

# The Weekly Daf



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Shabbos 149-155

Week of Week of 1-7 Iyar 5758 / 27 April – 3 May 1998  
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud  
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

## Thinking and Talking

When is thinking considered the equivalent of talking and when not? One ramification of this question is what one may say on Shabbos. While it is forbidden by rabbinic law to hire workers on Shabbos to do work after Shabbos, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha rules that one may tell a fellow Jew that he would like him to come to see him when Shabbos is over. Although both people are completely aware that the purpose of that visit is hiring for work, it's permitted to think about work on Shabbos so long as no explicit mention is made of it. The rationale, says Rabbi Yochanan, is that the passage which is the basis for this rabbinical ban (*Yishayahu 58:13*) directs us to honor Shabbos by refraining from doing our weekday activities and "saying things." This implies that *speaking* of weekday matters is forbidden, but not *thinking* about them.

This raises the question of *thinking as talking* in other areas. It is forbidden to say or even think words of Torah or prayer in a bathroom or a bathhouse. But in the presence of undress, it is only forbidden to say such holy words while *thinking* them is permitted.

In regard to the cleanliness of a place where Torah may be studied, our source is the Torah command in *Devarim (23:14-15)*. There it states that a Jewish soldier must have a shovel included in his military pack so that he will be able to cover his waste with earth. This is necessary because Hashem is present in the Jewish camp and it must therefore be holy. No indication is made here that this is limited to the actual vocalization of Torah, explains Rashi, and the need for maintaining a clean camp is created by the fact that Jews are always thinking Torah thoughts.

When it comes to undress, however, the command is to avoid Hashem seeing any unseemly *davar*, which means both "thing" and "statement." The ban on Torah in the presence of undress is therefore limited to speech, while thinking Torah is permissible.

What about thinking the *Shema* or blessings instead of vocalizing them? In *Mesechta Berachos (20b)* there is a dispute between the Sages Ravina and Rabbi Chisda as to whether thinking is equivalent to talking. The ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 62:3)* is that one does not fulfill any of these obligations by merely thinking the words. The *Mishnah Berurah* explains that this is the consensus of virtually all of the authorities except for Rambam, and one should therefore not rely on thinking his prayers without verbalizing them.

Shabbos 150

## For the Birds

On Shabbos Parshas Beshalach we read in the Torah about the song the Jews sang at the splitting of the sea and about the manna which fell from heaven. In many Jewish homes, there is a custom on that Shabbos to place wheat kernels or bread crumbs where the birds will be able to eat them.

This custom has many explanations, the most popular of which is credited by *Taamei HaMinhagim* to the great early leader of the Chassidic movement, the *Chozeh* of Lublin. It focuses on the plot of the wicked Dasan and Aviram to discredit Moshe, who had informed his people that no manna would fall on Shabbos. On Friday night, Dasan and Aviram placed some of their own Friday double portion of manna on the area where it usually fell and incited the people to go out and see that Moshe was wrong. But their plot was foiled by the birds, who devoured the manna before anyone arrived. In appreciation of their action in upholding Moshe's credibility, we supply them with food on the Shabbos in which we read about the manna.

This custom is challenged by one of the leading halachic authorities, *Magen Avraham (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 324:7)*, on the basis of our *gemara*. Our *gemara* rules that one may not go to the bother of supplying food or water on Shabbos to birds whose support is not his responsibility. His objection is based on the approach of Rambam and *Beis Yosef (ibid. 324:11)* who understand the conclusion of our *gemara* as establishing the sole criterion as whether one has responsibility for supporting the birds. According to this criterion there is no difference between supplying the birds with water or with grain.

Other commentaries (*Rabbeinu Nissim* and *Olas Shabbos*) understand the *gemara's* conclusion as establishing a different criterion — whether the birds have an alternative source for their sustenance. This would distinguish between water — which they can easily find in the river — and food, which is not always available. This approach would justify offering crumbs to birds on a winter Shabbos when the fields are bare.

Even though we abide by the stricter approach, that it is forbidden to supply birds with our food even when no other food is available to them, there is room for justifying the aforementioned custom. *Aruch Hashulchan (324:3)* writes that the custom stems from the tradition that the birds joined our ancestors in singing their song of praise to Hashem for splitting the sea, an act for which we show our appreciation by putting out food for them on the Shabbos that we read about this singing. If so, he argues, we are not supplying them food only for their sake, but for our sake as well, in order to better relive the experience of our ancestors, and it is therefore permitted and proper to follow this custom.

*Chasam Sofer* offers yet another approach for appreciating the birds. Moshe instructed his people (*Shmos 16:32*) to put a vial of manna away as a safekeeping for future generations. When the Prophet Yirmiyahu reproved his generation for not spending enough time in Torah study, the response was that the need to earn a livelihood made it impossible to do so. He entered the *Beis Hamikdash*, took out the vial of manna which was stored in the Holy of Holies, and told them that this was the food which miraculously sustained their ancestors and should remind them that Hashem has many ways to provide a livelihood to those who fear Him. Now that we no longer have the manna to teach us this lesson, we learn it from the birds who are sustained by Hashem with little effort on their part.

Shabbos 154b

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