



THE שבוע MATTERS

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

שבת קודש פרשת לך-לך
מסכת יבמות דף כ"ד
לרפ"ש לישמואל יעקב בן עטא זלעטאע וחנה רחל בת יענטה

Insights from our Chaburos

Accepting a Convert who Comes With the Proper Intent

לימות המשיח כו' לא קבלו גרים לא בימי דוד ולא בימי שלמה
אין מקבלין גרים

The Mordechai writes that even at times when converts are not accepted if the convert is especially determined, he or she may be allowed to join our ranks. The proof for this is found in Sanhedrin (99b), where Timna, the common-law wife of Elifaz (the son of Eisav), wanted to convert to be Jewish. She approached Avraham, but he shunned her. She asked for guidance from Yitzchok and Yaakov, but they also denied her request. She finally decided to agree to be a common-law wife to Elifaz, figuring that it was better to be a maid to the Jewish enclave, even at the expense of losing the aristocratic status she maintained among other nations. The Gemara then makes a startling observation: Eventually, the descendant of this union was Amalek (see Bereshis 36:12), the sinister symbol of cruelty and anarchy, the arch-enemy of the Jews. We see that it was not proper for this woman to be denied her yearning. If a person cares to this extent to convert, he should be accepted, and if not, the result might be an enemy of the Jewish people. Based upon this insight, Toras Aharon (Parashas Yisro) explains the Gemara (Zevachim 116a) which teaches that according to one opinion, Yisro came to convert after hearing about the battle with Amalek. The question is clear. Yisro had heard about the parting of the waters of Yam Suf, and of the miracles of Egypt, as the verse states (Shemos 18:1). Were none of these other miracles impressive enough to convince Yisro to come to convert? We can say, however, that the truth is that it was the wonderful miracles of the exodus which convinced him to come to convert. However, Yisro was concerned that his gestures would be turned down. The Jews were enjoying direct divine protection, and, as such, any efforts of converts to join their ranks would be suspect. When Yisro heard about the battle of Amalek, this reminded him that a convert will be accepted if he comes with a tenacious intensity, which was the lesson learned from the episode of Timna, the mother of Amalek. He knew, therefore, that his efforts would not be in vain, and this is why he came at this point.

Stories off the Daf

Sleep-Talking

כד נאים רב אמר להיא

The Divrei Torah of Munkacz, zt"l, would make use of a story to explain a possible meaning of the many times that Rav Sheshes said about his mentor, Rav: "When Rav was asleep he said this teaching." The Arizal was known for his deep and penetrating analysis of every mitzvah, custom, and verse of the Torah. He revealed a very rich and complex level of interpretation. In actual fact, despite their greatness, neither the Beis Yosef, zt"l, nor the Alshich, zt"l, merited to study the inner secrets of the Torah with the Arizal. Their souls simply did not require this particular rectification. When they insisted on coming to the shiur over the objection of the Arizal that this level of Torah was not what their neshamos needed, they would fall asleep! Clearly, not all people need to learn nistar for their rectification, and a mere aptitude for the study was not enough to become a student of the Arizal. A tremendous amount of yiras shomayim and a great knowledge of the revealed levels of Torah were prerequisites for this distinction. Furthermore, the Arizal (and Rav Chaim Vital, zt"l) only accepted students who displayed sterling integrity. One of these students came to the home of the Arizal one Shabbos afternoon, but when he saw that his teacher was still taking his customary Shabbos rest he decided to withdraw. Just then, the student noticed that his teacher's lips were moving. He approached his revered master and bent over to hear if he could grasp the meaning of his teacher's words. At this point, the Arizal awoke and said, "When I sleep, I grasp very deep secrets. It would literally take me years to teach you what I learned just now in my sleep!" The Divrei Torah concluded, "This is what Rav Sheshes means. 'My master must have uttered this while asleep. Perhaps it doesn't mean what its plain meaning seems to indicate.' There is no chutzpah in this statement at all! This is especially true according to the opinion that Rav was Rebbi Abba, who wrote the Zohar HaKadosh. Rav Sheshes was hinting that this statement of Rav was really divrei Kabbalah and was not a statement about the revealed Torah at all!"

Review & Remember

1. What happens if none of the brothers wants to do yibum?
2. Is conversion done for ulterior motives accepted?
3. What is the dispute between Rav and Rebbi?

Parsha Connection

In this week's daf the Gemara discusses non-Jews who convert for ulterior motives, and how we seek to prevent this from happening. We find a similar idea in this week's Parsha. In יב פסוק ד the Torah writes "and Lot went with him." In the next possuk the Torah says "And Avram took his wife Sarai and Lot the son of his brother." The fact that Avram took Lot would appear to be redundant since we already know from the prior verse that Lot went with Avram. The Bais Halevi offers a beautiful explanation based on the idea in this week's daf, Avram wanted to make sure that Lot was genuine in his interest to accompany him. Therefore, Avram only "took" Lot after Lot "went with him" on his own initiative as mentioned in the earlier possuk.

