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If, while cutting, he cut through the neck with one stroke . . . [provided the knife extended the width of a neck].

Rabbi Zeira said: The width of a neck and also beyond the neck.

The question was raised: [Does he mean] the width of a neck and another width of a neck beyond the neck, so that the knife is two necks long, or [does he mean to say] the width of a neck and also a little beyond the neck? — Come and hear: If, while cutting, he cut through two necks with one stroke, the slaughtering is valid provided the knife extended the width of a neck. Now what is the meaning of “the width of a neck”? Can it mean the width of a neck and no more? But if when slaughtering one animal we require the knife to be the width of a neck and also beyond the neck, can it possibly be said that when slaughtering two animals the width of a neck by itself is sufficient? Obviously, it must mean, the width of a neck beyond the two necks [which are being slaughtered]. This, therefore, proves that [R’ Zeira means] there must be the width of a neck beyond the neck.

These provisions apply only to the case where he moved the knife forward and not backward . . . however small it was, even if it was a scalpel, the slaughtering is valid.

Rav Menasheh said: The Mishnah refers to a scalpel which has no projections.

Rav Acha, the son of R. Avia, asked Rav Menasheh: What is the law if one used a needle [for slaughtering]? — He replied: A needle tears [the flesh]. What if one used a leatherworker’s awl? — He replied: We have learned it in our Mishnah: However small it was. Surely this includes the leatherworker’s awl! — No, it refers to a scalpel. But a scalpel is expressly mentioned later? — No; it is merely explanatory; thus: However small it was, namely: A scalpel. And this is logical too. For if you say that it includes a leatherworker’s awl, then [it will be asked]: If a leatherworker’s awl is allowed, what need is there to mention a scalpel? [But this indeed would be no difficulty, because] it is necessary to mention a scalpel; for you might have thought that the Rabbis would prohibit the use of a scalpel even without projections as a precaution lest one use a scalpel with projections; [the Mishnah] therefore teaches us [that this is not prohibited].

MISHNAH: If a knife fell down and slaughtered [an animal], even though it slaughtered it in the proper way, the slaughtering is invalid, for it is written: and you shall slaughter . . . And you shall eat. That is to say, that which you do slaughter may you eat.

GEMARA: Now this is so only because it fell down [of itself], but if one threw it [and it slaughtered an animal], the slaughtering would be valid, notwithstanding there was no intention [to slaughter according to ritual].



Who is the Tanna that holds that the intention to slaughter is not essential? — Rava said: It is Rabbi Nassan, for Oshaya, the Younger, of the collegiate school, learned: If one threw a knife intending to thrust it into a wall and in its flight it slaughtered an animal in the proper way, Rabbi Nassan declares the slaughtering valid; the Sages declare it invalid. Having reported this, he added that the halachah was in accordance with Rabbi Nassan's view.

The Gemora asks: But hasn't Rava stated this before [in connection with the following Mishnah]? For we have learned: And if any of these slaughtered while others were standing over them, their slaughtering is valid. And it was asked: Who was the Tanna that held that the intention to slaughter was not essential? And Rava answered: It was Rabbi Nassan!

The Gemora answers: [Both statements] are necessary. For if he only stated it there [I should have said that only there the slaughtering was valid] because they at least intended to cut, but here since there was no intention to cut [at all] I should have said that it was not valid. And if he only stated it here [I should have said that only here the slaughtering was valid] because it [the act] emanated from a person of sound mind, but there, since it emanated from a person of unsound mind, I should have said that it was not valid. [Both statements] are therefore necessary.

It was stated: If a menstruous woman accidentally immersed herself, Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: She is permitted [to have intimate relations] with her husband, but is forbidden to eat terumah; Rabbi Yochanan said: She is not even permitted to [have intimate relations with] her husband.

Rava said to Rav Nachman, according to Rav's view that she is allowed intimacy with her husband, but is forbidden to eat terumah, [I would put the question:] If you have

permitted her that which entails the penalty of kares, surely you will permit her that which entails only the penalty of death at the hands of Heaven! — He replied: Intimacy with her husband is a mundane [i.e., non-sacred] thing, and in the case of mundane things the intention is not essential.

From where do you know this? — From the following Mishnah which we learned: If a wave containing forty se'ah [of water] was detached [from the sea] and fell upon a man or upon vessels [that were tamei], they are now tahor. Presumably a man is on the same footing as vessels, and as vessels have no intention so a man need have no intention.

