As the New Moon is itself a holiday – ṭוֹב הוּא מִן הַמּוֹﬠֵד
The New Moon (see 29a). The term moed is one of the biblical synonyms for a holiday. Others suggest that the verse "And on the day of your rejoicing, and on your appointed seasons, and on your New Moons" (Numbers 10:10) equates New Moons and the other holidays with ṭוֹב הוּא מִן הַמּוֹﬠֵד.

Rashi explains that the New Moon is considered a holiday in accordance with the interpretation of the verse: "He has called a solemn assembly [moed] against me." (Lamentations 1:5), as a reference to the New Moon (see 29a). The term moed is one of the biblical synonyms for a holiday. Others suggest that the verse "And on the day of your rejoicing, and on your appointed seasons, and on your New Moons" (Numbers 10:10) equates New Moons and the other holidays with ṭוֹב הוּא מִן הַמּוֹﬠֵד.

In accordance with whose opinion, in accordance with whose opinion is the halakha in accordance with the minority opinion of Rabbi Yosei (Rashi; Shita Meubbezet). However, most commentaries maintain that this statement is not a question, but a preamble to the difficulty that results if it is claimed that Megillat Ta'anit is in accordance with Rabbi Yosei’s opinion.

Matrona [matronita] – מַטְרוֹנִיתָא: From the Aramaic form of the Latin matrona, meaning woman, especially an important woman. In the time of the Mishna, many women of the noble class admired the Jews and their religion, and some even converted to Judaism.

The Gemara seeks to clarify these statements by comparing them to the ruling of the mishna. The Master said above: From the New Moon of Nisan until the eighth of the month, the daily offering was established, and therefore it was decreed not to eulogize on these dates. The Gemara asks: Why do I need Megillat Ta'anit to say: From the New Moon? Let it say: From the second of Nisan, as the New Moon is itself a holiday, and it is already prohibited to eulogize on that day. Rav said: It is necessary to mention the New Moon of Nisan only to prohibit eulogizing on the day before, in accordance with the statement in Megillat Ta'anit that fasting on the day before any of the specified commemorative days is also prohibited.

As it is taught in a baraita: With regard to these days that are written in Megillat Ta'anit, it is prohibited to fast before them and after them. However, concerning Shabbatot and Festivals, fasting on those days is prohibited, but before them and after them fasting is permitted. And what is the difference between this and that? These, Shabbat and Festivals, are statements of Torah, and statements of Torah do not require reinforcement, whereas these days mentioned in Megillat Ta'anit are statements of rabbinic law, and statements of rabbinic law require reinforcement.

The Master said above: From the eighth of Nisan until the end of the festival of Passover, the festival of Shavuot was restored and it was decreed not to eulogize. The Gemara asks: Why do I need Megillat Ta'anit to say: Until the end of the Festival? Let it say: Until the Festival, as it is anyway prohibited to eulogize on the festival of Passover. Rav Pappa said that this, too, should be explained as Rav said: It is necessary to mention the first of Nisan only to prohibit eulogizing on the day before. Here too, it is necessary to mention Passover only to prohibit eulogizing on the following day. The Gemara asks: In accordance with whose opinion is this ruling? It is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, who said that eulogizing is prohibited both on the day before the date recorded in Megillat Ta'anit and on the following day. The Gemara asks: If so, with regard to the twenty-ninth of Adar too, why state specifically that eulogizing is prohibited then because it is the day before the day on which the daily offering was established? Let him derive this prohibition from the fact that it is the day after the twenty-eighth of Adar.

As it is taught in Megillat Ta'anit: On the twenty-eighth of Adar good tidings came to the Jews, that they would not be restricted in their daily business, and they may not occupy themselves with Torah study, and that they may not circumcise their sons, and that they must desecrate Shabbat. What did Yehuda ben Shammua and his colleagues do? They went and sought the advice of a certain Roman matrona [matronita] whose company was kept by all the prominent people of Rome.
It was stated that there is a dispute between amora'im: Rav Hyya bar Asi said that Rav said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, that with regard to all the days mentioned in Megillah Ta'anit on which eulogizing is prohibited, it is likewise prohibited to eulogize on the day before and the day after. And Shmuel said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir, the tanna of the unattributed mishna, who said that although it is prohibited to eulogize on the day before, it is permitted on the day after.

Rav Ashi said: Even if you say that we are dealing with a deficient month, with twenty-nine days, the inclusion of the New Moon of Nisan can still be explained. The reason is that with regard to all days that follow the dates listed in Megillah Ta'anit, fasting is prohibited but eulogizing is permitted. But in this case, since the twenty-ninth of Adar is positioned between two commemorative holidays, the twenty-eighth of Adar and the New Moon of Nisan, the Sages made it like a commemorative holiday in its own right, and it is therefore prohibited even to eulogize on this date.

