

NOTES

Comes to write, etc. – בָּא לוֹ לְכַתּוֹב וכו' – The mishna is not explicit as to the language in which the scroll is written. Although another mishna (32a) states that the oath of the *sota* may be taken in any language that the wife understands, apparently the scroll itself was to be written specifically in Hebrew. This is true especially according to the opinion that the scroll of a *sota* may be taken from a Torah scroll (see 20b), and this is the ruling of the Rambam (*Minḥa Hareva*).

מתני' בָּא לוֹ לְכַתּוֹב אֶת הַמְגִילָה, מֵאֵיזוֹה מְקוֹם הוּא כּוֹתֵב?

מ'וְאִם לֹא שָׁכַב אִישׁ וְגו', וְאֵת כִּי שָׁטִית תַּחַת אִישׁךָ."

וְאִינוּ כּוֹתֵב: "וְהַשְׁבִּיעַ הַכֹּהֵן אֶת הָאִשָּׁה... וְכּוֹתֵב: "יִתֵּן ה' אוֹתְךָ לְאֵלֶּה וְלִשְׁבַּעַה... וּבָאוּ הַמַּאֲרָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּמַעַיְנְךָ לְצַבּוֹת בֶּטֶן וּלְנַפְל יָרֵךְ", וְאִינוּ כּוֹתֵב: "וְאָמְרָה הָאִשָּׁה אָמֵן אָמֵן."

רבי יוסי אומר: לֹא הִיָּה מִפְּסִיק.

רבי יהודה אומר: כָּל עֲצָמוֹ אִינוּ כּוֹתֵב אֶלֶּא: "יִתֵּן ה' אוֹתְךָ לְאֵלֶּה וְלִשְׁבַּעַה וְגו' וּבָאוּ הַמַּאֲרָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּמַעַיְנְךָ וְגו', וְאִינוּ כּוֹתֵב: "וְאָמְרָה הָאִשָּׁה אָמֵן אָמֵן."

גמ' במאי קא מיפלגי? בהאי קרא קמיפלגי: וכתב את האלות האלה הכהן בספר,

MISHNA When the priest comes to writeⁿ the scroll of the *sota* that is to be placed in the water, from what place in the Torah passage concerning the *sota* (Numbers 5:11–31) does he write?^h

He starts from the verse: “If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to defilement while under your husband, you shall be free from this water of bitterness that causes the curse” (Numbers 5:19); and continues: “But if you have gone astray while under your husband, and if you are defiled, and some man has lain with you besides your husband” (Numbers 5:20).

And then he does not write the beginning of the following verse, which states: “Then the priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing, and the priest shall say to the woman” (Numbers 5:21), but he does write the oath recorded in the continuation of the verse: “The Lord shall make you a curse and an oath among your people when the Lord will cause your thigh to fall away, and your belly to swell. And this water that causes the curse shall go into your bowels, and cause your belly to swell, and your thigh to fall away” (Numbers 5:21–22); but he does not write the conclusion of the verse: “And the woman shall say: Amen, amen” (Numbers 5:22).

Rabbi Yosei says: He does not interrupt the verses but rather writes the entire passage without any omissions.

Rabbi Yehuda says: He writes nothing other than curses recorded in the final verses cited above: “The Lord shall make you a curse and an oath among your people when the Lord will cause your thigh to fall away, and your belly to swell. And this water that causes the curse shall go into your bowels, and cause your belly to swell, and your thigh to fall away.” And he does not write the conclusion of the verse: “And the woman shall say: Amen, amen.”

GEMARA With regard to what issue do the Sages in the mishna disagree? What is the source of their disagreement? They disagree concerning the proper interpretation of the verse: “And the priest shall write these [*ha'eleh*] curses [*et ha'alot*] in a scroll” (Numbers 5:23).

HALAKHA

מֵאֵיזוֹה מְקוֹם הוּא כּוֹתֵב – The priest writes the scroll of the *sota* from the verse: “If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to defilement while under your husband, you shall be free from this water of bitterness that causes the curse” (Numbers 5:19); and continues: “But if you have gone astray while under your husband, and if you are defiled, and some man has lain with you besides your husband” (Numbers 5:20). And then he skips the beginning of the verse that follows: “Then the priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing, and the priest shall say to the

woman” (Numbers 5:21). But he does write the oath recorded in the continuation: “The Lord shall make you a curse and an oath among your people, when the Lord will cause your thigh to fall away, and your belly to swell. And this water that causes the curse shall go into your bowels, and cause your belly to swell, and your thigh to fall away” (Numbers 5:21–22). But he does not write the conclusion of the verse: “And the woman shall say: Amen, amen” (Numbers 5:22), in accordance with the first *tanna* of the mishna (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 3:8).

