

Daf Notes

Insights into the Daily Daf
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Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler
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Daily Daf

Firstborn in the Wilderness

The *Gemora* revises the dispute between Rabbi Yochanan and Rish Lakish about firstborns in the Wilderness. Rabbi Yochanan says that the sanctity of the firstborns who were counted in the Wilderness remained, extending to those born later. Rish Lakish says that the sanctity stopped with the ones counted, and did not extend to those born later, until the Jews entered *Eretz Yisroel*.

The *Gemora* says that we understand Rish Lakish's position, as the section introducing the rules of first born is introduced with the verse stating, "and it will be when Hashem brings you to *Eretz Yisroel*," implying that these rules only apply once they reach *Eretz Yisroel*. However, what is Rabbi Yochanan's reasoning?

The *Gemora* says that Rabbi Elozar saw Rabbi Yochanan in a dream, and he explained that the verse says that the first born *li yih'yu – will be to Me*, which is a phrase that implies continuity, teaching that the sanctity was never interrupted.

The *Gemora* says that Rabbi Yochanan explains the verse cited by Rish Lakish like the *braisa* taught in Rabbi Yishmael's academy, which says that it is telling us that in the merit of sanctifying the firstborns, we will merit entry into the Land.

Rav Mordechai told Rav Ashi that he learned the dispute in a different version, in which Rabbi Yochanan says that the firstborns in the Wilderness were not sanctified, and Rish Lakish says they were.

Rav Ashi challenged his version, asking whether he also reversed the debate about the verses, including Rabbi Elozar's dream. Since he was a student of Rabbi Yochanan, he only could have reported seeing Rabbi Yochanan in his dream.

Rav Mordechai answered that his version means the same as Rav Ashi's, since Rabbi Yochanan means that they did not *need* to be sanctified (*as they were already sanctified as firstborns*), and Rish Lakish means that they would *need* to be sanctified (*as they were not sanctified*). Although his version means the same thing, Rav Mordechai was teaching that one must cite what he learned in the same terminology as he learned it. (4b – 5a)

Discrepancies in Verses

The *Gemora* returns to a discussion of the *Levi'im* redeeming the firstborns in the Wilderness. The minister Kuntrukos asked Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai about a discrepancy between the number of *Levi'im* in each family, and then the final tally reported by the Torah. The verse lists each family's count as 7500 (Gershon),

8600 (Kehas), 6200 (Merari), which would total 23,300, while the final tally is reported as 22,000. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai explained that those 300 extra *Levi'im* were themselves firstborns, and therefore could not redeem the firstborns.

Abaye explains that they were able to redeem their own sanctity as firstborns, but not also that of others.

He also asked him about a discrepancy about the amount of silver collected from the Jews in the Wilderness. The verse says there were 603,550 Jews counted, each one of which donated half a *shekel*. This would come to 301,725 *shekel*. Since each *maneh* is 25 *sela* (*shekel*), and each *kikar* is 60 *maneh*, this would come to 201 *kikar*, and 11 *maneh*:

$201 \text{ kikar} = 201 * 60 \text{ maneh} = 201 * 60 * 25 \text{ sela} = 301,500 \text{ shekel}$

$11 \text{ maneh} = 11 * 25 \text{ sela} = 275 \text{ shekel}$

However, the verse records 100 *kikar*, which was used for the sockets of the *Mishkan*. He asked whether Moshe was a thief, or a bad accountant, as he pocketed the difference, which was more than half the silver collected? Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai answered the Moshe was a trustworthy administrator, and an expert accountant, and the seeming discrepancy is because a *maneh* used in the *Beis Hamikdash* was double the size of a regular one, and therefore each *kikar* listed in the verse is twice the size of a regular one. Therefore, each *kikar* is 3,000 *shekel*, and the 100 *kikar* come to 300,000 *shekel*, and the verse states that the remaining silver was used for vessels.

Rav Achai asked why he had to give this answer, and not simply say that the remaining silver remained in the treasury of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

The *Gemora* answers that another verse states the total tally of silver collected was 100 *kikar*, and 1,750 *shekel*, a discrepancy in the actual count of silver.

The *Gemora* asks how Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai knew that the *maneh* of the *Beis Hamikdash* was twice as large.

