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Bava Basra Daf 25

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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

Mishna

One must distance carcasses, graves and a tannery fifty *amos* away from a city (*due to their unpleasant odor*). One should not make a tannery except to the east of a city (*since its wind is not so fierce, the odor will not be carried to the city*). Rabbi Akiva says: It may be established on any side except the west, and he distances it fifty *amos* away.

One must distance a flax pool from his neighbor’s vegetables, and leeks from onions, and mustard plants from a beehive (*for the bees taste the mustard and then eat their honey to remove the sharpness left in their mouths*). Rabbi Yosi maintains that it permissible in the case of the mustard. (25a)

Directions

The *Gemora* inquires: How are we to understand Rabbi Akiva’s ruling? Does he mean to say that a tannery may be established on any side close to the city, except on the west, where also it may be placed, but only at a distance of fifty *amos*? Or perhaps he meant that it may be established on any side, but only at a distance of fifty *amos*; however on the west side it must not be placed at all?

The *Gemora* resolves this from a *braisa*: Rabbi Akiva says: A tannery may be established on any side at a

distance of fifty *amos*, except on the west side, where it must not be placed at all, because it is constant.

Rava asked Rav Nachman: What is the meaning of “constant”? It cannot be referring to the winds, for Rav Chanan bar Rava said in the name of Rav: Four winds blow every day and the north wind (*a pleasant wind, which is neither too hot, nor too cold*) blows with all of them, for were it not so the world would not be able to exist for a moment (*it calms the affects from the other winds*). The south wind is the most violent of all, and were it not for the angel Ben Neitz who keeps it back, it would destroy the whole world in its path! [We see that it is the north wind that is constantly blowing; not the west wind!?!]

The *Gemora* answers: It means that it is the constant direction of the *Shechinah*. [There is a greater manifestation of the *Shechinah* on the west side, and therefore it is deemed improper to establish a tannery in that direction.]

This is supported by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, who says: Let us show gratitude to our ancestors (*the Men of the Great Assembly*) for showing us the place (*the direction*) of prayer, as it is written: *And the heaven legions bow to you (the sun, which rises in the east, appears to be bowing towards G-d when it sets in the west).*



Rav Acha bar Yaakov asked on this interpretation: Perhaps the sun and moon are bowing down like a servant who has received a portion from his master and walks backwards, bowing as he goes!? [This would indicate that the Shechinah is in the east!?!]

The Gemora notes that this indeed is a difficulty.

Rabbi Oshaya holds that the Shechinah is in every place. For he said: What is the meaning of the verse: *You are God, You alone; You have made the heavens*, etc.? Your messengers are not like the messengers of flesh and blood. Messengers of flesh and blood return a report after performing their agency to the place from which they have been sent, but Your messengers return a report to the place to which they are sent.

Rabbi Yishmael also held that the Shechinah is in all places, since it was taught in the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael: From where do we know that the Shechinah is in all places? It is because it says: *And behold, the angel that talked with me came forth, and another angel went out to meet him*. It does not say, 'went out after him,' but 'went out to meet him.' This shows that the Shechinah is in all places.

Rav Sheishes also held that the Shechinah is in all places, because when desiring to pray (and since he was blind) he used to say to his attendant, "Stand me facing any way except the east." And this was not because the Shechinah is not there, but because the heretics prescribe praying to the east.

Rabbi Avahu, however, said that the Shechinah is in the west, for so said Rabbi Avahu: What is the meaning of Uryah (meaning east)? It comes from the words *avir Yah* (the air of God).

The Gemora cites a braisa: Rabbi Eliezer said: the world is like a pavilion (closed on three sides, but opened on the fourth side) and the north side is not enclosed, and so when the sun reaches the northwest corner, it turns around and returns to the east above the heaven. Rabbi Yehoshua, however, says that the world is like a tent (closed on all four sides), and the north side is also enclosed, and when the sun reaches the northwest corner, it goes around and circles the back of the tent (until it reaches the east), as it is written: *The sun goes toward the south and it circles toward the north*. 'It goes toward the south' - by day, and 'it circles toward the north' - by night.

Rabbi Yehoshua expounds the verse further: *It goes about continually in its course and in its travels it retraces the directions*. This refers to the eastern and western sides of the horizon, which the sun sometimes circles them (during the winter nights) and sometimes it traverses them (during the summer days).

