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Megillah Daf 2

Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler, Kollel Boker Beachwood

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Tzvi Gershon Ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o”h

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[Introduction to Tractate Megillah

The Tractate deals with the detailed laws of the reading of the Book of Esther on Purim. The Rabbis mandated that the Book of Esther (referred to as the Megillah) must be read on Purim. The verse in the Megillah states: “Consequently, these days are recalled and observed in every generation: by every family, every province, and every city. And these days of Purim shall never cease among the Jews, and the memory of them shall never perish among their descendants.” The Rabbis understood that the memory of Purim was to be preserved by the reading of Esther on Purim itself. Most cities would read the Megillah on the fourteenth of Adar. However, cities that were walled when Yehoshua conquered Canaan read on fifteenth of Adar and smaller cities sometimes read on an earlier date. This is an issue which we shall explore in depth in the first three Mishnayot of the tractate.]

MISHNAH: The Megillah is read on the eleventh, on the twelfth, on thirteenth, on the fourteenth and on fifteenth of Adar, not earlier (than the eleventh) and not later (than the fifteenth). Cities surrounded by a wall from the time of Yehoshua bin Nun (even though they do not have a wall at the present time), read on the fifteenth. Villages and large towns read on the fourteenth, but the villages may advance to the day of the gathering. (*Rashi explains that this refers to the Monday or Thursday preceding the fourteenth, when the villagers gathered in the large towns to settle disputes before the Courts, which convene every Monday and Thursday (as was enacted by Ezra). Since the villagers did not possess the expertise necessary to read themselves, the Sages were lenient and permitted one of the townspeople to read for*

them on the day of the gathering, instead of troubling them to return to the town on the fourteenth).

The Mishnah provides details on the case. If the fourteenth of Adar falls on a Monday, villages and large towns read on that day, and those surrounded by a wall on the following day. If it falls on a Tuesday or on a Wednesday, villages advance to the day of gathering, and the large towns read on that day, and those surrounded by a wall on the following day. If it falls on a Thursday, villages and large towns read on that day, and those surrounded by a wall on the following day. If it falls on a Friday, villages advance to the day of gathering, and the large towns and those surrounded by a wall read on that day. If it falls on Shabbos, villages and large towns advance and read on the day of gathering, and those surrounded by a wall on the following day. If it falls on Sunday, villages advance to the day of gathering, and large towns read on that day, and those surrounded by a wall on the following day. (2a)

The Mishnah had stated that the Megillah was read on the eleventh day of Adar. From where is this known? – From where? It is from that which is stated later: [The reading the Megillah on the eleventh is not a mandatory decree] but rather a leniency established by the Rabbis in order that they should be available on the fourteenth to provide their brethren of the towns with water and with food.? [The Gemora clarifies its original question.] This is what we were saying: It is obvious that all the dates listed in the Mishnah as proper times to read the Megillah, have been ordained by the Men of the Great Assembly; for if the Men of the Great Assembly ordained only the fourteenth and the fifteenth, how could the sages of a later generation have the power to abolish the ordinances of the Great Assembly? Have we not

learned in a Mishnah (Eduyos 1:5) that a Beis Din is not able to abolish the ordinances of its colleagues unless they are greater than the first Beis Din in wisdom and in numbers? It emerges that all the mentioned dates were ordained by the Great Assembly. Where, then, are there hints for these dates in the Megillah?

Rav Shemen bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: It is written [Esther 9:31]: "To establish these days of Purim in their times." "In their times" is seemingly unnecessary and signifies that there are more times possible to read the Megillah (*not just the fourteenth and the fifteenth*).

The Gemora asks: But this text is required for its literal meaning (that the Megillah should be read on the 14th and the 15th)? The Gemora answers: If that were all, Scripture could say simply 'time.' What then is implied by 'their times' (in the plural form)? It evidently means: A large number of 'times.'

The Gemora asks: But still I may say that 'their times' is required to indicate that the time of one is not the same as the time of the other? The Gemora answers: In that case, Scripture should say, 'their time.' Why does it say 'their times'? So that you may learn from this all of them.

