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Chagigah Daf 16

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamah of

Tzvi Gershon Ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o”h

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 had stated that Rabbi Akiva entered Pardes; he ascended in peace and he left in peace. Upon him, it is written: *Draw me, we will run after you.* And Rabbi Akiva as well, the ministering angels sought to push him away; but the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: Let this elder be, for he is worthy to avail himself of My honor.

The Gemora asks: What verse did he expound (so that he knew not to look towards the Place of the Divine Presence)?

Rabbah bar Rav Huna said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: It is written: *and Hashem approached with some of the holy myriads*, which is interpreted to mean that He is a sign amongst His myriads (indicating that he should not look in that direction).

Alternatively, Rabbi Avahu says, it is written: *dagul meirvavah*, surrounded with myriad angels, which is interpreted to mean that He was distinguished in His myriads.

Rish Lakish provides another source for Rabbi Akiva being protected is because it is said: *HaShem, Master of Legions, is His Name.* This is interpreted to mean that He is a master amongst His hosts.

Alternatively, Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that this is derived from the verse that

states: *“HaShem is not in the wind!”* [Eliyahu was told.] *After the wind came an earthquake. “Hashem is not in the earthquake.” After the earthquake came a fire. “Hashem is not in the fire.” After the fire came a still, thin sound.* [Prior to that it is said] *and behold HaShem was passing.* (16a)

The Gemora cites a braisa: Demons are akin to angels in three matters and they are akin to humans in three matters. Demons have wings, they fly from one end of the world to the other, and they know what is destined to be in the future.

The Gemora interrupts: Can it possibly be that they know the future (it cannot, for even angels do not know the future)?

Rather it means that they hear from behind the barrier like the angels. The demons are akin to humans as they eat and drink, procreate, and die like humans. (16a)

The braisa continues: Man is akin to the angels in three matters and man is akin to animals in three matters. Man is akin to angels in that he has intelligence, he walks upright, and he speaks the Holy Tongue. Man is akin to animals in that he eats and drinks, procreates, and emits excrement like an animal. (16a)

The Mishna had stated: Whoever analyzes the following four things, it would have been better if he

never entered this world: [What is above and below (*the Heavenly angels*), what is before and after (*beyond the universe*).]

The Gemora asks: It is understandable why one should not analyze what is above, below and after the world; but regarding what was before, what is the concern? Whatever was, was (already; and what difference would there be if he would inquire about it)?

Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elozar both said: Discussing what occurred prior to the creation of the world is akin to a king who instructed his servants to build a palace on a dung heap. Subsequent to the building, the king does not want to be reminded of the dung heap. (16a)

The Mishnah stated that if one does not concern himself with the honor of his Creator, then it is better that he had not been created.

Rabbi Abba explains that this refers to one who gazes at a rainbow. Rav Yosef maintains that this refers to one who sins privately.

The Gemora cites the Scriptural source proving that one who gazes at a rainbow impinges on the honor of his Creator. It is written: *As the appearance of the rainbow that is in the cloud in a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brilliance all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Hashem.*

Rav Yosef had said that this refers to one who sins privately. This is in accordance with what Rabbi Yitzchak said, for Rabbi Yitzchak said: One who sins in private is akin to one who has pushed the fete, so to speak, of the Divine Presence, as it is written: *Thus said Hashem: the Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.*

The Gemora asks: But Rabbi Il'a the Elder said that if one sees that his Evil Inclination is overwhelming him, he should travel to a place where he is not known and he should don black clothing and act as he wishes. This statement implies that sinning in private is not so terrible. The Gemora resolves this contradiction by answering that if one can subdue his Evil Inclination and does not, it is as if he has pushed away, so to speak, the feet of the Divine Presence. One who cannot subdue his Evil Inclination, however, is better off sinning in private. (16a)

One who gazes at a rainbow, at the Nasi, who is the Jewish leader, and one who gazes at the kohanim when the Bais HaMikdash was standing and the kohanim uttered the Ineffable Name, his eyesight will become dimmed. (16a)

The stones and beams of ones house will testify against him for the sins that he commits in private. Furthermore, ones soul will testify against him, and even the two angels who normally escort a person will testify against him. Ones own limbs will also testify against him. (16a)

The Mishna returns to the subject regarding the sacrifices which are brought during the festival. Yosef ben Yoezer maintains that although one may offer a sacrifice during the festival, he may not perform semichah, leaning on the animal. The reason for this prohibition is because leaning on the animal is deemed to be a *shevus* (similar to riding on an animal), a rabbinic injunction, and one cannot violate a rabbinical injunction on the festival. Yosef ben Yochanan holds that one can perform the semichah during the festival.

