HALAKHA

One who is not commanded to do so and performs a mitzva – מִיתָה: A woman is not commanded to learn Torah. However, if she does learn Torah, she is rewarded as one who performs a mitzva in which one is not obligated (Rambam Sefer HaMadda, Hilchos Talmud Torah 11:13, Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh Dea’a 296:6).

NOTES

This is referring to the time of death – מִיתָה: Some commentaries explain that the Torah one learns protects one from a painful death. Others explain that it protects one from punishment in the grave. The Meiri explains that the Torah watches over one’s soul in heaven between death and the time to come after the resurrection of the dead.

Of the thorns and of the pits, etc. – מִיתָה: These represent three types of spiritual dangers that one encounters during one’s lifetime. Thorns, pits, and thistles are obstacles one encounters while walking; they allude to worldly temptations that do not entice one unless one engages in them of his own accord. Thieves and wild animals represent dangers that creep up on a person; they allude to wicked individuals who might persuade one to follow evil paths. The third danger, losing one’s way, alludes to the fundamental question of whether one is following the right path in life (Rabbi David Luria).

And the Torah delays to say to you: Just to say to you: Just as it is written, “When you walk, it shall lead you”; this is referring to when one is in this world. “When you lie down, it shall watch over you; and when you awake, it shall talk with you” (Proverbs 6:22). The Gemara explains: “When you walk, it shall lead you”; this is referring to when one is in this world. “When you lie down, it shall watch over you”; this is referring to the time of death, when one lies in his grave. “And when you awake, it shall talk with you”; this is referring to the time to come after the resurrection of the dead. The Torah that one studies protects and guides him both in this world and in the next world.

This can be illustrated by a parable, as it is comparable to a man who is walking in the blackness of night and the darkness, and he is afraid of the thorns, and of the pits, and of the thistles, which he cannot see due to the darkness. And he is also afraid of the wild animals and of the bandits that lurk at night, and he does not know which way he is walking.
If a torch of fire comes his way, which is analogous to a mitzva, he is safe from the thorns and from the pits and from the thickets, but he is still afraid of the wild animals and of the bandits, and still does not know which way he is walking. Once the light of dawn rises, which is analogous to Torah study, he is safe from the wild animals and from the bandits, which no longer roam the roads, but he still does not know which way he is walking. If he arrives at a crossroads and recognizes the way, he is saved from all of them.

Alternatively, the verse associates the mitzva with a lamp and the Torah with the light of the sun in order to teach that a transgression extinguishes the merit of the Torah one studied, as it is stated: “Many waters cannot extinguish the love, neither can the floods drown it” (Song of Songs 8:7). The Torah is compared to love several times in the Song of Songs. One can conclude from the baraita that the merit of performing a mitzva is insufficient to suspend punishment.

Rav Yosef said that with regard to a mitzva, at the time when one is engaged in its performance it protects one from misfortune and saves one from the evil inclination; at the time when one is not engaged in its performance, it protects one from misfortune but it does not save one from the evil inclination. With regard to Torah study, both at the time when one is engaged in it and at the time when one is not engaged in it, it protects one from misfortune and saves one from the evil inclination. Therefore, the merit of the woman’s mitzvot does protect her from misfortune and delay her punishment.

Rabba objects to this explanation: If that is so, then with regard to Doeg (see 1 Samuel, chapters 21–22) and Ahithophel (see 11 Samuel, chapter 16), who were both wise scholars despite their wickedness, did they not engage in the study of Torah? Why did it not protect them from sinning? Rather, Rava said: With regard to Torah study, at the time when one is engaged in it, it protects and saves; at the time when one is not engaged in it, it protects one from misfortune but it does not save one from the evil inclination. With regard to a mitzva, both at the time when one is engaged in its performance and at the time when one is not engaged in it, it protects one from misfortune but it does not save one from the evil inclination.

Ravina said: Actually, the merit that delays the punishment of the sota is the merit of Torah study, and with regard to that which you say, i.e., that she is not commanded to do so and performs a mitzva, the mishna is not referring to the merit of her own Torah study. Granted, she is not commanded to study Torah herself; however, in reward for causing their sons to read the Written Torah and to learn the Mishna, and for waiting for their husbands until they come home from the study hall, don’t they share the reward with their sons and husbands? Therefore, if the sota enabled her sons and husband to study Torah, the merit of their Torah study can protect her and delay her punishment.

