

מסכת תענית • דף ט"ז

Elucidated Talmud • Statement and Proof • Navy & Gold Edition

THE SUGYA

In this daf, we are zocheh to learn about the deep, heartfelt ways our Chachamim established for us to awaken our hearts in teshuvah during public fast days. When the community is in tzarah, we do not just fast; we take the holy Aron Kodesh out into the street, place ashes upon it and upon our own heads, and cry out to Hashem from the depths of our neshamos.

The Gemara guides us through the inner meaning of these holy minhagim, showing us how every single action—from going out to the city square to visiting the cemetery—is designed to break our hearts and remind us of our dependence on Hashem's rachamim. We learn how these physical actions reflect our inner state of shiflus and how they arouse the zechus of our holy Avos, especially the Akedas Yitzchak.

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

EXPLANATION

למתבייש מאחרים.

The Gemara explains: It is more painful **to be humiliated by others** than to humiliate oneself.

QUESTION

והיכא מנח להו?

The Gemara asks: **And where** exactly **do they place** the ashes **upon** their heads?

ANSWER

אמר רבי יצחק: במקום תפילין.

Rabbi Yitzchak said: **On the place of the tefillin** of the head,

PROOF

שנאמר: "לשום לאבלי ציון להם פאר תחת אפר".

as it is stated: "To appoint to those who mourn in Zion, to give to them an ornament [pe'er] instead of ashes" (Isaiah 61:3), which equates the place of ashes with the place of the tefillin, which are called pe'er.

STATEMENT

רחוב, תיבה, ושקים, אפר, אפר, קבורה, ומוריה סימן.

The Gemara provides a mnemonic device for the upcoming discussions: **Street, Ark, and Sackcloth, Ashes, Ashes, Cemetery, and Moriah** is the **mnemonic**.

QUESTION

למה יוצאין לרחוב?

The Gemara asks: **Why do they go out to the street** of the city on a fast day?

ANSWER

רבי חייא בר אבא אמר: לומר — זעקנו בצנעא ולא נענינו, נבזה עצמנו בפרהסיא.

Rabbi Chiyya bar Abba said: It is to say before Hashem: **We cried out in private** inside the synagogue and **we were not answered**; therefore, **we will disgrace ourselves in public** by praying in the street, so that our prayers will be heard.

ANSWER

ריש לקיש אמר: גלינו, גלותינו מכפרת עלינו.

Reish Lakish said: It is as if we say: **We have exiled** ourselves from our place of prayer; may **our exile atone** for us.

QUESTION

מאי בינייהו?

The Gemara asks: **What is** the practical difference **between them**?

RESOLUTION

איכא בינייהו, דגלו מבי כנישתא לבי כנישתא.

The Gemara answers: **There is** a practical difference **between them** in a case **where they exiled** themselves from one **synagogue to another synagogue**. According to Reish Lakish, they have achieved exile, whereas according to Rabbi Chiyya bar Abba, they have not disgraced themselves in public.

QUESTION

ולמה מוציאו את התיבה לרחוקה של עיר?

The Gemara asks: **And why do they remove the Ark to the street** of the city?

ANSWER

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, לומר: כלי צנוע היה לנו, ונתבזה בעווננו.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: It is to say: **We had a modest vessel**, the Ark, which was kept hidden in the sanctuary, **and it has been disgraced** by being brought out to the street **due to our transgressions**.

QUESTION

ולמה מתכסין בשקים?

The Gemara asks: **And why do they cover themselves in sackcloth**?

ANSWER

אמר רבי חייא בר אבא: לומר — הרי אנו חשובין כבהמה.

Rabbi Chiyya bar Abba said: It is to say: **Behold, we are considered like animals** before You, covered in rough hide.

QUESTION

ולמה נותנין אפר מקלה על גבי תיבה?

The Gemara asks: **And why do they place burnt ashes on top of the Ark?**

ANSWER

אמר רבי יהודה בן פזי: כְּלוּמַר — "עִמּוֹ אֲנֹכִי בְצָרָה".

Rabbi Yehuda ben Pazi said: It is as if to say in the name of Hashem: "I am with him in distress" (Psalms 91:15), showing that the Shechinah shares in Israel's suffering.

ANSWER

ריש לקיש אמר: "בְּכָל צָרָתָם לוֹ צָר".

