

BS”D

Siyum Mesechet Shabbat

Shabbat HaGadol 5784

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BACKGROUND

So before we do the actual siyum mesechet, I would like to share with you a few words as to how I got to doing this, my FIRST siyum mesechet.

Of course, I couldn’t have even begun without my wife Deena, so let me thank her before saying anything else – both for this kiddush and for everything else – as R. Akiva said: sheli veshelachem, shela hu.

As many of you know, I became religious in college when a mentor of mine began to teach me about Jewish philosophy. It was the first time someone told me that there is a purpose to the world, to our lives – I was intrigued. He said that, as Jews, we believe that there is a Creator with a plan; that we each have a soul, and that we are here to fix our souls and fix the world. Tikun HaNefesh, Tikun Olam.

[As a funny aside, when I first made Aliyah my Hebrew was very minimal, my vocabulary was limited to the words I learned from my Torah studies. The first week we were here we had to go sign up to a kupat holim, which meant we needed to fill out a health form (she’aylon refui). I struggled to get through it, but I knew machalot was something I didn’t have, so I checked off NO to all those questions. But then I got to a very strange question: Do you have “bayot nafshiyot”? So I said to myself, bayot bayot – that means problems. But what is nafshiyot? Ah, nefesh! They want to know if I have problems with my nefesh. But OF COURSE, I do. We all do. We are here to do TIKUN HANEFESH. The only reason I didn’t answer “yes” was because I thought it was very strange that the kupat holim was asking religious questions!]

Anyway, my journey into Judaism started with reading philosophical and spiritual books, like Derech Hashem and Tanya. At some point my mentor said that I really needed to learn Gemara. So I joined a Gemara class. I can’t remember exactly which sugya it was,

but it was something like Shnayim Ohazim b'Talit. Who gets what, who said what, and other legal arguments. I said to myself: what am I doing here – I want to discuss philosophy, like “why we are here,” not law and legalistic minutiae. I never went back.

Nevertheless, I realized that the Gemara is important and so I bought myself a set of Soncino English Talmud, and anytime I was reading a philosophy book that referred to the Gemara, I would look up the source and read a couple of pages before and a couple of pages after the actual source in order to familiarize myself more with this text called the Talmud.

Over the years I began to appreciate the central importance of the Gemara as I used it in many of my weekly shiurim and drashot. At one point I tried to join a daf yomi shiur – but that lasted for one month. The most Gemara I learned was when I studied for 6 years at Mercaz HaRav for semicha – where I went through many many sugyot in great detail.

But for all that, I never finished a mesechet from start to finish ... until today.

WHY NOW?

This past October, I paid a shiva call to my friend David Geudalia who had lost his son Yosef Malachi Geudalia, HY”D, on Oct. 7. David told us about what a dedicated Torah scholar his son was (talmid hachamim). How he learned at Yeshivat Benei David and when he was killed his friends at Yeshiva Har Etzion put up his picture on the wall with those of the Gedolim (R. Soloveitchik, R. Lichtenstein, etc.). David told us about how he had taken Yosef to their family Rabbi before Yosef was drafted and the Rabbi said that Yosef should try to take on something more to be mehazek himself now that he was going to the army. Yosef took on to learn mesechet Shabbat. But he didn't get to finish it.

When I heard this, I knew that I had to finish it. Not knowing where he was holding, I started from the beginning. So today, while Yosef is enjoying the Ziv Hashechina with all the great martyrs of Israel – Kedoshei Yisrael – we will finish his mesechet for him.

LAST WORDS OF MESECHET

The Gemara concludes a discussion about measuring (medida) on Shabbat with a story (maaseh rav).

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף קנז עמוד ב

עולא איקלע לבי ריש גלותא [עולא היה מבקר בבית של "נשיא" העם]. חזייה לרבה בר רב הונא דיתיב באוונא דמיא [עולא ראה את רבה בר רב הונא שישב "בגיגית של מים" – בקיצור: ג'קוזי], וקא משח ליה [ורבה בר רב הונא היה מודד את ג'קוזי]. אמר ליה [עולא לרבה בר רב הונא]: אימר דאמרי רבנן מדידה דמצוה, דלאו מצוה מי אמור: [הרבנים אמרו שמותר לעשות מדידה הקשורה למצווה אבל לאו מי אמר?!] - אמר ליה [רבה בר רב הונא לעולא]: **מתעסק בעלמא אנא.**

Mitasek Balma Ana – I am just messing around. This is how the mesechet ends!!

On the halachic level, the Piskei Rid explains that Rabba Bar R. Huna told him he was just playing around and had no intention of measuring:

פסקי רי"ד מסכת שבת דף קנז עמוד ב

... איני מתכוין למדוד אלא מתעסק אני לשחוק [סתם משחק], ואיני צרי' לדעת מידת המים שבהן.

The Daf Al Daf explains that Schok implies kalut rosh (frivolity).

דף על הדף מסכת שבת דף קנז עמוד ב

... יש לפרש "לשחוק" מלשון שחוק וקלות ראש, משחק אני (משלי כו, יט), דאין הכוונה כלל למדידה, כי אם מתעסק בעלמא. וראה בפ"י הר"ח: מתעסק בעלמא אנא כלומר אני מודד ולא מתכוון למדידה אני, וכלשון רבינו הזקן בשו"ע שלו (סי' שו סעיף יח - יט) מודד שלא לצורך כלל ואז דוקא מותר. ובהנ"ל דלחישא - מדידה חשיבא, (אלא שמותר מפני שהיא מדידה דמצוה). וצ"ע.

But then the question is asked how can it be that a great Amora is just "messing around"!?

Answer: He was in a jacuzzi and not allowed to think Torah so he was distracting himself.

דף על הדף מסכת שבת דף קנז עמוד ב

וכתב שם בשיורי מנחה בסוף הספר וז"ל: והקשה עלי גדול אחד, הלא בסוף שבת איתא דרבה בר רב הונא כו' מתעסק אנא, ואם אמורא אומר על עצמו דאינו אלא מתעסק בעלמא, מאן יימר על צדיקי זמנינו דכוונתם מכוונת וכל פעולתם עם כוונה וייחוד מכוונים.... **שרבה בר רב הונא הי' מוכרח להיות מתעסק בעלמא, דהא ישב אז בגיגית מים, והוא בית המרחץ מקום שאסור להרהר בדברי תורה ובדברים שבקדושה, וכי הפוסקים (באו"ח סי' פ"ח) דבעת היכנסו לבית הכסא יפנה לבו ויעסוק בדברים אחרים כדי שלא יבא להרהר בדברים שבקדושה. ...**

But even if that is true, we still have a great amora, sitting in the jacuzzi of the President's house, just "messing around," having a good time (oseh hayim).

There is a very important message here. While the entire mesechet is one filled with all the minutiae of the law, how one must be careful to fulfill the law in all its detail – and this is indeed important since halacha is what frames our daily lives – this final story that closes out the mesechet teaches that there is not only room, but a need to just mess around, mitasek, lesahek.

And it is this philosophical message that is so important for us today, living under the tensions of war. Of course we must take life seriously, mithazek be'emuna u'b'halacha, but we must also let ourselves rejoice and even be stam mitasek in a jacuzzi.

הדרן עלך מי שהחשיך וסליקא לה מסכת שבת.