

שִׁמְשׁוֹת תְּלִמְדֵי חֻכְמָיִם וְשׁוֹנֵה וְלֹא שִׁמְשׁוֹת תְּלִמְדֵי חֻכְמָיִם.

is one who read the Written Torah and learned the Mishna but did not serve Torah scholars^N in order to learn the reasoning behind the *halakhot*. Since he believes himself knowledgeable, he issues halakhic rulings, but due to his lack of understanding he rules erroneously and is therefore considered wicked. His cunning is in his public display of knowledge, which misleads others into considering him a true Torah scholar.

אָתְמָר: קָרָא וְשׁוֹנֵה וְלֹא שִׁמְשׁוֹת תְּלִמְדֵי חֻכְמָיִם – רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר: הָרִי זֶה עִם הָאָרֶץ. רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָנִי אָמַר: הָרִי זֶה בּוֹר. רַבִּי יַנָּאִי אָמַר: הָרִי זֶה פּוֹתֵי.

It was stated: With regard to one who read the Written Torah and learned the Mishna but did not serve Torah scholars, Rabbi Elazar says: This person is an ignoramus. Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said: This person is a boor. Rabbi Yannai says: This person is comparable to a Samaritan, who follows the Written Torah but not the traditions of the Sages.

רַב אֶחָא בַר יַעֲקֹב אָמַר: הָרִי זֶה מְגוּשׁ. אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק: מִסְתַּבְּרָא כּוֹרַב אֶחָא בַר יַעֲקֹב, דְּאָמְרִי אֵינְשֵׁי: רִטְוִין מְגוּשָׁא וְלֹא יָדַע מֵאֵי אָמַר, תְּנִי תְנָא וְלֹא יָדַע מֵאֵי אָמַר.

Rav Aḥa bar Ya'akov says: This person is comparable to a sorcerer [*magosh*],^{NB} who uses his knowledge to mislead people. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: It is reasonable to accept the opinion of Rav Aḥa bar Ya'akov, as people say proverbially: The sorcerer chants^N and does not know what he is saying; so too, the *tanna* teaches the Mishna and does not know what he is saying.

תְּנִי רַבְנָן: אֵיזוֹהוּ עִם הָאָרֶץ? כָּל שְׂאִינוֹ קוֹרְא קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע שְׁחֵרִית וְעֵרְבִית בְּבִרְכוּתָהּ, דְּבַרֵּי רַבִּי מֵאִיר. וְחֻכְמָיִם אָמְרִים: כָּל שְׂאִינוֹ מְנִיחַ תְּפִילִין. בְּן עֲזַאי אָמַר: כָּל שְׂאִין לֹא צִיּוּת בְּבִגְדוֹ. רַבִּי יוֹנָתָן בֶּן יוֹסֵף אָמַר: כָּל שֵׁשׁ לֹא בְנִים וְאִינוֹ מְגַדְּלִין לְלִמּוּד תּוֹרָה. אַחֵרִים אָמְרִים: אֶפְיֵלוֹ קוֹרְא וְשׁוֹנֵה וְלֹא שִׁמְשׁוֹת תְּלִמְדֵי חֻכְמָיִם – זֶהוּ עִם הָאָרֶץ.

S The Sages taught: Who is an ignoramus [*am ha'aretz*]?^{NB} It is anyone who does not recite *Shema*^N in the morning and evening with its blessings; this is the statement of Rabbi Meir. And the Rabbis say: It is anyone who does not don phylacteries. Ben Azzai says: It is anyone who does not have ritual fringes on his garment. Rabbi Yonatan ben Yosef said: It is anyone who has sons and does not raise them to study Torah. *Aherim* say:^N Even if one reads the Written Torah and learns the Mishna but does not serve Torah scholars, he is an ignoramus.

BACKGROUND

Sorcerer [*magosh*] – מְגוּשׁ: The term *magosh* refers to Zoroastrian priests, also known in the Talmud as *habbarim*. The biblical term “*rab-mag*” (Jeremiah 39:3) is apparently derived from the same Persian term. It later became an accepted term for sorcerers in Greek and Latin, as well as other languages.

