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Tamid Daf 32

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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

Alexander of Macedon’s Questions

Alexander of Macedon asked ten questions to the Elders of the South. [This discussion is inserted here because Alexander’s first question had reference to the sun.] He asked: Which is a greater distance: from heaven to earth, or from east to west? They replied: From east to west. The proof is that when the sun is in the east all can look at it, and when it is in the west all can look at it, but when the sun is in the middle of the sky no one can look at it. [Evidently, when it is in the middle of the sky, it is much closer to the earth than when it is in the east or the west.] The Sages, however, say: The distance in both cases is the same, as it is written: *For as the heaven is high above the earth [so has His kindness overwhelmed those who fear Him], as far as the east is from the west [He has distanced our transgressions from us].* Now, if one of these distances is greater, both of those (*His kindness and the distancing of our transgressions*) should be written with respect to the one which is the greater. What then is the reason why no one can look at the sun when it is in the middle of the sky? It is because it is in the open and nothing obstructs the view (*but on the east and west, hills and mountains are in the way*).

He said to them: Were heavens created first, or the earth? They replied: The heavens were created first, as it is written: *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. [Since the heaven is mentioned before the earth, it must have been created first.]* He said to them: Was light created first, or darkness? They replied: This question cannot be resolved.

The Gemora asks: Why didn’t they reply that darkness was created first, since it is written: *And the earth was astonishingly void, with darkness [upon the surface of the deep]*, and only after that it is written: *And God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.”*

The Gemora answers: They thought to themselves that perhaps he (*Alexander*) will go on to ask what is above and what is below, what is before and what is after. [Asking such questions would be extremely disrespectful to the Creator.]

The Gemora asks: If so, they should not have answered his question about the heaven either?

The Gemora answers: At first they thought that he just happened to ask that question, but when they saw that he pursued the same subject, they thought to themselves that they should not answer him lest he should go on to ask what was above and what was below what was before and what was after.

He said to them: Who is called wise?

They replied: Who is a wise man? It is he who discerns what will happen in the future.

He said to them: Who is called a mighty man?

They replied: Who is a mighty man? It is he who overcomes his evil passions.

He said to them: Who is called a rich man?

They replied: Who is rich? It is he who is happy with his lot.

He said to them: What shall a man do to live?

They replied: Let him kill himself (*with study and hard work – even if he finds it unpleasant*).

[*He asked them:*] What should a man do to kill himself?

They replied: Let him keep himself alive (*by indulging in all sorts of luxuries*).

He said to them: What should a man do to make himself accepted by people?

They replied: Let him hate royalty and authority (*for otherwise, he will be suspected of informing on people*).

He said to them: My answer is better than yours: Let him love royalty and authority and confer favors on other people (*for this will make him popular*).

He said to them: Is it better to dwell on sea (*in a ship*) or on dry land?

They replied: It is better to dwell on dry land, because the minds of those who set out to sea are never settled until they reach dry land again.

He said to them: Which among you is the wisest?

They replied: We are all equal, because we have all given you the same answers to your questions.

He said to them: Why do you resist me (*and my kingdom; why don't you eat and drink and intermarry with us*)?

They replied: The enemy (*your dominion*) has won (*temporarily, but it is only due to our sins*).

He said to them: Behold I can kill you by royal decree. [*Alexander was not pleased at all with their reply, and took offense to it.*]

They replied: Power is (*most certainly*) in the hands of the king, but it is not appealing for a king to be false (*and you guaranteed us that we can speak our mind without fear of consequences*).

Immediately, he clothed them with purple robes and put chains of gold on their necks (*as signs of dignity*).

He said to them: I want to go to the country of Africa. [*What should I do?*]

They said to him: You cannot get there, because the Mountains of Darkness (*where the sun does not shine at all*) are in the way.

He said to them: It is unacceptable that I will not go. Was that not the reason that I asked you? So tell me, what I am to do?

They said to him: Take Libyan donkeys that can travel in the dark and take coils of flax cord and tie them on this side (*of those mountains*) so that when you return, you can guide yourself by them and reach your starting point. He did so and set forth.

He came to an area where there were only women. He wanted to wage war with them, but they said to him: If you kill us, people will say that you merely killed a city filled with women (*which would be demeaning*), and if we kill you, they will call you “the king who was killed by women.” He said to them: Bring me bread. They brought him gold bread on a gold table. He said to them: Do people here eat bread made out of gold? They replied: If you wanted bread, did you not have bread in your own place to eat that you should have journeyed here? When he departed, he wrote on the gate of the city: I, Alexander of Macedon, was a fool until I came to



the city of women in Africa, and I learned reasoning from the women.

As he was returning, he sat by a spring (*so he could drink upon the conclusion of his eating*) and began to eat bread. He had with him some salted fish, and as they were being washed, a spirit of life entered them. He said: This indicates that this spring comes from the Garden of Eden. Some say that he took some of the water and washed his face with it; others say that he went alongside of it until he came to the entrance of the Garden of Eden. He lifted his voice and said: Open the gate for me. They replied: *This is the gate of Hashem, [the righteous shall enter into it] (and you, who are not righteous, cannot enter)*. He replied: I too am a king; I am also important (*and my request should not be taken lightly*). Give me something (*as a souvenir*). They gave him an eyeball.

