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Avodah Zarah Daf 11

Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler, Kollel Boker Beachwood

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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

Onkelos

When Onkelos the son of Kalonimus became a convert the Caesar sent a contingent of Roman soldiers after him, but he enticed them by citing scriptural verses and they converted to Judaism as well. Thereupon, the Caesar sent another troop after him, instructing them not to say anything to him. As they were taking him away with them, he said to them, “Let me tell you just a trivial thing: In a procession, the *nifyora* (*these are Roman dignitaries arranged in ascendant order of rank*) carries the torch in front of the *pifyora*; the *pifyora* in front of the *duska*; the *duska* in front of the *hegmona*; the *hegmona* in front of the king; but does the king carry the torch in front of the regular people?” “No!” they replied. Onkelos said, “Yet the Holy One, Blessed be He, does carry the torch before the Jewish people, for Scripture says: *And Hashem went before them by day (... in a pillar of fire to give them light).*” Then they, too, converted. Again he sent another troop ordering them not to enter into any conversation at all with him. When they took hold of him, he saw a *mezuzah* which was fixed on the doorway and he placed his hand on it, and he asked them, “What is this?” They replied, “You tell us.” He said, “According to the way of the world, the king of flesh and blood dwells within, and his servants keep guard on him from outside; but the Holy One, Blessed be He, His servants dwell within while He keeps guard on them from the outside, as it is written: *Hashem shall guard your departure and arrival, from this time forth and forever.*” Then they, too, converted to Judaism. The Caesar did not send for him again. (11a)

Antoninus and Rebbe

It is written: And Hashem said to her: *Two nations (goyim) are in your womb.* Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: do not

read it as *goyim* - meaning nations, but rather, *ge'im* – meaning proud ones. This refers to Antoninus and Rebbe from whose table neither lettuce, nor cucumber, nor horseradish was ever absent - either in the summer or the winter; as a master has stated: Radishes cut the food (*helping it to dissolve*), lettuce turns it over (*helping the food to be digested*), cucumbers expand the intestines.

The *Gemora* asks: But was it not taught in the academy of Rabbi Yishmael that cucumbers are called *kishshuin* because they are injurious to the body as swords?

The *Gemora* answers: There is no contradiction here, for they are injurious when they are large ones, but our reference is to small ones. (11a)

Day of Burning

The *Mishna* had stated: These are the festivals of idolaters: The day of birth and the day of death – [*this is Rabbi Meir's opinion. The Rabbis say: Every death on which there was burning is idolatrous; where there was no burning, it is not idolatrous.*]

The *Gemora* notes: This implies that Rabbi Meir is of opinion that at every death, whether there is burning of articles or there is no burning, they worship idols; consequently, the burning of articles is not regarded as an idolatrous ritual. We can infer from this that the Rabbis hold that burning of articles at a funeral is an idolatrous ritual.

The *Gemora* asks from a *braisa*: The burning of articles at a king's funeral is permitted and it is not regarded as following the ways of the Amorite. Now if it is a ritual of idolatry, how



could such burning be allowed? Is it not written: *You shall not follow their rituals?*

Rather, all agree that burning is not an idolatrous ritual, and it is merely a manner of showing importance for the deceased; they differ regarding the following: Rabbi Meir maintains that at every death, whether burning of articles takes place or does not take place, they worship their idols, but the Rabbis hold that a death at which burning takes place is significant to them and is marked by worshipping idols, but one at which no burning takes place is unimportant and is not marked by worshipping idols.

It was stated: The burning of articles at a king's funeral is permitted and it is not regarded as following the ways of the Amorite. And just as it is permitted to burn to honor the kings, so it is permitted to burn to honor the *Nesiiim*. What is it that was burned to honor the kings? Their beds and articles that were used by them. When Rabban Gamliel the elder died, *Onkelos* the convert burned seventy Tyrian *manehs* in his honor.

The *Gemora* asks: But did you not say that beds and articles that were used by them were burned (not coins)?

The *Gemora* answers: Articles that were worth seventy Tyrian *manehs* were burned.

The *Gemora* asks: May other things then not be destroyed? Yet it has been taught in a *braisa*: They uprooted animals (*cutting the tendons above the hoof*) at royal funerals and it is not regarded as following the ways of the Amorite.

Rav Pappa answers that the *braisa* refers to the horse on which he rode (*and is therefore considered an article that he used*).

