

# The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Yoma 37-43

Week of 24-30 Shevat 5759 / 10-16 Feb 1999  
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud  
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

## The Miraculous Gates

All of the gates in the *Beis Hamikdash* were made of gold except for the eastern gates of the courtyard. They were made of brass and they were called the "Gates of Nikanor."

Why they were called "Gates of Nikanor" is dramatically explained in the *gemara*. Nikanor was the name of the man who traveled to the Egyptian city of Alexandria to bring specially made brass gates for the eastern entrance to the *Beis Hamikdash*. On the return trip a violent storm threatened to sink his ship and the crew lightened its load by throwing one of the heavy gates overboard. As the storm continued to threaten the ship the sailors decided to cast the second gate into the sea as well. At this point Nikanor, who was confident that no harm would befall him as befits one involved in a mission for a mitzvah, tied himself to the second gate and asked to be thrown overboard together with it. The sea miraculously become calm and both Nikanor and his gate were spared. His sorrow at losing the first one, concludes the *gemara*, was relieved when he arrived at the Port of Acco and the first gate surfaced. One version is that it had miraculously become attached to the bottom of the ship. Another is that a huge sea creature swallowed the gate and then vomited it out.

Why did Nikanor wait till the second gate was threatened before showing his heroic determination to save his sacred treasure? Iyun Yaakov explains that as long as he had one gate to bring back to Jerusalem there was the hope that craftsmen there could duplicate it.

But why, asks the *gemara* itself, were the Gates of Nikanor permitted to remain in their brazen form while all other gates were covered with gold? One answer given by our Sages is that this was done to commemorate the miracles which occurred in connection with these gates. Another is that they were made from a very special kind of brass which gave them a luster similar to that of gold.

But is "similar to gold" a sufficient reason for making an exception of them? The Jerusalem Talmud's approach is that the brass of Nikanor's gates outshone the gold of the others. Our own *gemara*, points out Iyun Yaakov, implies that even if they were only as brilliant as gold, this made them stand out because they were able to achieve such a superior glow despite being made of an inferior metal.

Yoma 37a

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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# Aim at the Name

*"The memory of a righteous man is blessed and the name of the wicked shall rot." (Mishlei 10:7)*

This delineation of King Solomon is applied in the mishna to those who made important contributions to the dignity of the Beis Hamikdash in contrast to those whose selfishness detracted from it.

Maharsha calls attention to the fact that Solomon, in his divinely inspired words, did not contrast the blessing for the righteous with a curse for the wicked. This is because our attitude to sinners is to hope and pray for them to improve their ways. When Rabbi Meir considered praying for the destruction of some troublesome sinners in his neighborhood, his wife, Beruria, suggested that he pray instead for them to repent. "Let sin be eliminated from the earth," is what King David meant (Tehillim 104:35), not that "sinners be eliminated." To prove her point she cited the continuation of that passage, "and there will be no more wicked ones." Once they have repented, their wickedness will cease to exist. Rabbi Meir followed her advice and they did indeed improve their ways (Berachos 10a).

In the same spirit, explains Maharsha, we actively bless the deeds and memory of the righteous so that others will learn from their example. But in regard to the wicked we do not pray that they be cursed, but rather that the name "sinner" which they have earned decay and disintegrate as a result of their repentance. It is not the sinner's elimination that we hope for but for the elimination of sin, not his disappearance but the disintegration of the name he has acquired.

*Yoma 39b*

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