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Taanis Daf 19

Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler, Kollel Boker Beachwood

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**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 Mishna teaches that there are certain circumstances in which we do not call for fasting that becomes progressively more severe, but rather we immediately declare a series of fasts with the strictest guidelines. Two cases listed in the Mishna are crops that grew strangely and if forty days passed between the first rain (in its proper time) and the second rain. The reason for this is because these are an affliction of food shortage. If rain fell for the crops and not for the trees, for the trees and not for the crops or it rained for both but not enough to fill the pits that were used for drinking water, we call out immediately. Also included would be a situation where there is rain in all communities but one and when a city is hit by plague or is surrounded by a non-Jewish enemy.

The Mishna proceeds to list cases of disasters where people everywhere are obligated to cry out because there is a good possibility that these disasters will spread. For plagues that ruin the grain, a severe drought that tends to cause the grain to yellow, locusts, wild animals and armies that are passing through we call out everywhere because these catastrophes travel to other areas.

The Mishna cites an incident where the elders went down from Yerushalayim to their cities to declare a communal fast because they saw the size of an oven mouth of plague damage on some grain in the city of Ashkelon. They also declared a fast due to an incident when wolves devoured two children on the other side of the Jordan River. Rabbi

Yosi maintains that the fast was declared because the wolves were seen in the city.

The Mishna continues by listing cases that are so severe, that we would even call out on Shabbos. If a city was surrounded by gentiles, a river threatening to flood the fields and a ship that is in danger of sinking; we would call out even on Shabbos. Rabbi Yosi disagrees and maintains that they would call out for help but not in prayer.

The Mishna states that we call out for any catastrophe that threatens the city except for an overabundance of rain. The Mishnah relates the story of Choni HaMa’agel. In the course of a year of drought, the Chachamim looked to Choni HaMa’agel and asked him to daven for rain. He instructed the people to bring their ovens inside in order that do not dissolve in the rain. When his first pleas did not produce rain, he drew a circle around himself and swore to Hashem that he would not leave that spot until Hashem showed compassion on His children by ending the drought.

At first, rain began to trickle, and Choni insisted on rain that fill the water holes. When angry rains began to fall, Choni demanded rains of mercy and blessing. Finally, the rains fell until flooding began, and the people were compelled to leave Yerushalayim for the Temple Mount. They turned to Choni and asked him to pray that the rain

should stop, which he was reluctant to do. He told them to go and see if the stone which was used to announce lost articles has been covered by water. (This stone was so high, that if it was covered, he would have prayed for the rain to cease.)

The story concludes with the words of Shimon ben Shetach who said that Choni's words to Hashem were so presumptuous that he deserved to be excommunicated. But he cannot be punished since he has such a close, personal relationship with Hashem, that He fulfills your requests like a father to a son even after the son sins towards the father.

The Mishna discusses whether a fast should be completed if they were answered in middle of the fast. If rain began to fall before sunrise, they are not obligated to complete the fast but if rain began to fall after sunrise, they should complete the fast. Rabbi Eliezer disagrees and maintains that if rain began to fall before midday, they are not obligated to complete the fast but if rain began to fall after midday, they should complete the fast.

The Mishna concludes with an incident that seems to support Rabbi Eliezer's viewpoint. The Chachamim declared a fast in Lod and it began to rain before midday. Rabbi Tarfon said to them that they should do eat, drink and declare a festival. They went out, ate, drank and made the day into a holiday and returned to the synagogues in the afternoon to recite Hallel Hagadol. (18b)

The Gemora cites a braisa which states that they begin to fast if there is a delay in the third rains and it is apparent from our Mishna that they would begin to fast even if

there is a delay in the first rains. Rav Yehuda explains that the Mishna is referring to a case where it rained in the proper time, however they planted seeds but nothing grew or they grew strangely; that is when they cry out immediately. (18b)

Rav Nachman distinguishes between a severe famine and a case where there is merely a food shortage. When one particular city doesn't have food but they can have food delivered from another city through ships on a river, this is regarded as a food shortage and not a famine. If food is in short supply in one city and must be imported from another city by land route with donkeys, this condition is regarded as a famine since only minimal amount of food will be delivered. (18b – 19a)

The Mishna had stated that if rain fell for the crops and not for the trees, for the trees and not for the crops or it rained for both but not enough to fill the pits that were used for drinking water, we call out immediately. The Gemora explains each case. Light rain will be beneficial for crops but not for trees. Heavy rains will be beneficial for trees but not for crops. Heavy and light rain came but not enough to fill the water holes. There is an additional case listed in a braisa. If there was enough rain to fill the water holes but not for the trees and crops, we would cry out immediately. The Gemora explains this case that the rain descended in a heavy downpour which wasn't beneficial for the trees or the crops. (19a)

The Gemora cites a braisa detailing the times of the year at which different water shortages become serious enough to necessitate fasting and crying out. If Pesach time came and there was insufficient water for the trees, we would cry out. If Sukkos time came and there was insufficient water to fill up the water holes (used for the

animals and irrigation), we would cry out. Anytime there is not enough water to drink, we call out immediately. We cry out only inside the effected location. There are certain diseases that we would cry out for if they cause death. Certain locusts that generally come in large numbers, we cry out even if only a few were sighted. (19a)

There is a braisa cited that presents a dispute regarding crying out on account of the trees during the Shemitha year. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel maintains that we would cry out because the fruits of the tree offer sustenance for the poor people. If there is a shortage of drinking water, we cry out even during Shemitha. (19a)

Rabbi Elozar ben Parta said that since the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, rain does not fall liberally. Some years there might be an abundance of rain and some years the rain that falls will be inadequate. Some years the rain will fall in the appropriate time and in some years it will not fall in its proper time.

