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Avodah Zarah Daf 9

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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

Calculating the Years

The *Gemora* asks: Was it only one hundred and eighty years before the destruction of the Second Temple that Rome started ruling over *Bnei Yisroel*? Rabbi Yosi the son of Rebbe taught: The Persian Empire ruled for the first thirty-four years of the Second Temple, after which Greece ruled for one hundred and eighty years. The kingdom of the Chashmonaim then ruled for one hundred and three years, after which the house of Hurdus ruled for one hundred and three years. From that point on, anyone (*who is teaching this braisa*) should go and count how many years there have been since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. This indicates that Rome already ruled for two hundred and six years before the destruction (*as the Chashmonaim overthrew Greece together*), not one hundred and eighty years!?

Rather, the *Gemora* answers: For twenty-six years the Romans kept to their agreement not to subjugate *Bnei Yisroel*, and they acted like partners with them. However, after this time, they broke their agreement. This is why Rabbi Yishmael deemed their rule to start only one hundred and eighty years before the destruction.

Rav Pappa says: If this *Tanna* (*or any Jew*) would make a mistake and not know exactly which year it was after the destruction, he should ask the scribe who writes documents how many years it is, and add twenty. [*This is because the scribes usually write their documents based on the kingdom of Greece, which is twenty years earlier than the destruction (see below). Although the Greek years started three hundred*

and eighty years before the destruction, the discrepancy in the double digit column between this and the churban is twenty years. This amount is therefore helpful in knowing that one should add twenty years to the last two digits of the Greek date in order to get the Jewish date. This of course works with the assumption that the person asking knows the centuries after the destruction.] He will then find the proper amount. A sign that this is the amount added is the verse: *This, for me, was twenty years in your house etc.* If the scribe makes a mistake and does not know exactly which year it was after the kingdom of Greece, he should ask the *Tanna* (*or Jew*) how many years it is, and subtract twenty. The sign for this is a scribe lessens, and a *Tanna* adds. [*A scribe follows tradition that some words should be written without a certain letter; a Tanna adds teachings to the Mishna, such as the Tosefta.*]

A *braisa* was taught in the academy of Eliyahu: The world will last for six thousand years. Two thousand are years of nothingness, two thousand are years of Torah, and two thousand are the days of *Mashiach*. Because of our many sins, what has happened has happened (*that Mashiach has not yet come*).

The *Gemora* asks: When did the two thousand years of Torah start? If it started from the Giving of the Torah and on, the amount is incorrect. This is because the Torah was given in the year 2448 (*which is well into the third thousand*)!?

Rather, the *Gemora* says: We can deduce the amount from the verse: *And the souls that they made in Charan.* We have



a tradition that Avram at that time was fifty-two. How many years were taken from the third thousand for the giving of the Torah? It was 2,448 years. When you count the years from Avram being fifty-two until the giving of the Torah, it is 448 years. [See Rashi for all of the calculations proving that this is correct.]

Rav Pappa says: If the *Tanna* made a mistake and did not remember exactly how many years have passed from the two thousand years of *Mashiach*, he should ask the scribe for the year and add forty-eight. [He adds this to the last two digits, with the assumption being that he knows the amount of centuries, as explained above at length.] The sign for this amount is the verse: *forty-eight cities*. If the scribe forgets his amount of years he can ask the *Tanna* and subtract forty-eight. The sign for this is that the scribe subtracts and the *Tanna* adds.

Rav Huna the son of Rav Yehoshua says: If a person does not know which year of the seven-year *Shemittah* cycle he is in, he should add one year to the difference between the year he is in and the date of the destruction. [Rashi explains that the destruction occurred in the first year of the *Shemittah* cycle. Accordingly, he can add one year to the difference between these amounts, and understand which year of the seven year cycle he is in.] He can then think of each century as two *Yovel* cycles (including seven *Shemittah* cycles) minus two years. He can then add these two years to the rest of the (single or double digit amount of years), and he will know which year of *Shemittah* he is in. The sign for this is the verse: *For the past two years there has been famine in the land*.

Rabbi Chanina says: If someone will say to you four hundred years after the destruction of the Second Temple that you should buy a field worth one thousand *dinarim* for one *dinar*, you should not buy it. [Rabbi Chanina thought *Mashiach* would certainly come by this time, and people would have their own inheritance for free in Eretz Yisroel.]

The *braisa* taught: If someone will say to you four thousand two hundred and thirty one years after the creation of the world that you should buy a field worth one thousand *dinarim* for one *dinar*, you should not buy it.

