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Sanhedrin Daf 92

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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

Teaching Torah

Rav Chana bar Bizna quoted Rabbi Shimon Chasida saying that one who withholds words of *halachah* from his student is cursed even by fetuses, since the verse says that one who prevents someone from “grain,” an allegory to Torah, will be cursed by *le’om* – a fetus.

Ulla bar Yishmael says that the fetuses will puncture him like a sieve, since the word used in the verse for curse is *yikvuhu*, which is related to the root for hole (*nekev*).

Abaye explains that he will be like a laundry vessel, which lets the water through its holes. However, if he teaches, Rava quotes Rav Sheishes saying that he will receive blessings like Yosef, since the verse continues that a blessing will be to the head of the *mashbir* – a reference to Yosef, who was the *mashbir* – provider for all the populace. Rav Sheishes says that one who teaches Torah in this world merits teaching it in the next world, since the verse says that one who teaches will continue to teach. (91b – 92a)

Resurrection of the Dead

The *Gemora* continues offering textual sources for the Resurrection of the Dead:

- Moshe blesses that Reuven will live and not die. The extra phrase indicates that Reuven will live – in this world, and not die – in the next world. (Rava)
- Daniel states that many of those who are in the dust will awake, some for everlasting life, and some for everlasting disgrace. (Ravina)
- Hashem tells Daniel that he will die and return when the redemption arrives. (Rav Ashi) (92a)

Rabbi Elozar

Rabbi Elozar says that any leader who leads the community gently will merit leading them in the World to Come, as the verse says that those who have mercy on the nation will lead them in the future as well.

Rabbi Elozar says that *de’ah* – understanding is important, as it is listed between two names of Hashem, in the verse *kail daios Hashem* – Hashem is a God of understanding.

Rabbi Elozar says the Bais Hamikdash is important, as it appears between two names of Hashem, in the verse *pa’alta Hahem Mikdash Hashem konenu yadecha* – You made, Hashem, the sanctuary, Hashem, which your hands made.

Rav Ada Karchina’ah challenged these statements from the verse *kail nekamos Hashem* – Hashem is a God of vengeance, placing vengeance between two names of Hashem.

Rabbi Elozar answered that vengeance, when meted out against Hashem’s enemies, is important, as Ulla explains that the two mentions of vengeance in this verse refer to Hashem repaying the reward of those who followed him, and the punishment of those who opposed him.

Rabbi Elozar says that if someone has understanding, it is as if the Bais Hamikdash was built in his time, since both are placed between two names of Hashem. Eventually, he will become wealthy, since the verse says that through understanding, rooms will be filled with all treasures. It is forbidden to have pity on someone who does not have understanding, as the

verse says that Hashem does not pity the Jews, since they have no understanding, and someone who feeds such a person is punished, as the verse says that bread given to one with understanding will lead to *mazor* – suffering. Eventually, one without understanding will be exiled, as the verse states that the Jews were exiled due *mibli da'as* – with a lack of understanding.

Rabbi Elozar says that a house which is silent of Torah at night is consumed by fire.

Rabbi Elozar says that one who does not benefit Torah scholars from his money will never experience blessing from the money, as the verse says that since a *sarid* – a Torah scholar is not with his food, he will not look forward to good. One who doesn't leave any crumbs on the table will also not experience blessing, since *sarid* can also mean leftovers. Although Rabbi Elozar says that leaving crumbs on the table is tantamount to idolatry, that is only when one places a full bread along with the crumbs.

Rabbi Elozar says that one who deceives is tantamount to idolatry, since Yaakov said that he was afraid his father would discover his trickery and consider him a *meta'teah*, the same root used to describe idolatry.

Rabbi Elozar says that if a man looks at the private area, his virility is damaged.

Rabbi Elozar says that one should be modest and low-key, and then last longer. Rabbi Zaira says that this is borne out in the rules of house *tzara'as*, as a dark house, where the *tzara'as* is not visible, is not declared impure. Similarly, one who is not highly visible, like the dark house, avoid pitfalls, like the *tzara'as*. (92a)

Resurrection

Rav Tavi quotes Rabbi Yoshia who explains the verse that states that the grave, the womb, and the land are never satiated. The comparison between a grave and the womb

teaches that just as there is a deposit (conception) and withdrawal (birth) from the womb, so there is a deposit (death) and withdrawal (revival) from the grave, proving that the dead will be revived. Furthermore, if the womb, whose deposit is done privately, produces with fanfare, the grave, whose deposit is done with commotion, will produce with greater fanfare.

