



DERECH B'YAM HATALMUD



**A GUIDED APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING
THE ACCOUNT OF THE CHURBAN IN**

**מסכת גיטין
דף נה:-נו.**

**Part I
The Story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza**

Rabbi Michoel Gros

Dedicated in memory of Gittel bas Shlomo ע"ה

Derech B'Yam HaTalmud presents a guided approach to aid in the learning and teaching of the גמרא with the understanding of the commentators.

The גמרא in גיטין מס' from the bottom of נה: until the bottom of נה. discusses some of the causes of the חרבן of the second המקדש, and events during it. The following is an elucidation of the first section of the גמרא.

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How To Use This E-Book

Derech B'Yam HaTalmud provides a guided approach to aid in the learning and teaching of גמרא בעיון. This E-Book is arranged to provide the tools to encourage independent study of the גמרא and its commentators (but it is not a replacement for learning directly from a teacher).

The E-Book is divided into two sections which cover the גמרא from מס' גיטין דף נה--נו.

Each **Section** is divided into two segments. The first is a guide for the **Preparation** of the גמרא and the commentators. The second is the **Analysis** of these sources.

The Preparation segment begins with an **Overview** which provides a summary of the particular issues which will be covered in the section.

Following the Overview is a list of מראה מקומות sources which should be learned in preparation. The sources will be analyzed and explained within the Analysis portion.

The מראה מקומות do not list every comment of רש"י, but it is recommended to learn all of his comments on the piece of גמרא since they provide essential background information. Specific comments of רש"י are highlighted, and they should be learned in depth since they will be analyzed in the text.

Next is the **Points to Consider** page which highlights particular themes and topics which you should explore as you learn the sources. These items will be discussed in the analysis text of the unit.

The Analysis segment of each section follows the Points to Consider page. It begins with an indented, italicized summary of the specific section of גמרא which will be discussed. This is followed by the text which guides the learning and examination of the sources. Other citations of the גמרא appear throughout the analysis section also as indented text.

Questions brought in the text explore specific issues which will be addressed. It is recommended to try to suggest answers to these questions on your own before seeing how the text answers them.

Please send comments and questions to derechbyam@gmail.com

Wishing you tremendous success in your learning,

Michoel Gros

SECTION ONE



What Did Kamtza Do Wrong? (Why is he blamed for the destruction of ירושלים?)

מס' גיטין דף נה:-נו.

OVERVIEW

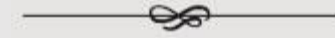
Beginning on the bottom of גמרא, the גמרא recounts several of the tragedies which befell the Jewish people during the חרבן, as well as the causes of these events.

The commentators discuss some of the factors which led to these tragedies.

מראה מקומות

- גמרא מ-נה: "אמר רבי יוחנן" עד נו. "בי מלכא"
- תוס' (נה: ד"ה "אשרי איש...")
- מהרש"א (ד"ה "אמר דאזל..." עד "שהוא הזמינו")
- מהר"ל (חדושי אגדות מ- ד"ה "ואמר" עד "וברורים מאד")
- בן יהוידע (ד"ה "אקמצא ובר קמצא חרוב ירושלים")
- מהר"ל (חדושי אגדות "וכאשר")

SECTION ONE



POINTS TO CONSIDER

Point One – When is it good to be afraid?

The גמרא on the bottom of גה: גיטין quotes a verse from Mishlei which says that it is good for a person to be in a constant state of fear.

How can this statement be understood? Why would this be a praiseworthy emotion?

In addition, the גמרא appears to be using this statement as an introduction to its recounting of the events of the חרבן which follow. What is the connection between this statement and those events?

See (ד"ה "מפחד") רש"י and (ד"ה "אשרי איש...") תוס' who suggest explanations of the verse and how it connects to the events of the חרבן.

Point Two – Why does the גמרא focus on the destruction of ירושלים specifically?

The גמרא says that the episode of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza was the reason that the city of ירושלים was destroyed during the חרבן. From the way that the גמרא presents the story, it would seem to be saying that this is the reason for the *entire* חרבן, not only of the city of ירושלים. Why does the גמרא say that this is the reason that ירושלים was destroyed specifically?

See the מהר"ל (חדושי אגדות מ-ד"ה "ואמר" עד "וברורים מאד").

