



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 16 | Terumah | Sichah 4
and *siyyum* for tractate Chagigah

An Overarching Dispute: Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel

Translated by Rabbi Shmuel Kesselman

General Editor: Rabbi Eliezer Robbins | Copy Editor: Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

Content Editor: Rabbi Sholom Zirkind

© Copyright by Sichos In English 2022 ◦ 5782

A note on the translation: Rounded parentheses and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; squiggly parentheses are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in squiggly parentheses are those of the translators or editors, and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time maintaining readability. The translation, however, carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. **Your feedback is needed — please send all comments to: info@projectlikkuteisichos.org**

1.

I WILL DWELL IN THEM

Concerning the command to build the *Mishkan*¹ and the Temple, the verse says,² “They shall make Me a Sanctuary.” In this same verse, the Torah immediately spells out the intention and purpose of this building: “**So that I will dwell in them,**” that is, so the Divine Presence should dwell in the *Mishkan* and in the Temple.

One of the primary forms of service performed in the Temple was the *avodah*³ of offering sacrifices.⁴ As Rambam writes,⁵ the purpose of the *mitzvah* to build the Temple is “...to serve {Hashem}. In the Temple, we offer sacrifices and constantly have fire burning {on the Altar}.” Thus, it is clear that the Outer Altar upon which the sacrifices were offered (the end of our *parshah*⁶ discusses this altar) and the Inner Altar⁷ (the commands relating to this altar are recorded at the end of *parshas Tetzaveh*)⁸ were among the primary utensils of the Temple.

Regarding the verse, “They shall make Me a Sanctuary,” our Sages say,⁹ “Scripture does not say, ‘in it,’ but rather, ‘in them’ — in every single Jew.” Meaning, every Jewish person must serve as a Sanctuary {to Hashem’s Presence}. Thus, it is clear that through his *avodah*, every Jewish person needs to make himself fit for the Divine Presence to rest in the “Temple” within him, so to speak.

¹ {The portable temple constructed by Moshe in the desert, and the temples in Gilgal, Shiloh, Nov, and Givon, before the Temple was built in Yerushalayim.}

² *Shemos* 25:8.

³ {Divine service.}

⁴ See *Maamar Basi LeGani 5710*, beg. of ch. 2 and beg. of ch. 3; see *Ramban (Kisvei HaRamban, vol. 1, p. 163, “Drashas Toras Hashem Temimah”)*: “In the *Mishkan*, the Divine Presence rested only by means of the sacrifices... and also in the Temple — its choice {as a place for Hashem’s Presence came about} by means of sacrifice”; see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 11, p. 125, ff., and fn. 63.

⁵ Rambam’s *Sefer HaMitzvos*, positive *mitzvah* 20; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Beis Habechirah*,” ch. 1, par. 1.

⁶ *Shemos* 27:1, ff.

⁷ See *Maamar Basi LeGani 5710*, beg. of ch. 3: “Since the primary *avodah* in the *Mishkan* and the Temple... was the offering of sacrifices **and particularly, offering incense**” (which was offered on the Golden {Inner} Altar).

⁸ *Shemos* 30:1 ff.

⁹ *Reishis Chochmah (Shaar HaAhavah, ch. 6, s.v., “ushnei pesukim”)*; *Shelah (Shaar HaOsiyos, “os lamed,” et al.)*; see references in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 11., p. 109, fn. 10.

Among the places where our Sages discuss both altars, and emphasize their connection to the inward Temple and *Mishkan* of every Jew, is at the conclusion of tractate *Chagigah*.

2.

RABBI ELIEZER, THE SAGES, RASHI, AND RAMBAM

The (conclusion of the) final *mishnah* in *Chagigah* says:¹⁰

All the utensils that were in the Temple required immersion except for the Golden Altar¹¹ and the Copper Altar,¹² because they are considered like earth;¹³ these are the words of Rabbi Eliezer. But the Sages say: Because they are plated.¹⁴

(After the festival, all the utensils of the Temple needed to be immersed, for they became *tamei*¹⁵ by coming into contact with the common folk.¹⁶)¹⁷

The *Gemara*¹⁸ explains Rabbi Eliezer's opinion: How do we know that the altars are considered like earth (and are, therefore, insusceptible to *tumah*¹⁹)?

The Copper Altar {is like earth}, as it says,²⁰ "An altar of earth you shall make for Me."²¹ The Golden Altar {is like earth}, as it says:²² "The *menorah* and the altars." {"Altars," in plural, indicates that} the altars are compared to each other.²³

¹⁰ {*Chagigah* 26b.}

¹¹ {Referred to earlier in this *sichah* as the Inner Altar.}

¹² {Referred to earlier in this *sichah* as the Outer Altar.}

¹³ {Just as earth is insusceptible to *tumah*, the altars were similarly insusceptible to *tumah*.}

¹⁴ {The altars were plated with gold and copper.}

¹⁵ {Ritually impure.}

¹⁶ {"*Amei haaretz*" in the original Hebrew, denoting unlearned people who were not aware of, or not careful with, the laws of purity. Thus, our Sages considered them to be *tamei*, and any objects they touched as being defiled.}

¹⁷ See *Rashi* to the *Mishnah* (*Chagigah* 26a, s.v., "*maavirin*").

