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Avodah Zarah Daf 18

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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

Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon

They then brought up Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon and asked him: Why have you occupied yourself with the study of Torah? He replied: *as Hashem, my God has commanded me*. Immediately they sentenced him to be burnt, his wife to be killed, and his daughter to dwell in a brothel.

The *Gemora* explains the reasons for these punishments: He was sentenced to death by burning because he pronounced Hashem’s Name (*of forty-two letters*) in its full spelling (*and he did with it whatever he desired*).

The *Gemora* asks: But how could he do so? Have we not learned in a *Mishna*: The following are people who do not have a share in the World to Come: One who says that the Torah is not from Heaven, or that there is no reference to the Resurrection of the Dead in the Torah. Abba Shaul says: Also one who pronounces Hashem’s Name according to its letters.

The *Gemora* answers: He did it in the course of teaching himself (*how to use it*), as it was taught in a *braisa*: *You shall not learn to act in accord with the abominations of those nations*, but you may learn about them in order to understand and to teach.

The *Gemora* asks: Why then was he punished?

The *Gemora* answers: It was because he was pronouncing the Name in public.

The *Gemora* continues its explanation: His wife was punished by being killed, because she did not protest against him. From this it was deduced: Anyone who has the power to protest against someone from doing something wrong and does not do so, is punished because of it.

His daughter was sentenced to dwell in a brothel, for Rabbi Yochanan related that Rabbi Chanina’s daughter was once walking in front of some great men of Rome, who remarked, “How beautiful are the steps of this maiden.” Immediately she paid particular attention to her steps. This confirms the following words of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish: What is the meaning of the verse: *The iniquity of my heel will surround me*? Sins which one treads with his heels in this world encompass him on the Day of Judgment.

When the three of them left the courthouse they acknowledged, through the citing of three Scriptural verses, the righteousness of the judgment against them. Rebbe said: How great were these righteous ones, in that the three Scriptural verses which acknowledged the righteousness of the Divine justice, readily occurred to them just at the appropriate time for the acknowledgment of such a submission.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: When Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma was ill, Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon went to visit him. He said to him: My brother Chanina, do you not know that it is Heaven that has imposed as rulers over us this Roman nation, which has destroyed His House, burned His Temple, killed His pious ones and caused His righteous ones to perish, and still, this ruler is firmly established! Yet, I have heard about



you that you sit and occupy yourself with the study of Torah, you publicly gather assemblies, and keep a Torah scroll in your bosom! Rabbi Chanina replied: Heaven will show mercy. Rabbi Yosi responded: I am telling you sensible words, and you say that Heaven will show mercy!? I will be surprised if they do not burn both you and the Torah scroll with fire. Rabbi Chanina asked him: My teacher, how do I stand with regard to the World to Come? Rabbi Yosi enquired: Is there any particular act that you have done? Rabbi Chanina answered: I once mistook Purim money for ordinary charity money, so I distributed the Purim money to the poor! [Afterwards, I distributed my own money as Purim funds.] Well then, said Rabbi Yosi, let my portion be from your portion, and let my lot be from your lot.

The *braisa* continues: It was said that within a few days Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma died and all the great men of Rome went to his burial and made a great funeral for him. On their return, they found Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon sitting and occupying himself with the study of Torah, publicly gathering assemblies, and a Torah scroll in his bosom. Immediately they brought him, and wrapped him in the Torah scroll, and placed bundles of vine shoots around him and set them on fire. They then brought tufts of wool and soaked them in water, and placed them over his heart, so that his soul should not depart quickly. His daughter said to him: Father, should I see you in this state? He replied: If it were I alone being burned it would have been a difficult thing to bear; but now that I am burning together with the Torah scroll, He who will seek retribution for the plight of the Torah scroll will also seek retribution for my plight. His disciples said to him: Teacher, what do you see? He answered them: The parchments are burning but the letters are flying in the air. Open your mouth, they said to him, so that the fire may enter you. He replied: Let Him who gave me my soul take it away, but no one should inflict injury upon himself.

The executioner then said to him: Master, if I enlarge the flame and take away the tufts of wool from over your heart,

will you bring me into the World to Come? He replied: Yes. He urged him to swear to this, and he did so. He thereupon enlarged the flame and removed the tufts of wool from over his heart, and his soul departed quickly. The executioner then jumped and threw himself into the fire. And a Heavenly Voice proclaimed: Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon and the executioner have been allotted to the World to Come. When Rebbe heard this story, he wept and said: One may acquire his portion in the World to Come through many years, and another may acquire it in one moment!

