TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

Rav Yosef said: Babylon and the neighboring city of Bursif are a bad sign for Torah. Their proximity to the Tower of Babel causes a person to forget what he has learned.

The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of the name Bursif? Rabbi Assi said: An empty pit (bor sha'ah). The city of Bursif causes a person to become empty of Torah knowledge.

We have learned in our Mishnah: "The people of Sodom do not have a portion in the World to Come."

Our Rabbis taught the following Baraita: "The people of Sodom do not have a portion in the World to Come, as the verse states (Genesis 13:13): "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly."

"Wicked" — so that they were punished in this world. "And sinners" — so that they will have no share in the World to Come.

Rav Yehudah said: The redundancy in the verse may be understood differently. The word "wicked" implies that the people of Sodom sinned with their bodies. The words "and sinners" teach that the people of Sodom also sinned with their money, dealing cruelly with their less fortunate neighbors.

The word "wicked" alludes to sins relating to their bodies, as the verse reporting Joseph's response to Potifar's wife's overtures states (Genesis 39:9): "How, then, can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

And the words "and sinners" allude to sins relating to their money, as the verse states (Deuteronomy 15:9): "And your eye is evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing...for it shall be reckoned to you as a sin."

"Wicked" with their bodies, as it is written: "How, then, can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

"And sinners" with their money, as it is written: "For it shall be reckoned to you as a sin."

Before the Lord — this is blasphemy (lit., "the blessing of God.")

Exceedingly — who sin intentionally.

A Tanna taught a Baraita: "Wicked" — with their money. And sinners — with their bodies.

"Wicked" with their money, as it is written: And your eye is evil against your poor brother.

RASHI

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NOTES

Bursif. It has been suggested that Bursif means bur min hazefer, "void of the book," for the place causes a person to become empty of Torah knowledge (Arukh).
TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

and you give him nothing.” 1 And the words ‘and sinners’ allude to sins relating to their bodies, as the verse states (Genesis 39:9): ‘How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’ 2 The words ‘before the Lord’ imply that the people of Sodom were guilty of blasphemy. 3 The word ‘exceedingly’ teaches that the people of Sodom were also guilty of bloodshed, as the verse states (II Kings 21:16): ‘Moreover Manasseh shed very [רומא] much innocent blood in Jerusalem.’

Our Rabbis taught the following Baraita: “The people of Sodom became haughty and were then led to sin only in consequence of the abundant bounty that the Holy One, blessed be He, bestowed upon them. 4 And which verses apply to them? The verses that state (Job 28:5-8): ‘The earth, from which comes bread; and under it is turned up as it was fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires; and it has dust of gold. There is a path which no bird of prey knows, and which the falcon’s eye has not seen. The lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.’ That passage refers to Sodom, for the very next verse states (Job 28:9): ‘He puts forth His hand upon the rock; He overturns the mountains by the roots.’ 5 The people of Sodom said: ‘Since we have an abundance of bounty — earth from which comes bread, and which has the dust of gold — why do we need wayfarers? Surely they come to stay by us only in order to deplete our money.’ Come, let us cause the law for the protection of travelers to be forgotten in our land, so that wayfarers will no longer come to our doors, 6 as the verse states (Job 28:4): ‘He breaks open a watercourse in a place far from inhabitants, forgotten by foot travelers, they are dried up, they have moved away from men.’

Rava expounded: What is meant by the verse that states (Psalms 62:4): “How long will you seek to overwhelm a man? You will all be murdered like a leaning wall, or a tottering fence?” This teaches that the people of Sodom would set their eyes on a person with money, and sat him

LITERAL TRANSLATION

‘And sinners’ with their bodies, as it is written: ‘And sin against God.’ 2 Before the Lord — this is blasphemy. 3 Exceedingly — this is bloodshed, as it is stated: ‘Manasseh also shed very [רומא] much innocent blood in Jerusalem.’

Our Rabbis taught: ‘The people of Sodom became haughty only in consequence of the bounty that the Holy One, blessed be He, bestowed upon them.” And what is written regarding them? “The earth, from which comes bread; and under it is turned up as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires; and it has dust of gold. There is a path which no bird of prey knows, and which the falcon’s eye has not seen. The lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.” They said: ‘Since it is earth from which comes bread, and it has dust of gold, why do we have wayfarers? They come to us only to deplete our money. Come, let us cause the law of travelers (lit., “the foot”) to be forgotten in our land;” as it is stated: ‘He breaks open a watercourse in a place [far] from inhabitants, forgotten by foot travelers, they are dried up, they have moved away from men.”

