

16 Iyar 5777  
May 12, 2017



Bava Basra Daf 110

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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

### **Check the Brothers**

Rava said: One who marries a woman should inquire about (*the character of*) her brothers, for it is written: *And Aharon took Elisheva, the daughter of Aminadav, the sister of Nachshon*. Now, since it is stated the daughter of Aminadav, do we not already know that she is the sister of Nachshon? Why does the torah expressly state, “*the sister of Nachshon*”? We derive from here that he who takes a wife should inquire about her brothers. It was taught in a *braisa*: Most children resemble the mother’s brothers. (110a)

### **Yehonasan and Michah**

It is written: *And they (the men from Dan) turned aside, and said to him (Yehonasan, the priest to Michah’s idol): Who brought you here (halom)? Why are you in this (zeh) place? And what do you have here (poh)?* The *Gemora* explains: They were saying to him: Are you not a descendant of Moshe of whom it is written: *Do not come any closer to here (halom)?* Are you not a descendant of Moshe of whom it is written: *What is this (zeh) in your hand?* Are you not a descendant of Moshe of whom it is written, *But as for you, stand here (poh) with me?* How (*knowing all this*) can you become a priest for idol worship? He said to them: I have the following tradition from my grandfather’s house (*Moshe*): A person shall rather hire himself out to

service idols rather than be in need of the charity from others. He thought that this meant actual idol worship, but it is not so. The meaning is “work which is strange to him (*work that is beneath one’s dignity*). This is as Rav said to Rav Kahana: Skin a carcass in the street and earn a wage for your work, and do not say, ‘I am a great man and such work is degrading to me.’”

When King David saw that Yehonasan had an exceptional liking for money, he appointed him in charge over the treasuries.

The *Gemora* concludes that Yehonasan was called Shevuel because he returned to Hashem with all his heart. (110a)

### **Sons but not Daughters**

The *Mishna* had stated: A son inherits from the father and he bequeaths to his father.

The *Gemora* asks: Where is this derived from (*that a son inherits, and not a daughter*)?

The *Gemora* answers: It is written: *If a man dies [and has no son, then his inheritance shall pass to his daughter]*. It can be inferred from here that the reason (*the daughter inherits*) is because he has no son, but if



he would have a son, the son takes precedence (*and the daughter would not inherit at all*).

Rav Pappa asked Abaye (*according to the conclusion of the Gemora*): Perhaps if there is (*only*) a son, he will inherit; if there is (*only*) a daughter, she will inherit; if there are both, they share the inheritance!?

Abaye answers: A verse would not be necessary to teach us that if there is only a son, he would inherit.

Rav Acha bar Yaakov attempts to cite another source for this *halachah* (*that a son inherits over a daughter*), but it is refuted.

Ravina also attempts to cite another source for this *halachah*, but it is refuted.

The *Gemora* cites an alternative source. It is written: *And you shall make them as an inheritance for your sons after you*. This means that *your sons* inherit but not your daughters. (110a – 110b)

### **Paternal Brothers**

The *Mishna* had stated: Brothers from the father inherit and bequeath to each other.

The *Gemora* asks: Where is this derived from (*that paternal brothers inherit, but not maternal*)?

Rabbah derives this *halachah* from a *gezeirah shavah* (*one of the thirteen principles of Biblical hermeneutics – it links two similar words from dissimilar verses in the Torah*). Just as the “brotherhood” by the twelve sons of Yaakov is referring to paternal brothers, so too here

(*by inheritance*), the brotherhood spoken of is that from the father and not from the mother.

The *Gemora* asks: why is this necessary? Did we not learn that the maternal family is not regarded as family?

The *Gemora* answers: That is, indeed, correct. Rabbah’s *gezeirah shavah* should be used for *yibum* (*only a paternal brother performs yibum with his brother’s wife, not a maternal brother*). (110b)

### **INSIGHTS TO THE DAF**

#### **Root of Yehonasan’s Sin**

The *Gemora* states that a person’s children will inherit the attributes of the family he marries into. Moshe married the daughter of Yisro who spent his life steeped in idolatry and therefore had Yehonasan as a grandson who served as a priest for the idol of Micah. But, Aharon, who married the daughter of Aminadav (*sister of Nachshon*), had Pinchas who was a great *tzadik*.

