Rav Ashi said: The wording of the mishna is also precise, according to this explanation, as it teaches: How are these seven fast days more stringent than the first ones? Rather, the difference is that on these days, in addition to all the earlier stringencies, they sound the alarm and they lock the stores. However, in regard to all their other matters, both this and that are identical. And if you say that here too he taught and omitted, but it teaches: How are these more stringent, an expression that indicates that the mishna states the only difference.

The Gemara asks: And how can you understand the phrase: How are these, specifically, as indicating that there is only one difference between the cases? But he omitted the ark. The Gemara responds: If the omission is due to the ark, that is not a real omission. The reason is that the tanna teaches only matters that are performed in private, whereas he does not teach matters that are performed in public (parshesia): 2

Abar bar Yishmael taught the Gemara that the last seven fasts are too numerous and too stringent. Other commentaries add that pregnant and nursing women are not required to observe the last series of fasts because certain practices laden with emotion are observed on those days, e.g., visiting cemeteries and extreme manifestations of crying, which might prove dangerous for them (Rabbeinu Yehonatan). In contrast, the Rambam rules that pregnant and nursing women fast on the last seven fasts, not on the first or middle series of three fasts (Rambam Sefer Zemanim, Hilkhos Tzniyos 5:3). Apparently, he understands Rav Ashi as saying: Take the middle baraita in your hand, i.e., disregard the first and the last baraita, and rule in accordance with the middle baraita, which states that pregnant and nursing women are required to observe only the last seven fasts. Some commentaries, who accept the Rambam’s ruling that pregnant and nursing women fast only on the last series of days, suggest a way in which all three baraitot can be reconciled with that opinion (Shita Mekubbezet).

HALAKHA

Take the middle in your hand – יד中间 materiał

Pregnant and nursing women are obligated to fast on the middle three fasts imposed upon the community in times of drought, but not the first three fasts or the last seven. However, on fast days that they are not required to observe, they may eat only what is necessary for the well-being of the fetus or infant. Some commentaries add that a pregnant or nursing woman may not act stringently and observe a fast from which she is exempt (Shulhan Arukh, Drah (Hayim) 575.5, and in the comment of Rema).
The mishna teaches: How are these seven fasts more stringent than the first ones? Rather, the difference is that on these days, in addition to all the earlier stringencies, they sound the alarm and they lock the stores. The Gemara asks: With what do they sound the alarm? Rav Yehuda said: With shofarot. And Rav Yehuda, son of Rav Shmuel bar Shelia, said in the name of Rav: With the Aneinu prayer.

The Gemara analyzes the dispute: It might enter our mind to say that the one who said that the community sounds the alarm by reciting Aneinu, i.e., Rav, did not say that they cry out with shofarot, and likewise the one who said that they do cry out with shofarot, Rav Yehuda, did not say that they sound the alarm by reciting Aneinu. But it isn’t taught in a baraita: The court does not decree fewer than seven fasts on the community, which include eighteen acts of sounding the alarm.8 And a mnemonic for this matter is Jericho. And as there were many episodes of sounding the shofarot in Jericho, this is a conclusive refutation of the one who said that according to the opinion of Rav they sound the alarm only by reciting Aneinu.

Rather, the Gemara explains that the dispute must be understood differently: With regard to shofarot, everyone, i.e., Rav and Rav Yehuda, agrees that the mishna calls this: Sounding the alarm. When they disagree, it is with regard to the Aneinu prayer. One Sage, Rav, holds that this too is called sounding the alarm, and one Sage, Rav Yehuda, holds that reciting Aneinu is not called sounding the alarm.

The Gemara comments: If so, then it follows that according to the one who said that they sound the alarm by reciting Aneinu, all the more so they can do so with shofarot,8 but according to the one who said that they sound the alarm with shofarot, this is the way they sound the alarm; however, they may not do so with Aneinu, i.e., the community does not sound the alarm by reciting this prayer. This indicates that the Aneinu prayer is recited only in extreme cases, as it is a greater form of petitioning to God than blowing the shofar.
The Gemara raises a difficulty against this conclusion. But isn’t it taught in a baraita: And with regard to all other types of calamities than drought that break out, for example scabs, 1 plagues of locusts, 2 flies, or hornets, 3 or mosquitoes, 4 or infestations of snakes or scorpions, they would not sound the alarm, but they would cry out. From the fact that crying out is, according to all opinions, a prayer recited with one’s mouth, it follows that sounding an alarm must be with shofarot. 5 This baraita indicates that sounding the alarm with shofarot is the response to a serious situation, whereas the Ancina prayer is recited on less worrisome occasions.

