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Yoma Daf 54

Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler, Kollel Boker Beachwood

Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamah of

Tzvi Gershon Ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o”h

May the studying of the Daf Notes be a zechus for his neshamah and may his soul find peace in Gan Eden and be bound up in the Bond of life

Rav Nachman said: It was taught that the Ark was hidden away in the Chamber of the wood. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: Thus were we also taught: It happened to a certain Kohen who was busying himself when he saw a block of pavement that was different from the others. He came and informed his fellow, but before he could complete his account, his soul departed. Thus they knew definitely that the Ark was hidden there. What had he been doing? Rabbi Chelbo said: He was playing with his hatchet. The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: Two Kohanim, afflicted with a blemish, were sorting the woods when the hatchet of one of them slipped from his hand and fell on that place, whereupon a flame burst forth and consumed him. (54a2 – 54a3)

Rabbi Yehudah contrasted the following passages: And the ends of the staves were seen, and it is written but they could not be seen on the outside — how is that possible? — They could be observed, but not actually seen. Thus was it also taught in a Baraisa: ‘And the ends of the staves were seen. One might have assumed that they could not slide from their place. To teach us [the fact] Scripture says: ‘And the staves were extended’. One might assume that they tore through the curtain and showed forth (on the other side); to teach us [the fact] Scripture says: ‘They could not be seen on the outside’. How then? They pressed forth and protruded as the two breasts of a

woman,¹ as it is said: My beloved is unto me as a bundle of myrrh, that lodges between my breasts. (54a3)

Rav Ketina said: Whenever the people of Israel came up on the Festival, the Curtain would be rolled up for them [by the Kohanim] and the Cherubim, which were joined together [in an embrace] were shown to them, and they would be thus addressed: Look! You are beloved before Omnipresent as the love between man and woman.

Rav Chisda raised the following objection: But they shall not go in to see the holy things as they are being covered, in connection with which Rav Yehudah in the name of Rav said: It means at the time when the vessels are being put into their cases?² — Rav Nachman answered: That may be compared to a bride: As long as she is in her father's house, she is modest in regard to her husband, but when she comes to her father-in-law's house,³ she is no more so modest in regard to him.

Rav Chana son of Rav Katina raised the following objection: It happened with a Kohen who was busying himself etc. — He was answered: You speak of a woman, who has been divorced. When she is divorced, she goes back to her earlier love.

Of what circumstances are we dealing here?⁴ If we were to say the reference is to the first Sanctuary — but there

¹ Whose outlines are visible beneath her clothing.

² This is said of the Levites in the Wilderness, who, while carrying the vessels on their shoulders, were not permitted to look at them before they were covered. How much less would the Holy of Holies be profaned by being shown to the

masses who had come to celebrate the Festival; the Cherubim being above the Ark-Cover in the Holy of Holies.

³ When she is fully married.

⁴ Of what time speaks this account of the Curtain being unrolled and the Cherubim shown to the pilgrims.

was no Curtain!⁵ If, again, the reference be to the second Sanctuary, but there were no Cherubim? — In truth the reference is to the first Sanctuary and as to ‘Curtain’ the reference here means the curtain at the entrances, for Rabbi Zeira said in the name of Rav: There were thirteen curtains in the Sanctuary, seven facing the seven gates, two [more], one of which was at the entrance to the Heichal - Sanctuary, the other at the entrance to the Ulam - antechamber; two to the Devir – Inner Sanctum; two, corresponding to them, on the upper floor.

Rav Acha bar Yaakov said: In truth the reference here is to the second Sanctuary, but it had images of cheruvim (on the walls), as it is written: And the walls of the Temple were surrounded by designs, figures of cheruvim and palm-trees and open flowers, and he overlaid them with gold fitted upon the engraved designs. And it is written also: As the joining of man, accompanied. What does ‘as the joining of man, accompanied’ mean? Rabbah son of Rav Shila said: As a man who is joined to his companion.

