

NOTES

They say before Him – אומרים לפניו: According to Rashi, it is the small children who will state this claim. The Maharsha maintains that the fathers, when they are brought to judgment, will argue that they were already punished in their lifetimes by the death of their children. The language of the Gemara allows for both interpretations.

Sellers of fat [revav] – מוכרי רבב: Rashi and many other commentaries explain that *revav* means fat, and the phrase sellers of fat is referring to people who eke out their living by selling items that dirty their hands. The *Arukh* maintains that *revav* means the dregs of wax, which explains the connection between this teaching and the previous one, which spoke of the cessation of the honey. Since the honey of *nofet tzufim* has ceased, the only element left of this product is the honeycomb, used for wax.

If it were not for the prayer of Habakkuk – אלמלא תפלתו של חבקוק: The Maharsha explains that David's prayer was that those who deal in trade should not have to earn their livelihood in a demeaning manner, while Habakkuk prayed for the Torah scholars.

One will die – אחד מת: As one of the Torah scholars is presumably greater than the other, the latter must submit to his authority and is not fully responsible for the topic of their conversation while walking. Since they are not equally guilty, their respective punishments differ as well (*Iyyun Ya'akov*).

LANGUAGE

Partition [*pargod*] – פרגוד: From the Greek παραγαυδης, *paragaudēs*, meaning a garment with a purple border, or the Latin *paragauda*, a laced border on a garment. Its origin is from the Persian *pargad*, which refers to the screen that divides the king from his palace retinue. The king would speak from behind the screen, and this is the basis for the borrowing of this term to describe a barrier in front of the Divine Presence.

שׁמְבוּזִין דִּין אָבִיהֶם לְעֵתִיד לְבוֹא. אומרים לפנינו: רבוננו של עולם, מאחר שאתה עתיד ליפרע מהן, למה הקהיתת שׁיניהם בם!

אמר רבי אילעא בר יברכיה: אלמלא תפלתו של דוד היו כל ישראל מוכרי רבב, שנאמר: "שׁינתה ה' מורה להם". ואמר רבי אילעא בר יברכיה: אלמלא תפלתו של חבקוק היו שני תלמידי חכמים מתבססים בטלית אחת ועוסקין בתורה, שנאמר: "ה' שמעתי שמעך וראתי ה' פעלך בקרב שנים חיהו". אל תקרא "בקרוב שנים" אלא "בקרוב שנים".

ואמר רבי אילעא בר יברכיה: שני תלמידי חכמים המהלכין בדרך ואין ביניהן דברי תורה – ראוי לשרף באש, שנאמר: "ויהי המה הלכים הלוך ודבר והנה רבב אש" וגו'. טעמא דאיכא דיבור, הא ליכא דיבור – ראוי לשרף.

ואמר רבי אילעא בר יברכיה: שני תלמידי חכמים הדרין בעיר אחת ואין נוהגין זה לזה בהלכה – אחד מת ואחד גולה, שנאמר: "לגם שמה רוצח אשר ירצח את רעהו בבלי דעת", ואין דעת אלא תורה, שנאמר: "נדמו עמי מבלי הדעת".

אמר רבי יהודה בריה דרבי חייא: כל תלמיד חכם העוסק בתורה מתוך הדחק – תפלתו נשמעת, שנאמר: "כי עם בציון ישב בירושלם בכו לא תבכה חנון יחנך לקול ועקך בשמעתו ענוך", וכתוב בתרייה: "ונתן ה' לכם לחם צר ומים לחץ".

רבי אבהו אומר: משביעין אותו מזיו שבינה, שנאמר: "ויהי עינוך ראות את מוריך". רבי אחא בר חנינא אומר: אף אין הפרגוד נגמל בפניו, שנאמר: "ולא יכנף עוד מוריך".

who plunder, i.e., destroy, their fathers' future judgment. When God sits in judgment of their parents, these children say before Him:^N Master of the Universe, because You were destined to exact punishment from our fathers in the World-to-Come for their wickedness, why did You blunt their teeth with the death of their children in their lifetimes? In this way, the death of their children atones for the fathers.

§ Rabbi Ile'a bar Yeverekhya says: If it were not for the prayer of David for Israel to have sustenance, all Israel would be sellers of fat [*revav*],^N i.e., involved in debased occupations, as it is stated: "Place for them mastery, O Lord" (Psalms 9:21), that is, may God grant them dignity. And Rabbi Ile'a bar Yeverekhya also says: If it were not for the prayer of Habakkuk,^N two Torah scholars would have to cover themselves with a single cloak due to poverty and engage in Torah study dressed that way, as it is stated: "Lord, I heard Your report and was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years" (Habakkuk 3:2). Do not read: "In the midst [*bekerev*] of the years [*shanim*]," but in the closeness [*bikrov*] of two [*shenayim*]. In other words, Habakkuk prayed that God would nullify His decree of two Torah scholars having to share a single cloak.

And Rabbi Ile'a bar Yeverekhya says: In the case of two Torah scholars who are walking along the way and there are no words of Torah between them, but they are conversing about other matters, they are deserving of being burned in fire. As it is stated with regard to Elijah and his disciple Elisha: "And it was as they walked along, talking, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder" (11 Kings 2:11). The reason they were not burned by the chariot of fire is that there was speech exchanged between them, which presumably was words of Torah, but if there had been no speech, they would have been deserving of being burned by the chariot.

And Rabbi Ile'a bar Yeverekhya says: If there are two Torah scholars who reside in the same city and they are not pleasant to each other with regard to *halakha*, but are constantly fighting, one of them will die^N and the other one will be exiled. As it is stated: "That the manslayer might flee there, who slays his neighbor without knowledge" (Deuteronomy 4:42), and "knowledge" means nothing other than Torah, as it is stated: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Hiyya, says: With regard to any Torah scholar who engages in Torah study while experiencing the pressure of poverty, his prayer is listened to, as it is stated: "For, O people that dwells in Zion at Jerusalem, you shall weep no more; He will surely be gracious to you at the voice of your cry. When He shall hear, He will answer you" (Isaiah 30:19), and after it is written: "And the Lord shall give you sparse bread and scant water" (Isaiah 30:20). This verse indicates that those who sit and study Torah, that is, the people who dwell in Zion, and eat bread sparingly, will have their prayers answered by God.

Rabbi Abbahu says: A Torah scholar who engages in Torah study despite economic pressures is satiated with the glory of the Divine Presence, as it is stated in the same verse, above: "And your eyes shall behold your Teacher." Rabbi Aha, son of Hanina, said: Even the concealing partition [*pargod*]^l before the Divine Presence is not locked before him, as it is stated: "And your Teacher shall not hide Himself anymore" (Isaiah 30:20).