The Gemara answers: This is a dispute between tanna’im, as we learned in a mishna: For the following calamities sound the alarm even on Shabbat: For a city that is surrounded by an enemy army or in danger of being flooded by a river, 6 or for a ship tossed about at sea. Rabbi Yosei said: An alarm may be sounded on Shabbat to summon help, but it may not be sounded for crying out 7 to God.

The Gemara clarifies this case. With what do they sound the alarm? If we say with shofarot, is the sounding of shofarot permitted on Shabbat? Even when Rosh HaShanah occurs on Shabbat, one must refrain from sounding the shofar on that day. Rather, is it not the case that this is referring to the recitation of the Ancina prayer, and yet the mishna calls this recitation: Sounding the alarm. Conclude from this that there is a tanna who maintains that sounding of the alarm is in fact performed by prayer, as claimed by Rav Yehuda, son of Rav Shmuel bar Sheliat.

The Gemara relates: During the years of Rabbi Yehuda Nesia there was a trouble that afflicted the community.

### Background

Flies, or hornets, or mosquitoes – In the appearance of a multitude of these insects is caused by particular weather conditions. An increase of flies is a serious nuisance in its own right, so much so that certain nations had a special cult and a god for the removal of flies. Mosquitoes, apart from the irritation they cause, can spread malaria. The hornet, whose sting is mentioned in the Bible as one of the factors that led to the overthrow of the Canaanites (Exodus 23:28; Joshua 24:12), may be identified with the Oriental hornet, Vespa orientalis. Similarly, later historians tell of cities that were abandoned due to a plague of mosquitoes or hornets.

### Notes

To summon help but not for crying out – fi ḥaṭgav: Rashi: Rabbi Yosei’s words in two ways. The commentary on the text follows Rashi’s first explanation, according to which Rabbi Yosei permits the community to sound the alarm in times of danger to summon people for assistance even on Shabbat, but he does not allow them to cry out to God in prayer on Shabbat. According to Rashi’s second explanation, Rabbi Yosei maintains that on Shabbat the people may pray for assistance as individuals, but not as a community.

The Rambam (Sefer Zemanim, Hilkhota Ta’anit 1:6) maintains that when Rabbi Yosei permits a community in danger to summon people to its rescue, he even permits the shofar to be sounded for that purpose. The anonymous first tanna agrees with him on this point, as when it comes to saving lives, all the prohibitions of Shabbat are suspended.

Scabs – fi ʿamār: If the majority of the members of the community are suffering from boils that ooze with pus, they must fast and sound the alarm. However, if they are suffering from dry scabs, they cry out in prayer (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 576:3).

Locusts (hagov) – fi ḥagav: If a community is struck by locusts, its members must fast and sound the alarm. However, if it is plagued by a relatively harmless type of locust called hagov, they do not fast or sound the alarm. Nowadays, however, when we cannot distinguish between the different types of locusts, the alarm is sounded for all locusts (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 576:9).

Flies or hornets – fi ḥaṭgav bi-ʿayyim: If a community is struck by a plague of flies or hornets, its members do not fast or sound the alarm, but only cry out in prayer (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 576:9).

Sounding an alarm with shofarot – fi ḥaṭgav be-shofarot: In the last set of fasts several blessings are added to the prayers, and in each of those additional blessings shofarot are sounded, in accordance with the opinion of Rav Yehuda (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 575:4).

A city that is surrounded by an army or a river – fi ḥaṭgav ha-neḥavei: If a city is surrounded by an enemy army or threatened by an overflowing river, or if a boat is tossed about at sea, or even if a single individual is in mortal danger, the community cries out and offers special supplications even on Shabbat, but they do not sound the shofar. However, they may sound the shofar to summon people to assist in the rescue efforts, in accordance with the opinion of the anonymous first tanna, who agrees with Rabbi Yosei on this point (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 576:13).
The question of the inhabitants of Nineveh – The Talmud indicates likewise. However, most early authorities should treat the day as an individual fast; the Jerusalem Talmud indicates likewise. However, most early authorities explain that they were inquiring about asking for rain in the blessing of the years. It is possible that the Rambam maintains that their question referred to both issues (Keness Ora; see Sefat Emei). As for the reason why this request should not be added to the blessing of the years, the commentaries explain that one should not deviate from the formula of blessings established by the Sages. Furthermore, a blessing of rain in one country can be a curse for others, it is treated as an individual calamity (Ra’avad).

