

What's Behind Door #2?

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Proverbs 8:34

משלי ח:לד

אֲשֶׁר־יִאֲדָם שִׁמְעַע לִי לְשִׁקֹּד עַל־דַּלְתוֹתַי יוֹם יוֹם לְשָׁמֵר מְזוּזוֹת פְּתָחַי:

Happy is the person who listens to me, who comes quickly to my doors every day, to guard the door posts of my entrance ways.

Questions to Consider:

- About which doors do you think the verse talking?
- What doors do you regularly guard?
- What doors do you happily go to and guard?

Malbim ad loc.

מלבי"ם משלי פרק ח:לד

אשרי אדם שומע לי לשקוד על דלתותי יום יום, מצויר את החכמה שהיא יושבת סגורה בהיכלה כבודה בת מלך פנימה, לא תתראה לאיש והדלתות סגורות, והמבקש אותה צריך לשקוד בשקידה רבה על דלתות הסגורות לשמור מזוזות פתחי, לשמור את העת שיפתח הפתח שאז ימצא החכמה בעת תתראה דרך הפתח:

The verse describes wisdom, sitting closed up in her holy sanctuary, for the glory of the daughter of the king is internal. She is not seen by others for the doors to her are closed. One who seeks her must continually guard the door and the entry way until it is opened. Then, she might be seen through the entrance.

Rashi ad loc.

רש"י משלי ח לד

על דלתותי - להכנס ראשון לבית המדרש ולבית הכנס' ולצאת אחרון:

"My doors"- be the first to enter the study hall and the shul and the last to leave.

people Israel to inherit.^[16] ולא עוד אלא שגורם גלות לו ולבניו – And not only that but he brings exile upon himself and his descendants, שנאמר – as the verse continues and states with regard to those evil neighbors: „הגני נתשם מעל אדמתם – Behold, I am uprooting them from their land” ואת-בית יהודה – and I will uproot the House of Judah from among them.^[17]

The Gemara records a dialogue relevant to attendance at the synagogue:

איבא סבי – They said to R' Yochanan: תמה ואמר – There are elderly people in Babylonia.^[18] – [R' Yochanan] said in amazement: „למען ירבו ומיכם וימי – It is written:^[19] In order to prolong your days and the days of your children upon the land that Hashem has sworn to your ancestors to give them, which is a reference to Eretz Yisrael. אכל בחוץ לארץ לא – This implies, however, that outside of Eretz Yisrael there is no promise of a long life. כיון דאמרי ליה מקרמי ומחשבי לבי כנישתא – Once they told [R' Yochanan] that [the elders of Babylonia] are people who arise early to attend synagogue in the morning and stay late in the synagogue in the evening,^[20] אמר היינו דאקני להו – he said: That is the merit that gained them their long lives. As R' Yehoshua ben Levi said to his sons: קדימו וחשיבו ושיילו לבי כנישתא – Arise early and stay late when going to the synagogue – כי היכי דתורכו חי – in order that your days should be prolonged.^[21]

The Gemara offers the Scriptural source:

אמר רבי אחא בר ר' חנינא – R' Acha bar R' Chanina said: מאי

– What is the verse that teaches us that this is the reward for arriving early and staying late in the synagogue? „אשרי אדם – Happy is the man who listens to Me, who comes quickly to My doors every day, to guard the doorposts of My entranceways.”^[22] ובהיב – And it is written immediately afterwards: „כי מצא – For he who finds Me finds life.”^[23]

The Gemara records a ruling related to the above verse:^[24]

אמר רב חסדא – Rav Chisda said: לעולם יבנס אדם שני פתחים – A person should always enter through two doors in the synagogue.^[25]

The Gemara expresses surprise:

אמר רב חסדא – Can you think Rav Chisda means that a person must enter through two doors of a synagogue? What would one do if a synagogue did not have two doors?

The Gemara therefore revises its interpretation:

אמר רב חסדא – Rather, say that this is what Rav Chisda meant: When a person enters a synagogue he should walk into it a distance equal to the width of two doors, and subsequently pray.^[26]

The Gemara before spoke of prayers offered at a favorable time. Now, the Gemara discusses prayers offered in regard to a specific time:

„על-זאת ותפלל כל-חסיד אליך לעת מצא” – Regarding this let every devout man pray to You: at the time [needed], a finding.^[27] I.e. he should pray that in his moment of need, he will find that God has supplied what he requires. What, precisely, is this moment of need and what is the “finding” supplied?

