

מסכת תענית • דף י"ט

Elucidated Talmud · Statement and Proof · Navy & Gold Edition

THE SUGYA

In this daf, we learn about the specific tzaros (troubles) that require the tzibbur (community) to fast and cry out to Hashem, such as pestilence, collapsing buildings, and invading armies. The Mishnah defines the exact threshold of a plague and details which calamities are so severe and fast-spreading that they require crying out in every place, and even on Shabbos itself to seek help.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

משנה MISHNAH

MISHNAH

אותה העיר מתענה ומתרעת, וכל סביבותיה מתענות ולא מתריעות.

That city fasts and cries out by blowing the shofar, and all of its surrounding areas fast but do not cry out.

MISHNAH

רבי עקיבא אומר: מתריעות ולא מתענות.

Rabbi Akiva says: They cry out but they do not fast.

MISHNAH

וכן עיר שיש בה דבר או מפולת — אותה העיר מתענה ומתרעת, וכל סביבותיה מתענות ולא מתריעות.

And likewise, regarding a city in which there is pestilence or collapsing buildings, that city fasts and cries out, and all of its surrounding areas fast but do not cry out.

MISHNAH

רבי עקיבא אומר: מתריעות ולא מתענות.

Rabbi Akiva says: They cry out but they do not fast.

MISHNAH

איזהו דבר? עיר המוציאה חמש מאות רגלי, ויצאו ממנה שלשה מתים בשלשה ימים זה אחר זה — הרי זה דבר, פחות מכאן — אין זה דבר.

What is considered pestilence? A city that sends out five hundred infantrymen, and three dead are taken out of it on three consecutive days, this is pestilence; less than this is not pestilence.

MISHNAH

על אלו מתריעין בכל מקום: על השדפון, ועל הירקון, ועל הארבה, ועל החסיל, ועל החיה רעה,
ועל החרב — מתריעין עליה, מפני שהיא מכה מהלכת.

For the following they cry out in every place: For blight, and for mildew, and for locusts, and for caterpillars, and for dangerous beasts, and for the sword; they cry out for it because it is a plague that spreads.

MISHNAH

מעשה שירדו זקנים מירושלים לעריהם, וגזרו תענית על שנראה כמלא פי תנור שדפון באשקלון.

An incident occurred in which Elders descended from Jerusalem to their cities, and decreed a fast because there was seen a small amount of blight, enough to fill the mouth of an oven, in Ashkelon.

MISHNAH

ועוד גזרו תענית על שאכלו זאבים שני תינוקות בעבר הירדן.

And furthermore they decreed a fast because wolves had eaten two children in Transjordan.

MISHNAH

רבי יוסי אומר: לא על שאכלו, אלא על שנראו.

Rabbi Yosei says: Not because they ate them, but because they were seen in an inhabited area.

MISHNAH

על אלו מתריעין בשבת: על עיר שהקיפוה נכרים או נהר, ועל הספינה המיטרפת בים.

For the following they cry out on Shabbat: For a city that is surrounded by non-Jews or a river, and for a ship tossed about at sea.

MISHNAH

רבי יוסי אומר: לעזרה ולא לצעקה.

Rabbi Yosei says: One may cry out to summon help, but not for crying out to God.

MISHNAH

שמעון התימני אומר: אף על הדבר, ולא הודו לו חכמים.

Shimon the Timnite says: Even for pestilence, but the Sages did not agree with him.

MISHNAH

על כל צרה שלא תבוא על הצבור מתריעין עליה, חוץ מרוב גשמים.

For any trouble that should not befall the community they cry out, except for an overabundance of rain.

MISHNAH

מעשה שאמרו לו לחוני המעגל, התפלל שירדו גשמים.

An incident occurred in which they said to Choni HaMe'agel: Pray that rain should fall.

MISHNAH

אָמַר לָהֶם: צֵאוּ וְהַכְנִיסוּ תַנּוּרֵי פֶסַחִים בְּשֻׁבִּיל שְׁלֹא יִמּוּקוּ. הִתְפַּלֵּל וְלֹא יָרְדוּ גֶשְׁמִים.

