

III.

BAVLI TRACTATE TAANIT CHAPTER THREE

FOLIOS 18B-26A

3:1-11

3:1

- A. The conduct of these fast days which have been described applies in the case of the first rainfall.
- B. But in the case of crops that exhibit a change [from their normal character]
- C. they sound the shofar on their account forthwith.
- D. And so if the rain ceased between one rainstorm and the next for a period of forty days,
- E. they sound the shofar on that account forthwith,
- F. for it represents the blow of famine.

3:2

- A. If the rain fell sufficient for crops but not for trees,
- B. for trees but not for crops,
- C. for this and that, but not for [filling up] cisterns, pits, or caverns,
- D. they sound the shofar on their account forthwith.

3:3

- A. And so too: A town on which rain did not fall,
- B. as it is said, “And I caused it to rain upon one city and caused it not to rain upon another city, one piece was rained upon and the piece on which it rained not did wither” (Amo.†4: 7)
- C. [19A] that town declares a fast day and sounds the shofar.
- D. And all its neighbors fast but do not sound the shofar.
- E. R. Aqiba says, “They sound the shofar but do not fast.”

3:4

- A. And so too: A town which is afflicted with pestilence or ruination [of houses]
—
- B. that town declares a fast day and sounds the shofar.
- C. And all its neighbors fast but do not sound the shofar.
- D. R. Aqiba says, “They sound the shofar but do not fast.”

3:5

- A. What is the meaning of “pestilence”?
- B. A town which has a population of five hundred soldiers which produces three corpses In three successive days — lo, this is [a sign of the presence of] pestilence.
- C. [If the death rate] is less than this, it is not [the sign of the presence of] pestilence.

3:6

- A. On account of the appearance of these do they sound the shofar in every locale:
- B. “blasting or mildew, locust or caterpillar” (1Ki. 8:37), “wild beasts, and the sword” [Lev. 26:6].
- C. [Everywhere] do they sound the shofar on their account, because it is an affliction which spreads.

3:7

- A. M'SH S: Elders went down from Jerusalem to their towns and decreed a fast because in Askelon there had appeared blight to the extent of [the area of] an oven's mouth.
- B. And a further fast on the next day did they decree because wolves had eaten two children in Trans-Jordan.
- C. R. Yosé says, “Not because they had eaten anyone, but merely because they had appeared.”

3:8

- A. On account of these do they sound the shofar [even] on the Sabbath.
- B. On account of a town which gentiles have besieged, or a river,
- C. and because of a ship which is foundering in the sea.
- D. R. Yosé says.”They sound the shofar on the Sabbath] for help, not for supplication.”
- E. Simeon the Temanite says.” Also on account of pestilence.”
- F. But sages did not concur with him.

3:9

- A. On account of every sort of public trouble — may it not happen — do they sound the shofar,
- B. except for an excess of rain.
- C. M'SH S: They said to Honi the Circle Drawer, Pray for rain.”

- D. He said to them, “Go and take in the clay ovens used for Passover, so that they not soften [in the rain which is coming].”
- E. He prayed, but it did not rain.
- F. What did he do?
- G. He drew a circle and stood in the middle of it and said before Him, “Lord of the world! Your children have turned to me, for before you, I am like a member of the family. I swear by your great name— I’m simply not moving from here until you take pity on your children!”
- H. It began to rain drop by drop.
- I. He said, “This is not what I wanted, but rain for filling up cisterns, pits, and caverns.”
- J. It began to rain violently.
- K. He said, “This is not what I wanted, but rain of good will, blessing, and graciousness.”
- L. Now it rained the right way, until the Israelites had to flee from Jerusalem up to the Temple Mount because of the rain.
- M. Now they came and said to him, “Just as you prayed for it to rain, now pray for it to go away.”
- N. He said to them, “Go, see whether the stone of those who stray has disappeared [under water].”

3:10

- A. Simeon b. Shatah said to him, “If you were not Honi, I should decree a ban of excommunication against you. But what am I going to do to you? For you importune before the Omnipresent, so he does what you want, like a son who importunes his father, so he does what he wants.
- B. “Concerning you Scripture says, ‘Let you father and you mother be glad, and let her that bore you rejoice’” (Pro. 23:25).

3:11

- A. If they were fasting. and it rained for them before sunrise, they should not complete the fast.
- B. [If it rained] after sunrise, they should complete the day in fasting.
- C. R. Eliezer says, “[If it rained] before noon. they should not complete the day in fasting. [If it rained] after noon, they should complete the day in fasting.”
- D. WM’S H S: They decreed a fast in Lud. It rained before noon. R. Tarfon said to them, “Go, eat and drank and celebrate a festival.” So they arose and ate and drank and celebrated a festival day. Then they assembled it twilight and proclaimed the Great Hallel [that is. Psa. 136].

I.1 A. The conduct of these fast days which have been described applies in the case of the first rainfall:

- B. *An objection was raised:* If rain does not come at the time of the first and second rainfalls, it is time to ask for rain. If at the time of the third, it is time to fast.
- C. Said R. Judah, “*This is the sense of the statement:* As to the order of fasts that has been stated, when does it apply? At an occasion on which the time for the first,

second, and third rainfalls have not come. But if rain fell at the time for the first fructifying rainfall and they sowed but nothing sprouted, or if the plants did sprout but changed in an unusual way, the alarm is sounded right away.”

- I.2. A.** Said R. Nahman, “That is in particular if they changed in appearance, but if they merely dried up, that is not the rule.”
- B. *That is obvious, for we have learned in the Mishnah in so many words, in the case of crops that exhibit a change!*
- C. *No, it was necessary to make that point in connection with a case in which the seeds have shot up into stalks. What might you have supposed? It is a mark of recovery. So he informs us to the contrary.*

II.1 A. And so if. the rain ceased between one rainstorm and the next for a period of forty days, they sound the shofar on that account forthwith, for it represents the blow of famine:

- B. *What is the definition of the blow of famine?*
- C. Said R. Judah said Rab, “It is a blow that brings about scarcity.”
- D. *Said R. Nahman, “When grain has to be moved by river [19B] it is a drought. But when it has to be brought from province to province, it is a famine.”*
- E. *And said R. Hanina, “If a seah of grain costs a sela but it is available in the market, that is a drought. If it four cost a sela and cannot be found, that is a famine.”*
- F. Said R. Yohanan, “That is the case only if coins are cheap and produce is expensive. But if coins are expensive and produce is cheap, they forthwith sound the alarm.”
- G. *For said R. Yohanan, “I remember when four seahs cost a sela, but there were plenty of people in Tiberias who has bellies swollen with hunger because no one had a penny.”*

III.1 A. If the rain fell sufficient for crops but not for trees, for trees but not for crops, for this and that, but not for [filling up] cisterns, pits, or caverns, they sound the shofar on their account forthwith:

- B. *Now it is so that rain sufficient for crops but not for trees does happen, when it rains gently and not heavily; so too, rain that is good for trees but not for crops happens, when it rains heavily and not gently; and there can be rain that is good for both crops and trees but not fill up cisterns, ditches, and caves, if it falls heavily and gently but not yet sufficiently. But how is it possible for sufficient rain to fall to fill cisterns, ditches, and caves, yet not to be good for crops and trees, in accord with the Tannaite formulation?*
- C. *It would be a case of torrential rain.*

III.2 A. Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:

- B. **They sound an alarm for rain for trees if it has not rained by half a month prior to Passover [that is, the new moon of Nisan], and for cisterns, ditches, and caves even half a month prior to Tabernacles; and whenever there is not sufficient water for drinking, it is done at once.**
- C. **What is the definition of “at once”?**
- D. **On the following Monday, Thursday, and Monday.**

- E. They sound the alarm only in their own province [T. Ta. 2:8C-F].
- F. In the case of croup, they sound the alarm only if deaths result. If no deaths result, they do not sound the alarm.
- G. They sound the alarm in case of locusts, however small the sample.
- H. R. Simeon b. Eleazar says, “Even on account of grasshoppers [do they sound the alarm]” [T. Ta. 2:9D-E, 2:10A-B].

III.3 A. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. They sound the alarm on account of the condition of the trees [needing rain] through the other years of the Sabbatical cycle [but not in the Seventh Year], and for cisterns, ditches, and caves, even in the Sabbatical Year.
- C. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, “Also on account of trees in the Sabbatical Year [do they sound the alarm], because they provide support for the poor [who then are permitted freely to take the fruit].”
- C. *It has further been taught on Tannaite authority:*
- D. They sound the alarm on account of the condition of the trees [needing rain] through the other years of the Sabbatical cycle [but not in the Seventh Year], and for cisterns, ditches, and caves, even in the Sabbatical Year.
- E. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, “Also on account of trees in the Sabbatical Year [do they sound the alarm].”
- F. For the scrub in the field they sound the alarm even in the Seventh Year because it provides support for the poor.”

III.4 A. *It has been taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. From the day on which the house of the sanctuary was destroyed, rains have turned irregular for the world: there is a year in which the rain is abundant, and there is a year in which the rain is scanty; there is a year in which the rain falls at the anticipated time, and there is a year in which the rain does not fall at the anticipated time.
- C. To what is a year in which the rain falls at the anticipated time to be compared? To the case of a worker who is given his week’s food in advance on Sundays: the dough is well baked and edible.
- D. To what is a year in which the rain does not fall at the anticipated time to be compared? To the case of a worker who is given his week’s food at the end of the week on Fridays: the dough is not well baked and is inedible.
- E. To what is a year in which the rain is abundant to be compared? To the case of a worker who is given his week’s food all at once. The waste in grinding a qab [thirty seahs] is no more than the water in grinding a qab [a sixth of a seah], and the waste in kneading a kor is no more than the waste in kneading a qab.
- F. To what is year in which the rain is scanty to be compared? To the case of a worker who is given his food bit by bit. The waste in grinding a qab is no less than the waste in grinding a kor, so too with kneading a qab, it is no less than kneading a kor.
- G. Another matter: to what is a year in which the rain is abundant to be compared?

