

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Week of 7-13 Tamuz 5756 / 24-30 June 1996

Menachos 51-57

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

When the Heir Doesn't Care

The Kohen Gadol daily brought "minchas chavisin," an issaron amount of meal which he provided from his own resources and divided into two equal parts, offering half in the morning on the altar and half in the afternoon.

If he passed away and no-one was yet appointed to succeed him, Rabbi Shimon rules that the community must provide the meal for the minchas chavisin and a full issaron must be offered both in the morning and in the afternoon.

During the era of the Second Beis Hamikdash there were many Kohanim Gedolim who were not fit for the position they gained through political power. As a result they died within the first year of their service. This created a situation in which the Sanctuary treasury was depleted each year by having to provide funds for the minchas chavisin in the interim period till another Kohen Gadol was appointed. The Sages therefore decreed that the responsibility for providing this would be placed upon the heirs of the deceased Kohen Gadol.

This decree was in effect until it became apparent that the heirs were becoming negligent in fulfilling their obligation. It was then decided to reinstate the original, Torah ordained system of making it a communal responsibility, regardless of the strains it placed on the Sanctuary budget.

Menachos 51b

Heroes and Zeroes

"Rabbi Ezra, grandson of Rabbi Avtulas, who was in the tenth generation from Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, who was the tenth generation from Ezra, is at the door!"

This was the grand introduction made to Rabbi Preida concerning his visitor.

"What is all this fuss about his genealogy?" asked Rabbi Preida. "If he is a Torah scholar without a glorious genealogy that is fine. If he is a Torah scholar and is the scion of a great family as well it is even better. But if he has only genealogy but not Torah then to blazes with him!"

Only after he was assured that the visitor was indeed a Torah scholar did he invite him in and enter into a long discussion of Torah subjects with him.

This attitude of Rabbi Preida provides a perspective on how the Sages viewed the value of what we call "yichuss" — genealogy. Yichuss has been compared to a bunch of zeroes. If you put a number in front of those zeroes it becomes multiplied by hundreds, thousands and millions. But if no number is placed before them they add up to nothing.

In similar fashion the greatness of ancestors can multiply the achievements of their scion. But if he achieves nothing on his own and relies only on his yichuss he adds up to nothing.

Menachos 53a

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