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Megillah Daf 24

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MISHNAH: One who reads from the Torah should not read less than three verses. He should not read for the translator more than one verse. (*It was customary in those days to have someone interpret the words of the Torah during the reading for the unlearned among them. They shouldn't explain more than one verse at a time because it will lead to mistakes.*) Regarding the Prophets; three verses can be interpreted at one time. However, if the three verses are from three different sectioned, they should be interpreted one by one.

We are permitted to skip from one section to another in the Prophets but not when reading the Torah. How far can one skip? Until the interpreter would be forced to pause. (*The reader should be able to scroll to the new section while the interpreter is still translating.*) (23b3 - 24a1)

The Gemora asks: What do these three verses represent?

Rav Assi said: The Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Writings. (24a1)

The Mishnah had stated: He should not read for the translator more than one verse. Regarding the Prophets; three verses can be interpreted at one time. However, if the three verses are from three different sectioned, they should be interpreted one by one.

The Gemora cites an example of this: For thus said Hashem, "You were sold for nought"; For thus said the Lord God, "My people went down initially to Egypt"; "Now, what do I have here," said Hashem. (24a1)

The Mishnah had stated: We are permitted to skip from one section to another in the Prophets but not when reading the Torah.

The Gemora asks a contradiction from the following Mishnah: The Kohen Gadol would read the portion of *Acharei Mos* and the passage which begins with "However, on the tenth day..." [*He would skip the verses in between these two passages. How then do we allow the Kohen Gadol to skip in the Torah?*]

Abaye answers: It is permitted there because the interpreter will not be forced to pause. (*The reader should be able to scroll to the new section while the interpreter is still translating.*)

The Gemora asks: It would appear from our Mishnah that when reading the Torah, it is prohibited to skip at all. The Mishnah had stated: We are permitted to skip from one section to another in the Prophets but not when reading the Torah. How far can one skip? Until the interpreter would be forced to pause. (*The reader should be able to scroll to the new section while the interpreter is still translating.*) It is evident that he is not permitted to skip in the Torah at all!

Abaye answers: One is permitted to skip even when reading from the Torah if both portions of the Torah are pertaining to one subject matter. The Gemora cites a *Baraisa*, which supports this distinction: The reader may skip in the Torah when they both are one subject, and in the Prophets - even if he goes on to another subject; and in both cases (it is permitted) only so far that the translator will not be forced to pause (before he finds the place).

It has been taught in another place: The reader may not skip from one Prophet to another. In the Book of the Twelve Prophets, he may skip, provided that he does not skip from the end of the book to the beginning. (24a1 – 24a2)

MISHNAH: The (*usual*) reader of the *haftorah* in the Prophets, is the one who divides the *Shema*, and acts as the chazzan for Shemoneh Esrei, and providing that he is a Kohen, may perform the priestly blessing. If the reader of the *haftorah* was a minor, his father or his teacher go on his behalf.

A minor may read in the Torah and he may interpret, but may not divide the *Shema*, nor act as the chazzan for Shemoneh Esrei, and he may not perform the priestly blessing.

A person whose legs are uncovered may divide the *Shema* and he may interpret, but he may not read in the Torah, nor act as the chazzan for Shemoneh Esrei, and he may not perform the priestly blessing.

One who is blind may divide the *Shema* and he may interpret. Rabbi Yehudah says: Someone who has not seen light in his lifetime (he was blind from birth) may not divide the *Shema*. (24a2)

What is the reason (as to why the (*usual*) reader of the *haftorah* in the Prophets is awarded all the other rights mentioned in the Mishnah)? Rav Pappa said: It is to honor him (*to compensate him for the fact that he reads the haftorah in the Prophets, which was not considered an honor*). Rabbah bar Shimi said: It is to ensure that he would not fight with the chazzan.

What is the practical difference between the two explanations? - In a case where the chazzan perform gratis.

The Gemora asks on Rabbah bar Shimi from our Mishnah: If the reader of the *haftorah* was a minor, his father or his teacher go on his behalf. If now you say it is to avoid a fight, will a child pick a fight?

The Gemora counters: What then? It is a mark of honor? Does a child receive marks of honor? What you must say is, out of honor for his father and his teacher. So here too, there is the question of fights, involving his father or his teacher. (24a3 – 24b1)

The Mishnah had stated: A person whose legs are uncovered may divide the *Shema*, etc.

Ulla bar Rav inquired of Abaye: Is a child in rags allowed to read in the Torah? He replied: You might as well ask about a naked one. Why is one without any clothes not allowed? Out of respect for the congregation. So here, it would be forbidden as well out of respect for the congregation. (24b1)

The Mishnah had stated: One who is blind may divide the *Shema* and he may interpret. Rabbi Yehudah says: Someone who has not seen light in his lifetime (he was blind from birth) may not divide the *Shema*.

The Gemora cites a Baraisa: The Chachamim said to Rabbi Yehudah: There have been many people who attempted to explain the Merkavah (*the vision of Hashem and His angels that were shown to Yechezkel*) although they never actually saw it. (*It would therefore stand to reason that even a blind man can recite the blessing of the luminaries and be permitted to divide the Shema.*) Rabbi Yehudah disagreed with the correlation between the two: Explaining the Merkavah is dependent on understanding and one can understand without actually seeing it; one can only recite the blessing on the luminaries if he has received benefit from them and therefore a blind man from birth is excluded.

