

NOTES

And then she retracted her statement and said I will drink, etc. – וְחִזְרָה וְאָמְרָה שׁוֹתָה אֲנִי וכו' – If the woman said explicitly that she was defiled, she cannot retract her statement. The discussion here pertains to a woman who did not state explicitly that she was defiled; however, her refusal to drink is interpreted in this manner, and the Gemara questions whether she can claim that her refusal to drink was only due to fear. Some commentaries write that were she to claim explicitly that her initial refusal was due to fear, she would certainly be believed. This case is comparable to that of a woman who informed her husband that she was menstruating and afterward retracted her statement and claimed that she was ritually pure, in which case the *halakha* is that if she provided a pretext for her initial statement, she is believed. The Gemara raises this question only in a case where she did not explain her reasons for initially refusing to drink but merely claimed that she is now willing to drink the water (*Minḥat Ḥinnukh*).

It is necessary to put a bitter substance into the water, etc. – צְרִיךְ שִׁיתֵן מֵר לְתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וכו' – The water is called “the water of bitterness” (Numbers 5:23) even before it is drunk, although it might not cause any harm. This indicates that it is not so named because it causes death, but because it is already bitter (Rashi). Others add that the additional phrase “the water of bitterness that causes the curse” (Numbers 5:18) indicates that the water’s bitterness is unrelated to its causing a curse. The ink and dust added to the water do not cause it to be bitter, and therefore something bitter must be added.

קִשְׂיָא דְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אֲדַרְבֵּי עֲקִיבָא. הָתָם
אָמַר מַחִיקָה מְעַכְבָּא, וְהֵכָא אָמַר קוֹמֵץ
מְעַכָּב!

תְּרֵי תַנַּיִם וְאֵלֶּיבָא דְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא.

אֵיבְעִינָא לְהוּ: אָמְרָה “אֲנִי שׁוֹתָה” מִחֲמַת
בְּרִיּוּתָא, וְחִזְרָה וְאָמְרָה “שׁוֹתָה אֲנִי”, מַהוּ?
כִּיּוֹן דְאָמְרָה “אֲנִי שׁוֹתָה” – טְמֵאָה אֲנִי
קְאָמְרָה, וְכִיּוֹן דְאֶחָזִיק נַפְשָׁה בְטוֹמְאָה –
לֹא מְצִינָא הַדְּרָה בָּהּ. אוּ דִילְמָא כִּיּוֹן דְאָמְרָה
“שׁוֹתָה אֲנִי”, גְּלִיאַ דְעֵתָה דְמַחֲמַת בִּיעֲתוּתָא
הוּא דְאָמְרָה? תֵּיקוּ.

אָמַר אַבּוּה דְשִׁמוּאֵל: צְרִיךְ שִׁיתֵן מֵר לְתוֹךְ
הַמַּיִם. מַאי טְעַמָּא? דְאָמַר קְרָא: “מֵי הַמָּרִים”,
שְׁמָרִים כְּבָר.

The Gemara asks: The statement of Rabbi Akiva is difficult, as it is contradicted by another statement of Rabbi Akiva: There, in the first *baraita*, he said that erasure prevents the authorities from compelling the woman to drink the water if she retracted her decision to drink, and here he says that the sacrifice of the handful prevents the authorities from compelling the woman to drink the water. In other words, according to the first *baraita* the woman can retract her decision to drink until the scroll is erased, whereas according to the second *baraita* she can retract her decision until the handful is sacrificed.

The Gemara responds: There is a dispute between two *tanna'im*, and they disagree with regard to the opinion of Rabbi Akiva. They disagree with regard to what point in time, according to Rabbi Akiva, is the final moment at which a woman can refuse to drink the bitter water without being forced to do so.

A dilemma was raised before the Sages: If she initially said: I will not drink, while in a state of good health, and then she retracted her statement and said: I will drink,^N what is the *halakha*? Does one say that when she said: I will not drink, it is as if she confessed and said: I am defiled, and since she established herself as defiled she cannot retract her statement?^H Or perhaps when she said: I will drink, she revealed her thoughts that it was only due to fear that she said she will not drink? The Gemara concludes that the dilemma shall stand unresolved.

Shmuel’s father says: It is necessary for one to put a bitter substance into the water^{NH} that the *sota* drinks. What is the reason for this? It is as the verse states: “And he shall blot them out into the water of bitterness” (Numbers 5:23), indicating that they are already bitter before the scroll is erased.

HALAKHA

She cannot retract her statement – לֹא מְצִינָא הַדְּרָה בָּהּ: A *sota* who, due to fear, says: I will not drink, may later retract her statement and say: I will drink. However, if she said: I will not drink, when she is in good health and unafraid, she may not later recant and say: I will drink (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:3).

It is necessary to put a bitter substance into the water, etc. – צְרִיךְ שִׁיתֵן מֵר לְתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וכו': A bitter substance, e.g., wormwood, must be placed into the water that the *sota* drinks, as the verse (Number 5:23) describes that water as “the water of bitterness” (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 3:10).

