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Sotah Daf 21

Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler, Kollel Boker Beachwood

Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamot of

Moshe Raphael ben Yehoshua (Morris Stadtmauer) o”h
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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

The Merit of Torah

The Mishnah had stated: There can be a merit that can hold the punishment for three years etc.

The *Gemora* asks: What is the merit (*that extends the life of a guilty Sotah*)? If it is the merit of Torah study this seems difficult, as a woman is not commanded to study Torah (*and therefore her merit should not be so great*)! It therefore must be the merit of other *mitzvos*.

The *Gemora* asks: But does the merit of a *mitzvah* protect so much? But it was taught in a *Baraisa*: Rabbi Menachem ben Rabbi Yosi expounded the following verse: *For a mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light*; the Torah compared a *mitzvah* to a candle and the Torah to light. A *mitzvah* is compared to a candle: This tells you: Just as a candle protects only momentarily, also a *mitzvah* protects only momentarily. [*A candle eventually goes out.*] And Torah is compared to light: This tells you: Just as (the essence of) light is forever, so too, Torah protects forever. Additionally, the verse states: *When you walk, it (the study of Torah) will guide you. When you walk, it will guide you* - this refers to (a person’s life in) this world. *When you lie down, it will watch over you* - this refers to death. *And when you wake up, it will talk for you (it will be your advocate)* - this refers to the future. This (the distinction between the merit received from the performance of a *mitzvah* and the merit received from the study of Torah) is comparable to someone who was walking in the black of night and darkness and was scared of (walking into) thorns, pits and briars, (and he was scared of being

attacked by) wild animals and bandits, and he was also uncertain of which road to take. If a torch of fire comes to him, he is saved from the thorns, pits and briars (for he can see them and readily avoid them), but he is still scared of the animals and bandits, and he is still uncertain of which road to take. Once the light of dawn rises, he is saved from the animals and bandits, but he is still uncertain of which road to take. Once he reaches the crossroad (*and crosses over to the road he is supposed to go on*), he has been saved from everything.

Another explanation: A sin can extinguish (the reward of) a *mitzvah*, but a sin cannot extinguish (the reward for) Torah study. This is as the verse says: *Much water cannot extinguish this love.* [*Accordingly, how will the sotah’s mitzvos protect her from death?*]

Rav Yosef answers: When a person is involved in the performance of a *mitzvah*, it protects him (*from punishment*) and saves him (*from his Evil Inclination*). When he is not (actually) involved in the *mitzvah*, it protects him (*from punishment*) but does not save him (*from sinning*). However, Torah study, whether at the time that he is involved with it or whether at the time that he is not involved with it, it protects him (*from punishment*) and saves him (*from sinning*).

Rava asked: If this is so, (how can it be) didn’t Doeg and Achitofel involve themselves with Torah? Why were they not protected (*from sinning*)?

Rather, Rava says: Torah study, at the time that he is involved with it, it protects him (*from punishment*) and saves him (*from sinning*); however, when he is not involved with it, it protects him (*from punishment*) but does not save him (*from sinning*). A *mitzvah*, however, whether at the time that he is involved with it or whether at the time that he is not involved with it, it protects him (*from punishment*) but does not save him (*from sinning*).

Ravina suggests differently: The merit which protects the *sotah* is the merit of Torah. And that which you asked that she is one who is performing even though she herself is not commanded; (we can answer that) while it is true that she is not commanded (to study Torah), she has the merit of making her sons read and study (by sending them to school), and by waiting for their husbands to come back from the study hall (*in another town*). Does she not divide a share with them? (21a1 – 21a3)

Crossroads

The *Gemora* asks: What is the “crossroads” referred to (*in the Baraisa above*)? Rav Chisda says: This is referring to a Torah scholar and the day of his death (*on the last day of his life, he knows that he has not shirked the yoke of Torah*). Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak says: This is referring to a Torah scholar and the fear of sin. Mar Zutra says: This is referring to a Torah scholar who is able to reach the correct conclusion regarding Halachic topics. (21a3)

Torah Protects

The *Baraisa* stated: Another explanation: A sin can extinguish (the reward of) a *mitzvah*, but a sin cannot extinguish (the reward for) Torah study.

