

שבת קודש פרשת שופטים | מסכת כתובות דף ק"ד

INSIGHTS FROM OUR CHABUROS

The prayer of Rebbe on his death-bed

יהי רצון מלפניך שיהא שלום במנוחתך

When Eisav raised his eyes and saw Yaakov's wives and children, he asked (Bereshis 33:5), "Who are these to you?" Yaakov answered, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."

The Midrash Tanna D'vei Elyahu Zuta (ch. 19) explains this exchange as follows: When Yaakov and Eisav were yet in their mother's womb, Yaakov said to Eisav, "Eisav, my brother! We are two brothers and there are two worlds in front of us - this world and the World-to-Come. This world has in it eating and drinking, business, marriage and raising children, while the World-to-Come has none of these. If you would like, you take this world, and I will take the World-to-Come."

Eisav agreed. However, when Yaakov returned from Lavan's house and Eisav saw that Yaakov had wives and children and slaves, animals, gold and silver, Eisav said to Yaakov, "Did you not say that I would take this world? Why do you have so much of this world - wives, children, money, and slaves?"

Yaakov answered him, "This is the small amount that Hashem gave me to use in this world as needed." R' Shmuel Heida, z"l, explains Yaakov's answer: "It is impossible to exist in this world without some possessions, but I do not seek any enjoyment from this world." R' Heida adds that this also explains the prayer of R' Yehuda HaNassi, known as "Rebbe," who was the compiler of the Mishnah. He was an extremely wealthy man and always had many types of delicacies on his table. Still, before he died, he lifted his fingers toward the heavens and proclaimed that he never took any enjoyment from this world. On his deathbed he uttered the following prayer, "May it be Your will that I rest in peace."

Why did Rebbe pray thus? Because of his riches, it might appear that Rebbe had taken Eisav's portion in this world and, therefore, was not entitled to a place in the world-to-come. "No!" said Rebbe. "I never took anything from this world that was not essential [to maintaining my stature as the political head of the Jews]. Therefore, let me rest in peace in my place in the World-to-Come."

PARSHA CONNECTION

In this week's daf we learn about a אלמנה who went to שילא because she needed his help to collect her כתובה from her brother-in-law. The establishment of judges in every community is first mentioned in this week's פרשה. The פסוק says: שפטים ושטרים תתן לך בכל־שעריך אשר ה' אלהיך נתן לך לשבטיך. ושפטו את־העם משפט־צדק. The פסוק question the word לך in the פסוק which seems unnecessary. If anything it should have said לכם in the plural. The חיים ויטל in his ספר נחל קדומין חיד"א offers a beautiful answer in the name of רבינו רבינו. He explains that every individual has various "gates" or openings which need to be guarded against bad influences, for example our eyes, ears, and nose. The פסוק is telling everyone to place "judges" and policemen at every "gate". This is why it says לך individually and also why it says "בכל שעריך", it is addressed to every individual and pertains to our duty to guard and protect our entry points from bad influence.

STORIES OF THE DAF True Delight

“לא נהנתי אפילו באצבע קטנה”

Tosafos brings the Tanna d'vei Elyahu which states that before asking to absorb Torah, one should first ask that no delicacies enter one's body. This echoes what Rebbe said just before his death, that he had taken no ego-driven pleasure from this world at all.

The Minchas Elazar asked, "Why not consume delicacies? On the contrary, don't we find that a Torah scholar should eat light and well seasoned foods that are easily digestible and give him energy to learn?"

He answered with a story. "People often petitioned my father, the Darkei Teshuvah, to pray for them regarding all sorts of issues. One time, a chossid approached him and asked my father to pray that he learn diligently.

My grandfather replied, "How can I possibly daven for something that depends on your free choice? This is a positive commandment that you must work to fulfill. The only thing I can do to help you is give you a brochah and daven that you feel the sweetness of Torah learning. From that happy moment, you will study with diligence because that is what you will want to do!"

The Minchas Elazar continued, "One who is completely consumed by Ahavas HaTorah cannot get too enthusiastic about physical things. This is like the story about Rav Zev of Lvov, zt"l, who didn't feel like eating anything after Shavuot. He felt such a love of Torah after being up the entire night that he was completely indifferent to the prospect of food!

The Rebbe concluded, "This is the answer then. The Midrash and Gemara are not teaching us not to eat delicacies if this is the best food for our health and strength. They are trying to help us see that if we feel enough pleasure in our learning, we will take no personal pleasure in even the most delectable delicacies!"

HALACHA HIGHLIGHT

Publicizing news of a death in a newspaper

אמר להו אתון קאמריתו ואנא לא קאמינא
He (Bar Kappara) said to them, "You said it, but I did not say it."

