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Sotah Daf 9

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Fitting Punishment

The *Gemora* bought a *Baraisa*, which cites Scriptural sources proving that Heaven measures a person according to his actions.

The *Baraisa* continues: And so we find regarding a *sotah*. In the manner which she measured, with it they measure for her. She stood at the doorway of her house to display herself to the man; therefore the *Kohen* stands her by the Nikanor Gate and reveals her disgrace to all. She wound beautiful scarves about her head for him; therefore the *Kohen* removes her veil and places it under her feet. She beautified her face for him; therefore her face is made to become pale (*immediately after drinking the bitter waters*). She colored her eyes for him; therefore her eyes protrude. She braided her hair for him; therefore the *Kohen* undoes her hair. She signaled to him with her finger; therefore her fingernails fall off. She girded herself with a belt for him; therefore the *Kohen* takes a rope made from palms and ties it above her chest. She stretched out her thigh towards him; therefore her thigh falls. She received him upon her stomach; therefore her stomach swells. She gave him the world’s delicacies to eat; therefore her offering consisted of animal food (*barley*). She gave him fine wine to drink in precious goblets; therefore the *Kohen* gives her the bitter waters to drink in an earthenware pot. She acted in secret; and He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High directs His attention towards her, as it is written [Iyov 24:15]: The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying: “No eye shall see me.” Another thing: She acted in secret; the Omnipresent proclaims it publicly, as it is written [Mishlei 26:26]: When the hatred is covered with darkness, his evil will be revealed in a congregation.

Since [the teaching that even the slightest sin is punished] is derived from ‘Laying one thing to another to find out the amount’, why do I require ‘For every measure is measured with noise’? — That [the punishment is] according to measure. - But since that is derived from ‘For every measure is measured with noise’, why do I require ‘With a precise measure you shall contend with her when you send her away’? — It is in accord with the teaching of Rav Chinana bar Pappa; for Rav Chinana bar Pappa said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, does not exact punishment of a nation until the time of its banishment into exile, as it is said: “With a precise measure ... when you send her away, etc.’

The *Gemora* asks: But Rava said: Why are three cups mentioned in connection with Egypt (*when Pharaoh’s butler repeated his dream to Yosef*)? One which she drank in the days of Moshe (*they were punished at the time that Kal Yisroel left Egypt*); one which she drank in the days of Pharaoh Necho (*when King Nevuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians*); and one which in the future, she will drink together with her friends (*in the times of Mashiach*)! [We see that the Egyptians were not completely destroyed by the initial punishment!?!]

And if you will suggest an answer that the original Egyptians were indeed completely destroyed, and the later Egyptians were in actuality people from other countries (*who settled in Egypt, and were later destroyed*), this can be proven false from the following *Baraisa*: Rabbi Yehudah said: Minyamin, an Egyptian convert was one of my colleagues among the disciples of Rabbi Akiva, and he once told me: “I am a first-generation Egyptian convert and I married a first-generation Egyptian convert. I shall arrange for my son to marry a second-generation Egyptian convert in order that my

grandson shall be eligible to enter the congregation.” [Evidently, the people living in Egypt are still Egyptians.] — But if the above statement was made it was made as follows: Rav Chinana bar Pappa said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, does not exact punishment of a king until the time of his banishment into exile, as it is said: ‘With a precise measure you shall contend with her when you send her away, etc’.

Ameimar applied this teaching of Rav Chinana bar Pappa to the following: What is the meaning of that which is written: For I, Hashem, have not changed; and you, the sons of Jacob, have not perished? I, Hashem, have not repeated it — I did not strike a nation and strike it again. And you, the sons of Jacob, have not perished — that is what is written: My arrows I shall finish against them. — My arrows will be finished, but they will not be finished.

