

# The Weekly Daf



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Shabbos 107-113

Week of 18-24 Adar 5758 / 16-22 March 1998  
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

## A Fishy Mystery

May one write the Torah chapters for *tefillin* on the skin of a fish?

This question was put to Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak by the Sage Mar, the son of the Sage Ravina. It appears in the *gemara's* discussion of which living things are considered as having a layer of skin covering their flesh and the ramifications of this for one who wounds such a creature on Shabbos.

Rabbi Nachman's response was that while it is obvious that a fish has a skin, we will have to wait for the Prophet Eliyahu to reveal to us whether the inherent uncleanliness of this skin is removed in processing it for parchment. Since we have not yet merited Eliyahu's arrival, Rambam rules that we may not use fish skin for *tefillin*.

A simple reading of the *gemara* suggests that the physical uncleanliness is the putrid odor of fish skin. But it is difficult to understand why we need a prophet to reveal to us something which we can determine with our own sense of smell.

Rabbi Nissim (*RaM*), one of the early commentaries, offers another perspective. The *gemara* (*Shabbos 146a*) tells us that when the primeval serpent persuaded Chava to sin by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, he instilled a spiritual uncleanliness into the entire universe. The Jewish People, and the spirits of their future generations and converts, which stood at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, were purified of this uncleanliness. All animal life, except for fish, was there as well, adds Rabbi Nissim, and was likewise purified. The question remaining for Eliyahu to solve is whether this spiritual uncleanliness disappears during the processing of the skin.

A more recent commentary, *Sfas Emes*, suggests that only animal life requiring *shechita*, such as animals and fowl, were granted release from spiritual uncleanliness, to the exclusion of fish which do not require *shechita*. Only Eliyahu will tell us whether processing achieves the same effect.

Shabbos 108a

## When Word is Work

Shabbos is different!

Since this day is holy, our Sages taught us that we must show our respect for this difference in a variety of ways. Not only must the clothes we wear on Shabbos be different than those we wear on the weekdays, and the manner in which we walk be different from how we move about on the weekdays, but even our talk on Shabbos must be different from our talk on the weekdays.

Rashi explains this ban on weekday talk as referring to discussion of weekday business and calculations, activities which are forbidden on Shabbos. Tosefos rejects this approach because discussion of business comes under another category of activity previously mentioned in the *gemara*. Rabbeinu Tam, one of the leading Tosefists, suggests that the aforementioned curb on speech relates not to the *subject* but rather to the *quantity* of talk, even about permissible things.

In support of this point he cites a *Midrash* which tells of the extremely talkative elderly mother of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. On Shabbos the Sage would remind her that it was Shabbos and she would become silent.

A further support is the Jerusalem Talmud which relates that the Sages stretched the law to its limit in order to permit us to say "Good Shabbos" to one another.

The reason for all of this caution in regard to talking on Shabbos, says Maharsha, is that in regard to Shabbos, word is equivalent to work: The Torah says "(Hashem) rested on the seventh day from all the *work* which He had done (*Bereishis 2:2*)," and King David explains that "with the *word* of Hashem" everything was created (*Tehillim 33:6*). Since word is work, on Shabbos we must be careful which words we speak and how many of them.

Shabbos 113b

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