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Avodah Zarah Daf 24

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Dama ben Nesinah

The *Gemora* discusses the *braisa* that Shila taught: What is Rabbi Eliezer’s reasoning (*that an animal bought from an idolater cannot be used for a parah adumah*)? The verse states: *Speak to Bnei Yisroel and let them take (a red heifer)*. This implies that Jews can sell us their own red heifer, but we cannot buy one from an idolater.

The *Gemora* asks: If this teaching is correct, we should similarly say that the verse: *Speak to Bnei Yisroel and let them take for me a donation* also implies that it can only be from *Bnei Yisroel*, and we cannot purchase these items from idolaters! The *Gemora* proves from an incident that this cannot be so. Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: They asked Rabbi Eliezer how far one must go when honoring his parents. He answered: See what this idolater did for his father in Ashkelon. His name was Dama ben Nesinah. Once, the *Chachamim* proposed to buy stones for the *eifod* (*article of clothing worn by the Kohen Gadol*), in a deal which would have given him a profit of six hundred thousand gold *dinars*. Rav Kahana taught that it was eight hundred thousand. However, the key to the goods was under his father’s pillow, and his father was sleeping, so he did not pain his father.

The *Gemora* answers that the Shoham stones are written without the conjunction “and,” and therefore it is evident that these stones (*unlike other materials*) may be purchased from an idolater.

The *Gemora* asks: But the very next words in the verse, “and stones for the settings” once again combines the entire verse (*to teach us that all the materials are subject to the same limitation*)!?

And furthermore, it was taught at the end of that *braisa* that the next year Hashem repaid him, as a red heifer was born in his herd. The *Chachamim* came to him. He said: I know that if I ask for all of the money in the world you will give it to me, but I only seek from you the money I lost due to my honoring my father. [*We see that Rabbi Eliezer himself maintains that a parah adumah can be purchased from an idolater!*?]

The *Gemora* answers that they bought it from the idolater through Jewish merchants. [*The merchants bought it from Dama, and they sold it to the Sages.*]

The *Gemora* asks: And Rabbi Eliezer does not have a concern for sodomy (*regarding a parah adumah*)? But it was taught in a *braisa*: When the incident was mentioned to Rabbi Eliezer of a *parah adumah* having been bought from an idolater named Dama - or, as some say, named Ramatz - Rabbi Eliezer replied: Proof cannot be brought from there, seeing that Israelites had been watching the heifer from the moment of its birth (*and they knew for certain that it had not been sodomized*)!?

The *Gemora* answers: Rabbi Eliezer holds of two reasons (*why a parah adumah cannot be purchased from an idolater*): It must be purchased from an Israelite (*as is*



derived from the Scriptural verse), and there is a concern as well that the idolater sodomized it.

The master had stated: The Israelites had been watching the heifer from the moment of its birth.

The *Gemora* asks: But perhaps the idolaters had sodomized the mother of this heifer while she was pregnant with it (*and this would render the heifer unfit to be used as a parah adumah*), for Rava said: If a baby cow was part of its mother when it gored, it cannot be brought as a sacrifice, as both it and its mother gored. Similarly, the offspring of an animal that had been sodomized by a human (*when it was in its mother's womb*) cannot be brought as a sacrifice, as it and its offspring had been sodomized by this man.

The *Gemora* answers: The Israelites had been watching the heifer from the moment of its formation.

The *Gemora* asks: But perhaps the idolaters had sodomized the mother of this heifer before she was pregnant with it (*and this would also render the heifer unfit to be used as a parah adumah*), for it was taught in a *Mishna*: As to all those which are forbidden to be offered on the altar - their offspring are permitted. And a *braisa* was taught pertaining to this *Mishna*: Rabbi Eliezer forbids sacrificing the offspring. Now, all is well according to Rava's understanding of Rabbi Eliezer's opinion, for Rava said in the name of Rav Nachman: The dispute only applies to a case where the mother was sodomized when already designated as a sacrifice; but if it was sodomized when still in an unconsecrated state, all agree that the offspring is permitted. [Accordingly, it would not concern us at all if the mother of the red heifer was sodomized, for it would still be valid to be used as a *parah adumah*, since the mother was not consecrated.] However, according to Rav Huna bar Chinena who said in the name of Rav Nachman that the dispute applies only to a case where the mother was sodomized while still

unconsecrated, but if it was already consecrated all agree that the offspring is forbidden, what is there to say (*for Rabbi Eliezer should forbid the heifer from being used even if the heifer was watched from the time of its conception*)?

The *Gemora* answers: Then we must say that the mother, as well, was watched by Israelites since the time it was first formed.