Reish Lakish said it is derived from here: "In all their affliction, He was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9).

STATEMENT

אמר רבי זירא: מֵרִישׁ כִּי הָיָה חֲזִינָא לְהוּ לְרַבָּנָן דִּיהָבִי אֶפֶר מִקְלָה עַל גְּבִי תִיבָה — מִזְדַּעְזַע לִי כוֹלִיָּה גּוֹפְאִי.

Rabbi Zeira said: At first, when I would see the Rabbis placing burnt ashes on top of the Ark, my entire body would tremble from the awe of seeing the symbol of the Shechinah in distress.

QUESTION

וְלָמָּה נוֹתְנִין אֶפֶר בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד?

The Gemara asks: **And why do they place ashes upon the head of each and every individual?**

STATEMENT

פְּלִיגִי בֵּה רַבִּי לְוִי בַר חָמָא וְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא.

Rabbi Levi bar Chama and Rabbi Chanina disagree regarding this matter.

EXPLANATION

חד אמר: הֲרִי אֲנוּ חֲשׂוּבִין לְפָנֶיךָ כְּאֶפֶר, וְחַד אָמַר: כִּדִּי שְׂיִזְכּוֹר לָנוּ אֶפְרוֹ שֶׁל יִצְחָק.

One said: It is to say, "Behold, we are considered before You like ashes." And one said: It is in order that He should remember for us the ashes of Yitzchak, as if he had been sacrificed on the Altar.

QUESTION

מַאי בֵּינֵיהוּ?

The Gemara asks: **What is** the practical difference **between them?**

RESOLUTION

אִיכָא בֵּינֵיהוּ עֶפֶר סְתָם.

The Gemara answers: **There is** a practical difference **between them** in a case where they used **plain earth** instead of ashes. Plain earth represents self-nullification, but does not recall the ashes of Yitzchak.

QUESTION

לָמָּה יוֹצְאִין לְבֵית הַקְּבָרוֹת?

The Gemara asks: **Why do they go out to the cemetery** on a fast day?

STATEMENT

פְּלִיגִי בֵּה רַבִּי לְוִי בַר חָמָא וְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא.

Rabbi Levi bar Chama and Rabbi Chanina disagree regarding this matter.

EXPLANATION

חַד אָמַר: הֲרִי אָנוּ חֲשׁוּבִין לְפָנֶיךָ כְּמֵתִים, וְחַד אָמַר: כִּדִּי שְׂיִבְקָשׁוּ עָלֵינוּ מֵתִים רַחֲמִים.

One said: It is to say, "Behold, we are considered before You like the dead." And one said: It is in order that the deceased should pray for mercy on our behalf.

QUESTION

מָאִי בֵּינֵיהֶו?

The Gemara asks: **What is** the practical difference **between them**?

RESOLUTION

אֵיכָא בֵּינֵיהֶו קְבָרֵי נְכָרִים.

The Gemara answers: **There is** a practical difference **between them** regarding visiting **the graves of non-Jews**. If the purpose is to feel like the dead, non-Jewish graves suffice; if it is for them to pray for us, we must visit Jewish graves.

QUESTION

מָאִי הִר הַמִּזְרִיָּה?

The Gemara asks: **What is** the meaning of the name **Mount Moriah**?

STATEMENT

פְּלִיגִי בֵּה רַבִּי לְוִי בַר חָמָא וְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא.

Rabbi Levi bar Chama and Rabbi Chanina disagree regarding this matter.

EXPLANATION

חַד אָמַר: הִר שְׂיִצָּא מִמֶּנּוּ הַרְאָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, וְחַד אָמַר: הִר שְׂיִצָּא מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹרָא לְאוּמוֹת הָעוֹלָם.

One said: It is the mountain from which instruction [hora'ah] went out to Israel from the Sanhedrin. And one said: It is the mountain from which fear [mora] went out to the nations of the world.

מִשְׁנָה MISHNAH

MISHNAH

הִזְקֹו שְׂפָתָהּ אוֹמֵר לְפָנֶיהָ דְּבָרֵי כְּבוֹשִׁין.

We learned in the Mishnah: **The eldest among them says before them words of admonition** to move them to repentance.

