

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Yoma 2-8

Week of 18 - 24 Teves 5759 / 6 - 12 January 1999
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Evil on the Ropes

Seven days before Yom Kippur the kohen gadol is removed from his home and quartered in a special office in the Beis Hamikdash. Another kohen is prepared as a replacement in case he becomes impure.

Thus begins Mesechta Yoma, which is dedicated to the laws of Yom Kippur and the service which the kohen gadol performs on this day in the Beis Hamikdash.

Rashi explains that preparing a replacement was a precaution taken in case the kohen gadol had a nocturnal emission or contracted another type of spiritual impurity that would prevent him from entering the sacred precincts of the Beis Hamikdash.

One might think that this concern was unwarranted, because one of the ten miracles which our ancestors enjoyed in the Beis Hamikdash was that no kohen gadol ever became impure from a nocturnal emission on Yom Kippur (Avos 5:5). But this is incorrect for two reasons. First of all, the miracle related only to impurity caused by a nocturnal emission, because this was a bodily dysfunction and therefore more embarrassingly distasteful than other external causes of impurity. The replacement still had to be ready in case one of the causes not covered by the miracle arose. And even if the miracle would have covered all sources of impurity, our rule is "one does not rely on miracles." Therefore, natural precautions had to be taken, as the Jerusalem Talmud points out in regard to the pre-Yom Kippur diet of the kohen gadol to prevent such emissions. (1:4)

In his commentary on the mishna in Avos, Tosefos Yom Tov raises another question: Why was a miracle necessary to prevent the nocturnal emission caused by impure thoughts, when the kohen gadol was so well-insulated against such danger by being separated from home and family for seven days and being kept awake all night before he began his service?

His solution is to compare the constant battle between man's yetzer tov and yetzer hara (good and evil inclinations) to a battle between two opponents. When the losing combatant feels he is "on the ropes" he suddenly musters all his remaining strength in order to bounce back. An example of this is the rallying of a dying man who surprises his onlookers with a monetary appearance of good health. On the holy day of Yom Kippur, the yetzer hara is "on the ropes" and rallies his remaining energy to contaminate the kohen gadol with impure thoughts which would lead to nocturnal emission if not for the miracle preventing this.

Yoma 2a

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Two Lessons in Speech

"And He called to Moshe and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of the Assembly for him to say to others." (*Vayikra 1:1*)

Our Sages derive two important lessons in human relations from this very first passage of the Book of *Vayikra*.

The fact that Hashem first called to Moshe before speaking to him is support for Rabbi Chanina's counsel that one should not address his fellow man before first calling him to attention. Maharsha notes that this means he should call his intended listener by his name just as Hashem called Moshe by name before addressing him.

Another lesson deals with the issue of confidentiality. Our Sages warn us that anything heard from someone may not be repeated to any other party without the permission of the person who is the source. The proof for this would seem to be, as Maharsha notes, from the fact that Hashem had to give Moshe instructions to say to others what he had heard from Him.

Rashi, however, has another interpretation based on the makeup of the Hebrew word "*leimor*" which translates as "say unto others." This word can be broken into two shorter Hebrew words "*lo emor*" which translates as "do not say unto others," an implied ban on revealing anything heard until permission is granted.

This second lesson is mentioned as a matter of *halacha* by Magen Avraham in *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 156)*. He adds that if the person divulging the information explicitly demands the listener's confidentiality, the listener may not repeat that information to others even if the statement was made before others, giving the impression that it was not classified.

Yoma 4b

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