



על חטא שחטאנו לפניך במשא ובמתן For the sin we have committed before You... with the demands of Business

Rabbi Hannah Kingston, Yom Kippur 5781

Mishnah Ketubot 5:6

הַמְדִיר אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ מִתְשַׁמֵּשׁ הַמָּטָה, בֵּית שַׁמַּי אוֹמְרִים, שְׁתֵּי שָׁבָתוֹת. בֵּית הַלֵּל אוֹמְרִים, שָׁבָת אַחַת. הַתְּלִמִּידִים יוֹצְאִין לְתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה שְׁלֹא בְרִשּׁוֹת שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם. הַפּוֹעֲלִים, שָׁבָת אַחַת. הָעוֹנֶה הָאֲמוּנָה בַתּוֹרָה, הַטָּיִלִין, בְּכָל יוֹם. הַפּוֹעֲלִים, שְׁתֵּי שָׁבָתוֹת. הַחֲמֻרִים, אַחַת בְּשָׁבָת. הַגְּמָלִים, אַחַת לְשָׁלְשִׁים יוֹם. הַסְּפָנִים, אַחַת לְשָׁשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים, דְּבָרֵי רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר

A man forbade himself by vow from having relations with his wife: Beit Shammai says: two weeks [until he must divorce her]; Beit Hillel says: one week.

Students may go away to study Torah, without the permission [of their wives] for a period of thirty days; labourers – for one week.

The times for conjugal duty prescribed in the Torah are: For those who live at home – every day; For labourers outside the city – twice a week; For donkey-drivers, once a week; For camel-drivers, once in thirty days; For sailors, once in six months.

These are the words of Rabbi Eliezer.

Ketubot 62b

אמר רב אדא בר אהבה אמר רב זו דברי ר' אליעזר אבל חכמים אומרים התלמידים יוצאין לת"ת ב' וג' שנים שלא ברשות אמר רבא סמכו רבנן אדרב אדא בר אהבה ועבדי עובדא בנפשיהו

Rav Adda Bar Ahava said in the name of Rav: This is the opinion of Rabi Eliezer however, the Sages say that a student may leave for his wife to study Torah for two, or even three years, without her permission.

Rava stated: the Rabbies relied on Rav Adda bar Ahava and act accordingly at the risk of losing their lives.

כי הא דרב רחומי הוה שכיח קמיה דרבא במחוזא הוה רגיל דהוה אתי לביתיה כל מעלי יומא דכיפורי יומא חד משכתייה שמעתא הוה מסכיא דביתהו השתא אתי השתא אתי לא אתא חלש דעתה אחית דמעתא מעינה הוה יתיב באיגרא אפחית איגרא מתותיה ונח נפשיה

So Rav Rehummi who was commonly at the school of Rava in Mahoza used to return home on the Eve of Yom Kippur. One day he was pulled in by his learning. His wife was looking out for him, saying, 'He is coming now, he is coming now.'

He did not come, she became depressed, a tear fell from her eye.

[At that moment] he was sitting on a roof. The roof collapsed under him and he was killed.

Daf Shevui Commentary on this:

Composed in Modiin. Commentary on the Talmud written by Rabbi Joshua Kulp, Rosh Yeshiva at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

There are many ironic elements of this tragic story. First of all, his name is Rehum, which is the Aramaic word for “lover.” But whom does he love—the Torah or his wife?

R. Rehum “regularly” comes home once a year. The day he comes home is Yom Kippur—perhaps in acknowledgement that by staying away he is committing a sin. Maybe he comes home to ask her forgiveness. In the end, her tears kill him. R. Rehum did not have the ability to truly understand his wife’s pain, and for that he was punished severely.

Another story from Ketubot 62b

רבי חנניה בן חכניאי הוה קאזיל לבי רב בשילהי הלוליה דר"ש בן יוחאי א"ל איעכב לי עד
דאתי בהדך לא איעכבא ליה אזל יתיב תרי סרי שני כבי רב עד דאתי אישתנו שבילי דמתא
ולא ידע למיזל לביתה

Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinay set out for the home of his rabbi at the end of the wedding of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Rabbi Shimon said to Rabbi Chanina, “Wait for me, and I’ll come with you.” He did not wait. He went, and he sat learning at the home of his rabbi for twelve years. By the time he left, all the roads of the city had changed, and he did not know how to get home.

אזל יתיב אגודא דנהרא שמע לההיא רביתא דהוה קרו לה בת חכניאי בת חכניאי מלי קולתך
ותא ניזיל אמר ש"מ האי רביתא דידן אזל בתרה הוה יתיבא דביתהו קא נהלה קמחא דל
עינה חזיתיה סוי לבה פרח רוחה אמר לפניו רבש"ע ענייה זו זה שכרה בעא רחמי עליה
וחייה

He went and sat by the river. He heard young girls calling out, “Bat Chachinay, Bat Chachinay, fill up your jug and let’s go.”

He said, “This girl must be ours!” He followed her.

His wife was sitting and sifting flour. She lifted up her eyes, saw him, her heart swelled, and her soul flew from her.

Chanina ben Chachinay said, “Master of the Universe! This poor woman – is this her reward?”

He asked for mercy upon his wife and she lived.

