



THE DAF WEEK MATTERS

שבת קודש פרשת דברים | מסכת יבמות דף ס"א

לע"נ דוד חיים בן שלמה ז"ל

INSIGHTS FROM OUR CHABUROS

How Old was Rivka When She Married Yitzchok Avinu?

איך בתולה אלא נערה וכן הוא אומר "הנערה טובות מראה מאד"

The Gemara clearly understands that Rivka was a נערה, twelve years old, when Eliezer came to take her for a wife for Yitzchok. Tosafos (ד"ה וכן) points out that this is contrary to the description of the story as related in Midrash of Seder Olam (Ch. 1), where we are told that Rivka was three years old at that time. Tosafos reinforces the question by demonstrating that the version of the Midrash is not an error, because the birth of Rivka is listed to be at the same time Akeidas Yitzchok took place (see Rashi to Bereshis 22:20). Yitzchok at that time was 37 years old, and he married Rivka three years later, when he was forty, and she was three. On the other hand, Tosafos cites the opinion of R' Shmuel Chassid of Shapira, who explains a midrash from Yalkut Shimoni (Zos Haberacha 965), where we find that there are six pairs who lived to the same age. One of the pairs is Kehas and Rivka, both of whom lived until age 133. The age of Kehas is explicit in the verse (Shemos 6:18). We also know that Rivka died when Yaakov was 99 years old. The basis for this calculation is found in Tosafos here, and can be found in Rashi to Bereshis 28:9. This means that she was 34 when her twin sons were born, which we know was twenty years after she was married to Yitzchok. Accordingly, she was 14 when she married Yitzchok. The Rishonim all say that she was still only a נערה at this age, and not yet a בוגרת, because she did not show signs of being a נערה until she was fourteen. Tosafos concludes that we must say that there are variances in the Midrashim, and each has its own opinion on how old she was when she married Yitzchok. Ramban, however, brings opinions which say that the verse cited in our Gemara is coming to praise Rivka for being advanced in her manner of conduct. While she was actually three years old, the verse refers to her as a נערה, not due her actually being 12 years old, but only in terms of her precocious behavior. Ramban himself rejects this attempt to reconcile the midrashim, and he concludes, as does Tosafos, that the Midrashim cannot be resolved with each other.

STORIES OFF THE DAF

"You Are Called 'Adam' but the Nochrin Are Not"

אתם קרוים אדם

Officially, the trial of Mendel Beilis was to be a judgment pertaining to a single individual former Russian soldier turned brick-worker accused by the Tzar's government of murder. In reality, the trial was to be an indictment against the entire Jewish nation on a blood libel charge: an insane accusation of long provenance that Jews would ritually murder non-Jewish children to procure blood for the preparation of matzos. The blood libel was centuries old, and political unrest in Czarist Russia made the creation of a Jewish scapegoat very appealing. The year was 1913, only four years away from the Russian Revolution; if Russians could be convinced that their true enemy was the Jews and not the Czar, perhaps the masses could be quieted.

Jews all over the world contributed to Mendel Beilis' defense fund; he was represented by a number of advocates, but the testimony of Rav Mazeh, zt"l, chief Rabbi of Moscow, was given special consideration by the court. Entrusted with the defense of Judaism, Rav Mazeh appealed to Gedolim throughout the Jewish world for help in assembling his arguments. A vicious Moldovan friar had leveled a number of very serious allegations against the Jews based on misinterpretations of Talmudic sources. In his defense, Rav Mazeh relied on a number of responses provided to him by other scholars. One of the strongest allegations was based on the Gemara in Yevamos 60b which states that the Jewish people alone are called "Adam." This statement was taken out of context and misapplied a number of times. The prosecution would say, "This proves that Jews consider non-Jews subhuman. This means that restrictions against abuse and murder would not apply to us!" Understandably, this statement was very damaging and incited a lot of wrath until the Rav remembered that among the hundreds of letters which he had received had been a letter touching upon this point from Rav Meir Shapira, the illustrious Rav of Lublin, zt"l.

"The words of the Gemara mean that, unlike the Jewish people, the non-Jews are not considered an Adam, a single man. This trial proves the point. If a single Russian was to be accused of murder, surely this would not concern the entire nation? Yet everyone sees and knows that while one Jew stands on trial here, the outcome affects every Jew, everywhere!"

PARSHA CONNECTION

This week's daf discusses a כהן גדול marrying a widow. This week's Haftorah, and for which this Shabbos draws its name (i.e., שבת חזון), mentions the widow twice. The second reference is in the following possuk: שריך סוררים וחברי גנבים כלו אהב: שחד ורדף שלמנים יתום לא ישפטו וריב אלמנה לא יבוא אליהם. The prophet's admonishment in the last part of this possuk is perplexing: "They do not judge the case of the orphan, and the widow's cause never reaches them." If the case of the widow doesn't come before them, why is this their fault? Moreover, why does the possuk describe the orphan's case differently than the widow's case, both cases are not judged by them? The Alshich Hakadosh explains as follows: the first part of the possuk describes the judges in those days as corrupt judges who took bribes from both sides. When orphans came to them the judges refused the case knowing that the orphans are not going to bribe them. The mother of these orphans, who saw what happened to her children's case, refrained from even coming to court because of the mistreatment their sons received. The possuk describes one as causing the other, the fact that they ignored the plight of the orphans, caused another miscarriage of justice, for the widow!

