

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Eruvin 84 - 90

Week of 4 - 10 Av 5758 / 27 July-2 August 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 Hanging Walls of Tiberias

For something to qualify as a *mechitza* (wall or barrier) in regard to the laws of Shabbos or of Sukkah (which requires a minimum of three walls) it must be ten handbreadths high. If this height begins from a point less than three handbreadths from the ground, it is a valid *mechitza* for all purposes. But if one hangs such a *mechitza* from above and it ends at a point three handbreadths or more above the ground so that there is enough space for a kid goat to enter underneath it, there is a difference of opinion regarding its validity.

Regarding a Sukkah wall, Rabbi Yossi contends that such a wall is valid while the other sages rule that it is invalid. Rabbi Yossi's position led the *gemara* to assume that it was he, as the rabbinical authority of Tiberias, who had sanctioned the carrying of a Sefer Torah from a house to the synagogue in a courtyard on Shabbos, as follows:

In a courtyard in Tiberias, one of the houses served as a synagogue. No *eruv* was made, so they would always bring to it before Shabbos a Sefer Torah from one of the houses in the courtyard where the Sefer Torah was stored. One time, they forgot to bring the Sefer Torah before Shabbos. It seemed that they faced a serious problem. Fortunately, they discovered that someone had hung sheets from poles along the route from the house with the Sefer Torah to the synagogue. This virtually cut off the rest of the courtyard and made carrying the Torah permissible.

The only problem was that these hanging *mechitzos* did not reach within three handbreadths of the ground. If the people of Tiberias nevertheless relied upon such walls, says Rabbi Yochanan, it must be that their leader Rabbi Yossi extends the validity which he grants such walls for Sukkah purposes to the laws of carrying on Shabbos as well.

The *gemara*, however, rejects this as inconclusive. It may well be that Rabbi Yossi took a lenient view regarding hanging walls only regarding Sukkah, because it only involves the issue of whether a mitzvah has been properly fulfilled. In regard to Shabbos laws, whose violation can even carry a death penalty, it is possible that Rabbi Yossi too would disqualify such walls.

How then was it possible for the people in Rabbi Yossi's community to rely on such walls for carrying the Sefer Torah? That incident, explains the *gemara*, took place after Rabbi Yossi's death, and it was his son, Rabbi Yishmael, who sanctioned their action, because he went even further than his father by validating hanging walls even in regard to Shabbos.

Eruvin 86b

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Respect for the Rich

Both Rabbi Akiva and the Sage Rebbi showed respect to wealthy people and gave them seats of honor when they came before them. Rebbi even sent a message to the very wealthy father of one of his visitors, whom he had not accorded as much honor as he did to others whom he assumed were wealthier, so that the father should instruct his son to dress in accordance with his wealth, and thus gain the honor due him.

These Sages are certainly not suspect of honoring wealthy people for the ulterior motives. Why then did they see fit to honor people because of their wealth?

A passage in *Tehillim* (61:8) is cited by the Sage Rabba bar Meri as a basis for this approach. It speaks of an orderly world in the presence of Hashem, a world of kindness and truth, of preservation and of prosperity. Various interpretations are provided by the commentaries as to how this applies to respect for the rich:

- When there are wealthy people who do kindness and charity, the world is in order before Hashem. They are therefore accorded honor by the Creator and this is a reason for us to honor them as well.
- If not for the fact that they show kindness and truth in their relationships with the less fortunate, they would not merit the preservation of their prosperity and they therefore deserve honor.
- The Midrash says that King David asked Hashem to create an order in His world in which all people would be equal with no rich and poor. Hashem explained that such an order would eliminate the opportunity for kindness.

The above three approaches were proposed by one of the early commentaries, Rabbi Nossen of Rome, in his classic *Sefer Ha'aruch*. There is another interesting angle presented by some of the later commentaries: Rabbi Akiva and Rebbi were both outstanding sages who were also outstandingly wealthy. They were very reluctant to have people honor them for their Torah knowledge, because of their refusal to benefit in any way from Torah. They therefore openly showed respect for wealthy people so that if others honored them it could be attributed to their wealth rather than their Torah knowledge.

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