

להתוודע ולהגלות מחמדי התורה בכל דף בשי"ס LEHISVADA



Kiddushin daf 76

THE FOUR HUNDRED CHILDREN OF DOVID HAMELECH

בקידושין דף ע"ו: רבי חנינא בן אנטיגנוס וכו': אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל בחיילות של בית דוד. אמר רב יוסף מאי קרא, והתיחשם בצבא במלחמה. וטעמא מאי, אמר רב יהודה אמר רב כדי שתהא זכותן וזכות אבותם מסייעתן. והאיכא צלק העמוני, מאי לאו דאתי מעמון וכו'. ועוד אמר רב יהודה אמר רב, ארבע מאות ילדים היו לו לדוד, וכולם בני יפת תואר היו, וכולם מסתפרים קומי, ומגדלים בלורית היו, וכולם יושבים בקרוניות של זהב, והיו מהלכים בראשי גייסות, והן הן בעלי אגרופים של בית דוד. דאזלי לבעותי עלמא.

-א-

How could the children of Dovid Hamelech trim their fringe and grow locks

Whether a Yefas To'ar is permitted before she converts / Whether these four hundred children had the status of Jews / Whether there was a situation of pikuach nefesh / Assuming that they had the status of Jews, they also had pure lineage to allow them to go to war on behalf of the nation / Whether they were Dovid Hamelech's own children

תוספות הרא"ש, רש"י, ר"ת, כסף משנה, מנחת חינוך, יד רמ"ה, תוספות רי"ד

The Gemara tells us of the four hundred children of Dovid Hamelech who went to war for him. The Gemara says that these children were born to Dovid Hamelech from women who were *yefos to'ar* [sing. *yefas to'ar*], beautiful women who fall captive during war, where there is special permission to convert them against their wishes.

These children all trimmed their fringes and grew their hair in locks in a way common by the *goyim*, non-Jews. We will discuss here some of the implications of their being children of *yefas to'ar* and the potential *issurim* regarding their hairstyle.

The *Tosfos haRosh* questions how the children of

Dovid Hamelech could style their hair in the way of the *goyim*, since we know that it is forbidden to copy their customs and statutes. He gives two answers.

Firstly, that *Tosfos*¹ in the name of *Rabbeinu Tam* write that the permission for one to take a *yefas to'ar*, includes a special *heter*, permission, to start relations right away during the war, even before converting her, in order to satiate his *yezer hara's* desires.

It is only the continuation of the marriage, the *bi'ah sheniyah*, which requires conversion.

According to this opinion we could assume that all of these children were born from their relations before the conversion, and thus they have the status of non-Jews, seeing that their mother was not yet Jewish. Therefore, there is no question as to their conduct like *goyim*, since they themselves were *goyim*.

However, *Rashi's*² opinion there is that no relations are permitted until the conversion takes place. In which case we are forced to assume that these

children were in fact Jewish, and therefore the question returns to its place.

To this the *Tosfos haRosh* answers that their permission was specifically so that they would seem intimidating and succeed in scaring the enemy during war. The same explanation is said by *Rashi* himself in *Sanhedrin*³.

The *Rambam*⁴ rules that one who engages in communal affairs with the royalty, and he frequents their meetings, may cut his hair as they do in order not to stand out and to be effective in his work.

The *Kesef Mishneh* cites the source of this ruling from the *Gemara* in *Baba Kamma*⁵ which tells us about *Avtolus bar Reuven* who grew locks in order to fit in with the royalty.

The *Kesef Mishneh* questions this ruling though, since we know that following the ways of the *goyim* is an *issur min haTorah*, and even carries *malkos*, how can it be allowed for this cause.

He answers that the cause of saving *Klal Yisrael* carries enough weight to shunt aside other *issurim* of the *Torah* [similar to *pikuach nefesh*]. He proves this further from our *Gemara* that the four hundred children of *Dovid Hamelech* would style their hair in such a way as to intimidate the enemy and thus effect a salvation for *Klal Yisrael*. The *Kesef Mishneh* echoes this explanation in *Beis Yosef*⁶.

