



מכון
סמיכה

נולד
החוכמה

ט"ו אלול תשפ"ו

שבת קודש פ' כי תבא

גיליון פ"ו

עולם הזה לכה

עולם התשובה

לקט שאלות ותשובות

Machnisei Rachamim

Rabbi M.M Prescott Rosh Yeshiva Machon Smicha

As the Selichos season approaches, the familiar passages ring in our earsonce again — particularly those that appear in the standard Selichos. One of those is the tefillah of Machnisei Rachamim, whose familiarity has only grown in recent decades with the composition of a widely-sung melody that stirs the hearts of Yidden everywhere.

What is the basic meaning of this tefillah? Machnisei Rachamim means “those who bring in mercy” — referring to the malachim. Among the roles ascribed to malachim is that of serving as conduits, carrying our tefillos heavenward to Hashem. In this tefillah, we ask the malachim to present our tefillos before the Hashem, the Baal HaRachamim.

As a side point, this piyyut extremely old and universal. While many piyyutim are exclusive to Ashkenaz or Sepharad, and recited only by their respective communities, this piyyut appears already in the earliest sources — Seder Rav Amram Gaon and Rav Sherira Gaon — and the Rokeach describes it as widespread throughout Ashkenaz, Sepharad, and the eastern lands, including Bavel and Egypt.

Almost every other tefillah is addressed directly to Hashem — whether in the first person or the second. Yet Machnisei Rachamim breaks this pattern entirely. Here we turn not to the Ribbono Shel Olam, but to the malachim themselves — described as “bringers-in of mercy” and “announcers of prayer” — asking them to do the work of tefillah for us: to take our prayers, carry them heavenward, intensify their potency, and place them before Hashem. What calls for explanation is reconciling this tefillah with one of the Thirteen Ikkarim of Yiddishkeit. The Rambam writes, in the fifth ikkar: “...Hashem is the one worthy to be worshipped, exalted... and that this should not be done for anyone beneath Him in existence: the angels, the stars, the spheres, the elements, or anything composed of them. For all of these are but instruments, and there is no judgment or free choice in their actions — that belongs to Him alone... Likewise, it is not worthy to worship them as intermediaries to draw closer to Him; rather, one’s thoughts should be directed to Him alone, setting aside all else...”

Does this tefillah border on worship of intermediaries? Granted, this tefillah does not treat the malachim as deities. But it is, plainly, a tefillah directed to them, not to Hashem. And tefillah itself is avodah — the Gemara in Maseches Ta’anis (2a) calls it avodah shebalev. Directing avodah to a malach, then, would seem to run straight into the ikkar. Moreover, the Yerushalmi (Berachos 9:1) states this concern plainly: “If a misfortune befalls a man, he should not cry out to [the malachim] Michael or Gavriel; rather, to Me he should cry, and I will answer immediately.”

Interestingly, while it is rare to find other tefillos directed to malachim, it is specifically within Selichos that we find piyyutim of this structure, such as “Malachei Rachamim... Chalu Na Pnei...”, in which we beseech the malachim to intercede on our behalf with good discernment. Here again we meet the same difficulty.



עולם הציצית

הרב חיים אברהם זאקוטנסקי ר"מ במכון סמיכה ורב דק"ק השיבנו ניו יורק

לנקות המשקפיים עם טלית גדול ועם טלית קטן

כתב המחבר בסימן כא סעיף ב טליתות של מצוה שבלו, אדם בודל עצמו מהם, ואינו מותר לקנח עצמו בהם ולא ליחד אותם לתשמיש המגונה, אלא זורקן והם כלים.

ולא ליחד אותם לתשמיש המגונה- הנה במשנה ברורה (ס"ק י"ב) ביאר את דברי השלחן ערוך ח"ל: "אבל לשאינה מגונה שרי. ובעוד הציצית עליו אם רשאי להשתמש בהטלית תשמיש שאינו מגונה, דעת העולות תמיד דשרי, דדוקא בציצית אסור המחבר בסעיף א' [אבל בהבגד שרי], ולהט"ז אסור, וכן הסכים הפרי מגדים וכתב, דטלית של תפלה המיוחד לכך חמיר הטלית כמו הציצית, אבל טלית קטן פשיטא דשרי לכל תשמיש שאינו מגונה אפילו בעוד הציצית עליו, דהא לבוש הדיוט הוא ורשאי לשכב בה בלילה."

