

# The Weekly Daf



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**Bava Kama 58-64 Week of 11-17 Iyar 5754/22-28 April 1994**

*Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied as part of Daf Yomi during the above dates.*

***This issue is dedicated in memory of Bernard Greenman O.B.M.***

## Something for Everyone – Two Lessons on Fire

**A** dilemma of conflicting interests faced the Sage Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha. Two disciples, Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi, implored him to teach them. But one insisted on a topic of Halacha (Jewish Law) while the other insisted on a topic of Agadata (Biblical Exegesis, ethical guidelines or educational stories). His efforts to initiate a discourse in either one of these areas was frustrated by the obstinate insistence of the other to concentrate on the area of his choice. He explained his dilemma to his disciples with the following parable.

A middle aged man had two wives, one young and one old. The young one kept plucking out the gray hairs from his head in order to maintain a youthful appearance. The older one plucked the black hairs to keep him looking older. As a result he lost all of his hair.

But this Sage came up with a bold solution by focusing on a Biblical passage whose interpretation would satisfy the interests of both disciples. The passage he chose (Shmos 22:5) deals with responsibility for damage caused by human negligence in failing to control a fire.

“If a fire breaks out and catches on to thorns causing standing sheaves of grain or the field to be consumed, he that set the fire shall surely be required to make compensation.”

### THE HALACHA

The passage begins with a description of the fire as something not of his creation (“the fire breaks out”) but rather his property which he has failed to control. It concludes, however, by referring to the guilty party as “he that set the fire.” The purpose of this description is to raise the level of responsibility of one who starts a fire on his property and fails to prevent it from spreading to another’s property. The flames are not merely like an animal he has failed to control but are considered as arrows which he has launched against his neighbor. The wider range of payments – pain, unemployment and medical expenses – which the Torah places upon a man who physically causes damage to another person’s body, but not when such damage is caused by negligence in controlling his animal, will therefore be incumbent upon one whose fire burns the hand of another.

### THE AGADATA

“I am obligated to pay for the damage caused by the fire I set,” says Hashem. “I set a fire in Zion (‘He has set a fire in Zion which consumed its foundations’ – Eicha 4:11— a reference to the burning of the two Holy Temples) and I shall rebuild it with fire (‘I shall be a wall of fire surrounding her, says Hashem, and my glory shall dwell within her’ – Zecharia 2:9).”

*Bava Kama 60b*

**NOTE:** Our Weekly Daf is patterned after the formula described above. Our effort to present each week one item of Halacha and one of Agadata in order to satisfy the varying interests of our subscribers must overcome the challenges faced both by Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha and the embattled husband in his parable. We rely on the sophistication of our readers to help us achieve the **bold** success of the Sage and avoid the *bald* failure of the other.

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