

Three decrees – שלש גזירות: It would appear that these were not actual governmental decrees, but rather descriptions of various situations in Eretz Yisrael during and in the aftermath of the war against the Romans. Josephus provides a similar account. This war, which lasted for several years, created strong feelings of hostility. With its conclusion, there was no adherence to military or any other law but rather widespread slaughter of the Jews, many being subjected to cruel torture. It was only later that some semblance of order returned and the public killing of the Jews came to an end. Still, most of the land was confiscated from its owners and considered property of the Roman authorities, with its owners regarded as tenant farmers.

LANGUAGE

Kamtza – קמץא: Some say that this is a reference to the family known as Κομψός, Komposos. Josephus writes that they were an important family in Tiberias and supporters of the Romans. The name Komposos means graceful and wise, yet it also carries the negative connotation of crafty and deceitful.

Chariot [rispak] – ריסקא: The *Arukh* and some manuscripts read *dispak*, which is apparently derived from the Middle Iranian *dēspak*, meaning a chariot drawn by horses.

Enemy [ba'al devava] – בעל דבבא: The root *dalet*, *beit*, *beit* seems to be connected to *dovev*, speaking. However, in Aramaic, and as it is used when borrowed into Hebrew, it denotes hostile speech. In Syriac it also carries the meaning of enemy or foe.

אמר רב יהודה: לא דנו בה דין סיקריקון קאמר; דאמר רבי אסי, שלש גזירות גזרו: גזרתא קמייטא – כל דלא קטיל ליקטלוהו, מציעתא – כל דקטיל ליימי ארבע זוזי, בתרייתא – כל דקטיל ליקטלוהו. הלכך, קמייטא ומציעתא, כיון דקטלי – אגב אוניסיה גמר ומקני.

בתרייתא. אמרי: האידינא לישקול, למחר תבענא ליה בדינא.

אמר רבי יוחנן, מאי דכתיב: "אשרי אדם מפרח תמיד ומקשה לבו פול ברעה"? אקמצא ובר קמץא חרוב ירושלים, אתרוגולא ותרנגולתא חרוב טור מלכא, אשקא דריסקא חרוב ביתר.

אקמצא ובר קמץא חרוב ירושלים; דהוא גברא, דרחמיה קמץא ובעל דבביה בר קמץא, עבד סעודתא. אמר ליה לשמעיה: ויל אייתי לי קמץא, אזל אייתי ליה בר קמץא.

אתא אשכחיה דהוה יתיב, אמר ליה: מכדי ההוא גברא בעל דבבא דהוא גברא הוא מאי בעית הכא? קום פוק! אמר ליה: הואיל ואתאי שבקו, ויהיבנא לך דמי מה דאכילנא ושתינא.

Rav Yehuda said: The mishna is saying that in the time that people were being killed in the war they did not apply the law of Sicarii, but rather they would confirm the purchases of land made from the Sicarii. The reason for this is in accordance with what **Rabbi Asi said:** The gentile authorities issued three decrees⁸ during and in the aftermath of the war that ended in the destruction of the Temple. The first decree was that anyone who does not kill a Jew should himself be killed. The second decree was that anyone who kills a Jew should pay four dinars as a fine. The last decree was that anyone who kills a Jew should himself be killed. Therefore, during the time of the first and second decrees, the time when people were being killed in the war, since the gentile would kill Jews, then the owner of the field, owing to the danger posed to his life, would fully transfer ownership⁹ of his field to the Sicarius.

Then, during the time of the last decree, after the time when people were being killed in the war, anybody whose field was stolen by a Sicarius would say to himself: Now let him take the field; tomorrow I will claim it from him in court. Although the gentile had the advantage and could force the owner to give him the field, the assumption is that the owner did not fully transfer possession of the field to him, as he thought that he would still be able to recover it in court.

§ Apropos the war that led to the destruction of the Second Temple, the Gemara examines several aspects of the destruction of that Temple in greater detail: **Rabbi Yohanan said:** What is the meaning of that which is written: "Happy is the man who fears always, but he who hardens his heart shall fall into mischief" (Proverbs 28:14)? Jerusalem was destroyed on account of Kamtza¹ and bar Kamtza.^N The place known as the King's Mountain was destroyed on account of a rooster and a hen. The city of Beitar was destroyed on account of a shaft from a chariot [rispak].^L

The Gemara explains: Jerusalem was destroyed on account of Kamtza and bar Kamtza. This is as there was a certain man whose friend was named Kamtza and whose enemy was named bar Kamtza. He once made a large feast and said to his servant: Go bring me my friend Kamtza. The servant went and mistakenly brought him his enemy bar Kamtza.

The man who was hosting the feast came and found bar Kamtza sitting at the feast. The host said to bar Kamtza. That man is the enemy [ba'al devava]^L of that man, that is, you are my enemy. What then do you want here? Arise and leave. Bar Kamtza said to him: Since I have already come, let me stay and I will give you money for whatever I eat and drink. Just do not embarrass me by sending me out.

NOTES

אגב – Owing to the danger would fully transfer ownership: It is not enough to transfer ownership through an act of acquisition. Rather, there must be full acceptance of the transfer from the seller to the buyer. When the owner's life is in danger, the assumption is that in order to save his life he wholeheartedly agrees to transfer the ownership of his property.

אקמצא ובר קמץא – On account of Kamtza and bar Kamtza: Many commentaries ask: Since it was bar Kamtza and the party's host who caused the calamity, why is Kamtza's name mentioned

here? The simple answer is that these places were destroyed over trivial matters, such as a slight difference between the names Kamtza and bar Kamtza. The Maharal suggests a more profound explanation: As is mentioned in many places, Jerusalem was destroyed because of baseless hatred. Not only does baseless hatred cause fights between people, such as the host of the meal and bar Kamtza, but it also leads to the formation of factions and of bonds that only intensify the contention. Presumably, Kamtza played a role in the development of the discord between bar Kamtza and the party's host.

אמר ליה: לא. אמר ליה: יהיבנא לך דמי פלגא דסעודתיה! אמר ליה: לא. אמר ליה: יהיבנא לך דמי כולה סעודתיה! אמר ליה: לא. נקטיה בידיה ואוקמיה ואפקיה.

אמר: הואיל והוה יתבי רבנן ולא מחו ביה, שמע מינה קא מיחא להו, איזיל איכול בהו קורצא בי מלכא. אזל אמר ליה לקיסר: מרדו בך יהודאי! אמר ליה: מי יימר? אמר ליה: שדר להו קורבנא, תוית אי מקרבין ליה.

אזל שדר בידיה עגלא תלתא. בהדי דקאתי שדא ביה מומא בנב שפתים, ואמרי לה בדוקין שבעין, דוכתא דלדידן הוה מומא ולדידהו לאו מומא הוא.

סבור רבנן לקרוביה משום שלום מלכות, אמר להו רבי זכריה בן אבקולס, יאמרו: בעלי מומין קרובין לגבי מנבת! סבור למיקטליה, דלא ליזיל ולמא, אמר להו רבי זכריה, יאמרו: משיל מום בקדשים יהרג!

אמר רבי יוחנן: ענוותנותו של רבי זכריה בן אבקולס החריבה את ביתנו, ושרפה את היכלנו, והגליטנו מארצנו.

שדר עליוהו לנירון קיסר. בי קאתי, שדא גירא למזרח – אתא נפל בירושלים, למערב – אתא נפל בירושלים, לארבע רוחות השמים – אתא נפל בירושלים.

אמר ליה לניוקא: פסוק לי פסוקיך, אמר ליה: ונתתי את נקמתי באדם ביד עמי ישראל! וגו' אמר: קודשא בריך הוא בעי לחרובי ביתיה, ובעי לכפורי ידיה בההוא גברא! ערק ואזל ואיגיר, ונפק מינה רבי מאיר.

The host said to him: No, you must leave. Bar Kamtza said to him: I will give you money for half of the feast; just do not send me away. The host said to him: No, you must leave. Bar Kamtza then said to him: I will give you money for the entire feast; just let me stay. The host said to him: No, you must leave. Finally, the host took bar Kamtza by his hand, stood him up, and took him out.

After having been cast out from the feast, bar Kamtza said to himself: Since the Sages were sitting there and did not protest the actions of the host, although they saw how he humiliated me, learn from it that they were content with what he did. I will therefore go and inform [eikhul kurtza]¹ against them to the king. He went and said to the emperor: The Jews have rebelled against you. The emperor said to him: Who says that this is the case? Bar Kamtza said to him: Go and test them; send them an offering to be brought in honor of the government, and see whether they will sacrifice it.

The emperor went and sent with him a choice three-year-old calf. While bar Kamtza was coming with the calf to the Temple, he made a blemish on the calf's upper lip.² And some say he made the blemish on its eyelids, a place where according to us, i.e., halakha, it is a blemish, but according to them, gentile rules for their offerings, it is not a blemish. Therefore, when bar Kamtza brought the animal to the Temple, the priests would not sacrifice it on the altar since it was blemished, but they also could not explain this satisfactorily to the gentile authorities, who did not consider it to be blemished.

The blemish notwithstanding, the Sages thought to sacrifice the animal as an offering due to the imperative to maintain peace with the government. Rabbi Zekharya ben Avkolas³ said to them: If the priests do that, people will say that blemished animals may be sacrificed as offerings on the altar. The Sages said: If we do not sacrifice it, then we must prevent bar Kamtza from reporting this to the emperor. The Sages thought to kill him⁴ so that he would not go and speak against them. Rabbi Zekharya said to them: If you kill him, people will say that one who makes a blemish on sacrificial animals is to be killed. As a result, they did nothing, bar Kamtza's slander was accepted by the authorities, and consequently the war between the Jews and the Romans began.

Rabbi Yohanan says: The excessive humility of Rabbi Zekharya ben Avkolas⁵ destroyed our Temple, burned our Sanctuary, and exiled us from our land.

The Roman authorities then sent Nero Caesar⁶ against the Jews. When he came to Jerusalem, he wished to test his fate. He shot an arrow to the east and the arrow came and fell in Jerusalem. He then shot another arrow to the west and it also fell in Jerusalem. He shot an arrow in all four directions of the heavens, and each time the arrow fell in Jerusalem.

Nero then conducted another test: He said to a child: Tell me the verse that you learned today. He said to him as follows: "And I will lay My vengeance upon Edom by the hand of My people Israel" (Ezekiel 25:14). Nero said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, wishes to destroy His Temple, and He wishes to wipe his hands with that man, i.e., with me. The Romans are associated with Edom, the descendants of Esau. If I continue on this mission, I will eventually be punished for having served as God's agent to bring about the destruction. So he fled and became a convert, and ultimately Rabbi Meir descended from him.

LANGUAGE

Inform [eikhul kurtza] – איכול קורצא: This Aramaic expression is found in the Bible, where it says: "Va'akhalu kartzeihon" (Daniel 3:8), as well as in Aramaic translations of other verses, as the word for talebearing, informing, or denouncing.

Avkolas – אבקולס: Apparently from the Greek εὐκολος, *eukolos*, meaning good-natured, easily satisfied, self-sufficient, or admired.

HALAKHA

On the calf's upper lip – בנב שפתים: If the lip of an animal is damaged or cracked, it is considered to be blemished and may not be sacrificed as an offering. The same applies to an animal that has a white dot in the middle of its pupil, referred to as *dak* in the Torah (Rambam *Sefer Avoda*, *Hilkhot Biat HaMikdash* 7:5, 7).

The Sages thought to kill him – סבור לְמִיקְטִלְיָה: With regard to those who slander Jews to the government, it is a mitzva to eradicate them and to cause them to descend to the pit of destruction (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda*, *Hilkhot Avoda Zara*, 11:1).

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Zekharya ben Avkolas – רבי זכריה בן אבקולס: Very little is known about this Sage, and only one *halakha*, in tractate *Shabbat*, is recorded in his name. Yet, based on what is written here and in collections of *midrashim*, he appears to have been one of most prominent Sages of his generation. Some identify him with Zekharya ben Amfaddolas, who is mentioned by Josephus as one of the Sages close to the leaders of the rebellion.

Nero Caesar – נירון קיסר: The Roman emperor Nero was killed under strange circumstances and after his death, rumors circulated that he was not actually killed but had taken refuge elsewhere.

It should be noted that the name Caesar is fundamentally a family name, and many members of this family, both those born into it and those who were adopted, were called Nero either as a first or middle name, such as Tiberius, Claudius' father Drusus, and others. It therefore appears that this story refers to a member of the Caesar family who was appointed as an officer in the Roman army in the campaign against the Judean revolt. It is also known that there were several figures in the Caesar family who had a high regard for Judaism, and it is reasonable to assume that this officer eventually converted.

NOTES

His humility, etc. – ענוותנותו וכו': Rabbi Zekharya's actions here are an expression of his humility in that he did not wish to rely on his own opinion and rule one way or the other, as he was concerned about what people would say if he issued a ruling with regard to this matter. Rabbi Yohanan criticizes him for this, as there are times when a Sage must rule decisively, and not be concerned with the reaction of the masses (*Maharatz Hayyut*). *Midrash Eikha* explains that Rabbi Zekharya ben Avkolas was one of the Sages at the feast that bar Kamtza was mistakenly invited to, and due to his humility he did not protest the host's conduct.

Keys [aklidei] – אַקלידֵי: From either the Greek κλεις, *kleis*, meaning key, bolt, or hook, or from κλειδιον, *kleidion*, meaning small key.



Key from the mishnaic period

Storehouse [akhleva] – אַחֲלֵבָא: This word is a misspelling of *akhlekha*, which is derived from the Akkadian *kalakku*, meaning storehouse.

Storehouses [ambarei] – אַמְבָּרֵי: From the Middle Persian *ambār*, meaning storehouse.

Fine flour [semida] – סְמִידָא: Related to the Greek σμιδαλις, *semidalis*, meaning fine wheat flour.

Coarse flour [gushkera] – גּוּשְׁקָרָא: Apparently from the Middle Iranian *hushkar*, meaning coarse flour.

שְׁדָרְיָה עִלְוִיָּהּ לְאַסְפִּיקִינוֹס קִיסָר. אֲתָא, צַר עָלָה תַּלְתָּ שָׁנִי. הָיוּ בָּהּ הֵנָּה תַּלְתָּ אֶתְרֵי: נַקְדִּימוֹן בֶּן גּוּרְיוֹן, וּבֶן כַּלְבָּא שָׁבוּעַ, וּבֶן צִיצִית הַכֶּסֶת; נַקְדִּימוֹן בֶּן גּוּרְיוֹן – שֶׁנִּקְדָּה לוֹ חֲמָה בַּעֲבוּרֵי; בֶּן כַּלְבָּא שָׁבוּעַ – שֶׁכָּל הַנֶּכֶס לְבֵיתוֹ בִּשְׁהוּא רָעַב כָּלֵל, יוֹצֵא בִּשְׁהוּא שָׁבֹעַ; בֶּן צִיצִית הַכֶּסֶת – שֶׁהֵיחָה צִיצִיתוֹ נִגְרָתָה עַל גְּבִי כֶסֶתוֹ. אִיכָא דְאַמְרֵי: שֶׁהֵיחָה כֶסֶתוֹ מוֹטֶלֶת בֵּין גְּדוּלֵי רוֹמִי.

חַד אָמַר לָהּ: אֲנִי זֵינָא לָהּ בְּחִיטֵי וְשַׁעֲרֵי, וְחַד אָמַר לָהּ: בְּדַחְמָא וּבְדַמְלָחָא וּמִשְׁחָא. וְחַד אָמַר לָהּ: בְּרָצִיבִי, וְשִׁבְחוּ רַבְּנֵי לְרָצִיבִי, דְּרַב חֲסָדָא כָּל אַקְלִידֵי הָיוּ מְסַר לְשִׁמְעִיָּה בַר מְדַצְבִּי, דְּאָמַר רַב חֲסָדָא: אַחֲלָבָא דְחִיטֵי בְּעֵי שִׁתָּיִן אַחֲלָבִי רָצִיבִי. הָיוּ לָהּ לְמִינוֹ עֶשְׂרִים וְחַד שֶׁתָּא.

הָיוּ בָּהּ הֵנָּה בְּרִיוֹנִי, אָמְרוּ לָהּ רַבְּנֵי: נִיפּוֹק וְנַעֲבִיד שְׁלָמָא בְּהַדְיָהּ, לֹא שֶׁבִקְנָהּ. אָמְרוּ לָהּ: נִיפּוֹק וְנַעֲבִיד קֶרְבָּא בְּהַדְיָהּ, אָמְרוּ לָהּ רַבְּנֵי: לֹא מִסְתַּיְעָא מִלְתָּא. קָמוּ קִלְנָהּ לְהִנָּהּ אַמְבָּרֵי דְחִיטֵי וְשַׁעֲרֵי, וְהָיוּ כְּפָנָא.

מָרְתָּא בַת בַּיְתוֹס עֲתִירְתָּא דִּירוּשָׁלַיִם הָיְתָא, שְׁדָרְתָּה לְשִׁלּוּחָהּ וְאָמְרָה לֵיהּ: זֵיל אֵייתִי לִי סְמִידָא. אֲדֹאֵל אֵיזְדָּבֶן, אֲתָא אָמַר לָהּ: סְמִידָא לִיכָא, חִיירְתָּא אִיכָא, אָמְרָה לֵיהּ: זֵיל אֵייתִי לִי אֲדֹאֵל אֵיזְדָּבֶן, אֲתָא וְאָמַר לָהּ: חִיירְתָּא לִיכָא, גּוּשְׁקָרָא אִיכָא, אָמְרָה לֵיהּ: זֵיל אֵייתִי לִי אֲדֹאֵל אֵיזְדָּבֶן, אֲתָא וְאָמַר לָהּ: גּוּשְׁקָרָא לִיכָא, קִימְחָא דְשַׁעֲרֵי אִיכָא, אָמְרָה לֵיהּ: זֵיל אֵייתִי לִי אֲדֹאֵל אֵיזְדָּבֶן.

The Roman authorities then sent Vespasian Caesar^p against the Jews. He came and laid siege to Jerusalem for three years. There were at that time in Jerusalem these three wealthy people: Nakdimon ben Guryon,^p ben Kalba Savua,^p and ben Tzitzit HaKesat.^p The Gemara explains their names: Nakdimon ben Guryon was called by that name because the sun shined [*nakad*] on his behalf, as it is related elsewhere (see *Ta'anit* 19b) that the sun once continued to shine in order to prevent him from suffering a substantial loss. Ben Kalba Savua was called this because anyone who entered his house when he was hungry as a dog [*kelev*] would leave satiated [*save'a*]. Ben Tzitzit HaKesat was referred to by that name because his ritual fringes [*tzitzit*] dragged along on blankets [*keset*], meaning that he would not walk in the street with his feet on the ground, but rather they would place blankets beneath him. There are those who say that his seat [*kiseh*] was found among the nobles of Rome, meaning that he would sit among them.

These three wealthy people offered their assistance. One of them said to the leaders of the city: I will feed the residents with wheat and barley. And one of them said to leaders of the city: I will provide the residents with wine, salt, and oil. And one of them said to the leaders of the city: I will supply the residents with wood. The Gemara comments: And the Sages gave special praise to he who gave the wood, since this was an especially expensive gift. As Rav Hisha would give all of the keys [*aklidei*]^l to his servant, except for the key to his shed for storing wood, which he deemed the most important of them all. As Rav Hisha said: One storehouse [*akhleva*]^l of wheat requires sixty storehouses of wood for cooking and baking fuel. These three wealthy men had between them enough commodities to sustain the besieged for twenty-one years.

There were certain zealots among the people of Jerusalem. The Sages said to them: Let us go out and make peace with the Romans. But the zealots did not allow them to do this. The zealots said to the Sages: Let us go out and engage in battle against the Romans. But the Sages said to them: You will not be successful. It would be better for you to wait until the siege is broken. In order to force the residents of the city to engage in battle, the zealots arose and burned down these storehouses [*ambarei*]^l of wheat and barley, and there was a general famine.

With regard to this famine it is related that Marta bat Baitos^p was one of the wealthy women of Jerusalem. She sent out her agent and said to him: Go bring me fine flour [*semida*].^l By the time he went, the fine flour was already sold. He came and said to her: There is no fine flour, but there is ordinary flour. She said to him: Go then and bring me ordinary flour. By the time he went, the ordinary flour was also sold. He came and said to her: There is no ordinary flour, but there is coarse flour [*gushkera*].^l She said to him: Go then and bring me coarse flour. By the time he went, the coarse flour was already sold. He came and said to her: There is no coarse flour, but there is barley flour. She said to him: Go then and bring me barley flour. But once again, by the time he went, the barley flour was also sold.

PERSONALITIES

Vespasian Caesar – אַסְפִּיקִינוֹס קִיסָר: Vespasian served as the Roman emperor from 69–79 CE. He founded the Flavian dynasty and was responsible for the destruction of the Temple and the accompanying devastation of Judea. Vespasian's family was part of the Roman equestrian order, and he distinguished himself in battle and rose in the ranks of the Roman army, eventually being appointed to suppress the Great Revolt of the Jews in Judea. While his military operations were successful, he had yet to conquer Jerusalem when he left Judea after being declared emperor in the summer of 69 CE. He entrusted the siege and ultimate conquest of Jerusalem to his son, Titus, who later became emperor as well.

Nakdimon ben Guryon – נַקְדִּימוֹן בֶּן גּוּרְיוֹן: Nakdimon ben Guryon, whose Hebrew name appears to have been Boni, was

one of the wealthiest men living in Jerusalem at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple. Tractate *Ta'anit* tells of the great sums of charity that he donated to the community and the miracle of the sun that was performed for him as a result.

Ben Kalba Savua – בֶּן כַּלְבָּא שָׁבוּעַ: The family of ben Kalba Savua was one of the wealthiest and most powerful at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple and in the period following, as is known from the story of Rabbi Akiva marrying one of the daughters of this family. It is said to trace its descent back to Caleb, the son of Jephunneh. The name Kalba seems to be based on this lineage rather than the explanation given in the Gemara here.

Ben Tzitzit HaKesat – בֶּן צִיצִית הַכֶּסֶת: Ben Tzitzit HaKesat was one of the wealthiest Jews at the time of the destruction of

the Second Temple. The midrash in *Bereshit Rabba* notes that a genealogical scroll was found in Jerusalem listing the house of Tzitzit HaKesat as descending from King Saul's general, Abner, the son of Ner.

Marta bat Baitos – מָרְתָּא בַת בַּיְתוֹס: Marta bat Baitos is mentioned in several places in the Talmud. Due to her great wealth, she has served throughout the ages as the archetype of a very wealthy woman. The house of Baitos was one of the most powerful and wealthy families of priests in Jerusalem, and many members of this household served as High Priest or in other important positions in the Temple. According to the Jerusalem Talmud, Marta married Yehoshua ben Gamla as a result of trickery on his part. After becoming betrothed to him, she sought to secure him the position as High Priest.

Abba Sikkara – אבא סקרא: Apparently Abba Sikkara was not his actual name but rather a nickname, *sikkara* being the Aramaic form of the word *sicarius* or murderer (55b). In *midrashim* he is called ben Batiah, similar to ben Avatiah, meaning son of a watermelon, as he is called in tractate *Kelim* (17:12). These appear to be nicknames given to him due to his great size. The present passage identifies him as one of the leaders of the Great Revolt.

LANGUAGE

Zealots [*biryanim*] – בְּרִיּוֹנִים: The source of this word has not been found. Some propose that it may be a shortened and altered form of *praetoriani*, the term for Caesar's guard, and was borrowed to mean menacing figures who show no obedience to authority.

הָיָה שְׁלִיפָא מְסָאנָא, אֲמַרָה: אִיפּוּק וְאַחֲזִי אִי מִשְׁכַּחְנָא מִיַּדִּי לְמִיכָל, אֵיתִיב לָהּ פְּרִתָּא בְּכַרְעָא וּמָתָה.

קָרַי עָלָהּ רַבִּין יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאי: "הֲרֹפֶה בֶּן הָעֲנֻנָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא נִסְתָּה כִּף רֹגְלָהּ." אִכָּא דְאֲמַרִי: גְּרוּגוּרוֹת דְּרַבִּי צְדוֹק אֲכָלָהּ, וְאִיתְנִסָּא וּמָתָה. דְּרַבִּי צְדוֹק יְתִיב אֲרֻבְעִין שָׁנִין בְּתַעֲנִיתָא דְלֹא לִיחָרֵב יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, כִּי הָיָה אֲכִיל מִיַּדִּי הָיָה מִיתְחִזִּי מֵאֲבָרָא, וְכִי הָיָה בְּרִיא, מִיַּתִּי לִיהּ גְּרוּגוּרוֹת, מִיֵּץ מִיְהוּ וּשְׂדֵי לָהּ.

She had just removed her shoes, but she said: I will go out myself and see if I can find something to eat. She stepped on some dung, which stuck to her foot, and, overcome by disgust, she died.

Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai read concerning her a verse found in the section of the Torah listing the curses that will befall Israel: "The tender and delicate woman among you who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground" (Deuteronomy 28:56). There are those who say that she did not step on dung, but rather she ate a fig of Rabbi Tzadok, and became disgusted and died. What are these figs? Rabbi Tzadok observed fasts for forty years, praying that Jerusalem would not be destroyed. He became so emaciated from fasting that when he would eat something it was visible from the outside of his body. And when he would eat after a fast they would bring him figs and he would suck out their liquid and cast the rest away. It was one such fig that Marta bat Baitos found and that caused her death.

It is further related that as she was dying, she took out all of her gold and silver and threw it in the marketplace. She said: Why do I need this? And this is as it is written: "They shall cast their silver in the streets and their gold shall be as an impure thing; their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels" (Ezekiel 7:19).

§ The Gemara relates: Abba Sikkara⁹ was the leader of the zealots [*biryonei*]¹ of Jerusalem and the son of the sister of Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai. Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai sent a message to him: Come to me in secret. He came, and Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai said to him: Until when will you do this and kill everyone through starvation? Abba Sikkara said to him: What can I do, for if I say something to them they will kill me. Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai said to him: Show me a method so that I will be able to leave the city, and it is possible that through this there will be some small salvation.

Abba Sikkara said to him: This is what you should do: Pretend to be sick, and have everyone come and ask about your welfare, so that word will spread about your ailing condition. Afterward bring something putrid and place it near you, so that people will say that you have died and are decomposing. And then, have your students enter to bring you to burial, and let no one else come in so that the zealots not notice that you are still light. As the zealots know that a living person is lighter than a dead person.

Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai did this. Rabbi Eliezer entered from one side and Rabbi Yehoshua from the other side to take him out. When they arrived at the entrance of the city on the inside, the guards, who were of the faction of the zealots, wanted to pierce him with their swords in order to ascertain that he was actually dead, as was the common practice. Abba Sikkara said to them: The Romans will say that they pierce even their teacher. The guards then wanted at least to push him to see whether he was still alive, in which case he would cry out on account of the pushing. Abba Sikkara said to them: They will say that they push even their teacher. The guards then opened the gate and he was taken out.

When Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai reached there, i.e., the Roman camp, he said: Greetings to you, the king; greetings to you, the king. Vespasian said to him: You are liable for two death penalties, one because I am not a king and yet you call me king, and furthermore, if I am a king, why didn't you come to me until now? Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai said to him: As for what you said about yourself: I am not a king,

כִּי הָיָה קָא נִחָא נַפְשָׁהּ, אִפִּיקְתָּהּ לְכָל דְּחָבָא וּכְפָא שְׂדִיתָהּ בְּשׁוּקָא, אֲמַרָה: הָאִי לְמָאִי מִיבְעִי לִי! וְהֵינִי דְכַתְבִּי: "כְּסָפָם בַּחוּצוֹת יִשְׁלִיכוּ".

אֲבָא סִקְרָא רִישׁ בְּרִיּוֹנֵי דִירוּשָׁלַיִם בֶּר אַחְתֵּיהּ דְּרַבִּין יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאי הָיָה, שְׁלַח לִיהּ: תָּא בְּצִינְעָא לְגַבְאִי. אָתָּא, אָמַר לִיהּ: עַד אֵימַת עֲבָדִיתוּ הֵכָּה, וְקִטְלִיתוּ לִיהּ לְעֵלְמָא בְּכַפְנָא? אָמַר לִיהּ: מָאִי אֵינְעִבִיד, דָּאִי אֲמִינָא לָהּ מִיַּדִּי קִטְלוּ לִי! אָמַר לִיהּ: חֲזִי לִי תַקְנָתָא לְדִידִי דְאִיפּוּק, אֲפֻשֶׁר דְּהוּי הַעֲלָה פּוֹרְתָא.

אָמַר לִיהּ: נְקוּט נַפְשֶׁךָ בְּקִצְרִי, וְלִיתִי בּוֹלִי עֲלֵמָא וְלִישְׁיִילוּ בֶּן, וְאֵייתִי מִיַּדִּי סְרִיא וְאִגְנִי גַבְךָ, וְלִימְרוּ דְנַח נַפְשֶׁךָ, וְלִישְׁיִילוּ בֶּן תַּלְמִידֶךָ וְלֹא לִיעוֹל בֶּן אֵינִישׁ אַחֲרִינָא, דְלֹא לְרַגְשָׁן בֶּן דְּקָלִיל אֶת, דְּאִינְהוּ יִדְעִי דְחִיָּא קָלִיל מִמֵּיתָא.

עֲבִיד הֵכָּה, נִכְנַס בּוֹ רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר מִצֵּד אֶחָד וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ מִצֵּד אֶחָד, כִּי מָטוּ לְפִיתְחָא בְּעוּ לְמִדְקָרִיָּה, אָמַר לָהּ: יֹאמְרוּ "רַבִּין דְּקָרוּ!" בְּעוּ לְמִדְחַפְיָהּ, אָמַר לָהּ: יֹאמְרוּ "רַבִּין דְּחַפִּי!" פְּתַחוּ לִיהּ בָּבָא, נֶפֶק.

כִּי מָטָא לְהַתָּם, אָמַר: שְׁלָמָא עֲלֶיךָ מַלְכָּא, שְׁלָמָא עֲלֶיךָ מַלְכָּא! אָמַר לִיהּ: מִיחֲיִיבָתִי תִרִי קִטְלָא, חֲדָא, דְלֹא מַלְכָּא אֲנָא וְקָא קִרִית לִי מַלְכָּא! וְתוּ, אִי מַלְכָּא אֲנָא, עַד הָאִידְנָא אֲמָאִי לֹא אֶתִית לְגַבְאִי? אָמַר לִיהּ: דְּקֹאֲמַרְתָּ לָאוּ מַלְכָּא אֲנָא.

BACKGROUND

In truth you are a king – איברא מלכא את – A similar account is relayed in Roman history books. According to these writings, the Sages, among whom the Romans included Josephus, predicted that Vespasian would eventually become emperor of Rome.

A messenger arrived – אתי פריסתקא: During the year that Vespasian became emperor, known as the year of the four Caesars, a revolt erupted in the empire in the course of which the emperor Nero was killed and a dispute commenced over the issue of who was to succeed him. The legions stationed in the Balkans, Syria, and Judea chose Vespasian as emperor and the Egyptian governor gave him his immediate support. After a period of time Vespasian was informed from Rome that his followers in the Roman army had killed the reigning emperor Vitellius, and he was then recognized by all as the ruler of the empire.