With regard to the aforementioned parable, the Gemara asks: What is the meaning of the crossroads, which provide clarity? Rav Hisda says: This is referring to a Torah scholar and his day of death. Due to his continued commitment to the Torah, when the time comes for him to die, it is clear to him that he will go to the place of his eternal reward. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak says: This is a Torah scholar who has also acquired fear of sin, as his fear of sin guides him to the correct understanding of the Torah.

Mar Zutra says: This is a Torah scholar who reaches conclusions from his discussion in accordance with the halakha, as that is an indication that he is following the right path.
The Gemara asks: What verse did Doeg and Ahithophel interpret incorrectly, causing them to err? They interpreted this verse: “For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp... to give up your enemies before you... that He see no licentious matter in you,” (Deuteronomy 23:15), to indicate that God turns away from one who engaged in forbidden relations, and since David had sinned with Bathsheba God must have turned away from him. But they did not know that a transgression extinguishes the merit of a mitzva, but a transgression does not extinguish the merit of the Torah.

The Gemara interprets the continuation of the verse cited by the baraita with regard to Torah study: What is the meaning of: “Many waters cannot extinguish the love... if a man would give all the fortune of his house for love, he would utterly be condemned” (Song of Songs 8:7)? The Torah is compared to love several times in the Song of Songs. Therefore, the verse indicates that one cannot acquire a share in the reward for Torah study with money. Ulla says: The verse is not speaking of individuals like Shimon, brother of Azarya, whose brother Azarya supported him and enabled him to study Torah. And it is not speaking of individuals like Rabbi Yohanan of the house of the Nazi, whom the Nazi supported so that he could study Torah.

Rather, it is speaking of individuals like Hillel and Shavana, as when Rav Dimi came to Babylonia he said: Hillel and Shavana were brothers; Hillel engaged in Torah study and remained impoverished, whereas Shavana entered into a business venture and became wealthy. In the end, Shavana said to Hillel: Come, let us join our wealth together and divide it between us; I will give you half of my money and you will give me half of the reward for your Torah study. In response to this request a Divine Voice issued forth and said: “If a man would give all the fortune of his house for love, he would utterly be condemned” (Song of Songs 8:7).

$\text{ NOTES}

They would not have pursued David – אל לא רדפו בּוֹז רָדפוּ

The Rosh notes that actually, the Gemara’s statement applies only to Ahithophel. Doeg’s name should not appear here, since according to the Gemara elsewhere, Doeg was no longer alive at the time that the incident involving David and Bathsheba occurred. Ahithophel was still alive at the time, and in fact Bathsheba was his granddaughter (Tosefot HaRosh).

Shevna – Shevna

Tosefot HaRosh cites Rabbi Elazar Tam, who says that the name here should actually read: Shekhna, as the Shevna mentioned in the Bible was wicked, and it is improper to name one’s child after a wicked person. Others disagree, noting that there were two individuals by the name of Shevna, and one of them was not wicked. Therefore, the name may be used in naming the child after the other Shevna.

If a man would give all the fortune of his house – ג’ אֶת בּוֹז מְנַחֵם

The Gemara distinguishes between one who financially assists another to learn Torah, and one who wishes to acquire the reward for the Torah that another already studied under difficult financial conditions. One who assists another to learn does share in the merit of his Torah study; by contrast, after one has already learned Torah without assistance, his merit cannot be bought, and even entertaining the thought that it could be bought is worthy of condemnation (Yyun Nitzav).

$\text{ PERSONALITIES}

Shimon brother of Azarya – שִׁמְעוֹן בָּתַר

Shimon, brother of Azarya, was a tanna who lived at the time of the destruction of the Temple, and he is mentioned several times in the Mishna. According to the Rambam, the Azarah mentioned here was the father of Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya. Azarya was a Torah scholar, but he was also very wealthy, and he supported his brother Shimon, who was a greater Torah scholar. Despite the fact that Shimon was a greater scholar, he is known as the brother of Azarya because Azarya supported him (see Yavyika Rabba 251).

Rabbi Yohanan of the house of the Nazi – רָב יַהוֹנָנָא בַּתַּר

Apparentl, this is referring to a poverty-stricken scholar who wishes to acquire the reward for the Torah, because the house of the Nazi supported him and enabled him to learn Torah. It is unlikely that this is referring to the great amora Rabbi Yohanan, as he sold all his vast possessions in order to devote himself to Torah study. In fact, the Pesakta DeRav Kahana (27:1) cites the verse mentioned here: “If a man would give all the fortune of his house for love” (Song of Songs 8:7), in reference to Rabbi Yohanan.

