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Brachos Daf 31

Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler, Kollel Boker Beachwood

Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamah of

Tzvi Gershon Ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o"n

May the studying of the Daf Notes be a zechus for his neshamah and may his soul find peace in Gan Eden and be bound up in the Bond of life

Not Too Much Celebration

Mar the son of Ravina made a wedding for his son. When he saw the Torah scholars being excessively joyous, he brought a precious ornate glass vessel, worth 400 zuz, and broke it in front of them, saddening them. Rav Ashi also made a wedding for his son, and saw the Torah scholars very joyous, so he broke a white glass cup in front of them, saddening them.

At Ravina's son Mar's wedding, the Sages asked Rav Hamnuna Zuti to sing for them. He sang to them, "Woe to us, that we will die," and told them to respond to him by singing "Where is the Torah and *mitzvos* that will protect us?"

Rabbi Yochanan cites Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai saying that one may not immerse himself in laughing in this world, as the verse says that "then, our mouth will be filled with laughter, and our tongues with praises, then the nations will say, how great is what Hashem did for them [Bnai Yisrael]," indicating that only in the future, when the nations will recognize Hashem, may one be full of laughter.

The *Gemora* relates that from the time that Rish Lakish heard this from Rabbi Yochanan, he never again filled himself with laughter. (30b – 31a)

What to do before Praying

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa* which says that one may not start praying from the midst of a judgment or a *halachic* discussion, but rather from the midst of a settled *halachah*, to ensure that his mind will not dwell on anything while he prays.

The *Gemora* lists the following examples of a settled *halachah*:

1. Rabbi Zeira's statement that Jewish women have adopted the stringency that they wait for seven clean days, even if they only saw a small drop of blood. (Abaye)
2. Rav Hoshaya's statement that one may circumvent the Torah obligation of *ma'aser* by bringing produce in while it is still in its shell, allowing his animals to eat from it. (Rava)
3. Rav Huna's statement in the name of Rabbi Ze'ira that the blood from letting blood from a sanctified animal is prohibited from benefit, and is subject to the laws of *me'ilah*. (alternate version of Rava)

The Sages followed the *Mishna*, and prayed from the midst of a serious mood, while Rav Ashi followed the *braisa*, and prayed from the midst of settled *halachah*.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa* which says that one should not pray from the midst of sadness, laziness, laughter, conversation, levity, or idle matters, but rather from the midst of the happiness of a *mitzvah*.

Similarly, when one departs from his friend, he shouldn't do so in a state of mundane conversation, laughter, levity, or idle matters, but rather in the context of *halachah*. We similarly find that the early prophets concluded their words with praise and consolation. Mari the son of Rav Huna the son of Rabbi Yirmiyah bar Abba similarly taught that one should only take leave of his friend in the context of *halachah*, as he will thereby remember him.

In this vein, the *Gemora* relates the story of Rav Kahana, who accompanied Rav Shimi bar Ashi from Pumbedra to the palm

tree region in Babylonia. When they arrived there, Rav Kahana asked Rav Shimi whether it was true what people say, that these trees have been there since the time of Adam. Rav Shimi said that this reminded him of Rabbi Yossi the son of Rabbi Chanina's statement that the verse that refers to the land "*where no man ever passed, and no Adam – person sat there.*" The second clause seems unnecessary, since it is obvious that no one ever sat in a place where no one even passed. Rather, the verse teaches that only in a place that Adam decreed that people can *settle* did anyone ever pass. Thus, people mean that if people pass by these trees, Adam must have decreed that this place should be inhabited.