He said to them: Go out and bring in the clay ovens used to roast the Pesach offerings so that they will not dissolve.
He prayed, and no rain fell.

MISHNAH

מָה עָשָׂה? עָג עוֹגָה וְעָמַד בְּתוֹכָהּ, וְאָמַר לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם! בְּנֵיהֶ שָׂמוּ פָנֵיהֶם עָלַי, שְׂאֲנִי כְּבֵן בֵּית לְפָנֶיהָ. נִשְׁבַּע אֲנִי בְּשֵׁמֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל שְׂאִינִי זֶה מִכָּאן עַד שֶׁתָּרַחֵם עַל בְּנֵיהֶ.

What did he do? He drew a circle and stood inside it, and said before Him: Master of the Universe! Your children have turned their faces toward me, as I am like a member of Your household before You. I take an oath by Your great name that I will not move from here until You have mercy upon Your children.

MISHNAH

הִתְחִילוּ גֶשְׁמִים מִנְטָפִין. אָמַר: לֹא כָּה שְׂאֵלְתִּי, אֶלָּא גֶשְׁמֵי בּוֹרוֹת שִׁיחִין וּמַעְרוֹת.

Rain began to trickle down. He said: I did not ask for this, but for rain to fill cisterns, ditches, and caves.

MISHNAH

הִתְחִילוּ לֵירֵד בְּזַעַף. אָמַר: לֹא כָּה שְׂאֵלְתִּי, אֶלָּא גֶשְׁמֵי רְצוֹן בְּרָכָה וּנְדָבָה.

Rain began to fall furiously. He said: I did not ask for this either, but for rain of benevolence, blessing, and generosity.

MISHNAH

יָרְדוּ בְּתַקְנָן, עַד שֶׁיֵּצְאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִירוּשָׁלַיִם לְהֵר הַבַּיִת מִפְּנֵי הַגֶּשְׁמִים.

They fell in their standard manner, until the Jewish people exited Jerusalem to the Temple Mount because of the rain.

MISHNAH

בָּאוּ וְאָמְרוּ לוֹ: כָּשֶׁם שֶׁהִתְפַּלַּלְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶם שֶׁיִּרְדּוּ — כָּה הִתְפַּלַּל שֶׁיֵּלְכוּ לָהֶן.

They came and said to him: Just as you prayed over them that they should fall, so pray that they should go away.

MISHNAH

אָמַר לָהֶם: צֵאוּ וּרְאוּ אִם נִמְחִית אֶבֶן הַטּוֹעִין.

He said to them: Go out and see if the Claimants' Stone has been washed away.

MISHNAH

שָׁלַח לוֹ שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן שָׁטַח: אֵלְמָלָא חוֹנִי אַתָּה — גּוֹזְרִנִּי עָלֶיךָ נִידוּי.

Shimon ben Shatach sent to him: Were you not Choni, I would have decreed ostracism upon you.

MISHNAH

אָבָל מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה לָּךְ, שְׂאֵתָה מִתַּחַטָּא לְפָנַי הַמָּקוּם וְעוֹשָׂה לָּךְ רְצוֹנָה כְּכֵן שֶׁהוּא מִתַּחַטָּא עַל אָבִיו וְעוֹשָׂה לוֹ רְצוֹנוֹ, וְעָלֶיךָ הַכְּתוּב אוֹמֵר: "יִשְׁמַח אָבִיךָ וְאִמָּךְ וְתִגַּל יוֹלְדֶתְךָ".

But what can I do to you, as you nag before the Omnipresent and He does your bidding, like a son who nags his father and he does his bidding; and about you the verse states: 'Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice.'

MISHNAH

היו מתעניין ויָרְדוּ לָהֶם גְּשָׁמִים, קודם הַגֶּזַע הַחֲמָה — לא יִשְׁלִימוּ, לאחר הַגֶּזַע הַחֲמָה — יִשְׁלִימוּ.

