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Avodah Zarah Daf 28

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamot of

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May the studying of the Daf Notes be a zechus for their neshamot and may their souls find peace in Gan Eden and be bound up in the Bond of life

Idolatrous Doctors

Rabbah bar bar Chanah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that any mortal wound which one may violate *Shabbos* to treat may not be treated by an idolater, as we are concerned the idolater will kill him.

The *Gemora* cites an alternate version, which prohibits one to be healed for internal injuries.

The *Gemora* explains that the difference between the two versions is a wound on a hand or foot, which one may violate *Shabbos* to heal, but which is not internal. (27b – 28a)

Saving a Life on Shabbos

Rav Zutra bar Tuviah quotes Rav saying that one may violate *Shabbos* to treat any wound with which one must estimate the viability of the patient.

Rav Shemen bar Abba quotes Rabbi Yochanan saying that a high fever is considered such a wound, so one may violate *Shabbos* to treat it.

Rabbi Ami explains that “internal injury” refers to anything from the lips and in.

Rabbi Elozar asked whether a wound in the gums or teeth is considered internal: they are inside, so they may be considered internal, but they are hard, so they may be considered external.

Abaye tries to prove that it is internal from the *Mishna*,

which says that one may not treat a toothache on *Shabbos* by gargling, implying that one *may* treat a bona fide pain in the tooth, since it is internal.

The *Gemora* deflects this by saying that the *Mishna* may refer to all pains in the tooth as a toothache, and prohibit treating all of them.

The *Gemora* attempts to prove that it is internal from the story of Rabbi Yochanan, who was suffering from the *tzafidna* tooth disease. He went to a female idolatrous doctor, who applied a treatment on Thursday and Friday. He then asked her how he should treat it on *Shabbos*, but she said that he will not need to. When he insisted, she only revealed the treatment once he swore “to the God of Israel, I will not reveal it.” He then taught it to all in his *Shabbos* lecture, as he only swore that he will not reveal it *to God*, but he can reveal it to his people. [The *Gemora* explains that this was not a *chilul Hashem* – desecration of Hashem’s name, since once she revealed it, he explained to her that his oath did not prohibit him from revealing it to others, as he did not swear *by God*.] Since Rabbi Yochanan was going to treat his tooth ailment on *Shabbos*, this proves that it is considered internal.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak deflects this by saying that this type of ailment is different, since it begins in the teeth, but ultimately spreads to the digestive tract, which *is* internal.

The *Gemora* explains that its symptom is that when one puts something in his mouth, the whole row of his teeth bleed, and it is caused by eating very cold wheat products in



the winter, very hot barley products in the summer, or the leftovers of fried fish pieces.

The *Gemora* cites the following treatments:

Water of sour dough, olive oil, and salt (Rav Acha the son of Rava).

Melted goose fat, soaked on the teeth by a goose wing (Mar bar Rav Ashi).

Abaye says that no treatments healed him, until he found a Yishmaelite merchant who told him to take pits of olives that grew only a third, burn them on a heated new spade, and put them on his teeth. When he applied this treatment, he was healed. (28a)

Professional Doctor

The *Gemora* asks how Rabbi Yochanan could go to an idolatrous doctor.

The *Gemora* answers that since Rabbi Yochanan was so politically important, we assume the doctor would not mistreat him, as he could be killed as punishment. Furthermore, his doctor was a professional, who would not ruin her reputation by mistreating him.

Although Rabbi Avahu, who was also important, was mistreated by a professional idolatrous doctor, who applied an ointment on his leg that nearly necessitated amputation, this was due to the enmity that idolaters had for Rabbi Avahu, who would triumph in debates about verses from Tanach. They therefore were willing to kill Rabbi Avahu, even if they would die in the process. (28a)

Various Treatments

Shmuel says that a sword wound is potentially fatal, so one may violate *Shabbos* to treat it. The way to stop the bleeding is to eat cress in vinegar, and the way to heal the wound is to apply a bandage from scrapings of the *yavla* plant with the scrapings of a thorn bush, or of worms that chickens uncover.