- H. To the case of a man kneading clay. If he has plenty of water, then the clay is well kneaded, but not all of the water is used up; if he has only a little water, then the water will be used up, but the clay still won't be well kneaded.

III.5 A. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. One time all Israel ascended to Jerusalem for the festival, and they didn't have enough water to drink. Naqedimon b. Gurion went to a certain lord. He said to him, "Lend me twelve wells of water for the pilgrims, and I shall pay you back with twelve wells of water, and if I don't do it, then I'll give you instead twelve talents of silver," with a fixed time for repayment.
- C. When the time came for repayment and it did not rain, in the morning, he sent him a message, "Send me the water or the money that you owe me."
- D. He sent word, "I still have time, for the rest of the entire day belongs to me."
- E. At noon he sent him word, "Send me the water or the money that you owe me."
- F. He sent word, "I still have time, for the rest of the entire day belongs to me."
- G. At dusk he sent him word, "Send me the water or the money that you owe me."
- H. He sent word, "I still have time today."
- I. That lord ridiculed him. He said to him, "The whole year it hasn't rained, [20A] and now is it going to rain?"
- J. He cheerfully went off to the bath-house.
- K. While the lord was cheerfully going to the bath house, Naqedimon sadly went to the house of the sanctuary. He wrapped himself in his cloak and stood up in prayer, saying before him, "Lord of the world, it is obvious to you that it was not for my own honor that I acted, not for the honor of my father's house did I act, but I acted for your honor, to provide ample water for the pilgrims."
- L. At that moment the skies darkened with clouds and it rained until water filled twelve wells and more.
- M. As the lord was going out of the bath-house, Naqedimon b. Gurion was leaving the house of the sanctuary. When the two met, he said to him, "Pay me the cost of the extra water that you owe me."
- N. He said to him, "I know full well that the Holy One, blessed be he, has disrupted his world only on your account. But I still have a legitimate gripe against you to collect the money that is owing to me! The sun has already set, so the rain has fallen in the time that belongs to me [after the end of the specified time limit]."
- O. He once more went into the house of the sanctuary, wrapped himself in his cloak, and stood up in prayer, saying before him, "Lord of the world, let people know that you have loved ones in your world."
- P. At that instant the clouds scattered and the sun shone at that moment.
- Q. The lord said to him, "Had the sun not broken through, I still would have had a legitimate gripe against you to collect the money that is owing to me."
- R. A Tannaite statement:
- S. His name wasn't Naqedimon, it really was Boni, and why was he called Naqedimon? For the sun broke through [niqedera] on his account.

III.6 A. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. In behalf of three persons the sun broke through: Moses, Joshua, and Naqedimon b. Gurion.
- C. *As to Naqedimon b. Gurion, we have a tradition.*
- D. *As to Joshua, there is a verse of Scripture: "And the sun stood still and the moon stayed" (Jos. 10:13).*
- E. But how do we know that that is so of Moses?
- F. Said R. Eleazar, *"It derives from the use of the words, 'I will begin,' in the two instances. Here we find, 'I will begin to put the dread of you' (Deu. 2:25), and in connection with Joshua, 'I will begin to magnify you' (Jos. 3: 7)."*
- G. R. Samuel bar Nahmani said, *"It derives from the use of the word 'put' in both cases. Here we find, 'I will begin to put the dread of you' (Deu. 2:25), and in connection with Joshua, 'In the day when the Lord put the Amorites' (Jos. 10:12)."*
- H. Said R. Yohanan, *"From the verse itself the lesson is to be derived: 'The peoples that are under the whole heaven who shall hear the report of you and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you' (Deu. 2:25): And when did they tremble and feel anguish on account of Moses? This is when the sun stood still for him."*

IV.1 A. And so too: A town which is afflicted with pestilence or ruination [of houses] — that town declares a fast day and sounds the shofar. And all its neighbors fast but do not sound the shofar. R. Aqiba says, "They sound the shofar but do not fast:"

- B. Said R. Judah said Rab, "And both conditions [having too little rain, having too much] are a curse."

IV.2 A. "Jerusalem is among them as one unclean" (Lam. 1:17) —

- B. Said R. Judah said Rab, "It is for a blessing. Just as a menstruating woman [when her period is over] becomes permitted again, so Jerusalem has its remedy as well."
- C. "She is become as a widow" (Lam. 1:17) —
- D. Said R. Judah, "This is for a blessing. She is as a widow, but she is not actually a widow, but rather like a woman whose husband has gone overseas but plans to come back to her."
- E. "Therefore I have also made you contemptible and base before all the people" (Mal. 2: 9) —
- F. Said R. Judah, "This is for a blessing. *For from you will not come forth river-masters and drill sergeants.*"
- G. "For the Lord will smite Israel as a reed is shaken in the water" (1Ki. 14:15)
- H. Said R. Judah said Rab, "It is for a blessing."
 - I. *For said R. Samuel bar Nahmani said R. Jonathan, "What is the meaning of the verse, 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend but the kisses of an enemy are importunate' (Pro. 27: 6)? Better is the curse with which Ahiah the Shilonite cursed Israel than the blessing with which Balaam the wicked blessed them.*

- J. “Ahiah the Shilonite cursed Israel by comparing them to a reed. He said to them, ‘For the Lord will smite Israel as a reed is shaken in the water.’ Just as a reed grows by water, and its stock produces new shoots, and its roots are many, so even though all the winds of the world come and blow at it, they can’t move it from its place, as it sways with the winds and when they have fallen silent, resumes its upright position [so is Israel].
- K. “Balaam the wicked blessed Israel by comparing them to a cedar: ‘As cedars besides waters’ (Num. 24: 6). Just as a cedar tree does not stand in a well watered place, and it does not grow new shoots, and its roots are not many, so even though all the winds of the world blow at it and cannot move it from its place, if the south wind blows against it, it uproots it and turns it upside down, [so is Israel].
- L. “And now only so, but the reed had the remarkable recognition that from it is taken the pen for the writing of the scroll of the Torah, prophets, and writings.”

IV.3 A. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. A person should always be as yielding as a reed and never as unyielding as a cedar.
- C. **There is the case of R. Simeon b. Eleazar, who was coming from the house of his master in Migdal Gedor, riding on an ass and making his way along the river bank. He was in a very happy frame of mind and feeling good about himself because he had learned a great deal of Torah. [20B] An unusually ugly man came along. He said to him, “Peace be to you, my lord,” but [Simeon] did not reply to him.**
- D. **Then [Simeon] said to him, “Empty head! what a beast [how ugly] you are! Is it possible that everyone in your town is as ugly as you are?”**
- E. **He said to him, “I really couldn’t say, but go to the craftsman who made me and tell him, ‘How ugly is that utensil that you have made!’”**
- F. **When R. Simeon b. Eleazar realized that he had sinned, he got off his ass and prostrated himself before the man, saying to him, “I beg you to forgive me.”**
- G. **He said to him, “I shall not forgive you until you go to the Craftsman who made me and tell him, ‘How ugly is that utensil that you have made!’”**
- H. **He ran after the man for three miles until he came to his town. The people of the town came out to meet him. They said toward him, “Peace be to you, my lord, my lord, my teacher, my teacher.”**
- I. **He said to them, “Whom do you call, ‘my lord, my lord’?”**

- J. They said to him, To the one who is going along after you.”
- K. He said to them, “If this is a ‘my lord,’ may there not be many more like him in Israel.”
- L. They said to him, “God forbid! and what has he done to you?”
- M. He said to them, “Thus and so did he do to me.”
- N. They said to him, “Nonetheless, forgive him, for he is a man who is great in Torah-learning.”
- O. He said to them, “Lo, for your sake I forgive him, on the condition that he not make a habit of acting in that way.”
- P. On that same day R. Simeon entered the great study-house that was his and gave an exposition: “A person should always be as yielding as a reed and never as unyielding as a cedar.
- Q. “Therefore the reed had the remarkable recognition that from it is taken the pen for the writing of the scroll of the Torah, prophets, and writings.”
- R. [ARN: “In the case of a reed, all the winds in the world can go on blowing against it but it sways with them, so that when the winds grow silent, it reverts and stands in its place. And what is the destiny of a reed? In the end a pen is cut from it with which to write a scroll of the Torah. But in the case of a cedar it will not stand in place, but when the south wind blows against it, it uproots the cedar and turns it over. And what is the destiny of a cedar? Foresters come and cut it down and use it to roof houses, and the rest they toss into the fire. On the basis of this fact they have said, ‘One should always be as soft as a reed and not as tough as a cedar’”
[Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan XLI:III.1].

V.1 A. And so too: A town which is afflicted with pestilence or ruination [of houses] — that town declares a fast day and sounds the shofar. And all its neighbors fast but do not sound the shofar. R. Aqiba says, “They sound the shofar but do not fast:”

- B. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*
- C. The ruination of which they have spoken refers to the collapse of sound buildings but not of those that were shaky anyhow; only those that are not shaky, not to those that are going to fall down.
- D. *But aren’t “sound buildings” the same as “those not shaky”? And aren’t “those that were shaky anyhow” the same as “those that are going to fall down”?*
- E. *Well, it was required to make such distinctions, to take account of the case of those that collapse because they are too high, or those that stood on the bank of a river [which are sound but likely to fall down].*

- F. *It is comparable to the case of a dilapidated wall in Nehardea, by which neither Rab nor Samuel would walk by, even though it had stood in the same way for thirteen years. One day R. Adda bar Ahbah came there. Said Samuel to Rab, "Come, sir, let us circumambulate it."*
- G. *He said to him, "We don't have to today, for R. Adda Bar Ahbah is here with us, who enjoys a vast treasury of heavenly grace, so [on his account] I'm not afraid [to walk by the wall, since his merit will hold it up supernaturally]."*

Appended Composite on the Merits of Sages that Permit them to Do Wonders

V.2 A. *R. Huna had wine stored in a certain dilapidated house and wanted to take it out. He brought R. Adda bar Ahbah there and kept him busy with tradition-recitation until he had emptied out the place. Once he got out, the house fell down. R. Adda bar Ahbah realized what had happened. He took offense, because he concurs with what R. Yannai said, "A person should never stand in a dangerous place and say, 'They'll do a miracle for me,' Maybe they won't do a miracle for him. And if they do do a miracle for him, they will deduct it from his treasury of unearned grace."*

B. *Said R. Hanan, "What verse of Scripture supports that view? As it is written, 'I am not worthy of all the mercies and of all the truth' (Gen. 32:11)."*
 [Rabbinowitz: "I have become smaller on account of all the mercies."]

