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Special Individuals

As mentioned last week, *messechet ta'anit* deals primarily with the fast days that were performed in response to a drought. Prior to the enactment of the public fast days, *yechidim* ("individuals") were charged with the responsibility of fasting (*Taanit* 1:4):

If the seventeenth of *Mar Cheshvan* approached and it still had not rained, then the *yechidim* would begin three fast days [on Monday, Thursday then Monday]...

Who are these *yechidim*? Why were they the ones trusted with fasting? The *Gemarah* (*Taanit* 10a) responds that they were the *Rabbanan*.

The *Gemarah* continues and differentiates between a *yachid* and a *talmid*:

It was taught in a *beraitah*: a person should not say I am a *talmid* and not worthy enough to be considered a *talmid* rather all *talmidei Chachamim* [can be] *yechidim* [for this matter]. What is a *yachid* and what is a *talmid*? A *yachid* is anyone that is fitting to be elected as a *parnes* (president) over the community. A *talmid* is a person who one can ask a *halachic* matter in his learning and he can respond, even if it is from *messechet kalah*.

From the above section, it appears that a *yachid* is a distinct level above a *talmid*. The *Tosfot* however quotes an apparently contradicting *Gemarah* (*Shabbat* 114a) that writes: "Who is a *talmid* that is worthy to be elected as a *parnes* over the community? [He is] a person that can respond to any *halachic* question, even if it is from *messechet kalah*." That *Gemarah* appears to blur the lines between the definition provided for the *talmid* and *yachid* quoted in *Gemarah Taanit*.

The *Tosfot* responds by explaining that there are two forms of *talmidim*. There is a person who can respond to any query that relates to the *messechet* he is learning, even if it is *messechet kalah*. This person is referred to as a *talmid* in *Taanit*. However there is a higher level of *talmid* that is able to respond to any question irrespective of its location.

This is a "yachid" (*Gemarah Taanit*) who is a form of "talmid that is worthy of being elected as a *parnes*" (*Gemarah Shabbat*).¹

Granted that only these people are of the status to bare the responsibility, why are all others (non-*talmidim*) excluded from fasting. The *Mishnah Berurah* (575:3) explains that were others to fast, it would be evident that they were fasting for the lack of rain and it would appear as *yehora* ("haughtiness").

The first understanding therefore is that in response to the draught the *rabbanic* giants stand up and pray on behalf of the community as a first measure before calling on the entire community to band together.

There is perhaps however another response that can be gleaned from the *Yerushalmi* (*Taanit* 1:4):

Who are these "yechidim"? They are those that **have been** elected as *parnsin* over the community.

The *Yerushalmi* then asks:

Since he has been elected as a *parnes* over the community he will pray and be answered?! Rather since he has been elected... and proven trustworthy he is the most fitting to pray and be answered.

Granted that one could understand that the *Yerushalmi* is referring to the same *parnes* as the *Bavli*, it is also possible that the *Yerushalmi* is not referring to *talmidei Chachamim*, but rather literally to people that have been charged with communal responsibility and are serving their post admirably.² As the *Korban Eidah* explains, these are people that have sacrificed and given of themselves for the benefit and protection of the community. If so, why should they be entrusted with being the "first line of defence?" One can suggest that these people truly understand and live on a daily basis the directive presented in the *Gemarah* (*Taanit* 11a) that one should never separate himself from the pain of the community but feel the pain and associate themselves with them. Thus it is these people that shall fast first, lead by example and hopefully be answered.

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¹ This interpretation also has the added advantage in that it correlates the meaning of *yachid* presented in the *beraitah* with the initial response of the *Gemarah* that "yachid" refers to *Rabannan* – see the *Tosfot Yom Tov*. See also *Rambam Taanit* 3:1.

² This is perhaps supported by the change in language used by the *Yerushalmi* referring to people that "have been elected" as opposed to "fitting to be elected".

Revision Questions

יומא א' ג' – ב' ט'

- From what date do we begin to ask for rain? (Include both opinions) (א' ג')
- By which date do “individuals” begin fasting if rain has not yet fallen? (א' ד')
- How many fast days do these people undertake? (א' ד')
- By which date does *beit din* decree fast days on the public if rain has still not fallen? (א' ה')
- How many fast days does the *Beit Din* institute? (א' ה')
- If it still has not rained how many more fast days does the *Beit Din* institute and how do these differ from the previous ones? (א' ו')
- If yet again it still has not rained how many more fast days does the *Beit Din* institute and how do these differ from the previous ones? (א' ו')
- If it still has not rained, what else would everyone take upon themselves? (א' ז')
- Did anyone still fast during this period? (א' ז')
- If it eventually rained in *Nissan* was it considered positive? (א' ז')
- For the final set of fasts, where would they all gather? (ב' א')
- What would they put on their heads? (ב' א')
- According to the *Mishnah* what was the most vital component of the fast days? (ב' א')
- Who would they elect to lead them in the *tefillot*? (ב' ב')
- How many *berachot* would they add to *sh'monah esrei*? (ב' ב')
- What were these additional *berachot*? (ב' ג-ד')
- How did *R' Chalafta* and *R' Chananya ben Teradyon* end each of the additional *berachot* and how did the *kehillah* respond? (ב' ה')
- What else did they do differently? (ב' ה')
- Who were exempt from the first three fast days? (ב' ו')
- Was anyone exempt from the second set of fast days? (ב' ו')
- What other difference is mentioned between the *Anshei mishmar* and *Anshei beit av*? (ב' ז')
- What was prohibited for the *Anshei mishmar* until Thursday and why? (ב' ז')
- With respect to a day mentioned in the *Megillat ha'taanit* as being prohibited from fasting, are the days prior to and proceeding it prohibited from fasting as well? (ב' ח')
- On which day of the week do we not begin the set of fast days and why? (ב' ט')
- On which days during the year do we not begin the set of fast days and why? (ב' י')

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Mizrachi Shul

Friday & Shabbat

10 minutes before mincha
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Next Week's Mishnayot...

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | שבת קודש |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 18 th June כ"ב סיון | 19 th June כ"ג סיון | 20 th June כ"ד סיון | 21 st June כ"ה סיון | 22 nd June כ"ו סיון | 23 rd June כ"ז סיון | 24 th June כ"ח סיון |
| Taanit 2:10-3:1 | Taanit 3:2-3 | Taanit 3:4-5 | Taanit 3:6-7 | Taanit 3:8-9 | Taanit 4:1-2 | Taanit 4:3-4 |

