

2 Elul 5777
August 24, 2017



Sanhedrin Daf 39

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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

Responding to Heretics

A heretic once said to Rabban Gamliel: Your God is a thief, for it is written: And Hashem God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept (*and He took one of his ribs and made the side into a woman*). Thereupon the heretic’s daughter said to him, “Leave him to me and I will answer him,” and she said, “Give me a judge.” He asked, “Why do you need him?” she replied, “Thieves came upon us last night and robbed us of a silver pitcher, leaving a golden one in its place.” He exclaimed, “Would such a thief visit us every day!” She retorted, “Was it not to Adam’s advantage that a rib was taken from him and a maid to serve him was presented to him instead?” He replied, “I meant that He should have taken it from him openly.” She responded to him, “Let me have a piece of raw meat.” It was given to her. She placed it under some hot ashes and then took it out and offered it to him to eat. “I find it repulsive,” he exclaimed. She therefore retorted, “If Chavah would have been taken from him openly, she would have been disgusting to him.”

A heretic said to Rabban Gamliel, “I know what your God is doing, and where He is seated.” Rabban Gamliel became faint and sighed, and on being asked the reason, answered, “I have a son in one of the cities of the sea, and I long to see him. Please show him to me.” “Do I know where he is,” he replied. Rabban Gamliel retorted, “You do not know what is on earth, and yet you claim to know what is in heaven!”

A heretic said to Rabban Gamliel, “It is written: *He counts the number of the stars*. What is so remarkable about that? I too can count them!” Rabban Gamliel brought some quinces, put them into a sieve, whirled them around, and said, “Count them.” The heretic requested, “Keep them still (*so I can count*

them).” Thereupon Rabban Gamliel observed, “But the Heavens are also moving!”

Some say that the heretic said as follows, “The number of the stars is known to me.” Thereupon Rabban Gamliel asked him, “How many molars and teeth do you have in your mouth?” He put his hand inside his mouth and began to count them. Rabban Gamliel said to him, “You do not know what is in your mouth and yet you claim to know what is in Heaven!”

A heretic said to Rabban Gamliel, “He who created the mountains did not create the wind, for it is written: For behold, the Fashioner of mountains and Creator of wind.” [By the fact that there are two expressions used, it would seem that two different powers created the mountains and the wind.] Rabban Gamliel replied, “According to this reasoning, when we find it written of Adam: *And He created man*, and, *And he fashioned man*; would you also say that He who created one limb did not create the other? And furthermore there is a part of the human body by the head - just a handbreadth square, which contains two holes (*the eye and the ear*) and would you say that he who created one did not create the other? For it is written: He who implants the ear, shall he not hear? He who forms the eye, shall he not see?” “Yes,” the heretic answered. Rabban Gamliel rejoined, “yet, at the time of death, do they (*all man’s creators*) agree that it is time to die!?”

A sorcerer once said to Ameimar, “From the middle of your body upwards belongs to Hormiz, and from the middle downwards belongs to Ahormiz.” Ameimar replied, “If so, why then does Ahormiz permit Hormiz to send putrid water through his territory?”



Caesar proposed to Rabbi Tanchum, "Come, let us all be one people." "Very well," he answered, "but we who are circumcised cannot possibly become like you; you become circumcised and be like us." Caesar replied, "You have argued well, nevertheless, anyone who bests the king must be thrown into a pen of wild beasts." So they threw him in, but he was not eaten. Thereupon, a Sadducee remarked, "The reason the animals did not eat him is because they were not hungry." So they threw the heretic in, and he was eaten.

A heretic said to Rabban Gamliel, "You maintain that the *Shechinah* rests upon every assembly of ten Jews! How many *Shechinahs* are there then?" Rabban Gamliel called his servant, and hit him on the neck, saying, "Why did you let the sun enter into the heretic's house?" "But," he responded, "the sun shines upon the entire world!" Rabban Gamliel retorted, "Then if the sun, which is but one of the thousands of thousands of myriads of the servants of the Holy One, blessed be He, shines on the whole world, how much more so then, the *Shechinah* of the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself (should be able to rest on more than one place at a time)!"

A certain heretic said to Rabbi Avahu, "Your God is a jester, for He said to Yechezkel, 'Lie down on your left side,' and it is also written (*that he said*), 'Lie on thy right side.'" Just then, a disciple came and asked him, "What is the reason for the *Shemittah* year?" Rabbi Avahu said, "Now, I shall say something which will be fitting for both of you equally. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel, Plant your crops for six years but desist on the seventh, so that you may know that the earth is Mine. They, however, did not do so, but sinned and were exiled. Now, it is the universal practice that a king of flesh and blood against whom his subjects³⁶ have rebelled - if he is cruel, he will kill them all; if he is merciful, he will kill half of them; but if he is exceptionally merciful, he will inflict suffering only upon the great ones. So too, the Holy One, blessed be He, afflicted Yechezkel in order to cleanse Israel from their sins."

