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Taanis Daf 9

Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler, Kollel Boker Beachwood

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### Tzvi Gershon Ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o”h

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 Gemora records various teachings of Rabbi Yochanan – the first three being relevant to rain.] Mnemonic: Ingathering, legions, charity, (deed,) sustains: Rabbi Yochanan said: A day of rain is as significant as the day of the ingathering of all the exiles, as it is said: Hashem, return our exile as ‘*afikim*’ in the desert. And ‘*afikim*’ means nothing except rain, as it is said: And the channels [*afikim*] of the sea appeared.

And Rabbi Yochanan said: a day of rain is great because even soldiers from an army halt due to the rain, as it is said: Watering her furrows abundantly, settling down its legions.

And Rabbi Yochanan said: Rain is withheld only because people pledge to give charity in public and fail to do so, as it is said: Clouds and wind, but no rain, when a man is praised for a false gift.

And Rabbi Yochanan said: What is the meaning of that which is written: *asser ta-asser* - surely you shall tithe - separate tithes so that you should become wealthy.<sup>1</sup> (8b3 – 9a1)

[The Gemora now records two fascinating exchanges between Rabbi Yochanan and Rish Lakish's son.] Rabbi Yochanan met the child of Rish Lakish and said to him: Tell me a verse (that you have learned in school - a common practice in Talmudic times). The child said to him: *asser ta-asser* - and then asked Rabbi Yochanan: what is meant by *asser ta-asser* (what is meant by the double expression)? Rabbi Yochanan said to him: separate tithes so that you

should become wealthy. The child asks Rabbi Yochanan: How do you know this? Rabbi Yochanan replied to him: Go and test it (be careful in separating tithes, and see the results)! The child asked him: And is it permitted to test the Holy One, Blessed be He? But it is written: Do not test Hashem!? Rabbi Yochanan said to him: so said Rabbi Hoshaya: Except for this (tithes are unique that one can test Hashem), because it is said: Bring all the tithes to the storehouses, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now through this, says Hashem, Master of Legions – if I will not open for you the windows of the sky - and pour out blessings to you without any limits. - What is meant by the verse “and to pour out blessings without any limits”? Rami bar Chama explains in the name of Rav: Until people’s lips will wear out from saying, “Enough!” - The child said to Rabbi Yochanan: If I would have reached that verse, I would not have needed you, n or Hoshaya your teacher.

On another occasion, Rabbi Yochanan met the young son of Rish Lakish sitting and reciting the verse: *The foolishness of man perverts his way; and his heart frets against Hashem*. Rabbi Yochanan sat and wondered, he asked: Is there anything written in the Writings to which allusion cannot be found in the Torah? The boy replied: Is then this verse not alluded to in the Torah, seeing that it is written: And their hearts sank, and they turned trembling one to another, saying: ‘What is this that God has done to us?’ [The brothers of Yosef attributed their misfortune to God and blamed Him, rather than blaming themselves for the selling of Yosef.] Rabbi Yochanan lifted up his eyelid and stared at him,

<sup>1</sup> This teaches that fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *ma’aser* - tithes - guarantees wealth. At first glance this appears to be a simple play-on-words, switching the Hebrew letter *sin* for a *shin*, thus changing the pronunciation of the word from *asser* (tithe) to *osher* (wealth). Others explain that this is a more straightforward

interpretation of the *pasuk* (verse) - separate tithes, and by doing so you will be given the opportunity to separate yet more tithes (i.e. you will see success in your endeavors).

whereupon the boy's mother came and took him away. She said to him: Go away from him, lest he do to you as he did to your father.<sup>2</sup> (9a1)

And Rabbi Yochanan said: Rain will fall even for an individual, but sustenance will only be provided if it's for many people. [That] rain [may fall] for the sake of even one man may be learned from the verse where it is written: Hashem will open for you His good storehouse ... to give your (singular) land's rain. Sustenance for the sake of the many, as it is written: Behold I will rain down bread [i.e., the manna] for you (plural).

The Gemora asks on Rabbi Yochanan from a Baraisa: Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Yehudah states that there were three excellent leaders for Israel (in the wilderness). They were: Moshe, Aaron and Miriam. And there were three wonderful gifts bestowed upon the Jewish people (on their account). They were: The well, the Cloud and the Manna. The Well came on account of Miriam, the Pillar of Cloud came because of Aaron, and the Manna came in the merit of Moshe. When Miriam died, the Well disappeared, as it is said: And Miriam died there, and immediately follows [the verse]: And there was no water for the congregation; and it returned for the merit of the [latter] two (Aaron and Moshe). When Aaron died, the Clouds of Glory disappeared, as it is said: And the Canaanite, the king of Arad heard. What news did he hear? He heard that Aaron had died, and that the Clouds of Glory had disappeared; he thought that he was free to make war on Israel. Therefore, it is written: And all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead. With reference to which Rabbi Avahu said: Do not read, 'they saw' [vayir-u] but 'and they appeared' [vayeiro-u]. This is also in accordance with the view of Rish Lakish who said: [The word] ki may be used in four different senses, namely, 'if,' 'perhaps,' 'but,' and 'because'. The two [the Well and the Cloud] returned because of the merit of Moshe, but when Moshe died, all of them disappeared, as it is said: And I cut

