

שבת קודש פרשת וישב | מסכת נדרים דף ה'

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INSIGHTS FROM
OUR CHABUROS

An oath to fulfill a
mitzvah

אלא הא קא משמע לן דשרי ליה לאיניש לזרזי נפשיה

Rav Gidal in the name of Rav taught that one is permitted to make an oath to perform a mitzvah. Although we are already adjured to fulfill the mitzvot, based upon the oath and covenant which we entered at Sinai, the novelty of this statement is that a person is permitted to encourage and stir himself into action with conviction and enthusiasm. This would be the purpose of the oath. Tosafos (ד"ה מושבע) explains that the insight here teaches that this is not considered pronouncing Hashem's name in vain. Tosafos Rid point out that the reason this is not wasteful is that he intends to improve his mitzvah observance, and the name of God is not being said improvidently.

Rashba questions this point, as the Gemara continues with the case where a person declared, "I will rise and learn this chapter!" he has accepted upon himself a great commitment. The Gemara questions why this statement is not just a repeat of the first statement of Rav Gidal, the Gemara explains that the person has promised to learn more than he would minimally be required to do. Yet, according to Tosafos, the second statement is not at all similar to the first. The original statement of Rav Gidal teaches that one may pronounce the name of God in this context and it is not considered in vain. The second statement is merely a promise to learn Torah. The fact the Gemara compares the two statements indicates that the novelty of the first teaching had nothing to do with uttering the name of God.

Rashba learns that the חידוש of Rav Gidal is that although people who are upright (כשרים) never utter oaths (see Mishnah, 9a), it is appropriate and even recommended to take an oath when the purpose is to reinforce the fulfillment of a mitzvah.

Tosafos Rid explains that if this person fails to observe the mitzvah after having taken a vow to fulfill it, he is in violation of having said Hashem's name in vain. Rashba rules that in such a case, the person is in violation of דברו ולא יחל דברו. Meiri writes that with the person's lack of fulfillment of his word he is now in violation of having said a false oath. Sfas Emes writes that according to Rashi and Tosafos (Chagiga 10a), the only benefit in taking an oath to do a mitzvah is in order to encourage himself to fulfill the mitzvah, but the oath was never valid in and of itself. If the person fails to fulfill the mitzvah, he is not in violation of the oath.

POINT TO PONDER

The Gemara discusses whether a person can make a נדר to do a מצוה. Assuming that he can't because he is already סיני מושבע מהר, the גמרא suggests that he can still do so as a motivation. If the נדר is not binding, how does it motivate him?

Response to last week's Point to Ponder:

The Gemara asks if there is יד לצדקה, which means that his words would bind him to give the צדקה if יד לצדקה. Even if אין יד לצדקה isn't he obligated to give what he made up in his mind to give?

In order for the obligation to be binding merely based on his thoughts, he would have to have made up his mind 100%. However if he says it, even though he didn't think about it, is binding by his merely saying it. (See מוקובצת שיטה).

STORIES
OF THE DAF

The blessing
often

ויהי שלמא לבי עשרה

Once, one of the family members of a ba'al habayis in Brisk was very ill. He was beset with worry and didn't know what to do. Meanwhile, the situation was getting steadily worse. Finally, he had an idea. Although the doctors had given up hope, perhaps the famous tzaddik, Rav Chaim Brisker, zt"l, the Rav of the town, could be of assistance.

The distressed man immediately hurried to the Rav to request that the tzaddik daven for his son and to ask if he had any idea of a strategy which may help on a spiritual level. He broken-heartedly finished his appeal by saying that it was clear that there were no more to be done for him on the physical level.

The Rav said, "Today is Erev Shabbos, a day when many people go to the mikveh to purify themselves to greet the holy Shabbos. Hurry to the mikveh and plead with every person who passes to give you a blessing for a refuah sh'leimah. In this way, you will have achieved what amounts to a sort of tefillas rabim, a mass prayer rally, on behalf of the choleh."

As the man rushed out to do the Rav's bidding, the Rav added, "I didn't make this up. There is a source for this in the Gemara."

When Rav Avrohom Ehrlinger, zt"l, the Rosh Yeshiva of Kol Torah, recounted this story he said, "Apparently the source for this practice is from the Gemara in Nedarim 8a, which brings the statement of Rav Yosef that if one dreamed one has been put in cherem, he should ask ten people who have at least learned Gemara to release him from the cherem. If he cannot find ten such people, then he may use ten who have learned Mishnah. If one fails to find ten such people, one should go to the crossroads and say 'shalom' to ten passersby. Their responding 'shalom' in turn will protect one until he finds ten people to release him from the cherem. Rav Ehrlinger concluded, "We see from here that even a greeting from ten can be likened to the tefillah of a rabim which protects!"

HALACHA HIGHLIGHT

Studying daf yomi or halachah?

אמר ר' גידל אמר ר' האומר אשכים ואשנה פרק זה או אשנה מסכתא זו וכו'

R' Gidal said in the name of Rav that a person who declares, "I will rise and study this chapter or this massechta etc."

There was once a man who spent the time he set aside each day to learn by participating in a daf yomi shiur. He later developed an interest in joining a group of people who were studying halacha with an accomplished halachic authority. The question arose whether his original commitment to study daf yomi is considered like a vow which would necessitate nullifying his vow before he switches from daf yomi to halacha or is it not considered a vow and he is free to switch without hesitation.