The *Gemora* asks: And was this not done to kosher animals as well? Yet it has been taught in a *braisa*: Uprooting which renders the animal a *tereifah* is forbidden, but such that does not render it a *tereifah* is permitted. What kind of uprooting does not render it a *tereifah*? It is when they cut the tendons

of its hoofs from the hock and below. [*Evidently, they destroyed kosher animals as well; how were these used by the king?*]

This was explained by Rav Pappa to be referring to a calf drawing the royal wagon. (11a – 11b)

Lock of Hair

The *Mishna* had stated: The day of the shaving of his beard and his lock of hair.

The *Gemora* inquired: What does the *Mishna* mean? Is the festival on the day when he shaves his beard and the lock of hair is left (*which was done for idolatrous purposes*), or is it the day of the shaving of his beard and also on the day (*once a year*) when the lock of hair is removed?

The *Gemora* cites two *braisos* where both of these interpretations are taught specifically. (11b)

Other Festivals

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: They have yet another festival in Rome which took place once every seventy years. A healthy man (*representing Esav*) was brought and made to ride on a lame man (*representing Yaakov*). The upper one was dressed in the attire of Adam, and on his head was placed the scalp of Rabbi Yishmael, and on his neck was hung a stone of *paz* to the weight of two hundred *zuzim*. The streets were paved with carbuncles, and the following proclamation was made before him: "The reckoning of the ruler (*Yaakov*) is wrong (*that the exile did not end*). The brother (*Yaakov*) of our lord (*Esav*) is a cheat (*by taking the blessings from Yitzchak*)! He who sees it sees it; he who does not see it now will never see it (*for it only took place once in seventy years*). Of what benefit is the cheating to the cheater or deceit to the deceiver!" And they concluded by saying: "Woe unto the one (*Esav*) when the other (*Yaakov*) will arise."



Rav Ashi said: The wording of the evildoers have made them stumble. Had they said, “A cheat is the brother of our lord,” it would have accorded with their intention, but when they say, “The brother of our lord is a cheat,” it may be taken to mean that it is their lord himself who is the cheat.

The *Gemora* asks: And why does our *Tanna* not include this festival in the *Mishna*?

The *Gemora* answers: He only mentions those which occur every year, but does not mention such festivals that are not annual ones.

The *Gemora* notes: Those mentioned were the Roman festivals. The *Gemora* then lists the Persian and the Babylonian ones.

The *Gemora* states: There are five appointed temples of idol-worship: Rav Chisda explained to his son that they are fixed permanently throughout the year that idol worship is taking place in them.

Shmuel said: In the Diaspora, it is only forbidden to conduct business with idolaters on the actual festival days itself.

The *Gemora* asks: And is it forbidden even on the actual days of the festivals? Did not Rav Yehudah allow Rav Bruna to sell wine, and to Rav Gidal to sell wheat on the Festival of the Merchants?

The *Gemora* answers: The Festival of the Merchants is different, as it is not a fixed one. (11b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Why Me?

Our *Gemora* cites Rav Yehudah in the name of Rav on the passage “two nations are inside you”: “These are Antoninus

and Rebbe, whose tables never lacked lettuce, squash or radish, not in the summer and not in the winter.”

The Chibas HaKodesh (Chelek HaDerush) writes that Rivkah knew she was carrying twins, one a *tzaddik* and the other an evildoer. She complained that Avraham also had two sons, one a *tzaddik* – Yitzchak – and the other an evildoer – Yishmael, but that Sarah did not bear both but rather Hagar bore Yishmael. If so, she complained, “Why me?” Why am I punished to be the evildoer’s mother? She was answered: “two nations are inside you” – these are Antoninus and Rebbe. That is, your evil son contains a holy spark and your tribulation is not in vain.

All the Portions were Eaten at the Same Time

Our *Gemora* relates that the tables of Antoninus and Rebbe “never lacked lettuce, squash or radish.” It is the custom to eat radish at the start of a meal and lettuce at the end. However, their guests continually came and went, such that while one was eating his radish, another was finishing his lettuce (Peninim Yekarim).

Were Esav’s Clothes Tamei?

The Midrash says that Esav’s clothes were “desired” because they had belonged to Adam. Nimrod coveted them and stole them from Adam and Esav stole them from Nimrod. Why does the Midrash take the trouble to tell us the events that brought these garments to Esav?

Yedei Moshe comments that the *halachah* is that the clothes of an *am haaretz* are impure (*tamei medras*) for a *talmid chacham*. How, then, did Rivkah clothe Yaakov in Eisav’s garments? Chazal mention, however, (Bava Kama 66b) that *tumas medras* pertains only to the impure person’s own clothes and not to stolen garments and since Esav’s clothes were stolen, they weren’t *tamei*.