

# The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Yoma 16-22

Week of 3 - 9 Shevat 5759 / 20 - 26 January 1999  
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud  
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

## The Double Agent

During the period of the second *Beis Hamikdash* the *Sanhedrin* tried to ensure that the *kohen gadol*, who was suspected of being a *tzaduki* with alien ideas, would not deviate from the Yom Kippur service according to the rabbinic tradition. After the elders of the *kohanim* had instructed him in the manner which the incense should be offered, they impressed upon him an oath of allegiance which began:

"Honored *kohen gadol*, we are the agents of the court, and you are our agent and an agent of the court."

This is posed as a challenge to the ruling of Rabbi Huna the son of Rabbi Yehoshua who stated that *kohanim*, in their service in the *Beis Hamikdash*, act as agents of Heaven. His reasoning is that they *cannot* be considered agents of the Jews whose sacrifices they are offering, because one cannot halachically act as an agent for someone who is *himself* ineligible to perform that act. Since a non-*kohen* cannot perform the sacrificial service, the *kohen* cannot be considered *his* agent, and must therefore be the agent of Heaven for this matter.

The above challenge to Rabbi Huna's ruling is refuted with an explanation that it is not the issue of *agency* which is being addressed by the elders in their charge to the suspicious *kohen gadol*. Rather it is a warning that in the oath he is taking he is committing himself to what they and the *Sanhedrin* have in mind, rather than to any devious thoughts he may entertain.

Tosefos points out that in another *mesechta* (*Nedarim 35b*) the question is raised as to whether *kohanim* are our agents or the agents of Heaven. The ramification being, whether a particular *kohen* may perform the sacrificial service for someone who is prohibited by a vow from deriving any benefit from this *kohen*. If *kohanim* are *our* agents, then this *kohen* would not be allowed to offer his sacrifice for him, as he is not allowed to benefit him by acting as his agent. But if the *kohen* is Heaven's agent, there is no problem. Rabbi Huna's logical proof that the *kohen* must be Heaven's agent and not ours is not cited among the proofs presented in *Mesechta Nedarim*, because the issue there is not whether the *kohanim* are agents of Heaven but whether they are *also* our agents. The fact that they are indeed Heaven's agents enables them to perform the service even though we are unable to do so. Rabbi Huna's point is that we cannot consider them *only* our agents. Therefore, if a person bringing a sacrifice declares that he does not want a particular *kohen* who is on duty that day to perform the service he cannot prevent him from doing so, since he is first and foremost an agent of Heaven.

Yoma 19b

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

©1998 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 ✉ [info@ohr.org.il](mailto:info@ohr.org.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.

Production Design: Eli Ballon

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

Issue #258 - Yoma 16-22

For the week of 3 - 9 Shevat 5759 / 20 - 26 January 1999 (Parshas Bo)

# Count-less Kohanim

The familiar taboo on counting Jews finds expression in the lottery determining which *kohen* would gain the privilege of performing a particular service. The *kohen* in charge of the lottery would ask all the candidates to extend a finger so that he could count them, and award the privilege to the *kohen* whose finger coincided with a predetermined number.

The fact that he did not count heads is cited as a proof to Rabbi Yitzchak's ruling that it is forbidden to count Jews even for the purpose of a mitzvah. Two historical sources are mentioned for the practice of not counting heads but rather counting in a different manner. One source is the census of soldiers conducted by King Saul (*Shmuel I 11:8*) in preparation for the battle of Ammonite forces besieging Yavesh Gilad. He determined that he had 330,000 soldiers by asking them to place before them clay shards which he counted.

The second census was also conducted by Saul, this time in preparation for a war with Amalek. In this account (*Shmuel I 15:4*), familiar to us from the Haftorah of Parshas Zachor read on the Shabbos before Purim, the king determined that he had 210,000 troops by counting the lambs which he ordered each one of them to take from the royal flocks and bring to the point of assembly.

Why, asks Maharsha, does the *gemara* not cite the earliest and most obvious precedent, the Torah command to count the Children of Israel through their contributions of half shekel coins? His answer is based on a closer look at the passages (*Shmos 30:12-15*) containing this command. Jews were commanded to give these coins "to achieve atonement for their souls." We might therefore interpret the need to contribute coins not as a way of avoiding counting heads but as a form of atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. The phrase "so that there shall be no plague when they are counted" could be understood not as a warning that counting heads invites a plague, but rather as a prescription for avoiding the plague resulting from their sin.

Only in the censuses conducted by King Saul, where there is no mention of atonement, and where the nature of the items counted obviously precludes any such assumption, is it clear that he avoided counting heads because it is forbidden to do so and can even invite a plague, as it did in the days of King David (*Shmuel II 24*).

Yoma 22b

---

Prepared by **Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel**

©1998 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

The Weekly Daf is available from several sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• World Wide Web: Our address is <a href="http://www.ohr.org.il">http://www.ohr.org.il</a></li><li>• 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.</li><li>• E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message "sub dafyomi {your full name}" to <a href="mailto:listproc@virtual.co.il">listproc@virtual.co.il</a></li></ul>
---	---

☎ 22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel	☎ 972-2-581-0315	☎ 972-2-581-2890	✉ <a href="mailto:info@ohr.org.il">info@ohr.org.il</a>
☎ 38 East 29th Street 8 <sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY 10016, USA	☎ 1-212-213-3100	☎ 1-212-213-8717	✉ <a href="mailto:RZCarlin@aol.com">RZCarlin@aol.com</a> or <a href="mailto:estern@Aol.com">estern@Aol.com</a>
☎ 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada	☎ 1-905-886-5730	☎ 1-905-886-6065	✉ <a href="mailto:Somayach@MSN.com">Somayach@MSN.com</a>

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

**Production Design: Eli Ballon**

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

Issue #258 - Yoma 16-22

For the week of 3 - 9 Shevat 5759 / 20 - 26 January 1999 (Parshas Bo)