C. *What were the deeds of R. Abba bar Ahba?*

D. *It is in line with that which has been stated:*

E. *His disciples asked R. Adda bar Ahbah, "On account of what do you attribute your long life?"*

F. *He said to them, "I never lost my temper in my household, and I never strode in front of anyone greater than I, and I never meditated in dirty alleyways, and I never walked four cubits without Torah-learning and without wearing tefillin, and I never slept in the house of study, either on a regular basis or even a cat nap, and I never took pleasure in the humiliation of my fellow, and I never called my fellow by his nick-name — and some say, by the nick-name that others gave to him."*

V.3 A. *Said Raba to Rafram bar Pappa, "Would the master report to us some of those lovely things that R. Huna used to do?"*

B. *He said to him, "He said to him, "Of his childhood I remember nothing. As to his old age, I recall that every stormy day they would drive him about in a golden carriage and he would make the rounds of*

the entire town and would have destroyed every shaky wall. If it was possible for the owner, the owner would build it, and if it was not possible, he would build it out of his own resources. On every Friday he would send a messenger to the market, and all vegetables that the market-gardeners had left over he would be and throw into the river.”

- C. *Oughtn't he to have given the vegetables to the poor?*
- D. *[It was done] lest they rely on him and not come to buy any for themselves.*
- E. *And why not throw them to the animals?*
- F. *He took the view: food fit for human consumption is not to be thrown to animals.*
- G. *Then he oughtn't to buy it at all?*
- H. *It would mislead the gardeners in the future [who would then bring an inadequate supply of vegetables to market].*
- I. *When he came across a healing remedy, he would fill a jug of water with it and hang it above his doorstep and announced, “Who wants, let him come and take.”*
- J. *And there are those who say, a medicine for Sibetha [a disease that affects those that fail to wash hands before eating], he had learned and he would leave a jugful of water and proclaim, “Whoever needs it let him come [and wash his hands] to save his life from danger.”*
- K. *When he would wrap bread for a sandwich for a meal, he would open the door to his house and proclaim, “Whoever is in need, let him come and eat.”*
- L. *Said Raba, “All of these things I can carry out, except for this last, which I cannot carry out [21A] because there are so many impoverished people in Mehoza.”*

V.4 A. *Ilfa and R. Yohanan were studying Torah together in great poverty. They said, “Let's get up and go and get into trade and realize in our own regard the verse, ‘Howbeit there shall be no needy among you’ (Deu. 15: 4).”*

B. *They went and sat down underneath a dilapidated wall. They*

were wrapping their bread. Two ministering angels came. R. Yohanan heard that one said to his fellow, "Let's throw this wall on them and kill them, for they abandon the life of the world to come and take up the life of the transient moment."

C. The other said, "Let's let them be, because on one of them the hour shines."

D. R. Yohanan heard this. Ilpha did not hear it. Said R. Yohanan to Ilpha, "Did the master hear anything?"

E. He said to him, "No."

F. He said, "Since I heard and Ilpha did not hear, it is to be inferred that on me the hour shines."

G. Said R. Yohanan to him, "I will go back, so that in me may be realized the verse, 'For the poor shall never cease out of the land' (Deu. 15:11)."

H. R. Yohanan returned [to Torah-study]. Ilpha did not return. When Ilpha finally came back, R. Yohanan was ruled [the school]. They said to him, "If the master had remained and continued learning, would the master not be ruling?"

I. Ilpha then hung himself on the mast of a ship and said, "If there is anyone here who can ask me a question concerning Mishnah-teachings of R. Hiyya and R. Oshaiah and I can't straighten it out for him, I will throw myself down and drown."

J. An old man came along and repeated for him the following passage: **He who says, "Give over a sheqel from my property to my children for their maintenance for a week" but they are supposed to take a sela a week — they give over to them a sela. But if he said,**

“Give them only a sheqel,” they give them only a sheqel. If he said, “If they die, let others inherit me instead of them,” whether he said “Give” or did not say “Give,” they give over to them only a sheqel [T. Ket. 6:10A-D]. [Slotki to B. Ket. 69B: when the father mentioned the smaller coin at the outset, it was not to exclude the larger sum, but he was saying, give them what they actually need. If he named heirs other than the children, it is clear that he wanted to economize as much as possible on the weekly maintenance of the children so that the heirs might receive a very large estate.]

K. *He said to him, “Lo, who is the authority behind that rule? It is R. Meir, who has said, ‘It is a religious obligation to carry out the instructions of the deceased.’”*

Appended Composite on the Merits of Particular Sages: Nahum of Gimzo

- V.5 A.** They said about Nahum of Gimzo that he was blind in both eyes, his two hands were cut off, his two legs were amputated, and his whole body was full of boils, and he was lying in a dilapidated house, with the legs of his bed in bowls of water so that the ants should not crawl up onto him. One time his disciples wanted to remove his bed and then clear everything out of the house. He said to them, “My children, empty out the furniture and then clear out my bed. For I guarantee you, so long as I am in the house, the house won’t fall down.” So they cleared out the furniture and afterward they cleared out his bed and the house fell down.
- B. His disciples said to him, “My lord, now, since you are completely righteous, how did this condition come upon you?”

- C. He said to them, “My children, I brought it on myself. For one time I was walking on the way to the house of my father-in-law, and with me I had three well-loaded asses, one with food, one with drink, and one with goodies. A poor man came and stopped me on the way and said to me, ‘My lord, feed me.’ I said to him, ‘Wait until I unload something from the ass,’ but I didn’t have a moment to unload the ass before his soul went forth. I went and fall on his face and said, ‘My eyes, which did not take pity on your eyes — let them be blind. My hands, which had no pity on your hands — let them be cut off. My feet, that did not have pity on your feet — let them be cut off.’ And I did not calm down until I had said, ‘Let my whole body be covered with boils.’”
- D. They said to him, “Woe is us, that we have seen you in such straits.”
- E. He said to them, “Woe would it have been for me, had you not seen me in such straits!”

V.6 A. *And why did they call him Nahum of Gimzo? Because whatever happened to him, he would say, “This too is for the good” [Gam Zo letobah].*

B. *Once the Israelites wanted to send a gift to the household of Caesar. They said, “He will go? Let Nahum of Gimzo go, because he is experienced in miracles.” They sent along a bag of precious stones and pearls. He went. At night he came to a certain inn. The guests in the end during the night went and emptied the bag and filled it up with dirt. The next day when he saw it, he said, “This too is for the good.”*

C. *When he got there, they untied his bag and found it was full of dirt. The king wanted to kill all of them to death. He said, “The Jews are ridiculing me.”*

D. *He said, “This too is for the good.”*

E. *Elijah came along and appeared in the form of one of them [the Romans]. He said to him, "Perhaps this dirt comes from the dirt of Abraham their father, for when he threw dirt against the enemy, it turned into swords, and when he drew stubble, it turned into arrows: 'His sword makes them as dust, his bow as the driven stubble' (Isa. 41: 2)."*

F. *Now there was a certain city that they had been unable to conquer. They tried it out and conquered it. They took him to the treasury and filled his bag with precious stones and pearls and sent him away with great marks of honor. When he was going home, he stopped again for the night in the same inn, and was asked, "What did you bring with you that they paid you such great honor?"*

G. *He said to them, "What I took from here I brought there."*

H. *They tore down their inn and brought the rubble to the household of the king. They said to him, "This dirt that was brought here was ours."*

I. *They tried it out and found there was nothing to it. They executed those innkeepers."*

VI.1 A. What is the meaning of "pestilence"? A town which has a population of five hundred soldiers which produces three corpses In three successive days— lo, this is [a sign of the presence of] pestilence. [If the death rate] is less than this, it is not [the sign of the presence of] pestilence:

B. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

C. A town that produces fifteen hundred foot soldiers, for example, Kefar Akko, from which nine corpses were removed on three successive days — lo, this constitutes a sign of pestilence. If this takes place on one day, or on four days, this is not a sign of pestilence. And a town that produces five hundred foot soldiers, for example, Kefar Amiyo, from which three corpses were removed on three successive days, lo, this is a sign of pestilence. **[21B]** If this was on one day or on four days, it is not a sign of pestilence.

- D. Deroqeret was a city that produced five hundred foot shoulders, and from it three corpses were removed on a single day. R. Nahman bar R. Hisda decreed a fast.
- E. *Said R. Nahman bar Isaac, "In accord with which authority was this done? It is in accord with R. Meir, who has said, 'If the oxen is liable for acts of goring that are spread out, how much the more so will he be liable for acts of goring that are not spread out!'"*
- F. *Said R. Nahman bar R. Hisda to R. Nahman bar Isaac, "Will the master get up and come and sit nearer to us?"*
- G. *He said to him, "A Tannaite statement: R. Yosé says, 'It is not the position of a man that honors him, but it is the man that honors the position that he holds.'"*
- H. For so we find in connection with Mount Sinai: All the time that the Presence of God was dwelling thereon, the Torah has said, "Let neither flocks nor herds feed before that mountain" (Exo. 34: 3). When the Presence of God had departed from it, the Torah then said, "When the ram's horn sounds a long note, they shall come up to the mountain" (Exo. 19:13).
- I. So we find of the tent of meeting in the wilderness: so long as it was pitched, the Torah said, "Let them put out of the camp ever leper" (Num. 5: 2). Once the curtains were rolled up [for the trip], Zabs [Lev. 15] and lepers [Lev. 13-14] were permitted to enter that space.
- J. *He said to him, "If so, let me get up and come to the master."*
- K. He said to him, "It is better that a *maneh* son of a *peras* [half a *maneh*] [a scholar, son of a common man] should go to one who is a *maneh* son of a *maneh* [a scholar son of a scholar] than that a *maneh* son of a *maneh* should come to a *maneh* son of a *peras*." [Rabbinowitz: Hisda, father of Nahman, was more eminent than Isaac, father of Hisda; Nahman refers to himself as a *maneh* son of a *peras*, half a *maneh*.]

