

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) Circumcision in the desert (cont.)

Two reasons are given why the Jews did not practice circumcision in the desert.

Two reasons are presented to explain why the northern wind did not blow while the Jews were in the desert.

R' Pappa notes that according to the above, circumcision and blood letting should not take place on cloudy days or days when the southern wind blows.

It is noted that we no longer are cautious about this.

A related teaching concerning the Northern Wind is recorded.

2) A משוך

R' Huna rules that a משוך is Biblically permitted to eat terumah but he is Rabbinically restricted because he appears uncircumcised.

On its second attempt the Gemara refutes R' Huna's halacha.

3) A tumtum's "wife"

Abaye and Rava suggest alternative explanations for the reference in the Baraisa to the tumtum's "wife."

Rava's explanation is unsuccessfully challenged.

4) A משוך (cont.)

It is suggested that R' Huna's statement that a משוך is only Rabbinically restricted from eating teruma is a dispute between Tannaim.

This suggestion is rejected.

5) The sprinkling of one who is uncircumcised

R' Elazar rules that the sprinkling of one who is uncircumcised is valid.

After clarifying the source of this ruling a Baraisa is cited that supports this ruling.

A contradictory Baraisa is cited.

R' Yosef resolves the contradiction.

This resolution is unsuccessfully challenged.

6) An אנדרוגינוס who sanctified the parah adumah ashes

It is suggested that the positions of Tanna Kamma and R' Yehudah cited in an earlier Baraisa concerning the validity of parah adumah ashes sanctified by an אנדרוגינוס is consistent with their positions expressed in a different context.

The Gemara records the source for each position and the exchange between the two regarding the other's source. ■

Distinctive INSIGHT

No one did milah in the desert

משום שלא נשבה להו רוח צפונית

The Gemara explains that when the Jewish people were in the desert for forty years they were unable to perform the mitzvah of milah. The reason that they could not perform this mitzvah was that it would have been dangerous for the baby, either due to the weakness they all experienced due to the constant travel, or due to the lack of the northern wind and its healing powers, which did not blow during the day during those years.

Tosafos (ד"ה לא נשבה) explains that we cannot say that the northerly wind did not blow at all during the forty years the Jews were in the desert, because the Gemara in Gittin (31b) reports that winds from all directions blow each day, including the wind of the north, for otherwise the world would not be able to exist. Rather, when our Gemara says that the northerly wind did not blow, it means that it never blew by itself. Its full medicinal or meteorological benefits were therefore lacking. It did, however, blow together with the other winds.

Our Gemara provides two reasons why milah could not be done in the desert during the forty years the Jews were moving through. One is that they were weak due to travel. The other reason is that the northerly wind did not blow so as not to dispel the Clouds of Glory. Panim Yafos explains why the Gemara uses two different reasons. The tribe of Dan was situated in the north of the camp, and they actually traveled outside the back of the cloud enclosure. Therefore, they did experience the northerly wind, as for them there was no problem of the effect the wind would have on the cloud. However, the reason of being weary due to the travel is given to explain why the tribe of Dan did not do milah. The other tribes traveled inside the cloud enclosure, which enveloped the people completely, as it lifted and transported the nation miraculously. For these people, becoming weary was not an issue, but the lack of the northerly wind was an issue which prevented their doing milah. ■

REVIEW and Remember

1. Why is it permitted to do a bris milah on a cloudy day?

2. Is the wife of a tumtum permitted to eat teruma?

3. How long did it take R' Yochanan to learn and understand Toras Kohanim?

4. Is a woman permitted to sanctify the parah adumah ashes?

HALACHAH Highlight

Protecting the simple

Hashem protects the simple

The Gemara declares that although it is dangerous to give a baby a bris on a cloudy day, nevertheless, it is permitted nowadays because Hashem “protects the simple.” Ritva¹ writes that one who is concerned about the possible danger has the option to not act “simply” and may delay the bris until the clouds clear. Rav Eliezer Yehudah Waldenberg², the Tzitz Eliezer, cites this comment to support his position in a dispute he has with Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach concerning the parameters of this principle.