The Yechaveh Da'as¹ began his analysis of the question with our Gemara. The Gemara states that if a person declares, "I will rise and learn this chapter or this massechta," he has made a great vow. Commentators² explain that despite the fact that he did not use language characteristic of a vow, nonetheless, since he committed to do a mitzvah it is a binding vow and he if he does not fulfill that vow he transgresses the prohibition against profaning his words. Consequently, one could assert that even though this person never verbally expressed a formal commitment to study daf yomi his conduct should constitute a binding vow to continue that practice. After citing additional reasons why he should not be permitted to switch shiurim without having his vow nullified, Yechaveh Daas cites sources³ that write that when one has only a limited amount of time to learn, the time should be spent pursuing the study of practical halacha rather than the study of Gemara, Rashi and Tosafos. Therefore, preference should be given to the study of halacha rather than the study of Gemara since the Gemara itself (Bava Basra 130b) declares that one should not derive halachic conclusions from the Gemara. Mishnah Berurah⁴ cites these opinions and writes that professionals who only learn three or four hours a day should make sure to study halacha and not limit themselves to studying only Gemara. Therefore, ideally one should try to study both daf yomi and halacha but in the event that it is not possible to study both it is acceptable for this person to switch from daf yomi to the study of halacha since it is considered a higher level of learning (מעלין בקודש) and it is not necessary to have his vow annulled.

1. שו"ת יחזקאל דעת ח"ו סי' נ"ב
2. ע' רשב"א והנימוקי יוסף לסוגיין
3. ע' שו"ת ליר"ד סי' רמ"ו סק"ה
4. מ"ב סי' קנ"ה סק"ג

MUSSAR FROM THE DAF

The magnitude of teaching Torah

אמר רב יוסף: נידווה בחלום, צריך עשרה בני אדם להתיר לו, והוא דתנו הלכתא, אבל מתנו ולא תנו - לא. ואי ליכא דתנו הלכתא - אפילו מתנו ולא תנו. תוספות: והוא דמתנו - לאחרים הלכתא למשה מסיני אותן ראויין לשרות שכינה ביניהם ואי ליכא דמתנו אפי' תנו לעצמן ולא לאחרים:

The Gemara teaches us that a person who was put in נידוי (excommunication) in a dream, needs 10 people to be נתיר his נידוי. These 10 people should be ones who teach others (according to the first pshat in the Ran and according to Tosafos specifically teachers of מסיני) but if one can't find such people, then one can use 10 people who learn Torah.

Why does the Gemara tell us that one should ideally try to find 10 people who are teachers of Torah? What isn't learning Torah as good? Moreover, why does Tosafos דוקא mention the הלכה למשה מסיני as the ideal of what they should teach?

The Gemara understands that since this person was put in נידוי in his dream, it means it is possible that it was sent from Hashem for him to be in נידוי. Therefore we need 10 people who have the Shechina with them to take him out of נידוי (Ran). The more we resemble Hashem (by being מהלכת בדרכיו) the more we can become a מרכבה of the Shechina in this world. One of the greatest ways we can resemble Hashem is to be a giver of Torah just as Hashem gave us the greatest gift possible by giving us the Torah. By becoming part of that transmission we resemble Hashem in the ultimate manner. Therefore, there is a greater experience of the Shechina when we teach Torah to others as opposed to learning the Torah. And this is the pshat of why Tosafos specifically says teaching למשה מסיני since this is the most absolute purest Torah that we have which was taught from Hashem to Moshe etc. The person teaching this Torah (הלכה למשה מסיני) is placing himself as part of the Mesorah and continuing to teach exactly what Hashem taught to Moshe.

We see from this Gemara the magnitude of teaching Torah. When a person teaches Torah they are literally reenacting the transmission from Hashem to Moshe Rabbbeinu.

PARSHA CONNECTION

In this week's daf the גמרא discusses a dream that someone had regarding a יוסף הצדיק in which he finds the famous dreams of פרשת וישב. In נידוי we find the famous dreams of פרשת וישב. This caused the brothers to hate him and be jealous of him. The possuk (בראשית לז) ו"א writes: "ויקנאו בו אחיו ואביו שמר את-הדבר."

After Yosef told his brothers the second dream the Torah says that the brothers were jealous of him, but when he told them the first dream it says that they hated him, like the possuk (בראשית לז) ח' says: "ויאמרו לו אחיו המלך תמלך עלינו אִם-מִשׁוֹל: תִּמְשַׁל בָּנוּ וְיוֹסֵף עוֹד שָׁנָא אֹתָם עַל-חֲלֹמֹתָיו וְעַל-דִּבְרָיו". Why did the brothers have different reactions to the two dreams? The אלשיך הקדוש offers a beautiful explanation. We know that people often dream about what they think about during the day, but at the same time we also know that נבואה came to many prophets in the form of a dream. In the case of יוסף, his first dream was interpreted by the brothers as an extension of his thoughts during the day, and they hated him because they felt that he must feel superior to them and due to these thoughts he is dreaming about ruling over them. However the second dream contained the sun and the moon, which referred to his parents bowing down to him. Everyone realized that this cannot be something that is reflective of his daytime thoughts, because he certainly would not be thinking that his parents should be subservient to him. They therefore understood that this must be a נבואה, and hence their reaction was one of jealousy as opposed to hate.

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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