

המקנא פרק ראשון סוטה

א"ח מ"ח פ"ג מהל' סוטה הלכה ד' מתק' ע"ן ו'
 א"ב מ"ח פ"ג מהל' סוטה הלכה ד' מתק' ע"ן ו'
 ב' מ"ח פ"ג מהל' סוטה הלכה ד' מתק' ע"ן ו'
 ג' מ"ח פ"ג מהל' סוטה הלכה ד' מתק' ע"ן ו'
 ד' מ"ח פ"ג מהל' סוטה הלכה ד' מתק' ע"ן ו'
 ה' מ"ח פ"ג מהל' סוטה הלכה ד' מתק' ע"ן ו'
 ו' מ"ח פ"ג מהל' סוטה הלכה ד' מתק' ע"ן ו'
 ז' מ"ח פ"ג מהל' סוטה הלכה ד' מתק' ע"ן ו'
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מזה להלן בשבעים ואחד. מימה אמאי לא תני להו לטוטה חקן ממרל צפ"ק דסנהדרין (דף ג.) צדדי הני דהו צ"ב על שבעים ואחד וי"ל משום דגמר על סוטה חקן ממרל לא היה צדדי דין של שבעים ואחד: **בזה** להלן בבית דין של שבעים ואחד. קטלי וממנו בני סוטה שהמקום גורס כמו גבי זקן ממרל ולכן היו מעלין אותה ללשכת הגזית ח"כ פסקו המיס המרים מיום שגלתה סנהדרין וישנה לה צמנת כדלמור צפרק היו צדוקין (סנהדרין דף מה.) לפי שלא רצו לדון דמי נפשות לפי שהמקום גורס וצפרק צמרת דמילתין (לקמן דף מה.) אמרינן דרנן יומין בן זכאי הפסקין וקודם גלות סנהדרין אומר צפרק היו צדוקין (שם מה.) דרנן יומין בן זכאי תלמיד יושב לפני רבו היה ולא מקרי רבן ונראה לדיוס לא היה מעבד והם לא היו מאיימין כלל אעפ"כ ארסה שומה הילכן הימה טוהגמ אפי' לאמר גלות:

לא עבר וז בתובם. פירש ר"י (ו) בשם רזי שמואל הניחו צמנתו ויחזקאל שאלוהי יהודה שמים: **שמעת** מינה כותבין שובר. מימה והא הכא לא אפשר ללא עמיה אס היא אומרת אגדה כמותמי צמנה יוסף אותה להחזיר כמותמי צמנלם ליה צמנלם מעבד הפערון עד שיחזיר מלוה את השטר אכל כון א"ר וי"ל שפירש שהרי כון אגדה כמותמי והיא ללא אפשר דברי הכל כותבין וי"ל שיהי יכול לעבד את הגט אללו עד שמחזיר לו הכמותי אכל כותמי לפום מלי דמתיק צמקוס שאין כותבין כמותי כותבין שובר למה לי למיכתב שובר יקרת הגט יוכותי עליו גיטא דנן דקרתוהו לא משום דגיתא פסקלה הוא אלא ללא חסד ותגזי ציה זימנא אחריתי דלמתיין צ"פ הכותב (במות דף פט:) צדוקי קמא צדבא מיעלא (דף י"ג.) וי"ל שהלך מיימי מן הסכנה ויליך ללמור צפרק הכותב (במות דף פט:) דוגמה צעדי גירושין אפילו בלא גט: **אמר** רבא במקום שאין כותבין צמקוס עסקינן. מקשים הא צמקוס כמותין אין כותבין שובר וצגט פדושתין (צ"ב דף קפ"ג): אמר ה"ג מסתברא דכותבין שובר דלי אין כותבין יאלל הלה ומדי ח"ל אבי אלא מלי כותבין אגד שובר ואלל הלה ומדי ח"ל רבא אין עבד ליה לנש מלוה אלמנא דקיבל אותה סכרה כותבין ונראה דרנבא ס"ל כותבין אכל הא סדמיה צמנלם הוא:

וקטליאות נומים ומבעיות *מעבירין מומה כרי לנוולה (ו) ואחר כך *מביא חבל מצרי וקושרו למעלה מדדיה ויכל הרוצה לראות בא לראות *חזין מעבדיה ושפחותיה מפני שלבה גם בהן *וכל הנשים מותרות לראותה שנאמר *ונסורו כל הנשים ולא תעשינה כמותכנה: **גב' מנהגי** מילי א"ר חייא בר גמרא א"ר יוסי בר חנינא אתיא תורה תורה כתיב הבא *ועשה לה כהן את כל התורה וכתבי הים *על פי התורה אשר יורוך מה להלן בשבעים ואחד אף כאן בשבעים ואחד: ומאיימין עליה וכו': *ורמיהו * בדרך שמאיימין עליה שלא תשתה יכ' מאיימין עליה שתשתה אומרים לה בתי אם ברור לך הדבר שמהורה לה עומד על בוריך ושתי לפי שאין מים המרים עומדי אלא לסם ויש שמונה גידו רש בשר חי אם יש שם מכה מחלחל ויורד אין שם מכה אינו מועיל כלום *לא קשיא כאן קודם שנמחקה מגיזה כאן לאחר שנמחקה מגיזה: ואומר לפניה וכו': ת"ר *אומר לפניה דברים של הגון ומעשים שאירעו בתכתיבים הראשונים בגון *אשר חכמים גידו ורש כחודו מאבותם יהודה הורה ולא בוש מה היה סופו נחל חי העולם הבא ראובן הורה ולא בוש מה היה סופו נחל חי העולם הבא ומה שכתב מה שכתב בקרא אמרינן אלא מה שכתב בעולם הזה *להם לברם נתנה הארץ ואמר עבר וז בתוכם בשלמא ביהודה אישכחן דארי דכתיב *ויבר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממני אלא ראובן מלך דאודי *דא"ר שמואל בר נחמני אמר ר' יוחנן מאי דכתיב *יהו ראובן ואל ימות * וזאת יהודה כל אותן שנים שהיו ישראל במדבר היו עצמותיו של יהודה מוגלגלין בארון עד שעמד משה ובקש עליו רחמים אמר לפניו רבש"ע מי גרם לראובן שהורה יהודה (ו) וזאת יהודה * מיד * שמע ה' קול יהודה על איבריה לשפא ולא הוה קא מעיילין ליה למתיבתא דרקינא * ואל עמו הביאנו ולא הוה קא דע משקל * ומטרה בשמעתא בהדי רבנן * דיון רב לו אה הוה קא סלקא ליה בשמעתא אליבא דהילכתא * ועוד מצריו תהיה בשלמא יהודה דאודי כי היכי דלא תישרף חמור אלא ראובן למה ליה דאודי * והאמר רב ששת * הציף עלי (בר ישראל) דמפרש חמאה כי היכי דלא ליחשדו אחויה (א) אם אמרה טמאה אני וכו': * שמעת מינה כותבין שובר אמר אבי תני מקרעת א"ל רבא והא שוברת קתני אלא אמר רבא במקום שאין כותבין כותבה עסקינן: ואם אמרה מהורה אני מעלין אותה לשערי מורה: מועלין אותה הרים

וקטליאות. מכשית הוא כמין חלי עיגול פחות וסוגרת בו את חלוקה ומקף את גרוטה מן הצדדין: חבל הצברי. עשו מזויר קלף מסבי הגלגל סביב הדקל וכךו עליו: וקושר לזמעה מדדיה. כי שלל ישמעו צדדיה ללחן: שלבה גם בהן *וכל הנשים מותרות לראותה שנאמר *ונסורו כל הנשים ולא תעשינה כמותכנה: **גב' מנהגי** מילי א"ר חייא בר גמרא א"ר יוסי בר חנינא אתיא תורה תורה כתיב הבא *ועשה לה כהן את כל התורה וכתבי הים *על פי התורה אשר יורוך מה להלן בשבעים ואחד אף כאן בשבעים ואחד: ומאיימין עליה וכו': *ורמיהו * בדרך שמאיימין עליה שלא תשתה יכ' מאיימין עליה שתשתה אומרים לה בתי אם ברור לך הדבר שמהורה לה עומד על בוריך ושתי לפי שאין מים המרים עומדי אלא לסם ויש שמונה גידו רש בשר חי אם יש שם מכה מחלחל ויורד אין שם מכה אינו מועיל כלום *לא קשיא כאן קודם שנמחקה מגיזה כאן לאחר שנמחקה מגיזה: ואומר לפניה וכו': ת"ר *אומר לפניה דברים של הגון ומעשים שאירעו בתכתיבים הראשונים בגון *אשר חכמים גידו ורש כחודו מאבותם יהודה הורה ולא בוש מה היה סופו נחל חי העולם הבא ראובן הורה ולא בוש מה היה סופו נחל חי העולם הבא ומה שכתב מה שכתב בקרא אמרינן אלא מה שכתב בעולם הזה *להם לברם נתנה הארץ ואמר עבר וז בתוכם בשלמא ביהודה אישכחן דארי דכתיב *ויבר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממני אלא ראובן מלך דאודי *דא"ר שמואל בר נחמני אמר ר' יוחנן מאי דכתיב *יהו ראובן ואל ימות * וזאת יהודה כל אותן שנים שהיו ישראל במדבר היו עצמותיו של יהודה מוגלגלין בארון עד שעמד משה ובקש עליו רחמים אמר לפניו רבש"ע מי גרם לראובן שהורה יהודה (ו) וזאת יהודה * מיד * שמע ה' קול יהודה על איבריה לשפא ולא הוה קא מעיילין ליה למתיבתא דרקינא * ואל עמו הביאנו ולא הוה קא דע משקל * ומטרה בשמעתא בהדי רבנן * דיון רב לו אה הוה קא סלקא ליה בשמעתא אליבא דהילכתא * ועוד מצריו תהיה בשלמא יהודה דאודי כי היכי דלא תישרף חמור אלא ראובן למה ליה דאודי * והאמר רב ששת * הציף עלי (בר ישראל) דמפרש חמאה כי היכי דלא ליחשדו אחויה (א) אם אמרה טמאה אני וכו': * שמעת מינה כותבין שובר אמר אבי תני מקרעת א"ל רבא והא שוברת קתני אלא אמר רבא במקום שאין כותבין כותבה עסקינן: ואם אמרה מהורה אני מעלין אותה לשערי מורה: מועלין אותה הרים

מסורת הש"ס
 (א) עירובין מת. וי"ח
 (ב) חגיגה פ"ג הל' ט'
 (ג) חגיגה פ"ג הל' ט'
 (ד) חגיגה פ"ג הל' ט'
 (ה) חגיגה פ"ג הל' ט'
 (ו) חגיגה פ"ג הל' ט'
 (ז) חגיגה פ"ג הל' ט'
 (ח) חגיגה פ"ג הל' ט'
 (ט) חגיגה פ"ג הל' ט'
 (י) חגיגה פ"ג הל' ט'

תוספות שאנין

לברם נתנה הארץ פ"ה יהודה וכה למילתא תוספתא ברבית (פ"ה) קאמר דראובן נטל חמלה חלק בעבר הירדן: היו עצמותיו מוגלגלין פ"ה איבריו היו מתפרקין בארנו מפני שגדת את עצמו בערבנו של בנימין ונחמיהו לך כל הימים אפי' ליעולם הבא ומתא נפקא לן נדיר של תלמיד חכם אפילו על תנאי בא ליה: מי גרם שיהיה יהודי פ"ה אדריה ברדש ר' נתנאל בשעה שזמר יהודה צדקה ממני אמר ראובן בני אני כלבתיך יעזי אבי ועבשיו יהו ראובן שלדו קיימת כאילו הוא זו וזאת ליהודה כפניה שצמתי מוגלגלין: על איברי ליעולם ליקום שותקיה: משם כדמי דרש מתקנה: מאן דמפרש דהא סוטה היתה (פ"ג פ"ו) וכו' היתה כותבין אמר אשרי נשיר פשע כתיב סוטה וכוונת אמר אשרי וכוונת ירום. לא קשיא וכוונת אמר אשרי טוב ליהודא שאינו מפרסם טוב ליהודא לירבם (ו) דנראה שאינו נכלל בבר. ש"פ ממתין כותבין שובר ופולתא היה אביי ק"ו. אמר במקום רבא ונראה חמור טמא פשוט דכותבין שובר משה דעבד ליה לאיש מלוה וי"ל דהא ליה דכותבין הוא דקאמר הבא במקום שאין כותבין דהיינו בשלמא הוא כלומר מהא לא פתחוסי מלי דאיכא לאוקמא במקום שאין כותבין:

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השק שלמה

על תוספות שאנין

(א) הלכה ג' ע"ל פי שבתם אכל צמנת ששתי מפרסם טוב לו חלה יגה חמלה דלא נכלל ההנה עמיה ששתי נכלל:

השק שלמה

על תוספות שאנין

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עין משפט

נר מצוה

נח א מיה מיה מהל

סוטה נלכט טו מהל

שעון טו

תוספות שאנין

הכמוצ בדין כיון כני עיני
 באמונה יורה שולחה
 עם הכל דשיי האמונה
 גולה וכו' כתיב את
 אחיה את הכל בני אחיו כי
 ריבויין וכו' על כן מבינה
 ויבנה כלום כמנוני של
 בלין לקול ישראל תהיה
 מבינה כשהיה ליטול
 שכן כיד אף שפילו
 מישאלו בעצתו דואג
 אבי הדינים גודלו
 שבתלמידים היה תמקא
 בוד כדמיס מה ראיין
 כל לשי בית הלל אמר
 בהנהגה כהן חזק לא
 הוה פוסק הוא אמר דואג
 כלשון הרע ואחופיל
 נתן עינו מלכות
 כדאמרן הוא אש יוצא
 מאמרו וכספר שיעור
 למלך. נחיו כמנוני של
 נעמן ונעטר אבשלום
 מלכותו נהרג ארעה
 באבשלום נהרג ועורו
 בכונה הוציעה וזהו
 מנצחה. ליה. גב לב
 וכל לב בית דין פיה
 שאמר אלמה אבשלום
 נהרג וכמה את אבשלום
 הלכו מאימא אש (ראיין)
 (אמרין) בירושלמי (סוטה)
 שני דין תובת דוד אבי
 וזהו ענין תובת דוד אבי
 שכל ענין אש אש תובת
 אש וכל ענין אש אש תובת
 וזהו ענין תובת דוד אבי
 מראה חומתו של דוד
 לשימם הדין וכן לשימם
 אחימזע עד סגפס פאנים
 אש וכו' ואש ראיין
 שנתרואה היה גב לב
 אבי וכל כיד. ליה.
 תחלת קלקולו מיהא
 שנת הרע פיה והתוא
 התנהג לא לקולל הוא
 כולו היא שלקחה לו
 לאשה ולא בני עליה
 בנות. ליה. ליה.
 ירושלמי ואיצ"ל דגיה
 היתה אשה בעיניה בא
 עליה אב היתה רעה לא
 היה דוד נשואין אלא דוד
 גנות.

תורה אור השלם

(א) ואיך ה' אלימים אל
 הנפש כי עשית את
 מקול אתה מקול
 התבונה ועלית מעת
 השבוע על נקול תהך
 ועקר תאכל כי ימי
 עקבך (אבות ג' טו)
 (ב) ואיך אשית פיך
 וכן האשה וכן יושע
 וכן יושע הוא ישעך
 ראש ואתה השופע
 עקבך (אבות ג' טו)
 (ג) והשבע הבתן את
 האשה בשבעת האלה
 ואמר הבתן לאשה וכן
 "ואיך אשית פיך
 והשבעת בתן עקבך
 בתן ואת יושע נשעך
 ואת פיך עקבך
 (מסכת ג' טו)
 (ד) והשבע את המים
 והיתה את המים
 והמעל מעל המים
 ובאו את המים
 המאורים והמים
 והבחה כמנה האשה
 והיתה והיתה האשה
 אלה קרובי משה:
 (מסכת ג' טו)
 (ה) ובאו המים
 המאורים והיתה
 האלה
 פניקח לצבות כיון עיני
 ויורדי אותו עקרה ואמרו
 בנחשמים יהי מוחן
 בבית אבשלום פקדי
 תהך לכל ישראל אשר באו
 לשמש אל המזבח ויגב
 אבשלום את לב אנשי
 ישראל (אבות ג' טו)
 (ו) והשבע מרים לשתיה
 בשבעת ימים והשם לא
 נשע עד המצות ואמר
 יוסף עמו כי נשע עלי
 דודך (אבות ג' טו)
 (ז) והשבעת את
 המים והיתה את המים
 והמעל מעל המים
 ובאו את המים
 המאורים והמים
 והבחה כמנה האשה
 והיתה והיתה האשה
 אלה קרובי משה:
 (מסכת ג' טו)

נדה הקדמוני. נמן עיני צמח וכל עליה והיינו דכמי (בבבב) הנחש השילוי לשון משמים ושואין הוא: נשאו היינו. קומה זקופה:
 היא מביך. שלק עשאו ערוס מכל: אני אמרתי יהיך בקומה זקופה. מלקללו אמה למד וכן כל אלה אמה למד מלקללן. קין. נמן עיני
 בתלמודי ימורה שגלה עם הגל ששמי מאומות נולדו עמו והיינו דכמי (בבבב) את אמרו את גבל שמי אמיס שני ריבויים: נקח עיני
 על הכהונה ונבלו: ביעם. כמנוני של נלק לקלל את ישראל והנה נמדין שהקל ליטול שער עשרים וארבעה אלף שפילו מישאלו בעצתו:
 דואג. אביר העושים וגולו שבתלמידים

היה ומתקנה צדוד שראו נמן דבר
 ואיש מואר ומראה פנים נבלה
 דכמי (שטול f h טו) הנה רלמיץ נן
 לשי בית הללמי וגו' ואמר צבגה
 דחלק (דף טז:) דכל הפסוק הזה דואג
 אמרו לשון הרע: ואחיותו. נמן
 עיני כמלוכה דלמרא צחלק (דף טז:)
 ראה אש יואל מלממו וכסבור
 שעמד למלך (ומה שצדוד נטלו היינו
 על ידו ימיים: נחיו. כמנוני של
 נמן ונלטרע: ואודיה. נלביש
 ונהרג: ועודיה. נכהונה והלרע
 זכסה על מלמו (דף טז:) כי ימי
 בו. וקלה היא חמלת הפרענות:
 מיהו כי בדיק מיהו כי אורחיהו בדיק.
 כמנעיים נכנסו חמלה ומקלקלות
 אותן ואמ"כ נפלות לעין: ש"א
 דרבינו יצני. שילמור לו דוד כסדר
 הלה ואין פורענות זו על דן:
 ברתני" שמשון הדין אחר עיניו.
 כדמי (בבבב) יע עשר פלשי אבוי.
 עשר נשס פלשסי לשמור בימין:
 דכמי (בבבב) חמימות: יב אבוי יב ביה.
 נדה וגו' וכמי את אשלתה הלכו
 ואמריס אש קרוסיס והולסיס למוס
 חמלה כמנוני של נלטרע: וקרוסיס
 מדוד שעל ידי מות דוד הלכו עמו
 אמרו לו כמנוני של עילו עמי אוקן
 שניס שאבחר ונכח לו והיה מראה
 חומתו של דוד לשיס והולסיס אחיו
 וכן לשיס אחריס עד פיעס חמליס
 ולכן ראשי סנהדרותה ריה לז אבוי
 ולז ב"ד וכל אשני ישראל דכמי
 כקבד אש להשמותו וגו' וכמי מי
 שימי שופס צחק וכמי ויגנו
 אשלת את לז אשני ישראל: ואין
 באדוי גודו פמנו. שהיה מלך הרי
 מדה שמד שנקבד אבוי נגדוליס ובו
 כמנה מדדו לו שנקבד הוא
 נגדוליס (טו): מי ינו. לענין כדו
 קצורה לקבד נגדוליס גדול מיופק
 שלל שנקבד בו אלל משה שהו דוד
 מישאלו ואין נישאלו גדול
 הרי כמנה שמד לקבור את יוסף
 ע"י גדול זה מדדו לו שאין גדול
 ככצדוד קצור ממהה שלל שנקבד
 זו אלל הקב"ה: גמ' בעיני פרה.
 ע"י עיני מרד נגדוליס: כי מה
 הוא. ושקבד צמותה אשה כי
 להמנות פלשמיס: והכתיב וירד
 שמשון פלשמה. וילס שס אשה
 מננות פלשמיס ומנע עיני שמשון
 ומעשה של זו כמננות קודס למעשה
 של זו כמננות: תהיילת קלקולו מיהו
 בעוד דוד. תהיילת דמננת ללו
 לקולקול הוא כולי היא שלקחה
 לו לאשה ולא נל עליה צמות:
 החולל

הנהרות הב"ה

(ה) בשמינה וספדו פסח
 עשרים עשרו כל יואל וכו'
 את אשלתו ופי שגב:
 (ג) וכן יוסף יואל שגב:
 שמיס: (ג) גמרא אמר
 שמיס עיניו אל: (ד) וכן
 לקח עיניו חמלה חמלה:
 (ה) רש"י ד"ה וכן
 בלחיו וכו' נגדוליס דמי
 לו וכו' שאין לו נגדוליס
 ככדוד קרוסיס ממהה כ"ל
 וכו':

לפי שגבג' ג' גנבות לב אבוי ולב כ"ד ולב ישראל (שנאמר) ויגבג אבשלום

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 הנפש כי עשית את
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תורה אור השלם

פניקח לצבות כיון עיני
 ויורדי אותו עקרה ואמרו
 בנחשמים יהי מוחן
 בבית אבשלום פקדי
 תהך לכל ישראל אשר באו
 לשמש אל המזבח ויגב
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היה – **Are we casting her on [the other man] against his will?** No! He marries her willingly.^[1]

The Gemara cites a third version of the Rav Yosef/Abaye exchange:

וַיֵּאבְדוּ דְאָמְרֵי – **And there are those who say** that to explain why a suspected adulteress is not eligible for *yibum*, אָמַר רַב יוֹסֵף – **Rav Yosef said:** “אֲחֵרָהּ, – **Scripture calls [the second husband] another man**, to stress שְׂאִין בֶּן זִוְגוֹ שֶׁל רֵאשׁוֹן – **that he is not the counterpart of the first husband**, but is morally inferior.^[2] שְׂזָה הוּצֵיא רִשְׁעָה מִבֵּיתוֹ – **For this first husband removed a wicked person (the sotah) from his house**, and this second husband brought a wicked person into his house – וְזֶה הַבְּנִיּוֹת רִשְׁעָה לְתוֹךְ בֵּיתוֹ – **and yet you state that she should even be taken in yibum!**”^[3]

The Gemara objects:

אָמַר לִיה אֲבֵי – **Abaye said to [Rav Yosef]:** – **But according to that,** נִשְׂאת לְאֲחֵרָה – **if [the suspected adulteress] married another man** after her first husband divorced her – **and [the second husband] later died childless,** לֹא תִּתְּנָבָם – **she should not be taken in yibum,** אֲחֵרָהּ, – **since Scripture would call also [the yavam] of the second husband “another” man.**^[4] Yet she certainly *is* subject to *yibum*! – ? –

Rav Yosef answers:

גְּבִיָּה דְהָאֵי מִיָּהָא – **Nevertheless, at least with regard to this “other one”** (i.e. the *yavam* of the second husband), בְּשֵׁם טוֹב הָיָה – **she has maintained a good reputation.**^[5]

The Gemara cites an altogether different source of the Mishnah’s prohibition against a suspected *sotah* being taken in *yibum*: רַבָּא אָמַר – **Rava said:** קַל נְחוּמָר – **A sotah’s exemption from**

yibum is derived with a *kal vachomer* argument, as follows: אִם לֹא הָיָה בְּמִוְתָרָהּ – **If [the suspected sotah] becomes prohibited to one who was permitted to her** originally (i.e. her husband), בְּאִסּוּרָהּ – **then to one who was forbidden to her** originally (the husband’s brother), לֹא כָּל שְׂכָן – **is it not all the more so that she be forbidden?**^[6]

The Gemara objects to this reasoning:

אָמַר לִיה אֲבֵי – **Abaye said to [Rava]:** – **But according to that,** כִּהֵן גְּדוֹל שְׂקִידֵשׁ אֶת הָאֵלֶּמְנָה וּמָת – **in the case of a Kohen Gadol who unlawfully betrothed a widow^[7] and later died childless,** וַיֵּשׁ לוֹ אָח בְּהֵן הָרִיּוֹט – **and he has a brother, an ordinary Kohen, who is permitted to marry a widow,^[8]** לֹא תִּתְּנָבָם – **[the widow] should not be taken in yibum!** For we can make the same *kal vachomer* argument: אִם לֹא הָיָה בְּמִוְתָרָהּ – **If [the widow] becomes prohibited to one who was permitted to her** originally (i.e. her husband, the Kohen Gadol), בְּאִסּוּרָהּ – **then to one who was forbidden to her** originally (the husband’s brother, the ordinary Kohen), לֹא כָּל שְׂכָן – **is she not all the more so forbidden?** However, we know that she *is* permitted for *yibum*!^[9] – ? –

Rava rejects the analogy on two counts:

נִשְׂאָרָה – **Are you saying that [the widow] has become prohibited to the Kohen Gadol?** הָאֵסְרָהּ וְקִיָּמָה – **Why, she was prohibited to him all along!** מוֹתָרָהּ – **Furthermore, are you saying that the widow has become prohibited to one who was permitted to her originally?** אִסּוּרָהּ לָהּ הוּא – **Why, [the Kohen Gadol] was always forbidden to her!**^[10]

Abaye accepts this rebuttal, but issues a different challenge:

אֲלֵא אִשְׁתּוֹ בְּהֵן שְׂנֵאֲנָסָה – **Rather, in the case of an ordinary Kohen’s wife who was violated and thus became forbidden to him,^[11]** וּמָת – **and shortly thereafter – before he divorced her**

NOTES

1. In the case of a *yavam*, on the other hand, marrying the *yevamah* is indeed incumbent upon him, for the rule is that the mitzvah of *yibum* takes precedence over the mitzvah of *chalitzah* (*Yevamos* 39b). However, where the *yevamah* is a *sotah*, this obligation is not appropriate, for she will destroy his home. It follows, then, that the *yavam* may not marry her, even of his own volition! For marriage to one’s sister-in-law is permitted only when it occurs under aegis of the full mitzvah of *yibum*. Since in the case of a *sotah* she was never a fit subject for *yibum*, she is not subject to *yibum* at all, and remains Biblically forbidden to her brother-in-law. In the case of a stranger who desires to marry this woman, however, there is no reason for us to stop him (*Rashi*, as explained by *Chidushei HaGriz*; cf. *Meiri*; see also *Keren Orah*).

[Although the *yavam* is exempt from performing *yibum*, *chalitzah* is nonetheless required, since the husband himself would have had to divorce her had he remained alive, as the Gemara stated above, 5b. See *Tiferes Tziyon*.]

2. The Torah should have written “a second man” to contrast the second husband to the first one, since the latter is called “her first husband” (v. 4 there). We therefore interpret the adjective “another” as a pejorative, as in אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים, *other gods* (*Maharsha to Gittin* 90b; see also *Meiri* here).

3. How can we compel the *yavam* to marry this woman when the Torah itself regards her as wicked and condemns her second husband? (see *Rashi*).

4. Here, too, how do we compel the *yavam* of the second husband to take her in *yibum*, if the Torah condemns a subsequent husband? (see *Rashi*).

5. Since the *sotah* has not acted improperly during her second marriage, we can say that she has repented her evil ways. Hence, one who subsequently marries her would not be called “another man.” That description is reserved for one who married her immediately after her being widowed or divorced from a marriage in which she had acted unfaithfully (*Rashi*; cf. *Hagahos Radal*).

6. What allows a man and woman to live together is a valid marriage. Rava thus reasons that if a post-*kinui* seclusion impairs that marital relationship and renders the heretofore-permitted husband now forbidden, then certainly that seclusion should impair the *yibum* potential of

that marital relationship for the heretofore-prohibited brother-in-law (*Rashi*).

7. The Torah states regarding a Kohen Gadol (*Leviticus* 21:14): *A widow, a divorcee, a desecrated woman (חֵלְלָה) and a harlot (זוֹנָה) – these he may not take.* [Although these unions are Biblically forbidden, the marriage does take effect after the fact.]

8. An ordinary Kohen is forbidden to marry three of the four types of women prohibited to a Kohen Gadol (*ibid.* v. 7). The permitted exception is a widow.

9. For the Mishnah in *Yevamos* (84a) expressly states: “These women are prohibited to their husbands, yet are permitted to the *yavam*: a Kohen Gadol who married (i.e. betrothed) a widow, and he has a brother [who is] an ordinary Kohen etc.”

The Gemara will presently note an obvious flaw in this analogy: In Abaye’s case the Kohen Gadol has not become forbidden to his wife (the widow); he was forbidden to marry her in the first place (*Rashi*; see *Tiferes Tziyon* for a discussion of why *Rashi* states מִפְּרֵשׁ [the Gemara below will explain] rather than לִקְמוֹן פְּרִיךְ [the Gemara below will ask]; see there also for an explanation of Abaye’s thinking).

10. Rava maintains that the reasoning presented in note 6 above holds true only when a valid, permitted marriage becomes forbidden; that affects the *yavam* as well. When a marriage was originally forbidden, the *yavam* was, and remains, unaffected (see *Tos. HaRosh* here, *Tosafos to Yevamos* 84b שִׁיר דְּרַיָּה, and *Kovetz Ha’aros to Yevamos* 15:4; cf. *Toras HaKenaos*).

11. The wife of a Yisrael who was forcibly violated remains permitted to her husband. The Gemara (*Kesubos* 51b) derives this law from *Numbers* 5:13, which teaches that an adulteress is prohibited to her husband if she was not forced. This implies that if she was forced, she is still permitted to him. Further, the Gemara interprets the word *she* as an exclusion – implying that only *she* benefits from this leniency. However, there is another violated woman – the wife of a Kohen – who is not treated thus; she becomes forbidden to her husband even if she was forced (*Rashi*). [Indeed, she is forbidden to all Kohanim – i.e. when the husband dies before divorcing her (see *Yevamos* 56b).]

– [the husband] died childless, וְיִשׁ לוֹ אֶחָד חָלָל – and he has a brother who is a *chalal*,^[12] לֹא תִיבֵם – [the widow] should not be taken in *yibum*! For we can make the same *kal vachomer* argument: אִם נֶאֱסָרָה בְּמוֹתָר לָהּ – If because of the forced cohabitation [the widow] becomes prohibited to one who was permitted to her originally (i.e. her Kohen husband), בְּאִסוּר לָהּ – then to one who was forbidden to her at the time of the

cohabitation (the husband's *chalal* brother), לֹא כָל שָׂכָן – is it not all the more so that she be forbidden?^[13] – ? –

Rava rejects this analogy as well:

אֲוֹנָס בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל שָׂרִי – A violated [woman] is surely permitted to a Yisrael (i.e. a non-Kohen); וְגַבֵּי דְהָאֵי (מִיָּהָ) – and so regarding this brother, the *chalal*, there is no prohibition whatsoever.^[14]

Mishnah The previous Mishnah had taught that a presumptive *sotah* is temporarily barred from eating *terumah*, pending resolution of her status through the test of the bitter waters.^[15] The women listed in this Mishnah, however, are permanently forbidden to eat *terumah* because their guilt is established or because they will not or cannot prove their innocence by drinking the bitter waters.^[16] וְאֵלּוּ אִסוּרוֹת מִלְּאָכּוּל בְּתֵרוּמָה – And these women are forbidden to partake of *terumah*.^[17] הָאוֹמֶרֶת טְמֵאָה אֲנִי – One who says to her husband, “I am defiled to you”;^[18] וְשָׂבְאוּ עֲדִים שְׁהִיא טְמֵאָה – and one about whom witnesses came and testified that she is defiled;^[19] וְהָאוֹמֶרֶת אֲנִי שׁוֹתָה – and one who says, “I will not drink”;^[20] וְשָׂבְעָלָה אִינוּ רוֹצֵה לְהַשְׁקוֹתָהּ – and one whose husband does not want to give her the bitter waters to drink;^[21] וְשָׂבְעָלָה בָּא עִלְיָה בְּדֶרֶךְ – and one whose husband cohabited with her on the way to Jerusalem.^[22]

Gemara The Gemara cites a ruling that can be inferred from our Mishnah:

– Rav Amram said: אָמַר רַב עֲמְרָם – הא מילתא אמר לן רב ששת –

ואנהר לן עיינין – and he enlightened our eyes for us from our Mishnah.^[23] What was it that Rav Sheishess said? סוטה שיש לה

NOTES

12. A *chalal* [literally: desecrated] is the child of a union between a Kohen and a woman who is especially prohibited to Kohanim (e.g. a divorcee; see notes 7-8 above). This category is derived from *Leviticus* 21:15, which states that by refraining from marrying the women forbidden to him, the Kohen Gadol shall not desecrate his offspring. Scripture here implies that when a Kohen does have children with any of the prohibited women, he indeed desecrates them (i.e. he renders the offspring *chalalim*). Abaye thus speaks of where this Kohen's father cohabited with one of these prohibited women and begat a son. The half brother is a *chalal*, and as such is disqualified from the priesthood and is permitted to marry any of the prohibited women, including a woman who was violated (*Rashi*).

13. Yet we know that she is eligible for *yibum* (see *Tosafos* בְּדוּן אֶת שֶׁכָּח). This analogy is accurate, for a permissible woman has become forbidden to her husband (the Kohen) during her marriage (when she was violated). Abaye thus argues that if the violation has impaired the marital relationship and rendered the heretofore-permitted husband prohibited, then certainly it impairs the *yibum* potential of that marital relationship for the heretofore-prohibited brother-in-law (see *Rashi*; see note 6 above).

14. As mentioned above (notes 11 and 12), a violated woman is prohibited only to a Kohen in good standing; a non-Kohen, or even a *chalal*, may marry or remain married to her. Rava's *kal vachomer* is therefore inapplicable in our case. For Rava was dealing with a woman who perhaps willingly committed adultery and became forbidden as a *sotah*. She is thus forbidden with the type of prohibition that applies to both the husband and his brother. Since the brother's power of *yibum* derives from the original marriage, and since that marriage has been impaired by an action that would impact the brother as well, we say that his power of *yibum* has likewise been impaired. However, in Abaye's case the *chalal* is not impacted by the action (the forced cohabitation) that has impaired his (Kohen) brother's marriage, since he is indeed permitted to marry a violated woman. Hence, his power of *yibum* has not been diminished (*Rashi*).

15. See 2a note 11 for the Scriptural source.

16. See *Meiri*; Rav to this Mishnah with *Minchah Chareivah*. Similarly, they are forbidden to remain with their husbands (*Tos. Shantz; Meiri*).

17. Even if their husbands are Kohanim (*Rashi*), or they are Kohanim who would revert to their parental home after their marriage is terminated (see Rav; *Mishneh LaMelech, Hil. Sotah* 2:12; see, however, *Tiferes Tziyon* to *Rashi*; see also *Hagahos R' Betzalel Ronsburg*).

18. I.e. I have committed adultery while married to you. An adulteress is disqualified from eating *terumah* (see below, 28a; *Tosafos* to *Yevamos* 44b וְיִשׁ לָהּ אֶחָד חָלָל, and this woman is, by her own admission, an adulteress.

[Actually, the Mishnah in *Nedarim* (90b) teaches that a woman who claims to have committed adultery remains permitted to her husband

(since we suspect her of fabricating the story in order to force her husband into divorcing her), and there is a view there in the Gemara that she remains permitted to eat *terumah* as well. This would seem to contradict our Mishnah, which accepts her confession. In truth, however, there is no contradiction; for our Mishnah refers to where she confessed after violating a warning against secluding herself with another man. Since there is circumstantial evidence that supports her claim of adultery, all would agree that we forbid her to eat *terumah* or remain with her husband (see *Tosafos, Tos. Shantz* and *Tos. HaRosh*).

19. Since it has been established by two witnesses that she has committed adultery, she may never eat *terumah*.

20. She maintains her innocence but is fearful of drinking the bitter waters. We cannot coerce her into drinking [see Mishnah below, 20a], and thus cannot ascertain whether or not she had in fact committed adultery. She thus remains in her status as a *sotah* and remains forbidden to eat *terumah* (*Meiri*).

21. It is the husband who must bring the *sotah* to the Temple to be tested by the bitter waters. If he refuses to make her drink, she cannot drink the bitter waters on her own. [This is indicated by the verse that states (*Numbers* 5:15): וְהִבִּיא הָאִישׁ אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶל-הַבְּקָן; and the man shall bring his wife to the Kohen . . . (see *Rashi* to 24a שְׁתוּת וְלֹא שְׁתוּת, *Kesubos* 81a).] Thus, her status can never be clarified and she is therefore forever forbidden to her husband and forever forbidden from eating *terumah*. [In fact, *Tosafos* to *Yevamos* 95a אֵילִימָא דְרַבִּי אֵילִימָא deduce from the Gemara there that once the husband refuses to make his wife drink the waters, he cannot retract, and her *sotah* status therefore remains permanently.]

22. A suspected *sotah* is forbidden to have relations with her husband until she drinks from the bitter waters and thereby proves her innocence (see below, 27b). If her husband violated this prohibition and cohabited with her during this time (“while they were on the way” to Jerusalem, where the test is administered), the bitter waters will no longer test her. For the Torah states (*Numbers* 5:31): וְהָאִישׁ מֵעוֹן וְהָאִשָּׁה הִרְוָה תִּשָּׂא, And the man will be free of sin, while that woman will bear her sin, from which the Sages infer: Only if the husband himself is free of sin are the waters effective in testing his wife; if he has sinned (by cohabiting with her illegally), the waters are ineffective (below, 28a). Our Mishnah thus teaches that if her husband has cohabited with her illegally, there is no longer any way for her to prove her innocence and she therefore remains forever forbidden from eating *terumah* (*Rashi*; see *Meiri*).

23. I.e. he proved his ruling from our Mishnah (*Rashi*). He thereby enlightened us as to the Mishnah's intent (see *Rashi* to *Yevamos* 56b). [We find this expression used in connection with Rav Sheishess many times. Perhaps, it is because Rav Sheishess was blind (*Berachos* 58a), yet he illuminated the eyes of other Torah scholars with his knowledge (see *Minchas Yaakov* מִלְּתָא דְרַבִּי הָאֵלְמִילָא.)]

הנים — In the case of a *sotah* about whom there are witnesses overseas who indeed saw her commit adultery with the suspected adulterer,^[24] אין המים בודקין אותה — **the bitter waters cannot examine her** to confirm her innocence or guilt.^[25] מאי טעמא — **What is the reason for this?** I.e. what is the Scriptural basis for this law? דאמר קרא — **For the verse states:** “וְנִסְתַּרְהָ וְהָיָא נִטְמָאָה וְעַד אֵין בָּהּ” — **and she had been secluded and had become defiled and there was no witness about her** [i.e. that she indeed became defiled] . . . then the man shall bring his wife etc.^[26] דליכא דירע בה — The verse thus prescribes the *sotah* procedure only where there is no one who knows about her whether she had in fact become defiled, לאפוקי הא — which is to exclude the case of this woman where the bitter waters are not effective, דהא איכא דירע בה — **for there is indeed someone who knows about her** that she became defiled.^[27]

Rav Amram elaborates how Rav Sheishesh proved his ruling from the Mishnah:

ואנהר לן עיינין ממתניתין — **And he enlightened our eyes from our Mishnah**^[28] as follows: דקתני — **For the Mishnah states** among its list of *sotahs* who are permanently forbidden to partake of *terumah*: וְשָׂבָאוּ לָהּ עֲדִים שְׁהִיא טְמָאָה — **AND ONE ABOUT WHOM WITNESSES CAME and testified THAT SHE IS DEFILED.** דאתו עדים — **Now, when did the witnesses come?** אי נימא מקמי — **Now, when did the witnesses come?** דתשתי — **If we say that they came before she drinks** the bitter waters, זונה היא — **then she is a confirmed adulteress**, and there is no need for the Mishnah to teach that she may not eat

terumah!^[29] אלא לבתר דשתאי — **Rather**, the Mishnah must be referring to where the witnesses came **after she drank** the bitter waters. And the Mishnah is teaching us that her survival of the bitter waters test does not prove the witnesses false. Rather, we accept their testimony that she is guilty, and she is forbidden to eat *terumah* permanently.^[30] אי אמרת בשלמא אין המים בודקין — **Now, it is well understood if you say that the waters do not examine her** if there are witnesses somewhere who have seen her commit adultery; the Mishnah’s ruling is then proper. For we can believe the witnesses that she committed adultery, and attribute the noneffectiveness of the bitter waters to the fact that they could not test her since there were witnesses somewhere who had seen her commit adultery. אלא אי אמרת — **But if you say that the waters do examine her** even if there are witnesses somewhere who have seen her commit adultery, הניגלי מילתא למפרע דסהרי שקרי נינהו — **let the matter be revealed in retrospect that these are false witnesses.**^[31] Surely the determination of the bitter waters promised by the Torah should be more authoritative than the testimony of two witnesses. We should therefore discredit the witnesses as liars and allow her to continue eating *terumah*! The fact that the Mishnah *does* accept the witnesses proves Rav Sheishesh’ assertion that the waters are rendered ineffective where there exist witnesses who have seen her commit adultery.^[32]

Rav Yosef rejects this proof:

אמר ליה רב יוסף — **Rav Yosef said to [Rav Amram]:** לועלם

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24. *Rashi*.

25. That is, although we do not know about the existence of these witnesses, the fact that there are witnesses somewhere who have indeed seen her become defiled prevents the waters from being effective.

It would appear from *Rashi*’s comments (which we have just quoted in the text) that the bitter waters are rendered ineffective only if there are witnesses who saw her sin with this man with whom the husband had warned her not to seclude herself; their having seen her commit adultery with someone else, however, would not prevent the bitter waters from examining her. See *Mishneh LaMelech, Hil. Sotah* 1:14, and *Chidushei HaGriz to Sotah*, who discuss this point; see also *Keren Orach* and *Dvar Shaul* 9:1-2.

26. *Numbers* 5:13,15.

27. The verse implies that the bitter waters procedure is applicable only where there is no witness to the adultery. If there are witnesses, however, the entire procedure is ineffective.

Now, it is true that a Baraisa above (2a-b) expounds this very verse, וְנִסְתַּרְהָ וְהָיָא נִטְמָאָה וְעַד אֵין בָּהּ, *and she became secluded and had become defiled and there was no witness about her* . . . , as referring to a case in which the *sotah* is not administered the bitter waters but is rather assumed to be definitely defiled, because although *there was no witness about her* [i.e. there were not two witnesses who testified that she was defiled], there was one witness who testified that she was defiled. According to that exposition, this verse cannot provide any basis for Rav Sheishesh’ ruling, which must take this verse as referring to the case in which the woman *is* administered the bitter waters. However, in light of the principle that אין מקרא יוצא מדי פשוטו, *a verse never departs from its plain meaning*, the Gemara here also interprets this verse on the level of plain meaning as referring to where the waters are administered to the woman — only if there are not witnesses to her defilement. But if there are somewhere in the world witnesses to her defilement, the entire *sotah* procedure will be ineffective (*Rashi*).

Tosafos ושבאו רייה consider whether Rav Sheishesh requires the existence of at least two witnesses overseas in order to negate the effectiveness of the bitter waters, or whether even the existence of a lone witness would serve this purpose. *Tosafos* seem to conclude that in all likelihood, even a lone witness would suffice (see, however, *Mishneh LaMelech, Hil. Sotah* 3:23, and below, beginning of note 32, with references cited there).

28. I.e. he proved his ruling from our Mishnah (see above, note 23), because the Scriptural source just cited is not so strong a proof. For (as

mentioned in the previous note) the Baraisa above expounds that verse as referring to a *sotah* presumed to be definitely defiled because a lone witness has testified against her. [And a ruling derived from the simple meaning that is at odds with the Baraisa’s exposition is open to question] (*Rashi*).

29. For the Mishnah has already stated that a *sotah* who admits having committed adultery is permanently forbidden to eat *terumah*. This certainly applies, then, to a *sotah* whose guilt is established by two witnesses, and there was no need for the Mishnah to state this (*Rashi*; cf. *Tos. Shantz*; see *Tos. HaRosh* here and *Tosafos to Yevamos* 44b רייה הבא רייה).

30. *Rashi*. And we attribute her failure to succumb to the bitter waters to some other factor; see further.

31. [I.e. from the moment she drinks the waters and shows no ill effects, any subsequent testimony that she is guilty should be proven false.]

32. *Tosafos* ושבאו רייה consider whether the testimony of a lone witness against a woman who has already survived the bitter waters would also be accepted and force us to attribute her survival to something other than her innocence. *Tosafos* conclude that in all likelihood, even a lone witness would be believed (see there). *Rambam, Hil. Sotah* 3:23, however, states clearly that a lone witness would *not* be believed. See *Mishneh LaMelech* there; *Achiezer* vol. 1, 8:4; *Kehillos Yaakov* §2 (*Nedarim* §40 in old edition).

The Rishonim ask: Seemingly, there is another way to reconcile the testimony of the witnesses with her survival of the bitter waters; namely, by positing that her husband cohabited with her “on the way” to Jerusalem, before the waters were administered. This, too, would render the waters ineffective (as we have seen in the Mishnah). What proof, then, is there that it is the existence of witnesses that renders the waters ineffective? Perhaps the presence of witnesses does *not* render the waters ineffective, and they are ineffective in this case because the husband has cohabited with her illegally! The Rishonim answer that we do not assume that the husband has illegally cohabited with her (unless there are two witnesses to this effect), because the Mishnah below (7a) teaches that the husband was accompanied by two escorts to prevent him from cohabiting with her. Furthermore, the very fact that he is bringing his wife to Jerusalem to subject her to the test of the bitter waters demonstrates that he has not cohabited with her illegally, since he knows the law that the waters are rendered ineffective if he does cohabit with her illegally (see *Tos. Shantz*; *Tos. HaRosh*; see, however, *Meiri, Rambam, Hil. Sotah* 3:23 and *Keren Orach* רייה וראיתי *Dvar Shaul* 9:6).

correct: **Since merit does not suspend** the punishment because this would undermine the intended impact of the *sotah* procedure, **overseas witnesses also do not suspend** the punishment. Rav Sheishess, however, stated his ruling according to the opinion of the Rabbis, who maintain that merit does suspend the punishment and are not concerned that this would diminish the dread of

the bitter waters or defame the innocent women who have survived the test.

The Gemara presents a second challenge to Rav Sheishess: **מתיב רב – Rav^[46] challenged** this ruling from another segment of the Mishnah just cited: **וְאֵלוֹ שְׂמֵנֵי חוֹתֵיהֶן נִשְׂרָפוֹת – AND THESE ARE THE ONES WHOSE MENACHOS MUST BE BURNED.**^[47]

NOTES

46. Other texts read: רָבָא, *Rava* (*Mesoras HaShas*).

47. The *sotah's minchah* offering is an integral part of the *sotah* procedure (see *Numbers* 5:15,18,25-26; Mishnah below, 19a et al.). The Mishnah cited here lists the instances in which the *sotah's minchah*

becomes unfit for offering, and – because it can neither be offered nor redeemed – must be burned on the ash heap at the side of the Altar [see below, 20a note 9] (*Rashi*).

וְשָׂבָאוּ לָהּ – ONE WHO SAYS, “I AM DEFILED.”^[1] הָאִמְרַת טְמֵאָה אֲנִי – AND ONE ABOUT WHOM WITNESSES COME AND TESTIFY THAT SHE IS DEFILED. Since the waters are not administered to such a *sotah*,^[2] the procedure is halted; her *minchah* cannot be offered on the Altar^[3] and is burned instead.

Rav develops his challenge by analyzing the Mishnah’s second case:

דָּאָתוּ עֲדִים אֵימַת – Now, when did the witnesses come and testify against her, thereby halting the *sotah* procedure? אֵילִימַן – If you say that they came before [the *minchah*] was sanctified by being placed in a *kli shareis*,^[4] תִּיפּוּק לְחֻלִּין – then [the *minchah*] should go out of its sanctified state to a state of non-sanctity through redemption.^[5] Why would the Mishnah rule that it must be burned? אֶלֶּא לְבַתֵּר דְּקָרוּשׁ – Rather, we must say that the witnesses came to testify after [the *minchah*] was sanctified in a *kli shareis*.^[6]

Having established what case is being discussed by the Mishnah, Rav presents his challenge:

אִי אֲמַרְתָּ בְּשִׁלְמָא מִיָּם בּוֹדְקִין אוֹתָהּ – Now, [the Mishnah’s ruling] that the *minchah* must be burned in this case is well understood if you say that the waters would examine her even if there are witnesses overseas who can attest to her guilt, as long as she drinks before they testify.^[7] אֶלֶּמָא בַּת מְקַדְשׁ וּמְקַרְבַּת הִיא – Accordingly, [the *minchah*] is eligible to be sanctified and offered on the Altar despite the existence of these witnesses; וְכִי קָרוּשׁ מְעִיקְרָא – and when it was originally sanctified in the *kli shareis*,

וּמְשׁוּם הִכִּי מִנְחָתָהּ נִשְׂרַפָּת – it was validly sanctified. – And because of this, her *minchah* is burned when the witnesses come and halt the procedure, because by halting the procedure they are disqualifying a *minchah* that had been validly sanctified in a *kli shareis*.^[8] אֶלֶּא אִי אֲמַרְתָּ אִין הַמַּיִם בּוֹדְקִין אוֹתָהּ – But if you say, as Rav Sheishess asserts, that the waters do not examine her if there exist witnesses overseas who can attest to her guilt, תִּיגְלִי מִלְתָּא לְמַפְרַע – then once the witnesses do arrive, let the matter be revealed in retrospect דְּכִי קָרוּשׁ – that when [the *minchah*] was originally sanctified in the *kli shareis*, בְּטָעוּת קָרוּשׁ – it was sanctified in error, since we now know that the woman was never fit to be tested by the *sotah* waters in the first place.^[9] וְתִיפּוּק לְחֻלִּין – And accordingly, [the *minchah*] should not be burned but should rather go out of its sanctified state to a state of non-sanctity!^[10] – ? –

The Gemara defends Rav Sheishess:

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה מְדִיִּסְקָרְתָּא – Rav Yehudah of Diskarta said: הַבְּעוּרָה בְּעוּרָה – The case of the Mishnah is where witnesses testified that she committed adultery in the Temple Courtyard after the *minchah* had been sanctified in the *kli shareis*, דְּכִי קָרוּשׁ מְעִיקְרָא – so that when [the *minchah*] was originally sanctified, שְׁפִיר קָרוּשׁ – it was validly sanctified, since the seclusion for which she is drinking is not what the witnesses are testifying about.^[11]

The Gemara objects to this answer:

מִתְקִיף לָהּ רַב מִשְׁרָשִׁיא – Rav Mesharshiya objected to it: וְהֵלֵא

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1. [After her *minchah* offering had been sanctified in a *kli shareis* (service vessel), she admitted to the court that she had committed adultery. For the court would frighten her in order to induce her to admit, as taught in the Mishnah [below, 7a] (*Rashi*).

2. The purpose of administering the waters is not to punish the guilty *sotah* but to ascertain whether or not a *sotah* is innocent and permitted to remain with her husband. Once her guilt is established (by her admission or by witnesses), there is no longer any point in making her drink the waters (see *Rashi* below דְּבַתֵּר דְּקָרוּשׁ; see also Gemara 19b and note 32 there).

3. The *sotah*’s *minchah* can be offered only as long as it can effectuate the examination of the bitter waters. Once it becomes clear that the waters will not be administered, however, the offering of the *minchah* cannot proceed, and is disqualified (see *Rashi* below דְּבַתֵּר דְּקָרוּשׁ; and note 6 there).

4. *Rashi*. Like every other *minchah* offering, the *minchas sotah* goes through two stages of sanctification before it is offered: It first receives verbal sanctification when the owner dedicates the ingredients for use as a *minchah*. At this point, the *minchah* is invested with only monetary sanctity, which can be redeemed. [The redemption money assumes the sanctity of the original *minchah*, and is used to buy another one.] The *minchah* is then placed in a *kli shareis* (a Temple service vessel), investing it with physical sanctity, which cannot be redeemed.

5. Granted that the offering of the *minchah* cannot proceed and it is “disqualified,” why should it be burned? Even if it has already been verbally sanctified, that sanctity can be redeemed (see *Rashi*).

6. That is why the *minchah* must be burned. For a *kli shareis* invests whatever is fit for it with sanctity that cannot be deconsecrated even if the offering becomes *tamei* or otherwise disqualified, as it is written in regard to *klei shareis* (*Exodus* 30:29): בְּלִי־דִגּוּץ בָּהֶם יִקְדָּשׁ: *whatever touches them shall be holy* [see *Zevachim* 86b-87a; *Menachos* 100b]. In the present case, the offering of the *minchas sotah* cannot proceed, because its sole purpose is to allow for the *sotah*’s examination, and her guilt has already been established! It is also not fit as a voluntary *minchah*, since a barley *minchah* is fit to be offered only as a *minchas sotah* or *Omer* offering (*Rashi*; see, however, *Chidushei HaGriz*). The sanctified *minchas sotah*, therefore, must be burned.

7. *Rashi*.

8. When the *minchah* was placed in the *kli shareis* prior to the coming of the witnesses, the *sotah* was still in a state of doubt and the bitter waters could ascertain her status. The *minchah* was thus fit to function

as a prerequisite for the *sotah*’s test, and was fit for the *kli shareis*, whose sanctification was therefore valid. If the witnesses come afterward, the validly sanctified *minchah* becomes disqualified only from this point forward. It cannot revert to a state of non-sanctity, and it must be burned (see *Rashi*).

9. If we accept Rav Sheishess’ ruling that the bitter waters are ineffective when there are witnesses who know of her guilt, it emerges that this woman was never eligible to be tested by the bitter waters. The *minchah* thus never received a valid sanctification in the *kli shareis* since a *kli shareis* invests with holiness only those things that are fit for it [*Zevachim* 86a, 87a]. Since it emerges that this *minchah* was never fit for the *kli shareis*, the *minchah* never became sanctified (*Rashi*).

10. I.e. even without redemption. For since both the verbal and physical sanctification were done on the false premise that the woman required a *minchah*, the ingredients should be treated as ordinary and non-sacred even without redemption. This is in keeping with the principle that *erroneous consecration is not consecration* (*Rashi* from *Nazir* 31a; see, however, *Chidushei HaGriz*).

11. That is, the witnesses who testify that she has committed adultery have no knowledge about whether she became defiled during the seclusion for which her husband had brought her to the Temple. Rather, they testify that they saw her commit adultery in the Temple Courtyard itself, after the *minchah* was sanctified in the *kli shareis*. Since she was eligible to drink the bitter waters at the time of the sanctification, as there were then no witnesses regarding defilement, the sanctification was valid. When the witnesses then testify about the second adultery, we cannot offer the *minchah* (since her status as a definite adulteress becomes established) and it must be burned instead (*Rashi*).

[Actually, according to *Rashi* who holds that Rav Sheishess’ law applies only where there exist witnesses who have seen her commit adultery with the suspected adulterer with whom the husband warned her not to seclude herself (see 6a note 25), the Gemara could have apparently answered quite simply that the Mishnah refers to witnesses who came and testified that she committed adultery with a different man. The mere existence of such witnesses would not invalidate the *sotah* procedure, but their testimony that she is defiled would halt it, as she is definitely forbidden to her husband! Why did the Gemara not offer this answer? See the resolution of *Mishneh LaMelech* to *Hil. Sotah* 1:14; see also *He’aros L’Maseches Sotah* here; see also *Chidushei HaGriz* to the Gemara below דְּרִי־הַתַּיָּבָא כּוּוּתֵי דְרִי־הַתַּיָּבָא.]

ותה – פירחי בהונה מלוי אונה – **But is it not so that the young Kohanim escort her** around the Temple Courtyard for the duration of the bitter waters procedure? How, then, could she possibly have committed adultery after her *minchah* was sanctified in the *kli shareis*?

The Gemara answers:

עצמן – שזינתה מפירחי בהונה עצמן – It could be that the witnesses are testifying **that she committed adultery with the young Kohanim themselves.**

The Gemara presents an alternative scenario of how she could commit adultery despite being under the surveillance of the young Kohanim:

אמר – רב אשי – **Rav Ashi says:** – בגון שנצרכה לנצרכיה – This could happen **in a case where she needed to relieve herself.** In that case, the Kohanim would grant her the privacy needed to allow her to tend to her needs, פירחי בהונה בכיפה – דאטו פירחי בהונה בכיפה – תלי לה – **for do you think that the young Kohanim are hanging from her head-covering** so that she should not evade them?^[12]

The Gemara offers yet another defense of Rav Sheishess' ruling:

אמר – רב פפא – **Rav Pappa says:** – לעולם בדאמרין מעיקרא – **In fact, I will tell you as we said originally,** that the witnesses testified about her defilement during the seclusion for which her husband has brought her to the Temple, which indeed occurred prior to the sanctification of the *minchah* in a *kli shareis*.^[13] ודקאמרתי תיפוק לחולין – **And as to that which you claim** that in that case, **[the *minchah*] should go out** of its sanctified state to a state of **non-sanctity**, מדרבנן – I will say that it is **by Rabbinic decree** that the *minchah* is burned,^[14] גזירה שמה – **as a preventive measure lest people say that we may remove sanctified offerings from service vessels to revert to a state of non-sanctity.**^[15]

The Gemara challenges Rav Pappa's assertion that the Rabbis decreed that offerings erroneously sanctified in a *kli shareis* must be burned:

מריב רב מרי – **Rav Mari challenged** Rav Pappa from the following Baraisa regarding the *minchas sotah*:^[16] נטמאת הרי היא בכל – **If her *minchah* became *tamei* before it was sanctified in a service vessel,** הרי היא בכל – **IT IS LIKE ALL OTHER *menachos* that became *tamei* before being sanctified in a *kli shareis*, and it may be redeemed.**^[17] משקדשה בכלי – **But if it became *tamei* after it was sanctified in a service vessel,** הרי היא בכל המנחות ותשרף – **IT IS LIKE ALL OTHER *menachos* that have become *tamei* after being sanctified in a *kli shareis*, and it must be burned.**^[18]

The Baraisa's second ruling:

קדש הקומץ – **IF THE *KOMETZ* WAS SANCTIFIED** in a *kli shareis*^[19] – **AND [THE KOHEN] DID NOT MANAGE TO OFFER IT** on the Altar UNTIL [THE HUSBAND] OR [THE WIFE] DIED, הרי היא בכל המנחות ותשרף – **[THE *MINCHAH*] IS LIKE ALL OTHER *menachos* that become disqualified after the *kometz* is removed and sanctified in a *kli shareis* but before it is offered on the Altar, and it must be burned.**^[20]

The Baraisa's third ruling:

לא הספיק – **IF THE *KOMETZ* WAS** already OFFERED – **AND THE [KOHEN] DID NOT MANAGE TO EAT THE LEFTOVERS UNTIL EITHER [THE HUSBAND] OR [THE WIFE] DIED,**^[21] הרי היא בכל המנחות ותאכל – **[THE *MINCHAH*] IS LIKE ALL OTHER *menachos* AND IT MAY BE EATEN** by the Kohanim. – **Although it emerges that this *minchah* never served as a part of the bitter waters procedure,**^[22] **it is not regarded as a disqualified offering, BECAUSE TO BEGIN WITH, IT COMES** only FOR the sake of determining A DOUBT, whether the woman has committed

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12. *Rashi*.

13. This was the case Rav assumed the Mishnah was talking about when he challenged Rav Sheishess from the Mishnah (see *Rashi*).

14. But Biblically, the *minchah* does indeed revert to non-sacred status, since it now emerges that the woman never stood to be tested by the waters since there existed witnesses to her defilement.

15. Not everyone is knowledgeable enough to know that the mere existence of witnesses who have seen her become defiled negates the effectiveness of the *sotah* procedure, and thus invalidates the sanctification of the *minchah*. Thus, when they see that the *minchah* is being treated as ordinary food, they will mistakenly conclude that an offering can be deconsecrated even after it has been consecrated in a *kli shareis* (*Rashi*). To prevent this misconception, the Rabbis decreed that the *minchah* that has been “sanctified” in a *kli shareis* be burned, even though the *minchah* is not sacred at all on the Biblical level.

16. The first segment of this Baraisa is also found in the Mishnah below, 22b.

17. [It must be redeemed to remove the monetary consecration with which it was invested by the verbal sanctification.]

18. Because the physical sanctity with which it was invested by sanctification in the *kli shareis* cannot be redeemed (see above, notes 4 and 6).

19. The *kometz* is the portion of a *minchah* offering that is scooped out by the Kohen through the service of *kemitzah* (scooping) and offered on the Altar. A *minchah* to which *kemitzah* is done requires four *avodos* (services), which correspond to the four blood *avodos* done to an animal offering. [The primary Altar portion of an animal offering is its blood, which must be applied to the Altar; the Altar portion of a *minchah* that requires *kemitzah* is the *kometz*, which is offered up on the Altar. The “blood” of such a *minchah*, then, is its *kometz*.] The four blood *avodos* of animal offering are: (a) *shechitah* – slaughtering the animal (and thereby obtaining the blood); (b) *kabbalah* – receiving the blood in a *kli shareis*; (c) *holachah* – conveying the blood to the Altar; and (d) *zerikah*

– throwing the blood on the Altar. The *kemitzah* (scooping of the *kometz* from the *kli shareis* in which the *minchah* is lying) produces the *kometz*, and corresponds to the *shechitah* of an animal sacrifice with a knife that is a *kli shareis*, which produces the blood [see Gemara below, 14b]. The placement of the *kometz* in its own *kli shareis* (as distinguished from the first *kli shareis* in which the entire *minchah* was consecrated) corresponds to the receiving of the blood into its own *kli shareis*. [At this point, both the blood of the animal offering and the *kometz* of the *minchah* receive a second sanctification (Gemara *ibid.*.) The conveying of the *kometz* to the Altar corresponds to the conveying of the animal offering's blood to the Altar. And the burning of the *kometz* on the Altar corresponds to throwing the animal offering's blood on the Altar (*Rashi*, from *Zevachim* 13b).

The Baraisa speaks of a case where the *kometz* had been separated and placed into its own *kli shareis*, and thereby assumed the sanctity of a *kometz* (*Rashi*).

20. The death of the husband disqualifies the *minchas sotah*, since this *minchah*'s primary function is to determine whether the *sotah* is permitted to her husband. Now that he has died, the issue is moot, and she does not drink the bitter waters. [And surely there is no drinking of the bitter waters where it is *she* who has died.] Therefore, the offering of the *minchah* [whose purpose is to validate the bitter waters] cannot proceed; the *kometz* cannot be offered on the Altar and it – together with the rest of the *minchah* – must be burned off the Altar (see *Rashi*; cf. *Rashash*; see, however, *Minchah Chareivah*, *Tiferes Tziyon* and *Chidushei HaGrazas*).

21. The husband or the wife died immediately after the offering of the *kometz*, before the Kohen had a chance to administer the bitter waters to the woman (see *Rashi* כיפרה ד'יה כיפרה).

22. The bitter waters examination was canceled once the husband or wife died. Thus, it emerges that there was no reason to bring the *minchah* in the first place, and one might think that we should now disqualify the *minchah* and forbid the Kohanim from partaking of it.

adultery. **בִּיפְרָה סְפִיקָה וְהִלְכָה לָהּ** — And indeed IT HAS ACCOMPLISHED its sacrificial purpose of allowing for the determination of HER DOUBT, AND HAS GONE ALONG ITS WAY, i.e. it has already fulfilled its objective prior to the death of the husband or wife.^[23]

The Baraisa's fourth ruling:

בְּאֵר לָהּ עֵדִים שֶׁהִיא טְמֵאָה — IF before the *kometz* is offered^[24] WITNESSES CAME and testified THAT SHE IS DEFILED, **מִנְחָתָהּ נִשְׂרָפֶת** — HER MINCHAH MUST BE BURNED.^[25]

The Baraisa's fifth ruling, which is the basis of its challenge to Rav Pappa:

נִמְצְאוּ עֲדֵיהָ וּזְמִינִין — IF THE WITNESSES AGAINST HER [i.e. those who testified that she had secluded herself with the suspected adulterer after being warned by her husband against doing so]^[26] WERE FOUND TO BE ZOMEMIN,^[27] **מִנְחָתָהּ חֹלִין** — HER MINCHAH IS NON-SACRED, even if it has already been sanctified in a *kli shareis*.^[28] We see, then, that there is no Rabbinic decree to burn offerings that were mistakenly sanctified in a *kli shareis*!^[29] — ? —

The Gemara defends Rav Pappa:

עֵדִים וּזְמִינִין קְאָמְרִין — Are you saying that the case involving *zomemin* witnesses disproves Rav Pappa? The cases are not comparable. **עֵדִים וּזְמִינִין קְלָא אִית לָהּ** — The irregularities in the

sotah procedure caused by the *zomemin* witnesses are widely known. I.e. everyone realizes that now that the seclusion witnesses have been proven false by the *zomemin*, this *sotah's minchah* was never sanctified to begin with (as the seclusion witnesses, who are the basis for the procedure, have been shown to be false). Thus, there was no need for the Rabbis to decree that it should be burned lest people think that physical sanctity can be deconsecrated. The law that the mere existence of witnesses who saw the *sotah* commit adultery nullifies the entire procedure, however, is not common knowledge. Hence, if we would allow the *minchah* to be treated as non-sacred in that case, people will mistakenly conclude that even physical sanctity can be deconsecrated.^[30]

The Gemara cites a Baraisa that supports Rav Sheishess' ruling, but bases it on a different source:

תִּנְיָא מִטְעֵמִיָּה — A Baraisa was taught in accordance with the ruling of Rav Sheishess, **וְלֹא מִטְעֵמִיָּה** — but not because of his reason given above.^[31] The Baraisa reads: **“טְהִירָה”**, — The verse states: *But if the woman had not become defiled and she is PURE, then she shall be innocent [from punishment] and she shall bear seed.*^[32] The apparently superfluous

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23. The word *בִּיפְרָה* in the present context refers neither to the atonement of sin (as is its usual meaning) nor to the remembrance of sin (which is how the Torah describes the objective of the *minchas sotah* in *Numbers* 5:15: **עֵן מִנְחַת זִכְרוֹן מִפְּעֵל עֲוֹן**, a *minchah of remembrance, a reminder of iniquity*). Rather, the Baraisa means that when the *kometz* was brought, completing the offering of the *minchah*, it fulfilled its function as an element in the bitter waters procedure. For at that time both the husband and wife were alive and it was therefore possible to administer the waters to the suspected *sotah*. Accordingly, the validly offered *minchah* remains valid even after the husband or wife has died, even though the waters can no longer be administered. The Kohanim thus eat the remnants of the *minchah* as long as no inherent disqualification (such as *tumah*) occurs to those remnants (*Rashi*).

24. [Although the previous case of the Baraisa refers to where the *kometz* has already been offered when the *sotah* procedure is canceled,] this next case of the Baraisa goes back and refers to where the cancellation occurs before the *kometz* is offered (*Rashi*; see *Dvar Shaul* 9:14).

25. See above, note 20. Here, too, the issue is moot, since the testimony of the witnesses conclusively establishes her guilt (see above, note 2). The *sotah* procedure cannot proceed, and the *minchah*, which was already sanctified in a *kli shareis*, must be burned.

26. These are the witnesses who create the conditions for her being brought to the Temple to undergo the *sotah* procedure. Without testimony that the woman has secluded herself with the suspected adulterer, the husband cannot bring his wife to drink the waters (*Rashi*). [See *Meiri*, who suggests that the same would hold true for the witnesses to her husband's initial warning to her not to seclude herself with that man. Those witnesses, too, are a necessary precondition for the *sotah* procedure (see also *Dvar Shaul* 9:10).]

27. *Zomemin* (singular: *zomeim*) are witnesses who are proven false by other witnesses who testify to having been with the first witnesses elsewhere at the time of the alleged incident (see *Deuteronomy* 19:16-21). For example, one set of witnesses testifies that someone committed murder at a particular time and place. A second set of witnesses then testifies that the first witnesses were with them elsewhere at the time they allege that they have witnessed the murder, and thus could not possibly have witnessed it. The Torah decrees that in such a case the second witnesses are believed. The first witnesses are known as *zomemin* (conspiring) witnesses, and are established as false.

In the present case, two witnesses testified that the woman had secluded herself with the suspected adulterer in a specific place. Later, two other witnesses testified that the first witnesses were with them elsewhere at that time, and thus could not possibly have seen the seclusion they claim to have witnessed. The “seclusion witnesses” are thus rendered *zomemin* and established as false.

28. The Baraisa rules that despite the fact that this *minchah* was

verbally sanctified and then physically sanctified in a *kli shareis*, it is now revealed to possess no sanctity whatsoever — neither verbal sanctification nor physical sanctification — and is thus not subject to the law of *me'ilah* (misuse of sacred items for mundane purposes) [see, however, *Maharsha's* reading in *Rashi*]. For the sanctifications of this *minchah* are now known to have been done in error, since we have discovered that the seclusion testimony upon which the entire *sotah* procedure is based was in fact false. The sanctification of the *minchah*, then, was never valid in the first place. The erroneously sanctified ingredients of the *minchah* are treated as ordinary foodstuffs [without the need for redemption], and may be consumed by anyone as he pleases (*Rashi*). [*Tosafos* demonstrate that if the witnesses are found to be *zomemin* after the *kometz* was separated, there is a Rabbinic requirement (aside from Rav Pappa's consideration) to burn the *minchah*. Cf. *Meiri*; see *Keren Orah*.]

29. For in the case of the Baraisa, the *minchas sotah* was erroneously sanctified in a *kli shareis* (on the mistaken assumption that the seclusion witnesses were truthful), yet the Baraisa rules that *minchah* is regarded as ordinary foodstuffs once we discover that the seclusion witnesses were false. This disproves Rav Pappa's assertion that there is a Rabbinic requirement to burn an offering that had been sanctified in a *kli shareis* even if it later emerges that the sanctification was done on false premises.

Accordingly, when the Mishnah below (22b) rules that we must burn the *minchah* of a *sotah* should witnesses testify that she had in fact committed adultery, we cannot say that the Mishnah means that it must be burned because of a Rabbinic decree, as Rav Pappa asserted. Rather, the Mishnah must mean that Biblical law demands that it be burned, because the *minchah* was fit to be offered at the time it was sanctified (*Rashi*).

30. Thus, Rav Pappa can indeed justify his explanation of the Mishnah on 22b as referring even to where the witnesses who now testify that she was defiled are testifying that she was defiled during the seclusion for which she would be drinking the bitter waters.

31. Rav Sheishess (above, 6a) had based his ruling on the verse (*Numbers* 5:13): **וְהָיָה נִטְמָא וְהָיָה נִטְמָא וְהָיָה נִטְמָא וְהָיָה נִטְמָא**, and she had been secluded and had become defiled — but there was no witness about her . . . , which — according to its simple meaning — refers to where the waters are administered to the woman; the verse teaches that they are to be administered only if there are no witnesses to her defilement. But if there are witnesses to her defilement somewhere in the world, the entire *sotah* procedure will be ineffective [see 6a note 27]. The Baraisa the Gemara is about to quote does not use this verse as a source for that law, because we expound this verse instead as referring to a definite *sotah*, who does not drink the bitter waters [above, 2a-b; see 6a note 27]. This Baraisa therefore presents a different Scriptural source for the law (*Rashi*).

32. *Numbers* 5:28.

expression *pure*^[33] teaches that only a *sotah* who is indeed pure will bear seed as a result of her drinking and being saved from the waters, וְלֹא שִׁישׂ לָהּ עֲדִים בְּמִדְיַת הַיָּם – BUT NOT ONE ABOUT WHOM THERE ARE WITNESSES OVERSEAS, who – although she, too, survives the waters – does not bear seed as a result.^[34]

וְטָהֳרָה,, – “AND” *PURE* teaches that only a woman who is pure will bear seed, וְלֹא שִׁתְּלֶמָה לָהּ זָכוֹת – BUT NOT ONE WHO WAS SPARED FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE BITTER WATERS ON ACCOUNT OF A MERIT that she possessed, which temporarily suspended her punishment.^[35] “הוּא,, – The expression “*SHE*” is *pure* teaches that only a woman who is indeed pure will bear seed, וְלֹא שִׁישׂא

וְיִתְנוּ בָּהּ מוֹרֹת בְּלִבָּנָה – BUT NOT ONE WHO WAS SPARED FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE BITTER WATERS BECAUSE THE PERCEPTION OF HER GUILT WAS SO WIDESPREAD THAT EVEN THE WOMEN WHO SPIN THREAD BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON GOSSIP ABOUT HER.^[36]

In light of this Baraisa’s exposition, the Gemara returns to question R’ Shimon’s view:

וְרַבִּי שִׁמּוֹן – And R’ Shimon, who maintains that merit does not hold the *sotah*’s punishment in abeyance,^[37] נָהִי דִּינִי לֹא דְרִישׁ – granted that he disagrees with the Baraisa and he does not expound the extra letter *vav*,^[38] וְהָא אֵיבָא – but there is

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33. The verse could have written simply: *But if the woman had not become defiled, then she shall be innocent and she shall bear seed*, leaving out the expression וְטָהֳרָה הוא, *and she is pure (Rashi)*. The Baraisa will therefore expound the three separate elements of the superfluous expression וְטָהֳרָה הוא, *and she is pure* – the word וְטָהֳרָה, *pure*, the prefix וְ, *and*, and the concluding word הוא, *she*.

34. I.e. we expound *she is pure* as being exclusionary: Only a woman who survived the bitter waters test because “she is pure” (innocent of the charges) will be blessed with children; if she survived the bitter waters test for a different reason, she will not be blessed. The Baraisa takes this as a reference to a woman about whom there are witnesses who can attest to her guilt. This woman will not be blessed, though she too survives the bitter waters test. [Now there is certainly no reason to believe that a woman about whom there are witnesses overseas receives the blessing promised to one who survived the test because she was innocent. Rather, the main thrust of this Scriptural indication is to teach that such a woman is not tested by the bitter waters (see *Chidushei HaGriz* at length, from *Yerushalmi* 3:5).]

35. The extra letter וְ, *and*, teaches that there is yet another type of woman who survives the bitter waters test though she is not pure –

namely, one who possesses a merit that suspends the effects of the bitter waters. [See above, 6a note 33.] This woman too – though she survives the bitter waters – does not receive the blessing conferred on one who survives the test because she is indeed innocent (see *Chidushei HaGriz* cited in previous note).

36. *Rashi*; *Rambam, Commentary to the Mishnah and Meiri*; see also *Tosafos* printed on 27a דוּמָה רַיָּה. A woman whose guilt is so widely assumed is not tested by her drinking of the bitter waters [see Chapter Six, 31a note 3] (see *Rashi*).

37. See above, 6a, with notes 41-44.

38. [If R’ Shimon explicitly disagrees with a law that the Baraisa derives from Scripture, we must say that he does not expound that Scriptural derivation. Now, we can understand that R’ Shimon might hold that the superfluous expression וְטָהֳרָה הוא, *and she is pure*, yields only *two* indications of *sotahs* who are not tested by the bitter waters, rather than *three*. He might hold that the extra letter וְ, *vav*, cannot be expounded because it is a common Scriptural prefix and was not intended here for exposition. Having only *two* Scriptural exclusions, R’ Shimon could rightly say that merit does *not* hold a *sotah*’s punishment in abeyance.]

הים – the case of **one who has witnesses** about her **overseas**, where the effects of the waters are negated unbeknownst to us.^[1] – ? –

The Gemara answers:

לא שכיחא – **That situation is not common.**^[2]

Mishnah The Mishnah delineates the procedure the husband must follow after his wife has ignored the warning and gone into seclusion with the suspected adulterer:

ביצר עושה לה – **What does he do with her?** מוליכה לבית דין שבאותו מקום – **He takes her to the court in that place** where he resides,^[3] ומוסרין לו שני תלמידי חכמים – **and [the judges] provide for him two Torah scholars** to escort them to Jerusalem,^[4] ששם יבא עליה בדרך – **lest he cohabit with her on the way.**^[5]

A dissenting opinion:

R' Yehudah says: בעלה נאמן עליה – **Her husband can be trusted regarding her;** we need not be concerned that he will cohabit with her on the way, and so no escort is needed.^[6]

Gemara The Gemara adduces support from our Mishnah for an Amoraic ruling:

תרי ואיהו – The Mishnah states that **two** Torah scholars **and he**, the husband, accompany the *sotah* to Jerusalem. היא תלתיא – **She is a total of three** men. לימא מסיעי ליה לרב – **Shall we say** that [our Mishnah] supports a ruling concerning *yichud* by Rav?^[7] רב דאמר רב יהודה אמר רב – **For Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav:** לא שנו אלא בעיר – **They taught** in the Mishnah in *Kiddushin* that one woman may be alone with two men^[8] **only in the city;** אבל בדרך – **however, on the road** being alone is

not permitted עד דאיכא שלשה – **unless there are three** men with the woman. שמה יצטרף אחד מהן לנקביו – **For if there are only two men, perhaps one of them will need to relieve himself** and go off alone to do so, ונמצא אחד מהן מתייחד עם הערוה – **and it turns out** that the other **one of them** is left alone with a **forbidden woman.**^[9]

The Gemara answers that the proof from our Mishnah is not compelling:

לא – **No**, you cannot compare our Mishnah with Rav's ruling! הלא היינו טעמא – **Here** in our Mishnah, **this is the reason** that

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1. Since the Baraisa just cited has derived Rav Sheishess' ruling that overseas witnesses negate the effect of the bitter waters from a Scriptural superfluity, we can no longer say (as we did above) that R' Shimon would disagree; for he would then have no way of accounting for that Scriptural superfluity. Rather, R' Shimon must agree, even though that possibility of negating the waters' effects would cause a defamation of the innocent *sotahs* who drank. Does this, then, not disprove R' Shimon's basic contention that there cannot exist a law that would cause the defamation of innocent *sotahs*? (see *Rashi* here and to the end of 6b).

2. R' Shimon indeed agrees that the existence of witnesses will negate the effects of the waters. But since it is quite uncommon that there are witnesses overseas who have seen her actual defilement, people will not consider that remote possibility. Rather, they will assume that a *sotah* who has survived the bitter waters is indeed innocent. R' Shimon can still posit, then, that there cannot be a *common* event – such as the delaying power of merit – that would negate the effects of the waters; for that would lead to a defamation of the innocent *sotahs* who have drunk the waters and survived (see *Rashi*).

3. The local court hears testimony to verify that the husband had indeed warned his wife and that she then secluded herself with the suspected adulterer nonetheless [and she claims she was innocent and willing to be examined by the bitter waters] (*Meiri*; *Rambam, Hil. Sotah* 3:1). [*Dvar Shaul* discusses whether the local court is composed of three judges (as a civil court), or whether it must be composed of twenty-three judges (as required for capital cases).]

4. It was necessary to take the *sotah* to Jerusalem because the bitter waters were administered by the High Court (of seventy-one judges), which was located there (*Rashi*). [More simply, they went to Jerusalem because the waters must be administered in the Temple. *Rashi* is simply giving an ancillary reason (see *Chidushei HaGriz*).]

5. The purpose of this escort was to prevent the husband and wife from engaging in intimate relations, which are forbidden so long as her status is unclear [as stated above in the Mishnah 2a, and also below, 28a] (*Meiri*). *Rashi* in *Kiddushin* (80b מוסיף) adds that if the husband *does* cohabit with her, the waters are not effective, and it turns out that God's Name is erased in vain. The Gemara will elaborate on this ruling.

6. The Gemara will discuss this dispute.

7. It is forbidden for an unmarried man and woman to be alone together, lest an untoward intimacy occur. This prohibition against *yichud* (seclusion) applies to any woman to whom one is forbidden under penalty of death or *kares*, except for one's mother and daughter (Mishnah *Kiddushin* 80b); further, it does not apply to one's wife who is a *niddah* (see Gemara below; see also *Rambam, Hil. Isurei Biah* 22:1). Some include in the prohibition even women forbidden by a negative commandment that does not carry the *kares* penalty (*Perishah* to *Even*

HaEzer 22:1, *Chochmas Adam* §126). See note 29 below.

[There is a dispute among Rishonim whether the *yichud* prohibition is Biblical (*Rashi* to *Shabbos* 13a מה ד"ה and *Tosafos* there; *Ramban* to *Sefer HaMitzvos Shores* §3), or Rabbinic (*Rambam, Hil. Isurei Biah* 22:2; see *Beur HaGra, Even HaEzer* 22:4; cf. *Maggid Mishneh* to *Rambam* ad loc.). However, *yichud* with an unmarried woman (who is not a *niddah*) is certainly not Biblically forbidden, but was prohibited by King David's rabbinical court (*Sanhedrin* 21b); and *yichud* with a gentile woman was prohibited by the decree of the schools of Shammai and Hillel (*Avodah Zarah* 36b).]

Since our Mishnah requires a total of *three* men together with the *sotah*, and since only *one* scholar is needed to prevent the husband and wife from being intimate, we can deduce that, when on the road, a woman may not be alone with two men. See note 9 below.

8. The Mishnah in *Kiddushin* 80b, which teaches the law of *yichud*, rules that a single woman is permitted to seclude herself with two men. Rav qualifies this ruling (*Rashi*).

9. However, if there are three male escorts traveling on the road, then even if one goes off to relieve himself, two will remain with the woman, which is permitted.

The Mishnah's concern exists only on the road, where often one must walk a considerable distance to find a secluded and private place. Thus, the man and woman left alone would not be afraid to act immorally, because they would be able to see from afar when the second man was starting to return. In the city, however, it is usually possible to relieve oneself behind a nearby building. Thus, the man and woman would be afraid to do anything immoral, because the second man could return suddenly, at any moment (*Perishah, Even HaEzer* 22:12).

Accordingly, in our Mishnah's case as well, two escorts are required, for both the husband and the Torah scholar are forbidden to the woman – the former because of the *sotah* prohibition; the latter because she is a married woman. Hence, if there was only one escort and either the husband or the escort had to relieve himself, one man would be left alone with the woman. A second escort is therefore needed (*Rashi*). [*Rashash* wonders why *Rashi* stresses that since *both* the husband and a single escort are forbidden to her, two escorts are needed. Would it not suffice to say that the escort is forbidden to her and he might be left alone with the woman should her husband go off to relieve himself?! *Rashash* explains that *Rashi* mentions the husband's prohibition as well in order to prevent a misunderstanding. For the Gemara in *Kiddushin* (81a) teaches that the *yichud* prohibition is suspended if the woman's husband is "in the city." Since in our *sotah* case the husband has merely left to relieve himself and thus is in the immediate area, *yichud* should not apply. *Rashi* therefore stresses that the husband here is prohibited to his wife because she is a *sotah*. Accordingly, *yichud* with her is forbidden even when he is nearby (see *Dvar Shaul* 10:6). However, see *Bach, Even HaEzer* §22 אשה א"ה.]

two must escort the husband – namely, **כי היכי דליהו עליה סהרי** – so that there will be two witnesses against [the husband] if he cohabits with his wife.^[10] The *two* are *not* there because of any *yichud* problem.

