

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) Regrets and openings (cont.)

A fourth incident is recorded that relates to the question of whether regret is sufficient grounds to annul a vow or is an opening necessary.

R' Abba identifies the verse that teaches that when a person takes a vow his ledger is opened and scrutinized in Heaven.

The Gemara discusses other possible reasons to annul a vow and whether they are sufficient grounds to annul vows.

The Gemara rules that mentioning the issue that taking vows is like building a private altar and fulfilling vows is like offering a sacrifice on that altar cannot be used to annul a vow.

Another possible opening, based on a teaching of Shmuel, is rejected as a valid opening.

2) Anger

R' Shmuel bar Nachmani taught in the name of R' Yonason about the evil of anger.

An incident related to one of the verses cited in R' Yonason's teaching is presented.

Two more teachings related to anger are recorded.

R' Ada the son of R' Chanina teaches that had the Jewish People not sinned they would have received only the Torah and Sefer Yehoshua.

3) Annulling vows

R' Assi teaches that other than two exceptions a vow taken by invoking the name of "the G-d of Israel" should not be annulled.

The incident that led R' Assi to issue this ruling is presented.

Another related incident is recorded.

Rava rules in the name of R' Nachman that vows may be annulled with regret, even if they were taken by invoking the name of "the G-d of Israel."

Two additional incidents related to openings to annul vows are presented. ■

REVIEW and Remember

1. What happens in Heaven when a person takes a vow?
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2. What is the consequence for one who becomes angry?
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3. How much of Tanach would have been given to the Jewish people had they not sinned?
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4. Why did R' Sechora annul his vow?
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Distinctive INSIGHT

Declaring a vow is as building a private altar

הנודר כאילו בנה במה

The ר"ן explains that R' Nosson in the Baraisa teaches that one who pronounces a vow is as a person who builds a private altar at a time when doing so is prohibited. The comparison is that one who builds an altar thinks that he is doing a great mitzvah, while the truth is precisely the opposite. Similarly, the person who declares a vow thinks that since the Torah prohibits many things, if he accepts additional limitations upon himself he is doing a greater mitzvah. The truth is, however, that bringing an offering is desirable only when it is done within the Beis Hamikdash and with the kohanim officiating. Offering an individual offering on the private altar is a mistake. This parallels the general situation regarding prohibitions. When the Torah instructs us to prohibit something, it is a mitzvah to abstain from it. However, a private neder to prohibit additional items upon oneself is looked down upon.

The Rosh also brings this explanation, and it seems from his words that the very building of a private altar is unacceptable, and it is not only its usage to bring an offering that is prohibited.

Shitta Mikubetzes explains the analogy to an altar a bit differently. When a person builds such an altar, he has not yet slaughtered any animals for it, yet we assume that with the altar built it is inevitable that the person will continue and ultimately bring an offering upon it. So too, when a person utters an oath, the truth is that he has not yet violated his word. Nevertheless, we immediately censure his gesture, as we assume that there is an excellent chance that the vow will fail to be honored.

Tosafos (Gittin 46b, ד"ה הנודר) explains that the comparison between building an illegal private altar and uttering a vow is that we have a גזירה שוה of חדלה-חדלה with the verse in Devarim (23:23) referring to a vow, and the verse in Yeshaya (2:22) referring to building an illegal altar.

Maharsha in Yevamos (109b) explains the comparison along the lines of the Shitta Mikubetzes here, in that building an altar and declaring a vow are not prohibited in and of themselves, but they lead to situations where the person is about to fail, either with inevitably bringing a foreign offering, or by violating the commitment represented by the vow. ■

HALACHAH Highlight

The negative side of taking vows

ר' נתן אומר הנודר כאילו בנה במה והמקיימו כאילו מקריב עליו קרבן

R' Nosson said: One who vows is like one who built an private altar and one who fulfills his vow is like one who offered upon it a Korban

The Gemara makes it clear that although there is a parsha of nedarim in the Torah that allows a person to make a neder, nevertheless it is an objectionable practice. The reason it is objectionable is the fear that the vower will not fulfill his vow. Furthermore, the Gemara teaches that one who fulfills his vow rather than have it annulled has compounded his sin and is considered wicked and a sinner. According to the Yerushalmi¹ Hashem questions the necessity for the vower to create additional prohibitions not mentioned in the Torah. In another place in the Yerushalmi² we are taught that when a person makes a vow it gives license to those in the Heavens to open that person's ledger to start examining his deeds and if he is late in fulfilling his vows they immediately seek retribution for the delay.

One could ask, however, if nedarim are so bad why does the Torah allow a person to take a vow in the first place? Additionally, the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos³ writes that nedarim are a method by which a person can achieve a state of asceticism – פרישות. If nedarim are positive how could the

Gemara speak so negatively about them? Rav Yechiel Michel Epstein⁴, the Aruch Hashulchan answers that depending upon the circumstances a neder can be very positive or very negative. If a person takes a neder to facilitate separating from a bad habit or to rectify a bad character trait it is laudable. Thus, for example, if a person is gluttonous and wishes to refrain from eating meat for a period of time or if a person was drinking too much wine and desired to refrain, a neder is an effective method to ensure that he will follow through with his commitment. Similarly, if a person is strongly drawn to money and would like to train himself to a different manner of thinking he may choose to prohibit benefiting from certain people to accustom himself to saying no to other people's money. Nonetheless, one should not become carried away even with positive nedarim, and that is the Gemara's warning against taking vows and certainly becoming accustomed to taking vows. Thus a person should make an effort to exercise self control without resorting to vows. ■

1. ירושלמי ריש פ"ט דנדריים ומובא בערוה"ש יו"ד סי' ר"ג סע' ד'
2. ירושלמי שם פ"א ומובא בערוה"ש יו"ד סי' ר"ג סע' ד'
3. פרקי אבות פ"ג י"ז
4. ערוה"ש שם סע' ה' ■

STORIES Off the Daf

Proper priorities

כל הכועס אפי' שכינה אינה חשובה כנגדו...

We find on today's daf: "To one who loses his temper, even the Shechinah is not important in his eyes." Our daf is filled with numerous proofs of the negative consequences, in this world and the next, of indulging the terrible middah of anger. From this we can see that the inverse is true—there are many rewards, in this world and the next, for making the effort to master one's temper.

Once, the expensive matzos slated

for use by the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz were accidentally switched for much simpler matzos. Understandably, certain people were upset at the assistants who were supposed to guard against such an eventuality. The rebbe told the following story to convey his own feelings about such punctiliousness.

"In many places the custom was to keep chickens set aside for Pesach away from any chometz. In the household of a certain rebbe, they would even dress the chickens in little mittens and place them in a special chometz-free henhouse. When a chicken from the regular flock jumped into the coop that housed the Pesach chickens, one of the rebbe's assistants began to shout. 'Why

aren't these chickens watched as is fitting?'

"The rebbe of that place turned to the man who shouted and said, 'Haven't you heard that it is forbidden to get angry?'

"The man who had shouted tried to justify his behavior. 'But on Pesach even the slightest amount of chometz is prohibited!'

'The tzaddik did not accept the man's reasoning. 'I am talking about anger, regarding which our sages said that anyone who is angry is considered to have worshipped idols. And you justify yourself with a 'chometzdik'e' chicken?'" ■