A year that rain descends in its appropriate time is compared to a servant who received his weekly portion of grain from his master on Sunday and thereby has sufficient time to bake the bread so he can eat it on Shabbos. A year that the rain does not descend in its appropriate time is compared to a servant who received his weekly portion of grain from his master on Friday and thereby does not has sufficient time to bake the bread so he can eat it on Shabbos.

### **Nakdimon ben Gurion**

The entire Jewish people were in Yerushalayim for the festival, but there was no water to drink. A Jewish leader, Nakdimon ben Gurion, approached a Roman nobleman who lived there.

"Lend me twelve wells of water for the people," he told him, "and I will replace it with another twelve wells of water [i.e. Hashem will replenish them for you;] and if not, I will pay you twelve bars of silver."

The nobleman agreed, and they set a date by which time the water must be returned. That day came, and still no rain had fallen. That morning the nobleman sent a messenger to Nakdimon ben Gurion.

"Send me my water or my silver," he commanded.

"I still have time. The whole day is still mine," Nakdimon ben Gurion sent back.

At noontime, he again sent a messenger. "Give me my water or my money," he ordered.

"I still have time," Nakdimon ben Gurion sent back.

In the late afternoon, he again sent a messenger. "Give me my water or my money," he ordered.

"I still have time," Nakdimon ben Gurion sent back.

The nobleman had a good laugh on hearing this. "Could it be," he chuckled, "that the whole year no rain falls, and now enough rain to fill my wells will fall?" He went to the local bathhouse joyously rubbing his hands at the thought of twelve bars of silver.

At the same time, Nakdimon ben Gurion entered the *Beis HaMikdash* anxiously. He wrapped himself in his *tallis* and stood in prayer.



"*Ribono shel Olam*, You know that neither for my honor, nor the honor of my father's house did I do this. I did it all for Your honor alone, that the Jewish people may have water for the festival."

Immediately, the skies filled with clouds and a great rain fell, until the twelve wells overflowed with water. The nobleman hurriedly left the bathhouse, bumping into Nakdimon ben Gurion as he left the *Beis HaMikdash*.

"Give me my change for the additional water you received," Nakdimon ben Gurion said to the nobleman.

"I know that Hashem turned the world over only for you," the nobleman answered, "but it won't help you. You still owe me those twelve bars of silver, for that rain fell after sunset, and it's all mine."

Hearing this, Nakdimon ben Gurion quickly returned to the *Beis HaMikdash*, rewrapped himself in his *tallis* and stood in prayer.

"*Ribono shel Olam*, let them know that we are Your friends in this world," he begged. The clouds then scattered, and the sun shone.

"Were it not for that sun shining through," the nobleman groaned, "that money would have been mine."

"Buni was his real name and not Nakdimon," the rabbis taught. "He was called Nakdimon since the sun pierced [*"nikdera"*] through the clouds for him.

### INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

#### When to Recite Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGeshem

BY RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

**No definitive Halacha LeMa'aseh conclusions should be applied to practical situations based on THIS Shiur.**

When Paroh pleads with Moshe to pray to Hashem that He should stop the plague of Barad, hail, Moshe says that when he leaves the city, he will spread out his hands to Hashem, and the plague will indeed end (Shemos 9:29). The Pardes Yosef on this Posuk (Ibid.) takes note of the fact that Moshe never says that he will actually ask Hashem to stop the hail, just that he will stretch out his hands. When he does approach Hashem (Ibid. Pasuk 33), he indeed never specifically requests that the hail and the rain stop; he merely stretches out his hands and the plague ends. The Pardes Yosef (Ibid.) explains that although Moshe stretched out his hands in prayer, he did not want to ask that there be no more rain or hail, because rain, of course, is generally necessary and beneficial, and it is improper to request that something good should stop, even if there is too much of it. Moshe therefore simply stretched out his hands, trusting Hashem to respond appropriately to his silent prayer.

This idea that one shouldn't ask Hashem to take away something good is found in a Mishnah in Taanis (19a) which describes different communal difficulties and tragedies because of which the Chachomim would declare public fast days, featuring special Tefillos; the Mishnah (Ibid.) states that they would never declare such a fast day if there was too much rain. The Gemara there (22b) explains that this is because it is inappropriate to daven to Hashem because one has too much of a good thing. The Gemara (Ibid.) adds, however, that if the excessive rain is actually damaging or dangerous, then one could daven for it to stop because it is then no longer a good thing. The same Mishnah (Ibid.) then relates the famous story of Choni HaMe'agel who "persuaded" Hashem to cause the rains to fall by "threatening" to remain standing in the circle he drew on the ground until it would rain, which it then did, coming down at one point with such force that Choni had to request that it fall in the proper measure. The Gemara (Ibid. 23a) elaborates on this story, saying that when the rain fell very hard, Choni's students asked him to daven that it should stop entirely, to which he

responded that he had it by tradition that one doesn't daven because of having too much of a good thing. He solved the problem using only specific and precise language and actions. The Rambam (Hilchos Taaniyos 2:15) and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 576:11 and 577:1) rule in accordance with all of the above.