And her meal-offering is scattered – ומנחתה מתפזרת: The commentaries explain that if the woman refuses to drink without admitting infidelity, her meal-offering is burned in the place of the ashes, located in the Temple courtyard, and its ashes are scattered (see 22b). The reason for this is that since the meal-offering was consecrated in a service vessel, it must be burned. In the second case in the mishna, where the woman admits her infidelity, the meal-offering is scattered without being burned, as, although the meal-offering was consecrated in a service vessel, her admission clarifies that the consecration was in error, and therefore it need not be burned (Meiri).

She does not manage to finish drinking – אינה מספיקת – לשתות: This is an exaggeration, as the water does not affect her until she drinks the entire amount. This phrase is used to emphasize that the effect of the water occurs immediately afterward (Jerusalem Talmud).

A person is obligated to teach, etc. – תניב אדם ללמד וכו': If a woman learns Torah and is later accused of being a *sota*, she will know that even if she survives the evaluation of the water despite her infidelity, it is not because the water is powerless but because of her merit. Although the knowledge that it is possible to survive the evaluation of the water could cause a woman to commit adultery, it is nevertheless preferable that they become aware of this possibility, as the lack of this knowledge is more likely to cause a lack of fear of the water, as rumors will be spread that the water is powerless (Etz Yosef).

Is teaching her promiscuity [*tiflut*] – לומדה תפלות: Rashi interprets the term *tiflut* as referring to promiscuous behavior, while the Rambam interprets the term as referring to idle nonsense (Rambam's Commentary on the Mishna). According to some versions of the text, the mishna reads: Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah is considered as though he taught her promiscuity. However, it is evident from the Gemara (21b) that this is not the actual text of the mishna; rather it is the Gemara's interpretation of the mishna (Meiri).

LANGUAGE

Promiscuity [*tiflut*] – תפלות: The root *tav, peh, lamed* refers to that which is meaningless or worthless. This literal definition fits well according to the Rambam's interpretation that the term here is referring to idle nonsense. Alternatively, the term can be understood as a euphemism for words or acts of a sexual nature, whether adulterous, as in the statement of Rabbi Eliezer, or of a permitted nature, as in the statement of Rabbi Yehoshua. This interpretation is indicated by the fact that the term is contrasted with abstinence, both here and elsewhere, and might have been influenced by the similar root *tet, peh, lamed*, which denotes attachment and bonding, as in the attachment of a man and a woman.

BACKGROUND

An abstinent woman [*perusha*] – אשה פרושה: The mishna refers critically to women who are unwilling to accept a life of abstinence, yet at the same time it declares that an abstinent woman, as well those who injure themselves out of false abstinence, are among those who erode the world. The Gemara (22a–b) explains that the mishna's criticism pertains to individuals who are self-righteous, sanctimonious, and hypocritical. The terms *perusha* and *perushin* can be translated as those who engage in self-restraint, but they can also carry the negative connotation of separatists who reject community norms. The term *perushim*, sometimes rendered *perushin*, i.e., Pharisees, was also used by the opponents of rabbinic Judaism in reference to the rabbinic Sages, often in a derogatory sense. Its usage here appears to be an example of self-criticism on the part of the Sages with regard to the activities of some members of their community.

MISHNA If before the scroll was erased she said: I will not drink,^h the scroll that was written for her is sequestered, and her meal-offering is burned and scattered over the place of the ashes, and her scroll is not fit to give to another *sota* to drink. If the scroll was erased and afterward she said: I am defiled,^h the water is poured out, and her meal-offering is scatteredⁿ in the place of the ashes. If the scroll was already erased and she said: I will not drink, she is forced to drink against her will.

When a guilty woman drinks she does not manage to finish drinkingⁿ before her face turns green^h and her eyes bulge, and her skin becomes full of protruding veins, and the people standing in the Temple say: Remove her, so that she does not render the Temple courtyard impure by dying there.

The mishna limits the scope of the previous statement: If she has merit, it delays punishment for her and she does not die immediately. There is a merit that delays punishment for one year, there is a larger merit that delays punishment for two years, and there is a merit that delays punishment for three years. From here Ben Azzai states: A person is obligated to teachⁿ his daughter Torah, so that if she drinks and does not die immediately, she will know that some merit she has delayed punishment for her. Rabbi Eliezer says: Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah^h is teaching her promiscuity [*tiflut*].^{NL}

Rabbi Yehoshua says: A woman desires to receive the amount of a *kav* of food and a sexual relationship [*tiflut*] rather than to receive nine *kav* of food and abstinence. He would say: A foolish man of piety, and a conniving wicked person, and an abstinent woman [*perusha*],^B and those who injure themselves out of false abstinence; all these are people who erode the world.^H

HALAKHA

If before the scroll was erased she said I will not drink, etc. – עד שלא נמחקה המגילה אמרה איני שותה וכו': If the woman says: I will not drink, before the scroll is erased, then the scroll is sequestered, and it is not fit to give to another *sota* to drink. Her meal-offering is scattered over the place of the ashes. If she says: I will not drink, once the scroll has been erased, she is forced to drink against her will, and it is explained to her that if she is not defiled she will not be harmed by the water (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:4–5).

