said, the chili pepper is really an unrelated plant to the black pepper we know. Chili pepper comes from a genus called *Capsicum*, which includes bell pepper, and sweet peppers.

So it turns out that the pursuit of black pepper helped in the founding of the United States and all of its subsequent history. Pepper is known to cause sneezing. Some sources say that piperine, a substance present in black pepper, irritates the nostrils, causing the sneezing. Interestingly, black peppercorns were found stuffed in the nostrils of Ramesses II, placed there as part of the mummification rituals shortly after his death in 1213 BCE. As an interesting aside, while black peppers are really a different plant than sweet peppers, bell or sweet peppers and chili peppers are actually from the same family of plants. The main difference between bell peppers and chili peppers is the spiciness. The bell pepper is the only member of the genus *Capsicum* that does not produce capsaicin, a lipophilic chemical that can cause a strong burning sensation when it comes in contact with mucous membranes. Why are bell peppers not hot like the other peppers? This absence of capsaicin is due to a recessive form of a gene that eliminates the compound and, consequently, the "hot" taste usually associated with the rest of the genus *Capsicum* is absent.



## NO MATTER WHO THE TRAVELER IS, YOUNG OR OLD, OBSERVANT OR OTHERWISE, WHEN A JEW COUNTS ON HIM, HE ANSWERS

We are very blessed that TableTalk's readership covers the entire spectrum of G.D fearing Jews. From those that are completely observant and talmidei chachamim to those who are not completely observant. Last week, I shared a Parsha thought that highlighted the power of a prayer from a simple Jew who prays to HaShem out of total helplessness knowing that only He can answer.

After receiving last week's TableTalk, Yelena and Yefim, a family with whom I am very close, sent me an email reflecting their reaction to last week's Parsha thought.

Yelena grew up in the city of Kharkov, Ukraine. Although this was a very Jewish city, there were no observant Jews. All of her grandparents spoke Yiddish. For most of them it was their mother tongue, even before Russian. This demographic was the result of the Communists anti-religion campaign. Given this background you will appreciate the import of Yelena's response.

Yelena wrote the following.

"I really enjoyed reading this week's Table Talk. You are doing a great job writing them. Thank you!

Your remarks about the huge force that a traveler's prayer could have, reminded me of my own story.

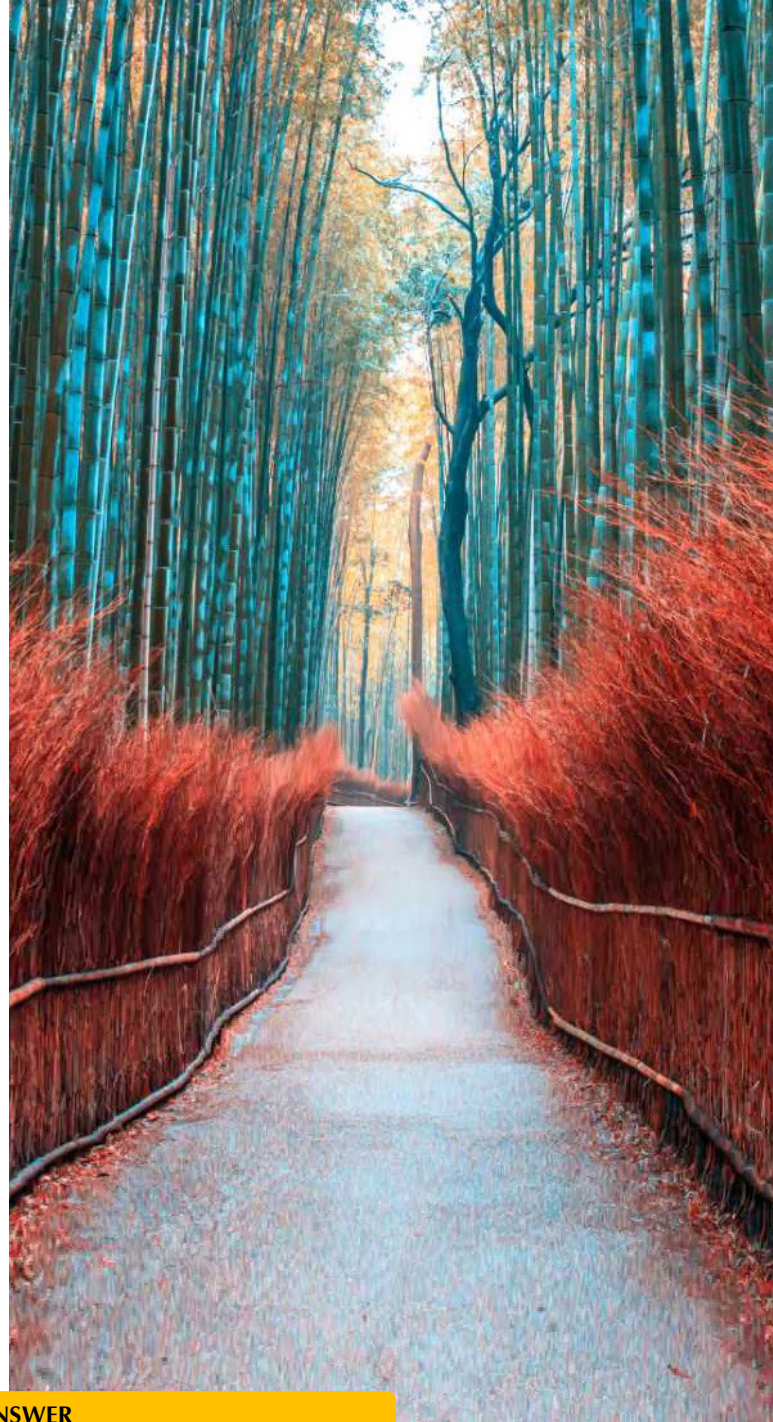
Many years ago when I was 15 or 16 years old my dad was hospitalized with a massive heart attack. The doctors told my mom that they give a 5% chance for my dad to survive that massive heart attack.

There was nothing else that I was able to do. Outside the hospital there was a forest. I wandered in the forest around that hospital crying and praying to G-d to save my dad.

Not only did my dad survive but he lived another 31 more years after that!

I never fully appreciated how much such strength was in my prayer."

Evidently, no matter who the traveler is, young or old, observant or otherwise, when a Jew counts on Him, He answers.



### THE ANSWER

Regarding last week's question about the meal in the hotel, Rav Zilberstein wrote that it was not permitted for the man to take the meal. Even if it may go to the garbage eventually, the meal was the property of the hotel. The man should therefore pay the hotel for the food he ate.

This week's TableTalk is dedicated in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of our dear son  
**YONATAN EZRA**

and as an expression of our gratitude to HaShem for bringing us to this great moment.

May the ACHIM community always be blessed to share in each other's smachot and may we as a nation merit to share in the ultimate simcha, the Geulah Shleimah and the Beit HaMikdash HaShlishi bimheirah v'yameinu.

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