Yavne – יבנה: Yavne is an ancient city mentioned in the Bible. Apparently, it is Yavneel, located in the tribal territory of Judah. It was a Philistine city for many years, and it is listed as one of the places whose walls were breached by King Uziah of Judea.

Yavne is located slightly more than a kilometer from the Mediterranean coast, due west of Jerusalem. It was conquered by Vespasian during the campaign to quash the Great Revolt, which culminated in the destruction of the Second Temple. It seems that several Sages who did not support the revolt settled there. When Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai joined them, Yavne became the spiritual center of Eretz Yisrael and the seat of the Sanhedrin for many years, apparently until the bar Kokheva rebellion. The main yeshiva there was called the vineyard in Yavne, as the students would sit in rows, evoking the rows of grapevines in a vineyard.

The dynasty of Rabban Gamliel – שושילתא דרבנן גמליאל: Although the *Nesi'im* from the house of Hillel were moderate in their political views, they still joined the Great Revolt. Since Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel was considered the leader of the people and as such was responsible for what happened in Eretz Yisrael, he was sentenced to death. Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai made a unique request, that despite Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel's execution, his family should not be held responsible and killed or exiled.

Doctors to heal Rabbi Tzadok – אקוטא דמסיין ליה לרבי: As with all cases of malnutrition, Rabbi Tzadok's many years of fasting exacted a heavy toll on his physiology, manifested not only in extreme weight loss from the depletion of fat cells, but also in the shrinkage of his stomach and an inability to adequately digest food. A person in this condition who tries to eat normally will become sick and possibly die. For this reason doctors had to monitor his gradual transition to a normal diet.

NOTES

Lebanon – לבנון: It was understood that Moses wished to see the Temple Mount, referred to as "that good mountain," and the Temple itself. The Temple is referred to as "Lebanon" because it achieves atonement for and thereby whitens [*malbin*] Israel's sins, which are depicted in the Bible as being scarlet red. In addition, the Temple was built from the cedars of Lebanon, as is mentioned in the book of Kings.

LANGUAGE

Snake [*derakon*] – דרקון: From the Greek δράκων, *drakon*, meaning snake. The word also means dragon.

Messenger [*peristaka*] – פריסתקא: From the Middle Iranian *frēstak*, meaning envoy or messenger.

איברא מלכא את, דאי לאו מלכא את
לא מימסרא ירושלים בידך, דכתב:
"והלבנון באדיר ופול", ואין "אדיר"
אלא מלך, דכתב: "והיה אדירו ממנו"
וגו', ואין "לבנון" אלא בית המקדש,
שנאמר: "ההר הטוב הזה והלבנון";
ודקאמרת אי מלכא אנא אמאי לא
קאתית לגבאי עד האידינא – בריוני
דאית בן לא שבקינן.

אמר ליה: אילו חבית של דבש ודרקון
ברוך עליה, לא היו שוברין את החבית
בשביל דרקון? אישיתקי. קרי עליה רב
יוסף, ואיתימא רבי עקיבא: "מישיב
חכמים אחור ודעתם יסבל", איבעי ליה
למימר ליה: שקלינן צבתא ושקלינן ליה
לדרקון וקטלינן ליה, וחביתא שבקינן
לה.

אדדקי אתי פריסתקא עליה מרומי,
אמר ליה: קום, דמית ליה קיסר, ואמרי
נהו חשיבי דרומי לאותיבך ברישא.
היה סיים חד מסאמי, בעא למסימא
לאחרינא לא עייל, בעא למשלכא
לאדיך לא נפק, אמר: מאי האי?

אמר ליה: לא תצטער, שמועה טובה
אתיא לך, דכתב: "שמועה טובה תדשן
עצם". אלא מאי תקנתיה? ליתי איניש
דלא מיתבא דעתך מיניה ולחלוף קמך.
דכתב: "ורוח נכאה תיבש גרם", עבד
הכי, עייל. אמר ליה: ומאחר דחכמיתו
בולי האי, עד האידינא אמאי לא אתיתו
לגבאי? אמר ליה: ולא אמרי לך? אמר
ליה: אנא נמי אמרי לך!

אמר ליה: מייל אוילנא ואיניש אחרינא
משדרנא, אלא בעי מינאי מידי דאתן
לך. אמר ליה: תן לי לבנה וחכמיה,
ושושילתא דרבנן גמליאל, ואסוותא
דמסיין ליה לרבי צדוק. קרי עליה רב
יוסף, ואיתימא רבי עקיבא: "מישיב
חכמים אחור ודעתם יסבל", איבעי
למימר ליה לשבקינהו הדיא זימנא.

in truth, you are a king,⁸ if not now, then in the future. As if you are not a king, Jerusalem will not be handed over into your hand, as it is written: "And the Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one" (Isaiah 10:34). And "mighty one" means only a king, as it is written: "And their mighty one shall be of themselves, and their ruler shall proceed from the midst of them" (Jeremiah 30:21), indicating that "mighty one" parallels "ruler." And "Lebanon" means only the Temple, as it is stated: "That good mountain and the Lebanon" (Deuteronomy 3:25).⁹ And as for what you said with your second comment: If I am a king why didn't you come to me until now, there are zealots among us who did not allow us to do this.

Understanding that Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai was prepared to ask him not to destroy the Temple, Vespasian said to him: If there is a barrel of honey and a snake [*derakon*]¹ is wrapped around it, wouldn't they break the barrel in order to kill the snake? In similar fashion, I am forced to destroy the city of Jerusalem in order to kill the zealots barricaded within it. Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai was silent and did not answer. In light of this, Rav Yosef later read the following verse about him, and some say that it was Rabbi Akiva who applied the verse to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai: "I am the Lord... Who turns wise men backward and makes their knowledge foolish" (Isaiah 44:25). As Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai should have said the following to Vespasian in response: In such a case, we take tongs, remove the snake, and kill it, and in this way we leave the barrel intact. So too, you should kill the rebels and leave the city as it is.

In the meantime, as they were talking, a messenger [*feristaka*]¹ arrived⁸ from Rome, and said to him: Rise, for the emperor has died, and the noblemen of Rome plan to appoint you as their leader and make you the next emperor. At that time Vespasian was wearing only one shoe, and when he tried to put on the other one, it would not go on his foot. He then tried to remove the other shoe that he was already wearing, but it would not come off. He said: What is this?

Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai said to him: Be not distressed or troubled, for good tidings have reached you, as it is written: "Good tidings make the bone fat" (Proverbs 15:30), and your feet have grown fatter out of joy and satisfaction. Vespasian said to him: But what is the remedy? What must I do in order to put on my shoe? Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai said to him: Have someone with whom you are displeased come and pass before you, as it is written: "A broken spirit dries the bones" (Proverbs 17:22). He did this, and his shoe went on his foot. Vespasian said to him: Since you are so wise, why didn't you come to see me until now? Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai said to him: But didn't I already tell you? Vespasian said to him: I also told you what I had to say.

Vespasian then said to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai: I will be going to Rome to accept my new position, and I will send someone else in my place to continue besieging the city and waging war against it. But before I leave, ask something of me that I can give you. Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai said to him: Give me Yavne⁹ and its Sages and do not destroy it, and spare the dynasty of Rabban Gamliel⁸ and do not kill them as if they were rebels, and lastly give me doctors to heal Rabbi Tzadok.⁸ Rav Yosef read the following verse about him, and some say that it was Rabbi Akiva who applied the verse to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai: "I am the Lord... Who turns wise men backward and makes their knowledge foolish" (Isaiah 44:25), as he should have said to him to leave the Jews alone this time.

Flour mixed with bran [*sipuka*] – סיפוקא: The *Arukh* and others have a version that reads *siposka*, which apparently is derived from the Middle Iranian *sapōsak*, meaning bran.

NOTES

Who is like You – מי כמכה: This exposition is based upon the spelling of the word “gods [*elim*]” without a *yod*, so that it can be read as *ilem*, mute. Therefore, the Sages expound the verse to mean: Who is like You, Who remains silent among the mute (Maharsha).

והוא סבר, דלמא כולי האי לא עביד,
והצלה פורתא נמי לא הוי.

And why didn't Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai make this request? He maintained that Vespasian might not do that much for him, and there would not be even a small amount of salvation. Therefore, he made only a modest request, in the hope that he would receive at least that much.

אסוותא דמסיין ליה לרבי צדוק מאי
היא? וימא קמא אשקויה מיא דפארי,
למחר מיא דסיפוקא, למחר מיא
דקימחא, עד דרווח מיניה פורתא
פורתא.

The Gemara asks: What was he requesting when he asked for doctors to heal Rabbi Tzadok? How did they heal him? The first day they gave him water to drink that contained bran [*parei*]. The next day they gave him water containing flour mixed with bran [*sipuka*].¹ The following day they gave him water containing flour. In this way they slowly restored his ability to eat, allowing his stomach to broaden little by little.

אזל שדריה לטיטוס. ואמר אי אליהמו
צור חסיו בו – זה טיטוס הרשע שהיה
וגידף כלפי מעלה.

§ Vespasian went back to Rome and sent Titus in his place. The Gemara cites a verse that was expounded as referring to Titus: “And he shall say: Where is their God, their rock in whom they trusted?” (Deuteronomy 32:37). This is the wicked Titus,⁸ who insulted and blasphemed God on High.

מה עשה? תפש זונה בידו ונכנס לבית
קדשי הקדשים, והציע ספר תורה
ועבר עליה עבירה, ונטל סייף וגידר את
הפרוכת, ונעשה נס והיה דם מבצבץ
ויוצא. וכסבירו הרג את עצמו, שנאמר
“שאגו צורריך בקרב בקרב מעדיך שמו
אותותם אותות.”

What did Titus do when he conquered the Temple? He took a prostitute with his hand, and entered the Holy of Holies with her. He then spread out a Torah scroll underneath him and committed a sin, i.e., engaged in sexual intercourse, on it. Afterward he took a sword and cut into the curtain separating between the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. And a miracle was performed and blood spurted forth. Seeing the blood, he mistakenly thought that he had killed himself. Here, the term himself is a euphemism for God. Titus saw blood issuing forth from the curtain in God's meeting place, the Temple, and he took it as a sign that he had succeeded in killing God Himself. As it is stated: “Your enemies roar in the midst of Your meeting place; they have set up their own signs for signs” (Psalms 74:4).

אבא חנן אומר: “מי כמוך חסין יה” – מי
כמוך חסין וקשה, שאתה שומע ניאוצו
וגידופו של אותו רשע ושותק. דבי רבי
ישמעאל תנא: “מי כמכה באלים ה” –
מי כמכה באלמים.

Abba Ḥanan says: The verse states: “Who is strong like You, O Lord?” (Psalms 89:9). Who is strong and indurate like You, as You hear the abuse and the blasphemy of that wicked man and remain silent. Similarly, the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught that the verse: “Who is like You,⁹ O Lord, among the gods [*elim*]” (Exodus 15:11), should be read as: Who is like You among the mute [*ilmim*], for You conduct Yourself like a mute and remain silent in the face of Your blasphemers.

מה עשה? נטל את הפרוכת ועשא
כמין גרוגותני, והביא כל כלים שבמקדש
והניחן בהן. והשיבן בספינה לילך
להשתבח בעירו. שנאמר: “ובכן ראיתי
רשעים קבורים ונבאו וממקום קדוש
יהלכו וישתבחו בעיר אשר בן עשו,
אל תיקרי “קבורים” אלא “קבוצים”, אל
תיקרי “וישתבחו” אלא “וישתבחו.”

What else did Titus do? He took the curtain and formed it like a large basket, and brought all of the sacred vessels of the Temple and placed them in it. And he put them on a ship to go and be praised in his city that he had conquered Jerusalem, as it is stated: “And so I saw the wicked buried, and come to their rest; but those that had done right were gone from the holy place, and were forgotten in the city; this also is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 8:10). Do not read the word as “buried [*kevurim*].” Rather, read it as collected [*kevutzim*]. And do not read the word as “and were forgotten [*veyishtakehu*].” Rather, read it as: And they were praised [*veyishtabehu*]. According to this interpretation, the verse speaks of those who will gather and collect items “from the holy place,” the Temple, and be praised in their city about what they had done.

איכא דאמרי: קבורים ממש, דאפילו
מילי דמטמין אינלייא להון.

There are those who say that the verse is to be read as written, as it is referring to items that were actually buried. This is because even items that had been buried were revealed to them, i.e., Titus and his soldiers, as they found all of the sacred vessels.

BACKGROUND

The wicked Titus – טיטוס הרשע: Titus was the eldest son of Vespasian, replacing him as Caesar after his death for a short reign of approximately two years. Although Roman sources praise him for his positive attributes, prior to his rise to power he displayed great cruelty and was steeped in promiscuity. The many negative

references to him in the Talmud are due to his having ordered the destruction of the Second Temple. The destruction of the Temple after Jerusalem had been captured was not necessary from a military standpoint, and it even contradicted the prevailing Roman policy of respecting the sacred sites of conquered countries.

BACKGROUND

Divine Voice [*bat kol*] – **בַּת קוֹל**: This term has been explained in various ways. Some explain that a Divine Voice is a subcategory of prophecy; although prophecy had ceased before this time, the Holy Spirit remained (see *Ge'onim*; *Tosafot*). Others suggest that a Divine Voice is a type of echo or sound whose source cannot be placed, e.g., when people have a conversation and happen to be overheard saying something that resolves another's difficulty. Such cases are found in the Jerusalem Talmud (Maharatz Hayyut). Another possibility is that the word *bat* refers here to a measure, as a *bat* is a biblical measure of liquid volume. Therefore, the meaning of this phrase is a voice for those who measure up, i.e., a voice heard only by those who are worthy (Rosh; see *Sefer HaNitzahon*).

A gnat came – **בָּא יְתוֹשׁ**: Some, including the Maharal, interpret this figuratively: Titus suffered from an illness of the brain that tormented and eventually killed him. It is known that Titus died at the young age of forty-two from a painful affliction that remained undiagnosed in Roman sources.

It should be noted that various parasites can enter the body through the skin or the orifices, grow there, and cause serious damage. One example is a parasite called the *Larva migrans*, which moves to different internal organs and is capable of reaching the brain, causing blindness and other damage.

Hammer – **אֲרוֹנְתָא**:



Relief of blacksmith with hammer, first century

Sparrow – **צִפּוֹר דָּרוֹר**: The house sparrow, *Passer domesticus*, is one of the most common varieties of birds. It is found in populated areas. The house sparrow is brown-gray in color and reaches approximately 14 cm in length. Adult males have a black patch on their necks.



Male house sparrows

Burn – **לִיקְלִיָּה**: Although the Roman custom was to bury the dead, the funerary ritual of the Caesar involved the public burning of his body down to ash.

LANGUAGE

Litra – **לִיטְרִין**: From the Greek *λίτρα*, *litra*, which has several meanings in Greek, among them a measure of volume, a measure of weight, and the name of a coin. A Greek *litra* equals 327 g.

עֲמַד עָלָיו נִחְשׁוֹל שְׂבִים לְטוֹבְעוֹ. אָמַר: כְּמִדּוּמָה אֲנִי שְׂאֵלֵיהֶם שֶׁל אֱלֹהֵי אִין גְּבוּרָתוֹ אֵלָּא בְּמַיִם, בָּא פֶּרַעַה טָבַעוּ בְּמַיִם, בָּא סִיסְרָא טָבַעוּ בְּמַיִם, אִף הוּא עוֹמֵד עָלֵי לְטוֹבְעֵי בְּמַיִם: אִם גְּבוּרָה הוּא יַעֲלֶה לִּבְשָׁה וְיַעֲשֶׂה עִמִּי מִלְחָמָה! יֵצֵאתָ בַּת קוֹל וְאָמַרְתָּ לוֹ: רִשָּׁע בֶּן רִשָּׁע בֶּן בְּנוֹ שֶׁל עֶשׂוֹ הָרִשָּׁע, בְּרִיָּה קִלְחָה יֵשׁ לִי בְּעוֹלָמִי וְיִתוֹשׁ שְׂמָהּ.

אֲמַאי קָרִי לָהּ בְּרִיָּה קִלְחָה? דְּמַעֲלָנָא אֵיתִי לָהּ וּמִפְקָנָא לֵית לָהּ.

עָלָה לִיבְשָׁה וְתַעֲשֶׂה עִמָּה מִלְחָמָה. עָלָה לִיבְשָׁה, בָּא יְתוֹשׁ וְנִכְנַס בְּחוֹטְמוֹ, וְנִקְרַ בְּמוֹחוֹ שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים. יוֹמָא חַד הָוָה קָא חֲלִיף אֲבָבָא דְּבִי נִפְחָא. שְׁמַע קֵל אֲרוֹנְתָא אִישְׁתִּיק, אָמַר: אִיבָא תְּקַנְתָּא. כָּל יוֹמָא מֵייתָא נִפְחָא וּמָחוּ קַמֶּיהָ, לְגוּי יְהִיב לָיָה אַרְבַּע זוּזֵי, וְיִשְׁאֵל אָמַר לָיָה: מִיִּסְתִּיךְ דְּקָא חֲוִית בְּסַנְאָךְ. עַד תִּלְתִּין יוֹמִין עֲבַד הֵכִי, מִכָּאן וְאִילָךְ כִּיּוֹן דְּדָשׁ דָּשׁ.

תַּנְיָא, אָמַר רַבִּי פִּנְחָס בֶּן עֲרוּבָא: אֲנִי הָיִיתִי בֵּין גְּדוֹלֵי רוֹמָי, וְכִשְׁמַת פְּצָעוּ אֶת מוֹחוֹ, וּמִצָּאוּ בּוֹ צִפּוֹר דָּרוֹר מִשְׁקַל שְׁנֵי סָלְעִים. בְּמַתְנֵיתָא תַּנָּא: כְּגוֹזֵל בֶּן שָׁנָה מִשְׁקַל שְׁנֵי לִיטְרִין.

אָמַר אַבְי, נִקְטִינָן: פִּיּוּ שֶׁל נְחוֹשֶׁת וְצִפּוֹרְנֵי שֶׁל בְּרוֹזֵל. כִּי הָוָה קָא מֵייתָ, אָמַר לָהּ: לִיקְלִיָּה לְהָהוּא גְּבִירָא וּלְבָדְרִי לְקִטְמִיָּה אֲשֶׁב יַמִּי, דְּלֹא לְשַׁבְחִיהָ אֱלֹהָא דִּיהוּדָאִי וְלִקְמִיָּה בְּדִינָא.

It is further related about Titus that he was once traveling at sea and a wave rose up against him and threatened to drown him. Titus said: It seems to me that their God, the God of Israel, has power only in water. Pharaoh rose against them and He drowned him in water. Sisera rose against them and He drowned him in water.^N Here too, He has risen up against me to drown me in water. If He is really mighty, let Him go up on dry land and there wage war against me. A Divine Voice^B issued forth and said to him: Wicked one, son of a wicked one, grandson of Esau the wicked, for you are among his descendants and act just like him, I have a lowly creature in My world and it is called a gnat.

The Gemara interjects: Why is it called a lowly creature? It is called this because it has an entrance for taking in food, but it does not have an exit for excretion.

The Gemara resumes its story about Titus. The Divine Voice continued: Go up on dry land and make war with it. He went up on dry land, and a gnat came,^B entered his nostril, and picked at his brain for seven years. Titus suffered greatly from this until one day he passed by the gate of a blacksmith's shop. The gnat heard the sound of a hammer^B and was silent and still. Titus said: I see that there is a remedy for my pain. Every day they would bring a blacksmith who hammered before him. He would give four dinars as payment to a gentile blacksmith, and to a Jew he would simply say: It is enough for you that you see your enemy in so much pain. He did this for thirty days and it was effective until then. From that point forward, since the gnat became accustomed to the hammering, it became accustomed to it, and once again it began to pick away at Titus's brain.

It is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Pinehas ben Arova said: I was at that time among the noblemen of Rome, and when Titus died they split open his head and found that the gnat had grown to the size of a sparrow^B weighing two sela. It was taught in another *baraita*: It was like a one-year-old pigeon weighing two litra.^L

Abaye said: We have a tradition that its mouth was made of copper and its claws were fashioned of iron. When Titus was dying, he said to his attendants: Burn^B that man, i.e., me, and scatter his ashes across the seven seas, so that the God of the Jews should not find me and stand me for judgment.

NOTES

Sisera rose and He drowned him in water – **בָּא סִיסְרָא טָבַעוּ**: Although Sisera himself was killed by Yael (Judges 4:21), this statement is based upon the verse: "The brook Kishon swept them away" (Judges 5:21). A midrash explains that Sisera's men

were swept away by the mighty waters of the Kishon, a river whose waters were normally quite shallow. Miraculously, at the moment Sisera and his men entered the river, the water level rose, drowning them all, with the exception of Sisera himself.

בולט ושוקע – A ring with a seal that is protruding or sunken. A ring with a seal that has a protruding shape of a human being may not be worn; however, it is permitted to seal with it, as the imprint of the seal is sunken. Conversely, while a ring with a sunken seal may be worn, one may not seal with it, as it produces a protruding shape of a human being, which is prohibited (*Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 141:5).

Many – רבים: If one did not fashion these objects himself, it is permitted to possess them in a place where many people are found. In these circumstances, there is no suspicion that he is using them for idolatrous purposes, and therefore there is no need to destroy or burn them. Nevertheless, it is a disgraceful practice to maintain these items (*Shakh; Peri Megadim; Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 141:4, and in the comment of Rema).

להתלמד – **To teach himself**: Images are prohibited when fashioned for decoration. However, if they are formed to be used as a learning aid, they are permitted, even if they protrude (*Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 141:5).

LANGUAGE

Statue [andarta] – אנדרטה: From the Greek ἀνδριάντος, *andriantos*, meaning a statue or an image of a human being.

התם חותמו בולט הוה, ומשום חשדא. בדתנא: טבעת, חותמו בולט – אסור להניחה ומותר להתוס בה. חותמו שוקע – מותר להניחה ואסור להתוס בה.

The Gemara answers: **There**, in the case of Rav Yehuda, **his was a protruding seal**, i.e., the image projected from the ring, and Shmuel prohibited it **due to the potential suspicion** that he had an object of idol worship in his hand. **As it is taught in a baraita:** With regard to a ring, if its seal protrudes it is prohibited to place it on one's finger, due to the suspicion of idol worship, but it is permitted to seal objects with it. In this case, the act of sealing creates an image that is sunken below the surface, which is not prohibited. However, if its seal is sunken,¹ it is permitted to place it on one's finger, but it is prohibited to seal objects with it, as that creates a protruding image.

ומי חיישינן לחשדא? והא הדיא בי בנישתא דשף וייתיב בנהרדעא, דהוה ביה אנדרטא. והו עיילי רב ושמואל ואבובא דשמואל ולוי ומצלו התם, ולא חיישי לחשדא! רבים שאני.

The Gemara asks: **And are we concerned about arousing suspicion** in a case of this kind? **But** what about that **certain synagogue that had been destroyed** in Eretz Yisrael and its stones were **relocated** and it was rebuilt so that it **satⁿ in Neharde'a**,² and there was a statue [*andarta*]¹ of the king in it. **And nevertheless** Rav and Shmuel and Shmuel's father and Levi would all **enter and pray there** and they were not concerned about arousing suspicion. The Gemara answers: When many Jews are present it is different, as a large group is not suspected of having idolatrous intentions. Rather, it is assumed that the statue is there exclusively for purposes of ornamentation.

והא רבן גמליאל יחיד הוא! כיון דנשיא הוא – שכיחי רבים גביה. איבעית אימא: דפרקים הוה.

The Gemara asks: **But isn't Rabban Gamliel an individual?** According to this reasoning, his images of the moon should have been prohibited, as they would have aroused suspicion. The Gemara answers: **Since he is the Nasi**, the head of the Great Sanhedrin, **many^h people were always found with him**, and therefore there was no room for suspicion. The Gemara suggests an alternative answer: **If you wish**, say that these images were not whole; rather, they were **formed from pieces** of images that had to be put together. Only complete images are prohibited.

ואיבעית אימא: להתלמד עבד, ובתיב: "לא תלמד לעשות" – אבל אתה למד להבין ולהורות.

The Gemara suggests yet another answer: **If you wish**, say: **Rabban Gamliel did this to teach himself**,³ which is not prohibited, as it is written: **"You shall not learn to do after the abominations of those nations"** (Deuteronomy 18:9), which indicates: **However, you may learn to understand and to teach**. In other words, it is permitted to do certain things for the sake of Torah study which would otherwise be prohibited.

מתני' מעשה שבאו שנים ואמרו: ראינוהו שחרית במזרח

MISHNA There was an incident in which two witnesses came to testify about the new moon, and they said: **We saw the waning moon in the morning in the east,**

NOTES

That had been relocated [*shaf*] and sat – דשף וייתיב: This synagogue was famous in Babylonia, as the Sages said that the presence of God resided there. There is an aggadic tradition that it was referred to in this manner because they built it from stones of the ruins of the first Temple, so that it had

fallen [*shaf*] and subsequently sat, i.e., the stones were rebuilt. Another explanation is that this is referring to God's presence, which left [*shaf*] the Temple and then sat, or resided, in this synagogue (see *Arukh* and *geonim*).

BACKGROUND

Neharde'a – נהרדעא: Neharde'a, a city on the Euphrates near the Malka River, was one of the oldest Jewish communities in Babylonia. According to tradition, Jews lived in Neharde'a as early as the First Temple period, sixth century BCE, after the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judea. Neharde'a was one of the most significant Jewish communities in Babylonia. It was a center of Torah learning from an early period, and its yeshiva is the oldest in Babylonia.

Many great *tanna'im* visited Neharde'a, including Rabbi

Akiva, who intercalated the calendar there (*Yevamot* 122b). In Rav's time, the first half of the third century CE, the Neharde'a yeshiva was headed by Rav Sheila and then by Shmuel. Since the city lay near the border between the Roman and the Persian Empires, it frequently suffered from the wars between the two; Pappa bar Nazer, Odonathus, king of Tadmor, destroyed it completely in 259 CE. Later, however, Jews resettled there, and many Torah scholars remained in Neharde'a even after its yeshiva moved to Mehoza and Pumbedita.

NOTES

In the morning in the east and in the evening in the west – **שְׁחִירָת בְּמִזְרָח וְעֵרֵב בְּמַעֲרָב**: Rashi provides two explanations of this incident. The first is that they saw the waning moon in the morning and the new moon in the evening, as explained in the Jerusalem Talmud. The second explanation is that they saw the new moon in the morning in one point of the sky and then again that night in a different, distant location, indicating that it traveled more quickly than is possible. Others suggest that they saw the waning moon on the morning of the twenty-eighth day and the new moon on the evening of the twenty-ninth (*Meiri*). Although this too is a shorter time than usual, Rabban Gamliel learned that sometimes the moon travels by a short path.

Rabban Gamliel accepted them – **קִיבְּלוּ רַבִּין גַּמְלִיאל**: Rashi and others explain that Rabban Gamliel relied on the tradition of his forefathers that sometimes the moon travels by a short path, in which the new moon is seen sooner than usual after the old moon. Most commentaries claim, based on their knowledge of astronomy, that this is impossible even in a deficient month. Consequently they explain, in the manner of the Rambam, that Rabban Gamliel disregarded the sighting of the waning moon as irrelevant. Presumably the witnesses saw a cloud and thought it was the moon (Rabbi Zerahya HaLevi).

They are false witnesses, etc. – **עֵדֵי שֶׁקֶר הֵיוּ**: The commentaries dispute this point. Some maintain that Rabban Gamliel did disregard the testimony that the moon was not seen on the night of the thirtieth, as irrelevant. Perhaps clouds, fog, or similar phenomena obscured the new moon (Rambam). Others maintain that in this case Rabban Gamliel indeed erred in his acceptance of unreliable testimony; however, he had reasons for not changing his mind (Rabbi Zerahya HaLevi). Yet others contend that the phrase: On the night of a full month it was not seen, means that according to Rabban Gamliel's calculations the moon could not have been visible on the following night, and yet he accepted their testimony regardless; in actual fact, Rabban Gamliel erred in his calculations (Rabbeinu Yehonatan).

Rabban Gamliel sent to him – **שָׁלַח לוֹ רַבִּין גַּמְלִיאל**: The commentaries ask: Why did Rabban Gamliel send a message to Rabbi Yehoshua, not to Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas? Some say that Rabbi Dosa was merely offering a logical argument, not a halakhic decision. Indeed, Rabbi Dosa's statement later in the Gemara discussion indicates that he relied on the ruling of the court. Consequently, Rabban Gamliel did not need to respond to him (*Arukh LaNer*). Others explain that Rabbi Dosa was not a public figure, whereas Rabbi Yehoshua was a head of the court and his opinion in the matter soon became well known (Maharsha). Yet others explain simply that Rabbi Dosa was a venerable and wise Sage, greater than all others of his generation, and that consequently Rabban Gamliel did not want to treat him harshly (Rabbi Avraham min HaHar).

HALAKHA

When they arrived in Yavne Rabban Gamliel accepted them – **בִּשְׁבָּאוֹ לִיבְנָה קִיבְּלוּ רַבִּין גַּמְלִיאל**: With regard to witnesses who said that they saw the moon on the morning of the twenty-ninth in the east, and in the evening they saw it in the west, their testimony is reliable and the court may sanctify the New Moon based on it. The testimony of the morning sighting is of no concern, as it is irrelevant to the matter at hand (Rambam *Sefer Zemanim*, *Hilkhot Kiddush HaHodesh* 2:6).

וְעֵרֵב בְּמַעֲרָב. אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן נֹרִי:
עֵדֵי שֶׁקֶר הֵם. בִּשְׁבָּאוֹ לִיבְנָה קִיבְּלוּ
רַבִּין גַּמְלִיאל.

וְעוֹד בָּאוּ שְׁנַיִם וְאָמְרוּ: רְאִינוּהוּ בּוֹמָנֹ,
וּבְלֵיל עֵיבוּרוֹ לֹא נִרְאָה. וְקִיבְּלוּ רַבִּין
גַּמְלִיאל.

אָמַר רַבִּי דוֹסָא בֶּן הוֹרְקִינָס: עֵדֵי שֶׁקֶר
הֵם: הֵיאָךְ מַעֲרִיבִים עַל הָאִשָּׁה שְׂנִידָה,
וְלִמְחָר כְּרִיסָה בֵּין שִׁנְיָה? אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ: רֹאֶה אֲנִי אֶת דְּבָרֶיךָ. שְׁלַח לוֹ
רַבִּין גַּמְלִיאל: גִּזְרִי עֲלֶיךָ שֶׁתִּבָּא אֲצִלִּי
בְּמִקְלֶךָ וּבְמַעוֹתֶיךָ בְּיוֹם הַכְּפֻרִים שְׁחַל
לְהִיּוֹת בְּחֻשְׁבוֹנְךָ.

