



Mezonot and Maaseh Yadeiha

A husband must support and provide food for his wife (*mezonot*). Against that obligation he has the right to her “*maaseh yadeiha*” – her handiwork. The *Mishnah* (5:9) discusses the amount of *maaseh yadeiha* he has rights to and what is considered the excess (*motar*) if she produces more. The *Mishnah* (5:4) teaches that the husband is not able to *makdish* (consecrate) *maaseh yadeiha*. The excess however is the subject of debate. *R' Meir* maintains he can whereas *R' Yochanan* disagrees.

The *Gemara* (58b) explains that the case in our *Mishnah* is where the wife was supporting herself, such that she retained *maaseh yadeiha*. In this case everyone agrees that the husband cannot *makdish maaseh yadeiha*, since it does not belong to him. The debate at the end of the *Mishnah* regarding the excess, which would be his, is whether someone is able to *makdish* something before it exists. *R' Meir* maintains that even though that *motar* is not yet produced, that declaration can have an effect such that it will become *hekdesh* once produced. *R' Yochanan* however disagrees.

The *Gemara* cites our *Mishnah* when trying to determine nature of this *takana* – the decree that connects the husband’s obligation to support her with his right to *maaseh yadeih*. *R' Huna* (citing *Rav*) understands that the main purpose of the *takana* was for the benefit of the wife, to ensure that she is supported. The reciprocal right to her *maaseh yadeiha* was to prevent the animosity that could be caused if he was obligated to support her, and she could also retain the profits from her handiwork. The other way to understand this *takana* is that the main motivation is that *maaseh yadeiha* goes to the husband. After that, because she would not have any funds, he is obligated to feed her.

Our *Mishnah* is brought as proof for the first understanding, since it would seem, as explained above, that the wife can decide not to activate this agreement, and instead support herself and retain *maaseh yadeiha*. This appears to only make sense according to the first understanding where the

main motivation is to support the wife, which she can decide to forgo. The *Gemara* rejects this as a proof since it is possible that the reason why she is retaining *maaseh yadeiha* in our *Mishnah* is simply because it is a case where he is unable to support her. Indeed, according to the second understanding she cannot opt to retain *maaseh yadeiha*. Yet, if the husband cannot support her, then the arrangement is not in play.

According to the way we have described the *Gemara* above, the entire discussion appears to be focused on the nature of an entirely rabbinic law. Indeed, the *Chatam Sofer* understands that *Rav Huna* maintains that the obligation to provide *mezonot* is rabbinic and the continuation of the *Gemara* is assuming his position.

The *Ran* however find this understanding difficult. He reasons that most *tanaim* maintain that the obligation of *mezonot* is biblical. How then could *Rav Huna* understand that that *mezonot* was central to the *takana* (a rabbinic decree)? The obligation to provide *mezonot* is biblical!

The *Ran* therefore cites the *Rashba* who explains that the *Gemara* can be understood assuming *Rav Huna* maintains that the obligation of *mezonot* is biblical. In other words, the starting point was the biblical obligation of *mezonot*. The *takana* that followed granting the husband *maaseh yadeiha* was to avoid any animosity. One might ask, granted that she can choose to forgo that right to *mezonot*, however once the *takana* is in place that the husband received *maaseh yadeiha*, how can she act to counter that *takana*? The simple answer is that the *takana* was ultimately for her benefit such that she received *mezonot* without any ill will. Consequently, she can choose not activate the *takanat chachamim*. The *Rashba* continues that if she does choose not to provide *maaseh yadeiha* the husband would not need to provide *mezonot* even though the obligation is biblical. The *Rashba* explains this is because the *Chachamim* can enforce or strength their *takanot* that relate to financial matters just as they have the ability to declare one’s property *hefker* (ownerless).

Revision Questions

כתובות די: ח' – ה': ט'

- What are the four conditions that even if they are not written into the *ketubah* are considered as if they have been written? (די: ג'–ח', י–י"א)
- Can a husband alleviate the responsibility of redeeming his captive wife by sending her a *get* and *ketubah*? (די: ט')
- What is different about the *ketubot* of *Anshei Yerushalaim* and *Anshei Yehuda*? (די: י"ב)
- Can one add to the base value of a *ketubah*? (ה': א')
- When is there a dispute as to whether the *tosefet ketubah* is paid? (ה': א')
- What is *R' Meir's* opinion regarding whether a woman can agree to her *ketubah* being a reduced value? (ה': א')
- What is the maximum spacing allowed between *kidushin* and *nisuin*? (Include two cases.) (ה': ב')
- What happens after this time period? (ה': ב')
- Can a *bat Yisrael* who is a *shomeret yabam* to a *Kohen* eat *trumah*? (ה': ג')
- Can a husband *makdish* his wife's handiwork? (ה': ד')
- Explain the debate regarding whether the husband can sanctify *motar ma'asei yadeiha*? (ה': ד')
- What are the seven *melachot* performed by the wife and when does this change? (ה': ה')
- What are the opinions of *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* regarding how long we wait before forcing the husband to divorce his wife if he vowed against *tashmish*? (ה': ו')
- What is the *mitzvah* of *onah* for *po'alim*? (ה': ו')
- What are the opinions regarding a case where either of the spouses refuses *tashmish*? (ה': ז')
- What are the husband's obligation regarding: (ה': ח'–ט')
 - Provision of food?
 - Provision of clothing?
 - General allowance?
- To whom do the measures in the previous question apply? (ה': ט')
- What is the measure of *ma'asei yadeiha* and when does it change? (ה': ט')

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
21 January י"א שבט	22 January י"ב שבט	23 January י"ג שבט	24 January י"ד שבט	25 January ט"ו שבט	26 January ט"ז שבט	27 January י"ז שבט
Ketubot 6:1-2	Ketubot 6:3-4	Ketubot 6:5-6	Ketubot 6:7-7:1	Ketubot 7:2-3	Ketubot 7:4-5	Ketubot 7:6-7