Rish Lakish said: When the gentiles entered the Temple and saw the Cheruvim joined together, they carried them out to the marketplace and said: These Jews, whose blessing is a blessing, and whose curse is a curse, occupy themselves with such things! And immediately they debased them, as it is said: All that honored her, debased her, because they have seen her nakedness. (54a4 – 54b1)

And it was called shessiyah: A Tanna taught: [It was so called] because from it the world was founded. We were taught in accord with the view that the world was started [created] from Zion. For it was taught: Rabbi Eliezer said: The world was created from its center, as it is said: When the dust was poured into a mass, and the clods stuck together. Rabbi Yehoshua said: The world was created from its sides on, as it is said: For He says to the snow: ‘Become the earth’; from showers and rain, and from

showers and His mighty rains. Rabbi Yitzchak said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, cast a stone into the sea, from which the world then was founded, as it is said: Into what its bases are sunken, or who laid its corner-stone? But the Sages said: The world was [started] created from Zion, as it is said: A Psalm of Asaph, O Almighty God ... and it says [in the next verse]: Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, that means from Zion was the beauty of the world perfected.

It was taught: Rabbi Eliezer the Great said: *These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created - on the day that Hashem God made earth and heaven.* The generations [the creations] of heaven were made from the heaven and the generations of the earth were made from the earth. But the Sages said: Both were created from Zion, as it is said: A song of Asaph: O Almighty God, Hashem, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down. And Scripture further says: Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has appeared, that means from it the beauty of the world was perfected. (54b1 – 54b2)

DAILY MASHAL

Impure Thoughts

The Gemora states that the keruvim embraced each other like a male and a female. The Sheorim Metzuyanim B'halacha brings down from the Minchas Elozar and others that in the Beis Hamikdosh, they were not concerned about impure thoughts.

My assumption is that Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai instituted a balcony to separate the men and women because of intermingling and not because of thought.

⁵ I.e., between the Holy and the Holy of Holies, but a partition.



Keruvim Embracing Each Other

The Gemora relates that when the idolaters entered the Kodesh Kodoshim, they saw the keruvim were locked in an embrace.

The commentators ask from a Gemora in Bava Basra (99). One verse says the keruvim faced each other and one says that they faced away from each other. The Gemora answers that it depended on Klal Yisroel's demeanor. When they fulfilled the will of Hashem, they were facing each other. If so, at the time of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, why were the keruvim facing each other?

The Ritva answers that the Gemora in Bava Basra is referring to the keruvim that Moshe made (those that were on the Ark) and our Gemora is discussing the keruvim that were drawn on the wall and these keruvim never changed their positions. Rashi seems to indicate like this explanation, for he says that the idolaters peeled them off the walls and then brought them outside.

The Maharsha brings from Rishonim that it was a special miracle at this time in order to shame the Jews in the eyes of their enemies.

An answer is brought in the name of a Rav from the previous generation who was forced out of his position due to his constant rebuking of the community members on their deficiency in avodas Hashem. As he was departing, he gave a farewell drashah and he asked the former question. His answer was that at the time that the Ribbono shel Olam was compelled to remove his Heavenly presence from the Beis Hamikdash, this was not the time to make calculations. It pained Him to such an extent, like a father who is forced to leave his son, it was as if all reckoning was forgotten and that is why the keruvim were embracing each other.

Rav Meir Bergman proposes another solution and he says

that this is the accurate answer. The professionals, who initially crafted the keruvim formed them facing each other. Subsequently, when the Shechinah resided in the Beis Hamikdash, the keruvim were given a spirit of life, and when Bnei Yisroel were not virtuous and not committing themselves to do the will of Hashem, the keruvim turned away from each other. At the time of destruction, the Shechinah completely vanished from the Beis Hamikdash and nothing remained. The keruvim then reverted back to their original construction and they were found facing each other.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz states that there is an important lesson to learn from here in the method of the Attribute of Justice - when Hashem is administering justice to those that deserve it, at the outset there must be love. Pinchas had the right to be a zealot for he was a descendant from Aharon Hakohen who was a seeker of peace and harmony. This is what the Gemora in Sotah (47) means when it states that the left shall push away and the right shall bring close. One must be extremely cautious in these matters. This is the lesson we learn from the keruvim.