



לעי"נ ברוך בענדיט ובורה גרוס ע"ה  
by Mr. & Mrs. Duvy Gross

# The Hakuk Edition English Topics on the Daf

*Dedicated l'refuah sheleima for Yaakov ben Victoria*

By Rabbi Mordechai Papoff

THE EIGHTH PEREK OF YEVAMOS IS DEDICATED:

לזכר נשמת שלמה בן יהושע והחבר דוד בן החבר מרדכי

## Yevamos Daf 71

### Mitzvas Priyah

At the end of our daf, the Gemara teaches us that the second part of the bris, priyah, was not commanded to Avraham. It was added in the time of Yehoshua (Tosfos asserts that it was actually a halacha l'Moshe MiSinai). Notwithstanding, it is now an integral and inseparable part of the bris, and it is not valid without it.

At a bris, the mohel pronounces the first blessing before starting the incision and the father of the child says a beracha right afterwards. Tur brings the Rosh that he should say it before priyah, in order to be prior to the completion of the mitzvah. What is his beracha? "To bring him into the covenant of Avraham Ovinu." But, we just said Avraham did not have the mitzvah of priyah! How could the beracha of Avraham's bris be considered "prior to the performance of a mitzvah" which he did not have?

The Chasam Sofer (Shu"t, Y.D. 249) addresses this at length, exploring various resolutions and concluding that priyah is not a separate, second step of bris. Rather, the mitzvah of milah was expanded to include priyah as well. He points out that the root of the word milah is

not "cutting" but "removing." In Avraham's time, all that needed to be removed was the outer foreskin. By Sinai, priyah became obligatory and milah required also the membrane underneath to be removed. The term "orlah" became broadened. So, the bris of Avraham may include even that which Avraham himself was not commanded.

Thus, priyah is not an individual mitzvah, but simply a component of milah. Many sources support this view:

The Ritva here asks the same question as Tosfos, that there's a rule that no prophet can originate a halacha. How could Yehoshua make up a new mitzvah? Ritva answers that priyah is different, since it's a "hechsher mitzvah," auxiliary and at times unnecessary. Rashi on Chumash says that Avraham didn't have to do priyah since he was married for many years already and the membrane had already separated. It does not stand alone.

Much sharper, the Yam Shel Shlomo insists that if a mohel did a bris on Shabbos but didn't do the priyah part – another person did – he is liable to karess for chilul Shabbos! Since Chazal say that if one did the cutting but not the priyah, it's

not a milah, he merely cut into flesh on Shabbos, a melacha.

Similarly, Rav Moshe Shternbuch shlit" reports that the Brisker Rav told him that it isn't enough to do just the cutting part and not the priyah to consider it having done a bris (Orchos Habayis p. 128).

This is all according to one school of thought, though. Let's now explore the authorities who maintain that priyah is a separate mitzvah.

The same Yam Shel Shlomo cites other poskim who rule that a bris even on Shabbos may be done with two mohalim, one doing the cutting and one, the priyah. This view is held by the Rema (Y.D. 266:14) as well as the Noda B'Yehuda (O.C. II:22). Rav Shternbuch himself also sides with it (concerning the hiddur that the father of the baby does the milah personally – it's enough to do only the cutting).

They base their opinion on Tosfos here who cites a Midrash that the Jews did do milah while in the Midbar. How, then, can our Gemara say they didn't? Tosfos answers that they did milah but not priyah. Clearly, Tosfos considers the two parts of a bris as independent of each other.

Another sevara is to compare it to the avoda in the Beis Hamikdash. The Rema comments that they divided the work among many Kohanim, each one theoretically being mechalel Shabbos. It was permitted because the avoda overrules Shabbos, and it doesn't matter how it's done. So too here.

Practically, the Rema does not recommend this practice, since many other poskim forbade it. The Noda B'Yehuda, as well, prefers to be stringent, even while noting that it was the widespread custom throughout Poland to

engage two mohalim to do a bris, even on Shabbos. (Pischei Teshuvah cites a fiery teshuva that Heaven forbid to say it's forbidden, when so many people in Klal Yisroel have done it this way!)

How can we say that milah can exist without priyah when the Mishnah states, as we quotes above, that without priyah it's not considered a bris? Rav Elchonon Wasserman (64:5) notes the expression of that Mishnah, "it's like he was not circumcised." He still has some of the orlah remaining on him. However, it could be said that a mitzvah or bris was done, nevertheless.

We can understand this better with a beautiful exposition of the Beis Halevi, on Parshas Lech Lecha. The Rishonim debated if the point of milah is to remove the foreskin, deemed a defect by Chazal; or to forge a special kedusha and prominence for the Jews. The Beis Halevi says both aspects are true. The Mishnah in Nedarim declares that the foreskin is "abominable," and then exclaims, "Milah is great, for it..." Bris milah both relieves us from the imperfection we are supposed to remove, and also grants us extra kedusha, a covenant with Hashem. As the Midrash Rabba puts it: Hashem told Avraham, "It's long enough that there exists the orlah in the world, and it's long enough that the mitzvah of milah is suffering!"

He says that these two facets are expressed by the cutting and the priyah. The first step simply removes the orlah, and then priyah is the "os bris kodesh" setting us apart from the gentiles. With this perspective, we can understand why milah and priyah are separate mitzvos – each one accomplishes a different goal!