A *braisa* was taught in the academy of Eliyahu: The righteous who will be revived by Hashem will never die again, as the verse says that they will be called *kadosh* – holy. Just as holiness is everlasting, so they will last forever. During the period when Hashem will regenerate the world, and submerge it all in water, they will have wings and float on the water, never tiring.

The *Gemora* questions why he does not instead learn from the case of the dead that Yechezkel revived, who eventually died again? The *Gemora* answers that the *braisa* says that the story of Yechezkel was purely allegorical. (92a – 92b)

The Dead Revived by Yechezkel

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa* with the following opinions about the dead that Yechezkel revived:

1. The dead were revived, sang praise to Hashem, and died. Rabbi Eliezer says the praise stated His justice in death and mercy in life, while Rabbi Yehoshua says the phrase stated his power to bring death and also life.
2. It was only an allegory. (Rabbi Yehudah, Rabbi Nechemia)
3. The dead were revived, went to *Eretz Yisroel*, married, and had children. (Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yossi). Rabbi Yehudah ben Besaira stated that he was one of their descendants, and showed the *tefillin* that he inherited from them.

Who were they?

1. Rav says the dead were the descendants of Efraim, who miscalculated the end of the bondage in Egypt. When they left early, they were attacked and killed by

the Philistines of Gas.

2. Shmuel says that they were people who denied resurrection, as Hashem tells Yechezkel that the Jews said that they lost all hope for the future.
3. Rabbi Yirmiya bar Abba says that they were people who had not even moisture of mitzvos, since the verse refers to them as dry bones.
4. Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha says that they were people who plastered the wall of the Bais Hamikdash with images of forbidden creatures, since the word saviv (all around) is used in the story of the images, and also in the story of Yechezkel.
5. Rabbi Yochanan says they were the dead in the valley of Dura, which is from the Eshel river until Rabbas. This valley was full of very handsome young men at the time of the exile, and the Babylonian women were very attracted to them. Their husbands told the king Nevuchadnetzar, who decreed that they be killed. Even after they were killed, since their forms were intact, the women were still attracted to them, so he decreed to crush their bodies. (92b)

Chanania, Mishael, and Azaria

The *braisa* says that when Nevuchadnetzar threw Chanania, Mishael, and Azaria into the furnace, Hashem told Yechezkel to resurrect the bodies in the valley of Dura. When he did so, their bones slapped Nevuchadnetzar on the face. When Nevuchadnetzar questioned them, they said that the peer of the three in the furnace is currently resurrecting them in the valley of Dura. Nevuchadnetzar began to praise Hashem. An angel came and slapped him, to keep him from continuing, since his praises would have been more extensive than those of king Dovid.

The *braisa* lists six miracles that occurred that day:

1. The furnace floated out of the earth.
2. The furnace cracked open.
3. The burning clay of the furnace poured out.
4. the golden image fell on its face.
5. four kingdoms were burned.
6. Yechezkel resurrected the dead in the valley of Dura.

We have a tradition for all of these, but the loss of the four kingdoms is mentioned in the verse. The verse before

Chanania, Mishael, and Azaria were put in the furnace lists the dignitaries with Nevuchadnetzar who told him that some Jews were not bowing to the idol. After they passed through the furnace, the dignitaries are listed again, with four omitted.

Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says that even in a time of danger, a person should not shed his dignity, since the verse says that as they were passing in the furnace, they wore their respectful clothing.

