

# The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Pesachim 23-29

Week of 17 Elul - 23 Elul 5758 / 7-13 September 1998  
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud  
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

## Whose Blood Is Redder?

If non-Jews demand of a group of surrounded Jews that they deliver one of the group for execution or else they will put the entire group to death, the Jews must all sacrifice their lives rather than deliver a single Jew to death. Even if the non-Jews designate a particular victim and threaten to kill all of them if he is not delivered, the Jews may do so only if the designated person is guilty of a capital crime. If, however, the designated person is not guilty of a death penalty, then all the members of the group must be ready to give up their lives rather than deliver him to death. (Such was the case with Sheva ben Bichri. He was a rebel against King David who sought refuge from his pursuing forces in the city of Aveil and was slain by the residents of the besieged city in order to save themselves from being put to death as conspirators (see Shmuel II chapter 20).

This is the ruling of Rambam (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 5:5) based on the view of the Sage Reish Lakish in the Jerusalem Talmud (Terumos 47a). This ruling is challenged, however, on the basis of an exchange found in our own gemara: A Jew came before the Sage Rava and asked him the following question: "The ruler of my town ordered me to kill a fellow Jew, or else this ruler will kill me. What should I do?" "Allow yourself to be killed," answered Rava. "Who says your blood is redder than that of the other Jew? Perhaps his blood is redder than yours?"

Rashi explains that Rava understood that the question put to him was based on the knowledge that the commandments can be put aside in order to save a life, and the assumption was that this should include even the ban on murder. To this, Rava countered that a commandment is suspended only for the purpose of preserving a life, which is so precious to the Creator. But regarding murder, a life will be lost in any case. One therefore cannot take the initiative of taking the other person's life on the assumption that one's own life is more precious.

If this is the only rationale for murder to be prohibited even for saving a life, it is difficult to see how it applies to the ruling of Reish Lakish codified as law by Rambam. Since the designated victim is anyway doomed to die together with his comrades if he is not delivered by them, it would seem to make sense that they should be permitted to sacrifice him in order to save themselves. The argument of "whose blood is redder" seems irrelevant here!

Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the Shulchan Aruch, writes in his Kesef Mishneh commentary on Rambam that the rule that murder is forbidden even for saving a life — or many lives — is something we know from an oral tradition dating back to Sinai. Our Sages merely tried to provide a tangible perception of its basic logic by presenting the "red blood" explanation. They never intended, however, to limit the ban only to situations where that criterion applied. Handing over someone to be executed, even if he is destined to be killed in any case, is still considered an act of murder and is therefore forbidden, even for the purpose of saving the life of the entire group.

*Pesachim 25a*

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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# With All Your Might

A Jew faced with the choice between idol worship and death is required to choose death. The basis is the Torah command (Devarim 6:5) "love Hashem with all your heart, all your soul and all your might."

It is understandable why the Torah had to write "all your soul" to instruct that loyalty to Hashem takes precedence over life. It is difficult, however, to understand why it was also necessary to stress the need to sacrifice "all your might," which means all your possessions, to maintain that loyalty. If life itself must be sacrificed, is it not obvious that one must sacrifice his money as well?

To this Rabbi Eliezer replies that there are some people for whom their money is more precious than their lives, and they too are instructed to sacrifice what is most precious to them in order to remain faithful.

The above cited passage appears in the first chapter of the Shema we recite each morning and evening. In the second chapter we recite we are again instructed in regard to loving and serving Hashem, but this time only "all your heart and all your soul" are mentioned (Devarim 11:13). There is no mention of "all your might." Why is the concept of sacrificing money for faithfulness deleted in this chapter?

Ohr Hachayim points out that the first chapter of Shema appears in the singular form while the second chapter appears in the plural. Amongst individuals, explains the Ohr Hachayim, it is possible to find some with such an exaggerated love of money that they must be reminded to sacrifice even that for their faith. But when the Torah addresses a community, it is inconceivable that any society should be so perverted in its priority of values. Once they have been told to sacrifice their lives, they will arrive at the natural conclusion that their possessions are also expendable.

Maharsha (Mesechta Berachos 35b) offers a different approach, based on the view of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, that a person who dedicates himself totally to the study of Torah need not be concerned about earning a livelihood, for his needs will be provided by Heaven. The passage (Devarim 11:14) about "gathering in your grain" which implies the need for human effort is interpreted by him as applying to situations in which Jews are not fulfilling the will of Hashem and therefore not deserving of such Divine assistance. But how can we limit this to when they are not behaving righteously, when that chapter begins with the words "And it shall be if you hearken to My commands?"

The answer, as already partially suggested by Tosefos, is that the first part of the chapter relates to Jews who indeed obey the Divine commands, but who are not completely righteous and therefore forfeit extraordinary Heavenly assistance. This characterization, points out Maharsha, is evident from the deletion of "all your might" in that chapter. Jews who love and worship Hashem with all their hearts and souls but fail to do so with all their money are condemned, measure for measure, to earn their livelihood through their own efforts.

*Pesachim 25a*

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