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David's Battle

Rav Acha bar Bizna said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Chasida: There was a harp hanging over David's bed and when it reached midnight, the north wind would blow on the harp and it played by itself. At that point, David would get up and study Torah until the break of dawn. After the break of dawn, the *Chachamim* came to him and said: "Our master, the king! Your nation Israel requires sustenance." David replied, "Go and sustain each other." They said back to him, "A handful cannot satisfy a lion, nor can a pit be filled up with its own earth." He said to them, "Then go out and stretch your hand against the enemy (*for plunder*)." They immediately took counsel with Achitofel (*as to their battle strategy*) and consulted the *Sanhedrin* (*for permission and that they should pray for them*) and questioned the Urim VeTumim (*if they would be successful or not*).

Rav Yosef cites the Scriptural verse (*proving this*): *Achitofel was followed by Benayahu the son of Yehoyada and Evyasar; and Yoav was the commander of the king's army*. Achitofel was the king's advisor, as another verse shows. Benayahu refers to the *Sanhedrin*, and Evyasar refers to the Urim v'Tumim. The reason the Urim v'Tumim was called the Kereisi and the Peleisi was because their words were cut precisely (*there were no extra words, nor were there too little*), and their words were wondrous. And only after this (*asking their advise*) was Yoav the commander of the king's army (*for then, he was permitted to enter into battle*). (3b – 4a)

Midnight

The *Gemora* had asked: And did David actually know when midnight was? If Moshe didn't know, is it possible that David knew?

The *Gemora* had proven that Moshe didn't know, for it is written [Shmos 11:4]: *At about midnight I shall go forth into the midst of Egypt*. Why did Moshe say "about midnight"? It cannot be that Hashem told Moshe "about midnight," for is there any uncertainty before Heaven? Rather, it must be that Hashem told Moshe "at midnight," and Moshe went ahead and said "at about midnight"!?

Rabbi Zeira answers: In truth, Moshe and David both knew when midnight was. And why did David need a harp? It was to wake him up. And why did Moshe say "about midnight"? This was because Moshe thought that Pharaoh's astrologers will calculate incorrectly the precise time of midnight, and they therefore will say, "Moshe is a liar." This is based upon that which master has said: Teach your tongue to say that you do not know, for otherwise, you will be caught in saying a lie.

Rav Ashi says: It was actually the midnight of the thirteenth going into the fourteenth and Moshe said to the Jews: Hashem said that tomorrow at midnight, like the midnight of right now, I will go out into the midst of Egypt. (4a)

David's Rising at Midnight

It is written [Tehillim 86, 1-2]: *By David: guard my soul, for I am a devout man*. Levi and Rabbi Yitzchak disagree as to the interpretation of this verse. One of them said: This is what David was telling Hashem: Master of the Universe, am I not devout? For all the kings from the East and West remain asleep until three hours of the day, and I arise at midnight to give thanks to You. The other one said: This is what David was telling Hashem: Master of the Universe, am I not devout? For all the kings from the East and West sit in groups of honor, while I sit with my hands in blood, embryos and afterbirth in order to permit a woman for her husband. And not only that, but everything I do I consult with Mephiboshes, my teacher. And I say to him, "Mephiboshes, my teacher. Have I judged properly? Have I declared someone to be



liable properly? Have I declared innocence properly? Have I declared someone to be *tahor* properly? Have I declared someone to be *tamei* properly?" And I was never embarrassed.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: His name was not Mephiboshes. It was Ish Boshes. The reason he was referred to as Mephiboshes was because he would embarrass David in *halachic* matters. ["*Mephi*" – from the mouth of David (when he would err) would be "boshes" – a source of embarrassment to him when he would be corrected.] And on this account, David merited to have Kilav come from him.

Rabbi Yochanan said: His name was not Kilav. It was Daniel. The reason he was referred to as Kilav was because he would embarrass Mephiboshes in *halachic* matters. (4a)

Losing a Reward on Account of Sin

The *Gemora* asks: And would David call himself "devout"? It is not written: *Had I not [lulei] believed that I would see the good reward of Hashem in the land of the living.* And a *Tanna* taught in the name of Rabbi Yosi: Why are there dots upon the world 'lulei'? David spoke before the Holy One, blessed be He, "Master of the world, I am sure that you will pay a just reward to the righteous in the World to Come, but I do not know whether I shall have a share in it." [Evidently, he did not consider himself "devout."]