VI.2 A. *In Sura there was pestilence. It did not affect the neighborhood of Rab. People drew the conclusion that it was on account of the unearned grace enjoyed by Rab, which was abundant. It was shown to them in a dream that Rab's unearned grace was too abundant for so small a thing, but it was on account of a certain man, who would lend out a shovel and spade for burials.*

VI.3 A. *In Deroqeret there was a fire, but there was no flame in the neighborhood of R. Huna. People drew the conclusion that it was on account of the unearned grace enjoyed by R. Huna, which was abundant. It was shown to them in a dream that R. Huna's unearned grace was too abundant for so small a thing, but it was on account of a certain woman, who would heat her oven and let her neighbors use it [on Fridays].*

VI.4 A. *They told R. Judah, "Locusts have come." He decreed a fast. They said to him, "We didn't suffer losses." He said to them, "Did they bring along their own provisions?"*

- VI.5** A. *They told R. Judah, "There is pestilence among the pigs." He decreed a fast.*
 B. *May we then say that R. Judah takes the view, A plague sent against one species is sent against all species?*
 C. *Not at all. Pigs are a special case, because their intestines are like those of man.*
- VI.6** A. *They told Samuel, "There is pestilence in Khuzistan." He decreed a fast.]*
 B. *They said to him, "But it's a long way away!"*
 C. *He said to them, "There is no crossing that can stop it."*
- VI.7** A. *They told R. Nahman, "There is pestilence in the land of Israel." he decreed a fast, saying, "If the mistress is smitten, all the more so the servant-girl."*
 B. *Then the operative consideration is that we deal with a "mistress" and a "serving girl," but if both were in the status of "serving girl," that would not be the case? And lo, they told Samuel, "There is pestilence in Khuzistan," and he decreed a fast.*
 C. *That case was different, because there are caravans that [the disease] accompanies, and it comes right along with them.*

Composite on Supererogatory Miracles Done to Pay Respect to Various Sages and Other Virtuous Persons

- VI.8** A. *Abba was a cupper. He got greetings from the heavenly academy every single day. To Abbaye greetings came every Friday, to Raba on the eve of every Day of Atonement.*
 B. *Abbaye was depressed, because of Abba the cupper. They said, "It is because you can't do deeds such as those of Abba."*
 C. *And what are the deeds of Abba the cupper?*
 D. *When he would conduct an operation, he would set man on one side, woman on the other.*
 E. *And he had a cloak that held a cup [to catch the blood], slit at the shoulder; when a woman would come to him, he would put the garment on her shoulder so as not to see her.*
 F. *He had a hidden place, out of public sight, into which patients would place their fees that he would collect. Those who had money would deposit it there, those that didn't would not be embarrassed.*
 G. *When a neophyte rabbi would consult him, he would not accept a fee from him. And after he got up, he would give him some money and say to him, "Go, heal yourself."*
 H. *One day, Abbaye sent him a pair of rabbis to test him. He received them and gave them food and drink. In the evening he made for them woolen mattresses for sleeping. [22A] In the morning the rabbis rolled up the mattresses and took them and got up and went off to the market, where he came across them. They said to him, "Will the master estimate how much these are worth?"*
 I. *He said to them, "Thus and so."*
 J. *They said to him, "And maybe they're worth more?"*

- K. *He said to them, "That is what I paid for them."*
- L. *They said to him, "They're yours. We took them from you."*
- M. *They said to him, "By your leave, of what did you suspect us?"*
- N. *He said to them, "I thought that the rabbis came across a case requiring money for the redemption of captives and were embarrassed to tell me."*
- O. *They said to him, "Will the master take them back?"*
- P. *He said to them, "From the very moment that I missed them, I dismissed them from mind for charity."*
- Q. *Raba was depressed because of the honor paid to Abbaye. They said to him, "Let it be enough for you that you protect an entire town [by the special grace owing to you]."*

VI.9 A. *R. Beroqa of Khuzistan would commonly go to market at Be Lapat. Elijah would frequently come to him. He said to him, "In this very marketplace is there anyone who is destined for the world to come."*

- B. *He said to him, "No."*
- C. *In the meanwhile he saw someone who was wearing black shoes [in the gentile manner], and who did not have a thread of blue at the corner of his garment, but [Elijah] said to him, "This one is who is destined for the world to come."*
- D. *He ran after him and asked him, "What sort of deeds do you do?"*
- E. *He said to him, "Go now and come back tomorrow."*
- F. *The next day he asked him, "What sort of deeds do you do?"*
- G. *He said to him, "I'm a jailer, and I keep the man on one side and the women on the other and I put my bed between these and those so that they may not come and violate a prohibition."*
- H. *"When I see an Israelite woman whom gentiles are eyeing, I risk my life and save her."*
- I. *"One day there was a betrothed girl with us, whom gentiles were eyeing, so I took the lees of red wine and I put them on her skirt and told them she was unclean."*
- J. *He said to him, "How come you don't have fringes and why are you wearing black shoes [as gentiles do]?"*
- K. *He said to him, "I come and go among gentiles. It is so that they won't know that I'm a Jew. So when they make a decree, I can inform the rabbis, who then beseech mercy and annul their decree."*
- L. *"How come, when I said to you, 'What sort of deeds do you do?' you said to me, 'Go now and come back tomorrow'?"*
- M. *He said to him, "At that very moment they had made a decree, and I determined first of all to go and inform the rabbis of it so that they might beseech for mercy on account of that matter."*
- N. *In the meantime two men came along. [Elijah] said, "These two also have a share in the world to come."*
- O. *He went to them. He said to them, "What sort of deeds do you do?"*

- P. *They said to him, "We are clowns, and when we see men who are sad, we clown around to cheer them up; moreover, when we see people quarreling, he make an effort and bring peace between them."*

VII.1 A. On account of the appearance of these do they sound the shofar in every locale: "blasting or mildew, locust or caterpillar" (1Ki. 8:37):

- B. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*
- C. On account of the following they sound the alarm everywhere: on account of blast, mildew, locusts, crickets, and wild beasts.
- D. R. Aqiba says, "On account of blast and mildew for the slightest manifestation; on account of locusts and crickets, even if only one winged creature appears, they sound the alarm."

VIII.1 A. "wild beasts" [Lev. 26:6]:

- B. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*
- C. As to the wild beasts of which they have spoken, when it is a divine visitation they sound the alarm on that account, but if it is not a divine visitation they do not sound the alarm on that account. What is the definition of a divine visitation, and what is the definition of that which is not a divine visitation? If [the wild beast] is seen in town, it is a mark of a divine visitation, if in the field, it is not a divine visitation. If it is seen by day, it is a divine visitation, if by night, it is not a divine visitation. If two men saw it and it ran after them, it is a divine visitation. If it hid away from them, it is not a divine visitation. If it tore two men and ate up one of them, it is a divine visitation. If it ate both of them, it is not a divine visitation. If it climbed up to the roof and took an infant from its crib, it is a divine visitation.
- D. ["If [the wild beast] is seen in town, it is a mark of a divine visitation:"]
- E. *Now there is a contradiction in the body of the rule.* You say, "If [the wild beast] is seen in town, it is a mark of a divine visitation," and there is no difference whether this was by day or by night, and then you go and say, "If it is seen by day, it is a divine visitation, if by night, it is not a divine visitation"!
- F. *There is no real conflict. Here is the sense of the statement:* If it appeared in town by day, it is a divine visitation, in town by night, it is not a divine visitation. *Or, also,* if it appeared in the field, even by day, it is not a divine visitation.
- G. "If two men saw it and it ran after them, it is a divine visitation:" lo, if it was standing still, it is not a divine visitation. And then you go and say, "If it hid away from them, it is not a divine visitation"!
- H. *There is no real conflict.* The one refers to a field that is near a marsh, the other in a field not near a marsh.
- I. "If it tore two men and ate up one of them, it is a divine visitation. If it ate both of them it is not a divine visitation:" But didn't you say, even if only runs after two people, it is a divine visitation?
- J. *Said R. Pappa, "When the Tannaite formulation was set, it refers to a case in which the beast is standing in a marsh."*
- K. "If it climbed up to the roof and took an infant from its crib, it is a divine visitation:"

- L. *Reverting to the body of the foregoing:* “If it climbed up to the roof and took an infant from its crib, it is a divine visitation” — *that is self-evident!*
- M. Said R. Pappa, “It speaks of the beast’s kidnapping from a cave of a hunter” [Rabbinowitz: although it is a low building and the animal need not climb up high for its prey, the attack is taken as a divine visitation].

IX.1 A. “and the sword” [Lev. 26: 6]:

- B. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*
- C. The sword of which they have spoken — it is not necessary to say, a sword that does not come in peace, but even a sword that comes in peace [is an occasion for alarm].
- D. For no sword ever was carried in a spirit of peace more than that of Pharaoh Necho, and even so, King Josiah fell to it: **[22B]** “But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with you, King of Judah? I come not against you this day but against the house with which I am making war, and God has given command to speed me; forbear from meddling with God who is with me, that he not destroy you” (2Ch. 35:21).
- E. *What is meant by* “God who is with me”?
- F. Said R. Judah said Rab, “Idols.”
- G. *He said, “Since he trusts in idols, I will overcome him.”*
- H. “And the archers shot at King Josiah, and the king said to his servants, ‘Take me away for I am heavily wounded’” (2Ch. 35:23):
- I. *What is meant by* “for I am heavily wounded”?
- J. Said R. Judah said Rab, “They riddled his body like a sieve.”
- K. Said R. Samuel bar Nahmani said R. Jonathan, “How come Josiah was punished? Because he ought to have consulted Jeremiah but did not consult him.”
 - L. How did [Josiah] interpret matters?
 - M. “Neither shall the sword go through your land” (Lev. 26: 6) — *what sword? Should we say, a sword that does not come in peace, is it not written, “And I will give peace in the land” (Lev. 26: 6), so, it must follow, even a sword of peace.*
 - N. But [Josiah] did not know that his generation did not appear worthy [in God’s eyes].
 - O. *As he lay dying, Jeremiah saw that his lips were moving. He said, “Perhaps — God forbid — it is something that is improper because of the great pain.” He knelt down and heard that he was accepting God’s justice for himself, saying, “The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against his word” (Lam. 1:18).*
 - P. At that moment he recited the verse, ““The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord” (Lam. 14:20).”

