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Sotah Daf 38

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamot of

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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

### **Mishna**

How is the *Kohanim's* blessing recited? In the provinces (*not in the Beis Hamikdosh*) they recited it as three blessings (*after each blessing, the congregation would answer, "Amen"*), but in the Temple, it was recited as one blessing. In the Temple, he pronounces the Name as it was written (*the Tetragrammaton*), but in the provinces, by its representation. In the provinces, the *Kohanim* raised their hands to shoulder height, but in the Temple, they lifted their hands above their heads, except for the *Kohen Gadol* who does not raise his hands above the *tzitz*. Rabbi Yehudah says: The *Kohen Gadol* likewise raised his hands above the *tzitz*, as it is stated [Vayikra. 9:22]: *And Aaron raised his hands toward the people and he blessed them.*

### **Birkas Kohanim**

The *braisa* states: "So you should bless." This teaches us that the blessing should be in (*biblical*) Hebrew. Perhaps this means that you can bless in any language? [No.] The verse states, "So you should bless," and it also states, "These will stand to bless the nation." Just as the latter "blessing" was done in Hebrew, so too, this blessing must be done in Hebrew. Rabbi Yehudah states: This teaching is unnecessary. "So you should bless" indicates that it must be said exactly so (*as it is said in the Torah in Hebrew*).

Another *braisa* states: "So you should bless." This must be done standing. Perhaps it could even be done sitting? [No.] The verse states, "So you should bless," and it states, "These will stand to bless." Just as the latter was done standing, so too, this blessing must be done standing. Rabbi Nassan says: This teaching is unnecessary. The verse states, "To serve Him and to bless in His name." Just as serving (*service of the Beis Hamikdash*) Him is done standing, so too, the blessing in His Name (*Birkas Kohanim*) is done standing. How do we know that serving Him is done standing? The verse states, "To stand and serve."

Another *braisa* states: "So you should bless." This must be done with raised hands. Perhaps one does not need to raise his hands? [No.] The verse states, "So you should bless," and it states, "And Aharon picked up his hands towards the nation and blessed them." Just as the latter was done with raised hands, so too, the former must be done with raised hands.

Rabbi Yonasan has difficulty with this teaching. He asked: If we compare the laws of the two verses, then perhaps we should say that just as the latter blessing took place by a *Kohen Gadol* on Rosh Chodesh (*first of the month*) after a public sacrifice, so too Birkas Kohanim should only be at this time!

Rabbi Nassan says: This (*first*) teaching is unnecessary. The verse states, "Him and his sons all of the days." This shows us that we compare the *Kohen Gadol* to his sons.

Just as he blessed with his hands raised, so too they must bless with their hands raised. In addition it says, "all the days" (*implying whenever they will bless Birkas Kohanim, even if it is not Rosh Chodesh etc.*). Additionally, we compare blessing to the service of the Beis Hamikdash (*and therefore, although this verse is referring to service, we can apply it to Birkas Kohanim as well*).

Another *braisa* states: "So you should bless." This must be done with the Explicit Name of Hashem (*in the Beis Hamikdash*). Perhaps only a descriptive name should be used? [*No.*] The verse states, "They will place my name," implying the specific name that is for Me alone. Perhaps this name should also be used outside the Beis Hamikdash? [*No.*] The verse states, "And they will place My name," and it says, "To place His name there." Just as the latter is referring to the Beis Hamikdash, so too, the former is referring to the Beis Hamikdash. Rabbi Yoshiyah says: This teaching is unnecessary. The verse states, "In any place where I will mention my name, I will come to you and bless you." Can this really mean that anywhere Hashem's Name is mentioned, He will come and bless us? It must mean that wherever I will come and bless you there, I will instruct that My Name be mentioned. Where will I come and bless you? The Beis Hamikdash, there I will have My Name be mentioned in the Beis Hamikdash.

Another *braisa* states: "So you should bless Bnei Yisroel." It is apparent only that original Jews should be blessed. What about converts, women, and freed slaves? The verse states, "Say to them," implying everyone.

Another *braisa* says: "So you should bless." This must be done face to face (*kohanim and people facing each other*). Perhaps this means they should face the back

of their necks? [*No.*] The verse says, "Say to them," like a person talking to his friend.

Another *braisa* says: "So you should bless." This must be done in a loud (*meaning average, not a whisper*) voice. Perhaps it can be done in a whisper? The verse states, "Say to them," like a person talking to his friend.

