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Sotah Daf 35

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May the studying of the Daf Notes be a zechus for their neshamot and may their souls find peace in Gan Eden and be bound up in the Bond of life

The Spies

And they returned from spying out the land....and they went and they came. Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: This indicates we should compare when they went to when they came (*back*). Just as when they came back they did so with bad intentions, so too when they went, they did so with bad intentions.

And they told him and they said, “We arrived etc.” And it is written: *But the people are strong.* Rabbi Yochanan said (A mnemonic: emes, levado, levayah) in the name of Rabbi Meir: Any lashon hara that does not at first contain some truth will not be established at the end.

And Calev quieted the people towards Moshe. Rabbah says: He enticed them with words. He saw that when Yehoshua started to speak, the people said to him, “Shall this one whose head is cut off speak before us?” (*Rashi explains that he had no sons.*) Calev said (to himself), “If I would simply start to speak (*positively about the land, as Yehoshua did*), they would quiet me as well.” He therefore said to them, “Is this all that the son of Amram has done to us?” The people became quiet, as they thought that he was going to denigrate Moshe. He then said to them, “He took us out of Egypt, and he split the sea for us, and he fed us the Manna. If he would say, ‘Build ladders and ascend to the heavens,’ wouldn’t we listen to him?”

But the people who went up with him said we cannot etc. Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa said: The spies made a great (and horrible) statement at that time. *For it is stronger*

than me (mi’menu). Do not read this as ‘mi’menu’ (from us), but rather, ‘mi’menu’ (from Him). They were saying, as it were, even the owner (*Hashem*) could not take out his vessels (*the giants living there*) from the land.

It is a land that swallows its inhabitants. Rava expounded: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: I thought of this (all the deaths that the spies saw) for good, and they have considered it bad. ‘I thought of it for good’ - wherever they would go, a most important Canaanite would die, in order that they should be busy and not ask about the spies. Some say: Iyov died, and they were busy with eulogizing him. ‘They considered it bad’ - *it is a land that swallows its inhabitants.*

And we were in our eyes like grasshoppers, and so we looked (in their eyes). Rav Mehsarshiya said: The spies were liars. It is reasonable that they can say ‘*and we were in our eyes like grasshoppers,*’ but, ‘*and so we looked in their eyes,*’ how could they possibly have known that?

The *Gemora* notes: This is not so, for when they (the Amorites) were feeding the mourners, they would serve the meal under the cedar trees, and when the spies saw them, they (the spies were afraid, so) climbed up and sat in the trees. They then overheard the Amorites saying: We see people who look like grasshoppers sitting in the tree.

And the entire congregation lifted up their voices and cried. Rabbah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: That night was the eve preceding the ninth of Av, and the Holy

One, Blessed be He, said: They have cried on this night in vain, and I shall ordain for them a crying for generations (*as there will be many bad events that would happen on the ninth of Av, including the destruction of both Temples*).

And the entire congregation said to pelt them with stones. And it is written: *And the honor of Hashem was seen at the Tent of Meeting.* Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said: This teaches us that they took stones and threw them heavenward.

And the men who spoke evil slander about the land died in a plague. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: This teaches us that they died a very unnatural death.

Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa said: Rabbi Shila, a man from Kfar Temarta expounded: This teaches us that their tongue extended out of their mouth and hung down until their navels. Worms exited from their tongues and entered their navels, and (exited) from their navels and entered their tongues.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: They died of *askera* (an inflammation of the throat that results in choking). (34b - 35a)

Crossing the Jordan

Once the last person from Israel had ascended from the Jordan, the waters returned to their place. This is as the verse states: *And it was when the Kohanim, the ones who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Hashem, ascended from the Jordan, the soles of the feet of the Kohanim moved onto dry land, and the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and they flowed like yesterday and the day before, on all of its banks.* It emerged that the Ark and those who carried it – the Kohanim, were on one side (of the Jordan – the east side), and Israel was on the other side (the west side). [Accordingly, we may ask: How did

the Ark and the Kohanim cross over the Jordan?]The Ark then proceeded to carry those who were carrying it and crossed. This is as the verse states: *And it was when the entire nation finished crossing, the Ark of Hashem and the Kohanim crossed to the head of the nation.*

The Gemora notes: And it is because of this that Uzza was punished. The verse states: *And they came to the threshing floor of Kidon, and Uzza stretched out his hand out to grab hold the Ark [because the oxen shook it].* The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: Uzza, the Ark bears those who carry it (*as is evident from what happened by the crossing of the Jordan*), it certainly can carry itself!

And the anger of Hashem burned against Uzza, and He smote him there for the 'shal.' Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elozar argue (*regarding the word 'shal'*). One says that it refers to his mistake (of touching the Ark). And one says that he took care of his needs (i.e., he defected) in front of the Ark.

And he died there with (next to) the Ark of God. Rabbi Yochanan said: Uzza went to the World to Come, as it states: *with the Ark of God.* Just as the Ark exists forever (and it was not destroyed together with the Temple), so too did Uzza come to the World to Come.

'Vayichar' to David that Hashem made a breach upon Uzza. Rabbi Elozar says: His face went black (out of anguish) like a coal-baked biscuit.

The Gemora asks: Does this mean that every place that the Torah says *'vayichar,'* it means like that (but not anger)?

