

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) **MISHNAH (cont.):** The Mishnah continues to discuss the appropriate response to different tragedies. The story of Choni the Circle-maker is retold. A discussion about whether a fast must be completed if the tragedy is no longer present is presented with a related incident.

2) Clarifying the Mishnah

A contradiction is noted between our Mishnah which implies that we begin fasting when the first rain is delayed and a Baraisa that states that we do not fast unless the time for the third rain arrived and the rain has not fallen.

R' Yehudah resolves the contradiction.

R' Nachman states that we cry out immediately if the plants grew abnormally but if they dried we do not cry or fast because it would constitute a tefillah in vain.

R' Yehudah in the name of Rav explains the Mishnah's term **מכת בצורת**.

R' Nachman distinguishes between a food shortage and a famine.

Another distinction between a food shortage and a famine is made by R' Nachman.

R' Yochanan qualifies R' Nachman's second distinction.

The Gemara explains how different rains could be beneficial in one way but detrimental in another.

3) Water shortages

A Baraisa spells out when we begin to cry out for different kinds of water shortages and calamities.

Two Baraisos record a dispute whether it is appropriate to cry out if insufficient rain fell for trees during the Shemittah year.

4) Rain following the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash

R' Elazar ben Parta elaborates on how rainfall has been affected by the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

5) Nakdimon ben Guryon

A Baraisa begins to retell the story of the effort Nakdimon ben Guryon made to obtain water for the people traveling to Yerushalayim for Yom Tov and the miraculous manner in which he paid his debt. ■

Distinctive INSIGHT

Direct and blunt words in prayer

שלח לו שמעון בן שטח אלמלא חוני אתה גזרני עליך נידוי

Speaking in a direct manner and complaining against Hashem in prayer is something which our Gemara regarding Choni HaMe'agel describes as being highly inappropriate.

The Gemara (Berachos 32a) notes that Moshe also prayed in a direct manner towards the heavens, following the incident when the Jews complained about the manna (Bemidbar 11:2). Rabbi Elazar said: Moshe spoke with harsh direct words towards the heavens. Although the verse says that Moshe spoke "אלה - to Hashem", we should read it as if it says "על ה' - against Hashem." Where do our sages detect that there was an element of firmness and demand in Moshe's entreaty?

We must understand that the Gemara is not coming to criticize Moshe Rabbeinu for the manner in which he dealt with this crisis, but rather to praise him. This particular expression of prayer (על ה') does not always have to connote a direct and harsh prayer. In this context, it could be interpreted to refer to the focus of Moshe's concern during this encounter as the Jews began to complain about the manna. Moshe detected that the Shechinah must have been enduring distress due to the lack of trust which the Jews had exhibited. As a result of this lapse, a fire had burned against a corner of the camp and caused destruction. Moshe himself was also saddened by these events, but he aimed his prayers to reflect the difficulty the Shechinah must have felt.

This same insight can be used to interpret another incident which the Gemara in Berachos (31b) describes. Chana, the future mother of Shmuel and a wife of Elkanah, was childless. The verse (I Shmuel 1:10) reports that she was very bitter and that she davened "על ה' - against Hashem." The Gemara detects that her prayers were unusual, and apparently exceedingly direct. Yet, here again, we must say that the verse is not coming to criticize Chana, but to praise her. Although she was suffering due to her condition of being childless, she nevertheless directed her attention to the fact that the Shechinah must have been in torment due to her sadness. This was the focus of her prayer, as she aimed her attention at the fact that the heavens must have been troubled due to her plight.

When a person is suffering, he can choose how to direct his prayers. On the one hand, he can highlight his own personal pain and beseech Hashem for relief. On the other hand, he can acknowledge that the Shechinah itself is in a state of distress, **כביכול**. By broadening his scope, a person can anticipate that his prayers will be answered in a multiple manner, corresponding to the compounded nature of his concern not only for himself, but also that the condition of the Shechinah be relieved. ■

HALACHAH Highlight

Davening with an oath

שבע אני בשמך הגדול שאיני זו מכאן עד שתרחם על בניך וכו' שאתה מתחטא לפני המקום ועושה לך רצונך כבן שהוא מתחטא על אביו ועושה לו רצונו

"I take an oath by Your Great Name that I will not leave here until You act mercifully towards Your children," etc. "You sin before Hashem and He does your will like a son who sins before his father and he [the father] does his will."