The *Gemora* asks: And why not be concerned that its mother's mother was sodomized?

The *Gemora* answers: We are not concerned to such an extent. (23b – 24a)

Watching the Heifer

The master had stated: The Israelites had been watching the heifer from the moment of its formation.

The *Gemora* asks: How did we know that the fetus would be born as a red cow?

Rav Kahana answers: A cup of red liquid is passed before the mother at the time of mating.

The *Gemora* asks: If that is so, why should a red heifer be so expensive?

The *Gemora* answers: It is because even two (*black or white*) hairs (*in one place*) render her unfit.

The *Gemora* asks: Then why did they use this method only on their animals?

Rav Kahana answered: They did it only with those herd that had been established that this method was effective. (24a)



Idolaters' Animals in Scripture

The *Gemora* cites an *Amora's* opinion that Rabbi Eliezer disqualified all animals purchased from idolaters to be used for any *korbanos*. Another *Amora* said that the Rabbis cited a Scriptural verse proving that when the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt (*in the Messianic era*), the choicest animals of idolaters will be used for sacrifices. However, Rabbi Eliezer responded that the verse is referring to those idolaters who will convert to Judaism (*and although they will not be accepted, their animals will be fit to be used, for they will forsake their pagan practices, and we will not need to be concerned for sodomy*). Abaye asked: Perhaps they will only forsake idolatry (*but not sodomy*)? Rav Yosef answered by citing the verse: they will worship Him with a united resolve, proving that they will accept all of the Torah's commandments. The *Gemora* cites an alternative version of the above discussion.

The *Gemora* asks (*on Rabbi Eliezer*): It is written: *And Moshe said (to Pharaoh): You will also give into our hands feast-sacrifices and burnt-offerings.*

The *Gemora* answers: The law was different before the Giving of the Torah (*and a sodomized animal was fit to be used as a korban*).

The *Gemora* asks from a different verse: *And Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and feast-sacrifices for God.*

The *Gemora* answers: In the case of Yisro, too, it was before the Giving of the Torah.

The *Gemora* asks: This is well according to the opinion that Yisro (*came to Moshe*) before the Giving of the Torah; however, according to the opinion that he came after the Giving of the Torah, what is there to say?

The *Gemora* answers: Yisro did not bring his own animals; rather, he bought them from the Israelites.

The *Gemora* challenges Rabbi Eliezer's view from a different Scriptural verse, and answers as follows: Shaul's men took the best of the Amalekite's animals in order to make a quick sale, and with the proceeds, purchase animals that would be fit to be used for offerings.

The *Gemora* challenges Rabbi Eliezer's view from a different Scriptural verse, and Rav Nachman answers that Arvanah was a resident alien (*and that is why his animals would be fit to be used for offerings*).

The *Gemora* challenges Rabbi Eliezer's view from a different Scriptural verse: *and the cows they offered up as a burnt-offering to Hashem.*

The *Gemora* answers: This was a special ruling of the moment. [*Since the nursing cows, that the Philistines had sent to carry the Ark back to the Jews, abandoned their young at home, and traveled to Beis Shemesh without anyone leading them – the entire time singing praises to Hashem, they issued a special ruling that these cows could be offered as korbanos to Hashem.*]

The *Gemora* proves that it was a ruling of the moment, for otherwise, how could female animals be brought as an *olah* offering.

The *Gemora* rejects this proof, for Rav Adda bar Ahavah taught that a female *olah* offering is valid on a private *bamah* (*an altar outside of the Temple*).

Rabbi Yochanan says: If an animal is sodomized when it is less than three years of age, it can become sterile; however, if it sodomized after it reaches three years of age, it will not become sterile. [*Accordingly, an animal of an idolater can be used as a sacrifice only if it is less than*



three years of age, for then the idolater will not sodomize his animal.]

The *Gemora* asked all the challenges cited above, and answered that the verses are referring to animals that were less than three years of age (*and that is why they were fit to be used as korbanos*).

The *Gemora* asked from the verse: *and the cows they offered up as a burnt-offering to Hashem*.

Rabbi Yochanan answered that those cows were less than three years of age.

Rav Huna the son of Rav Nassan asked from the verse which states that their young were confined at home. Is it possible for cows less than three years of age to give birth?

The *Gemora* concludes that the explanation must be like we originally answered (*that it was a special ruling of the moment*).

It is written regarding the cows that carried the Ark: *vayisharnah*.

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Meir: The cows sang a song to God.

Rav Zutra bar Tuvyah said in the name of Rav: They turned their faces directly towards the Ark and sang a song to God.

