

DONKEY BRAYS;^[8] שְׁנֵיהּ כְּלָבִים צוֹעֲקִים – THE SECOND [WATCH], DOGS HOWL; שְׁלִישִׁית תִּינוּק יוֹנֵק מִשְׁדֵּי אִמּוֹ – THE THIRD [WATCH], which occurs close to daybreak, AN INFANT NURSES FROM ITS MOTHER'S BREASTS;^[9] וְאִשָּׁה מְסַפֶּרֶת עִם בַּעְלָהּ – AND A WOMAN SPEAKS WITH HER HUSBAND.^[10]

The Gemara considers which part of the watch these signs point to:

What is R' Eliezer counting with these signs? – מאי קא חשיב רבי אליעזר – What is R' Eliezer counting with these signs? – אי תחלת משמרות קא חשיב – If he is counting the beginnings of the watches, – תחלת משמרה ראשונה סימנא למה לי – what need is there for a special sign to identify the beginning of the first watch? – אורתא הוא – It is when night falls!^[11] – אי סוף משמרות קא חשיב – And if he is counting the ends of the watches, – סוף משמרה אחרונה למה לי סימנא – what need is there for a special sign for the end of the last watch? – It is when day breaks! – ? –

The Gemara concludes:

Rather, we must say that [R' Eliezer] is counting the end of the first watch, ותחלת משמרה – the beginning of the last watch, ואמצעית – and the middle of the middle watch.^[12]

The Gemara offers an alternative explanation:

Or if you prefer, say: – ואיבעית אימא – Or if you prefer, say: – With all of these signs he is counting the ends of the watches. – וְכִי תִימָא אַחֲרֹנָה לֹא צָרִיךְ – And if you will object and say that the last watch does not need a special sign to mark its

end, since it ends at dawn, I will answer as follows: לְמַאי נִפְקָא – For what practical purpose is it stated? לְמִיקְרֵי קְרִיאַת – To serve as a marker for reciting the morning *Shema* for one who sleeps in a dark house^[13] וְלֹא יָדַע – and does not know when is the time for reciting the morning *Shema*. – בֵּינון דְּאִשָּׁה מְסַפֶּרֶת עִם בַּעְלָהּ – Once a woman begins speaking with her husband ותִינוּק יוֹנֵק – and a child begins nursing from its mother's breasts, – לִיקוּם וְלִיקְרֵי – let him arise and recite the *Shema*, for the night has ended.^[14]

The Gemara quotes a teaching of Rav that elaborates the subject of God's "roaring":

Rav Yitzchak bar Shmuel said in the name of Rav: – אָמַר רַב יִצְחָק בַּר שְׁמוּאֵל מִשְׁמִיָּה דְּרַב – The night consists of three watches, – שְׁלֹשׁ מְשֻׁמְרוֹת הָיִי הַלַּיְלָה – and at each and every watch the Holy One, Blessed is He, sits and roars like a lion וְעַל כָּל מְשֻׁמְרָא וּמְשֻׁמְרָא יוֹשֵׁב הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ – and says: – וְאָמַר – Woe to the children – שְׁבַעֲנוֹתֵיהֶם הִחָרַבְתִּי אֶת בֵּיתִי – because of whose sins I destroyed My Temple, וְשָׂרַפְתִּי אֶת – and burned My Sanctuary, – וְהִגְלִיתִים לְבֵין אֻמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם – and exiled them among the nations of the world.^[15]

The Gemara cites a related incident:

It was taught in a Baraisa: – אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסִי – R' YOSE SAID: – פַּעַם אָחַת הָיִיתִי מְהַלֵּךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ – I WAS ONCE TRAVELING ON THE ROAD, – וְנִכְנַסְתִּי לְחוֹרְבָה אֶחָת מִחוֹרְבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם – AND I ENTERED

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8. The Gemara below will explain to what portion of the watch this corresponds.

9. At this hour of the morning an infant becomes hungry and begins nursing from its mother (*Tzalach*).

10. Since it is close to morning, people are awakening, and those who sleep together begin talking to one another (*Rashi*). Thus, when the Baraisa speaks of a woman talking to her husband it is merely by way of example (*HaKoseiv in Ein Yaakov*, in explanation of *Rashi*).

[Although these signs are meant to serve as physical cues for the moments described, R' Eliezer's choice of them also contains certain ethical teachings. See *Maharsha* and *HaKoseiv* for two such interpretations.]

