

Daf Review – Berachos 17

Compiled by: Zevi Daniel

Gemara:

- One challenge we face with *tfiloh* is that we utilize a prayer template written by others, creating perhaps an impersonal feel. The *Gemara* recounts examples of *rabanim* of yesteryear who composed personal *tfilos* which they appended after the *bracha* of *Sim Shalom* in *Shmona Esrai*. Some of those *tfilos* addressed difficulties plaguing the individual, others for communal/national challenges, one even addressing the challenges among the celestial sphere.
 - a. **Inspiration** - Torah as an “*Umnus*” - While “showing up” is truly an achievement unto itself, the optimal way to learn Torah is by treating it as an occupation, fully engaged.
 - b. **Maharsha** - *Rav Alexandri's* prayed that “our eyes not be darkened”. The light of our eyes refers to our hopes, dreams and aspirations. We ask G-d, “*Al yechshechu eineinu*”, help us hold on to our dreams.
 - c. **Inspiration** - Sin is a manifestation of our arrogance, of our own will trumping that of G-ds. *Rav Alexandri's tfiloh* was to be saved from the arrogance (the *S'or Sheb'isa*, leavening in the dough) that is the evil inclination.
- The *Gemara* continues with “pearls” from various *Tanaim* and *Amoraim*
- **Rabanan D'Yavneh** compared the work roles of the “learner” and the farmer. Both are G-d's creatures with the ability to discern good from evil. While one works (learns) in the city and one works in the pastures, both arise early to work and one does not necessarily aspire to perform the work role of the other. However, lest one think otherwise, as long as the learning and effort is sincere, even if the output is less, the farmer can attain equal reward.
- **Abaye** – one should be *arum*, cunning in finding ways to fear G-d; there are so many ways the evil inclination is scheming to outsmart us, we must be clever in outsmarting that force. A soft response turns away anger. If one wishes to de-escalate a situation, do it with calm.
- How does one know if he's “good” with G-d? If he's beloved by Man; Jew and gentile alike. *Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai* never was greeted by others first. He always took the initiative, even with gentiles in the market.
- **Inspiration** - The “goal” of the Torah is character refinement, to make one the best version of one's self. If one learns but is rebellious or uncouth, that's not Torah *lishmah*.
- *Olam Haba'ah* is depicted as the righteous sitting, basking in the glory of the *s'chinah*. We must ask ourselves, does this vision appeal to us? If this is not something we'd value, we have work to do!
- Women, not men, are described in *Sefer Yeshaya* as confident and at ease. Why? By bringing their children to learn and waiting for their husbands to return from study, they are the enablers and merit not only their own fruit of their growth but also the accomplishments of those whom they are enabling.
- The *gemara* concludes with a disagreement around the meaning of *abirei lev*, “fierce hearted ones”; 1. Are the righteous sustained through their deeds or, as witnessed by their suffering, perhaps their deeds sustain others, not themselves. 2. “fierce hearted ones” refer not to the righteous, rather to the fools (*Gova'ei*, descendents of the *Givonim*) who witnessed large gatherings of Torah learning (and per *Tosfos* witnessed a miraculous pillar of fire hover over those gathered) but from whose ranks, no one ever converted on their own initiative.