

Daf Notes

Insights into the Daily Daf
Middos Daf 34

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Tzvi Gershon ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o"n.
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Daily Daf

Guarding the Bais Hamikdash

1. The *Kohanim* guarded the Bais Hamikdash in three places: Avtinas House, the house of Nitzotz (sparks), and the house of the Moked (bonfire). The *Levi'im* guarded in 21 places: 5 inside the 5 gates of the Temple Mount, 4 inside its 4 corners, 5 outside the 5 gates of the courtyard, 4 outside its corners, one in the room of the sacrifice, one in the room of the Paroches – curtain, and one outside the Kodosh Kodashim – Holy of Holies, which contained the Kapores – covering of the Ark.

2. The one in charge of the Temple Mount checked on those guarding to ensure they were awake. If he passed one who did not greet him, he would greet the guard, to check if he was asleep. If he didn't respond, the one in charge would hit him, and he had the right to burn his clothes, as punishment for falling asleep. The guards would remark on the commotion they would hear, saying that it was the *Levi* being hit, and his clothes being burned, since he fell asleep. Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says that once they found his maternal uncle asleep while guarding, and they burned his clothes.

3. There were 5 gates to the Temple Mount:
a. Two gates of Chuldah – both on the south, through which people entered and exited.
b. Kiponos gate on the west, through which people entered and exited.
c. Tadi gate on the north, which was not used.

d. The east gate, which had a design of the Persian capital, Shushan, through which the *Kohen Gadol* and his helpers exited to the Mount of Olives to burn the red heifer.

4. There were 7 gates in the courtyard: 3 in the north, 3 in the south, and one in the east.

On the south were:

- The gate of Delek – burning.
- The gate of the sacrifices.
- The water gate.

On the east was the Nikanor gate, which was flanked on its side by two offices: the office of Pinchas the clothier, containing the *Kohen Gadol's* clothes, and the office where they made the loaves of the *Kohen Gadol*.

5. On the north were:

- The Nitzotz gate, which was only partially closed. The *Kohanim* guarded in the room on top of it, and the *Levi'im* guarded below. There was an entrance from it to the *chail* area.
- The sacrifice gate.
- The Moked house.

6. The Moked house had four offices on its corners, like offices opening to a large central area. Two were in the sanctified area, and two were not, with small beams delineating the boundary between the two regions. The offices were:

- The sacrifice office, on the southwest corner.
- The show bread office, on the southeast corner.
- The northeast office, where the Chashmona'im stored the stones of the altar that were broken by the Greeks.
- The northwest office, through which they would go to the *mikvah*.

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

The ben Levi is getting punished

The *Mishna* (1:2) refers to the discussion that would ensue when the one in charge of checking on the guards would punish one who fell asleep. The *Mishna* says that they would say that the noise was from the “ben Levi” who was hit and punished for falling asleep.

Rav Ovadia Bartenura (Shekalim 1:5) says that this was done to a *Levi* or *Kohen* who fell asleep, making the phrase “ben Levi” imprecise.

The Tofos Yom Tov cites the Shiltai Giborim saying that this was only done to *Levi'im*, but not to *Kohanim* who fell asleep, and therefore the *Mishna* only refers to a ben *Levi*.

To the Right

The *Mishna* (2:2) states that one normally enters the Bais Hamikdash and goes along the courtyard to their right, exiting on the left. The principle of choosing the path to the right has other applications in *halachah*.

When the *Kohanim* bless the congregation with *Birkas Kohanim*, they start out facing the *Aron*, then turn to the congregation for the blessing, and then turn back to the *Aron* afterwards. The Shulchan Aruch (OH 128:7) rules that both turns must be to the right side.

The Shulchan Aruch (OH 676:5) rules that when lighting the Chanukah candles, one adds a new candle each night to the left of the preceding candle, and begins lighting this new candle. By doing this, one will be turning to the right as he lights all the candles.

The Taz (6) disputes this application of choosing the right, and says that choosing the right would actually mean to start lighting with the right candle first.

The Chasam Sofer (OH 27) discusses constructing the entrances of a shul. While the actual entrance to the room where the congregation prays is made to face the *Aron*, the outer entrance to the building should be on the southern wall, so that one turns to the right to face the *Aron*, in the east. He

7. The Moked house had two gates, one opening to the courtyard, and one opening to the *chail* area. Rabbi Yehuda says that the gate opening to the courtyard had a small door in it, through which they entered to check on the courtyard.

8. The Moked house had a dome on top, and had stone shelves on its edges. The elders of that day's family of *Kohanim* slept on the shelves, while the young *Kohanim* slept near their clothes on the floor.