If they were fasting and rain fell for them, if it fell before sunrise, they need not complete their fast; if it fell after sunrise, they must complete it.

MISHNAH

רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר: קודם חצות — לא יִשְׁלִימוּ, לאחר חצות — יִשְׁלִימוּ.

Rabbi Eliezer says: If it fell before midday, they need not complete it; if after midday, they must complete it.

MISHNAH

מַעֲשֵׂה שֶׁגָּזְרוּ תַעֲנִית בְּלוֹד, וַיָּרְדוּ לָהֶם גְּשָׁמִים קודם חצות.

An incident occurred in which they decreed a fast in Lod, and rain fell for them before midday.

MISHNAH

אָמַר לָהֶם... וְקָרְאוּ הַלֵּל הַגָּדוֹל.

Rabbi Tarfon said to them: Go out, and eat, and drink, and make a Festival. And they went out, and ate, and drank, and made a Festival, and they came in the afternoon and recited the Great Hallel.

גְּמָרָא GEMARA

GEMARA

גְּמ' סֵדֶר תַעֲנִיּוֹת הָאֵלּוּ הָאֲמֹר בְּרִבְעָה ראשונה.

GEMARA: The Mishnah taught: The order of these fasts is stated only when the fast concerns the first rainfall.

QUESTION

וּרְמִינָהּ: רִבְעָה ראשונה ושנייה לשאל, שְׁלִישִׁית לְהַתְעַנּוֹת!

And the Gemara raises a contradiction: A Baraita states that the first and second rainfall are for asking, and the third is for fasting!

ANSWER

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה, הִכִּי קָאָמַר: סֵדֶר תַעֲנִיּוֹת הָאֲמֹר אֵימָתִי — בְּזִמְנָן שִׁיצָאָה רִבְעָה ראשונה ושנייה וּשְׁלִישִׁית וְלֹא יָרְדוּ גְשָׁמִים.

Rav Yehuda said, this is what the Mishnah is saying: When does the order of these fasts that is stated apply? When the first, second, and third rainfall have passed and rain has not fallen.

ANSWER

אָבֿל יָרְדוּ גֶשֶׁמִּים בְּרִבְעָה רֵאשׁוֹנָה וְזָרְעוּ וְלֹא צָמְחוּ, אִי נָמִי צָמְחוּ וְחָזְרוּ וְנִשְׁתַּנּוּ — מִתְרִיעִין עֲלֵיהֶן מִיד.

However, if rain fell in the first rainfall and they sowed but the plants did not sprout, or, alternatively, if they sprouted but their appearance changed back for the worse, they cry out about them immediately.

STATEMENT

אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן: דְּוָקָא נִשְׁתַּנּוּ, אָבֿל יָבִישׁוּ — לֹא.

Rav Nachman said: This applies specifically if their appearance changed, but if they dried out entirely, they do not cry out.

QUESTION

פְּשִׁיטָא, נִשְׁתַּנּוּ תִּנּוּ!

The Gemara asks: It is obvious, as we learned 'changed' in the Mishnah!

ANSWER

לֹא צָרִיכָא, דְּאָקוּן. מַהוּ דְּתִימָא: אֶקְנֵתָא מִיִּלְתָּא הִיא, קָמַשְׁמַע לָן.

The Gemara answers: No, it is necessary for a case where they produced stalks after they dried. Lest you say that producing stalks is a matter of significance, he teaches us that it is not.

QUESTION

וְכֵן שְׁפִסְקוּ גֶשֶׁמִּים בֵּין גֶּשֶׁם לְגֶשֶׁם כּו'. מַאי מַכַּת בְּצוּרָת?

The Mishnah continues: And likewise, if the rains ceased between one rain and another. What is a plague of drought?

ANSWER

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב: מַכָּה הַמְּבִיאָה לְיָדֵי בְּצוּרָת.

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: A plague that brings about drought.