Rava expounded: What is that which is written: “How long will you seek to overwhelm a man? You will all be murdered like a leaning wall, or a tottering fence?” This teaches that the people of Sodom would set their eyes on a person.
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with money, sit him down next to a leaning wall, push the wall upon him and kill him, and then come and take his money.

Rava expounded: What is meant by the verse that states (Job 24:16): “In the dark they dig through houses; by day they shut themselves up; they know not the light”? This teaches that the people of Sodom would set their eyes on a person with money, and deposit strong-smelling balsam with him, and the moneyminded person would place the balsam together with his own valuables in his treasure house. Later that night the depositors would come back and follow the scent of the balsam like a dog, as the verse states (Psalms 59:7): “They return at evening; they howl like a dog, and go round about the city.” Led by the scent of the balsam, they would burrow into the rich man’s house, and take his money.

The verses state (Job 24:7): “They lie all night naked without clothing, and they have no covering in the cold”; (Job 24:3): “They drive away the ass of the fatherless; they take the widow’s ox for a pledge”; (Job 24:2): “Some remove the landmarks; they violently steal flocks, and feed them”; and (Job 21:32): “For he is brought to the grave, and watch is kept over his tomb.”

Rashi
Rabbi Yose of Sepphoris expounded these verses, and in the course of the discussion, he explained how the people of Sodom practiced their thievery. That night thieves broke into three hundred houses in Sepphoris, making use of the devices mentioned by Rabbi Yose in his lecture. The people of Sepphoris went to Rabbi Yose, and troubled him about the matter, and said to him: “It was you who showed the thieves the way to steal.” Rabbi Yose said to the angry residents: “Was I to know that, in the wake of my lecture, thieves would come and rob you?” When Rabbi Yose died, the spouts of Sepphoris flowed with blood in mourning over that city’s great Sage.

NOTES

The spouts of Sepphoris flowed with blood. Some explain that this detail shows Rabbi Yose’s greatness and righteousness; so that the people of Sepphoris would know that there was nothing wrong with the plant referred to here is probably Canophora apodocasman, of the Bursaceae family. Balsam is a bush or low tree (2-5 meters), its branches are very thin, and its compound leaves are composed of very many small leaves. It appears that the balsam referred to here is the one of the ingredients of the Incense in the Temple. The finest scent is gathered from what drips in droplets from the ends of the stalks (ןָּטַק וּמִישָׁם), but in general it is produced by boiling the branches. The perfume is used to produce incense and aromatic oil. During Second Temple times Eretz Israel was an important center for the cultivation of balsam, especially near Jericho.
TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

The Gemara now describes some more of the wicked practices of the people of Sodom. They said: "Someone who has one ox must graze the city's oxen for two days." It was related that a certain orphan, the son of a widow, was once given the city's oxen to graze. He went and took them and killed them. He then said to the owners of the oxen: [109b] "Anyone who has one ox may take one hide. Anyone who did not have any oxen may take two hides." The owners of the oxen protested and said to him: "What is the meaning of this?" "The orphan said to them: "The logic at the end is like the logic at the beginning. Just like the logic at the beginning — someone who has one ox must graze the city's oxen for one day, while he who does not have any oxen must graze those animals for two days — so, too, the logic at the end — anyone who had one ox may take one hide, and anyone who did not have any oxen may take two hides." Another law was passed in Sodom: Someone who crosses a river by ferry must pay one zuz. Someone who fords the river and does not cross by ferry, must pay two zuz. Another wicked practice prevailed in Sodom: If someone had a row of bricks, everyone would come and take one brick, and each person would say to the owner of the bricks: "I only took one brick," but all of the bricks would be taken. And similarly, if someone spread out garlic or onions to dry, everyone would come and take one garlic or an onion, and would say to the owner: "I only took one," but all the garlic or onions would be taken.

