Again, on another occasion, Shmuel HaKatan decreed a fast, and rain fell for them after sunset. Based on his previous response, the people thought to say: This is a sign of the praiseworthiness of the community, as God listened to our prayers all day. Shmuel HaKatan said to them: It is not a sign of the praiseworthiness of the community. Rather, I will tell you a parable. To what is this matter comparable? To a situation where there is a slave who requests a reward from his master, and the master says to his ministers: Wait until he pines away and suffers, and afterward give it to him. Here too, the delay is not to the congregation’s credit.

The Gemara asks: But if so, according to the opinion of Shmuel HaKatan, what is considered the praiseworthiness of the community; what are the circumstances in which approval is shown from Heaven? The Gemara explains: When the prayer leader recites: He Who makes the wind blow, and the wind blows; and when he recites: And the rain fall, and rain falls.

The mishna teaches: An incident occurred in which the court decreed a fast in Lod, and when rain fell they ate and drank, and afterward they recited hallel. The Gemara asks: And let us recite hallel at the outset, without delay. Why did they first go home and eat? Abaye and Rava both said: Because one recites hallel only on a satisfied soul and a full stomach. Consequently, it is preferable to return home to eat and drink so as to recite hallel in the proper frame of mind. The Gemara asks: Is that so? But Rav Pappa happened to come to the synagogue of Avi Govar in Meboza, and he decreed a fast, and rain fell for them before midday, and yet he recited hallel immediately, and only afterward they ate and drank. The Gemara explains: The inhabitants of the city of Meboza are different, as drunkenness is common among them. Had Rav Pappa told them to go home to eat and drink, they would have become drunk and been unable to pray.

**NOTES**

**Hallel** — הַלֵּל: The term hallel in this context refers to Psalm 136. Elsewhere, the term is understood as including other psalms, or perhaps it even refers to the regular hallel recited on the Festivals, Psalms 113–118 (see Pesahim 18a; Jerusalem Talmud, Ta’anit 31b). Rashi explains that Psalm 136 was recited after the long-awaited rain because it includes the verse: “Who gives food to all flesh, for His mercy endures forever” (Psalms 136:25). Other commentaries accept the opinion that hallel starts with Psalm 135. They explain that this chapter was recited because it includes the verse: “Who causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain; He brings forth the wind out of his treasuries” (Psalms 135:7; see Rabbeinu Hananel).

**On a satisfied soul — הַנֶּפֶשׁ:** Rashi explains that hallel includes the verse “Who gives food to all flesh, for His mercy endures forever” (Psalms 136:25), and therefore it is improper for a hungry person to recite it.

**BACKGROUND**

The synagogue of Avi Govar — וַיִּבֶן הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֶלֶף נַכְּרוֹ: This synagogue was probably located in a small settlement, perhaps in a suburb of Meboza, between that city and the town of Mavrikhata. The place itself might have been named after the founder of this synagogue. The synagogue of Avi Govar is mentioned in several points in the Gemara as a location visited by a number of great amoraim in different generations. Apparently it served as an important center in that region.
**MISHNA** At three times in the year priests raise their hands to recite the Priestly Benediction four times in a single day, in the morning prayer, in the additional prayer, in the afternoon prayer, and in the evening in the closing of the gates, i.e., the ne’ila prayer. And these are the three times: During communal fasts, due to lack of rain, on which the closing prayer is recited; and during non-priestly watches [ma’amadot], when the Israelite members of the guard parallel to the priestly watch come and read the act of Creation from the Torah, as explained below; and on Yom Kippur.

These are the non-priestly watches: Since it is stated: “Command the children of Israel and say to them: My offering of food, which is presented to Me made by a fire, of a sweet savor to Me, you shall guard the sacrifice to Me in its due season” (Numbers 28:2), this verse teaches that the daily offering was a communal obligation that applied to every member of the Jewish people. The mishna asks: But how can a person’s offering be sacrificed when he is not standing next to it?

The mishna explains: Since it is impossible for the entire nation to be present in Jerusalem when the daily offering is brought, the early prophets, Samuel and David, instituted the division of the priests into twenty-four priestly watches, each of which served for approximately one week, twice per year. For each and every priestly watch there was a corresponding non-priestly watch in Jerusalem of priests, Levites, and Israelites who would stand by the communal offerings for that day to represent the community.

