

# The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Bechoros 53-59

Week of 24-30 Adar 1 5757 / 3-9 March 1997  
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud  
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

This issue is sponsored by Herschel Kulefsky, Attorney at Law, 15 Park Row, New York, NY 10038, 1-212-693-1671

## The Tithe that Was

The Torah commanded every Jew to tithe his cattle and to offer the tenth cow, sheep or goat as a sacrifice whose flesh is eaten by its owner. By Torah law this applies even when there is no *Beis Hamikdash* in which to offer a sacrifice, and the tithed animal cannot be consumed until it develops a blemish which disqualifies it as a sacrifice. Our Sages saw a need to forestall a problem which could arise from such a situation. While a Jew is waiting for a blemish to develop he might come to transgress the ban on shearing or working with such a sacred animal, or may even slaughter and eat its flesh before the blemish develops. They therefore decreed that tithing of cattle should be suspended, preferring a passive non-performance of a mitzvah, to an active violation of a ban.

This raises a question in regard to what the Talmud (*Shabbos* 54b) relates about the wealth of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, whose annual tithe of calves was 12,000. This sage was a minor when the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, so that this tithing had to take place only when there was no longer a place to bring sacrifices. How then did he practice cattle tithing in opposition to the aforementioned rabbinical decree?

Three resolutions of this problem are found in the commentary of Tosefos in this and other *masechtos*:

- 1) The tithing took place while there was still a *Beis Hamikdash* and was performed by a guardian of the sage who was still a minor.
- 2) The tithing referred to was not the performance of the mitzvah, but rather a payment of a ten percent tax to the government, and is mentioned only to illustrate the extensive wealth of the sage.
- 3) The decree against cattle tithing did not come into being immediately with the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, only years later, so that in the days of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah it was still in practice.

Bechoros 53b

## The Mysterious "Kareiach"

"All the sages of Israel seem to be in comparison with me like garlic skin, except for this *kareiach*."

Thus declared the great sage Shimon ben Azai.

Who was this *kareiach* whose greatness was thus acknowledged, and how does this Hebrew word for "bald one" characterize him?

Rashi identifies him as Rabbi Akiva, a contemporary of Ben Azai. He bases this on the fact that Rabbi Yehoshua ben *Karcha* was actually the son of Rabbi Akiva, so that the father was also known by a nickname associated with baldness.

Tosefos finds difficulty with this approach because it is unlikely that Ben Azai would refer to Rabbi Akiva in such an uncomplimentary way rather than by name. Two alternative approaches are proposed:

- 1) He was referring to Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah who was indeed bald and there was no denigration intended in this physical description.
- 2) There was actually a sage named "*Kareiach*" and there is no relationship between the name and baldness.

In regard to the statement itself the commentaries point out that it should not be misconstrued as a boast by Ben Azai of his intellectual superiority. His intention was to inspire other scholars to apply themselves diligently to their studies by citing his own scholastic achievements which were not the result of his natural brilliance alone but of his extreme diligence.

(For another explanation of Ben Azai's remark see "Garlic-Skin Modesty" in the Weekly Daf (Vol. 4 No. 4) for week ending 20 Cheshvan, 5757, Nov. 2, '96.)

Bechoros 58a

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

©1997 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

The Weekly Daf is available from several sources:

- World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.ohr.org.il>
- Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America. Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details.
- E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message "sub dafyomi {your full name}" to [listproc@virtual.co.il](mailto:listproc@virtual.co.il)

☎ 22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel ☎ 972-2-581-0315 fax: 972-2-581-2890 ✉ [ohr@jer1.co.il](mailto:ohr@jer1.co.il)  
☎ 38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA ☎ 1-212-213-3100 fax: 1-212-213-8717 ✉ [RZCorlin@aol.com](mailto:RZCorlin@aol.com) or [estern@Aol.com](mailto:estern@Aol.com)  
☎ 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada ☎ 1-905-886-5730 fax: 1-905-886-6065 ✉ [Somayach@MSN.com](mailto:Somayach@MSN.com)

Dedication opportunities are available for The Weekly Daf — Please contact us for details.

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.

Issue #160 - Bechoros 53-59

Production Design: Lev Seltzer

For the week of 24-30 Adar 1 5757 / 3-9 March 1997 (Parshas Vayakhel)