

Rabbi Lauren Tuchman Webinar Series
Week 1

When Our Basic Values Aren't So Basic Anymore

matan 

Source 1: Talmud Bavli Brachot 19B

This piece is taken from a larger conversation about treatment of and dignity for deceased persons.

תָּא שְׁמַע: גְּדוֹל כְּבוֹד הַבְּרִיּוֹת שְׂדוּחָה [אֶת] לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה שְׁבִיתוֹרָה

The Gemara cites an additional proof from a *baraita*: **Come and hear: Great is human dignity, as it overrides a prohibition in the Torah.**

וְאַמַּאי? לִימָא "אֵין חֲכָמָה וְאֵין תְּבוּנָה וְאֵין עֶצָה לְנֶגְדַּהּ!" תַּרְגְּמָה רַב בַּר שָׁבָא קָמִיהּ דְּרַב
כְּהָנָא בְּלֹא דְ"לֹא תִסּוּר". אָחִיכוּ עָלֶיהָ, לָאוּ דְ"לֹא תִסּוּר" דְּאִוְרֵיתָא הִיא?

The Gemara asks: **Why? Let us also say here: "There is neither wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord." Rav bar Shaba interpreted this prohibition, which is overridden by human dignity, before Rav Kahana as referring to the prohibition of:**

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“According to the Torah taught to you and the ruling handed down to you, you shall do, **you shall not deviate** to the left or the right from that which they tell you” (Deuteronomy 17:11). The Yeshiva students **laughed at him**, as the **prohibition of “you shall not deviate” is by Torah law**, like all other Torah prohibitions. Why should human dignity override it any more than any other Torah prohibition?

אָמַר רַב כְּהָנָא: גְּבַרְא רַבָּה אָמַר מִילְתָּא, לָא תְחִיכוּ עֲלֵיהּ. כָּל מִילֵי דְרַבְנִין אֶסְמְכִינְהוּ עַל
לָאוּ דְ“לֹא תִסּוּר”, וּמִשּׁוּם כְּבוֹדוֹ שְׁרוּ רַבְנִין

Rav Kahana replied to them: A great man has spoken, do not laugh at him. The Sages **based all rabbinic law on the prohibition of “you shall not deviate”**; **however, due to concern for human dignity, the Sages permitted** suspension of rabbinic law in cases where the two collide. All rabbinic decrees are predicated on the mitzva in the Torah to heed the judges in each generation and to never stray from their words. Therefore, when the Sages suspend a decree in the interest of preserving human dignity, human dignity is overriding a Torah prohibition. In any case, it only overrides rabbinic decrees.

Source 2: Talmud Bavli Chagiga 5B

רבי ורבי חייא הוו שקלי ואזלי באורחא כי מטו לההוא מתא אמרי איכא צורבא מרבנן
הכא נזיל וניקביל אפיה אמרי איכא צורבא מרבנן הכא ומאור עינים הוא אמר ליה ר' חייא
לרבי תיב את לא תזלזל בנשיאותך איזיל אנא ואקביל אפיה

§ The Gemara relates: **Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi and Rabbi Ḥiyya were walking along the road. When they arrived at a certain city, they said: Is there a Torah scholar here whom we can go and greet?** The people of the city said: **There is a Torah scholar here but he is blind. Rabbi Ḥiyya said to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi: You sit here; do not demean your dignified status as *Nasi* to visit someone beneath your stature. I will go and greet him.**

Source 2: Talmud Bavli Chagiga 5B

תקפיה ואזל בהדיה כי הוו מיפטרי מיניה אמר להו אתם הקבלתם פנים הנראים ואינן
רואין תזכו להקביל פנים הרואים ואינן נראין אמר ליה איכו השתא מנעתן מהאי ברכתא

Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi **grabbed him and went with him** anyway, and together they greeted the blind scholar. **When they were leaving him, he said to them: You greeted** one who is **seen and does not see; may you be worthy to greet** the One Who **sees and is not seen**. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi **said to** Rabbi Ḥiyya: **Now, if** I had listened to you and not gone to greet him, **you would have prevented me from receiving this blessing.**

Source 3: Talmud Bavli Eruvin 54B

רבי פרידא הוה ליה ההוא תלמידא דהוה תני ליה ארבע מאה זימני וגמר יומא חד בעיוה
למלתא דמצוה תנא ליה ולא גמר

Having discussed the importance of reviewing one's Torah study, the Gemara relates that **Rabbi Perida had a certain student whom he would have to teach four hundred times, and** only then would he **learn** the material, as he was incapable of understanding it otherwise. **One day they requested** Rabbi Perida's presence **for a mitzva matter** after the lesson. Rabbi Perida **taught** his student four hundred times as usual, **but** this time the student **did not** successfully **learn** the material.

אמר ליה האידנא מאי שנא אמר ליה מדהיא שעתא דאמר ליה למר איכא מילתא

Source 3: Talmud Bavli Eruvin 54B

אמר ליה האידנא מאי שנא אמר ליה מדהיא שעתא דאמר ליה למר איכא מילתא
דמצוה אסחאי לדעתאי וכל שעתא אמינא השתא קאי מר השתא קאי מר אמר ליה הב
דעתיך ואתני לך הדר תנא ליה ארבע מאה זימני [אחריני]

Rabbi Perida **said to him: What is different now** that you are unable to grasp the lesson? **He said to him: From the time that they said to the Master that there is a mitzva matter** for which he is needed, **my mind was distracted** from the lesson **and every moment I said: Now the Master will get up, now the Master will get up** to go and perform the mitzva and he will not complete the lesson. Rabbi Perida **said to him: Pay attention** this time **and I will teach you**, and know that I will not leave until you have fully mastered the lesson. **He taught him again an additional four hundred times.**

Source 3: Talmud Bavli Eruvin 54B

נפקא בת קלא ואמר ליה ניחא לך דליספו לך ארבע מאה שני או דתיזכו את ודרך
לעלמא דאתי אמר דניזכו אנא ודריי לעלמא דאתי אמר להן הקדוש ברוך הוא תנו לו זו

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Due to the merit of Rabbi Perida's great devotion to his students, a **Divine Voice emerged and said to him: Is it preferable to you that four hundred years be added to your life, or that you and the rest of your generation will merit the World-to-Come? He said: I prefer that I and my generation merit the World-to-Come. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the angels: Give him both; he shall live a very long life and he and the rest of his generation will merit the World-to-Come.**