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Gittin Daf 56

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamot of

**Moshe Raphael ben Yehoshua (Morris Stadtmauer) o”h**  
**Tzvi Gershon ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o”h**

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

He sent against them Nero the Caesar. As he was coming towards Yerushalayim, he shot an arrow towards the east, and it fell in Yerushalayim. He then shot one towards the west, and it again fell in Yerushalayim. He shot towards all four points of the compass, and each time it fell in Yerushalayim. He said to a certain boy, “Say to me your verse (*that you were just studying*).” The boy said, “*And I will take My revenge upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel.*” Nero said, “The Holy One, Blessed be He, desires to destroy His House and wants to punish me.” Thereupon, he ran away and converted, and Rabbi Meir was descended from him.

He then sent Vespasian Caesar against them. He came and besieged Yerushalayim for three years. There were three men of great wealth in Yerushalayim: Nakdimon ben Gurion, Ben Kalba Savua and Ben Tzitzis Hakeses. Nakdimon ben Gurion was so called because the sun pierced the clouds for his sake. [*The Gemora Taanis relates that Nakdimon once prayed that the sun should continue to shine in order that a certain debt he had incurred on behalf of the people should not be considered late, and his prayer was granted.*] Ben Kalba Savua 'was so called because one would go into his house hungry as a dog and would come out fully satisfied. Ben Tzitzis Hakeses was so called because his *tzitzis* used to trail on cushions behind him. Others say he derived the name from the fact that his seat was among those of the nobility of Rome.

One of these said to the people of Yerushalayim, “I will provide for them in wheat and barley.” A second said, “I will provide for them in wine, oil and salt.” The third one said, “I will provide wood for them.” The Rabbis considered the offer of wood the most generous, since Rav Chisda used to

hand all his keys to his servant except for that of the wood, for Rav Chisda used to say: To bake a storehouse of wheat into bread requires sixty storehouses of wood.

These men were in a position to provide for the city for twenty-one years. However, the *baryonei* (*empty men; their only wish was to fight the Romans*) were then in the city. The Rabbis said to them, “Let us go out and make peace with them.” They would not let them. They said, “Let us go out and fight them.” The Rabbis said, “You will not be successful.” The *baryonei* then rose up and burnt the storehouses of wheat and barley, so that a famine ensued.

Marsa the daughter of Boethus was the richest woman in Yerushalayim. She sent her servant out saying, “Go and bring me some fine-flour bread.” By the time he went, it was sold out. He came and told her, “There is no fine flour, but there is white bread.” She said to him, “Go and bring me some.” By the time he went, the white bread was sold out. He came and told her, “There is no white bread, but there is coarse bread.” She said to him, “Go and bring me some.” By the time he went, it was sold out. He returned and said to her, “There is no coarse bread, but there is barley flour.” She said, “Go and bring me some.” By the time he went, this was also sold out. Although she had taken off her shoes, she said, “I will go out and see if I can find anything to eat.” Some dung stuck to her foot and she died. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai applied to her the following verse: *The delicate and pampered woman among you which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground.*

There were those who said that she ate the dried figs left by Rabbi Tzadok, and became nauseated and died. For Rabbi Tzadok observed fasts for forty years in order that

Yerushalayim should not be destroyed. He became so thin that when he ate something, the food could be seen from the outside (*as it passed through his throat*). When he wanted to restore himself (*after the fasts*), they used to bring him dried figs. He would suck the juice and throw the rest away.

When Marsa was about to die, she took out all her gold and silver and threw it into the marketplace, saying, "Is this needed to me any longer?" This gives effect to the verse: *They shall throw their silver into the streets.*