Rav Yosef said: Rabbi Menachem bar Yosi (the author of the *Baraisa*) expounded this verse as if (he heard the explanation) at Mount Sinai. And if Doeg and Achitofel would have expounded it in this fashion, they would not

have chased after David. For it is written (*they said about David*): saying, God has left him. What verse did they expound (*that they therefore thought that God had left David on account of his sin with Bathsheba*)? It states: *And He shall not see by you a promiscuous thing (and He will turn away from you)*. They did not realize that a sin can extinguish (the reward of) a *mitzvah*, but a sin cannot extinguish (the reward for) Torah study (*and that would protect David even if he sinned*). (21a3 – 21a4)

Partners in Torah

What does the verse mean when it states: *they will surely scorn him*? Ulla said: This is not like (the arrangement of) Shimon the brother of Azaryah (where Shimon studied Torah and Azaryah supported him, and in exchange, Shimon agreed to share his reward for studying with him), nor is it like Rabbi Yochanan of the Nasi’s house (where R’ Yochanan had a similar arrangement with the Nasi), but rather like Hillel and Shevna. For when Rav Dimi arrived (*from Eretz Yisroel*), he taught that Hillel and Shevna were brothers. Hillel studied Torah while Shevna was a businessman. Eventually, Shevna said to Hillel: Let us join together and divide (*your merit and my money*). A Heavenly voice rang out and said: If a person will give all the treasure of his home (*they will surely scorn him – referring to one who takes this in lieu of his Torah merit*). (21a4)

Teaching one’s Daughter Torah

The Mishnah had stated: Ben Azzai said: A man is required to teach [his daughter Torah, so that if she drinks, she will know that her merits may suspend it for her.] Rabbi Eliezer says: Whoever teaches his daughter Torah has taught her lewdness.

The *Gemora* asks: Could it enter your mind that he is teaching her lewdness!?



The Gemora answers: Rather, it is as if he is teaching her lewdness.

Rabbi Avahu said: What is Rabbi Eliezer's reasoning? For it is written: *I (the Torah) am wisdom; I lay cunningly.* Once wisdom enters a person, cunningness enters him.

The Gemora asks: What do the Rabbis (i.e., Ben Azzai, who maintains that one is obligated to teach his daughter Torah) say is the definition of this verse?

The Gemora answers: They need it for that which Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Chanina expounded, for Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Chanina said: The words of Torah are upheld only by someone who makes himself as if he is standing naked for them (*he does not involve himself in other pursuits*). This is as the verse states: *I am wisdom, I dwell with nakedness.* [He translates "Armah" differently.]

Rabbi Yochanan said: The words of Torah are upheld only by someone who makes himself as if he does not exist. This is as the verse states: *And wisdom from nothing will be found.* [It will be found in someone who has nothing else.] (21b1)

Cunning Evildoer

The Mishnah had stated: Rabbi Yehoshua says: A woman prefers [one kav and intimacy rather than nine kavs and abstinence].

The Gemora asks: what is he saying?

The Gemora explains this to mean that a married woman would prefer one kav (of food) and intimacy, rather than nine kavs (of food) and abstinence (i.e., *she would rather have a husband who earns only a kav, but is home with her, rather than a husband who earns nine kav, and is traveling, which promotes abstention*).

The Mishnah had stated: He used to say: A foolish pious person [a cunning evildoer, a self-righteous woman and the blows of the self-righteous - these ruin the world].

The Gemora asks: What is an example of a "pious fool?"

The Gemora answers: If a woman is drowning in a river, and he says, "It is not appropriate for me to look at her and save her."

The Gemora asks: What is an example of a cunning evildoer?

Rabbi Yochanan answers: This is someone who relates his side of the story to the judge before the other litigant arrives.

Rabbi Avahu says: This is someone who gives a *dinar* to a poor person, so that he now has two hundred zuz (*so that he can no longer take the entitlements of the poo*). This is as the Mishnah states: Someone who has two hundred zuz cannot take *leket* (*one or two ears of grain that fall from his hand while harvesting must be left for the poor*), *shich'chah* (*one or two bundles that are mistakenly left behind during the gathering of the bundles are left for the poor*), *pe'ah* (*a corner of the field is left over for the poor*) from the stalks, and he cannot take the tithe for the poor. If he had less than two hundred, even if they give him one thousand zuz at one time, he may take it.

Rabbi Assi said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: This is referring to one who advises orphans to sell inadequate property left to them by their father. For Rav Assi taught in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: If the male orphans preempted the female orphans (*before it came to Beis Din*) and sold property from a small estate, their sale is valid (*even though the daughters should have legally received the estate and the sons would go begging door to door*).

Abaye said: This is referring to one who advises his fellow to sell properties in accordance with Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. For it has been taught in a *Baraisa*: If one man said to another, "My property shall be yours and after you it shall be given to so-and-so," and the first recipient went down and sold the property, the second one may take the property from those who bought it (*after the first one dies*); these are the words of Rebbe. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel ruled: The second one may receive only that which the first has left.

Rav Yosef bar Chama said in the name of Rav Sheishes: It is referring to someone who convinces others to emulate his ways (*in order to hide his abominable actions*).

Rabbi Zerika said in the name of Rav Huna: It is referring to one who is lenient for himself, but he rules stringently for others.

Ulla said: It is referring to a person who has studied Torah and *Mishnah*, but he not served Torah scholars (*and thereby lacks the true understanding of the Mishnah*). (21b1 – 22a1)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Teaching Torah to Girls

Rabbi Eliezer said: If someone teaches his daughter Torah, he is teaching her lewdness.