The *Gemora* answers: He was afraid that a sin of his might cause him to lose his reward (although he knew that he was devout).

This follows the saying of Rabbi Yaakov bar Iddi, for Rabbi Yaakov bar Iddi asked a contradiction. One verse reads: *And behold, I am with you, and will guard you wherever you go,* and the other verse reads: *And Yaakov was greatly afraid.* The answer is that he thought that some sin of his might cause him to lose Hashem's protection over him.

Similarly it has been taught in a *braisa*: *Until Your people pass over, Hashem.* This alludes to the first entering of Israel into *Eretz Yisroel* in the days of Yehoshua and *Until the people which You have acquired pass over* alludes to the second entering (in the days of *Ezra*). Conclude from this that the Jewish people were worthy that a miracle should be performed on their behalf during the second entering just as in the first entering, but their sins caused them to lose it. (4a)

The Decree of the Sages regarding Kerias Shema at Night

The *Mishna* had stated (regarding the proper time for reciting *kerias shema* in the evening): The *Chachamim* say that it is until *chatzos* (midnight).

The *Gemora* asks: Who do the *Chachamim* hold like? If they hold like Rabbi Eliezer (who maintains that the word *b'shachbacha* -- when you lie down, is referring to the time that people go to sleep – some earlier and some later), let them say like him (that *kerias shema* can be recited until the end of "the first watch" of the night). And if they hold like Rabban Gamliel (who maintains that the word *b'shachbacha* -- when you lie down, is referring to the time that people are sleeping – which is the entire night, let them say like him (that *kerias shema* can be recited the entire night).

The *Gemora* answers: In truth, they hold like Rabban Gamliel, and the reason that they say that one can recite *kerias shema* until midnight is to keep a man from sinning.

The *Gemora* cites a supporting *braisa*: The *Chachamim* made a fence for their words so that a man, on returning home from the field in the evening, should not say, "I shall first go home, eat a little, drink a little, sleep a little, and then I shall recite *kerias shema* and *shemoneh esrei*, and meanwhile, sleep may take a hold of him, and consequently, he will sleep the entire night. Rather, a man, when returning home from the field in the evening, should go directly to the synagogue. If he is used to read Scripture, he should read Scripture, and if he is used to learning *Mishnah*, he should learn *Mishnah* (while it is still day), and then he should recite *kerias shema* and *shemoneh esrei*, and eat his meal and say the blessings afterwards. And whoever transgresses the words of the *Chachamim* is liable to death.

The *Gemora* asks: Why by *shema* (reciting it after midnight) does it say that one who violates this is liable to death?

The *Gemora* answers: If you wish, I can say because here there is a concern of sleep taking a hold of him. Or, alternatively, I can say because they want to exclude the opinion of those who say that the evening prayer is only voluntary. Therefore they teach us that it (*davening Maariv*) is compulsory. (4a – 4b)



The Order of Shema and Prayer

The *Gemora* had stated: He (at night) should recite *kerias shema* and *shemoneh esrei*,

The *Gemora* notes: This supports Rabbi Yochanan's point of view, for Rabbi Yochanan said: Who inherits the World to Come? It is one who follows the redemption blessing immediately with the evening prayer. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: The prayers were arranged to be said in between (the *kerias shema* in the morning and in the evening; accordingly, *Maariv shemoneh esrei* would be recited before the evening *kerias shema*).

The *Gemora* asks: What is the point of issue between them?

The *Gemora* answers: If you like, I can say that it is regarding the interpretation of a verse, and alternatively, I can say that their dispute is based upon logic.

The *Gemora* explains the argument based upon logic: For Rabbi Yochanan holds: Though the complete redemption from Egypt took place in the morning, there was also some degree of redemption in the evening (*Pharaoh's agreement to let them go*); whereas Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi argues that since the real redemption occurred in the morning, that which happened in the evening was not a proper redemption.

Or, alternatively, I can say it is the interpretation of a verse. And they both interpret the same verse. It is written: *When you lie down and when you arise*. Rabbi Yochanan holds that there is an analogy between lying down and rising. Just as at the time of rising (in the morning), recital of *shema* precedes *shemoneh esrei*, so also at the time of lying down (by the evening prayer), recital of *shema* precedes *shemoneh esrei*. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi holds differently: There is an analogy between lying down and rising. Just as at the time of rising, the recital of *shema* is close to the time that one rises from his bed, so also at the time of lying down, recital of *shema* must be close to the time that one goes to lie in his bed.

