



Volume 12. Issue 23

Sof Tumah Latzeit

The *Mishnah* (8:6) teaches that if a half *kezayit* of a *met* is in one room and another half is in another, if the doors are closed (*Barternura*), even though the rooms themselves remain *tahor*, the house is *tameh*. The rooms remaining *tahor* makes sense – there is not a sufficient *shiur* in each of the rooms to make them *tameh*. Why however is the house *tameh* if the doors are closed?

The *Bartenura* explains that this is based on the concept that “*sof tumah latzeit*”. Since the *tumah* will eventually leave via that doorway, the closed door does not act as a barrier to *tumah* leaving.¹ Even though the two halves leave their respective rooms and combine to make the minimum *shiur*, the rooms themselves however remain *tahor* due to the second principle that “*tumah* leaves but does not (re)enter”. In that respect, the door acts as a sufficient partition in the face of the *tumah*.

The *Sidrei Taharot* however stresses that the half *kezayit* however are not sources of *tumah* on their own. Since they are not *tameh*, how can the principle of *sof tumah latzeit* be applied? To understand this *Mishnah* we need to explore the concept of *sof tumah latzeit*.

Rav Daniel Wolf (*Mincha Tehora*) explains that there are three different ways to understand this principle. The first is that it is an extension of *tumat ohel*. Since they will eventually leave through that doorway, it does not act as a barrier and the *tumah* continues to spread (based on *tumat ohel*) as if the door was left open. R’ Wolf directs us to the R’ Chananel (*Beitzah* 10a) as a proponent of this position: “whenever the door will be opened, it is as if it is open.”

Alternatively, one can understand that this is a new form of *tumah* and not an extension of *tumat ohel*. The area under the doorway is rendered *tameh* since *tumah* will eventually leave that way. He cites *Rashi* and the *Rash* as maintaining this position. For example, the *Rash* (*ibid*) writes: “the *Chachamim* decreed *tumah* on the location of the passage of *tumah*.”

Finally it appears that according to the *Rambam* (*Tumat HaMet* 7:1) one can understand the *tumah* by the doorway is like the *tumah* of a *kever* (grave). Just like with a *kever* despite the fact there are no openings, its surroundings are *tameh*, so too the closed room or house turns into an object of *tumah* and the door can longer act as a partition.

Returning now to our *Mishnah*, R’ Wolf explains that if we view this principle as an extension of *tumat ohel*, then the question of the *Sidrei Taharot* is strong. Since the half *kezayit* is not a source of *tumah* within the room then how can it extend beyond the doorway? However, the *Bartenura* may understand that the *sof tumah latzeit* is not an extension, but rather a new form of *tumah*. Consequently, even though the room itself is *tahor*, the principle of *sof tumah latzeit* is able to place the two half *kezayit* at the doorways such that they can combine to render the rest of the house as being *tameh*.²

R’ Wolf provides a number of other examples where the ruling appears to depend on the way one views the principle of *sof tumah la'tzeit*. One of these is where the *met* is not currently under any *ohel*, however it will be leaving the city (for burial) via the city gates. The *Trumat HaDeshen* brings an opinion that under the gate is *tameh* due to our principle. The *Rama* (YD 371:4) mentions that there are those that are *machmir* like this opinion, but those who act leniently in a place where there is no *minhag* to act stringently are fine.

According to the opinion that the principle is any extension of *tumat ohel*, the city gates cannot be *tameh*. As the *Gra* writes explaining those that are lenient, “we do not say *sof tumah latzeit* expect under one *ohel*”. If however *sof tumah latzeit* is new form of *tumah*, then it is not dependant on an *ohel* and one could understand that under the city gates could be *tameh*.²

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¹ The *Mishnah Achrona* notes that we are assuming that the door is the only way for the *tumah* to leave.

² See R’ Wolf inside (124) that explains that one could nevertheless permit *kohanim* to be under the city gate.

Revision Questions

ז: תולהאיה – ז: ט

- Explain the debate regarding a case where a woman miscarries after she was transferred between rooms during labour. ז: ז(
- In what case is the ruling different? ז: ז(
- Until what point is a baby aborted when it is threatening the mother's life? ז: ז(
- List some items that can spread *tumah* and shield against *tumah*. ז: ז(
- What are *sechachot*? ז: ז(
- What are *pera'ot*? ז: ז(
- List some items that can spread *tumah* but cannot shield against *tumah*. ז: ז(
- List some items that can shield against *tumah* but cannot spread *tumah*. ז: ז(
- List some items that can neither spread nor shield against *tumah*. ז: ז(
- What is the law regarding to two tightly sealed earthenware jugs that each contains a half-kezayit of a *met*? ז: ז(
- What is law if one of them were opened? ז: ז(
- What other case is similar to the one in the previous question? ז: ז(
- (Question A :) Regarding a *kaveret* that that is placed inside a house lying on its side with it open outside the house, what is the law regarding items above, below and inside the *kaveret* and inside the house if: ז: ז(
 - A *kezayit* from a *met* is found underneath the *kaveret* (outside the house)?
 - A *kezayit* from a *met* is found inside the house?
 - Inside the *kaveret*?
- (Question B :) Is the law different if the *kaveret* was raised a *tephach* above the ground? ז: ז(
- (Question C :) In which two cases would the laws in the previous two cases change and what is the law in both those cases? ז: ז(
- What is meant by the term *afutza*? ז: ז(
- If the opening of the *kaveret* was inside the house how would the law differ in the case of:
 - Question A? ז: ז(
 - Question B? ז: ז(

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Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שדוק תבש
19 th April ז' אב	20 th April ז' אב	21 th April ז' אב	22 th April ז' אב	23 th April ז' אב	24 th April ז' אב	25 th April ז' אב
Ohalot 9:7-8	Ohalot 9:9-10	Ohalot 9:11-12	Ohalot 9:13-14	Ohalot 9:15-16	Ohalot 10:1-2	Ohalot 10:3-4