The *Gemora* suggests that the verse, which lists 100 *kikar*, and a remainder of 1,750 *shekel*, indicates that the *kikar* listed here is more than the standard 1,500-*shekel maneh*, as otherwise, the verse should have listed 101 *kikar*, and a remainder of 250 *shekel*.

The *Gemora* deflects this, as perhaps the verse only counted round 100's of *kikars* (100), and not individual ones.

The *Gemora* suggests that he knew it from another verse, which tallies the copper collected as 70 *kikar*, and 2400 *shekel*. Since the verse did not count the 2400 *shekel* as 96 *maneh*, which is more than one more *kikar*, this indicates that a *kikar* and *maneh* mentioned here is larger.

The *Gemora* deflects this as well, since perhaps the verse only counted round 10's of *kikars* (70), and not individual ones.

Rav Chisda says that he knew it from the verse in Yechezkel, which states that a *shekel* is 20 *geira*, and a *maneh* is 20+25+15 (=60) *shekel*.

The *Gemora* explains that 60 *shekel* would be 240 *dinar*, as a *shekel* is 4 *dinar*, whereas our *maneh* is 100 *dinar*. The way to resolve this discrepancy is to explain that a *maneh* of the *Beis Hamikdash*, which the verse is referring to, is double a regular *maneh* (200 *dinar*).

In addition, in the times of Yechezkel, they expanded the *maneh* by 1/6 of the total size (1/5 of the original size), which is 40 *dinar* for 200 *dinar*, leading to the final count of 240 *dinar*.

The *Gemora* says that this verse therefore teaches:

1. The measures of the *Beis Hamikdash* are double regular ones.
2. We can expand measures, but only up to 1/6.
3. The 1/6 is of the new expanded measure, which is 1/5 of the original measure. (5a – 5b)

Only Donkeys

Rabbi Chanina says that he asked Rabbi Eliezer in the large study hall why the Torah mandated redemption of firstborn donkeys, but not of any other non-kosher firstborn animals.

Rabbi Eliezer answered:

1. It's a decree of Hashem.
2. The donkeys helped the Jews when they left Egypt, as each Jew took many donkeys laden down with treasures of Egypt. (5b)

Names of Places

He also asked him why the place where Amalek attacked was called Refidim, and he answered that was simply the place's name.

The *Gemora* says that this is a dispute of *Tannaim*, citing a *braisa*, in which Rabbi Eliezer says that its name was Refidim, while Rabbi Yehoshua says it was called this to refer to the fact that the Jews *ripu* – *weakened* their hands there from Torah.

He also asked him why the place where the daughters of Moav corrupted the Jews was named Shittim, and Rabbi Eliezer says this was simply the place's name.

The *Gemora* says that this is a dispute of *Tannaim*, citing a *braisa*, in which Rabbi Eliezer says that its name was Shittim, while Rabbi Yehoshua says it was called this to refer to the *shtus* – *folly* that the Jews were involved in there.

The *braisa* continues with another dispute about this section, about the verse which says *vatikrena la'am* – *and the [Moav women] called to the nation to serve their idolatry*. Rabbi Eliezer says that the verse is teaching that their selves (i.e., bodies) called them, as they were naked, while Rabbi Yehoshua says that the word *vatikrena* can be read as *they made [the Jews] have keris - nocturnal emissions*. (5b)

Offspring different than their Mothers

The *Mishna* says that if a cow gave birth to something looking like a donkey, or if a donkey gave birth to

something looking like a horse, it is exempt from the rules of firstborn, as two verses refer to *peter chamor* – *the first born of a donkey*, teaching that the mother and child must look like a donkey.

The *Mishna* says that for kosher status, we follow the mother, allowing a non-kosher looking animal born from a kosher one, but not the opposite, as what comes out of a prohibited animal is prohibited, and what comes out of a permitted animal is permitted.

The *Gemora* cites a *Mishna* which states that if a sheep gave birth to a ram, or a ram gave birth to a sheep, the child is exempt from the rules of firstborn. If the child resembles the mother at all, it is obligated.

The *Gemora* asks what the source for this *Mishna* is, and Rav Yehudah answers that it is the verse which says: *ach* – *however, bechor* – *the first born of an ox*, or the first born of a sheep, or the first born of a ram may not be redeemed, as they are sanctified. Since the verse repeats the word *bechor* – firstborn for each species, it teaches that the sanctity of a firstborn only applies if the mother and child match in their appearance. Since the verse limits this statement with the word *ach* – *however*, we learn that as long as they have something in common, the sanctity applies.

