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Gittin Daf 56

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamot of

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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

Destruction of Yerushalayim

Rabbi Yochanan said: What is illustrative of the verse: *Fortunate is the man that fears always, but he that hardens his heart shall fall into harm? [In the following three incidents, people acted in an irresponsible manner, thinking that their prosperity would continue, even if they sin.]* The destruction of Yerushalayim came about through Kamtza and Bar Kamtza; the destruction of Har HaMelech came about through a rooster and a hen; the destruction of Beitar came about through the side of a carriage.

The destruction of Yerushalayim came about through Kamtza and Bar Kamtza in the following way: A certain man had a friend Kamtza and an enemy Bar Kamtza. He once made a party and said to his attendant, “Go and bring Kamtza.” The man went and brought Bar Kamtza. When the host found him there, he exclaimed, See, you are my enemy, what are you doing here? Get out!” Bar Kamtza said to him, “Since I am here, let me stay and I will pay you for whatever I eat and drink.” The host refused. Bar Kamtza said, “Then let me give you half the cost of the party.” “No,” said the host. “Then let me pay for the whole party,” Bar Kamtza said. He still refused and he took him by the hand and threw him out. Bar Kamtza said, “Since the Rabbis were sitting there and did not rebuke him, this shows that they agreed with him. I will go and slander them to the Government.” He went and said to Caesar, “The Jews are rebelling against you.” Caesar asked him, “Who says so?” He replied, “Send them an animal as a sacrifice and see whether they will offer it on the Altar.

So he sent with him a fine calf. While on the way, Bar Kamtza made a blemish on its upper lip, or as some say, he cause a cataract in the eye, in a place where we consider it a blemish, but they do not. The Rabbis were inclined to offer it in order not to offend the Government. Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulas said to them, “People will then say that blemished animals are offered on the Altar!” They then proposed to kill Bar Kamtza so that he should not go and inform against them, but Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulas said to them, People will then say that one who makes a blemish on consecrated animals is to be put to death!”

Rabbi Yochanan remarked: Through the tolerance of Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulas, our Temple has been destroyed, our Sanctuary was burned down and we were exiled from our land.

He sent against them Nero the Caesar. As he was coming towards Yerushalayim, he shot an arrow towards the east, and it fell in Yerushalayim. He then shot one towards the west, and it again fell in Yerushalayim. He shot towards all four points of the compass, and each time it fell in Yerushalayim. He said to a certain boy, “Say to me your verse (*that you were just studying*).” The boy said, “*And I will take My revenge upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel.*” Nero said, “The Holy One, Blessed be He, desires to destroy His House and wants to punish me.” Thereupon, he ran away and converted, and Rabbi Meir was descended from him.

He then sent Vespasian Caesar against them. He came and besieged Yerushalayim for three years. There were three men of great wealth in Yerushalayim: Nakdimon ben Gurion, Ben Kalba Savua and Ben Tzitzis Hakeses. Nakdimon ben Gurion was so called because the sun pierced the clouds for his sake. [*The Gemora Taanis relates that Nakdimon once prayed that the sun should continue to shine in order that a certain debt he had incurred on behalf of the people should not be considered late, and his prayer was granted.*] Ben Kalba Savua 'was so called because one would go into his house hungry as a dog and would come out fully satisfied. Ben Tzitzis Hakeses was so called because his *tzitzis* used to trail on cushions behind him. Others say he derived the name from the fact that his seat was among those of the nobility of Rome.

One of these said to the people of Yerushalayim, "I will provide for them in wheat and barley." A second said, "I will provide for them in wine, oil and salt." The third one said, "I will provide wood for them." The Rabbis considered the offer of wood the most generous, since Rav Chisda used to hand all his keys to his servant except for that of the wood, for Rav Chisda used to say: To bake a storehouse of wheat into bread requires sixty storehouses of wood.