However, the *Minchas Chinuch*⁷ brings the *Kesef Mishneh*'s explanation of our *Gemara* and he argues that the *Rambam*'s⁸ opinion in the laws of *yefas to'ar* is like that of *Rabbeinu Tam* and therefore it is not necessary to explain the *Gemara* any differently than the *Rabbeinu Tam*, that all of them were born from the time before their mothers converted, and therefore their status was that of non-Jews. [This coincides with the *Tosfos haRosh* we brought earlier.] Thus, there is no substantiation to the *Kesef Mishneh*'s explanation from this *Gemara*.

The *Minchas Chinuch* argues further that from

the *Gemara* itself there is evidence to his reasoning. The *Gemara* had stated that those who fight in the king's army must be of pure lineage in order that the merit of their forefathers should stand by them in battle.

The *Gemara* questions this from the four hundred children of *Dovid Hamelech* who were born from *yefos to'ar* and therefore could not have fought for him, so how could they be generals in his army. To which the *Gemara* answered that they did not actually fight on behalf of *Dovid Hamelech* rather, their entire presence was to intimidate the enemy. This is the reasoning of the *Gemara*.

Now, if these four hundred children were to have been born after their mothers converted, since their mothers were Jewish converts and their father was already an original Jew, their lineage is considered pure for all purposes. If so, what is the *Gemara*'s difficulty with how they could serve in the army.

The *Minchas Chinuch* goes so far as to question *Rashi*'s opinion that there is no permit for relations before the conversion of the *yefas to'ar*, as we brought earlier. If so, these children were of pure lineage, what is wrong with them serving in the army.

He answers that we must say that all of them were born illegitimately before the conversion of their mothers.

This is of course hard to believe, since we know that *Dovid Hamelech* was a big *tzaddik*, how did he come to have four hundred illegitimate children.

The answer to this lies in *Rashi*'s own words⁹ that these were not *Dovid Hamelech*'s own children, rather they were children of others who served under him and they became known as his 'children'.

This is easier to understand according to the *Minchas Chinuch*, since we are forced to say that they were all illegitimate, we can say that this is what forced *Rashi* to explain the *Gemara* so.

The explanation of the *Tosfos haRosh* and

Minchas Chinuch is further corroborated by the *Yad Remah*¹⁰ who adds that if they were born from the time after these women converted, they would not be called the 'children of *yefos to'ar*', as after their conversion they are no longer known as *yefas to'ar*, rather as full converts. [1]

*Tosfos Rid*¹¹ also proves that they were born from the initial relations, as he brings in the name of *Rabbeinu Yitzchak ben R' Asher Halevi ztz"l*, that a king is forbidden from having more than eighteen wives,

in which case it would have been close to impossible to imagine that *Dovid Hamelech* had these four hundred children from that amount of *yefos to'ar*.

The *Mahar"i Beirav* explains that this premise is also what forced *Rashi* to write that they were not his own children, since *Rashi* is of the opinion that the initial relations are forbidden, it cannot be that he converted and married so many women as he was limited to eighteen.

NOTES

How was it possible for Dovid Hamelech to have four hundred children from yefos to'ar

יד רמ"ה, ערוך לנר, מרגליות הים

[1] As we mentioned, the *Yad Remah* proves that all of these children were born to *Dovid Hamelech* from before the conversion of their mothers. The *Gemara* earlier in *Kiddushin*¹³ says that each *yefas to'ar* is permitted only one time on the battlefield, and also only one *yefas to'ar* is permitted per troop. Therefore, we must conclude that they were born from four hundred captives from four hundred individual troops. Or potentially there were only two hundred, and each one bore twins.

The *Margolios Hayam* in *Sanhedrin* asks on this, that the *Rambam*¹⁴ does not distinguish between one or more troops, only that one *yefas to'ar* is permitted for each campaign, in which case we must assume that *Dovid Hamelech* went on four hundred campaigns. This is refuted by the *Midrash*¹⁵ that *Dovid Hamelech* only waged eighteen wars.

