



FROM THE TALMUD
SEDER KODASHIM
MASECHET BECHOROT
daf 4

מן התלמוד:

סדר קודשים, מסכת בכורות, דף ד':

”מתקיף לה רב פפא: ובמדבר לא קדשו? והכתיב: 'פקוד כל בכור זכר לבני ישראל'. אלא אי איתמר הכי איתמר: רבי יוחנן אמר קדשו ולא פסקו, וריש לקיש אמר קדשו ופסקו”

Translation

מתקיף לה ... *Matkeef lah* ... Objects to it
איתמר ... *It'mahr* It was said

Explanation

Rav Pappa cites a Torah verse to prove *B'nai Yisrael* had already begun to sanctify its *bechorot* (firstborn) born upon entering the wilderness after the Exodus. However, Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish debated whether the sanctification of firstborn was halted during the wilderness travels and resumed upon entry into *Eretz Yisrael* or whether it never ceased.

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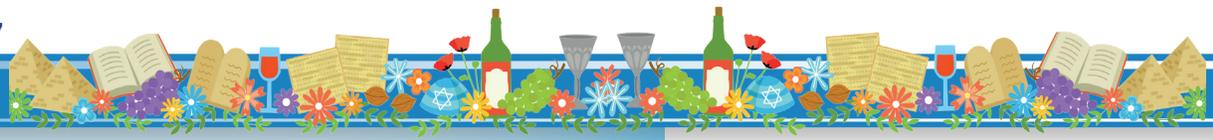


דף 4: נקודות בספר התורה – Dots Written In A Torah Scroll

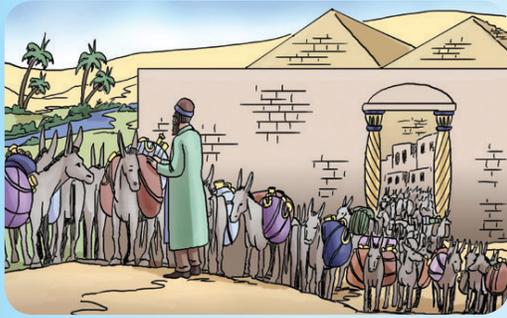
ואהרן

On this *daf*, we learn why dots appear over the word "Aharon" in *Sefer Bamidbar* (3:39). There are ten words in the Torah over which dots are placed. The list of such words is cited in *Avot D'Rabbi Natan*, together with the relevant lessons derived from those dots.

Ezra HaSofer instructed that these dots be written in the Torah scroll as hints to *halachot* which had been transmitted *be'al peh* (orally). According to tradition, *Ezra HaSofer* was such a tremendous Torah scholar that had he lived prior to *Moshe Rabbeinu* it would have been Ezra who was chosen to deliver the Torah.



Daf 5: פֶּטֶר חֲמוֹר – A Firstborn Donkey



Rabbi Hanina said: I asked Rabbi Eliezer the following question in the *Beit Midrash Hagadol* (great study hall) — “In what ways are firstborn donkeys different from firstborn horses and camels? Why did the Torah command that firstborn donkeys be redeemed and not firstborn horses and camels?”

Rabbi Eliezer answered: “It is a Torah decree. Donkeys assisted *B’nai Yisrael* as they left Egypt. *Hashem* promised that *B’nai Yisrael* would depart from Egypt with significant possessions. Each Jew left Egypt with strong, superior-quality donkeys, carrying bags filled with Egyptian silver and gold.”

Daf 6: פְּדִיּוֹן הַבֵּן הָרִאשׁוֹן – The Original Redemption of the Firstborn

Every firstborn son, whose mother had never given birth previously, is liable for *Pidyon HaBen* (redemption of the firstborn). When a *bechor* (firstborn) turns 30 days old, his father redeems him, by giving 5 sterling coins to the *kohen*.

In this *perek* (chapter), we learn about the original *Pidyon Bechorim* done in the Sinai Desert. At that time, the *bechorim* were redeemed by the Levites. It was this first act of redemption, performed by *shevet Levi* that was the source of their tribe’s sanctity.

Was the number of Levites identical to the number of first-born in *B’nai Yisrael*? No, there were more firstborn in *B’nai Yisrael* than Levites. So, how were the remaining firstborn redeemed — meaning, after each of the Levites had redeemed a firstborn in exchange for themselves? The remaining firstborn each redeemed themselves with five silver coins, as is our practice today. As for which *bechorim* had to pay, that was determined by lottery.