The Gemora explains the Chachamim's position by citing a Baraisa: Rabbi Yosi said: "All my life I was troubled by this verse [Devarim 28:29]: And you shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness. What does it matter to the blind person whether he is in darkness or whether he is in the light? Until an incident occurred with me, that I was walking in the dark of night and I saw a blind person who was going

on his way with a torch in his hand. I said to him, my son, why do you have this torch? He responded, 'While I have the torch in my hand, people see me and rescue me from pits and from thorns and from thistles.'" It emerges that a blind man can recite the blessing of the luminaries since he indirectly derives benefit from them because other people see him, and prevent him from stumbling into obstacles. (24b1)

MISHNAH: A Kohen who has blemishes on his hands may not recite the priestly blessing. Rabbi Yehudah says: Even a kohen whose hands were dyed, may not recite the priestly blessing because the people stare at him. (24b1 – 24b2)

It was taught in a Baraisa: Blemishes on the face, hands or feet of a kohen disqualify him from reciting the priestly blessing (*since he must remove his shoes, the people will observe the blemishes and eventually look at his hands*).

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: If his hands are spotted he should not raise his hands (to recite the priestly blessing). It has been taught in a Baraisa similarly: If his hands are spotted, he should not raise his hands (to recite the priestly blessing). If they are curved forward or bent sideways, he should not raise his hands (to recite the priestly blessing).

Rav Assi said: A Kohen from Haifa or Beis Shean should not raise his hands (to recite the priestly blessing). It has been taught in a Baraisa to the same effect: We do not send down before the ark either men from Beis Shean or from Haifa or from Tivonin, because they pronounce 'alef 'as 'ayin,' and 'ayin' as 'alef.'

Rabbi Chiya said to Rabbi Shimon ben Rebbe: If you were a Levite, you would not be qualified to stand on the platform (and sing) because your voice is heavy. He went and told his father who said to him: Go and say to him, "When you come to the verse: And I will hope to God, will you not be a reviler and a blasphemer? [He pronounced a 'ches' as a 'hey.']

Rav Huna said: A Kohen whose eyes run (with tears) should not raise his hands (to recite the priestly blessing).

The Gemora asks: But was there not one in the neighborhood of Rav Huna who used to raise his hands (to recite the priestly blessing)?

The Gemora answers: The townspeople had become accustomed to him. It has been taught in a Baraisa to the same effect: A man whose eyes run should not raise his hands (to recite the priestly blessing), but if the townspeople are accustomed to him, he is permitted.

Rabbi Yochanan said: A Kohen blind in one eye should not raise his hands (to recite the priestly blessing).

The Gemora asks: But was not there one in the neighborhood of Rabbi Yochanan who used to raise his hands (to recite the priestly blessing)?

The Gemora answers: The townspeople had become accustomed to him. It has been taught in a Baraisa to the same effect: A man whose blind in one eye should not raise his hands (to recite the priestly blessing), but if the townspeople are accustomed to him, he is permitted.

The Mishnah had stated: Rabbi Yehudah says: Even a kohen whose hands were dyed, may not recite the priestly blessing because the people stare at him. A Tanna stated: If most of the men of the town follow the same occupation it is permitted. (24b2 – 24b3)

MISHNAH: If one says, "I will not pass before the ark [to act as prayer leader] in colored clothing," he must not pass before it in white clothing either. [If he says], "I will not pass before it in shoes, he must not pass before it barefoot either. One who makes his tefillin [for the head] round is endangering himself, and has not fulfilled any mitzvah. If he puts them on his forehead (and not above his hairline) or on the palm of the hand (and not on his biceps) – this is a manner of heresy. If he coated them with gold or put [the

one for the hand] on his sleeve- this the manner of the outsiders. (24b3)

GEMARA: [In colored clothing]. What is the reason [why he must not act as prayer leader]? We are apprehensive that he has a leaning towards heresy. (24b3)

The Mishnah had stated: One who makes his tefillin [for the head] round is endangering himself, and has not fulfilled any mitzvah. May we say that our Mishnah teaches here the same as our Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: That tefillin should be square is a law set down by Moshe at Sinai, and Rava explained [this to mean] in their stitching and in their diagonal? — Rav Pappa said: The Mishnah is speaking only of those which are made as round as a nut (but round like a bean may be acceptable). (24b3)

DAILY MASHAL

GAZING AT THE KOHANIM'S OUTSTRETCHED HANDS

The Mishnah had stated: A Kohen who has blemishes on his hands may not recite the priestly blessing. Rabbi Yehudah says: Even a Kohen, whose hands were dyed, may not recite the priestly blessing because the people stare at him.

Rashi explains: At the time when the Kohanim recited the priestly blessing, the Divine Presence rests on their outstretched hands.

Tosfos (Chagigah 16a) asks: That only happened in the times that the Beis Hamikdosh was in existence and the Kohanim used the Ineffable Name of Hashem, and therefore nowadays, there should be no prohibition against gazing at the Kohanim's hands.

Tosfos learns that it is nevertheless forbidden to look at the Kohanim in order not to be distracted from what they are saying.

Turei Even writes that Rashi only wrote that explanation in the Mishnah which ruled regarding blemishes on their hands and not on their faces or feet. This is because the Mishnah is referring to the times when the Beis Hamikdosh was standing and the reason one cannot gaze is because of the Divine Presence that is resting upon their outstretched hands.

The commentators ask: Why weren't we concerned for lack of concentration in the times of the Beis Hamikdosh?

Dvar Avraham answers based on a Hafla'ah in Kesuvos (24b) that just like a Kohen has an obligation to recite the Priestly blessing one time per day, so too the Israelites have an obligation to be blessed by the Kohanim only once per day. If the congregation heard the priestly blessing and are now listening again, there would be no concern for lack of concentration (since they fulfilled their mitzvah already), but they still would not be able to gaze at the Kohanim's hands because of the Divine Presence that is resting on their hands.