

# The Weekly Daf



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Megilah 21 - 27

Issue # 294 Shemini Atzeret

Week of 17 - 23 Tishrei 5760 / 27 September - 3 October 1999

Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

## Respect for the Congregation

A woman, rule our Sages, may not be given an *aliya* to the Torah on Shabbat out of respect for the congregation. This concept appears once again in our *gemara* as an explanation for why one whose torn clothes reveal his arms and shoulders cannot be the reader of the Torah for the congregation, lead the services for them or bless them if he is a kohen.

What is meant by "respect for the congregation?"

The common understanding is that an individual must show respect to a community. Since a woman is not obligated in the mitzvah of Torah study, as is a man, it is a sign of disrespect for the man's obligation to have someone who is exempt from that obligation read the Torah publicly for him. Someone who is not properly attired would also be guilty of disrespect for the congregation if he led it in Torah or prayer or even publicly blessed its members.

Tiferet Yisrael, however, offers a different perspective of what our Sages meant with respect for the congregation. Not the honor of the congregation was the concern of our Sages, he maintains, for this would invite the possibility of the congregation waiving the honor due it. Since we find no allowance made by halacha for such a gesture by the congregation, we must conclude that "respect for the congregation" should better be understood as the respect "by the congregation" which must be shown towards Heaven. A congregation has a greater responsibility in its service to Heaven than an individual, and must therefore show its respect for Heaven in a more proper manner.

This approach to "respect for the congregation" fits the cases mentioned in our *gemara* and another *gemara* (*Gittin 60a*) which prohibits reading for the congregation from a scroll containing just one of the five *Chumashim* (*Books of Moses*) rather than the entire Torah. There is some difficulty, however, applying this interpretation to other *gemara* statements (*Yoma 70a and Sotah 39b*) where the term is used in relation to not causing the congregation to idly wait while certain functions are performed (such as rolling the Sefer Torah to the place where it will be read). This would seem to be an indication that indeed "respect for the congregation" is the issue. It may be, however, that an entire congregation idly waiting and not utilizing their presence in the synagogue to pray or study also constitutes a lack of "respect by the congregation" for their responsibilities towards Heaven in such a holy setting.

Megillah 23a/24b

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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Production Design: Eli Ballon

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# Blessings and Returns

"What happened to your belt?" asked the Sage Rav of his disciple Rabbi Huna when he noticed that he was wearing some makeshift belt of vegetation rather than his regular one.

"I gave away my belt as collateral in order to secure money to buy wine for Shabbat *kiddush*."

Rav was so impressed by his disciple's sacrifice of a personal garment for a mitzvah that he blessed him that he should, as a reward, "be covered with clothes."

Some time afterwards Rabbi Huna was hosting a wedding for his son Rabba. Rabbi Huna, who was a very short man, lay down upon a bed to rest while his family gathered for the celebration. His daughters and daughters-in-law did not notice his presence and they placed their coats on the bed, completely covering him with clothes in fulfillment of Rav's blessing.

When Rav heard that his blessing had thus been fulfilled he complained to Rabbi Huna:

"When I blessed you why did you not respond with a blessing of "the same to my master" (Rashi — it may have been a moment of Divine favor and the blessing would have been fulfilled for me as well).

Two problems arise in regard to understanding this story. Why was it necessary to mention the uncomplimentary fact of Rabbi Huna's diminutive size? Even more puzzling is Rav's disappointment in not receiving a counter-blessing after seeing the fulfillment of his blessing. What benefit would Rav have derived from being temporarily covered by clothes as was his disciple?

The simple approach to the first question is that it was necessary to mention Rabbi Huna's size in order to explain why his family members did not notice his presence on the bed where they placed their coats. In regard to the second issue, an interesting explanation is offered in the footnotes of Bach (Rabbi Yoel Sirkis):

Rav was upset because the fulfillment of his blessing indicated that it was moment of Divine favor and had he received a counter-blessing it may well have, in his case because of his greater merit, been fulfilled in the way it was intended by Rav — by being blessed with the wealth which enables one to cover himself with clothes.

A most innovative approach to answering these questions is suggested by Rabbi Yaakov Emden. Rav was the tallest sage of his generation while Rabbi Huna was among the shortest. Rabbi Huna therefore hesitated to return the blessing which Rav gave, as the clothes which fit his short figure would look absurd on the tall figure of his master.

An important lesson is to be learned from this story. When you receive a blessing from anyone, be sure to return it.

*Megillah 27b*

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