9. There was a space of one square *amah*, on which there was a marble tile, with a ring on it, and a keychain. When it was time to lock the gates, the *Kohen* would raise this tile using the ring, lock them with the keys on the chain, and the *Levi* would sleep outside the gate. The *Kohen* would lock the doors, and then place the keys back in place, put down his clothes on the tile, and slept. If one of them was impure due to a nocturnal emission, he would exit through a tunnel under the Bais Hamikdash, which was illuminated with candles, until he reached the *mikvah*. Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says that the tunnel went under the *chail*, and exited through the Tadi gate. (34a – 34b)

WE SHALL RETURN TO YOU, BISHLOSHAH MEKOMOS

Layout of the Temple Mount

1. The Temple Mount was 500 x 500 *amos*. The courtyard was positioned towards the northwest corner, with the south most open, then the east, then the north, and finally the west. The south was most heavily used, as it had the largest open area.

2. Anyone who entered the Temple Mount entered to their right, and went around to exit on the left, except for someone who had to exit due to mourning or excommunication, who would exit in the opposite direction. When someone would see such a person and ask why they were exiting this way, they would explain their situation, and the first person would bless him. If he was mourning, he would bless him by saying that Hashem, who dwells in this house, should comfort him. Rabbi Meir says that if he was excommunicated, he would bless him by saying that Hashem should cause his peers to rescind the excommunication. Rabbi Yossi challenges this, as this implies that his peers were unjust in their excommunication. Instead, Rabbi Yossi says, that he would bless him by saying that Hashem should cause him to listen to his peers, and thereby let them accept him back into the fold. (34b)

says that for this reason the entrances and exits of the Bais Hamikdash were on the north, so that one would turn to his right to face the *Aron*, in the west.

He discusses (187) guidelines for how and when to apply the rule of turning to the right:

1. When walking around something, one should always be going to his right, from start to finish, as the *Mishna* says about going around the courtyard.
2. When standing in one place and doing something (e.g., lighting Chanukah candles), one should start with the left-most item, and then turn to the right.
3. Once in a Shul, one should go in a path towards the right, even if it is longer. However, if one is going into a place of a *mitzvah* (e.g., a Shul), he should always take the shortest path to enter, regardless of its direction.

Can we estimate the length of an amah from the size of the Temple Mount?

The area of the Temple Mount (har habayis) was 500 amah by 500 amah, as explained in our *Mishna*.

The Rosh mentions that there's a source and hint for such in the verses, that the area of the Temple Mount must be 50 times the area of the courtyard of the Mishkan, which was 100 amah long and 50 amah wide.

Many Acharonim state that despite the different opinions as to whether one may add areas to the sanctity of Yerushalayim and the 'azaros, all agree that the area of the Temple Mount is 25,000 square amah, to which one mustn't add or subtract.

The length of an amah: From here we proceed to one of the most famous differences of opinions concerning amounts of the Torah: what is the length of an amah? The opinions range from 58 cm to 48 cm.

Apparently, we have a golden opportunity to finally ascertain the exact length of an amah. The Temple was destroyed but the Temple Mount stands, the Western Wall remains as it was, the other walls stand in the place of the original ones and therefore all we have to do is measure the length of the Temple Mount, divide by 500 and we'll know the length of an amah.

HaGaon Rabbi Yonah Mertzbach zt"l, Rosh Yeshivah at Kol Torah, mentioned that this measurement would prove the

length of an amah to be 56 cm because the distance from the Eastern Wall to the Western Wall is 283 m. Dividing this length by 500 produces the result of 56.6 (Shi'urin shel Torah, Ch. 8, 9:5).

The Temple Mount "expanded" over the years: However, some remarked that an extensive measurement of the area shows that the length of the Temple Mount in our era is almost twice its width despite the description in our *Mishna* that the Temple Mount was square. Furthermore, the distance between the Eastern and Western Walls is not identical but the space between increases from south to north and the distance between the walls to the south is smaller by about 30 amah than the distance between the walls to the north. Indeed, Josephus Flavius wrote in his Wars of the Jews (I, 21:1) that King Hordus increased the area of the Temple Mount to almost twice its original area and changed its dimensions. This interesting information combines well with the statement of Piskei Yom Tov on our tractate (printed after the Gemara on daf 39a, os 5) that "the Mount was much bigger than 500 by 500 but only an area of 500 by 500 was sanctified." In other words, the Temple Mount was surrounded by other areas but they weren't sanctified with the sanctity of the Temple Mount, which only occupied 500 amah by 500 amah (see Kiryas Ariel, Hilchos Techum Shabbos, p. 255).