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Megillah Daf 9

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamah of

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May the studying of the Daf Notes be a zechus for his neshamah and may his soul find peace in Gan Eden and be bound up in the Bond of life

The Mishnah had stated that the Books of Scripture can be written in any language. The Gemora asks from a Baraisa which states: If one wrote a Hebrew text in Aramaic or an Aramaic text (*certain words in the Torah that are Aramaic*) in Hebrew (from any Scripture Book) or he used the Ivri script (instead of Ashuris), the scroll is not sacred and does not render the hands tamei. The scrolls must be written with the Ashuris script on parchment and with ink. [It is evident from this Baraisa that a Book of Scripture must be written in Ashuris.]

Rava answers: This is not a difficulty, as our Mishnah is referring to a case where the Scriptures were written in a different language but it was transliterated in the Ashuris script; that is why the Book is sacred. The Baraisa is referring to a case where the Scriptures were written using the Ivri script; this is why the Book is not sacred.

Abaye questions Rava’s answer: If the reason the Baraisa states that the Scripture scrolls are not sacred is because they were not written in Ashuris script, why does the Baraisa mention cases of writing Hebrew texts in Aramaic or vice versa? Even a Hebrew text written in Hebrew or an Aramaic text written in Aramaic will not be sacred if it is not written with the Ashuris script!?

Rather, it is not a difficulty, as the Mishnah is following the opinion of the Rabbis (and that is why it is sacred even when written in other languages), and the Baraisa is following the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel of the Mishnah, who maintains that the Scriptures can be sacred even if they are not written in Ashuris.

The Gemora asks: The Baraisa states that the scrolls must be written with the Ashuris script on parchment and with ink. According to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, it will be sacred even if it is written in Greek!?

Rather, it is not a difficulty, as the Mishnah is referring to Books (of Scripture), and the Baraisa is referring to *tefillin* and *mezuzos*, which everyone agrees, must be written in Hebrew and with the Ashuris script. This is learned from the verse [Devarim 6:6]: *and they shall be*, which means that they should stay as they are; their language and script should not be changed.

The Gemora questions this: The Baraisa states a case where Aramaic text was written in Hebrew; this is understandable if it is referring to the Torah, where there are Aramaic words (*yegar sahadusa* Breishis 8:48), but there are no Aramaic words mentioned in *tefillin* and *mezuzos*!?

The Gemora answers: The Baraisa is referring specifically to a Megillah and that must be written in Hebrew and with Ashuris script. The other to the other books [of the Scripture]. What is the reason in the case of the Megillah? — Because it is written in regard to it: according to their writing and according to their language. - What case of Aramaic being written in Hebrew is possible here? — Rav Pappa said: And the king’s “decree” shall be published; Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: And all the wives shall give “honor” to their husbands.

Rav Ashi answers that the Baraisa is referring to the other Books of Scripture (*the Prophets and the Writings, not the Torah*), and it is following the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah, as it has been taught in a Baraisa: Tefillin and mezuzos are to be written only in Ashuris, but our Rabbis allowed them to be written in Greek also. - But is it not written: and they shall be? I must say therefore: Scrolls of the Scripture may be written in any language, and our Rabbis permitted them to be written in Greek. - They permitted! This would imply that the Tanna Kamma forbade it!? - What I must say therefore is: Our Rabbis permitted them to be written only in Greek. - And it goes on to state: Rabbi Yehudah said: When our teachers permitted Greek, they permitted it only for a Torah scroll. This was on account of the incident related in connection with King Talmi (an Egyptian king). Talmi gathered seventy-two Elders of Israel and placed them in seventy-two chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: "Write for me a Greek translation of the Torah of Moshe your teacher." The Holy One, Blessed be He, put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did. [The Gemora proceeds to illustrate the changes that these Elders made in the Torah in order not to anger Talmi or to prevent a denigration of the Torah, Heaven forbid.] They wrote (in Greek):

- God created in the beginning (instead of 'In the beginning God created'; the purpose of this change was to prevent the idea that another deity, referred to as 'In the beginning' created 'God').
- I shall make man in image and likeness (instead of 'Let us make,' for then it would appear as if there were two deities).
- And he finished on the sixth day, and He rested on the seventh day (instead of 'and he finished on the seventh day', which might be taken to imply that some work was done on the seventh day).

- Male and female he created him, but they did not write 'created them' (which could be taken to mean that they were separate from the first).
- Come, let Me descend and I will confound their tongues.
- And Sarah laughed among her relatives (instead of 'in herself,' in order to make a distinction between Sarah and Avraham, who also laughed inwardly; this way, it indicated that Sarah laughed in public and that is why God rebuked her and not Avraham).
- For in their anger they killed an ox, and at their whim they uprooted the manger (to save our ancestors from being called murderers).
- And Moshe took his wife and his children, and made them ride on a carrier of men (instead of a donkey; so they wouldn't mock Moshe for not having a horse or a camel at his disposal).
- And the abode of the children of Israel which they stayed in Egypt and in other lands, was four hundred years. [The words 'and in other lands' are inserted because, according to the Biblical record, the Israelites were at the utmost 210 years in Egypt.]
- And he sent the elect of the children of Israel.
- And against the elect of the children of Israel he did not put forth his hand.
- I have not taken one valuable of theirs (instead of a donkey, so it shouldn't be said that Moshe took other things).