Abaye states: To two Kohanim we say "Kohanim" (*before they can bless the people*), but not to one. This is as the verse states, "Say to them (*plural*)." Rav Chisda says: A *Kohen* says, "Kohanim," not a regular Jew. This is apparent from the verse, "Say to them," meaning that the statement to them should come from them. The *Gemora* concludes that the law follows Abaye, but not Rav Chisda.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: How do we know that Hashem desires that the Priestly Blessing should be said? The verse states, "And they will place My Name on Bnei Yisroel and I will bless them."

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: Any *Kohen* who blesses others gets blessed, and if he does not bless, he does not get blessed. This is as the verse states, "And I will bless those who bless you."

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: Any *Kohen* who does not go to bless the people (*when called*) transgresses three positive commandments. "So you should bless," "Say to them," and "They will place My Name." Rav says: Such a person is under suspicion of being the son of a divorcee or one who received *chalitzah*. The *Gemora* explains that they are not arguing. Rabbi Yehoshua was discussing a *Kohen* who does not go up even one time, while Rav was discussing a *Kohen* who does not bless the people at all.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi states: Any *Kohen* who does not go to do Birkas Kohanim during the blessing of "Ritzei" during Chazaras HaShatz (*the chazzan's recitation of the amidah*) can no longer recite the blessing. This is as the verse states, "And Aharon raised his hands towards the people and blessed them, and he went down from performing the chatas, olah, and shelamim." Just as the verse is referring to him doing service, so too, a *Kohen* must go up during the blessing of service (*in Shemoneh Esrei*).

The *Gemora* asks: Is this so? Didn't Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Assi go up anyway? The *Gemora* answers: Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Assi started going towards where they would bless, but did not reach the area where they would give the blessing until later.

This is as Rav Oshiya said: We learned this only when a *Kohen* did not pick up his feet (*to go and give the blessing*) at all, but if he did he can bless the people. We also learned in a *Mishna*: If a *Kohen* was the *chazzan* and he was certain that he would be able to give the blessing and continue with the *shemoneh esrei* without a problem, he may give the blessing. We noted: How can this be as he did not move his feet to go up (*and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said every Kohen has to move to go to give the blessing or he is not allowed to give the blessing*)? It must be that he moved a little bit.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: One gives the cup to bless only to someone who has a good eye towards others. This is as the verse says, "A person with a good eye shall be blessed, for he gave some of his bread to the poor." Do not read it merely as he shall be blessed, but rather he should bless.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: How do we know that even birds recognize those who have bad eyes towards

people? This is as the verse says, "For naught is the net spread in the eyes of every winged creature."

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: Whoever partakes from the food of someone with a bad eye towards people transgresses a negative prohibition. This is as the verse says, "Do not take part of the bread of a person with a bad eye...for like someone who is estimating, he will tell you to eat and drink."

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak says: Such a person transgresses two negative prohibitions, "Do not take part," and "Do not desire."

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: An *eglah arufah* (*see 44b*) only occurs due to people with a bad eye towards others. This is as the verse says, "Our hands did not spill this blood." Does anyone think that the *Beis Din* (*saying this statement*) spilled this person's blood? Rather they are saying that he did not come to us and we left him, we did not see him and leave him be. [*What does this mean?*] We did not have him come to us and allow him to leave without giving him food for the road, and we did not allow him to leave the city without escorting him.

Rav Ada bar Simlai says: In a synagogue where everyone is a *Kohen*, everyone gives the Birkas Kohanim. Who do they bless? Rabbi Zeira says: They bless their brothers in the fields.

The *Gemora* asks: Is this true? Didn't Abba, the son of Rav Minyamin bar Chiya, say that the people who are in back of the *Kohanim* are not included in the blessing?

The *Gemora* answers: They are not included when they purposely do not come to hear the blessing, as opposed to when they are forced not to come.

The *Gemora* asks: Didn't Rav Simi from Birta d'Shechori teach that in a synagogue where everyone is a *Kohen* that some should give the blessing and some should stay behind?

The *Gemora* answers: When ten people are left behind, the rest should give the blessing. When there will not be ten people left behind, everyone can give the blessing. (38a – 38b)

## INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

### *Listening is Like Responding*

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: "So you should bless." This must be done in a loud (*meaning average, not a whisper*) voice. Perhaps it can be done in a whisper? The verse states, "Say to them," like a person talking to his friend.

The Beis HaLevi rules that one *Kohen* cannot recite the Priestly Blessing and the others will discharge their obligation by listening. Although there is a principle that "listening is like responding," it is not effective by this *mitzvah*. The reason is based upon our *Gemora*: The Torah says, "*Emor la'hem, say to them*," which the *Gemora* expounds to mean that it should be said in an audible tone. Each *Kohen* must recite it in this manner. It is not sufficient that he has "responded"; he must say it in a loud voice.

