

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Berachos 44-50

Week of 10-16 Cheshvan 5758 / 10-16 November 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 Tenth Man

"A tenth man for a minyan!"

This classical need once confronted even the great sage, Rabbi Eliezer. With no possibility in sight for completing the quorum of ten male, adult Jews which makes it possible for Hashem's Name to be sanctified in prayer, Rabbi Eliezer emancipated his Canaanite slave and made him eligible for inclusion. Although it is normally forbidden to emancipate such a slave, the importance of the mitzvah involved justified this action.

It has been suggested that proof can be brought from this incident to resolve a halachic question raised by the eighteenth century scholar Rabbi Tzvi Ashkenazi, author of "Responsa of the Chacham Tzvi." He asks, "Can a man created through mystical powers be counted as a tenth for a minyan?" (See Responsa Number 83)

(Incidentally, to prove that this is not a purely theoretical question, he cites the tradition that his grandfather, Rabbi Eliyahu of Chelm, created such a man. The fact that he fails to mention the famed "golem" allegedly created by Rabbi Yehuda Lowe (*Maharal of Prague*) who lived more than a century earlier, casts doubt on the credibility of that legend!)

Rabbi Ashkenazi's conclusion that such a man-made man cannot be included in a minyan is based on an incident mentioned in *Sanhedrin 65b*. The sage Rava created a man through the mystical combination of the letters in the Divine Name and sent his creation to Rabbi Zeira. When the latter saw that this creature could not speak, he ordered it to return to its dust. Had such a creature been capable of providing such a valuable service as completing a minyan, Rabbi Zeira would not have ordered its destruction. Perhaps Rabbi Eliezer's insistence on violating the ban on freeing a slave in order to complete a minyan rather than create a man, as he was certainly capable, is an indication as well that such a creature is ineligible for inclusion in a minyan.

Berachos 47b

Open, Wide

"Blessed is He from Whose we have eaten and Who sustains us with his goodness."

This introduction to the *bircas hamazon* which we say after a meal where at least three have eaten together expresses our appreciation of the limitless kindness of the Creator, and reflects a scholar's understanding of the nature of the blessing. One who says instead "Who sustains us from His goodness" is considered a boor for limiting his praise of the Creator to the minimum necessary for survival.

While there is a need to speak in such broad terms when praising Hashem, a different manner is in order when it comes to asking something of Him. When the request is for material prosperity, it must be in the modest (in the manner of a beggar at the door — Rashi) fashion of King David, who prayed "May Your servant's household be blessed from Your blessing forever." (*Shmuel II 7:29*)

But when the request is for success in regard to Torah study, the same King David invites us in the name of Hashem "Open wide your mouth and I shall fill it." (*Tehillim 81:11*)

This is a powerful incentive for every Jew involved in Torah study — from the full-time Yeshiva student to the businessman and professional with only a limited time to study — to pray to Hashem for unlimited assistance in achieving the most ambitious goals in his learning.

Berachos 50a

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Production Design: Lev Seltzer

Issue #196 - Berachos 44-50

For the week of 10-16 Cheshvan 5758 / 10-16 November 1997 (Parshas Vayera)