

# The Weekly Daf



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Niddah 67-73

Week of 20-26 Elul 5757 / 22-28 September 1997  
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

## Raising the I.Q.

What should a man do to become wise in Torah?" asked the Jews of Alexandria of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanina. "Let him spend much time studying and little time in business," was the sage's reply.

"But many have done so," they persisted, "and have not succeeded."

"Then let him pray to the one to whom wisdom belongs."

Why, asks the Talmud, did he first mention the need for much study if in the end everything depends on prayer?

Rabbi Yehoshua taught the people of Alexandria that success in acquiring wisdom can only be achieved through a combination of study and prayer, and that one without the other is insufficient.

Maharsha points out that the wisdom referred to here is not the knowledge of Torah but the intelligence of the one studying Torah. The intelligence level of a person, say our Sages (*Niddah 16b*), is predetermined, for at the moment of conception an angel brings the seminal drop before Hashem and asks whether a wise man or a fool will be formed from it. Is man forever limited to this degree of predestined intelligence, asked the Alexandrians, or is he capable of breaking the banners of this Heavenly decree?

Rabbi Yehoshua's response was that man can break the intelligence barrier by a combination of hard work and the Heavenly help gained through prayer and the merit of Torah study. One without the other will leave him with the level of intelligence decreed at conception. Together they can make him a more intelligent man.

Niddah 70b

## Siyum of Tenth Cycle of Daf Hayomi

How appropriate it is that our concluding item in the "Weekly Daf" should deal with the subject of becoming wise in Torah. It is the joy of acquiring such wisdom which is the cause for tens of thousands of Jews throughout the world this week to celebrate the completion of the tenth cycle of Daf Hayomi.

When one completes a single *mesechta*, let alone the entire Shas, he makes a *siyum* which is celebrated with a festive meal which the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 246:26) defines as a "*seudas mitzvah*." The source for this practice is the Sage Abaye (*Mesechta Shabbos 119a*) who declared that when he saw one of his disciples complete a *mesechta* he made a festive meal for all of his disciples.

One reason for this *simcha*, says the Gaon of Vilna, is the explanation given by the Sages (*Bava Basra 121b*) for the Fifteenth of Av being such a special day of joy. It was on that date that the cutting of wood for use on the *Beis Hamidkash* altar was completed for the year. Reaching the climax of a *mitzvah* is a cause for joy, and so is reaching the climax of a *mesechta*.

Maharsha, however, suggests another source. The Midrash states that we learn from the feast which King Solomon made for his entire court upon being blessed with the extraordinary wisdom he had requested in his nocturnal dialogue with Hashem (*Melachim I 3:15*), that we should also make a feast when completing the study of the Torah. This is the source for our celebration on *Simchas Torah* when we complete the reading of the entire Torah, and for our celebration of the *siyum* of a *mesechta*. Just as Solomon understood that there could be no greater cause for joy than the gift of wisdom, so do we celebrate the acquisition of wisdom which comes from a year's reading of weekly portions of the Torah and which results from the completion of a *mesechta*.

To all participating in this great *Siyum Hashas* of Daf Hayomi we wish a hearty "Mazal Tov" with best wishes to complete the cycle again and again.

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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