



OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) Corpse-dust (cont.)

A Baraisa teaches the conditions necessary for a corpse to produce corpse-dust.

Ulla asserts that for corpse-dust to be produced it is necessary to begin with flesh, sinews and bones.

Rava unsuccessfully challenges Ulla's assertion.

R' Shmuel bar Abba in the name of R' Yochanan asserts that the corpse-dust from two corpses does not transmit tumah.

R' Nossan unsuccessfully challenges this assertion.

Rabbah bar bar Chanah asserts that if the hair of the deceased is cut and buried with the corpse the resulting corpse-dust will not transmit tumah.

A Mishnah in Oholos teaches that teeth, hair and nails that are detached do not transmit tumah.

Chizkiyah inquires about the status of hair or nails that are ready to be cut. Are they considered as if they are already removed or not?

It is suggested that this inquiry could be resolved from the teaching of Rabbah bar bar Chanah but the Gemara rejected the suggestion.

R' Yirmiyah inquires about whether corpse-dust that comes from the heel transmits tumah.

An unsuccessful attempt is made to resolve this inquiry and the question remained unresolved.

R' Yirmiyah asks whether the corpse-dust of a woman buried with a fetus transmits tumah.

The Gemara refines the question but does not resolve the inquiry.

Different inquiries are presented related to whether other body fluids will render corpse-dust unable to transmit tumah.

The Gemara unsuccessfully challenges the premise of these inquiries.

Abaye rules that corpse-dust that was ground up no longer transmits tumah.

The Gemara inquires whether corpse-dust from a body that was ground up before it decayed will transmit tumah.

The question remains unresolved.

2) An incomplete corpse

Ulla bar Chanina cited a Baraisa that taught laws related to an incomplete corpse. One of those laws is that corpse-dust from an incomplete corpse does not transmit tumah.

This ruling is unsuccessfully challenged.

3) Corpse-dust (cont.)

Rava inquires whether corpse-dust from a limb that decayed before the person died will transmit tumah.

An unsuccessful attempt is made to resolve this inquiry.

4) An incomplete ant

Rava inquires whether there is liability for consuming an ant that is incomplete.

The essence of the question is clarified. ■

Distinctive INSIGHT

The status of an ant without legs

בעי רבא נמלה שחסרה מהו? שיעורא גמירין לה והא חסר, או בריה גמירי לה והאיכא

The Gemara had just presented a number of inquiries regarding a corpse which is incomplete and when tumah remains an issue. As a parallel inquiry, Rava inquires about an ant which is alive, but is no longer complete. Tosafos explains that Rava's question is regarding the Gemara in Makkos (13a) which states that someone who eats an entire ant is liable for the consumption of a שרץ, a creeping insect, although an ant is smaller than an olive-volume, the general minimum amount of a forbidden substance to eat in order to be punishable. The reason is that an ant is a בריה, an entire creature. The question of Rava is where a person eats an ant whose legs have become detached, but whereby the insect can still live. Is this ant no longer a בריה due to its physical loss of its legs, or, pines Rava, is the status of being a בריה a function of the animal's ability to still live, and in this regard the leg-less ant is still alive.

The מפרש explains that the question of Rava is whether this leg-less ant has lost its status as a בריה due to its deficiency, or do we say ככולו רובו—most of the creature is as if we have the entire creature, and eating it is therefore punishable. Here, though, the question is regarding eating the ant.

Rosh, however, explains that the inquiry of Rava is in regard to whether this ant, even completely intact, is a source of tumah. On the one hand, it is smaller than the size of an עדשה—a lentil, but on the other hand, this ant is a בריה.

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REVIEW and Remember

1. What are the necessary conditions for corpse-dust to transmit tumah?

2. What is unique about the heel?

3. What is the process that cleanses a body of any foreign matter?

4. Explain Rava's inquiry pertaining to eating an incomplete ant.

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 By Dr. and Mrs. Reuven Warshell
 In loving memory of their mother
 מרת חייקא בת ר' וועלוועל, ע"ה

HALACHAH Highlight

Corpse-dust

בעי ר' ירמיה רקב הבא מן העקב מהו

R' Yirmiyah inquired: What is the status of corpse-dust that comes from the heel?