11. I.e. it begins when the stars come out (*Rashi*).

12. [I.e. the donkey brays at the end of the first watch; the dogs howl in the middle of the middle watch (at midnight); and an infant nurses from its mother, and a woman awakens and begins talking to her husband, at the beginning of the third watch. It is at those moments that God roars over the destruction of the Temple.]

13. [I.e. in a room without any windows to let in the light of day.]

14. [The other two signs (the donkey braying, the dogs barking), however, are for the purpose of informing us when the first and second heavenly watches end.]

What is the point of knowing when the heavenly watches begin and end? Rav Hai Gaon (cited in *Rashba*, and at greater length in *Otzar HaGeonim*; see also *Rosh*) explains that it is because it is proper to cry out to God and beseech Him at the beginning of the watches concerning the destruction of the Temple, as the verse in *Lamentations* (2:19) states: קוּמִי רֵנִי בְּלִילָה לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֻׁמְרוֹת שְׁכָבִי כִּמְיֹן לִבְךָ נִגְחַ מִן אֲרֵץ. Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. [Thus, the donkey's braying alerts us that the first watch is now ending and that the second is about to begin, and the dogs howling alerts us to the end of the second watch and the beginning of the third.] Praying for the Temple at these times is especially effective, for these are the times that God Himself "roars" over the destruction of the Temple, which is meant to indicate His willingness to [accept our repentance and] forgive us and restore the Temple to us (*Ritva*, in explanation of Rav Hai Gaon; see next note).

According to the previous answer as well, the signs indicate (either directly or indirectly) the beginnings of the second and third watches and thus serve to alert us to a propitious time to pray for the Temple. But according to that answer, the dogs howl in the middle of the second watch, not at the beginning or end of one. For what purpose does R'

Eliezer teach us this sign? *Rashba* and *Ritva* answer that R' Eliezer gives this sign to indicate a practical way of knowing when it is midnight and time to stop eating the meat of sacrifices whose consumption is limited to one day (see 2a note 11). *Magen Avraham* (1:4), however, states that according to the Gemara's first answer midnight is also an appropriate time to cry out to God concerning the Temple, since it too is a time when God roars over the destruction of the Temple. (See *Magen Avraham* who cites this interpretation as a source for the custom of the Kabbalists to pray for the Temple at midnight. See also *Tzalach* who notes *Rashba's* apparent disagreement with this interpretation.)

[It is interesting to note that although according to both of the Gemara's answers the beginning of the night also marks the beginning of a watch, *Rashi* (to *Lamentations* 2:19) does not seem to count it as one of the propitious times for praying for the Temple. See *Maharsha* who discusses this point. On the other hand, *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 1, see also *Shulchan Aruch* 1:2) understands R' Eliezer's counting of the ends of the watches to imply a third propitious time for this prayer – at the moment night changes into day.]

15. Rav Hai Gaon (cited in *Otzar HaGeonim*) explains the statement that God "roars" to be meant allegorically. Its point is to teach us to cry out concerning the destruction of the Temple and our exile among the nations. (See below, 7a note 2 for a similar explanation by Rav Saadiah Gaon of "Hashem's prayer.") [Accordingly, the statement, "Woe to the children because of whose sins I destroyed My Temple . . ." may be meant to convey that since it is only because of our sins that the Temple was destroyed and our people were scattered among the nations, it is only because of our failure to repent them that the Temple continues to lie in ruins and we remain scattered among the nations. God, however, yearns for our repentance, and if only we will cry out to Him in anguish and regret over our sins and return to Him, He will surely restore us to our land and rebuild the Holy Temple.]

The expression "destroyed My Temple" and "burned My Sanctuary" would both seem to refer to the same thing. *Toras Chaim* (to *Sanhedrin* 96b), however, suggests that the expression "destroyed My Temple" connotes the departure of God's Presence from the Temple, while the expression "burned My Sanctuary" refers to its actual destruction. It is only after God's Presence has departed the Temple that it can be physically destroyed. Alternatively, the double expression connotes the loss of both the earthly Temple and its heavenly counterpart. As stated in *Taanis* (5a), God does not "reside" in His heavenly Temple while the earthly Temple is in ruins. Thus, in effect, both Temples were "destroyed" at one time.