Point Three – Why is Kamtza blamed for the חרבן?

The גמרא describes a fight between Bar Kamtza and an unnamed enemy of his (the host of the party), but it says that the חרבן was caused by Kamtza and Bar Kamtza. What was Kamtza's role in the incident, and why is he blamed for the destruction?

The מהר"ל (חדושי אגדות "וכאשר") and the בן יהוידע (ד"ה "אקמצא ובר קמצא חרוב ירושלים") discuss details of the episode, how the men's names allude to the events and why Kamtza was culpable.

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Summary of the גמרא

The גמרא, beginning towards the bottom of גיטין דף נה: discusses the causes of the חרבן of the second המקדש בית המקדש and certain events related to it.

אמר רבי יוחנן – The גמרא begins its account with an elucidation of a verse from Mishlei which teaches: "אשרי אדם מפחד תמיד..." – "praiseworthy is the man who is always afraid."

QUESTION: Why does the verse teach that it is good for a person to be afraid? It would appear that being afraid is not a proper emotion!

What is the value of the fear that the verse advocates, and how does it relate to the story of the חרבן?

(ד"ה "מפחד") רש"י explains that the פסוק is teaching that a person should contemplate his actions and worry that a negative outcome might emerge from them.

(ד"ה "אשרי איש...") תוס' gives two lessons of this verse:

First, a person needs to be afraid lest he forgets his learning. Therefore חוזר על משנתו תמיד – he should constantly review what he learns so this does not occur.

Second, תוס' explains that many of the events of the חרבן were caused because particular Jews who בטחו על רוב טובתם ושלוותם – trusted in the security of their personal situations. This gave them excessive confidence and caused them to act inappropriately. Specifically, he says this caused the host of the party to embarrass Bar Kamtza, as the גמרא will teach, and to react strongly in an episode which the גמרא will recount later involving the daughter of the Caesar.

והיה להם לפחד ולדאג – He says that the Jews in these two events should have been afraid and feared that פורענות – repercussions – might come from their actions.

וּלֹא דְמִי לְאָדָם הַמֵּתַפְחֵד בְּחֵנֶם – it is not similar to fear for no reason, which people should avoid.

(We see from the explanations of רש"י and תוס' the importance of anticipating the outcomes of one's actions. The necessity of this outlook can be seen in the way that the גמרא presents the events of the חרבן here. It explains that seemingly insignificant actions by multiple people had dramatic effects which ultimately led to the destruction of the בית המקדש.)

אקמצא ובר קמצא חרוב ירושלים – The גמרא continues and says that the city of ירושלים was destroyed because of an episode involving the men Kamtza and Bar Kamtza.

אתרנגולתא חרוב... – The גמרא mentions other locales which were also destroyed during the years of the חרבן, due to particular events which occurred there. The גמרא will elucidate each event on the coming pages.

The גמרא in ט. יומא דף ט. says that the חרבן of the second בית המקדש was caused by the שנאת חנם – baseless hatred – among the Jewish people at the time.

The יומא in (ד"ה "אבל מקדש ב'...") מהרש"א says that the episode of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza is a sign of the שנאת חנם which was prevalent among the Jewish people in this time period. The incident involving them marked the beginning of the חרבן.

QUESTION: There appears to be an incongruity here. Since the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza was a sign of the שנאת חנם which caused the overall חרבן of the בית המקדש, why does the גמרא here say that it was the cause of the destruction of ירושלים in particular? Why is it focusing on only one part of the tragedy?

Does the גמרא here specifically focus on the city of ירושלים to match the other episodes that it mentions, or is it teaching a particular message?

The מהר"ל (חדושי אגדות מ-ד"ה "ואמר" עד "וברורים מאד") says that each of the locations listed here was destroyed due to a specific reason which was appropriate for it.

He explains that the בית המקדש and the city of ירושלים are locations which represent the unity of the Jewish people, where they come together כאיש אחד – like one person. The goal of the בית המקדש is to bring שלום among the members of the nations. He notes, for example, that there is only a single מזבח (altar) inside the בית המקדש where offerings can be brought, representing the Jewish people coming together to serve ה'. This in comparison to the earlier practice of allowing each person to build his own במה – private altar – where he can offer his own קרבנות.

