

שיטתיה לסבא – The (custom) [myrtle] was an aid for the elder

OVERVIEW

When ר"ש בר ר"י passed away a pillar of fire separated him from the rest of the people. זירא commented that this was due to his style of dancing before the כלה. There are three versions as to how זירא actually expressed this thought. The last version was that אהני שיטתיה לסבא. רש"י explains the word שיטתיה to mean his שטיט; his style and approach. תוספות offers a different interpretation.

פירש רבינו חננאל מלשון שטה והדס (ישעיה מ"א) -

The ר"ה interpreted the word שיטתיה that it is from the expression in a פסוק 'a שטה tree and a myrtle tree'. He was referring to the הדס (myrtle) as a שטה.

אף על גב דלא הוי ממש מין אחד מכל מקום שניהם מין ארז² -

Even though the שטה and the הדס are not exactly one species, nevertheless they are both a type of ארז (cedar). Therefore it is appropriate to refer to the הדס as a שטה.

תוספות asks:

ואם תאמר ומנא ליה דבשביל כן זכה³ -

And if you will say; how did זירא know that ר"ש בר ר"י merited the fire surrounding him on account of the dancing with the הדס?

תוספות answers:

ויש לומר דעמוד דנורא היה כעין שיבשא דהדס -

רב שמואל בר רב יצחק said that the pillar of fire that surrounded רב שמואל was similar in appearance to a myrtle branch –

כדאמרין בבראשית רבה (פרשה ס"א) נחת שיבשא דנורא ואיתעבידא כעין שיבשא דהדס -

As it is stated in ב"ר (concerning the passing of רב שמואל) a column of fire descended and it became similar in form to a myrtle branch –

ואפסקת בין ידיה לחברוהי –

And it separated between רשב"י and his peers –

¹ פסוק יט. The נביא is enumerating the various trees with which הקב"ה will populate the desert.

² The גמרא in (כג,א) states that there are ten types of ארז, including והדס.

³ It would seem that תוספות's question is appropriate according to all versions of זירא's statement.

⁴ In our texts it is in נט,ד.

אמרי חמית הדין סבא דקאי שישבא דנורא קומיה משום דעביד קמוהי דכלתא -

The peers said, 'see this elder that a pillar of fire is standing before him. This is **because of what he did in front of the כלה**'; that he danced before her with the myrtle branches.

SUMMARY

The term שיטתיה refers to the שטה tree which is a type of ארז similar to the הדס tree. They knew that the pillar of fire that separated רשב"י was on account of his dancing with הדסים, because the fire was shaped as a הדס branch.

THINKING IT OVER

1. How can one explain the dispute between רשב"י and the ר"ה concerning the meaning of שיטתיה?
2. According to the ר"ה that שיטתיה refers to the הדס (which is similar to שטה) what is the difference between the first לשון of זירא ר' (which is אהני לו) and this לשון of [רב"י ד"ה שוטיתיה] שוט של הדס, referring to the שוטיתיה (since they both refer to a הדס)?!⁵

⁵ See שטמ"ק בשם הריטב"א.