LITERAL TRANSLATION

"They said: 'He who has one ox must graze one day. He who does not have must graze two days.' To a certain orphan, the son of a widow, they gave oxen to graze. He went and took them and killed them. He said to them: [109b] 'He who has an ox may take one hide. He who does not have an ox may take two hides.' They said to him: 'What is this?' He said to them: 'The end of the judgment is like the beginning of the judgment. Just as at the beginning of the judgment, he who has [one] ox must graze one day, [while] he who does not have oxen must graze two days, so the end of the judgment: He who has one ox may take one, [and] he who does not have an ox may take two.' He who crosses by ferry must pay one zuz. He who does not cross by ferry must pay two. He who has a row of bricks — everyone comes [and] takes one. [and] says to him: 'I took one.' He who spreads out garlic or onions — everyone comes [and] takes one, [and] says to him: 'I took one.' There were four judges in Sodom:

RASHI

There are four judges in Sodom: One is called 'Avadu hayaha. — it is no wonder, what has happened — the boy, the girl, the master and the maid. Each one of the four judges took one of the 'public' rows of bricks, and everyone spread out the garlic and onions to dry, and everyone took one of the garlic or onions. It was related that there were four judges in Sodom, whose names reflected their judicial conduct:

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what he had said in his lecture, even though it had caused them financial loss (see Binyan Shlomo, Rambam). According to an alternative reading, when Rabbi Yose died, the people of Sepphoris did not want to involve themselves in his burial at first. The spouts of the city flowed with blood in order to convince the residents to prepare for Rabbi Yose's funeral and show him proper respect. The practices of Sodom. Most of the Sodomite practices mentioned here are alluded to by the verses in Job 24 cited above: 'They lie all night naked without
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Shakrai ("Liar"), Shakrurai ("Prevaricator"), Zaifai ("Forger"), and Matzlei Dina ("Perverter of Justice"). The edicts that they issued included the following: 1) If someone strikes a man’s wife and causes her to miscarry, they say to the woman’s husband: “Hand your wife over to the assailant, so that he can impregnate her for you.” 2) If someone cuts off the ear of another person’s ass, they say to the ass’s owner: “Hand the ass over to the one who caused the damage until the ear grows in again.” 3) If someone injured another person, they say to the victim: “Pay your assailant a fee, for he bled you, and deserves to be paid for his services.” 4) If someone crosses a river by ferry, he must pay four zuz. 5) If he crosses in the water, he must pay eight zuz.

Once a certain washerman happened to come to Sodom, and they said to him: “Pay us four zuz for crossing the river by ferry.” He said to them: “But I crossed the river in the water.” They said to him: “If so, then you must pay eight zuz for crossing the river in the water.” The washerman refused to pay, and so they struck and injured him. He came before a judge demanding compensation, but the judge said to him: “Pay your assailant a fee, for he bled you, and deserves to be paid for his services, and pay another eight zuz for crossing the river in the water.” It was related that Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, once happened to come there, and one of the local residents struck and injured him. He came before a judge demanding compensation, but the judge said to him: “Pay your assailant a fee, for he bled you.” Eliezer then took a stone,

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clothing alludes to the enactment passed in Sodom to strip a person of his cloak if he invites a guest for a meal. "They drive away the ass of the fatherless" alludes to their ruling regarding someone who cut off the ear of another person’s ass. "They take the widow’s ox for a pledge" alludes to their rules regarding grazing the city’s oxen. The orphans and the widow mentioned in these verses allude to the story about the orphan, the son of a widow, who grazed the city’s oxen (Mishnah). The various practices are cited here to show that not only did the people of Sodom sin in the most evil manner as individuals, but they also enacted wicked laws as a community in order to oppress the weakest members of society.

Yad Yosef Who crosses in the water. The commentators explained the devious reasoning behind these perverse laws. The people of Sodom argued that those who cross a river in the water must pay double, for they reduce the amount of water in the river (Rambam). Alternatively, they imposed a double fine, because they suspected those who crossed a river in the water of smuggling in order to avoid paying customs (Margoliot Halan). Or else, they argued that they enacted the fine in order to discourage people from crossing the river in the water, which would put their lives in danger (Yad Yosef).
and struck and wounded the judge. 1 The judge asked: “What is the meaning of this?” 2 Eliezer said to the judge: “The fee that you now owe me for bleeding you, you pay it on my behalf to the one who bled me, and my money will remain by me where it is.” 4 It was further related that the people of Sodom had a bed upon which they would make guests passing through the city lie down. 5 If the guest was too long for the bed, they would cut his limbs to make him fit, and if he was too short, they would stretch him. 7 Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, once happened to come to Sodom, and the local residents said to him: “Come, lie down on this bed.” Eliezer outsmarted them and said: “I took a vow on the day that my mother died never to lie down again on a bed.” 9 Whenever a poor person happened to come to Sodom, everyone would give him a dinar, and each of the donors would write his name on the coin that he gave. 10 But after they provided the pauper with money, nobody would give him any bread for it, and the poor person would starve to death. 11 After the pauper died, everyone would come and take back his dinar. 12 The people of Sodom also agreed among themselves as follows: Whoever invites a stranger to a wedding will be publicly humiliated and have his cloak removed. 13 There was a certain wedding, and Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, happened to attend, but he was not given any bread to eat. 14 When he wanted to eat, Eliezer went and sat down at the end of the crowd. 15 The other guests said to him: “Who invited you here?” 16 Eliezer said to the person who was sitting next to him: “Was it not you who invited me to the wedding?” 17 The person sitting next to Eliezer said to himself: “Perhaps the others will hear rumors about me, that

