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Menachos Daf 53

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**Matzah and Chametz**

The *Mishna* says that all *minchah* offerings are made into unleavened *matzah*, except for the leavened *chametz* breads of the *todah* – *thanks offering*, and the *shtai halechem* – *bread offered on Shavuot*. The *Mishna* cites a dispute over how these exceptions were leavened. Rabbi Meir says that part of the flour was mixed with water, to create a leavened area, and that in turn was used to leaven the rest. Rabbi Yehudah says that one takes very-leavened dough from home, places it into the measuring vessel, and then fills it up with the *isaron* measure of flour. The Sages objected, since based on the density of the dough, it would lead to a measure of flour which is smaller or larger than a pure *isaron* of flour.

Rabbi Pereida asked of Rabbi Ami: How is it known that all *minchah* offerings are made into unleavened *matzah*?

Rabbi Ami replied in amazement: How is it known? Any *minchah* where it is written that it must be made into *matzah*, it is written; and any *minchah* offering where it is not written that it must be made into *matzah*, the following verse is written: *And this is the law of the minchah offering: the sons of Aaron shall offer it before Hashem, to the front of the altar... And that which is left of it, Aaron and his sons shall eat; it shall be eaten unleavened!* [This verse is referring to all *minchah* offerings!]

Rabbi Pereida responded: As to the proper procedure of the *mitzvah* I am not asking; I ask only whether it is essential (to make it into *matzah*; and if it is not, the *minchah* is invalid).

Rabbi Ami replied: But, even with regard to the question of being essential, it is still written: It shall not be baked *chametz* (leavened); this means that it must be *matzah*!?

Rav Chisda asked: Perhaps the verse means: *it shall not be baked chametz*; but it can be baked as *si’ur*! [*Si’ur is dough in the early stages of leavening. It is neither chametz nor matzah.*]

The *Gemora* clarifies his question: [There is a dispute as to what *si’ur* of the *Mishna* means. The *Mishna* in *Pesachim* states that one who eats ‘*si’ur*’ on *Pesach* is not liable to *kares*, for it is not regarded as ordinary *chametz*. Rabbi Meir holds that *si’ur* is when the surface of the dough has become pale (after that it is regarded as pure *chametz*). Rabbi Yehudah holds that it is not regarded as *si’ur* until the surface of the dough develops cracks (and before that, it is regarded as pure *matzah*).] Whose *si’ur* is Rav Chisda referring to? If he meant the *si’ur* of Rabbi Meir (the dough became pale), but he is following Rabbi Yehudah’s opinion, then it is absolutely *matzah* (at that early stage)! If he was referring to the *si’ur* of Rabbi Yehudah (it developed cracks), but he is following Rabbi Meir’s opinion, then it is absolutely *chametz* (at that late stage). If he meant the *si’ur* of Rabbi Meir (the dough became pale), and he is following Rabbi Meir’s opinion, then since he holds that one incurs lashes for eating it on *Pesach*, it is obviously *chametz* (of sorts)! It must be then that he was referring to the *si’ur* of Rabbi Yehudah (it developed cracks), and he is following Rabbi Yehudah’s opinion (and Rav Chisda was asking that perhaps the verse meant that this type of *si’ur* is valid for a *minchah* offering, since it is neither *matzah* nor *chametz*).

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak asked: Perhaps the verse means: *it shall not be baked chametz*; but it can be scalded (*with boiling water*)!

The *Gemora* challenges the question: Dough which is scalded in boiling water is referred to in the Torah as *revichah* (*which is required for certain minchah offerings*)! Now, if this *minchah* requires the process called '*revichah*,' then it is written that it must be done so (*and the verse would not be necessary to teach us that it should be done like that*); and if we are referring to one that the Torah does not require this process, then it should not be done so!?

The *Gemora* explains Rav Nachman's question: Perhaps the verse means: if a *minchah* requires the process called '*revichah*,' then it should be done so; and if the Torah does not require this process, then this verse is saying that it may be brought as *revichah* (*scalded*), or it may be brought as *matzah*!?