Curses in *Mishne Torah* – קְלָלוֹת שְׁבַמְשֵׁנָה תוֹרָה: There is also a long list of curses recorded in Leviticus. However, no verse is needed to exclude it, since the curses there are written in the plural and directed to the people as a whole, whereas the ones in Deuteronomy are written in the singular (*Tosefot HaRash*; *Tosefot HaRosh*). From the commentaries of Rashi and the Meiri, however, it seems that they had an alternate text that reads: To exclude all the curses in the Torah, including those in Leviticus.

You shall be free [*hinnaki*] – הִנָּקִי: A number of explanations have been given for the significance of this phrase. Most understand that the word *hinnaki* resembles *hinnaki*, taken to mean: You shall choke. The word is therefore a hint that if she is in fact guilty she will die a terrible death. The *Sefat Emet* adds that the phrase: You shall be free, indicates that there are additional curses not explicit in the verse from which the *sota* will be saved only if she is innocent.

Fire consumes them – אֵשׁ אוֹכְלָתָן: A number of commentaries explain that this refers to the fire of discord, which appears as a result of the departure of the Divine Presence and leads to disputes between the couple (see, e.g., *Iyyun Ya'akov*). According to the *Halakhot Gedolot*, however, the consuming fire is the evil inclinations of the couple.

Rabbi Meir, the first *tanna* of the mishna, reasons: The word “*alot*,” curses, is referring to **actual curses**. The prefix *ha*, meaning: The, in the word “*ha'alot*” serves to **include curses that come on account of the blessings**, i.e., the curses that are inferred from the phrase: “You shall be free from this water of bitterness that causes the curse” (5:19). The word “*eleh*,” meaning these, is a limiting term that serves to **exclude the long list of curses that are recorded in *Mishne Torah***,^N the book of Deuteronomy (chapter 28). Although these curses are also referred to as “*alot*,” the priest does not write them. The addition of the definite article in the word “*ha'eleh*” serves to **exclude the commands recorded in the *sota* passage and the acceptances by the word “amen” recorded there as well**. The priest need not write these sections of the passage.

And Rabbi Yosei interprets it: It would all be as you, Rabbi Meir, said; however, the additional word “*et*” in the verse amplifies its scope. It serves to **include both commands and acceptances**, as they must be written in the scroll as well.

And why does Rabbi Meir disagree? As a rule, he **does not interpret** the additional word *et* as amplifying a verse's scope.

And as for Rabbi Yehuda, he interprets all of the terms in the verse as **exclusionary**: The word “*alot*” is referring specifically to the **actual curses** recorded in the verses. The definite article in the word “*ha'alot*” serves to **exclude curses that come on account of blessings**. The word “*eleh*” serves to **exclude the curses** recorded in the *Mishne Torah*. And the definite article in the word “*ha'eleh*” serves to **exclude the commands and acceptances** recorded in the verses.

The Gemara asks: **But according to Rabbi Meir, what is different about this letter *heh*** at the beginning of the word “*ha'alot*” such that it **amplifies** the *halakha* to include curses that come on account of the blessings, **and what is different about that letter *heh*** in the word “*ha'eleh*” such that it **excludes** the commands and acceptances by the word “amen”? Why should one amplify while the other excludes?

The Gemara answers: The letter *heh* **when written near an amplifier is an amplifier**. The word “*alot*” itself amplifies the *halakha*, and the definite article extends that amplification; and a *heh* **when written near a restrictor is a restrictor**. The word “*eleh*” itself restricts the *halakha*, and the definite article before it extends that restriction.

The Gemara asks: **But Rabbi Meir does not** accept the principle that **from a negative statement you can infer a positive statement**. What is to be gained by writing the blessings if one cannot infer the curses from them?

Rabbi Tanḥum says: **It is written**: “If no man has lain with you ... **you shall be free** [*hinnaki*]” (Numbers 5:19).^N The word “*hinnaki*” should be interpreted as if it were in fact *hinnaki*, meaning: You shall choke. When read with the beginning of the next verse, it then forms the sentence: You shall choke ... if you have gone astray while under your husband. Therefore, Rabbi Meir understands the blessings themselves to have a dimension of a curse.

§ Rabbi Akiva taught: If a man [*ish*] and woman [*isha*] merit reward through a faithful marriage, **the Divine Presence rests between them**. The words *ish* and *isha* are almost identical; the difference between them is the middle letter *yod* in *ish*, and the final letter *heh* in *isha*. These two letters can be joined to form the name of God spelled *yod, heh*. But if due to licentiousness **they do not merit** reward, the Divine Presence departs, leaving in each word only the letters *alef* and *shin*, which spell *esh*, fire. Therefore, **fire consumes them**.^N

רַבִּי מֵאִיר סָבַר: “אֲלוֹת” – אֲלוֹת מִמֶּשׁ, “הָאֲלוֹת” – לְרִבּוֹת קְלָלוֹת הַבְּאוֹת מִחַמַּת בְּרֻכּוֹת, “אֵלֶּה” – לְמַעוּטֵי קְלָלוֹת שְׁבַמְשֵׁנָה תוֹרָה, “הָאֵלֶּה” – לְמַעוּטֵי צְוֹאוֹת וְקַבְּלוֹת אֲמִן.

