

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY

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Chatat

The diversity of various korbanot is reflected by the very different halakhot which apply to each specific korban. Nowhere, though, is the difference as apparent as in the case of korban chatat. As opposed to other sacrifices this korban is intended to achieve a distinct halakhic state - kapara. If this objective is compromised, the entire korban becomes disqualified. For example, in general, if a sacrifice is executed with improper intent, the korban itself remains valid. For instance, if the kohen sacrificed the animal for an ola even though it was really a shlamim the korban is still valid. By contrast, if a chatat were sacrificed as an ola the sacrifice would be pasul and could not be eaten. Another difference between a chatat and other sacrifices is the amount of times its blood must be sprinkled on the mizbei'ach. In general, the blood is placed twice or once on the mizbei'ach. In the case of chatat, however, the blood is placed four times. This unique ceremony reflects the fact that the blood of a korban chatat is not intended merely to effect the sacrifice but rather to establish kapara. This article will explore a third unique halakha governing the korban chatat: if its blood falls on a garment, the garment requires 'kibus'- cleansing in the beit ha-mikdash.

Upon first glance, this halakha would appear to be consistent with the special status of the chatat. If its blood lands on a garment it must be recovered or removed. The Rashbam in his commentary to Tzav comments that the removal will prevent the blood from becoming notar. Though he cannot mean real notar (since blood never becomes notar) his intention is clear. We must be careful with the blood of a chatat and if it becomes absorbed in a garment we must wash it off.

If this were the only understanding, though, we might expect that logically only the affected area requires cleansing. The mishnah (Zevachim 93b) does indeed make

this claim but the gemara itself (94a) considers that maybe the entire cloth requires cleansing. This view would then represent a different understanding of our halakha. The cleansing might not be a requirement to remove the blood as much as a mitzva to wash the garment. Any garment which comes into contact with blood requires cleansing - not just to remove the blood. Given this understanding, we might appreciate why the gemara even considered requiring that the entire garment be washed.

Our question, then, becomes: According to the conclusion of the gemara that only the affected area must be cleansed, does this mean that the washing is only intended to remove the blood? Or might we claim that the garment itself requires washing yet a special pasuk limits the washing only to the affected area? If it were only a din to remove the blood why would I require a special pasuk to teach me that ONLY the affected area requires cleansing?

An interesting ramification of this question pertains to the manner of cleansing the garment. The gemara (Zevachim 95a) comments that like an article of clothing affected with tzara'at this article requires seven cycles each with a different cleansing agent (7 samanim). What would happen, asks the Minchat Chinukh, if the blood stain were removed after the first agent, would we still require that the other agents be used? Clearly, if we view the purpose of this washing as purely to remove the blood, we might agree that after its removal any further washing is superfluous. If, however, the garment itself, by the fact that it touched the blood of a chatat, requires cleansing, we might demand a thorough halakhic process including the same seven cleansing agents used to wash a cloth which carries tzara'at.

What about the site of the cleansing? The mishna (Zevachim 94b) mentions that the cleansing should be performed in the mikdash. How critical is this location? What would happen if it were performed outside the mikdash and the blood were actually removed? Even though the le-khatchila was not performed, the blood was still removed. Would we require a second process to be performed inside the mikdash? The Keren Ora raises this question in his comments to Zevachim. Clearly, if the washing is purely a removal of blood we would not require washing when the blood stain no longer exists. If, however, the washing were a specific requirement of the garment, we might sever it entirely from the blood stain and require a second washing in a case where the first one was performed in the wrong location.

SUMMARY:

We have inspected the cleansing of a garment upon which fell the blood of a chatat. It might be a process intended solely to remove the blood. Alternatively, it might not be a "halakha of dam" but a garment-oriented principle ("a halakha in the beged") to execute a ritual cleansing process upon this garment. We have witnessed three halakhot which might be impacted by this question: which area must be washed, what agents must be used, and the location of the cleansing.

