

The Weekly Daf



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Chullin 124-130

Week of 13-19 Teves 5757 / 23-29 December 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 Paradoxical Connection

When is something considered connected and detached at the same time?

Food is considered impure if it comes into contact with a contaminating agent such as the carcass of an animal which died not through *shechita*. But in order to be susceptible to such contamination, this food has to no longer be a part of its living source. As long as an animal is alive its meat cannot contract impurity, and as long as fruits and vegetables are still growing they are immune to contamination.

What happens, however, if figs dried up, except for their stems, while still connected to their tree? Do we consider them to be still a part of the tree or not? This has two different ramifications. Are the figs considered as detached and therefore susceptible to contamination? Is one who picks them off the tree on Shabbos guilty of violating the Torah command not to pick fruit on Shabbos?

Rabbi Chiya bar Ashi cites an interesting ruling by the Sage Shmuel.

So long as the stems of the figs have not dried up along with the fruit we consider the figs to still be growing on the tree. Therefore, if someone should forget that it is Shabbos, and pick such figs from the tree, he will be required to bring a sin offering to atone for his unintentional violation of Shabbos. But with regard to these very figs coming into contact with a contaminating agent, they are considered as being detached and susceptible to contamination.

The same paradoxical situation exists in regard to the limb of an animal which has become almost completely detached, but remains connected by a hairline of flesh. As far as the rule of a detached limb's impurity, it is still considered a part of the living animal and therefore pure in regard to the impurity inherent in a detached limb. But as regards contracting impurity as food which comes into contact with a contaminating agent, it is considered as detached, and susceptible to contamination.

This paradox, arising from the Oral Law's interpretation of the passages in the Written Law pertaining to impurity, can best be understood if we view the definition of food's susceptibility to contamination not in terms of actual detachment from its source, but rather in terms of the high probability that it will soon become food.

Chullin 127b

Pauper for a Day

All of us are familiar with the fantasy of "king for a day" in which the pauper momentarily indulges in the luxuries of the rich man.

But there is another side to this coin which has been more common in human experience, that of the rich man who is a "pauper for a day."

A man of substantial means is traveling and finds himself in a situation without funds or any handy means of support. He can get by only by accepting those gifts from agricultural produce which the Torah awards to the indigent. Does his general financial situation as a man of means disqualify him from being eligible for these gifts or does his current status as a "pauper for a day" qualify him to share these gifts with genuine paupers?

There is a consensus of the Sages that he is entitled to these gifts for the poor. The only point of contention is in regard to his obligation to repay the sum he took as charity when he returns home. Rabbi Eliezer rules that he must reimburse the poor for what he enjoyed during his temporary poverty. The majority view, however, is that since he was genuinely poor at that moment, his right to the gifts was absolute and he has no obligation to repay.

Both views agree, it seems, that one who took such gifts without being entitled to them has an obligation to make reimbursement. This seems to present a conflict with the ruling of Rabbi Chisda that one who destroys or eats the gifts which the Torah awarded to the *kohanim* or to the poor cannot be prosecuted for payment because there is no specific claimant, and the offender can deflect the claim of any individual by contending that he wants to give his gift to another *kohen* or pauper. The conflict is resolved by Rabbi Chisda who explains that the issue discussed by Rabbi Eliezer and his colleagues is not one of a legal claim which the court will prosecute, for there is no specific claimant who can demand such action. There is, however, a moral obligation — "a righteous course" — which Rabbi Eliezer rules is incumbent upon this temporary pauper, an obligation which his colleagues hold is not applicable at all in this case.

Chullin 130b

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