Rabbi Yochanan says that the righteous are greater than angels, since Nevuchadnetzar describes that he saw four forms emerging from the furnace, and the last one was an angel, coming after the righteous Chanania, Mishael, and Azaria. (92a – 92b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

The Reward for Teaching Torah

Rav Chana bar Bizna quoted Rabbi Shimon Chasida saying that one who withholds words of *halachah* from his student is cursed even by fetuses, since the verse says that one who prevents someone from “grain,” an allegory to Torah, will be cursed by *le’om* – a fetus. Ulla bar Yishmael says that the fetuses will puncture him like a sieve, since the word used in the verse for curse is *yikvuhu*, which is related to the root for hole (*nekev*). Abaye explains that he will be like a laundry vessel, which lets the water through its holes. However, if he teaches, Rava quotes Rav Sheishes saying that he will receive blessings like Yosef, since the verse continues that a blessing will be to the head of the *mashbir* – a reference to Yosef, who was the *mashbir* – provider for all the populace.

There is a glaring difficulty with this *Gemora*. The theme discussed is the punishment of one who withholds Torah from a student and the reward of one who teaches Torah to his student. The *Gemora* concludes that one who teaches his student Torah merits blessings like Yosef, who was the provider of food when there was a famine in Mitzrayim. What

is the association between Yosef providing food for his people during a famine and teaching a student Torah?

There is a well-known statement in the *Mishna*.¹ Rabbi Elozar ben Azariah says: If there is no Torah, there is no worldly occupation; if there is no worldly occupation, there is no Torah. If there is no wisdom, there is no fear of G-d; if there is no fear of G-d, there is no wisdom. If there is no knowledge, there is no understanding; if there is no understanding, there is no knowledge. If there is no flour there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no flour.

All the statements of the *Mishna* are readily understood. The one that requires clarification is the statement 'If there is no flour, there is no Torah'. First, this is similar to the earlier statement that 'if there is no worldly occupation, there is no Torah'. Furthermore, how is this idea to be understood? Torah is the blueprint of the world. Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world.² Why is it necessary to be occupied in worldly matters in order to sustain Torah? The opposite is easier comprehended. If there is no Torah, there is no worldly occupation. Without Torah study, the world would cease to exist.³

To gain insight into the meaning of the *Gemora* and the statements of the *Mishna*, it is important to reflect on the life of Yosef in Mitzrayim. Yosef was preoccupied with running the country and preventing Mitzrayim from falling apart. When there was a famine, Yosef devised methods in which to store wheat and ration out the food so people would be able to live. All these efforts may have appeared to go to waste, as the Egyptians did not show their appreciation for his efforts. After Yosef died Pharaoh made believe as if Yosef never existed.⁴, and the Jewish People were enslaved for two hundred and ten years. In reality, however, Yosef's achievements in Mitzrayim were a shining light for future generations. Although the ultimate goal in the life of a Jew is to study Torah undisturbed,

only the minority of Jews has practiced this lifestyle. As the *Gemora* states,⁵ "many attempted to emulate the motto of Rabbi Yishmael and they were successful. Those who attempted to emulate Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai were not successful. Most people fall under the category of Rabbi Yishmael, who taught,⁶ conduct with them [Torah study] worldly occupation. Hashem created a world of occupation. The Jew is required to work six days, and rests on the seventh. Shabbos is not merely to rest from the toil of the week. Shabbos is a time to rejuvenate our thirsty souls, and delve into the depths of Torah study. Yaakov was the symbol of Shabbos.⁷ Yosef symbolized the concept of *Tosefes Shabbos*⁸, an addition to Shabbos. The addition of Shabbos is during the week. One sanctifies the weekday by accepting Shabbos early and by extending the Shabbos after Shabbos has ended. True holiness is derived from safeguards and extra effort in mitzvah observance.⁹

One who merits providing sustenance for others has truly taught Torah to his fellow Jew. Although Yosef was preoccupied in sustaining the Egyptians, Yaakov blessed him by saying,¹⁰ but his bow was firmly emplaced, and his arms were gilded, from the hands of the Mighty Power of Yaakov from there, he shepherded the stone of Israel. Yosef is the foundation of the Jewish People, because he maintained a high level of holiness in a depraved society. One who teaches his students "Torah," with the understanding that if there is no flour, there is no Torah, will surely merit blessings like Yosef.