The Gemara now adduces support from our Mishnah for a second ruling by Rav:

תלמידי חכמים אין – The Mishnah states that the local judges provide the husband with “two Torah scholars.” This implies that **Torah scholars indeed** accompany the husband and wife, **בולי**, **עלמא לא** – but **everyone else may not**. Evidently, Torah scholars are sent because we rely only on men of high moral character to accompany the woman. **לימא מסייע ליה לאיךך דרב** – **Shall we say that [our Mishnah] thus supports the other ruling of Rav** there in *Kiddushin* (80b)? **דאמר רב יהודה אמר רב** – **For Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav:** **לא שנו אלא** – **They taught** in the aforementioned Mishnah in *Kiddushin* that a woman may be alone with two men **only** when they are **decent men**;^[11] **אבל פרוצין** – **however, regarding promiscuous men,** **לא שנו אלא** – **even with a group of ten such men it is not permitted.**

Rav supports his ruling anecdotally:

היה – **Indeed, there was once an incident** **והוציאוה** **היה** – **and ten men carried out [a woman]**^[12] **on a bier** under the pretense that she was dead, for the purpose of committing adultery with her.^[13]

The Gemara answers that the proof from our Mishnah is not compelling:

לא – **No, you cannot compare our Mishnah with Rav’s ruling!**

הכא היינו טעמא – **Here in our Mishnah, this is the reason** that two Torah *scholars* must escort the husband and wife – namely, **הדינא לאתרווי ביה** – **because they know to warn [the husband]** that if he cohabits with his wife, the bitter waters will not be effective.^[14] The two scholars were not necessarily chosen because of their sterling characters.

The Mishnah concluded:

רבי יהודה אומר בעלה וכו – **R’ YEHUDAH SAYS: HER HUSBAND etc.** [can be trusted regarding her]. That is, we need not be concerned that he will cohabit with the *sotah* on the way.

R’ Yehudah explains the rationale for his ruling in a different statement:

רבי יהודה אומר – **R’ YEHUDAH SAYS:** **בעלה נאמן מקל וחומר** – **We derive that HER HUSBAND CAN BE TRUSTED** not to cohabit with her **FROM A KAL VACHOMER** argument, as follows: **וימה נדה שהיא בכרת** – **SINCE** in the case of **A MENSTRUANT**,^[15] **WHO IS** prohibited **ON PAIN OF KARES,** **בעלה נאמן עליה** – **HER HUSBAND IS TRUSTED REGARDING** cohabitation with **HER**,^[16] **סוטה שהיא בלאו** – **then in the case of A SOTAH, WHO IS** prohibited **ONLY BY A NEGATIVE COMMANDMENT**,^[17] **לא כל שכן** – **IS IT NOT ALL THE MORE SO** that the husband is trusted?^[18]

The Gemara explains why the Rabbis disagree:

היא הנוהנת – **[this very distinction] gives** rise to an even stronger argument for the opposite conclusion, as follows: **נדה דכרת** – **Cohabiting with a niddah, because it is punishable by kares,** **המירא ליה** – **is a stringent transgression for [the husband],** **ומהימן** – **and**

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10. The Gemara now explains that the escorts were sent for *two* purposes: (a) to prevent the husband from cohabiting with his wife, as mentioned above. (b) And should their efforts on that score prove unavailing, to testify against the husband before the High Court in Jerusalem. Their testimony would cause cancellation of the bitter waters ritual, thereby preventing the Name of God from being erased in vain. Although a single person suffices to perform the first function, *two* are needed for the testimony [see *Dvar Shaul* 10:3] (*Rashi*, with *Rashi* to *Kiddushin* 81a).

11. See note 13.

12. I.e. a married woman (*Rashi*; see also *Rashi* to *Avodah Zarah* 25b ד”ה (הוציאוה)). It is not clear why *Rashi* states that she was married (*Rashash* to *Kiddushin* *ibid.*).

13. Thus, we see that even a group of ten cannot be trusted to refrain from sinning if they are men of low moral character. Our Mishnah lends support to that ruling, for why else would it stipulate that those accompanying the husband and *sotah* be Torah scholars? [According to this understanding, the Mishnah uses the term “Torah scholar” only to intimate that the escorts must be known as decent people; it does not mean that they must actually be Torah scholars. See *Meiri*. Cf. *Rama* to *Even HaEzer* 22:5, who rules that regular people are presumed to be “decent.” See *Dvar Shaul* 10:5, who discusses this and other issues.]

14. As Torah scholars, they know that under Biblical law the bitter waters are impotent if the husband cohabited with his wife after she became a *sotah* [and the scholars will thereby be effective in dissuading him from cohabiting with her] (*Rashi*). Alternatively, Torah scholars were chosen for this task because they know how to speak in a way that will inspire the husband to subdue his evil inclination (*Meiri* to *Kiddushin* *ibid.*).

The simple meaning of our Gemara would seem to be that Torah scholars have the knowledge to warn the husband that if he cohabits with his wife, he will be subject to lashes. Indeed, some Rishonim understand the Gemara in this manner (*Tosafos* ד”ה כי דיבי with *Minchas Kenaos*; *Tosafos* to *Yevamos* 11b ד”ה מאי with *Rashash* to *Tosafos* *ibid.* 11a ד”ה צרת סוטה, and *Shaarei Yosher* 1:11). *Rashi* apparently eschews this interpretation because he holds that one is *not* subject to lashes for cohabiting with his wife when she is only a suspected *sotah* [although he is liable to lashes where she is a confirmed *sotah*]. This view is held by

many Rishonim (*Tosafos* below, 28a ד”ה מה *Rosh* to *Yevamos* Ch.1 §4; *Tosafos* to *Yevamos* 69a כי ד”ה; see *Kovetz He’aros* §15). See also note 17 below.

15. A *niddah* (menstruant) is a woman who has experienced a menstrual flow and has not yet immersed herself in a *mikveh* [after the prescribed waiting time and preparations (see *Yoreh Deah* §183-201)]. Cohabitation with her is forbidden on pain of *kares* (*Leviticus* 18:19 and 18:29).

16. I.e. a man is permitted to seclude himself with his wife while she is a *niddah* despite the fact that she is forbidden to him on pain of *kares*; we are not afraid that he will cohabit with her (see *Rashi*; see *Kesubos* 4a). [The Gemara does not provide a source for this ruling. Presumably, it is based on logic, for it would be unreasonable to require a married couple to inhabit separate quarters during every *niddah* period. However, as mentioned in note 7 above, some opinions maintain that the *yichud* prohibition is Biblical. See *Tosafos*, who explain that – nevertheless – the prohibition does not apply to a *niddah* because she is not permanently forbidden to her husband. See *Chazon Ish*, *Nashim* 34:6. See also *Rashash*.]

17. The Gemara in *Yevamos* (11b) derives from *Deuteronomy* 24:4 that a *sotah* is forbidden by a negative commandment. The verse states: **לא יוכל בעלה הראשון אשר שלחה לשוב לקחתה להיות לו לאשה אחר אשר השמאה ביה תועבה**, *Her first husband who divorced her is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, after she had been defiled, for it is an abomination*. The Gemara there interprets the phrase *after she had been defiled* as referring to a woman who was “defiled” by engaging in an extramarital affair (*Rashi* here; *Tosafos* *ad loc.* ד”ה לרבו).

According to the Rishonim who maintain that a husband is liable to lashes for cohabiting with even a suspected *sotah* (see note 14 above), our Gemara is stating in a straightforward way that there is a negative commandment in the case of a suspected *sotah* (*Rashash* to *Yevamos* 11a ד”ה צרת סוטה). The dissenting opinion there maintains that our verse applies only to a confirmed *sotah*. They will explain our Gemara to mean that even if the wife had in fact committed adultery, she is prohibited to her husband only by a negative commandment (*Tos. HaRosh*).

18. I.e. if the husband can be trusted to be secluded with his wife when she is forbidden by a severe prohibition (viz. one punishable by *kares*), then certainly he can be trusted when she is forbidden only by an ordinary prohibition.

therefore **he is trusted** to refrain from consorting with her.^[19] **תאמר בסוטה שאין** – Conversely, cohabiting with a *sotah*, because it is forbidden only by a **negative commandment**, **לא המירא ליה** – is not a **stringent transgression for him**, **ולא מהימן** – and therefore **he cannot be trusted** to refrain from consorting with her.^[20]

The Gemara notes that a different Baraisa teaches a different reason for R' Yehudah's opinion:

לה – **And does R' Yehudah derive [his ruling],** that the *sotah's* husband can be trusted, **from a *kal vachomer* argument?** **והא רבי יהודה מקראי מיייתי לה** – Why, he derives it from the Scriptures, **דתניא** – as was taught in another Baraisa: **„והביא האיש את-אשתו אל-הכהן”** – Since the Torah states,^[21] **AND THE MAN SHALL BRING HIS WIFE TO THE KOHEN** (for the *sotah* ceremony in the Temple), it is evident that **אשתו** – **UNDER BIBLICAL LAW THE MAN MAY BRING HIS WIFE TO the Kohen** by himself, without any escort, because he is trusted to refrain from cohabiting with her.^[22] **אבל** – **HOWEVER, THE SAGES SAID** that as a precautionary measure **מוסרין לו שני תלמידי חכמים** – [THE LOCAL JUDGES] SHOULD PROVIDE FOR HIM an escort of TWO TORAH SCHOLARS, **בדרך** – **LEST HE COHABIT WITH HER ON THE WAY.** This completes the statement of the Tanna Kamma of this second Baraisa. **רבי יוסי אומר** – However, R' YOSE SAYS: **בעלה נאמן** – We derive that [THE SOTAH'S] HUSBAND CAN BE TRUSTED not to cohabit with her along the way FROM A *KAL VACHOMER* argument, as follows: **ומה נדה שהיא בקרת** – SINCE in the case of A MENSTRUANT, WHO IS prohibited ON PAIN OF *KARES*, **בעלה נאמן עליה** – HER HUSBAND IS TRUSTED REGARDING cohabitation with HER, **וסוטה שהיא בלאו** – then in the case of A *SOTAH*, WHO IS prohibited only BY A NEGATIVE COMMANDMENT, **לא כל שבן** – IS IT NOT ALL THE MORE SO that the husband is trusted?! **אמרו לו** – [THE RABBIS] SAID TO [R' YOSE] in reply: **לא** – NO! Your logic is flawed, **אם אמרת בנדה** – for WHILE YOU cogently STATED that the husband is trusted IN [THE CASE OF] A

MENSTRUANT, **שבן יש לה היתר** – SINCE INDEED SHE eventually HAS A RELEASE from her prohibited state,^[23] **תאמר בסוטה שאין** – WILL YOU SAY the same IN [THE CASE OF] A *SOTAH*, WHO HAS NO RELEASE from her prohibited state should it emerge that she indeed committed adultery?^[24] **ואומר „מים-גנובים ימתקו וגו'”** – AND indeed [SCRIPTURE] STATES:^[25] *STOLEN WATERS ARE SWEET* etc.^[26]

The second Baraisa now quotes a third opinion, that of R' Yehudah:

מן התורה האיש מביא את – R' YEHUDAH SAYS: **מן התורה האיש מביא את** – UNDER BIBLICAL LAW, THE MAN MAY BRING HIS WIFE TO THE KOHEN by himself, without any escort, because he is trusted not to cohabit with her, **שנאמר „והביא האיש את-אשתו”** – AS IT IS STATED: **AND THE MAN SHALL BRING HIS WIFE TO the Kohen.**^[27] Thus, we see that in this Baraisa R' Yehudah derives his ruling from Scripture, whereas in the first Baraisa he derived it from a *kal vachomer*! – ? –

The Gemara explains the discrepancy:

אמר להו קל וחומר ברישא – R' Yehudah related his *kal vachomer* argument to [the Rabbis] initially, **ופרכיה** – and they refuted it,^[28] **והדר אמר להו קרא** – and so he then related to them his proof from the verse.^[29]

The Gemara now notes an ambiguity in the second Baraisa:

רבי יהודה היינו תנא קמא – It would appear that the opinion of R' Yehudah is the same as that of the Tanna Kamma!^[30] What is he adding?

The Gemara answers:

איבא בינייהו אבא אמרו – The difference there is between them is the Tanna Kamma's modifier: **„HOWEVER, THE SAGES SAID** [that, as a precautionary measure, the local judges should provide the husband with an escort of two Torah scholars, lest he cohabit with his wife on the way].” According to the Tanna Kamma, the Rabbis decreed that the husband should have an escort; according to R' Yehudah, they issued no such decree.^[31]

Mishnah The Mishnah continues to delineate the procedure for administering the bitter waters: **היו מעלין אותה לבית דין הגדול שבירושלים** – They (the husband and the escort^{[32])} bring her up to the High Court in Jerusalem,^[33] **ומאימין עליה** – and [the judges] attempt to intimidate her so that she will

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19. The very severity of the *niddah* transgression gives the husband pause and deters him from sinning (*Rashi*). Hence, he is allowed to seclude himself with his wife when she is a *niddah*.

20. Since the *sotah* transgression is less severe, the deterrent factor is weaker, and so two escorts are required for the journey to Jerusalem.

21. Numbers 5:15.

22. See note 29 below.

23. After the menstruation ceases and she immerses herself in a *mikveh*, a *niddah* once again becomes permitted to her husband. Thus assured of their reunion, the husband is able to control his passions while she is forbidden (*Rashi*).

24. Since this possibility exists, we suspect that the husband will be overcome with desire and will cohabit with her along the way (*Rashi*). It is therefore more reasonable to trust the husband in the case of a *niddah* than in the case of a *sotah*.

25. Proverbs 9:17.

26. I.e. a man naturally desires and pursues that which is forbidden to him (*Rashi*). In citing this verse, the Rabbis are buttressing their argument for not trusting the husband in the case of a *sotah*. First they explained that the possibility of her becoming permanently prohibited could overwhelm him with desire. Now they anticipate the question: But since these two have already been intimate as man and wife, his passion will not be that intense! To this the Rabbis respond: But now that she is forbidden to him, his desire will be further aroused – for *stolen waters are sweet* (*Tosafos*; see *Shitah Mekubetztes*; cf. *Rashash*).

27. The Gemara will presently explain the difference between the opinions of R' Yehudah and the Tanna Kamma.

28. The Gemara refers to the Rabbis' rebuttal of R' Yose in the second Baraisa, after R' Yose advanced the *kal vachomer* from *niddah* that R' Yehudah stated in the first Baraisa. In this rebuttal the Rabbis argued that it is more reasonable to trust the husband with a *niddah*, who will eventually become permitted, than with a *sotah*, who might remain forbidden forever (*Rashi, Tosafos*). [See *Tosafos*, who demonstrate that the Rabbis' first rejoinder to the *kal vachomer* (“the very fact that the *niddah* prohibition is more stringent is reason for the husband to be trusted in that case”) is not compelling, for we often find that people are more careful about the lighter prohibitions, and so R' Yehudah certainly would not have accepted their argument.]

29. The commentators infer from the fact that R' Yehudah cites a verse to permit *yichud* with a *sotah* that the *yichud* prohibition applies even to a woman who is forbidden by only a negative commandment – see notes 7 and 9 above (*Chazon Ish, Even HaEzer* 34:6; *Keren Orah*; see also *Beis Shmuel, Even HaEzer* 117:8; *Achiezer, Even HaEzer* 9:1).

30. For they cite the same Scriptural verse (*And the man shall bring his wife to the Kohen*) to show that the *sotah's* husband is trusted to refrain from cohabiting with his wife on the way.

31. See *Minchah Chareivah*, who explains the dispute.

32. *Meiri*; see end of note 34 below.

33. The High Court (or Sanhedrin) was composed of seventy-one judges, and it convened in the *Lishkas HaGazit* (“Chamber of Hewn Stone”). This was a room built into the wall of the Temple's main Courtyard.

admit her guilt,^[34] כְּדָרַךְ שְׁמַאיִמִין עַל עַדֵי נִפְשׁוֹת – just as they intimidate witnesses in capital cases to ensure their truthfulness.^[35] לֵאמֹר לָהּ – They say to her: בַּתִּי – “My daughter, הַרְבֵּה יַיִן עוֹשָׂה – wine causes much impropriety,^[37] הַרְבֵּה שְׁחֹק עוֹשָׂה – levity causes much impropriety; הַרְבֵּה יְלֻדוֹת עוֹשָׂה – childishness causes much impropriety,^[38] וְהַרְבֵּה שְׂכֵנִים עוֹשִׂין – and bad neighbors cause much impropriety.^[39] עָשִׂי לְשֵׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל שֶׁנִּכְתָּב בְּקִדְשׁוֹ – Act for the sake of His great Name which is written in holiness and admit your guilt, שְׂלֵא יִמָּחַה עַל הַמַּיִם – so that It not be erased on the waters.”^[40] וְאֵינָם לְשׁוֹמְעֵן – And [they] then relate before her matters that she is not deserving to hear – היא וְכָל מִשְׁפַּחַת בֵּית אָבִיהָ – neither she nor all her father’s family.^[42] אִם אָמְרָה טְמֵאָה אָנִי – If in response to all this she said, “I am defiled,” – וְאֵם אָמְרָה טְהוֹרָה אָנִי – But if she writes a receipt for her *kesubah* and goes out.^[44] אִם אָמְרָה טְהוֹרָה אָנִי – But if she said, “I am pure,”^[45] מֵעַלִּין אוֹתָהּ לְשַׁעַר הַמְּזוֹרָח – they take her up to the Eastern Gate, שְׂעַל פֶּתַח שַׁעַר נִקְנוֹר – which was directly opposite the Nikanor Gate,^[46] שָׁשֶׁם מְשַׁקֵּין אֶת הַסּוֹטוֹת – since there at the Nikanor Gate they give suspected *sotahs* the bitter waters to drink,^[47] וּמְטַהְרִין אֶת הַיּוֹלְדוֹת – and there they purify the women who have given birth,^[48] וּמְטַהְרִין אֶת הַמְּצוֹרָעִין – and there they purify the *metzoraim*.^[49]

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34. Before allowing the *sotah* to drink, the court attempts to elicit a (truthful) admission of guilt to avoid having God’s Holy Name erased in the bitter waters (see Mishnah further). [Once she confesses, she is neither given to drink nor punished in any manner (since punishment issues from the testimony of two witnesses and never from a confession); rather, she is divorced from her husband and forfeits her *kesubah*.]

In order to frighten her, the court would describe in detail the terrible fate of a *sotah* who is found guilty by the bitter waters – see Mishnah below, 20a (*Meiri*). [According to some, the court separated the *sotah* from her husband so that she would not be embarrassed to confess her adultery (*Rambam, Hil. Sotah* 3:2, with *Mirkeves HaMishneh*; see also *Aruch HaShulchan, Even HaEzer* 178:52).]

35. See Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 37a for details (*Rashi*). See *Tos. Yom Tov*; cf. *Minchas Kenaos*.

36. *Mesoras HaShas* emends this to וְאִמְרִים, and so it appears in Mishnayos. Our translation follows this emendation.

37. See above, 2a note 19. See *Maharsha* here.

38. Immaturity typically brings a young person to sin (see *Tiferes Tziyon* to *Rashi*).

39. It is easier, and more typical, for a neighbor to have incited her to sin (*Rashi*).

The court mentions these four possible causes (wine, levity etc.) to impress upon the *sotah* that the husband’s suspicion is not farfetched, and thus denying her guilt will only accomplish that she will suffer a revolting death (see *Rashi* above וְהַרְבֵּה יְלֻדוֹת עוֹשָׂה; cf. *Tiferes Yisrael*).

40. As part of the bitter waters ritual, a Kohen describes the terrible fate a guilty *sotah* suffers after drinking. The Kohen then writes the Biblical verses describing this on a piece of parchment, and then erases this writing – including God’s Name – in the bitter waters. The *sotah* then drinks this water (*Numbers* 5:19-24).

We therefore urge the *sotah* to confess, to prevent the desecration of God’s Holy Name.

41. *Bach* (see also *Rashi*) emends this to שְׁאִינָה. (Moreover, וְאִמְרִים should be emended to וְאִמְרִים – see above, note 36.) Our translation follows these emendations. See *Rashash*.

42. I.e. they tell her stories about righteous Biblical figures (such as Yehudah and Reuven) who sinned and were not ashamed to confess their misdeeds (as discussed in the Gemara below, 7b). They then admonish the *sotah* that she, too, should not be ashamed to admit her sin. Although she is unworthy of being likened to such righteous people, we relate these incidents to her so that she will confess (see *Rashi*; cf. *Rambam Commentary*).

The Mishnah also considers the family undeserving because, presumably, their moral character is similar to hers (*Tiferes Yisrael*; cf. *Meiri*).

43. She writes for her husband a document stating that she committed adultery and has thereby forfeited the right to collect her *kesubah* (marriage contract) award. This receipt protects the husband should she later try to claim the *kesubah* (*Rashi*).

44. [I.e. the husband divorces her (see *Dvar Shaul* 12:2-4 at length, and see General Introduction, note 1.)] However, she is not executed on her own admission, even though the warning and seclusion constitute circumstantial evidence that she did sin, inasmuch as she did not receive the required warning prior to committing the act (*Rashi*, as explained by *Minchah Chareivah*; see there at length; cf. *Rashash*).

45. I.e. if she maintains her innocence.

46. The Temple mount was surrounded by a wall that had several openings. One of these was situated directly opposite the Nikanor Gate, which was the eastern entrance to the main Temple Courtyard. Hence, people entering the Temple would first pass through the Eastern Gate to the Temple Mount, then walk up further until he reached the *Ezras Nashim* (“Women’s Courtyard”), pass through that Courtyard to the Nikanor Gate, and then enter through the Nikanor Gate to the *Ezras Yisrael* (“Israelites’ Courtyard”), which was located in the Temple proper (*Rashi*; see *Middos* 1:3-4; 2:1,5,6). See following note.

Nikanor was a great man who brought beautiful copper doors from Alexandria, Egypt to the Temple gate that was afterward named for him. The Gemara (*Yoma* 38a) relates the miracles that occurred for him when he was transporting the doors to Jerusalem (*Rashi*).

47. After appearing before the Sanhedrin, the *sotah* was taken down to the Eastern Gate, and from there back up to the Nikanor Gate (*Rashi*; cf. *Tos. Yom Tov*, citing *Kaftor VaFerach*). The Gemara below (8a) will explain why she was moved about in this manner.

The Nikanor Gate was chosen as the location for administering the bitter waters because the Torah writes (*Numbers* 5:18) that the Kohen shall stand the woman “before God” when she drinks the waters. Since the Nikanor Gate was the entrance to the main Temple Courtyard [and was situated directly opposite the entrance to the Holy of Holies], standing there qualifies as being “before God” (see *Rashi*; see below, 8a note 4).

The *sotah* did not enter the Temple proper when she drank the waters; rather, she stood in the space of the Nikanor Gate, which was never sanctified [see note 49 below for the reason why it was not] (*Rashi*). [It is not clear why the *sotah* was not allowed into the sanctified portion of the Temple. Some suggest that since her hair was uncovered and her bosom bared (see Mishnah further), it was unseemly for her to be there (see *Minchah Chareivah*, who discusses this issue).]

48. [Upon giving birth a woman becomes *tamei* – for a week following the birth of a male and for two weeks following the birth of a female. After this period of *tumah* she immerses in a *mikveh* and becomes *tahor* (and permissible to her husband). However, she may not eat sacrificial meat or enter the Temple Courtyard until she offers her Biblically prescribed sacrifice on the forty-first day after the birth of a male, and on the eighty-first day after the birth of a female (see *Leviticus* 12:1 ff.).] The Gemara below (8a) will explain that the Mishnah means that it was necessary for the woman to stand near the Temple Courtyard when her sacrifice was being offered (*Rashi*). See following note.

49. A *metzora* is a person who has contracted one of a variety of skin afflictions, which all fall into the general category of *tzaraas*; these afflictions render the person *tamei*. When a *metzora* feels that his *tzaraas* has healed, he goes to a Kohen for an examination. If the Kohen decides that it has, in fact, healed, the purification process commences (see *Leviticus* Ch. 14 for a full description). The process continues for seven days, during which time the *metzora* can still transmit *tumah* to other people and to utensils. On the seventh day he immerses himself in a *mikveh*. Upon nightfall he is *tahor*; but he may not partake of sacrificial meat or enter the Temple Courtyard until the prescribed offerings are brought on the following day.

Now, the service of those offerings involves applying oil and sacrificial blood on the *metzora*’s ear, hand and foot. This, however, creates a difficulty, since (a) a *metzora* may not enter the Temple until his purification is complete, and (b) the blood could not be taken outside to the *metzora*, because sacrifices that leave the Temple proper become disqualified. To resolve this problem the area within the Nikanor Gate

The Mishnah continues its description of the bitter waters ritual:

וְכַהֵן אוֹחֵז בְּבִגְדֶיהָ – A Kohen then **grabs hold of her clothing** – אִם נִקְרְעוּ נִקְרְעוּ – **if they are torn, they are torn;**^[50] וְאִם נִפְרְמוּ נִפְרְמוּ – **if they are shredded, they are shredded**^[51] – עַד שֶׁהוּא מְגַלֵּה אֶת לְבָהּ – and he rips them **until he uncovers her bosom;**^[52] וְסוֹתֵר אֶת שְׂעָרָהּ – **and he then unbraids her hair.**^[53]

A dissenting opinion:

רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אֵימַר – R' Yehudah says: אִם הָיָה לְבָהּ נְאֻהָ – **If her bosom was comely,** לֹא הָיָה מְגַלְהוּ – **he would not uncover it;** וְאִם הָיָה שְׂעָרָהּ נְאֻהָ – **and if her hair was beautiful,** לֹא הָיָה סוֹתֵר – **he would not unbraids it.**^[54]

The Mishnah resumes its description of the bitter waters ritual:

הָיָה מְבֹשָׁמֵת בְּלִבְנָיִם – **If she was dressed in white,** מְבֹשָׁמֵת בְּשַׁחֲוֵרִים – **[the Kohen] dresses her in black.**^[55] הָיָה עָלֶיהָ כְּלֵי זָהָב – **If she was wearing gold ornaments,**

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was left unsanctified. The *metzora* could thus stand there and insert his right hand and foot into the Temple Courtyard so that the necessary applications could be made, for indeed the Torah permits a partial entry of the *metzora's* limbs into the Courtyard [see, however, *Zevachim* 32a,b] (*Rashi*; see, however, *Chidushei HaGriz*).

50. The Kohen takes hold of the neckline of the *sotah's* blouse [in an angry and demeaning manner (*Meiri*)]. He need not take care to avoid tearing her garments. He takes hold of them and pulls – and if they tear, they tear (*Rashi*).

51. פְּרִימָה is a greater damage than קְרִיעָה (tearing). It involves a cutting into pieces, as in פְּרִים סִלְקָא, *mince beats* (*Shabbos* 74b) [*Rashi*].

52. The Gemara below (8a) derives from Scripture that the Kohen exposes the woman's body in this way (*Rashi*).

It emerges from the Gemara below (8b) that the intent was to degrade the *sotah* publicly in order to discourage other married women from putting themselves in compromising positions, as this woman had done. [Even if the bitter waters eventually prove that the *sotah* did not commit

adultery, she nonetheless acted immodestly and improperly in secluding herself with another man. This justifies the degrading procedure to which she is now subjected (*Rashi* to *Sanhedrin* 45a).]

53. I.e. after uncovering her hair (as stated in Scripture – *Numbers* 5:18), he undoes her braids, as derived by the Gemara below, 8a (see *Rashi*).

54. Although Biblical law requires the Kohen to expose the bosom and hair of the *sotah*, R' Yehudah was concerned that doing so if she was attractive would evoke lewd thoughts in the minds of those witnessing the procedure. He therefore ruled that it not be performed, in accordance with the principle that the Sanhedrin is empowered to suspend the observance of a Biblical commandment as long as the violation takes place in a passive manner [שב ואל תעשה] (*Tosafos*, printed below, 8a ד"ה דא; see also *Yevamos* 90a). See, however, *Hagahos Radal* here; cf. *Tos. Shantz* below, 8b חבל ב"ד.

55. The reason for this action, as well as the others mentioned in the Mishnah, is to demoralize the *sotah* so that if she is indeed guilty, she will confess and the Name of God will not be erased in vain.

CLEAR TO YOU THAT YOU ARE PURE (i.e. innocent), עמדי על — then RELY ON YOUR INNOCENCE AND DRINK the bitter waters. בורייך ושתי — FOR THE BITTER WATERS ARE SIMILAR ONLY TO A DRY SALVE על שמונתה על — THAT RESTS UPON RAW SKIN. אם יש שם מכה — IF THERE IS AN open WOUND THERE, מוחלל ויורד — [THE SALVE] PENETRATES AND DESCENDS into the wound, thereby healing it. אין שם מכה — And IF THERE IS NO open WOUND THERE, אינו מועיל בלום — IT HAS NO EFFECT WHATSOEVER. So too, the bitter waters have an effect only if the woman indeed committed adultery; otherwise, they have no detrimental effect whatsoever. According to this Baraisa, then, we not only discourage the *sotah* from drinking the bitter waters if she is guilty, but we also encourage her to drink them if she is innocent. This conflicts with the Mishnah, which teaches only that we discourage the woman from drinking the bitter waters.^[12] — ? —

The Gemara answers:

באן קודם שנמחקה מגילה — לא קשיא — Here, in our Mishnah, we are speaking of **before the scroll was erased**. We discourage her from drinking the bitter waters in order to prevent God's Name from being erased.^[13] באן לאחר — שנמחקה מגילה — Here, in the Baraisa, we are speaking of **after the scroll was erased**. We therefore encourage her to drink the bitter waters.^[14]

The Mishnah next stated:

ואומר לפניה וכו' — AND THEY then RELATE BEFORE HER etc. (matters that she is not deserving to hear — neither she nor all her father's family).

The Gemara reveals what these “matters” were:

אומר לפניה דברים — The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: תנו רבנן — THEY RELATE BEFORE HER HOMILETIC DICTA, וימעשים שאירעו בכתובים הראשונים — AND INCIDENTS THAT OCCURRED during the era that is recorded in THE EARLY WRITINGS (i.e. the Torah).^[15] בגון „אשר חכמים יגידו ולא כחדו — FOR EXAMPLE, they relate to her a homiletic exegesis of the verse:^[16] WISE MEN SAY IT; IT WAS NOT WITHHELD FROM THEIR FATHERS. יהודה הודה ולא בוש — This alludes to JUDAH, the son of Jacob, who CONFESSED that he had sinned with Tamar AND WAS NOT EMBARRASSED to do so.^[17] מה היה סופו — WHAT WAS HIS END? I.e. what did he merit as a result of his brave confession? נחל חיי העולם הבא — HE INHERITED THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME. ראובן הודה ולא בוש — Similarly, REUBEN CONFESSED that he had sinned with Bilhah AND WAS NOT EMBARRASSED to do so.^[18] מה היה סופו — WHAT WAS HIS END? I.e. what did he merit as a result of his confession? נחל חיי העולם הבא — HE INHERITED THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME. ומה שכן — AND WHAT WAS THEIR REWARD for confessing their sins?

The Gemara interrupts the Baraisa to express its astonishment: בדקא אמרינן — “What was their reward?” you ask?! — מה שכן — Why, it is like what you just said, that Yehudah and Reuben inherit the life of the World to Come! — ? —

The Gemara explains the Baraisa's last question:

אלא מה שכן בעולם הזה — Rather, the Baraisa is asking, “What is their reward in *this* world?”

The Baraisa resumes:

„להם לבדם נתנה הארץ ולא עבר זר בתוכם” — Yehudah and Reuben were rewarded with that which is written in the very next verse in the Book of *Job*: TO THEM ALONE THE LAND WAS GIVEN; NO STRANGER PASSED AMONG THEM.^[19]

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12. And could mean that we do so even if she is innocent, to avoid the erasure of God's great Name. [We could encourage her to refuse to drink; see Mishnah 20a.] See *Tiferes Tziyon*; cf. *Dvar Shaul* 11:4.

13. And the Mishnah could mean that we only discourage her by saying that if she is guilty, she should confess and not drink (see *Tiferes Tziyon* and *Dvar Shaul* *ibid.*; see, however, *Keren Orach*).

14. Once the Divine Name has been erased, we encourage her with words of comfort to drink the bitter waters if she is truly innocent; for if she is fearful and falsely admits her guilt to avoid drinking, she will cast aspersions upon herself and her children. To allay her fears, we explain that the bitter waters have no ill effect upon an innocent person (*Rashi*).

See *Tsafos* below, 14b אי משום 14b.

15. That is, they related to her incidents that are recorded in the Torah (*Rashi*) [and that are alluded to — through homiletic exposition — in later writings]. See further.

16. *Job* 15:18.

17. The events leading to Judah's confession are recorded in *Genesis* Ch. 38. Briefly, Tamar had married Judah's firstborn son Er, who died childless soon afterward. Tamar was subsequently given in marriage to Yehudah's second son, Onan, in accordance with the practice of *yibum* (see *Ramban* ad loc.). When Onan too died, Yehudah held back his youngest son, Shelah. Eventually, Tamar plotted to have children with Judah. Posing as a harlot, she lured Judah into cohabiting with her, and she conceived from the union. When Judah was informed of her pregnancy, he took this as clear proof that she had engaged in harlotry. He therefore sentenced her to death by burning (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 85:10, cited by *Rashi* to *Bereishis* 38:24, and *Ramban* ad loc. regarding why he pronounced this particular sentence). When Tamar was being led to execution, she sent to Judah the articles that he had given her as pledges for her harlot's pay, hoping that he would admit to their liaison and reverse her sentence. [She could have saved herself by simply stating the truth about the paternity of her fetus, but that would have humiliated Judah in public. To avoid doing this, she gave him a hint that no one else would understand.] Upon realizing the truth, Judah immediately confessed that he was the one who had impregnated

Tamar (ראה מניין, *she is right; it is from me!* (*ibid.* v. 26)), even though his admission presumably shamed him greatly. [The episode of Yehudah and Tamar is elaborated upon in the Gemara below, 10b.]

The verse quoted here, *wise men say it; it was not withheld from their fathers*, alludes to this incident as follows: “Wise men say it” — i.e. admit their guilt — “and do not withhold (their sins) from their fathers” — even though it causes them much shame (*Rashi*).

18. The episode is related in *Genesis* (35:22): *And Reuben went, and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine*. Reuben too confessed his misdeed, even though it caused him embarrassment, and the *Job* verse alludes to that episode as well. [The Gemara below will discuss how we know that Reuben confessed.]

Now, the Rabbis (*Shabbos* 55b) tell us that the aforementioned verse concerning Reuben is not to be understood literally. What actually happened was this: After Rachel died, Yaakov removed his bed from her tent and placed it in the tent of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, thus bypassing Leah, Reuben's mother. Reuben felt that his mother had been slighted, and impetuously moved his father's bed. Reuben's lofty degree of righteousness was such that even so minor a misdeed could be equated to an act of adultery committed by a lesser person. However, both *Ramban* (*Hil. Sotah* 3:2) and *Smag* write that when relating this incident to a *sotah*, the court gives the impression that Reuben actually cohabited with Bilhah. *Rama* (responsa §11) explains that a literal account will have a greater impact on the *sotah*, and so she will be more disposed to admit her guilt and the Divine Name will not be erased (see there).

19. *Job* 15:19. I.e. each merited a unique privilege in Eretz Yisrael. Yehudah acquired the monarchy [see *Genesis* 49:10 and *Tosefta Berachos* 4:16], and Reuben was the first of the tribes to receive its allotted portion in the Land, in Transjordan [see *Numbers* Ch. 32] (*Rashi*).

The conclusion of the verse (*no stranger passed among them*) also alludes to the fact that these two tribes received their blessings from Moses successively (in *Deuteronomy* 33:6-7), so that “no stranger”— i.e. other tribe — received a blessing in between their blessings (*Rashi*, from *Midrash R' Tanchuma* [*Hakadam V'Hayashan* to *Parashas Vayeishev*, p. 77 in the Eshkol ed.]). See also *Rashi* to *Deuteronomy* 33:7, with *Maskil LeDavid* ad loc., cited by *Yalkut Yeshayahu*.

The Baraisa claimed that both Yehudah and Reuven confessed. The Gemara questions this:

בשִׁלְמָא ביהודה – Now, [this Baraisa] is understandable in [the case of] Judah, אֲשֶׁכְחָן דְּאוּרִי – for we indeed find explicitly stated that he confessed his wrongdoing, וַיִּבְרַח יְהוּדָה, וַיִּבְרַח יְהוּדָה – and he said, “She [Tamar] is right; it [the child] is from me.” אֲלָא רְאוּבֵן מִנְלֵן דְּאוּרִי – But with regard to Reuven, from where do we know that he confessed?

The Gemara answers:

דְּאָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בְּרַחֲמֵי רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן – It is as R’ Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of R’ Yochanan:^[21] מַאי דְּכָתִיב “וַיְהִי רְאוּבֵן וְאֵלֵי־יָמָת . . . וְזֹאת לַיהוּדָה” – What is the meaning of that which is written in Moses’ blessing to the Jewish people just before his death:^[22] *May Reuben live and not die . . . And this is to Judah?*^[23] He explains: כָּל אוֹתָן שָׁנִים שְׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִדְבָּר – All those forty years that the Israelites were in the Wilderness – הָיוּ עֲצָמוֹתָיו שֶׁל יְהוּדָה מְגוֹלְגָלִין בְּאֶרֶץ – the bones of Judah were detached and rolling around in his coffin, whereas the skeletal remains of all the other brothers were intact;^[24] עַד שְׁעִמְרוּ מִשָּׁה – until Moses stood in prayer and pleaded for Divine mercy for [Judah]. רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם – [Moses] said before [God]: מִי גָרַם לְרְאוּבֵן שְׁהוּדָה – who caused Reuven to confess in the incident of his father’s bed? יְהוּדָה – It was none other than Judah!^[25] But Reuven’s skeleton is intact.^[26] וְזֹאת לַיהוּדָה! – and this is to Judah!^[27] מִנְדָּה – Moses immediately^[28] prayed:^[29] *Hearken, Hashem, to Judah’s voice* and allow his remains to find rest in the coffin. עַל אֲבִירָה לִשְׁפָא – His prayer was accepted, and [Judah’s] limbs entered their joints.^[30] לֹא הָיָה קָא מְעִיָּלִין לֵיהּ – He did not admit [Judah] to the Heavenly academy,^[31] and so Moses prayed: וְאֵלֵי־עִמּוֹ תְּבִיאֵנוּ,

– and return him to his people. This prayer as well was accepted, and Judah was admitted to the Heavenly academy. וְלֹא הָיָה קָא יָדַע מִשְׁקַל וּמִטָּרַח בְּשִׁמְעָתָא בְּהַדְרֵי רַבָּנָן – However, he did not know how to debate the law with the Rabbis; he was not yet treated as their spiritual peer. Moses therefore prayed: “וַיָּרִיו רַב לִי” – may his hands contend for him in the “battle of Torah”; i.e. may he be able to engage in Talmudic debate with his peers. This prayer, too, was accepted. לֹא הָיָה קָא סְלִיקָא לֵיהּ – Still, he could not conclude legal discussions in accordance with the law.^[32] Moses therefore added: “וַיַּעַזְרֵנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ תְּהִיָּה” – and may You be a help against his adversaries, to enable Judah to triumph in deciding the law.

The Gemara has another query regarding the Baraisa:

בשִׁלְמָא יהודה – Now, it is understandable regarding Yehudah that he publicly confessed his sin; כִּי הֵיבִי דְלֹא תִישָׁרַף – he did it so that Tamar should not be burned for engaging in harlotry. אֲלָא רְאוּבֵן לָמָּה לֵיהּ דְּאוּרִי – However, why was it necessary for Reuven to confess his sin in public? וְהָאִמַר רַב שֵׁישִׁט – But Rav Sheishess has said: וְהָאִמַר רַב שֵׁישִׁט – “I view as audacious one who specifies his transgressions in public!”^[33] – ? –

The Gemara answers:

Reuven confessed publicly so that his brothers should not be suspected by their father Jacob of committing the sin of moving the latter’s bed.^[34]

The Mishnah had stated:

אם אָמְרָה טְמֵאָה אָנִי וכו' – IF after the court’s intimidation SHE SAID, “I AM DEFILED” etc., (she writes a receipt for her *kesubah* and goes out).

The Gemara deduces from the Mishnah’s ruling:

Derive from it that [creditors] may write a receipt instead of returning the original debt document.^[35]

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20. Genesis 38:26.

21. Mesoras HaShas emends this to “R’ Yonasan,” and so it appears in Ein Yaakov.

22. Deuteronomy 33:6-7.

23. Why did Moses place the blessing of Judah immediately after that of Reuven, and why does Judah’s blessing begin with the unusual expression, *And this is to Judah?* (Rashi here and to Makkos 11b).

24. The remains of all of Jacob’s sons were taken out of Egypt when the Israelites were released from slavery, as implied by Exodus 13:19: *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he (Joseph) had firmly adjured the Children of Israel saying, “God will surely remember you, and you shall bring up my bones from here with you.”* The term *with you* is taken to mean “together with your own remains” (Rashi).

Whereas the remains of the other sons remained intact, Judah’s bones rattled around in his coffin. This is because he had placed himself under a ban for all time (i.e. in this world and the next) if he failed to bring Benjamin back to Jacob (see Genesis 43:9). The Gemara (Makkos 11b) derives from this episode that a ban imposed conditionally requires nullification even if the condition is never fulfilled. That is, even though Benjamin was returned to Jacob, Judah nonetheless became subject to his ban because he never had it nullified (Rashi, as emended by Mesoras HaShas; see Yalkut Yeshayahu).

25. The Rabbis have an oral tradition that Reuven confessed the sin of upsetting his father’s bed only after observing Judah confess his sin in the incident with Tamar (Rashi; Rashi writes that this tradition is also recorded in Midrash R’ Tanchuma; see also Bach §1).

26. The first half of Moses’ blessing quoted by the Gemara, *May Reuben live*, intimates that Reuven’s skeletal remains were intact, as if he were still alive! (Rashi).

This verse, then, is the Biblical source that Reuven confessed his sin, and so the Gemara’s question is answered here.

27. This part of the quoted blessing expresses astonishment that the

bones of Judah, on the other hand, were rolling around in his coffin (Rashi). Surely he deserved a better fate! See Tos. Shantz.

28. Bach §2 deletes the word מִנְדָּה, immediately.

29. From this point onward the Gemara expounds the remainder of Judah’s blessing (Deuteronomy 33:7).

30. The word שָׁפָא means *detached*. Hence, the sense of לִשְׁפָא is: “to the place from which they were detached” (Rashi).

31. [Although Judah’s earthly remains found rest, his soul did not, and he was denied entry into the Heavenly academy] where he could engage in Torah discourse with the other sages (Rashi).

32. I.e. Judah did not merit to have his arguments accepted by the sages in the academy (Rashi).

33. For by doing so, he demonstrates that he is not embarrassed by his misconduct (Rashi).

The words לִי יִשְׂרָאֵל do not appear in any of the early editions. See Rashi and Dikdukei Soferim HaShalem.

34. See Chochmas Shlomo to Orach Chaim 607:2, and Minchas Chinuch 364:10; see also He’aros L’Maseches Sotah.

35. Generally, when a borrower repays a debt that was recorded in a document, the lender returns the document to him. If the lender cannot produce the document, thus allowing for the possibility of his presenting it later and collecting a second time illegally, there is a dispute regarding how to proceed (see Bava Basra 170b-171b). According to one opinion, we permit the lender to substitute a receipt for the loan document. Although this imposes upon the borrower the burden of guarding the receipt, he must accept this responsibility and repay the debt. Others maintain that the borrower may demand the actual document and refuse to accept a receipt in its place; he cannot be compelled to pay until the document is returned to him. The Gemara asserts that since our Mishnah permits the woman to give her husband a receipt instead of returning the actual *kesubah*, it supports the opinion that we allow a creditor (in this case the woman) to substitute a receipt for the original document (Rashi).

The Gemara rejects this proof:

אָמַר אַבַּיִי – Abaye said: תְּנִי מְקַרְעַת – Read instead in the Mishnah: “She tears up her *kesubah*.” The Mishnah can thus accord with the opinion that we do not allow the creditor to write a receipt.

The Gemara objects:

אָמַר לִיה רַבָּא – Rava said to [Abaye]: וְהָא שׁוֹבְרֵת קְתַנִּי – But [the Mishnah] states explicitly, “SHE WRITES A RECEIPT.” You cannot revise the text arbitrarily! – ? –

Rava now offers another rebuttal:

אָלֵא אָמַר רַבָּא – Rather, Rava said: בְּמָקוֹם שֶׁאֵין בּוֹתְבִין כְּתוּבָה – במקום שאין בותבין כתובה עֲסָקִינָן – We are dealing in the Mishnah with a locale where the

custom is that **they do not write a *kesubah***.^[36] Since no *kesubah* exists, a divorced woman normally collects when she produces her *get*, and according to all opinions the husband has no choice but to accept a receipt.^[37]

The Mishnah next stated:

וְאִם אָמְרָה טְהוֹרָה אָנִי – BUT IF SHE SAID, “I AM PURE,” מֵעֵלֶין אוֹתָהּ – THEY TAKE HER UP TO THE EASTERN GATE [(at the foot of the Temple Mount), which was opposite the Nikanor Gate].

The Gemara asks:

מֵעֵלֶין אוֹתָהּ – You say “THEY TAKE HER UP”?

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36. Even if one did not give his wife a document guaranteeing fulfillment of the *kesubah* obligations, he is still obligated to fulfill them, for the Rabbis made these obligations a stipulation of every marriage. In fact, there are places where *kesubos* are not written at all; in these areas, people rely upon the Rabbis’ stipulation and pay the appropriate *kesubah* amount (a *maneh* or two hundred *zuz*). Since there is no *kesubah* document to present, a divorced woman simply presents her *get* (bill of divorce), and a widow brings witnesses to attest that her husband died, and she collects her *kesubah* (*Rashi*).

37. The receipt is not needed to prevent a woman from collecting twice

for her divorce, since we tear the *get* upon payment. However, since if she later claims to have been widowed she can collect simply by producing witnesses to her husband’s death, the only way to protect the husband’s estate against multiple collections is to write a receipt for him. In this case, the receipt is a benefit to him, since he must pay the *kesubah* in any event and would certainly prefer some protection [i.e. a receipt that he must guard] to none at all (*Rashi*). [In our case, of course, where the woman has forfeited her *kesubah* payment, in a locale where they do not write *kesubos* the husband has no choice but to accept a receipt to avoid her collecting at some future date (see *Tosafos*).]

מאי קיימא – Why, **she is already standing there**, in the chamber of the Great Sanhedrin, which is in the vicinity of the Nikanor Gate.^[1] – ? –

The Gemara answers:

המקטין לה ומחתינן לה כדי לייגעא – The Mishnah means **that we take her up and down** the Temple Mount in order to exhaust her and thereby weaken her resistance to confessing.^[2] דתניא – This method of intimidation was employed elsewhere as well, **for it was taught in a Baraisa: רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר** – R' SHIMON BEN ELAZAR SAYS: **מקומם למקום** – When examining witnesses in capital cases, **THE COURT MOVES THE WITNESSES FROM PLACE TO PLACE**,^[3] כדי שתטרח דעתן עליהן – **IN ORDER THAT THEIR MINDS SHOULD BECOME UNSETTLED, SO THAT THEY WILL RETRACT** their testimony if it is untrue.

The Mishnah stated further:

ששם משקין את הסוטה וכו' – SINCE THERE at the Nikanor Gate **THEY GIVE** suspected **SOTAHs** the bitter waters **TO DRINK etc.** [and there they purify the women who have given birth and the *metzoraim*].

The Gemara asks:

בשלמא סוטה דכתיב, והעמיד הכהן את האשה לפני – **It is understandable that sotahs** drink the bitter waters at the Nikanor Gate, והעמיד הכהן את האשה לפני – **for it is written: The Kohen shall stand the woman “before Hashem.”**^[4] – Regarding *metzoraim*, too, it is understandable that their purification process takes place at the Nikanor Gate, דכתיב, והעמיד הכהן המטהר וגו' – **for it is written: The Kohen who purifies shall stand etc.** [the person being purified . . . “before Hashem” at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting].^[5] – **אלא יולדת מאי טעמא** – **But as for the woman who**

has given birth, what is the reason that her purification takes place at the Nikanor Gate? אילימא משום דאתיין וקיימין אקורב בנייהו – **If you say it is because [the women who have given birth] must come to the Temple and stand over their offerings**,^[6] אין קרבנו של אדם קרב – **as it was taught in a Baraisa: אין קרבנו של אדם קרב – A PERSON'S OFFERING IS NOT BROUGHT UNLESS HE IS STANDING OVER IT** –^[7] – **אי הכי** – **if so**, that this is the rationale, זבין וזבות נמי – **then zavin and zavos**^[8] should also be required to stand at the Nikanor Gate during their purification, yet the Mishnah does not mention them. – ? –

The Gemara answers:

Yes, it is **indeed so!** *Zavin* and *zavos* are in fact required to come to the Nikanor Gate just like a woman who has given birth, **ותנא חרא מינייהו נקט** – **but the Tanna chose to mention only one of them** (viz. the woman who has given birth), since this suffices to demonstrate that one who cannot enter the Courtyard proper stands “over his offering” by coming to the Nikanor Gate.^[9]

The Gemara cites a Baraisa relating to the law that the *sotah* procedure is performed in a specific area of the Courtyard:

אין משקין שתי – **The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: תנו רבנן** – **WE MAY NOT GIVE** the waters **TO DRINK TO TWO SOTAHs AT ONCE**,^[10] – **כדי שלא יהא לבה גס בהבירתה** – **SO THAT THE HEART OF ONE SHOULD NOT BE EMBOLDENED BY HER FELLOW**.^[11] – **רבי יהודה אומר** – R' YEHUDAH SAYS: **שתי היא** – **THIS IS NOT THE REASON** that two *sotahs* may not be given to drink at once. – **אזלא אמר קרא** – **RATHER**, the reason is that **SCRIPTURE STATES, The Kohen shall adjure HER**,^[12] – **לבה** – and *her* implies, “**BY HERSELF**.”

NOTES

1. The Mishnah stated previously that she was initially brought to the Great Sanhedrin, who would attempt to intimidate her into confessing. Now, the Great Sanhedrin convened in the לשכת הגזית, *Lishkas HaGazit* (Chamber of Hewn Stone), which was built into the wall of the Temple Courtyard, partly within the consecrated Courtyard area and partly outside that area (*Rashi*, citing *Yoma* 25a; see *Tos. HaRosh*). Since the *sotah* was already at the Sanhedrin's quarters on top of the Temple Mount, why does the Mishnah say that they took her “up to the Eastern Gate,” which was at the *bottom* of the Temple Mount?

2. Perhaps the hardship and mistreatment will awaken in her an anxiety about the potential effects of the bitter waters, so that if she is indeed guilty she will confess (*Rashi*). [Seemingly, the Gemara should have said that we take her “down and up,” rather than “up and down” – since she was previously on *top* of the Temple Mount. Perhaps the Gemara refers back to the beginning of the process, and means simply that we initially take her up to the seat of the Great Sanhedrin and then take her back down to the Temple Mount entrance. Alternatively, it means that after leaving the Chamber of Hewn Stone, we take her up and down several times to wear her out (*Hagahos Radal*). *Rashi* to *Numbers* 5:18, as well as *Rambam, Hil. Sotah* 3:3, seem to follow the latter interpretation. See *Keren Orah* and *Dvar Shaul* 13:1.]

3. The judges begin their examination in one chamber, then move the witnesses to another part of the chamber, and then to a different chamber altogether, before completing their questioning (*Rashi*).

4. *Numbers* 5:18 (see *Keren Orah* and *Meromei Sadeh*). The Nikanor Gate is considered “before Hashem,” because it was the main entrance to the Courtyard (*Rashi*) and was directly opposite the Holy of Holies (*Rambam, Hil. Sotah* 3:3). For further discussion of this point, see *Chidushei HaGriz al HaRambam, Hil. Mechusrei Kaparah* pp. 112-114, and *Dvar Shaul* 13:2.

5. *Leviticus* 14:11.

6. I.e. the bird offerings that they bring forty-one days after the birth of a male and eighty-one days after the birth of a female. These offerings permit them to partake of sacrifices and enter the Temple Courtyard (*Rashi*; see 7a note 48).

7. This requirement is derived from a verse concerning the *tamid* offering: תשמרו להקריב לי במוצאי: *You shall guard [the sacrifice] to offer*

[it] to Me in its appointed time (*Numbers* 28:2). One “guards” a sacrifice by standing nearby when it is offered (*Sifrei* ad loc.). [For the sake of the *tamid* and other communal offerings, representatives of the entire nation – known as *מקדוה*, *stations* – were stationed in the Temple (see *Taanis* 26a).] Someone bringing a personal offering would ordinarily enter the Courtyard with his offering in order to fulfill this requirement. A woman who has given birth, however, is forbidden to enter the Courtyard proper until *after* her offerings are made! She may come only as far as the Nikanor Gate, which is the innermost point not endowed with the sanctity of the Courtyard (see 7a note 47). Perhaps the reason she must stand there is to fulfill the requirement of “guarding” her offering (*Rashi*).

8. A *zav* (pl. *zavin*) is a man who experienced a certain type of genital emission similar (but not identical) to a seminal discharge. A *zavah* (pl. *zavos*) is a woman who experienced uterine bleeding not at her normal time. Both the *zav* and the *zavah* are *tamei*. If the *zav* had three such emissions on one day or on two or three consecutive days, and the *zavah* experienced such bleeding on three consecutive days, they must bring offerings as part of their purification process (see *Leviticus* Ch. 15). Until they do so, they are forbidden to enter the Temple proper (*Rashi*).

9. The Gemara seems to have concluded that a woman who has given birth as well as a *zav* and *zavah* must stand in the Nikanor Gate when their offerings are made. However, this contradicts the Mishnah in *Shekalim* (6:5, 7:7 with *Rav*) and the Baraisa in *Ervin* (32a), which teach that these people could merely deposit money for their offerings in a special box in the Temple and rely upon the Kohanim to purchase the offerings and bring them on their behalf! For discussion of this matter, see *Tos. Yom Tov, Shekalim* 7:7; *Gevuros Ari, Taanis* 26a; *Cheshk Shlomo* and *Toras Hakenaos* here.

10. *Tosafos* (ר"ה אין משקין) understand this as meaning that we do not even stand both of them in the Courtyard at the same time. See *Maharsha* to *Tosafos* and *Mishneh LaMelech, Hil. Sotah* 3:1.

11. Perhaps one of them is confident in her innocence and will therefore withstand the pressure to confess, and when the other – who is actually guilty – sees this, her ego will embolden her to bear the humiliation and persist in her denial just like the first (*Rashi*).

12. *Numbers* 5:19 [וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ אֹתָהּ הַכֹּהֵן] (*Rashi*). Another version of this Baraisa, cited in *Nedarim* 73a, quotes the verse (*ibid.* v. 27): וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ אֶת-הַמִּיּוֹם,

The Gemara examines the first opinion:

“**ואתה, קמא קמא הכתיב, — And the Tanna Kamma — why, it is surely written her,** as R’ Yehudah states. Why does he resort to a different reason for this ruling?^[13]”

The Gemara answers:

היא — **The Tanna Kamma** of this Baraisa is none other than **R’ Shimon**, דרריש טעם דקרא — **who expounds the rationale of Scripture** to define the limits of its law.^[14] ומה — **And he is thus saying** his statement in the style of “**What is the reason?**” as follows: מה טעם, אתה, לכךה — **What is the reason that the Torah states her** and requires that she be given to drink **by herself?** כדי שלא יהא לבה גס בהבירתה — **It is so that her heart should not be emboldened by her fellow.** R’ Yehudah, however, maintains that we cannot assume the law is based on this rationale, but must treat it as a Scriptural decree.

The Gemara asks:

מאי בנייהו — **What is the practical difference between them** (the Tanna Kamma and R’ Yehudah)?^[15]

The Gemara answers:

איבא בנייהו רותתה — **There is difference between them** regarding a **woman who is trembling** out of fear but who maintains her innocence all the same. The Tanna Kamma would permit administering her the waters together with another *sotah*, since there is no concern that she will become overly confident. R’ Yehudah,

however, would forbid it even in this case, since we have no license to set guidelines for the Scriptural law on the basis of our rationale for it.^[16]

The Gemara wonders how this can ever be permitted even according to the Tanna Kamma’s reasoning:

והא אין עושין מצות — **But can we give a trembling woman to drink** together with another woman? והתתה מי משקין — **Why,** there is a principle that **we do not perform mitzvos in bundles!**^[17] [רתגן] [רתגיא] — **For it was taught in a Baraisa:**^[18] אין משקין שתי סטות באחת — **WE MAY NOT GIVE TO DRINK TO TWO SOTAHs AT ONCE,** ואין מטְהֵרין — **NOR MAY WE PURIFY TWO METZORAIM AT ONCE,**^[19] שני מצורעין באחת — **NOR MAY WE BORE** the ears of **TWO SLAVES AT ONCE,**^[20] ואין עורפין שתי עגלות — **NOR MAY WE DECAPITATE TWO CALVES AT ONCE,**^[21] לפי שאין עושין מצות חבילות חבילות — **BECAUSE WE MAY NOT PERFORM MITZVOS IN BUNDLES.** This consideration applies under all circumstances — even where the *sotah* is trembling in fear.^[22] — ? —

The Gemara answers:

ואיחיתמא רב בהנא — **and some say it was Rav Kahana** who said: לא קשיא — **There is no difficulty.** כאן בכהן אחר — **Here,** in the latter Baraisa, we are dealing with administration of the waters by a **single Kohen.** Were he to give two *sotahs* to drink at once, he would be performing mitzvos in

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and he shall give “her” to drink the waters. The word והשקה, written with a *mapik hei*, is a contraction of — and thus equivalent to — והשקה (see *Ran* there). Yet another version, appearing in *Tosefta* 1:4, cites the verse (*Numbers* 5:16): והקריב אתה הכהן, *The Kohen shall bring “her” near.* [For a discussion concerning the various versions, see *Gilyon HaShas*. See also *Maharsha* and *Mitzpeh Eisan*.]

13. [According to the Tanna Kamma’s reason, the rule against giving two *sotahs* to drink together would seem to be a mere Rabbinic injunction, but R’ Yehudah has demonstrated a clear Scriptural source!]

14. The Gemara refers to a dispute between R’ Shimon and the Sages found in *Bava Metziah* (115a) concerning the prohibition, stated in (*Deuteronomy* 24:17), *You shall not take as a security the garment of a widow.* The Torah thus restricts a lender from exacting an item as security from a widow. The Sages maintain that this prohibition applies to all widows regardless of their financial condition, whereas R’ Shimon asserts that this prohibition applies only when the debtor is a poor widow and not when she is a wealthy one. For R’ Shimon surmises that the basis of this prohibition is as follows: A lender is obligated to return a security each day should the debtor need it (ibid. v. 13; see *Bava Metziah* 114b). If a lender would take security from a widow and the widow requires that item, he would be forced to frequent the widow’s house on a regular basis to return the item. However, when people observe the lender’s constant comings and goings, they will suspect that the widow is engaging in an inappropriate relationship with him. The Torah therefore forbade one from taking a security from a widow in the first place. This reasoning, however, applies only in the case of a *poor* widow, to whom one must return a security each day, but not to a wealthy widow, who [presumably] does not need the security. R’ Shimon, therefore, rules that the prohibition not to exact security from a widow does not apply in the case of a wealthy widow (*Rashi* here and to *Sanhedrin* 21a).

Underlying R’ Shimon’s argument is the position that the limits of the Torah’s laws can be determined by examining their logical basis; the scope of a mitzvah can be defined by examining its rationale. The Sages reject this premise and maintain that we have no right to expound the rationale of the mitzvos in order to define the limits of the law.

15. I.e. what difference is there whether we assume the Tanna Kamma’s (i.e. R’ Shimon’s) reasoning as the logical basis for the law, or whether we accept R’ Yehudah’s position that the law is treated as a Scriptural decree without any qualifying reason? (*Rashi*).

16. *Rashi*. [*Rashi* implies that it is sufficient for *one* of the *sotahs* to be trembling, as indicated by the singular form of the word ורותתה, a *trembling woman*. The reason would seem to be that her obvious fear

eliminates not only the concern that she will become overconfident, but also the concern that her fellow will become emboldened by watching her (*Hagahos Radal*, *Dvar Shaul* 14:3). However, *Tos. HaRosh* objects to *Rashi*’s explanation and emends the text to read ורותתו, *trembling women*, in the plural form.]

17. That is, although there is no concern for arrogance, we must conform to the dictum that multiple mitzvos may not be performed at once. The reason for this principle is that doing two mitzvos at once can create the impression that we are seeking to absolve our obligations quickly by bundling them together (*Rashi*; cf. *Tosafos* to *Moed Katan* 8b לפי ר”ה, who explain the reason as being that we must focus our full attention on each mitzvah separately).

18. The emendation follows *Mesorah HaShas*.

19. The reference is to the final step of the *metzora*’s purification, when he brings his offerings to the Nikanor Gate and a Kohen applies oil and the blood of his offering to his ear, thumb and toe (see 7a note 49). This ritual may not be done to two *metzora'im* at one time. See *Tiferes Yisrael*, *Boaz*, *Negaim* Ch. 3 §2.

20. A Hebrew slave ordinarily works for a six-year term, after which he goes free. Should he wish to remain with his master beyond the conclusion of the six-year term, he can, under certain circumstances, extend his service with the consent of his master until the arrival of the *Yovel* year (see *Exodus* 21:5-6 and *Deuteronomy* 15:16-17). The ritual that effects this condition is known as רציצה, *retziah* (literally: boring or piercing). In it, the master pierces the servant’s ear with an awl or the like, against a door, in the presence of three judges. This may not be done with two slaves at once.

21. The Torah (*Deuteronomy* 21:1-9; see below, Ch. 9) commands that if a murdered corpse is found and it is not known who killed him, the elders of the town nearest to the corpse bring a calf to an untilled valley, decapitate it there from the back of its neck, wash their hands over it and then make a statement denying responsibility for the murder. This calf is commonly referred to as the *eglah arufah* (decapitated calf). If it happened that there was a need to process two *eglah arufahs*, the court may not do both at the same time.

22. *Tosafos* object to the question: The principle that mitzvos may not be performed in bundles is merely a Rabbinic innovation, whereas the Tanna Kamma and R’ Yehudah argue in regard to the interpretation of Scripture! *Toras HaKenaos* explains that the Gemara’s question relates to the previous implication that on the *practical* level R’ Shimon would permit giving two *sotahs* to drink together if one is trembling in fear. Cf. *Mitzpeh Eisan*.

bundles.^[23] **באן בשני בהנים** – But here, in our explanation of the Tanna Kamma of the first Baraisa, we are dealing with administration of the waters by **two Kohanim**. The consideration of performing mitzvos in bundles does not apply to this case, and as such, the Tanna Kamma maintains that two *sotahs* may be given to drink at once if one of them is trembling with fear.^[24]

The Mishnah stated:

והכהן אזוח ובגדיה – A KOHEN then GRABS HOLD OF HER CLOTHING. If they are torn, they are torn; if they are shredded, they are shredded; and he rips them until he uncovers her bosom; and he then undoes her hair.

The Gemara cites the source of this ruling:

ופרע את ראש, ופרע את ראש – The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: HE SHALL UNCOVER THE HEAD OF THE WOMAN.^[25] **אין לי אלא ראשה** – From a simple reading of this verse, I KNOW ONLY that HER HEAD must be uncovered. **גופה מנין** – FROM WHERE do we derive that HER BODY must also be bared? **תלמוד לומר**, האשה – THE TORAH therefore STATES in that verse: THE WOMAN.^[26] **אם בן מה תלמוד לומר ופרע את ראשה** – IF SO, that even her body is bared, WHY MUST THE TORAH STATE that HE SHALL UNCOVER HER HEAD?^[27] **מלמד שהכהן סותר את שיערה** – THIS TEACHES THAT THE KOHEN UNBRAIDS HER HAIR.^[28]

The Mishnah stated further:

רבי יהודה אומר – R' YEHUDAH SAYS: **אם היה לבה וכו'** – IF HER BOSOM WAS COMELY etc. [he would not uncover it; and if her hair was beautiful, he would not unbraided it].

The Gemara analyzes the dispute between R' Yehudah and the Sages:

למימרא דרבי יהודה חייש להרוגא – Is this to say that R' Yehudah is concerned about evoking lewd thoughts in the minds of the bystanders **ורבנן לא חיישי** – whereas the Rabbis

are not concerned about this possibility? **והא איפקא שמעינן להו** – But in another Baraisa, we heard [these] Tannaim take the very opposite views! **דתניא** – For it was taught in a Baraisa, regarding the procedure for carrying out execution by stoning: **האיש מבסין אותו פרוק אחר מלפניו** – If the condemned person is A MAN, THEY remove his clothing and COVER his genitals IN FRONT with A SMALL PIECE OF MATERIAL.^[29] **והאשה שני פרקים אחר** – AND if the condemned is A WOMAN, they remove her clothing and cover her with TWO PIECES OF MATERIAL, ONE IN FRONT AND ONE IN BACK, **מפני שכולה ערוה** – BECAUSE ALL OF HER IS NAKEDNESS.^[30] **דברי רבי יהודה** – These are THE WORDS OF R' YEHUDAH. **והקמים אומרים** – BUT THE SAGES SAY: **האיש נסקל ערום** – Only A MAN IS STONED UNCLOTHED, **ואין האשה נסקלת ערומה** – BUT A WOMAN IS NOT STONED UNCLOTHED.^[31] Here, the Sages prohibit the disrobing of a woman because they are concerned that this might evoke lewd thoughts in the minds of those witnessing the execution.^[32] R' Yehudah, on the other hand, who rules that she must be disrobed, is not concerned for this eventuality.^[33] This stands in contradiction to the positions taken by these Tannaim as to whether the bosom of a comely *sotah* should be bared! – ? –

The Gemara answers:

אמר רבה – Rabbah said: **הבא טעמא מאי** – Here, in the case of a *sotah*, what is the reason that R' Yehudah does not permit the baring of a comely *sotah*? **שמא תצא מבית דין ונאית** – He is concerned that perhaps she will leave the court having been found innocent,^[34] **ויתגרו בה פרחי כהונה** – and the youthful Kohanim who were present will become aroused through seeing her and will pursue her afterwards.^[35] **התם הא מסתלקא** – But there, in the case of stoning, [the woman] has perished after being exposed, and thus, there is no fear that the bystanders will later act immorally with her.^[36]

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23. Similarly [in the case of *metzora'im*, the Baraisa refers to their purification by a single Kohen, and] in the case of slaves, it refers to a single master bringing them before a single court (*Rashi, Meiri*; cf. *Tosafos* with *Maharsha, Rashash* and *Hagahos Radal*; see also *Minchas HaKenaos* and *Kerem Nota*).

24. The elucidation follows *Rashi*. Cf. *Magen Avraham* 147:11.

25. *Numbers* 5:18.

26. Since it could have written, *ופרע את ראשה*, he shall uncover her head, and it adds *the woman*, it implies that her body must be exposed as well.

27. [If we go as far as to expose her bosom, it is obvious that we do not leave her head covered!]

28. The specific mention of her head teaches that an added degree of “uncovering” is required for her head: Besides removing any head-covering, the Kohen undoes her braids (*Rashi*).

29. We have translated the word *פרק* as a small piece of material, as it is rendered by *Rashi* here. Alternatively, it could mean a small part of his body (see *Rashi* to *Sanhedrin* 45a). In either case, the idea is that the genital area of the prisoner is covered when his clothes are removed prior to the stoning.

30. Since a woman’s genital area is visible even from behind, a second piece of material must be attached to cover her in back as well (*Rashi*; see *Hagahos Radal*).

31. That is, only a man is stripped naked – save for a patch of clothing covering his genitals – before he is stoned; a woman is stoned while clothed (*Meiri; Rambam, Hil. Sanhedrin* 15:1).

32. The requirement that the condemned be naked when stoned is Scriptural, as derived from the verse (*Leviticus* 24:14), *וירגמו אותו, and they shall stone “him,”* which implies that only the person “himself” is to be stoned – he is not to be stoned with any clothes on. Since the Torah mentions this in the context of a male and not a female, the Sages infer that a male must be naked when he is stoned, but a woman may be clothed (*Gemara Sanhedrin* 45b and below, 23b; see *Rashi* to 23b *דיה* ורגמו אותו, and see further, *Yad Ramah* to *Sanhedrin* *ibid.* and *Malbim* to

Leviticus loc. cit.). However, this derivation does not prohibit us from stoning a woman who is disrobed; it merely exempts a woman from the disrobing requirement. Accordingly, it would seem that we, in any case, should direct the woman to disrobe to ensure that she dies quickly and with a minimum of pain. [As we will see below (8b), the court is instructed to execute the condemned in the mildest feasible manner.] The Sages, however, rule that a woman must be clothed when she is executed. Evidently, then, they were concerned that men observing the execution would become aroused if her body was exposed (*Rashi* to *Sanhedrin* 45a להרהורא *דיה*; cf. *Tosafos* here), and that consideration overrides the precept to minimize her pain (see *Maharsha* to 8b).

33. R' Yehudah’s position is predicated on the view that although Scripture mentions the disrobing requirement in the context of a male, it does not mean to exclude a female from this requirement. Rather, based on the general principle that לאיש לכל מיתות, שבתורה, Scripture equates women to men with respect to all methods of execution mentioned in the Torah, we deduce that it applies equally to a female (see *Sanhedrin* *ibid.* with *Rashi*; cf. *Tosafos* to *Bava Kamma* 15a *דיה* לכל מיתות). The Gemara takes this as an indication that R' Yehudah is not concerned for the possibility of lewd thoughts. Had lewd thoughts been a factor for R' Yehudah, he presumably would have interpreted the verse’s requirement of disrobing as applying only to a man. Although the Torah generally equates the methods of execution applied to men and women, the particular requirement of disrobing would have been seen as an exception to this rule (*Dvar Shaul* 15:6; see *Aruch LaNer, Sanhedrin* 45a; see also *Rashash* to *Tosafos* *דיה* האיש).

34. I.e. she will survive the ordeal of the bitter waters and leave the Temple grounds alive (*Rashi*).

35. Rabbah speaks of the youthful Kohanim [not because others are immune to arousal, but] because it was predominantly the Kohanim who stayed on the Temple grounds and who were thus likely to witness the *sotah* ritual (*Rashi*).

36. [See *Mesoras HaShas*. R' Yehudah allows the concern for lewd thoughts to be a factor in the method of performing a legal procedure

The Gemara continues:

וְכִי תִימָא – **And if you will object:** אֲתִי לְאִיגְרוּנִי בְּאֶחָרְנֵייתָא – Perhaps those observing the demise of the condemned woman **will be provoked** by seeing her in a state of undress to act immorally **with other [women]**, הָאָמַר רַבָּא – we can reply: **But** this concern has no basis, for **Rava has said:** גְּמִירֵי דְאִין יִצְרֵהּ הָרַע – **We have it by tradition** from my teachers that **the Evil Inclination prevails only over what an individual sees with his own eyes.**^[37]

The answer just given by Rabbah has resolved the contradiction

between the two statements of R' Yehudah. It has not, however, touched upon the contradiction between the two statements of the Sages. The Gemara therefore objects:

אָמַר רַבָּא – **Rava said:** דְּרַבִּי יְהוּדָה אֲדַרְבֵּי יְהוּדָה קָשְׁיָא – Do you suppose that there is a **conflict between [the two statements] of R' Yehudah,** דְּרַבְנָן אֲדַרְבֵּי לָא קָשְׁיָא – but **not between [the two statements] of the Sages?!** Why have you given an answer for only the first of these contradictions and not the second? אָלֵא אָמַר רַבָּא – **Rather, said Rava:** דְּרַבִּי יְהוּדָה אֲדַרְבֵּי יְהוּדָה לָא קָשְׁיָא – **[The two statements] of R' Yehudah are not contradictory,** כְּדִשְׁנִין – **as we have answered.**

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only when these thoughts could translate into some sort of action. Thus, in the case of a comely *sotah*, where it is possible that she will survive the ordeal, R' Yehudah forbids her exposure out of concern that the Kohanim who witness it will later try to seduce her (see 7a note 54). In the case of stoning, though, where there is no possibility that an observer will commit a sin with her later, R' Yehudah interprets Scripture as requiring a woman to be executed while unclothed, just as a man is.]

37. I.e. while seeing a woman in an exposed state might lead a man to pursue her at a later time, seeing one woman exposed does not trigger a man's arousal towards other women (see *Tosafos* גמירי and *Melo HaRo'im*; see also *Teshuvos Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah* §184 נעִימוּהָ רַבִּיהּ נְעִימוּהָ (רַבִּיהּ וְעֵתָה נְבוּאָה).

[*Tosafos* (רַבִּיהּ וִיתְגַּר) wonder: Since even R' Yehudah agrees that Scripture requires the uncovering of the *sotah*, why does he forbid it outright when she is comely? Let a sheet be spread out between the spectators and her, so that the verse may be fulfilled and the concern for lewd thoughts eliminated! As for the Kohen who uncovers her, let him turn his face away. In fact, *Sifrei* (ad loc.) states that this is how it was done! *Tosafos* answer that (as stated below) the reason for the uncovering of the *sotah* is to humiliate her and make of her an example as to what results from loose behavior. R' Yehudah maintains that this would not be achieved if it was done behind a sheet, and therefore, when the uncovering cannot be done publicly it is omitted entirely (cf. *Keren Orah* here and *Aruch LaNer to Sanhedrin* *ibid.*).]

And [the two statements] of the Sages are also not contradictory, as follows. הָבָא טַעְמָא מֵאִי – Here, in the case of *sotah*, what is the reason that the Sages require that she be exposed and humiliated? מִשּׁוּם, וְנִסְקָר? – It is on account of the verse which states: *and all the women shall be chastised and shall not imitate your lewdness.*^[1] This consideration overrides the concern that men observing the process will be aroused to lewd thoughts. הֲתָם – But there, in the case of stoning, we need not humiliate the condemned woman, אֵין לָהּ יִסּוּר גְּדוֹל מִזֶּה – for there is no greater chastisement to others than this, i.e. the very fact that she is being executed. Thus, she is stoned while clothed, for there is no reason to disrobe her.^[2]

The Gemara anticipates a possible objection:

And if you say, לְעֵבִיד כֶּה תֵרְתִי – let us do both – execute the condemned woman *and* humiliate her – for this will create an even greater deterrent; אָמַר רַב נַחְמָן בְּרַבָּה בְּרַבָּה אָבִיבָה – we can reply that Rav Nachman said in the name of Rabbah bar Avuha: אָמַר קָרָא – Scripture states: וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ, אָמַר קָרָא – Scripture states: כָּמוֹךָ, כָּמוֹךָ – you shall love your fellow as yourself,^[3] בְּרוּר לוֹ מֵיָתָהּ – and from this it follows that if your fellow has been condemned to die, you shall choose for him a favorable death.^[4]

The Gemara now proposes that Rav Nachman's principle is at the core of the dispute between the Sages and R' Yehudah:

Let us say that this [dictum] of Rav Nachman – the idea that we must choose a “favorable” death for those whom the court executes – is the subject of the previous Tannaic dispute! The Sages, who rule that a woman is stoned while clothed, accept the dictum that we must choose a “favorable” death for the condemned, whereas R' Yehudah, who rules that she is stoned unclothed, rejects this dictum.^[5] – ? –

The Gemara responds:

No! We can say that everyone accepts [the principle] of Rav Nachman, וְהָבָא בְהָא קְמִיפְלָגִי – and here, [the Sages and R' Yehudah] are in disagreement about the following issue. מִר סָבַר בְּיִוּנְיָה עֲדִיף לִיה טַפִּי מִצְעָרָא – One master [i.e. the Sages] holds that one's personal

degradation is a more significant consideration to him than the suffering of his body, וּמַר סָבַר צְעָרָא דְגוּפִיה עֲדִיף לִיה טַפִּי – and the other master [R' Yehudah] holds that the suffering of one's body is a more significant consideration to him than his personal degradation.^[6]

The Mishnah states further:

הִיְתָה מְבוּסָה לְבָנִים וְכו' – IF SHE WAS DRESSED IN WHITE etc. [the Kohen dresses her in black].

A Baraisa qualifies this ruling:

אִם הָיוּ שְׁחוּרִים נְאִים לָהּ – IF BLACK [CLOTHING] SUITED HER, מְבַסִּין אוֹתָהּ בְּגָדִים מְבוּעָרִים – THEY WOULD DRESS HER IN OTHER UNBECOMING CLOTHING.

The Mishnah states further:

הָיוּ עָלֶיהָ כְּלֵי זָהָב וְכו' – IF SHE WAS WEARING GOLD ORNAMENTS etc., they remove them from her in order to disgrace her.

The Gemara wonders why the Mishnah must say this:

It is obvious that we remove her jewelry! הֲשֵׁתָא נוּוְלִי – If [the Kohen] even makes her repulsive by tearing her garment and unbraiding her hair, הֲנִי מִיְבַעֲיָא – is it necessary to state that these (her ornaments) are removed?

The Gemara answers:

You might have said that with these ornaments on she suffers greater humiliation through the disrobing than without them, בְּרָאָמְרִי אִינְשֵׁי – as people say, שְׁלִיחַ עֲרִטִיל וְסִיּוּם מִסְאָנִי – “He is stripped of clothing, yet wearing shoes!”^[7] [The Mishnah] therefore informs us that her jewelry must be removed.^[8]

The Mishnah continues:

וְאַחַר כֵּן מְבִיא חֶבֶל וְכו' – AFTERWARD [THE KOHEN] BRINGS A ROPE OF PALM FIBERS etc. [and ties it above her bosom].

The Mishnah's ruling is analyzed:

R' Abba inquired of Rav Huna: בְּעָא מִינֵיהּ רַבִּי אֲבָא מִרַב הוּנָא – Concerning the rope of palm fibers, what is [the law] as to whether it is essential to the *sotah* procedure?^[9] מִשּׁוּם שְׁלֵא יִשְׁמְטוּ בְּגָדֶיהָ מֵעֲלֶיהָ הוּא – Is the

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1. *Ezekiel* 23:48 (see above, 7b note 7). The Gemara draws from this metaphor an allusion that it is actually proper to punish an adulterous woman publicly in order to deter other women from licentiousness – and it understands this as the reason why the Sages insist on exposing every *sotah* in public. Now, if the *sotah* is guilty, her horrible death through the bitter waters will provide a potent deterrent to others. But if she is actually innocent she will survive the ordeal, and it is still necessary to impress upon other women the imperative of avoiding the type of immodest conduct that brought her under suspicion of adultery. This is accomplished by humiliating her through public exposure (*Rashi* here and to *Sanhedrin* 45a). And although the lesson is intended for women, her humiliation is complete only if the disgraceful exposure is done in the presence of men (*Tosafos* on 8a ויתגרו).

2. In the final analysis, then, the reason the condemned woman is stoned with her clothes on is not necessarily because of the consideration of lewd thoughts (*Rashi* to *Sanhedrin* *ibid.*). Rather, it is because this type of execution is simply to her benefit, as the Gemara proceeds to explain.

3. *Leviticus* 19:18.

4. I.e. a death with the least amount of humiliation (see *Rashi* to *Sanhedrin* *ibid.*). [We apply this principle when there is no reason to include humiliation in her punishment.]

5. [Had R' Yehudah considered it important to choose a favorable death for the condemned, he presumably would have interpreted the verse's requirement of disrobing as applying only to a man. Although the Torah generally equates the methods of execution applied to men and women, the particular requirement of disrobing would have been deemed an exception to this rule. See 8a note 33.]

6. I.e. the dispute between the Tannaim does not revolve around *whether*

we are to choose a favorable death for the condemned; rather, it focuses on *what* constitutes a favorable death. According to the Sages, we assume that a person would prefer some physical pain to humiliation. Thus, since it is humiliating for a woman to be publicly exposed, they rule that she is to be clothed when executed, although this will prolong her death somewhat. R' Yehudah, though, assumes that one would rather avoid physical pain even at the expense of humiliation; hence, he rules that the woman is to be disrobed, for this will lessen her physical agony (*Rashi*). [Nevertheless, if the concern for lewd thoughts would be a factor, this would override the consideration of giving the woman a favorable death, and R' Yehudah would not allow her to be disrobed. Thus, we must say, as above, that lewd thoughts are not of concern because the woman perishes as a result of stoning (*Maharsha*).]

7. People ridicule an unclothed person who insists on wearing shoes, since they consider this incongruous and bizarre. Similarly, if the *sotah* would wear jewelry with her clothes tattered and her hair disheveled, perhaps this would be an even greater humiliation (*Rashi*; see *Dvar Shaul* 15:9).

8. Because despite the attitude of some scoffers, the jewelry could actually enhance her appearance (see *Kerem Nota*).

9. Is it essential that we tie the *sotah*'s dress specifically with this type of rope? *Tosafos* (ד"ה תנינא) assert that this does not mean that if the Kohen used another rope the bitter-waters procedure would be ineffective, for the Torah never mentions the necessity for a rope of palm fibers (or any other rope)! Rather, the question is whether the requirement is important enough that if rope of palm fibers is not readily available the Kohen must delay the procedure and make a thorough search for one instead of simply using an ordinary belt. See further, notes 11 and 12.

rope brought primarily so that her clothing should not slip from her, **או דילמא** – and accordingly, even a small belt is sufficient since it, too, supports her dress? **או דילמא** – Or, perhaps, the rope is brought primarily on account of that which the master said in a Baraisa: היא חגרה – SHE (i.e. the suspected *sotah*) GIRDED HERSELF FOR her liaison with HIM (the suspected adulterer) WITH A BELT, לפיכך בהן מביא חבל המצרי – THEREFORE, THE KOHEN BRINGS A ROPE OF PALM FIBERS, וקושר לה למעלה מרדףיה – AND TIES IT ABOVE HER BOSOM¹⁰ – מעקב – and accordingly, the rope of palm fibers is essential to fulfillment of the procedure.¹¹ – ? –

Rav Huna replies:

אמר ליה – He said to [R' Abba]: הנינוה – We learned the resolution to this question in the following Baraisa: ואחר כך מביא – HE THEN BRINGS A ROPE OF PALM FIBERS AND TIES IT ABOVE HER BOSOM בדי שלא ישמשו בגדיה – SO THAT HER CLOTHING SHOULD NOT SLIP FROM HER.¹²

The Mishnah concluded:

והוא שכל הרוצה לראות בה יראה וכו' – WHOEVER WISHES TO WATCH HER MAY WATCH etc. [except for her slaves and maidservants, because her heart is emboldened by them. All women are permitted to watch her, as it is stated: *And all the women shall be chastised and shall not imitate your lewdness*].

The Gemara wonders:

אמרת כל הרוצה – This is self-contradictory! היא גופא קשיא

First you say: WHOEVER WISHES TO WATCH HER MAY WATCH. Thus, there is no difference between men and women, as all are permitted to observe the proceedings. **והדר תני** – But then, in the very next clause, [the Tanna] teaches, **כל הנשים מותרות לראותה** – ALL WOMEN ARE PERMITTED TO WATCH HER, which implies that **נשים** – women, indeed, are permitted to watch, but **אין אנשים לא** – men are not permitted to watch. – ? –

The Gemara answers:

אמר אביי – Abaye said: **תרגמה אנשים** – Interpret the initial ruling (“Whoever wishes to watch may come and watch”) as referring to women only.¹³

This interpretation is rejected:

אמר ליה רבא – Rava said to [Abaye]: **והא כל הרוצה לראות בה** – But [the Mishnah] teaches: WHOEVER WISHES TO WATCH HER MAY WATCH! How can you say that this refers only to women?

