



Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler, Kollel Boker Beachwood

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**Tzvi Gershon Ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o"n**

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The *Mishna* asks: How do we know that if a woman discharges semen on the third day (after intercourse) she is *tamei*? It is because it is written (prior to the giving of the Torah): *Be ready for a three day period.* [The verse continues: *do not come near a woman. The Tanna understands this to mean that intercourse was prohibited to them for three entire days before the giving of the Torah, which took place on the fourth day. This proves that a discharge within this period would render her tamei for the day of the discharge, whereas all had to be tahor at the Revelation. The men did not need such a commandment, for even if they would become tamei through the emission of semen, they could become tahor again by immersing in a mikvah on that very same day.*]

The *Mishna* continues: How do we know that a circumcised child may be bathed (even) on the third day after circumcision which falls on *Shabbos*? [How do we know that the infant is still in danger until three days have elapsed, and therefore the *Shabbos* may be desecrated on its account (just as it would be for any critically ill person) by boiling the water for such a child?] It is because it is written: *and it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain.*

The *Mishna* continues: How do we know that a red-colored strap (of wool) is tied to the head of the goat that is sent (to *Azazel* on *Yom Kippur*)? It is because it is written: *if your sins will be as crimson wools, they shall become as white as snow.* [By a miracle, this crimson

*colored strap turned white as the goat fell down the cliff; this showed the people that they were forgiven of their sins.*]

The *Mishna* continues: How do we know that anointing is the same as drinking on *Yom Kippur* (that it is also forbidden)? Though there is no proof of this, yet there is a hint to it, for it is written: *and it came like water into his inward parts, and like oil into his bones.*

The *Gemora* notes: The first clause does not agree with Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah, while the second clause does agree with Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah, for if it (the first clause) were according to Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah, we have heard from him that she (who emits semen on the third day after intercourse) is *tahor*.

The *Gemora* suggests: He who does not want to explain a *Mishna* as reflecting the views of two *Tannaim* learns 'she is *tahor*' in the first clause (instead of *tamei*), and therefore establishes the entire *Mishna* in accordance with Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah. While he who does explain it as the views of two *Tannaim* holds that the first clause agrees with the Rabbis, while the second is according to Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: If a woman discharges semen on the third day (after intercourse), she is *tahor*; these are the words of Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah. Rabbi Yishmael said: This sometimes comprises four periods (each period consisting of twelve hours), sometimes

five, and sometimes six periods. He holds that she is *tamei*. [Now, if cohabitation took place at the very beginning of Thursday evening while the discharge occurred at the end of the Shabbos, we have six periods; if at the end of Thursday night, five; and if at the end of Thursday, four. In all cases she is *tamei*.] Rabbi Akiva maintained: It (*the tumah*) is always five periods. And if part of the first period has gone (*before intercourse has taken place*), a part of the sixth period is given to her.

Now the Rabbis stated this before Rav Pappa, and others say, Rav Pappa stated this to Rava: As for Rabbi Elozar ben Azaryah, it is well, for he holds with the Rabbis, who maintain that abstention (*from intimacy before Revelation*) was effected on Thursday. [The Giving of the Torah took place on Shabbos, at the very beginning of which (on Friday night) they performed their ritual immersion to purify themselves. Now some may have cohabited on Thursday before dusk, and yet they were fit for the Revelation on Shabbos, which shows that a discharge of semen on the third day (including the day of intercourse) does not defile.] And, Rabbi Yishmael holds with Rabbi Yosi that abstention was effected on Wednesday (*for then, there would be four periods before the Revelation*). But with whom does Rabbi Akiva agree? [The Torah speaks of days, which implies that whether intimacy took place at the beginning or at the end of the day, she would be *tahor* on the third (or, the fourth, according to Rabbi Yosi) day, irrespective of the numbers of 'periods' that elapsed.]

