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## BACKGROUND TO THE DAILY DAF

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# AVODAH ZARAH 44

[a - 48 lines; b - 43 lines]

1) [line 7] **וגם מעכה אם אסא המלך הסירה מגבירה אשר עשתה לאשרה מפלצתה וידק וישרף בנחל קדרון** V'GAM MA'ACHAH EM ASA HA'MELECH HESIRAH MI'GEVIRAH ASHER ASESAH LA'ASHERAH MIFLETZES, VA'YICHROS ASA ES MIFLATZTAH, VA'YADEK, VA'YISROF B'NACHAL KIDRON" - "And he (Asa) also removed Ma'achah, the mother of Asa the king, from her position of power, because she made a Mifletzes (an indecent abomination) for the Asheirah; and he chopped up her Mifletzes, ground it fine, and burned it in the valley of Kidron." (Divrei ha'Yamim II 15:16) (The Righteous King Asa)

(a) Encouraged by the prophets Oded and his son Azaryahu, Asa, one of the most righteous kings of Yehudah, set out to destroy the idols that abounded in the land of Yehudah and Binyamin. He also destroyed the idols of the towns that he had captured from Har Efrayim, and he rebuilt the Mizbe'ach of HaSh-m.

(c) Asa then gathered the whole of Yehudah and Binyamin, and the many refugees from Efrayim, Menasheh and Shimon that had come to live in his territory, to show how HaSh-m was with him. They gathered in Yerushalayim in the month of Sivan of the fifteenth year of his reign to bring Korbanos to HaSh-m from the booty that they had captured during their recent war with Ethiopia.

(d) There they all entered into a covenant with HaSh-m. Asa decreed that anybody who failed to comply, young or old, man or woman, would pay for it with his life. There were no dissenters and they all swore an oath of allegiance to which they made a covenant. This was accompanied by the joyful blowing of Shofaros which was done "with all of their hearts and with all of their souls."

(e) It is in the context of these accomplishments that the Navi informs us how Asa removed his own mother (who was actually his grandmother, but she raised him like a mother), because of the terrible abomination that she had set up and which served both as an idol and as the source of her indecent practices. Asa then removed her from her important post as Queen Mother, to prevent her from spreading idolatry among the people.

(f) The only thing he did not succeed in doing was the removal of the Bamos (private altars which individuals had built in order to serve HaSh-m), which had become forbidden once the Beis ha'Mikdash had been built.

(g) Asa also returned all the Kodshim that his father, Aviyah the son of Rechav'am, had removed from the Temple treasury and returned them to their place. Following all of this, peace reigned in Yehudah for many years.

2a) [line 12] **באמה** B'AMAH - in the "Amah," the Amah-high, Amah-wide channel of water running through the Azarah of the Beis ha'Mikdash in pools

b) [line 12] **נחל קדרון** NACHAL KIDRON - the name of a valley to the south of Yerushalayim

3a) [line 12] **לגננין** L'GANANIN - for the gardeners

b) [line 13] **לזבל** L'ZEVEL - for fertilizer

4) [line 14] **מועלין בהן** MO'ALIN BAHEN (ME'ILAH)

(a) It is forbidden to derive personal benefit from anything that is Hekdesh, as the Torah states, "Lo Suchal le'Echol b'Sha'arecha ... u'Nedarecha Asher Tidor" ("You may not eat in your settlements, ... and your pledges that you will pledge" - Devarim 12:17) (**RAMBAM** Hilchos Me'ilah 1:1-3). The minimum amount for which one transgresses this prohibition is a Perutah's worth of benefit.

(b) If someone benefited from Hekdesh intentionally, he receives Malkus and must pay to Hekdesh the amount that he benefited. However, the object from which he benefited remains Hekdesh.

(c) If someone benefited from Hekdesh unintentionally, the object loses its Kedushah. He must bring a Korban Me'ilah and repay Hekdesh the value of his benefit plus an additional *fifth* (of the ensuing total, or a *quarter* of the original value). This is true of any object that has Kedushas Damim (i.e. its value is consecrated to Hekdesh). An object that has Kedushas ha'Guf (i.e. an object with intrinsic Kedushah, such as the utensils used in the Beis ha'Mikdash or a live Korban that is used in the Beis ha'Mikdash "as is") does not lose its Kedushah under any circumstances.