The Master said above, in Megillah Ta'anit: From the eighth of Nisan until the end of the festival of Passover, the festival of Shavuot was restored, and it was decreed not to eulogize during this period. The Gemara asks: Why do I need it to say: From the eighth of Nisan? Let the tanna say: From the ninth of Nisan, and the eighth itself will still be prohibited because, as stated earlier, it is the day on which the daily offering was established.

The Gemara answers: Since if a calamitous event happened and they canceled the seven days commemorating the establishment of the daily offering, the eighth day itself will remain prohibited, as it is the first day on which the festival of Shavuot was restored. Since this date is not merely the last of the series for the daily offering, but it also commemorates the restoration of Shavuot, it is not affected by the cancellation of the previous seven days.

It was stated that there is a dispute between amora'im: Rav Hyya bar Asi said that Rav said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, that with regard to all the days mentioned in Megillah Ta'anit on which eulogizing is prohibited, it is likewise prohibited to eulogize on the day before and the day after. And Shmuel said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir, the tanna of the unattributed mishna, who said that although it is prohibited to eulogize on the day before, it is permitted on the day after.
The reading of the Scroll of Esther – The reading of the Scroll of Esther is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel. How, then, can it be said that Shmuel ruled in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir?

The Gemara asks: And did Shmuel actually say this? But isn’t it taught in a baraita that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: And what is the meaning when Megillat Ta’anit states: On them, on them, twice, in the phrases: Not to eulogize on them, and: Not to fast on them. This phrase is repeated to say to you that fasting and eulogizing on these days themselves is prohibited, but on the days before and on the following days it is permitted. And Shmuel said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. How, then, can it be said that Shmuel ruled in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir?

The Gemara answers: Initially, Shmuel maintained that since there is no other tanna as lenient as Rabbi Meir, he said that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir. When he heard that the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel was more lenient, he said that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. Shmuel consistently ruled in the most lenient manner possible on this issue.

And similarly, the Sage Bali said that Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei. The Gemara relates that Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said to Bali: I will explain this ruling to you. When Rabbi Yoḥanan said that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, he was not referring to all matters. Rather, he spoke specifically with regard to the day before those dates concerning which Megillat Ta’anit said: Fasting is prohibited. However, with regard to those days on which it is prohibited to eulogize, he did not rule in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, as Rabbi Yoḥanan maintains that eulogizing on the following day is permitted.

The Gemara asks: And did Rabbi Yoḥanan actually say this? But didn’t Rabbi Yoḥanan say as a principle that the halakha is always in accordance with an unattributed mishna. And we learned in a mishna: Although the Sages said, with regard to reading of the Scroll of Esther, that one may read it earlier but one may not read it later,

as the Sages decreed that in certain places one may read the Scroll of Esther on the fourteenth, twelfth, or thirteenth of Adar. Nevertheless, it is permitted to eulogize and fast on these days. The Gemara clarifies: When does this ruling apply? If we say that it applies to those in walled cities, who normally read the scroll on the fifteenth of Adar and yet this year they read it on the fourteenth, a day on which they normally are permitted to fast and eulogize, but this cannot be the case, as are they permitted to fast and eulogize at all on these days?

But isn’t it written in Megillat Ta’anit: The day of the fourteenth of Adar and the day of the fifteenth of Adar are the days of Purim, on which eulogizing is prohibited. And Rabbi said: Since these days are already mentioned in the Bible (Esther 9:8–19), it is necessary to state this halakha in Megillat Ta’anit only to prohibit those living in these walled cities from fasting and eulogizing on this date, the fourteenth, and those living in these non-walled cities from fasting and eulogizing on this date, the fifteenth.

These are the days of Purim, on which eulogizing is prohibited – those living in walled cities, who celebrate Purim on the fourteenth, and for residents of non-walled cities, who observe Purim on the fourteenth (Shulḥan Arukh, Orḥot Hayyim 646:3).
The Gemara answers: No; the mishna is actually referring to those who normally read on the fourteenth of Adar, but who read it that year on the twelfth of Adar. And with regard to that which you said, that it is Trajan’s Day, Trajan’s Day itself was annulled and is no longer celebrated, since Shemaya and his brother Ahiya were killed on that day. We learn this as in the incident when Rav Nahman decreed a fast on the twelfth of Adar and the Sages said to him: It is Trajan’s Day. He said to them: Trajan’s Day itself was annulled, since Shemaya and his brother Ahiya were killed on that day.

The Gemara asks: And let him derive that fasting on the twelfth is prohibited in any case, as it is the day before Nicanor’s Day? Rav Ashi said: Now that with regard to Trajan’s Day itself, they annulled it, will we then arise and issue a decree not to fast on this date due to the following day, Nicanor’s Day?