These sorcerers would perform ritual ceremonies in the ancient Avestan language, an Eastern Iranian language that derives its name from the language of Zoroastrian scripture, the Avesta. The sorcerers did not understand this language, and from this stems the aphorism: The sorcerer chants and does not know what he is saying.

Ignoramus [*am ha'aretz*] – עִם הָאָרֶץ: The term *am ha'aretz*, which literally means: People of the land, appears in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, but there it refers only to gentiles. The term later evolved into a derogatory epithet referring to a Jew who behaves in the manner of a gentile.

The concept of an *am ha'aretz* was not clearly defined, and therefore there were many opinions among the *tanna'im* with regard to who should be characterized as an *am ha'aretz*. They ranged from the opinion that the term refers to one who does not serve Torah scholars and learn from them, to the opinion that the term refers to one with no Torah, no Mishna, and no manners. According to the first opinion, many learned people were included in this category. According to the second opinion, an *am ha'aretz* was the basest of individuals, to whom the most derogatory epithets were generally applied. The common application of the term was to one devoid of spirituality, with no profession or occupation, no education, and no connection to Torah and mitzvot.

In the talmudic era, and even more so in later times, the situation changed in two respects. First, while there remained many who were uneducated, the most extreme form of an *am ha'aretz* disappeared, as even simple Jews upheld Torah and mitzvot to the best of their ability. Secondly, to avoid causing rifts within the nation in exile, the *halakhot* restricting interactions with an *am ha'aretz* were repealed.

Relief of Zoroastrian priest, referred to in the Gemara as a *magosh*

NOTES

לֹא שִׁמְשׁוֹת תְּלִמְדֵי חֻכְמָיִם – Did not serve Torah scholars – Rashi explains that this refers to one who did not study the Gemara, which teaches the proper analysis of the Mishna and the systematic reasoning underlying *halakha*. Others explain that serving Torah scholars literally means one who visits and serves Torah scholars in order to learn from their ways. One who does not do so shows that his Torah study is insincere, and he is therefore considered a conniving, wicked person (*Tosefot HaRash; Meiri*).

הָרִי זֶה מְגוּשׁ – He is comparable to a sorcerer – Each of the opinions presented here voices stronger criticism than the preceding one. An ignoramus is one who has positive traits but is insufficiently educated, whereas a boor is one devoid of anything positive. A Samaritan does not even accept the Torah and therefore separates himself from the Jewish people. The comparison to a sorcerer, who was considered an apostate, is the most derogatory.

רִטְוִין מְגוּשָׁא וְכוּ' – The sorcerer whispers all kinds of incantations without understanding their meaning, yet he relies upon the efficacy of his actions. So too, one who does not understand the depths of the Torah simply repeats statements that he heard, believing that by merely reciting the words he does something important (Rashi).

אֵיזוֹהוּ עִם הָאָרֶץ – Who is an ignoramus [*am ha'aretz*] – *Tosafot* note that the Gemara provides varying definitions of an ignoramus, depending on the context. One definition applies when defining those who are unfit to testify, another with regard to those suspect of not tithing their produce, and yet another with regard to matters of ritual purity. *Tosefot HaRash* writes that the discussion in this *baraita* might be with regard to joining in a *zimmin*, the introductory blessing recited by three or more adults before Grace after Meals.

שְׂאִינוֹ קוֹרְא קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע – Who does not recite *Shema* – The Gemara states elsewhere that if one is incapable of learning more, he can fulfill the obligation to study Torah by at least reciting the *Shema* with intent and understanding in the morning and the evening. Consequently, one who does so is not defined as an ignoramus (*Maharsha; Etz Yosef*).

אַחֵרִים אָמְרִים – *Aherim* say – The term *aherim* literally means others. *Tosefot HaRash* notes that although this term generally refers to Rabbi Meir, here it obviously does not refer to Rabbi Meir, as Rabbi Meir states a different opinion in the *baraita*. *Tosafot* elsewhere suggest that perhaps the term *aherim* is used in cases where Rabbi Meir cited the opinion of his teacher, Elisha ben Avuya, who was referred to as *Aher*.