By the sanctification that is said in the order, etc. – **אֶקְדוּשָׁה דְּסִידְרָא וְכוּ**: The Maharsha explains that these two sections of prayer are said in Aramaic and were understood even by the masses. As these passages were recited in the prayers and after the study of *aggada*, which even simple people would join in, they constituted a praise of God and the study of Torah with the participation of the entire people.

יְהֵא – אַחַר הַלְמַחָה דְּאֶגְגָּדָא: Many authorities infer from this passage that the *kaddish* prayer is recited only after the study of *aggada*, as it is beloved upon people and is learned with joy (*Ben Yehoyada*). This is the basis for the widespread custom of adding the short aggadadic statement: Rabbi Hananya ben Akashya says, after Torah study before the *kaddish* prayer. The *Melekheth Shlomo* discusses this issue, and concludes that the Gemara means that the *kaddish* prayer is said even after the study of *aggada*, and certainly after the study of *halakha*. The *Be'er Sheva* addresses this topic from a slightly different angle, and he too holds that according to the Rambam in the *Mishne Torah*, the *kaddish* prayer must be recited after all Torah study, both *halakha* and *aggada*.

Lost purity has removed the taste and the aroma, etc. – טַהָרָה בְּטִלְהָ טַעַם וְרוּחַ וְכוּ: The Maharsha writes that the cessation of purity, which is something intangible, led to the removal of tastes and aromas, which similarly are not tangible. The cancellation of the physical tithes caused the removal of the fat of grain, as both the cause and the effect are material.

A fragrant date – תוּמְרֵתָא דְּחֵינוּמֵתָא: The *Arukh* cites three explanations of this term. The first explanation is that it means a type of date that is especially fragrant. The second explanation is that it is referring to a place where good-quality dates were cultivated. The third explanation is that this was the name given to all first fruits, and in this particular case, to a date.

I am not your son – לֹא אֶבְרִיךְ אָנָּה: Some authorities prove from here that a grandson, or at least the son of a daughter, is not obligated to honor his grandfather as he would honor his father. The *Yad Melekh* points out that Rav Ya'akov certainly brought the glass of water to his grandfather; he pointed out to him only that the grandfather cannot demand that he do so in the same way that a father may demand of his son. This is the intention of the comment of Rashi, who writes: I am not obligated to honor you as a son, indicating that he is obligated to honor him to some degree.

BACKGROUND

The sanctification that is said in the order – אֶקְדוּשָׁה דְּסִידְרָא: The sanctification of the order is the text of the sanctification recited by the angels, appearing in the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel, with its Aramaic translation interspersed between the verses. This is said during the prayer of: "And a redeemer will come to Zion," after the *Amida* prayer, in the morning. The reason for its placement there is not clear. Some *ge'onim* maintain that it was moved to the end of the prayer service in response to a government decree banning its recital. Others say that it is a remnant of an ancient custom to read sections from the prophets, together with their translations, after the morning service. That custom was discontinued, but this was instituted to replace it.

§ The mishna states that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua: **From the day that the Temple was destroyed, there is no day that does not include some form of curse. Rava says: Each and every day is more cursed than the previous one, as it is stated in the chapter detailing the curses in the book of Deuteronomy: "In the morning you will say, would that it were evening, and in the evening you will say, would that it were morning"** (Deuteronomy 28:67). It is unclear which morning the verse means. If we say that in the evening he will wish it would be the following morning, does he know what will be the outcome of the next morning, which would cause him to yearn for its arrival? Rather, it must mean the morning that has passed; that is, in the evening they will pine for the previous morning, because their situation is continuously worsening.

The Gemara poses a question: **But if everything is deteriorating, why does the world continue to exist?** The Gemara answers: **By the sanctification that is said in the order^{nb} of prayers, after the passage that begins: And a redeemer shall come to Israel, which includes the recitation and translation of the sanctification said by the angels, and by the response: Let His great name be blessed, etc., which is recited after the study of *aggada*.ⁿ As it is stated: "A land of thick darkness, as darkness itself; a land of the shadow of death, without any order"** (Job 10:22). Therefore, it can be inferred from this verse that if there are orders of prayer and study, the land shall appear from amidst the darkness.

§ The mishna taught that since the destruction of the Temple, **dew has not descended for a blessing, and the taste has been removed from fruit. It is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: The lost purity has removed the taste and the aroma;ⁿ the tithes that were not separated have removed the fat of grain.**

The Gemara relates that **Rav Huna found a fragrant date.ⁿ He took it and wrapped it in his shawl. Rabba,^p his son, came and said to him: I smell the aroma of a fragrant date. Rav Huna said to him: My son, there is clearly purity in you, as you were able to notice the fragrance. He gave it to him. Meanwhile, Abba, Rabba's son, arrived. Rabba took the date and gave it to him. Rav Huna said to Rabba: My son, you have made my heart rejoice with your purity, and you have blunted my teeth, by showing your preference for your own son.** The Gemara comments: **This explains the folk saying that people say: The love of a father is for the sons; the love of the sons is for their own sons, more than for their father.**

The Gemara relates another incident: **Rav Aha bar Ya'akov took care of Rav Ya'akov, the son of his daughter, who was an orphan. When the grandchild grew up, his grandfather once said to him: Give me water to drink. He said to him: I am not your son,ⁿ and I am not obligated in your honor as a son must honor his father.** The Gemara again comments: **And this explains the folk saying that people say: Raise, raise your grandchild, but in the end he will retort: I am the son of your daughter, and I do not have to take care of you.**

PERSONALITIES

Rabba bar Rav Huna – רַבְּה בַּר רַבְּה הוּנָא: Rabba bar Rav Huna was a third-generation *amora* in Babylonia. He merited to see Rav, and transmitted several *halakhot* in his name. He was a preeminent disciple of his father, Rav Huna, and there are several instances in the Talmud where Rav Huna gives practical halakhic guidance to his son. He was a judge in the city of Sura after the death of his father, a disciple-colleague of Rav H̄isda, and a colleague of Rav Nahman and Rava.

Rabba bar Rav Huna was wealthy and was close to the

Exilarch, despite having several disagreements with him. He was known to be very modest. Upon his death he was brought to Eretz Yisrael for burial, and a text of a eulogy given for him is still extant.

The son mentioned here is Abba, who is the *amora* Rava, a shortened version of Rabbi Abba, son of Rabba bar Rav Huna. He was a fourth-generation *amora*, and his teachings are found throughout the Talmud.

וְלֹא יָרַד טַל לְבִרְכָה, וְנִשְׁטַל טַעַם פְּרוּת וכו'. תַּנְיָא, רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן אֱלֶעָזָר אָמַר: טַהָרָה – בְּטִלְהָ טַעַם וְרוּחַ; מַעֲשֵׂר – בִּישָׁל שׁוּמְנֵי דָּגָן.

