



Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler, Kollel Boker Beachwood

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Missing Three Periods

The *Mishna* had stated: Rabbi Eliezer says that any woman (including a young one), for whom three periods has passed (without experiencing a discharge of blood), her time suffices for her (she has no retroactive tumah).

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: Rabbi Eliezer said to the Sages (who maintain that missing three periods is halachically significant only with respect of an old woman): It once happened to a young girl in Hislu that her discharges were interrupted for three periods, and when the matter was submitted to the Sages, they ruled that it sufficed for her to reckon her tumah from the time she experienced the discharge (and not retroactively). They replied: A time of pressing need is no proof.

The *Gemora* notes what the “pressing need” was: Some say that it was a time of famine (when a ruling to regard all the foodstuffs the woman had touched during the preceding twenty-four hours as tamei would have involved a considerable loss), while others say that the quantity of taharos that the woman had prepared was rather large, and the Rabbis took into consideration the great loss (that would result) for the taharos (if they would rule stringently).

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: It once happened that Rebbe ruled (on an actual case involving a young girl) in accordance with the ruling of Rabbi Eliezer, and after he reminded himself (that the halachah does not follow R’ Eliezer in this case), he observed: Rabbi Eliezer is sufficiently worthy to be relied upon in a time of pressing need.

The *Gemora* asks: What is the meaning of ‘after he reminded himself’? If it means that he reminded himself that the *halachah* was not in accordance with Rabbi Eliezer, but rather, it is in accordance with the Rabbis; how, then, could he rule according to Rabbi Eliezer even in a time of pressing need? Rather, it must be that it was not stated whether the *halachah* was in accordance with Rabbi Eliezer or with the Sages; then what is meant by ‘after he reminded himself’? It means the following: After he reminded himself that it was not an individual that disagreed with him, but rather, it was many Rabbis that disagreed with him. Upon remembering that, he observed that Rabbi Eliezer is sufficiently worthy to be relied upon in a time of pressing need.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: If a young girl, who had not yet reached the age of discharging blood (for girls her age do not usually menstruate), experienced a discharge, after the first time, it suffices for her to reckon her tumah from the time she discharged it; after the second time, it suffices for her to reckon her tumah from the time she discharged it; after the third time, however, she is like all other women, and she causes tumah retroactively for twenty-four hours or from examination to examination. If subsequently three periods have passed over her (without experiencing a discharge of blood), and then she again experienced a discharge, it suffices for her to reckon her tumah from the time she experienced it. If another three periods have passed over her (without experiencing a discharge of blood), and then again she experienced a discharge, it suffices for her to reckon her tumah from the time she experienced it. But, if another three periods have passed over her (without experiencing a discharge of blood), and she again experienced a discharge, she is like all other women, and she causes tumah retroactively for twenty-four hours or from examination to

examination (because the appearance of the discharge for the third time proved that her flow had not ceased, and that only the intervals between the discharges had been lengthened).

The *braisa* continues: When, however, a girl has reached the age of discharging blood, after the first discharge, it suffices for her to reckon her *tumah* from the time she experienced the discharge, while after the second time, she causes *tumah* retroactively for twenty-four hours or from examination to examination. If subsequently three periods have passed over her and then she again experienced a discharge, it suffices for her to reckon her *tumah* from the time she experienced it (for this *braisa* is following the opinion of R' Eliezer, who maintains that any woman who misses three periods is regarded as one who is in a state of abeyance of bloods).

The master had said: If subsequently three periods have passed over her (without experiencing a discharge of blood), and then she again experienced a discharge, it suffices for her to reckon her *tumah* from the time she experienced it.

The *Gemora* inquires: What is the ruling where (after the one discharge at the end of the three periods) she again experiences a discharge at the end of a single period? [Does it suffice for her to reckon her *tumah* from the time she experienced the discharge or is her *tumah* to be retroactive? Rashi explains the inquiry: Perhaps the *braisa* is being precise when it stated that if subsequently three periods have passed over her (without experiencing a discharge of blood), and then she again experienced a discharge, it suffices for her to reckon her *tumah* from the time she experienced it. However, if after the three periods have passed, she experienced a discharge after one period, although this woman has not yet reached the age of discharging blood, but since she has seen blood three times, she is a woman who is presumed that she will discharge blood. Now, the reason why we say that her time suffices for her when she saw one time after three periods have passed is because the *braisa* is in accordance with R' Eliezer who maintains that even a young woman who misses three periods is presumed that her blood is in abeyance, but this is only applicable for her first discharge; not for her second, and therefore her *tumah* will be

retroactive. Accordingly, this woman, who saw after one period, will cause a retroactive *tumah*, for she now is a woman who is presumed to experience discharges. Or perhaps, as long as she does not experience three discharges, she is still presumed to be a woman whose blood is in abeyance, and therefore, the ruling would be that her time suffices for her?]

