

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) **MISHNAH (cont.):** The Mishnah discusses the process of constructing the pyre and then what was done with the sacrificial parts that were removed since they were not consumed by the fire overnight.

2) Exaggerations

Rava asserts that the Mishnah's statement that the mound of ash contained three hundred kur is an exaggeration.

Another instance in which Rava made the same comment is cited.

R' Ashi states that the Torah, Prophets and our Sages spoke imprecisely, and he gives an example in each of these contexts.

R' Yannai bar Nachmani in the name of Shmuel contends that Chazal used imprecise language three times and this is at odds with Rava who has a longer list of instances.

The Gemara presents the three cases of imprecise language mentioned by R' Yannai bar Nachmani in the name of Shmuel.

3) Vine and olive trees

R' Pappa and R' Acha bar Yaakov suggest different reasons why wood from the vine and olive tree may not be used on the pyre of the Altar.

R' Acha bar Yaakov's explanation is unsuccessfully challenged. ■

REVIEW and Remember

1. What was the preferred wood for the pyre of the Altar ?

2. Where do we find the Torah exaggerating ?

3. Why weren't vine and olive wood used for the pyre of the Altar ?

4. Do all fig trees produce fruit ?

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שמואל יהושע בן ישראל

Distinctive INSIGHT

Olive wood and grapevines may not be used for the Altar fire

כל העצים כשרין למערכה חוץ מעץ של גפן ושל זית

The Mishnah taught that all types of wood were acceptable for the logs for the firewood of the Altar, except for grapevines and olive wood. The Gemara explains why these two types of wood were not eligible for the Altar.

R' Pappa says that the reason was that these types of wood have knots in them. The Mifresh explains that knots in wood generally retain more of the original moisture of the wood, and as a result they do not burn well and they cause smoke. It seems from this comment that the Mifresh has a text which has the word "קטירי" (with an extra letter 'yod' in the middle) and he translates the word to mean "smoke". The message is that it is not respectful for the Mikdash to use smoky wood.

Rosh says that the problem is that the knots are not fully dry and they are not smooth, and they therefore do not burn well. Rosh seems to translate the word "קטירי" to mean that the wood had knots, and the knots cause extra smoke. Ra'aved has a text which reads "קטמי," which means that these woods cause ashes. This could mean that they cause excessive ash, or, as Rambam explains, these woods burn and turn into ash too quickly.

R' Acha b. Yaakov provides another reason, beside that of R' Pappa, and he says that grapevines and olive wood are not to be used because the Mikdash uses a large volume of wood on the Altar. If we would use grape and olive wood, it would contribute to a depleting of the supply of wine and oil in Eretz Yisrael.

The Rishonim discuss whether R' Acha agrees or disagrees with the reason of R' Pappa. The Mifresh explains that R' Acha agrees that grape and olive wood are knotted and therefore unacceptable. However, he adds that using them would also cause Eretz Yisroel to be depleted of the fruits of these trees. Rambam (Hilchos Isurei Mizbe'ach 7:3) only mentions the issue of depleting Eretz Yisroel of its fruits, and he does not refer to the issue of the knots in the wood. Lechem Mishnah explains that Rambam understands that R' Acha does not agree with R' Pappa, and we therefore hold that any tree which bears fruits should not be used, whether it has knots or not. Grape or olive wood would not be any different than wood from palm trees or fig trees. Although the Mishnah only itemizes wood from grape vines and olive trees as being unacceptable, perhaps it only lists the first two fruits of the seven species of Eretz Yisroel, but the Mishnah does mean to say that any fruit tree may not be used.

Mishneh LaMelech brings a proof for the view of Rambam. If R' Acha agrees that either factor is in and of itself enough to disqualify wood for the Altar, why did the Mishnah use examples which specifically have both issues, knots and being fruit trees? Also, what does R' Acha accomplish by adding his own reason? Rather, it must be that R' Acha argues against R' Pappa. ■

HALACHA Highlight

Cutting down a fruit tree to fulfill a mitzvah

במרביות של תאנה

With branches of a fig

The Mishnah teaches that any wood could be used on the pyre of the altar except for wood from grape vines and olive trees. One of the preferred woods was from the fig tree. R' Pappa explains that wood from grape vines and olive trees were not used for reasons related to the smoke it produces or that it burns quickly, whereas according to R' Acha bar Yaakov it was related to settling Eretz Yisroel. In other words they did not want to use for the pyre trees that provide fruit for the people living in Eretz Yisroel. The Gemara explains that according to R' Acha bar Yaakov the fig tree that was used was a variety that did not produce fruit.

Sefer Be'er Sheva¹ notes that the implication of the Gemara is that according to R' Pappa who is not concerned with the principle of settling Eretz Yisroel they would use

any variety of fig tree, even one that produces fruit. The difficulty he has with this is that it should be prohibited to cut down fruit trees due to the prohibition of *בל תשחית* which prohibits cutting down fruit trees. He suggests that perhaps for the purpose of performing an important mitzvah such as producing wood for the pyre of the altar it is permitted to cut down fruit trees. Rav Yaakov Emden² also derives from our Gemara that it is permitted to cut down a fruit tree for the sake of performing a mitzvah. The reason is that the prohibition applies when cutting down the fruit tree is a destructive act but when the fruit tree is cut down so that one should be capable of performing a mitzvah it is not destructive and thus not included in the prohibition. Based on this analysis he permitted a Beis HaKnesses that was too small to cut down a grape vine that was growing in the only available space for the Beis HaKnesses to expand. His reasoning was that when a fruit tree is cut down to fulfill a mitzvah it is not destructive and consequently permitted. ■

¹ באר שבע ד"ה ומיהו תימה.

² שו"ת שאילת יעביץ ח"א סי' ע"ו. ■

STORIES off the Daf

The Vine and the Olive Tree

"חוץ משל גפן ושל זית..."

There is a fascinating midrash that explains why Aharon isn't mentioned in all of Parshas Vayikra while Parshas Tzav begins with him. The midrash recounts how Moshe begged God to give honor to Aharon.

"Moshe said to God: 'Master of the World! You gave honor to branches because of their offspring. As it says in the Mishnah, all trees are kosher to be used on the altar besides wood from a vineyard and olive wood. But You do not give honor to Aharon due to his offspring?'"

"God immediately replied, 'For your sake I will draw him near. Not only that, but I will make him the

main element and his sons less important. As the verse states: 'צו את 'אהרן ואת בניו'".

The Arugos HaBosem, zt"l, explains this seemingly enigmatic midrash. "On a simple level we must surely wonder what it means that God honors wood of a vineyard and olive wood by not allowing them onto the altar. We would figure that the greatest honor possible for wood is to burn for the Creator! We see from here that, although burning for God is surely a great honor, if one's offspring serve in a more distinguished capacity, it is more worthwhile to produce the offspring than to be consumed for God.

"Moshe claimed that Aharon was no different. God had distanced him since he did not sacrifice himself when the Jews insisted that he fashion a golden calf. But just as olive wood or

grapevines are not used since they have the capacity to bear fruit which reveal greater honor to God, so too, Aharon was correct in not sacrificing himself because of his holy progeny!"¹

¹ ערוגות הבשם, צו ■

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