Yehoshua ben Perachya maintains that one should not perform semichah during the festival. Nitai Hearbeili



holds that one can perform the semichah during the festival.

Yehudah ben Tabbai maintains that one should not perform semichah during the festival. Shimon ben Shetach holds that one can perform the semichah during the festival.

Shemaye maintains that one can perform semichah during the festival. Avtalyon holds that one should not perform the semichah during the festival.

Hillel and Menachem did not argue regarding this matter.

Menachem left the Sanhedrin and Shammai replaced him. Shammai maintains that one should not perform semichah during the festival. Hillel holds that one can perform the semichah during the festival.

The first of each of the aforementioned pairs was the Nasi and the second one was the Av Beis Din (the head of the court). (16a – 16b)

The Gemora cites a braisa: The three Tannaim of the first pairs who said not to perform semichah and the two from the last pairs who said not to perform semichah were the Nesiim. The second one listed from all these pairs were the Av Beis Din. These are the words of Rabbi Meir. The Chachamim said: Yehudah ben Tabbai was the Av Beis Din and Shimon ben Shetach was the Nasi. (*The Mishna was going according to Rabbi Meir.*) (16b)

The Gemora asks: Who is the Tanna of the following braisa? Yehudah ben Tabbai said: I shall see consolation if I did not execute a single *eid zomeim* (when witnesses offer testimony and other witnesses refute them

claiming that the first set of witnesses could not possibly testify regarding the alleged crime since they were together with them at a different location at the precise time that they claimed to witness the crime somewhere else; The Torah teaches us that we believe the second pair in this instance; the first witnesses are called "*eidim zomemim*" "scheming witnesses," and they receive the exact punishment that they endeavored to have meted out to the one they accused) in order to disprove the viewpoint maintained by the Sadducees who held that *eidim zomemim* are not executed unless the defendant was executed because of them (according to the Chachamim, this law only applies as long as the accused was not punished already).

Shimon ben Shatach heard of this and told him: I shall see consolation if you did not execute an innocent person since we have learned that *eidim zomemim* can only be punished if both of the witnesses are found to be lying and not only one.

Yehudah ben Tabbai immediately accepted upon himself never to issue a ruling unless he was in the presence of Shimon ben Shetach (*in order to be corrected by him*).

For all the remaining days of Yehudah ben Tabbai's life, he would prostrate himself on the grave of the person that he had mistakenly killed (*begging for forgiveness*). His voice could be heard but the people thought that it was the cry of the man whose blood he had innocently shed. Yehudah ben Tabbai said: I will prove it to you that it is my voice, for after I die, you will not hear the crying any longer. Rav Acha the son of Rava said to Rav Ashi: Perhaps the crying was from the one who was executed, but after Yehudah ben Tabbai died, he



stopped crying because he was appeased or because the Heavenly Court administered justice against him.

It is evident from this incident that initially Yehudah ben Tabbai issued halachic rulings even while Shimon ben Shetach was near him. The Gemora asks: This is understandable according to Rabbi Meir who maintains that Yehudah ben Tabbai was the Nasi since the Nasi is not required to consult with the Av Beis Din prior to issuing a ruling; however, according to the Chachamim, wouldn't it be considered disrespectful for the Av Beis Din (Yehudah ben Tabbai) to issue halachic rulings without consulting with Shimon ben Shetach (the Nasi). This proves that the author of the braisa is indeed Rabbi Meir.

The Gemora rejects this proof and states that Yehudah ben Tabbai (the Av Beis Din) never issued rulings without Shimon ben Shetach; Yehudah ben Tabbai resolved that he would never even join in a ruling unless Shimon ben Shetach was present. (16b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*** The Gemora states that the demons can hear what is being announced from behind the Partition in the same manner as the ministering angels.

The question is asked: If they can hear from behind the Partition, what is the purpose of the Partition?

A possible answer is that it is there in order to prevent them from seeing.

*** Why was the Satmar Rebbe extremely particular that the beds should be placed next to a wall and not in the middle of the bedroom, even the beds that children sleep on?

*** The Gemora states: If a person feels that his evil inclination is overpowering him, he should travel to a place where he will not be recognized, dress in black and there he could do whatever his heart desires; this way, he will not be desecrating Hashem's name.

How should this Gemora be understood?

Tosfos cites two explanations: There is the literal interpretation of the Gemora and also that these activities will result in deflating his desires and will ultimately prevent him from sinning.

*** The Gemora states: The stones located in a person's house will testify against him if he sins; the beams of his house will testify against him. The Chachamim say: His soul will testify against him. Rabbi Zreika said: The two ministering angels that accompany a person will testify against him. Others say: A person's limbs will testify against him.

Are all these opinions arguing with each other? What is the significance of all these testimonies?