הֵלֵךְ וּמָצָאוּ רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא מֵיִצְר. אָמַר
לוֹ: יֵשׁ לִי לְלִמּוּד שְׁכַל מִה שְׁעֵשָׂה רַבִּין
גַּמְלִיאל עֲשִׂי, שְׁנֵאמַר: "אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה'
מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אוֹתָם" – בֵּין
בּוֹמָנִין בֵּין שְׁלֹא בּוֹמָנִין. אִין לִי מוֹעֲדוֹת
אֵלֶּה אֵלֶּה.

and that same day we saw the new moon in the evening in the west.^N Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri said: They are false witnesses, as it is impossible to see the new moon so soon after the last sighting of the waning moon. However, **when they arrived in Yavne, Rabban Gamliel accepted them^{NH}** as witnesses without concern.

And there was another incident in which two witnesses came and said: We saw the new moon at its anticipated time, i.e., on the night of the thirtieth day of the previous month; however, on the following night, i.e., the start of the thirty-first, which is often the determinant of a full, thirty-day month, it was not seen. And nevertheless Rabban Gamliel accepted their testimony and established the New Moon on the thirtieth day.

Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas^P disagreed and said: They are false witnesses;^N how can witnesses testify that a woman gave birth and the next day her belly is between her teeth, i.e., she is obviously still pregnant? If the new moon was already visible at its anticipated time, how could it not be seen a day later? Rabbi Yehoshua^P said to him: I see the logic of your statement; the New Moon must be established a day later. Upon hearing that Rabbi Yehoshua had challenged his ruling, Rabban Gamliel sent a message to him:^N I decree against you that you must appear before me with your staff and with your money on the day on which Yom Kippur occurs according to your calculation; according to my calculation, that day is the eleventh of Tishrei, the day after Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Akiva went and found Rabbi Yehoshua distressed that the head of the Great Sanhedrin was forcing him to desecrate the day that he maintained was Yom Kippur. In an attempt to console him, Rabbi Akiva said to Rabbi Yehoshua: I can learn from a verse that everything that Rabban Gamliel did in sanctifying the month is done, i.e., it is valid. As it is stated: "These are the appointed seasons of the Lord, sacred convocations, which you shall proclaim in their season" (Leviticus 23:4). This verse indicates that whether you have proclaimed them at their proper time or whether you have declared them not at their proper time, I have only these Festivals as established by the representatives of the Jewish people.

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas – **רַבִּי דוֹסָא בֶּן הוֹרְקִינָס**: Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas was apparently the cousin of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, and it is related that he knew the greatest Sages of the generation of Yavne, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua, when they were still young. Although it seems that he was no longer active when the Great Sanhedrin sat in Yavne, his influence was felt even then. Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas merited a very long life as well as great wealth. Rabbi Dosa was one of the Elders of Beit Hillel, and his younger brother, Yonatan, was one of the heads of Beit Shammai. When Rabbi Dosa is mentioned in the Mishna without further specification, the reference is to Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas.

Rabbi Yehoshua – **רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ**: This is Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananya the Levite, one of the leading Sages in the generation after the destruction of the Second Temple. Earlier, Rabbi Yehoshua served as one of the Levite singers in the Temple.

After its destruction, he was among the students who accompanied their teacher, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, to Yavne. Unlike his colleague Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua entirely adhered to the opinion of his teacher and that of Beit Hillel.

Rabbi Yehoshua was recognized by Jews and gentiles alike as a leading scholar not only in Torah matters, but in general knowledge as well. He was renowned as an expert in science, from astronomy to zoology. Rabbi Yehoshua was unimpressive in appearance, and the Talmud quotes the Caesar's daughter as exclaiming that his brilliant knowledge was contained in an ugly vessel.

Despite living a life of poverty, working as a blacksmith, Rabbi Yehoshua was widely recognized as one of the leading religious authorities. Although he disagreed with many of Rabban Gamliel's rulings, he accepted the authority of the *Nasi*. Ultimately, after the death of Rabban Gamliel, he was appointed leader of the Sages.

פעמים שבא – בארוכה Sometimes it comes by a long path – **בארוכה**: Some commentaries maintain that Rabban Gamliel is not providing an explanation for his acceptance of the testimony of the witnesses. Rather, he is suggesting a new halakhic insight on a related topic, that the standard principles with regard to the time differences between the waning moon and the new moon are merely averages, as in reality there are deviations and the actual length of time can be shorter or longer (Rambam).

Go to Ein Tav – יול לעין טב: See Rashi for two interpretations of this story. Some sources allude to another explanation: In accordance with tradition the Sages tried as much as possible to announce the full, thirty-day month specifically in the region of the kingdom of Judea. Although the Great Sanhedrin sat at that time in the northern Galilee, they wanted to conduct the ceremony in Judea (*Tosafot*). Others maintain that Ein Tav is not the name of a place, but a concept meaning: Look into it well [*ayen tav*], and you will understand that I was correct in my calculations (Rambam; Rabbi Avraham min HaHar).

דוד מלך ישראל – David, king of Israel: Rashi explains that this is based on a verse that compares the monarchy of David to the moon (Psalms 89:38). This is also interpreted as a reference to the entire Jewish people, which is continually renewed despite its small size (*Pardes Rimonim*). According to the opinion that at that time there was a decree against studying Torah, it is clear why they relayed the message by means of a secret code. However, it is also possible that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi simply wanted to send the message through a phrase connected to the moon. The commentaries explain the symbolism connecting the moon to David and the monarchy of David at length (see *Otzar HaKavod* and *Maharal*). In any case, this link is the reason why the phrase: David, king of Israel, lives and endures, is recited every time one blesses the new moon.

בא לו אצל רבי דוסא בן הורקנס. אמר לו: אם באין אנו לדון אחר בית דינו של רבן גמליאל – צריכין אנו לדון אחר כל בית דין ובית דין שעמד מימות משה ועד עכשיו. שנאמר: "ויעל משה ואהרן נדב ואביהוא ושבעים מזקני ישראל". ולמה לא נתפרשו שמותן של זקנים? אלא ללמד שכל שלשה ושלשה שעמדו בית דין על ישראל הרי הוא כבית דינו של משה.

נטל מקלו ומעותיו בידו, והלך ליבנה אצל רבן גמליאל ביום שחל יום הכפורים להיות בחשבון. עמד רבן גמליאל ונשקו על ראשו, אמר לו: בוא בשלום רבי ותלמידו רבי – בחכמה, ותלמידו – שקבלת את דברי.

גמ' תנא, אמר להם רבן גמליאל לחכמים: כך מקובלני מבית אבי אבא: פעמים שבא בארוכה, ופעמים שבא בקצרה.

אמר רבי יוחנן: מאי טעמא דבי רבי? דכתיב: "עשה ירח למועדים שמש ידע מבואו" – שמש הוא ידע מבואו, ירח לא ידע מבואו.

רבי חיאי חזויי לסיהרא דהה קאי בצפרא דעשרים ותשעה. שקל קלא פתק ביה, אמר: לאורחא בעינן לקדושי בך, ואת קיימת הכא? זיל איבסי! אמר ליה רבי לרבי חיאי: זיל לעין טב וקדושה לירחא, ושלח לי סימנא: דוד מלך ישראל חי וקיים.

Rabbi Yehoshua then came to Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas, who said to him: If we come to debate and question the rulings of the court of Rabban Gamliel, we must debate and question the rulings of every court that has stood from the days of Moses until now. As it is stated: "Then Moses went up, and Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy of the Elders of Israel" (Exodus 24:9). But why were the names of these seventy Elders not specified? Rather, this comes to teach that every set of three judges that stands as a court over the Jewish people has the same status as the court of Moses. Since it is not revealed who sat on that court, apparently it is enough that they were official judges in a Jewish court.

When Rabbi Yehoshua heard that even Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas maintained that they must submit to Rabban Gamliel's decision, he took his staff and his money in his hand, and went to Yavne to Rabban Gamliel on the day on which Yom Kippur occurred according to his own calculation. Upon seeing him, Rabban Gamliel stood up and kissed him on his head. He said to him: Come in peace, my teacher and my student. You are my teacher in wisdom, as Rabbi Yehoshua was wiser than anyone else in his generation, and you are my student, as you accepted my statement, despite your disagreement.

GEMARA It is taught in a *baraita* that Rabban Gamliel said to the Sages, in explanation of his opinion that it is possible for the new moon to be visible so soon after the last sighting of the waning moon: This is the tradition that I received from the house of my father's father: Sometimes the moon comes by a long path^{NB} and sometimes it comes by a short one.

Rabbi Yohanan said: What is the reason for the opinion of the house of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, i.e., the house of the heads of the Great Sanhedrin, the source of Rabban Gamliel's ruling? As it is written: "Who appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knows its going down" (Psalms 104:19). This verse indicates that it is only the sun that knows its going down, i.e., its seasons and the times that it shines are the same every year. In contrast, the moon does not know its going down,^B as its course is not identical every month.

§ The Gemara relates that Rabbi Hiyya once saw the waning moon standing in the sky on the morning of the twenty-ninth of the month. He took a clump of earth and threw it at the moon, saying: This evening we need to sanctify you, i.e., the new moon must be visible tonight so that we may declare the thirtieth of the month as the New Moon, and you are still standing here? Go and cover yourself for now, so that the new moon will be seen only after nightfall. The Gemara further relates that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi once said to Rabbi Hiyya: Go to a place called Ein Tav^N and sanctify the New Moon there, and send me a sign that you have sanctified it. The sign is: David, king of Israel,^N lives and endures.

BACKGROUND

פעמים שבא בארוכה – Sometimes it comes by a long path: Although there is an average time from the precise moment of the appearance of the moon of one month until the appearance of the next one, because of the movement of the earth-sun system and due to the elliptical orbit of most of the celestial bodies, the precise moment of the appearance of the new moon can vary from the average by up to thirteen hours. These deviations from the average are due to the elliptical orbit of the celestial bodies, including that of the earth. Therefore, sometimes the moon comes by a long path, meaning that the actual month is longer than

average, while at other times it is shorter. Nevertheless, over the course of a year the average is maintained.

ירח לא ידע מבואו – The moon does not know its going down: In addition to the discrepancies in the length of the month, there are also differences in the location of the rising of the moon and its apparent height that follow a nineteen-year cycle and other cycles as well. Due to many factors, including the complicated relationship between the movement of the earth, the moon, and the sun, the moon's precise location in relation to the sun and the earth changes from month to month.

BACKGROUND

The renewal of the moon – חידוש של לבנה: The time that Rabban Gamliel set: 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, and 3½ seconds, accurately matches the synodic month, which is 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, and 2.9 seconds, especially when taking into account that the moon's orbit has slowed somewhat over the years. This is the average time between the appearance of the moon from one month to the next, although, as noted, there are recognizable deviations from this average.

HALAKHA

The time of the renewal of the moon – זמן חידוש הלבנה: The renewal of the moon occurs every twenty-nine days plus twelve hours and 793 subsections, which amount to forty-four minutes and three and one-third seconds. Based on this formula the Sages calculated which months should be deficient, with twenty-nine days, and which are full, thirty-day, months (Rambam *Sefer Zemanim*, *Hilkhot Kiddush HaHodesh* 8:1).

Unwittingly...intentionally...misled – מוטרען...מיוזין...מיוזין: The court sanctifies the month, their declaration is always valid, even if they are deceived or unwittingly mistaken, or if they erred by unavoidable accident, and the Festivals are established accordingly. This is true even if it becomes common knowledge that the judges erred, as the establishment of the Festivals depends exclusively on the court (Rambam *Sefer Zemanim*, *Hilkhot Kiddush HaHodesh* 2:10).

NOTES

Who was distressed – מי מיצר: Apparently, in the sentence: Rabbi Akiva went and found him distressed, the pronoun: Him, is referring to Rabbi Yehoshua. Some versions read: He went and found Rabbi Akiva distressed, in which case the pronoun: He must be referring to Rabbi Yehoshua (*Dikdukei Sofrim*; Ritva). Conversely, it is recorded in the Jerusalem Talmud that Rabbi Akiva went to inform Rabbi Yehoshua about Rabban Gamliel's decree.

It is fitting for one to fall sick in bed – לא שפול למטה: The commentaries explain that Rabbi Yehoshua was distressed because although he was sure that Rabban Gamliel was wrong, it is a mitzva to heed the court, in accordance with the verse: "And you shall do according to the tenor of the sentence which they shall declare to you" (Deuteronomy 17:10). The commentaries analyze the different aspects of this problem at length. Some maintain that although all are obligated to accept rulings of the court, nevertheless a great Sage who knows that the judges are in error must not rely on their ruling and thereby transgress the Torah. Since he would otherwise have felt compelled to violate Rabban Gamliel's command, Rabbi Yehoshua was pleased with Rabbi Akiva's explanation that the Festivals are established by the ruling of the court, and that they have no absolute time (see Ritva and Maharsha).

You have consoled me, you have consoled me – נחמתני: Some explain that this double expression conveys the idea that Rabbi Yehoshua was comforted both with regard to an unwitting act, i.e., Rabban Gamliel's mistaken ruling, and with regard to an intentional one, that Rabban Gamliel would have treated the day that Rabbi Yehoshua maintained should be Yom Kippur as an ordinary weekday. This is especially true according to those commentaries who maintain that Rabban Gamliel ultimately agreed with Rabbi Yehoshua (Rabbi Zerahya HaLevi). Others explain that the double words of comfort are referring both to the fact that he was desecrating Yom Kippur according to his calculations and that he was observing the Festival on the wrong day (see Maharsha, Rif, and *Arukh LaNer*).

Why were the names of these Elders not specified – למה לא נפרשו שמותם של זקנים הללו: These elders were prophets, as it states: "And he took of the spirit" (Numbers 11:25), and therefore they were worthy of having their names mentioned (Maharsha). The commentaries explain that their names were not mentioned so that their respective ages should remain unknown, to teach that all the members of the court are considered equal in stature (*Tiferet Yisrael*).

תנו רבנן: פעם אחת נתקשרו שמים בעבים ונראית דמות לבנה בעשרים ותשעה לחודש. בסבורים העם לומר: ראש חודש, ובקשו בית דין לקדשו. אמר להם רבן גמליאל: כך מקובלני מבית אבי אבא: אין חידוש של לבנה פחותה מעשרים ותשעה יום ומחצה ושני שלישי שעה ושבעים ושלשה חלקים.

ואותו היום מתה אמו של בן זוא, והספידה רבן גמליאל הספד גדול. לא מפני שראויה לכך, אלא כדי שידעו העם שלא קידשו בית דין את החודש.

"הלך רבי עקיבא ומצאו מיצר" כו'. איבעיא להו: מי מיצר? רבי עקיבא מיצר, או רבי יהושע מיצר? תא שמע, דתנא: הלך רבי עקיבא ומצאו רבי יהושע כשהוא מיצר. אמר לו: [רבן] מפני מה אתה מיצר? אמר לו: רבי עקיבא, ראוי לו שפול למטה שנים עשר חודש ואל יגזור עליו גזירה זו.

אמר לו: רבי תרשימי לומר לפניך דבר אחד שלמדתני. אמר לו: אומר. אמר לו: הרי הוא אומר "אתם" "אתם" "אתם" שלש פעמים.

"אתם" – אפילו שוגגין; "אתם" – אפילו מיוזין; "אתם" – אפילו מוטרען. בלשון הזה אמר לו: עקיבא, נחמתני, נחמתני.

"בא לו אצל רבי דוסא בן הורקנים" כו'. תנו רבנן: למה לא נפרשו שמותם של זקנים הללו? שלא יאמר אדם: פלוני כמשה ואהרן? פלוני כנבד ואביהוא? פלוני כאלרד ומייד?

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: Once the sky was covered with clouds, and the form of the moon was visible on the twenty-ninth of the month. The people thought to say that the day was the New Moon, and the court sought to sanctify it. However, Rabban Gamliel said to them: This is the tradition that I received from the house of my father's father: The monthly cycle of the renewal of the moon⁸ takes no less than twenty-nine and a half days, plus two-thirds of an hour, plus seventy-three of the 1,080 subsections of an hour.⁹

The *baraita* continues: And on that day the mother of the Sage ben Zaza died, and Rabban Gamliel delivered a great eulogy on her behalf. He did this not because she was worthy of this honor; rather, he eulogized her so that the people would know that the court had not sanctified the month, as eulogies are prohibited on the New Moon.

§ The mishna taught that Rabbi Akiva went and found him distressed that the head of the Great Sanhedrin was forcing him to desecrate the day that he maintained was Yom Kippur. A dilemma was raised before the Sages: Who was distressed?¹⁰ Was Rabbi Akiva distressed or was Rabbi Yehoshua distressed? The Gemara answers: Come and hear, as it is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Akiva went and found Rabbi Yehoshua in a state of distress, and he said to him: My teacher, for what reason are you distressed? Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: Rabbi Akiva, it is fitting for one to fall sick in bed¹¹ for twelve months, rather than to have this decree issued against him that he should have to desecrate Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Akiva said to him: My teacher, allow me to say before you one matter that you yourself once taught me. He said to him: Speak. He said to him: It states with respect to the Festivals: "The appointed seasons of the Lord, which you shall proclaim them [*otam*] to be sacred convocations (Leviticus 23:2). And it is written: "These are the appointed seasons of the Lord, sacred convocations; you shall proclaim them [*otam*] in their season" (Leviticus 23:4). And it is written: "These are the appointed seasons of the Lord; you shall proclaim them [*otam*] to be sacred convocations" (Leviticus 23:37). Three times the verses use the term: Them [*otam*], which can also be read as you [*atem*], in plural.

This comes to teach: You [*atem*] are authorized to determine the date of the new month, even if you unwittingly establish the New Moon on the wrong day; you, even if you do so intentionally; you, even if you are misled by false witnesses.¹² In all cases, once the court establishes the day as the New Moon, it is sanctified, and God grants His consent. After hearing this, Rabbi Yehoshua said to him in these words: Akiva, you have consoled me; you have consoled me.¹³

§ The mishna taught that Rabbi Yehoshua next came to Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas, who proved to him that the court of Rabban Gamliel has the same legal status as the court of Moses. The Sages taught in a *baraita*: Why were the names of these seventy Elders who sat together with Moses on his court not specified?¹⁴ The reason is so that a person not say: Is so-and-so the judge in my time, like Moses and Aaron? Is so-and-so like Nadav and Avihu? Is so-and-so like Eldad and Medad? Therefore, the names of the other elders were not specified, so that there is no way of knowing the qualifications of the elders in the time of Moses to compare them to later judges.

ואומר: "ויאמר שמואל אל העם: ה' אשר עשה את משה ואהרן" ויאמר: "וישלח ה' את ירובעל ואת בדן ואת יפתח ואת שמואל". ירובעל – זה גדעון. ולמה נקרא שמו ירובעל? שעשה מריבה עם הבעל. בדן זה שמשון. ולמה נקרא שמו בדן? דאתי מדן. יפתח – כמשמעו.

And similarly it says: "And Samuel said to the people: It is the Lord Who made Moses and Aaron" (1 Samuel 12:6). And it says further: "And the Lord sent Jerubaal and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel" (1 Samuel 12:11). The Gemara explains: Jerubaal, this is Gideon. And why is he called Jerubaal? The reason is that he waged a quarrel against Baal. Bedan, this is Samson. And why is he called Bedan? As he came from the tribe of Dan. Jephthah, in accordance with its regular meaning, i.e., this is referring to Jephthah himself and is not a nickname.

Perek II
Daf 25 Amud b

ואומר: "משה ואהרן בכהניו ושמואל בקוראי שמו". שקל הכתוב שלשה קלי עולם בשלשה חמורי עולם.

And it says in another verse: "Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among those who call His name; they called upon the Lord, and He answered them" (Psalms 99:6). This verse equates Samuel to Moses and Aaron. In this manner, the verse weighed^N three light ones of the world,^N i.e., it considered the three less distinguished figures of Gideon, Samson, and Jephthah as equal to three significant ones of the world, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, three of the greatest leaders of the Jewish people.

לומר לך: ירובעל בדורו – כמשה בדורו; בדן בדורו – כאהרן בדורו; יפתח בדורו – כשמואל בדורו. ללמדך שאפילו קל שבקליו ונתמנה פרנס על הצבור – הרי הוא כאביר שבאבירים.

This comes to tell you that Jerubaal in his generation is worthy of being treated like Moses in his generation; Bedan in his generation is like Aaron in his generation; and Jephthah in his generation^N is like Samuel in his generation. This serves to teach you that even the lightest of the light,^N i.e., the least distinguished individual, once he has been appointed as a leader over the community, he must be treated like the greatest of the great, and all are required to heed him and obey his rulings.

ואומר: "ובאת אל הכהנים הלויים ואל השופט אשר יהיה בימים ההם". וכי תעלה על דעתך שאדם הולך אצל הדיין שלא היה בימיו? הא אין לך לילך אלא אצל שופט שבבימיו. ואומר: "אל תאמר מה היה שהימים הראשונים היו טובים מאלה".

And it further says: "And you shall come^N to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge who shall be in those days" (Deuteronomy 17:9). But can it enter your mind that a person can go to a judge that is not alive in his days? What, then, is the meaning of the phrase "in those days"? It teaches that you need to go only to the judge in one's days,^N i.e., he is authorized to judge and decide matters. And it also says: "Do not say: How was it that the former days were better than these? For it is not out of wisdom that you inquire concerning this" (Ecclesiastes 7:10). Instead, one must accept the rulings of the leaders of his generation.

"נטל מקלו ומעותיו בידו". תנו רבנן: בין שראה אותו עמד מכסאו, ונשקו על ראשו. אומר לו: שלום עליך רבי ותלמידי! רבי – שלמדתני תורה בריבם; ותלמידי – שאני גזור עליך גזירה ואתה מקיימה בתלמיד. אשרי הדור שהגדולים נשמעים לקטנים, קל וחומר קטנים לגדולים.

§ The mishna taught: Rabbi Yehoshua took his staff and his money in his hand, and appeared before Rabban Gamliel on the day on which Yom Kippur occurred according to his calculation, as Rabban Gamliel had ordered him to do. The Sages taught in a baraita: When Rabban Gamliel saw Rabbi Yehoshua, he rose from his chair and kissed him on his head and said to him: Peace be on you, my teacher and my student. My teacher, as you have taught me Torah in public, and my student, as I issue a decree against you and you fulfill it like a student of mine. Fortunate is the generation in which the greater heed the lesser, and it is an *a fortiori* inference that the generation in which the lesser^N heed the greater is certainly fortunate as well.

קל וחומר? חיובא הוא! אלא: מתוך שהגדולים נשמעים לקטנים – נושאין קטנים קל וחומר בעצמן.

The Gemara questions this last point: Is this derived by an *a fortiori* inference? This is incorrect, as it is an obligation for the lesser to heed those who are greater than them. Rather, Rabbi Gamliel meant the following: Since the greater heed the lesser, the lesser apply an *a fortiori* inference to themselves and heed the leaders of the generation.

NOTES

The verse weighed – שקל הכתוב: In the Jerusalem Talmud it is noted that the names of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel are separated in the verses (1 Samuel 12:6, 12:11) by the mention of the less important figures.

Light ones of the world – קלי עולם: The reason that these leaders are called the light ones of the world is not only because they were from less important tribes, but also due to the fact that each one had a stain on his character: Gideon fashioned an ephod that the people used for idol worship (Judges 8:27); Samson married Philistine women; and Jephthah vowed to sacrifice the first item to leave his house, which led to tragedy when his daughter came out to greet him (Judges, chapter 11).

Jephthah in his generation – יפתח בדורו: The phrase: The court, is added in the Jerusalem Talmud, i.e., the court of Jephthah and the court of Samuel.

The lightest of the light, etc. – קל שבקליו: Some explain that the lightest of the light is referring to Jephthah as compared to Samuel, who is the greatest of the great, as he is likened to Moses and Aaron. The reason Jephthah is called the lightest of the light is because the other two individuals in the list of the light ones, Gideon and Samson, either received a revelation of prophecy or were the subject of a prophecy, whereas Jephthah did not.

And it says, And you shall come, etc. – ובאת וכו': The Gemara cites three different verses for the following reason: If someone says that the change over the generations indicated by the verse: "Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among those who call His name" (Psalms 99:6), should be acceptable only with regard to prophets and kings, one can cite the verse: "To the judge who shall be" (Deuteronomy 17:9). If he retorts that this is speaking only of the Great Sanhedrin, contrary proof can be derived from the verse: "Do not say: How was it that the former days were better than these?" (Ecclesiastes 7:10; see Ritva).

To the judge in one's days – אצל שופט שבבימיו: Even if there are greater Sages in that generation, nevertheless the community must obey the one appointed as their leader (Rif; see Rashash).

An *a fortiori* inference in which the lesser, etc. – קל וחומר: Apparently, Rabban Gamliel said this to Rabbi Yehoshua to appease him after being so severe. He explained that his harsh behavior was necessary to demonstrate to the public the importance of accepting the authority of the head of the Great Sanhedrin (*Arukh LaNer*).

Shields [terisin] – תְּרִיסִין: From the Greek *θυρεός*, *thureos*, meaning large shield. Keepers of the shield are the ones who hold those shields, i.e., warriors.

PERSONALITIES

Hutzpit the disseminator – הוֹצִיט הַמְדִּירָגֶמֶן: Rabbi Hutzpit, one of the Sages of the Mishna (see *Shevi'it* ch. 10) is known as Rabban Gamliel's *turgeman*. That position entailed more than merely repeating the Sage's lecture aloud. He also expanded upon the concise, cryptic statements made by that Sage in the course of the lecture. Because of his skill in explaining Rabban Gamliel's lectures, Rabbi Hutzpit was called: The mouth that produced pearls. We know nothing else about him, except that he died as one of the ten martyrs at the hands of the Roman empire.

NOTES

Rabbi Yehoshua was party to the incident – רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בַּעַל מַעֲשֵׂה הוּא: Some explained that Rabbi Yehoshua was not appointed because that would have created the impression that he initiated the dispute as a ploy to be appointed *Nasi* (Maharsha).

בֹּא לִפְנֵי רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל, אָמַר לוֹ: תְּפִלַּת עֶרְבִית רְשׁוּת אוֹ חֻבָּה? אָמַר לוֹ: חֻבָּה. אָמַר לוֹ: וְהִלָּא רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אָמַר לִי רְשׁוּת! אָמַר לוֹ: הִמָּתֵן עַד שִׁכְנֹסוּ בַּעֲלֵי תְרִיסִין לְבֵית הַמְדִּירָשׁ.

בְּשָׁנְכֶנְסוּ בַּעֲלֵי תְרִיסִין, עָמַד הַשּׁוֹאֵל וְשָׁאַל: תְּפִלַּת עֶרְבִית רְשׁוּת אוֹ חֻבָּה? אָמַר לוֹ רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: חֻבָּה. אָמַר לָהֶם רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל לַחֲכָמִים: בְּלוּם יֵשׁ אָדָם שֶׁחֹלֵק בְּדָבָר זֶה? אָמַר לֵיהֶם רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ: לֹא. אָמַר לוֹ: וְהִלָּא מִשְׁמַךְ אָמַר לִי רְשׁוּת!

אָמַר לֵיהֶם: יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, עָמַד עַל רִגְלֶיךָ וְיַעֲיֶדוּ בְּךָ עָמֵד רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עַל רִגְלָיו וְאָמַר: אֶלְמָלֵא אֲנִי חַי וְהוּא מֵת – יָכוֹל הַחַי לְהַכְחִישׁ אֶת הַמֵּת, וְעֵכְשִׁי שָׂאֲנִי חַי וְהוּא חַי – הֵיאֵךְ יָכוֹל הַחַי לְהַכְחִישׁ אֶת הַחַי?

הִיָּה רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל יוֹשֵׁב וְדוֹרֵשׁ, וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עוֹמֵד עַל רִגְלָיו, עַד שֶׁרָגְנוּ כָּל הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ: לְחוֹצֵפֵית הַתּוֹרָגָמֶן: עָמַד! וְעָמַד.

אָמְרוּ: עַד כַּמָּה נִצְעָרִיהָ וְנִיזִיל? בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה אֲשַׁתְקַד צַעֲרִיהָ, בְּבִכּוֹרוֹת בְּמַעֲשֵׂה דְרָבִי צִדּוֹק צַעֲרִיהָ, הֲכָא נִמְי צַעֲרִיהָ, תָּא וְנַעֲבְרִיהָ!

מֵאֵן נֹקִים לִיהִ? נֹקְמִיהָ לְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ? בַּעַל מַעֲשֵׂה הוּא; נֹקְמִיהָ לְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא? דִּילָמָא עֲנִישׁ לִיהִ, דְּלִית לִיהִ זְכוּת אָבוֹת;

אֵלֹא נֹקְמִיהָ לְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה, דְּהוּא חָכֵם וְהוּא עָשִׂיר וְהוּא עָשִׂיר לְעֹזְרָא. הוּא חָכֵם – דְּאִי מִקְשִׁי לִיהִ מִפְּרָק לִיהִ, וְהוּא עָשִׂיר – דְּאִי אֵית לִיהִ לְפִלּוּחֵי לְבִי קִיסָר אִף הוּא אִיזִיל וּפְלַח, וְהוּא עָשִׂיר לְעֹזְרָא – דְּאֵית לִיהִ זְכוּת אָבוֹת וְלֹא מִצִּי עֲנִישׁ לִיהִ. אֵתוּ וְאָמְרוּ לִיהִ: מִתָּא לִיהִ לָמַר דְּלִיהִוִּי רִישׁ מְתִיבְתָּא? אָמַר לָהֶם: אִיזִיל וְאִימְלִיד בְּאִינְשֵׁי בֵיתִי. אִזִּל וְאִמְלִיד בְּבֵיתָהּ. אָמְרָה לִיהִ:

The same student came before Rabban Gamliel and said to him: Is the evening prayer optional or obligatory? Rabban Gamliel said to him: Obligatory. The student said to Rabban Gamliel: But didn't Rabbi Yehoshua tell me that the evening prayer is optional? Rabban Gamliel said to the student: Wait until the "masters of the shields,"¹ a reference to the Torah scholars who battle in the war of Torah, enter the study hall, at which point we will discuss this issue.

When the masters of the shields entered, the questioner stood before everyone present and asked: Is the evening prayer optional or obligatory? Rabban Gamliel said to him: Obligatory. In order to ascertain whether or not Rabbi Yehoshua still maintained his opinion, Rabban Gamliel said to the Sages: Is there any person who disputes this matter? Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: No, no one disagrees. In deference to the *Nasi*, he did not wish to argue with him publicly (*Tziyyun Le-Nefesh Hayya*). Rabban Gamliel said to Rabbi Yehoshua: But was it not in your name that they told me that the evening prayer is optional?

Rabban Gamliel said to Rabbi Yehoshua: Yehoshua, stand on your feet and they will testify against you. Rabbi Yehoshua stood on his feet and said: If I were alive and the student were dead, the living can contradict the dead, and I could deny issuing that ruling. Now that I am alive and he is alive, how can the living contradict the living? I have no choice but to admit that I said it.