BRAISA

תְּנִי רַבָּנִי: אִם יֵשׁ זָקֵן — אוֹמֵר זָקֵן. וְאִם לֹא — אוֹמֵר חָכֵם, וְאִם לֹא — אוֹמֵר אָדָם שֶׁל צוּרָה.

The Rabbis taught in a Braisa: If there is an elder, the elder says the admonition. And if not, a Sage says it. And if not, a person of imposing appearance says it.

QUESTION

אִטּוּ זָקֵן דִּקְאָמְרִי, אַרְיָ עַל גַּב דְּלֹא חָכֵם הוּא?

The Gemara asks: Is that to say that the elder of whom they spoke is preferred even though he is not a Sage?

ANSWER

אָמַר אַבְיִי, הָכִי קְאָמְרִי: אִם יֵשׁ זָקֵן וְהוּא חָכֵם — אוֹמֵר זָקֵן וְהוּא חָכֵם, וְאִם לֹא — אוֹמֵר חָכֵם, וְאִם לֹא — אוֹמֵר אָדָם שֶׁל צוּרָה.

Abaye said: This is what they are saying: If there is an elder and he is also a Sage, the elder who is a Sage says the admonition. And if not, a Sage who is young says it. And if not, a person of imposing appearance says it.

STATEMENT

אֲחִינוּ, לֹא שָׁק וְתַעֲנִית גּוֹרְמִים, אֶלָּא תְּשׁוּבָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים גּוֹרְמִים.

The elder says: "Our brothers, it is not sackcloth and fasting that cause atonement, but rather repentance and good deeds that cause atonement.

PROOF

שָׁכַן מְצִינוּ בְּאַנְשֵׁי נִינְוָה, שֶׁלֹּא נֶאֱמַר בָּהֶם "וַיֵּרָא הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת שָׁקָם וְאֶת תַּעֲנִיתָם", אֶלָּא: "וַיֵּרָא הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם כִּי שָׁבוּ מִדֶּרֶכָם הָרָעָה".

For so we find with the people of Nineveh, that it is not stated concerning them: 'And Elokim saw their sackcloth and their fasting,' but rather: 'And Elokim saw their deeds, that they turned from their evil way' (Jonah 3:10).

QUESTION

"וַיִּתְּכְסּוּ שָׂקִים הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה", מֵאִי הוּא עֹבְדִי?

The verse states regarding Nineveh: "And let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast" (Jonah 3:8). The Gemara asks: What did they do with the animals?

ANSWER

אָסְרוּ הַבְּהֵמוֹת לְחֹדֶד, וְאֶת הַחֹדֶדִּים לְחֹדֶד. אָמְרוּ לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם! אִם אֵין אַתָּה מְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ — אֵין אָנוּ מְרַחֲמִים עַל אֵלּוּ.

They separated the mother animals alone, and the offspring alone. They said before Him: Master of the Universe! If You do not have mercy on us, we will not have mercy on these animals by letting them nurse.

QUESTION

”וַיִּקְרָאוּ אֶל אֱלֹהִים בְּחִזְקָה”, מאי אָמור?

The verse states: **"And let them cry mightily to Elokim"** (Jonah 3:8). The Gemara asks: **What did they say** that was considered calling out "mightily"?

ANSWER

אָמְרוּ לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם! עָלוּב וְשָׂאִינוּ עָלוּב, צָדִיק וְרָשָׁע — מִי נִדְחָה מִפְּנֵי מִי?

They said before Him: Master of the Universe! If there is a dispute between a submissive one and one who is not submissive, or between a righteous one and a wicked one, who must yield before whom? Surely the righteous and powerful yields to the weak; so too, You must yield and forgive us.

QUESTION

”וַיִּשְׁבּוּ אִישׁ מִדֶּרֶכוֹ הִרְעָה וּמִן הַחַמָּס אֲשֶׁר בְּכַפֵּיהֶם”, מאי ”וּמִן הַחַמָּס אֲשֶׁר בְּכַפֵּיהֶם”?

The verse states: **"And let them turn, every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands"** (Jonah 3:8). The Gemara asks: **What is the meaning of "and from the violence that is in their hands"**?

