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Pesachim Daf 17

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Tzvi Gershon Ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o”h

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The Gemora returns to the main text: Rav said: The *Kohanim* erred; but Shmuel maintained: The *Kohanim* did not err.

The Gemora elaborates: Rav said: The *Kohanim* erred, for he (Chaggai) asked them about a fourth degree in respect of *kodesh* (holy foodstuffs), and they answered him that it was *tahor* (which is incorrect); but Shmuel maintained: The *Kohanim* did not err, for he asked them about a fifth degree in respect of *kodesh*, and they answered him that it is *tahor*.

The Gemora asks: As for Rav, it is understandable that four are written (in the verse): bread, stew, wine, and oil (for a *sheretz*, which is an *av hatumah* touched the bread rendering it a *rishon*; it subsequently touched the stew, which touched the wine, which touched the oil, rendering it a *revii* – fourth degree of *tumah*); but according to Shmuel, from where does he know five (that there were five items)?

The Gemora answers: Is it then written: *and his garment’s corner touched the bread*? Surely it is written: *and with his garment’s corner he touched the bread*; meaning that he touched bread with that which was touched by the corner of his garment. [The *sheretz* touched something, which in turn touched the bread, which is therefore a second degree; therefore, the oil would be a fifth.]

The Gemora asks on Rav (from the verses): Then Chaggai said: *If one that is tamei by a corpse touch all of these, shall it be tamei? And the Kohanim answered (correctly) and said: It shall be tamei.* As for Shmuel, it is understandable, since they did not err here, they did not err there either; but according to Rav, why did they err here, yet did not err there?

Rav Nahman said in the name of Rabbah bar Avuha: They were well-versed in the laws of corpse *tumah*, but they were not well-versed in the laws of *tumah* of a *sheretz*.

Ravina said: There it was a fourth degree; here it was a third. [They were aware that there is a third degree of *tumah*, but they were unaware regarding a fourth.]

The Gemora asks on Shmuel (from the verses): Then Chaggai answered and said: *So is this people, and so is this nation before me, said the Lord (and so is every work of their hands, and that which they offer there is tamei).* As for Rav, it is understandable; therefore ‘*tamei*’ is written (for since they were ignorant of the laws of *tumah*, their work had to be regarded as *tamei*); but according to Shmuel, why was it *tamei*?

The Gemora answers: He indeed wondered (why it was regarded as *tamei*).

The Gemora asks: But it is written: *and so is every work of their hands (which insinuates that it was literally tamei)?*

Mar Zutra, and others state, Rav Ashi said: Because they corrupted their actions (in the future they will sin), Scripture stigmatizes them as though they offered up sacrifices in *tumah*. (17a1 – 17a2)

The Gemora returns to the main text: Rav learned (that Yosef ben Yoezer’s testimony was referring) to the liquids of the slaughtering house (that blood and water are *tahor*); while Levi learned (that it was referring to) the liquids of the Altar (including wine and oil).

The Gemora asks: Now according to Levi, it is understandable if he holds as Shmuel, who said that they are *tahor* only in so far that they cannot contaminate other objects, but nevertheless they are *tamei* in themselves, then it is possible (that Chaggai's second question was) where they all touched the first (and the Kohanim correctly answered that they all are *tamei*; in the first question, however, Chaggai asked about successive stages of *tumah*, and they correctly answered that the oil is *tahor*, since it touched the wine, which as a liquid of the altar that can be rendered *tamei*, but cannot contaminate others), but if he holds as Rav, who maintained that they are literally *tahor*, how is it conceivable (that the oil can be *tamei*)?

The Gemora answers: You are forced to say that he holds as Shmuel.

The Gemora asks: And according to Shmuel (who maintained that the Kohanim did not err, for he asked them about a fifth degree in respect of *kodesh*, and they responded that the oil is *tahor*) it is understandable if he holds as Rav who learned (that Yosef ben Yoezer's testimony was referring) to the liquids of the slaughtering house (that blood and water are *tahor*), but the liquids of the Altar (such as wine and oil) can even contaminate others; therefore, it is only a fourth degree which cannot make a fifth, but a third can make a fourth. But, if he holds as Levi who learned (that it was referring to) the liquids of the Altar (including wine and oil that cannot become *tamei*), why particularly ask about a fourth, which cannot make a fifth; they cannot even make a second or a third?

The Gemora answers: You are forced to say that he holds as Rav. (17a2 – 17a3)

The Gemora notes: A *braisa* was taught in accordance with Rav, and a *braisa* was taught in accordance with Levi.

