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Tumah by Earthenware and Metal

Rav Ada bar Ahavah asked Rava: Shouldn't an earthenware vessel be rendered *tamei* through contact from the outside by the following *kal vachomer*: If all other vessels which are not rendered *tamei* through their airspace are nevertheless rendered *tamei* from the outside, then an earthenware vessel, which is rendered *tamei* through its airspace, should surely be rendered *tamei* from the outside?

He replied: It is written: *And every open vessel which has no cover fastened onto it (it is tamei)*. Now, what kind of vessel is it to which the *tumah* comes first through its opening (*even before making contact with the vessel*)? It must be an earthenware vessel; and the verse teaches us that if it has no cover fastened upon it, it is *tamei*, but if it has a cover fastened upon it, it is *tahor* (*even if the source of tumah came into contact with the outside of the vessel*).

The *Gemora* asks: And should not all other vessels be rendered *tamei* through their airspace through the following *kal vachomer*: If an earthenware vessel which is not rendered *tamei* from the outside is nevertheless rendered *tamei* through its airspace, then all other vessels, which are rendered *tamei* from the outside, should surely be rendered *tamei* through their airspace?

The *Gemora* answers: It is written (*by an earthenware vessel*): *In its (tocho) interior*. This teaches us that the airspace of this type of vessel (*if its earthenware*) can render the vessel *tamei*, but the airspace of no other vessel can render it *tamei*.

The *Gemora* asks: But have we not already interpreted this word for another purpose?

The *Gemora* answers: The verse twice stipulates that items that are *tocho* – *in it*, are *tamei*, effectively making four statements, since each verse could have simply said *toch* – *in*, without explicitly stating *in it*. These four statements teach:

1. The basic rule that items in the airspace become *tamei*.
2. The airspace is the medium for a *tamei* earthenware vessel to make things *tamei*, but also for the vessel itself to become *tamei* (e.g., if a dead rodent is in its airspace, but doesn't touch the vessel).
3. Airspace is not a medium for transferring *tumah* in vessels that are not earthenware.
4. Only its airspace, but not the airspace of a vessel inside it, even if the vessel an immersible one (*is not earthenware*).

The *Gemora* asks: And all other vessels should not be rendered *tamei* by contact from the outside, but only by contact from the inside, through the following *kal vachomer*: If an earthenware vessel which is rendered *tamei* through its airspace is nevertheless not rendered *tamei* from the outside, then all other vessels, which are not rendered *tamei* through their airspace, should surely not be rendered *tamei* from the outside?

The *Gemora* answers: It is written: *And every open vessel which has no cover fastened onto it, it is tamei*. We infer from here (*it is tamei*) that only with regard to this type of vessel

(an earthenware one) that we say if it has no cover fastened upon it, it is *tamei*, and if it has a cover fastened upon it, it is *tahor*; whereas all other vessels, whether they have a cover fastened upon them, or whether they do not have not a cover fastened upon them, they are *tamei*. (25a)

Mishna

That which is *tahor* by wooden utensils can be rendered *tamei* by metal ones, and that which is *tahor* by metal utensils can be rendered *tamei* by wooden ones. (25a)

Tumah by Wood and Metal

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: Unfinished wooden utensils (that can be used for their intended purpose; they merely lack some finishing touches) can be rendered *tamei*, but flat wooden utensils (which cannot be used as a receptacle) cannot. Unfinished metal utensils cannot be rendered *tamei*, but flat metal utensils can. It emerges, therefore, that that which cannot be rendered *tamei* in wooden utensils can be rendered *tamei* in metal utensils, and that which cannot be rendered *tamei* in metal utensils can be rendered *tamei* in wooden utensils.

The following wooden utensils are examples of being unfinished: any wooden utensil that still requires to be polished, or adorned with designs, or planed, or banded (with decorative grooves), or smoothed with the skin of a tunny fish, or if it still lacks the base, rim or the handle; these can be rendered *tamei*. However, that which still requires to be hollowed out cannot be rendered *tamei*. The *Gemora* explains this to be referring to a case where one hollowed out of a block enough to hold a *kefiza* (three-fourths of a *kav*) in a block which was intended to hold a *kav*.

The following metal utensils are examples of being unfinished: any metal utensil that still requires to be filed, or adorned with designs, or planed, or engraved (with decorative designs), or hammered out. If it still lacks the base,

rim or the handle, it is *tahor*. If, however, it only requires the lid, it can be rendered *tamei*.

The *Gemora* asks: Why is there a difference between the two of them?

Rabbi Yochanan said: It is because metal utensils need the designs for they are made for occasions of honor (such as entertaining guests, and therefore they must appear beautiful in order to be used for their intended purpose).

Rav Nachman said: It is because they are expensive (and would not fetch a high price if they were lacking the design).

The *Gemora* notes that a practical difference between them would be regarding bone utensils (for they are expensive, but they were not used for occasions of honor). And indeed, Rav Nachman is consistent with his view stated elsewhere, for Rav Nachman said: Bone utensils are regarded as metal utensils.

The *Gemora* infers from here that bone utensils can be rendered *tamei*. The *Gemora* cites a *braisa* which indeed supports this: Rabbi Yishmael, the son of Rabbi Yochanan ben Berokah cites a Scriptural verse proving that horns or hooves of a goat can be rendered *tamei*. This is true by other animals and beasts as well; the Torah wrote goats to exclude utensils made from birds. (25a – 25b)

Mishna

When bitter almonds are subject to tithing, sweet almonds are exempt, and when sweet almonds are subject to tithing, bitter almonds are exempt. [The bitter almond becomes bitter as it grows larger, and the sweet almond becomes sweeter as it grows larger.] (25b)

Ma'aser on Almonds

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: Small bitter almonds are subject to tithing, but the large ones are exempt (*for once they become large, they are extremely bitter and regarded as non-edible*); large sweet almonds are subject to tithing, but the small ones are exempt. Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yosi said in the name of his father: Both are exempt. Others have the version that both of them are subject to tithing.