Abba Sikra, the head of the *baryonei* in Yerushalayim, was the son of the sister of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai sent to him the following: Come to visit me privately. When he came, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai asked him, "How long are you going to act in this way and kill all the people with starvation?" He replied, "What can I do? If I say a word to them, they will kill me." He said: Find for me a way to escape. Perhaps it will be a small salvation." Abba Sikra said to him, "Pretend to be sick, and let everyone come to ask about you. Bring something foul smelling and put it by you so that they will say you are dead. Let your students pick up your bed, but no others should enter, so that they shall not notice that you are still light, since everyone knows that a living person is lighter than a corpse." He did so, and Rabbi Eliezer went under the bed from one side and Rabbi Yehoshua from the other. When they reached the gate, the *baryonei* wanted to pierce the bed (*to make sure that Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was truly dead*). Abba Sikra said to them, "Do you want the Romans to say that the Jews have pierced their Master?" They wanted to give it a push. He said to them, "Do you want the Romans to say that the Jews have pushed their Master?" They opened a gate for him and he was taken out. When he reached the Romans, he said to Vespasian, "Peace to you, O king, peace to you, O king!" Vespasian said to him, "You are liable to death on two counts. One is because I am not a king and you call me king, and secondly, if I am a king, why did you not come to me before today?" Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai replied, "As for your saying that you are not a king, in truth you must

become a king, since otherwise, Yerushalayim could not be delivered into your hand, as it is written: *And Lebanon (the Beis HaMikdash) shall fall by a mighty one (a king)*. And as for your question, why if you are a king, did I not come to you till now, the answer is that the *baryonei* among us did not let me leave." Vespasian said to him, "If there is a dangerous snake wrapped around a jar of honey, would they not break the jar to get rid of the snake?" [*You should have destroyed the walls and burned them, so that the baryonei would be chased away!*] Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai kept quiet.

Rav Yosef, or some say it was Rabbi Akiva, applied to him the verse: *God turns wise men backwards and makes their knowledge foolish*. He should have answered him: We would take a pair of tongs, grab the snake and kill it, and leave the jar intact. [*So too, we were waiting for some other way to remove the baryonei, without destroying the wall of the city.*]

At this point, a messenger came to Vespasian from Rome saying, "Get up, for Caesar is dead, and the dignitaries of Rome have decided that you should be the leader." He was only wearing one shoe at the time. When he tried to put on the other one, he could not. He tried to take off the first one, but it would not come off. He asked, "What is the meaning of this?" Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said to him, "Do not be concerned, for the good news has done it (*it caused your feet to swell*), as it says: *Good tidings fatten the bones*. What is your remedy? Let someone whom you dislike come and pass before you (*and the swelling will go away*), as it is written: *A broken spirit dried up the bones*." He did so, and his shoe went on. Vespasian asked him, "Seeing that you are so wise, why did you not come to me before today?" He replied, "Have I not told you before (*that the baryonei did not let*)?" Vespasian retorted, "I too have told you (*that you should have destroyed the walls*)."

Vespasian said to him, "I am now going back to Rome, and will send someone to take my place. You can, however, make a request of me and I will grant it." He said to him, "Spare for me the city of Yavneh and its Sages, and the family

of Rabban Gamaliel (*he wanted to ensure that the Nasi's family, the royal family from King David will not be broken*), and physicians to heal Rabbi Tzadok.

Rav Yosef, or some say it was Rabbi Akiva, applied to him the verse: *God turns wise men backwards and makes their knowledge foolish*. He should have answered him, "Let them off this time." He, however, thought that Vespasian would not grant him so much, and so even a little would not be saved.

How did the physicians heal Rabbi Tzadok? On the first day, they let him drink water in which bran had been soaked. On the next day, they let him drink water in which there had been coarse bran and flour. On the next day, they gave him water in which there was some flour, so that his intestines expanded little by little.

Vespasian sent Titus to capture Yerushalayim. It is written: *Where is their God, the rock in whom they trusted?* This is referring to the wicked Titus who blasphemed and insulted Heaven. What did he do? He grabbed a harlot by the hand and entered the Holy of Holies and spread out a Torah scroll and committed a sin upon it (*by having relations with her*). He then took a sword and slashed the curtain (*separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy*). Miraculously, blood bubbled out, and he thought that he had slain "himself" (*in reference to God*), as it says: *Your adversaries have roared in the midst of your assembly; they have set up their signs for true signs*.