In the meantime, Rabban Gamliel, as the *Nasi*, was sitting and lecturing, and Rabbi Yehoshua all the while was standing on his feet, because Rabban Gamliel did not instruct him to sit. He remained standing in deference to the *Nasi*. This continued for some time, until it aroused great resentment against Rabban Gamliel, and all of the people assembled began murmuring and said to Hutzpit the disseminator:² Stop conveying Rabban Gamliel's lecture. And he stopped.

The Gemara relates that in their murmuring they said: How long will Rabban Gamliel continue afflicting him? Last year on Rosh HaShana, he afflicted him; Rabban Gamliel ordered Rabbi Yehoshua to come to him carrying his staff and bag, on the day on which Yom Kippur occurred, according to Rabbi Yehoshua's calculations. Regarding the firstborn, in the incident involving the question of Rabbi Tzadok, he afflicted him just as he did now, and forced him to remain standing as punishment for his failure to defend his differing opinion. Here too, he is afflicting him. Let us remove him from his position as *Nasi*.

It was so agreed, but the question arose: Who shall we establish in his place? Shall we establish Rabbi Yehoshua in his place? The Sages rejected that option because Rabbi Yehoshua was party to the incident³ for which Rabban Gamliel was deposed. Appointing him would be extremely upsetting for Rabban Gamliel. Shall we establish Rabbi Akiva in his place? The Sages rejected that option because Rabbi Akiva, who descended from a family of converts, would be vulnerable. Perhaps due to Rabban Gamliel's resentment he would cause him to be divinely punished as he lacks the merit of his ancestors to protect him.

Rather, suggested the Sages, let us establish Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya in his place, his outstanding characteristics set him apart from the other candidates. He is wise, rich, and a tenth generation descendant of Ezra. The Gemara explains: He is wise, so if Rabban Gamliel raises a challenge in matters of Torah, he will answer it and not be embarrassed. And he is rich, so if the need arises to pay homage to the Caesar's court and serve as a representative of Israel to lobby and negotiate, he has sufficient wealth to cover the costs of the long journeys, taxes, and gifts, so he too is able to go and pay homage. And he is a tenth generation descendant of Ezra, so he has the merit of his ancestors, and Rabban Gamliel will be unable to cause him to be punished. They came and said to him: Would the Master consent to being the Head of the Yeshiva? He said to them: I will go and consult with my household. He went and consulted with his wife. She said to him:

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya – רבי אלעזר בן עזריה: One of the most significant *tannaim* in the generation following the destruction of the Temple, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya descended from a family of great wisdom, distinguished lineage, and wealth. His father, Azarya, was also a Torah scholar and an extremely wealthy man. He supported his brother Shimon, one of the Sages, who is, therefore, referred to as Shimon brother of Azarya. Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya's family were priests, descended from Ezra the Scribe, and there are traditions that tell of similarities between them. Some conjecture that Rabbi Eliezer was Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya's mentor.

Rabbi Yehoshua – רבי יהושע: This is Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananya the Levite, one of the leading Sages in the generation following the destruction of the Second Temple. He had served as one of the Levite singers in the Temple. After its destruction, he was among the students who went with their primary teacher, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, to Yavne. Unlike his colleague Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua completely adhered to the approach of his teacher and of Beit Hillel.

HALAKHA

An Ammonite and a Moabite – עמוני ומואבי: Those who dwell in contemporary lands of Ammon and Moab, i.e., Jordan, do not have the legal status of Ammonites and Moabites, and converts from those areas may enter the congregation of Israel in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua (Rambam *Sefer Kedusha*, *Hilkhot Issurei Bia* 12:25; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Even HaEzer* 4:10).

BACKGROUND

Everything that parts from a group parts from the majority – כל דפריש מרובא פריש: This principle applies to many dilemmas with regard to the laws of prohibited and permitted mixtures. One may only rely on this principle in specific cases. In other words, the object must have spontaneously emerged from a mixture whose proportions are known. That is not the case when the object remains in the mixture. In that case, the sample is flawed and there is room for concern that the object in question is not really from the majority component. Then the principle is: Anything that is fixed, i.e., remains in the mixture, is considered an evenly balanced uncertainty and the object is not attributed to the majority.

דלמא מעברין לך? אמר לה: לשתמש אינש יומא חדא בכסא דמוקרא, ולמחר ליתבר. אמרה ליה: לית לך חיוורתא. ההוא יומא בר תמני סרי שני הוה, אתרחיש ליה נסא ואהדרו ליה תמני סרי דרי חיוורתא. היינו דקאמר רבי אלעזר בן עזריה: הרי אני "כבן" שבעים שנה, ולא "בן" שבעים שנה.

תנא; אותו היום סלקוהו לשומר הפתח ונתנה להם רשות לתלמידים ליכנס. שהיה רבן גמליאל מכריז ואומר: כל תלמיד שאין תוכו כבד – לא יכנס לבית המדרש.

ההוא יומא אתוספו במה ספסלי. אמר רבי יוחנן: פליגי בה אבא יוסף בן דוסתאי ורבנן. חד אמר: אתוספו ארבע מאה ספסלי; וחד אמר: שבע מאה ספסלי. הוה קא חלשה דעתיה דרבן גמליאל, אמר: דלמא חס ושלום מנעתי תורה מישראל. אחוה ליה בחלמיה חצבי חיורי דמליין קטמא. ולא היא, ההיא ליתובי דעתיה הוא דאחוו ליה.

תנא: עדיות בו ביום נשנית, וכל היכא דאמרין "בו ביום" – ההוא יומא הוה. ולא היתה הלכה שהיתה תלויה בבית המדרש שלא פירשהו. ואף רבן גמליאל לא מנע עצמו מבית המדרש אפילו שעה אחת.

דתנן: בו ביום בא יהודה גר עמוני לפנייה בבית המדרש, אמר להם: מה אני לבא בקהל?

אמר לו רבן גמליאל: אסור אתה לבא בקהל; אמר לו רבי יהושע: מותר אתה לבא בקהל. אמר לו רבן גמליאל: והלא כבר נאמר: "לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל ה'!" אמר לו רבי יהושע: וכי עמוני ומואב במקומן הן יושבין? כבר עלה סנחריב מלך אשור ובלבל את כל האומות, שנאמר: "ואסיר גבולות עמים ועתודותיהם שושתי ואוריד כביר יושבים," וכל דפריש – מרובא פריש.

There is room for concern. Perhaps they will remove you from office just as they removed Rabban Gamliel. He said to her, based on the folk saying: Let a person use an expensive goblet one day and let it break tomorrow. In other words, one should take advantage of an opportunity that presents itself and he need not concern himself whether or not it will last. She said to him: You have no white hair, and it is inappropriate for one so young to head the Sages. The Gemara relates: That day, he was eighteen years old, a miracle transpired for him and eighteen rows of hair turned white. The Gemara comments: That explains that which Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya^p said: I am as one who is seventy years old and he did not say: I am seventy years old, because he looked older than he actually was.

It was taught: On that day that they removed Rabban Gamliel from his position and appointed Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya in his place, there was also a fundamental change in the general approach of the study hall as they dismissed the guard at the door and permission was granted to the students to enter. Instead of Rabban Gamliel's selective approach that asserted that the students must be screened before accepting them into the study hall, the new approach asserted that anyone who seeks to study should be given opportunity to do so. As Rabban Gamliel would proclaim and say: Any student whose inside, his thoughts and feelings, are not like his outside, i.e., his conduct and his character traits are lacking, will not enter the study hall.

The Gemara relates: On that day several benches were added to the study hall to accommodate the numerous students. Rabbi Yohanan said: Abba Yosef ben Dostai and the Rabbis disputed this matter. One said: Four hundred benches were added to the study hall. And one said: Seven hundred benches were added to the study hall. When he saw the tremendous growth in the number of students, Rabban Gamliel was disheartened. He said: Perhaps, Heaven forbid, I prevented Israel from engaging in Torah study. They showed him in his dream white jugs filled with ashes alluding to the fact that the additional students were worthless idlers. The Gemara comments: That is not the case, but that dream was shown to him to ease his mind so that he would not feel bad.

It was taught: There is a tradition that tractate *Eduyyot* was taught that day. And everywhere in the Mishna or in a *baraita* that they say: On that day, it is referring to that day. There was no *halakha* whose ruling was pending in the study hall that they did not explain and arrive at a practical halakhic conclusion. And even Rabban Gamliel did not avoid the study hall for even one moment, as he held no grudge against those who removed him from office and he participated in the halakhic discourse in the study hall as one of the Sages.

As we learned in a mishna: On that day, Yehuda, the Ammonite convert, came before the students in the study hall and he said to them: What is my legal status in terms of entering into the congregation of Israel, i.e., to marry a Jewish woman?

Rabban Gamliel said to him: You are forbidden to enter into the congregation. Rabbi Yehoshua^p said to him: You are permitted to enter into the congregation. Rabban Gamliel said to Rabbi Yehoshua: Wasn't it already stated: "An Ammonite and a Moabite^h shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to the tenth generation shall none of them enter into the congregation of the Lord forever" (Deuteronomy 23:4)? How can you permit him to enter the congregation? Rabbi Yehoshua said to Rabban Gamliel: Do Ammon and Moab reside in their place? Sennacherib already came and, through his policy of population transfer, scrambled all the nations and settled other nations in place of Ammon. Consequently, the current residents of Ammon and Moab are not ethnic Ammonites and Moabites, as it is stated in reference to Sennacherib: "I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and have brought down as one mighty the inhabitants" (Isaiah 10:13). And although it is conceivable that this particular convert is an ethnic Ammonite, nevertheless, there is no need for concern due to the halakhic principle: Anything that parts from a group parts from the majority,^b and the assumption is that he is from the majority of nations whose members are permitted to enter the congregation.

Since this is the situation – הואיל והכי הוה – Rabban Gamliel's reaction is based on the premise that until a *halakha* was voted on in the study hall and adopted as final, the extent to which it represents the truth cannot be determined. Once the Sages arrive at a decision with regard to a specific issue, it is deemed to be absolute truth. The fact that Rabbi Yehoshua was right became clear by means of the conclusive determination of the *halakha*.

From the walls of your house it is apparent that you are a blacksmith – מכותלי ביתך אתה ניכר שפחמי אתה – Rabbi Yehoshua's actual profession is unclear. Some interpret the word *pehami* as coal worker, i.e., one who makes charcoal from wood. Others interpret it as blacksmith, a conclusion supported by the Jerusalem Talmud which states that Rabbi Yehoshua manufactured needles.

אמר לו רבן גמליאל: והלא כבר נאמר: "ואחרי כן אשוב את שבות בני עמון נאם ה'" – וכבר שבו.

Rabban Gamliel said to Rabbi Yehoshua: But wasn't it already stated: "But afterward I will bring back the captivity of the children of Ammon, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 49:6) and they have already returned to their land? Therefore, he is an ethnic Ammonite and he may not convert.

אמר לו רבי יהושע: והלא כבר נאמר: "ושבתם את שבות עמי ישראל" – ועדיין לא שבו. מיד התירוהו לבא בקהל.

Rabbi Yehoshua said to Rabban Gamliel: That is no proof. Wasn't it already stated in another prophecy: "And I will turn the captivity of My people Israel and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them" (Amos 9:14), and they have not yet returned? In rendering the ruling, only proven facts may be taken into consideration. They immediately permitted him to enter the congregation. This proves that Rabban Gamliel did not absent himself from the study hall that day and participated in the halakhic discourse.

אמר רבן גמליאל: הואיל והכי הוה, איזיל ואפייסיה לרבי יהושע. כי מטא לבייתה, חזוהו לאשיתא דבייתה דמשחרן. אמר ליה: מכותלי ביתך אתה ניכר שפחמי אתה. אמר לו: אוי לו לדור שאתה פרנסו, שאי אתה יודע בצערן של תלמידי חכמים במה הם מתפרנסים ובמה הם נזונים.

Rabban Gamliel said to himself: Since this is the situation,^N that the people are following Rabbi Yehoshua, apparently he was right. Therefore, it would be appropriate for me to go and appease Rabbi Yehoshua. When he reached Rabbi Yehoshua's house, he saw that the walls of his house were black. Rabban Gamliel said to Rabbi Yehoshua in wonderment: From the walls of your house it is apparent that you are a blacksmith,^N as until then he had no idea that Rabbi Yehoshua was forced to engage in that arduous trade in order to make a living. Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: Woe unto a generation that you are its leader as you are unaware of the difficulties of Torah scholars, how they make a living and how they feed themselves.

אמר לו: נעניתי לך, מחול לי! לא אשגח ביה. עשה בשביל כבוד אבא! פייס.

Rabban Gamliel said to him: I insulted you, forgive me. Rabbi Yehoshua paid him no attention and did not forgive him. He asked him again: Do it in deference to my father, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, who was one of the leaders of Israel at the time of the destruction of the Temple. He was appeased.

אמרו: מאן גיזיל ולימא להו לרבנן? אמר להו ההוא כובס: אנא איילנא. שלח להו רבי יהושע לבי מדרשא: מאן דלביש מדא ילבש מדא, ומאן דלא לביש מדא יימר ליה למאן דלביש מדא "שלח מדר" ואנא אלבשיה?" אמר להו רבי עקיבא לרבנן: טרוקו גלי, דלא ליתו עבדי דרבנן גמליאל ולצערו לרבנן.

Now that Rabbi Yehoshua was no longer offended, it was only natural that Rabban Gamliel would be restored to his position. They said: Who will go and inform the Sages? Apparently, they were not eager to carry out the mission that would undo the previous actions and remove Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya from his position as *Nasi*. This launderer said to them: I will go. Rabbi Yehoshua sent to the Sages to the study hall: The one who wears the uniform will continue to wear the uniform, the original *Nasi* will remain in his position so that the one who did not wear the uniform will not say to the one who wears the uniform, remove your uniform and I will wear it. Apparently, the Sages believed that this emissary was dispatched at the initiative of Rabban Gamliel and they ignored him. Rabbi Akiva said to the Sages: Lock the gates so that Rabban Gamliel's servants will not come and disturb the Sages.

אמר רבי יהושע: מוטב דאיקום ואיזיל אנא לגבייהו. אתא, טרף אבבא. אמר להו: מזה בן מזה יזה, ושאינו לא מזה ולא בן מזה יאמר למזה בן מזה: מימך מי מערה ואפרך אפר מקלה? אמר לו רבי עקיבא: רבי יהושע, נתפייסת? כלום עשינו אלא בשביל כבודך! למחר אני ואתה נשכים לפתחו.

When he heard what happened, Rabbi Yehoshua said: It is best if I go to them. He came and knocked on the door. He said to them with a slight variation: One who sprinkles pure water on those who are ritually impure, son of one who sprinkles water shall continue to sprinkle water. And it is inappropriate that he who is neither one who sprinkles nor son of one who sprinkles will say to one who sprinkles son of one who sprinkles: Your water is cave water and not the running water required to purify one exposed to ritual impurity imparted by a corpse and your ashes are burnt ashes and not the ashes of a red heifer. Rabbi Akiva said to him: Rabbi Yehoshua, have you been appeased? Everything we did was to defend your honor. If you have forgiven him, none of us is opposed. Early tomorrow you and I will go to Rabban Gamliel's doorway and offer to restore him to his position as *Nasi*.

And the additional prayer all day – נָשַׁל – תּוֹסֵף: The Hebrew word *poshe'a* can refer either to a transgressor, who commits a *pesha*, a transgression, or to one who is negligent, who is guilty of *peshia*, negligence. As one is within his rights to recite the additional prayer all day, referring to him as a transgressor is a bit extreme. Rabbi Akiva Eiger in *Gilyon HaShas* refers to the Gemara below on 43b where one who arrives last to the study hall is similarly called a *poshe'a*. Rashi there defines it as one who is lazy, which seems more in line with negligence than transgression. It is conceivable that the determination whether it is negligence or transgression depends on the definition of the term, is called. If it refers to an objective pronouncement, he has certainly not transgressed any *halakha*. On the other hand, if it refers to the subjective judgment of onlookers, it is certainly possible that they would conclude that one who postpones reciting the additional prayer and comes last to the study hall is also a transgressor.

NOTES

Is called negligent – נִקְרָא פֹשֵׁעַ: The Hebrew word *poshe'a* can refer either to a transgressor, who commits a *pesha*, a transgression, or to one who is negligent, who is guilty of *peshia*, negligence. As one is within his rights to recite the additional prayer all day, referring to him as a transgressor is a bit extreme. Rabbi Akiva Eiger in *Gilyon HaShas* refers to the Gemara below on 43b where one who arrives last to the study hall is similarly called a *poshe'a*. Rashi there defines it as one who is lazy, which seems more in line with negligence than transgression. It is conceivable that the determination whether it is negligence or transgression depends on the definition of the term, is called. If it refers to an objective pronouncement, he has certainly not transgressed any *halakha*. On the other hand, if it refers to the subjective judgment of onlookers, it is certainly possible that they would conclude that one who postpones reciting the additional prayer and comes last to the study hall is also a transgressor.

אָמַר: הֵיכָּה נִעְבֵּד? נִעְבְּרָה – גְּמִירָה: מַעֲלִין בְּקֹדֶשׁ וְאֵין מוֹרִידִין! נִדְרֹשׁ מִרְחֹק שֶׁבִּתְּא – אֲתִי לְקַנְאוּיִי! אֶלֶּא: לְדְרוֹשׁ רַבֵּן גְּמִלְיָאֵל תְּלָתָא שַׁבְּתֵי, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה חֲדָא שַׁבְּתָא. וְהֵינִי דְאָמַר מִרְחֹק שֶׁבִּתְּא שֶׁל מִי הֵיטָה – שֶׁל רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה הֵיטָה. וְאוֹתוֹ תַּלְמִיד – רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי הוּא.

וְשֶׁל מוֹסְפִין כָּל הַיּוֹם. אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: וְנִקְרָא פֹשֵׁעַ.

תָּנוּ רַבָּנֵי: הָיוּ לִפְנֵינוּ שְׁתֵּי תַפְלוֹת, אַחַת שֶׁל מִנְחָה וְאַחַת שֶׁל מוֹסֵף – מִתְפַּלֵּל שֶׁל מִנְחָה וְאַחֵר כֵּךְ מִתְפַּלֵּל שֶׁל מוֹסֵף, שׁוֹז תְּדִירָה וְזוֹ אֵינָה תְּדִירָה. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר: מִתְפַּלֵּל שֶׁל מוֹסֵף וְאַחֵר כֵּךְ מִתְפַּלֵּל שֶׁל מִנְחָה, שׁוֹז מִצְוָה עוֹבֵרֶת וְזוֹ מִצְוָה שְׂאִינָה עוֹבֵרֶת. אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן, הֲלָכָה: מִתְפַּלֵּל שֶׁל מִנְחָה וְאַחֵר כֵּךְ מִתְפַּלֵּל שֶׁל מוֹסֵף.

רַבִּי זֵירָא בִּי הוּא חָלִישׁ מִגִּירָסִיָּה, הוּא אֵייל וְיָתִיב אֶפְתָּחָא דְּבִי רַבִּי נָתָן בַּר טוֹבִי, אָמַר: בִּי חֲלָפִי רַבָּנִן אֶזְ אִיקוּם מִקְמֵיהוֹ וְאֶקְבֵּל אֲגָרָא. נֶפֶק אֶתָּא רַבִּי נָתָן בַּר טוֹבִי, אָמַר לֵיה: מָאן אָמַר הֲלָכָה בִּי מִדְּרָשָׁא? אָמַר לֵיה, הֵכִי אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אֵין הֲלָכָה כְּרַבִּי יְהוּדָה דְּאָמַר: מִתְפַּלֵּל אָדָם שֶׁל מוֹסֵף וְאַחֵר כֵּךְ מִתְפַּלֵּל שֶׁל מִנְחָה.

אָמַר לֵיה: רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַרָה? אָמַר לֵיה: אֵין. תָּנָא מִינָה אֲרַבְעִין זְמָנִין. אָמַר לֵיה: חֲדָא הִיא לָךְ, אוֹ חֲדָת הִיא לָךְ? אָמַר לֵיה: חֲדָת הִיא לִי, מִשּׁוּם דְּמִסְפָּקָא לִי בְּרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לִי.

אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לִי: כָּל הַמִּתְפַּלֵּל תַּפְלָה שֶׁל מוֹסְפִין לְאַחֵר שְׁבַע שְׁעוֹת לְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה, עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב אָמַר: "נוֹגִי מִמוּעַד אֶסְפְּתִי מִמֶּךָ הָיוּ." מָאִי מִשְׁמַע דְּהָאִי "נוֹגִי" לִישָׁנָא דְּתַבְרָא הוּא? כְּדִמְתַּרְגֵּם רַב יוֹסֵף: "תְּבָרָא אֲתִי עַל שְׁנֵאִיהוֹן דְּבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל דְּאֲחִירוֹ זְמָנִי מוּעֵדֵי דְּבִירוּשָׁלַם."

אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: כָּל הַמִּתְפַּלֵּל תַּפְלָה שֶׁל שְׁחִירָת לְאַחֵר אַרְבַּע שְׁעוֹת לְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה, עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב אָמַר: "נוֹגִי מִמוּעַד אֶסְפְּתִי מִמֶּךָ הָיוּ." מָאִי מִשְׁמַע דְּהָאִי "נוֹגִי" לִישָׁנָא דְּעֶצְרָא הוּא? דְּכַתִּיב: "דִּלְפָּה נַפְשִׁי מִתּוֹגָה." רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק אָמַר, מִהָכָא: "בְּתוֹלוֹתֶיהָ נִגּוּתָא וְהִיא מִרְחֹק."

The question arose what to do with Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya? They said: What shall we do? Remove him from his position. That is inappropriate as we learned a *halakha* through tradition: One elevates to a higher level of sanctity and does not downgrade. Therefore, one who was the *Nasi* of the Sanhedrin cannot be demoted. Let one Sage lecture one week and the other Sage one week, they will come to be jealous one of another, as they will be forced to appoint one as the acting head of the Sanhedrin. Rather, Rabban Gamliel will lecture three weeks and Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya will lecture as head of the yeshiva one week. That arrangement was adopted and that is the explanation of the exchange in tractate *Hagiga*: Whose week was it? It was the week of Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya. One final detail: That student who asked the original question that sparked this entire incident was Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai.

We learned in the mishna: And the additional prayer may be recited all day.¹⁴ Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Nevertheless, one who postpones his prayer excessively is called negligent.¹⁵

The Rabbis taught in a *baraita*: If the obligation to recite two prayers was before him, one, the additional prayer and one, the afternoon prayer, he recites the afternoon prayer first and the additional prayer thereafter, because this, the afternoon prayer, is recited on a frequent basis, and this one, the additional prayer, is recited on a relatively infrequent basis. Rabbi Yehuda says: He recites the additional prayer first and the afternoon prayer thereafter, because this, the additional prayer, is a mitzva whose time soon elapses, as it may only be recited until the seventh hour and this, the afternoon prayer, is a mitzva whose time does not soon elapse as one may recite it until the midpoint of the afternoon. Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The *halakha* is that he recites the afternoon prayer first and the additional prayer thereafter, in accordance with the opinion of the Rabbis.

The Gemara cites additional sources relating to this issue: When Rabbi Zeira would tire of his studies, he would go and sit in the doorway of Rabbi Natan bar Tovi's study hall. He said to himself: When the entering and exiting Sages pass, I will rise before them and be rewarded for the mitzva of honoring Torah scholars. Rabbi Natan bar Tovi himself emerged and came to where Rabbi Zeira was seated. Rabbi Zeira said to him: Who just stated a *halakha* in the study hall? Rabbi Natan bar Tovi said to him: Rabbi Yoḥanan just said as follows: The *halakha* is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda who said: He recites the additional prayer first and the afternoon prayer thereafter.

Rabbi Zeira said to him: Did Rabbi Yoḥanan himself say this *halakha*? Rabbi Natan said to him: Yes. He learned this statement from him forty times, etching it into his memory. Rabbi Natan said to him: Is this *halakha* so dear to you because it is singular for you, as it is the only *halakha* that you learned in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, or is it new to you, as you were previously unaware of this ruling? Rabbi Zeira said to him: It is somewhat new to me, as I was uncertain whether this *halakha* was said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan or in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. Now it is clear to me that this *halakha* is in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: With regard to anyone who recites the additional prayer after seven hours of the day, according to Rabbi Yehuda, the verse states: "Those who are destroyed [*nugei*] far from the Festivals, I shall gather from you, they who carried for you the burden of insult" (Zephaniah 3:18). From where may it be inferred that *nugei* is an expression of destruction? As Rav Yosef translated the verse into Aramaic: Destruction comes upon the enemies of the house of Israel, a euphemism for Israel itself, for they have delayed the times of the Festivals in Jerusalem. This proves both that *nugei* means destruction and that destruction comes upon those who fail to fulfill a mitzva at its appointed time.

Similarly, Rabbi Elazar said: Regarding anyone who recites the morning prayer after four hours of the day, according to Rabbi Yehuda, the verse states: "Those who are in sorrow [*nugei*] far from the Festivals, I shall gather from you, they who carried for you the burden of insult" (Zephaniah 3:18). From where may it be inferred that *nugei* is an expression of sorrow? As it is written: "My soul drips in sorrow [*tuga*]" (Psalms 119:28). Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: The proof that *nugei* indicates suffering is from here: "Her virgins are sorrowed [*nugot*] and she is embittered" (Lamentations 1:4).

תנא, אמר רבי יוסי: שח לי זקן אחד מאנשי ירושלים: עשרים וארבעה מבי שחין הן, וכולן – אמרו חכמים: תשמיש קשה להן, ובעלי ראיתן קשה מכולן. במאי הוי? דתנא: הקיז דם ושימש – הויין לו בנים ויתיקין, הקיז שימשים ושימשו – הויין לו בנים בעלי ראיתן. אמר רב פפא: לא אמרן אלא דלא טעים מידי, אבל טעים מידי – לית לן בה.

It is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yosei said: A certain Elder from among the residents of Jerusalem told me that there are twenty-four types of patients afflicted with boils, and with regard to all of them the Sages said that sexual relations are harmful to them, and those afflicted with *ra'atan*,^a a severe skin disease characterized by extreme weakness and trembling, are harmed even more than all of the others. The Gemara asks: From where and how does this disease come about? The Gemara answers: As it is taught in a *baraita*: One who let blood and immediately afterward engaged in sexual relations will have weak [*vitaykin*]¹ children. If both of them let blood and then engaged in sexual relations, he will have children afflicted with *ra'atan*. Rav Pappa said in response: We said this only if he did not taste anything between bloodletting and intercourse, but if he tasted something we have no problem with it, as it is not dangerous.

מאי סימניה? דלפן עיניה, ודייבי נחיריה, ויתיה ליה רירא מפומיה, ורמו דידבי עילויה. ומאי אסותיה? אמר אבין: פילא, ולודנא, גירדא דאגוזא, וגירדא דאשפא וכליל מלכא, ומתחלא דידקלא סומקא, ושלילק להו בהדי הדדי, ומעיל ליה לביתא דשישא. ואי לא איכא ביתא דשישא – מעיל ליה לביתא דשב לבני ואריחא.

The Gemara inquires: What are the symptoms of *ra'atan*? His eyes water, his nose runs, drool comes out of his mouth, and flies rest upon him. The Gemara further inquires: And what is his cure to remove the insect found in his head, which is associated with this illness? Abaye said: One takes *pila*¹ and *ladanum* [*lodana*],² which are types of grasses; and the ground shell of a nut;³ and shavings of smoothed hides;⁴ and artemisia [*kelil malka*];⁵ and the calyx of a red date palm. And one cooks them together and brings the patient into a marble house,⁶ i.e., one that is completely sealed. And if there is no marble house available, the one performing the treatment brings the patient into a house whose walls have the thickness of seven bricks and one small brick.

BACKGROUND

Ladanum – לודנא: Apparently this is the sap of a species of the plant called *cistus*. The *cistus* is an evergreen bush with simple, creased flowers that is found all over Israel. *Cistus* flowers are large and white or pink, depending on the particular species, and at the end of the summer the fruits ripen into a uniquely shaped capsule. *Cistus* sap has been widely used since ancient times as a common medicine. Nowadays it is mainly used as an ingredient in cosmetics and perfumes.



Cistus bush with flowers

Artemisia [*kelil malka*] – כליל מלכא: According to Asaf HaRofeh, *kelil malka* is a plant from the genus *Artemisia*, certain types of which are found in Israel. These plants grow on plains and in sandy areas and bear small flowers. An essential oil extracted from some kinds of artemisia has been widely used as a medicine since ancient times.



Artemisia capsules



Artemisia flowers

Marble house – ביתא דשישא: The Gemara here and other sources imply that this was a building designated for surgical procedures. It is possible that a structure of this kind was used because it was closed off and relatively free of external contamination.

בבעלי ראיתן – *ra'atan*: This disease, mentioned in the Talmud and various *midrashim*, has not been definitively identified, and there are several theories as to its nature. However, the most likely explanation is that it refers to Hansen's disease, colloquially known as leprosy, which is distinct from the biblical disease commonly translated this way and discussed at length in the Talmud.

Hansen's disease appears in different forms, one of which is in line with the description here in the Talmud. In addition to a severe toughening of the skin which causes a loss of feeling in that area or to the entire limb, the ailment also causes a great deal of mucus to flow from the nose. For various reasons, in later stages this illness causes serious wounds and gangrene, which rots away the external limbs. The disease is infectious but it requires close, prolonged contact for contagion to occur. Nevertheless, due to the severity of this illness and the inability of those in talmudic times to treat it, they were extremely careful about any kind of contact, not only direct contact with the infected patient but even with flies that touched the secretions of those afflicted with the disease, or anything they may have touched.

The matter of the insect in the brain, however, is not at all clear in this context. It might be connected to a different disease brought about by parasites. Various types of parasites, such as hookworms, travel from place to place in the body and can cause serious damage to the afflicted.

LANGUAGE

Weak [*vitaykin*] – ויתיקין: The source of this word and its precise meaning are unclear. According to Rav Binyamin Musafia it comes from the Greek *φθισικός*, *phthisikos*, meaning one who is sick with a degenerative illness, primarily tuberculosis. Others assert that it is derived from the Greek *ἐκτικός*, *hektikos*, which, among its various meanings, refers to one who is sick with a dangerous illness, or tuberculosis.

Pila – פילא: Apparently from the Greek *φύλλον*, *fullon*, meaning vegetable or grass. In addition to being a general term, it is also the name of specific plants, such as those belonging to the genus *Mercurialis*. Some claim that the Sages were referring to laurel leaves.

Ladanum [*lodana*] – לודנא: From the Greek *λάδανον*, *ladanon*, or the Latin *laudanum*, which refers to the sap extracted from this plant. Some assert that its original derivation is the Hebrew word *lot* (see Genesis 43:11).

NOTES

The ground shell of a nut [*de'egoza*] – גירדא דאגוזא: Rashi and other commentaries explain this in accordance with our reading of the text. The *Arukh* presents an alternate version of the text which reads *de'azga*, meaning pieces of glass.

And shavings of smoothed hides [*de'ashpa*] – גירדא דאשפא: According to the alternate version of the text which reads *de'ashpekha*, this refers to the material that cobblers, *ushphakhim*, shave off of the leather.

