

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Chagiga 18 - 24

Week of 13 - 19 Kislev 5760 / 22 - 28 November 1999

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

The Great Debate

Chagiga, the Intermediate Days of the Festivals of Pesach and Succot, was the principal subject of the previous mesechta. Several Torah sources are cited as proof that it is forbidden to perform some forms of labor during these days. It would, therefore, seem that the ban on forbidden labor on Chagiga is of Torah origin, just as the ban on a broader range of labors on the first and last days of these festivals is certainly of Torah origin.

Such is indeed the opinion of some leading commentaries such as Rashi and Rif. Tosefot, however, finds difficulty with this approach and concludes that the ban on labors is of rabbinic origin. The passages cited in our gemara, asmachta

hint in the Torah.

One of the principal objections raised by Tosefot to the opinion that labor is of Torah origin is the fact that there are certain categories of labor such as something which cannot be put off till after the festival without sustaining a serious loss which are permitted on Chagiga. Where, asks Tosefot, do we find something banned by the Torah with exceptions to the rule?

The rebuttal to this argument can be found in the text of a beraita in our gemara. After posing apparently conflicting signals from the Torah as to whether any labor is prohibited on Chagiga, the conclusion is reached that the Torah delegated to the Sages the authority to determine which labors should be prohibited and which permitted. This, then, is the key to the approach of Rashi and Rif. The Torah did, indeed, ban labor on Chagiga, but gave the Sages the power to decide which categories of labor to exclude from this rule.

It is this approach, suggests Mishna Berura (530:1), which the Rema (ibid.) adopts when he follows the words of the Shulchan Aruch on Chagiga.

A third approach, which is something of a compromise, is cited by the above Mishna Berura in his Biyur Halacha. According to this view, the Torah itself made some broad exceptions to its ban on Chagiga labor, and it was the Sages who instituted their own ban to limit some of these exceptions.

Chagiga 18a

Keeping the Peace

Even though there was a suspicion in Beit Hamikdash not careful regarding the laws of ritual purity, and the vessels he handled were treated as impure, some exceptions were made. The wine he contributed for libations on the altar and the oil he donated for flour offerings were accepted. So too were vessels which he brought from his home to use for the ashes or water in the purification process of the Red Heifer.

The rationale for adopting this liberal attitude, explains Rabbi Yossi, is to prevent a situation in which the develops such a hatred for the Sages because his materials are refused that he is tempted to establish his own altar and burn his own red heifer.

Rabbi Papa extends this consideration even to accepting the testimony of an Chagiga lest we create bad feeling with that element of Jewry. Tosefot applies this as well to counting, in our day, an Chagiga zimun after meals despite the ruling of the gemara (Mesechta Berachot 47b) not to include him.

This is the approach of the Tosefist Rabbi Elchanan. The Tosefist Rabbi Yitzchak, however, sees no need to justify including an Chagiga in a zimun on the basis of avoiding discord. Who are we, he challenges, to assume that we are Torah scholars whose socializing with those ignorant of Torah was discouraged by the Sages? His response to this rhetorical question is that we indeed do not consider ourselves Torah scholars in regard to this matter and therefore have no problem in joining together with the Chagiga for a zimun.

Chagiga 22a

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