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Rosh Hashanah Daf 18

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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

OVERTURNING A DECREE

The Gemora cites a Baraisa that it is actually a dispute among the Tannaim if an individual’s decree can be reversed through repentance or prayer. Rabbi Meir used to say that if there were two people that were sick with an indistinguishable illness, or similarly, if there were two people who came before a judge with the identical case brought against them, and one patient recovered and the other did not, and one was saved (from capital punishment) and the other was not. [How can this be explained?] Why did this one leave his sickbed and this one did not leave? Why was this one saved and this one was not? He answered that one prayed and was answered and one prayed and was not answered. But why was this one answered and this one was not answered? This one prayed a complete prayer (with a proper concentration) and was therefore answered and this one did not pray a complete answer, so he was not answered. Rabbi Elozar answers that one case was before the decree was issued and the other was afterwards. Rabbi Yitzchak said that calling out to Hashem will always be helpful even after the decree was issued. (18a1)

DECREE ON A COMMUNITY

But can the final decree on a community be rescinded? Have we not one verse which says: Wash your heart from wickedness, and it is written: Even if you would wash with niter and use much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me? Is it not that the one text applies before the final decree is pronounced and the other after? — No; both apply after the final decree has been pronounced, yet there is no contradiction; in the one case the final sentence has been accompanied by an oath, in the other it has not been accompanied by an oath. This accords with the dictum of Rav Shmuel bar Ami. For Rav Shmuel bar Ami, or, as some say Rav

Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonasan: How do we know that a final decree accompanied by an oath is never rescinded? Because it says: Therefore, I have sworn concerning the House of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s House shall not be atoned for with a sacrifice nor with a minchah offering.

Rava said: The iniquity shall not be atoned for with a sacrifice nor with a minchah offering, but it can be atoned for with the study of Torah. Abaye says: The iniquity shall not be atoned for with a sacrifice nor with a minchah offering, but it can be atoned for with the study of Torah and with acts of kindness.

Rabbah and Abaye were from the House of Eli. Rabbah who devoted himself to Torah study lived forty years; Abaye who devoted himself both to Torah study and to acts of kindness lived sixty years.

The Gemora cites a Baraisa: There was a family in Jerusalem whose members used to die at the age of eighteen. They came and told Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai. He said to them, “Perhaps you are of the family of Eli, to whom it was said: and all those raised in your house shall die young men? Go and study the Torah and you may live.” They went and studied the Torah and lived, and they used to call that family the family of Rabban Yochanan after his name. (18a1 – 18a2)

Rav Shmuel bar Inia said in the name of Rav: From where do we know that the final decree on a community is never sealed? – It is not sealed! But it is written: yet your iniquity is marked before Me? Rather, even if it was sealed, it may be torn up? Because it says: as is Hashem, our God, whenever we call upon Him. The Gemora asks: But it is written: Seek Hashem while he may be found (indicating that there are

times when He cannot be found to overturn a decree)? The Gemora answers: This verse speaks of an individual, whereas the other refers to a community.

The Gemora asks: When can an individual find God? Rabbah bar Avuha says that during the Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.¹

And it came to pass after the ten days that Hashem smote Naval. The Gemora asks: What is the significance of these ten days here? Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: They (the ten-day delay of his punishment) correspond to the ten morsels of food which Naval gave to the servants of David. Rav Nachman said in the name of Rabbah bar Avuha: These are the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. (18a1 – 18a3)

JUDGED SINGLE FILE

The Mishnah had stated that on Rosh Hashanah, the entire world passes in front of Hashem to be judged like “bnei maron.” [The Gemora cites three opinions for the meaning of “bnei maron.”] Here [in Bavel], they explained it to mean that the people being judged are compared to lambs (passing through a narrow gate as they are being counted for the tithing). Rish Lakish states that the analogy is to the elevates paths in the Maron area (people traveling down a narrow path that has a sharp drop on both sides; they need to walk in single file). Rav Yehudah says in the name of Shmuel that they are compared to the soldiers of Dovid (as they were being counted single file as they prepared for battle). Rabbah bar Bar Chanah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: [All the same] they are all examined with one glance. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: We also have learned this in our Mishnah: He that fashions their hearts together, Who understands all their deeds. What does this mean? Shall I say that it means this, that [God] has created everyone and unites all their hearts together? But we see that this is not so! Rather; what it means is this: ‘The Creator sees their hearts together and understands all their deeds’. (18a3 – 18a4)

¹ Hashem is available to listen to an individual crying out to Him and will overturn an evil decree previously issued.