It was taught in accordance with Levi: Blood, wine, oil and water, the liquids of the Altar, which became *tamei* inside (the Temple Courtyard) and were taken out, are *tahor*. [They

cannot contaminate others, because when they became *tamei* in the first place, they were fit as 'liquids of the Altar,' and as such could not contaminate others, even though now they are disqualified from being used on the Altar.] If they became *tamei* outside (the Temple Courtyard) and were brought in, they are *tamei*. [They retain the power to contaminate. This *braisa* is in accordance with Levi, for it speaks of liquids of the Altar.]

The Gemora asks: But is that indeed so (that it remains *tahor* when it was taken outside); didn't Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi say that they did not rule that the liquids of the Altar are *tahor* except in their place? Is that not coming to exclude the case where they became *tamei* inside (the Temple Courtyard) and were taken out?

The Gemora answers: No; it is to exclude where they became *tamei* outside (the Temple Courtyard) and were brought in.

The Gemora asks: But he states, 'in their place' (which sounds like inside)?

The Gemora answers: This is what he states: They did not rule that these liquids are *tahor* except when they became *tamei* in their place.

It was taught in accordance with Rav: Blood and water, the liquids of the slaughtering house, which became *tamei*, whether in vessels or in the ground, are *tahor*. Rabbi Shimon said: In vessels, they are *tamei*; in the ground, they are *tahor*. (17a3 – 17b1)

Rav Pappa said: Even according to the view that the *tumah* of liquids is Biblical, the liquids of the slaughtering house is a *Halachah l'Moshe mi'Sinai* (that they are not subject to *tumah*).

Rav Huna the son of Rabbi Nassan said to Rav Pappa: Then when Rabbi Elozar said that liquids are never subject to *tumah* from the Torah, and he supports this from the testimony of Yosi ben Yoezer from Tzereidah that the liquids

in the slaughtering area of the are always *tahor* (implying that the impurity of liquids is only Rabbinic), but if it is a *Halachah l'Moshe mi'Sinai*, can we learn from this? [The *Halachah l'Moshe mi'Sinai* is merely an exception to the Biblical law!?]

Ravina said to Rav Ashi: But surely Rabbi Shimon maintained that the *tumah* of liquids is Biblical, for it was taught in a *braisa*: Rabbi Yosi and Rabbi Shimon say that it is *tahor* regarding any utensils (that might have come into contact with *tamei* liquids), but *tamei* regarding foods (that might have come into contact with *tamei* liquids), yet here Rabbi Shimon rules: [Liquids from the slaughtering area that were contained] in vessels, they are *tamei*; in the ground, they are *tahor*. But if it is a *Halachah l'Moshe mi'Sinai*, what is the difference whether they are in vessels or in the ground?

The *Gemora* notes that this indeed is a difficulty. (17b1)

Rav Pappa said: As to what you say that in the ground, they are *tahor*, this was taught only of water, but not of blood. And even of water too, we said this only when there is a *revi'is* (quarter of a log), so that needles and spinning forks can be immersed in them, but if less than a *revi'is*, it is *tamei*. (17b1 – 17b2)

The master said: Rabbi Yehudah said: It (anything that may have come into contact with *tamei* liquids) is *tamei* in respect of everything.

The *Gemora* asks: Shall we say that Rabbi Yehudah holds that the *tumah* of liquids, in respect of contaminating utensils, is Biblical (and that is why it is *tamei* out of doubt)? Surely we learned in a *Mishna*: In the case of all utensils which, have an exterior and an interior, such as pillows, cushions, sacks and leather bags, if the interior becomes *tamei*, the exterior is *tamei* as well; if the exterior becomes *tamei*, the interior is not *tamei*. Rabbi Yehudah said: When is that said? That is where they become *tamei* by a liquid, but if they become *tamei* by a *sheretz*, if the interior becomes *tamei*, the exterior is *tamei* as well; and if the exterior becomes *tamei*, the

interior becomes *tamei* as well. [Utensils which have an exterior and an interior are those which can be used on both sides. A pillow, cushion, etc. had a definite side for use, nevertheless, they could be turned inside out and used; similarly, sacks and leather bags could be turned inside out and used, and they are therefore treated like other vessels which require only rinsing in order to become *tahor*, so that if the inner side is *tamei*, the entire utensil is *tamei*, but not the reverse. The first *Tanna*, R' Yehudah, however, draws a distinction between liquids and a *sheretz* as the contaminating object; in the first case this law holds good, because liquid contaminates by Rabbinical law only, and therefore the extent of its *tumah* was lessened, so that it might be known that it does not become *tamei* by Biblical law. Therefore, if it touches *terumah*, the *terumah* must not be burned, as it would be if it were *tamei* by Biblical law. But if a *sheretz*, which becomes *tamei* by Biblical law, contaminates them, they are altogether *tamei*, no matter where they are touched.] Now, if you think that the *tumah* of liquids in respect of contaminating utensils is Biblical, what is the difference whether it became *tamei* through liquids or through a *sheretz*?