The *tanna'im* – התנאים: This does not refer to the Sages of the Mishna. In the amoraic period, the term *tanna* sometimes took on another meaning, referring to those who had broad knowledge of tannaic statements and *mishnayot*. Despite this knowledge, they were not considered among the Sages because they were unable to resolve the difficult issues that arose in the texts that they recited. The *tanna* would recite the material in the presence of one of the Sages, who would assess its accuracy and either confirm it or, if need be, correct it.

קרא ולא שנה – הרי זה בור; לא קרא ולא שנה – עליו הכתוב אומר: "וורעתי את בית ישראל ואת בית יהודה ורע אדם ורע בהמה".

"ירא את ה' בני ומלך עם שונים אל תתערב" – אמר רבי יצחק: אלו ששונים הלכות פשיטא! מהו דתימא שונים בחטא, וכדרב הונא, דאמר רב הונא: מין שעבר אדם עבירה ושנה בה הותרה לו, קא משמע לן.

תנא: התנאים מבלי עולם. מבלי עולם סלקא דעתך? אמר רבינא: שמורין הלכה מתוך משנתן. תנא נמי הכי, אמר רבי יהושע: וכי מבלי עולם הן? והלא מיישבי עולם הן, שנאמר: "הליכות עולם לו!" אלא, שמורין הלכה מתוך משנתן.

"אשה פרושה" וכו'. תנו רבנן: בתולה צלינית, ואלמנה שובבית, וקטן שלא כלו לו חדשיו – הרי אלו מבלי עולם.

איני? והאמר רבי יוחנן: למדנו יראת חטא מבתולה, וקיבול שכר מאלמנה. יראת חטא מבתולה, דרבי יוחנן שמעה לה היא בתולה דנפלה אפה, וקאמרה: רבונן של עולם, בראת גן עדן ובראת גיהנם, בראת צדיקים ובראת רשעים. יהי רצון מלפניך שלא יבטלו בי בני אדם.

If one read the Written Torah but did not learn the Mishna, he is a boor. With regard to one who did not read and did not learn at all, the verse states: "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, and I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast" (Jeremiah 31:26). One who has not studied at all is comparable to a beast.

The verse states: "My son, fear the Lord and the king; and meddle not with those who are repeating" (Proverbs 24:21). Rabbi Yitzhak says: These are individuals who repeatedly learn the *halakhot* but do not know the reasons behind them. The Gemara asks: Isn't that obvious? How else could the verse be understood? The Gemara answers: He states this lest you say that the verse is referring to individuals who repeatedly commit sins, and this is in accordance with the words of Rav Huna, as Rav Huna says: Once a person committed a transgression and repeated it, in his eyes it became permitted for him. Since the verse could be interpreted in this manner, Rabbi Yitzhak teaches us that the verse is referring to those who learn without understanding.

It was taught in a *baraita*: The *tanna'im*,^b who recite the tannaic sources by rote, are individuals who erode the world. The Gemara is puzzled by this statement: Could it enter your mind that they are individuals who erode the world? Ravina says: This statement is referring to those who issue halakhic rulings based on their knowledge of *mishnayot*. This is also taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yehoshua said: Are they individuals who erode the world? Aren't they settling the world, as it is stated: "His ways [*halikhot*] are eternal" (Habakkuk 3:6)? The Sages read the term *halikhot* as *halakhot*, inferring that one who learns *halakhot* attains eternal life. Rather, this is referring to those who issue halakhic rulings based on their knowledge of *mishnayot*.

§ The mishna states that an abstinent woman is among those who erode the world. The Sages taught: A maiden who prays constantly,ⁿ and a neighborly [*shovavit*] widowⁿ who constantly visits her neighbors, and a child whose months of gestation were not completed, all these are people who erode the world.

The Gemara asks: Is that so? But didn't Rabbi Yohanan say: We learned the meaning of fear of sin from a maiden,ⁿ and the significance of receiving divine reward from a widow. The meaning of fear of sin from a maiden, as Rabbi Yohanan heard a certain maiden who fell on her face in prayer, and she was saying: Master of the Universe, You created the Garden of Eden and You created Gehenna, You created the righteous and You created the wicked. May it be Your will that men shall not stumble because of me and consequently go to Gehenna.