Rava therefore offers another explanation:

כל הרוצה לראות בה רואה – Rather, Rava said: **אמר אביי** – The clause, WHOEVER WISHES TO WATCH HER MAY WATCH, לא ונשים – refers to both men and women. **והייבות לראותה** – And the latter clause teaches that whereas men are merely permitted to watch her, **נשים** – women are obligated to watch her, **ונסרו כל הנשים ולא תעשינה בזמהכנה** – for it is stated, and all the women shall be chastised and shall not imitate your lewdness.¹⁴

Mishnah **בה** – According to the measure with which one measures out his actions **בה** – with it they (the Heavenly tribunal) measure for him in return.¹⁵ This principle is illustrated by the Torah’s treatment of the *sotah*. **היא קשטה את עצמה לעבירה** – She adorned herself for the sin of adultery; **המקום גולה עליה** – the Omnipresent disgraced her.¹⁶ **היא גלתה את עצמה לעבירה** – She revealed herself for the sin; **המקום גלה עליה** – the Omnipresent revealed her sin to all.¹⁷ **בדרך התחילה בעבירה תחילה** – She sinned with the thigh first and then with the stomach; **לפיכך תלקה הדרך תחילה ואחר כך** – therefore the thigh should be struck first and then the stomach.¹⁸ **ושאר כל הגוף לא פלט** – And the rest of the body does not escape either.¹⁹

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10. This is one of the ways in which the *sotah* is punished “measure for measure” (see the Mishnah below). The full text of the Baraisa, which contains many such examples, is cited below, after the Mishnah.

11. Certainly the Baraisa’s reason for using a rope of palm fibers is valid, and this is why it is surely preferable that a rope of palm fibers be used. The question is whether this is the primary reason that they bring rope. Do they seek primarily to hold up her dress and incidentally use a rope of palm fibers to add a degree of degradation, or are they primarily interested in degrading her with a rope of palm fibers and therefore tie her torn clothing with it? If the primary purpose is to hold up her dress, then when no rope of palm fibers is readily available, the Kohen should simply use an ordinary belt. But if the primary purpose is to degrade her “measure for measure,” then the Kohen must make a significant effort to procure a rope of palm fibers (*Tosafos* תניא, based on *Rashi* תניא; see following note).

12. We see from this Baraisa that the rope is brought primarily to prevent her clothing from falling [and accordingly, even an ordinary belt suffices] (*Rashi*). The other Baraisa means merely to explain why a rope of palm fibers is preferred (see *Tosafos*).

13. According to Abaye, men may not watch the procedure, presumably because they might be aroused to lewd thoughts. Nevertheless, the Kohanim who were present [at least, those involved in the proceedings] did watch, and it is on account of these Kohanim that R’ Yehudah forbids barring the bosom of a comely *sotah* (*Dvar Shaul* 15:11; see there for an alternative explanation).

14. The Mishnah states that women are “permitted” to watch – not that they are “obligated” to watch – because it is contrasting the rule for women with the following ruling, “except for her slaves and maidservants.” They are forbidden to watch, whereas other women are “permitted” to watch, and indeed are commanded to do so (*Tos. HaRosh*; cf. *Melech Shlomo* and *Tiferes Yisrael* to the Mishnah,

Malbim to *Numbers* 5:18, *Dvar Shaul* 15:12).

15. [In whatever manner one conducts himself, Divine judgment deals with him in a similar manner. This is the principle of *measure for measure*. Our Mishnah and the one that follows (below, 9b) give examples of this principle, beginning with the treatment of the *sotah*.]

God treats a person in this way so that he will recognize that the occurrence was a reward or punishment directed by Divine Providence (see *Sefer Ikarim*, cited by *Geon Yaakov* in *Ein Yaakov*, and *Derashos HaRan* §3 p. 42). Also, when one sees another person suffering measure for measure for a sin, he will become more careful in his actions (*Sefer Chasidim* §92). Furthermore, when a person suffers a measure-for-measure punishment, he is more easily able to determine which misdeed he has committed to cause this particular punishment, and this makes it easier for him to correct himself (*Nefesh HaChaim* 4:29 and *Ruach Chaim* 4:14). See also *Sichos Mussar* of R’ Chaim Shmulevitz (5732:11).

16. She dressed herself in finery to commit adultery; the Torah therefore commanded that the Kohen makes her appear disheveled by tearing her garments and unbraiding her hair (*Rav*).

17. The *sotah* sat in public places to meet an adulterer instead of remaining in the privacy of her home; measure for measure, God causes her to stand at the Nikanor Gate and have her sin publicly revealed (*Rav, Rambam*).

18. During the act of adultery, the thigh is the first part of the body to derive pleasure, for it is the first body part to come into contact with the body of the adulterer; her stomach is next to receive pleasure. The Kohen therefore curses her (*Numbers* 5:21): . . . when Hashem causes your thigh to collapse and your stomach to distend, beginning the curse with the thigh and then the belly (*Rashi*; see, however, *Gemara* below, 9b).

19. Since all of the *sotah*’s body derives pleasure from her adultery, her entire body is stricken when she drinks the bitter waters (*Meiri*; see also *Maharsha*).

Gemara The Gemara elaborates on the principle of *measure for measure*:

אָפּ עַל גַּב דְּמִדָּה בְּטִילָה – Rav Yosef said: – Even though the exact measure of the four types of court-imposed capital punishment have ceased to exist,^[20] בְּמִדָּה לֹא בְטִיל – the “according to the measure” mentioned by our Mishnah has not ceased.^[21]

The Gemara cites another place where this idea is found: דָּאָמַר רַב יוֹסֵף – For Rav Yosef said, וְכֵן תִּנִּי רַבִּי חִיָּיא – and so too did R’ Chiya teach a Baraisa that states: מִיּוֹם שֶׁחָרַב בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ – FROM THE DAY THAT THE TEMPLE WAS DESTROYED, אָף עַל פִּי שֶׁבִטְלָה סַנְהֶדְרִין – EVEN THOUGH THE Great SANHEDRIN CEASED to function in its traditional place in the Temple, אַרְבַּע מִיתוֹת לֹא בְטִילוּ – THE FOUR types of EXECUTIONS HAVE NOT CEASED.

The Gemara objects: וְהֵא בְטִילוּ – But surely they have ceased, as the Great Sanhedrin no longer sits in the Temple!^[22] – ? –

The Gemara explains: אֵלֶּיךָ דִּין אַרְבַּע מִיתוֹת לֹא בְטִילוּ – Rather, the Baraisa means that even though the court can no longer impose capital punishment, the equivalent Divine punishment of the four types of executions has not ceased, as follows:^[23] מִי שֶׁנִּתְחַיֵּב סְקִילָה – One who is deserving of death by stoning או נופל מן הגג או היה – either falls from a roof or is trampled by a wild beast;^[24] מִי שֶׁנִּתְחַיֵּב שְׂרִיפָה – one who is deserving of death by burning או נופל בדליקה או נחש מבישו – either falls into a fire or is bitten by a snake;^[25] מִי שֶׁנִּתְחַיֵּב הַרְיָגָה – one who is deserving of death by beheading או נמסר למלכות או ליקטין באין – is either handed over to the authorities to be killed, or bandits come upon him and kill him;^[26] מִי שֶׁנִּתְחַיֵּב חֲנִיקָה –

and one who is deserving of death by strangulation או טובע בְּנָהָר או מת בקרונובי – either drowns in a river or dies of quinsy.^[27]

The Gemara elaborates further on the theme of measure-for-measure punishments:

It was taught in a Baraisa: רֵבִי אֱמִיר – REBBI USED TO SAY:^[28] מִנֵּיִן שֶׁבְּמִדָּה שֶׁאָדָם מוֹדֵר בָּהּ מוֹדְרִין לוֹ – FROM WHERE do we know that WITH THE MEASURE THAT A MAN MEASURES his actions, WITH IT THEY (the Heavenly tribunal) MEASURE FOR HIM in return? “בְּסִטְאָהּ בְּשִׁלְחָהּ הָרִיבָנָה” – FOR IT IS STATED: WITH A PRECISE MEASURE YOU SHALL CONTEND WITH HER WHEN YOU SEND HER AWAY.^[29] אֵינִי לִי אֵלֶּיךָ סָאָה – From this verse, I HAVE a source ONLY for a substantial sin, represented by A *SE’AH*.^[30] מִנֵּיִן לְרִבּוֹת תְּרַקֵּב וְחֲצֵי תְרַקֵּב – FROM WHERE do I know TO INCLUDE smaller infractions, represented by A *TARKAV*.^[31] אֶחָד קַב וְחֲצֵי קַב – A *KAV* AND A HALF A *KAV*, רֹבַע וְחֲצֵי רֹבַע – A *ROVA* (quarter of a *kav*) AND HALF A *ROVA* – And FROM WHERE do I know about yet smaller infractions, represented by A *TOMEN* AND AN *UCHLA*.^[32] “כִּי כָל-סֵאוֹן סֵאוֹן בְּרַעֲשׁ” – [SCRIPTURE] therefore STATES: FOR EVERY MEASURE IS MEASURED WITH NOISE.^[33] וּמִנֵּיִן – AND FROM WHERE do we know that EACH AND EVERY *PERUTAH* ADDS UP TO A GREAT AMOUNT!^[34] “אֶחָת לְאֶחָת לְמִצְאָה חֶשְׁבוֹן” – For [THE VERSE] STATES:^[35] [ADDING] ONE TO ANOTHER TO DETERMINE THE AMOUNT.

The Baraisa explains how this principle applies to a *sotah*: וְכֵן מִצִּינֵי בְּסוּטָה – AND SO WE FIND WITH A *SOTAH*, שֶׁבְּמִדָּה שֶׁמוֹדְרָה – THAT WITH THE MEASURE THROUGH WHICH SHE MEASURED

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20. The Torah prescribes four different methods of execution for different capital offenses: *stoning, burning, beheading and strangulation* (see Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 49b). The courts, though, can no longer impose capital punishment on anyone because the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 41a) states that no Sanhedrin can sentence a person to death unless the Great Sanhedrin is functioning in the Chamber of Hewn Stone in the Temple.

21. Those who violate the law will be punished in a measure similar to the form of death to which they are liable (*Rashi*). [This is further application of the measure-for-measure principle: Not only does it apply to the type of transgression that the person committed, but it can also apply to the type of punishment to which one is liable (see *Sichos Mussar* *ibid.*.)]

[Rav Yosef states this here to warn women against adultery, because even though the *sotah* test is no longer given, an adulteress will nevertheless suffer a similar fate (*Iyun Yaakov*.)]

22. How, then, can Rav Yosef and the Baraisa state that capital punishment remains in effect after the destruction of the Temple?

23. I.e. although a Sanhedrin could no longer sentence a guilty person to the capital punishment prescribed for his crime, God nevertheless punishes him by having him killed in a similar way (*Rashi*). [See *Tosafos* to *Kesubos* 30a and *Sanhedrin* 37b for why there seem to be exceptions to this principle.]

Tosafos note that this principle had application even when the Great Sanhedrin was functioning in the Temple and the courts were authorized to carry out capital punishment. For example, in cases where there were no witnesses who could testify to having witnessed the crime, the court could not execute the accused; he would nevertheless (if guilty) be subject to a similar death at the hands of Heaven.

The Gemara now describes the type of death that awaits a person liable to each of the four types of capital punishment.

24. In execution by stoning, the convict is first thrown from an elevation to the ground below. [Only if he survives this fall are stones actually thrown at him – see Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 45a.] In the post-Temple era, Divine Providence brings about an analogous punishment by causing the one deserving of stoning to be killed by falling off a roof or by being clawed and thrown to the ground by a wild animal (see *Rashi*).

25. The snake venom kills him by “burning” him internally (*Rashi*).

26. Such a person dies either at the hand of bandits, who kill their victims with a sword, or at the hands of the authorities, who execute by beheading (see *Rashi* here and to *Sanhedrin* 37b עלֵי באין עלֵי).

27. *Rashi*, as rendered by *Targum HaLaaz*. This disease can so constrict the throat that the person cannot breathe, and death by suffocation is the result.

28. [The parallel Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (100a) records the Tanna as R’ Meir. This is also apparent from our Gemara’s reference below (15b) to this Baraisa (see *Gilyon HaShas*.)]

29. *Isaiah* 27:8. When it is necessary to punish Israel (“to send her away”), God will do so (“contend with her”) in the measure through which Israel sinned [בְּסִטְאָהּ derives from סָאָה, *se’ah*, a dry measurement] (*Rashi*).

30. A *se’ah* is equivalent to the volume of one hundred and forty-four eggs.

31. A *tarkav* is half a *se’ah*, or three *kavs*. The word *tarkav* is a compound word comprised of the words *trei* and *kav*, interpreted as “two (*kavs*) plus a *kav*” (*Rashi*).

32. These are small measures, mentioned in *Bava Basra* 90a (*Rashi*; see *Rashbam* there). See also above, 5a.

33. *Isaiah* 9:4. [This translation follows the exposition; see commentators there for the literal translation.] The superfluous phrase כִּי לְכָל, *for every*, includes even smaller indiscretions (*Maharsha*; see there for an alternative; cf. *HaMagiah* in *Ein Yaakov*).

34. Even though a person is not punished the first or second time he transgressed, this does not mean that his actions are ignored. Rather, they are all added to the reckoning, until they reach the level for punishment (*Rashi*).

This refers to small sins. Such a sin is referred to as a *perutah*, because a *perutah* is the smallest denomination of coin, and the minimum amount that is considered money. Similarly, these actions are the smallest actions that can be considered a sin at all (*Ben Yehoyada*).

35. *Ecclesiastes* 7:27.

היא עמדה על פתח – WITH IT THEY MEASURE FOR HER: בָּהּ מִדְּרוּלָה
 לְפִיכֶךָ בְּהֵן מִעַל רֵאשָׁה – SHE STOOD AT THE DOORWAY OF HER HOUSE TO
 BE SEEN BY [THE ADULTERER]; לְפִיכֶךָ בְּהֵן מִעַמִּידָה עַל שַׁעַר נִקְנֹר –
 THEREFORE THE KOHEN STANDS HER UP AT THE NIKANOR GATE AND REVEALS HER SHAME TO ALL.^[36] היא

פְּרָסָה לוֹ סוּדְרֵינֵי נְאִין עַל רֵאשָׁה – SHE SPREAD ATTRACTIVE KER-
 CHIEFS ON HER HEAD FOR HIM; לְפִיכֶךָ בְּהֵן נוּטֵל בִּפְהָ מִעַל רֵאשָׁה –
 THEREFORE THE KOHEN TAKES THE VEIL OFF HER HEAD AND PLACES IT AT HER FEET.^[37] היא קִשְׁטָה לוֹ פְּנֵיהָ –
 SHE ADORNED HER FACE FOR HIM; לְפִיכֶךָ – THEREFORE

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36. The Nikanor gate was used to access the Temple courtyard. Therefore, by standing her in that gate, her indiscretion becomes publicized (*Nesivos HaKodesh*; see also *Rashi to Numbers 5:18*).

37. See *Rashi* to 8a ופרע ד״ה; see also *Nesivos HaKodesh*.

The Gemara suggests, and immediately rejects, a possible answer:

– וכי תימא הַנֶּךְ אֲרֹדוּ – **And if you say that those [first Egyptians] were in fact completely destroyed,**^[21] וְהָיָה אַחֲרָיִךְ נִיחָה – **and those later “Egyptians” were in fact people of other nationalities who afterwards settled in the land of Egypt, and it was they who were later destroyed – וְהִתְנַיָּא – but it was taught in a Baraisa to the contrary: אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוּדָה – R’ YEHUDAH SAID: MINYAMIN, AN EGYPTIAN CONVERT, WAS A COLLEAGUE OF MINE FROM AMONG THE STUDENTS OF R’ AKIVA. אָמַר מִנְיָמִין גַּר הַמִּצְרַיִם – MINYAMIN, THE EGYPTIAN CONVERT, SAID: אֲנִי מִצְרִי רִאשׁוֹן וְנִשְׂאֵתִי מִצְרִית – “I AM A FIRST-GENERATION EGYPTIAN convert,^[22] AND I MARRIED A FIRST-GENERATION EGYPTIAN convert. אֲשִׁיא לְבִנִּי – I WILL MARRY MY SON TO A SECOND-GENERATION EGYPTIAN, i.e. the daughter of Egyptian converts, כְּרִי שִׁיחָא בֶן – SO THAT MY SON’S SON SHALL BE FIT TO ENTER THE CONGREGATION.”^[23] We thus see that in the times of the Tannaim, the original Egyptians still lived in Egypt. – ? –**

The Gemara therefore revises its answer:

– אֵלֶּיָּא אִי אִיתְמַר הָכִי אִיתְמַר – **Rather, if it was stated at all, this is what was stated: אָמַר רַב חִינָנָא בַר פָּפָא – Rav Chinana bar Pappa said: אֵין הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא נִפְרַע מִן הַמֶּלֶךְ עַד שְׁעַת שִׁלּוּחוֹ – The Holy One, Blessed is He, does not punish a king until his time to be sent away has arrived, בְּסִטְאָהּ בְּשִׁלְחָה – שְׁנֵאמַר – as it is stated: With a precise measure you shall contend with her when you send her away etc.**

The Gemara cites another Biblical source for this Amora’s statement:

– אָמַיִמַר מִתְּנִי לָהּ דְּרַב חִינָנָא בַר פָּפָא אָהָא – **Ameimar taught that statement of Rav Chinana bar Pappa regarding this following verse: מַאי דְּכָתִיב – What is meant by that which is written:**^[24] “כִּי אֲנִי ה’ לֹא שִׁנִּיתִי וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי-יַעֲקֹב לֹא כָלִיתֶם” – **For I, Hashem, have not changed, and you, the sons of Jacob, you have not perished.** “אֲנִי ה’ לֹא שִׁנִּיתִי” – **The first phrase is interpreted: I, Hashem, have not “repeated,”**^[25] meaning that לֹא הִבִּיתִי לְאוֹמָהּ – **I did not strike a nation and strike it again.**^[26] “וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי-יַעֲקֹב לֹא כָלִיתֶם” – **And when the verse concludes: and you, the sons of Jacob, you have not perished,** it refers to הָיִינוּ – **that which is written:**^[27] **My arrows I shall finish against them.** חֲצִי בָלִין – **My arrows will be finished,** וְהֵן אֵינָן בָּלִין – **but they will not be finished.**^[28]

The Gemara discusses God’s method of punishing an individual:

– אָמַר רַב הַמְנוּנָא – **Rav Hamnuna said: אֵין הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא נִפְרַע מִן הַמֶּלֶךְ עַד שְׁתִּתְמַלֵּא סֵאתוֹ – The Holy One, Blessed is He, does not punish a person until his measure is filled,**^[29] שְׁנֵאמַר – **as it is stated: After his desire has been filled, misfortune will strike him etc.**^[30]

The Gemara cites another exposition made by the Amora cited above:

– דְּרַשׁ רַב חִינָנָא בַר פָּפָא – **Rav Chinana bar Pappa expounded: מַאי דְּכָתִיב – What is the meaning of that which is written:**^[31] “רַנְּנוּ צְדִיקִים בְּה’ לְיֹשְׁרִים נְאֻהָ תְהִלָּה” – **Sing joyfully, O righteous, because of Hashem; for the upright, praise is fitting?** “נְאֻהָ תְהִלָּה” – **Do not read it praise is “fitting” [“navah”], אֵלֶּיָּא נְוָה תְהִלָּה – but rather “a palace of” [“nevei”] praise.**^[32] זֶה מֹשֶׁה וְזֶה – **This refers to Moses and**

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21. I.e. they died and drowned during the Exodus from Egypt. [Pharaoh’s army that chased after the Israelites drowned in the Sea of Reeds, and those Egyptians who remained in Egypt were smitten by God and died at the very same time (*Beur HaGra, Even HaEzer* 4:18; based on *Rashi to Exodus* 14:25).]

22. That is, Minyamin himself converted. The Torah permits only third-generation Egyptian converts to marry an ordinary Jew (see *Deuteronomy* 23:8-9). Minyamin applied this law to his own situation (*Rashi*).

23. [The son’s son will be a third-generation Egyptian, who is permitted to marry into the congregation of Israel.] Minyamin’s son was a second-generation Egyptian, i.e. the son of an Egyptian convert. If he marries a first-generation Egyptian convert, his children are second-generation Egyptians on their mother’s side, and would therefore be forbidden to marry into the congregation. As the Gemara (*Yevamos* 78a) teaches, the offspring of those prohibited to enter the congregation are classified according to the greater disqualification among their parents. [E.g. if a second-generation Egyptian male marries a first-generation Egyptian female, the children are classified as second-generation Egyptians in accordance with their maternal lineage, rather than third-generation Egyptians in accordance with their paternal lineage.] Based on this statement, we see that the original Egyptian nation did not die out completely, and even those living in Egypt in Tannaic times were descendants of the original Egyptians, whom Jews are prohibited to marry (*Rashi*; see *Iyei HaYam*, cited by *Chidushei Geonim* in *Ein Yaakov*).

[*Rashi* cites *Tosefta*, which records R’ Akiva’s disagreement with his student Minyamin’s statement. According to R’ Akiva, Minyamin himself was permitted to marry an ordinary Jew. This is so because back in the days of the First Temple, Sancheirev, king of Assyria, had conquered much of the populated world, exiling nations and resettling them in other lands. Based on this fact, the Gemara in *Berachos* (28a) permits the marriage of an Ammonite convert to an ordinary Jewess, under the assumption that the convert was not a descendant of the Ammonite nation forbidden to the congregation of Israel. Thus, even though Minyamin was born in the land of Egypt, that did not necessarily mean that he was a descendant of the Egyptian nation, whose converts are prohibited until the third generation. Our Gemara nevertheless asks a legitimate question from Minyamin’s case. For R’ Akiva argued only

that all the nations were integrated, but not that the Egyptians no longer exist. Thus, according to both Minyamin and R’ Akiva, there are still Egyptians somewhere in the world (see *Tosafos*). See *Minchah Chareivah* for a wide-ranging discussion of this matter.]

24. *Malachi* 3:6.

25. The term שִׁנִּיתִי is expounded as a form of מְשֻׁנָּה, *repetition*.

26. According to Ameimar it was this verse that inspired Rav Chinana bar Pappa’s statement that God does not punish a nation until it is fit to be completely destroyed. *Tosafos* notes that the Gemara’s objection would apply to this version, too, for we see from the three cups mentioned by Pharaoh’s butler that Egypt seemingly survived the first major punishment. The answer given above, however, would not apply here since in this version the verse clearly refers to the “sons of Jacob” and not to a king. See *Maharsha* for a possible solution.

27. *Deuteronomy* 32:23.

28. That is, God’s punishment of the nation of Israel will end without destroying the nation (*Rashi*).

[The literal translation of the verse can also be understood this way: Just as God does not change, so too the existence of the Jews will not be changed (*Meiri*).]

29. That is, God allows a wicked person to carry out all his desires in this world, before He punishes him in the World to Come (*Rashi*, as understood by *Maharsha*; see next note).

30. *Job* 20:22. This applies only to evil people [as evident from the context of the verse]; God does not bother punishing them until they are deserving of an eternal punishment. But concerning the righteous the opposite is true: God punishes them immediately in this world, in order that they receive full reward in the World to Come (*Meiri*; see also *Maharsha*).

Meiri adds that this is the reasoning behind the previous Gemara, which distinguished between Israel and the other nations: God does not punish evil nations immediately, but rather waits until they deserve total destruction. However, He punishes Israel a little at a time, in order that they never become deserving of complete destruction.

31. *Psalms* 33:1.

32. That is, the upright shall praise God for the structures that they erect (*Rashi*).

David, שלא שלטו שונאיהם במעשיהם – for their enemies did not gain control of their handiwork.^[33] דוד דכתב „טבעו בארץ” שעריה” – We know this about David, for it is written: *Its gates sunk in the earth.*^[34] משה – The same is true about Moses, דאמר מר – for the master said: משנבנה מקדש ראשון – When the first Temple was built, נגנו אהל מועד – the Tent of Meeting was hidden; קרשיו קרסיו – its beams, its hooks, ובריהיו ועמודיו – its bars, its pillars, ואדניו – and its sockets.^[35]

The Gemara asks:

היבא – Where is the Tabernacle hidden?

The Gemara answers:

אמר רב חסדא אמר רב אבימי – Rav Chisda said in the name of

Avimi: תחת מחילות של היכל – Under the tunnels of the Temple Sanctuary.^[36]

The Gemara returns to the topic of the *sotah*'s punishment: סוטה נתנה עיניה – The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: תנו רבנן לה – במי שאינו ראוי לה – THE SOTAH SET HER EYES UPON ONE WHO IS NOT FIT FOR HER. מה שביקשה לא ניתן לה – WHAT SHE SOUGHT WAS NOT GIVEN TO HER,^[37] ומה שבידה נטלוהו ממנה – AND WHAT WAS IN HER HAND THEY TOOK FROM HER.^[38] שכל הנותן עיניו במה – FOR ANYONE WHO SETS HIS EYES UPON SOMETHING THAT IS NOT HIS, מה שמבקש אין נותנין לו – WHAT HE SEEKS THEY DO NOT GIVE HIM ומה שבידו נוטלין הימנו – AND WHAT IS IN HIS HAND THEY TAKE FROM HIM.^[39]

NOTES

33. I.e. the enemies of Israel never derived any benefit from the labors of David or Moses (*Rashi*).

34. *Lamentations* 2:9. The context of this verse refers to the city that David built for himself. Its gates, made of precious metals, sank into the ground so that the enemies could not carry them away and use them. And the enemies had no interest in the wooden objects (*Rashi*; cf. *Rashi* to the verse).

Alternatively, this refers to the gates of the Temple. Although David did not actually build the Temple (his son, Solomon, did), he prepared the gold and silver for its construction and purchased the land. Its gates in particular are associated with David (see *Shabbos* 30a). Our Gemara is therefore justified in stating that the Temple gates were saved in tribute to David (*Maharsha*; cf. *Iyun Yaakov*, *Ben Yehoyada*, and *Toras HaKe-naos*).

35. [*Exodus* Ch. 26 describes how these items were used in construction of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness.] See *Ben Yehoyada* for a possible explanation for why these components of the Mishkan are singled out here; see also *Minchah Chareivah*.

36. That is, when the Temple was built in Jerusalem, the Tabernacle was hidden in tunnels beneath it. [See *Minchah Chareivah*.]

37. She becomes prohibited to the adulterer [even should she become divorced or widowed] (*Rashi*).

38. If she drinks the *sotah* waters, she will die; and if she confesses, she becomes prohibited to her husband and loses her *kesubah* (*Rashi*).

39. See *Iyun Yaakov*, who discusses if this concept applies to the adulterer as well.

AND SO WE FIND CONCERNING THE PRIMORDIAL SERPENT, שָׁנְתָן עֵינָיו בְּמָה שֶׁאִינוֹ רְאוּי לוֹ – THAT SET ITS EYES UPON SOMETHING NOT FIT FOR IT.^[1] מָה שֶׁבִיקֵשׁ לֹא נָתַנוּ לוֹ – WHAT IT SOUGHT, THEY DID NOT GIVE TO IT, וּמָה שֶׁבִּדְרוֹשׁ נִטְלוּהוּ מִמֶּנּוּ – AND WHAT WAS IN ITS HAND, THEY TOOK FROM IT.^[2] אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא – THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED IS HE, SAID: אֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי יְהִי מֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל – I HAD SAID THAT [THE SERPENT] SHOULD BE KING OVER ALL THE ANIMALS AND BEASTS,^[3] וְעָבְשׂוּ אַרְוֵר הוּא מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכָּל – BUT NOW, IT IS MORE CURSED THAN ALL THE ANIMALS AND ALL THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD.^[4] אֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי יִהְיֶה בְּקוּמָה וְקוּפָה – I HAD SAID THAT [THE SERPENT] WOULD WALK UPRIGHT.^[5] עָבְשׂוּ אֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי יְהִי – NOW, UPON ITS BELLY SHALL IT GO.^[4] מֵאֲכָלוּ מֵאֲכָל אָדָם – I HAD SAID THAT [THE SERPENT'S] FOOD SHOULD BE THE SAME AS HUMAN FOOD; עָבְשׂוּ עִפְרוֹ יֵאָכֵל – BUT NOW, DUST IT SHALL EAT.^[4] [THE SERPENT] SAID, “I WILL KILL ADAM AND MARRY EVE.”^[6] עָבְשׂוּ, אֵיבָה – NOW, I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN YOU AND THE WOMAN, AND BETWEEN YOUR OFFSPRING AND HER OFFSPRING.^[7]

The Baraisa lists ten other examples of this principle: בְּקִין וְקֹרַח וּבִלְעָם וְדֹאֵג וְאַחִיתוּפֶלֶל וְגַחְזִי – AND SO WE FIND REGARDING CAIN, KORACH, BILAM, DOEG, ACHITHOPHEL, GEICHAZI, ABSALOM, ADONIAHU, UZIYAHU, AND HAMAN, מָה שֶׁבִיקֵשׁ לֹא נִתְּנָה לָהֶם – THAT THEY SET THEIR EYES UPON SOMETHING NOT FIT FOR THEM. וּמָה שֶׁבִּדְרוֹשׁ נִטְלוּהוּ – AND WHAT WAS IN THEIR HAND WAS TAKEN FROM THEM.^[8]

The Mishnah stated:

בְּיָרֵךְ הַתְּחִילָה בְּעֵבֶרָה וְכוּ' – SHE SINNED WITH THE THIGH FIRST etc.

and then with the belly; therefore the thigh should be struck first and then the belly.

The Gemara seeks the source for this:

אֵילִימָא – From where is this statement known? מִנָּא הֵי מִיֵּלֵי – If you say, because it is written as part of the oath that the Kohen administers to the sotah:^[9] וְנִפְלָה וְנִפְלָה בִטְנוֹ וְנִפְלָה בִטְנוֹ וְנִפְלָה בִטְנוֹ – but it is also written regarding the actual punishment:^[10] וְנִפְלָה בִטְנוֹ וְנִפְלָה בִטְנוֹ – her stomach will distend and her thigh will collapse. This verse mentions the punishment of the stomach before that of the thigh. – ? –

The Gemara answers:

אָבַיֵי – Abaye said: כִּי לֵיט – When [the Kohen] administers the curse, לֵיט תְּחִילָה יֵרַךְ – he curses the thigh first, וְהָדָר בְּטֵן לֵיט – and then he curses the stomach.^[11] בְּטֵן בְּדָקִי – But when the waters test, כִּי אֹרְחִיחוּ בְּדָקִי – they test in their normal manner: בְּטֵן בְּרִישָׁא וְהָדָר יֵרַךְ – the stomach first and then the thigh.^[12]

The Gemara asks:

בְּקִלְלָה נְמִי כְּתִיב, לְצִבּוֹת בְּטֵן וְלִנְפֵל יֵרַךְ – But in the curse the Kohen administered it is also written:^[13] These curse-causing waters shall enter your innards to distend the stomach and collapse the thigh. Why is the stomach mentioned first in that part of the curse?

The Gemara answers:

הוּא הַהוּא דְמוֹדַע לָהּ בְּהוֹן דְּבָטֵן בְּרִישָׁא וְהָדָר יֵרַךְ – That is so the Kohen will inform her that the stomach will actually be stricken first and then the thigh, – so as not to cast aspersions on the bitter waters, when the punishment occurs to the stomach first.^[14]

NOTES

1. [Before the serpent was punished for persuading Eve to partake of the Tree of Knowledge, it was endowed with a certain amount of intelligence and the power of speech. The Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (59b) relates that if not for its curse, serpents would have been the servants of man (see *Maharal* and *Maharsha* there). Only after the serpent persuaded Eve to sin did God decree that it lose its former stature and crawl on its belly.]

When the Torah records Eve's words regarding her beguilement into eating from the Tree of Knowledge, it employs a term that connotes marital relations. For the word הַשֵּׂאִי – from the verse הַשֵּׂאִי אֶת הַחַיָּה, *the serpent deceived me* (*Genesis* 3:13) – has the same root as the word *marriage*. The Torah thus teaches that when the serpent convinced Eve to eat, it “coupled” with her (*Rashi* here and to *Shabbos* 146a; see also *Rashi* to *Genesis* 3:1; see *Maharatz Chayes*). [*Pardes Rimonim* (quoted by *Shaarei Zohar* to *Shabbos* there) states emphatically that this should not be taken literally, as meaning that the serpent actually cohabited with Eve.]

2. The serpent lost its upright stature (*Rashi*).

[Although the serpent also lost other qualities with which it was created, as the Gemara proceeds to explain, the change from an upright creature with hands and feet to one which must slither on the ground is the most striking (*Toras HaKenaos*).]

3. That is why the serpent was created with more cunning than all the other animals (*Rashi*, based on *Genesis* 3:1).

4. Based on *Genesis* 3:14.

5. This is based on the paraphrase of the curse that follows. From each detail of the curse we can learn what the serpent was like beforehand (*Rashi*).

6. The serpent's hope was that Eve would feed the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge to Adam first, causing him to die. It would then be free to marry Eve (*Rashi* to *Genesis* 3:15; cf. *Maharsha* and *Iyun Yaakov*).

7. *Genesis* 3:15.

8. The ten incidents are as follows:

(1) Cain's brother Abel was born together with two twin girls [while Cain himself was born with only one twin girl] (as derived from *Genesis* 4:2). Cain wanted to marry the extra twin girl that was born with Abel (*Rashi*; cf. *Maharsha*, *Maharatz Chayes*, and *Iyun Yaakov*). [When Cain killed

Abel to achieve this goal, he himself became cursed.]

(2) Korach wanted to serve as a Kohen, and as a result he was swallowed by the earth (*Rashi*; cf. *Meiri*; see *Numbers* Ch. 16).

(3) Bilam wanted to earn Balak's money by cursing Israel, but he was killed when he went to get paid for the 24,000 Israelites who fell as a result of his advice (*Rashi*; see *Numbers* Ch. 22, with *Sanhedrin* 106a).

(4) Doeg was one of the greatest Torah scholars, and when he became jealous of David's Torah knowledge he attempted to belittle David in the eyes of King Saul. He was punished with an early death (*Rashi*; see *I Samuel* 21:8 with *Sanhedrin* 93b and 101b).

(5) Achithophel sought to become king in the times of David, but he too died young (*Rashi*; see *Sanhedrin* 101b).

(6) Geichazi set his eyes upon the property of Naaman, the general of Aram [against the wishes of Elisha], and he was punished with *tzaraas* for taking it (*Rashi*; see *II Kings* Ch. 5).

(7) Absalom wanted to usurp the kingdom from his father David, but he lost his life during the rebellion. [This story will be elaborated upon below, 10b-11a.]

(8) Adoniyahu, son of David, wanted to marry Avishag, David's attendant, and attempted to take the throne for himself; King Solomon had him executed (*Rashi*; see *I Kings* Ch. 2).

(9) King Uziyahu wanted to serve as a Kohen, but he was stricken with *tzaraas* on his forehead (*Rashi*; see *II Chronicles* Ch. 26).

(10) Haman wanted to destroy the nation of Israel (*Meiri*), but he himself lost his high office and was killed (see *Emes LeYaakov*, who notes that the reference to Haman was apparently not in *Rashi's* text).

[See *Ben Yehoyada* and *Radal* for reasons why Geichazi, who lived after Absalom and Adoniyahu, is mentioned first.]

9. *Numbers* 5:21.

10. *Ibid.* v. 27.

11. [As recorded in v. 21.] Since the curse begins the process, it emerges that the *sotah* is first punished by hearing about the collapse of her thigh (*Rashi*).

12. The waters enter the stomach first, causing damage there, and afterwards they move on to the thigh (*Rashi*).

13. Verse 22.

14. If the Kohen does not repeat the curse in the order in which the

stated:^[30] *Joseph went up to bury his father . . . and up with him went both chariots and horsemen.* מי לנו גדול – Joseph was rewarded measure for measure for this good deed, for **who was treated with as much honor as Joseph**, משה זכה בעצמות יוסף – **that none other than Moses attended to him?**^[31] משה זכה בעצמות יוסף – **Moses merited to attend to the bones of Joseph**, וְאִין בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גְּדוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ – **and there was none in Israel greater than him**, וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ – **as it is stated:**^[32] *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.* Moses, too, was rewarded measure for measure, for **who was treated with greater honor than Moses**, וַיִּקְבֵּר אֹתוֹ בְּגִי' – **that none but the Almighty attended to him?** – **As it is stated:**^[33] *He buried him in the valley.* – **And it was not regarding Moses alone that they said this**, אֲלֵא עַל כָּל הַצְּדִיקִים – **but regarding all of the righteous** as well – that is, God Himself attends to the righteous after their death. וַיִּקְבֵּר אֹתוֹ בְּכּוּר ה' וַיִּסְפְּדֵהוּ – **As it is stated: your righteousness shall go before you, and the glory of Hashem shall gather you in.**^[34]

Gemara The Gemara cites a Baraisa that elaborates upon the Mishnah's statement concerning Samson:

שְׁמֵשׁוֹן בְּעֵינָיו מָרַר – **The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa:** שְׁמֵשׁוֹן בְּעֵינָיו מָרַר – **SAMSON REBELLED against God WITH HIS EYES**, וַיִּמְרָר שְׁמֵשׁוֹן אֶל־אִבּוֹ אֹתָהּ קַח־לִי בִּיהִיא וְשָׂרָה בְּעֵינָיו – **AS IT IS STATED** regarding the woman from Timnas whom he wished to marry: *SAMSON SAID TO HIS FATHER, "TAKE HER FOR ME, FOR SHE IS FITTING IN MY EYES."*^[35] לְפִיכָךְ נִקְרוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים אֶת עֵינָיו – **THEREFORE, THE PHILISTINES GOUGED OUT HIS EYES**, וַיִּמְרָר שְׁמֵשׁוֹן אֶת־עֵינָיו – **AS IT IS STATED: THE PHILISTINES SEIZED HIM AND GOUGED OUT HIS EYES.**

The Gemara asks:

אֵינִי – **But is it so** that Samson erred in marrying the woman from Timnas? וְהִכְתִּיב, וְאָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ לֹא יָדְעוּ בִּי מֵהָיָא – **Why, it is written: His father and mother did not know that it was from Hashem.**^[36] – ? –

The Gemara answers:

כִּי אֶזְלָא מִיָּהָא – **When he went to select her, at least, his motives were not completely pure, because** בְּתֵר יִשְׂרוּתִיהָ אֶזְלָא – **he**

followed what was proper in his eyes.^[37]

The Gemara discusses Samson further:

רַבִּי אֹמֵר תְּחִילַת קְלָקוּלוֹ בְּעָזָה – **It was taught in a Baraisa:** תְּחִילַת קְלָקוּלוֹ בְּעָזָה – **REBBI SAYS: THE BEGINNING OF HIS CORRUPTION WAS IN GAZA;** לְפִיכָךְ לָקָה בְּעָזָה – **HE WAS THEREFORE SMITTEN IN GAZA.** תְּחִילַת קְלָקוּלוֹ בְּעָזָה – **We know that the BEGINNING OF HIS CORRUPTION WAS IN GAZA,** וַיִּלְךְ שְׁמֵשׁוֹן עִזְתָּהּ וַיִּרְא־שָׁם אִשָּׁה זֹנָה וּגְו' – **FOR IT IS WRITTEN:**^[38] *SAMSON WENT TO GAZA AND HE SAW A HARLOT THERE* etc. לְפִיכָךְ לָקָה בְּעָזָה – **HE WAS THEREFORE SMITTEN IN GAZA.** וַיּוֹרִידוּ אֹתוֹ עִזְתָּהּ – **FOR IT IS WRITTEN:**^[39] *THEY BROUGHT HIM DOWN TO GAZA and they bound him in copper fetters.*

The Gemara asks:

וַיּוֹרֵד שְׁמֵשׁוֹן תְּמַנְתָּהּ – **But it is written** before this: *Samson went down to Timnas.*^[40] Why was he not punished in Timnas, measure for measure?

The Gemara answers:

תְּחִילַת קְלָקוּלוֹ מִיָּהָא בְּעָזָה הָיָא – **The beginning of his corruption, at least, was in Gaza.**^[41]

NOTES

were buried. When Jacob passed away, Joseph fulfilled this last request and arranged for his father to be buried in Eretz Yisrael. He himself led the funeral procession, as stated in the verse quoted below.

Joseph's stature at that time was greater than that of all of his brothers, since he was then the viceroy of Egypt (*Rashi*).

30. *Genesis* 50:7,9.

31. Since Joseph accorded his father the great honor of personally attending to his burial, Joseph merited to have his remains attended to by the greatest of all Jews, Moses – measure for measure (*Rashi*).

32. *Exodus* 13:19.

33. *Deuteronomy* 34:6. Moses, the greatest of all men, had the privilege to have the Almighty Himself attend to his burial. Moses merited this great honor and privilege because he occupied himself with transporting Joseph's remains from Egypt. Just as Moses gave Joseph great honor by occupying himself with him, Moses merited that God Himself should bury him (*Rashi*).

34. *Isaiah* 58:8. Not only did God occupy Himself with Moses upon his passing, but God occupies Himself with all the righteous who pass away – to bring their souls to their eternal place and reward them. [He does not, however, occupy Himself with their bodies. Only in the case of Moses did God Himself attend to the actual burial (*Maharsha*; see also *Tos. Yom Tov*).]

35. *Judges* 14:3. When Samson visited the city of Timnas, he saw a Philistine woman whom he desired to marry (see below, note 37). Upon returning home, he requested of his parents that they should arrange the marriage.

[This is the first of three Philistine women with whom Samson was involved. He subsequently met a woman from Gaza, and finally, Delilah from Nachal Sorek, who brought about his downfall.]

36. *Ibid.* v. 4. That is, God wanted Samson to desire the woman from Timnas, to aid his fight against the Philistines (*Rashi*; see next note).

37. Samson's primary motive in marrying a Philistine woman was to find a pretext to fight the Philistines. At that time, the Philistines dominated the Jewish nation, and the Jews did not have sufficient merit to fight them. It was therefore left to Samson to serve as a lone warrior against

the Philistines. His plan was to live with the Philistines and find personal cause to attack them. [This would not result in reprisals against the Jews, for the Philistines would view his acts as those of a disenfranchised madman, who was clearly acting on his own.] For example, when the woman from Timnas was subsequently given in marriage by her father to another man, Samson responded by using foxes to burn down the Philistines' crops. When they retaliated by burning the woman and her father alive, he responded with a second attack. Thus, his motives for marrying the woman were sound. However, when Samson stated that the Timnas woman was fitting "in his eyes," he demonstrated that some physical desire had entered his thoughts. For this slight imperfection he was later punished (*Radak to Judges* 13:4).

Radak also points out that since Samson was blamed only for following his eyes, it is apparent that his action in marrying the Philistine was not in itself forbidden. Since one may not marry a non-Jewish woman, we must infer that the woman from Timnas converted to Judaism before Samson married her. [Only women from the seven nations of Canaan are forbidden even after they convert – see *Maharsha*.] This is also the view of *Rambam* (*Hil. Isurei Biah* 13:14-16 and *Sefer Chasidim* §167; cf. *Tos. Shantz*). Through this marriage of convenience, Samson could have decisively defeated the Philistines, if not for the fact that there was a minuscule ulterior motive for the marriage.

[Later commentators attribute even more sublime motives to Samson's actions. See, for example, *Ben Yehoyada, R' Tzadok HaKohen* in his *Yisrael Kedoshim* pp. 10a ff, and *Michtav MeEliyahu* vol. II pp. 266 ff.]

38. *Ibid.* 16:1. The verse concludes: וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ, which apparently means, *he cohabited with her*. For this sin he was later punished in Gaza.

39. *Ibid.* v. 21. This occurred after Delilah betrayed him to the Philistines.

40. *Ibid.* 14:1. The incident with the woman from Timnas preceded the one with the woman from Gaza (*Rashi*). And the Gemara just stated that because he followed his eyes in Gaza, he later was punished with having his eyes gouged out there.

41. Although the incident in Timnas occurred earlier, it was not considered a serious lapse, because Samson married the woman and did

The Gemara now discusses the third and last Philistine woman with whom Samson was involved:

“וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵיכֵן וַיֵּאָהֵב אִשָּׁה בְּנַחַל שׁוֹרֵק וּשְׁמָהּ דְּלִילָה” – The verse states:^[42] *It happened after this that he loved a woman from Nachal Sorek; her name was Delilah.*

A Baraisa elaborates on the fitting nature of Delilah’s name: תְּנִינָא – It was taught in a Baraisa: רַבִּי אֲמַר – REBBI SAYS: אִילְמָלָא (לא) נִקְרָא שְׁמָהּ דְּלִילָה – Even if her name had not been DELILAH, רַאִיָּה הֵיחָה שְׁתַּקְרָא דְּלִילָה – IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FITTING FOR HER TO BE CALLED DELILAH,^[43] because the Hebrew word *delilah* connotes severing. דִּילְדָּלָה אֶת כַּחוֹ – SHE [DELILAH] SEVERED [SAMSON’S] STRENGTH, דִּילְדָּלָה אֶת לְבָבוֹ – SHE SEVERED HIS HEART, דִּילְדָּלָה אֶת מַעֲשָׂיו – and SHE SEVERED HIS ACTIONS.^[44] דְּכַתִּיב, וַיִּסַּר כַּחוֹ – SHE SEVERED HIS STRENGTH, דִּילְדָּלָה אֶת כַּחוֹ – AS IT IS WRITTEN: HIS STRENGTH DEPARTED FROM HIM.^[45] דְּכַתִּיב, וַתִּרְאֵה דְּלִילָה – SHE SEVERED HIS HEART, דִּילְדָּלָה אֶת לְבָבוֹ – AS IT IS WRITTEN:^[46] DELILAH SAW THAT HE HAD TOLD HER ALL [THAT WAS IN] HIS HEART. דִּילְדָּלָה אֶת מַעֲשָׂיו – SHE SEVERED HIS ACTIONS, דִּיהוּא לֹא יָדַע בִּיהִי – FOR THE DIVINE PRESENCE DEPARTED FROM HIM, דִּיהוּא לֹא יָדַע בִּיהִי – AS IT IS WRITTEN: BUT HE DID NOT KNOW THAT HASHEM HAD DEPARTED FROM HIM.^[47]

The Gemara analyzes this section of the Baraisa: “וַתִּרְאֵה דְּלִילָה בִּיהִגֵּיד לָהּ אֶת־כָּל־לְבוֹ” – The verse states: *Delilah saw that he had told her all [that was in] his heart.*

The Gemara asks: מַנָּא יָדְעָה – How did she know?^[48]

The Gemara offers two possible explanations:

רַב אֲמַר רַב חַנִּין אָמַר – Rav Chanin said in the name of Rav: אֲבַיִי אָמַר – True words are recognizable.^[49] אֲבַיִי אָמַר – Abaye said: יָדְעָהּ בּוֹ בְּאוֹתוֹ צְדִיק דְּלֹא מְפִיק שֵׁם שְׁמַיִם לְבַטְלָה – She knew about that righteous one (Samson) that he would not utter the Name of Heaven in vain.^[50] כִּיֹּן דְּאָמַר, נִזְיִר – Hence, as soon as he said: *I am a nazir to God.*^[51] אֲמַרָה הִשְׁתָּא וַדָּא קוּשְׁטָא קְאָמַר – she said to herself, “Now he is certainly telling the truth.”

The Gemara examines another verse in that passage, which describes the steps taken by Delilah to persuade Samson to reveal to her the source of his strength:

“וַיְהִי כִּי־הִצִּיקָהּ לּוֹ בְּדַבְרֶיהָ כָּל־הַיָּמִים וַתִּאלָצְהוּ” – And it was after she tormented him with her words every day and pressed him, he became exasperated to death.^[52]

The Gemara asks: מַאי, וַתִּאלָצְהוּ? – What does the verse mean by *she pressed him*? What could Delilah do to cause Samson distress?

The Gemara answers: אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק דְּבֵי רַבִּי אַמִּי – R’ Yitzchak of the academy of R’ Ami said: בְּשַׁעַת גְּמֵר בִּיאָה נִשְׁמָטָה מִתַּחְתָּיו – At the time of the culmination of cohabitation, she would slip away from beneath him.^[53]

The Gemara digresses briefly to discuss the verse in which Samson’s mother (Tzlaponis) was instructed as to the particulars of Samson’s *nezirus*.^[54]

“וַעֲתָה הִשְׁמְרִי נָא וְאַל־תִּשְׁתֵּי יַיִן וְשִׁכָר וְאַל־תֹּאכְלִי כֵּל־טָמֵא” – And now, be careful, and do not drink wine or aged wine, and do not eat anything contaminated.^[55]

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not cohabit with her out of wedlock [which he apparently did with the woman from Gaza] (*Rashi*). [The incident in Gaza is related in the verse only after we are told that Samson judged Israel for twenty years (15:20). Apparently, after twenty years of relative calm following Samson’s attacks on the Philistines that resulted from his marriage to the woman from Timnas, Samson found it necessary once again to move among the Philistines so that he would be able to attack them from within. The Baraisa, though, views this action as a serious mistake, which quickly led to Samson’s downfall at the hands of Delilah (see *Samson’s Struggle* by R’ Gershon Weiss, p. 116 ff). Thus, although Samson had already erred earlier in Timnas, that mistake, which was not as severe, did not lead to his downfall as did his mistake in Gaza.]

[It should be noted that *Targum Yonasan* to the verse apparently disputes the view of Rebbi, for the *Targum* translates זֹנָה as an *innkeeper* [related to *מְיוֹנוֹת*, *food*], not a harlot. Accordingly, the verse means merely that Samson came to the woman’s inn, not that he cohabited with her. Thus, there must be some other reason as to why he was punished in Gaza. [This follows *Rashi’s* understanding of *Targum* in a similar verse that is written regarding Rachav (see *Joshua* 2:1). However, *Radak* there argues that *Targum* is translating the word זֹנָה euphemistically – that is, a harlot can be called an “innkeeper” in the sense that just as an innkeeper will provide room and board to anyone for a fee, a harlot will provide her services to anyone for a fee. According to his view, it is possible to say that the *Targum* does not dispute Rebbi’s view.]

The conclusion of the episode in Gaza will be cited below, 10a (see note 7 there).

42. *Judges* 16:4.

43. Delilah is the only one of the three women that Samson married whose name is known. The Gemara therefore expounds her name (*Ma-harsha*).

44. This does not mean that Delilah was always evil and tricked Samson into marrying him so that she could betray him. Rather, she was initially righteous, attracted to Samson’s spiritual qualities, and even converted to Judaism in order to marry him. Only later, after she was bribed by the governors of the Philistines, did she succumb and agree to betray Samson (see *Yisrael Kedoshim*, p. 13a).

45. *Ibid.* v. 19. After his hair was cut, Samson lost his strength. See below, 10a note 31.

46. *Ibid.* v. 18.

47. *Ibid.* v. 20. Until Delilah betrayed him, Samson had been blessed with Divine assistance in his single-handed fight against the Philistines.

[*R’ Tzadok HaKohen* notes that the term *דְּלִילָה* generally refers to something that, although it is almost completely severed from its source, still hangs by a slight attachment (see *Mishnah* to *Chullin* 127a). Here too, although Delilah succeeded in damaging Samson’s strength, heart, and actions, she could not completely destroy him, because he still retained some of his sanctity. Thus, when his hair began to grow, he regained his strength (*Yisrael Kedoshim* 11a).]

48. Samson had previously given her several false explanations as to the source of his strength (*Rashi*). Why, then, was she so certain that this explanation was true?

49. The truth rings with sincerity because it explains heretofore inexplicable observations. When Delilah heard that Samson was a *nazir*; she now understood why his hair was so long and why he never drank wine. She therefore believed that his latest explanation about the source of his great strength was true (*Rashi*).

50. [*R’ Tzadok HaKohen* points out (*Yisrael Kedoshim*, p. 16b) that even though our *Mishnah* is using Samson as an example of measure-for-measure punishment and the Gemara is now describing his fatal error with Delilah, it still refers to him as a righteous person. This term would certainly not be used for a base person who lived a promiscuous life. Obviously then, Samson’s slight missteps are magnified in relation to his exalted level of righteousness.]

51. *Ibid.* v. 17.

52. *Ibid.* v. 16.

53. This action, taken by Delilah at the time when Samson’s arousal was greatest, caused him great anguish (*Rashi*). According to *Alshich* (see also *Ben Yehoyada*), Samson was concerned that she was causing his seed to be wasted.

54. [Presumably, this passage is taught here because the verse cited is expounded upon by R’ Yitzchak of the house of R’ Ami, the author of the previous teaching.]

55. *Ibid.* 13:4. An angel appeared to the barren Tzlaponis and informed her that she would bear a son (Samson). In this verse he instructs her how to act during the pregnancy, because her son would be a *nazir*.

The Gemara asks:

“**בל־טמא** – **What** does the verse mean to include by saying “**anything**” contaminated? ותו עד השתא דברים טמאים קאכלה – **And furthermore, did she** (Samson’s mother) **eat contaminated things until now?** Surely not!^[56]

The Gemara answers:

אמר רבי יצחק דבי רבי אמי – **R’ Yitzchak of the house of R’ Ami said:** דברים האסורים בגזיר – This refers to **things that are forbidden to a nazir.**^[57]

The Gemara discusses one of the miracles that occurred to Samson:

“ויבקע אלהים את־המכתש אשר־בלחי” – **God split open the hollow that was in the jawbone, and water came from it and he drank.**^[58]

The Gemara explains why Samson was saved from death in such an unusual way:

אמר רבי יצחק דבי רבי אמי – **R’ Yitzchak of the house of R’ Ami said:** הוא אינה לדבר טמא – [Samson] **desired a contaminated thing;**^[59] לפיכך נתלו חייו בדבר טמא – **therefore, his life was made dependent upon a contaminated thing.**^[60]

The Gemara elaborates on the beginnings of Samson’s prophetic experience:

“ותחל רוח ה’ וגו’” – The verse states: **The spirit of Hashem began to resound in him in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.**^[61]

The Gemara explains what this means:

אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא – **R’ Chama the son of R’ Chanina said:** הלתה נבואתו של יעקב אבינו – **The prophecy of our**

forefather Jacob was fulfilled,^[62] “יהי־דן נחש עלי־דרך” – **for it is written: Dan will be a serpent on the highway.**^[63]

The verse, describing Samson, continues:

“לפעמו במחנה־דן” – . . . **to resound in him in the camp of Dan.**

The Gemara explains:

אמר רבי יצחק דבי רבי אמי – **R’ Yitzchak of the house of R’ Ami said:** מלמד שהיתה שכינה מקשקשת לפניו כוונ – **It teaches that the Divine Presence rang before him like a bell, to escort him wherever he went.** “לפעמו במחנה־דן” – **For it is written here: to resound in him in the camp of Dan.** וכתוב “ותחל רוח ה’ וגו’” – **And it is written regarding the Robe of the Kohen Gadol:**^[64] **A bell and a pomegranate.** Just as the sound of the bell accompanied the Kohen Gadol wherever he walked, the Divine Presence escorted Samson.^[65]

The verse concludes:

“בין צרעה ובין אשתאול” – **between Zorah and Eshtaol.**

The Gemara explains the significance of these two landmarks: צרעה ואשתאול שני הרים גדולים היו – **R’ Assi said:** – **Zorah and Eshtaol were two large mountains, ועקרן ועקרן – yet Samson uprooted them and ground them together.**^[66]

The Gemara returns to the account of Samson’s beginnings: “והוא יחל להושיע את־ישראל” – The angel told Samson’s mother: **and he will begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.**^[67]

The Gemara explains:

אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא – **R’ Chama the son of R’ Chanina said:**

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56. The term “contaminated” connotes something that is forbidden to eat. Why would Samson’s mother have to be told not to eat forbidden food? Cf. *Maharsha*.

57. For example, water in which grapes were soaked, that now has the taste of wine. These are not prohibited under the general *nazir* law, but Samson’s mother was told to refrain even from this water (*Rashi*; see *Minchas Kenaos* and *Minchah Chareivah*).

Since God knew that Samson would be involved with Philistine women, He wanted to give Samson the greatest chance of not being tainted from this involvement. He therefore commanded Samson’s mother to refrain from all grape products so that even in the womb Samson would abstain from the sensual properties of wine (see *Bamidbar Rabbah* 10:5).

58. *Judges* 15:19. [This occurred after Samson had killed one thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey, when the Philistines attempted to capture him after the Timnas episode. After his victory, Samson became extremely thirsty, to the point where his life was actually in danger. He prayed for help and God responded, causing water to flow miraculously from the jawbone.] Water appeared in a hollow in the jaw where a tooth had been (*Rashi*).

59. That is, he wanted to marry the daughter of an idolater (*Rashi*). Although she had converted before the marriage, his parents nevertheless objected to it because in his status as a *nazir* he should not have married a Philistine convert (*Nesivos HaKodesh*; see also *Minchas Yaakov*).

Maharsha explains this Gemara differently: Samson chose to kill the Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey rather than by hand; he was therefore made dependent upon it for his life. [See there for yet another

interpretation of our Gemara, with *Toras HaKenaos* and *Minchah Chareivah*.]

60. If not for the jaw of the donkey, he would have died of thirst (*Rashi*).

61. *Ibid.* 13:25.

62. [The term ותחל (literally: it began) is expounded to mean *it was fulfilled*.] The *spirit of Hashem* refers to the prophecy that Jacob received (*Rashi*; see *Maharsha*).

63. *Genesis* 49:17. This description mirrored Samson’s tactics in fighting the Philistines: A snake camouflages itself in order to blend in with its environment. Samson too made himself appear to be a traitor to the Jewish nation so that he could attack the Philistines without causing the Philistines to retaliate against the Jews.

[The Midrash expounds the end of Jacob’s blessing, *For Your salvation I hope, O God*, as indication that Jacob thought Samson to be the Messiah (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 98:14).]

64. *Exodus* 39:26.

65. *Rashi*; see *Iyun Yaakov*.

66. The verse mentions Zorah and Eshtaol in this verse to teach that it was Samson’s attainment of spiritual perfection (*the spirit of Hashem*) that gave him the strength to perform this prodigious feat of physical strength. See below, 10a note 14.

67. *Judges* 13:5. Simply understood, this means that Samson would be the first judge to fight against the Philistines. Although the earlier judge Shamgar had limited success against the Philistines (see *Judges* 3:31), Samson was the first to cause the Philistines significant losses (*Ramban to Genesis* 49:16). The Gemara now presents a homiletical interpretation of the verse.

הוחל שבועתו של אַבִּימֶלֶךְ — the oath of Avimelech, king of the Philistines, was desecrated [i.e. rendered null and void],^[1] „אִם-תִּשְׁקַר לִי וּלְנִינִי וּלְנִבְדִי” — for it is written that Avimelech made the following covenant with Abraham: *Swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, or with my son or with my grandson.*^[2] Since the Philistines were the first to violate the oath, by subjugating the Jews, Samson was not bound by it either.^[3]

The verse states concerning Samson:

”וַיִּגְדַּל הַנַּעַר וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ ה' — *the lad grew and Hashem blessed him.*^[4]

The Gemara inquires:

בְּמָה בָּרַכְוּ — With what did [God] bless [Samson]?^[5]

The Gemara answers:

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב — Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: שָׁבַרְכּוּ בְּאֲמָתוֹ — He blessed him with respect to his member. אֲמָתוֹ כְּבִנֵי אָדָם — That is, his member was like that of ordinary people, וְתֵרַע כְּנַחַל שׁוֹטֵף — yet his seed was like a rushing stream.^[6]

The Gemara discusses Samson's prayer to God:

וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹן אֱלֹהֵי וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים זְכַרְנִי נָא וְחַזְקֵנִי נָא אֶף הַפַּעַם הַזֶּה, וַאֲנִימָה נִקְם-אֶחָת מִשְׁתֵּי עֵינַי מִפִּלְשְׁתִּים” — The verse states: *Samson called out to Hashem and said, “Hashem! Lord! Remember me and strengthen me just this one time ... and I will exact vengeance from the Philistines for one of my two eyes.”*^[7]

The Gemara elaborates:

אָמַר שְׁמוֹן לִפְנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא — Rav said: אָמַר רַב — Samson said before the Holy One, Blessed is He: זְכוֹר לִי עֲשָׂרִים (וּשְׁתַּיִם) שָׁנָה — Master of the Universe! זְכוֹר לִי עֲשָׂרִים (וּשְׁתַּיִם) שָׁנָה — Remember for me the twenty-two years^[8] that I judged Israel מִמְּקוֹל מְקוֹם לִי מִמְּקוֹל מְקוֹם — and I did not even say to one of them, “Move a staff for me from one place to another place.”^[9]

The Gemara discusses an earlier incident that occurred during Samson's battles with the Philistines:

וַיֵּלֶךְ שְׁמוֹן וַיִּלְכַּד שְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת שׁוּעָלִים — *Samson went and he captured three hundred foxes.*^[10]

The Gemara asks:

מָאי שָׁנָא שׁוּעָלִים — Why did he choose foxes to be the vehicle to destroy the Philistine crops?^[11]

The Gemara answers:

אָמַר רַבִּי אֵיבּוּ בַר נַגְדִי אָמַר רַבִּי חִיָּיא בַר אַבָּא — R' Ayvu bar Nagdi said in the name of R' Chiya bar Abba: אָמַר שְׁמוֹן — *Samson said: יָבֵא מִי שְׁחוֹזֵר לְאַחוֹרָיו — Let [an animal] that retreats backwards^[12] come וַיִּפְרַע מִפִּלְשְׁתִּים שְׁחוֹזָרוּ בְּשִׁבּוּעָתָן — and exact retribution from the Philistines, who retreated from their oath.*^[13]

The Gemara illustrates Samson's great strength:

אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן הַחֲסִיד — R' SHIMON THE PIOUS ONE SAID: בֵּין כְּתִיפָיו שָׁל שְׁמוֹן שְׁשִׁים אַמָּה הָיָה

NOTES

1. The term יָחַל in the verse is expounded as in the verse (*Numbers* 30:3): לֹא יִחַל דְּבָרוֹ: ... לא יחל דברו: [If] a man vows a neder to Hashem ... he shall not desecrate his word (*Rashi*). In this context, the Gemara means that the oath imposed upon Abraham by Avimelech was no longer in effect, and Samson was therefore permitted to wage war against the Philistines.

2. *Genesis* 21:23. Since the Philistines had attacked the Jews first (*Radak* to *Shoftim* 13:5), the Jews were no longer bound by the treaty agreed to by Abraham.

[According to many commentators, this Gemara is the source of the law (*Yoreh Deah* 236:6) that if two people make an oath to one another, and then one of them violates the oath, the second is no longer bound by his oath, even without formal nullification (see *Nekudas HaKesef* and *Beur HaGra* there; cf. *Faz* there; see also *Mishkenos Yaakov*, *Choshen Mishpat* §61, and *Minchah Chareivah* at length.)]

3. [The commentators discuss another factor that apparently should have nullified the treaty: It was to be in effect only during the lifetime of Avimelech's children and grandchildren (see *Bereshis Rabbah* 54:2; *Mechilta*, *Beshalach*; see also *Chullin* 60b with *Rashi*). *Maharsha* writes that one of Avimelech's grandchildren must still have been alive at the time, and consequently the only reason the treaty was annulled was because the Philistines violated it. However, other commentators find it difficult to imagine that one of Avimelech's grandchildren could still be alive more than seven hundred years after the treaty had been made. See *Mishkenos Yaakov*, *Choshen Mishpat* *ibid.* and *Maharatz Chayes* for further discussion of this issue.]

4. *Judges* 13:24.

5. The term “blessing” connotes an increase from which one can be satisfied [see *Exodus* 23:25]. But we do not find anywhere that Samson's possessions increased to where he became wealthy (*Rashi*). [See *Nefesh HaChaim* 2:2 for a discussion about how this definition of “blessing” impacts upon the understanding of the blessings that we regularly make to God.]

6. Thus, the object of Samson's desires was increased (*Rashi*). [Most people are interested in increasing their material possessions; to them, wealth would be a blessing. Samson, though, understood his role as requiring him to engage in relations with Philistine women to save the Jewish nation from attack (see above); he was blessed with abundant ability to carry out his plan.] See *Ben Yehoyada* for a deeper understanding of this blessing.

7. *Judges* 16:28. Some time after the Philistines captured Samson, they took him out of prison and brought him to a stadium for their entertainment. Samson prayed that he be able to destroy the stadium, which contained thousands of Philistine spectators.

8. Other versions omit the word “two,” since the verse states (*Judges* 15:20) that Samson judged Israel for twenty years (see *Teshuvos HaRashba* §88, cited by *Mesoras HaShas*). See *Maharsha*, however, who suggests a defense of our version.

9. The Gemara in *Shabbos* (10a) states that anyone who judges faithfully is considered by Scripture to be a partner with God in the creation. Samson therefore asked that the merit of having judged Israel faithfully for many years allow him to miraculously defeat the Philistines (see *Minchas Sotah*). When he was not answered through that merit alone, Samson asked for reward for one of his eyes that he lost to the Philistines, while he would receive reward for the loss of the other eye in the World to Come (*Rashi*, based on *Yerushalmi* as understood by *Minchas Sotah*).

[This is apparently difficult, because the Gemara above (9b) stated that Samson was punished for rebelling with his eyes. How could he now seek reward for their loss? See *Maharsha*, who explains that Samson was saying here that the loss of one eye should count as punishment for his earlier indiscretions, and he should therefore be empowered to take revenge against the Philistines as reward for the loss of the other eye. Samson then stated further (as recorded in our Gemara) that he was extremely careful not to take any bribes as a judge. The loss of his eyes could therefore not be attributed to bribery [which “blinds the eyes of the wise” — see *Deuteronomy* 16:19] (see also *Iyun Yaakov*).]

10. *Judges* 15:4. This refers to the incident that took place when Samson was involved with the woman from Timnah. When he discovered that his wife had been given to another man, he captured three hundred foxes and tied torches to their tails. He then set them loose among the Philistine crops, destroying them.

11. Foxes are cunning and difficult to apprehend. Why then did Samson choose to use these animals to spread the fire? He could have used any animal (*Iyun Yaakov*).

12. When a fox is confronted, it does not turn around and run; rather, it backs away (*Rashi*).

13. See above, note 2. *Maharsha* adds that by tying the tails of the foxes together Samson hinted further that the Philistines had “backed out” of their oath.

— THERE WERE SIXTY AMOS BETWEEN THE SHOULDERS OF SAMSON.^[14] וַיִּשְׁכַּב שָׁמֹן עַד-חֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיָּקָם בַּחֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיֵּאָחֶז בְּדַלְתוֹת שַׁעַר-הָעִיר וּבִשְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת וַיִּסָּעַם עִם-הַבְּרִיחַ וַיִּשֶׁם עַל-כַּתְּפָיו — FOR IT IS STATED: SAMSON SLEPT UNTIL MIDNIGHT. HE AROSE AT MIDNIGHT AND GRASPED THE DOORS OF THE CITY GATE AND THE TWO DOORPOSTS AND TORE THEM OUT WITH THE CROSSBAR, AND HE PLACED THEM ON HIS SHOULDERS.^[15] וַיִּגְמְרֵי דָאִין דְּלָתוֹת עָזָה — AND WE HAVE A TRADITION THAT THE DOORS OF THE GAZA gate ARE NOT LESS THAN SIXTY AMOS wide.

The Gemara discusses Samson's captivity:
 “וַיְהִי טוֹחֵן בְּבֵית הָאֲסוּרִים” — *and he was grinding in the prison.*^[16]

The Gemara elaborates:
 — אין טחינה אלא לשון עבירה — *R' Yochanan said: The word “grinding” in this context is nothing other than a term of sin [i.e. adultery].* — וכך הוא אומר — *And so it is stated elsewhere in Scripture:*^[17] “תִּטְחֹן לְאַחַר אִשְׁתּוֹ” — *Let my wife grind for another man and may strangers kneel over her.* — מלמד — *This teaches that each and every [Philistine] brought his wife to [Samson] to the prison כְּרִי שֶׁתֵּתֵעֶבֶר הֵימָנוּ — in order that she would become pregnant from him.*^[18]

— אמר רב פפא — *Rav Pappa said: That is in line with what people often say: קמי דשתי חמרא חמרא — Before a wine drinker, bring wine; קמי דפוקא גרידינא דובלא — before a gardener, who usually eats vegetables, bring a basket of vegetables.*^[19] Similarly, Samson, who was involved in relations with Philistine women, ultimately was caused to come into contact with still more Philistine women.

The Gemara digresses to expound a previously cited verse:
 — אמר רבי יוחנן — *And R' Yochanan said: כל המזונה אשתו מזונת — Any man who commits adultery, his wife also commits*

adultery against him, אמרנא לבי על-אשה ועל-פתח, — *as it is stated:*^[20] *If my heart was [ever] seduced over a woman, or if I ever lay in wait at my neighbor's door; — and it is written in the next verse: Let my wife grind for another man and may strangers kneel over her.*^[21] — *And that is what people say: איהו בי קארי — He is with the big pumpkins*^[22] — *and his wife is with the small pumpkins.*^[22]

The Gemara returns to Samson:

— אמר רבי יוחנן — *And R' Yochanan said: שמשון דן את ישראל — Samson judged Israel like their Father in Heaven, — שמואל — as it is stated:*^[23] *Dan will judge his people, like one etc.* This can be expounded to teach that Samson, from the tribe of Dan, judged the Jews like God, Who is One.^[24]

More about Samson:

— אמר רבי יוחנן — *And R' Yochanan said: שמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא נקרא — Samson is called by the name of the Holy One, Blessed is He, — שמו ומגן ה' אלהים וגו' — as it is stated: For a wall [shemesh] and a shield is Hashem, Lord.*^[25] The Hebrew word for “wall” here is *shemesh*, from which Samson's name (*Shimshon* in Hebrew) is derived.

The Gemara asks:

— אמר רבי יוחנן — *But now, according to this, the word [shemesh] should not be erased, if it is one of the Names of God.*^[26] — ? —

The Gemara answers:

— אמר רבי יוחנן — *Rather, R' Yochanan meant to say that Samson's name is derived from the word shemesh, which is akin to a Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He, in that it describes an aspect of God.*^[27] — *מה הקדוש ברוך הוא מגין על כל — For just as the Holy One, Blessed is He, protects*

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14. This cannot be taken literally, for a person that size (90-120 feet across the shoulders) could not live normally in society. Rather, it means that he could carry a burden 60 *amos* wide on his shoulders — a feat requiring remarkable strength (*Ben Yehoyada*; see also *Maharal*; cf. *Maharsha*).

15. *Judges* 16:3. When the Philistines in Gaza heard that Samson was staying at the harlot's house, they waited at the gate of the city all night, so they could attack and kill him in the morning, when he left town. However, in an unbelievable display of strength, Samson arose at midnight and carried the doors of the city away! This certainly served to intimidate the Philistines against attacking Israel (*Samson's Struggle* p. 121). [However, we have learned above (9b note 37) that Samson's cohabitation with a harlot was not justified, and indeed, Scripture immediately thereafter discusses Samson's marriage to Delilah, which led to his downfall.]

16. *Ibid.* 16:21. After Delilah betrayed him, the Philistines blinded Samson and imprisoned him.

17. *Job* 31:10.

18. Most commentators are of the opinion that this passage is not to be taken literally. After all, R' Yochanan himself states below that Samson judged Israel similar to God Himself, and that Samson's name is similar to a name by which God is known. How, then, could he have possibly performed such acts? Various explanations of this passage are given by the Rishonim. *Alshich* writes that it means that the Philistines would take their wives to see Samson so their thoughts about his strength would cause them to conceive strong children. [The thoughts of the parents at the time they unite is a factor in determining the nature of the child that is conceived. This can be seen from the fact that Jacob (see *Genesis* 30:37-42) placed streaked rods before the parent sheep when they mated in order to cause the lambs that would be born to be similarly streaked (*Iggeres HaKodesh*, attributed to *Ramban*, Ch. 5; *Maharsha* to *Bava Metzia* 84a; see also *Rabbeinu Bachya* and *Sforno* to *Genesis* 30:39).] See *Maharal* for another approach to our Gemara.

19. It is wise to bring people gifts of items to which they are accustomed (see *Rashi*).

20. *Job* 31:9.

21. *Job* was describing his righteousness: If he had ever been seduced by another woman, then his wife too would have been suspected of adultery. [See *Minchas Sotah*.]

Even though a married man does not technically transgress the adultery prohibition for cohabiting with another [unmarried] woman (according to Biblical law a man is allowed to have multiple wives), by undermining the union with his wife through an extramarital affair he makes it easier for his wife to become unfaithful [with its more severe consequences] (see *Maharal*; see also *Ben Yehoyada*).

22. That is, they are both involved in the same activities (*Rashi*).

23. *Genesis* 49:16.

24. [Simply understood, the verse means that Dan will *avenge* his people (a reference to Samson — see *Rashi* to *Genesis* *ibid.*), and cause the tribes of Israel to unite as one. Here, however, the Gemara expounds דין to refer to *judging*, and כְּאֶחָד as a reference to God.]

25. *Psalms* 84:12. *Shemesh* is translated as “wall” here, following a similar usage in *Isaiah* 54:12 (*Rashi*; see also *Rashbam* to *Bava Basra* 75a; cf. *Rashi* to *Isaiah* there).

26. The Gemara assumes that R' Yochanan meant that *shemesh* is one of the Names by which God is actually called (*Rashi*). As such, it should not be permitted to erase that word in the verse in *Psalms* (*Ben Yehoyada*). [See *Tosafos*; see also *Rashash*.]

27. That is, R' Yochanan does not mean that *shemesh* is an actual name of God. Rather, the term *shemesh* is a description of how God protects the world. Samson was so called because he was similar in this characteristic to God, in that he too served as a protector of the Jews. It is thus fitting that his name is related to the term for protection that is used to describe God (see *Rif* on *Ein Yaakov*).

the entire world, אף שמשון מגין בדרורו על ישראל – so too Samson protected Israel in his generation.

More about Samson:

בלעם חיגר ברגלו אחת – And R' Yochanan said: וְאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן – Bilam was lame in one of his feet, „וַיִּלַךְ שָׁפִי” – as it is stated: he walked limping (*shefi*).^[28] שמשון חיגר בשתי רגליו – Samson was lame in both of his legs, „וַיִּלַךְ שָׁפִי” – as it is stated: Dan will be a serpent on the highway, *slithering (shefifon) along the path.*^[29]

The Gemara cites a Baraisa that speaks further of Samson's great strength:

המשה נבראו מעין – The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: תנו רבנן – The following FIVE men WERE CREATED WITH an aspect of SIMILARITY TO the One ABOVE,^[30] וכולן לקו בהן – AND ALL OF THEM WERE STRICKEN IN THOSE areas in which they excelled. שמשון בכחו – SAMSON was similar to the One above WITH HIS STRENGTH,^[31] שאול בצנארו – SAUL WITH HIS NECK,^[32] צדקיה בעיניו – ABSALOM WITH HIS HAIR,^[33] אבשלום בשערו – TZIDKIAH WITH HIS EYES, אָסָא בְּרַגְלָיו – and ASA WITH HIS LEGS.^[34]

The Gemara demonstrates how each was stricken:

דכתיב – Samson was stricken with his strength, שמשון בכחו – דכתיב „וַיִּסָּר כְּחוֹ מַעְלָיו” – for it is written:^[35] his strength departed from him. שאול בצנארו – Saul was stricken with his neck, „וַיִּקַּח שְׂאוֹל אֶת־הַחֶרֶב וַיַּפֵּל עָלֶיהָ” – דכתיב – for it is written: Saul took the sword and he fell upon it.^[36] אבשלום בשערו – Absalom was stricken with his hair, – as we will explain below.^[37] צדקיה בעיניו – Tzidkiah was stricken with his eyes, „וַאֲת־עֵינֵי צִדְקִיָּהוּ עָוְרוּ” – for it is written: and the eyes of Tzidkiah he blinded.^[38] אָסָא בְּרַגְלָיו

– Asa was stricken in his legs, דכתיב – for it is written:^[39] „רַק לַעַת זְקֵנְתוֹ חָלָה אֶת־רַגְלָיו” – but in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet. וְאָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב – And Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: שְׂאֵחוֹתוֹ פְּדִגְרָא – He was seized by a disease known as *podagra*.^[40]

The Gemara describes this illness:

אמר ליה מר זוטרא בריה דרב נחמן דרב נחמן לרב נחמן היכי דמי – Mar Zutra the son of Rav Nachman said to his father Rav Nachman: וְאִיבָא דְאָמְרֵי מִיחַשׁ הָהוּא חֵשׁ בֵּיהּ – Some say that he himself suffered from this [malady], so he had firsthand knowledge of its symptoms. וְאִיבָא דְאָמְרֵי מִרְבִּיהּ שְׁמַע לִיהּ – Some say that he heard about it from his teacher. וְאִיבָא דְאָמְרֵי „סוּד ה' לִירְאִי” – And some say Rav Nachman was granted Divine insight into the matter, as the verse states: *The secret of Hashem is with those who fear Him, and his covenant to inform them.*^[41]

The Gemara inquires:

How did [Rav Nachman] know this?

The Gemara suggests three answers:

איבא דאמרי מיחש הנהו חש ביה – Some say that he himself suffered from this [malady], so he had firsthand knowledge of its symptoms. וְאִיבָא דְאָמְרֵי מִרְבִּיהּ שְׁמַע לִיהּ – Some say that he heard about it from his teacher. וְאִיבָא דְאָמְרֵי „סוּד ה' לִירְאִי” – And some say Rav Nachman was granted Divine insight into the matter, as the verse states: *The secret of Hashem is with those who fear Him, and his covenant to inform them.*^[41]

The Gemara elaborates on Asa's downfall:

מפני מה נענש אסא – Why was Asa punished? מפני שפעה אנגריא בתלמידי חכמים – Because he pressed Torah scholars into the service of the king, שְׂאֵמַר – וְהַמֶּלֶךְ אָסָא הַשְׁמִיעַ אֶת־כָּל־יְהוּדָה אִין נְקִי” – as it is stated: King Asa called together all of Judah, no one was exempt.^[42] מאי – Now, what does the verse mean by no one was exempt? – אמר רב יהודה אמר רב – Now, what does the verse mean by no one was exempt? – אמר רב יהודה אמר רב – Even a groom

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28. Numbers 23:3. The word שפי (*shefi*), normally translated as meaning alone, is translated by R' Yochanan as *limping*, from the word שף, meaning *slipped* or *dislocated* (see *Rashi*).

Maharsha (to the parallel Gemara in *Sanhedrin* 105a) suggests that this refers to the fact that Bilam's leg had been crushed when his donkey had pressed it against a wall on the road to Moab (ibid. 22:25). In spite of his pain, Bilam was so anxious to curse the Jews that he proceeded on the journey until he came to Moab. This verse describes how he limped alongside King Balak in great pain, attempting to find some way to curse the Jewish nation.

29. Genesis 49:17. [The verse is Jacob's deathbed blessing to his son Dan. It is a reference to Dan's descendants, particularly Samson, who was a member of the tribe of Dan.] R' Yochanan sees the double consonant “פ” in the word שפיפון (*shefifon*) as denoting *double lameness* (*Rashi*) and depicting a *slithering movement*. Samson, because of his lameness, would have to slither along the path like a viper.

Maharsha (to the parallel Gemara in *Sanhedrin* 105a) suggests that this is stated in contrast to Bilam. Despite his handicap, Bilam persevered in order to harm the Jews. Samson, on the other hand, struggled against his handicap to save the Jews.

30. That is, each of the five had one property in which he excelled over any other mortal (*Rashi*). In this way they were in a certain sense similar to God (see *Maharsha*). Alternatively, they were similar to Adam, who was formed by God Himself (*Keren Orach* and *Eitz Yosef*).

31. This does not mean merely that Samson was physically strong. Indeed, we find that the verse continually states that “the spirit of God descended upon him” before he performed his acts of strength (see *Judges* 14:6,19). Rather, his strength derived from the spirituality of his *nezirus*. For this reason, when his *nezirus* was compromised by the cutting of his hair, he lost his strength (see *Bamidbar Rabbah* 14:9).

32. The verse states (*I Samuel* 10:23) that Saul was taller than everyone else from his shoulders up (*Rashi*).

33. See above, 9b note 17.

34. There is no Scriptural proof regarding the superior nature of Tzidkiah's eyes or Asa's legs. Rather, the Tanna had learned from his teacher that they each excelled in that particular area (*Rashi*). See *Maharsha*, *Keren Orach* and *Hagahos Yavetz* for various suggestions as to sources for Tzidkiah's sharp eyesight and Asa's swift legs.

[Tzidkiah ruled at the end of the First Temple era, while Asa (the grandson of Rechavam and great-grandson of Solomon) ruled much earlier. See *Ben Yehoyada* for why the Baraisa mentions Tzidkiah first; see also *Emes LeYaakov*.]

35. *Judges* 16:19.

36. *I Samuel* 31:4. The Gemara's assumption is that the sword struck the part of the body where it normally strikes a mortal blow – namely, the neck (*Rashi*).

37. Below, 10b.

38. *II Kings* 25:7. When Nebuchadnezzar captured Tzidkiah, he murdered Tzidkiah's children and then blinded him.

39. *I Kings* 15:23.

40. [In today's terminology, this ailment is called gout. It is a painful disease of the joints.]

41. *Psalms* 25:14. Occasionally, a Sage will describe a natural phenomenon with which he did not have personal experience. The Talmud often cites this verse to explain such knowledge, thereby implying that the sage possessed the information through some sort of Divine inspiration. See above, 4b, and *Niddah* 20b.

[*Ben Yehoyada* wonders why the Gemara seeks the source of Rav Nachman's knowledge here, when the entire Talmud is replete with medically related statements made by the Sages that are not challenged. See there for an explanation.]

42. *I Kings* 15:22. Baasa, the king of Israel, had attacked Judah and its king, Asa. Baasa enclosed the village of Ramah to prevent anyone from aiding Asa. When Baasa ended his seige, Asa called together all of the people of Judah to remove the stones and wood that Baasa had built in Ramah (see *Rashi*).

was taken **from his chamber and a bride from her canopy**.^[43] And he certainly took Torah scholars as well.^[44]

The Gemara returns to Samson:

“וַיֵּרֶד שָׁמֶשׁוֹן תִּמְנַחָה” – וְיֵרֶד שָׁמֶשׁוֹן תִּמְנַחָה – **It is written:**^[45] *Samson went down to Timnah.* “וַיַּהֲרֹג שָׁמֶשׁוֹן עֵלְיָהּ תִּמְנַחָה” – וְכָתוּב – **But it is written** regarding Judah: *Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah.*^[46] Does one need to ascend or to descend to reach Timnah?

The Gemara offers three possible answers:

שָׁמֶשׁוֹן שָׁנְתָּגְנָה בַּהּ בְּתֵיב בֵּיהּ – אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר – **R’ Elazar said:** *With regard to Samson, who was denigrated in [Timnah], it is written that his travel to Timnah was a descent; but about Judah, who was elevated there, it is written that his travel to Timnah was an ascent.*^[47] רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחְמָנִי אָמַר – **R’ Shmuel bar Nachmani said:** *There were two Timnahs. One could be reached through a descent, and one through an ascent.*^[48] רַב כָּפָא אָמַר – **Rav Pappa says:** *There was only one Timnah; but for one who comes from this direction it was reached via a descent, while for one who comes from this other direction it was reached via an ascent.*^[49] בְּגוֹן וַרְדוּגָא וְכִי בְּאַרְי וְשׁוּקָא דְנָרְשׁ – **This is like the case of Vardonya, Bei Barei, and the market**

of Narash, which are all situated in the middle of Babylonian hills.