Tosfos cites a Yerushalmi which notes that Ben Azzai does not follow the exposition of Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah. For it is written regarding the *mitzvah* of Hakhel that men, women and children should assemble. The men come to learn, the women come to listen and the children come so that those who brought the children can earn reward. According to Ben Azzai, the reason why the women come is to learn, just like the men. However, according to Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah, who holds that one should not teach

his daughter Torah, the women are not coming to learn; but rather, they are listening to the words of Torah in order for them to know how to fulfill the *mitzvos* that they are commanded to perform.

The Rambam rules that a woman who studies Torah receives reward, but not in the same capacity as a man. However, the *Chachamim* commanded a father not to teach Torah to his daughter, for women, in general, are not capable of understanding the intricacies and the fine details of the Torah, and it will lead them to incorrect halachic conclusions. This admonition is only applicable to the Oral Law; however with respect of the Written Law, one should not teach it to her, but if he does, it is not regarded as if he taught her lewdness.

The Maharatz Chiyos asks: According to the Rambam, Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah could also expound the verse by Hakhel to be saying that the women are coming to learn Torah, for there, the king was teaching the Written Law, and there is no prohibition whatsoever to teach that to her!?

He writes that after careful scrutiny of the Rambam's language, it is clear that there is a prohibition to teach one's daughter the Written Law; however, it is not with the same degree as the prohibition regarding the Oral law.

The Tur (Y"D 246:6) seemed to have a different version of the Rambam, for he writes that the Rambam holds that the concept of lewdness only applies by the Written Law, but with respect of the Oral Law, there is no lewdness; however, one should not teach it to her, but if he does, it is not regarded as if he taught her lewdness.

The Beis Yosef writes that it must be a printer's mistake in the Tur, for the Rambam says the exact opposite.



The Rama rules that the laws pertaining to a woman, she is obligated to learn. The Bach writes that it is for this reason that a woman recites a birchas HaTorah in the morning.

The Aruch Hashulchan comments that it was never the custom for women to learn from a sefer. They were taught orally all the *halachos* that were relevant to them.

The Chafetz Chaim in Likutei *Halachos* writes that these *halachos* only applied in earlier times when the children lived in the same place as their parents and the tradition was strong. Then, it was forbidden to teach the women Torah, and the women followed the examples of the previous generations. However, in today's times, when children live far away from their parents and the tradition has been weakened, and especially because the woman are studying the language and writings of the secular world, it is an important obligation to teach the girls Chumash, Prophets, the Writings, Pirkei Avos and the ethical teachings of our sages in order to strengthen their faith. For if not, they are liable to stray from the correct path of Hashem. The Steipler Gaon writes that in today's times, it is more dangerous not to teach them Torah than to teach them. He even rules that one is allowed to teach *Mishnah* to girls. However, Reb Moshe Feinstein (Y"D III, 87) rules that *Mishnah* is part of the Oral Law, and the original prohibition is still intact, and therefore, girls should not be taught *Mishnah* in school.

DAILY MASHAL

First Thoughts

The *Gemora* asks: What is an example of a cunning evildoer? Rabbi Yochanan answers: This is someone who tells his side of the story to the judge before the other party shows up.

Rashi explains that once the judge hears the first side, it will be difficult for him to remove that from his mind, and he will not be impartial in the case.

The Mirrer Mashgiach, Reb Chaim Shmuelwitz notes that this is true regarding the way a person thinks as well. The first thought that enters one's mind becomes entrenched in his brain, and he will not pay attention to a different perspective presented to him. He will not even bother thinking that perhaps his opinion is incorrect, and all that will happen in the future will only serve to strengthen his original thought.

Accordingly, he explains that which the Shach (C"M 37:109) brings from the Ball Ha'itur: If witnesses observed something concerning a relative of theirs, they cannot offer testimony even if at the time of the testimony, they were no longer relatives. This is because it is the nature of man to follow his initial thoughts, and their recollection of the incident will be based on their initial perception, which occurred while they were related.

Protection of Torah

The Gemara questions the suggestion that the ill effects of the Sotah waters can be held in abeyance if the Sotah has the merit of Torah learning to her credit because since it is not incumbent on women to learn Torah, they do not receive the same level of reward as men do.

It is given that there are many areas of Halacha that a woman needs to be well educated about and therefore it is incumbent on her to study those laws. This teaches us that when the Gemara refers to the merits of Torah study that protect and shield a person from punishments and from the Yetzer Hara, it is not referring to the study of practical Halacha, it is referring to the immersion in and the intense analysis of the theory behind the Halacha.



It is this type of Torah study that requires the full focus of all a person's mental faculties that protects and shields us from all forms of harm.