HALAKHA

One does not decree more than thirteen fasts on the community. If the community’s prayers have not been answered after thirteen fasts, the court may not decree additional fasts. This ruling applies only if the fasts were decreed on account of drought. However, if they were imposed due to some other calamity, the court may continue to decree fasts until the trouble has passed (Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 117:5).

The inhabitants of Nineveh – Individuals who are in need of rain during the summer months may not insert the prayer for rain into the blessing of the years; instead they add it in the blessing: Who listens to prayer. Even if an entire city or a whole country is in need of rain, its residents are treated as individuals, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Some commentaries assert that the prayer for rain is inserted into the blessing of the years; whereas the prayer leader does not recite the prayer for rain when he repeats the Amidah out loud (Taz). In some places it is customary to substitute other forms of petition for rain in the blessing: Who listens to prayer, in place of the usual formula used in the blessing of the years. Give dew and rain (see Ber Rabbah, Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 117:2).

The Gemara suggests: Let us say that this baraita is a conclusive rebuttal of the opinion of Rabbi Ami. The Gemara answers: Rabbi Ami could have said to you that this is a dispute between tanna‘im, as it is taught in a baraita: One does not decree more than thirteen fasts on the community, as one does not trouble the community excessively. This is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Rabbah Shimon ben Gamliel says: This halakha is not for that reason. Rather, it is due to the fact that after thirteen fasts the time of the rainfall has already passed, and there is no reason to fast for rain after the rainy season has ended.

The Gemara relates a story on a similar topic: The inhabitants of Nineveh sent a question to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi: People such as us, who require rain even during the season of Tammuz, and who live in areas where rain falls all year round, what should we do when there is a drought during the summer? Are we likened to individuals or are we likened to a community? The Gemara explains the practical difference between these two options: Are we likened to individuals and therefore we pray for rain in the blessing: Who listens to prayer? Or are we likened to a community and we pray for rain in the ninth blessing, the blessing of the years? He sent his answer to them: You are likened to individuals and therefore you pray for rain in the blessing: Who listens to prayer.
The Gemara raises an objection from a baraita: Rabbi Yehuda said: When do the halakhot concerning the times during which the prayer for rain is recited apply? When the years, i.e., the climate, are as they ought to be and the Jewish people are living in their land. However, nowadays, when the Jewish people are dispersed around the world, and the climate is not always as it ought to be, all is in accordance with the year, i.e., the local climate, is in accordance with the place in question, and all is in accordance with the particular time, and therefore one prays for rain in the blessing of the years, as necessary for the local climate. He said to him: You raise a contradiction from a baraita against Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi? Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi himself is a tanna, and consequently has the authority to dispute the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda.

The Gemara asks: What halakhic conclusion was reached about this matter? Rav Nahman said: One prays for rain in the blessing of the years, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda. Rav Sheshet said: One prays in the blessing: Who listens to prayer, as stated by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. The Gemara concludes: And the halakha is that if rain is required when it is not the rainy season in Eretz Yisrael, one prays for rain in the blessing: Who listens to prayer.8

§ The mishna taught: On Monday they open the stores a little at nightfall, and on Thursday they are permitted to open the stores all day, in deference to Shabbat. A dilemma was raised before the Sages: How is this taught, i.e., what is the meaning of this ruling? Does it mean that on Monday the storeowners open their doors a little at nightfall, and on Thursday they likewise open their doors just a little, but do so all day, in deference to Shabbat? Or perhaps, the mishna means that on Monday they open their doors a little, but all day, and on Thursday they open their doors wide the entire day?

The Gemara answers: Come and hear a resolution of this dilemma, as it is taught in a baraita: On Monday they open their doors a little until the evening, and on Thursday they open them the entire day, in deference to Shabbat. If one shop had two entrances, he opens one and locks one, thereby demonstrating that his store is not open in the normal manner. If he had a platform opposite his entrance46 which conceals the door to his store, he may open in his usual manner without concern, as it is prohibited to open one’s store not due to work, but only so that it not appear as though people are eating and drinking on this day.