This issue of not asking Hashem to hold back something good even when we don't need it is relevant to us today concerning our practice regarding the last recitation of Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGeshem in the spring. Based on the Mishnah at the beginning of Taanis (2a), the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 114:1) writes that we start reciting this phrase in the second Beracha of the Shemoneh Esrei at Mussaf on Shemini Atzeres. The Yerushalmi in Taanis (Perek 1 Halacha 1, 1b), discussing why we wait until Mussaf, quotes a view that an individual should not begin to say it until he has heard it from the Sheliach Tzibbur. The Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Sif 2) accepts this view; the Ramo (Ibid.) adds that prior to the silent Shemoneh Esrei of Mussaf, an announcement is made to begin saying Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGeshem so that the Tzibbur will say it then too.

This same Mishnah in Taanis (Ibid.) then indicates that we stop saying Mashiv HaRuach at Mussaf on the first day of Pesach, and the Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Sif 1) rules accordingly. Here, however, no mention is made of any announcements not to say Mashiv HaRuach any longer. In fact, the Ramo (Ibid Sif 3) writes that the Tzibbur does indeed say it in the silent Shemoneh Esrei of Mussaf; only the Chazzan omits it in the Chazoras HaShatz, and the Tzibbur, hearing the Chazzan's omission, then leaves it out starting with Minchah. The Taz (Ibid. Sif Katan 9) explains that this is because any announcement not to say this phrase would be potentially confusing. The Magen Avraham (Ibid. Sif Katan 8) and the Be'er Heitev (Ibid. Sif Katan 5), however, explain that this is really because an announcement not to daven for rain would be like davening that Hashem should hold back something which

is generally a Beracha, and this is inappropriate. Elsewhere, the Magen Avraham (Ibid. Siman 488 Sif Katan 4) actually quotes the aforementioned Gemara in Taanis (Ibid.) which says that one shouldn't daven to Hashem because one has too much rain as the source for this practice not to announce that people should stop saying Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGeshem.

This idea may relate to an interesting question. Why do we wait on the first day of Pesach until Mussaf to stop saying it? Why not stop already the night before, at Maariv? The Yerushalmi cited above (Ibid.) discusses this question regarding when to start saying Mashiv HaRuach on Shemini Atzeres, and explains that we don't start at Maariv because not everybody is in Shul then. The Rosh in Taanis (Perek 1 Siman 2) elaborates, saying that since people often stay home at night, those in Shul will therefore know to say it, those at home will not, and as a result, different people will be doing different things, which is inconsistent and thus improper. The Rosh (Ibid.) says that this reason actually explains specifically why we don't stop saying Mashiv HaRuach at Maariv on the first night of Pesach; the Ra'avad (Hasagas HaRa'avad on Ba'al HaMaor to Taanis, 1b on the Rif Ot 2) says even more clearly that this reason applies only to the first night of Pesach. In truth, however, this explanation is not needed. If no announcement is made to stop saying Mashiv HaRuach, and the Tzibbur must first hear the Chazzan's omission of it before they omit it, obviously it will be said by the Tzibbur at Maariv.

As for making the change during Shacharis, the same Yerushalmi (Ibid.) presents two reasons for not starting to say Mashiv HaRuach then on Shemini Atzeres. First, people who were not in Shul the night before may think, upon hearing it at Shacharis, that it was to have been said at Maariv too, and will make a mistake in subsequent years. Second, since an announcement to recite it must precede the Shemoneh Esrei, at Shacharis no announcement is possible, because there can be no

interruption at all between the Beracha of Go'al Yisrael and the start of the Shemoneh Esrei; we thus wait until Mussaf. The Magen Avraham (Ibid. Siman 114 Sif Katan 1) cites both these reasons. If, however, no announcement is actually made to stop reciting Mashiv HaRuach anyway, it would indeed be possible to stop at Shacharis on the first day of Pesach, at least during the Chazoras HaShatz, except for the first reason of the Yerushalmi (Ibid.) about causing confusion in subsequent years. The Aruch HaShulchan (Ibid. Sif 4) adds that the Halachos should be consistent; if we start saying Mashiv HaRuach at Mussaf, we should stop saying it at Mussaf as well, especially since there are more people in Shul at Mussaf time who will take note of the change. The Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 2) does write, however, that if one did in fact recite Mashiv HaRuach at Maariv or at Shacharis on Shemini Atzeres, his Shemoneh Esrei is still valid.

It is worth noting that according to the Minhag of those who daven Nusach Sefard (and many who daven Nusach Ashkenaz), Morid HaTal is recited in place of Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGeshem. That begins at Mussaf on the first day of Pesach, and for that, an announcement should be made, as the Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 3) and the Aruch HaShulchan (Ibid. Sif 7) write. All the same explanations would then hold true for both insertions, as the Taz (Ibid. Sif Katan 3) implies. The Kaf HaChaim (Ibid. Ot 14) writes that the special Piyuttim recited by some before the Shemoneh Esrei (or perhaps, we may add, the special tune used by the Chazzan for Kaddish) may constitute a sufficient announcement for the Tzibbur to begin including the new insertion.