The reason Bar Kappara went out of his way to avoid relating that Rebbe had died was based on the pasuk in Mishlei (10:18) that declares that one who relates bad news is a fool. Accordingly, Kol Bo¹ writes that in a neighborhood where a death occurred, the custom is to pour out the water and the rationale behind this practice is to communicate that a death occurred without having to communicate that news verbally. Pele Yoetz² writes that when it is necessary to inform another about bad news it should not be said explicitly; rather the information should be communicated by hinting to the news so that the listener will understand on his own. Another option is to have a non-Jew tell the bad news but one should not have another Jew serve as a messenger to share the bad news.

Teshuvos Salmas Yosef³ wrote that he does not see an issue with publicizing news of a person's death in a newspaper. The reason is that since the news is communicated in writing rather than verbally it fulfills the requirement to communicate the information through a hint. Another rationale for leniency is based on the ruling of Rav Chaim Falagi⁴ who wrote that when the matter will anyways become known the restriction against sharing bad news does not apply.

Teshuvos Rebbe Ezriel⁵ also addresses the issue of whether it is permitted to write bad news. In the course of his discussion he mentions the possibility that perhaps the restriction only applies when referring to the death of a relative, but when referring to the death of a non-relative it is permitted to report that bad news explicitly. After analyzing the issue he concludes that the prohibition applies even for non-relatives but nonetheless concludes that there is no problem to write about a death since the restriction is specifically to orally communicate the news. He cites as proof to the principle that restrictions like this apply to oral communication rather than written communication the halacha that a child is not permitted to refer to his father by name and yet we find numerous examples of sons who in writing would refer to their fathers by name.

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5. שו"ת רבי עזריאל ח"א יו"ד סי' רס"ג

MUSSAR FROM THE DAF

Food for Thought

בשעת פטירתו של רבי זקף עשר אצבעותיו כלפי מעלה, אמר: רבונו של עולם! גלוי וידוע לפניך שיגעתי בעשר אצבעותי בתורה, ולא נהניתי אפילו באצבע קטנה. יהי רצון מלפניך שיהא שלום במנוחתו. יצתה בת קול ואמרה: "יבא שלום ינחו על משכבותם."

The Gemara tells us how when Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi was on his deathbed, he raised his 10 fingers towards the Heaven and declared "Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You that I toiled with my ten fingers in the Torah, and I have not derived any benefit from the world even with my small finger." Tosafos asks on our Gemara, from the Gemara in Avodah Zarah 11a which states about Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi that מעל שלא פסקו חמץ ולא צנון ולא קישות ולא צנון לא בימות החמה ולא בימות הגשמים (his table never lacked for lettuce, nor cucumbers, nor radish, neither in the summer nor in the rainy season). Tosafos answers that the Gemara in Avodah Zarah was referring to the food that was available to guests, and not referring to Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi's food.

Perhaps one can give a different answer to Tosafos's question. The Shulchan Aruch says in Siman 231 that all of the pleasures that one experiences in this world, should not be done for pleasures' sake, rather they should be experienced so that one can serve Hashem. There are many levels to this concept. On a very basic level, it means that the food that one eats, one should focus on the eating as a way to give one's self energy to serve Hashem. On a deeper level, it is teaching us that the pleasures one experiences can allow the person to experience a greater connection with Hashem because the person can now "taste" the love that Hashem has towards them even in all the physical pleasures they experience. And therefore the pleasures are not experienced for their own sake rather they are experienced as part of one's Avodas Hashem. This is a pshat when Chazal (Bava Basra 16b) tell us that the Avos were able to taste Olam Haba in Olam Hazeih. (See Alei Shur Chelek 2, Vaad on Simcha)

Therefore we can explain that it is not a contradiction for Rebbe to have all these great foods on his table. All those wonderful foods Rebbe enjoyed were because he wanted to derive pleasure for his own sake but rather to enhance his Avodas Hashem. We can learn from Rebbe that we are not only permitted but even obligated to enjoy the foods in this world, which is not different then enjoying a sunset, as long as the foods allow us to feel Hashem's intense love towards us.

POINT TO PONDER

When נפטר was רבי he raised his hands and said that he toiled in תורה with his ten fingers and that he didn't derive pleasure even with his smallest finger. It is easy to understand the second statement, but toiling in תורה is done with one's head not their fingers? What did Rebbe mean?

Response to last week's Point to Ponder:

The Gemara says that after רבי was נפטר he used to come back every Friday night and make קידוש. Why did he come back on שבת, as opposed to another day of the week?

רבינו מוהרש"א writes that he came back to make קידוש because רבינו מוהרש"א represented קידוש and was therefore connected to שבת. Perhaps we can add that שבת is עולם הבא and therefore שבת has a connection to עולם הבא that other days do not have.

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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