The Gemora asks: But cannot I say that 'their times' means 'numerous times' (perhaps including the entire first half of the month of Adar)? The Gemora answers: The expression 'their times' is to be interpreted in the same way as we should interpret 'their time': just as 'their time' would indicate two days, so 'their times' indicates two (additional days).

The Gemora asks: But why not make these the twelfth and thirteenth (and not the eleventh)? The Gemora answers: For the reason given elsewhere by Rav Shmuel bar Yitzchak, - that the thirteenth is a time of assembly for all (for that is the day they assembled to wage war against their enemies), and no special derivation is required for it in Scripture (for the main miracle occurred that day); so we may say here that the

thirteenth day is a time of assembly and no special derivation is required for it in Scripture.

The Gemora asks: But why not say that the sixteenth and seventeenth are meant? The Gemora answers: The two days cannot be the sixteenth and the seventeenth for it is written [Esther 9:27]: "and it shall not pass." [This teaches us that it must never be after the appointed time.] (2a)

Rav Shmuel bar Nachmeini cites a different source: It is written [Esther 9:22]: "like those days on which the Jews had rested from their enemies." It can be derived from the words "like those days," that there are other days that the Megillah can be read. This includes two additional days – the eleventh and the twelfth.

The Gemora asks: But why not make these the twelfth and thirteenth (and not the eleventh)? The Gemora answers: Rav Shmuel bar Yitzchak says that the thirteenth is a time of assembly for all (for that is the day they assembled to wage war against their enemies), and no special derivation is required for it in Scripture (for the main miracle occurred that day); so we may say here that the thirteenth day is a time of assembly and no special derivation is required for it in Scripture.

The Gemora asks: But why not say that the sixteenth and seventeenth are meant? The Gemora answers: The two days cannot be the sixteenth and the seventeenth for it is written [Esther 9:27]: "and it shall not pass." [This teaches us that it must never be after the appointed time.] (2a)

The Gemora asks: Why didn't Rav Shmuel bar Nachmeini derive the rule from the expression 'in their times'? The Gemora answers: He does not accept the distinction made above between 'time,' 'their time' and 'their times.'

The Gemora asks: And why didn't Rav Shemen bar Abba derive the rule from the expression 'like those days'? The Gemora answers: He can say to you: This is meant to make the rule apply to future generations. (2a)

Rabbah bar Bar Chanah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that the ruling of our Mishnah is only according to Rabbi Akiva, the anonymous one (*it is common for an anonymous Mishnah to be according to Rabbi Akiva*), for he expounds: 'time,' 'their time' and 'their times'; but the Chachamim maintain that the Megillah can be read only on the fourteenth and the fifteenth.

The Gemora cites a Baraisa challenging Rabbi Yochanan's viewpoint. Rabbi Yehudah said: When is it that the Megillah can be read earlier than the fourteenth? This is only during the period when the years were set by the Beis Din and the Jews lived in Eretz Yisroel (*the messengers would be sent out to inform them when Pesach will be*); but nowadays (*when the Jewish people were exiled to distant lands and the messengers will not reach them in proper time*), people look at the date at which the Megillah was read and calculate when Pesach will be (*by counting thirty days from that date*), it must be read only in its proper time (on the fourteenth or the fifteenth).

The Gemora proceeds to analyze who Rabbi Yehudah is going according to. He cannot be following Rabbi Akiva's viewpoint since according to Rabbi Akiva, the villagers can read the Megillah earlier even nowadays. He must be in accordance with the Chachamim and yet there would be times that the villagers can read earlier. This is inconsistent with Rabbi Yochanan's opinion that the Chachamim never allow the Megillah to be read earlier than the fourteenth. The Gemora concludes that this Baraisa refutes Rabbi Yochanan's opinion.

The Gemora presents an alternative version of Rabbi Yochanan's statement. Rabbah bar Bar Chanah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that the ruling of our Mishnah is only according to Rabbi Akiva, the anonymous one; but the Chachamim maintain that nowadays, people look at the date at which the Megillah was read and calculate when Pesach will be (*by counting thirty days from that date*), it must be read only in its proper time (on the fourteenth or the fifteenth).