רַב הוּנָא אֶשְׁכַּח תוּמְרֵתָא דְּחֵינוּמֵתָא. שְׁקֵלָה בְּרִכָּה בְּסוּדְרֵיהּ. אֲתָא רַבָּה בְּרִיהּ. אָמַר לֵיהּ: מוֹרְחֵינָא רִיחָא דְּחֵינוּמֵתָא, אָמַר לֵיהּ: בְּנִי, טַהָרָה יֵשׁ בְּךָ. יְהֵבָה מִהֲלִיָּה. אֲדַהְבִּי אֲתָא אַבָּא בְּרִיהּ, שְׁקֵלָה יְהֵבָה מִהֲלִיָּה. אָמַר לֵיהּ: בְּנִי, שְׂמַחְתָּ אֶת לְבָבִי וְהִקְהִיתָה אֶת שִׁנַּי. הֵינֵנו דְּאֶמְרֵי אֵינְשֵׁי: רַחֲמֵי דְּאֶבָּא – אֲבַנְי, רַחֲמֵי דְּבְנֵי – אֲבַנְי דְּהוּוּ לֵיהּ.

רַב אַחָא בַר יַעֲקֹב אֵיטְפַל בִּיהּ בְּרַב יַעֲקֹב בַּר בְּרַתֵּיהּ. כִּי גָדַל, אָמַר לֵיהּ: אֶשְׁקִינְךָ מִנָּא. אָמַר לוֹ: לֹא אֶבְרִיךְ אָנָּה. וְהֵינֵנו דְּאֶמְרֵי אֵינְשֵׁי: רַבִּי רַבִּי, בַּר בְּרַתְךָ אָנָּה.

War [*pulemus*] – פּוּלְמוּס: From the Greek πόλεμος, *polemos*, meaning war or army.

HALAKHA

They decreed upon the crowns of bridegrooms – גָּזְרוּ עַל עֲטֹרוֹת הַתְּנִיּוֹם: The Sages decreed that bridegrooms should not place crowns on their heads at all, as stated by Levi on 49b. They likewise prohibited brides from wearing crowns made of precious metals. This decree applied only to brides and grooms, but not to the rest of the population (Rambam *Sefer Zemanim*, *Hilkhot Ta'anit* 5:15; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 560:4).

NOTES

From the time when Rabbi Akiva died, etc. – מִשְׁמַת רַבִּי אֲכִיבָא וְכוּ: Rashi explains that the honor of the Torah here means Rabbi Akiva's technique of deriving *halakhot* from the crowns drawn above the letters in a Torah scroll. Deriving *halakhot* from the crowns increases the honor of Torah, as each small detail of the Torah is shown to be meaningful. Others add that Rabbi Akiva honored the Torah through his vast number of students (*Iyyun Ya'akov*).

מתני' בפולמוס של אספסינוס – גָּזְרוּ עַל עֲטֹרוֹת הַתְּנִיּוֹם וְעַל הָאֵירוֹס.

בפולמוס של טיטוס – גָּזְרוּ עַל עֲטֹרוֹת כְּלוֹת, וְשָׁלָא יִלְמַד אָדָם אֶת בְּנוֹ יוֹנָתָן.

בפולמוס האחרון – גָּזְרוּ שְׁלָא תֵצֵא הַכְּלָה בְּאַפְרִיזוֹן בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר, וְרַבּוּתֵינוּ הִתִּירוּ שְׁתֵּיצָא הַכְּלָה בְּאַפְרִיזוֹן בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר.

משמת רבי מאיר – בְּטָלוּ מוֹשְׁלֵי מְשָׁלִים. משמת בן עזאי – בְּטָלוּ הַשְּׂקָדָנִים. משמת בן זומא – בְּטָלוּ הַדְּרָשָׁנִים. משמת רבי עקיבא – בְּטָלוּ כְבוֹד הַתּוֹרָה. משמת רבי חנינא בן דוסא – בְּטָלוּ אֲנָשֵׁי מַעֲשֵׂה. משמת רבי יוסי קטנתא – פְּסָקוּ חֲסִידִים. ולמה נקרא שמו קטנתא? שהיה קטנתא של חסידים.

MISHNA In the war [*pulemus*]¹ of Vespasian² the Sages decreed upon the crowns of bridegrooms,³ i.e., that bridegrooms may no longer wear crowns, and upon the drums, meaning they also banned the playing of drums.

In the war of Titus⁴ they also decreed upon the crowns of brides, and they decreed that a person should not teach his son Greek.

In the last war,⁵ meaning the bar Kokheva revolt, they decreed that a bride may not go out in a palanquin inside the city, but our Sages permitted a bride to go out in a palanquin inside the city, as this helps the bride maintain her modesty.

The mishna lists more things that ceased: From the time when Rabbi Meir died, those who relate parables ceased; from the time when ben Azzai died, the diligent ceased; from the time when ben Zoma⁶ died, the exegetists ceased; from the time when Rabbi Akiva died,⁷ the honor of the Torah ceased; from the time when Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa⁸ died, the men of wondrous action ceased; from the time when Rabbi Yosei the Small⁹ died, the pious were no more. And why was he called the Small? Because he was the smallest of the pious, meaning he was one of the least important of the pious men.

BACKGROUND

The war of Vespasian – פּוּלְמוּס שֶׁל אֲסַפְסִינּוּס: This refers to the great rebellion that led to the destruction of the Second Temple. The war is named after Vespasian because he was the head of the Roman army for almost the entire war, from the year 67 CE until he was crowned emperor.

The war of Titus – פּוּלְמוּס שֶׁל טִיטוּס: The name of this war as it appears in the standard text can be explained, albeit in a forced way, if it is assumed that the Sages made a distinction between the first part of the war, in which Jerusalem was put under siege, and the second part, in which the Temple was destroyed. In the first part, Vespasian led the Roman army. There was a brief respite in the fighting, from the time when Nero was assassinated until Vespasian became emperor. The final stage of the war, in which Jerusalem and the Temple, as well as the rest of the fortresses held by the Jews, were destroyed, was carried out with Titus leading the Roman army.

Even disregarding the forced nature of this explanation, as it is difficult to classify these as two separate wars, this also

does not account for the variant version of this statement found in *Seder Olam Rabba*. Therefore, it is preferable to accept the variant text found there and in other early sources, which reads: The war of Quietus. Lusius Quietus was the general of the emperor Trajan, who slaughtered many Jews in Syria and Babylonia during his battles with the Persians, in the year 114 CE. He was also later named the ruler over Eretz Yisrael. The decrees enacted by the Sages from the time of Trajan are mentioned elsewhere in the Talmud, and, according to this modified version of the text, those decrees are ascribed in this passage to his general Quietus.

The last war – פּוּלְמוּס הָאַחֲרוֹן: This refers to the bar Kokheva rebellion, which was the final large-scale battle in the time of the Mishna. This hard-fought war, which ended in the destruction of the city of Beitar and the killing of bar Kokheva in the year 135 CE, was accompanied by mass killings of the Jewish people. Estimates of the total killed run up to one million Jews. Following this, the land of Judah was desolate for many years.

