

וַיָּלְכוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ – אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מְשׁוּם
רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחִי מְקִישׁ הַלִּיכָה
לְבִיאָה, מַה בִּיאָה בְּעֵצָה רָעָה, אִף
הַלִּיכָה בְּעֵצָה רָעָה.

”וַיִּסְפְּרוּ לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּאָנֹכִי וְגו’, וְכַתִּיב:
”אֶפֶס כִּי עַז הָעָם” – אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן
(סִימָן: אִמְרַת לְבַדּוֹ לְוִי”ה) מְשׁוּם רַבִּי
מֵאִיר: כָּל לְשׁוֹן הָרַע שָׂאִין בּוֹ דְּבַר אֱמֶת
בְּתַחֲלִילָתוֹ – אִין מְתַקְמִים בְּסוֹפוֹ.

And they went and they came” (Numbers 13:25–26). Rabbi Yohanan says in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai: This verse likens their going to their coming. Just as their coming back was with wicked counsel, so too, their going to Eretz Yisrael was with wicked counsel.^N

The Torah states: “And they told him, and said: We came to the land to which you sent us, and it also flows with milk and honey” (Numbers 13:27), and then it is written: “However the people that dwell in the land are fierce” (Numbers 13:28). Why did the spies praise the land and then slander it? Rabbi Yoḥanan says three statements in the name of Rabbi Meir, represented by the mnemonic device: Truth, alone, borrowing.^N The first statement answers this question: Any slander that does not begin with a truthful statement^N ultimately does not stand, i.e., it is not accepted by others.

NOTES

אִף הַלִּיכָה בְּעֵצָה – So too their going was with wicked counsel – רַעָה: One explanation of this statement is that just as their return to the wilderness was guided by wicked counsel, so too, their departure from the Valley of Eshkol was guided by wicked counsel (*Sefat Emet*). According to this explanation, Rashi’s statement (see Numbers 13:3) that when the spies left for Eretz Yisrael they were considered upright and flawless does not contradict this statement, as they were righteous until they reached Eretz Yisrael.

סִימָן אֱמֶת – The mnemonic truth, alone [*levado*], borrowing – לְבַדּוֹ לְוִי”ה: This is a mnemonic for the statements said by Rabbi

Yohanan in the name of Rabbi Meir in this tractate. The acronym should be: Truth, ensnared [*lekhado*], borrowing, as elsewhere (42b), Rabbi Yohanan quotes the statement of Rabbi Meir: His own mouth ensnared that wicked one, and in another place (46b) he quotes Rabbi Meir with regard to anyone who does not lend and borrows. However, Rabbi Yohanan quotes Rabbi Meir in another place (36b): His bow returned to its strength, so perhaps the mnemonic should include that and be: Truth, returned, ensnared, borrowing (*Heshek Shlomo*).

לְשׁוֹן הָרַע שָׂאִין בּוֹ דְּבַר אֱמֶת בְּתַחֲלִילָתוֹ – Slander that does not begin with a truthful statement – The commentaries ask: What

did the spies lie about? The Maharsha explains that since the spies did not return with the basic food staples of wheat, barley, and olives, they implicitly told the people that the land did not produce sufficient food for sustenance. Furthermore, although the spies were not in Hebron, they nevertheless reported about the giants who lived there. Others explain that they lied in that they said: “The people that dwell in the land are fierce,” even though the people of the land feared the Jewish people, as stated by Rahab (Joshua 2:10). Others suggest that they said Eretz Yisrael is “a land that eats its inhabitants” (Numbers 13:32), where people die frequently (see *Ir Binyamin*).

The verse states: “**And Caleb stilled [vayyahas] the people toward Moses**” (Numbers 13:30). Rabba says: This means that he persuaded them [*hesitan*] with his words. *Vayyahas* and *hesitan* share the same root in Hebrew.