¹⁸ {*Chagigah* 27a.}

¹⁹ {Ritual impurity.}

²⁰ *Shemos* 20:21.

²¹ {Comparing the altar to earth.}

²² *Bamidbar* 3:31.

²³ {Therefore, just as the Copper Altar is insusceptible to *tumah*, the same is true regarding the Golden Altar.}

The *Gemara* then goes on to address {the conclusion of the *Mishnah*}, “But the Sages say: It is because they are plated.” (At this point in the discussion, the *Gemara* assumes that the intent of the Sages is to explain why the altars are *insusceptible to tumah*.) The *Gemara* asks:

On the contrary! Since they are plated, they *should* be susceptible to *tumah*!²⁴

(And Rashi explains: If not for the plating, they would remain *tahor*²⁵ as a result of being “a wooden utensil made to remain stationary.”)²⁶ The *Gemara* then answers:

{Emend the *mishnah* and} say: But the Sages say that the altars *are susceptible* to *tumah*, because they are plated.

(Meaning, the Sages disagree with Rabbi Eliezer and maintain that the altars also became *tamei* because of their plating. The *Gemara* then offers another answer:)

And if you wish, I can say that {the text of our *mishnah* does not need to be amended, and} the Sages were questioning Rabbi Eliezer: What is your reasoning?²⁷ {Did you refrain from arguing that they are *insusceptible to tumah* based on their being wooden utensils made to remain stationary} because they are plated?²⁸ {This is incorrect, for} their plating is subordinate to them.²⁹

Rashi understands this as follows: The Sages said to Rabbi Eliezer, “What is your reasoning?” Meaning, the rationale that Rabbi Eliezer is compelled to offer for the altars being *tahor* is specifically that the Torah calls the altars “earth,” and the rationale that an altar is “a wooden utensil made to remain

²⁴ {The metal plating makes the entire altar considered as a metal utensil, and metal is susceptible to *tumah*.}

²⁵ {Ritually pure.}

²⁶ Which is *insusceptible to tumah*, “for to be susceptible to *tumah*, it must be similar to a sack...,” as the *Gemara* discusses earlier (*Chagigah* 26b).

²⁷ {Rabbi Eliezer cited the verse, “an altar of earth...” to teach that the altars are *insusceptible to tumah*, implying that it is *only* this verse that excludes them from susceptibility to *tumah*. Why is this so? (Rashi.)}

²⁸ {And therefore, they would be considered metal utensils, which *are* susceptible to *tumah*, even if they are made to remain stationary.}

²⁹ {Thus, they are indeed considered wooden utensils made to remain stationary, and as such, they are *insusceptible to tumah*. Consequently, the verse “an altar of earth...” is not needed to prove that the altars are *insusceptible to tumah*. Although generally the status of a utensil *does* follow its plating, the Temple table and its altars are exceptions, as the *Gemara* derived earlier on *Chagigah* 27a.}

stationary” is inadequate, since the altars were “**plated**,” excluding them from the category of wooden utensils. The Sages responded, “their plating is subordinate to them.” That is, since the Torah calls them wood,³⁰ this means that their metal plating is subordinate to **them**. (They remain entirely within the category of wooden utensils) and therefore, they are insusceptible to *tumah*.

Rambam, however, understands³¹ that the Sages did not say “because they are plated” to explain why the altars are seemingly susceptible to impurity according to Rabbi Eliezer. Rather the Sages said this in order to explain why according to **their view**, they are *tahor*. As *Sifra* says regarding the verse, “any utensils which work is done with them”:³² “I might think to include the coverings of utensils {among items that become susceptible to *tumah*}; it is, therefore, written ‘with them,’ excluding the coverings of utensils.” Meaning, if this vessel is not used via its **main body**, but only by means of the covering (plating) of the utensil, it is insusceptible to *tumah*.

Indeed, as some explain Rambam’s opinion:³³ Rambam understands the clause “their plating is subordinate to them” to mean that according to the Sages, plating would not be a reason to say that the vessel is impure (as Rabbi Eliezer maintains). On the contrary! The (metal) plating is a reason why the altars should remain *tahor* — being only a cover to the utensil, automatically, it is subordinate to the utensil and cannot cause it to become susceptible to *tumah*. On the other hand, from the perspective of the utensil itself (if it has a receptacle) it also cannot become *tamei*; since the utensil can only be used through and by the covering, the law is that a covered or plated utensil is insusceptible to *tumah*.³⁴

³⁰ {“The altar was of wood....” (*Yechezkel* 41:22).}

³¹ Rambam’s *Commentary on Mishnah*, tractate *Keilim*, ch. 11, *mishnah* 4; see *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Metamei Mishkav Umoshav*,” ch. 11, par. 11 (at the end).

³² *Vayikra* 11:32.

³³ *Kesef Mishneh* commenting on Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Keilim*,” ch. 4, sec. 4, in the name of Rabbi Yosef Kurkus (also mentioned in *Tosafos Yom Tov* at the end of *Chagigah*).