(d) The Mishnah which the Gemara here quotes teaches that the restrictions of Me'ilah apply to the blood of the Chata'os that washed out to Nachal Kidron.

5a) [line 16] **מפליא ליצנותא** MAFLI LEITZANUSA - [it was] a wondrous mockery

b) [line 16] **כמין זכרות** K'MIN ZACHRUS - like a male organ

6) [line 18] **הוא הסיר את הבמות ושבר את המצבות וכתת את האשרה] וכתת נחש [כני עד הימים ההמה היו בני ישראל מקטרים לו ויקרא לו הנחשת אשר עשה משה**

[HU HESIR ES HA'BAMOS V'SHIBAR ES HA'MATZEVOS V'CHARAS ES HA'ASHERAH] V'CHITAS NECHASH HA'NECHOSHES ASHER ASAH MOSHE, [KI AD HA'YAMIM HA'HEMAH HAYU BENEI YISRAEL MEKATRIM LO, VAYIKRA LO NECHUSHTAN]" - "[He (Chizkiyah ha'Melech) removed the Bamos, broke the Matzevos (monuments), cut down the Asherah,] and chopped up the copper snake that Moshe made, [because up until those days the Jewish people used to burn incense to it; and he called it 'Nechushtan']." (Melachim II 18:4) (Chizkiyah Destroys the Copper Snake)

(a) This verse is the Navi's introduction to one of the greatest and most righteous kings of Yehudah. Chizkiyah ascended the throne at the age of twenty-five and reigned for twenty-five years. The ensuing verses relate that he did what was right in the eyes of HaSh-m, just like his "father" David had done. He trusted HaSh-m implicitly and there was not a king before him or after that could compare to him. He cleaved to HaSh-m and fulfilled everything that HaSh-m had commanded Moshe. And HaSh-m for His part granted him success in all his undertakings. Among the first of his numerous achievements, he broke away from the heavy yoke of Sancheriv, the king of Ashur and defeated the Pelishtim.

(b) He also broke the copper snake when he saw that the people were offering incense to it. He called the copper snake, "Nechushtan," to belittle it, as if to say that it is nothing more than a copper snake and is not worthy of the importance that the people ascribed to it.

7) [line 24] **ויעזבו שם את עצביהם וישאם דוד ואנשיו** "VA'YA'AZVU SHAM ES

ATZABEIHEM VA'YISA'EM DAVID VA'ANASHAV" - "They (the Pelishtim) abandoned their idols there, and David and his men carried them away." (Shmuel II 5:21) (David ha'Melech's First Defeat of the Pelishtim) When the Pelishtim — who recognized David's immense strength from his defeat of their champion warrior Golyas — heard that David had been crowned King of Yisrael, they sent their entire army to capture him. To thwart their efforts, David first locked himself in a fortress. When he then asked HaSh-m (presumably via the Urim v'Tumim) whether he should attack the Pelishtim and whether He would deliver them into their hands, he received a positive reply to both inquiries. David thus gathered an army and attacked the Pelishtim, who were encamped in Emek Refa'im (which, on account of the ensuing victory, also became known as Ba'al Peratzim, due to the breach that David made in the Pelishtim's ranks).

8) [line 26] **דזרוי** D'ZERUYEI - they threw it up in the air

9) [line 32] **ויאמר דוד וישרפו באש [ויעזבו שם את אלהיהם]** "[VA'YA'AZVU SHAM ES ELOHEIHEM] VA'YOMER DAVID VA'YISREFUM BA'ESH" - "[They (the Pelishtim) left their gods there,] and David commanded, and they (David's men) burned them with fire. (Divrei ha'Yamim I 14:12) (David and the Pelishtim's gods)

The Gemara comments on the change of expression between this verse ("va'Yisrefum ba'Esh") and the verse in Shmuel ("va'Yisa'em"; see above, entry #7). The Gemara explains that this verse refers to before Itai ha'Giti (a Nochrì who was friendly with David) nullified the idols, while the verse in Shmuel refers to afterwards, when it had become permitted to benefit from the idols. (Perhaps this also explains why the former verse refers to them as "gods," while the latter verse refers to them as merely "idols.")

