

The Weekly Daf



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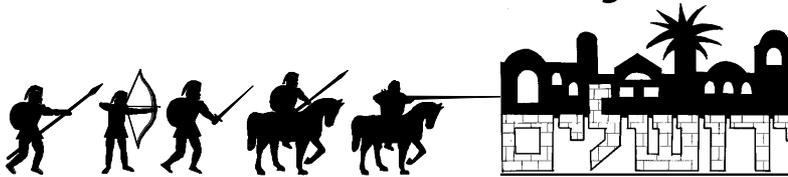
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Sanhedrin 93-99

Week of 14-20 Tamuz 5755 / 12-18 July 1995
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Anatomy of a Miracle



Jerusalem was under heavy siege. Sancheriv and his mighty Assyrian army commanded by 185,000 officers stood outside its walls, poised for an invasion.

Ten years earlier this world conqueror had forced ten tribes of Israel into exile and he was determined to now crush this last shred of Jewish resistance offered by King Chizkiyahu.

During the night before the scheduled morning of attack a heavenly angel struck the Assyrian camp, slaying every one of its 185,000 officers and compelling Sancheriv to withdraw to his homeland.

How did Chizkiyahu and his people merit this miracle?

The oil of Chizkiyahu, say our Sages, subdued the yoke of Sancheriv.

Which oil?

The oil which burned in the synagogues and yeshivos for Jews to study Torah even at night.

How did Chizkiyahu motivate his people to such dedication to Torah study?

He placed a sword at the entrance to each Beis Midrash and proclaimed:

"Whoever fails to study Torah will be skewered with this sword!"

Torah study was thus so popularized that when a search was made from the northernmost part of Israel to the southern-most not one man ignorant of Torah could be found, and when a search was made from the easternmost point to the westernmost one not one little boy or girl could be found who was not well versed in the laws of impurity and purity.



Sanhedrin 94b

Secret of the Baal Tshuva

"Where the baal tshuva stands," said Rabbi Avohu,

"not even the most righteous can stand."

(For the power of the returning Jew is so great that no-one is worthy of standing near him — Rashi.)

In his Michtav M'Eliyahu, the great Mussar master Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler *zatzal* offers the following explanation for the apparent paradox of one who returns occupying a greater place of honor than one who was righteous all his life.

All of creation has the mission of expressing the glory of the Creator. There are two ways in which men achieve this objective. The righteous do so with each of their heroic acts of fulfilling the will of the Creator. The sinner who returns to Hashem reveals another dimension of His glory — the heavenly assistance extended to him to transform his first tiny step towards Hashem into a giant leap heavenward.

The magnificent expression of heavenly mercy in the *baal tshuva's* "shortcut" to higher spiritual levels cannot be generated by the righteous one who carries himself upwards on his own steam. In this sense the *baal tshuva* has a place all his own to which *tzadikim* have no access.

Sanhedrin 99a

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