

The Weekly Daf



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Rosh Hashana 23 - 29

Week of 14 - 20 Av 5759 / 27 July - 2 August 1999
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide **Daf Yomi** cycle

An Extra Day of Rest

In Biblical and Talmudic times one could not consult a calendar to know when Rosh Chodesh was. It was the Sanhedrin in *Eretz Yisrael* which determined the beginning of a new month based on the testimony of two reliable witnesses who saw the new moon.

Getting the word to the Jewish community in Babylon presented a challenge. At first the message was communicated through fire signals from mountain top to mountain top until it was acknowledged in the city of Pumpedisa, which then spread the word to the rest of Babylon. This practice ran into trouble when the Kutim, hostile to rabbinical control over the calendar, misled the people by sending erroneous signals. It was therefore replaced by a system of human messengers.

The fire signal system was used only when Rosh Chodesh was declared on the 30th day of the previous month. In such case, the signals were sent on the night following that 30th day. If, however, the Sanhedrin allowed the previous month to become a "full month" of 30 days by declaring Rosh Chodesh on the thirty-first day, then no signals were sent; everyone understood from the absence of the signal that Rosh Chodesh had been set for that day.

The gemara explains why no signals were sent when Rosh Chodesh followed a "full month." This was because of the confusion which would arise when Rosh Chodesh was declared on Friday and no fire signal could be sent at night because of Shabbat. If a signal were sent the next night, Saturday night, it would be unclear whether it was a postponed signal that Friday was Rosh Chodesh, or an on-time signal that Shabbat was Rosh Chodesh. By avoiding signals for "full months," they could be sure that the signals sent on Saturday night would be understood as communicating that Friday was Rosh Chodesh.

But why not do it the other way, asks the gemara, and limit signals to a Rosh Chodesh following a "full month?" Should the Rosh Chodesh following a 29-day month be set on Friday, no signals would be sent and people would understand that Rosh Chodesh had followed an incomplete month. The gemara's explanation is that the people waiting for the signal due on the night following the 31st day would have to keep two days Rosh Chodesh, because perhaps the 30th had been declared Rosh Chodesh and no signals would be forthcoming at all. By making the signals on the night following Rosh Chodesh set on the thirtieth day, they let people know that tomorrow was no longer Rosh Chodesh.

Rashi explains the ramifications of such knowledge in terms of Rosh Hashana, when an unnecessary extra day of holiday would mean a serious loss of time for productive labor. Tosefot, however, suggests that the same consideration applies to any Rosh Chodesh because it was the custom not to work on Rosh Chodesh. Even though Rosh Chodesh was given to the women as a holiday from regular labors as reward for not contributing their jewelry to the creation of the golden calf, this abstention from work somehow affected the menfolk as well.

Rosh Hashana 23a

Along for the Ride

"Cast upon Hashem your *yihov*," says King David (Tehillim 55:23), "and He will sustain you." An unusual word, "*yihov*," one which eluded the Rabbis until one day when the Sage Rabba bar Bar Chanah was traveling together with a merchant leading a camel carrying wares. The merchant saw the sage struggling with his own luggage and said, "Take your *yihov* and put it on my camel." It then became clear that King David was counseling us to place the baggage of our needs on Hashem's "wagon."

The story is told of a fellow struggling with his heavy baggage on a county road when a wagon driver offered him a lift. He gladly accepted the ride but he held on to the baggage. The stunned driver asked him why he didn't put his baggage down on the wagon floor. He replied that he was grateful enough for being spared the trouble of walking, and he did not wish to impose any further on his generous host by adding the baggage to the wagon's load.

We often relate to Hashem in the same silly way. We are entirely dependent upon His kindness in sustaining us with life, health and all the basic necessities of existence. But when it comes to the baggage such as earning a livelihood, we suddenly feel that this is something which is completely dependent upon us.

Hashem offers you a free ride every minute of the day, King David reminds us, so don't be a fool and keep struggling with your baggage of *parnasa* (livelihood). Put that on Hashem's wagon as well, and He will be sure to sustain you.

Rosh Hashana 26b

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