

The Weekly Daf



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Chullin 5-11

Week of 11-17 Elul 5756 / 26 August - 1 September 1996
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Bird Food

After he had pronounced a drought upon the idol worshipping King Ahab of Israel, the Prophet Eliyahu was directed by Hashem to seek refuge in a remote location where food would miraculously be brought to him by ravens. The ravens did indeed bring him bread and meat each morning and evening.

But where did they bring the meat from and how did the prophet know it was kosher?

The meat, says the Talmud, was from the kitchens of Ahab. But Ahab was a committed idol worshipper, so how could meat from an animal slaughtered by him or one of his idol worshipping servants be considered kosher?

This is proposed as a support for the opinion expressed by Rabbi Anan in the name of the Sage Shmuel that the slaughtering done by a Jew who worships idols is kosher. But the Talmud rejects this proof because the meat may indeed not have been kosher, but was explicitly permitted in this extraordinary situation by Hashem when He informed the prophet that the ravens would feed him.

Tosefos raises an interesting problem. In the Talmud's initial assumption that the meal of an animal slaughtered by an idolater is indeed kosher there is still a problem as to how the prophet could eat meat which had disappeared from sight since there is a rabbinic injunction against eating such meat for fear that the birds may have switched it with non-kosher meat from non-Jews. Tosefos' resolution is that Eliyahu relied upon the Divine promise to feed him meat that this meat would not come from non-Jews, but the Talmud initially hesitated to suggest that this promise also included a dispensation regarding the meat of an animal slaughtered by an idolater.

The distinction made by Tosefos is thus explained by Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Chayos: When the Torah wrote that "The Torah is not in heaven" it ruled that prophecy could not interfere in the halachic process delegated to human intellect. But a prophet may, through prophecy, clarify the facts of a case. The Talmud therefore assumed that Eliyahu relied on his prophecy to ascertain that the meat indeed came from a Jewish kitchen, but not to abrogate the halacha prohibiting idolater-slaughtered meat until the conclusion was reached that even the halacha was abrogated temporarily by Divine command.

Chullin 5a

River Talk

On his way to perform the great mitzvah of ransoming captives Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair found his journey blocked by the impassable Ginai River.

"Part your waters Ginai," requested the sage, "so that I may pass."

"You are going forward to do the will of your Master," replied the reluctant river, "and I flow on to do the will of my Master. There is no guarantee that you will succeed in your mission (since the captors may not consent to the ransoming – Rashi) while I will certainly succeed in mine (the Divine order for all rivers to flow to the sea – Rashi)."

Only after the sage threatened to dry up the river did it finally part its waters to allow him and his company to pass through.

The problem raised by this and other sections of the Talmud concerning speech by inanimate objects such as the river is resolved by Tosefos in two different approaches:

- 1) It was the angel in charge of seas and rivers who engaged the sage in this dialogue. Maharsha expands this idea to explain the statement made by the grasses at the time of Creation (*Chullin* 60a). Every blade of grass, say our Sages, has an angel in charge of it who commands it to grow from the earth. It was these angels, he concludes, that did the talking just as the Ginai River's angel did here.
- 2) No dialogue actually took place. The Talmud is describing Rabbi Pinchas' thought process as to why the river was initially reluctant to part its waters. While this approach may be somewhat difficult to apply to the statement of the grass, it provides a perfect explanation for the dialogue between Rabbi Eliezer ben Durai and the mountains, heaven, earth, sun, moon and stars (*Avodah Zarah* 17a).

Chullin 7a

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