Rav Auerbach³, writes that the principle “Hashem protects the simple” applies whenever people do not treat a particular behavior or condition as dangerous. This is also the way Rav Auerbach sets up the parameters of פיקוח נפש. Rav Auerbach writes that people’s perception of danger is what defines the principle of פיקוח נפש. Consequently, when there is a perception of danger one is even permitted to desecrate Shabbos, even though medically there may not be any danger.

שומר פתאים ה'

Rav Waldenberg, however, disagrees, and poses the following challenges to Rav Auerbach. Nowadays, doctors do not perceive metzitza as a medical necessity; does that mean that it is no longer required? Another example relates to Chazal’s assertion that a woman up until three days postpartum is considered to be dangerously ill. If people no longer consider a postpartum woman dangerously ill does that mean that it is not permitted to desecrate Shabbos on her behalf?

Therefore, Rav Waldenberg, writes that we only apply the principle that “Hashem protects the simple” in those cases identified by Chazal. This is consistent with the opinion of Terumas Hadeshen⁴ who writes that it is difficult to be lenient concerning something dangerous based on the principle of “Hashem protects the simple.” Furthermore, concludes Rav Waldenberg, even when Chazal declare that the principle of “Hashem protects the simple” is applied, Ritva maintains that one could be cautious. Therefore, one should certainly be very cautious before further applying this principle to new circumstances. ■

1. ריטב"א לסוגייתנו ומובא דבריו בנמ"י
2. שו"ת צי"ץ אליעזר ח"ט סי' י"ז פ"ב חלק ט' אות כ"ב
3. מובא דבריו בשו"ת צי"א הנ"ל
4. שו"ת תרומת הדשן סי' רי"א ■

STORIES Off the Daf

Children who have been saved from the gentiles

והלא הרבה מלו בימי בן כוזיבא... [רש"י שם : שמשכום עו"כ באונס... וחזרו ומלו בימיו]

On today’s daf we find that even in the case of a mashuch, where milah is likely to be dangerous, Chazal decreed that it be performed. It is forbidden for a Jewish child to appear like a gentile!

After Lithuania’s liberation from the hands of the Nazis, ימ"ש, Rav Ephraim Oshry, z"tl, traveled throughout the towns and villages to seek out Jewish children. Because of the danger, many parents did not circumcise their children in the ghettos; they also hoped that leaving them uncircumcised would make it easier to hide them with local non-Jews. In his book of teshuvos writ-

ten after the war, Rav Oshry relates that among the children was one three-year-old boy who had not yet been circumcised. With great difficulty, he found a mohel who came from the Vilna district to circumcise sixteen such boys. Upon examination, the mohel found that the child appeared jaundiced; in his opinion, it was forbidden to circumcise the boy. A doctor was brought in, and he disagreed—according to him, the child was not jaundiced enough to warrant concern. Rav Oshry had to decide—in such a case, could they rely on the doctor over the opinion of the mohel? The bris could not be postponed because the mohel had to leave the country and there were no others available.

After further medical consultations that upheld the first doctor’s opinion, Rav Oshry was inclined to permit the milah on the basis of the Rambam. Because the Shulchan Aruch rules differ-

ently, however, the Rav hesitated. He wrote, “I feared risking even the slightest chance of danger to the child, for he was the only remaining survivor of his entire family...If, God forbid, something should happen to the child...we would be causing an entire family to disappear from the Jewish people. I therefore begged the mohel to postpone his departure... The mohel agreed...and the occasion proved to be the opportunity for a beautiful celebration. One mitzvah led to another. The story...had spread all over Kovno. A doctor [there] confided to me that he had a three-month old son whom he strongly desired to have circumcised...[but hadn’t] because Lithuania was then governed by the communists and [this] might have harmed the father. Our joy was truly doubled [by] having two circumcisions take place that same day!” ■

