

וּמִצְפָּצֶפֶן וְעוֹלִין, שְׁנֵאמַר: "וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶת הַשְּׁלִישִׁית בְּאֵשׁ וְצִרְפְּתִים בְּצִרוֹף אֶת הַבְּסָף וּבַחֲנָתִים בְּכַחוֹן אֶת הַזֹּהֵב. הוּא יִקְרָא בְשֵׁמִי וְאֲנִי אֶעֱנֶה אוֹתוֹ." וְעַלֵּיהֶם אָמְרָה חֲנָה: "ה' מִמִּית וּמְחַיֶּה מוֹרִיד שְׂאוֹל וְיַעֲלֶה."

בית הלל אומרים: "רוב חסד" – מטה כלפי חסד, ועליהם אמר דוד: "אהבתי כי ישמע ה' את קולי", ועליהם אמר דוד כל הפרשה כולה "דלותי ולי יהושיע".

פושעי ישראל בגופן, ופושעי אומות העולם בגופן יורדין לגיהנם, ונידונין בה שנים עשר חדש. לאחר שנים עשר חדש גופן כלה, ונשמתן נשרפת, ורוח מפורתן תחת כפות רגלי צדיקים, שנאמר: "ועשותם רשעים כי יהיו אפר תחת כפות רגליכם".

אבל המינין, והמסורות, והאפיקורסים, שכפרו בתורה, ושכפרו בתחיית המתים, ושפירשו מדרכי צבור, ושנתנו חיתיתם בארץ חיים, ושחטאו והחטיאו את הרבים, כגון ירבעם בן נבט וחביריו – יורדין לגיהנם, ונידונין בה לדורי דורות, שנאמר: "ויצאו וראו בפגרי האנשים הפושעים בי" וגו'.

גיהנם כלה והן אינן כלין, שנאמר: "וצורם לבלות שאל מזבול לו", וכל כך למה? מפני שפשטו ידיהם בזבול, שנאמר: "מזבול לו", ואין זבול אלא בית המקדש, שנאמר: "בנה בניתי בית זבול לך", ועליהם אמרה חנה: "ה' יחתו מריביו".

and they will cry out<sup>N</sup> in their pain and eventually ascend from there, as it is stated: "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on My name, and I will answer them" (Zechariah 13:9). This is referring to the members of the third group, who require refinement and cleansing. And about them, Hannah said: "The Lord kills, and gives life; he brings down to the grave, and brings up" (1 Samuel 2:6).

Beit Hillel say: He Who is "and abundant in kindness" (Exodus 34:6) tilts the scales in favor of kindness, so that middling people should not have to pass through Gehenna. And about them, David said: "I love the Lord, Who hears my voice and my supplications" (Psalms 116:1). And about them, David said the entire passage: "I was brought low [*daloti*] and He saved me" (Psalms 116:6). Although they are poor [*dalim*] in mitzvot, God saves them.

The rebellious Jews who have sinned with their bodies<sup>N</sup> and also the rebellious people of the nations of the world who have sinned with their bodies descend to Gehenna and are judged there for twelve months. After twelve months, their bodies are consumed, their souls are burned, and a wind scatters them under the soles of the feet of the righteous, as it is stated: "And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet" (Malachi 3:21).

But the heretics; and the informers;<sup>N</sup> and the apostates [*apikorsim*];<sup>LB</sup> and those who denied the Torah; and those who denied the resurrection of the dead; and those who separated from the ways of the Jewish community<sup>N</sup> and refused to share the suffering; and those who cast their fear over the land of the living; and those who sinned and caused the masses to sin, for example, Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and his company; all of these people descend to Gehenna and are judged there for generations and generations, as it is stated: "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have rebelled against Me; for their worm shall not die; neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24).

Gehenna will terminate, but they still will not terminate, as it is stated: "And their form shall wear away the netherworld, so that there be no dwelling for Him" (Psalms 49:15); that is to say, Gehenna itself will be worn away before their punishment has come to an end. And why are they punished so severely? Because they stretched out their hands against God's dwelling,<sup>N</sup> the Temple, and everything else that is sanctified, as it is stated: "So that there be no dwelling [*zevul*] for Him." Dwelling [*zevul*] is referring here only to the Temple, as it is stated: "I have built You a house for dwelling [*zevul*] in" (1 Kings 8:13). And about them Hannah said: "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces" (1 Samuel 2:10).

NOTES

And they will cry out [*metzafzefin*] – וּמִצְפָּצֶפֶן: The Arukh explains the word *metzafzefin* as floating [*tzafim*]; after they descend they return to float up. In some early versions, it is written *mevatvzetzin*, meaning to bubble forth.

The rebellious Jews who have sinned with their bodies – פושעי ישראל בגופן: The commentaries offer many explanations with regard to both the different categories of sinners and whether the Gemara is speaking of the great, future Day of Judgment or of the judgment of each individual after death. The Rosh lists six categories of people for the Day of Judgment; others do not include all of them or combine different categories (see Ritva and *Tashbetz*).

But the heretics and the informers – אֲבָל הַמִּינִין וְהַמְסוֹרוֹת: The Maharal writes that this group of people who are judged for eternity have in common that all of their sins are spiritual rather than physical. Furthermore, all of these categories of sinners are people who lead or attempt to lead others to sin, and they affect entire communities.

And those who separated from the ways of the community – וְשִׁפְרִישׁוּ מְדַרְכֵי צִבּוֹר: Rashi does not explain this as a separate category but as a general definition for all the sinners listed here. The Rif had the version of the text like this. Rambam explains that these are people who do not transgress but also do not share the troubles and problems of the Jewish community. Consequently, it is considered as though they do not belong to the Jewish people.

