

CHAVRUTA

SHABBAT – DAF KUF NUN BET

Translated by: *Rabbi Avraham Rosenthal*

Edited by: *R. Shmuel Globus*

...and tears caused by the pain **of the outhouse** are **detrimental**.

The tears **of remedy, and of laughter and of the odor of sharp produce**, such as mustard seed, are **beneficial**.

It says in the continuation of the verses in *Kohelet*¹ (12:3): **“In the day when the guards of the house will tremble, and the powerful men will stoop**, and the grinders are idle, and the gazers through windows are dimmed.”

“In the day when the guards of the house will tremble,” these are the **flanks and the ribs** that protect the heart and the innards of a person, as in old age they move and shake.

“And the powerful men will stoop,” these are the **thighs** that the body rests on.

“And the grinders are idle,” these are the **teeth**.

“And the gazers through windows are dimmed,” these are the **eyes**. All of this will happen during old age.

*

Said the Caesar to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananyah: What is the reason that you do not come to the House of Avidan? This was a place where debates were staged between the Sages and the followers of the heretical sects, the Sadducees and the *Baitusim*.²

He said to him: The mountain is covered with snow, i.e., my head is white like snow. **And around it is ice**, i.e., my mustache and beard have also turned white. **My voice is not heard. My teeth do not grind**. Since I am old, I do not have strength for debates.

*

¹ Ecclesiastes

² Sadducees and *Baitusim* were two sects who rejected the teachings of the Oral Law.

PEREK 23 – 152A

In the **household of Rav they said** in their old age: **For something that is not lost, I am looking.** Since I walk bent over, it appears as if I am looking for something that I lost.

*

It was taught in a Baraita: **Rabbi Yosi bar Kisma says: Better two than three.** When a person is young he walks on two legs, and this is better than an old man who walks with three, i.e., two legs and a cane.

And woe is to the one that goes and does not come again.

What is this that goes and does not return?

Said Rav Chisda: Youth.

When Rav Dimi came, he said: Youth is compared to a **crown of roses**, and **old age** is compared to a **crown of thorns**. Roses are something important but it does not last long. So too youth. Thorns are not important, but it keeps a long time. So too, old age.

It was taught in a Baraita **in the name of Rabbi Meir: Chew with your teeth, and you will find** the strength of the food **in the vigor of your steps.** If a person eats a lot, he will have strength to walk, as it says (*Yirmeyahu*³ 44:17), **“And we were sated with bread and we were well and we saw no evil.”**

Said Shmuel to Rav Yehudah: Sharp one! Open your mouth and your bread will enter, i.e. eat, because **until forty years food benefits** a person. **From then on**, after forty, **drinking benefits** him.

*

A certain eunuch, who was a *Tzeduki*⁴, **said to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah: From here until Karchina**, the place of the bald people, **how much is the distance?** He tried to taunt Rabbi Yehoshua, who was bald.

³ Jeremiah
⁴ Saducee

PEREK 23 – 152A

Rabbi Yehoshua **said to him: Like** the distance **from here until *Gozniah***, i.e., the place of the eunuchs. He taunted him in return over the fact that he was a eunuch.

The *Tzeduki* again **said to him: A goat is sold for four**. He again taunted him about his baldness by mentioning a goat that does not have as much wool as a sheep.

Rabbi Yehoshua **said to him: A castrated sheep is sold for eight**. He again taunted him about his being a eunuch.

The *Tzeduki* **saw** that Rabbi Yehoshua **did not put on his shoes**.

He made fun of him **and said to him: One that rides on a horse**, is a **king**, and one **that rides on a donkey** is a **freeman**. **And** a person **that wears shoes** is a regular **person**. Someone **that** does not have **neither this nor that**, and he does not even have shoes, he is not on the level of man at all, **and one that a grave was dug for him, and was buried in the ground, is better than him**.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah **said to him: Eunuch, eunuch, three things you said to me, and three I will answer that you should hear**.

Splendor of the face, this is a beard.

Joy of the heart, this is a wife.

Inheritance of G-d, this is **children**, as it is written (*Tehillim*⁵ 127:3), “Behold the inheritance of G-d is children, the reward of the fruit of the womb.”

Blessed is the Omnipresent Who castrated you, **that** by doing so, He **held you back from all of them**.

