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Avodah Zarah Daf 20

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamot of

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May the studying of the Daf Notes be a zechus for their neshamot and may their souls find peace in Gan Eden and be bound up in the Bond of life

MISHNAH. One should not make jewelery for an idol [such as] necklaces, ear-rings, or finger-rings. Rabbi Eliezer says: for payment it is permitted. One should not sell to idolaters a thing which is attached to the soil, but when severed it may be sold. Rabbi Yehudah says: one may sell it on condition that it be severed.

GEMARA. From where do we derive these rules? — Rabbi Yosi ben Chanina said: From the scriptural words: nor be gracious unto them — lo-sichaneim — [which may be rendered] nor allow them to settle on the soil.

The Gemora asks: But are not these words needed to convey the Divine command not to admire their gracefulness?

The Gemora answers: If that alone were intended, the wording should have been ‘lo sichuneim’; why is ‘lo sichaneim’ used? To imply both these meanings.

The Gemora asks: But there is quite another purpose for which this is needed, to express the Divine command not to give them any free gift!

The Gemora answers: For that purpose the wording should have been ‘lo sichineim,’ why then is it ‘lo sichaneim’? — So as to imply all these interpretations.

It has indeed been taught so elsewhere: ‘lo sichaneim’ means: You shall not allow them to settle on the soil. Another interpretation of ‘lo sichaneim’ is: You shall not pronounce them as graceful; yet another interpretation of ‘lo sichaneim’ is: You shall not give them any free gift.

The giving of free gifts [to idolaters] is itself a matter of dispute between Tannaim, for it has been taught: [The verse]: You shall not eat of anything that dies of itself - unto the stranger that is within your gates you may give it that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a heathen. This only tells us that it may be given away to a stranger or sold to a heathen. How do we know that it may be sold to a heathen? Because Scripture says: You may give it — or sell it. How do we know that it may be given away to a heathen? Because Scripture says: You may give it that he may eat it or you may sell it to a heathen: hence it may be derived that both giving and selling may be applied to a stranger or a heathen; these are the words of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yehudah, however, says: The words should be taken as they are written, giving being applied to a stranger, and selling to a heathen.

The Gemora asks: But Rabbi Meir's interpretation is quite right!

The Gemora answers: Rabbi Yehudah may contend thus: Were the divine words to be interpreted according to Rabbi Meir, they would have read: 'You shall give it as well as sell it'; why then does it say 'or' [sell it] if not to convey the particular meaning of the words?

The Gemora asks: And Rabbi Meir?

The Gemora answers: [He might reply that 'or'] indicates that it is preferable to give it away to a stranger-settler than to sell it to a heathen.

The Gemora asks: And as to Rabbi Yehudah?

The Gemora answers: He might say that, since the maintenance of such a stranger is commanded by Scripture and that of a heathen is not so commanded, no scriptural word is needed to give [the stranger] preference.

[It has been stated above:] 'Another interpretation of 'lo sichaneim' is: You shall not pronounce them as graceful. This supports the view of Rav, for Rav said: One is forbidden to say, "How beautiful is that idolatress!"

The following objection was raised: It happened that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, while standing on a step on the Temple-mount, saw a heathen woman who was particularly beautiful, and he exclaimed: How great are Your works, O Lord. Likewise, when Rabbi Akiva saw the wife of the wicked Tyranus Rufus¹, he spat, then laughed, and then wept. 'Spat,' — because of her originating only from a putrefying drop; 'laughed,' —

¹ Governor of Judea, 1st century

because he foresaw that she would become a convert and that he would take her to wife; 'wept,' that such beauty should [ultimately] decay in the dust.

The Gemora asks: What then about Rav's ruling?

The Gemora answers: [He might say that] each of these Rabbis merely offered thanksgiving. For a master has said: He who beholds goodly creatures should say, "Blessed be He who has created such in His universe."

The Gemora asks: But is even mere looking permitted? The following can surely be raised as an objection: 'And you shall beware from every evil thing' [implies] that one should not look intently at a beautiful woman, even if she be unmarried, or at a married woman even if she be ugly, nor at a woman's gaudy garments, nor at male and female donkeys, or a boar and a sow, or at birds — when they are mating; even if one be "all eyes" like the Angel of Death! (It is said of the Angel of Death that he is all full of eyes. When a sick person is about to depart, he stands above his head-pillow with his sword drawn out in his hand and a drop of gall hanging on it. As the sick person beholds it, he trembles and opens his mouth [in fright]; he then drops it into his mouth. It is from this that he dies, from this that [the corpse] deteriorates, from this that his face becomes greenish).?

The Gemora answers: [What may have happened in those cases was that] the woman turned around a corner².