Because they stretched out their hands against God's dwelling [*zevul*] – וְיָדֵיהֶם בְּזָבוּל: The transgressions listed in the Gemara here caused the destruction of both the First Temple and the Second Temple, and it is their continued prevalence that prevents the Temple from being rebuilt. Therefore, those who commit these sins nowadays are considered to be actively preventing the rebuilding (*Arukh LaNer*; *Sefat Emet*).

LANGUAGE

Apostates [*apikorsim*] – אֲפִיקוֹרְסִים: From the name of the Greek philosopher Epicurus, whose pleasure oriented philosophy, and specifically his lack of belief in the eternity of the soul, became a symbol of heresy. In the language of the Sages the etymology of the word became associated with the word *pakar*, which means arrogance.

BACKGROUND

The heretics...and the apostates – הַמִּינִין...וְהַמְסוֹרוֹת: The heretics referred to here may be the early Christians, but were more likely various groups who broke away from mainstream Judaism, the largest of which was the Gnostics, who believed in two divinities. The apostates were those who mocked the observance of mitzvot of the Torah, whether due to their mocking

nature or due to their philosophy, which conflicted with Torah. The Rambam makes a halakhic distinction between heretics, who deny God or the non-corporeality of God, and apostates, who deny the relationship between the Creator and the world, i.e., apostates deny the divinity of the Torah, divine providence, and prophecy.

NOTES

Like the bottom of a pot – דומין לשולי קדידה: Some explain that once the bottom of a pot becomes completely blackened, it always retains its stain, even after it is cleaned (Ritva).

The most handsome – שפירי שפירי: A harsher version of this text states that those sinners are better than the people of Mehoza. The Maharal writes that it was the beauty of the people of Mehoza that led them to sin with their bodies.

The skull that did not don phylacteries – קרקפתא דלא: Some say that this phrase is referring to someone who never donned phylacteries in his life (Rabbeinu Hananel; Rif; Rambam; Tosafot Yeshanim). Others say that it is referring to one who did not don phylacteries because the mitzva itself disgusts him (Tosafot; Rosh). According to both opinions, it is referring to any mitzva that is performed with the body, not only to phylacteries (see Ran and Korban Netanel).

A leader [parnas] who casts excessive fear – פרנס המטיל: The word parnas includes any kind of leader, whether a teacher, a communal leader, or a king of an entire country. Although it is permitted to discipline one's students through fear, one who casts excessive fear demonstrates that he is not disciplining them for the sake of Heaven (Maharsha).

BACKGROUND

The people of Mehoza – בני מחוזא: The city of Mehoza was a large city on the banks of the Tigris River. This city served as a major center of commerce, but the inhabitants' great wealth led them to become corrupt. Rava, who was the head of the yeshiva in Mehoza, sharply criticized the traits of the people of the city when he taught them.



Taq-e Kasra monument, the only remaining visible structure from Persian-era Mehoza

HALAKHA

A leader who casts excessive fear – פרנס המטיל אימה: It is forbidden for a leader or a judge to be arrogant or imposing toward the public. Any leader who casts fear over the community not for the sake of Heaven will not merit having a son who is a Torah scholar (Shulhan Arukh, Hoshen Mishpat 8:4).

אמר רבי יצחק בר אבין: ופניהם דומין לשולי קדידה. ואמר רבא: ואינהו משפירי שפירי בני מחוזא, ומקריין בני גיהנם.

אמר מר: בית הלל אומרים: "ורב חסד" – משה כלפי חסד. והכתוב: "והבאתי את השלישית באש". התם בפושעו ישראל בגופן.

פושעו ישראל בגופן? והא אמרת לית להו תקנתא! כי לית להו תקנה – ברוב עונות, הכא – מחצה עונות ומחצה זכיות, ואית בהו נמי עון דפושעו ישראל בגופן, לא סגיא ליה דלאו "והבאתי את השלישית באש", ואם לאו, "ורב חסד" משה כלפי חסד, ועליהן אמר דוד: "אהבתי כי ישמע ה'".

דרש רבא: מאי דכתיב: "אהבתי כי ישמע ה'?" אמרה כנסת ישראל לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: רבוננו של עולם, אימתי אני אהובה לפניך – בןמן שאתה שומע קול תחנוני. "דלותי ולי יהושיע" – אף על פי שדלה אני מן המצות – לי נאה להושיע.

פושעו ישראל בגופן מאי ניהו? אמר רב: קרקפתא דלא מנח תפלין. פושעו אומות העולם בגופן – אמר רב: בעבירה.

ושנתנו חיתיתם בארץ חיים – אמר רב חסדא: זה פרנס המטיל אימה יתירה על הצבור שלא לשם שמים. אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: כל פרנס המטיל אימה יתירה על הצבור שלא לשם שמים – אינו רואה בן תלמיד חכם, שנאמר: "לכן יראוהו אנשים לא יראוהו כל חכמי לב".

Rabbi Yitzhak bar Avin said: And their faces on the Day of Judgment will be black and sooty like the bottom of a pot.<sup>N</sup> And Rava said: And they shall include the most handsome,<sup>N</sup> i.e., upstanding, of the people of Mehoza,<sup>B</sup> as Rava thought that even the most upstanding people of the city of Mehoza were wicked, and they shall be called the people of Gehenna.

The Master said in the baraita above: It stated that Beit Hillel say: He Who is "and abundant in kindness" (Exodus 34:6) tilts the scales in favor of kindness, so that middling people will not have to pass through Gehenna. The Gemara asks: But isn't it written: "And I will bring the third part through the fire" (Zechariah 13:9), implying that there is a third group, which is sent to Gehenna temporarily? The Gemara answers: There, the verse is referring to the rebellious Jews who have sinned with their bodies.

