

Daf Notes

Insights into the Daily Daf
Middos Daf 35

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

Soreg, Cheil, Gateways, Steps and Doors

3. Inside the wall of the Temple Mount was the *soreg* (which was a fence constructed of latticework, and it served as a marker that a gentile and a Jew who was *tamei* from a corpse could not cross that point). It was ten *tefachim* high and there were thirteen breaches in it. They were breached by the Greek kings, and later, the Jews repaired it. They instituted thirteen prostrations corresponding to them.

Inside of the *soreg* was the *cheil* which was an open area of ten *amos*, and within those ten *amos* there were twelve steps (which led into the Women's Courtyard). The height of each of those twelve steps was a half an *amah* and its tread was a half an *amah*. [Thus, four *amos* of the *cheil* were flat and the remaining six *amos* were steps leading up to the Women's Courtyard, whose floor was six *amos* higher.]

All the steps (of the Temple) were half an *amah* high and their tread was half an *amah*, except for those of the Antechamber.

All the gateways (in the Temple) were twenty *amos* high and they were all ten *amos* wide, except for that of the Antechamber (which was forty *amos* high and twenty *amos* wide).

All the doorways there had doors in them except that of the Antechamber.

All the gateways there had lintels except that of Tadi, which had two stones inclined to one another.

All the original (doors of the) gateways were changed (from copper) to gold, except those of the Nikanor Gate, because a miracle happened with them. [Nikanor went to Alexandria, Egypt to buy fancy doors for the Temple courtyard. On the way home there was a storm and the sailors threw one of the doors into the sea. They wanted to throw the second door in as well, but Nikanor said they would have to throw him in as well. At this point the storm subsided. When they arrived at Akko, they were surprised to find that the door which was thrown to the sea arrived with them under the boat. Another version of the story says a large sea creature swallowed the door and spit it out when they arrived in Akko. Even when all the doors of the Temple were replaced with gold doors, the bronze doors of Nikanor remained in order to remember the miracle which took place.] And some say, however, it was because the copper of them shone (like gold). (35a)

Walls and Gateways

4. All the walls that enclosed the Temple Mount were very tall (with the gateways being twenty *amos* high and the area above the gateways made the walls even higher). The eastern wall of the Temple Mount, however, was not high (it was twenty *amos* high, but the wall did not rise high above the gateway like the other walls), in order that the Kohen who burned the *parah adumah* (red heifer) could stand on the Mount of Olives (which is east of the Temple Mount), and he could gaze at the entrance of the *Heichal* while sprinkling the blood of the Parah Adumah. When the Kohen sprinkled the blood of the Parah Adumah, he had to aim towards the *Heichal*, and he also had to see into the entrance of the *Heichal* while sprinkling. [When the Kohen stood on the Mount

of Olives and faced westward towards the Temple Mount, he was able to see into the entrance of the Heichal because all the gateways to the Temple Mount were lined up in a perfect row. For the Kohen to see into the entrance of the Heichal, he had to look over the Temple Mount wall and through the gateways of the Women's Courtyard and the Inner Courtyard. The floor of the Heichal was twenty and a half amos higher than the floor of the Temple Mount, so the base of the Heichal entrance was a half an amah higher than the top of the Temple Mount gateway which was only twenty amos high. The Kohen could not see into the entrance of the Heichal by looking through the Temple Mount gateway, so the eastern wall had to be lower than the other walls so the Kohen could look over the wall and see into the Heichal entrance through the other gateways.] (35a)

Women's Courtyard

5. The Women's Courtyard was one hundred and thirty-five amos long by one hundred and thirty-five amos wide, and there were four chambers located in its four corners, with a length of forty amos (and their width was thirty amos). They were not roofed, and that is how they will be as well in the future Temple.

What purpose did they serve? The southeastern chamber was the chamber of the Nazarites, who would cook their *shelamim* offerings there and they would cut their hair and throw it under the cauldron in which their *shelamim* offerings were cooking. The northeastern chamber was the chamber where they stored wood that was used as fuel for the fires of the Altar. *Kohanim* who had physical blemishes and could not partake in the service would stand there and examine the wood to see if it had worms inside, because wood that contained worms was invalid for use on the Altar. The northwestern chamber was the chamber of the *Metzoraim* where a *metzora* would immerse himself in a *mikvah* before he had blood applied to his body. Regarding the southwestern chamber, Rabbi Eliezer Ben Yaakov said that he forgot what purpose the chamber served, and Abba Shaul said that in the southwestern chamber they used to store wine and oil and this chamber was referred to as the Chamber that held the Oil.

Originally, the Women's Courtyard was smooth and at a later date they surrounded it with a balcony. They decreed that the women should sit above in the balcony and the men below so they should not mingle with each other.

There were fifteen steps ascending from within the Women's Courtyard. [These fifteen steps descended from the Israelite Courtyard into the Women's Courtyard.] These corresponded to the fifteen Songs of Ascent that are in the Book of Tehillim. Upon these steps, the *Levi'im* uttered song (during the Simchas Beis Hasho'eivah. They were not straight steps, but rounded, similar to the shape of half a circular threshing floor. [Here, too, the height of each step was half an amah and its tread was a half an amah, so the Israelite Courtyard was seven and a half amos higher than the women's Courtyard and thirteen and a half amos higher than the Temple Mount.] (35a)

Israelites' Courtyard and Kohanim's Courtyard

6. There were chambers underneath the Israelites' Courtyard which opened into the Women's Courtyard, where the *Levi'im* used to keep their harps, lyres, cymbals and all kinds of musical instruments.

