

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) R' Yosi of Yukras (cont.)

The Gemara continues to relate a number of stories related to the uncompromisingly high standards of behavior of R' Yosi of Yukras and how they produced negative consequences for his children.

The series of stories conclude with a demonstration of the righteousness of his donkey.

2) Elazar Ish Birta

The Gemara tells of the generous behavior of Elazar Ish Birta and his refusal to benefit from the miracles that occurred on his behalf.

3) Leaders declaring fasts for lack of rain

The story of R' Yehudah Nesiah declaring a fast and how his prayers were ultimately answered is recorded.

Additional incidents involving fasts declared by the Nasi are recounted, each one with a slightly different twist.

The story of how a rabbi's dedication to his students made him worthy of davening for rain is presented.

Incidents involving R' Nachman and Rabbah davening for rain and how their prayers were answered are recorded.

The Gemara relates how R' Yehudah caused and reversed a famine and how there was opposition to the people benefiting from grain that was miraculously produced.

Two stories involving Rava's prayers for rain are rec-

(Continued on page 2)

Distinctive INSIGHT

Exceeding the maximum limits in donating to tzedaka

הוּ טָשׁוּ מִיִּנְיָה דְּכָל מַאי דְּהוּה גְּבִיָּה יְהִיב לְהוּ

The Gemara (Kesuvos 50a) states that an enactment was established by the sages in Usha stating that the maximum amount a person may give to tzeddaka is one fifth of his assets. Accordingly, Gevuros Ari questions the actions of Elazar of Birta who gave away everything he owned, even causing the collectors to hide from him to avoid depriving him of the few coins he might have had for himself. How was Elazar permitted to dispense all he owned, in apparent disregard for the guidelines of the enactment of Usha.

We cannot say that Elazar of Birta had more assets at home, and he only gave away the money in his pockets, because if this was the case, the tzedaka collectors would not have felt that they were depriving him of his last coins. It also seems that Elazar was a genuine pauper, as he told his daughter that she was no different "than any other poor person," and therefore not eligible to take more than her share from the wheat that was discovered later in the story. Gevuros Ari resolves this based upon the view of Rambam (in his Commentary to the Mishnah, Pe'ah 1:1), that the restriction to limit tzedaka to one-fifth of one's assets is optional. If one wishes to be more pious, he is allowed to give more. This is what Elazar from Birta did.

Anaf Yosef provides a different answer to explain the conduct of Elazar of Birta. The verse in Mishlei (11:24) states: "There is one who scatters and gathers more, and one who refrains from what is proper, only for a loss." The Vilna Gaon explains that there are two extreme traits which people might possess. One is extreme selfishness, and the other is extreme generosity. Neither extreme is a proper path. However, if one is extreme in giving his possessions to others, and he gives to legitimate tzedaka causes, he will benefit with the reward of having his assets increase. The other extreme is more dangerous, as by being tight-fisted, and not giving even what he should give, his financial condition will collapse.

While Elazar of Birta acted in an extreme manner, and even if he was perhaps inappropriately generous, he was nevertheless rewarded with the miraculous expansion of the few kernels of wheat which he kept. ■

REVIEW and Remember

1. Why did the tzedakah collectors hide from Elazar Ish Birta?
2. What mitzvos make a person's tefillos more acceptable?
3. Why did the government think to persecute Rava?
4. How does the Gemara illustrate the power of R' Chanina ben Dosa's merit?

HALACHAH Highlight

Baking challah on Erev Shabbos

הוה רגילה דביתהו למיחמא תנורא כל מעלי דשבתא ושדיא אקטרתא משום כיסופא

His [R'Chanina ben Dosa's] wife was accustomed to lighting the oven every Erev Shabbos and would throw in a smoke-producing item because of embarrassment.

The Rema¹ writes that when kneading dough to prepare loaves for Shabbos and Yom Tov one should be particular to knead the quantity that would generate an obligation to separate challah. The Magen Avraham² suggests a reason for both concepts mentioned in Rema. The first concept is the general mitzvah to bake loaves of bread for Shabbos. This could be demonstrated from our Gemara where we are told that R' Chanina ben Dosa's wife heated up the oven on Erev Shabbos so that people would think she was following the general practice of baking loaves for Shabbos. Additionally, there is the custom to knead a quantity that will generate an obligation to separate challah. The reason is that Adam HaRishon, who is referred to as the "challah" of the world, lost some of his stature as a result of the sin of eating from the tree on Erev Shabbos; therefore Erev Shabbos is an appropriate time to rectify that sin. Rav Avrohom Dovid Wahrman³ writes that loaves baked for Shabbos are called challah, rather than bread, to serve as a reminder to separate challah from the dough on Erev Shabbos.

(Insight. Continued from page 1)

ordered.

An incident related to R' Pappa's prayer for rain is presented.

4) R' Chanina ben Dosa

The Gemara begins to relate a number of stories about the righteousness of R' Chanina ben Dosa. ■

The Yad Ephraim⁴ writes that the reason for the custom of baking loaves for Shabbos is that during the week people commonly relied on the leniency that permits consuming bread baked by a non-Jew who is a professional baker (פת פלטר). Therefore, to give additional honor to Shabbos and Yom Tov the custom developed to bake bread specifically for Shabbos and Yom Tov.

Rav Yaakov Emden⁵ writes that the loaves should be baked specifically on Erev Shabbos as a reminder of the לחם הפנים which were also baked on Erev Shabbos. The Chasam Sofer⁶ cites the statement of Taz⁷ that when the loaves are removed from the oven they should be placed immediately on the table as an expression of k'vod Shabbos. ■

1. רמ"א או"ח סי' רמ"ב סע' א'
2. מג"א סק"ד
3. מובא דבריו באוצר השבת ריש פ"ב
4. יד אפרים על המג"א הנ"ל
5. הגריעב"ץ בסידורו עמודי שמים
6. הגהות חת"ס בסי' זה
7. ט"ז יו"ד ס"ס קע"ח ■

STORIES Off the Daf

Begging for mercy

אלקים באזנינו שמענו אבותנו ספרו לנו פועל פעלת בימיהם בימי קדם

In the year 1951, Rav Dovid of Barshov, zt"l, arrived in Israel. Since the Beis Yisroel of Gur, zt"l, had known him in Poland, he paid him a visit. It was well known that the Beis Yisroel was always first to visit those whom he felt that proper conduct required that he meet. When asked why he doesn't wait for them to visit him, he responded, "If I visit, I decide how much time to stay!" The Gerrer Rebbe was known

to stay an exceedingly short while on all such honorary visits to limit bittul Torah.

When the Beis Yisroel and the Rebbe of Barshov met, the latter said, "We must make a marked effort to minimize the various conflicts that exist between the numerous groups of Jews herein Israel. There should be unity among those who fear Hashem. And if there is unity, redemption is sure to follow!"

The Beis Yisroel shot back, "With all due respect, I disagree! Instead of putting your efforts into uniting those who fear Hashem, you are better off turning to Hashem Himself and pleading with Him to bring the redemption!

We find a clear proof for this in Taanis 24. There we see a description of a time when people were suffering because of a drought. Rava quoted from Tehillim: 'Hashem! We have heard tell of Your wonders which You did in earlier times from our fathers who saw this with their own eyes.' He added: but we have not seen this! Immediately, rain came."

The Beis Yisroel concluded, "We see from this that instead of saying that we are guilty of something, Rava found it far more efficacious to simply beg Hashem for mercy! This is true today as well. All may seem to be lost, but the 'eternal One of Israel will not be false!'" ■