Therefore, he says that when the גמרא attributes the destruction of ירושלים to the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, it is indicating that the division between people which was seen in the story was the cause of the חרבן of both the בית המקדש and the city of ירושלים. Since both of these locations represent unity, they were destroyed due to שנאת הינם expressed in this episode.

אקמצא ובר קמצא חרוב ירושלים – The גמרא continues and explains the details of the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza:

ההוא גברא – There was a man, דרחמיה קמצא – who had a friend named Kamtza, ובעל דבביה בר קמצא – and an enemy named Bar Kamtza.

אמר ליב לשמעיה "זיל אייתי לי קמצא" – The man made a party. עבד סעודתא – He told his servant, "go, bring Kamtza." אול אייתי ליה בר קמצא – He went and instead brought Bar Kamtza to the party.

אתא אשכחיה דהוא יתיב – (When the host arrived at the party) he found that Bar Kamtza was sitting there. אמר ליה "מכדי דהוא גברא בעל דבבא דההוא – He (the host) asked him, "since you are the enemy of this man (me)," מאי בעית הכא? קום פוק!" – "What are you doing here? Get up and leave!"

אמר ליה "הואיל ואתאי" – Bar Kamtza replied, "since I already came," שבקן ויהיבנא לך דמי מה דאכילנא ושתינא" – "let me be and I will pay you for what I eat and drink." אמר ליה "לא" – The host replied, "No!"

אמר ליה "יהיבנא לך דמי פלגא דסעודתך" – Bar Kamtza said, "I will pay you for half of the entire meal." Again, the host refused.

"אמר ליה..." – Bar Kamtza then offered to pay for the entire meal, but his offer was rejected.

נקתיה בידיה ואוקמיה ואפקיה – The host then grabbed Bar Kamtza and threw him outside.

אמר - Bar Kamtza "הואיל והווי יתבי רבנן ולא מחה בה שמע מינה קא ניחא להו" – (to himself), "since the Rabbis were sitting there and did not protest, it must be that they agreed with him."

"איזיל איכול בהו קורעא בי מלכא" – "I will go and spread rumors to the Roman government about the Jews." (As explained by רש"י.)

The ("ד"ה "ואמר הואיל..." א"ה) מהרש"א explains that the Rabbis in attendance felt that they did not have the ability to protest against the host's actions. (However, their hesitancy to respond may have been incorrect.)

The ("ד"ה "ואמר הואיל..." א"ה) ברכת אברהם cites: מס' שבת דף קיט: which attributes the חרבן to the failure of the Rabbis at the time to give proper תכונה – rebuke – to people. The ברכת אברהם says that this episode is an example of that statement.

The גמרא also says that another cause of the חרבן is that people failed to give proper respect to Torah scholars. This was also seen in this episode (through the actions of Bar Kamtza).

QUESTION: The גמרא continues and explains how Bar Kamtza falsely accused the Jewish nation of rebelling against the Roman empire, which ultimately led them to destroy the בית המקדש. However, the roots of that tragedy came from the events which occurred at the party between him and the host.

If so, why does the גמרא say that ירושלים was destroyed due to both Kamtza and Bar Kamtza? The episode related by the גמרא only involves a fight between the host of the party and Bar Kamtza. Why is Kamtza blamed for the חרבן as well, since it appears from the text of the גמרא that he was not involved in the story at all?

The ("ד"ה "אקמצא ובר קמצא חרוב ירושלים") בן יהוידע cites the עיון יעקב who asks: Kamtza had no role in the episode! The גמרא should therefore say that ירושלים was destroyed only due to Bar Kamtza.

The בן יהוידע suggests an answer to this question. He cites the teaching (from מס' שבת נד: of: דכל מי שיש בידו למחות ולא מיחה – any person who has the ability to protest another person's actions and does not, נקרא הדבר על שמו – the event is called by his name.

He explains that when the host yelled at Bar Kamtza to leave the party, Kamtza was also sitting in the house. He had the ability to protest and convince the host not to throw out Bar Kamtza. Since he did not do so, he is considered a partner in the host's actions and its repercussions.