Mar bar Ravina asks on Rabbi Yochanan from a *Mishna*: In the evening, two blessings precede *kerias shema* and two blessings follow it. Now, if you say that the redemption blessing is immediately followed with the evening prayer, behold he does not do so, for the blessing of *hashkiveinu* (lay us down) is in between!?

The *Gemora* answers: Since the Rabbis established that this blessing should be recited after the redemption blessing, it is as if it were one long redemption. For, if you do not agree to this, how can the redemption blessing precede *shemoneh esrei* in the morning, seeing that Rabbi Yochanan says: In the beginning of *shemoneh esrei*, one must say the following: *Hashem, open my lips* etc., and upon concluding *shemoneh esrei*, one should say: *Let the expressions of my mouth be acceptable to you!* We are compelled to explain there that since the Rabbis established that *Hashem, open my lips* should be recited before the *tefillah*, it is like one long *tefillah*. Here, too, since the Rabbis established that this blessing should be recited after the redemption blessing, it is as if it were one long redemption. (4b)

Ashrei

Rabbi Elozar said in the name of Rabbi Avina: Whoever recites *A praise by David (ashrei)* three times daily is guaranteed to inherit the World to Come.

The *Gemora* asks: What is the reason? Perhaps it is because it is written in an alphabetical arrangement (according to the *aleph beis*); then let one recite, *Praiseworthy (ashrei) are those who are upright in their way (Tehillim 119)*, which has an eightfold alphabetical arrangement!?! Rather, it is because it contains the verse: *You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing*; then let him recite the *Great Hallel (Tehillim 136)*, where it is written: *Who gives bread to all living creatures!?*

Rather, the *Gemora* concludes that *ashrei* is special because it contains both.

Rabbi Yochanan asks: Why is there no letter "nun" in *Ashrei* (at the beginning of a verse; like there is for every other letter in the *aleph beis*)? It is because the fall of Israel's enemies (a euphemism referring to the Jewish people) begins with it. For it is written: *She has fallen and will no longer rise, the maiden of Israel*. [And since this verse, discussing the downfall of the Jewish people without any ascent, begins with a "nun," the letter "nun" is omitted in *ashrei*.]

In the West (*Eretz Yisrael*) this verse is interpreted as follows (as a blessing): *She has fallen and will no longer do so. Arise, O maiden of Israel*.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak says: Even after omitting the letter "nun," David, by divine Spirit, refers to it (to the ascent of those



who have fallen), For it is written: *Hashem supports all that fall.* (4b)

Angels

Rabbi Elozar said something else in the name of Rabbi Avina: The verse writes about the angel Michael greater than the angel Gavriel.

The *Gemora* cites a supporting *braisa*: The angel Michael travels to his destination in one flight; the angel Gavriel takes two flights; Eliyahu takes four, and the Angel of Death takes eight. In the time of plague, however, the Angel of Death, too, reaches his destination in one flight. (4b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Child Prodigy

The *Gemora* elsewhere related the following incident: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananiah once happened to go to the great city in Rome, and he was told there that there was in the prison a child with beautiful eyes and face and his curly hair was arranged in locks. He went and stood at the doorway of the prison and said, "*Who gave Yaakov over for spoil and Israel to the plunderers?*" The child answered (*by continuing the verse mentioned by Rabbi Yehoshua*), "*Is it not Hashem? It is on account of this; we have sinned against Him, and our fathers did not want to go in His ways, neither did they listen to His Torah.*" Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananiah said: I feel sure that this child will be a teacher in Israel. I swear by the Temple service that I will not move from here before I ransom him with whatever price that they demand for him. They said that he did not leave the spot before he had ransomed him with a huge amount of money, and it was not too long afterwards before he became a teacher in Israel. Who was he? He was Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha.

The question is asked: What was so exceptional about the boy's answer that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananiah declared that he was certain that this child will grow up to be a tremendous Torah scholar?