³⁴ As Rambam writes, “*Hilchos Keilim*,” *ibid*: “Similarly, a wooden or bone implement that has a receptacle, but which was plated with metal is *tahor* and it is insusceptible to *tumah*. The rationale is that the plating causes the implement itself to be considered insignificant and the plating itself is *tahor*, as explained.”

Thus, we see that Rashi and Rambam disagree regarding the effect of plating according to the Sages. Rashi maintains that also according to the Sages, metal plating on a wooden utensil causes the utensil to become susceptible to *tumah* (however, the Sages maintain that the altars were unique because the **Torah** calls them wood). But Rambam maintains that the plating on a covered utensil makes it insusceptible to *tumah*, as mentioned above.

We need to clarify:

What is the underlying rationale for the dispute between Rambam and Rashi (regarding the dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the Sages)? Moreover, the *Gemara's* wording (“And if you wish, I can say that the Sages were questioning Rabbi Eliezer”) conforms better with Rashi’s viewpoint, as many of the commentators mention.³⁵

3.

CONNECTING THE BEGINNING AND END

There is a widespread custom³⁶ — when conducting a *hadran*³⁷ — to connect the beginning and end of the tractate.³⁸ The reason for this is not only for the sake of polemics and intellectual stimulation,³⁹ but rather because the content of the beginning and end of the tractate are truly connected. So, too, in our case regarding the beginning and end of tractate *Chagigah* {there is a thematic connection between them}, as will be explained.

³⁵ See *Rosh* on *Keilim*, ch. 11, *mishnah* 4; see Rabbi Yosef Kurkus, and *Mishneh LaMelech* on *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Keilim*,” ch. 4, par. 4.

³⁶ The *Achronim* note {a source for this in} *Berachos* 10a (beg.); *Tosafos*, loc. cit.; see *Sefer Viyhei Berachah*.

³⁷ {*Hadran*, lit., “we will return,” is the opening word of the text recited upon completing a tractate. Thus, “a *hadran*” often involves completing the tractate of Talmud publicly and then offering an elucidation on the concluding passage of the tractate.}

³⁸ Similar to the statement, “The beginning of the reading of the Torah always immediately follows its conclusion.” (From the prayer recited upon calling the *Chasan Bereishis* to read from the Torah.)

³⁹ *Maharal* and *Shelah*, et al., strongly warned against this, as quoted in *Kuntres Eitz HaChaim*, ch. 31.

4.

THEY FOLLOW THEIR LINE OF REASONING

Perhaps we can offer the following explanation for Rambam: Rambam assumes that the particular dispute here between the Sages and Rabbi Eliezer — since Rabbi Eliezer was a “*Shammuti*,” a student of Beis Shammai⁴⁰ — conform with⁴¹ their opinions regarding a general concept that serves as the basis to many disputes between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel.⁴² Meaning, in many disputes between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel, we find a common denominator underpinning their opinions, which holds true in many different topics and laws throughout the Talmud. Thus, we can presume that the basis of their disputes (in all these instances) is unrelated to the specifics of each dispute as it stands alone. Rather, they are all based on one principle, as the *Gemara* concludes in many places that the opinions expressed are consistent with the viewpoints of their authors.⁴³

We will now present illustrations⁴⁴ — with, at minimum, one dispute within each “*Seder*.”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *Shabbos* 130b, Rashi, s.v. “*Shammuti*,” *Tosafos* s.v., “*Rabbi Eliezer Shammuti*”; *Niddah* 7b, *Tosafos* s.v., “*Shammuti*.”

⁴¹ See *Beisza* 34b, *Tosafos*, s.v., “*VeOmer*,” who questions straightforwardly a dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the Sages whereby, “they have taken the opposite opinions of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel.”

⁴² See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 6 (p. 70, ff.); vol. 7 (p. 114, ff.); *Sefer Hasichos* 5748, vol. 2 (p. 647, ff.) regarding another basic and fundamental dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel. See *Mefaneiach Tzefunos*, ch. 1, sec. 3; and others.

⁴³ *Shabbos* 34b {et al}.

⁴⁴ {Of different disputes between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel which share a common denominator.}

⁴⁵ {*Seder*, lit., “order.” The six “Orders” of the *Mishnah*: *Zeraim*, *Moed*, *Nashim*, *Nezikin*, *Kodshim*, *Taharos*.}

5.

SEDER ZERAIM — THE BLESSING MADE OVER A FIRE

Seder Zeraim: In tractate *Berachos*,⁴⁶ regarding the wording of the blessing over a fire recited after *Shabbos* concludes, we find a dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel: “Beis Shammai says: ‘Who created the light of fire.’ Beis Hillel says: ‘Who creates the lights of fire.’” The *Gemara* then proceeds to explain this dispute:⁴⁷ “Beis Shammai maintains that there is a single light in fire,” i.e., there is only **one** (color) of light in fire, and therefore we say “light” in the singular. “And Beis Hillel maintains that there are many lights in a fire. This was also taught in a *Beraisa*: Beis Hillel said to Beis Shammai: There are many lights in a fire.” (Fire contains many colors: red, white, and green.)⁴⁸ Therefore, we say “lights” in the plural.

