

# The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Yoma 30-36

Week of 17-23 Shevat 5759 / 3-9 Feb 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 Long Knife

To enter the *azarah* — the courtyard of the *Beis Hamikdash* — one had to first immerse in a *mikveh*. The Sage Ben Zoma saw this as a Torah requirement derived from the fact that the *kohen gadol* on Yom Kippur had to do such an immersion when he switched from the service done in the inner sanctum to the service outside it. If immersion was necessary for moving from one level of sanctity to another, he concludes, then it is certainly necessary when one wishes to come from a totally secular state to a sacred one.

Rabbi Yehuda contends that this immersion is a rabbinical decree. Its purpose, he says, was to stimulate the *kohen* to recall whether he had contracted any ritual impurity that would prevent his entering the *Beis Hamikdash* until immersing and waiting for dark.

Even according to the stricter view of Ben Zoma, the question arises: May a *kohen* avoid this immersion if he stands outside the *Beis Hamikdash* and, with a long knife, slaughters the animal inside?

The only reason not to allow this is the concern that during the *shechita*, he may forget and actually enter the sacred area.

Tosefos notes an apparent conflict between this *gemara* and another in *Mesechta Chullin (2b)*. There the *gemara* rules that a ritually impure person may not slaughter a sacrificial animal, even with a long knife that enables him stand outside the sanctuary. The reason given is that he may inadvertently touch the animal's flesh and thus disqualify it as a sacrifice. Why, asks Tosefos, does the *gemara* there not cite the same concern mentioned in our *gemara* — that he may inadvertently enter the sanctuary?

His resolution is to focus on the difference between a ritually impure person and one who is pure. The ritually impure person, aware of the serious prohibition against entering the sanctuary, will be very careful to avoid such entry. Therefore, the only concern is the possible contact with the *animal*. The pure person, however, does not have this sense of seriousness of distancing himself from the *sanctuary* — because even if he enters without immersion, the most he is guilty of is a failure to fulfill the positive command of immersion, but he has not violated any prohibition — and is likely to be less cautious.

Yoma 31a

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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Issue #260 - Yoma 30-36

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# The Mysterious Guard

One of the most famous stories of the Talmudic Sages is the one in our *gemara* about Hillel. This great sage used to work each day to earn a bit of money, half of which he spent to support his family, and with the other half he paid the guard at the *beis midrash* to allow him to enter and learn from the great teachers inside. One Friday he failed to earn the money necessary for this admission fee and he was barred from entering. Undaunted, Hillel climbed up to the roof of the *beis midrash* just before Shabbos and listened through the skylight to the Torah lectures given inside by the great Sages Shemaya and Avtalyon.

It was an extremely cold winter night and snow fell on him throughout the night. In the morning he was discovered virtually frozen beneath three cubits of snow, and the people in the *beis midrash* put aside the laws of Shabbos to save his life.

Hillel's perseverance in Torah study despite abject poverty is cited by the Heavenly Court as a refutation to any poor man who claims that his failure to study Torah was due to his preoccupation with eking out a livelihood.

The story speaks for itself but one detail remains a mystery. Why was it necessary to have a guard at the door of a house of Torah study?

Maharsha offers two possible solutions to this mystery. One is that the houses of worship and study in those days were located in unpopulated areas and therefore required the hiring of guards to prevent theft and vandalism. Another possibility is based on the policy, in effect at one stage of Jewish history, of restricting admission to the house of study. Rabbi Gamliel (*Mesechta Berachos 28a*) made it a rule that only a student "whose interior was like his exterior" — who has been certified as a sincere student of Torah — could be admitted to the *beis midrash*. It was therefore necessary to hire a guard to prevent the less sincere ones from entering, and his services were financed by people like Hillel who had this qualification.

Yoma 35b

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