

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) Rain in its appropriate time (cont.)

A Beraisa continues to explain the blessing of having rain in its appropriate time and cites examples of highly beneficial rain falling at opportune times.

2) Choni the Circle-maker

A Beraisa elaborates on the story of Choni the Circle-maker.

A second Beraisa records the message Sanhedrin sent to Choni the Circle-maker following the above cited story.

R' Yochanan retells the story of Choni the Circle-maker sleeping for seventy years and how depressed he became when he realized that he had no one with which to study Torah until he davened that he should die.

3) Choni the Circle-maker's grandchildren

The story of Abba Chilkiyah, a grandson of Choni the Circle-maker, davening for rain is retold.

After the rain began to fall the rabbis asked Abba Chilkiyah to explain a number of unusual behaviors he practiced while they followed him.

The Story of Chanan the Hidden is presented and the Gemara explains the origin of his name.

4) The contrast between the righteous people of Bavel and the righteous people of Eretz Yisroel

R' Zerika noted the different styles of obtaining rain between those in Eretz Yisroel and those in Bavel.

The Gemara proceeds to relate two incidents involving R' Mani the son of R' Yonah.

A story involving R' Yitzchok ben Elyashiv, mentioned in one of the incidents involving R' Mani, is recorded.

5) R' Yosi of Yukras

The Gemara begins to relate a number of stories related to the behavior of R' Yosi of Yukras. ■

Distinctive INSIGHT

Prayers supported with the merit of good deeds

משום דאיתתא שכיחא בביתא ויהבא ריפתא לעניי ומקרבא הנייתה

Abbā Chilkiya was a descendant of Choni the circlemaker. The Jews needed rain, and a delegation was sent to ask Abba Chilkiya to pray. Ultimately, Abba Chilkiya and his wife climbed to the roof of their house to daven. Each stood at an opposite corner of the roof, and as they davened, clouds began to form at the side of the sky closer to his wife. Abba Chilkiya was asked why his wife's prayers were more readily answered, as indicated by the cloud formation building nearer to her. He explained that although both he and his wife gave tzedaka to the poor, she always gave food which was ready to eat. He, however, only had money to give. Her prayers were therefore most productive because her kindness to the needy was more available and beneficial.

HaRav Shlomo Morgenstern points out that the curses in Parashas Ki Savo in Devarim feature a verse warning that one's sons and daughters will be in distress, and the parent will only be able to watch helplessly, unable to do anything about it. Why will one's hand be powerless? In his translation and commentary (Devarim 28:32), **לית בדיכון עבדין טבין** explains that the parent will be lacking in good deeds (לית בדיכון עבדין טבין), and that, as a result, his prayers will be ineffective. This is what the verse means when it says, "your hand will be unable to reach God."

Generally, a person can spare himself from suffering by davening to Hashem. The Jews in Egypt cried out in pain. Hashem obviously knew they were in pain, but He didn't rescue them until He heard their cries and prayers. Clearly, a parent who sees his children in distress will daven to Hashem for their rescue. If so, why is it that this man described in Parashas Ki Savo will not be answered at a time of his children's distress?

Despite davening to Hashem, a person might not be answered due to a lack of merit. This verse is speaking about a person who has inadequately performed acts of kindness. Prayer itself cannot achieve its goal if the person is deficient in his actions. The Targum is teaching us a new insight into the secret of prayer. Prayer alone, without merits, is ineffective. Merit alone, without prayer, is also inadequate. Mitzvos and good deeds are the foundation upon which effective prayer can be built, which enables us to approach ה"קב.

Prayers are effective when pronounced by a person who performs good deeds. And, in fact, the quality of the good deeds itself also determines the degree to which a prayer can penetrate the Heavens, as evidenced in the case of Abba Chilkiya. Repentance, prayer and good deeds can push away an evil decree. When our prayers are surrounded by repentance and good deeds, we will see the results. ■

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HALACHA Highlight

Yichud in an elevator

מאי טעמא עיילא היא ברישא והדר עייל מר אבתרה והדר עיילין אנן אמר להו משום דלא בדקיתו לי

Why did your wife enter first and the master entered after her and then we were invited to answer? He [Abba Chilkiyah] answered: Because I did not know your character

