

27 Elul 5774  
Sept. 22, 2014



Chagigah Daf 14

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamah of

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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

The Gemora cites a braisa: Rabbi Shimon the pious said: These (those who were ordained) are the nine hundred and seventy-four generations that were ordained originally to be created, before the world was created, but ultimately, they were not created. The Holy One, Blessed be He, went and planted them in each and every generation, and these are the bold-faced people in the generation.

And Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: the verse, “those who were cut down” is actually written as a blessing: These are Torah scholars who cut down on their sleep (in order) to study the words of Torah in this world. The Holy One, Blessed be He, will reveal secrets to them in the World to Come, as it is written: *Their secrets will be like a pouring river.* (13b – 14a)

Shmuel told Chiya bar Rav, “Son of the lion! Let me relate to you a good matter that your father said. Every day angles are created from the River of Dinor and they sing HaShem’s praises and they disappear. This is based on a verse that states, they are new every morning, great is Your faithfulness.”

The Gemora notes: This statement is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini who said in the name of Rabbi Yonasan that every utterance of HaShem creates a new angel, as it is said, by the word of HaShem the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. (14a)

The Gemora notes a contradiction: One verse states: *His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like clean wool.* Yet, another verse states: *His crowns hold mounds of statutes written in raven-black flame.*

The Gemora answers that this is not difficult: The first verse refers to HaShem as old in the context of a Rabbinical academy, because an old man epitomizes a Torah sage, whereas the second verse refers to HaShem in battle, because a young man epitomizes battle; for the master stated: there is nothing better in a Rabbinical academy than an elder, and there is nothing better in a battle than a youth. (14a)

The Gemora notes another contradiction: One verse states: *His throne was of fiery flames,* which implies that HaShem has one throne, whereas a second verse states: *as thrones were set up, and the One of Ancient Days sat,* which implies that HaShem has two thrones.

The Gemora answers: The resolution to this discrepancy is that the second verse that was quoted refers to the throne of HaShem and the throne of Dovid HaMelech, as it has been taught in a braisa: One throne is for HaShem and the other throne for Dovid HaMelech; these are the words of Rabbi Akiva, whereas Rabbi Yose HaGelili maintains that to suggest that HaShem has a human sitting next to Him on a throne would render the Divine Presence profane. Rather, Rabbi Yose HaGelili maintains that one throne is for justice and one throne is for charity.



The Gemora inquires: did Rabbi Akiva accept this interpretation, or not?

The Gemora resolves this from a braisa: One throne is for justice and one throne is for charity; these are the words of Rabbi Akiva.

The braisa continued: Rabbi Eliezer Ben Azaryah rebuked Rabbi Akiva for expounding on Agaddic matters. He said to him: Akiva, what is your connection with Aggadah? Cease your talk until you reach the topics of Negaim and Oholos (laws of tumah and taharah, which are complex and more fitting for Rabbi Akiva); rather, one throne is for His chair and one throne is for His footstool. The chair is for Him to sit upon, and the stool is for Him to use as a footrest, for it is said: *The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.* (14a)

When Rav Dimi came (to Bavel from Eretz Yisroel), he said: Eighteen curses did Yeshaya pronounce upon the Jewish people (tribulations that would happen to them), yet he was not pacified until he pronounced upon them this verse: The child shall behave insolently against the elderly, and the base against the respectable.

The Gemora asks: What are the eighteen curses?

The Gemora answers: It is written: *For, behold, the Lord, Hashem, Master of Legions, does take away from Jerusalem and from Judah support and mainstay; every support of bread, and every support of water; the mighty man, and the man of war; the judge and the prophet, and the diviner, and the elder; the captain of fifty; and the respected man, and the counsellor, and the scholar of scholars, and the comprehender of whispers. And I will give children to be their leaders, and mockers shall rule over them, etc.*

1] 'Support' — this means the masters of the Scriptures.  
2] 'Mainstay' — this means the masters of the Mishnah, like Rabbi Yehudah ben Teima and his colleagues.

Rav Pappa and the Rabbis dispute the extent of their mastery of the Mishnah: One says that there were six hundred orders of the Mishnah (while currently there are only six), and the other said that there were seven hundred orders of the Mishnah.