These men were in a position to provide for the city for twenty-one years. However, the *baryonei* (*empty men; their only wish was to fight the Romans*) were then in the city. The Rabbis said to them, "Let us go out and make peace with them." They would not let them. They said, "Let us go out and fight them." The Rabbis said, "You will not be successful." The *baryonei* then rose up and burnt the storehouses of wheat and barley, so that a famine ensued.

Marsa the daughter of Boethus was the richest woman in Yerushalayim. She sent her servant out saying, "Go and bring me some fine-flour bread." By the time he went, it

was sold out. He came and told her, "There is no fine flour, but there is white bread." She said to him, "Go and bring me some." By the time he went, the white bread was sold out. He came and told her, "There is no white bread, but there is coarse bread." She said to him, "Go and bring me some." By the time he went, it was sold out. He returned and said to her, "There is no coarse bread, but there is barley flour." She said, "Go and bring me some." By the time he went, this was also sold out. Although she had taken off her shoes, she said, "I will go out and see if I can find anything to eat." Some dung stuck to her foot and she died. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai applied to her the following verse: *The delicate and pampered woman among you which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground.*

There were those who said that she ate the dried figs left by Rabbi Tzadok, and became nauseated and died. For Rabbi Tzadok observed fasts for forty years in order that Yerushalayim should not be destroyed. He became so thin that when he ate something, the food could be seen from the outside (*as it passed through his throat*). When he wanted to restore himself (*after the fasts*), they used to bring him dried figs. He would suck the juice and throw the rest away.

When Marsa was about to die, she took out all her gold and silver and threw it into the marketplace, saying, "Is this needed to me any longer?" This gives effect to the verse: *They shall throw their silver into the streets.*

Abba Sikra, the head of the *baryonei* in Yerushalayim, was the son of the sister of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai sent to him the following: Come to visit me privately. When he came, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai asked him, "How long are you going to act in this way and kill all the people with starvation?" He replied, "What can I do? If I say a word to them, they will kill me." He said: Find for me a way to escape. Perhaps it will be a small salvation." Abba Sikra said to him,

“Pretend to be sick, and let everyone come to ask about you. Bring something foul smelling and put it by you so that they will say you are dead. Let your students pick up your bed, but no others should enter, so that they shall not notice that you are still light, since everyone knows that a living person is lighter than a corpse.” He did so, and Rabbi Eliezer went under the bed from one side and Rabbi Yehoshua from the other. When they reached the gate, the *baryonei* wanted to pierce the bed (*to make sure that Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was truly dead*). Abba Sikra said to them, “Do you want the Romans to say that the Jews have pierced their Master?” They wanted to give it a push. He said to them, “Do you want the Romans to say that the Jews have pushed their Master?” They opened a gate for him and he was taken out. When he reached the Romans, he said to Vespasian, “Peace to you, O king, peace to you, O king!” Vespasian said to him, “You are liable to death on two counts. One is because I am not a king and you call me king, and secondly, if I am a king, why did you not come to me before today?” Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai replied, “As for your saying that you are not a king, in truth you must become a king, since otherwise, Yerushalayim could not be delivered into your hand, as it is written: *And Levanon (the Beis HaMikdash) shall fall by a mighty one (a king)*. And as for your question, why if you are a king, did I not come to you till now, the answer is that the *baryonei* among us did not let me leave.” Vespasian said to him, “If there is a dangerous snake wrapped around a jar of honey, would they not break the jar to get rid of the snake?” [*You should have destroyed the walls and burned them, so that the baryonei would be chased away!*] Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai kept quiet.

Rav Yosef, or some say it was Rabbi Akiva, applied to him the verse: *God turns wise men backwards and makes their knowledge foolish*. He should have answered him: We would take a pair of tongs, grab the snake and kill it, and leave the jar intact. [*So too, we were waiting for some*

other way to remove the baryonei, without destroying the wall of the city.]