NOTES

A maiden who prays constantly – בתולה צלינית: The *Arukh* explains that this refers to a woman who spends all day in prayer while ignoring her other obligations. According to a variation of the text found in the Jerusalem Talmud, the phrase means: A maiden who fasts constantly and loses her virginity. Some commentaries explain that literally, due to her self-mortifying behavior, her hymen is eroded. *Tosafot* suggest that this refers to a woman who fasts outwardly in order to appear righteous and hide her licentiousness.

A neighborly [*shovavit*] widow – אלמנה שובבית: Various interpretations have been offered for this term. Rashi explains that it is derived from the Aramaic *shivava*, which means neighbor, referring to a widow who often visits her neighbors. The Meiri explains that Rashi is referring to one who attempts to appear God-fearing and visits her neighbors in order to show off her piety. Some early commentaries render the term as *sovavit*, which is derived from the Hebrew root *samekh, beit, beit*, meaning to circuit, to go around, and refers to a widow who constantly frequents the markets and alleys in an immodest manner (*Arukh*).

This would also appear to be the understanding of the Jerusalem Talmud, in which it is explained that her behavior causes her name to become tarnished, as she is accused of immoral behavior due to the length of time she spends in the houses of others.

Others explain that the term *shovavit* means penitent, and refers to a widow who publicly acts as one who is repenting. She claims that she desires only to serve God and does not intend to remarry; however, she is unable to maintain this way of life and in the end falls into sin (Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon; *Arukh*).

The meaning of fear of sin from a maiden, etc. – יראת חטא וכי: It was not merely the maiden's fear of sin or the widow's efforts to receive reward that impressed Rabbi Yohanan; rather, it was the unique manner in which they expressed these traits. The maiden's fear of sin caused her to ensure not only that she did not sin herself, but also that she would not cause others to sin. Similarly, the widow concerned herself with finding new ways to increase the value of the mitzvot she performed and their reward.

The significance of receiving divine reward can be learned from a widow, as there was a certain widow in whose neighborhood there was a synagogue, and despite this every day she went and prayed in the study hall of Rabbi Yoḥanan. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to her: My daughter, is there not a synagogue in your neighborhood? She said to him: My teacher, don't I attain a reward for all the steps I take while walking to pray in the distant study hall?

The Gemara answers: When it is stated in the *baraita* that a maiden who prays constantly is one who erodes the world, it is referring, for example, to Yoḥani bat Retivi, who constantly prayed and pretended to be saintly but actually engaged in sorcery.

The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of a child whose months of gestation were not completed?^N Here, in Babylonia, they interpreted this as alluding to an imperfect, incomplete Torah scholar who scorns his teachers.^N

Rabbi Abba says: This is a student who has not yet attained the ability to issue halakhic rulings, and yet he issues rulings and is therefore compared to a prematurely born child. This is as Rabbi Abbahu says that Rav Huna says that Rav says: What is the meaning of that which is written: “For she has cast down many wounded; and a mighty host are all her slain” (Proverbs 7:26)? “For she has cast down [*hippila*] many wounded”;^N this is referring to a Torah scholar who has not yet attained the ability to issue rulings, and yet he issues rulings.^H “And a mighty host [*ve'atzumim*] are all her slain”;^N this is referring to a Torah scholar who has attained the ability to issue rulings, but does not issue rulings^{NH} and prevents the masses from learning Torah properly.

NOTES

A child whose months of gestation were not completed – קטן שלא בלו לו חדשיו: It is explained in the Jerusalem Talmud that this refers to an extremely young but successful Torah scholar, who uses his knowledge to embarrass his elders. An alternative opinion, also found in the Jerusalem Talmud, explains that this refers literally to a child, who is only nine years old but appears much older. If he involves himself in forbidden sexual intercourse, the woman is punished, while he is exempt from punishment.

Who scorns his teachers – המבעט בברותיו: Rashi explains that according to this understanding, the expression: A child whose months were not completed, refers to the fact that his actions cause his life to be shortened. Others explain that this refers to a student who is so convinced of his greatness that he feels he should already be recognized as the leader of his generation, and therefore he prays that his teachers die so that he can take their place. Consequently, he is punished measure for measure by having his own life shortened (*lyyun Ya'akov*).

Who has not yet attained the ability to issue rulings and yet he issues rulings – שלא הגיע להוראה ומורה: A student who has not yet attained the ability to issue halakhic rulings, and yet he issues rulings, is a fool and a wicked and haughty person. It is stated with regard to these individuals: “For she has cast down many wounded” (Proverbs 7:26).