Daf 7: דְּבַשׁ דְּבוּרִים – Honey From Bees



Why is it permissible to eat honey produced by bees? Honey is created through the body of the bee and bees are *t'mai'im* (ritually impure)? The Talmud answers that the honey itself is *tahor* (ritually pure), since honey is not produced inside the body of the bee. As Rambam explained further: bees only store the flower nectar they collect in their mouths and then release the collected nectar into their hive.

Who's Who?

RABBI YOSEF KARO
(1488-1575)

Rabbi Yosef Karo was one of the greatest rabbis and halachic authorities of all time. He was also known also as “*Maran*” (our Master), “*Beit Yosef*” (House of Yosef) and “*HaMechaber*” (The Author). Rav Karo was born in Spain, and after the expulsion of the Jews, he and his family moved several times, before they ultimately arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* and settled in Tzfat.

At age 34, he began to write his “*Beit Yosef*” commentary on the *Arba'ah Turim* (known as the “*Tur*”, the important medieval Halakhic code composed by Jacob ben Asher, in Spain), which he worked on over the course of twenty years. In his “*Beit Yosef*,” Rav Karo presents a comprehensive summary of the greatest *poskim* (halachic authorities): the *Rif* (Rabbi Yitzhak ben Yaakov Alfasi HaCohen, 1013-1103); Rambam (Moses ben Maimon, commonly known as Maimonides, 1135-1204); and the *Rosh* (Asher ben Jehiel, 1250-1327).

Rav Karo shared his halachic conclusions in his book the “*Shulchan Arukh*,” which became Am Yisrael’s fundamental code of *Halacha*.



Illustration from Brockhaus and Efron Jewish Encyclopedia (1906—1913). Photo Source: Wikipedia





Daf 8: הקיסר ורבי יהושע בן חנניה – The Emperor and Rabbi Yehoshua



Once, the Roman Emperor sought to speak with Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Hananya, owing to the rabbi's superior intellect. The Emperor said to him: "Given that you are so smart, go debate the wise men of Athens and defeat all of their arguments."

Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Hananya travelled to Athens and asked a certain butcher: "Where might I find the wise men of Athens?" The butcher responded: "I am afraid to reveal their location to you, because they are cruel and merciless, and they have been known to kill whoever reveals their whereabouts!"

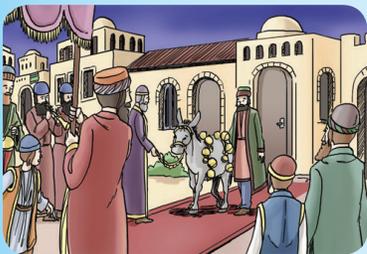
Understanding the butcher's fear, Yehoshua Ben Hananya replied: "Do this ... Take a bundle of sticks and walk in front of me, toward the location of the wise men. When we arrive near the entrance of the building in which the wise men sit, do not point it out. Rather, set down your bundle on the ground for a moment, as if you are taking a short rest, and then pick the bundle up again, and continue on your way. That is how I will know where the wise men are located, without endangering you."

Daf 9: שני חמורים זכרים תאומים – A Pair of Twin Donkeys



What is done if a donkey gives birth to a set of firstborn male twins? Is the owner required to pay two sheep to the *kohen*? – i.e., do both baby donkeys require redemption? Are they both considered *bechorim* (firstborn)? Answer: The *Mishnah* teaches that the owner "[only] gives one sheep to the *kohen*." Why? Because only one of the donkeys is a *bechor*, and the other is not.

Daf 10: קידושין בפטר חמור – Sanctification of a Firstborn Donkey



A man can carry out *kiddushin* (betrothal) by giving a woman any item he owns, e.g., a ring, or any other item of value – under the condition that the woman agrees to the transaction.

If a *chatan* (groom) chose to give his *kalla* (bride) a donkey instead of a ring, and says: "*Harei at mekudeshet li, be'chamor zeh, ke'daht Moshe ve'Yisrael*" (Behold, you are betrothed to me, by means of this donkey, according to the religion of Moses and Israel) – would the woman indeed be *mekudeshet* (betrothed)? Yes, in such a case, the woman is *mekudeshet*, on the condition the donkey had been properly redeemed, in accordance with the law. One may not perform *kiddushin* with a firstborn donkey until after the animal has been redeemed, as it is prohibited to derive benefit from a firstborn donkey prior to its redemption.

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Matzot Aviv is another example of an innovative Israeli company. They are the first automated matzah factory in Israel and recently made matzah that can be broken apart without making crumbs (definitely worth celebrating!) *Matzot Aviv* currently distributes their products to over 40 countries around the world. In order to fulfill orders for *matzah*, the company's machines work 24 hours a day, in the months leading up to Passover! *Matzot Aviv* also have a Kosher-for-Passover line of cookies and crackers that is delicious the rest of year as well.

