

The Weekly Daf



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Mo'ed Katan 4 - 10

Issue # 296 Parshat Noach

Week of 1 - 7 Cheshvan 5760 / 11-17 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

Don't Mix Your Simchas

Weddings are not held during *Chol Hamo'ed* — the intermediate days of the Festival of Pesach or Succot. The reason given in the *mishna* is that getting married is an occasion of *simcha*.

This explanation is greeted with wonder in the *gemara*. Our *mesechta* is filled with the laws regulating what sort of work may be done during these special days because, as Rashi points out in the very first *mishna*, the Torah communicated to us that some categories of work should be prohibited on *Chol Hamo'ed* and left it up to the Sages to determine which ones. But why should a wedding be prohibited just because it is an occasion of *simcha*?

A number of explanations are offered by the Talmudic Sages. One view is that it is improper to "mix one *simcha* with another" because the *simcha* one has in getting married will make it impossible to single-mindedly focus on the *simcha* of the festival.

A second explanation goes a step further. The *simcha* of getting married will actually cause him to neglect the *simcha* of the festival and goes against the Torah command of "You shall rejoice in your festival" (*Devarim 16:14*) which implies an exclusion of "joy with your new wife."

While these two explanations revolve around the competition between the *simcha* of marriage and that of the festival, the Sage Ula returns us to the basic restriction of work on *Chol Hamo'ed*. Since a Jew will be so concerned with properly preparing for the great *simcha* of his wedding, he is bound to invest a great deal of work and such a strenuous effort is prohibited.

Rabbi Yitzchak completes the list of explanations by pointing out that since getting married is such an occasion of *simcha* a Jew will be tempted to put off his wedding until the festival when he is free from his work and when he is in a festive mood. Such a delay, which can sometimes add up to almost half a year, postpones the fulfillment of the important mitzvah of getting married and bringing children into the world.

The explanation cited by the halachic authorities is the first one about not mixing *simchas*. The *gemara* provides us with a fascinating source for this rule:

When King Solomon inaugurated the *Beit Hamikdash*, he led the entire people in a celebration which consisted of the seven days before Succot (*Melachim I 8:65*). Why did he not delay the inauguration ceremony until Succot itself so that they could celebrate both it and the festival simultaneously? The answer is that this would have constituted the mixing of *simchas*. This is why the aforementioned passage stresses that there were two distinct seven-day celebrations, to teach us that such mixing should not be done.

Mo'ed Katan 8b-9a

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When to Ask and When Not

Rabbi Yannai had a disciple who was constantly posing challenges to his Talmudic lectures. When it came to the Shabbat of a Festival, this disciple did not ask any questions. In praise of his behavior, Rabbi Yannai cited a passage in *Tehillim* (50:23) which promises a revelation of Divine salvation for one who makes a proper evaluation of the course he takes in life.

Rashi explains that the disciple's motive in refraining from challenging Rabbi Yannai on those special days was his fear that perhaps he would not be capable of answering his question and would suffer great embarrassment since large crowds of people came to hear the lecture on those days. The discretion displayed by the disciple in evaluating the proper time to ask and the proper time to be silent was considered by Rabbi Yannai as a fulfillment of *Tehillim's* description of a "proper evaluation of the course."

Maharsha finds difficulty with Rashi's approach, both because it is inconceivable that Rabbi Yannai should stand the danger of being stumped and because showing discretion as to the proper time for asking can hardly be described as a course.

The explanation he offers is based on a fascinating analysis of posing challenges which every student of Talmud will enjoy:

The questions which we find in the *gemara* break down into two basic categories. One is the challenge posed by an apparent contradiction between the statement made and another source, like a *mishna* or a *beraita*. The other is a challenge to the need for making such a statement since the information it conveys is already known to us, either because it appears in one of the aforementioned sources or because it is obvious from simple logic.

These are the sort of questions which Rabbi Yannai's scholarly disciples asked him daily. On the Shabbat of the Festival, when he delivered his lecture to a general audience, the subject matter was of so simple a nature that there was nothing which could be challenged by contradiction. It also would have been absurd for any of his scholarly disciples to challenge him on that day about the need for teaching matters which were already common knowledge, since that knowledge was not common to the common people who gathered on that day to hear the lecture.

Why then did this disciple bother coming to the lecture if there was apparently nothing in it which was not already known to him? The answer is that he made an evaluation of the Divine reward he would be eligible for if he took the course from his home to the *beit midrash* to attend the lecture. Rabbi Yannai then declared that the passage in *Tehillim* describes this as deserving a reward of "a revelation of Divine salvation" — Divine assistance in discovering some new insight in the simple subject of the lecture which he would not have been capable of gaining with his natural intelligence.

Mo'ed Katan 5a

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