

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) The development of an embryo (cont.)

R' Elazar cites an alternative source that an embryo takes an oath before it exits the womb.

The Gemara cites a Beraisa and elaborates on the topic of the location of the embryo in the womb.

Another Beraisa notes the differences among the three trimesters.

A potential danger to the developing fetus is discussed.

A Beraisa elaborates on the three partners in the development of a fetus.

R' Chanina bar Pappa describes the brilliance of the creation of man.

Another Beraisa on the topic of a fetus is presented.

Additional related expositions are recorded.

A number of statements by R' Yitzchok related to conception are cited and explained.

Three questions posed to R' Shimon ben Yochai and his responses are presented.

Four questions posed to R' Dostai the son of R' Yannai and his responses are recorded.

הדרן עלך המפלת חתיכה

2) **MISHNAH:** The Mishnah presents niddah and tum'ah rules that apply to Cutheans.

3) Cuthean daughters

The circumstances in which the Mishnah's declarations that Cuthean daughters are considered niddos are explained. ■

REVIEW and Remember

1. What are the respective contributions of the three partners in a baby?
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2. Why should a person thank God for being angry with him?
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3. Why is the bris milah done on the baby's eighth day?
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4. Why are women more difficult to pacify than men?
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Today's Daf Digest is dedicated in memory of

ר' משולם פייש בן ר' יהוסף, ע"ה

Gemara GEM

The corrupted view of the evil Bilaam

ועל דבר זה נסמית עינו של בלעם הרשע

In preparation to declaring his vexing words, Bilaam climbed to a perch overlooking the Jewish nation, from where he "set his gaze toward the desert." Onkelos explains that Bilaam set his sights upon the calf which the Jews had worshiped in the desert, as he aimed to have the Jews condemned for their previous faults and failures. Bilaam hoped to have his curse become firmly established by its being founded on the indignities of the past record of the Jews.

Yet, suddenly, as he set his sights upon the Jewish camp, Bilaam noticed that their tents were arranged so that the doorways were not directly across one from the other, and he was overwhelmed. He then began to pronounce his wonderful blessing of "Ma Tovu." What was it that impressed Bilaam so that his attitude changed suddenly from one extreme to the other?

Bilaam was an evil person. He was jealous of the successes of others, and he craved and coveted money that was not his. The Mishna (Avos 5:17) expounds upon the depraved character of Bilaam. "He who has these 3 things is a disciple of the wicked Bilaam - an evil eye, a haughty spirit and an insatiable soul." Rashi explains that a "good eye" refers to one who is not jealous of what others have, and one who honors the respect and dignity of other people with the same degree of esteem that he sees fit for himself.

Rambam and Bertinoro understand a "good eye" to refer to one who lives with proper restraint, and does not indulge in earthly pleasures for their own sake. Bilaam epitomized the opposite of these traits.

Bilaam could not tolerate the success that the Jewish people were experiencing, and he wanted to cast upon them an evil eye. While situated high on the peak of Peor, overlooking the Jewish camp, Bilaam noticed something which appeared quite strange to him. While he had spent his entire life staring with a destructive focus upon other people and their money and possessions, jealously pursuing others and their amassed wealth, here Bilaam observed and beheld a nation whose nature did not allow them to gaze one upon another's physical station. In fact, even the manner in which they camped was designed so that the doorways of each tent did not face each other, in order to guard against one person's watching the happenings in his neighbor's abode.

This sight shook Bilaam to his very soul. In that one moment he was confronted with the lowly depths to which his own soul had fallen. He pondered the lofty and holy station of the Jews, in terms of their conduct between man and his fellow man, as well as in all areas. He then realized that he would never succeed in cursing the Jews, and he decided that they indeed were deserving of a blessing due to their elevated status and unique destiny. ■

HALACHA Highlight

Establishing a presumption with regards to bris milah

אמו מזרעת אודם

The mother seeds the red

Shulchan Aruch¹ rules that if a woman had two sons who died following their bris milah as a result of the milah diminishing their strength, a presumption (חזקה) has been established that her children may die from having a bris milah. As a result her sons should not have their bris milah until they are older and have sufficient strength to undergo the procedure. This halacha is in force regardless of whether the two sons were from the same father or from different fathers. The same halacha is true if a man had two sons that died following their bris milah regardless of whether the sons were from the same mother or not. Rema² cites authorities who maintain that this presumption applies only to the mother but since it is a question of life and death we are more cautious and we apply the presumption even to the father.

Commentators³ assert that the source for Rema's

distinction between the father and the mother comes from our Gemara that relates that the blood of the baby comes from the mother. Others⁴ point to a different line in our Gemara as the source for Rema's position. The Gemara relates that when the woman plays the lead role in the conception of the baby the baby will be male. This indicates that it is the mother's influence that produces a male child and that is why his physical makeup is dependent upon his mother.

Kesav Sofer⁵ was asked about a woman who had twin sons both of whom died as a result of their milah and then she had another set of twins but this time it was a son and a daughter. The question was whether they should perform the bris milah on the son on time or wait until he is older. He ruled that the fact that twins died following their milah does not establish a presumption since twins by nature are weak and perhaps it was due to that weakness that they died. ■

¹ שו"ע יו"ד סי' רס"ג סעי' ב'.

² רמ"א שם.

³ ט"ז שם סק"א וגר"א שם סק"ד.

⁴ שו"ת כתב סופר יו"ד סי' קי"ז. ■

⁵ כתב סופר שם.

STORIES off the Daf

Bread in Hand

”בא תינוק פתו בידו...”

It is always important to bolster one's emunah and bitachon when entering a new stage of life with all of its fresh challenges. Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, zt”l, gave powerful chizuk to a young man who had just had his first son. “Your precious letter reached me with the good news. I wish to bless you with a hearty mazal tov! You should merit to raise your son to Torah, chuppah and good deeds!

“Our sages say in Niddah 31 that ‘a baby boy is born with his bread in his hand.’ The Vilna Gaon in his famous letter adds that every Jewish child that is born has his own mazal and a special providence of the Creator on him. It

certainly is strange that when people receive a new level of good from Hashem they immediately trade in truth for falsehood! Regarding this tendency, the midrash in Koheles brings the phrase haval havalim—vanity of vanities. ‘When he marries he becomes like a donkey. When they have children he makes himself brazen like a dog to earn bread and bring livelihood.’

“We see that the natural attitude is the opposite of emunah. One needs vast chizuk to resist falling into this trap. As is well known from the manna, one who made more effort to attain livelihood or less efforts because of his emunah lost nothing from it. See Rashi in Shemos, 16:17. We have seen all this from experience...

“My dear friend! Every single person must access huge reservoirs of chizuk to know that his many attainments are from God. They are not the result

of his own understanding and efforts—‘the strength and power of my own hand,’ God forbid. I bless you, my beloved friend, with every good for eternity. But there is no true good besides the success of one's nefesh that earns eternity.

“As far as my wife and family, we are all healthy and doing well. I believe I can say that also now I feel Yerushalayim is a place that is especially suited for ascending in Torah and yir’as shamayim. One certainly cannot compare the Torah and yir’as shamayim attainable here to that which one can gain elsewhere! God should turn our hearts to the truth, so we will certainly be successful.”¹ ■

■ אור יחזקאל, מכתבים, אגרת קל"ז