PERSONALITIES

Ben Zoma – בֶּן זוּמָא: This is Shimon ben Zoma, one of the great Sages who lived in the generation of the destruction of the Second Temple. He was a student of Rabbi Yehoshua, and a disciple-colleague of Rabbi Akiva. Shimon ben Zoma was considered to be one of the great Torah scholars of his generation, but, perhaps due to his young age, he was never officially ordained. He therefore was not given the title of Rabbi and was called after his father's name. Many statements, in both *halakha* and *aggada*, have been said in his name. He was particularly well known for his exegeses of biblical verses, which is why it was said that when ben Zoma died, the exegetists ceased.

Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa – רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶּן דוּסָא: Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa was a *tanna* who lived toward the end of the Second Temple period. He was a student of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakai. Even as a student he was known for his righteousness and for being a miracle worker. Very few of his statements have

been recorded, and those that have are primarily in the realm of *aggada*. He is known mainly through stories about his piety and his cleaving to God, his righteousness and his willingness to make do with a minimum of earthly possessions. Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa served as a symbol of the righteous man in all of his behaviors.

Rabbi Yosei the Small [*Katonta*] – רַבִּי יוֹסֵי קַטְנָתָא: From this mishna it seems that the appellation *Katonta* was not his name, but rather a nickname he was given. From the Jerusalem Talmud (*Bava Kamma* 3:7) it can be seen that he had several names and nicknames. He was called, on occasion, Yosei the Babylonian, or Isi ben Yehuda, or Isi ben Akiva (see *Pesahim* 113b). He lived in the city Huzal in Babylonia, and moved from there to Eretz Yisrael to study under the students of Rabbi Akiva. His statements are mentioned throughout the Talmud and the halakhic midrash.

From the time when Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai died, the glory of wisdom ceased;^N from the time when Rabban Gamliel the Elder died,^N the honor of the Torah ceased, and purity and asceticism died. From the time when Rabbi Yishmael ben Pavi^P died, the glory of the priesthood ceased; from the time when Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi died, humility and fear of sin ceased.

GEMARA The Sages taught: Rabbi Pinehas ben Ya'ir says: From the time when the Second Temple was destroyed, the *haverim* and free men of noble lineage were ashamed,^N and their heads were covered in shame, and men of action dwindled, and violent and smooth-talking men gained the upper hand, and none seek, and none ask, and none inquire of the fear of Heaven.

Upon whom is there for us to rely? Only upon our Father in Heaven.

Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: From the day the Second Temple was destroyed, the generations have deteriorated: Scholars have begun to become like scribes^B that teach children, and scribes have become like beadles,^B and beadles have become like ignoramuses, and ignoramuses

מִשְׁמַת רַבָּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּי – בָּטַל זֵיו הַחִכְמָה. מִשְׁמַת רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הַזֶּקֶן – בָּטַל כְּבוֹד הַתּוֹרָה, וּמַתָּה טְהוֹרָה וּפְרִישׁוּת. מִשְׁמַת רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן פָּאבִי – בָּטַל זֵיו הַכְּהוּנָה. מִשְׁמַת רַבִּי – בָּטַל עֲנָוָה וְיִרְאַת חַטָּא.

גמ' תנו רבנן, רבי פנחס בן יאיר אומר: משחרב בית המקדש – בושו חברים ובני חורין, ורחפו ראשם. ונדלדלו אנשי מעשה, וגברו בעלי זרוע ובעלי לשון, ואין דורש ואין מבקש ואין שואל.

על מי לנו להשען? על אבינו שבשמים.

רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר: מיום שחרב בית המקדש שרו חכימיא למהוי בספריא, וספריא כחוניא, וחוניא כעמא דארעא, ועמא דארעא

NOTES

The glory of wisdom ceased – **בָּטַל זֵיו הַחִכְמָה**: Rashi comments that he does not know to what the glory of wisdom is referring. The *Penei Moshe* and the *Be'er Sheva* explain that this is referring to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai's expertise in all areas of the Torah, major and minor alike. The *Maharsha* states that it is referring to his knowledge of all wisdom, whether Torah knowledge or other types of wisdom.

From the time when Rabban Gamliel the Elder died, etc. – **מִשְׁמַת רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הַזֶּקֶן וכו'**: The honor of the Torah stated here has a different meaning from that mentioned in reference to Rabbi Akiva. Some explain that until Rabban Gamliel died, students

would stand while being taught Torah by their teacher. This honors the Torah, as it replicates the giving of the Torah at Sinai, where the entire nation stood. The *Arukh* explains that after Rabban Gamliel died, people stopped according the proper respect that is due to the Torah.

The *haverim* and free men were ashamed – **בושו חברים** ו**בני חורין**: Rashi explains that the term free men is referring to those of honored lineage. When the Temple was destroyed, they lost their high status, as lineage was relevant mostly for the priestly service in the Temple and various governmental appointments.

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Yishmael ben Pavi – **רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן פָּאבִי**: Rabbi Yishmael ben Pavi, or ben Piavi, or ben Piakhi, was appointed to the position of High Priest by King Agrippa shortly before the destruction of the Second Temple. Although the Sages were not pleased with his family in general, as they would use their power to oppress others (see *Pesahim* 57a), they praise his good deeds.

It seems that his family was very wealthy. There are those who claim that he is the High Priest known as: The son of Kimhit, after his pious mother. If that is so, then he had brothers who also served in the position of High Priest. Rabbi Yishmael ben Pavi served as the High Priest for ten years and is listed among the few High Priests who performed the ritual of the red heifer.

BACKGROUND

Scribes – **ספריא**: The term scribes in this instance refers to those who taught Torah to children. In smaller towns, they would also serve as local scribes who would write documents for members of the community. Although they had to possess a modicum of Torah knowledge, they were not considered to be scholars. It was rare to find a true Torah scholar who was also a scribe.

Beadles – **חוניא**: These were the people who took care of the synagogues, and who also, on occasion, would assist those who taught Torah to the children. Due to their involvement in caring for the synagogue, they had to possess more Torah knowledge than an ignoramus, but they were certainly not numbered among the scholars.

NOTES

And none ask, etc. – ואין שואל וכו': The *Tosefot Yom Tov* explains that none ask and none seek the other's welfare, as people stopped caring about each other. The *Tiferet Yisrael* analyzes the differences between asking, seeking, and inquiring. He explains that the mishna is discussing the people's lack of desire for the redemption.

In the approach of the Messiah – בעקבות משיחא: This passage, and the far lengthier one in the last chapter of tractate *Sanhedrin*, describes the deterioration of the world in the era just before the arrival of the Messiah, how the Jewish people will be held in the lowest esteem, and that specifically this set of circumstances will be the springboard for the redemption.

