

SAGE 2: SIMEON THE JUST – שמעון הצדיק

Pirkei Avot: Who Are These Sages?

June 2, 2007

משנה מסכת אבות פרק א

(ב) שמעון הצדיק היה משגיחי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר, על שלשה דברים העולם עומד, על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים:

Simeon the Just was of the last survivors of the Men of the Great Assembly. He used to say, the world is based upon three things: on Torah, on service [of G-d], and on acts of kindness."

תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא דף טז/א

בעשרים וחמשה [בטבת] יום הר גרזים [הוא] דלא למספד יום שבקשו כותיים את בית אלהינו מאלכסנדרוס מוקדון להחריבו ונתנו להם באו והודיעו את שמעון הצדיק מה עשה לבש בגדי כהונה ונתעטף בבגדי כהונה ומיקירי ישראל עמו ואבוקות של אור בידיהן וכל הלילה הללו הולכים מצד זה והללו הולכים מצד זה עד שעלה עמוד השחר כיון שעלה עמוד השחר אמר להם מי הללו אמרו לו יהודים שמרדו בך כיון שהגיע לאנטיפטרס זרחה חמה ופגעו זה בזה כיון שראה לשמעון הצדיק ירד ממרכבתו והשתחוה לפניו אמרו לו מלך גדול כמותך ישתחוה ליהודי זה אמר להם דמות דיוקנו של זה מנצחת לפני בבית מלחמתי אמר להם למה באתם אמרו אפשר בית שמתפללים בו עליך ועל מלכותך שלא תחרב יתעוך עובדי כוכבים להחריבו אמר להם מי הללו אמרו לו כותיים הללו שעומדים לפניך אמר להם הרי הם מסורין בידיכם מיד נקבום בעקביהם ותלאום בזנבי סוסיהם והיו מגררין אותן על הקוצים ועל הברקנים עד שהגיעו להר גרזים כיון שהגיעו להר גרזים חרשוהו וזרעוהו כרשינין כדרך שבקשו לעשות לבית אלהינו ואותו היום עשאוהו יום טוב אי בעית אימא ראוין לבגדי כהונה ואי בעית אימא עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך:

The twenty-fifth of Tebeth is the day of Mount Gerizim, on which no mourning is permitted. It is the day on which the Cutheans demanded the House of our God from Alexander the Macedonian so as to destroy it, and he had given them the permission, whereupon some people came and informed Simeon the Just. What did the latter do? He put on his priestly garments, robed himself in priestly garments, some of the noblemen of Israel went with him carrying fiery torches in their hands, they walked all the night, some walking on one side and others on the other side, until the dawn rose. When the dawn rose he [Alexander] said to them: Who are these [the Samaritans]? They answered: The Jews who rebelled against you. As he reached Antipatris, the sun having shone forth, they met. When he saw Simeon the Just, he descended from his carriage and bowed down before him. They said to him: A great king like yourself should bow down before this Jew? He answered: His image it is which wins for me in all my battles. He said to them: What have you come for? They said: Is it possible that star-worshippers should mislead you to destroy the House wherein prayers are said for you and your kingdom that it be never destroyed! He said to them: Who are these? They said to him: These are Cutheans who stand before you. He said: They are delivered into your hand. At once they perforated their heels, tied them to the tails of their horses and dragged them over thorns and thistles, until they came to Mount Gerizim, which they ploughed and planted with vetch, even as they had planned to do with the House of God. And that day they made a festive day. If you like say: They were fit to be priestly garments, or, if you like, say: It is time to work for the Lord: they have made void Thy law.

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 11

After Alexander captured Gaza he hurried to go to the city of Jerusalem. The priest Jeddiah heard of this and became fearful...He went out with the priests and many citizens and welcomed [Alexander of Macedon]...When Alexander saw, from a far, the multitudes in their white clothing...he kneeled and bowed before the Lord and greeted the high priest.