How did he do so? **Joshua began to address the people, and as he was speaking they said to him: Should this person, who has a severed head, as he has no children, speak to the people about entering Eretz Yisrael?**

Caleb said to himself: **If I speak they will also say something about me and stop me from speaking.** He began to speak and said to them: **And is this the only thing that the son of Amram, Moses, has done to us? They thought that he wanted to relate something to the discredit of Moses, and they were silent.**

He then said to them: **He took us out of Egypt, and split the sea for us, and fed us the manna. If he says to us: Build ladders and climb to the heavens, should we not listen to him? “We should go up at once,” even to the heavens, “and possess it” (Numbers 13:30).**

The verses continue: **“But the men that went up with him said: We are not able to go up against the people; as they are stronger than us” (Numbers 13:31).** Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa says: **The spies said a serious statement at that moment.** When they said: **“They are stronger,” do not read the phrase as: Stronger than us [mimmennu],^N but rather read it as: Stronger than Him [mimmennu],** meaning that **even the Homeowner, God, is unable to remove His belongings from there, as it were.** The spies were speaking heresy and claiming that the Canaanites were stronger than God Himself.

The spies said: **“It is a land that consumes its inhabitants” (Numbers 13:32).** Rava taught: **The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: I intended the land to appear to consume its inhabitants for their own good, but they considered this proof that the land was bad. I intended it for their good by causing many people to die there so that anywhere that the spies arrived, the most important of them died, so that the Canaanites would be preoccupied with mourning and would not inquire about them. And there are those who say that God caused Job to die at that time, and everyone in Canaan was preoccupied with his eulogy, and did not pay attention to the spies.** However, the spies considered this proof that the land was bad and said: **“It is a land that consumes its inhabitants.”**

The spies said: **“And we were like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and so were we in their eyes” (Numbers 13:33).** Rav Mesharshiyya says: **The spies were liars. Granted, to say: “We were like grasshoppers in our own eyes,” is well, but to say: “And so were we in their eyes,” from where could they have known this?**

The Gemara responds: **But that is not so, as when the Canaanites were having the mourners’ meal, they had the meal beneath cedar trees, and when the spies saw them they climbed up the trees and sat in them. From there they heard the Canaanites saying: We see people who look like grasshoppers in the trees.**

The verse states: **“And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried” (Numbers 14:1).** Rabba says that Rabbi Yohanan says: **That day was the eve of the Ninth of Av, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, said: On that day they wept a gratuitous weeping, so I will establish that day for them as a day of weeping for the future generations.**

Do not read, than us [*mimmennu*] but rather, than Him [*mimmennu*]- אֵל תִּקְרִי מִמֶּנּוּ אֶלָּא מִמֶּנּוּ: Rashi omits this sentence, as the expression: Do not read, generally indicates that a different vocalization is being suggested. Here, however, both readings are identical. According to the *Arukh*, the Gemara is pointing out that the verse does not use the term *mennu*, meaning: Than us; rather, it says *mimmennu*, meaning: Than him. Other commentaries explain that in Babylonia, the term *mimmennu* was written with different punctuation for: Than us, and: Than him. Therefore, the Gemara, which was written in Babylonia, is teaching that it should be read not with the punctuation that would render it: Stronger than us, but with the punctuation that would render it: Stronger than him (Dunash; Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra; Rashba).

“וַיְהִי כַּלְבַּ בְּלִבְ אֶת הָעָם אֶל מֹשֶׁה” - אָמַר רַבָּה: שְׁהִיטָתוֹ בְּדַבְרָיו.

פֶּתַח יְהוֹשֻׁעַ. דִּקָּא מִשְׁתַּעֲי אֶמְרֵי לִיהּ: דִּין רַאֲשׁ קִטְיַעָה יְמִלְלָ?

אָמַר: אֵי מִשְׁתַּעֲינָא אֶמְרֵי בִי מִלְתָּא וְחִסְמִין לִי. אָמַר לְהֶן: וְכִי זִו בְּלִבְד עֲשָׂה לָנוּ בֶן עֶמְרָם? סַבְרֵי בְּגִנְתֵּיהּ קָא מִשְׁתַּעֲי, אִישְׁתִּיקוּ.

