



The spread of Tumah

The *Mishnah* (7:3) discusses the spread of *tumah* from a corpse in a house with more than one exit. If the exits contain recessed doors, then the areas under the lintels are treated as part of the house and the *tumah* spreads to utensils that are situated in these doorways. If the doors are closed, *tumah* will still be transmitted, but only through the exit through which the corpse will be removed. If it is not yet known which exit will be used, *tumah* will be transmitted to utensils in all of the exits. This principle is known as *sof tumah latzeit*.

When the decision is made to use a particular exit, any other closed exits will no longer transmit *tumah*. However, *Beit Shammai* say that this principle only applies if this decision is made before the person dies. If it is made after the person dies, the doorways remain *tamei*. The only way the *tamei* status can be removed is if a physical act is done; opening the selected door is such an act (*Bartenura*). According to *Beit Hillel*, the other exits become *tahor* as soon as the decision not to use them as the exit is made, even without an action. If a *tahor* utensil was then placed in one of the other exits, it would remain *tahor*.

A *Mishnah* learnt in the previous *masechet* appears to be relevant to this *machloket*. The *Mishnah* (*Keilim* 25:9) states: "All utensils descend into impurity through intention, but ascend from impurity only through a physical alteration." The intention to use an object for a particular purpose is sufficient to render it susceptible to *tumah*¹. However if that intention subsequently changes, the object remains susceptible to *tumah*. There must be a physical alteration to remove the susceptibility to *tumah*. Until a physical alteration is made, we are concerned that the person might change their mind (*Mishnah Achronah* to *Keilim* 27:4).

It seems that *Beit Shammai* applies the same principle to the case of our *Mishnah*. Until the person performs an action such as opening the door, *Beit Shammai* is concerned that the person will change his mind. *Beit Hillel*, on the other hand, is not concerned that the person will change his mind. As soon as the person decides to use a particular exit to remove the corpse, the *tamei* status is removed from the other exits. It follows that the *machloket* between *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai* only relates to the time at which

the *tamei* status is removed from the other exits. According to *Beit Hillel*, this occurs when the decision is made to use a particular exit. According to *Beit Shammai*, this occurs when the selected door is actually opened.

However, the *Gemara* (*Beitzah* 10a) explains that the *machloket* between *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai* may go even further. Apparently, the *machloket* might also concern the principle of *breirah* (retroactive clarification) (*Rashi*). The *Gemara* discusses the status of a utensil placed in a doorway before the decision was made to use another doorway. When the decision is made to use another doorway, does the utensil remain *tamei*, or does it become retroactively *tahor*? According to *Beit Shammai* the principle, of *breirah* is not valid. The utensils in the doorways become *tamei* at the moment of death and they remain *tamei* even after the decision is made to use another doorway.

The *Gemara* gives 2 interpretations of *Beit Hillel's* opinion:

- (a) According to *Rabbah* and *R' Oshaya*, *Beit Hillel* holds that the decision to remove the corpse through a particular door makes the other exits *tahor*, but only from that time on. Utensils that were already in the other doorways before the decision is made remain *tamei*. This would accord with the ruling of *Beit Shammai* apart from the difference as to what constitutes a sufficient trigger to change the status of the doorways not chosen for the corpse's exit.
- (b) According to *Rava*, *Beit Hillel* holds that the decision to remove the corpse through a particular door makes the other doorways *tahor* retroactively. *Rava* interprets this to mean that utensils that are in the other doorways also become *tahor* at the time the decision is made, based on the principle of *breirah*.

In general, whether or not *breirah* is a valid principle is a *machloket* raised in a number of places in the *Gemara*. The above analysis suggests that *Beit Shammai* does not accept the principle of *breirah* while according to *Rava*, *Beit Hillel* accepts the principle of *breirah* as valid. According to *Rabbah* and *R' Oshaya* it would appear that both *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai* agree that the principle of *breirah* is not valid, at least in this instance.

Allon Ledder

¹ The same object can be susceptible to *tumah* or not, depending on the purpose for which the object is to be used. Eg. A ring for use by a person

is susceptible to *tumah*. The same ring, if it is for the use of an animal, is not susceptible to *tumah*.

Revision Questions

אהלות ו: ד- ח: ד'

- What is the law regarding *tumah* found in the wall between two houses? (ו: ד')
- Explain the debate regarding the status of the *ma'aziva*? (ו: ד')
- What is the law regarding *tumah* that is found *bein ha'korot*? (Provide all three cases.) (ו: ה')
- What is the law regarding a "house that serves a wall"? (ו: ו') (Compare with how a "wall that serves a house"). (ו: ג')
- What is the law regarding a case where *tumah* is found beneath a pillar? (ו: ו')
- Explain the debate regarding the utensils found beneath the overhanging decorations of the pillar. (ו: ו')
- Regarding the previous question, in what case is there no debate? (ו: ו')
- What is the law regarding *tumah* found in cupboards built into the wall? (ו: ו')
- When does *tumah* found in a wall cause all the floors in the building to become *tameh*? (ו: א')
- In what case would the spread be stopped? (ו: א')
- When would one touch the side of a *matezeiva* be *tameh* and when would he be *tahor*? (ו: א')
- Is the space under the slanted part of an *ohel* considered part of the *ohel*? (ו: ב')
- What is the difference if one touches the inside or outside of an *ohel* once the corpse has been removed? (ו: ב')
- What is the law regarding a case where a half *kezayit* was on one side of the *ohel* and another on the other side? (ו: ב')
- What is the law regarding *tumah* that is found under that excess flap of a tent? (ו: ב')
- Explain the debate regarding a tent placed over an *arubah*? (ו: ב')
- What is the law regarding item in the closed doorways of a house that contains a corpse? When does this change? (ו: ג')
- What are the two debates between *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* regarding the previous question? (ו: ג')
- Explain the debate regarding a case where a woman miscarries after she was transferred between rooms during labour? (ו: ד')
- In what case is the ruling different? (ו: ה')
- Until what point is a baby aborted when it is threatening the mother's life? (ו: ו')
- List some items that can spread *tumah* and shield against *tumah*. (ו: א')
- What are *sechachot*? (ו: ב')
- What are *pera'ot*? (ו: ב')
- List some items that can spread *tumah* but cannot shield against *tumah*. (ו: ג')
- List some items that can shield against *tumah* but cannot spread *tumah*. (ו: ד')

Local Shiurim

Sunday -Thursday

After maariv
Mizrachi Shul

Friday & Shabbat

10 minutes before mincha
Mizrachi Shul

Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
19 th July כ"ז תמוז	20 th July כ"ח תמוז	21 st July כ"ט תמוז	22 nd July א' אב	23 rd July ב' אב	24 th July ג' אב	25 th July ד' אב
Ohalot 8:5-6	Ohalot 9:1-2	Ohalot 9:3-4	Ohalot 9:5-6	Ohalot 9:7-8	Ohalot 9:9-10	Ohalot 9:11-12