The Gemora asks: But is this so? Perhaps we are dealing with the case of a man who was sitting and waiting for the wave to become detached! And [on the contrary] vessels are to be on the same footing as a man, and as a man is capable of forming an intention so in the case of vessels a man must form an intention for them. But if you will say: If we are dealing with the case of a man who was sitting and waiting, why is it at all necessary to be taught? [I reply that] you might have disallowed [this immersion] as a precautionary measure lest he immerse himself in a torrent of rainwater; or you might have disallowed immersion at the edge [of the wave] as a precaution, lest it be thought that immersion is also allowed in the arch of the wave. We are therefore taught that no precautionary measures are necessary.

And from where do we know that immersion is not allowed in the arch of the wave? — From [the following Baraisa] which was taught: Immersion is allowed at the edge [of the wave] but not in the arch of the wave, for immersion is not allowed in mid-air.

From where then do we derive the rule that in the case of mundane things the intention is not essential? — From [the following Mishnah] which we learned: If fruits had fallen into a channel of water and a person whose hands were tamei stretched out his hands and took them, his hands have become tahor, and the rule of ‘if water be put’<sup>1</sup> does not apply to the fruits. But if his purpose was to wash his hands, his hands have become tahor and the rule of ‘if water be put’ applies to the fruits.

Rava raised an objection against Rav Nachman. [We have learned:] If a man immersed himself to render himself fit to partake of mundane food and had this purpose in view, he is forbidden to partake of ma’aser sheini. Now this is so only because he had this purpose in view, but if he did not have this purpose in view he may not [partake even of mundane food]! — [He replied,] This is what it means: Even though he had the purpose in view to render himself fit to partake of mundane food he is forbidden to eat ma’aser sheini.

He raised this further objection: If he immersed himself but did not have any purpose in view, it is as if he had not immersed himself. Presumably it means: It is as if he had not immersed himself at all? — No, it means: It is as if he had not immersed himself for ma’aser sheini, but he has certainly immersed himself for mundane food.

Now he [Rava] thought that Rav Nachman merely intended to point out a possible refutation; he accordingly went and searched, and found [the following Baraisa]: If he immersed himself and had no purpose in view, he is fit to eat mundane food but not ma’aser sheini.

<sup>1</sup> The application of the rule ‘if water be put’ means that the food has been rendered susceptible to tumah. Since the fruits became wet accidentally they are not thereby rendered susceptible to tumah.

Abaye said to Rav Yosef: Shall we say that this [last Baraisa] is a refutation of Rabbi Yochanan's view? — He replied. Rabbi Yochanan will concur with the view expressed by Rabbi Yonasan ben Yosef, for it was taught: Rabbi Yonasan ben Yosef says: It is written: And it (a garment afflicted with tzaraas) shall be washed [the second time]. Now what does ‘the second time’ teach us? We must compare the washing on the second occasion (the immersion performed for the purpose of purifying the garment) with the washing on the first occasion (a cleansing performed for the purpose of quarantining the garment); as the latter must be intentional, so the washing on the second occasion shall be intentional. But then it should follow, should it not, that as the washing on the first occasion must be by order of the Kohen, so shall the washing on the second occasion be by order of the Kohen? It is therefore written: And it shall be tahor, in all circumstances.

Rav Shimi bar Ashi asked: But did Rabbi Yochanan really say this? Surely Rabbi Yochanan has stated that the halachah is always in accordance with the view of an anonymous Mishnah. And we have learned: If a knife fell down and slaughtered [an animal], even though it slaughtered it in the proper way, the slaughtering is invalid. And we argued the point thus: This is so only because it fell down [of itself], but if one threw it [and it slaughtered an animal], the slaughtering would be valid, notwithstanding there was no intention [to slaughter according to ritual]. And we asked: Who is the Tanna that holds that the intention to slaughter is not essential? And Rava said: It is Rabbi Nassan!<sup>2</sup>

He answered: Regarding shechitah, even Rabbi Yonasan ben Yosef would concede [that the intention is not

<sup>2</sup> The halachah, therefore, should be in accordance with this anonymous Mishnah, namely, that the intention to slaughter is not essential; but this is contrary to R’ Yochanan's view.

essential]; for inasmuch as the Divine Law has expressly laid down that an act performed incidentally in connection with consecrated animals is invalid, it follows that with regard to ‘mundane’ things the intention is not essential.

The Gemora asks: And the Rabbis?

The Gemora answers: [They will say:] Granted that with regard to ‘mundane’ animals it is not essential to have the intention to slaughter, but it is essential to have an intention to cut.

In this matter, said Rava, Rabbi Nassan triumphed over the Rabbis. For is it ever written: And you shall cut? It is written: And you shall slaughter’. Therefore, if it is essential to have the intention to cut, it is also essential to have the intention to slaughter, and if it is not essential to have the intention to slaughter, then it is not even essential to have the intention to cut.