Rav Mordechai accompanied Rav Shimi bar Ashi from Hagraunia to Bai Kipi (or Bai Dura). (31a)

Concentration During Praying

The *braisa* says that one who prays must direct his heart to Heaven. Abba Shaul cites a reference to this from the verse which states that "*You will prepare their hearts [i.e., to Heaven], [and then,] You will listen with Your ears.*"

Rabbi Yehudah says in a *braisa* that Rabbi Akiva's practice when praying with a congregation was to pray quickly, to not delay everyone, but when he prayed individually, he would concentrate so intensely that he would start in one corner, and finish on the opposite corner, due to the many times he would bow. (31a)

Learning about Praying from Daniel

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba says that one should pray in a room with windows, as the verse describes the room where Daniel prayed as one with "open windows." Lest one think that he should pray the whole day, the verse states that Daniel prayed three times a day. Lest we think that this praying began only when Daniel went into exile, the verse says that he always had this practice. Lest one think that one can pray in any direction, the verse says that Daniel prayed towards Yerushalayim. Lest one think that one can pray all three prayers at one time, Dovid stated in Tehillim that "*Evening, morning, and afternoon, [I will pray].*" Lest we think that one should pray out loud, the verse about Chana states that "*her voice wasn't audible.*" Lest we

think that one should first make his requests and then praise Hashem, Shlomo asks Hashem to listen to the *rinah* – praises and the *tefillah* – requests, setting their order. One may not make any requests after the *brachah* after *Shema*, as he must follow it immediately with *Shemoneh Esrei*, but after *Shemoneh Esrei*, one may add in as much as he wants, even as much as one adds on *Yom Kippur*. (31a)

Chanah's Prayer

Rav Hamnuna enumerates the important *halachos* we can learn from verses about Chanah's prayer:

"*Chana was talking al libah – on her heart,*" teaches that one who prays must concentrate on what he is saying.

"*Only her lips were moving*" teaches that one must enunciate the words.

"*But her voice wasn't audible*" teaches that one may not raise his voice when praying.

"*And Eli thought she was drunk*" teaches that one may not pray while drunk, since Eli rebuked her for this.

"*And Eli told her, 'Until when will you be drunk [and pray]'*" teaches that one must offer constructive criticism, if he sees someone doing something wrong.

Ulla, or Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Chanina explains that when Chanah responded, "*No, my master,*" she was stating that Eli did not speak as a master of wisdom, nor one who has divine inspiration, as he wrongly suspected her of being drunk. Another version is that she asked rhetorically, "*Are you not a master of wisdom, and have you no divine inspiration or presence, that you didn't give me the benefit of the doubt? Do you not know that I am a broken woman?*"

"*[Chanah answered] I didn't drink wine*" teaches that if someone is wrongly suspected, he must notify the suspecting person that he is innocent.

Chanah continues to tell Eli not to consider her a *bas bliya'al* – *someone unbounded*. Rabbi Elozar says that from here we see that one who prays while drunk is equivalent to one who worships idolatry, as the same term *bliya'al* is used in the context of a city that worshipped idolatry.

"*And Eli responded to her, 'Go to peace, and may Hashem fulfill your request'*" teaches that one who wrongly suspected someone of a sin must assuage him, and bless him.

The *Gemora* returns to discuss Chanah's prayer in more detail. The verse says that Chanah swore and said, "*Hashem tzvakos – the Lord of hosts.*" Rabbi Elozar says that Chanah was the first person in history to refer to Hashem by the name *Tzvakos*. She was asking Hashem that how can He, who created legions of creatures, not spare one son for her.

The *Gemora* illustrates this with a parable of a king who held a banquet for his servants, and a poor person came to the door asking for a slice of bread. When no one paid him any attention, he pushed his way into the king, and asked whether he couldn't spare just one slice of bread from the whole banquet.

Chanah said to Hashem, "*if ra'oh - see tir'eh – you will see [in my suffering].*" Rabbi Elozar explains the double verb to mean that Chanah said to Hashem, *if ra'oh – you see [and give me a son]*, that's fine, but if not, *tir'eh – I will make You see*, by secluding myself with another man in front of my husband. This will prompt him to make me drink the *sotah* water, and then You must give me a son, as the verse says that a *sotah* woman who was found innocent will conceive.

The *Gemora* says that this is a possible explanation according to Rabbi Yishmael, who says that the verse about the innocent *sotah* means that one who hadn't conceived will then conceive. However, according to Rabbi Akiva, who says that the verse only means that one who is fertile will have easier and more productive labor, since otherwise any barren woman will seclude herself to conceive, we must say that the verse is simply speaking in the vernacular.

