

שבת קודש פרשת ויחי | מסכת נדרים דף סב'

This week's newsletter is dedicated in memory of Esther Mindel bas Avraham Tzvi

**INSIGHTS FROM
OUR CHABUROS**

The sanctity of the Kohen

ותנא דבי רבי ישמעאל וקדשתו לכל דבר שבקדושה

In his Sefer Hamitzvos, Rambam tells us that we are commanded to honor and give respect to the descendants of Aharon. We are always to give them precedence, even overriding their objections in this matter, for this entire glorification is actually intended for Hashem. It is He who has taken them and selected them for His service and for offering his קרבנות. This principle is expressed in our Gemara, which interprets the verse to teach that we are commanded to sanctify the descendants of Aharon in all matters pertaining to holiness. Thus, in all holy matters the Kohen is to be first. He shall have the first right to recite the berachos at a meal, and he shall be first to receive a proper portion.

Chasam Sofer explains that Hashem expects the entire Jewish people to sanctify His name in the world as part of their mission among the nations. In this way, the prestige of His sovereignty is increased. Even though our holiness emanates solely from Him, nevertheless, His name is magnified through our actions. In this same way, the Kohanim serve to purify and lift up the Jews by performing the ritual offerings in the Beis Hamikdash which atone for us and draw us nearer to Hashem. Yet, it is incumbent upon us to raise their status among us by acknowledging their unique role and by giving them special privileges.

The verse cited in our Gemara now reads: "Sanctify the Kohen, for he brings the offerings (לחם) on your behalf." Why does he need your recognition? Because he needs to be sanctified by you in this world just as I, Hashem, am sanctified by your actions in this world." Maharam Shif (to Gittin 59b) explains that given the first portion is not an element of holiness, but rather one of honor. When the Torah commands that the Kohen be called first to the Torah and recite the berachos at a meal, the point is that he be treated with honor and respect in all areas.

PARSHA CONNECTION

In this week's daf the גמרא discusses the issue of one who sells trees from his forest to someone who may use them for עבודה זרה. We find a similar idea regarding Yaakov Avinu who when he felt that his days were numbered asked Yosef to promise him that he will not bury him in Mitzrayim. One of the reasons given is that he was concerned lest the Egyptians will deify him and make him a עבודה זרה. A while after this request Yosef is told that his father is ill and when he comes to visit him, the Possuk (בראשית 45:2) states that Yaakov tells Yosef the following:

ואני בבאי מפדן מתה עלי רחל: What did Yaakov mean to convey to Yosef? Most commentaries explain that Yaakov explained why he is asking Yosef to do for him something which he himself didn't do for Yosef's mother Rachel. The difficulty with this explanation is that Yaakov should have told him this earlier when he asked him to bury him in the מצפה, not now when he is coming to visit him with his sons? Another difficulty with this Possuk, is the word עלי. Why is he saying that she passed away "on him"? The אור החיים הקדוש explains that this Possuk is connected to the following declaration by Yaakov that אפרים will be treated as שבטים. The reason for that says Yaakov is due to the fact that Rachel who should have given birth to additional שבטים passed away before having more children. The reason for her passing early was because of Yaakov who said to Lavan that whoever stole his טרפים will die. We can now answer both questions, he said it now because it's related to what was about to take place, and he acknowledged his role in her passing.

**STORIES
OF THE DAF**

**The quiet
kindness**

עשה דברים לשם פעלם

At the end of his life, Rav Yochanan of Rachmastrivska, zt"l, had to be hospitalized. Unfortunately, he was assigned a very anti-religious roommate, who insisted on listening to a secular radio station all day long. When a private room was requested for the Rebbe, the department head categorically refused the request. The Rebbe and those close to him were at a loss as to how they ought to proceed. The Rebbe was really not well and quite possibly would need to remain in the hospital for an extended period of time. How could they allow him to be subjected to a steady stream of secular music and chatter which would surely impede his convalescence?

The Rebbe's son and the Tolna Rebbe, shlit"a, broached the topic on a visit with the Lev Simcha of Gur, zt"l. After all, although the Rachmastrivska Rebbe was virtually unknown in the secular world, the Gerer Rebbe was a famous religious leader. Perhaps he would succeed where others had failed. Although the Lev Simcha inquired after the Rebbe's health with great interest, he was not so optimistic that he could help. "I doubt anything I do will change this," he said. A little discouraged, the two took their leave. After Minchah, they traveled to the hospital and arrived about an hour after their meeting with the Lev Simcha. To their surprise, the Rebbe's bed was empty and all his effects were already gone. When they inquired, they were told that a little less than an hour ago, the director of the hospital himself had arrived at the department and ordered the Rebbe brought to a private room. "The Rebbe of Gur called!" the administrator tersely explained.

The Tolna Rebbe said, "The Gerer Rebbe has fulfilled the Gemara in Nedarim 62, that one should only do good deeds לשם פועלם—solely because Hashem commanded. The Gemara concludes that mitzvos are 'not a tool for digging,' they are not vehicles to enhance our prestige. Had the staff not told us, do you think that the Gerer Rebbe would have ever mentioned that he had effected the change?"