- Which Hashem, your God distributed to give light to all the peoples (so that it shouldn't be said that the other nations are permitted to worship idols).
- And he went and served other gods which I commanded should not be served.
- They also wrote for him 'the beast with small legs' and they did not write 'the hare,' because the name of Ptolemy's wife was hare, lest he should say, "The Jews have mocked me and put the name of my wife in the Torah." (8b4 – 9b1)

The Mishnah had stated: Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: The Books of Scripture may be written only in Greek (*not any foreign language*).

Rabbi Avahu said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: The halachah is in accordance with Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel.

And Rabbi Yochanan said: what is the reason of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel? It is written [Breishis 9:27]: *May Hashem extend Yefes and He will dwell in the tents of Shem*. We can interpret these words as follows: The language of Yefes (*Greek*) will be in the tents of Shem (*the Torah*). - But why not say [the words of] Gomer and Magog? — Rabbi Chiya bar Abba replied: The real reason is because it is written: Let God beautify Yefes; implying: Let the chief beauty of Yefes be in the tents of Shem. (9b1)

The Mishnah states: There is no difference between a Kohen Gadol who is anointed with the oil of anointing (*shemen hamishchah*) and the Kohen Gadol whose dignity was marked with a larger number of garments (*ribuy begadim, when the oil was lacking*), except the bull which comes for all the mitzvos (*a Kohen Gadol that was anointed will bring a bull chatas if he issued an erroneous ruling, however, a kohen gadol appointed through the extra garments will bring a regular chatas*).

There is no difference between a serving Kohen Gadol and one who has retired except for the bull of Yom Kippur and the tenth of the *eifah* (*which is offered every day*). 99b1 – 9b2)

From this we infer that in the matter of the bull of Yom Kippur and the tenth of the *eifah* they are on the same footing. The Mishnah, it appears, does not concur with Rabbi Meir; for with regard to the view of Rabbi Meir, it has been taught: One who wears the additional garments [without having been anointed] brings the bull which is offered [by the Kohen Gadol] for the [unwitting breaking of] any of the mitzvos; these are the words of Rabbi Meir. The Sages, however, say that he does not offer it. What is the reason of Rabbi Meir? — As it has been taught: [If the] anointed [Kohen shall sin]: this tells me only of one anointed with the oil of anointment. How do I know that it applies also to one who [merely] wears the additional garments? — Because it says: the 'anointed'. How have you explained [the Mishnah]? As not concurring with Rabbi Meir. Look now at the next clause: There is no difference between a serving Kohen Gadol and one who has retired except for the bull of Yom Kippur and the tenth of the *eifah*. We infer from this that in all other matters they are on the same footing; and so we come round to the view of Rabbi Meir, as it has been taught: If something happened to disqualify him and another Kohen was appointed to take his place, when the first returns to his service the second is still liable to all the obligations of the Kohen Gadol; these are the words of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yosi said: The first returns to his service whereas the second is qualified to act neither as a Kohen Gadol nor as an ordinary Kohen. Rabbi Yosi further said: it happened with Rabbi Yosi ben Ulam from Tzipori that a disqualification occurred to the Kohen Gadol and they appointed him in his place, and the case eventually came before the Sages and they said: The first returns to his service. The second is qualified to act neither as a Kohen Gadol nor as an ordinary Kohen: as a Kohen Gadol, so as

not to create enmity, as an ordinary Kohen, because we can raise to a higher grade of holiness but we never put down to a lower. Are we then to say that the first clause [of the Mishnah] follows the Sages and the second Rabbi Meir? — Said Rav Chisda: Yes; the first clause follows the Sages and the second Rabbi Meir. Rav Yosef said: The entire Mishnah is the view of Rebbe, who combined the views of differing Tannaim. (9b2 – 9b3)

(9b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

GREEK TRANSLATION

The Gemora relates that when the Greek king Ptolemy ordered the Sages to translate the Torah into Greek, they made a number of changes, including changing the name of the hare mentioned (14:7) as one of the four forbidden animals which possess one sign of kashrus but not the other. Because Ptolemy's wife was named "Arneves," the word the Torah uses for the hare, the Sages changed the wording so as not to offend him. Reb Oizer Alpert cites the Taam V'Daas in Parshas Shemini who asks: How were they permitted to do so in light of the ruling of the Yam Shel Shlomo (Bava Kamma 4:9) that one is required to give up his life rather than alter a single word or ruling of the Torah to appease others?