Ravina asked: Perhaps the verse *it shall not be baked chametz* merely imposes a negative commandment upon the person (*who allows the minchah to become chametz*), but the *minchah* offering does not become invalid?

[*Now that the Gemora has proven (based upon the three questions asked above) that the verse is not coming to disqualify a minchah that has become leavened, the Gemora asks:*] So, where do we know that it must be made *matzah*?

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: *Matzah*. One might think that to be made *matzah* was only a recommendation (*but not invalid*); the Torah therefore stated: *It shall be*; the verse establishes this as an obligation.

Rabbi Pereida inquired of Rabbi Ami: How is it known that the *minchah* offerings are kneaded with lukewarm water and that they were watched to ensure that they should not become *chametz*? Is it derived from *Pesach*, where the Torah

says: And you shall guard the *matzos* (*to ensure that they don't become chametz*)?

He answered to him: [*It is not necessary to derive from there*] for it is written by the laws of *minchah* itself, where it states: *matzah it shall be*; that means that it should be kept as is (*as matzah; and it should not become chametz*).

The *Gemora* asks: but this verse was used to teach us that it is essential for it to be *matzah* (*and not chametz*)?

The *Gemora* answers: If the verse would only be coming to teach us that it is essential, the Torah could have merely written: *matzah it is*; the fact that the Torah wrote '*matzah it shall be*' teaches us both laws. (52b – 53a)

#### **Rabbi Pereida and Rabbi Ezra**

The Rabbis said to Rabbi Pereida: Rabbi Ezra, the grandson of Rabbi Avtolas, who was the tenth-generation descendant from Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah, who was the tenth-generation descendant from Ezra (*the Scribe*), is standing at the door. He said to them: What is the explanation for all of this (*pedigree*)? If he is a scholar, it is well; if he is a scholar and also a descendant of noble ancestors, it is well; but if he is a descendant of noble ancestors and not a scholar, may fire consume him! They told him that he was indeed a scholar. Rabbi Pereida said to them: Let him come in. He at once saw that Rabbi Ezra's mind was troubled, so he began his discourse by saying (*in order to make him feel good*): *You said to God: You are my Master. My gratefulness is not to you.* [*He explained the meaning of the verse:*] The assemblage of Israel said to the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe! Show Your gratefulness to me for making You known in the world. Hashem replied: My gratefulness is not with you, but with Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, who first made Me known in the world, as it is written: *To the holy that are in the earth; they are the mighty ones in whom is all My desire.*

When Rabbi Ezra heard the expression '*mighty*,' he began his discourse by saying: *Let the Mighty One come and take*



vengeance on behalf of the mighty from the mighty in the mighty. [He explained the meaning of the verse:] Let the Mighty One come; this is the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is written: *Mighty on high, Hashem. And take vengeance on behalf of the mighty*; that is referring to the Children of Israel, as it is written: *They are the mighty ones, in whom is all my desire. From the mighty* is the Egyptians, as it is written: *The mighty ones sank like lead in the waters. In the mighty*; that is the water, as it is written: *Louder than the voices of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea.*

Rabbi Ezra explained another verse: *Let the beloved a descendant of the beloved come and build a beloved for a beloved in the portion of a beloved that the beloved may receive atonement in it. Let the beloved ... come* is referring to King Solomon, as it is written: *And He sent word through the hand of Nathan the prophet, and he called his name Yediyah (beloved of Hashem), because of Hashem's love for Solomon. A descendant of the beloved*; that is, the son of Avraham, as it is written: *What is My beloved doing in My house? And build a beloved* is referring to the Temple, as it is written: *How beloved are your dwellings, Hashem. For a beloved*; this is the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is written: *Let me sing now on behalf of my Beloved. In the portion of a beloved* is referring to Binyamin, as it is written: *Of Binyamin he said, "The beloved of Hashem shall dwell securely by Him." That the beloved may receive atonement in it*; that is the Children of Israel, as it is written: *I have placed My soul's beloved into the palm of her enemies.*