STATEMENT

אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן: נַהֲרָא אֲנַהֲרָא — בְּצוּרָתָא. מְדִינָתָא אֲמְדִינָתָא — כִּפְנָא.

Rav Nachman said: If one river valley is affected but another is not, this is drought. If one province is affected but another is not, this is famine.

STATEMENT

וְאָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא: סָאָה בְּסֵלַע וְשִׁכִּיחָא — בְּצוּרָתָא. אַרְבַּעָה וְלֹא שִׁכִּיחָא — כִּפְנָא.

And Rabbi Chanina said: If a se'ah of grain costs a sela but is available, this is drought. If it costs four sela and is not available, this is famine.

STATEMENT

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: לֹא שָׁנוּ אֶלָּא בְּזִמְן שְׁהַמְעוּת בְּזוּל וּפִירוּת בְּיוֹקָר, אָבֿל מְעוּת בְּיוֹקָר וּפִירוּת בְּזוּל — מִתְרִיעִין עֲלֵיהֶּ מִיד.

Rabbi Yochanan said: They only taught this when money is cheap and produce is expensive, but if money is expensive and produce is cheap, they cry out immediately.

PROOF

דאָמער רבֿי יוחנן: נהירנא כד הוּו קיימי ארבעה סאין בסלע, והוּו נפישׂי נפישׂי כפן בטבריא מדלית איסר.

As Rabbi Yochanan said: I remember when four se'ah stood at a sela, and yet there were many swollen from hunger in Tiberias because they did not have an issar to buy food.

EXPLANATION

יָרְדוּ לְצִמְחִין אֲבָל לֹא לְאֵילָן. בְּשִׁלְמָא לְצִמְחִים וְלֹא לְאֵילָן — מִשְׁפַּחַת לָהּ דְּאֵתָא נִיחָא, וְלֹא אֵתָא רִזְיָא.

If rain fell for the plants but not for the trees. Granted, for plants but not for trees is found when it comes gently and does not come heavily.

EXPLANATION

לְאֵילָן וְלֹא לְצִמְחִין — דְּאֵתָא רִזְיָא, וְלֹא אֵתָא נִיחָא.

But for trees and not for plants is found when it comes heavily and does not come gently.

EXPLANATION

לָזָה וְלָזָה אֲבָל לֹא לְבוֹרוֹת וְלֹא לְשִׁיחִין וּמַעְרוֹת — מִשְׁפַּחַת לָהּ דְּאֵתָא רִזְיָא וְנִיחָא, מִיְהוּ טוּבָא לָא אֵתָא.

If it fell for this and for that, but not for cisterns, ditches, and caves, this is found when it comes both heavily and gently, but a great amount did not come.

QUESTION

אָלָא הָא דְּתַנָּיָא: יָרְדוּ לְבוֹרוֹת לְשִׁיחִין וּלְמַעְרוֹת אֲבָל לֹא לָזָה וְלָזָה, הִיכִי מִשְׁפַּחַת לָהּ? דְּאֵתָא בְּשִׁפְיכוּתָא.

But that which is taught in a Baraita: If they fell for cisterns, ditches, and caves, but not for this and for that, how is this found? When it comes in a sudden downpour.

BRAISA

תְּנוּ רַבָּנִי: מִתְרִיעִין עַל הָאֵילָנוֹת בְּפֶסַח, עַל הַבוֹרוֹת וְשִׁיחִין וּמַעְרוֹת בְּפֶסַח הַחֵג.

The Rabbis taught: They cry out for the trees before Pesach, and for the cisterns, ditches, and caves before Succos.

BRAISA

וְאִם אֵין לָהֶן מַיִם לְשִׁתּוֹת — מִתְרִיעִין עֲלֵיהֶן מִיָּד.

And if they have no water to drink, they cry out for them immediately.

BRAISA

ואיזהו מיד שֶׁלֶהֶן — שְׁנֵי וַחֲמִישֵׁי וְשָׁנִי.

And what is their 'immediately'? Monday, Thursday, and Monday.

