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Sotah Daf 11

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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

**Avshalom’s Children**

(Avshalom said the following as he was building a monument for himself:) for he said, “I have no son.”

The Gemora asks: Did he really not have sons? Behold it is written: And to Avshalom there were born three sons and one daughter?

Rav Yitzchak bar Avdimi said: He meant that he had no son fit for the kingship (and the only way for him to be remembered was through the monument).

Rav Chisda answered: There is a tradition that whoever burns his neighbor’s produce will not leave a son to inherit him (measure for measure); and he had burned Yoav’s produce, as it is written: And he said to his servants, “See, Yoav’s field is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire (this way, Yoav would come and talk to Avshalom).” And Avshalom’s servants set the field on fire. (According to this answer, Avshalom’s children had already died.) (11a1)

**Measure for Measure by Good**

The Mishnah had stated: And so too, for good (a person is rewarded measure for measure): Miriam waited for Moshe one hour, as it is said [Shmos 2:4]: And his sister stationed herself from afar, therefore the entire Jewish nation were delayed for her seven days in the Wilderness (when she had tzaraas for speaking derogatory about Moshe), as it is written [Bamidbar 12:15]: And the nation did not travel until Miriam was gathered in.

The Gemora asks: But the reward is not comparable to her good deed? She waited for Moshe for only one hour, and the nation waited for her for seven days!

Abaye answers: Let us say that the Mishnah means that with respect of good, it is not so (he is rewarded in greater measure for his good deeds).

Rava asked: But the Mishnah says that they are the same?

Rather, Rava says: This is what the Mishnah means: It is the same in connection with the good that he is rewarded in the same measure; nevertheless, the measure in the case of the good is greater than the measure in the case of punishment.

It is written: And his sister stationed herself from afar. Rabbi Yitzchak said: The whole of this verse is spoken with reference to the Shechinah (the Divine Presence stood together with Miriam until Moshe was saved). ‘and stood’, as it is written: And God came and stood etc. ‘His sister’, as it is written: Say to wisdom, “You are my sister.” ‘From afar’, as it is written: From afar, Hashem appeared to me. ‘To know’, as it is written: For Hashem is a God of knowledge. ‘What’, as it is written: What is Hashem your Lord asking of you? ‘Done’, as it is written: Because Hashem the Lord will do nothing. ‘To him’, as it is written: And he called it, “Hashem, Peace.” (11a1 – 11a2)

**Decree against the Jews**

It is written [Shmos 1:8]: And a new king arose over Egypt. Rav and Shmuel disagree as to the meaning of this verse. One of them says that it was actually a new king. The other



one said that the meaning of the verse is that his decrees were new.

The one who said that it was a new king, for it is written: new. The one who understands the verse to mean that his decrees were new derives it from the fact that the Torah never wrote that the king died and a new one took over.

The verse states: ...*who did not know Yosef*. He made it as if he didn't know Yosef (*and he issued harsh decrees against the Jewish people*).

It is written in the next verse: *He (Pharaoh) said to his people, "Behold, the people of the children of Israel (are more numerous and stronger than we are)"*.

The *Gemora* cites a *Baraisa*: He was the first to suggest a plan against the Jews; therefore he was punished first. He originated the plan first, as it is written: And he said to his people; therefore he was punished first, as it is written: Into you, and into your people, and into all your servants.

Come, let us deal wisely with him — it should have been with them! — Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina explains: The following is what Pharaoh was saying: Come and let us outwit the Savior of Israel. With what shall we afflict them? If we afflict them (*the Jewish people*) with fire, it is written: *For, behold the Lord will come with fire*, and it also states: *For Hashem will enter into judgment by fire (Hashem will punish us with fire)*. If we afflict them with the sword, it is written: *And by His sword against all flesh (Hashem will punish us with a sword)*. Rather, let us afflict them with water (*drown the Jewish children*), because the Holy One, blessed be He, has already sworn that He will not bring a flood upon the world. They didn't realize, however, that He would not bring a flood upon the whole world but upon one people He would bring it. Alternatively, He would not bring a flood upon them, but they would go and fall into it. Thus it says: *And the Egyptians were fleeing towards it (the Egyptians ran into the seabed that had previously split, and that is when they drowned)*.

