

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach

Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel

Tel: 972-2-581-0315 Fax: 972-2-581-2890 E-Mail: ohr@virtual.co.il Web: <http://www.ohr.org.il>

Bava Kama 86-92 Week of 10-16 Sivan 5754/20-26 May 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 J. Joshua Goldberg Z'L

A Blind Sage and a Bar Mitzvah

Who *deserves greater credit* ?

- One who fulfills G-d's commandments although he is not obligated.
- One who does so when he is obligated.

A blind sage, Rabbi Yosef, had different ideas on this subject at various stages in his life. At first he thought that someone who voluntarily fulfills a *mitzvah* deserves more credit. He therefore looked forward to a decision being reached by the Sages to uphold the controversial opinion of Rabbi Yehuda that a blind man is exempt from the obligation to fulfill positive commands. He even pledged to make a feast for the Torah scholars when such a decision should be forthcoming to celebrate his opportunity to fulfill so many commandments voluntarily.

But Rabbi Yosef had a change of heart when he heard the declaration of the great Rabbi Chanina that one who is obligated deserves more credit for fulfillment than his voluntary counterpart. The former must contend with the anxiety and tension natural for one concerned whether he has properly fulfilled his obligation while the latter has the relaxed ability to comfort himself with the thought that he is exempt anyway.

Rabbi Yosef therefore pledged to make his aforementioned feast for Torah scholars if a decision were reached by the Sages to reject Rabbi Yehuda's opinion and to thus make him obligated and deserving of greater credit.

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This principle is cited as a source for the celebration surrounding a youngster becoming a Bar Mitzvah, for it is at that point in his life that he is transformed from a child with no obligation – only the chinuch training for the future which is imposed on his parents – into a man with obligations and an opportunity to gain greater credit for each *mitzvah*.

How Great Gratitude?

"Don't throw dirt into a well from whose water you have drunk."

This is a bit of folk wisdom regarding the importance of gratitude. When the Sage Rabbah bar Mori was challenged by the Sage Rava to identify a scriptural source for this approach he referred him to the Torah's command (*Devarim* 23:8-9) to allow a third-generation Egyptian convert to Judaism to marry any Jew. We are directed to not hold the Egyptian "in total abomination" (even though his ancestors at one stage cast Jewish male babies into the river) "because you were a stranger in his land" (your ancestors enjoyed their hospitality when Yacov and his family came there in a time of famine).

Bava Kama 92b

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