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Avodah Zarah Daf 2

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamot of

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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

Mishna

Three days before the festivals of idolaters one is forbidden from doing business with them, to lend them something or to borrow something from them, to lend them money (without interest) or to borrow money from them, to pay back a loan to them or to receive payment for a loan from them. [All these things are forbidden because the idolater receives pleasure from them, and he will go and praise the name of his alien god.] Rabbi Yehudah says: One may collect a loan from them, as this causes them distress. They said to him: Even though he is distressed now, he will be happy later (that his debt is all paid up). (2a)

Correct Version

Rav and Shmuel argue regarding the correct version of a word in our Mishna. One says the first letter of the word “eideihen” -- “festivals” is an “alef”, while the other says it is an “ayin.” Neither of these opinions are mistaken. The one who spells it with an “alef” has a source in the verse: For the day of their destruction is near (and “eid” is spelled with an “alef” (Devarim 32:35). [We call their holidays “eideihen” because they will be destroyed due to their idolatry. However, it is used to refer to their festivals, which is why we will define it in the Mishnayos as festivals. The same applies to the opinion below.] The one who spells it with an “ayin” has a source in the verse: They will bring “eideihem” -- “their witnesses” (referring to idolaters) and be vindicated (Yeshaya 43:9).

The Gemora asks: Why doesn’t the opinion who spells it with an “alef” spell it with an “ayin”?

The Gemora answers: He would rather call their festivals a word which indicates destruction.

The Gemora asks: Why doesn’t the one who spells it with an “ayin” spell it with an “alef”?

The Gemora answers: He understands that the reason they are going to be destroyed is because of the testimony that they themselves will give about their actions. This is why testimony is more fitting.

The Gemora asks: Is the verse: They will bring witnesses and be vindicated regarding idolaters? Isn’t this regarding Bnei Yisroel, as stated by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi? Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: All of the mitzvos that Bnei Yisroel perform in this world will testify for them in the World to Come. This is evident from the verse: They will bring witnesses and be vindicated - referring to Bnei Yisroel, and: They will hear and say, “It is true,” refers to the idolaters.

Rather, Rav Huna the son of Rav Yehoshua says: The one who says it is spelled with an ayin has his source from the following verse: All who create statues are empty, and their adored creations (i.e. idols) will not avail, and they (i.e. the idols) will be (incriminating) witnesses about them (those who worship them). [The word “eideihem” is used to mean “and their witnesses.”] (2a)

A Dialogue in the Future

Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa, and some say Rabbi Simlai, taught: In the future, Hashem will bring a Torah scroll and put it in His lap. He will say: “Anyone who dealt with this (during his lifetime) should come receive his reward.” Immediately, all of the idolaters will gather around in a disorderly mob, as the verse says: all of the nations with gather together etc. the Holy One, Blessed be He, will say, “Do not gather in a crowd; rather each nation should come separately along with its



scribes.” This is as the verse says: And the “le’umim” gathered, and we know that le’um indicates kings, as the verse says: u’le’om mi’lom yematz -- and one kingdom will overpower the other kingdom.

The Gemora asks: Is there disarray before Hashem? [Hashem knows who everyone is even if they are in a crowd!?]

The Gemora answers: Hashem wanted them not to be mixed up, in order that they should hear (and be able to respond to) what He says to them.

First, the kingdom of Rome will come to Hashem. Why? This is because they are important. How do we know they are considered important? The verse says: And they will devour all of the land, and they will trample it and crumble it. Rabbi Yochanan says: This verse refers to the wicked Rome, whose influence has spread out to the entire world.

The Gemora asks: How do we know that the nation that is considered important will be the first to come before Hashem?

The Gemora answers: This is based on a statement of Rav Chisda. Rav Chisda says: When a king and the community are supposed to come before Hashem to be judged, the king approaches first. This is as the verse says: to do the judgment of his servant, and the judgment of his nation, Yisroel.

The Gemora asks: What is the reason why this is appropriate behavior?