R. Ila'a said that Rabbi Chanina ruled in Tzippori in accordance with the one who maintains that both are exempt.

The *Gemora* asks: But according to the one who maintains that both are subject to tithing, what use can be made of the large bitter almonds?

Rabbi Yochanan answered: They can be sweetened through roasting them in fire (*and then, they will be edible*). (25b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Bone is like Metal

The *Gemora* asks: How is it known that bone utensils can become *tamei*?

Tosfos explains that it is obvious that a bone utensil is susceptible to *tumah*, as explicitly mentioned in the Mishna; the *Gemora* is asking: how is it known that it can become *tamei* on a Biblical level?

The Acharonim ask: Why did the *Gemora* ask this on Rav Nachman, and not on the Mishna? And if you will answer that it cannot be proven from the Mishna that it can become Biblically *tamei*, where can it be proven that Rav Nachman holds that way?

The Maharam answers that if a bone utensil would only become *tamei* on a Rabbinic level, it would not seem logical that it should have the same laws as a metal utensil that it

can become *tamei* even before it is a completed vessel. Evidently, it becomes *tamei* on a Biblical level, and so it seems from the language of Rav Nachman, for he stated that bone utensils are like metal ones.

The Chasam Sofer answers similarly that from Rav Nachman's language, it would seem that bone utensils are similar to metal ones in all facets - even with regards to bone slabs that they can become *tamei* on a Rabbinic level. Obviously then, a bone vessel is Biblically susceptible to *tumah*.

DAILY MASHAL

Two Attributes of Successful Mitzvah Agents

By: Rav Yissocher Frand

Moshe sent 12 tribal representatives to spy out the land. Their mission was a disaster that we still pay for to this very day. The night following their return from the mission was the night of the Ninth of Av. The nation cried on that night [Bamidbar 14:1]. The Talmud comments "You cried for nothing that night, I will give you something to cry about on that night for all generations" [Taanis 29a; Sanhedrin 104b].

The parsha of Sh'lach and its associated Haftorah present a stark contrast between the spies that Yehoshua sent, who did their job in the correct fashion, and the spies who Moshe sent, who did not do their job in the correct fashion. The Medrash extensively praises the spies who were sent out by Yehoshua. "Nothing is more dear to the Master of the World than a person who goes on a mission of G-d and gives his heart and soul to fulfill that mission. The paradigm of people sent on a mission who perform with dedication and devotion are the two representatives sent out by Yehoshua bin Nun".

What can we learn from the spies of Yehoshua. What is the key to being a successful 'shlich mitzvah' [agent for



performing a holy task]? How does one become praiseworthy when carrying out a mission of G-d?

In order to answer this question, it is instructive to turn to a second Medrash. The Medrash comments on the word 'cheresh' in the pasuk "And Yehoshua bin Nun sent out from Shittim two men who were spies 'cheresh' saying..." [Yehoshua 2:1]. According to one opinion, the Medrash interprets that the word 'cheresh' comes from the term for earthenware vessels (kli cheres). The two spies disguised themselves as pottery salesman. According to a second opinion in the Medrash 'cheresh' comes from the word for a deaf person. Yehoshua told them to pretend that they were deaf, and thereby they would be able to eavesdrop on the secrets of others.

In a homiletic fashion, these two interpretations of the Medrash can be teaching us the two key ways to be successful agents of G-d in carrying out holy missions.

The first approach is to be like a pottery salesman. Pottery is fundamentally different halachically than metal utensils. Tumah [ritual impurity] is transmitted to a metal utensil by touching it from the outside. However, an earthenware vessel contracts tumah even when a source of tumah is suspended inside its walls -- without actually touching the wall of the vessel.

The Kotzker Rebbe (1797-1859) explained that the functionality of a metal utensil is its outside. Its external component (chitzoniyus) has value. Therefore it can be defiled by touching its externality. But the externals of an earthenware vessel are insignificant. (Pottery in those days was cheap and did not have a good appearance.) The outside does not make any difference. Therefore, the way to defile it is via its functionality (the inside).

In order to be a successful shliach mitzvah, a person must be willing to give up on his externals. He must be willing to say that externals do not make any difference. The only thing

that matters is the internal (penimiyus), the functionality of the mission.

The other key to being a successful agent for a mission of G-d is to pretend that you are deaf. Any person who has ever undertaken the task of doing something worthwhile in this world has been told by at least some - if not most - people, "You're crazy! It will never work! It can't be done."

"You want to start a Day School? It can't be done. You want to build a Yeshiva? It won't work. You want to put up a new mikveh (ritual bath)? It's not going to happen. You want to start a new shul? Forget it." The whole world tells you that it is a crazy idea!

If a person listens to all the advice, he will never succeed in accomplishing G-d's mission. The people who started our Torah institutions, 40, 50, 60, and 70 years ago, were all told that it could not be done in America. This happens in every generation. Whenever we try to start something new there are always the nay-sayers who say it can't be done.

The only way to be a successful 'shliach mitzvah' is to be 'cheresh' -- to pretend that you are deaf to such negative 'encouragement.'