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Sotah Daf 22

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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

The Merit of Torah

It was stated: A person who has studied Torah and *Mishna*, but has not served Torah scholars (*and thereby lacks the true understanding of the Mishna*), Rabbi Eliezer says that he is an *am ha’aretz* (*an ignorant person; someone who is not careful with respect of terumah, ma’aser, tumah and taharah*). Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini says that he is a boor (*same halachic status as an am ha’aretz, but a boor is worse because he lacks good character as well*). Rabbi Yanai says that he is compared to a Cuthean (*converts to Judaism after an outbreak of wild animals in Eretz Yisroel and their conversion was debated as to its validity; they observed some commandments, but not others*). Rav Acha bar Yaakov said that he is like a sorcerer (*since he tricks people*).

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: It is probable that Rav Acha bar Yaakov is correct, for there is the following saying: “The sorcerer mumbles and doesn’t know what he is saying; the *Tanna* (*who hasn’t served a Torah scholar*) recites and doesn’t know what he is saying.”

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: Who is regarded as an *am ha’aretz*? Someone who doesn’t recite *kerias shema* in the morning and in the evening with the blessings; these are the words of Rabbi Meir. The *Chachamim* say: An *am ha’aretz* is someone who does not put on *tefillin*. Ben Azzai said: An *am ha’aretz* is someone who does not have *tzitzis* on his garment. Rabbi Yonasan ben

Yosef said: An *am ha’aretz* is someone who has sons, but does not raise them to learn Torah. Others say: Even if a person has studied Torah and *Mishna*, but has not served Torah scholars, he is regarded as an *am ha’aretz*. If he studied Torah, but not *Mishna*, he is a boor.

It is written [Mishlei 24:21]: *My son, fear the Lord and the king; do not mingle with the “shonim.”* Rabbi Yitzchak said: The “*shonim*” are those who study *halachos* (*but do not serve Torah scholars*).

The *Gemora* comments: I might have thought that the “*shonim*” refers to those who repeat their sins, and it would be in accordance with Rav Huna. For Rav Huna said: One who commits a sin and repeats it, it has become permitted to him. Our *Gemora* teaches us to expound the verse to be referring to those who study *halachos*, but do not serve Torah scholars.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: Those who report the *Mishna* bring destruction to the world.

Ravina explained: They issue halachic rulings based upon the *Mishna* (*without understanding the reasoning behind the Mishna, or they don’t know if this particular Mishna is a minority opinion; this causes them to err in their halachic rulings*). (22a)

Destroyers of the World

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: A maiden who prays constantly, a widow who constantly visits her neighbors and a minor whose months are not completed bring destruction upon the world.

The *Gemora* asks: And is this so? But Rabbi Yochanan has said: We learned fear of sin from a (*prayerful*) maiden and the bestowal of reward from a (*neighborly*) widow! “Fear of sin from a maiden” - for Rabbi Yochanan once heard a maiden fall upon her face and exclaim, “Lord of the Universe! You have created Gan Eden and Gehinom; You have created the righteous (*to inherit Gan Eden*) and the wicked (*to inherit Gehinom*). May it be Your will that men should not stumble (*and sin*) through me.” “The bestowal of reward from a widow” – for a certain widow had a Synagogue in her neighborhood; yet she used to come daily to the Beis Medrash of Rabbi Yochanan and pray there. He said to her, “My daughter, is there not a Synagogue in your neighborhood?” She replied, “My teacher, but do I not receive reward for the extra steps!” [*Why does the braisa say that these women bring destruction upon the world?*]

The *Gemora* answers: The *braisa* was referring to women such as Yochani the daughter of Retivi (*she was a widow who through sorcery made childbirth difficult for a woman, and then, when the pregnant woman was in severe pain, she would pray for her, and give the impression that she was an extremely pious person*).

The *Gemora* asks: What does the *braisa* mean when it said “a minor whose months are not completed”?

In Bavel they explained: It refers to a Torah scholar who rebels against the authority of his teachers (*based upon the Gemora in Chagigah (5a) which states that a*

student who revolts against his teacher, his life will be shortened).

Rabbi Abba said: It refers to a student who has not attained the qualification to issue halachic decisions, and yet decides them.

The *Gemora* asks: At what age should a student begin to issue halachic rulings?

The *Gemora* answers: When he is forty years old.

The *Gemora* asks: But Rabbah decided many halachic issues (*and he died at forty*)?

The *Gemora* answers: Rabbah was equal in Torah wisdom with the one’s who were his senior. (22a – 22b)

Self-righteous

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: There are seven types of self-righteous people: The self-righteous Shechemite, the self-righteous knocker, the self-righteous bloodletter, the self-righteous pestle, the self-righteous who always says, “What is my obligation that I may perform it?”, the self-righteous because of love and the self-righteous from fear.

The *Gemora* explains them: The self-righteous Shechemite is one who acts like Shechem (*who circumcised himself for ulterior reasons*). The self-righteous knocker is one who knocks his feet while walking (*he walks humbly, from heel to toe without lifting his feet off the ground, and because of that kicks the stones that are on the ground*). The self-righteous bloodletter - Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak said: He is one who makes his blood to flow by hitting his head against the walls (*by pretending to close his eyes in order to avoid looking at women*). The self-righteous

pestle - Rabbah bar Shila said: This is referring to one who bends his head like a pestle (*pretending to be modest*).