off the three shepherds in one month. Did they then all [three] die in one month? Didn't Miriam die in Nisan, Aaron in Av and Moshe in Adar? This therefore is meant to teach you that the three good gifts which were given because of their merit were nullified and they all disappeared in one month.

It emerges from this Baraisa which states (that the Manna fell on the account of Moshe) that sustenance can be granted even for the sake of a single person!? The Gemora answers that Moshe is different since he would pray for many, he is regarded as many people. (9a1 – 9a2)

The Gemora relates: Rav Huna bar Manoach and Rav Shmuel bar Idi and Rav Chiya of Vastanya were accustomed to attend the discourses of Rava. When Rava passed away, they came to those of Rav Pappa and whenever he expounded to them a law which did not appeal to them they would signal each other (as a sign of disapproval), and thus distressed him greatly. In a dream they recited to him the following verse: *And I removed the three shepherds*. When next day these disciples took leave of him he said to them, "Go in peace (as a blessing to protect them from the harsh sentence depicted in his dream)."

Rav Shimi bar Ashi was accustomed to frequent the discourses of Rav Pappa and used to challenge him very much with questions. One day he observed that Rav Pappa fell on his face (in prayer – saying tachanun), and he heard him saying: May the Merciful One preserve me from the humiliation of Shimi. The latter thereupon accepted silence upon himself and didn't challenge him any longer. (9a3 – 9b1)

Rish Lakish also held that rain will be provided for an individual, even if he is the only one requires the rain, for Rish Lakish said: From where do we adduce that rain may fall even for the sake of an individual? Because it is written: Ask from

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Yochanan initially brought Rish Lakish from being a bandit into a Torah scholar. Later on in life, he looked at him when he was upset, whereupon Rish Lakish fell ill and eventually died.

Hashem rain in the time of the latter rain, and Hashem will form clouds, and He will give them showers of rain, for each man, grass in the field. - You might have thought, only when all need [it]; therefore, Scripture says: 'for each man'. Further, it has been taught in a Baraisa: Had Scripture said, 'for each man' [only], you might have thought [rain would fall] only when one needs it for all his fields, therefore Scripture adds: 'field'. Had the word 'field' [been used] you might have thought only when the whole field needs [rain], Scripture therefore adds, 'grass'. This is borne out by the case of Rav Daniel bar Katina, who had a garden that he would inspect every day. He would say that this row needs rain and this row does not. Rain would fall only on the places that needed the water.

What is the meaning of the verse: Hashem will form clouds? — Rabbi Yosi son of Rabbi Chanina said: This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, provides a cloud for each righteous man. What are chazizim (why are clouds written in the plural form)? Rav Yehudah said: The flying ones. Rabbi Yochanan said: Flying clouds are a sign of [coming] rain. What are flying clouds? — Rav Papa said: Thin clouds under thick clouds.

Rav Yehudah said: If small drops of rain descend before regular rain, this is an indication that the rains will persist a long time. If the small drops of rain follow after the regular rain, this means that the rains are about to stop. If before the rain, the rain will continue, of this the sieve serves as a reminder; if after a heavy rain, the rain will cease, of this goats' dung serves as a reminder.<sup>3</sup>

Ulla came to Bavel and he saw flying clouds. He instructed the people that were with him to clear away his belongings as rain is about to come. At the end, it didn't rain. Ulla said that just as the Babylonians lie, so too their rains lie.

Ulla went to Bavel and he saw that they were selling a basketful of dates for only a zuz. Ulla wondered why the people residing in Bavel would occupy their time with making

money when food was so inexpensive. They should dedicate all their time to the study of Torah. Ulla ate some of those dates and at night, he developed a severe case of diarrhea. Ulla retracted from his earlier statement and instead marveled at the Babylonians who ate these dates and suffered but nevertheless were able to study Torah. (9b1 – 9b2)