The connection between marrying the sister of Nachshon and having a child like Pinchas seems clear. Nachshon was known for his dedication to sanctifying Hashem’s Name, being the first to jump into the *Yam Suf*. Pinchas was also *moser nefesh* by being *mekadesh shem shamayim* by killing the *Nasi* of Shimon, despite the ridicule he had to suffer (*as the Gemora says that all the Tribes mocked him that he descended from Yisro who worshiped idols*).

It would seem that the connection between Yisro and Yehonasan is also clear. They were both involved in idolatry. But, the *Gemora* on 109a explains that Yehonasan was misled by a tradition that he heard: A person shall rather hire himself out to service idols rather than be in need of the charity from others. Yehonasan understood this literally, that for sustenance, one may work as a priest for idolsh.

The Rashbam seems troubled by how he could made such a mistake and writes that Yehonasan thought that as long as he is not intending to worship the idols, he is not doing anything wrong. This seems to be an honest mistake based on the misunderstanding of the tradition, so why does the *Gemora* indicate that he was evil? He never actually worshiped idolatry!?

The Rashbam quotes a Yerushalmi that elaborates on the behavior of Yehonasan. Yehonasan was entirely motivated by money. People would bring sacrifices to t Michah's idol, to which Yehonasan would say that they are wasting their time. He would then tell them that they should give him precious gifts and he will bring it to the idol. When they left he would indulge in the gifts. When confronted, he admitted that the idol has no power and he is only working there for sustenance. The sin of Yehonasan is that his desire for wealth blinded him from realizing what he is doing. He may have honestly been confused and thought that the tradition allowed him to do what he was doing, but the only reason he made such a grave error is because he was blinded by his desire for wealth.

\Where did this great desire for wealth and physical possessions come from? Perhaps this came from Yisro. In Parshas Yisro we find that Yisro comes to Moshe

(according to Ramban, it was prior to the Giving of the Torah), and after giving Moshe advice, he returns to his family, but the Ramban explains that he came back again while the Jews were still camped as Sinai. Then in Parshas B'ha'aloscha (10:29), he tries to leave again. Why? Rashi explains that he wanted to go back to his wealth rather than join the Jews into *Eretz Yisroel*. Moshe then begs him not to leave because, as Rashi explains, people will say he only converted to get a portion in *Eretz Yisroel*, so when he realized that converts aren't entitled to a portion, he left. Moshe then has to guarantee Yisro some financial incentive to get him to stay. Rashi explains that the "good" that is being referred to is that when *Eretz Yisroel* was divided, Yisro received the fertile land of Yericho, which he would have until the time when the Beis Hamikdash would be constructed. The Ramban (Yisro) understands from this Rashi that Moshe successfully convinced Yisro to stay by offering financial incentive. Targum Yonasan also says that the good that Moshe promised to Yisro was a portion in *Eretz Yisroel*.

Based on this, we can suggest that the poison that Yisro brought into the genetic pool of Moshe's descendants was not service of idol because Yehonasan his grandson never actually worshiped idols. The poison that Yisro brought, which the *Gemora* refers to, is the great desire for material wealth that caused Yehonasan to make such a fatal error.

***Should you check out your future wife's brothers nowadays?***

Rava asserts the well-known rule that he who plans to marry should check her brothers since, as Rashbam comments, "most of a woman's children resemble her

brothers” (s.v. *Sheyivdok*). The purpose of the examination is not to determine the woman’s own nature as that can be perceived by observing **her**, but aims to foresee her children’s character as they are assumed to resemble her brothers (*Chida* in *Pesach Einayim* on our *sugya*).

Rabeinu Tam explains that the link between a woman, her brothers and her children stems from their all having the same *mazal* (Tosfos, *Yevamos* 62b, s.v. *Vehanosei*). If so, why examine her brothers? If she and her brothers have the same *mazal*, would it not suffice to examine her alone? The answer is that males and females have different natures even if being under the same *mazal*; hence one must check her brothers to see how her sons will be (Maharal, *Chidushei Agados*).

The *Gemora* in *Yevamos* (63a) remarks that he who weds his sister’s daughter will enjoy marital bliss and the Meiri (*ibid*) attributes this promise to the fact that they have the same nature.