Having mentioned the story of Judah and Tamar, the Gemara digresses to elaborate upon it:

וְהוּא שָׁב בְּפֶתַח עֵינַיִם – **The verse states:**^[50] *she (Tamar) sat by the crossroads, which is on the road toward Timnah.* אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְכְּסַנְדְּרִי – **R’ Alexandri said:** By using the phrase *pesach einayim* [literally: opening of the eyes] for crossroads,^[51] **[the Torah] teaches that she went and sat herself at the “doorway” of our forefather Abraham, the place that all “eyes” look forward to seeing.**^[52] אָמַר רַב חֲנִין – **Rav Chanin said in the name of Rav:** *It is a place whose name is Einayim; and so it says: Tapuah and Einam.*^[53] שְׁנֵתָנָה – **R’ Shmuel bar Nachmani says:** *[Tamar] gave color to her words when [Judah] solicited her.*^[54] אָמַר לָהּ שְׁמָא נְכָרִית אַתְּ – **[Judah] said to her, “Perhaps you are a gentile.”**^[55] אָמְרָה לִיהּ גֵּיזְרָת – **She said to him, “I am a convert.”**^[56] אָמְרָה לִיהּ פְּנוּיָה – **Judah said, “Perhaps you are married.”**^[57] אָמְרָה לִיהּ אִישׁ אַתְּ – **She said to him, “I am unmarried.”**^[58] אָמְרָה לִיהּ יְתוּמָה אָנִי – **She said to him, “Perhaps your father accepted kiddushin for you.”**^[59]

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43. Generally a groom is exempt from public service, as mandated in *Deuteronomy* (24:5): *When a man marries a new wife . . . he shall be free for his home for one year (Rashi)*. But in this case Asa stated that even a groom was not free.

44. We have explained the Gemara in accordance with *Aruch* (cited by *Mesoras HaShas*). *Maharsha*, however, understands the proof about Torah scholars to be from the phrase *all of Judah*. The Gemara then expounds the phrase *no one was exempt* to include brides and grooms. [See *Chidushei Geonim to Ein Yaakov* for an analysis of *Maharsha*'s view.]

45. *Judges* 14:1.

46. *Genesis* 38:13. [After the sale of Joseph into slavery, Judah left the company of his brothers, and married. His oldest son grew up and married a woman named Tamar, and died shortly thereafter. Judah's second son then married Tamar, and he too died. Judah, fearing that Tamar bore some blame for the unusual pair of tragedies, delayed the marriage of Tamar to his youngest son, Shelah. Realizing that Judah would not allow her to marry Shelah, but being bent on having Judah father her children, Tamar posed as a harlot, and lured Judah into cohabiting with her. She conceived twins, Peretz and Zerach, from this union (see *Rashi*'s commentary to the Bible).]

Since Judah and Samson were both in Eretz Yisrael, it is difficult to understand why Scripture states that Judah went *up* to Timnah and that Samson went *down* to Timnah (*Rashi*).

47. [On the surface the two incidents seem similar: Both Judah and Samson went to Timnah to engage in relations in unusual circumstances. However, they differed in the following way:] Samson married a woman from the Philistine nation, which is generally prohibited to Jews [unless she converts]. But Judah's incident resulted in the birth of Peretz and Zerach from whom kings and prophets were descended (*Rashi*; see *Minchah Chareivah*). [It will be explained below why Judah had not violated any law through his relationship with Tamar.]

48. [The Timnah of Judah's time was on top of a hill, while the Timnah of Samson's was in a low-lying area.]

49. Timnah was built on an incline in the middle of a hill. Someone coming from the summit would descend to the city, while someone coming from the foot of the hill would ascend to the city (*Rashi*).

50. *Ibid.* v. 14.

51. Crossroads are more simply referred to as פְּרָשֵׁת דְרָכִים, *separation of the ways* (see below, 21a). The Gemara therefore expounds the unusual phrase פֶּתַח עֵינַיִם, which literally means “opening of the eyes.” [This phrase connotes “crossroads” because it is a point at which the traveler

must open his eyes and decide which way he will go (*Sifsei Chachamim* to the verse; cf. *Sforno* and *Rashbam* there).]

52. People appreciated this place because they were always welcome to stop there (*Rashi*).

53. *Joshua* 15:34. According to this view, the verse means that Tamar sat at the entrance to the city of Einayim. [That is, the Hebrew word עֵינַיִם is not translated as “eyes,” but is the name of the city.]

54. I.e. Tamar advanced convincing arguments to explain why she was permitted to Judah, giving him an opening to take her (see *Rashi*).

55. Even though this incident occurred before the Torah was given at Sinai, Abraham [and his descendants] practiced even Rabbinic laws [see *Yoma* 28b] (*Maharsha*; see also *Ben Yehoyada*). Judah therefore did not want to cohabit with an idolater. [The exact prohibition would depend on whether or not this act of cohabitation was to be for the sake of marriage (see *Rambam, Hil. Isurei Biah* 12:1-2; *Maharsha*). *Minchah Chareivah* discusses this issue at length.]

56. That is, she stated that she was not an idolater and was therefore permitted to Judah (*Rashi*).

The nature of conversion before the Torah was given is not clear. *Ben Yehoyada* writes that it means renunciation of idolatry and acceptance of the seven Noahide laws. However, *Chidushei HaGriz* cites various sources indicating that full conversion existed even in those times. See also *Parashas Derachim* §1 at length.

57. If Tamar was a full convert (see previous note), she would be subject to the laws against adultery. And even if she were still technically considered a non-Jew [and one does not violate the normal negative prohibition for cohabiting with a married idolater woman], relations with her would nevertheless be prohibited according to Biblical law (see *Tosafos to Sanhedrin* 52b [ב] וְיֵרֶד פֶּרֶט and to *Kiddushin* 21b אִישׁ אַתְּ; cf. *Rashba to Kiddushin* there and *Rambam, Hil. Melachim* 8:3; see *Minchas Chinuch* 35:17 [Machon edition], *Iyun Yaakov*, and *Nesivos HaKodesh*).

58. And she was therefore permitted to any man (*Rashi*).

59. That is, her father might have accepted a *kiddushin* transaction for her from another man. This would make her legally married [and forbidden to Judah] without her realizing it.

[This statement of Judah is difficult to understand, because there is a principle that a convert is considered like a newborn child, without familial relationships. Hence, if a conversion before the Torah was considered true conversion, her father would apparently not have had any rights to marry her off. However, *Iyun Yaakov* cites a view of *Tosafos* that this principle is not absolute; it is therefore possible that

“I am an orphan.”^[60] שְׁמָא טַמְאָה אַתְּ — Judah said, “Perhaps you are *tamei* as a *niddah*.” אָמְרָה לִיהּ טְהוּרָה אָנִי — She said to him, “I am *tahor*” [i.e. not a *niddah*].^[61]

The Gemara digresses further to discuss Abraham:

“וַיִּטַע אֶשֶׁל בְּבֶאֱר שְׁבַע” — *He planted an “eshel” in Beer-sheba.*^[62] אָמַר רִישׁ לָקִישׁ — Reish Lakish said: מְלִמֵּד שְׁעֵשָׂה — *It teaches that he made an orchard and planted in it many types of fine fruits for the benefit of his guests.*^[63]

The Gemara cites a dispute about this term:

רַבִּי יְהוּדָה וְרַבִּי נְחֵמְיָה נִחְמָה — R’ Yehudah and R’ Nechemyah disagree: חָד אָמַר פְּרָדֵס — *One says that it was an orchard,*^[64] וְחָד אָמַר פּוֹנֵדֵק — *while one says that it was an inn where travelers could lodge.*^[65]

The Gemara examines the dispute:

בְּשִׁלְמָא לְמָאן דְּאָמַר פְּרָדֵס — *It is understandable according to the one who said that it was an orchard, “וַיִּטַע” — for that is why it is written, he planted it.* אֲלֵא לְמָאן דְּאָמַר פּוֹנֵדֵק — *But according to the one who said that it was an inn, “וַיִּטַע” — what does the verse mean by he planted?*

The Gemara answers that this term can also be used for establishing a dwelling:

“וַיִּטַע אֶהְלֵי אֶפְרַיִם וְגוֹ” — *As it is written regarding one of the kings in the Book of Daniel:*^[66] *He will pitch the tents of his palace.*

The Gemara expounds the end of the previously cited verse about Abraham:

“וַיִּקְרָא שָׁם בְּשֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהִים” — *there he proclaimed the name of Hashem, God of the Universe.* אָמַר רִישׁ לָקִישׁ — Reish Lakish said; “אֵל תִּיקְרֵי, וַיִּקְרָא” — *Do not read it, he proclaimed;*

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the father would retain rights over his daughter if they both converted together. See also *Minchah Chareivah* for further elucidation of this view.]

60. That is, Tamar’s father died when she was a minor. As such, there was no concern that she was legally married because only a father has the right to marry off his minor daughter; her mother and brothers have no such authority under Biblical law [see below, 23b] (*Rashi*).

Rashi notes that through this answer Tamar removed another possible obstacle against her marriage to Judah. Tamar was Judah’s daughter-in-law, and a union between father-in-law and daughter-in-law is forbidden. However, since when her mother or brothers married her off to Judah’s sons, Er and Onan, the marriage was not legal according to Biblical law, Tamar did not become prohibited to Judah as his daughter-in-law.

Rashi adds that according to this Gemara, we cannot say that Tamar’s father was Shem the son of Noah. [This view is held by *Bereishis Rabbah* 85:10.] For we know that Shem died when Jacob was 50 years old, and at the time of the story between Judah and Tamar, Jacob was already 110 years old. Tamar therefore would not have been a minor at the time of her marriage to Er and Onan (*Rashi*; cf. *Gur Aryeh* to *Genesis* 38:15; see *Levush HaOrah* there; see also *Chidushei HaGriz*).

61. I.e. she immersed in a *mikveh* following the end of her last menses (see *Kerem Nota*). Tamar thus succeeded in convincing Judah that she

was permitted to him.

Mizrachi (*Genesis* *ibid.*) raises another issue that should have made this act forbidden: It is prohibited according to Biblical law to cohabit with a harlot (see *Deuteronomy* 23:18, *Rambam*, *Hilchos Ishus* 1:4, with *Raavad* and commentators). How, then, did Judah do this? *Mizrachi* suggests that Judah did not intend to cohabit promiscuously, but rather was going to effect *kiddushin* with her (cf. *Maharsha*, *Minchah Chareivah*).

[*Mizrachi* also cites a *Midrash* that states that Judah was going to desist from any action, but an angel forced him to cohabit with Tamar to produce the royal line that was to result from this union. This view is further explained by R’ *Tzadok HaKohen* in his *Takanas HaShavin* (73b).]

62. *Genesis* 21:33.

63. This follows the usual meaning of אֶשֶׁל as a tree (see *I Samuel* 22:6, 31:13).

64. This is in accordance with the view of Reish Lakish just mentioned.

65. According to this view the term אֶשֶׁל is a contraction of אֲבִילָה שְׁתִּיהָ לְיָדָה, *eating, drinking, escorting*. It was a place where the guests were given food and drink, and escorted when it was time for them to leave (*Rashi*; see *Ben Yehoyada*).

66. *Daniel* 11:45.

rather, read it as “he caused to call” (*vayakri*). This teaches that our forefather Abraham caused the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He, to be called in the mouth of every passerby.^[1] How did Abraham accomplish this? After [the wayfarers] ate and drank, they stood up to bless [Abraham]. He would say to them, and you ate? Of course not! You ate from [the food] of the Lord of the world. Rather, you should thank, praise, and bless He Who spoke and caused the world to come into being.”^[2]

The Gemara returns to the story of Judah and Tamar:

“*And Judah saw her and thought she was a harlot, because she had covered her face.*”^[3]

The Gemara asks:

Because she had covered her face, he thought she was a harlot?! That cannot be the meaning of the verse.^[4] – ? –

The Gemara answers:

The verse means that because [Tamar] had always covered her face in her father-in-law’s [Judah’s] house out of modesty, Judah did not recognize her now.^[5]

The Gemara supports this interpretation:

For R’ Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of R’ Yonasan: Any bride who is modest in her father-in-

law’s house will merit to have kings and prophets descend from her.^[6] From where do we know this? From Tamar.^[7] We know that prophets descended from her, for it is written: *The vision of Isaiah, son of Amotz.*^[8] We know about kings from David and his royal line, who also descended from Tamar.^[9] And R’ Levi said in explanation of this: The following statement is a tradition that has been passed down to us from our fathers: Amotz and Amatziah were brothers. Since Amatziah, like all kings of Judah, was a descendant of Tamar, his brother Amotz obviously was too; thus the prophet Isaiah, son of Amotz, was among her descendants as well.^[10]

The verse describes Tamar’s situation after she was sentenced to death for her alleged adultery:

As she was taken out (*mutzeis*)^[11] (to be executed, she sent to her father-in-law, Judah, the pledges he had left with her). The term *mutzeis*, “taken out,” is ambiguous, because it can also be translated as, “she found.”^[12] The Gemara therefore asserts: [The verse] should have stated: “She was *mitutzeis*,” which clearly means “she was taken out.”^[13]

The Gemara explains why the ambiguous term is used:

After R’ Elazar said: After her angel Samael came and distanced them from her, so she would be unable to send them to Judah.^[14] the angel Samael and distanced them from her, so she would be unable to send them to Judah.^[15] Gabriel then came and brought them close to her once again.^[16] The verse therefore uses a term that connotes “finding.”

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1. The verse thus means that Abraham taught people to call in the Name of God (*Rashi*), not only that he himself called using the Name of God.

The basis for this exposition is that if the verse meant simply that Abraham called in the Name of God, why should that fact follow the description of his inn or orchard? The Gemara therefore understands that Abraham must have caused others to call in the Name of God through the proper use of his possessions (*Maharsha*).

2. [The Midrash adds another detail of Abraham’s motivational strategy: If the passersby resisted blessing God, Abraham would present them with a bill for their food and drink – at prices befitting an inn in the middle of the desert. At that point, the visitors would exercise their option of making a blessing rather than paying for their meal (*Tos. Shantz*). Abraham apparently felt that even this insincere blessing would eventually lead them to more sincere appreciation of God [מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה] (*Toras HaKenaos*; see there for a halachic implication of this Midrash).

3. *Genesis* 38:15.

4. A covered face is a sign of modesty, which is surely not the trademark of a harlot. The verse therefore cannot mean that Judah thought she was a harlot because her face was covered (*Mizrachi*; see also *Maharsha*).

5. Since Judah never saw her face during the entire time she was in his house, he did not recognize her now (*Rashi*; see also an alternative explanation in *Hagahos HaBach*). Thus, the verse does not mean that Judah thought she was a harlot because she had her face covered at the time of their encounter; rather, it means that because Tamar had always kept her face covered in Judah’s house, he had no way of recognizing her now. Since he had no way of recognizing her as his daughter-in-law, he assumed that she was a harlot because harlots commonly wait at crossroads (based on *Rashi* here and to the verse; see also *Ramban* there in explanation of *Rashi*). According to this conclusion, the verse is making two statements: (a) Judah thought she was a harlot because she was sitting at the crossroads; (b) he could not recognize her as his daughter-in-law because she had always covered her face in his house.

6. Or, at least, men suited for such exalted positions (*Meiri*; see *Ben Yehoyada* for two possible explanations of how this reward is measure for measure for modesty).

7. Tamar’s modesty in Judah’s house enabled her to lure Judah into cohabiting with her, as the Gemara just stated. This union produced Peretz and Zerach, from whom descended kings and prophets, as the Gemara proceeds to illustrate.

8. *Isaiah* 1:1. The Gemara will soon explain how we know that Isaiah was descended from Tamar.

9. David was the founder of the main royal dynasty in Israel. The line of descent from Peretz, the son of Tamar, to David is detailed in the book of *Ruth* (4:18-22).

10. Thus, by telling us that Amotz and Amatziah were brothers, we learn that Tamar merited having the prophet Isaiah among her descendants.

[The Gemara states that “prophets” (plural) descended from Tamar, intimating that Isaiah was not the only prophet among her descendants. The Gemara in *Megillah* (15a) notes that wherever in Scripture a prophet is named together with his father in connection with one of his prophesies we may assume that the father was also a prophet. Thus Isaiah’s father, Amotz, must also have been a prophet, since it is written (*Isaiah* 1:1): הוון ישעיהו בן-אמוץ, *The vision of Isaiah son of Amotz* (see *Rashi* here with *Minchas Sotah*; *Turei Even* and *Sfas Emes* to *Megillah* 10b).]

11. *Genesis* 38:25.

12. The term *mutzeis* is related to *metziah* [a find] (*Rashi*).

13. *Mitutzeis* is grammatically related to *hotzaah* [taken out] (*Rashi*).

14. I.e. the seal, tunic, and staff that Judah had given her as security (*Rashi*; see *Genesis* 38:18).

15. Every nation has a corresponding angel which intercedes on its behalf in the Heavenly tribunal. Samael represents the nation of Edom. As such, Samael wanted Tamar, the prospective progenitor of the royal Davidic line, to be executed, because David was destined to defeat Edom in the future. For this reason, he removed the pledges so Tamar would be unable to use them to save herself (*Rashi* here and to *Succah* 29a; see *Derech Hashem* 2:4:8).

16. Gabriel is the angel appointed over fire, who often comes to the aid of the Jewish nation and its leaders. See examples below, 12b, 13b, and 36a, *Pesachim* 118a, *Yoma* 77a, and *Megillah* 16a (see *Maharsha*). See, however, *Targum Yehonasan* and *Targum Yerushalmi* to *Genesis* 38:25.

The Gemara finds further allusion to this incident in the following verse in *Psalms*:

“היינו דתיב, למנצח על-יונת אלם רחקים לרוד מכתם” – **And this is alluded to in what is written: For the conductor, regarding the distant dove of silence, by David, a michtam.**^[17] אמר רבי יוחנן – **R’ Yochanan said:** משעה שנתרחקו סימניה – The “dove” in this verse is a reference to Tamar; for from the time that her identifying objects became distanced, נעשית בינה אילמת – she became like a silenced dove.^[18]

The Gemara explains the end of this verse:

“לרוד מכתם,, – **By David, a michtam.**^[19] שיצא ממנה דוד שהיה – The verse discussing Tamar ends with this phrase because David, who was humble [*mach*] and perfect in his ways [*tam*] to all,^[20] descended from [Tamar]. דבר אחר – **Another explanation** of the term *michtam*: מכתם” שהיתה,, מכתו תמה – *Michtam* means that his organ that would normally require wounding, was complete, שגולד כשהוא מהול – teaching that [David] was born circumcised.^[21] דבר אחר – **Another explanation** of this term: כשם שבקטנותו – *Michtam* means that just as in his youth he lowered himself to someone greater than him in order to study Torah, כך בגדולתו – so too in his

greatness he did the same.^[22]

The Gemara returns to the passage of Tamar, quoting the rest of the aforementioned verse:

“והיא שלחה אל-חמיה לאמר לאיש אשר-אלה לו אנכי הרה” – **She sent to her father-in-law, saying, “By the man to whom these belong I am pregnant.”**

The Gemara asks:

ותימא ליה מימר – **Let her have simply said to [her messenger] to tell Judah that he was the father of her children.**^[23] – ? –

The Gemara answers:

אמר רב זוטרא בר טוביה אמר רב – **Rav Zutra bar Toviyah said in the name of Rav,** אמר רב חנא בר ביזנא אמר רבי שמעון – **and others say it was Rav Chana bar Bizna who said it in the name of R’ Shimon Chasida,** אמר רבי יוחנן – **and others say it was R’ Yochanan who said it in the name of R’ Shimon ben Yochai:** נוח לו לאדם – **It is better for a person that he should cast himself into a fiery furnace** ואל ילבין פני חברו – **than that he should shame his fellow in public.**^[24] מן-הוא – **From where do we know this?** מן-הוא – **From Tamar.**^[25]

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17. *Psalms* 56:1. The Gemara below will explain the term “*michtam*.” Now it discusses the phrase, “the distant dove of silence.”

18. That is, the phrase “the distant dove of silence” alludes to Tamar’s silence, brought about when her pledges were distanced from her (*Rashi*). [Tamar is compared to a dove here because the dove is symbolic of the Jewish nation (*Maharsha*, based on *Berachos* 53b; see also *Rashi* to 11b; cf. *Ben Yehoyada*).]

19. The term *michtam* (*michtam*) literally means: a song of great worth (*Ibn Ezra* and *Metzudas Tzion* to *Psalms* 16:1). [For alternative translations, see *Rashi* ad loc.; *Targum Yonason ben Uziel*, as explained by *R’ Avraham ben HaGra’s Tirgeim Avraham* to *Exodus* 28:9.] In the context of this verse the *michtam* is attributed to Tamar, from whom David was to be descended (*Rashi*). The Gemara now offers three explanations of how the term *michtam* itself alludes to David.

20. Based on *Rashi*. [*Maharsha* translates מך as poor and cites *Psalms* (25:16): *For I am alone and impoverished*, and (26:1): *I have walked in my perfection*, as sources for these characteristics of David.

21. David’s organ was thus complete in that no foreskin needed to be cut away (see *Rashi*). According to this explanation the term *michtam* is a contraction of *makaso* (his wound) and *tam* (complete).

[It should be noted that *Maharsha* finds this exposition difficult in light of the incident that is recorded in Tractate *Menachos* (43b): Once, when King David entered the bathhouse, he was upset that he could not fulfill any mitzvot there; but when he remembered his circumcision, he was relieved. *Maharsha* asks that if David was born circumcised, what comfort could he derive from his circumcision? No circumcision was ever performed upon him! *Maharsha* answers that even though David had not actively fulfilled the mitzvah of circumcision, he was nevertheless satisfied that he was not uncircumcised, which would have violated the law (see there for further details). *Minchah Chareivah* explains further, based on the principle that in addition to the mitzvah to physically circumcise oneself, there is also a constant mitzvah to remain circumcised (see *Beis HaLevi* vol. II 47:4): Although David was born circumcised, he was nevertheless happy every second that he *was* circumcised, thereby fulfilling a mitzvah.

22. That is, even when he became king, he still lowered himself to learn Torah from someone he considered greater than himself (*Rashi*). The Gemara in *Berachos* (4a) states that David, even as king, would consult his teacher Mephiboshes before he would take any action (*Maharatz Chayes*).

According to this exposition the term *michtam* is a contraction of *tam* (complete) and *machuso* (his humility); i.e. his humility was complete, and never lessened until the end of his days (*Rashi*).

23. That is, she should have simply told the messenger to give Judah his pledges and to inform Judah that she became pregnant from him (*Rashi*). Why did she have to inform him in such a roundabout manner?

24. The Mishnah in *Avos* (3:11; see also *Sanhedrin* 99a and 107a) includes one who humiliates his fellow in public among those who have no portion in the World to Come. Similarly, the Gemara in *Bava Metzia* (58b) includes such a person among those who descend to Gehinnom but do not readily leave (see *Tosafos* there). Furthermore, the Gemara states, since he causes the person’s face to turn white from the humiliation (ואל ילבין פני חברו literally means: to whiten the face of one’s fellow), it is viewed as if he spilled the person’s blood, killing him.

Pri Megadim (in his *Matan Secharan shel Mitzvos* §5) writes that “public” in this context means embarrassing the person in the presence of three people – two bystanders and the offender (see also *Teshuvos Binyan Tzion* §172; cf. *Minchas Sotah* and *Kerem Nota*).

Rambam (*Hil. Dei’os* 6:8) derives from the verse (*Leviticus* 19:17): *You shall reprove your fellow and you shall not bear a sin because of him*, that there is a prohibition to embarrass someone even in private; doing so in public, though, is worse, and causes the offender to lose his portion in the World to Come. This view, that a Biblical prohibition is in force even for embarrassing someone in private, is cited by *Pri Megadim* (*Orach Chaim*, *Eishel Avraham* 156:2) and *Chofetz Chaim* (Introduction, *lavin* §14). However, *R’ Yerucham Fishel Perla* (in his commentary to *Rav Saadia Gaon’s Sefer HaMitzvos* vol. I pp. 171a-171b) cites other Rishonim who write that this verse refers either to failing to rebuke a sinner (see, for example, *Rabbeinu Yonah* in *Shaarei Teshuvah* 1:50, 3:59 and 3:72) or to humiliating a person in public (see *Rashi’s* commentary to the verse and *Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:220). According to their view, there would be no Biblical source for a prohibition against shaming someone in private. [*Amudei Arazim* to *Sefer Yere’im* (37:3) suggests that *Rambam* too means that humiliating someone privately is only a Rabbinic prohibition.] At any rate, all agree that the directive that one should cast himself into a furnace rather than humiliate another applies only in public situations.

25. This is why Tamar did not save herself by simply stating the truth about the paternity of her child; for by doing so, she would have humiliated Judah in public. She therefore gave him a hint that no one else would understand. But since she was prepared to die in fire rather than publicly expose him as the father if he would not admit this himself, we can infer that it is better to cast oneself into a fiery furnace than to shame somebody in public (see *Rashi*).

[*R’ Yehoshua Leib Diskin*, in his commentary on the Torah, notes that the verse separates Tamar’s message to Judah into two parts. First, the Torah relates that “she sent a message to him, saying: ‘By the man to whom these belong I am pregnant’”; and then the Torah states that “she said: ‘Please recognize to whom these belong.’” From this he infers that Tamar sent *two separate* messengers to Judah; one to return his staff and seal, and one to tell him that she had received a staff and a seal as pledges from the father of the child. In this way, Tamar ensured that not even the messengers would realize what had transpired unless

Tamar continued:

“הַכֵּר־נָא,, – *Please recognize to whom this seal, tunic and staff belong.*^[26]

The Gemara expounds this phrase:

אָמַר רַבִּי חַמָּא בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא – R’ Chama the son of R’ Chanina said: בְּ,הַכֵּר, בִּישֵׁר לְאָבִיו – With the word “recognize” [Judah] informed his father Jacob about the alleged death of his son Joseph; בְּ,הַכֵּר, בִּישֵׁרוּהוּ – and, measure for measure, with the term “recognize” they^[27] informed him about his indiscretion [Judah] informed his father, as it is stated: בְּ,הַכֵּר־נָא הַכֶּתֶנֶת בְּנֶךְ הוּא,, – *Please recognize: Is this the tunic of your son?*^[28] בְּ,הַכֵּר, בִּישֵׁרוּהוּ – With “recognize” they informed him about his indiscretion, as it is stated: בְּ,הַכֵּר־נָא לְמִי,, – *Please recognize to whom this seal, tunic and staff belong.*^[29]

The Gemara analyzes the message that Tamar sent to Judah: “נָא,, – Tamar said: *Please recognize etc.*

The Gemara explains:

– אין, נָא,, אֵלָא לְשׁוֹן בְּקֶשָׁה – The word “please” in this context is nothing other than a term of appeal.^[30] אֶמְרָה לֵיהּ – She said to [Judah], – בְּבִקְשָׁה מִמֶּךָ הִכָּר פָּנֵי בּוֹרְאֶךָ – “I beg of you: Recognize the presence of your Creator, וְאַל תַּעֲלִים עֵינֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי – and do not conceal your eyes from me.”^[31]

The Torah records Judah’s response:

– וַיִּכַּר יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר צְדָקָה מִמֶּנִּי,, – *Judah recognized, and he said, “She is right; it is from me.”*^[32]

The Gemara elaborates on this response:

– הֵינִינוּ דְאָמַר רַב חֲנִין בַּר בִּזְנָא אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן חַסִּידָא – This is what Rav Chanin bar Bizna said in the name of R’ Shimon Chasida:^[33] – יוֹסֵף שְׁקִדְשׁ שָׁם שְׁמַיִם בְּסִתְרָא – Joseph, who sanctified the name of Heaven in seclusion,^[34] וְזָכָה וְהוֹסִיפוּ לוֹ – merited that they added for him one letter from the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He, – אֲחַת מִשְׁמוֹ שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא – as it is written: *He made [this day] a testimony for Joseph,*^[35] where Joseph’s name is spelled with an extra *hei* (*Jehoseph*). – בְּפִרְהִסִּיא – However, Judah, who sanctified the name of Heaven in public,^[36] וְזָכָה וְנִקְרָא כּוֹלוֹ עַל שְׁמוֹ שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא – merited that he is called by a name entirely based on the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He.^[37]

The Gemara notes another reward Judah received for his public confession:

– כִּינּוֹן שְׁהוּדָה וְאָמַר,, צְדָקָה מִמֶּנִּי,, – As soon as [Judah] confessed and said, “*She is right; it is from me,*” – וַיִּצְתָּה בַת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה – a Heavenly voice issued forth and said: אֲתָה הִצַּלְתָּ תַמָּר וּשְׁנֵי אֶתְּהָהּ הַצֵּלָתָה תַמָּר וּשְׁנֵי – You saved Tamar and her two sons from the fire; – בְּנִיָּה מִן הָאוּר – by your life I swear that I will save in your merit three of your descendants from the fire. – מֵאֵן נִינְיָה – Who are these? – מִישָׂאֵל וְעֶזְרָיָה – They are Chananyah, Mishael, and Azaryah.^[38]

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Judah chose to reveal the truth.]

[An apparent difficulty: The Gemara here seemingly concludes that one must give up his life rather than shame someone in public. If so, why is it not counted among the three cardinal sins (murder, idolatry, and adultery) listed in *Pesachim 25a*, for which one is obligated to give up his life? *Tosafos* answer that since it is not written explicitly in the Torah, this law is not included with the other three. *Pri Megadim* (ibid.), though, cites *Rabbeinu Yonah* (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:139), who writes that one is required to give up his life rather than embarrass someone in public because that embarrassment is tantamount to murder (see previous note). Accordingly, this infraction is not listed separately since it is included in the prohibition against murder (see also *Kerem Nota* and *Teshuvos Binyan Tziyon* §172; see also *Meromei Sadeh* and *Emes LeYaakov*). However, *Pnei Yehoshua* (*Bava Metzia* 59a) understands our Gemara to be stating only that it is permitted for one to give up his life rather than embarrass another person, but not that it is obligatory. This assumption is based on the fact that our Gemara states that it would be “better” [וּיִחַ] for a person to cast himself into a furnace, not that one is obligated [חַיִּיב] to do so (see *Minchah Chareivah*). Although this view seems to be in conflict with that of *Tosafos* and *Rabbeinu Yonah*, perhaps his source is *Rambam* (*Hil. Yesodei HaTorah* 5:2), who lists only the three cardinal sins as those for which one must give up his life, but makes no mention of embarrassing someone in public (cf. *Mayim Chaim* to *Rambam* there). *Meiri*, too, indicates that our Gemara is merely emphasizing the importance of not embarrassing someone in public. See also *Chidushei HaGriz* and *Nesivos HaKodesh*.]

26. *Genesis* 38:25.

27. [The plural here refers either to the messengers, or to Heaven.]

28. Ibid. 37:32. After the brothers had sold Joseph, they took his tunic and dipped it in the blood of a kid. They took it to Jacob to identify it, so that he would conclude that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. [See *Maharsha*, who asks why this act is attributed specifically to Judah.]

29. This too was measure for measure: Judah tricked his father Jacob into thinking that the blood on the tunic came from Joseph, thereby causing Jacob great pain; Tamar, too, revealed her deception to Judah through the pledges, thereby causing Judah pain (*Maharsha*).

30. [The Hebrew word נָא can also be translated as “now” (see *Radak, Shorashim*). The Gemara states that in this context it should be understood as “please.”]

31. Tamar was concerned that Judah would say that he did not recognize

the items. She therefore reminded him that God knows what is in a person’s heart (*Iyun Yaakov*).

32. Ibid. 38:26.

33. The R’ Shimon Chasida cited here, who is an Amora, should not be confused with R’ Shimon HaChasid, who was quoted above (10a) in a Baraisa (*Toldos Tannaim V’Amoraim*).

34. Joseph succeeded in withstanding the seductive powers of his master’s wife when they were secluded together (*Rashi* below, 36b). One who avoids sinning not due to fear or other motivation, but simply because it is the will of God, has sanctified God’s Name (*Rambam, Hil. Yesodei HaTorah* 5:10; see *Maharatz Chayes* here).

35. *Psalms* 81:6. Joseph’s name is spelled יהוֹסֵף in this verse, rather than the usual יוֹסֵף.

36. By making a public confession about his involvement with Tamar. [The Gemara below (36b) states another action through which Judah sanctified the name of Heaven (*Maharsha*).]

37. The Hebrew name יהוּדָה contains all four letters of the Tetragrammaton.

[*Maharsha* writes that Rav Chanin makes this exposition on the basis that this section of the verse spells out Judah by name rather than calling him “her father-in-law,” as it does until this point. This indicates that the name Judah is linked to his public confession. This exposition, though, is nevertheless difficult, because Scripture states that Leah gave Judah his name at birth because she was thanking (אוֹדָה) God for a fourth son. It is thus unlike the *hei* that was later added to the name Joseph was given at birth. *Maharsha* suggests that if Judah was so named only for the reason given by Leah, his name could have been “Odeh.” God arranged that Leah call him “Yehudah” because of his future confession (see also *Rif* in *Ein Yaakov*).]

38. The incident of Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah is related in *Daniel* Ch. 3. In brief, Nebuchadnezzar erected a colossal golden image in the Plain of Dura and ordered all to prostrate themselves before it on pain of being cast into a fiery furnace. Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah refused and were cast into the furnace, which Nebuchadnezzar had ordered specially overheated for the occasion. So hot was the fire that those who had cast Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah into it were themselves killed by the flames, but – to Nebuchadnezzar’s utter consternation – Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah could be seen walking around in the furnace amid the roaring flames, completely unharmed. The Gemara here teaches that the merit for their escape derived from Judah’s confession, which allowed Tamar to escape a fiery death. *Maharsha* notes two

Judah stated:

“צדקה ממני” – “*She is right; it is from me.*”

The Gemara asks:

מָנָא יָדַע – **How did he know** that the child was from him? Perhaps other men cohabited with her and she conceived from one of them.^[39] – ? –

The Gemara answers:

יְצִתָּהּ בַּת קוֹל יְאֻמְרָה – **A Heavenly voice** [i.e. the Divine Spirit] issued forth and said: “מִמְּנִי” יָצְאוּ כְבוֹשִׁים – **From Me** have these hidden things emanated.^[40]

The verse teaching Judah’s response concludes:

“וְלֹא יָסַף עוֹד לְרַעֲתָהּ” – **and he did not refrain from being intimate with her.**

The Gemara explains:

אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל סָבָא חֲמוּהָ דְרַב שְׁמוּאֵל בְּרַ אַמִּי מוֹשְׁמִיָּה דְרַב שְׁמוּאֵל בְּרַ אַמִּי – **Shmuel Sabba, the father-in-law of Rav Shmuel bar Ami**,^[41] said in the name of Rav Shmuel bar Ami: **Once he knew about her** that she was righteous and had acted for the sake of Heaven,^[42] – **שוב לא פסק מנה** – **he never again abstained from her.** “וְלֹא יָסַף עוֹד לְרַעֲתָהּ” – **It is written here: and he did not “yasaf” from being intimate with her.** “קוֹל גְּדוֹל וְלֹא יָסַף” – **And it is written there** describing the sound of the Ten Commandments:^[43] **a great sound that did not cease (yasaf)**, where the term for “cease” is “yasaf.” We thus see that *yasaf* means “to cease.”^[44]

The Gemara returns to our Mishnah, to elaborate upon the

second example of the principle of *measure for measure*:

אֲבִשְׁלוֹם נִתְגָּאָה בְּשַׁעְרוֹ וְכוּ’ – **ABSALOM GLORIED IN HIS HAIR etc.**^[45]

The Gemara cites a Baraisa that provides the source from which it is known that Absalom gloried in his hair:

תְּנוּ רַבְּנָן – **The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa:** אֲבִשְׁלוֹם בְּשַׁעְרוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר – **ABSALOM REBELLED** against God **WITH HIS HAIR,** “וְכַאֲבִשְׁלוֹם-לֹא הָיָה אִישׁ-יִפְהָּ וְגו’” – **AS IT IS STATED: AND THERE WAS NO BEAUTIFUL MAN IN ISRAEL LIKE ABSALOM etc.**^[46] וּבִגְלָחוֹ אֶת-רֹאשׁוֹ (וּגו’) וְהָיָה מִקֶּץ יָמִים לְיָמִים אֲשֶׁר יִגְלַח כִּי-בָבַד עָלָיו וְגִלְחוֹ – **AND WHEN HE WOULD SHAVE HIS HEAD – AT THE END OF EVERY YEAR HE WOULD SHAVE HIS HEAD BECAUSE IT BECAME HEAVY UPON HIM AND HE SHAVED IT – THE HAIR OF HIS HEAD WEIGHED TWO HUNDRED SHEKELS BY THE KING’S WEIGHT.**^[47]

The Gemara interrupts the citation of the Baraisa to cite a second Baraisa that explains what is meant by “the king’s weight”:

אֲבָן שְׁאֵנִישֵׁי טִבְרְיָא וְאֲנָשֵׁי צִיפּוּרִי – **Another Baraisa taught:** תְּנָא – **אֲבָן שְׁאֵנִישֵׁי טִבְרְיָא וְאֲנָשֵׁי צִיפּוּרִי** – **The weight of Absalom’s hair was two hundred times the weight of the stone with which the people of Tiberias and the people of Tzippori weighed.**^[48]

The Gemara resumes its citation of the first Baraisa:

לְפִיכָּךְ נִתְלָה בְּשַׁעְרוֹ – **THEREFORE, [ABSALOM] WAS HUNG BY HIS HAIR,** “וַיִּקְרָא אֲבִשְׁלוֹם לְפָנָיו עֲבָדֵי דָוִד וְאֲבִשְׁלוֹם רָכַב עַל-הַפָּרָד וַיִּבֵּא הַפָּרָד תַּחַת שׁוֹבְךָ הָאֵלֶּה הַגְּדוֹלָה (וַיֵּאחָז) [וַיִּחְזַק] רֹאשׁוֹ – **AS IT IS STATED: ABSALOM CHANCED UPON DAVID’S SERVANTS. ABSALOM WAS RIDING UPON A MULE, AND THE MULE CAME UNDER THE THICK**

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other connections between these two incidents: The angel Gabriel helped save Tamar by restoring Judah’s items to her; and the same angel saved Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah from the furnace (see *Pesachim* 118a). Also, Judah received his name [Yehudah] from his confession to Tamar, while we derive from the story of Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah that any member of the nation of Israel who disavows idolatry is called a “Jew” [Yehudi] (see *Megillah* 13a).

39. *Rashi*, based on *Makkos* 23b (see *Maharsha* and *Minchah Chareivah*).

40. That is, God’s hidden intention was that the royal line should be produced by Tamar, but this required her union with Judah, since Jacob promised royalty to Judah (see *Genesis* 49:9). The Gemara in *Berachos* (10a) contains a similar usage of this term (*Rashi*; cf. *Rivan* to *Makkos* 23b). According to this exposition, it was not Judah who declared that Tamar was pregnant from him, but rather the Heavenly voice.

41. [It is interesting to note that this Amora had married a woman whose father’s name was the same as his – Shmuel. This apparently proves that in Talmudic times they did not follow the directive later issued by *Rabbeinu Yehudah HaChasid* to refrain from such matches (*Iyun Yaakov*; see also *Emes LeYaakov*). However, *Minchah Chareivah* writes that the full name of the father-in-law was Shmuel Sabba (Sabba is a proper name; it does not mean “elder” here). He was therefore permitted to marry Shmuel Sabba’s daughter since his own name was simply Shmuel. *R’ Reuven Margolies* (in his commentary to *Tzavaos Rabbeinu Yehudah HaChasid* §34) discusses this issue at length.]

42. Based on *Rashi* (cf. *Maharsha*; see *Iyun Yaakov* and *Bechor Shor*).

43. *Deuteronomy* 5:19.

44. It should be noted that *Rashi* to the verses in *Genesis* and *Deuteronomy* offers a different explanation of these verses.

45. To better understand the context of the verses that will be cited in the upcoming Gemara, we will briefly summarize the story of Absalom as recorded in *II Samuel* Chs. 13-19: After killing his half-brother Amnon for having violated his sister Tamar, Absalom escaped to live with his mother’s family in Geshur. [Absalom’s mother Maachah, whom David captured in battle and married, was the daughter of the gentile king Talmi of Geshur – see *II Samuel* 3:3 and *Sanhedrin* 107a.] After three years, upon his general Yoav’s urging, David allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem, but would not permit Absalom to visit him. Absalom sent

for Yoav to ask him to arrange for a meeting with David. When Yoav did not reply, Absalom had Yoav’s crops burned down. Finally, Yoav arranged for the meeting between David and Absalom. During this period Absalom succeeded in making himself popular with the general populace [*He stole the hearts of the people of Israel* – see Gemara above, 9b]. Later, he began his rebellion by asking his father David permission to offer sacrifices in Hebron. [It was then that he received the letter allowing him to choose any two individuals to be in his service – see above, 9b note 22.] Arriving in Hebron, Absalom proclaimed himself king, whereupon David escaped from Jerusalem, leaving his ten concubines to take care of the palace. Upon returning to Jerusalem, Absalom took the advice of his followers and violated his father’s concubines. In the ensuing civil war, Absalom’s army was defeated, and he himself was killed after his hair became entangled in a tree.

46. *II Samuel* 14:25. The verse concludes: *from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head there was no blemish in him.* *R’ Tzadok HaKohen* writes that this cannot be taken to mean only that he was physically handsome, because that would not be important for Scripture to report. Rather, it signifies that he was not blemished with any sin from head to toe. It is this righteousness that led the Jewish nation to accept the possibility that he was their true leader, replacing David because of his indiscretion with Bathsheba (see *Yisrael Kedoshim* 25b-26a). In a similar vein, *Hagahos Yavetz* writes that Absalom was misled by the eminent people who supported him to think that David had lost his rights to rule Israel because of that indiscretion.

47. *Ibid.* vs. 25-26. Absalom was a perpetual *nazir* (*nazir olam*) who cuts his hair once a year (*Rashi*, based on *Nazir* 4a; see *Radak* to the verse). This was further indication of Absalom’s apparent righteousness. However, it also represents the source of Absalom’s grave error, because it led to haughtiness, causing him to think that he could replace his father as king (*Be’er Moshe* to the verse; see also *Ralbag* there).

48. [Thus, the Baraisa teaches us that the “weight” mentioned in the verse was an exceptionally heavy weight, equivalent to the one used in Tiberias and Tzippori (see *Eruvin* 83a, where it is noted that the measures of Tzippori were larger than the standard). Other texts (see *Dikdukei Soferim* here) cite the Baraisa as stating that the weight was one that was *not* used in Tiberias and Tzippori, implying that the “king’s weight” was even greater than the weights used in those cities.]

BRANCHES OF A LARGE ELM TREE; HIS HEAD BECAME ENTANGLED IN THE ELM, AND HE WAS SUSPENDED BETWEEN THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, WHILE THE MULE THAT WAS UNDER HIM MOVED ON.^[49]

The Gemara describes how Absalom wanted to save himself: [אֶת שְׂכָל שִׁפְטָיָא – He took his sword – and wanted to cut [his hair] to free himself from the tree.] תָּנָא רַבִּי אֲבָי – A Baraisa of the academy of R' Yishmael taught: בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה נִבְקַע שְׂאוֹל מִתְּחִתּוֹ – AT THAT TIME THE DEPTHS OPENED UP BENEATH HIM.^[50] He therefore could not save himself by cutting himself loose.

The verse describes David's reaction to the death of Absalom: וַיִּרְגַז הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַל עַל-עֲלִית הַשָּׁעַר וַיִּבֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלִבְתּוֹ בְּנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם [מי־יִתֵּן מוֹתֵי אֲנִי תַחְתִּיף אַבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנֵי בְנֵי . . . וְהַמֶּלֶךְ לָאֵט – The king trembled. He ascended to the upper chamber of the gateway and wept; and thus he said as he went: “My son, Absalom! My son, my son, Absalom! If only I could have died in your place! Absalom, my son, my son!” . . . The king wrapped his face, and the king cried out in a loud voice, “My son, Absalom! Absalom, my son, my son!”^[51]

The Gemara comments on the numerous times that David said “my son”:

לָמָּה – Why did David make these eight mentions of “my son”?

The Gemara answers:

שִׁבְעָה דְאִסְקִיָּה מִשְׁבְּעָה מְדוּרֵי גֵיהֶנּוֹם – Seven of the mentions of “my son” brought [Absalom] up from the seven chambers of Gehinnom.^[52] וְאֵיךְ – And regarding the other one: אֵיכָא דְאָמְרֵי דְקָרִיב רִישֵׁיהּ לְגַבֵּי גּוֹפֵיהּ – Some say that [Absalom's] head was brought near the rest of his body;^[53] וְאֵיכָא דְאָמְרֵי דְאֵיִתִּיָּהּ לְעֵלְמָא דְאֵתִי – and some say that it brought him to the World to Come.^[54]

The verse describes Absalom's action in building a monument for himself:

וַיִּבְנוֹ לָקַח וַיִּצְבֵּלוּ בְּחַיָּוֵי – And Absalom took and erected for himself during his lifetime . . .^[55]

The Gemara asks:

מֵאֵי לָקַח – What did he take?

The Gemara answers:

אָמַר רִישׁ לָקִישׁ – Reish Lakish said: שֶׁלָּקַח מִקָּרַע לְעַצְמוֹ – He took a bad purchase for himself, i.e. he made an unwise decision.^[56]

The verse continues:

וְאֵת-מַצֵּבַת אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵמֶק הַמֶּלֶךְ וְגוֹ' – . . . the pillar that is in the Valley of the King etc.

The Gemara elaborates:

אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בַר פָּפָא – R' Chanina bar Pappa said: בְּעֵצָה – This alludes to the fact that the entire episode of Absalom took place through the deep counsel of the King of the Universe.^[57]

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49. *II Samuel* 18:9. Since his hair had led to his haughtiness, his death was brought about by his hair.

50. According to another version, he saw Gehinnom opening under him (see *Hagahos HaBach*). [The term שְׂאוֹל used by our Gemara also sometimes refers to Gehinnom – see *Erwin* 19a.] He therefore preferred to be killed by his father's servants so that his acceptance of his fate would atone for his mistakes. Alternatively, he was hoping that he would be captured alive and brought back to his father (*Radal to Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* 53:31).

51. *Ibid.* 19:1 and 19:5.

52. [The Gemara in *Erwin* (*ibid.*) states seven names for Gehinnom. Each one represents a unique chamber.]

53. Absalom's head had been thrown far from his body (*Rashi*). Through David's prayer his head miraculously left the place where it had been thrown and became reunited with the rest of the corpse. [See *Nesivos HaKodesh* for the significance of the miracle.]

54. This is apparently difficult, because the Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (104a) states that although a son's merit can help his father's status, a father's merit cannot help the status of his son. How then could David elevate

Absalom's level to qualify for the World to Come? *Tosafos* offer three answers: (a) Since Absalom died such a terrible death, David's prayer could be effective. (b) The Gemara in *Sanhedrin* refers only to children who are guilty of idolatry; any other violations can be mitigated by the father's merit. (c) The Gemara in *Sanhedrin* means only that a son will not be exempt from punishment merely because of the honor of his father; but a father's prayer certainly helps. [See *Maharsha, Toras HaKenaos, Minchah Chareivah, Hagahos Yavetz, Nitzutzei Ohr, and Teshuvos Shevus Yaakov* vol. II §93 for further discussion of this issue, including how this impacts upon a father reciting Kaddish for his deceased son.]

55. *Ibid.* 18:18.

56. The verse should thus be understood as follows: “Absalom took for himself authority during his lifetime and erected a monument for himself” (*Rashi*, as emended by *Hagahos HaBach*).

57. That is, God had decreed after David's involvement with Bathsheba that such a rebellion would befall him (*Rashi*). [This topic is further discussed in *Berachos* 7b.] The term עֵמֶק (literally: valley) is expounded to connote “depth.” The verse thus teaches that Absalom carried out his actions “through the deep [counsel] of the King [of the Universe, God].”

“For it is written regarding David: *Behold! I shall raise evil against you from your own household.*”^[1]

The Gemara cites a comparable exposition of the term עֵמֶק in a different context:

בְּיוֹצֵא בְדָבָר אֶתְּהָ אֹמֵר – In a similar way you may expound the verse that states: “וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ מֵעֵמֶק הֶבְרוֹן” – *so he sent him from the valley of Hebron.*^[2] אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בַר פָּפָא – R’ Chanina bar Pappa said: בְּעֵצָה עֲמוּקָה שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ צָדִיק שֶׁקָּבוֹר בְּהֶבְרוֹן – The verse alludes to the deep counsel of that righteous one [Abraham] who is buried in Hebron.^[3] וְדַע תְּדַע בִּיגֵר – דַּהֲתִיב “וְיָהִי וְרַעְךָ” – For it is written concerning Abraham: *Know with certainty that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not their own.*^[4]

The Gemara returns to the verse about Absalom’s monument: “כִּי אָמַר אֵין־לִי בֵן” – *for he said, “I have no child.”*^[5]

The Gemara asks: וְהֲתִיב – *But did [Absalom] not have children?* – וְלֹא הָיוּ לִיה בְּנֵי וַיּוֹלְדוּ לְאַבְשָׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹשָׁה בָנִים וּבַת אַחַת – *Three sons and one daughter were born to Absalom.* – ? –

The Gemara answers: אָמַר רַב יִצְחָק בַּר אֲבָדִימִי – Rav Yitzchak bar Avdimi said: שְׁלֵא – *It means that he had no child fit for royalty.*^[7]

The Gemara suggests an alternative explanation: אָמַר רַב חִסְדָּא – Rav Chisda said: גְּמִירֵי – *We have a tradition that anyone who burns the produce of his fellow will not leave a son to inherit him.*^[8] – And we know that [Absalom] burned the produce of Yoav. דַּהֲתִיב – *For it is written:* וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־עַבְדָּיו רְאוּ חֲלָקֶת יוֹאָב אֶל־יְרֵדֵי וְלוֹ־שָׁם

– *He then said to his servants, “Take note of Yoav’s field that is next to mine, where he has barley, and go and set it on fire.” So Absalom’s servants set the field on fire.* Thus, although Absalom had children, they did not live to inherit him.^[9]

The Gemara now turns to the next section of the Mishnah, which applies the principle of measure for measure to reward for good deeds:

וְכֵן לְעֵנִין הַטּוֹבָה מֵרֵיז וְכוּ – AND SO TOO WITH REGARD TO THE GOOD: MIRIAM etc. waited for Moses one hour; therefore Israel delayed for her seven days in the Wilderness.

The Gemara asks: הֲתָם חָדָא שְׁעָתָא – *There, Miriam waited just one hour for Moses,* – הֲכָא שְׁבַעָה יוֹמֵי – *while here, Israel delayed seven days for her.*^[10] – ? –

The Gemara answers: אֲבַיֵּי אָמַר – Abaye said: אֲבַיֵּי אָמַר – *Say that the Mishnah means: “But for good it is not so.”*^[11]

The Gemara objects: הָא וְכֵן לְעֵנִין הַטּוֹבָה קִתְּנֵי – *Rava said to him: But [the Mishnah] taught: AND SO TOO FOR GOOD,* clearly stating that the principle of measure for measure applies to reward in the same way that it does for punishment. – ? –

Rava therefore suggests another answer: אֲלֵא אָמַר רַבָּא – *Rather, Rava said: This is what [the Mishnah] is teaching: AND SO TOO FOR GOOD, דְּבִאוּתָהּ מִדָּה – that the person is rewarded in that measure, i.e. in a similar fashion;*^[12] וְלַעוֹלָם מִדָּה טוֹבָה מְרֻבָּה – *but actually God’s measure of beneficence is greater than His measure of retribution, so that the reward will be quantitatively greater than the action itself.*^[13]

NOTES

- II Samuel* 12:11. [This prophecy was told to King David after his indiscretion with Bathsheba.] Absalom was carrying out the Divine plan that was foretold much earlier. Thus, the term מַצְבָּה (literally: pillar) is expounded as alluding to God’s *established* plan – based on the verse in *Psalms* (119:89): *Forever, Hashem, Your word stands established* (נֶצַח) *in the heavens.* [It is this term that motivated the exposition of עֵמֶק (literally: valley) to be understood as *deep counsel.*] And the phrase (*II Samuel* 18:18): וַיִּקְרָא לְמַצְבֵּת עַל־שְׁמוֹ means that *he caused himself to be called the evil who was to arise from the house of David to fulfill God’s established plan.* When the verse concludes: וַיִּקְרָא לָהּ יָד אֲבִשָׁלוֹם, *And it was called Yad Absalom,* this is understood literally as the name of the pillar [*yad* means “a place” – see commentators to the verse] (*Rashi*).
- Genesis* 37:14. The verse refers to Jacob’s sending of Joseph to find his brothers, an act that culminated in the selling of Joseph, which eventually led to the exile to Egypt (*Rashi*).
- The word עֵמֶק cannot be taken literally to mean *valley*, because Hebron is situated on a mountain. Thus, here too the term should be translated as “counsel” (*Rashi* to *Genesis*, from *Bereishis Rabbah* 84:13).
- Ibid.* 15:13. The verse pertaining to Joseph thus means that he was sent to be the vehicle through which the prophecy given to Abraham was fulfilled.
- II Samuel* 18:18.
- Ibid.* 14:27.
- [He therefore erected a monument so the people would be more likely to remember him.]
- For destroying someone’s seed (crops), his seed (children) is destroyed, measure for measure (see *Maharal*; cf. *Kerem Nota* and *Toras HaKenaos*).
- Ibid.* v. 30. [According to this explanation the verse can be understood literally: Absalom built the monument because he no longer had children at the time, for they had died.]
- Thus, we see that the reward for good is not strictly measure for measure [in equivalent amount], but rather *exceeds* the good that

- was performed.
- That is, whereas a person is punished measure for measure, he is rewarded in *greater* measure for the good action he performed (*Rashi*). Thus, punishment and reward are *not* alike.
 - That is, the reward will be similar in form to the good deed that he performed (*Rashi*).
 - Rava explains that the amount of reward will be greater than the action because God’s measure for rewarding a person is greater than the measure He uses for punishment; for a good deed the person will receive a reward even greater than the deed itself (*Rashi*). Therefore, in the case of Miriam, her reward for waiting for Moses was measure for measure in *form*, in that she too was waited for in her time of need. But her reward was *quantitatively* greater, in that she waited for only an hour, and yet was rewarded with a wait of seven days. *Tosafos* cite the *Tosefta*, which states that God’s measure for reward is five hundred times as great as His measure for punishment (see also *Rashi* to *Yoma* 76a). Hence, if a bad deed is punished measure for measure, for a good deed the person should receive a reward five hundred times as great as the deed itself. Accordingly, *Tosafos* calculate that Miriam must have actually waited only fifteen or twenty minutes, since her reward was that the Israelites waited for her for seven days. The Mishnah’s expression, *one hour*, is thus not to be taken literally, but is to be understood as referring to a brief period of time. [See *Maharsha*, who asks why *Tosafos* state that Miriam must have waited “fifteen or twenty minutes” when twenty minutes is almost exactly one five-hundredth of seven days. See there and *Poras Yosef* for possible explanations. See *Minchah Chareivah* for another application of this principle of *Tosafos*.] *Toras HaKenaos* (see also *Maharsha*) suggests an alternative explanation of our Mishnah: The expression “one hour” is indeed to be taken literally, for Miriam did wait a full hour. She therefore merited that the Jews would have waited for her for up to three weeks, had this been necessary. But since her *tzaraas* was healed, there was no need for a longer wait.

The Gemara elaborates on the verse that describes Miriam's action:

“וַתִּתְצַב אַחֲתוֹ מֵרַחֵק” – *His sister stationed herself from afar to know what would be done to him.*^[14] אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק – R' Yitzchak said: פָּסוּק זֶה כּוּלּוֹ עַל שֵׁם שְׂכִינָה נֶאֱמַר – This entire verse is stated regarding the Divine Presence.^[15]

R' Yitzchak demonstrates how each word of the verse alludes to the Divine Presence:

“וַתִּתְצַב” – “*She stood*,” – “וַיִּבֵּא ה' וַיִּתְצַב וְגו'” – for it is written:^[16] *God came and stood etc.* “אַחֲתוֹ” – “*his sister*,” – “אָמַר לְחַכְמָה אַחֲתִי אֶת” – for it is written: *Say to wisdom, “You are my sister.”*^[17] “מֵרַחֵק” – “*from afar*” – “מֵרַחֵק ה' נִרְאָה לִי” – for it is written: *From afar Hashem appeared to me.*^[18] [“לְדַעַת”] – “*to know*” – “כִּי אֵל דְּעוֹת ה'” – for it is written: *Because Hashem is a God of knowledge.*^[19] “מָה” – “*what*” – “מָה ה' אֲלֵהֶיךָ שֶׁאֵל מֵעַמְךָ” – for it is written: *What is Hashem your Lord asking of you?*^[20] “וַיַּעֲשֶׂה” – “*would be done*,” – “כִּי לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה [ה'] אֱלֹהִים דְּבָר” – for it is written, *Because Hashem the Lord will not do something.*^[21] “לֹ” – “*to him*” – “וַיִּקְרָא לוֹ ה' שְׁלוֹם” – for it is written: *And he called it, “Hashem, Peace.”*^[22]

The Gemara begins an in-depth analysis of the Scriptural passage that describes the beginning of the Egyptian exile:

“וַיִּקָּם מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ וְגו'” – *And a new king arose over Egypt etc.*^[23] רַב וּשְׁמוּאֵל – Rav and Shmuel disputed the meaning of this verse: חָדָשׁ מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ – One said that it refers to a genuinely new king. וְחָדָשׁ אָמַר שֶׁנִּתְחַדְּשׁוּ גְזֵירוֹתָיו – And one said that only his decrees were new.^[24]

The Gemara gives the basis for each opinion:

חָדָשׁ מֶלֶךְ חָדָשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ – The one who said that it was a genuinely new king derives this from the fact “חָדָשׁ” – that it is written: *a new king.* וְחָדָשׁ אָמַר שֶׁנִּתְחַדְּשׁוּ גְזֵירוֹתָיו – And the one who said that only his decrees were new derives this from the fact “לֹא כָתִיב וַיָּמָת וַיִּמְלוֹךְ” – that nowhere is it written that [the previous king] died and [a new one] reigned in his stead.

The verse continues:

“אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע אֶת-יֹסֵף” – ... *who did not know of Joseph.*

The Gemara explains:

– דִּהְיָה דְּמִי כְּמֵאן דְּלֹא יָדַע לִיהַ כְּלָל – It means that he seemed like one who did not know Joseph at all. He passed harsh decrees against the Jewish people as if he had never known Joseph.^[25]

The next verse states:

“וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-עַמּוֹ הַזֶּה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל” – *He said to his people, “Behold! the people, the Children of Israel, are more numerous and stronger than we.”*^[26]

The Gemara elaborates:

הוּא הִתְחִיל בְּעֵצָה תְּחִילָה – HE WAS FIRST TO OFFER THE SUGGESTION of acting against the Jews; לְפִיכָךְ לָקָה תְּחִילָה – THEREFORE, HE WAS STRICKEN FIRST. הוּא הִתְחִיל בְּעֵצָה תְּחִילָה – HE WAS FIRST TO OFFER THE SUGGESTION, אֶל-עַמּוֹ – AS IT IS WRITTEN: HE SAID TO HIS PEOPLE. לְפִיכָךְ לָקָה תְּחִילָה – THEREFORE, HE WAS STRICKEN FIRST. וּבְכָה וּבְעַמְךָ וּבְכָל-עַבְדֶּיךָ” – AS IT IS WRITTEN: INTO YOU AND INTO YOUR PEOPLE AND INTO ALL YOUR SERVANTS will the frogs ascend.^[27]

Pharaoh then said:

“הֲבָה נִתְחַכְמָה לִי” – *Come, let us act wisely concerning it.*^[28]

The Gemara asks:

– לְהֵם מִיבְעֵי לִיהַ – He should have said: Let us act wisely “concerning them”^[29] – ? –

The Gemara answers:

אָמַר רַבִּי חֲמַי בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא – R' Chama the son of R' Chanina said: בָּאוּ וְנִחַמְכֶם לְמוֹשִׁיעַן שְׁלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – What Pharaoh meant was: Let us act wisely concerning the Savior of Israel [i.e. God].^[30] בְּמָה נִדּוּנִים – With what can we mete out judgment upon [the Israelites] without fear of retribution?^[31] נִדּוּנִים בְּאֵשׁ – If we judge them with fire, God will certainly punish us through fire, “כִּי-הִנֵּה ה' בָּאֵשׁ יִבּוֹא” – for it is written: *For behold, Hashem will arrive in fire ... to vent His anger with wrath.*^[32] “וְכָתִיב, כִּי בָאֵשׁ ה' נִשְׁפָּט וְגו'” – And it is also written in the next verse: *For Hashem will enter into judgment with fire ...*^[33]

NOTES

14. *Exodus* 2:4.

15. [That is, the verse is worded in such a way to teach us that the Divine Presence stood with Miriam, so to speak, until Moses was saved. See note 17.]

16. *I Samuel* 3:10.

17. *Proverbs* 7:4. Wisdom is associated with God in *Proverbs* 2:6 (*Rashi*). Thus, the “sister” in this verse is understood homiletically to be referring to God's wisdom that He reveals to man through His Torah. Since Moses was God's emissary in presenting the Torah to the Jewish nation, this wisdom of God was watching Moses to ensure that he would survive (*Siach Yitzchak* by R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver, Meir ed. p. 317; see there for a lengthy discussion of this entire section of Gemara). The Gemara goes on to explain how each word in the verse is used elsewhere in Scripture in reference to God.

18. *Jeremiah* 31:2.

19. *I Samuel* 2:3.

20. *Deuteronomy* 10:12.

21. *Amos* 3:7.

22. *Judges* 6:24 [That is, Hashem is the source of our peace.]

23. *Exodus* 1:8.

24. The second view should not be taken literally to mean that the original Pharaoh from Joseph's time was still alive, for it is unlikely that a wicked person would be granted such a long life. Rather, it means that he was the son or grandson of the original Pharaoh so that the kingdom was still intact; he is called new only because of his new decrees. The other view, though, holds that the original kingdom had crumbled and

this new Pharaoh was unrelated to the one of Joseph's times (*Maharal*; cf. *Iyun Yaakov* here and *Maharzav* to *Shemos Rabbah* 1:8). [See *Ben Yehoyada* to *Eruvin* 53a for a legal ramification of this dispute.]

25. The Gemara in the parallel passage in *Eruvin* (53a) suggests this explanation according to the opinion that this was the same Pharaoh (or the same regime – see previous note). But according to the view that a new regime had risen, this verse can be understood literally, that the new Pharaoh did not know of Joseph.

26. *Ibid.* v. 9.

27. *Ibid.* 7:29.

28. *Ibid.* 1:10.

29. Even though the entire verse is written in the singular, referring to the Jewish nation as a unit, the term לִי, *to him*, is often expounded as a limiting term. The Gemara therefore asks why it is used here (*Maharal*).

30. That is, the singular *to him* can be expounded as alluding to that which makes the Jewish nation into a singular unit – viz. God (*Maharal*; cf. *Rif* in *Ein Yaakov*).

31. The Egyptians knew that God punishes people measure for measure from the episode of the Flood and from the destruction of Sodom. They therefore sought counsel on how to outwit God (*Rashi*).

32. *Isaiah* 66:15. [The Egyptians certainly did not cite this verse in *Isaiah*. They just knew from history that God punished people with fire, and the Gemara cites a supporting verse (*Ben Yehoyada*; see also *Iyun Yaakov* and *Eitz Yosef*).]

33. [It is seemingly difficult why the Gemara has to cite two verses to prove that God judges through fire. *Minchas Sotah* deduces from

Pharaoh then said: בַּחֶרֶב – If we judge them with the sword, God will certainly punish us through the sword, וּבַחֶרֶב, [וּבַחֶרֶב] – **In the pot in which [the Egyptians] cooked, they themselves were cooked.**^[38] [“אֶת-כָּל-בָּשָׂר” – for it is written in continuation of the just-cited verse: ... **and with His sword against all flesh.** Pharaoh therefore concluded: אֶלָּא בּוֹאוּ וְנִדְוִנֵם בַּמַּיִם – **Rather, let us judge them with water,** שֶׁבָּכָר נִשְׁבַּע הַקְּרוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שְׂאִינוּ מִבֵּיא – **for the Holy One, Blessed is He, has already sworn that He will not again bring a flood upon the world** מִבּוֹל לְעוֹלָם – **for the Holy One, Blessed is He, has already sworn that He will not again bring a flood upon the world** “כִּי-מִי נָח זֹאת לִי וּגְוִי” – **as it is stated:**^[34] **For like the waters of Noah shall this be to Me etc., as I have sworn never again to pass the waters of Noah over the earth.** This argument yielded the plan to drown the Israelite babies. וְהָן אֵינָן יוֹדְעִין – **But they did not know** שֶׁעַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם כּוֹלוּ אֵינוּ מִבֵּיא – **that God swore only that he would not bring a flood over the entire world,** אָבָל עַל אוֹמָה אחת הוא מביא – **but over one nation he would bring a flood.**^[35] אי נמי – **Alternatively, they did not realize that** [God] would not bring flood waters upon a nation, אָבָל הֵן בְּאִין וְנוֹפְלִין בְּתוֹכוֹ – **but He could arrange matters so that they would come and fall into [the water] themselves.** “וּמִצְרַיִם נֹסִים לְקִרְאָתוֹ” – **And so it says: the Egyptians were fleeing toward it.**^[36]

The Gemara supports this exposition: מאי – **And this is what R’ Elazar said:** וְהֵינּוּ דְאָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר – **What is the meaning of that which is written:**^[37] כִּי – **What is the meaning of that which is written:** “אֶת-כָּל-בָּשָׂר” – **for [with] that which they schemed [zadu] against them ... [they themselves were punished].** Since Scripture chooses the word *zadu*, which can also be a reference to

cooking,^[38] the verse alludes to the following: בַּקִּדְרָה שֶׁבִישְׁלוּ בָּהּ – **In the pot in which [the Egyptians] cooked, they themselves were cooked.**^[39]

The Gemara questions the basis for this allusion: מאי משמע דהאי, “וְדו” לִישְׁנָא דְקִדְרָה הוּא – **What implies that this word *zadu* is an expression of cooking in a pot?**^[40]

The Gemara answers: וְהוּא דְהַתִּיב, “וְנִדְוִי יַעֲקֹב נְזִיד” – **For it is written:**^[41] **Jacob cooked [vayazed] a dish [nazid].**

The Gemara further describes the circumstances surrounding Pharaoh’s decree against the Jews:

אָמַר רַבִּי חִיָּא בַר אַבְבָּא אָמַר רַבִּי סִימַאי – **R’ Chiya bar Abba said in the name of R’ Si’mai:** שְׁלֹשָׁה הָיוּ בְּאוֹתָהּ עֲצָה – **Three persons were involved in offering that counsel to Pharaoh:** בִּלְעָם שְׂנֵעֵץ נְהָרָג – **Bilam, Job and Yisro.**^[42] – **Bilam, who counseled Pharaoh to drown the Jewish babies, was slain;**^[43] אִיּוֹב שֶׁשָׁתֵּק – **Job, who was silent,** neither suggesting to Pharaoh that he drown the Israelite babies nor advising him not to do so, גִּידוּן בְּסוּרִין – **was punished by having to undergo suffering.**^[44] אֲשֶׁר יָצָא מִבְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – **As for Yisro, who fled in protest,**^[45] **his descendants merited to sit in the Chamber of Hewn Stone in the Temple as members of the Sanhedrin,**^[46] וּמִשְׁפַּחַת שְׂנֵאָמָר, וּמִשְׁפַּחַת סוֹפְרִים יִשְׁבִּי יַעֲבֹץ תְּרַעְתִּים שְׂמַעְתִּים שׁוֹכְתִים הֵמָּה הַקִּינִים הַבָּאִים מִחַמַּת – **as it is stated:**^[47] **The families of scribes, dwellers of Yabetz**^[48] – **the Tirathites, the Shimathites, and**

NOTES

Rashi’s mention of only the second verse that his version of the Gemara cited only that verse. *Ein Yaakov* too cites only the second verse. However, see *Maharsha* for an explanation of why both of these verses might be needed.]

34. *Isaiah* 54:9.

35. That is, God swore only that He would not destroy the entire world through a flood again, but He could still punish a single nation through water (*Keren Orah*).

36. *Exodus* 14:27. That is, in their confusion the Egyptians ran into the seabed of the Reed Sea that had previously split, and they drowned there (see *Rashi* and *Or HaChaim* to the verse). [Thus, the drowning of the Egyptians was not caused by waters leaving their natural place; rather, the Egyptians ran into the sea and were drowned.]

37. *Ibid.* 18:11.

38. See Gemara below.

39. Cooking is accomplished through the medium of water. Thus, the Egyptians were thrown in the very pot of water (the Reed Sea) in which they threw the Israelite children (*Maharsha*).

40. The simple meaning of נָדוּ is that they acted wickedly (see, for example, *Exodus* 21:14). [In Rabbinic terms, the word מְוִיד refers to someone who deliberately performs a prohibited act (*Radak, Shorashim* וְוִי.ע.)] The Gemara asks where this term is used to connote cooking.

41. *Genesis* 25:29.

42. There was a tradition that these three men were the advisors of Pharaoh at the time (*Eitz Yosef*; cf. *Iyun Yaakov*).

[*Sfas Emes (Likkutim)* notes that the Torah speaks of only two people that gave advice [using the word עֲצָה]; Yisro (*Exodus* 18:19) and Bilam (*Numbers* 24:14). In those cases, too, Yisro’s advice was beneficial to Israel, while Bilam’s was to its detriment.]

43. I.e. he was killed during the Israelite campaign against Midian (*Numbers* 31:8). [This punishment was measure for measure: For advising that the Israelites be killed, he himself was killed.]

[The Gemara stated above that Pharaoh himself was the first to propose such a plan. Our Gemara calls the scheme the counsel of Bilam, because he endorsed it (*Eitz Yosef*). Alternatively, it is possible that Pharaoh was the first to propose action against the Jews, but the actual plan was Bilam’s.]

44. See *Job* Chs. 1-2. One who is able to protest against the wrongdoing of others, but remains silent, is punished (*Eitz Yosef*). The punishment

of suffering was measure for measure, because one who is afflicted with suffering cries out from the pain; this was just punishment for Job’s failure to open his mouth in defense of the Israelites (*Aruch LaNer to Sanhedrin* 106a). Even if Job did not protest because he knew that he would not be successful in changing Pharaoh’s mind, he was nevertheless punished measure for measure; for one cries when he suffers even though he knows that doing so will not alleviate his suffering. Similarly, Job should have voiced his objection to Pharaoh’s plan, although he knew that doing so would not change Pharaoh’s mind in the end (*Chidushei HaGriz*; see also *R’ Chaim Shmulevitz in Sichos Mussar* 5733 §5; cf. *Anaf Yosef* and *Hagahos Einei Shmuel*). [In the *Zohar* (vol. 2, 33a), it is stated that Job told Pharaoh to spare the Jews’ lives, but to take away their possessions and enslave them. For this, Job was punished measure for measure, for God later gave almost exactly the same instructions to the Satan with regard to Job (*Job* 2:5; see *Bava Basra* 16a).]

R’ Chaim Shmulevitz brings out another point from this Gemara. At first glance it would seem that Job’s punishment was worse than that of Bilam, for Job suffered the worst types of suffering, while Bilam died a quick death. This seems unfair, since Bilam certainly acted more evilly than Job in advising Pharaoh how to defeat Israel. *R’ Chaim* derives from this that the gift of life is most precious, even when one must suffer. Thus, Job, who survived, was better off than Bilam, even though Job had to undergo terrible suffering.

45. He objected to Pharaoh’s plan, and then fled to Midian to escape Pharaoh’s wrath (*Iyun Yaakov*; cf. *Ben Yehoyada to Sanhedrin* 106a).

46. This reward too was measure for measure: As reward for Yisro abdicating his position as one of Pharaoh’s advisors, his descendants became members of the Sanhedrin, which offers counsel to Israel (*Toras HaKenaos*).

47. *I Chronicles* 2:55.

48. According to this exposition, Yabetz should not be understood according to its literal meaning, as a place where the families of scribes lived. Rather, these families were disciples of Yabetz, a great Torah scholar. The Gemara (*Temurah* 16a, based on *I Chronicles* 4:9-10) teaches that Yabetz had prayed to be blessed with Torah wisdom and many disciples, and these requests were granted to him (*Rashi*). [The Gemara (*ibid.*) further identifies Yabetz as Asniel ben Kenaz, the first of the Judges to lead the Israelites after the death of Joshua (see *Judges* 3:9).]

According to our Gemara, the families of scribes who were the disciples of Yabetz were descendants of Yisro, as the Gemara will prove

the *Suchatites*,^[49] they are the Kenites who are descended from Chammath, father of the house of Reichav. וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרוֹ – And it is written: The children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, etc. went up out of the city of palm trees.^[50] We thus see that the Kenites described in the previously cited verse as scribes [i.e. sages] were descendants of Yisro.

The Gemara resumes its exposition of Pharaoh's discourse: וְגַלְתִּים בָּנוּ וְעָלָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ,, – if a war will occur, it too may join our enemies and fight us and go up from the land.^[51]

The Gemara asks: וְעָלָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ – [Pharaoh] should have said, “And we will go up from the land.”^[52] – ? –

The Gemara answers: אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָא בַר כַּהֲנָא – R' Abba bar Kahana said: כְּאִםּוֹ – It is like a person who curses himself, שֶׁמְקַלֵּל אֶת עַצְמוֹ – but applies his curse to others.^[53]

The next verse states: וַיִּשְׁמָוּ עָלָיו שְׂרֵי מִסִּים,, – They appointed taskmasters over it.^[54]

The Gemara asks: עָלָיוּ מִיבְעֵי לֵיהּ – It should have said that they appointed taskmasters “over them.” Why does the verse state “it” in the singular?^[55]

The Gemara answers: תַּנָּא רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן – A Tanna of the academy of R' Elazar the son of R' Shimon taught: מַלְמֹד שֶׁהֵבִיאוּ מִלְכָן – IT

TEACHES THAT THEY BROUGHT A BRICK MOLD.^[56] וְתָלוּ לוֹ לְפָרְעֹה וְכָל אֶחָד – AND THEY HUNG IT ON PHARAOH'S NECK;^[57] וְאָחַד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁאָמַר לָהֶם אֵי־סָטְנִים אֲנִי – THEN, WHENEVER ONE OF THE ISRAELITES SAID TO [THE EGYPTIANS], “I AM OF A DELICATE NATURE and unable to work,” אָמְרוּ לוֹ כְּלוֹם אֵי־סָטְנִים אַתָּה יוֹתֵר – THEY WOULD SAY TO HIM, “ARE YOU THEN OF A MORE DELICATE NATURE THAN PHARAOH?” Thus, the singular “him” used by the verse is an allusion to Pharaoh.^[58]

The Gemara expounds the verse's term for “taskmasters” according to this interpretation: שְׂרֵי מִסִּים,, – According to the aforementioned exposition, *taskmasters* refer not to officers, but to דְּבַר שְׁמֹשִׁים (לְבָנִים) – a thing that coerces.^[59]

The verse continues: לְמַעַן עֲנוּתוֹ בְּסִבְלָתָם,, – ... in order to afflict him with their burdens.

The Gemara asks: עֲנוּתָם מִיבְעֵי לֵיהּ – It should have stated “in order to afflict them.”

The Gemara answers: לְמַעַן עֲנוּתוֹ לְפָרְעֹה בְּסִבְלוֹתָם דִּישְׂרָאֵל – The verse means in order to afflict Pharaoh with regard to the burdens of Israel.^[60]

The verse continues: וַיִּבְנֶן עָרֵי מִסְכְּנוֹת לְפָרְעֹה,, – ... and it built storage cities [mishkenos] for Pharaoh.

The Gemara expounds the term *mishkenos* used here: חַד אָמַר שְׁמִסְכְּנוֹת אֶת – Rav and Shmuel disagree: רַב וְשְׁמוּאֵל

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from the end of the verse. They were called “scribes” because they were members of the Sanhedrin [the term *sofrim* is often used for Sages (see *Kiddushin* 30a) (*Rashi*).

49. *Sifri* (to *Numbers* 10:29) expounds the names of these three peoples as further allusions to the life of Yisro and his descendants:

(a) Tirathites: They heard the “*teruah*” sound of the shofar at Sinai. Alternatively, *tirah* is Aramaic for “gate”; they sat at the gates of Jerusalem.

(b) Shimathites: They heeded (*sham'u*) the advice of their father. Our verse further describes these families as the descendants of Reichav; *Jeremiah* Ch. 35 records how Yonadav son of Reichav had commanded his children not to drink any wine, build any houses, sow any fields nor plant any vineyards, but to live a life of complete simplicity in tents (*Rashi*). [This, as *Sifri* teaches, was because, knowing that it had already been decreed that the Temple was to be destroyed, Yonadav felt as if it had already been destroyed.]

(c) Suchatites: They lived in booths (*succos*) in the desert [as their father had commanded] (*Rashi*).

50. *Judges* 1:16. This verse explicitly identifies the Kenites as the descendants of Yisro. Thus, the previously cited verse alludes to the reward given Yisro's descendants and identifies the family of Reichav as his descendants as well (*Rashi*; see *Sifri*).

51. *Exodus* 1:10.

52. The way the verse reads, it seems that Pharaoh was concerned that the Israelites (*it* is a reference to the Jewish nation) would leave Egypt. But if Pharaoh was afraid of the Israelites, he would have been happy if they left the land; his true concern was that they would drive the Egyptians from the land (*Rashi*; cf. *Maharsha*). Why, then, does the verse not state this explicitly?

53. Thus, Pharaoh actually was worried that the Israelites would triumph in war and force the Egyptians out of their land. But Pharaoh did not want to speak openly about such a bad thing happening to himself; hence, he spoke euphemistically.

[It is interesting to note that Pharaoh's spoken words indeed came true. Israel went up from the land to receive the Torah at Sinai, and from there went up further to Eretz Yisrael (*Iyun Yaakov*).]

54. *Ibid.* v. 11. [In the entire passage, the word *it* is a reference to the Jewish nation.]

55. Here, too, the Gemara's question is based on the fact that the term *עָלָיו*, *on him*, is often used as a limiting term. The Gemara therefore asks why it is used in this context (*Maharal*).

56. This was a mold that would be filled with clay and flattened to form a brick (*Rashi*). [The Gemara will explain below that the term *שְׂרֵי מִסִּים* (literally: taskmasters) used in this verse also alludes to this brick mold.]

57. The previous verses quote Pharaoh's decrees. This verse now states that they placed the mold *עָלָיו*, *on him* – i.e. on Pharaoh (*Rashi*).

58. This verse presents a difficulty to the Gemara above, which stated that Pharaoh had acted with wisdom by choosing to use water to defeat Israel without fear of retribution. Why then does Scripture state in the very next verse that he enslaved the Israelites and forced them to build for him? *Iyun Yaakov* answers that Pharaoh initially tried this method of subduing Israel, because he felt it was his right as king to have them work for him. When this did not prevent them from increasing, he ordered the midwives to kill the male Jewish infants, thinking that he would not be punished for the actions of the Hebrew midwives. When this too proved ineffective (because the midwives disregarded his orders), Pharaoh resorted to his plan to destroy Israel through water [by ordering that the male infants be drowned] (cf. *Ben Yehoyada*).

59. This refers to the mold that was hung on Pharaoh's neck. It is called *שְׂרֵי מִסִּים* (literally: taskmasters) because Pharaoh used it as a symbol to force the Jews to work (*Rashi*; see *Tiferes Tziyon*, who explains that *שְׂרֵי* connotes oppression [שָׂר, an officer, has the authority to oppress], and *מִסִּים* is cognate to *מָשִׂים*, which means to place. Thus, the mold forced the Jews to work when it was placed on Pharaoh's neck). [*Rashi's* version apparently did not have the word *לְבָנִים* found in parenthesis in our editions (see *Hagahos R' Simchah MiDessau*).]

[*Maharal* (in *Gur Aryeh*) finds in the verse's use of the singular in this passage an allusion to the fact that the Egyptians realized that the power of the Jews lay in their unity. He states further that Pharaoh placed the brick mold upon his neck to assure that all of the Israelites would follow his example as one, thus ensuring that there would be no rebellion.]

60. [This teaching is in line with the previous one. Pharaoh pretended to be afflicted] in order that the Israelites should volunteer to work hard to help ease Pharaoh's burden (*Rashi*; see *Mizrachi* to this verse).

בעליהן – One said that [these cities] endangered their owners.^[61] וְחָדָא אָמַר שְׂמִמְסָבְנוֹת אֶת בְּעֵלֵיהֶן – And the other one said that they impoverished their owners.^[62] וְדָאָמַר מַר – For the master said: כָּל הַעוֹסֵק בְּבִנְיָן מִתְמַסְכֵּן – Anyone who engages in construction becomes poor.^[63]

The verse concludes with the names of the storage cities:
 “אֶת־פִּתּוֹם וְאֶת־רַעַמְסֵס” – *Pithom and Raamses*.

These names are expounded as a single city:
 חָדָא אָמַר פִּיתוֹם שְׂמָה – Rav and Shmuel disagree: רַב וְשְׁמוּאֵל – One said that its name was Pithom. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׂמָה רַעַמְסֵס – So why was it called Raamses? שְׂרָאוֹן רָאוֹן מִתְרוֹסֵס – For it would crumble [*misroseis*] one bit at a time.^[64] וְחָדָא אָמַר – And the other one said that its name was Raamses. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׂמָה פִּיתוֹם – So why was it called Pithom? שְׂרָאוֹן רָאוֹן פִּי תְהוֹם בּוֹלְעוֹ – For the mouth of the depths [*pi tehom*] would swallow it one bit at a time.^[65]

The next verse states:
 “וְכַאֲשֶׁר יַעֲנוּ אֹתוֹ בֵּן יִרְבֶּה וְבֵן יִפְרָץ” – *But as much as they*

would afflict it, so it would increase and so it would spread out.”^[66]

The Gemara questions the tense of the verbs:
 כֵּן רַבּוּ וְכֵן פָּרְצוּ מֵיבְעֵי לֵיהּ – It should have stated, “so they increased and so they spread out,” in the past tense. – ? –

The Gemara answers:
 רִיחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבְּשָׂרְתָן – Reish Lakish said: אָמַר רִישׁ לָקִישׁ – The Divine Spirit informed them: “בֵּן יִרְבֶּה וְכֵן יִפְרָץ” – *so it will increase and so it will spread out*.^[67]

The verse continues:
 “וַיִּקְצוּ מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל” – *and they were disgusted* [*vayakutzu*] *because of the Children of Israel*. מִלְּמַד שֶׁהָיוּ דוֹמִין בְּעֵינֵיהֶם – It teaches that [the Jews] were like thorns [*kotzim*] in the eyes of [the Egyptians].^[68]

The next verse states:^[69]
 “וַיַּעֲבְדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל” – *The Egyptians enslaved the Children of Israel*

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61. Because the Egyptians forced the Jews to build these cities, they were later endangered and drowned in the sea (*Rashi*). [According to this view the term *miskenos* is related to the Hebrew word *sakanah* (danger).]

[In *Yalkut Shimoni* it is related that when the Egyptians rushed into the Reed Sea and were about to be punished, the angel appointed over Egypt pleaded with God to spare the lives of the Egyptians. But his appeal was denied when the angel Gabriel descended to earth and brought before God a brick, inside of which a Jewish baby was entombed. (The taskmasters threw the Jewish children into the brick molds if the Jews did not fulfill their daily quotas.) Thus, the construction of the cities truly endangered their owners, for the brick was the final straw that sealed the Egyptians’ fate.]

62. Because of this forced labor, the Egyptians later lost all of their possessions to the Jews (*Rashi*). [The term *miskeinus* in *Deuteronomy* (8:9) means “poverty.” See also *Ecclesiastes* (4:13 and 9:15) for a similar usage of this root.]