The Gemara asks: Can the verse be referring to the rebellious Jews who have sinned with their bodies? But didn't you say that they have no rectification? The Gemara responds: When do they have no rectification? When in addition to their having sinned with their bodies, the majority of their actions are sins. But here, the verse is referring to people for whom half of their actions are sins and half are meritorious deeds, and those sins include the sin of the rebellious Jews who sin with their bodies. It is not sufficient that they not be subject to the verse: "And I will bring the third part through the fire." However, if their sins and meritorious deeds are equally balanced, and they did not sin with their bodies, He Who is "abundant in kindness" tilts the scales in favor of kindness. And about them, David said: "I love the Lord, Who hears my voice and my supplications" (Psalms 116:1).

Rava interpreted the verse homiletically: What is the meaning of that which is written: "I love the Lord, Who hears my voice and my supplications"? The Congregation of Israel said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, when do I know that I am loved by You? When You hear the voice of my supplications, as the verse states: "I was brought low [daloti], and He saved me" (Psalms 116:6). Although I am poor [dala] in mitzvot, nevertheless it is fitting to save me.

The Gemara asks: The rebellious Jews who have sinned with their bodies, who are they? Rav said: This is referring to the skull that did not ever don phylacteries.<sup>N</sup> The Gemara asks further: The rebellious ones of the nations of the world who sin with their bodies, who are they? Rav said: They are those who engage in the sin, i.e., forbidden sexual relations.

And those who cast their fear over the land of the living, who are they? Rav Hisda said: This is referring to a communal leader [parnas]<sup>1</sup> who casts excessive fear<sup>NH</sup> on the community not for the sake of Heaven. Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: Any community leader who casts excessive fear on the community not for the sake of Heaven will be punished and not see any Torah scholar among his sons, as it is stated: "Men do therefore fear him; he sees not any who are wise of heart" (Job 37:24). One who brings others to fear him will not merit having wise-hearted people in his family.

LANGUAGE

Leader [parnas] – פרנס: Although this word and the linguistically similar words parnes, sustain, and parnasa, livelihood, are found in the language of the Sages, the origin of this word is not completely clear. Some explain that it is from the root p-r-s with an additional nun, as in the verse: "Is it not to deal [paros]

your bread to the hungry?" (Isaiah 58:7). Others claim that it is from the Greek πρόνοος, pronoos, meaning careful or calculating. There are those who maintain that it is derived it from the Latin word pensio, meaning to give rations to one who is deserving.

Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua... Rav Pappa – רב הונא – רב פפא  
 בְּרִיָּה דְרַב יְהוֹשֻעַ... רַב פַּפְּא: Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, and Rav Pappa were close friends, and they lived parallel lives. They both studied first with Abaye and then with Rava, with whom they spent significant time, and they were apparently among his closest students. They were also successful as business partners. After the death of Rava, Rav Pappa founded a yeshiva in the city of Naresh near Sura, where he served as head of the yeshiva and where Rav Huna was appointed head of the advanced students.

## LANGUAGE

Provisions [zavdata] – יְוֹדְהָא – Related to the Arabic زَوَادٌ, 'azwād, meaning provisions for a journey. The modern Hebrew *mizvada*, suitcase, is derived from this root.

בֵּית הַלֵּל אֹמְרִים: "וְרַב חֲסֵד" – מִשָּׁה  
 בְּלִפְנֵי חֲסֵד. הֵיכִי עֲבִיד? רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר  
 אֹמֵר: כּוֹבֵשׁ, שְׂנֵאֲמֵר: "יִשׁוּב יִרְחַמְנוּ  
 יִכְבֹּשׁ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ." רַבִּי יוֹסִי בַר חֲנִינָא  
 אָמַר: נוֹשֵׂא, שְׂנֵאֲמֵר: "נוֹשֵׂא עֲוֹן וְעוֹבֵר  
 עַל פְּשָׁע."

תַּנָּא דְבִי רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל: מַעֲבִיר רֵאשׁוֹן  
 רֵאשׁוֹן, וְכֵן הִיא הַמְּדָה. אָמַר רַבָּא: וְעוֹן  
 עֲצָמוּ אֵינוּ נִמְחָק, דְּאִי אִיכָא רֵבָא  
 עֲוֹנוֹת – מִחְשִׁיב בְּהַדְרֵיהּוּ.

רַבָּא אָמַר: כָּל הַמַּעֲבִיר עַל מְדוּתוֹ  
 מַעֲבִירִין לוֹ עַל כָּל פְּשָׁעוֹ, שְׂנֵאֲמֵר:  
 "נוֹשֵׂא עֲוֹן וְעוֹבֵר עַל פְּשָׁע" – לְמִי נוֹשֵׂא  
 עוֹן? לְמִי שְׁעוֹבֵר עַל פְּשָׁע.

רַב הוֹנָא בְּרִיָּה דְרַב יְהוֹשֻעַ חָלַשׁ. עַל  
 רַב פַּפְּא לְשִׁיחֵי לֵבֵיהּ. חֲזוּיָה דְחָלִישׁ לֵיהּ  
 עֲלָמָא. אָמַר לְהוֹ: צְבִיתוּ לֵיהּ יְוֹדְתָא.  
 לְסוּף אֵיתְפַּח. הָוָה מִיכְסִיף רַב פַּפְּא  
 לְמִיחֲזוּיָה. אָמְרוּ לֵיהּ: מַאי חֲזוּתָ?  
 אָמַר לְהוֹ: אֵין, הֲכִי הָוָה. וְאָמַר לְהוֹ  
 הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: הוֹאִיל וְלֹא מוֹקִים  
 בְּמִלְיָה – לֹא תִקְוֵמוּ בְּהַדְרֵיהּ, שְׂנֵאֲמֵר:  
 "נוֹשֵׂא עֲוֹן וְעוֹבֵר עַל פְּשָׁע" – לְמִי נוֹשֵׂא  
 עוֹן – לְעוֹבֵר פְּשָׁע.

