



שבת קודש פרשת ואתחנן | מסכת נדרים דף מא'

This week's newsletter had been dedicated לע"נ חיים ברוך בן בנימין

INSIGHTS FROM OUR CHABUROS

The Torah study is sustained through one's illness

כל משכבו הפכת בחליו אמר רב יוסף לומר דמשכב לימודו,
רב יוסף חלש, איפקר ליה לימודיה

The Gemara reports that Rav Yosef became ill and, as a result, he forgot his Torah learning. Rebbe also lost his Torah knowledge, until it was later restored to him by Rebbe Chiyya and the laundry man. The יפה asks how these great men could have suffered such a fate, as the Gemara in Berachos (5b) reports that anyone who accepts suffering with love and trust of Hashem is guaranteed that his learning will be sustained (תלמודו מתקיים). The Gemara even proves this from a verse (Yeshayahu 53:10): "Hashem desired to oppress him, and He afflicted him...and the desire of Hashem would succeed in his hand." We can certainly assume that Rav Yosef and Rebbe accepted the suffering which accompanied their illnesses with perfect faith and love. Why, then, did they suffer the loss of their Torah knowledge?

We must say that when the Gemara in Berachos guarantees of one who accepts his suffering with love that he will have his Torah knowledge sustained, it does not necessarily mean that one will never forget Torah at all. Rather, it means that even if a person does forget his learning, he will be assisted from the Heavens that his knowledge will eventually be restored to him. This is indicated in our Gemara, where Rav Yosef had his Torah knowledge restored by Abaye, and Rebbe was reminded of his Torah by Rebbe Chiyya and the laundry man. In both cases, they merited to recapture their Torah due to their accepting of the suffering of their illnesses with love.

Ben Yehoyada adds that the Gemara in Berachos can be understood to mean that accepting of suffering with love will indeed prevent one's forgetting of his Torah. Rebbe did not forget his Torah knowledge, but he did forget the one aspect of how to explain a particular halacha in thirteen ways. Even this was later restored to him by Rebbe Chiyya and the laundry man. The admission of Rebbe to Rebbe Chiyya that "You have made me" was an expression of Rebbe's great humility, as the only thing Rebbe Chiyya did was to remind him of six of the ways he had learned this one halacha.

Rav Yosef also only forgot certain details of how to explain certain lessons. And even these pieces were noted by his students as Rav Yosef taught them with some element of confusion, and they immediately corrected him and reminded him how he had always taught them properly.

POINT TO PONDER

The Gemara says that a חולה forgets his learning. How is this connected to his illness? Is it an עונש just like the חולי is assumed to be?

Response to last week's Point to Ponder:

The Gemara says that רבי חלבו was sick and no one came to visit him. Why didn't anyone come? The people obviously knew that he was sick and that it's a הוצא to visit the sick?

The יעקב explains that the people assumed that only בן גילו would benefit רבי חלבו and since they were not בן גילו they didn't come to visit him.

STORIES OF THE DAF

"They stand today to your judgments"

למשפטן עמדו היום

On today's daf, we find that once a person's time to die comes, anything can be the instrument of Providence to bring him down, for "They stand today to Your judgments, for they are all Your servants." On the other hand, if one's time has not come, judgment and salvation protect a person. A survivor described her experiences after the Holocaust: "There was a great shortage of manpower in Germany since all the men were in the army. Posing as a Polish farm girl, I worked on a farm in a German village on the Elbe.... One morning while working in the barn I heard a shot, dogs snarling, voices yelling lauf, lauf Hunde. [Run, run, dog.] I ran out to see what was happening. I could not believe what I saw. Were these men human beings?

"Emaciated, in tattered striped uniforms, barefoot, bent, shuffling. They looked like puppets. One heap on the ground was the poor soul who had been shot. He had stumbled. The corpse was kicked aside and the line straightened again. Above all the din and uproar, I heard or did I imagine it, the words pitifully moaned, 'Wasser, wasser.' ['Water, water:'] "I rushed back to the barn, grabbed a pail of water for this suffering human being. I was immediately arrested and dragged to the Gestapo prison. I was locked in with other criminals with no way to escape. When they took me in, I knew it was the end for me. Would I be tortured before I was hanged or shot? If that were to be, I would join my beloved family. On the other hand I wanted to live. As the door was forced open I said what I thought was the last Shema Yisrael. But it was not. The soldiers were Russians. I yelled, 'Ich been eine Jude, Jude, Jude. Ich been nicht eine Deutsche.' [I am a Jew...I am not a German.]

"I was sobbing, I was hysterical. My head was bowed, fear gripped me, I was trembling. What did fate have in store for me? ...I raised my head. He was a Russian officer. 'What did you say, my child?' Looking up I said, 'I am Jewish.' I was crying, he was crying too, when he said, 'So am I.'" [Cyna Glatstein's story, as recorded by Jolene Mallinger in Flares of Memory: Stories of Childhood during the Holocaust.]

HALACHA HIGHLIGHT

Davening for the soul of a patient

אין החולה עומד מחליו עד שמוחלין לו על כל עוונותיו

Someone ill does not stand from his illness until he has been forgiven for all his sins

Teshuvos Haravaz¹ wonders why, when davening on behalf of someone who is ill, did Chazal include a prayer for the person's soul, רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף—healing for the body and healing for the soul? It would seem out of place to daven for the patient's soul when he is physically ill. He answers the question by first citing our Gemara. The Gemara states that a patient does not rise from his illness until his sins have been forgiven. Therefore, it is necessary to plead with Hashem to forgive the patient for the transgressions that he has committed so that his soul should be repaired from the damage caused by the sins and this will bring a positive flow of blessing from Hashem that will heal him from his illness.

