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Taanis Daf 9

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamah of

Tzvi Gershon Ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o"n

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

[The Gemora records various teachings of Rabbi Yochanan – the first three being relevant to rain.]

RABBI YOCHANAN

➤ Rabbi Yochanan states that a day of rain is as significant as the day of the ingathering of all the exiles.

Rabbi Yochanan states that a day of rain is great because even soldiers from an army halt due to the rain.

Rabbi Yochanan states that rain is withheld because people pledge to give charity in public and fail to do so.

Rabbi Yochanan teaches that fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *ma'aser* - tithes - guarantees wealth. He derives this from the passage (Devarim 14:22) *asser ta-asser* - surely you shall tithe - which he understands to mean *asser bishvil she-titasher* - separate tithes so that you should become wealthy. [At first glance this appears to be a simple play-on-words, switching the Hebrew letter *sin* for a *shin*, thus changing the pronunciation of the word from *asser* (tithe) to

osher (wealth). Others explain that this is a more straightforward interpretation of the *pasuk* (verse) - separate tithes, and by doing so you will be given the opportunity to separate yet more tithes (i.e. you will see success in your endeavors).] (8b – 9a)

[The Gemora now records two fascinating exchanges between Rabbi Yochanan and Rish Lakish's son.]

Rabbi Yochanan asks the child of Rish Lakish to share a passage that he had learned in school (a common practice in Talmudic times). The child quotes this *pasuk* - *asser ta-asser* - and asks Rabbi Yochanan to explain it. Following Rabbi Yochanan's explanation the child asks how he knows that someone who separates tithes becomes wealthy. Rabbi Yochanan responds that it could be tested - be careful in separating tithes, and see the results! The child responds that testing God is forbidden, quoting the passage in Devarim (6:16) that clearly forbids testing God. To this Rabbi Yochanan responds by quoting Rabbi Hoshaya as teaching that tithes are unique because of the *pasuk* in Malachi (3:10) in which God clearly allows the Jewish people to test Him



with regard to the *mitzvah* of *ma'aser*, promising to open the storehouses of the skies and to pour out blessings without any limits to those who keep the *mitzvah* properly. (Courtesy of the Aleph Society)

What is meant by the verse “and to pour out blessings without any limits”? Rami bar Chama explains that people’s lips will wear out from saying, “Enough!”

The child said to Rabbi Yochanan that if he would have learned the passuk in Malachi himself, he would not have needed Rabbi Yochanan or Rabbi Hoshaya to understand the passuk in the same manner that they taught it.

On another occasion, Rabbi Yochanan met the young son of Rish Lakish sitting and reciting the verse: *The foolishness of man perverts his way; and his heart frets against Hashem*. Rabbi Yochanan thereupon exclaimed in amazement: Is there anything written in the Writings to which allusion cannot be found in the Torah? The boy replied: Is then this verse not alluded to in the Torah, seeing that it is written: And their hearts sank, and they turned trembling one to another, saying: ‘What is this that God has done to us?’ [The brothers of Yosef attributed their misfortune to God and blamed Him, rather than blaming themselves for the selling of Yosef.] Rabbi Yochanan lifted up his eyelid and stared at him, whereupon the boy's mother came and took

him away. She said to him: Go away from him, lest he do to you as he did to your father. [R’ Yochanan initially brought Rish Lakish from being a bandit into a Torah scholar. Later on in life, he looked at him when he was upset, whereupon Rish Lakish fell ill and eventually died.] (9a)

PROSPERITY ON THE ACCOUNT OF AN INDIVIDUAL

➤ Rabbi Yochanan states that rain will fall even for an individual but sustenance will only be provided if it’s for many people. The Gemora provides Scriptural sources for this.

The Gemora asks on Rabbi Yochanan from a braisa. Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Yehudah states that there were three excellent leaders for Klal Yisroel in the wilderness and there were three wonderful gifts bestowed upon the Jewish people. The first was the miraculous well which came on account of Miriam, the second was the pillar of cloud which came because of Aharon, and the third was the Manna which came in the merit of Moshe. The Gemora goes on to say that when Miriam passed away, the well went away but was returned on the merit of Aharon and Moshe. When Aharon passed away the Clouds of Glory went away, only to come back on Moshe’s merit. When Moshe passed away, all three of these precious gifts were gone forever.

It emerges from this braisa which states that the manna fell on the account of Moshe that

sustenance can be granted even for the sake of a single person.

The Gemora answers that Moshe is different since he would pray for many, he is regarded as many people.

The Gemora relates: Rav Huna bar Manoach and Rav Shmuel bar Idi and Rav Chiya of Vastanya were accustomed to attend the discourses of Rava. When Rava died they came to those of Rav Pappa and whenever he expounded to them a law which did not appeal to them they would signal each other (as a sign of disapproval), and thus distressed him greatly. In a dream they recited to him the following verse: *And I removed the three shepherds*. When next day these disciples took leave of him he said to them, “Go in peace (as a blessing to protect them from the harsh sentence depicted in his dream).”

