

The Weekly Daf



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Week of 23-29 Sivan 5756 / 10-16 June 1996

Menachos 37-43

Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Are Two Heads Better Than One?

"If a person has two heads — on which does he put *tefillin*?"

When this question was put to Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi (Rebbie) by the Sage Phlimo, it drew an angry rebuke for suggesting an impossible situation.

Suddenly a man came along and asked: "My wife gave birth to our first-born boy with two heads! How much must I give to the *kohen* for redemption of the first-born?"

(This case, from this week's section of Daf Hayomi, was mentioned in the "Ask the Rabbi" column of Parshas Behar-Bechukosai and dealt with at length along with the issue of conjoined twins. We will merely concentrate on the halachic conclusions of the Talmud regarding the two-headed baby.)

The ruling given to the father of the two-headed first-born was that he must give double the normal amount since the Torah commanded that the *kohen* be given "five selaim per head" and here there were two heads. Rashi explains that in the case of normal twins the father must give only five selaim because it is impossible for both babies to come forth from the womb simultaneously so that only one of them is considered "*petter rechem*" — the first fruit of the womb. In this case, however, it was possible for both heads of the baby to come out together and both therefore qualify for redemption.

This is not a contradiction to Rebbie's outraged reaction to Phlimo's question. The Talmudic guideline of "any organ which appears in excess is considered as non-existent" compels us to consider a two-headed baby as one without a head at all and therefore a "*treifah*" not capable of living out the year. Since the two-headed baby was still alive when the thirty-day period set for redemption was concluded he must be redeemed with a double amount. But no child of such a nature would survive till the age where *tefillin* become relevant and Rebbie rebuked his disciple for suggesting such a possibility.

Menachos 37a

The Constant Companion

Beloved is Israel for Hashem has surrounded them with mitzvos: 1) *tefillin* on their heads; 2) *tefillin* on their arms; 3-6) *tzitzis* on the four corners of their garments; and 7) *mezuzos* on their doorposts. In reference to this David declared (*Tehillim 119:164*) "Seven in a day do I sing praise to You about Your righteous commandments."

When David entered the bathhouse where there is no *mezuzah* and one is without *tefillin* and *tzitzis*, he sighed to himself: "Woe to me for I am naked without any mitzvah!" But as soon as he reflected on the sign of *bris milah* on his body he was reconciled and when he came out of the bathhouse he sang a song of praise about the mitzvah of *milah* which he titled a "Song to the Eighth" (*Tehillim 12*).

Three explanations of this title are offered by Maharsha:

- 1) This eighth mitzvah which constantly surrounds the Jew proved a more reliable companion than the aforementioned seven.
- 2) The mitzvah of *milah* is on the eighth day of the child's life.
- 3) *Milah* was the eighth mitzvah commanded to Avraham who was already bound by the seven mitzvos commanded to all the sons of Noach.

Menachos 43b

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