She said: I am defiled – אמרה "טמאה אני": If she says: I am defiled, even if the scroll has been erased, the water is poured out and her meal-offering is scattered in the place of the ashes (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:6).

Her face turns green, etc. – פניה מוריקות וכו': If she is defiled, her face immediately turns green, her eyes bulge out, and her veins protrude, and the people standing in the Temple say: Remove her from the Temple courtyard, lest she begin menstruating and render the Temple courtyard impure (see 20b). She is then removed from the women's courtyard where she is standing (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 3:16).

Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah – כל המלמד בתו תורה: A woman who studies Torah receives a reward, but her reward is not equal to that of a man because, unlike men, she is not commanded to learn. Despite the fact that women receive a reward if they study Torah, the Sages ruled that a man should not teach Torah to his daughter, since most women's minds are not attuned to learning and they render the words of the Torah into nonsense. Therefore, the Sages stated: Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah is considered as though he taught her foolishness.

This applies only with regard to the Oral Torah; however, with regard to the Written Torah, although one should not teach the Written Torah to one's daughter, it is not considered as though he taught her foolishness. The distinction between the Oral and Written Torah stems from the statement of Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya in tractate *Hagiga* (3a) that women are also required to participate in the mitzva of assembly, i.e., the obligation to assemble in the Temple on *Sukkot* in the year following the Sabbatical Year in order to hear the Written Torah being read publicly (*Bah*).

Some of the later authorities state that the above ruling does not apply to a woman who decides to study Torah on her own initiative, as by doing so she proves that she does not belong in the category of women who turn the Torah into nonsense (*Perisha*).

The Rema writes that women are certainly obligated to learn the *halakhot* that are applicable to them. The later authorities write that nowadays, when women study secular subjects, it is incumbent upon them to study Torah as well, and girls should be taught at least the entire Written Torah and the ethical teachings of tractate *Avot* (*Likkutei Halakhot*). Furthermore, some authorities state that women are required to study those parts of the Torah that deal with matters of faith, as women are obligated to believe in God and to love and fear Him (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda, Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 1:13; *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 246:6).

People who erode the world – מבלי עולם: If one gives all his money to charity or spends all his money on other mitzvot, he is not pious but foolish, and he is considered one of those who erode the world (Rambam *Sefer Hafla'a, Hilkhot Arakhin VaHaramim* 8:13).

Scribe [lavlar] – לַבְלָר: This word is derived from the Latin *librarius*, which means scribe or writer, and refers to one whose profession is to write promissory notes or other documents.

NOTES

Lest you omit a single letter – שְׂמָא תַחְסִיר אוֹת אַחַת: According to the Ritva, Rabbi Yishmael means that any letter omitted or added to the text of a Torah scroll invalidates it, even if it does not alter the meaning of the verse. However, most of the commentaries explain that the Gemara is referring to additional or missing letters that change the meaning of the text and transform the text into a blasphemous statement. Rashi provides some examples of this. For instance, with regard to the verse: “But the Lord God is the true God [emet]” (Jeremiah 10:10), if one omitted the first letter of the word *emet*, the word would become *met*, which means: He is dead.

Rendering it the letter reish which could be a critical error – וּמִשּׁוֹי לִיה רִישׁ: For example, if when writing: “The Lord is one [ehad]” (Deuteronomy 6:4), the *dalet* at the end of *ehad* became a *reish*, it would read: The Lord is another [aher].

HALAKHA

Copper sulfate put into the ink – קְנָקְנָתוֹם לְתוֹךְ הַדִּיּוֹ: A Torah scroll, as well as phylacteries and *mezuzot*, must be written with ink prepared from the soot produced by burning oils and soaked in gallnut juice, as this ink is both durable and erasable. If one wrote with ink containing copper sulfate or similar substances that prevent the writing from being erased, the Torah scroll is valid, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir, provided that the ink is black (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefillin UMezuza VeSefer Torah* 1:4; *Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'a* 271:6).

גמ' אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר שְׂמוּאֵל מְשׁוֹם רַבִּי מַאִיר: בְּשִׁהְיִיתִי לְמַד תּוֹרָה אֶצֶל רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא, הֵייתִי מְטִיל קְנָקְנָתוֹם לְתוֹךְ הַדִּיּוֹ, וְלֹא אָמַר לִי דְבַר. כְּשִׁבְאַתִּי אֶצֶל רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל, אָמַר לִי: בְּנִי, מַה מְלַאכְתְּךָ? אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: לְבַלֵּר אָנִי. אָמַר לִי: בְּנִי, הֲוֵי זְהִיר, שְׂמַלְאכְתְּךָ מְלַאכְתְּ שְׂמִים הִיא. שְׂמָא תַחְסִיר אוֹת אַחַת אוּ תַתִּיר אוֹת אַחַת, נִמְצְאַתְּ אֶתְּהָ מַחְרִיב אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלָם כּוּל.

אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: דְּבַר אַחַד יֵשׁ לִי שְׂאֲנִי מְטִיל לְתוֹךְ הַדִּיּוֹ, וְקְנָקְנָתוֹם שְׂמוּ. אָמַר לִי: וְכִי מְטִילִין קְנָקְנָתוֹם לְתוֹךְ הַדִּיּוֹ? הַתּוֹרָה אָמְרָה: “וּמַחְהָ”, בְּתַב שְׂיֻבְלָ לְמַחֹת.

מַאי קָאָמַר לִיה וּמַאי קָא מַהְדֵּר לִיה?

הָכִי קָאָמַר לִיה: לֹא מְבַעֵיָא בְּחִסְרוֹת וּיְתִירוֹת דְּבִקֵּי אֲנָא. אֶלְא אֶפְלוּ לְמִיחַשׁ לְזוּבָב, דְּדִילְמָא אֲתִי וְיִתֵּיב אֲתַגִּיהַּ דְּדִלִיית וּמַחִיק לִיה וּמִשְׁוֵי לִיה רִישׁ – דְּבַר אַחַד יֵשׁ לִי שְׂאֲנִי מְטִיל לְתוֹךְ הַדִּיּוֹ וְקְנָקְנָתוֹם שְׂמוּ.

אִינִי?! וְהָא תַנְיָא, אָמַר רַבִּי מַאִיר: כְּשִׁהְיִיתִי לְמַד תּוֹרָה אֶצֶל רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל, הֵייתִי מְטִיל קְנָקְנָתוֹם לְתוֹךְ הַדִּיּוֹ, וְלֹא אָמַר לִי דְבַר. כְּשִׁבְאַתִּי אֶצֶל רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אֶסְרָה עָלַי.

קְשִׁיָא שְׂמוּשׁ אֲשִׁמוּשׁ, קְשִׁיָא אֶסְרָה אֶסְרָה!

בְּשִׁלְמָא שְׂמוּשׁ אֲשִׁמוּשׁ לֹא קְשִׁיָא. מְעִיקְרָא אֲתָא לְקַמְיָה דְּרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא. כִּיּוֹן דְּלֹא מְצִי קָם אֶלְיָבִיָה, אֲתָא לְקַמְיָה דְּרַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל וְגַמְרָא גְמָרָא. הֲדַר אֲתָא לְקַמְיָה דְּרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא סְבַר סְבָרָא.

GEMARA Rav Yehuda says that Shmuel says in the name of Rabbi Meir: When I was studying Torah before Rabbi Akiva, as his disciple, I used to put copper sulfate into the ink with which I wrote Torah scrolls, and he did not say anything to me in protest. Afterward, when I came to learn Torah before Rabbi Yishmael, he said to me: My son, what is your vocation? I said to him: I am a scribe [lavlar]¹ who writes Torah scrolls. He said to me: My son, be careful in your work, as your work is the work of Heaven, lest you omit a single letter^N from the Torah scroll or add a single letter, and in this you are found to be destroying the entire world if the mistake alters the meaning of the verse and results in blasphemy.

Rabbi Meir continues: I said to Rabbi Yishmael: I have one substance that I put into the ink, and it is called copper sulfate, which prevents the writing from being erased. He said to me: And may copper sulfate be put into the ink?^H The Torah clearly said with regard to the scroll of the *sota*: “And the priest shall write these curses in a scroll, and he shall blot them out into the water of bitterness” (Numbers 5:23). This indicates that the Torah requires writing that can be blotted out.

Since Rabbi Meir’s remark about copper sulfate seems unrelated to Rabbi Yishmael’s previous statement, the Gemara asks: What is Rabbi Yishmael saying to Rabbi Meir, and what is Rabbi Meir replying to Rabbi Yishmael?

The Gemara explains: This is what Rabbi Meir is saying to him: It is not necessary to say that I do not err in omissions and additions, as I am an expert. Rather, there is not even any reason for concern with regard to a fly lest it come and sit on the protrusion of the letter *dalet* and erase it, thereby rendering it the letter *reish*, which could be a critical error.^N There is no concern of this erasure occurring, since I have a certain substance that I put into the ink and that prevents the writing from being erased, and it is called copper sulfate.

The Gemara questions the initial part of Rabbi Meir’s statement: Is that so? But isn’t it taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Meir said: When I was studying Torah before Rabbi Yishmael, I used to put copper sulfate into the ink with which I wrote Torah scrolls, and he did not say anything to me. Afterward, when I came to learn Torah with Rabbi Akiva, he prohibited me from doing so.

The Gemara points out that there are two separate contradictions between the two statements: Rav Yehuda’s statement with regard to Rabbi Meir first serving Rabbi Akiva as a disciple is difficult, as it is contradicted by the statement of the *baraita* with regard to his first serving Rabbi Yishmael. Furthermore, Rav Yehuda’s statement is difficult, since he states that it was Rabbi Yishmael who prohibited the addition of copper sulfate, and this is contradicted by the statement of the *baraita* that it was Rabbi Akiva who prohibited it.

