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Bava Metzia Daf 87

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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

Avraham and Sarah

It is written: *And I (Avraham) will fetch a morsel of bread (for the angels).* But, the *Gemora* asks: It is also written: *And Avraham ran to the cattle and took a calf. [This is much more than a mere morsel of bread!]*

Rabbi Elozar answers: This teaches that righteous men say a little and do a lot; whereas the wicked say a lot and do not perform even a little.

The *Gemora* asks: How do we know this (regarding the wicked)?

The *Gemora* answers: It is derived from Ephron (when he was selling land to Avraham to bury Sarah). At first it is written: *The land is worth four hundred shekels of silver*, but subsequently he said: *And Avraham heeded Ephron; and Abraham weighed out to Ephron the price which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Ches, four hundred shekels of silver in negotiable currency*; indicating that he refused to accept anything but *centenaria* (which each one of them was equivalent to 2,500 shekels), for there is a place where *shekels* are called *centenaria*.

It is written (regarding Avraham’s request of Sarah to prepare cakes made out of meal for their guests): *meal*, and it is also written: *fine meal!*?

Rabbi Yitzchak answers: This shows that a woman is stingier upon guests than a man.

It is written: *Knead it, and make cakes*, but it is also written: *And he took butter and milk, and the calf.* And yet, he did not bring any bread before them!?

Ephraim Maksha’ah, a disciple of Rabbi Meir, said in the name of Rabbi Meir: Avraham Avinu ate *chulin* only when it was *tahor* (which although permitted, because it was not consecrated, Avraham acted in the way of pious people), and that day our mother Sarah had her menstrual period (causing the bread to become tamei).

It is written: *And they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “Behold, She is in the tent!”* This is to inform us that she was modest (and was not hanging out with the men).

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, and others say that it was Rabbi Yitzchak: The Ministering Angels knew that our mother Sarah was in the tent, but why did they cause Avraham to answer that she was in her tent? It was in order to make her beloved to her husband (that she was so modest).

Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Chanina said: It was in order to send her the cup of blessing (the wine cup used for birchas hamazon).

A *braisa* was taught under the authority of Rabbi Yosi: Why are the letters *alef, yud* and *vav* in the word *eilav* dotted? The Torah is teaching us proper etiquette - that a man must enquire about the welfare of his hostess.

The *Gemora* asks: But did Shmuel not say: One should inquire about a woman (*for it can lead to intimacy between them*)!?

The *Gemora* answers: When the enquiry is made through her husband (*about his wife*), it is different and therefore permitted.

It is written (*when Sarah laughed when she heard she will have a child*): *After I have withered, I shall have delicate skin again?* Rav Chisda said: After the flesh has withered and the wrinkles have multiplied, her flesh became delicate and the wrinkles were smoothed out, and her beauty returned to its place.

It is written (*when Sarah laughed when she heard she will have a child*): *And my husband is old*, but it is also written: *And Hashem said to Avraham, she said, "I am old"* (*why did Hashem say that she said that she was old, when in fact she said that Avraham was old*)? The Holy One, blessed be He, did not say her words the way she said it!?

The *Beis Medrash* of Rabbi Yishmael taught: Peace is great, for even the Holy One, blessed be He, made a variation for its sake, as it is written: *And Sarah laughed within herself, saying ... and my husband is old*, whereas it is further written: *And Hashem said to Avraham, she said, "I am old."*

It is written (*after Yitzchak was born*): *And she said, "Who would have said to Avraham that Sarah would nurse children?* How many children did Sarah nurse (*only one*)

Rabbi Levi said: On the day that Avraham weaned his son Yitzchak, he made a great feast, and all the nations of the world derided him, saying, "Have you seen that old man and woman, who brought a foundling from the street, and now claim him as their son! And furthermore, they make a great feast to establish their claim!" What did our father Avraham do? He went and invited all the great men of that generation, and our mother Sarah invited their wives. Each one brought her child with her, but not her nursemaid. A miracle

happened to our mother Sarah that her breasts opened like two fountains, and she nursed them all. Yet they still murmured, saying, "Granted that Sarah could give birth at the age of ninety, but could Avraham have a child at the age of a hundred?" Immediately, Yitzchak's facial features changed and became similar to the face of Avraham, whereupon they all called out, "Avraham begot Yitzchak."

