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Taanis Daf 20

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

The Gemora cites a braisa that there were three people for whom sunset was miraculously delayed and they are: Moshe, Yehoshua and Nakdimon. The Gemora cites Scriptural verses to prove that the sun stayed East for Moshe and Yehoshua. (20a)

The Mishna had ruled that in a situation where there is rain in one city but not another, they call out immediately. A verse is cited which states that Hashem will deliver rain to one city and cause the rain not to fall in the other city. Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav that both the rain and the drought entail a curse. Rashi explains that the city which receives the rain will be so sodden that the grain will become destroyed. (20a)

The Gemora illustrates four occasions in which Rabbi Yehuda detects a positive aspect to an otherwise negative verse.

The fourth verse cited is a verse from Melochim where the Navi Achiya Hashiloni prophesied against Yerovem ben Nevot for enticing Klal Yisroel to commit idolatry. The Navi said that Hashem will smite the Jews like the reed that swings in the water. Rav Yehuda expounded this verse to mean a blessing. The Gemora explains that the curse of Achiya was better than the blessing of Bilam. Achiya cursed Klal Yisroel using the metaphor of a reed. A reed stands in a

place of water, its stalks grow back after it's cut and it has many roots. Even if all the winds of the world will come and blow, the reed will not move from its place; rather it will sway in the same direction as the wind is blowing. When the wind settles down, the reed will stand erect in its place. Bilam blessed Klal Yisroel using the metaphor of a cedar tree. A cedar tree does not grow in a watery place and therefore can dry up. Its trunk would not grow back and it doesn't have many roots. Most winds cannot blow a cedar tree down but the powerful Eastern wind can uproot it. It was Bilam's wish that Edom should deal such a powerful blow to the Jewish people that they wouldn't be able to recover. The Gemora concludes that the reed merited that it is used by a scribe to write the Holy Scriptures. (20a)

The Gemora states that a person should be humble like a reed and not haughty or harsh like a cedar tree.

The Gemora cites an incident with Rabbi Elozar illustrating this theme. R' Elozar b'Rebbi Shimon rode his donkey along the riverbanks, traveling from his yeshiva to Migdal G'dor, his hometown. He was extremely happy, and self-assured having learned so much Torah. Suddenly, he met an exceptionally ugly man.

"Shalom alecha, Rabbi," the man greeted R' Elozar b'Rebbi Shimon. R' Elozar b'Rebbi Shimon however, instead of greeting him in return, scolded him.

"You -- good for nothing -- how ugly you are! Are all the people in your town as ugly as you?"

"I don't know," answered the man, "but maybe you'd like to tell the Craftsmen who made me, how ugly His work is!

R' Elozar b'Rebbi Shimon immediately realized that he had made a bad mistake. He got down from his donkey, and bowed down before the man.

"Please, forgive me," he begged.

"First," answered the man, "tell the Craftsmen who made me, how ugly His work is. Then I will forgive you!"

The man walked off, with R' Elozar b'Rebbi Shimon tailing humbly after him. They came to Migdal G'dor, R' Elozar b'Rebbi Shimon's hometown. There, many people came out to greet the great scholar. "Shalom alecha, Rabbi, Rabbi, Mori, Mori," they called.

"Whom are you calling Rabbi, Rabbi," the ugly man asked them.

"The person who walks behind you," they answered.

"If this is a rabbi," he exclaimed, "may there not be too many of them in Yisrael."

"Why do you say this?" they asked.

"Do you know how he treats people?" he answered, and told them the story.

"Even so, forgive him, for he is a Torah giant," the people requested.

"For the sake of this town I will forgive him," the man responded, "as long as he promises never to act like this again."

R' Elozar b'Rebbi Shimon then entered the shul and the people assembled there. "A person needs always to be as flexible as a reed," he taught them, "and not

hard like a cedar." This, says the Gemora, is the reason, the common reed is used as a quill to write the Torah, tefillin, and mezuzos. (20a – 20b)

The Mishna had stated that a city where the buildings are collapsing should declare a fast and call out. The Gemora qualifies this halacha to be referring to buildings that are sturdy and not liable to collapse. The Gemora states that this excludes buildings that fall due to their height or because they were built on the banks of the water.

The Gemora relates a story pertaining to this theme. Rav and Shmuel would not pass under a certain old and shaky wall in Nehardea. Even though it had stood thirteen years, it looked dangerous and as though it would fall at any moment. Therefore, they went to the trouble of encircling it and not passing under it. Once, the great Rav Ada bar Ahava visited Rav and Shmuel in Nehardea. As they walked together, Shmuel reminded Rav, "We need to walk around that old wall, and not under it."

"No," Rav answered, "today this isn't necessary. Rav Ada bar Ahava, who has many merits, is with us and we have nothing to fear." (20b)

The Gemora relates a similar type of story. Rav Huna had barrels of wine in an old house. He wanted to remove them but he was scared of entering the building. There was a fear it might collapse on him. What did he do? He invited Rav Ada bar Ahava over, and entered a deep Torah conversation with him. As they spoke, workers removed the barrels. As they then left the old house, it collapsed. Rav Ada bar Ahava was angry with Rav Huna.



"How could you ignore the teaching of R' Yanai," he asked, "Never should a person stand in a dangerous place, and rely on a miracle. For, he cannot know that the heavens will perform a miracle for him. And even if they do perform a miracle, they deduct this from his heavenly merits." (20b)

The Gemora records the praiseworthy incident of Rav Adda bar Ahava. His student inquired of him "Why did you merit living so long?"