The Gemora cites the Baraisa (mentioned above) supporting Rabbi Yochanan's opinion. Rabbi Yehudah states that the Megillah can be read earlier than the fourteenth only during the period when the years were set by the Beis Din and the Jews lived in Eretz Yisroel; but nowadays, people look at the date at which the Megillah was read and calculate when Pesach will be (*by counting thirty days from that date*), it must be read only in its proper time (on the fourteenth or the fifteenth). (2a)

Rav Ashi asks a contradiction regarding Rabbi Yehudah's opinion. In the Baraisa cited above, Rabbi Yehudah maintained that nowadays, people look at the date at which the Megillah was read and calculate when Pesach will be (*by counting thirty days from that date*), it must be read only on the fourteenth or the fifteenth. Rabbi Yehudah states in a Mishnah (5a) that the ordinance (*of reading the Megillah early*) was only in those places where the people from the villages came to the towns on Mondays and Thursdays; but in the places where they do not enter the towns, the Megillah is only read in its proper time. We can infer from here that where the villagers come, even nowadays, the Megillah can be read earlier, and this contradicts his teaching above. Rav Ashi answers that the Baraisa is not according to Rabbi Yehudah, but rather according to Rabbi Yosi, his son.

The Gemora asks: And just because he noted a contradiction between the two statements of Rabbi Yehudah, he decided to change the authorship of the Baraisa and attribute it to Rabbi Yosi, the son of Rabbi Yehudah!? [Perhaps there are other ways to resolve the contradiction?]

The Gemora explains that Rav Ashi heard two different versions of the Baraisa. Some attributed the Baraisa to Rabbi Yehudah and others attributed it to Rabbi Yosi, the son of Rabbi Yehudah. Since he saw a contradiction if the Baraisa was according to Rabbi Yehudah, he concluded that the accurate version was that the Baraisa was Rabbi Yosi, the son of Rabbi Yehudah. (2a – 2b)

The Mishnah had stated that cities surrounded by a wall from the time of Yehoshua bin Nun, read on the fifteenth. The Gemora seeks to find the source for this halachah.

Rava said that it is written [Esther 9:19]: "Therefore, the Jews of the villages that dwell in the unwalled cities make the fourteenth day of the month of Adar a day of gladness etc." Since it is explicitly mentioned that the unwalled cities celebrate Purim on the fourteenth, it implies that the walled cities celebrate on the fifteenth.

The Gemora asks: But why not say that the villages should celebrate Purim on the fourteenth, and those in walled towns not at all? The Gemora retorts: But are they not also Jews? And moreover is it not written, From Hodu to Cush (which certainly included walled cities)?

The Gemora asks: But why not say that the unwalled cities should celebrate it on the fourteenth and those in walled towns on both the fourteenth and fifteenth, as it is written: *that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and the fifteenth day each and every year?* The Gemora answers: If the verse had said, 'the fourteenth day and the fifteenth day,' you would have been right. Now, however, that it is written 'the fourteenth day and [v'es] the fifteenth day,' the 'v'es' comes and interposes between them, so that one celebrates on the fourteenth and the other on the fifteenth.

The Gemora asks: But why not say that the unwalled cities celebrate on the fourteenth, and those surrounded by a wall can celebrate if they like on the fourteenth or if they like on the fifteenth? The Gemora answers: The verse says, 'in their times,' to teach us that the time of one is not the same as the time of the other.

The Gemora asks: But why not say that they (the walled cities) should celebrate on the thirteenth? The Gemora answers: We can assume that it should be on the same day that the residents of Shushan celebrated after they defeated their enemies, which was on the fifteenth.

The Gemora asks that the verse where we are deriving the date for the walled cities is referring to the celebration of Purim; how do we know that this also applies to the commemoration of the miracle (which is accomplished through the reading of the Megillah)? The Gemora answers that it is written [Esther 9:28]: "And these days are remembered and celebrated." We compare the celebration to the remembering; the remembering of the miracle (*through reading the Megillah*) takes place on the same day as the celebration. (2b)

The Mishnah had stated that cities surrounded by a wall from the time of Yehoshua bin Nun, read on the fifteenth.

