

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Shabbos 37-43

Week of 7-13 Teves 5758 / 5-11 January 1998

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

What Language Do You Think In?

Do you think in the same language that you speak?

This fascinating speculation arises in the story told by Rabbi Yitzchak bar Avdimi of his visit to a bathhouse on Shabbos, in the company of his mentor, Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi (Rebbie). When he asked Rebbie a question about the laws of Shabbos pertaining to cooking congealed oil he received a detailed halachic response.

"How could Rebbie discuss a topic of Torah in the bathhouse?" asks the gemara. After all, it has already been ruled by Rabbi Yochanan that one may not even think thoughts of Torah in a bathhouse or bathroom because of the unclean nature of those places.

The first attempt to vindicate Rebbie is to suggest that he made his Torah statements in a secular tongue and not in the sacred language of Hebrew. This is rejected, however, because the Sage Abaye has already taught us that in such places secular matters may be discussed even in the holy language, while sacred matters may not be discussed even in a secular tongue. The gemara's conclusion is that since it was necessary to issue a halachic ruling in order to prevent the asker from violating Shabbos law, it was permissible to do so even in the bathhouse.

Tosefos raises the question as to how the gemara initially suggested that it was permissible to speak words of Torah in a secular language. Before uttering such words one must think, and thinking Torah thoughts is also forbidden in the bathhouse!

The gemara's initial suggestion, answers Tosefos, was based on the assumption that if Rebbie said his words of Torah in a secular language, he probably thought of them in that language as well.

Shabbos 40b

The Mitzvah of Living in Israel

"They shall be brought to Babylon and there remain until the day that I remember them, says Hashem, and I shall bring them up and return them to this place." (*Yirmiyahu 27:22*)

Does this prophecy concerning the Babylonian Exile refer to the Jewish People and constitute a ban on leaving Babylon for *Eretz Yisrael*? Or does it simply refer to the sacred vessels of the *Beis Hamikdash* mentioned a few passages earlier and spell out the exile of those vessels?

This was the subject of a dispute between two great sages, Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Zeira. The former interpreted this passage as a ban on leaving Babylon for *Eretz Yisrael*, while the latter contended that it applied only to the sacred vessels. Because Rabbi Zeira was anxious to make *aliya* to *Eretz Yisrael* he avoided any encounter with Rabbi Yehuda, whom he greatly respected, lest Rabbi Yehuda forbid him to make such a move. But he was so anxious to hear some words of wisdom from him before leaving that he surreptitiously came to overhear him dispensing advice to his attendants, advice which he considered most valuable.

(In the classic debate between Rambam and Ramban as to whether settling in *Eretz Yisrael* is considered one of the 613 *mitzvos*, the position of Rabbi Yehuda is cited by one of the commentaries as support for Rambam's opinion that there is no such command after the Jews were exiled from *Eretz Yisrael*. Had the command in the Torah to conquer and settle *Eretz Yisrael* been incumbent on every generation, how could a later prophet, Yirmiyahu, counter a prophetic command of the Torah? Refutations of this challenge have been made, and the relevant issue today is not whether it is permissible to leave Babylon but whether it is obligatory to settle in *Eretz Yisrael*.)

Shabbos 41a

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

972-2-581-0315

fax: 972-2-581-2890

ohr@virtual.co.il

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

1-212-213-3100

fax: 1-212-213-8717

RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

Somayach@MSN.com

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Production Design: Lev Seltzer

Issue #204 - Shabbos 37-43

For the week of 7-13 Teves 5758 / 5-11 January 1998 (Parshas Vayechi)