

Toldot Shimshon

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Chapter I – Mishnah 5

יוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים אומר, יהי ביתך פתוח לרנקה, ויהיו ענייני בני ביתך, ואל תרבה שיחה עם האשה. באשתו אמרו, קל נחמר באשת חבירו. מכאן אמרו חכמים, כל זמן שאדם מרבה שיחה עם האשה, גורם רעה לעצמו, ובוטל מדברי תורה, וסופו יורש גיהנם.

Yose ben Yochanan, a man of Jerusalem used to say: Let your house be wide open, and let the poor be members of your household, and do not engage in too much conversation with women. They said this with regard to one's own wife, how much more [does the rule apply] with regard to another man's wife.

From here, the Sages said: as long as a man engages in too much conversation with women, he causes evil to himself, he neglects the study of the Torah, and at his end he will inherit Gehenna.

פליאה דעת ממנו, איך תקשרו אלו העניינים זה עם זה. ועוד, מכאן אמרו חכמים, היכא קאי האי "מכאן". דאם נאמר דקאי ל"אל תרבה שיחה עם האשה", קשה, דמאי דקתני אחר כך "כל זמן" וכו', "גורם" וכו', הם טעמים למאי דאמר שאל תרבה שיחה, ולא שייד לומר "מכאן", אלא "שכל זמן" וכו'. ואם נאמר דשייד לקל נחמר באשת חבירו, גם זה לא יתכן כלל. ועוד, "וסופו יורש גיהנם", מהו "וסופו".

“This knowledge is too wonderful:”¹ how are these matters connected one with another?

Further, regarding “From here the Sages said,” to which element does this “from here” refer? For if we say that it refers to “do not engage in too much conversation with women,” it is difficult to understand, for from what he teaches afterward, “as long as a man engages in too much conversation with women, he causes evil to himself,” is not a derivation of some teaching based upon “do not engage in too much conversation with women.” Instead, they are reasons for why he said that one should not engage in too much conversation. Thus, it is not relevant to say “from here,” but rather, to omit the word and instead to immediately add the reason, “as long as a man engages in too much conversation with women . . .”

If we say that [“from here”] pertains to the *a fortiori* argument regarding another man's wife, this too is entirely impossible.

Furthermore, “and in the end he will inherit Gehenna” — what is [the meaning of] “and at his end”?

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¹ Cf. Ps. 139:6.

ומה שפירשו המפרשים, ש"מכאן אמרו חכמים" הוא תוספת שהוסיף רבינו הקדוש על דברי התנא. מלבד הדוחק, עוד קשה, שאין זו הוספה של פלוג, אלא נתינת טעם למה שאמר התנא, ולא שייד הלשון "מכאן אמרו חכמים", שאפשר שהתנא עצמו הזכיר, ואל תרבה שיחה וכו', מתמת טעמים אלו, והנה לו לומר, "ואמרו חכמים כל זמן וכו', ולא "מכאן". ובנדאי שתיבה זו ניתנה לידרש, בין אם יהנה מאמר התנא עצמו, בין אם יהנה תוספת של רבינו הקדוש.

That which the commentators explained, that the words “From here the Sages said” as well as the following reasoning was an addition that our holy Rabbi, Yehudah haNasi, added onto the words of the Tanna.² Aside from the forcedness [of this explanation], it is furthermore difficult to understand, for as noted, this is no addition of any substance, but rather the providing of a rationale for what the Tanna said.

The expression “From here, the Sages said” is not relevant, for it is possible that the Tanna himself warned, “and do not engage in too much conversation” etc., because of these reasons, viz, that it causes evil to himself, he neglects the study of the Torah, and at his end he will inherit Gehenna.

If the rationale were added by Rabbi Yehudah haNasi, then **he should have said, “and the Sages said: as long as a man engages in too much conversation with women,” etc.,** connecting to what the Tanna just said, **rather than “From here,”** which implies derivation from a source. The word "מכאן" is the problem; it doesn't fit a simple editorial addition.

Whether we view the word “from here” as having been provided by the Tanna or having been added by Rabbi Yehudah haNasi, it doesn't seem to make sense, as it implies a derivation from something, but no such derivation is taking place. The reasoning follows directly from the ruling, not from some external source.

Certainly, this word “from here” was given to be expounded, whether it be the statement of the Tanna himself, or whether it be an addition of our holy Rabbi.

ונקדים מאי דאמרינו בפירוש קמא דבתרא דף ז', כופין אותו לבנות בית שער לחצר. למימרא דבית שער - מעליותא היא, והא שהוא חסידא דהנה רגיל דמשמע אליהו בהדיה, עבד בית שער, ותו לא אישתעי בהדיה. לא קשיא, הא דאית ליה דלת, הא דלית ליה דלת. ואי בעית אמא, הא דאית ליה דלת ופומסת, ולא קשיא, הא דפומסת דידיה מגנאי, הא דפומסת דידיה מבנאי. ופרש רש"י, פומסת דידיה מבנאי, דעני פומסת ונכנס, והיא של עץ, ותמיד המפתח לתוכו, עכ"ל.

