

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) **MISHNAH:** The Mishnah discusses the scroll that was written for the sotah procedure and the dispute about what was written on this scroll.

2) Clarifying the dispute

The point of dispute regarding how much of the sotah parasha was written onto the scroll is explained.

R' Meir's position is unsuccessfully challenged.

3) Aggadic expositions

R' Akiva teaches what a couple must do to merit to have the Divine Presence between them.

Rava elaborates on this teaching.

Rava explains why earth is used in the sotah ritual.

Rava teaches that Bnai Yisroel merited two mitzvos as a result of Avrohom Avinu's referring to himself as dust and ash.

Rava connects another two mitzvos, tefillin and tzitzis, with a comment of Avrohom Avinu.

4) **MISHNAH:** The topic of the sotah scroll continues.

5) The sotah scroll

Four of six requirements for the sotah scroll are recorded. ■

REVIEW and Remember

1. What is the point of dispute concerning how much of the parsha is included in the sotah scroll?

2. How did Avrohom add four mitzvos to the Torah?

3. Onto what material was the sotah scroll written?

4. How is the sotah scroll written like a "letter"?

Distinctive INSIGHT

The strings of tzitzis and the straps of tefillin

בשכר שאמר אברהם אבינו "אם מחוט ועד שרוך נעל" זכו בניו לב' מצוות, חוט של תכלת ורצועה של תפילין

In what way are the mitzvos of tallis and tefillin appropriate rewards for the insistence of Avrohom Avinu not to accept any benefits from the spoils of war which the King of Sedom offered him?

Rabbi Mordechai Rogow, zt"l, explains that when a person has a personal interest or bias, it becomes quite difficult, if not impossible, for him to consider a decision in a balanced manner. He is influenced by his personal agenda which distort his objectivity. Accepting a bribe also has this effect, as a judge becomes blinded against the other party, and his mind compels him to consider the merits of only the one who paid him.

Gazing upon the tzitzis guides a person to think of the sky, the heavenly throne of Hashem, and the mitzvos. When we sincerely look upon the tzitzis with open eyes, we focus our attention and concentrate upon proper motives.

Avrohom was extremely determined and directed. His mission was to save the captured souls, and when he achieved his goal, he then refused to be distracted and to accept any material rewards for his miraculous deeds. The ability to remain concentrated and focused on one's true objectives became rooted in his descendants as part of the spiritual makeup of the Jewish people.

We now have the ability to look upon the strings of the tzitzis and to envision the full extent of what they represent. When we consider the straps of the tefillin, we can appreciate the significance of the tefilla on our head which corresponds to dedicating our minds and spirits to the service of Hashem. The tefilla which we secure upon our arms represents our consecrating our physical strength to the Torah and its mitzvos, as we declare in the introductory paragraph before putting on the tefillin daily: "With the soul that is in my mind, together with all my senses and powers, all shall be dedicated to the service of Hashem."

When Avrohom declared his refusal to accept the material wealth from the King of Sedom, he thereby demonstrated the ability to deny the opportunity for financial rewards when they are inappropriate. His descendants thereby merited the mitzvah of tzitzis, where they gaze upon the blue techeiles, which reminds them of Hashem's Throne of Glory. This mitzvah helps them avoid sin. The Jews also merited the mitzvah of the straps of tefillin, where the mitzvah "to love Hashem with one's whole heart and soul," is recorded on its enclosed parchments.

A Jew is prepared to declare his readiness to give his life for the service of Hashem, recognizing that no personal considerations will prevent him from accomplishing his mission. ■

HALACHAH Highlight

Adding scored lines after writing the text

כתבה איגרת פסולה "בספר" אמר רחמנא

If it was written as a letter [i.e. without scored lines] it is invalid because the Torah refers to it as a "Sefer"

Tosafos¹ expresses uncertainty regarding the halacha of a sotah scroll that was scored (שרטוט) after writing the text. Do we say that once it was written incorrectly it remains unfit for use or perhaps since at this point it is scored it is fit to be used? Rav Akiva Eiger² expresses astonishment that Tosafos could even entertain that the scroll would be fit for use if it was scored after the writing was completed. Someone wrote a mezuzah with text that was straight but the scored lines were crooked and wanted to know whether new scored lines could be added after the text. Rav Eiger ruled that this mezuzah may not be repaired and cited a Gemara in Menachos (32b) that discusses the possibility of transforming worn out tefillin into a mezuzah and rejects the possibility since tefillin does not require scored lines whereas a mezuzah does. Since the Gemara did not mention the possibility of adding scored lines now it is evident that once the text is written one is not permitted to add scored lines.

Teshuvos Dovev Meisharim³ suggests that there is a difference between the requirement to score the parchment of a sotah scroll and the requirement to score a mezuzah. There is a requirement for a mezuzah to be written in order (כסדרן),⁴ therefore if the mezuzah was written without scored lines the text is invalid until those lines are added. However, if the scored lines are added after the text the mezuzah was written out of order and thus invalid. The text of the sotah scroll may be written out of order and thus it is possible, as Tosafos entertains, that the scored lines could be added after the text. Netziv⁵ writes that regarding a mezuzah Tosafos would not entertain the possibility of adding the scored lines after the text since Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai mandates writing the text onto scored lines. The requirement for scored lines for the sotah scroll is derived from the Torah's description of the scroll as a ספר. It is reasonable to assume that to meet this requirement it is acceptable to add the scored lines after the text since the end result is the same.

1. תוס' ד"ה כתבה איגרת
2. שו"ת רעק"א מהדו"ק סי' נ'
3. שו"ת דובב מישרים ח"א סי' י"ח אות ג'
4. שו"ע יו"ד סי' רפ"ח סע' ג'
5. מרומי שדה לסוגיין

STORIES Off the Daf

"The techeiles resembles the sea..."

שתכלת דומה לים

It is interesting to what extent the words that people use reveal so much about them.

Once, a certain person who considered himself quite a scholar asked the Brisker Rav, zt"l: "On Sotah 17 we find that the color techeiles in one's tzitzis resembles the sea which resembles the sky which should remind one of the כסא הכבוד, which the verse states is of a sapphire color.

He concluded, "I don't under-

stand how contemplating this will lead one to think of Hashem. After all, what is the correlation?"

The Brisker Rav responded with a question of his own, "Do you understand the Gemara in Avodah Zarah 20b which states that one may not gaze at a woman's colored clothes so as not to come to sin?"

"Yes," the questioner responded.

"Nu, so we see that your head is working alright. So the only explanation has to do with the quality of your own thoughts. If your thoughts would turn to yiras shamayim, you would find it very easy to comprehend the connection. Your difficulty stems from the fact that your

thoughts are elsewhere!"

People must know that what one thinks about is what determines where he or she is spiritually. Not surprisingly, the gedolim see yiras Shamayim even in the most mundane-seeming experiences.

Once, the Steipler, zt"l, was walking on his way to procure סכך for his sukkah near the Yarkon river. When he noticed plant life growing on the river, he excitedly called his son, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, shlit"a. When he came running, the Steipler exclaimed, "This is what the halachah is referring to when it states that the green vegetation that propagates upon the water does not receive tuma!"

