



THE **שבוע** MATTERS

לע"נ ברוך בענדיט וברכה גרוס ע"ה
by Mr. & Mrs. Duvy Gross

שבת קודש פרשת תרומה

מסכת חגיגה דף ט"ו
לענ ר' מאיר יעקב קאפל בן ר' ירוחם פישל עה
לענ החבר דוד בן החבר מרדכי עה

Insights from our Chaburos

A Heretic's Repentance

By Rabbi Gedaliah Jaffe, Rav of Ahavas Yisrael Edison, NJ

This week's Daf speaks about the Tanna Elisha ben Avuya, also known as Acher (the other one) who became an apikores. The Gemara describes a moving scene involving Acher's devoted talmid R' Meir walking behind him as Acher is riding a horse on Shabbos. Acher turns to his student and says, "you must return because we are reaching the Techum Shabbos." R' Meir responds to his teacher, "you should also return." In this statement lies a double message, the student is asking his Rebbi to return both from his geographical space and from his existential place of heresy. Acher replies I cannot. The exact details of Acher's response seem to be machlokes between Bavli and Yerushalmi. According to Bavli, Acher said he heard a Heavenly Voice say, "return wayward children, except for Acher," while according to the Yerushalmi, he heard "return wayward children, except for Elisha ben Avuya."

While this appears to be a minor difference in details, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik ZT"l explains that the Bavli and Yerushalmi are not arguing. Says the Rov that Elisha ben Avuya was possessed by a gilgul (a spirit) call "Acher." What the Heavenly Voice actually said was "return, except for Acher!," the first half of the statement "return" was a loving call to Elisha to do Teshuva, the second half was to the gilgul within him "except for Acher." Elisha ben Avuya mistakenly heard the message as expressed by Yerushalmi that the end of the message was directed to him personally so instead it came across in his perception as "return, except for Elisha ben Avuya." The Rov was compelled to offer this novel understanding of the Gemara because it would be antithetical to the foundation of our emunah that heaven would determine that someone is beyond teshuva. On the contrary, "even if one is a heretic all his life, if he repents in the end, he is forgiven." A Jew needs to feel and internalize that no matter what happens in their life, they will always have a place in Hashem's world!

Stories of the Daf

“...אף אתה חזור בך...” “Return, Yourself!”

In Poland, during the initial period of emancipation and equal political representation, only those Jews who were far from Torah observance served in the Sejm, the Polish parliament. These “representatives” had goals that were antithetical to Judaism, which they felt was old-fashioned and outdated. When things began to get out of hand and these unscrupulous parties started to advocate for legislation that was clearly detrimental to the religious community, the Gedolim saw that they had no choice but to present a candidate to represent the religious community. During the winter of 5683 (1923), this role was entrusted to Rav Meir Shapira, zt"l, who worked together with a few select bnei Torah. Rav Shapira immediately became a thorn in the side of the anti-religious Jews who also sat in the Sejm. One person even had the nerve to complain to Rav Shapira. “Since when have the Rabbanim been involved in pol-itics?” he asked. “They’re always talking about guarding the old ways, but we see that you yourselves don’t remain in the beis medrash which was always your place!” Rav Shapira answered serenely, “Actually this is an old argument between Rav Meir and Acher, as recorded in Chagigah 15a.” He went on, “We find that Acher said to Rav Meir, ‘Chazor b’cha’— return to the beis hamedrash which is your rightful place!’ But Rav Meir retorted, ‘Af ata chazor b’cha!’—I will return just as soon as you turn back from your wicked plans to undermine faithful Jews.’ Rav Shapira concluded, “If you would stick to politics without hidden agenda, we will gladly return to the beis hamidrash where we would much rather be. However, since you are trying to ensnare the Torah-true, we must remain here to inconvenience you and block every single one of your evil plans!”

Parsha Connection

In this week's Daf will learn the story of Elisha ben Avuyah, a Tanna and the Rebbi of Reb Meir who turned against the Torah and is referred to as Acher. Why is he referred to as Acher and not as a heretic, which is how most who stray off the right path have been called? The answer can perhaps be found based on a Midrash in this week's Parsha: The first item to be described in the building of the Mishkan, is the Aron (the Ark), the frame of which was surrounded by a gold crown-like rim: זר זהב סביב. The Midrash says as follows: זר למה נכתבים זר ונקראים זר אלא לומר לך אם אדם זוכה נעשים לו זר ואם לאו זר למה נכתבים זר ונקראים זר. The Hebrew word for crown is spelled the same as the word foreign, with the difference being the vowels which in Hebrew are represented by the nekudos (the dots and lines under the letters). Says the Midrash; why is it written as “foreign” yet it is pronounced as “crown”? To teach us that if one merits, the Torah will become a crown for him, and if G-D forbid he is not worthy it will become foreign. Elisha ben Avuyah was unique in his knowledge of Torah to the point that Reb Meir continued to study with him even after he became a heretic, but this made him foreign, since he did not wear the Torah as a crown!