### **PUSHING ASIDE PROHIBITIONS IN ATTEMPTING TO SAVE LIVES**

by Zvi Akiva Fleisher

Ch. 21, v. 1: "L'nefesh lo yitamo" – A Kohein is prohibited to defile himself to a dead human body. The Tosfos on Bovo Metzia 114b d.h. "omar lei" asks, "How was Eliyohu

permitted to resuscitate the son of the Ishoh haTzorfosis by coming into contact with him (M'lochim 1:17:21)? Since Eliyohu is a Kohein, he is prohibited to defile himself, as per our verse." Tosfos answers that he was CERTAIN that he would be successful in bringing the child back to life and was therefore permitted by virtue of the rules of "pikuach nefesh," saving one's life. (Technically he didn't save a life, but rather brought about the existence of a life, according to those who say that the child had expired. However, this is also permitted, as per commentators on gemara Shabbos 151b and Yoma 85b who derive from the words, "Tov she'y'chalel Shabbos achas k'dei she'yishmor Shabbosos harbei" that this too is permitted. Rabbi Eliezer Moshe Horovitz, Rov of Pinsk asks that even if Eliyohu wasn't certain, but even in DOUBT whether he would be successful, he should have been permitted to defile himself, as per the gemara Yoma 83a, that "sofik pikuach n'foshos docheh Shabbos."

He answers that the gemara Taanis 19a says that if a Jewish community becomes surrounded by enemies who want to attack, it is permitted to blow trumpets with a signal to outlying Jewish communities to come to their aid in battle even on Shabbos. Rabbi Yosi says that a blast to indicate that they should assemble in prayer for their welfare is not permitted. Rashi explains that this is not permitted, because to transgress the Rabbinical decree of sounding instruments is not cast aside for prayer, which might be ineffective. We see from here that although a call to arms might also not be successful, nonetheless the Rabbis only permitted pushing aside prohibitions for physical help in attempting to save lives, and not spiritual. A Kohein defiling himself to a dead body is even stricter than the Rabbinical prohibition. Therefore Tosfos says that Eliyohu had to be CERTAIN that his prayers would be successful, since his reviving the dead child was through prayer.

Along the same line: The responsa of the Divrei Yechezkel of Shinov has the following question raised: Is it permitted

to send a telegram to a great tzadik on Shabbos, to advise him that someone is gravely ill, so that the tzadik will pray for his well-being? The Shinover Gaon answered that this is not permitted since it is a spiritual approach.

A subject relative to the above is if one may transgress a prohibition to attempt to save one's life through bringing it about by way of a supernatural manner, such as a "seguloh." The basis for this is a Mishneh Shabbos 67a.

## DAILY MASHAL

### Lessons from Ein Yaakov: Nakdimon Supplies Water to the Olei Regel Pilgrims by Rabbi Chanoch Gevhard

It was a drought. The Jews went up to Yerushalayim for the *Sholosh Regolim*, but they had no water to drink. Nakdimon ben Gurion, a wealthy man, saw this and went to the Roman governor who owned water cisterns and said to him, "Lend me twelve of your water cisterns so that I can give them to the pilgrims. I will return all the twelve cisterns of water and if I cannot, I will give you twelve large silver bars."

The silver was worth much more than the water. In fact, it was enough to pay for porters to transport that much water from afar and even have a great deal left over!

The two made up a date by which Nakdimon would have to replenish the cisterns — or pay the debt.

This governor had not dug those cisterns, but had seized them from Jews. He ruled the Jews and he was really responsible for the welfare of the people, but instead, he used the water to luxuriate in baths, while the people were parched for water to drink.

The date arrived, but no rains had yet fallen. That morning, the governor sent a messenger to remind Nakdimon to pay, since it hadn't rained and the basins were dry.

"The day is not yet over," replied Nakdimon. "I still have time."

He sent a messenger again in the afternoon, and received the same reply. The sun was leaning westward when he sent a third reminder, this time demanding, "Send me my money!"

"It's not dark yet," said Nakdimon.

The governor mocked him, saying, "No rain has fallen all year long and now you expect some to fall?"

He entered the public bathhouse in a joyous mood, confident that he would soon be receiving his money.

At the same time, Nakdimon went off to the *Beis Hamikdosh*.

The governor, it seems, gave the water to Nakdimon on loan and did not ask for payment at the outset. It is possible that he was not an evil man at all and that he really was touched by the plight of the *olei regel*. But it is more logical to assume that he felt that if rain hadn't fallen all winter long, it would surely not fall after Pesach. And so, when he made the agreement with Nakdimon he was almost certain that he would be paid with the money, and not the water.

Perhaps this is why, to begin with, he did not want to sell the water, but wished to appear magnanimous and concerned for the welfare of the thirsty travelers and let them drink their fill for free, knowing that Nakdimon would have to refill the cisterns anyway. When rain did not fall, he realized that he could become very wealthy from the arrangement, far more than if he had sold the water.



The due date arrives and the governor sends a messenger to demand payment. "Give me water or silver," he says.

