

ואימא מאי מחיצה פלוגתא - And I can say, what does מחיצה mean; a division

OVERVIEW

The גמרא originally interpreted מחיצה to mean a wall. After the גמרא showed that this is based on a ברייתא (and inferring from this translation that היזק לא שמה (היזק), the גמרא challenges this assumption and declares that מחיצה should mean a (property) division. There is seemingly no basis for this challenge; on the contrary the accepted translation of 'מחיצה' universally, is a wall. תוספות deals with this issue.

מפרש רבינו יצחק¹ משום דעל לשון גודא יש כמה קושיות כדפריך בסמוך² –

The ר"י explains; because on the translation that מחיצה refers to a wall, there are many difficulties as the גמרא will shortly ask. The גמרא asks many questions on the interpretation that מחיצה means a wall. This interpretation of גודא requires us to assume that היזק לא שמה³. The גמרא cites many sources which indicate that היזק לא שמה.

לפיכך דוחק לפרש מחיצה פלוגתא אף על גב דבכל מקום הוי מחיצה גודא:

Therefore, on account of these questions, the גמרא forces itself to awkwardly interpret the word מחיצה to mean a division, even though that everywhere the meaning of 'מחיצה' is a wall. It is preferable to compromise the literal meaning, and conform to all the cited sources, than having a proper translation but (seemingly) contradicting all the cited sources.

SUMMARY

The גמרא challenges the assumption that מחיצה means גודא. According to that assumption, we will maintain that היזק לא שמה. There are many sources which indicate that היזק לא שמה. Therefore it is preferable to interpret מחיצה to mean a division, thereby maintaining that; היזק לא שמה. Even though this interpretation runs contrary to the usual interpretation of the word מחיצה.

¹ Why does the גמרא want to reinterpret the word מחיצה to mean a division, as opposed to the original interpretation that מחיצה is a dividing wall. The word מחיצה generally refers to a wall, not to a division.

² The גמרא on this עמוד asks many questions on the opinion that ה"ר לש"ה from many משניות and a מימרא. תוספות has previously stated (עמוד א' ד"ה סבריה), that the answers to these challenges are unconvincing.

³ See the גמרא immediately preceding this 'ואימא'.

⁴ The גמרא presents its opposition to מחיצה גודא and offers the alternate that מחיצה פלוגתא immediately after the גמרא inferred that if מחיצה גודא then ה"ר לש"ה. This may indicate that the opposition was not to the translation itself, but rather what is inferred from the translation, namely that ה"ר לש"ה.

THINKING IT OVER

1. Why can we not say that the reason the גמרא wants to say מחיצה פלוגתא is because if מחיצה גודא then it should have said 'בונין אותו' instead of 'בונין את הכותל', as the גמרא asks? Or is this also included in the 'כמה קושיות', that תוספות refers to?
2. What does this תוספות teach us as to the relative strengths of כלל versus פרט?