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The Status of a *kohen* Who Becomes Aware of His True Background

“If [a *kohen*] was standing and sacrificing on the altar, and it became known that he was the son of a divorced woman or a *halutzah*- R.. *Eliezer* says, All the sacrifices which he offered on the altar are invalid. But R. *Yehoshua* declares them valid.” (*Trumot* 8:1)

The first argument here is over the status that *halacha* attributes to the *korbanot* of a *kohen* who was proven to be the son of a divorcee and/or “*chalutzah*” (i.e. a woman who did not marry her late husband’s brother following his passing, where their marriage had not brought forth any children). Such a *kohen* is ineligible to perform the services of a *kohen* in the *Beit Ha’Mikdash*.

On an objective plane this “*kohen*” was never eligible to perform the services of a *kohen* in the *Beit Ha’Mikdash*, and consequently there is room to say that none of the *korbanot* which he brought were valid. *This is the view of R. Eliezer.*

On the other hand, the *korbanot* brought by such a “*kohen*” were brought at a time when this person and the society around him wholeheartedly believed that he was a *kohen*. It is thus possible that this artificial former reality retains the *halachic* validity it enjoyed before the new evidence of the *kohen*’s background came to light. This would mean that all the *korbanot* brought by the *kohen* before the realization of his true background retain their *halachic* weight even after the *kohen* has been dethroned. *This is the view of R. Yehoshua.*

The *halacha*, as Kehati notes, is in accordance with R. *Yehoshua*. The *gemara* in Tractate Pesachim 72b cites the *passuk* (*Devarim* 33:11), which relates to the tribe of Levi from which the *kohanim* emerged, as being the source for R. *Yehoshua*’s ruling:

“Bless, LORD, his resources, and accept the work of his hands”

The *gemara* in *Kiddushin* (66b) explains the exposition of the text to be as follows:

The father of *Shmuel* explains [R’ *Yehoshua*’s source is from the *pasuk*]: “Bless, LORD, his resources (חילו), and accept the work of his hands” – implying that even the profane (חולין) are accepted.

In essence the *Gemara* learns out from this *passuk* that even the *korbanot* of a *kohen* who is unfit to perform in the *Beit Ha’Mikdash* are not invalidated post facto.

However, the *Gemara* in Tractate *Makkot* (11b) raises the possibility of two understandings of the reasoning behind R. *Yehoshua*’s opinion.

The first understanding presented is that even once the *kohen* becomes aware of his true background it is as if he is “dead” regarding the *kehuna* (priesthood). This implies that the *kohen*’s former status as a *kohen* was “alive” and thus the *korbanot* he brought were valid.

The second understanding brought by the *Gemara* asserts that the status of the *kehuna* of the *kohen* in question following his enlightenment is “nullified.” The implication here is that the *kohen* is retroactively disqualified from performing services in the *Beit Hamikdash*. According to this view the only reason that the *korbanot* (as opposed to other special duties) of this *kohen* are still considered valid is because of the special teaching learnt from the *passuk* cited earlier. Fundamentally, this view proposes that the *kohen* in question was never a recognised *kohen*.

The *Rambam* seemingly rules according to the second understanding presented (*Hilchot Beit Ha’Mikdash* 6:10):

A *kohen* that works, and is found to be a *challal* the work he performed in the past is *kosher*, and he cannot perform any further *Avodah*. If he however does do any *Avodah* it is not profane as the *passuk* states: “Bless, LORD, his resources, and accept the work of his hands” – implying that even the profane are accepted.

The *Tosfot Anshei Shem* writes that the *Rambam* rules that while an ineligible *kohen* (who is aware of this) may not work in the *Beit Ha’Mikdash*, if he does so, his work is not invalidated. This cannot follow the first understanding of R. *Yehoshua*’s opinion stated earlier as a “dead” *kohen* cannot perform work in the *Beit Ha’Mikdash*. Rather the *Rambam* prefers the second understanding that this *kohen* is retroactively nullified from being a recognised *kohen*, yet nonetheless his work in the *Beit Ha’Mikdash* still has validity and is accepted. Hence, he quotes the *passuk* from which this special law is learnt out.

Noam Greenberger

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יחזקאל זליג בן ישראל ע"ה

Revision Questions

תרומות ז': א' – ח': ז'

- What are two differences between the way one must recompense a *kohen* if he ate *trumah be'shogeg* and if he ate *trumah be'meizid*? (ז': א')
- What is the law regarding a *bat-kohen* that marries an *israel* and then eats *trumah* (ז': ב')
- Explain the debate regarding a *bat-kohen* who marries one of the *p'sulim*? (ז': ב')
- What are the three other cases listed where the one who eats *trumah* only pay the *keren* and not the *chomesh*? (ז': ג')
- When can the *kohen* exempt one from payment after they have eaten *trumah*? (ז': ד')
- What is the law regarding two piles, one of *chulin* and one of *trumah* where:
 - *Trumah* fell into one of the two piles? (ז': ה')
 - One is not sure which pile is *trumah* and which pile is *chulin* and:
 - One person ate from one pile – what is the status of the second pile? (ז': ה')
 - One person ate from one pile, and another person ate from the other? (ז': ה')
 - One person ate from both piles? (ז': ה')
 - Part of one of the pile got mixed up with *chulin* – what is the status of all three piles? (ז': ו')
 - Part of one pile got mixed with one pile of *chulin* and part of the other pile got mixed with another pile of *chulin*? (ז': ו')
 - Both piles got mixed with one pile of *chulin*? (ז': ו')
 - Someone one planted some of the seeds from one pile – what is the status of the second pile? (ז': ז')
 - Someone planted some of one pile, and another person planted some of the other pile? (ז': ז')
 - One person planted seeds from both piles? (ז': ז')
- Explain the debate regarding a slave of a *kohen* who is eating *trumah* and is notified that his master has passed away. (ז': ח')
- What are the two other *trumah* related cases that are treated in a similar manner to the previous question? (ז': א')
- Explain the debate between *R' Eliezer* and *R' Yehoshua* regarding the case described in the previous questions where the *kohen* has the *trumah* in his mouth. (ז': ב')
- In what cases does *R' Eliezer* agree with *R' Yehoshua*? (ז': ב')
- This debate between *R' Eliezer* and *R' Yehoshua* carries over to other area of *halacha* – which two cases are described in the *mishnah*? (ז': ג')
- What are the three liquids that become forbidden if they are left uncovered and why? (ז': ד')
- Explain the debate regarding the amount of water that can become forbidden as a result of being uncovered? (ז': ה')
- What other foods can become forbidden for the same reason that some liquids can be become forbidden if left uncovered? (ז': ו')
- Explain the debate regarding *mashmeret ya'yin*? (ז': ז')

Local Shiurim

Sunday
Between mincha and ma'ariv
Mizrachi Shul
David Bankier

Monday -Thursday
Between mincha & ma'ariv
Mizrachi Shul
Ben-zion Hain

9:45pm
Beit Midrash:
Naftali Herc
David Bankier

Friday & Shabbat
10 minutes before mincha
Mizrachi Shul
David Bankier

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Next Week's Mishnahyot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
1 st May כ"ב ניסן	2 nd May כ"ג ניסן	3 rd May כ"ד ניסן	4 th May כ"ה ניסן	5 th May כ"ו ניסן	6 th May כ"ז ניסן	7 th May כ"ח ניסן
Trumot 8: 8-9	Trumot 8: 10-11	Trumot 8:12 – 9:1	Trumot 9: 2-3	Trumot 9: 4-5	Trumot 9: 6-7	Trumot 10: 1-2