The vine shall bring forth its fruit, etc. – הגפן תתן פריה: Rashi and many other commentaries explain that despite the fact that the vine will produce its fruit and there will be plenty of wine, it will nevertheless be expensive, as the high prevalence of drunkards will increase demand to a higher level than the supply. Some say that the excessive drinking of wine will be as a result of people attempting to drown their sorrows in wine. A variant version of the text reads: High costs will be corrupted, meaning that the prices will not be dependent on supply and demand but will be manipulated by those in the marketplace. The mishna illustrates this with the example that wine will be plentiful but will still be expensive.

And the Gavlan will be desolate, etc. – והגבלן ישום: The Gavlan is a border region in Eretz Yisrael, identified by some as the Golan Heights in modern-day Israel, or the area of Gevel in the northwestern part of the country (Ya'avetz). This explains the connection to the subsequent teaching about the men of the border, as the border region of Eretz Yisrael will be plundered and its members will go around seeking support and charity throughout the land. The *Yad Rama* cites a version of the text that reads: The parchment will be destroyed and the men of the parchment will travel from city to city. He explains that the parchment of the Torah scroll will no longer be valued, and the men of the parchment, scribes, will have to go around seeking charity, as their services will no longer be needed.

And the wisdom of scribes will putrefy [*tissarah*] – והכמות סופרים תפוח: This means that wisdom will no longer retain its lofty status, and its value will increasingly depreciate, like something that has spoiled. Some commentaries connect the word *tissarah* to "the overhanging [*serah*] part" (Exodus 26:12), meaning that wisdom will be considered superfluous. Yet others explain homiletically that the scholars will patter on to no purpose, like something unnecessary, that extends and hangs over (see *Etz Yosef*).

The face of the generation will be like the face of a dog – פני הדור כפני הכלב: Rashi in tractate *Sanhedrin* explains that this means people will have no shame in front of each other. Maharsha on tractate *Sanhedrin* explains that people will falsely present themselves as loving each other. The *Etz Yosef* explains that this passage refers to either the brazen face of the leaders or to the miserly countenances of the wealthy. According to Rabbi Elhanan Wasserman, the leaders of the generation will be compared to dogs, who run before their masters as though they were the ones leading, when in truth the master is actually in charge. Similarly, the leaders of the people will act as if they were making the decisions, whereas they are really following the will of the masses.

אזלא ודלדלה, ואין שואל ואין מבקש. על מי יש להשען? על אבינו שבשמים.

בעקבות משיחא – חוצפא יסגא, ויוקר יאמיר, הגפן תתן פריה והיין ביוקר, ומלכות תהפך למינות, ואין תוכחת, בית וועד יהיה לזנות, והגליל יחרב, והגבלן ישום, ואנשי הגבול יסובבו מעיר לעיר ולא יחוננו.

וחכמות סופרים תפוח, ויראי חטא ימאסו, והאמת תהא נעדרת. נערים פני זקנים ילבינו, זקנים יעמדו מפני קטנים, בן מניחול אב, בת קמה באמה, בלה בחמותה. אויבי איש אנשי ביתו. פני הדור כפני הכלב, הבן אינו מתבייש מאביו. ועל מה יש לנו להשען? על אבינו שבשמים.

אמר רב: לא שנו אלא של מלח וגפרית, אבל של הדם ושל וורד – מותר. ושמואל אומר: אף של הדם ושל וורד – אסור; של קנים ושל חילת – מותר. ולוי אמר: אף של קנים ושל חילת – אסור. וכן תני לוי במתניתיה: אף של קנים ושל חילת – אסור.

"ועל האירוס." מאי אירוס? אמר רבי אלעזר: טבלא דחד פומא. רבה בר רב הונא עבד ליה לבריה טנבורא. אתא אבוי תבריה. אמר ליה: מיחלף בטבלא דחד פומא. זיל עביד ליה אפומא דחצבא או אפומא דקפיזא.

are increasingly diminished, and none ask^N and none seek. Upon whom is there to rely? Only upon our Father in Heaven.

He also said: In the times of the approach of the Messiah,^N impudence will increase and high costs will pile up. Although the vine shall bring forth its fruit,^N wine will nevertheless be expensive. And the monarchy shall turn to heresy,^B and there will be no one to give reproof about this. The meeting place of the Sages will become a place of promiscuity, and the Galilee shall be destroyed, and the Gavlan will be desolate,^N and the men of the border shall go round from city to city to seek charity, but they will find no mercy.

And the wisdom of scribes will putrefy,^N and people who fear sin will be held in disgust, and the truth will be absent. The youth will shame the face of elders, elders will stand before minors. Normal family relations will be ruined: A son will disgrace a father; a daughter will rise up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be the members of his household. The face of the generation will be like the face of a dog,^N a son will no longer be ashamed before his father. And upon what is there for us to rely? Only upon our Father in heaven.

S Rav says concerning the decree banning the wearing of crowns that they taught this *halakha* only with regard to crowns of salt and sulfur, but those of myrtle and rose are permitted. And Shmuel says that even crowns of myrtle and rose are prohibited, but those made of reeds and bulrush are permitted. And Levi says: Even crowns of reeds and bulrush are prohibited. And likewise Levi teaches in his *baraita*: Even those of reeds and bulrush are prohibited.

The mishna taught that the Sages decreed against the wearing of crowns for bridegrooms and upon the drums. The Gemara poses a question: What is this drum [*irus*]?¹ Rabbi Elazar says: A drum with one mouth. The Gemara relates a story involving this instrument: Rabba bar Rav Huna made a tambourine for his son. His father, Rav Huna, came and broke it. He said to him: This instrument will be confused for a drum with one mouth, and people will assume that a drum with one mouth is permitted. Instead, go and make for him a small drum on the mouth of an earthen jug [*hatzava*],^B or on the mouth of a container used for measuring a *kefiza*,^L a small measurement, which did not pose the concern of being confused with a drum with one mouth.

BACKGROUND

The monarchy shall turn to heresy – מלכות תהפך למינות: This prediction of Rabbi Eliezer the Great, who lived in the generation of the destruction of the Second Temple and immediately after, was that the pagan Roman Empire would accept as their official religion the beliefs of those groups that had separated themselves from Judaism, among them the Christians. This was fulfilled nearly two hundred years later, in the time of the emperor Constantine.

Earthen jug [*hatzava*] – חצבא: The *hatzava* is a very large pottery vessel that had many uses. It was sometimes used as a bucket to draw water and sometimes for the storage of liquids or for soaking objects in liquid.