We shall preface with that which we say in the first chapter of Bava Batra, page 7b:

“[The residents of a courtyard] **can compel** [each inhabitant of that courtyard] **to** [financially participate in the] **building of a gatehouse** and a door **to the** [jointly owned] **courtyard** [so that the courtyard not be open to the eyes of those standing in the public domain].”³

Is this to say that a gatehouse is an advantageous thing? But there was that certain pious man, with whom Elijah was accustomed to converse; he

² The Bartenura wrote: “Our holy master, who arranged the Mishnahs, wrote [this]: From the words of this sage, who said, ‘do not engage in too much conversation with women,’ the sages learned to say, ‘as long as a man engages in too much conversation with women, he causes evil to himself.’ ”

³ Mishnah Bava Batra 1:5.

made a gatehouse, and afterward [Elijah] no longer conversed with him [because due to the gatehouse the voice of the poor crying outside the courtyard was not heard].

This is not difficult: this [case where the gatehouse is a bad thing] **is where it has a door** [that would keep a poor man from approaching to ask for charity]; **that** [case where the gatehouse is a good thing] **is where it does not have a door** [and thus a poor man can enter to ask for help].

If you wish, say: both this and that are where it has a door and a handle, and it is not difficult to understand: this [case where the gatehouse is a bad thing] **is where its handle is on the inside** [not allowing entry to a poor man], **that** [case where the gatehouse is a good thing] **is where its handle is on the outside.**

- Bava Batra 7b

Rashi explained “its handle is on the outside” as meaning “for the poor man opens it and enters, and it is made of wood, and the key is always inside it.”

ובנה יובנו דברי המנא "יהי ביתך" וכו', היותר טוב הוא שלא יהיה דלת כלל, ויהי ביתך פתוח לרנחה, כדי שאם יבא העני לא יצטרך להתעכב לפתוח הדלת, או לא יהיה פותחת כלל, מהטעם הזה ממש. ואפילו אם תרצה לעשות דלת ופוחתת, הנהר שתהיה הפוחתת מבחוץ, כדי שיוכל העני לפתוח גם הוא את הדלת, כמו שעושים בני ביתך, ונהו ויהיו עניים בני "ביתך".

By this, the words of the Tanna, “Let your house be wide open, and let the poor be members of your household” will be understood. The better thing is that there should be no door at all, and let your house be open wide, so that if the poor man comes, he will not need to delay to open the door.

Or if there is to be a door, it is best where there is no handle at all, i.e., no latch, for precisely this reason. Even if you wish to make a door and a handle, be careful that the handle be on the outside, so that the poor man too can open the door, just as the members of your household do. This is the meaning of: “and let the poor be members of your household.”

ולאחר שיבואו העניים לביתך, אף על פי שעקר המצוה היא לתן להם צדקה ולפייסם בדברים, ואדרבא, המפייסם בדברים, נרבה שקרו יותר, כדאמרין בפרק קמא דבתרא, הנותן צדקה מתברך בנש ברכות, והמפייסו בדברים מתברך באסת עשרה ברכות. אם תבאנה לביתך נשים עניות, אין לך להאריך בדברים ולפייסן, אלא תן להן צדקה, ואל תרבה שיחה עם האשה.

After the poor come to your house, although the essence of the commandment is to give them charity and to also appease them with words, but if only one is to be done, then one who appeases [the poor] with words increases his reward even more than one who gives only charity. As we say in the first chapter of Bava Batra (9b): “One who gives charity is blessed with six blessings, and one who appeases him with words is blessed with eleven blessings.” But if poor women come to your house, you should not lengthen speech with words and appease them, but rather give them charity, and do not engage in too much conversation with women.

ואף על פי שיש מקום לומר, שהואיל שפוננתו לעשות מצות הצדקה פתיקונה, דהיינו הפיוס הצריך, אי אפשר לבוא לידי חטא, שהרי הצדקה תגין מיצר הרע, כדכתיב "וצדקה תציל ממות". אפלו הכי, קא משמע לן, ואל תרבה שיחה עם האשה, שהרי באשתו אמרו שאל ירבה שיחה, אף על פי ששם אי אפשר לו לבא לידי חטא, קל וחמר באשת חברו שאפשר לבא לידי חטא, שאל יסמוך על הנס לומר, שמצות הצדקה תגין עליו מיצר הרע.