Understanding, Sanctuary and Vengeance

The *Gemora* mentions three concepts that are placed in Scripture between two letters of the Divine Name. These are:

1. Understanding
2. The Sanctuary
3. And vengeance.

¹ Avos 3:21

² Breishis Rabbah 1

³ See Yirmiyahu 33:25 and Nefesh Hachaim

⁴ See Targum to Shemos 1:8 and Shemos Rabbah Ibid

⁵ Berachos 35b

⁶ Ibid

⁷ See Breishis Rabbah 1:1

⁸ See Sfas Emes on Parashas Vayeishev

⁹ See Rashi and Ramban in the beginning of Parashas Kedoshim

¹⁰ Breishis 49:24

What is the association between these seemingly distinct ideas?

We normally assume that the Sanctuary, be it the Mishkan or the Bais Hamikdash, was a house for sacrifices and worship. Although this is certainly true, there was another dimension to the sanctuary that is alluded to in the Torah. This is the Sanctuary in man himself. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explains in his classic work, *Nefesh Hachaim*¹¹, that there are three terms that incorporate the internal essence of man:

1. *Maaseh*, action
2. *Dibbur*, speech
3. *Machshavah*, thought.

The *ma'aseh*, action, corresponds to the *Nefesh*, soul. *Dibbur*, speech, corresponds to *ruach*, spirit, in the heart. *Machshavah*, thought, corresponds to the *neshamah*, the intellect of man.

Based on our understanding of these three terms, we can understand the three different principles mentioned in the *Gemora*.

Understanding corresponds to the *neshamah*, because the *neshamah* is the intellect of man.

The Sanctuary corresponds to the *ma'aseh*, action, as is said, The foundation of Your dwelling place that You have made, O Hashem, the Sanctuary, my Lord, that your hands have established. Furthermore, the *Gemora* states¹² "Rav Kapara taught, the handiwork of the righteous is greater than those of Heaven and Earth. Regarding the handiwork of heaven and earth it is said,¹³ Also, My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has measured out the heavens. Regarding the handiwork of the righteous, it is said,¹⁴ the foundation of Your dwelling place that You have made, O Hashem, the Sanctuary, my Lord, that your hands have established".

¹¹ 1:14

¹² Kesubos 5a

¹³ Yeshaya 48:13

¹⁴ Shemos 15:17

Vengeance corresponds to the *dibbur*, speech, because the vengeance of Hashem is performed through speech. This is evident from the verse said regarding the disasters that Hashem visited upon Israel's mighty enemies:¹⁵ [And the depths of the water became visible, the foundations of the earth were laid bare;] by Your rebuke, Hashem, by the blowing of the breath of Your nostrils.

The lesson from this is inspiring. A person can emulate Hashem daily with his own personal *Mishkan*. As Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin writes,¹⁶ every action or thought in a person has a rippling effect in the upper heavenly spheres. What we do in this lowly world has serious ramification above us. One should not think, "today was just another day", because every action effects the enhancement of our personal Sanctuary.

Wings like an Eagle

A *braisa* was taught in the academy of Eliyahu: The righteous who will be revived by Hashem will never die again, as the verse says that they will be called *kadosh* – holy. Just as holiness is everlasting, so they will last forever. During the period when Hashem will regenerate the world, and submerge it all in water, they will have wings and float on the water, never tiring.

This *Gemora* has kabalistic overtones, but there is a profound lesson to be gained from the simple interpretation of the text. The *Gemora* posed a question: In those years during which the Holy One, blessed is He, is destined to renew His world—as it is stated:¹⁷ and Hashem alone will be exalted on that day—what will the righteous be doing?

The *Gemora* appears to be concerned with the fate of the righteous. This is difficult to comprehend, because surely Hashem will provide for the righteous even during those years that He is destined to renew His world. The answer offered by

¹⁵ Tehillim 18:16

¹⁶ Nefesh Hachaim 1:4

¹⁷ Ibid 2:11

the *Gemora* is: The Holy One, blessed is He, will make them wings like the eagles and they will glide over the water in safety, as it is stated:¹⁸ therefore we shall not fear when the earth is transformed and when the mountains collapse in the heart of the seas.

How does this answer the question? If Hashem wanted the righteous to be “alive” even after the world is being renewed, why is it necessary for them to have wings and glide over the water?