The *Aruch Laner* also discusses the above, how is it possible for *Dovid Hamelech* to have four hundred children. He brings *Rashi's* explanation that they were not his children rather of his soldiers, and he also brings the *Tosfos Rid* that they were not considered his wives as he may not have more than eighteen.

However, the question still stands, how could there be born four hundred children from eighteen battles, where each one only permits one *yefas to'ar*.

The *Margolios Hayam* suggests a tremendous *chiddush*, that there was a mistake in the transcription of the *Gemara*. He proposes the following theory.

The *passuk* in *Divrei Hayamim* lists out all of the children of *Dovid Hamelech* by their name and their mothers' name. Six of them were born in *Chevron* and four in *Yerushalayim*. The *Passuk* concludes with a list of nine names 'And *Yivchar* and *Elifelet* and *Nefeg* and *Yafia* and *Elishama* and *Elifat*, *tish'a* [nine of them].' These nine are listed separately, and there is no mention of the mothers.

It seems, suggests the *Margolios Hayam*, that these nine were the one born from the *yefos to'ar* before they converted and therefore their mothers get no mention.

However, how does this fit with the *Gemara* which says there were four hundred. Here he proposes his *chiddush*. Originally the *Gemara* were hand written and shorthand was used for the word '*tish'a*' with just the first letter written 'ת'. The letter *tav*, whilst it is the first letter of *tish'a* meaning nine, also carries the numerical value of four hundred.

In a later transcript, the transcriber saw the letter *tav*, and assumed erroneously that it stood for four hundred, so he opened it up and wrote four hundred in full. Thus started the confusion that there were four hundred children. This mistake was later copied in all future transcriptions of the *Gemara*, and this is how this error was entrenched.

Truthfully though, there were only nine children of *yefos to'ar*. This is easily understood in the context of *Dovid Hamelech's* eighteen wars.

-ב-

The scope of the *issur* to follow the customs of *goyim*

The Torah gave over the limitations of this prohibition for the Rabbanan to decide / Whether the Rabbanan can permit something forbidden by the Torah / The prohibition only applies where one's intent is to emulate their ways as if he concurs with their beliefs

כסף משנה, קובץ שיעורים, ב"ה

The *Kessef Mishneh* has an alternative approach to the permission given for those working together with the royalty to trim in the way of the *goyim*. That the *Torah* did not specify the scope of this *issur*, rather it left it to the discretion of the *Rabbanan* to decide what is forbidden and what is permitted.

R' Elchonon Wasserman *ztz"l* *hy"d* questions this approach, as the *Rabbanan* still can't distinguish between two people or scenarios. They can only decide which acts are included in the prohibition. So, if they decided that growing one's hair to locks

is the ways of the *goyim*, there can be no distinction for those engaging with the royalty.

The *Bach*¹² offers another answer. That the prohibition only applies to those who are trying to emulate the *goyim* in a way that shows that he concurs with their beliefs. If his whole intent is not to be shown up in front of them as being different, there is no prohibition.

Perhaps we can suggest that the *Kessef Mishneh* also intended to answer on these lines of the *Bach*, that the *Torah* handed to the *Rabbanan* the power to decide which actions are included in the prohibition, and the *Rabbanan* said that only such actions with intent to emulate the *goyim* are forbidden. In this way we can answer the question of R' Elchonon *ztz"l*.

מראי מקומות

1. לעיל כב. ד"ה שלא 2. רש"י שם ד"ה שלא 3. מט. ד"ה ומגדלי 4. הלכות ע"ז פי"א ה"ג 5. דף פג. 6. בית יוסף יו"ד סי' קע"ח ס"ב 7. מצוה רס"ב אות ג' 8. פ"ח הל' מלכים ה"ב 9. רש"י ד"ה ילדים, בני 10. יד רמ"ה סנהדרין כא. 11. לעיל כא: 12. יו"ד סי' קע"ח 13. דף כב. 14. הל' מלכים פ"ח ה"ג 15. ויקרא רבה פרשה א' סי' ד'