Abba Chanan said: *Who is like You, O Mighty One, God?* He explains: Who is like You, mighty and firm (*in self restraint*), that You heard the blaspheming and insults of that wicked man and You keep silent? In the Beis Medrash of Rabbi Yishmael it was taught: *Who is like You among the mighty ones, Hashem?* The explained: Who is like You among the mute ones (*in reference to his remaining silent*)?

What did Titus do next? He took the curtain and shaped it like a basket and brought all the vessels of the Temple and placed them in it. He put them on board a ship to go and be

praised for his victory in his city. A hurricane at sea threatened to drown him. He said: Apparently, the power of the God of these people is only over water. When Pharaoh came, He drowned him in water. When Sisera came, He drowned him in water. He is also trying to drown me in water. If he is really mighty, let Him come up on the dry land and fight with me. A Heavenly voice came out saying: "Wicked one, the son of a wicked man, descendant of Esav the wicked, I have a tiny creature in my world called a gnat. Go up on the dry land and wage war with it!" When he arrived on dry land, the gnat came and entered his nose, and it picked against his brain for seven years. One day as he was passing the door of a blacksmith, it heard the noise of the hammer and kept quiet. He said, "I see there is a remedy." So every day they brought a blacksmith who hammered before him. If he was a gentile, they gave him four *zuz*, and if he was a Jew, they said: It is enough that you see the suffering of your enemy. This went on for thirty days, but then the gnat got used to it. It has been taught: Rabbi Pinchas ben Aruva said: I was in company with the nobles of Rome, and when he died, they split open his skull and found there a gnat that was something like a swallow, two *selas* in weight. A *Tanna* taught; It was like a one-year-old pigeon, two pounds in weight. Abaye said: We have it from tradition that its beak was of copper and its claws of iron.

When Titus died, he said, "Burn me and scatter my ashes over the seven seas, so that the God of the Jews should not find me and bring me to trial." (55b2 – 56b3)

#### DAILY MASHAL

"The pure person shall sprinkle upon the impure person ..."

In the Talmud Yerushalmi Rabi Yehoshua Ben Kabsoy comments: "I always understood this *pasuk* to mean that one pure person may sprinkle [the ashes of the *parah adumah*] on one impure person until I learned from the 'treasure house of Yavneh' that one person may sprinkle on many impure people!"

Rabbi Meir Shapiro ztz"l of Lublin explained that the "treasure house of Yavneh" is referring to Rabi Yochanan Ben Zakai's request of Emperor Vespasian to grant him the city of Yavneh and its sages. Rabi Yehoshua was inspired by Rabi Yochanan Ben Zakai's words which teach us the power of the individual to spread abundant purity. This single achievement of Rabi Yochanan Ben Zakai enabled the entire nation to continue learning and teaching Torah. (Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach *Merosh Amanah*)

The mighty Roman army was besieging Jerusalem. Starvation a horrific civil war battering rams destroying the city walls and the threat of total destruction.... Rabi Yochanan Ben Zakai surveyed the scene and thought of the future when the Jewish nation would disperse to the four corners of the earth and the *lishkas hagazis* nucleus of the Sanhedrin and heart of the nation would lie desolate. What would become of the Torah?

Considering his lack of financial means and military prowess he should have given up in despair. He was one man within a doomed nation. But he smuggled himself out in a coffin stood before the emperor and begged: "Grant me Yavneh and its sages!"

Yavneh — a tiny yeshivah in northern Israel where Torah would continue to be taught and learned.

Yavneh is still in our midst. There are *talmudei Torah* yeshivos kollelim and seminaries. These are the offshoots of Yavneh. Without them there would be no Jewish Nation.

That was the message Rabi Yehoshua imbibed from Yavneh. One pure person has the power to purify many impure people. One pure individual can save the entire world.

Mishpachah - 2013

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM YESTERDAY'S DAF**  
to refresh your memory

Q: If a man steals a beam and builds it into a palace, is he required to demolish the palace to return the beam?

A: *Machlokes* between Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel.

Q: If one stole an animal and consecrated it and then slaughtered it, how much does he pay?

A: Only the double payment, but not four or five.

Q: What are *sikerikon*?

A: An idolater who threatens to murder a Jew unless he gives him his field.