ויש לעיין לפי זה אם מותר לקנח את המשקפיים עם הטלית, דלכאורה הדבר תלוי בדברי המשנה ברורה הנ"ל: דאם זה בגדר תשמיש מגונה אז יש לאסור לכ"ע, אכן אם הוא בגדר תשמיש שאינו מגונה אז יש מחלוקת בדבר דלעולות תמיד שרי, ולהט"ז יש לאסור. ואף בטלית קטן יש לעיין דאף שהתיר הפרי מגדים (אם הוא בגדר תשמיש שאינו מגונה) אמנם יעיון בכך החיים (ס' כ"א אות י') שאחר שהביא את דברי הפרי מגדים והמ"ב דט"ק פשיטא דשרי לכל תשמיש שאינו מגונה וכו', כתב ח"ל: "מיהו לדידן שמכוננים בטלית קטן ללבוש משום מצוה יש להחמיר", עכ"ל.

ועיינתי בהספרים ומצאתי דלנקות המשקפיים ודאי שיש כאן שימוש בהטלית^[1], אמנם אינו נחשב תשמיש מגונה אלא כתשמיש שאינו מגונה, ולכן תליא בהמחלוקת הנ"ל דלעולות התמיד שרי ולט"ז ופרי מגדים אסור. וראיתי בקובץ תשובות (ח"א סימן ב') מהגר"ש אלישיב זצ"ל דנשאל אם מותר לקנח המשקפיים בטלית קטן, והשיב: "שאיני רואה בזה שום איסור, כי מדרך בני אדם שאינם מקפידים להשתמש לצורך שפשוף המשקפיים גם בבגד הכי חשוב ואין זה בגדר תשמיש מגונה, ואריך למיעבד הכי", ע"כ. ומבואר בדבנד"ד חשיב כתשמיש שאינו מגונה והתיר בט"ק ע"פ הפרי מגדים הנ"ל דמותר להשתמש בט"ק תשמיש שאינו מגונה. ומצאתי שכן דעת הגאון רבי שלמה זלמן אורבך זצ"ל (הליכות שלמה ח"א עמוד ל"א בדבר הלכה אות י"ט ובארחות הלכה אות מ"א) דאין לנקות המשקפיים בטלית גדול שהרי דעת הפוסקים דבשעה שלובש הטלית אסור אף בתשמיש שאינו מגונה. ורק חולק על הגר"ש אלישיב והחמיר בטלית קטן ע"פ הכך החיים הנ"ל דיצא לאסור בתשמיש שאינו מגונה אף על ט"ק עש^[2].

באמצע התפילה

הנה ביארנו כבר דשפשוף המשקפיים נחשב כתשמיש שאינו מגונה ואסור לדעת הט"ז, אולם ראיתי דבאמצע התפלה מותר לכ"ע, ואף להט"ז הנ"ל, והיינו משום דהוא צורך התפלה כדי שיוכל לראות היטב לתוך הסידור, והמחלוקת שייך רק אחר התפלה, וכמו שסובר הג"ר ישראל גוסטמאן זצ"ל (הובא דבריו בספר הליכות ישראל מאת הרב ישראל טעפלין שליט"א עמוד מ'). וכן מסיק הג"ר אפרים גרינבלאט שליט"א בשו"ת רבבות אפרים (ח"ה ס' רפ"ג, ח"ז ס' רס"ד, וח"ח ס' תכ"ה). ויעיין שם בחלק ו' סימן י' שכן דעת הרב האדרת"ו ח"ל: "ראיתי מה שכתב בזה הרב האדרת"ו זצ"ל, ח"ל גדרתי מנהג לאשר אני נשא בתי עינים לעיני החלושות ותמיד הם מתכסים מהבל העינים, וצריך לנגבן תמיד, ואני מנקה אותם גם בטלית גם בטלית קטן, וכל זה רק כשאני עוסק בלימוד התורה, אבל בדברים של חול נזהר אני שלא להשתמש בטלית של מצוה לדבר חול", עכ"ל^[3].