The בן יהוידע cites the ("ד"ה "ואמר דאזל..." א"ה) מהרש"א who suggests that Kamtza was the father of Bar Kamtza, and he was aware of the ill feelings between the host and his son. He should have tried to make שלום between them. Since he did not, the event is called by his name.

The (חדושי אגדות "וכאשר") מהר"ל says that the names of the men involved in the episode allude to their errors. He says that the name Kamtza represents חלוק ופירוד – separation and divisiveness. He cites several examples in which words with the root קמץ represent separation, including the act of קמיצה, of separating a portion of flour to place it on the מזבח.

The מהר"ל explains that the men in this episode (Bar Kamtza and the host) were known in ירושלים because of the severity of their fight. Their actions were the cause of the destruction of the very city which stands for the unity of the Jewish people.

But if so, what did Bar Kamtza do wrong? What does the גמרא say that he is one of the causes of the חרבן?

The מהר"ל answers that the friendship between Kamtza and Bar Kamtza was a one of פירוד, of separating from and excluding others. Kamtza was aware of the fight which was raging between Bar Kamtza and the party's host. He knew that by befriending Bar Kamtza, this would further enflame the fight, and yet he did not hesitate to do so.

Thus, instead of the friendship between Kamtza and Bar Kamtza being one which would encourage more love among members of the Jewish people, it caused just the opposite, more division between people.

The purpose of ירושלים is to unite the Jews, so it was appropriately destroyed due to שנאת חנם present in the people of the time, as displayed by Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, the men whose very names represent separation.

SECTION TWO

A Plot Fueled by Anger

מס' גיטין דף נו.

OVERVIEW

The גמרא on .נו continues its discussion of the story involving Bar Kamtza. It relates how he went to the Roman government and falsely accused the Jews of rebelling against them.

The גמרא centers on the debate of the Rabbis concerning how to respond to Bar Kamtza's plot. The commentators analyze their arguments.

מראה מקומות

- גמרא נו. מ- "איזיל איכול בהו" עד "והגליתנו מארצנו"
- מהרש"א (ד"ה "דשדא ביה מומא...")
- מאירי (ד"ה "לעולם...")
- מהר"ץ חיות (ד"ה "ענותנותו...")
- מהרש"א (ד"ה "ואמר יאמרו...")
- מהר"ל (נה: מ-ד"ה "ומעתה" עד "דוקא ישראל")

SECTION TWO



POINTS TO CONSIDER

Point One – Understanding the allusions of the מומים

See the ("ד"ה "דשדא ביה מומא...") מהרש"א who says that the מומים which Bar Kamtza made in the animal contain allusions to the sins of the Jews of the generation.

Point Two – Understanding the deliberation of the Rabbis

The גמרא says that the Rabbis considered accepting the Caesar's sacrifice, even though it had a מום. How could they do so, since this would violate a negative prohibition?

They also considered killing Bar Kamtza to stop him from returning to the Caesar to report that the Jews did not accept his קרבן. Why did he deserve this?

See the מאירי in ("ד"ה "לעולם...") and the ("ד"ה "ענותותו...") מהר"ץ חיות who explain points in the conversation of the Rabbis. (brought in the מפרשים (ילקוט מפרשים)

The ("נה: מ-ד"ה "ומעתה" עד "דוקא ישראל") מהר"ל provides deep insight into the underlying issues of the episode, Bar Kamtza's plot and the response of the Rabbis.

Point Three – Which event(s) caused the הרבן?

The גמרא here attributes the הרבן to several people and events. Did all of these together cause the הרבן together, or did they each lead to specific parts of it?

The ("ד"ה "ואמר יאמרו...") מהרש"א and the ("ד"ה "החריבה...") מהר"ם שיף discuss the interplay of the various people and circumstances cited by the גמרא.

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גמרא Summary of the

The גמרא towards the top of דף נו. continues its explanation of the events which led to the destruction of בית המקדש and ירושלים.

"איזיל איכול בהו קורצא בי מלכא" – The גמרא says that after Bar Kamtza was thrown out of the party in the presence of the Rabbis, he decided to travel to the Roman government to make a false and malicious claim that the Jews were rebelling against them.

"מרדו בכ יהודאי" – He went to the Caesar and said, "the Jews are rebelling against you."

"מי יימר" – The Caesar replied to him, "who told you?"

