

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) A fish found inside of a non-kosher fish (cont.)

The Gemara continues to discuss different features of different creatures and clarifies points in the Beraisa.

Another Beraisa discusses how camels copulate.

A Beraisa discusses the gestation period of different animals.

The Gemara searches for the source of the gestation period of snakes.

Two alternative expositions are suggested but rejected.

2) R' Yehoshua ben Chananyah

The Gemara retells the incident of R' Yehoshua ben Chananyah's conversation with Caesar that led to a lengthy debate with the wise men of Athens. ■

REVIEW and Remember

1. Why is it important to know that chickens lay eggs only during the day?

2. What is the source that the period of gestation for a snake is seven years?

3. How did R' Yehoshua succeed at getting all the guards killed?

4. How did R' Yehoshua respond to the question of how to preserve salt?

Today's Daf Digest is dedicated

as a zechus

for a refuah sheleimah for

אברהם גרשון בן ציפי

שלמה ברוך בן שיינדל ברכה

מרים אורית בת דבורה

דינה חיה שרה בת שיינע מירה

Distinctive INSIGHT

The sages of Athens and their parables

ההוא גברא דאזיל ובעי אתתא ולא יהבו ליה

The Gemara relates the fantastic and strange story of R' Yehoshua and his meeting with the sages of Athens. This narrative contains parables, tests and absurd questions which are only comprehensible with the guidance of the words of our Commentators who serve as our eyes and ears.

In the first exchange, the sages of Athens asked R' Yehoshua about a man whose marriage proposal to a woman of a low social status was rejected by her family. They asked him why would such a man then seek a wife of a higher social status than the first? R' Yehoshua responded and said that just as a pin only fits into a wall where there is a crack, so too, a man may find his mate who is most compatible to him regardless of her social status.

In his Chidushei Agados, Maharal explains the key to this parable. The sages of Athens were noting that the Jews should have no expectations of receiving any part in the world-to-come, which is described as a place of lofty, spiritual benefits, because they clearly already do not enjoy any part even in this world, which is a place of a lowly, physical existence. How could the Jews, who suffer in this world, claim that they will deserve a portion in the more illustrious world-to-come?

R' Yehoshua replied that the refusal to give a man a wife from a lower social level does not mean that he is undeserving because he is too low. Rather, this denial is rather a signal that he and that woman are simply not meant for each other. It can very well be that a woman of a higher status is the one compatible for him. The lesson is that God realizes that this lower, physical world is much too mundane for the Jewish nation, which is a people groomed for heavenly pursuits. We crave an eternal existence, one in which our souls can thrive.

The second question the sages of Athens asked was about a man who lent money, but the borrower defaulted and could not pay back the loan. How can this lender then lend money a second time? R' Yehoshua responded with his own parable. A man was cutting branches, and he found that the pile was too heavy to carry. He then cut even more, increasing the weight of the pile. The reason was that realizing he was going to need help, he cut more so that when help arrived the entire pile could be moved.

Maharal provides the key to this parable as well. The sages noticed that God redeemed the Jews from Egypt, only to then discover that the Jews were unworthy and had to be exiled from their land. Will God "lend" to them again and trust them any more? Certainly not! R' Yehoshua explained that the Jews are not like a single person, who is not to be trusted after ruining his reputation. We are a nation, and subsequent generations can exonerate earlier ones, and help earn merit and bring the final redemption. ■

HALACHA Highlight

Eating egozim on Rosh Hashanah

וכנגדה באילן לוז

And corresponding to that is the luz tree

The Gemara teaches that the luz tree takes twenty-one days for the flower to develop into a nut. Rashi and Tosafos disagree about the identity of the luz plant. Rashi¹ indicates that it is the hazelnut whereas Tosafos² asserts that it is the almond and he cited pesukim that mention the שקד – almond – which are translated by Targum as luz. Rema³ relates that there are people who are particular to avoid egozim on Rosh Hashanah. He offers two explanations why people avoid egozim on Rosh Hashanah. The first explanation is that the numerical value for egoz and cheit are the same and the second reason is that eating the egoz increases phlegm and spittle which is disruptive to davening.

Magen Avrohom⁴ writes that he heard that when the nut is large it is called egoz and when it is small it is called luz and he cites a Midrash that supports this interpretation. Accordingly, if the reason to refrain from eating

egozim on Rosh Hashanah is based on the first interpretation of Rema one is only required to refrain from eating the larger ones that are called egoz. The small ones that are called luz may be eaten since the numerical value of luz is not the same as cheit. According to the second reason of Rema, namely that this nut increases phlegm and spittle one should avoid large and small ones since they both increase phlegm and spittle.

Match Ephraim⁵ maintains that both large and small egozim are called egoz, therefore, even according to Rema's first explanation that the egoz shares the same numerical value as cheit, one should refrain from eating both the large and small egoz. Chavos Yair⁶, on the other hand, writes that based on kabbalistic sources one should refrain from the egoz and luz. Being that there is a disagreement between Rashi and Tosafos concerning the definition of the luz there is a custom to refrain from the hazelnut as well as the almond. ■

¹ רש"י ד"ה לח.
² תוס' ד"ה תרנגולת.
³ רמ"א או"ח סי' תקפ"ג סעי' ב'.
⁴ מג"א שם סק"ד.
⁵ מטה אפרים שם סעי' ג'.
⁶ מקור חיים לחוות יאיר שם. ■

STORIES off the Daf

The Antidote to the Serpent

"נחש..."

Learning Daf HaYomi is very invigorating but can also be quite difficult to maintain on a daily basis for those who are not devoting the bulk of their time to learning. Rav Ovadia Yosef, shlit"א, once said at the siyum hashas, "When the new cycle begins, very many begin learning the Talmud with it. The first tractate is called Berachos for good reason: everyone feels 'blessed' to be learning this tractate. But when they reach Shabbos, a great deal of those who began with renewed zeal fall away. It is almost as if they are saying, בא שבת בא מנוחה, — When Shabbos comes, there is rest

and relaxation!" But some do stick it out. Of these, almost everyone ceases to learn when they start to wade through the complex topics in Eiruvin. It is almost as though they are declaring, 'עד כאן תחום שבת', —The boundary of Shabbos stops here!' As if the very limit of where one may go is just until the end of meseches Shabbos! We must not fall into any of these traps. We should begin and complete the shas every seven years, one daily daf at a time."¹

Rav Meir Shapiro of Lublin, zt"l, learns the importance of completing shas every seven years from a statement on today's daf. "In Bechoros 8 we find that various creatures have different periods of gestation. Each creature mentioned has its parallel in the world of plant life which produces

fruits in a corresponding amount of time. The only exception is the snake. The snake has a seven-year gestation period and no plant is mentioned as its match.

"It is highly significant that those who learn Daf HaYomi only bear fruit after seven years, since it takes them this long to learn through the entire shas. The tree which corresponds to the gestation period of the snake is the עץ חיים, the Tree of Life. We nullify the primordial snake by patiently learning a daf a day. In this manner we rectify the damage caused in the world by the sin inspired by the snake."² ■

¹ הליכות מוסר
² אמרי דעת, ע' רל"ח ■

