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Sotah Daf 34

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**Moshe Raphael ben Yehoshua (Morris Stadtmauer) o”h**  
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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

***Crossing the Jordan***

The *Gemora* cites a *Baraisa*: How did Israel cross the Jordan? Each day (*while they were in the Wilderness*) the Ark journeyed behind two divisions, but on this day, it journeyed first; as it is said: *Behold, the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passed over before you*. Each day the Levites carried the Ark, but on this day, the *Kohanim* carried it; as it is said: *And it shall come to pass, when the soles of the feet of the Kohanim, the bearers of the Ark of God, rest (in the waters of the Jordan)*. It has been taught in a *Baraisa*: Rabbi Yosi says: On three occasions the *Kohanim* carried the Ark: When they crossed the Jordan, when they surrounded Yericho and when they brought it back to its place (*after Shlomo HaMelech built the Beis HaMikdash*).

The *Baraisa* continues: When the *Kohanim's* feet were immersed in the water, the water flowed backward; as it is said: *When the bearers of the Ark came to the Jordan ... the waters which came down from above stood still and rose up in one column*. How high was this column of water? It was twelve *mil* high, corresponding with the dimensions of the camp of Israel. [*They crossed the Jordan in the same manner in which they camped. Since the camp was twelve mil by twelve mil, they were traveling in the Jordan the amount of time it takes to travel twelve mil. The water rose in a column at the same speed as the people, and*

*therefore it emerges that it was twelve mil high.*] These are the words of Rabbi Yehudah.

Rabbi Elozar the son of Rabbi Shimon said to him: According to your explanation, which is swifter, man or water? Surely (the current of the) water is swifter! Accordingly, the water would come and drowned them (for it would take longer for the people to travel the twelve mil than the water)!? Rather, the verse is teaching us that the waters were heaped up, waves after waves, to a height of more than three hundred *mil*, until all the kings of the East and West saw them; as it is said: *And it came to pass, when all the Amorite kings who were west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings who were by the sea heard how Hashem had dried up the waters of Jordan because of the children of Israel until they crossed over, their heart melted, and there was no spirit in them anymore, because of the children of Israel*. And also Rachav the harlot said to Yehoshua's messengers: *For we have heard how Hashem dried up the water of the Reed Sea etc. and the verse continues: And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and no spirit remained etc.*

The *Baraisa* continues: While they were still in the Jordan, Yehoshua said to them: Know why you are crossing the Jordan. It is on condition that you drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; as it said: *You shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from*

before you etc. If you do this, all will be fine; otherwise, the water will return and wash “osichem” away.

What is the meaning of “osichem”? It means “me and you”. [Yehoshua was saying that he along with them will drown in the Jordan.]

The *Baraisa* continues: While they were still in the Jordan, Yehoshua said to them: *Every man should take one stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of Israel* etc. and the verse continues: *That this may be a sign in your midst, when your children ask tomorrow, saying: “What is the purpose of these stones to you?”* etc. It was to be a sign for the children that their fathers had crossed the Jordan. While they were still in the Jordan, Yehoshua said to them: *Carry for yourself from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, out of the place where the Kohanim’s feet stood firm, making ready twelve stones (a second set of stones, which would be set up by Mount Eival and later transported to Gilgal), and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging place, where you shall lodge this night* etc. You might think that they were to bring them to every lodging place; therefore, it states: *where you shall lodge this night*.

The *Baraisa* continues: Rabbi Yehudah (Yosi) said: My father Chalafta, Rabbi Eliezer ben Masya and Chanania ben Chachinai stood upon those stones and estimated that each measured about forty *se’ah*.

The *Gemora* notes: There is a tradition that the weight which a man can lift upon his shoulder is one-third of the weight he can carry (if others would help him put it on his shoulder).

The *Baraisa* continues: From this you may calculate the weight of the cluster of grapes (which the spies brought

back from Eretz Yisroel); as it is said: *And they carried it upon a staff, by two*. From the fact that it said that it was carried upon a staff, do I not know that it was carried by two people? Why, then, does it say “by two”? Evidently, the cluster of grapes was carried with two staffs. Rabbi Yitzchak said: It means that it was carried as a load, and a load under the load (four spies held two poles and another four spies held two poles that were placed diagonally underneath the other two poles). How did he figure this out? Eight spies carried the cluster of grapes, one carried a pomegranate, and one carried a fig, and Yehoshua and Calev did not carry anything. Either they did not carry anything because they were the most distinguished of them, or alternatively, it was because that they did not want to be a part of their plan.

Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha disagree regarding the column of water (mentioned in the *Baraisa* above). One of them says that according to Rabbi Yehudah (that it was twelve mil high corresponding to length of the camp), they crossed the Jordan in the same manner in which they camped (like a box; for if they would have crossed in a line, the entire procession would extend considerably more than twelve mil). And according to Rabbi Elozar the son of Rabbi Shimon (who holds that the column of water was higher than three hundred mil), they crossed the Jordan one after the other (in single file). The other one says that both *Tannaim* agree that they crossed the Jordan in the same manner in which they camped. Rabbi Yehudah holds that man is swifter than water, and Rabbi Elozar the son of Rabbi Shimon maintains that water is swifter. (33b – 34b)

### Spies

The *Gemora* discusses the spies: Rish Lakish said: *Send for yourself men* means that it was up to Moshe (but

*Hashem was not commanding him to send spies*). Does anybody (i.e., Moshe) choose a bad position for himself (by listening to Hashem's instructions)? That is what is written: *And the matter pleased me well*. Rish Lakish said: It was pleasing in my eyes, but not in the eyes of the Omnipresent.

*And they will spy the land for us*. Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said: Those that asked for the spies aimed at nothing else than shaming the land of Israel. It is written here: *and they will spy out (v'yachpiru) for us the land*, and it is written there: *And the moon will be abashed (v'chafrah) and the sun will be ashamed*.

And these were their names: *For the tribe of Reuven, Shamua the son of Zaccur*. Rabbi Yitzchak said: It is a tradition in our hands from our forefathers that the spies were named after their actions, but only one of them has been retained. *Sessur the son of Michael*; he was named Sessur because he denied the works of the Holy One, Blessed be He; and Michael, because he suggested that God was weak.

Rabbi Yochanan said: We can also explain *Nachbi the son of Vaphsi*. He was named Nachbi because he concealed the words of the Holy One, blessed be He; and Vaphsi, because he stepped over the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He.

*And they went up by the South and he arrived at Chevron*. Shouldn't the Torah have stated: *and they arrived at Chevron*?

Rava said: It teaches us that Calev separated himself from the plan of the spies and went and prostrated himself upon the graves of the Patriarchs, saying to them, "My fathers, pray for mercy on my behalf that I may be spared from the plan of the spies."

The *Gemora* notes: As for Yehoshua, Moshe had already requested mercy on his behalf; as it is said: And Moshe called Hoshea the son of Nun Yehoshua. He was saying: May God save you from the plan of the spies.

This is the meaning of that which is written: *But My servant Calev, because he had another spirit with him (that is why he inherited Chevron)*.

*Where there were Achiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the offspring of the giant*. One giant was called Achiman because he was the strongest of all the brothers. The second one was called Sheshai because he made the earth like pits. The third giant was called Talmai because he made many furrows in the ground when he walked.

Another explanation: Achiman built Anas, Sheshai built Alush, and Talmai built Talbush. They were referred to as the offspring of the giant (*anak*) because it seemed as if their heads penetrated through the heavens and the sun was like a necklace around their necks. The word *anak* refers to a necklace.

*Now Chevron was built seven years before Tzoan of Mitzrayim*. What does it mean that *it was built*? If one thinks it means actually built, does a person build a house for his younger son before building a house for his older son? The verse states "and the sons of Cham were Kush, Mitzrayim, Put, and Canaan." [Therefore it would seem Tzo'an, part of Egypt, would have been built for Mitzrayim before Chevron was built for Canaan.] The verse therefore must mean that Chevron was seven times better in quality than Tzoan. There is no worse stony land in all of Eretz Yisroel than Chevron, for this is where the dead are buried. There is no land better than Mitzrayim, as it states: *Like the garden of*



*Hashem, like the land of Mitzrayim.* There is no land in Egypt as good as Tzoan, for it is written: *the emissaries of kings would (more fertile) than Tzo'an.*

The *Gemora* asks: But was Chevron stony land? Behold it is written: *And it came to pass at the end of forty years that Avshalom said to the king: I will go now and fulfill my vow in Chevron.* And Rav Avya said, and according to another version, Rabbah bar bar Chanan said: He went to get lambs from Chevron (*for there they were the finest*). And we learned in a *Baraisa*: The best rams are from Moav and lambs from Chevron!