The *Tzeduki* **said to him: You bald one, are you fighting me?**

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah **said to him: You eunuch**, have come to give me **rebuke?**

Said Rabbi, i.e., Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, **to Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta: Why did we not come to you during the festival, in the same way that my fathers came to your**

⁵ Psalms

PEREK 23 – 152A

fathers? Rabbi meant to ask, “Why did *you* not come to *me*,” but he turned it around due to his humility.

Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta **said to him: The rocks** that were small **became tall**, that which was **close** became **distant**, as I have aged and have no strength to come to you. What used to be close now seems far for me. **And from the two** legs that I would walk on, **became three**, as I need a cane in addition to my two legs. **And that which made domestic tranquility**, i.e., the male organ, its strength is **nullified**.

The Gemara again proceeds to expound verses in *Kohelet* that deal with old age.

It is written (ibid. 12:4), “When the doors in the street are shut, when the sound of the grinding is low, when one rises up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of song grow dim.”

“**When the doors in the street are shut**,” these are the orifices of a person that close “**when the sound of the grinding is low**,” for the **gizzard**, i.e., the stomach, **does not grind** the food properly.

“**When one rises up at the voice of the bird**,” when a person is old, **even** the chirping of a bird wakes him from his sleep.

“**And all the daughters of song grow dim**,” even the sound of the male and female singers seem to him like regular speech, as an old person is hard of hearing.

And even Barzilai the Gileadean said to David (*Shmuel*⁶ II 19:36), “**I am eighty years old this day, can I discern between good and bad?**” From here we learn that the wisdom of the elderly changes for the worse.

And he further said to David (ibid.), “**Can your servant taste what I eat and drink?**” From here, the lips of the elderly crack.

And he said further (ibid), “**Can I still listen to the voice of male singers and female singers?**” From here, the ears of the elderly cannot hear well.

⁶ Samuel

PEREK 23 – 152A

Said Rav: Barzilai the Gileadean was a liar, as old age is not a reason that he cannot taste food and drink. **For the maidservant of the household of Rabbi was ninety-two years old and she tasted** the food in the pot.

Said Rava: Barzilai the Gileadean was steeped in immorality, and that is why he said what he said, because **anyone who is promiscuous, old age advances rapidly on him**.

It was taught in a Baraita: **Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yosi says: Torah scholars, the entire time they become older, wisdom is added to them, as it says** (*Iyov*⁷ 12:12), **“In elders there is wisdom and in longevity there is understanding.”** **And ignoramuses, the entire time they become older, foolishness is added to them, as it says** (ibid. 20), **“He removes the speech from trusty men and takes away the sense of the elders.”**

Another verse in *Kohelet* (12:5), **“When they even fear a height and terror in the road, and the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper becomes a burden and the desire fails – so man goes to his eternal home, while the mourners go about the streets.”**

“When they even fear a height,” as in a person’s old age, **even a small mound** on the road **seems to him as a huge mountain**, and he is afraid of it.

“And terror in the road,” at the time when he walks on the road, **his heart becomes fearful** of anything.

“And the almond tree blossoms,” this is the hip bone. During old age it sticks out in the same way that the blossom of a tree sticks out.

“And the grasshopper becomes a burden,” these are buttocks, as they appear to him as a heavy burden.

“And the desire fails,” this is desire. He loses his desire for marital relations.

⁷ Job

PEREK 23 – 152A

Rav Kahana was reviewing passages of Scripture in front of Rav. When he reached this verse, “and the desire fails,” Rav became faint and sighed.

Said Rav Kahana: From the fact that Rav sighed, **I understand from this that Rav lost his desire.**

Said Rav Kahana: What is the meaning of **that which is written** (*Tehillim* 33:9), **“For He spoke and it came to be,” this is a woman.** If it were not for the Holy One’s decree, she would not be fitting to be desired, as she is like a flask full of filth.

It was taught in a Baraita: **A woman is like a flask full of excrement and her mouth** i.e. her lower orifice **is full of blood, and nevertheless everyone runs after her.**

What is the meaning of (*Kohelet* 12:5), **“So man goes to his eternal home”?** **Said Rabbi Yitzchak:** **This teaches that to every righteous person they give a residence according to his honor.** This is compared to a king who entered with his servants to a city. **When they enter, they all enter through one gate. When they go to sleep, they give each one a residence according to his honor.** Since it is not written “to the eternal home,” rather it is written, “to *his* eternal home,” this teaches that each one receives a residence for himself.