The Gemara Kesubos¹ relates that Hashem imposed an oath on the Jewish People that they should not force the end of days - שלא ידחקו את הקץ. Rashi² explains that the specific restriction against forcing the end of days means that we may not implore Hashem with an overabundance of supplications to bring the end of days. The commentators³ struggle to understand the exact guidelines of this restriction. The first issue is that it is not clearly defined what is considered a normal amount of asking for the end of days to arrive and what is considered an overabundance. A second issue is that we do not find that the Poskim address this interdiction and warn against crossing the line regarding supplications to bring the end of days. Another difficulty is that tzadikim for generations have, in fact, invested great amounts of time and energy attempting to end the exile and bring the end of days. Case in point, righteous people rise in the middle of the night to recite and cry bitter tears for tikun chatzos. Moreover, in each Shemoneh Esrei, tzadikim pour out their heart to bring the end of days, so what then is included in the restriction mentioned in the Gemara?

The Yismach Moshe⁴ explains that the restriction is to daven

REVIEW and Remember

1. Why did the sages wish to place Choni the Circle-maker in cherem?

2. Why do we not cry when the crops have dried?

3. How has the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash affected rainfall?

4. What effort did Nakdimon ben Guryon make on behalf of the Jewish People?

with an oath in the manner of Choni the Circle-maker, who took an oath that he would not leave the circle until Hashem answered his prayers. The only people who can daven in this style are those that fulfill the pasuk which states⁵, "Hashem, Your God, you should fear, you should serve Him and attach yourself to Him." One who is in compliance with the first half of the pasuk has the capacity to invoke the end of the pasuk, "And in His Name you will swear." This type of prayer, that is accompanied by an oath, is what is restricted but davening in the normal fashion, including tikun chatzos, is not encompassed by this restriction. ■

1. גמ' כתובות קי"א
2. רש"י שם ד"ה ושלא ידחקו בפירות השני
3. ישמח משה ללשיר השירים, שו"ת דברי יואל חו"מ סי' קל"ט וע"ע ויואל משה מאמר א' סי' כ"ד והלאה
4. ישמח משה הנ"ל
5. דברים י: כ

STORIES Off the Daf

Seeing a tragedy

ועוד גזרו תענית על שאכלו זאבים שני תינוקות בעבר הירדן רבי יוסי אומר לא על שאכלו אלא על שנראו

During the period that led up to the outbreak of World War I, tensions in Europe were at an all-time high. The conflicting nationalistic aspirations of numerous groups threatened the stability of all of Europe, and many monarchies were on the brink of civil war at home, and war over territorial claims at their borders. During the summer immediately preceding the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Yugoslavia that began World War I, Europe was aptly compared to a powder

keg, waiting for the spark to set it alight.

At that time, a number of gedolim proposed that a universal fast be declared over the Jewish community and circulated a petition to garner support.

When the matter became known, a certain communal leader declared his vehement opposition. He publicly stated, "Right now, the Jewish Communists, Socialists, Zionists, and Bundists are presenting an unprecedented affront to God. Why should we, Orthodox Jewry, have to fast because of their sins?"

The petitioners responded with an obvious answer. "The Midrash says clearly that since we are all in the same boat, it doesn't matter if it is someone else's fault that we are sinking because he has decided to drill a hole! To save ourselves, we have

to undo the damage made by the other person."

And, as for not waiting for disaster to strike but rather making an effort to preempt it, they had a perfect argument. "We find on Taanis 19a that Rebbe Yosi said that the sages didn't declare a fast because a tragedy had already happened. Rather, they declared a fast because they were able to see that a potential tragedy was looming on the horizon. 'They declared a fast because wolves had devoured two young children on the far side of the Yarden. Rebbe Yosi said: They weren't eaten, they were seen...' If the Chachomim felt that just spotting the wolves is enough of a reason to declare a fast, surely our situation is no less threatening! And we pasken like R' Yosi!" ■