

INSIGHTS FROM OUR CHABUROS

The tasks a wife performs for her husband

אבל מחגת לו כוס ומצעת לו את המטה ומרחצת לו פניו ידיו ורגליו

Rabbi Yitzchok ben Chananya quotes Rav Huna who says that although the Mishnah allows a wife who brings four maidservants to "sit in an easy chair," it is recommended that the wife not remain idle. She should "add water to his wine, make his bed and wash his face, hands and feet."

Rashi notes that the Mishnah taught that once a woman is able to bring three maidservants into her house, she is not required to make her husband's bed. Why, then, does Rav Huna say that the wife should still do so when she has enough maids?

Rashi explains that the Mishnah excuses the woman from the tedious and demanding aspects of making the bed. Rav Huna does not require the wife to work hard, but he does recommend (השיאוה עצה טובה) that she perform light activities, particularly those which express affection and endearment for her husband.

ין has a text in the Mishnah which reads מצעת המטה—the wife generally has to make the beds," which does not refer specifically to her husband's bed. This means that the woman must tidy up the house and keep the furniture in order. When she brings enough maids, she is excused from this general housework. The statement of Rav Huna, however, is that she should still perform the task of מצעת לו המטה—she should make his bed."

This גירסא in the Mishnah and Gemara supports the explanation which Rashi offered.

PARSHA CONNECTION

On the words of the Mishna בעמר בצמר, ועושה בצמר גמרא, the גמרא says אין בפשתים בצמר. A lady must work with wool but not with flax (linen), because it is unpleasant to work with. This seems to be contradictory to the פסוק in חיל אשת חיל which says: דרשה צמר ופשתים ותעש בחפץ כפיה, which literally means that she worked with both wool and flax. According to the Midrash אשת חיל is the הספד which אברהם אבינו said about שרה, whose פטירה is described in אשת חיל. What did אברהם mean with this פסוק? Also, why does it say "דרשה" instead of עשתה which means worked? The מדרש תנחומא in this week's פרשה explains that this is a reference to יצחק וישמעאל as well as to שעטנז. When שרה told אברהם that he must send ישמעאל away she used the מצוה to make her case. According to the מדרש in אשת חיל brought flax as his קרבן while הבל brought sheep, which have a lot of wool. The איסור of שעטנז is related to what happened when קין and הבל brought their respective offerings, and this ended up in the tragic death of הבל, this is one of the reasons for the מצוה of שעטנז which is mixing wool and linen. When the פסוק says דרשה צמר ופשתים שרה how explained her reasoning for wanting ישמעאל away from יצחק, she "studied ופשתים וצמר", meaning the reason for the מצוה of שעטנז and therefore she was concerned that יצחק וישמעאל will get into a fight like הבל וקין.

STORIES OF THE DAF

Open Miracles

"מאי טעמא סמכת אניסא..."

On today's daf we find that Rav Ashi once interfered with the king's dish in a sudden effort to help the ailing Mar Zutra. He did so despite the fact that the waiter would inevitably notice, and his action entailed relying on an open miracle to prevent severe punishment for ruining the king's repast.

A certain Jewish man was traveling along a deserted Israeli road. Suddenly, a group of armed terrorists appeared who clearly wished to kill him. The moment before they acted, a truck appeared to be heading their way and the group got frightened and ran off. As it turned out, they fled prematurely. The truck driver was an Arab who zoomed past, and he most likely wouldn't have lifted a finger to halt the innocent's demise.

The saved man was filled with gratitude to Hashem for this miracle. As he stood shaking with spent adrenaline after his harrowing experience, he noticed a wad of bills lying in the road. In their haste to flee, the would-be perpetrators had apparently dropped a large sum of money.

The reprieved asked if the money was permitted to him since it had come into his possession because of a miracle. Perhaps he should act as Avraham Avinu did, by refraining from taking profit from his miraculous victory over the four Kings? Perhaps anyone who lived through a miracle is required to give any gains to tzedakah?

This question was raised before Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l. He said, "Although this man must bentch hagomel, according to the letter of the law he may keep the money. This miracle is not in the same category as the miracle Avraham Avinu experienced which was completely not natural. Avraham was victorious by throwing sand at his enemies. In our case, the miracle happened naturally."

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, shlit"א, added, "Even so, one who experienced a miracle should give as much money as he can afford to tzedakah to support those who learn Torah with the intention that the money take the place of the Todah sacrifice he would have been obligated to bring when the Beis Hamikdash stood." Here, the tzedakah is meant to express one's gratitude to Hashem for having received a new lease on life!"

HALACHA HIGHLIGHT

Endangering oneself to save another

אמר להו חזאי רוח צרעת דקא פרחא עילויא

He said to them [the rabbis] I saw a spirit of tzara'as floating around him.