The *Kesef Mishneh* discusses why the Rambam does not mention the distinction stated later in the Gemara (22b) between one who has reached the age of forty and one who has not yet reached that age (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda, Hilkhhot Talmud Torah* 5:4; *Shulḥan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 242:13).

כי רבים – For she has cast down [*hippila*] many wounded – חללים הפילה: The term *hippila* is derived from the same root as the word *nefel*, which means a stillborn child. This alludes to the aforementioned comparison of a prematurely born child to a student who issues rulings while his abilities are still premature (Rashi). The term “many wounded” referred to in the verse alludes to the many people who stumble in matters of *halakha* due to his incorrect rulings.

ועצומים כל – And a mighty host [*ve'atzumim*] are all her slain – הרוגיה: The term *ve'atzumim* is derived from the root *ayin, tzadi, mem*, which also denotes shutting, closing. This alludes to one who is able to issue rulings but keeps his mouth closed.

Who has attained the ability to issue rulings but does not issue rulings – שהגיע להוראה ואינו מורה: The Rambam explains that the severity of this statement is not only due to the fact that such a person prevents others from learning Torah, but also because if he does not issue rulings, others issue rulings even though they are not capable of doing so, and their rulings are incorrect.

HALAKHA

Who has attained the ability to issue rulings but does not issue rulings – שהגיע להוראה ואינו מורה: A scholar who has reached the level where he is capable of rendering halakhic decisions but does not do so withholds Torah from the people and places stumbling blocks in front of others, and the verse (Proverbs 7:26) states with regard to him: “And a mighty host are all her slain” (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda, Hilkhhot Talmud Torah* 5:4; *Shulḥan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 242:14).

PERSONALITIES

Rabba – רבא: Rav Abba bar Nahmani, commonly referred to as Rabba throughout the Babylonian Talmud, was a third-generation Babylonian *amora*. He was a disciple of Rav Huna, who was a disciple of Rav, and his approach to *halakha* was consistent with Rav's teachings. Rabba was considered the sharpest among his peers; he was described as one who uproots mountains, in contrast to his colleague, Rav Yosef, whose was referred to as Sinai, due to his broad knowledge (*Berakhot* 64a). In virtually every dispute between them, the *halakha* is ruled in accordance with the opinion of Rabba. Rabba had many disciples, and virtually all of the Sages of the following generation studied with him. His personal life was tragic; his children apparently died during his lifetime. He was poverty stricken throughout his life, barely subsisting on agricultural work. When his nephew Abaye was orphaned at a young age, Rabba took him into his home and raised him.

ועד כמה? עד ארבעין שנים. איני? והא רבה ארזין בשוין.

”ומכות פרושין” וכו'. תנו רבנן – שבעה פרושין הן: פרוש שיכמי, פרוש נקפי, פרוש קיזאי, פרוש מדוכיא, פרוש “מה חובתי ואעשנה”, פרוש מאהבה, פרוש מיראה.

פרוש שיכמי – זה העושה מעשה שכם. פרוש נקפי – זה המנקי את רגליו. פרוש קיזאי – אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק: זה המקיז דם לכתלים. פרוש מדוכיא – אמר רבה בר שילא: דמשפע בי מדוכיא.

And until when is it considered too premature for a scholar to issue halakhic rulings? It is until forty years.^N The Gemara asks: Is that so? But didn't Rabba^a issue rulings, even though he lived for only forty years? The Gemara answers: It is permitted for a scholar who has not studied for so long to issue rulings when his knowledge reaches the level of the foremost scholar in his city and they are equals.

It states in the mishna: And those who injure themselves out of false abstinence [*perushin*] are people who erode the world. The Sages taught: There are seven pseudo-righteous people^N who erode the world: The righteous of Shechem, the self-flagellating righteous, the bloodletting righteous, the pestle-like righteous, the righteous who say: Tell me what my obligation is and I will perform it, those who are righteous due to love, and those who are righteous due to fear.