Rav Gidal citing Rav replied: After the first time and after the second time (after the three periods have passed without her experiencing a discharge), it suffices for her to reckon her *tumah* from the time of her experience of the discharge, but after the third time she causes *tumah* retroactively for twenty-four hours or from examination to examination.

The *braisa* continued: If another three periods have passed over her (without experiencing a discharge of blood), and then again she experienced a discharge, it suffices for her to reckon her *tumah* from the time she experienced it.

The *Gemora* inquires: What is the ruling where (after the one discharge at the end of the second set of three missed-periods) she again experiences a discharge at the end of a single period? [Does it suffice for her to reckon her *tumah* from the time she experienced the discharge or is her *tumah* to be retroactive? Rashi explains the inquiry: Perhaps the *braisa* is being precise when it stated that if subsequently three periods have passed over her (without experiencing a discharge of blood), and then she again experienced a discharge, she is like all other women, and she causes *tumah* retroactively for twenty-four hours or from examination to examination. This is because the appearance of the discharge for the third time proved that her flow had not ceased, and that only the intervals between the discharges had been lengthened. However, if after the second of three periods have passed, she experienced a discharge after one period, she has not yet established a pattern of seeing in "skipping intervals," she is still a woman who is presumed that her blood is in abeyance blood. Accordingly, this woman, who saw after one period, will cause *tumah* only from the time of the discharges. Or perhaps, as long as she experienced a second discharge after an interruption of three missed periods, she reverts back to be a woman who is presumed to discharge blood,

and therefore, the ruling would be that she causes tumah retroactively?]

Rav Kahana citing Rav Gidal, who said in the name of Rav, replied: After the first time (after the second of three periods have passed without her experiencing a discharge), it suffices for her to reckon her tumah from the time of her experience of the discharge, but after the second time, she causes tumah retroactively for twenty-four hours or from examination to examination.

The Gemora asks: Whose view does this (ruling that after the second time she is already in a condition of presumptive menstruation) represent?

The Gemora answers: It is that of Rebbe who maintains that if a thing has occurred twice, presumption (chazakah) is established.

The Gemora asks: But let us consider then the final clause of the braisa, which states: If (regarding a girl who has reached the age of discharging blood) subsequently three periods have passed over her and then she again experienced a discharge, it suffices for her to reckon her tumah from the time she experienced it. This is following the opinion of R' Eliezer (who maintains that any woman who misses three periods is regarded as one who is in a state of abeyance of bloods).

The Gemora notes that you cannot reply by saying that it in fact represents the view of Rebbe, but that in the case of "a missed three-periods," he holds like Rabbi Eliezer, for a braisa (which was cited above) stated: After he (Rebbe) reminded himself (that he should not rule like R' Eliezer).

The Gemora answers: The braisa is indeed authored by Rabbi Eliezer, but in respect of the amount of fixed periods (needed to establish a presumption), he holds like Rebbe.

The Gemora rules (regarding a girl who has reached the age of discharging blood): A stain discovered between her first and second experience of a discharge is regarded as tahor (for since

she does not yet have a chazakah to see, we do not attribute this blood as coming from her), but regarding one discovered between her second and third experience of a discharge, Chizkiyah ruled that it is tamei, while Rabbi Yochanan ruled that it is tahor.

The Gemora explains: Chizkiyah ruled that it is tamei, since if she would experience a discharge for the third time, she becomes tamei retroactively (which demonstrates that we already, after two discharges, establish the commonness of her bloods), her stain also causes her to be tamei (for we cannot any longer apply the leniency of 'a woman who hasn't reached her time to discharge' to her), while Rabbi Yochanan ruled that it is tahor, for since we have not yet ruled (in any practical manner) that she is in the condition of presumptive menstruation, she cannot be regarded as tamei on account of her stain.

Rabbi Ila'i asked: But what is the difference between this class of woman and a virgin (just married) whose blood is tahor? [In that case the blood is assumed to be that of the wound caused by her hymen rupturing, which is exempt from the laws of tumah.]

Rabbi Zeira replied: In the latter case of the latter her secretion from a source which is tahor is extremely common, but in that of the former, her secretion from a source that is tahor is not frequent. (9b – 10b)