

The Weekly Daf



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Shabbos 121-127

Week of 3-9 Nisan 5758 / 30 March-5 April 1998
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

The Little Fireman

If a Jewish child comes to extinguish a fire on Shabbos, says the *mishnah*, we do not permit him to do so, because we have an obligation to see that the child observes the Shabbos.

This seems to be in contradiction with the conclusion of a *gemara* in *Mesechta Yevamos* (114a). The story is related there of keys to the synagogue which were lost in the street. The rabbi in charge was distraught over the fact that he would not be able to retrieve the keys. Rabbi Pedos advised him to bring some children there to play, in the hope that one of them would find the keys and carry them back to him. The halachic conclusion is that if a child carries on Shabbos or eats forbidden food there is no obligation on the *Beis Din* (the rabbinical leadership of the community) to prevent him from doing so.

Our *gemara* resolves the contradiction by pointing out that our *mishnah's* case is one in which the child is aware that his father will be pleased with his action and is extinguishing the fire for his father's sake.

There are two different approaches as to how to determine the halacha based on this *gemara*. Rambam rules that even after a child reaches the stage when he is capable of understanding when told to refrain from doing something forbidden, and even when he reaches the age of six or seven, the obligation of training him is incumbent only on the father and not on others. Tosefos, however, contends that the difference between the father and others mentioned in our *gemara* is limited to the stage between basic understanding and the age of *chinuch* (six for regular children and seven for slower developers). Once he reaches this later stage, the obligation of *chinuch* is incumbent on every Jew; if one sees such a child eating forbidden food or violating the Shabbos he is obligated to stop him. Although the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 243:1) rules like Rambam, the Rema cites the more stringent view of Tosefos. The ruling of *Mishnah Berurah* (243:7) is to follow the stringent view of Tosefos in laws which are of Torah origin, but to leave *chinuch* to the father alone in those laws which are of Rabbinic origin.

Shabbos 121a

How Great is Hospitality!

Hospitality to guests is mentioned by our *mishnah* in one breath with learning Torah as a justification for exerting oneself on Shabbos. This led Rabbi Yochanan to conclude that the mitzvah of hospitality is equivalent in its importance to that of Torah study. Rabbi Dimi of Nehardoa takes this one step further by stating that its importance is even greater, because the *mishnah* mentions it even before Torah study.

But it is Rabbi Yehuda quoting the Sage Rav who raises the importance of hospitality to its highest level by stating that it is even greater than welcoming the *Shechinah* (the Divine Presence). He deduces this from Avraham's request that Hashem, Who came to visit him while he was recovering from his circumcision, allow him to interrupt their encounter. This was in order for Avraham to welcome into his home the three angels disguised as wayfarers (*Bereishis* 18:3).

Why is hospitality to guests considered so great a mitzvah that it surpasses even an audience with the *Shechinah*?

Man is commanded to perform *mitzvos* in order to raise his spiritual level and bring him closer to Hashem. Receiving Hashem certainly represents a high level of intimacy with Him, but what could be a greater closeness than actually emulating Hashem? We are all guests in the world which Hashem created; when we welcome a guest, who is dependent on our hospitality, it is a reflection of the way we are dependent on Hashem. We are, as it were, "playing G-d" in a very positive way. This brings us closer to our Divine role model than even receiving the *Shechinah*.

Shabbos 127a

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