

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Eiruv 21 - 27

Week of 29 Iyar-6 Sivan 5758 / 25-31 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

The Mushroom Mystery

In order to walk on Shabbos more than 2,000 amos beyond the city border, one must make an "eruv techumim" by placing enough food for two Shabbos meals at the point where the "techum" boundary of 2,000 ends. It is then considered as if he had established his residence there and he may proceed from there another 2,000 amos.

Not everything, however, qualifies as food for this eruv, or for an eruv which is made to allow residents of different courtyards to carry objects into the alley into which their courtyards empty. The mishna excludes only water or salt from being considered acceptable foods. A simple reading of our gemara indicates that truffles and mushrooms are also excluded. The reason for their exclusion even when cooked, say the early commentaries, is that people do not generally rely on them as a staple, nor even as an accompaniment to meals, and only occasionally indulge in them. Rambam goes even further in ascribing their exclusion to their negative nutritional impact.

Despite this consensus of so many major commentaries based on the text before us, the text before the Gaon of Vilna has an "etc." added to the quotation from the mishna, which radically alters the gemara's meaning. The exclusion of mushrooms, in his text, is limited to the law of "maaser sheni" — the second tithe — mentioned in our mishna immediately after the law of eruv. The Torah sets down special rules for what one may purchase in Jerusalem with the money from the redemption of maaser sheni. These rules preclude mushrooms because they do not grow from the earth but are only fungi. As far as eruv is concerned, he concludes, once they have been cooked into an edible state they qualify as food.

This innovative approach of the Gaon is elaborated upon in another footnote on our gemara page, that of Rabbi Betzalel of Regensburg, and is mentioned by the Mishna Berura (366:23) as well.

Eruvin 27a

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A Timely Reward

When does Hashem pay the reward due a man for his good deeds? In regard to the wicked, the Torah tells us (Devarim 7:10) that "He does not delay in regard to one who hates Him, and He pays him to his face." But in regard to the righteous, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi points out on the basis of the very next passage, the reward is delayed: "The commandment which I command you this day to do them" indicates that mitzvos can only be done today — in this world —while their reward is reserved for tomorrow — the World to Come.

An interesting explanation of the timing of payment is offered by Iyun Yaakov on the basis of an analogy to the Torah law requiring an employer to pay his employee promptly upon completion of his day's work. Since we are similar to employees in the service of our Creator it would seem that payment should be due every time we complete the performance of a mitzvah. This is where the righteous differ from the wicked for two reasons.

First of all, wages are due the worker only when he demands payment. The righteous man does not serve Hashem for the purpose of reward, so no such demand emanates from him. The wicked one is motivated in the little good he does by the promise of reward, so there is a demand for payment which is promptly met.

An even more dramatic difference between the two is seen against the background of the law which states that payment is due only upon the completion of the stipulated term of service — a day worker at the end of the day, a year worker at the end of the year, a seven-year worker at the end of seven years. The righteous man is in the constant service of his Divine employer until the end of his life on earth. Payment is therefore delayed until the day after this service is terminated — the tomorrow of eternity. The wicked man, however, performs an occasional mitzvah and then takes a long vacation from serving Hashem, so that his reward must be given to him right away.

Eiruvim 22a

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