He responded, "It is because I never got angry in my house. I was careful not to walk in front of someone greater than me. I did not think in learning in filthy places. I never walked more than four amos without learning Torah and wearing tefillin. I never slept in a Beis Medrash, not even a nap. I never rejoiced when my friends stumbled. Lastly, I never called my friend by a derogatory nickname. "

The Gemora records the praiseworthy incident of Rav Huna. Tell me of Rav Huna's good deeds," Rava asked Rafram bar Papa.

"About the good deeds of his youth," Rafram bar Papa answered, "I can't remember, but I can tell you the good deeds of his old age.

"On cloudy stormy days when strong winds would blow, he would inspect the city's walls riding in a golden carriage. If he saw a wall that was shaky or cracked, he would have it dismantled, that the owner should rebuild it anew. If the homeowner could not afford this repair, Rav Huna would rebuild it at his own expense.

"Every Erev Shabbos, towards evening, he sent a messenger to the market to buy up the remaining vegetables, and throw them in the river."

"Why did he not give these vegetables to the poor? He didn't want the poor to rely on this handout. For there would certainly be some weeks that the market would sell out its goods, and they would have no food for that Shabbos.

"Why then didn't he throw the vegetables to his sheep and goats? He felt that giving what Hashem has given as a gift to us to animals, belittled this gift; alternatively, he knew poor people lower down the river would find this food and eat it.

"Why then did he buy the food at all? He didn't want the merchants to suffer losses over their unsold produce. This would discourage them from bringing fresh vegetables the following week, and consequently, the holy Shabbos would suffer."

"Another great deed of his," Rafram bar Papa continued, "was when he sat down to a meal, he would open his door and announce, "Anyone who wishes to eat should come and join me."

"All these things," Rava told Rafram bar Papa, "I could also do, except for feeding the people that are passing by. They are so many paupers in Mechuza, they would eat all that I own." (20b – 21a)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

When You Go Out to War — HaRav Yitzchok Silberstein Discusses Questions Arising During Wartime

DEI'AH VEDIBUR

Question Five: Being Filmed While Engaged in Rescue Work

Is it correct for a Hatzalah worker to be filmed while selflessly rescuing the wounded, in order to provide a good example to others, or for fundraising purposes?

Answer: The *gemora* (*Kesuvos* 66) brings the following story. Rabban Yochanon ben Zakai was riding a donkey out of Yerushalayim and his disciples were following him on foot. He saw a young woman — the daughter of Nakdimon ben Gurion — gathering barley grains from among the dung dropped by the Arab's animals. He asked her, "What happened to your father's wealth?"

She replied, "Rabbi, don't they say this parable in Yerushalayim — To 'salt' [i.e. preserve] money, deduct from it [by giving *tzedokoh*]?"

The *gemora* asks, "Didn't Nakdimon ben Gurion give *tzedokoh*? The *beraissa* says that when he left his house to go to the *beis hamedrash* they would spread pieces of lace beneath his feet and the poor would then come and fold them up." It answers, "You could say that he did this for his own honor, or you could say that he didn't do as much as he could have done."

Kovetz Shiurim (*Kesuvos siman* 224) asks on this *gemora* from Rashi in *Pesochim* (8) who writes that when a person does a mitzvah, intending both to fulfill the mitzvah and to derive benefit, he is still worthy of being called a complete *tzaddik*. He explains that we would have to say that here Nakdimon had *only* his own honor in mind — a very difficult assertion, in light of the fact that his name is explained (*Gittin* 56) as a reference to an incident when Heaven showed him special favor as a result of his generosity (*Taanis* 20).

Alternatively, to do a mitzvah for one's own honor is worse than hoping to derive personal benefit from it, as is the case in *Pesochim*. The former is akin to serving Hashem in partnership, as the *Chovos Halevovos* writes.

The Chofetz Chaim [however,] cites the *gemora* in *Menochos* (41) which says that at a time of Divine wrath, punishment is meted out for things that are normally not [immediately] punishable.

The incident related by the *gemora* in *Kesuvos* took place around the time of the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* which was unparalleled as a time of Divine wrath; thus Nakdimon's punishment was much worse than it would ordinarily have been.

With regard to our case, at a time of war one should serve Hashem by practicing 'pure' kindness towards others without any ulterior motive and it should be done quietly and privately. If Hatzalah need such footage in order to help them raise funds they can film their worker but they should obscure his face so that his deeds remain untainted [by pride] — Nakdimon ben Gurion was also a great man yet he fell



prey [to this]. If the Hatzalah worker is pure- hearted he may be filmed.

weakness. Honor means being honest, not being right all the time. As the Talmud says, "You should not say, 'You must accept my opinion,' because the others may be right and not you" (Ethics of the Fathers 4:10).

DAILY MASHAL

Rabbi Abraham Twersky

A person should always be flexible like a reed, and not rigid like a cedar (Taanis 20a).

Some people forget that they have the right to be wrong. They may see being wrong as showing weakness. They grossly misunderstand the true concept of strength.

In the physical world, many substances that are very rigid are also fragile. Glass, for instance, is hard but shatters into many splinters, and metals which lack resilience are apt to break under pressure.

Rigidity in people frequently shows ignorance. If people do something without understanding why they are doing it, they are likely to become very defensive when challenged. The reason is obvious: if they do not understand the reason for their actions, they of course do not know if they have any room for compromise. Since they can respond only in an all-or-nothing manner, they perceive any questioning of their principles or practices as a threat or even as a hostile attack. They therefore react defensively.

Willingness to listen to advice, to consider it, and to alter our opinion when the advice appears to be the correct thing to do are signs of strength, not of

Today I shall ... try to be flexible, to listen to other opinions, and not be obstinate in insisting that I am always right.