What about the actual process itself? The mishna in Zevachim (94b) claims that only a garment requires cleansing and not a rigid utensil or piece of leather. The gemara (96a) infers this from the syntax of the pasuk - "you should WASH..." this refers to a garment which is washed and not leather which is scraped. One might understand this gemara as excusing the hard leather from ANY process. The Rambam, however, (ma'aseh korbanot 8:4) rules that the scraping of blood from a piece of leather is parallel to the cleansing of clothing. In fact, many commentaries rule that according to the Rambam this scraping as well must be performed in the mikdash. If, indeed, we extend the principle of the Torah to scraping and not just cleansing what might we prove about the actual cleansing? Probably that it was utilitarian at its root intended merely to remove the blood. As such, the Torah's enunciation of cleansing is to be taken literally or exclusively but as an EXAMPLE. Clothing are to be washed to remove the blood while other articles should have their blood removed in the standard manner. Had the rule of cleansing not been utilitarian (to remove the blood) but 'garment-oriented' to ritually wash clothing which came into contact with blood, we would have no mandate to include the scraping process within the mitzva. See the Avnei Nezer Orach Chayim 157:7 who argues this very point.

What about the type of contact between the garment and the blood necessary to obligate cleansing? The gemara in Zevachim (98b) poses the following scenario. Blood of an ola (which doesn't require cleansing) fell upon a garment and subsequently the blood of a chatat fell upon the ola blood. The chatat blood while touching the garment is not absorbed. Do we require that the blood be in contact with the garment or must it actually be absorbed? Possibly, this deliberation is based upon our initial question. If the cleansing intends to remove the blood we might only require CONTACT between the garment and the blood. If, however, the blood obligates the garment in its own inherent ritual cleansing process, we might require that the blood actually be

ABSORBED in the garment so that the garment itself now requires a cleansing process. (See Afterword for elaboration of the gemara's conclusion).

One final question pertains to an interesting scenario posed by the gemara. If the blood is impure the garment doesn't require cleansing (see the mishna 92a). What happens if the blood itself were pure but became impure through contact with the garment which itself was impure and transferred this state to the blood? Do we judge the blood's status independent of the garment or not? See the gemara 93a. If the halakha mandates removal of pure blood we might still require removal in this case since technically the blood was pure and remained so until the point of contact with the garment when it already obligated its own removal. If, however, the absorbed blood confers a status to the garment which now requires a ritual cleansing, we might only demand such cleansing when the garment absorbed pure blood. If at the moment of absorption the blood were already impure no such process would be required.

METHODOLOGICAL POINTS:

1. Whenever a halakha applies in the presence of two factors it is important to isolate the central one. Cleansing is only obligated if and when the blood of a chatat falls upon a garment. Is this halakha 'blood-oriented' to remove the blood from garments or is it garment -oriented' - to cleanse garments which came into contact with chatat blood?
2. The proofs would lie in the specific halakhot which govern this process. Ideally, we should locate three forms of nafka minot; which type of blood (we discussed impure blood), which type of garment (leather), and what form of cleansing is required (location, agents, how much of the garment must be washed).
3. The scope of a halakha and extensions of a halakha beyond what might have been expected might reveal the essence. The Torah describes cleansing a garment. If, indeed, this process can be realized through scraping what might this indicate about the nature of cleansing?

AFTERWORD:

The gemara in Zevachim concludes that the blood of chatat which falls on the blood on an ola which had previously fallen upon a garment doesn't require cleansing. A careful reading, however, discloses a fascinating shift. The gemara questioned whether contact is required (in which case we would obligate washing) or ABSORPTION is necessary (in which case no cleaning is necessary). When the gemara rules that no cleaning is necessary it doesn't reiterate 'since no ABSORPTION occurred.' Instead, it just rules that no cleansing is required. Might the gemara be claiming that even though only CONTACT is necessary even this doesn't exist when the blood of a chatat falls upon the blood of an ola. What would happen if first water fell upon the clothing and subsequently the blood of a chatat - would cleansing be required? See the Minchat Chinukh (238).

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