Rav Safra says that a boil that looks like a grape is a sign of impending death. The way to treat it is grinding *tinga* – gourd in honey, or parsley in strong wine. While looking for these ingredients, one should roll on the boil a grape of the same type, i.e., white for a white boil, and black for a black boil.

Rava says that if someone's skin swells up, it's a sign of impending *ishta* – fever. The way to treat it is to snap on it sixty times, and make a crosswise incision. However, if the swelling is white, it is benign, and need not be treated.

Rabbi Yaakov had a crack in his anus area. Rabbi Ami (or Rabbi Asi) told him to take seven seeds that are red like the worms in *ahala* – a cleansing agent, wrap them up in cloth that was removed to make a neck hole, tie it closed with a thread of animal hair, and dip it in white pitch. He should then burn this mixture, and apply the ashes on the crack. While he is preparing this, he should take pits from the fruit of a thorn bush, and place their crack on his crack. The *Gemora* says that this is for a crack that is high enough to apply this remedy, but for a crack that is lower, one should take the fat of a goat that has not yet borne children, melt it and spread it on that spot. If one cannot do this, he should burn three shade-dried gourd leaves and apply the ashes on the crack. If one cannot do this, he should use part of a *chilazon* worm. If he cannot do this, he should take olive oil mixed with wax, and cover himself – with worn out linen clothes in the summer, or with cotton clothes in the winter, to ensure that he not overheat.

Rabbi Avahu had a pain in his ear. Rabbi Yochanan (or the students in the Beis Medrash) told him how to treat it. The *Gemora* explains that the treatment used kidneys, based on Abaye's quote from his mother that kidneys were created to treat ears.

Rava says that Manyomi the doctor told him that all liquids are harmful for the ear except for the water of kidneys.

The *Gemora* explains that one takes the kidneys of a bald goat, make a crosswise incision, place it on simmering coals, and the liquid that drips down should be applied lukewarm to the ear. If this is not possible, one should place the melted fat of a large *chipushta* insect in the ear. If this is not possible, he should fill his ear with oil, and make seven wicks from a long leaf of green wheat. He should take dry garlic leaves and attach them to the one end of the wick, burn it, and place the other end in the ear, with the ear facing the fire, avoiding any wind. He should repeat this with all the wicks. Some say that he should take seven wicks from animal hair, burn one end, and put the other end in the ear, for each of the seven wicks, and avoid wind at the ear. If this is not possible, he should place in the ear soft material that was never beaten, and put his ear near a fire, avoiding wind. If this is not possible, he should burn a tube of a century old reed filled with salt of a marble-like stone, and put the ashes in the ear. The *Gemora* explains that these different treatments apply to different earaches, with the rule being that a wet treatment is for a dry ear, and a dry treatment is for a wet ear. (28a – 28b)

Wounds on Shabbos

Rabbah bar Zutra quoted Rabbi Chanina saying that one may raise the sinews of an ear on *Shabbos*, since it is potentially fatal.

Rav Shmuel bar Yehudah says that one may only do so manually, but not using medicine, since medicine is Rabbinically prohibited.

Some say that one may only do it with medicine, but not manually, since the manual process creates a wound, making it a more serious *Shabbos* violation.

Rav Zutra bar Tuviah quoted Rav saying that an eye that is about to fall out may be treated by applying medicine on *Shabbos*. Some of the Sages thought this was only if the medicine was prepared before, as it then only violates the Rabbinic prohibition of applying medicine, but one may not

grind the medicine, or carry it outside, since that would violate Torah prohibitions of *Shabbos*. Rabbi Yaakov taught that he heard directly from Rav Yehudah that one may even violate Torah prohibitions to treat the eye.