The *Gemora* answers: From that very fact it is proven that the land was stony, for the soil is thin, it produces fine pastures, and the cattle grow fat there. (34b)

#### **INSIGHTS TO THE DAF**

##### ***Praying in a Cemetery***

*And they went up by the South and he arrived at Chevron.* Shouldn't the Torah have stated: *and they arrived at Chevron?* Rava said: It teaches us that Calev separated himself from the plan of the spies and went and prostrated himself upon the graves of the Patriarchs, saying to them, "My fathers, pray for mercy on my behalf that I may be spared from the plan of the spies."

The *Gemora* in Taanis (16a) states that it was the custom to visit a cemetery on a fast day. One reason given is that the Jewish people were saying that they consider themselves like corpses and this will stimulate them to repent. Another reason is that this will enable the deceased who are buried in the cemetery to pray for them. According to the second reason, they would not visit a cemetery that contained the graves of gentiles.

The Ritva writes that they didn't go to the cemetery in order to daven there because that is forbidden on the account of "loeg lerosh" – it is considered mocking to the dead who cannot perform the mitzvos; rather they davened in the streets and went to the cemetery afterwards. The Ran adds that they did not take the sefer Torah with them when they went to the cemetery.

The Noda B'yehuda (O"C 2:109) was asked on a year that there was no rain and there was tremendous suffering; if they would be permitted to go to a cemetery with a sefer Torah and daven there for rain.

He cites a Zohar (Acharei Mos) which states that davening by a cemetery inspires the souls of those buried there to inform those that are buried in Chevron (Patriarchs and the Matriarchs) who subsequently will arouse Hashem's compassion.

However, there is a *Gemora* in Brochos (18a) which rules that a person should not enter a cemetery with tefillin on his head or read from a sefer Torah in his arm. We can infer from this *Gemora* that reading from the sefer Torah is forbidden but holding it would be permitted. The Kesef Mishna in Hilchos Sefer Torah (10:6) learns that both are forbidden; reading from the sefer Torah or holding it.

The Noda B'yehuda concludes that although he is not an expert in the hidden portions of Torah, the Zohar cited does warn against bringing a sefer Torah that might be missing letters into a cemetery since this can cause terrible consequences.

The sefer Igra D'taanisa wonders why the Noda B'yehuda makes no mention of the *Gemora* in Taanis,



which would indicate that one can go daven by a cemetery.

The Minchas Elozar discusses the permissibility of people davening by Kever Rochel. Some say that we are not mocking Rochel since she was living before the Torah was given; she was never obligated in mitzvos.

The Netziv rules that in his days, it would be permitted because the custom was to bury them deeper than ten tefachim from the ground and it is considered like a different domain.

The Rama (O"C 581:4) writes that there are places that have the custom to go to cemeteries on Erev Rosh Hashanah and to recite lengthy Tefillos there. The Chidah asks on this Rama from the Ritva in Taanis that states explicitly that one should not daven in the cemetery.

There are those that create a distinction between a compulsory tefillah and a tefillah which is only voluntary.

The Elya Rabbah (581) quotes from the Maharil that one should be careful when going to the graves of Tzadikim that your tefillos should not be directed towards those that are buried there, rather one should daven to Hashem and ask for compassion in the merit of these Tzadikim. Some say that you can ask the dead to be an advocate on your behalf.

The Bach (Y"D 217) rules that it is forbidden to daven to the dead because of the prohibition of being "doresh el hameisim." He points out that even though we find that Calev did daven in Chevron by the Meoras Hamachpeila, he wasn't davening to the Avos. Rather,

since a cemetery is a place of holiness and purity, the tefillos davened there will be more readily accepted.

## **DAILY MASHAL**

### ***Yehoshua and Calev***

Why did Moshe Rabbeinu daven for Yehoshua, and leave Calev on his own to fend for himself? The Chofetz Chaim (on the Torah) explains that Moshe realized that Yehoshua and Calev had opposite approaches. Yehoshua's approach was to fight for what he believed in, and not even for a second, give the impression that he agrees with the spies. Calev's approach was more of a logistical tactic; one that would be most effective in winning the litigation. This involved the giving of the impression that he agreed with them, until the ideal opportunity presented itself that he could express his true feelings. Moshe Rabbeinu was concerned that with Yehoshua's antagonistic method, his life was endangered because the spies may try to harm him, therefore he davened for him. Calev, on the other hand, pretended to be on their side until they returned. As Rashi writes on the verse regarding Calev - his heart did not match his mouth; he pretended to agree with the spies until the opportune time came to quiet them down. However, when they began conceiving their hideous plans, Calev was concerned that by pretending to agree with them, he may actually become influenced, and felt it was necessary to protect himself by going to Chevron to pray, in order to protect his convictions.