[It was said above.] 'Nor at a woman's gaudy garments!' Rav Yehudah bar Shmuel said: Even when

² Her face thus met the Rabbi's eyes unexpectedly.

these are spread on a wall. Whereon Rav Pappa remarked: That is if he knows their owner. Said Raba: This is also proved by the wording which reads: 'Nor at a woman's gaudy garments,' but does not read 'at gaudy garments.' This proves it. Rav Chisda said: That can only refer to such as had been worn, but in the case of new ones it does not matter; for were you not to say so, how could women's dresses be handed to a trimmer; he must needs look at them! — And according to your opinion, [how will you explain] the statement of Rav Yehudah that in the case of animals of the same kind one may bring them together [for mating] in the very closest manner; surely he, too, must need to look! — But, we assume that what he cares about is only his work; so here, too, it is only his work that he cares about.

The master said: 'From it he dies.' Shall we say, then, that this differs from the statement of Shmuel's father? For Shmuel's father said: The Angel of Death told me, "Were it not for the regard I have for people's honor, I could cut the throat of men as widely as that of an animal [is cut]"! — Possibly, it is that very drop that cuts into the organs of the throat.

[The above-mentioned statement.] 'From it the corpse deteriorates' supports the view of Rabbi Chanina bar Kahana. For Rabbi Chanina bar Kahana stated: It had been said in the school of Rav that if one wants to keep a corpse from deteriorating, he should turn it on its face.

Our Rabbis taught: The words: and you shall beware from every evil thing, mean that one should not indulge in such thoughts by day as might lead to uncleanness by night. Hence Rabbi Pinchas bar Yair

said: Study leads to precision, precision leads to zeal, zeal leads to cleanliness, cleanliness leads to restraint, restraint leads to purity, purity leads to holiness, holiness leads to meekness, meekness leads to fear of sin, fear of sin leads to saintliness, saintliness leads to the [possession of] the holy spirit, the holy spirit leads to life eternal, and saintliness is greater than any of these, for Scripture says: Then You did speak in vision to Your saintly ones.

The Gemora notes: This, then, differs from the view of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. For Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Meekness is the greatest of them all, for Scripture says: The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings unto the meek. It does not say, 'unto the saints,' but 'unto the meek,' from which you learn that meekness is the greatest of all these.

One should not sell to idolaters a thing which is attached to the soil. Our Rabbis taught: One may sell a tree to a heathen with the stipulation that it be felled and he then fells it; this is the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah. Rabbi Meir, however says: We may only sell to heathen a tree when felled. Likewise, low-growth, with the stipulation that it be cut and he may then cut it; this is the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah. Rabbi Meir, however, says: We may only sell it to them when it is cut. So also, standing corn, with the stipulation that it be reaped and he may then reap it; this is the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah. Rabbi Meir, however, says: We may only sell it them when reaped.

The Gemora notes: And all these three instances are necessary; for were we told of the case of a tree only [we might think that] in that case only does Rabbi Meir



oppose, for, since the heathen will not lose by letting it remain in the ground, he might leave it so, but the other case [the standing corn] where he would lose by letting it remain in the soil, we might think that Rabbi Meir would agree with Rabbi Yehudah. On the other hand, were we told about the tree and the corn only [we might have thought that] it is because it is not obvious that he benefits by leaving them in the soil [that Rabbi Yehudah permits], but in the case of low-growth where he obviously benefits by leaving it to grow on, we might think that he agrees with Rabbi Meir. Were we again to be told of the case of [low-growth] only, we might have thought that it is only in that case that Rabbi Meir objects [since it pays him not to cut it], but in the other two cases, he shares the view of Rabbi Yehudah; hence all these are necessary.

The question was asked: How about selling cattle with the stipulation that it be slaughtered? Shall we say that in those other instances the reason why Rabbi Yehudah permits is because [the articles], not being in the heathen's domain, could not be left there altogether, whereas cattle, which is in his own domain, might be kept by him [unslaughtered], or should no distinction be made?

Come and hear: It has been taught: [We may sell a heathen] cattle with the stipulation that he should slaughter it, and he then slaughters it; this is the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah. Rabbi Meir, however, says: We may only sell it to them when slaughtered.

DAILY MASHAL

Investment for the Future

In our *sugya* Rava counsels a person who doesn't understand his learning to continue to learn. *Mesilos Lechizuk Limud HaTorah* explains Rava's statement according to the *Gemora* in Berachos 40a which says: "The attribute of flesh and blood is not like Hashem's attribute. With flesh and blood, an empty vessel holds and a full vessel does not hold. But with Hashem, a full vessel holds and an empty vessel does not hold." Thus for spiritual matters, the more a person fills himself with them, the more he becomes a receptacle for them. This is Rava's advice, that by constant learning everyone can prepare himself to understand what he learns.

Why the Jews Slept

The *Gemora* explains that because of "...and do good", a person should not indulge in sleep but rather learn Torah by day and by night. Therefore, commented the *Imrei Emes* zt"l, the Jews overslept on the night of the giving of the Torah. They had not yet received the Torah and were only in the category of "Turn away from evil" without "...and do good" (*Imrei Emes, Likutim*).