

# The Weekly Daf



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Niddah 18-24

Week of 1-7 Av 5757 / 4-10 August 1997

Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

## No Laughing Matter

A woman who gives birth to a child is considered ritually impure, for a week's duration if it's a boy and for two weeks if it's a girl. If the offspring does not have a human form but rather that of an animal, there is a dispute between Rabbi Meir and the other Sages as to whether this constitutes a birth which makes her impure.

Rabbi Meir's position that it *is* considered a birth — either because the word "formation" is used in the Torah to describe both human and animal creation, or because of the physiological similarity of the eyes of both species — raises a fascinating question.

Rabbi Ada bar Ahavah posed a question to the Sage Abaye. If an animal born from man is considered human according to Rabbi Meir, what will be the status of a humanoid born from an animal? Will its flesh be kosher for consumption? This question remains unresolved in the Talmud.

Niddah 23b

## The Secret Smell Of Blood

The Sage Rabbi Elazar had a most interesting title. He was called "*Mara D'Ara D'Yisrael*" — Master of the Land of Israel.

This title of preeminence was earned by Rabbi Elazar's superiority over all the sages in *Eretz Israel* in regard to ruling on the nature of feminine blood as to whether it rendered the woman menstrually impure or not. Rabbi Ami once had an opportunity to witness this expertise at work. He was sitting before Rabbi Elazar when a woman brought some blood before him for a ruling. After smelling it, Rabbi Elazar issued his ruling to her, with an explanation to Rabbi Ami that the flow had been caused by a certain personal circumstance of the woman involved. Rabbi Ami met the woman outside Rabbi Elazar's office and heard from her a corroboration of the circumstance which Rabbi Elazar had determined simply on the basis of smell.

"The secret of Hashem is revealed to those who fear Him." (*Tehillim 25:14*) was the expression which Rabbi Ami gave to the wonder aroused by the supernatural wisdom of this "*Mara D'Ara D'Yisrael*."

*Maharsha* explains that *Eretz Israel* is incorporated into the title describing Rabbi Elazar's extraordinary wisdom because our Sages have already told us (*Bava Basra 158b*) that "the air of *Eretz Israel* makes one wise." Rabbi Ami's application of the passage about the Heavenly gift of wisdom to Rabbi Elazar's sense of smell is based on the passage in *Yeshayahu* (11:3) that describes one of the supernatural attributes of the progeny of King David who will be the *Mashiach* to redeem his people: "He shall smell through the fear of Hashem and judge not according to what his eyes can see." The Sage Rava (*Sanhedrin 93b*) interprets this as meaning that *Mashiach* will be able to judge cases of law on the basis of his sense of smell. Rashi sees this as referring to the use of this sense to smell the parties standing before him in a monetary litigation and to thus determine who is right and who is wrong. *Maharsha*, however, extends this to include the ability to determine the halachic nature of feminine blood on the basis of smell alone.

Rabbi Ami was so impressed by Rabbi Elazar's sense of smell that he concluded that it must be that special Heavenly gift with which Hashem will endow *Mashiach*, alongside all of his other extraordinary qualities.

Niddah 20a

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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