"לְשִׂאֲרֵית נַחְלָתוֹ" – אָמַר רַבִּי אֲחָא  
 בַּר חֲנִינָא: אֲלֵיהּ וְקוֹץ בַּהּ; "לְשִׂאֲרֵית  
 נַחְלָתוֹ" – וְלֹא לְכָל נַחְלָתוֹ.

§ It was taught in the *baraita*: Beit Hillel say: He who is "and abundant in kindness" (Exodus 34:6) tilts the scales in favor of kindness, so that middling people will not have to pass through Gehenna. The Gemara asks: How does He do this? Rabbi Eliezer says: He pushes down on the side of the merits,<sup>n</sup> tipping the scale in their favor, as it is stated: "He will again have compassion upon us; He will push down our iniquities" (Micah 7:19). Rabbi Yosei bar Hanina said: He bears, i.e., raises, the side of the sins, as it is stated: "He bears [noseh] sin and forgives transgression" (Micah 7:18).

A Sage from the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught in a *baraita*: He overlooks<sup>n</sup> each and every first transgression,<sup>n</sup> and that is the attribute of mercy,<sup>n</sup> that God forgives one's first sin, and therefore He tips the scale in favor of the merits. Rava said: But that sin itself, which God overlooks, is not completely erased;<sup>n</sup> if the individual's actions are still mostly sins, God counts the overlooked sin with them and metes out punishment accordingly.

Rava understood this verse differently and said: With regard to whoever forgoes his reckonings<sup>n</sup> with others for injustices done to him, the heavenly court in turn forgoes punishment for all his sins, as it is stated: "He bears sin and forgives transgression" (Micah 7:18). Whose sins does He bear? The sins of one who forgoes his reckonings with others for injustices committed against him.

It is related that Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, became sick, and Rav Pappa<sup>p</sup> went into his home to inquire about his well-being. He saw that the world was growing weak for Rav Huna, i.e., he was dying. Rav Pappa said to his attendants: Prepare his provisions [zavdata],<sup>l</sup> i.e., his shrouds. In the end, Rav Huna recovered. Rav Pappa was embarrassed to go and see him, as it seemed as if he had decreed Rav Huna's death. Rav Huna's friends said to him: What did you see when you were lying there suspended between life and death? He said to them: Yes, it was so, I was truly close to dying, but the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the heavenly court: Since he does not stand on his rights, i.e., he is ready to waive what is due him, you too should not be exacting with him in his judgment, as it is stated: "He bears [noseh] sin and forgives transgression." Whose sins does He bear? The sins of one who forgoes his reckonings with others for injustices committed against him.

That same verse continues: "He bears sins and forgives transgression for the remnant of His inheritance" (Micah 7:18). Rav Aha bar Hanina said: This is like the fat tail that has a thorn in it, i.e., something good that contains something bad. God forgives and pardons only "for the remnant of His inheritance," but not for all His inheritance.

## NOTES

כוֹבֵשׁ – He pushes down [kovesho] on the side of merits – Rashi explains that the word *kovesho* means conquers, that God conquers the side of the merits to give it more weight. This fits with the statement in the Jerusalem Talmud that God adds mitzvot for the person, to add weight to the side of their merits. However, elsewhere Rashi explains the word *kovesh* as meaning hiding (*Arakhin* 8b). In several places in the Jerusalem Talmud, it is explained as snatching sins.

Some write that the word *kovesh* means presses or constricts, like the word *kevisha*, meaning pressing of clothes; God constricts the sin and makes it small (*Tashbetz*; *Shenei Luhot HaBerit*). The Maharal explains in *Hiddushei Aggadot* that the dispute concerning forgiveness pertains to whether the Holy One, Blessed be He, gives more weight to the merits or lightens the weight of the sins.

A Sage from the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught, He overlooks – תַּנָּא דְבִי רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל, מַעֲבִיר – There are several possibilities with regard to how this statement relates to the previous

discussion. It may explain the concept of God pressing down the sins or the concept of God bearing the sin. Others say that it is an alternative explanation of the opinion of Beit Hillel (Rosh). It is also possible that it is a new section with no connection to the previous discussion.

מַעֲבִיר – He overlooks each and every first transgression – רֵאשׁוֹן רֵאשׁוֹן: The *ge'onim* write that with regard to one who has mostly merits, the Holy One, Blessed be He, forgives the first sin first. The Rambam explains in *Hilkhot Teshuva* how the first sin is always forgiven first (see Rosh and *Asara Ma'amarot* of Rema MiPano). Others explain that the first of each type of sin is forgiven (Rashash).

וְכֵן הִיא הַמְּדָה – And that is the attribute of mercy – Some explain that this is the attribute of the Holy One, Blessed be He. He overlooks the first sin and forgives it (Rabbeinu Hananel). Others explain that it is the attribute even of kings and ordinary people not to punish one for a first offence (Rashash).

The *ge'onim* explain that this phrase is referring to the sixth of God's attributes of compassion: "And abundant in kindness" (Exodus 34:6).

וְעוֹן עֲצָמוּ אֵינוּ נִמְחָק – But that sin itself is not erased – Rashi explains that the first sin is forgiven, but not in all circumstances. It is forgiven only if one has mostly merits; if his sins are more numerous than his merits, all of the sins are counted, including the first one. Others explain that the sin itself is not erased on the day of death or on the Day of Judgment. At those times there is a complete calculation of sins and merits, including this sin, which is not erased (see Rambam, Rosh, and Ritva).

כָּל הַמַּעֲבִיר עַל – כָּל הַמַּעֲבִיר עַל – מְדוּתוֹ: It is natural for one to repay those who hate him, measure for measure [*midda keneged midda*]. One who forgives and is not exacting with regard to this is treated in a similar fashion by God, measure for measure, and his sins are forgiven (see *Tosafot*; Rashi; *Tashbetz*).

NOTES

Who who regards himself as a remainder – שְׁמֵשִׁים: Rashi writes in tractate *Sanhedrin* (111b) that just as remainders are not important, so too, this individual does not consider himself important, and he is not full of pride.