And this is what Rabbi Elozar said: What is the meaning of that which is written: *For that which they planned against them?* In the pot in which they (*the Egyptians*) cooked, they themselves were cooked.

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Simai: There were three involved in that plan (*offering their advice to Pharaoh regarding the Jews*): Bilaam, Iyuv and Yisro. Bilaam who devised it (*to drown the Jewish children*) was slain; Iyuv who remained silent, was afflicted with sufferings; Yisro, who fled, merited that his descendants should sit in the Chamber of Hewn Stone (*as members of the Sanhedrin*), as it is said: And the families of scribes which dwelt at Yabetz; the Tirathites, the Shimathites, the Sucathites. These are the Kenites that came of Chammath, the father of the house of Reichav; and it is written: And the children of the Kenite, Moshe's father-in-law etc.

And fight against us and get them up out of the land — it should have read 'and we will get us up!' — Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: It is like a man who curses himself and hangs the curse upon somebody else. (11a2 – 11a4)

### **Working in Egypt**

Therefore they did set over him taskmasters — it should have read 'over them!' — A *Tanna* at the Beis Medrash of Rabbi Elozar the son of Rabbi Shimon taught that the Egyptians brought a brick mold and hung it onto Pharaoh's neck. If any of the Jewish people said, "I am too weak to work," they would say to him, "Are you any weaker than Pharaoh (*and he works; so should you*)?"

Missim ['taskmasters'] — i.e., something which coerces. 'To afflict him with their burdens' - it should have read 'them!' — The [meaning is] to afflict Pharaoh with the burdens of Israel.

The verse states: *And it built storage cities for Pharaoh*. Rav and Shmuel disagree regarding the meaning of the word "*miskenos*." One of them said that these were cities that

endangered their owners (*for because they forced the Jewish people to build them, they were later killed in the sea*). The other one said that they bankrupted their owners. For it was stated: Anyone who is busy with building will eventually become poor.

They built the cities of Pisom and Raamses. Rav and Shmuel disagree: One of them says that the name of the city was Pisom. It was called Raamses because it would crumble a little bit at a time. The other one said that the name of the city was Raamses. It was called Pisom because it would be swallowed by the mouth of the depths a little at a time. *[Every time that they built a little of it, it would crumble and they would be forced to start all over again.]*

But the more they afflicted him, the more he will multiply and the more he will spread abroad — it should have read ‘the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad! — Rish Lakish said: The Divine Spirit announced to them. ‘The more he will multiply and the more he will spread abroad’. (11a4 – 11a5)

### **Giving Birth in Egypt**

It is written: *And they were disgusted because of the Children of Israel*. This teaches us that the Jewish people were like thorns in the eyes of the Egyptians (*when they saw that the Jewish people were increasing*).

And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor [pharech]. Rabbi Elazar said: [It means] with a tender mouth [peh rach]; Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said: [It means] with rigorous work [pherichah].

And they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick etc. Rava said: At first it was in mortar and in brick; but finally it was in all manner of service in the field.

All their labors wherein they performed with them with pharech. Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonasan: They changed men's work for the women

and the women's work for the men; and even he who explained [pharech] above as meaning ‘with tender mouth’ admits that here it means ‘with rigorous work’.