The Israelites' Courtyard was a hundred and thirty-five amos in length by eleven in width. Similarly the *Kohanim's* Courtyard was a hundred and thirty-five amos in length by eleven in width, and heads of beams separated the Israelites' Courtyard from the *Kohanim's* Courtyard.

Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: There was a step an amah high, on which was placed a Platform, and this had three steps each of half an amah leading up to it. It emerges that the *Kohanim's* Courtyard was made two and a half amos higher than that of the Israelites' Courtyard.

The entire Courtyard was one hundred and eighty-seven amos long and one hundred and thirty-five amos wide. [This is referring to the Inner Courtyard, which incorporated the Israelite's Courtyard and the Kohanim's Courtyard.] And thirteen prostrations were made there (corresponding to the thirteen breaches in the Soreg). Abba Yosi ben Chanan said: They were made facing thirteen gates (of the Courtyard).

The *Mishna* lists the gates: On the south adjoining the west there were the Upper Gate, the Gate of Kindling, the Gate of the Firstborn and the Water Gate. It was so called because they brought in the pitcher of water for libation on the festival through it Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: By it the stream of water was as (wide as comes out of) a flask, and in the future, they will emerge from under the threshold of the Temple. Corresponding to them in the north adjoining the west were the Gate of Yechoniah, the Gate of the Offering, the Women's

Gate and the Gate of Song. It was called the Gate of Yechoniah because Yechoniah was exiled into captivity through it. On the east was the Gate of Nikanor; it had two wickets, one on its right and one on its left. There were further two gates in the west which had no name. (35b)

WE SHALL RETURN TO YOU, HAR HABAYIS

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Mechitzah in Shul

The Mishnah stated that at the end of the first day of Sukkos they went down to the Women's Courtyard and they made a great adjustment. The Gemara explains that originally the Women's Courtyard was smooth and at a later date they surrounded it with a balcony. They decreed that the women should sit above in the balcony and the men below so they should not mingle with each other. A Braisa states that originally the women watching the Simchas Bais Hashoeva would be inside the Women's Courtyard and the men observing would be on the outside but this led to frivolity. They then instituted that the women should be on the outside and the men should be on the inside but there was still frivolity, so they decreed that the women should be above and the men below.

Harav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (Orach Chaim 1:39) writes that the primary purpose of a *mechitza*, a barrier, is not to prevent the men from looking at the women. He proves this from our Gemara which states that the balcony was instituted because of frivolity that transpired between the men and the women. Rav Moshe writes further that the balcony they constructed did not consist of a dividing wall and the women could still be seen. Although it is true that the men standing directly underneath the balcony could not see the women, the men dancing in the middle were able to see the women. Thus, the purpose of the balcony was to prevent intermingling and frivolity. Rav Moshe rules that the most preferable mechitzah in a synagogue would be a balcony. If it is not possible to erect a balcony, they should erect a dividing wall that is at least eighteen tefachim high. This will not prevent the women from being seen, but it will prevent intermingling and levity.

The Rambam in his commentary to the Mishna here indicates that the balcony was constructed in order to prevent the men from seeing the women. In his commentary to the Mishna in Middos, the Rambam writes that the balcony was erected

because of the concern that the men and women would mingle.

The Tosfos Yom Tov writes that the men standing under the balcony could not see the women and the men that were dancing in the middle were pious and saintly and there was no need to be concerned that they would be frivolous. Yet, this is quite perplexing as we know that the evil inclination can never be underestimated.

There is a well known story regarding Rav Elya Lopian, who despite being a great Torah scholar and was very pious, was still concerned about entertaining any immoral thoughts. A student of Reb Elya once sought permission to attend a wedding. Rav Elya questioned the student regarding the modesty of the women who would be attending the wedding. The student, who was well aware of the challenge that he would be facing, began to justify his attendance by declaring that he would be seated at a special table with his parents and he ended his rationalization by stating that the immodesty would not have an effect on him. When Reb Elya heard this, he was very disturbed and he told the student, "Listen, I am already over eighty years old, and blind in one eye, yet despite all these factors, when I walk in the street I am still fearful that I will perhaps inadvertently succumb to even the slightest temptation of immorality. How is it, then, that you, a young boy with two good eyes, can honestly tell me that immodesty will not have an effect on you?!"

The Piskei HaRid writes that there was a wall in the Bais HaMikdash that was constructed in a manner that the men could not see the women but the women were still able to see the men, similar to a one-way mirror.

DAILY MASHAL

Perfection in Every Area

The Gemara states that any piece of wood that had a worm in it was invalid for use on the mizbeiach. Although the wood itself is only a vehicle to bring an offering on the mizbeiach, a sacrifice must be perfect in all aspects. This is a powerful lesson for one serving HaShem. One must realize that even the means with which one serves HaShem must be honed to perfection. One's dress must be immaculate, one must keep his body clean, and most important is that one must keep his thoughts free of sin. Only then can one fulfill the dictum of Dovid HaMelech who said *I wash my hands in purity and circle around Your altar, HaShem.*