

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Chullin 47-53

Week of 24-30 Tishrei 5757 / 7-13 October 1996
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

The Blessed Blessers

At the conclusion of the blessings which Hashem commanded the kohanim to bestow upon His people Israel, the Blessed One declares: "And I shall bless them." (Bamidbar 6:27)

Who is the object of the blessing?

Rabbi Yishmael's interpretation is that the reference is to the kohanim. The kohanim bless Israel and Hashem blesses the kohanim.

Rabbi Akiva, however, understands that this is Hashem's way of affirming the blessing which His agents, the kohanim, have bestowed upon Israel. The Heavenly blessing for the kohanim themselves has already been indicated as the divine promise given to Avraham: "I shall bless those who bless you." (Bereishis 12:3)

The dispute between these sages, says Iyun Yaakov, can be thus understood:

Rabbi Yishmael holds that before they are themselves blessed by Heaven the kohanim are not capable of bestowing a blessing upon Israel. There occurs therefore a simultaneous process of blessing – Hashem blesses the kohanim so that their blessing upon Israel will be effective. This itself constitutes divine affirmation of the blessing being bestowed.

Rabbi Akiva sees the blessing bestowed upon the kohanim not as a means for making their blessing effective nor as a reward for their act. He therefore concludes that it is an affirmation of the blessing bestowed.

According to both views not only does Israel end up with a Heavenly affirmed blessing but the kohanim as well. The blessing the latter receive according to Rabbi Akiva would be theirs even if they were non-Jews blessing Israel, while the blessing according to Rabbi Yishmael is one only kohanim are capable of receiving. The Talmud therefore cites this as a case of "Yishmael the Kohen aiding his fellow kohanim."

Chullin 49a

Bouncing Back from a Fall

One of the eighteen categories of *treifah* (an animal terminally ill because of an organic defect) listed in the mishnah (42a) is the animal which has fallen from a roof. There is a suspicion that as the result of falling from a high place the internal organs and parts may have been crushed or dislocated.

Since this is the reason there are qualifications. If the animal consciously jumped from the roof because it saw some food on the ground below we assume that it made this leap without suffering any damage because it instinctively would not have undertaken a jump it could not sustain.

Another interesting exception is the case of thieves who throw the stolen sheep over the wall of the yard they have broken into. Here too we do not apply our suspicion of *treifah*. We assume that the thieves carefully toss the animals in a manner which will assure that they safely land on their fronts so that they can immediately begin running for a fast getaway. Such a fall eliminates the danger of serious damage which creates a condition of *treifah*.

What happens, however, if the thieves toss the sheep back over the wall? It all depend, rules Rabbi Menashe. If they did so because they were afraid of being caught then we assume that they disregard the animal's safety and there is a suspicion of *treifah*. But if the motivation of these thieves was to mend their ways by returning stolen property we assume that they want their repentance to be complete and would therefore be as careful in returning the sheep as they were in taking them.

Chullin 51a

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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Production Design: Lev Seltzer

Issue #139 - Chullin 47-53

For the week of 24-30 Tishrei 5757 / 7-13 October 1996 (Parshas Bereishis)