The Gemara answers: Granted, the apparent contradiction between Rav Yehuda’s statement with regard to Rabbi Meir’s serving Rabbi Akiva first, and the statement of the *baraita* with regard to serving Rabbi Yishmael first, poses no difficulty. Initially, he came before Rabbi Akiva to study, but since he could not comprehend his extremely complicated method of learning, he came before Rabbi Yishmael and learned the oral tradition from him. Afterward, he returned and came before Rabbi Akiva and studied his method of logical reasoning in order to understand the reasons behind the *halakhot* he had already learned.

אָלֵא אֶסְרָה אֶסְרָה קְשִׁיָּא! קְשִׁיָּא.

However, the contradiction between Rav Yehuda's statement that it was Rabbi Yishmael **who prohibited** the addition of copper sulfate and the statement of the *baraita* that it was Rabbi Akiva **who prohibited it** still poses a **difficulty**. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, the matter is **difficult**.

תַּנְיָא: רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר, אָמַר הֵיאֵה רַבִּי מַעֲיָר: לְבַל מְטִילִין קְנָנְתָּוּם לְתוֹךְ הַדִּין,

It is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yehuda says that Rabbi Meir would say: Copper sulfate may be put into the ink that is used for all sacred writings, i.e., Torah scrolls, phylacteries, and *mezuzot*,

Perek III
Daf 20 Amud b

חוּץ מִפְּרֻשַׁת סוּטָה בְּלִבְד. רַבִּי יַעֲקֹב אָמַר מִשְׁמוֹ: חוּץ מִפְּרֻשַׁת סוּטָה שֶׁל מְקַדָּשׁ. מֵאֵי בִּינְיָהוּ? אָמַר רַבִּי יִרְמְיָהוּ: לְמַחֲוֹק לָהּ מִן הַתּוֹרָה אִיכָּא בִּינְיָהוּ.

except for the ink used to write the Torah passage about the *sota*, even when written in a Torah scroll. Rabbi Ya'akov says in the name of Rabbi Meir: It is **except** for the ink used to write the scroll with the *sota* passage used in the Temple.⁴ The Gemara asks: **What is the difference between these two opinions?** The Gemara replies: Rabbi Yirmeya says that there is a difference **between them** with regard to whether it is permitted to **erase** the passage **for the *sota* from a Torah scroll**. According to Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Meir holds that this is permitted, and therefore the passage in the Torah scroll must be written with ink that does not contain copper sulfate, so that it can be erased. By contrast, according to Rabbi Ya'akov, Rabbi Meir holds that it is prohibited to erase the passage from a Torah scroll, and therefore the passage may be written with ink containing copper sulfate.

וְהֵי תַנְיָא כִּי הֵי תַנְיָא: דְּתַנְיָא: אֵין מְגִילַתָּה כְּשִׁירָה לְהַשְׁקוֹת בָּהּ סוּטָה אַחֲרָת. רַבִּי אֲחִי בַר יֵאֲשִׁיָּה אָמַר: מְגִילַתָּה כְּשִׁירָה לְהַשְׁקוֹת בָּהּ סוּטָה אַחֲרָת.

The Gemara assumes that according to Rabbi Ya'akov it is prohibited to erase the passage from a Torah scroll, since he holds that the scroll must be written for the sake of the *sota*, whereas Rabbi Yehuda, who permits this, holds that the scroll need not be written for the sake of the *sota*. **And** therefore, the opinions of these *tanna'im* are **parallel** to the opinions of those *tanna'im*, as it is taught in a *baraita*: **The scroll of one *sota* is not fit⁴ to be used in the preparation of the water to give to another *sota* to drink**, as it was not written for the sake of the other *sota*. Rabbi Aḥai bar Yoshiya says: **Her scroll is fit** to be used in the preparation of the water **to give to another *sota* to drink**, since it does not need to be written for the sake of the *sota*.

אָמַר רַב פַּפְּא: דִּילְמָא לָא הִיא. עַד כָּאֵן לָא קָאָמַר תַּנְיָא קָמָא הָתָּם, אֲלֵא כִּינּוּ דְאִינְתִּיק לְשׁוּם רַחֵל – לָא הָדְרָא מִינְתָּקָא לְשׁוּם לְאָה, אֲבָל תּוֹרָה דְּקָתְמָא כְּתִיבָהּ, הָכִי נִמְי דְּמַחְקִינָן.

Rav Pappa said: **Perhaps that is not so**, and the two disputes are not comparable. It is possible that the **first *tanna*** of the *baraita* states that the scroll may not be used for another *sota* **only there**, in the case if a scroll written for a specific woman; **since it was originally designated in the name of one woman**, e.g., Rachel, **it cannot again be designated in the name of another woman**, e.g., Leah. **However**, in the case of a Torah scroll, **which is written without specifying anyone**, **indeed we may erase** the passage to prepare the water for a *sota* even though it was not written for her sake.

אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק: דִּילְמָא לָא הִיא. עַד כָּאֵן לָא קָאָמַר רַבִּי אֲחִי בַר יֵאֲשִׁיָּה הָתָּם, אֲלֵא בְּמִגִּילָה דְאִיכְתוּב לְשׁוּם אֲלוֹת בְּעוֹלָם, אֲבָל תּוֹרָה דְּלֵהֲתַלְמִיד כְּתִיבָהּ, הָכִי נִמְי דְּלָא מַחְקִינָן.

Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak said that the comparison between the two disputes can be refuted for a different reason: **Perhaps that is not so**. It is possible that Rabbi Aḥai bar Yoshiya states that the scroll may be used for another *sota* **only there**, with regard to the scroll written for a specific *sota*, as it was written for the purpose of the curses of a *sota* **in general**. **However**, in the case of a Torah scroll, **which is written to be learned from**, **indeed we may not erase** it for a *sota*, as it was not written for the sake of a *sota* at all.

HALAKHA

Except for the ink used to write the scroll with the *sota* passage used in the Temple – חוּץ מִפְּרֻשַׁת סוּטָה שֶׁל מְקַדָּשׁ – The *sota* scroll is written with ink that does not contain copper sulfate and therefore can be erased (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 3:8).

The scroll of one *sota* is not fit, etc. – אֵין מְגִילַתָּה כְּשִׁירָה וְכו' – The *sota* scroll must be written for the sake of a specific *sota*. If it was not written for her sake, it is unfit for use. A scroll written for the sake of one woman is not fit for use in the evaluation of any other woman (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:4).

One who wrote a bill of divorce with which to divorce his wife, etc. – כתב לגרש את אשתו וכו' – If a bill of divorce was not written for the sake of the specific man and woman using the bill of divorce, it is not valid. Therefore, if one wrote a bill of divorce and then decided not to use it, then even if he later found a person from his city with the same name who is married to a woman of the same name, the second individual cannot use the bill of divorce (Rambam *Sefer Nashim*, *Hilkhot Geirushin* 3:1–2; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Even HaEzer* 131:1–2).

NOTES

It is referring to the erasure – מחיקה – The Rosh explains that although the *sota* passage need not be written for the sake of a specific woman, it does need to be written for the purpose of cursing, as the verse states: “And he shall write the curses” (Numbers 5:23). Therefore, the *sota* passage in the Torah scroll, which is written for study purposes, may not be used for a *sota* (*Tosefot HaRosh*).

ורבי אחי בר יאשיה לית ליה: כתב לגרש את אשתו ונמלך. מצאו בן עירו ואמר לו: שמי בשמך ושם אשתי בשם אשתך – פסול לגרש בו?

אמרי: התם “וכתב לה” אמר רחמנא, בעינן בתיבה לשמה. הכא נמי “ועשה לה” מאי עשייה? מחיקה.

“אינה מספקת לשותות עד שפניה [כו]”. מני רבי שמעון היא, דאמר: מקריב את מנחתה ואחר כך משקה, דכמה דלא קרבה מנחתה לא בדקי לה מיא, דתיב: “מנחת זכרון מוכרת עון”.

אימא סיפא: יש לה זכות היתה תולה לה. אתאן לרבנן, דאי רבי שמעון, דאמר: אין זכות תולה במים המרים!

אמר רב חסדא: הא מני רבי עקיבא היא, דאמר: מקריב את מנחתה ואחר כך משקה. ובזכות – סבר לה רבנן.

“והם אומרים: הוציאוה” וכו'. מאי טעמא? דדילמא מתה. למימרא, דמת אסור במחנה לוייה?

The Gemara asks: **And doesn't Rabbi Aḥai bar Yoshiya hold in accordance with that which is taught in a mishna (*Gittin* 24a):** With regard to one who wrote a bill of divorce with which to divorce his wife^h but later reconsidered and did not divorce her, if a resident of his city found him and said to him: **My name is the same as your name, and my wife's name is the same as your wife's name; give me the bill of divorce, and I will use it to divorce my wife, it is unfit to divorce the other woman with it.** The reason for this is that it was written for the sake of another woman. Seemingly, the same principle should apply with regard to the scroll of a *sota*.

The Sages say in response: **There**, with regard to a bill of divorce, **the Merciful One states:** “**And he shall write for her a bill of divorce**” (Deuteronomy 24:1). This teaches that **we require the writing to be performed for the sake of the specific woman.** However, no similar requirement is mentioned with regard to a *sota*. The Gemara asks: **Here, too**, with regard to the *sota*, the verse states: “**And the priest shall perform with her all of this law**” (Numbers 5:30), indicating that the ritual must be performed for the sake of the specific woman. The Gemara answers: **What is the performance referred to in the verse?** It is referring to the erasure,^N whereas the writing need not be done for the sake of a specific woman.

§ The mishna states: When a guilty woman drinks **she does not manage to finish drinking before her face turns green** and her eyes bulge, and her skin becomes full of protruding veins. The Gemara asks: In accordance with **whose** opinion is this mishna, which indicates that the water evaluates her while she is still drinking? It is in accordance with the opinion of **Rabbi Shimon, who says:** The priest sacrifices her meal-offering and afterward forces her to drink, because according to the opinion of the Rabbis the meal-offering is sacrificed only after she drinks, and **as long as her meal-offering has not been sacrificed the water does not evaluate her, as it is written:** “And he shall bring her offering for her... for it is a meal-offering of jealousy, a meal-offering of remembrance, a reminder of iniquity” (Numbers 5:15).