"שדר להו קורבנא חזית אי מקרבין ליה" – He replied, "send an animal (to the בית המקדש) as an offering and see if it is accepted."

"אול שדר בידיה עגלא תלתא" – He went and sent with Bar Kamtza a third-born cow (a choice offering). *"בהדי דקאתי שדא ביה מומא בניב שפתים"* – As Bar Kamtza was bringing it up, he made a מום – wound – in the animal's upper lip. *"ואמרי לה בדוקין שבועין"* – Others say that he caused a cataract to form in the animal's eye.

The ("ד"ה "דשדא ביה מומא...") – The מהרש"א says that the placement of the מום was an allusion to the sins of the Jews which led to the חרבן. According to the opinion that Bar Kamtza made a מום in the animal's lip, this is representative of the Jews of the generation speaking לשון הרע.

According to the opinion that he injured the animal's eye, this is a sign of the Jews' negative outlook towards others, specifically shown by the party's host not wanting Bar Kamtza to benefit from his party, and then by embarrassing him.

"דוכתא דלדין הוה מומא ולדידהו לאו מומא הוא" – The גמרא says that the particular location of the wound invalidates an offering according to the Jews, but it does not do so according to the rules of the non-Jews.

The גמרא continues and describes the debate among the Rabbis of how to respond to Bar Kamtza's attempt to frame the Jewish people:

סבור רבנן לקורבניה – The Rabbis thought that they should offer the animal, משום שלום מלכות – to encourage peace with the government.

– Rav Zecharia ben Avkulos said, "if we do so, people will say that it is permitted to sacrifice blemished animals."

– The Rabbis then suggested that they should kill Bar Kamtza to prevent him from returning to the Caesar and maligning the Jews by saying that they refused to accept his offering.

The מאירי in (ד"ה "לעולם...") explains that it would have been permitted to kill Bar Kamtza because he was guilty of inciting the non-Jewish government against the Jews.

– Rav Zecharia said, "if we do so, people will say that anyone who makes a blemish in the body of an offering is killed" (but this is incorrect).

– Rabbi Yochanan said, "ענוותנותו של רבי זכריה בן אבקולוס" due to the humility of Rav Zecharia ben Avkulos, "החריבה את ביתנו ושרפו" – "our house (the המקדש) was destroyed, and the sanctuary was burnt and we were exiled from our land."

רש"י (ד"ה "ענוותנותו") says the term humility here refers to the excessive tolerance of Rav Zecharia ben Avkulos that he did not permit Bar Kamtza to be killed.

Several questions need to be answered to understand these events:

QUESTION ONE: What was the consideration of the Rabbis of שלום מלכות, and why would this have permitted them to accept an offering which had a מום?

QUESTION TWO: What was the final decision of the Rabbis? Was the calf brought as an offering?

QUESTION THREE: There was an easier solution to the dilemma of the Rabbis. Why did they not send a message to the Caesar that they could not accept an animal with a blemish? This would have avoided the misunderstanding which led to the destruction!

QUESTION FOUR: What is the meaning of the phrase, the humility of Rav Zecharia ben Avkulos, and why was it the cause of the destruction?

Understanding the term שלום מלכות and why it would have allowed the acceptance of the blemished animal from the Caesar

The גמרא says that the Rabbis considered accepting the animal of the Caesar, despite its disqualifying מום, for the purpose of maintaining peace with the Roman government.

How can this be understood, since offering an animal with a מום as a קרבן is a לא תעשה (negative prohibition)?

The מגן אברהם (תרנו:ח) cites the (ילקוט מפרשים) מהר"ץ חיות (ד"ה "ענותותו...") who explains that it is permitted to violate a לא תעשה for the purpose of אימת המלכות – fear of the government. In this case, the Roman government was threatening the entire Jewish people, so it would have been warranted for them to offer the blemished קרבן to avoid this danger.

The מהר"ץ חיות cites an opinion of the גמרא in מס' יומא which says that Shimon HaTzaddik was permitted to leave the בית המקדש wearing the clothing of the כהן גדול to greet Alexander the king (even though this is normally not allowed). There as well, this was a unique case because of a fear that Alexander would act harshly against the Jews if not given the proper respect.