Rav Shimi bar Ashi was accustomed to frequent the discourses of Rav Pappa and used to challenge him very much with questions. One day he observed that Rav Pappa fell on his face (in prayer – saying tachanun), and he heard him saying: May the Merciful One preserve me from the humiliation of Shimi. The latter thereupon accepted silence upon himself and didn't challenge him any longer.

Rish Lakish also held that rain will be provided for an individual, even if he is the only one requires

the rain. The Gemora relates that Rav Daniel bar Katina had a garden that he would inspect every day. He would say that this row needs rain and this row does not. Rain would fall only on the places that needed the water. (9a – 9b)

MORE RAIN

➤ The Gemora states that if small drops of rain descend before regular rain, this is an indication that the rains will persist a long time. If the small drops of rain follow after the regular rain, this means that the rains are about to stop.

Ula came to Bavel and he saw flying clouds. He instructed the people that were with him to clear away his belongings as rain is about to come. At the end, it didn't rain. Ula said that just as the Babylonians lie, so too their rains lie.

Ula went to Bavel and he saw that they were selling a basketful of dates for only a zuz. Ula wondered why the people residing in Bavel would occupy their time with making money when food was so inexpensive. They should dedicate all their time to the study of Torah. Ula ate some of those dates and at night, he developed a severe case of diarrhea. Ula retracted from his earlier statement and instead marveled at the Babylonians who ate these dates and suffered but nevertheless were able to study Torah. (9b)

RAIN AND DROUGHTS

➤ Rabbi Eliezer said that the world drinks from the ocean (water which evaporated from the ocean and comes back to the earth as precipitation) and he cites a Scriptural verse proving this point. Rabbi Yehoshua questioned him that isn't seawater salty but rain is not? The Gemora answers that it is sweetened in the clouds.

Rabbi Yehoshua maintains that the world drinks from the Upper Waters (the rain falls from heaven) and he cites a Scriptural verse proving this point.

The Gemora cites a verse and states that it teaches us that the day of rainfall is as great as the day that the Heavens and Earth were created. (9b)

DAILY MASHAL

ONE WHO GIVES MAASER WILL BE WEALTHY

➤ Rabbi Yochanan teaches that fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *ma'aser* - tithes - guarantees wealth. He derives this from the passage (Devarim 14:22) *asser ta-asser* - surely you shall tithe - which he understands to mean *asser bishvil she-titasher* - separate tithes so that you should become wealthy.

A person once approached Reb Pinchos Koritzer and complained to him that he has given maaser his entire life and he never merited to become wealthy. Why not?

Reb Pinchos responded with a story that occurred in his neighborhood. There lived a wagon driver who possessed many strong horses that would pull his wagon. He provided these horses with all their needs and the horses performed their job admirably.

One day, after he fed and gave his animals to drink, he tied the horses to the wagon and ordered the horses to begin the journey. The horses rebelled against him and refused to budge. The wagon driver began whipping the animals but to no avail. He became furious with the horses until he was beating them senselessly.

A passerby observed the scene and called out to the wagon driver that he is being ruthless and cruel. "Don't you see what you are doing? Don't you realize why the wagon is not moving? You have chained the wheels of the wagon to a tree and that is why your faithful horses are not listening to you."

Reb Pinchos Koritzer explained that the *mitzvah* of *ma'aser* - tithes - which guarantees wealth is akin to the strong horses. If one chains the wagon to a tree, the most powerful horses in the world would not move an inch. So too, if one prevents



the wheels of the 'maaser' from turning by committing other sins and acting immorally, the segula of the maaser cannot take effect and he will never become wealthy.

become wealthy and that is why it has become the custom to have a different sandek for every bris. Wealthy does not mean that he will become rich; rather he will become content and satisfied with whatever he has.

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

The above explanation is not consistent with the opinion of the Chinuch (424) who explicitly states that the blessing of riches is guaranteed and no sins committed will prevent the blessing from taking affect. The Meiri does state that one can lose out on this guarantee by committing sins.

There are other answers to this question. The Meor Einayim cites the Gemora in Shabbos (25b) that states "Who is a rich person? One who is pleased with his riches." The Mishna in Avos states that a wealthy person is someone who is happy with his lot. One who fulfills the mitzva of maaser will merit that he will be satisfied with what he has and be happy with it. Chazal say that a person dies without satisfying even half of his desires. Through the mitzva of maaser, one will learn to be satisfied and content with whatever he has. This is the test that Hashem allows the Jewish people to test Him with regard to the *mitzvah of ma'aser*.

This is the explanation in the statement of the Maharil, cited by the Rama (Y"D 265:11) that the sandek by a bris is akin to the kohen who burned the incense. There is a special segula that he will