

Daf Notes

Insights into the Daily Daf

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Niddah Daf 4

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Daily Daf

Box of Taharos

The *Gemora* presents us with an argument concerning a case where a container with *tahor* foods on one side of a container, and a *sheretz* was found on the other side. Chizkiyah holds that the foods that were in the container remain *tahor*, while Rabbi Yochanan maintains that they are *tamei* retroactively.

The *Gemora* asks: How could Rabbi Yochanan hold they are *tamei*? Don't Shammai and Hillel both agree that in such a case they are *tamei*?

The *Gemora* answers that Shammai and Hillel are talking about a container whose bottom lid is intact. In such a case, any *sheretz* that was there must have made contact with the *tahor* items, rendering them *tamei*. Chizkiyah and Rabbi Yochanan however, are arguing about a container whose bottom lid has been removed. In such a scenario, it is very unlikely that the *sheretz* made contact with the *tahor* items.

The *Gemora* asks: If that's the case, how could Rabbi Yochanan maintain that the items are *tamei*?

The *Gemora* answers that although the container had no bottom lid, it did have a rim at the bottom, which may have prevented the *sheretz* from leaving. Therefore, there's enough reason to assume that the items are *tamei*.

The *Gemora* notes that based on Rabbi Yochanan's answer, we can deduce that Chizkiyah would hold that even with a rim, the items remain *tahor*. This presents a problem, as a *Mishna* tells us that if one draws water ten separate times using the same bucket,

and in one of those drawings he discovers a *sheretz* in the bucket, only that bucket's water are considered *tamei*, but the previous waters are *tahor*. Rish Lakish expounds on this *Mishna* in the name of Rabbi Yannai, that this leniency is only applicable if the bucket had no rims, but if it did, then we have to assume that the *sheretz* was there from the first drawing, and therefore all the waters are *tamei*. Are we to say then that Chizkiyah disagrees on Rabbi Yannai (*who lived well before him*)?

The *Gemora* answers: No, this isn't necessarily the case. There's an intrinsic difference between water in a bucket and foods in a container. Water pours out much more smoothly than food. Therefore, the person didn't have to invert the bucket completely to take out the water, so it's possible that the *sheretz* remained inside, but since food items don't come out as smoothly, he would have to invert the container completely, assuring that the *sheretz* came out as well.

Alternatively, we can say that water has much less monetary value than food. When one pours out water, he is less careful to empty out the entire bucket. Therefore, it's possible that the *sheretz* remained inside. But since food is more valuable, the person made sure to completely empty out the container, and we can assume that the *sheretz* came out as well.

The *Gemora* notes another way of viewing the difference between the argument of Shammai and Hillel and the argument of Chizkiyah and Rabbi Yochanan is that Shammai and Hillel are discussing a container that was not initially checked for a potential *sheretz*. In Chizkiyah and Rabbi Yochanan's case, however, the container has been checked. *Chizkiyah's* view is simple: if the container was checked, then the food must be *tahor*. Rabbi Yochanan however is concerned that perhaps the

very moment after he removed his hands from checking, that's when the *sheretz* fell out, and went unnoticed.

The *Gemora* asks: But when Shammai and Hillel were arguing about the container, they compared the case to a woman. A woman surely checks herself each morning and evening – and yet they both agreed that the foods are *tamei*. If that's the case, how can *Chizkiyah* say that the container is *tahor*?

The *Gemora* answers that since it is normal for a woman to experience a discharge of blood, it is considered as if she has not checked herself, as the blood can be discharged at any given moment.

We can also say that Shammai and Hillel are in agreement (that the foods are *tamei*) about a container that's uncovered at its top, essentially allowing a potential *sheretz* to fall in there. But *Chizkiyah* and Rabbi Yochanan are talking about a container that's covered at the top.

The *Gemora* asks: If it is covered, how could the *sheretz* have fallen in there?

The *Gemora* answers: What they meant by "covered" is that we normally cover the container between usages, but there are times when it is uncovered.

The *Gemora* persists: The container was compared to a woman, who is considered to be covered, and no blood can enter her (from external sources), so how could *Chizkiyah* say that the foods are *tamei*?

The *Gemora* answers that since blood is common in a woman, she is considered not to be covered (and therefore similar to an uncovered box).

The *Gemora* notes another difference between the two sets of arguments, namely that Shammai and Hillel were talking about two different sides of the container itself – a much smaller area that surely could contain the *sheretz*. *Chizkiyah* and Rabbi Yochanan, however, were arguing in a case where the container was in one side of the house, and the *sheretz* was found in another side of the house – minimizing the chances that the *sheretz* came in contact with the foods.

The *Gemora* asks: But surely the word "container" was used, so how can we interpret that to mean "house"?

The *Gemora* answers that we are talking about a container that was moved from one side of the house to another. *Chizkiyah* believes that *tumah* can only remain in one place, and cannot

"travel" from one side of the house to another, while Rabbi Yochanan says that it can move around.