אָמַר לְהֶן: הוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְקָרַע לָנוּ אֶת הַיָּם וְהֶאֱכִילָנוּ אֶת הַמָּן. אִם יֹאמְרוּ עֲשׂוּ סֹלֶמֶת וְעֲלוּ לְרִקִיעַ, לֹא נִשְׁמַע לֹ? “עֲלֵה נַעֲלֵה וּרְשָׁנוּ אֶתָּה” וְגו’.

“וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֹא נוֹכַח” וְגו’ - אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בַר פַּפָּא: דְּבַר גְּדוֹל דְּבַר מְרַגְלִים בְּאוֹתָהּ שַׁעָה, “כִּי חִזּוֹק הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ” - אֵל תִּקְרִי “מִמֶּנּוּ” אֶלָּא “מִמֶּנּוּ”: כְּבִיכּוֹל, אֶפְיֵלוּ בַעַל הַבַּיִת אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לְהוֹצִיא בְּלִיּוֹ מִשָּׁם.

“אֶרֶץ אֹכֶלֶת יוֹשְׁבֵיהָ הִיא” - דִּרְשׁ רַבָּא, אָמַר הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: אֲנִי חֲשַׁבְתִּיהּ לְטוֹבָה וְהֵם חֲשַׁבּוּ לְרָעָה. אֲנִי חֲשַׁבְתִּיהּ לְטוֹבָה - דְּכָל הַיָּבָא דְמָטוּ, מֵת חֲשִׁיבָא דִידְהוּ, כִּי הַיָּבָא דְנִיטְרֵדוּ וְלֹא לְשָׂאֵלוּ אֲבַתְרֵייהוּ. וְאִיבָא דְאָמְרוּ: אִיבָא נַח נְפִשִׁיהּ, וְאִטְרִידוּ כּוּלֵי עֲלָמָא בְּהַסְפִּידָא. הֵם חֲשַׁבּוּ לְרָעָה - “אֶרֶץ אֹכֶלֶת יוֹשְׁבֵיהָ הִיא”.

“וְנָהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחַגְבִּים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ” וְגו’ - אָמַר רַב מִשְׁרָשִׁיָּא: מְרַגְלִים שְׁקָרֵי הוּוּ. בְּשִׁלְמָא “וְנָהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחַגְבִּים” - לְחַיֵּי אֶלָּא “וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְעֵינֵיהֶם” מָנָא הוּוּ יִדְעֵי?

וְלֹא הִיא, כִּי הוּוּ מְבַרֵי אֲבִילֵי, תוֹתֵי אַרְזֵי הוּוּ מְבַרֵי. וְכִי חֲזִינְהוּ, סִלְקוּ יְתָבֵי בְּאִילָנֵי. שְׁמַעֵי דְקָאֲמְרֵי: קַתְזִינֵי אִינְשֵׁי דְדָמּוּ לְקַמְצֵי בְּאִילָנֵי.

“וַתִּשָּׂא כָּל הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכּוּ” - אָמַר רַבָּה אָמַר רַבִּי זִחְנָן: אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם עָרַב תִּשְׁעָה בָּאָב הָיָה. אָמַר הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: הֵן בָּכוּ בְּכִיָּה שֶׁל חֲנַם, וְאֲנִי אֶקְבַּע לָהֶם בְּכִיָּה לְדוֹרוֹת.

Their tongues were stretched out and fell upon their navels – נִשְׁתַּרְבַּב לְשׁוֹנָם וְנָפַל עַל טִיבוֹרָם – The *Iyyun Ya'akov* explains that they received this punishment because they spoke slander about the land with their tongues and because Eretz Yisrael is called “the navel of the earth” (Ezekiel 38:12).