Attach himself to them – **מיכרך בהו** – According to Rashi and the Rivan this means that he would cling to them when he studied without concern, as he relied on the merit of the Torah to protect him from illness. Rabbi Yaakov Emden and the author of *Ahavat Eitan* state that as he was occupied with the public mitzva of teaching Torah he was not worried that he might be harmed. Although there is a principle that one may not rely on a miracle in an obviously dangerous situation, there is an exception for one engaged in the performance of a public mitzva. In contrast, the Ritva maintains that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi would stay close to them at all times, not only when learning Torah, in accordance with the principle discussed in tractate *Sota* (21a) that the Torah protects those who occupy themselves with it even when they are not involved in its study.

If it bestows grace – **אם חן מעלה** – The Maharam Schiff explains that if the Torah actively provides grace, it will certainly not cause people to lose their grace. Since those afflicted with *ra'atan* are extremely repulsive, as explained earlier, God will certainly ensure that those who study Torah will not end up in such a state.

ונטיל ליה תלת מאה כסי על רישיה, עד דרפיא ארעייתא דמוחיה, וקרע למוחיה. ומייתי ארבע טרפי דאסא, ומדלי כל חד ברעא ומותיב חד. ושקיל בצבתא, וקלי ליה. דאי לא – הדר עילויה.

מכריו רבי יוחנן: הזהרו מזבובי של בעלי ראתן. רבי יורה לא הוה יתיב בויקיה, רבי אלעזר לא עייל באהליו, רבי אמי ורבי אסי לא הוו אכלי מביעי דההיא מבואה. רבי יהושע בן לוי מיכרך בהו ועסיק בתורה, אמר: "אילת אהבים ויעלת חן" אם חן מעלה על לומדיה – אגוני לא מנא?

כי הוה שכיב, אמרו ליה למלאך המות: ויל עביר ליה רעותיה. אזל איתחזי ליה, אמר ליה: אחוי לי דוכתאי, אמר ליה: לחיי. אמר ליה: הב לי סכינך, דלמא מבעתת לי באורחא – יתבה ניהליה. כי מטא להתם, דלייה, קא מחוי ליה. שוור נפל לההוא גיסא.

נקטיה בקרנא דגלימיה. אמר ליה: בשבועתא דלא אתינא. אמר קודשא בריך הוא: אי איתשיל אשבועתא – ניהדר, אי לא – לא ניהדר. אמר ליה: הב לי סכינאי! לא הוה קא יתיב ליה. נפקא בת קלא ואמרה ליה: הב ניהליה, דמיתבעא לבריייתא. מכריו אליהו קמיה: פנו מקום לבר ליואי, פנו מקום לבר ליואי!

And the one performing the treatment pours three hundred cups of this mixture on the patient's head until his skull is soft, and then he tears open the patient's skull to expose his brain, and brings four myrtle leaves and lifts up each time one foot of the insect that is found on the patient's brain, and places one leaf under each foot of the insect so as to prevent it from attempting to cling to his brain when it is forcibly removed, and subsequently takes it with tweezers. And he then burns the insect, because if he does not burn it, it will return to him.

Rabbi Yohanan would announce: Be careful of the flies found on those afflicted with *ra'atan*, as they are carriers of the disease. Rabbi Zeira would not sit in a spot where the wind blew from the direction of someone afflicted with *ra'atan*. Rabbi Elazar would not enter the tent of one afflicted with *ra'atan*, and Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi would not eat eggs from an alley in which someone afflicted with *ra'atan* lived. Conversely, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi^p would attach himself to themⁿ and study Torah, saying as justification the verse: "The Torah is a loving hind and a graceful doe" (Proverbs 5:19). If it bestows graceⁿ on those who learn it, does it not protect them from illness?

When Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi was on the verge of dying, they said to the Angel of Death: Go and perform his bidding, as he is a righteous man and deserves to die in the manner he sees fit. The Angel of Death went and appeared to him. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to him: Show me my place in paradise. He said to him: Very well. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to him: Give me your knife that you use to kill mortals, lest you frighten me on the way. He gave it to him. When he arrived there, in paradise, he lifted Rabbi Yehoshua so he could see his place, and he showed it to him. Rabbi Yehoshua jumped and fell into that other side, thereby escaping into paradise.

The Angel of Death grabbed him by the corner of his cloak. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to him: I swear that I will not come with you. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: If he ever in his life requested dissolution concerning an oath he had taken, he must return to this world with the Angel of Death, as he can have his oath dissolved this time also. If he did not ever request dissolution of an oath, he need not return. Since Rabbi Yehoshua had in fact never requested dissolution of an oath, he was allowed to stay in paradise. The Angel of Death said to him: At least give me my knife back. However, he did not give it to him, as he did not want any more people to die. A Divine Voice emerged and said to him: Give it to him, as it is necessary to kill the created beings; death is the way of the world. Elijah the Prophet announced before him: Make way for the son of Levi, make way for the son of Levi.

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi – **רבי יהושע בן לוי** – One of the greatest *amora'im* of the first generation in Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi was, according to some opinions, the son of Levi ben Sisi, one of the outstanding students of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Apparently, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi himself was one of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's younger students. Many halakhic disputes are recorded between him and Rabbi Yohanan, who was apparently his younger disciple-colleague. In general, the *halakha* is ruled in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, even against Rabbi Yohanan, who was the leading authority at that time.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi was also a renowned teacher of

aggada. Because of the great esteem in which he was held, aggadic statements in his name are cited at the end of the six orders of the Mishna.

A great deal is told of his piety and sanctity; he is regarded as one of the most righteous men who ever lived. He was famous as a worker of miracles, as one to whom Elijah the Prophet appeared, and as one whose prayers were always answered.

He taught many students. All of the Sages of the succeeding generation were Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's students to some degree and all cite Torah pronouncements in his name. His son, Rabbi Yosef, was also a Torah scholar and married into the family of the *Nasi*.

Stools [*takhtekei*] – תַּכְתֵּקֵי: Related to the Middle Persian taxtaga, which means a throne.

אֵל אֲשַׁכְחִיָּה לְרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָי דְּהוּהָ יֵתִיב עַל תְּלַת עֶשְׂרֵי תַכְתֵּקֵי פִּיזָא. אָמַר לֵיהּ: אַתָּה הוּא בְּרַ לְיוֹאֵי? אָמַר לֵיהּ: הֵן. נִרְאָתָה קֶשֶׁת בְּיָמַיךָ? אָמַר לֵיהּ: הֵן. אִם כֵּן, אֵי אַתָּה בְּרַ לְיוֹאֵי. וְלֹא הָיָא, דְּלֹא הָוֵא מִיָּדַי. אָלָא סָבַר: לֹא אֲחִיזִיק טִיבּוּתָא לְנַפְשָׁא.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi went and found in paradise Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai^p sitting on thirteen golden stools [*takhtekei*].¹ Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai said to him: Are you the son of Levi? He said to him: Yes. Rabbi Shimon said to him: Was a rainbow ever seen in your days? He said: Yes. Rabbi Shimon retorted: If so, you are not the son of Levi, as he is a completely righteous man. During the lifetimes of completely righteous people no rainbows are visible, as they are a sign that the world deserves to be destroyed by a flood; whereas the merit of the righteous protects the world from such things. The Gemara comments: And that is not so, for there was no rainbow seen at all during the lifetime of Rabbi Yehoshua, but he thought: I do not want to take credit for myself by presenting myself as such a righteous person.

רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בְּרַ פָּפָא שׁוֹשְׁבֵינִיָּה הוּהּ. כִּי הָוָה קָא נִיחָא נַפְשִׁיהּ, אָמְרוּ לֵיהּ לְמַלְאָךְ הַמָּוֶת: זִיל עֲבִיד לֵיהּ רְעוּתִיהּ. אֵל אֲלָגִבִּיהּ וְאִיתְחַזִּי לֵיהּ. אָמַר לֵיהּ: שְׂבָקִי תַלְתִּין יוֹם עַד דְּנִהַדְר תַּלְמוּדָא, דְּאָמְרִי: אֲשֶׁרִי מִי שְׂבָא לְכָאן וְתַלְמוּדוֹ בִּידוֹ. שְׂבָקִיהּ. לְבָתַר תַּלְתִּין יוֹמִין אֵל אִיתְחַזִּי לֵיהּ. אָמַר לֵיהּ: אַחֲוִי לִי דּוֹכְתָאִי. אָמַר לֵיהּ: לְחַיִּי. אָמַר לֵיהּ: הֵב לִי סִבְיָנִךְ, דְּלִמָּא מְבַעֲתָ לִי בְּאוֹרְחָא. אָמַר לֵיהּ: בְּחִבְרָךְ בְּעִית לְמִיעֲבַד לִי?

The Gemara relates a similar incident: Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa was a friend of the Angel of Death and would see him frequently. When Rabbi Hanina was on the verge of dying, they said to the Angel of Death: Go and perform his bidding. He went before him and appeared to him. He said to the angel: Leave me for thirty days until I have reviewed my studies, for they say: Happy is he who comes here, to paradise, with his learning in his hand. He left him, and after thirty days he again went and appeared to him. He said to the Angel of Death: Show me my place in paradise. He said to him: Very well. Rabbi Hanina said to him: Give me your knife, lest you frighten me on the way. The Angel of Death said to him: Do you wish to do to me as your friend Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi did, and escape?

אָמַר לֵיהּ: אֵייתִי סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה, וְחַזִּי מִי אִיכָא מִיָּדַי דְּכֶתִיב בֵּיהּ דְּלֹא קִיַּמְתִּיהּ. אָמַר לֵיהּ: מִי אִיכָרְכָת בְּבַעְלֵי רֵאשֹׁן וְאִיעֲסַקְתָּ בַּתּוֹרָה? וְאִפְּלִיז חֲכִי, כִּי נָח נַפְשִׁיהּ – אֶפְסִיק לֵיהּ עֲמוּדָא דְּנוֹרָא בֵּין דִּידֵיהּ לְעֵלְמָא, וְהִמְיִר דְּלֹא מִפְּסִיק עֲמוּדָא דְּנוֹרָא אֶלָּא לְחַד בְּדָרָא, אוֹ לְתֵרִין בְּדָרָא.

He said to him: Bring a Torah scroll and see: Is there anything written in it that I have not fulfilled? I am therefore worthy of entering Paradise alive, as did Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. He said to him: But did you attach yourself to those afflicted with *ra'atan* and study Torah, as he did? The Gemara comments: And even so, despite the fact that he was not equal to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, when he passed away a pillar of fire separated him from everyone. And it is learned as a tradition that a pillar of fire separates in this manner only for one in a generation or for two in a generation.

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai – רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָי: Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai is among the greatest *tanna'im* of the generation prior to the redaction of the Mishna. Rabbi Shimon was the preeminent student of Rabbi Akiva and he considered himself Rabbi Akiva's spiritual heir. Rabbi Shimon's greatness was manifest in his mastery of both *halakha* and *aggada*, and his statements can be found on all topics in every tractate of the Talmud. Although *halakha* is not always ruled in accordance with Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai's opinion, especially in disputes with Rabbi Yosei and Rabbi Yehuda, with regard to several core issues, the *halakha* is in accordance with his opinion. Rabbi Shimon had his own, unique method of deriving *halakha* from the Torah: He factored in the rationale of the verse and inferred halakhic conclusions from the Bible based on the spirit and purpose of the *halakha*.

Rabbi Shimon traveled to Rome as an emissary of the Jewish people but he harbored profound enmity toward the Romans. Because he made no attempt to conceal his feelings, he was sentenced to death in absentia by the Romans and forced into hiding for many years. He was an ascetic by nature who was very exacting, and was famous in his generation for his righteousness and his performance of miracles. There are many anecdotes related in the Talmud about miraculous acts that he performed.

The *Sifrei*, a collection of halakhic derivations from the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, was developed in his study hall. He is also the primary figure in the fundamental book of kabbala, the *Zohar*. His greatest students were Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi; Rabbi Shimon ben Yehuda; and his son, Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon, who was also among the most prominent *tanna'im*.

BACKGROUND

Beets [teradin] – תרדין: *Teradin* in this context refers to beets, *Beta vulgaris cicla*, which are generally called *silka* in the Talmud. This plant is an annual garden vegetable from the Chenopodiaceae family. Its large, fleshy leaves grow up to 15–30 cm in length and are edible when cooked. Their taste is similar to that of spinach. Nowadays, the leaves are also used as bird food.

Hizmei – היזמי: This is probably the bush *Ononis antiquorum* L. from the Papilionaceae family, more commonly known at the tall spiny rest-harrow. It is a small, thorny bush whose height is 25–70 cm and is commonly found in fields and riverbeds. The leaves of the plant are usually clover-shaped and its side branches are thorny and tend to branch out.



Tall spiny rest-harrow

קרב לגביה רבי אלכסנדר, אמר: עשה בשביל כבוד חכמים. לא אשגת. עשה בשביל כבוד אביך! לא אשגת. עשה בשביל כבוד עצמך! איסתלק. אמר אביי: לאפוקי ממאן דלא קיים (אפילו אות אחת). אמר ליה רב אדא בר מתנא: לאפוקי ממך, דלא אית ליה מעקה לאיגריה. ולא היא, מיהוה הוה, וההיא שעתא הוא דשדיה זיקא.

אמר רבי חנינא: מפני מה אין בעלי ראיתן בבבל – מפני שאוכלין תרדין, ושותין שכר של היזמי. אמר רבי יוחנן: מפני מה אין מצורעין בבבל – מפני שאוכלין תרדין, ושותין שכר, ורוחצין במי פרת.

הדרן עלך המדיר את אשתו

Due to the pillar of fire they could not go near Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa to attend to his burial. **Rabbi Alexandri approached him and said: Make the pillar of fire disappear in honor of the Sages.** He did **not** pay attention to him. He said: **Make it go away in honor of your father.** Again he did **not** pay attention to him. Finally he said: **Make it go away in your own honor**, at which point the pillar **disappeared**. **Abaye said:** The purpose of the pillar of fire is **to exclude him from the company of those who have not fulfilled even one letter of the Torah.** **Rav Adda bar Mattana said to him:** It comes to exclude him from the Master himself, **who does not have a guardrail for his roof.** Rav Adda bar Mattana took this opportunity to rebuke Abaye. The Gemara comments: **And that is not so** as he in fact **did** have a guardrail, **but the wind had just blown it off at that time.**

Rabbi Hanina said: For what reason are there no people afflicted with *ra'atan* in Babylonia? Because the Babylonians eat beets [*teradin*]⁸ and drink beer made from the *hizmei*⁹ plant. Rabbi Yohanan said: For what reason are there no lepers in Babylonia? Because they eat beets, drink beer, and bathe in the waters of the Euphrates, all of which are good for the body.

Four entered the orchard – אֶרְבָּעָה נִכְנְסוּ בְּפָרְדִּים: Entering the orchard, i.e., delving into the deepest secrets of Torah knowledge, does not leave anyone unaffected. Ben Azzai's death and ben Zoma's insanity are not presented as punishments but as the natural consequences of their investigation. Ben Azzai, whose soul yearned for the purity of Torah knowledge, subjugated his physical self to the extent that his spirit cleaved to the Almighty, destroying his physical being. Ben Zoma, who desired to investigate areas of wisdom that were beyond his comprehension, suffered a loss of intellectual function. Aher was overwhelmed by his experience and lost the ability to distinguish between the Creator and His creations, meaning that he confused Mitatron, who was God's angel, with the Creator Himself. This heresy is described by the Gemara as separating the root from the sapling. Only Rabbi Akiva, who was able to understand the depths of the Torah, survived unscathed (*Midrash Shlomo*).

Castrating a dog – לְקַרְוֵי בִלְבָא: Rashi and *Tosafot* ask why this question was asked specifically concerning a dog, rather than any animal unfit for an offering. They answer that because the law of castration is mentioned in the context of animals that are disqualified as offerings, one may have thought that the law does not apply to dogs, which are completely distanced from offerings by the prohibition against using the price paid for a dog to purchase an offering (*Deuteronomy* 23:19). The *Zohar* says that ben Zoma answered that despite the Torah's view of dogs as despised animals, even these animals have a right to exist in the world. Consequently, it is prohibited to interfere with their procreation.

Virgin who became pregnant – בְּתוּלָה שֶׁעִיבְרָה: High Priests are permitted to marry only virgins (*Leviticus* 21:13). The question being discussed here is whether the woman's pregnancy proves that she is not a virgin. The early and later authorities discuss whether the Gemara is referring to a woman who only claims to be a virgin or to a female who was examined and found to be one (see *Turei Aven* and *Sefat Emet*).

LANGUAGE

Orchard [pardes] – פָּרְדִּים: This word appears in the Bible as well (e.g., *Song of Songs* 4:13). It probably comes from an ancient Persian word meaning a fenced-off place or garden. Different forms of this word are featured in many other languages. In the Septuagint, *παράδεισος*, *paradysos*, is used as the translation of Garden of Eden. Here, in the context of the four who entered the *pardes*, the word also alludes to a celestial garden.

Aher – אֶהָר: Aher can be understood literally as: A different person, one who was unknown beforehand. However, the word apparently included a negative connotation as well, similar to the use of the term *Aherim*, literally, others, in rabbinic literature as a reference to gentiles. It is also possible that it is related to the verb *ahar*, which means: In heat, enslaved to his lusts.

HALAKHA

The prohibition against castration – אִיסּוּר קִירוּם: It is prohibited to destroy the sexual organs of humans and animals, including beast and fowl. *Pithei Teshuva* includes fish as well. The prohibition applies to both ritually pure and impure animals in both Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora. One who castrates any of these species is liable to receive lashes. It is also prohibited to castrate female species, but if one does so he is exempt from lashes (*Shulhan Arukh*, *Even HaEzer* 5:11).

§ The Sages taught: Four entered the orchard^N [*pardes*],^L i.e., dealt with the loftiest secrets of Torah, and they are as follows: Ben Azzai; and ben Zoma;^P Aher,^L the other, a name for Elisha ben Avuya;^P and Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva, the senior among them, said to them: When, upon your arrival in the upper worlds, you reach pure marble stones, do not say: Water, water, although they appear to be water, because it is stated: "He who speaks falsehood shall not be established before My eyes" (*Psalms* 101:7).

The Gemara proceeds to relate what happened to each of them: Ben Azzai glimpsed at the Divine Presence and died. And with regard to him the verse states: "Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His pious ones" (*Psalms* 116:15). Ben Zoma glimpsed at the Divine Presence and was harmed, i.e., he lost his mind. And with regard to him the verse states: "Have you found honey? Eat as much as is sufficient for you, lest you become full from it and vomit it" (*Proverbs* 25:16). Aher chopped down the shoots of saplings. In other words, he became a heretic. Rabbi Akiva came out safely.

The Gemara recounts the greatness of ben Zoma, who was an expert interpreter of the Torah and could find obscure proofs: They asked ben Zoma: What is the *halakha* with regard to castrating a dog?^N The prohibition against castration appears alongside the sacrificial blemishes, which may imply that it is permitted to castrate an animal that cannot be sacrificed as an offering. He said to them: The verse states "That which has its testicles bruised, or crushed, or torn, or cut, you shall not offer to God, nor shall you do so in your land" (*Leviticus* 22:24), from which we learn: With regard to any animal that is in your land, you shall not do such a thing.^H They also asked ben Zoma: A woman considered to be a virgin who became pregnant,^N what is the *halakha*? A High Priest may marry only a virgin; is he permitted to marry her? The answer depends on the following: Are we concerned for the opinion of Shmuel? Shmuel says:

PERSONALITIES

Ben Zoma – זִמָּא: Shimon ben Zoma, one of the greatest scholars of the generation of the destruction of the Temple, was a student of Rabbi Yehoshua. Despite being considered one of the foremost Sages of his time, Shimon ben Zoma was not ordained, perhaps due to his youth, and therefore he was not called Rabbi. He was sometimes known only by his father's name. A considerable number of legal and aggadic sayings are cited in his name, and he was especially renowned for his expositions of the Bible, so much so that it was said: After ben Zoma died, the expositors ceased.

Elisha, Aher – אֶלִישָׁע אֶהָר: Elisha ben Avuya was born in Jerusalem toward the end of the Second Temple period. His family was one of the most prominent and wealthy in the city, but, as related by the Jerusalem Talmud, it was under the sway of foreign cultures and did not maintain deep ties with Judaism. Unique circumstances lead to Elisha receiving an extensive Jewish education, and his great talents earned him a place among the chief scholars of the day. Nevertheless, even when he was a member of the academy, Elisha continued to maintain ties with Greek culture in its various manifestations and took an interest in and read heretical works.

In addition to the story reported here, the Talmud offers

other accounts of how severe emotional traumas, perhaps connected to the Hadrianic persecutions, caused Elisha to leave Judaism entirely. Certain sources suggest that not only did he transgress the mitzvot, but that he even collaborated with the Romans against his Jewish brethren. Many acts of cruelty are ascribed to him.

This explains the enmity directed at him as early as during the time of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. In his own generation, Rabbi Meir was apparently the only person to maintain personal ties with the renegade. He even continued to study Torah from Elisha, which was controversial at the time.

In talmudic sources, the feeling of regret and pain that such a great scholar turned into a heretic appears to have been more lasting than the immediate feelings of antagonism toward him. It is also implied that Aher remained miserable even during his rebellion but could not find the courage to repent after having acted so wickedly. It is due to this remorse that his teachings are preserved. A proverb of his can be found in *Pirkei Avot* (4:20), while *Avot DeRabbi Natan* features an entire chapter of his Torah teachings. According to the version of the Gemara here, the *tanna* Rabbi Ya'akov was the son of the daughter of Aher, who is discussed later (15b).

תָּנוּ רַבָּנֵי: אֶרְבָּעָה נִכְנְסוּ בְּפָרְדִּים, וְאֵלוּ הֵן: בֶּן זִמָּא, וְבֶן זִמָּא, אֶהָר, וְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא. אָמַר לָהֶם רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא: כְּשֶׁאַתֶּם מֵגִיעִין אֶצֶל אֲבָנֵי שֵׁשׁ טָהוֹרִים, אַל תֹּאמְרוּ "מַיִם מֵיִם!" מִשּׁוּם שְׁנֵאָמַר: "דּוֹבֵר שְׁקָרִים לֹא יִבּוֹן לִנְגַד עֵינַי."

בֶּן זִמָּא הִצִּיץ וּמָת, עָלָיו הִכְתוּב אוֹמֵר: "יָקָר בְּעֵינֵי ה' הַמּוֹתָה לְחַסִּידָיו." בֶּן זִמָּא הִצִּיץ וּנְפָעַע, וְעָלָיו הִכְתוּב אוֹמֵר: "רַבִּשׁ מִצָּאָתָא, אָכּוֹל דִּיִּךְ פֶּן תִּשְׁבָּעֵנּוּ וְהִקְאָתּוּ." אֶהָר קִיָּץ בְּנִטְעוֹת. רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא יָצָא בְּשָׁלוֹם.

שָׂאֵלוּ אֶת בֶּן זִמָּא: מַהוּ לְסְרוּסִי בִלְבָא? אָמַר לָהֶם: "וּבְאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ" – כֹּל שֶׁבְאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ. שָׂאֵלוּ אֶת בֶּן זִמָּא: בְּתוּלָה שֶׁעִיבְרָה מַהוּ לְכַהֵן גָּדוֹל? מִי חֵיִשִּׁינָּה לְדִשְׁמוּאֵל, דְּאָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל:

BACKGROUND

Conceived in a bath – באמבטי עיברה – Even in regular pregnancies, isolated spermatozoa rarely reach the womb and fertilize the female. Semen from sexual relations is ejaculated with force and lands closer to the womb, thereby increasing the chances of pregnancy. The spermatozoa of healthy semen can travel a considerable distance in the womb when ejaculated with force. The odds that a woman will become impregnated as a result of the chance infiltration of a sperm cell into her womb are of course extremely slight, but it is nevertheless possible.

LANGUAGE

Bath [ambati] – אמבטי: From the Greek ἐμβάτη, *embatē*, meaning a tub or other washing vessel.

יכול אני לבעול כמה בעילות בלא דם.
או דלמא דשמואל לא שכיחא? אמר
לו: דשמואל לא שכיח, וחישינן שמא
באמבטי עיברה.

I can engage in intercourse several times without blood. In other words, I can have relations with a woman while leaving her hymen intact. If this is so, it is possible that the assumed virgin had intercourse in this manner and is forbidden to the High Priest. Or, perhaps a person who can act like Shmuel is not common and the *halakha* is not concerned with this case. He said to them: One like Shmuel is not common, and we are concerned that she may have conceived in a bath.^{NBL} Perhaps she washed in a bath that contained a man's semen, from which she became impregnated while remaining a virgin.

והאמר שמואל: כל שכבת זרע שאינו
יורה כחץ אינו מוֹרֵעַ! מעיקרא נמי יורה
כחץ הוה.

The Gemara asks: How could she possibly become pregnant in such a manner? Didn't Shmuel say: Any semen that is not shot like an arrow cannot fertilize? The Gemara answers: This does not mean that it must be shot like an arrow at the moment of fertilization. Even if initially, when released from the male, it was shot as an arrow, it can also fertilize a woman at a later moment.

תנו רבנן: מעשה ברבי יהושע בן חנניה
שהיה עומד על גב מעלה בהר הבית.
וראהו בן זומא ולא עמד מלפניו. אמר לו:
מאין ולאין בן זומא? אמר לו: צופה הייתי
בין מים העליונים למים התחתונים, ואין
בין זה לזה אלא שלש אצבעות בלבד.
שנאמר: "ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני
המים" – ביונה שמרחפת על בניה ואינה
נוגעת. אמר להן רבי יהושע לתלמידיו:
עדיין בן זומא מבחוץ.

With regard to the fate of ben Zoma, the Sages taught: There was once an incident with regard to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananya, who was standing on a step on the Temple Mount, and ben Zoma saw him and did not stand before him to honor him, as he was deep in thought. Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: From where do you come and where are you going, ben Zoma, i.e., what is on your mind? He said to him: In my thoughts I was looking upon the act of Creation, at the gap between the upper waters and the lower waters,^N as there is only the breadth of a mere three fingers^N between them, as it is stated: "And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2), like a dove hovering over its young without touching them. Rabbi Yehoshua said to his students who had overheard this exchange: Ben Zoma is still outside;^N he has not yet achieved full understanding of these matters.

מכדי "ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים"
אימת הווי? ביום הראשון, הבהלה – ביום
שני הוא דהווי, דכתיב: "ויהי מבדיל
בין מים למים". וכמה? אמר רב אחא בר
יעקב: כמלא נמא. ורבנן אמרי: כי גודא
דגמלא. מר זוטרא ואיתימא רב אסי אמר:
כתרי גלימי דפריסי אהדדי, ואמרי לה:
כתרי כסי דסחיפי אהדדי.

The Gemara explains: Now, this verse: "And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters," when was it stated? On the first day, whereas the division of the waters occurred on the second day, as it is written: "And let it divide the waters from the waters" (Genesis 1:6). How, then, could ben Zoma derive a proof from the former verse? The Gemara asks: And how much, in fact, is the gap between them? Rav Aha bar Ya'akov said: Like the thickness of a thread; and the Rabbis said: Like the gap between the boards of a bridge. Mar Zutra, and some say it was Rav Asi, said: Like two robes spread one over the other, with a slight gap in between. And some said: Like two cups placed one upon the other.

NOTES

She may have conceived in a bath – באמבטי עיברה – The Gemara's statement here is a key source for the contemporary legal debate with regard to human artificial insemination and the legal status of a child born from such a procedure. Several early authorities discuss this issue in theory (see *Tosafot* and *Rosh* on *Gittin* 19a), and it is likewise addressed by several later authorities (see *Turei Aven*). Nowadays, the question has resurfaced as a practical concern. Various arguments have been put forward, with some scholars permitting artificial insemination in all cases and others issuing blanket prohibitions, as well as a range of opinions between the two extremes.

The upper waters and lower waters – מים העליונים למים התחתונים – Much has been written with regard to this statement. Rashi explains that it refers to the difference between the dome of the firmament and the earth, while the Rambam maintains that it means the distance between the firmaments and the various spheres. The *Otzar HaKavod* writes that the upper and lower waters

are spiritual terms that correspond to the source of ethereal and earthly entities. According to this explanation, Rabbi Yehoshua's claim is that on the first day, there was no difference between these entities; they all constituted a single creation. Others explain that according to ben Zoma, the description in Genesis follows the order of Creation, whereas Rabbi Yehoshua is of the opinion that certain things mentioned in Genesis as having been created on the first day did not come into being until a later stage.

Three fingers – שלש אצבעות – The *Turei Aven* writes that this breadth is equivalent to the distance of a dove from its young when it hovers above them. They add that there is no special scriptural source for this particular measurement.

Ben Zoma is still outside – עדיין בן זומא מבחוץ – This means that ben Zoma had yet to achieve a full understanding of secret matters. An alternate version of the text reads: Ben Zoma is already outside, reflecting Rabbi Yehoshua's recognition that his mind was occupied with matters that would lead to his impending demise.

He saw Mitatron, etc. – תָּזָא מִיטָטְרוֹן וְכוּ' – The kabbalistic Sages discuss this passage at length. Various midrashic sources imply that Mitatron is the minister of the world, i.e., the angel appointed over the entire world. Seeing Mitatron in this capacity led Aher to entertain the erroneous notion of the existence of two different thrones, that of God above the entire world and a separate domain of the minister of the world. This view is similar to that of certain Gnostic sects.

They removed Mitatron and smote him – אֶפְקְדוּ וְכוּ' – Some explain that Aher was shown Mitatron being beaten, so that he would recognize that his status was that of a mere messenger, just like other angels (Rabbeinu Hananel; *ge'onim*; see *Otzar HaKavod*).

Apart from Aher – חוץ מֵאֶהֱרָר – This is because God knew that Aher would never fully repent (Rabbeinu Hananel). The different versions of the text provide a reason for this: Since as a great scholar he possessed knowledge of the glory of God, he was a willful sinner, and he had therefore forfeited the assistance usually granted to one who wishes to achieve repentance.

Aher asked Rabbi Meir – שָׁאַל אֶהֱרָר אֶת רַבִּי מַעִיר – The Maharsha writes that Aher was alluding to himself in these questions, as implied by the other questions he posed. Some write that Rabbi Meir deliberately provided answers that would lead Aher to state the explanations that were applicable to himself, so that Rabbi Meir could reply by imploring that he repent.

LANGUAGE

Mitatron – מִיטָטְרוֹן: The linguistic origin of this word is unclear. Some claim it derives from the Latin metator, meaning a guide or a planner. Others maintain it comes from the Greek μετά θρόνον, *meta thronos*, meaning behind the throne. According to the latter explanation, it refers to the angel standing behind the Throne of Glory, as it were, the highest minister of the World Above.

Rods [pulsei] – פּוּלְסֵי: Some claim that this word is derived from the Latin pulsus, meaning a blow or a strike.