וְרַבִּי יוֹסֵי: כּוּלְהוּ כְּדִקְאִמְרַת, “אֵת” – לְרִבּוֹת צְוֹאוֹת וְקַבְּלוֹת.

וְרַבִּי מֵאִיר, אֲתִים לֹא דְרִישׁ.

וְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה, כּוּלְהוּ בְּמִיעוּטֵי דְרִישׁ לְהוּ: “אֲלוֹת” – אֲלוֹת מִמֶּשׁ, “הָאֲלוֹת” – לְמַעוּטֵי קְלָלוֹת הַבְּאוֹת מִחַמַּת בְּרֻכּוֹת, “אֵלֶּה” – לְמַעוּטֵי קְלָלוֹת שְׁבַמְשֵׁנָה תוֹרָה, “הָאֵלֶּה” – לְמַעוּטֵי צְוֹאוֹת וְקַבְּלוֹת.

וְרַבִּי מֵאִיר, מֵאִי שְׁנָא הָאִי הִי דְמַרְבֵּי בֵּיה, וּמֵאִי שְׁנָא הָאִי הִי דְמַעִיט בֵּיה?

הִי דְגַבְיָה דְרִיבּוּיָא – רִיבּוּיָא הִיא; הִי דְגַבְיָה דְמִיעוּטָא – מִיעוּטָא.

וְהָא לִית לִיה לְרַבִּי מֵאִיר מְכַלְל לָאו אָתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ הֵן!

אָמַר רַבִּי תַנְחֻם: “הִנָּקִי” כְּתִיב.

דְרִישׁ רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא: אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה, וְכוּ – שְׂכִינָה בֵּינֵיהֶן, לֹא וְכוּ – אֵשׁ אוֹכְלָתָן.

And the fire that consumes the woman is stronger – וְדֹאֵשׁ – וְדֹאֵשׁ עֲדִיפָא מְדֹאֵישׁ. According to the *Iyyun Ya'akov*, this means that the fire that consumes the woman expiates her sins more than that of the man. This is because from the time of Eve's curse, a woman undergoes much physical suffering through menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth. This suffering serves as an additional expiating force.

Dust for the *sota* – עֵפֶר לְסוֹטָה: In the Jerusalem Talmud the symbolism of the scroll of the *sota*, the dust, and the water is explained. The dust alludes to death, while the water alludes to the beginning of one's formation. The scroll represents the accounting one must provide before God. These are the three elements that one must contemplate so as to avoid sin, as stated in the mishna in tractate *Avot* (3:1): Know from where you come, and to where you are going, and before Whom you will have to give an accounting.

As reward for that which our Patriarch Abraham said, etc. – בְּשִׁכְרֵי שְׂאֵמֵר אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ וְכוּ': Abraham's statement displayed his modesty; the Divine Presence rests with those who are modest. God provided mitzvot that ensure that the Divine Presence rests among the Jewish people. These mitzvot help eradicate impurity and adultery, both of which banish the Divine Presence (*Iyyun Ya'akov*).

BACKGROUND

Sky-blue wool [tekhel] – תְּכֵלֶת: The Torah mentions the color *tekhel* in many situations, and the word refers specifically to the dye from which the color is made. Various discussions in the Gemara make it clear that the blue dye of the *tekhel* was extracted from a living creature called a *hilazon*. Because of the many passages that describe the *hilazon*, it is difficult to identify one particular animal that meets all of the criteria, and there are many different opinions with regard to its classification. Already during talmudic times the use of *tekhel* became a rarity, and soon its true source was forgotten. In recent generations there have been efforts to identify the *hilazon* and to resume use of the dye. Various suggestions have been made as to the identity of the *hilazon*, including the common cuttlefish and the raft snail. Today, many are of the opinion that the *hilazon* is the snail *Murex trunculus*, which is found on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in the north of Israel. This creature has a unique liquid dye, which, when mixed with other materials, produces the blue *tekhel* color described in the Torah.

The Torah (Numbers 15:38) delineates a positive mitzva to use wool that is dyed with this color for ritual fringes. One of the four threads of the fringes must be dyed with this blue dye, and it is wound around the other threads. However, one can fulfill the mitzva to wear fringes even if the threads are not dyed, and today most ritual fringes are made without the dyed thread.

אָמַר רַבָּא: וְדֹאֵשׁ עֲדִיפָא מְדֹאֵישׁ. מַאי טַעְמָא? הָאִי מְצַרְךָ, וְהָאִי לֹא מְצַרְךָ.

אָמַר רַבָּא, מִפְּנֵי מַה אָמְרָה תּוֹרָה: הֲבֵיא עֵפֶר לְסוֹטָה? זְכַתָּה – יוֹצֵא מִמֶּנָּה בֵּן כְּאַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ, דְּכַתִּיב בֵּיהּ "עֵפֶר וָאֵפֶר", לֹא זְכַתָּה – תַּחֲזוֹר לְעִפְרָה.