Rabbi Vidal HaTsarfati, who lived over four centuries ago, offered an alternative explanation in his *Imrei Yosher* on Midrash Rabah (*Shemos* 6:23): A woman’s children are accustomed to be in their uncles’ homes and, in a sense, are also brought up by them and learn from their behavior. (See also the commentaries on tractate *Soferim*, end of Ch. 15; *Maharsha* on our *Gemora*; *Gur Aryeh* on *Shemos* *ibid*; etc.)

The rule to check out one’s prospective brothers-in-law is not mentioned by Rambam, *Shulchan Aruch* or other *halachic* works. Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid, though, stresses the severity of the matter (*Sefer Chasidim*, 374-78) and the *Shelah HaKadosh* even adds

that anyone not obeying the rule “deviates from our Sages’ instructions and is considered as abandoning life” (*Shnei Luchos HaBeris* on *Shemos* 6:23).

We can further understand the application of the issue from the advice offered by the Steipler Gaon Rav Yaakov Kanievski zt”l, to a young man who had difficulty finding a *shiduch*. The boy eventually was engaged to a young woman whose brother had completely left the path of Torah and *mitzvos* and he asked the Steipler if he was acting wisely or perhaps should renege on the *shiduch*.

Rav Kanievski then offered six reasons to adhere to the *shiduch*:

- (1) There should be no worry if she also has observant brothers as her children might well resemble them in their behavior.
- (2) Most people fail to heed this Talmudic warning and the *Gemora* itself says of similar cases “Hashem guards the naïve” (*Tehilim* 116:6; *Yevamos* 12b; etc.).
- (3) Was her brother exposed to a negative environment as a young child and, as a result, tempted from the right path? If so, he is judged as a child led into captivity and not responsible for his actions.
- (4) The stinging insult to the fiancée if the *shiduch* is canceled should be considered.
- (5) If the boy cancels the *shiduch*, he won’t easily find another and might remain single for a long time.
- (6) The ruling is not cited by *halachic* authorities and is apparently intended as merely an extra measure of piety (*midas chasidus*).



Finally, Rav Kanievski concluded that the young man should decide the matter for himself (*Orchos Rabeinu*, IV, p. 255, and quoted almost in full in *Karyana D'igarta*, II, 18).

### ***What should you check for?***

Rav Kanievski's pupil, HaGaon Rav A. Horvitz, reports that his mentor offered another reason to forgo examining her brother (ibid, p. 234): In former times, families lived in a totally observant environment and a brother who deviated from the right path apparently indicated that something was amiss in his family. Now, though, the very streets are awash in heresy, the media tempt the youth in all directions and parents cannot protect their children from exposure to deleterious influences. A brother who stops being observant nowadays has no bearing on his family and we should have no worry as long as the potential bride is worthy and virtuous.

HaGaon Rav E.M. Shach zt"l further remarked that the examination concerns character and attributes, not actions which depend on a person's choice (*Michtavim Umaamarim*, VI, p. 128).

### **HALACHOS OF THE DAF**

#### ***Not Accepting Charity***

One should distance himself from accepting charity, and should live a life of poverty, rather than to avail himself unto others. Chazal say that a person should make his Shabbos a weekday (*i.e. he shouldn't spend so much*), rather than to collect charity. Even if he is a well respected Talmid Chacham that became poor, he

should work, even in a menial labor, just so that he shouldn't have to accept charity.

Having said that, if a person can't survive without accepting charity, and he can't work due to sickness or old age, or even if his salary can't make ends meet, and such a person doesn't accept charity due to pride or misguided piety, then it's as if he committed murder. Furthermore, all the pain and suffering that he has because of his poverty, will not be considered merits; on the contrary, it will be considered sins.

However, a person who can survive, and he chooses to live a life of abject poverty just so that he won't have to avail himself unto others, Hashem guarantees him that he will eventually become wealthy and he will support others.

If a charlatan collects charity when he has no need for it, he will eventually become poor and really need charity.

### **DAILY MASHAL**

#### ***A Woman of Valor, Who Can Find?***

Concerning Rava's warning to examine a prospective bride's brothers, the Chida found the topic hinted in the initials of "A woman of valor, who can find?" – *eishes chayil mi yimtza*, spelling *achim* – brothers; alternatively, *mi ach?* – "Who is the brother?" (*Pesach „Einayim*, on our *sugya*; *Kisei Rachamim* on tractate *Soferim*, end of Ch. 15; *Bris Olam* on *Sefer Chasidim*, p. 374).