A certain heretic once said to Rabbi Avahu, "Your God is a *Kohen*, since it is written: *And take for me terumah*. Now,

when He had buried Moshe, where did He immerse Himself after contact with the corpse? And should you reply that it was in water, is it not written: Who measured the waters with His fist (*so He could not have immersed Himself in all of the world's waters*)?" Rabbi Avahu answered, "He bathed in fire, for it is written: *Hashem will come in fire*." The heretic asked, "Is purification by fire effective?" He responded, "On the contrary! Immersion should essentially be in fire, for it is written: *And all that cannot pass through fire should pass through water*."

A heretic once said to Rabbi Avina, "It is written: *And who is like Your people, like Israel, one nation in the land*? But where does their superiority lie? You too are combined with us, for it is written: *All the nations (including Israel) are as nothing before Him*?" He answered, "One of your own prophets (Bilaam) has already testified for us (*that we are not included with the rest of the nations*), as it is written: *And you are not counted among the nations*."

Rabbi Elozar asked the following contradiction: It is written: *Hashem is good to all*; but it is also written: *Hashem is good to those who wait for Him*!? This may be compared to a man who has an orchard. When he irrigates it, he irrigates the entire orchard; but when he hoes, he hoes only the best trees. (39a – 39b)

The Wicked

The *Mishna* had stated: Therefore each and every one is obligated to say etc. (*and should you say, "Why should we be responsible for the blood of this one?" Surely it is written: And when the wicked perish, there is joy*).

And there went out the song throughout the camp (when Achav died). Rav Acha bar Chanina said: It is the song referred to in the verse: *When the wicked perish, there is joy*. When Achav ben Omri perished, there was joy.

The *Gemora* asks: But does the Holy One, blessed be He, rejoice over the downfall of the wicked? Did Rabbi Yonasan not say that the expression, "for it is good" is omitted from an

expression of thanks because the Holy One, blessed be He, does not rejoice in the downfall of the wicked?

This concept is also said by Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman in the name of Rabbi Yonasan: The angels of heaven wanted to sing a song of praise when the Egyptians were drowning, and Hashem said to them: My creations are drowning in the sea, and you want to sing songs?

Rabbi Yosi bar Chanina answers: He Himself does not rejoice, but He makes others rejoice.

The *Gemora* discusses Achav's death: Michayehu prophesied that Achav would die during battle. Eliyahu prophesied that he would die elsewhere. They both were fulfilled. An archer shot him and killed him during battle. His chariot took him to Samaria, where the dogs lapped his blood, as it was still oozing from his wounds.

Rava said that Achav was cold (*and not interested in having relations with his wife*), so Izebel, his wife, drew two prostitutes on his chariot in order to get him aroused.

It is written: *And Achav called Ovadyahu who was over the household; and Ovadyahu feared Hashem exceedingly*. Other times, someone's house would be blessed on account of a god-fearing man who lived there; here, it did not. It was not because of Ovadyahu, but rather due to the fact that Achav's house was not fit for blessing.

Rabbi Abba points out that by Avraham, it is written that he was a God-fearing man, but regarding Ovadyahu, it is written that he was exceedingly God-fearing.

Rabbi Yitzchak said: Why did Ovadyahu merit the gift of prophecy? It was because he hid a hundred prophets in caves (*in order to spare them from izebel*), fifty in one cave and fifty in another.

The *Gemora* asks: Why just fifty?

Rabbi Elozar said: He learned this lesson from Yaakov – so if something would happen to one group, the other would be left to escape.

Rabbi Avahu said: It was because the caves could not hold more than fifty.

Rabbi Yitzchak said: The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let Ovadyahu, who has lived among two wicked people (Achav and Izebel), and yet has not followed in their ways, come and prophesy against the wicked Esav (Edom), who lived with two righteous people, and yet did not learn from their good deeds.

Efraim Mikshaah, the student of Rabbi Meir, said in the name of Rabbi Meir: Ovadyahu was an Edomite convert, and thus people say, "From the very forest itself comes the handle of the axe that destroys it" (*and that is why he was chosen to prophesy about Edom*).

Rav and Shmuel disagree about the following verse: *Then he (Meisha, the king of Moav) took his firstborn son that would have ruled in his place and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall*. One of them said: He offered him to God. The other said: He offered him in the name of his pagan deity.

It is written: And there was great wrath upon Israel (*because of this*). If he did this for the sake of Heaven, it is understood why Hashem got angry at *Klal Yisroel*; but if he offered him in the name of his pagan deity, why was great wrath?

The *Gemora* answers: It is because the Jewish people did similar things.

It is written: *And the maiden (Avishag, who was taken as King David's nurse at the end of his life) was exceedingly beautiful*. Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa says: She still didn't reach half the beauty of Sarah, for it is written "until very much," but not included in the category of "very much." (39b)

WE SHALL RETURN TO YOU,
ECHAD DINEI MAMANOS