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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

Possibility vs. Certainty

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa* to challenge the premise that a possibility cannot remove an existing known status. In the *braisa*, Rabbi Yehudah tells a story of a strongman in Rimon whose maidservant miscarried her fetus into a pit. A *Kohen* came and peered over the pit to see if the fetus was male or female, to determine how long the maidservant would be impure. The Sages ruled that he was not considered impure due to contact with a corpse, since weasels and other rodents are common there, and they ate or removed the fetus already. Although there was certainly a corpse in the pit, which would make the *Kohen* impure, the Sages said he was pure, due to only the *possibility* of the corpse being removed, proving that a possibility can remove a known status.

The *Gemora* offers two answers: It was not certain whether she miscarried a fully formed fetus, or just elements of an embryo, which do not cause impurity. Therefore, the possibility of the contents being removed was sufficient to remove the possible status of impurity. Although the *braisa* says that the *Kohen* was checking if it was male or female, it means that he was checking whether if it was a fetus, and, if so, whether it was male or female.

Since weasels are common there, their presence and removal of the corpse it is a certainty, and not just a possibility. (41b – 42a)

Idolatry that Broke

Rabbi Yochanan continues to challenge Rish Lakish, who permits idolatry that broke on its own.

Our *Mishna* states that if one found the form of a hand or foot of an icon, it is prohibited. This is tantamount to idolatry which broke on its own, yet it is prohibited. Rish Lakish answers, based on Shmuel’s explanation, that they were found on a base, indicating that they were put there in order to worship them in their current state.

The *Mishna* says that an idolater can nullify his own idolatry or that of another idolater, but a Jew cannot nullify the idolatry of an idolater. Nullification by the Jew is tantamount to its breaking on its own, yet it is prohibited. Abaye explains that the “nullification” in this *Mishna* is not breaking the structure, but simply flattening its face by pounding on it. Although an idolater who does this to idolatry has nullified it, when a Jew does this, it is not considered broken, as the idolater assumes that the idolatry did not mind its face being pound, and therefore did not defend itself. Rava says that pounding the face is a valid nullification even by a Jew. However, the Sages decreed that a Jew’s nullification not be effective, as we are concerned the Jew may pick up the idolatry before nullifying it. If he picks it up, he acquired it, and a Jew’s idolatry can never be nullified.

The *Gemora* uses this principle of Rava to answer the next

three questions:

The *braisa* states that if an idolater took stones from the *markulis* idolatry and built a road or theater with it, these structures are permitted, but if a Jew did so, the structures are prohibited. A Jew's building with these stones is tantamount to their breaking, and yet it remains prohibited.

The *braisa* discusses one who shaved wood off an idol. If an idolater did so for his own use of the wood, the wood and the idolatry are permitted, as this has nullified it. If he did so for the benefit of the idolatry, the shavings are permitted, but the idolatry remains prohibited. If a Jew did so, for any reason, the idolatry and its shavings are prohibited. A Jew's shaving the wood should be tantamount a case of idolatry that broke.

Rabbi Yosi says that to destroy idolatry, one may grind it, and spread the powder to the wind, or throw it to sea. The Sages say spreading the powder will cause benefit, as the powder will fertilize the land where it settles. This powder should be tantamount to idolatry which broke on its own. The *Mishna* says that one may plant under the shade of an *asheirah* tree in the winter, as the shade provides no benefit. Rabbi Yosi differs, and says that the falling leaves fertilize the plants, causing benefit. The *Gemora* says that the leaves should be considered idolatry that broke, yet Rabbi Yosi prohibits benefit from them. The *Gemora* answers by noting that in this case, the idolatry itself is intact, and just its leaves fell off, so it is not nullified. The *Gemora* challenges this, since the earlier *braisa* permitted the shavings of idolatry, even when the idolatry is intact (*i.e., when it is shaved for its own benefit*). Rav Huna the son of Rav Yehoshua says instead that naturally falling leaves are not nullified, since idolatry is not nullified in the normal course of its growth.

