



With Faces of a Dog

The last few *Mishnah* in *masechet Sotah* describe the decline of the Jewish people over history including the *halachic* ramifications. The *Mishnayot* do not only describe the past, but also look forward up until the *ikvut meshicha* – towards the end of the *galut* and just before the time of *maschiach*. Amongst the many details included, the *Mishnah* explains that the “face of the generation [will be] like the face of the dog”. We shall try to understand its meaning.

Rashi (*Sanhedrin* 97a, *Pnei*) in his first explanation appears to take this literally. *Rashi* however provides another explanation that people will no longer be ashamed of one another. In other words, it is a description of their behavior.

The *Tifferet Yisrael* explains that the naturalists understand that one can tell the nature of a person from their face. Their similarity to different animals implies a tendency to traits exhibited by those animals. In this case the trait of a dog is *chatzifut* – insolence. He adds however, that despite the tendency, a person nonetheless has free will and has the capacity to overcome it.

The *Maharsha* (*Sanhedrin* 97a) explains that the name for a dog, *kelev*, originates from the words *kulo lev* – all heart – due to a dog's faithfulness to his master. Unfortunately, that generation resembles the “face” of a dog. In other words, any love shown is only on an external display, a façade. Real love, which is expressed internally, however is lacking.

Interestingly, the *Ben Yehoyada* (*Sanhedrin* 97a) takes the opposite approach understanding that each of the characteristics provided in the *Mishnah* are positive

descriptions. In our case, he explains that the face of the generation refers to its leaders, who will also be “all heart”, recognizing the Creator and being faithful to Master of the world.

Rav Elchanan Vasserman (*Kovetz Mamarim, Ikvuta Demeshicha*, 13) cites *R' Yisrael Salanter*, who explains that when a dog run ahead of his master, it gives the appearance that the dog is leading the master. In truth however, it is the reverse. The dog will regular look backward, and will change its course depending on the actions of master. The *Mishnah* is explaining that in that generation, while the leaders may appear to be leading, in truth they are neglect their responsibility to set the course and are being driven instead by the will of the people.

The *Iyun Yaakov* (*Sotah*) also understands that *pnei hador*, refers to the leaders. Furthermore, like the *Tifferet Yisrael*, he understands that comparing to dogs is a reference to brazenness. That said however, he notes that the leadership is generally a reflection of the people. Given that the *Mishnah* taught that the in that time *chutzpah* would increase, it follows that this would be reflected in the leadership.

Rav Elchanan also cites the *Chafetz Chaim* who explains that when a dog is being beaten by a stick, it has the habit of attacking the stick and not the person administering the blows. The *Chafetz Chaim* explains that towards the end of the *galut*, when *Hashem* provides *makkot* to the Jewish people they will not attribute it to *Hashem*. They will instead insist on waging war with those nations that delivered that blow.

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Revision Questions

סוטה ט' ד' – ט"ו

- Explain the debate regarding from which part of the body the distance to the closest city was measured. (ט' ד')
 - Who would perform the *eglah arufah*? (ט' ה')
 - Where was the *eglah arufah* performed? (ט' ה')
 - What work could be performed on the site of the *eglah arufah*? (ט' ה')
 - Why would the *Beit Din* say: (ט' ו')
- ”דינו לא שפכה את הדם הזה ועינינו לא ראו”
- What would happen to the *egel* if the murderer was found prior to the *arufah*? (ט' ו')
 - Could the murderer be tried if he was found after the performance of the *eglah arufah*? (ט' ו')
 - If one person said they saw the murder and another dismissed his claim, would they still carry out the *eglah arufah*? (ט' ח')
 - From what point did they cease performing *eglah arufah*? (ט' ט')
 - What other process stopped as a result of societal changes? (ט' ט')
 - What ended with the deaths of *Yosi ben Yo'ezer* and *Yosi ben Yochanan*? (ט' ט')
 - What three things did *Yochanan kohen gadol* put an end to and what two things were different in his time? (ט' י')
 - What stopped with the end of the *Sanhedrin*? (ט' י"א)
 - What stopped with the end of the *Nevi'im Rishonim*? (ט' י"ב)
 - What three things ended with the *Churban Ha'Bait*? (ט' י"ב)
 - What does *R' Shimon ben Elazar* say was lost along with *taharah* and *ma'asrot*? (ט' י"ג)
 - What decrees were made as a result of the following events:
 - The war of *Aspasyanus*?
 - The war of *Titus*?
 - The war that resulted in the *churban*? (ט' י"ד)
 - The death of *R' Meir*? *Ben Azai*? *R' Yehoshua*? *R' Elazar ben Azarya*? *R' Akiva*? *Rabban Gamliel HaZaken*? *Rebbi*? (ט' ט"ו)
 - What are the signs of the end of *galut*? (ט' ט"ו)

גיטין א' א'-ב'

- If someone brings a *get* from overseas, what must he say? (א' א')
- What if he is unable to say it? (א' ג')
- According to *R' Yehuda* what are the “borders” of Israel for the laws of *gittin*? (א' ב')

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Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
2 June כ"ה אייר	3 June כ"ו אייר	4 June כ"ז אייר	5 June כ"ח אייר	6 June כ"ט אייר	7 June א' סיון	8 June ב' סיון
Sotah 9:4-5	Sotah 9:6-7	Sotah 9:8-9	Sotah 9:10-11	Sotah 9:12-13	Sotah 9:14-15	Gittin 1:1-2