Because he relieved himself [*asa tzerakhav*] in its presence – שִׁעֲשָׂה צָרְכָיו בְּפָנָיו – Many commentaries ask how such a disgraceful thing could be said about Uzzah, especially in light of the Gemara’s statement that he entered the World-to-Come. Some explain that he relieved himself far away from the Ark but was facing in its direction, which is prohibited (see *Iyyun Ya'akov*). Another explanation, based on a midrash, is that the expression *asa tzerakhav*, literally, cared for his needs, is a reference to the blessing one recites when donning his shoes in the morning: Who has provided me with all I need. In this context it refers to the fact that Uzzah put on his shoes in front of the Ark (see *Anaf Yosef*).

BACKGROUND

Diphtheria – אֶקְבָּרָה: This is an infectious disease that causes the mucous membrane of the throat to swell and creates a choking feeling. It is common among young children, and until recently, with the invention of a vaccination against it, it was a fatal disease that caused its victims to die from choking. During the Second Temple period, people who served in the non-priestly watches would fast for one day each week, in the merit of which infants would not be afflicted with diphtheria.

”וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֹל הָעֵדָה לְרוֹגֹם אֹתָם בְּאֲבָנִים,” וְכַתִּיב: “וְכַבֹּד ה’ נִרְאָה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד” – אָמַר רַבִּי חֵיטָא בַר אֲבָא: מִלְּמַד, שֶׁנֶּטְלוּ אֲבָנִים וְזָרְקוּם בְּלִפְי מַעֲלָה.

”וַיָּמָתוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים מוֹצְאֵי דְבַת הָאָרֶץ רַעָה בְּמַגָּפָה” – אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן לִקְיִשׁ: שִׁמְתוּ מִיתָה מְשׁוּנָה. אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִנְיָא בַר פֶּפְאָה, דְּרַשׁ רַבִּי שִׁילָא אִישׁ כֶּפֶר תְּמַרְתָּא: מִלְּמַד, שֶׁנִּשְׁתַּרְבַּב לְשׁוֹנָם וְנָפַל עַל טִיבוֹרָם, וְהָיוּ תוֹלְעִים יוֹצְאוֹת מִלְּשׁוֹנָם וְנִכְנְסוֹת בְּטִיבוֹרָם, וּמִטִּיבוֹרָם וְנִכְנְסוֹת בְּלִשׁוֹנָם. וְרַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק אָמַר: בְּאֶסְכְּרָה מֵתוּ.

וְכִינּוּן שֶׁעָלָה הָאֲחֵרוֹן שְׂבִי שִׂרְאֵל מִן הַיַּרְדֵּן חֲזוֹן מִים לְמִקְוָמוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וַיְהִי בַעֲלוֹת הַכֹּהֲנִים נִשְׂאֵי אֲרוֹן בְּרִית ה’ מִתּוֹךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן נִתְקָו כְּפוֹת רַגְלֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶל הַחֲרָבָה וַיִּשְׁבוּ מִן הַיַּרְדֵּן לְמִקְוָמָם וַיֵּלְכוּ כְּתִמּוֹל שֶׁלִּשְׁוֹם עַל כָּל גְּדוֹתָיו.”

נִמְצָא אֲרוֹן וְנוֹשְׂאָיו וְכֹהֲנֵים מֵצַד אֶחָד וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל מֵצַד אֶחָד. נִשְׂאֵי אֲרוֹן אֶת נוֹשְׂאָיו וַעֲבָר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר תָּם כָּל הָעָם לַעֲבֹר וַיַּעֲבֹר אֲרוֹן ה’ וְהַכֹּהֲנִים לִפְנֵי הָעָם.”

וְעַל דָּבָר זֶה נִעְנַשׁ עוֹזָא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וַיִּבְאוּ עַד גְּרֵן בֵּידֵן וַיִּשְׁלַח עוֹזָא אֶת יָדוֹ לֶאֱחֹז אֶת הָאֲרוֹן.” אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: עוֹזָא, נוֹשְׂאֵיו נִשְׂאֵי. עֲצוּמוֹ לֹא כָּל שֶׁבָן!