63. Based on our explanation of the dispute between Rav and Shmuel, this dictum has no place in the text [for the danger and poverty discussed here are not directly related to the construction], and is taken out of context from a Gemara in *Yevamos* 63a (*Rashi*, first explanation).

Alternatively, the dispute between Rav and Shmuel concerns construction in general, not the particular case of the Jews in Egypt. One view holds that construction is dangerous because someone can fall off the building and be killed. The other view holds that construction

impoverishes a person, and cites the dictum to bolster his position (*Rashi*, second explanation).

[*Meiri* (to *Yevamos* (63a) explains that this dictum advises an ounce of prevention to prevent the necessity for a pound of cure. If one sees a small hole in the wall, he should plug it promptly and not leave it until it widens so that he will have to fortify and plaster an entire section. And if it has already widened, he should repair it promptly, and not leave it until the entire wall collapses and he will have to rebuild it. Procrastination, especially during construction, leads to ever greater losses.]

64. Every little bit they built would crumble and fall over, and each successive attempt would yield the same result (*Rashi*).

65. That is, whatever they built would sink into the ground (*Rashi*).

Pharaoh put the Jews to work building such useless structures because he wanted the Jews to be constantly laboring, so they could not rebel against him (*Malbim*). [Alternatively, he wanted the purposeless labor to break their spirits.]

66. *Exodus* 1:12.

67. That is, the Divine Spirit was informing Israel of the good news and telling the Egyptians that their plan against the Israelites would not work, because the Jews would certainly increase in number despite the Egyptians’ efforts (see *Rashi*).

68. That is, it was like their eyes and body were filled with thorns when they saw Israel increase (*Rashi*).

69. *Ibid.* v. 13.

“בפריך – with *“pharech.”*”

The Gemara presents two explanations of this last word:
R' Elazar says: It is a contraction, alluding to the fact that the enslavement began *with a soft mouth* [*pheh rach*].^[1]
R' Shmuel bar Nachmani said: It should be taken literally, meaning *with crushing labor* [*pherichah*].^[2]

The next verse states:

– *They embittered their lives with hard labor, with mortar and with bricks etc., and with every labor of the field.*^[3]

The Gemara explains:

Initially, the Egyptians embittered the lives of the Israelites *with mortar and with bricks*, *and at the end, and with every labor of the field.*^[4]

The verse concludes:

– *... all their labors that they performed with them with “pharech.”*

Before commenting on this passage, the Gemara explains the phrase “hard labor,” mentioned earlier in the verse:^[5]

R' Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of R' Yonasan: It means *שהיו*

– *that [the Egyptians] would substitute men’s work to be given to the women and women’s work to be given to the men.*^[6]

The Gemara now comments on the last word in this verse:
 – *Even according to the one who said that there* in the preceding verse the term “*pharech*” is a contraction, indicating that the work began *with a soft mouth* [*pheh rach*], *here the term “pharech” certainly means with crushing labor.*^[7]

The Gemara describes how Pharaoh’s first plan to prevent the Israelites from procreating failed:

Rav Avira expounded: *בשכר נשים צדקניות – In the merit of the righteous women who were in that generation, Israel was redeemed from Egypt.*^[8]
When [the women] would go to draw water, the Holy One, Blessed is He, would prepare small fish for them in their jugs.
And when they would draw up the jugs, they would be half full of water and half full of fish.^[9]
They would come and place two pots on top of the oven, one full of hot water and one full of the fish,

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1. That is, Pharaoh began the enslavement by inducing them – with encouraging words and good pay – to work for him, until he had acclimated them to the work (*Rashi*).

Pharaoh gathered the Israelites together and asked them if they would do him a favor for a day. He took a basket of clay and a trowel and started laying bricks. The Israelites enthusiastically helped him with the brickwork. At the end of the day Pharaoh ordered his taskmasters to count the number of bricks that had been laid. He then demanded that they produce the same amount every day (*Yalkut Shimoni* §163). This was Pharaoh’s first attempt to halt the population increase of the Israelites. The taskmasters would advise the Israelites not to go home, but rather to sleep at the worksite, so they could fulfill their quota the next day. However, this did not arrest the propagation of the Jews, as the verse states (*Exodus* 1:12): *But as much as they would afflict it, so it would increase* (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:12).

Actually, the Israelites first began to work for Pharaoh when Jacob died. [Since the entire length of the Israelites’ stay in Egypt was two hundred and ten years, and Jacob died seventeen years after his arrival, the work began one hundred and ninety-three years before the Exodus from Egypt.] This work, though, was intermittent, and as such was not considered the beginning of the slavery. Only when Levi, the last of Jacob’s sons, died, did a new king arise over Egypt and begin the constant slavery, forcing the Israelites to build his storage cities. Since Levi died ninety-four years after their arrival in Egypt, this period began one hundred and sixteen years before the Exodus (*Gur Aryeh* to *Genesis* 47:28 and *Exodus* 6:16, based on *Rashi* in both places; cf. *Mizrachi* there). According to R’ Elazar, the verse alludes to the fact that this period began with soft words and gentle persuasion.

Rashi to *Song of Songs* (2:13) adds yet another date to the slavery, writing that when Miriam the sister of Moses was born eighty-six years before the Exodus, the Egyptians increased their subordination of the Israelites. In fact, she was named Miriam to reflect this new situation (מיִרְיָם shares the same root as מִרְרִירוֹת, *bitterness*). [This is based on *Midrash Rabbah* there and *Pesikta Rabbasi* (15:11); see *Seder Olam Rabbah* (§3) for a somewhat different view.]

2. I.e. strenuous physical work that breaks down the body (*Rashi*). R’ Shmuel bar Nachmani follows the literal meaning of *pherach*, which is “break” (*Rashbam* to *Exodus* 1:13; see also *Rashi* there). [The Aramaic term פִּירְכָּא, *question*, also connotes an attempt to break one’s opinion.] Thus, in his view this verse refers to the demanding physical labor that the Israelites performed.

3. *Exodus* 1:14. This verse presents a further deterioration of the Jews’ situation (see *Sforno* there). According to *Pesikta Rabbasi* (ibid.), this verse marks the birth of Miriam, since its first word וַיִּמְרֹר, *they*

embittered, is related to מִרְיָם, *Miriam* (see note 1). Accordingly, this verse speaks of the period that began eighty-six years prior to the Exodus. [See also *Maharzav* and *Rashash* to *Shemos Rabbah* 1:13.]

The Gemara finds the verse difficult because the Israelites were forced to work at construction, using mortar and bricks to build Pharaoh’s storage cities. Why then does it make mention of field work? (*Minchas Sotah*).

4. Working in the field is more demeaning than construction work. Thus, the Egyptians subjugated the Israelites even more by forcing them to perform menial labor in the fields (*Maharsha*, based on *Shemos Rabbah* 1:11; cf. *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Vayeitzei* §9).

5. *Rashi* writes that the Gemara should be emended to add: *with hard labor*, since it is commenting on that phrase. But *Maharsha* defends our version (which is identical to that of *Tanchuma* ibid.) by offering an alternative explanation; see there, and see *Meromei Sadeh*.

6. They would order the men to knead dough and bake bread, while the women would have to chop wood and draw water etc. (*Tanchuma* ibid.).

This made the work more difficult for all, since they were unaccustomed to it (*Rashi*). That is, even though the men were used to exerting themselves even harder to perform physical labor, it was difficult for them to do tasks that they had never done before and were unfamiliar with – even though they were less physically taxing. And the women certainly suffered by being forced to perform labor more strenuous than was normal for them.

7. Since this verse begins by stating that the Egyptians embittered the lives of the Israelites, it cannot be referring to the initial inducements to convince the Israelites to work (*Rashi*; cf. *Iyun Yaakov*).

Based on *Rashi*’s version (see above, note 5), the Gemara has now made three comments on this verse:

(1) *They embittered their lives with hard labor*, by giving men’s work to the women and women’s work to the men.

(2) *... with mortar and with bricks and with every labor of the field* – in the beginning they worked with mortar and bricks, and at the end in the fields.

(3) *... all their labors that they performed with them with “pharech”* – with crushing labor.

8. It is because of this that women are obligated in the commandments of Passover just as men are, even though women are generally exempt from positive time-bound commandments (*Rashbam* to *Pesachim* 108b, *Or Zarua* vol. II, *Hilchos Pesachim* p. 59b; cf. *Tosafos* to *Pesachim* there).

9. [See *Iyun Yaakov* for a possible explanation of the apparent redundancy here.]

10. To bathe their husband’s feet in the field (*Rashi*).

and they would take them to their husbands to the field. ומרחיצות אותן וסכות אותן – [The women] would bathe [their husbands] and anoint them, ומאבילות אותן ומשקות אותן – feed them and give them drink,^[11] וינקקות להן בין שפתים – and they would then join with them conjugally between the borders of the fields,^[12] “אם תשבבון בין שפתים וגו’ – as it is stated: *As you lie among the borders etc.*^[13]

The Gemara notes another reward attributed to the righteous women:^[14]

“As reward for you lie among the borders, ישראל זכו וישראל לבנות מצרים – Israel merited the spoils of Egypt. שנאמר, כנפי יונה נחפה בכסף ואברותיה בירקרק – For it is stated at the end of the verse: *the wings of a dove that are coated with silver, and her pinions with brilliant gold.*^[15]

The Gemara resumes its narrative of how the Israelites continued to multiply despite the harsh labor:

“When the women became pregnant, they would come to their houses.^[16] וכיון שמגיע זמן – and when the time for them to give birth arrived, מולדיהן – they would go and give birth in the field under the apple tree,^[17] שנאמר, תחת התפוח – as it is stated, *Under the apple tree I roused*

you etc.^[18] – והקדוש ברוך הוא שולח משמי מרום – Then, the Holy One, Blessed is He, would send from the heavens above – מי שמנקיר ומשפיר אותן – an angel who would clean the newborn babies and straighten them^[19] את כחיה זו שמשפרת את – like this midwife who straightens the child, והולך – and you would suckle him, ומולדותיך ביום הולדת אתך לא-כרת שרף ובמים לא-רחצת למשעי – as it is stated: *And in regard to your birth, on the day you were born your umbilical cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to smooth [the skin] etc., nor were you swaddled at all.*^[20] [The angel] would gather [for the babies] two round loaves, אחד של שמן ואחד של דבש – one of oil and one of honey,^[21] שנאמר – as it is stated: *He would suckle him with honey from a stone, and oil etc. from a flinty rock.*^[22] When the Egyptians would discover [the babies], באין להורגן – they would come to kill them. ונעשה להם נס ונבלעין בקרקע – But a miracle would occur that [the babies] would be swallowed up in the ground.^[23] [The Egyptians] ומביאין שנורים וחרשין על גבן – would bring oxen and plow on top of them,^[24] על-גבי שנאמר – as it is stated:^[25] *On my back the plowers plowed.* לאחר שהולכין – After [the Egyptians] went away, היו מבצבצין ויוצאין בעשב השדה – [the babies] would spring

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11. The Gemara in *Kesubos* (10b) states that this treatment rejuvenates a man (*Chida* in *Rosh David* p. 208 *Nechmod* ed.).

In his commentary to the Torah (*Exodus* 38:8), *Rashi* cites *Midrash Tanchuma* (*Pikudei* §9), which adds that the women would then arouse the men further with their copper mirrors. Each woman would view herself with her husband in her mirror and entice him by saying, “I am more handsome than you.” These mirrors were later used to fashion the *kiyor* for the Tabernacle. [It is noteworthy that the women should have been even more exhausted than the men, for they had to perform the more physically taxing labor, as the Gemara stated above. Nevertheless, their righteousness and their concern for the survival of the Israelites gave them the strength to adorn themselves and entice their husbands, thus ensuring that children would be conceived.]

12. Every field had a raised border marking its boundary. The low land between two such borders offered relative privacy (*Rashi*).

13. *Psalms* 68:14. Thus, since the women stayed faithful to their husbands and supported them, the Israelites merited to be saved (*Maharsha*; see also *Kerem Nota* and *Chida* in his *Devarim Achadim* p. 15a). [See also below, note 15.]

14. The Gemara just concluded that through taking care of their husbands the Israelite women initiated the redemption from exile. The Gemara now states that through their uniting with their husbands in the fields they entitled the Israelites to the spoils of Egypt (*Minchas Sotah*; cf. *Maharsha*).

15. Israel is compared to a dove (*Rashi*). The passage thus conveys that Israel (the dove) was loaded with the gold and silver spoils of Egypt.

However, this is apparently difficult, because we learned above (11a note 62) that the Israelites were granted the spoils of Egypt in return for their work in building Pharaoh’s storage cities. Why, then, was the merit of the women needed? Furthermore, why was any merit needed if God had already promised Abraham that after the exile in Egypt his descendants would go out with great wealth? (see *Genesis* 15:14). *Mishneh LaMelech* (in his *Parashas Derachim* §5) answers that God’s promise to Abraham was predicated on the assumption that the Israelites would be enslaved for four hundred years as stated in Scripture there. But in fact, their entire stay in Egypt lasted only two hundred and ten years [and the actual slavery did not begin until one hundred and sixteen years before they left – see above, note 1]. Two factors contributed to view the shorter amount of time as fulfillment of the four-hundred-year term: (a) the harshness of the work, and (b) the tremendous number of Israelites who worked, due to the tremendous increase in population. Thus, the Gemara above states that the hard labor in building Pharaoh’s storage cities enabled the Israelites to gain the spoils of Egypt even though the four hundred years were not concluded, while our Gemara adds that through the efforts of the women

the Israelites continued to procreate, thus lessening their term; this factor too allowed them to receive the spoils of Egypt at this earlier date.

16. Once they became pregnant, they would stay in their houses and no longer cohabit with their husbands, since it was a time of sorrow for the nation (*Iyun Yaakov*, based on *Taanis* 11a; see also *Chida* in *Rosh David* there).

17. This represented their longing to become closer to God, Who is compared to an apple tree (see *Song of Songs* 2:3), and their desire to receive His Torah (*Iyun Yaakov*; cf. *Ben Yehoyada*).

18. *Song of Songs* 8:5. According to this exposition, the verse means that God aroused the children to leave their mother’s wombs under the apple tree (*Rashi*).

The continuation of the verse reads: שמה חבלתך אמך חבלה לך דתך – there your mother was in travail for you; she who bore you was in travail. Some versions have this continuation or part of it included in the Gemara’s text. See *Rashi*, who points out that חבלתך refers to labor pains. See also *Mesoras HaShas* and *Dikdukei Soferim HaShalem*.

19. They would straighten out those limbs of the children that had become dislocated from the trauma of birth (*Rashi*; see *Shabbos* 123a with *Rashi* אסובי נוקא רי’).

Although our Gemara only implies that this was done by angels, the version in *Ein Yaakov* and the *Midrash* (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:12) states so explicitly. However, another *Midrash* (*Shemos Rabbah* 23:8) states that God Himself cared for the babies.

20. *Ezekiel* 16:4. [This verse describes the birth of Israel as a nation in Egypt.] There were no midwives there to cut the umbilical cord [or to otherwise care for the newborns] (*Rashi*). These tasks were performed by the angels that were sent by God.

21. That is, the angels would gather stones for the babies, from which they were miraculously able to suck out oil and honey (*Maharshav* to *Midrash*; cf. *Maharsha*).

22. *Deuteronomy* 32:13. Although in context the verse is describing the virtues of Eretz Yisrael, it is expounded to refer to the Egyptian exile, because we find no reference of honey being miraculously produced from rocks in Eretz Yisrael (*Maharsha*).

23. [After explaining why this verse should be understood literally as a miraculous protection for the babies, *Maharal* (רש”ר) adds a second explanation, which understands this verse figuratively; see there.]

24. Although the Egyptians saw how the babies were miraculously saved, they thought it was accomplished through sorcery (as they would later assume regarding the first several of the ten plagues). They therefore tried to kill the babies by plowing over them (*Maharsha*).

25. *Psalms* 129:3.

out like grass of the field, „רַבְּכָה בְּצִמְחַת הַשָּׂדֶה נִתְחַיֵּי” – as it is stated: *I made you as numerous as the plants of the field.*^[26] וְכִינּוּן שֶׁמֵתְגַדְּלִין בְּאִינוּ עֲדָרִים עֲדָרִים לְבֵיתָהּ – When [the children] grew up, they would come as flocks upon flocks to their houses, „וַתִּרְבֵּי וַתִּגְדְּלֵי וַתְּבֹאֵי בְּעֲדֵי עֲדָרִים” – as it is stated in that same verse: *you increased and grew, and you came with ornaments upon ornaments.* אֵל תִּקְרֵי – אל תקרי “בְּעֲדֵי עֲדָרִים” – Do not read this as it is written: *b’adi adayim* (ornaments upon ornaments); אֵלָא בְּעֲדֵי עֲדָרִים – rather, read it as though it were written: “*b’edrei adarim*” (flocks upon flocks).^[27] וַיִּבְשַׁנְגְּלָה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַיָּם – Therefore, when the Holy One, Blessed is He, revealed Himself on the sea, הֵם הִכִּירוּהוּ תַחֲלָה – they recognized Him first, „וְהָאֵלֵי וַאֲנוּהוּ” – as it is stated: *This is my God and I will beautify Him.*^[28]

The Gemara returns to its analysis of the section in *Exodus*, citing Pharaoh’s next attempt to prevent the Israelites from procreating:

“וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמִיֻּלְדֵי הָעִבְרִיּוֹת וּגְוִי” – *The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives etc., of whom the name of the first was Shifrah and the name of the second was Puah.*^[29]

The Gemara discusses the relationship of the two midwives: Rav and Shmuel disagree: חָדָא אָמַר אֲשֶׁה וּבִתָּהּ – One said that it was a woman with her daughter, וְחַדָּא אָמַר כְּלָה – and the other one said it was a daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law.^[30] מַאֲן דְּאָמַר אֲשֶׁה וּבִתָּהּ – The one who said that it was a woman with her daughter, וַיִּזְכְּרוּ וּמִרְיָם – holds that they were Yocheved and Miriam.^[31] וּמַאֲן דְּאָמַר כְּלָה – But the one who said that it was a daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law וַיִּזְכְּרוּ וְאֵלִישֶׁבַע – holds that they were Yocheved and Elisheva.^[32]

The Gemara supports the first view:

– It was taught in a Baraisa in accordance with the one who said that it was a woman with her daughter: דְּתַנֵּינָא – For it was taught in a Baraisa: „שִׁפְרָה” – The midwife named SHIFRAH mentioned in the verse IS actually YOCHAVED. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמָהּ שִׁפְרָה – SO WHY IS SHE CALLED “SHIFRAH”? שְׁמִישְׁפָּרַת אֶת הַיֶּלֶד – BECAUSE SHE STRAIGHTENED (*meshaferes*) THE limbs of the CHILD after birth.^[33] דְּבַר אַחֵר – ANOTHER EXPLANATION: שִׁפְרָה שְׁפָרוּ וְרַבּוּ – She was called “SHIFRAH” BECAUSE ISRAEL INCREASED AND MULTIPLIED (*sheparu veravu*) IN HER DAYS. פּוּעָה – The midwife called PUAH in the verse IS actually MIRIAM. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמָהּ פּוּעָה – SO WHY IS SHE CALLED “PUAH”? שְׁהֵיִתָּה פּוּעָה (וּמוֹצִיאָה אֶת הַיֶּלֶד) לְלִלְדָא – BECAUSE SHE WOULD COO (*po’ah*) TO THE CHILD.^[34] דְּבַר אַחֵר – ANOTHER EXPLANATION: פּוּעָה שְׁהֵיִתָּה פּוּעָה בְּרוּחַ הַקְּדוֹשׁ – SHE WAS CALLED PUAH BECAUSE SHE WOULD CRY OUT (*po’ah*) WITH THE DIVINE SPIRIT וְאָמַרְתָּ – AND SAY, “MY MOTHER IS DESTINED TO BEAR A SON WHO WILL SAVE ISRAEL.”^[35]

The next verse records Pharaoh’s instructions to the midwives: “וַיֹּאמֶר בְּיִלְדֵיכֶן אֶת־הַעֲבָרִיּוֹת וּגְוִי” – *And he said, “When you are assisting the Hebrew women at childbirth etc., and you see on the stones; if it is a son, you are to kill him, and if it is a daughter, she shall live.”*^[36]

The Gemara asks:

“מַאֲן אֲבָנִים?” – What are the *stones* to which the verse refers?

The Gemara answers:

– R’ Chanan said: [Pharaoh] gave over to [the midwives] a great [i.e. dependable] sign of imminent childbirth.^[37] אָמַר לְהֵן – He said to them: בְּשַׁעָה – When [a woman] kneels to give birth, שְׁבוּרַת לֵילַד – When [a woman] kneels to give birth, יְרִיבוֹתֶיהָ יִמְצָטְנוֹת כְּאֲבָנִים – her thighs become as cold as stones.^[38]

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26. *Ezekiel* 16:7. The verse is expounded to mean that they grew out from the ground like plants of the field (*Rashi*). If the verse meant only to describe the numerous amount of babies, it should have used the common metaphor of sand or stars. The comparison to plants is thus understood as how the babies were saved (*Maharsha*; see *Iyun Yaakov*).

27. The verse cannot be taken literally because it concludes: *and you were naked and bare* (*Maharsha*). It is therefore expounded as if it stated “flocks,” and this miraculous procreation is considered Israel’s figurative “ornament” (*Tiferes Tziyon* to *Shemos Rabbah* 1:12).

28. *Exodus* 15:2. Because they had already witnessed the Divine Presence (*Rashi*; cf. *Maharal* שמר ד”ה וכן מה שאמר *Maharzav*).

Since Pharaoh’s first plan to prevent the Israelites from procreating was foiled, he tried a new tactic – as the Gemara proceeds to explain (see *Shemos Rabbah* 1:13 with *Yefei Toar*).

29. *Ibid.* 1:15. Since the verse introduces them as “the first” and “the second,” it indicates that it refers to a pair of women – one primary woman and one secondary woman. The Gemara therefore discusses their relationship (*Gur Aryeh* to the verse; cf. *Yefei To’ar* *ibid.*).

This does not mean that two women cared for the entire Israelite population. Actually, there must have been hundreds of midwives, but these two were the royal officials in charge of all the others. Pharaoh therefore summoned them to present his plan (*Ibn Ezra* to the verse; see also *Maharzav* to *Shemos Rabbah* *ibid.*; cf. *Sforno* to the verse).

30. Either combination satisfies the requirement that one woman be primary – mother or mother-in-law – and the second one secondary – daughter or daughter-in-law (*Gur Aryeh* *ibid.*). [See *Ben Yehoyada* and *Rashash* for various reasons why the daughter-in-law is mentioned before the mother-in-law according to the second opinion.]

31. Since the verse indicates that the two midwives were mother and daughter, it presumably wants to identify them. We can therefore assume that they were Yocheved and Miriam, since they are the only known mother-and-daughter pair of the time (*Gur Aryeh*).

Although Miriam was only five years old at the time, she served

as an aide to her mother (*Shemos Rabbah* *ibid.*).

32. Elisheva (was the daughter of Aminadav who) married Aaron (*Rashi*), Yocheved’s son. Elisheva was thus Yocheved’s future daughter-in-law.

According to this view, it is unlikely that Miriam was one of the midwives, since she was only five years old at the time [and it is difficult to say that she was only a helper]. The verse must therefore refer to Elisheva, the only other woman of the time named in the Torah, and she was secondary to her future mother-in-law, Yocheved (*Maharsha*).

[Since Aaron was only two years old at the time, we must presume that Elisheva was older than he and could thus serve as a midwife (*Yefei To’ar*).

33. See above, note 19. Alternatively, she would clean off the blood from childbirth (*Shemos Rabbah* *ibid.*).

34. I.e. she would make sweet sounds to play with the child (*Rashi*). [We have emended the Gemara based on *Rashi*’s [apparent] version; see also *Tosafos* and *Mesoras HaShas*.]

35. That is, Miriam prophesied that her mother was to give birth to Moses, who would lead Israel out of Egypt. [According to this explanation, the name פּוּעָה is understood as the related term in *Isaiah* (42:14): בְּיִלְדָה אֶפְעָה, *I will cry out like a woman in childbirth* (*Rashi*).]

See *Shemos Rabbah* (*ibid.*) for several other reasons why Yocheved and Miriam were called by these names.

36. *Exodus* 1:16. Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew midwives to carry out the infanticide so that God would punish them and not him [or his people] (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:14; see *Rashash* there).

37. Pharaoh gave the midwives this sign of an imminent birth so that the mothers would not give birth in their absence, hide the babies, and claim that they had miscarried (*Rashi*; see next note).

38. Since a woman generally labors for a period of time before giving birth, Pharaoh gave the midwives a sign so they would know when actual childbirth was about to commence. That is, he told the midwives that when the mother’s thighs become cold, it was time to remove the child, and kill it if it was male (*Maharsha*).

Another explanation of the term “stones”:

Another explanation of the term “stones”:
 And some say that “stones” refers to the birthing stool, as it is written:^[39] וְנָאָרַרְךָ בֵּית הַיּוֹצֵר וְהַגֵּהָהוּא,,
 “I went down to the house of the potter, and he was doing work over the block (literally: stones).
 Just as this potter – has a thigh here and a thigh there, and a block in the middle,^[40] – so it is with a woman who is giving birth:
 She has a thigh here and a thigh there, and the child in the middle.^[41]

The verse continues:

“if it is a son, you are to kill him.”

The Gemara explains the meaning behind Pharaoh’s words:
 R’ Chanina said: – [Pharaoh] gave over to [the midwives] a great [i.e. dependable] sign of gender:^[42] – A son’s face is turned downward at birth, – while a daughter’s face is turned upward.^[43]

Scripture records the response of the midwives to this order:
 “But the midwives feared God and they did not do as [the king of Egypt] spoke to them etc.^[44]

The Gemara questions the verse’s use of the word “*aleihen*” as meaning “to them” at the end of the passage:

It should have stated “*lahen*” to convey “to them,” not *aleihen*!^[45] – ? –

The Gemara answers:

R’ Yose the son of R’ Chanina said: – It teaches that [Pharaoh] propositioned them to a sinful matter [i.e. adultery]^[46] – and they did not accept his propositioning.^[47]

The verse concludes:

“... and they kept the boys alive.”

The Gemara elaborates:

[A Baraisa] taught: – IT WAS NOT ENOUGH FOR [THE MIDWIVES] THAT THEY DID NOT KILL [THE BABY BOYS], – BUT THEY SUPPLIED WATER AND FOOD TO THEM as well.^[48]

Scripture records the midwives’ explanation to Pharaoh as to why they did not kill the babies:

“Because not like [Egyptian] women etc. are the Hebrew women; for they are ‘*chayos*’; before the midwife comes to them, they have given birth.”^[49]

The Gemara asks:

What does the term *chayos* mean in this context? – If you say it should be translated as actual midwives, and the midwives were telling Pharaoh that all the Jewish women were skilled midwives themselves, and thus did not require assistance, this is untenable;^[50] – for does not even a midwife need another midwife to give birth?^[51] How could the midwives defend themselves with this argument?

The Gemara therefore offers another interpretation:

Rather, [the midwives] said to him, “This nation is compared to a wild animal.”^[52] – Judah is called a lion cub;^[53] – Dan it is written: *Dan shall be a serpent*;^[54] – Naftali is called a hind let loose;^[55] – Yissachar is called a strong-boned donkey;^[56] – in reference to Joseph it is stated, *the firstborn of [his] ox*;^[57] – Benjamin is called a wolf who

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39. *Jeremiah* 18:3.

40. The potter’s block is a thick piece of wood which the potter straddles; he sits and rolls clay balls of different sizes upon it, before placing them in the various molds that he uses (see *Rashi*).

41. A woman assumes the same position as a potter when she straddles the birthing stool upon giving birth. Therefore, her birthstool is called by the same term as the potter’s block (*Rashi*). According to this version, Pharaoh was not giving any signs to the midwives (*Maharsha*, in explanation of *Rashi*; see there for an alternative explanation).

42. The phrase, *and you see on the stones; if it is a son*, indicates that the midwives were to determine if the child was a boy while the mother was still on the birthing stool. Pharaoh thus gave the midwives the ability to determine the gender of the child while the mother was still on the birthstool without even having to touch the child (*Rashi*, as understood by *Minchas Sotah*).

43. A male child is born facing down just like the male position during cohabitation, while a female child is born facing up just like the female position (*Rashi*; see *Niddah* 31a). [This sign is no longer reliable, because nowadays babies of either gender are born facing both upward and downward. See *Ben Yehoyada* for a possible reason why the nature of childbirth changed.]

44. Pharaoh wanted the midwives to kill the babies before the actual birth, so that the mothers would not realize what had occurred. He therefore gave them a way of recognizing whether or not the child was a boy when it was just beginning to emerge from the womb (*Eitz Yosef*).
 44. *Exodus* 1:17.

45. The term *אליהן* is suggestive of marital relations, as in *Genesis* (29:23): וַיִּבֹּא אֵלֶיהָ, *he cohabited with her* (*Rashi*; cf. *Maharsha*, *Minchas Sotah*, and *Rif* in *Ein Yaakov*). Why does this verse use such a term?

46. Pharaoh hoped to establish this relationship with them so there would be a greater chance of their carrying out his orders (*Maharal*; cf. *Iyun Yaakov* and *Parashas Derachim* §2, cited by *Maharatz Chayes*).

47. [*R’ Tzadok HaKohen* notes that the Gemara does not say וְלֹא רָצוּ, *they did not want* ... to sin with him, for that would imply that they

considered the possibility, even momentarily, and decided against it. Rather, the Gemara states literally that “they were not propositioned”; that is, the thought of complying never entered their minds at all, as if the proposition had never occurred (*Doveir Tzedek* 62a).]

48. The Gemara infers this from the fact that the verse did not simply say that the midwives “did not kill” the children. The term “kept them alive” implies that they helped them more actively: viz. they hid them in their houses and raised them (*Rashi*). [See *Shemos Rabbah* 1:15 for yet other ways in which the midwives helped the newborn children.]

49. *Exodus* 1:19.

50. The term *חיה* is used by *Targum Onkelos* as a translation for *מַיְלֶדֶת*, *midwife* (see *Rashi* to the verse). [This is the Aramaic term for midwife found throughout the Talmud.] Since the Torah occasionally uses Aramaic words (see, for example, *Deuteronomy* 33:2), we could translate this word, too, as *midwife* (*Yefei To’ar* to *Shemos Rabbah* 1:16). [A midwife is called *חיה* because she helps bring new life (חיים) to the world.]

51. [They could not have meant that the Jewish women were delivering each other’s babies, because they claimed that the babies were born before any midwife arrived.]

52. According to this explanation, the term *חיה* is translated according to its literal meaning – a wild animal. The Gemara now finds Biblical sources for where Israel is compared to wild beasts; most of these are found in the blessings that Jacob gave to his sons before his death.

The allusions are presented in this order based on the order in which the tribes were born, as recounted in *Genesis* Chs. 29-30 (*Maharsha*).

53. *Genesis* 49:9.

54. *Ibid.* v. 17. [See above, 9b, with reference to Samson.]

55. *Ibid.* v. 21.

56. *Ibid.* v. 14.

57. *Deuteronomy* 33:17. This verse records the blessing of Moses to the tribe of Joseph.

devours his prey.^[58] דְּכָתִיב בֵּיהּ כְּתִיב בֵּיהּ – [Those tribes] about whom [such a metaphor] is written, it is written about [them]. וְלֹא כְּתִיב בֵּיהּ – And even regarding [tribes] about whom [such a metaphor] is not written, it still applies כְּתִיב בֵּיהּ “ וְהָיָה בִּי-נִרְאוּ אֶת-הַאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בְּתֵיבָם ” – It was because the midwives feared God that He made houses for them.^[61] The Gemara debates what this means: רַב וּשְׁמוּאֵל חָדָא אָמְרַי בְּתֵיבָהּ – Rav and Shmuel disagree: חד אמר בתי בהונה וליזיה – One said, He made for them houses of Kehunah and

Leviah;^[62] וְחָדָא אָמְרַי בְּתֵיבָהּ מְלֻכּוֹת – while the other one said, He made for them houses of royalty.^[63] מֵאֵן דְּאָמְרַי בְּתֵיבָהּ וְלִזְיָה – The one who said houses of Kehunah and Leviah אֶהְרִן – was referring to Aaron and Moses, who are the children of Yocheved.^[64] וּמֵאֵן דְּאָמְרַי בְּתֵיבָהּ מְלֻכּוֹת – And the one who said houses of royalty קָאֲתֵי דָוִד – was referring to David, because he also came from Miriam,^[65] וְהָיָה בִּי-נִרְאוּ אֶת-הַאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בְּתֵיבָם – as it is written:^[66] וְהָיָה בִּי-נִרְאוּ אֶת-הַאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בְּתֵיבָם – When Azuvah died, Caleb married Ephrath וְהָיָה לוֹ אֶת חוּר – who bore him Chur. This “Ephrath” is a reference to Miriam.^[67] וְהָיָה בִּי-נִרְאוּ אֶת-הַאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בְּתֵיבָם – And it is written:^[68] וְהָיָה בִּי-נִרְאוּ אֶת-הַאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בְּתֵיבָם – David was the son of an Ephrathite man etc. David was the son of a man who traced his lineage back to Ephrath, i.e. Miriam.^[69]

The Gemara discusses other allusions to Caleb and Miriam in *Chronicles*:^[70]

The verse states the midwives’ reward:

“וְהָיָה בִּי-נִרְאוּ אֶת-הַאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בְּתֵיבָם” – It was because the midwives feared God that He made houses for them.^[61]

The Gemara debates what this means:

רַב וּשְׁמוּאֵל חָדָא אָמְרַי בְּתֵיבָהּ – Rav and Shmuel disagree: חד אמר בתי בהונה וליזיה – One said, He made for them houses of Kehunah and

NOTES

58. *Genesis* 49:27, in Jacob’s blessings.

59. *Ezekiel* 19:2.

60. Once the midwives defied Pharaoh’s orders, God enabled the Israelite women to give birth without need for midwives. This served to protect the Hebrew midwives from Pharaoh’s anger when he discovered that they had not carried out his orders (*Anaf Yosef*). They could truthfully say that the births were taking place without benefit of a midwife. And Pharaoh believed their story, because he knew that the women would go out to the fields to bear their children [as the Gemara stated above, that the Egyptians attempted to kill the babies by plowing over them] (*Iyun Yaakov*).

61. *Exodus* 1:21.

62. The term “house” can refer to special families, as in *Psalms* (135:19-20): *House of Aaron . . . House of Levi*. It is expounded in that context here as well (*Yefei To’ar to Shemos Rabbah* 1:17).

As reward for sustaining the Israelite children, the midwives were given the houses of Kehunah and Leviah, whereby their descendants would be supported by *terumah*, *maaser*, and the other entitlements given to the Kohen and the Levi (*Iyun Yaakov*; cf. *Ben Yehoyada*).

63. To be a king one must fear God (see *Deuteronomy* 17:19 and *Proverbs* 24:21). Therefore, since the midwives feared God, they merited that the royal line descended from them (*Iyun Yaakov*; cf. *Ben Yehoyada*).

64. *Rashi*. That is, Yocheved’s son Aaron served as Kohen and became the progenitor of the entire Kohanic line, while her second son Moses was a Levi and began a Levitic line. [The reward given to Yocheved through Moses is difficult to understand, because Moses was not the exclusive progenitor of the Leviim, and his descendants did not differ in any way from the other Leviim. See *Maharsha* for a possible solution to this problem.]

65. According to this view, Miriam was also rewarded for serving as her mother’s aide (see above, note 31). She merited to become a vital link in the ancestry of King David, as the Gemara proceeds to explain. [See *Maharal* and *Minchas Sotah* for explanations of the dispute between these two opinions.]

66. *I Chronicles* 2:19.

67. The Gemara will tell us that the names “Azuvah” and “Ephrath” are both aliases of the same woman – Miriam. According to the Gemara below, she was called Azuvah when she was sick. When the verse says that she “died,” this means that she contracted *tzaraas*, a terrible skin disease, and it was considered as though she had died (see *Nedarim* 64b; see below, 12a note 3 as to when Miriam contracted *tzaraas*). Then Miriam healed completely and the name given her henceforth is “Ephrath,” because “on account of her the Jewish people were fruitful (*parah*) and multiplied” (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:17; cf. *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* Ch. 45). [Apparently, she is credited with this because, as a midwife, she disobeyed Pharaoh who ordered her to kill the males.] Although Caleb had already married Miriam when she was ill, he performed a second marriage ceremony with her (as indicated by the words, וַיִּקַּח לוֹ, and [Caleb] married [Ephrath]) out of his great joy when she returned to health (*Shemos Rabbah* *ibid.*; see *Rashi*).

68. *I Samuel* 17:12.

69. The Sages had an oral tradition that David was a descendant of

Miriam, and they expounded hints to this lineage in these verses (*Yefei To’ar to Shemos Rabbah* 1:17; cf. *Emek HaNetziv, Sifri Behaalosecha* §20).

Maharsha points out that although we find a person was called an Ephrathite if he belonged to the tribe of Ephraim or if he lived on Mt. Ephraim (see *Judges* 12:5 and *I Samuel* 1:1, respectively), neither of these conditions was true of David. He derived from the tribe of Judah and lived in Judah’s territory. Thus, he must have been called an Ephrathite after the matriarch of his family, Miriam/Ephrath. It is true that the city of Bethlehem in Judah (where David lived) was also called Ephrath, but our Gemara would hold that it was called Ephrath after Miriam [many of whose descendants lived there].

Maharsha states further that it seems puzzling for the Gemara to trace David’s lineage to Caleb the son of Chetzron (see below): In the genealogical table at the end of *Ruth*, Scripture states that David was a descendant of Ram the son of Chetzron, not Caleb the son of Chetzron. Possibly then, our Gemara means that David descended from Caleb and Miriam on his mother’s side, while he descended from Ram on his father’s side.

70. *I Chronicles* 2:18.

Expounding the genealogical verses in *Chronicles*

The Gemara continues with a series of homiletical interpretations of verses in *Chronicles*. These verses represent a small part of the genealogical tables that make up the first nine chapters of *Chronicles*. The Sages expound these chapters in a manner that differs markedly from their interpretations of almost all the rest of Scripture. In these nine chapters, if several different names are presented in a series, they may be interpreted as referring to the same person: Generations and families may be shuffled in apparent disregard of the clear meaning of the verse. Indeed, we find (*Megillah* 13a) that when R’ Shimon ben Pazi would introduce his discourse on *Chronicles*, he would say (as if speaking to the Book), “All your words are identical and we know how to interpret them,” i.e. a single person is identified by many different names, and even though God concealed this, we may apply ourselves until we are able to decipher and expound the correct meaning (*Rashi* ad loc.).

One key to this anomalous style of interpretation is in the significance of names in Scripture. In the Torah’s concept of things, a name is not merely an arbitrary identifier of a person. Rather, it is a descriptive term for him, an assessment of his essence and destiny (see *Berachos* 7b). There is even a special *providence* in the naming of a newborn that the name should be appropriate to him (*Or HaChaim to Exodus* 2:10). And aside from this given name, Scripture may assign names to a person that were never and will never be used in practice. The different names may be meant only to teach certain facets of his character or of his historical import.

For a comprehensive treatment of these themes and for sources, see the first two overviews to *I Chronicles*, ArtScroll ed: *The Uniqueness of Chronicles and Names and their Significance in Scripture*.

[It should also be noted that the following passages appear almost in their entirety in *Shemos Rabbah* 1:17-25. These Aggadic teachings have been explained masterfully in the *Midrash HaMevuar* edition and our elucidation draws upon that work.]

וְכַלֵּב בֶּן־חֲצִרֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת־עֹזָבָה אִשָּׁה
 וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵיהָ יֶשֶׁר וְאֶת־יְרִיעוֹת — *and Yerios. וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵיהָ יֶשֶׁר*
 “*And these are her sons: Yeshar, Shovav and Ardon.*”

The Gemara asks:

בֶּן חֲצִרֹן — Why does *Chronicles* refer to Caleb as the “son of Chetzron”? בֶּן יַפְנֵה הוּא — He was the son of Yefuneh!^[71] — ? —

The Gemara explains:

בֶּן שְׁפָנָה מַעֲצַת מְרַגְלִים — His father’s name was really Chetzron, but Caleb was called “the son of Yefuneh” because Caleb was a

son who turned aside (*fanah*) from the plot of the Spies.^[72]

The Gemara asks further:

וְאִבְתִּי בֶּן קִנּוּ הוּא — But still, [Caleb] was not the son of Chetzron but rather the son of Kenaz, וְיִלְכָדָה עֶתְנִיאֵל בֶּן־קִנּוּ אָחִי — as it is written:^[73] *Osniel son of Kenaz, Caleb’s brother, conquered it.*^[74]

The Gemara explains:

אָמַר רַבָּא — Rava said: חוֹרְגוּ דְקִנּוּ הָיָה — [Caleb] was the stepson of Kenaz. Caleb and Osniel were merely maternal brothers.^[75]

NOTES

71. The Torah states (*Numbers* 13:6) that Caleb the son of Yefuneh was one of the twelve *meraglim*, or spies, and that he was from the tribe of Judah. [See next note regarding the Spies.]

72. His actual name was Caleb the son of Chetzron, but he was called Caleb the son of Yefuneh by virtue of his deeds (*Rashi*).

When the generation of the Exodus was poised to enter Eretz Yisrael under the leadership of Moses, the people hesitated. They chose to send a contingent of twelve spies, one from each tribe, to investigate the Land and report back. Moses sent them forth and they returned after forty days, but only two of them, Joshua and Caleb, fulfilled their duties with integrity. The other ten were seduced by their Evil Inclinations to present an extremely negative slander of the Land. Public hysteria ensued and God found the people unworthy to enter Eretz Yisrael. They were condemned to wander in the desert for forty years while they died off. However, Joshua and Caleb were specifically excluded from this decree: They could (and did) enter the Land and take possession of it (see *Numbers* Chs. 13 and 14; see below, 34a-35a).

[Our Gemara assumes that the Caleb mentioned in *Numbers* 13:6 and the Caleb mentioned in *I Chronicles* 2:18ff are the identical man. This leads to several considerable chronological difficulties. For example, we know that Caleb was forty years old when he was sent on his mission as a spy in the second year after the Exodus (*Joshua* 14:7). His father Chetzron was already born when Jacob came to Egypt (see *Genesis* 46:8,12). If, as the Sages teach, the Jewish people were in Egypt for 210 years, then Chetzron must have been approximately 172 years old when Caleb was born. For a resolution of this and other difficulties, see *Radak* to these verses. For other views and further analysis, see the ArtScroll ed. of *I Chronicles* 2:18-49.]

73. *Joshua* 15:17; *Judges* 1:13.

74. [This Caleb clearly is Caleb ben Yefuneh, whom we have established is also Caleb ben Chetzron. See *Joshua* 15:13-17.]

75. Thus, Caleb could be the son of Chetzron and yet be the brother of the son of Kenaz.

The Gemara finds support for this explanation in another verse:

דִּקְיָא נְמִי דְבְתִיב – One may also infer this from the wording of another verse, for it is written:^[1] “הַקְנִיזִי” – Caleb the son of Yefuneh the Kenizzite. Since Caleb is called the Kenizzite, and not “the son of Kenaz,” this implies that Caleb was from the general household of Kenaz, but was not Kenaz’s biological son. שָׁמַע מִיָּנָה – Learn from this that Caleb was only a stepson of Kenaz.^[2]

The Gemara continues to expound the verse from *Chronicles* cited above:

זו מְרִיָּם – Azuvah – this is a reference to Miriam, whom Caleb married. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמָהּ עֲזוּבָה – And why is her name called Azuvah here? שֶׁהִכָּל עֲזָבוּהָ מֵתְחִלָּתָהּ – Because every man deserted her (azavuha) at the beginning of her ordeal.^[3] “הוֹלִידוּ” – The verse says that Caleb son of Chetzron sired Azuvah. וְהֵלֵא מִיָּנֶסֶב הָיָה נִסִּיב לָהּ – But the rest of the passage makes clear that he married her! For the next verse says:^[4] When Azuvah died, Caleb married Ephrath.^[5] Thus, Azuvah was his wife! אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן – R’ Yochanan said in explanation: כָּל הַנוֹשֵׂא אִשָּׁה לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם – Whoever marries a woman for the sake of Heaven, מַעֲלָה עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב בְּאֵילּוּ וְלָדָהּ – Scripture deems it as if he had sired her.^[6]

The Gemara continues:

“וְרִיעוּת” – The verse refers to Miriam next as “Yerios,” שְׁהָיוּ – because her complexion was so pale that it was similar to [undyed] curtains (yerios).^[7] “וְאֵלֶּה בְּנֵיהָ” – and these are her sons (baneha): Yeshar, Shovav and Ardon. אֵלֶּה – Do not pronounce it *vaneha* (her sons) אֵלֶּה – but rather *voneha* (her builders). I.e. the following names are allusions to her husband Caleb, who built and developed her into a fulfilled wife and mother, like other women. “וְיִשָּׁר” – Yeshar, שִׁישָׁר אֶת עַצְמוֹ – for [Caleb] straightened (yeshair) himself and did not err as the Spies erred; “וְשׁוֹבָב” – Shovav, שִׁישָׁבֵב אֶת יָצְרוֹ – for he acted disobediently (shebeiv) with regard to his Evil Inclination, i.e. he rebelled

against the plot of the Spies; “וְאַרְדוֹן” – and Ardon, שָׂרְדָה – for he disciplined (radah) his Evil Inclination, which was inciting him to stray after the Spies.^[8] וְאִיבָא דְאֶמְרֵי – But some say the name should be read *Vardon*^[9] as a reference to Miriam, עַל שְׁהָיוּ פְּנֵיהָ דּוֹמִין לְרֹדָר – because Caleb caused [Miriam’s] complexion to be similar in hue to a rose (vered), by assisting in her recovery.^[10]

The Gemara expounds another verse in *Chronicles* in regard to Caleb and Miriam.^[11]

“וּלְאִשְׁחֹר אָבִי תְקוּעַ הָיוּ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים” – Ashchur, the father of Tekoa, had two wives, “חֶלֶאָה וְנַעֲרָה” – Chelah and Naarah. “אֶשְׁחֹר” – When Scripture says Ashchur this is a reference to Caleb. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ אֶשְׁחֹר – And why was his name called Ashchur? שֶׁהוֹשְׁחָרוּ פְּנֵיו בְּתַעֲנוּיָת – Because his face became blackened (hushcharu) on account of his many fasts.^[12] “אָבִי” – He is called the father because he became like a father to [Miriam] in handling her medical and nutritional needs when she was ill. “תְּקוּעַ” – He is called Tekoa because he fastened (taka) his heart securely to his Father in Heaven in withstanding the temptation to be part of the Spies’ plot. “הָיוּ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים” – he had two wives; this means נַעֲשָׂה מְרִיָּם כְּשְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים – Miriam became as two distinct wives. “חֶלֶאָה וְנַעֲרָה” – Chelah and Naarah; לֹא חֶלֶאָה וְנַעֲרָה הָיָא – not that she was Chelah and Naarah at the same time; אֲלֵא בְּתַחֲלֵהּ חֶלֶאָה – rather, at first she was Chelah (an ill woman)^[13] and ultimately she was Naarah (a young woman).^[14]

The Gemara continues with an exposition of another verse in that passage:^[15]

“וּבְנֵי חֶלֶאָה צָרָת וְצָהָר וְאֶתְנָן” – And the sons of Chelah were Tzeres and Tzohar and Esnan. These “sons” are allusions to Miriam after she was restored to full health:^[16] “צָרָת” – She was called Tzeres because Miriam’s beauty was so great that she became as a competitive co-wife (tzarah) to her peers.^[17] “צָהָר” – She was called Tzohar because her face shone like the noonday sun (tza-

NOTES

1. *Joshua* 14:6.
2. Caleb is called “the Kenizzite” because he grew up in Kenaz’s home and under his influence, but he was not Kenaz’s son in the literal sense (see *Rashi*).
3. Originally [when she was single], Miriam was sickly. All her potential suitors abandoned her because of this, with the exception of Caleb who married her. At some point, she contracted *tzaraas*, a terrible skin affliction, and as the Gemara will state further on, Caleb nursed her back to health (see *Rashi* here and above, 11b ותמת *R*).
4. Based on the Gemara in *Sanhedrin* 69b (end), Caleb fathered Chur with Miriam while they were still in Egypt. Indeed we find (*Exodus* 17:12) that Chur was old enough to help Aaron support Moses’ upraised arms at the battle with Amalek, which took place a few weeks after the Exodus. Since Miriam’s illness and recuperation took place before she gave birth to Chur, these parts of her life must have taken place years before the Exodus. Accordingly, the episode of *tzaraas* that *Rashi* mentions must be distinct from the well-known episode of *tzaraas* Miriam suffered in the desert as described in *Numbers* Ch. 12.]
5. *I Chronicles* 2:19.
6. [The flow of the verse indicates that Ephrath was a successor to Azuvah (see, however, 11b note 67).]
7. In this case, Caleb chose Miriam for the sake of Heaven in that Miriam was likely to raise outstanding sons. The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 110a) states that most sons take after their mother’s brothers. Miriam’s brothers were, of course, Aaron and Moses, whom Caleb recognized to be righteous individuals. In the hope of having such wonderful sons, he married Miriam despite the problems with her health (*Rashi*).
8. [A parallel English idiom may be “as white as a sheet.”] *Rashi* explains that she had no redness in her complexion on account of her

- illness, and thus appeared jaundiced.
- The elucidation follows *Rashi* who explains that all these appellations describe Caleb’s resistance to the conspiracy of the Spies. However, *Maharsha* and *Ben Yehoyada* suggest that they could be interpreted in reference to Caleb’s decision to marry Miriam. He resisted the Evil Inclination’s advice to marry a lesser woman.
9. See *HaRif* in *Ein Yaakov*.
10. See *Maharsha*. The Gemara below teaches that Caleb cared for Miriam during her illness until he brought her back to robust health, and put color back into her face (see note 7).
11. *I Chronicles* 4:5. The verses the Gemara will expound (v. 5 and v. 7) read as follows: Ashchur, the father of Tekoa, had two wives, Chelah and Naarah . . . And the sons of Chelah were Tzeres and Tzohar and Esnan.
12. He had accepted many fasts upon himself in order to [merit God’s assistance in] escaping any entanglement with the plot of the Spies. [Upon fulfilling his commitment to fast repeatedly, his facial coloring darkened] (see *Rashi*).
13. *Chelah*, is cognate to חולי, *choli*, sickness (see *Rashi*).
14. When Miriam was healed from her illness she had the countenance of a *naarah*, a young girl. (*Rashi*).
15. *Ibid.* v. 7.
16. The words חֶלֶאָה וְנַעֲרָה, *And the sons of Chelah were*, should be read homiletically חֶלֶאָה וְנַעֲרָה, *And the developments of Chelah were*; i.e. Chelah, the sickly Miriam, attained health and developed into a new woman who was so attractive that she was characterized by the following descriptive names (see *Rashi*).
17. [When a man is married to more than one wife it is typical that each of the wives envies the superior qualities of the other wives. Similarly, Miriam was so beautiful after returning to health that] other women

haraim).^[18] „אֶתְנָן” שְׂבַל הַרְוָאָה אוֹתָהּ מוֹלִיךְ אֶתְנָן לְאִשְׁתּוֹ (She was called *Esnan*, because any man who saw her would become aroused by her beauty and bring a paramour’s gift (*esnan*) to his wife.^[19]

After a lengthy digression in which the Gemara discussed Miriam’s relation to the Davidic dynasty and related matters, the Gemara returns to the topic of Pharaoh’s decrees against the Jewish people. As noted above, these decrees were successively more severe. The last decree discussed above was Pharaoh’s command to the midwives to kill the male children at childbirth. The Gemara teaches:

„וַיִּצְוֵה פַרְעֹה לְכָל-עַמּוֹ” – *Pharaoh commanded his entire people, saying, “Every son that will be born – into the River shall you throw him!”*^[20] אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא – **R’ Yose the son of R’ Chanina said:** The phrase *his entire people* indicates אָף עַל עַמּוֹ – that he applied this decree to his own people as well.^[21]

The Gemara summarizes the decrees:
וַאֲמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא – **R’ Yose the son of R’ Chanina said further:** [Pharaoh] issued three decrees:

– In the beginning, he decreed: „אִם-בֵּן הוּא וְהַמֵּתָן” (ולבסוף) [ואחר] – “If it is a son, you are to kill him”;^[22] „כֹּל-הַבֵּן הַיּוֹלֵד הַיְאֻרָה תִשְׁלִיכוּהוּ” – and later he decreed: „כֹּל-הַבֵּן הַיּוֹלֵד הַיְאֻרָה תִשְׁלִיכוּהוּ” – “Every son that will be born – into the River shall you throw him!”; – and ultimately, אָף עַל עַמּוֹ גַּזַּר – he applied this decree to his own people as well.^[24]

The Gemara expounds the next verse:
„וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְוִי” – *A man (Amram) went from the house of Levi and he took a daughter of Levi (Yocheved).* לְהִיבֵן הָרַךְ – Why does the verse describe Amram as going? **To where did he go?** אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה בַּר זְבִינָא – **Rav Yehudah bar Zevina said:** שֶׁהָלַךְ בְּעֵצַת בָּתּוֹ – **He went according to the counsel of his daughter,** i.e. he followed her advice.^[25]

The Gemara elaborates:
אִמְרָם – **AMRAM WAS THE LEADER OF THE GENERATION.**^[26] כִּיִּן שָׂרָא שְׂאֵמֵר פַּרְעֹה – **ONCE HE SAW THAT THE WICKED PHARAOH SAID,** i.e. decreed, „כֹּל-הַבֵּן הַיּוֹלֵד הַיְאֻרָה תִשְׁלִיכוּהוּ” – “EVERY SON THAT WILL BE BORN – INTO THE RIVER SHALL YOU THROW HIM!” אָמַר

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were envious of her beauty (*Rashi*).

18. Although the spelling of this name in the printed editions of our text is צחר with a ה, the correct spelling found in Scripture is צחר with a ח. However, since the letters ח and צ are interchangeable in certain contexts, our Gemara expounds צחר as if it were written צחר (*Rashash* here and in his commentary to *Shemos Rabbah* 1:29). See *Dikdukei Soferim HaShalem*. [Precisely speaking, the word *written* in v.7 is יצחר, but it is pronounced צחר.]

19. In the hope that the gesture would lead to physical intimacy with his wife (see *Rashi*). The term אֶתְנָן is used in *Deuteronomy* 23:19 with reference to a payment given to a harlot in compensation for her services.

[Miriam went from being a sickly and pale woman who was spurned by all the eligible bachelors of her generation to a vibrantly healthy wife and mother whose great beauty thrust her into the awareness of those who were already married.]

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:17) explains that Miriam was called Ephrath because the Jewish people were fruitful (*paru*) and multiplied because of her. The Midrash (*ibid.*) goes on to expound other references to Caleb and Miriam in *Chronicles*.

20. *Exodus* 1:22.

21. *Rashi* cites the *Midrash Tanchuma (Vayakhel §4)* which provides the background for this decree: On the day that Moses was born, Pharaoh’s astrologers told him, “Today the Jewish people’s savior has been born, but we do not know if he is an Egyptian or a Jew.” In response, Pharaoh gathered his people and requested of them that they give him the babies born that day. He decreed that the Egyptian sons too should be thrown into the River. *Maharal* explains that the astrologers could not tell if Moses was a Jew or an Egyptian for good reason: He was destined to be raised by Pharaoh’s daughter, and *Whoever raises an orphan within his house is considered as if he had sired him (Megillah 13a)*. [See below, 12b note 35, regarding the unclarity inherent in astrological observations.]

The Gemara’s exposition is based on the wording of the verse: *Pharaoh commanded* לְכָל-עַמּוֹ, literally: *to his entire people*. Now, if the Torah means to say that he commanded his people to help enforce the decree against the Jews, one would have expected the verse to say *Pharaoh commanded* אֶת כָּל-עַמּוֹ, *his entire people* (for examples of this usage, see *Genesis* 32:18,20). However, לְכָל-עַמּוֹ implies that Pharaoh enacted this decree *in regard to* his own people (*Iyei HaYam*).

[*Imrei Emes (Likkutim, Mesechtos)* notes that although the verse states that Pharaoh applied this decree to the entire people, *Targum Onkelos* translates the decree into Aramaic as follows: כָּל בְּרָא דְיִהוּדַי לִיָּדָה, “Every son that will be born to the Jews – into the River shall you throw him!” *Imrei Emes* explains that the text of the decree was written explicitly to include the entire people, even the Egyptians, but the officers of the kingdom translated the decree to apply only to the Jews.]

22. *Exodus* 1:16.

23. Emendation follows *Ein Yaakov* and *Yalkut Shimoni*, quoted by *Mesorah Hashas*.

24. The enforcement of the decree became progressively stricter. *Rashi* states that Pharaoh did not set up overseers for the first decree to make sure the male babies would be killed before childbirth, but rather relied on the midwives to do his bidding. When they failed to do so, he appointed police and the like to see to it that the male babies would be thrown into the River. Finally, on the day Moses was born he applied the decree to the Egyptian male babies as well, as explained above (see note 21). *Rashi* adds: When the day passed and the astrologers saw that the savior of the Jews had not yet been stricken, Pharaoh decided to keep the universal decree in force until the day the unknown savior would be thrown in the River.

Although the decree against the Egyptian babies came *after* the decree against the Jewish babies, the allusion in the verse to the decree against the Egyptian babies appears first. *Iyun Yaakov* says this is of no significance since the Torah does not necessarily present its topics in chronological order (see discussion in *Maharsha* and *Eitz Yosef*). *Iyei HaYam* suggests that the allusion to the decree against the Jewish babies is actually in an earlier phrase (in v. 21): וַיִּצַעַשׂ לָקַח בָּתִּים. The plain meaning of this phrase according to this Amora is not that God made houses as a reward for the midwives (as the Gemara states above) but that Pharaoh set up quarters in Jewish neighborhoods in order to house observers who would be on the lookout for Jewish births. If there were any, they would ensure that the infants would be cast into the Nile (see also *Midrash Lekach Tov* to this verse).

[In each case, Pharaoh specifically excluded the female newborns from the decrees (*Exodus* 1:16,22): “If it is a son, you are to kill him, and if it is a daughter, she shall live”; “Every son that will be born – into the River shall you throw him! And every daughter shall you keep alive!” The Midrash teaches that, from a strategic point of view, it was extremely foolhardy of Pharaoh to focus on killing out the males and not the females: Even had he been successful in annihilating ninety-nine percent of the male population, one male can marry ten or one hundred women and the Jewish nation could be repopulated quickly. However, if Pharaoh had managed to kill out the females, the problem would have been far more severe: No matter how many men there are, a woman may marry only one man at a time and can experience only one pregnancy at a time. It is regarding this ill-advised plan that the prophet says (*Isaiah* 19:11): *The officers of Zoan [a royal Egyptian city] are but fools, Pharaoh’s wisest advisers offer boorish counsel.*

The reason that Pharaoh and his court *did* allow the females to live was because Egypt’s society was steeped in lechery and the Egyptians had lustful designs upon the Jewish females (see *Shemos Rabbah* 1:14,18).]

25. We find that the verb הִלִּיכָה is used in this sense [of following advice] elsewhere, as it says (*Psalms* 1:1): *Praiseworthy is the man who walked not in the counsel of the wicked.*

26. And everyone obeyed him (*Rashi*).

לְשׂוֹא אֲנוּ עֹמְלִין – [AMRAM SAID, “WE ARE LABORING FOR NOTHING in attempting to produce children.”] – עָמַד וְגִירָשׁ אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ – Consequently, HE PROCEEDED TO DIVORCE HIS WIFE. עָמְדוּ בּוֹלְן – ALL [THE JEWISH MEN] followed suit and PROCEEDED TO DIVORCE THEIR WIVES. אָמְרָה לוֹ בְּתוֹ – [AMRAM’S] DAUGHTER [Miriam] SAID TO HIM, אָבָא – “FATHER, קָשָׁה גְזִירָתְךָ יוֹתֵר מִשֵּׁל פְּרַעַה – YOUR DECREE IS HARSHER THAN THAT OF PHARAOH, שֶׁפְּרַעַה לֹא גָזַר אֱלָא עַל הַזְּכָרִים – BECAUSE PHARAOH DECREED ONLY AGAINST THE newborn MALES, וְאֵתָה – BUT YOU HAVE DECREED AGAINST THE MALES AND THE FEMALES;²⁷ גְזִירָתְךָ עַל הַזְּכָרִים וְעַל הַנְּקִיבוֹת – PHARAOH DECREED ONLY AGAINST life in THIS WORLD, וְלְעוֹלָם הַבָּא – BUT you have DECREED AGAINST life in THIS WORLD AND IN THE WORLD TO COME.²⁸ מִתְקַיְמָת גְזִירָתוֹ – Regarding THE WICKED PHARAOH, THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT HIS DECREE WILL BE OBSERVED סָפֵק אֵינָהּ – AND A POSSIBILITY THAT IT WILL NOT BE OBSERVED. אֲתָה צְדִיק בְּיָדָי שְׂגוֹרָתְךָ מִתְקַיְמָת – YOU ARE A RIGHTEOUS MAN: CERTAINLY YOUR DECREE WILL BE OBSERVED! שְׂנֵאָמַר – AS IT SAYS in regard to someone who is righteous: *YOU WOULD UTTER A DECREE AND IT WOULD BE DONE.*²⁹ וְהִחְיִיר אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ – [AMRAM] accepted her argument and PROCEEDED TO REMARRY HIS WIFE. עָמְדוּ בּוֹלְן – ALL [THE JEWISH MEN] followed suit and PROCEEDED TO REMARRY THEIR WIVES.

The Gemara continues the exposition of the verse describing the remarriage of Amram and Yocheved:

“וַיִּקַּח,, – When the verse says: *And he took a daughter of Levi,*

connoting a first marriage, וַיִּחְזוֹר³⁰ מִיבְעֵי לֵיהּ – it should say instead, *and he retook a daughter of Levi*, for it refers to their second marriage! אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה בַּר זְבִינָא – Rav Yehudah bar Zevina said: The Torah describes it this way [לָהּ] שֶׁעָשָׂה (לוֹ) – because when Amram remarried her, he performed for her a ceremony worthy of a first marriage.³¹ הוֹשִׁיבָהּ בְּאֶפְרָיִן – He seated her in a sedan chair³² וְאֶהְרִן וּמִרְיָם מְרַקְדִין לְפָנֶיהָ – and Aaron and Miriam danced before her.³³ וּמְלַאכֵי הַשָּׁרָת אָמְרוּ – The ministering angels said, concerning this event: “אִם-הַבְּנִים שִׂמְחָה,, – He restores the uprooted wife; a glad mother, children. Halleluyah!³⁴

The Gemara continues with the next words of the verse and expresses puzzlement:

“אֵת-בֵּת לְוִי,, – A man went from the house of Levi and he took a daughter of Levi. “בֵּת,, – Now, how can it be that in referring to a woman who was one hundred and thirty years old [the Torah] calls her merely “a daughter” as if she were a young girl?³⁵

Before answering this question, the Gemara proves that Yocheved was one hundred and thirty years old when Amram remarried her:

רָאֵמַר רַבִּי חַמָּא בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא – For this fact emerges from what R’ Chama the son of R’ Chanina said in resolving another Biblical difficulty: The Torah says there were seventy members of Jacob’s family who came to Egypt, but if one counts all the individuals listed in that passage one finds only sixty-nine.³⁶ In regard to this question, R’ Chama the son of R’ Chanina said: זוּ יוֹכְבֵד – This missing person is Yocheved שְׂהוּרָתָהּ בְּדַרְךָ – whose conception

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27. Since the Jewish couples would not be engaged in procreation [for they would surely follow Amram’s example], they would produce neither males nor females (see *Rashi*).

28. Those children who were born and died [by Pharaoh’s hand] will once again come to life to enjoy the World to Come. However, Miriam told her father, your decree excludes children from this world and the World to Come, since if they will not be born, they will not enter the World to Come (*Rashi*; see *Gittin* 57b cited by *Maharsha*).

29. *Job* 22:28. In this passage, one of Job’s friends is attempting to persuade Job to pursue the ways of righteousness by listing the advantages of being a righteous person. One of these, he says to Job, is that you, as a righteous person, would utter a decree and it would be done; that is, God would see to the fulfillment of the decree.

Maharsha comments that Miriam’s three points correspond to Pharaoh’s three decrees: In response to Pharaoh’s initial decree, that the midwives should kill the males before childbirth and let the females live, Miriam told her father that his decree would eliminate both males and females; in response to Pharaoh’s decree that the newborn infants should be thrown into the River, Miriam pointed out that this decree affected only life in this world, whereas Amram’s decree precluded life in the World to Come as well. And with reference to Pharaoh’s third decree, that the Egyptians must also throw their male children into the River, [the Gemara cites Miriam as saying that] it is questionable whether the Egyptians would accept this decree upon themselves. [Indeed, the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:18) states that they did not.] However, Amram’s decree would meet with full compliance.

30. The text of *Ein Yaakov* וַיִּחְיִיר and the translation follows this version (see *Mesoras HaShas*).

31. Although a second marriage is usually conducted with less pomp than a first marriage (see *Moed Katan* 8b and *Bava Basra* 145b), here Amram conducted the ceremony with great celebration.

Amram’s purpose in doing this was to publicize the annulment of his decree that all couples should separate. *Pesikta Rabbasi* 43:4 relates: After Miriam presented her criticism to her father, he brought her before the “Sanhedrin” (which Amram headed – *Shemos Rabbah* 1:13) and had Miriam repeat her arguments in their presence. Persuaded, they told Amram, “You forbade this matter and you must be the one who [formally] permits it.” When Amram asked if they were suggesting that he should remarry Yocheved quietly, they pointed out that if he did so,

there would be no one who would promulgate the revocation of the decree to the Jewish public. Consequently, he held a grand ceremony to publicize the new ruling and to encourage all the separated couples to remarry (cf. *Zohar*, *Shemos* 19a and *Maharsha* to *Bava Basra* 120a).

32. I.e. a covered litter of the type in which first-time brides were customarily carried (*Aruch* אַפְרִינִין; see *Toras Chaim* to *Bava Basra* 120a).

33. And they sang (*Bava Basra* 120a) and carried torches (*Pesikta Rabbasi* 44:4 with *Maharzu*). Although Aaron was at this time a very small boy [and perhaps did not grasp the cause for celebration], God placed joy in his heart. Alternatively, his older sister Miriam directed him (*Ramban* to *Exodus* 2:1).

34. *Psalms* 113:9. Amram restored Yocheved, who was the wife uprooted from the family home, and as a result the mother and the children were glad. The next verse informs us when this took place: *When Israel went out of Egypt* (*Maharsha*; see also *Pesikta Rabbasi* 43:4).

Ramban writes that Amram was given certain mitzvos while he was in Egypt (*Hil. Melachim* 9:1; see *Mechilta Yisro*, *Bachodesh* §3). *Radvaz* ad loc. writes that it is not clear which mitzvos these were. It has been suggested that they are the mitzvos of *kiddushin* and *gittin* alluded to in our Gemara (*Maharatz Chayes*; *Mekom Shmuel* §23).

35. The verse should have referred to her as a woman (*Rashbam* to *Bava Basra* 120a). Although she was indeed Levi’s daughter, one cannot say that the verse intends merely to state her lineage, for it fails to identify her by her own name, nor does it mention her husband’s name or his father’s name. Therefore, we must interpret the word *daughter* as an allusion to her youth (*Maharsha* to *Bava Basra* 119b; cf. *Maharal*, *Gevuros Hashem* Ch. 16, who offers a fundamental reason why their names were not mentioned).

36. The Torah lists Jacob’s descendants who were on their way to Egypt (*Genesis* 46:8-27). The Torah commences: *Now these are the names of the children of Israel coming to Egypt* and begins listing the individual names of the children and grandchildren, grouped by the four wives of Jacob: Leah, Zilpah, Rachel and Bilhah (see chart on following page). The Torah comments (v. 26): *All the souls coming with Jacob to Egypt; his own descendants, aside from the wives of Jacob’s sons – all the souls sixty-six.* Then the Torah notes that Joseph and his two sons were already in Egypt. The Torah concludes: *All the souls of Jacob’s household who came to Egypt – seventy.* However, there are only sixty-nine names on the list. Who is the seventieth person?

took place while Levi was **en route** to Egypt, i.e. in the Land of Canaan,^[37] וְלִידָתָהּ בֵּין הַחוֹמוֹת – **and whose birth took place between the walls** of Egypt, i.e. as her mother entered the gateway of the metropolis. Thus, while the family was on the road there were only sixty-nine descendants accounted for, but by the time they arrived there were seventy,^[38] שְׁנָאָמַר „אֲשֶׁר יֵלְדָה אֶתָּה „ שְׁנָאָמַר „אֲשֶׁר יֵלְדָה אֶתָּה „ – **as it says:**^[39] *The name of Amram's wife was Yocheved daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt.* The seemingly superfluous last phrase teaches us that לִידָתָהּ בֵּין הַחוֹמוֹת – **but her conception did not take place in Egypt.** Now, the Jewish people spent two hundred and ten years in Egypt^[40] and Moses was eighty years old when they departed.^[41] If Yocheved was born as they arrived in Egypt, she must have been one hundred and thirty years old when she gave birth to Moses. How can the Torah refer to this elderly woman as merely “a daughter of Levi”?

The Gemara answers:
 אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה – **Rav Yehudah said:** The Torah speaks of Yocheved as one would speak of a young woman שְׁנוֹלְדוֹ בְּהָ סִימְנֵי

נָעֻרוֹת – **because at her advanced age, the physical characteristics of a young woman were reborn in her.**^[42]

The Gemara turns to the next verse in the passage under discussion:^[43]

וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם הַהוּא שֶׁיָּלְדָהּ וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם הַהוּא שֶׁיָּלְדָהּ וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם הַהוּא שֶׁיָּלְדָהּ – **The woman (Yocheved) conceived and gave birth to a son.** – וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם הַהוּא שֶׁיָּלְדָהּ וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם הַהוּא שֶׁיָּלְדָהּ – **Why does the Torah mention that she conceived here, as if she conceived only after she remarried? But she was already pregnant with [Moses] three months before, as we will shortly demonstrate.**^[44] אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה בַּר זְבִינָא – **Rav Yehudah bar Zevina said:** מְקִישׁ לִידָתָהּ לְהוֹרָתָהּ – **The Torah mentions here that Yocheved conceived so that we may compare her act of giving birth to her act of conceiving.** מִהָ הוֹרָתָהּ שְׁלֵא בְּצָעַר – **Just as she conceived without pain** אַף לִידָתָהּ שְׁלֵא בְּצָעַר – **so too she gave birth without pain.**^[45] מִכָּאן לְנִשְׁיִם צְדִיקָנוֹת שְׁלֵא – **From here we may derive that the righteous women of all generations were not affected by Eve's verdict, that womankind would have to suffer pain in childbirth.**^[46]

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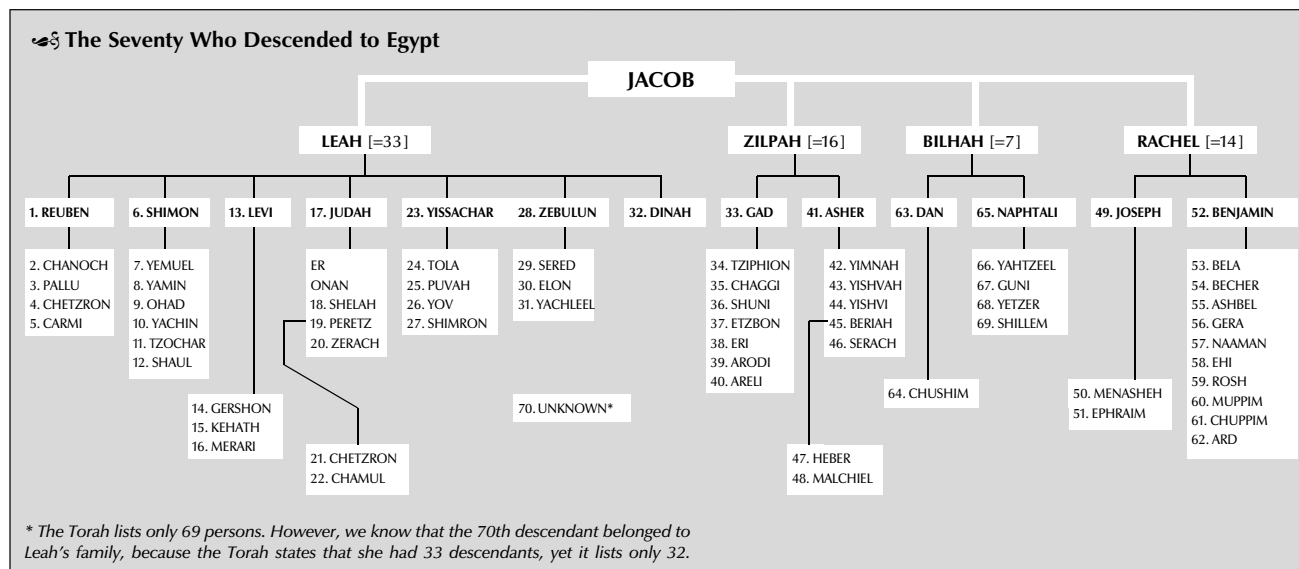
- 37. See text of our Gemara in *Ein Yaakov* and *Bereishis Rabbah* 94:9.
- 38. In his commentary on the Torah, *Rashi* states that the resolution is implied by the differing tenses of the word הִבָּאָה in these verses. When the cantillation indicates that הִבָּאָה is in the present (“coming”), it refers to the number of Jacob’s descendants as they were coming to Egypt – sixty-nine. However, when it is used in the past tense (“who came”), the reference is to the number of descendants after they had already arrived in Egypt. At that point, their number was seventy, for Yocheved had been born.
- 39. *Numbers* 26:59.
- 40. See calculations in *Seder Olam Rabbah* Ch. 3 and *Rashbam to Bava Basra* 120a אשר ילדה ד”ה.
- 41. *Exodus* 7:7.
- 42. Her flesh became tender, her wrinkles were smoothed out, beauty encompassed her (*Bava Basra* 120a), her menses returned and her face was the face of a young woman (*Rashi*). This occurred before Yocheved gave birth to Miriam and Aaron, when Yocheved was about 124 years old (see *Maharzu to Shemos Rabbah* 1:19).
- 43. *Ibid.* 2:2.
- 44. See below, note 53.
- 45. Literally: Just as her conception . . . so too her childbirth.
- 46. After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God judged them and handed down an edict of punishment. Mankind would no longer be immortal. Adam and his descendants would have to labor mightily for

sustenance. For Eve and her gender, pregnancy and childbirth would henceforth be accompanied by many and varied aches and pains (see *Rashi* and *Genesis* 3:8-19). [The punishment was not retaliatory. By assimilating into their nature an awareness of and a temptation to sin, Adam and Eve became unworthy to remain in the spiritual paradise of Eden; consequently they were expelled. As a result, life changed in virtually every conceivable way.]

However, our Gemara expounds, there were righteous women of later generations who were excluded from the verdict of painful childbirth. Indeed, we find that in every single instance in Scripture that the word וְהָיָה, *and she conceived*, is closely followed by וְהָיָה לָהּ יֶלֶד, *and she gave birth*, the woman under discussion is a righteous woman, i.e. one of the wives of the Patriarchs or of the twelve sons of Jacob or of the Prophets (*Midrash HaMevuar to Shemos Rabbah* 1:20).

§ The Miracle of Moses’ Birth

Ibn Ezra (*Genesis* 46:23) asks: If it is true that Yocheved bore Moses at the age of one hundred and thirty, why does the Torah not speak of this miracle and celebrate it as it does in regard to Sarah who gave birth at the age of ninety? *Ibn Ezra* therefore concludes that our Gemara’s statements as to when Yocheved was born cannot be taken literally. Similarly, *Ralbag* (*Genesis* 46:15) explains that these statements are meant homiletically. However, *Ramban* (46:15) rejects this view, pointing out that, in any case, a miracle of birth in later life had to have taken place: No one disputes that Yocheved was the daughter of Levi and the mother of Moses (see *Ramban*). Now, it can be calculated that the period from the birth of Levi to the birth of Moses is one hundred and



The Gemara turns to the next clause in this verse describing the birth of Moses and cites several views as to its meaning:

“וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב הוּא” – *she saw that he was good (tov)*. תַּנְיָא – **It has been taught in a Baraisa:** רַבִּי מֵאִיר אָמַר – R’ MEIR SAYS: טוֹב שְׁמוֹ – “TOV” WAS [MOSES’] NAME. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר – R’ YEHUDAH SAYS: טוֹבִיָּה שְׁמוֹ – TOVIYAH WAS HIS NAME.^[47] רַבִּי אֶחָרִים – R’ NECHEMYAH SAYS: The word “*tov*” signifies that Moses was הֵגוֹן לְנִבְיָאוֹת – FIT FOR PROPHECY.^[48] אֲחֵרִים – OTHERS SAY: It means נוֹלֵד כְּשֶׁהוּא מְהוּל – HE WAS BORN ALREADY CIRCUMCISED.^[49] וְהַכְּמִים אֲמָרִים – AND THE SAGES SAY: בְּשָׂעָה שְׁנוֹלֵד מֹשֶׁה – WHEN MOSES WAS BORN THE ENTIRE HOUSE FILLED WITH LIGHT.^[50] This may be derived from a *gezeirah shavah*: בְּתֵיב הַכָּא – IT IS WRITTEN HERE, “וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב הוּא” – *SHE SAW THAT HE WAS GOOD*. וּבְתֵיב הַהֵם – AND IT IS WRITTEN THERE,^[51] וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים

טוֹב – אֶת-הָאֹר כִּי-טוֹב – *GOD SAW THAT THE LIGHT WAS GOOD*.^[52]

The Gemara continues:

וַתֵּרָצַפְנָהּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים” – *she (Yocheved) hid him for three months*, הֲלֹא מִנּוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶלָּא מִשְׁעָה דְאַהֲרָה – **because the Egyptians, who were enforcing the decree to kill the baby boys, began counting the nine months of pregnancy only from the moment that [Amram] remarried [Yocheved],** וְהָיָא הָתָּה – **but she had been pregnant with [Moses] for three months before.**^[53] וְלֹא-יָבִילָהּ עוֹד – אֲמַאי תִּצְפִּינָהּ – *She could not hide him any longer.*^[54] וְתִיּוּל – Why not? Let her continue to hide him!^[55] אֶלָּא – **Rather, it was impossible for her to do so,**^[56] כָּל הַיָּבִיא דְהוּוּ שְׁמַעֵי – **for wherever the Egyptians heard that a baby was born, מִמָּטוּ וְנוֹקָא הֵתָּם – they would bring an Egyptian baby there,** (בְּהַרְיָהּ) וְגַמְעוּי (בְּהַרְיָהּ) – **so**

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seventy-three years. If Levi fathered Yocheved at a normal age, then Yocheved was very old when she had Moses, and if Yocheved bore him at a normal age, then Levi was very old when he fathered Yocheved [or they were both a little over eighty-six]. *Ramban* goes on to say that the Torah does not detail every miracle that occurs in the lives of the men and women it discusses. Rather, there were and are a myriad of “hidden miracles” (see there) that are not discussed. *Ramban* elaborates there on the kinds of miracles the Torah will discuss.

Maharal (Gevuros Hashem Ch. 16) takes great exception to *Ibn Ezra’s* comments. He states that *Ibn Ezra’s* premise, that the Torah is geared toward recounting the novel events of history, is completely wrong: The Torah is not a purveyor of news. Rather, the Torah chooses to discuss those matters that are fundamental to the world, and to the Jewish people who are central to the world. Thus, the Torah will speak at length of an incident that occurred with Abraham’s slave, but teach a major point in the laws of *tumah* through an extremely short allusion (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 60:8). Abraham’s and Sarah’s advanced ages when they had Isaac is fundamental to the Jewish people and is discussed; Yocheved’s advanced age when she had Moses is less so and is not discussed.

[For a parable of the *Dubno Maggid* expressing an alternative explanation, see *Shemen HaMor, Eretz Chadashah*, end of Ch. 12.]

47. [See below, note 52 for an explanation of the difference between *Tov* and *Toviyah*.]

Moses had many names (e.g. Chaver, Yekusiel): The Midrash lists ten (*Vayikra Rabbah* 1:3). Each of the names alludes to another stellar quality that Moses possessed. However, in almost every other context he is called by the name that Pharaoh’s daughter gave him – *Moshe*. This teaches the reward for those who perform kindness. Even the Holy One, Blessed is He, called him only by this name (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:26).

48. I.e. Yocheved saw that he was destined to be fit for prophecy (*Rashi*). Indeed, he would be the greatest prophet that would ever live (*Deuteronomy* 34:10; see end of *Devarim Rabbah*). [Thus, *she saw that he was tov* means she saw that he was the best, and this refers to his stature as a prophet (see *Yefei To’ar* to *Shemos Rabbah* 1:20).]

49. *Rashi* to *Genesis* 1:7 states that something that is not yet perfected cannot be called “good.” Thus, when the Torah says that Yocheved looked at her newborn and saw that he was “good,” this indicates that the baby was perfect, lacking no further improvement. Accordingly, Moses must have been born circumcised (*Torah Temimah* to *Exodus* 2:2).

[Since the words כִּי-טוֹב are used here by the Torah to refer to circumcision, it has become customary for those present at a *bris milah* to declare כִּי-טוֹב הוּוּ לָהּ (Chizkuni and *Pane’ach Raza* to *Exodus* 2:2). The *Baal HaTurim* (to *Genesis* 1:4) notes that when rearranged, the last letters of the words אֶת-הָאֹר כִּי-טוֹב (cited immediately below in our Baraisa) spell out the word בְּרִית, *circumcision*.]

[*Tosafos* point out that this view (that he was born circumcised) is attributed to “others” while the first view (*Tov*) is attributed to R’ Meir. This is odd because the Gemara in *Horayos* (13b) identifies “others” as R’ Meir. *Tosafos* cite two explanations: (a) The only teachings of R’ Meir that were quoted in the name of “others” are those that he received from Elisha ben Avuyah who was known as “the Other” (see *Chagigah* 15a). Thus, the view attributed here directly to R’ Meir is his own view

(or that of another teacher) and the view presented in the name of “others” is from Elisha ben Avuyah (*Tosafos* reject this explanation); (b) Both views are R’ Meir’s but the one quoted in his name (R’ Meir) was said earlier in his life. Later he retracted this view and espoused another view. At this point, though, his teachings were being attributed to “others.” Elsewhere (*Avodah Zarah* 64b אחרים ר”ה אחרים), *Tosafos* maintain that not every teaching of “the others” should be attributed to R’ Meir.]

50. This light was the light of the Six Days of Creation, that God hid away for the righteous in the future. God allowed this light to shine for Moses for the first three months of his life and then when he arrived at Pharaoh’s house it was taken away from him, until Moses stood at Mt. Sinai and God restored it to him (*Zohar Bereishis* 31b).

51. *Genesis* 1:4.

52. The differences between these five views seems clear except for the first two views, whether Moses’ name was *Tov* or *Toviyah*. *Iyei HaYam* explains that these two names signify vastly disparate characters. “*Tov*” indicates that Moses was good by his very nature; “*Toviyah*” (*good [through] God*) indicates that Moses was not good naturally, but that he strove and struggled to better himself until he attained spiritual perfection.