Perhaps there is room to say that since his intention is to perform the commandment of charity properly — namely, the necessary appeasement — it is impossible for him to come to sin. For behold, charity protects from the evil inclination, as it is written in Proverbs, “And charity saves from death.”⁴ Even so, it teaches us: “and do not engage in too much conversation with women.” For behold, regarding his own wife they said that one should not engage in too much conversation, even though there it is impossible for him to come to sin. All the more so regarding another man’s wife, where it is possible to come to sin, that he should not rely upon the miracle to say that the commandment of charity will protect him from the evil inclination.

ומעתה שלא ירבה שיחה עם האשה, לא יוכל לפיסה בדברים, ויאבד הברכות של המפייסו בדברים. וקשה, איה לא תלשו חכמים להפסד נדאי וגדול כזה, ואדרבא, הנה להם לומר "שומר מצנה לא ידע דבר רע". ועוד, שאם זוכה לברכות, אי אפשר שיגיע לו קללה, דהיינו פיתוי יצר הרע. אלא נדאי מדאסרו להרבות שיחה עם האשה ולפיסה בדברים, על פתח צריך לומר, משום דקים להו וההפסד נדאי, והתועלת ספק, ואדרבא, גדול ההפסד כל כך שלא יבוא כלל התועלת, שאיה אפשר שיבואו לו הברכות, אם יגרם רעה לעצמו.

Now, since he should not engage in too much conversation with women, he will not be able to appease her with words, and he will lose the blessings of one who appeases with words. This is difficult: how did the Sages not fear such a certain and great loss? On the contrary, they should have said, “He who keeps a commandment will know no harm.”⁵ Further, if he merits blessings, it is impossible that a curse should reach him — namely, seduction by the evil inclination. Rather, certainly, from the fact that they prohibited increasing conversation with women and appeasing her with words, you are forced to say that it was because it was established to them that the loss is certain and the benefit doubtful. Moreover, the loss is so great that the benefit will not come at all, for how is it possible that blessings should come to him if he causes evil to himself?

ונהו "מכאן אמרו חכמים", כלומר, מדתזינן שאסרו הראשונים לפייס הענייה בדברים, הגם שהיא מצנה שיש לה כל כך שבר טוב של אחת עשרה ברכות, מכאן למדו חכמים לומר, שהמרבה שיחה עם האשה, גורם רעה לעצמו וכו', ותבוא לו הקללה, ולא הברכה, חס ושלום.

This is the meaning of “From here the Sages said” — that is to say, since we see that the earlier ones prohibited appeasing the poor woman with words, despite the fact that it is a commandment that has such great good reward of eleven blessings, from here the Sages

⁴ Prov. 10:2.

⁵ Eccl. 8:5.

learned to say that one who engages in too much conversation with women causes evil to himself etc., and the curse will come upon him, and not the blessing, Heaven forbid.

וְהַקָּשֶׁר שֶׁל אֱלוֹהֵי הַשְּׁלוֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים יוֹבֵן שְׁפִיר, בְּמֵאֵי דְאֲמַרִּינָן בְּפֶרֶק ב' דְּנִדְרִים, אֵל תִּרְבֶּה שִׁיחָה עִם הָאִשָּׁה, שְׁסוּפָה בְּאֵת לַיְדֵי גֵיאוּף. ר' אַמִּי בְרַי אִשְׁיָה אָמַר, כָּל הַצּוֹפֶה בְּנָשִׁים סוּף בָּא לַיְדֵי עֲבִירָה. וְהַקָּשָׁה בְּעַל עֵינֵי זַעֲקָב, מֵאֵי שְׁנָא רִישָׁא וְאָמַר, סוּף בָּא לַיְדֵי גֵיאוּף, וּמֵאֵי שְׁנָא סִיפָא דְאָמַר, סוּף בָּא לַיְדֵי עֲבִירָה. וְתִירְזֵן, דְּנוֹאֵף בְּעֵינָיו, נִקְרָא נוֹאֵף, כְּדִכְתִּיב "וְעֵין נֹאֵף" וְכוּ'. וְדָרָה הַמְדַבְּרִים זַחַד, לְבוֹא לַיְדֵי הַסְּתַפְלוּת, כְּדִכְתִּיב "וְדָבַר ה' אֶל־מִשְׁחָה פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים" וְכוּ'. וְאִם כֵּן, שְׁפִיר קָאָמַר אֵל תִּרְבֶּה שִׁיחָה עִם הָאִשָּׁה, שְׁסוּפָה לְבוֹא לַיְדֵי גֵיאוּף בְּעֵינָם, וְהַצּוֹפֶה בְּנָשִׁים, סוּף בָּא לַיְדֵי עֲבִירָה מִמֶּשׁ, כִּי הָעֵין רוֹאֶה וְכוּ', עכ"ל.