The Gemora answers: It is possible to explain that it is simply not appropriate to leave a king sitting outside. Alternatively, this is in order that the king should not bear the anger of Hashem towards his community. (2a – 2b)

Romans

Hashem asked the Romans: What did you occupy yourself with in this world?

They will answer to him: Master of the Universe! We established many marketplaces; we erected many bathhouses; we stockpiled silver and gold; and we did this only in order that Bnei Yisroel should be able to study Torah.

Hashem will reply: You fools [of the world]! Everything that you did, you did for yourself! You established marketplaces in order to have prostitutes sit there; you erected bathhouses to enjoy yourself; and the silver and gold belongs to Me. This is as the verse says: Mine is the silver and gold are the words of Hashem, Master of Legions. Do you have anyone amongst you who disseminated zoas (the Torah in My arms)? This is as the verse says: Who amongst you can say zoas. Zoas refers to Torah, as the verse says, “v’Zoas ha’Torah” -- “And this is the Torah” that Moshe placed. Immediately, they will go out in broken spirits. (2b)

Persians

After they leave, the Persian Empire will enter. Why? This is because they are second in importance. This is as the verse says: And behold, another beast, a second one, similar to a bear. And Rav Yosef taught the following braisa: The verse is referring to the Persians, who eat and drink like a bear, and they are corpulent as a bear, and they grow hair like a bear, and they do not repose like a bear. [Some say this refers to a bear that is tied up, as it continually paces.]

Hashem will ask them: What did you involve yourself with in this world? They will answer: We made many bridges; we captured many cities; we waged many wars. This was all in order that Bnei Yisroel could study Torah. Hashem will answer them: Everything you have done, you did for yourself. You made bridges to collect taxes; you captured cities to draft its inhabitants into your army. I am the One who wages wars, as the verse says: Hashem is a Man of war. Do you have anyone amongst you who disseminated zoas (the Torah in My arms)? This is as the verse says: Who amongst you can say zoas. Zoas refers to Torah, as the verse says, “v’Zoas ha’Torah” -- “And this is the Torah” that Moshe placed. Immediately, they will go out in broken spirits.



The Gemora asks: If the Persian Empire saw that these claims did not help the Roman Empire, why did they bother making these claims?

The Gemora answers: They thought that they were different than Rome, as Rome destroyed the Beis Hamikdash, while they, in contrast, helped that it should be built. (2b)

All the Nations

The same thing then will happen with every nation.

The Gemora asks: If they saw that these claims did not help the Roman or Persian Empires, why did they bother making these claims?

The Gemora answers: They thought their claims were not accepted because these empires oppressively ruled over Bnei Yisroel, as opposed to them.

The Gemora asks: Why are the Romans considered more important than the Persians?

The Gemora answers: The Romans will rule over Bnei Yisroel until Mashiach comes.

The Gemora relates that the nations will say to Hashem: Did You give us the Torah and we did not accept it?!

The Gemora asks: Can then indeed make that claim? The verse says: He said: Hashem came from Sinai – having shone forth to them from Seir (having appeared from Mount Paran). The verse also states: Hashem will come from the South etc. What did He want from Seir and Paran? Rabbi Yochanan explains: This teaches that Hashem asked every nation if they wanted the Torah and they rejected it, until he came to Bnei Yisroel who accepted it. [Therefore, how can they make such a claim?]

Rather, they claim: Did we accept it and not fulfill it? [In other words, we did not study it or fulfill it because we did not accept it.]

The Gemora asks: This claim itself should refute them, as why didn't they accept it?

Rather, their claim is: Master of the Universe! Did You turn a mountain over our heads like an overturned vat, and force us to accept it as You did to Bnei Yisroel? This is as the verse says: They stood by the foot (can also mean underneath) of the mountain. Rav Dimi bar Chama says: This teaches that Hashem turned the mountain over their heads like an overturned vat and said: If you accept the Torah, all will be well. If not, you will be buried there.