The Gemara explains: The righteous of Shechem [*shikhmi*];^N this is one who performs actions comparable to the action of the people of Shechem, who agreed to circumcise themselves for personal gain (see Genesis, chapter 34); so too, he behaves righteously only in order to be honored. The self-flagellating righteous;^N this is one who injures his feet, as he walks slowly, dragging his feet on the ground in an attempt to appear humble, and injures his feet in the process. The bloodletting righteous;^N Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak says that this is one who lets blood by banging his head against the walls because he walks with his eyes shut, ostensibly out of modesty. The pestle-like righteous; Rabba bar Sheila says that this is one who walks bent over like the pestle of a mortar.^N

NOTES

Until forty years – עד ארבעין שנים: *Tosafot* explain that this means forty years from the time one commenced learning, whereas the Maharsha writes that this means until one reaches the age of forty, as the mishna states: One must reach the age of forty in order to attain understanding (*Avot* 4:21). The *Kesef Mishne* suggests a different interpretation: The Gemara's question refers to a scholar who has already attained the ability to issue rulings, and discusses the question of how long he may refrain from issuing rulings without incurring the aforementioned criticism.

There are seven pseudo-righteous people – שבעה פרושין הן: According to some versions of the text, the *baraita* explicitly states that all those listed here are insincere individuals who erode the world. However, in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Berakhot* 9:5) it is explained that the last two are sincerely righteous, citing Abraham as an example of the righteous due to love, and Job as an example of the righteous due to fear.

The righteous of Shechem [*shikhmi*] – פרוש שיכמי: Most commentaries explain that this refers to one who acts in the manner of the people of Shechem, who circumcised themselves not for the sake of Heaven but rather for their own benefit (see Meiri). The commentaries ask how this individual differs from an individual who performs the mitzvot not for their own sake, who is referred to below in a positive context. The Maharsha, apparently understanding that the Gemara is referring to Shechem, the son of the leader of the city of that name, answers that since Shechem had already transgressed, he evidently circumcised himself only in order to appear repentant, and therefore his actions were disgraceful. Alternatively, *Ben Yehoyada* explains that performing one's obligations is worthy behavior, even if one does not do so for the sake of Heaven. However, it is disgraceful to adopt pious behavior beyond one's obligations only in order to appear righteous, in the manner of Shechem,

who was not obligated to circumcise himself. In the Jerusalem Talmud this phrase is interpreted differently, and it is explained that the term *shikhmi* is derived from the word *shekhem*, which means shoulder. This refers to one who overtly carries on his shoulders items required to perform a mitzva, intending to advertise the fact that he is on his way to perform a mitzva.

The self-flagellating [*nikfi*] righteous – פרוש נקפי: Some explain that this refers to one who claims that his feet are bruised because he walks great distances in order to perform mitzvot (Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon). Others explain that this is one who walks slowly, his eyes upturned to heaven, attempting to appear God-fearing (Meiri). In the Jerusalem Talmud this phrase is interpreted differently, and it is explained that the term *nikfi* is derived from the term *hakafa*, which means payment on credit. This refers to one who demands to receive credit, claiming that he requires the money in order to perform mitzvot.

The bloodletting [*kiza'i*] righteous – פרוש קיזאי: The Ran explains that this refers to one who walks close to the walls and knocks into them, as he attempts to avoid contact with other people, feeling that everyone is impure in comparison to him. In the Jerusalem Talmud this phrase is interpreted differently, and it is explained that the term *kiza'i* means one who cancels out. This refers to one who performs a mitzva for each sin he performs, believing that he can cancel out his sins in this manner.

Who walks bent over like the pestle of a mortar – דמשפע בי מדוכיא: According to one interpretation, this refers to an individual who bends over excessively, seemingly due to his fear of sin (Ran). Others explain that it refers to one who covers himself with clothes in order to avoid becoming impure through contact with others. Alternatively, this refers to one who cloaks himself with a large garment that covers him like an upturned mortar, in a demonstration of arrogance (*Arukh*).

לְעוֹלָם יַעֲסוֹק אָדָם וְכוּ' – A person should always engage, etc. Ideally, one should engage in Torah study and in performance of the mitzvot out of love for and fear of God. Nevertheless, one should always engage in Torah study and in the performance of mitzvot, even if one does not do so for their own sake, as through performing them not for their own sake one comes to perform them for their own sake (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda*, *Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 3:5; and *Hilkhot Teshuva* 10:5; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Yoreh De'a* 246:20).