Rav Yehudah allowed treating an eye on *Shabbos*. Rav Shmuel bar Yehudah said that whoever listens to Rav Yehudah will be considered a *Shabbos* violator. Eventually, he had a problem with his eye on *Shabbos*, and he asked Rav Yehudah what he may do. Rav Yehudah said that although it is permitted to everyone else to violate *Shabbos*, it is prohibited for him, since he had prohibited it earlier, against Rav Yehudah's ruling.

Rav Yehudah explained that he did not originate this ruling, but learned it from his teacher Shmuel, as once a maid in Shmuel's house had an eye infection on *Shabbos*, and no one listened to her when she screamed for help. Eventually, her eye fell out. Shmuel then went out and taught that if an eye is inflamed on *Shabbos*, one may treat it, as the vision of the eye is intertwined with the chambers of the heart, making it potentially fatal.

Rav Yehudah explains that one may violate *Shabbos* only at the onset of the symptoms of pus, stabbing pain, blood, incessant tearing, or inflammation, but not at the end of these symptoms, or just to improve vision. (28b)

Dangerous Combinations

Rav Yehudah says that one who enters the bathhouse when he has been stung by a hornet, stuck by a thorn, has a swelling of skin, or has eye pain (*accompanied with fever*) is in danger.

If one is hot, he should eat radish, while if he is cold, he should eat beets, but the opposite is dangerous.

Heat should be applied to a scorpion bite, and cold to a snake bite, but the opposite is dangerous.



Heat should be applied to a thorn prick, and cold to cracks in the face, but the opposite is dangerous.

One who let blood from his shoulders should drink vinegar, and one who fasted should eat fish, but the opposite is dangerous.

Letting blood from the shoulders is dangerous when one eats cress or has a fever.

Eating cress when one has pain in his eye pains is dangerous.

One day after one ate fish he may let blood. The day after one let blood he can eat fish, but on the next day it is dangerous. (28b – 29a)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Expert Doctor

The *Gemora* states that one may be healed by a idolatrous doctor, if he is an expert, since he will not ruin his reputation by harming his patient.

The Rema (YD 155:1) quotes Tosfos (27a beRofai) saying that if the doctor is an expert in treating various illnesses, he is considered an expert. He may then treat the Jew for any illness, even one in which he has no expertise, since he will still be concerned with his reputation.

The Pischei Teshuvah (YD 155:2) quotes the responsa Bais Yaakov who says that if the doctor is an expert in only one area, he does not have the status of an expert to heal a Jew. Therefore, one may not be treated by him, even for that area.

The Pischei Teshuva disputes this, as Tosfos is simply teaching that his expertise need not be in the area he is currently treating, as he will be afraid of losing his reputation for his other expertise. This does not necessarily

mean that a doctor with expertise in one illness will not be afraid of losing his (limited) reputation by mistreating that illness.

He notes that the Rema states that we go to idolatrous bloodletters, as they are all experts in bloodletting, implying that expertise that is limited to one area is still expertise.

Vision Problems

The *Gemora* says that one may treat an eye on *Shabbos*, since loss of an eye can be fatal. The Tzitz Eliezer (14:89) discusses one who experiences a sudden degradation of vision on *Shabbos*, but does not know why. This symptom can be a result of many different conditions, only some of which can lead to blindness. He rules that the patient and doctor may violate *Shabbos* to diagnose this, and treat it if it is potentially blinding. Even if most cases of this symptom do not lead to blindness, *Shabbos* can be violated as long as there is a possibility of blindness, which the *Gemora* considers potentially fatal.

DAILY MASHAL

Why Tziporah Circumcised Her Son

Why did Tziporah circumcise her son? After all, she wasn't commanded to do so. Maharatz Chayos (Nedarim 32b) comments that according to Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim*, 10:8), Keturah's offspring must be circumcised. Keturah bore Midyan (Bereishis 25:2) and Tziporah was a Midianite. Since the mitzvah of circumcision was given to Keturah's offspring with no distinction between fathers and mothers, once she saw that Moshe refrained from circumcising his son, she went ahead and did so.