10) [line 35] **ויקח את עטרת מלכם מעל ראשו ומשקלה ככר זהב [ואבן יקרא ותהי על ראש דוד ושלל העיר הוציא הרבה מאד]** "VA'YIKACH ES ATERES MALKOM ME'AL ROSHO, U'MISHKALAH KIKAR ZAHAV, [V'EVEN YEKARAH, VA'TEHI AL ROSH DAVID. U'SHELAL HA'IR HOTZI HARBEH ME'OD.] - "And he (David) took the crown of Malkom (the name of an idol, the god of

Amon) from upon its head; its weight was one Kikar of gold, [and it was set with a precious stone; and they now placed it on David's head. And they also took a the booty from the city, which amounted to a very large amount.]" (Shmuel II 12:30) (David Captures Rabat, Capital of Amon)

(a) Yo'av, David's general, had just defeated Amon and had captured the "city of water" which contained the royal palace and the area which contained the water supply, although Rabat, the capital, had not yet fallen. In deference to David ha'Melech, Yo'av invited him to gather an army and capture it, so that the honor of victory should belong to him. David accepted the offer and he gathered an army and fought against Rabat and captured it.

(b) Among the spoil was the precious crown that adorned the head of Malkom, the Amonite god, which David took for himself. Although what adorns an image is generally forbidden to benefit from, David was permitted to do so because his friend Itai ha'Giti had annulled it.

(c) As for wearing such a heavy crown, the Gemara explains either that he did not actually wear it, and the verse means merely that it fitted him as if it was made to measure, or that it had a sort of magnet affixed to it which kept it "floating above David's head" without actually resting on it.

11) [line 38] **אבן שואבת היתה בה דהוה דרא לה** EVEN SHO'EVES HAISAH BAH D'HAVAH DARA LAH - there was a precious stone in it that lifted it up

12) [line 42] **והולמתו** V'HOLMASO - and it fit him nicely on his head

13) [line 43] **ויוציאו את בן המלך ויתנו עליו את הנזר ואת העדות [וימליכו אתו]**

**[ויוציאו את בן המלך ויתנו עליו את הנזר ואת העדות [וימליכו אתו]** "VA'YOTZI'U ES BEN HA'MELECH, VA'YITNU ALAV ES HA'NEZER V'ES HA'EDUS [VA'YAMLICHU OSO, VA'YIMSHACHEHU YEHOYADA U'VANAV, VA'YOMRU 'YECHI HA'MELECH!]" "They brought out (from his hiding-place) the son of the king (Yo'ash), they placed on him the crown and the testimony (the Sefer-Torah), [then they crowned him, and Yehoyada and his sons anointed him; and they proclaimed, 'Long live the king!']" (Divrei ha'Yamim II 23:11) (The Crowning of Yo'ash the King)

(a) Following the death of King Achazyahu, his mother, Asalyah, attempted to kill all of the remaining members of the royal family, and she seized the throne. The only survivor was Achazyahu's son Yo'ash, whom Achazyah's sister snatched from among the victims. She took him, together with the baby's nurse, and hid him in the "room of beds" (the attic above the Kodesh ha'Kodashim). There he remained in hiding for six years while Asalyah reigned.

(b) After six years, Yehoyada the Kohen Gadol brought Yo'ash down to the Chatzer of the Beis ha'Mikdash, where he introduced him to the people. He then arranged the people into armed groups, some to guard the king, others to prepare for the arrival of Asalyah from the palace to the Beis ha'Mikdash, forcing her to follow the route that he had prepared for her, once she left the palace.

(c) He then led the young Yo'ash from his hiding place, placed the crown on his head, and tied the Sefer Torah to his arm. (Others attribute the Navi's use of the word "testimony" to the miracle that the royal crown fitted the head of any incumbent who was fit to sit on the throne, in spite of the bar that ran from one side to the other. They then anointed him with the anointing oil, joyfully clapped their hands and announced, 'Long live the king!')

