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Bechoros Daf 43

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**Blemishes**

These blemishes (mentioned above in the previous chapter; those that permit a bechor to be slaughtered), whether permanent or temporary, make a man (a Kohen) unfit (for avodah – to do the service in the Temple). In addition to those are the following: *Kilon, laftan, makvan*, one whose head is *shakut* or *sekifas*. [These are all malformations of the head; they will be explained below.]

Regarding hunchbacked men, Rabbi Yehudah considers them fit, whereas the Sages consider them unfit.

A bald-headed person is unfit. Bald-headed refers to one who has not a line of hair from ear to ear; if however, he has, then he is fit. (43a)

The Gemora asks: But why (is it stated that the blemishes mentioned above regarding animals make a man unfit)? Is there not the case of *yaveles*, which is not written in the torah in connection with the blemishes of a man? And, furthermore, *dak* (some type of clouding of the eye which diminishes one’s vision) and *tevalul* (a white streak which goes from the white of the eye across the iris and into the pupil) are not mentioned in the Torah in connection with the blemishes of an animal (and yet, they are mentioned above as blemishes in regard to a firstborn animal; they should only apply by a man)!?

The Gemora answers: We derive one from the other, for it was taught in a *braisa*: In connection with a man, *yaveles* is not stated (as a blemish), and in connection with an animal, *dak* and *tevalul* are not stated as blemishes. From where do we derive that we apply the expressions used in connection with one to the other and vice versa? It is written ‘*garav*’ (in connection with a man) and repeats ‘*garav*’ (in connection with an animal); also ‘*yalefes*’ is stated (in connection with a man) and ‘*yalefes*’ is repeated (in

connection with an animal), in order to expound a *gezeirah shaveh* (one of the thirteen principles of Biblical hermeneutics; it links two similar words from dissimilar verses in the Torah).

The Gemora notes: One of the above verses (used for the *gezeirah shaveh*) is free (and extra for interpretation), for if it were not free (for interpretation), it (the *gezeirah shaveh*) may be challenged as follows: We cannot derive the blemishes in connection with a man from those of an animal, for the animal itself is offered on the altar (and perhaps the law regarding animals is more stringent), and we cannot derive blemishes in connection with an animal from those of a man, as a person has many *mitzvos* to carry out (and perhaps the law regarding people is more stringent). [When the words are extra, the *gezeirah shaveh* cannot be challenged.]

The Gemora proves this to be true: For the Torah could say that ‘*yalefes*’ is a blemish, and there would be no need to state ‘*garav*,’ as I could argue, as follows: If ‘*yalefes*,’ which is not repulsive, is nevertheless considered a disqualifying blemish, how much more so, with reference to ‘*garav*,’ which is repulsive, it should certainly be regarded as a blemish! What necessity is there therefore for the Torah to write, ‘*garav*,’ ‘*garav*’? They must consequently be free (for the *gezeirah shaveh*).

The Gemora asks: And why doesn’t the Torah state all the blemishes in one verse, and ‘*garav*’ and ‘*yalefes*’ both here (in connection with a person) and there (in connection with an animal), and then we would have derived one (section of blemishes) from the other (section)?

The Gemora answers: If the Torah would have stated them in connection with a man, I might have thought that whatever blemish disqualifies a person also disqualifies an animal; rounded hooves and notched gums, however, which do not apply to a person, do not make the animal unfit either. And if the Torah would

have stated all (*the blemishes*) in connection with an animal, I might have thought that whatever makes an animal unfit makes a person unfit, but the blemishes of an overgrown eyebrow or a sunken nose, which do not apply to an animal, do not make a man unfit either.

The *Gemora* asks: And why doesn't the Torah state all the blemishes in one verse, and those blemishes which do not apply to a person, let the Torah mention in connection with (*the blemishes of*) an animal, and let those blemishes which do not apply to an animal be stated in connection with human blemishes, and 'garav' and 'yalefes' should be written both here (*in connection with a person*) and there (*in connection with an animal*), and then we would have derived one (*section of blemishes*) from the other (*section*)?

The *Gemora* answers: This is in accordance with the teaching of the *Beis Medrash* of Rabbi Yishmael. The *Beis Medrash* of Rabbi Yishmael taught: Any passage of the Torah that was said once and then repeated again, was said over a second time solely for the new law (*there does not have to be a new law derived from every word*).

Rava said: What necessity is there for the Torah to state blemishes in connection with a person, consecrated sacrifices, and a firstborn animal? It was necessary (*to state all these sections of blemishes*), for if the Torah would have only stated the section of blemishes in connection with a person, we might have thought that the reason was because he has many *mitzvos* to carry out (*and perhaps the law regarding people is more stringent*). We cannot derive the blemishes in connection with a man from those of an animal, for the animal itself is offered on the altar (*and perhaps the law regarding animals is more stringent*). We cannot either derive (*the blemishes of*) consecrated animals from those of a firstborn animal, as we might have thought that the reason there (*by bechor*) was because it was consecrated from the womb. Nor can you derive (*the blemishes of*) a man from those of consecrated animals, as we might have thought that the reason there was that they themselves are sacrificed. Neither can you derive (*the blemishes of*) a firstborn animal from those of consecrated animals, for we might have thought that the reason there was because the holiness (*of a consecrated animal*) is greater (*for it applies to many different kinds of offerings*).