In relation to the above, the Gemara inquires: What is the origin of Nicanor’s Day and what is the origin of Trajan’s Day? As it is taught in a baraita: Nicanor was one of the generals [sparkeiros] in the Greek army, and each and every day he would wave his hand over Judea and Jerusalem and say: When will this city fall into my hands, and I shall trample it? And when the Hasmonean monarchy overcame the Greeks and emerged victorious over them, they killed Nicanor in battle, cut off his thumbs and big toes, and hung them on the gates of Jerusalem, saying: The mouth that spoke with pride, and the hands that waved over Jerusalem, may vengeance be taken against them. This occurred on the thirteenth of Adar.

What is the origin of Trajan’s Day? They said in explanation: When Trajan sought to kill the important leaders Luleyanus and his brother Pappas in Laodicea, he said to them: If you are from the nation of Haniah, Mishael, and Azariah, let your God come and save you from my hand, just as He saved Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah from the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Luleyanus and Pappas said to him: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were full-fledged righteous people, and they were worthy that a miracle should be performed for them, and Nebuchadnezzar was a legitimate king who rose to power through his merit, and it is fitting that a miracle be performed through him.
One may not decree a fast on New Moons – אֶין קְרִיָּךְ אוֹתָנוּ אֲבָל Rav Yehuda said: This halakha of the mishna that a fast that occurs on a festival is not observed, is the statement of Rabbi Meir, who said it in the name of Rabban Gamliel. However, the Rabbis say: If a communal fast occurs on one of these days, one must fast and complete the fast until nightfall. Mar Zutra taught in the name of Rav Huna: The practical halakha is in accordance with the opinion of the Rabbis, that one fasts and completes his fast until nightfall.
**MISHNA** The order of these fasts of increasing severity, as explained in Chapter One, is stated only in a case when the first rainfall has not materialized. However, if there is vegetation that grew and its appearance changed due to disease, the court does not wait at all; they cry out about it immediately. And likewise, if rain ceased for a period of forty days between one rainfall and another, they cry out about it because it is a plague of drought.

If sufficient rain fell for the vegetation but not enough fell for the trees; or if it was enough for the trees but not for the vegetation; or if sufficient rain fell for both this and that, i.e., vegetation and trees, but not enough to fill the cisterns, ditches, and caves with water to last the summer, they cry out about it immediately. And likewise, if there is a particular city upon which it did not rain, while the surrounding area did receive rain, this is considered a divine curse, as it is written: “And I caused it to rain upon one city, but caused it not to rain upon another city; one piece was rained upon, and the portion upon which it did not rain withered” (Amos 4:7).

Vegetation that changed – According to most commentaries, this means that the vegetation noticeably changed appearances as it began to wither, or due to disease (Rabbeinu Hananel; Rabbeinu Gershom; Rashi). Conversely, Rashi and several other commentaries maintain that different plants, i.e., weeds, sprouted in place of the ones that had been sown.

They cry out about it immediately – The expression: They cry out, is repeated many times in the course of this chapter. Some commentaries explain that this phrase invariably means that the shofar is sounded without a fast being proclaimed. If the rain is late, the court proclaims a series of fasts, and the shofar is sounded on the last seven of them. In contrast, in the cases discussed in this chapter, the shofar is sounded, but fasts are not proclaimed (Ravad). This interpretation is based on the argument that the circumstances described in this chapter are less threatening than a delay in the first rain of the season. If the vegetation takes on an unusual appearance or if there is a forty-day interval between the first and second rains of the season, these problems require a less drastic response than if there is no rainfall.

Since the court first decrees a series of less stringent fasts for a lack of rain, and only if the drought persists does it decree the more stringent fasts on which the shofar is sounded, it stands to reason that when there is rain but the crops appear unusual, or if there is an interval between rainstorms, the court should not immediately decree a series of severe fasts that include the blowing of the shofar.

However, most early authorities maintain that the expression: They cry out, generally means that the court immediately decrees a series of the most severe fasts on which the shofar is sounded (Rashi; Tosafot; Ramban; Ritva; Ran). This definition is consistently applied unless it is obvious from the context that the shofar is sounded without a fast being proclaimed, e.g., if Rabbi Akiva says that they cry out but do not fast, or if the Gemara states that an alarm is sounded for the recitation of special prayers, as in the following case: For these they cry out on Shabbat.

Although the total lack of rain is a greater calamity than the disasters discussed in this chapter, if rain is late the court first proclaims a series of less stringent fasts and then gradually increases their severity. This is because if the month of Kislev has arrived and rain has still not fallen, the situation is not yet calamitous and may yet be rectified. Therefore, the proclaimed fasts are less stringent. It is only after the drought has lasted for some time and the difficulties caused by the failure of rain have become very serious that the most severe fasts are proclaimed and the shofar is sounded.

If contrast, if the crops begin to grow strangely, or if there is a forty-day interval between rainstorms, this poses a serious threat, and therefore the court immediately proclaims fasts of the most severe kind.

**NOTES**