Chanah refers to herself as *amasecha – Your maidservant* three times. Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Chanina says that Chanah was telling Hashem that He created three sins which can be fatal (*immersing in the mikvah after becoming a niddah, taking challah from dough, and lighting Shabbos candles*), and she never transgressed any of them.

Chanah asks Hashem to give her *zera anashim – offspring of men*. The *Gemora* offers these possible explanations for this phrase:

1. Someone who is important among men. (Rav)
2. Shmuel, her offspring, who anointed two men, Shaul and Dovid. (Shmuel)

3. Offspring who is equivalent to two men (i.e., Aharon and Moshe), as the verse refers first to Moshe and Aharon as Hashem's kohanim, and then Shmuel as one of those who call His name. (Rabbi Yochana)
4. Offspring who will blend in with other men. (The Sages) When Rav Dimi came from Eretz Yisrael, he explained that this means someone who is average, in height, weight, complexion, and intelligence.

When Chanah returns with Shmuel, she tells Eli, "*I am the woman, who was standing here with you.*" Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says we learn from this verse that one may not sit in the 4 *amos* near one who is praying, as she implied that Eli stood with her while she was praying.

Chanah tells Eli, "*for this child I prayed.*" Rabbi Elozar explains that Shmuel ruled in front of his teacher Eli, as the earlier verse states that they slaughtered a bull (as a sacrifice), and they brought the child (Shmuel) in front of Eli. The connection between these two statements is that Eli was looking for a *Kohen* to slaughter the bull, and Shmuel wondered by, as anyone could slaughter it. When they brought Shmuel to Eli to tell him what he said, Eli asked him how he knew this. Shmuel told him that the verse only specifically refers to *Kohanim* from the point of receiving the blood, teaching that anything before (i.e., slaughtering) can be done by anyone. Eli agreed with Shmuel's argument, but stated that he had to be executed, as he taught in the presence of his teacher. When Chanah cried to Eli that she prayed so much for Shmuel, Eli told her that he will pray for her to have another child. At that point, Chanah told him that she prayed specifically for this one, and didn't want to lose him for a replacement.

When Chanah prayed, the verse says "*and Chanah was talking al libah – on her heart.*" Rabbi Elozar quotes Rabbi Yossi ben Zimra saying that this means that Chanah prayed about her heart. She said to Hashem that He created all parts of the female body for a purpose – eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, a mouth to speak, hands to work, legs to walk, and breasts to nurse. If she has no child, her breasts, on her heart, will be for naught, and therefore she is asking Hashem for a son.

Rabbi Elozar quotes Rabbi Yossi ben Zimra saying that if one fasts on Shabbos, Hashem will tear up even a decree of seventy

years of punishment. Even so, he is held liable for violating the enjoyment of Shabbos, so Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak says that he must therefore fast another day to atone for that.

Rabbi Elozar says that Chanah had complaints on Hashem, as the verse says that she prayed *al – on* Hashem, implying that she had complaints.

Rabbi Elozar says that Eliyahu also had complaints on Hashem, as he said that Hashem “turned away the hearts of *Bnei Yisroel*.”

Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak says that Hashem later accepted this complaint, as he stated that he “did harm” to *Bnei Yisroel*, by creating the evil inclination. (31a – 32a)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Scheming Woman

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: It is written: *Then she shall be innocent and she shall bear seed*. This teaches us that if she was barren, she will be blessed with a child; these are the words of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Yishmael asked him: If so, all the barren women will seclude themselves (*and upon emerging innocent after drinking the bitter waters*) and then be blessed with children, and since this one (*a woman who remains loyal to her husband and avoids suspicion*) did not seclude herself, she will lose out (*and remain barren*)! What then is the verse teaching us? It teaches us that if she used to have painful births, she will now give birth with ease; if she gave birth to females, she will now give birth to males; if she used to have short children, she will now have tall children; if she used to give birth to dark-skinned babies, she will now give birth to fair ones.

Tosfos asks: Can’t we ask the same question on Rabbi Yishmael as he asked on Rabbi Akiva? A woman who was suffering severe childbirth pains would seclude herself, and after drinking the bitter waters, she will give birth “pain-free”!