They had a bed upon which they made guests lie down. 5 If he was too long, they would cut him. 4 If he was too short, they would stretch him. 7 Eliezer the servant of Abraham happened to come there, and they said to him: “Come, lie down on the bed.” 8 He said to them: “I took a vow from the day that my mother died not to lie down on a bed.” 6 When a poor person happened to come to them, everyone would give him a dinar, and his name was written on it, and they would not give him bread. 11 When he died, everyone would come and take his dinar. 12 Thus they agreed among themselves: Whoever invites a stranger to a wedding will be publicly humiliated and have his cloak removed. 13 There was a certain wedding, and Eliezer happened to come there, and they did not give him bread. 14 When he wanted to eat, Eliezer came and sat at the end of all of them. 15 They said to him: “Who invited you here?” 16 He said to the one who was sitting: “You invited me.” 17 He said: “Perhaps they will hear rashes.
TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

I invited Eliezer as my guest, and they will come and have my cloak removed from me in public. To avoid this, the person who sat next to Eliezer took his cloak, and ran outside. Eliezer did the same thing to all the people at the table until all the people left the wedding hall, and he ate the entire meal by himself.

It was further related that once there was a certain girl in Sodom who carried bread out to a poor person in a pitcher, so that nobody would see her charitable act, but the matter nevertheless became known. The people of Sodom decided to punish her, and so they smeared her with honey and placed her on the top of the city's wall. Wasps came and stung her until she died. And this is the meaning of the verse that states (Genesis 18:20): "And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great." And Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: The word "great" intimates that God decreed the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of the matter of the girl who was put to death on account of an act of lovingkindness that she had performed.

We have learned in our Mishnah: "The spies who Moses sent out to scout the Land of Israel do not have a portion in the World to Come, as the verse states (Numbers 14:37): 'Now those men who brought the evil report about the land died before the Lord.' They died — in this world. The plague — in the World to Come. The company of Korah do not have a portion in the World to Come, as it is stated: 'And the earth closed upon them' — in this world. And they perished from among the congregation — in the World to Come. These are the words of Rabbi Akiva.

LITERAL TRANSLATION

about me that I invited him and they will remove the garment of that man. The one who sat next to him took his cloak, and ran outside. And he did the same thing to all of them until they all went out, and he ate the meal.

There was a certain girl who carried bread to a poor person in a pitcher. The matter became known. They smeared her with honey and placed her on the roof of the wall. Wasps came and ate her. And this is what is written: "And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great." And Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: About the matter of a girl.

The spies do not have a portion in the World to Come, as it is stated: Now those men who brought the evil report about the land died of the plague. They died — in this world. Of the plague — in the World to Come. The company of Korah do not have a portion in the World to Come, as it is stated: And the earth closed upon them — in this world. And they perished from among the congregation — in the World to Come.

[Rashi: The spies who Moses sent out to scout the Land of Israel do not have a portion in the World to Come, as the verse states (Numbers 14:37): 'Now those men who brought the evil report about the land died before the Lord.' They died — in this world. The plague — in the World to Come. The company of Korah do not have a portion in the World to Come, as it is stated: 'And the earth closed upon them' — in this world. And they perished from among the congregation — in the World to Come. This is the position of Rabbi Akiva.]

NOTES

According to the Midrash, the girl who served the poor person bread was one of the daughters of Lot. The Midrash adds that it was regarding this girl that God said (Genesis 18:21): 'I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to her cry, which is come to me.'