

Daf Notes

Insights into the Daily Daf
Sanhedrin Daf 109

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Yonina bas Menachem Mendel o"h.

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Daily Daf

Nachum Ish Gamzu

Rav Chanah bar Livai said: Shem, Noach's eldest son, said to Eliezer, Avraham's servant: When the kings of the east and the west attacked you, what did you do? He replied: The Holy One, Blessed be He, took Avraham and placed him at His right hand, and we threw dust which turned to swords, and straw which turned to arrows.

Why was Nachum Ish Gamzu so called? For, about everything that happened to him, even that which was not good, he would say, "This too, *"Gam zu"*, is for the good," as we see in the next story: The Jewish people needed to buy Caesar's goodwill by sending him a gift. "Who should we send as our representative," they wondered. "Surely, no one is better suited for this mission than Nachum Ish Gamzu, for whom the heavens perform miracles." They sent him with a chest of precious gems and pearls. On the way, he spent a night at an inn. While he slept, the owners stole the gems from his chest, replacing them with dust. He presented the chest to Caesar who opened it. Seeing the dust, he assumed that the Jews were mocking him. He was so angry, he decided to have Nachum executed. "This too is for the good," Nachum Ish Gamzu said to himself.

At that moment, Eliyahu HaNavi miraculously appeared in the guise of an important officer. "Maybe," he said to the Romans, "this is the sand their ancestor Avraham used to fight and conquer the kings. When he threw sand at them, they died as though slaughtered by swords. When he threw straw at them, they died as though pierced by arrows." They tested the dirt and found it to be so.

Caesar had a particular enemy district that had resisted all his attempts to conquer it. He therefore, took the dust in the

next battle. He was victorious. He then brought Nachum Ish Gamzu into his treasure house. Nachum filled his chest with precious gems, and sent him home in honor.

Going home, Nachum Ish Gamzu again stopped at the same inn. Eagerly, the inn owners asked him what important gift he had brought to the Caesar that he should return in such honor. "What I took from here," he told them, "is what I brought to Caesar." On hearing his story, they took dust from their inn and brought it to Caesar. "We have brought you the same dust that Nachum Ish Gamzu brought you," they proudly reported. "That dust came from our inn!" The Romans tested the dust in their next battle, but it failed to produce the same results. They then executed those inn owners. (108b – 109a)

The Generation of the Dispersion

The *Mishna* had stated: The Generation of the Dispersion does not have a share in the World to Come.

The *Gemora* asks: What did they do wrong?

They said in the Academy of Rabbi Sheila: They said, "Let us build a tower, ascend to heaven, and strike it with axes, that its waters might flow (*so there should not be another Flood*). In the West, they laughed at this: If so, they should have built it on a mountain (*and not on a valley*)!"

Rather, Rabbi Yirmiyah son of Rabbi Elozar said: They split up into three groups. One said, "Let us ascend and dwell there." The second said, "Let us ascend and serve idols." And the third group said, "Let us ascend and wage war." The group which proposed, "Let us ascend and dwell there," Hashem scattered them around the world. The one that said,

“Let us ascend and wage war” became apes, spirits, demons and *lilin*. As for the group which said, “Let us ascend and serve idols” – it is written about them: *For there God did confuse the language of all the earth.*

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: Rabbi Nassan said: They all built the tower for the purpose of idolatry.

Rabbi Yonasan said: The top third of the tower was burned, the bottom third sunk into the ground, and a third is still standing.

Rav said: The airspace of the tower causes forgetfulness.

Rav Yosef said: Bavel and Borsif are evil omens for the Torah. What is the meaning of Borsif? Rav Assi said: An empty pit. (109a)

People of Sodom

The *Mishna* had stated: The people of Sodom do not have a share in the World to Come.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: The people of Sodom have no portion in the World to Come, as it is written: *But the people of Sodom were evil and sinners before Hashem exceedingly: evil - in this world, and sinners - in respect of the World to Come.*

Rav Yehudah said: They were evil with their bodies (*i.e., immoral*) and sinners with their money. *Before Hashem* refers to blasphemy; *exceedingly* - that they intentionally sinned. A *Tanna* taught: *Evil* - with their money; and sinners - with their bodies. *Before Hashem* refers to blasphemy; *exceedingly* - this refers to bloodshed.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: The people of Sodom became haughty only on account of the good which the Holy One, Blessed be He, had lavished upon them. What is written regarding them? *As for the earth, out of it comes bread, and instead of it, it is burned up as it were with fire. The stones of it produced sapphires, and it has dust of gold. There is a path which no robber has known, and which a spy's eye has not seen. The mighty beasts have not trodden over it, nor the fierce lions passed by it.* They said: Since bread comes forth out of our earth, and it has the dust of gold, why should we need wayfarers, who come to us only to deplete our wealth? Come, let us abolish the practice of travelling in our land.

Rava expounds a Scriptural verse as follows: The people of Sodom used to cast envious eyes at wealthy visiting men, place them by a leaning wall, push it upon them, then go and take their wealth. Raba continued: They used to cast envious eyes at wealthy men, and deposit balsam into their

keeping, which they placed in their storage rooms. In the evening they would come and smell it out (*where they hid their valuables*) like dogs. Then they would go, burrow in, and steal the money.

Rabbi Yosi taught this (*the above exposition*) in Tzippori. That night three hundred houses were burglarized. So they came and accosted him. They said to him: You have shown a way for the thieves!” He replied: Could I have known that thieves would come to the lecture? When Rabbi Yosi died, the gutters of Tzippori flowed with blood.