Halacha Highlight

Converting for the Sake of Marriage

הנטען. עלה עבודת כוכבים ונתגיירה הריזה לאיכנוסואם
כנס אין מוציאין מייד

Someone suspected of cohabiting with a non-Jewish woman and she converted to Judaism, he may not marry her but if he did we do not require him to divorce her.

Rishonim disagree about the reason one who was suspected of cohabiting with a non-Jewish woman is not permitted to marry her even if she converts to Judaism. According to Rashi¹, the concern is that if he marries her after her conversion it appears to confirm the suspicion that he was cohabiting with a non-Jew. The implication of Rashi's explanation is that the couple would be required to divorce if there was confirmation that this couple had relations. Other Rishonim² disagree and maintain that the couple would not be required to divorce even if there was confirmation that the couple had relations before her conversion, and the reason they should not marry is that her conversion is suspect that it was done for ulterior motives. There was once a Jewish man and a non-Jewish woman who had a civil marriage and then approached a Beis Din to convert her to Judaism. The Beis Din inquired of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski³, the Achiezer, whether they could convert this woman and if they could, would it be permitted for the couple to marry. Achiezer responded that seemingly it should be prohibited to convert this woman because of the Rishonim who are suspicious that her conversion was done for ulterior motives. One could even suggest that although Rashi offers a different interpretation of the Gemara, nevertheless, he would agree that a person should not be converted if there is a suspicion that the conversion was done for ulterior motives. Achiezer proceeds to cite the opinion of Rav Chaim of Sanz⁴, the Divrei Chaim, who was asked a similar question. Although his initial inclination was to prohibit the man from marrying this woman, in his final analysis he refrained from issuing a definitive ruling. The reason was that the man, in that case, threatened to remain with that woman even if they would not grant him permission to marry, and Divrei Chaim entertained the possibility that he should be allowed to marry her to prevent him from violating a greater prohibition. Accordingly, Achiezer concluded that although the couple should not be given permission to marry in his case, if they are already married it would not be required to force them to divorce.

1. רש"י ד"ה דאמר ר' אסי
2. ע"י רמב"ן ורשב"א
3. שו"ת אחייעזר ח"ג סי' כ"ז
4. שו"ת דברי חיים אה"ע ח"ב סי' ל"ז

Mussar from the Daf

No Geirus in the Times of Moshiach

The Gemorah states that converts will not be accepted in the times of Moshiach. Why is this so? We know that Chazal felt that one of the most important foundations of a good conversion is that the prospective converts do so "Lshma." If so, one might have thought that at the time of Moshiach, when Hashem's Kingship is revealed to the world, there is no greater opportunity for a Lshma conversion? The Gemorah later on Daf 47a states that Bais Din asks a potential convert: "What did you see that motivated you to come to convert? Don't you know that the Jewish people at the present time are anguished, suppressed, despised, and harassed, and hardships are frequently visited upon them?" If he answers "I know, and although I am unworthy of joining the Jewish people and sharing in their sorrow, I nevertheless desire to do so, then the court accepts him immediately to begin the conversion process." We see from this Gemara that a vital part of Lshma in Geirus is the willingness of a convert to live as a Jew even under the most difficult and painful circumstances. If someone only wants to be part of Klal Yisroel during the "good times," it demonstrates a weak connection and his commitment to a long term relationship with Hashem and the Torah is doubtful. Once difficulty comes, the convert may change their mind and look to leave the Klal Yisroel, calling into question whether the conversion was valid in the first instance. This is likely the pshat in our Gemara. Anybody who waits until the time of Moshiach to convert when all the nations of the world will recognize that we are the chosen people and see Hashem's rulership demonstrates that he is only ready to become a Jew only during times of clarity. They are missing the crucial condition that one must be ready to accept Judaism under all circumstances. This is a lesson for all of us. It is easy for a relationship (e.g., a marriage or business partnership) to blossom during the good times. The true test of the relationship, however, is what happens when difficulties and challenges arise. When life's challenges arise that is the time when one needs to invest extra energy in keeping things going and thereby demonstrating a true commitment to the relationship. The result will be a relationship that flourishes to an even greater level.

Point to Ponder

The Mishna says that the oldest/firstborn has the Mitzvah of Yibum but if a younger brother marries the Yevama, he gets the Mitzva. If the oldest is not interested in doing Yibum, a younger brother can do it. What would happen if the oldest only wants to do Chalitzah, but a younger brother is willing to do Yibum? Do we give preference to the younger brother because Yibum is our first choice, or do we give preference to Chalitzah since it will be performed by the older brother?

Response to last week's Point to Ponder

Why does the Torah express only a concern of a grandchild being influenced to leave the faith were his Jewish daughter to marry a non-Jew, but does not express that same concern about the daughter herself being influenced in the same way, and straying from Judaism? A husband usually lets his wife do what she wants, and wouldn't try to change her. (See נמוקי יוסף).

ר' יוסף שמואל שמעלקא בר יצחק מערמעלשטיין ז"ל Shelly Mermelstien לענו Yevamos has been dedicated in

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The shavua matters is published by the Daf a week program under the rabbinical guidance of Harav Meir Stern shlita and Harav Shmuel Kamenetsky shlita

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