Obviously, Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel are not disagreeing about a physical fact. The physical fact is that a fire contains many different colors. So how could Beis Shammai say, “there is a single light in a fire”?

The explanation:

Beis Shammai maintains that according to **Torah**, matters are ascertained primarily on the basis of their basic property,⁴⁹ as perceived by our first impression (first glance). (This is **analogous** to the principle that “a judge may adjudicate based only what he can see.”)⁵⁰ Beis Hillel maintains that, primarily, every matter needs to be judged as it is broken up into its details and components, even though the details are not readily visible and require investigation, etc. This approach, in particular, is the determining factor in Torah laws.

⁴⁶ *Berachos* 51b.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 52b

⁴⁸ Rashi, loc. cit.

⁴⁹ {In the Hebrew original, “*tochanam haklali*”; lit., “their overall substance (or content).”}

⁵⁰ *Sanhedrin* 6b. {The intent is that a judge is required to rule based on his understanding of the situation (after thorough investigation and consideration) — even though the possibility always exists that some of the factors are unbeknown to him.}

On this basis, we can understand the rationale behind the dispute. The law regarding the blessing over {the fire of} a burning candle is as follows: “One does not recite a blessing over the burning candle until he derives benefit from its light.”⁵¹ Meaning, the obligation to recite a blessing only begins when a person is able to benefit from the light, or when he actually *does* benefit from it.⁵² The benefit begins when he sees its flame **as a whole**. At that point, he sees a plain flame that has **one** color (“one light”). Therefore, Beis Shammai maintains that the blessing also needs to be recited over the general creation of fire, “light of fire.”

In contrast, Beis Hillel maintains that since upon further scrutiny, a person will see many “lights” in the flame, and in actual fact, he benefits from **all** the colors of the flame — therefore, the wording of the blessing needs to be, “Who creates the **lights** of fire.”

6.

SEDER NASHIM — PRAISING A BRIDE

Seder Nashim, in tractate *Kesuvos*:⁵³

How do we dance before the bride {i.e., what do we say in her presence}? Beis Shammai says: “{We praise} the bride as she is” (according to her beauty and eminence — Rashi). Beis Hillel says: {In all cases, we say that she is} “a beautiful and graceful bride.” Beis Shammai said to Beis Hillel: “If she was lame or blind, do we say that she is a beautiful and graceful bride? But the Torah says, ‘Distance yourself from falsehood!’”⁵⁴ Beis Hillel said to Beis Shammai: “According to you, if a person made a bad purchase in the marketplace, should one praise or denigrate it in the purchaser’s eyes? {Of course} you would say that one should praise it.”

⁵¹ *Mishnah, Berachos* 51b.

⁵² See *Berachos* 53b.

⁵³ *Kesuvos* 16b, ff.

⁵⁴ *Shemos* 23:7.

Obviously, Beis Hillel also agrees that Torah commands us to “distance yourself from falsehood,” and Beis Shammai also agrees that when a person already purchased something, others should praise it in his presence.

But here, too, the explanation is that they are consistent with their viewpoints: Beis Shammai maintains that we must always assess an item as it appears immediately, at first glance.” Since this bride does not appear to have the virtues of being “a beautiful and graceful bride,” it makes no sense to praise her with these virtues. Rather, we praise her based on our first impression: “the bride as she is.”

In contrast, Beis Hillel maintains, consistent with their perspective, that we must analyze the details and scrutinize the matter. Since the groom has made “an acquisition,” i.e., he has chosen this bride, obviously, in his eyes, she is beautiful and graceful.⁵⁵ [On this basis, we can appreciate the *Gemara’s* subsequent remark: “From here the Sages said: A person’s mind should always be “commingled” {i.e., harmonious} with those of other people {*briyos*}. ”⁵⁶ From here we see that since “people’s minds are unlike,”⁵⁷ an individual must be “assessed” in accordance with **his** mind, similar to the adage, “Do not judge your fellow until you have reached **his place**”⁵⁸ (keeping in mind all the varying interpretations of the term “place”). In this way, a person develops an empathetic disposition even toward “*briyos*.”]⁵⁹

Thus, we can also understand why, according to Beis Hillel, this is not a lie. After deliberating on this situation in careful detail, we conclude that from the perspective of **this** groom, the bride is, in fact, beautiful and graceful. In contrast, Beis Shammai maintains that a determination is based on a thing’s general category and appearance. Therefore, we may not say, “a beautiful and graceful bride” if she is lame or blind. Saying so would violate the injunction to “keep away from a false matter.”

⁵⁵ See *Sotah* 47a.

⁵⁶ {*Kesuvos* 17a.}

⁵⁷ *Berachos* 58a; *Sanhedrin* 38a; *Derech Eretz* ch. 9.

⁵⁸ *Pirkei Avos*, ch. 2, *mishnah* 4 (“Hillel said”); see *Tanya*, ch. 30.