The halacha regarding corpse-dust has very strict parameters. The Mishnah (50b) stated that if a nazir comes in contact with a ladleful of corpse-dust he is obligated to shave his head and follow the standard procedures for a nazir who came in contact with a corpse. One of the parameters¹ is that the corpse-dust must derive exclusively from one corpse to the exclusion of corpse-dust that comes from multiple bodies, or if there is a foreign substance that became intermingled with the corpse as it was decomposing into corpse-dust. The halacha that a foreign substance prevents corpse-dust from becoming potent applies even if it is known with certainty that the corpse produced a ladleful of corpse-dust without the additional foreign substance². Once a foreign substance is introduced into the mixture it prevents the corpse-dust from becoming potent.

Sefer Pischei Nazir³ questions the exact nature of this halacha. Does the problem of a foreign substance arise only when a substance that in itself could not become corpse-dust that transmits tumah mixes together with the corpse, or does the Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai state that for corpse-dust to transmit tumah it must derive exclusively from the corpse and any other substance will impede the production of corpse-dust capable of transmitting tumah? He resolves his uncertainty from R' Yirmiyah's inquiry related to corpse-dust that comes from the heel. The thrust of the inquiry was whether skin from the heel combines towards the minimum quantity necessary to transmit tumah but

(Insight. Continued from page 1)

The גרי"ז notes that we do not find the factor of a creature being a בריה except in terms tumah, but only in terms of eating. The size of a שרץ which emits tumah is an עדשה, and this is the Halacha of Moshe m'Sinai. Why would an ant, which is smaller, be considered as a source of tumah? He answers that there are two categories of שרץ. From the word "מהם" we learn that the tissue of such creatures (בשר שרץ) is a source of tumah. In this category, the minimum amount which can transmit tumah is the size of an עדשה. Yet, we also learn that a בריה is a source of tumah, and this is derived from the word "בהם". In this area, Rava inquires whether a בריה is a full creature, or even one which is missing legs, as long as it can still live. ■

there was never an uncertainty that the presence of the heel should prevent the rest of the body from producing corpse-dust that transmits tumah even if it itself would not be a substance that could produce corpse-dust. This demonstrates that even a substance that itself may not be capable of producing corpse-dust does not impede the body's production of corpse-dust as long as it is not a foreign substance. Another halacha that helps clarify this matter is the halacha that corpse-dust from two bodies that decompose together does not transmit tumah. This demonstrates the other side of this matter, namely, that even when a corpse-dust-producing item is mixed with a corpse it prevents the production of tumah-transmitting corpse-dust. These two halachos lead us to the conclusion that any foreign substance that is not from the body itself will prevent the production of potent corpse-dust. ■

1. עי רמב"ם פי"ז מהלי נזירות ה"ג וד'.
2. עי פתח הביאור שבספר פתחי נזיר ה"ג ד"ה ואין רקב.
3. פתח הביאור שם. ■

STORIES Off the Daf

The Impurity of the Heel

"רקב הבא מן העקב מהו..."

The brilliance of the Rogatchover Gaon, זת"ל, is well known. When Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, זת"ל, first met the Rogatchover Gaon, he didn't reveal who he was. After their intricate discussion in learning, the Rogatchover asked, "Who are you?"

Rav Meir Simcha said, "A baal habayis from Dvinsk."

"Not bad for a baal habayis!" was the unusually generous reply.

After the two were acquainted for

quite some time, someone asked Rav Meir Simcha, "How does the Rogatchover have such complete recall of every source everywhere?"

"That's where you are wrong. It's not his memory," Rav Meir Simcha replied. "He is such a masmid that he reviews everything each month. Whenever he speaks about any topic, it is something he has just learned!"

There is a very enigmatic Avos D'Rav Nosson which correlates things in the universe that have a counterpart in man. At the very end it says, "There is a Malach Hamaves in the world and there is a Malach Hamaves in man. Man's heel is an aspect of the Angel of Death in him." In Hilchos Krias Shema, the Rogatchover

explains this: "In Nazir 51, the Gemara questions whether decay of the heel imparts ritual impurity. Tosafos explains the rationale behind question. 'Since the heel is flesh with less chiyus, sensation and vitality, perhaps it does not impart ritual impurity?' This explains the ma'amar in Avos D'Rav Nosson. The heel reminds one of the Angel of Death, since it is the part of a person most lacking feeling."

When Rav Shlomo Zevin, זת"ל, would tell this over he would remark, "The Rogatchover only dedicated about one line in his work to encapsulate this vort. Now try and fathom how deep his words are when he spends a few pages on a single subject!" ■