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Sotah Daf 7

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Mishnah

What does the husband do to her? He brings her to the Beis Din in his area, and they give him two Torah scholars to escort him (*to Yerushalayim*, where she will be given the bitter waters to drink), lest he cohabit with her on the way. Rabbi Yehudah says: Her husband is believed (*that he did not do so*). (7a1)

Does the Mishnah Support Rav?

The *Gemora* remarks: Two scholars plus the husband equals three men. This seems to support a statement of Rav, for Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: They taught in a Mishnah that a woman may be secluded with two men (*and it does not present a problem of yichud; i.e., the prohibition against a man and woman being secluded together*) only in the city. However, if they are traveling, (it is forbidden) unless there are three men, lest one of the men need to relieve himself and the other will be left alone with the forbidden woman.

The *Gemora* rejects this proof. The *Mishnah* requires two people only for the purpose that there should be witnesses (*who will testify if they cohabit that she no longer has the ability to become permitted to her husband through drinking the sotah waters*).

The *Gemora* remarks: The *Mishnah* made a point of saying that two Torah scholars should be sent, not regular people. [*If the point is merely to have testimony, why wouldn't regular people qualify?*] This seemingly supports

a different statement made by Rav, for Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: The *Mishnah* only permitted one woman to be secluded with two men if they are decent Jews. However, if they are promiscuous, even ten are not enough. This is evident from an incident where ten men took out a woman for burial. [*Many men pretended that a woman had died and that they were going to bury her, when in facts she was alive. They merely wanted to take her to a secluded place so that they could commit adultery with her.*]

The *Gemora* rejects this proof. The reason that the *Mishnah* says Torah scholars must go is so that they will know how to warn the couple. (7a1 – 7a2)

The *Mishnah* had stated: Rabbi Yehudah says: Her husband etc.

The *Baraisa* states: Rabbi Yehudah says that her husband is trusted to say they did not cohabit on the road, due to the following logic: If a person is trusted to be alone with his wife who is a *niddah*, even though it is a severe transgression punishable by *kares*, he should certainly be believed by a *sotah*, which is only a basic negative prohibition.

How do the Rabbis respond to this? They say that this very distinction proves that the opposite is true. *Niddah*, that is punishable by *kares*, and as it is a more stringent prohibition he is therefore believed, as opposed to *sotah*, which is merely a negative prohibition, and is not as a strict of a prohibition, he is therefore not believed.

The *Gemora* asks: Does Rabbi Yehudah in fact derive this law from the logic of a kal v'chomer? Doesn't he derive it from a verse, as it was taught in the following Baraisa: *And the man shall bring his wife to the Kohen*. This means that according to Torah law, the man must bring his wife. However, the Rabbis said that they give him two Torah scholars to escort him, lest he cohabit with her on the way. Rabbi Yosi says: Her husband is believed using a kal v'chomer. If a person is trusted to be alone with his wife who is a *niddah*, even though it is a transgression punishable by kares, he should certainly be believed by a sotah, which is only a basic negative prohibition. The Rabbis said to Rabbi Yosi that his logic is incorrect. If you said by a *niddah* (that the husband is trusted), for she eventually becomes permitted (to him; and therefore, he can control himself during the prohibited days); would you say (that he should be trusted) by a sotah, where she never again will be permitted (to him – if it emerges that she committed adultery)? Additionally, it is said: *Stolen water are sweet*.

Rabbi Yehudah says: According to Torah law, the man may bring his wife to the Kohen (by himself), as it is stated: *And the man shall bring his wife to the Kohen*. [This Baraisa states that R' Yehudah derives it (that the sotah's husband can be trusted) from a verse, whereas in the other Baraisa, he derived it from a kal vachomer!?!]

The *Gemora* answers: Rabbi Yehudah originally explained his position using a kal v'chomer, but the kal v'chomer was then proven refuted. He then stated that his position was supported by a verse.

The *Gemora* asks: Isn't the position of Rabbi Yehudah and the Tanna Kamma in this Baraisa identical?

The *Gemora* answers: The difference between them is whether or not the Rabbis decreed that two Torah scholars should escort them. [The Tanna Kamma

maintains that they issued such a decree, while R' Yehudah disagrees.] (7a2 - 7a3)

Mishnah

They would bring her to the Beis Din Ha'Gadol (High Court) in Yerushalayim, and the judges would proceed to intimidate her (so that she would admit her guilt), just as they intimidated the witnesses who testified in cases of capital punishment (to ensure that they were saying the truth). They would say to her: "My daughter, wine causes much (indecenty), lechity causes much (indecenty), childishness causes much (indecenty), and bad neighbors causes much (indecenty). Admit for the sake of His great Name which is written in holiness, so that It should not be erased on the waters." They also say things to her that are not appropriate to hear (i.e., stories about Biblical righteous people who sinned but were not ashamed to admit it), neither her nor all of her father's family. If she says, "I am defiled," she writes a receipt for her kesuvah and goes out (*with a get*). But if she says, "I am pure," they bring her to the Eastern Gate, which was situated opposite the Nikanor Gate, for there (at Nikanor Gate) is the place where sotahs are given (the bitter waters) to drink, and where they would purify the women who gave birth (for they stood there when their sacrifices were being offered), and where they would purify those who were tamei with tzaraas. The Kohen takes hold of her clothes. If they tear, they tear. If they shred, they shred (*and there is nothing to be concerned about*), until he reveals her bosom. He then unbraids her hair.