BACKGROUND

אָמַר לָהּ יְנָאִי מַלְכָּא לְדִבְתִּיָּהּ – King Yannai said to his wife – Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* XIII) gives an account of the final will of King Yannai to his wife, which primarily involved his counsel to her to accept the authority of the Pharisees in every matter, as she did in fact do during the remaining years of her rule. According to the Gemara here, he apparently also advised her that she need not fear the Pharisees, even though they were his bitter enemies during most of his reign. Rather, she should fear the hypocrites who use the crown of Torah to further their personal objectives.

The Pharisees [*perushin*] – הַפְּרוּשִׁין: The name Pharisees is usually understood as referring to the rabbinic Sages, particularly during the late Second Temple period. Nevertheless, the Sages rarely referred to themselves by this term, and it was used more often by their opponents. Although some suggest that the term means: Those who interpret or expound, i.e., those who expound the Written Torah, many explain that the term means separatists. The reference to the Sages as separatists who reject community norms could be either a positive or a negative appellation, depending on one's perspective on general society at the time. The term *perushin* is also used by the mishna and Gemara earlier in reference to those who injure themselves as a sign of false abstinence and the pseudo-righteous. The choice of this term may be an example of self-criticism on the part of the Sages with regard to the activities of some members of their community.

With regard to the righteous one who says: Tell me what my obligation is^N and I will perform it, the Gemara asks: Isn't this virtuous behavior, as he desires to be aware of his obligations? Rather, this is referring to one who says: Tell me what further obligations are incumbent upon me and I will perform them, indicating that he fulfills all of his mitzvot perfectly and therefore seeks additional obligations.

The *baraita* also includes in the list of pseudo-righteous people those who are righteous due to love^N and those who are righteous due to fear, i.e., one who performs mitzvot due to love of their reward or due to fear of punishment. Abaye and Rava said to the *tanna* who transmitted this *baraita*: Do not teach in the *baraita*: Those who are righteous due to love and those who are righteous due to fear, as Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: A person should always engage^H in Torah study and in performance of the mitzvot even if he does not do so for their own sake,^N as through performing them not for their own sake, one comes to perform them for their own sake.

Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: That which is hidden is hidden, and that which is revealed is revealed, but in Heaven everything is known, and the great court in Heaven will exact payment from those who wear the cloak of the righteous^N but are in fact unworthy. The Gemara relates: King Yannai said to his wife^B before he died: Do not be afraid of the Pharisees [*perushin*],^B and neither should you fear from those who are not Pharisees, i.e., the Sadducees; rather, beware of the hypocrites who appear like Pharisees, as their actions are like the act of the wicked Zimri^N and they request a reward like that of the righteous Pinehas (see Numbers, chapter 25).

NOTES

מה חובתי וכו' – In the Jerusalem Talmud this phrase is rendered as: Tell me what my transgression is, and I will perform a mitzva in order to cancel it out.

פְּרוּשׁ מֵאַהֲבָה וכו' – Those who are righteous due to love – The Ran explains that this refers to one who acts righteously out of love for or fear of another person.

Engage in Torah study...even if he does not do so for their own sake – תּוֹסַפּוֹת...אֶפְּלוּ שְׂלָא לְשִׁמְהָ – *Tosafot* cite a number of sources which maintain that if one studies Torah not for its own sake, it would have been preferable for him had he not been created. This apparently contradicts Rav's statement. *Tosafot* resolve this difficulty by distinguishing between different types of impure intentions: If one studies Torah with the intention of ridiculing the Torah or Torah scholars, it would be better for him not to study at all. If, however, one studies Torah out of external motives, e.g., in order to attain honor, this is acceptable, if not ideal, behavior, as it will lead one to engage in Torah study and mitzvot for the sake of Heaven. The Rambam explains that performing mitzvot due to external motivation is a necessary educational method; children are taught to behave correctly by receiving small rewards, and as they grow older their interest shifts to more substantial rewards, until ultimately they attain the understanding that one should perform the mitzvot for no reason other than the sake of Heaven.