The braisa continues: It is written: *Out of the inner chamber comes the whirlwind* - this is the south wind. *And from the scattered parts, the cold* - this is the north wind. *By the breath of God ice is given* - this is the west wind. *And the expanse of water in the torrent* - this is the east wind.

The Gemora asks: But it has just been stated by Rav Yehudah that it is the south wind (and not the east wind) which brings showers and makes the grass grow?

The Gemora answers: There is no contradiction, for when the rain falls gently (and makes the grass grow), it is from the south, and when it falls in torrents, it is from the east.

Rafram bar Pappa said in the name of Rav Chisda: Since the day when the Holy Temple was destroyed, the south wind has not brought rain, as it is written: *And he decreed on the right and there was hunger and he consumed on the left and they were not satisfied*; and it is written: *North and right (the south), You have created them.*

Rafram bar Pappa said in the name of Rav Chisda: Since the day when the Holy Temple was destroyed, rain did not descend from the “good storehouse,” as it is written: *God shall open up to you His good storehouse.* When the Jewish people act according to the will of God and are settled in their own land, the rain descends from the “good storehouse,” but when they are not settled in their own land, the rain does not descend from the “good storehouse.”

Rabbi Yitzchak said: He who desires to become knowledgeable should turn to the south (*when praying*), and he who desires to become wealthy should turn to the north. The symbol (*in order to remember this*) is that the table (*in the Sanctuary*) was on the north side (*and the table is a symbol for prosperity*) and the *menorah* (*symbolizing Torah*) was on the south.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, however, said that he should always turn to the south (*when praying*), because through obtaining knowledge, he will obtain wealth, as it is written: *Length of days are in wisdom’s right hand; in its left hand are wealth and honor.*

The *Gemora* asks: But was it not Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi who said that the *Shechinah* is in the west?

The *Gemora* answers: He means that one should turn somewhat to the south.

Rabbi Chanina said to Rav Ashi: Those like you who live to the north of *Eretz Yisroel* should turn to the south.

How do we know that Bavel is to the north of *Eretz Yisroel*? It is written: *Out of the north evil shall upon all the inhabitants of the land.*

The *Mishna* had stated: One must distance a flax pool from his neighbor’s vegetables, and leeks from onions, and mustard plants from a beehive (*for the bees taste the mustard and then eat their honey to remove the sharpness left in their mouths*). Rabbi Yosi maintains that it is permissible in the case of the mustard.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: Rabbi Yosi maintains that it is permissible in the case of the mustard because the owner of the mustard can say to his neighbor, “Before you tell me to remove my mustard from your bees, I can tell you, ‘Remove your bees from my mustard, because they come and eat the flowers from my mustard plants!’” (25a – 25b)

Mishna

One must distance a tree twenty-five *amos* from a pit in another man’s field. If it is a carob or sycamore tree, he must distance it fifty *amos* (*for their roots are larger*). This applies whether one is above the other, or if they are on the same level.

If the pit was there first, he must cut down the tree, but the neighbor reimburses him (*since the damage is not immediate*). If the tree was there already, he is not required to cut it down. If it is unclear whether the tree or pit was first, he is not required to cut down the tree. Rabbi Yosi says: Even if the pit was there before the tree, the tree does not need to be cut down, because

just as one owner may dig a pit in his property, the other may plant a tree in his. [*Rabbi Yosi is of the opinion that it is the obligation of the suffering party to distance his property from the hazard!*] (25b)

Distancing

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: The *halachah* applies whether the tree is on a higher ground than the pit or the pit is on higher ground than the tree.

The *Gemora* asks: If the tree is on higher ground than the pit, we can understand the prohibition, because the roots spread and damage the pit. But if the pit is higher than the tree, what possible damage can there be?

Rav Chaga answered in the name of Rabbi Yosi: It is because the roots travel under the soil and damage the floor of the pit.

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel that the *halachah* follows Rabbi Yosi (*that it is the obligation of the suffering party to distance his property from the hazard*). (25b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Is the Earth Round or Square?

Rabbi Eliezer says that the world resembles a porch, a structure which lacks a fourth wall (Rashi, s.v. *Le'achsadrah*), and the north side is not enclosed. The fact that the earth is a globe was known in the Talmudic era and anyone learning the book of Yeshayahu would surely notice the verse "*He who sits on the circle of the earth*" (40:22).

