

The Weekly Daf



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Chullin 89-95

Week of 7-13 Kislev 5757 / 18-24 November 1996
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

The Reluctant Guest

It is forbidden to deceive someone even if there is no financial loss. Rabbi Meir cites several examples of how one can be guilty of dishonest behavior by giving the impression that he is doing a favor to another when he actually has no intention of doing so.

One of these is the case of a host urging a guest to eat in his home when he knows that this guest has absolutely no intention of eating there, and the only motivation of the host is to deceptively earn the gratitude of the guest who thinks that the invitation is sincere. In similar fashion, he should not offer one of his dining guests a large amount of servings when he knows that there is no possibility that he will accept them.

An interesting observation is made by one of the great legal authorities, Rabbi Yehoshua Wolk, author of the *Sefer Meiras Ainayim*, commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat*. In both cases Rabbi Meir stresses the fact that the host is making an extraordinary effort — “urging” his recalcitrant guest to eat, or offering a “large amount” to one who will not accept. If one, however, makes a polite offer once or twice for his guest to eat, or presents him with moderate servings, he is not considered guilty of deception, because this is the normal etiquette of hospitality even though the host knows he will be refused. If he fails to make such a gesture he may even be guilty of embarrassing the reluctant guest. Other guests see him enter and leave without receiving an invitation and, unaware that it is the guest's custom not to eat out, may assume that he received no invitation because he is not worthy of one.

One commentary even suggests a support for this distinction from the story of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair (*Chullin 7b*) who never accepted invitations to eat by others, but did so when the Sage Rebbie offered. He explained to Rebbie that this reluctance to eat by other Jews was not based on any disdain for them, “for Jews are holy people,” but because of his fear that some of them could not afford to entertain him, while others who could afford to do so failed to do so wholeheartedly. Tosefos points out that the latter type of Jew who invites the sage only out of shame, rather than sincerity, is still considered “holy.” This would seem to indicate that an insincere invitation based on courtesy is not considered deception. (In his commentary on the Tur, the aforementioned Rabbi Wolk challenges this proof because the recipient of an insincere invitation may indeed end up eating, while our case deals with a guest who will definitely not.)

Chullin 94a

A Merger of Stones

On his way from Be'er Sheva to Charan, Yaakov *Avinu* stopped off at Mount Moriah where he spent the night. In preparing his bed, one passage (28:11) states that he took stones from the area and placed them as a pillow, while another passage (28:18) refers to this pillow in the singular, as the stone. Rabbi Yitzchak resolves thus the apparent conflict: Each of the many stones which Yaakov took for his pillow began to demand the privilege of having this *tzaddik's* head rest upon it. They were therefore miraculously merged into a single stone.

In his commentary on Chumash, Rashi cites this explanation from our section of the Talmud, but combines it with a Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 68:11) which relates that Yaakov placed the stones *all around his head* like a drainpipe as a protective barrier against wild beasts. How do we reconcile this Midrash with Rabbi Yitzchak's explanation about a pillow?

One of the commentaries offers the following resolution:

Yaakov placed one stone as a pillow and then piled other stones all around it so that it appeared like a drainpipe which has a floor and three sides. Even though each stone in this array was serving the *tzaddik* in his effort to sleep securely, all of the other stones envied the privilege accorded to the one stone serving as a pillow which would receive the head of the holy man. When they all began to clamor for this privilege, Hashem caused the stone beneath his head to swallow all of them so that Yaakov's head indeed rested upon all of them. (*Maharsha*)

It may be suggested that following this swallowing of stones, the protective barrier disappeared because the protective presence of Hashem rendered such a security measure superfluous. Or it may be that the meaning of swallowing is merging. Thus the barrier remained intact and what changed was that all the stones were now a single stone sharing the privilege of serving as a pillow as well.

Chullin 91b

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