At this point, a messenger came to Vespasian from Rome saying, “Get up, for Caesar is dead, and the dignitaries of Rome have decided that you should be the leader.” He was only wearing one shoe at the time. When he tried to put on the other one, he could not. He tried to take off the first one, but it would not come off. He asked, “What is the meaning of this?” Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said to him, “Do not be concerned, for the good news has done it (*it caused your feet to swell*), as it says: *Good tidings fatten the bones*. What is your remedy? Let someone whom you dislike come and pass before you (*and the swelling will go away*), as it is written: *A broken spirit dried up the bones*.” He did so, and his shoe went on. Vespasian asked him, “Seeing that you are so wise, why did you not come to me before today?” He replied, “Have I not told you before (*that the baryonei did not let*)?” Vespasian retorted, “I too have told you (*that you should have destroyed the walls*).”

Vespasian said to him, “I am now going back to Rome, and will send someone to take my place. You can, however, make a request of me and I will grant it.” He said to him, “Spare for me the city of Yavneh and its Sages, and the family of Rabban Gamaliel (*he wanted to ensure that the Nasi’s family, the royal family from King David will not be broken*), and physicians to heal Rabbi Tzadok. Rav Yosef, or some say it was Rabbi Akiva, applied to him the verse: *God turns wise men backwards and makes their knowledge foolish*. He should have answered him, “Let them off this time.” He, however, thought that Vespasian would not grant him so much, and so even a little would not be saved.

How did the physicians heal Rabbi Tzadok? On the first day, they let him drink water in which bran had been soaked. On the next day, they let him drink water in which there had been coarse bran and flour. On the next day,



they gave him water in which there was some flour, so that his intestines expanded little by little.

Vespasian sent Titus to capture Yerushalayim. It is written: *Where is their God, the rock in whom they trusted?* This is referring to the wicked Titus who blasphemed and insulted Heaven. What did he do? He grabbed a harlot by the hand and entered the Holy of Holies and spread out a Torah scroll and committed a sin upon it (*by having relations with her*). He then took a sword and slashed the curtain (*separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy*). Miraculously, blood bubbled out, and he thought that he had slain "himself" (*in reference to God*), as it says: *Your adversaries have roared in the midst of your assembly; they have set up their signs for true signs.*

Abba Chanan said: *Who is like You, O Mighty One, God?* He explains: Who is like You, mighty and firm (*in self restraint*), that You heard the blaspheming and insults of that wicked man and You keep silent? In the Beis Medrash of Rabbi Yishmael it was taught: *Who is like You among the mighty ones, Hashem?* The explained: Who is like You among the mute ones (*in reference to his remaining silent*)?

What did Titus do next? He took the curtain and shaped it like a basket and brought all the vessels of the Temple and placed them in it. He put them on board a ship to go and be praised for his victory in his city. A hurricane at sea threatened to drown him. He said: Apparently, the power of the God of these people is only over water. When Pharaoh came, He drowned him in water. When Sisera came, He drowned him in water. He is also trying to drown me in water. If he is really mighty, let Him come up on the dry land and fight with me. A Heavenly voice came out saying: "Wicked one, the son of a wicked man, descendant of Esav the wicked, I have a tiny creature in my world called a gnat. Go up on the dry land and wage war with it!" When he arrived on dry land, the gnat came

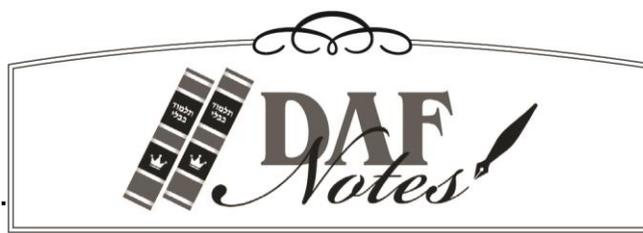
and entered his nose, and it picked against his brain for seven years. One day as he was passing the door of a blacksmith, it heard the noise of the hammer and kept quiet. He said, "I see there is a remedy." So every day they brought a blacksmith who hammered before him. If he was a gentile, they gave him four zuz, and if he was a Jew, they said: It is enough that you see the suffering of your enemy. This went on for thirty days, but then the gnat got used to it. It has been taught: Rabbi Pinchas ben Arava said: I was in company with the nobles of Rome, and when he died, they split open his skull and found there a gnat that was something like a swallow, two selas in weight. A Tanna taught; It was like a one-year-old pigeon, two pounds in weight. Abaye said: We have it from tradition that its beak was of copper and its claws of iron.