3] 'Every support of bread' — this means the masters of Talmud, for it is said: *Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mixed.* 4] 'And every support of water' — this means the masters of Aggadah, who draw the heart of man like water by means of Aggadic teachings. 5] 'The mighty man' — this means the masters of halachic traditions. 6] 'And the man of war' — this means one who knows how to engage in discussion in the battle of the Torah. 7] 'The judge' — this means a judge who passes judgment in the strictest accord with truth. 8] 'The prophet' — according to the literal meaning of the word. 9] 'The diviner' — this means the King, for it is said: *There is a divination on the lips of the King.* 10] 'The elder' — this means one who is worthy to sit in the Rabbinical academy. 11] 'The captain of fifty': do not read 'the captain of fifty (chamishim),' but rather 'the prince of the Pentateuch (chumashim)'; it means one who knows how to engage in discussion in the five books of the Torah. Another explanation: 'the captain of fifty' — as Rabbi Avahu taught; for Rabbi Avahu said: From here we derive that a spokesman may not be appointed over a congregation, if he (the Rabbi) is less than fifty years of age. 12] 'And the respected man' — this means one for whose sake, deference is shown to his generation above, like Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa (as a Heavenly voice declared each day that the whole world was sustained in the merit of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa), or below (on earth) like Rabbi Avahu at the palace of the Caesar (for when Rabbi Avahu would go from the *Beis Medrash* to the Caesar's house, the ladies of the Caesar's household went out to receive

him and sang about him, “Prince of his people, leader of his nation, lantern of light, your coming should be blessed with peace”). 13] ‘The counsellor’ — this means one who knows how to determine the intercalation of years and the fixation of months. 14] ‘And the scholar’ - this means a disciple who makes his teachers wise. 15] ‘Of scholars’ (charashin) — at the moment that he begins a Torah discourse, all become like deaf mutes (cheirshin). 16] ‘And the comprehender’ — this means one who understands one fact from another fact. 17] ‘Of whispers’ — this means one who is worthy to have imparted to him the words of the Torah, which was given in a whisper. 18] ‘And I will give children to be their princes’: what is the meaning of [the words], ‘I will give children to be their princes’? Rabbi Elozar said: It means people who are empty of good deeds. ‘And mockers shall rule over them’. Rav Acha bar Yaakov said: It means foxes sons of foxes (men who are weak and inferior).

The Gemora concludes: ‘But he was not pacified until he said to them: The child shall behave insolently against the elderly’: — those people who are empty of good deeds shall behave insolently against those who are filled with good deeds, as a pomegranate (is full with seeds). ‘And the base against the respectable’: those to whom grave sins appear as light ones will come and behave insolently against those to whom light sins appear as weighty ones. (14a)

Rav Katina taught that even at the time of Jerusalem’s downfall, there were still people of truth, as it is said, when a man will grasp his relative, a member of his father’s house, [saying,] ‘You have a garment! Become a benefactor for us.’ The word garment is interpreted to refer to matters of Torah which people would cover up like a garment. People were lax in Torah study and when asked a question they would feign ignorance and pretend that they had not heard the question. When they would discover someone who was knowledgeable in Torah, they

would grasp him and ask him to be their leader, i.e. to teach them Torah.

It is said further in that verse, and let this stumbling block be under your hand. This stumbling block refers to Torah, which are matters that students do not pay close attention to until they have been corrected several times.

It is said further, he shall raise up an oath that day saying: I will not be a ruler, and in my house there is no bread and no garment; do not install me as a chief of the people. The word ‘raise up’ refers to an oath. The words ‘I will not be a ruler’ means I did not become one of those who locked themselves up in the study hall, i.e. I was not diligent in my Torah study. The words ‘and in my house there is no bread and no garment’ means that I do not have a knowledge of Scripture, Mishnah or Talmud. When the person would respond, ‘I am not accustomed to locking myself up in the study hall,’ he meant that he never knew the answer to the question.

This statement that even at the time of Jerusalem’s downfall there were still people of truth is contradicted from Rava’s statement that Jerusalem was only destroyed because people of truth had disappeared from it.

The Gemora answers that Rav Katina was speaking regarding words of Torah, as regarding words of Torah people were honest in that they were not knowledgeable.

Rava’s statement, however, was regarding business matters, as in this respect, people of truth had disappeared from Jerusalem. (14a-14b)