The explanation for this can be found in the *Gemora*¹⁹ which states: The Torah scholars have no rest, neither in this world nor in the World to Come, as it is stated:²⁰ they advance from strength to strength; each one will appear before Hashem in Zion.

The Maharsha²¹ raises the obvious question: We know that the World to Come is referred to as “the day that will be completely a Sabbath and rest day for eternal life.” Why then does the *Gemora* state that the Torah scholars have no rest in the World to Come? The Maharsha answers that the rest referred to in the *Gemora* is parallel to the rest that describes Hashem’s completion of work after six days of creation. After finishing His work, Hashem so to speak laid aside his work. Torah scholars, however, will not cease to toil in their spiritual introspection even in the World to Come.

The Meshech Chochma²² writes that normally, when a person hosts a righteous person in his home, the influence of the righteous person will leave an impression on him, as it is stated:²³ One who walks with the wise will grow wise. When Yaakov departed Lavan’s home, Lavan went back to his old ways of wickedness and deceit. Yaakov, however, went on his way, an allusion to a righteous person who is constantly ascending to spiritual plateaus, as the *Gemora* states: The Torah scholars have no rest, neither in this world nor in the World to Come.

Based on the words of the Meshech Chochma, we can interpret our *Gemora* as follows: When Hashem is destined to renew His world, the righteous, although they shall merit being alive, will not be content with that state. Rather, Hashem will make them wings like the eagles and they will glide over the water in safety. An eagle soars higher than all other birds. This is the definition of a righteous person and a Torah scholar. One must never be content with his position in spiritual matters. He must always strive to go higher, and then he will surely merit appearing before Hashem in Zion.

Who did Yechezkel Revive?

The *Gemora* records five opinions as to the identities of the dead who were resurrected by Yechezkel. Surely there is a direct correlation between these opinions and the fundamentals of belief in the Resurrection of the Dead. Once again we turn to the second blessing of Shmoneh Esrei, formulated by the Men of the Great Assembly, who, in their Divinely inspired thoughts, shed light on this perplexing subject. We proclaim, “You are eternally mighty, my Lord, the Resuscitator of the dead are you, abundantly able to save. He sustains the living with kindness, resuscitates the dead with abundant mercy, supports the fallen, heals the sick, releases the confined, and maintains His faith to those asleep in the dust. Who is Like You, O Master of mighty deeds, and who is comparable to You, O King Who causes death and restores life and makes salvation sprout! And You are faithful to resuscitate the dead. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who resuscitates the dead.”

There are five fundamentals concerning the Resurrection of the Dead:

1. The Resurrection is a display of Hashem’s might.
2. The Resurrection is a sign of Hashem’s compassion.
3. The Resurrection reveals the trust that we must have in Hashem’s promise.

¹⁸ Tehillim 46:3

¹⁹ Berachos 64a

²⁰ Tehillim 84:8

²¹ Ibid

²² Breishis 32:1-2

²³ Mishlei 13:20

4. The Resurrection will reflect Hashem's kingship.
5. The Resurrection is a key component of the redemption.

The first fundamental is reflected in the words: You are eternally mighty, my Lord, the Resuscitator of the dead are you, abundantly able to save. In conjunction with referring to Hashem as the Resuscitator of the Dead, we mention that Hashem is abundantly able to save.

The second fundamental is symbolized in the words: He sustains the living with kindness, resuscitates the dead with abundant mercy. The fact that Hashem resuscitates the dead shows that He is a merciful G-d, Who is concerned with His creations even after they pass on from this world.

The third fundamental is manifested in the words: and maintains His faith to those asleep in the dust. Hashem promised in numerous instances in the Torah that He would resurrect the dead, and he will fulfill His promise²⁴.

The fourth fundamental is found in the words: Who is Like You, O Master of mighty deeds, and who is comparable to You, O King. When Hashem will resurrect the dead, His kingship will be revealed to the whole world.

The fifth fundamental is indicated in the words: Who causes death and restores life and makes salvation sprout! There is no greater proof of the ultimate redemption than the fact that Hashem will resurrect the dead.

The five opinions in the *Gemora* regarding the identities of the dead who were resurrected by Yechezkel correspond to the five fundamentals concerning the resurrection of the Dead.