דְּרִישׁ רַבָּא: בְּשִׁכְרֵי שְׂאֵמֵר אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ: "וְאֶנְכִי עֵפֶר וָאֵפֶר", זְכוּ בְּנֵי לְשִׁתֵּי מִצְוֹת: אִפְרֵי פְרָה וְעֵפֶר סוֹטָה.

וְהָאִיכָא נִמְי עֵפֶר כִּישׁוּי הָדָם!

הֲתָם הַכֶּשֶׁר מִצְוָה אִיכָא, הַנָּאָה לְיִכָּא.

דְּרִישׁ רַבָּא: בְּשִׁכְרֵי שְׂאֵמֵר אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ: "אִם מַחוּט וְעַד שְׂרוּךְ נִעַל", זְכוּ בְּנֵי לְשִׁתֵּי מִצְוֹת: חוּט שֶׁל תְּכֵלֶת וְרִצְעָה שֶׁל תְּפִלִּין.

בְּשִׁלְמָא רִצְעָה שֶׁל תְּפִלִּין, דְּכַתִּיב: "וְרָאוּ כָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם ה' נִקְרָא עֲלֵיךָ", וְתַנְיָא, רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַגָּדוֹל אָמַר: אֵלּוּ תְּפִלִּין שְׁבֵרָאֵשׁ.

Rava said: And the fire that consumes the woman is stronger^N and more immediate than that which consumes the man. What is the reason for this? The letters *alef* and *shin* in the word *isha* are adjacent, joined together, but in the word *ish* they are not joined, as the letter *yod* is written between them.

Additionally, Rava says: For what reason did the Torah say: Bring dust for the *sota*?^N It is because if she merits to be proven faithful after drinking the water of the *sota*, a child like our Patriarch Abraham will emerge from her, as it is written with regard to Abraham that he said: "I am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27). But if she does not merit to be proven faithful after drinking the water of the *sota*, she shall die and return to her dust, the soil from which mankind was formed.

And Rava further taught: As reward for that which our Patriarch Abraham said:^N "And I am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27), his children merited two mitzvot: The ashes of the red heifer (see Numbers, chapter 19) and the dust of the *sota*.

The Gemara asks: But there is also another mitzva involving dust: The dust used for covering the blood of a slaughtered undomesticated animal or fowl (see Leviticus 17:13).

The Gemara answers: There, the dust does serve as an accessory to the mitzva of covering the blood, but there is no benefit imparted by it. It occurs after the animal has been slaughtered and does not itself render the meat fit for consumption.

Rava further taught: As reward for that which our Patriarch Abraham said to the king of Sodom: "That I will not take a thread nor a shoe strap nor anything that is yours" (Genesis 14:23), distancing himself from anything not rightfully his, his children merited two mitzvot: The thread of sky-blue wool^B worn on ritual fringes and the strap of phylacteries.

The Gemara asks: Granted, the strap of the phylacteries impart benefit, as it is written: "And all the peoples of the earth shall see that the name of the Lord is called upon you; and they shall be afraid of you" (Deuteronomy 28:10). And it is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: This is a reference to the phylacteries of the head, upon which the name of God is written. Phylacteries therefore impart the splendor and grandeur of God and are a fit reward.



Murex



Common cuttlefish



Raft snail

The priest does not write upon a wooden tablet, etc. – **אינו כותב לא על הלוח וכו'**: The curses of the *sota* are not written upon a wooden tablet, nor on unprocessed parchment, nor on paper. They must be written on a parchment scroll. If they are written on paper or unprocessed parchment, the scroll is unfit (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhos Sota* 4:8).

But what is the benefit imparted by the thread of sky-blue wool? The Gemara answers: **As it is taught in a baraita** that Rabbi Meir would say: **What is different about sky-blue from all other colors** such that it was specified for the mitzva of ritual fringes?

It is because sky-blue dye is similar in its color to the sea, and the sea is similar to the sky, and the sky is similar to the Throne of Glory, as it is stated: “And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet the like of a paved work of sapphire stone, and the like of the very heaven for clearness” (Exodus 24:10). This verse shows that the heavens are similar to sapphire, and it is written: “And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone” (Ezekiel 1:26). Therefore, the throne is similar to the heavens. The color of sky blue dye acts as an indication of the bond between the Jewish people and the Divine Presence.

MISHNA The priest does not write the scroll of the *sota* upon a wooden tablet,^h and not upon paper made from grass, and not upon

אֵלָא חוּט שֶׁל תְּכֵלֶת מֵאֵי הִיא? דְּתַנָּא, הִיָּה רַבִּי מֵאִיר אָמַר: מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה תְּכֵלֶת מִכָּל מִינֵי צְבָעוֹנִין?