The connection of these three things, i.e., the listed consequences, may be properly understood from that which we say in the second chapter of Nedarim (20a): “Do not engage in too much conversation with women, for your end is to come to adultery.” Rabbi Ammi bar Yoshiyah said: “Anyone who gazes at women, his end is to come to transgression.”

The author of *Iyun Yaakov*⁶ asked:

What is different about the first clause, that it says, “his end is to come to adultery,” and what is different about the latter clause, that it says, “his end is to come to transgression”? He answered: one who commits adultery with his eyes is called an adulterer, as it is written in Book of Job, “The eyes of the adulterer watch for twilight, thinking, “No one will glimpse me then.” He masks his face.”⁷

It is the way of those who speak together to come to gazing, as it is written in Book of Exodus, “And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as one person speaks to another.”⁸ If so, he properly says: “do not engage in too much conversation with women,” for your end is to come to adultery with the eyes. One who gazes at women, his end is to come to actual transgression, for “the eye sees, the heart covets, and the body commits the sin.”⁹

- *Iyun Yaakov*

וְנִהוּ כָּל הַמְרַבֶּה שִׁיחָה עִם הָאִשָּׁה, גּוֹרֵם רָעָה לְעַצְמוֹ, שְׂיָבוֹא לַיְדֵי גֵיאוּף. וְכִשְׁהָעֵין רוֹאֶה, הַלֵּב חוֹמֵד. וְכִשְׂבוֹא לַיְדֵי הַרְהוּר, נִקְרָא רַע, וְכִתִּיב "לֹא יִגְרַף רַע", וְאִין מְכַנִּיסִין אוֹתוֹ בְּמַחֲצֵתוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

This is the meaning of: “One who engages in too much conversation with women causes evil to himself” — that he will come to adultery. When the eye sees, the heart desires. When he comes to thoughts of sin, he is called evil, as it is written in Psalms, “Evil shall not

⁶ Rabbi Jacob Reischer (1670 - 1733), *Iyun Yaakov* (Wilhermsdorf 1729).

⁷ Job 24:15.

⁸ Ex. 33:11.

⁹ Rashi on Num. 15:39.

dwelt with You,”¹⁰ and they do not admit him into the partition of the Holy One, blessed be He.¹¹

ובוטל מדברי תורה, דכתיב "יראת ה' טהורה", וכשגשג לו הרהור, אינה טהורה. וכן אמרו, נושא אשה, נאחר פה לומד תורה, כדי שלא יקנה בהרהור עבירה.

He neglects words of Torah, as it is written in Psalms, “The fear of the L-rd is pure,”¹² and when he has sinful thoughts, it is not pure. So they said in Kiddushin: “One marries a woman, and afterward studies Torah,” so that he not be in thoughts of transgression.¹³

נסופו יורש גיהנם, דעבירה גוררת עבירה, העין רואה, והלב חומד, וכלי המעשה גומרים. וזהו "נסופו", משום דגורם רעה ובוטל מדברי תורה - באות מחמת תחלת ההרהור לחוד, אבל יורש גיהנם, הוא מחמת הסוף, שכלי המעשה גומרים.

His end is that he inherits Gehenna, for transgression leads to transgression.¹⁴ The eye sees, and the heart covets, and the instruments of action complete the deed.¹⁵ This is the meaning of “and his end,” because “causes evil to himself” and “neglects words of Torah” come merely from the beginning of the sinful thought alone, but inheriting Gehenna comes from the end — when the instruments of action complete the deed.

We may now return to the question with which we began: to what does “from here” refer? It refers neither to “do not engage in too much conversation with women,” nor to the *a fortiori* argument regarding another man’s wife. Rather, it refers to the ruling discussed in Bava Batra — that the Sages prohibited appeasing a poor woman with words, even though one who appeases the poor with words is blessed with eleven blessings, far more than the six blessings received by one who gives charity alone. From this ruling, the Sages derived that the loss incurred by engaging in too much conversation with women is certain and great, while the benefit is doubtful — indeed, so great is the loss that the benefit cannot come at all, for how can blessings come to one who simultaneously causes evil to himself?

Whether the word “from here” was written by the Tanna himself or added by Rabbi Yehudah haNasi, it was certainly given to be expounded. It points us back to the practical ruling about poor women and charity as the source from which the Sages articulated the three consequences: causing evil to oneself, neglecting Torah, and ultimately, at the end of the full progression from thought to deed, inheriting Gehenna.

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¹⁰ Ps. 5:5.

¹¹ Niddah 12b.

¹² Ps. 19:10.

¹³ Kiddushin 29b.

¹⁴ Pirkei Avot 4:2.

¹⁵ Rashi on Num. 15:39.