

## OVERVIEW of the Daf

### 1) R' Yishmael the son of R' Yosi

The Gemara retells the incident of R' Yishmael the son of R' Yosi working as an officer to arrest thieves.

A description of the physical traits of R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon and R' Yishmael the son of R' Yosi is presented.

### 2) R' Yochanan

R' Yochanan comments about his own beauty.

The assertion that R' Yochanan was the most beautiful is unsuccessfully challenged.

R' Yochanan's practice of sitting by the mikvah is discussed.

The story of R' Yochanan's and Reish Lakish's first meeting is recounted.

### 3) R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon

The Gemara describes the suffering that R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon brought upon himself.

Rebbi comments on how much was lost while R' Elazar was busy capturing thieves.

The Gemara describes R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon's death and what happened after his death.

The Gemara recounts Rebbi's request to marry the wife of R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon and her refusal to marry him.

The Gemara elaborates on the statement of Rebbi that R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon was greater than him in Torah. ■

## Distinctive INSIGHT

### *Reish Lakish makes the jump*

אמר ליה חילך לאורייתא

The Gemara tells the story of Rabbi Yochanan who was swimming in the Jordan River when Reish Lakish saw him and jumped in after him. At this point, Reish Lakish was the head of a group of bandits, and R' Yochanan noted that his leap into the river demonstrated impressive physical prowess. R' Yochanan called out to Reish Lakish and said, "Your strength should be for Torah!" Rashi explains that R' Yochanan was telling Reish Lakish that with such strength, he would be especially suited to succeed in the study of Torah. Maharsha, in his Agados, says that R' Yochanan was informing Reish Lakish that by learning Torah he would be able to control his strong impulses. These words immediately inspired him, and Reish Lakish no longer had the strength to jump back out of the water.

Tosafos proves that Reish Lakish knew much Torah before this incident, but he had abandoned his Torah studies to become a bandit. This is indicated firstly by the words of R' Yochanan who adjured him "to return back," as he begged him "אי הדרת בך". Furthermore, later during the exchange between Reish Lakish and R' Yochanan in the beis midrash regarding the description of a certain weapon, Reish Lakish says, "they used to call me Rebbe beforehand also." Tosafos understands that this refers not to when he was a bandit, but rather to a previous situation when he was a Torah scholar.

Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer (Ch. 43) writes: The power of teshuva is great, as is evidenced in the episode of Reish Lakish. He and two cohorts were bandits in the mountains and valleys, where they would pillage anyone who came their way. Reish Lakish, however, did teshuva with all his heart, with prayer and fasting. He returned to a life of Torah, dwelling in the beis midrash from early in the morning until late at night. On the day he died, his two former partners in crime also died. Reish Lakish was admitted to the heavenly gates, while his former partners were herded to the lower worlds. They immediately complained that it was not fair, as they had all perpetrated crimes together. They were informed, however, that Reish Lakish had done teshuva, but they had never changed their evil ways. ■

## REVIEW and Remember

1. What made R' Yochanan's beauty unique?  
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2. How did the scholars attempt to comfort R' Yochanan following the death of Reish Lakish?  
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3. What was the reason R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon was not buried immediately?  
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4. Why did the widow of R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon refuse to marry Rebbi?  
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## HALACHAH Highlight

### Using Prophecy in halacha

נפיק קלא מעיליתיה ואמר איש פלוני אתה חייב וכו'

A voice came from his attic and declared, "So and so, you are liable etc."

The Gemara relates that a long period of time transpired between the time of R' Elazar ben Shimon's death and the time of his burial. During that period of time, people who were in need of judgment could visit R' Elazar ben Shimon to resolve the matter. Each party would present his claim and a voice would emerge and declare which party is guilty and which party is innocent. The obvious difficulty with this occurrence is תורה לאו בשמים היא – Torah is not in the Heavens (Bava Metzia 59b). A similar question is asked about the ruling of many Poskim<sup>1</sup> that gentiles do not transmit *tumas ohel*. This position is based on the Gemara later (114b) where Rabbah bar Avuha questioned Eliyahu Hanavi why he was standing in a gentile cemetery and Eliyahu Hanavi answered that halacha follows R' Shimon ben Yochai who made an exposition that the graves of gentiles do not transmit tumah. How could Poskim cite this as proof to the halacha when Eliyahu Hanavi should not be able to give a halachic ruling based on prophecy since תורה לאו בשמים היא?