משנה מסכת פרה פרק ג

(ה) ל' א מצאו משבע, עושין משש, מקמש, מארבע, משלש, משתים, ומאחת. ומי עשאם, הראשונה עשה משה, והשנייה עשה עזרא, וקמש, מעזרא ואילך, דברי רבי מאיר. ונקמם אומרים, שבע מעזרא ואילך. ומי עשאן, שמעון הצדיק ויוחנן כ' הו גדול עשו שתים שמים, אליהו עיני בן הקור וחנומאל המצרי וישמעאל בן פיאיבי עשו אחת אחת:

If they did not find the residue of the ashes of the seven [red cows] they performed the sprinkling with those of six, of five, of four, of three, of two or of one, and who prepared these? Moses prepared the first, Ezra prepared the second, and five were prepared since Ezra; so R. Meir. But the sages stated: seven were prepared since the days of Ezra. And who prepared them? Simeon the just and Johanan the high priest prepared two, Eliehoenai the son of Ha-kof and Hanamel the Egyptian and Ishmael the son of Piabi prepared one each.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת נזיר דף ד/ב

אמר שמעון הצדיק מימי לא אכלתי אשם נזיר טמא חוץ מאדם אחד שבא אלי מן הדרום יפה עינים וטוב רואי וקווצותיו סדורות לו תלתלים אמרתי לו בני מה ראית לשחת שער נאה זה אמר לי רועה הייתי לאבי בעירי והלכתי לשאוב מים מן המעיין ונסתכלתי בבבואה שלי ופחזו יצרי עלי וביקש לטורדני מן העולם אמרתי לו ריקה מפני מה אתה מתגאה בעולם שאינו שלך שסופך להיות רמה ותולע' העבודה שאגלחך לשמ' עמדתי ונסקתיו על ראשו אמרתי לו כמותך ירבו נזירים בישראל עליך הכתוב אומר איש כי יפליא לנדור נזיר להזיר לה'

Simon the Just said: In the whole of my life, I ate of the guilt-offering of a defiled nazirite [only once]. This man who came to me from the South country, had beautiful eyes and handsome features with his locks heaped into curls. I asked him: 'Why, my son, didst thou resolve to destroy such wonderful hair?' He answered: 'In my native town. I was my father's shepherd, and, on going down to draw water from the well, I used to gaze at my reflection [in its waters]. Then my evil inclination assailed me, seeking to compass my ruin, and so I said to it, "Base wretch! Why dost thou plume thyself on a world that is not thine own, for thy latter end is with worms and maggots. I swear I shall shear these locks to the glory of Heaven!"' Then I rose, and kissed him upon his head. and said to him: 'Like unto thee, may there be many nazirites in Israel. Of such as thou art, does the verse say, When a man shall clearly utter a vow, the vow of a nazirite to consecrate himself unto the Lord.'

תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא דף לט/א

תנו רבנן ארבעים שנה שמש שמעון הצדיק היה גורל עולה בימין מכאן ואילך פעמים עולה בימין פעמים עולה בשמאל והיה לשון של זהורית מלבין מכאן ואילך פעמים מלבין מכאן והיה נר מערבי דולק מכאן ואילך פעמים דולק פעמים כבה והיה אש של מערכה מתגבר ולא היו כהנים צריכין להביא עצים למערכה חוץ משני גזירי עצים כדי לקיים מצות עצים מכאן ואילך פעמים מתגבר פעמים אין מתגבר ולא היו כהנים נמנעין מלהביא עצים למערכה כל היום כולו ונשתלחה ברכה בעומר ובשתי הלחם ובלחם הפנים וכל כהן שמגיעו כזית יש אוכלו ושבע ויש אוכלו ומותר

Our Rabbis taught: Throughout the forty years that Simeon the Righteous ministered, the lot ['For the Lord'] would always come up in the right hand; from that time on, it would come up now in the right hand, now in the left. And [during the same time] the crimson-coloured strap would become white. From that time on it would at times become white, at others not. Also: Throughout those forty years the westernmost light was shining, from that time on, it was now shining, now failing; also the fire of the pile of wood kept burning strong, so that the priests did not have to bring to the pile any other wood besides the two logs, in order to fulfill the command about providing the wood unintermittently; from that time on, it would occasionally keep burning strongly, at other times not, so that the priests could not do without bringing throughout the day wood for the pile [on the altar]. [During the whole period] a blessing was bestowed upon the 'omer, the two breads, and the showbread, so that every priest, who obtained a piece thereof as big as an olive, ate it and became satisfied with some eating thereof and even leaving something over.