How did it happen that the menstruous woman accidentally immersed herself? Shall we say that another woman pushed her [into a mikvah] and she thus immersed herself? But surely the intention of the other woman is a perfect intention! Moreover, [in such a case] she would even be allowed to eat terumah! For we have learned: If a woman was a deaf-mute or an imbecile or blind or not conscious [and she immersed herself], provided there were present women of sound mind to prepare everything for her, she may eat terumah! — Rav Pappa said: According to Rabbi Nassan [it happened thus:] She fell from a bridge;<sup>3</sup> according to the Rabbis [it happened thus:] She went down [into the sea] to cool herself.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Into the sea and thus immersed herself. This corresponds with R’ Nassan’s view that with regard to shechitah there is not even required the intention to cut or to deal with the animal at all. Here the woman did not even have the intention to be in the water.

Rava said: If a person while slaughtering the parah adumah, slaughtered at the same time another animal, according to all views the parah adumah is invalid. If another animal was [accidentally] slaughtered with it, according to Rabbi Nassan, the parah adumah is invalid and the other animal valid; according to the Rabbis, the parah adumah is valid and the other animal invalid.

The Gemora asks: This is surely obvious!

The Gemora answers: It was necessary to state the clause, ‘If another animal was [accidentally] slaughtered with it’ in order to set forth Rabbi Nassan’s view. For I might have said that the Divine Law [when it] said: And he shall slaughter it, implying ‘it’ but not it and another, referred to the slaughtering of two parah adumams simultaneously; but to slaughter a ‘mundane’ animal with it, I might have said, would not render it invalid; we are therefore taught [otherwise]. If, while slaughtering the parah adumah, he cut at the same time a pumpkin, according to all views the parah adumah is invalid. If a pumpkin was [accidentally] cut while the parah adumah was being slaughtered, according to all views the parah adumah is valid.

#### DAILY MASHAL

Rashi writes that Hashem declared the mitzvah of parah adumah to be a “chok” – a Divine decree with no readily apparent rationale – regarding which we are not permitted to inquire or attempt to understand. Shlomo Hamelech declared (Bamidbar Rabbah 19:3) that after using all of his intellectual capabilities to attempt to understand the mitzvah of parah adumah, he was still unable to do so.

<sup>4</sup> She intended to be in the water but not to immerse herself ritually; corresponding to the view of the Rabbis that with regard to shechitah there must be the intention to cut, but not necessarily the intention to slaughter.

Yet Rashi also writes in the name of Rav Moshe HaDarshan that the parah adumah served as an atonement for the sin of the golden calf, and he proceeds to explain how each detail of the laws of the red heifer specifically atoned for a corresponding aspect of the golden calf. After explaining that the parah adumah is the quintessential chok, the purpose of which even the wise Shlomo couldn't grasp, how can Rashi proceed to explain the rationale behind the mitzvah in great detail? Additionally, in what way did this specific mitzvah effect atonement for the sin of the golden calf?

The Beis HaLevi explains that when the Jewish people incorrectly concluded that Moshe had died, they were distraught by the lack of an intermediary to lead them and teach them Hashem's will. They yearned to build a place for the Divine presence to rest among them to fill the void left by Moshe's perceived death. Because their intentions in were for the sake of Heaven, they selected Aharon to lead the project so that it would succeed. If so, what was their mistake, and why did their plans go so awry?

The Beis HaLevi explains that each mitzvah contains within it deep, mystical secrets which have tremendous effects in the upper worlds when performed properly. At Mount Sinai, the Jewish people erred in thinking that if they discovered the kabbalistic concepts behind a mitzvah, they could perform it based on their understanding even without being commanded. As a result, although their intentions were good, they lacked the Divine assistance which comes only from performing His will, and they ended up sinning with the golden calf.

The Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 51:8) teaches that the Mishkan also served as atonement for the sin of the golden calf. The Beis HaLevi explains that because the sin of the golden calf was caused by doing something without

a command from Hashem to do so, the Torah therefore repeatedly emphasizes in Parshas Pekudei (see e.g. Shemos 39:5) that every single aspect of the Mishkan was made exactly as Hashem had commanded Moshe.

With this introduction, Reb Oizer Alport answers the original questions. The mitzvah of parah adumah is indeed a chok, the logic of which escaped Shlomo and certainly Rav Moshe HaDarshan. If so, what does he mean when he says that the red heifer comes to atone for the golden calf? As we now understand that the root of the sin of the golden calf was the Jews' attempt to be too smart and to do something which Hashem didn't command them to, the ultimate rectification of this sin is to completely subordinate one's intellect to Hashem's dictates – as manifested by the willingness to perform a chok, a mitzvah which appears to make no sense but which one does solely because Hashem commanded it!