X.1 A. M’S H S: Elders went down from Jerusalem to their towns and decreed a fast because in Askelon there had appeared blight to the extent of [the area of] an oven’s mouth

- B. *The question was raised:* like an oven full of grain or perhaps like an oven full of bread [the former is larger]?
- C. *Come and take note:* as much as would fill the mouth of an oven.
- D. *And still the question was troubling:* as much bread as would close the opening of an oven, or a row of loaves extending to the opening of an oven?
- E. *That question stands.*

XI.1 A. And a further fast on the next day did they decree because wolves had eaten two children in Trans-Jordan:

- B. Said Ulla in the name of R. Simeon b. Yehosedeq, “:There was a case in which wolves ate two children and excreted them through the excrement. The case came before sages, who declared the flesh of the children clean but the bones unclean. [Rabbinowitz: the flesh was a secretion and not a source of uncleanness, but the bones, still retaining their solid nature, do, cf. Lev. 5: 2-3.]

XII.1 A. On account of these do they sound the shofar [even] on the Sabbath. On account of a town which gentiles have besieged, or a river, and because of a ship which is foundering in the sea. R. Yosé says.”They sound the shofar on the Sabbath] for help, not for supplication:”

- B. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*
- C. **A town which gentiles besieged, or a river [M. Ta. 3:7B] —**
- D. **and so too, a ship foundering at sea,**
- E. **and so too, an individual pursued by gentiles or by thugs or by an evil spirit — [they sound the alarm even on the Sabbath].**
- F. **And for all of them an individual is permitted to afflict himself by fasting.**
- G. **Yosé says, “[They are not permitted to afflict themselves in a fast, so as not to break their strength [but only to sound the shofar]. An individual is not permitted to afflict himself in a fast, lest he fall onto the public charity, and people may have no mercy on him” [T. 2:12].**
- H. Said R. Judah said Rab, “What is the scriptural basis for the position of R. Yosé? ‘And become a living soul’ (Gen. 2: 7) — ‘The soul that I have given you — keep it alive!’”

XIII.1 A. Simeon the Temanite says.” Also on account of pestilence:”

- B. *The question was raised:* did sages not agree with him concerning the Sabbath alone, but on a weekday they would concur with his rule? Or perhaps they did not agree with him at all?
- C. *Come and take note of that which has been taught on Tannaite authority:*
- D. They sound the alarm on the Sabbath on account of plague, and, it goes without saying, on weekdays.
- E. R. Hanan b. Pitom, disciple of R. Aqiba, in the name of R. Aqiba, says, “They do not at an time sound the alarm on account of plague.”

XIV.1 A. On account of every sort of public trouble — may it not happen — do they sound the shofar, except for an excess of rain:

- B. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- C. On account of every sort of public trouble — may it not happen — do they sound the shofar, except for an excess of rain.
- D. *How come?*
- E. Said R. Yohanan, “Because people do not recite prayers on account of an excess of good.”
- F. And said R. Yohanan, “How on the basis of Scripture do we know that people do not recite prayers on account of an excess of good? ‘Bring you the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house and try me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing that shall be more than enough’ (Mal. 3:10).”
- G. *What is the meaning of “that shall be more than enough”?*
- H. Said R. Ammi bar R. Yud, “Until your lips get tired of saying, ‘Enough.’”]
- I. Said R. Ammi bar R. Yud, “In the Exile they sound the alarm on that account.”
- J. *So too it has been taught on Tannaite authority:*
- H. In a year in which the rains are abundant the men of the priestly watch send word to the men of the priestly delegation, “Consider your brothers of the Exile, that their houses not turn into their graves.”

XIV.2 A. They asked R. Eliezer, “To what extent must rain fall that people may pray that it not fall?”

- B. He said to them, “Sufficient that one may stand in Keren Ofel and waggle his feet in the water.”
- C. *But has it not been taught on Tannaite authority, his hands?*
- D. “His feet like his hands,” *is what I meant to say.*
- E. *Said Rabbah bar bar Hanah, “I personally have stood on Keren Ofel, and a Tai-Arab with a spear in his hand riding on a camel looked to me as little as a flax-worm.”*

XIV.3 A. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. “And I will give you your rains in their season” (Lev. 26: 4) — [so that the soil will be] neither soaked nor parched but middling, for so long as the rain is abundant, it scours away the soil and the soil does not produce fruit.
- C. Another matter: **[23A]** “in its season” (Lev. 2: 4):
- D. on Wednesday nights and on Sabbath nights, [when no work can be done anyhow].**
- E. For so we find in the time of Simeon b. Shatah, [Sifra: in the time of Queen Shelamsu], when it would rain on Wednesday and on Friday nights [on a weekly basis],**
- F. so that the grains of wheat grew as large as beans, and the grains of barley were like olive pits, and the lentils were like golden denars.**
- G. Sages made a bundle of some of them and left them behind for coming generations,**
- H. so as to demonstrate how much sin accomplishes [in less virtuous generations].**

I. This serves to illustrate the following:

J. “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he does not hear” (Isa. 59: 2).

K. They have held back goodness from you [Sifra CCLXI:I.3].

L. So we find in the time of Herod, when people were engaged in building the house of the sanctuary, that it would rain at night. In the morning the wind blow and the clouds scattered and the sun shone. The people came forth to do their work, and they knew that in their charge was the work of Heaven.

XV.1 A. M'SH S: They said to Honi the Circle Drawer, Pray for rain:”

B. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

C. On one occasion the larger part of the month of Adar passed, and rain had not fallen. They sent word to Honi the Circle-Drawer: “Pray so it will rain.”

D. He prayed, but it did not rain.

E. He drew a circle and stood within it in the way in which Habakkuk the prophet did, as it is said, “I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower” (Hab. 2: 1).

F. He said before him, “Lord of the world, your children have turned to me, for I am like a member of your household. I take an oath by your great name that I shall not move from here until you have mercy on your children”

G. Rain came, drop by drop.

H. His disciples said to him, “My lord, we looked to you that we not die. But to us it appears that the rain is falling only to release your oath.”

I. He said, “That is not what I asked for, but rain that will fill the cisterns, ditches, and caves.”

J. It rained furiously, every drop as big as the opening of a jug, and sages made an estimate that there was not a single drop smaller than a log in volume.

K. His disciples said to him, “My lord, we looked to you that we not die. But to us it appears that the rain is falling only to wipe out the world!”

L. He said, “That is not what I asked for, but rain or good will, blessing, and generosity of spirit.”

M. It rained properly [but continuously] until all the people had to climb up the Temple mountain on account of the rain.

N. They said to him, “My lord, just as you prayed that it would rain, now pray that the rain will go away.”

O. He said to them, “Thus I hold a tradition: ‘people are not to pray for an excess of good.’ Nonetheless, bring me a bullock for a thanksgiving offering.”

P. They brought him a bullock for a thanksgiving offering. He put his town hands on it and said before him, “Lord of the world, your people Israel, whom you brought forth from Egypt, cannot bear either an excess of goodness or an excess of punishment. When you showed your anger to them, they could not endure. When you poured out goodness upon them, they could not endure. May it please you that the rain may cease and that there be abundance in the world.”

- Q. On the spot the wind blow and the clouds scattered and the sun shone. And the people went out to the field and collected mushrooms and truffles.
- R. Simeon b. Shatah sent word to him, “Were you not Honi, I should decree excommunication against you, for if the years were years of famine as in the time of Elijah — in whose hand were the keys to rain — would not the name of Heaven have been profaned on account of you?! But what can I do to you, for you [Rabbinowitz} act petulantly before the Omnipresent and he does whatever you want for you — like a son who acts petulantly before his father and the father does whatever he wants. So he says to him, ‘Father, take me to wash me in warm water, rinse me in cold water, give me nuts, almonds, peaches, pomegranates,’ and he gives them. In your regard Scripture says, ‘Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her that bore you rejoice’ (Pro. 23:25).”

XV.2 A. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. What message did the members of the Hewn-Stone Chamber [superior court] send to Honi the Circle-Drawer?
- C. “‘You shall also decree something and it shall be established for you and light shall shine upon your ways. [When they cast you down, you shall say, there is lifting up. For the humble person he saves. He delivers him that is not innocent, yes, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of your hands]’ (Job. 22:28) —
- D. “‘You shall also decree something’ you have decreed below, and the Holy One, blessed be he, carries out your word above.
- E. “‘and light shall shine upon your ways:’ a generation that was shrouded in darkness did you illuminate through your prayer.
- F. “‘When they cast you down, you shall say, there is lifting up:’ a generation that had sunk down you lifted up with your prayer.
- G. “‘For the humble person he saves:’ a generation that was humiliated by its sin you saved by your prayer.
- H. “‘He delivers him that is not innocent:’ a generation that was not innocent you delivered by your prayer.
- I. “‘yes, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of your hands:’ you delivered it through the work of your clean hands.”