14) [line 44] **כלילא** KELILA - a crown

15) [line 46] **ואדניה בן הגית מתנשא לאמור אני אמלך ויעש לו רכב ופרשים וחמישים איש רצים לפניו** "VA'ADONIYAH BEN HAGIS MISNASEI LEIMOR, 'ANI EMLOCH!' VA'YA'AS LO RECHEV U'PARASHIM VA'CHAMISHIM ISH RATZIM LEFANAV" - "And Adoniyah ben Chagis boasted saying, 'I am destined to rule!' So he made himself a chariot and riders, with fifty men running ahead of him." (Melachim I 1:5) (Adoniyahu's Rebellion)

(a) Adoniyahu decided to usurp the kingdom from his father David, so he made himself a chariot and riders, with fifty runners to run in front of it. Their spleens and the soles of their feet were removed so they were able to run for long distances without feeling pain in their feet and without getting tired.

(b) The Chachamim teach that his father David made a serious mistake by not rebuking his errant son, and this resulted in Adoniyahu's untimely death.

(c) He succeeded in obtaining the following of such leaders as Evyasar ha'Kohen and Yo'av ben Tzeruyah (who knew that David would command his son Shlomo to have him put to death for having killed Avner, Amasa, and Avshalom; Yo'av hoped that Adoniyahu, with his assistance, would reign instead of Shlomo). Evyasar ha'Kohen joined Adoniyahu's side because he bore David a grudge for having removed him from the Kehunah Gedolah during the uprising of Avshalom.

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(d) On the other hand, Tzadok ha'Kohen, Benayahu ben Yehoyada, Nasan ha'Navi, and other great men of the generation, remained loyal to David and declined to join forces with Adoniyahu.

(e) Adoniyahu further strengthened his claim to the throne by sacrificing many animals next to a large stone called "Even ha'Zoches," inviting virtually all his brothers, the men of Yehudah, and the servants of the king to join his banquet. However, he did not invite Nasan ha'Navi (who had prophesied that Shlomo was next in line to rule) to be his strong man, or his brother Shlomo (who, he knew, was destined to succeed his father on the throne).

(f) In the end, however, David — prompted by Nasan ha'Navi and his wife Bas Sheva (Shlomo's mother) — stopped the rebellion in its tracks by proclaiming his young son Shlomo as his successor, and by arranging for him to be publicly crowned and anointed.

16) [line 48] **טחול** TECHOL - spleen

17) [line 48] **וחקוקי כפות הרגלים היו** V'CHAKUKEI KAPOS HA'RAGLAYIM HAYU - they were people who had removed the skin of the bottom of their feet (so they could run faster and thorns would not hurt them)

## 44b-----44b

18) [line 1] **פרוקלוס** FRUKLUS - a non-Jewish heretic

19) [line 2] **מרחץ של אפרודיטי** MERCHATZ SHEL AFRODITI - the bathhouse of Aphrodite (a popular fertility goddess in the Near East)

20) [line 5] **אין משיבין במרחץ** EIN MESHIVIN B'MERCHATZ - one is not allowed to answer matters of Torah in a bathhouse

21) [line 7] **בגבולה** BI'GEVULAH - in its boundary

22) [line 11] **ובעל קרי** U'VA'AL KERI - and [impure as] a man who has emitted Keri (semen)

23) [line 11] **ומשתין** U'MASHTIN - and urinate (in front of the idol)

24) [line 12] **הביב** HA'BIV - the trough

25) [line 23] **תשובה גנובה השיבו** TESHUVAH GENUVAH HE'SHIVO - he answered him with a deceptive reply

26) [line 24] **הגמון** HEGMON - nobleman; district commander

27) [line 27] **פעור** PE'OR - the name of an idol of Moav, worshipped by defecation and highly immoral practices (RAMBAM Hilchos Avodas Kochavim 3:2)

28) [line 36] **רק** RAK - [if he] spat

29) [line 37] **גיררה** GIRERAH - [if he] he dragged it (the idol) in mud

30) [line 37] **הצואה** HA'TZO'AH - the excrement (that they would throw at the idol)

31) [line 38] **רתח** RASACH - he got angry

32) [line 38] **נוי** NOY - beauty, appearance