[1] אכן עיין בשו"ת דברי שלום ח"ג סימן ט' שכ': "מ"מ בנד"ד יש להקל דזה אינו בגדר תשמיש כלל", יעו"ש שמפלפל בזה אם הוא בגדר תשמיש שאינו מגונה או דילמא אינו תשמיש כלל, וצ"ע.

[2] אמנם עיין בשו"ת משנה הלכות מהדורא תנינא ח"ד ס' ר"ל דמשמע שסובר דקינח המשקפיים נחשב כתשמיש מגונה ויש לאסור בכל אופן ע"ש.

[3] וכן עיין במסכת ברכות דף כ"ד ע"ב בדעת תפלה מותר ליקח רוק שבפיו וליתן ע"ג טליתו ע"ש.

עולם השיה

Regarding Techeiles: A Final Response

This is my last response in this exchange. Due to the nature of the publication Issue 84 was under a word limit, so some arguments were compressed. Where that caused imprecision, I will correct. But compression, omission, and rewriting an opponent's argument are different things.

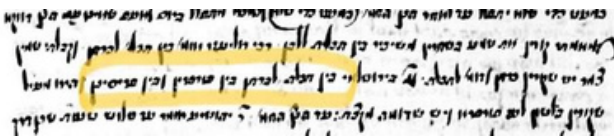
Issue 85 states that I “did not understand the Gemara,” “neglected to see the Rishonim,” and that Murex proponents “butcher the sugya.” If so, the standard is simple: source by source. Several arguments received no answer, while several “corrections” answer claims I did not make. I will not respond in kind: those assertions prove nothing. The question is what the sources actually say.

What Was Left Unanswered

The Ravya and Shiltei HaGibborim

Issue 82 said there is no early source, “including the Ravya,” connecting purpura with the *Chilazon*. I therefore cited the Ravya on *Yerushalmi Berachos* 1:2, on *misheyakir bein Techeiles l’karti*: **בין פורפירין ובין פריסינן**.

The printed text has **פריפינן**, while the manuscript and *Sefer HaAsufos* of the Ravya’s grandson read **פריסינן**. Prifinin has no meaning in any language, while Prasinis is Greek for leek-green: *Techeiles* - purpirin; *karti* - prasinin. Purpura is classical Murex-dye terminology. One may dispute the reading or significance; the rejoinder does neither.



Ravya manuscript: פריסינן / פריפינן

Nor is the Ravya the only traditional source linking Techeiles to Purpura. R’ Avraham HaRofe Portaleone writes in his *Shiltei HaGibborim* (ch. 79):

והמלה הזאת בלאט”ה יש לה שתי משמעויות כפי הפרש הלשונות, כי בלשון לאטינו רוצה לומר עש האוכל הבגד, ובלשון יון רוצה לומר רמש הים הנקרא פורפורה, והוא החלזון שצובעים בו התכלת.

“Blatta has two meanings depending on the language: in Latin, a moth that eats clothing; in Greek, a sea-creature called purpura, which is the chilazon with which Techeiles is dyed.” This directly identifies Purpura with the Techeiles Chilazon. Issue 85 does not address it.

The Maharil was left unanswered. Shu”t Maharil HaChadashos 5:2 discusses restoring Techeiles by identifying the Chilazon from its location and simanim, relevant to nignaz.

Also passed over were Ephraim Ayil’s second Luz, other Purpura sources, the Radzyner Rebbe’s identification criterion, and my answers on damo shachor k’dyo and lefichach damav yekarim. Cohen’s soap argument is addressed below.

Tzor to Haifa - and Rav Belsky’s Vadai

Shabbos 26a places professional *Chilazon* hunters *miSulamo shel Tzor ad Chaifa*. That coastal zone contains enormous deposits of ancient Murex shells from industrial dyeing.

