



Volume 4. Issue 46

## Do Not Rejoice in the Fall of your Enemies

*Shmuel HaKatan* says: ‘Do not be glad when your foe falls, and when he stumbles let your heart not be joyous. Lest *Hashem* see it and be displeasing in His eyes, and He turn is anger from him’ (*Mishlei*, 24:17-18)

*Avot* 19:4

The *Mishnah* has two clear oddities that require clarification. Firstly, who is *Shmuel HaKatan*, the “Little” *Shmuel*, and how or why did he receive this title; and secondly, and more importantly, why is this brought as a *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avot* – *Shmuel HaKatan* brings no explanation or thoughts of his own, he is simply quoting a *pasuk* from *Mishlei*.

To briefly touch on the first question, two different thoughts are brought down explaining his unique name. In commenting on this *Mishnah*, *Rashi* explains that the title of *HaKatan* was not really a description of him, but more a way of showing the greatness of *Shmuel HaNavi*; that any other *Shmuel* is small in comparison. Alternatively, *Masechet Sotah* (9:13) in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* cites a story which acts as a basis to explain that the title *HaKatan* in no way describes the way we view *Shmuel HaKatan*, but more about the way he viewed himself, and that what is being described is his meekness, self effacing nature and humility.

Considering that *Shmuel HaKatan* gave no further elucidation to these verses from *Mishlei*, it would seem that he believed that in and of themselves they contain an important lesson that needs no further explanation. This very notion of how to relate to the downfall of our enemies, is discussed in several places throughout the *Gemara*, some which at face value appear to contradict these verses, some which come to their support, and many different important ideas arise from them.

But rather than focusing on whether or not one should actually rejoice in the downfall of one’s enemies, let us focus on a separate, but very interesting point that arises from *Shmuel HaKatan*’s words, and the significance of them being brought specifically by him. After the

original *Shemonei Esrei* was compiled by *Shimon KaPekuli*, the bracha of “*VeLamalshinim...*”, a request for the failure of our enemies and the humbling of the wicked, was inserted upon the request of *Rabban Gamliel*. Its authorship is attributed to *Shmuel HaKatan* – the very person who felt it so important to tell us that we should not be rejoicing at the downfall of our foes.

How can we reconcile this seemingly puzzling occurrence, and what does it teach us? *David Hamelech*, known to have praised *Hashem* at every point of his life, says in *Tehillim* (104:35): “Sins will cease from the earth, and the wicked will be no more; bless *Hashem...*” and in a somewhat surprisingly similar vein, the *Gemara* does not even question whether or not *David* is contradicting the verses from *Mishlei*.

What this shows us, and this is possible what *Shmuel HaKatan* was trying to teach us, is that there is a big difference between praising *Hashem* for the downfall of our foes and our salvation from their influence on our lives, and relatively ‘over-rejoicing’ when this does happen. *David* was not questioned for praising *Hashem* in the aforementioned quote from *Tehillim*, because *David* praised *Hashem* at all stages of his life and in every personal context – when he was conceived, when he was born and amongst many others when evil was destroyed from in front of him – he did not save the praising of *Hashem* for times only when he was in some sort of enemy related dilemma. What *Shmuel HaKatan* wants us to realise and understand is not that we should not rejoice in the downfall of our enemies, and not that we should not pray that our antagonists are unable to stand before us and defeat us, but that just as we do thank *Hashem* and celebrate when our prayers are answered and our foes do fail in their attempts, we should also be able to do so in less dire circumstances. Through *all* stages of life we should be recognising the role that *Hashem* is playing in everything that is happening around us, just as *David HaMelech* did, and that for everything that goes on, not just the downfall of enemies, we should equally be recognising, thanking and praising *Hashem* for his part played.

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**Revision Questions**

אבות ד': י"ח – ה': ט'

- According to *R' Shimon ben Elazar* what are the four times when one should not confront/see his friend? (ד': י"ח)
- What *passuk* is central to the *Mishnah* in the name of *Shmuel Ha'Katan*? (ד': י"ט)
- To what does *Elisha ben Avuya* compare one that learns when he is young? (ד': כ')
- To what does *R' Yosi bar Yehuda ish Kfar HaBavli* compare learning from an elderly sage? (ד': כ')
- Who argues with *R' Yosi bar Yehuda* and what is his rationale? (ד': כ')
- According to *R' Eliezer* what three things remove a person from the world? (ד': כ"א)
- What eight "roles" of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* should one be conscious of and inform others about? (ד': כ"ב)
- What five events occurred and will occur against our will? (ד': כ"ב)
- Why was the world created with ten utterances? (ה': א')
- Why were there ten generation from: (ה': ב')
  - *Adam to Noach*?
  - *Noach to Avraham*?
- Who bore ten trials? (Two people.) (ה': ג-ד')
- What four things numbered ten as *Yisrael* was taken out of *Mitzrayim*? (ה': ד')
- What were the ten miracles in the *Beit Ha'Mikdash*? (ה': ה')
- What ten things were created on *erev Shabbat bein ha'shmashot*? (ה': ו')
- What seven traits are found in a *Chacham*? (ה': ז')
- What calamities are a result of the following public sins:
  - Some people stop separating *ma'asrot*?
  - Everyone stops separating *ma'asrot*?
  - People stop separating *challah*?
  - *Chayavei critut* or *mitah bidei shamayim*?
  - Trading with *shmittah* produce?
  - Corruption in the courts and *halacha*? (ד': ח')
  - *Chillul Hashem*?
  - The three cardinal sins? (ה': ט')
- At what four times is there an increase in *dever* and why? (ה': ט')

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**Next Week's Mishnayot...**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
6 <sup>th</sup> April א' ניסן	7 <sup>th</sup> April ב' ניסן	8 <sup>th</sup> April ג' ניסן	9 <sup>th</sup> April ד' ניסן	10 <sup>th</sup> April ה' ניסן	11 <sup>th</sup> April ו' ניסן	12 <sup>th</sup> April ז' ניסן
Avot 5:10-11	Avot 5:12-13	Avot 5:14-15	Avot 5:16-17	Avot 5:18-19	Avot 5:20-21	Avot 5:22-23