[This dispute, as explained by *Iyei HaYam*, is echoed in the controversy surrounding a story cited by *Tiferes Yisrael* at the end of his commentary on *Kiddushin*. The part of the story that is relevant here quotes Moses as saying that he was born with pronounced inclinations to do all manner of evil, but that he labored in self-improvement until he conquered these flaws. This story was condemned by some Torah luminaries who disagreed with *Tiferes Yisrael* regarding its authenticity and suspected it to be the fabrication of those attempting to ridicule the Torah. Some Rabbinical scholars and academics indeed concluded that the story has a non-Jewish origin. However, many of the great Chassidic masters have accepted the premise of this story regarding the characteristics with which Moses was born. See *Megadim Chadashim* to *Berachos* pp. 199-200 for a lengthy discussion of this topic.]

53. Since the Egyptians came to check on her after nine months, she was able to hide Moses for three months. This is the source for the Gemara’s statement above that Yocheved was already three months pregnant when Amram remarried her (*Rashi*). It should be noted however that *Rashi*, in his commentary to the Torah, does not say that Yocheved was pregnant for three months before, but rather that Moses was born after only six months and one day. The Egyptians who came by three months later wrongly assumed that she would carry to full term. *Mizrachi* (*Exodus* 2:3) cites *Tosafos* who cite a Midrashic work known as *Sefer HaAggadah shel Divrei HaYamim* as a source for *Rashi* (see also *Zohar Bereishis* 31b). *Mizrachi* suggests that *Rashi* preferred this approach over that of our Gemara because it is closer to the plain meaning of the verse that says Yocheved conceived after Amram married her (cf. *Chizkuni* who attempts to reconcile *Rashi* with our Gemara).

54. *Exodus* 2:3.

55. Since the baby was concealed in some secret place, what was it that she feared might happen? (*Rashi*).

56. The letter ך in the word הִצְפִּינוּ is written with a *dagesh* (ך), which is unusual. *Maharal (Gevuros Hashem Ch. 17)* says it signifies that even with the most elaborate attempts, she could no longer hide him.

that they would hear each other and cry (together).^[57] And these babies who were the cause of Jewish tragedy are alluded to in Scripture, דְּבַתִּיב – as it is written:^[58] אֲחֻזֵי-לָנוּ שְׁעָלִים,, “ [God said to the sea:] *Grab for us foxes, the small foxes etc., who spoiled the vineyards, when our vineyards had just begun to blossom.*^[59]

The Gemara continues:

“וַתִּקְחֵהּ לּוֹ תֵּבַת גַּמָּא” – *so she took for him a wicker basket.* Why wicker and not something stronger, like wood? אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר – **R’ Elazar said:** מִיִּכְּן לְצַדִּיקִים שְׁמוֹנָם – **From here** we may derive that **the property of the righteous is dearer to them than their own bodies**, i.e. she chose wicker because it was less expensive.^[60] וְכָל כֶּף לָמָּה – **And why** do the righteous care **so much** about their property? לְפִי שֶׁאֵין פּוֹשְׁטִין יְדֵיהֶן בְּגוֹל – **Because their hands never touch stolen money;** whatever they have is theirs honestly and is therefore precious to them. רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָנִי אָמַר – **R’**

Shmuel bar Nachmani said: She used wicker for the basket because it was דְּבַר רַךְ – **a soft material** שֶׁיִּכְוֹל לְעֻמּוֹד בְּפָנֵי קִשְׁיָה – **that would be able to withstand a confrontation with either a soft object or a hard object**, when it was in the water. But if Yocheved had fashioned the basket out of wood, it would have been liable to break upon a rock.^[61]

The Gemara continues:

“וַתְּחַמְרָהּ בְּחֵמָר וּבִנְפֹת” – *and she smeared it with clay and tar.* תְּנָא – **A Baraisa was taught:** חֵמָר מִבְּפָנִים וְנְפֹת מִבְּחוּץ – **THE CLAY WAS ON THE INSIDE AND THE TAR WAS ON THE OUTSIDE**, כִּדְרֵי – **SO THAT THAT RIGHTEOUS PERSON (Moses) WOULD NOT SMELL THE FOUL ODOR** of tar.^[62]

The Gemara continues:

“וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף” – *she placed the child into it and placed it in the suf.* רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר – **R’ Elazar says:** This *suf* – **was the Yam Suf**, the Sea of Reeds.^[63] רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָנִי אָמַר – **R’ Shmuel bar Nachmani said:**

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57. The Jewish women would hide their newborn babies in secret passageways. If the Egyptians estimated that a Jewish baby had been born in a certain area, they would go house to house with an Egyptian baby, pinch it until it cried and listen for the sound of another baby crying along (see *Shemos Rabbah* 1:20; *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 2:15:2). It is the nature of a baby to begin wailing when it hears the sound of another baby wailing (*Rashi*). When the Egyptians would find the Jewish baby, they would take it and throw it into the river to drown.

58. *Song of Songs* 2:15.

59. The Heavenly voice tells the [Reed] Sea [after the Jews have exited and the Egyptians have entered]: *Grab for us* [i.e. drown those who used to be] *the small foxes who were spoiling the vineyards* [i.e. the Jewish people – see *Isaiah* 5:7] *when they had just begun to blossom, when the fruit was yet small* [i.e. when the Jewish victims were still so young] (*Rashi*).

The Midrash relates another way the Egyptian children brought death to Jewish infants. The Egyptian adults would bring their children home from school and send them into the public bathhouses of the Jewish women. The children would note who was pregnant and estimate the number of months. They would make notes to themselves and report back to their parents. When the Egyptian adults reckoned that a woman had carried for nine months, they would pay her a visit and rip her baby away from her, even in the middle of nursing (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 2:15:2).

60. Clearly, her baby would be fully protected whether in a wicker basket or in a wooden basket. However, it stands to reason that since wood is stronger than wicker, a wooden basket would provide an extra measure of security (see *Rashi* and *Maharsha*).

Ben Yehoyada explains: Certainly, the righteous do not hold their property dearer than their lives; nothing is more precious than life (see also *Maharsha*). Rather, the principle means that the righteous are willing to sustain temporary, minor discomforts rather than incur expenses to avoid them. Thus, we find (*Taanis* 23a-b) that the Amora Abba Chilkiyah preferred to expose his shins to thistles rather than cover them with a garment that would become ripped.

61. If the waters thrust a wooden basket against a rock forcefully, it is liable to become dented and break. But if the waters force a wicker basket against a rock, it will merely flex and bounce back. Thus, a wicker basket afforded Moses the best protection (see *Rashi* and *Eitz Yosef*).

62. This was unlike Noah’s ark which was tarred both within and without (see *Genesis* 6:14). *Rashi* there adds that Moses’ basket did not need a coating of tar both inside and out, because the waters of the Nile were not tumultuous as were the waters of the Flood.

63. There is a place where the Sea of Reeds extends to the Nile. She avoided placing the basket in a place where the waters were flowing and would carry the basket away and instead placed it near this juncture, where the waters were stationary (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:21 with *Yefei To’ar*).

אָגם – The verse means she placed the basket in a **marsh** among the reeds and willows, which are called *suf*, קְנֵה וְסוּף, בדכתיב „קְנֵה וְסוּף, קָמְלוּ” – as it is written: *the reeds and the thin willows (suf) will wither.*^[1]

The Gemara continues:

„וַתֵּרֶד בַּת־פַּרְעֹה לְרַחֵץ עַל־הַיָּאֵר” – *Pharaoh's daughter went down to wash herself by the river.*^[2] אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִשּׁוּם רַבִּי – R' Yochanan said in the name of R' Shimon ben Yochai: מְלַמֵּד שְׂרָרָה לְרַחוּץ מִגּוּלֵי אֲבִיהָ – *This teaches that she went down to the river in order to wash herself from her father's idols,*^[3] i.e. she went to immerse herself in the River as an act of conversion to monotheism.^[4] וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר – *And we find similarly that someone who repents and cleanses himself from his sins is called “washed” as it says: אִם רָחַץ ה' אֶת צִאתָּה,, אִם רָחַץ ה' אֶת צִאתָּה,, אִם רָחַץ ה' אֶת צִאתָּה – When my Lord will have cleansed the filth of the daughters of Zion etc.*^[5]

The Gemara continues:

„וַתֵּרֶד בַּת־פַּרְעֹה לְרַחֵץ עַל־הַיָּאֵר” – After the verse in *Exodus* says that Pharaoh's daughter went down to the river to cleanse herself, it continues: *And her maidens were walking (holchos) along the river etc.* Why does the Torah mention that they were walking? אֵין הֶלִיכָה זֶה אֶלָּא לְשׁוֹן מִיָּתָה – R' Yochanan said: – *This “walking” is none other than an expression of drawing closer to death.* I.e. the maidens were about to do something for which they would deserve death. וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר – *And similarly,* we find that the term “walking” is used in the sense of drawing closer to death, as it says: „הֲנֵה אֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לְמוֹת” – *Look, I am going (holeich) to die.*^[6]

The Gemara continues:

„וַתֵּרֶד אֶת־הַתְּבָחָה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף” – *she saw the basket among the reeds.* בֵּינָן דְּחֻזֵי דְקָא (בעו) [בְּעֵת] לְאַצּוּלֵי לְמִשָּׁה – *Once [the maidens] saw that [Pharaoh's daughter]^[7] wished to rescue*

Moses, they protested. אָמְרוּ לָהּ גְבִירָתָנוּ – *They said to her, “Our lady, מִנְהֵגוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם – the following is the norm in the world: מֶלֶךְ בָּשָׂר וְדָם גּוֹזֵר גְּזֵירָה – When a flesh-and-blood king issues a decree, אִם כָּל הָעוֹלָם כּוֹלוּ אֵין מְקַיְמִין אוֹתָהּ – if the entire world does not observe it, כִּנְיֵי וּבְנֵי בֵיתוֹ מְקַיְמִין אוֹתָהּ – at least his children and the members of his household can be counted on to observe it; וְאַתְּ עוֹבְרַת עַל גְּזֵירַת אָבִיךָ – yet you are violating the decree of your own father!”* בָּא גְבִרְיָאֵל – *The angel Gabriel came then and struck [the maidens] to the ground,* thus disposing of them.^[8]

The Gemara continues:

„וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אֲמָתָהּ וַתִּקְחֶהָ” – *and she [Pharaoh's daughter] sent forth her amah and fetched it [the basket].* רַבִּי יְהוּדָה וְרַבִּי נְחֵמְיָהּ – *R' Yehudah and R' Nechemyah disputed the meaning of the word amah in this verse. חֵד אָמַר נְדָה – One said it means her arm, that she stretched out her arm to take hold of the basket, וְחֵד אָמַר שְׁפָחָתָה – and one said it means her maidservant, i.e. Pharaoh's daughter sent one of her maidens to retrieve the basket. מֵאַן דְּאָמַר נְדָה דְכֵתִיב „אֲמָתָה” – The one who said it means her arm holds this view because it is written in the verse “her amah,” and amah is a term for one's arm. וּמֵאַן דְּאָמַר שְׁפָחָתָה – And the one who said it means her maidservant holds this view – מִדְּלֵא בְּתֵיב נְדָה – because the more common term for her arm, “yadah,” is not written here.^[9]*

The Gemara asks:

„וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אֲמָתָהּ” – *And according to the one who said it means she sent her maidservant, וְלִמְאַן דְּאָמַר שְׁפָחָתָה – but you said before that Gabriel came and struck [the maidens] to the ground; so who remained for Pharaoh's daughter to send?*

The Gemara answers:

„וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אֲמָתָהּ” – *One has to say that [Gabriel] left her one*

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1. *Isaiah* 19:6. According to this opinion too, Yocheved placed the basket in still waters, so that it should not be carried away by the river's current (*Yefei To'ar to Shemos Rabbah* 1:21). She placed it among the reeds and willows so that no passerby should see her hiding something there (*Sforno to Exodus* 2:3). The Midrash (*ibid.*) says that Yocheved was aware of the astrologers' observation that the savior of the Jewish people would be stricken with water [and that her son could be that savior]. She therefore placed her infant son in a basket in the river, so that the destiny written in the stars for her son could be satisfied in this limited sense (see below, note 25) and the Egyptians would search for him no more. According to the Gemara below, Yocheved's plan succeeded. As long as Moses was in the river, the astrologers noticed a difference in the stars, which was interpreted to mean that the savior had already been killed. As a result, Pharaoh canceled the decree.

2. *Exodus* 2:5.

3. There is a version of our text that reads: „עַל־הַיָּאֵר” (literally: on the river), עַל עֶסְקֵי הַיָּאֵר, [she went down to wash herself] on matters of the river (Oxford ms., cited in *Kuntres Me'ah He'aros al Sotah* by R' C.D. Chavel, printed at the end of the standard *Dikdukei Soferim*; see also *Eitz Yosef*). According to this text, it seems that the explanation is as follows: The Nile River was worshiped as a god in Egypt (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 87:7 and *Shemos Rabbah* 9:9) and Pharaoh's daughter wished to cleanse her soul of the matters of the river, i.e. from this form [and all forms] of idolatry.

4. *Rashi*. This immersion was not intended as part of a halachically valid conversion to Judaism. Rather, it was a gesture of spiritual cleansing. We find immersions in the name of repentance performed even by Jewish penitents (*Meromei Sadeh to Megillah* 13a; see *Yoreh Deah* 268:12; cf. *Minchah Chareivah*; see above, 10a note 56 in regard to conversion prior to the Giving of the Torah).

5. *Isaiah* 4:4. The previous chapter describes the immorality of the daughters of Zion, and the punishments that would befall them. In this verse, Scripture describes the future Redemption when God will have

“washed” the sins of the daughters of Zion *with a spirit of judgment and a spirit of purging.*

6. *Genesis* 25:32. This comment was made by Esau when he traded his birthright as a firstborn son for a plate of lentils.

The reason that the maidens were deserving of death was because they were going to protest the rescue of Moses (*Rashi*). [*Hadar Zekeinim* to this verse notes that *walking*, *halachah*, has the same numerical value as *death* (see also *Maharal, Gevuuros Hashem*, Ch. 17).]

7. Emendation follows *Hagahos HaBach*.

8. They fell by the ground at the edge of the river and died, and that is how Gabriel “struck” them (*Mizrachi ad loc.*).

9. From the Gemara's presentation of these two views, it would seem that, by itself, the Hebrew word אֲמָתָה could be translated either as “her maidservant” or “her arm” and the Tannaim dispute which is the correct translation here. However, *Rashi* in his commentary to this verse states that, grammatically speaking, “her maidservant” is the only translation possible, since the *alef* has a *chataf patach* (אָ) and the *mem* has no *dagesh* (מ). If the word meant “her arm,” it would be spelled אֲמִתָּה, the *alef* with a *patach* (אָ) and the *mem* with a *dagesh* (מָ) (see also *Ibn Ezra, Rashbam* and *Ibn Janach* אמה). According to *Rashi*, the dispute between R' Yehudah and R' Nechemyah how to understand this word is a dispute at the level of *derash*, homiletical exposition. One view expounds the plain meaning of the word, “her maidservant,” and the other view expounds the word to mean “her arm” (see *Mizrachi ad loc.*).

[It seems, however, that there are authorities who disagree with *Rashi* about the plain meaning of this verse. *Targum Yonasan ben Uzziel* translates אֲמָתָה as נְשִׂאֵי יָדַי גְּרָמִיכָא וְנִשְׁלַח אֶת־אֲמָתָהּ, *and she stretched forth her arm. Rav Saadiah Gaon* translates similarly (into Arabic) and *Dunash ben Labrat* raises the aforementioned objections to his translation (*Teshuvos Dunash ben Labrat al Rav Saadiah Gaon* §1). *Radak* in his *Sefer HaShorashim* (ערך אמה) states that there is a dispute as to how to read the word in our verse. Quite possibly then, the correct reading of this word was also a part of the dispute between R' Yehudah and R' Nechemyah (see *Karnei Or* in *Mechokekei Yehudah to Exodus* 2:5.)

maiden חוּדָה – דָּלָאוּ אִוְרָהָ דְּבַת מַלְכָּא לְמִיָּקָם לְחוּדָה – **because**, in any case, **it is not proper for a princess to stand by herself.**

The Gemara asks further:

וְלִמְאֵן דְּאָמַר יָדָה – **And according to the one who said** it means “*yadah*” (her arm), לִיְכַתּוּב יָדָה – **let [the Torah] write “yadah” explicitly.** – ? –

The Gemara answers:

לֵן הָא קָא מְשַׁמַּע לֵן – **This is what [the Torah] means to inform us** by using the word *amah*: דַּאִישְׁתְּרַבֵּב אִישְׁתְּרַבּוּבֵי – **That [her own arm] extended miraculously far** in reaching for the basket.^[10] We have a tradition that such a miracle took place, דְּאָמַר מַר – **for the master said** in reference to Achashveirosh’s scepter that lengthened miraculously:^[11] וְכֵן אָתָּה מוֹצֵא בְּאֵמְתָה – **And you find a similar miracle with regard to the arm of Pharaoh’s daughter.** שֶׁל בַּת פְּרַעֲוֶה – **And you find a similar miracle with regard to the teeth of the wicked.**^[12] דְּכַתִּיב „שְׁנֵי רְשָׁעִים שִׁבְרָתָ” – **as it is written:**^[13] *the teeth of the wicked You have broken.* וְאָמַר רִישׁ לְקִישׁ – **And Reish Lakish said:** “אל תיקרי, שִׁבְרָתָ” – **Do not read this as it is written, *shibarta* (You have broken);** אֲלָא שְׁרִיבְבָתָה – **rather, read it *sheribavtah* (that You have extended).** God lengthened the teeth of a wicked man in a historical incident in order to forestall disaster for the Jewish people.^[14]

The Gemara continues:

„וּתְפַתַּח וּתְרָאוּהוּ אֶת־הַיְלָד” – **She opened it and saw him, the child.** וְתָרָא מִיָּדָה לֵיהּ – **[The verse] should simply say: She**

opened it **and saw** the child. ר’ יוסי ברבי חנינא – **R’ Yose bar R’ Chanina said:** The phrase *she saw him, the child* means שֶׁרָאָתָהּ שְׁכִינָה עִמוּ – **that she saw the Divine Presence together with [the child].**^[15]

The Gemara continues:

„וְהִנֵּה נֹעֵר בֹּכֵה” – **and, behold! A youth was crying.** קָרִי לֵיהּ – **Earlier, [the Torah] called him a child,** which could mean an infant, וְקָרִי לֵיהּ נֹעֵר – **and here [the Torah] calls him a youth,** implying an older person. תְּנָא – **A Baraisa was taught** that explains this apparent contradiction: הוּא יְלָד וְקוּלוּ בְנֵעַר – **HE WAS AN INFANT BUT HIS VOICE WAS LIKE THAT OF A YOUTH,** i.e. much deeper. דְּבָרֵי רַבִּי יְהוּדָה – **THESE ARE THE WORDS OF R’ YEHUDAH.** אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי נְחֵמְיָהּ – **R’ NECHEMYAH SAID TO HIM:** אִם כֵּן – **IF SO,** that his voice was abnormally deep, עֲשִׂיתוּ לְמֹשֶׁה – **YOU HAVE MADE MOSES OUR TEACHER OUT TO BE THE POSSESSOR OF A DEFECT.** Since Moses was a Levite, he was supposed to participate in the Temple service by singing, but an abnormally deep voice would disqualify him from doing so.^[16] שְׁעֲשֵׂתָהּ לוֹ – **RATHER [THE WORD YOUTH] TEACHES US** אֲלָא מִלְּמַר – **RATHER [THE WORD YOUTH] TEACHES US** אֲמו חוֹפֵת נְעוּרִים בְּתִיבָה – **THAT [MOSES’] MOTHER FASHIONED FOR HIM IN THE BASKET A CANOPY OF YOUTH,** i.e. a symbolic *chuppah* or wedding canopy, אָמַרָה – **for SHE SAID to herself,** שְׂמָא לָא – **“PERHAPS I WILL NOT MERIT TO SEE HIS actual CHUPPAH.”**^[17]

The Gemara continues:

וּתְאָמַר מִיָּלְדֵי הַעֲבָרִים – **She took pity on him**^[18] וְתַחֲמַל עָלָיו

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10. [Thus, the word אָמְתָה is cognate to אַמּוּת, *cubits*, for her hand miraculously extended many cubits to reach Moses (see *Iyun Yaakov* here and Rashi to Exodus ad loc.) R’ Chaim Shmulevitz states that it is not necessary to explain that her hand literally lengthened many feet (and then was afterward restored to its original size in a second miracle). Rather, the Gemara is speaking metaphorically. Pharaoh’s daughter saw Moses’ basket from afar; however, the distance did not prevent her from reaching out for it. The princess gathered her strength, commanded every bit of courage and daring she had, and kept reaching toward the luminous infant floating upon the surface of the water until she had him. A person has inner resources that vastly exceed his natural abilities (*Sichos Mussar*, 5731 §5).

11. Haman decreed that the Jews should be annihilated. After this decree was sent to the far corners of Achashveirosh’s empire, Esther approached Achashveirosh to (ultimately) plead on behalf of the Jews. She risked her life by doing so since the law in the kingdom prescribed capital punishment for anyone who approached the king in the inner court uninformed, unless the king extended his gold scepter to that person. When Esther appeared before the king, she stood at a distance, but the scepter extended miraculously until it reached her (see *Megillah* 15b).

12. The Gemara refers to an incident involving the giant Og, king of Bashan, and his attempt to kill the Jewish people. The Gemara in *Berachos* (54b) relates the story: The camp of Israel was three *parsaos* square. [A *parsah* is between 2.4 and 2.9 miles.] Og went and uprooted a mountain that was three *parsaos* square. Og carried the enormous mountain on his head, but the Holy One, Blessed is He, caused the mountain to be infested with ants and these ants bored through it. The mountain fell around Og’s neck. He attempted to remove it from around his neck, but his teeth extended downward on two sides and he could not take it off. [Seemingly, it would be impossible for a mortal to do what Og is described as doing. Hence, several commentators state that this narrative should not be understood literally – see the following commentators to *Berachos* (ibid.): *Rashba* in *Peirushei HaHaggados, Maharsha, Tzlach, Ben Yehoyada* and *Maharal* in *Gur Aryeh* to *Numbers* 21:35.]

13. *Psalms* 3:8.

14. See above, note 12.

15. Thus, the verse should be translated: *She saw Him with the child.* (The word אָת, in this case, is understood to mean *with* as in *Genesis* 42:4 – *Rashi*). Or *HaChaim* ad loc. states that she did not actually

experience a revelation of the Divine Presence. This would have been impossible for her [since she grew up] in the spiritually defiled environment of her father and grandfather. Rather, God attached a “great light” to Moses in order to impress upon Pharaoh’s daughter the uniqueness of this infant.

[The שְׁכִינָה, Divine Presence, is usually spoken of in Hebrew using feminine verbs, adjectives and pronouns. Thus, it would seem uncharacteristic that she saw *him*, would be interpreted as an allusion to the Divine Presence. However,] *Rabbeinu Bachya* ad loc. explains that it is the letters *hei* and *vav* that allude to the Divine Presence: וְתָרָא הֵי וַוַּ, *and she saw hei and vav* [the שְׁכִינָה] *with the child.* Indeed, the Gemara in *Shabbos* (104a) teaches that הֵי וַוַּ is one of the Names of God (see the *Gra* in *Kol Eliyahu* here).]

16. And Scripture does not typically recount the shortcomings of the righteous [without cause] (see *Bava Basra* 123a). Even though it appears that Moses would have been disqualified to participate in the Levites’ singing anyway because of his age (he was eighty at the time of the Exodus), nevertheless Moses was also the head of the Sanhedrin and a member of the Sanhedrin may not possess a physical defect. Since the deep voice would have disqualified him as a Levite, it would have disqualified him as a judge on the Sanhedrin (*Responsa, Chasam Sofer, Even HaEzer* II §92; see, however, *Chidushei HaGriz* vol. II §52).

17. This was an expression of her despair (see *Eitz Yosef*; see *Maharsha*). Yocheved did not in fact see Moses’ *chuppah*, since he married in Midian (*Ben Yehoyada*).

[Thus, our Gemara presents two ways to resolve the contradictory references to Moses as an *infant* and as a *youth*: R’ Yehudah says that Moses was an infant but his voice was as deep as a youth’s voice. R’ Nechemyah agrees that Moses was an infant but he was treated like a youth in that he was covered with a symbolic wedding canopy. The Midrash offers a third resolution: The words, *And behold! a youth was crying*, do not refer to Moses at all, but rather to Aaron who was about three years old at the time. Aaron was crying in dreaded anticipation of Moses’ impending doom in the water (*Yalkut Shimoni* §166; see *Pane’ach Raza*; see *Yalkut Shimoni* further for another explanation).

18. Pharaoh’s daughter was inclined initially to listen to the earlier protestations of her maidens and abandon the baby. However, the angel Gabriel came and hit him so that he should cry and thereby invoke feelings of compassion within Pharaoh’s daughter (see *Yalkut Shimoni* ad loc. and *Shemos Rabbah* 1:24). Alternatively, he was crying because he longed for his sister Miriam who was watching him from afar (*Shemos Rabbah* loc. cit.).

“ה – *and said, “One of the Hebrew boys, this one.”* מִנָּה יָדְעָה – How did she know? – אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא – R’ Yose the son of R’ Chanina said: She knew שָׂרְאָתָה אֹתוֹ מְהוּל – because she saw he was circumcised.

The Gemara turns to the end of Pharaoh’s daughter’s statement, “*One of the Hebrew boys, this one*”:

“וְהָ” – *This one*^[19] – אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן – R’ Yochanan said: מִלְמַד – [The words *this one*] teach us that she prophesied unconsciously: וְהָ נֹפֵל וְאֵין אַחַר נֹפֵל – *This one has fallen into the river but no other baby will again have to fall into the river.* I.e. she implied without thinking that the decree that male infants must be thrown into the river would be abolished that day. That is precisely what happened, because the astrologers no longer foresaw a threat. וְהֵינּוּ דְאָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר – *And this bears out what R’ Elazar said in regard to those astrologers:* מֵאֵי דְכֶתִיב – *What is the meaning of that which is written:*^[20] וְכִי־יֹאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכֶם – *If people say to you,*^[21] דְרָשׁוּ – *Inquire of the necromancers and the diviners,*” – *אל-האבות ואל-הידענים והמזפזפים והמגים” – who chirp (mitzafzefim) and vocalize?*^[22] Scripture means וְאֵין אֵין מַה צּוֹפִין – *they envision (tzofin) future events but do not know what they envision, מהגים וְאֵין יוֹדְעִים מַה מְהֻלָּם – they vocalize but do not know what they vocalize,* i.e. they have a vague idea of what they are divining, but not a well-defined picture.

The Gemara elaborates:^[23]

[The astrologers of Pharaoh] saw that the savior of the Jewish people would be stricken by water. Consequently, עָמְדוּ וְגִזְרוּ – [the Egyptians] proceeded to decree, “כִּלְיֵהֶבֶן הַיְלִיד הַיֵּאֲרֶה תִשְׁלִיכֶהוּ” – *Every son that is born – into the river shall you throw him!*^[24] Once Moses was cast into the river (in a basket), [the astrologers] said, – אָמְרוּ – *“We no longer see something like that sign.”*^[25] Assuming that the potential savior must have already drowned,

[the Egyptians] abolished their decrees.^[26] שָׁעַל מִי מְרִיבָה הוּא – *But they did not realize* – וְהֵם אֵינָן יוֹדְעִין לֹקְהָ – *that the sign indicating that Moses would be stricken actually referred to the fact that [Moses] would be stricken in connection with the Waters of Strife.*^[27] וְהֵינּוּ דְאָמַר רַבִּי חֲמָא – *And this account bears out that which R’ Chama the son of R’ Chanina said:* מֵאֵי דְכֶתִיב – *What is the meaning of that which is written:*^[28] “הִמָּה מִי מְרִיבָה אֶשְׁר־רְבוּ” – *They are the Waters of Strife where the Children of Israel contended with Hashem?* Why does the Torah say “*They are the Waters of Strife,*” implying that the Waters of Strife have been spoken of earlier in the Torah and we are identifying the waters currently under discussion as those same waters? It does not seem that these waters were mentioned anywhere before. Rather, the Torah means הִמָּה שָׂרְאוּ אֵי־צִטְנִינֵי פְרַעֲהָ וְטָעוּ – *they are the waters that Pharaoh’s astrologers saw and erred.*^[29]

The Gemara comments further:

– *And that* which we said above, that Moses’ descent into the river marked the end of the drowning decrees, explains what Moses said himself many years later:^[30] “שֵׁשׁ-” – *Six hundred thousand [men] on my account etc. are the people in whose midst I am.*^[31] אָמַר לְהוֹן – *Moses said to the Jewish people,* בְּשִׁבְלִי – *It is because of me that you were all saved from being cast into the Nile. My descent into the river ended that decree.*^[32]

Earlier, the Gemara expounded the word *zeh, this one*, in the statement of Pharaoh’s daughter, “*One of the Hebrew boys, this one.*” Now the Gemara expounds the word *zeh* differently:^[33] אֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם – *R’ Chanina bar Pappa said:* אֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם – *That day, the day that Moses was placed in the Nile and was in danger of drowning, was the twenty-first of Nissan, the same date on which the Splitting of the Reed Sea would take place eighty years later.*^[34] אָמְרוּ מִלְאֲבֵי הַשֶּׁרֶת לַפָּנִי

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19. Grammatically speaking, the phrase should be מִיִּלְדֵי הַעֲבָרִים הוּא not הָהָא מִיִּלְדֵי הַעֲבָרִים. The Gemara therefore expounds the word הָהָא (*Maharsha*).

20. *Isaiah* 8:19.

21. If the idolaters suggest to you, “Why do you not seek out [information about the future] from those who commune with the dead as we do?” (see *Rashi*).

22. The prophet Isaiah uses derogatory terms here for the utterances of the necromancers. Just as cranes make chirping sounds and doves make cooing sounds, so too these necromancers produce sounds from their throats without knowing what they are saying. And astrologers, in turn, are just like these necromancers. They perceive some inkling of the future, but cannot pin it down with any accuracy (see *Rashi*; cf. *Maharsha*; see *Iyei HaYam*).

23. See *Rashi*.

24. *Exodus* 1:22.

25. As long as Moses was in the river, [he was acutely endangered and] he could hardly be more “stricken.” Consequently, the celestial sign that his crisis was yet to come disappeared (*Rashi*; see note 35).

26. [During the time that the infant Moses lay in his basket in the Nile, his future and the future of the Jewish people appeared fragile in the extreme. A thin wall of tarred wicker separated him from the water where thousands of his brethren had drowned. He was helpless, at the whim of an errant wind or crocodile; and the brutal forces of the Egyptian regime were mobilized to kill him, the potential savior of Israel. However,] at that moment God’s protection of Moses was intense. All the threats to the infant were ultimately meaningless. The decree against male babies was summarily abolished. Moses, the target of Pharaoh, would soon be taken under Pharaoh’s own custody through his daughter. The savior of the Jewish people would emerge from Pharaoh’s own palace (see *Shemos Rabbah* 1:22,26 and *Maharal, Gevuos Hashem* Ch. 17).

27. Toward the end of the Jewish people’s forty-year sojourn in the desert, Miriam died and they lost the miraculous source of water that had accompanied them in her merit. The people complained of thirst and God instructed Moses and Aaron to speak to a stone in order to induce it to produce water. However, Moses hit the stone instead of speaking to it. He succeeded in drawing forth water from the stone, but did not sanctify the Name, at least in the way and to the degree to which he had been commanded. This sin caused Moses to lose the privilege of entering the Land with the nation. This water was called the Waters of Strife (see *Numbers* 20:1-13 with *Rashi*).

28. *Numbers* 20:13.

29. These are the waters by which Moses would be stricken, not the waters of the Nile.

30. *Ibid.* 11:21.

31. The plain meaning of this phrase is “*six hundred thousand footmen,*” but the Gemara expounds the word רַגְלֵי to mean “*on my account*” (see an example of this usage in *Genesis* 30:30) (*Rashi*).

32. Even though one could argue that the decree to throw male infants into the Nile in the first place was also on account of Moses (see *Tosafos*), it seems that the first two decrees of Pharaoh (to kill the boys at childbirth and to throw them into the River) were intended to reduce the Jewish population, not to strike at Moses. It was only the last decree, that even Egyptian boys should be drowned, that was enacted with the purpose of eliminating the Jewish savior. The reason that they abolished all the decrees when they thought that the savior had drowned was because there was no fear of a Jewish uprising if the Jews would have no savior to lead them (*Maharsha*; cf. *Tosafos*).

33. See *Eitz Yosef*, citing *Yefei To’ar*.

34. *Rashi* cites *Seder Olam Rabbah* (Ch. 5) as to the chronology of the days preceding the splitting of the Reed Sea: On the fifteenth of Nissan, the Jews journeyed from their homes in Rameses to Succos (see *Exodus*

הוא – הקדוש ברוך הוא – The ministering angels said before the Holy One, Blessed is He, רבונו של עולם – “Master of the Universe! מי שעתיד לומר שירה על הים ביום זה – He who is destined to utter song by the Sea on this (*zeh*) date, ילקה ביום זה – should he be stricken dead on this date?!” רבי אחא בר חנינא אמר – R’ Acha bar Chanina said: אותו היום ששה בסיון היה – That day was the sixth of Sivan and אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא – the ministering angels said before the Holy One, Blessed is He, as follows, רבונו של עולם – “Master of the Universe! מי שעתיד לקבל תורה מחר סיני ביום זה – He who is destined to receive the Torah at Mt. Sinai on this (*zeh*) date, ילקה ביום זה – should he be stricken on this date?!”^[35]

The Gemara analyzes these two views:

למאן דאמר בששה בסיון – It is well and good according to the one who says Moses was placed in the River on the sixth of Sivan, because משבחת לה תלתא ירחי – it is possible that there were three months between Moses’ birth and the day he was placed in the river, as the Torah says.^[36] דאמר מר – For the master said:^[37] בשבועה באדר מת – [Moses] died on the seventh of Adar^[38] ובשבועה באדר נולד – and Moses was born on the seventh of Adar.^[39] And from the seventh of Adar when he was born, ועד ששה בסיון – until the sixth of Sivan when he was placed in the River, תלתא ירחי – there are exactly three months. However, according to the one who says he was placed in the River on the twenty-first of Nissan, איך אפשר – how is it possible that three months passed from the seventh of Adar, when Moses was born?

The Gemara explains:

אותה שנה מעוברת היתה – That year was a leap year and thus had an extra month of Adar, and Moses was born in the first Adar.

Thus, we have רובו של ראשון – most of the first month (Adar I), ורובו של אחרון – most of the last month (Nissan)^[40] – and the entire month in between (Adar II) for a total of three approximate months.^[41]

The Gemara continues with the next verse:^[42] ותאמר אחתו אל־בת־פרעה – His sister [Moses’ sister, Miriam] said to Pharaoh’s daughter, האלף וקראתי לך – “Shall I go and summon for you – a wet-nurse from the Hebrew women, who will nurse the boy for you?” ומאי – Now, why was it necessary for Miriam to suggest to Pharaoh’s daughter that she fetch a wet-nurse from the Hebrew women? This implies that an Egyptian wet-nurse would not be acceptable to Pharaoh’s daughter. מלמד שהחזירוהו למשה – This teaches that they circulated Moses על כל המצרות – among all the Egyptian women who were nearby^[43] in an attempt to find someone to nurse him, ולא ינק – but he did not nurse from any of them. אמר [הקדוש ברוך הוא] – [The Holy One, Blessed is He] said in explanation of why Moses could not nurse from an Egyptian, פה שעתיד לדבר עם השכינה – The mouth that is destined to speak with the Divine Presence, should it nurse the breast milk of a woman who ate a non-kosher item?^[44] והיינו דכתיב – And that is the meaning of that which is written:^[46] “אֵת־מי יורה דעה וגו’ – With whom shall one teach knowledge etc. and with whom shall one explain a message? I.e. למי יורה דעה – to whom shall one teach knowledge – and to whom shall one explain a message? ל, גמולי מחלב – To those weaned from milk – and to those removed from the breasts. The verse means, to whom did God teach the Torah? To Moses who “weaned” himself away from non-kosher milk and separated himself from its non-kosher source.^[47]

NOTES

12:37); on the sixteenth, they journeyed from Succoth to Etham, at the edge of the Wilderness (see *Exodus* 13:20); on the seventeenth, they journeyed from Etham to the area before Pi-hahiroth. Those are three days. On the fourth day, Pharaoh was informed that the Jewish people had escaped (*Exodus* 14:5). On the fifth and sixth days, the Egyptians pursued the Jews, and on the night of the seventh, they went down into the sea (see *Exodus* 14:20 where the Torah speaks of the Splitting of the Reed Sea and says that the pillar of fire accompanying the Jews lit up the night). On the morning of the seventh, the Jews gave voice to the Song of the Sea. That day was the twenty-first of Nissan, the seventh day and last [Biblical] festival day of Passover.

35. Moses could have indeed drowned in the Nile and the celestial sign that he would be stricken with water could have found its fulfillment in this way. However, the Gemara in *Shabbos* (156a) states that the Jewish people are not bound by astrological destiny; through a great merit one may transcend his fate (see *Rashi* ad loc.). That is what occurred here. Because of Moses’ enormous potential merit, he escaped watery doom as an infant (*Maharsha*).

36. *Exodus* 2:2-3: The woman [Yocheved] gave birth to a son . . . and hid him for three months. She could not hide him any longer, so she took for him a wicker basket and . . . placed it among the reeds at the bank of the river (see above, 12a).

37. See *Kiddushin* 38a.

38. The Gemara (*ibid.*) deduces the date of Moses’ death as follows: After Moses dies, it is written (*Deuteronomy* 34:8): *And the Children of Israel mourned Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days.* And it is written at the beginning of the Book of *Joshua* (1:2, 11) that God told Joshua: *Moses, My servant has died. So now, arise . . . for in another three days you are crossing over the Jordan.* And it is written further (4:19): *And the nation ascended from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month [Nissan].* These verses describe three distinct events: (a) the thirty-day period of mourning for Moses; (b) the three-day preparation to enter Eretz Yisrael; (c) and the actual entry, which took place on Nissan 10. [It is assumed that God spoke to Joshua (instructing him to command the Jews to prepare for entry into Eretz Yisrael in three days’ time) after the

thirty-day mourning period was complete, since the Divine Presence does not rest upon a person when he is in a state of sadness (*Tosafos* to *Kiddushin* 38a צא ר”ה).] Now, if we count thirty-three days backwards from Nissan 10 (the ten days of Nissan and the last twenty-three days of Adar [i.e. from Adar 29 to Adar 7, inclusive] we arrive at Adar 7. Thus, Moses died on Adar 7 (see *Rashi*).

39. We know this because at the end of his life, Moses said (*Deuteronomy* 31:2): “*I am one hundred and twenty years old ‘today,’ I am no longer able to go and come.*” The seemingly superfluous word “today” is expounded to mean, “Today my days and my years have been completed.” That is, I have lived out my final year to the very day of the very month I was born (see below, 13b, and *Rashi* here). Thus, he was born on the same day he died, Adar 7.

40. There were only seven days missing from Adar I and ten days missing from Nissan (see *Rashi*).

41. [In regard to whether the year Moses died was also a leap year, which Adar he died in, and the possible halachic ramifications of this, see *Minchah Chareivah*.]

42. *Exodus* 2:7.

43. *Ben Yehoyada*.

44. Emendation follows *Ein Yaakov* and *Mesoras HaShas*.

45. An infant tastes in the breast milk it nurses whatever foods were eaten by the wet-nurse. Since the Egyptian women ate all manner of non-kosher foods, their breast-milk was unfit for Moses (see *Rashi*).

46. *Isaiah* 28:9.

47. [יָרָה is understood in the sense of *He removed himself from there* (*Genesis* 12:8) (*Rashi*).]

It is certainly not prohibited for a Jewish infant to nurse from a non-Jewish woman, even if a Jewish wet-nurse is available (see *Mishnah, Avodah Zarah* 26a and *Shemos Rabbah* 1:25, according to *Rashba* to *Yevamos* 114a; cf. *Rabbeinu Chananel*, cited in *Nimukei Yosef* to *Yevamos* loc. cit.). However, it is preferable that a Jewish infant nurse from a Jewish wet-nurse and from one who eats only kosher foods. This is why [Heaven inspired Moses so that] he would not nurse from the

The Gemara continues with the next verse:^[48]
 “וַתֹּאמֶר-לָהּ בַת-פַּרְעֹה לְכִי וְהִלַּךְ הָעֶלְמָה׃” – *Pharaoh’s daughter said, “Go.” [The girl went] etc. and summoned the boy’s mother.* בְּרִיזוֹת בְּעֶלְמָה – *This word *almah* teaches that she went with alacrity, like an energetic young girl.*^[50] רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחְמָנִי – *R’ Shmuel bar Nachmani said:* “הָעֶלְמָה” שֶׁהֵעֲלִימָה אֶת – *“The *almah* because she concealed (he’elimah) her facts.* She did not mention that she was the infant’s sister and that she was summoning his mother.^[51]
 וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַת-פַּרְעֹה – *Pharaoh’s daughter said to her [Yocheved],* “הִילִיכִי אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה” – *“Take (heilichi) this boy and nurse him for me.”* אָמַר רַבִּי חָמָא בְּרַבִּי חַנִּינָא – *R’ Chama the son of R’ Chanina said:* [Pharaoh’s daughter] was prophesying but unaware of what she was prophesying, because she said, “הִילִיכִי” הָא שְׁלִיכִי – *“Hei’lichy,” meaning ha (here is) shelichi (that which belongs to you).*

The Gemara continues:

“וַאֲנִי אֶתְּן אֶת-שְׂכָרְךָ” – *Pharaoh’s daughter said further to Yocheved that if she would nurse him, “then I will give your pay.”* אָמַר רַבִּי חָמָא בְּרַבִּי חַנִּינָא – *R’ Chama the son of R’ Chanina said:* לא רַיִן לְצַדִּיקִים שְׂמַחֲוִירִין לְהֵן אֲבִידָתָן – *It is not sufficient for the righteous that what they have lost should be returned to them, אֲלָא שְׂנוֹתְנִין לְהֵן שְׂכָרָן – but they will also be given their reward for their trouble.*^[52]

The Gemara concludes the exposition of this passage:

“וַתִּקַּח מִיָּם הַיָּבִיָּא אֶחָת אֶהָרִן וְגו’” – *At the Splitting of the Sea, the Torah states:*^[53] *Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aaron, took etc. her drum in her hand.* אֶחָת אֶהָרִן וְלֹא אֶחָת מִשָּׁה – *Why does the Torah call her the “sister of Aaron” and not the “sister of Moses”?* אָמַר רַב עֲמֶרָם אָמַר רַב – *Rav Amram said in the name of Rav, וְאָמְרֵי לָהּ – and some say that it was Rav: אָמַר רַב נַחְמָן אָמַר רַב – Rav Nachman who said in the name of Rav: מִלְּמַד שֶׁהִיְתָה מִתְּנַבְּאָה כְּשֶׁהָיָא אֶחָת אֶהָרִן – This teaches us that [Miriam] prophesied while she was still only the sister of Aaron, i.e. before Moses was born,^[54]*

NOTES

Egyptian women (*Rashba* loc. cit.; see on this topic: *Midrash Tanchuma, Shemos* §7; *Hagahos Asheri* to *Avodah Zarah* 2:6; *Toras Chatas* 65:11 and *Rama, Yoreh Deah* 81:7; *Maharsha*).

48. *Exodus* 2:8.

49. Emendation follows *Ein Yaakov* and *Mesoras HaShas*.

50. The word עֶלְמָה connotes a girl at her full strength. The *Targum* of יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, *be strong and dynamic (Deuteronomy 31:7)* is יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְעֶלְמָה.

51. She was discreet on these points because she wished to conceal her prior prophecy (see below, 13a) that her mother will give birth to the

savior of the Jewish people. [Public awareness of this prophecy would obviously endanger Moses’ life] (*Maharsha*).

52. Yocheved was thereby rewarded, in part, for her efforts at supplying the newborn males in Egypt with food and water (*Eitz Yosef* to *Shemos Rabbah* 1:25 citing *Yefei To’ar*).

53. *Exodus* 15:20.

54. Thus the verse describes her as אֶחָת אֶהָרִן, *the prophetess, sister of Aaron*, meaning she was already a prophetess while yet the sister of [only] Aaron (see *Rashi*).

– and said, – and then:^[6] *as well as all who had gone up with him to bury his father.* Why did the Torah put the Egyptians ahead of the brothers upon their departure, yet it put the brothers ahead of the Egyptians upon their return?
 The Gemara explains:
 R' Yochanan said: – before [the Egyptians] saw the honor of Israel, i.e. the honor rendered at his funeral, they did not treat [Jacob's descendants] with respect; – however, at the end after they witnessed their honor, – they treated them with respect and let them return ahead of them.
 The Torah alludes to this profound display of honor, for it is written:^[7] – They came to Goren HaAtad [literally: The Threshing Floor of the Thorn]. Now, is it possible that there is a threshing floor for thorns?! Does one harvest thorns and then thresh them?
 R' Abahu said: – [This phrase] teaches us that [many kings] surrounded Jacob's coffin with their crowns, and the scene was similar to a threshing-floor building that people surround with thornbushes as a security measure.
 For the descendants of Esau and the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Keturah all came there. A Baraisa taught: – They all came for battle.^[8] Once, however, they saw Joseph's crown hanging from Jacob's coffin, – they all took their crowns off their heads^[9] – and hung them upon Jacob's coffin.^[10] A Baraisa taught: – thirty-six crowns were hung upon Jacob's coffin.^[11]

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- NOTES
- Exodus 2:4.
 - In the end, of course, she saw her prophecy fulfilled in the most thorough sense possible. Eighty years after she stood from afar keeping watch on her baby brother, she stood with the entire Jewish people whom her brother had just led out of Egypt.
 - As the Mishnah taught above (9b) in the statement that began this discussion, Miriam was repaid in kind for her waiting. Because she lingered a few minutes (see *Tosafos* 11a מרים), the Jewish people waited for her seven days in the desert when she could not travel with them.
 - Genesis 50:7.
 - Ibid. v. 8.
 - Ibid. v. 14.
 - Ibid.
 - Ibid. v. 10.
 - They wanted, initially, to prevent Jacob from being buried in the Cave of Machpelah (*Maharsha*, citing *Bereishis Rabbah*).
 - As if to say, “The crown of our head has fallen” (*Maharsha*).
 - [The utter abnegation of Joseph, viceroy of a superpower, toward his father awakened a realization of Jacob's stature in the hearts of these kings.] They surrounded his coffin with their crowns as if to say: Just as a threshing facility and its hedge of thorns exist only for the sake of the wheat produced there, so too the entire world existed only for the sake of Jacob. They recognized at that moment that, despite their kingdoms and armies, they were merely a peripheral aspect of Creation, a collection of thorns, while Jacob was its essence (see *Einei Yitzchak* in *Ein Yaakov*, who cites *Berachos* 6b).
 - Rashi* accounts for the thirty-six crowns as follows: (1) One crown belonged to Joseph; (2-13) twelve crowns belonged to the twelve princes of Ishmael (see *Genesis* 25:13-16); (14-36) twenty-three crowns belonged to the chiefs of Esau. *Rashi* himself points out a problem with the last part of this count: The two sets of verses in *Genesis* 36:15-19 and 36:40-43 list twenty-five chiefs of Esau. *Rashi* explains that the name

The Wearers of the Thirty-six Crowns
 (according to *Rashi*)

1. JOSEPH	
THE TWELVE PRINCES OF ISHMAEL	THE TWENTY-THREE CHIEFS OF ESAU
2. NEBAIOTH	14. TEMAN*
3. KEDAR	15. OMAR
4. ADBEEL	16. ZEPHO
5. MIBSAM	17. KENAZ*
6. MISHMA	18. KORAH (A)
7. DUMAH	19. GATAM
8. MASSA	20. AMALEK
9. HADAD	21. NAHATH
10. TEMA	22. ZERAH
11. JETUR	23. SHAMMAH
12. NAPHISH	24. MIZZAH
13. KEDMAH	25. JEUSH
	26. JALAM
	27. KORAH (B)
	28. TIMNA
	29. ALVAH
	30. JETHETH
	31. OHOLIBAMAH
	32. ELAH
	33. PINON
	34. MIBZAR
	35. MAGDIEL
	36. IRAM

*This chief is mentioned twice in the Torah

The Gemara continues to expound the verses describing the burial of Jacob:

“וַיִּסְפְּדוּ־שָׁם מִסְפַּד גָּדוֹל וְכָבֵד מְאֹד” – *and there they held a very great and imposing eulogy.*^[12] תָּנָא – A Baraisa taught: The eulogies and mourning were so intense they included אֲפִילוּ (מאילו ומאילו) – EVEN HORSES AND EVEN DONKEYS.^[13] – פִּינּוּן שֶׁהֵגִיעוּ לַמְעֵרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה – Once [the burial party] reached the Cave of Machpelah, אֶתְאָתָא עֲשׂוּ קָא מְעַבְבַּ – Esau, Jacob’s brother, came and put up obstacles to burial in the Cave. [Esau] said to them, – אָמַר לְהוֹן – [Esau] said to them, “This cave is in *Mamre in the City of Four, which is Hebron.*^[14] It is called the City of Four because this burial cave has place for only four pairs of people.”

The Gemara corroborates Esau’s statement:^[15] R’ Yitzchak said: – קְרִית אֶרְבַּע – The City of Four is called by this name because אֶרְבַּע זׁוגוֹת הָיוּ – there were four couples buried there in the Cave of Machpelah: – אָדָם וְחַוָּה – (1) Adam and Eve; אַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה – (2) Abraham and Sarah; יִצְחָק וְרֵבֶקָה – (3) Isaac and Rebecca; and יַעֲקֹב וְלֵאָה – (4) Jacob and Leah.

The Gemara returns to Esau’s argument: “There were only two spaces left after the last generation: He buried Leah in the space that was rightfully his,^[16] וְהָאִי פְּדִישׁ דִּידִי הוּא – therefore the one space remaining is mine, and you may not bury Jacob there.” אָמְרוּ – They replied to him, “You sold it! You relinquished your right to be buried here when you sold your right of the firstborn to Jacob, our father, for a pot of lentils.”^[17] אָמַר לְהוֹן – [Esau] said to them, “Granted I sold the extra portion I would have received as a firstborn. מי

– But when did I ever sell the standard portion I am to receive as a son?^[18] Thus, our portions should be equal: He gets one burial space and I get one burial space.” אָמְרוּ לֵיהּ אֵין – They said to him, “Yes, you did sell your standard portion in the Cave of Machpelah, for Jacob told us so on his deathbed.”

The Gemara corroborates their statement: “Behold, I am about to die; *in my grave, which I have acquired (karisi) for myself* in the Land of Canaan – there you are to bury me.”^[19] אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בְּרִי יוֹחָנָן מְשׁוּם רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יְהוֹזָדָק אֵין בִּירָה אֶלָּא לְשׁוֹן – And R’ Yochanan said in the name of R’ Shimon ben Yehotzadak: אין בִּירָה – The word *kirah* in this verse means none other than “selling,” (*mechirah*) i.e. acquisition, שְׂבֹן בְּכַרְבֵי הַיָּם קוֹרִין – because in the cities of the sea, i.e. in cities abroad, they would call selling by the term *kirah*.^[21]

The Gemara returns to Esau’s argument: “If Jacob bought it from me, give me the letter of sale. Show me proof!” אָמְרוּ לֵיהּ – They replied to him, איגרתא בארשא המצרים היא – “The letter of sale is in the land of Egypt. ומאן גִּזִּיל – Now, who could go and fetch it? גִּזִּיל גַּפְתָּלִי – Naftali should go, for he is swift as a hind.”

The Gemara comments: “As it is written:^[22] *Naftali is a hind let loose*” – הַנִּתְּן אֲמַר־יִשְׁפָּר – *who delivers beautiful sayings (imrei shafer).* אָמַר רַבִּי אַבְהוּ – R’ Abahu said: אל תקרי – Do not pronounce this *imrei shafer* (beautiful sayings) – אֶלָּא אֲמַרֵי סֵפֶר – but rather *imrei sefer* (the statements of the book). Naftali is the one who will deliver the document containing the legal statements.

NOTES

Rosh points out that according to *I Chronicles* 1:43-54 and *Rashi*’s own commentary to *Genesis* 36:40, the second list of chiefs of Esau (36:40-43) refers to persons who first reigned many years after Jacob’s funeral. *Tos. Shantz* notes that *Rashi*’s count does not include any rulers from Keturah, even though our Gemara mentions that the descendants of Keturah came for battle just as the descendants of Ishmael and Esau did (see further difficulties raised by *Maharsha*). Therefore, *Tos. Rosh* and *Tos. Shantz* compile their own lists.

Keren Orah explains that these thirty-six crowns are the converse of the thirty-six *kereisos*, sins that cut off a person from the Divine Source (כְּתָר is the counterpoint to כְּרָת). A person who does the opposite of these sins and cleaves to the Source, partakes of the splendor of the Divine Presence, a crown upon his head (see *Berachos* 17a). This display of thirty-six crowns was particularly apt for Jacob, who was so full of life that our Sages teach us he never died (see *Taanis* 5b).

[*Ben Yehoyada* discusses why there were exactly thirty-six crowns Kabbalistically.]

12. *Genesis* 50:10.

13. *Rif* in *Ein Yaakov* suggests that the people withheld food from the horses and donkeys in order to cause them to neigh and bray in hunger. The sounds they made complemented the moans of the mourners. *Meshech Chochmah* says these animals were hungry because the famine that ended when Jacob came to Egypt returned when he died (see *Tosefta* 10:3). Thus, the horses and donkeys felt his loss.

Maharsha suggests that perhaps these animals were robbed in black, as was the custom for royal funerals in the time of *Maharsha*. This was done to show that [the grief over the royal personage’s demise was so great,] it was as if the horses themselves were crying. *Ben Yehoyada* explains that the reference may be to coarse and lowly people who pulled carts and were human “horses” and “donkeys.” [Taking this last idea one step further, it should be noted that Scripture refers to the idolatrous and lecherous Egyptians as horses and donkeys: *The Land of Egypt . . . those whose flesh is the flesh of donkeys and whose issue is the issue of horses (Ezekiel 23:19-20).* Indeed, we find elsewhere in the Talmud that “donkey” is a shorthand reference to a licentious Egyptian (see *Berachos* 58a). Possibly, our Gemara means that the Egyptians themselves, who are called “horses” and “donkeys,” participated, with

genuine feeling, in the mourning. Our Gemara phrases it this way to underline how novel an occurrence this was: The thoroughly evil men of Egypt, who in normal times were consumed utterly by their physical appetites, were on this occasion able to gain a glimmer of Jacob’s brilliant spirituality and an understanding of the darkness that had entered the world after his passing. Consequently, these “horses” and “donkeys” transcended their natures on this one day and joined sincerely in the mourning for Jacob. (See *MeiAm Loez*, citing *Yad Yosef*.)

[The words מאילו מאילו in parentheses do not appear in some versions of our text and are left untranslated here.]

14. *Genesis* 35:27.

15. See *Rashi*.

16. As it is written (*Genesis* 49:31): *and there I buried Leah*.

17. See *Genesis* 25:29-34.

18. Generally, if a person has two sons, one of whom is legally deemed a firstborn son, the firstborn takes a double portion in the inheritance (see *Deuteronomy* 21:17). This means that the firstborn would take two thirds of the estate and the other son one third (as if there were three sons and the firstborn was equal to two). Now, Esau argued that in the lentil-stew transaction, he had waived his special rights as a firstborn but not his standard rights as a son. Thus, no one would receive a double portion; rather, they would split the inheritance in two (see *Rashi*; cf. *Maharsha*).

19. *Genesis* 50:5.

20. The Midrash relates: After Isaac’s death, Jacob said to himself, “Is it possible that the wicked Esau will be buried among the tombs of the righteous?!” What did [Jacob] do? He took all the silver and gold he had [from the house of Laban – *Rashi* to *Genesis* *ibid.*] and made a heap out of them. He said to Esau, “Which do you prefer – this heap or this grave?” Esau chose the heap and Jacob took the burial place in the Cave (*Tanchuma, Vayechi* §6).

21. This supports the interpretation of אֶתְאָתָא as “I acquired.” We find this verb being used in this sense in another verse as well (*Hosea* 3:2): וְאֶבְרָתָא לִי בְחַמְשָׁה עֶשְׂרִים כֶּסֶף, *So I acquired her for myself for fifteen [pieces of] silver.*

22. *Genesis* 49:21.

The Gemara continues the narrative:

הנה – Chushim the son of Dan was there at this confrontation. וְיִקְרֶן לִיה אֹרְגִינִי – However, he was hard of hearing^[23] so he had not heard what was happening. אָמַר לָהֶם – [Chushim] said to them, מַאי הָאֵי – “What is this?”^[24] וְאָמְרוּ לֵיה – And they told him, קָא מַעֲבָב הָאֵי – “This one (Esau) is blocking us from proceeding with the burial עד דְאָתֵי – until Naftali comes back from the land of Egypt with proof of ownership in the Cave.” אָמַר לָהֶם – [Chushim] said to them, וְעַד דְאָתֵי נַפְתָּלִי מֵאַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם – “And until Naftali comes back from the land of Egypt, יְהֵא – my grandfather will be lying here in disgrace?!” שָׁקַל קוּלְפָא – So saying, [Chushim] took hold of a staff – מַחֲיִיָּה אֲרִישִׁיָּה – and hit [Esau] on his head, killing him.^[25] וְנִפְלו אֲבָרְעָא – [Esau’s] eyes popped out – נִתְרַן עֵינָיו – and fell on Jacob’s feet.^[26] וְדִיעֲקַב – Jacob opened his eyes and smiled. וְהִינֵנו דְכָתִיב – And this is the meaning of that which is written:^[27] וְיִשְׂמַח צְדִיק בִּיְהוָה – The righteous one will rejoice when he sees vengeance, וְהַשָּׂדֵה יִשְׂמַח בְּדַם הָרָשָׁע – he shall bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked one.^[28] בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה – At that time, נְבוֹאֲתָהּ שֶׁל רֵבֶקָה – the decades-old prophecy of their mother, Rebecca, was fulfilled in part, לְמָה אֲשַׁבֵּל גַּם־שָׂנִיבֶם יוֹם – as it is written^[29] that Rebecca said: “Why should I be bereaved of both of you on the same day?”^[30] וְאֵף עַל גַּב דְּמִיתֶתָּן – And even though their deaths were not on the same day, קְבוּרָתָן מִיָּהָא בְּיוֹם אֶחָד הֲוָא – their burials at least were on the same day.

The Mishnah stated that it was Joseph who was involved in his father’s burial. This is based on the verse, *So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up etc.*^[31] Later, it is written: *Joseph returned to Egypt . . . after he buried his father.*^[32] In both verses, Jacob’s burial is ascribed mainly to Joseph. The Gemara asks: Why was Joseph the central figure in Jacob’s burial?^[33] Did the brothers shirk their responsibility? Were they not concerned about their father? If Joseph would not have been involved with [Jacob’s burial] – would his brothers not have been involved with it?! – וְהִכְתִּיב – But we see that they were, in fact, involved, as it is written:^[34] וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֹתוֹ בְּנָיו אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן – His sons carried him to the Land of Canaan and they buried him in the Cave of the Machpelah field.

The Gemara answers: הַגִּיחוּ לוֹ – [The other brothers] said among themselves, כְּבוֹדוֹ – [Joseph] take the leading role in the burial, – בְּמַלְכִים יוֹתֵר מִבְּהַדְיוֹטוֹת – [our father Jacob’s] honor is better served by royalty than by commoners.^[35]

The Gemara cites the next section of the Mishnah: מִי לָנוּ גָדוֹל – WHO WAS treated with AS MUCH honor AS JOSEPH etc., that none other than Moses attended to him.

The Gemara cites a related Baraisa: בֵּא וּרְאֵה – COME AND OBSERVE – כְּמָה חֲבִיבוֹת מִצְוֹת עַל מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ – HOW BELOVED MITZVOS WERE TO MOSES OUR TEACHER, שָׁבֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל כּוֹלֵן נִתְעַסְקוּ – FOR THE WHOLE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THEIR ENTIRETY WERE ENGAGED IN gathering THE BOOTY of Egypt^[36] וְהוּא נִתְעַסַּק בְּמִצְוֹת

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23. Literally: his ears were heavy.

24. Why do you not bury Jacob? (*Rashi*).

25. One may ask: Why did none of the other children or grandchildren of Jacob ask Chushim’s question? Why was he the only one outraged? The answer is a lesson in the deadening effects of habituation: The others present heard Esau’s original claim and thought that they could easily set it aside with their counterargument. And at every step of Esau’s continuing legal challenge, they thought they could best him on his terms. Meanwhile, however, Jacob’s coffin lay waiting longer and longer, and the members of his funeral procession became habituated to this sorry situation bit by bit. All except one. Chushim, because of his deafness, was not distracted by the claims and counterclaims and saw only the intolerable dishonor done to his grandfather Jacob. He acted accordingly. The lesson is that it is in a person’s nature to become accustomed, eventually, to the worst of situations. It therefore takes a sudden, striking insight for a person to break free from the chains of his habits (*R’ Chaim Shmulevitz, Sichos Mussar* 5731 §32).

[Chushim’s tribe, the tribe of Dan, was Esau’s nemesis: Esau is the standard-bearer of the Primordial Snake (see note 28 below). Indeed, he had a symbolic snake upon his thigh (see *Targum Yonasan* ad *Genesis* 25:27, *Tzioni* ad loc. and *Zohar* cited in *Peirush Yonasan* ad loc.). Dan was his opposite number, a snake upon the highway, a serpent on the path (*Genesis* 49:17), a “snake-eater,” as it were. It was therefore Chushim the son of Dan who brought about Esau’s demise (cf. *Yalkut Shimoni* §162 and *Tosafos* to *Gittin* 55b ביחודה ר”ה.)]

26. *Keren Orah* cites the *Zohar* that Leah was destined initially to be Esau’s wife. However, when Esau turned wicked, she had no interest in him. Her prayers and tears succeeded in changing her destiny, but Esau still cast his gaze upon her. At the confrontation described in our Gemara, he wanted in death what he could not have in his life: to be together with Leah. The eyes that ogled her were the same eyes that popped out of his head at his death.

27. *Psalms* 58:11.

28. *Maharsha* states that a good part of this chapter in *Psalms* is expounded by our Gemara (vs. 4-9,11-12): *The wicked are estranged from the womb* [a reference to Esau who was drawn to idolatry while still a fetus], *the speakers of falsehood went astray from birth* [Esau denied selling the grave]. *They have venom like the venom of a snake* [Esau is associated with the Primordial Snake]; *like a deaf viper that closes its ear*

[a reference to Chushim], *so as not to hearken to the voice of charmers, of the most skillful caster of spells* [Chushim was not swayed by Esau’s legalistic arguments]. *O God, smash their teeth in their mouth; shatter the molars of the young lions* [Esau is struck]. . . . *Like . . . the falling of the mole, who did not see the sun* [Esau’s eyes pop out]. *The righteous one will rejoice when he sees vengeance* [Jacob opened his eyes and smiled], *he shall bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked one* [Esau’s eyes fell on Jacob’s legs]. *And mankind shall say, “There is, indeed, fruit for the righteous; there is, indeed, a God Who judges in the land.”*

It goes without saying that Jacob’s joy was not in gaining his personal revenge against his brother. Rather, he rejoiced in the achievement of God’s vengeance. When wickedness triumphs and evil men flourish this diminishes the esteem accorded to Heaven, especially when a brazen affront to God remains unanswered for years. When, however, justice is effected in one dramatic stroke, Heavenly honor is restored and the righteous rejoice. Esau’s ongoing prosperity was a black mark to all things holy. His bloody end at the feet of the righteous Jacob erased that mark and was a source of joy for all who, like Jacob, cared about God’s honor (see *R’ Chaim Shmulevitz, Sichos Mussar* 5733 §12).

29. *Genesis* 27:45.

30. When Rebecca advised Jacob to flee from Esau, she was concerned that Jacob would kill Esau in self-defense and then Esau’s sons would kill Jacob in revenge. [She could thus lose both of them on a single day] (see *Rashi* ad loc.).

31. See *Genesis* 50:7, cited in our Mishnah.

32. *Genesis* 50:14, cited by *Rashi* here.

33. How did the brothers allow Joseph to take this task upon himself? [It was] Jacob [who was] buried, who was the father of [all of] them! (*Rashi*).

34. *Genesis* 50:13.

35. Joseph was royalty (*Rashi*). He was second in command to Pharaoh (see *Genesis* 41:40-45).

36. The “booty” of Egypt refers to silver and gold vessels and garments that the Jewish people asked of the Egyptians immediately prior to the Exodus (*Rashi*; see *Exodus* 3:22, 11:2, 12:35-36). After this exercise, Egypt was emptied of its riches (see *Berachos* 9b). [Since Egypt was the enemy against whom God battled on behalf of the Jewish people, these possessions were akin to the spoils of war and thus are called “booty” here.]

מִצְוֹת — WHILE [MOSES] WAS INVOLVED WITH MITZVOS, AS IT SAYS: “הַכֵּם לֵב יִקַּח מִצְוֹת וְגוֹ” — THE WISE OF HEART WILL SEIZE MITZVOS etc.^[37]

The Baraisa continues:

וּמִנֵּי הָיָה יוֹדֵעַ מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ — AND HOW DID MOSES OUR TEACHER KNOW — הֵיכָן יוֹסֵף קָבוּר — WHERE JOSEPH WAS BURIED? — אָמְרוּ — THEY SAID: סֶרַח בַּת אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁתַּיְיְרָה מֵאוֹתוֹ הַדּוֹר — SERACH THE DAUGHTER OF ASHER REMAINED ALIVE FROM THAT GENERATION.^[38] — הָלַךְ מֹשֶׁה אֶצְלָה — MOSES WENT TO HER and — אָמַר לָהּ — SAID TO HER — “דָּוָּם אֵת יוֹדֵעַת הֵיכָן יוֹסֵף קָבוּר — “DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WHERE JOSEPH IS BURIED?”^[39] — אָמְרָה לוֹ — SHE REPLIED TO HIM, “Yes; — אֲרוֹן שֶׁל מִתְּכַת עָשׂוּ לוֹ מִצְרַיִם — THE EGYPTIANS MADE A METAL COFFIN FOR HIM^[40] — וְקָבְעוּהוּ בְּנִילוֹס הַנָּהָר — AND SET IT IN THE NILE RIVER, — כִּי שִׁוֵּת בְּרִכּוֹ מִיָּמֵינוּ — SO THAT ITS WATERS SHOULD BE PLENTIFUL and irrigate all the fields.”^[41] — מֹשֶׁה וָעָמַד עַל שְׂפַת נִילוֹס — MOSES WENT AND STOOD UPON THE BANK OF THE NILE. — אָמַר לוֹ — HE SAID, — “JOSEPH, JOSEPH! — הַגִּיעַ הַעֵת שֶׁנִּשְׁבַּע הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שְׂאֵנִי גּוֹאֵל אֶתְכֶם — THE MOMENT ABOUT WHICH GOD SWORE THAT ‘I WILL REDEEM YOU,’ HAS ARRIVED, — וְהַגִּיעָה הַשְּׂבוּעָה שֶׁהִשְׁבַּעַת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל — AND therefore, THE time for the fulfillment of the OATH THAT YOU MADE THE JEWISH PEOPLE SWEAR to take your bones with them^[42] HAS ALSO ARRIVED. — אִם אֶתָּה מְרַאֶה עֲצָמְךָ — IF YOU SHOW YOURSELF now, — מוֹטָב — IT IS WELL and good. We will take your remains with us. — אִם לֹא — BUT IF you do NOT show yourself, — מְשֻׁבְּעֵיךָ — WE ARE ABSOLVED OF YOUR OATH.”^[43] — מִיָּד צָף אֲרוֹנוֹ — IMMEDIATELY, THE COFFIN OF JOSEPH FLOATED to the surface.^[44]

The Baraisa continues:

וְאַל תִּתְמַה הַיָּאֵר בְּרוּל צָף — AND DO NOT BE AMAZED HOW IRON COULD FLOAT, — שֶׁיָּרָה בְּתִיב — BECAUSE IT IS WRITTEN in connection with Elisha:^[45] — וַיְהִי הָאֵחָד מִפִּיל הַקּוֹרָה וְאֶת-הַבְּרוּל נָפַל — IT HAPPENED AS ONE OF THEM [one of Elisha’s disciples] WAS FELLING A BEAM THAT THE IRON [axehead] FELL

INTO THE WATER etc. He cried out and said, אָהָה אֲרֵנִי וְהוּא — “WOE IS ME, MY MASTER, IT IS BORROWED!” — וַיֹּאמֶר — “THE MAN OF GOD ASKED HIM, “WHERE DID IT FALL?” — וַיִּרְאֵהוּ אֶת-הַמָּקוֹם — AND HE SHOWED HIM THE PLACE. — וַיִּקְצֹב עֵץ וַיִּשְׁלַךְ-שָׁמָּה וַיִּצַּף הַבְּרוּל” — [ELISHA] THEN CUT A PIECE OF WOOD AND THREW IT THERE, AND THE IRON [blade] FLOATED UP. — וְהֵלֵא דְבָרִים קָל וְחוֹמֶר — NOW THIS MATTER IS A KAL VACHOMER: — וּמָה אֵלִישָׁע תִּלְמִידוֹ שֶׁל אֱלִיָּהוּ — IF when we are talking about ELISHA, who was A DISCIPLE OF ELIJAH, — AND ELIJAH, IN TURN, WAS A DISCIPLE OF MOSES,^[46] — צָף בְּרוּל מִפְּנֵי — nevertheless IRON FLOATED ON ACCOUNT OF [ELISHA], — מִפְּנֵי מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ עַל אַחַת כְּמָה וְכְמָה — then ON ACCOUNT OF MOSES OUR TEACHER himself, ALL THE MORE SO will iron float.

The Baraisa continues with a somewhat different version of the above story:

— בְּקַבְרֵינֵיט שֶׁל מְלָכִים הָיָה קָבוּר — R’ NASSAN SAYS: — רַבִּי נִתָּן אָמַר — [JOSEPH] WAS BURIED IN THE ROYAL CATACOMBS.^[47] — הָלַךְ מֹשֶׁה — MOSES WENT AND STOOD NEXT TO THE ROYAL CATACOMBS — אָמַר — and SAID, — “JOSEPH, — הַגִּיעַ הַעֵת שֶׁנִּשְׁבַּע הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שְׂאֵנִי גּוֹאֵל אֶתְכֶם — THE MOMENT ABOUT WHICH GOD SWORE THAT ‘I WILL REDEEM YOU,’ HAS ARRIVED, — וְהַגִּיעָה שְׂבוּעָה שֶׁהִשְׁבַּעַת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל — AND therefore, THE time for the fulfillment of the OATH THAT YOU MADE THE JEWISH PEOPLE SWEAR, to take your bones with them, HAS ALSO ARRIVED. — אִם אֶתָּה — IF YOU SHOW YOURSELF now, — מוֹטָב — IT IS WELL and good. — אִם לֹא — BUT IF NOT, WE ARE ABSOLVED OF YOUR OATH.” — בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה — AT THAT MOMENT, — אֲרוֹנוֹ שֶׁל יוֹסֵף — JOSEPH’S COFFIN TREMBLED, distinguishing itself from all the other coffins. — נִטְלוּ מֹשֶׁה וְהַבִּיאֵו אֶצְלוֹ — MOSES TOOK IT AND BROUGHT IT WITH HIM. — וְכָל אוֹתָן שָׁנִים שְׁהָיוּ — AND ALL THOSE YEARS THAT THE JEWISH PEOPLE WERE IN THE DESERT, — הָיוּ שְׁנֵי אֲרוֹנוֹת הַלָּלוּ — THERE WERE THESE TWO CASKETS, — אֶחָד שֶׁל מֵת וְאֶחָד שֶׁל שְׂכִינָה — ONE OF A DEAD MAN

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37. Proverbs 10:8. See *Divrei Yoel, Va’eschanan* pp. 43-47 as to why Moses is called “wise” here [and not righteous or saintly] and why we describe him as being engaged in “mitzvot” [and not a single mitzvah].

38. She was more than two hundred and ten years old, since she was one of the seventy descendants of Jacob who entered Egypt (see *Genesis* 46:17; see *Targum Yonasan* ad loc. and *Derech Eretz Zuta* Ch. 1).

Serach merited an extremely long life [and perhaps immortality] because she bore the glad tidings to Jacob that Joseph was still alive (see *Targum Yonasan* loc. cit. and *Sefer HaYashar, parashas Vayigash*). Moses went to Serach because secret information pertaining to the Redemption had been imparted to her (*Tosafos*, citing *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* Ch. 48; see, however, next note).

39. In a Midrash (*Devarim Rabbah* 11:7) cited by *Tos. Shantz*, it says that Moses went around the city, exerting himself for three days and three nights in an attempt to locate Joseph’s resting place. After tiring himself out thoroughly, he encountered Serach who asked him why he was so exhausted. He replied that he had been unable to find Joseph’s coffin, and asked her if she knew anything about it.

40. An extremely heavy metal coffin (*Devarim Rabbah* loc. cit.).

41. The fields of Egypt do not depend upon rain for their water. Rather, there are channels and ditches dug from the Nile to fields many miles away, throughout the country: When the Nile rises, it spills over into these channels which fill with water and carry the water far away. It is from these water-filled channels that the Egyptians would irrigate their fields.

This phenomenon explains a passage in *Zechariah* (14:17-18) regarding the nations of the world: *And it shall be that whichever of the families of the land does not go up to Jerusalem to bow down before the King, Hashem, Master of Legions, there will be no rain upon them. But if it is the family of Egypt that does not go up and does not come [to Jerusalem], there will be none for them.* Now, it does not say that there will be no rain upon Egypt, but simply *there will be none for them.* This means there will

be no [overflowing] river from which they could irrigate their fields. *Targum Yonasan* to v. 18 says explicitly that the prophet is talking about the Nile River (*Rashi*).

Ben Yehoyada points out that Joseph (Joseph) and Nilos (Nile) have the same numerical value. [The Egyptians were aware that Joseph had brought them agricultural prosperity during his lifetime and they hoped that he would continue to do so after his death.]

42. See *Genesis* 50:25.

43. [For a halachic rationale as to why the Jewish people would be absolved of this oath under these circumstances, see *Merkevot HaMishneh* to *Mechilta, Pesichta* of *parashas Beshalach* 1:4.]

44. The Midrash relates: Moses wrote a Divine Name and the words *עֲלֵה שׁוֹר* “Arise, O ox! Arise, O ox!” upon a plate and cast it into the Nile. [“Ox” is a complimentary reference to Joseph — see *Deuteronomy* 33:17] (*Tanchuma, Ki Sisa* §19). Moses said to Joseph, “Render honor to the God of Israel and do not delay the redemption of Israel! You have good deeds; pray before your Creator and ascend from the depths.” Immediately, Joseph’s coffin began to bubble and rise as if it were a single reed (*Devarim Rabbah* 11:7). While Moses was involved with removing Joseph’s coffin from the River, an idolater named Micah retrieved the plate. He later used it to help form the Golden Calf (*Tanchuma* loc. cit.).

45. *II Kings* 6:5-6.

46. [This is meant in a broad sense.] Elijah was not taught directly by Moses; rather, the Torah of Moses was taught to Elijah (*Rashi*; cf. *Iyun Yaakov*; see *Rashi* to *Bava Metzia* 114b מר רייה לא כהן מר).

47. [The translation of “royal catacombs” for קַבְרֵינֵיט is a conjecture. *Rashi* states that it is a Greek word meaning “tombs of the kings” (cf. *Rivash* §442). From the context of the Gemara, it seems plain that the coffins were not buried in the ground but above ground, as in a catacomb. It has been suggested that קַבְרֵינֵיט is a corruption of לְבָרֵינֵיט,

[Joseph's coffin] AND ONE OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE [the Holy Ark], מְהַלְכִין זֶה עִם זֶה – THAT TRAVELED TOGETHER.^[48] וְהָיוּ מֵהַ טִיבָן שֶׁל עוֹבְרִין וְשׁוֹבִין אֹמְרִים – AND PASSERSBY WOULD SAY, שְׁנֵי אַרְוֹנוֹת הַלָּלוּ – “WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THESE TWO CASKETS?” אָמְרוּ – AND THEY WOULD TELL them, וְאָחָד שֶׁל שְׁכִינָה

– “ONE BELONGS TO A DEAD MAN AND ONE BELONGS TO THE DIVINE PRESENCE.”^[49] וְכִי מֵהַ דְּרָבּוֹ שֶׁל מֵת לְהֵלֵךְ עִם שְׁכִינָה – They would ask, perplexed, “AND IS IT then THE WAY OF A DEAD MAN TO TRAVEL WITH THE eternally alive DIVINE PRESENCE?!” אָמְרוּ – And THEY WOULD TELL them,

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labyrinth, and refers to the great labyrinth built by the Egyptian monarchs to conceal their sarcophagi (see *Pesikta DeRav Kahana* §10, note 109, Buber ed.).]

48. Joseph's coffin was in the Levite camp with Moses and the Holy Ark was near it in the camp of the Divine Presence, i.e. the Sanctuary. However, the remains of Joseph's brothers, which were also taken from

Egypt, were placed elsewhere (*Maharsha*).

49. It seems odd that they would mention Joseph's coffin first, before the Holy Ark. *Ben Yehoyada* suggests that the observers would ask about Joseph's coffin first because it was larger than the Holy Ark and the Jews would answer them in the order they had been asked (cf. *Ben Yehoyada's* other explanation).

הוא – “The contents of THIS ONE (Joseph) FULFILLED EVERYTHING THAT IS WRITTEN IN the contents of THIS ONE (the Torah).”^[1]

The Mishnah stated that it was Moses who attended to the disposition of Joseph’s bones. The Gemara asks:

וְאֵי לֹא עָסִיק בֵּיהּ מוֹשֶׁה – Why did the Jewish people allow Moses to attend to Joseph’s remains by himself? **And if Moses would not have attended to [Joseph], would the Jewish people not have attended to him either?** Were they not concerned with the fulfillment of Joseph’s oath that was incumbent upon all of them? **וְהִתְבַּיַּת – But the Torah says that they did in fact attend to him, as it is written in the Book of Joshua:**^[2] **וְאֵת-עֲצָמוֹת יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר-הָעֵלָה בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם קָבְרוּ – Joseph’s bones, which the children of Israel had brought up from Egypt, they buried in Shechem.** Thus, we see that, at least after Moses passed away in the Plains of Moab, the Jewish people did attend to Joseph’s remains and transported them across the Jordan River.^[3] **וְתוֹ – And, furthermore, this itself is difficult: Why did Joseph’s descendants allow the Jewish people to attend to Joseph’s remains after Moses’ death, when they could have done so themselves? אִי לֹא אֵינְעִסְקוּ בֵּיהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל – Could it be that if the Jewish people would not have attended to [Joseph] then his children would not have attended to him either? Certainly not, וְהִתְבַּיַּת, וַיְהִי –**

לְבִנְיָיוּסֵף לְנַחֲלָה – for Scripture indicates that Joseph was beloved by his descendants: These descendants proudly buried his bones in their portion, as it is written in that verse: *They buried [Joseph’s bones] in Shechem, in the portion of the field that Jacob acquired . . . and it became a heritage for the children of Joseph.*

The Gemara answers:

אָמְרוּ – [Joseph’s children] said among themselves after Moses died, **הֲנִיחוּ לוֹ – “Let our father [Joseph] be attended to by the Jewish people rather than by us; כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּמִרְבֵּי יוֹתֵר מִבְּמִוֶּעֶטֶן – his honor is better served by the many rather than the few.”** **וְתוֹ אָמְרוּ – Moreover, [the Jewish people] said among themselves when Moses was still alive, הֲנִיחוּ לוֹ – Let [Joseph] be attended to by Moses rather than by us; כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּגִדּוּלִים יוֹתֵר – [Joseph’s] honor is better served by the eminent rather than the lowly.”**^[4]

The Gemara examines part of the verse cited above:

וְאֵת-עֲצָמוֹת יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר-הָעֵלָה בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם קָבְרוּ בְּשֶׁכֶם – **מֵאֵי שְׁנָא בְּשֶׁכֶם – What was special about Shechem that they buried him there?**^[5]

The Gemara explains:

אָמַר רַבִּי חָמָא בְּרַבִּי חַנִּינָא – R’ Chama bar R’ Chanina said: The children of Israel reasoned, **מִשְׁכֵּם גְּבוּדוֹ – [The brothers] kidnapped him from Shechem וְלִשְׁכֵּם נִחְזָר אֲבִירָתוֹ – and it is to Shechem that we should return his lost object (his body).”**^[6]

NOTES

1. *Rashi* cites the *Mechilta* (*Beshalach* §1 ויקח ר"ה) which elaborates at length upon this Aggadic teaching, as follows: It is written in the contents of this Ark [i.e. in the Ten Commandments inscribed on the Tablets], *I am Hashem, your God* (*Exodus* 20:2), and it is written regarding Joseph that he said [rhetorically], *Am I instead of God?* (*Genesis* 50:19); it is written in this one, *You shall not recognize the gods of others* (*Exodus* 20:3), and it is written regarding Joseph that he said, *I fear God [and no other gods]* (*Genesis* 42:18; see *Mirkeves HaMishneh* to *Mechilta* loc. cit.); in this one, *You shall not take the Name of Hashem, your God, in vain* (*Exodus* 20:7), and Joseph said, *By Pharaoh’s life you will not leave here unless your youngest brother comes here* (*Genesis* 42:15) [i.e. when Joseph had to swear falsely, he used Pharaoh’s name and not God’s Name]; *Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it* (*Exodus* 20:8), and Joseph said, *Have meat slaughtered, and prepare it* (*Genesis* 43:16), which is an allusion to the preparations performed for the Sabbath – see *Exodus* 16:5; *Honor your father* (*Exodus* 20:12), and Joseph listened to his father who told him to visit his brothers even though Joseph knew they hated him (see *Genesis* 37:13); *You shall not kill* (*Exodus* 20:13), and Joseph did not kill Potiphar when he had the power to do so as viceroy (see *Zayis Raanan* to *Mechilta* loc. cit.); *You shall not commit adultery* (*Exodus* 20:13), and Joseph did not commit adultery with Potiphar’s wife (see *Genesis* Ch. 39); *You shall not steal* (*Exodus* 20:13), and Joseph was scrupulously honest in delivering all the monies he collected to Pharaoh’s treasury (see *Genesis* 47:14); *You shall not bear false witness against your fellow* (*Exodus* 20:13), and Joseph never told his father what his brothers did to him. Now, if Joseph never conveyed even a true report about his brothers, certainly he never conveyed a false one. [According to *Shevus Yehudah* and *Zayis Raanan* (commentaries on the *Mechilta*), the *Mechilta* means that Joseph never told his father that the brothers sold him into slavery (see *Ramban* to *Genesis* 45:27); *Mei HaChesed* says it means that Joseph never told Jacob about being thrown in a pit and other suffering he underwent at their hands, but Jacob knew about the sale]; *You shall not covet your fellow’s house . . . your fellow’s wife* (*Exodus* 20:14), and Joseph did not covet Potiphar’s wife.

After going through each of the Ten Commandments, the *Mechilta* continues that there were also mitzvos written in the rest of the Torah that Joseph observed (see *Maharsha*): *You shall not hate your brother in your heart* (*Leviticus* 19:17), and regarding Joseph it is written that when his brothers raised the issue of the evil they had done him, [Joseph] comforted them and spoke to their heart (*Genesis* 50:21); *You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge* (*Leviticus* 19:18), and we find that Joseph was positive – not acrimonious – about this part of his past, for he said to his brothers, *Although you intended me harm, God intended it for good: in order to accomplish – it is as clear as this day –*

that a vast people be kept alive (*Genesis* 50:20); finally, the Torah says, *Let your brother live with you* (*Leviticus* 25:36), and regarding Joseph it is written, *Joseph sustained his father and his brothers and all of his father’s household* (*Genesis* 47:12).

