

שבת קודש פרשת ויגש | מסכת כתובות דף ס"ז

ר' נחום בן ר' פנחס

INSIGHTS FROM OUR CHABUROS

The particular needs of the poor man

נענית לך קום אכול

The Gemara tells the story of a poor man who came to Rava and asked for food. When Rava asked him what he needed, the man told him that he wanted a fattened chicken and old wine. Rava was surprised that the man expected the community funds to cover such an expensive meal. The poor man pointed out that the verse (Tehillim 145:15) teaches that Hashem provides for each creature its needs "בעתו" at the proper time. Nevertheless, Rava still did not feel that this poor man should be afforded the elaborate meal that he was requesting. Suddenly, the sister of Rava, whom he had not seen for thirteen years, came to visit at that very moment, and she happened to bring with her a fattened chicken and some old wine. Rava understood this was a sign from heaven that these delicacies were meant for the hungry, poor man who had come to ask for help. Rava exclaimed, "I accept your request, come and eat!"

Maharsha explains that this poor man was not accustomed to eat such fine foods, and Rava was correct in his reluctance to accede to his request. However, at the moment he came to Rava, this poor man was in need of a special meal for whatever reason. It could be that he was ill, or that he felt weak. This is why the man himself evoked the verse in Tehillim from where we see that Hashem provides for every creature its needs at the precise moment of need.

At first, Rava did not agree with the poor man. Anaf Yosef, in his commentary to Ein Yaakov, explains that Rava derived other lessons from the verse in Tehillim. He understood that Hashem provides every creature with its diet at the proper time. For example, people eat lighter foods in the morning, and heavier foods, such as meat, at night. Other creatures have other needs at different times, as well, as we find (Sanhedrin 108b) that the animals in the ark of Noach had different needs at various times. Rava later realized that the poor man was correct.

STORIES OF THE DAF

The Jewish Urge to Give

"המבזבז אל יבזבז יתר מחומש..."

Once there was an assembly called in Tel Aviv to memorialize the millions of innocents heartlessly killed at the hands of the Nazi murderers. Blazoned in big letters on the poster proclaiming the event was a list of speakers. Included in this list was the Rav of Ponevezh, zt"l.

When someone mentioned this to the Rav he looked very surprised. "That's odd. No one asked me to speak!" However, he decided to accept the public invitation and attend.

The Rav's speech literally moved the people to tears. "I will not even try to be maspid, since only a prophet on the level of Yirmiyahu could give a eulogy for such kedoshim. But surely we must do something in their memory! So what can we do? Stand a few moments of silence? Light candles? Perhaps we should fast? Surely those under the Kanfei HaShechinah who share the heavenly chamber of the greatest martyrs, Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues, have no need of any action on our part. However, there is one thing they would beg us to do for them. We can become the parents of all their orphaned children! All these holy departed souls are pleading with us, 'Please! Don't let them raise our children as goyim! Make sure our children not forget the mainstays of Judaism such as Shema Yisrael.'

"My brothers! Let us all open our hearts and our pockets and donate as much as we can to build an orphanage for these wretched souls! The speaker before me suggested each person donate a prutah for a foundation to promulgate their memory. Rabbosai, this is far from sufficient! The Gemara in Kesuvos 67b states that in Ushah they decreed that one refrain from giving more than 20% of one's earnings to charity. When a Jewish heart is opened, the urge to give is so powerful that Chazal had to make a proclamation that one hold back from giving everything to tzedakah. Let us give in this spirit in memory of the Kedoshim!"

The astronomical sum of 17,400 British Pounds Sterling was immediately raised, far more than a prutah per person!

PARSHA CONNECTION

In this week's daf we find the famous גמרא which says that it's better to throw oneself into a burning oven rather than embarrass another person. ל' חז"ל learn this principle from תמר who didn't want to embarrass יהודה even though she was being led to be burnt. In פרשת ויגש we find that יוסף was similarly sensitive to his family's potential embarrassment when they came down to מצרים. The possuk (פרק מז פסוק כא) says: ואתהעם העביר אתו לערים מקצה גבול־מצרים: ועד־קצהו. Yosef moved the people from one end of מצרים to the other end. Why did יוסף force people to move? רש"י explains that he did it because he didn't want his family to be embarrassed because of their status as גרים (visitors), when everyone else around them were permanent residents. By moving everyone, he caused the Egyptians to feel just like his family, because they were all immigrants. The יקר כלי offers another explanation, as an alternative to רש"י and says that someone who never moved and is living in his homeland, can't understand or appreciate the feelings of an immigrant. This is why יוסף moved all of the Egyptians, so that they can "feel" what it's like to be גרים. We see that יוסף went to incredible lengths to make sure that his family will not be embarrassed by feeling inferior to the Egyptians!

HALACHA HIGHLIGHT

Is a Torah scholar permitted to play an instrument at a wedding?

לא מצא עבד לרוץ לפניו ורץ לפניו שלשה מילין

[One time Hillel the Elder] could not find a slave to run in front of him (the pauper from a distinguished family) and he (Hillel the Elder) ran before him for three mil.