Daf Shevui Commentary on this:

Chanina comes home after twelve years but has spent so long away from his home and family that he does not recognize the streets, nor does he recognize his daughter. He only knows her because other people are calling her “daughter of Chachinay.” We should also note that they are calling her by her grandfather’s name, not her father’s.

Note also that he uses an academic term “learn from this” to discover his own daughter’s identity. Chanina’s wife is so startled by her husband’s appearance after twelve years away that she dies. While her husband does succeed in bringing her back to life, again the message is clear. Such a way of acting can bring death. Even Chanina recognizes his wife’s misery, calling her “poor one.”

A final story from Ketubot 63a

רב יוסף בריה דרבא שדריה אבוהי לבי רב לקמיה דרב יוסף פסקו ליה שית שני כי הוה תלת שני מטא מעלי יומא דכפורי אמר איזיל ואיחזינהו לאינשי ביתי שמע אבוהי שקל מנא ונפק לאפיה אמר ליה זונתך נזכרת איכא דאמרי אמר ליה יונתך נזכרת איטרוד לא מר איפסיק ולא מר איפסיק

Rav Yosef, son of Rava, was sent by his father to the academy under Rav Yosef, and they arranged for him to stay there for six years.

Having been there three years, it was the eve of Yom Kippur and he said, “I will go and see my family.”

When his father heard, he took a weapon and went out to meet him.

“You have remembered your prostitute?!” or alternatively “You have remembered your dove?!” [There is only one letter difference in the Hebrew]

They got involved in a quarrel and neither one ate the meal before the fast.

Daf Shevui Commentary on this:

This harsh story ends the cycle. R. Joseph is sent away for six years, but clearly he is homesick. He wants to return to see his wife, which is probably the meaning of “my family.” Interestingly, he wants to visit them on Yom Kippur, the one day of the year he could not have sex. The father comes up, armed, ready to send him home and utters a horrible line—“You have remembered your whore.” This line is so troubling that even the Talmud itself seems to want to soften it into “your dove” which in Hebrew is only one letter difference. Why is Rava so angry with his son? It sounds like he is accusing him of not respecting his learning, of being so desirous of his wife that he is willing to abandon the academy.

Neither party is able to eat the meal before Yom Kippur, which is considered by the Talmud to be an important feast, equivalent to fasting on Yom Kippur itself. It’s almost like saying that neither side was able to observe Yom Kippur and to receive the proper atonement for their transgressions.

So how can we establish a work life balance for ourselves?

Exodus 20:9-10

(ט) שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל־מְלָאכְתְּךָ (י) וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת | לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְאִתְּעֲשֶׂה כָּל־מְלָאכָה אַתָּה | וּבְנֵיךָ וּבָתֶּיךָ עֲבָדְךָ וְאִמְתֶּךָ וּבַהֶמְתֶּךָ וּגְרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ

Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Eternal your God: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements.

Bereishit Rabbah 10:9

רבי שאליה לרבי ישמעאל ברבי יוסי, אמר ליה שמעת מאביך מהו ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי, אתמהא. אלא כזה שהוא מכה בקורנס על גבי הסדן, הגביהה מבעוד יום והורידה משתחשף. אמר רבי שמעון בן יוחאי בשם ר' יודע לא עתיו ולא רגעיו ולא שעותיו, הוא מוסיף מחל על הקדש, אבל הקדוש ברוך הוא שהוא יודע רגעיו ועתיו ושעותיו, נכנס בו פחות השערה. גניבא ורבנן, גניבא אמר משל למלך שעשה לו חפה, וציריה וכיירה, ומה היתה חסרה, כלה שתכנס לתוכה. כך מה היתה העולם חסר, שבת. רבנן אמרי משל למלך שעשו לו טבעת, מה היתה חסרה, חותם. כך מה היתה העולם חסר, שבת.

Rabbi asked R. Ishmael b. R. Jose: "Have you heard from your father the actual meaning of 'And on the seventh day God finished, etc.?' " Said he to him: It is like a man striking the hammer on the anvil, raising it by day and bringing it down after nightfall. R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Mortal man, who does not know his minutes, his [exact] times or his hours, must add from the profane to the sacred; but the Holy One, blessed be God, who knows moments, times, and hours, can enter it by a hair's breadth.

Genibah and the Rabbis discussed this.

Genibah said: This may be compared to a king who made a bridal chamber, which he plastered, painted, and adorned; now what did the bridal chamber lack? A bride to enter it.

Similarly, what did the world still lack? The Sabbath.

The Rabbis said: Imagine a king who made a ring: what did it lack? A signet. Similarly, what did the world lack? The Sabbath.

Bryan Dyson, President & CEO of Coca-Cola Enterprises

Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them - work, family, health, friends and spirit - and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls - family, health, friends and spirit - are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life.

Author Nora Jones comments on this:

I'm not talking about juggling five balls. I'm talking about juggling FIFTY-FIVE balls. The balls don't represent 'family' or 'work.' There are separate balls for everything that goes into each of those categories."

By prioritizing the balls that are glass—picking the kids up from nursery, making sure dinner's on the table, or meeting a deadline on a project—and not the ones that are plastic—crazy hair day at school, staying caught up on your email inbox—parents can assure there are no glass shards where their little ones are crawling around.

Everyone drops a ball or two in a day, and that's pretty much unavoidable. My point is that the balls that bounce are fine to bounce. Catching the glass before it hits the floor means letting the plastic ones go.