

The Weekly Daf



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Niddah 53-59

Week of 6-12 Elul 5757 / September 8-14 1997
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Lost and Found

A dead rodent found in a courtyard not only contaminates whatever it comes into contact with, but also creates a problem concerning any items of purity which were handled in that area. Since we are not aware how long this contaminating agent has been there, we must assume the possibility that any items handled there since the area was last cleaned have contracted ritual impurity through unconscious contact with the rodent.

A question is raised by the Talmud in regard to this rule of the Mishna as to whether the cutoff point of last cleaning is based on the assessment that whoever cleaned the courtyard would have checked to see if there was any rodent there, or whether we assume that even if no conscious search was made, any rodent there would have been removed in the cleaning process. The ramifications of this question are: 1) If the person cleaning the courtyard declares that he did not search for rodents; and 2) If the rodent is presently discovered in a hole which would not have been reached in a regular cleaning process. The conclusion of the Talmud is that we assume the cleaner inspected for rodents. If he declares that he did not search for rodents, then we consider the items handled there to be impure even beyond the date of the cleaning, but if he declares that he did inspect for rodents we assume he would have even discovered one in a hole.

Tosefos calls attention to a rule stated in *Mesechta Pesachim* (7a) that money found in the streets of Jerusalem during the seasons of the Festivals is assumed to be from sacred funds used to redeem the *Ma'aser Sheini* tithes which were brought by their owners to Jerusalem for purchasing sacrificial animals whose flesh would be enjoyed during the holiday. But if this money was found during the rest of the year, when most of the money in the city has no sacred character, we assume that this lost money was not from *Ma'aser Sheini* redemption funds. Rabbi Zeera explains that we are not concerned that this money might have been lost during the Festival period when *Ma'aser Sheini* funds proliferate, because the streets of Jerusalem were daily cleaned and such funds would long have been removed in the cleaning process.

This assumption that something in the street would have been removed seems to run counter to the conclusion of our Talmudic section which assumes this only if a conscious search is made. One of the resolutions offered by Tosefos is that our assumption is that when the street of Jerusalem are being cleaned, the cleaners make sure to look for any money that might be lying around.

Niddah 56b

Sages In The Vaults Of Rome

In regard to a law mentioned in the Mishna about the status of a blood spot found on a woman's dress which she had removed and used as a blanket, we find the following by Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Yossi:

"I issued a ruling on this matter when I was in Rome, and when I returned to the Sages in the south of *Eretz Yisrael* they told me that I had ruled correctly."

But what was a Sage from *Eretz Yisrael* doing in Rome?

For the answer to this we must refer to the story told (*Mesechta Me'ilah* 17b) about a trip to Rome made by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Yossi as representatives of the Jewish community in *Eretz Yisrael*. The Roman rulers of the Holy Land had issued a decree forbidding Jews to observe the laws of the Shabbos, circumcision and family purity. After an initial attempt by Rabbi Reuven ben Istroble, posing as a Roman nobleman, failed to persuade the Romans after they discovered his identity, it was decided to send these two outstanding Sages to Rome in an effort to abolish this decree.

On the way to Rome they were met by a demon named Ben Tamalion who offered to assist them in their mission. Rabbi Shimon's response was to weepingly reflect on the fact that his ancestor's maidservant, Hagar, was visited by three angels (*Bereishis* 16:7-11) while he did not merit even one angel, only a demon. "Let the miracle happen through any means," he decided and invited Ben Tamalion to come along. When they reached the emperor's palace in Rome the demon entered into the body of the emperor's daughter, who began to hysterically cry out in her madness for Rabbi Shimon to be brought to her. When he came before her, he commanded "Exit, ben Tamalion, exit, Ben Tamalion!" The demon departed and the grateful emperor invited the Sages to enter the treasure vaults of Rome and to take whatever they wished. There they found the document containing the repressive decree and they destroyed it.

It was in regard to this visit in the Roman vaults that Rabbi Elazar once reported that he had seen the *paroches* curtain which separated the *heichal* sanctuary from the *kodshei kodeshim* inner sanctum in the *Beis Hamikdash* before the Romans destroyed it. It had on it some drops of blood from the blood of the Yom Kippur sacrifices. It was apparently during this visit that he also issued the aforementioned ruling.

Niddah 58a

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