Ben Yehoyada reads the Gemara as follows: קיים זה, This one fulfilled, מה שכתוב בויה, what is written in 7 and 5 [7=7, 5=5], i.e. the seventh commandment, *You shall not commit adultery*, and the fifth commandment, *Honor your father*. [Joseph excelled in the observance of these two commandments.]

2. *Joshua* 24:32.

3. [The Gemara below explains why this verse describes the children of Israel as bringing the bones out of Egypt, even though Moses is the one who did this.]

4. See *Divrei Yoel*, *Va’eschanan* p. 44.

5. Cf. *Rashi* to *Genesis* 48:22; see *Maharsha*.

6. They wished to rectify the sin in the very place where it had occurred (*Maharzu* to *Shemos Rabbah* 20:19).

From a casual reading of *Genesis* 37:12-17, it would seem that Joseph was kidnapped in a place called Dothan, not Shechem: *Now, his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, “Your brothers are pasturing in Shechem, are they not? Come, I will send you to them.” He said to him, “Here I am!” And he said to him, “Go now, look into the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock and bring me back word.” So he sent him from the depth of Hebron, and he arrived at Shechem. A man discovered him, and behold! – he was blundering in the field; the man asked him, saying, “What do you seek?” And he said, “My brothers do I seek; tell me, please, where they are pasturing.” The man said, “They have journeyed on from here, for I heard them saying, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.*

Rashi explains however that “Dothan” is not an actual place but rather a conspiratorial state of mind shared by the brothers: When the man said, “They have journeyed on from here,” he meant as follows: “You say, ‘My brothers do I seek’; well, they have moved on from such feelings of brotherliness and in fact no longer consider themselves as brothers to you. For I heard them saying, ‘Let us go and seek laws (*dathoth*) and legalities as to how we may kill him if he comes here.’” [The source of this Midrash, which *Rashi* cites in his commentary to *Genesis* 37:17 as well, is unknown. *Rashi* *ibid.* comments that, according to the verse’s simple meaning, Dothan is the name of a place. According to this, our Gemara says that Joseph was kidnapped from Shechem because Dothan was a hamlet in the vicinity of Shechem, and it is considered as a part of Shechem (*Rashi* to *Sanhedrin* 102a.)]

The Gemara poses a contradiction between the verse cited above and the verse cited in the Mishnah:

קָשׁוּ קְרָאֵי אֶהְרִי – **The verses we have been discussing contradict one another, בְּתֵיב – for it is written in one verse:**^[7] „וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־עֲצָמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ” – **Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.** This indicates that it was Moses and not any one of the rest of the people who took the bones. **וּבְתֵיב – And it is written in the other verse:**^[8] „וְאֶת־עֲצָמוֹת יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר־הָעֵלוּ” – **Joseph’s bones, which the children of Israel had brought up etc. from Egypt.** Who brought Joseph’s bones out of Egypt – Moses or the children of Israel?

The Gemara reconciles the verses:

אָמַר רַבִּי חָמָא בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא – **R’ Chama bar R’ Chanina said: Moses indeed brought them out of Egypt. However כָּל הָעוֹשֶׂה – whoever does something but does not complete it, וְכֵן אֲחֵר וְגַמְרוּ – and another person comes and completes it, מַעֲלָה עָלָיו בְּחֵטְבוֹ עַל שֶׁגַּמְרוּ – Scripture considers the one who completed it as if he had done [the whole thing].**^[9] Since the children of Israel are the ones who completed Joseph’s burial in Eretz Yisrael, they are reckoned as if they brought him out of Egypt originally and they are described accordingly.

The Gemara adds:

אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אוֹמַר – **R’ Elazar says: If a person begins a mitzvah and does not attempt to complete it – אֵף מוֹרִידֵינוּ אוֹתוֹ מִגְּדוּלָתוֹ – he is also demoted from his position of prominence.**^[10] **דְּכֵתִיב –** דְּכֵתִיב – **We learn this from Judah, who prevented his brothers from killing Joseph but who failed to rescue Joseph completely, for it is written:**^[11] **It was at that time, that Judah went down.**^[12]

The Gemara adds:

אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בֶּר נַחֲמָנִי אוֹמַר – **R’ Shmuel bar Nachmani said: אֵף אֵף – A man who begins a mitzvah and does not attempt to complete it will also have to bury his wife and sons, as it is written:**^[13]

וּבְתֵיב, וְנִמְתָּ עַר, וְנִמְתָּ עַר – and it is written:^[14] **Judah’s sons were Er, Onan, Shelah, Peretz and Zerach, but Er and Onan died.**^[15]

The Gemara presents another teaching concerning Joseph’s bones:

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב – **Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: מַפְנֵי מַה נִּקְרָא יוֹסֵף עֲצָמוֹת בְּחַיָּו – Why was Joseph referred to as “bones” during his lifetime?**^[16] **מַפְנֵי שְׁלֵא מִיַּחָה בְּכַבּוֹד אָבִיו – Because he did not object on behalf of his father’s honor when he should have. וְדַקְאֲמַרֵּי לֵיהּ – For when [the brothers] were speaking to him, thinking that he was an Egyptian viceroy, they referred frequently to “your servant, our father,”**^[17] **וְלֵאמָר לְהוּ וְלֵאמָר לְהוּ – yet [Joseph] said absolutely nothing to them in protest.**^[18]

A related teaching:

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב – **And Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, וְאֵיתִימָא רַבִּי חָמָא בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא – and others say it was R’ Chama bar R’ Chanina who said: מַפְנֵי מַה מַת יוֹסֵף קוֹדֵם לְאֶחָיו – Why did Joseph die before his brothers?**^[19] **מַפְנֵי שֶׁהִנְחִיג עִצְמוֹ – Because he carried himself with excessive authority.**^[20]

Having expounded Judah’s descent earlier, the Gemara now expounds the descent associated with Joseph:

וְיוֹסֵף הוֹרֵד מִצְרָיִם – **And Joseph was brought down to Egypt.**^[21] **אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר – R’ Elazar said: “הוֹרֵד, אַל תִּיקְרֵי, הוֹרֵד” – Do not pronounce this word *hurad* (he was brought down) – אֶלָּא, הוֹרִיד – but rather *horid* (he brought down), i.e. Joseph brought Egypt down – שְׁהוֹרִיד אֵינְסִיגְנִי פְרַעָה מִגְּדוּלָתָן – in that by interpreting a dream that they could not interpret, he lowered Pharaoh’s astrologers from their positions of greatness.**^[22]

The Gemara expounds the continuation of this verse:

וַיִּקְנֵהוּ פוֹטִיפָר סְרִיס פְּרַעָה – **Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh, purchased him.** **אָמַר רַב – Rav said: This means שֶׁקָּנָאוּ – that [Potiphar] bought [Joseph] for himself, i.e. for his own illicit purposes.**^[23] **בָּא (בא גבריאל וסירסו) בָּא**

NOTES

7. Exodus 13:19.

8. Joshua ibid.

9. Because, in any endeavor, the objective is the main thing (*Maharsha*).

10. Heaven brings about the diminution of his stature if he could have completed the mitzvah but neglected to do so. If, however, he was forced to abandon the mitzvah in the middle (like Moses, who died on the east bank of the Jordan before he could complete the mitzvah of Joseph’s burial), then he is not held accountable (see *Rashi*).

11. Genesis 38:1.

12. Judah convinced them not to kill Joseph by saying (*Genesis* 37:26-27): “What gain will there be if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites.” He thus began the mitzvah of rescuing Joseph but did not complete it.

Rashi in his commentary on these verses writes that it was the brothers themselves who demoted Judah from his position of leadership among them when they saw the distress of their father. They said to Judah, “You said to sell him. Had you said to return him to our father, we would have listened to you.”

13. Ibid. 38:12.

14. Ibid. 46:12.

15. These punishments are measure for measure: A person who begins a mitzvah and wantonly abandons it in the middle shows others that the mitzvah has little importance in his eyes: His importance in others’ eyes is therefore reduced as well (*Tiferes Tziyon*). Furthermore, just as this person disrupted the continuation of the mitzvah, his own continuity, through his wife and children, is disrupted as well (see *Maharal*).

In summary, there are three basic principles regarding a mitzvah that one person begins and another completes: (a) If the first person had to abandon the mitzvah against his will, he receives a reward for the mitzvah (see *Yefei To’ar*); (b) if he simply chose to neglect the

completion of the mitzvah, he will receive a punishment; (c) the performance of the mitzvah is always attributed to the one who completes the mitzvah (*Yefei To’ar to Bereishis Rabbah* 85:3).

16. Before Joseph’s death, he adjured the children of Israel as follows: “God will indeed remember you and you will bring my bones up out of here” (*Genesis* 50:25). [Joseph referred to himself self-deprecatingly as “bones” to atone for the slight he committed against his father, as the Gemara proceeds to describe.]

17. See e.g. *Genesis* 43:28, 44:24.

18. Joseph should have reacted with a natural sense of displeasure when he heard these words. Instead, he remained stone-faced. He is thus compared to bones, which are the least flexible parts of the body and the least “reactive” (*Maharal*, first explanation; cf. *Maharsha, Iyon Yaakov*).

19. The Torah says (*Exodus* 1:6): *Joseph died, and all his brothers and that entire generation.* This means that first Joseph died, and then his brothers etc. (*Rashi to Berachos* 55a יוסף היה). Joseph was the second youngest of the twelve sons and six years younger than Reuben, the eldest. Nevertheless, Joseph died first at the age of one hundred and ten (*Genesis* 50:26) while none of his brothers died before one hundred and twenty.

20. The Gemara says elsewhere (*Pesachim* 87b): *Power buries its possessors.*

21. *Genesis* 39:1. This point, that Joseph was brought to Egypt, was already mentioned before (see *Genesis* 37:28); why does the Torah repeat it here? (*Tiferes Tziyon*).

22. Thus, the Torah emphasizes that Joseph’s very coming was [Heavenly] intended for this purpose: to surpass the astrologers and to dominate them (*Maharsha*).

23. He was attracted to Joseph’s handsomeness (*Rashi*).

24. Emendation follows *Rashi*.

Gabriel came and emasculated him. This is derived as follows: “פוטיפר – **Initially, his name is written “Potiphar,”** – **but in the end it is written “Potiphera.”**”^[25] The name change alludes to his transformation into a eunuch.

The Gemara cites the next part of the Mishnah: **WHO WAS treated with AS MUCH honor AS MOSES etc.** that none other than the Omnipresent attended to his burial. Because Moses attended to Joseph’s burial, God attended to that of Moses, measure for measure.

The Gemara cites another example of measure-for-measure justice that was applied to Moses:

“**Hashem said to me, “It is much for you! Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter . . . for you shall not cross this Jordan.”**”^[26] **R’ Levi said: [Moses] used the word “much” to lecture others and the word “much” was used to lecture him.** [Moses] used the word “much” to lecture others, as he said to his disputant, Korach: **“It is much for you, O offspring of Levi!”**”^[27] **And the word “much” was used to lecture him, as it says: “R’ Levi – Hashem said to me, “It is much for you!”**”^[28]

Alternative teachings of these words:

Another explanation: “**It is much (rav) for you!**” means: **You have a rav (a master) waiting to assume power, and who is this? Joshua.** You cannot enter Eretz Yisrael, for then Joshua’s reign as leader would have to be delayed.^[29] **Another explanation:** “**It is much for you!**” means it is enough for you. Do not pray excessively for that which I will not allow you,^[30] **so that they should not say, “How harsh is the Master, and how imploring is the student in pleading incessantly even after the Master has made it clear that He will not relent.”**”^[31]

The Gemara asks:

And why was God so strict with Moses, “punishing” him for the words he chose?^[32]

The Gemara cites a Baraisa containing the answer:

A Baraisa was taught in the academy of R’ Yishmael: **ACCORDING TO THE CAMEL IS**

THE BURDEN. Just as one increases the heaviness of the burden based on the camel’s strength, so too God judges a person with greater exactitude based on his level of righteousness.

The Gemara turns to the topic of Moses’ death:

בן מאה ועשרים שנה אנכי, [Moses] said to them, “I am a hundred and twenty years old today.”^[33] **Now, it was not necessary for the Torah to say “today.”** The meaning would have been the same if Moses would have said simply: I am a hundred and twenty years old. Why then did he add “today”? To tell us, **“Today my days and years have been filled.** On this day I was born and on this day I shall die.”^[34] **The Torah saw fit to report this to teach you that the Holy One, Blessed is He, completes the years of the righteous from day to day and from month to month, i.e. God allows the righteous to live out their final year until the very day of the very month in which they were born; as it is written that God said: the number of your days I will complete.**^[35]

The Gemara cites the next part of the verse and examines it: **“I can no longer go out and come in.”** **What was Moses’ meaning in saying to go out and come in? If you will say it means literally that he was not able to go out and come in, i.e. his strength was depleted, but it is written:**^[36] **“Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; . . . his eye had not dimmed and his vigor had not diminished.”**^[37] **Furthermore it is written:**^[38] **“Moses ascended from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, and it has been taught in a Baraisa: THERE WERE TWELVE STEPS THERE AND MOSES TOOK THEM IN A SINGLE STEP.”**^[39] Obviously, if he could leap over twelve steps, he was physically strong enough to go out and come in. – ? –

The Gemara explains:

R’ Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of R’ Yonasan: Moses meant he was no longer able **“to go out and come**

NOTES

25. Genesis 41:45. [פירעו is cognate to פירעו, intimating that he was emasculated.]

26. Deuteronomy 3:26-27. Moses supplicated God to rescind the decree that he would not be allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael. However, God did not relent.

27. Numbers 16:7. Korach (Korah) sought the position of the Kohen Gadol and Moses told him that the mitzvos he could perform as a Levite were more than enough.

28. Moses was right to dissuade Korach from usurping the position of Kohen Gadol. However, Moses committed a slight error in expressing this message through the words, רב־לכם, *It is much for you*. This phrase implies that Korach was seeking to fulfill more and more mitzvos and that Moses discouraged him from pursuing whatever was not already obligatory upon him. This is an incorrect attitude. Heaven views with pleasure a person who wants further spiritual progress and more mitzvos. Thus, when Moses desired to enter Eretz Yisrael so as to become obligated in more mitzvos, God discouraged him with the same phrase (R’ Shlomo Kluger in *Imrei Shefer, Korach*, cited by *Yalkut HaGershuni*, end of *Kuntres Acharon*; see also R’ Chaim Shmulevitz, *Sichos Mussar*, 5732 §11). The Holy One, Blessed is He, is exacting with the righteous to the fineness of a hairsbreadth (*Rashi*; see *Yevamos 121b*).

29. And the reign of one leader may not encroach upon the reign of another even by the breadth of a hair (*Berachos 48b*; see *Rashi*).

30. Prior to this point, Moses had already uttered five hundred and fifteen prayers on this topic (see *Devarim Rabbah 11:10*).

31. The verse could have said only, *do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter*. The apparently superfluous רב־לך, *It is much for you*, indicates why God wanted Moses to stop pleading. Had he continued, it would have been unseemly both for God and for Moses (see *Rashi* here and *Be’er Sadeh to Rashi, Deuteronomy 3:26*).

32. See *Maharsha*.

33. Deuteronomy 31:2.

34. That day was 7 Adar (see above, 12b).

35. Exodus 23:26.

36. Deuteronomy 34:7.

37. לחה is related to לחלוּחית, *moisture*: The moisture [or freshness] of his vigor had not diminished (see *Rashi*; see *Tiferes Tziyon*).

38. Ibid. v. 1.

39. “*From the plains of Moab*” seems superfluous, for the Torah stated already that the Israelites were encamped in the plains of Moab (see *Deuteronomy 1:1*). The Baraisa therefore expounds this phrase to teach us that Moses ascended directly from the plains of Moab to the top of the mountain in a single bound (*Mizrachi* and *Sifsei Chachamim* ad loc.). [On a deeper level, the twelve steps correspond to the twelve tribes. Each tribe has its own unique qualities and contributions to make, but nevertheless Moses was the equal of all the tribes (*Maharsha*; see *Maharal* for a lengthy discussion of a different approach).]

in” in words of Torah. מלמד שנסתתמו ממנו שערי חכמה – This teaches that the gates of wisdom were closed to him at this time.^[40]

The Gemara cites a later verse and comments:

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ – *So Moses and Joshua went and stood in the Tent of Meeting.*^[41] תנא – A Baraisa taught: אותה שבת של דיו זוגי היתה – THAT WAS “A SABBATH OF TWO PEERS,”^[42] i.e. the congregation saw their outgoing leader and their incoming leader on the same day;^[43] וְנִשְׁלַח רְשׁוּת מִזֶּה וְנִתְּנָה לָזֶה – AUTHORITY WAS TAKEN FROM THIS ONE [Moses] AND INVESTED IN THIS ONE [Joshua].^[44]

The Gemara comments on the location of Moses’ death and the location of his burial:

וְתִנָּיָא – *And it has been taught in a Baraisa:* R’ Yehudah said: אי למלא מקרא כהוב – If there were not a verse written to this effect, אי אפשר לאומרו – it would be impossible for us to say this on our own: היכן משה מת – Where did Moses die? בחלקו של ראובן דתיב – In the portion of Reuben, as it is written:^[45] וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה מֵעֵרְבַת מוֹאָב אֶל-הַר – *Moses ascended from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo,* and Nebo stands in Reuben’s portion as it is written:^[46] וּבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן בָּנוּ וְגוֹ’ וְאֶת-נְבוֹ וְגוֹ’ – *The children of Reuben built etc. Nebo etc.* (נבו ששם מתו) – Nebo was called this name because three prophets [*neviim*] died there: Moses, Aaron and Miriam.) – *And where is Moses buried?* והיכן משה קבור – *In the portion of Gad, as it is written:*^[47] וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַבְּרִיָּה וַיִּרְא אֶת-הַבְּרִיָּה וַיִּרְא אֶת-הַבְּרִיָּה – *He (Gad) saw the beginning [of the conquest of the Land] for himself etc., for [he knew that] there is the hidden plot of the lawgiver [Moses].* ומחלקו של ראובן עד חלקו

Now, what is the distance from the portion of Reuben until the portion of Gad? ארבעה מילין – Four mil.^[48] – *Who carried [Moses’ body] those four mil?* – *This teaches us that Moses lay within the folds of the raiment of splendor of the Divine Presence*^[49] as Moses’ body was transported to his grave.^[50] – *And the ministering angels were saying, in elegy: ‘עשה ומשפטיו עם ישראל’ – He carried out the righteousness of Hashem and His ordinances with Israel.*^[51] – *And the Holy One, Blessed is He, was saying: ‘מי יקום לי עם-מרעים’ – Who will rise up for Me against evildoers?*^[52] – *Who will stand up for Me against the doers of iniquity?*^[53] – *And Shmuel said that the elegy of the Holy One, Blessed is He, for Moses was: ‘מי כהחכם ומי יודע פשר דבר’ – Who is like the wise man? And who knows the resolution of a matter* [like Moses]^[54] – *And R’ Yochanan said that His elegy was: ‘החכמה מאין תמצא’ – [But as for] wisdom: Where can it be found?*^[55] – *And Rav Nachman said: ‘וַיָּמָת שָׁם מֹשֶׁה וְגוֹ’ – So Moses, servant of Hashem, died there etc., in the land of Moab, by the mouth of Hashem.*^[56] – *Samalion*^[57] said: *Moses, the great scholar of the Jewish people, died there.* תנא – *It has been taught in a Baraisa: רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר – R’ ELIEZER THE GREAT*^[58] SAYS: – *Over an area of TWELVE MIL BY TWELVE MIL – CORRESPONDING TO THE site of the ISRAELITE CAMP – A HEAVENLY VOICE RESOUNDED, SAYING: וַיָּמָת מֹשֶׁה סָפְרָא רַבָּה – MOSSES, THE GREAT SCHOLAR OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE,*

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40. This was a miraculous change that God wrought in order to allay the Jewish people’s concerns about investing Joshua with authority in Moses’ presence (*Ramban to Deuteronomy 31:2*). Also, the gates of wisdom were closed so that Moses himself should not be overly troubled about his impending death (*Rabbeinu Bachya* loc. cit.).

A number of commentators state that our Gemara does not mean that Moses lost his Torah wisdom, but rather that he lost his ability to express his Torah wisdom to others. [“To go out and come in” through the gates that stood between him and his students, the Jewish people, to reach them.] During Moses’ lifetime he was always able to teach others by allowing just a small trickle to escape from the wellsprings within him (see version of our text in *Ein Yaakov*). But on the day of his death, the wellsprings of Torah swelled within him so intensely that he could no longer allow out just the needed trickle, and he could no longer be their teacher. The gates were shut (see *Imrei Emes, Likkutim, Mesechtos*; see also *Avodas Yisrael*, and *Ksav Sofer* cited in *Yalkut Yeshayahu*).

41. *Deuteronomy 31:14*.

42. *Tiferes Tziyon* notes that this line corroborates the tradition of the Geonim cited in *Tosafos* (to *Menachos* 30a ואלך ואילך) that Moses passed away on the Sabbath (see also *Gilyon HaShas to Menachos* ad loc.). This in turn raises the issue of how Moses could have written “I am one hundred and twenty years old today” on the Sabbath (see *Tosafos* loc. cit. and *Rosh, Pesachim 10:13 with Korban Nesanel*; see *Taz, Orach Chaim 292:2*). [The Gemara said above (12b) that the calendar day on which Moses passed away was Adar 7. In our fixed calendar, however, Adar 7 can never fall on the Sabbath.]

43. In the beginning of the day, power still belonged to Moses and by the end of the day, power belonged to Joshua (see *Rashi*).

44. [Various passages in the Gemara indicate that the leading Rabbinic figure, and only he, would speak on each Sabbath. An exception to this would seem to be the rare case when a transition took place from the old Rabbi to the new Rabbi: That would be a “Sabbath of two peers.”]

45. *Ibid.* 34:1.

46. *Numbers 32:37-38*.

47. *Deuteronomy 33:21*.

48. [Between 2.3 and 3 miles.]

49. *Rashi*; see *Psalms 104:1-2* and *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* Ch. 2 for other references to God’s “raiment.” [*Rashi* does not translate השכינה כנפי here as “wings of the Divine Presence.”]

50. The distance of four mil is the same as the distance a man can walk from the time the early morning sky lights up in the east until sunrise (see *Bereishis Rabbah 50:15*). That is to say, it is the time needed to go from darkness to light; in Moses’ case, from the darkness of this world to the light of the World to Come (*Tiferes Tziyon*).

51. *Deuteronomy 33:21*.

52. To rebuke them in My Name (*Rashi*), and to transform them into decent people (*Maharal*).

53. *Psalms 94:16*. According to *Rivash* (§60), God laments the absence of someone who judges wrongdoing firmly, as Moses did in the episodes of the Golden Calf, the daughters of Moab at Shittim and the dispute of Korach.

54. *Ecclesiastes 8:1*. Moses was like a mediator between God and His children, the Jewish people, adept in finding a compromise (*Rashi*).

55. *Job 28:12*. This verse may also be read: *Wisdom can be found [only] in [someone who considers himself as] nothing*, such as Moses who was the humblest of all men (see *Rashi* to 21b below מאין ויאלץ and *Yalkut Yeshayahu* here; see *Numbers 12:3*).

56. *Deuteronomy 34:5*. The word וַיָּמָת, and he died, can be read as a contraction of the words וַיָּמָת, *Woe! He has died!* (*Rashi* in *Ein Yaakov*).

57. A Talmudic Sage (*Rashi*). *Tosafos* cite one view that this is the name of an angel.

58. I.e. R’ Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, who is known simply as R’ Eliezer throughout the Talmud and Midrash. For reasons why he was called “the Great,” see *Kuntres Shem HaEchad Eliezer* at the beginning of *Radal’s* commentary to *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* and *Toldos Tannaim V’Amoraim* vol. I p. 166. [Interestingly, R’ Eliezer was a descendant of Moses. God quoted R’ Eliezer to Moses when they were learning the halachos of a פרה אדומה (*Red Cow*) and Moses prayed that this sage should descend from him. God granted this request (see *Tanchuma, Chukas* §8a.)]

DIED.^[59] וַיֵּשׁ אֹמְרִים – **And some say:** לֹא מָת מֹשֶׁה – **Moses did not die.**^[60] בְּתֵיב הַכָּא – **It is written here:** “וַיָּמָת שָׁם” – **And [Moses] died there.** וּבְתֵיב הַתָּם – **And it is written elsewhere:**^[61] “וַיִּהְיֶה־שָׁם עִם־ה’” – **He [Moses] remained there with Hashem for forty days and forty nights.** מֵה לְהֵלֵךְ עֹמֵד – **Just as there [Moses] was not dead but rather was standing in service of God,** אֶף כְּאֵן – **so too here,** at the end of Moses’ one hundred and twenty years, he did not die but rather is **standing in service of God.**

The Gemara comments further on Moses’ burial: בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב,, – **He buried him in the depression,** מוֹל בֵּית פְּעוֹר – **in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor.**^[62] אָמַר רַבִּי בְּרֵכְיָה – **R’ Berechyah said:** סִימָן בְּתוֹךְ סִימָן – **The Torah provides guidepost after guidepost in describing this location,** וְאִפִּילוּ הָכִי – **but nevertheless,** וְלֹא־יָדַע אִישׁ – **and no one knows his burial place to this day.**^[63] וַיִּבְרַח שְׁלַחַת מַלְכוּת הַרְשָׁעָה אֶצְלָה – **And the evil regime [Rome] already sent emissaries to**

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59. Each successive view represents a greater quality [which by itself would be deserving of a eulogy by God]. *Who will rise up for me against evildoers?* speaks to Moses’ greatness in regard to [his treatment of] the Jewish people; *Who is like the wise man? And who knows the resolution of a matter* alludes to his greatness as a mediator; [But as for] *wisdom: Where can it be found* refers to his sublime perception of wisdom and understanding; *Moses, servant of Hashem, died* contains the greater accolade *servant of Hashem*: A servant has a connection with his master; “Moses, the great scholar of the Jewish people, died,” contains Moses’ ultimate quality, that he was *the* Torah scholar (see *Maharal*; cf. *Derashos Chasam Sofer* pp. 645-646).

60. [I.e. he did not die as everyone else did.]

61. *Exodus* 34:28.

62. *Deuteronomy* 34:6.

63. *Ibid.* God did not want the pagans of the world to defile his gravesite with their idols (*Pesikta Zutrasa, Zos HaBerachah*). Also, He did not want the Jews to be able to pray at Moses’ grave (see below, 14a note 8), because anything they would have requested there would have been granted them (*Maharal*; see there for another reason as to why Moses’ burial location had to be hidden).

הראנו היכן משה – גסטרא של בית פְעוֹר – the local military governor of the Beth-peor region with the following order: משה – “Show us where Moses is buried.”^[1] The officer took them to the general area. However, עמדו למעלה – when they stood above, atop an elevation, נדמה להם למטה – it seemed to them that they saw the gravesite below. למטה – And when they stood below, נדמה להם למעלה – it seemed to them that they saw it above. נחלקו לשתי ביות – They split into two groups, one heading to each site. However, אותן שעומדים – for those standing above למטה – it seemed to them that the gravesite was below למטה נדמה להן למטה – and for those standing below it seemed to them that it was above.^[2] This miracle took place לקיים מה שנאמר – to fulfill that which it says in the Torah:^[3] ולא ידע איש,, “and no man knows his burial place to this day.”^[4]

The Gemara adds:

R' Chama the son of R' Chanina said: אף משה רבינו אינו יודע היכן קבור – Even Moses our Teacher himself does not know where he is buried,^[5] as may be learned from the following *gezeirah shavah*. – It is written here: “ולא ידע איש את קברתו” – and no man knows his burial place, – וכתוב התם – and it is written there:^[6] “והואת הברכה אשר ברח משה איש האלהים” – And this is the blessing that Moses, the man of God, bestowed upon the Children of Israel. Just as the word “man” refers to Moses in this verse, so too does it refer to Moses in the verse: *and no man knows his burial place*.

More on the location of Moses' grave:

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא – And R' Chama the son of R' Chanina said: מפני מה נקבר משה אצל בית פעור – For what reason was Moses buried close to Beth-peor?^[7] כדי לכפר על – In order to atone for the Peor incident.^[8]

The Gemara cites a fundamental teaching that, in the end, draws a lesson from God's burial of Moses:

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא – And R' Chama the son of R' Chanina said: מאי דכתיב – What is the meaning of that which is written:^[9] “אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו” – Hashem, your God, shall you follow. – וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה – Now is it possible for a human being to follow the Divine Presence? – והלא כבר נאמר – But it has already been said: “כי ה' אלהיך אש אכלה הוא” – For Hashem, your God – He is a consuming fire.^[10] – אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא – Rather, the mitzvah to follow God means we should follow, i.e. emulate, the attributes of the Holy One, Blessed is He. – מה הוא מלביש ערומים – Just as He clothes the naked, דכתיב – ונעש ה' אלהים לאדם ולאשתו וקנתו עור ונלבשם” – as it is written:^[11] And Hashem God made for Adam and his wife skin garments, and He clothed them, and He clothed them, – you too should clothe the naked.^[12] – והוא ביקר חולים – The Holy One, Blessed is He, visited the sick, as it is written:^[13] “וירא אליו ה' באלני ממרא” – Hashem appeared to him [Avraham] in the plains of Mamre [on the third day after his circumcision]; – אף אתה בקר חולים – you too should visit the sick. – והקדוש ברוך הוא נחם אבלים דכתיב – The Holy One, Blessed is He, comforted mourners, as it is written:^[14] “ויהי” – And it was after the death of Abraham

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1. As part of the Romans' strategy in their quest to conquer Israel, they attempted to block the Jews from having the merit of praying at Moses' gravesite (see *Ben Yehoyada*).

2. This was all a mirage, placed there by God in order to confuse them. They were not viewing an actual grave at all (*Ben Yehoyada*).

3. *Deuteronomy* 34:6.

4. I.e. even after searching for it (*Tiferes Tziyon*). See the reason for this in note 8.

5. The Mishnah lists Moses' grave as one of the ten things created during twilight of the sixth day of Creation (*Pirkei Avos* 5:6). The list contains wonders of the world such as the manna and the staff with which Moses wrought miracles. *Ben Yehoyada* comments that Moses' grave was miraculous in that it took up no space in this world, like the Holy Ark and its Cherubim. Thus, Moses himself could not know where he was.

Meshech Chochmah (*Deuteronomy* 34:6) explains somewhat differently. He cites the Gemara (*Shabbos* 152b) which states that for the first year after a person's death that person's soul ascends and descends between the body and above. The soul has a certain connection to the body and visits it as a person would visit a nearby friend. Moses, however, who even in his lifetime maintained no connection to the physical (he endured forty days on Mt. Sinai without food or water, God spoke to him “face-to-face”), had his soul immediately find its place among the holy angels and he never visited his body. Thus, Moses did not “know,” i.e. he was not familiar with, his burial place.

6. *Ibid.* 33:1.

7. For although Moses was punished in that he could not enter Eretz Yisrael, why could he not at the very least merit to be buried there just as the bones of Yosef were brought there for burial? (*Maharsha*; see also *Midrash Rabbah to Deuteronomy* 2:8).

8. This was a tragic incident in which Jewish men were enticed by the daughters of Moab into debauchery and idolatry (see *Numbers* Ch. 25 and *Sanhedrin* 106a).

Tosafos cite a Midrash Aggadah which states that every year, on the anniversary of the sin, the Peor location ascends to Heaven in order to recall the guilt of the Jewish people. However, when it sees Moses' grave, it sinks back. For explanations of this Midrash, see *Meshech Chochmah to Numbers* 25:5 and *Be'er Moshe, Devarim* II p. 1020.

[*Hagahos HaBach* emends our Gemara to include an additional passage found in the version of our text in Ein Yaakov: And R' Chama the son of R' Chanina said. Why is it that the gravesite of Moses was hidden from the eyes of flesh and blood [i.e. humans]? For it was revealed and known to the Holy One, Blessed is He, that the Holy Temple was destined to be destroyed and that the Jewish people was [destined] to be exiled from their land. [The grave had to be hidden] lest the Jews come crying at Moses' gravesite at that time and beseech Moses saying, “Moses our teacher, rise and pray on our behalf!” Moses would then arise and [through his prayers] nullify the harsh decree. [God would accede to his prayers] because righteous individuals are [even] more beloved after their deaths than during their lifetimes. [This was denied because at times, punishment is necessary (*Tiferes Tziyon*; for other explanations see *Ben Yehoyada* and *Yismach Moshe to Deuteronomy* 34:6). One may ask, why was it necessary to conceal Moses' gravesite more than those of other righteous men? It is in answer to this question that the Gemara continues:] For this is what you find: When the Israelites were in the desert, and they sullied their deeds by making the [Golden] Calf, the Holy One, Blessed is He, became angry and said to Moses (*Deuteronomy* 9:14), “Leave Me alone [by not interceding with prayer] and I will destroy them.” There were many righteous and saintly people in that generation such as Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Eldad, Meidad, the Seventy Elders and other learned men and their disciples. Yet, the only one in whose merit God acted and nullified the decree was Moses. Therefore, only Moses' gravesite was hidden; he was the interceder *par excellence* on behalf of the Jews.]

9. *Deuteronomy* 13:5.

10. *Ibid.* 4:24.

11. *Genesis* 3:21.

12. This mitzvah is not restricted to aiding a destitute person who cannot afford to clothe himself, for that situation is in any case included in the positive commandment to help the needy (*Deuteronomy* 15:8). Rather this mitzvah applies even to a person who is affluent but needs help in procuring clothing (e.g. he is away from home and does not know where to purchase them). We see this from the fact that God provided clothing for Adam, who was given the whole world and was by no means poor (*Ahavas Chesed*, vol. III Ch. 7, in note).

13. *Genesis* 18:1.

14. *Ibid.* 25:11.

“וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יִצְחָק כִּנּוּ” – *that God blessed Isaac his son* [by reciting the Mourners’ Blessing];^[15] אַף אַתָּה נַחֵם אַבְלִים – *you too should comfort mourners*. הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא קָבַר מֵתִים – *The Holy One, Blessed is He, buried the dead, as it is written:*^[16] “וַיִּקְבֹּר אֹתוֹ בְּגִי” – *He buried him in the depression*; אַף אַתָּה קָבַר מֵתִים – *you too should bury the dead.*^[17]

The Gemara returns to a phrase in a verse cited above and offers two interpretations:

“בְּתַנּוּת עוֹר” – The Torah says that God made *skin garments* for Adam and his wife. רַב וּשְׁמוּאֵל – There is a dispute between Rav and Shmuel as to what this phrase means: חַד אָמַר – One says it means דָּבָר הַבָּא מִן הָעוֹר – *something that comes from the skin*, i.e. the garments were made of wool which is derived from the shearing of a sheep’s skin.^[18] וְחַד אָמַר – And one says it means דָּבָר שֶׁהָעוֹר נִהְיָה מִמֶּנּוּ – *something that a person’s skin takes pleasure in*, i.e. the garments were linen, a material that a person wears [comfortably] next to his skin.^[19]

The Gemara cites another teaching that draws a lesson from God’s burial of Moses:

תּוֹרָה תְּחִלָּתָהּ גְּמִילוּת – *R’ Simlai expounded: The Torah – its beginning is the performance of kindness* and its end is the performance of kindness.^[20] תְּחִלָּתָהּ גְּמִילוּת חֲסִדִים דְּבַתִּיב – *Its beginning is the performance of kindness, as it is written:*

“וַיַּעַשׂ ה’ אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ בְּתַנּוּת עוֹר וַיִּלְבָּשֵׁם” – *And Hashem God made for Adam and his wife skin garments, and He clothed them.*^[21] – וְסוֹפָהּ גְּמִילוּת חֲסִדִים דְּבַתִּיב – *And its end is the performance of kindness, as it is written: וַיִּקְבֹּר אֹתוֹ*, “וַיִּקְבֹּר אֹתוֹ בְּגִי” – *He buried him in the depression.*

Another teaching by this Amora, which leads into words of eulogy for Moses:

מִפְּנֵי מָה נִתְאַוָּה מֹשֶׁה – *R’ Simlai expounded: Why did Moses our Teacher desire to enter Eretz Yisrael?* וְכִי לְאָכּוּל מִפְּרִיָּהּ הוּא צָרִיךְ – *Did he need to eat of its fruit or did he need to sate himself with its bounty?* Certainly not! אֲלֵא כִּךָ אָמַר מֹשֶׁה – *Rather, this is what Moses said to himself: הֲרַבָּה מִצְוֹת נִצְטָו – There are many mitzvos that the Jewish people have been commanded וְאִין מִתְקַיְיֵמִין אֲלֵא בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל – that cannot be fulfilled except in Eretz Yisrael. אֲנִי לֹא אֶכְנֶס – I will enter the Land כִּדִּי שִׁיתְקַיְיֵמוּ בּוֹלָן עַל יְדֵי – so that all [the mitzvos] will be fulfilled through me.”* הַקְדוּשׁ – *The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to him, בָּלוּם הוּא – Do you seek anything other than to gain reward?* Even though you will not enter Eretz Yisrael to have those mitzvos performed, I will reckon it for you as if you had performed them,^[22]

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15. Since the verse states that God blessed Isaac after Abraham’s death, the implication is that the blessing and the death were related. Therefore, the Gemara infers that God recited the Mourners’ Blessing for Isaac, who was in mourning, and thus comforted him (see *Maharsha* here, *Nachalas Yaakov* to *Genesis* 25:11; see *Kesubos* 8b for the text of the Mourners’ Blessing).

16. *Deuteronomy* 34:6.

17. This mitzvah, the emulation of God’s ways, is expressed in more general terms elsewhere (*Shabbos* 133b): *Just as [God] is gracious and compassionate, you also should be gracious and compassionate*. [Although our Gemara cites *Deuteronomy* 13:5 as the source for this mitzvah, there are seven other verses that convey the same idea – see *Introduction to Ahavas Chesed*.] Emulating God’s ways is counted among the six hundred and thirteen Biblical mitzvos (see *Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvos, Asei* §8 and *Hil. Dei’os* 1:5-6, *Sefer HaChinuch* §611).

When one visits the sick or buries the dead [and so on], one also performs a kindness (*Bava Metzia* 30b) and therefore fulfills another Biblical mitzvah as well (*Leviticus* 19:18): וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ, *You shall love your fellow as yourself*. This mitzvah encompasses all favors performed for others that we would wish to have performed for us (*Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvos, shoresh* §2 וְכִבֵּר הִגִּיעַ בָּהֶם and *Hil. Aveil* 14:1; *Ramban, Hasagos to Sefer HaMitzvos, shoresh* §1 רְיָה וְהַתְּשׁוּבָה הַרְבִּיעִית). Indeed, attending to the needs of the dead is called a *אֲמַת שֶׁל אֶמֶת*, a bona fide kindness, since one expects no favor in return (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 96:5).

18. *Rashi*. According to *Targum Yonasan* ad loc., the garments were made of snakeskin.

19. [The dispute is contingent upon the translation of עוֹר. Does it mean “garments of skin” or “garments for [their] skin”?]

20. Torah is essentially a Book of beneficence. If we occasionally find within it judicial punishments and frightening curses, these are there only because man sins, and such stern measures are necessary in order to remove the evil created. But once the evil is removed, it is only goodness that remains (*Maharal*). *Rabbeinu Bachya* writes: The attribute of kindness pervades all of existence in its entirety, the supernal realms and the lowly realms, and these realms have no possibility of continued being without it; everything needs kindness, and kindness has no end or boundary (*Kisvei Rabbeinu Bachya* p. 327). The numerical value of kindness (*חסד*), the performance of kindness, is equal to that of *תורה*, *Torah* (*Shelah*, cited in *Be’er Moshe, Devarim* i p. 222).

21. Although there are earlier verses that refer to acts of kindness (e.g. וַיְבִיאָהּ אֶל־אָדָם, *and He brought her to Adam* (*Genesis* 2:22) which refers to the wedding arrangements God made for Adam [see *Berachos* 61a])

our Gemara chose this later verse (the skin garments) for it demonstrates a greater degree of kindness; for God performed this kindness for Adam and Eve after they sinned (*Toras HaKenaos*).

22. There are several difficulties with R’ Simlai’s teaching which the commentators discuss at length. *Geon Yaakov* points out the following: (a) How can R’ Simlai ask why Moses desired to enter Eretz Yisrael? The great merit of living in Eretz Yisrael is well-established (see *Kesubos* 110b-112b) and the Patriarchs, Tannaim [and all the righteous men between and after] desired to dwell there! (b) The response of the Holy One, Blessed is He, to Moses (“Do you seek anything other than to gain reward?”) seems odd: Was that Moses’ spiritual level? Could it be that the supreme prophet served his Master only for the sake of attaining payment, Heaven forbid? (see *Pirkei Avos* 1:3). (c) Finally, the phrasing of Moses’ comment, “I will enter the Land so that all [the mitzvos] will be fulfilled through me,” is awkward. He should have said simply, “so that I may fulfill all [the mitzvos].”

Geon Yaakov offers the following approach: It is certainly a great mitzvah to dwell in Eretz Yisrael, to observe the attendant halachos and to partake of its holiness. But Moses did not beseech God to allow him to dwell there, since he knew that the decree had already been issued and so dwelling in Eretz Yisrael was out of the question. Moses asked only, “Let me now cross and see the Land” (*Deuteronomy* 3:25). Moses wished only to enter the Land and see it [for a short time]. It is in this context that R’ Simlai presents his question: It would make perfect sense if Moses wanted to ascend to Eretz Yisrael and settle there permanently; this was the goal of the Patriarchs as well. But why, R’ Simlai asks, would he want to merely visit without being able to live there? This would be comparable to entering an orchard, tasting its fruits and leaving. Is that what Moses desired? Certainly not.

What Moses *did* desire, R’ Simlai explains, was the spiritual betterment of other Jews. He was not content with the spiritual perfection he had achieved himself, but he wished to help other Jews perfect themselves as well. He therefore urged other Jews to observe the mitzvos that were incumbent upon them whenever the opportunity arose. However, there was a large segment of mitzvos regarding which Moses would not have the chance to prompt his people: the mitzvos dependent upon the Land. Therefore, he wished to enter Eretz Yisrael briefly to do all he could so that they should observe these laws, and then he would leave. In this way, all the mitzvos would be fulfilled *through* him.

The Holy One, Blessed is He responded: All you want is to receive a reward, i.e. not a reward in this world or the next, but to earn the merit of fostering the observance of the mitzvos dependent on the Land. If that is what you want, then I reckon it as if you had performed them, i.e. as if all the Jews will perform and uphold the mitzvos because of you, and

WITH THOSE WHO TRANSGRESS HIS WILL, קל נחומר על עושי רצונו
 – HOW MUCH MORE SO WITH THOSE WHO FULFILL HIS WILL!¹⁰

The Gemara is bothered by R' Eliezer's concluding statement:
 וממאי משום דחטה הוא – **And from where** does he know **that the**
reason she is prodded to confess **is that [the Torah] is sparing** of

her life? דילמא בי היכי דלא תימחק מגילה – **Perhaps** it is **in**
order to prevent the scroll containing God's Name **from being**
erased!¹¹ – ? –

The Gemara answers:
 קטבר – [R' Eliezer] holds that

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10. [She will only die] if she transgressed God's will and sinned [for if she is innocent the waters will not harm her. Yet still] the Torah seeks ways and means to encourage her to confess and not die (*Rashi*). If the Torah is so solicitous with the lives of the wicked, how much more so does it value the lives of the righteous!

11. If the *sotah* confesses, the process – which involves the erasure of God's Name in water – is automatically halted (see Mishnah below, 20a). How do we know, then, that it is not to prevent this terrible desecration of God's Name that her admission is sought?

הוא – משקה ואחר כך מקריב את מנחתה – [the Kohen] gives her to drink first and afterwards offers her *minchah*.^[1] דאי – משום מגילה – So that if you think that our concern is on account of the scroll, i.e. to prevent it from being erased, היא אימחוקא – why, it was already erased beforehand. Yet still we leave the *minchah* in her hands to tire her out.^[2] R' Eliezer therefore is forced to conclude that the reason is in order to spare her life.^[3]

The Mishnah stated:

כל המנחות בו – ALL MINCHAH OFFERINGS etc. [are brought in sacred service vessels].

The Gemara asks:

But contrast [our Mishnah with the following Baraisa]: סדר מנחות ביצר – WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE FOR MINCHAH OFFERINGS? אדם מביא מנחה מתוך ביתו – A PERSON BRINGS A MINCHAH FROM HIS HOUSE – בקלות של כסף ושל זהב – IN BASKETS OF SILVER OR GOLD, ונותנה לתוך כלי שרת ומקדשה – AND when he arrives at the Courtyard PLACES IT IN A SERVICE VESSEL AND SANCTIFIES IT IN A SERVICE VESSEL,^[4] ונותן עליה שמנה ולבונה – PLACES ITS OIL AND ITS LEVONAH ON IT, וכהן מוליכה אצל כהן – AND BRINGS IT TO A KOHEN. ומגישה בקרן דרומית – THE KOHEN TAKES IT TO THE ALTAR, ומביאה בדרום – AND BRINGS [THE VESSEL] containing the *minchah* TO THE SOUTHWEST CORNER of the Altar,^[5] בנגד חודה של כרן – TO THE TIP OF THE CORNER, וריו – AND THAT IS SUFFICIENT.^[6] ומסלק את הלבונה לצד אחד – HE THEN REMOVES THE LEVONAH TO ONE SIDE,^[7] וקומץ ממקום שנתרבה שמנה – AND TAKES A KOMETZ FROM A PLACE of the *minchah* WHERE THE OIL IS ABUNDANT, i.e. well mixed with the flour. בלי שרת ומקדשו בכלי – ונותנו לתוך כלי שרת ומקדשו בכלי – HE PLACES [THE KOMETZ] IN A second SERVICE VESSEL^[8] AND HE SANCTIFIES IT IN A SERVICE VESSEL. ומלקט את לבונה – HE THEN COLLECTS ITS LEVONAH, ומעלה אותו לגבי – (ומעלה אותו לגבי – PLACES IT ON TOP OF [THE KOMETZ], מזבחה) – BRINGS IT UP to the top of the Altar AND OFFERS IT UP IN A SERVICE VESSEL, ומולחו ונותנו על גבי האישים – AND SALTS IT AND PLACES IT ON TOP OF THE FIRES. קרב הקומץ – Once THE KOMETZ IS OFFERED, שנייה נאכלין – THE REMNANTS OF [THE MINCHAH] ARE EATEN. וישמן ודבש – AND THE KOHANIM ARE PERMITTED TO PUT WINE, OIL OR HONEY IN [THE REMNANTS], ואין אסורין אלא מלחמץ – AND THEY ARE PROHIBITED ONLY FROM ALLOWING IT TO BECOME CHAMETZ.

The Gemara articulates its question:

At any rate, [the

Baraisa] teaches that a *minchah* offering is brought from one's house “in baskets of silver or gold,” and only later, once the *minchah* reaches the Courtyard, is it placed in a service vessel. Why, then, does our Mishnah state that it leaves the house (“begins”) in a service vessel?

The Gemara answers:

אימא בכלים הראויין לכלי שרת – Rav Pappa said: – Say that our Mishnah means that the *minchah* is taken out in vessels fit to be service vessels if the owner were to consecrate them.

The Gemara comments:

מכלל דכפיפה מצריה לא חזיא – Implied by this is that a basket of palm bast [or any wooden vessel] is unfit to be a service vessel. דלא כרבי יוסי – In accordance with whom is this ruling? כמאן – In accordance with whom? רבי יוסי ברבי יהודה – It is not in accordance with R' Yose the son of R' Yehudah. דתניא – For it was taught in a Baraisa: כלי שרת – SERVICE VESSELS THAT WERE FASHIONED FROM WOOD, רבי פוסל – REBBI INVALIDATES them as service vessels, ורבי יוסי ברבי יהודה מכשיר – AND R' YOSE THE SON OF R' YEHUDAH VALIDATES them. Thus, according to R' Yose the son of R' Yehudah a basket of palm bast is fit to be a service vessel.

The Gemara disagrees with this inference:

אפילו תימא רבי יוסי ברבי יהודה – You can even say that the Mishnah follows R' Yose the son of R' Yehudah. אימר דאמר – Say that R' Yose the son of R' Yehudah stated his ruling regarding superior quality [utensils]; בפתחין מי אמר – did he say it regarding inferior ones? לית ליה לרבי יוסי ברבי יהודה – Does not R' Yose the son of R' Yehudah hold of the verse: “הקריבהו נא לפתחך” – Offer it, if you please, to your governor; will he show you favor or will he turn his countenance toward you?^[9]

Having reconciled the Baraisa's first statement with our Mishnah, the Gemara begins a comprehensive analysis of the Baraisa:

[THE OWNER] PLACES [HIS MINCHAH] IN A SERVICE VESSEL AND SANCTIFIES IT IN A SERVICE VESSEL.

The Gemara infers:

שמעת מינה כלי שרת אין מקדשין אלא מדעת – Learn from this that service vessels do not sanctify their contents except with explicit intent.^[10]

The Gemara counters that this is not necessarily true:

אימא נותנה בכלי שרת לקדשה בכלי שרת – Say that the Baraisa means that [the person] places [the *minchah*] in a service

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1. The Mishnah below (19a) records a dispute as to when the *sotah's minchah* is offered (*Rashi*). One Tanna holds that it is offered before the *sotah* drinks the bitter waters, while another Tanna holds that it is offered afterwards. R' Eliezer, the Gemara explains, subscribes to the view that it is offered afterwards.

2. She continues to hold the *minchah* until it is offered (*Tosafos*).

3. Only once the *minchah* is offered do the waters begin to test her (*Rashi*), as the Torah calls the *minchah* (*Numbers* 5:15): מן עין, a reminder of iniquity (*Tos. Shantz*). Thus if she admits before the *minchah* is offered, her life will be spared.

4. At present the Gemara thinks this means that the *minchah* is placed in a *kli shareis* with the intention that the vessel consecrate it (*Rashi*).

5. The Scriptural source for this will be given below (*Rashi*).

6. The Gemara will explain what else we might have thought should be done that the Baraisa needs to state “and that is sufficient” (*Rashi*).

7. I.e. inside the *kli shareis* itself. The Gemara will give a step-by-step explanation of this Baraisa (*Rashi*).

8. The reason for this too will be explained below (*Rashi*).

9. *Malachi* 1:8. This verse teaches that inferior items may not be used in the Temple service. Thus, although R' Yose the son of R' Yehudah would not disqualify a wooden vessel as a *kli shareis*, an inferior basket such as that used to carry a *sotah's minchah* would be invalid.

10. As noted above, the Gemara assumes that the Baraisa means that the one who places the *minchah* in the *kli shareis* must do so with intention to consecrate the *minchah*. If he fails to have this intention, the *minchah* will not become sanctified (see, however, *Succah* 49b-50a).

Although the owner already verbally sanctified the *minchah* offering right from the start, this declaration gives the offering only monetary sanctity (קדשת דמים); it does not gain physical sanctity (קדשת הגוף) until it is placed in a *kli shareis*, and according to the Gemara's current assumption this sanctity is actuated only through intention. The increased physical sanctity supplied by the *kli shareis* subjects the *minchah* to various stringencies: It can now become invalidated if it is touched by a *tevil yom* [one who has immersed himself that day but who still awaits nightfall] or if it is left overnight. In addition, if it becomes contaminated with *tumah* it can no longer be deconsecrated through redemption (*Rashi*).

vessel in order to thereby sanctify it in the service vessel.^[11]

The Baraisa continued:

וְנֹתֵן עָלֶיהָ שְׁמֵנָה וּלְבוֹנָתָה – HE [the one bringing the *minchah*] PLACES ITS OIL AND ITS *LEVONAH* ON IT.

The Gemara explains:

“שָׁנְאָמַר – וְיִצֵק עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן וְנֹתֵן עָלֶיהָ לְבוֹנָה” – As it is stated: *he shall pour oil upon it and place levonah upon it.*^[12]

The Baraisa stated:

וְנֹתֵן עָלֶיהָ אֶצְלַל כֹּהֵן – AND HE BRINGS IT TO A KOHEN.

The Gemara explains:

“וְהֵבִיאה אֶל־בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְגו'” – For it is written:^[13] *And he shall bring it to the sons of Aaron etc.*

The Baraisa stated:

וְכֹהֵן מוֹלִיכָה אֶצְלַל מִזְבֵּחַ – THE KOHEN then TAKES IT TO THE ALTAR.

The Gemara explains:

“וְהֵבִישה (אֶצְלַל) [אֶל] הַמִּזְבֵּחַ” – For it is written: *and he shall bring it close to the Altar.*^[14]

The Baraisa stated:

מְגִישה בְּקֶרֶן דְּרוּמֵית מְעַרְבֵית – [THE KOHEN] BRINGS [THE *MINCHAH*] TO THE SOUTHWEST CORNER of the Altar, כְּנֶגֶד חוּדָה שֶׁל קֶרֶן – TO THE TIP OF THE CORNER, וְיָדוּ – AND THAT IS SUFFICIENT.

The Gemara explains:

מִזְכָּן – From where do we know this? דְּכֵתִיב – For it is written: וְזֹאת תֹרַת הַמִּנְחָה הַקָּרֵב אֶתָּה בְּנֵי־אַהֲרֹן לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵי – And this is the law of the *minchah*: The sons of Aaron shall bring it before Hashem, to the front of the Altar.^[15] – And it was taught in a Baraisa: “לִפְנֵי ה'” – The verse states: *BEFORE HASHEM*. – On the basis of this

phrase, IT COULD BE thought that a *minchah* must be brought TO THE WEST side of the Altar (which is “before Hashem,” since it faces the Sanctuary).^[16] “אֶל־פְּנֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ” [THE TORAH] therefore STATES: *TO THE FRONT OF THE ALTAR*, which connotes the south side of the Altar (since that is the side where the ramp is located).^[17] “אֶל־פְּנֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ” – But IF one considers only the phrase *TO THE FRONT OF THE ALTAR*, כִּבֹּל – IT COULD BE thought that a *minchah* must be brought TO THE SOUTH side of the Altar. “לִפְנֵי ה'” – [THE TORAH] THEREFORE STATES: *BEFORE HASHEM*, which connotes the west side. הֵא כִּי־צַד – HOW SO, i.e. how can both of these seemingly contradictory verses be fulfilled? מְגִישה בְּקֶרֶן דְּרוּמֵית – The answer is that [THE KOHEN] BRINGS [THE *MINCHAH*] TO THE SOUTHWEST CORNER of the Altar, כְּנֶגֶד חוּדָה שֶׁל קֶרֶן – TO THE TIP OF THE CORNER,^[18] וְיָדוּ – AND THAT IS SUFFICIENT. This, then, is the source for the law that a *minchah* is brought to the southwest corner of the Altar.

The Baraisa continues with a dissenting view:

יָכוֹל יִגִּישָׁנָה בְּמַעְרָבָה שֶׁל קֶרֶן – R' ELAZAR SAYS: – IT COULD BE thought that HE MAY BRING [THE *MINCHAH*] EITHER TO THE WEST OF THE southwest CORNER OR TO THE SOUTH OF THE southwest CORNER.^[19] – אֲמַרְתָּ – To dispel this notion, YOU must SAY the following: כָּל מְקוֹם שֶׁאֵתָּה מוּצֵא שְׁנֵי אֶחָד מְקַיֵּים עֲצָמוֹ – WHEREVER YOU FIND TWO VERSES, מְקַרְאוֹת – ONE that FULFILLS ITSELF AND FULFILLS THE OTHER, וְאֶחָד מְקַיֵּים עֲצָמוֹ וּמְבַטֵּל דְּבָרֵי חֲבִירוֹ – AND ONE that FULFILLS ITSELF BUT NEGATES THE OTHER, מִנִּיחֵין אֶת שְׁמֹנֵי – WE LEAVE THE ONE THAT FULFILLS ITSELF BUT NEGATES THE OTHER, וְתוֹפְסִין אֶת שְׁמֹנֵי עֲצָמוֹ וּמְקַיֵּים חֲבִירוֹ – AND WE TAKE THE ONE THAT FULFILLS ITSELF AND FULFILLS THE OTHER.^[20] In our case this rule is applied as follows: כְּשֶׁאֵתָּה – IF YOU SAY that the phrase *BEFORE*

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11. [“And sanctify it” in the Baraisa means “and thereby sanctify it.”] That is, the Torah required that it be placed in a service vessel in order that the *vessel* sanctify it. The sanctification is effective even without any specific intention (*Rashi*).

12. *Leviticus* 2:1. These actions may be performed by a non-Kohen, since the next verse states that the *minchah* should be brought to a Kohen, which implies that the actions up till that point do not require a Kohen (*Rashi*).

13. *Ibid.* v. 2.

14. *Ibid.* v. 8. [*Rashash* emends the Gemara to conform with the verse.]

15. *Leviticus* 6:7. The phrase *This is the law of the minchah* implies that the requirements of this verse apply to all *minchah* offerings (*Rashi*).

16. The Sanctuary (*Heichal*) was in the western portion of the Temple Courtyard, centered midway between the southern and northern walls; its width from north to south was thirty-two *amos* – twenty *amos* for its interior airspace and six *amos* each for the thickness of its two walls. The Altar was also placed midway between the southern and northern walls of the Courtyard, to the east of the Sanctuary (see, however, Gemara below). Since the Altar measured thirty-two *amos* square, its

western wall is called “before Hashem,” because nothing interposed between the Altar and the Sanctuary. See diagram. Although the Antechamber (*Ulam*) was built in front of the Sanctuary, its opening was also twenty *amos*, which is as wide as the interior space of the Sanctuary, so it did not block the Altar from being “before Hashem” (*Rashi*).

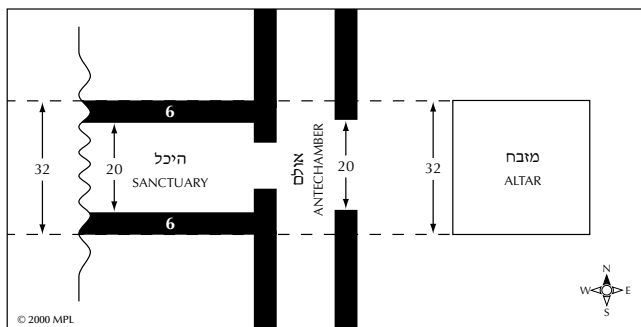
[It is unclear what *Rashi* means by this last sentence. How does the fact that the Antechamber’s opening was as wide as the interior space of the Sanctuary help to give the entire western wall of the Altar the status of “before Hashem,” when the Antechamber’s walls did in fact interpose between the thickness of the Sanctuary’s walls and the ends of the Altar? Regarding this problem, see *Rashash* and the commentary *Eeras Kohanim to Toras Kohanim, Tzav, Parshasa* 2:4, in *Tosefos HaAzarah*.]

17. The “front” of a structure is the side in which its entrance is situated (see *Rashi* to *Zevachim* 62a מְקוֹם דִּיה שְׂכַל מְקוֹם).

18. The corners of the Sanctuary are situated directly opposite the corners of the Altar. If the *minchah* were to be brought by the Kohen to the south side of the Altar, therefore, it would not be “before Hashem,” because it would be outside of the area opposite the Sanctuary. The Kohen therefore brings it to the southwest corner, thereby fulfilling both the requirement of “to the front of the Altar” and “before Hashem” (see *Rashi*).

19. Since the verse alludes to both the western and southern sides of the Altar, perhaps the law is that the Kohen may bring the *minchah* offering to whichever one of those two sides he prefers (*Rashi*).

20. This rule concerns two verses that apparently contradict each other. If one verse is fulfilled, it can be consistent with the requirement of the other verse (“it fulfills itself and fulfills the other”), but if the second verse is fulfilled it cannot be consistent with the first verse (“it fulfills itself but negates the other”). In such a case the rule is that we leave aside the second verse and take the first verse as the primary requirement. This compliance with both verses is preferable to giving the option of fulfilling either one of the two verses (see *Rashi*).



HASHEM refers TO THE WEST side of the Altar, „אַל־פְּנֵי בַטְלֵתָהּ, – YOU HAVE NEGATED the phrase *TO THE FRONT OF THE ALTAR*, which refers TO THE SOUTH side. „וּבְשֵׁאתָהּ אָמַר – BUT WHEN YOU SAY that the phrase *TO THE FRONT OF THE ALTAR* refers TO THE SOUTH side, „לְפָנֶיהָ, – YOU HAVE also FULFILLED the phrase *BEFORE HASHEM*, which refers TO THE WEST side. „הֲיֵא בִצֵּד – HOW SO? „מְגִישָׁה לְדְרוֹמָה שֶׁל קָרְן – HE BRINGS [THE *MINCHAH*] TO THE SOUTH side OF THE CORNER.^[21]

The Gemara wonders:
„וְהֵיכָן קִיּוּמָתָהּ – But how have you fulfilled the phrase *before Hashem* if you say it refers to the south side of the Altar?^[22]

The Gemara answers:
„אָמַר רַב אֲשִׁי – Rav Ashi said: „קָסְבַּר הָאִי תַנָּא כּוֹלִיָּה מְזַבְּחָהּ בְּצַפּוֹן – This Tanna [R' Elazar] maintains that the entire Altar stood in the north half of the Courtyard.^[23]

The Gemara asks:
„מַאי וְדִין – What does the Baraisa mean by: AND THAT IS SUFFICIENT?^[24]

The Gemara answers:
„אָמַר רַב אֲשִׁי – Rav Ashi said: „אִי־צָרִיךְ – It is necessary. „סָלְקָא דְעֵתָךְ אָמִינָא תִיבְעִי הַגְּשַׁת מְנַחָה גּוֹפָה – You might have thought to say that the *minchah* itself needs to approach the Altar, without being separated by the sacred service vessel.^[25] „[The Baraisa] therefore informs us that it is sufficient if the vessel in which the *minchah* is placed touches the Altar.

The Gemara asks:
„וְאִימָא הֲכִי נָמִי – But say that it is indeed so, that the *minchah* itself must touch the Altar. – ? –

The Gemara answers:
„אָמַר קָרָא – The verse states:^[26] „וְהִקְרִיבָה אֶל־הַבְּהֵן (וגו') וְהִגִּישָׁה – אֶל־הַמְזֻבְּחָהּ, – he shall bring it to the Kohen and he shall

approach the Altar, implying: „מֵה הִקְרִיבָה אֶצְל בֵּהֶן בְּכָלִי – Just as the bringing close to the Kohen is in a service vessel, „אֶף הַגְּשָׁה אֶצְל מְזַבְּחָהּ בְּכָלִי – so the approach to the Altar is in a service vessel.

The Baraisa stated:
„וּמִסָּלַק אֶת לְבוֹנָתָהּ לְצֵד אֶחָד – HE REMOVES THE *LEVONAH* TO ONE SIDE.

The Gemara explains:
„כִּי הֵיכִי דְלֵא תִקְמוּץ בְּהָרִי מְנַחָה – This is done in order that some of [the *levonah*] should not be scooped up in the Kohen's *kemitzah* along with the *minchah*. „בְּדִתְנֵן – As we learned in a Mishnah:^[27] „קָמַץ – If [THE KOHEN] SCOOPED UP אֶת הַגֶּרֶם שֶׁבָּרַח בְּיָדוֹ – AND A PEBBLE CAME UP IN HIS HAND, „אוֹ גֶרֶם מֶלַח – OR A GRAIN OF SALT, „אוֹ קוֹרֵט לְבוֹנָה – OR A PARTICLE OF *LEVONAH*, „פָּסוּל – [THE *KEMITZAH*] IS INVALID.^[28]

The Baraisa stated:
„וְקוֹמַץ מִמְּקוֹם שֶׁנֶּחְרָבָהּ שְׂמֵנָה – HE TAKES A *KOMETZ* FROM A PLACE WHERE THE OIL IS ABUNDANT.

The Gemara explains:
„מִנָּה – From where do we know this? „דְּכֵתִיב – For it is written that the *kometz* should be taken: „מִמִּסְלֵתָהּ וּמִשְׂמֵנָה . . . מִגֶּרֶם שֶׁנֶּחְרָבָהּ – from its fine (wheat) flour and from its oil . . . from its fine (barley) flour and from its oil.^[29]

The Baraisa stated:
„וְנוֹחֲנוּ לְתוֹךְ כְּלֵי שֶׁרֶת וּמִקְדָּשׁוֹ בְּכָלִי שֶׁרֶת – HE PLACES [THE *KOMETZ*] IN A second SERVICE VESSEL AND SANCTIFIES IT IN A SERVICE VESSEL.

The Gemara asks:
„לָמָּה לִי – Why do I need the Kohen to sanctify the *kometz*? „הָאִי קָדְשָׁה הָרַא זְיִמְנָא – Why, he already sanctified it one time, when the entire *minchah* was placed in a service vessel! – ? –

NOTES

21. [I.e. of the two sides of the Altar that form the southwest corner, the west side and the south side, he brings it to the south side.] He does not need to bring it to the actual corner (*Rashi*).

22. [Since the Altar was as wide as the Sanctuary and was positioned exactly opposite it, as explained in note 16], the south side of the Altar was *past* the southernmost corner of the Sanctuary! (*Rashi*).

23. R' Elazar disagrees with the Tanna Kamma's contention that the Altar was placed midway between the northern and southern walls. Rather, the Altar stood on the north side of the Courtyard, with its south side (its front) opposite the middle of the Sanctuary's opening; see diagram. The Kohen may therefore bring the *minchah* to the south side of the southwest corner, making sure, however, that he brings it toward the western end of that side, for in that way he fulfills the requirements of both verses (*Rashi*).

[For purposes of this Baraisa it would have sufficed to say that R' Elazar holds that the Altar was situated just slightly to the north of the middle of the Courtyard, because the south side of the Altar would then necessarily be opposite at least some part of the *Heichal*. However, the

Gemara (see *Yoma* 16a and *Zevachim* 59a) cites three views as to where the Altar was located: in the center of the Courtyard, totally on the south side, or totally on the north side. Since R' Elazar cannot agree with either of the first two opinions, the Gemara assumes that he agrees with the third view rather than say that he holds a totally independent, fourth view (*Rashi*).

24. What more would we think is necessary to do? (*Rashi*). [This question is asked in reference to both the Baraisa cited at the top of the *daf* and to the most recently cited Baraisa, each of which stated “and that is sufficient” (see *Rashi* above ד"ה ודיו and *Rashi* to *Zevachim* 63b ד"ה ודיו).]

25. I.e. the Kohen should tilt the *kli shareis* so that the flour itself touches the Altar (*Rashi*; cf. *Tosafos* to *Menachos* 19b כ"ה ודיו).

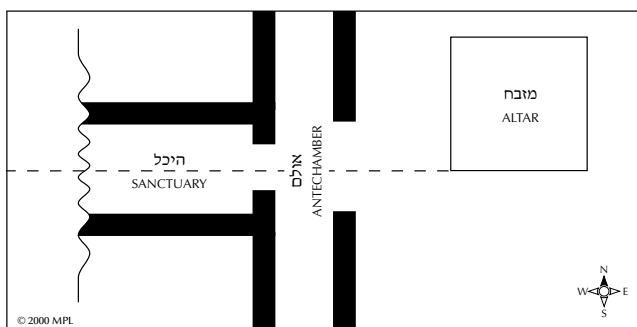
26. *Leviticus* 2:8.

27. *Menachos* 6a.

28. Because it is deficient (*Rashi*). [In order for the *kemitzah* to be valid, all the available space created by the Kohen's bending his three fingers over his palm (i.e. the *kemitzah*) must be filled by the flour and oil of the *minchah*. In this case, however, some of the space is occupied by the pebble, grain of salt or particle of *levonah*.]

[See *Mahari Korkos, Hil. Pesulei HaMukdashin* 11:7 who explains how a grain of salt could get scooped up in the *kemitzah* when the salting is not performed to the *minchah* but rather to the *kometz* after it is separated, as the Baraisa states. See also *Rav MiBartenura* to *Menachos* 3:2 ד"ה לא מלח and *Tos. R' Akiva Eiger* there.]

29. *Leviticus* 2:2,16. By placing together “its flour and its oil,” the Torah teaches that the *kometz* is to be taken from where the flour is thoroughly saturated with oil, so that both ingredients are well represented in the *kometz* (*R' Samson Raphael Hirsch* to v. 2; see also *Dvar Shaul* 17:2; cf. *Mizrachi* to *Leviticus* 6:8).



The Gemara answers:

מירי דהנה אדם – It is the same as with the blood of an animal sacrifice. דם – Regarding the blood, אף על גב דקדושתיה סכין בצואר בהמה – even though the Temple's knife sanctified [the blood] in the neck of the animal at the time of the slaughtering,^[30] הדר מקדיש ליה בכלי שרת – [the Kohen] must afterwards sanctify it again in a service vessel.^[31] הקא נמי לא שניא – Here also it is no different: Even though the *minchah* was already sanctified in a sacred service vessel, its *kometz* must be sanctified again.

The Baraisa stated:

ומלקט את לבונה ונותנה על גביו – HE THEN COLLECTS ITS *LEVONAH*, PLACES IT ON TOP OF [THE *KOMETZ*].

The Gemara explains:

“ואת כל-הלבנה אשר על-המנחה” – For it is written:^[32] and all the *levonah* that is on the *minchah*, teaching that the *levonah* is burned on the Altar together with the *kometz*.^[33]

The Baraisa stated:

ומעלה – HE BRINGS IT UP to the top of the Altar

NOTES

30. The Temple's *shechitah* knife is a *kli shareis*, as the very use of a utensil for *avodah* in the Temple invests it with sanctity (*Rashi*, based on *Yoma* 12b; cf. *Tos. HaRosh* here and *Tosafos* to *Zevachim* 47a ד"ה איזוהו; see also *Ritva* to *Chullin* 3a, *Minchas Kenaos*, *Minchah Chareivah*).

31. The blood of a sacrifice must be received in a *kli shareis*, as it is written (*Exodus* 24:6): and he placed [the blood] in basins (*Rashi*).

32. *Leviticus* 6:8.

33. [The full verse reads: *He shall separate from it with his three-fingersful some of the fine flour of the minchah and some of its oil, and all the levonah that is on the minchah, and he shall cause them to go up in smoke on the Altar*. Thus we learn that after the removal of the *kometz* of flour and its placement in a *kli shareis*, the *levonah* is gathered up and added to the *kometz* of flour in the *kli shareis* and] the two are burned together on the Altar (*Rashi*; cf. *Rashi* to *Menachos* 13b ד"ה ליקוט; see *Mishneh LeMelech* to *Hil. Maaseh HaKorbanos* 13:12).

AND OFFERS IT UP IN A SERVICE VESSEL.

The Gemara asks:

Did he actually offer it up in a service vessel?^[1]

The Gemara answers:

Rather, say [i.e. emend the Baraisa to read]: He brings it up in a service vessel in order to offer it up.^[2]

The Baraisa stated next:

HE SALTS IT AND PLACES IT ON TOP OF THE FIRES.

The Gemara explains:

For it is written:^[3] And your every minchah offering you shall salt with salt etc.

The Baraisa next stated:

Once THE KOMETZ IS OFFERED, THE REMNANTS OF [THE MINCHAH] ARE EATEN.

The Gemara explains:

From where do we know this? And the Kohen shall burn its memorial portion [i.e. the kometz] etc., and it is written in the next verse: And the remainder of the minchah is for Aaron and his sons.

The Gemara comments:

The Baraisa states that once the kometz is offered the remnants of the minchah may be eaten. At exactly what point is the minchah legally considered to have been “offered”? According to one master it is as he maintains, and according to the other master it is as he maintains. For it was stated: Regarding the kometz, at what point does it

permit the remnants to be eaten? R' Chanina says: From when the fire catches onto even a little of it. R' Yochanan says: From when the fire has ignited most of it.^[5]

The Baraisa stated:

AND THE KOHANIM ARE PERMITTED TO PUT WINE, OIL OR HONEY IN [THE REMNANTS].

The Gemara explains:

What is the reason? The verse states regarding the portions given to the Kohanim: I have given them to you *lemashchah*,^[6] which means for distinction, and teaches that the sacrificial portions should be eaten in the manner in which kings eat, i.e. with condiments.^[7]

The Baraisa concluded:

AND THEY ARE PROHIBITED ONLY FROM ALLOWING IT TO BECOME CHAMETZ.

The Gemara explains:

For it is written: It may not be baked leavened, their share . . ., and Reish Lakish said about this: This teaches that even their [the Kohanim's] share may not be baked leavened.

The Gemara analyzes the next phrase in our Mishnah:

ALL MINCHAH OFFERINGS etc. require oil and *levonah* (frankincense).

The Gemara asks:

Do all minchah offerings other than the sotah offering really require oil and *levonah*? Why, there is the minchah of the sinner,^[9]

NOTES

1. I.e. did he actually put fire in a *kli shareis* and offer the *kometz* there, or place the *kli shareis* along with the *kometz* in the Altar's fire? (see *Chazon Ish*, *Menachos* 22:3; see also *Siach Yitzchak* to *Yoma* 67b ד"ה בא"ד ולי נראה).

2. He brings it up to the Altar in a *kli shareis* in order to pour it from there onto the Altar's fire (*Chazon Ish* *ibid.*, see *Rambam*, *Maaseh HaKorbanos* 13:12).

The foregoing is the explanation of the Gemara according to the reading appearing in our texts (see *Tosafos* to *Yoma* 67b ד"ה אטו for an alternative explanation according to our reading, and see *Keren Orah* here and *Chazon Ish* *loc. cit.*). *Rashi*, however, objects to this reading, because the expression *בכלי שרת* can be understood – even without emendation – to mean that the Kohen offers it up by means of a *kli shareis* (as in fact the Baraisa means after the Gemara's emendation); moreover, this is exactly what this expression means elsewhere in the Talmud (see *Rashi* to *Yoma* 67b ד"ה ורקטירו סלקא). Rather, the proper reading of the Gemara's question is: Does the Kohen really offer the *minchah* up at this juncture? Why, he has not yet salted it, for the next line of the Baraisa states “and he salts it and places it on top of the fires!” The Gemara answers: אלא אימא מעלהו בכלי שרת להקטירו, the Baraisa means that he brings it up in a *kli shareis* in order to offer it up later, after he salts it.

3. *Leviticus* 2:13.

4. *Ibid.* 2:2.

5. [This dispute is elaborated upon in *Menachos* 26b.]

6. *Numbers* 18:8. See following note.

7. The Torah states (*ibid.*) concerning the portions of offerings that are awarded to the Kohanim: לכל־קִרְשֵׁי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֶךְ נָתַתִּים לְמִשְׁחָה, of all the sanctities of the Children of Israel, I have given them to you “*lemashchah*.” The term *lemashchah* means, literally: for anointment. *Targum Onkelos*, however, renders it לְרִבּוּ, for distinction, for he interprets it as meaning that those who receive the sacrificial portions

should eat them like kings, who ascend the throne by anointment (see *Rashi* to *Zevachim* 28a ד"ה אבל הכא).

[This exposition seems to imply that the *minchah* offering must be eaten in a way fit for kings. In fact, in a parallel ruling involving the parts of an animal given to the Kohen, the Gemara (*Chullin* 132b) states that they must be roasted and eaten with mustard, the way kings eat meat. Yet our Gemara states that the Kohanim are permitted to put wine, oil or honey into their *minchah* portion, but not that they are required to do so. See *Tosafos* to *Chullin* 132b ד"ה אין regarding this problem, and see *Nesivos HaKodesh*.]

[The Gemara below (40b) states that it is prohibited to sit in the Courtyard. Consequently, the Kohanim would have to eat the *minchah* offerings standing (*Piskei Tosafos* §10). Alternatively, included in the description of the Kohanim being given the sacrificial entitlements “for distinction” is the permission to eat sitting even while in the Courtyard, because kings certainly sit while dining (*Tosafos* to *Yoma* 25a ד"ה אין ד"ה). See *Keren Nota*.]

8. [The full text of this phrase reads (*Leviticus* 6:10): לא תִּאְפָּה חֶמֶץ חֶלֶקֶם: It (the *minchah* offering) shall not be baked leavened, I have presented it as their share from My fire offerings. According to the plain meaning of the verse, the prohibition to bake the *minchah* leavened applies to the *minchah* before the *kometz* is removed, in order that the *kometz* not be offered in a leavened state. However, in the Hebrew the term *their share* comes directly after the phrase *it may not be baked leavened*, and] the verse is therefore expounded as reading: *It shall not be baked leavened – their share* (*Rashi*).

9. This refers to the special *chatas* known as the עוֹלָה וְיוֹרֵד, variable [*chatas*] offering [literally: offering that ascends and descends; i.e. its composition depends on the financial means of the sinner]. As detailed in *Leviticus* 5:1-10, this type of atonement offering is incurred for the commission of one of three sins: falsely denying under oath knowledge of testimony, entering the Temple precincts or eating consecrated food while *tamei*, and swearing falsely (*Rashi*). Unlike the ordinary *chatas*, which must be a female lamb or goat regardless of the sinner's financial

The Gemara interrupts its quotation of the Baraisa to explain what prompted Rabban Gamliel's appeal:

היא – דשמעיה לרבי מאיר דקאמר – For he had heard R' Meir say: היא – דשמעיה לרבי מאיר דקאמר – She fed him the delicacies of the world; therefore her sacrifice is animal food.^[1] אמר להו – [Rabban Gamliel] therefore said to [the Sages]: התניח עשירה – That explanation is appropriate for a wealthy woman, who can afford expensive foods, עניה מאי איבא –

למימר – but for a poor woman, what is there to say? How do you explain the fact that a poor *sotah's* offering is also of barley!

The Gemara resumes its interrupted quotation of the Baraisa, with Rabban Gamliel giving his own explanation for the Torah's choice of barley for the *sotah's minchah*:

אֵלָא כִּשְׁם שְׂמַעְשִׂיהָ מַעֲשֵׂה בְהֵמָה – RATHER, JUST AS HER ACTIONS WERE the ACTIONS OF AN ANIMAL, כִּךְ קִרְבְּנָהּ מֵאֵבֶל בְּהֵמָה – SO HER OFFERING IS from the FOOD OF ANIMALS.^[2]

Mishnah The Mishnah continues its description of the *sotah* ritual:

וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכָהּ חֲצִי לֹג – [The Kohen] would bring an earthenware vial^[3] וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכָהּ חֲצִי לֹג – [The Kohen] would bring an earthenware vial^[3] וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכָהּ חֲצִי לֹג – and put into it half a log of water from the *kiyor*:^[4] רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר – R' Yehudah says: רַבִּיעִית – A quarter log.

The Mishnah interjects:

כִּשְׁם שְׂמַמַּעַט בְּכֶתֶב – Just as [R' Yehudah] minimizes the amount of writing on the scroll, כִּךְ מִמַּעַט בְּמִים – so he minimizes the amount of water required for its erasure.^[5]

The Mishnah resumes its description of the *sotah* process:

וּמְקוֹם הָיָה שָׁם – Vial in hand, [the Kohen] entered the Sanctuary and turned to his right. וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכָהּ חֲצִי לֹג – There on the floor was a place an *amah* by an *amah* wide, וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכָהּ חֲצִי לֹג – There on the floor was a place an *amah* by an *amah* wide, וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכָהּ חֲצִי לֹג – with a marble flagstone and a ring fixed to it.^[6] וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכָהּ חֲצִי לֹג – When he lifts it וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכָהּ חֲצִי לֹג – he takes earth from beneath it^[7] וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכָהּ חֲצִי לֹג – and places enough in the vial so as to be visible on the water, וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכָהּ חֲצִי לֹג – וּמִן הָעֵפָר אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בְּקִרְקַע הַמִּשְׁכָּן יִקַּח הַכֹּהֵן וְנוֹתֵן אֵלַיִם – as it is stated: and from the earth that will be on the Tabernacle floor, the Kohen shall take and add to the water.^[8]

Gemara The Gemara elaborates on the vial used to hold the water and earth:

אֵת הַכֵּל – A Baraisa taught: פְּיֵלֵי שֶׁל חֶרֶס הַדְּרָשָׁה – A NEW EARTHENWARE VIAL is required; דְּבָרֵי רַבִּי יִשְׁמָאֵל – these are THE WORDS OF R' YISHMAEL.^[9]

The Gemara explains:

מָאִי טַעְמָא דְרַבִּי יִשְׁמָאֵל – What is R' Yishmael's reason? גָּמַר – He expounds a *gezeirah shavah* of the words *vessel, vessel*, from the section regarding the *metzora*.^[10] מִה לְהֵלֵן חֶרֶס הַדְּרָשָׁה – Just as there, regarding a *metzora*, a new

NOTES

1. This explanation for why the *sotah's minchah* is of barley was quoted in a Baraisa cited on 9a (*Rashi*).

2. She acted like an animal in abandoning herself to cohabitation with someone other than her husband (*Rashi*), so it is fitting that her *minchah* be composed of animal food. (See *Ramban* to *Numbers* 5:15 for an original and different explanation for why her *minchah* is composed of barley.)

[There were two renowned Rabban Gamliels: One, Rabban Gamliel the Elder, who held the position of *Nasi* several decades before the end of the Second Temple era, and his grandson Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh, who occupied the same position shortly after the Destruction. It seems unlikely that either of these would have commented about a statement made by R' Meir, because R' Meir was a contemporary of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel the Second, the son of Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh (see *Horayos* 13b). Perhaps, therefore, the Rabban Gamliel mentioned here is the lesser known Rabban Gamliel son of R' Yehudah HaNasi (mentioned in *Avos* 2:2), great-grandson of Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh, who either [in his youth] heard the explanation directly from R' Meir, or else heard it repeated in R' Meir's name. Alternatively, the name Rabban Gamliel is a copyist's error and should read Rabban *Shimon ben Gamliel* [as indeed is found in *Sifrei* to *Numbers* 5:15] (see *Maharshal, Maharatz Chayes* and *Sifrei DeVei Rav*).]

3. A *phial*, or *vial*, is a container used for holding liquids (see *Rashi*; see *Rashi* to *Genesis* 40:1 חֲטָאוּ [Meiri comments that the Greek term פְּיֵלֵי used here is reserved for drinks of misfortune, as in *Isaiah* 51:17: אֵת רִבְעֵת בּוֹס הַמִּרְעֵלָה, which *Targum* renders בְּסָא דְלִנְטָא וְנוֹתֵן אֵלַיִם, the “*phialeii*” cup of curse. Cf. *Kerem Nota*.)

4. [The *kiyor* was a large copper water basin situated in the Courtyard. It was a *kli shareis* used by the Kohanim to wash their hands and feet in preparation for performing the service (see *Exodus* 30:17-21).] The Torah requires that the bitter waters be “holy waters” (*Numbers* 5:17), meaning water that had been sanctified by being placed in a *kli shareis* (*Rashi*, from *Sifrei*). Although any *kli shareis* would have sufficed for this function (see *Kerem Nota* and *Dvar Shaul* 21:1; cf. *Chidushei HaGriz*), the *kiyor* was specifically chosen because the original *kiyor* in the Tabernacle had been fashioned from the mirrors donated by the righteous Israelite women of that era, who had used them in Egypt to enhance their marriages (see above, 11b note 11). Let this *sotah*, who strayed from those women's example of marital loyalty, be tested using

that same vessel (*Rashi* to *Numbers* 5:17, from *Bamidbar Rabbah* 9:14). A half log of water was taken from the *kiyor* for this purpose.