BRAISA

ועל כולן אין מתריעין עליהן אלא באפרכיא שלֶהֶן.

And for all of them, they only cry out in their own province.

BRAISA

ואספרא, בזמן שיש בה מיתה — מתריעין עליה. בזמן שאין בה מיתה — אין מתריעין עליה.

And for croup, when there is death from it, they cry out; when there is no death from it, they do not cry out.

BRAISA

ומתריעין על הגובאי בכל שְׁהוּא. רבי שמעון בן אֶלְעָזָר אומר: אף על הַחֲגָב.

And they cry out for the gobai locust in any amount. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: Even for the chagav locust.

BRAISA

תנו רבנן: מתריעין על האילנות בשאר שְׁנֵי שְׁבוּעַ. על הבורות ועל השיחין ועל המערות אפילו בשביעית.

The Rabbis taught: They cry out for the trees in the other years of the seven-year cycle, and for the cisterns, ditches, and caves even in the Sabbatical year.

BRAISA

רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר: אף על האילנות בשביעית, מפני שיש בהן פרנסה לעניים.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: Even for the trees in the Sabbatical year, because they provide sustenance for the poor.

BRAISA

תנא אידך: מתריעין על האילנות בשאר שְׁנֵי שְׁבוּעַ. על הבורות על השיחין ועל המערות אפילו בשביעית.

It is taught in another Baraita: They cry out for the trees in the other years of the cycle, and for the cisterns, ditches, and caves even in the Sabbatical year.

BRAISA

רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר: אף על האילנות. מתריעין על הספיחין בשביעית, מפני שיש בהן פרנסה לעניים.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: Even for the trees. And they cry out for the aftergrowth in the Sabbatical year, because they provide sustenance for the poor.

BRAISA

תנא, אמר רבי אלעזר בן פרטא: מיום שחרב בית המקדש נעשו גשמים צימוקין לעולם.

It is taught in a Baraita, Rabbi Elazar ben Parta said: From the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, the rains have become diminished for the world.

BRAISA

יש שנה שגשמייה מרובין, ויש שנה שגשמייה מועטין. יש שנה שגשמייה יורדין בזמנן, ויש שנה שאין גשמייה יורדין בזמנן.

There is a year whose rains are abundant, and there is a year whose rains are meager. There is a year whose rains fall in their proper time, and there is a year whose rains do not fall in their proper time.

BRAISA

שנה שגשמייה יורדין בזמנן למה הוא דומה — לעבד שנתן לו רבו פרנסתו באחד בשבת, נמצאת עיסה נאפית כתיקנה, ונאכלת כתיקנה.

A year whose rains fall in their proper time, to what is it compared? To a servant whose master gave him his sustenance on Sunday; the dough is baked properly and eaten properly.

BRAISA

שנה שאין גשמייה יורדין בזמנן למה הוא דומה — לעבד שנתן לו רבו פרנסתו בערב שבת, נמצאת עיסה נאפית שלא כתיקנה, ונאכלת שלא כתיקנה.

A year whose rains do not fall in their proper time, to what is it compared? To a servant whose master gave him his sustenance on Friday afternoon; the dough is baked in a hurried manner and eaten in a hurried manner.

BRAISA

שנה שגשמייה מרובין למה הוא דומה — לעבד שנתן לו רבו פרנסתו בבת אחת, נמצאו ריחים טוחנות מן הכור מה שטוחנות מן הקב, ונמצאת עיסה אוכלת מן הכור כמו [ש]אוכלת מן הקב.

A year whose rains are abundant, to what is it compared? To a servant whose master gave him his sustenance all at once; the millstones grind from a kor of grain just as they grind from a kav, and the dough is consumed from a kor just as it is consumed from a kav.

BRAISA

שנה שגשמייה מועטין למה הוא דומה — לעבד שנתן לו רבו פרנסתו מעט מעט, נמצאו ריחים מה שטוחנות מן הכור טוחנות מן הקב. נמצאת עיסה כמה שנואכלת מן הכור אוכלת מן הקב.