When Titus died, he said, "Burn me and scatter my ashes over the seven seas, so that the God of the Jews should not find me and bring me to trial." (55b – 56b)

DAILY MASHAL

Kamtza and Bar Kamtza

The Gemora had stated: The destruction of Yerushalayim came about through Kamtza and Bar Kamtza in the following way: A certain man had a friend Kamtza and an enemy Bar Kamtza. He once made a party and said to his attendant, "Go and bring Kamtza." The man went and brought Bar Kamtza. When the host found him there, he exclaimed, See, you are my enemy, what are you doing here? Get out!" Bar Kamtza said to him, "Since I am here, let me stay and I will pay you for whatever I eat and drink." The host refused. Bar Kamtza said, "Then let me give you half the cost of the party." "No," said the host. "Then let me pay for the whole party," Bar Kamtza said. He still refused and he took him by the hand and threw him out. Bar Kamtza said, "Since the Rabbis were sitting there and did not rebuke him, this shows that they agreed with him. I will go and slander them to the Government."



He went and said to Caesar, "The Jews are rebelling against you." Caesar asked him, "Who says so?" He replied, "Send them an animal as a sacrifice and see whether they will offer it on the Altar. So he sent with him a fine calf. While on the way, Bar Kamtza made a blemish on its upper lip, or as some say, he cause a cataract in the eye, in a place where we consider it a blemish, but they do not. The Rabbis were inclined to offer it in order not to offend the Government. Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulas said to them, "People will then say that blemished animals are offered on the Altar!" They then proposed to kill Bar Kamtza so that he should not go and inform against them, but Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulas said to them, People will then say that one who makes a blemish on consecrated animals is to be put to death!"

There is a well known question: It is understandable why the *Gemora* lays the blame of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash on Bar Kamtza, for he was the one who slandered the Jews to Caesar; however, what did Kamtza do wrong? Why does the *Gemora* introduce the incident by saying that it was on account of both of them?

The Ben Yehoyada answers that anyone who has the ability to protest when a sin is being committed and does not do so; the sin is called upon his name as well. Chazal understood that Kamtza, being a friend of the host, had the ability to prevent the host from evicting Bar Kamtza from the banquet. Since he did not do so, he became a partner in all the events that resulted from the eviction.

The Yalkut HaGershuni answers, based upon the premise that Kamtza was not at the banquet; he did not attend, for he did not receive an invitation. It was very possible that if he would have been there, the host would not have gotten so angry, for he would have seen that his friend joined him at the banquet. Kamtza, out of haughtiness, did not attend the party. He said to himself, "If he didn't send me an invitation, I am not attending!" It emerges

that Kamtza, due to his evil attribute, also had a share in Bar Kamtza's actions.

The Chida answers that in truth, Kamtza did nothing wrong. The meaning of the *Gemora* is as follows: It was because the attendant was not careful regarding his master's words that brought about this destruction. He did not distinguish between Kamtza and Bar Kamtza. This is as the *Chachamim* say: One must be extremely careful in the words he speaks, and one who listens to another person talking must pay careful attention, for sometimes, due to one mistaken word, there can be deadly consequences.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM YESTERDAY'S DAF to refresh your memory

Q: If a man steals a beam and builds it into a palace, is he required to demolish the palace to return the beam?

A: *Machlokes* between Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel.

Q: If one stole an animal and consecrated it and then slaughtered it, how much does he pay?

A: Only the double payment, but not four or five.

Q: What are *sikerikon*?

A: An idolater who threatens to murder a Jew unless he gives him his field.