He does not reveal his greedy heart. He speaks civilly and asks for water, but "if you can't provide water, then give me money." He did not say what he was really thinking — that he wanted the money.

Nakdimon was staunch in his faith in Hashem and even though no rain had fallen since he had struck the bargain with the gentile, still he was not discouraged. Throughout the long day he continued to trust that Hashem would yet save him and fill the cisterns with water.

"Water or money!" demanded the governor again at noon, and then once more in the late afternoon. When Nakdimon still bided his time, the governor scoffed, "How is it possible? No rain has fallen all year and you expect to fill the cisterns yet today, now? With no sign of impending rain?"

### **Nakdimon Requests Rain from Hashem**

The governor expected to be a rich man within a very short time, and therefore entered the bathhouse in high spirits. He wished to prepare himself for the riches that would soon be his.

He thus expressed a compounded wickedness. Here are Jews thirsty for water prepared to pay a huge sum just to quench their thirst, while he had so much water to spare that he could allow himself to bathe luxuriously for pleasure. He expected to demand the full amount of the contract and not lower the price of the water, or wait a bit more. He would collect the full price — a drop of gold for every drop of water, and would pour that into his bath, so to speak.

At the same time that the governor entered the bathhouse in high spirits, Nakdimon ben Gurion entered

the *Beis Hamikdosh*. And even though as a rule, one does not go to the *Beis Hamikdosh* empty-handed, without a sacrifice or some kind of tribute (a visit which is called *bi'a reikonis* — see *Yoma 53a*), nevertheless, one who comes with a special request to be eased from suffering that presses upon his heart, is not considered to be coming empty-handed.

Shlomo Hamelech defined the role of the *Beis Hamikdosh*: "Every prayer, every request which any person may have, to all of your people, Yisroel, who knows each one the pain of his heart, and shall come and spread out his hands to this House — You shall surely hear from Heaven, the Abode of Your residence, and You shall forgive him... and You shall give that man according to the ways that You know His heart" (*Midrash Aggada 38-39*).

In such a case, the man is himself a sacrifice, as it is written, "The sacrifices of Hashem are a broken spirit" (*Tehillim 51:19*). And with a broken heart, thoroughly saddened, Nakdimon ben Gurion huddled in a corner and enveloped himself in a *tallis*, enshrouding himself as well in his trouble, hoping and waiting for Hashem's deliverance. This, some say, is what enveloped him (*Tehillim 102:1*; see Rashi there).

He stood in prayer and said, "Master of the World; it is known and revealed before You that not for my honor did I make this effort, nor for the honor of my father's house did I do this, but only, solely, for Your honor, so that there be water for the *olei regel*."

To utter these nice words is simple enough, but who can stand in the *Beis Hamikdosh* and declare before Hashem, with full confidence: "I did not do this for my own honor, nor for the honor of my father's house, but purely for Your Honor, Hashem?"

He was positive that he had no ulterior motive in his deed, not for future benefit, not to find favor with his people nor



to prove his loyalty to them. He did not wish to make a public exhibit of concern and responsibility for the public. Whoever could have acted as Nakdimon did, with his purity of heart, can also expect that Hashem will not neglect or disappoint him.

### Hashem Fulfills Nakdimon's Request

Indeed, his prayer was immediately answered. The skies darkened and filled with clouds which released rain. The rain pelted down heavily, filling all of the cisterns to overflowing. Not only that — it also washed down all of the caked mud that had been accumulated by the cisterns in the dry years and left them clean.

One can reckon in which season this took place. This whole episode was for the benefit of *olei regel*, which means it had to be before one of the pilgrimage festivals: Pesach or Succos or Shavuos. In the beginning of the story, Chazal noted that it was a drought year, so that we can infer that it did not take place Succos time, for if so, the drought would have referred to the previous year [since rain only falls in the fall and winter in Eretz Yisroel]. It is not logical that the gentile would agree to such a deal, for the rainy season was imminent and the cisterns may soon be filled. Besides, the definition of a 'drought year' would not apply for no rain would, in any case, have fallen in the summer.

We can also eliminate Shavuos, for at that time of year, Nakdimon would not have promised to fill the cisterns with (rain) water. It is already past the rainy season and for rain to fall then would have required a miracle.

If, therefore, it was Pesach-time and rain had not fallen all winter long, then it would have been considered a drought year yet Nakdimon could still hope that rain might yet fall, namely, the final rain, known as the *malkosh*. For this he had the precedent of Yoel Hanovi who experienced a thoroughly dry winter, but in the spring enough rain fell to turn the drought into blessing (*Taanis 5a*).

### The Surplus Water Belongs to the Miracle- Maker

It appears that not all the residents of Jerusalem greeted the rain that broke the drought with joy. The wicked governor did not rejoice at the rain. He would have preferred to see his constituents suffering from hunger, while his pockets were bursting with much money. He would have liked to wallow in the bathhouse, as was the Roman custom, and soak himself for hours (see *Chovos Halevovos 2:3*: "In his leisure time, the *batlan* goes to the bathhouse.")

As soon as he entered the bathhouse, however, he noticed the raindrops on the window and rushed outside quickly, even before having bathed. He had to intercept Nakdimon and tell him that he had not fulfilled his part of the bargain since it was already too late. He would not be able to prove that on the following day, but only at the onset of the rain, for then every passerby would be able to testify that the sun had already set.

