

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Shabbos 79-85

Week of 20-26 Shevat 5758 / 16-22 February 1998
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Credit Rating

Although it is forbidden on Shabbos to carry any item from the private to public domain, i.e., from the house to the street, one who does so does not become liable to the death penalty for willful violation — or a sin offering for an involuntary one — unless the item carried has some minimal value. Almost the entire eighth *perek* of *Mesechta Shabbos* is devoted to explaining what a minimal value is considered for everything from wine and oil to rope and paper.

It is in regard to paper that we find a most interesting dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and one of his colleagues. If the paper in question has a debt note written on it, then there is a consensus that it has sufficient value to be the instrument of serious Shabbos violation if carried. But what if the debt has already been paid and the note has been returned to the borrower, and the borrower carries the note out into the street?

In contrast to his colleague's opinion that there is no value in such a used document for the borrower, Rabbi Yehuda rules that he is guilty of violating the Shabbos and liable to the aforementioned penalties.

But what value can such a paper have for the borrower? Although we sometimes find that such papers could be utilized as bottle caps, it is hardly likely that a borrower would do so for fear that unless destroyed the debt document might fall into the hands of the lender who could then, out of avarice or forgetfulness, once again demand payment of the debt. What other use could there then be for the borrower to warrant holding on to it?

Rabbi Ashi comes to the rescue with a brilliant interpretation of Rabbi Yehuda's point. The paid up debt note is valuable to the borrower because he can show it to other potential lenders as evidence that he pays his debts and has a good credit rating.

Shabbos 79a

Killing Yourself to Learn

"Torah knowledge," says Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, "is not truly acquired unless one kills himself in order to learn."

A number of explanations of this statement have been offered by commentaries through the ages.

One approach is that one must invest tremendous effort in his search for an understanding of Torah. "Should a man tell you that he discovered the meaning of Torah without investing extreme effort," say our Sages (*Megillah 6b*) "do not believe him."

Another approach to "killing yourself" is to deny yourself the comforts of life which may serve as distractions or which tempt you to take away valuable time and energy from Torah study in order to acquire them. "Such is the way of Torah study," say our Sages (*Avos 6:4*) "eat simple bread and salt and drink your water in measure."

While these two approaches focus on the dimensions of exertion and self-denial required for someone to achieve maximal success in his study of Torah, there is yet another approach which is suitable even to the Jew who can afford only an hour or two a day to study Torah. Such a Jew often finds that he is interrupted during the time period he has set aside for Torah by visitors and telephone calls. One Jew solved this problem by instructing his wife to tell all callers that he was unavailable because he was "dead." Only after she heard their astonished reaction was she to explain that during the time he finally found for Torah study he "killed himself" in order to avoid any distractions.

Shabbos 83b

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