XV.3 A. Said R. Yohanan, “All the rest of the life of that righteous man he was troubled by this verse of Scripture: ‘A song of ascents: when the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like those who dream’ (Psa. 126: 1). *Honi thought, ‘Is there anyone who sleeps and dreams for seventy years?’*”

- B. *“One day he was going along the road. He saw a man who was planting a carob tree. He said to him, ‘As to that tree, how long does it take to bear fruit?’*
- C. *“He said to him, ‘It takes seventy years.’*
- D. *“He said to him, ‘Is it absolutely obvious to you that you are going to live another seventy years?’*
- E. *“He said to him, ‘That man I found a world full of carobs. Just as my fathers planted for me, so I plant these for my children.’”*
- F. *He sat down to wrap a piece of bread. Sleep overtook him. As he slept, a rocky formation closed around him and hid him from sight, and he slept for seventy*

years. When he woke up, he saw a certain man gathering carobs from the tree. He said to him, "Are you the one who planted the tree?"

G. He said to him, "I am his grandson."

H. He said to him, "It is to be inferred that I have slept for seventy years."

I. He saw his ass, who had produced generations of mules, and he went home.

J. He said to them, "Is the son of Honi the Circle-Drawer still alive?"

K. They said to him, "His son is no longer, but his grandson is here."

L. He said to them, "I am Honi the Circle-Drawer."

M. They didn't believe him.

N. He went to the house of study. He heard the rabbis saying, "Our traditions are as clear to us as in the days of Honi the Circle-Drawer. For when he would come to the house of study, any question that the rabbis had, he would work out for them."

O. He said to them, "I am Honi the Circle-Drawer."

P. They didn't believe him or pay him any respect such as was owing to him.

Q. He was deeply hurt. He sought mercy and died.

R. Said Raba, "That is in line with what people say: either fellowship or death."

Composite on Honi's Descendants: Abba Hilqiah

XV.4 A. Abba Hilqiah was the grandson of Honi the Circle-Drawer. When the world needed water, rabbis would send word to him and he would ask for mercy so it rained.

B. One time the world needed rain. So rabbis sent to him a pair of rabbis to ask for mercy so that it would rain. They came to his house but did not find him there. They went out to the field, and they found that he was hoeing. They greeted him **[23B]** but he did not pay any attention to them.

C. Toward evening as he gathered wood, he placed the wood and rake on one shoulder and his cloak on the other. Through the whole walk he did not tie on his shoes, but when he came to a stream, he put them on; when he came upon thorns and thistles he lifted up his garments. When he got to town, his wife came to meet him all dolled up. When he got home, his wife went in first, then he went in, then rabbis went in. He sat down to wrap bread but did not say to rabbis, "Come, eat bread." He divided the bread among his children, to the older, one piece, to the younger, two.

D. He said to his wife, "I know that rabbis have come on account of rain. Let's go up to the roof and ask for mercy, it's possible that the Holy One, blessed be he, will be pleased for rain to come, and we won't take credit for ourselves." They went up to the roof; he stood in one corner, she in another. First clouds gathered over the corner of his wife.

E. When he came down, he said to them, "Why have the rabbis come?"

F. They said to him, "The rabbis have sent us to the master to seek mercy for rain."

G. He said to them, "Blessed be the Omnipresent, who has not made you need Abba Hilqiah."

- H. *They said to him, "We know for sure that the rain has come on account of the master. But perhaps the master will explain for us these things that have surprised us. How come when we greeted the master, the master paid no attention to us?"*
- I. *He said to them, "I was a day laborer, and I thought, I won't slack off."*
- J. *"And how come did the master carry wood on one shoulder and the cloak on the other shoulder?"*
- K. *He said to them, "It was a borrowed cloak. For one purpose [wearing it] it was borrowed, and for the other, it was not borrowed."*
- L. *"How come for the whole trip the master did not put on his shoes, but when he came to water, he put on his shoes?"*
- M. *He said to them, "The whole trip I could see [where I was walking], but in the water I couldn't see."*
- N. *"How come when the master came upon thorns and thistles he lifted up his garment?"*
- O. *He said to them, "This [the body] heals itself, that [the garments] do not heal themselves."*
- P. *"How come when the master got to town, the master's wife came to meet him all dolled up?"*
- Q. *He said to them, "So that I should not look at any other woman."*
- R. *"How come she went in [to the house] first, and then the master went in after her, and then we went in at the end."*
- S. *He said to them, "Because you were not vetted by me [so I didn't know who you were]."*
- T. *"How come, when the master broke bread, he did not say to us, 'You too, break bread'?"*
- U. *"Because there wasn't a lot of bread, and I thought, I won't place a gratuitous obligation on the rabbis [by offering what I don't have, in a show of false hospitality]."*
- V. *"How come, when the master divided the bread among his children, he gave to the older, one piece, to the younger, two?"*
- W. *He said to them, "This one stays home, that one sits in the synagogue [and studies]."*
- X. *"How come the clouds gathered over this corner, where the master's wife was standing, then in his corner?"*
- Y. *"Because a woman stays around the house, so she gives bread to the poor, and they get immediate benefit from it, but I give them money, and they don't get immediate benefit. Or maybe, [because] there were in our neighborhood some robbers, and I asked for mercy that they die, but she asked for mercy that they repent, and that's exactly what they did."*

XV.5 **A.** *Hanan the Retiring was the son of the daughter of Honi the Circle-Drawer. When the world needed rain, rabbis would send to him kindergarten children, and they would take hold of the hem of his garment and say to him, "Father, father, give us rain!"*

- B. He would say before the Holy One, blessed be he, “Do it for the sake of these, who don’t know the difference *between the father who gives rain and the father does not give rain.*”
- C. *And why was he called Hanan the Retiring?*
- D. Because he would retire to the privy [and lock the door].

Composite on Other Sages and their Power to Bring Rain

- XV.6** A. Said R. Zeriqa to R. Safra, “*Come and see [from the contrast between the actions of these masters] what is the difference between the brawny men of the Land of Israel [who acted arrogantly] and the pious men of Babylonia [who acted humbly]!*”
- B. “*With respect to the pious men of Babylonia, R. Huna and R. Hisda, when the world needed rain, they should say, ‘Let’s get together and seek mercy, perhaps the Holy One, blessed be he, will be pleased to give rain.’ The brawny men of the Land of Israel, for example, R. Jonah father of R. Mani, when the world needed rain, would go home and say to the household, ‘Give me my haversack and I’ll go and buy grain for a zuz.’ When he went out, he would go and stand in a low place, as it is written, ‘Out of the depths I have called to you, Lord’ (Psa. 130: 1), and standing in this concealed place, he would cover himself with sack cloth and seek mercy, and it would rain. When he would come to his household, they would say to him, ‘Has the master brought grain?’ He would say to them, ‘I am thinking that, since it has rained, now the world will have plenty.’*”
- XV.7** A. *And further, his son, R. Mani, was persecuted by the household of the patriarch. He prostrated himself on his father’s grave and said to him, “Father, father, these men are persecuting me.” One day, they were passing by there. The knees of their horses stiffened until they undertook not to persecute him.*
- XV.8** A. *And further, R. Mani would regularly attend the lessons of R. Isaac b. Eliashib. He said to him, “The rich members of the household of my father-in-law are persecuting me.” He said, “May they lose all their money,” and they lost all their money.*
- B. *[Mani] said to him, “They’re pressuring me for support.” He said, “May they get rich,” and they got rich.*
- C. *He said, “My wife isn’t appealing to me.”*
 - D. *He said to him, “What’s her name?”*
 - E. *“Hannah.”*
 - F. *“May Hannah become beautiful,” and she became beautiful.*
 - G. *He said to him, “She likes to control me.”*
 - H. *He said to him, “If so, let her revert to her homeliness,” and Hannah turned homely again.*
- XV.9** A. *There were these two disciples who were regularly in the presence of R. Isaac b. Eliashib. They said to him, “May the master seek mercy for us, that we may get smarter.”*
- B. *He said to him, “That power was with me, but I sent it away.”*

XV.10 A. *R. Yosé bar Abin was regularly in the presence of R. Yosé of Deroqeret. He left him and came before R. Ashi. [24A] One day he heard him reciting the tradition, “Said Samuel, ‘He who nets a fish from the sea on the Sabbath, once it has dried off to the extent of a sela’s space, is liable for violating the Sabbath].”*

- B. *[Yosé bar Abin] said to him, “Will the master add, ‘[a spot] between the fins’?”*
- C. *He said to him, “But does the master not concur that R. Yosé bar Abin said that?”*
- D. *He said to him, “I am he [I am Yosé].”*
- E. *[Ashi] said to him, “But were you not regularly in the presence of R. Yosé of Deroqeret?”*
- F. *He said to him, “Yup.”*
- G. *He said to him, “And why did the master leave him and come here?”*
- H. *He said to him, “A man who had no mercy for his son and for his daughter — was he going to treat me mercifully?”*

XV.11 A. *What’s the story involving his son?*

- B. *One day he had day laborers working in a field. At night fall they didn’t bring them bread. They said to his son, “We are hungry.” They were sitting under a fig tree. He said, “Fig tree, fig tree, bring out your fruit so father’s workers may eat!” The tree produced fruit and they ate.*
- C. *In the interim the father came. He said to them, “Don’t be grieved with me; the reason I’m late is that I was doing a religious duty, and it kept me busy until now.”*
- D. *They said to him, “May the All-Merciful satisfy you as your son has satisfied us.”*
- E. *He said to them, “With what?”*
- F. *They said to him, “Thus and so is what happened.”*
- G. *He said to him, “My son, you have troubled your creator to have the fig bring forth its fruit not in its proper time. May he you. be gathered in not in his [your] proper time.”*

XV.12 A. *What’s the story involving his daughter?*

- B. *He had a beautiful daughter. One day he saw a man boring a hole in the fence to get a peep at her. He said to him, “What’s going on?”*
- C. *He said to him, “My lord, if to take her as a wife I have not had sufficient merit, should I not have merit enough at least to look at her?”*

- D. *He said to her, "My daughter, you are really bothering people, 'return to your dust and let not men stumble on your account.'"*

XV.13 A. *He had an ass. When people would rent it out for a day, they would send the fee tied to its back and it would come home on its own to its master's house. If they put on too much or too little money for the fee, it wouldn't go. One day they tied on a pair of sandals. And it would not go until they took them off, and then it went along.*

