

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Avodah Zarah 9-15

Week of 24-30 Tishrei 5756 / 18-24 October 1995
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

When Private is Public

	Rule 1	Rule 2
The Rules:	If a Jew drops a bunch of coins in front of an idol he is forbidden to bend down and pick them up because he gives the appearance of bowing down to the idol. This rule applies even if there are no onlookers because whenever the Sages prohibited doing something forbidden they extended this prohibition to include even the innermost chamber where no onlookers are present.	It is forbidden to slaughter a fowl or animal over a hole in the ground because it was the practice of idol worshippers to collect the blood from slaughtering in such a hole and use it for their pagan rites. If the slaughtering took place in a <i>private</i> yard which one wishes to remain clean he may do it in such a way that the blood will run into a hole, something which he is forbidden to do in a <i>public</i> area because of its pagan appearance.
The Problem:	If a rabbinic ban on an action which gives the appearance of being sinful applies even in a private area where there are no onlookers, as in Rule One, why do we make the distinction between public and private areas in Rule Two?	
The Resolution:	The reason we apply the ban even to a private area in Rule One is because there is a need to strengthen discipline by requiring the person to act in private as if there were onlookers who would suspect him of acting improperly. In Rule Two, however, even if there were onlookers they would not suspect him of idolatrous practice but would rather assume that he is trying to keep his yard clean. It is not the private nature of the yard which determines the exception in Rule Two but rather the nature of the circumstances which eliminate the fear of suspicion.	

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The Thousands of Torah

The world, in its present form, was scheduled from the time of its creation to endure for six thousand years. The first two millennia were characterized by the chaotic emptiness which existed before the Divine teaching of Torah arrived. The next two millennia were characterized by Torah without Mashiach. The last two millennia already held the potential for the Messianic era and only our sins have been responsible for the delay in Mashiach's arrival.

What is considered as the start of the Torah Millennia?

The giving of the Torah to the Nation of Israel at Mount Sinai took place in year 2448. This would leave only 1552 years till the end of the fourth millennium and therefore cannot be the milestone to which this calculation referred. Avraham Avinu is describe by the Torah as "having made souls in Charan" which means that he taught an idol-worshipping populace the belief in One G-d. Tradition teaches us that Avraham was 52 years old when he began teaching this Torah and the Biblical genealogical accounts indicate that he was born in the year 1948. This means that at the end of 2000 years of world history the era of Torah began.

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