Rav Yisroel Belsky *zt”l* considered this enough for certainty. Asked whether he held there was merely a possibility that Murex was *Techeiles*, he answered: “I hold it’s *Vadai*, and I’ll tell you why for a totally different reason. Big deposits of murex shells were found ... where it says are *Sefunei Temunei Chol*, *meSulamo shel Tzor ad Chaifa*, and there’s no other fish, no other creature that’s found in a factory-like setup.” (*Living Torah Museum Q&A, May 2014: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTUzf2Else8*)

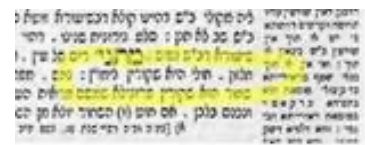
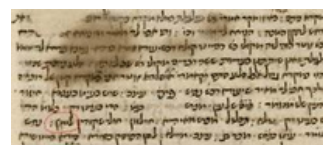
The rejoinder portrays the Murex position as beginning with academia and forcing *Chazal* to fit. Rav Belsky reasoned the other way: begin with *Chazal*’s geography, then ask what the physical evidence identifies. That is not replacing *Mesorah* with academia.

Checking the “Corrections”

The Rambam, dag, sheretz, and snail terminology

The rejoinder says the Rambam teaches the “exact opposite”: a sea snail is “a sheretz, not a dag,” and “not a single Rishon describes the Chilazon as a sheretz.” Yet Rambam writes in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, Lo Taaseh 179, **כי הנה יתכן שיהיה דג**, and a sheretz yam. In *Peirush HaMishnayos*, *Keilim* 12:1, he compares an iron door-fastener to a *chilazon*. The first passage shows that dag and sheretz yam are not mutually exclusive; the second, though generic, shows that Rambam used *chilazon* for a shell-bearing marine creature.

Nor is “snail” foreign to the Rishonim’s terminology. I thank Rabbi Gershom Baraza, who brought several of these *mareh mekomos* to my attention. Rashi (*Bechoros* 38a) has **חלזון... שקורין לימץ**; the commentary printed as *Rabbeinu Gershom* (*Bechoros* 38b), **חלזון קורין בלעז לימץ**, and Rashi (*Avodah Zarah* 28b), **לימץ**. R’ Yisrael Gukovitzky’s *Sefer Targum HaLa’az* (1985), comparing manuscripts and early editions, notes that a Ksav Yad reads **לימץ**, calls it *cross-referencing* *limace*, translating as “snail.” Rashi is clearer: *Shabbos* 77b calls a *shablul* **לימצא**, while *Chagigah* 11a describes the *chomet* as **גדל בקליפה ההולכת ומעגלת תמיד כל כמה שגדל** — a sheretz growing in a spiraling shell. Radak calls the *shablul* **לימצא** and says it hides **כמו לבוש** (*Tehillim* 58:9); some editions add **יש** *שבלול לימצא* — *caracol*, Spanish for “snail.” *Chochmat Shlomo* (*Shabbos* 77b) is especially significant because he explains Rashi’s terminology: **שבלול לימצא** — Rashi’s *shablul/chomet* is called *Schnecke*, German for “snail.” This directly addresses the claim that Rashi’s **לימצא** means something else. Rashi and *Rabbeinu Gershom* use **לימצא** for *chilazon*; Rashi uses the same term for *shablul/chomet* and describes it as shell-bearing; and *Chochmat Shlomo* explains Rashi’s *shablul/chomet* as *Schnecke*, a snail. This is not a modern meaning invented for the Murex.



Suggesting that *Chilazon* HaTecheiles differs from a snail is modern. Johann Michaelis first identified the *sepia* as the *chilazon*, unsure if the shores of תכלת is *תכלת*, the latter being Arabic to “pour out.” Ludwig Lewysohn in 1858 guessed it could also be a mussel. Those two were newer ideas.