How are we, then, to interpret Rabbi Eliezer's statement that the world lacks one side? The well-known astronomer Rabbi Dr. Nisim Vidal offers an explanation as intriguing as it is simple.

The great drain at the North Pole:

Rav Pinchas Eliahu of Vilna, a contemporary of the Vilna Gaon, is known for his *Sefer HaBris*, a compendium of the natural sciences based on Talmudic and Midrashic sources. [Pupils of the Chasam Sofer recounted (Responso Chasam Sofer, *Kovetz Teshuvos*, 26) that he studied the work closely and recommended it to those wanting to gain expertise in different scientific fields: "We owe much to the author for saving us a lot of time, now that I don't have to pen a similar book for you"]. *Sefer HaBris* addresses Rabbi Eliezer's statement, citing Rav Avraham Ereira's *Sha'arei Shomayim* that "the North Pole has a great hole...and the oceanic waters enter it...This is what *Chazal* meant, saying the north side is not enclosed."

Rabbi Dr Vidal explains that the scientific writings of leading Torah giants of past generations were not recorded just for the technical data but include profound concepts from the Kabbalah. Nonetheless, our *Gemora* may be explained quite simply: The sun, of course, rises in the east and sets in the west but its apparent orbit changes with the seasons, moving south in the winter (in the Northern Hemisphere).

It seems, then, at least in *Eretz Yisroel*, that the sun at midday shines down straight on us in the summer while, in the winter, it moves south, leaving the north "not enclosed" – i.e., not surrounded by its light. At any rate, the *Gemora* surely does not imply that the earth is square. (Many commentators make great efforts to



explain our *Gemora*; see Maharal's *Be'er HaGolah*, *Be'er VI*, p. 128 and *Sifsei Chayim*, *Mo'adim*, II, p. 147).

Direction of Praying

Rav Chanina said to Rav Ashi that the people of Bavel who are north of *Eretz Yisroel*, should daven to the south. This is based on the premise that the direction of *tefillah* should be toward *Eretz Yisroel*. Tosafos (25a) explains that this opinion is consistent with the *braisa* in Brachos (30a) that says that one should face toward Yerushalaim. However, in the *Gemora* 25a, Rav Sheishes told his assistant that he should allow him to daven in any direction except toward east. Any direction is technically fine because he followed the opinions that the *Shechinah* is in all directions, even in the east, but since idolaters pray toward the east (*because they worshipped the sun that rises in the east*), he made a special effort not to daven in that direction.

Most Jews out of *Eretz Yisroel* live west of *Eretz Yisroel* (*some of us further west than others*). Based on the first approach of davening toward *Eretz Yisroel* and Yerushalaim, we should be facing east (*or perhaps whichever direction would be the quickest line drawn to Eretz Yisroel, which in California would be more north than east - but that is not the minhag*). But, based on the concern of idol worshipers, we should refrain from davening to the east, as Rav Sheishes was careful not to do.

R' Moshe (dibros, heara 44) explains that in the time of Rav Sheishes, there were many idol worshipers who would pray to the east. Therefore, even those who live west of Yerushalayim and should be praying to the east, would not. But nowadays we daven to the east because

we are west of *Eretz Yisroel* and there no longer exists idol worshipers who pray in that direction.

DAILY MASHAL

The Best Advice to Attain True Riches

Our *Gemora* counsels those seeking wisdom to face southward in prayer and those wanting riches to face to the north. In his *Ben Yehoyada*, Rav Yosef Chayim reminds us that experts in moral conduct advise us, for spiritual matters, to look to those above us to increase our striving for achievement. For material matters, we should consider the poorer and be content with our lot. The south, *darom*, is also called *teiman*, from *yamin* ("the right") as when we face the dawn the south is to our right. To the right of the letters *lamed* and *beis*, forming **lev** – the heart, being the seat of wisdom and striving – stand the letters *alef* and *kaf*, spelling **ach** ("only") whereas to their left stand *gimel* and *mem*, forming **gam** ("also"). Those seeking wisdom, then, should turn to the right (south), stressing they are **only** at their present level and must strive upwards whereas those wanting riches should turn to the left (north), look at the poorer and realize they **also** have much more than others. Becoming happy with their portion, they will be truly rich.