He brought it back with him and weighed all his silver and gold against it, and the silver and gold did not outweigh it. He said to the Rabbis: What is this? They replied: It is the eyeball of a human being, who is never satisfied (*no matter how much riches he attains*). He said to them: How can you prove that this is so? They took a little bit of dirt and covered it, and immediately it was outweighed; and so it is written: *The grave and Gehinnom are never satiated [so the eyes of man are never satiated]*.

A *braisa* was taught in the academy of Eliyahu: *Gehinnom* is above the sky; some, however, say that is behind the Mountains of Darkness.

Rabbi Chiya taught a *braisa*: If one studies the Torah at night, the Divine Presence stands beside him. Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah said: Torah scholars increase peace in the world, for it is said: And all your children shall be disciples of Hashem; and abundant shall be the peace of your sons. Do not read it "your sons," but rather "your builders." (32a – 32b)

WE SHALL RETURN TO YOU, LO HAYU KOF'SIN

DAILY MASHAL

Torah Scholars Increasing Peace

Rabbi Elozar said in the name of Rabbi Chanina: Torah scholars increase peace in the world, for it is said: And all your children shall be disciples of Hashem; and abundant shall be the peace of your sons.

The commentators ask: Why does it say that the Torah scholars will increase peace in the world? The Gemora should say that they will make peace in the world.

The Kedushas Tziyon explains based on a Gemora Kiddushin (30b) where Rabbi Chiya bar Abba states that even a father and son, or a teacher and student who are engaged in Torah study will become enemies with one another (as they debate the intricacies of Talmudical law), but they will not budge from there until they become friends with each other.

It emerges that Torah scholars are increasing peace in the world because every time they are engaged in Torah study, they become temporary enemies and then, they bring about peace with each other. Ordinary friends remain friends, and are not constantly making peace. Torah scholars; the more they learn, the more they are increasing peace.

What Comes First?

In discussing the construction and assembly of the Mishkan and its vessels with Betzalel, Rashi writes that Moshe initially suggested that the vessels should be built before the Mishkan itself. Betzalel disagreed and maintained that the structure should be constructed before its contents so that the utensils would have a place to rest upon their completion, a position to which Moshe subsequently acquiesced. Tosfos (Berachos 55a) notes that the wording of the verses in Parshas Terumah seems to support the opinion



of Moshe, while the order used in Parshas Ki Sisa is in accord with Betzalel's position.

I once read a beautiful explanation of the dispute between Moshe and Betzalel based on a comparison to a similar disagreement. The Gemora in Chagigah (12a) records that Beis Hillel claimed that the Earth was created before the Heavens, while Beis Shammai maintained the opposite. Beis Hillel issued a challenge strikingly similar to that of Betzalel, asking Beis Shammai whether it is customary for a person to first build an attic (the Heavens) and only afterward the house (Earth).

The Rogatchover explains that this dispute was over a more profound question: which has more importance, the means to accomplish a goal or the goal itself? The ultimate purpose of life is to earn a portion in the World to Come, yet the mechanism for doing so is the performance of mitzvos in this world. Beis Shammai focused on the goal and held that the Heavens were created first, while Beis Hillel argued that because it is impossible to get there without the proper means, the Earth was created first.

Similarly, the focus of our lives is to elevate and perfect our souls, but the mechanism for doing so is the observance of the Torah with our bodies. Initially, a person's soul was dominant, but after Adam sinned the body became superior. The mystics write that although the Gemora rules in accordance with the opinion of Beis Hillel, in the Messianic era the law will be like the position of Beis Shammai.

We may symbolically explain that at present, the body (means) prevails and we follow the rulings of Beis Hillel. When Moshiach comes, the soul (purpose) will once again be dominant as it initially was, and we will conduct ourselves according to Beis Shammai. When the Jewish people enthusiastically accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai, they purified themselves to reach Adam's pre-sin level (Shabbos 146a). This new state was brief in duration, as they lost it when they sinned with the golden calf.

With this introduction, we can now explain that the purpose of the Mishkan was the Divine Service which took place inside through its vessels, while the Mishkan itself merely represented the means to accomplish this goal. Moshe wasn't present during the sin of the golden calf and didn't recognize the spiritual decline which had befallen the people. As such, he instructed Betzalel to make the vessels and then the Mishkan as he had been instructed in Parshas Terumah before the sin of the golden calf, when the Jewish people were on a level to follow the opinion of Beis Shammai.

Betzalel, on the other hand, recognized what had transpired and knew that they were no longer able to conduct themselves on such a lofty plane. He therefore suggested following the order of Parshas Ki Sisa, which was given after the sin of the golden calf (Rashi 31:18). Moshe recognized the unfortunate truth behind Betzalel's logic and conceded that his opinion was to be followed, remarking, "You were in the shadow of Hashem." Moshe was hinting that, unlike himself, Betzalel had witnessed the national downfall during the sin of the golden calf when the people returned to living in Hashem's "shadow" without a soul-dominated clarity of understanding, and therefore Beis Hillel's logic once again prevailed!