Ben Yehoyada, Luz, and Megillah 6a

The rejoinder claims the Ben Yehoyada “says no such thing” that dyeing could occur elsewhere. However, the Ben Yehoyada - a.k.a. the Ben Ish Chai - writes that although the *Chilazon* comes from Zevulun, the color takes better in Luz יותר **מאם יצבעו באויר מקום אחר** — “than if they would dye it in the air of another place” (*Sotah* 46b). That’s my point. Tanna d’Vei Eliyahu’s description of Luz as the dyeing center does not erase that comparison to dyeing elsewhere.

Megillah 6a likewise does not establish a biological monopoly. It says **כל הנוטל** — one who takes from you without payment will not succeed. Rashi reads this as taking Zevulun’s *Chilazon* without paying; the Sifri says **כל מי** — “whoever steals from you.” Maharsha calls that a forced reading, and instead understands **כלא דמים** as *Techeiles* produced **דם חלזון**, using *kala ilan*.

A somewhat different example within Selichos is where we ask a middahitself to intervene — as in the well-known piyyut recited on Erev Rosh Hashanah, each stanza ending with “Na Kol Middah Nechona...” or the equally well-known selicha recited often, and most notably during Neilah, “Midas HaRachamim Aleinu Hisgalgali” — beseeching the middah of rachamim to plead for rachamim on our behalf.

This discussion is not new; it has already been addressed thoroughly by several Rishonim. The earliest appears to be the Maharam MiRottenburg(270, Berlin printing), who was quite wary of these piyyutim. He raises, first, the issue of shituf — attributing power to another divine being. He further notes that throughout Tanach, among the many tefillos and bakashos of the Avos and the Neviim, we find only tefillos addressed directly to Hashem; never do we find a supplication or plea directed to a malach. Similarly, of the berachos and tefillos instituted by Anshei Knesses HaGedolah, none of them address malachim. Why, then, would the paytanim depart from this convention and compose a tefillah addressed to malachim?

Apparently, various other Selichos beseeching malachim were recited by older kehillos, as the Tashbetz (Magen Avos 1:4) attests, citing the Ramban (in his Derashas Toras Temimah), who disapproved of them for the reasons above. Other Rishonim were similarly uncomfortable with these piyyutim — among them the Meiri and the Orchos Chaim.

The fact remains, though, that some of these piyyutim survived the criticism and remain in the siddur, recited universally to this day. How is this to be explained? Several answers have been offered: The Rokeach (see Yeshurun Vol. 3, pg. 41) states in strong terms that it is a mistake to think malachim are unnecessary to the ascent of our tefillos. True, in the time of the Beis HaMikdash, tefillos ascended more directly; but now, agents are required to carry our tefillos upward — and this is the role malachim fulfill in that process. Asking them to fulfill that role, then, is no problem at all.

The Shibolei HaLeket follows this approach, adding that a clear source for the concept appears in Midrash Shir HaShirim: Knesses Yisrael beseeches the malachim who stand at the gates of tefillah and dim’ah (tears): “Bring my tefillos and tears before Hashem, and be a meilitz yosher on our behalf.”

Other Rishonim accept the premise that a tefillah may not be directed to a malach, but reinterpret the wording to bring it within convention. Rabbeinu Yaakov ben Yakar (the Ramban’s rebbi) explains that the “Machnisei Rachamim” are not the malachim at all, but the tzadikim of each generation, whom we ask to daven on our behalf — a straightforward concept, since the leaders of a generation bear responsibility to daven for their people.

This answer, however, does not address piyyutim such as “Na Kol Middah Nechona” or “Midas HaRachamim Aleinu Hisgalgali.” The Mahari Brona (simman 275) offers a different approach, explaining as follows: “It is merely a way of humility and servitude, like one who speaks before the king to his advisers, asking them to speak to the king, being too embarrassed to approach the king directly. But this is not, in any way, an actual intermediary.”

Several Acharonim take a different route, introducing slight textual emendations to these piyyutim to avoid the difficulty altogether. The Maharal (Nesiv HaAvodah, ch. 12) adjusts the syntax so that the tefillah is directed to Hashem Himself. Rav Chaim Volozhiner similarly changed the words “Malachei Rachamim” to “Avos HaOlam.” Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:43) cites this in his father’s name, noting that his father followed this practice as well. The Tzemach Tzedek, as well, in Derech Mitzvosecha (Tefillah, ch. 7), suggests changing “Middas HaRachamim” to “Av HaRachamim,” so that Hashem is addressed directly.