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהִתְכַלֵּת דּוֹמָה לַיָּם, וְיָם דּוֹמָה לְרִקִּיעַ, וְרִקִּיעַ דּוֹמָה לְכִסֵּא הַכְּבוֹד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו כְּמַעֲשֵׂה לְבִנְתֵּי הַסַּפִּיר וּכְעֶצֶם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר,” וְכָתִיב: “כְּמַרְאֵה אֶבֶן סַפִּיר דְּמוֹת כִּסֵּא.”

מתני' אינו כותב לא על הלוח ולא על הנייר ולא על

Perek II
Daf 17 Amud b

הדיפתרא – אלא על המגילה, שנאמר: “בספר”.

ואינו כותב לא בקומוס ולא בקנקנתום ולא בכל דבר שרושים – אלא בדיו, שנאמר: “ומחה”, כתב שיכול למחות.

גמ' אמר רבא: מגילת סוטה שכתבה בלילה – פסולה. מאי טעמא? אתיא “תורה” תורה. בתיב הקא: “ועשה לה הכהן את כל התורה הזאת”, וכתבי הקתם: “על פי התורה אשר יורוך ועל המשפט”. מה משפט ביום, אף מגילת סוטה ביום.

diftera,^l a hide that is only partially processed, as it is salted and treated with flour but not gallnuts; rather, it must be written only on a scroll of parchment, as it is stated: “And the priest shall write these curses in a scroll” (Numbers 5:23).ⁿ

And the scribe may not write with gum [*komos*],^{lh} and not with copper sulfate [*kankantom*],^l nor with any substance that makes a mark and cannot be completely erased, but only with ink^{nb} made from soot, as it is stated in the continuation of the same verse: “And he shall blot them out into the water of bitterness” (Numbers 5:23). This indicates that the scroll must be written with a writing that can be erased in water.

GEMARA Rava says: A scroll of a *sota* that one wrote at night^h is unfit. What is the reason for this? It is derived by verbal analogy between one instance of the word “law” and another instance of the word “law.” It is written here, with regard to a *sota*: “And the priest shall execute upon her all this law” (Numbers 5:30), and it is written there, with regard to judgment: “According to the law, which they shall teach you, and according to the judgment, which they shall tell you” (Deuteronomy 17:11). Just as judgment may be done only by day, so too the scroll of a *sota* may be written only by day.

LANGUAGE

Diftera – דיפתרא: From the Greek διφθέρα, *difthera*, meaning a hide prepared for writing.

Gum [*komos*] – קומוס: From the Greek κόμμι, *kommi*, meaning tree sap. It specifically refers to gum arabic from the acacia tree known as *Acacia arabica*. This sap has a variety of uses, including the production of strong inks.

Copper sulfate [*kankantom*] – קנקנתום: This word appears in other sources as *kalkantom* or *kalkantos*. It derives from the Greek χαλκανθος, *khalkanthos*, meaning copper sulfate (CuSO₄). This substance was used as a base for the ancient dye and ink industry and is still used nowadays to make ink and shoe polish.

HALAKHA

And the scribe may not write with gum, etc. – **אינו כותב** וכו': The scroll of the *sota* may not be written with ink containing copper sulfate, nor may it be written with gum or any substance which makes a permanent mark (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhos Sota* 3:8, 4:9).

Wrote at night – **כתבה בלילה**: A scroll of a *sota* written at night is unfit, in accordance with the statement of Rava (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhos Sota* 4:7).

BACKGROUND

Ink – דיו: In talmudic times, various writing utensils and colored inks were used for writing on parchment and paper. Black was the most common color of ink. This ink was similar to India ink, a thick ink made from the soot of burnt wood or oil. The soot was collected and mixed with the appropriate quantity of oil. Sometimes sap was also added to the ink so that it would better adhere to the writing surface.

NOTES

On a scroll [*megilla*]...in a scroll [*sefer*] – על המגילה...בספר: Rashi explains elsewhere (*Eiruvin* 15b) that whenever the Torah refers to a written object as a *sefer* it means a scroll [*megilla*]. This can be seen in Jeremiah (36:18–20), where the *sefer* written is later referred to as a *megilla*. The same verse in Jeremiah also indicates that one must write with ink.

But only with ink – אלא בדיו: Some question whether the scroll of a *sota* must be written specifically with ink, or whether it may be written with other writing substances that can be erased (see *Sefat Emet* and *Devar Shaul*). According to Rabbi David Luria, the verses in Jeremiah 36:18–20 indicate that all scrolls must be written with ink. Although it appears from the Gemara that ink must be made specifically of soot and oils, the consensus is that one may use other inks with similar stabilizing materials.

If one wrote the scroll out of sequence – כְּתָבָה לְמַפְרֵעַ: The word “these,” which is the biblical source for this *halakha*, is used in an exegetical interpretation for other purposes as well. Still, as a rule, a verse retains its straightforward meaning even when interpreted otherwise. The *halakha* here is taught based on the word’s straightforward meaning.