The *Gemora* cites different opinions as to the song that they sang. (23b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Eating from a Sodomized Animal

The Beer Yaakov brings that it is written in Teshuvos Bais Yaakov that one is forbidden from eating an animal that has been sodomized.

Accordingly, the Lechem Hapanim explains that therefore Adam Harishon was prohibited from eating meat, for it is stated that Adam cohabited with every animal.

This explanation is challenged, however, for the *Gemora* states that an animal that has been sodomized cannot give birth; if so, how was it possible, for all the animals initially created, to produce offspring?! The answer must be that the animals gave birth before cohabiting with Adam. The question therefore returns: Why didn't Adam eat from those animals that were born beforehand?

He answers that in truth, they did not give birth first; rather, our *Gemora* says that once an animal is three years old, they will not become sterile though sodomy, and since all the creatures created by Creation were created in their full height - they were created as if they were older than three. That is why they were able to produce offspring. (24a – 24b)

A brown cow, red horses and green hair

Our *sugya* details several halachos concerning the red heifer, whose ashes served to purify people defiled by the dead. Among other matters, our *Gemara* cites the well-known tale of Dama ben Nesinah, who earned a red heifer to be born in his herd after refusing to wake his father despite a substantial financial loss.

“*A parah adumah* - red heifer”: This is the expression we are used to, while we imagine a cow as red as a rose. Still, HaGaon Yehuda Lichter of Monsey asserts that this could

possibly not be so (*Kovetz Zikaron 'Ateres Shlomo*, V, and see *Ashkecha Miyayin*). First we shall bring supports for this idea and then we shall examine why the animal is nonetheless called “red”.

Red horses: In Zechariah 1:8 we are told: “And behold, a man riding a red horse...and after him, red horses” and lest we think that this means a rare variety that has become extinct, Rashi tells us (Bechoros 6a, s.v. *Chamor adam*) that “most horses are red”. As we are not familiar with any red horses, we must assume that the word “red” was used for “brown”. The red heifer and the red horses are therefore brown.

Using “red” for “brown”: We find many examples in the Rishonim of using “red” for “brown”. On the verse “Gorge my gullet with this red stuff” (Bereishis 25:30), Rashi comments “red lentils” though lentils are brown.

Rambam (*Hilchos Parah Adumah*, 3:2) writes that “the *tola’as* is the reddest seeds, which resemble carob seeds” while it is known that carob seeds are brown. The Gemara in Sukkah 35b explains that a cut *esrog* becomes red and Rashi (s.v. *Kaahina*) comments that all cut fruit becomes red while they become brown. *Beis Yosef* (O.C. 645, s.v. *Nechlekah*) also calls the *kora* shell of a *lulav* is red, though it is brown, and the *Perishah* calls rice husks red (Y.D. 162, os 2).

We must therefore say that *Chazal* called brown “red”. Indeed, Rav Saadayah Gaon translates the “red” in “red heifer” as *tzafra* – “brown” in Arabic. The same appears from our *sugya*, which says that a red heifer is expensive because two white hairs disqualify it. If it is really red, it should be expensive because two white hairs disqualify it. If it is really red, it should be expensive due to its rare color. We must therefore say that a red heifer is brown and is only rare because two white hairs disqualify it.

We must now clarify why the difference became unclear

between red and brown and why both became known as “red”. In addition, regarding animals the Torah uses the word “brown”, such as “...and every brown (*chum*) lamb among the sheep” (Bereishis 30:32) and Rashi comments: “Dark, resembling red”. In other words, the color **resembles** red but was recognized as a different hue. If so, we must understand why the Torah uses the word “red” instead of “brown” in other places.

Indeed, we call each color by a different name, such as orange, pink, brown or red but *Chazal* called them by the primary colors to which they belong: red, blue or green (*Binas Adam*, Y.D. 13, os 13) and since brown belongs to the reds, they sometimes called it red.

Green hair: If not so, how can we understand the Zohar (*parashas Yisro*) which asserts that some people have green hair? It could only be that yellow is derived from green (see Responsa *Peas Sadecha*, 95).

DAILY MASHAL

The Song of the Leviim in the Temple

From here we learn, writes the *Sefas Emes* zt”l, that even the steers that carried the *aron* with the Tablets of the Law broke out in song to Hashem! We thus understand the simple meaning of the verse concerning the descendents of Kehos: “...they will lift on their shoulders” the *aron* (Bemidbar 7:9), as interpreted by *Chazal* that “they will lift” means “they will sing” („Arachin 11a) – i.e., the burden of the *aron* made them sing. This is also the source of the mitzvah of song for the Leviim in the Temple („Arachin, ibid).