

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Pesachim 65-71

Week of 29 Tishrei - 5 Cheshvan 5759 / 19 - 25 October 1998
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Sons of Prophets

The Sage Hillel had made *aliya* from Babylon to Eretz Yisrael where an unusual event prepared him for leadership as the head of the Sanhedrin. His historical opportunity arrived when Erev Pesach (14 Nissan), the day on which the Pesach sacrifice was to be slaughtered and offered, was on Shabbos. The heads of the Sanhedrin were in doubt as to whether this sacrifice could be offered in violation of the Shabbos laws. Communal sacrifices, such as the regular daily ones and the additional ones on the festivals, are offered even on Shabbos, but they forgot whether the Pesach sacrifices, which are brought by individuals in a communal fashion, also have this special status.

When they turned to their colleagues for guidance it was suggested that Hillel, who had studied with the great Sages Shemaya and Avtalyon, might know the answer. Hillel was indeed equal to the challenge and cited proof from the Torah that the Pesach sacrifice must be offered "in its appointed time," even on Shabbos. The knife, on the other hand, could be prepared the day before, and there was therefore a doubt as to whether it could be brought on Shabbos. Even if a way were found to avoid violating Torah law, did the rabbinical ban on carrying in an irregular fashion prevent the carrying of the knife for the slaughter of the Pesach sacrifice?

Now it was Hillel's turn to be stumped. (The *gemara* explains that this was Heavenly punishment for the haughty manner in which he addressed his predecessors as heads of the Sanhedrin when they forgot a law.) He admitted that he had learned the law in such a case but had forgotten it. "But," he added, "things will work out, because even if Jews are not prophets themselves, they are the sons of prophets."

The next day, Shabbos Erev Pesach, these semi-prophetic Jews arrived at the *Beis Hamikdash* with their animals for the Pesach sacrifice. From the wool of the lamb protruded a knife, and between the horns of the goat a knife was to be found. Upon seeing this Hillel proclaimed: "Now I recall the law I learned from Shemaya and Avtalyon. This is the procedure which they taught me!"

The "sons of prophets," by placing the knives on the animals in such irregular fashion, had avoided violating Torah law by themselves carrying, or by having their animals carry for them in a regular fashion. They had properly anticipated that the rabbinical ban on such irregular carrying by their animals would not stand in the way of offering the Pesach sacrifice.

Pesachim 66a

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Lost Angry Man

After Hashem informed the Prophet Shmuel that Saul would not continue to be King of Israel, He directed him to secretly proceed to the Bethlehem home of Yishai where he would find a candidate for the Crown amongst Yishai's children. Upon his arrival he was greatly impressed by the oldest son, Eliav, and assumed that he was the chosen one. Hashem cautioned him, however, "to not look upon his appearance and his height, for I have rejected him." The reason for Shmuel's error is explained as "a man sees only what is visible to they eyes, while Hashem sees what is in his heart." (*Shmuel I 16:7*)

What did Hashem see in the heart of Eliav which disqualified him?

In the very next chapter we find the answer. David, already anointed by Shmuel as the future king unbeknownst to his father and brothers, was told by his father to leave his sheep tending in order to bring provisions to his brothers serving in Saul's army in a war with the Philistines. Eliav became angry with David, unjustly scolding him for abandoning the sheep in his charge and accusing him of misbehaving in order to watch the war. (*ibid. 17:28*)

It was Eliav's characteristic of anger, says the Sage Reish Lakish, which disqualified him from being king even though he was otherwise suited for this role. The problem with this explanation is that chronologically the rejection of Eliav took place before the incident of his display of anger. Rashi points out that we find no other reason for his rejection and must therefore conclude that it was Hashem's omniscient awareness of his tendency to anger which caused the rejection which, concludes Reish Lakish, is the fate of angry men otherwise destined for greatness.

Maharsha points out that this message is implied in the words "Hashem sees what is in his heart," for Hashem saw the character of the man which would later become visible with his outburst against David.

Pesachim 66b

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