XV.14 A. *R. Eleazar of Birta — when the charity-collectors would see him, they would hide from him, because whatever he had he would give them. One day he was going to the market to buy a trousseau for his daughter. The charity collectors hid from him. He went and ran after them. He said to them, "By an oath! What are you engaged in at just this minute?"*

- B. *They said to him, "[We're collecting for the marriage of] an orphan boy and an orphan girl."*

- C. *He said to them, "By the Temple service! They take precedence over my daughter."*

D. *So he took everything he had with him and give it to them. He had a zuz left, with which he bought some week, which he deposited in the granary. His wife came along. He said to her daughter, "What did your father bring you?"*

- E. *She said to her, "Whatever he brought me he deposited in the granary." She came to open the door of the granary, and she saw that the granary was so full of wheat that it was seeping out of the hinges of the door socket and the door wouldn't open on that account.*

- F. *His daughter went to the house of study and said to him, "Come and see what the One who loves you has done for you."*

- G. *He said to her, "By the Temple service! Lo, they are consecrated so far as you are concerned, and you have a right in them only as would any other poor person in Israel."*

XV.15 A. *R. Judah the Patriarch decreed a fast, asked for mercy, but it didn't rain. He said, "How great is the difference between Samuel the Ramathite and Judah son of Gamaliel! Woe is the generation that finds itself so, woe to him in whose time this has happened." He felt humiliated and it rained.*

XV.16 A. *The household of the patriarch decreed a fast but they did not inform R. Yohanan and R. Simeon b. Laqish. In the morning they informed them. Said R. Simeon b. Laqish to R. Yohanan, "Lo, we did not take the fast upon ourselves from the preceding night!"*

B. *He said, "We are dragged after them."*

XV.17 A. *The household of the patriarch decreed a fast, but it didn't rain. Oshaia the youngest of the collegium repeated a Tannaite teaching for them: "'Then it shall be, if it be done in error by the congregation' (Num. 15:14) — the matter may be compared to the case of a bride to be, in the household of her father. So long as her eyes are beautiful, her entire body does not have to be examined. If her eyes are bleary, then the whole body needs examination. [Everything depends on the eyes, so too here, everything depends on the condition of the patriarchate.]"*

B. *The staff of the patriarchate came and put a scarf around his neck and tortured him. The townspeople said, "Let him be, since he also insulted us. But since we see that whatever he does is for the sake of him, we say nothing to him and let him be, and you too, let him be.""*

XV.18 A. *Rabbi decreed a fast but it didn't rain. Ilfa — some say, R. Ilfi — went down before the ark and recited, "He causes the wind to blow," and the wind blew; "the rain to fall," and rain fell.*

B. *He said to him, "What sort of deeds to you do?"*

C. *He said to him, "I live in a poor, remote place, where there is no wine for Sanctification of the Sabbath and for the Rite Distinguishing the Sabbath from the Weekday, and I go to the trouble and bring wine for those purposes, and I thereby fulfill the obligation of the entire town."*

XV.19 A. *Rab came to a certain place. He decreed a fast but it didn't rain. In his presence the precentor went down before the ark. He said, "He causes the wind to blow," and the wind blew; "the rain to fall," and rain fell.*

B. *He said to him, "What sort of deeds to you do?"*

C. *He said to him, "I am a teacher of children, and I teach reading to the children of the poor and of the rich alike. And from whoever has not got the possibility to pay I take no fee; and I have a fish pond, and whoever misbehaves, I bribe with some fish [to behave properly in class], and I send them to him and win his favor so that he will come and learn."*

XV.20 A. *R. Nahman decreed a fast. He asked for mercy but it didn't rain. He said, "Take Nahman and throw him from the wall to the ground. He felt humiliated and it rained."*

XV.21 A. *Rabbah decreed a fast. He sought mercy but it didn't rain. They said to him, "And lo, when R. Judah decreed a fast, it rained."*

B. *He said to them, "What can I do about it? If it has to do with mastering Tannaite traditions, we excel them, For in the time of R. Judah, all the Tannaite traditions*

that they learned were in Damages, while we study all six divisions of the Mishnah. And when R. Judah reached the passage, **The woman who was preserving vegetables in a pot [M. Toh. 2:2]**, or the passage in Uqsin, **If olives are pickled together with their leaves, the leaves are insusceptible [M. Uqsin 2:1]**, he would say, 'The speculations of Rab and Samuel do I see here,' while we repeat as Tannaite traditions in tractate Uqsin alone no fewer than thirteen version! But when R. Judah would remove a single shoe [in preparing for a fast], it rained. But as for us, we cry out all day long, but no one pays attention to us. If it is because of some deed or if anyone has seen anything, let him say so. But what can the principals of the generation do when their generation does not appear proper."

XV.22 A. R. Judah one time saw two men wasting bread and exclaimed, "I should then infer that there is plenty in the world." He cast his eyes. There was famine.

- B. Said rabbis to R. Kahana b. R. Nehunia, his attendant, "Will the master, who is constantly in attendance before him, arrange it that he goes forth through the door that is near the market place." He did it, and he went out to the market. He saw a crowd. He said to them, "What's going on?"
- C. They told him, "They're standing around a mass of ground dates that's on sale."
- D. He said, "I should then infer that there is famine in the world."
- E. He said to his attendant, "Take off my shoe." He took off one of his shoes, and it rained. When he reached over to take off the other, Elijah came and said to him, "Said the Holy One, blessed be he, 'If you take off the other, I'll wipe out the world.'"

XV.23 A. R. Mari, son of Samuel's daughter, said, "I was once standing on the bank of the Papa canal. I saw angels who appeared in the guise of sailors, bringing sand and loading ships with it, and it turned into fine flour. Everybody came to buy it. I said to them, 'Don't buy of that, because it is the result of miracles. The next day boat-loads of wheat came from Perezina.'"

XV.24 A. Raba came to Hagronia and decreed a fast but it didn't rain. He said to them, "Let all the people continue with your fasting."

- B. The next day he said to them, "Is there anybody who saw a dream? Let him tell it."
- C. Said to them R. Eleazar of Hagronia, "In my dream they said to me, 'A good greeting to the good master from the good lord who does good from his store of good for his people.'"
- D. He said, "That implies that this is a time of favor to ask for mercy." He asked for mercy and it rained.

XV.25 A. Once someone was sentenced by Raba's court to a flogging because he had sexual relations with a gentile woman. Raba had him flogged, and he died. The matter was reported to the court of King Shapur II. . He wanted to punish Raba. Said to him Ifra Hormiz, King Shapur's mother, to her son, "Don't get involved with these Jews, for whatever they ask from their master he gives them."

- B. He said to her, "What's that?"
- C. "They ask for mercy and it rains."

- D. *He said to her, "That's because its the rainy season. But let them ask for mercy at this time, now in the summer season, and bring rain."*
- E. *She sent word to Raba, "Concentrate and ask for mercy to bring rain."*
- F. *He sought mercy but rain didn't come. He said before him, "Lord of the world, 'God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, a work you did in their days, in the days of old' (Psa. 44: 2) — but we have not seen it with our own eyes!"*
- G. *Rain came until the gutters of Mahoza emptied into the Tigris.*
- H. *His father came and appeared to him in a dream and said to him, "Is there anybody else who gives so much trouble to heaven the way you do! Change the place where you sleep." He changed his place. The next day he found that his bed was cut with knives.*

XV.26 *A. R. Pappa decreed a fast and it didn't rain. He felt humiliated He supped on a plateful of grits and asked for mercy but it didn't rain. Said to him R. Nahman bar Oshpazarti, "If you would sup on another plateful of grits, it will rain." He was embarrassed and felt humiliated and it rained.*

XV.27 *A. R. Hanina b. Dosa was going along the road. It rained. He said before him, "The entire world is in good shape but Hanina is in trouble." The rain stopped.*

- B. *When he got home, he said before him, "The whole world is in trouble but Hanina is in good shape." It rained.*
- C. *Said R. Joseph, "What good did the prayer of the High Priest [in the Temple] do against that of R. Hanina b. Dosa, for we have learned in the Mishnah: **And he said a short prayer in the outer area. He did not prolong his prayer, so as not to frighten the Israelites [M. Yoma 5:1K].**"*
 - D. *What is the short prayer that he says?*
 - E. *Raba bar R. Ada and Rabin bar R. Ada both in the name of R. Judah say, "May it be pleasing to you, Lord our God, that this year should be a year of heavy and rain and hot."*
 - F. *But is a hot year such an advantage? Rather, say, "...if it is hot, let it be rainy."*
 - G. *Aha b. Raba concludes in the name of R. Judah, "May no ruler depart from the House of Judah, and may your people Israel may not need sustenance from one another. And may the prayer of travellers not come before you [that it not rain]."*
 - H. *R. Aha b. Raba completes the prayer in the name of R. Judah as follows: "May there never cease from the house of Judah a ruler and may Israel your people never be in need of sustenance from one another let alone from any other people."*

Composite on Hanina b. Dosa

- I. Said R. Judah said Rab, "Every day an echo comes forth and says, 'The entire world is sustained on account of Hanina, my son, and Hanina, my son, suffices with a qab of carobs from week to week.'"
- J. *"Every Friday [having no food to prepare for the Sabbath] his wife would light the oven and toss in what makes smoke [25a] on account of embarrassment. She had a bad neighbor. She said, 'Now I know that they have nothing, so what's all this [smoke]?' She went and knocked on the door. [Hanina's wife], being embarrassed, went into a room. A miracle was done, and the neighbor looked into the oven and saw an oven full of bread and the kneading trough full of dough. She said to her, 'Mrs. So-and-so, Mrs. So-and-so, bring a shovel, your bread is charring.'"*
- K. *She said to her, "Yes, that's exactly why I went into the room [to fetch it]."*
- L. *A Tannaite statement: He had gone in to get it, because she was used to miracles.*

XV.28 A. *Said to him his wife, "How long are we going to go along and suffer like this?"*