5. The Mishnah below (17a) records a dispute as to how many verses of the Torah's passage concerning the *sotah* are to be written into the scroll that the Kohen erases into the water. Of all the opinions cited there, the one asserting that the smallest amount of writing is erased is R' Yehudah (*Rashi*). The Mishnah observes that just as R' Yehudah in that Mishnah minimizes the amount of writing, so does he minimize the amount of water here.

[*Rashi* to *Menachos* 88a חֲצִי דְרָשָׁה states that the amount of water required is *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* (cf. *Torah Temimah* to *Numbers* 5:18 §102). *Tos. Yom Tov* suggests that rather than specify a particular amount, the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* stated that the amount of water to be taken should be sufficient to easily and effectively erase the writing on the scroll. Hence, R' Yehudah, who limits the amount of writing, similarly limits the amount of water. Cf. *Chidushei Radal*.]

6. The entire floor of the Sanctuary was tiled with marble. This particular stone, however, stood out from the rest, and had a ring attached to it by which the Kohen could lift it from among the others (*Rashi*).

7. [The standard editions of *Mishnayos* have נֹטֵל in place of נוֹטֵל.]

8. *Numbers* 5:17. Since the verse does not state that the earth should be added *into* the water, but rather *קִיַּם* *בְּמִים*, *to* the water, it is implied that the earth should not be dissolved in the water, but rather should be visible in it (*Rashi*).

9. The Tanna of our Mishnah, however [who makes no mention of a new vial], holds that even a used one is valid (see *Rashi* לא שֵׁנוּ דְרָשָׁה).

10. When a *metzora* is cured of his *tzaraas*, he undergoes a process of purification described by the Torah as follows (*Leviticus* 14:4-7): *The Kohen shall command, and he shall take for the person being purified two live, tahir birds, cedarwood, scarlet wool and hyssop. The Kohen shall command, and he shall slaughter the one bird into an earthenware vessel over spring (literally: “living”) water. As for the live bird, he shall take it with the cedarwood, and the scarlet wool and the hyssop, and he shall dip them and the live bird into the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the spring water. Then he shall sprinkle seven times upon the person being purified from the tzaraas and purify him.* R' Yishmael, the Gemara says, expounds a *gezeirah shavah* from this passage to the passage of *sotah*.

earthenware vessel must be used, אף כאן חרס חרש – so here too we require a new earthenware vessel.

The Gemara proves that this is the case for a *metzora*:

דבתיב, וישחט את־הצפור האחת אל־בלי־חרש – ויהתם מנלן – And from where do we know that a new vessel is required there? וישחט את־הצפור האחת אל־בלי־חרש – For it is written:^[11] and he shall slaughter the one bird into an earthenware vessel over spring water. The Torah compares the vessel to spring water. מה מים חיים שלא – Just as spring water had no work done with it, אף בלי שלא נעשתה בו מלאכה, – so the vessel must have had no work done with it.^[12]

The Gemara asks:

אי מה להלן מים חיים – If we are deriving the laws of *sotah* from those of a *metzora*, then we should say as well: Just as there spring water is required, אף כאן מים חיים – so too here spring water is required. – ? –

The Gemara answers:

לרבי ישמעאל הכי נמי – According to R' Yishmael (to whom you are directing your question) it is indeed so: Spring water is required for the *sotah*. דאמר רבי יוחנן – For R' Yochanan said: What kind of water is the *kiyor's* water, i.e. with what type of water must it be filled? רבי ישמעאל אומר – R' Yishmael says: מי מעיין הן – It is spring water. – But the Sages say: משאר מימות הן – It may be other waters, i.e. even ordinary, non-spring water. Hence, since the *sotah's* water is taken from the *kiyor*, and R' Yishmael holds that the *kiyor* contained spring water, it emerges that the *sotah's* water was also spring water.

The Gemara objects to the aforementioned *gezeirah shavah*:^[13] איבא למפרך – There are grounds to refute it as follows: מה – What comparison can be made to a *metzora*, למצורע שכן – when he requires cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool for his purification?^[14] Perhaps that is why he requires a new vessel as well. Can you say the same for a *sotah's* offering, which does not require these items?

Accepting this refutation, the Gemara presents another source for R' Yishmael's ruling that the *sotah's* vessel must be new:

אמר רבה – Rabbah said: בכלי־חרש – אמר קרא – The verse

states regarding the *sotah*:^[15] The Kohen shall take sacred water in an earthenware vessel, which implies: בלי שאמרתי לך כבר – a vessel that I [the Torah] already told you of previously – i.e. a vessel like that used for a *metzora*.^[16]

The Gemara elaborates on the view of the Tanna of our Mishnah, who disputes R' Yishmael's opinion that the vessel must be new:^[17]

לא שנו אלא שלא נתאבמו פניו – אמר רבא – That ruling was taught only when [the vessel's] face did not become blackened from use over the fire, אבל נתאבמו פניו פסולין – but if its face became blackened, it is invalid. – מאי טעמא – What is the reason? דומיא דמים – Because the vessel has to be similar to the water. – מה מים שלא נשתנו – Just as the water was not changed, אף בלי שלא נשתנה – so the vessel can not have been changed.^[18]

A question is raised:

נתאבמו והחזירן לתוך כבשן האש – בעי רבא – Rava inquired: If [the vessels] became blackened, and he then returned them to the fiery furnace and they became whitened again, what is [the law]?^[19] מי אמרינן בינן דאיכדחו איכדחו – Do we say that once they were rejected they remain rejected? או דילמא בינן דהדרור הדרור – Or perhaps since they have returned to their original whiteness, they have returned to their status of validity?^[20]

The Gemara responds:

רבי אלעזר אומר – Come, learn a proof from a Baraisa: רבי אלעזר אומר – CEDARWOOD, HYSSOP AND SCARLET WOOL – WITH WHICH HE SLUNG HIS BOX BEHIND HIM – פסולין – ARE INVALID, because they were bent out of shape.^[21] – והא היתם הדרני ומפשטי – Now there they will be straightened out again. We thus see that once an object becomes invalid, it remains so, even though the cause of the invalidation is corrected.

The Gemara rejects the proof:

התם דאיכלוף איקלופי – There, we can say that they were peeled off (i.e. physically damaged) through the burden. This change cannot be corrected.

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11. *Leviticus* 14:5.

12. [The verse should have said: “into spring water in an earthenware vessel.” By inverting the order, the Torah indicates that the vessel is to be compared to the water (*Malbim* and *Torah Temimah* ad loc.). Just as the water is pristine,] for it is called *חיים*, *living* (*Rashi*), which implies pristine – and if work was done with it, it is no longer pristine – so too the vessel must be “pristine,” i.e. never before used (see *Dvar Shaul* 21:7; see also *Kehillos Yaakov* to *Berachos* §22; cf. *Chazon Ish*, *Negaim* 11:1). Cf. *Rambam*, *Hil. Tumas Tzaraas* 11:1 and *Kesef Mishneh* in the name of *Mahari Korkos*.

13. [This objection follows the opinion that a *gezeirah shavah* whose component words are not superfluous is subject to refutation (see *Tosafos*).]

14. See verses cited in note 10.

15. *Numbers* 5:17.

16. *Rabbah* maintains that in giving its instructions for the preparation of the *sotah's* potion, the verse should have stated “he shall take an earthenware vessel and put water in it” [thereby intimating that the earthenware vessel had not been previously mentioned]. By stating instead that the Kohen “shall take holy water in an earthenware vessel,” the Torah implies that this type of vessel had been spoken of earlier. That is, the Kohen should put water in the same type of vessel as was mentioned in regard to the *metzora*, viz. a new one (*Rashi*).

17. The Rabbis of our Mishnah [i.e. the Tanna Kamma] did not specify that the earthenware vessel be new, because they hold that even an old one is valid (*Rashi*). [See *Rambam*, *Hil. Sotah* 3:9 with *Kesef Mishneh* for a different approach to our Gemara. See also *Keren Orah*.]

18. Even though the Rabbis do not require the *sotah's* earthenware vessel to be new (because they do not expound the laws of *sotah* from the laws of *metzora*), they nevertheless require that it not be blackened from use. This is so because they derive the laws of the *sotah's* vessel from the water used for the *sotah*. Although the Rabbis do not require spring water for this purpose, they do require that the water not have changed in appearance from ordinary water. Accordingly, the vessel, too, which is compared to the water, may not have changed in appearance from when it was produced (*Rashi*; cf. *Tosafos*; see *Nesivos HaKodesh*).

[Above in note 12 in regard to the *metzora* it was mentioned that the grounds for comparing the vessel to the water emerge from an oddity in the syntax of the verse. Here, however, regarding the *sotah* there seems to be no such syntactical oddity. Perhaps, therefore, the present comparison is not a true Biblical derivation but merely an *asmachta* (*Toras HaKenaos*).]

19. That is, they were placed in a kiln in which new earthenware vessels are fired (*Rashi*), which will restore them to their pristine state.

20. [This issue of whether once something that became rejected can ever be used again is apparently addressed concerning other areas of halachah. See *Tosafos* along with *Minchas Kenaos* and *Chazon Ish*, *Yadayim* 5:15 for why this issue is discussed specifically here.]

21. [He used the cedarwood, hyssop or scarlet wool to suspend his load over his shoulder.] Since the Baraisa did not simply state that they were used for work, it is apparent that merely working with them does not invalidate them. Rather, they became invalidated because they were bent out of shape from the burden (*Rashi*).

The Mishnah stated:

נכנס להיכל ופנה לימינו וכו' – [THE KOHEN] ENTERED THE SANCTUARY AND TURNED TO HIS RIGHT etc.

The Gemara explains:

מאי טעמא – What is the reason?^[22] דאמר מר – For the master said in a Baraisa: כל פינות שאתה פונה – ALL TURNS THAT YOU MAKE לא יהו אלא דרך ימין – SHOULD BE ONLY TO THE RIGHT.^[23]

The Mishnah stated:

מקום היה שם אמה כו' – THERE on the floor WAS A SPOT AN AMAH etc. [by an amah wide].

The Gemara elaborates:

ומן העפר אשר – The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: ומן העפר אשר – The verse states that the Kohen should take: FROM THE EARTH THAT WILL BE on the Tabernacle floor. Had the verse stated only “from the earth that will be in the Tabernacle,” without adding “floor,”^[24] יכול יתקן מבחוץ ויבניס – IT COULD HAVE BEEN thought THAT [THE KOHEN] COULD PREPARE the earth OUTSIDE the

Sanctuary AND BRING it IN.^[25] “בקרקע המשכן” – [THE TORAH] therefore STATES: ON THE TABERNACLE FLOOR. אי “בקרקע המשכן” – And IF the verse had stated only: ON THE TABERNACLE FLOOR, without the words “that will be,” יכול יחפור – IT COULD HAVE BEEN thought THAT HE SHOULD DIG WITH SPADES to obtain that earth.^[26] “אשר יהיה” – [THE TORAH] therefore STATES: THAT WILL BE, implying that the earth need not have always been there.^[27] היא ביצר – HOW IS THIS? יש שם הבא – If THERE IS earth already THERE, TAKE it; אין שם תן שם – if THERE IS NONE THERE, PLACE some THERE.^[28]

The Gemara cites a dissenting opinion:

וימן העפר אשר – It was taught in another Baraisa: ומן העפר אשר – The verse states that the Kohen should take: FROM THE EARTH THAT WILL BE etc. מלמד שהיה מתקן מבחוץ ומבניס – THIS TEACHES THAT HE MAY PREPARE earth OUTSIDE the Sanctuary AND BRING it IN.^[29] “בקרקע המשכן” – When the verse continues: ON THE TABERNACLE FLOOR,^[30] איסי בן יהודה אומר – ISIBEN YEHUDAH SAYS: להביא קרקע – It serves to INCLUDE THE FLOOR

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22. He obviously turned right, because that is where the special marble stone with the ring was located (see *Be'er Sheva*). The Gemara means to ask why they placed that stone on the right side of the Temple (see *Minchah Chareivah* and *Dvar Shaul* 22:1).

23. A Baraisa quoted in *Yoma* 58b and *Zevachim* 62b derives this from a verse describing the basin that King Solomon built for the Temple (*Rashi*). [See *Be'er Sheva* for a lengthy essay about how this principle applies to various areas of Jewish law such as waving the *lulav* and lighting the Chanukah lights. See also *Teshuvos Chasam Sofer, Orach Chaim* §187.]

24. *Rashi*, as explained by *Hagahos HaBach*.

25. As long as the earth entered [the airspace of] the Sanctuary, that would be sufficient. [There would be no need to take earth that was part of the floor, or that had been temporarily placed on the floor] (*Rashi*).

26. If the Kohen did not find loose earth ready to take from the floor, he would have to use a spade to obtain some earth from the floor (*Rashi*).

27. The phrase “that will be” implies that it is sufficient if the earth is on the Tabernacle floor for only a short time (*Rashi*, with *Hagahos HaBach*).

28. Thus, the combination of the two phrases teaches that it is preferable to take earth that was already on the floor of the Sanctuary.

But if there is none there, earth may be taken from the outside and placed on the floor for a short time rather than having to use a spade to dig the earth from the Sanctuary floor (*Dvar Shaul* 22:2, in explanation of *Rashi*).

[It should be noted that although *Rashi* seems to understand the verse to be teaching that we are not required to dig out dirt from the Sanctuary floor when no loose earth is found, *Rambam (Hil. Sotah* 4:13) and *Meiri* write that it is forbidden to dig with a spade in the Sanctuary. See *Minchas Sotah* (16a) and *Toras HaKenaos* for further discussion.]

29. Since the verse does not state simply: “and from the Tabernacle floor” [but rather adds “that will be”], we learn that it is not imperative that the earth be on the floor. The Kohen may therefore prepare earth outside the Sanctuary, bring it in, and put it into the water, without first placing it on the ground (*Rashi*; cf. *Tos. HaRosh, Malbim*). [In this way this Tanna agrees with the Tanna of the previous Baraisa; that is, he infers from the phrase *that will be* that it is sufficient for the dirt to be in the airspace of the Sanctuary. His dissent with the Tanna of the previous Baraisa centers on his exposition of the term *floor*, as he proceeds to state (see *Dvar Shaul* *ibid.*.)]

30. This phrase seems superfluous, since we derive from the phrase *that will be* that it is not necessary for the earth to be taken from the floor of the Tabernacle (*Rashi*).

of the Sanctuaries in SHILOH, NOV AND GIVEON, AND of THE ETERNAL HOUSE [the Temple in Jerusalem].^[1] איסי בן מנחם אומר – ISI BEN MENACHEM SAYS: אינו צריך – IT IS NOT NECESSARY to include the Temple through this verse, for its inclusion may be derived through logic. ומה – IF CONCERNING A LENIENT *TUMAH*, i.e. entering the Temple while *tamei*,^[2] SCRIPTURE DID NOT DISTINGUISH between the Mishkan and the Temple,^[3] בטומאת אשת איש חמורה לא כל שכן – THEN CONCERNING THE SEVERE *TUMAH* OF A MARRIED WOMAN, IS IT NOT CERTAINLY SO?^[4] מה תלמוד לומר „בקרקע המשכן“ – IF SO, WHAT DOES [THE TORAH] TEACH with the words ON THE FLOOR OF THE MISHKAN? שלא יביא מתוך קופתו – THAT HE SHOULD NOT BRING earth in FROM HIS BOX.^[5]

The Gemara elaborates on the earth needed for the *sotah* ritual: איבעיא להו – They inquired: אין שם עפר – If there is no earth there, מהו שיתן אפר – what is [the law] as to whether [the Kohen] may place ashes in the water instead? אליבא דבית – According to the view of Beis Shammai you need not inquire, – דאמרי לא מצינו אפר שקרוי עפר – for they say elsewhere that we do not find ashes to be called earth.^[6] כי תיבעי לך – When should you inquire? אליבא

– According to the view of Beis Hillel, who say that we find ashes to be called earth. What would Beis Hillel hold regarding using ashes for a *sotah*? אף על גב דאיכרי עפר – Would they say that even though [ashes] are called earth, בקרקע המשכן כתוב – here it is written: on the floor of the Tabernacle, and that superfluous phrase excludes ashes?^[7] בקרקע הא, דילמא האי – Or perhaps this phrase on the floor of the Tabernacle – comes to teach the ruling of Isi ben Yehudah or of Isi ben Menachem, as stated in the previously cited Baraisa, and therefore cannot be used to exclude ashes. – ? –

The Gemara attempts a resolution: דאמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי – Come, learn a proof. תא שמע – For R' Yochanan stated in the name of R' Yishmael: In three places a *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* undermines^[8] i.e. overrides the simple meaning of the verse: התורה אמרה „בעפר“ – The Torah stated that the blood of a slaughtered non-domestic animal or bird should be covered with earth,^[9] והלכה בכל דבר – but the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* states that it may be covered with anything.^[10] התורה אמרה „בתער“ – The Torah stated that a *nazir* may not cut his hair with a razor,^[11] והלכה בכל

NOTES

1. Fourteen years after the Jews entered the Holy Land, the Tabernacle was erected in Shiloh. It stood there for over three centuries until it was destroyed by the Philistines, at which time a new Tabernacle was erected in Nov, and then again, when that one was destroyed, in Giveon. Finally, the Temple was erected in Jerusalem (*Zevachim* 118b). [The Temple is called “the Eternal House” because once it was established no offerings were permitted to be brought in any other place; and also because once the Temple was built, God never caused His *Shechinah* to rest in any other location (*Rashi*).]

The Tabernacle in Shiloh differed significantly from its counterpart in the Wilderness. While both Tabernacles were roofed over with curtains, the Wilderness Tabernacle, which was designed to be portable, was made of detachable wooden beams, whereas the one in Shiloh was a stone structure (*Mishnah*, *Zevachim* 112b). Accordingly, since the Torah speaks of taking earth for the *sotah* from “the floor of the Mishkan,” and the term “Mishkan” implies a temporary structure, we would have thought that the *sotah* could not be given to drink in the more permanent structure of Shiloh – and surely not in the very permanent structure of the Temple. We might also have thought that the *sotah* could not be given to drink in Nov and Giveon, because although the Tabernacles there were as temporary as that in the Wilderness, they did not possess the same sanctity, for the Holy Ark did not reside within them. The superfluous word *floor* thus teaches that the *sotah* may be given to drink even in Shiloh, Nov and Giveon, and the Temple (*Tos. HaRosh* here, *Tos. Yeshanim* to *Yoma* 44a שילה דר).]

[The above explanation accords with our reading of the Gemara. *Rashi*, however, deletes the words “Shiloh, Nov and Giveon,” because the Sanctuary in Shiloh was in fact called “Mishkan” (as we find in *Psalms* 78:60: and He abandoned the Mishkan of Shiloh), and therefore needs no special verse to include it. And the Tabernacles in Nov and Giveon were in fact *not* suitable for giving *sotahs* to drink, because the altar in each of those places had the status of only a *bamah*, since the Ark was not there. Therefore, the *sotah's minchah* – which is critical to the *sotah* rite – could not be offered there, because it is a private obligatory offering, and the law is that private offerings that do not have a specific time at which they must be offered may not be brought at a *bamah*. Rather, the Baraisa should read as it appears in *Sifrei* to this verse: to include the floor of the Eternal House, i.e. the Temple, because the Temple is called “Mikdash” and not “Mishkan.” Cf. *Tosafos* לרבות דר”ה ובית עולמים]

2. Entering the Mishkan or Temple while *tamei* is considered a “lenient” *tumah* because it is not subject to capital punishment, but only to *kares* (*Rashi*; cf. *Emek HaNetziv* to *Sifrei*).

3. For in *Numbers* Ch. 19 there is a separate verse forbidding entry into each location (*Rashi*, from *Shevuos* 16b).

4. The Temple should certainly be equal to the Mishkan insofar as testing and purging the *sotah* from within it (*Rashi*). [One who commits a severe, perverse type of sin brings *tumah* upon himself. If he then enters the Temple, he contaminates that holy place (see *Ramban* to *Leviticus* 18:21). It follows, therefore, that if the Temple is equal to the Mishkan insofar as one who possesses a weaker form of contamination, (such as bodily *tumah*), is forbidden to enter, then certainly it is equal to the Mishkan insofar as testing and expelling an adulteress, who possesses a far fouler form of *tumah*.]

5. That is, he may not take earth from his box outside the Temple [people generally maintained a box of earth in their homes for covering filth on their earthen floors], put it in a vessel, and bring it into the Sanctuary to use. Rather, he must take the earth from the floor of the Sanctuary. And if no earth is present there, he must bring earth from the outside and place it on the Sanctuary floor, and only then use it for the *sotah* process. In this way both phrases: “on the floor of the Mishkan” and “that will be” are fulfilled – as explained in the previously cited Baraisa (*Rashi*). [Isi ben Menachem’s opinion is thus identical with that of the previous Baraisa (*Rashi* to 15b אידך תניא אידך).]

6. [There is a mitzvah to cover the blood of a slaughtered kosher bird or non-domesticated beast (*chayah*) with earth (כפוי הדם).] In *Chullin* (88b), Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel disagree as to whether ashes can be used in place of earth for this requirement. The dispute is based on the verse (*Numbers* 19:17): ולקחו לשמא מעפר שרפת החטא, And they shall take for the *tamei* person some of the ashes of the burning of the *chata*s (i.e. *parah adumah*). Since the term עפר (literally: earth) is used in this verse for “ashes,” Beis Hillel infer that ashes can also be used whenever Scripture requires earth. Beis Shammai disagree, because that verse calls the ashes שרפה (“dust of burning”). Where the Torah uses the word עפר alone, however, it refers specifically to earth and not ashes (*Rashi*).

7. The phrase on the floor of the Mishkan is superfluous, because the phrase that will be teaches that it is not necessary to dig earth from the Mishkan floor. The phrase on the floor of the Mishkan must therefore be teaching that only something similar to the floor of the Mishkan may be used for the *sotah* [i.e. earth, but not ashes] (*Rashi*).

8. [The word עקב means heel; thus, the Gemara means that the basic meaning of the verse, upon which it stands, is negated by the halachah.]

9. *Leviticus* 17:13. The Torah does not mention any other substance that may be used for performing this commandment (*Rashi*).

10. That is, with anything in which plants can grow, such as orpiment, lime, ground earthenware or crushed brick (*Rashi*, from *Chullin* 88a,b).

11. *Numbers* 6:5: All the days of his nazirite vow a razor shall not pass over his head.

דָּבָר – but the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* states that he may not cut it with anything.^[12] “הַתּוֹרָה אָמְרָה, סֵפֶר” – The Torah stated that a *get* should be written on a [parchment] document,^[13] וְהִלְכָה בְּכָל דָּבָר – but the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* states that it may be written on anything.^[14]

The Gemara now articulates its proof:

וְאִם אֵימָא – And if it is true that ashes may be used for the *sotah* procedure, לִיהֹשֵׁב נָמִי הָאִי – let [R’ Yishmael] also count this law!^[15]

The Gemara rejects this proof:

[R’ Yishmael] taught only some of the cases in which a *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* undermines a verse, and left out others. Thus, his failure to list this case of *sotah* does not prove anything.

The Gemara asks:

וּמַאי שְׁיִיר דְּהָאִי שְׁיִיר – What else did [R’ Yishmael] leave out that you may justifiably claim that he left out this case as well?^[16]

The Gemara answers:

וְהִתְנַיָּא – He left out also the case of a *metzora*. שְׁיִיר מִצְוָה – For it was taught in a Baraisa regarding the second shaving of a *metzora*:^[17] “וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי יִגְלַח אֶת כָּל־שְׁעָרוֹ” – The verse states:^[18] AND IT SHALL BE ON THE SEVENTH DAY, HE SHALL SHAVE ALL HIS HAIR; כָּל־ל – here [THE TORAH] HAS GENERALIZED,

וְאָתָּה – implying that the *metzora*’s entire body must be shaved. רִאשׁוֹ וְאֶת־זָקְנוֹ וְאֶת גְּבַת עֵינָיו” – The verse continues: HIS HEAD AND HIS BEARD AND HIS EYEBROWS; פָּרַט – here [THE TORAH] HAS SPECIFIED, implying that only the enumerated areas must be shaved. The verse then concludes: “וְאֶת־כָּל־שְׁעָרוֹ יִגְלַח” – AND ALL HIS HAIR SHALL HE SHAVE; חֹר וּבְכָל – here [THE TORAH] HAS AGAIN GENERALIZED. כָּל־ל וּפְרָט וּבְכָל – Now, when the Torah provides A GENERALIZATION followed by A SPECIFICATION followed by A second GENERALIZATION, מַה פָּרַט מְפֹרָשׁ מִקּוּם כִּינוּס – YOU CANNOT DERIVE ANYTHING OTHER THAN WHAT IS SIMILAR TO THE SPECIFICATION.^[19] שְׁעָר וְנִרְאָה – JUST AS THE SPECIFICATION IS SPECIFICALLY A PLACE IN WHICH HAIR IS GATHERED AND SEEN, אִם כָּל מְפֹרָשׁ מִקּוּם כִּינוּס – SO TOO, ANY PLACE IN WHICH HAIR IS GATHERED AND SEEN must be shaved.

The Gemara explains:

רַבִּי שִׁיעָר הַרְגָלִים – What does [the verse] include? – מה רבי – What does [the verse] include? – It includes pubic hair.^[20] מַאי מִיַּעַט – And what does it exclude? – מיַּעַט דְּבֵית הַשְּׁחִי וְדְכּוּלִּיָּה גּוֹפִיָּה – It excludes the hair of [the person’s] armpit and his entire body.^[21]

The Gemara now explains its proof:

וְהִלְכָתָּא מִגְּלַח כְּדִלְעַת – Yet despite this Scriptural implication, the actual *halachah* is that [the Kohen] shaves the *metzora* so

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12. Even with scissors or by plucking it by hand (*Rashi*, from Mishnah *Nazir* 39a).

13. *Deuteronomy* 24:1: וְכָתַב לָהּ סֵפֶר בְּרִיתָהּ, and [the husband] shall write for her a document of severance. The word סֵפֶר (*sefer*), document, implies parchment, for in *Jeremiah* 36:18 Baruch ben Neriah relates that he wrote a prophecy that Jeremiah dictated to him from prison “on a *sefer*,” and this same writ is later referred to (v. 27) as a מגילה, [parchment] scroll (*Rashi* to *Eruvin* 15b (ר”ה ספר)).

14. On an olive leaf, papyrus, or a wooden tablet (*Rashi*, from *Gittin* 19a). Actually, each of these three laws – that the blood of a fowl or non-domestic animal may be covered with anything, that the *nazir* is forbidden to cut his hair with anything, and that a *get* may be written on anything – is derived by the Gemara (*Chullin* 88b, *Nazir* 39b and *Gittin* 21b respectively) from a specific Scriptural verse, so that seemingly a *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* should not be necessary to teach these laws. However, R’ Yishmael maintains that each of those verses is really needed to teach another law, and that the Gemara cites the verses as *asmachtas*, supports – but not as real sources – for those laws. In fact, that is why R’ Yishmael cites only these three cases as examples of the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* overriding Scripture, and none of the many other laws that are derived through Scriptural expositions [and seem to contradict the plain meaning of the verse], for those expositions are bona-fide expositions and are not mere *asmachtas* (*Rashi*; the remainder of *Rashi*’s comments here will be explained in note 28).

15. Let him list also the case of *sotah* as an instance in which the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* undermines a verse, for the Torah states that the Kohen must place “earth” into the *sotah* water, and the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* overrides the verse and permits him to use even ashes (*Rashi*; cf. *Hagahos R’ Elazar Moshe Horowitz*). And we cannot say that the Scriptural term “earth” includes ashes [so that the permission to use ashes is not an example of a *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* overriding a verse but simply the plain meaning of the verse], for if R’ Yishmael held that the word “earth” literally included ashes, he could not have listed among his three cases the fact that items other than earth may be used for the mitzvah of covering blood (*Rashi*, with emendation of *Maharsha*). [That is, although presumably R’ Yishmael agrees with Beis Hillel that “ashes are called earth” (cf. *Tosafos*), as derived from the verse regarding the *parah adumah* (see note 6), that is not to say that the actual definition of the term עָפָר includes ashes, for ultimately the word עָפָר means earth and earth alone (and the verse in regard to *parah adumah* is only an *asmachta*), as evidenced by R’ Yishmael’s inclusion in his list of the case of covering blood, where the word עָפָר is also used. Accordingly, had R’ Yishmael permitted the use of ashes for the *sotah* process, he should have listed the case of *sotah* as another instance of the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* undermining a

verse. Since he did not, we may rightfully conclude that ashes are invalid for the *sotah* water. Cf. *Tosafos* to *Chullin* 88b שוהק [ר”ה].

[The Acharonim ask, however, that the fact that R’ Yishmael included the case of covering blood in his list is inconclusive proof that the word עָפָר does not literally include ashes, for perhaps the word does in fact include ashes, and the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* is needed to teach that items other than ashes, such as orpiment and lime (see note 10), are valid for performing this mitzvah (*Maharsha*, R’ *Akiva Eiger*). See *Meromei Sadeh*.]

16. Generally, a Tanna does not offer an incomplete list when it lacks only one item to complete it (*Rashi* to *Taanis* 13b שִׁיר 13b). Thus, if we are to explain R’ Yishmael’s list as being incomplete, there must be at least one other *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* that was omitted as well.

17. Once a confirmed *metzora* becomes free of any symptoms of *tzaraas*, he undergoes a special purification procedure described by the Torah in *Leviticus* Ch. 14. Among other things, the procedure calls for the Kohen to shave the *metzora*’s entire body with a razor on two separate occasions (*Rashi*). The first is at the start of the purification (after the special sprinkling with the blood of a bird and spring water; *Leviticus* 14:4 ff). Following this, the *metzora* immerses himself in a *mikveh*, and his level of *tumah* is somewhat reduced (*Leviticus* 14:8; *Rambam*, *Hil. Tumas Tzaraas* 11:1). He now counts a period of seven days. On the seventh day he is shaved a second time from whatever hair has grown in the interim, and again immerses himself in a *mikveh*. On the following day (the eighth), he offers the prescribed sacrifices and becomes completely *tahor* (*Rambam* *ibid.* 11:2). The Baraisa expounds a verse pertaining to the second shaving.

18. *Leviticus* 14:9. The verse in its entirety reads: וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי יִגְלַח אֶת־כָּל־שְׁעָרוֹ וְאֶת־זָקְנוֹ וְאֶת־גְּבַת עֵינָיו וְאֶת־כָּל־שְׁעָרוֹ יִגְלַח, And it shall be on the seventh day, he shall shave all his hair – his head and his beard and his eyebrows – and all his hair shall he shave.

19. According to this principle, the specific places of the restrictive clause in our verse – the head, beard and eyebrows – define the first general statement, confining its application to those specific places only. The final expansive statement then serves to broaden the application of the law by a degree, to include all places that are similar to the places described in the specific statement.

The Baraisa now notes the defining characteristic of the specific items listed in the verse. Based on this, it formulates the rule that delineates which types of hair must be removed.

20. [Literally: the hair of the legs. The Gemara employs a euphemism (*Rashi*).] This hair is both gathered and readily visible (when the person stands unclothed).

21. The hair on the arms and legs, although visible, is not gathered; the hair of the armpit, although gathered, is not readily visible (*Rashi*).

completely that his skin is smooth as a gourd.^[22] דתנן – For regarding the first time the *metzora* is shaved we learned in a Mishnah:^[23] בָּא לוֹ לְהַקִּיף אֶת הַמִּצְוֹרֶעַ – When [THE KOHEN] COMES TO SHAVE THE *METZORA*, מַעְבִּיר תֵּעָר עַל כָּל בְּשָׂרוֹ – HE PASSES A RAZOR OVER HIS ENTIRE BODY.^[24] וְקִטְנֵי סִפָּא – And the Mishnah then teaches in a later clause regarding the second shaving:^[25] וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי מִגְלַחוֹ תִּגְלַחַת שְׁנֵינָה בְּתַגְלַחַת – ראשונה – AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY HE SHAVES HIM A SECOND SHAVING LIKE THE FIRST SHAVING. We thus see that the Mishnah rules that even at the second shaving the *metzora* is shaved completely – despite the verse’s implication through the *generalization, specification and generalization* that this time only the places in which the hair is gathered and seen are shaved. This, then, is another instance in which the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* overrides a verse, yet R’ Yishmael did not mention it.^[26]

The Gemara counters that this cannot be considered an omission by R’ Yishmael:

אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק – Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: בי קא חשיב הלכה עוקבת מקרא – When [R’ Yishmael] was count-

ing, he was considering cases in which the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* undermines an explicit verse; היא עוקבת מדרבנן היא – but in this case of the *metzora* [the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai*] undermines a Rabbinical exposition.^[27]

The Gemara offers another reason for why the case of *metzora* should not be considered an omission:

בי קא חשיב הלכה עוקבת ועוקרת – Rav Pappa said: – When [R’ Yishmael] was counting, he was considering cases in which the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* undermines and uproots a verse; היא עוקבת ומוסקפת היא – but in this case of the *metzora* [the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai*] undermines and adds to the verse.^[28]

A third reason not to consider the case of the *metzora* an omission:

אמר רב אשי – Rav Ashi said: היא מתניתא מני – Whom is this Baraisa, which limits the areas to be shaved, following? רבי – who expounds the Torah with the exegetic rule of generalizations and specifications.^[29]

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22. That is, even this second shaving is total (*Rashi*), in contradiction to the implication of the *generalization, specification and generalization*.

23. *Negaim* 14:2.

24. That the *metzora*’s first shave is total is beyond question, for regarding that shaving the verse (14:8) states simply *he shall shave off all his hair*, without adding any specifications thereafter. Thus when the *metzora* is shaved the first time, the Kohen certainly shaves, in addition to the places of visible and gathered hair, the hair of his arms, legs and underarms, so that after that shave the *metzora*’s entire body is as smooth as a gourd (*Rashi* שירי *Rashi*).

25. *Negaim* 14:3.

26. Although the plain meaning of the verse – i.e. the implication that emerges from the *generalization, specification and generalization* – is that only places in which the hair is gathered and visible are shaved, the Mishnah in *Negaim* rules that the *metzora*’s body is shaved in its entirety. This can only be the result of a *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* overturning the verse. [Although the Baraisa’s unqualified citation of the *generalization, specification and generalization* would seem to indicate that the Baraisa rules that the actual halachah is that only areas of gathered and visible hair are shaved, that is because the Baraisa disputes the existence of a *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* to the contrary. The more authoritative Mishnah in *Negaim*, however, which rules that the *metzora*’s entire body is shaved, apparently possessed a tradition that a *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* overrides the verse (see *Chazon Ish* §146).]

27. In the cases listed by R’ Yishmael the verse states explicitly “earth,” “a [parchment] document,” and “a razor” (*Rashi*). In the case of the *metzora*, however, the Rabbis expounded the verse (through a *generalization, specification and generalization*) to mean only places in which the hair is gathered and seen. See *Radal* and *Maharatz Chayes*.

28. That is, the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* merely adds places that must be shaved. As such, it is not uprooting anything recorded in the Torah.

[One might ask that the case of *nazir* mentioned by R’ Yishmael is also an instance of adding rather than uprooting, because the Torah states that a *nazir* may not cut his hair with a razor, and the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* does not deny this, but merely adds that he may also not cut his hair through other means. The answer, however, is that that *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* does in fact uproot a verse, because the law is that a *nazir* is flogged for his violation. Since it is Biblically forbidden to strike a Jew without cause, it emerges that the Torah forbids flogging

a *nazir* who cut his hair with a scissors or by hand, while the *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* uproots the verse and mandates such flogging (*Rashi* above והלכה *Rashi*; see there, however, where *Rashi* feels that this answer is weak, and therefore prefers an alternative version of R’ Yishmael’s teaching found in *Yerushalmi*, according to which R’ Yishmael does not list the case of *nazir* and instead replaces it with another case).]

29. [Upon occasion, the Torah pronounces a law by employing a combination of general and specific statements. The Torah might first state the law in a general, expansive way, and then state a specific, restricted application of the law. Finally, the Torah may repeat a general, expansive statement. There is a Tannaic dispute regarding the proper methodology for expounding such combinations of general and specific statements.] In Tractate *Shevuos* (26a) the Gemara explains that R’ Yishmael expounded such statements found in the Torah using the method of *generalization, specification, and generalization* (כלל ופרט וכלל), like his teacher R’ Nechunya ben Hakaneh. [This method tends to view the specific statement following the generalization as the *definition* of the broader statement.] R’ Akiva, however, followed the method of his teacher, Nachum Ish Gam Zu, who expounded such statements with the exegetic rule of *amplification, limitation, and amplification* (רבינו ומיעוט ורבינו). [This method takes the specification to be less restrictive; it does not *define* the scope of the initial generalization, but merely *limits* – or *restrains* – it to some degree] (*Rashi*).

This dispute, whether the specific statement is viewed as a specification or a limitation, affects how the law is expounded where the Torah concludes with a closing generalization. According to the פקט method, since the specification defines the scope of the law, the closing generalization serves to expand that definition to include all things similar to the specification. Thus, we read in the Baraisa of R’ Yishmael (which prefaces the *Sifra*, and is recited during the morning prayer): כלל ופרט וכלל אי אתה דן אלא בעין הפרט. A *generalization, a specification, and a generalization* – you may include only things similar to the specification. In the רבינו ומיעוט method, however, the primary legal statement was the initial רבינו, *amplification*, which was simply restrained somewhat by the subsequent מיעוט, *limitation*, to be limited to all things similar to the מיעוט. Accordingly, the closing רבינו, *amplification*, serves to expand the scope of the law further to encompass even things *dissimilar* to the מיעוט, *limitation*. The only things left excluded by the מיעוט, then, are the things *most* dissimilar to it [as determined by the Torah sages] (see *Rashi* to *Kiddushin* 21b, *Shevuos* 4b and *Chullin* 67a, and *Meiri* to *Sanhedrin* 46a).

מני כדלעת מי – And **who** is the Mishnah, which states that the second time too he must be shaved like a **gourd**, following? רבי – **It is R' Akiva**, דרריש ריבוי ומיעוט – **who expounds** the Torah with the exegetic rule of **amplifications and limitations**. דתניא – **For it was taught in another Baraisa:** “והיה ביום השביעי יגלח את-כל-שעריו” – **AND IT SHALL BE ON THE SEVENTH DAY, HE SHALL SHAVE ALL HIS HAIR;** ריבה – here [THE TORAH] HAS AMPLIFIED, implying that the *metzora's* entire body must be shaved. “את-ראשו ואת-זקנו ואת-” – **HIS HEAD AND HIS BEARD AND HIS EYEBROWS;** מיט – here [THE TORAH] HAS LIMITED, implying that only the enumerated areas must be shaved. The verse then concludes: “ואת-כל-שעריו יגלח” – **AND ALL HIS HAIR SHALL HE SHAVE;** הור וריבה – here [THE TORAH] HAS AGAIN AMPLIFIED. ריבה ומיעוט וריבה – Now, when [THE TORAH] AMPLIFIED AND then LIMITED AND then again AMPLIFIED, ריבה הכל – IT HAS INCLUDED virtually EVERYTHING. מאי ריבה – WHAT HAS IT INCLUDED? ריבה דכוליה גופיה – IT HAS INCLUDED the hair of HIS ENTIRE BODY. ומאי מיעוט – AND WHAT HAS IT EXCLUDED?^[2] שיער – **AND WHAT HAS IT EXCLUDED?**^[2] שבתוך החוטם – IT HAS EXCLUDED THE HAIR INSIDE THE NOSE.^[3]

The Gemara returns to its question of whether ashes may be used for the *sotah* process:

מאי הוי עלה – **What was decided regarding [the matter]?**^[4]

The Gemara answers:

תא שמע – **Come, learn** the resolution. דאמר רב הונא בר אשי – **For Rav Huna bar Ashi said in the name of Rav:** אמר רב – **For Rav Huna bar Ashi said in the name of Rav:** מביא ריבה ורק – **If there is no earth there,** אינן שם עפר – **he brings the dust of a decayed vegetable and sanctifies it,** i.e. he brings it into the Sanctuary and places it on

the ground so that the Sanctuary sanctifies it, and then picks it up again and puts it into the water.^[5] Now, if the dust of a decayed vegetable may be used, it stands to reason that ashes may be used as well.

The Gemara rejects the comparison:

רקוביית ירק הוא דהואי עפר – **But it is not so.** רקוביית ירק הוא דהואי עפר – **It is only the dust of a decayed vegetable that is considered earth,** אפר לא הואי עפר – **but ash is not considered earth.**^[6]

The Mishnah stated:

כדי שיראה על המים – **He places enough earth into the vial SO AS TO BE VISIBLE ON THE WATER.**

The Gemara elaborates:

שלישה צריכין – **The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa:** תנו רבנן – **THREE things NEED TO BE VISIBLE:** עפר סוטה – **EARTH OF THE SOTAH,**^[7] ואפר פרה – **ASHES OF THE PARAH adumah,**^[8] מישום רבי ישמעאל – **AND SPITTLE OF THE YEVAMAH.**^[9] אפרו – **IN THE NAME OF R' YISHMAEL THEY SAID:** אף דם צפור – **ALSO BLOOD OF THE metzora's BIRD.**^[10]

The Gemara examines the view of R' Yishmael:

מאי טעמא דרבי ישמעאל – **What is R' Yishmael's reason for including the bird of the metzora?** דקתיב, ונטבל אותם . . . בדם . . . **and he shall dip them** [i.e. the live bird, cedarwood, scarlet wool and hyssop] . . . **into the blood of the bird etc.** [that was slaughtered over the spring water]. ותניא – **And it was taught in a Baraisa:** “בדם” – The verse states that the four items should be dipped **INTO THE BLOOD OF** [the bird]. יכול בדם ולא במים – **IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN thought that they should be dipped only INTO THE slaughtered bird's BLOOD AND NOT INTO THE WATER.**^[12] “במים” – **[THE TORAH]**

NOTES

1. *Leviticus* 14:9.

2. [The verse cannot include every hair on his body, since the limiting clause *his head and his beard and his eyebrows* must serve some purpose.]

3. This is the least likely hair to have to be shaved, since it is not visible at all, as opposed to the hair of the underarm, which is at least visible when the person raises his arm (*Rambam, Hil. Tumas Tzaraas* 11:1 with *Kesef Mishneh, Meiri*; cf. *Hasagos HaRaavad* *ibid.*).

Thus, the case of *metzora* is not an example of a *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* uprooting a verse, because the Baraisa which stated that the verse teaches that the second shaving applies only to hair that is both visible and gathered *disputes* the Mishnah in *Negaim* which states that all the *metzora's* hair is shaved off.

4. In the final analysis, do we say that R' Yishmael omitted the fact that ashes may be used for the *sotah* process from his list of verses uprooted by a *Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai* because ashes may in truth *not* be used, or do we say that ashes *may* be used, and he omitted it because he was not providing a complete list? (see *Tosafos*).

5. *Rashi* with *Maharshah*.

[Presumably, Rav Huna bar Ashi mentions a decayed vegetable only as an example. In fact, any item that had decayed into dust would be valid as well (*Minchah Chareivah*).]

6. Thus, ash may *not* be used.

[*Rashi* deletes the phrase *ולא הואי עפר*, but *it is not so*, because the Gemara had offered its resolution in response to the inquiry *מאי הוי עלה*, *What was decided regarding it?* and a resolution introduced in this manner is generally maintained and not refuted (see *Tos. Shantz*). Rather, according to *Rashi's* reading, from the very start the Gemara cited Rav Huna's teaching to prove that ash is *not* valid, for Rav Huna stated only that the dust of a decayed vegetable is valid, which implies that ash is not valid. Cf. *Hagahos R' Simchah MiDessau*.]

7. The Scriptural source for this was given in note 8 to 15b.

8. [The ashes of the *parah adumah* are mixed with spring water to be sprinkled on persons or utensils that have contracted *tumah* from a corpse.] The Gemara below expounds a *gezeirah shavah* linking the laws of *sotah* to those of *parah adumah*, so that just as the earth used for a

sotah must remain visible when placed in the water, so must the ashes of the *parah adumah* remain visible (*Rashi*).

9. [The Torah commands that if a married man dies childless, his widow may not marry someone from the general public, but instead must be taken in marriage by the dead man's brother (the *yavam*) in a marriage called *yibum*. Should, however, the brother not wish to marry her, the Torah provides an alternative ceremony, known as *chalitzah*, by which the *yevamah* (the widow) may be freed to marry another man. In this rite, the *yevamah* removes the *yavam's* shoe in the presence of *beis din*, spits before him, and declares: “So should be done to the man who will not build the house of his brother!” (see *Deuteronomy* 25:5-10).] The Baraisa rules that the spittle must be visible to the judges, because the verse states that (v. 9): “before the eyes . . . she should spit (*Rashi*).

10. [When a *metzora* becomes healed of his *tzaraas*, he begins his purification from *tumah* by undergoing a sprinkling ceremony. Two birds are brought to the Kohen. One of them is slaughtered, with its blood caught in an earthenware bowl containing spring water. The remaining, live bird is then taken, together with a stick of cedarwood, scarlet wool and a sprig of hyssop. These four items together are dipped into the blood of the slaughtered bird and used to sprinkle the healed *metzora* seven times to begin his purification. The living bird is then set free, and the *metzora* undergoes his first body-shave (see *Leviticus* 14:4-8).] R' Yishmael states that the spring water should be limited to an amount in which the blood of the bird will remain visible after it drips in (*Rashi*).

11. *Leviticus* 14:6.

12. The verse does not state that the items should be dipped “into the blood of the slaughtered bird and the spring water” (compare v. 51 later in this same chapter regarding the identical procedure used to purify a house from *tzaraas*). Rather, it states: *and he shall dip them into the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the spring water*. Hence, one might argue that the verse means that the dipping should be performed into the blood alone. (How this is possible when the previous verse instructed that the bird be slaughtered over a vessel containing spring water will be clarified by the Gemara below.)

therefore STATES: INTO THE WATER.^[13] **מִים אֵי מִים** – But IF the Torah stated that they should be dipped into THE WATER, **יָכוֹל בְּמִים וְלֹא בְדָם** – IT MIGHT BE thought that they should be dipped INTO THE WATER AND NOT INTO THE BLOOD.^[14] **– [THE TORAH] תִּלְמֹד לֹמֵר „בְּדָם”** – [THE TORAH] therefore STATES: INTO THE BLOOD OF [the bird]. **הֵא בְּיָצֵד** – HOW IS THIS done? **מֵבִיא מִים שְׂדֵם צִיפּוֹר נִיכָר בְּהֵן** – HE BRINGS an amount of WATER IN WHICH THE BLOOD OF A BIRD CAN BE DISCERNED. **וְכַמָּה** – AND HOW MUCH water is that? **רְבִיעִית** – A REVIIS.^[15]

The Gemara explains how the Rabbis (i.e. the Tanna Kamma), who disagree with R' Yishmael and do not require the blood of the *metzora* to be discernible, deal with R' Yishmael's proof:

וְרַבְּנָן – And the Rabbis would respond: **– הָהוּא לְגוֹפִיהָ** – That verse is needed for teaching the basic law itself, **דְּהַכִּי קָאָמַר אֲטָבִיל** – for this is what the Merciful One is saying: **בְּדָם וּבְמִים** – Dip the items into a mixture of the blood and the water.^[16] But the verse does not require that the blood be discernible in the water.

R' Yishmael's defense:

אִם בֵּן לְכַתּוּב – And R' Yishmael would counter: **אִם בֵּן לְכַתּוּב** – If so, let the Merciful One write, “And he shall dip into them.” **– „בְּדָם . . . וּבְמִים” לְמָה לִי** – Why do I need the Torah to specify: *into the blood of . . . and the water?* **לְיִנְיָר** – It is to teach that the blood should be discernible.

The Rabbis' counter-reply:

וְרַבְּנָן – And the Rabbis would say: **אִי כְּתִב רַחֲמֵנָא וְטָבֵל בְּהֵם** – Had the Merciful One written only, “And he shall dip into them,” **– הֵנָּה אָמִינָא הָאִי לְחֻדְיָה וְהָאִי לְחֻדְיָה** – I would have thought that the items are dipped into this alone and into this alone – i.e. into the blood and the water consecutively. **כְּתִב** **– רַחֲמֵנָא „בְּדָם . . . וּבְמִים” לְעָרְבָן** – The Merciful One therefore wrote: *into the blood . . . and the water* to teach that he must mix them and then dip into them.

R' Yishmael's defense:

לְעָרְבָן קָרָא – But R' Yishmael would reply: **לְעָרְבָן קָרָא** – A specific verse instructing to mix them is unnecessary, for another verse is written:^[17] **וְשָׂחַט אֶת-הַצִּיפּוֹר**,,

– הָאֶחָת וְגו' – He shall slaughter the one bird etc. [into an earthenware vessel over spring water]. Thus, the blood and water are mixed together right from the start!^[18]

The Rabbis' response:

– אִי מֵהוּא – If we derived the law only from that verse, **– הֵנָּה אָמִינָא לִישְׁחִטָּיה קַמּוֹר לְמֵנָא** – I could have thought to slaughter [the bird] over [the vessel] in which the water is contained,^[20] **– וְיִנְקִטְנָהּ לְוִירִדִין** – and to pinch the *veridin* [the main blood vessels of the neck] with the fingers so that the blood does not flow out, **וְלִקְבְּלֶיהָ לְדָם בְּמֵנָא** – and then catch the blood in another vessel. **קָא** **– מִשְׁמַע לָן** – [The verse] therefore informs us that the blood and water should be mixed.^[21]

The Gemara discusses the requirement that the amount of water be a *reviis*:

– בְּעָא מִינֵיה רַבִּי יִרְמְיָה רַבִּי מְרַבִּי זִירָא – R' Yirmiyah inquired of R' Zeira: **– גְּדוּלָה וּמְדֻחָת אֵת הַמִּים** – If the bird is so large that [its blood] overwhelms the water **– קִטְנָה וְנִדְחִית מִפְּנֵי הַמִּים** – or so small that [its blood] is overwhelmed by the water,^[22] **מָהוּ – לָא** – what is [the law]?

R' Zeira is annoyed by the question:

– לָאו אָמִינָא לָךְ – Have I not told you, **– לָא תִפִּיק נִפְשָׁךְ לְבַר מֵהִלְכָתָא** – do not take yourself outside the framework of the halachah!^[23] **בְּצִפּוֹר** **– דְּרִוּר שִׁיעֵרוּ רַבְּנָן** – The Rabbis measured how much water should be used for a *d'ror* bird^[24] so that its blood would be discernible in the water, and they concluded that that amount is a *reviis*. **– אִין לָךְ גְּדוּלָה שְׂמֻדְחָת אֵת הַמִּים** – Hence, you will not find [a *d'ror* bird] so large that [its blood] overwhelms the water, **– וְאִין לָךְ קִטְנָה שְׂנֻדְחִית מִפְּנֵי הַמִּים** – nor will you find one so small that [its blood] is overwhelmed by the water.^[25]

The Gemara returns to its discussion of the *sotah* procedure:

– תֵּנוּ רַבְּנָן – The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: **– פָּסוּל** – If HE PLACED the EARTH into the vial BEFORE THE WATER, [THE MIXTURE] IS INVALID.^[26] **– וְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן מְבַשֵּׁיר** – BUT

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13. *Rashi* emends the word **בְּמִים**, *into the water* (here and below), to read **מִים** (without the prefixed *beis*), because the verse states: **עַל הַמַּיִם הַחַיִּים**, *over the spring water*. [Apparently, the fact that the verse stresses that the blood emanated from the bird “that was slaughtered over the spring water” indicates that the dipping is to be done into a mixture of blood and water.] Cf. *Malbim* and *Torah Temimah* ad loc., and see *Rashash* to *Tosafos* (ב' *רִי"ה* מביא (ב').

14. That is, perhaps the amount of water may be so great as to overwhelm the blood and render it indiscernible (*Malbim*; *Beur of Chofetz Chaim* to *Toras Kohanim*; *Chazon Ish, Negaim* 11:2, first explanation).

15. [A *reviis* is approx. 3-5 fluid ounces.] How the Sages arrived at this measure will be elaborated below (*Rashi*).

[Of course, the bird's blood, being deep red, is capable of being discerned even in a much larger amount of water than a *reviis*. However, the Gemara means that in a *reviis* the blood will retain the appearance of blood, whereas in a greater amount it will merely color the water red (*Tosafos* [ב' *רִי"ה* מביא (ב').]

16. [By stating that the dipping should be done *into the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the spring water*, we learn that the water and blood must be mixed. If not for this verse, I would not have known this fact.]

17. *Leviticus* 14:5.

18. Once the bird has been slaughtered into the water, the blood and water are obviously mixed. Thus the present verse's intent must be to teach that the blood must be discernible in the water.

19. Literally: close to. Cf. *Mitzpeh Eisan*.

20. Thereby fulfilling the command of v. 5 to slaughter the bird “over the spring water.”

21. I.e. that the blood should be allowed to fall directly from the slaughter into the vessel of water (*Chazon Ish, Negaim* 11:2).

[See *Chidushei HaGriz* to *Rambam, Hil. Tumas Tzaraas* 11:1 for a different explanation of our Gemara according to *Rambam*.]

22. The bird has so much blood in it that the *reviis* of water into which the blood falls is totally overwhelmed [i.e. the resultant mixture looks like pure blood] (*Rashi*), or the bird has so little blood in it that the *reviis* of water totally dilutes the blood and the mixture looks like pure water.

23. I.e. not to doubt the precision of any measure fixed by the Sages (*Rashi*).

24. [The type of bird required for the *metzora's* purification rite (*Negaim* 14:1,5 based on a teaching of R' Yose HaGlili in *Toras Kohanim, Metzora, perek* 5:14).]

25. The range of size of *d'ror* birds is such that the largest among them never possesses enough blood to overwhelm a *reviis* of water, nor the smallest among them so little blood as to be overwhelmed by a *reviis* of water.

[The word *דְּרִוּר* is related to *דָּרָה*, *it lives*; the *d'ror* bird lives freely anywhere, even in a house (*Rashi* to *Beitzah* 24a *דְּרִוּר* *Ramban*, in his commentary to the Torah (*Leviticus* 14:4), asserts that the term *d'ror* bird, does not refer to a specific species, but rather to any small species of bird that lives freely anywhere. *Radak* (*Shorashim* (דְּרִוּר), however, maintains that *d'ror* is the name of a specific species – namely, the swallow (*hierondella*). This seems also to be the view of *Rashi* to *Proverbs* 26:2 and to *Gittin* 56b. *Ibn Ezra* (to *Psalms* 84:4) maintains that it is known to be a songbird.]

26. The Torah states (*Numbers* 5:17): *The Kohen shall take from the earth . . . and put it in the water*. This implies that the earth is to be put

R' SHIMON RULES it VALID.

The Gemara explains:

דְּכַתִּיב – מאי טעמא דרבי שמעון – What is R' Shimon's reason? – וְלִקְחוּ לְטֵמֵא מֵעֵפֶר שְׂרַפַת הַחֲטָאִת׃ – For it is written regarding the *parah adumah*:^[27] **And they shall take for the tamei person some of the ashes of the burning of the chatas.** Now strangely, the Hebrew word herein used for “ashes” is *affar*, which ordinarily means “earth,” not ashes. וְתִנָּא – And it was taught in a Baraisa: אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן – R' SHIMON SAID: וְכִי עֵפֶר הוּא – IS IT THEN THE EARTH [*affar*] that is taken from the burnt cow? וְהֲלֹא אֵפֶר – שִׁנְיָה הַכְּתוּב בְּמִשְׁמַעוֹ לְדוֹן הֵימְנוּ – WHY, IT IS ASHES [*eifer*]! – גְּזִירָה שְׁוֵה – SCRIPTURE CHANGED [THE WORD'S] IMPLICATION TO EXPOUND A GEZEIRAH SHAVAH FROM IT.^[28] “עֵפֶר” – IT IS STATED HERE, with reference to the *parah adumah*, *AFFAR*, “עֵפֶר” – AND IT IS STATED THERE, with reference to the *sotah*, *AFFAR*. מֵה לְהֵלֵךְ עֵפֶר עַל גְּבֵי מַיִם – JUST AS THERE during the procedure of the *sotah* the *AFFAR* [i.e. earth] should preferably be placed UPON THE WATER, אָף כֵּן בְּאֵן עֵפֶר עַל גְּבֵי מַיִם – SO TOO HERE regarding the *parah adumah* the *AFFAR* [i.e. ashes] should preferably be placed UPON THE WATER.^[29] וְזִמְנָה כֵּן הַקְּרִיבִים – AND JUST AS HERE regarding the *parah adumah* if HE PLACED THE *AFFAR* [i.e. ashes] into the vessel BEFORE THE WATER, IT IS VALID after the fact,^[30] אָף לְהֵלֵךְ הַקְּרִיבִים עֵפֶר לְמַיִם בְּשֵׁר – SO TOO THERE in the case of the *sotah* if HE PLACED THE *AFFAR* [i.e. earth] into the vial BEFORE THE WATER, IT IS VALID.

The Gemara asks:

וְהֵתֵם מִנְלָן – And there in the case of the *parah adumah*, how do we know that if the ashes are placed into the vessel before the water it is valid after the fact?

The Gemara answers:

וְתִנָּא – תְּרֵי קְרָאִי בְּתִיבֵי – Two verses are written. “עֵלִי” – It is

written that the Kohen shall place water: *upon it* [the ashes]:^[31] אֶלְמָא אֶפֶר בְּרִישָׁא – evidently the ashes should be put into the vessel first. “מֵיִם חַיִּים אֶל־בְּלִי” – But it is written in that same verse: *spring water in a vessel*, which implies that the spring water should go *directly* into the vessel, without the ashes intervening between the water and the vessel. אֶלְמָא מֵיִם בְּרִישָׁא – Evidently, the water should be put into the vessel first. הָא רְצָה וְהָ נוֹתֵן – How is this contradiction to be reconciled? כִּי עֵפֶר – If he prefers he places this one into the vessel first, רְצָה וְהָ – and if he prefers he places that one in first.^[32]

The Gemara explains why the Rabbis disagree with R' Shimon: וְרַבְנָן – But the Rabbis maintain that even in the case of the *parah adumah* if the ashes were placed in first it is invalid. אֶל־בְּלִי” – For the phrase *in a vessel*, which teaches that the water must be placed in first, is precise, “עֵלִי” – and the phrase *upon it* teaches a different point, that after the ashes are added, the Kohen is to mix [the water and ashes] together, so that the water is over the ashes (“*upon it*”).^[33]

The Gemara asks:

וְאִמָּא – But perhaps say the opposite, that the term *upon it* is the precise one, teaching that the ashes must be placed into the vessel first, “אֶל־בְּלִי” שְׁתֵּהָא חַיִּיָּתָן בְּבִלִי – and the phrase *in a vessel* teaches a different point, that [the water] must come “living” into the vessel, i.e. directly from the spring.^[34]

The Gemara answers that it is reasonable that the precise verse is *in a vessel*:

וְזִמְנָה מִבְּלִי מִקּוּם מִבְּשֵׁר לְמַעְלָה – Just as we find in all other places that the “permitter” is on top,^[35] אָף כֵּן בְּאֵן מִבְּשֵׁר – so too here the “permitter” [i.e. the ashes] must be on top.

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into the vessel after the water is already there. And since the section concludes (*Numbers* 5:30): *and the Kohen shall carry out for her this entire law*, we learn that the procedure is valid only if carried out exactly as stated in that section (*Rashi*; cf. *Keren Orah*).

27. Ibid. 19:17.

28. That is, the Torah used the term *affar* (עֵפֶר) for ashes instead of the more precise term *eifer* (אֶפֶר) in order to link the laws of the *parah adumah* to another section in which the term *affar* is used, as follows.

29. R' Shimon refers to the process of mixing the ashes of the *parah adumah* with spring water in order to sanctify the water and render it fit for purification. He uses the *gezeirah shavah* to derive that just as during the *sotah* procedure, *lechatchilah* (initially) the water should precede the earth into the vial (as the verse indicates), for the service of the *parah adumah* too the water should *lechatchilah* precede the ashes into the vessel. We do not say that the verse referring to the *parah adumah* which states (ibid.) “*and put upon it spring water in a vessel*” teaches that the ashes are to be put into the vessel first [see below] (*Rashi*).

30. As the Gemara will soon prove (*Rashi*).

31. Ibid. The verse in context states: *They shall take . . . some of the ashes . . . and place upon it spring water in a vessel.*

32. That is, if not for the *gezeirah shavah* I would have said that the contradiction in verses teaches that one has a choice as to which ingredient to place into the vessel first (*Tos. HaRosh*; *Hagahos HaGra*

to *Temurah* 12b). Now that we have the *gezeirah shavah*, however, which teaches that the water is to be placed in first, we at least maintain the verse *upon it* which says that the ashes are to be placed in first to teach that if the ashes were in fact placed in first, it is valid after the fact.

33. [The Rabbis do not believe it reasonable to resolve the contradiction between verses by saying that the Torah means to give the person a choice as to which ingredient should be added first. Rather, one verse, namely *in a vessel*, teaches that the water should be added first, and the other, *upon it*, teaches a different detail, that the contents should be mixed after the ashes are added so that the water is at least at this point “over” the ashes.]

34. [Granted that it is unreasonable to resolve the contradiction by saying that the Torah means to give the person a choice as to the order, but who says that the precise verse is *in a vessel*?] Perhaps the verse *upon it* is the one that is precise, teaching that the ashes should be put in first, and it is the verse *in a vessel* that teaches a different detail. Namely, we learn from *in a vessel* that the water may not be scooped up from the spring in one vessel and from there transferred into another vessel for mixing with the ashes. Rather, the water must remain in the same vessel into which it flowed “live” from the spring (*Rashi*; cf. *R' Akiva Eiger*).

35. Regarding the laws of *sotah* the earth “permits” the water to test if she committed adultery. Similarly, the blood of the bird “permits” the water to be sprinkled upon a *metzora* (*Rashi*). In each of these cases the “permitter” is placed on top of the water.

Mishnah The next stage in the preparation of the bitter waters is to write the oaths of the *sotah* passage on a scroll and then erase them into the water contained in the earthenware vial. This Mishnah discusses which verses need to be recorded on the scroll:^[1]

– **When [the Kohen] comes to write the scroll, from which point in the passage does he write?** – **From verse 19: If no man has lain etc.,**^[2] – **and he continues through the end of verse 20: But if you have strayed while under your husband's jurisdiction etc.** – **And he does not write the beginning of verse 21: The Kohen shall adjure the woman etc.,** – **and he writes from the middle of that verse: May Hashem set you as a curse and as an oath etc.** and continues into verse 22: **These waters that cause curse shall enter your innards to distend the stomach and collapse the thigh.** – **And he does not write the end of that verse: And the woman shall respond, "Amen, Amen."**^[3]

– **R' Yose says: He would make no break, but rather would write the entire passage.**^[4] – **R' Yehudah says: He writes nothing more than: May Hashem set you as a curse and as an oath etc.** – **These waters that cause curse shall enter your innards etc.,** – **and he does not write the end of that verse: And the woman shall respond, "Amen, Amen."**^[5]

Gemara The Gemara examines the three-way dispute in our Mishnah:

– **Concerning what point do they disagree?** – **They disagree concerning the interpretation of the following verse:** – **The Kohen shall write these curses on a scroll.**^[6] – **R' Meir [the Tanna Kamma] holds that the term "curses" in that verse refers to the explicit curses.**^[7]

– **And by writing "the" curses, with a hei, the verse means to include the curses that derive implicitly from the blessings.**^[8] – **The term "these" serves to exclude the curses recorded in Deuteronomy.**^[9] – **And by writing "these" with a hei (הַאֵלֶּה), the verse serves to exclude the commands to the Kohen and the acceptance of the oath by the woman through saying "Amen."**^[10]

NOTES

1. The relevant passage consists of four consecutive verses in *Numbers* 5:19-22. They read as follows:

v. 19: והשביע אתה הכהן ואמר אל־האשה אם־לא שכב איש אתך ואם־לא שטית: *The Kohen shall adjure her and say to the woman, "If no man has lain with you, and if you have not strayed in defilement while under your husband's jurisdiction, then you shall be innocent of these bitter waters that cause curse.*

v. 20: ואת־כי שטית תחת אישך וכי נטמאת ויתן איש בך את־שכבתו מבלי־עדי אישך: *But if you have become defiled, and a man other than your husband has lain with you –*

v. 21: והשביע הכהן את־האשה בשבעת האלה ואמר הכהן ויתן ה' אותך לאלה: *The Kohen shall adjure the woman with the oath of the curse, and the Kohen shall say to the woman, "May Hashem set you as a curse and as an oath amid your people, when Hashem causes your thigh to collapse and your stomach to distend.*

v. 22: ובאו המים המאֲרָרִים האלה במעיֶיך לַצָּבוֹת בָּטֶן וּלְנִפְלֵי יֶרֶךְ וְאָמְרָה הָאִשָּׁה אָמֵן: *These waters that cause curse shall enter your innards to distend the stomach and collapse the thigh." And the woman shall respond, "Amen, Amen."*

[It is important to note that although writing the scroll is the next step in preparing the *sotah* waters, another procedure must be done before the scroll may be written; that is, the Kohen must adjure the *sotah*, as mandated by the aforementioned verses. The Gemara below (17b) will derive that the scroll is invalid if written before the woman takes her oath (see *Mishneh LaMelech, Hil. Sotah* 3:1). The laws concerning the actual adjuration will be discussed below, 18a-18b.]

2. Although this first verse speaks of the woman's innocence, the implication is that if she *had* strayed, she would *not* be cleared from punishment by the bitter waters. This implication is considered a "curse" that must be recorded (*Rashi*).

3. According to the Tanna Kamma the entire section must be written except for the passages that are not part of an explicit or implied curse. Thus, the part of the verse that instructs the Kohen to make the woman swear [i.e. the beginning of v. 21] and the part that states the woman's acceptance of the oath [i.e. the end of v. 22] are omitted (*Rashi*).

According to the Tanna Kamma, then, the passages emphasized with bold letters are those recorded in the scroll:

[v. 19] *The Kohen shall adjure her and say to the woman, "If no man has lain with you and if you have not strayed in defilement while under your husband's jurisdiction, then you shall be innocent of these bitter waters that cause curse.* [v.20] *But if you have strayed*

while under your husband's jurisdiction, and if you have become defiled, and a man other than your husband has lain with you . . ." [v. 21] *The Kohen shall adjure the woman with the oath of the curse, and the Kohen shall say to the woman, "May Hashem set you as a curse and as an oath amid your people, when Hashem causes your thigh to collapse and your stomach to distend.* [v. 22] *These waters that cause curse shall enter your innards to distend the stomach and collapse the thigh." And the woman shall respond, "Amen, Amen."*

[The Gemara below (18a) will explain why the Kohen is instructed in v. 21 to administer the oath, when he was already so instructed in v. 19.]

4. According to R' Yose, the Kohen writes the entire section beginning with *If no man has lain* in v. 19 through the end of v. 22. No passages are omitted – even those detailing the instructions to the Kohen and the woman's acceptance of the oath (*Rashi*).

5. According to R' Yehudah, only the text of the explicit curse and the consequences of that curse are written into the *sotah* scroll. The Kohen does not write the words of v. 19 that imply a curse, and certainly not the instructions given the Kohen in the beginning of v. 21. He also does not write the woman's acceptance of the oath recorded at the end of v. 22 (*Rashi*).

6. *Ibid.* v. 23.

7. That is, the end of v. 21 and beginning of v. 22: *May Hashem set you as a curse and as an oath . . . These waters that cause curse shall enter your innards to distend the stomach and collapse the thigh (Rashi)*. [This also includes v. 20, which begins this curse.]

8. That is, v. 19: *If you have not strayed in defilement while under your husband's jurisdiction, then you shall be innocent of these bitter waters that cause curse*, which implies that if she did stray she will be cursed (*Rashi*).

9. In *Deuteronomy* Ch. 28 Moses enumerates a long series of punishments that will befall one who transgresses the Torah. Had the verse regarding a *sotah* stated only that the Kohen should write "אלות," I might have thought that he should also write those punishments in *Deuteronomy*, since they too are termed אלות, as it is written (*ibid.* 29:18): והיה בשמעו את־דברי האלה הזאת: אלה *these* curses, in our verse limits the writing to the curses recorded in the section of the *sotah (Rashi; see Rashash)*.

10. Although this is not part of the curse, we would think that it should be included, so as not to skip parts of the passage (*Rashi*).

The Gemara below will ask why the *hei* in this word serves to exclude while the *hei* in the term האלה serves to include (*Rashi*).

The Gemara expands this teaching:

בשכר שאמר אברהם אבינו – ודאשה עדיפא מדאיש – אמר רבא – **Rava said: And the wife's fire is stronger than the husband's.**^[20] (מאי טעמא – What is the reason?) – האי מצרף – Because the letters representing the fire of [the woman] are joined, והאי לא מצרף – whereas the letters representing the fire of [the man] are not joined.^[21]

The Gemara expounds another homiletic interpretation of the *sotah* procedure:

מפני מה אמרה תורה הבא עפר לסוטה – אמר רבא – **Why did the Torah say, "Bring dust for the sotah?"** – וזתה – For if she is meritorious, ויצא ממנה בן באברהם אבינו – a son like our forefather Abraham descends from her, דכתיב – ויראו כל-עמי – **It is understandable that Abraham benefited through the strap of the tefillin,** ויראו כל-עמי – **and they will be in awe of you.** – ותניא – **And it was taught in a Baraisa:** רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר – **R' ELIEZER THE GREAT SAYS:** אלו תפלין שבראש – **THESE awe-inspiring objects are THE TEFILLIN THAT ARE WORN ON THE HEAD.**^[22] לא זכתה – **But if she is not meritorious,** תחזור – **she will return to her dust** (i.e. die through drinking the water).

The Gemara presents another exposition of this verse:

בשכר שאמר אברהם אבינו, ואנכי – רבי רבא – **Rava expounded:** בשכר שאמר אברהם אבינו, ואנכי – **As a reward for Abraham having said: though I am but dust and ashes,** – וזכו בניו לשתי מצוות – **his children merited two mitzvos:** אפר פרה ועפר סוטה – **the ashes of the parah adumah and the dust of the sotah.**

The Gemara asks:

והאיכא נמי עפר כיסוי הדם – **But there is also the dust of covering the blood** of a slaughtered bird or nondomestic animal. Why did Rava not say that Abraham's children merited *that* mitzvah?

The Gemara answers:

התם הקשר מצוה איכא – **There, it is only a fulfillment of a mitzvah,** הנאה ליכא – **but there is no benefit** in this world that accrues from the mitzvah.^[23]

The Gemara cites a similar exposition by the same Amora:

בשכר שאמר אברהם אבינו – ויראו כל-עמי – אמר רבא – **Rava expounded:** בשכר שאמר אברהם אבינו – **In reward for our father Abraham's having said: If so much as a thread or a shoestrap,**^[24] – וזכו בניו לשתי מצוות – **his descendants merited two mitzvos:** חוט של תכלת – **the thread of techeiles** – ורצועה של תפלין – **and the strap of tefillin.**^[25]

The Gemara asks:

בשכר שאמר אברהם אבינו – ויראו כל-עמי – אמר רבא – **Rava expounded:** בשכר שאמר אברהם אבינו – **It is understandable that Abraham benefited through the strap of the tefillin,** ויראו כל-עמי – **and they will be in awe of you.** – ותניא – **And it was taught in a Baraisa:** רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר – **R' ELIEZER THE GREAT SAYS:** אלו תפלין שבראש – **THESE awe-inspiring objects are THE TEFILLIN THAT ARE WORN ON THE HEAD.**^[27] אלא חוט של תכלת מאי – **But what is the benefit of the thread of techeiles?**

The Gemara answers:

היה רבי מאיר אומר – **For it was taught in a Baraisa:** רבי מאיר אומר – **R' MEIR WOULD SAY:** מה נשתנה תכלת מכל מיני צבעונין – **WHY IS TEICHEILES UNIQUE** in that it was selected FROM ALL OTHER TYPES OF DYES for coloring the *tzitzis*?^[28] מפני שהתכלת דומה לים – **BECAUSE** the color of *TEICHEILES* IS SIMILAR to that of THE SEA, – וים דומה לרקיע – **AND** that of THE SEA IS SIMILAR TO that of THE SKY, – ורקיע דומה לכסא הכבוד – **AND** that of THE SKY IS SIMILAR TO that of THE THRONE OF GLORY, – ויראו את אלהי ישראל – **AND THEY SAW THE GOD OF ISRAEL, AND UNDER HIS FEET WAS LIKE SAPPHIRE BRICKWORK, AND LIKE THE ESSENCE OF THE HEAVENS IN PURITY.**^[29] וכתיב – **כמראה אבן ספיר רמות כסא** – **AND IT IS WRITTEN:**^[30] **LIKE THE APPEARANCE OF SAPPHIRE STONE IN THE LIKENESS OF A THRONE.** We thus see that God's Throne of Glory is also sapphire in color.^[31]

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20. She is more readily punished by the fire than he is (see *Rashi*).
21. The fire of the woman is more easily kindled, because no letter of God's Name separates the *aleph* from the *shin* in the word *אשה*, and the letters can thus be read *שא*. In the case of the husband, though, the *yud* of God's Name intervenes between the *aleph* and the *shin* (*Rashi*).
22. *Genesis* 18:27: *though I am but dust and ashes*.
23. The meat of the bird or animal is permitted even without the blood being covered (*Rashi* to *Chullin* 88b הנאה). Hence, the mitzvah of covering the blood cannot be considered a reward for Abraham's statement. The dust of a *sotah*, by contrast, results in the this-worldly benefit of restoring harmony to Jewish marriages (if she is cleared by the waters, her husband's suspicions are removed). Additionally, if she is in fact guilty, her death will prevent the birth of *mamzerim* [from future adulterous unions], and if she is innocent, she will bear children and the taint of *mamzerus* will be removed from her previously born children (until she is proven innocent, people will suspect that her previously born children were also conceived through adultery). Similarly, the ashes of the *parah adumah* effect *taharah* and serve as an atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf (*Rashi*; see *Rashi* to *Numbers* 19:22).
24. *Ibid.* 14:23. Abraham refused to take any of Sodom's possessions that he had rescued in war – even so much as a thread or a shoestrap – in order to distance himself from theft (*Rashi*). See next note.
- [Abraham stated his reason for declining the king of Sodom's proposal that he keep the valuables that he had rescued – *so that you* [the king of Sodom] *do not say, "I made Abram rich."* Why, then, would *Rashi* state Abraham's reason as being so as to distance himself from theft (see previous note)? Possibly, *Rashi's* explanation is in line with his commentary to this verse in *Genesis*. There he explains that in saying: *If so much as a thread or a shoestrap, or if I shall take anything of yours*, Abraham was addressing two different points. By saying *if so much as a thread or a shoestrap*, Abraham was refusing to take any of the Sodomites' retrieved wealth. Perhaps, however, the king would offer to reward him from his own

- personal treasury. To this Abraham proclaimed: *or if I shall take anything of yours*. Accordingly, it may be that it was only for this last refusal that Abraham explained his motive as being *so that you do not say, "I made Abram rich."* The reason he would not take of the rescued possessions of the Sodomites, however, was to distance himself from theft, because those items were not the king's to give away. Cf. *Eitz Yosef*.]
25. The Torah (*Numbers* 15:38) prescribes that some of the threads in the *tzitzis* be dyed with a special blue dye known as *techeiles*. The tefillin are bound to the body by means of leather straps.
26. *Deuteronomy* 28:10.
27. The verse means that when the Jews wear their tefillin on their heads, they inspire fear in the hearts of their enemies.
- [Tefillin inspire fear in Israel's enemies because a Jew who dons tefillin causes the Divine Presence to rest upon him. When other nations see this, they are awed by God's power and might (*Maharsha* to *Berachos* 6a). R' Eliezer specifies the tefillin worn on the head (as opposed to the tefillin worn on the arm) because the letter *ו* is carved on their boxes, and their straps are tied together behind the head in the form of the letter *ו*. They consequently display most of the letters of the Divine Name *שרי*. Accordingly, it is to these tefillin that the verse refers when it says, *The nations of the world will see that the Name of Hashem is called upon you* (*Rashi* to *Menachos* 35b *וה* *וה* *וה*; cf. *Tosafos* to *Berachos* 6a). At any rate, the tefillin are a benefit to Israel in this world, because their enemies are thereby frightened of them.]
28. [*Tzitzis* are intended as a reminder of God's mitzvos. Of all things, why did God select *techeiles* for this purpose?]
29. *Exodus* 24:10. I.e. like sapphire brickwork *which is* like the essence of the heavens. Thus we see that the heavens are similar to sapphire [which is bluish in color] (*Rashi* to *Chullin* 89a שהתכלת *וה*).
30. *Ezekiel* 1:26.
31. Thus we learn that whoever fulfills the mitzvah of *tzitzis* is considered to have received the Divine Presence (*Rashi*, from *Sifrei*), which certainly constitutes a sublime benefit (*Eitz Yosef*). Alternatively, the

Misfnaf The Mishnah continues its description of the writing of the *sotah* scroll:
 אינו כותב לא על הלוח – [The Kohen] does not write it on a wooden tablet, ולא על הגנייר – nor
 on papyrus,^[32] ולא על – nor on

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benefit is that when God gazes at His Throne of Glory, He is reminded of the great mitzvah of *tzitzis* [and is moved to have mercy on Israel] (*Rashi* to *Chullin* ibid. with *Eitz Yosef* here; see also version of *Rashi* to *Menachos* 43b ד"ה וריקיע printed in *Ein Yaakov*).

R' Meir could not have simply said that *techeiles* is similar to the Throne of Glory, because we know from Scripture only that the *sky* is similar to the Throne. And he could not have said that *techeiles* is similar to the sky, because they are not totally similar. Rather, the blue of *techeiles* is similar to the blue of the sea, which in turn is similar to that of the sky. And since Scripture describes both the sky and the Throne of Glory as being sapphire in color, it emerges that *techeiles*

recalls to our minds God's Throne of Glory (*Rashi*; cf. *Rashi* to *Menachos* 43b).

[In *Sifrei*, R' Meir is cited as basing his teaching on a Scriptural allusion. The Torah does not state of the *tzitzis* ויראיִתֶּם אוֹתָם, and you shall see **them** (the *tzitzis*), but rather ויראיִתֶּם אוֹתוֹ, and you shall see **Him** (God). This is because the appearance of *techeiles* reminds us of the One Who sits on the Throne of Glory.]

See *Kli Yakar* to *Numbers* 15:38 for an in-depth explanation of R' Meir's teaching.

32. Papyrus is made from shredded grass and a binding agent that gives it the same texture as parchment (*Rashi*).

הַרְפֵּתָרָא – unfinished parchment,^[1] אֶלָּא עַל הַמְּגִילָה – but on a finished parchment scroll, “בַּסֵּפֶר” – for it is stated: *in a “sefer.”*^[2] וְאִינוּ כּוֹתֵב לֹא בְּקוֹמוֹס – And he may not write with gum,^[3] וְלֹא בְּקַנְקָנְתוֹם – nor with *kankantom* (ferrous sulfate), וְלֹא בְּכֵל דְּבַר שְׂרוּשָׁם – nor with anything else that becomes absorbed into the parchment and leaves an indelible mark, אֶלָּא בְּדִיו – but only with ink.^[4] “וּמָחָה” – For it is stated:^[5] *and he shall erase*, which implies: כְּתָב שְׂיֻכּוֹל לְמַחֹת – writing that is capable of being erased.^[6]

Gemara The Gemara lists other requirements of the *sotah* scroll:

אָמַר רַבָּא – Rava said: מְגִילַת סוֹטָה בְּלַיְלָה פְּסוּלָה – A *sotah* scroll that was written at night is invalid. מַאי טַעְמָא – What is the reason? “תּוֹרָה,, תּוֹרָה,, תּוֹרָה” – It is derived through a *gezeirah shavah* of *Torah, Torah, Torah*. כְּתִיב הֵבָא,, וְעָשָׂה – and the *Kohen* shall perform for her this entire “Torah,” וְכִתְיֵב הֵתָם – and it is written elsewhere:^[7] “עַל־פִּי הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר יוֹרֵךְ – According to the “Torah” that they shall teach you, and according to the judgment. מִדָּה מוֹשֵׁפֵט בְּיוֹם – Just as judgment must be rendered by day,^[8] אִם מְגִילַת סוֹטָה בְּיוֹם – so too the *sotah*’s scroll must be written by day.

A second requirement of the *sotah* scroll:
הַתְּבָה לְמַפְרַע פְּסוּלָה – If he wrote it out of sequence,^[10] it is

invalid. “וְכָתַב אֶת־הָאֵלֶּת הָאֵלֶּה” – For it is written: *and he shall write these curses.*^[11] The word *these* implies that the curses must be written – *in the same order as written in the Torah.*

A third requirement for the scroll:
כְּתָבָה קוֹדֵם שֶׁתִּקְבַּל עָלֶיהָ שְׁבוּעָה פְּסוּלָה – If he wrote it before she accepted the oath upon herself, it is invalid. [שְׁנֵאמַר] וְאַחַר כֵּן – For it is stated first: *He shall adjure* – “וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ” – and only afterwards: *He shall write.*^[12]

A fourth requirement:
כְּתָבָה אֵינֶרֶת פְּסוּלָה – If he wrote it as a letter [i.e. without lines etched into the parchment on which to write the words], it is invalid, אָמַר רַחֲמָנָא – for the Merciful One said: *in a “sefer.”*^[13]

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- Parchment intended for writing upon is ordinarily treated in three stages. First it is salted, then it is soaked in a mix of flour and water, and finally it is treated with the extract of gallnuts. *Diftera* is that which is treated with salt and flour but not with gallnut (*Rashi*).
- Numbers* 5:23. “*Sefer*” is the Torah’s word for finished parchment (*Rashi*; see *HaKesav VeHaKabbalah* to this verse).
- I.e. gum diluted in water (*Rashi*).
- A combination of gum and other ingredients (see *Rashi*, and see *Rashash* to *Tosafos* to *Gittin* 19a דִּי רִיחָא דִּי רִיחָא; see also *Chidushei Maharit* to *Shabbos* 23a; cf. *Tosafos* to *Shabbos* *ibid.*). Ink dissolves when the paper is immersed in water.
- Ibid.*
- [The Gemara in *Shabbos* (115b) states that a Torah scroll written with gum or ferrous sulfate will not last as long as one written with standard ink. How, then, *Tosafos* (*ibid.*) ask, can the Mishnah say that gum and ferrous sulfate are not erasable while ink is? *Tosafos* answer that although gum and ferrous sulfate *fade* more quickly than ink, they do not dissolve in water, because they become absorbed into the parchment.]
- Ibid.* v. 30.
- Deuteronomy* 17:11.
- As derived by the Gemara in *Sanhedrin* 34b from the verse (*Deuteronomy* 21:16): *And it shall come to pass on the “day” in which he causes his sons to inherit* [inheritance has the force of a judicial proceeding] (*Rashi*; cf. *Tosafos*).
- E.g. instead of writing יָרַךְ וְלִנְפֹל בְּטוֹן וְלִצְבוֹת בְּטוֹן he wrote לְצְבוֹת בְּטוֹן וְלִנְפֹל יָרַךְ. He did this to the entire scroll or even to just part of it (*Rashi*; cf. *Turei Even* to *Megillah* 17b שלא דִּייה).
- Numbers* 5:23.
- Ibid.* vs. 21 and 23 respectively.
- V. 23. An oral tradition [*Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai*] requires that a *Sefer Torah* [Torah scroll] have scored into its parchment parallel, horizontal lines on which to write the words. Accordingly, the *sotah*’s scroll, which is also called a “*sefer*,” must also be so lined (*Rashi*; see *Tosafos*).