אֶהֱרָר קִינֵץ בְּנִינְעוּת. עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב אוֹמֵר: "אַל תִּתֵּן אֶת פִּיךָ לְחַטֵּא אֶת בִּשְׂרֶךָ." מֵאִי הָיָא? הוּא מִיטָטְרוֹן דְּאַתְיָהֲבָא לֵיהּ רְשׁוּתָא לְמִיתֵב לְמִיכְתֵּב וְכוּתָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל. אָמַר: גְּמִירָא דְלִמְעַלָּה לֹא הָיָא לֹא יִשְׁיבָה וְלֹא תַחְרוּת וְלֹא עוֹרֵף וְלֹא עִיפּוּ. שְׂמָא חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם שְׁתֵּי רְשׁוּתוֹת הֵן.

אֶפְקְדוּ וְכוּ' לְמִיטָטְרוֹן וּמַחֲיוּהוּ שִׁיתֵּן פּוּלְסֵי דְנֹרָא. אָמְרוּ לֵיהּ: מֵאִי טַעְמָא כִּי חֲזִיתִיהָ לֹא קָמַת מִקְמֶיהָ? אֵיתִיָּהֲבָא לֵיהּ רְשׁוּתָא לְמִמְחֶק וְכוּתָא דְאֶהֱרָר. יֵצֵתָה בֵּת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה: "שׁוּבוּ בְּנֵי שׁוֹבְבִים" חוץ מֵאֶהֱרָר.

אָמַר: הוֹאִיל וְאִיטְרִיד הֵהוּא גְבֵרָא מִהֵהוּא עָלְמָא לִיפּוֹק לִיתְהֵינִי בְּהָאֵי עָלְמָא. נִפְק אֶהֱרָר לְתַרְבּוּת רַעָה. נִפְק אֶשְׁכַּח זֹנָה, תִּבְעָה. אָמְרָה לֵיהּ: וְלֹא אֵלִישָׁע בֶּן אֲבִיָּה אַתָּה? עָקַר פּוֹגֵלָא מִמִּישְׂרָא בְּשַׁבָּת וְיָהֵב לָהּ. אָמְרָה: אֶהֱרָר הוּא.

שָׁאַל אֶהֱרָר אֶת רַבִּי מַעִיר לְאַחַר שִׁנְאָה לְתַרְבּוּת רַעָה, אָמַר לֵיהּ: מֵאִי דְכַתִּיב: "גַּם אֵת זֶה לְעוֹמֵת זֶה עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים?" אָמַר לוֹ: כָּל מַה שֶּׁבְּרָא הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא – בְּרָא בְּנִגְדּוֹ. בְּרָא הָרִים – בְּרָא גְבָעוֹת; בְּרָא יָמִים – בְּרָא נְהָרוֹת.

§ The Gemara stated earlier that Aher chopped down the saplings, becoming a heretic. With regard to him, the verse states: "Do not let your mouth bring your flesh into guilt" (Ecclesiastes 5:5). The Gemara poses a question: What was it that led him to heresy? He saw the angel Mitatron,^{NI} who was granted permission to sit and write the merits of Israel. He said: There is a tradition that in the world above there is no sitting; no competition; no turning one's back before Him, i.e., all face the Divine Presence; and no lethargy. Seeing that someone other than God was seated above, he said: Perhaps, the Gemara here interjects, Heaven forbid, there are two authorities, and there is another source of power in control of the world in addition to God. Such thoughts led Aher to heresy.

The Gemara relates: They removed Mitatron from his place in heaven and smote him^N with sixty rods [pulsei]^I of fire, so that others would not make mistake that Aher made. They said to the angel: What is the reason that when you saw Elisha ben Avuya you did not stand before him? Despite this conduct, since Mitatron was personally involved, he was granted permission to erase the merits of Aher and cause him to stumble in any manner. A Divine Voice went forth saying: "Return, rebellious children" (Jeremiah 3:22), apart from Aher.^N

Upon hearing this, Elisha ben Avuya said: Since that man, meaning himself, has been banished from that world, let him go out and enjoy this world. Aher went astray. He went and found a prostitute and solicited her for intercourse. She said to him: And are you not Elisha ben Avuya? Shall a person of your stature perform such an act? He uprooted a radish from a patch of radishes on Shabbat and gave it to her, to demonstrate that he no longer observed the Torah. The prostitute said: He is other than he was. He is not the same Elisha ben Avuya, he is Aher, other.

The Gemara relates: Aher asked Rabbi Meir^{NP} a question, after he had gone astray. He said to him: What is the meaning of that which is written: "God has made even the one as well as the other" (Ecclesiastes 7:14)? Rabbi Meir said to him: Everything that the Holy One, Blessed be He, created, He created a similar creation corresponding to it. He created mountains, He created hills; He created seas, He created rivers.

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Meir – רַבִּי מַעִיר: Rabbi Meir was one of the greatest *tanna'im* of the generation that preceded the redaction of the Mishna. There is no clear information available concerning Rabbi Meir's parents, though it is told that he descended from a family of converts from the house of the Roman emperors.

His exceptional brilliance in Torah study was evident from a very early age, and he was a student of the two greatest scholars of the generation, Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva. He was also the only Sage who continued to study with Elisha ben Avuya, despite the latter's estrangement from Judaism. His primary teacher was Rabbi Akiva, who ordained him at a very young age, which is the reason that he was ordained a second time by Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava. In recognition of his outstanding scholarship, Rabbi Meir was officially appointed *Hakham*, literally, wise man, the third level below *Nasi*, head of the Sanhedrin. The halakhic discussions between him and his colleagues, Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Yosei, Rabbi Shimon, and Rabbi Elazar, form an important foundation of the Mishna.

Rabbi Meir's greatest undertaking appears to have been a structured, oral redaction of the Oral Law, including establishing specific formats for the *halakhot*. Apparently, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi followed in Rabbi Meir's footsteps and incorporated his work into the Mishna. Consequently, it is a well-known principle that the author of an unattributed statement in the Mishna is

Rabbi Meir, as the assumption is that it was one of the *mishnayot* he formulated.

Due to his involvement in the attempt to depose Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, the *Nasi* of the Sanhedrin, he was punished by the latter, and for a long period his teachings were not cited in his name but were introduced with the words: Others say.

His private life was replete with suffering. His two sons died during his lifetime, and his extraordinary wife Berurya also died under painful circumstances. Nevertheless, it is known that a daughter of his survived. He was eventually forced into exile to Asia Minor, where he died, with the order that his coffin be transferred to Eretz Yisrael and that he be temporarily interred on the shore of the sea whose waves reach the Holy Land.

Rabbi Meir was famous in his lifetime, not only for his sharp intellect, which exceeded that of all his peers, but also for his personal attributes, his efforts as a peacemaker and his willingness to relinquish personal honor for the good of others. He was known as a magnificent public speaker. It is said that following his death, those who composed parables ceased. Several of his parables relating to animals were repeated for many generations. He was also renowned as a miracle worker. For many years a charity fund named after him, Rabbi Meir the Miracle Worker [*Ba'al HaNes*], served as the main source of funding for the Jews in Eretz Yisrael.

Curtain [pargod] – פָּרָגוֹד: It appears that this word is of Persian origin, a transposition of pargad, meaning a screen. It refers to the screen that divides the king from his palace retinue.

אמר לו: רבי עקיבא רבך לא אמר כך, אלא: ברא צדיקים – ברא רשעים. ברא גן עדן – ברא גיהנם. כל אחד ואחד יש לו שני חלקים, אחד בגן עדן ואחד בגיהנם. וזה צדיק – נטל חלקו וחלק חברו בגן עדן. נתחייב רשע – נטל חלקו וחלק חברו בגיהנם.

אמר רב משרשיא: מאי קראה? גבי צדיקים כתיב: "לכן בארצם משנה ירשו." גבי רשעים כתיב: "ומשנה שברון שברם."

שאל אחר את רבי מאיר לאחר שיצא לתרבות רעה: מאי דכתיב: "לא יערבנה זהב וזכוכית ותמורתה בלי פז"? אמר לו: אלו דברי תורה, שקשין לקנותן בכלי זהב וכלי פז, ונוחין לאבדן בכלי זכוכית. אמר לו: רבי עקיבא רבך לא אמר כך, אלא: מה בלי זהב וכלי זכוכית, אף על פי שנשברו יש להם תקנה – אף תלמיד חכם, אף על פי שפרח יש לו תקנה. אמר לו: אף אתה חזור בך! אמר לו: כבר שמעתי מאחורי הפרגוד: שובו בנים שובבים – חוץ מאחר.

תנו רבנן: מעשה באחר שהיה רוכב על הסוס בשבת, והיה רבי מאיר מהלך אחריהו ללמוד תורה מפיו. אמר לו: מאיר, חזור לאחריך, שכבר שיערתי בעקבי סוסי עד כאן תחום שבת. אמר ליה: אף אתה חזור בך. אמר ליה: ולא כבר אמרתי לך: כבר שמעתי מאחורי הפרגוד "שובו בנים שובבים" – חוץ מאחר.

תקפיה, עייליה לבי מדרשא. אמר ליה לינוקא: פסוק לי פסוק! אמר לו: "אין שלום אמר ה' לרשעים." עייליה לבי כנישתא אחריתי, אמר ליה לינוקא: פסוק לי פסוק! אמר לו: "כי אם תכבסי בנתר ותרבי לך בורית נכתם עונך לפני." עייליה לבי כנישתא אחריתי, אמר ליה

Aher said to him: Rabbi Akiva, your teacher, did not say so, but explained the verse as follows: Everything has its opposite: He created the righteous, He created the wicked; He created the Garden of Eden, He created Gehenna. Each and every person has two portions, one in the Garden of Eden and one in Gehenna. If he merits it, by becoming righteous, he takes his portion and the portion of his wicked colleague^N in the Garden of Eden; if he is found culpable by becoming wicked, he takes his portion and the portion of his colleague in Gehenna.

Rav Mesharshiyya said: What is the verse from which it is derived? With regard to the righteous, it is stated: "Therefore in their land they shall possess double" (Isaiah 61:7); whereas with regard to the wicked, it is stated: "And destroy them with double destruction" (Jeremiah 17:18); therefore, each receives a double portion.

Aher asked Rabbi Meir another question, again after he had gone astray. What is the meaning of that which is written: "Gold and glass cannot equal it; neither shall its exchange be vessels of fine gold" (Job 28:17)? If it is referring to the praise and honor of the Torah, it should have compared it only to gold, not to glass. He said to him: This is referring to words of Torah, which are as difficult to acquire as gilded vessels and vessels of fine gold but are as easy to lose as glass vessels. Aher said to him: Rabbi Akiva, your teacher, did not say so, but taught as follows: Just as golden vessels and glass vessels have a remedy even when they have broken, as they can be melted down and made into new vessels, so too a Torah scholar, although he has transgressed, has a remedy. Rabbi Meir said to him: If so, you too, return from your ways. He said to him: I have already heard the following declaration behind the dividing curtain,^L which conceals God from the world: "Return, rebellious children," (Jeremiah 3:22) apart from Aher.

The Gemara cites a related story: The Sages taught: There was once an incident involving Aher, who was riding on a horse on Shabbat, and Rabbi Meir was walking behind him to learn Torah from him. After a while, Aher said to him: Meir, turn back, for I have already estimated and measured according to the steps of my horse^N that the Shabbat boundary ends here, and you may therefore venture no further. Rabbi Meir said to him: You, too, return to the correct path. He said to him: But have I not already told you that I have already heard behind the dividing curtain: "Return, rebellious children," apart from Aher?

Nevertheless, Rabbi Meir took hold of him and brought him to the study hall. Aher said to a child, by way of divination: Recite your verse that you studied today to me.^N He recited the following verse to him: "There is no peace, said the Lord, concerning the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22). He brought him to another study hall. Aher said to a child: Recite your verse to me. He recited to him: "For though you wash with niter, and take for you much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me" (Jeremiah 2:22). He brought him to another study hall. Aher said to

NOTES

^Nטל – He takes his portion and the portion of his colleague. This is because one who causes many others to sin is punished for their sins as well. Similarly, a righteous person brings merit to many others (Rabbeinu Hananel).

For I have already estimated according to the steps of my horse – שכבר שיערתי בעקבי סוסי: The Maharsha explains that the intention of Aher was to mock Rabbi Meir, as it is easier to measure distances by the pace of a person than by a horse's gait.

However, in the Jerusalem Talmud it is indicated that this serves to emphasize the wisdom of Aher. Even while talking of other matters and while riding, he was able to estimate the distance he had traveled.

Recite your verse to me – פסוק לי פסוק: It was the custom for each child learning in a synagogue to memorize a verse each day. The Gemara elsewhere states that Sages would ask children to recite their verse as a way of divining the future (see Hullin 95b).

NOTES

אֶלֶּה עָשָׂן – I will cause smoke to rise up from his grave – **מִקְבְּרוֹ**: Obviously, not all those who are sentenced to Gehenna have smoke rising from their graves. Rabbi Meir, however, requested that God provide a sign so that all would know that *Aher* had been judged and would eventually be rehabilitated (Maharsha).

וְהָאֵלֹהִים – But isn't it stated, he shall have neither son, etc. – **כְּתִיב**, **לֹא יִנּוּ וְכִי**: According to the Jerusalem Talmud, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi cited a different verse: "Let there be none to extend kindness to him; nor let there be any to be gracious to his fatherless children" (Psalms 109:12), which means that one should not give charity even to the children of one such as *Aher*, who sinned so greatly and desecrated God's Name. He subsequently retracted his statement when he realized that *Aher* had merited God-fearing daughters (see *Dikdukei Soferim*).

לְנוֹקָא: פֶּסוֹק לִי פֶסוֹקָךְ! אָמַר לִיה: "וְאַתָּה שְׂדוּד מִזֶּה תַעֲשֶׂי בִּי תִלְבָּשִׁי שָׁנִי בִּי תַעֲדִי עֵדִי וְזָבַב בִּי תִקְרָעִי בַּפֹּךְ עֵינֶיךָ לִשְׂאֵל תַּתִּיפִי" וּגו'.

עֵינֵי לִיה לְבִי כְּנִישְׁתָּא אַחֲרִיתִי, עַד דְּעֵינֵי לִיה לְתַלְסִיר בִּי כְּנִישְׁתָּא. כּוֹלְהוּ פֶּסְקוֹ לִיה בִּי הָאֵלֹהִים גּוֹנָא. לְבַתְרָא אָמַר לִיה: פֶּסוֹק לִי פֶסוֹקָךְ! אָמַר לִיה: "וְלִרְשָׁע אָמַר אֱלֹהִים מִה לֶךְ לִסְפֹּר חֻקִּי" וּגו'. הֵהוּא יְנוֹקָא הוּא מְגַמֵּם בְּלִישְׁנֵיהּ, אֲשֶׁתַּמַּע כְּמָה דְּאָמַר לִיה "וְלִאֱלִישָׁע אָמַר אֱלֹהִים". אֵיבָא דְּאָמַר: סְכִינָא הוּא בְּהִדְיָה וּקְרָעִיהּ, וְשִׁדְרִיהּ לְתַלְסִיר בִּי כְּנִישְׁתִּי. וְאֵיבָא דְּאָמַר: אָמַר: אֵי הוּאֵי בְנֵי סְכִינָא – הֵהוּא קְרָעָנָא לִיה.

בִּי נָח נִפְשִׁיהּ דְּאַחַר אָמַר: לֹא מִידֵּן לִידְיִינָה, וְלֹא לְעֵלְמָא דְּאַתִּי לִיתִי. לֹא מִידֵּן לִידְיִינָה – מְשׁוּם דְּעֵסֶק בְּאוֹרֵי תַּאֲתָא, וְלֹא לְעֵלְמָא דְּאַתִּי לִיתִי – מְשׁוּם דְּחָטָא. אָמַר רַבִּי מֵאִיר: מוּטָב דְּלִידְיִינָה וְלִיתִי לְעֵלְמָא דְּאַתִּי. מִתִּי אָמוֹת וְאֶעֱלֶה עָשָׂן מִקְבְּרוֹ. בִּי נָח נִפְשִׁיהּ דְּרַבִּי מֵאִיר סְלִיק קוּטְרָא מִקְבְּרֵיהּ דְּאַחַר.

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: גְּבוּרָתָא לְמִיקְלָא רַבִּיהֵא? חַד הָוָה בֵּינָא וְלֹא מְצִינָא לְאַצְלוּהִי. אֵי נִקְטִינָה בֵּיד – מֵאֵן מְרַמֵּי לִיה. מֵאֵן? אָמַר: מִתִּי אָמוֹת וְאֶכְכֶּבָה עָשָׂן מִקְבְּרוֹ! בִּי נָח נִפְשִׁיהּ דְּרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן – פֶּסֶק קוּטְרָא מִקְבְּרֵיהּ דְּאַחַר. פֶּתַח עָלֶיהָ הֵהוּא סְפָדָנָא: אֲפִילוּ שׁוּמֵר הִפְתָּח לֹא עָמַד לְפָנֶיהּ, רַבִּינָא.

בְּתוֹ שֶׁל אַחֵר אָתִּיא לְקַמֵּיהּ דְּרַבִּי, אָמְרָה לִיה: רַבִּי, פְּרַנְסֵנִי. אָמַר לָהּ: בֵּת מִי אַתָּה? אָמְרָה לָהּ: בְּתוֹ שֶׁל אַחֵר אָנִי. אָמַר לָהּ: עֵדִין יֵשׁ מִזֵּרְעוֹ בְּעוֹלָם? וְהָאֵלֹהִים בְּתִיב: "לֹא יִנּוּ וְכִי לֹא יִבְדּוּ בְּעַמּוֹ וְאֵין שְׂרִיד בְּמִגְוִירֵי" אָמְרָה לָהּ: וְכֹר לְתוֹרָתוֹ וְאֵל תִּזְכּוֹר מַעֲשָׂיו. מִדֵּי יוֹדָה אֵשׁ וְסִכְסְכָה סִפְסְלוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי, בָּבָהּ וְאָמַר רַבִּי: וְמָה לְמַתְגַּנֵּן בָּהּ – כֶּךָ, לְמִשְׁתַּבְּחִין בָּהּ – עַל אַחַת כְּמָה וְכְמָה!

a child: Recite your verse to me. He recited to him: "And you, spoiled one, what are you doing, that you clothe yourself with scarlet, that you deck yourself with ornaments of gold, that you enlarge your eyes with paint? In vain you make yourself fair" (Jeremiah 4:30).

He brought him to another synagogue, until he had brought him into thirteen synagogues, where all the children recited to him similar verses that speak of the hopeless situation of the wicked. At the last one, he said to him: Recite your verse to me. He recited to him: "And to the wicked [velerasha] God says, what is it for you to declare My statutes" (Psalms 50:16). The Gemara relates: That child had a stutter, so it sounded as though he were saying to him: *Vele'elisha*, i.e., and to Elisha, God says. This made Elisha think the child was deliberately insulting him. Some say *Aher* had a knife, and he tore the child apart and sent him to the thirteen synagogues. And others say that *Aher* merely said: Had I a knife, I would have torn him apart.

The Gemara relates: When *Aher* passed away, the Heavenly Court declared that he should not be judged, nor brought into the World-to-Come. He should not be judged in a manner befitting his deeds, because he occupied himself with Torah, whose merit protects him. And he should not be brought into the World-to-Come because he sinned. Rabbi Meir said: It is better that he be judged properly and be brought into the World-to-Come. When I die I will request this of Heaven, and I will cause smoke to rise up from his grave,ⁿ as a sign that he is being sentenced in Gehenna. The Gemara relates: When Rabbi Meir passed away, smoke rose up from the grave of *Aher*, implying that Rabbi Meir's wish was granted.

Rabbi Yohanan said: Was this a mighty deed on Rabbi Meir's part, to burn his teacher? Was this the only remedy available? Can it be that there was one Sage among us who left the path and we cannot save him? If we hold him by the hand, who will remove him from our protection; who? Rabbi Yohanan continued and said: When I die I will have the smoke extinguished from his grave, as a sign that he has been released from the sentence of Gehenna and brought to the World-to-Come. Indeed, when Rabbi Yohanan passed away, the smoke ceased to rise up from the grave of *Aher*. A certain eulogizer began his eulogy of Rabbi Yohanan with the following: Even the guard at the entrance could not stand before you, our rabbi. The guard at the entrance to Gehenna could not prevent Rabbi Yohanan from arranging the release of *Aher*.

The Gemara relates: The daughter of *Aher* came before Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi and said to him: Rabbi, provide me with sustenance, as she was in need of food. He said to her: Whose daughter are you? She said to him: I am the daughter of *Aher*. He said to her, angrily: Is there still of his seed remaining in the world? But isn't it stated: "He shall have neither sonⁿ nor grandson among his people or any remaining in his dwellings" (Job 18:19)? She said to him: Remember his Torah, and do not remember his deeds. Immediately, fire descended and licked Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's bench. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi wept and said: If God protects the honor of those who treat the Torah with contempt in such a manner, as *Aher* despised the Torah and relinquished its teachings, how much more so would He do for those who treat it with honor.

From whom is it proper to learn – ממי ראוי ללמוד – One may not learn from a teacher who behaves improperly, even if he is a great Torah scholar, until the scholar mends his ways. The Sages say that if a teacher is not similar to an angel of God, one should not seek Torah from his mouth (*Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a*, 246:8).

NOTES

This is referring to an adult [*gadol*], that is referring to a minor [*katan*] – הא בגדול, הא בקטן – The commentaries ask why the Rambam and the *Shulhan Arukh* do not cite this distinction in their codes of law. They answer that nowadays, there are no scholars of such caliber who can learn Torah from a teacher without being influenced by his ways (*Lehem Mishne, Shakh*). The *Yad David* writes that the word *gadol*, literally, great one, refers to an individual who is unique in his generation. Only such a person is permitted to learn from a teacher who behaves inappropriately, while an ordinary adult is prohibited to do so. The *Zekher LaHagiga* suggests an alternative explanation: The words great and small do not refer to the student but to the teacher himself: If the teacher who sinned is such a great individual that the court does not place him under a ban, it is permitted to study from him.

Ate a half-ripe date [*tahla*] – אכל תחל – Rashi explains that *tahla* in this context is a type of date whose peel is inedible. The Maharsha notes that this metaphor alludes to the double nature of the corruption of *Aher*, which was both internal, in terms of his heretical views, as well as external, in terms of his conduct. Rabbi Meir consequently threw away both the bad peel as well as the inedible pit within, keeping only the words of Torah themselves.

Now God is saying, etc. – השתא קאמר וכו' – Many commentaries are puzzled by this passage. Why were words of Torah not cited in Rabbi Meir's name, and how did Rabba bar Sheila's argument cause this to change? One explanation is that God was, of course, aware of the purity of Rabbi Meir's intentions and of the fact that he had not been affected by his teacher's opinions. However, those observing Rabbi Meir may have viewed such learning in a negative light. Since one must also be innocent in the eyes of others, learning from *Aher* was considered a flaw. Once it became evident that there are those in the world below such as Rabba bar Sheila, who understood the positive nature of Rabbi Meir's behavior, the latter was demonstrated as worthy of having teachings ascribed to him.

Woe is Me [*kalani*] from My head, etc. – קלני מראשי וכו' – The meaning of this expression, which concerns God's identification with the pain of the Jewish people, is debated by *amora'im* (*Sanhedrin* 47a). The *ge'onim* explain *kalani* as two words: *Kal ani*, I am light, as one who is unwell feels so weak that even a light gust of wind could knock him over. Mystical significance has been ascribed to the terms My head and My arm in this context (*Otzar HaKavod*). The *Zekher LaHagiga* explains that these expressions allude to the midrashic teaching that God wears phylacteries on His head and arm, upon which the name of Israel is inscribed. When a Jew suffers, it is as though these phylacteries were damaged and fell; therefore, it is as if His head and arm become lighter.

ורבי מאיר היכי גמר תורה מפומיה דאחר? והאמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן: מאי דכתיב: "כי שפתי כהן ישמרו דעת ותורה יבקשו מפיהו כי מלאך ה' עבדות הוא"? אם דומה הרב למלאך ה' עבדות – יבקשו תורה מפיהו. ואם לאו – אל יבקשו תורה מפיהו!

אמר ריש לקיש: רבי מאיר קרא אשבח ודרש: "הט אוזןך ושמע דברי חכמים ולבך תשית לדעתי". לדעתם לא נאמר, אלא לדעתי.

רב חנינא אמר מהכא: "שמעי בת וראי והטי אוזןך ושכחי עמך ובית אביך" וגו'.

קשו קראי אהדדי! לא קשיא, הא – בגדול, הא – בקטן.

בי אתא רב דימי אמר, אמרי במערבא: רבי מאיר אכל תחל ושדא שיחל לא לברא. דרש רבא: מאי דכתיב: "אל גנת אגוז ירדתי לראות באבי הנחל" וגו'? קמה נמשלו תלמידי חכמים לאגוז? לומר לך: מה אגוז זז, אף על פי שמוכיחך בטיט ויצאך – אין מה שבתוכו נמאס, אף תלמיד חכם, אף על פי שפסח – אין תורתו נמאסת.

אשכחיה רבה בר שילא לאלהו, אמר ליה: מאי קא עביד הקדוש ברוך הוא? אמר ליה: קאמר שמענתא מפומיהו דכולהו רבנן, ומפומיה דרבי מאיר לא קאמר. אמר ליה: אמאי? משום דקא גמר שמענתא מפומיה דאחר. אמר ליה: אמאי? רבי מאיר רמוז מצא, תוכו אכל, קליפתו זרק! אמר ליה: השתא קאמר: מאיר בני אומר: בזמן שאדם מצטער שכינה מה לשון אומרת? קלני מראשי, קלני מזרועי. אם כך הקדוש ברוך הוא מצטער על דמן של רשעים – קל וחומר על דמן של צדיקים שנשפך.

The Gemara poses a question: And Rabbi Meir, how could he learn Torah from the mouth of *Aher*? But didn't Rabba bar bar Hana say that Rabbi Yohanan said: What is the meaning of that which is written: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek Torah from his mouth; for he is an angel of the Lord of hosts" (*Malachi* 2:7)? The verse teaches: If the rabbi is similar to an angel of the Lord of hosts, perfect in his ways, they should seek Torah from his mouth; but if not, they should not seek Torah from his mouth.^h

Reish Lakish said: Rabbi Meir found a verse and interpreted it homiletically: "Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to My knowledge" (*Proverbs* 22:17). It does not state "to their knowledge," but "to My knowledge." In other words, one must listen to the words of the Sages, despite their flaws, provided that their opinion concurs with that of God.

Rav Hanina said that one can find support for this idea from here: "Listen, daughter and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people and your father's house" (*Psalms* 45:11), which likewise indicates that one must listen to the words of a Sage while forgetting, i.e., ignoring, the faulty aspects of his teachings.

The Gemara asks: If so, the verses contradict each other, for one source states that one may learn only from a scholar who is perfect in his ways, while the other indicates that it is permitted even to learn from one whose character is flawed. The Gemara answers: This is not difficult. This case, in which it is permitted to a flawed scholar, is referring to an adult; whereas that case, which prohibits doing so, is referring to a minor,ⁿ who should learn only from a righteous person, so that his ways are not corrupted by a teacher with flawed character.

When Rav Dimi came from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia, he said: In the West, Eretz Yisrael, they say: Rabbi Meir ate a half-ripe dateⁿ and threw the peel away. In other words, he was able to extract the important content from the inedible shell. Rava taught: What is the meaning of that which is written: "I went down into the garden of nuts, to look at the green plants of the valley" (*Song of Songs* 6:11)? Why are Torah scholars compared to nuts? To tell you: Just as this nut, despite being soiled with mud and excrement, its content is not made repulsive, as only its shell is soiled; so too a Torah scholar, although he has sinned, his Torah is not made repulsive.

The Gemara relates: Rabba bar Sheila found Elijah the prophet, who had appeared to him. He said to Elijah: What is the Holy One, Blessed be He, doing? Elijah said to him: He is stating *halakhot* transmitted by all of the Sages, but in the name of Rabbi Meir He will not speak. He said to him: Why? He replied: Because he learned *halakhot* from the mouth of *Aher*. He said to him: Why should he be judged unfavorably for that? Rabbi Meir found a pomegranate and ate its contents while throwing away its peel. He said to him: Indeed, your defense has been heard above. Now God is saying:ⁿ My son, Meir, says: When a person suffers, e.g., by receiving lashes or the death penalty at the hands of the court, how does the Divine Presence express itself? Woe is Me from My head,ⁿ woe is Me from My arm, as God empathizes with the sufferer. If the Holy One, Blessed be He, suffers to such an extent over the blood of the wicked, how much more so does He suffer over the blood of the righteous that is spilled.

Long-toothed one [shinnana] – שִׁינָנָא: According to many commentaries, Rashi among them, *shinnana* means sharp. It is an honorific that Shmuel conferred upon his most prominent student. However, the *ge'onim* explain, based on old Aramaic vernacular, that *shinnana* means the one with the large teeth, and that this was Rav Yehuda's nickname.

Mud [tina] – טִינָא: Probably similar in meaning to the word's form in Arabic, طين, *tin*, meaning mud or dirt, or, according to some scholars, rust. It subsequently came to refer to anything unclean in the spiritual sense, i.e., something resulting from envy, hatred, lust, and related traits.

NOTES

Closet [migdal] floating in the air – מִגְדָּל הַפּוֹרֵחַ בָּאֵוִיר – Rashi provides three explanations of this expression. According to Rashi's own opinion, it refers to the *halakhot* of a tent over a corpse. The specific case here is that of a wooden closet suspended in the air in the space between various areas of a house (see Mishna *Oholot* 4:1). Many *halakhot* depend on whether the impurity is considered to be in the house or the closet. Rabbeinu Hananel explains this expression similarly.

Rashi provides two additional explanations of this phrase, both of which are metaphorical. First, the word *migdal* includes the letter *lamed*, which is shaped like a closet in the air, as it is the only letter to continue above a line when written. It alludes to the Sages being so thorough in their interpretation of the Torah, that they found meaning even in part of one letter. Second, the word *migdal* alludes to the Tower of Babel, which was built high in the air with the end of defeating God. This story is one of the sections of the Torah that the Sages expounded upon. The *Otzar HaKavod* attempts to reconcile Rashi's explanations while elucidating some of the secret teachings involved, relating to the Divine Presence in the world.

However, some *ge'onim* maintain that it is possible, by various means, for a closet to actually fly in the air. The legal ramifications of such a case are connected to the *halakhot* of a portable tent. Others maintain that this case is cited as an example in order to show that despite the fact that such a flying object could not have existed in those days, the Sages did not refrain from discussing the detailed *halakhot* of something that was of mere theoretical importance.

For he is fit to serve My glory – שְׂרָאוֹי לְהִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בְּכְבוֹדִי – Rabbi Akiva was careful not to proceed beyond the boundaries of human comprehension in his studies. This protected him from an error that would cost him his sanity or his life (*Otzar HaKavod*).