The מהר"ץ חיות continues and says that the Jews would have been justified in killing Bar Kamtza because he had the status of a רודף – pursuer, whom it is permitted to kill. However Rav Zecharia ben Avkulos convinced them not to do so. He did not hold himself to have enough standing as a leader of the nation to be able to order Bar Kamtza to be killed in this case.

This is the meaning of the statement that the excessive humility of Rav Zecharia ben Avkulos was the cause of the חרבן. According to the conclusion of the גמרא, Rav Zecharia acted improperly, and he should have let Bar Kamtza be executed.

The מהר"ץ חיות compares Rav Zecharia's actions to the statement of the גמרא that the Rabbis should have protested the actions of the host when he ejected Bar Kamtza from his party.

Understanding why the Jews could not accept the blemished animal

The **מהר"ל** (נה: מ-ד"ה "ומעתה" עד "דוקא ישראל") says that the events of the חרבן of ירושלים began due to the actions of Kamtza (and Bar Kamtza) and continued until the destruction of the בית המקדש. He explains that the city of ירושלים and the מזבח bring שלימות – completion – to the entire world. He cites a Midrash which says that if the non-Jews would be aware of the benefit which the בית המקדש provides to them, they would have built it themselves out of gold.

He says that since the בית המקדש is meant to bring שלימות to the entire world (and not only to the Jewish people), therefore the תורה commands us to accept (certain) offerings sent by non-Jews (see מס' מנחות דף עג:).

For this reason as well, the non-Jews do not have a desire to destroy the בית המקדש. The destruction could only be due to an event of disunity among the Jews themselves, which would conflict with the goal of שלמות which the בית המקדש is supposed to provide. Therefore when Bar Kamtza separated himself from the Jewish people to try to persuade the Romans to attack them, this set the events of the destruction in motion.

The **מהר"ל** says that even though the בית המקדש serves a purpose for the entire world, ultimately it belongs to the Jewish people, and it demonstrates that we are not under the control of the non-Jewish nations.

Bar Kamtza wished to make this point clear to the Caesar, that the Jews do not consider themselves to be under his control, specifically due to the presence of the בית המקדש among them. Therefore, he specifically engineered a plot which he knew would cause a rift between the Jewish people and the Roman government regarding this point.

The גמרא emphasizes that the blemish which he caused in the animal invalidates it only for the Jews, but not for the Romans. The **מהר"ל** says that the non-Jews look at the overall body of the animal to judge if it is fit to be an offering. It is permitted to bring a קרבן with a slight imperfection, as long as it is not missing an entire limb.

However for an animal to be fit to be a קרבן for the Jewish people, it must be perfect in its body and all of its details.

The Rabbis knew that if they sent a message to the Caesar that his animal was unfit to be offered, this would emphasize the difference between our rules and theirs. But of even greater importance, it would demonstrate that the בית המקדש itself shows that the Jewish people are not under the control of the Romans.

The Caesar wished that the entire world would be under his control. The presence of the Jewish nation as an independent entity to his rule, as shown by the presence of the בית המקדש, was a clear statement that we were not under his control. The Caesar would be enraged if he heard this.

Recognizing that this was the intent of Bar Kamtza, the Rabbis knew that they could not send a message to the Caesar explaining the true reason why they did not accept his offering.

QUESTION FIVE: The גמרא here attributes the destruction to Rav Zecharia ben Avkulos, but the גמרא earlier attributed it to the שנאת חנם from the episode of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza. Which of these is the true cause?

QUESTION SIX: How can the גמרא here attribute all of the events of the חרבן to the actions of the men who were involved in this episode, since the גמרא elsewhere attributes it the original events of the spies?

The ("ד"ה "ואמר יאמרו...") מהרש"א suggests that even though the exile of the Jews had already been decreed due to the שנאת חנם of the time, this did not necessarily mean that the בית המקדש would have been destroyed. He says that it is possible that if the Jews had accepted the Caesar's blemished animal and offered it on the מזבח, the Romans would have spared the בית המקדש.

However once the Jews did not bring the Caesar's offering, this was the final seal in the minds of the Romans on their decision to destroy the בית המקדש because they said, "for what use is this to us?"

The ("ד"ה "החריבה...") מהר"ם שיף says that even though the destruction of the בית המקדש had already been decreed, these events caused the חרבן to occur at this moment.

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