The Gemora cites a dissenting opinion. We learned in a Baraisa: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah said: The inhabitants of cities surrounded with walls from the times of Achashverosh should read on the fifteenth. He derives this from the city of Shushan. Just as Shushan was surrounded by a wall at the time of Achashverosh and the Megillah was read there on the fifteenth; so too all cities surrounded with a wall from the time of Achashverosh shall have the Megillah read on the fifteenth.

The Gemora asks: And our Tanna (who maintains that the crucial time is from yehoshua), what is his reason? – He derives a gezeirah shavah of 'perazi,' 'perazi.' It is written here: therefore, the Jews living in the unwalled (perazim) cities, and it is written there (pertaining to entering Eretz Yisroel): besides a great many unwalled cities. Just as there, it is referencing the time of Yehoshua bin Nun, so too here, the crucial time is from yehoshua bin Nun.

The Gemora asks: It is understandable why Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah did not say like our Tanna, for he does not learn the gezeirah shavah of 'perazi,' 'perazi.' But our Tanna, why does he not say like Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah? – What is the reason? Why, he holds the gezeirah shavah of 'perazi,' 'perazi'!? Rather, this is what he was saying: Regarding the inhabitants of Shushan themselves; who were they acting

according to? It was not like an unwalled city? How could they read on the fifteenth if Shushan was not surrounded with a wall from the time of Yehoshua bin Nun? Rava answered and others say that it was Kadi who said: Shushan is different, for the miracle was there.

We can understand according to the view of our Tanna why the text should say: city and city, town and town; 'city and city' to make a distinction between those which were walled in the days of Yehoshua bin Nun and those which were walled in the days of Achashverosh; 'town and town' likewise to distinguish between Shushan and other towns. But according to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah, it is true we can account for 'city and city', as being intended to distinguish between Shushan and other cities, but what is the purpose of 'town and town'? — Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah can answer: And can our Tanna explain the words satisfactorily? Since he uses the gezeirah shavah of 'perazi,' 'perazi,' why do we require the words 'city and city'? The truth is that the text is inserted for a homiletical purpose, and to teach the rule laid down by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. For Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: 'A city and all that adjoins it and all that is taken in by the eye with it is reckoned as city'. Up to what distance? — Rabbi Yirmiyah, or you may also say Rabbi Chiya bar Abba, said: As far as from Chamsan to Tiberias, which is a mil. Why not say [simply] a mil? — We learn from this what is the extent of a mil, namely, as far as from Chamsan to Tiberias. (2b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

READING EARLY FOR THE VILLAGERS

Villages and large towns read on the fourteenth, but the villages may advance to the day of the gathering. (*Rashi explains that this refers to the Monday or Thursday preceding the fourteenth, when the villagers gathered in the large towns to settle disputes before the Courts, which convene every Monday and Thursday (as was enacted by Ezra). Since the villagers did not possess the expertise necessary to read themselves, the Sages were lenient and permitted one of the townspeople to read for them on the day of the gathering,*

instead of troubling them to return to the town on the fourteenth). The Rishonim discuss the validity of this reading. How can a townspeople, who is obligated on the fourteenth, read on behalf of the villagers at an earlier date? The Yerushalmi rules that a townspeople, who is obligated on the fourteenth, cannot read the Megillah for people residing in a walled city on the fifteenth.