Yet the prevailing practice remains to preserve the original text. Even Rav Moshe Feinstein, who advocated in principle for the emended wording, cautioned people who asked him l’maaseh against departing from the minhagim of old.

The Rebbe, in his writings on Selichos (Likkutei Taamim U’Mekoros), takes up this question as well. In just a few lines he gathers a wide range of sources, and his own leaning is to keep to the original nusach. He notes that although the Tzemach Tzedek had initially rejected the nusach, he appears to have later retracted, explaining in subsequent writing that it is indeed acceptable to appoint malachim as agents to present our tefillos before Hashem – and ask them to intervene in this manner.

Rashi on Devarim 33:19 likewise places the maritime resources בחלקו של ישכר וזבולן. Megillah establishes Zevulun’s livelihood interest, not a biological monopoly; Shabbos 26a gives the actual location, Tzor to Haifa.

Rav Yitzchak Isaac Halevy Herzog and the color evidence

The rejoinder turns R’ Herzog into “secular evidence favors Murex, Chazal rule it out.” Not exactly: R’ Herzog says Murex trunculus has “a strong claim upon our attention,” citing its geography and historical use; he discusses how briyaso domeh l’dag should be understood, and treats seventy years as hyperbolic while noting the seven-year variant (Semitic Porphyrology, 5F).

Color was his major obstacle. Lacaze-Duthiers inconsistently obtained blue from a variety of Murex trunculus. Friedländer told R’ Herzog that pure blue from Murex was impossible, while Raphael Dubois claimed that pure blue could be produced from the pigment by a special treatment. Faced with conflicting scientific authorities, R’ Herzog didn’t decide the chemical question himself. Janthina attracted R’ Herzog because it was reported to yield blue, yet it had no historical dye industry, and he called the idea that Jews used Janthina while Phoenicians used Murex “hardly tenable.” Modern chemistry changes the problem: photodebromination produces blue, and a Roman-period Wadi Murabba’at textile was chemically identified as Hexaplex trunculus and interpreted by Sukenik et al. as ancient blue Murex dyeing (JAS Reports 3 [2015], 565–570). Cohen offers alternatives in ch. 22; they are not the researchers’ conclusion.

Lo nicha lei

Issue 85 claims I “did not understand the Gemara” because Murex was sometimes crushed during extraction. Cohen writes stronger: “The exact opposite is the case by the Murex, as they would try to kill it with the first blow, before they extracted the mucus,” and “the death of the Murex has no impact on the quality of the mucus” (Chilazon HaTecheiles, ch. 14, pp. 215–216).

But the mere fact that the animal was crushed cannot be the problem. R’ Avraham ben HaRambam describes petzias haChilazon as ריסוק והחיתוך, crushing and cutting, and compares that petziah to petzias egozim (Birchas Avraham 19).

The Murex evidence is strikingly parallel. Aristotle says fishermen were anxious to break the shellfish while alive because if it died beforehand it expelled the dye (Historia Animalium V:15). Pliny says larger specimens were opened and smaller ones crushed alive, shell and all (Natural History IX:60). That fits כי ניחא ליה טפי נשמה ציבעיה (Shabbos 75a): keeping the animal alive was important for successful dye recovery. Cohen distinguishes between keeping it alive until extraction begins and keeping it alive during the extraction itself. That distinction can be argued; calling the Murex the “exact opposite” of the Gemara cannot.

The bedikah - and Cohen’s soap argument

Menachos 42b-43a gives a *bedikah* distinguishing *Techeiles* from *kala ilan*. Issue 85 treats the shared indigo molecule as a disproof if both respond alike. Yet Cohen’s ch. 25 says “our inability to understand and perform the tests properly excludes them being used as either a proof or a disproof” (p. 370). Before using the *bedikah* as a disproof, Cohen needs to reconcile that with his own statement.