***HALAKHA***

Raise their hands — תקנו את ה阿根. On a day that includes the closing prayer service, the priests raise their hands to recite the Priestly Benediction only three times, in the morning service, the additional service, and in the closing prayer service (Shalshele Arukh, Oras Hayyim 191:1).

Non-priestly watches — מאמדות: One who brings an offering is required to be present in the Temple when it is sacrificed. Since the communal offerings are brought by the entire Jewish people, but the whole nation cannot be present in the Temple each time those offerings are sacrificed, the early prophets instituted that worthy and sin-fearing people should be selected to represent the nation at the time of the sacrifice. To that end they divided the entire nation into twenty-four watches corresponding to the twenty-four watches of priests and Levites (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot HaMikdash 6:1).
There was a non-priestly watch in Jerusalem... and the Israelites assigned to that priestly watch assembled in their towns – (Genesis 28a). Some commentators maintain that those members of the watch who lived in or near Jerusalem would go to the Temple together with the priests and Levites, while those who resided farther away would assemble in the synagogues in their hometowns (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhos Kelai HaMikdash 6:6). Others suggest that those members of the watch who were able to make the journey to Jerusalem would do so, while the older members of the watch, for whom travelling was difficult, would assemble in their local synagogues (Meir, citing Ra’avad). Yet others state that some members of each watch were stationed permanently in Jerusalem, so they could enter the Temple and represent the nation when the communal offerings were brought. The rest of the watch remained in their hometowns and assembled in their local synagogues (Rabban). And the members of the non-priestly watch – also read passages that dealt with the offerings. Likewise, they would recite special prayers and supplications each time they entered the synagogue. The term: Non-priestly watch, refers not only to the Israelites who served as representatives of the entire nation at the communal offerings, but also to their assembly in the synagogue for the special Torah readings, prayers, and supplications (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhos Kelai HaMikdash 6:6). On days that have an additional offering, there was no watch in the additional service. The early commentators note that this appears to contradict the statement of the mishna that the members of the watch read the story of the Creation in the morning service and again in the additional service. Rashi and many others explain that on those days when there was an additional offering, there was no watch in Jerusalem for the additional service, as the members of the watch who were in Jerusalem were involved in the sacrificial service in the Temple and did not have the time to conduct the assembly. However, outside of Jerusalem there was indeed a watch in the additional service. Others distinguish between the special supplications offered at the assembly of the watch and the Torah reading they conducted. On those days when there was an additional offering, no special supplications were recited in the additional service, neither in Jerusalem nor outside the capital. Conversely, the act of Creation was indeed read in the additional service even on those days, including in Jerusalem. Some authorities rule that on each day of the week the members of the watch conducted a special additional service, which was inserted between the morning and the afternoon services. During that additional service, the special Torah reading for the assemblies of the watch was read. The mishna is simply stating that when an additional offering was brought, there were no special prayers of the watch in the closing prayer service, and certainly not in the ordinary additional service conducted on those days (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhos Kelai HaMikdash 6:4). Wood offering – On the other hand, in the early years of the Second Temple there was not enough wood to burn the offerings on the altar, and it had to be supplied by various families on a voluntary basis (see 28a). Later, to commemorate their generosity, the day on which each of those families brought wood for the altar was declared a private holiday for them. They would bring wood for the altar, and it was prohibited for them to fast or to recite eulogies on their special day. According to many early commentators, the term wood offering refers to the wood itself, which was burned separately on the altar (see Rivah). Others write that it refers to the voluntary burnt-offerings that those families would bring to the Temple together with the wood (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhos Kelai HaMikdash 6:6).
Ben Azzai said to Rabbi Akiva that this is how Rabbi Yehoshua would teach this halakha: On days when an additional offering was sacrificed, there was no non-priestly watch in the afternoon prayer. When a wood offering was brought, there was no non-priestly watch in the closing prayer. Upon hearing this, Rabbi Akiva retracted his ruling and began to teach in accordance with the opinion of ben Azzai.