The Holy One, Blessed be He, wrapped Himself like a prayer leader – נִתְעַטֵּף הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּשֵׁלִיַת צְבוֹר – The Ritva writes that Moses saw this in a prophetic vision, as though God were wrapped in a prayer shawl. In this prophecy, God taught Moses the order of the prayer service and what to recite. Rabbeinu Hananel writes that it was not God Himself, but an angel who was revealed to Moses. Rav Hai Gaon writes that the word “God” itself in the thirteen attributes created this angel that was revealed to Moses. The Maharsha explains that this wrapping is referring to that which is stated in the midrash, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, wrapped Himself in a prayer shawl and created the first light of the world. This wrapping hints to the first power of creation, and the forgiveness of sins is through a return to the world as it was originally (*Otzar Kavod*; see *Pardes Rimmonim*).

Before a person sins – קוֹדֵם שֶׁיַּחֲטֵא הָאָדָם: The Rosh asks why God requires the attribute of compassion. He explains that compassion is applied to one who sinned in thought alone; before he sins through deed, he is forgiven for the thought. He also explains that the Holy One, Blessed be He, does not judge one for any future sin but only according to the present. The Maharsha writes that the meaning of this phrase is related to the statement of the Sages that before anyone sinned God created the world with the attribute of compassion (see *Arukh LaNer*).

Thirteen attributes – שְׁלֹש עֶשְׂרֵה מִדּוֹת: All authorities agree that there are thirteen attributes of compassion. They are taken from Exodus 34:6–7, after the Jewish people were forgiven for the sin of the Golden Calf. However, there are various opinions with regard to their identification.

לְמִי שֶׁמְשִׁים עֲצָמוֹ כְּשִׁירִים.

רַב הוֹנָא רְמִי: כְּתִיב: “צַדִּיק ה’ בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו”, וּכְתִיב: “וְחָסִיד בְּכָל מַעֲשָׂיו”. בְּתַחֲלָה – צַדִּיק, וּלְבַסּוֹף – חָסִיד.

רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר רְמִי: כְּתִיב “וְלַךְ ה’ חֶסֶד”, וּכְתִיב: “כִּי אַתָּה תִשְׁלַם לְאִישׁ כְּמַעֲשָׂהוּ”. בְּתַחֲלָה “כִּי אַתָּה תִשְׁלַם כְּמַעֲשָׂהוּ”, וּלְבַסּוֹף – “וְלַךְ ה’ חֶסֶד”.

אֵילָפִי, וְאָמְרִי לֵה אֵילָפָא, רְמִי: כְּתִיב “וְרַב חֶסֶד” וּכְתִיב “וְאָמַת”! בְּתַחֲלָה – וְאָמַת, וּלְבַסּוֹף “וְרַב חֶסֶד”.

“וַיַּעֲבֹר ה’ עַל פְּנֵי וַיִּקְרָא”, אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אֵלְמָלָא מִקְרָא בְּתוֹב אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְאֹמְרוֹ. מִלְּמֹד שְׁנַתְעַטֵּף הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּשֵׁלִיַת צְבוֹר, וְהָרָאָה לוֹ לְמִשָּׁה סֵדֵר תְּפִלָּה. אָמַר לוֹ: כָּל זְמַן שֶׁיִּשְׂרָאֵל חוֹטְאִין – יַעֲשׂוּ לְפָנַי כְּסֵדֵר הַזֶּה, וְאֲנִי מוֹחֵל לָהֶם.

“ה’ ה’” – אֲנִי הוּא קוֹדֵם שֶׁיַּחֲטֵא הָאָדָם, וְאֲנִי הוּא לְאַחַר שֶׁיַּחֲטֵא הָאָדָם וַיַּעֲשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה. “אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן” –

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה: בְּרִית בְּרוּתָה לְשִׁלְשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה מִדּוֹת שֶׁאֵינָן חוֹזְרוֹת רִיקָם, שְׁנֵאמַר: “הִנֵּה אֲנִי בּוֹרֵת בְּרִית”.

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: גְּדוּלָה תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁמְקַרְעֵת גֹּזֵר דִּינָא שֶׁל אָדָם, שְׁנֵאמַר: “הִשְׁמֵן לֵב הָעָם הַזֶּה וְאָזְנוֹ הַכֶּבֶד וְעֵינָיו הִשְׁעוּ פֶּן יִרְאֶה בְּעֵינָיו וּבְאָזְנוֹ יִשְׁמַע וּלְבָבוֹ יָבִין וְשָׁב וּרְפָא לוֹ”.

אָמַר לֵיהּ רַב פַּפָּא לְאַבְי: וְדַלְמָא לְפָנַי גֹּזֵר דִּין? אָמַר לֵיהּ: “וּרְפָא לוֹ” כְּתִיב. אֵיזוּהוּ דְבַר שֶׁצָּרִיךְ רְפוּאָה – הוּא אוֹמֵר זֶה גֹּזֵר דִּין.

That is to say, God forgives sins only for one who regards himself as a remainder,<sup>N</sup> i.e., of only secondary importance.

§ Rav Huna raised a contradiction between the two halves of a verse. It is written: “The Lord is righteous [*tzaddik*] in all His ways” (Psalms 145:17), indicating that God acts in accordance with the attribute of strict justice [*tzedek*], and then it is written in the same verse: “And kind [*hasid*] in all His works,” implying that He acts with grace and loving-kindness [*hesed*], going beyond the letter of the law. Rav Huna explained: **Initially**, at the time of judgment, **He is righteous, but in the end**, at the time of punishment, **He is gracious**.