Rashi, cited in Shitah Mikubetzes¹, writes that R' Ashi was explaining the reason he put his life in danger. In other words, since R' Ashi sensed that Mar Zutra was in danger he put his life at risk to save Mar Zutra's life. This seemingly indicates that it is appropriate and perhaps even obligatory for a person to submit himself to possible danger in order to save others. This principle, however, is not so simple. The Radvaz² was asked to rule on a frightening inquiry. A Jew was given the following choice by a non-Jew: Either you allow us to sever a non-life threatening organ from your body or we will kill your friend. The one posing the question to Radvaz asserted that it should be obligatory for the Jew given this choice to give up his limb to save the life of his friend. His reasoning was based on a combination of different halachic principles. Saving a life overrides Shabbos and Shabbos overrides danger to a single limb. Therefore, saving a life must certainly override any consideration of a single limb. Radvaz disagreed with this conclusion for a number of reasons and referred to the suggested approach as foolish piety (חסידות של שטות).

The Chasam Sofer³ analyzes and questions Radvaz's conclusion at great length. At the end of his analysis, he writes that if the offer involves cutting off a limb with a sword the conclusion of Radvaz seems reasonable but if the limb will be removed by the use of some sort of acid or poison (סס) the matter is uncertain. Accordingly, Chasam Sofer explains that the worst punishment that R' Ashi would have received would be that his finger would be removed with acid or poison; therefore, he felt it obligatory to take that risk to save Mar Zutra from the tzara'as that would have endangered his entire body.

The Aruch HaShulchan⁴ rules in general that a person should not endanger himself to save another. He adds, however, that all cases must be judged carefully because one should not be overly cautious since Chazal teach that anyone who saves a Jewish soul is considered to have saved the entire world.

1. רש"י מהדור"ק ומובא דבריו בשיטה מקובצת בסוגיין.
2. שו"ת הרדב"ז ח"ג ס' תרכ"ה.
3. חידושי חת"ס מהדור"ק.
4. ערוה"ש חר"מ ס' תכ"ו.

MUSSAR FROM THE DAF

Bringing Bracha

עולה עמו ואינה יורדת עמו

When a woman marries a man, she ascends with him to his socioeconomic status, if it is higher than hers, but she does not descend with him if his status is lower.

The Gemara tells us a כלל that if woman grew up in a lower socioeconomic status, and her husband is at a greater social economics status, he is obligated to care for her based on his current status and not that of her upbringing. The Gemara concludes that this is based on the concept of עולה עמו ואינה יורדת עמו.

One could ask, why should this be the din? If a woman grew up in a certain manner with less material benefits, why should the husband be obligated to treat her in an "elevated" financial manner if he could afford it. She certainly won't be "suffering" without the extras as they are not habitual to her?

There is a Gemara in Bava Metzia 59a that can give clarity to this rule. ר' חלבו לעולם יהא אדם זהיר בכבוד אשתו שאין ברכה מצויה בתוך ביתו של אדם אלא ר' (R' Chelbo says "A person must always be careful about sustaining the honor of his wife, as blessing is found in a person's house only because of his wife").

What is the connection to honoring a wife and receiving ברכה? There is a concept that the man is the שליח to bring the flow of ברכה from שמים to his wife. If a man demonstrates that he honors his wife, i.e., that he will take care of her in every way that he is "blessed with," then Hashem deems him a proper שליח to deliver the קשיא that are meant to be given to his wife. This could help us answer the קשיא in our sugya. Chazal are telling us that if a person is blessed with abundance, then he needs to realize that he is the שליח from Hashem and therefore his primary role is to extend the ברכה from Hashem to honor and take care of his wife.

We can learn a great lesson from עולה עמו ואינה יורדת עמו. Understanding that one's wife is not only a primary destination of the beracha one has been given, but even the source of the Beracha. This realization can help a husband bestow benefits to his wife even in situations when she wouldn't be suffering if she didn't have those benefits.

POINT TO PONDER

The Gemara asks why ב"ה learn from a birth of a boy and not from the birth of a girl like ב"ש, and answers that בית הלל learn from נידה. How does this answer the question of not learning from the birth of a girl? Since we find that sometimes a lady has to wait two weeks, like a נקיבה נקייבה she should be fine waiting two weeks here as well.

Response to last week's Point to Ponder:

The Gemara says that someone who is גונח בשבת is allowed to nurse (or suck) directly from a goat on שבת for רפואה. Should he try to get a גוי to milk the goat for him if one is available rather than nursing himself?

The ר"ן asks the question and explains that the full therapeutic benefit is only possible when the person gets the milk while it's warm, which is not possible unless he sucks it directly from the goat. (See ר"ן שבת דף סא בדפי הר"י).

For more points to ponder by Rabbi Yechiel Grunhaus, or insights by Rabbi Yitzchok Gutterman, please visit our website, dafaweek.org, or download the app

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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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