



## OVERVIEW of the Daf

### 1) Mitzvos (cont.)

The Gemara describes how over the generations different Prophets condensed the 613 mitzvos into smaller numbers of categories until the number eventually reached one principle, namely that one should live by one's faith.

### 2) The words of Prophets

R' Yosi bar Chanina teaches that Moshe enacted four decrees that were nullified by four other Prophets.

### 3) R' Akiva and his colleagues

The Gemara recounts two incidents in which R' Akiva responded with laughter when his colleagues responded with crying. ■

חדון עלך אלו הן הלוקין  
 וסליקא לה מסכת מכות

## REVIEW and Remember

1. Why is Abba Chilkiyah described as one who "works righteously"?

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2. How does one behave modestly?

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3. What is the ethical principle into which the entire Torah can be condensed?

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4. Why did R' Akiva laugh when he saw the fox emerge from the Kodesh Kodashim?

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 By the Geller family in memory of their grandfather  
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## Distinctive INSIGHT

### Rabbi Akiva was smiling

אמר להן לכך אני מצחק

The commentators all wonder how Rabbi Akiva would laugh upon viewing the terrible catastrophe of the desecration of the holy Beis HaMikdash. Even Yirmiyahu the prophet laments with agony and despair regarding seeing this sight (Eicha 5:17- 18), as he cries out, "For this our heart was ill, for these our eyes were dimmed. For Har Tzion which lies desolate, foxes prowl over it."

Maharsha explains that the prophet lamented the destruction itself, and this is why he began by saying, "Har Tzion which lies desolate.". When he mentioned that the foxes were prowling around, this was just a sign that the desolation was so complete, and that the Shechina had departed from this holy place.

The truth is that Rabbi Akiva also was saddened by this sight, as his initial reaction was to tear his clothing as he and his colleagues saw the place of the Mikdash. It was just that the other Tannaim were additionally pained when they saw the fox prowling about. They seemed to be hurt because a lowly fox was at loose on this place, but had it been a person who was walking around it would have been better. It was in reference to this additional observation that Rabbi Akiva reacted with a smile as he pointed out that it was satisfying to see that without the Jews there, the place remained undeveloped and desolate. The Midrash reports that the non-Jewish residents had tried to cultivate the area, but to no avail. What these Tannaim were seeing was a fulfillment of the verse which promises (Devarim 29:22), "Sulfur and salt, a conflagration of the entire land." Without the Jews on their land, God has no satisfaction from anyone else. The land will not produce fruit until the Jews return.

Aruch LaNer explains that the fox was a symbol of the evil inclination which was rampant during the time of the second Beis HaMikdash. Rabbi Akiva saw the incident as a signal that the evil inclination of senseless hatred would be conquered, and for this he was happy.

Chasam Sofer explains that the lament of Yirmiyahu in Eicha was that the first prophecy of Uriah had come true, that Yerushalayim was desolate. Nevertheless, it was sad that the situation had not improved, as we now anticipate that the hopeful prophecy of Zecharya should be fulfilled.

# HALACHAH Highlight

## Is belief in God one of the 613 mitzvos?

"אנכי" ו"לא יהיה לך" מפי הגבורה שמענו

"I am God," and "you shall not have," we heard from the Almighty

The Gemara mentions that there are 613 mitzvos in the Torah. R' Hamnuna explains that this is alluded to in the phrase תורה צוה לנו משה—The Torah was commanded to us by Moshe. The numerical value of the word תורה is 611 which are the mitzvos we heard from Moshe Rabbeinu plus the first two of the Ten Commandments which we heard directly from God equals the 613 mitzvos. Since R' Hamnuna referred to the first of the Ten Commandments as אנכי it seems that there is a Biblical command to believe in God. Rambam<sup>1</sup>, amongst others, in fact, counts the obligation to believe in God as one of the 613 Biblical commandments.

Other authorities do not count belief in God as one of the 613 mitzvos. Ramban<sup>2</sup> explains that the 613 mitzvos represent our obligations and prohibitions but belief in the existence of God and that He revealed Himself with miracles and wonders is the root and foundation upon which the other mitzvos exist it is not counted as one of the 613 mitzvos. R' Chasdei Kreskas<sup>3</sup> writes even more emphatically that one who counts belief in God as one of the 613

(Insight...continued from page 1)

The commentators note that Rabbi Akiva never doubted that the prophecy of Zecharya would come true, it was just that the prophecy of Uriah had to occur first. Rabbi Akiva declared, "Now that this prophecy has occurred, we can anticipate imminently the time for the next step to happen, with the rebuilding of Yerushalayim with security, safety, and with a national sense of serving God. ■

mitzvos is in error. It is not possible for a commandment to exist without one who is issuing that command. It would be circular reasoning for there to be command to believe in the existence of the one issuing that command.

As far as our Gemara which indicates that belief in God is one of the 613 mitzvos is concerned, Ramban<sup>4</sup> offers the following explanation. The prohibition לא יהיה לך—you shall not have etc. – encompasses two prohibitions. One is the prohibition against making an idol and the second is the prohibition against worshipping an idol. Therefore, when R' Hamnuna taught that two commandments were heard directly from God he did not mean that one command was from אנכי and the second command was from לא יהיה. His intent was that within those two verses there are two commandments. ■

1. רמב"ם ספר המצוות מ"ע א'
2. רמב"ן השגות לספר מצוות עשה א'
3. ספר אור ה' בהצעה
4. רמב"ן שם ■

# STORIES Off the Daf

## "Speaks truth in his heart"

ודובר אמת בלבבו כדבר ספרא

When the Tchebiner Rav, ז"ל, put out a new volume of his erudite sefer, Dovev Meisharim, he sent a copy to many of the greatest scholars of his generation. One recipient, Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, ז"ל, the Rav of Yerushalayim, enjoyed the sefer very much and decided to send a large sum of money to show his appreciation. He sent Rav Moshe Aharon Rosenthal to the Tchebiner Rav with ten lirot, an overly ample gift in return for the sef-

er.

To Rav Moshe Aharon's surprise, the Tchebiner Rav refused the money. When Rav Moshe Aharon tried to convince him to accept, the Tchebiner Rav explained that he had never meant to take a penny for the book which he had sent as a gift. When Rav Moshe Aharaon pressed him to accept, explaining that the money was also sent as a gift, not payment, the Tchebiner Rav held steadfast in his refusal by quoting a statement on today's daf. "Our sages tell us that Rav Safra personified the verse, 'ודובר אמת בלבבו—and speaks truth in his heart.' When he was offered a certain price

and thought to accept it in his heart, he would not take a penny more. If I were to change my mind now that I already decided not to take money, I would transgress the verse..."

When Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank heard that the Tchebiner Rav refused to take the money he was very impressed with his great level of integrity. He was especially astonished since he knew that the Tchebiner Rav was having financial difficulties at that time and the money would have been a great help to him. He refused to compromise his principals, even for much-needed financial gain.<sup>1</sup> ■

1. שר התורה ע' 473 ■