Prof. Zohar Amar recently tested Murex and plant indigo under several reconstructions of the Talmudic test. Modern dyeings were both durable; with traditional methods, differences emerged. In the Geonic reconstruction natural *kala ilan* faded considerably more than natural Hexaplex trunculus. Amar does not claim certainty about the ancient recipe, but shows that the same principal molecule need not produce the same test response when dyeing method differs (*Vehayah Lachem LeTzitzis* 20, 5786).

Ch. 25 also argues that *Techeiles* can be damaged by *tza’fon* while *kala ilan* may resist it, concluding: “Murex dyes don’t wash out with soap, while techeiles does.” But Cohen himself quotes the Radzyner Rebbe that “not all *kala ilan* dyeing is equal” and says the effect depends on “the type of dyeing” (pp. 365-366). That principle cannot apply to *kala ilan* and stop at Murex. Amar’s newer work must be addressed before either test can be used as a decisive argument against the Murex.

What I Actually Wrote

A debate cannot be productive if an argument is rewritten and then attacked. Several of the rejoinder’s strongest “corrections” do that.

On the Yad Ramah, I did not mean that he disputes the seventy-year cycle of the Techeiles Chilazon; Issue 85 is correct that he appears to accept it. My point was that he rejects Rashi's identification of the mountain Chilazon in Sanhedrin 91a with the Chilazon of Techeiles: **אלא מסתברא דהאי חלזון דהכא לאו האיך דאמרינן גבי תכלת**: הוא אלא מינא אחרינא. Even if his reasoning assumes that the Techeiles Chilazon appears only infrequently, he still holds that the mountain Chilazon in Sanhedrin is **מינא אחרינא**, a different species. Sanhedrin 91a therefore cannot itself be cited as a description of the Techeiles Chilazon coming up in the mountains every seventy years. On that identification, Rashi and the Yad Ramah disagree.

The rejoinder's "grand finale" calls it my "fantastic claim" that the Rambam rediscovered the Chilazon. I introduced this as the Radzyner Rebbe's inference and said, "His inference, not mine." Rejecting it is legitimate; turning it into my claim and ridiculing it is not.

Likewise, I wrote "the commentary attributed to the Raavad." The word attributed was deliberate. The *Peirush HaRaavad al Sefer Yetzirah* states:

כי הנה החלזון אי אפשר לעמוד עליו אם הוא מכלל הדגים או מכלל הצומח כי הוא חי ומתנועע אינו מחליף מקומו כי הוא נעוץ ונקוע בארץ

The *chilazon* is described as so difficult to classify that one cannot determine whether it belongs among fish or vegetation: it is alive and moves, yet does not change location because it is **נעוץ ונקוע בארץ**, embedded and fixed in the ground (Introduction, Thirty-Two Paths, no. 8).

The rejoinder answers: "There is no such Raavad," but disputing authorship is not denying that the text exists. I expressly called it attributed to the Raavad because the attribution is disputed. Disputed does not mean the passage doesn't exist.

The passage does not explicitly discuss *gufo domeh l'yam*, camouflage, or a green animal. It compares the *chilazon* to **צומח** and describes it as fixed in place; that plant-like description was the basis for my inference that its appearance might relate to *gufo domeh l'yam*, including green or sea-like coloration. That is an inference, not the text's explicit meaning; "there is no such Raavad" addresses attribution, not the passage.

The Simanim

The rejoinder quotes my statement that the *simanim* are a "bad metric" and substitutes: "That *Gemara* was too difficult to understand, so I will base my opinion on something else." I said no such thing.

My point is that *simanim* cannot function as six fixed zoological criteria unless their meanings are established. Parallel texts differ between seven and seventy years; Rambam omits the seventy-year feature entirely; R' Herzog reads seventy hyperbolically; *Yad Ramah* separates the mountain *chilazon* from the *Techeiles Chilazon*; Rabbeinu Tam reads the usable dye material as **מיפקד פקיד**; and *briyaso domeh l'dag* and *gufo domeh l'yam* require interpretation.