HALACHA HIGHLIGHT

Issues of
לפני עור

א"ל רשבינא לר' אשי האיכא לפני עור לא תתן מכשול א"ל
רוב עצים להסקה ניתנו

Ravina asked R' Ashi, "What about the prohibition of placing a stumbling block before the blind?" R' Ashi answered that most of the wood will be used for fuel

Sever Imrei Dovid¹ raised the question of whether it is permitted for someone to set up vending machines that sell sandwiches when there is a possibility that some of the buyers will eat their sandwich without washing their hands. Is there any responsibility on the part of the owner of the vending machines in this regard? He answered that if the majority of residents in town are not Jewish one could assume that a prohibition will not be violated with these sandwiches. The basis of this ruling comes from our Gemara. When Ravina asked R' Ashi why he sold his forest to an idolater who worshipped fire, R' Ashi explained that since most of the wood will be used for fuel rather than idolatry he had the right to assume that this is how the wood would be used and consequently he does not violate לפני עור by this sale. Furthermore, the Dagul M'Revava² allows assisting a wanton sinner לעוברי (מסייע עבירה במזיד) as long as one does not actively assist the sinner to sin. Therefore, since the sinner will take the sandwich himself without the active assistance of the owner of the machine, the owner does not transgress any prohibitions when the sinner purchases and eats the sandwich.

Taz³ ruled that when there is uncertainty whether a buyer purchased something for a prohibited or permitted purpose one has the right to assume that he bought the item for a permitted use. Teshuvos Ein Yitzchok⁴ challenged this ruling from our Gemara. When R' Ashi defended his sale of the forest he explained that it was based on the fact that most of the wood would be used for a permitted purpose. This indicates that lacking that majority it would be prohibited, in conflict with Taz who does not express this requirement. Answers Ein Yitzchok, the reason R' Ashi needed a majority to permit the sale is that he was selling wood to a fire worshipper and it was almost certain that some would be used for idolatry. Under normal conditions, a majority is unnecessary and one is permitted to sell the item as long as it is possible that it will not be used for a prohibited purpose, like the ruling of Taz.

1. ספר אמרי דוד סי' קנ"ז מובא במתיבתא למס' נדרים בפניני הלכה סב
2. דגול מרבבה י"ד סי' קנ"א
3. ט"ז י"ד סי' קנ"א סק"א
4. שו"ת עין יצחק אר"ח סי' י"ג סק"ג

MUSSAR FROM THE DAF

To guide action

רבי אליעזר בר רבי צדוק אומר: עשה דברים לשם פעלים, דבר בהם לשמם. מן העולם, המשתמש בכתרה של תורה — על אחת כמה וכמה.

The Gemara teaches that one must learn Torah lishmah. But what precisely, does Torah lishmah mean? At first glance, the Rishonim seem to disagree. Many Rishonim (Tosafos Harosh, Rashi) understand Torah Lishmah to mean "al menas la'asos" — learning Torah in order to fulfill the mitzvos properly. Torah study, according to this view, is fundamentally practical: its purpose is to guide action.

The Rosh, however, gives a different explanation. He writes that Torah lishmah means learning Torah l'shem Torah — for the sake of Torah itself, out of a desire to know and understand it. Are these views arguing? The Nefesh HaChaim famously builds his entire understanding of Torah lishmah on the Rosh: that true Torah study is learning for the sake of Torah itself, without ulterior motives — even spiritual ones. Torah, in this view, is not merely a means to an end; it is an end in itself. Yet the Ruach Chaim (Avos 3, 9) seems to say the opposite — that Torah lishmah means learning in order to fulfill mitzvos properly.

So which is it? Perhaps the answer is that there is no real disagreement at all. The various opinions are addressing different aspects of limud haTorah. Rav Yisrael Salanter, in Ohr Yisrael (Letter 31), provides a crucial framework. He explains that Torah cannot be reduced to a technical manual for mitzvah observance. While it is absolutely true that Torah teaches us how to fulfill mitzvos, that is not the entirety of what Torah is.

There is also an aspect of Torah that is חק — and this is the צורה of Torah — something we engage with simply because it is Torah, because we yearn to know the word of Hashem. This is learning Torah for its own sake, not because it leads directly to action, but because the soul is drawn to Torah itself. However — and this is critical — Rav Yisrael Salanter emphasizes that even this kind of learning must be shaped, must be performed with the condition that it is al menas la'asos. Torah learned "for its own sake" must still exist within a framework where the learner is committed to fulfilling what he learns.

POINT TO PONDER

The Gemara says that when the owner of a field caught רבי טרפון eating his fruit he tied him in a sack and took him to the river with the intention of drowning him. Why would he want to kill him, which would not get him anything? Wouldn't he be better off taking him to בית דין to try and recover payment?

Response to last week's Point to Ponder:

The Gemara wants to bring a proof that according to Rabbi Meir a person would put themselves in a doubtful situation, from Kiddushin. How does Nedarim compare to Kiddushin? Maybe when it comes to Kiddushin a person would be extra careful because of the serious consequences, whereas in Nedarim he would be less cautious?

The רבי מאיר explains that the main proof is from מאיר who holds that even in קידושין a person does enter into a doubtful situation. If so we can surmise that נדרים which is less serious than קידושין it would be a ק"ו that רבי מאיר should hold the same.

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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