The *Gemora* asks: Is one who says, "What is my obligation that I may perform it?" regarded as being self-righteous? Shouldn't that be regarded as a virtue!

The *Gemora* answers: Rather, he was saying, "What further obligation is there for me that I may perform it?" [*He is saying that he fulfilled the entire Torah, and there is nothing left for him to do.*]

The final two people listed in the *braisa* were the self-righteous because of love (*because of the reward of the mitzvos; not because he was commanded to do them*) and the self-righteous from fear (*because of the punishments he will incur if he does not fulfill them; a person should perform the mitzvos out of love for Hashem, and eventually, he will receive the rewards*).

Abaye and Rava said to the one who was teaching this *braisa*: Do not mention the self-righteous because of love and the self-righteous from fear, for Rav Yehudah has said in the name of Rav: A person should always perform Torah and *mitzvos* even without the proper intent, as doing so leads to their performance with proper intent.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: What is hidden is hidden, and what is revealed is revealed (*to other people; however, everything is revealed before Hashem*); the Great Tribunal will exact punishment from those who wrap themselves in cloaks (*of self-righteousness*).

King Yannai (*upon his deathbed*) said to his wife, "Do not fear the righteous (*referring to the truly righteous*

Jews, who would not take revenge against her for what her husband did) or the non-righteous (*the Sadducees, who were friends of Yannai*), but you should fear those who pretend to be righteous, because their deeds are like the deeds of Zimri, but they expect a reward like Pinchas. (22b)

Mishna

Rabbi Shimon said: A merit does not cause the bitter waters to suspend its effect, for if you would say that it does, you discredit the water in the case of all the women who drink it (*and she will not admit her guilt, but rather, she will rely on her merits*) and defame the innocent woman who drank it, since people will say that she was actually defiled, but their merit caused the water to suspend its effect upon them.

Rebbe says: A merit may cause the bitter waters to suspend its effect, and she will not bear a child or thrive, but she gradually wastes away and finally dies through that very death (*her belly will swell and her thighs will fall*).

If her *mincha* became *tamei* before it became sanctified in the ministering vessel, it is like all *mincha* offerings, and it can be redeemed. If however, it became *tamei* after it had been sanctified in the ministering vessel, it is like all *mincha* offerings and it is burned.

The following are cases where the *sotah's mincha* (*flour-offering*) must be burned: A woman who says to her husband, "I am defiled to you"; a woman about whom witnesses testified that she is defiled (*we do not give her the waters to drink in these cases, so her mincha cannot be brought on the Altar; hence, it must be burned*); a woman who says that she will not drink; a woman whose husband does not want her to drink; a

woman whose husband cohabited with her on the way up to the Beis Hamikdash (*for the bitter waters will not test her any longer*); and any woman who is married to a *Kohen*. All of their flour-offerings are burned. (22b – 23a)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

REPENTANCE IN THE SAME SITUATION

It is written [Yirmiyah 22:10]: *Cry intensely for one who leaves, because he will not return again and see the land of his birthplace*. Rav Yehudah said: This is referring to one who departs this world without children.

Rav Huna said: The verse is referring to a person who committed a sin and repeated it. The *Gemora* states: Rav Huna is following his reasoning stated elsewhere that one who commits a sin and repeats it; it has become permitted to him.

The *Gemora* asks: Do you actually think that it is permitted? The *Gemora* answers: Rav Huna means that it becomes to him as if it was permitted.

The *Gemora* (*Yoma 86b*) explains that a true penitent is one who committed a sin in the past and then the opportunity for the same sins comes again a first time and a second time and he is saved from the sin on both occasions.

The *Sefer Chasidim* writes that a person should not put himself into a situation where he is tempted to sin, because he may not be able to withstand temptation.

The *Tzlach* questions the words of the *Sefer Chasidim* from the commentary of the *Kli Yakar* in *Parshas Chukas*, who writes regarding the phenomena of the

Parah Adumah that the *Parah Adumah* was capable of rendering pure those that were impure and conversely, rendering impure those that were pure.

The *Kli Yakar* likens this idea to certain medicines that are beneficial for one who is ill but can prove fatal for one who is healthy. There is a parallel between remedying the body and remedying the soul. One who wishes to repent must be with the same woman that he sinned with the first time, at the same time of the year in which he had sinned, and at the same place where he sinned with her. Thus, the temptation to sin is particularly strong, as his *Evil Inclination* will entice him to respond exactly as he did before. By resisting the temptation, he demonstrates that he is a true penitent.

The *Kli Yakar* adds that this is what the *Gemora* (*Brochos 34b*) means when it states that in the place where penitents stand, the completely righteous do not stand, i.e. the completely righteous cannot stand in a place of temptation. Yet, according to the *Sefer Chasidim*, a righteous person is not permitted to endanger himself by entering into such a situation.

TRANSGRESSION COMMITTED ONLY ONCE

The *Gemora* states that if one commits a transgression and repeats it, it becomes like it is permitted to him.

Rav Shach was once giving rebuke and he questioned if there is any among us that have committed a sin and not repeated it. Woe is to us.

The *Mabit* in *Beis Elokim* (*shaar hateshuva ch 11*) writes that our sages have said if one commits a transgression three times, it becomes like it is permitted to him. Did he have a different version in the *Gemora* than us? Our *Gemora* states this to be correct if a person commits a sin even twice.