Rabbi Elazar raised a similar contradiction: It is written: “But to you, O Lord, belongs kindness” (Psalms 62:13), implying that God acts beyond the letter of the law, and then it is written in the same verse: “For You render to a man according to his deeds,” implying that He rewards and punishes measure for measure. Rabbi Elazar answered: **Initially**, at the time of judgment: “For You render to a man according to his deeds”; **but in the end**, at the time of punishment: “But to You, O Lord, belongs kindness.”

Ilfa, and some say it was the Sage Ilfa, also raised a contradiction: It is written in the list of God’s attributes: “And abundant in kindness” (Exodus 34:6), and it is written in the same verse: “And truth,” which implies the attribute of justice. He answered: **Initially**, at the time of judgment: “And truth,” i.e., God employs strict justice, **but in the end**, when He sees that the world cannot survive on judgment based only on truth and justice: “And abundant in kindness,” i.e., He is merciful.

§ The verse states: “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed” (Exodus 34:6). Rabbi Yohanan said: Were it not explicitly written in the verse, it would be impossible to say this, as it would be insulting to God’s honor. The verse teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, wrapped Himself in a prayer shawl like a prayer leader<sup>N</sup> and showed Moses the structure of the order of the prayer. He said to him: Whenever the Jewish people sin, let them act before Me in accordance with this order. Let the prayer leader wrap himself in a prayer shawl and publicly recite the thirteen attributes of mercy, and I will forgive them.

The verse continues: “The Lord, the Lord,” and it should be understood as follows: I am He before a person sins,<sup>N</sup> and I am He after a person sins and performs repentance, as God does not recall for him his first sins, since He is always “God, merciful and gracious” (Exodus 34:6).

Rav Yehuda said: A covenant was made with the thirteen attributes<sup>N</sup> that they will not return empty-handed, meaning that if one mentions them, he will certainly be answered, as it is stated in this regard: “Behold, I make a covenant” (Exodus 34:10).

§ Rabbi Yohanan said: Great is repentance, for it tears up the sentence issued against a person, as it is stated: “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and smear over their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and they will return, and be healed” (Isaiah 6:10), implying that if indeed they return and repent, they will be healed from all their sins.

Rav Pappa said to Abaye: But perhaps this was said before the sentence was issued, but after one’s sentence has been decreed repentance no longer helps. Abaye said to him: It is written here: “And they will return and be healed” (Isaiah 6:10). What requires healing? An illness does. Consequently, you must say that the reference here is to a sentence that has already been issued, and even so, after repentance, they will be healed.

Here, repentance of an individual...there, communal repentance – **הָא בְּיָחִיד, הָא בְּצַבּוּר**: The Gemara in tractate *Berakhot* tells of the repentance of King Hezekiah. The commentaries ask: How could the sentence of Hezekiah, king of Judea, change after it had already been decreed? They answer that in matters of judgment a king is considered like a community (*Turei Even*).

**לִיקְרָעִיהָ לְגִזְרָה** – **Let Him tear up their sentence** – **דִּינֵיהוּ**: The reason that the Gemara asks its question only with regard to changing an evil decree into good, is that God's attribute of goodness means that He never changes a good decree into a bad one (*Mishhat Aharon*).

Markers...are similar to the words **בְּאֵין וְרַק** and **וְרַק בְּאֵין** – **סימניוֹת בְּאֵין וְרַק**: These markers are also in the Torah around the verses in Numbers 10:35–36. There it means that these verses are not written in their correct chronological place. Similarly, when the Gemara refers to the verse from Psalms that says that when people call out they are answered, it means that they are not always answered immediately (see Maharsha).

## BACKGROUND

**Causes them to fall at the appropriate time** – **מורידן בְּזִמְנָן**: From an agricultural perspective, not only is the quantity of rain important. Its distribution during the growth period of the plants is similarly effective. For most of the winter plants, the ideal situation is to have the rain spread out evenly during the whole rainy season. A long break after planting or after the first rains, those that caused the seeds to sprout, is destructive, as discussed in tractate *Ta'anit*. This sometimes necessitates plowing and replanting the field. Conversely, too much water causes rotting in the plant and harms its growth.

מִיִּתְבַּיֵּן: הַשָּׁב בֵּינָתָם – מוֹחֲלִין לוֹ. לֹא שָׁב בֵּינָתָם, אֲפִילוּ הֵבִיא כָּל אֵילֵי נְבוֹת שְׁבַעֲוֹלָם – אֵין מוֹחֲלִין לוֹ! לֹא קִשְׂיָא: הָא – בְּיָחִיד, הָא – בְּצַבּוּר.

The Gemara raises an objection from a *baraita*: If one repents in the meantime, between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, he is forgiven; if he does not repent in the meantime, then even if he later brings as offerings all the rams of Nebaioth in the world, which are of the best quality, they do not forgive him in the Heavenly court. This implies that once one's sentence has been decreed, even repentance cannot alter it. The Gemara answers: This is not difficult: Here, where repentance is effective only before the sentence on Yom Kippur, the *baraita* is referring to repentance of an individual; there, where forgiveness is granted even after a sentence is issued, it is referring to communal repentance.<sup>N</sup>

מִיִּתְבַּיֵּן: "עֵינֵי ה' אֲלֵהֶיךָ בָּה" – עֵתִים לְטוֹבָה עֵתִים לְרָעָה. עֵתִים לְטוֹבָה בְּיַצֵּד? הֲרֵי שְׁהִיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל רְשָׁעִים גְּמוּרִין בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, וּפָסְקוּ לָהֶם גְּשָׁמִים מוֹעֲטִים. לְסוּף חֲזָרוּ בָּהֶן. לְהוֹסִיף עֲלֵיהֶן – אִי אֶפְשָׁר, שְׂכַבְרֵי נְגוּרָה גְּזָרָה. אֲלֵא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מוֹרִידֵן בְּזִמְנָן עַל הָאָרֶץ הַצְּרִיכָה לָהֶן, הַכֹּל לְפִי הָאָרֶץ.

