

שבת קודש פרשת מקץ | מסכת כתובות דף ס"ו

בילא שרה בת אפרים הכהן

STORIES OF THE DAF

The salt of charity

On today's daf we find Chazal's dictum that if a person wishes to preserve his money, he must "salt" it with generous amounts of tzedakah.

The Chofetz Chaim once asked a student why he was leaving learning. "I wish to support Torah. If I make money in business then I will be able to fulfill this aspiration!" The Chofetz Chaim answered, "My son, you are making a mistake. Right now you think you will support Torah if you make a fortune. But you are not factoring in the stronger yetzer you will have when you strike it rich. Then you will see that it will be close to impossible for you to give even a pittance to tzedakah." Despite the Gadol's warning the man left the yeshiva and went into business. Twenty years later, that very same person met with the Chofetz Chaim. He had made a fortune and was exceedingly wealthy.

When he saw his old Rebbi, he said, "Oy, were you so right! I have so much, but although I can spend countless dollars on myself, I find the prospect of giving anything more than a pittance to tzedakah akin to cutting off my arm!"

Once Rabbi Rutkin told a class, "Buy whatever luxuries you feel you need and can afford. But be sure to give an amount equal to what you spend on luxuries to charity!"

Once, a certain meshulach was collecting and approached a wealthy man for a donation. The man was so incensed that he literally slapped the meshulach in the face! The collector was able to tolerate the abuse, and he gently said, "That was for me. Now, how much will you give to the yeshiva?"

INSIGHTS FROM OUR CHABUROS **Preserving one's fortune**

מתלא בירושלים מלח ממון חסר, ואמרי לה חסד אמרה לו רבי לא כדין מתלין

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai and his entourage were traveling outside Yerushalayim when they met the daughter of Nakdimon ben Guryon.

Although both she and her husband came from exceedingly wealthy families, the fortune of the families had been lost. When Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai asked her where the money had gone, she answered with the parable which was used in Yerushalayim, "The salt of money is deficit." Others quote the parable to state, "The salt of money is kindness." This simply means that the way to preserve one's wealth is to deplete it by giving tzedaka, or to do kindnesses for others.

Maharam Shif explains that the difference between these versions is that according to the first one, any form of tzedaka is effective to preserve one's wealth. According to the second version, however, it is specifically through kindnesses that one merits to guarantee financial security. Kindness is greater than tzedaka in three ways (Sukka 49b). Tzedaka is only with money, it can only be provided for the poor, and it is only for the living. Kindness—**גמילות חסדים**—can be done as a personal favor or even as a non-financial kindness, it can be done even for those who are not poor, and it can be done even for the dead.

Ben Yehoyada notes that the different texts also result in other practical differences. According to the first text (חסר) the only way to guard one's fortune is to deplete it, by giving of one's funds to the poor. The second text (חסד) does not require that one give his assets away. A person can do favors, such as lending out his money, and this would be adequate. Furthermore, if the money is given as tzedaka to someone who is not worthy, according to the first version, the money of the giver has been depleted, and as long as he intended to do it for a mitzvah, he has done what he can. But if the point is to perform a chessed, as stated by the second version, the giver has failed, because the receiver who is unworthy has defrauded the giver, and he has not been afforded a favor.

PARSHA CONNECTION

In this week's daf the גמרא suggests that embarrassment of one family member can cause embarrassment for the entire family. The unity of the family is clearly illustrated in this week's פרשה, when we read about the brothers reaction to בנימין being caught with the גביע. The brothers immediately rallied around בנימין and said: **ויאמר יהודה מהנאמר לאדני מהנדבר ומהנצטדק בנימין** and **האלהים מצא את עון עבדיך הננו עבדים לאדני גם אנחנו גם אשר נמצא הגביע בנימין** Although the גביע was found in the bag of בנימין all of the brothers took responsibility for it and said **"את עון עבדיך"** meaning that it is "our" sin and not just one of us. Given that they accepted responsibility and offered to become slaves to יוסף we need to understand why they unexpectedly changed their minds as we see in the beginning of פרשת ויגש where יהודה has strong words for יוסף. Since they already agreed that they were responsible, what caused them to change their position? The אלשיך הקדוש explains that when they first discovered that the גביע was in בנימין's bag, they assumed that this was a punishment from הקב"ה for selling יוסף and therefore they accepted it right away. However when they were told that only בנימין will have to go back and become a slave to יוסף they realized that this could not be a punishment for selling יוסף, because בנימין was not part of יוסף, מכירת יוסף, and therefore would not be punished for that sin. Originally when they assumed that ALL of them will become slaves they figured that בנימין is being punished because they are all together, but if only he is the one being punished it could not be for יוסף מכירת. And since it's not a punishment משמים for selling יוסף they don't have to accept it and they decided to fight יוסף.

HALACHA HIGHLIGHT

Following local custom when naming children

רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר הכל כמנהג המדינה

R' Shimon ben Gamliel declares that [all matters related to the kesubah] follow local custom

There was once a man who married a woman whose mother shared the same name as his deceased mother. When they gave birth to a daughter, the father wanted to name her after his deceased mother but his wife protested giving her the same name as her living mother. The Chelkas Yaakov¹ was asked to decide the matter.

