

The Weekly Daf



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Ta'anit 23 - 29

Issue # 290 Nitzavim / Vayelech

Week of 18 - 24 Elul 5759 / 30 August - 5 September 1999

Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Traveler in the Rain

As rain began to pour down upon him, the traveling sage, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, turned his eyes heavenward and appealed: "Everyone else is enjoying the comfort of his home; must Chanina suffer from the rain?"

The rain immediately stopped. When he finally entered his home he once again turned to heaven:

"Everyone (who needs rain for his fields) is suffering while Chanina (who has no field) is in the comfort of his home!"

And the rains came once again.

"What power does the *kohen gadol's* prayer have against Rabbi Chanina?" asked Rabbi Yosef.

He was referring to the prayer said on Yom Kippur by the *kohen gadol* upon leaving the Holy of Holies. This prayer included not only an appeal for adequate rainfall but also a request that Hashem not accept the prayers of travelers who ask Hashem to halt the rain. (*Yoma 53b*)

This conflict between the needs of the general public and the comfort of the individual on the road is resolved in favor of the public in the *kohen gadol's* prayer. This seems to run counter to the resolution of the same conflict found earlier in our *mesechta* (*10a*). There we learned that in *Eretz Yisrael* the request for rain is not included in prayers until two weeks after Succot; this enables the last of those who traveled to Jerusalem to fulfill the mitzvah of *aliya laregel* to reach their distant homes safely before the rains begin.

The simple answer is that we distinguish between the case of an ordinary traveler whose comfort must be sacrificed for the general good and that of a Jew who has traveled all the way to Jerusalem to serve Hashem in the *Beit Hamikdash* on Succot. We are prepared to sacrifice the public's welfare so that he shall not be discouraged from such service.

Regarding Rabbi Chanina, perhaps his prayer was accepted by Heaven against that of the *kohen gadol* because his prayer was also accepted for the rain to resume when he gets home.

Ta'anit 24b

Twilight Zone

Many wondrous events are related in our *gemara* about the saintly sage Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa. One of them took place during the "twilight period." Rashi defines "twilight period" as a Talmudic term for the period preceding the beginning of Shabbat. This particular story begins when Rabbi Chanina's daughter sighed with sadness. Her father asked her why she was so upset.

"When I prepared the Shabbat lights," she explained, "I mistakenly put vinegar into the lamps instead of oil. Shabbat has already begun, and the tiny bit of oil that had been in those lamps will certainly last for only a few moments, while the vinegar cannot serve as fuel."

"Don't be concerned," responded the sage. "He Who commanded oil to burn shall command vinegar to burn as well."

Not only did the vinegar miraculously burn, but the light it fueled lasted throughout the entire Shabbat and was even used for the *havdalah* service.

Although Rashi here states that he has no explanation for the use of "twilight period" in reference to Shabbat eve, he does offer an explanation elsewhere. *Mesechta Ketubot* (*103a*) describes Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi's visits to his home at "twilight" following his death. Rashi explains that "twilight" refers to the period preceding Shabbat. Why? Because that is the time of the week when Jews are most concerned about when "twilight" — "*bein hashmashot*" (a period whose halachic character as day or night is dubious) — begins, since by then all weekday labor must already have ceased.

The Maharsha offers another perspective here. Since a Jew is required to add some of the weekday to the Shabbat (*tosefet Shabbat*) the term "twilight" is applied to this period to indicate this conversion of a part of Friday into Shabbat. For the same reason, he notes, we refer to this period as "*Erev Shabbat*" because the part of the late afternoon defined in Hebrew as "*erev*" is converted into Shabbat because of our need to usher in the holy day earlier.

Ta'anit 25a

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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