

The Weekly Daf



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Shabbos 142-148

Tazria/Metzora Week of Week of 24-30 Nissan 5758 / 20-26 April 1998
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Child Psychology

A child is sitting in an enclosed yard demanding the attention of his father, to whom he is very attached. He obviously wishes to be carried. The problem is that in his hand is a stone, which is considered *muktzeh* and forbidden by rabbinic law to move even in the private domain. If the father carries his sensitive child, he will be considered indirectly carrying the *muktzeh* stone. If he does not carry him, the child is likely to become so upset that he will become ill.

The opening mishnah of our 21st perek provides the resolution of this dilemma. The danger to the child's health, albeit not a mortal threat, was sufficient reason for the Sages to suspend their ban on this indirect form of handling *muktzeh*, and the father may therefore carry his stone-bearing child.

An interesting question is raised by Tosefos regarding this ruling. If someone wishes to carry a basket of fruit with a stone in it, he is permitted to do so only if he has no option of removing the stone by pouring out the contents of the basket, because the fruit involved is grapes or figs which will become spoiled upon being spilled. In the case of hard fruits such as citrus which will not be spoiled by a fall, he must empty the basket to get rid of the stone and then return the fruit to the basket. Why, then, shouldn't the father be required to shake the stone out of his child's hand before carrying him?

The answer offered by Tosefos is another exercise in child psychology. Causing the child to thus part with the stone will result in the sort of tantrum we are trying to avoid, so we are left with no other option for safeguarding his health than to carry him with stone in hand.

What if it is a coin in the child's hand rather than a stone? The Sage Rava points out that in such a case the Sages did not permit the father to carry him. Unlike a stone, the father will be tempted to pick up the coin if it falls from the child's grasp and thus violate the more serious ban on direct handling of *muktzeh*.

May the father take his child for a walk in the yard when one hand is in his father's grasp and the other is clutching a coin?

Rashi contends that this is forbidden because the coin may fall from the child's hand and the father will be tempted to pick it up. Ramban, however, differentiates between carrying a coin-bearing child and leading one by the hand. In the former case, the father, under the influence of the coin's value, is likely to reason that if it was permissible to indirectly carry the coin when he carried his child, then it is also permissible for him to directly pick up the fallen coin and return it to his child's hand. This reasoning will not apply in the case where he only led the coin-carrying child by the hand.

Both views are cited in *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 209:1*.

Shabbos 142a

The Importance of Learning Together

The priceless value of colleagues for the Torah scholar finds dramatic expression in the story of Rabbi Elazar ben Aroch. This great sage once traveled to that part of *Eretz Yisrael* whose rich wine and soothing mineral baths had been the undoing of the ten tribes, who were exiled from their land because they abandoned Torah study in order to indulge in these luxuries. He too was so attracted to these pleasures that he forgot his Torah knowledge. His colleagues prayed on his behalf and succeeded in having his wisdom restored to him. This is cited as one dimension of the counsel offered by Rabbi Nehorai in *Pirkei Avos* (4:14): "Exile yourself to a place of Torah study, and do not say that it will come to you, for your colleagues shall preserve it for you, and you must not rely on your understanding alone." Other dimensions of this advice are provided by the commentaries.

Rashi sees these words as directed towards the Torah scholar who fails to appreciate the value of studying together with others and insists on remaining alone in his own community in the hope that others will join him. Travel to them, advises Rabbi Nehorai, because you will be enriched by their study, even if it is another *mesechta*. You will inevitably listen in on their study and refresh your memory in that area. This will be more effective than relying on your own review and good memory alone. Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura offers two other approaches. One is that the sage is warning the scholar against relying on his own intelligence, no matter how sharp he is, for a true understanding of Torah. Only through the give-and-take of studying with others will he achieve success in his learning.

His other approach is that Rabbi Nehorai is addressing the scholar who hesitates to join his colleagues in traveling to the master to learn from him, and relies on hearing the master's lessons from his colleagues upon their return. Say not that it will come to you, warns the sage, by entertaining the illusion that your colleagues will preserve it for you, because hearing it second hand is not comparable to learning it from the source.

Yet another insight is offered by Eitz Yosef who focuses on the use of the term "exile" rather than "travel" to a place of Torah study. Exile implies the sacrifice of the prosperity and comfort of home. One must be prepared to give up such well being and endure the discomfort of exile for the sake of Torah study, always bearing in mind that if people are prepared to travel great distances and endure great hardships in order to achieve material wealth one should certainly be prepared to do the same in order to gain the crown of Torah which is superior to all other rewards.

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