LANGUAGE

Drum [*irus*] – אירוס: Some believe that the origin of this word is based in its being used at the festivities surrounding a betrothal [*eirusin*]. Most commentaries hold the *irus*, *tavla*, and *tanbora* are all different types of the same instrument, a drum with skin on only one side. However, the Meiri writes that the *irus* was a wind instrument with only one opening, and would make a sound that was a cross between a trumpeting and a hum.

Kefiza – קפיזא: The origin of this word is Iranian. In Middle Persian, the form is *kabiz*, which refers to a measurement of volume.

What are crowns of brides – מאי עטרות בלות: The crowns of brides that the Sages prohibited include only those made of precious metals, such as the city of gold (Rambam *Sefer Zemanim*, *Hilkhot Ta'anit* 5:15; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 560:4).

LANGUAGE

Fine wool [*meilat*] – מילת: From the Greek *μηλωτή*, *mēlotē*, meaning wool. There are those who claim that this word is associated with the island of Malta, where high-quality wool was produced.

Papyrus [*papirit*] – פפירית: From the Greek *πάπυρος*, *papyrus*, papyrus sedge plant, *Cyperus papyrus* L., which was used in the manufacturing of paper. In the context of the Gemara, it means a frame-like structure made of reeds that was used for the hanging of decorative or other objects.

They further taught that in the war of Titus the Sages decreed upon the crowns of brides. The Gemara clarifies: **What are the crowns of brides?**^h Rabba bar bar Hana says that Rabbi Yoḥanan says: **A city of gold,**^b a gold crown engraved with the design of a city, worn by women as an ornament. **This is also taught in a baraita: Which are the crowns of brides that were forbidden?** The crown of a bride is a city of gold. However, one may make it as a cap of fine wool [*meilat*].^l

The Sage taught: The Sages even decreed upon the canopy of grooms. The Gemara asks: **What is the type of canopy of grooms that was prohibited, as they certainly did not ban the marriage canopy.** The Gemara answers: It means **the golden crimson [zehorit]**^b clothes, dyed red and crimson and decorated with gold, which they would hang on a marriage canopy. **This is also taught in a baraita: These are the canopy of grooms the Sages banned: The golden crimson clothes. But he may make a papyrus [papirit]**^l construction and hang upon it whatever he wants, even ornaments made of gold.

S The mishna taught that during the war of Titus the Sages decreed that a person should not teach his son Greek. The Sages taught that this decree came about as a result of the following incident: **When the kings of the Hasmonean monarchy besieged**^b each other in their civil war, Hyrcanus was outside of Jerusalem, besieging it, and Aristoblus was inside. **On each and every day they would lower dinars in a box from inside the city, and those on the outside would send up animals for them to bring the daily offerings in the Temple.**

“בפולמוס של טיטוס גזרו על עטרות בלות” וכו'. מאי עטרות בלות? אמר רבא בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן: עיר של זהב. תנא נמי הכי: איזהו עטרות בלות? עיר של זהב, אבל עושה אותה כיפה של מילת.

תנא: אף על חופת חתנים גזרו. מאי חופת חתנים? זהורית המוזהבות. תנא נמי הכי: אלו הן חופת חתנים: זהורית המוזהבות, אבל עושה פפירית ותולה בה כל מה שירצה.

“ושלא ילמד את בנו יוונית”. תנו רבנן: כשצרו מלכי בית חשמונאי זה על זה, היה הורקנוס מבחוץ ואריסטובלוס מבפנים. בכל יום ויום היו משלשלין דינרים בקופה ומעלין להן תמידים.

BACKGROUND

City of gold – עיר של זהב: This was a piece of jewelry made of gold in the shape of a crown, with the image of the walls of a city engraved upon it. It was also known as a mural crown. Only very wealthy women wore such pieces. There was also a Jerusalem of Gold, fashioned in the same way.

Golden crimson [*zehorit*] – זהורית המוזהבות: *Zehorit* is a woven material, made of wool or silk, and dyed crimson. Crimson is produced from the eggs of *Kermes vermilio*, a scale insect found in trees. Crimson-dyed material was used in various items in the Temple, and for decorative purposes outside of the Temple. Golden crimson is a crimson-dyed, woven material decorated with golden strands.

When the kings of the Hasmonean monarchy besieged – כשצרו מלכי בית חשמונאי: Before her death, Queen Shelomtzion appointed her son Hyrcanus the Second to serve as king. His brother, Aristoblus the Second, initiated a rebellion and took control of much of the country. Later, with the assistance and encouragement of Antipater, the father of Herod, Hyrcanus fielded an army that defeated the troops of Aristoblus and forced them to take refuge within the walls of Jerusalem. During the course of this siege, those inside Jerusalem were in need of sheep to continue the sacrificial rites in the Temple, and they paid large sums of money to those on the outside to supply them.

This story is also found in the works of Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* XIV:2), where he records that those in the city needed sheep for the Paschal offering, and promised the huge sum of one thousand drachma for each sheep. Josephus writes that there was an open, divine punishment for the treachery of the men of Hyrcanus in the form of a savage storm that tore through the land, damaging most of the crops. Perhaps this is what is alluded to in the expression: Eretz Yisrael shuddered, etc.



Greek coin depicting a woman wearing a mural crown

Greek wisdom – חֵכְמַת יוּנַיִת: Based on several sources, it appears that Greek wisdom refers primarily to the knowledge of Greek culture, poetry, and literature. Homer’s works were to be found in Jewish homes already in the time of the Mishna. The lingua franca of the region, even among the gentiles, was Hellenistic Greek, and not many people spoke classical Greek or were familiar with Greek culture. This enabled those possessing this knowledge to hint things to each other in a way that would not be understood by most of the bystanders.

Gaggot Tzerifim – גַּגּוֹת צְרִיפִים: An alternate version of the text reads: Gannot Tzerifim. Either way, this place is generally identified with modern-day Tzerifin, a name preserved in Arabic as صرفند العمار, *sharafand al-amār*, which is a village east of Rishon LeZion, along the road from Ramla to Jaffa.

Ein Sokher – עֵין סוֹכֵר: The accepted identification of Ein Sokher is the valley called in Arabic سهيل عسكر, *sahl’askar*. It is located southwest of Mount Ebal, and the main road from Shechem to Jerusalem runs through it. The name is apparently derived from a deep well [*ein*] located in a neighboring village.

HALAKHA

Cursed is the person who raises pigs – אָרוּר אֲדָם שֶׁיַּגְדֵּל חֲזִירִים: It is prohibited to raise pigs anywhere, even if one does so only in order to sell their skin and the like. It is unnecessary to state that it is prohibited to raise them to sell (Rambam *Sefer Nezikin, Hilkhot Nizkei Mamon 5:9; Shulḥan Arukh, Hoshen Mishpat 409:2*).

LANGUAGE

Syriac [Sursi] – סוּרְסִי: This is a modified form of the Greek σῦρος, *suros*, meaning Syrian or of the land of Syria.