Immediately Hashem answers: The first ones (the seven precepts of the Noahide Code) should inform us the answer to this claim. This is as the verse says: And the first ones will inform us. Did you even fulfill the seven (Noahide) mitzvos?

The Gemora asks: How do we know they did not fulfill these mitzvos?

Rav Yosef had said: Hashem stood and judged the earth; He saw and released the nations. What did He see? Hashem saw the seven commandments which were accepted by all the descendants of Noach, but since they did not observe them, He rose up and released them from their obligation to observe these commandments.

The Gemora asks: It would emerge that a sinner gains from his transgression!?

Mar the son of Ravina answers: This is teaching us that even if they fulfill the mitzvos, they will not receive reward for it (even though they would still be punished for transgressing them). (2b – 3a)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Fools

The Gemora tells us of a conversation between the Holy One, Blessed be He, and the nations of the world during the period



of Mashiach. In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will take a Torah scroll in His lap, and proclaim: "Let him who has occupied himself with this come and take his reward!" The Romans will enter. Hashem will ask them: What did you occupy yourself with in this world? They will answer to him: Master of the Universe! We established many marketplaces; we erected many bathhouses; we stockpiled silver and gold; and we did this only in order that Bnei Yisroel might have the leisure to occupy themselves with the study of Torah.

Hashem will reply: You fools [of the world]! Everything that you did, you did to satisfy your own desires! You established marketplaces in order to have prostitutes sit there; you erected bathhouses to enjoy yourself; and the silver and gold belongs to Me. This is as the verse says: Mine is the silver and gold are the words of Hashem, Master of Legions. Do you have anyone amongst you who disseminated zoas (the Torah in My arms)? This is as the verse says: Who amongst you can say zoas. Zoas refers to Torah, as the verse says, "v'Zoas ha'Torah" -- "And this is the Torah" that Moshe placed. Immediately, they will go out in broken spirits.

The Brisker Rav asked an important question about the truthfulness of this dialogue. These nations are merely telling lies and making excuses about why they did what they did. Why then does Hashem only refer to them as "fools of the world"? They should simply be called what they really are, and that is - "liars."

He answers that although they were not aware of it, in the grand scheme of things they are actually telling the truth. They made marketplaces, bathhouses and bridges that benefited the Jewish People and actually enabled them to study Torah. However, at the time each kingdom developed society and contributed to mankind, their intent was for themselves. The reason that they are titled as "fools" is because they were not aware of what they were doing; they failed to have that benefit in mind.

DAILY MASHAL

Hashem Wages War

Hashem responds to the Persians by asking them: What did you involve yourself with in this world? They will answer: We made many bridges; we captured many cities; we waged many wars. This was all in order that Bnei Yisroel could study Torah. Hashem will answer them: Everything you have done, you did for yourself. You made bridges to collect taxes; you captured cities to draft its inhabitants into your army. I am the One who wages wars, as the verse says: Hashem is a Man of war.

It is noteworthy that Hashem is willing to give them credit for whatever else they may have accomplished - albeit they only had their own interests in mind; however regarding wars, Hashem is not even willing to acknowledge that they waged them. What does this mean? Do human beings not wage war?

HaRav Chaim Shmuelevitz explains that during times of war, Hashem watches over us even more than at other times, so much so, that we cannot even attribute the acts of war to human beings.

It is recorded by his students that during the Six Day War, he once delivered a shmuess in which he quoted an incident related by Chazal. Chazal tell us (Vayikra Rabbah 24:3) that there was once a demon who lived next to a spring. This demon was good to the people and never wished to bring any harm upon them. One day the demon remarked to one of the townspeople that another demon was planning to move into the neighborhood, but this demon was not so friendly. He asked for the neighbors' help in preventing this new demon from moving in to the town. The person asked how it was possible for human beings to have any influence on a fight between two demons. The demon responded that he wished the residents of the neighborhood to stand on the side during the fight and merely shout: "ours will win." Rav Chaim remarked that if standing on the side and cheering helps when two demons are fighting, how much more so when we shout out that the King of kings will be the victor.