Rav Avira expounded: As a reward for the righteous women who lived in that generation, the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt. When they went to draw water, the Holy One, blessed be He, would prepare small fish in their pitchers, and when they drew up the pitchers, they would be half full of water and half full of fish. They then would put two pots on the fire, one with hot water (*to be used for their husband's feet*) and the other with fish, and they carried them to their husbands in the field. They would wash their husbands, anoint them, feed them, give them to drink and they had marital relations with them in between the (*elevated*) borders of the fields, as it is stated: *lying among the borders*. As a reward for “*lying among the borders*” (*staying faithful to their husbands and taking care of them*), they merited the spoils of the Egyptians, as it is stated: the wings of a dove that are coated with silver, and her pinions with brilliant gold. After the women had conceived, they returned to their homes; and when the time came to give birth, they would go and give birth in the field beneath the apple tree, as it is said: *Under the apple tree, I roused you*. The Holy One, blessed be He, would then send down an angel from the heavens that would wash and straighten the limbs of the babies just like a midwife would do, as it is stated: And as for your birth, on the day you were born your umbilical cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to smooth the skin etc. He also provided for them two cakes, one of oil and one of honey, as it is stated: He would suckle him with honey from a stone, and oil etc. When the Egyptians realized what had happened, they went to kill them; but a miracle occurred on their behalf, and the babies were swallowed into the ground. The Egyptians brought oxen and plowed over them, as it is said: On my back the plowers plowed. After the Egyptians left, the babies broke through the earth like grass of the field, as it is stated: I made you as numerous as the plants of the field. And when the babies grew up, they would come in flocks to their homes, as it is stated: you increased and grew, and you came with

ornaments upon ornaments. Do not read this as: “b’adi adayim” – “ornaments upon ornaments,” but rather, “b’adrei adarim” – “flocks upon flocks.” At the time the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself by the sea, they recognized Him first, as it is said: This is my God and I will glorify Him (*the word “this” implies that He had been previously seen; therefore it must have been by the former babies*).

It is written: *And the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives.* Rav and Shmuel differ in their interpretation: One of them said that they were mother and daughter, and the other said that they were daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. According to the one who holds that they were mother and daughter, they were Yocheved and Miriam; and according to the one who maintained that they were daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, they were Yocheved and Elisheva (*the future wife of Aaron*).

There is a *Baraisa* in accordance with the one who said that they were mother and daughter. For it has been taught: “Shifrah” is Yocheved; and why was her name called Shifrah? It was because she straightened the limbs of the baby. Another explanation of Shifrah is that the Jewish people were fruitful and multiplied in her days. “Pu’ah” is Miriam; and why was her name called Pu’ah? It was because she would coo to the child. Another explanation of Pu’ah is that she used to cry out through the Divine Spirit and say, “My mother will bear a son who will be the savior of Israel.”

[Pharaoh’s instructions to the midwives were] and he said, “when you are assisting the Hebrew women at childbirth etc. [*and you see on the stones; if it is a son, you are to kill him*]. What are these “stones”? Rabbi Chanan said: He entrusted them with an important sign and told them that when a woman bends to deliver a child, her thighs grow cold like stones [‘*avanim*’]. Another explains [the word ‘*ovnayim*’] in accordance with what is written: Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he was doing his work on the wheels. As in the case of a potter, there is a thigh on one side, a thigh on the other side and the wooden block in

between, so also with a woman there is a thigh on one side, a thigh on the other side and the child in between.

If it is a son, you are to kill him. Rabbi Chanina said: Pharaoh gave them an important sign. If the baby’s face is turned downward, it is a son; if it is turned upward, it is a daughter.

But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt spoke to them. Instead of *aleihen* [‘to them’] we should have had ‘*lahen*’! — Rabbi Yosi son of Rabbi Chanina said: It teaches that he solicited them for a sinful matter but they refused to yield.

It is written: *And they kept the boys alive.* We learned in a *Baraisa*: Not only did they not kill the boys, but they provided for them water and food as well.