Until Avraham there was no old age. Whoever wished to speak to Avraham would speak to Yitzchak (*since they were identical*), and whoever wished to speak to Yitzchak would speak to Avraham. Thereupon Avraham begged for mercy, and old age came into existence, as it is written: *And Avraham was old and well-on in years.*

Until Yaakov there was no illness. Yaakov begged for mercy (*so a father could instruct his children prior to his death*), and illness came into existence, as it is written: *And he told Yosef, "Behold, your father is sick."*

Until Elisha no sick man ever recovered, but Eliyahu came and begged for mercy, and he recovered, for it is written: *Now Elisha took sick with the sickness from which he died.* This proves that he had been sick on previous occasions too, but he had recovered.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: Elisha was afflicted with three illnesses: One was because he pushed Geichazi away with both of his hands; one because he stirred up the bears against the children; and one of which he died; as it is written: *Now Elisha became sick with the sickness from which he would die.* (87a)

Explaining the Mishna

The *Mishna* had stated: Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: This is not necessary to say, for everything is decided according to the custom of the city.

The *Gemora* asks: What is included in "everything"?



The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: If one hires a worker and he says to him, "I will pay you like one or two of the people who reside in this city," he can give him according to the person who receives the lowest wage in the city; these are the words of Rabbi Yehoshua. The *Chachamim* say: They must make a compromise between them (*and pay according to the average wage received*). (87a)

Mishna

[*This Mishna teaches us that in some cases the Torah authorizes workers to eat from the employer's food, even without the sanction of local custom or a special agreement for the provision of food.*] And these eat by Biblical law: The one who works on what is attached to the ground when the work is being completed (*i.e. the harvesting*), and on what is detached from the ground before its work is completed (*before it is fully processed, and not obligated in ma'aser or challah yet*), and this is only if they are working with that which grows from the ground.

And the following may not eat: The one who works on what is attached to the ground when the work is not being completed (*during the time that the produce is still growing*), and on what is detached from the ground after its work is completed, and if they are working with that which does not grow from the ground. (87a – 87b)

Scriptural Sources

The *Gemora* cites the Scriptural sources for the *halachos* mentioned in the *Mishna*.

The *Gemora* initially cites the verse: *When you come into the vineyard of your fellow, then you may eat...* [*The Gemora later will explain that this verse is referring to a worker who was engaged to work in a vineyard. By the fact that the verse concludes by saying that the fruits should be placed in the owner's vessel, this indicates that we are discussing the produce at the time of completion.*] We derive from a vineyard to any other type of produce that grows from the

ground that the worker is allowed to eat from it as the work is being completed.

The *Gemora* asks: How can we derive from a vineyard which is obligated in *oleilos* (*a small, underdeveloped cluster of grapes; it must be left for the poor people*)?

The *Gemora* answers: We may derive from the following verse regarding standing grain: *When you come into the standing grain of your fellow, you may pluck ears with your hand.*

The *Gemora* asks: How can we derive from standing grain which is obligated in *challah*? The *Gemora* proves that the standing grain under discussion is grain that is subject to the *challah* obligation.

The *Gemora* answers that we may derive it from the common denominator of the two: Anything that grows from the ground - the workers are allowed to eat from it as the work is being completed.

The *Gemora* asks: How can we derive from the common characteristic of the two when they both have an altar aspect to them (*a vineyard is used for libation and grain for the meal-offerings*)? The *Gemora* notes that olives, which also have an Altar aspect (*its oil is mixed into the libations*), could also be derived from here.

Shmuel answers that we derive all crops from a different verse: *but a sickle*. We derive from here to any produce which is cut with a sickle - the worker is allowed to eat from it as the work is being completed.

The *halachah* that the worker can only eat from the attached produce at the time of the picking is derived from the verse: *but you may not place it in your vessel.*

The *Gemora* asks: Perhaps a worker can only eat those crops that are cut with a sickle (*such as beans and grain*); how



would we know that the *halachah* is the same regarding fruits of a tree (*which are not cut with a sickle*)?

Rather, Rabbi Yitzchak says: It is derived from the word *kamah* (*standing grain – any produce*).

The word “*sickle*” teaches us that the *halachah* applies even to produce which is not subject to the laws of *challah*.

Rava notes that the verse “*When you come into the vineyard of your fellow, then you may eat...*” teaches us the following *halachos*: The worker may eat from the produce of the employer; however, the *halachah* does not apply to the vineyard of a Cuthean (*the worker may even place the produce in his own vessel*).

The *Gemora* asks: Why is this verse needed according to the opinion that holds that it is permitted to steal from a Cuthean (*which is a matter of dispute in Bava Kamma 113a*)?

The *Gemora* answers: The verse will be coming to teach us that a worker cannot eat from the produce when he is working on a field belonging to *hekdesh* (*consecrated property*).