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: Rabbi Yehudah retracted (from the view that it is *tamei* in respect of everything).

Ravina said: In truth he did not retract, for one refers to liquids which are *tamei* through the hands (for by a Rabbinical enactment, a person's hands are generally considered *tamei* in the second degree; further, they contaminate liquids and render them *tamei* in the first degree; it is between such liquids and a *sheretz* that R' Yehudah draws a distinction), and the other to liquids which are *tamei* through a *sheretz*.

The *Gemora* asks: If so, instead of stating, 'When is that stated? It is when they are contaminated by liquids,' let him draw a distinction in that itself, as follows: When is it said? It is in the case of liquids that became *tamei* through the hands; but in the case of liquids that became *tamei* by a *sheretz*, if



the interior is *tamei*, the exterior is *tamei*, and if the exterior is *tamei*, the interior is *tamei*. Therefore, it is clear as we first answered - that Rabbi Yehudah retracted. (17b2 – 17b3)

The scholars inquired: Did he retract only from his ruling on utensils (*that they can become tamei on a Biblical level from contact with liquids*), but in the matter of foods (*that they can become tamei on a Biblical level*) he holds as Rabbi Yosi and Rabbi Shimon; or perhaps he completely retracted, in accordance with the view of Rabbi Meir?

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: Come and hear from the following *Mishna*: If a cow drinks the water of purification, its flesh is *tamei* (*if it is slaughtered while the water is yet within it, for the water of purification contaminates human beings and vessels*). Rabbi Yehudah said: It (*the water*) is nullified in its intestines (*and therefore its flesh is tahor*). Now if you think that he retracted only from his ruling on utensils, yet in respect of foods, he holds as Rabbi Yosi and Rabbi Shimon, why is it completely nullified in its intestines? Granted that it cannot contaminate with the severe degree of *tumah* (*of the waters of purification*), yet it can at least contaminate with the lesser degree of *tumah* (*of ordinary tamei waters*)?

The *Gemora* answers: What does, ‘it is nullified in its intestines’ mean? It is indeed nullified from imposing the severe degree of *tumah*, but it does contaminate with the lesser degree of *tumah*.

The *Gemora* asks: Therefore it follows that the first Tanna holds that it is *tamei* even with the severe degree of *tumah*; but surely he states: its flesh is *tamei*?

The *Gemora* answers: The entire *Mishna* is the words of Rabbi Yehudah, but the text appears deficient, and it was taught as follows: If a cow drinks the water of purification, its flesh is *tamei*. When is that said? It is in respect of the lesser degree of *tumah*, but not in respect of the severe degree of *tumah*, for Rabbi Yehudah maintained: It is nullified in its intestines. (17b3 – 18a1)

DAILY MASHAL

TUMAH & CHANUKAH

We all know that once we got jurisdiction of the Beis Hamikdash back from the Yevanim, the people searched for pure olive oil. Yet there is a rule *Tumah Hutrah B'tzibur* (Pesachim 79a), spiritual impurity is permitted in regards to the community. So the oil was allowed to be *tameh* for the menorah. Why did they find it necessary to locate only olive oil that was *tahor*?

The answer is that the whole miracle of Chanukah was based on doing acts that were not necessarily required by the letter of the law. The Jews, along with the Chashmonaim, were hiding from the Greeks. Deep in the mountains they were trying to save themselves and their religion. Eventually they said enough is enough and they had to fight for Hashem's honor. There is no way they truly believed they were going to win the battle. They were “weak against strong, and few against many”. But it didn't make a difference to them. Hashem and His nation were being disgraced and they weren't going to tolerate it any longer. They weren't obligated to do what they did, but they did it anyways. They went beyond the call of duty. Yehudis also risked her life when she courageously chopped off the head of the Greek general, Aliporni, and brought his head to show the Greek nation that their leader had been assassinated. She, too, went beyond the letter of the law and put herself in danger to preserve the holiness of the Jewish Nation.

Therefore, when the mitzvah of the lighting the menorah comes our way, be it in the Beis Hamikdash or in our own homes, we also go beyond the letter of the law. We don't rely on leniencies of *tameh* oil, and we don't just simply light one candle. We are “*mosif v'holech*” during this time of year.

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