”וַיַּחַר אֵף ה’ בְּעוֹזָה וַיַּכְהוּ שָׁם... עַל הַשָּׁל” וְגו’ – רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר, חֵד אָמַר: עַל עֶסְקֵי שָׁלוֹ, וְחֵד אָמַר: שִׁעֲשָׂה צָרְכָיו בְּפָנָיו.

”וַיָּמָת שָׁם עִם אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים” – אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: עוֹזָא בָּא לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “עִם אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים,” מָה אֲרוֹן לְעוֹלָם קָיָים, אֵף עוֹזָא בָּא לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

”וַיַּחַר לְדָוִד עַל אֲשֶׁר פָּרַץ ה’ פָּרֵץ בְּעוֹזָה” – אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: שֶׁנִּשְׁתַּנּוּ פָּנָיו כְּחֻרְרָה.

The verse states: “But all the congregation bade stone them with stones” (Numbers 14:10), and it is written immediately afterward: “When the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tent of Meeting” (Numbers 14:10). Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba says: This teaches that they took stones and threw them upward as if to throw them at God.

The verse states: “And those men who brought out an evil report of the land, died by the plague before the Lord” (Numbers 14:37). Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says: This means that they died an unusual death. Rabbi Ḥanina bar Pappa says that Rabbi Sheila Ish Kefar Temarta taught: This teaches that their tongues were stretched out from their mouths and fell upon their navels,ⁿ and worms were crawling out of their tongues and entering their navels, and worms were likewise coming out of their navels and entering their tongues. This is the painful death that they suffered. And Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak says: They died of diphtheria,^b which causes one to choke to death.

§ The Gemara returns to discuss the entry of the Jewish people into Eretz Yisrael. And once the last one of the Jewish people ascended out of the Jordan, the water returned to its place, as it is stated: “And it came to pass, as the priests that bore the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord came up out of the midst of the Jordan, as soon as the soles of the priests’ feet were drawn up unto the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks, as it had before” (Joshua 4:18). The Gemara understands that the priests who carried the Ark stood in the water until all of the Jewish people passed through the Jordan. Once all the Jewish people had reached the other side of the Jordan, the priests stepped back from the water and the Jordan returned to its natural state.

It follows that the Ark and its bearers and the priests were on one side of the Jordan, the east side, and the rest of the Jewish people were on the other side, the west side. Subsequently, the Ark carried its bearers in the air and crossed the Jordan, as it is stated: “When all the people were completely passed over, the Ark of the Lord passed on, and the priests, before the people” (Joshua 4:11).

And over this matter Uzzah was punished for not taking proper care of the Ark, as it is stated: “And when they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzzah put forth his hand to hold the Ark; for the oxen stumbled” (1 Chronicles 13:9). The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: Uzzah, the Ark carried its bearers when it crossed the Jordan; all the more so is it not clear that it can carry itself?

§ The verse states: “And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error [*hashal*]” (II Samuel 6:7). Rabbi Yoḥanan and Rabbi Elazar disagreed over the interpretation of this verse. One says: God smote him for his forgetfulness [*shalo*], because he did not remember that the Ark can carry itself. And one says: God smote him because he lifted the edges [*shulayyim*] of his garment in front of the Ark and relieved himself in its presence.ⁿ

The verse states: “And he died there with the Ark of God” (II Samuel 6:7). Rabbi Yoḥanan says: Uzzah entered the World-to-Come, as it is stated: “With the Ark of God.” Just as the Ark exists forever, so too, Uzzah entered the World-to-Come.

The verse states: “And David was displeased [*vayyihar*] because the Lord had broken forth upon Uzzah” (II Samuel 6:8). Rabbi Elazar says: *Vayyihar* means that his face changed colors and darkened like baked bread [*harara*] from displeasure.

At first a javelin [*kidon*] but ultimately established [*nakhon*] – בתחלה כידון ולבסוף נכון: According to one interpretation in the *Arukh*, the Gemara is saying that at first there was judgment [*din*] and then there was order [*nakhon*]. According to a second interpretation, *kidon* means tragedy or brokenness. Rashi suggests a similar explanation of the phrase, based on a verse from Job.