The mishna taught: If these fasts have passed and they have not been answered, they decrease their engagement in business negotiations6 and in building and planting. It was taught in the Tosefta (Megilla 52b): Building means joyful building, not building in general. Likewise, planting means joyful planting, not all planting. The Tosefta elaborates: What is joyful building? This is referring to one who builds a wedding chamber for his son. It was customary upon the marriage of a son to build him a small house where the marriage feast was held and where the newlywed couple would live for a certain period of time. What is joyful planting? This is referring to one who plants a splendid, royal garden that does not serve practical purposes, but is only for ornamentation.

§ And the mishna further taught that they decrease greetings between one another. The Sages taught: Havurim, members of a group dedicated to the precise observance of mitzvot, do not extend greetings between each other at all. Amei haaretz, common, uneducated people, who extend greetings to havurim, do so while unaware that this is inappropriate. The havurim answer them in an undertone and in a solemn manner. And havurim wrap themselves and sit as mourners and as ostracized ones, like people who have been rebuked by God, until they are shown mercy from Heaven.
An important person is permitted to fall on his face only if he is praying on behalf of the community, unless he is certain that he will be answered, like Joshua. Some authorities maintain that one may not fall on his face even if he is praying on his own behalf (Pen Hadas). Others maintain that it is prohibited for one to fall on his face only when he prays on behalf of the community; however, they add that this stricture applies even if he is praying in private on the community’s behalf (Arukh HaShulhan; Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 131a).

Rabbi Elazar said: An important person is permitted to fall on his face and humiliate himself in front of the community only if he is certain that he will be answered like Joshua, son of Nun, as it is stated: “And the Lord said to Joshua, Get you up, why are you fallen upon your face?” (Joshua 11:6). One who is not absolutely certain that he will be answered may not fall on his face in public, as if he is unanswered he will become an object of derision.

And Rabbi Elazar further said: Not all are worthy to petition God by rending their garments, and not all are worthy of falling on their faces in times of trouble. Moses and Aaron were worthy of petitioning God by falling on their faces, whereas their students Joshua and Caleb prayed by only rending their garments. The Gemara elaborates: Moses and Aaron petitioned God by falling on their faces, as it is written: “Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces” (Numbers 14:5). Joshua and Caleb prayed by rending their garments, as it is written in the next verse: “And Joshua, son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh, who were of those who spied out the land, rent their garments” (Numbers 14:6).

Rabbi Zeira strongly objects to this interpretation, and some say it was Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani who objected: Had the verse written only: Joshua and Caleb, the meaning would be as you said, that Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces whereas Joshua and Caleb only rent their garments. However, now that it is written: “And Joshua,” it is possible that the connecting word “and” indicates that Moses and Aaron merely fell upon their faces, whereas Joshua and Caleb did both this and that, i.e., they rent their clothing in addition to falling upon their faces.

And Rabbi Elazar further said: Not all dignitaries will worship God in the messianic age by rising, and not all will do so by bowing. Rather, kings will serve God by rising, and ministers by bowing. The Gemara elaborates: Kings by rising, as it is written: Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One,

Notes:

An important person is permitted to fall on his face only if he is praying on behalf of the community. Rashi states that the reason is so that he does not suffer public humiliation in the event that his prayers go unanswered. Alternatively, if he is not answered after falling on his face, this might constitute a desecration of God’s Name (see Jerusalem Talmud and Meir). Yet others state that this behavior might upset the community (Kikre Yosef), or that it is a sign of arrogance and pretentiousness, a display of assurance that one’s prayers will be answered (Gemara; Ta’amid HaRamban). Some say this halakha applies only when an individual is praying in public. However, if one is praying in private or on his own behalf, he is permitted to fall on his face (see Rabbad on Rambam Sefer Ahava, Hilkhos Tefilla UHilkos Kahanim 5:14; see also Tosafot on Megilla 22b). Not all are worthy to petition God by rending their garments. To illustrate his point that not every person is worthy of falling on his face to elicit divine compassion, Rabbi Elazar cites the example of Joshua and Caleb, who rent their garments but did not fall on their faces. Some commentators note that at one stage Joshua was in fact answered when he fell on his face in prayer, as Rabbi Elazar also stated (Maharsha). The Maharsha explains that Joshua was not worthy of falling on his face during the lifetimes of Moses and Aaron, as he was not of their stature, and therefore this would have been considered an act of pretentiousness. However, after their death, when Joshua enjoyed the status of king, it was appropriate for him to fall on his face and it was no longer suitable for him to only rend his garments.