

A New Yavneh Publication

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Obscure Halacha

How Frum are You?

By Rabbi Eitan Webb

A quote from the Tur Yoreh Deah, in Chapter 305:

It is written: But you shall surely redeem the first born of a human ... and the redemption [takes effect] from one month, you shall redeem. (Bamidbar 18)

From this we derive a positive commandment for every Israelite that gives birth to a son, when that son is a first born to his mother, who is an Israelite (not a daughter of a Kohen or Levi), in all places and in all time periods; to redeem him from a Kohen and not a Kohenet with 5 slaim which are the equivalent of 2 and a half unkiot according to Rashi and the silver weight equivalent of 1920 grains of barley according to the Geonim.

And if the son has two heads, he must be redeemed for 10 slaim. [My emphasis. -Ed.]

Okay, this sounds odd. But the truth is, that there is a very good logic for this. (And it could indeed happen. It's called *dicephalus dipus* and it is really not a laughing matter. You can wiki it after Shabbos.)

The reason that the Gemara gives (Menachot 37b) is because the pasuk (Bamidbar 3:47) says "And you shall take 5 shekels per *gulgolet* of the shekel of the sanctuary which is 20 gerah per shekel." Although it is obviously referring to a person, the term *gulgolet* literally means a skull. The gemara concludes that the reason that the Torah did not just say *la'adam* - per person - or some other more common term, is to teach that in the case of *dicephalus dipus*, you would need 5 shekel per head for a total of 10 shekalim.

Minyan Times

Friday Mincha	5:40 PM
Kabbalat Shabbat	After Mincha
Saturday Shacharit	8:45 AM
Saturday Mincha	5:30 PM
Saturday Maariv	6:48 PM

A Taste of History

Anecdotes from Yavneh's Past

By Toby Robison

One of the nice things about Stevenson Hall was that it was an old, aging building. When it was closed for break or the summer, a guard was supposed to open the building so we could have services, but often the guard was late. Eventually we found ten ways to get into this locked building, but I remember when I only knew of one: a tiny casement window on the front porch.

One Saturday morning we fretted, waiting for the guard. After a while I turned to the thinnest undergraduate among us and said, "Charles, you can fit through this window. Go inside and unlock the door for us."

Charles looked at the little window. "There's no way I can get through that!"

"Yes you can," I said. "I know it."

Dubiously, he stretched his body through to the inside, and he just made it. He came around to the front door, unlocked it, and we were in.

"How did you know I would fit through that window?" he asked me.

"I had no idea," I admitted. "I thought it was our best hope."

Announcements

- This Friday night, after dinner winds down, join us in the CJL lounge for a dessert-and-tea buffet as well as schmoozing and board games. Kinda like an oneg, but less cramped and no long walk!
- Rivky Ross will be giving a shiur following davening and kiddush this Saturday morning.
- Purim! Though many students will be gone, Mr. Robison has organized Megillah reading and all are invited. Times: Thursday March 20, 7:30 PM Maariv. Arrive by 7:50 PM for Megillah. Friday March 21, 7:00 AM Shacharit and Megillah. Also, any students who will be around should please let Rabbi Ross know.
- Purim Party! On Sunday, March 23rd (right after spring break) there will be a Yavneh Purim costume party in 73 Spelman. Entertainment is currently being planned by Jeff Mensch, Mendy Fisch, and *Noam Tanner!*

A Quick Thought

By Rabbi Josh Ross

So here's the thing. I'm not going to lie to you... I just don't have anything more I want to say about the mishkan. It's not that it isn't really interesting or worth reading about or worth learning about, but I feel like I am not sure what I can write at this stage that might keep you interested. So I'm going to go on a pretty serious tangent. In so far as the parsha this week talks about the clothing of the kohanim and the kohen gadol, I want to look at a mishna and gemara that deal with an issue relating to the kohen gadol. Like I said - a tangent.

There is this very interesting gemarrah in mesechet Makot on daf 11a:

MISHNA: Both a Kohen (Gadol) anointed with the anointing oil and one garbed in the additional vestments and one who has stepped down from his anointment, return the killer in exile [...] Therefore the mothers of the Kohanim would supply the exiles with food and clothing so that they would not pray for their sons to die .

GEMARA: The mishna implies that that the reason that the Kohanim do not die is that the banished do not pray [for the high priest's death]; but if they should pray, he would die. But it is written: As the fitting bird, as the flying swallow, so the curse that is causeless shall [not] follow! Said a venerable scholar: I heard a lecture of Rava, that [the high priests were not without blame, as] they should have implored Divine grace for [averting the sorrows of] their generation, which they failed to do. Others read in the Mishna "That they might pray for their sons *that they die not.*" The reason [given then] is that the banished should pray for the health of [the high priest]; but, what if they did not pray for him? Do we really think he would die? What should he have done [to avert it]? As they say here [in Babylon]: "Toviah sinned and Zigud was given lashes," or as they say there [in Palestine]: "Shechem is getting married and Mavgia must get circumcised." Said a venerable scholar: I heard an explanation at the lectures of Rava that [the high priests were not without blame, as] they should have implored Divine grace for [averting the sorrows of] their generation,

which they failed to do. Just as in the case of that poor fellow who was devoured by a lion some three parasangs from the town where R. Joshua b. Levi lived, Elijah would not commune with the Rabbi, on that account, for three days!

I have always found this gemara interesting. (And I love the colloquial sayings!) It is very surreal to me, the idea of the kohen's mother running around with brownies for the exiled so that the negative prayers don't add up. The very idea that a person might be swayed by a new shirt is strange. Personally, I also think I would sooner be free to go where I choose than get a new shirt, you know?

The truth is, I think there is a great deal of meaning in this gemara. I think it says a lot about communal responsibility. We see that the kohen gadol on some level should have been more responsible for the people, or at least thought of them more, and we see that the mother must do what she can for her son. We also see that the exiles hopefully recognize that they are being punished for what they did (no matter how inadvertent) and that praying for the death of someone they don't even know isn't a solution.

The second reading in the gemara is also very interesting - by the actions of the kohen's mother the very exiles who may be in exile because the kohen gadol did not pray for them as a nation, now pray for the kohen as an individual. I think there is a lot to learn from this and how we should act. Never stop questioning if you can be of help to an individual or a nation - we all bear some responsibility for the actions of others. Never assume that a quick way out is a solution. And never assume that a good deed won't have a tremendous impact on someone - it may be enough to make them pray for your well being instead of your death.

Things to Anticipate

- Spring Break! An end to midterms!
- Yavneh on Ice. Finally the guy in charge of Baker Rink is back in town, so this might really happen ... again!
- A Shabbaton with Penn. Some fifteen or so Penn students could come here for Shabbat. Maybe we'll bring in a speaker or two. Good times, yeah?