

The Weekly Daf



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Krisos 11-17

Week of 19-25 Iyar 5757 / 26 May-1 June 1997
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

The Sober Blessing

A *kohen* who drinks a *reviis* (86 cc according to one opinion and 150 according to another) of wine is forbidden to serve in the *Beis Hamikdash*. If he performs any of the sacred services in this condition the service is invalid and he is punished with a premature death.

This law is relevant even today in regard to a *kohen* who blesses the congregation. The Gemara in *Mesechta Taanis* (26b) sees a relationship between service in the *Beis Hamikdash* and blessing the congregation, as suggested by the Torah's description (*Devarim* 10:8) of the *kohen's* responsibilities "to serve Him and bless in His Name." The *kohen* is therefore disqualified from blessing the congregation if he has drunk wine.

But how much wine disqualifies him? In regard to Temple service he is forbidden to perform the service even if he drinks less than the aforementioned *reviis*, even though there is no disqualification of the service or liability for premature death for such an amount. Does this same restriction apply to blessing the congregation?

There is no clear indication in the Gemara itself, but there is a consensus among the commentaries that there is no ban on a *kohen* blessing the congregation if he imbibed less than a *reviis*. Some authorities are even more lenient and rule that he is disqualified only if he actually becomes intoxicated. The Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 128:38), however, favors the approach of Rambam who rules that there is no problem at all with less than a *reviis*, but that a *reviis* is sufficient for disqualification even though he has not become intoxicated.

The approach of the other authorities is based on the idea that the ban on a *kohen* blessing after drinking wine is not of Torah origin but rather a rabbinical decree, which places this in the same category as prayer for which one is disqualified only upon intoxication. Rambam, however, views this rabbinical decree in another light. The Sages wanted the act of blessing the congregation to be given virtually the same respect as Temple service. To achieve this they held that it was sufficient to forbid the *kohen* to bless when he drank so much wine that it would have invalidated the service he performed and make him liable for premature death. To extend this ban even to a lesser amount would have given it exactly the same status as Temple service, and this they wished to avoid.

Krisos 13b

The Secret of a Sage's Success

A series of several *mishnayos* features halachic questions put to Rabbi Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua by Rabbi Akiva and the responses they offered. The series is introduced with the information that their Torah dialogue took place in the marketplace of Eimum where they had gone to purchase an animal to serve at the wedding feast of Rabbi Gamliel's son.

Tosefos points out that the purpose of providing this information is to call attention to the extraordinary attachment these sages had to Torah study. We see this from their profound dialogue even at a time when they were so preoccupied with wedding feast preparations.

Rabbi Yehoshua features in another account of attachment to Torah study. The Jerusalem Talmud (quoted by Tosefos in *Mesechta Chagiga* 15a) relates what took place at the feast celebrating the *bris* of Elisha ben Avuya. The host, Avuya, was one of the foremost people of Jerusalem and he invited all of the city's most distinguished residents. He placed all of his guests in one house and he put Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer in another place. While the other guests were engaged in eating, drinking, singing and dancing, these two sages devoted themselves to Torah study and were surrounded by Heavenly fire. They explained to their shocked host that he need not fear a conflagration in his home, because these flames were only a return of the Heavenly fire which attended the giving of the Torah at Sinai, and generated by the intensity of their Torah study.

A key to Rabbi Yehoshua's central role in these two tales of intense attachment to Torah study may perhaps be found in the tribute paid to him by his teacher Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai (*Pirkei Avos* 2:8). "Fortunate is the woman who gave birth to him," is what he said of him. Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura explains the tribute thus: "She was responsible for his becoming a sage. When she was pregnant with him she visited all the houses of Torah study in her city and asked the scholars to pray for her yet unborn child to become a sage. From the day he was born she did not remove his cradle from the Beis Midrash so that no sound but Torah should enter his ears."

Krisos 15a

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