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Sanhedrin Daf 106

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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

Bilam’s prophecy

The Gemora continues to explain the verses of the story of Bilam.

Like cedars...Rav Shmuel bar Nachmaini quotes Rabbi Yonasan explaining that the verse that states that “blows from a friend are preferable to the kisses of enemies” is borne out by the curse of Achiya Hashiloni, which was better than the blessing of Bilam. Achiya cursed the Jews to be like a reed, while Bilam blessed them to be like cedar trees. Although a reed is weak, it is resilient and easily revitalized, with many roots, growing in water and surviving strong winds, while a strong cedar has few roots, cannot grow near water, and cannot withstand the southern wind. In addition, the reed is used to write a Torah scroll.

The Gemora proceeds to explain Bilam’s prophecy of the future. He [Bilam] saw the Kaini and he said....The Gemora explains that Bilam was referring to Yisro the Kaini, who was in the original assembly which discussed Pharaoh’s plans for the Jews. Rabbi Chiya bar Abba quotes Rabbi Simai who says that Pharaoh consulted Yisro, Bilam, and Iyov for a plan for the Jews. Bilam, who advised Pharaoh to drown them, was killed. Iyov, who was silent, was persecuted. Yisro ran away in protest, and was rewarded with descendants who judged in the Sanhedrin.

He [Bilam] said, ‘woe, who will live from Hashem’s will place them’. Rabbi Yochanan says this refers to the nation that will be present when Hashem redeems the Jews, just as one would not want to get in the way of two mating

lions. and Ships [will travel] from Kitim Rav says this refers to Libun Aspir. and they will persecute Ashur and persecute Aiver The Gemora explains that there will be killing until Ashur, followed by enslavement.

Bilam’s Advice

I am going back to my nation, let me advise you what this nation will do to yours Rabbi Abba bar Kahana says that Bilam really meant that he will advise Balak what Balak’s nation will do the this nation (the Jews), but switched it, to avoid mentioning the unpleasant reality that the Moabites are afraid of the Jews. Bilam noted was that the Jews wanted linen material, and Hashem hates immorality. He therefore advised Balak to set up tents selling linen, with an old prostitute outside, and a young one inside. They set up these tents all along the encampment of the Jews, and when the Jews had eaten and drank, they strolled by, and the old woman inquired if they wanted linen. When they expressed interest, the old and young women would begin bidding against each other, until they finally told him that he should feel at home and choose whatever he wants. When he entered, he would drink wine they provided, and desire the woman. When he wanted to have relations, she took out an idol and told him to worship it. When he protested that he was a Jew, she told him he just had to defecate in front of it, and, further, that she will not agree until he renounces the Torah.

And the Jews settled in Shittim Rabbi Eliezer says the place was named Shittim, while Rabbi Yehoshua says it was given this name, since the Jews involved themselves there in nonsense (shtus).



Vatikrena - They called them to serve their idols Rabbi Eliezer says the phrase “called them” indicates that they announced their presence to the Jews, by appearing unclothed. Rabbi Yehoshua says the word vaticrena is similar to kerī – nocturnal emission, indicating that all the Jewish men had nocturnal emissions as a result of their meeting the women.

The Gemora cites a similar dispute about the place called Refidim. Rabbi Eliezer says that Refidim is the name of a place, while Rabbi Yehoshua says it refers to the fact that the Jews weakened themselves (rifu) there from Torah, leading to Amalek’s attack.

Rabbi Yochanan says that whenever the verse uses the phrase vayeshev – and he settled it connotes suffering, as illustrated in the following examples:

Vayeshev (he settled)	Suffering
The Jews <i>settled</i> in Shittim	The Jews worshiped Pe’or
Yaakov <i>settled</i> in the land of his fathers	Yosef brought bad reports, and was sold
Yisrael <i>settled</i> in Goshen	Yisrael approached death
The Jews <i>settled</i> in security, under vines and palms	Hashem brought Hadad from Edom to attack

Bilam’s Death

The verse says that the Jews killed the kings of Midyan, and killed Bilam by sword. Rabbi Yochanan explains that Bilam had gone to Midyan to collect his reward for his advice, which killed 24,000 Jews. Mar Zutra bar Tuvia quotes Rav saying that this illustrates the common saying that “the camel went to get horns, but ended up with his existing

ears cut off.” Similarly, Bilam went to collect money, and ended up losing his life.

The verse says that the Jews killed Bilam the magician. Rabbi Yochanan explains that Bilam was originally a prophet, but ended up being just a magician, since he violated Hashem’s command. Rav Pappa says that this illustrates the saying that “I was the wife of nobility, but I committed adultery with low class sailors”. Similarly, Bilam began as a prophet of Hashem, but betrayed Hashem, and ended up a simple magician.

The verse states that the Jews killed Bilam to “their corpses”. Rav says the plural form indicates that the Jews fulfilled all four methods of capital punishment with Bilam.