1. Rav said: These were the sons of the tribe of Ephraim, who calculated the end of the slavery in Egypt and

erred in their count, and were killed after escaping Egypt. The opinion of Rav is in line with the fundamental (5) that redemption is revealed through the resurrection of the Dead. The sons of the tribe of Ephraim were seeking redemption, and although they erred in their calculations, they merited to be resurrected for a short time to give hope for our ultimate redemption.

2. Shmuel says: these dead whom Yechezkel resurrected were people who denied that there would be the Resurrection of the Dead. Shmuel's opinion is parallel to the fundamental (3) that Hashem will fulfill His promise to resurrect the dead. These people denied that there would be a resurrection, so they were resurrected for a short time as a form of punishment.²⁵
3. Rabbi Yirmiah bar Abba says: These dead whom Yechezkel resurrected were people who lack even the "moisture" of a mitzvah (that is, they were totally bereft of even the slightest merit). Rabbi Yirmiah's opinion is reflective of the fundamental (4) that Hashem is our king and we must follow His commandments. The dead that Yechezkel resurrected were devoid of *mitzvos*, because they did not comprehend their relationship with Hashem. Even a recognition of Hashem as king can merit one to be resurrected, as the *Gemora* states,²⁶ A Tanna taught in the name of Rabbi Meir: a child is eligible for admittance into the World to Come from the moment it responds, "amen", as it is stated,²⁷ open the gates, and let enter the righteous nation that keeps faith (*shomer emunim*). Do not read *shomer emunim*, that keeps faith, but *she'omer amen*, that responds, "amen". What is the meaning of the word Amen? Rabbi Chanina said: It means: G-d, trustworthy King. Thus, when one pronounces the word Amen, he is expressing his belief in G-d's sovereignty and trustworthiness. For that reason, anyone, even a small child, who says Amen thereby earns admittance into the World to Come.
4. Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha says: these dead whom Yechezkel resurrected were the people who covered

²⁴ Although there is an alternative interpretation to this sentence, and that is that Hashem will fulfill His promise to "those asleep in the dust" i.e. the Patriarchs, Avudraham in his commentary (page 97) rejects this explanation for the one cited above.

²⁵ This is similar to the Gemara earlier (90b) that proved that all the measures of Hashem are measure for measure. See Rashi here s.v. Hatzamos h'eileh who

explains that the dead whom Yechezkel resurrected were a sign for the future Resurrection.

²⁶ Sanhedrin 110b-111a

²⁷ Yeshaya 26:2

the entire Temple sanctuary with pictures of pagan abominations and creeping things. Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha understood that the dead who were resurrected by Yechezkel denied the fundamental (1) set forth that Hashem is eternally mighty, which is a sign that He will resurrect the dead. The *Gemora*²⁸ states that although Yirmiyahu and Daniel were reluctant to refer to Hashem as the Mighty one and the Great one, because the gentiles had disgraced the Bais Hamikdash, the Men of the Great Assembly reinstated those terminologies. They declared, "The fact that the gentiles defile the sanctuary and Hashem remains silent is a sign of His might and awe". Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha therefore maintained that these were the people who disgraced the sanctuary. They could not recognize that although Hashem appears to ignore the derision of the gentiles, He is truly in control of the world every second. Hashem will eternally reward those who fear him and punish those who do not heed His will.

5. Rabbi Yochanan says: these dead whom Yechezkel resurrected were the dead of the plain of Dura. Rabbi Yochanan maintained that the dead that Yechezkel resurrected were those who were killed and trampled by Nebuchadnezzar. Hashem instructed Yechezkel to resurrect them, as a demonstration of his kindness. This is in keeping with the fundamental (2) that Hashem will resurrect the dead out of compassion. It is just for one who dies to be resurrected by the King Who is good and compassionate.

May we merit in this time of the downfall of evil to the ultimate redemption with the final Resurrection of the Dead. Amen!