Before she accepted the oath upon herself – קֹדֶם שֶׁתִּקְבַּל עָלֶיהָ שְׁבוּעָה: Although the Gemara here explicitly states that the scroll must be written after the oath is administered, the *amora'im* disagree concerning this issue. See *Tosafot* for a discussion of the source of this dispute.

HALAKHA

Wrote the scroll out of sequence – כְּתָבָה לְמַפְרֵעַ: A scroll of a *sota* written out of sequence is unfit (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:7).

Before she accepted the oath upon herself – קֹדֶם שֶׁתִּקְבַּל עָלֶיהָ שְׁבוּעָה: If the scroll was written before the *sota* accepted the oath upon herself, it is unfit (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:7).

Wrote the scroll as a letter – כְּתָבָה אֵיגֶרֶת: A scroll written in the form of a letter is unfit (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:8).

כְּתָבָה לְמַפְרֵעַ – פְּסוּלָה, דְּכָתוּב: “וְכָתַב אֶת הָאֵלוֹת הָאֵלֶּה” כִּי דְכָתוּבָא.

כְּתָבָה קֹדֶם שֶׁתִּקְבַּל עָלֶיהָ שְׁבוּעָה – פְּסוּלָה, שְׁנֵאמַר “וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ” וְאַחַר כֵּן “וְכָתַב”.

כְּתָבָה אֵיגֶרֶת – פְּסוּלָה, “בִּסְפָר” אָמַר רַחֲמָנָא.

If one wrote the scroll out of sequence,^{NH} it is unfit, as it is written: “And the priest shall write these curses in a scroll” (Numbers 5:23). They must be written in the scroll just as they are written in the Torah.

If one wrote the scroll before the *sota* accepted the oath upon herself,^{NH} the scroll is unfit, as it is stated: “Then the priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing” (Numbers 5:21), and afterward it states: “And the priest shall write these curses in a scroll” (Numbers 5:23).

If one wrote the scroll as a letter,^H i.e., without first scoring the lines onto the parchment, it is unfit, as the Merciful One states in the Torah: “In a scroll,” indicating that it must be written like a Torah scroll, in which the parchment must be scored.

Perek II

Daf 18 Amud a

HALAKHA

If one wrote the scroll on two unattached pages – כְּתָבָה עַל שְׁנֵי דָפִין: If the scroll of a *sota* is written on two pages, it is unfit (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:8).

If one wrote one letter, etc. – כָּתַב אֶת אֶחָת וְכוּ': If the priest wrote one letter and erased it, and then wrote another letter and erased it, the scroll is unfit (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:10).

Erasure for the sake of a specific woman – מְחִיקָה לְשֵׁמָה: If the priest erased the scroll not for the sake of a specific *sota*, the water of the *sota* is unfit. Whenever the Gemara states: If you say, this is an indication that what follows that introduction is the accepted *halakha* (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:11).

Erased them in two different cups, etc. – מְחָקוּ בְּשֵׁתִי וְכוּ': If the priest wrote two scrolls for two *sota* women and erased them in one cup, or if he erased them in separate cups and mixed the water in one cup, the water of the *sota* is unfit (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:11).

כְּתָבָה עַל שְׁנֵי דָפִין – פְּסוּלָה, “סֵפֶר” אָחַד אָמַר רַחֲמָנָא, וְלֹא שְׁנַיִם וְשִׁלְשָׁה סְפָרִים.

כָּתַב אֶת אֶחָת וּמְחָק אֶת אֶחָת, וְכָתַב אוֹת אֶחָת וּמְחָק אוֹת אֶחָת – פְּסוּלָה, דְּכָתוּב: “וַעֲשֵׂה לָּהּ הַכְּהֵן אֶת כָּל הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת.”

בְּעֵי רַבָּא: כָּתַב שְׁתֵּי מְגִילוֹת לְשֵׁתִי סוּטוֹת, וּמְחָקוּן לְתוֹךְ כּוּס אֶחָד, מַהוּ? בְּתִיבָה לְשֵׁמָה בְּעֵינִי – וְהֵאֵיבָא, אוּ דִילְמָא בְּעֵינִי נִמְי מְחִיקָה לְשֵׁמָה?

וְאִם תִּמְצָא לֹמַר: בְּעֵינִי נִמְי מְחִיקָה לְשֵׁמָה, מְחָקוּן בְּשֵׁתִי כּוּסוֹת וְחִזּוּר וְעִירְבּוֹן, מַהוּ? מְחִיקָה לְשֵׁמָה בְּעֵינִי – וְהֵאֵיבָא, אוּ דִילְמָא: הֵא לֹא דִידָה קָא שְׁתִּיא, וְהֵא לֹא דִידָה קָא שְׁתִּיא?

If one wrote the scroll on two unattached pages,^{NH} it is unfit, as the Merciful One states in the Torah: “Scroll,” in the singular. It must be written on one scroll and not on two or three scrolls.