The *Gemora* asks: We cannot therefore derive one (*section of blemishes*) from another single (*section of blemishes*). Why not, however, derive one (*section of blemishes*) from the other two?

The *Gemora* answers: Which (*section*) should the Torah have omitted? Should the Torah have omitted (*the section relating to blemishes of*) the firstborn animal, leaving it to be derived from the other (*two sections of blemishes*)? We might then have thought that the others (*the two sections*) are different, seeing that their holiness is greater (*for it applies to many different kinds of offerings, and a man has many mitzvos to carry out*) and that they also apply to plain (*non-firstborn*) individuals. If the Torah have omitted (*the section of blemishes relating to*) consecrated animals, leaving us to derive it from the other two (*sections*), we might then have thought that the reason there was because they are holy by themselves (*the firstborn and the Kohen are holy automatically*). And if the Torah would have omitted (*the section of blemishes relating to*) a person, which we would then have derived from the other two sections, we might have thought that the reason there was because they themselves are sacrificed on the altar. Therefore it was necessary (*to state the three sections of blemishes*).

The *Mishna* had stated: In addition to those are the following: [*Kilon, laftan, makvan, one whose head is shakut or sekifas; these are all malformations of the head.*]

The *Gemora* asks: From where are these known (*for they are not mentioned in the Torah*)?

Rabbi Yochanan said: It is written: *A man among the offspring of Aaron that has a blemish*, intimating that a man who is similar (*in physical characteristics*) to the offspring of Aaron (*is rendered unfit by a blemish; however, if he does not even have normal characteristics, such as an abnormal shape of the head, he is disqualified even without a blemish*).

The *Gemora* asks: What is the practical difference between (*a Kohen*) with a blemish and one 'who is not similar to the offspring of Aaron'?

The *Gemora* answers: The difference is whether the Temple-service is invalidated. If it is an actual blemish, the service is invalidated, for it is written: *because he has a blemish, that he may*



not invalidate it. If, however, it is a case of not being 'similar to the offspring of Aaron,' then the Temple-service is not invalidated.

The *Gemora* asks: What is also the difference between the case of one 'who is not similar to the offspring of Aaron' and of a *Kohen* who is unfit 'for appearance sake' (such as one who has no eyelashes or one whose teeth were removed)?

The *Gemora* answers: The difference is regarding the transgression of a positive commandment. [A *Kohen* 'who is not similar to the offspring of Aaron,' if he performed the Temple service, would be guilty of breaking a positive commandment, according to the following reasoning: 'One who is similar to the offspring of Aaron' may serve in the Temple, but not one who is not similar to the offspring of Aaron. Now this negative conclusion is merely derived from the implication of a positive and not an explicit negative prohibition, and therefore it only possesses the force of a positive commandment.]

*Kilon* (mentioned in the *Mishna*) is one whose head has the shape of a lid of a barrel (narrow on the top and wide on the bottom). *Liftan* (mentioned in the *Mishna*) is one whose head resembles the head of a turnip (wide on the top and narrow on the bottom).

It was taught in a *braisa* (another head-blemish): One whose neck stands in the center of his head.

*Makvan* (mentioned in the *Mishna*) is one whose head resembles an ax (the back of his head is rounded). One whose head is *shakut* (mentioned in the *Mishna*) means that the front of his head is slanted downward. *Sekifas* (mentioned in the *Mishna*) means that the back of his head is slanted downward.

It was taught in a *braisa* (other head-blemishes): One whose neck is *shakut* or *shamut*. *Shakut* is one whose neck is hiding (for it is sunk between his shoulders), and *shamut* is one whose neck is long and dislocated.

The *Mishna* had stated: Regarding hunchbacked men, Rabbi Yehudah considers them fit, whereas the Sages consider them unfit.

The *Gemora* notes: If he has a hump in which there is a bone, all agree that he is unfit (for the Temple service). The dispute arises

with a hump in which there is no bone. The Sages maintain that this is a case where 'he is not like the offspring of Aaron,' and Rabbi Yehudah holds that it is merely a piece of extra flesh. (43a – 43b)

## DAILY MASHAL

### *A List of Kohanim*

Once the Chafetz Chayim zt"l was aroused to prepare the people of Israel for the arrival of Mashiach and the building of the Temple and he sent to all the Rabbis that as one must prepare for the service of the sacrifices, it is fit to make orderly lists of all the suitable *kohanim*. HaGaon Rav Yitzchak Zeev of Brisk zt"l sent back a list with exact details as to how many *kohanim* were in his town, how many old, how many young and how many bearing defects and unsuitable for service.