



Beit Ha'pras

In chapters 17 and 18 of *Masechet Ohalot* we are introduced to the concept of a *Beit Ha'pras*. The *Beit Ha'pras* is a field which has a safek of *tumat met* (for which one usually becomes *tameh* for seven days).

The *Beit Ha'pras* is so called due to the fact that the *tumah* has spread throughout the field. The term *pores* is used in *Sefer Shemot* (40:19) where it indicates “*vayifros et HaOhel*” where *Hashem* spread the *Ohel Moed*. The *Tosafot* (*Niddah* 87a) mentions two other interpretations of the name. A first interpretation states that the origin of *Beit Ha'pras* comes from the word “*perusah*” which is something that is broken or sliced. This is due to the fact that the bones of a dead person are broken into fragments as they are moved around by either people’s feet or by farming machinery. The second interpretation is related to the word “*parsah*” which is usually related to a measure of distance. This interpretation is based on the fact that people prevent themselves from walking any distance within this field due to its doubtful status with regards to *tumah*.

There are three different types of *Beit Ha'pras* mentioned in our *Masechet*

1. A field in which a grave was ploughed
2. A field in which there is a grave, but its location is unknown
3. *Sadeh Buchin* (literally field of crying) – a field adjacent to the cemetery where the bereaved eulogized the deceased

The *Rambam* and majority of *mefarshim* generally accept that in general the term *Beit Ha'pras* refers to the first type. Supporting this is the fact that only the case of a field in which a grave was ploughed aligns with all three interpretations of the word ‘*Beit Ha'pras*’ mentioned above.

The *Rambam* also states in his *Peirush Ha'Mishnayot* that it is only the first two categories of *Beit Ha'pras* that are classified as ‘impure’ while the third category is ‘*tahor*’. The reason behind this is that in these cases, no

one can actually locate a specific grave in the field. Yet the restrictions relating to the presence of the dead cannot be ignored only due to the fact that we do not have the knowledge of where it is. In the first case, the grave does not exist as a unit any longer, however there may be bits and pieces of the corpse, previously buried in the now ploughed grave, which may exist in large enough quantities to contaminate. In the second case, the grave is there, only we don’t know exactly where.

In the third category however, there is no certainty that a dead person ever existed there at all. This field was only used as a spot to eulogize the dead, and according to the *Rambam* does not contaminate and is not deemed impure at all. Moreover, this is so to the extent that even sacrificial meat, such as the *Korban Pesach*, which must be eaten in a state of purity (and which itself also must be totally free of *tumah* contamination) can be prepared in an oven made of dried mud taken from such a field (see *Ohalot Perek* 18 and *Moed Katan* 5b).

The question arises as to whether a *Beit Ha'pras* exists in *Chutz La'aretz*. The *Tosefta* in *perek* 18 of *Ohalot* answers that this *din* does not apply outside the land of Israel. There are differing interpretations as to why this is so. There are those that say, that a *Beit Ha'pras* cannot exist in *Chutz La'aretz* because one of the reasons for the *Gezeirah* of a *Beit Ha'pras* is because we are worried about the contamination of *Terumah* and *Maaser*. Since these gifts do not apply outside the land of Israel, there is no need to be concerned for a *Beit Ha'pras*.

However, the *Kesef Mishneh* interprets the *Tosefta* in a different manner. He writes that when it states that there is no *Tumah* in *Chutz La'aretz* he means to say that there is no *remedy* for a *Beit Ha'pras* in *Chutz La'aretz*. That is – there is a concept of a *Beit Ha'pras* outside of Israel, however, once it has been deemed so, there is no way to purify it.

Yehuda Gottlieb

Revision Questions

אהלות י"א – י"ח: ט'

- How does a field become a *beit ha'pras*? (י"א: ז')
- How large is the resulting area of the *beit ha'pras*? (י"א: ז')
- How do the dimensions differ if the field is sloping? (Include both opinions.) (י"א: ז')
- In what three cases would the dimensions of the *beit ha'pras* be smaller? (י"ב: ז')
- Explain the debate regarding whether a *beit ha'pras* can be the basis for another *beit ha'pras*. (י"ב: ז')
- What are the six cases of ploughed fields that had sources of *tumat met* in them that do not result in being a *beit ha'pras*? (י"ג: ז')
- What is the law regarding a field into which the soil of a *beit ha'pras* was washed? (י"ד: ז')
- What is the law regarding the attic of a house built in a field in which the location of a grave is unknown? (י"ד: ז')
- Explain the debate regarding the minimum measure of the soil from a *beit ha'pras* to be a source of *tumah*. (י"ד: ז')
- What other soil has the same measure? (י"ה: ז')
- What are the three opinions regarding how grapes from a vineyard in a *beit ha'pras* can be gathered and pressed and remain *tahor*? (י"ה: ז')
- What are the three types of a *beit ha'pras* and how do they differ from one another? (י"ח: ב'-ד')
- Explain the debate regarding the first category. (י"ח: ב')
- How can a field in which a grave has been ploughed is unknown be checked? (י"ח: ד')
- For what purpose does checking the field help and for what purpose does it not help? (י"ח: ד')
- In what two ways can a *beit ha'pras* be purified? (י"ח: ה')
- What two methods does R' Shimon add? (י"ח: ה')
- How can one pass through a *beit ha'pras* without becoming *tameh*? (י"ח: ו')
- What is the law regarding one who travels outside Israel through the mountains? Through the sea? (י"ח: ו')
- What is a *Shunit*? (י"ח: ו')
- What is the law regarding fields in *Surya* with respect to *tumah*, *ma'asrot* and *shmittah*? (י"ח: ז')
- In what circumstances does a property occupied by a *goi* in *Eretz Yisrael* require checking for *tumah*? (What case is the exception?) (י"ח: ז')
- Provide the three opinions regarding the areas that required checking. (י"ח: ח')
- What are *itz't'vaniyot* and can they have the status of a *mador goyim*? (י"ח: ח')
- What does R' Shimon ben Gamliel rules does not have the status of *mador goyim*? (י"ח: ט')
- Which location was purified by the *Chachamim*? (י"ח: ט')
- Which location was purified by *Rebbi* and his *Beit Din*? (י"ח: ט')

Local Shiurim

Sunday -Thursday

After maariv
Mizrachi Shul

Friday & Shabbat

10 minutes before mincha
Beit Ha'Roeh

Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
30 th August י"א אלול	31 st August י"ב אלול	1 st September י"ג אלול	2 nd September י"ד אלול	3 rd September י"ה אלול	4 th September ט"ו אלול	5 th September ט"ז אלול
Ohalot 18:10 – Negaim 1:1	Negaim 1:2-3	Negaim 1:4-5	Negaim 1:6-2:1	Negaim 2:2-3	Negaim 2:4-5	Negaim 3:1-2