Beruria, the wife of Rabbi Meir, was a daughter of Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon. She said to her husband: I am embarrassed to have my sister dwell in a brothel. So he took a *tarkav*-full of *dinars* and set out. He thought as follows: If she has not submitted to anything wrong, a miracle will occur for her, but if she has committed an immoral act, no miracle will happen to her. Disguised as a Roman horseman, he came to her and said: Submit to me. She replied: The way of women is upon me. He said to her: I am prepared to wait until your menstruation has stopped. She asked him: But why? There are many prettier women here than I!? He said to himself: This (*her excuses*) proves that she has not committed any forbidden act; she no doubt says like this to every man that propositions her. He then went to her guard and said to him: Hand her over to me. He replied: I am afraid of the government. Rabbi Meir said: Take the *tarkav* of *dinars*, and one half distribute as a bribe, and the other half shall be for you. The guard asked him: And what shall I do when these are exhausted? Rabbi Meir replied: Then say, "God of Meir, answer me!" and you will be saved. The guard asked him: Who can assure me that this will be the case? He replied: You shall see now. There were some dogs that would bite people. Rabbi Meir took a clod of earth and threw it at them, and when they were about to bite him, he exclaimed, "God of Meir, answer me!" and they let him alone. The guard then handed her over to him. Ultimately, the matter became known to the government, and the guard on being brought for trial and convicted was taken up to the gallows, when he exclaimed, "God of Meir, answer



me!" [A miracle occurred, and try as they might, they could not hang him.] They took him down and asked him what that meant, and he told them the story that had happened. They then engraved Rabbi Meir's likeness on the gates of Rome and announced that anyone seeing a person resembling it should bring him to the government. One day there were some Romans who saw him and ran after him, so he ran away from them and entered a brothel. Some say that he happened just then to see food cooked by idolaters (which is forbidden for a Jew to eat), and he dipped in one finger and then sucked on the other one (giving the appearance as if he was eating from it). Others say that Eliyahu the Prophet appeared to them as a harlot who embraced him. They said: Heaven forbid! Were this Rabbi Meir, he would not have acted like this. He then arose and ran away and came to Babylon. Some say it was because of this incident that he ran to Babylon; and others say that it was due to the incident with Beruria. [The Gemora Kiddushin (80b) relates that when Rabbi Meir's wife taunted him about the familiar Rabbinic adage "Women's minds are easily swayed," he replied that one day she would herself testify to its truth. When, subsequently, she was enticed by one of her husband's disciples, upon Rabbi Meir's instructions, she indeed proved to be too weak to resist. She then hanged herself and the husband, for shame, ran away to Babylon.] (17b – 18b)

Stadiums and Camps

The Gemora cites a *braisa*: Those who go to stadiums or camps and see there the performance of conjurers and snake charmers, or different kinds of clowns, are considered "sitting in a session of jesters." These things cause one to neglect the study of Torah.

The Gemora contradicts this with the following *braisa*: It is permitted to go to stadiums, because by shouting, one may rescue the victim. One is also permitted to go to a camp for the purpose of relieving the besieged city, providing that he

is not counted with the besiegers; if, however, he is counted with the besiegers, it is forbidden.

The Gemora answers: There may indeed be no contradiction between those relating to camps, because the first *braisa* refers to a case where he is counted with the besiegers, and the other refers to the case where he is not counted with the besiegers.

As far as the contradiction regarding stadiums, they represent the differing opinions of two *Tannaim*, for it has been taught in a *braisa*: One should not go to stadiums because they are considered "sitting in a session of jesters." Rabbi Nassan permits it for two reasons: first, because by shouting, one may rescue the victim, and secondly, because one might be able to give testimony for the victim's wife, and so enable her to marry again.

The Gemora cites a *braisa*: One should not go to theatres or circuses because they gather there in honor of the idols; these are the words of Rabbi Meir. But the Sages say: Where they gather there in honor of the idols, it is prohibited to go there because of the suspicion of idolatrous worship, and where they do not gather there in honor of the idols, it is nevertheless forbidden because they are considered "sitting in a session of jesters." Rabbi Chanina of Sura notes the difference between them: There is a difference in the case where a Jew went there and traded with the idolaters gathered there. [If it is forbidden on account of idol worship, the money is prohibited.]

Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi expounded: What does the Torah mean when it says: *Praiseworthy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat at the session of the jesters?* If he did not even walk that way, how could he have stood there? And if he did not stand there, he obviously did not sit with them; and as he did not sit among them, how could he have scoffed? The Torah is teaching us that if one merely walks on such a path, he will subsequently stand with them, and



if he stands there, he will ultimately sit with them, and if he does sit, he will also come to scoff, and if he does scoff, he alone will bear the consequence.

Rabbi Elozar said: He who scoffs, affliction will befall him.

Raba used to beg his students not to scoff, so that they will not incur afflictions.

Rav Katina said: He, who scoffs, his sustenance will be diminished.

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: He who scoffs will fall into Gehinnom.

Rabbi Oshaya said: He who is haughty will fall into Gehinnom.

Rabbi Tanchum bar Chanilai said: He who scoffs brings destruction upon the world.