אֲשָׁכְחִיָּה שְׂמוּאֵל לְרֵב יְהוּדָה דְּתַלִּי בְּעֵיבְרָא דְדִשָּׂא וְקָא בְּכִי. אָמַר לֵיהּ: שִׁינָנָא. מָאִי קָא בְּכִיתָ? אָמַר לֵיהּ: מִי זִוְרָא מָאִי דְכָתִיב בְּהוּ בְּרַבְנָן: "אֵיָּה סוֹפֵר אֵיָּה שׁוֹקֵל אֵיָּה סוֹפֵר אֶת הַמִּגְדָּלִים"? "אֵיָּה סוֹפֵר" – שְׁהִי שׁוֹקֵל – שְׁהִי שׁוֹקֵלִים קָלִין וְחֲמוּרִין שְׁבִתּוּרָה. "אֵיָּה סוֹפֵר אֶת הַמִּגְדָּלִים" – שְׁהִי שׁוֹמֵן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת הֶלְכוֹת בְּמִגְדָּל הַפּוֹרֵחַ בָּאֵוִיר.

The Gemara relates: Shmuel found Rav Yehuda leaning on the bar of the door, crying. He said to him: Long-toothed one [shinnana],¹ what are you crying for? He said to him: Is it a small matter, that which is written with regard to Sages who have sinned: "Where is he who counted, where is he who weighed? Where is he who counted the towers?" (Isaiah 33:18). He proceeded to explain: "Where is he who counted"; for they would count all the letters of the Torah. "Where is he who weighed"; for they would weigh and compare the minor and major transgressions of the Torah. "Where is he who counted the towers"; for they would teach three hundred *halakhot* concerning the details of tent impurity involving a wooden closet floating in the air.^N If they studied a subject so removed from reality in such depths, how much more so did they analyze other issues.

ואמר רבי אמי: תלת מאה בעיי בעו דאגא ואחיתופל במגדל הפורח באויר. ותנן: שלשה מלכים וארבעה הדיוטות אין להם חלק לעולם הבא. אגן מה תהיו עלון? אמר ליה: שיננא, טינא היתה בלבם.

And Rabbi Ami said: Doeg asked Ahithophel three hundred questions with regard to a closet floating in the air, as they were both great Torah scholars. And we learned in a mishna (*Sanhedrin* 90a): Three kings and four commoners have no portion in the World-to-Come, a list that includes Doeg and Ahithophel. If such great Sages could sin and forfeit their share in the World-to-Come, we, who are less knowledgeable than they, what will be of us? He said to him: Long-toothed one, there was mud [tina]¹ in their hearts, i.e., they had certain flaws that prevented their Torah learning from protecting them.

אחר מאי? זמר יוני לא פסק מפומיה. אמרו עליו על אחר, בשעה שהיה עומד מבית המדרש הרבה ספר מיני גשרין מחיקו.

The Gemara explains: *Aher*, what was his failing? Greek tunes never ceased from his mouth. He would constantly hum Greek songs, even when he was among the Sages. This shows that from the outset he was drawn to gentile culture and beliefs. Similarly, they said about *Aher*: When he would stand after learning in the study hall, many heretical books, which he had been reading, would fall from his lap. Therefore, he was somewhat unsound even when among the Sages.

שאל נימוס הגרדי את רבי מאיר: כל עמר דנחית ליוורה סליק? אמר ליה: כל מאן דהוה נקי אגב אימיה – סליק, כל דלא הוה נקי אגב אימיה – לא סליק.

The gentile philosopher, Nimos HaGardi,^P asked Rabbi Meir: Does all wool that enters the cauldron to be dyed emerge colored? In other words, do all those who learn Torah emerge as decent and worthy? He said to him: Whoever was clean when he was with his mother, from the outset, will emerge decent and worthy, but all those who were not clean when they were with their mother will not emerge worthy. One who approaches Torah study having been flawed from the outset will not be properly influenced by it.

רבי עקיבא עלה בשלום וירד בשלום, ועלו דנחית ליוורה סליק? אמר: "משבני אחרין גרועה". ואף רבי עקיבא בקשו מלאכי השרת לדחפו. אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא: הניחו לזקן זה, שראוי להשתמש בכבודי.

§ The Gemara returns to the four who entered the orchard. It is stated above that Rabbi Akiva ascended in safety and descended safely. With regard to him, the verse states: "Draw me, we will run after you; the king has brought me into his chambers" (Song of Songs 1:4). The Gemara relates: And even Rabbi Akiva, the ministering angels sought to push him out of the orchard. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: Leave this Elder, for he is fit to serve My glory.^N

PERSONALITIES

Nimos HaGardi – נִימוֹס הַגָּרְדִּי: This is probably the man referred to elsewhere as Avimos HaGardi, from the Greek name Οἰνόμαος, *Oinomaos*. Some maintain that it refers to a Greek philosopher from the town of Gader, which explains the surname. He was a fierce opponent of paganism. Various sources

relate discussions that he conducted with the Sages of Israel. It appears that he and Rabbi Meir held each other in mutual respect. The Sages greatly praised his wisdom, to the extent that they said that there were no philosophers in the nations as great as Balaam and Nimos HaGardi.

HALAKHA

Before the festivals – לפני אידיהן – On the three days preceding the festivals of gentiles, it is prohibited to buy from or sell to them, to lend or borrow items or money, to repay debts owed to them, or to collect payment of their debts. This ruling is in accordance with the opinion of the first *tanna* of the mishna. The *Tur* and *Shulhan Arukh* write that this was the *halakha* only in the talmudic period, but nowadays it is permitted. The halakhic authorities explain that the prohibition no longer applies either because in the present time gentiles do not engage in idol worship or because they are no longer so devout or familiar with the worship. Furthermore, even if they give the money to their priests, it would not be used for idol worship itself. Another reason the prohibition no longer applies is that there is a fear that it might cause hatred of the Jews who are living among the gentiles and have to conduct business with them throughout the rest of the year (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda*, *Hilkhot Avoda Zara* 9:1; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Yoreh De'a* 148:1, 12).

NOTES

אסור – לישא ולית עמהם – It is prohibited to engage in business with them – According to most of the commentaries and halakhic authorities, the mishna is referring to any sort of business transaction, whether buying from them or selling to them. Some maintain that the prohibition applies to selling to gentiles alone. Furthermore, it applies only to selling an animal or an item that can serve as an idolatrous offering, and provided that the gentile does not already possess this type of animal (*Tosafot*, citing Rabbeinu Tam).

Let them bring their witnesses that they may be justified – יתנו עדיהם ויצדקו – According to Rashi, at this stage the verse is understood as follows: If the gentiles were to bring witnesses who testify that they engaged in idol worship, will they then be justified? Others interpret the verse in a positive manner, i.e., the gentiles should come and provide testimony that they kept the seven Noahide mitzvot, and thereby be justified (Maharsha).

LANGUAGE

Eideihen – עידיהן – In addition to the Gemara's explanation of this term, some commentaries suggest that the source and meaning of the word *eideihen* spelled with an *ayin* is possibly the term: "Polluted [*iddim*] garment" (Isaiah 64:5). Furthermore, there might be a connection between the term *eid* and the *ides*, the middle of every month, sacred in the Roman calendar.

MISHNA On the three days before the festivals¹ of gentiles the following actions are prohibited, as they would bring joy to the gentile, who would subsequently give thanks to his object of idol worship on his festival: It is prohibited to engage in business with them;² to lend items to them or to borrow items from them; to lend money to them or to borrow money from them; and to repay debts owed to them or to collect repayment of debts from them. Rabbi Yehuda says: One may collect repayment of debts from them because this causes the gentile distress. The Rabbis said to Rabbi Yehuda: Even though he is distressed now, when he repays the money, he is happy afterward that he is relieved of the debt, and therefore there is concern that he will give thanks to his object of idol worship on his festival.

GEMARA Rav and Shmuel disagree with regard to the correct version of the text of the mishna. One teaches the term meaning: Their festivals, as *eideihen*, spelled with an *alef* as the first letter, and one teaches *eideihen*¹ with an *ayin* as the first letter. The Gemara comments: The one who teaches *eideihen* with an *alef* is not mistaken, and the one who teaches *eideihen* with an *ayin* is not mistaken, as there is support for each version of the term.

The Gemara elaborates: The one who teaches *eideihen* with an *alef* is not mistaken, as it is written: "For the day of their calamity [*eidam*] is at hand" (Deuteronomy 32:35), and the future downfall mentioned in the verse is partly due to the festivals of idol worshippers. The term there is spelled with an *alef*. And likewise, the one who teaches *eideihen* with an *ayin* is not mistaken, as it is written: "Let them bring their witnesses [*eideihem*], that they may be justified" (Isaiah 43:9),² i.e., the festivals will serve as witnesses against gentile sinners, proving that they engaged in idol worship. The term there is spelled with an *ayin*.

The Gemara asks: And according to the one who teaches *eideihen* with an *alef*, what is the reason that he did not teach *eideihen* with an *ayin*? The Gemara answers: He could have said to you that a term that refers to a calamity is preferable. The Gemara asks: And the one who teaches *eideihen* with an *ayin*, what is the reason that he did not teach *eideihen* with an *alef*? The Gemara answers: He could have said to you: What causes this calamity to happen to them? It is the testimony that they testified against themselves. Therefore, a term that references testimony is preferable.

The Gemara asks: But is this verse: "Let them bring their witnesses that they may be justified," written with regard to the nations of the world? Isn't it written with regard to the Jewish people? As Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: All the mitzvot that the Jews perform in this world will come and bear witness for them in the World-to-Come, as it is stated: "Let them bring their witnesses that they may be justified." These are the Jews, as their good deeds bear witness for them and demonstrate their righteousness. When the verse states: "And let them hear, and say: It is truth" (Isaiah 43:9), these are the nations of the world, who will admit to the righteousness of the Jews.

Rather, Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, said: The one who says that the correct word is *eideihen* with an *ayin* derived this use of the term from here: "They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity, and their delectable things shall not profit; and their own witnesses [*eideihem*] see not, nor know" (Isaiah 44:9). This demonstrates that the objects of idol worship will serve as witnesses against their worshippers.

מתני' לפני אידיהן של גוים שלשה ימים – אסור לישא ולית עמהם, להשאיל ולשאל מהן, להלוותן וללוות מהן, לפורען ולפרוע מהן; רבי יהודה אומר: נפרעין מהן, מפני שמיצר הוא להן, אפרו להן: אף על פי שמיצר הוא עבשיו, שמח הוא לאחר זמן.

גמ' רב ושמואל, חד תני: "אידיהן", וחד תני: "עידיהן". מאן דתני "אידיהן" לא משתבש, ומאן דתני "עידיהן" לא משתבש.

מאן דתני "אידיהן" לא משתבש, דכתיב: "כי קרוב יום אידם"; ומאן דתני "עידיהן" לא משתבש, דכתיב: "יתנו עדיהם ויצדקו".

ומאן דתני "אידיהן", מאי טעמא לא תני "עידיהן"? אפר לה: תברא עדין. ומאן דתני "עידיהן", מאי טעמא לא תני "אידיהן"? אפר לה: מאן קא גרים להו תברא – עדות שהעידו בעצמן, להלכך עדות עדיפא.

והאי "יתנו עדיהם ויצדקו" באומות העולם כתיב? הא בישראל כתיב, דאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: כל מצות שישראל עושין בעולם הזה, באות ומעידות להם לעולם הבא, שנאמר: "יתנו עדיהם ויצדקו" – אלו ישראל, "שמעו ויאמרו אמת" – אלו אומות העולם!

אלא אפר רב הונא בריה דרב יהושע: מאן דאמר "עידיהן" – מהכא: "יצרי פסל בלם תהו וחמויהם בל ויעילו ויעיהם המה".

דַּרְשׁ רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בַּר פַּפָּא, וְאִיתִּימָא רַבִּי שְׁמַלְאי:
לְעֵתִיד לְבָא מִבֵּיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה
וּמִנִּיחוּ בְּחִיקוֹ, וְאוֹמְרִי: לָמִי שְׁעָסֵק בָּהּ, יָבֵא וְיִשׁוּל
שְׂכָרוֹ.

§ The Gemara cites homiletic interpretations of the verse that was discussed earlier: “All the nations are gathered together, and let the peoples be assembled; who among them can declare this, and announce to us former matters? Let them bring their witnesses, that they may be justified; and let them hear, and say: It is truth” (Isaiah 43:9). Rabbi Ḥanina bar Pappa taught, and some say that it was Rabbi Simlai who taught: **In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will bring a Torah scroll and place it in His lap and say: Anyone who engaged in its study should come and take his reward.**

מִיָּד מִתְקַבְּצִין וּבָאִין אוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם בְּעֶרְבוּבָא,
שְׁנֵאמַר: “כָּל הַגּוֹיִם נִקְבְּצוּ יַחְדָּו” וְגו’, אָמַר לָהֶם
הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: אַל תִּכְנְסוּ לִפְנֵי בְּעֶרְבוּבָא,
אַל תִּכְנֶס כָּל אוֹמָה וְאוֹמָה

Immediately, the nations of the world will gather together and come intermingled with each other, as it is stated: “All the nations are gathered together and let the peoples be assembled.” The Holy One, Blessed be He, will say to them: **Do not enter before Me intermingled; rather, let each and every nation enter**

Perek I
Daf 2 Amud b

NOTES

Le'om means nothing other than kingdom – **אֵין לְאוֹם אֶלָּא מַלְכוּת**: This is in contrast to the beginning of the verse, which states: “All the nations are gathered together,” i.e., the different nations gather together intermingled. Here the verse is no longer referring to nations gathered together, and is in the future tense. This indicates that God will instruct the various nations to form separate groups (see Maharsha).

Whose name [shettivah] spread – **שְׁטִבְעָה יָצָא**: Rashi explains that *tivah* means its name, i.e., the name of the Roman Empire, is known everywhere. Rashi elsewhere states that *tivah* means its seal or coin (see *Megilla* 14b). If so, Rabbi Yohanan is saying that the Roman coin is used throughout the world due to the importance of this empire (Maharsha).

What is the reason – **טַעְמָא מַאי**: With regard to a matter of honor, it is clear why the king would receive precedence. It is less evident why the most important figure is brought first to face judgment (*Tosefot Hakhmei Angliyya*).

וְסוֹפְרֶיהָ, שְׁנֵאמַר: “וַיֵּאסְפוּ לְאֻמִּים”, וְאֵין
“לְאוֹם” אֶלָּא מַלְכוּת, שְׁנֵאמַר: “וּלְאוֹם מַלְאֵם
יֵאֱמָץ”. וְמִי אֵיכָא עֶרְבוּבָא קָמִי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
הוּא? אֶלָּא, כִּי הֵיכִי דְלֵא עֶרְבוּבָא אֵינְהוּ [בְּהַדֵּי
הַדֵּי], דְּלִישְׁמַעוּ מֵאֵי דְאָמַר לָהּ.

with their scholars, as it is stated: “And let the peoples [*le’umim*] be assembled” (Isaiah 43:9); and the term *le’om* means **nothing other than kingdom**,ⁿ as it is stated: “And the one kingdom [*ule’om*] shall be stronger than the other kingdom [*mile’om*]” (Genesis 25:23). The Gemara asks: **But is it possible for there to be intermingling before the Holy One, Blessed be He, that it should be necessary for each nation to stand and be addressed separately? Rather, the nations are instructed to stand separately so that they will not become intermingled with each other in order that they will each hear what He says to them.**

[מִיָּד] נִכְנָסָה לִפְנֵי מַלְכוּת רומי תְּחִלָּה. מַאי
טַעְמָא? מְשׁוּם דְּחִשְׁבָּא. וּמִנְלָן דְּחִשְׁבָּא?
דְּתַיִב: “וְתֹאכַל כָּל אֶרֶץ וְתִדְשְׁנָה וְתִדְקִינָה”,
אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: זוֹ רומי חִיִּבְתָּ, שְׁטִבְעָה יָצָא
בְּכָל הָעוֹלָם.

Immediately, the Roman Empire^b enters first before Him. The Gemara asks: **What is the reason** that the Roman Empire enters first? It is **because** the Roman Empire is the most important of all of the nations. **And from where do we derive that it is the most important?** As it is written in the book of Daniel with regard to the fourth empire that will rule over the world: “And it shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces” (Daniel 7:23), and Rabbi Yohanan says: This empire that will devour the earth is the wicked Roman Empire, whose name spreadⁿ throughout the world.

וּמָנָא לָן דְּמָנָא דְּחִשְׁבִּי עֵייל בְּרִישָׁא? כְּדָרַב
חֲסָדָא, דְּאָמַר רַב חֲסָדָא: מֶלֶךְ וְצִבּוֹר – מֶלֶךְ
נִכְנָס תְּחִלָּה לְדִין, שְׁנֵאמַר: “לְעִשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט
עֲבָדוּ וּמִשְׁפָּט עִמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל” וְגו’. וְטַעְמָא מַאי?
אֵיבָעִית אֵימָא: לֹא אוֹרַח אֶרֶץ לְמִיתָב מַלְכָּא
מֵאַבְרָא, וְאֵיבָעִית אֵימָא: מִקָּמִי דְּלִפּוֹשׁ חֲרוֹן
אָף.

The Gemara asks: **And from where do we derive that whoever is more important enters first?** This is in accordance with a statement of Rav Hisda, as Rav Hisda says: When a king and a community are brought before God for judgment, the king enters for judgment first, as it is stated: “That He make the judgment of His servant and the judgment of His people Israel, as every day shall require” (1 Kings 8:59). **And what is the reasonⁿ** that it is important for the king to enter first? **If you wish, say that it is not proper conduct for the king to stand outside and wait for the trial of his subjects to end. And if you wish, say instead that the king is brought in first so that he may be judged before God’s anger intensifies due to the sins of the community.**

BACKGROUND

Roman Empire – **מַלְכוּת רומי**: This passage describes the positive contributions of the Roman Empire. Most prominent, as indicated by the ruins that remain from their time, are the Roman Empire’s efforts in city planning and improving the infrastructure of conquered cities. For example, the Romans built markets, bathhouses, and other structures in all their conquered cities. The Roman Empire was highly

organized, with a well-established system of tax collection. Due to the great needs of this empire it continued to grow and expand, and consequently huge amounts of money circulated within the Roman Empire. This contrasts with the practices of previous empires. This phenomenon is referred to here by the expression: We have increased much silver and gold.

Silver and gold, it is Mine – וְהָבָה שְׁלִי הוּא – God answers as follows: You claim that you amassed gold and silver so that you would not need to collect money from the Jewish people. Yet, no amount of effort can guarantee success in business; rather, it was I who made you successful, knowing that if you would not amass money in this manner you would take it from the Jewish people. Therefore, not only does this claim not demonstrate your righteousness, but it actually indicates the opposite, and you deserve to be punished rather than rewarded (Ra'avad).

אָמַר לָהֶם הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: בְּמַאי עֲסַקְתֶּם? אֹמְרִים לִפְנֵי: רַבּוּנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, הִרְבֵּה שְׁוּקִים תִּקְנִינוּ, הִרְבֵּה מִרְחָצוֹת עָשִׂינוּ, הִרְבֵּה כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב הִרְבִּינוּ, וְכֹלָם לֹא עָשִׂינוּ אֶלָּא בְּשִׁבְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּדִי שִׁיתַּעֲסֻקוּ בַּתּוֹרָה.

The Gemara returns to its narration of the future judgment. First, the members of the Roman Empire enter. **The Holy One, Blessed be He, says to them: With what did you occupy yourselves? They say before Him in response: Master of the Universe, we have established many marketplaces,⁸ we have built many bathhouses,⁹ and we have increased much silver and gold.¹⁰ And we did all of this only for the sake of the Jewish people, so that they would be free to engage in Torah study.**

אָמַר לָהֶם הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: שׁוּטִים שְׂבַעְעוּלָם, כָּל מָה שֶׁעָשִׂיתֶם – לְצוּרָה עֲצַמְכֶּם עָשִׂיתֶם, תִּקְנִיתֶם שְׁוּקִים – לְהוֹשִׁיב בָּהֶן זִנּוּת, מִרְחָצוֹת – לְעֵדֶן בָּהֶן עֲצַמְכֶּם, כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב – שְׁלִי הוּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "לִי הַכֶּסֶף וְלִי הַזָּהָב נָאִם ה' צְבָאוֹת";

The Holy One, Blessed be He, says to them: Fools of the world! Are you attempting to deceive Me? Everything that you did, you did for your own needs. You established marketplaces to place prostitutes in them; you built bathhouses for your own enjoyment; and as for the silver and gold that you claim to have increased, it is Mine,¹¹ as it is stated: "Mine is the silver, and Mine the gold, said the Lord of hosts" (Haggai 2:8).

כְּלוּם יֵשׁ בְּכֶם מְגִיד זֹאת? שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "מִי בְּכֶם יְגִיד זֹאת"; וְאֵין "זֹאת" אֶלָּא תּוֹרָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "זֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מִשָּׁה! מִיָּד יֵצְאוּ בְּפִחֵי נֶפֶשׁ."

Is there no one among you who can declare that they have studied this Torah? This is the meaning of the continuation of the verse from Isaiah, as it is stated: "Who among them can declare this?" (Isaiah 43:9). And "this" is referring to nothing other than the Torah, as it is stated: "And this is the Torah that Moses set before the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 4:44), and whoever did not engage in its study does not receive reward. Immediately, the members of the Roman Empire leave disappointed.

BACKGROUND

We have established many marketplaces – הִרְבֵּה שְׁוּקִים – תִּקְנִינוּ:



Roman market in Libya

We have built many bathhouses – הִרְבֵּה מִרְחָצוֹת עָשִׂינוּ: Many of the Roman bathhouses, called *thermae*, were lavish structures boasting large halls [tepidarium], gardens, private and public baths, various hot-bath complexes [calidarium] and cold baths [frigidarium], swimming pools, and stadiums. They served not only for washing, but also as places for social gatherings and entertainment.

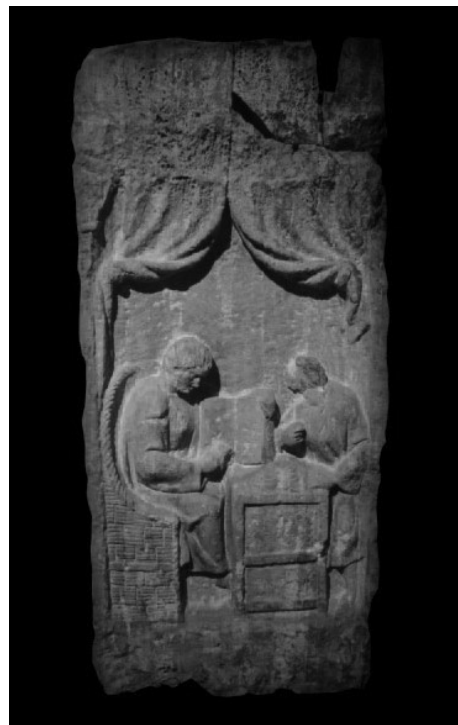


Roman bath in Bath, England



Caracalla's bathhouse in Rome

We have increased much silver and gold – הִרְבֵּה כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב – הִרְבִּינוּ:



Roman relief of tax collector and citizen paying taxes

BACKGROUND

Persian Empire – מלכות פרס: The Persian emperors, in particular the Parthians, and to a large extent the Persians rulers who followed them, invested much of their energy in war. The Persian cavalry, which was the most powerful division of their army, was engaged in constant war with both the Romans and other nations to the north and east.

The bridges mentioned here allude to some of the colossal building projects undertaken by the Persians, such as the giant bridge crossing the Tigris River at Ctesiphon. These projects were most prominent in Babylonia, a country with a need for many bridges due to its numerous great and wide rivers.

Grow their hair as a bear – מגדליו שער כדוב: This is referring to the custom of the Persians to grow their hair and beards. Since this was not typically done by Romans or most other nations, the Persians appeared hairier than the inhabitants of other lands.



Persian glazed bricks depicting an archer with long hair and beard

LANGUAGE

Forced labor [angareya] – אנגריא: From the Greek ἀγγαρεία, *angareia*, meaning forced labor performed for the ruling authorities.

יצאת מלכות רומי, ונכנסה מלכות פרס אחריה. מאי טעמא? דהא חשיבא בתרה. ומגלן דכתב: "וארו חיוא אחרי תניא דמנא לדב", ותני רב יוסף: אלו פרסיים, שאובלין ושומי דדוב, ומסורבלין [בשר] דדוב, ומגדליו שער כדוב, ואין להם מנוחה כדוב.

אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא: במאי עסקתם? אומרים לפניו: רבוננו של עולם, הרבה גשרים גשרנו, הרבה כרכים כבשנו, הרבה מלחמות עשינו, וכולם לא עשינו אלא בשביל ישראל כדי שיתעסקו בתורה.

אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא: כל מה שעשיתם – לצורך עצמכם עשיתם, תקנתם גשרים – ליטול מהם מכס, כרכים – לעשות בהם אנגריא, מלחמות – אני עשיתי, שנאמר: "ה' איש מלחמה", כלום יש בכם מגיד זאת? שנאמר: "מי בכם יגיד זאת"; ואין "זאת" אלא תורה, שנאמר: "זאת התורה אשר שם משה"! מיד יצאו מלפניו בפחי נפש.

וכי מאחר דחזית מלכות פרס למלכות רומי דלא מהניא ולא מיד, מאי טעמא עיילא? אמרי: אינהו סתרי בית המקדש, ואנן בנינן. וכל אומה ואומה.

The Roman Empire leaves, and the Persian Empire^b enters after it. What is the reason that the Persian Empire enters second? The reason is that after the Roman Empire it is the next most important. And from where do we derive this? As it is written in Daniel's vision: "And behold^a another beast, a second, like a bear" (Daniel 7:5). And Rav Yosef teaches: These are the Persians, who are compared to a bear, as they eat and drink copious amounts as does a bear, and they are fleshy like a bear, and they grow their hair long as does a bear,^b and they never rest, like a bear, which is constantly on the move from one place to another.

The Holy One, Blessed be He, says to them: With what did you occupy yourselves? They say before Him in response: Master of the Universe, we have built many bridges, we have conquered many cities, and we have fought many wars. And we did all of this only for the sake of the Jewish people, so that they would engage in Torah study.

The Holy One, Blessed be He, says to them: Everything that you did, you did for your own needs. You established bridges to collect taxes from all who pass over them. You conquered cities to use their residents for forced labor [angareya],^l and with regard to fighting the wars, I wage wars,ⁿ and your success is from Me, as it is stated: "The Lord is a man of war" (Exodus 15:3). Is there no one among you who can declare that they have studied this Torah? As it is stated: "Who among them can declare this" (Isaiah 43:9), and "this" is referring to nothing other than the Torah, as it is stated: "And this is the Torah that Moses set" (Deuteronomy 4:44). Immediately, the members of the Persian Empire leave from before Him disappointed.

The Gemara asks: But once the Persian Empire sees that everything said by the Roman Empire is completely ineffective, what is the reason that they come forward? The Gemara answers: They believe that their claims will be more effective, as they say: The Romans destroyed the Second Temple, and we had built it, as the Second Temple was constructed under the auspices and with the encouragement of Cyrus, the king of Persia. The Gemara adds: And likewise, a similar exchange occurred with each and every nation.

NOTES

As it is written, and behold, etc. – דכתיב ואין וכו' – The verse does not prove that the Persian Empire was the second empire in importance, as the Babylonian Empire appears before the Persian Empire in Daniel's vision. Rather, the verse is cited in demonstration that the Persian Empire is a significant empire, since it appears in Daniel's vision as one of the four empires that rule the world. The real proof that the Persian Empire is second in importance only to the Roman Empire is that the kingship of the Persian and Roman Empires extend until the coming of the Messiah, as the Gemara soon states (Rid).

מלחמות אני – With regard to fighting the wars, I wage wars – עשיתי: You claim that you waged wars to allow the Jewish people to sit in peace and study Torah without being attacked by their enemies. In truth it is I who determines the outcome of wars, and I allowed you to become successful, knowing that if you lost to other nations, you would take out your anger upon the Jewish people (Ra'avad).

וכי מאחר דחזו לקמאי דלא מהני ולא מדי, מאי טעמא עיילי? סבירי: הניך אישתעבדו בהו בישראל, ואנן לא שעבדנו בישראל. מאי שנא הני דחשיבי, ומאי שנא הני דלא חשיבי להו? משום דהניך משכי במלכותיהו עד דאתי משיחא.

אומרים לפניו: רבוננו של עולם, כלום נתת לנו ולא קיבלנוה? ומי מצי למימר הכי? והכתבי: ויאמר ה' מסיני בא ונורח משעיר למו, וכתבי: אלוה מתימן יבוא וגו'; מאי בעי בשעיר ומאי בעי בפארן?

אמר רבי יוחנן: מלמד שהחזירה הקדוש ברוך הוא על כל אומה ולשון ולא קבלוה, עד שבא אצל ישראל וקבלוה!

אלא הכי אמרי: כלום קיבלנוה ולא קיימנוה? ועל דא תברתהון, אמאי לא קבלתוה? אלא כך אומרים לפניו: רבוננו של עולם, כלום כפית עלינו הר בגיגית ולא קבלנוה, כמו שעשית לישראל?

דכתיב: "ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר", ואמר רב דימי בר חמא: מלמד שבפך הקדוש ברוך הוא הר בגיגית על ישראל, ואמר להם: אם אתם מקבלין את התורה - מוטב, ואם לאו - שם תהא קבורתכם!

מיד אומר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא: הראשונות ישמיעונו, שנאמר: "וראשונות ישמיענו", שבע מצות שקיבלתם היכן קיימתם?

ומגיל דלא קיימום? דתני רב יוסף: "עמד ומרד ארץ ראה ויתר גוים", מאי ראה? ראה שבע מצות שקבלו עליהן בני נח ולא קיימום, כיון שלא קיימום - עמד והתירן להן. איתגורר איתגור? אם בן מצינו חוטא נשכר!

אמר מר ברבינא:

The Gemara asks: **But once** the other nations **see that** everything said by the **first ones**, Rome and Persia, **is completely ineffective**, what is the reason that they come forward? The Gemara answers that **they think**: Those Empires **subjugated the Jewish people**, but we did not subjugate the Jewish people. The Gemara further asks: **What is different about these**, Rome and Persia, **which were singled out** explicitly, and what is different about those other empires that come afterward, **which were not singled out** and mentioned by name? It is **because** with regard to **these**, Rome and Persia, **their kingship extends until the coming of the Messiah**.

The nations will say before God: **Master of the Universe, did You give us the Torah and we did not accept it?** Since we never received the Torah, why are we being judged for not fulfilling its mitzvot? The Gemara asks: **And can one say that** they were never offered the Torah? **But isn't it written** in the description of the giving of the Torah: **"And he said: The Lord came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them"** (Deuteronomy 33:2), **and it is written: "God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran"** (Habakkuk 3:3). And the Sages asked: **What did God require in Seir and what did He require in Paran?** The Torah was not given in those locations.

And Rabbi Yohanan says: This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, took the Torah around to every nation and those who speak every language, such as the Edomites in Seir and the Ishmaelites in Paran, **but they did not accept it, until He came to the Jewish people and they accepted it**. If the other nations all rejected the Torah, how can they excuse themselves by claiming that it was never offered to them?