ANSWER

אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: אֲפִילוּ גִזַּל מְרִישׁ וּבִנְאוֹ בְּבִירָה — מְקַעֲקַע כָּל הַבִּירָה כּוֹלָהּ וּמַחְזִיר מְרִישׁ לְבֹעֲלָיו.

Shmuel said: Even if one had stolen a beam and built it into a palace, he would tear down the entire palace completely and return the beam to its owner, showing the extreme measure of their repentance.

STATEMENT

אָמַר רַב אָדָא בַר אַהֲבָה: אָדָם שֵׁשׁ בָּיָדוֹ עֲבִירָה, וּמִתְנַדֵּה וְאִינוּ חוֹזֵר בָּהּ, לָמָּה הוּא דוֹמָה? לְאָדָם שֶׁתּוֹפֵס שָׂרֵץ בָּיָדוֹ, שֶׁאֲפִילוּ טוֹבֵל בְּכָל מֵימוֹת שְׁבַעוּלָם — לֹא עֲלָתָהּ לוֹ טְבִילָה.

Rabbi Adda bar Ahavah said: A person who has a transgression in his hand, and confesses but does not turn back from it, to what is he compared? To a person who holds a sheretz in his hand, for even if he immerses in all the waters of the world, his immersion is not effective for him to become pure.

PROOF

זִרְקוּ מִיָּדוֹ, כִּיּוֹן שֶׁטָּבַל בְּאַרְבָּעִים סָאָה — מִיָּד עֲלָתָהּ לוֹ טְבִילָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ”וּמוֹדָה וְעִזָּב יָרָחָם”, וְאוֹמַר: ”נִשָּׂא לְכַבְּנוֹ אֶל כַּפָּיִם אֶל אֵל בְּשִׁמְיָם”.

But if he throws it from his hand, once he immerses in forty se'ah of water, immediately his immersion is effective for him, as it is stated: **"He who confesses and abandons them shall obtain mercy"** (Proverbs 28:13), and it says: **"Let us lift up our heart with our hands to El in heaven"** (Lamentations 3:41).

MISHNAH מִשְׁנָה

MISHNAH

עָמְדוֹ בְּתַפְלָה, מוֹרִידִין לְפָנָי הַתִּיבָה זָקֵן כּוֹי.

We learned in the Mishnah: When they stood in prayer, they send down before the Ark an elder who is experienced, etc.

גמרא GEMARA

BRAISA

תנו רבנן: עמדו בתפלה, אף על פי שיש שם זקן וחכם — אין מורידין לפני התיבה אלא אדם הרגיל.

The Rabbis taught in a Braisa: When they stood in prayer, even though there is an elder and a Sage present, they only send down before the Ark a person who is accustomed to lead the prayers.

BRAISA

רבי יהודה אומר: מטופל ואין לו, ויש לו יגיעה בשדה, וביתו ריקם, ופרקו נאה, ושפל ברה, ומרוצה לעם, ויש לו נעימה, וקולו ערב, ובקי לקרות בתורה ובנביאים ובכתובים, ולשנות במדרש בהלכות ובאגדות, ובקי בכל הפרכות כולן.

Rabbi Yehuda says: He must be burdened with a family and have no livelihood, and he has labor in the field, and his house is empty, and his youth is pleasant, and he is humble, and acceptable to the people, and he has a sweet melody, and his voice is pleasant, and he is expert in reading the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, and in studying the Midrash, Halachos, and Aggados, and is expert in all the blessings.

STATEMENT

ויהבו ביה רבנן עינייהו ברב יצחק בר אמאי.

And the Rabbis cast their eyes upon Rav Yitzchak bar Ammi as possessing all these qualities.

QUESTION

היינו "מטופל ואין לו", היינו "ביתו ריקם"?

The Gemara asks: Is not "burdened with a family and has nothing" the same as "his house is empty"?

ANSWER

אמר רב חסדא: זהו שביתו ריקם מן העבירה.

Rav Chisda said: This means that his house is empty of transgression.

EXPLANATION

"ופרקו נאה", אמר אביי: זה שלא יצא עליו שם רע בגלדותו.

Regarding the phrase "and his youth is pleasant," Abaye said: This is one about whom no bad reputation went out in his youth.

QUESTION

"היתה לי נחלתי פאריה ביצר נתנה עלי בקולה על פן שנאתיה", מאי "נתנה עלי בקולה"?