The Gemara raises an objection from another *baraita*: The verse states: "A land which the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it" (Deuteronomy 11:12). God's constant providence over Eretz Yisrael is sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad. Sometimes for the good; how so? If the Jews were wholly wicked on Rosh HaShana, so that only a meager amount of rain was decreed for them for the year, but in the end they repented, what can be done? To add rain is impossible, as the decree was already issued. Rather, the Holy One, Blessed be He, causes those sparse rains to fall at the appropriate times<sup>B</sup> on land that needs it, e.g., fields, vineyards, and gardens, all according to requirements of the land, and those rains are just as effective as a lot of rain.

עֵתִים לְרָעָה בְּיַצֵּד? הֲרֵי שְׁהִיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל צְדִיקִים גְּמוּרִין בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, וּפָסְקוּ עֲלֵיהֶן גְּשָׁמִים מְרֻבִּין. לְסוּף חֲזָרוּ בָּהֶן. לְפָחוֹת מֵהֶן – אִי אֶפְשָׁר, שְׂכַבְרֵי נְגוּרָה גְּזָרָה. אֲלֵא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מוֹרִידֵן שְׁלֵל בְּזִמְנָן עַל הָאָרֶץ שְׂאִינָה צְרִיכָה לָהֶן.

Sometimes for bad; how so? If the Jewish people were wholly righteous on Rosh HaShana, so that much rain was decreed for them for that year, but in the end they regressed and sinned, what can be done? To reduce the amount of rain is impossible, as the decree was already issued. Rather, the Holy One, Blessed be He, causes the rain to fall not at the appropriate time, and on land that does not need it, e.g., forests and deserts, and the ample rain is no more beneficial than meager rain.

לְטוֹבָה מִיָּהָא לִיקְרָעִיהָ לְגִזְרָה דִּינֵיהוּ וְלוֹסִיף לָהֶן שְׂאִינֵי הַתָּם דְּאֶפְשָׁר בְּהֵבִי.

The Gemara asks: When it is for good, however, let Him tear up their sentence<sup>N</sup> and add to the rain that had originally been decreed for them. Since the *baraita* explains that God does not do so, it implies that an evil sentence cannot be rescinded, even if the entire community fully repents. The Gemara answers: It is different there, because it is possible to achieve the same result in this manner, by causing the rain to fall at the proper time and in the proper place, without rescinding the original sentence.

תָּא שְׁמַע: "וְרִדֵי הַיָּם בְּאֵנִיּוֹת עוֹשֵׂי מְלָאכָה בְּמִיַם רַבִּים הֵמָּה רָאוּ מַעֲשֵׂי ה'" וְגו'. "וַיֹּאמֶר וַיַּעֲמֵד רוּחַ סְעָרָה וַתִּרְדָּם גְּלִיו... יַחֲזוּגוּ וַיִּנְגְּעוּ כְּשֹׁבָר" וְגו'. "וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל ה' בְּצַר לָהֶם" וְגו'. "וַיִּדְוֶה לָהֶם חֶסֶד" וְגו'.

Come and hear a proof from a different *baraita*: The psalm states: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these saw the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep" (Psalms 107:23–24). The psalm continues: "For He commanded, and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves thereof... They reel and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end" (Psalms 107:25–27). It continues further: "Then they cry to the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses" (Psalms 107:28). And finally, "Let them give thanks to the Lord for His mercy, and for His wonderful works to the children of men" (Psalms 107:31).

עָשָׂה לָהֶן סִמְנֵיּוֹת בְּאֵין וְרַקִּין שְׂבַתוּרָה, לְזַכֵּר לָךְ: צְעֲקוּ קוֹדֵם גְּזַר דִּין – נִעֲנֵנוּ, צְעֲקוּ לְאַחַר גְּזַר דִּין – אֵינָן נִעֲנֵנוּ!

Markers were inserted here before each one of verses 23 through 28. These markers, which are the letter *nun* inverted, are similar in meaning to the words **בְּאֵין וְרַק**<sup>N</sup> in the Torah, to tell us that just as the Torah's words are precise and cannot be changed, so too, these people cannot have their sentence changed. This tells you that if they cried out before the sentence was issued, they are answered, but if they cried out only after the sentence was issued, they are not answered.

הֲגִי נְמִי בְּיָחִידֵין דְּמוּ.

The Gemara answers: This is not difficult, for those who go down to the sea in ships are also considered like individuals. Even if there are many such people, they do not constitute an entire community but only a small defined group within it.

**PERSONALITIES**

Beloreya the convert – בְּלוֹרְיָא הַגֵּיּוֹרָת – As indicated by her name, Valeria, or perhaps Valuria, was a wealthy Roman matron who converted to Judaism during the Second Temple period. The Talmud (*Yevamot* 46a) records the questions that she put to Rabban Gamliel with regard to the meaning of biblical verses.

**NOTES**

Here it is referring to sins committed between man and God – כָּאֵן בְּעֵבִירוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְמָקוֹם – The Maharsha writes that God does not show favor when one sins against another, as this would be like favoritism, but when one sins against God, He forgives the offender. Similarly, he writes that with regard to sins committed by one person against another God, acts as a judge, who is forbidden to show favor to either side. However, with regard to sins committed between man and God, He is like a plaintiff, who is permitted to forgo his rights (Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chajes).

תָּא שְׁמַע: שְׂאֵלָה בְּלוֹרְיָא הַגֵּיּוֹרָת אֵת רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: כְּתוּב בְּתוֹרַתְכֶם: "אֲשׁוּר לֹא יִשָּׂא פָנִים," וְכָתוּב: "וְיִשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ."

The Gemara continues: Come and hear: Beloreya the convert<sup>f</sup> once asked Rabban Gamliel: It is written in your Torah: "The great, mighty, and awesome God who favors no one" (Deuteronomy 10:17), and elsewhere it is written: "The Lord shall show favor to you and give you peace" (Numbers 6: 26). How can this contradiction be resolved?