He answers that by the fact that Hashem put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did, this is similar to a Divine spirit and therefore it was permitted. Furthermore, they didn't change the meaning of the words, only the language. Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld of Har Nof, Jerusalem discusses our Gemora in an article.

GREEKS & DARKNESS

The world was chaos and void, with darkness over the face of the deep; and the spirit of Hashem hovered over the water. (Bereishit 1:2)

"The world was chaos" -- this is an allusion to the Babylonian exile... "And void" -- this refers to the Medean exile... "With darkness" -- this is an allusion to the exile imposed by the Greeks, who darkened the eyes of Israel with their decrees. They would tell the Jews, "Write on the horns of an ox that you have no more to do with the G-d of Israel!" (Bereishit Rabba 2:4)

Why is specifically the Greek exile represented by the word "darkness?" Didn't other nations also persecute the Jewish People through their anti-religious decrees? What, then, is unique about the Greek exile that it is likened to darkness?

Rav David Cohen of Cong. G'vul Yaavetz in Flatbush, N.Y., suggests a novel explanation for this Midrash based on the following selection from Massechet Sofrim: Five elders translated the Torah into Greek for King Ptolemy (a successor to Alexander the Great). The day this was accomplished was as unfortunate for Israel as the day that the Golden Calf was worshipped, because it is impossible to present a truly adequate translation of the Torah in any foreign language.

On another occasion, Ptolemy gathered together seventy-two elders and placed them in seventy-two separate rooms, not informing any of them the purpose of their summons. He approached each of them and said, "Write down the Torah of your teacher Moses for me." Hashem arranged that the same thoughts occurred to all of them and they made the same thirteen modifications in their translations. [This translation is commonly known as Targum Shiv'im, or the Septuagint.] (Sofrim 1:7-8; Megillah 9a)

The Tur (Orach Chayim 580; see also Shulchan Aruch ad loc.) quoting the opinion of the Halachot Gedolot, tells us that one should observe a fast day on the eighth day of Tevet because that is the anniversary of the day that Ptolemy commissioned his translation of the Torah. On



the day that the translation commenced, adds the Tur, "A three-day long period of darkness descended upon the world." This, Rav Cohen suggests, is the "darkness" of the Greek exile.

DAILY MASHAL

THE LIGHT OF THE ORAL TORAH

It remains to be explained why the translation of the Torah should cause a global darkness. What was the great tragedy of translating the Torah into another language, and why should it cause the world to become dark?

The tragedy, Rav Cohen explains, is implicit in the words of Massechet Sofrim -- "because the Torah could not be translated adequately." Although the written text of the Torah can be translated with reasonable accuracy into another language, all the nuances of meaning -- the double-entendres and the various implicit insinuations in the words of the Torah -- are lost in the process. Gematrias, acrostics and other word-based analyses are impossible to carry over from one language to another. The entire body of the Oral Torah which lies beneath the surface of the written text was thus severed -- and deleted -- from the Torah.

It is interesting to note that, as Rav Cohen points out, the Sadducees (a sect that believed in the literal interpretation of the written Torah and denied the existence of an oral tradition) were a powerful force in Israel only until the Hasmonean uprising which culminated in the Chanukah miracle (Megillat Ta'anit, Ch. 5). Once the Hasmoneans succeeded in uprooting Greek culture from the hearts of the Jewish people, the Sadducees also submitted to the Halachic renderings of the Torah-true elders of the generation. The Greek influence on Torah analysis that caused the Sadducees to give credibility to the written word alone was done away with along with the Greek culture.

The Oral Torah is compared in the Midrash to a light that illuminates the darkness:

The Oral Torah is difficult to learn and its mastery involves great hardship. It is therefore compared to darkness in the verse "the people who walked in darkness saw a great light," (Yeshayahu 9:1). The "great light" is a reference to the great light that is seen by the Talmudic sages [i.e. they understand matters with great clarity], for Hashem enlightens their eyes in matters of ritual law and laws of purity. In the future it is said of them, "those who love Him will shine as bright as the sun when it rises with its full intensity" (Shoftim 5:31)....

Reward for the study of the Oral Torah is to be received in the Next World, as it says, "The people who walk in darkness saw a great light." "Great light" is a reference to the primeval light which was hidden away by Hashem during Creation as a reward for those who toil over the Oral Torah day and night. (Midrash Tanchuma, Noach #3)

Those who "shed a great light" on the Oral Torah are allowed, in return, to benefit from the "great light" of Creation. It is now clear why translating the Torah into Greek caused a darkness to descend upon the world. The darkness was caused by the obstruction of the "great light" of the Oral Torah that resulted from the translation of the Torah into a foreign language. It is this "great light" that shines true once again in our Chanukah candles, in which we celebrate the Hasmonean victory over Greek culture and its destructive effects! (Rav David Cohen in "Bircat Yaavetz," p. 147)