Rather, this is what they say: **Did we accept the Torah and then not fulfill its mitzvot?** The Gemara asks: **But this itself serves as the refutation of their own claim**, as one can respond: **Why didn't you accept it?** Rather, this is what the nations of the world say before Him: **Master of the Universe, did You overturn the mountain above us like a basin, and we still did not accept the Torah, as You did for the Jewish people?**

The Gemara provides the background for this claim: **As it is written: "And they stood at the nether part of the mount"** (Exodus 19:17), and Rav Dimi bar Hama says: The verse teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, overturned the mountain, i.e., Mount Sinai, above the Jews like a basin, and He said to them: **If you accept the Torah, excellent, and if not, there, under the mountain, will be your burial**. The nations of the world will claim that they too could have been coerced to accept the Torah.

Immediately, the Holy One, Blessed be He, says to them: **The first mitzvot will let us hear the truth, as it is stated in the continuation of the same verse under discussion: "And announce to us the first things"** (Isaiah 43:9). With regard to the seven Noahide mitzvot that preceded the giving of the Torah **that even you accepted, where is the proof that you fulfilled them?**

The Gemara asks: **And from where do we derive that they did not fulfill them?** As Rav Yosef teaches in explanation of the verse: **"He stands, and shakes the earth, He sees, and makes the nations tremble [vayater]"** (Habakkuk 3:6): **What did God see? He saw the seven mitzvot that the descendants of Noah accepted upon themselves, and He saw that they did not fulfill them**. Since they did not fulfill them, He arose and nullified for them [vehitiran] the command to heed these mitzvot. The Gemara asks: Do they gain from not obeying, as they are now released from the obligation to fulfill these mitzvot? **If so, we find that a sinner profits from his transgression**.

Mar, son of Ravina, said:

NOTES

Even a gentile who engages in Torah study, etc. – אֶפִּילוּ גוֹי וְעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה וכו' – The Rashba explains that gentiles are prohibited from studying mitzvot that were given exclusively to the Jewish people and that this is referring to a gentile who studies the mitzvot that are relevant to him. A Jew is likewise prohibited from teaching him those mitzvot (see *Sanhedrin* 59a and Meiri there).

Greater is one who is commanded to do a mitzva and performs it – גָּדוֹל הַמַּצְוָה וְעוֹשָׂהּ – When one is obligated to perform a mitzva he knows that he has no choice in the matter and it serves as a source of stress for him, causing him to give in to his evil inclination and neglect the mitzva. By contrast, one who is not obligated to perform the mitzva is not subject to this temptation (*Tosafot*; Meiri). Alternatively, if one is commanded to perform a mitzva and he does so, he thereby fulfills the will of God, whereas one who does the same action without being commanded merely performs a positive action, but he does not fulfill God's command (Maharal).

My covenant be not with day and night – בְּרִיתִי – יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה: The Torah was given as a covenant, which applies during both the day and night. Rashi explains that the Torah was given to be studied day and night, as in the verse: "And you shall meditate on it day and night" (*Joshua* 1:8).

The sixth day – יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי – In contrast to the other days of creation, the sixth day is preceded by the definitive article, represented by the letter *heh*. This superfluous letter is interpreted homiletically as alluding to the giving of the Torah. According to one explanation, the definitive article is a reference to the giving of the Torah because the Torah was given on the sixth day of the month of Sivan (Rashi). Alternatively, the letter *heh*, which has the numerical value of five, alludes to the five books of the Torah (*Tosefot Hakhmei Angliyya*; see Rashi's commentary on *Genesis* 1:31).

HALAKHA

Greater is one who is commanded to do a mitzva – גָּדוֹל הַמַּצְוָה: If one performs a mitzva that he is not commanded to do, his reward is less than the reward received by one who is obligated to perform the mitzva. This ruling is in accordance with the statement of Rabbi Hanina (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda*, *Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 1:13; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Yoreh De'a* 246:6).

לומר, שאף על פי שמקיימין אותו – אין מקבלין עליהם שָׂכָר.

ולא? והתניא, היה רבי מאיר אומר: מנין שאפילו גוי ועוסק בתורה שהוא ככהן גדול? תלמוד לומר: "אשר יעשה אתם האדם וחי בהם", כהנים לויים וישראלים לא נאמר, אלא "האדם", הא למדת, שאפילו גוי ועוסק בתורה – הרי הוא ככהן גדול!

אלא לומר לך, שאין מקבלין עליהם שָׂכָר במצוה ועושה אלא כמי שאינו מצוה ועושה, דאמר רבי חנינא: גדול המצוה ועושה יותר משאינו מצוה ועושה.

אלא כך אמרים הגוים לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: רבנו של עולם, ישראל שקיבלוה היכן קיימוה?

אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא: אני מעיד בהם שקיימו את התורה כולה. אמרים לפניו: רבנו של עולם, כלום יש אב שמעיד על בנו? דכתיב: "בני בכורי ישראל! אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא: שמעו וארץ יעידו בהם שקיימו את התורה כולה.

אמרים לפניו: רבנו של עולם, שמעו וארץ נוגעין בעדותך, שנאמר: "אם לא בריתי יומם ולילה חקות שמעו וארץ לא שמתני", (דאמר) [ואמר] רבי שמעון בן לקיש. מאי דכתיב: "ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום הששי"? מלמד שהתנה הקדוש ברוך הוא עם מעשה בראשית, ואמר: אם ישראל מקבלין את תורתני – מוטב, ואם לאו – אני אחזיר אתכם לתוהו ובוהו;

והיינו דאמר חזקיה: מאי דכתיב: "משמים השמעת דין ארץ יראה ושקטה"? אם יראה למה שקטה, ואם שקטה למה יראה? אלא בתחלה יראה ולבסוף שקטה.

This serves to say that even if they fulfill the seven Noahide mitzvot they do not receive a reward for their fulfillment.

The Gemara asks: And are they not rewarded for fulfilling those mitzvot? But isn't it taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Meir would say: From where is it derived that even a gentile who engages in Torah studyⁿ is considered like a High Priest? The verse states: "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances, which if a person do, and shall live by them" (*Leviticus* 18:5). It is not stated: Priests, Levites, and Israelites, but rather the general term "person." From here you learn that even a gentile who engages in the study of Torah is like a High Priest. This demonstrates that gentiles are rewarded for fulfilling mitzvot, despite the fact that they are not commanded to do so.

Rather, the verse serves to tell you that they do not receive as great a reward for their fulfillment as one who is commanded and performs a mitzva. Rather, they receive a lesser reward, like that of one who is not commanded and still performs a mitzva. As Rabbi Hanina says: Greater is one who is commanded to do a mitzvaⁿ and performs itⁿ than one who is not commanded and performs it.

The Gemara returns to the discussion between God and the nations of the world, whose claims are rejected with the rebuttal that they did not receive the Torah because they did not fulfill the seven Noahide mitzvot that were incumbent upon them. Rather, this is what the gentiles say before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, as for the Jewish people who accepted the Torah, where is the evidence that they fulfilled its mitzvot?

The Holy One, Blessed be He, says to them in response: I will testify about the Jewish people that they fulfilled the Torah in its entirety. The nations say before Him: Master of the Universe, is there a father who can testify about his son? As it is written: "Israel is My son, My firstborn" (*Exodus* 4:22). Since God is considered the Father of the Jewish people, He is disqualified from testifying on their behalf. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: Heaven and earth will testify about them that they fulfilled the Torah in its entirety.

The nations say before Him: Master of the Universe, in this matter the testimony of heaven and earth is tainted by a conflict of interest, as it is stated: "If My covenant be not with day and night,ⁿ I would not have appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth" (*Jeremiah* 33:25). And concerning this verse, Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says: What is the meaning of that which is written: "And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day" (*Genesis* 1:5)?ⁿ This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, established a condition with the acts of Creation, and said: If the Jewish people accept My Torah at the revelation at Sinai, all is well, but if they do not accept it, I will return you to the primordial state of chaos and disorder.

And this is similar to that which Hizkiyya says with regard to a different matter: What is the meaning of that which is written: "You caused sentence to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was silent" (*Psalms* 76:9)? If the earth feared, why was it silent, and if it was silent, why did it fear? One who is afraid does not stay silent, and one who remains silent thereby demonstrates that he is not afraid. Rather, this is the meaning of the verse: At first, when God came to give the Torah to the Jewish people, the earth feared that they might not accept it, and it would be destroyed. This is alluded to by the phrase "You caused sentence to be heard." But ultimately, when the Jews accepted the Torah, the earth was silent. Consequently, heaven and earth are interested parties and cannot testify about the Jewish people's commitment to the Torah.

יְעִיד בְּאַבְרָהָם וכו' – Testify about Abraham, etc. – As explained in the Midrash, Nimrod cast Abraham into a fiery furnace due to Abraham's refusal to engage in idol worship (see *Bereshit Rabba* 38:13).

אֵלִיהוּ בֶן בְּרַכְאֵל – According to Rashi, Elihu should not be included in this list, as the Gemara states elsewhere that Elihu was a Jew (*Bava Batra* 15b). This is also the reason that Job is not included in the list, since according to one opinion he too was a Jew.

Today is not the time to receive one's reward – לֹא הַיּוֹם לִישׁוֹל שְׂכָר: If reward were given immediately, in this world, mankind would lose its free choice to decide how to act. Therefore, the principle reward for one's actions is granted in the World-to-Come. There are certain exceptions of mitzvot whose reward is promised in this world, but even in those cases the Sages maintain that although one enjoys a reward in this world, the principal reward remains for him in the World-to-Come.

אָמַר לָהֶם הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: מִכֶּם יָבֹאוּ וְיַעֲדוּ בֵּהֶן בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂקִימּוֹ אֶת הַתּוֹרָה כּוּלָּהּ: יָבֹא נִמְרוֹד וְיַעֲד בְּאַבְרָהָם שֶׁלֹּא עָבַד עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה, יָבֹא לָבָן וְיַעֲד בְּיַעֲקֹב שֶׁלֹּא נָחֲשַׁד עַל הָגוֹל, תְּבֹא אִשְׁתּוֹ פּוֹטִיפָרַע וְיַעֲד בְּיוֹסֵף שֶׁלֹּא נָחֲשַׁד עַל הַזְנוּיָהּ,

Instead, the Holy One, Blessed be He, says to the nations: Let the witnesses come from among you and testify that the Jewish people fulfilled the Torah in its entirety. Let Nimrod come and testify about Abrahamⁿ that he did not engage in idol worship. Let Laban come and testify about Jacob that he is not suspect with regard to robbery (see Genesis 31:36–42). Let the wife of Potiphar come and testify about Joseph that he is not suspect with regard to the sin of adultery (see Genesis 39:7–12).

יָבֹא נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר וְיַעֲד בְּחַנַּנְיָהּ מִשְׁשָׁאֵל וְעַזְרִיָּה שֶׁלֹּא הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַעֲלָם, יָבֹא דָרְיוֹשׁ וְיַעֲד בְּדַנְיָאֵל שֶׁלֹּא בִיטַל אֶת הַתְּפִלָּה, יָבֹא בִלְדַּד הַשּׁוּחִי וְצוֹפָר הַנַּעֲמָתִי וְאֵלִיפָז הַתִּמְנִי וְאֵלִיהוּ בֶן בְּרַכְאֵל הַבּוּזִי וְיַעֲדוּ בָּהֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂקִימּוֹ אֶת כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוּלָּהּ. שְׁנֵאֵמַר: "יִתְּנוּ עֵדוּתָם וְיַצְדִּקוּ".

Let Nebuchadnezzar come and testify about Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah that they did not prostrate themselves before a graven image. Let Darius come and testify about Daniel that he did not neglect his prayer (see Daniel 6). Let Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, and Eliphaz the Temanite, and Elihu, son of Barachel,ⁿ the Buzite, friends of Job (see Job 2:11 and 32:2) come and testify about the Jewish people that they fulfilled the Torah in its entirety. As it is stated: "All the nations are gathered together... let them bring their witnesses, that they may be justified" (Isaiah 43:9), i.e., the gathered gentiles will submit testimony on behalf of the Jewish people and demonstrate the Jews' righteousness.

אָמְרוּ לִפְנֵי: רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, תֵּנֵה לָנוּ מִרְאֵשׁ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָּה. אָמַר לָהֶן הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: שׁוּטִים שְׂבַעְעוּלָם, מִי שְׁטָרַח בַּעֲרֵב שַׁבָּת יֵאָכֵל בְּשַׁבָּת, מִי שֶׁלֹּא טָרַח בַּעֲרֵב שַׁבָּת מֵהֵיכָן יֵאָכֵל בְּשַׁבָּת? אֵלֶּיךָ אֵיךְ עַל פִּי בֶן, מִצְוָה קִלְיָה יֵשׁ לִי וְסוּכָה שְׂמָה, לָכוּ וַעֲשׂוּ אוֹתָהּ.

The gentiles say before Him: Master of the Universe, give us the Torah afresh and we will perform its mitzvot. The Holy One, Blessed be He, says to them in response: Fools of the world! Do you think you can request this? One who takes pains on Shabbat eve will eat on Shabbat, but one who did not take pains on Shabbat eve, from where will he eat on Shabbat? The opportunity for performing mitzvot has already passed, and it is now too late to ask to perform them. But even so, I have an easy mitzva to fulfill, and its name is *sukka*; go and perform it.

וּמִי מִצִּית אֲמֹרֶת הֵכִי? וְהָאֵל אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לׁוֹי, מֵאִי דְכִתְבִּיב: "אֲשֶׁר אֲנִיכִי מִצְוֹת הַיּוֹם? הַיּוֹם לַעֲשׂוֹתָם – וְלֹא לְמָחָר לַעֲשׂוֹתָם, הַיּוֹם לַעֲשׂוֹתָם – וְלֹא הַיּוֹם לִישׁוֹל שְׂכָר!"

The Gemara asks: And how can you say so, that it is possible to perform a mitzva after the end of this world? But doesn't Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi say: What is the meaning of that which is written: "You shall therefore keep the commandment, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command you this day, to do them" (Deuteronomy 7:11)? This verse teaches that today, in this world, is the time to do them, but tomorrow, in the World-to-Come, is not the time to do them. Furthermore, today is the time to do them, but today is not the time to receive one's reward,ⁿ which is granted in the World-to-Come.

אֵלֶּיךָ, שְׂאִין הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בֹּא בְּטָרוּמָא עִם בְּרִיּוֹתָיו. וְאֵמַאי קָרִי לִיָּה "מִצְוָה קִלְיָה"? מִשּׁוֹם דְּלִית בֵּיהּ חֶסְרוֹן כִּסִּים.

The Gemara explains: But even so, God gave the nations an opportunity to perform a mitzva, as The Holy One, Blessed be He, does not deal tyrannically [*beteruneya*]¹ with His creations, but wants them to feel that they have been judged fairly. The Gemara asks: And why does God call the mitzva of *sukka* an easy mitzva to fulfill? Because performing the mitzva involves no monetary loss.

מִיד כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד נוֹטֵל וְהוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹשֶׂה סוּכָה בְּרֹאשׁ גַּגּוֹ, וְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְקַדֵּיר עֲלֵיהֶם חֹמֶה בְּתַקּוּפַת תַּמּוּז, וְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִבֵּעֵט בְּסוּכָתוֹ וְיוֹצֵא, שְׁנֵאֵמַר: "וְנִתְקַהּ אֶת מוֹסְרוֹתֵינוּ וְנִשְׁלִיכָהּ מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבִיתֵנוּ". מְקַדֵּיר? וְהָאֵל אָמַרְתִּי: אֵין הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בֹּא בְּטָרוּמָא עִם בְּרִיּוֹתָיו! מִשּׁוֹם דִּישְׁרָאֵל נִמְי וְיִמְנִי

Immediately, each and every gentile will take materials and go and construct a *sukka* on top of his roof. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, will set upon them the heat [*makdir*]¹ of the sun in the season of Tammuz, i.e., the summer, and each and every one who is sitting in his *sukka* will be unable to stand the heat, and he will kick his *sukka* and leave, as it is stated: "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psalms 2:3). The Gemara asks: Why does God heat the sun over them? But didn't you say that the Holy One, Blessed be He, does not deal tyrannically with His creations? The Gemara answers: This is not considered dealing tyrannically with the gentiles, because for the Jewish people as well, there are times

LANGUAGE

Tyrannically [*teruneya*] – טְרוּנֵיָא: From the Greek τυραννία, *turannia*, meaning the rule of a tyrant or despot. Here it means that God does not deal tyrannically with his creatures, but rather acts with justice and compassion.

Sets the heat [*makdir*] – מְקַדֵּיר: The principal meaning of the root of this word is unclear. Rashi explains that *kadar* refers to a hole, and therefore the Gemara is saying that God formed a hole, as it were, in the firmament and brought forth the sun. Some say that it belongs to the category of roots that can have

opposite meanings, and therefore the root *kadar* here means to shine, the opposite of its standard meaning of darkness. Alternatively, it means to heat or boil, which leads to the term *kedeira*, meaning a pot used for cooking.

BACKGROUND

Season of Tammuz – תקופת תמוז: This is the summer season, from the longest day of the year, June 21, until the autumnal equinox on September 21. As the Hebrew calendar is not set precisely in accordance with the sun, it is possible for the festival of *Sukkot* to begin during the summer season. Consequently, in certain years the weather is warmer during the festival of *Sukkot* than in others.

HALAKHA

One who suffers in the *sukka* is exempt from the *sukka* – מצטער פטור מן הסוכה: One who suffers in the *sukka* is exempt from this mitzva for the entire Festival except for the first night, when he is obligated to eat an olive-bulk of food in the *sukka* (Rema). Suffering in this context is referring to one who is unable to sleep in the *sukka* due to the wind, odor, flies, or any other reason that causes him affliction. This also includes one who cannot remain in the *sukka* due to illness. The *halakha* is in accordance with the statement of Rava (Rambam *Sefer Zemanim*, *Hilkhot Sukka* 6:2; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 640:4).

Should one kick it – בעוטי מי מבצע: When one leaves the *sukka* due to rain, he should not kick the *sukka* and leave; rather, he should act submissively, like a servant who brought his master a drink and had it thrown in his face (*Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 639:7).

The court does not accept converts in the days of the Messiah – אין מקבלין גרים לימות המשיח: The court should not accept converts when there is any suspicion that they are not converting for the sake of Heaven. This is why they did not accept converts in the time of King David, in case they converted out of fear, or during the time of King Solomon, as perhaps their true motivation was to share in the success of the Jewish people (Rambam *Sefer Kedusha*, *Hilkhot Issurei Bia* 13:15; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Yoreh De'a* 268:12).

דמשכא להו תקופת תמוז עד חגא, והיו להו צערא. והאמר רבא: מצטער פטור מן הסוכה! נהי דפטור, בעוטי מי מבצע?

מיד, הקדוש ברוך הוא יושב ומשחק עליהן, שנאמר: "יושב בשמים ויחק" וגו'. אמר רבי יצחק: אין שחוק לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא אלא אותו היום בלבד.

איכא דמתני להא דרבי יצחק אהא, דתנא, רבי יוסי אומר: לעתיד לבא באין אומות העולם ומתגיידין. ומי מקבלין מיניה? והתנא: אין מקבלין גרים לימות המשיח, כיצא בו לא קבלין גרים לא בימי דוד ולא בימי שלמה!

אלא שנעשו גרים גוירים, ומניחין תפילין בראשיהן, תפילין ברועותיהם, ציצית בבגדיהם, מוזה בפתחיהם.

בין שראין מלחמת גוג ומגוג, אומר להן: על מה באתם? ואמרים לו: על ה' ועל משיחו, שנאמר: "למה רגשו גוים ולאמים יהגו ריק" וגו'.

וכל אחד מנתק מצותו והולך, שנאמר: "ננתקה את מוסרותינו" וגו', והקדוש ברוך הוא יושב ומשחק, שנאמר: "יושב בשמים ויחק" וגו'. אמר רבי יצחק: אין לו להקדוש ברוך הוא שחוק אלא אותו היום בלבד.

איני? והאמר רב יהודה אמר רב: שתים עשרה שעות היו היום, שלש הראשונות – הקדוש ברוך הוא יושב ועוסק בתורה, שניות – יושב ודן את כל העולם כולו, בין שראין שנתחייב עולם כלליה, עומד מכסא הדין ויושב על כסא רחמים.

when the season of Tammuz⁸ extends until the festival of *Sukkot*, and in such years sitting in the *sukka* causes them suffering. The Gemara asks: But doesn't Rava say that one who suffers in the *sukka* is exempt from performing the mitzva of *sukka*,⁹ and under these circumstances even a Jew is permitted to leave the *sukka*? If so, why are the gentiles criticized for leaving? The Gemara answers: **Granted that one is exempt** from performing the mitzva and is permitted to leave his *sukka*, but should one kick it?¹⁰

The Gemara resumes its narration: **Immediately, the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits and makes sport** of those gentiles, i.e., He laughs at them, as it is stated: "He that sits in heaven makes sport, the Lord has them in derision" (Psalms 2:4). With regard to this verse, Rabbi Yitzhak says: **There is no making sport for the Holy One, Blessed be He, but on that day alone.**

There are those who teach that which Rabbi Yitzhak subsequently said with regard to this matter, as it is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Yosei says: **In the future, the nations of the world will come and convert.** The Gemara asks: **And do we accept them as converts at that time?** But isn't it taught in another *baraita*: The court does not accept converts in the days of the Messiah;¹¹ similarly, they did not accept converts either in the days of David or in the days of Solomon, due to a concern that these people wanted to convert for ulterior motives, because the Jewish people were mighty and respected?

Rather, Rabbi Yosei means that they become converts who have attached themselves¹² to the Jewish people, and they don phylacteries on their heads, phylacteries on their arms, place ritual fringes on their garments, and a *mezuzah* in their doorways.

When these converts see the war of Gog and Magog, every convert of this sort will say to Gog and Magog: **For what purpose did you come?** They will say to him: We came to fight against the Lord and against His Messiah, as it is stated: "Why are the nations in an uproar? And why do the peoples mutter in vain. The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Messiah" (Psalms 2:1–2).

And then every one of these converts will tear loose his sign of performance of a mitzva and leave, as it is stated: "Let us tear their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psalms 2:3). And the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits and makes sport, i.e., laughs or rejoices, as it is stated: "He that sits in heaven makes sport, the Lord has them in derision" (Psalms 2:4). Rabbi Yitzhak says: **There is no making sport for the Holy One, Blessed be He, but on that day alone.**

The Gemara asks: **Is that so?** Is there is no other making sport for the Holy One, Blessed be He? But doesn't Rav Yehuda say that Rav says: **There are twelve hours in the day.** During the first three, the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits and engages in Torah study. During the second three hours, He sits and judges the entire world. Once He sees that the world has rendered itself liable to destruction, He arises from the throne of judgment and sits on the throne of mercy, and the world is not destroyed.

NOTES

Converts who have attached themselves – גרים גוירים: Although they have not been accepted as converts, they attach themselves to the Jewish people and choose to act as converts (Rashi). Alternatively, these people were not converted by a standard court,

but by a court comprised of three laymen. Such converts are not accepted immediately, but are examined and watched carefully, to see if they are sincere converts (Meiri).

He does not make sport of his creations – **על בְּרִיּוֹתָיו אֵינוֹ מִשְׁחָק**: Rashi explains that God does not make sport of his creations when they sin. Others explain that God does not laugh at them in their difficulties and downfalls, but He does rejoice with them when they are successful (see Maharsha, Maharal, and *Torat Hayyim*).

מְלִמֵּד – Teaches Torah to schoolchildren, etc. **תִּינוּקוֹת שֶׁל בֵּית רַבֵּן תּוֹרָה וְכוּ'**: The commentaries disagree whether this is referring to young children or schoolchildren who had died (Rashi), or living children. The Maharal explains that young schoolchildren are like unspoiled vessels, ready to be filled with knowledge, and therefore it is fitting that they should receive instruction from the source of all wisdom, God.

In the night His song shall be with me – **בַּלַּיְלָה שִׁירָה עִמִּי**: King David is saying that by singing and playing music for God, he participates in the song that is played before Him at night (Rashi). In tractate *Hagiga* 12b, Rashi explains that at night the song sung in the Heavens by the divine creatures is joined with the song that David had sung during the day.

שְׁלִישִׁיּוֹת – יוֹשֵׁב וְזוֹן אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלָם בְּכּוֹל מִקְרָנִי רְאִים עַד בְּצִי כְּנִם, רְבִיעִיּוֹת – יוֹשֵׁב וּמִשְׁחָק עִם לִוְיָתָן, שְׁנָאֵמֶר: "לִוְיָתָן זֶה יִצְרֵת לְשִׁחָק בּוֹ!" אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק: עִם בְּרִיּוֹתָיו מִשְׁחָק, וְעַל בְּרִיּוֹתָיו אֵינוֹ מִשְׁחָק אֶלָּא אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם בְּלִבְדּוֹ.

אָמַר לִיה רַב אַחָא לְרַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק: מִיּוֹם שְׁחָרַב בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אֵין שְׁחָק לְהַקְדֹּשׁ בְּיוֹדֵהּ. הוּא. וּמִנְּלָן דְּלִיבָא שְׁחָק? אִילִּימָא מִדְּכִתִּיב: "וַיִּקְרָא ה' אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת בְּיוֹם הַהוּא לְבָכִי וּלְמִסְפָּד וּלְקִרְחָה" וְגו', דְּלִמָּא הַהוּא יוֹמָא וְתוֹ לָא!

אֶלָּא דְּכִתִּיב: "אִם אֲשַׁכַּח יְרוּשָׁלַם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי, תִּדְבֵּק לְשׁוֹנִי לִחְכִּי אִם לֹא אֲזָכְרֶכִי" – דְּלִמָּא שְׁכַחַת הוּא דְּלִיבָא, אֲבָל שְׁחָק מִיָּהָא אֵיכָא! אֶלָּא מָהָא: "הַחֲשִׁשִׁית מַעוֹלָם אַחֲרִישׁ אֶתְאַפֵּק" וְגו'.

בְּרִבְעִיּוֹת מֵאֵי עֲבִיד? יוֹשֵׁב וּמְלַמֵּד תִּינוּקוֹת שֶׁל בֵּית רַבֵּן תּוֹרָה, שְׁנָאֵמֶר: "אֶת מִי יוֹרָה דְּעָה וְאֶת מִי יָבִין שְׁמוּעָה גְּמוּלִי מִחֻלָּב עֵתִיקִי מִשְׁדָּיִם", לָמִי יוֹרָה דְּעָה וְלָמִי יָבִין שְׁמוּעָה? לְגְמוּלִי מִחֻלָּב וְלַעֲתִיקִי מִשְׁדָּיִם.

וּמַעֲיָקָרָא מֵאֵן הוּא מִיָּמֶר לְהוֹי אִיבְעִית אִימָא: מִיטְטָרוֹן, וְאִיבְעִית אִימָא: הָא וְהָא עֲבִיד.

וּבְלִילִיא מֵאֵי עֲבִיד? אִיבְעִית אִימָא: מֵעִין יָמָמָא. וְאִיבְעִית אִימָא: רֹכֵב עַל כְּרוּב קַל שְׁלֹו וְשֵׁט בְּשִׁמּוֹנָה עֶשֶׂר אֲלֵף עוֹלָמוֹת, שְׁנָאֵמֶר: "רֹכֵב אֱלֹהִים רִבְתִּים אֲלָפִי שְׁנָאֵן", אֵל תִּקְרִי "שְׁנָאֵן" אֶלָּא "שְׁאֵינִן". וְאִיבְעִית אִימָא: יוֹשֵׁב וְשׁוֹמֵעַ שִׁירָה מִפִּי חַיִּית, שְׁנָאֵמֶר: "וּזְמַם יִצְוָה ה' חֲסִדוֹ וּבַלַּיְלָה שִׁירָה עִמִּי".

During the **third** set of three hours, the Holy One, Blessed be He, **sits and sustains the entire world, from the horns of wild oxen to the eggs of lice**. During the **fourth** three hours, **He sits and makes sport with the leviathan**, as it is stated: "There is leviathan, whom You have formed to sport with" (Psalms 104:26). Evidently, God makes sport every day, not only on that one day. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak says in explanation: **He makes sport with His creations**, just as He sports with the leviathan; **He does not make sport of His creations^N but on that day alone**.

Rav Aha said to Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak: **From the day the Temple was destroyed, there is no longer any making sport for the Holy One, Blessed be He. And from where do we derive that there is no making sport? If we say that it is from that which is written: "And in that day did the Lord, the God of hosts, call to weeping, and to lamentation, and to baldness and to girding with sackcloth" (Isaiah 22:12), that is inconclusive: Perhaps that day alone was called for weeping and lamentation, and no additional days.**

Rather, you might suggest that the source is that it is written: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you" (Psalms 137:5–6). This is also inconclusive, as **perhaps there is no forgetting of Jerusalem for God, but in any event there is still making sport**. Rather, it is derived from this verse: "I have long time held My peace, I have been still, and refrained Myself; now will I cry like a travailing woman, gasping and panting at once" (Isaiah 42:14).

The Gemara asks: If God no longer makes sport, **what does He now do during the fourth** three-hour period of the day? The Gemara answers: **He sits and teaches Torah to schoolchildren^N**, as it is stated: "Whom shall one teach knowledge? And whom shall one make to understand the message? Them that are weaned from the milk, them that are drawn from the breasts" (Isaiah 28:9). The verse is interpreted in the following manner: **To whom does God teach knowledge, and to whom does He make to understand the message? To those who are just weaned from the milk and to those who are drawn from the breasts, i.e., children only recently weaned from nursing.**

The Gemara asks: **And initially**, before the destruction of the Temple, **who would teach the schoolchildren?** The Gemara answers: **If you wish, say that the angel Metatron⁴ would teach them, and if you wish, say instead that He would do both this**, sport with the leviathan, **and that**, teach the schoolchildren; whereas after the destruction of the Temple in the fourth period of the day He only teaches the schoolchildren.

The Gemara asks: **And during the twelve hours of the night, what does God do?** The Gemara answers: **If you wish, say that the night is similar to the day, i.e., God performs the same activities as in the day. And if you wish, say instead that He rides on his light cherub and flies in eighteen thousand worlds, as it is stated: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even [shinan] thousands" (Psalms 68:18). Do not read it as even [shinan], rather read it as: That which are not [she'einan]**. Since the minimum of thousands is two thousand, the phrase: That which are not thousands, indicates that two thousand are not present, i.e., the chariots of God are twenty thousand minus two thousand, which means that God rides in eighteen thousand worlds. **And if you wish, say instead that God sits and listens to the songs from the mouths of the angelic creatures, as it is stated: "By day the Lord will command His loving-kindness, and in the night His song shall be with me" (Psalms 42:9).**^N

LANGUAGE

Metatron – מִיטְטָרוֹן: The meaning of this word is unclear. Some claim it is from the Latin metator, meaning divider or fixer of boundaries, measurer, guide, or planner. Others maintain it comes from the Greek

μετά θρόνος, *meta thronos*, which means behind the throne. According to this explanation, it is referring to the angel standing behind the Throne of Glory, as it were, the highest minister of God.