Rav Hamnuna said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, does not exact punishment of a man until his measure is filled; as it is said: After his desire has been filled, misfortune will strike him etc. (8b3 – 9a2)

Rav Chinana bar Pappa expounded: What is the meaning of that which is written: Sing joyfully, O righteous; because of Hashem, for the upright, praise is fitting? Do not read it praise is fitting ‘navah’, but rather, a palace of praise ‘nevei.’ This alludes to Moshe and David over whose handiworks [in erecting a Sanctuary] their enemies did not gain control. Of [the Temple planned by] David, it is written: Its gates sunk in the ground. With regard to Moshe the Master said: After the first Temple was erected, the Tent of Meeting was hidden, its boards, hooks, bars, pillars and sockets. - Where [were they hidden]? — Rav Chisda said in the name of Avimi: Beneath the tunnels of the Temple. (9a2 – 9a3)

Measure for Measure

The *Gemora* cites a *Baraisa*: The *sotah* set her eyes on a man who was not fit for her; what she wanted was not given to her (*she becomes forbidden to the adulterer*) and what she possessed was taken from her (*she becomes forbidden to her husband*). For whoever sets his eyes on something that is

not his, what he seeks is not granted to him, and what he possesses is taken from him. And so we find with the primeval serpent (*in the Garden of Eden*), which set its eyes on that which was not fit for it (*the snake which to marry Eve*); what it wanted was not granted to it and what it possessed was taken from it (*it could not stand upright any longer*). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I had said: Let the serpent be king over every animal and beast, but now, it shall be more cursed than all cattle and beasts of the field. I had said that it should walk upright, but now, it shall go upon its belly. I had said that its food should be the same as that of man, but now, it shall eat dust. It said: I will kill Adam and marry Eve, but now, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. And similarly, we find it with Cain, Korach, Bilaam, Doeg, Achitophel, Geichazi, Avshalom, Adoniyahu, Uziyahu and Haman. They set their eyes upon that which was not fit for them. What they wanted was not granted to them and what they possessed was taken from them. (9a3 – 9b1)

Thigh and Stomach

The *Mishnah* had stated: She sinned with her thigh and then her stomach; she gets punished with the thigh and then her stomach.

The *Gemora* seeks to find the Scriptural source for this. Shall I say because it is written: When Hashem makes your thigh collapse and your stomach distend? But it is likewise written: Her stomach will distend and her thigh will collapse! — Abaye explains: When the *Kohen* pronounces the curse, he curses the thigh (*for that is where the sin was initiated*) and then the stomach. However, the water punishes in its normal manner; it enters the stomach first and then the thigh (*and the Mishnah only means that the thigh is first with respect to the curse, for the curse starts the process*).

The *Gemora* asks: there is a verse written by the curse: to distend the stomach and collapse the thigh!? - The *Gemora* answers: That is because the *Kohen* is informing her that she will be punished with the stomach first and then the thigh, and this way, they will not discredit the bitter waters (*for*

people will say that she was punished in the reverse order, and they will thus deny in the Divine nature of the waters). (9b1)

Mishnah

(The Mishnah cites other examples where a person is punished measure for measure.) Shimshon followed his eyes, therefore the Philistines gouged out his eyes, as it is said [Shoftim 16:21]: And the Philistines grabbed him and gouged out his eyes. Avshalom gloried in his hair; therefore he was hung by his hair. And since he cohabited with the ten concubines of his father, ten lances were thrust into him, as it is written [II Shmuel 18:15]: And ten men, the bearers of Yoav's armor encompassed him (and then they killed him). And since he stole three hearts, the heart of his father, the heart of the Beis Din, and the heart of Israel, as it states [ibid. 15:6]: And Avshalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel, therefore three lances were thrust into him, as it says [ibid. 18:14]: And he took three lances in his hand and thrust them into Avshalom's heart.

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.

Yosef merited to bury his father, and none of his brothers was greater than he, as it is written [Breishis 50:7,9]: And Yosef went up to bury his father...And he brought up with him both chariots and horsemen. Who was greater than Yosef that none other than Moshe attended to him (demonstrating that Yosef's deeds were rewarded measure for measure)? Moshe merited to take the bones of Yosef, and there was none in Israel greater than him, as it is said [Shmos 13:19]: And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him. Who was greater than Moshe, for the Almighty attended to him, as it is said [Devarim 34:6]: And He buried him in the

valley. And it is not only of Moshe alone that they said this, but of all the righteous (the Almighty will attend to them), as it is said [Yeshayah 58:8]: And your righteousness shall go before you, and the glory of Hashem shall gather you in. (9b2 – 9b3)

Shimshon

The Gemora cites a Baraisa: Shimshon rebelled against God through his eyes, as it is said: *And Shimshon said to his father, Get her (the woman from Timnas) for me, because she is pleasing in my eyes.* Therefore the Philistines gouged out his eyes, as it is said: *And the Philistines grabbed him and gouged out his eyes.* - The Gemora asks: But it is not so; for behold it is written: *But his father and his mother did not know that it was from Hashem?* [Hashem wanted Shimshon to marry her to help him fight the Philistines!] - The Gemora answers: When he went to choose a wife, he nevertheless followed his own guidelines (and his reason for marrying her was not completely pure in the eyes of Hashem).