Rabbi Yehudah says: If her bosom was pretty, he would not reveal it, and if her hair was pretty, he would not unbraid it.

If she was wearing white clothing, he (the Kohen) would dress her in black. If she was wearing golden jewelry, chokers, nose rings, or finger rings, they remove them from her, so as to make her repulsive. Afterwards, he

brings a rope made from a palm tree and ties it above her bosom. Whoever wants to see this may come and see, besides for her slaves and maidservants, as her heart becomes haughty in their presence (*and she will not admit even if she is guilty*). All women are permitted to see her, as it states: *And all the women shall be chastised and shall not imitate your lewdness.* (7a3 – 7b1)

Gemora

The Gemora asks: From where is it known (that they would bring her to the Beis Din Ha'Gadol)?

Rav Chiya bar Gamda said in the name of Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Chanina: We derive this through a gezeirah shavah, using the words “torah, torah.” It is written here: *The Kohen will do to her this entire torah – (the law that he is supposed to do to a sotah)*, and it is written there (regarding the High Court): *According to the torah that they will teach you.* Just as there, it is referring to seventy-one (judges of the High Court), so too here, it is alluding to the (court of) seventy-one (judges). (7b1)

The Mishnah had stated: And the judges would proceed to intimidate her.

The Gemora asks a contradiction from the following Baraisa: Just as they intimidate her not to drink, so too they intimidate her to drink. They say to her, “My daughter, if you are certain that you are truly pure, rely on your innocence and drink, as the bitter waters are like a dry salve that rests on raw skin: If there is a wound, it sinks in and goes down (*into the wound, thereby healing it*). If there is no wound, nothing happens at all!?” [The Mishnah had clearly stated that we discourage her from drinking!?!]

The Gemora answers: This is not difficult. Our Mishnah is referring to (the time) before the scroll (containing Hashem’s Name) was erased (and we therefore

encourage her not to drink, so we would not need to erase the name of Hashem). The Baraisa is referring to (a case) after it (the scroll) was erased. (7b1 – 7b2)

The Mishnah had stated: They also say things to her that are not appropriate to hear.

The Gemora cites a Baraisa: They say to her homiletic sayings, and incidents that occurred in the early Scriptures. Such as: The scholars will say: *it was not hidden them from their fathers.* Yehudah admitted (that he sinned with Tamar) and was not embarrassed (*to admit*). What happened to him in the end? He merited the life of the World to Come! Reuven admitted (that he sinned with Bilhah) and was not embarrassed (*to admit*). What happened to him in the end? He merited the life of the World to Come! What is their reward?

The Gemora asks: Didn’t we say their reward is the World to Come?

The Gemora answers: The Baraisa means to ask: what did they also merit in this world?

The Baraisa answers: *To them alone the land was given and a stranger did not walk among them.*

The Gemora asks: It is understandable that Yehudah is in this list, as we find that he admitted, as it is written: And Yehudah recognized (his belongings) and he said: *She is right; it (the child) is from me.* However, where do we see that Reuven admitted?

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini answers in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: What is the meaning of that which is written: *Reuven should live and not die... and this is for Yehudah?* This tells us that all of the forty years that *Bnei Yisroel* were in the Wilderness, the bones of Yehudah were rolling around in their casket. This was until Moshe came and asked for mercy. He said: Master of the

Universe! Who caused Reuven to admit to his sin? It was Yehudah! [But Reuven's skeleton was still intact (as if he was alive)] - *and this is to Yehudah!* Immediately, (Moshe prayed): *Hashem, hear the voice of Yehudah*, and his bones returned to their proper sockets. However, he was not admitted to the Heavenly academy. [Moshe prayed] - *And to his nation You should bring him.*" He did not understand what was being said, and was therefore unable to participate in the discussions. Moshe prayed, *"His hands should be mighty for him."* He was not able to conclude the material with the right *halachic* outcome. Moshe prayed: *And bring him to his nation (this prayer granted him admission)*. However, he could not interact in law discussions with the Rabbis. Moshe prayed: *May his hands contend for him.* [This prayer was accepted as well.] He was still unable to complete a topic correctly according to the law. Moshe prayed: *And may You help him from his enemies.*

The *Gemora* asks: It is understandable that Yehudah admitted his sin in order that Tamar should not be burned. However, what purpose was there in Reuven's admittance (in public)? Didn't Rav Sheishes say: I consider a man to be arrogant who openly recounts his sins (*to others*)?

The *Gemora* answers: He did so in order that his brothers should not be suspected by their father of having done this. (7b2 – 7b3)

DAILY MASHAL

Inspiring Others

Yehudah's bones were rattling in the coffin on the way to Eretz Yisroel, until Moshe prayed to God claiming: "Yehudah confessed to falsely accusing Tamar of being a harlot, and only then did Reuven confess to the sin of mixing up Yaakov's bed." We deduct from this time span (*between Reuven committing the sin and his confessing to*

the act) that Reuven learned from Yehudah that it is a Mitzvah to confess your sins. Therefore God, Moshe continued, if Reuven merits an eternal rest, Yehudah should as well. God answered Moshe's prayers, and Yehudah's bones rested immediately.

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz asks: Why isn't the fact that Yehudah confessed his sin adequate enough? Why did Moshe have to utilize the fact that Reuven learned from Yehudah to admit? He answers that it is not just the merit of confessing, but the fact that due to Yehudah's deeds, other people learned how to serve God better. This is greater than just the merit of a good deed on its own. This is what's called "ZIKUY HARABIM", "meriting the public."