ONE OF THE RUINS OF JERUSALEM TO PRAY. בא אליהו ובור לטוב – ELIJAH the prophet, WHO IS REMEMBERED FOR GOOD,^[16] CAME – AND WAITED^[17] FOR ME AT THE ENTRANCE OF the ruin UNTIL I FINISHED MY PRAYER. לאחר שסיימתי תפילתי – AFTER I FINISHED MY PRAYER, [ELIJAH] SAID TO ME: “PEACE UNTO YOU, MY TEACHER.” – ואמרתי לו – AND I RESPONDED TO HIM: “PEACE UNTO YOU, MY TEACHER AND MASTER.” – עליך רבי ומורי – “PEACE UNTO YOU, MY TEACHER AND MASTER.” – ואמר לי – AND HE SAID TO ME: “MY SON, מפני מה נכנסת – FOR WHAT reason DID YOU ENTER THIS RUIN and place yourself in a state of danger?” – אמרתי לו להתפלל – I SAID TO HIM: “TO PRAY.”^[18] – ואמר לי – AND HE SAID TO ME: “היה לך – YOU SHOULD HAVE PRAYED ON THE ROAD and not have entered the ruin.”^[19] – ואמרתי לו – AND I SAID TO HIM: “I did not pray on the road for I WAS AFRAID THAT PASSERSBY MIGHT INTERRUPT ME.” – ואמר לי – AND HE SAID TO ME: “היה לך להתפלל תפלה קצרה – “In that case YOU SHOULD HAVE PRAYED THE ABRIDGED PRAYER.”^[20]

Before continuing to relate his dialogue with Elijah, R' Yose pauses to comment:

באותה שעה למדתי מננו שלשה דברים – AT THAT TIME I LEARNED FROM [ELIJAH] the following THREE THINGS: למדתי שאין נכנסין – I LEARNED THAT ONE SHOULD NOT ENTER A RUIN;^[21] לחורבה – AND I LEARNED THAT ONE MAY PRAY ON

THE ROAD,^[22] – AND I LEARNED THAT ONE WHO PRAYS WHILE ON THE ROAD SHOULD PRAY THE ABRIDGED PRAYER.^[23]

R' Yose returns to the dialogue between himself and Elijah: מזה קול – AND ELIJAH SAID TO ME: “MY SON, ששמעת בחורבה זו – WHAT SOUND DID YOU HEAR when you were IN THIS RUIN?” – ואמרתי לו – AND I SAID TO HIM: “קול שמהמתה ביונה ואומרת – I HEARD A HEAVENLY VOICE THAT WAS COOING LIKE A DOVE”^[24] AND SAYING: “והנה הנהגתי את ביתי – WOE TO THE SONS BECAUSE OF WHOSE SINS I DESTROYED MY HOUSE, AND BURNED MY TEMPLE, והגליתם לבין האומות – AND EXILED THEM AMONG THE NATIONS of the world.” – ואמר לי – AND [ELIJAH] SAID TO ME: “היה נחיי ראשך – “BY YOUR LIFE AND THE LIFE OF YOUR HEAD”^[25] – IT IS NOT ONLY AT THIS MOMENT THAT [THE HEAVENLY VOICE] SAYS THIS, BUT ON EACH AND EVERY DAY IT SAYS THIS THREE TIMES,^[26] – ולא זו בלבד – AND NOT ONLY THIS, BUT AT THE TIME THAT the people of ISRAEL ENTER THE SYNAGOGUES AND HOUSES OF STUDY ועונין יהא שמיא הגדול – AND RESPOND in the Kaddish, ‘MAY HIS (God’s) GREAT NAME BE BLESSED,’^[27] הקדוש ברוך הוא מנענע ראשו ואומר – THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED IS HE, SHAKES HIS HEAD AND SAYS:^[28]

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16. [This expression of blessing is often appended to the name of the prophet Elijah and indeed only to his name. (See Midrash *Esther Rabbah* 10:9 which relates its use in connection with Charvonah to Elijah the prophet as well, with the statement that it was actually Elijah in the guise of Charvonah who told the king about the gallows Haman had built for Mordechai.)]

17. Although the word שמר ordinarily means to watch or guard, *Rashi* cites several instances where it means to wait (for example, *Sanhedrin* 63b, *Bava Kamma* 90b, and the verses in *Genesis* 37:11, and *Isaiah* 26:2), and on this basis he explains that to be its meaning here as well.