Tosfos HaRosh answers that these blessings are not as great as that of a barren woman giving birth. A woman would not go to such lengths (*secluding herself with another man*) just to receive these blessings.

The *Haflaah* in *Panim Yafos* answers that a woman who was used to painful childbirths will not seclude herself with another man, for she will be afraid that her husband will rather divorce her than have her degraded in *Beis Din*. A barren woman, however, is not concerned that her husband might divorce her, for after ten years without children, he will anyway divorce her. She therefore has nothing to lose by secluding herself.

The *Minchas Kenaos* answers by asking the following question: While it is understandable that the woman might employ such a scheme, but where will she find a man to go along with her? An ordinary man will not want to transgress the prohibition of secluding with a married woman. It is illogical to assume that she will seclude herself with a wicked man, for he will want to cohabit with her, and her intention is only to be blessed with children from her husband.

We are compelled to say like the *Sifri* states that if the husband never had children, he will also be blessed with children. Accordingly, she will find a barren man to seclude with, for he also wants to have a child.

This concern is only according to Rabbi Akiva, who maintains that the barren women will be blessed with children. Accordingly, it can be extended to a man as well. However, according to Rabbi Yishmael, who holds that the blessing is in regards to pain-free child birth, this is only applicable to the woman, and not the man.

HALACHAH FROM THE DAF

Davening Quietly

The *Gemora* learns from the verse about Chanah praying that one must enunciate the words, but not loudly.

The *Tur* (OH 101) cites those who say that one should not even pray loud enough to hear himself, but rules like the *Yerushalmi*, which says that one should just not pray loud, but still be able to hear himself.

The *Rambam* states that one should hear himself, but others should not hear him.

The Bais Yosef cites a Tosefta which seems to state that one should not hear himself, and states that the Zohar seems to support this.

The Shulchan Aruch (101:2) rules like the Rambam, requiring one pray loud enough to hear, not for others to hear him.

The Magen Avraham and Gra state that this is consistent with the Zohar, and therefore most poskim (Chaye Adam, Shulchan Aruch Harav, Mishnah Berurah) rule that one should hear himself.

The Chida (Birkai Yosef 101:3) cites some *mekubalim* who rule in the name of the AriZal that one should not pray loud enough to hear himself, and the Kaf Hayaim (101:8) rules like this.

The Ben Ish Hai (Od Yosef Hai Misphatim 3) states that if one can concentrate and enunciate properly without hearing himself, he should do so, but otherwise, he should hear himself. See also Yalkut Yosef (1, page 159) for a full exposition of the differing positions on this issue.

The Shulchan Aruch (582) cites those who allow one to pray more loudly on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, as everyone has machzorim and will not get confused by someone else's praying.

Sitting Near Someone Praying

The *Gemora* learns that one may not sit near someone praying from the verse in which Chanah tells Eli that she is the woman "who was standing here with you."

Rashi explains that by saying that she was standing "with you," she indicated that Eli was also standing, presumably due to his proximity to her.

Tosfos says that the *Gemora* learns it from the spelling of the word *imcha* – with you. The word is written with an extra *heh*, whose numerical value is 5, indicating that he was sitting, but only in the fifth *amah*, since he couldn't sit within 4 *amos*.

The Tur (102) states that one may not sit in the 4 *amos* in front, nor 4 *amos* to either side, for a total of 12 *amos*. This is

indicated by the word *bazeh* – in this [spot] used in the verse, as the word *zeh* has a numerical value of 12 (7+5).

The Darkai Moshe (1) cites the Ashiri, who uses the same source, but includes the 4 *amos* behind the one praying. He explains that we either count the 4 *amos* on either side as 4 *amos* all together, or don't count the 4 *amos* in front, as they are obvious.

The Shulchan Aruch (102:1) rules like the Tur, while the Rama adds in that one should not sit behind one praying.

The Gaonim state that if one is involved in prayer (*even not Shemonah Esrei*), he may sit in the vicinity of someone praying.