MESENTERS SENT OUT

The Mishnah states that at the beginning of six months, messengers would be sent out to notify the Jewish communities as to which day was determined to be the first of the month. They were sent out in the month of Nissan because of the festival of Pesach. At the beginning of Av, they were sent out because of the fast. Messengers were sent in the month of Elul on the account of Rosh Hashanah. They were sent out during Tishrei because of Yom Kippur and Sukkos. Messengers were sent out during Kislev because of Chanukah and during Adar because of Purim. During the times that the Beis Hamikdash was standing, they would send out messengers for Iyar as well because of Pesach Sheini (for those that were not able to bring the Korban Pesach on Pesach). (18a4 – 18a5)

VOLUNTARY FASTS

The Gemora asks: Why were there no messengers sent out for Tammuz and Teves due to the fast days contained in those months? The Gemora quotes Rav Chana bar Bizna in the name of Rabbi Shimon Chasida who cites a verse in Zecharya, “The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth will be to the House of Yehudah for joy and for happiness.” It is called a fast and it is called joy and happiness! [Which one is it?] Rather, at a time when there is peace (when the Beis HaMikdash was standing), they will be for joy and happiness, but when there is no peace (when it is not standing), they will be fast days.

Rav Pappa said (explaining the verse differently): This is what the verse means: At a time when there is peace (when the idolaters are not ruling over the Jewish people), they will be for joy and happiness, but at a time when there is a governmental decree (of persecution against the Jewish people), they will be fast days. And if there is no governmental decree and there is no peace, if they want to fast they can, and if they want, they are not required to fast.



[Accordingly, there was no need for messengers to be sent out, for the fasts were not obligatory.]

The Gemora asks: If so, the same should apply by the Ninth of Av as well!? Rav Pappa answers that the fast of the Ninth of Av was different, for calamities were repeated on it, for the master said: On the ninth of Av, the Temple was destroyed the first time and the second time, and Beitar was taken, and the city (Yerushalayim) was plowed up. (18a5 – 18b2)

FOUR FASTS

The Gemora cites a Baraisa: Rabbi Shimon said: There were four verses that Rabbi Akiva would expound, but I would not expound like him: [The verse in Zecharya states: “The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth will be to the House of Yehudah for joy and for happiness.” Rabbi Akiva understands the verse as follows:] “The fast of the fourth” is referring to the ninth of Tammuz, since on that day the city of Yerushalayim was breached, as it says: On the fourth month on the ninth of the month the famine was critical in the city, so that there was no food for the people of the land, and a breach was made in the city. And why is it called the “fourth”? - Since Tammuz is the fourth month from Nissan. “The fast of the fifth” is referring to the Ninth of Av, since on that day the Beis Hamikdosh was destroyed, and why is it called the “fifth”? - Since Av is the fifth month from Nissan. “The fast of the seventh” is referring to the Third of Tishrei, since on that day Gedalya was murdered. Who killed him? Yishmael the son of Nethaniah killed him; and [the fact that a fast was instituted on this day] shows that the death of the righteous is equivalent to the burning of the House of our God. And why is it called the “seventh”? - Since Tishrei is the seventh month from Nissan. “The fast of the tenth” is referring to the Tenth of Teves, since on that day the Babylonian King began to surround Yerushalayim, as it says: And the word of Hashem came to me in the ninth year in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, saying, “Son of man, write for yourself the name of the day, this very day; the king of Babylonia has begun to besiege Jerusalem. And why is it called the “tenth”?

- Since Teves is the tenth month from Nissan. [It might be asked], shouldn't this have been mentioned first? Why then was it mentioned in this place [last]? So as to arrange the months in their proper order. I, however, [continued Rabbi Shimon], do not explain thus. Rather, “The fast of the tenth” is referring to the fifth of Teves, since on that day the news came to the exile that the city of Yerushalayim was sacked, as it says: And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, that one who had escaped out of Jerusalem came to me saying, “The city has been sacked.” And they made that day of ‘hearing’ equivalent to the day of the actual burning.

The Baraisa continues: And my words seem more reasonable than the words of Rabbi Akiva, for I make the first (fast mentioned by the prophet) first (chronologically) and the last (fast mentioned by the prophet) last, whereas he makes the first last and the last first. He, however, counts according to the order of months, whereas I count according to the order of the calamities. (18b2 – 18b3)

MEGILLAS TAANIS

[Megillas Taanis is a scroll that was written by Chananya close to end of the second Beis Hamikdosh. It contains in it a compilation of dates that were regarded to be festivals and therefore fasting was prohibited on those days. There is a dispute in the Gemora if those halachos still apply.]

It was stated: Rav and Rabbi Chanina hold that the Megillas Taanis has been abrogated, whereas Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi hold that the Megillas Taanis has not been abrogated.