The Gemara asks: **Say the latter clause** of the mishna: **If she has merit, it delays her punishment for her. We arrive at the opinion of the Rabbis, as, if this statement were in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Shimon, didn't he say: Merit does not delay punishment in the case of the bitter water of a *sota*?**

Rav Hisda said: In accordance with **whose** opinion is this mishna? It is in accordance with the opinion of **Rabbi Akiva, who says:** The priest sacrifices her meal-offering and afterward forces her to drink. With regard to the order of the ritual he holds in accordance with **Rabbi Shimon, and with regard to the matter of merit** delaying punishment, **he holds in accordance with the opinion of the Rabbis.**

§ The mishna states: **And the people standing in the Temple say: Remove her**, so that she does not render the Temple courtyard impure. The Gemara explains: **What is the reason** for this? It is **lest she die** there immediately and render the women's courtyard, where she drinks the water, impure. The Gemara asks: **Is this to say that a corpse is prohibited from being in the women's courtyard, which has the same status as the Levite camp^B in the desert?**

BACKGROUND

In the Levite camp – במחנה לוייה: When the Jewish people were in the wilderness, the camp was arranged around the Tabernacle and divided into three areas. The first camp was that of the Divine Presence, which included the Tabernacle and its courtyard. The second camp was the Levite camp, whose tents surrounded the Tabernacle. Surrounding this was the Israelite camp, where the rest of the nation pitched their tents. Those

who were impure were required to remain outside the first, the second, or the third camp, depending on the type of ritual impurity involved.

When the Temple was built in Jerusalem, a corresponding division was instituted. The Temple and its courtyard were equivalent to the camp of the Divine Presence, the Temple Mount was equivalent to the Levite camp, and the city of

Jerusalem was equivalent to the Israelite camp. The women's courtyard was situated immediately outside the entrance to the Temple courtyard, and by Torah law its sanctity was equivalent to that of the Temple Mount. However, the Sages ordained that the sanctity of the women's courtyard would be greater than that of the Temple Mount.

One who is ritually impure with impurity imparted by a corpse is permitted to enter the Levite camp – **טָמֵא מִתּוֹתֵר לִיכָנֵס לַמַּחֲנֶה לְיוֹזֵה**: The Temple Mount has a status equivalent to the Levite camp in the desert, and entry to it is prohibited for anyone who is ritually impure due to a bodily secretion, e.g., a *zav* or a *zava*. However, a corpse may be brought onto the Temple Mount, and certainly one who is ritually impure due to contact with a corpse may enter (Rambam *Sefer Avoda*, *Hilkhot Beit HaBehira* 7:15).

BACKGROUND

Fear causes muscular relaxation and menstrual bleeding – **הַרְדָּה מְסַלְקֵת דָּמִים**: The menstrual cycle is dependent on hormonal activity, which is heavily impacted by one's mind-set. Extreme emotional stress, e.g., a continuous state of fear, can prevent a woman from menstruating for a lengthy period of time. On the other hand, sudden fear and other strong emotions can lead to a flow of menstrual blood, even at an abnormal time in the menstrual cycle.

But isn't it taught in a *baraita*: One who is ritually impure with impurity imparted by a corpse is permitted to enter^N the Levite camp.^H And the Sages said this not only with regard to one who is ritually impure with impurity imparted by a corpse; rather, even a corpse itself may be brought into the Levite camp, as it is stated: “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him” (Exodus 13:19), which is interpreted to mean: With him, in his vicinity, even though Moses was in the Levite camp.

Abaye said: The woman is removed not due to a concern that she will die there but lest the fear of the water cause her to begin to menstruate, and it is prohibited for a menstruating woman to enter the Levite camp. The Gemara asks: Is this to say that fear causes muscular relaxation and menstrual bleeding?^B The Gemara responds: Yes, as it is written: “And the Queen was exceedingly pained” (Esther 4:4), and Rav says: This means that she began to menstruate. The Gemara asks: But didn't we learn in a mishna (*Nidda* 39a) that **trepidation eliminates the flow of menstrual blood**? Presumably, the *sota* experiences trepidation. The Gemara answers: **Trepidation** generated by extended worry **contracts** the muscles and prevents the blood from flowing, but sudden **fear relaxes** the muscles and causes the blood to flow.

§ The mishna states: **If she has merit, it delays punishment ... for one year ... for two years ... for three years.** The Gemara asks: **Whose opinion is expressed in the mishna?** It is **not** the opinion of Abba Yosei ben Hanan, and not the opinion of Rabbi Elazar ben Yitzhak of Kefar Darom, and not the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael.