⁵⁹ {Lit., “creatures,” *briyos* connotes people of low spiritual stature. See *Tanya* ch. 32}

SEDER NEZIKIN — HILLEL AND SHAMMAI THEMSELVES

We can further prove and illustrate this principled disagreement that finds expression in these disputes between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel by analyzing a dispute between Shammai and Hillel themselves. We will look at two cases in which the consistency of their viewpoints is sharply underscored: In the first, we will see how remaining consistent with his opinion caused Shammai to rule leniently, and Hillel to rule stringently (the **opposite** of their usual positions). In the second case, this consistency is emphasized through narratives regarding the masters themselves⁶⁰ — how Shammai and Hillel actually acted.

In *Seder Nezikin*, tractate *Eduyos*, we learn:⁶¹

Shammai says: “For all women, it suffices {if we consider them *tamei* from} their time {of discovering a discharge of blood}.” Hillel says: “{A woman who finds blood internally is considered to be *tamei*} from {the last} examination until {the present} examination, even for many days.”

Shammai maintains that a woman who discovers a discharge of blood will defile any *tahor* objects she touches from the moment she notices the blood and onward, but what she touches beforehand is not rendered *tamei*. Hillel maintains that she defiles *tahor* items that she had touched from **after** her last examination that emerged *tahor*.

The *Gemara* explains (according to the first suggested rationale):⁶²

Shammai maintains: Keep the woman in her presumptive status, and {until she actually discovers blood} the woman retains the presumptive status of being *tahor*. And {why does} Hillel {disagree}? He maintains that we “keep an item in its presumptive status” only where the item itself does not weaken the presumptive status. But {in the *mishna*’s case of} the woman {who discovers a discharge of blood},

⁶⁰ {In the Hebrew original, “*maaseh Rav*.” A particular action performed by a Sage is strong confirmation of the Sage’s opinion regarding this matter. See *Shabbos* 21a; et al.}

⁶¹ *Eduyos*, ch. 1, *mishnah* 1.

⁶² *Niddah* 2a ff.

since {according to nature} she sees blood flow from her body {at regular intervals}, we do not say {in this case}, “keep her in her presumptive status.”

Here we see the same lines of reasoning in their opinions: Shammai maintains that we look at an item as it immediately appears (or does not appear) at first glance. Therefore, it suffices to consider a woman *tamei* from the time that she discovered discharge of blood, and not earlier, before she noticed it. (And consequently {with regard to whatever she touched before she actually saw the blood} we keep her in her presumptive status {at that time}). Hillel, however, maintains that we do not suffice with what we see on the whole; rather we must analyze the details of the matter, i.e., her seeing blood. Meaning, a woman seeing blood now (in this time) is a result of something else — a weakening {in her presumptive status} caused by her body. Meaning, discovering blood is a natural occurrence for a woman. For this reason, we cannot keep her in her {earlier} presumptive status of *taharah*,⁶³ and the *tahor* items {that she had touched} become *tamei* (at least, doubtfully so).

8.

SEDER MOED — IN RESPECT TO PROSPECTIVE CONVERTS

In *Seder Moed*, tractate *Shabbos*,⁶⁴ we also find this difference between the positions of Shammai and Hillel in three instances of gentiles who wished to convert:

In one case, the gentile said, “Convert me on condition that you will teach me (only) the Written Torah.” In the second case, the gentile said, “Convert me on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot.” And in the third, the gentile said, “Convert me on condition that you install me as the *Kohen Gadol*.” In all three instances, Shammai pushed them away and Hillel accepted and converted them.

⁶³ {Ritual purity.}

⁶⁴ *Shabbos* 31a.

However you look at this episode, it is puzzling: As a rule, we refrain from accepting converts easily. Moreover, these converts had explicitly declared that they desired to convert “on condition.” Making such conditions are inappropriate. [In fact, if a person wishes to convert in order to obtain a position of leadership, or something to that effect, or if he refuses to abide by the entire Torah, he is not accepted as a convert.]⁶⁵ How could Hillel have accepted them? And {conversely;} if their acceptance as converts was appropriate — and we see that, in fact, they did convert and become honest converts — why had Shammai rejected them?

The explanation is as mentioned above: In accord with his general line of reasoning, Shammai’s overall perception of the situation determined his response, i.e., the general implication of what the converts said and the means by which they wanted to convert. Since their terms were unacceptable, Shammai rebuffed them. Hillel, however, consistent with his line of reasoning, judged each of the converts based on the details of, and underlying reasoning behind, their statements. He had discerned that they were all sincere in their desire to convert. (Why they had said what they did, as mentioned above, was for purely a **tangential** reason — they did not understand what being a *Kohen Gadol* entailed, and so forth.)

9.

SEDER KODSHIM — FOWL AND CHEESE AT THE SAME TIME

In *Seder Kodshim*, tractate *Chullin*:⁶⁶

Fowl may be placed on a table together with cheese but may not be eaten {together}; these are the words of Beis Shammai. Beis Hillel says: It may not be placed {on the table} nor may it be eaten {together with it}.

⁶⁵ See *Yevamos* 24b, 47a, 109b; *Bechoros* 30b; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hichos Issurei Biah*,” ch. 13, par. 14.

⁶⁶ *Chullin* 104b (*mishnah*).

Beis Shammai maintains that we look at the matter (placing fowl on a table) as it is on its own. Therefore, there is no suspicion of a prohibition by just **placing** fowl on a table together with cheese.