$\text{ BACKGROUND}

When Rav Dimi came – רַב יַמִּי בַּתַּר

Rav Dimi was one of the Sages of Eretz Yisrael who would often travel to Babylonia, primarily in order to transmit the Torah learned in the study halls of Eretz Yisrael to the Torah centers of the Diaspora, although occasionally he traveled on business as well. Many questions, particularly those concerning the opinions of the Sages of Eretz Yisrael, remained unresolved in Babylonia until one of these messengers from Eretz Yisrael arrived and elucidated the halakha, explained a novel expression, or clarified the unique circumstances pertaining to a particular statement.

$\text{ NOTES}

The mishna states: From here ben Azzai states: A person is obligated to teach his daughter Torah, so that if she drinks and does not die immediately, she will know that some merit of hers has delayed her punishment. Rabbi Eliezer says: Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah is teaching her promiscuity. The Gemara asks: Could it enter your mind to say that teaching one’s daughter Torah is actually teaching her promiscuity? Rather, say: It is considered as if he taught her promiscuity.
Rabbi Abbahu says: What is the reason for Rabbi Eliezer’s statement? It is as it is written: “I, wisdom, dwell with cunning” (Proverbs 8:12), which indicates that once wisdom enters into a person, cunning enters with it." Rabbi Eliezer fears that the woman will use the cunning she achieves by learning the wisdom of the Torah to engage in promiscuous behavior.

The Gemara asks: And the Rabbis who disagree with him, what do they do with this verse: “I, wisdom, dwell with cunning (orma)”! How do they interpret it? The Gemara responds: He requires that verse for that which Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Hanina, states, interpreting the word "orma" as nakedness rather than cunningness, as Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Hanina, says: The matters of Torah do not endure except in one who stands naked for them, as it is stated: “I, wisdom, dwell with nakedness (orma)” (Proverbs 8:11). This means that wisdom dwells only in one who is prepared to give away all of his possessions for the sake of Torah study. Rabbi Yoḥanan says: The matters of Torah do not endure except in one who considers himself as one who does not exist, as it is stated: “But wisdom, it can be found in nothingness” (Job 28:12).

The mishna states that Rabbi Yehoshua says: A woman desires to receive the amount of a kav of food and a sexual relationship rather than to receive nine kav of food and abstinence. The Gemara asks: What is he saying? This is what Rabbi Yehoshua is saying: A woman desires to receive the amount of a kav of food and with it a sexual relationship, i.e., her husband’s availability to fulfill her sexual desires, rather than nine kav of food and with it abstinence, and since her desires are of a sexual nature, it is undesirable for her to study Torah.

The mishna continues: He, Rabbi Yehoshua, would say: A foolish man of piety, and a conniving wicked person, and an abstenent woman, and those who injure themselves out of false abstinence; all these are people who erode the world. The Gemara asks: Who is considered a foolish man of piety? For example, it is one who sees that a woman is drowning in a river, and he says: It is not proper conduct to look at her while she is undressed and save her.

**NOTES**

Cunning enters with it – According to Rashi, who explains the term tsifrut as referring to licentious behavior, the connection between cunning and tsifrut is that a woman might use the ingenuity she achieves by learning Torah in order to hide her immorality. The Meri, who explains tsifrut as meaning worthless matters, interprets the connection differently. Although she attains a little wisdom by learning Torah, she comprehends her studies only partially. Yet she believes herself to have understood fully, and attempts to show off her wisdom to all.

One who stands naked for them – Rashi, in his first interpretation, explains that this statement refers to one who relinquishes all his possessions in order to acquire wisdom. The Meri adds that only when one does not care at all about physical possessions can he be sure that nothing will prevent him from learning. In his second interpretation, Rashi explains that in order to attain the wisdom of the Torah, one must view himself as bare and devoid of all knowledge, as this enables him to learn from everyone, even from those of lesser stature. The Meri offers an alternative explanation as well, suggesting that Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Hanina, also interprets orma in the sense of cunning and states that the matters of Torah do not endure except in one who renders himself cunning for them. One must use cunning in order to discover the methods and techniques of learning that best suit him. For example, some memorize their learning through repetition, but there are others who find other methods more efficient.

The amount of a kav of food and with it a sexual relationship, etc. – Women generally prefer a less luxurious lifestyle that involves more sexual intercourse to a life of greater luxury that involves a lack of sexual intercourse, possibly due to a husband’s extended absences from home for work. Tosafot cite Rabbeinu Hananel, who illustrates this concept by means of a halakhic ruling. The Gemara states elsewhere that a donkey driver may not become a camel driver without his wife’s consent, since although a camel driver earns more than a donkey driver, he arrives home less frequently. Alternatively, the Meri explains that a woman generally prefers that her husband attain only minimal knowledge of Torah and be at home with her, rather than attain great wisdom but be distant from her.