It was necessary for the governor to rush quickly to Nakdimon and show that night had already fallen. He didn't even have time to dry himself off, and who knows if he took the trouble to put on all of his garments of office but perhaps wrapped himself only in a towel. In any case, he ran swiftly and not quite respectably through the city streets. Indeed, the Greeks tell the story of a distinguished scientist who rushed out of the bathhouse and ran through the city streets unclothed as, perhaps, in this case.

So we have the governor rushing to intercept Nakdimon, as Nakdimon emerges from his prayers in the *Beis Hamikdosh*. When they finally met, it is possible that Nakdimon already knew what the governor wished to tell him, but he rushed to speak first, saying, "Pay me for the extra water. I gave you back more than I took, for the cisterns were not filled to the top and now they are. You owe me. I did you another good turn besides, because when a cistern overflows from strong, gushing rain, it

flushes the bad water out and keeps the good water in. Not only was the sediment at the bottom flushed out, but the caked mud on the sides was also cleaned away and, in addition, the force of the water actually increased the size of the cisterns so that now they can hold more water than before!

"This would not have happened with a regular, mild rainfall. It happened because of the strong, miraculous downpour. This is a supernatural rain, and it came because of my prayers," said Nakdimon to the governor. "And so, the surplus water certainly belongs to me and you must pay me for it."

#### Rain and Sun for the Sake of Hashem's Beloved Ones

The governor was reluctant to give up on the money he had so anticipated and said to Nakdimon, "I agree with you insofar as the rain that fell just now was supernatural. I am aware that your G-d upset the routine of the world for your sake. But that does not mean that I owe you money. On the contrary: you owe me money — the full amount that we originally agreed upon. A deal is a deal, and I am in the right; You owe me the money. The cisterns may have filled with rainwater, and I am truly glad for that, but the sun has already set. Thus, the water that filled the cisterns is mine, and you have no claim to it. You still owe me the money, because at the end of the day they were empty."

This dialogue took place on the road between the public bathhouse and the *Beis Hamikdosh*. There the two stood in the dark, under the blackness; the sky was so overcast with thick clouds that one could not see anything. It was impossible to tell if the sun had actually set or not. Perhaps it was still light beyond those dark rain clouds?

Nakdimon turned around and went back to the *Beis Hamikdosh*. He again enveloped himself in his *tallis*, and again stood in prayer before Hashem. And he beseeched,

"Master of the World: I beg of You, if You deem that I must pay I shall pay, for this is what we agreed upon, and I will keep my bargain if I must. But when I first stated the price, I did so in my trust that You would intervene favorably for Your children who come by foot to visit Your House, and do so joyfully, out of their love for You (see *Succa 49b*) as it is written in *Shir Hashirim*, 'How lovely are your footsteps — those of the *olei regel*.'

"Therefore, I plead with You, show that there are those who love You in this world. Let everyone see that You are pleased that they make the pilgrimage. If I must pay, so I shall, but the governor will be the one to gain and next time he will surely agree to such an arrangement, but no one will know that You are pleased with Your children who love You."

Nakdimon phrased his request thus, here, and not when he prayed for the rain, because rain can fall and seem entirely natural. Those who believe that it fell because Hashem loves His people will continue to believe, but the doubters will claim that it was an ordinary rain and not a sign of Hashem's love for us. However, if the sun retraces its course, it will be a clear and definitive sign that Hashem loves His children (*Bei'urei Aggodos*).

Nakdimon continued to plead: "I surely know that the rain fell because You love me and Your people. But, I beg of You, just as You performed a miracle for me the first time, so, please, perform one now, too. This second miracle will be much more prominent and obvious."

And, indeed, immediately after he had concluded praying, the wind began blowing from a different direction. The clouds dispersed and lo! The sun became visible, shining in the sky, and everyone clearly saw that the rain which had fallen, had fallen during that selfsame day.

#### The Governor is Forced to Admit His Lies

After Hashem swept aside the curtain of clouds and the last rays of the sun became clearly visible, the governor could no longer maintain his argument.

But he did not give up yet and said, "Nevertheless, even though we were unable to see the sun set because of the heavy clouds, I still maintain that according to my calculations, it should have set at that time. I cannot explain it, but neither can I argue with the facts for I can see the sun with my own eyes. All I can say is that you must admit: Had not the sun shone and illuminated the sky in the manner that it does every day before it sets, I would have been able to extract your money from you."

From here Chazal say that Nakdimon was originally called by the name of Buni. Why was he called Nakdimon? Because the sun shone (*nokda*), especially for his sake.

Take note of the governor's phrasing. He said "My money" and not "Your money." He really believed that the money rightfully belonged to him. Why? Because even though he saw the sun with his own eyes, he was certain that the time of sunset had already passed, and he felt as if he had been cheated out of money that was justifiably his.

We later see that he truly was correct and that his calculations were not inaccurate. The sun really had already set, but in honor of Nakdimon, it retraced its course and went backwards in its orbit. We might say, alternatively, that it stood still in the same spot in heaven without progressing. Another possibility is that a brilliant object was suddenly visible through a hole in the clouds which could lead one to believe that it was the rays of the setting sun.