Beis Hillel, however, consistent with their line of reasoning, maintains that we need to analyze this matter in {all} its details. And in this case, we need to consider the likelihood of cause and effect. Placing fowl on a table could act as a trigger to cause something {a prohibition}; since (“the inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth”),⁶⁷ if we allow people to place both items on the table, we are concerned that in the end, people might come to eat them together.⁶⁸

10.

SEDER TAHAROS — BOOK COVERS

One of their disputes in *Seder Taharos* (and from which we glean an insight into our case {i.e, in the end of tractate *Chagigah*}).

In tractate *Keilim*,⁶⁹ we find a dispute:

Covers of scrolls, whether decorated or not, are susceptible to *tumah* according to the view of Beis Shammai. Beis Hillel says: Those that are decorated are *tahor*, and those that are not decorated are susceptible to *tumah*.

The *Rogatchover Gaon*⁷⁰ explains their dispute based on *Raavad’s*⁷¹ interpretation of the difference between a “case” and a “covering.” A “case” serves to protect whatever is inside it. Therefore, a case is susceptible to *tumah*, because it falls into the category of “objects that a person uses.”⁷² But a

⁶⁷ *Bereishis* 8:21.

⁶⁸ The explanation in the main text follows the interpretation of *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Maachalos Asuros*,” ch. 9, par. 20 (See *Lechem Mishneh*, loc. cit.); *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, beg. of sec. 88; See {however} Rashi on *Chullin*, 104b, s.v., “*aval hacha*”; *Yad Avraham* on *Shulchan Aruch*, loc. cit.; et al.

⁶⁹ *Keilim*, ch. 28, *mishnah* 4.

⁷⁰ {Rabbi Yosef Rosen (1858-1936) of Rogatchev (Belarus).} *Responsa of Tzafnas Paneach* (ed., New York) sec. 136 (also quoted in *Tzafnas Paneach al HaTorah*, *parshas Shemini*, p. 106).

⁷¹ *Raavad* on *Toras Kohanim*, *Vayikra* 11:32.

⁷² {See *Keilim* ch. 16, *mishnah* 7.}

“covering” does not serve to protect the covered item, just to beautify it. Therefore, it is insusceptible to *tumah*.⁷³

This, then, serves as the rationale behind the dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel. “Decorated covers of scrolls,” which wrap around the scrolls and serve {only} to beautify the scrolls, have the *halachic* status of a covering. Therefore, Beis Hillel maintains that they remain *tahor*, whereas “undecorated covers of scrolls,” which do not serve to beautify the scrolls, are susceptible to *tumah*. In contrast, Beis Shammai maintains that also the coverings of objects are susceptible to *tumah*.

We will clarify the {Rogetchover’s} explanation of this dispute based on the above: Beis Shammai maintains that we look at an item based on its general categorization (a cover), without delving into and analyzing its particulars. At first glance, both types of covers serve as accessories to cover and protect a utensil. Therefore, they are susceptible to *tumah*. In contrast, according to Beis Hillel, we need to consider the details of the items, in our case, the details that illustrate the “function” and intended use of each type of utensil separately. “Decorated covers of scrolls” serve to beautify the covered utensil; therefore, they have the status of a covering. A covering is subordinate to the utensil it covers and is not categorized as a utensil; hence, they are insusceptible to *tumah*. However, “undecorated covers of scrolls” do not serve to beautify the utensil that they cover; rather, they serve as cases that protect and shield utensils. Thus, they are susceptible to *tumah*.

We find⁷⁴ that Rabbi Eliezer concurs with Beis Shammai, and the Sages, with Beis Hillel.

⁷³ {The *halachah* is that anything intended to serve a person (משמשי אדם) or to serve (or protect) his objects (משמשי) is susceptible to impurity. On the other hand, something intended for purely aesthetic purposes, is not susceptible to impurity.}

⁷⁴ See the sources brought down in *Tzafnas Paneach*, *ibid*.

11.

TYING IT BACK TO THE DEBATE IN *CHAGIGAH*

Based on all the above, we will understand the rationale behind the dispute — consistent with their respective viewpoints — in the *mishnah* at the end of tractate *Chagigah*, mentioned above.

Rambam maintains that Rabbi Eliezer, a disciple of Beis Shammai, and the Sages adopt the respective viewpoints of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel in the aforementioned disputes.

Rabbi Eliezer maintains that a covering is susceptible to *tumah* — since the Altar (and each one of its **parts**, which is a piece of the “Copper Altar”) is included in the general category, as the name of the altar indicates, of a *copper* or *golden* altar {utensils also made from those metals}. Hence, they are susceptible to *tumah*. The fact that a detailed observation shows that the copper and gold served merely as a cover that was secondary to the altar does not matter in establishing its status. Thus, the altars would be *tamei* if not for **Torah** saying that they are equivalent to earth, which is insusceptible to *tumah*.

The Sages maintain that we do not need to employ this inference from earth. Although in general the altars — copper and gold — are metal utensils, and they are referred to as such, if we analyze the altars in detail, the metal serves as plating. Plating, no matter what it is made out of — gold or copper, etc. — is subordinate and therefore insignificant with respect to the utensil. (Thus, the utensil itself cannot become susceptible to *tumah* (as a result of the plating).)