A heretic asked Rabbi Chanina how long Bilam lived. Rabbi Chanina answered that he would assume that he lived only 33 or 34 years, since the verse says that venal people should not even reach half their lifespan, which is assumed to be 70 years. The heretic confirmed this, stating that he saw Bilam’s notepad, which said that “Bilam the cripple was 33 years old when Pinchas the general killed him.” [Note: Rashi explains that this is at odds with the earlier statement of Rabbi Simai that Bilam advised Pharaoh to drown the Jews, since that occurred many years earlier]

Mar the son of Ravina told his son that he should not overly criticize the people who lost their share in the world to come, except for Bilam, whose all flaws should be fully explicated.

Doeg

The Mishna says that Doeg lost his share in the world to come. The Gemora notes that Doeg’s name is also spelled Doyeg, with a vav and yud. Rabbi Yochanan explains that initially he was called Doeg – worrying, since Hashem was worried lest he leave Hashem’s path, but once he did, he was called Doyeg, since the letters vav and yud spell vay – woe, as Hashem bemoaned his fall.



The Gemora explains a number of verses referring to Doeg.

Why are you praising yourself, courageous one [who is well versed in Torah], [haven't you been graced with] Hashem's kindness all the time? Rabbi Yitzchak explains that the Hashem is addressing Doeg in this verse.

Wicked one, why do you learn my Torah? Rabbi Yitzchak explains that Hashem is challenging Doeg, asking how he can study the prohibitions of murder and gossip, when he violated them so seriously.

And you carried my treaty on your mouth Rabbi Ami says that this verse teaches that Doeg's Torah was only on his mouth, i.e., superficial.

And the righteous will see and fear, and rejoice on him Rabbi Yitzchak explains that when Doeg was successful, the righteous feared that people will learn from his bad example, but when he died young, they rejoiced.

He ingested property, and will expel it, from his stomach Hashem will chase it Rabbi Yitzchak explains that David asked Hashem that Doeg die, but Hashem said that Doeg must first forget his Torah ("expel his property"). David then asked Hashem to accelerate that process (chase it from his stomach).

Rabbi Yitzchak explained the verses referring to Doeg: When Hashem told David that Doeg should enter the world to come, David replied "Hashem will also expel you forever". When Hashem said that Doeg's Torah should be quoted in the study hall, David replied, "He will destroy and exile you from the tent [of Torah]". When Hashem said that Doeg should have descendants who study Torah, David replied "and he will uproot you from the land of the living [Torah community] forever".

Rabbi Yitzchak says that the verse which bemoans the loss of the one who counts, the one who weighs, and the one

who counts the towers refers to Doeg, who counted the letters of the Torah, measured logical arguments, and counted 100 halachos about a suspended tower.

Rebbe says that Doeg and Achitofel had 400 unresolved questions about a suspended tower. Rava stated that delving into Torah topics, even when raising hard unresolved questions, is not a value per se.

Rava illustrated this by noting that in Rav Yehudah's generation, all learning centered on monetary halachah, to the extent that Rav Yehudah considered Mishnayos in the impurity section of Uktzin to be as difficult as disputes of later Ammoraim, while in Rava's time thirteen schools delved into Uktzin. Nonetheless, when Rav Yehudah would just take off his shoe in preparation for a fast, rain would come, while in Rava's time, Hashem did not even answer much prayer. Rather, the main component Hashem values is the intent in the heart, which was purer in the times of Rav Yehudah.

Rav Mesharshia says that Doeg and Achitofel didn't understand Torah topics. The Gemora objects, since the verse refers to them as the ones who count and measure Torah. Rather, Rav Mesharshia said that they did not merit having halachah decided like them.

Rabbi Ami says that Doeg forgot his Torah before dying, as the verse says "He will die without lessons [of Torah], and in his abundant foolishness will falter".

Rav says he contracted tzara'as, as the verse says that he who roamed away from the path of Hashem, He was hitmata – cut off. The verb used is the same as the word tzmisus – absolute, which is translated in Aramaic as chalutin, the same root used to denote one who has been proclaimed impure from tzara'as.

Rabbi Yochanan says that Doeg was visited by three destroying angels: one who made him forget his learning,

one who burned his soul, and one who spread his ashes in the synagogues and study halls.

Rabbi Yochanan says that Achitofel lived during the time of Shaul, while Doeg lived in the time of David, and they never saw each other. Each lived only less than half a life span (70 years), as the verse says they will not split their days.

The Gemora cites a supporting braisa, which says that Doeg died at 34, and Achitofel at 33. Rabbi Yochanan says that David first called Achitofel his teacher, then his colleague, and finally his student. The verse first refers to him as alufi – my teacher, then says that we will “together learn Torah” (colleague), and finally refers to him as “the one who eats my bread” (student).

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Reeds

The Gemora states that although a reed is weaker than a cedar, it is much more resilient, withstanding all winds, and useful, since its stalk is used as a pen. Therefore, the prophet Achiya, while cursing the Jews, still compared them to the preferable reed.

The Maharsha explains that the four winds (from all directions) are a metaphor for the four kingdoms through which the Jews suffered. Although the Jews were affected by these kingdoms, just as a reed sways in the wind, they survived all of them, just as the reed remains intact after all the winds have passed. Furthermore, when the Jews have suffered exile, they have survived with Torah, just as the reed which is cut is useful for the writing of a Torah.