תנו רבנן אותה שנה שמת בה שמעון הצדיק אמר להם בשנה זו הוא מת אמרו לו מניין אתה יודע אמר להם בכל יום הכפורים היה מזדמן לי זקן אחד לבוש לבנים ועטוף לבנים נכנס עמי ויצא עמי והיום נזדמן לי זקן אחד לבוש שחורים ועטוף שחורים נכנס עמי ולא יצא עמי אחר הרגל חלה שבעה ימים ומת ונמנעו אחיו הכהנים מלברך בשם

Our Rabbis taught: In the year in which Simeon the Righteous died, he foretold them that he would die. They said: Whence do you know that? He replied: On every Day of Atonement an old man, dressed in white, wrapped in white, would join me, entering [the Holy of Holies] and leaving [it] with me, but today I was joined by an old man, dressed in black, wrapped in black, who entered, but did not leave, with me. After the festival [of Sukkoth] he was sick for seven days and [then] died. His brethren [that year] the priests forbore to mention the Ineffable Name in pronouncing the [priestly] blessing.

Ecclesiasticus Chapter 50 - The praises of Simon the High Priest.

Simon the high priest, the son of Onias, who in his life propped up the house, and in his days fortified the temple. By him also the height of the temple was founded, the double building and the high walls of the temple. In his days the wells of water flowed out, and they were filled as the sea above measure. He took care of his nation, and delivered it from destruction. He prevailed to enlarge the city, and obtained glory in his conversation with the people: and enlarged the entrance of the house and the court. He shone in his days as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full. And as the sun when it shineth, so did he shine in the temple of God. And as the rainbow giving light in bright clouds, and as the flower of roses in the days of the spring, and as the lilies that are on the brink of the water, and as the sweet smelling frankincense in the time of summer. As a bright fire, and frankincense burning in the fire. As a massy vessel of gold, adorned with every precious stone. As an olive tree budding forth, and a cypress tree rearing itself on high, when he put on the robe of glory, and was clothed with the perfection of power. Clothed with the perfection of power.. That is, with all the vestments denoting his dignity and authority. When he went up to the holy altar, he honoured the vesture of holiness. And when he took the portions out of the hands of the priests, he himself stood by the altar. And about him was the ring of his brethren: and as the cedar planted in mount Libanus. And as branches of palm trees, they stood round about him, and all the sons of Aaron in their glory. And the oblation of the Lord was in their hands, before all the congregation of Israel: and finishing his service, on the altar, to honour the offering of the most high King. He stretched forth his hand to make a libation, and offered of the blood of the grape. He poured out at the foot of the altar a divine odour to the most high Prince. Then the sons of Aaron shouted, they sounded with beaten trumpets, and made a great noise to be heard for a remembrance before God. Then all the people together made haste, and fell down to the earth upon their faces, to adore the Lord their God, and to pray to the Almighty God the most High. And the singers lifted up their voices, and in the great house the sound of sweet melody was increased. And the people in prayer besought the Lord the most High, until the worship of the Lord was perfected, and they had finished their office. Then coming down, he lifted up his hands over all the congregation of the children of Israel, to give glory to God with his lips, and to glory in his name: And he repeated his prayer, willing to shew the power of God. And now pray ye to the God of all, who hath done great things in all the earth, who hath increased our days from our mother's womb, and hath done with us according to his mercy. May he grant us joyfulness of heart, and that there be peace in our days in Israel forever:

