



## Sicha Summary

Chelek 17 | Tazria | Sichah 2

### The Mishnah:

After giving birth, a woman is obligated to offer a “sheep... as an *olah*.” If she cannot afford a sheep, she offers two turtledoves or two young doves, “one for an *olah* and one for a *chatas*.”

The *mishnah* at the end of tractate *Kinnim* discusses a scenario where a woman vows to offer bird sacrifices in addition to her obligatory pair of birds, yet doubts arise concerning the exact nature of her pledge, and whether or not the *kohen* offered the sacrifices correctly. In the case where the most doubts arise, the *mishnah* rules that the woman must offer “four other birds for her vow, and two for her obligation and one for her *chatas*. Ben Azzai says: ‘two *chatos*.’” (*Kinnim* 3:6)

The *mishnah* then continues:

Rabbi Yehoshua said: This is what is meant when they said: “While a sheep is alive, it makes one sound, but after it is dead, its sound is sevenfold.” In what way is its sound sevenfold? Its two horns are made into two trumpets, its two leg-bones into two flutes, its hide into a drum, its entrails for lyres and its large intestines for harp strings; and some add that its wool is used for the blue pomegranates.”

“Rabbi Shimon ben Akashiah says: Ignorant old people, the older they become, the more their thinking gets muddled, as it says, “He removes speech from the faithful and deprives elders of their reason.” But when it comes to elderly Torah scholars, it is not so. On the contrary! The older they

get, the more their minds become composed, as it says, “There is wisdom in the elderly, and understanding in the aged.””

*Bartenura* explains the relevance of this in our context:

Just as after the animal is dead, its sound is sevenfold, so, too, aged Torah scholars: When they age and become feeble in strength, and they accrue wisdom.

### **The Questions:**

- 1) What is the purpose of Rabbi Yehoshua’s metaphor? What does it explain about the law of the doubtful sacrifices that we did not know already?
- 2) The formulation, “This is what is meant when they said” implies that the law of the sacrifices illuminates and explains the popular saying about sheep. Why does this statement require explanation, and why is it the role of the *mishnah* to offer it?
- 3) What is added by *mishnah*’s explanation regarding elderly ignorant people and elderly Torah scholars?

### **The Explanation:**

This law yields a surprising conclusion: A woman who gave birth was only obligated to offer two birds; she then pledged to offer two additional birds. Yet, through mistakes and doubts that arose, she became obligated to offer seven or eight sacrifices. How, though, could she be obligated to bring additional sacrifices in the *Beis Hamikdash* when it is possible that she is not obligated to offer them at all? This would violate the law against offering non-consecrated animals in the *Beis Hamikdash*!

Additionally, what category do these seven or eight sacrifices fit into? The only reason why they are offered is because of a doubt on the part of the woman or the *kohen*.

Rabbi Yehoshua explains this with the metaphor of the dead sheep: “This is what is meant when they said: ‘While it is alive, it makes one sound, but

after it is dead, its sound is sevenfold.” This teaching attributes the seven sounds to the sheep itself — “**its** sound is sevenfold” — even though these sounds have no connection to the usual sound of the sheep. After the sheep dies, its original, single sound ceases, and new sounds emerge from the horns, etc. But “they said” that all these sounds are “its sound” — the sound of the sheep.

This explains which category the sacrifices fit into and why they can be offered legitimately. Although these additional sacrifices resulted from doubts that only emerged after her original obligatory offerings, nonetheless, these sacrifices are also considered as obligatory as were her original sacrifices, like the sounds of the repurposed sheep are considered the sound of the sheep itself.

### **Reverse Explanation:**

The law of the birds can, in turn, illuminate a question concerning a live sheep and its status after death. A sheep that has been worshiped as an idol cannot be offered on the Altar. The Talmud asks whether that forbidden status applies to the repurposed parts of the sheep after its death. “May its wool be used for *techeles*?... its horns... for trumpets? its leg-bones... for flutes? its large intestines... for harp strings?” (*Avodah Zarah* 64b)

Does the fact that a sheep has changed its form make its use permissible? The law of the doubtful bird sacrifices resolves this: Just as in the case of pairs of birds, although the woman’s obligation is based on a doubt, nonetheless, these sacrifices are similar to “its sound.” Meaning, they retain the same class of obligation as the original sacrifices. The same applies to the law of the worshiped sheep. Even though its parts have changed form and have become new entities, nevertheless, “after it is dead, its sound is sevenfold” — these parts maintain an inherent biblical prohibition, just as the various parts of the sheep are still considered “its sound.”

### **Asymmetrical Metaphor:**

The metaphor of the sheep, however, is not entirely similar to the pair of birds offered by a woman who has given birth. Regarding the woman’s

obligations, each doubt generates the obligation to offer another sacrifice. In the case of the sheep, however, there is only one change in status, one type of degradation from its previous status — death.

Therefore, the *mishnah* continues with Rabbi Shimon ben Akashiah's statement that "aged Torah scholars... the older they become, the more their minds become composed..." The natural degradation of the body and mind occurs every day, yet for Torah scholars, this only causes more mental composure. This is similar to the multiple bird sacrifices, where every mishap and doubt gives rise to the obligation to offer additional sacred sacrifices.

### **The Deeper Dimension:**

Regarding the miraculous survival of the Jews in exile, Rabbi Yehoshua said, "Mighty is the shepherd who can save and protect the lamb, and destroy the wolves surrounding her." Perhaps the shepherd only saves the lamb when it is "alive" — when the Jewish people are spiritually connected to their forefathers and faith, then G-d protects them. But what if the sheep "dies" and it no longer has one unified voice, but is divided into "seven voices?" When the Jewish people are disconnected from their source Above, and devolve into disparate groups, do they earn G-d's protection?

Rabbi Yehoshua's statement in *Kinnim* resolves this doubt: Even when there are a multiplicity of voices amongst the Jewish people, they are all considered the sound of the original "sheep" itself. The different types of Jews are connected to the single sound of the living "sheep" — that of the forefathers.

And if it seems that we are in a state of exile for too long, the conclusion of the *mishnah* reminds us that by "growing old" in exile, we acquire more "wisdom" and "understanding," meaning, we refine the world to a greater degree. Nowadays, however, we have already surpassed the state of "growing old," and "old age" in exile, according to all opinions. Thus, we are ready for the complete and final redemption.