Chelkas Yaakov's initial reaction was to say that it is the father's choice to choose a name for a child. He based this on the fact that a father bears the financial responsibility to support his children². Additionally, when a son is born it is the father's duty to give the child a bris and the name of the male child is given at the time of the bris³. This also indicates that naming a child falls into the father's domain. Therefore, since it is considered advantageous for the souls of the deceased to have offspring named after them, it seems that the choice is his.

Upon further analysis he reconsiders this approach because it would lead to the conclusion that it is always the father's choice to name a child and that is known to be false. An obvious proof is that the Torah informs us that on numerous occasions it was the mother who chose the name for a child rather than the father. Da'as Zekanim⁴ also infers from the Torah that ancient custom was for the father to name the first child and the mother to choose the name of the second child. Therefore, since at the time of the wedding the husband accepts upon himself to treat his wife in accordance with the local customs, as our Gemara indicates, the husband must honor those customs. Consequently, if the couple lives in a place where people are opposed to naming a child after a living ancestor the wife has the right to protest giving that name and the husband must comply with that custom.

1. שו"ת חלקת יעקב יו"ד סי' קל"ו.
2. שו"ע אה"ע סי' ע"א.
3. שו"ע יו"ד סי' רס"א.
4. דעת זקנים מבעלי תוספות פרשת וישב.

MUSSAR FROM THE DAF

Selfless Giving

תנו רבנן: מעשה ברבן יוחנן בן זכאי שהיה רוכב על החמור והיה יוצא מירושלים, והיו תלמידיו מהלכין אחריו. ראה ריבה אחת שהיתה מלקטת שעורים מבין גללי בהמתן של ערביים. כיון שראתה אותו, נתעטפה בשערה ועמדה לפניו. אמרה לו: רבי, פרנסני. אמר לה: בתי, מי את? אמרה לו: בת נקדימון בן גוריון אני. אמר לה: בתי, ממון של בית אביך היכן הלך? אמרה לו: רבי, לא כדן מתלין מתלא בירושלים: "מלח ממון – חסר"? בכה רבן יוחנן בן זכאי ואמר: אשריכם ישראל, בזמן שעושי רצונו של מקום אין כל אומה ולשון שולטת בהם, ובזמן שאין עושי רצונו של מקום, מוסרן ביד אומה שפלה. ולא ביד אומה שפלה, אלא ביד בהמתן של אומה שפלה

The Gemara tells a story of how Rav Yochanan Ben Zakai saw the daughter of Nakdimon Ben Gurion picking barley from the dung of the donkeys of a "lowly nation". He then cries out, אשריכם ישראל, when they do Hashem's רצון, no nation can rule over them, and when they don't follow Hashem's רצון they are delivered into the, into the hands of the animals of a lowly nation. Even though the wealthy Nakdimon gave tzedakah (חסר) which should have protected him from losing all his money, the Gemara explains that since he gave the tzedakah in order to increase his Kavod, he therefore lost his money. One can ask, why did R' Yochanan say אשריכם ישראל after seeing such a sad situation (it seems his statement was connected to the second part of his statement as well)? And why did Nakdimon and his daughter deserve such a horrible punishment, just because he may have used tzedakah to increase his kavod? The Kuzari explains that there are five levels of creation; domem, tzomeach, chaya, medaber, and Yisroel. There is a Klal that when any of these five levels of creation fail to maintain the unique essence that differentiates them from the level below them, not only do they not fall to the next level down they fall to the bottom. This is what R' Yochanan was deducing when he saw the daughter of Nakdimon. As the same R' Yochanan Ben Zakai learned with students in Bava Basra 10b שאומות וחסד וצדקה וחסד – כל צדקה וחסד שאומות 10b that when a non-jew performs chesed, he does it to feel superior to another and thereby raise himself up. However, the Gemara explains, אלו ישראל – צדקה תרומם גוי – a Jew has the unique ability to be elevated when they perform tzedekah and chesed in an altruistic fashion. Therefore, R' Yochanan specifically understood the uniqueness of the Jewish people in the manner that they give tzedakah. And since Nakdimon didn't fulfill his natural uniqueness of a Jew, his family fell to the lowest level of creation. We can learn from R Yochanan Ben Zakai, how crucial it is for one to give to others in ways in which we sincerely care about the others and want to help them without thinking about our kavod that may or may not come as a result.

POINT TO PONDER

The Mishna writes that if someone committed to give his son-in-law money, and the son-in-law dies, he doesn't have to give the same to his brother, who is now the יבם. The Mishna says הוא לומר וכו' meaning he can say that he only agreed to give one brother the money and not the other. Why does the Mishna use the terminology, "he could say" instead of just saying, that he is not obligated to give the יבם?

Response to last week's Point to Ponder:

The Gemara asks ומאי אוכלת and offers 2 possibilities. Why did the Gemara question it in the first place? What was bothering the Gemara that it wasn't satisfied with the obvious פשט which means eating? The Gemara was bothered by the fact that the Mishna only mentions שבת, לילי שבת, meaning that they should eat together on Friday night. If אוכלת means eating and it's because of שבת than the Gemara should have mentioned שבת day, which is the main meal. Since it only mentions the Friday night meal (שיטה מקובצת) the Gemara asked ומאי אוכלת, suggesting that it may not mean just eating. (See שיטה מקובצת)

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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