The *Gemora* asks: What is the difference between their opinions?

The *Gemora* answers: The difference is that the exile will be three years longer according to the *braisa*. (8b – 9b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Which Year are we in?

This year is not 5763?

“On the first of the week, 19 Adar II, in the year 5763 since Creation according to the number that we count here in Bnei Berak...” Such a sentence, opening the *kesuvah*, is familiar to anyone who has ever stood near a *chupah* and listened to the reading of the *kesuvah*. But why the addition of “according to the number that we count here in Bnei Berak”? Is the same number not counted everywhere? The *Tashbetz* (Responsa, I 301) saw fit to elucidate this topic, as we shall explain.

Our *sugya* addresses different calculations of years, indicating that the Second Temple stood till 3828 years after the Creation. The *Gemora* in Arachin 10b also explains that the Second Temple was destroyed in a year following the *Shemittah*. Consequently, there should be no difficulty in calculating the *Shemittah* up till today, as the year before the destruction, 3827, was a *Shemittah* year. The matter, however, is not at all simple because of two essential differences of opinions.

In what year was the Temple destroyed? According to Rashi (s.v. *Ki m'ayant*), the Temple was indeed destroyed in 3828 and therefore 3827 was a *Shemittah* year. However, Rashbam (in Tosfos) disagrees and believes that the Second

Temple was destroyed in 3829 but that that year is not included in the years of the Temple, as the Temple did not stand during all the months of that year. Hence in his opinion, 3828 was a *Shemittah* year.

On the other hand, Rambam (*Hilchos Shemittah Veyovel*, 10:5, in the name of the Geonim) combines the approaches of Rashi and Rashbam. In his opinion, the Temple was destroyed in 3828, as in Rashi's approach, but that year itself was a *Shemittah* year, conforming to Rashbam's opinion. The *Gemora* explaining that the Temple was destroyed after a *Shemittah* year refers to the year of mourning following the destruction.

We thus have two opinions. According to Rashi the *Shemittah* year was 3827 and according to Rashbam and Rambam, 3828. A quick calculation will show that according to Rashi the last *Shemittah* should have been in 5766 and according to Rambam, in 5767 whereas we observed the *Shemittah* in 5768!

Did some confusion occur in the calculation of the years over the generations? Or perhaps there are a few systems for calculating the years since the Creation? Indeed, it is so. There are different opinions as to if we should reckon the first five days of Creation as a whole year, as follows.

We assume, at least for the sake of counting years, that the world was created in Tishrei: "This day (Rosh Hashanah) is the beginning of Your deeds." However, 1 Tishrei is not the day on which the world was created but on which Adam was created, whereas the world was created five days previously, on 25 Elul. Some count the years since Creation as starting on the sixth day of Creation – i.e., 1 Tishrei – but some (see the *Maor* on our *sugya*) count the first five days of Creation as a year in itself whereas the first 1 Tishrei starts the second year since Creation.

All agree that the sages of the Talmud counted the first year of Creation as starting on 1 Tishrei but we have adopted the

other opinion, that the first five days of Creation should be regarded as a year in itself. We must therefore "move" the dates cited above. In other words, according to Rashi 3828 was a *Shemittah* year and according to Rambam, 3829 was a *Shemittah* year (see *Ki Hi Chochmaschem Uvinaschem*, Ch. 16, as for the reason why we count the years so and see his explanation of the Vilna Gaon's opinion; see further in *Birkas Kohen* on the Torah, 146, who devotes a lengthy discussion to the issue).

If so, we have found out which year this is and all that remains is to clarify whether the *halachah* is according to Rashi or Rambam. Indeed, all the *poskim* agree that we should follow Rambam and that we "should not budge from the custom" (see *Chazon Ish*, *Hilchos Shevi'is*, 3, S.K. 33, and *Shemitas Karka'os*, 2, note1). We thus understand the formulation of the *kesuvah* – "**according to the number we count here**" – for there was another custom, according to which this year would be 5762.

We conclude on an interesting grammatical note cited in *Mishpat HaKesuvah* (*sha'ar 2*, Ch. 5). While our *sugya* counts the years since the creation of **the** world, we write in the *kesuvah* "since the creation of world", without the definite article. It seems, asserts the author, that as our reckoning of the years includes the first five days as a year in itself, the formulators of the *kesuvah* did not want to write "the creation of **the** world".