



Purifying Mei Gevaim

Masechet Mikvaot begins by listing the various natural collections of water and how they differ with the respect to *taharah*. The first one mentioned is the *mei gevaim*, which we discussed in detail previously (*Mei Gevaim*, 6(50)). The first *Mishnah* teaches that if someone *tameh* drinks from the water, someone *tahor* should not drink from that water otherwise they will become *tameh*. One explanation we saw previously, was that even though the *mei gevaim* are not susceptible to *tumah* until they are intentionally extracted, we are concerned that *tameh* drops of water fell back into the water. When the *tahor* person takes some water to drink, it becomes susceptible to *tumah*. The concern is that the water will include the *tameh* drops which would then make that water *tameh*. If he drinks the *tameh* water, he would become a *sheni le'tumah* (by way a rabbinic decree).

The *Mishnah* (1:4) teaches that during the dry months, those *mei gevaim* that were accessible for drinking water are assumed to be *tameh*. The ruling is based on the concern above, that someone *tameh* may have drank from the water.

The next *Mishnah* records a debate regarding when the *mei gevaim* can be assumed to be *tahor* again. *Beit Shammai* maintain that it is when the rainwater collects and exceeds the water that was already there, and the water also overflows. *Beit Hillel* understand that spilling over is not necessary. Finally, *R' Shimon* takes the most lenient position, that even if a small amount of rain water collects, yet it spills over, the *mei gevaim* would become *tahor*.

The *Mishnah Achrona* asks why *Beit Shammai* also needs the water to spill over. Why is it not sufficient that the existing water become annulled in a majority of new *tahor* water? He also questions the position of *R' Shimon*. What does water spilling over achieve?

The *Mishnah Achrona* bases his answer on a later *Mishnah* (3:3). The *Mishnah* teaches that if a *mikveh* was filled with drawn water, and there is stream of water passing through it, then the *mikveh* is only valid once we can be certain that none of the original water remains. The *Raavad* there explains that if the *mikveh* was invalid since it had three *log* of drawn water, since that *pesul* is rabbinic, once three *log* of water of the stream passes through we can assume it pushed out the invalid three *log*. *R' Shimon* therefore considers that this case should share the same law, since biblically, that drop of *tameh* water should already be annulled in the majority.¹

Both *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* however require the existing water be annulled in the majority of rainwater. For *Beit Shammai* however, that alone is insufficient. The *Mishnah Achrona* explains that they are concerned that someone might wait and anticipate the rainfall to purify their *mei gevaim*. The issue then would be that since one wanted that rain, it would become susceptible to *tumah*. Not only could it not purify the *mei gevaim*, but it would become *tameh*. Consequently, an additional requirement was there either as a *heker* (a reminder) that there can be an issue of *machshava* or to ensure rabbinic counsel is sought.

One might ask, why is a majority of fresh water necessary. The drops of *tameh* water in the *mei gevaim* are already in the minority.² The *Mishnat Taharot* cites the *Chazon Ish* (*kama* 1:5) that explains that the original *tumah* of the water in the ground is indeed rabbinic.³ If there was no avenue for making it *tahor* it would never become *tahor*. *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* each provide that way.

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¹ This explanation fits those *Rishonim* that explain, as we did in the beginning of the article, that the issue the *mei gevaim* is a *tameh* drop. Recall, that according to the *Rambam* however, the *mei gevaim* became *tameh*. This is because the *Rambam* understands that *mei gevaim* can become *tameh* if the *tumah* is brought into contact with the *mei gevaim* willingly. We would need to understand how the water spilling over alone would help according to the *Rambam*.

² According to the *Rambam* (cited in the previous footnote) that all the *mei gevaim* are *tameh*, the need for a majority of fresh water is readily understood.

³ The *Mishnat Taharot* explains that this could either be since *tameh* liquids ability to make other liquid *tameh* is rabbinic or because the logic that the single *tameh* drop will be "awakened" (*chozer ve'neiur*) and make the other water *tameh* is rabbinic.

Revision Questions

טהרות י' א' – ח'

- Explain the debate regarding the case where the olive workers who were made *tahor* were locked in the press along with a *tameh kli*. (י' א')
- What is the law if *tameh* liquid was found spilt in an olive press in which the workers were treading? (י' ב')
- Were the workers allowed to leave the press to relieve themselves? (י' ב')
- Explain the debate regarding whether the workers would need to be supervised when immersing themselves and the *keilim* prior to work. (י' ג')
- What is the scope of the decree that applies to picked grapes making them susceptible to *tumah*? (Include both opinions.) (י' ד')
- Grapes picked and stored in which locations would immediately be susceptible to *tumah*? (י' ה')
- What would be the law if one such grape (that was *tameh*) fell into many others? After how many more would the law be different? (י' ה')
- What is the law if an *am ha'aretz* spat while he talked and there is a doubt whether the spittle reached the vat? (י' ו')
- What is the law if while one was drawing wine out of the vat, a *sheretz* was found in the first barrel? In the last barrel? (י' ו')
- Regarding the previous question in what case is the ruling more stringent? More lenient? (י' ז')
- Which parts of a vineyard would be considered *reshut ha'rabim*? (י' ח')
- What must one do first if the utensils of a wine press became *tameh* through *tameh* liquids? (Provide both cases.) (י' ח')

מקואות א' א' – ו'

- What is *mei gevaim*? (א' א')
- What is the law regarding one that drank from *mei gevaim* after someone *tameh* drank from it? (א' א')
- Regarding the previous question, what would the law be if *trumah* fell in such water? (א' א')
- What is the law regarding the previous two questions if instead of a *tameh* person first drinking from the *mei gevaim*:
 - Water was first drawn with a *tameh kli*? (א' ב')
 - *Tameh* liquid first fell into the *mei gevaim*? (א' ג')
 - A corpse fell into the *mei gevaim*? (א' ד')
- Provide some examples of bodies of water that qualify as *mei gevaim*? (א' ד')
- What is the law regarding *mei gevaim* that is found during the rainy seasons? During the rest of the year? (א' ד')
- When does *tameh mei gevaim* become *tahor*? (א' ה')
- What two things listed in the *Mishnah* can *mei gevaim* be used for? (א' ה')
- What is the body of water that is the next level above *mei gevaim* and how does it differ from *mei gevaim*? (א' ו')
- For what two things listed in the *Mishnah* can that water be used? (א' ו')

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Mikvaot 1:7-8	Mikvaot 2:1-2	Mikvaot 2:3-4	Mikvaot 2:5-6	Mikvaot 2:7-8	Mikvaot 2:9-10	Mikvaot 3:1-2