The Shvus Yaakov¹ wondered why it was permitted for Hillel the Elder to run before this pauper. Even though there is an obligation to provide a pauper with all of his needs, nevertheless, Hillel the Elder should be exempt from that responsibility since it is beneath his dignity, as the Nasi, to run before others. Rav Yaakov Emden² suggests that the incident that is recorded in our Gemara occurred before Hillel the Elder became the Nasi. Rav Elchonon Wasserman³ asserts that it was permitted because the incident took place in a location where Hillel the Elder was not recognized; thus it was not a disgrace to his stature.

The Chavos Yair⁴ was asked whether someone who is an outstanding Torah scholar is permitted to play musical instruments at a wedding. On the one hand one could argue that it should be permitted since a Torah scholar is permitted to waive the honor that is due to him (חכם שמחל על כבודו כבודו מחול). On the other hand, that principle only allows the scholar to waive the honor that others should accord to him but it does not allow him to disgrace himself and perhaps playing music at a wedding is considered disgraceful to his honor.

Chavos Yair suggests that there is a distinction to make between the mitzvah of returning lost objects and the chessed one does by playing music at a wedding. Returning lost objects is in its origin a mitzvah that exists in the realm of interpersonal relationships (מצוה בין אדם לחברו) as opposed to the mitzvah of celebrating at a wedding which is categorized as a mitzvah between the person and Hashem (בין אדם למקום). When it comes to fulfilling mitzvos in the second category it is permissible for a Torah scholar to disgrace himself while fulfilling those mitzvos.

Accordingly, the Gaon Chida⁵ suggests as a resolution to Shvus Yaakov's inquiry that the reason it was permitted for Hillel the Elder to run before this pauper while fulfilling this type of mitzvah is that it is permitted for a Torah scholar to disgrace himself in fulfillment of Hashem's mitzvos.

1. עיון יעקב לסוגייתו.
2. דבריו נדפסו בשו"ת חכם צבי ליקוטי תשובות סי' ק"ב.
3. קובץ שיעורים אות רכ"ו.
4. שו"ת חוות יאיר סי' ר"ה.
5. בספרו מראית העין ד"ה אמרו עליו.

MUSSAR FROM THE DAF

A Mitzvah is Precious

אשר יחסר לו" — אפילו סוס לרכוב עליו ועבד לרוץ לפניו. אמרו עליו על הלל הזקן שלקח לעני בן טובים אחד סוס לרכוב עליו ועבד לרוץ לפניו. פעם אחת לא מצא עבד לרוץ לפניו, ורץ לפניו שלשה מילין.

"Which is deficient for him"; even a horse upon which to ride and a servant to run in front of him. They said about Hillel the Elder that he obtained for a poor person of noble descent a horse upon which to ride and a servant to run in front of him. One time he did not find a servant to run in front of him, and Hillel himself ran in front of him for three mil.

The Gemara tells us how Hillel performed chesed לו אשר יחסר לו by giving people what they truly needed. Hillel arranged for an עני who was a טובים בן (came from a wealthy background) a horse to ride upon and an עבד to run in front of him. The Gemara tells about one time when Hillel couldn't find an עבד to run in front of a certain עני and therefore Hillel himself ran in front of the עני for 3 מילין.

Why was Hillel permitted to do that? Hillel was the Nasi, which was essentially the Gadol Hador. Why wasn't there a concern of עור ולפני עני, i.e., by showing the עני such honor it would cause him to potentially develop גאווה?

The classic answer to this question is that this is not my cheshbon. I should only be concerned about my responsibility to give the עני honor, and any gayva that may or may not happen is not my cheshbon. The problem with that answer, is that it is very difficult to say that I shouldn't be concerned with another Jew? How can we ever say that it is not my cheshbon regarding how my actions affect another?

A similar question was once asked to R' Yisroel Salanter regarding the mitzvah to give kavod to a זקן if one might be violate עור לפני עור because the kavod might turn the zaken into a גאווה? R' Yisroel Salanter answered that we never have to be worried about any damage or negative result that comes from one who truly does a mitzvah l'shma. This would answer the question in our sugya as well. Hillel understood he was fulfilling a mitzvah of chesed, and understood that no damage could come as a result of this action. Therefore he wasn't concerned about how his chesed would effect the עני. There is a great lesson from this. When we have the opportunity to do a mitzvah, if done properly, one should remember that something so precious can't be the cause of damage to ourselves and others.

POINT TO PONDER

The Gemara says that if a needy person doesn't want to take צדקה we offer it to him as a מתנה (gift). If he doesn't want to accept צדקה why would he be more receptive to accepting a gift?

Response to last week's Point to Ponder:

The משנה 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 משנה says יכול הוא לומר וכו' meaning he can say that he only agreed to give one brother the money and not the other. Why does the משנה use the terminology, "he could say" instead of just saying, that he is not obligated to give the יבם?

Since he didn't condition his original commitment to only give one brother, the יבם can claim that he should inherit this commitment along with everything else that belonged to the deceased brother. Therefore he has to state clearly that he never intended to give it, unless it will go to the original חתן. (See ברכת אברהם)

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

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