This is as it is taught in a *baraita*: **If she has merit, it delays punishment for her for three months, equivalent to the time necessary to recognize the fetus; this is the statement of Abba Yosei ben Hanan.**^N Rabbi Elazar ben Yitzhak of Kefar Darom says: Merit delays punishment for **nine months, as it is stated**: “Then she shall be cleared, and shall conceive seed” (Numbers 5:28). It is possible to infer from this that if she has merit she will be cleared temporarily, for the length of time required to conceive a child, and there, in Psalms, it says: “A seed shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord unto the next generation” (Psalms 22:31). This indicates that the **seed must be fit to tell of the Lord once it matures, and a child can live only if it is born after the culmination of nine months in the womb.**

Rabbi Yishmael says: Merit delays punishment for **twelve months.** And although there is **no explicit proof for the concept** of merit delaying punishment for twelve months, there is an **allusion to the concept, as it is written** that Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar after interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream concerning the evil which would befall him: “Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you, and redeem your sins with charity, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor;

NOTES

One who is ritually impure with impurity imparted by a corpse is permitted to enter, etc. – **טָמֵא מִתּוֹתֵר לִיכָנֵס לַמַּחֲנֶה לְיוֹזֵה**: The early commentaries raise a difficulty: A mishna (*Kelim* 1:8) states that one who contracted impurity imparted by a corpse may not enter even the rampart, which was situated beyond the women's courtyard. This contradicts the Gemara's statement here that even a corpse may reside in the women's courtyard. They answer that the prohibition cited in tractate *Kelim* is a rabbinic prohibition, whereas the Gemara here is referring to Torah law.

The commentaries ask: Why does the Gemara conclude that the *sota* is removed lest she begin to menstruate? Perhaps she is removed due to the rabbinic prohibition against a corpse being present in the women's courtyard. Some explain that the rabbinic prohibition prohibits an impure person only from entering the sanctified areas, but if one is rendered impure with impurity imparted by a corpse within the rampart, he is not obligated to leave (*Tosefot HaRash*). Similarly, the Meiri cites *Tosafot*, who

explain that the Sages prohibited one from entering the rampart and the women's courtyard while impure lest one continue beyond the permitted area. However, the *sota* clearly has no intention of entering further, as she likely wishes to leave as quickly as possible, and therefore the rabbinic prohibition does not apply to her. The Meiri also cites an alternative answer in the name of *Tosafot*: If the *sota* were removed due to this rabbinic prohibition, she would not be removed until she showed signs of dying.

Equivalent to the time necessary to recognize the fetus; this is the statement of Abba Yosei ben Hanan – **כְּדֵי הַכִּרְתּוֹת הָעוֹבֵר**, **דְּבַרֵי אַבְיָא יוֹסֵי בֶן חֲנַן**: Rashi explains that Abba Yosei also bases his opinion on the verse cited below by Rabbi Elazar ben Yitzhak: “Then she shall be cleared, and shall conceive seed” (Numbers 5:28). Abba Yosei infers from the verse that if she has merit she will be cleared temporarily, for the length of time required to visibly conceive seed.

וְהַתְּנִיָּא: טָמֵא מִתּוֹתֵר לִיכָנֵס לַמַּחֲנֶה לְיוֹזֵה. וְלֹא טָמֵא מִתּוֹתֵר לִיכָנֵס לְיוֹזֵה. וְיִיָּקַח מִשֵּׁהָ אֶת עֲצָמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ, עִמּוֹ בְּמַחֲצֵצְתוֹ!

אָמַר אַבְיָי: שְׂמָא תְּפָרוֹס נְדָה. לְמִימָרָא, דְּבַעֲיֹתוֹתָא מְרַפֵּיא? אִין, דְּכִתְיָב: “וְתִתְחַלְחַל הַמֶּלֶכָה מְאֹד”, וְאָמַר רַב: שְׂפִירוֹסָה נְדָה. וְהָא אֲנִן תִּנְן: הַרְדָּה מְסַלְקֵת דָּמִים! פְּחָדָא צְמִית, בַּעֲיֹתָא מְרַפֵּיא.

“יֵשׁ לָהּ זְכוּת הֵיטָה” וכו'. מִנֵּי מִתְנַתִּין? לֹא אַבְיָא יוֹסֵי בֶן חֲנַן, וְלֹא רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר בֶּן יִצְחָק אִישׁ כְּפָר דָּרוֹם, וְלֹא רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל!

דְּתַנְיָא: אִם יֵשׁ לָהּ זְכוּת תּוֹלָה לָהּ שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים, כְּדֵי הַכִּרְתּוֹת הָעוֹבֵר, דְּבַרֵי אַבְיָא יוֹסֵי בֶן חֲנַן. רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר בֶּן יִצְחָק אִישׁ כְּפָר דָּרוֹם אָמַר: תִּשְׁעָה חֳדָשִׁים, שְׂנַאֲמַר: “וְנִקְתָּה וְנִרְעָה זֶרַע”, וְלֵהֲלֹן הוּא אָמַר: “זֶרַע יַעֲבֹדְנִי יִסְפֹּר”, זֶרַע הָרְאוּי לְסַפֵּר.

רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל אָמַר: שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר חֳדָשִׁים, וְאִף עַל פִּי שְׂאִיִן רְאִיָּה לְדַבֵּר – זִכָּר לְדַבֵּר, דְּכִתְיָב: “לֵהֲוֵן מִלְכָּא מְלִכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲלִיד וְחֲטִיד בְּצִדְקָה פְּרָק וְעוֹיְתֵךְ בְּמַחֲנוּ עֲנִין