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Sotah Daf 4

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamot of

Moshe Raphael ben Yehoshua (Morris Stadtmauer) o”h

Tzvi Gershon ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o”h

May the studying of the Daf Notes be a zechus for their neshamot and may their souls find peace in Gan Eden and be bound up in the Bond of life

Length of Seclusion

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: What is the *Mishna* referring to when it says, “the first testimony”? This is in reference to the witnesses testifying about the seclusion. What is the *Mishna* referring to when it says, “the last testimony”? This is in reference to the witnesses testifying about the defilement.

How long must she be secluded to be regarded as a *sotah*? It is the amount of time it takes for defilement to occur, which is the time it takes for cohabitation, which is the time it takes for the initial cohabitation, which is the time it takes to walk around a palm tree. These are the words of Rabbi Yishmael. Rabbi Eliezer says: It is the amount of time it takes to mix a cup (*to dilute a revi’is of wine with water*). Rabbi Yehoshua says: It is the amount of time it takes to drink the cup. Ben Azzai says: It is the amount of time it takes to roast an egg. Rabbi Akiva says: It is the amount of time it takes to eat the egg. Rabbi Yehudah ben Beseira says: It is the amount of time it takes to eat three eggs one after the other. Rabbi Elozar ben Yirmiyah says: It is the amount of time it takes for a weaver to tie the strings (*that are protruding from the garment*). Chanin ben Pinchas says: It is the amount of time it takes for a woman to put her hand into her mouth to remove a splinter (*which was stuck between her teeth*). Pileimo says: It is the amount of time it takes for a woman to place her hand into a basket and remove a loaf of bread.

[*The braisa had stated: How long must she be secluded to be regarded as a sotah? It is the amount of time it takes*

for defilement to occur, which is the time it takes for cohabitation, which is the time it takes for the initial cohabitation, which is the time it takes to walk around a palm tree.] The *Gemora* asks: Why is it necessary for the *Tanna* to mention all these different measures (*he could have simply said that the time needed for defilement is the time it takes to walk around a palm tree*)?

The *Gemora* answers: All those measures are necessary, for if the *Tanna* would have only mentioned “it is the amount of time it takes for defilement to occur,” I would have thought that the time that it would take for the adulterer to seduce her should also be included. The *braisa* therefore states, “the time it takes for cohabitation” (*to teach us that we are only concerned with the cohabitation time; for perhaps she was seduced prior to the seclusion*). And if the *Tanna* would have only mentioned “the time it takes for cohabitation,” I would have thought that there must be ample time for a complete cohabitation. The *braisa* therefore states, “which is the time it takes for the initial cohabitation.” And if the *Tanna* would have only mentioned “the time it takes for the initial cohabitation,” I would have thought that the time that it would take for the adulterer to seduce her should also be included. The *braisa* therefore states, “the amount of time it takes for defilement to occur.” And the *braisa* concludes: How long does it take for an initial cohabitation? It is the time it takes to walk around a palm tree.

The *Gemora* asks a contradiction from this *braisa* to another one. It is written: And she became secluded. How



much time is considered “a seclusion”? The verse does not inform us. However, when the verse continues and says, “and she became defiled,” we see that it is considered a seclusion if there is time for a defilement to occur, which is the time it takes for cohabitation, which is the time it takes for the initial cohabitation, which is the time it takes for the returning of a palm tree. These are the words of Rabbi Eliezer. Rabbi Yehoshua says: It is the amount of time it takes to mix a cup (*to dilute a revi'is of wine with water*). Ben Azzai says: It is the amount of time it takes to drink the cup. Rabbi Akiva says: It is the amount of time it takes to roast an egg. Rabbi Yehudah ben Beseira says: It is the amount of time it takes to eat the egg.

The *Gemora* asks: Let us assume that the time it takes to walk around a palm tree and the time it takes for the returning of a palm tree is the same amount of time. There Rabbi Yishmael said: It is the time it takes to walk around a palm tree, and Rabbi Eliezer argues with him. But here Rabbi Eliezer himself says that it is the time it takes for the returning of a palm tree!?

Abaye answers: The returning of a palm tree means the amount of time it takes for the branches to return to its original position after the wind has swayed them.

Rav Ashi inquires: Are we referring to the amount of time it takes for the branches to sway in the wind and return (*although it still might be moving a little*)? Or do we mean until the time that the branches are completely still? The *Gemora* leaves this question unresolved.

The *Gemora* continues to contrast the opinions mentioned in the two *braisos*: There Rabbi Eliezer said: It is the amount of time it takes to mix a cup, and here he said that it is the time it takes for the returning of a palm tree!?

The *Gemora* answers that they are both the same amount of time.

The *Gemora* continues its line of questioning: There Rabbi Yehoshua said: It is the amount of time it takes to drink the cup, and here he said that it is the amount of time it takes to mix a cup!?

The *Gemora* answers: Let us say that both *braisos* mean “the time it takes to mix the cup and drink it.”

The *Gemora* asks: Why didn't we answer that they are both the same amount of time?

The *Gemora* answers: Because if so, Rabbi Yehoshua would be saying the same as Rabbi Eliezer.

The *Gemora* asks on ben Azzai: There he said: It is the amount of time it takes to roast an egg, and here he said that it is the amount of time it takes to drink a cup!?

The *Gemora* answers that they are both the same amount of time.

The *Gemora* asks on Rabbi Akiva: There he said: It is the amount of time it takes to eat an egg, and here he said that it is the amount of time it takes to roast an egg!?

The *Gemora* answers: Let us say that both *braisos* mean “the time it takes to roast an egg and eat it.”