Other *halachos* derived from this verse are as follows:

1. The worker cannot suck the grapes (*for he will be consuming more this way*).
2. He may eat it like the owner; i.e. when he eats it as a snack, he is not required to separate *ma'aser* from it.
3. He may not eat gluttonously.
4. The worker can eat only at the time that he is putting the produce in the employer's vessels (*at the time of the harvest*). (87b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

License to Lie

Rabbi Moshe Menachem Liberman, a member of the Chicago Community Kollel discusses some of the *halachos* regarding the modification of the truth for certain purposes.

“And they sent a message to Yoseph saying: Your father commanded before he died, saying: So you shall say to Yoseph: Please forgive now the transgression of your brethren, and their sin, for they did to you evil . . .” Vayechi 50:16-17. Rashi points out that the brothers modified the words of Yaakov Avinu in this matter in the interest of peace because Yaakov Avinu had not actually commanded thus. The Gemara learns from these pesukim that there is a license to alter the truth in the interest of peace. This freedom to alter the truth is actually mandatory and not merely an authorization to alter the truth. Before we look at this obligation to alter the truth in the interest of peace, it behooves us to examine the general restriction against altering it.

The Torah states in Parshas Mishpatim, “From a false matter you shall distance yourself.” Thus, halachic authorities hold that there is a biblical obligation to refrain from lying. Furthermore, Hashem exhorts us to speak the truth, as the Navi in Zechariah states, “Let one man speak with another in truth.”

The threshold for establishing what constitutes a falsehood, though, is very low. A mere omission is considered an alteration of the truth. The Chofetz Chaim deduces this from our *Gemora*, which states:

Peace is important because even Hakodosh Boruch Hu altered the truth in the interest of peace. Initially the Torah writes [that Sarah Imeinu, after hearing that she will give birth to a son to Avraham Avinu, said], “[After I am old shall my skin become smooth] and my husband is old?” And afterwards it writes [Hashem (only) told Avraham Avinu that Sarah Imeinu had said], “and I am old?” The only difference between what Sarah Imeinu said and what Hashem told Avraham Avinu that she said, was that Hashem omitted the comment that she had made concerning Avraham Avinu. This omission, the Gemara said, was permitted only because it was done in the interest of peace. Thus, even a mere omission of part of an otherwise true statement is



considered a falsehood to which we are commanded to keep our distance.

Although merely omitting is considered a falsehood, when altering the truth in the interest of peace, it is preferred to an outright lie. Of course, if merely omitting would be insufficient then he should outright lie. This obligation to lie in the interest of peace, however, does not sanction swearing falsely. Additionally, one may not lie concerning things which have not yet happened.

There are other times when it is also appropriate to lie. If a person is asked whether he is knowledgeable in a certain Mesechta, he may lie and answer that he is not when in fact he is. However, if he is asked in order to provide an answer to a halachic query or to teach, then he must answer truthfully, consistent with his expertise in the Mesechta. If a person is asked in the presence of disreputable people concerning the graciousness of his host, he may lie and answer that his host was not gracious.

The contemporary halachic authorities also permit altering the truth in the following circumstances:

- ☐ People may answer, "I don't know" when asked about a matter that is supposed to remain secret.
- ☐ Wealthy individuals may lie about their wealth if they fear "the evil eye" (*ayin hara*) or if they do not want to arouse jealousy.
- ☐ If one fears that a package will be mishandled, it is permitted to write "glass" on it, even though it does not contain any glass.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM YESTERDAY'S DAF to refresh your memory

Q: Who were the last of the *Tannaim*?

A: Rebbe and R' Nassan.

Q: Who were the last of the Amoraim?

A: Ravina and Rav Ashi.

Q: How do we know that one should not deviate from the custom of the local town?

A: We see that Moshe went to the Heavens and did not eat bread, and the angels came to earth and did eat bread (*or made it appear as if they did*).

DAILY MASHAL

Birkas HaMazon on Drinking Wine?!

Our Gemora relates that the angels asked Avraham Avinu "Where is Sarah" to send her the wine from birkas hamazon. The Gemora, though, remarks that they did not eat the bread she baked as it became tamei so how could they say birkas hamazon? Rav Y.L. Diskin zt"l offered a brilliant solution. The Gemora in Berachos 35b explains that despite the important status of wine, we do not say birkas hamazon after drinking it as it is usually not drunk as the "fixed" major ingredient of a meal. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak asked what the halachah would be if one arranged his meal with wine as the major ingredient. Rava replied that Eliyahu the Prophet would have to testify that he actually "fixed" his meal on wine – till then, we assume he behaved like everyone else. Avraham Avinu, said Rav Diskin, was a prophet and could bear witness that the angels drank wine as the central feature of their meal and could say birkas hamazon.