The Gemora cites a braisa: Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai was once riding on a donkey and Rabbi Elozar Ben Arach was riding behind him, and Rabbi Elozar Ben Arach requested that Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai teach him one chapter regarding the Ma’aseh Merkavah. Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai responded, “Did I not teach you that

one cannot expound the matter of the Ma'aseh Merkavah to an individual unless he is wise and can understand on his own?" Rabbi Elozar Ben Arach requested of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai that he allow him to relate one teaching that he had learned from Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai. Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai agreed, and Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai descended from his donkey, wrapped his face and sat on a stone under an olive tree. When Rabbi Elozar Ben Arach questioned Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai regarding his behavior, Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai responded, "is it possible that you are expounding on matters regarding the Ma'aseh Merkavah, and the Divine Presence is amongst us and the angels are escorting us, and I will remain riding on the donkey?" Rabbi Elozar Ben Arach immediately began to expound on matters regarding the Ma'aseh Merkavah and a fire descended from heaven and scorched all the trees in the field. All the trees then sang praise to HaShem. An angel from the fire declared that what Rabbi Elozar Ben Arach had expounded on was precisely the matters regarding the Heavenly Chariot. Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai stood up and kissed Rabbi Elozar Ben Arach on his head, and he said: Blessed be Hashem, God of Israel, Who has given a son to Avraham our father, who knows to speculate upon, and to delve into, and to expound the Ma'aseh Merkavah! There are some who expound well but do not act well, others act well but do not expound well, but you expound well and act well. Fortunate are you, O Avraham our father that Rabbi Elozar Ben Arach has come forth from your loins. Now, when these matters were told to Rabbi Yehoshua, he and Rabbi Yosi the Kohen were going on a journey. They said: Let us also expound the Rabbi Elozar Ben Arach; so Rabbi Yehoshua began an exposition. Now, that day was in the summer Tammuz season, and nevertheless, the heavens became overcast with clouds and a kind of rainbow appeared in the cloud, and the ministering angels assembled and came to listen like people who assemble and come to watch the merrymaking before a groom and bride. Afterwards, Rabbi Yosi the Kohen went and related

what happened before Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai; and Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai said: Fortunate are you, and fortunate is she that bore you; fortunate are my eyes that have seen thus. Moreover, in my dream, I and you all were reclining at Mount Sinai, when a Heavenly Voice resounded towards us from Heaven, saying: Ascend here, ascend here! There are great banqueting halls and fine dining couches are prepared for you; you and your disciples and your disciples' disciples are invited for the third division.

The Gemora asks: But is this so? For behold it was taught in a braisa: Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Yehudah said: There were three discourses (dealing with Ma'aseh Merkavah): Rabbi Yehoshua discoursed before Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai, Rabbi Akiva discoursed before Rabbi Yehoshua, Chananya ben Chachinai discoursed before Rabbi Akiva; whereas Rabbi Elozar Ben Arach he does not mention!?

The Gemora answers: One who discoursed himself, and others discoursed before him, he mentions; one who discoursed himself, but others did not discourse before him, he does not mention.

The Gemora asks: But behold there is Chananya ben Chachinai before whom others did not discourse, yet he mentions him!?

The Gemora answers: He at least discoursed before one who discoursed before others. (14b)

## INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

### OUR LEADERS ARE THE EYES OF THE NATION

Our Gemora cites a compelling statement from Rav Dimi. He said, "Yeshayahu cursed Klal Yisrael with eighteen curses. Yet, he was not satisfied until he pronounced,



"The youngster will behave insolently against the elder, and the base against the honorable." Yeshayahu uttered eighteen terrible curses, each one grave and serious with awesome ramifications. That was not sufficient. He wanted to deliver the final blow, the blow that would have the greatest effect. What was that curse that would outdo all the others, that would devastate Klal Yisrael's chance for survival? It was the one that pronounced an end to the authority of the zekeinim, elders, and talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars. We cannot survive without their leadership.

Why is this? Why is Klal Yisrael so unique that it cannot exist without the institution of elders?

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum in his *Peninim al Hatoah* explains: Rabbi Akiva compares us to a bird. Just as a bird cannot fly without its wings, so, too is Klal Yisrael helpless without its elders. A bird uses its wings to go higher and to remain airborne. Otherwise, it will fall to the ground, a helpless broken bird. Without its leadership, Klal Yisrael will not only not go forward; it will actually fall and cease to exist. A generation's greatest disgrace is demonstrated when the people do not show respect to their gedolim, leaders. How shameful is it when people refer to gedolei haTorah in the most pedestrian terms? The arrogance of the common Jew, his self-declared scholarship, provokes chutzpah towards our leaders. One cannot accept leadership from another if he is filled with himself.

The Satmar Rebbe, zl, once set forth criteria for a gadol to be accepted. He must first be a talmid chacham, totally proficient in all areas of Torah erudition. Secondly, he must be a yarei Shomayim, G-d fearing person, who will not adapt his psak, halachic decision, as a result of outside pressures or personal vested interests. Third, he must have special, common sense. He must possess an acute ability to understand and deal with all people. He should be able to ferret out those who would undermine the Torah way of life. A gadol is the embodiment of Torah; he

reflects it in his total demeanor. To respect a gadol is to respect the Torah. To deny a Torah leader the respect he deserves is to challenge the Torah itself.