DAILY MASHAL

Nevuchadnetzar's Praises

The *braisa* says that when Nevuchadnetzar threw Chanania, Mishael, and Azaria into the furnace, Hashem told Yechezkel to resurrect the bodies in the valley of Dura. When he did so,

their bones slapped Nevuchadnetzar on the face. When Nevuchadnetzar questioned them, they said that the peer of the three in the furnace is currently resurrecting them in the valley of Dura. Nevuchadnetzar began to praise Hashem. An angel came and slapped him, to keep him from continuing, since his praises would have been more extensive than those of king Dovid.

This *Gemora* is difficult to understand. How did Nebuchadnezzar merit even attempting to surpass Dovid in praise of Hashem?

There is a correlation between Nebuchadnezzar's praises and the revival of the dead. The *Gemora* later on²⁹ states as follows: Scripture states:³⁰ To him who increases [G-d's] authority; and for [him there shall be] peace without end, etc. Rabbi Tanchum said: In Tzipori, Bar Kapara expounded this verse as follows: Why is it that every letter *mem* that appears in the middle of a word is always open, but this letter *mem* that appears in the word *lemarbeh* is closed? This *mem* is closed to indicate that the Holy One, blessed is He, sought to make King Chizkiah the Messiah, and He sought to make Sancheirev, Chizkiah's enemy, Gog and Magog. However, the Divine Attribute of Justice exclaimed before the Holy One, blessed is He: "Master of the Universe! If Dovid, King of Israel, who recited multitudes of songs and praises before You, You did not make the Messiah, then Chizkiah, for whom You performed all these miracles, and yet he did not sing songs of gratitude before You, will You really make him the Messiah? This would be an injustice!" Thereupon, G-d relented and did not bring about the Messianic Era, and because of this, [the letter *mem*] in the word *lemarbeh* was closed.

This *Gemora* itself requires elaboration, but what is necessary to understand is the connection between songs of gratitude and the advent of the Messiah. The *Gemora* derives from the closed letter *mem* that Chizkiah did not merit to be the Messiah. There are three levels of praise that one can offer to Hashem. The first level is to praise Hashem for the natural

²⁸ Yoma 69b

²⁹ 94a

³⁰ Yeshaya 9:6



order of life, as we mention in the blessings we recite every morning. The next level is to thank Hashem for the miracles that He performs for us daily, as we say in the Shmoneh Esrei: and upon the miracles that You perform for us every day, evening, morning, and afternoon. The third level is to sing and praise Hashem when He performs an extraordinary miracle. Although it would seem obvious that one should praise Hashem when an outright miracle occurs, there is also an element of denial involved. A person can be so overwhelmed by the miracle that he will claim that it was subject to mere happenstance.

In the case of Chizkiah, the miracle that Hashem performed to annihilate the armies of Sancheirev was of such magnitude that only a non-believer could deny the miracle. Nonetheless, Chizkiah did not perceive this miracle as any different than the daily order of seemingly natural events. This is perhaps what the *Gemora* means when it states that Chizkiah did not sing songs of gratitude. Surely he was grateful for the salvation that Hashem had wrought, but his appreciation for the miracle was not expressed on the third level of praise.

The open letter *mem* is in the word *lemarbeh*, meaning to increase. This symbolizes that a person will express his gratitude to Hashem on all levels. The closed letter *mem* indicates that his heart is not bursting with gratitude for the most profound miracles.

Dovid Hamelech praised Hashem for the natural order of events and for daily miracles. Nebuchadnezzar, however, was witness to the miracle of the revival of the dead. This was a miracle that was unprecedented for a gentile. Nebuchadnezzar was certainly not more righteous than Dovid, nor was he able to compose praises to Hashem on the level of Dovid. The revelation that he witnessed was the only advantage that Nebuchadnezzar attained, and this was why the angel had to strike him on his mouth.

The lesson from this *Gemora* is unique. We are witness to events that seem to be a prelude to the end of days, yet we

attempt to cast them in the light of natural order of events. At best, we thank Hashem for the daily miracles that He performs for us. Perhaps if we were to awaken and realize that everything that we have heard and witnessed until now will pale in comparison to the miracles of the Messianic Era, Hashem will allow us to merit seeing all the miracles that He promised to perform, as is said,³¹ As in the days when you left the land of Egypt, I will show it wonders.

³¹ Micha 7:15