If one wrote one letter^{NH} and erased that one letter in water, and he then wrote one more letter and erased that one letter, it is unfit, as it is written: “And the priest shall execute upon her all this law” (Numbers 5:30). The entire passage must be written completely and only then erased, all at once.

§ Rava raised a dilemma: If one wrote two scrolls for two separate *sota* women but then erased both of the scrolls in one cup, what is the *halakha*? Do we require that only the writing be performed for the sake of a specific woman, in which case that is accomplished here? Or perhaps we require that also the erasure be performed for the sake of a specific woman,^H which is not accomplished here, since both scrolls are erased together?

And if you say that we require that also the erasure be for the sake of each specific woman, then if the priest erased them in two different cups^H and afterward mixed the water from both together again, what is the *halakha*? Do we require that only the erasure be for the sake of a specific woman, in which case that is accomplished here? Or perhaps since this *sota* does not drink from only her own water and that *sota* does not drink from only her own water, the water is disqualified?

NOTES

If one wrote the scroll on two unattached pages – כְּתָבָה עַל שְׁנֵי דָפִין: Most commentaries, including *Tosafot*, *Tosefot HaRosh*, and the Meiri, explain this as referring to a case where the contents of the scroll were written over two unattached pages of parchment. However, if they were attached, it is fit, just as a Torah scroll is written over many attached pages of parchment. By contrast, Rashi holds that the scroll is unfit

even when written on two columns of attached parchment. Some explain Rashi’s reasoning as follows: Since a Torah scroll is very long, it must, of necessity, be written on many pages of parchment. Therefore, it is still considered as one item. However, a scroll of a *sota* is short, and if written on separate pages of parchment, it appears to be two separate documents (*Meromei Sadeh*).

If one wrote one letter, etc. – כָּתַב אֶת אֶחָת וְכוּ': According to the Meiri, the same *halakha* applies if one wrote a complete word and then erased it, or if one wrote part of the scroll properly and erased it. The scroll must be erased only after being completely written.

ואם תמצא לומר: הא לאו דידה קא שתניא? והא לאו דידה קא שתניא, תור וחלקון מהו? יש ברירה או אין ברירה? תיקו.

And furthermore, if you say that the water is disqualified because **this one does not drink** from only her own water and that **one does not drink** from only her own water, what if after mixing the two cups of water together the priest **divided them again**^H into two cups and gave one to each? **What is the halakha** then? **Is there retroactive clarification**,^N in which case one may claim that each woman drank her own water, **or is there no retroactive clarification**? The Gemara responds: The dilemma shall stand unresolved.

בעי רבא: השקה בסיב, מהו? בשופרת, מהו? דרך שתיה בכך, או אין דרך שתיה בכך? תיקו.

Rava raised a dilemma: If the priest administered the bitter water to the *sota* to drink through a palm fiber,^N what is the *halakha*? Or if he administered it through a tube, what is the *halakha*? Is this considered a normal manner of drinking, or is it not considered a normal manner of drinking, in which case the act is invalid? The Gemara responds: The dilemma shall stand unresolved.

בעי רב אשי: נשפכו מהן ונשתיירו מהן, מהו? תיקו.

Rav Ashi raised a dilemma: If some of the water of the *sota* spilled out and some of it remained^{HN} in the cup, what is the *halakha*? Is it sufficient for the woman to drink some of the water in which the scroll has been erased or must she drink all of it? The Gemara responds: The dilemma shall stand unresolved.

אמר רבי זירא אמר רב: שתי שבועות האמורות בסוטה למה? אחת קודם שנמחקה מגילה, ואחת לאחר שנמחקה.

§ Rabbi Zeira says that Rav says: With regard to the two oaths^N that are stated with regard to the *sota*: “And the priest shall cause her to swear” (Numbers 5:19), and: “Then the priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing” (Numbers 5:21), why are they both necessary? **One must be administered before the scroll is erased and one must be administered after it is erased.**

מתקיף לה רבא: תרווייהו קודם שנמחקה מגילה בתיבן! אלא אמר רבא: אחת שבועה שיש עמה אלה, ואחת שבועה שאין עמה אלה.

Rava objects to this: Both of the oaths are written in the Torah before any mention of the scroll being erased. What is the basis to claim that one oath was administered afterward? **Rather, Rava said:** While both oaths are administered before the *sota* drinks, the two oaths are different: **One is an oath that has a curse with it, and one is an oath that does not have a curse with it.**

היכי דמי שבועה שיש עמה אלה? אמר רב עמרם אמר רב: “משביעני עליך שלא נטמאת, שאם נטמאת יבואו בידך.”

The Gemara asks: **What are the circumstances of an oath that has a curse with it?** What is the language of this oath? **Rav Amram says that Rav says:** The priest says: **I administer an oath to you that you are honest in your claim that you were not defiled, as, if you were defiled, all these curses will come upon you.**

אמר רבא: אלה לחודה קיימא, ושבועה לחודה קיימא! אלא אמר רבא: “משביעני עליך שאם נטמאת יבואו בידך.”