Asia Minor [Asya] – עַסְיָא: From the Greek Ἀσία, *Asia*, which is also the appellation for the region known as Asia Minor. Part of Asia Minor was a Roman province known as Asia. It seems that when using this term, the Sages were referring to a specific district, perhaps Cilicia, located in that region.

הִיא שֶׁשָׁם זָקן אֶחָד שֶׁהָיָה מְבִיר בְּחֻכְמַת יוּנַיִת, לָעוֹ לָהֶם בְּחֻכְמַת יוּנַיִת, אֲמַר לָהֶן: כֹּל זְמַן שְׁעוֹסְקִים בְּעַבְדוּדָה, אֵין נִמְסְרִין בְּיַדְכֶם. לְמַחֵר שְׁלֹשָׁיו לָהֶם דִּינָרִים בְּקוּפָה וְהָעִלוּ לָהֶם חֲזוּר. בֵּינן שְׁהָגִיעַ לְחֲצֵי חוֹמָה, נָעַץ צְפָרְנָיו נֹדְעוּעָה אַרְץ יִשְׂרָאֵל אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת פְּרָסָה.

אוֹתָהּ שְׁעָה אֲמַר: אָרוּר אֲדָם שֶׁיַּגְדֵּל חֲזִירִים, וְאָרוּר אֲדָם שֶׁיִּלְמַד לְבַנּוֹ חֻכְמַת יוּנַיִת; וְעַל אוֹתָהּ שָׁנָה שְׁנִינוּ: מֵעֵשֶׂה וְכָא עוֹמֵר מִגַּגּוֹת צְרִיפִים, וְשֵׁתֵי הַלֶּחֶם מִבְּקָעַת עֵין סוֹכֵר.

אֵינִי? וְהָאֲמַר רַבִּי: בְּאַרְץ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשׁוֹן סוּרְסִי לְמָהּ? אֵלָּא אֵי לְשׁוֹן הַקּוֹדֵשׁ אֵי לְשׁוֹן יוּנַיִת! וְאֲמַר רַב יוֹסֵף: בְּבִבְלָל לְשׁוֹן אֲרָמִי לְמָהּ? אֵלָּא אֵי לְשׁוֹן הַקּוֹדֵשׁ אֵי לְשׁוֹן פְּרָסִי!

לְשׁוֹן יוּנַיִת לְחוּד, וְחֻכְמַת יוּנַיִת לְחוּד.

וְחֻכְמַת יוּנַיִת מִי אֶסְיָא? וְהָאֲמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אֲמַר שְׁמוּאֵל מִשּׁוּם רַבִּין שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל, מֵאֵי דְבַתִּיב: “עֵינִי עוֹלְלָה לְנַפְשִׁי מִכּוֹל בְּנוֹת עִירִי” אֵלֶּף יְלָדִים הָיוּ בְּבֵית אָבָא, חֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת לְמִדּוֹ תוֹרָה, וְחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת לְמִדּוֹ חֻכְמַת יוּנַיִת, וְלֹא נִשְׁתַּיֵּיר מֵהֶן אֵלָּא אֵינִי כָאן וְכֵן אַחֵי אָבָא בְּעַסְיָא!

A certain Elder was there, in Jerusalem, who was familiar with Greek wisdom.⁸ He communicated to those on the outside by means of Greek wisdom, using words understood only by those proficient in Greek wisdom. He said to them: As long as they are engaged in the Temple service, they will not be delivered into your hands. Upon hearing this, on the following day, when they lowered dinars in a box, they sent up a pig to them. Once the pig reached halfway up the wall, it inserted its hooves into the wall and Eretz Yisrael shuddered four hundred parasangs.

When the Sages saw this, they said at that time:^N Cursed is the person who raises pigs,^H and cursed is the person who teaches his son Greek wisdom. And with regard to that year of civil war, in which the land was destroyed, we learned (*Menahot 64b*): An incident occurred in which the *omer*, the measure of barley brought as a communal offering on the sixteenth of Nisan, came from Gaggot Tzerifim,^B and the two loaves offered on *Shavuot* came from the valley of Ein Sokher.^B

It is understood from both the mishna and the *baraita* that it is prohibited to learn Greek. The Gemara raises a question: Is that so? But didn’t Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi say: In Eretz Yisrael, why should people speak the tongue of Syriac [*Sursi*],^L the Aramaic commonly spoken in Eretz Yisrael? Rather, they should speak either in the sacred tongue, Hebrew, or in the beautiful tongue of Greek. And Rav Yosef similarly said: In Babylonia, why should they speak in the vernacular tongue of Aramaic? Rather, they should speak either in the sacred tongue, Hebrew, or in the tongue of Persian, used by the authorities.

The Gemara answers that there is a difference: The Greek tongue is discrete and Greek wisdom is discrete,^N and the Sages prohibited the latter but not the former.

The Gemara poses a question: And is Greek wisdom prohibited? But didn’t Rav Yehuda say that Shmuel said in the name of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel: What is the meaning of that which is written: “My eye affected my soul, due to all the daughters of my city” (Ecclesiastes 3:51)? There were a thousand children in my father’s house, the princes’ household. Five hundred of them learned Torah, and the other five hundred learned Greek wisdom, and there only remained of them, after the bar Kokheva revolt, me, here in Eretz Yisrael, and the son of my father’s brother, who lives in Asia Minor [*Asya*].^L The fact that Rabban Gamliel allowed half of his household to study Greek wisdom indicates that it is permitted.

NOTES

That time, etc. – אוֹתָהּ שְׁעָה וְכוּ: The early commentaries note that this *baraita* indicates that the decree against the study of Greek wisdom was instituted during the Hasmonean reign, whereas the mishna states that it occurred during the war of Titus, which occurred more than one hundred years later. The *Tosefot HaRosh* explains that initially, in the Hasmonean times, they did not ban the practice entirely but simply declared that one who teaches Greek wisdom to his children would be cursed. Later, after the war with Titus, they completely prohibited the study of Greek wisdom. However, the Rosh contends that if a practice was cursed by the Sages it would not require an

additional prohibition. He explains that the decree from the time of the Hasmoneans was not observed by most people, and consequently they had to institute the decree a second time.

Greek wisdom is discrete – חֻכְמַת יוּנַיִת לְחוּד: The early commentaries explain that Greek wisdom does not include all forms of wisdom studied by the Greeks, for this would include almost all types of knowledge. Greek wisdom refers to the special way of expressing ideas through hints, or in a language that not all people can understand and use (Responsa of the Rashba; Responsa of the Rivash).

Komi – קומי: From the Greek κόμη, *komē*, which means either hair or the tips of the hair. It is not clear what a haircut in the *komi* style looked like. It may have been a style where the hair all around the head was cut equally, without leaving any hair on the sides of the head.

Avtolos – אַבְטוֹלוֹס: From the Greek εὐτολμος, *eutolmos*, meaning brave of heart.