CONTINUED 

Halacha Highlight

Reciting Kedusha in Birchos Krias Shema

“אמר גמירא דלמעלה לא הוי ישיבה וכו'”
He [Acher] said that there is a tradition that in heaven there is no sitting, etc.

There was once a town whose Torah leaders instructed the residents to sit while reciting kedusha in Birchos Krias Shema (kedushas yotzer). At one point a new leader came to town who was accustomed to stand during kedushas yotzer. Since he continued this practice, other residents in town also began to stand while reciting kedushas yotzer. Others refused to follow his custom and argued that if one is not obligated to stand for Krias Shema there is no reason to stand for kedushas yotzer. The leader responded that since in kedushas yotzer we repeat the praise sung by the angels it is only logical that we should emulate their behavior which, as our Gemara relates, is to stand. The community agreed to ask Rambam for guidance.

Rambam¹ responded that standing while reciting kedushas yotzer is certainly a foolish custom and the custom to sit is correct. The reason it is foolish is that even concerning matters that relate to prohibitions we are instructed to follow the local custom. Certainly concerning matters that do not involve a prohibition, e.g. whether to stand or sit for kedushas yotzer, the correct practice is to follow the local custom. Regarding the claim that we should stand as the angels do when they recite kedusha Rambam explained that we are not required to emulate the behavior of the angels.

Rabbeinu Yehudah ben Yakar², however, maintains that if kedushas yotzer involves reciting kedusha together with the angels we would, in fact, stand, but that is not the case. In kedushas yotzer we are relating the way the angels sing praises of Hashem's sanctity, but we are not singing those praises. Thus, it is acceptable to sit during its recitation. Shulchan Aruch³ cites differing opinions as to whether we are reciting the praises of Hashem or merely repeating what the angels say. Rav Avrohom Avli Gombiner⁴, the Magen Avrohom, quotes authorities who maintain that it should be recited while seated but Rav Menachem Azaryah of Pano⁵, the Rama MiPano, writes that if a person was standing he is permitted to remain standing while reciting kedushas yotzer.

1. שו"ת הרמב"ם (בלאו) סח' רסב.
2. בפירושו לסיידור.
3. שו"ע אורח סי' נ"ט סע' ג'.
4. מג"א שם סק"ב.
5. שו"ת רמ"ע מפאנו סי' קב.

Mussar from the Daf

Two Types of Repentance

The Gemorah in Chagiga explains a dialogue between Acher and Rabbi Meir. R' Meir tries to convince Acher to return to the proper path and Acher responds that he heard a bas kol stating everyone can do Teshuva except for Acher.

Why does R' Meir try to convince Acher to do teshuva if he couldn't? Tosafos implies that Acher did Teshuva before he died. How do we understand the Gemara?

Rav Itzael Peterberger in Cochvai Ohr (page 452, Ohr Yisroel edition (red)) describes two groups of people who do teshuva. There are some people that Hashem not only accepts their teshuva, but He even helps them to do teshuva. This is what the verse "Shuvu Shuvu" refers to.

There is another type of person who Hashem will certainly accept their Teshuva, but because of the severe nature of their transgressions Hashem doesn't aid them in doing Teshuva. Acher fell into the second category.

Acher still had the power to do teshuva by himself, even though he did not merit Hashem's help.

A person should not let the Yetzer Hara convince them that Hashem will not accept their tefilos and sincere teshuva. We see that Hashem still accepts the teshuva and is ready to listen to even a Rasha like Acher.

Point To Ponder

From the members of the Agudah North Chabura, Toronto, led by Rabbi Yakov Rubanowitz, compiled by R' Refael Wolfe

The Gemara (Chagigah 15a) elaborates what it means that Acher was *בניטעוּת* קוּצֵץ. When he entered *פרדס*, he saw the supreme malach *מטטרין* sitting and writing the *zechuyos* of klal Yisroel. This led Acher to believe that there are *שתי רשויות*. However, the gemara elsewhere (Kiddushin 39b, Chullin 142a) gives us a different explanation for why Acher went off the *derech*. One gemara states that he saw someone perform *הקן שילוח* for their father, (both of which the Torah promises a reward of long life) who died immediately afterwards; another gemara states he saw the tongue of *Chutspis* the *מתורגמן* (one of the *מלכות הרוגי* מלכות), which was ripped out by the Romans, being eaten by a pig. The seeming injustice from such a situation caused him to leave *Yiddishkeit*. Is there a way to reconcile these sources?

Answer to appear next week

Review & Remember

1. What event led Acher astray?
2. Why did R' Meir prefer that Acher go to Gehinom?

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