One of the distinguished laymen who heard the Satmar Rav's comments questioned him regarding a certain rav who fit the criteria, yet whose views regarding Orthodoxy were in contradiction to the Satmar Rav's. The Rav responded that indeed the gadol in question truly "fit the bill," but was deficient in one area. He was not "meshamesh," did not serve in such a capacity that he understood how to deal with the incursions against Torah Judaism. Only certain rabbonim, such as those who served in a number of the larger communities in Hungary, in which they were compelled to fight a holy war to preserve the sanctity of Torah and mitzvos from those who would do anything to impugn and destroy the Torah way of life, were able to impart lessons based upon their own life's experience. The Satmar Rav was an individual who, in addition to being a brilliant talmid chacham and pikeach, had absorbed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge from his rebbeim, who themselves were the gedolei Yisrael of the previous generation.

It is written [Devarim 1:13]: Provide for yourselves distinguished men, who are wise, understanding, and well known to your tribes, and I shall appoint them as your heads. (1:13)

In a play on the word "and I will appoint them," the Midrash changes the "sin" to a "shin", transforming the word to "and I shall hold them guilty". The Midrash is teaching us the importance of listening to our spiritual leaders. If they lead properly and the common people still do not respond with respect, the people are liable. They cite an interesting analogy. Once a snake was sliding along its path, when the tail began complaining to the head, "Why are you always in the front with me dragging along behind? I want to lead, while you follow in the rear."



The head responded, "Very well. We will switch positions, and you will lead. Since the tail has no eyes, we can well understand what happened. The snake fell into a pit, then it was singed by fire. Finally it was scratched by a thorn bush into which it had run. The fate suffered by the snake was to be expected, given the fact that the tail had guided it.

Similarly, when the common Jew attempts to usurp the spiritual leadership of Klal Yisrael, we are beset with bruises -- and in many instances -- serious injury. Our Torah leaders are the "eyes" of the nation. They lead because they have vision. They have the necessary perspective to guide the people on the correct and safe path.

Even the best leader will succeed only if he has the respect and approbation of the people he is to lead. One earns this respect by virtue of his character and scholarship. At times, however, the people themselves are not worthy of their leadership, not recognizing the leaders' virtue and capabilities.

Rabbi Scheinbaum continues: Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, explains that when the youth lose respect for their elders -- when they wrest the reins of leadership away from those whose wisdom is tempered by life's experiences, from a leadership whose counsel is inspired by the Torah giants of a previous era -- Klal Yisrael is as good as dead. This is not life! Indeed, such a circumstance represents the greatest curse. A nation whose leadership is not "mekabel," will not accept advice from their elders, who are obsessed with their arrogance and sheer chutzpah; who denigrate the authority of their elders and render decisions based upon their own brash ideas, and shaped by their own vested interests, is not living a Torah life. Such a generation does not truly live.

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, explains that the Jewish people are unlike other nations, in that they cannot

survive without the institution of "zekeinim," elders. While other nations manage to survive without the leadership of sages or elders, our uniqueness renders our elders an essential prerequisite for our existence, rather than a mere luxury. It is Rabbi Akiva who says, "Yisrael is likened to a bird. Just as a bird cannot fly away without its wings, so, too, is Yisrael helpless without its elders." Rav Chaim explains that a bird without its wings is in a worse situation than an animal who never had wings. It remains a helpless, pitiful creature, victimized by any creature bigger and more powerful than it. Klal Yisrael without elders is just like that bird. It cannot survive. Undermining the power of our elders is tantamount to striking a powerful blow to the core of the life force of the Jewish People.

## DAILY MASHAL

Horav Yechezkel Abramski, zl, put the idea into perspective with the following illustration: Imagine sitting at a distance of one hundred yards from a given point and asking a group of people if they are able to see a picture at this distance. One person will say he can only see thirty yards, while another will see forty yards, and yet another will see up to seventy yards. Suddenly, someone comes along with incredible eyesight who can see up to one hundred yards! Indeed, if all of the other people would get together, they could nevertheless not see as well as he, because the sight is limited. Having them all get together is to no avail because the eyesight of the individuals is still deficient.

The same idea applies to our Torah leaders: They see what others cannot; their vision extends beyond the grasp of the average person. Thus, if an entire group gets together to express their opinion in opposition of one gadol, their position carries no weight, because they cannot see what he sees. Their vision is stunted; their perspective is myopic. This is the reason that our Torah leaders are referred to as "einei ha'am," the eyes of the nation.