

19 Elul 5777
Sept. 10, 2017



Sanhedrin Daf 56

Produced by Rabbi Avrohom Adler, Kollel Boker Beachwood

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Mishna

The blasphemer is not liable until he states the Divine Name. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah said: Every day they examine the witnesses with a substitute name, by asking them (*did the defendant say*) “May Yosi strike Yosi”? [*“Yosi” is chosen as a substitute, because it contains four letters, like the Specific Name of God, which must have been used by the blasphemer for him to be punished. Moreover, the numerical value of “Yosi” is the same as of Elokim.*] If the judgment is concluded, they do not execute him with a substitute name, but rather, they send out every person and ask the greatest witness among them, and they say to him, “Say explicitly what you heard the defendant say,” and he says it. The judges stand on their feet, and they rend their garments and they do not mend them. And the second witness says, “I also heard like him,” and the third says, “I also did.” (55b – 56a)

Blasphemy

It was taught in a *braisa*: The blasphemer is not punished unless he “blesses” (*a euphemism for curse*) the Divine Name with the Divine Name.

Shmuel said: This is derived from the verse: *And he blasphemes (nokeiv) the Name...when he blasphemes the Name, he shall be put to death.* [*The repetition of the words “blasphemes the Name” indicates that the Divine Name must be “blessed” by the Divine Name.*]

The *Gemora* asks: How is it known that the word *nokeiv* means a “blessing”? Perhaps it means “piercing” (*piercing a hole through the divine Name written on a piece of parchment*)!?

The *Gemora* answers: Something must be done by the Name to the Name, and that would not apply by piercing.

The *Gemora* asks: But perhaps it refers to the case where one of the Names is placed upon the other, and he pierces them both together?

The *Gemora* answers: In that case, one Name is pierced after the other (*it is not pierced with the other Name*).

The *Gemora* asks: But perhaps the Torah is prohibiting a case where the Divine Name is engraved on a knife, and it is used to pierce the Divine Name written on a piece of parchment?

The *Gemora* answers: In that case, the sharpness of the knife pierces, not the Divine Name.

The *Gemora* asks: But perhaps it refers to the elucidation of the ineffable Name?

The *Gemora* answers: Firstly, Something must be done by the Name to the Name, and that would not apply by pronouncing the Name; and secondly, it is a warning in



the form of a positive command (*Hashem your God you shall fear*), which is not deemed to be a warning at all (*in order to incur any punishment*).

Alternatively, the *Gemora* proves that the word “*nokeiv*” in this context means “blesses,” and not “pronounces.”

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: [*It is written: Any man that curses his God shall bear his sin.*] It would have been sufficient to say, “*A man...*” What is taught by the expression *any man*? This is to include gentiles -to whom blasphemy is prohibited just as to Israelites. Yet, they are executed by sword (*unlike a Jew who is executed by stoning*); for every death penalty decreed for the Noahites is only by sword.

The *Gemora* asks: isn’t there another verse which teaches us that a gentile may not “bless” the Divine Name?

Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha answers: Our verse teaches us that as gentile is liable even if he uses one of the subordinate “Names.” This follows Rabbi Meir’s viewpoint (*who holds that a Jew is also liable for this*), for we learned in a *braisa*: The extra verse teaches us that a Jew is liable for execution for “blessing” the Name of God no matter which Name he uses (*even subordinate ones, such as Elokim, Shakay etc.*). The *Chachamim* hold that he is subject to execution only if he uses the Specific Name; if he uses any of the subordinate Names, he has merely violated a Scriptural warning.

Rabbi Meyasha, however, maintains that the *Chachamim* agree that a Noahite is subject to execution even if he “blesses” the Name of God by using a subordinate Name. Only a Jew has the condition that he will be executed only if he uses the Specific Name. This is derived from the verse: *A convert and native alike.*

Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha uses this verse to teach that a Noahite will be executed for “blessing” the Name even if he does not “bless” the Name with the Name. (56a)

Seven Noahite Commandments

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: There were seven commandments given to the Noahites: Civil laws (*establish courts according to the Rambam; observe civil laws according to the Ramban*), “blessing” the Name, idolatry, illicit relationships, and murder, robbery, and eating a limb cut from a living animal.

Rabbi Chananyah ben Gamliel said: They also are prohibited from partaking of the blood drawn from a living animal. Rabbi Chidka added sterilization. Rabbi Shimon said: They are also prohibited from engaging in sorcery. Rabbi Yosi said: The Noahites were prohibited from everything that the Torah mentioned in the section on sorcery, as follows: *There shall not be found among you any one who passes his son or daughter through the fire, or that uses divinations, or an illusionist, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a consulter of spirits, or a necromancer. For all that do these abominations, Hashem your God is driving them out (from Canaan) from before you.* Now, God does not punish without first warning (*so since we see that they are being punished, they must have been warned against doing them*). Rabbi Elozar added the prohibition of *kilayim*. They are permitted to wear *kilayim* (*garments of wool and linen*) and to plant *kilayim* (*sowing different species together*); they are forbidden only to mate one species of animal with another and to graft trees of different species.

The *Gemora* cites the scriptural sources for each of the seven Noahide laws.

The *Gemora* cited two opinions as to where idolatry and the establishment of civil laws are derived from.