נִטְפַל לָהּ רַבִּי יוֹסֵי הַכֹּהֵן, אָמַר לָהּ: אֲמַשׁוּל לָךְ מִשָּׁל, לְמָה הִדְבַר דּוּמָה – לְאָדָם שְׁנוּשָׁה בְּחִבּוּרוֹ מִנָּה, וְקָבַע לוֹ זְמַן בְּפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְנִשְׁבַּע לוֹ בְּחַיֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ. הִגִּיעַ זְמַן וְלֹא פָּרַעוּ, בָּא לְפָנֵים אֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ. וְאָמַר לוֹ: עֲלֹבוּנִי מִחוּל לָךְ, לָךְ וּפָנִים אֵת חִבְיָרְךָ. הֵכָא גַּמְ, כָּאֵן – בְּעֵבִירוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְמָקוֹם, כָּאֵן – בְּעֵבִירוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְחִבְיָרוֹ.

Rabbi Yosei the priest joined the conversation with her and said: I will tell you a parable. To what is this matter comparable? To a person who lent his friend one hundred dinars and fixed a time for repayment of the loan before the king, and the borrower took an oath by the life of the king that he would repay the money. The time arrived, and he did not repay the loan. The delinquent borrower came to appease the king for not fulfilling the oath that he had sworn by the life of the king, and the king said to him: For my insult I forgive you, but you must still go and appease your friend. Here also the same is true: Here, the verse that states: "The Lord shall show favor to you," is referring to sins committed between man and God,<sup>h</sup> which God will forgive; there, the verse that states: "God favors no one," is referring to sins committed between a person and another, which God will not forgive until the offender appeases the one he hurt.

עַד שָׁבָא רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא וְלִימַד:

This is how the contradiction had at first been resolved, until Rabbi Akiva came and taught as follows:

Perek I  
Daf 18 Amud a

**NOTES**

Before one's sentence... after the sentence – קוּדְם גְּזֵר דִּין... – This is according to the opinion that one is judged every day. Alternatively, it is referring to the time between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, when for one individual it may be before his decree and for another it could be after his decree (*Turei Even*; see *Arukh LaNer*).

**LANGUAGE**

Tribunal [*gardom*] – גָּרְדוּם: The origin of the word is the Latin gradus, or gradum in the accusative, initially meaning step. Later it came to refer to the steps in front of the Roman judge. It is possible it also took on meaning from the Roman custom of killing those sentenced to death by throwing them down from a rock.

כָּאֵן – קוּדְם גְּזֵר דִּין, כָּאֵן – לְאַחַר גְּזֵר דִּין! הֵכָא גַּמְ בְּחִיּוּד.

Here the verse is referring to the time before one's sentence is issued, when God shows favor and forgives; and there the verse is referring to the time after the sentence<sup>n</sup> has been issued, when He no longer forgives. This implies that after a sentence has been issued, there is no possibility of repentance, which seems to contradict the statement of Rabbi Yohanan. The Gemara answers: Here too it is referring to an individual, but a community is granted forgiveness even after its sentence has been issued.

וְגַזְרֵי דִּין דִּיחִיד תִּנְאֵי הֵיא. דְּתִנְאֵי: הִיָּה רַבִּי מֵאִיר אָמַר: שְׁנַיִם שְׁעָלוּ לְמִטָּה וְחוֹלְטִין שׁוּה, וְכֵן שְׁנַיִם שְׁעָלוּ לְגָרְדוּם לִידוֹן וְדִינֵן שׁוּה, זֶה יָרַד וְזֶה לֹא יָרַד, זֶה נִיצַל וְזֶה לֹא נִיצַל.

The question of whether or not an individual's sentence can be rescinded is a dispute between *tanna'im*, as it is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Meir would say: Two people take to their beds, and their illness is the same, or two people ascend to the tribunal [*gardom*]<sup>4</sup> for judgment, and their potential sentence is the same; but this one comes down from his bed, while that one does not come down from his bed, and this one is saved from death, while that one is not saved.

מִפְּנֵי מָה זֶה יָרַד וְזֶה לֹא יָרַד, זֶה נִיצַל וְזֶה לֹא נִיצַל? זֶה – הִתְפַּלֵּל וְנִעֲנָה, וְזֶה הִתְפַּלֵּל וְלֹא נִעֲנָה. מִפְּנֵי מָה זֶה נִעֲנָה וְזֶה לֹא נִעֲנָה? זֶה הִתְפַּלֵּל תְּפִלָּה שְׁלִימָה – נִעֲנָה, וְזֶה לֹא הִתְפַּלֵּל תְּפִלָּה שְׁלִימָה – לֹא נִעֲנָה.

For what reason did this one recover and come down from his bed, while that one did not recover and come down from his bed; and why was this one saved from death, while that one was not saved? The difference between them is that this one prayed and was answered, while that one prayed, but was not answered. And for what reason was this one answered and that one not answered? This one prayed a prayer with his whole heart and consequently was answered, while that one did not pray a prayer with his whole heart and therefore was not answered.

רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר: כָּאֵן – קוּדְם גְּזֵר דִּין, כָּאֵן – לְאַחַר גְּזֵר דִּין. רַבִּי יִצְחָק אָמַר: יָפָה צְעָקָה לְאָדָם, בֵּין קוּדְם גְּזֵר דִּין בֵּין לְאַחַר גְּזֵר דִּין.

Rabbi Elazar said: Not so; rather, here he prayed before his heavenly sentence was issued, and so he was answered, whereas there the other one prayed after his heavenly sentence was issued, and therefore he was not answered. Rabbi Yitzhak disagreed and said: Crying out to God is effective for a person, both before his sentence has been issued and also after his sentence has been issued, as even after his sentence has been issued, it can still be rescinded if he repents.