The details outweigh the generalities, as discussed.

Therefore, we do not need to rely on a special inference from the verse to prove that the altars cannot become *tamei*. Rather, the reasoning {of the Sages}, “because they are plated” suffices.

12.

THE CONNECTION TO THE BEGINNING OF THE TRACTATE

On this basis, we can also clarify the connection between the beginning and the end of tractate *Chagigah*. At the beginning of the tractate, we also find a dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel. The crux of the explanation behind the dispute **there** is the same as the explanation behind the dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the Sages at the end of the tractate.

In the first *mishnah*⁷⁵ of tractate *Chagigah*, we learn:

Beis Shammai say: The *olas re'iyah*⁷⁶ must be worth at least two silver {*ma'ah*} coins, and the *chagigah*⁷⁷ must be worth at least one silver *ma'ah* coin. And Beis Hillel says: The *olas re'iyah* must be worth at least one silver *ma'ah* and the *chagigah* at least two silver {*ma'ah*} coins.

Beis Shammai maintains that the *olas re'iyah* that every person needed to bring when they ascended to the Temple for the Festival needed to be worth two silver coins, and the *shalmei chagigah* could be worth less — “one silver *ma'ah* coin.” Beis Hillel maintains the opposite position: the *shalmei chagigah* needed to be worth more than the *olas re'iyah*.

The *Gemara*⁷⁸ explains that Beis Shammai focuses on the fact that “the *olas re'iyah* goes up entirely to Hashem, which is not so with regard to the *chagigah*.” Meaning, since the whole *olas re'iyah* ascends to Hashem, it needs to be worth more than the *shalmei chagigah* which is eaten by people. In contrast, Beis Hillel maintains that, “on the contrary! The *chagigah* is superior, as it has two consumptions.”⁷⁹

⁷⁵ According to the division of the Mishnah as printed in the *Gemara*.

⁷⁶ {Lit. A burnt-offering of appearance. Every festival, when the Jewish people came on a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem, they had to each bring two sacrifices. The *olas re'iyah*, an animal offered and burned completely on the Altar, and a *chagigah* (also known as the *shalmei chagigah*) an animal eaten partially by the owners, partially by the *kohanim*, and partially offered on the Altar.}

⁷⁷ {See previous footnote.}

⁷⁸ *Chagigah* 6a.

⁷⁹ {I.e., part is burned on the altar, and part is consumed by people.}

The meaning behind this is as follows: When looking at sacrifices in a general sense, presumably we would conclude that a sacrifice offered entirely to Hashem should be worth more than a sacrifice that is only partially offered to Hashem (as Beis Shammai maintains). However, once we analyze the details of this matter, we reach the opposite conclusion. {In the case of *shalmei chagigah*, some parts are burned on the altar, and the rest is eaten by the *kohanim* and by the people who offered the sacrifice.} The *kohanim* eating part of the sacrifice (and the owners also eating part) is also a *mitzvah*. Therefore, **their** eating is also a sanctified act. Thus, “on the contrary! The *chagigah* is superior” (Beis Hillel’s opinion), for it has “two consumptions” intended for **Hashem** {i.e., the parts consumed by the altar, and the parts consumed by the *kohanim* (and owners)}. Therefore, its price must be more than the *olas re’iyah*.

13.

GEHENOM HAS NO POWER OVER THE SINNERS OF ISRAEL

Based on the aforementioned explanation regarding the Sages’ rationale (according to Rambam’s understanding) we can also explain the connection between the *Gemara*’s two statements at the end of the tractate: “The fire of *Gehenom*⁸⁰ has no power” over “Torah scholars,”⁸¹ and over “the sinners of Israel.”⁸² Additionally, we can explain how these statements are a continuation of and connected to the subject of the Altar’s plating:

First, the *Mishnah* and *Gemara* discuss the altars in the Temple, explaining how the sacrifices facilitated Hashem’s dwelling in the Temple. Then,

⁸⁰ {Purgatory.}

⁸¹ {The *Gemara* there writes: This can be derived by an *a fortiori* inference from the salamander [*salamandra*], a creature created out of fire and immune to its effects, and whose blood is fireproof: If a salamander, which is merely a product of fire, and nevertheless when one anoints his body with its blood, fire has no power over him, all the more so should fire not have any power over Torah scholars, whose entire bodies are fire, as it is written: “Surely My words are as fire, says the L-rd” (*Yirmiyahu* 23:29), and the words of Torah become part of the Torah scholars’ very bodies.}

⁸² {The *Gemara* there writes: This can be derived ... from the Golden Altar: If the Golden Altar, which has plating that is no more than the thickness of a gold *dinar*, and which has incense burning on it for many years and yet fire has no power over it, as the gold miraculously remained undamaged, all the more so should immunity from fire be granted to the sinners of Israel, who are filled with good deeds as a pomegranate is full of seeds.}

the *Gemara* explains the Sages' opinion (according to Rambam) that the finer details of a matter must be considered, and we see that {metal} plating is subordinate to the actual utensil. Following this, the *Gemara* presents the teachings regarding {the fire of *Gehenom* having no power over the Jewish people — highlighting the true, and elevated spiritual status, of all Jews as reflected in} the verse, “I will dwell in them,” in every single Jew (as mentioned above, Section 1). Every Jew can create a **personal Temple** in himself through his *avodah*. Here, too, the aforementioned rationale applies:

When we analyze the finer details in accordance with Beis Hillel's ruling, it becomes clear that even a person's undesirable aspects— even those which are evident in Jews who have transgressed — do not define their true essence. These aspects are merely “plating” — a superimposed cover — which is subordinate and insignificant compared with their essence. The essence and core of a Jew is an altar — holy and good. Therefore, the fire of *Gehenom* cannot possibly prevail over them.

