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Sotah Daf 19

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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

**Mishnah**

The *Kohen* would take her *minchah* offering from the palm basket and he places it in a ministering vessel, and puts it in her hand. The *Kohen* would then place his hand beneath hers and wave it. He waved it and brought it near the *mizbe’ach*, scooped out the *komeitz* and burned it on the *mizbe’ach*. The remainder would be eaten by the *Kohanim*. He would give her to drink and then offer her *minchah* offering. Rabbi Shimon says: He offered her *minchah* offering and then would give her to drink, as it is said: “And afterwards he shall give the woman to drink the water.” But if he gave her to drink and afterwards offered her *minchah* offering, it is nevertheless valid. (19a2 – 19a3)

**Waving**

Rabbi Elozar said to Rabbi Yoshiyah: Do not sit on your knees until you explain me this matter: From where do we know that the *minchah* of a *sotah* requires a waving by the owner (*the sotah*)? - From where do we know it? It is written in connection with it: And he shall wave! — Rather, [my question is], from where [is it that it has to be done] by the owner [i.e., the woman]? — It is derived through a *gezeirah shavah* using the word ‘hand’ in connection with the *shelamim*. Here it is written: The *Kohen* shall take out of the woman's hand, and there it is written: His own hands shall bring. As in this present case it refers to the *Kohen* [who waves the offering of the *sotah*], so there it refers to the *Kohen*; and as there [in the waving of the *shelamim*] the owner [holds it during the

procedure] so here the owner [holds it]. What, then, was the procedure? — [The *Kohen*] places his hand under the hands of the owner and waves.

The *Mishnah* had stated: He waved it and brought it near the *mizbe’ach*, scooped out the *komeitz* etc. He would give her to drink and then offer her *minchah* offering. — But he has already offered it? — This is what is intended: What is the procedure in connection with the *minchah* offering? He waves it, brings it close [to the *mizbe’ach*], scooped out the *komeitz* and burned it, and the remainder is eaten by the *Kohanim*. As to the giving of the water to drink, on this Rabbi Shimon and the Rabbis differ; because the Rabbis hold that he gives her to drink and then sacrifices her *minchah* offering, whereas Rabbi Shimon holds that he sacrifices her *minchah* offering and then gives her to drink, as it is said: And afterwards he shall make the woman drink. (19a3)

**Correct Procedure**

The *Mishnah* stated: But if he gave her to drink and afterwards offered her *minchah* offering, it is nevertheless valid.

The *Gemora* cites a *Baraisa*: It is written: *And he gives the sotah to drink*. — what does this intend to tell us since it has already been stated: And he shall make the woman drink? [It informs us] that if [the writing on] the scroll has been erased and she says: ‘I refuse to drink’, they exert influence upon her and make her drink by force. These are the words of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Shimon says: And

afterwards he shall make the woman drink — what does this intend to tell us since it has already been stated: And he shall make the woman drink? [It informs us] that it only takes place after all the actions mentioned above have been carried out, thus indicating that three things prevent [the giving of the water to drink]: [the Kohen] must have offered the kometz, [the writing on] the scroll must have been erased, and [the woman] must have taken the oath.

[The Kohen] must have offered the kometz. — Rabbi Shimon is consistent with his opinion when he said that the Kohen sacrifices her minchah offering and then gives her to drink.

[The writing on] the scroll must have been erased. — [Obviously so], for what else could he give her to drink? — Rav Ashi answers: We are referring to a case where the scroll was placed in the water, but the inscription is still recognizable (*all the ink must be erased in the water*).

The *Gemora* asks: She doesn't drink until she accepted the oath upon herself!? We can infer from here that the scroll would be written before she accepts the oath. But didn't Rava say that if the *sotah* scroll was written before she accepted the oath, it is invalid? The *Gemora* answers: It was unnecessary for Rabbi Shimon to mention it (*that she doesn't drink until she accepts the oath, for the scroll wasn't even written before she accepted the oath*). (19b1 – 19b2)

