

INSIGHTS FROM OUR CHABUROS

To eradicate the trait of haughtiness

מאי דכתיב וממדבר מתנה וממתנה במות וגו'

The ריא"ף, in his commentary to Ein Yaakov (Eiruvין 54a) explains that the insight of the Gemara to analyze this verse (Bamidbar 21:18-19) is based upon the observation that in the list of stations through which the Jews passed which are listed in Parashas Masei, none of the areas listed in this verse appear. What is the nature of these places? Also, why does the verse not mention that the nation arrived at Midbar, and that from Midbar they traveled to Matana? Rather, the lesson of the Torah is to instruct a person that if he portrays himself as a desert (lowly and humble), the Torah will be given to him as a gift.

Keren Orah explains that Rav Yosef wanted to teach Rava not to allow himself to develop the trait of haughtiness, and that becoming haughty is unlike other bad traits. As a person grows in Torah and develops into a genuine talmid chacham, many negative traits are able to be easily overcome. However, arrogance and pride are flaws which can sometimes grow with a person even as he changes and matures into becoming a significant Torah scholar. This is why it was so important for Rav Yosef to instruct Rava to be alert and be on guard to remain lowly and humble. A person who wishes to be a שלם—to perfect his personality—must exercise utmost control over this particular characteristic. Even a little bit of conceit can adversely affect one's personality, and all of one's accomplishments can be destroyed. The Mishnah (Avos 4:4) emphasizes that one should be exceedingly humble. Our sages have taught (Sotah 5a) that the amount one may possess of this trait is one eighth of an eighth, but who is able to measure this amount and limit it to this degree? In fact, Rav Nachman bar Yitzchok even concludes that he feels that it is better for a person to eradicate this trait completely, as he states, "Better not it nor even a bit of it!"

PARSHA CONNECTION

In this week's daf the גמרא discusses נדרים from certain foods and which foods are included in the נדר. There are various reasons for people to vow not to eat certain foods like we learned earlier which are related to circumstances. In the parsha we learn that אליעזר עבד אברהם refused to eat before speaking to אלשיך הקדוש. לכן. Why did he insist on speaking before eating? The גמרא explains that Eliezer had a very straight forward calculation: before giving Rivka the jewelry, he asked her about a place to sleep and eat. He was concerned that they would assume that the gifts were a form of payment for sleeping and eating at their home, and even if they don't agree to let Rivka go they will still want to keep the jewelry. He therefore wanted to clarify that he came for a very specific reason, namely to find a wife for Yitzchak and the gifts were a form of engagement jewelry, and not payment for lodging and food.

Eliezer took a very significant risk when he relied on the signs of chessed exhibited by Rivka as proof that she was the right one. Why not go directly to their home and talk to them? The גמרא offers a fascinating explanation. Eliezer was concerned that his request may be rejected by אלשיך הקדוש. לכן. He therefore devised a plan which once it unfolded would allow him to state that his mission was sanctioned by Hashem. We see that it worked, since in the end they were forced to agree and said "מהשם יצא הדבר"!

STORIES OF THE DAF

"And from the desert, a gift"

וממדבר מתנה

On today's daf we see that a prerequisite for Torah greatness is true humility: the "gift" of Torah can only be received by the person who makes himself barren as the desert. It is only afterward that a person can come to greatness. The Gedolim were always filled with this precious middah of humility. When the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz, זט"ל, was already elderly, he felt ill and consulted a doctor.

The doctor said that the Rebbe should go to the famous Carlsbad spring to convalesce. When the Rebbe arrived there, Rav Sofer, a grandson of the Chasam Sofer, was also there for his health. One of Rav Sofer's friends recommended that he should take advantage of the opportunity and go to see the famous tzaddik. Rav Sofer decided to take this advice and made his way to where the Rebbe was staying.

When he arrived, he saw an elderly man learning. Before Rav Sofer had time to open his mouth, the old man said, "What does your honor, a grandson of the holy Chasam Sofer seek?" "I have come to where I understood the Rebbe of Vizhnitz is staying since I would like to meet with him," Rav Sofer answered. "What for?" interjected the old man. "Who is the Vizhnitzer after all? An elderly man who knows how to learn a little, put on a long coat, and became a Rebbe. Why waste your time visiting him? Wouldn't you be better off learning a daf Gemarah instead?" "Nu, nu," acceded Rav Sofer. And he returned to his rooms.

A little while later, the same friend told him that the Rebbe was in shul and asked him to join him for a visit of his own. Rav Sofer acquiesced once again. When they arrived, he was surprised to find that the Rebbe was the very same elderly man who had dissuaded him earlier! Rav Sofer protested, "The Rebbe tricked me with his words earlier." The Vizhnitzer Rebbe shook his head and replied, "Not at all. I know the Rebbe better than anyone, and you can take it from me that every word I told you was absolutely true!"