Reb Yaakov Emden states a similar qualification with respect to the laws of *kerias haTorah*. The *halacha* is that when one is called up to the Torah, he is required to read along together with the *ba'al korei*. He does not fulfill his obligation by listening to the *ba'al korei*. The reason for this is because the Torah must be read from

the written scroll. If one is listening, and he wishes to discharge his obligation through the principle of "listening is like responding," he cannot do so, for he is not responding from the scroll. It is regarded as if he is saying it "by heart," and he cannot fulfill his obligation in that manner.

The Rogatchover Gaon explains using this principle why the entire congregation recites the "ten sons of Haman," and they do not fulfill their obligation by listening to the *ba'al korei*. Although "listening is like responding," there is a *halacha* that the ten names must be recited in one breath. If the congregation merely listens to the names being recited, it is considered as if they said the names, but they did not say them in one breath.

### *Raising his Hands Higher than the Tzitz*

The *Mishna* in Yoma states that the *Kohen Gadol* wears eight vestments and the ordinary *Kohen* dons four. The Yerushalmi comments that each one of the *Kohen's* clothing served as an atonement for a specific sin. The shirt is a forgiveness for the transgression of wearing *shatnez* (*wool and linen together*).

The commentators on Medrash explain the connection between the shirt and *shatnez* because the shirt itself was *shatnez*. This is extremely bewildering for it is explicit that the shirt of the *Kohen* was made solely from linen and there was no wool in it!?

There is a famous answer given based on a ruling of the Rama. He rules that one is forbidden to wear shoes of linen and socks from wool, even though they are two different articles. The reason for this is because it is considered like one, since the socks cannot be removed

without first taking off the shoes. The same can be said regarding the *Kohen's* shirt. The *Kohen Gadol* wore the robe on top of the shirt and the robe was made from wool. Since the shirt could not be removed without first taking off the robe, this can be considered *shatnez*.

There are those that say that this can be the reason why the *Kohen Gadol* puts the headplate (*tzitz*) on last. In truth, he can lift his hands in the air and wiggle out of the shirt without removing the robe. However, there is a *halacha* that he cannot raise his hands higher than the *tzitz* because it has Hashem's name inscribed on it. It emerges that the wearing of the *tzitz* is what creates the *shatnez* of the shirt and the robe; hence, we delay the placing of the *tzitz* until the end.

#### DAILY MASHAL

##### Serenity

The Gemora tells us that the honor of the *Kos shel brachah* is given only to someone who has a generous spirit, lit. a good eye. What is the connection between this *middah* and this particular *mitzvah*?

Rabbi Dessler in his *Michtav Meliyahu* expounds that we find two different descriptions of the spirit of generosity – a good heart, and a good eye. He explains that a good heart is a lower level, where he may wish well to others, but that's as far as it goes. The higher level is a good eye, where he is not satisfied until he sees others actually doing well.

The Maharal explains that it is fitting that someone who has the higher level of the *middah* of generosity should be the one to make the blessings over the *Kos shel brachah*, which signifies gratitude to Hashem for

an overflowing bounty of blessing, as it is a generous person who is able to express gratitude.

The *Ben Yehoyada* connects this to the Priestly Blessing discussed earlier in today's Daf. He writes that there are a total of fourteen joints in a hand, which is one short of fifteen, which would equal the number of words in the Priestly Blessing. The fifteenth word is *shaom*, peace. That is why we hold the goblet in our cupped hand, to use the joint of the wrist as well, bringing it to a total of fifteen joints that are used in this mitzvah. This provides a novel interpretation of the well-known statement that Hashem did not find any vessel to contain blessing for Israel except for peace. It is the vessel of peace, i.e. the *Kos shel brachah* that through the use of the fifteen joints that symbolize peace that creates the merit for Israel to receive blessing. He explains further that there are generally two different sources of discord. One cause of discord is when someone does or says something to harm someone else. This is relatively easy to rectify by a well-meaning mediator who may be able to clear up misunderstandings, or convince one of them to apologize. If there is a concrete source of discord, when that is removed, peace is the natural default. The other source of discord is more ethereal, when someone feels a meanness of spirit to someone else, either due to jealousy, or a general sense of resentment. This cannot be as easily removed, but it is not commonly found except by those who do not have an *ayin tov* – the generosity of spirit described as a good eye. The person who is fortunate to have this *middah* of an *ayin tov* is someone who is more at peace with himself and with others and is therefore a fitting conduit to bestow blessings on us.