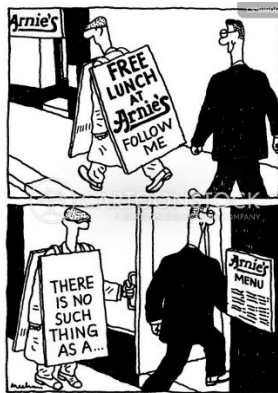


Stories with a Twist [322]

One Who Wants a Butcher to Be Liable Should Advance Him a Dinar

Insights into Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kamma 99b



Background to Our Story

Tzippori



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Bava Kamma Volume 2. Koren publishers Jerusalem. Page 237.

Tzippori was a large town in the Upper Galilee, and the perennial rival of Tiberias for recognition as the spiritual capital of the Galilee. During the Second Temple period it enjoyed special status among the towns of the Galilee because of its large and learned Jewish community.

Synagogue of the town Maon



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Bava Kamma Volume 2. Koren publishers Jerusalem. Page 237.

This refers to the large synagogue in the town of Maon, also called Beit Maon, which was a suburb of Tiberias, situated to the east of Tiberias. Beit Maon was the hometown of the priestly watch of Huppa.

Denarius - Dinar

A dinar also had the name zuz, as in the Had Gadya song where the goat is bought for two zuzim.

The Text: Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 99ba

אָמַר רַבֵּה בַר בַּר תְּנֵה אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: טַבַּח אוֹמֵן שְׁקָלֶקֶל – תִּיב, וְאֶפִּילוּ הוּא אוֹמֵן קְטַבְתִּי צִיפּוֹרִי.

ומי אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן הַכִּי? ! וְהָאֹמֵר רַבָּה בַּר בַּר חָנָה: עוֹבְדָא הוּא קַמִּיה דְּרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בְּכַנְיָשְׁתָּא דְּמַעוֹן, וְאָמַר לֵיהּ: זִיל אֵייתִי רְאָיָה דְּמַמְחִית לְתַרְנַגּוּלִים, וְאַפְטָרָד! לֹא קָשִׁיא; כָּאן בְּתַנּוּם, כָּאן בְּשִׁכְרָא. כִּי הָא דְאָמַר רַבִּי זִירָא: הָרוּצָה שְׂתִתְחַיֵּיב לוֹ טַבַּח – יִקְדִּים לוֹ דִּינָר.

Rabba bar bar Ḥana says that Rabbi Yoḥanan says: An expert butcher who damaged an animal by slaughtering it incorrectly, thereby rendering it non-kosher, is liable to pay the owner of the animal, and even if he is as expert as the butchers of Tzippori, it is not considered an accident, and he is considered to be at fault.

The Gemara asks: And did Rabbi Yoḥanan say this? But didn't Rabba bar bar Ḥana say that there was an incident in which a butcher who damaged an animal was brought to court before Rabbi Yoḥanan in the synagogue of the town Maon, and Rabbi Yoḥanan said to the butcher: Go bring proof that you are an expert at slaughtering chickens, and I will exempt you from payment?

The Gemara responds: This is not difficult. Here, in the aforementioned incident, the butcher slaughtered the animal for free, and he is therefore exempt, while there, in Rabba bar bar Ḥana's previous statement, he slaughtered the animal for pay, and is therefore liable to pay for the damage. This is in accordance with that which Rabbi Zeira says: One who wants a butcher to be liable to pay him in the event that he damages the animal during slaughter should advance him a dinar, so that he is paid for his services, and he is consequently liable to pay damages.



Explaining the Story - What is going on in our story? (Explain the sequence of events)

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? When is an expert butcher who damaged an animal liable to pay the owner of the animal?

Extra Bonus ? Why do you think the owner of the animal asked an expert butcher to slaughter his animal for free in one of the scenarios of our story?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Extra Bonus ? Why do you think the expert butcher agreed to slaughter the animal for free in one of the scenarios of our story?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

“The Twist” – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from This Text.

- ! Free stuff might end up being expensive!



Our 2000-year-old story reminds us of something we all know well deep inside, but many times choose to ignore: free stuff could end up being very expensive.

The end of our story adds a great piece of advice: paying for services automatically creates not only an obligation, but a connection between the parts. Hence, the moral of our story not only applies to butchers, cows, and customers, but to family and friendship, interpersonal dynamics, and congregational life as well.