The verse states: "My heritage has become to Me like a lion in the forest; she has raised her voice against Me, therefore I hate her" (Jeremiah 12:8). The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of "she has raised her voice against Me"?

ANSWER

אמר מר זוטרא בר טוביה אמר רב, ואמרי לה אמר רבי חמא אמר רבי אלעזר: זה שליח צבור שאינו הגון היורד לפני התיבה.

Mar Zutra bar Tuvia said in the name of Rav, and some say Rabbi Chama said in the name of Rabbi Eleazar: This refers to an improper prayer leader who goes down before the Ark to lead the congregation in an arrogant manner.

משנה MISHNAH

MISHNAH

ואומר לפניהם עשרים וארבע ברכות, שמונה עשרה שבכל יום ומוסיף עליהן עוד שש.

We learned in the Mishnah: And he says before them twenty-four blessings: the eighteen of every day, and he adds to them another six.

גמרא GEMARA

QUESTION

הני שש, שבע הוויין! כדתנן: על השביעית הוא אומר "ברוך מרחם על הארץ"!

The Gemara asks: These six are actually seven! As we learned in the Mishnah: On the seventh he says, "Blessed is He Who has mercy on the earth"!

ANSWER

אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק: מאי "שביעית" — שביעית לארופה.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: What is the meaning of "seventh"? It is the seventh of the long blessings, meaning the seventh blessing of the entire service, which is the extended blessing of Go'el Yisrael.

BRAISA

כדתנא: ב"גואל ישראל" מאריך, ובחלתמה הוא אומר: "מי שענה את אברהם בחר המוריה, הוא יענה אתכם וישמע בקול צעקתכם היום הזה. ברוך גואל ישראל",

As it is taught in a Braisa: In the blessing of "Redeemer of Israel" he lengthens the prayer, and in its conclusion he says: "He Who answered Avraham on Mount Moriah, He shall answer you and hear the voice of your cry on this day. Blessed is the Redeemer of Israel,"

BRAISA

והו עונין אחריו "אמן", וחוז הכנסת אומר להם: "תקעו בני אהרן תקעו".

and they answer after him "Amen," and the synagogue sexton says to them: "Blow, sons of Aaron, blow!"

BRAISA

וַחֲזָר וְאָמַר: "מִי שֶׁעָנָה אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ עַל יָם סוּף, הוּא יַעֲנֶה אֶתְכֶם וְיִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל צַעֲקַתְכֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, בְּרוּךְ זֹכֵר הַנִּשְׁכָּחוֹת", וְהָיוּ עֹנִיִּין אַחֲרָיו "אָמֵן", וַחֲזָן הַכִּנְסֵת אוֹמֵר לָהֶם: "הָרִיעוּ בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן הָרִיעוּ".

And he goes back and says: "He Who answered our forefathers at the Red Sea, He shall answer you and hear the voice of your cry on this day, Blessed is He Who remembers the forgotten," and they answer after him "Amen," and the synagogue sexton says to them: "Sound a teruah, sons of Aaron, sound a teruah!"

BRAISA

וְכֵן בְּכָל בְּרָכָה וּבְרָכָה, בְּאַחַת אוֹמֵר: "תִּקְעוּ", וּבְאַחַת אוֹמֵר: "הָרִיעוּ".

And so in each and every blessing, in one he says "Blow" and in one he says "Sound a teruah."

BRAISA

בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אֲמוּרִים — בְּגִבּוּלִין, אֲבָל בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֵינוּ כֵן, לְפִי שֶׁאֵין עֹנִיִּין "אָמֵן" בְּמִקְדָּשׁ.

In what case are these words said? In the provinces. But in the Beis HaMikdash it is not so, because they do not answer "Amen" in the Beis HaMikdash.

PROOF

וּמִנֵּין שֶׁאֵין עֹנִיִּין "אָמֵן" בְּמִקְדָּשׁ — שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "קוּמוּ בָּרְכוּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִן הָעוֹלָם עַד הָעוֹלָם וַיְבָרְכוּ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדְךָ וּמְרוֹמֶם עַל כָּל בְּרָכָה וְתִהְיֶה".

And from where do we know that they do not answer "Amen" in the Beis HaMikdash? As it is stated: "Rise up and bless Hashem your Elokim from everlasting to everlasting, and let them bless Your glorious Name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise" (Nehemiah 9:5).

