

The Weekly Daf



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Berachos 9-15

Week of 5-11 Tishrei 5758 / 6 - 12 Oct. 1997

Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

First Things First

What determined the order of the three chapters of the Torah which comprise the recital of the *Shema*?

It cannot be the sequence in which they appear in the Torah, for the chapter we recite third — "*Vayomer*" (*Bamidbar* 15:37) — appears before those we recite first — "*Shema*" (*Devarim* 6:4), and "*Vehaya*" (*Devarim* 11:13).

Two explanations are offered in different parts of this week's section of the Talmud.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha takes this approach:

"*Shema*" is an expression of pledging one's allegiance to the Kingdom of Heaven and therefore should be recited before "*Vehaya*" in which one commits oneself to the commandments dictated by Heaven. "*Vehaya*" contains the commandment to study Torah, which is incumbent on a Jew night and day, and it therefore takes precedence to "*Vayomer*" with its commandment of *tzitzis* which is relevant only during the day.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai adds another angle.

In "*Shema*" we have commandments to study Torah, to teach it to others and to perform *mitzvos* (*tefillin* and *mezuzah*). "*Vehaya*" follows next because it also has commands to teach Torah and to perform *mitzvos*. "*Vayomer*" comes last because it contains only a commandment to perform the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* but lacks any mention of studying or teaching Torah.

Tosefos points out that if not for these explanations we would have concluded that since we do not follow the sequence in which they appear in the Torah, it would be more fitting to recite "*Vehaya*," which is in plural form, before "*Shema*" which is in the singular.

Berachos 14b

Never Too Late

The power of prayer is dramatically highlighted in the historic confrontation between a great king and a great prophet.

Chizkiyahu, King of Judea, refused to go and meet with the prophet Yeshayahu ben Amotz because he felt that the dignity of his office dictated that the prophet come to him. Yeshayahu, on the other hand, cited a historical precedent of king coming to prophet, and therefore refused to visit him.

Hashem, whom King Solomon describes in *Koheles* (8:1) as "the incomparable compromiser" broke the impasse by causing the king to become deathly ill and commanding the prophet to pay him a sick call.

"Thus spoke Hashem," he announced to the ailing king, "make your final preparation for you are condemned to die both in this world and in the world to come."

"Why do I deserve such a judgment?" asked the startled king.

"Because you failed to marry and produce children!"

"I avoided marriage," explained the king, "because it was revealed to me by Divine inspiration that my children would be sinners."

"What right do you have to meddle with the secrets of Heaven," he was rebuked by the prophet. "You are obliged to do what you have been commanded and let Hashem take it from there in the direction that He wishes."

"Will you give me your daughter in marriage?" proposed the contrite king. "Perhaps our combined merits will enable me to have righteous children."

"It is too late," declared Yeshayahu ben Amotz, "for it has already been decreed that you shall die from this illness."

"Son of Amotz", roared the king, "halt your prophesying and depart. There is a tradition in my family dating back to my great ancestor King David who did not hesitate to pray even when he saw the Angel of Death with sword in hand threatening a plague. This tradition says that even if a man has a sharp sword poised against his neck he should not hesitate to pray for deliverance."

The king immediately prayed to Hashem and was blessed with recovery.

Berachos 10a

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