Either way, at the time of their argument, it was already after sunset. But if this is so, why, truly, was Nakdimon not obligated to pay? We see that the governor was right! He said, correctly, "My money."

According to the gentile reckoning, one day turns into the next at midnight. When the agreement was made, the governor had in mind the rules by which he dealt in his daily transactions. This time, however, because of the borderline time frame, he sought to gain the money by claiming the turn of day according to the Jewish reckoning, even though he never transacted business dealings that way.

It is even possible that had it not been for the information supplied by one of his aides, he would never even have known that Jews reckon the new day after sunset. Hashem purposely waited until after sunset to test his reliability and honesty. Would his greed cause him to jump from the rules of gentiles to the laws of the Jews?

But we see that the governor did not admit that he was taking advantage of Jewish law to which he did not subscribe at all. Instead, he convinced himself that he was just and honest and that the rain really did fall after nightfall. But no one agreed to justify him for they saw the sun still shining and he was forced to keep quiet.

He was told that one cannot hold the rope at both ends, for if he had made an agreement whereby the date would change at midnight, would he have conceded that he was prepared to lose because he was ruling according to Jewish laws? For sure — not! He wanted to be safe on all accounts, and gain whichever way he could, arguing this way when it was to his advantage, or the opposite when that was to his advantage, so long as he came out the winner.

Here, however, Hashem intervened and would not let him carry out his deceit. It was truly for the governor's benefit, for he would have continued to lie and cheat up to half his lifetime, as is written, "Men of blood and deceit will not live out half their days . . ." and then he would have been caught. But when such a person wishes to deceive a *tzaddik*, Hashem will not allow it, even if He has to stop

the sun in its tracks. There is nothing too difficult for Hashem to do for the sake of His beloved people, for those who keep His commandments.

### **Nakdimon — the Sun Was Beclouded and also Blazed for His Sake**

It was taught: Ever since that episode, that rich man became known by a different name. Originally, he was called Buni, and not Nakdimon. Why then was his name changed? Because the sun shone, *nikdera*, for his sake.

What is the root of this somewhat unusual verb? It is derived from the root *kodar*, which means — cut an exact circle, as we find Chazal saying, "*Vekadrin behorim*" (*Eruvin 35b*). This means: to drill a hole. We also find by the wicked King Menashe that he `drilled' and removed certain mentions from the Torah (*Sanhedrin 103b*). He cut out the name of Hashem from the Torah and left everything around it intact, leaving a hole, so to speak.

The same happened here. Hashem did not waft away the clouds so that the sky would become light, but in a direct line from their eyes and the horizon a hole in the clouds was `drilled' to admit a few rays of sunlight from the setting sun.

There are other opinions as well as to the meaning of his name. Some say that *nokda chama* means that it became a point, a *nekudah*; it remained stationery, like a point in heaven. In spite of the passing time, the sun remained riveted in its spot, at the point of sunset.

One might alternatively explain that the sun did proceed as usual, but a point of light remained inexplicably behind to illuminate their eyes. They were then misled into thinking that the sun had not set.

However, if it had stated "*nokda*," we might interpret it thus, as a point. But it is written *nikdera*, which refers to

the clouds that became dark (*kodru*) and the sun which drilled a hole in them.

We can also interpret the name Nakdimon from the word *nikdema* — it proceeded towards him, intercepted him. Then we would have to translate the word as coming from *kodem*: it stopped the progress of its usual orbit to come towards Nakdimon, as we find in the phrase, "A student who gets up early and arrives early (*makdim*) at his master's doorway."

Either way, it is obvious that the phenomenon occurred for Buni's sake. And from that time, his name was changed to commemorate the event, to remember the miracle that took place and the fact that Hashem loves His children, Israel. From that time on, the *olei regel* would not need an interceder like Buni; they would come eagerly, knowing that Hashem loves them so and that their deeds are favorable in His eyes. They would come, trusting that Hashem would take care of their needs. This entire chapter in *bitochon* is encompassed in the single name: Nakdimon.

### **Stopping the Sun — Three Times**

Chazal taught: Three men experienced the miracle of *nikdema* — that the sun changed its orbit and went backwards (instead of forwards). In their merit, time stood still. They are: Moshe, Yehoshua and Nakdimon.

By Yehoshua, it explicitly says, "On the day Hashem delivered the Emori into the hands of Bnei Yisroel. And he said before the eyes of Yisroel: Sun in Giv'on — halt, and moon in the valley of Ayalon. And the sun stopped and the moon stood, until the nation was avenged." That is, until Yisroel took revenge from its enemies. This is what is written in *Sefer Hayoshor*: The sun stood in midheaven and did not run its course as on a regular day (*Yehoshua 10:12*).

It is later explained precisely how long the hands of the astronomical clock were stopped because of Yehoshua. And because of it, the Sages of his generation were given the opportunity to nullify the false belief of the idolaters who worshiped the sun, the astrological signs of the zodiac and their power over mankind. That is why they placed a figure of a sun over Yehoshua's grave, exactly in the same form that the priests did in their temples of idol worship (*Rashi, Shofetim 2:9*).

The Jews did it, however, for precisely the opposite reason. The idolaters put up an image in order to worship it, while the Jewish Sages placed such an image in order to show to one and all that the sun has no independent power. Yehoshua, servant of Hashem, was able to arrest its progress by the mere utterance of his mouth.