Thank you Israeli manufacturers for supplying the world with tasty treats.



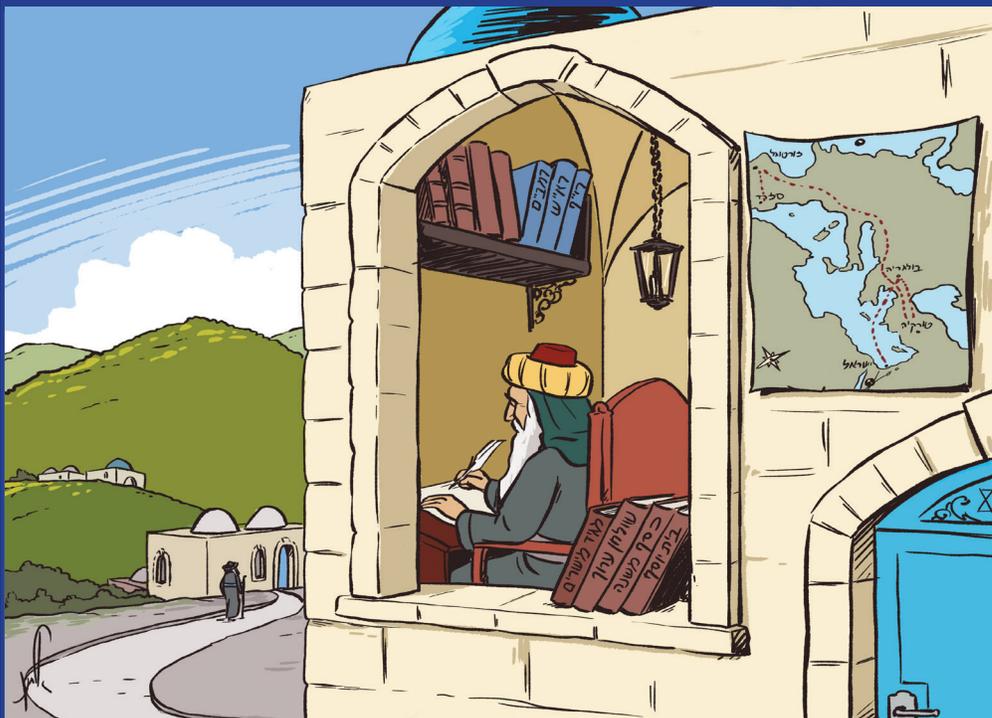
A sampling of Matzot Aviv products.
Photo source: matzotaviv.co.il





Look closely at the illustration and answer the following questions:

1. In which city is the man in the illustration sitting?
2. Who wrote the books sitting on the windowsill?
3. What is special about the three books on the upper shelf?
4. What is the significance of the route outlined on the map?



1) Tzfat; 2) Rabbi Yosef Karo; 3) These are the first three *poskim* (halachic authorities) according to whom the rulings in the *Shulchan Arukh* were determined; 4) The route that Rabbi Yosef Karo took from Spain to Eretz Yisrael.

Dvar Torah PESACH



For How Many Days Do We Eat Matzah?

There seems to be a blatant contradiction in the Torah. *Devarim* 16:3 states that we should eat matzah for seven days on *Pesach*. *Devarim* 16:8 states that we should eat matzah for six days.

How can these verses be reconciled? Actually, there is no contradiction whatsoever. *Devarim* 16:8 addresses making a holiday pilgrimage to the central place of Jewish worship (i.e. the *Beit Hamikdash*). Not everyone was able to linger at the *Beit Hamikdash* for the entirety of the weeklong festival. There was urgent agricultural work that could not be postponed. *Devarim* 16:7 gives permission for people turn around and go home on the first morning of *Chol Ha-Moed*. But the Torah warns such people who leave at the earliest opportunity that the holiday is still not over. For another six days one is bidden to eat *matzah* and celebrate the festival of liberation. Moreover, the Torah reminds everyone that on the seventh day of the holiday one must refrain from work and observe *Yom Tov*, even if that observance takes place far away from where God rests the Divine Presence.



QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK

All answers can be found in this *Daf Yomi* publication

- 1) Who instructed that dots were to be written in the Torah scroll and why did he do so?
- 2) Why is it permissible to eat bees honey?
- 3) How is the *mitzvah* of *Pidyon HaBen* fulfilled today?

Please email answers to questions to answers@talmudisraeli.co.il for a chance to win a \$50 Amazon Gift Card!

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