*

And said Rabbi Yitzchak: What is the meaning of this **which is written**, (*ibid.* 11:10), **“For childhood and youth are vanity”?** This teaches that **things that a person does in his youth, behold they blacken his face at the time of his old age,** as much marital relations during one's youth will weaken his strength when he gets older. The word in the verse “youth,” “*vehashachrut*,” is related to “*shachor*,” “black.”

*

Said Rabbi Yitzchak: **A worm is harsh to a dead person like a needle in the flesh of one who is alive, as it says** (*Iyov* 14:22), **“But his flesh causes him pain.”**

PEREK 23 – 152B

*

Said Rav Chisda: The soul of a deceased person mourns for him all seven days after his death, as it says (ibid.), “And his soul mourns for him,” and mourning is for seven days, as it is written, “And he made for his father mourning seven days.”

*

Said Rav Yehudah: A dead person who does not have consolers, i.e., relatives to mourn for him and accept consolation for him, ten people go and sit in his place where he died and receive consolation for him.

There was someone who died in the neighborhood of Rav Yehudah and did not have consolers.

AMMUD BET

Every day of the seven, Rav Yehudah would send ten people and they would sit in his place, i.e. of the dead person, and accept consolation on his behalf.

After seven days, the dead person appeared in the dream of Rav Yehudah and said to him, “Your mind should be at ease because you put my mind at ease.”

*

Said Rabbi Abahu: Whatever they say in front of a dead person, he hears and he knows what is said, until the casket cover is closed.

And Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Shimon the son of Rabbi differ over this. One said: The dead person knows what they are saying about him until the casket cover is closed.

And one said: He knows what they say about him until his flesh decomposes.

The one that said, “Until his flesh decomposes,” learns it from that which is written (*Iyov* 14:22), “But his flesh causes him pain and his soul mourns for him.” As long as he has flesh, his soul has enough life to know what they are saying about him.

PEREK 23 – 152B

And the one that said, “Until the casket cover is closed,” learns it from that **which is written** (*Kohelet* 12:7), **“And the dust returns to the earth as it was** and the spirit returns to G-d, Who gave it.” For the body is called “dust,” and when it returns to the earth, which is at the closing of the casket cover, the spirit immediately returns and removes itself from him and it no longer has any understanding to comprehend what they are saying about him.

*

The Rabbis taught in a Baraita: It is written (*Kohelet* 12:7), **“And the spirit returns to G-d, Who gave it.”** “Who gave it” is superfluous. The Gemara interprets it: Be careful with your soul **and give it to Him**, i.e., G-d, as it was at the time **that He gave it to you.** Just like He gave you the soul **in purity** without sin, **even you** should give it back to Him **in purity.**

This is **compared to a king of flesh and blood who distributed royal clothing to his servants. The intelligent ones amongst them folded them and placed them in a chest. The fools amongst them went and did work** while wearing them.

After many days, the king wanted his clothes back. The intelligent ones amongst them, who took care of the clothes, they returned them to him ironed, and the fools amongst them who did work while wearing them, **returned them to him dirty.**

The king was pleased with the intelligent ones and was angry with the fools.

Regarding the intelligent ones he said, “They will place the clothes that they were watching back into the storage room, and they will go to their homes in peace.”

And regarding the fools he said, “The clothes that they dirtied, they will give to a washer and they will be placed in the prison.

Even the Holy One does the same. He gives the soul as a deposit to the body and when the person dies and he returns the deposit, the righteous person returns it while it is pure. Then, **regarding the bodies of the righteous, the Holy One says** (*Yeshayahu* 57:2), **“He shall come in peace, they shall rest in their resting-place,”** similar to the deposit where the king sends them away in peace.

PEREK 23 – 152B

And regarding their souls He says (*Shmuel* I 25:29), **“But my lord’s soul shall be bound in the bond of life,”** under the Throne of Glory,⁸ similar to the king's deposit that the king returns to the storage house.

But the wicked are similar to the fools, and they return their souls dirtied. Then, **regarding the bodies of the wicked**, the Holy One says (*Yeshayahu*⁹ 48:22), **“There is no peace,’ said G-d, ‘for the wicked.”**

And regarding their souls He says (*Shmuel* I 25:29), **“While the souls of your enemies, He will shoot it with the hollow of the sling,”** as it is sentenced to Gehinnom¹⁰ in order to cleanse it, similar to the king's clothes that were dirtied by the fools which are given to a washer.