Rish Lakish challenges Rabbi Yochanan with a *Mishna*. The *Mishna* says that a nest in a consecrated tree is prohibited in benefit, but does not incur the formal punishment of *me'ila* – *misusing consecrated property*. If one wants to take a nest in an idolatrous *asheirah* tree, he may retrieve it with a stick, but he may not climb the tree, as that would be a form of benefit. The *Gemora* assumed that the nest was built using the branches of the tree, yet the *Mishna* allows one to benefit from the nest of an *asheirah*, indicating that broken idolatry is considered nullified.

The *Gemora* answers that the *Mishna* is referring to a nest built with other wood, and therefore one may use it. This reading fits well, as it would explain why there is no formal *me'ilah* in the case of a consecrated tree, as the wood is not from the tree itself.

The *Gemora* deflects this point by explaining that the wood of the nest grew after the tree was consecrated, and is therefore not a consecrated item.

Rabbi Avahu quotes Rabbi Yochanan who answers that the *Mishna* is only allowing one to use a stick to retrieve the chicks in the nest, but not the nest itself.

Rabbi Yaakov explained to Rabbi Yirmiyah bar Tachlifa that chicks in a nest of a consecrated tree or an *asheirah* tree are permitted, as they do not need the tree, while eggs in either tree are prohibited, as they need the tree. Rav Ashi explains that chicks that cannot yet fly without their mother are equivalent to eggs, and are prohibited. (42a – 42b)

Lost and Found

The *Mishna* states that if one found utensils with an image of the sun, the moon, or a *darkon* fish on them, they should be thrown into the Dead Sea. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says that this is only true if the utensils are



respectable.

The *Mishna* implies that idolaters only worship the sun, moon, and *darkon* fish, but the *Gemora* challenges this from a *braisa* which says that a sacrifice offered to the seas, rivers, the desert, the sun, moon, stars, constellations, Michael the heavenly minister, or a worm is considered a sacrifice to idolatry, proving that they also worship these items.

Abaye answers that the idolaters worship many items, but only go to the trouble of making images to worship for the sun, moon, and *darkon*. Therefore, sacrifices to many items is considered idolatry, but we only prohibit a utensil if it has the images listed in the *Mishna*. (42b)

Rules for Images

Rav Sheishes listed groups of *braisos* about idolatry:

All images of constellations are permitted, except for the sun and moon

All faces are permitted, except for a human face

All images are permitted, except for one of the *darkon* fish

The *Gemora* asks what action Rav Sheishes is referring to. The first and last statements can only refer to one finding them, as one is prohibited from making *any* images of things in the sky, and one is permitted to make images of *any* land creatures, including the *darkon* fish. However, the middle statement can only refer to making the item, since the *Mishna* did not prohibit a found utensil with a human face on it.

This follows Rav Huna the son of Rav Yehoshua, who prohibits making a likeness of a human face, based on the verse that says *lo sa'asun iti – do not make with Me*. The last word can be read *osi – Me*, referring to a human face, since humans are made in the form of Hashem.

Abaye says that the statements are indeed referring to different actions. Rava says that all of them are referring to one who finds them, and the middle statement follows Rabbi Yehudah, who prohibits an item that one finds with an image of a nursing woman or a leader. We assume that these images are idolatrous, comparing the idolatry to Chavah, in nourishing the whole world, or like Yosef, in feeding the world.

The *Gemora* clarifies that Rabbi Yehudah prohibits it only if the leader is measuring out food with a utensil, and if the woman is holding and nursing a child. (42b – 43a)

DAILY MASHAL

How the Gold Was Burnt

In his commentary on the Torah (Shemos 32:20), Ibn Ezra remarks that some ask how the gold of the golden calf was burnt. After all, when heated, gold only melts. He and other commentators (see Torah Sheleimah, *ibid*) therefore prove that by adding other materials, even gold can be burnt. The Chida (Chomas Anach, Shemos, *ibid*) asserts that since such materials exist, the gold burnt miraculously as if such a material was added and “He who tells oil to burn can tell vinegar to burn”. Still, Abarbanel comments that the Torah does not say that the gold was burnt. Only the ornaments that decorated the calf were burnt. The verse (*ibid*) says “and he took the calf...and burnt in fire” but does not say that he burnt it in fire. And Devarim 9:21 says “and your sin, that you made <es – with> the calf, I took and burnt it in fire”. What did he burn? The sin – that is, the ornaments that decorated the calf.