EXPLANATION

יְכוּל עַל כָּל בְּרָכוֹת כּוֹלֵן לֹא תִּהְיֶה אֵלָּא תִּהְיֶה אַחַת — תִּלְמוּד לומר: "וּמְרוֹמֶם עַל כָּל בְּרָכָה וְתִהְיֶה" — עַל כָּל בְּרָכָה תֵּן לוֹ תִּהְיֶה.

One might think that for all the blessings together there should only be one praise; therefore the verse states: "exalted above all blessing and praise" — for each and every blessing, give Him praise with a full response.

BRAISA

וְאֵלָּא בְּמִקְדָּשׁ מָהוּ אוֹמֵר? "בְּרוּךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם. בְּרוּךְ גּוֹאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל".

But rather, in the Beis HaMikdash, what does he say at the end of the blessing? "Blessed is Hashem, the Elokim of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed is the Redeemer of Israel."

BRAISA

וְהָיוּ עֹנִיִּין אַחֲרָיו: "בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלָכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד".

And they answer after him: "Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever."

BRAISA

וַחֲזָן הַכִּנְסֵת אוֹמֵר לָהֶם: "תִּקְעוּ הַכִּהָנִים בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן תִּקְעוּ",

And the synagogue sexton says to them: "Blow, Kohanim, sons of Aaron, blow!"

BRAISA

וְחֹזֵר וְאוֹמֵר: "מִי שֶׁעָנָה אֶת אֲבִרָהֶם בְּהַר הַמּוֹרִיָּה, הוּא יַעֲנֶה אֶתְכֶם וְיִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל צְעָקַתְכֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. בָּרוּךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל זֹכֵר הַנְּשָׁכָחוֹת,"

And he goes back and says: "He Who answered Avraham on Mount Moriah, He shall answer you and hear the voice of your cry on this day. Blessed is Hashem, the Elokim of Israel, Who remembers the forgotten,"

BRAISA

וְהֵם עֹנִים אַחֲרָיו: "בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד," וְחֹזֵן הַכִּנּוּסֶת אוֹמֵר לָהֶם: "הֲרִיעוּ, הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן, הֲרִיעוּ וְכוּ,"

and they answer after him: "Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever," and the synagogue sexton says to them: "Sound a teruah, Kohanim, sons of Aaron, sound a teruah, etc."

BRAISA

וְכֵן בְּכָל בְּרָכָה וּבְרָכָה, בְּאַחַת אוֹמֵר "תִּקְעוּ" וּבְאַחַת אוֹמֵר "הֲרִיעוּ," עַד שֶׁגִּמַּר אֶת כּוֹלָן.

And so in each and every blessing, in one he says "Blow" and in one he says "Sound a teruah," until he finishes all of them.

STATEMENT

וְכָה הִנְהִיג רַבִּי חַלְפֵּתָא בְּצַפּוּרִי, וְרַבִּי חֲנַנְיָה בֶּן תֵּרַדְיוֹן בְּסִיכְנִי,

And this was the practice led by Rabbi Chalafta in Tzippori, and Rabbi Chananya ben Teradyon in Sichni.

STATEMENT

וּכְשֶׁבָּא דָּבָר לְפָנֵי חֲכָמִים, אָמְרוּ: לֹא הָיוּ נוֹהֲגִין בֶּן אֶלָּא בְּשַׁעְרֵי מִזְרַח וּבְהַר הַבֵּית.

And when the matter came before the Sages, they said: They only practiced this manner of blowing at the Eastern Gates and on the Temple Mount, but not in the provinces.

BRAISA

וְאִית דְּאָמְרִי, כְּדִתְנִיָּא: אוֹמֵר לְפָנֵיהֶן עֲשָׂרִים וָאַרְבַּע בְּרָכוֹת, שְׁמוֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה שְׁבָכָל יוֹם, וּמוֹסִיף עֲלֵיהֶן עוֹד שֵׁשׁ.

And some say a different version, as it is taught in a Braisa: He says before them twenty-four blessings: the eighteen of every day, and he adds to them another six.

BRAISA

וְאוֹתָן שֵׁשׁ הֵיכָן אוֹמְרוֹ? בֵּין "גּוֹאֵל" לְ"רוֹפֵא חוֹלִי", וּמֵאַרְיָה בְּגֹאֲלָהּ, וְהֵן עֹנִין אַחֲרָיו "אָמֵן" עַל כָּל בְּרָכָה וּבְרָכָה.

And those six, where does he say them? Between "Redeemer" and "Healer of the sick," and he lengthens the blessing of redemption, and they answer after him "Amen" for each and every blessing.

BRAISA

וְכֵן הָיוּ נוֹהֲגִין בְּגָבוּלֵין.

And this was the practice in the provinces.

BRAISA

אָבֵל בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ, הָיוּ אוֹמְרִים: "בָּרוּךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם. בָּרוּךְ גּוֹאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל." וְלֹא הָיוּ עוֹנִין אַחֲרָיו "אָמֵן".

But in the Beis HaMikdash, they would say: "Blessed is Hashem, the Elokim of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed is the Redeemer of Israel." And they would not answer after him "Amen."

EXPLANATION

וְכָל כֵּן לָמָּה? לְפִי שֶׁאֵין עוֹנִין "אָמֵן" בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ,

And why all this? Because they do not answer "Amen" in the Beis HaMikdash.

PROOF

וּמִנֵּין שֶׁאֵין עוֹנִין "אָמֵן" בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "קוּמוּ בָּרְכוּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִן הָעוֹלָם עַד הָעוֹלָם וּבָרְכוּ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדָהּ וּמְרוֹמָם עַל כָּל בְּרָכָה וְתִהְיֶה לָּהּ" — עַל כָּל בְּרָכָה וּבְרָכָה תֵּן לוֹ תְּהִלָּה.

And from where do we know that they do not answer "Amen" in the Beis HaMikdash? As it is stated: "Rise up and bless Hashem your Elokim from everlasting to everlasting, and let them bless Your glorious Name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise" — for each and every blessing, give Him praise with a unique response.

SUMMARY

The sugya begins by explaining the specific placement of ashes on the head, locating it where the tefillin—our holy ornament—are worn, based on the pasuk in Yeshayahu. The Gemara then brings a series of explanations for the fast-day rituals: moving to the city square represents either public humiliation or exile; exposing the Aron Kodesh symbolizes the shame of our hidden sins being revealed; and wearing sackcloth likens us to animals before Hashem. Placing ashes on the Aron reminds us that Hashem is with us in our tzarah, while placing ashes on our heads either represents our own nothingness or invokes the zechus of Akedas Yitzchak. Similarly, visiting the cemetery either symbolizes our own mortality or serves to have the neshamos of the departed plead for mercy on our behalf. Finally, the Gemara discusses the greatness of Har Moriah as the source of Torah instruction and yiras Shamayim, and outlines the order of who delivers the words of reproof, emphasizing that true atonement comes not from the external sackcloth and fasting, but from genuine teshuvah and good deeds, just as we find by the people of Nineveh.

When we find ourselves in a time of tzarah, whether as a community or in our own personal lives, the Gemara in Taanis teaches us a profound secret about Hashem's relationship with us. When the community placed ashes on the Aron Kodesh, it was to declare: 'I am with him in trouble.' Rabbi Zeira would tremble when he saw this, because it reveals that Hashem does not stand distant from our pain; He feels it with us, as if He is right there in the ashes.

But the Gemara also warns us not to get caught up in the external show of pain. The elder would stand before the tzibbur and cry out: 'Our brothers! It is not the sackcloth and fasting that brings salvation, but teshuvah and good deeds.' He pointed to the people of Nineveh, noting that Hashem did not look at their sackcloth, but at their actions—that they actually returned what they had stolen, even tearing down entire buildings to return a single stolen beam.

This is our avodah. We cannot be like someone who immerses in a mikvah while still holding a sheretz (an impure creature) in his hand. If we want our tefillos to pierce the heavens, we must look honestly at what we are holding onto. We must drop the bad habit, the lashon hara, or the dishonesty, and only then turn to Hashem with a broken heart, knowing He is right there weeping with us.

Today, identify one small, improper habit or dishonest practice that you have been holding onto, and make a concrete decision to 'drop the sheretz' by letting it go before you stand to pray Mincha.