דָּחֲפוּ – Who wear the cloak [*gundeil*] of the righteous, etc. – גּוֹנְדֵי וְכוּ': Some of the early commentaries explain that the term *gundeil* refers to black garments (*Arukh*). The Maharsha explains that this might refer to individuals who wore black clothes in order to appear in mourning for the destruction of the Temple.

Their actions are like the act of the wicked Zimri, etc. – שְׂמַעֲשִׂיהֶן כְּמַעֲשֵׂה זִמְרִי וְכוּ': The Maharsha notes that the comparison of the pseudo-righteous to Zimri is difficult, as Zimri transgressed publicly and did not hide his actions. He explains that Pinehas received a reward because of his zeal in stopping the behavior of Zimri. The essence of this aphorism is that the pseudo-righteous behave sinfully and yet present themselves as deserving of reward for those very matters in which they secretly transgress. Others explain that Zimri claimed that his behavior was permitted, and so too, the hypocrites find justification for their actions (*Ben Yehoyada*).

Alternatively, some explain that the main emphasis of this aphorism is in the concluding statement that they request a reward like that of Pinehas. This refers to those who intend to appear zealous for the sake of Heaven like Pinehas, while their intent is not in the least for the sake of Heaven but only to attain a reward for their demonstration of zealotry. King Yannai advised his wife not to fear the actions of the Pharisees, which stemmed from true fear of God, but rather to fear the zealots whose zealotry stemmed from false motives (*Iyyun Ya'akov*; *Ben Yehoyada*).

LANGUAGE

Weaken [*madhe*] – מַדְּהָה: The term *madhe* literally means to cause a color to become dull and weak. Here it is used in the borrowed sense of causing power to weaken. The root of the word is *dalet, heh, heh*, which is similar in meaning to the root *dalet, het, heh*, which denotes removing an item from its place or from its previous status.

HALAKHA

Merit delays, etc. – הַזְכוּת תּוֹלָה וּכְוֹ: If a woman has the merit of Torah study, it delays the punishment of the bitter water, and she does not die immediately. Rather, she becomes sick and continually deteriorates until she finally dies the death described for a *sota* (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 3:20).

If the meal-offering of the *sota* is rendered impure – נִטְמָאת מִנְחָתָה: If the meal-offering of a *sota* is rendered impure before it has been sanctified in a service vessel, it is redeemed and another meal-offering is brought in its place. If it is rendered impure after it has been sanctified in a service vessel, it is burned (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 4:14).

מתני' רבי שמעון אומר: אין זכות תולה
במים המרים. ואם אתה אומר הזכות תולה
במים המאריין – מדהה אתה את המים
בפני כל הנשים השוות, ומוציא אתה שם
רע על הטהורות ששתו, שאומרים: טמאות
הן, אלא שתלתה להן זכות. רבי אומר:
הזכות תולה במים המאריין, ואינה יולדת
ואינה משבחת, אלא מתנוונה והולכת,
לסוף היא מתה באותה מיתה.

נטמאת מנחתה עד שלא קדשה בכלי – הרי
היא ככל המנחות ותפדה. ואם משקדשה
בכלי – הרי היא ככל המנחות ותשרף. ואלו
שמנחותיהן נשרפות:

MISHNA Rabbi Shimon says: Merit does not delay the punishment of the bitter water of a *sota*, and if you say that merit does delay the punishment of the water that causes the curse, as stated earlier by the Rabbis (20a), you weaken [*madhe*]^l the power of the bitter water before all the women who drink the water, who will no longer be afraid of it, as they will rely on their merit to save them. And you defame the untainted women who drank the water and survived, as people say: They are defiled but it is their merit that delayed the punishment for them. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi says: Merit delays^h the punishment of the water that causes the curse, but a woman whose punishment is delayed does not give birth and does not flourish; rather, she progressively deteriorates. Ultimately she dies by the same death as a *sota* who dies immediately.

§ If the meal-offering of the *sota* is rendered impure^h before it has been sanctified in the service vessel, its status is like that of all the other meal-offerings that are rendered impure before being sanctified in a service vessel, and it is redeemed. But if it is rendered impure after it has been sanctified in the service vessel, its status is like that of all the other meal-offerings that are rendered impure after being sanctified in a service vessel, and it is burned. And these are the *sota* women whose meal-offerings are burned if they have already been sanctified in a service vessel: