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**Fixed Period**

Our *Mishna* told us that a woman who has experienced a discharge of blood three times at the exact same interval (*known as a veses kavua*) does not need to worry perhaps blood was discharged earlier, since she is accustomed to seeing at the same time.

The *Gemora* wants to suggest that this passage was authored by Rabbi Dosa, and not the Rabbis. [Note that the term Rabbis here is used as a generic term, referring to the *tanna kamma* [first *tanna* in the *Mishna*], in this case Rabbi Eliezer.] We find in a *braisa* that Rabbi Eliezer says that regarding only four women do we consider their blood to have discharged now, and we don't suspect that it came out retroactively: a) a woman who has never experienced a blood-discharge in her life, b) a pregnant woman, c) a nursing woman, d) a woman who has gone through menopause. [These four women aren't accustomed to seeing blood, so we don't assume that the blood discharged earlier.] Rabbi Dosa says that any woman who is accustomed to seeing at a regular interval, can also assume that the blood was not discharged earlier. This seems to fit our *Mishna* very well, but presents somewhat of a difficulty, as the *Mishna* will be following the minority opinion (of Rabbi Dosa, versus Rabbi Eliezer, who in this case is considered like the Rabbis, who are the majority opinion.)

The *Gemora* answers that our *Mishna* can also follow Rabbi Eliezer. The Rabbis have only argued on Rabbi Dosa if a woman experienced a discharge of blood at the time when she is not accustomed to see. But during the time of the *veses*, they would agree that we don't suspect for blood retroactively. This is the exact case of the *Mishna*, and it follows everyone's opinion.

The *Gemora* asks: Does this mean to say that Rabbi Dosa was lenient even when the woman experienced a discharge at a time which is not her 'regular time'? According to this, who authored the following *braisa*? The *braisa* states: A woman who has a *veses kavua*, any blood stain that she sees is *tamei* retroactively. If she experiences a discharge

of blood during the time that is not her fixed period, she is *tamei* retroactively for twenty-four hours. This should follow the Rabbi's opinion, and not Rabbi Dosa's!?

The *Gemora* answers that it could even be Rabbi Dosa, for Rabbi Dosa was only lenient with the woman if she saw at the exact time when she is accustomed to seeing – such that we don't suspect the blood to have been discharged earlier, but if she saw at a time which is not her fixed period, Rabbi Dosa would agree with the Rabbis. According to all this, the *Mishna* was authored by Rabbi Dosa, and is talking about a woman who saw at the time of her fixed period, and the *braisa* is according to all opinions.

The *Gemora* asks: But why do we have to change the explanation? What is wrong with the first way we established the *Mishna* and the *braisa*?

The *Gemora* answers that the two explanations present us with two possibilities: either to be lenient or to be strict. The first way brings forth a leniency, since both opinions are that a woman who experiences a discharge of blood at the time of her fixed period is not *tamei* retroactively. The second explanation will bring forth a stringency, since both opinions would say that she is *tamei* retroactively. Therefore, if we're faced with the two possibilities, we opt for the stricter one.

The *Gemora* now refers back to the *braisa* that said that a woman who has a *veses kavua*, any blood stain that she finds is *tamei* retroactively. If she experiences a discharge of blood not at the time of her fixed period, she is *tamei* retroactively for twenty-four hours. It appears that the only difference between a stain and an actual discharge of blood is when a woman has a *veses kavua*. However, if she is one of the four types of women (*very young, very old, pregnant, or nursing*), then we don't go back retroactively if they experienced a discharge of blood, and the same *halachah* would apply if they find a stain – we would not go back retroactively.



This seems to follow the opinion of Rabbi Chanina ben Antignus, who was quoted by Rav Yehudah in the name of Shmuel to have said that all women's stains are *tamei* retroactively (as if they actually experienced a discharge of blood), except for the four types of women, whose stains are only *tamei* from the time they were discovered. The only notable exception is a very young girl, who hasn't yet reached the age of menstruation – even if we find her sheets soiled with blood, we do not regard it as *tamei* at all.

Now the *Gemora* questions our assumption that Rabbi Chanina ben Antignus is the author of the *braisa*, for another *braisa* says that the stain of every woman is *tamei*, and the stain of the four types of women is also *tamei*. Rabbi Chanina ben Antignus says that we don't regard the four women's stains. Can we assume that the statement "we don't regard the four women's stains" means that we completely disregard their stains? This would go against what Rabbi Chanina ben Antignus said, that the four women's stains are *tamei* from now on!?

The *Gemora* answers that it does indeed mean that the stains are only *tamei* from now on. But this would imply that the *tanna kama's* opinion would be that these stains are *tamei* retroactively. This can only be Rabbi Meir's opinion, who is stringent with stains, as proven by the following *braisa*: All women's stains are *tamei* retroactively, and the four women's stains are (also) *tamei* retroactively. These are the words of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Chanina ben Antignus says that the four women's stains are as if they actually experienced a discharge of blood (and the stains are *tamei* from now on). A young girl who has come of the age of discharging blood, we do regard her stains. A young girl who hasn't yet come of the age of discharging blood, we completely disregard her stains. The coming of age is the time of her "youth-hood." [*Rashi explains this to be when the girl has two pubic hairs, or has turned twelve years old.*] (4b – 5a)

## Examining Before and After Marital Relations

The *Mishna* said that woman who has marital relations with her husband, and before and afterwards, she examines herself with a clean cloth, can follow the Sages' "middle-ground" opinion, and we don't render food and objects *tamei* from the morning, but rather from the time of the relations, when she last examined herself.

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel, that the examining with a clean cloth before the relations isn't considered an examination. Why not? Rav Ketina said that the reason for this is that she is in a hurry to be in her "home" (with her husband), and may not examine herself well enough, as normally she needs to insert the clean cloth into her crevices and creases (inside of the vaginal canal).

The *Gemora* asks: But surely our *Mishna* has taught that a woman who has relations and examines herself with the clean cloth, we can assume that she didn't experience a discharge of blood beforehand, so how can Shmuel not accept this examining?

The *Gemora* assumes that the *Mishna* refers to two cloths, one before relations and one afterwards – thereby challenging Shmuel's statement. However, we can also understand the *Mishna* refers to two cloths – one for the man and one for the woman – that are used after the relations. A *braisa* supports this view, and says that it is the way of Jewish woman to have relations with a cloth for the man and a cloth for the woman.

Now, how are we to understand this? Why did the *Mishna* have to tell us that she needs the two cloths, one before the relations and one after?

The *Gemora* answers that since she is too hasty with the one before, we need to be informed that it is still a good examination.

But, the *Gemora* asks, according to the second way of understanding the *Mishna* – that both cloths are used after relations, is this not obvious (that it is a valid examination)?

The *Gemora* answers that even after relations, some semen may cover a small drop of blood – the size of a mustard seed, leaving it unnoticed. However, the *Mishna* tells us that we do not suspect such a case, and both cloths for the man and the woman are the new starting points for the last time she discharged blood.

Alternatively, we can say that the Rabbis required the woman to examine herself both before and after relations. But the one that counts for the starting point of the blood is the examining after the relations.

The *Gemora* asks: If so, why did the *Mishna* say "a woman ... who examines herself," which implies that it's not obligatory to check twice, and even the one before the relations counts?

The *Gemora* answers that the *Mishna* should really read “a woman must examine herself,” which means that the examining after the relations is the starting point for the blood retroactively, and the first cloth is used as a preliminary examining before the relations, so she shouldn’t have relations when she is *tamei*.

We have established that a woman who examines herself with clean cloths does not have to go back retroactively to the past twenty-four hours, nor to the last time she examined herself in the morning.

The *Gemora* asks: Why does the *Mishna* say both times (*twenty-four hours and this morning*) – if the examining eliminates the examination of twenty-four hours ago, certainly it eliminates this morning’s examination?

The *Gemora* answers this question by saying that we could have thought that the Rabbis didn’t want to disqualify the *taharos* of a full twenty-four hour period, but perhaps the ones from this morning will be *tamei*. Therefore, the *Mishna* tells us both times, notifying us that both remain *tahor*. (5a – 5b)

## Significance of the Couch

The *Mishna* gave an example of a woman who doesn’t have to go back retroactively with her food and objects – a woman who was sitting on her couch and was touching food and objects which are *tahor*. She later left the couch and then experienced a discharge of blood. Only she herself is now considered *tamei*, but the food and objects remain *tahor*.

The *Gemora* asks: What is the significance of the couch in this example? Wouldn’t it have sufficed to say “a woman who was touching food...,” without mentioning the couch?

The *Gemora* answers that the only reason why the food remains *tahor* is because she has a *veses kavua*. But if not, then even the couch will become *tamei*, just like any other object that a *niddah* woman lies on.

The *Gemora* notes that this supports Ze’iri’s opinion, who said elsewhere that if a woman has to go back retroactively, then not only is she herself *tamei*, but that *tumah* extends to other people who came in contact with her, and those people will also render foods *tamei* upon touching them.

The *Gemora* asks: How is this possible – surely we are talking about a couch, and the general rule is that when we are uncertain of a *tumah* of any object that can’t be asked concerning, we rule leniently? [*In our case where the foods are rendered tamei retroactively – and foods can’t be asked – the reason according to Rashi is that the woman is actively touching them, so they become an extension of her.*]

Ze’iri answers that this case of the couch is when other women carried this woman while lying in her couch in the past twenty-four hours. We can therefore ask them, and can be stringent with the *tumah*.

We can also say that the couch is *tamei* without the women carrying her, based on what Rabbi Yochanan has said elsewhere, that any *tumah* that comes via a human being – even though it was placed in a vessel on the ground – is as if it’s the person himself. Therefore, since the suspected *tumah* here spread out to the couch via the woman, we consider the couch to be *tamei* as well retroactively.

The *Gemora* questions Rabbi Yochanan’s statement, based on a *braisa* that says that if a person was donning his garment and nearby him were foods and objects, some *tahor* and some *tamei*, and we are unsure whether the garment touched these items (*according to Rashi, either his garment was tamei and we are unsure if touched something tahor, or his garment was tahor and we are unsure if it touched something tamei*) – we consider him *tahor*, unless it is inevitable that he became *tamei*. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says that we ask him to repeat his action, to ascertain whether he actually touched the *tumah*. The Sages disagree with this approach, as he may be causing certain *tumah* now, instead of just questionable *tumah*.

According to Rabbi Yochanan, this statement is difficult. The questionable *tumah* was brought on by a person, so why does the *tumah* remain questionable?

The *Gemora* defends Rabbi Yochanan’s position by quoting Rav Hoshaya, who said that we are only lenient in a *reshus harabim*, but in *reshus hayochid* we will be stringent – as is the normal ruling when a human being is involved, based on the *sotah* woman, who can be asked, and her questionable *tumah* is only considered *tamei* in *reshus hayochid*. (5b)