Protesting

The Gemora lists the three advisors of Pharaoh, along with their fate. Iyov, who was silent, suffered. The Brisker Rav explains that this was midah k'neged midah – a punishment akin to the crime. Iyov may have calculated

that a protest would not accomplish anything, as Pharaoh would not listen to him, just as he did not listen to Yisro. However, the prospect of the Jews suffering so much under Pharaoh's decree should have itself elicited a protest from Iyov, even if it would not change the reality. Similarly, when one is in pain and suffering, crying out will not relieve or remove the pain. However, the pain elicits cries from the one suffering, regardless of the result, but simply as an expression of their pain. Since Iyov was not moved by the pain of the Jews to protest when it was ineffective, he was forced to suffer pain, eliciting ineffective cries.

Hovering Towers

The Gemora states that Doeg learned 300 halachos about “a hovering tower”. Rashi offers a number of explanations of this term:

1. Reasons that the top stroke of the Lamed is pointed down.
2. The halachos of one who enters lands outside of Eretz Yisrael, which make one impure, enclosed in a container.
3. Ways to magically make a tower hover in midair
4. Halachos of impurity of a corpse (tumas mais) relating to a tower that is not under a roof, as discussed in Ahalos (4:1)

Rashi in Chagigah (15b) suggests that this refers to the tower built by the dor haflaga – the generation of separation.

The Maharsha explains that this refers to the question of the exact placement of the Bais Hamikdash, known as David's tower. This tower had to be somewhat suspended, in terms of its elevation, and is therefore referred to as the “hovering” tower.

DAILY MASHAL

And Rabbi Yochanan said: At the beginning of their relationship, Dovid referred to Achitophel as his teacher;

subsequently, he referred to him as merely his colleague; and ultimately he referred to him as his mere student. At the beginning, Dovid referred to Achitophel as his teacher, as it is written:¹ *But it is you-a man of my measure, my mentor and my advisor!* Subsequently, he referred to him as his colleague, as it is written:² *Together we would take sweet counsel; in the house of G-d we would walk in company.* And ultimately, he referred to him as his student, as it is written:³ *Even my ally, in whom I trusted-who ate my bread-has raised his heel to trample me.*

Can one imagine his Rebbe becoming his colleague, let alone becoming his student? This is what happened to Achitophel, as his wickedness caused his spiritual decline. There is a parallel to this in the Torah, where at the Giving of the Torah, it is said:⁴ *Moshe Aharon Nadav and Avihu and seventy of the elders of Israel ascended. They saw the G-d of Israel, and under His feet was the likeness of sapphire brickwork, and it was like the essence of heaven in purity. Against the great men of Israel, He did not stretch out His hand-they gazed at G-d, yet they ate and drank.* What was the initial sin of Nadav and Avihu? It would appear that they sinned by gazing at Hashem's Presence. Yet there is a deeper explanation of their error. They ascended with Moshe and Aharon, and this allowed them to think that they were on equal footing with the leaders. The Gemara⁵ relates that Nadav and Avihu were walking behind Moshe and Aharon, and the Children of Israel were following them. Nadav said to Avihu: "When will these two elders, i.e. Moshe and Aharon, pass on, and you and I will lead the people?" Hashem responded: "We shall see who will bury who." Apparently, Nadav and Avihu felt that since at the Giving of the Torah they were on par with Moshe and Aharon, they could entertain delusions of grandeur. This idea led them to gaze at Hashem's Presence, not necessarily in a sinful way, but with the thought that they

were on the level of Moshe, who received direct communication from Hashem.

As long as one remains a student to his teacher, he can be assured that he will not stray from the correct path. Achitophel, his brilliance and erudition notwithstanding, failed to understand that he was subservient to Hashem's will. This led to his decline and to his losing his share in the World to Come. Nadav and Avihu also were flawed in thinking that they were greater than Moshe and Aharon. They certainly were special, but they were not chosen as the leaders of the generation. Throughout history, people who challenged the leadership always met a harsh end. Let us learn from these great people who erred in their understanding of leadership. We can learn from these incidents that Hashem decides who will lead and who will follow, and no one can change their assigned task in life. We should follow the dictum of the Mishnah that states:⁶ *be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes.*

NEVER ME

Bilam expressed his shock at having discovered through prophecy that Yisro, who was also involved in offering counsel when Pharaoh commanded to cast the newborn Jewish babies into the Nile, would merit that his descendants sit in the Chamber of Hewn Stone in Bais Hamikdash. There is an important lesson to be learned from Bilam's incredulity. Although Bilam was bewildered as to how Yisro merited such greatness, he did not give pause to contemplate his own complicity in counseling Pharaoh, and he did not foresee his own downfall. This should inspire us to be less critical of others and more critical of our own actions.

¹ Tehillim 55:14

² Ibid verse 15

³ Ibid 41:10

⁴ Shemos 24:9-11

⁵ Sanhedrin 52a

⁶ Avos 4:20