We learned in a Baraisa: Rebbe says: The beginning of Shimshon's downfall occurred in Gaza; therefore he received his punishment in Gaza. The beginning of Shimshon's downfall was in Gaza, as it is written: *And Shimshon went to Gaza, and saw a harlot there.* Therefore he received his punishment in Gaza, as it is written: *And they brought him down to Gaza.* - But behold it is written: *And Shimshon went down to Timnas!* [The incident with the women from Timnas occurred before the one from Gaza!] - The Gemora answers: Nevertheless, the beginning of his degeneration occurred in Gaza (for the woman from Timnas, he married; this was not the case with the woman from Gaza).

And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman from the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. We learned in a Baraisa: Rebbe said: If her name had not been called Delilah, she was fit that it should be so called. For she broke his strength, she broke his heart and she broke his actions. She broke his strength, as it is written: *And his strength left him.* She broke his heart, as it is written: *And Delilah saw*

that he had told her all his heart. She broke his actions, since the Shechinah departed from him, as it is written: *But he did not know that Hashem had departed from him.*

And Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart. The Gemora asks: How did she know this? [*How did she know that now Shimshon was telling her the truth that the source of his strength came from his hair and the nezirus?*]

Rav Chanin said in the name of Rav: Words of truth are recognizable. Abaye said: She knew that this righteous man would not utter the Divine Name in vain. And when he exclaimed: I have been a Nazir to God, she said: Now he has certainly spoken the truth.

And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him. Rabbi Yitzchak of the School of Rabbi Ammi said: At the time of consummation, she detached herself from him (*causing him tremendous distress*).

And now be careful, and do not drink wine or aged wine, and do not eat anything contaminated. What does it mean '*anything contaminated*'? Furthermore, had she [Shimshon's mother] up to then eaten anything contaminated? Rabbi Yitzchak of the School of Rabbi Ammi said: This refers to things forbidden to a nazir.

God split open the hollow that was in the jawbone. R Rabbi Yitzchak of the School of Rabbi Ammi said: He [Shimshon] lusted for that which was contaminated; therefore his life was made dependent upon a contaminated thing.¹

And the spirit of Hashem began, etc. Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina said: Jacob's prophecy became fulfilled, as it is written: *Dan shall be a serpent on the highway.*

To resound in him in the camp of Dan. Rabbi Yitzchak of the School of Rabbi Ammi said: This teaches us that the Shechinah kept ringing in front of him like a bell. It is written

¹ The donkey's jawbone (lechi) out of which he drank in his thirst.

here: *To resound in him [lefa'amo] in the camp of Dan*, and it is written elsewhere: A bell [pa'amon] and a pomegranate.

Between Zorah and Eshtaol. — Rabbi Assi said: Zorah and Eshtaol are two great mountains, and Shimshon uprooted them and ground one against the other.

And he shall begin to save Israel. Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina said: The oath of Avimelech became void, as it is written: *That you will not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my grandson.*

And the child grew, and Hashem blessed him. - With what did He bless him? — Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: With his member - which was like that of other men but his seed was like a fast-flowing stream. (9b3 – 10a1)

DAILY MASHAL

Not Truly Yours

The Gemora related regarding several Biblical figures: They set their eyes upon that which was not fit for them. What they wanted was not granted to them and what they possessed was taken from them.

Rav Eliyahu Dessler writes in Michtav Mi-Eliyahu as follows: "That which is in his hand is taken from him" is not to be understood as a punishment, but rather, it is on account of this: if one feels that he owns something, it is only in his imagination. In reality, a person has no real connection to that which is external. Only that which one is able to internalize in his mind and soul is really "his." Therefore one's only desires has to be internally focused. One who desires external things, is showing that he really doesn't have any internal possession. Therefore, even that which he has, isn't really his.