The Vilna Gaon explains based on the following *Gemora* in Brochos (4a): It is written: "*Ad ya'avov amecha Hashem; ad ya'avov am zu kanisa.*" *Until your people pass through, Hashem; until this people*

that You have acquired pass through. Until your people pass through, Hashem is in reference to the first time that the Jewish people entered *Eretz Yisroel* (*in the times of Yehoshua*). *Until this people that You have acquired pass through* is in reference to the second time that the Jewish people entered *Eretz Yisroel* (*in the times of Ezra*). From here, the *Chachamim* have said: The Jewish people deserved that a miracle should be performed for them at the time of Ezra (*when they were crossing the Jordan River into Eretz Yisroel*) in the same manner that happened to them in the times of Yehoshua. However, due to their sins, they lost this reward.

Accordingly, it can be said that this is what Rabbi Yehoshua was asking: *Who gave Yaakov over for spoil and Israel to the plunderers?* Although the Jewish people were on a low level when they entered Bavel (*as the name Yaakov connotes*), but why weren't they redeemed with a complete redemption (*when they were on a higher level, as the name Israel connotes*)?

The child answered: *It is on account of this (zu); we have sinned against Him.* By the second redemption, it is written *zu*, this; and since we have sinned, we lost the reward that we originally deserved.

DAILY DAF

Ashrei

Mesukim Medvash

Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Avina: Whoever recites *Tehillah Le-David* three times each day is guaranteed a place in the world-to-come. Why? If you were to say because it is in the order of the *Aleph Beis*... Because it contains the verse 'You open Your hand [and satisfy the desire of every living thing]'... Rather because it has both."

What follows from the *Gemora* is that we recite *Ashrei* three times each day, something that is reflected in our *siddurim*, because it is in the order of the Hebrew alphabet and contains the verse "*Posei'ach es yadecha*".

R' Meir Simcha Ha-Kohen of Dvinsk explains the significance of these two items along the following lines. There are two main themes in *Tehillim* 145. The first is that we praise G-d incessantly. For what? That is the second theme; G-d sustains all of his creatures. He feeds us, protects us and fulfills our needs. This



second theme is exemplified with the verse "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing," which is why the Gemora gives it as an example for why we recite *Ashrei* three times a day and is why some *siddurim* tell the reader to have extra intent while reciting this verse.

R' Meir Simcha further explains that the significance of *Tehillah Le-David* being an alphabetic acrostic is that the alphabet represents the natural order of things. When the verses each begin with a successive letter of the alphabet it indicates the message that the theme follows the normal progression of nature. In our case, the theme of G-d sustaining the world is meant to be through natural means. As a part of nature, G-d provides food and sustenance to His creations. While we may see our needs satisfied through our own work, we are really witnessing G-d providing for us through nature.

It is this important message that we recite three times a day. While we work very hard for our livings, our success and failure depend on G-d. Hard work does not always lead to reward and little work sometimes leads to great bounty. That is the Divine hand at work providing for us. It is very easy to become caught up in nature and to believe that we provide for ourselves. For this reason Chazal tell us to recite *Ashrei* repeatedly each day so that we do not forget that it is G-d who provides for us. The Pnei Yehoshua adds that when we constantly remember that G-d determines how much money we make we are able to scale back on the time we spend working and allocate more time to studying Torah. It is this additional and worry-free study of Torah, made possible by the message imbued through the daily repetition of *Ashrei*, that guarantees a person a place in the world-to-come. Saying *Ashrei* is not a magic formula. Rather, its message of Divine sustenance and the resulting intensification of religious study is what takes a person into the world-to-come.

Hands Dirty

The Noda beYehudah writes that David wasn't praised for "getting his hands dirty with blood" in order to ensure that one does not transgress the kares-prohibition of niddah; he is praised for "getting his hands dirty with blood" in order to permit a woman to her husband. It is the concern for shalom bayis and a harmonious relationship that David is regarded as pious and righteous.

Losing a Reward

The Meshech Chachmah explain why on the way out of Mitzrayim - their sins did not cause a minimization of the Miracles, but in the times of Esra it did. It is because, in Mitzrayim, although they sinned against Hashem, nevertheless, they protected their safeguards. They did not change their names or their language, and in general, did not assimilate. In the times of Ezra, however, although they adhered to the basic laws of the Torah, they did not keep the "fences" set up to prevent assimilating with their non-Jewish neighbors. They married gentile women and their children spoke in the languages of the gentiles. This is what caused them to lose out on the Miracles that were destined to happen. In the time of galus, the primary focus must be on the protection of the home and the family, and to ensure that outside influences do not permeate the home.

Did you ever Wonder...?

Did you know that every verse of *Ashrei* is divided in two, with a "vav" beginning the second half of the verse.

Which verse is it, and why?