14.

HASHEM AND THE JEWISH NATION, GROOM AND BRIDE

This explanation also dovetails with Beis Hillel's overarching opinion regarding how to view Jewish people. This is emphasized in the previously-mentioned dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel, in which Beis Shammai says, “The bride as she is,” and Beis Hillel says, “A beautiful and graceful bride.” (This explanation is also alluded at in the names “Shammai” and “Hillel.”):

As known,⁸³ Hashem and the Jewish nation are called metaphorically “bride and groom.” Beis Shammai, whose name “Shammai” is cognate to the word *hasham* in the phrase, “*hasham orchosav* — {lit.,} he *appraises* his ways⁸⁴ — maintains that we must be very particular and properly evaluate a Jewish

⁸³ In many statements of our Sages, and in fact the entire book of *Shir Hashirim* is based on this premise.

⁸⁴ {Meaning, one who scrutinizes his behavior.} *Moed Katan* 5a; *Sotah* 5b.

person's mode of conduct based on his actual behavior (“the bride as she is”), and we relate **to them** correspondingly.

In contrast, Beis Hillel — whose name Hillel is cognate to the word *behilo*, in the phrase, “*behilo neiro*,” {“his lamp would *shine*”}⁸⁵ — illuminates and uncovers the inner core of every entity, in a manner that determines how we relate to it in actuality in this physical world. Beis Hillel thus maintains that in essence, every Jew is good, “a beautiful and graceful bride.” The proof for, and explanation of, this comes from the analogy of someone “who made a... purchase in the marketplace... one should praise it in his eyes...” Since Hashem made a “purchase” — He chose the Jewish nation — obviously, in essence, what he “purchased” is good and holy. Even if superficially, this does not appear to be the case, this does not change who they really are, and on a deeper and essential level, they are good. Since we know with certainty that the groom (Hashem) chose and acquired this “purchase” for Himself, the Jewish people must be a “beautiful and graceful bride”!

However, to achieve this end, one condition must be met (as the *Gemara* in *Kesuvos* continues).⁸⁶ A person is told to be “commingled’ {i.e., in tune} with people, the “*briyos*.” When a person “mingles” with *briyos*, meaning, when he recognizes and is cognizant of the conditions and climate prevalent in this physical world, and of all a person's tribulations, etc., then he will certainly discover the truth. The bride is “beautiful and graceful.”

⁸⁵ *Iyov* 29:3.

⁸⁶ {*Kesuvos*, *ibid.*}

THE LESSON AND MOSHIACH

This is the lesson for every person: When we notice something undesirable in someone, we might think that the other person is, figuratively, lame or blind. Thus, how can we have any dealings with this person!? Beis Hillel addresses this: “Why are you only looking with **fleshly** eyes? “Do not look at his appearance!”⁸⁷ Since Hashem chose this person and took him as his “purchase,” certainly, he is a “beautiful and graceful bride.” Furthermore, the fact that we have seen something unseemly in the other fellow means that we need to appreciate the reason: We saw this flaw in order that “his lamp would shine” — to lend him a hand in uncovering his essence.

During these times of exile, we perform our *avodah* specifically in accordance with the opinion of Beis Hillel — for the *halachah* accords with Beis Hillel,⁸⁸ and no thought at all is given to conducting ourselves according to Beis Shammai.⁸⁹ We do not look at Jewish people as they appear through the lens of “physical eyes.” Rather, we look into the essence — every Jew is a “beautiful and graceful bride.” Consequently, we work with every person in an effort to draw out this essence in a revealed sense.

Through such *avodah*, we will merit the marriage⁹⁰ between the Jews and Hashem. Then, it will become possible for the *halachah* to be in accordance with Beis Shammai,⁹¹ and, in fact, this will be the case. {As this will be a time when we will see fulfillment of the promise} “I will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth.”⁹² Then we will see in a revealed sense and with our fleshly eyes that every Jew (“the bride as she is”) is “beautiful and graceful.”

— Based on talks delivered on the 20th of Av, 5731 (1971)

⁸⁷ {*Shmuel Aleph* 16:7.}

⁸⁸ *Eruvin* 13b.

⁸⁹ *Berachos* 36b.

⁹⁰ *Shemos Rabbah*, end of ch. 15.

⁹¹ See *Midrash Shmuel* on *Pirkei Avos*, ch. 5, *mishnah* 19; *Mikdash Melech* on *Zohar*, vol. 1, 17b.

⁹² *Zechariah* 13:2.