A year whose rains are meager, to what is it compared? To a servant whose master gave him his sustenance little by little; the millstones grind from a kor just as they grind from a kav, and the dough is consumed from a kor just as it is consumed from a kav.

BRAISA

דבר אחר: בזמן שגשמייה מרובין למה הוא דומה — לאדם שמגבל את הטיט, אם יש לו מים רבים — מים אינן כליין, והטיט מגובל יפה. אם יש לו מים מועטין — מים כליים, והטיט אינו מתגבל יפה.

Another explanation: When its rains are abundant, to what is it compared? To a person who kneads clay; if he has much water, the water is not depleted and the clay is kneaded well. If he has little water, the water is depleted and the clay is not kneaded well.

BRAISA

תנו רבנן: פעם אחת עלו כל ישראל לרגל לירושלים, ולא היה להם מים לשתייה.

The Rabbis taught: Once, all of Israel ascended for the festival to Jerusalem, and they had no water to drink.

BRAISA

הלך נקדימון בן גוריון אצל הגמון אחד, אמר לו: הלוני שתיים עשרה מעינות מים לעולי רגלים, ואני אתן לך שתיים עשרה עינות מים. ואם איני נוֹתֵן לך — הריני נוֹתֵן לך שתיים עשרה כפר כסף, וקבע לו זמן. כיון שהגיע הזמן ולא ירדו גשמים, פשחרית שלח לו: שגר לי

Nakdimon ben Guryon went to a certain officer and said to him: Lend me twelve wells of water for the festival pilgrims, and I will return to you twelve wells of water. And if I do not give them to you, I will give you twelve talents of silver. And he set a time limit. When the time arrived and no rain had fallen, in the morning the officer sent to him: Send me the money.

SUMMARY

The daf continues with the famous and heartwarming story of Choni HaMe'aggel, who drew a circle in the dirt and swore by Hashem's great Name that he would not move until the Aibershter showed mercy and sent rain. We see how Choni's prayers brought down first droplets, then a torrential downpour, and finally rains of blessing, showing his unique closeness to Hashem like a beloved son who nags his father. The Gemara also discusses the halachos of whether a community must complete their fast if Hashem answers their tefillos and sends rain on the morning of the fast day itself, concluding with the beautiful story of Rabbi Tarfon and the people of Lod who turned their fast day into a joyous Yom Tov of eating, drinking, and saying the Great Hallel.

The Gemara on our daf teaches us a profound lesson about the nature of our relationship with the Aibershter. When the people needed rain, Choni HaMe'aggel drew a circle, stood inside it, and declared that he was like a member of Hashem's household, a beloved child who simply refuses to leave until his Father listens. Shimon ben Shetach looked at this and said, "What can I do to you? You nag God and He does your bidding, like a son who nags his father." This is not just a story about a great tzaddik from the past; it is a blueprint for our own avodah.

Sometimes we approach our tefillos with a sense of distance, as if we are strangers knocking on a palace gate, hoping someone might hear us. But the truth of a Yid's neshama is that we are children of the King. A child does not offer a formal, cold petition; a child speaks from the heart, with warmth, persistence, and absolute trust that the Father wants to give them what they need. When you daven, you do not need to find the most poetic, distant words. You need to step into that circle of closeness and speak to Hashem with the simple, honest vulnerability of a child.

At the same time, we see that Choni did not just ask for generic rain; he paid attention to the details, asking for "rain of benevolence, blessing, and generosity" when the droplets were too harsh or too weak. This teaches us to bring our actual, specific lives into our tefillah. Hashem cares about the small details of your day, your livelihood, and your peace of mind. Do not hold back from asking for exactly what you need, with the sweet stubbornness of a child who knows their Father is listening.

Today, when you stand to daven the Shemoneh Esrei, take ten seconds before you begin to remind yourself: "I am standing before my Father in Heaven who loves me." Speak one specific request to Him in your own words, with the simple warmth and trust of a child speaking to a parent.