Many Poskim write that in order to violate the prohibition of yichud the man and the woman must be in seclusion for the amount of time necessary for defilement¹ (כדי טומאה). Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin², the Maharil Diskin, writes that although seclusion for less than time needed for defilement does not violate the Biblical prohibition, nonetheless, it is prohibited because it constitutes half a measure חצי שיעור. Minchas Yitzchok³ writes that even according to Maharil Diskin the prohibition of חצי שיעור is violated only when the couple secludes in a place that allows them to be in seclusion for a period of time longer than כדי טומאה and the couple leaves that place in a shorter amount of time. If, however, the place does not allow for seclusion for the amount of time of כדי טומאה then the interdiction of חצי שיעור does not apply. Minchas Yitzchok proceeds to cite our Gemara to refute this assertion. Our Gemara relates that Abba Chilkiyah had his wife enter the house first and then he entered before the guests. The reason for this order, asserts Minchas Yitzchok, was because Abba Chilkiyah did not want his wife to be in seclusion with these strangers

REVIEW and Remember

1. In what way did Choni the Circle-drawer behave disrespectfully towards Hashem?
2. Why did Choni want to die at the end of his life?
3. Why didn't Abba Chilkiyah respond to the rabbi's greetings?
4. How did Chana the Hidden earn the nickname "The Hidden?"

even for a moment. This would indicate that the prohibition against yichud applies even if the couple will be alone only momentarily. He subsequently backs off from this proof because Maharsha⁴ identifies a different issue of concern than yichud.

This question of whether there is a prohibition for a couple to be in seclusion for less than the amount of time for defilement is relevant for the question of whether a couple can ride together on an elevator. If the qualification of Minchas Yitzchok is accepted it would be permitted for a couple to take a short ride on an elevator but if this qualification is rejected than it is prohibited for a couple to take the elevator even for a small trip⁵. ■

¹ ע"ג גמי סוטה ד. ושו"ע אה"ע סי' קע"ח סעי' ד'.
² שו"ת מהר"ל דיסקין קונטרס אחרון אות ר"ו.
³ שו"ת מנחת יצחק ח"ד סי' צ"ד.
⁴ מהרש"א בסוגייתו.

⁵ ע" דברי הגרש"ז אויערבאך בהסכמה לספר דבר הלכה שו"ת חלקת יעקב ח"ב סי' י"ד ועוד ואכמ"ל. ■

STORIES off the Daf

The Circle of Choni HaMe'ageil

"עג עוגה ועמד בתוכה..."

Once the Mabit, ז"ל, was asked a difficult question: "Rebbi, I don't understand the Gemara in Taanis 23. The Gemara tells us that there we desperately needed rain and Choni HaMe'ageil came and drew a circle around himself and swore that he wouldn't step foot out of it until rain fell. Why did Choni HaMe'ageil make a circle in particular? And why is this fact considered significant enough to be recorded for posterity in the Gemara? Couldn't it have simply stated that he refused to leave his place until rain fell?"

The Mabit explained: "There is a very deep message hidden within the circle of Choni HaMe'ageil. The sages taught that the world is round. For this reason, a circle alludes to the natural world or the natural order of things. Choni made a circle around himself to show that if Hashem would not help His children by sending rain, this would imply that we are subject to the natural order of things, to the cycle of nature. This is a tremendous desecration of Hashem's Name, because we are His chosen people who have been uplifted to higher things. This is why Choni said that he would only leave the circle when the rain came. It was his way of showing that we are actually above the circular cycle of nature when there are tzaddikim among us. When such lofty people are in our midst, all natu-

ral cosmological and astronomical influences are suspended for the Jewish people. This is the meaning of Hashem taking Avraham Avinu out of the stratosphere of the world to gaze at the stars. This was meant to show him that Hashem had raised him far above the influence of the stars and the order of nature. And it was this that would allow him to have children, because by nature, Avraham was physically unable to bear children.

The Mabit concluded: "The verse says that Hashem took Avram outside, above the natural order of things, and said, 'That is how your descendants will be.' (Bereshis 15:5) When will your descendants merit to transcend the circular cycle of natural influence? When they are truly 'your descendants'—when they are righteous like you!" ■