Rav and Rabbi Chanina hold that the Megillas Taanis has been abrogated, interpreting the words of the prophet as follows: When there is peace, these days shall be for joy and happiness, but when there is no peace, they shall be fasts, and the days mentioned in the Megillas Taanis are to be treated the same as those days. Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi hold that the Megillas Taanis has not been abrogated, maintaining that it was those others (mentioned

by the prophet) that the Merciful One made dependent on the existence of the Temple, but these (mentioned in Megillas Taanis) remain unaffected.

Rav Kahana asks from a Baraisa: There was an incident in Lod and they were compelled to decree a fast during the days of Chanukah. Rabbi Eliezer went and took a bath and Rabbi Yehoshua went to get a haircut, indicating publicly that people shouldn't fast. They announced that anyone who fasted on that day is required to fast again in order to repent for fasting on Chanukah.² Rav Yosef answers that Chanukah is different since there is a mitzvah (of lighting the Menorah) connected to it.

Abaya asked: Let Chanukah be abrogated, and its mitzvah will then be abrogated as well!? Rather, Rav Yosef answers: Chanukah is different, for the miracle is publicized to all based on the mitzvah of lighting the menorah, and therefore it would be improper to abolish it.

Rav Acha bar Huna asks by citing another incident: The Greeks had decreed that the Jews could not mention Hashem's name. After the Greeks were defeated by the Chashmanoim, they established that Hashem's name should be written on all contracts. The Chachamim heard about this and stopped this because they were concerned that when the borrower will repay the debt, the unnecessary document will be thrown in the garbage. It was the third day of Tishrei when the Chachamim abolished this enactment and they made that day into a festival. The Gemora asks: If it should enter your mind that Megillas Taanis was abrogated, the first ones were already abrogated, is it logical to assume that they would add a new festival? The Gemora answers that this incident occurred in the times when the Beis Hamikdosh was still standing and everyone agrees that the Megillas Taanis still applied.

² The Gemora is attempting to prove from this incident that Megillas Taanis is still in effect since Chanukah is one of the days listed there.

The Gemora questions the necessity of making a festival on this day since the third of Tishrei was the day Gedalya was murdered and we learned previously that all the days of calamity became days of joy during the second Beis Hamikdosh. Rav answers that it was necessary to establish the third of Tishrei as a festival in order to prohibit fasting the day before. (This was done in order to prevent people from fasting on the festival itself.)

The Gemora asks that it is prohibited to fast on the second of Tishrei anyway since it is the day after Rosh Chodesh. The Gemora answers that Rosh Chodesh being Biblical does not need any strengthening and therefore the day afterwards would not be prohibited if not for the fact that it is the day before the festival of the third. For it was taught in a Baraisa: These days which are mentioned in Megillas Taanis are forbidden [for fasting on] along with both the day before them and the day after them. As to Sabbaths and Yomin Tovim, they themselves are forbidden, but the days before and after them are permitted. What is the difference between one set and the other? The one set are ordained by the Torah, and the words of the Torah require no reinforcement, whereas the other are Rabbinical ordinances, and Rabbinical ordinances require reinforcement.

The Gemora asks that the second of Tishrei should be forbidden from fasting anyway since it is the day before Gedalya was murdered. The Gemora answers that since the fast of Gedalya was written in the Prophets, it is similar to a Biblical decree that does not need to be strengthened. (18b3 – 19a2)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

NINE DAYS OF CHANUKAH

The Mishnah states that at the beginning of six months, messengers would be sent out to notify the Jewish communities as to which day was determined to be the first



of the month. They were sent out in the month of Nissan because of the festival of Pesach. At the beginning of Av, they were sent out because of the fast. Messengers were sent in the month of Elul on the account of Rosh Hashanah. They were sent out during Tishrei because of Yom Kippur and Sukkos. Messengers were sent out during Kislev because of Chanukah and during Adar because of Purim.

A question is brought down in the sefer Poseach Shaar. If messengers were required in the months of Kislev and Adar because of Chanukah and Purim, shouldn't there be a halacha that in the faraway places, where the messengers cannot reach in due time, that there should be an extra day of Chanukah and Purim because of the doubt as to the correct day? this is indeed the reason why the other festivals have an extra day. It would emerge that there should be nine days of Chanukah and two days of Purim nowadays in the Diaspora.

Abudraham writes that this is only required on the Biblical festivals but we do not have this stringency on Chanukah and Purim which is only Rabbinic.

The Mordechai states that in the Meggillah it is written "V'lo yaavor," the meggilah should not be recited on any other day but the fourteenth of Adar. Sefer Dovev Meisharim (1:15) asks on this that the verse would only answer why the meggilah is not recited on any other day but there should be an extra day for all the other obligations of Purim.

Minchas Chinuch writes that in the days that Rosh Chodesh was determined through the witnesses and Beis Din, there actually was nine days of Chanukah in the faraway places. He states further that in the future when the Beis Hamikdosh will be built, there will also be nine days. Nowadays, that we are experts in the correct days of the month, there is no necessity to institute an extra day since it is only Rabbinic.