A foolish man of piety – Also included in this category are those whose concepts of piety cause them to neglect mitzvot that are incumbent upon them, and those who behave with exaggerated piety, e.g., one who fasts every single day (Rambam; Meir).

One who sees that a woman is drowning, etc. – Some of the commentaries raise the question that this behavior is neither merely foolish but wicked, as the Torah explicitly obligates one to save those whose lives are in danger, as stated in the verse: “You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:16). The commentaries therefore explain that the Gemara is referring to a case where there are others present who can perform the rescue but he, due to his misplaced piety, does not hasten to perform this mitzva (Minha Hanava; see Eishel Avraham).
The Sages expound this verse to apply to the litigant as (Rashi).

become one who persuades others with his ways – (Rashi). Ben Yehoyada adds that the Gemara is not referring to an individual who openly states his case before the judge in this manner, as the judge will not be prepared to listen to him; rather, it refers to one who discusses the particulars of his case with the judge incidentally, or in the course of a Torah discussion.

One who persuades others with his ways – (Rashi). The Maharsha explains that this refers to one who gives advice to others, surreptitiously advising them to perform actions that benefit him and cause loss to others.

BACKGROUND

Gleanings – The Torah prohibits the owner of a field from gathering individual stalks that fell during the harvest (Leviticus 19:9). Less than three stalks that fell in one place are considered gleanings and belong to the poor.

Forgotten sheaves – If one forgot a sheaf in the field while harvesting, he may not return to collect it, as it must be left for the poor (Deuteronomy 24:19).

Pe’a – The Torah states that one is prohibited from harvesting the produce in the corner of his field; rather, one must allow the poor to collect this produce themselves. The Sages decreed that the area of the corner must be at least one-sixtieth of the field. This mitzva is stated in the Torah (Leviticus 19:9, 23:22), and the details of the mitzva are explained in tractate Pe’a.

The poor man’s tithe – During the third and sixth years of the Sabbatical cycle, after one separates teruma from his produce, which is given to the priests, and first tithe, which is given to the Levites, one-tenth of the remaining produce is distributed to the poor. During the other years of the Sabbatical cycle, second tithe is separated instead of the poor man’s tithe.

HALAKHA

One who presents his statement to the judge, etc. – A judge who hears one litigant when the other litigant is not present transgresses the prohibition: “Do not accept a false report” (Exodus 23:3). The Sages expand this verse to apply to the litigant as well, prohibiting him from presenting his case when the other litigant is not present. The rationale behind this prohibition is that once a judge has heard the argument of one side while the other side is not present, the impression created is likely to remain fixed in his mind, making it difficult for him to accept the arguments of the other side (Rashi). Ben Yehoyada adds that the Gemara is not referring to an individual who openly states his case before the judge in this manner, as the judge will not be prepared to listen to him; rather, it refers to one who discusses the particulars of his case with the judge incidentally, or in the course of a Torah discussion.

One who persuades others with his ways – A judge who hears one litigant adds that the Gemara is not referring to an individual who openly states his case before the judge in this manner, as the judge will not be prepared to listen to him; rather, it refers to one who discusses the particulars of his case with the judge incidentally, or in the course of a Torah discussion.

One who persuades others with his ways – The Maharsha explains that this refers to one who gives advice to others, surreptitiously advising them to perform actions that benefit him and cause loss to others.

Abaye says: A convincing wicked person is one who provides advice to sell property in accordance with the ruling of Rabbab Shimon ben Gamliel, as it is taught in a baraita: With regard to one who said: My property is given to you, and after you die, to so-and-so, and the first beneficiary entered the property and sold it and consumed the profits, the second beneficiary repossesses the property from the purchasers, as the property belongs to him after the death of the first beneficiary; this is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Rabbab Shimon ben Gamliel says: The second beneficiary receives only that which the first beneficiary left, since his sale is valid. However, it is not permitted to sell the property ab initio, since the giver intended for the second beneficiary to receive the property.

Asi says that Rabbi Yoḥanan says: A convincing wicked person is one who persuades others with his ways, convincing others to mimic his seemingly righteous behavior, in order to hide his faults. Rabbi Zerika says that Rav Huna says: A convincing wicked person is one who is lenient in the halakha for himself and strict for others. Ulla says: This