The mishna details the times for the wood offering of priests and the people. These were private holidays specific to certain families, on which their members would volunteer a wood offering for the altar. There were nine such days and families: On the first of Nisan, the descendants of Arah ben Yehuda; on the twentieth of Tammuz, the descendants of David ben Yehuda; on the fifth of Av, the descendants of Parosh ben Yehuda; on the seventh of Av, the descendants of Jonadab ben Rechab; on the tenth of Av, the descendants of Senna ben Binyamin; on the fifteenth of Av, the descendants of Zattu ben Yehuda.

And included with this group of Zattu ben Yehuda’s descendants were other priests; and Levites; and anyone who erred with regard to his tribe, i.e., Israelites who did not know which tribe they were from, and the descendants of those who deceived the authorities with a pestle; and the descendants of those who packed dried figs. These last groups and their descriptions are explained in the Gemara.

The mishna resumes its list. On the twentieth of Av, the descendants of Pahat Moav ben Yehuda; on the twentieth of Elul, the descendants of Adin ben Yehuda; on the first of Tevet, the descendants of Parosh returned to bring wood for a second time; likewise on the first of Tevet, there was no non-priestly watch, as it is Hanukkah, on which kallel is recited, and it is the New Moon, on which an additional offering is sacrificed, and there was also a wood offering.

The mishna discusses the five major communal fast days. Five calamitous matters occurred to our forefathers on the seventeenth of Tammuz, and five other disasters happened on the Ninth of Av. On the seventeenth of Tammuz

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**NOTES**

The fact that the fifteenth of Av was the day on which a large proportion of the Jewish people brought their wood offerings was one more reason, in addition to the justifications listed on 30b–31a, for the celebration of that day as an especially joyous holiday.
Ashkenazic communities are stringent in this regard from the week in which the Ninth of Av occurs — from when Av begins on the eve of the Ninth of Av (Rema). Conversely, the Sephardic custom follows the opinion of Rabbi Yosef Karo that these prohibitions need be observed only during the week of the Ninth of Av itself (Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 551:3).

On the eve of the Ninth of Av — בְּתוֹכָהּ an Arukh (Soncino ed. 1609, perek IV. 26b)...

... אָב שַׁבָּת, אֵלֵיָּה, אָסֻר שִׂמְחַת וּכְיוֹם, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, אֵלֵיָּה, ...
The Gemara taught: At three times in the year priests raise their hands to recite the Priestly Benediction four times in a single day: On communal fasts, non-priestly watches, and Yom Kippur.

The Gemara asks: How do they recite the Priestly Benediction four times on these days? Do fast days and gatherings of non-priestly watches have an additional prayer? The Gemara explains that the mishna is incomplete and is teaching the following: At three times in the year priests raise their hands each time they pray, and on some of these they bless four times a day, in the morning prayer, in the additional prayer, in the afternoon prayer, and in the closing of the gates, i.e., the ne’ila prayer. And these are the three times: Communal fasts, non-priestly watches, and Yom Kippur.

Rav Nahman said that Rabbi bar Avuh said: This mishna is the statement of Rabbi Meir. However, the Rabbis say: The morning prayer and the additional prayer have the Priestly Benediction of the raising of the hands, whereas the afternoon prayer and the closing prayer [ne’ila] do not have the raising of the hands.

The Gemara asks: Who are these Rabbis, who disagree with Rabbi Meir? It is the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, as it is taught in a baraita: The morning prayer, the additional prayer, the afternoon prayer, and ne’ila all have the Priestly Benediction of the raising of the hands. This is the statement of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yehuda says: The morning prayer and the additional prayer have the raising of the hands, whereas the afternoon prayer and ne’ila do not have the raising of the hands. Rabbi Yosei says: Ne’ila has the raising of the hands; the afternoon prayer does not have the raising of the hands.

Conversely, Rabbi Yehuda maintains that with regard to the morning prayer and the additional prayer, when drunkenness is not common on every ordinary day, the Sages did not issue a decree that the Priestly Benediction be omitted during them. However, with regard to the afternoon prayer and ne’ila, when drunkenness is not common on every day, the Sages issued a decree that the Priestly Benediction should not be recited during them, despite the fact that intoxication is not a concern on a fast day.

Finally, Rabbi Yosei maintains that with regard to the afternoon prayer, which is recited every day, the Sages issued a decree concerning it, whereas with regard to ne’ila, which is not recited every day, the Sages did not issue and apply their decree to it, as there is no concern that people might become confused between ne’ila and an afternoon prayer of a regular weekday.