18. Thus, I counted on the merit of the mitzvah to protect me from any danger (*Rosh Yosef*; see also *Rif* in *Ein Yaakov*; cf. *Pnei Yehoshua*).

19. Elijah answered that R' Yose should not have relied on the merit of his prayer where there was any alternative. [Although it is better to pray indoors than outdoors (see Gemara below, 34b, and *Orach Chaim* 90:5)] it is nonetheless preferable to pray outdoors than to enter a place of danger (*Rif* in *Ein Yaakov*). And since it was possible to pray outdoors, R' Yose should not have counted on the merit of the mitzvah to protect him when he placed himself in danger unnecessarily (*Rosh Yosef*; cf. *Pnei Yehoshua*).

20. This refers to the abridged version of *Shemoneh Esrei* cited below (29a), called *vahavineinu* (*Rashi*; *Tosafos*; et al.).

21. Because of the dangers that lurk there, which the Gemara will enumerate below.

22. If no other place is available (see note 19).

23. R' Yaakov ibn Chaviv (the original compiler of *Ein Yaakov*, whose commentary to that work appears under the name *HaKoseiv*) suggests a deeper meaning to this incident. R' Yose (who was a disciple of R' Akiva and one of the leading teachers of Israel in the generation after the collapse of the Bar Kochba revolution some 65 years after the destruction of the Second Temple) was troubled by the failure of the Temple to be rebuilt. Like Daniel before him (see *Daniel* ch. 9), he set himself to investigate this matter and to pray for understanding and to beseech God for the restoration of the Temple (he “entered one of the ruins of Jerusalem to pray” – i.e. he entered into the subject of the continued ruination of Jerusalem and prayed). As a result of the intensity of his devotion, the prophet Elijah appeared to him and asked him, “My son, for what reason did you enter this ruin” – i.e. why have you delved into this matter with such intensity? Are you perhaps questioning the justice of God’s ways? R' Yose answered: No, “I entered [only] to pray” for the quick restoration of the Temple. Elijah answered him, “You should have prayed on the road” – i.e. the time has not yet come for the restoration of the Temple and the return of the exiles, and you should therefore have

devoted the main part of your prayer to the safe passage of Israel along the long and bitter road of its exile. R' Yose responded, “I was afraid that passersby would interrupt me” – i.e. I was afraid that the nations of the world, who constantly persecute the people of God, would make it impossible for Israel to complete its journey through the exile as faithful servants to Him. [The Bar Kochba revolution was suppressed by the Romans with extreme brutality, and in its aftermath, Judea was completely emptied of Jews. Even the Jews of the Galilee were subjected to almost unbearable persecutions.] Elijah responded that even so, “You should have prayed the short prayer” – i.e. the travails of the exile do not allow for prayers of great length on this subject. Our prayers on the matter should therefore be short in length, but full of intensity. [For if we were to cry in full over all the tragedies of the exile, our lives would be completely consumed in this task and no time and energy would be left to build, support and make Israel flourish despite her many woes.] R' Yose concluded that he learned three important lessons from this dialogue. First, it is not wise for a person to enter too deeply into the reasons for the lengthy exile and the long delay in the Messiah’s arrival, nor to try and reckon the time of his arrival. Second, he learned that one should pray on the road – i.e. pray for the survival and well-being of Israel along her journey through the exile. Third, that our prayers concerning the tragedies of exile should be intense but not overly long.

24. A בך קול is a voice from Heaven that constitutes a level of Divine communication below that of actual prophecy. When Chaggai, Zechariah and Malachi (the last of the prophets) died in the early period of the second Temple, the era of actual prophecy came to an end. Nonetheless, Divine messages continued to be received by the righteous in the form of a בך קול [literally: the daughter of a voice] (*Sanhedrin* 11a). According to some, the reason for this name is because the voice heard by the person is not the voice that emanates from Heaven but merely an echo of it (*Tosafos* *ibid.*; see *Tos. Yom Tov* to *Yevamos* 16:6 for another explanation).

25. Each of these expressions is used as a form of oath (see *Sotah* 10b and *Sanhedrin* 24a). Here Eliyahu makes use of a double oath to emphasize his statement.

26. [I.e. at the end of each of the three watches of the night, as the Gemara stated above (see note 14; cf. *Iyun Yaakov*).]