The *Gemora* answers: Rabbi Akiva holds as Rabbi Yosi, but it is as Rav Adda bar Ahavah said: Moshe ascended early in the morning and descended early in the morning. He ascended early in the morning, for it is written: *and Moshe rose up early in the morning, and ascended to Mount Sinai*. He descended early in the

morning, for it is written: *Go, descend; and you shall then ascend and Aaron with you*. This likens the descent to the ascent: just as the ascent was early in the morning, so was the descent early in the morning. [Accordingly, there were five full periods of abstinence before the immersion prior to the Revelation.]

The *Gemora* asks: But why did Moshe have to tell them (*to abstain in the morning*)? Surely, Rav Huna said: The Israelites are holy, and do not cohabit by day (*for it is regarded as immodest, since in the full light, one may gaze at his wife's private parts*)?

The *Gemora* answers: But Rava said: If the house is in darkness, it is permitted. Rava also said, and others state, Rav Pappa said: A scholar (*who may be trusted not to gaze under these conditions*) may cause darkness with his garment, and it is then permitted. [Accordingly, it was necessary for Moshe to instruct them to abstain from marital relations, even on Wednesday morning, for this way, it would ensure that there were five full periods of abstinence before the immersion prior to the Revelation.]

The *Gemora* asks: But they were *tevul yom*? [If they immersed themselves on Friday evening, they would not be thoroughly *tahor* until the following evening, as a *tevul yom* does not become *tahor* until the evening after his immersion. Therefore we must assume that they immersed on Friday afternoon, and thus they would become completely *tahor* on Friday night, in which case there is one 'period' short on all views.]

Abaye bar Ravin and Rabbi Chanina bar Avin both say: The Torah was given to *tevul yom*.

Mereimar sat and reported this discussion. Ravina said to him: Do you say that it was given, or that it was fitting (*that it should be given to people who were tevul*

yom)? He replied: I mean that it was fitting (for they immersed on Friday afternoon; this way, they were completely *tahor* by Friday night). [No woman emitted semen after this immersion, for if they would have, they would need to immerse on Friday night, causing them to be a *tevul yom* on Shabbos day – the day that the Torah was given.]

The *Gemora* asks: Yet they should have immersed Friday evening and received the Torah Friday evening?

Rabbi Yitzchak said: It is written: From the beginning, I have not spoken in secret. [The Torah had to be given in broad daylight.]

The *Gemora* asks: Yet they could have immersed on Shabbos morning and received the Torah on Shabbos morning?

Rabbi Yitzchak said: It was unfitting that some should go to receive the Torah while others went to immerse themselves.

Rabbi Chiya the son of Rabbi Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: These are the words of Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva; but the Sages maintain that six full (twelve-hour) periods are required (before the semen that is emitted is regarded as *tahor*).

Rav Chisda said: This dispute is only where it (the semen) issues from the woman (for it loses its viability due to the heat of the woman's body); but if it issues from a man (on to a garment), it is *tamei* as long as it is moist.

Rav Sheishes objected: It is written: *And any garment or leather on which there shall be semen [shall be immersed in water and be tamei until the evening]*. It was taught in a *braisa* that this excludes semen that is

foul. Surely, this refers (*even*) to that which issues from a man?

The *Gemora* answers: No! It is only to that which issues from a woman.

Rav Pappa inquired: What is the law regarding the semen of a Jew in the womb of a Cuthean woman? [Is it *tamei* or not?] Is it only in the case of Jewish women, who are anxious to observe the *mitzvos*, their bodies produce heat and the semen decomposes (and it is therefore ruled to be *tahor*), but in the case of Cutheans, who are not anxious to observe the *mitzvos*, their bodies do not produce heat, and the semen (inside their womb) therefore does not decompose, or is it possible that on account of their consumption of abominable creatures and reptiles, their bodies also produce heat and their semen also decomposes?

The *Gemora* inquires further: Now should you say that as they eat abominable creatures and reptiles, their bodies also produce heat (and their semen also decomposes), what of semen within an animal? Do we say that a woman, who has a corridor (leading to her uterus), causes it to decompose, but not so an animal, who has no corridor; or perhaps there is no difference? The questions remains unresolved.