HALACHA HIGHLIGHT

Wearing a plastic cover on one's hat

תניא יוצאין יוצאין בשק עבה וכו' מפני הגשמים

One may go out on Shabbos wearing thick sackcloth ... for protection from rain

Rav Moshe Feinstein¹ was asked whether it is permitted for a person to walk in a public domain on Shabbos with a plastic cover on his hat. Rav Feinstein prohibited the practice because the plastic cover is intended to protect the hat rather than the person. A garment by definition is something that is worn to serve the person and not something that is worn to protect his garments. For that reason one cannot cite our Gemara that permits wearing certain garments for protection from the rain as proof that it is permitted to wear a plastic cover on one's hat since the intention of the one wearing the garments mentioned in the Gemara is to protect himself from the rain rather than his clothing.

The Chelkas Yaakov² rules that it is permitted because the primary factor is whether it is commonly worn as a garment. Therefore, if people wear a plastic cover on their hat during the week there is no basis to prohibit wearing it on Shabbos since it qualifies as a garment. Proof to this principle is the common practice of wearing a yarmulke under one's hat. Although the yarmulke becomes useless in protecting the person once he is wearing a hat, it is nonetheless permitted since it is considered a garment. Chelkas Yaakov also cites the comments of Shulchan Aruch Harav³ who cites our Gemara that permits wearing sackcloth and then writes that based on our Gemara it must certainly be permitted to wear a hat on top of a hat since they are worn as clothing.

The Minchas Yitzchak⁴ subscribes to Rav Moshe Feinstein's definition and writes that it is prohibited to wear a plastic cover on one's hat on Shabbos since it is intended to protect the hat rather than the person. Proof to this assertion is that people are particular to cover a new hat to protect it from the rain but people are not particular to cover an old hat since they are not concerned with the damage that could happen to an old hat. This clearly points to the fact that the plastic cover is worn for protection for the hat rather than to protect the person.

1. שו"ת אג"מ ח"א סי' ק"ח
2. שו"ת חלקת יעקב או"ח סי' צ"ט
3. שו"ע הרב או"ח סי' ש"א סעי' י"א
4. שו"ת מנחת יצחק ח"ג סי' כ"ו סק"ח.

MUSSAR FROM THE DAF

Open to All: The Secret of Torah Given as a Gift

אמר ליה: כיון שעושה אדם את עצמו כמדבר, שהוא מופקר לכל — תורה ניתנה לו במתנה, שנאמר: "וממדבר מתנה". וכיון שניתנה לו במתנה — נחלו א-ל, שנאמר: "וממתנה נחליאל". וכיון שנחלו א-ל — עולה לגדולה, שנאמר: "ומנחליאל במות". ואם הגביה עצמו — הקדוש ברוך הוא משפילו, שנאמר: "ומבמות הגיא", ולא עוד אלא ששוקעין אותו בקרקע, שנאמר: "ונשקפה על פני הישימו". ואם חזר בו — הקדוש ברוך הוא מגביהו

What does the Gemara mean when it says that when one makes himself *mufkar lakol*, completely available and open to all, the Torah is given to him as a matana, a gift?

If a person learns Torah with the intention of sharing it with Klal Yisrael, he is demonstrating that the Torah is not his private possession, but something meant for everyone. When one learns with this selfless, communal mindset, Hashem responds by granting him supernatural gifts in his learning—insights, clarity, and depth beyond what he could have achieved on his own, because of the zechus harabim, the merit of the community that he learns for.

However, whenever a person receives spiritual gifts without a corresponding level of personal effort, there is always a danger of developing *ga'avah*, and ultimately losing more than he has gained. Therefore, the Gemara concludes that if such gifts lead to pride, Hashem will humble him, bringing him back down to preserve his humility.

From here we see that when a person approaches Torah learning, and certainly Torah teaching with a klal-oriented perspective, Hashem grants him extra *siyata diShmaya*, in his Torah. Yet he must remember that these added gifts are pure chesed from Hashem, not the result of his own greatness. That awareness should not inflate his ego, but rather deepen his humility and gratitude before Hashem.

POINT TO PONDER

The Gemara says that someone who made a נדר not to eat דגן is allowed to eat חילקא טרגיס וטיסני which the ר"ן explains are wheat kernels split in 2, 3 or 4. If the whole kernels were split after he made the נדר, would it still be מותר, or do we say that since it became אסור when he made the נדר, it remains אסור?

Response to last week's Point to Ponder:

The Gemara says that Rabbi Akiva and the רבנן argue regarding items which a שליח would ask about. What is the Gemara adding with this explanation? Isn't that what the Mishna already established?

Since the Gemara says that their מחלוקת is in a case where he said "ירק המתבשל בקדרה עלי" we might have thought that they argue about the meaning of this phrase. This is why the Gemara needs to explain what the מחלוקת is about. (See ריטב"א).

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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