

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) Ben Zoma

The Gemara completes the discussion about the permissibility of a Kohen Gadol marrying a pregnant virgin.

Another incident involving Ben Zoma and the distance between the upper and lower waters is presented.

2) Acher

The incident that led Acher to stray from Hashem is recorded.

Two conversations and an incident with Acher and R' Meir are presented.

The Gemara recounts what happened after Acher passed away and how R' Meir and R' Yochanan were able to help him.

An incident between Rabbi and Acher's daughter is recorded.

The Gemara inquires how R' Meir was permitted to learn Torah from Acher.

Two resolutions are presented.

R' Dimi offers another rationale why R' Meir was permitted to study Torah from Acher.

A conversation between Rabbah bar Shila and Eliyahu Hanavi related to R' Meir's studying Torah from Acher is recorded.

R' Yehudah inquired of Shmuel why the Torah study of Doeg and Achitofel did not protect them from straying.

Shmuel responded that they had impure thoughts even while they studied Torah.

Two suggestions are offered regarding the thoughts that Acher harbored even when he studied Torah.

3) R' Akiva entering the orchard

A Beraisa relates that R' Akiva entered and exited "the orchard" safely because Hashem defended him from the ministering angels. ■

Distinctive INSIGHT

The call from Above to do teshuva

שובו בנים שובבים חוץ מאחר

Our Sages (Zohar 3:126a, Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer, Ch. 15) reveal to us that every day a heavenly voice emanates from Har Sinai and proclaims: "Return to Me, My sons." (Yirmiyahu 3)

Kedushas Levi explains that every Jewish person merits to hear this voice on his own level, and even though he does not necessarily notice it audibly, his conscience is aware of it. This voice is what stirs a person to repent and reconsider his ways on a regular basis. Our Gemara notes that this system of teshuva is not without an exception. This voice is quoted as proclaiming that all may repent, except for "Acher." The process of teshuva only works when a person is moved because he arrives at a realization that he must do his job - and not when it is imposed upon him by another - by an "acher". We also learn that each person must interpret the message of teshuva for himself, and must not assume that the message to repent is meant for everyone else except himself.

The verse in Devarim (28:1) begins with the word "ויהי" - and it will be." "And it shall be that if you listen to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, to keep, to perform all of His commandments that I command you this day, then Hashem, your G-d, will make you supreme over all the nations of the earth." The term ויהי generally indicates a state of joy and satisfaction (Vayikra Rabba 11:7). The upbeat and happy mood is generated when "you will hear the voice of Hashem, your God." A person is most fortunate when he is attentive and alert to the call from Har Sinai which calls to him to repent. ■

REVIEW and Remember

1. What event led Acher astray?

2. Why was Acher unwilling to repent?

3. Why did R' Meir prefer that Acher go to Gehinom?

4. What were the practices that led Acher away from Hashem?

HALACHAH Highlight

Reciting kedusha in Birchos Krias Shema

אמר גמירא דלמעלה לא הוי ישיבה וכו'

He [Acher] said that there is a tradition that in heaven there is no sitting, etc.

There was once a town whose Torah leaders instructed the residents to sit while reciting kedusha in Birchos Krias Shema (kedushas yotzer). At one point a new leader came to town who was accustomed to stand during kedushas yotzer. Since he continued this practice, other residents in town also began to stand while reciting kedushas yotzer. Others refused to follow his custom and argued that if one is not obligated to stand for Krias Shema there is no reason to stand for kedushas yotzer. The leader responded that since in kedushas yotzer we repeat the praise sung by the angels it is only logical that we should emulate their behavior which, as our Gemara relates, is to stand. The community agreed to ask Rambam for guidance.

Rambam¹ responded that standing while reciting kedushas yotzer is certainly a foolish custom and the custom to sit is correct. The reason it is foolish is that even concerning matters that relate to prohibitions we are instructed to follow the local custom. Certainly concerning matters

that do not involve a prohibition, e.g. whether to stand or sit for kedushas yotzer, the correct practice is to follow the local custom. Regarding the claim that we should stand as the angels do when they recite kedusha Rambam explained that we are not required to emulate the behavior of the angels.

Rabbeinu Yehudah ben Yakar², however, maintains that if kedushas yotzer involves reciting kedusha together with the angels we would, in fact, stand, but that is not the case. In kedushas yotzer we are relating the way the angels sing praises of Hashem's sanctity, but we are not singing those praises. Thus, it is acceptable to sit during its recitation. Shulchan Aruch³ cites differing opinions as to whether we are reciting the praises of Hashem or merely repeating what the angels say. Rav Avrohom Avli Gombiner⁴, the Magen Avrohom, quotes authorities who maintain that it should be recited while seated but Rav Menachem Azaryah of Pano⁵, the Rama MiPano, writes that if a person was standing he is permitted to remain standing while reciting kedushas yotzer. ■

1. שו"ת הרמב"ם (בלאו) סי' רסב.
2. בפירושו לסידור.
3. שו"ע או"ח סי' נ"ט סעי' ג'.
4. מג"א שם סק"ב.
5. שו"ת רמ"ע מפאנו סי' ק"ב. ■

STORIES Off the Daf

"Return, Yourself!"

"...אף אתה חוזר בך..."

In Poland, during the initial period of emancipation and equal political representation, only those Jews who were far from Torah observance served in the Sejm, the Polish parliament. These "representatives" had goals that were antithetical to Judaism, which they felt was old-fashioned and outdated. When things began to get out of hand and these unscrupulous parties started to advocate for legislation that was clearly detrimental to the religious community, the Gedolim saw that they had no choice but to present a candidate to represent the religious community. During the winter of

5683 (1923), this role was entrusted to Rav Meir Shapira, zt"l, who worked together with a few select bnei Torah. Rav Shapira immediately became a thorn in the side of the anti-religious Jews who also sat in the Sejm. He was very articulate and convincing and seemed to have a knack for thwarting the plans of the enemies of the Torah.

Since these other politicians felt that the parliament was their jurisdiction, they resented the perceived "intrusion" of Rav Meir and his aides. One member even had the nerve to complain to Rav Shapira.

"Since when have the Rabbanim been involved in politics?" he asked. "They're always talking about guarding the old ways, but we see that you yourselves don't remain in the beis medrash which was always your place!"

Rav Shapira answered serenely,

"Actually this is an old argument between Rav Meir and Acher, as recorded in Chagigah 15a."

He went on, "We find that Acher said to Rav Meir, 'Chazor b'cha'—return to the beis hamedrash which is your rightful place!' But Rav Meir retorted, 'Af ata chazor b'cha!'—I will return just as soon as you turn back from your wicked plans to undermine faithful Jews."

Rav Shapira concluded, "If you would stick to politics without hidden agenda, we will gladly return to the beis hamidrash where we would much rather be. However, since you are trying to ensnare the Torah-true, we must remain here to inconvenience you and block every single one of your evil plans!" ■

