

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon (cont.)

The Gemara concludes demonstrating Rebbi's assertion that R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon was greater than him in Torah.

Rebbi remarks about the suffering of R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon.

The Gemara compares the suffering of Rebbi and the suffering of R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon.

The cause for Rebbi's suffering and what made it go away is discussed.

The Gemara resumes its comparison between the suffering of Rebbi and the suffering of R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon.

2) Rebbi's efforts to help other people's children

Stories of Rebbi's efforts to help other people's children are retold.

The importance of having consecutive generations involved in Torah study is emphasized.

More teachings related to Torah study are presented.

3) R' Chiya

A number of incidents that illustrate the greatness of R' Chiya are recorded.

4) Rebbi

The Gemara records the account of Shmuel Yarchina'ah healing Rebbi's eye ailment. ■

REVIEW and Remember

1. Why was the suffering of R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon considered greater than that of Rebbi?

2. What is the merit for teaching someone else's child Torah?

3. What did R' Chiya do to assure that Torah would not be forgotten?

4. Who has the task of waking Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov?

Distinctive INSIGHT

They did not recite a blessing before studying Torah

אמר רבי יהודה אמר רב שלא בירכו בתורה תחילה

In the Gemara, Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav explains that the underlying reason for the state of societal decay which brought about the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash and of Yerushalayim was a mystery. The sages apparently could not put their finger on the cause for such devastation, and the prophets could not explain it. Finally, the Holy One, blessed by He, directly revealed the true cause for this national catastrophe, and the reason was that the people did not recite a blessing before studying Torah. ר"ן in Nedarim (81a) notes that the Gemara determines its information from a verse in Yirmiyahu (9:12) which states: "But Hashem has said, 'Because of their forsaking My Torah that I put before them.'" This implies that no one knew this answer, except for Hashem.

Rashi explains that the people did study Torah, but when they did so they neglected to recite the blessing which declares this pursuit as an act of devotion in performance of the mitzvah to toil in Torah study. Again, the verse is the source of this comment, as we find the prophet bemoans that the Torah was "placed before them." This suggests that there was something lacking in the preparation of the study, as it was placed before them. The Rishonim also note that the meaning of the lament cannot simply be that the people did not study Torah at all, which might seem to be what is indicated in the verse. If this had been the case, the cause of the destruction of Yerushalayim and the entire Jewish community would not have been mysterious or unknown to anyone. Without Torah study, the Jewish people have no right to their survival. It must be, therefore, that people were indeed studying Torah, but a subtle but significant deficiency was undermining their being able to connect their Torah with building a relationship between themselves and God.

ר"ן in Nedarim (81a) explains, in the name of Rabeinu Yona, that not reciting a blessing before studying Torah indicated that the people did not consider the Torah to be special. The nation did not feel that Torah study warranted a blessing before embarking upon it, and they did not study it for the sake of Heaven (לשמה).

Chasam Sofer to Nedarim (ibid.) writes that the reason the people did not say a blessing before Torah study is that they believed that the study was not important in and of

HALACHAH Highlight

Killing insects and rodents

אמר לה שבקינהו כתיב "ורחמיו על כל מעשיו"

He told her to leave it since the pasuk teaches, "His compassion is on all His creatures."

Rav Yaakov Emden¹ writes that the prohibition against causing pain to animals (צער בעלי חיים) is limited to work animals and there is no restriction against killing insects and other types of repulsive rodents, even if they experience some suffering while being killed. A difficulty that Rav Emden raises with his ruling is our Gemara in which Rebbi cited the verse "ורחמיו על כל מעשיו" – And His compassion is on all His creatures" as the source for not allowing his maidservant to kill weasels that were in the house. Rav Emden writes that one should not draw from this incident a halachic conclusion nor should one conclude that it is even a pious behavior to strive for to refrain from killing insects or rodents since the Gemara implies that earlier Rebbi was willing to allow killing rodents and he only refrained because he wanted to invoke extra compassion from Heaven to alleviate his suffering.

Rav Moshe Feinstein² also ruled that there is no prohibition against killing insects or rodents that ruin food or

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itself, but that it only served as a means to know how to perform mitzvos. The truth is that toiling in the study of Torah is a great mitzvah, beside the need to study in order to know how to act. ■

bother people. Furthermore, if there are small children around or even adults that are frightened by the insects or rodents it is permissible to kill them. Regarding our Gemara, Rav Feinstein suggests that the rodents that Rebbi did not permit his maidservant to kill were rodents that were not harmful to people or to their food. The maidservant wanted to kill the rodent because she had no need for it and did not want to trouble herself to find someone who did, therefore, Rebbi told her that under those circumstances she should not kill it.

On the other hand, Rav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, the Ben Ish Chai³, in a response to an inquiry confirmed that in the writings of the Arizal one will find that one should refrain from killing mosquitoes and lice. He also mentions the Gemara in Shabbos (12a) as proof to this restriction. The Gemara there relates that there were Amoraim who were killing lice but Rava would refrain from doing and put them in water instead. ■

1. שו"ת שאילת יעבי"ץ ח"א סי' ק"י.
2. שו"ת עג"מ חו"מ ח"ב סי' מ"ז.
3. שו"ת תורה לשמה סי' שצ"ז. ■

STORIES Off the Daf

Turning the youth around

"אסמכיה ברבי..."

Rav Shlomo Hoffmann worked with children who were not motivated in their school work at all. Some of these children had been caught perpetrating petty crimes like shoplifting. Others had fallen to even worse.

When Rav Hoffman first began working with such youth, especially those who had been in yeshiva, he consulted with Rav Meir Chadash, zt"l, for practical guidance in how to lead them away from bad behavior and bring them back to a straight path.

Rav Meir showed him several gemaras that relate to this calling, one of them on today's daf. He said, "On Bava

Metzia 85 we find that after Rabbi Eliezer ben Rabbi Shimon passed away, Rebbi came to his city to see if Rabbi Eliezer had left a son. There he found that there was a surviving son, but that he was unfortunately a big wastrel who received four zuz to sin.

"What did Rebbi do? You can be sure that he paid the young man off so that he would be willing to go to a new place and learn. He called the young man over and said, 'Until now you received four zuz for each time you sinned? I will give you eight zuz every time you come to learn Torah with me!' When Rebbi saw that his strategy was working and that the young man was beginning to learn, he began to add other incentives to help the young man persevere. He would give him exaggerated praise and honor, even giving him

publicity. And it worked. The young man learned until he became a gaadol baTorah."

The Mashgiach explained, "Rebbi understood that the strongest motivating factor in this young man's life was money. Even after things seem to be working out, one must not be complacent. He must use any other tactics that could help an estranged young man. You must do precisely the same thing. Find what elements are the mainstays of your charges' lives, and use them to help convince these unfortunates that it is worthwhile for them to change. Only after you have a common language regarding what is important to them can you tell them mussar and guide them to improve themselves in a way that will have an effect!"¹ ■

1. המשגיח ר' מאיר, ע' 381