

Fables from the Jewish Tradition  
By Rabbi Manes Kogan

(29)

**The Rooster and the Bat**  
Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 98b



**Background to the Fable "The Rooster and the Bat"**

Day of the Lord

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A day described by the Biblical prophets. On the Day of the Lord, God will punish the wicked and justice will ultimately triumph.

The prophets used the Day of the Lord as a warning to the people; the impression was given that it would happen in the near future so that now was the time to turn away from evil ways. The prophet Malachi promises that Elijah will return to earth before the great and terrible day of the Lord (Ch. 3:4) and this is the origin of the belief that Elijah will be the herald of God's \*messiah.

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**Question: "What is the day of the Lord?"**

**Answer:** The phrase "day of the Lord" usually identifies events that take place at the end of history (Isaiah 7:18-25) and is often closely associated with the phrase "that day." One key to understanding these phrases is to note that they always identify a span of time during which God personally intervenes in history, directly or indirectly, to accomplish some specific aspect His plan.

Most people associate the day of the Lord with a period of time or a special day that will occur when God's will and purpose for His world and for mankind will be fulfilled. Some scholars believe that the day of the Lord will be a longer period of time than a single day

The phrase "the day of the Lord" is used nineteen times in the Old Testament (Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1,11,31; 3:14; Amos 5:18,20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7,14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi. 4:5) and four times in the

New Testament (Acts 2:20; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10). It is also alluded to in other passages (Revelation 6:17; 16:14).

The Old Testament passages dealing with the day of the Lord often convey a sense of imminence, nearness, and expectation: "Wail, for the day of the Lord is near!" (Isaiah 13:6); "For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near" (Ezekiel 30:3); "Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand" (Joel 2:1); "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14); "Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near" (Zephaniah 1:7). This is because the Old Testament passages referring to the day of the Lord often speak of both a near and a far fulfillment, as does much of Old Testament prophecy. Some Old Testament passages that refer to the day of the Lord describe historical judgments that have already been fulfilled in some sense (Isaiah 13:6-22; Ezekiel 30:2-19; Joel 1:15, 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:14-18), while others refers to divine judgments that will take place toward the end of the age (Joel 2:30-32; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:1, 5).

Besides being a time of judgment, it will also be a time of salvation as God will deliver the remnant of Israel, forgiving their sins and restoring His chosen people to the land He promised to Abraham (Isaiah 10:27; Jeremiah 30:19-31, 40; Micah 4; Zechariah 13). The final outcome of the day of the Lord will be that "the arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day" (Isaiah 2:17). The ultimate or final fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the day of the Lord will come at the end of history when God, with wondrous power, will punish evil and fulfill all His promises.

## Amos Chapter 5

1. *Hear you this word which I take up against you, a lamentation, O house of Israel.*
2. *The virgin of Israel has fallen; she shall rise no more; she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.*
3. *For thus says the Lord God; The city that went forth a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went forth a hundred shall have ten left for the house of Israel.*
4. *For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel, Seek me, and you shall live;*
5. *But do not seek Beth-El, and do not enter into Gilgal, or pass over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Beth-El shall come to nothing.*
6. *Seek the Lord, and you shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and none will be there to quench it in Beth-El.*
7. *You who turn judgment to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the ground,*
8. *Seek him who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns the deep darkness into morning, and makes the day darken into night; who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth. The Lord is his name;*
9. *Who sends forth destruction against the strong, the destruction that comes against the fortress.*
10. *They hate him who rebukes in the gate, and they loathe him who speaks uprightly.*
11. *Therefore, since you trample upon the poor, and you take from him exactions of wheat, you have built houses of cut stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine of them.*
12. *For I know your many transgressions, and your mighty sins; you who afflict the just, you who take a bribe, and turn aside the poor at the gate.*
13. *Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.*
14. *Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as you have spoken.*
15. *Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*

16. Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, said thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the farmer to mourning, and to wailing those who are skilled in lamentation.

17. And wailing shall be in all vineyards; for I will pass through you, says the Lord.

18. Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light.

19. As if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned with his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

20. Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light? Very dark with no brightness in it?

21. I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell the sacrifices of your solemn assemblies.

22. Though you offer me burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them; nor I will regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

23. Take away from me the noise of your songs; for I will not listen to the melody of your lutes.

24. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

25. Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

26. But you shall carry Sikuth your king, and Kiyun, your images, your star-god, which you made for yourselves.

27. And I will cause you to go into exile beyond Damascus, says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.

**?** Whom is the Prophet Amos addressing in the above harsh words?

**?** Why, according to the Prophet Amos, the day of the Lord will be darkness and no light?

### **The Rooster and the Bat** Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 98b

סנהדרין דף צח.ב

דרש רבי שמלאי: מאי דכתיב (עמוס ה') הוי המתאווים את יום ה' למה יזוה לכם יום ה' הוא חשך ולא אור משל לתרנגול ועטלף שהיו מצפין לאור, אמר ליה תרנגול לעטלף: אני מצפה לאורה - שאורה שלי היא, ואתה למה לך אורה?

A rooster and a bat were waiting for the dawn. The rooster said to the bat, "I am waiting for the daylight, which is mine to announce. But of what use is it to you?"

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#### **Comprehension and Analysis Questions**

**?** Why was the rooster waiting for the dawn?

**?** Why isn't the light of use to the bat?

#### **Marcelo Ferder's Drawing**

**?** How does the bat look in Marcelo Ferder's drawing?

## Note on “The Rooster and the Bat”

Rabbi Simlai uses our fable to explain the following verse: “Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light” (Amos 5:18).

Thus, for the evil ones, as well as for the bat of our fable, the day of the Lord will not be a day of light, but rather of darkness and disgrace.

## More Comprehension and Analysis Questions

**?** Why do you think are the wicked waiting for the Day of the Lord if for them is darkness and not light?

**?** Do you know of people who wait for “something” that is not meant for them?

**?** How could we apply our fable to everyday situations, like job searching situations, dating, choosing a career, etc.?

## Wrapping Up



Be sure you do your homework before you yell: “pick me”!

## Discussion Ideas from Rabbi Dorit Edut

**Omit for K-3rd: too abstract to make any sense to them.**

### 4<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> GRADES:

- 1)  
What did the rooster mean by his question to the bat?
- 2)  
The picture seems to show us two characters looking at things in totally opposite ways. What could this mean about what they were each looking forward to?
- 3)  
What do you have to do to understand people who may see things very differently from you? If you know such people, how can you relate to one another?

### 7<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> GRADES:

- 1)  
What does the illustration add to the possible meaning of this fable?
- 2)  
What things have you ever valued for one reason, while your friend or relative valued them for an entirely different reason?
- 3)  
The fable relates to a prophetic idea of “The Day of the Lord” (Amos 5:18). What is meant by this? How would you envision this happening if you were to describe this day in modern language and with modern ideas about our world? Some Evangelical Christian groups talk about this day and believe it will come in our lifetime; why do you think it is important to them? What connection is there between this and the Jewish concept? How are they different?

## **Language Arts Strategies from Dr. M. Patricia Cavanaugh**

### **Pre-Reading Strategy: Provide Background Information**

Prior to reading this very short fable, provide students information on the natural habitats and behaviors of roosters and bats. This gives students necessary understanding of characters in the text, and it also opens a door to discussion because the note to this fable states that the bat is evil, and that is often an incorrect perception of bats. This could open up discussion of other incorrect assumptions that people hold including stereotypes that led to the Holocaust.