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin² wondered why we daven for the soul of a person only when he becomes physically ill? Why do we not find people davening for someone who is spiritually ill, e.g. someone who has strayed from Yiddishkeit or ר"ל? One practical explanation Rav Sorotzkin suggests is that there is no embarrassment when someone is physically ill as opposed to when someone is spiritually ill. Therefore, Chazal composed a שברך for those who are physically ill but not for those who are spiritually ill. Rav Sorotzkin's second explanation is also based on our Gemara. Since the Gemara declares that a person will not be physically healed until he has been forgiven for his sins, it is necessary to first daven that his soul should be healed and when that takes place the physical ailment will go away on its own. The reason this is an auspicious time for others to daven for the patient is that we assume that the patient has had thoughts of repentance in response to his pain and suffering. Accordingly, we can feel comfortable asking Hashem to help him reach a full repentance since the Gemara (Yoma 38) teaches that there is assistance for those who seek to become pure. In contrast, it is not beneficial to daven for a person who suffers from spiritual ailments. The reason is that as long as he does not repent on his own our tefila on his behalf will be ineffective since Chazal (Yoma 38) teach that Hashem opens the way for those who seek to defile themselves. Consequently, Chazal never composed a prayer to daven for someone who suffers from spiritual ailments.

1. שו"ת הרב"ז ח"א סי' ס"א

2. הדעה והדיבור ח"ג ומובא דבריו בספר שועתי אליך עמ' ק"ע.

MUSSAR FROM THE DAF

With deep joy and gratitude

“בחסר כל” רב נחמן אמר: בלא דעה
אמר אב"י: נקטינן — אין עני אלא בדעה

The Gemara (Nedarim 41a) comments on the verse from Devarim that describes the punishment of Klal Yisrael for not serving Hashem:

“תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרב כל.. ובחסר כל”

The Gemara explores what is meant by the phrase “בחסר כל” — lacking everything. Rav Nachman says: it refers to lacking daas. Following this, Abaye comments: a poor person is only one who lacks daas. What does daas have to do with serving Hashem with simcha? And why is the absence of daas enough to classify someone as truly poor, even if they have material wealth? To answer this, we must understand what daas truly is. Daas is the middah of connection. It is not just knowledge or intellect, it is the ability to connect to what we have. It allows a person to form deep bonds: with others, and with the blessings Hashem has given them. Without daas, a person can have all the blessings in the world: health, wealth, family, yet still feel empty. Why? Because without daas, they are disconnected. They evaluate their life purely through a quantitative lens, asking how much they have instead of what they have. And since in materialism there is always more to be acquired, such a person will never feel full. Their gaze is always fixed on what's missing. They are, in essence, poor, not in their bank account, but in their perception.

But with daas, a person views life qualitatively. They are able to truly savor and delight in their blessings, to experience depth, meaning, and joy in even the smallest things. With daas, the blessings of this world are not just used, they are cherished. This is what allows a person to serve Hashem “בשמחה ובטוב לבב” — with joy and a good heart. (Ayin Alei Shur Vaadim on Simcha where Rav Wolbe contrasts these 2 approaches with Yaakov and Esav) That is why Abaye teaches: “There is no poverty except poverty of daas.” A person can be a millionaire and still live with the anxiety and hunger of an ani, a poor man, constantly striving for more, never satisfied. And another person, with modest means but rich in daas, can live with deep joy and gratitude. The takeaway is powerful: If we want to feel wealthy, we must cultivate daas, the ability to connect deeply with what we already have. As Chazal teach in Pirkei Avos, “Who is truly rich? One who is happy with his portion.”

PARSHA CONNECTION

In this week's daf the גמרא writes that א חולה forgets his learning. פרשת ואתחנן contains a warning about forgetting what we saw at סיני. The Possuk (דברים פרק ו' פסוק ט) רק השמר לך ושמר נפשך מאד פן-תשכח את-הדברים says: Why does the Torah warn us not to forget what we “saw”? Isn't our obligation to tell over what we heard? Also why does it say “והודעתם לבניך” instead of “והגדת” like we find regarding יציאת מצרים? The אלשיך הקדוש explains that there is a very important message which the Torah is teaching us with this possuk with regards to a person relating a lesson to someone else. One must first internalize the message themselves, and if they do so properly they will be able to instill it in someone else. It therefore says that we should remember what we “saw” namely the spiritual experience that we had at Har Sinai, and this experience should always remain in our hearts (והודעתם) (ופן יסורו מלבבך), only then can we properly inform (והודעתם) our children who will instantly believe in what we tell them, because of the way that we have internalized it ourselves. Words that come from the heart penetrate the heart. The אלשיך הקדוש references the same concept which he uses to explain another famous possuk in this week's Parsha. The Torah (דברים פרק ו' פסוק ו) writes:

ושננתם לבניך וכו' followed by והיו הדברים האלה אשר אנכי מצוך היום על-לבבך. The Torah is teaching us that we should first make sure that the Torah is in our hearts, meaning that it's an integral part of us, and then we will be able to relay it properly to our children. ושננתם לבניך!