MUSSAR FROM THE DAF

Not Alone

הא יש לו בנים מפריה ורביה בטיל מאשה לא בטיל מסייעא ליה לרב
נחמן אמר שמואל דאמר אנ"פ שיש לו לאדם כמה בנים אסור
לעמד בלא אשה שנאמר (בראשית ב, יח) לא טוב היות האדם לבדו

The Gemorah teaches that it is forbidden for a person to remain unmarried. What is the idea behind that?

The Temorah Devora (Perek 9) states that if a person is not married then the Shechina is not with him. He continues to say that a man stands between two females, the lower female (his wife) and the upper female (the Shechina) והאדם עומד בין שתי הנקבות, נקבה תחתונה גשמית... והשכינה העומדת עליו לברכו.

Rav Chaim Friedlander explains (Sifsai Chaim Middos V'Avodas Hashem, 468) that the chesed that a person does with others is different from the chesed that he performs with his wife. The chesed that a person does with others is a middos chassidus, however the chesed a person performs with his wife is obligatory. If a person does not take care of his wife's needs, it is not simply that the person is lacking in a *מעלה*, rather the person is lacking in his very foundation. We see from here that marriage itself is an exercise to teach the husband the necessity to think of others and take care of their needs.

A bachur can live a hefker life without really having the need to think about others needs. Once he gets married he suddenly experiences this new life in which he can no longer just do whatever he wants, whenever he wants.

Perhaps this is why Chazal stated that it is forbidden to be unmarried. Marriage helps a person think about another. It teaches a person how to think of the needs of others and ultimately fulfill the ratzon of Hashem and therefore build the Keshet of the Shechina between us and Hashem.

Try to simply think once a day what you could do for your spouse (or any person) that might give them nachas.

POINT TO PONDER

Tosofos (ד"ה וכן הוא אומר) says that it would seem from our Gemara that Rivka was a נערה when she married Yitzchok, yet the מדרש says that she was only 3 years old. Since the Torah explicitly describes רבקה as a נערה throughout the incident with אליעזר, why does תוס' say that it would seem this way only from the גמרא?

Response to last week's Point to Ponder:

Since in the case of יבש גלעד they had a natural way of testing, why would the Gemara suggest relying on a נס by using the ציץ?

The method used in יבש בגלעד is described in the גמרא in כתובות as somewhat degrading to Jewish girls. Our גמרא in asking the question about using the ציץ felt that preserving the dignity of בנות ישראל would justify using the ציץ even if it relied on a נס. Another possibility is that the suggestion to use the ציץ was only to separate those girls who were younger than 3 years old, and then test the remaining girls using wine barrels (See לנר ערוך).

HALACHA HIGHLIGHT

Do the Graves of
Non-Jews Transmit
Tumas Ohel?

קברי עכו"ם אינן מטמאין באהל

The graves of non-Jews do not transmit tumah by means of an ohel.

Rambam¹ rules in accordance with the statement of R' Shimon ben Yochai that the graves of non-Jews do not transmit tumas ohel therefore it is permitted for a kohen to enter a non-Jewish cemetery and walk on their graves. However, it is prohibited for a kohen to touch or carry the corpse of a non-Jew as appears to be the conclusion of the Gemara. Rabbeinu Eliezer of Metz², the Sefer Yeraim, also rules that the graves of non-Jews do not transmit tumas ohel but disagrees with Rambam concerning the permissibility for a kohen to touch or carry the corpse of a non-Jew and maintains that it is permitted.

Rav Yehudah Rosanes³, the Mishneh Lamelech, writes that it is impossible to assume that Sefer Yeraim ignored or forgot our Gemara that clearly indicates that the corpse of a non-Jew does transmit tumah by means of touch or transporting and therefore proposes an interesting resolution. When the Gemara states that the corpse of a non-Jew transmits tumah it means that it transmits tumah similar to the tumah imparted by a sheretz. A person who is tamei from a sheretz is restricted from entering the Beis Hamikdash but it is not a tumah that is prohibited to a kohen. Therefore, when the Gemara states that the corpse of a non-Jew transmits tumah by touch or through carrying it was referring to sheretz level tumah rather than corpse level tumah. Accordingly, the ruling of Sefer Yeraim is not contradicted by our Gemara. Sefer Yeraim challenges his own position from the Gemara Nazir⁴ that proves that a nazir shimshon is permitted to become tamei from a corpse from the fact that Shimshon became tamei from the dead Phillistines. According to the position of Sefer Yeraim, however, there is no proof since the corpses of non-Jews do not transmit tumah by means of touch. Sefer Yeraim answers that the Gemara there follows the opinion of Rabanan who maintain that the corpses of non-Jews transmit even tumas ohel and according to their position the corpse of a non-Jew will certainly transmit tumah to one who touches or transports a corpse.

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