

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Menachos 30-36

Week of 16-22 Sivan 5756 / 3-9 June 1996

Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

State of the Eight

The last eight passages in the Torah present a mystery for they begin with the words "And there Moshe died." How, ask our Sages, could Moshe truthfully write that he died while he was alive and writing?

The explanation proposed by Rabbi Yehuda that these last passages were written by Moshe's disciple Yehoshua after his death is rejected by his colleague Rabbi Shimon on the grounds that Moshe refers to the Sefer he wrote in his lifetime as "this Sefer Torah" (Devarim 31) which he would not do if this scroll was missing even a single letter, let alone eight whole passages.

Rabbi Shimon's own explanation is that these last eight passage were written in a different fashion than the rest of the Torah — "*badema*." Various interpretations of this phrase are offered by the commentaries. One of them is that it is aligned to the word "*meduma*" which means mixed together. All the letters of these eight passages were dictated to Moshe by Hashem to be written in an unbroken sequence with no formation of words. It was in a similar fashion that the Torah was written before it was given to Israel when the letters did not form the words we know but served as various formulations of the Divine Names. Only when Moshe brought us the Torah was it revealed to him how to break up those letters in a manner which would communicate Hashem's mitzvos and messages to us. So too was the meaning of the letters Moshe wrote at the end of his technically complete Sefer Torah unknown until after his departure.

Menachos 30a

(This commentary is taken from a collection of extremely helpful material in Hebrew on Daf Hayomi published in booklets on a regular basis under the title of "Yosef Daas." Teachers and students of Daf Hayomi can order these booklets from Ben Arza, 6 Harav Mishklov, Har Nof, Jerusalem, Telephone 972-2-651-8128.)

Foreign for Four

How do we know that four Torah chapters are to be placed in four compartments for the Tefillin we place on our head?

Rabbi Yishmael identifies the sources as the number of times the word "*totafos*" appears in the Torah. Rabbi Akiva, however, deduces the number four from the word itself which is a subtle combination of two words in addition to its simple, literal meaning. "*Tot*" is two in the language of Katfi while "*Fos*" is two in the language of Africa, and the combination of the two equals four.

But how are we to understand defining a word in the Torah on the basis of its similarity to one in a foreign language?

(The same question arises in regard to the deduction made by the Sage Shimon ben Azai (Succah 35a) that the mysterious word "*hadar*" used in regard to a fruit to be taken for performing a mitzvah on Succos means an *esrog* which requires watering in addition to rain. His basis is the fact that "*hadar*" is similar to the Greek word "hydra" for water.)

The explanation offered by the commentaries is that up until the attempted rebellion against Heaven of the generation of the Tower of Bavel all mankind spoke *Lashon Kodesh*, the holy tongue in which our Torah is written. Even after Hashem dispersed the tower builders by introducing the disunity of separate languages some elements of the original tongue lingered in the new ones. So when we find a word in the Torah which is unfamiliar to us and locate a parallel to it in another language there is a basis for assuming that it is a remnant of Hebrew and can be used by our Sages as a clue to solving the mystery of the unfamiliar word.

Menachos 34b

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