The *Gemora* notes that there will be a practical difference between them regarding a case where the idolater made an idol but did not bow down to it. According to one view that the prohibition was derived from the phrase “*they have made,*” he would be liable for merely making the idol. According to the view that derives the prohibition from the phrase “*because he willingly walked,*” he will only be liable if he goes after the idol and worships it.

Rava asks: Does anyone maintain that an idolater is liable for punishment for merely making an idol even if he did not worship it? Surely it has been taught in a *braisa*: With respect to idolatry, such acts for which a Jewish Court executes a Jew are forbidden to the idolater; but those for which a Jewish Court does not execute are not forbidden to him. Now, what does this exclude? It is presumably excluding the case of an idolater who made an idol without worshipping it?

Rav Pappa answered: No. It is excluding the embracing and kissing of idols (*which if the Jew does, he will not incur the death penalty*). Regarding which idols is this said? It cannot be referring to those whose normal worship is in this manner, for then he is surely liable to death. It is excluding the embracing and kissing of idols which are not usually worshipped in this manner.

The *Gemora* asks: Is the establishment of civil laws a commandment for the Noahites? But we learned in a *braisa*: The Israelites were given ten commandments at Marah, seven of which had already been accepted by the Noahites, to which were added at Marah civil laws, the *Shabbos*, and honoring one’s parents. The *Gemora* cites the scriptural sources for this.

Rav Nachman answered in the name of Rabbah bar Avuha: The addition at Marah was only regarding the following details: the assembly of judges, witnesses, and warnings.

The *Gemora* asks: If so, why does the *braisa* say that the commandment of civil laws was added?

Rather, Rava answered: The addition was only in respect of the laws of fines.

The *Gemora* asks: But even so, should the *braisa* not have said that additions were made in the civil laws?

Rather, Rav Acha bar Yaakov answered: The *braisa* informs us that they were commanded to set up courts in every province and every town.

The *Gemora* asks that it was taught in a *braisa* that the Noahites were also commanded to do this!?

Rava answers: The author of this *braisa* (*which states that civil laws were added at Marah*) is a *Tanna* of the Academy of Menasheh, who omitted civil laws and blasphemy (*from the list of Noahites commandments*) and replaced them with sterilization and *kilayim*. For a *Tanna* of the Academy of Menasheh taught: The Noahites were given the following seven commandments: idolatry, illicit relationships, murder, robbery, and eating a limb cut from a living animal, sterilization and *kilayim*. Rabbi Yehudah said: Adam was prohibited only regarding idolatry. Rabbi Yehudah ben Beseirah maintains that he was forbidden in blasphemy as well. Some add civil laws. (56a – 56b)



INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Sheva Mitzvos

The Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach according to the Talmud, were given by Hashem to Noach as a binding set of laws for all mankind. Any non-Jew who lives according to these laws is regarded as a Chasid Umos Ha'Olam and is assured of a place in Olam Haba. The seven laws listed by the Tosefta and the Talmud (Tosefta Avodah Zarah 8.4 quoted in Talmud Sanhedrin 56a.)

1. Avodah Zara - Prohibition of Idolatry: You shall not have any idols before Hashem.
2. Shefichas Damin - Prohibition of Murder: You shall not murder. (Bereishis 9:6)
3. Giluy Arayos - Prohibition of Sexual Promiscuity: You shall not commit any of a series of sexual prohibitions, which include adultery, incest, bestiality and male homosexuality.
4. Gezeila - Prohibition of Theft: You shall not steal.
5. Birchus HaShem - Prohibition of Blasphemy: You shall not blaspheme God's name.
6. Aiver Min HaChai - Dietary Law: Do not eat flesh taken from an animal while it is still alive. (Bereishis 9:4)
7. Dinim - Requirement to have just Laws: You shall set up an effective judiciary to enforce the preceding six laws fairly.

A way to remember these seven are that the first three are the Three Aveiros Chamuros that we must be willing to die for. The next 4 are in accordance with the first four letters of the Aleph Bais.

Aleph - Aiver Min HaChai

Bais - Birchus Hashem (a euphemism for blasphemy)

Gimmel - Gezeila

Dalet - Dinim

DAILY MASHAL

The Ten Before

Even before they received the Torah at Sinai our ancestors were commanded with ten *mitzvos* – the seven Noahite Laws plus the three *mitzvos* which they received at the scene of the bitter waters of Marah “where there was given statutes and laws.” (*Shmot* 15:25)

Tosfos raises the question as to why there is no mention of the *mitzvah* of circumcision which had already been commanded to the Patriarch Avraham or the prohibition of eating the *gid hanasheh* (displaced sinew) commanded to the Patriarch Yaakov. (*Bereishet* 32.33)

The answer given by Rabbi Yaakov Emden regarding circumcision is that this list includes only prohibitions and not positive commands, as we find in a later *gemara* (58b). As regards *gid hanasheh* the opinion of the Sages (*Mesechta Chullin* 100b) who contest the view of Rabbi Yehudah is that although the source of the *gid hanasheh* ban is mentioned early in the Torah, it was not actually prohibited until Sinai. Since there is not a consensus that this was a pre-Sinai *mitzvah*, it is not mentioned in this list of ten.