Rabbi Ezra explained another verse: *Let the good come and receive the good from good for the good. Let the good come* is referring to Moshe, as it is written: *And she saw that he was good. And receive the good*; that is the Torah, as it is written: *For I have given you a good teaching. From the good*; this is the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is written: *Hashem is good to all. For the good* is referring to the Children of Israel, as it is written: *Do good, Hashem, to those who are good.*

Rabbi Ezra explained another verse: *Let this come and receive this from this for this nation. Let this come* is referring to Moshe, as it is written: *For this man Moshe. And receive this*; that is the Torah, as it is written: *And this is the Torah which Moshe placed. From this*; this is the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is written: *This is my God and I will glorify Him. For this nation* is referring to the Children of Israel, as it is written: *This people that You acquired.*

Rabbi Yitzchak said: At the time of the destruction of the Temple, the Holy One, Blessed be He, found Avraham standing in the Temple. Hashem asked: *What is My beloved doing in My house?* Avraham answered Him: I have come concerning the fate of my children. Hashem told him: Your children sinned and have gone into exile. Avraham said: Perhaps they only sinned inadvertently? Hashem answered: *She has carried out her deliberate schemes.* Avraham asked Him: Perhaps only a minority of them has sinned? Hashem replied to him: The many have sinned. Avraham pleaded: You should have remembered for them the covenant of circumcision. Hashem responded: *The sacred flesh is passed away from you.* Avraham asked Him: Perhaps had You waited for them they would have repented. He replied: *When you do evil, then you rejoice.* Immediately, Avraham put his hands on his head and wept bitterly, and cried: Perhaps, Heaven forbid, there is no hope for them. A Heavenly voice came out and said: Hashem called your name, "A leafy olive tree, beautiful with goodly fruit." Just as the olive tree produces its best only at the very end, so too regarding the Children of Israel, their destiny will be fulfilled at the end of time.

*Because of the sound of a great commotion, He has kindled fire upon it, and its branches were broken.* Rabbi Chinana bar Pappa said: Because of the sound of the words of the spies, the branches of Israel were broken; for Rabbi Chinana bar Pappa said: A terrible statement did the spies make at that time when they said: *For it is stronger than we.* Do not read this as 'than we,' but rather, 'than He.' They were saying that even the Master of the World cannot remove His utensils from there.

The *Gemora* then explains the verse differently: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Avraham: I heard your voice and I will have compassion upon them. I had said that they shall be subjugated by four successive kingdoms, each to endure the length of time that had been initially allotted to the four kingdoms combined, but now each shall endure only the time allotted to it.

Others say that Hashem said to Avraham that they initially were to be subjugated to the four kingdoms in succession, but now they shall be subjugated to them at the same time.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Why are the children of Israel likened to an olive tree? It is to tell you that just as the olive tree do not lose its leaves in the summer or in the winter, so too Israel shall never be nullified either in this world or in the World to Come.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Why are the children of Israel likened to an olive tree? It is to tell you that just as the olive tree produces its oil only after crushing, so too Israel returns to the right path only after suffering. (53a – 53b)

## DAILY MASHAL

### *A Wagon with Four Cranes*

Rabbi Yechezkel of Kuzmir would say about someone who prides himself on his *yichus* and relies on it: What is this like? This is like a loaded wagon which sank in the mud and which the horses couldn't move. The wagon-driver brought a crane that extracted the wagon. An idiot stood nearby and saw that a crane is better than horses and figured out a *kal vachomer*: if one crane is better than the horses, surely four would be better... He attached a wagon to four cranes and waited for it to move... and he's still waiting. *Yichus* is a crane to extract one from the mud. One cannot travel with it and someone who thinks that it suffices is just like that fool (*La'anavim Yiten Chen*, p. 181).