The Gemora answers: In other places it says, *'af'* – meaning anger, while here it does not say *'af.'*

Rava expounded: Why was David punished? This was because he called words of Torah “songs.” This is as the

verse states: *Songs were your statutes in my dwellings of fear.* The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: Words of Torah, about which it is written: *Close your eyes to it, and it is gone,* you have called songs? I will cause you to stumble on something that even schoolchildren know (is forbidden). For it is written: *And he did not give (wagons) to the sons of Kehas, for the service of the sacred (of carrying the Ark) was upon them.* David, however, let it be carried in a wagon.

And He smote among the people in Beis Shemesh, for they gazed upon the Ark.

The Gemora asks: Because they gazed upon the Ark, they deserved to be smitten?

Rabbi Avahu and Rabbi Elozar argue: One says that they were harvesting and bowing (*before the Ark, but did not stop harvesting*). And one says that in addition, they spoke in a denigrating manner. They said: Who made you angry when you were angry, and who approached you that you have been appeased?

And He smote among the people, seventy people, fifty thousand people. [What does this mean?] Rabbi Avahu and Rabbi Elozar argue: One says that there were seventy people, and each one of them was equal to fifty thousand people. The other says that there were fifty thousand people, and each one of them was equal to the seventy people of the Sanhedrin.

And when those who carried the Ark would walk six steps, and he (David) slaughtered an ox and a fattened ox. And it is written: seven bulls and seven rams. [The verses contradict each other!]

Rav Pappa bar Shmuel says: For each step, he slaughtered an ox and a fattened ox. For each six steps, they slaughtered six bulls and six rams.

Rav Chisda said to him: If so, the entire land would be full of altars!?

Rather, Rav Chisda said: For every six steps, he slaughtered an ox and a fattened ox. For every six sets of six steps, they slaughtered seven bulls and seven rams.

The Gemora asks: The incident that took place with Uzza is described in one verse as happening at the threshing floor of Kidon, while in another place it is described as occurring at Nachon!?

Rabbi Yochanan answers: First it (the Ark) was called Kidon (*meaning a spear, for on its account Uzza was killed*), but later (when the Ark was situated in the house of Oved Edom), it became Nachon (*'established' - for it started to be a blessing and established his family*). (35a – 35b)

[The Gemora resumes its citation of the braisa:] It emerges that there were three sets of stones. One that Moshe established (on the other side of the Jordan) in Moav, as the verse states: *Across the Jordan, in the land of Moav, Moshe started explaining* etc. And elsewhere it states: *And you shall write on the stones all the words of the Torah (ba'air heitev – very well).*" The word "ba'air" in both places indicates that he wrote the Torah on them. And one that Yehoshua established in the middle of the Jordan, as the verse states: *And twelve stones were erected by Yehoshua in the middle of the Jordan.* And one was placed (by Yehoshua) in Gilgal, as the verse states: *And these twelve stones that they took* etc."

The Gemora cites a braisa: How did Israel write the Torah (on the altar at Mount Eival)? Rabbi Yehudah says: They wrote it on stones, as the verse states: *And you shall write on the stones all the words of the Torah,* and afterwards they placed plaster over them. Rabbi Shimon said to him: How (*if it was plastered over*), then, were the nations supposed to learn from the Torah? Rabbi Yehudah



replied: The Holy One, Blessed be He, gave them extra intuition, and they sent their scribes to scrape off the plaster and they carried away a copy of the text of the Torah.

The Gemora comments: And it is because of this that their decree was sealed for the pit of destruction, as they had the ability to learn and did not.

Rabbi Shimon said: They wrote the Torah on top of the plaster. And on bottom, they wrote for the nations: *in order that they should not teach you to act like all etc.* This implies that if they would have repented, they would have been accepted.

Rava bar Shila said: what is Rabbi Shimon's reasoning? For it is written: *And nations will be burnings of plaster.* Because of matters of plaster (where the Torah was written, they could have learned).

The Gemora asks: And Rabbi Yehudah (how does he understand the verse)?

The Gemora answers: They are compared to plaster. Just as plaster has no remedy except through burning (for the lime must be burned to make plaster), so too, those Cutheans, have no remedy except through burning (in Gehinnom).

The Gemora asks: With whom does that which was taught in the following braisa accord? *And you will capture its captives.* This includes Canaanites who are living outside the Land, that if they repent, they are accepted.

The Gemora answers: With whom? It is with Rabbi Shimon. (35b – 36a)

DAILY MASHAL

The Twin Purposes of Torah

The Gemara tells us that King David was punished because he referred to Torah as *zemiros*. This is normally understood to mean that he described the Torah as a song.

The *Ben Yehoyada* provides a different interpretation. He explains that Torah has two purposes. The primary purpose is to provide instruction on how to conduct ourselves. In order to fulfill the *mitzvos* of Hashem, we need to be educated in how to do so. Additionally, the Torah is also a protection against tyranny; this is the meaning of the verse in Psalms 149:6 "*And a double-edged sword in their hands*". In this context the word *zemiros* can also be translated as a tool that prunes and cuts away thorns.

The complaint against King David was that he was lauding the Torah for its secondary purpose, and ignoring the more important purpose of learning it in order to know how to fulfill the command of Hashem.