Although the *Mishna* cited a different verse, Rav Yehudah is following Rabbi Yossi Hagelili, who cites Rav Yehudah's verse.

The *Gemora* explains that the *Mishna's* author says that the verse taught this requirement in the case of a firstborn donkey, which is a sanctity of monetary value, and we apply this to other case of firstborn, which are sanctity of the animal itself. Rabbi Yossi Hagelili says that the verse taught this in the case of other firstborn animals, and we apply it to the case of monetary sanctity of the first born donkey.

The *Gemora* says that the author of the *Mishna* uses the verse cited by Rabbi Yossi Hagelili to teach that the fats of all species of first born must be offered on the altar.

Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Chanina says that the verse had to list *bechor* for each species, as could not have been learned from the other. If only one was mentioned, we wouldn't have known the others, as each one has a unique aspect: an ox has more libations, a sheep has its tail fat offered, and a ram is offered as a sacrifice for an individual's accidental idolatry. If one was left out, we wouldn't have known it from the other two, because each group of two has an aspect different from the third:

1. Ram and sheep can be used for the Pesach sacrifice, as opposed to ox.
2. Ram and ox are offered as a sacrifice for the nation's accidental idolatry, as opposed to a sheep.
3. Sheep and ox both have something extra offered on the altar (the tail fats, and extra libations, respectively), as opposed to a ram.

The *Gemora* explains that Rabbi Yossi Hagelili says that we could have learned this about each type of firstborn if the word *bechor* was stated at the start of the list of species. The extra use of this word for the other two species teaches that the sanctity of firstborn only takes effect when the animal is like its mother.

To explain what Rabbi Yossi Hagelili learns from the two verses referring to the firstborn of a donkey, it cites a *braisa* which learns that a donkey is the only non-kosher species which has the rule of firstborn. Two verses are necessary, as one would have still left open the possibility that other non-kosher animals' firstborn are redeemed, but not necessarily with a sheep. The second verse teaches that the only non-kosher animal which has any rules of firstborn is the donkey. (5b – 6a)

DAILY MASHAL

Slacking off in Torah

The *Gemora* in Megillah (16b) expounds on the verse that states [Esther 8:16]: *Layehudim haysa orah visimcha visasson vikar*. The Jews had light, gladness, joy and honor. Light is referring to Torah; Gladness is referring to the festivals; Joy is referring to circumcision; Glory is referring to *tefillin*.

The question is asked: If the Megillah wished to say that the Jews were saved because they fulfilled the Torah, festivals, *milah* and *tefillin*, why didn't the Megillah write that explicitly? Why was it mentioned only in code form?

Rabbi Eliezer Ginzburg in his sefer, *The King's Treasures* states the following: It is well known that evil decrees instituted against the Jewish people are always in correspondence with their sins. Each transgression draws a particular type of negative force in its wake. Hence, in order to determine what sin the Jewish people are being held accountable for at any given time, one need only consider the dominant characteristic of the nation threatening them, for their enemies are nothing more than a reflection of their transgressions.

Amalek was able to strike the Jewish people when their enthusiasm for Torah observance waned. Our *Gemora* says in reference to the verse [Shmos 17:8]: Amalek came and battled Israel in Rephidim. Amalek came because Israel loosened their grip on the Torah. This is why Rabbi Elozar introduced his lecture on the scriptural portion of the Book of Esther with the following verse: Through laziness the ceiling collapses, and through idleness of the hands the house leaks – because of the laziness of the Jews, who did not engage in Torah study, the enemies were capable of attacking.

Perhaps, Rabbi Ginzburg continues, this is what the Megillah is teaching us by saying that “the Jews had light,” and not simply saying that “the Jews had Torah.” The Jews were not guilty of completely neglecting Torah study, or for that matter, any other *mitzvah*. Their shortcoming was their lack of enthusiasm for *mitzvos*. It was the inner light of the *mitzvah* which they lacked, the spark of excitement and fervor for doing Hashem's will. The miracles which Hashem performed for Israel stoked the smoldering embers within each Jew and evoked a new fervor for the performance of *mitzvos*, reawakening the “light” of Torah study, the “gladness” of the *Yom Tov* holidays, the “joy” of circumcision and the “glory” of *tefillin*.