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir. And Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The people act in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir. And Rava said: The custom is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir.
Priests spread their hands in the afternoon prayer of a fast – פָּרְשִׂי בְּיַיִן: The statement that the halakha is in accordance with a certain opinion indicates an unambiguous ruling that should be publicized, while those who follow other opinions are censured. If it is stated that the custom is to follow a particular opinion, this means that although no clear-cut ruling has been issued, there is an established custom to follow the opinion of that Sage. Essentially, an accepted custom is as binding as a halakha, only it is not taught publicly. Rather, each individual who inquires is informed that he must follow the custom of the people. The phrase: They act in accordance with an opinion, refers to after the fact. In other words, people act this way in practice, but this is not a custom that has been endorsed by the important Sages. Consequently, the practice is not negated, but nor is someone who asks a question instructed to follow that custom (see Ge’onom).

Priests spread their hands in the afternoon prayer of a fast – פָּרְשִׂי בְּיַיִן: The early commentators disagree as to whether the Priestly Benediction is recited in the afternoon prayer even on Yom Kippur and on the other fast days that include the closing prayer, or whether it is recited only on those fast days that do not include the closing prayer. Most early authorities maintain that the Priestly Benediction is not recited in the afternoon prayer of Yom Kippur and other fasts, as on those days the afternoon service is conducted earlier in the day than the time of the closing prayer, and therefore there is a concern that the priests might come to recite the benediction in the afternoon prayer on ordinary days, when they will possibly be drunk (Tosafot; Rambam; Ravad). The Rambam agrees, however, that if a priest ascends before the afternoon prayer, and there is a concern that the priests might come to recite the benediction in the afternoon prayer on ordinary days, when they will possibly be drunk, then it is prohibited for a priest who recites the benediction to drink wine, so too, it is prohibited for a priest who recites the benediction to eat grape pits. Certainly a priest is not barred from raising his hands after eating a few grape pits. Rather, Rabbi Yitzhak said that the verse states: “To minister to Him and to bless in His name” (Deuteronomy 10:8). Just as it is permitted for a priest who ministers to God in the Temple to partake of grape pits, so too, it is permitted for a priest who recites the benediction to partake of grape pits.

The Gemara clarifies these statements. The one who said that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir means that this ruling is taught in the public lectures on Shabbat. The one who said that the custom is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir means that one does not teach this in public, but if someone comes to ask for a practical ruling, one instructs them in private that this is the halakha. And the one who said that the people act in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir means that one does not even instruct someone that this is the halakha, but if he acts in accordance with Rabbi Meir, he has acted in a valid manner and we do not require him to return and recite the prayer again.3

And Rav Nahman said that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei. The Gemara concludes: And indeed, the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei. The Gemara asks: And nowadays, what is the reason that priests spread their hands to bless the people in the afternoon prayer of a fast?1 The Gemara explains: Since they spread their hands near sunset, it is considered like ne’ila, and therefore the decree of the Sages does not apply.

In any event, based on the above, everyone agrees that it is prohibited for a drunken priest to raise his hands and recite the Priestly Benediction. The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived? Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said in the name of bar Kappara: Why is the portion of the priest who recites the benediction (see Numbers 6:22–27) juxtaposed with the portion of the nazirite (see Numbers 6:1–21)? They are juxtaposed to say that just as it is prohibited for a nazirite to drink wine, so too, it is prohibited for a priest who recites the benediction to drink wine.

Rabbi Zeira’s father, and some say it was Oshaya bar Zavda, strongly objects to this explanation. If you wish to compare these two cases, you can argue as follows: Just as it is prohibited for a nazirite to eat grape pits, as he may not partake of any of the products of a grapevine, so too, it should be prohibited for a priest who recites the benediction to eat grape pits. Certainly a priest is not barred from raising his hands after eating a few grape pits. Rather, Rabbi Yitzhak said that the verse states: “To minister to Him and to bless in His name” (Deuteronomy 10:8). Just as it is permitted for a priest who ministers to God in the Temple to partake of grape pits, so too, it is permitted for a priest who recites the benediction to partake of grape pits.