

The Weekly Daf



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Zevachim 107-113

Week of 3-9 Iyar 5756 / 22-28 April 1996
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Once Holy, Always Holy

The Torah prohibited offering sacrifices outside of the sanctuary that was designated for that purpose, and warned the offender that he would be liable for *kares* - extirpation. (*Vayikra* 17:1-4)

Before the *mishkan* (sanctuary) was established in the *midbar* (wilderness) a year after the exodus from Egypt it was permissible to offer certain sacrifices on *bamos* (private altars). During the 39 remaining years in the *midbar* it was forbidden to offer sacrifices outside the *mishkan*. Upon entering *Eretz Yisrael* the *mishkan* was established in Gilgal where it stood for 14 years while the tribes of Israel conquered and divided the land. During this period the ban on *bamos* was suspended. From there the *mishkan* was transferred to Shiloh where stone replaced the boards that hitherto had been the walls of the sanctuary. During the 369 years in Shiloh the ban on *bamos* was once again in effect. With the destruction of Shiloh the *mishkan* was moved to Nov, and then to Givon, and the ban on *bamos* was once again suspended during the 57 years it was in these two locations.

With the construction of the *Beis Hamikdash* in Yerushalayim a rule was established that nowhere else would a sanctuary be built for offering sacrifices and, of course, *bamos* were banned.

What about today, when we have not yet merited to have a *Beis Hamikdash* - if one offers a sacrifice on a private altar is he considered in violation of the Torah's prohibition or is that ban applicable only when a sanctuary exists?

Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish (Reish Lakish) dispute this issue. The view of Rabbi Yochanan, which is the one that the halacha accepts, is that he is guilty of offering a sacrifice outside the sanctuary even though the sanctuary is not functioning. The reasoning is that the original sanctity invested in the site of the *Beis Hamikdash* (*kedusha rishonah*) is in effect forever, and as far as the site is concerned, sacrifices could be offered there even though there is no Temple. (Halachic authorities have pointed out the halachic - aside from the practical - problems involved in actually doing so. These include an inexact knowledge of who is a bona fide *kohen* and where the site of the altar is, the fact that all *kohanim* are impure from contact with the dead and numerous other problems.) Offering a sacrifice anywhere else is therefore considered a transgression of this prohibition.

Zevachim 107b

The Unflooded Land

Did the waters of the Great Flood in the days of Noach descend upon Eretz Yisrael as they did in the rest of the world?

Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish (Reish Lakish) have opposing views on this issue based on their conflicting interpretations of a passage in the prophecy of Yechezkel (22:24) which speaks of the status of ritual purity in Eretz Yisrael following the flood. Rabbi Yochanan's interpretation is that there is no need to fear that the flood waters buried the bones of their victims deep in the bowels of the earth in Eretz Yisrael as they did elsewhere. Reish Lakish's understanding of the same prophetic passage is that the flood waters did descend upon Eretz Yisrael as well and buried human bones deep in the earth, creating a doubt concerning every spot that it may be affected by the *tumah* (ritual impurity) rising from the deeply buried dead.

The practical application of this dispute is how to understand what *themishnah* means when it speaks of slaughtering the red heifer - whose ashes were used for purifying those who had become impure because of contact with the dead - in the wrong place. Reish Lakish interprets it as referring to any place, even in Eretz Yisrael, which has not been thoroughly checked to assure that there was no danger of it being atop a deeply buried grave from the days of the flood. Rabbi Yochanan rejects this because the flood waters never reached Eretz Yisrael and he explains the *mishnah* as a slaughtering which took place inside the walls of Jerusalem rather than outside them as prescribed by the Torah.

If the flood did not affect Eretz Yisrael according to Rabbi Yochanan why was there a need for Noach to spend so much time and effort building an ark when Hashem could simply have placed him along with the human and animal life He wished to spare in the protected confines of this land? It is eventually established that even Rabbi Yochanan concurs that the residents of Eretz Yisrael died, as is clearly indicated in the Torah (*Bereishis* 7:22), not because of the flood waters but from the deadly heat that radiated even as far as Eretz Yisrael. This conclusion is not reached, however, on the basis of the need for an ark, because, explains Maharsha, even if there would have been an alternative to find a haven in Eretz Yisrael it was Hashem's wish that Noach publicly spend 120 years building the ark in the hope that the sinful spectators would hear from him about the impending deluge and repent their ways (Rashi on *Bereishis* 6:14).

Zevachim 113

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