NOTES

16. The term “inheritance” in this verse refers to Eretz Yisrael, but it can also refer to the synagogues outside of Eretz Yisrael, as the Gemara states (*Megillah* 29a): The synagogues and study halls in Babylonia are destined to be established in Eretz Yisrael in the Messianic era (*Maharsha*).

17. Truancy from the synagogue is punished with exile, measure for measure: The Divine presence rests upon ten or more men praying together. This person's absence, however, prevented the completion of a *minyan* and he thus “exiled” the Divine Presence from the synagogue. Correspondingly, he is exiled himself (*Iyun Yaakov*).

18. I.e. extremely aged people, similar to R' Yochanan himself. *Seder HaDoros (Tannaim V'Amoraim, R' Yochanan §6)* cites several opinions that R' Yochanan lived to an unusually old age (*Ben Yehoyada*; cf. *Pnei Yehoshua*).

19. *Deuteronomy* 11:21.

20. That is, they spend a long time in the synagogue (*Rashi*).

21. One who prolongs his stay in the synagogue is rewarded measure for measure by having his life prolonged (*Rabbeinu Yehonasan MiLunel*).

R' Yochanan was puzzled as to how there could be old people in Babylonia since the Diaspora is excluded from the blessing of longevity. The mystery was resolved when he learned that those old persons spent much of their time in the synagogue: The Gemara states (*Megillah* *ibid.*) that the synagogues and study halls in Babylonia are destined to be established in Eretz Yisrael in the Messianic age. Because of this future disposition, one who prays in a synagogue is as if he were in Eretz Yisrael. Thus, Eretz Yisrael's blessing of longevity extends to him as well (*Maharsha, Yad David* et al.; see *Asifas Zekeinim*).

22. *Proverbs* 8:34. Who comes quickly to My doors every day is a reference to those who arise early to go to the synagogue, and to guard the doorposts of My entranceways is a reference to those who stay late in the synagogue as if they are guarding the entrances of the synagogue at night (*Maharsha*). Alternatively, the word לשמר should be understood “to wait” [see *Genesis* 37:11]: The end of the verse should then be translated, to wait [until the end of the day] at the doorposts of My entranceways (*Re'ah*).

23. *Proverbs* 8:35. God is found in the synagogue (see above, 6a): He

24. See end of note 26.

25. [At this point, the Gemara understands this literally: A person should pass through two doors when entering a synagogue.]

26. He should not sit next to the door, for then he appears as if remaining in the synagogue is burdensome to him and he is therefore positioning himself in order to exit quickly (*Rashi*). *Rabbeinu Yonah* states that this is the law if one has no set place in the synagogue; however if a person has a set place and it is next to the door, he may pray there: In this case, it is well known that he is in that spot simply because it is his permanent seat [and people will not suspect him of wishing to make a fast exit].

There is a dispute as to the span of “two doors” width”: *Orchos Chaim* (cited by *Beis Yosef, Orach Chaim* 90 מיד ולא ישהו) states it is 8 *tefachim* [or about 2-2 2/3 feet]; *Peirush HaRosh* (printed in *Ein Yaakov*) maintains that according to *Rashi* it is 8 *amos* [or about 12-16 feet].

Rashba explains Rav Chisda to mean one should wait a certain length of time before praying. This will assure that one's mind is settled, that he is aware of before Whom he stands and that he will not stumble over his words or thoughts. Certainly, he should not rush to pray the instant he enters the synagogue (see also *Rosh*). *Ritva* states that such haste is the custom of simpletons.

Others explain that Rav Chisda meant to distance a person in the midst of prayer from the distractions visible through the synagogue doors (*Sefer HaMichtam, Tur Orach Chaim* 90 in the name of *Maharam of Rottenburg*). *Sfas Emes* writes (*Tavo*, 5646) in the name of R' *Simchah Bunim of Peshischa* that before praying one should pass through two “doors,” the door out of the earthly realm and the door into the Heavenly realm. Only then should he pray.

According to the *Yerushalmi (Berachos* 5:1), Rav Chisda derives his ruling from the verse cited above: Happy is the man who listens to Me, who comes quickly to My doors every day, to guard the doorposts of My entranceways. The verse is expounded in *Devarim Rabbah* 7:2 as follows: What does the phrase, who comes quickly to My doors, mean? The Holy One, Blessed is He, said: If you have gone to pray inside the synagogue, do not stand next to the outer door in order to pray there; rather, intend to enter a door beyond the door... and why [should you do] so? Because the Holy One, Blessed is He, counts your steps and gives