An extra degree of understanding – בינה יתירה – According to the opinion that the entire Torah was written on the stones, the extraordinary expertise of these scribes was expressed through their ability to copy the Torah within a few hours, before the stones were plastered over (see *Tosafot*). Others explain that they managed to peel off the plaster from the stones without damaging the writing (*Yagel Ya'akov*). Another explanation is that although they could see only the plaster, the scribes understood that something important was written underneath, and peeled off the plaster to copy it (*Ben Yehoyada*).

LANGUAGE

Scribes [*noteirin*] – נוטירין: From the Latin term notarius, which is perhaps borrowed from Greek. It refers to a scribe, a writer, or someone who copies official documents.

כתוב: "כידון", וכתוב: "נכון"! אמר רבי יוחנן: בתחלה כידון, ולבסוף נכון.

נמצאת אתה אומר: שלשה מיני אבנים היו: אחד שהקים משה בארץ מואב, שנאמר: "בעבר הירדן בארץ מואב הואיל משה באר" וגו', ולהלן הוא אומר: "וכתבת עליהן את כל דברי התורה הזאת" וגו'. ואתא "באר", "באר";

ואחד שהקים יהושע בתוך הירדן, שנאמר: "ושתים עשרה אבנים הקים יהושע בתוך הירדן"; ואחד שהקים בגלגל, שנאמר: "ואת שתים עשרה האבנים האלה אשר לקחו" וגו'.

תנו רבנן: ביצד כתבו ישראל את התורה? רבי יהודה אומר: על גבי אבנים כתובה, שנאמר: "וכתבת על האבנים את כל דברי התורה הזאת" וגו', ואחר כך סדו אותן בסיד;

אמר לו רבי שמעון: לדבריהן, היאך למדו אומות העולם תורה? אמר לו: בינה יתירה נתן בהם הקדוש ברוך הוא, ושיגרו נוטירין שלהן וקילפו את הסיד והשיאוהו. ועל דבר זה נתחתם גזר דינם לבאר שחת, שהיה להן ללמד ולא למדו;

רבי שמעון אומר: על גבי סיד כתובה, וכתבו להן למטה: "למדו אתכם לעשות ככל" וגו'. הא למדת, שאם היו חוזרין בתשובה היו מקבלין אותן.

אמר רבא בר שילא: מאי טעמא דרבי שמעון? דכתוב: "היו עמים משרפות סיד", על עסקי סיד.

ורבי יהודה? כי סיד, מה סיד אין לו תקנה אלא שריפה, אף אומות העולם אין להם תקנה אלא שריפה.

It is written that Uzzah died "when they came to the threshing floor of Chidon" (1 Chronicles 13:9), and elsewhere it is written that it was "the threshing floor of Nacon" (11 Samuel 6:6). **Rabbi Yohanan says: At first the Ark was similar to a javelin [*kidon*],** as it caused Uzzah's death. **But ultimately,** after the people asked for forgiveness, it was **established [*nakhon*]**,^N i.e., placed, in the house of Obed Edom, where it was a source of blessing.

S The Gemara returns to the discussion of how the Ark was brought into Eretz Yisrael. **You are found saying that there were three sets of stones. One is a set that Moses erected in the land of Moab, as it is stated: "Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses took upon himself to expound [*be'er*] this law, saying" (Deuteronomy 1:5). And it states there with regard to the mitzva to erect the stones on Mount Ebal: "And you shall write on the stones all the words of this law clearly elucidated [*ba'er*]" (Deuteronomy 27:8). It is derived through a verbal analogy between the word "*be'er*" that appears with regard to Moses, and the word "*ba'er*" that appears with regard to the mitzva to write the Torah on the stones on Mount Ebal that Moses also wrote down the Torah on stones.**

And there is one set that Joshua erected in the Jordan, as it is stated: "Joshua also set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests that bore the Ark of the Covenant stood, and they are there to this day" (Joshua 4:9). And there is one set that Joshua erected in Gilgal, as it is stated: "And these twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal" (Joshua 4:20).