Rabbi Elozar said: It is indeed harsh, since it incurs affliction at first and it culminates in ruin. (18b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

How Hashem's Name should be Read when Reading the Torah

By: Meoros HaDaf HaYomi

Our *sugya* explains that a person who pronounces Hashem's Name as it is written has no portion in the World to Come (according to most Rishonim and see Rashi, 17b, s.v. 'Alav). Indeed, Hashem's Name appears over 6,000 times in the Tanach but we pronounce it as *Ado-nai*, from the word *adon* ("lord").

Why we don't pronounce Hashem's Name as written: Many works devote a lengthy discussion as to why we don't

pronounce Hashem's Name as written (see Responsa *Yachin Uvoaz*, I, 135). It is interesting to note the exchange of letters between HaGaon Rabbi Akiva Eiger zt"l and his son-in-law, the Chasam Sofer zt"l (Responsa, V, *Hashmatos*, 195), in the wake of Reformers who wanted to pronounce Hashem's Name as written. The Chasam Sofer proved from the Tanach that they were gravely mistaken as the Name *yud keh vav keh* is Hashem's real Name and not a descriptive Name. Many times we come across the combination *yud keh vav keh tzevaos* in the Tanach. When read as usual, this means "Lord of hosts" but if Hashem's Name is pronounced as written, the statement becomes "Hashem is hosts", which is meaningless (see further *ibid* about our lack of knowledge concerning the vowel points of Hashem's Name).

Keri and kesiv: a substitute or a different word? We find a difference of opinions about pronouncing Hashem's Name as written. There are other words in Tanach whose read version (*keri*) does not match their written version (*kesiv*) (see Devarim 28:30, Shemuel I 9:1, etc.) as we have the *halachah* from Moshe at Sinai that they must be so read. However, opinions differ as to if *Ado-nai* is the substitute *keri* of *yud keh vav keh* or if the proper pronunciation of *yud keh vav keh* is *Ado-nai*, without being a different word (see *Chidushei HaGeriz*, *Hilchos 'Avodah Zarah*, 2:7, and in his work on the Torah, *parashas Vaeschanan*; *Eish Tamid*, p. 878; *Birchos Horai*, 16, remark 1).

A word smeared with wax: This difference of opinions has a most practical implication as *Peri Megadim* (O.C. 141 in *Eishel Avraham*, S.K. 9) rules that when there is a *keri* and *kesiv*, the *ba'al korei* does not have to look at the *kesiv*, as he is not reading it. Moreover, some believe that if a word in a *sefer Torah* is smeared with wax, this is no defect as the wax does not erase the word but merely hides it (see Responsa *Rabbi 'Akiva Eiger*, 2nd ed., 11). As a result, there is nothing wrong with reading the *keri* of such a hidden word as it doesn't have to be seen to be read. Now, if *Ado-nai* is the **substitute** version (*keri*) of *yud keh vav keh*, the *ba'al*

korei does not have to see the *yud keh vav keh* but if *Adonai* is the actual **pronunciation** of *yud keh vav keh*, he must see the Name (*Birchos Horai*, *ibid*; *Sha'ar Efrayim* [*sha'ar* 3:13] believes that a *ba'al korei* must look at the *kesiv* when pronouncing the *keri* and see *Birchos Horai*, *ibid*, which discusses the reason and contends that the matter lacks a basis; see further in Responsa *Igros Moshe*, O.C. I, 32, 'anaf 6, and III, 41).

Going to the Zoo

"And in a gathering of scoffers he did not sit" (Tehilim 1:1). *Chazal* applied this term to someone who goes to a stadium – where contests are held between people and animals – for such attendance brings a person to neglect the study of Torah. The author of *Peri HaSadeh* (Responsa, III, 173) remarks that for that reason one should not go to a zoo to observe animals, while the *berachah* on unusual animals (*Shulchan 'Aruch*, O.C. 225:8) was instituted for those who come across them by chance. However, his opinion is unique and the pupil of the *Terumas HaDeshen* (*Leket Yosher*, O.C., p. 66) testified that his mentor never saw a lion until two lions were brought to his town and he went to see them.

Watching horseraces: Jewish horse merchants asked Mahari Bruna (Responsa, 71) if they could participate in races and he replied that if they intend to learn the art of racing or check the horses' health, they may do so. However, the *Remo* (*Darchei Moshe*, O.C. 316:2) sharply denigrates those engaged in games with animals, such as by hunting with dogs, and says that they "do not earn the joy of *Livyan*". *Peri Megadim* (*Eishel Avraham*, *ibid*, S.K. 25) believes that someone who earns his living thereby is not considered a scoffer.

DAILY MASHAL

An Ancient Search Engine

In his *Shem HaGedolim*, the Chida recounts that the Shach

knew the "finding Name" – a holy Name that, when pronounced with great concentration, enables one to find any saying of Chazal then needed (*Ma'areches Sefarim*, os shin, 134).

Why the Volozhin Yeshivah Was Better

HaGaon Rav Z.R. Bengis related that in his youth his parents discussed what yeshivah to send him to. They finally decided on Volozhin. Why? Because the benches were wider there. If he became tired, he could take a nap on a bench without wasting time going to his lodgings.