How do we know that Moshe Rabbenu also stopped the sun? Where in the Torah is there a hint to this happening?

R' Elozor said: We learn this from the parallel wording (*gezeira shova*). It says that Hashem sent Moshe Rabbenu to war with the nations on the border of Eretz Yisroel. He promised him, "On this very day, I will impose (*ocheil*) your fear and dread upon the nations under the entire sky, who will hear of your fame and will become overwrought with fear of you" (*Devorim 2:25*). Even in the hearts of those nations distant from him.

We later see that the facts substantiate this fear, but here the *gemora* explains when this all began and the reason verifying it. It began when all the nations of the world noticed that the sun had stood still. The more distant nations did not know about the event that caused the sun to stand, but they certainly felt the difference of the sun not shining when it was supposed to shine. They experienced it because it was not a matter of a moment or two, but of several hours. Even without a clock, one could tell that there was something unusual going on, an aberration in nature.

In both places, the Torah uses the verb *ocheil*. By Yehoshua — "*Ocheil gadlecho (Yehoshua 3:4)*" — when the standing of the sun was apparent to the whole world. So by Moshe Rabbenu there was a similar occurrence. And from thence onward, a fear of the Jewish people gripped the nations of the world.

Archaeological diggings, while not generally substantial, significant or reliable to us, show the exact places where the heavenly bodies were worshiped in temples in ancient times, and where, thousands of years ago, people sacrificed to the sun. In distant eastern countries were found vestiges of national mourning that the people's god had disappointed them and refused to appear at its appointed time in the morning. Ostensibly a strange story, but when one examines the globe, one can see that at the time that it sets in Eretz Yisroel, it rises in that distant land. And if the sun was arrested in Giv'on, it could not have appeared at its appointed rising place in the lands of the Far East. The fright that the nations experienced is briefly mentioned in the Torah as "*Ocheil teis pachdecho*."

### The Widespread Publicity of the Sun's Arrest

R' Shmuel bar Nachmeini said: The tradition transmitted from generation to generation that a similar occurrence took place with Moshe is mentioned in another place in the Torah: "*Asya* — we derive it from — the word *teis* — to give — which appears in two places. It is written here, in the war against the nations living in Canaan, '*teis*'" Hashem gave, delivered, them into the hands of Moshe. And it is written there, when Yehoshua arrested the sun in Giv'on: '*On the day that Hashem delivered the Emori...*' (*Yehoshua 10:12*).

From this parallel wording we can infer that the Torah is indicating that Moshe also arrested the sun, a fact that was known, up till that time, by word of mouth. R' Yochanon said: The fact can be learned from the written text itself, from the very simple rendition of the verse, for

Hashem promised Moshe that `...who will hear of your fame, and they will become overwrought and will tremble before you.' When did this happen? When the sun *nikdema*, retraced itself, and was set back for Moshe's sake.

"Jerusalem was like an impure woman." Said R' Yehuda, "This is a blessing of sorts [even though it is included in Yirmiyohu's lament of *Eichoh*]. For just as an impure woman can be purified, so is Jerusalem able to make amends.

"Which the nations will hear of your fame and will become overwrought and will tremble before you." The entire world became fearful of Moshe. When? We can only surmise that the nations in Moshe's vicinity feared him and were terrified, as is stated in the exodus from Egypt, "Nations heard and became overwrought; terror seized the residents of Peleshes. Then did the chiefs of Edom become frightened, the mighty ones of Moav were seized with trembling. All the dwellers of Canaan melted with fear. Dread and fear fell upon them" (*Shemos 15:15*).

This long list only contains local nations, the Middle East. Bolok, King of Moav, also expressed his entire nation's fear, and sought ways to offset the evil that was to befall them (*Bamidbor 25*).

### **The Stopping of the Sun — Publicized Throughout the World**

We see that only the local nations were seized with fear, for they felt threatened. But distant nations were not threatened by the Jews, and the news of the exodus had not even reached their ears. How, then, did they hear about Moshe Rabbenu?

The news could have reached them through traveling merchants and desert travelers, but then it would have taken the form of a wondrous happening to marvel at, a

tale that would be embellished by every successive traveler to impress his listeners. And when the news reached those distant lands, from various sources, the accounts would be entirely different from one another. And surely, this would not cause those faraway people to melt from fear.

The truth is that those distant nations learned about it through the arresting of the sun, when time stopped. For when the sun was arrested here in our area, it was arrested there as well. And this is truly a frightening phenomenon. When the sun does not set at its appointed time, this throws the world off kilter, which is truly terrifying. But those who lived close by, were afraid, in any case, of the advancing camp of the Israelites which conquered nations as it progressed along its course.

In distant lands, however, the sun did not rise, and the people there had no way of knowing that it would eventually resume its course. They thought the world was coming to an end, and they became duly terrified, as anyone can imagine.

A similar occurrence took place when King Ochoz died. The sun speeded up its progress and the day ended two hours earlier, resulting in a shorter day, as at the poles. But when Chizkiyohu became ill, the sun paid back its debt, so to speak, and the day was lengthened by ten additional hours (*Sanhedrin 91:1*).