Rava said: This is insufficient, as **the curse stands by itself and the oath stands by itself.** They are said in separate statements, and it cannot be considered to be an oath with a curse. **Rather, Rava said:** The priest says: **I administer an oath to you that if you were defiled, all these curses will come upon you.**

אמר רב אשי: אלה איכא, שבועה ליכא! אלא אמר רב אשי: “משביעני עליך שלא נטמאת, ואם נטמאת יבואו בידך.”

Rav Ashi said: Even this is insufficient, as **there is a curse but there is no oath** that she was not defiled. **Rather, Rav Ashi said:** The priest must say: **I administer an oath to you that you were not defiled and that if you were defiled all these curses will come upon you.** Here the oath itself includes the curse.

מתני' על מה היא אומרת אמן אמן? אמן על האלה, אמן על השבועה. אמן מאיש זה, אמן מאיש אחר. אמן שלא שטיתי ארוסה ונשואה,

MISHNA With regard to what does she say: “Amen, amen” (Number 5:22),^H twice, as recorded in the verse? The mishna explains that it includes of the following: **Amen on the curse**, as she accepts the curse upon herself if she is guilty, and **amen on the oath**, as she declares that she is not defiled. She states: **Amen** if I committed adultery with **this man** about whom I was warned, **amen** if I committed adultery with **another man**. **Amen that I did not stray** when I was **betrothed nor after I was married,**

HALAKHA

על מה היא – amen, amen – אומרת אמן אמן: Through the principle of extension of an oath, the husband may have his wife include in her oath other cases as well. Not only did she not commit adultery with the man about whom

she was warned, but neither did she do so with any other man, nor did she commit adultery even during the period of her betrothal (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhhot Sota* 4:17).

If he divided them again – תור וחלקון: If the priest wrote two scrolls for two *sota* women, erased them in separate cups, and then mixed the water together in one cup, he should not administer this water of a *sota* to the *sota* women to drink *ab initio*. However, after the fact, if he separated the water again into two separate cups and they drank, the drinking is valid. The *Kesef Mishne* explains that the Rambam rules leniently on this question since no answer is provided to the Gemara's query, and such an uncertainty does not justify erasing the Divine Name again (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhhot Sota* 4:11).

If some of the water spilled out and some of it remained – נשפכו מהן ונשתיירו מהן: If some of the water spilled out and some remained, one should not administer it to the *sota* to drink *ab initio*. However, the drinking is valid after the fact. The Rambam rules leniently on this question since no answer is provided to the Gemara's query, and such an uncertainty does not justify erasing the Divine Name again (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhhot Sota* 4:11).

NOTES

Retroactive clarification – בְּרִירָה: This principle is a matter of controversy throughout the Talmud. It posits that a case of uncertainty at a given time may be decided retroactively based on a later event. In this case, when each woman drinks the water, it will be clarified that this was the water intended for her. The consensus among the halakhic authorities is that concerning matters of Torah law one may not claim retroactive clarification, but with regard to matters of rabbinic law one may do so.

Administered the bitter water to her to drink through a palm fiber – הִשְׁקָה בְּסִיב: Rashi explains that the fiber here is similar to a straw, whereas the *Arukh* asserts that it is a spongy material from which the *sota* sucks water that has been absorbed in it. According to this understanding, this question is distinct from the following question of whether the *sota* may drink the water from a tube. *Tosafot* say that the question is whether, if the water of the *sota* was absorbed by a fiber and the *sota* swallowed the fiber, this is considered valid drinking after the fact.

If some of the water spilled out and some of it remained – נִשְׁפְּכוּ מֵהֶן וְנִשְׁתִּיירוּ מֵהֶן: Rashi explains that this is describing one case, in which some of the water spilled out while the rest remained. According to the *Tosefot HaRosh*, however, these are two separate cases: In one, some of the water spilled out but a majority remains. In the other, more serious case, most of the water spilled out and only a small amount remains. Some hold that at least a quarter-log must remain in any event, because as a rule, consumption of less than this amount is not considered drinking (*Minhat Kenaot*).

Two oaths, etc. – שְׁתֵּי שְׁבוּעוֹת וְכוּ': In his commentary on the Torah, Ibn Ezra explains that the priest does administer the oath to the woman twice, as the Gemara indicates here. However, the Ramban explains in his commentary on the Torah that there is only one oath. This is the ruling of the Rambam as well. The *Sefat Emet* challenges this understanding as Rabbi Zeira explicitly states that there are two oaths. The *Hazon Yehezkel* explains that Rav Ashi's opinion is that there is only one oath, and this is the source of the opinion of the Rambam and Ramban. Still, this is not the straightforward understanding of Rav Ashi's statement, which seems concerned only with the wording of the oath, while accepting that there are in fact two oaths.