



OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) Apikoros (cont.)

The Gemara cites numerous other opinions regarding the definition of an apikoros.

An exchange between R' Yirmiyah and R' Zeira about the definition of an apikoros is presented.

2) The height of the gates of Yerushalayim

R' Yochanan's earlier statement that the height of the gates of Yerushalayim will be twenty amos is unsuccessfully challenged.

A discussion related to the phrase ועלהו לתרופה is recorded.

3) The reward for the righteous

R' Dimi gives a description of the reward for the righteous in the World-to-Come.

Abaye unsuccessfully challenges this teaching.

A Beraisa is cited that supports R' Dimi's statement.

4) External books

A Beraisa defines "External books" as books of heretics.

R' Yosef rules that it is prohibited to read Sefer Ben Sira.

Abaye searches until he finally identifies the part of Sefer Ben Sira that is objectionable.

R' Yosef cites aphorisms from Sefer Ben Sira that may be quoted.

5) Explaining Mishlei 15:15

The Gemara begins to present different interpretations of Mishlei 15:15. ■

Distinctive INSIGHT

Expressing skepticism about the words of the sages

אמר לו ריקה אם לא ראית לא האמנת? מלגלג על דברי חכמים אתה וכו'

The Gemara brings several examples of heretical behavior. One of the examples is a story of R' Yochanan and a student. R' Yochanan was expounding upon a verse from Yeshayahu (54:12). He described how the Holy One, blessed be He, will take precious stones which are thirty amos wide by thirty amos long, and He will carve windows within them which will be ten by twenty amos, and these windows will be for the gates of Yerushalayim. A student who was listening to this speech was very skeptical, and he mocked the words of R' Yochanan. "We barely find precious stones which are the size of a bird's egg! How will there be stones of such huge dimensions?" A while later, this student went out to sea on a boat, and he saw angels carving stones of the precise dimensions about which R' Yochanan spoke. When he asked the angels what they planned to do with these stones, they told him that they were going to be used for the windows of Yerushalayim. The student returned to R' Yochanan and praised him. "Rebbe! Your insights are wonderful! I myself witnessed stones just like you described. You expounded the verse beautifully!"

When R' Yochanan heard the student's praise, he was stunned. "You ignorant fool! Had you not seen it you would not have believed it! Do you question and mock the words of the sages?" R' Yochanan placed his eyes upon the student, and he turned into a pile of bones.

Rashash notes that perhaps R' Yochanan did not react to the student's original criticism when he voiced skepticism about R' Yochanan's words because he did not hear the student when he spoke. Michtav MiEliyahu notes that this student must have been a very special person, as he was someone who was able to hear and converse with the celestial an-

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REVIEW and Remember

1. How tall will the gates of Yerushalayim be in the era of Moshiach?

2. What will be the reward for the righteous in the World-to-Come?

3. What is objectionable in Sefer Ben Sira?

4. In what way are בעלי משנה better than בעלי תלמוד?

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HALACHAH Highlight

Touching a Megillas Esther with one's hands

כי מטו מגלת אסתר אמרי הא מגילת אסתר לא בעי מטפחת

When they came to a Megillas Esther they said [to R' Yehudah], this Megillas Esther doesn't require a cover [does it?]

Shulchan Aruch¹ writes that it is prohibited to touch a Sefer Torah directly without a handkerchief to interpose between one's hand and the parchment. Rema² adds that according to some opinions the same restriction applies to other holy writings. The custom is not in accordance with these opinions but one should be stringent if he has not washed his hands. Magen Avrohom³ asserts that Rema is referring to holy writings that are not written in Ashuris script, on parchment and with a scribe's ink, but it is prohibited to touch other sections of Scripture that are written in Ashuris, on parchment and with a scribe's ink with one's hand. Thus, for example, it is prohibited for one to touch a scroll of Megillas Esther with one's hand.

Teshuvos Panim Meiros⁴ disagrees with Magen Avrohom's understanding of Rema. There is no question whatsoever that one may touch Scripture that is not written in Ashuris, on parchment and in scribe's ink, with one's hand. It is regarding Scripture written in Ashuris, on parchment and with scribes ink that Rema mentions that the custom is to be lenient but one who did not previously wash his hands should be stringent. The reason one could be lenient even with Scripture is that since it is not rolled as is a Sefer Torah it is lacking sanctity.

In the course of his analysis, Teshuvos Panim Meiros proves that it is not prohibited for one to touch Megillas Esther by hand from our Gemara. The Gemara relates that Levi bar

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gels. Yet, his actions still constituted heresy, because his trust in the words of R' Yochanan was lacking to the extent that he only believed in them fully once he saw the angels with his own eyes.

Tosafos (Chullin 57b) points out a contrast between our story and a similar story featuring R' Misharshia. In Chullin, based upon a verse in Mishlei (6:7), R' Misharshia taught that ants do not have kings or officers. A student who heard this went to an ant colony to verify if it was true, and the Gemara does not criticize that student. Tosafos explains that the student did not question R' Misharshia, and he only wanted to go and see how the ants function without a king or officers.

מהר"ץ חיות notes that the problem is only when one mocks the words of the prophets or the sages. If the statement is not from the words of the prophets, or where the student does not hear directly from his own rebbe, the problem is not so acute. ■

Shmuel and R' Huna bar Chiya were repairing the mantels of different scrolls and when they came to a scroll containing Megillas Esther they asked R' Yehudah whether it requires a mantle in a rhetorical manner indicative of disrespect. Rashi⁵ explains that their mistake was in the way they posed the question but their assumption that the megilla did not require a mantle was correct. The fact that all opinions seem to agree that a Megillas Esther does not require a mantle supports the custom that there is no prohibition to touch works of Scripture other than a Sefer Torah with one's hand. ■

1. שו"ע או"ח סי' קמ"ז סעי' א'.
2. רמ"א שם.
3. מגן אברהם שם סק"א.
4. שו"ת פנים מאירות ח"א סי' ע"ו.
5. רש"י ד"ה כי מטו מגלת אסתר. ■

STORIES Off the Daf

One day at a time

"אל תצר צרת מחר..."

The Chasam Sofer, zt"l, learns a very practical lesson about one's daily avodas Hashem from today's daf. "In Sanhedrin 100 we find that one should not worry about tomorrow since perhaps he will no longer live by then. Why worry about a world he has no part in? This is very valuable advice that shows how to overcome our yetzer hara. If one focuses on the long struggle he

will have throughout his entire life, he can easily give up on himself. Just thinking about the unrelenting effort required to overcome the evil within is enough to discourage anyone, since who knows that he will be able to keep up the struggle?

"Instead, one should focus on the day he is in right now. He should act as though he only has this day to live, since he really has no guarantee that he has a moment longer. He should tell himself that just for that day he will refuse to listen to his yetzer hara. After all, one day is really not too difficult. The next day he should once again fo-

cus only on that day. In this manner he will be able to overcome his yetzer hara with relative ease.

"This is the meaning of the verse, 'ואתם הדקבים בה' אלקיכם חיים כלכם' — And you who cleave to Hashem your G-d, your are all alive this day.' Those who wish to attain true dveikus with Hashem can do so through focusing exclusively on living and overcoming the evil within only on the day he is now living. In this manner he will truly cleave to his Creator and never need to feel overwhelmed by the task ahead of him."¹ ■

1. חתם סופר, דרשות