We can answer the famous question of the Beis Yosef according to the Minchas Chinuch. He asks that there should be seven days of Chanukah and not eight because the miracle

of the oil was only for seven days. We can answer that the reason there is an eighth day is because of the doubt as to when Rosh Chodesh was.

INFORMING THE PUBLIC

The Mishnah states that at the beginning of six months, messengers would be sent out to notify the Jewish communities as to which day was determined to be the first of the month. They were sent out in the month of Nissan because of the festival of Pesach. At the beginning of Av, they were sent out because of the fast. Messengers were sent in the month of Elul on the account of Rosh Hashanah. They were sent out during Tishrei because of Yom Kippur and Sukkos. Messengers were sent out during Kislev because of Chanukah and during Adar because of Purim.

Pnei Yehoshua questions the necessity of the messengers at all according to the opinion of those Tanaim who maintain that there is always a four day difference between the day that the festival falls out in one year and the day that the festival occurs in the following year. Since it is known which month will be thirty days and which month will be twenty-nine days, what is the purpose of the messengers? He answers that even according to that viewpoint, there are times that Beis Din will be forced to deviate from the regular cycle and change the amount of days in the month due to the seasons or because of a leap year. It is therefore still necessary to send out the messengers in the beginning of every month.

Reb Leib Malin answers this question differently with a novel approach. There is a halacha based on pesukim in the Torah that Rosh Chodesh can only be established through Beis Din. There is a secondary halacha, based on that, which teaches us that informing the public when Rosh Chodesh was also must be accomplished through Beis Din. He learns this from the language of the Rambam in Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh (1:7). It emerges that even if it is known precisely when Rosh Chodesh was, there is nevertheless an obligation for Beis Din to notify the public.



Question from a Subscriber

The Mishnah lists six months for which messengers were sent out – for reasons ranging from “major holidays” like Pesach & Sukkos to “minor holidays” like Chanukah. The Gemara then asks about Tammuz & Teves since they have minor fasts, and the conclusion is that during the times of the Beis HaMikdash, those were only optional. But what about Shevat? We learned not that long ago that Tu B’Shevat is the New Year for the trees (for maaser purposes, I believe). So wouldn’t people need to know exactly when Tu B’Shevat is so that they handle their trees properly? Tithing the crops is a Biblical obligation, so I would think that this would take even higher precedence than say Kislev.

DAILY MASHAL

DAYS OF FASTING OR DAYS OF JOY

"Thus spoke Hashem," says the Prophet Zecharia (Zecharia 8:19) "the fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth will be for the House of Yehuda holidays of joy and celebration." "How can the same days be both days of mournful fasting and of joyful celebration?" asks the Gemara. The answer given is that when Jews enjoy peace - when they have the Beit Hamikdash - these days that were fast days after the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash will be days of celebration in which it is forbidden to fast or eulogize. But when they lack that peace - when the second Beit Hamikdash will no longer stand - they will revert to the status of fast days.

This is the biblical and Talmudic background for the four days in the year when Jews fast in mourning for the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. The fast of the fourth month is the 17th of Tammuz when the walls of Jerusalem were breached by the Romans; the fast of the fifth is the 9th of Av when both the first and second Beit Hamikdash were destroyed; the fast of the seventh is the 3rd of Tishrei when the leader of the Jewish remnant in Eretz Yisrael, Gedalia ben Achikam, was assassinated; and the fast of the tenth month is the 10th of Tevet when the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem began.

Maharsha wonders at the Gemara's problem with the same date being described both as an occasion for mournful fasting and joyous celebration. Don't they refer to two different stages of history - the exile period of Zecharia when they still fasted for the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash and the joy-inspiring future of a rebuilt Beit Hamikdash?

The explanation, says Rav Mendel Weinbach zt”l from Ohr Sameach, is that our Sages were troubled by the implication in the prophet's words that once these days would become days of celebration with the building of the second Beit Hamikdash they would remain so forever. We know that this is not so, because the destruction of that Beit Hamikdash returned these days to the status of fast days. The gemara therefore must resolve this by explaining that mourning or joy was at the outset made conditional on whether there is peace.

But why is the term peace used to describe the existence of the Beit Hamikdash and the lack of peace its destruction? Here the Maharsha calls our attention to the closing words of the above mentioned passage "and you shall love truth and peace." The second Beit Hamikdash was destroyed, say our Sages (Mesechta Yoma 9b) because of the sin of unwarranted hatred of one Jew toward another. If there will be peace amongst Jews, says the prophet, there will be a Beit Hamikdash and you will celebrate these days. But if there shall be no such peace, the Beit Hamikdash will be destroyed and they will be days of mournful fasting.