Turei even and Reb Akiva Eiger explain that Rashi agrees that the townspeople cannot discharge the obligation for the villager. All Rashi means is that since the people in the village are not capable of reading the Megillah; the townspeople reads the Megillah out loud and the villagers repeat after him word by word. The Baruch Ta'am explains further that all the villagers have a Megillah opened before them for otherwise; they would not be fulfilling their obligation since they would be reading the Megillah by heart. The Ritva disagrees and maintains that a townspeople can discharge the obligation for the villager by reading the Megillah for him. He is not considered someone who is not obligated in the mitzva since he will be subject to this obligation on the fourteenth. It is not comparable to the Yerushalmi's case. A townspeople and a resident from a walled city have two distinct obligations and two different times. A townspeople must read the Megillah on the fourteenth and not on the fifteenth, and a resident from a walled city must read on the fifteenth and not on the fourteenth. A villager, on the other hand, has the identical obligation as the townspeople and that is to read the Megillah on the fourteenth. There was a leniency established for a villager that he can also read before.

The Rosh in Yevamos and the Ran here learn a different p'shat all together. They state that a villager would be the one reading for the other villagers. The reason they didn't read for each other on the fourteenth is not because they weren't proficient; rather it was because it was not customary for them to gather together in the villages on the days of the gathering.

WALLED CITY FROM THE TIMES OF YEHOShUA

Why was the determining factor for equal status with Shushan the existence of a wall during the time of Yehoshua bin Nun, and not the time of King Achashverosh? The Ran cites a Yerushalmi which explains that the purpose of this enactment was to give honor to Eretz Yisroel. At the time of Achashverosh, Eretz Yisroel was in ruins, and their cities were not surrounded by a wall. If the determining factor would have been the existence of wall during the time of Achashverosh, all the cities of Eretz Yisroel would have had the status of unwalled cities. It was therefore established that in all the cities which were surrounded by a wall during the period of the conquest of Eretz Yisroel; they would read on the fifteenth.

The Ritva states that Yehoshua was the one who led the Jewish people in the first war against Amalek. It is fitting to connect the holiday that celebrates the defeat of Haman, who was from Amalek, with Yehoshua.

MEGILLAH IS LIKE HALLEL

The Gemora later in the Mesechta (14a) rules that one does not recite Hallel on Purim because the reading of the Megillah is regarded as the recitation of Hallel. The Commentators ask that it is understandable that the people residing in the village can discharge their obligation of reading the Megillah prior to Purim because the Rabbis had established that the miracle can be publicized before the day of the miracle; however it is not understandable how one can fulfill the mitzvah of reciting Hallel before the day of the miracle. In the sefer Birchas Refoel (14), he answers that when the Gemora states that "reading the Megillah is regarded as reciting Hallel" it does not mean that reading the Megillah is a fulfillment of the obligation of reciting Hallel; rather the meaning is that one is not obligated to recite Hallel after he already publicized the miracle of Purim. Once the Megillah was read, there is no necessity or reason to recite Hallel. We can now understand why reading the Megillah before Purim can discharge one's obligation.

DAILY MASHAL

Nikras And Happenstance

The Mishnah commences with the words Megillah nikraas, the Megillah is read. There is an amazing allusion in these words to the entire story of Purim and the battle that the Jewish People fight with Amalek through history. Regarding Amalek it is said (Devarim 25:18), asher korcha baderech, that he happened upon you on the way. Rashi offers various interpretations for the word korcha, and one of the interpretations is that korcha means happenstance. This is meant to be understood that Amalek conducts themselves according to the laws of nature. Miracles do not exist in the lexicon of the Amalekites. Thus, although all the nations of the world were in awe after witnessing the splitting of the Sea, Amalek had no compunctions about attacking the Jewish People. Our Mishnah uses the word nikraas, which is similar to the mikreh. We read the Megillah, which according to the Medrash, does not contain the Name of HaShem, so that we can avoid the pitfalls of Amalek's behavior. We do not believe in coincidence, chance and happenstance. When the Name of HaShem is not visible, we must be megaleh, i.e. delve further, so that we can reaffirm our belief that everything is Divine providence. Our Sages alluded to this idea by using the word nikraas, as we find many times that a word can have a definition and the same word will also contain the exact opposite of the definition. This is known as *davar vihipucho*. Thus, although the simple definition of the word nikraas is to read, we have delved further and revealed that this word also alludes to the essence of Amalek, which is happenstance, and this is the antithesis of our belief that everything that occurs in life is Divine Providence.