

A TORAH OF JUSTICE – A VIEW FROM THE LEFT? – TEXT 2

תלמוד בבלי בבא בתרא ח.א

ואמר ר' אסי אומר ר' יוחנן: הכל לפסי העיר ואפילו מיתמי, אבל רבנן לא, דרבנן לא צריכי נטירותא. אומר רב פפא: לשורא ולפרשאה ולטרזינא - אפילו מיתמי, אבל רבנן לא צריכי נטירותא. כללא דמילתא: כל מילתא דאית להו הנאה מיניה - אפילו מיתמי. רבה רמא צדקה איתמי דבי בר מריון, אומר ליה אביי, והתני רב שמואל בר יהודה: אין פוסקין צדקה על היתומים אפילו לפדיון שבויים אומר ליה: אגא לאחשובינהו קא עבידנא.

BABYLONIAN TALMUD *Bava Batra* 8A

R Assi said that R Yohanan said: Everybody must [contribute] to the city walls, even orphans – but not rabbis, because they do not need guarding. Rav Papa said: even orphans must contribute to the walls, the mounted guard, and the armory – but not rabbis, because they do not need guarding. The general principle here is that anyone who derives benefit from something – even orphans – [should contribute].

Raba once asked the orphans of the house of Bar Merion for a contribution to charity. Abaye said to him, “Didn’t Rav Shmuel ben Yehudah say that you don’t ask orphans for charity contributions even if it is for the redeeming of captives?” Raba answered: “I am doing it so that people think well of them.”

STUDY QUESTIONS

- According to this passage, what is the status of orphans?
- Why do you think the Talmud would say that rabbis do not require protection?
- Do you agree with the general principle stated in the middle of the passage?
- Can a wider principle of civic responsibility be learned from this text? What is it?



A TORAH OF JUSTICE – A VIEW FROM THE LEFT? – TEXT 3

תלמוד בבלי בבא בתרא ח.ב

תנו רבנן: קופה של צדקה נגבית בשנים ומתחלקת בשלשה, נגבית בשנים - שאין עושים שררות על הצבור פחות משנים, ומתחלקת בשלשה - כדיני ממונות תמחוי נגבית בשלשה ומתחלקת בשלשה, שגבויה וחלוקה שנים תמחוי - בכל יום, קופה - מערב שבת לערב שבת, תמחוי - לעניי עולם, קופה - לעניי העיר ורשאים בני העיר לעשות קופה תמחוי ותמחוי קופה, ולשנותה לכל מה שירצו.

BABYLONIAN TALMUD *Bava Batra* 8B

Our rabbis taught: the charity fund must be collected by two people and distributed by three. It is collected by two people, because any job which confers authority over the public should not be done by less than two. It [the fund] should be distributed by three, by analogy with civil cases.¹

The [food for the] soup kitchen is collected by three people and distributed by three, because it is collected and distributed on the same day. The soup kitchen operates every day; the fund is distributed every Friday night. The soup kitchen is for anyone who comes to it; the fund is for the poor of that [particular] city.

The citizens of that city are entitled to turn the fund into monies for the soup kitchen, and the food for the soup kitchen into money for the fund, and to apply them for whatever they choose to do.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- What are the differences between the fund and the soup kitchen?
- Why are those differences important?
- What is the significance of the final sentence of this passage?
- Can a wider principle of civic responsibility be learned from this text? What is it?

¹ The general rule is that a civil case is to be decided by three judges.