And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Behold the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women etc. What does it mean *chayos*? If it is to say they were actually midwives, do you infer that a midwife does not require another midwife to deliver her child! — But [the meaning is] they said to him: This people are compared to an animal [*chayah*] — Judah [is called] a lion’s cub; of Dan [it is said] Dan shall be a serpent; Naftali [is called] a hind let loose; Yissachar a strong-boned donkey; Yosef a firstborn ox; Benjamin a wolf that devours. [Of those sons of Jacob where a comparison with an animal] is written in connection with them, it is written: but [in the instances where such a comparison] is not written, there is the text: What was your mother? A lioness; she couched among lions etc. (11a5 - 11b5)

## INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

### **Abortions**

The *Gemora* cites a *Baraisa*: “Shifrah” is Yocheved; and why was her name called Shifrah? It was because she straightened the limbs of the baby. Another explanation of Shifrah is that the Jewish people were fruitful and multiplied in her days. “Pu’ah” is Miriam; and why was her name called

Pu'ah? It was because she would coo to the child. Another explanation of Pu'ah is that she used to cry out through the Divine Spirit and say, "My mother will bear a son who will be the savior of Israel."

The Maharal (Gur Aryeh) asks: Why does the Torah refer to Yocheved and Miriam as Shifra and Pu'ah, rather than referring to them by their actual names? He explains that prior to the birth of Moshe, the Torah did not want to give any recognition to his family members, especially his parents, because that would indicate that Moshe's parents were responsible for who he was. Although normally the merits and contributions of the parents form the child, and without these specific parents, the child will not exist; by Moshe, this was not the case. Moshe's existence was not dependent on Amram and Yocheved as his parents. Moshe was already set and destined from the six days of creation to lead the Jews out of Egypt. That is why the Torah doesn't even mention Amram and Yocheved when describing Moshe's birth.

The Chasam Sofer (Torah Moshe), with Reb Avi Lebowitz's (Heoros – Insights on the Daf) elucidation explains that Pharaoh specifically requested of the Jewish women to murder the children, rather than asking the non-Jewish midwives, because he realized that the Jewish woman do not receive capital punishment for performing an abortion, whereas the non-Jewish woman do. Pharaoh wanted them to use the sign of "stones" to determine when the labor will begin, so that they can be present, and then use the dependable sign of which way the child is facing to determine if it is a boy or a girl, and to abort all the boys before the head comes out while it still has a status of a fetus. Pharaoh's applied the following logic: Normally one is not allowed to commit murder to save their own life because "who says that your blood is redder than the other one?", but this would only apply to a murder of a "life." For an idolater, even the fetus has the status of "life," since they receive capital punishment for performing an abortion, and the logic of "who says etc." would apply equally to murder and abortion. But for the Jewish women, the fetus was not

considered a full "life," since they are not liable for abortion, and therefore they should be able to determine that their lives are more precious than that of the child. They would therefore abort the fetus to fulfill the command of the king and save their own lives. However, when confronted by Pharaoh for not following through with this partial birth abortion, their claim was that by the time they arrived, the fetus was fully born, and they were not allowed to kill a born child, even if it would cost them their own lives.

#### DAILY MASHAL

##### *Preventing Inter-marriage*

It is written: *And they were disgusted because of the Children of Israel.* This teaches us that the Jewish people were like thorns in the eyes of the Egyptians (*when they saw that the Jewish people were increasing*).

It is noteworthy that when we read this portion from the Torah on Mondays and Thursdays, we conclude one of the *aliyos* with this verse.

The question is asked that the *halachah* is that we do not end an *aliyah* on a bad note. Why therefore would we conclude with this verse, which demonstrates the hatred that the Egyptians had for the Jewish people?

The Mattersdorfer Rav, at an Agudah Convention, once answered that on the contrary! The fact that the Egyptians despised the Jews was a blessing. It was through this that the Jews were able to maintain their Jewish identity, and ultimately, this is what brought about the redemption. The Jewish people were able to keep their distance from the Egyptians. This prevented assimilation. When the idolaters befriend the Jews and begin mingling with them, this can have catastrophic results.