*

It was taught in a Baraita: **Rabbi Eliezer says: The souls of the righteous are kept under the Throne of Glory**, as it says (*Shmuel* I 25:29), **“But my lord’s soul shall be bound in the bond of life.”**

And the souls of the wicked will be placed deep in the slingshot. **And one angel stands at one end of the world and another angel stands at the other end of the world, and they shoot the souls** of these wicked people with the slingshot **to each other**, as it says (*Shmuel* I 25:29), **“While the souls of your enemies, He will shoot it with the hollow of the sling.”**

Said Rabbah to Rav Nachman: And the souls of the average people, what is their status?

Rav Nachman **said to him: Had I died, I would not have told this matter. So said Shmuel: These and those**, i.e., the wicked and the average, **are given to Dumah**, the angel in charge of the spirits. However, **those**, the average ones, **have respite** until the future day of judgment, **and these**, the wicked, **do not have respite**, rather they are shot with a slingshot, as was said.

⁸ Lit. Throne of Honor
⁹ Isaiah
Hell ¹⁰

PEREK 23 – 152B

Said Rav Mari: Eventually, even the righteous will turn into dust after their death, as **it is written** (*Kohelet* 12:7), **“And the dust returns to the earth as it was.”**

There were ditch-diggers who were digging in the ground. Rav Achai bar Yoshia was buried there, and he **snorted at them** to indicate to them that he was there. The ditch-diggers **came and said to Rav Nachman: A person** who is buried there **snorted at us.**

Rav Nachman **came to that place and said to him**, i.e., the dead person: **Who are you, Sir?**

He said to him: I am Achai bar Yoshia.

Rav Nachman **said to him: How is it that your body has not decomposed? And did not Rav Mari say: Eventually the righteous will turn into dust?**

Rav Achai bar Yoshia **said to him: And who is Rav Mari? I do not know him** and I am not concerned about what he says.

Rav Nachman **said to him: Note** that he is supported by **a verse** (*ibid.*), **“And the dust returns to the earth as it was.”**

Rav Achai **said to him: The one that taught you Kohelet, did not teach you Mishlei,¹¹ as it is written** in *Mishlei* (14:30), **“But the rot of the bones is envy.”** From here we see that **whoever has envy of his friend in his heart** during his life, **his bones will rot** after death, and regarding him the verse says (*Kohelet* 12:7), **“And the dust returns to the earth as it was.”** **Anyone who does not have envy in his heart** during his life, **his bones will not rot** after death.

Rav Nachman **felt Rav Achai and saw that he had substance.** Rav Nachman **said to him: Arise, Sir, and enter into the house.**

¹¹ Proverbs

PEREK 23 – 152B

Rav Achai **said to him:** With this request, **you have shown that you did not even learn *Nevi'im*,¹²** as it is written (*Yechezkel*¹³ 37:13), **“And you will know that I am G-d when I open your graves, and when I will bring you up from your graves, My nation.”** Until the Holy One brings us out of our graves, we do not have permission to leave.

Rav Nachman **said to him:** How is it that your body has not decomposed? **And note that it is written** in the curse of Adam (*Breishit*¹⁴ 3:19), **“As dust you are and to dust you will return,”** and it is not possible to say that even this verse speaks only of the wicked ones, as the curses of Adam referred to all of his offspring.

He said to him: That verse of “to dust you will return,” will take place **one hour before the resurrection of the dead.**

A certain *Tzeduki* said to Rav Abahu: You say that the **souls of the righteous are kept under the Throne of Glory.** If so, the practitioner of *Ov*¹⁵, who used **bones** of the dead, **how did she raise up Shmuel with the sorcery of *Ov*¹⁶?**

Rav Abahu **said to him:** **There, it was within the twelve months** of Shmuel’s death, when the souls are not yet set in their places.

As it was taught in a Baraita: **The entire twelve months, his body, i.e., of the dead person, exists, and his soul ascends and descends. After twelve months, the body ceases...**

¹² Prophets

¹³ Ezekiel

¹⁴ Genesis

A form of sorcery ¹⁵

As is recorded in *Shmuel* I, ch. 28. ¹⁶