The Gemora cites a Baraisa: Rabbi Eliezer said: The entire world drinks from the ocean (water which evaporated from the ocean and comes back to the earth as precipitation), as it is said: But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole surface of the soil. Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: Aren't the waters from the ocean salty (but rain is not)? The replied: It is sweetened in the clouds. Rabbi Yehoshua said: The world drinks from the Upper Waters (the rain falls from heaven), as it is said: By the rain of the heavens you shall drink water. If so, what is the explanation of the verse: But there went up a mist from the earth? This teaches that the clouds grow in strength as they rise towards the firmament and then open their mouth as a flask and catch the rain water, as it is said: They will pour rain to His cloud. They are perforated like a sieve and they come and sprinkle waters on the ground, as it is said: A sieve of water are the clouds of the Heaven. And there is but one hand-breadth space between one drop and another. In order to teach you that the day on which rain falls is as great as the day where the heavens and earth were created, as it is said: Who does great deeds, beyond comprehension; and it is written: Who gives rain upon the face of the land; and it is also written: Do you not know? Have you not heard? ... The God of the world, Hashem ... His wisdom is beyond comprehension. (9b2 – 9b3)

Whose view is supported by the verse: He waters the mountains from His upper chambers, which Rabbi Yochanan interprets to mean the upper chambers of the Holy One, Blessed be He? Whose view? — It is that of Rabbi Yehoshua. And Rabbi Eliezer's view? - As [the waters] ultimately find their way above [Scripture] aptly terms them: He waters ...

<sup>3</sup> The fine flour comes first from a sieve then the heavier parts; conversely, the goat first discharges with force then relaxes.



from the upper chambers. For if you did not say like this, how will you explain: dust and dirt from the heaven? What you must [say is] that as these rise upwards [from the ground] the words, 'from heaven' are quite aptly applied to them. Likewise here, as the waters eventually find their way above Scripture aptly refers to them as: from His upper chambers'.

Whose view supports Rabbi Chanina who said this: He gathers the waters of the sea together as a mound; He lays the deep waters in storehouses, [as meaning:] What caused the storehouses to be filled with grain? The waters of the deep – the view of Rabbi Eliezer. And what of Rabbi Yehoshua's [view]? – That [verse] refers to Creation of the world. (9b3 – 10a1)

#### DAILY MASHAL

#### ONE WHO GIVES MAASER WILL BE WEALTHY

Rabbi Yochanan teaches that fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *ma'aser* - tithes - guarantees wealth. He derives this from the passage (Devarim 14:22) *asser ta-asser* - surely you shall tithe - which he understands to mean *asser bishvil she-titasher* - separate tithes so that you should become wealthy.

A person once approached Reb Pinchos Koritzer and complained to him that he has given maaser his entire life and he never merited to become wealthy. Why not?

Reb Pinchos responded with a story that occurred in his neighborhood. There lived a wagon driver who possessed many strong horses that would pull his wagon. He provided these horses with all their needs and the horses performed their job admirably.

One day, after he fed and gave his animals to drink, he tied the horses to the wagon and ordered the horses to begin the journey. The horses rebelled against him and refused to budge. The wagon driver began whipping the animals but to no avail. He became furious with the horses until he was beating them senselessly.

A passerby observed the scene and called out to the wagon driver that he is being ruthless and cruel. "Don't you see what you are doing? Don't you realize why the wagon is not moving? You have chained the wheels of the wagon to a tree and that is why your faithful horses are not listening to you."

Reb Pinchos Koritzer explained that the *mitzvah* of *ma'aser* - tithes – which guarantees wealth is akin to the strong horses. If one chains the wagon to a tree, the most powerful horses in the world would not move an inch. So too, if one prevents the wheels of the 'maaser' from turning by committing other sins and acting immorally, the segula of the maaser cannot take effect and he will never become wealthy.

#### INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

The above explanation is not consistent with the opinion of the Chinuch (424) who explicitly states that the blessing of riches is guaranteed and no sins committed will prevent the blessing from taking affect. The Meiri does state that one can lose out on this guarantee by committing sins.

There are other answers to this question. The Meor Einayim cites the Gemora in Shabbos (25b) that states "Who is a rich person? One who is pleased with his riches." The Mishna in Avos states that a wealthy person is someone who is happy with his lot. One who fulfills the mitzva of maaser will merit that he will be satisfied with what he has and be happy with it. Chazal say that a person dies without satisfying even half of his desires. Through the mitzva of maaser, one will learn to be satisfied and content with whatever he has. This is the test that Hashem allows the Jewish people to test Him with regard to the *mitzvah* of *ma'aser*.

*This is the explanation in the statement of the Maharil, cited by the Rama (Y"D 265:11) that the sandek by a bris is akin to the kohen who burned the incense. There is a special segula that he will become wealthy and that is why it has become the custom to have a different sandek for every bris. Wealthy does not mean that he will become rich; rather he will become content and satisfied with whatever he has.*