### **Expounding the Verses**

On what, then, do they differ? — There are three verses: first 'he shall give the woman to drink', second 'and afterward he shall give [the woman] to drink', and third 'and he shall give her to drink'. The Rabbis hold that the first phrase is required for the subject-matter, i.e., he gives her to drink and then sacrifices her minchah offering; the phrase 'and afterward he shall give [the woman] to drink' is necessary [to cover the case where] a

trace of the inscription is discernible; and the third phrase indicates that if [the writing on] the scroll has been erased and she says 'I refuse to drink', they exert influence upon her and make her drink by force. Rabbi Shimon, on the other hand, holds that 'and afterward he shall give [the woman] to drink' is required for the subject-matter. i.e., he sacrifices her minchah offering and then gives her to drink. The first phrase is to indicate that if he first gave her to drink and afterward sacrificed her minchah offering it is valid; and the third phrase denotes that if [the writing on] the scroll has been erased and she says 'I refuse to drink', they exert influence upon her and make her drink by force. The Rabbis, however, do not hold that the text opens with a case [which is only valid as] after the fact. (19b2 – 19b3)

### **Sotah Retracting**

The *Gemora* asks: Does Rabbi Akiva hold that we force her to drink? But we learned in a *Baraisa*: Rabbi Yehudah says: They insert iron rod into her mouth, so that if the scroll has been erased and she says "I refuse to drink," they make her drink by force. Rabbi Akiva says: Do we require anything else other than to prove if she defiled herself? And here, she has been proven (*by refusing to drink, she is indicating that she is in fact guilty*)! But as long as the Kohen has not offered the *kometz*, she can retract; afterwards, she cannot retract! [*So how can we say that Rabbi Akiva holds that she is forced to drink after the scroll has been erased?*]

The *Gemora* counters: But, even on your reasoning, the teaching itself is inconsistent. It states: After the *kometz* is brought, she cannot retract. But is she not proven (*guilty*) already?

The *Gemora* answers: There is no difficulty, as one case is where she retracts through trembling, and the other is where she retracts through soundness, and this is the meaning: Whenever she retracts through soundness, she

does not drink at all (*even after the burning of the komeitz, for then it is an admission of guilt*). However, when she is retracting through trembling, it depends on the following: If the *Kohen* has not offered the *komeitz*, she is able to retract, since the scroll had not been erased yet, or even if the scroll has been erased, she may retract because the *Kohanim* acted improperly by erasing it before its proper time (*before the komeitz was brought*). However, if the *komeitz* had been offered, in which case the *Kohanim* acted properly in erasing it, she cannot retract.

The *Gemora* asks: But Rabbi Akiva nevertheless contradicts himself! For he declared above that it was the erasure of the scroll which prevents her from retracting, and here he states that it is the offering of the *komeitz* which prevents her!

The *Gemora* answers: There are two *Tannaim* who have different opinions as to the view of Rabbi Akiva. (19b3 – 20a1)

#### INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

##### **Forced to Drink**

The *Gemora* states that once the scroll has been erased, we force the *sotah* to drink.

The *Mincha Chareivah* asks: Rava inquired above if we were permitted to give the woman to drink with a tube, for perhaps it should not be regarded as a “drinking,” since it is being done in an abnormal manner. If so, shouldn’t a “forced drinking” also be a concern?

The *Shaarei Sotah* answers: There, the water never entered into her mouth; it went directly into the *beis hab'liah*, and therefore it should not constitute a drinking. Here, she did drink! The fact that she was forced to drink does not negate the fact that she is drinking.

#### DAILY MASHAL

##### **A Spirit of Foolishness**

In his commentary on *Pirkei Avos*, the Maharal explains that *gilui arayos*, immorality, by its very nature, is the antithesis of Torah. By studying Torah, one develops his mind and intellect, thereby elevating himself above his base desires. The mind distinguishes a human being from an animal. One who defers to his animalistic desires is really no different than an animal. Indeed, Chazal explain the reason that the *sotah's* *korban* is composed of barley, as opposed to other *kobanos* which use flour. Barley is a food animals consume. Since the unfaithful wife acted in a manner unbecoming a human being, her sacrifice should reflect her recent act of debasement. Immorality, says Maharal, is an act of depravement which befits an animal, not a human being.

Furthermore, as Chazal reiterate a number of times, one does not act immorally unless he has been captivated by a *ruach shtus*, a spirit of foolishness. He acts foolishly; he loses control of his senses and acts like an animal.

The only way that one is able to prevent a breakdown of his *seichel/senses* is through Torah. By studying Torah and applying its lessons to one's life, he nurtures his mind in order to strengthen it enough to control the passions of the heart and the weakness of the flesh. Torah elevates a person to the point that a *ruach shtus* cannot penetrate his mind and destroy his humanness.