PERSONALITIES

Avtolos ben Reuven – אַבְטוֹלוֹס בֶּן רֵוֵנוּן: Some identify him as Avtolomus, who was one of the teachers of Rabbi Yosei. It is not known when he lived. It may be that he had a connection with Rabbi Reuven ben Itzteroboli, about whom it is told (*Me'ila* 17a) that he would dress and style his hair like the gentiles in order to spend time in the halls of power, trying to avert decrees against the Jewish people. Avtolos ben Reuven seems to have filled a similar function.

The Gemara answers: The members of the house of Rabban Gamliel are different, as they were close to the monarchy, and therefore had to learn Greek wisdom in order to converse with people of authority. As it is taught in a *baraita* (*Tosefta, Shabbat* 7:1): One who cuts his hair in the *komi*^l style,^h which was the gentile fashion of cutting and wearing the hair, is considered to be acting in the ways of the Amorites, and it is prohibited to act in their way. However, they permitted Avtolos^l ben Reuven^p to cut his hair in the *komi* style, as he is close to the monarchy,^h and similarly they permitted the house of Rabban Gamliel to study Greek wisdom, because they are close to the monarchy.

§ The mishna taught: In the last war the Sages decreed that a bride may not go out in a palanquin inside the city, but the later Sages permitted it. The Gemara explains: What is the reason they permitted this practice? Due to modesty, so that brides should not have to go out into the street and be seen by all.

The mishna taught that from the time when Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai died, wisdom ceased. The Sages taught: From the time when Rabbi Eliezer died, it was as if the Torah scroll had been interred, as he had memorized many secrets of the Torah. From the time when Rabbi Yehoshua died, council and deliberate thought ceased, as he had the sharpest mind in Israel. From the time when Rabbi Akiva died, the powerful arm of Torah, meaning the exposition of all the details of Torah scripture, ceased, and the fountains of wisdom were sealed.

From the time when Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya died, the crowns of wisdom ceased, as “the crown of the wise is their riches” (Proverbs 14:24), and he was both a great Torah scholar and a very wealthy man. From the time when Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa died, the men of wondrous deeds ceased. From the time when Abba Yosei ben Katonta died, the pious men ceased. And why was he called Abba Yosei ben Katonta? Because he was among the diminished [*miktanei*] of the pious people,ⁿ i.e., he lived in an era when the pious had become few.

HALAKHA

Cuts his hair in the *komi* style, etc. – מְסַפֵּר קוּמֵי וכו': One is prohibited to follow gentile ways and customs. A person may not grow the locks of his hair in their fashions, nor shave off the sides and leave the hair in the middle, known in Aramaic as *belorit*, nor shave the hair above the face and leave it to grow long behind him (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda, Hilkhot Avoda Zara* 11:1; *Shulḥan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 178:1).

שֶׁהוּא קְרוֹב לְמַלְכוּת – שֶׁהוּא קְרוֹב לְמַלְכוּת: If one has close ties with the authorities and needs to dress and act like them, those practices that are prohibited for others as practices of the gentiles are permitted for him. The *Beit Yosef* explains that this is because the details of this prohibition are not specified in the Torah, and the Sages were granted the authority to prohibit and permit items not mentioned in the Torah, as the circumstances require (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda, Hilkhot Avoda Zara* 11:3; *Shulḥan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 178:2).

NOTES

מִקְטַנֵּי – מִקְטַנֵּי: Among the diminished [*miktanei*] of the pious people – מִקְטַנֵּי: This expression, as well as the corresponding phrase in the mishna, does not appear to be an expression of praise. Since the mishna and the *baraita* are listing praises of the various rabbis, several alternative explanations have been offered. The Meiri claims that Abba Yosei was the last of the pious ones, whose numbers were gradually dwindling. Conversely, the Rambam

in his Commentary on the Mishna states that he was the root of the pious ones. Just as the root of a plant is relatively small in size and yet carries within it the potential for all of the growth that emerges from it, he too was the root of the pious ones in that he included all of their good traits within his character (see *Tosefot Yom Tov*).

From the time when Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi died the troubles multiplied – מְשֻׁמֵת רַבִּי הוֹכְפֵלוֹ צָרוֹת: In the time of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, not only were the Roman leaders enlightened and relatively moderate, there was even a warm, personal relationship between him and the emperor Antoninus. After Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi died there was a series of emperors who were not as wealthy as previous ones, and they began many speculative wars. Consequently they imposed many taxes on the Jews to help subsidize the wars. The general attitude of the Roman leadership toward the Jewish people also took a sharp turn for the worse, particularly with the rise of Christianity.

NOTES

For there is me – דְּאִיכָא אָנָא: It is surprising to find a Sage praising himself for his good qualities, especially that of humility. The Maharsha states that truth always takes precedence over politeness, and the Sages did not want something inaccurate to be taught. The *Ben Yehoyada* adds that they were concerned that the masses, who viewed the Sages as humble and fearing of sin, would conclude that the *baraita* was wrong. According to the *Sefat Emet*, these Sages were of the opinion that humility and fear of sin had not in fact ceased, and there were many such people still alive. As proof they stated: For there is me, and if even I possess this attribute, it must be possessed by many others who are greater than I.

מְשֻׁמֵת בֶּן עֲזַאי – בְּטָלוּ הַשְּׁקָדִימוֹן. מְשֻׁמֵת בֶּן זֹמָא – בְּטָלוּ הַדְרָשָׁנוֹן. מְשֻׁמֵת רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל – עָלָה גּוֹבְאֵי וְרַבּוֹ צָרוֹת. מְשֻׁמֵת רַבִּי – הוֹכְפֵלוֹ צָרוֹת.

מְשֻׁמֵת רַבִּי – בְּטָלָה עֲנוּה וִירֵאת חֲטָא. אָמַר לֵיהּ רַב יוֹסֵף לְתַנָּא: לָא תִיתֵינִי עֲנוּה, דְּאִיכָא אָנָא. אָמַר לֵיהּ רַב נַחֲמָן לְתַנָּא: לָא תִיתֵינִי יֵרֵאת חֲטָא, דְּאִיכָא אָנָא.

הדרן עלך עגלה ערופה
וסליקא לה מסכת סוטה

From the time when ben Azzai died, the diligent ceased; from the time when ben Zoma died, the exegetists ceased. From the time when Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel died, locusts ascended upon the land and troubles proliferated. From the time when Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi died, the troubles multiplied.⁸

The final line of the mishna states that from the time when Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi died, humility and fear of sin ceased. Rav Yosef said to the *tanna* who reviewed the mishna: Do not teach that humility ceased, for there is still one who is humble, namely me.⁹ Rav Nahman similarly said to the *tanna* who reviewed the mishna: Do not teach that fear of sin ceased, for there is still one who fears sin, namely me.