Birkei Yosef<sup>2</sup> suggests regarding the incident of Eliyahu Hanavi that the only restriction for a prophet to issue a halachic ruling is one that is based on prophecy but a prophet is permitted to issue a halachic ruling that is based on his Torah scholarship. Therefore, when Eliyahu Hanavi taught that the halacha of the graves of gentiles follows the opinion of R' Shimon ben Yochai it was his scholarship that was speaking rather than his prophecy.

Birkei Yosef suggests that although a prophet may not reach a halachic conclusion based on prophecy he may use prophecy to determine facts (לברר ספק במציאות). One example of this principle is found in the Gemara Shabbos (108) which discusses whether it is acceptable to write tefillin on the skin of a fish. The Gemara relates that Eliyahu Hanavi will have to come and inform us whether the זוהמא – spiritual filth—was removed from fish or not. It was not a halachic matter that he was deciding; rather he was clarifying a simple fact of whether the זוהמא was removed or not and that is within the domain of a prophet. Accordingly, one could suggest that in our Gemara the two litigants came to R' Elazar ben Shimon to determine a fact rather than issue a halachic ruling and that is the reason it was acceptable. ■

1. עי' ב"י יו"ד סי' שע"ב ד"ה קברי נכרים.

2. ברכי יוסף או"ח סי' ל"ב אות ד'. ■

## STORIES Off the Daf

### Disparaging a scholar

"יומא חד שמעי בזילותא דצורבא מרבנן..."

Today's daf discusses the terrible punishment for embarrassing a talmid chacham—or for even listening while another embarrasses him.

A certain group of students were learning in a yeshiva in Israel where false dei'os flourished. These students knew that the only way to convince their fellow students of the folly of such opinions was to speak against the rabbis who championed such opinions. But they wondered if this was halachically permitted. After all, talking against a talmid chacham is a very serious sin.

To their surprise, when they went to the Chazon Ish, ז"ל, and asked him if this was permitted he refused to answer them. They decided to return a second

time but the Chazon Ish was silent yet again.

On their third visit, he began to ask them numerous questions "What are your names? Where are you from? How long have you been learning?"

When he was finally satisfied with their answers he said, "In terms of the halachos of a talmid chacham... Although the rabanim you have named have a position, they do not learn every free moment. The Chofetz Chaim rules that only one who knows how to learn and whose Torah study is his exclusive occupation is a talmid chacham. These people are like tailors and shoemakers that work to earn a living.

"But that's only regarding the question of whether disparaging these particular rabbis constitutes embarrassing a talmid chacham. If you spread negative opinions about them, you will still violate the prohibition of l'shon hara. You wish

to speak l'toleles? Let me tell you how to speak l'shon hara l'toeles. Rav Chaim Brisker only attended the first Agudah convention because, during the proceedings, someone spoke against a certain communal activist and claimed that something he had done had caused trouble. Rav Chaim immediately stood up and proclaimed, 'It is prohibited to sit here since people speak l'shon hara!'

"But why was this l'shon hara?" asked the Chazon Ish. "The person speaking was addressing an important concern and every word he spoke was absolutely true. It was forbidden because the person spoke in a judgmental and self-righteous manner. If the speaker at the convention had said instead, 'Rabbosai! This person's error has brought about a terrible problem! Let us all work together to try and rectify it!' this would have been l'shon hara l'toeles."<sup>1</sup> ■

1. מעשה איש, ח"ב, עי' ק"פ- קפ"א ע"ש ■