The *Gemora* asks: Why didn't we answer that they are both the same amount of time?

The *Gemora* answers: Because if so, Rabbi Yehoshua would be saying the same as Ben Azzai.

The *Gemora* questions Rabbi Yehudah ben Beseira's opinion. There he said: It is the amount of time it takes to

eat three eggs one after the other, and here he said that it is the amount of time it takes to eat one egg!?

The *Gemora* answers: (*He actually holds that it is the amount of time it takes to eat one egg.*) He stated his view in the first *braisa* (*that it is the amount of time it takes to eat three eggs one after the other*) only in response to Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva had said that it is the time it takes to roast an egg and eat it. Rabbi Yehudah ben Beseira responded: Why don't you say that the measure is the amount of time it takes to eat three eggs one after the other (*which consists of one action*), which is the same measure as the amount of time it takes to roast an egg and eat it (*and that consists of two different actions*)?

Rabbi Elozar ben Yirmiyah had said: It is the amount of time it takes for a weaver to tie the strings

Rav Ashi inquired: Are the two ends of the string close together or far apart?

The *Gemora* leaves this question unresolved.

Chanin ben Pinchas said: It is the amount of time it takes for a woman to put her hand into her mouth to remove a splinter (*which was stuck between her teeth*).

Rav Ashi inquired: Is the splinter stuck tightly between his teeth or not?

The *Gemora* leaves this question unresolved.

Pileimo said: It is the amount of time it takes for a woman to place her hand into a basket and remove a loaf of bread.

Rav Ashi inquired: Is the loaf stuck tightly in the basket or not? Are we referring to a new basket or an old one (*where it would be easier and therefore faster to remove*

the loaf)? Is the loaf hot or cold? Was the loaf made from wheat or from barley? Is the loose dough or hard dough?

The *Gemora* leaves all these questions unresolved.

Rav Yitzchak bar Yosef said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: All of these *Tannaim* figured out the length of a seclusion based upon their own experience (*how long it took each of them to perform the initial act of cohabitation with their own wife*).

The *Gemora* asks: But Ben Azzai never got married (*based upon the Gemora in Yevamos 63b, where Ben Azzai explained why he did not marry: "What should I do? My soul desires the Torah. The world can survive through other people."*)?

The *Gemora* answers: You could say that he got married and later divorced.

Alternatively, you can say that he heard this opinion from his teacher.

And if you prefer, you can say that "The secrets of Hashem are revealed to those that fear him." (3b – 4b)

Expounding the Verses

The *Gemora* cites the following verse [Mishlei 6:26]: *For on account of a harlot, to the extent of a loaf of bread.* Rav Avira said: Whoever cohabits with a harlot will eventually be required to beg for a loaf of bread (*because of this sin, he will become extremely poor*).

Rabbi Zerika said in the name of R. Elozar: Whoever makes light of the *mitzvah* of washing the hands (*before eating bread*) will be uprooted from the world.

Rav Chiya bar Ashi said in the name of Rav: By the first washing (*before eating bread*), it is necessary to lift his hands upward; by the latter washing (*after the meal*), it is

necessary to lower his hands (*for the reason the hands are washed after the meal is to remove the dirt from the food that are on the fingers; if the fingertips are pointing downwards, the filth will run off*).

The *Gemora* cites a supporting *braisa*: One, who washes his hands (*before eating bread*) should lift them up lest the water pass beyond the wrist joint, flow back (*to the fingers*) and render them *tamei*.

Rabbi Avahu said: Whoever eats bread without first drying his hands is as though he eats contaminated food (*wet bread is repulsive*).

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Any man who possesses a haughtiness of spirit will in the end stumble by cohabitating with a married woman.

Rava said: Whoever cohabits with a married woman, even though he had studied Torah, of which it is written: It is more precious than pearls; i.e. above a *Kohen Gadol* who enters into the innermost part of the Sanctuary, she will trap him into the judgment of *Gehinom*.

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: Any man who possesses a haughtiness of spirit is as though he worships idols.

Rabbi Yochanan himself said: It is as if he denies in the existence of God.

Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said: It is as if he cohabited with all the forbidden relations.

Ulla said: It is as if he built a private altar (*for idolatry*). (4b)

DAILY MASHAL

BEN AZZAI

Rav Yitzchak bar Yosef said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: All of these *Tannaim* figured out the length of a seclusion based upon their own experience (*how long it took each of them to perform the initial act of cohabitation with their own wife*).

The *Gemora* asks: But Ben Azzai never got married (*based upon the Gemora in Yevamos 63b, where Ben Azzai explained why he did not marry: "What should I do? My soul desires the Torah. The world can survive through other people."*)?

The *Gemora* answers: You could say that he got married and later divorced. Alternatively, you can say that he heard this opinion from his teacher. And if you prefer, you can say that "The secrets of Hashem are revealed to those that fear him."

Rabbeinu Avraham min Ha'har explains that due to Ben Azzai's tremendous desire to study Torah, he did not experience any unclean thoughts, and was therefore not obligated to *get* married.

Reb Elchanan Wasserman states that Ben Azzai was exempt from the *mitzvah* of marrying, for he was unable to cease studying Torah even for one moment.

Reb Yosef Engel writes that Ben Azzai discharged his obligation of procreation through his new insights in Torah. This is based upon the *Gemora* in Brochos (47b), which states that two torah scholars studying together can be regarded as three with respect to the laws of *Birchas Hamazon* (*they could make a mezumen, even though the halacha is that three people are needed*). The Rosh explains that the Torah that they are studying is regarded as the third person.