

# The Weekly Daf



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Eruvin 98 - 105

Week of 18 - 25 Av 5758 / 10 - 16 August 1998

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

## A Spitting Offense

A seemingly innocent act such as spitting from inside the house out into the street is considered a violation of Shabbos. It is tantamount to transferring something from the private domain to the public domain. Rabbi Yosef concludes from this ruling of the *mishna* that if one does such spitting without being aware of the prohibition at that time, he is obligated to bring a sin offering as an atonement, as is the case in every involuntary violation of Shabbos.

A challenge is presented to Rabbi Yosef's conclusion. In order to qualify as a Shabbos violation, it is necessary for the transferred object to be removed from a surface which is at least four *tefachim* (hand-breadths) square, and then placed at rest upon a surface of that same size. A person's mouth, from which the saliva emanates, is certainly not that size. So, how can we consider transferring the saliva as a Shabbos violation?

This challenge is refuted by introducing a new concept. A person's intention can endow even a surface smaller than four *tefachim* square with the status of such a large surface. The precedent quoted is a ruling of the Sage Rava: If one throws some food a distance of four cubits in the public domain and directs it to land in the mouth of a dog who will eat it, or in the opening of a furnace where flames will consume it, he is guilty of a Shabbos violation and must bring a sin offering as an atonement. Neither the dog's mouth nor the furnace opening are four *tefachim* square. However, since he has a specific interest that the food land in those spots, his intention endows those surfaces with the same status as a larger surface with the necessary dimensions. Similarly, we view a man who wishes to rid his mouth of saliva as endowing his mouth with the status of a surface of four handbreadth's square.

Tosefos points out that the ruling of Rava applies only to a situation in which one has a definite preference for the smaller surface, such as in the case of the dog whom he wishes to feed, or the flames which he wishes to utilize for consuming the unwanted item. But if one should throw an object onto a narrow pole and there is no reason for him to prefer such a surface to a larger one, it is not considered as having landed on a large surface, even if he intended for it to fall on that particular pole.

Eruvin 99a

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# Learning from the Animals

Even if the Torah had not been given to us, says Rabbi Yochanan, we would have been able to learn certain basics from the behavior of animals.

From the cat we would have learned the elementary rules of cleanliness and respect for other people's sensitivities, expressed in the fact that this feline creature does not defecate in the presence of people, and even makes an effort to cover its excrement. From the ant we would have learned to respect other people's property. The Midrash (*Devarim Rabbah, Parshas Shoftim*) tells of an ant which dropped a grain of wheat it was carrying in its mouth to store away for the winter. Ant after ant came along to sniff the grain and then crawled away because it realized that it belonged to someone else, until the original owner came along to retrieve it.

Other examples are cited as well of lessons we can learn from a mule, a dove and a rooster in regard to decency, fidelity and domestic relations. But the question arises: What is it that causes these representatives of the animal kingdom to behave in these particular manners? It is not an intellectual or moral decision on the part of these creatures, explain the commentaries, which lies behind their actions. It is simply because the Creator wanted us to learn certain behavioral patterns, and therefore He instilled in particular creatures the instinct to behave in a certain fashion which would communicate a lesson to their human observers.

This is what is meant by the passage in the Book of Iyov (35:11) quoted by the *gemara*: "He teaches us through the animals of the earth and makes us wiser through the birds of heaven." It is our Creator who teaches us how to behave by orchestrating the nature of animals and fowl to serve as an education for man.

*Eruvin 100b*

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