



לע"נ ברוך בענדיט וברכה גרוס ע"ה
by Mr. & Mrs. Duvy Gross

The Hakuk Edition **English Topics on the Daf**

Dedicated l'refuah sheleima for Yaakov ben Victoria

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Yevamos Daf 98

Continuing the sugya from last daf, we explore the parameters of the yichus of converts.

The Beraisa at the bottom of the last daf states that if twin boys were born to a woman who converted during pregnancy, they are liable to karess of eishes ach if one marries the other's wife. They are not classified as brothers through their father, only their mother, so yibum is not applicable.

They are, at least, regarded as brothers from their mother. But why is this? Isn't a convert like someone "who was just born anew"?

We had a sugya on daf 78 about "uber yerech imo," if a fetus is considered a part of his mother or not. Particularly, if the mother immerses in a mikvah for conversion while pregnant, a Beraisa says that the child does not need to go to the mikvah himself! His mother's tevillah suffices. This fits better with the option that a fetus is k'yerech imo. Even if not, the Gemara says that the tevillah works for the child, too, even though he is ensconced within the womb; his mother's

body is not a chatzitza since it's his natural setting.

One way of understanding this is that the child doesn't actually need conversion. Although the beginning of the fetus' development was technically as a non-Jew, since by the time he was born his mother was a Jewess, he is automatically Jewish. Why does tevillah have any bearing on him, then? Similar to the halacha that we have to tovel dishes bought from a non-Jew, so too he must undergo tevillah to dispel the impurity of his initial stage! (Zecher Yitzchok Siman 4; we find a custom that even a baal teshuvah goes to the mikveh – Beis Yosef O.C. 531:7.)

However, Rishonim on daf 47b presume that the tevillah does count as the first part of his geirus. The Ramban asks on that Gemara's description of geirus as milah and then tevillah. Isn't our case the opposite – first he was immersed, in utero, and then he had a bris? Apparently, says the Ramban, the order of the two steps of geirus is not a hindrance. He is clearly learning that this child is a full-fledged convert. Again, why

don't we say that upon completion of his geirus he's a new person, unrelated to even his mother?

One suggestion is in Achiezer (Vol. 2:29). What does it mean that a ger is "k'koton shenolad"? Rashi in Sanhedrin 58 says it's as if he was born without parents. But that's only if they're both non-Jews. If his mother is Jewish when he's born, he does have yachas to her (not to the father, since his connection with the fetus ended before the geirus). He still needs geirus because on his father's side he is deemed parentless.

Other seforim split koton shenolad from the institution of geirus; they are not synonymous. The Maharal has a question on Rashi's comment in Chumash that the Jews in the Wilderness complained about forbidden relationships (Bamidbar 11:10). Didn't the nation undergo conversion at Har Sinai – so they were all unrelated to each other? He answers that the principle applies only when conversion is done willingly. The geirus at Mattan Torah was coerced to some degree (כפה עליהם הר – Hashem held the mountain over their heads), so their yichusim remained.

What emerges from the Maharal's answer is that a ger is k'koton shenolad only in regular cases of a non-Jew deciding to convert. A child born to a convert does not fall into this rubric.

Why is this so? One explanation, from Rav Yitzchok Hutner zt"l, is about the nature of the coercion at Mattan Torah (Pachad Yitzchok, Shavuos 20). How could they be forced into accepting

Yiddishkeit? Coercion to do certain mitzvos suffices because we assume that in the depths of a Jew's soul, he wants to do Hashem's will. We are just bringing forth his inner, true desire. So too, when they stood at Har Sinai, the assumption was that being offspring of our Forefathers, they wanted to accept the Torah. Such a geirus does not create a "new" person, since it's a continuation of pre-existing characteristics. On the other hand, when a non-Jew decides to convert, it is totally of his own initiative, a brand-new conviction, and it engenders a new rebirth of his soul.

Consider the eloquent exposition of the Levush on why a convert is k'nolad: When a person comes to convert and accept upon himself the yoke of Torah and mitzvos, it is evident that that he has been inspired by a Heavenly aura, a new and holy spirit and a new soul. He becomes a new man, as if he had been created and born today. All his previous life is as if it did not exist – he is a different person! And all his relatives he had as a gentile are not his relatives anymore. He is like Adam Harishon, created alone in the world (Y.D. 269:1, in part).

It is logical that this transformation occurs only when he arrives at such an inspiration on his own, not if he inherited it from his mother.

One more explanation is that we don't apply k'koton shenolad because when the mother converts and is tovel, it's considered as if the fetus also immersed. The geirus works for him as well, and is concluded with his bris after he's born.

Still, he's intrinsically part of his mother and cannot be deemed unrelated. Even according to the opinion that he is not k'yerech imo, it is only regarding certain aspects; in this context all agree (Chazon Ish E.H. 4:9).