Rabbi Yochanan's opinion – that *tumah* can move from place to place – now comes under question. A *Mishna* tells us that if a person touched someone at night, and come morning time that person was found to be dead, Rabbi Meir holds that the person who touched him is *tahor* (meaning, that at the time he touched the other person, he was still alive), and the Sages render him *tamei*, since all cases of *tumah* are determined by the time they were discovered. A *braisa* adds to this *Mishna* and says that *tumah* is also determined by the place it was discovered. We see therefore from the *braisa* that we don't assume that *tumah* travels from one place to another – an open contradiction to Rabbi Yochanan.

The *Gemora* suggests an answer, but immediately rejects it: Perhaps we can say that we don't actually burn the *tahor* foods if the *tumah* was found in a different place, but we merely suspend judgment on it (and he is possibly *tamei*)? This is incorrect, as another *Mishna* tells us that if a needle became rusty or was broken (and fell upon *tahor* foods), it is considered to be *tahor*. [The halachah is that any vessel – a *kli* – that becomes unusable, loses its ability to contract *tumah*, and is considered to be *tahor*.] Why is this the case? Perhaps the needle fell on the *tahor* foods before it was broken or became rusty, and at the time was still *tamei* (which would mean that *tumah* can travel from one place to another)? [This proves that the Rabbis did not suspend judgment in these types of cases.]

Another *Mishna* relates the same idea: If one found a burned *sheretz* or a worn-out towel that belonged to a *zav* – a *tamei* person (both are no longer *tamei*) – on top of olives, the olives are considered *tahor*, since *tumah* is determined by the time it was discovered, and we may assume that the *sheretz* was already burned when it touched the olives, and the towel was already worn-out when it touched the olives.

The *Gemora* suggests a rejection of these proof, but immediately rebuffs it: But perhaps the state of *tumah* at the time of discovery (whether to be lenient, as in the cases of the olives or the needle, or to be strict, as in the case of the dead person who was touched at night, according to the Sages) is only true in the original place of the *tumah*, however, if the *tumah* had moved to a different location, maybe we would be lenient, by only suspecting the *tumah*, and not actually burning the *tahor* items.

The *Gemora* explains why this is not true, since a *braisa* tells us that if a loaf of bread was placed on a shelf, and on the ground directly beneath that shelf was a garment belonging to a person who was *tamei*, and later on we found that loaf of bread on the

ground nearby the garment – we do not assume that the bread fell on the garment rendering it *tamei* – but rather we assume that someone moved the garment beforehand, and the bread never touched it. Only if we know for sure that nobody entered that room, then we have to assume that the bread fell on the garment. Rabbi Elozar commented that this leniency (*of assuming that another person moved the garment beforehand*) is when the shelf was on a slant, so that the bread must have fallen from it. We see from all of this that we don't assume that *tumah* has moved from one place to another.

The *Gemora* answers that the *braisa* supplied the reason: “We can assume that another person, who was *tahor*, moved the garment beforehand.” [*In general, however, R' Yochanan would hold that we do not assume the status of tumah from one place to another.*]

The *Gemora* asks: But why can't we say (*in R' Yochanan's case*) that a raven removed the container away from one side of the room, and dropped it off in another (*meaning, that the sheretz was never in the original location*)?

The *Gemora* differentiates between a human being – who thinks about his actions – and a raven that doesn't (*and we therefore do not assume that the raven threw the sheretz into the box after it had been moved*).

The *Gemora* asks on the *braisa*: But this is insufficient! The bread that fell from the shelf is located in a private domain, and the general rule is that any questionable *tumah* in a private domain is considered *tamei*!?

The answer is that this rule only applies to humans - that can be asked concerning their questionable *tumah*, but since we can't ask the bread this question, it is considered to be *tahor*.

Another explanation is that the potential *tumah* of the bread was only Rabbinic in nature, and therefore we can be more lenient. This is supported by the fact that the garment – known in Hebrew as a “*madaf*”, is derived from the word in the verse “*nidaf*”, which means “rustling leaf.” [*A tumah d'rabonon is considered to be light-weight.*] (3b – 4b)

The View of the Sages

We now return to the first *Mishna* in the Tractate, and analyze the Sages' middle-ground opinion. [*Shammai said that a woman who sees blood now is not tamei retroactively, and Hillel says she is tamei retroactively, all the way back to the last time she saw. The Sages hold of the middle-ground, and say that she's only tamei retroactively twenty-four hours, or from the last time she checked*

herself, whichever came last.]

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: The Sages believe that Shammai was too lenient, for he didn't create a fence for his words (*and didn't allow for any possible error*), while Hillel was much too strict. Their opinion is that if a woman examined herself on a given Sunday and was *tahor*, and went through Monday and Tuesday without examining herself, and then on Wednesday she examined herself and found herself to be *tamei*, we do not assume that she saw blood immediately after her last examination on Sunday. Rather, we only assume that the blood came out on Tuesday, twenty-four hours since the last time she examined herself.