The seventy-year statement is further complicated by the Radvaz (*Shu"t* Radvaz II, 685). He writes that the *Chilazon* is **מצוי הוא בים**, found in the sea, but that in Zevulun it formerly **היה עולה מאליו מן הים אל היבשה** — came up on its own from the sea onto dry land, where it could simply be gathered. After the *galus*, however, **לא**, it no longer came up, and therefore had to be hunted. R' Gershon Meltzer adds that Rashi's description in *Sanhedrin* 91a of the *Chilazon* ascending the mountains may similarly have occurred **בדרך נס**, even though this was not its natural behavior. Thus, even if *oleh* is understood literally, the absence of such surfacing today does not show that the *Chilazon* itself is absent.

These are issues within the traditional sources, not "fantastic claims" for Murex. Calling the *simanim* "straightforward" proves nothing unless that reading of each *siman* is shown to be necessary.

Nignaz and the Historical Claim

The *Sifri* itself uses *ganuz* while the *Chilazon* is still being obtained. R' Yosi meets an elderly man whose *parnassa* is **מחלזון**, learns where it can be reached, and concludes **הרי זה גנוז לצדיקים לעתיד לבא**. *Etz Yosef on Bamidbar Rabbah* 17:5 more directly

explains nignaz as *nishtakach* — "forgotten" — based on Rashi, Pesachim 62b, - **נגנז נשתכח**. Maharil likewise discusses restoring Techeiles by identifying the Chilazon. Nignaz therefore cannot by itself make rediscovery impossible.

The Ramban points in the same direction. On Shemos 28:2 he writes **והתכלת גם היום** — **לא ירים איש את ידו ללבוש חוץ ממלך גוים** — "Even today, no one would dare wear Techeiles except a gentile king." Whether he means the halachic Techeiles used for tzitzis or royal Techeiles material/color more generally, he describes something still known in his day but restricted to royalty, not something that had disappeared.

Issue 85 also says I used Rav Shmuel ben Hofni as proof that Techeiles was still in use. What I cited was the Radzyner Rebbe's inference, from Sefunei Temunei Chol: **וכפי הנראה שגם בימי הגאונים היה נהוג תכלת... וידוע שהגאונים לא סדרו הלכות רק כשהיה תכלת ביד ישראל** is textually complex: the same responsum is printed in Geonica II, pp. 330-331 under Rav Amram Gaon, while Shaarei Teshuvah attributes it to Rav Sher Shalom.

The rejoinder's "800 years" is too simplistic. Murex dyeing surviving somewhere in the Mediterranean does not prove uninterrupted Jewish knowledge of the Chilazon. David Jacoby notes that an attested Jewish dyer's colorants are unknown and that there is no evidence for Jewish purple-fishers in Byzantium (*Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84-85 [1991/92], p. 493 n. 232). He also concludes that Byzantine imperial Murex-purple production effectively ended after Constantinople's sack in 1204, though it continued elsewhere, including Egypt (*Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 [2004], p. 210). Continuity must be proved, not assumed.

Where I Leave It

I have no interest in prolonging a debate for its own sake. My concern is practical: if we may possess the Chilazon HaTecheiles today, people should evaluate the actual sources, not be discouraged by claims that misstate them.

The core facts remain: Chazal place Chilazon hunting on the Tzor-Haifa coast; massive Murex dye-industry remains are found there; the Ravya pairs Techeiles with purpurin; Shiltei HaGibborim directly identifies *Purpura* as the Chilazon used for Techeiles; Murex produces the indigo colorant corresponding to *kala ilan*; ancient textiles dyed blue with Murex survive; and Rav Yisroel Belsky called the identification *vadai* based on the geographic and industrial evidence.

Those points require answers. Calling the *simanim* "straightforward," saying I "did not understand the *Gemara*," or accusing Murex proponents of "butchering the sugya" does not answer them.

With that, I am leaving the discussion here. We are in Elul, approaching Rosh Hashanah. May the coming year bring Torah, clarity, health, and the ability to disagree vigorously while representing one another fairly and pursuing the truth wherever the sources lead.

For more information on these and many other sources relating to Techeiles and the Chilazon HaTecheiles, visit BlueFringes.com.

Rafi Hecht