The *Gemora* lists several unjust laws of Sodom: He who has only one ox must graze all the oxen of the town for one day; but he who has none must graze them for two days. Now a certain orphan, the son of a widow, was given oxen to graze. He went and killed them and then said to the Sodomites: He who has an ox, let him take one hide; he who has none, let him take two hides. They exclaimed: What is the meaning of this? He responded: The final ruling must be as the initial one: just as the initial ruling is that he who possesses one ox must graze them for one day, and he who has none must graze for two days; so should be the final ruling: he who has one ox should take one hide, and he who has none should take two.

They also ruled: He who crosses the water must pay one *zuz* (*as a toll-charge*), but he who does not (*entering by another way*) must give two.

If one had rows of bricks, every person came and took one, saying, “I have taken only one.”

If one spread out garlic or onions (*to dry them*), every person came and took one, saying, “I have taken only one.”

There were four judges in Sodom, named Shakrai (liar), Shakurai (extreme liar), Zaifai (forger), and Matzlei Dina (distorter of justice). If a man assaulted his fellow's wife and she miscarried, they would say to the husband: Give her to him, that she may become pregnant for you. If one cut off the ear of his fellow's donkey, they would rule: Give it to him until it grows back again. If one wounded his fellow, they would say to the victim: Pay him a fee for letting blood for you.

He who crossed over with the ferry had to pay four *zuzim*, while he who crossed through the water had to pay eight. On one occasion, a certain launderer happened to come there. They said to him: Give us four *zuzim*. But, he protested: I crossed through the water! They said: If so, you must give eight *zuzim* for passing through the water. He refused to give it, so they beat him. He went before the judge, who ordered: Give them a fee for bleeding and eight *zuzim* for crossing through the water. Now Eliezer,

Avraham's servant, happened to be there, and was beaten by them. When he went before the judge, he ruled: Give them a fee for bloodletting. Thereupon he took a stone and wounded the judge. The judge exclaimed: What is this?! He replied: The fee that you owe me, give to the man who wounded me, while my money shall remain with me.

Now, they had beds upon which guests slept. If the guest was too long (*for the bed*), they shortened him (*by cutting his legs*); if he was too short, they stretched him out. Eliezer, Avraham's servant, happened to go there. They said to him Sleep on this bed! He replied: I have vowed since the day of my mother's death not to sleep in a bed.

If a poor man happened to come there, every resident gave him a *dinar*, upon which he wrote his name, but they did not give him any bread. When he died, each came and took back his coin.

They made this agreement amongst themselves: Whoever invites a stranger to a feast shall be stripped of his garment. Now, a wedding was in progress, when Eliezer happened to be there, but they gave him no bread. Wishing to dine, he went and sat down at the end of the table. They asked him: Who invited you here? He replied to the one sitting near him: You invited me. The Sodomite said to himself: If the others will hear that I invited him, they will strip me of my garments! So he took his clothes and fled outside. Thus Eliezer did to them all, until they had all gone; whereupon, he consumed the entire meal himself.

A certain maiden gave some bread to a poor man, hiding it in a pitcher. After the matter became known, they smeared her with honey and placed her on the top of the city wall, and the bees came and devoured her. (109a – 109b)

Korach

The *Mishna* had stated: The Congregation of Korach do not have a share in the World to Come; these are the words of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Eliezer said: *Hashem kills and brings to life; He lowers into the grave and brings up.*

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: The Congregation of Korach do not have a share in the World to Come. Rabbi Yehudah ben Beseirah said: They are compared to a lost object which people are searching for (*i.e., they do have a share in the World to Come*).

Now Korach took. Rish Lakish said: He took a bad bargain for himself. *Korach* – he was called so because he caused a bald spot in Israel. *The son of Yitzhar* - a son who excited the whole world against himself, as the heat of noontime. *The son of Kehas* - a son, who set the teeth of those who

gave birth to him, on edge. *The son of Levi* - a son who was escorted to Gehinnom. The *Gemora* asks: Then why not state too '*the son of Yaakov*,' implying - a son who fell over his heels into Gehinnom? Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak answered: Yaakov prayed for himself not to be enumerated amongst Korach's ancestors.

Rav said: On, the son of Peles, was saved by his wife. She said to him: What does it matter to you? Whether Moshe remains the master, or Korach becomes the master, you will remain but a disciple. He replied: But what can I do? I have taken part in advising them, and I have sworn to be with them. She said: I know that they are all holy people, so, she proceeded: Sit here and I will save you. She gave him wine to drink, intoxicated him and laid him down to sleep. Then she sat down at the entrance of the tent and loosened her hair. Whoever came to summon On, saw her and turned around. Meanwhile, Korach's wife joined them and said to Korach: See what Moshe has done. He himself has become king; his brother he appointed as *Kohen Gadol*; his brother's sons he has made assistants to the *Kohen Gadol*. If *terumah* is brought, he says: Let it be for the *Kohanim*; if *ma'aser* is brought, which belongs to you, he says: Give a tenth of it to the *Kohanim*. Furthermore, he has had your hair cut off, and mocks you as though you were dirt; for he was jealous of your hair. He asked her: But he has done likewise (*for Moshe himself was a Levi*)!? She replied: Since all the greatness was his, he says: Let me die together with the Philistines. Furthermore, he has commanded you to place a single fringe of blue wool on the corners of your garments; but if the blue wool is regarded as a *mitzvah*, then bring a complete garment with blue wool, and clothe the entire academy with it. Thus it is written: *Every wise woman builds her house* - this refers to the wife of On, the son of Peles; *but the foolish destroys it with her hands* – this refers to Korach's wife. (109b – 110a)