27. Translation follows *Tosafos*; cf. translation of *Machzor Vitri* cited there.

28. This is not to be taken literally but rather as an anthropomorphism. The Torah itself sometimes ascribes human traits to the Almighty to help human minds grasp in some measure what is in essence ineffable [דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם] (see *Rambam*; *Hil. Yesodei HaTorah* 1:9). The Sages therefore employed such expressions as well. The intention here

מִה לֹא לְאָב שֶׁהִגְלָה אֶת בְּנָיו – FORTUNATE IS THE KING WHO IS PRAISED THIS WAY IN HIS HOUSE;^[29] וְנֹאֵי לָהֶם לְבָנִים שֶׁגָּלוּ מֵעַל שׁוֹלְחַן אֲבוֹתָם – WHAT IS THERE FOR THE FATHER WHO HAS EXILED HIS SONS, AND WOE TO THE SONS WHO HAVE BEEN EXILED FROM THEIR FATHER'S TABLE.^[30]

The Gemara cites a Baraisa that explains the reasons why one should not enter a ruin:

מִפְּנֵי שְׁלִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים – The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: תָּנוּ רַבָּנִן – FOR the following THREE REASONS ONE SHOULD NOT ENTER A RUIN: מִפְּנֵי חֲשָׁד – BECAUSE OF SUSPI-

CION, i.e. because people may suspect one of entering there to meet a harlot,^[31] מִפְּנֵי הַמְּפֹלֶת – BECAUSE of the danger OF COLLAPSE,^[32] וּמִפְּנֵי הַמְּזִיקִין – AND BECAUSE of the danger of DEMONS, who lurk in deserted areas and ruins.

The Gemara analyzes the need for all three reasons:

מִפְּנֵי חֲשָׁד – The Baraisa stated that one of the reasons not to enter is BECAUSE OF SUSPICION of consorting with a harlot. וְתִיפּוּק לִיָּה מִשּׁוּם מְפֹלֶת – But let [the prohibition] against entering a ruin be derived simply from the concern for the danger of collapse. Why does the Baraisa find it necessary to mention the additional reason of suspicion?^[33]

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is to say that though God's justice requires that Israel's sins eventually be punished — even to the extent of destroying the Holy Temple and exiling the people — nonetheless, His will is that they be righteous and prosper and thus merit to have the Land of Israel and the Holy Temple. The necessity of implementing Divine justice is thus at odds, so to speak, with God's plan to be benevolent. This is vividly portrayed in the Talmudic metaphor that the Holy One, Blessed is He, "shakes His head" in sorrow and anger at what He has been "forced," to do to His people (*HaKoseiv* in *Ein Yaakov*).

29. Fortunate was God when this praise was recited in the Holy Temple (*Rashi*). [For this is the relationship with Israel that God truly desires — that His children, Israel, serve Him as in ancient times; see previous note. For a deeper explanation, see *Maharsha* and the elaboration of his interpretation in *Emes LeYaakov*.]

30. It is not God's desire that the Temple continue to lie in ruins ("what is there for a Father Who has exiled His sons"), and it is indeed a source of anguish to Him, so to speak, that His children no longer praise Him in the Temple. [As *Maharsha* notes, God's Kingship is in some measure "diminished" (i.e. in our eyes) by the absence of the Temple.] And God bemoans the tragedy of the Children of Israel being forced into exile

because of their sins. We are to learn from this that God greatly desires to return His children to the Temple and have them praise Him once again. There is no obstacle on God's part to this — if only we will repent and return to Him it will surely happen (*HaKoseiv*). [It is perhaps for this reason that the Heavenly voice was heard by R' Yose to be "cooing like a dove." For the dove is considered a symbol of the nation of Israel, as the Gemara says below (53b). By assuming the tones of a dove, the Heavenly voice reaches out to Israel with its assurance of God's continued yearning for her return not only with its words but even with its very tone.]

31. Even though no sin is actually committed, one should not put himself in a position where he will even be suspected of sinning (*Rabbeinu Yonah*). [Harlots would typically arrange to meet people in out-of-the-way and deserted places.]

32. The walls of a ruin are very unstable and there is the danger that they may collapse.

33. The Tanna would not make a point of listing three reasons for the prohibition unless there were instances in which each of the reasons applied without the other two (*Rashi*).