The Sages taught: How did the Jewish people write the Torah? Rabbi Yehuda says: They wrote it on stones, as it is stated: "And you shall write on the stones all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 27:8). And afterward they plastered them over with plaster.

Rabbi Shimon said to him: According to your statement that they plastered over the writing, how did the nations of the world study Torah? He said to him: The Holy One, Blessed be He, granted them an extra degree of understanding,^N and they sent their scribes [*noteirin*],^L and they peeled off the plaster and copied it down. And on account of this matter their decree to be sent to the pit of destruction was sealed, as once the Torah was in their possession they should have studied it, and they did not study.

Rabbi Shimon says: That is not what happened. Rather, the Jewish people wrote the text of the Torah on top of the plaster, and they wrote below for the gentiles to read that the verse commands the Jewish people to destroy the gentile inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael: "Lest they teach you to do like all their abominations" (Deuteronomy 20:18). You derive from the fact that they wrote this verse that if the gentiles who lived in Eretz Israel would have repented, the Jews would have accepted them, i.e., allowed them to live in Eretz Yisrael.

Rava bar Sheila said: What is the reason for the opinion of Rabbi Shimon? As it is written: "And the peoples shall be as the burnings of plaster" (Isaiah 33:12). This is homiletically interpreted to mean that the nations were punished on account of matters of plaster, i.e., they did not study the Torah that was written on plaster.

The Gemara asks: **And how does Rabbi Yehuda, who holds that the Torah was not written on plaster, interpret this verse? The Gemara answers: He explains that the gentiles are like plaster; just as plaster has no remedy but burning, i.e., it is created by burning stone, so too, the nations of the world have no remedy other than burning in Gehenna.**

כִּמְאֵן אֶזְלָא הָא דְתַנָּא: "וְשָׁבִיתָ
שְׂבִי" – לְרַבּוֹת כְּנַעֲנִים שְׂבָחוּצָה לְאֶרֶץ
שָׂאם חוּזְרִין בְּתַשׁוּבָה מִקְּבָלִין אוֹתָן?

In accordance with whose opinion is **that which is taught** in a *baraita*: The verse states: "When you go forth to battle against your enemies, and the Lord your God delivers them into your hands, **and you take them captive**" (Deuteronomy 21:10), implying that there is no obligation to destroy them, **to include** not only gentiles who are not Canaanites, but even **Canaanites that are living outside of Eretz Yisrael,^N as, if they repent, they are accepted** and allowed to live in Eretz Yisrael.

NOTES

To include Canaanites that are living outside of Eretz Yisrael – לְרַבּוֹת כְּנַעֲנִים שְׂבָחוּצָה לְאֶרֶץ: The early commentaries have different opinions with regard to the relationship of the Jews to Canaanites living in Eretz Yisrael, Canaanites living outside of Eretz Yisrael, and other gentile nations who want to make peace with the Jews. This issue is dependent on another debate with regard to the offer that Joshua sent to the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael to make peace with the Jewish people, as discussed in the Jerusalem Talmud: Was this offer dependent merely on their acceptance of the political rule of the Jews, or did they also have to agree to cease idol worship and to observe the seven Noahide mitzvot? See a discussion of the different opinions in *Lehem Mishne* (Rambam *Sefer Shofetim, Hilkhot Melakhim UMilhemoteihem* 6:1). The differing opinions with regard to that

issue are dependent upon the understanding of the dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Shimon. Several commentaries understand that the matter under discussion is whether or not there is a distinction with regard to the possibility of accepting Canaanites under Jewish rule between the Canaanites who lived in Eretz Yisrael and those who lived outside of Eretz Yisrael; other commentaries disagree. Furthermore, the reason behind the distinction requires clarification. It is possible that the verse stating: "You shall keep alive no one who breathes" (Deuteronomy 20:16), refers only to the Canaanites living in Eretz Yisrael, and only under certain circumstances. Alternatively, it is possible that once the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael, the Canaanites living there could no longer be trusted to accept the mitzvot.