Similarly, if the woman examined herself at 9:00 in the morning and was *tahor*, and at 10:00 and at 11:00 she didn't examine herself, but she examined herself at 12:00 noon and then found herself to be *tamei*, we do not assume that she saw blood twenty-four hours ago, but only from the last time she examined herself, which was at 9:00.

The *Gemora* asks: This is obvious! Why should we suspect the past twenty-four hours – after all, she examined herself this very morning, and found herself to be *tahor*?

The *Gemora* answers that the *Tanna* (*author of the Mishna*) was using parallel statements. Since it was necessary to say the case of twenty-four hours concerning the three day interval of not examining, he wrote it concerning the three hour interval too.

The *Gemora* asks: What is the reason behind the Sages' opinion of twenty-four hours? We understand that Hillel suspects that the woman discharged blood immediately after her last examination, even though it was a few days ago. But where does the time period of twenty-four hours come from?

Rabbah said the reason is that since a woman senses if blood is discharged.

Abaye objected: If that's the case, she should be only *tamei* from now on like Shammai, and certainly not twenty-four hours?

The *Gemora* notes that Rabbah, of course, knew this as well; he was just testing Abaye's sharpness in Torah study.

The real reason is like Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel, which is based on a *takanah d'rabonon* (*a rabbinical enactment*), requiring Jewish women to examine themselves each morning and night. If she found herself *tahor* in the morning, she knows that any items she touched at night are *tahor*. And if she found herself *tamei* at night, only the items from the time of the morning's examination will be *tamei*. But the woman here – who

FEAR OF A RUSTLING LEAF

By: Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

violated this *takanah* and didn't examine herself in the morning – she “loses” an extra twelve hour period, and we render her past twenty-four hours to be *tamei*.

Rav Papa told Rava that it can happen that the woman will “lose” a period of thirty-six hours and not just twenty-four, in a case where she hasn't examined herself in a few days, and now only makes an examination at noon time. She'll lose the *tahor* status from that noon until the following evening.

Rava answers that in this case the Rabbis were lenient with their *takanah*, and only applied the enactment for a uniform twenty-four hours.

Another answer utilizes the concept of “a sinner shouldn't gain.” We don't want her only to lose eighteen hours of *taharos*. Therefore the *takanah* is a uniform twenty-four hours.

The *Gemora* notes that the difference between these two answers is a woman who wasn't able to examine herself in the morning. She's definitely not considered a “sinner” (*which would satisfy the second reason*), but the *takanah* was a uniform twenty-four hours, which fits with the first reason. (4b)

DAILY MASHAL

Great Secrets Are Found in Simanim

The *Shaloh* states (*Torah Shebe'al Peh, os samech, Simanim*): “I have seen many people that when there's a *siman* in the Gemara, they don't learn the *siman* and don't read it. G-d forbid to do so! and I think that great secrets are hinted in the *simanim* aside from the simple meaning.”

Mah, Mehumham, Mayim

The meaning of the word *mehumham* concerned many commentators (see *Mesores HaShas*). HaGaon Rav Y. Kaminetzki zt"l explains that it derives from the root *mah*, as in *mah bechach* (“what about it?”) or *mah shehu* (“a slight amount”) – i.e., something worn-out (*Emes LeYa'akov*). It is interesting that some explain the word *mayim* (“water”) as deriving from the root *mah* – that is, something without essence, color or adhesiveness which falls and scatters. Indeed, as in the holy tongue, also in a few European languages – such as English, German and Yiddish – the word “water” is sort of a plural form of “what”! (*Keses HaSofer, Bereishis*).

In their desire to relay the maximum amount of information with the minimum amount of words, the Talmudic Sages sometimes used a poetic turn of phrase to communicate a subtle message. We thus find in our *Gemora* that they referred to a certain form of *tumah* – ritual impurity – with the term *madaf* in order to indicate that it was of a slighter nature than other forms of ritual impurity.

This term *madaf* is based on the word *nidaf* found in a Torah passage which describes the suffering which G-d declares He will inflict upon Jews for abandoning their religious responsibilities. Not only will they be exiled from their land but “I shall instill a fear in their hearts, in the land of their enemies, and they will feel pursued by the sound of a *nidaf* leaf from which they will flee as on fleeing from the sword and falling, although there is no one in pursuit.” (*Vayikra 26:36*)

Nidaf, explain the commentaries, refers to the rustling sound made by the leaf of a tree when it is blown by the wind against another leaf. That such a slight, innocent sound can strike fear in the hearts of threatened people is illustrated in a story the Midrash tells of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha. “We were once studying between some trees,” related this Sage, “when we heard the rustling of wind – blown leaves. We were afraid that the enemy was approaching and fled for our lives. After a while we realized that no one was pursuing us and we wept that the curse in the Torah had come upon us.”

It is this slight, rustling leaf representing physical danger which serves as a simile for a slight form of the spiritual danger of *tumah*.