



THE HAKUK EDITION
ENGLISH TOPICS ON THE DAF

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Chagigah Daf 13

The Gemara on 13a teaches: “Rabbi Ami said, we may not give over words of Torah to gentiles, as it says, “He did not do this for any other nation, and His statutes He did not make known to them.”” Based on this Gemara it would be forbidden to teach Torah to gentiles.

The Be’er Sheva wonders why none of the major poskim fail to mention this prohibition. On the strength of this question the Be’er Sheva suggests that in fact we do not hold like this Gemara. Although R’ Ami interpreted the possuk like this, the Be’er Sheva suggests that it may be only a non-binding asmachta. Alternatively, the Be’er Sheva offers that the prohibition applies to only one who teaches the Torah along with their explanations and secrets. This would fit into the expression of the Gemara – to “give over” to them – as opposed to “teach them.” It would also explain why the gemara mentions this ruling here, since it is a continuation of the previous discussion concerning the studying of the secrets of the Torah. The Be’er Sheva concludes, however, that even though it may not be forbidden to teach a gentile the Torah “one who guards his soul should distance himself from it,

like we see that Hashem agreed to Moshe when he broke the luchos.” (Be’er Mayim Chayim, sec. 14)

However, Tosfos in Bava Kamma (38a) clearly assume that we hold like Rabbi Ami. The Gemara there records that Roman officials once approached Rabbonim and asked to be taught Torah, which they did. Tosfos questions how the Rabbonim could do so when our Gemara states a prohibition against teaching Torah to gentiles. Tosfos answers that they were forced to do so, and one does not have to endanger himself to uphold this mitzvah. Alternatively, maybe the Romans masqueraded as converts wishing to be instructed in halacha.

Yam Shel Shlomo notes Tosfos’ answers and issues a scathing condemnation of those who teach non-Jews simply for material gain. Inferred from Tosfos is that even if one would get into trouble with the authorities it is forbidden. Only if there is a real danger to life is there room for leniency. He laments that such Jews “in Spain and Arab countries, who teach gentiles for their own gain, are raising children for idol worship, since they go astray afterwards, as we have heard and seen...”

We are taught in the Zohar (Acharei Mos 73b, quoted in Sdei Chemed) that the Torah is composed of holy Names of Hashem. Thus, if we are not allowed to give an uncircumcised man from the meat of the Korbon Pesach, certainly we may not teach him Torah. If one learns with him *even one letter* – every letter is connected with a holy Name – it is as if he destroyed the world and lied in the Name of Hashem...!

Thus, ruled Rabbi Shmuel Wosner, that teaching Torah to non-Jews is strictly forbidden. He takes issue with the Be’er Sheva’s supposition based on the silence of the poskim; the Acharonim on Yoreh Deiah do bring it, and Tosfos and the Zohar explicitly forbid it (Shevet Halevi Vol. 2:59).

Reb Moshe Feinstein in Igros Moshe says that the Be’er Sheva’s underlying premise that the poskim omit this halacha is mistaken. Reb Moshe notes that the poskim state that it is forbidden to teach a slave Torah; as a result, there is no need to bring down the additional prohibition of teaching a

gentile Torah since if it is forbidden to teach a slave (who is obligated in mitzvos like a woman) it is certainly prohibited to teach a gentile Torah.

Reb Moshe Igros Moshe (Y.D. 2:132) does however permit Jew to teach Torah to other Jews even if a gentile will listen in. (The question under discussion involved the case of a relative married a woman converted by Reform rabbis that were coming to a Pesach Seder. Reb Moshe emphasizes that the woman is considered to be a complete gentile). Reb Moshe permitted the family to discuss Torah with the relative even though his gentile wife was listening in. As proof for this ruling, Reb Moshe pointed to Tevi, the famous Eved Cananni of Rabbon Gamliel, who was so proficient in Torah that he could have received semicha. How did he gain such knowledge, when as noted above, the prohibition of teaching gentiles applies even to slaves. It must be says Reb Moshe that Tevi would listen in when the the Rabbis were learning amongst themselves and he gained the knowledge through that.

In another Teshuva (Y.D. 3:90) Reb Moshe elaborates on this ruling noting that there is no element of “lifnei iveir” since the gentile is there on his own volition.

Rabbi Menashe Klein (Mishneh Halachos Vol. 5:172), permits the airing a Torah radio show (he refuses to allow a television show) even though non-Jews might listen in. If, however, the speaker *intends* for them to hear, then it would be forbidden.

On the other hand, Rav Eliyashiv (Kovetz Teshuvos Vol. 3:142) ruled stringently in this regard. Rav Eliyashiv permits a Torah radio show, in the U.S. only if the show pertains to halachos involving the seven Noachide laws (see also Maharsha here). Examples are monetary laws and forbidden mixtures of food, since eating a limb of a live animal is forbidden to them.