- B. *He said to her, "What should we do?"*
- C. *"Ask for mercy that something be given to you."*
- D. *He asked for mercy. Something like a hand came forth [from heaven] and handed to him the leg of a table of gold. He saw in a dream rich righteous men eating at a table of gold that had three legs, but he was eating at a table with only two legs.*
- E. *He said to her, "Do you want everyone to eat off of whole tables, while we eat off a table missing [a leg]?"*
- F. *[She said to him,] "What should we do?"*
- G. *"Ask for mercy that they take the leg away from you."*
- H. *He asked for mercy and they took it away.*
 - I. *A Tannaite statement: Greater was the latter miracle than the former miracle,*
 - J. *for there is a tradition that once something is given, it is not taken away.*

XV.29 A. *On a Friday one time he saw One Friday night he saw his daughter feeling sad. He said to her, "My daughter, why are you sad?"*

- B. *She said to him, "My confused my vinegar jar with my oil jar and I kindled the Sabbath light with [vinegar]."*
- C. *He said to her, "My daughter, why should that bother you? He who spoke to oil that it burn can speak to vinegar that it burn."*
- D. *A Tannaite statement: It continued burning all that day until they brought from it flame for the rite of distinguishing the Sabbath from an ordinary day.*

XV.30 A. *R. Hanina b. Dosa had goats. They said to him, "They're doing damage [to peoples' property]."*

B. *He said, "Well, now, if they're really doing damage, let bears eat them, but if not, then this evening let each one of them bring home a bear on its horns!"*

C. *That evening each one of them came home bearing a bear on its horns.*

XV.31 A. *He had a neighbor-lady, who was building room but the beams would not reach the walls. She came before him. She said to him, "I have built my room but the beams don't reach."*

B. *He said to her, "What's your name?"*

C. *She said to him, "Eiku" [resembling the Greek, eike = would that... (Rabbinowitz)].*

D. *He said to her, "Eiku that your beams should reach."*

E. *A Tannaite statement: they extended so far that they protruded by a cubit on this side and a cubit on that side.*

F. *And some say, "They added joints to them."*

G. *Polemo says, "I myself saw that room, and its beams protruded a cubit on this side and a cubit on that side, and people said to me, 'This house is the one that R. Hanina b. Dosa covered with his prayer.'"*

XV.32 A. *How come R. Hanina b. Dosa had goats, since he was poor? And moreover didn't sages say, "They do not raise small cattle in the Land of Israel?"*

B. *Said R. Phineas, "There was an incident. Someone came by his front door and left chickens [and did not retrieve them], and R. Hanina b. Dosa's wife found them. [Hanina] said to her, "Don't eat their eggs." So the eggs and chickens multiplied until it became a nuisance for them, so they sold them, and bought goats with the proceeds.*

C. *One day that man who had lost the chickens came by and said to his fellow, "This is where I left my chickens." R. Hanina heard. He said to him, "Do you have some sort of marking [to prove they were yours]?"*

D. *He said to him, "yes." He told him the distinctive marking and took the goats, and they are the very goats that brought home bears on their horns.*

XV.33 A. *R. Eleazar b. Pedat suffered extreme privation. He underwent a procedure [of being bled] and had nothing to eat. He took the skin of a garlic and put it into his mouth. He felt faint and slept. Rabbis came to greet him. They saw that he was crying and laughing, and that a beam of light radiated from his forehead. When he woke up, they said to him, "How come you cried and laughed?"*

B. *He said to them, "Because in session with me was the Holy One, blessed be he, and I said to him, 'How long will I suffer in this world?' and he*

said to me, 'Eleazar, my son, is what you want for me to turn the world back to its beginning? Then it's possible that you might be born in a more propitious time.'

- C. *"I said before him, 'All that and merely, "it's possible"!"'*
- D. *"I said to him, 'Which life is longer, the one I have already lived or the one that I have yet to live?'*
- E. *"He said to me, 'The one that you have already lived.' I said before him, 'If so, I don't want it.'*
- F. *"He said to me, 'As a reward that you have said, "I don't want it," I am giving you in the world to come thirteen rivers of balsam oil as clear as the Euphrates and the Tigris, there for your pleasure.'*
- G. *"I said to him, 'That and no more?!' He said to me, 'Then what shall I have left to give to your colleagues?'*
- H. *"I said to him, 'But am I asking for the share of one who has nothing?'*
- I. *"Then he snapped at my forehead and said to me, 'Eleazar, my son, I have shot you with my arrow.'"*

Composite on Sages' Power to Bring Rain, Continued

XV.34 A. R. Hama bar Hanina decreed a fast but it didn't rain. They said to him, *"Now look, R. Joshua b. Levi decreed a fast and it rained."*

- B. *He said to them, "I'm me and he's the son of Levi. Tell him to come and we shall focus our prayerful intention, maybe the community will break its heart and it will rain."*
- C. *They asked for mercy but it didn't rain. He said to them, "So do you want it to rain on our account [not yours]?"*
- D. *They said to him, "Yes."*
- E. *He said, "Firmament, firmament! Cover your face [with rain clouds]." The firmament did not cover its face.*
- F. *He said, "How brazen is the face of the firmament." The firmament did cover its face and it rained.*

XV.35 A. Levi decreed a fast but it didn't rain. He said before him, "Lord of the world, you have ascended and taken your seat on high, and you don't have mercy for your children."

- B. *It rained, but he was lamed.*
- C. *Said R. Eleazar, "A person should never speak insolently toward heaven, for lo, a great authority spoke insolently to Heaven and was lamed, and who is it? It is Levi."*
 - D. *But is that the cause? Wasn't it because he showed a certain form of kneeling to Rabbi and was lamed?*
 - E. *But this and that caused it.*

XV.36 A. R. Hiyya bar Luliani heard clouds saying to one another, *"Let's go and bring water to Ammon and Moab."*

- B. He said before him, “Lord of the world, when you gave the Torah to your people, Israel, you made the rounds of all the nations of the world but they did not accept it, and now you give them rain! *Let the clouds pour out their water here, and they poured out the water on the spot.*”

XV.37 A. R. Hiyya b. Luliani expounded as follows: “‘The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon’ (Psa. 92:13). If we speak of a palm tree, why mention a cedar, and if we mention a cedar, why mention a palm tree? If we had spoken of a cedar but not a palm tree, one might have thought that, [25B] just as the cedar does not produce fruit, so the righteous will produce no fruit; therefore the palm tree is noted. And if the palm tree is introduced as the governing analogy but not the cedar, it would have been supposed that just as the stump of the palm tree does not grow afresh, so the shoot of the righteous will not grow. Therefore the cedar also is mentioned.”

- B. But does the stem of the cedar renew itself? *Has it not been taught on Tannaite authority: He who buys a tree from his fellow, intending to cut it down, must leave in the ground a handbreadth of the height of the tree and cut the rest. If it is a virgin sycamore, he must leave three handbreadths in the ground; if it is a sycamore trunk, two; if it is reeds and vines, the cut is to be made from the knot and above; in the case of palm trees and cedars, he may dig down and take them out with the roots, since the stumps will not grow again anyhow [cf. T. B.B. 4:7P-Q].*

- C. *Here with what case do we deal? With other sorts of cedars, in line with what Rabbah bar Huna said, for said Rabbah bar Huna, “There are ten types of cedars as it is said, ‘I will plant in the wilderness the cedar: the acacia tree and the myrtle tree’ (Isa. 61:19).”*

XV.38 A. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. There is the case of R. Eliezer, who decreed thirteen fasts for the community but it didn’t rain. When at the end the community began to depart, he said to them, “Have you dug graves for yourselves.” The whole people broke out in tears, and it rained.

XV.39 A. There is another case involving R. Eliezer, who went down before the ark and said the twenty-four benedictions but was not answered.

- B. R. Aqiba went down after him and said, “Our father, our king, we have no king besides you, our father, our king, for your sake have mercy on us,” and it rained.
- C. The rabbis grumbled against [Eliezer]. An echo came forth and said, “It is not because that one is greater than this one, but because that one is forbearing and this one is not forbearing.”

XV.40 A. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. To what extent must rain come down for the community to suspend its fast?
- C. “[The rain must have penetrated] to as far as the knee of the plough breaks the soil,” the words of R. Meir.
- D. And sages say, “In arid soil, a handbreadth; in partially soft soil, two handbreadths, and in ploughed soil, three handbreadths.”

XV.41 A. *It has been taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. **R. Simeon b. Eleazar says, “You do not have a handbreadth of rain that descends from above, that the deep does not rise to meet with three handsbreadths from below” [T. 1:4J].**
- C. *But has it not been taught on Tannaite authority: two handbreadths?*
- D. *There is no contradiction, the one measure applies to soil that is ploughed, the other to soil that is not ploughed.*

XV.42 A. Said R. Eleazar, “When on the Festival of Tabernacles they pour out the water offerings, the deep says to its fellow, ‘Let your waters spring forth, I hear the voice of two friends [namely, the utensils bearing the water and the wine libations]:’ ‘Deep calls to deep at the voice of your cataracts’ (Psa. 42: 8).”

- B. *Said Rabbah, “I personally saw Ridya [the angel of rain], who looks like a heifer three years old, with lips parted; he stands between the lower deep and the upper deep. To the higher one he says, ‘Distil your water,’ and to the lower, ‘Let your water spring forth.’ ‘The flowers appear on the earth’ (Son. 2:12).”*

XVI.1 A. **If they were fasting and it rained for them before sunrise, they should not complete the fast. [If it rained] after sunrise, they should complete the day in fasting:**

- B. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*
- C. **“If they were fasting and it rained for them before sunrise, they should not complete the fast. [If it rained] after sunrise, they should complete the day in fasting,”** the words of R. Meir.
- D. R. Judah says, “It if rained before noontime, they need not complete the fast. If it rained after noontime, they should complete the day in fasting.”
- E. R. Yosé says, “If it rained before the ninth hour, they need not complete the fast, if after the ninth hour, they must complete it. For lo, we find in the case of Ahab, king of Israel, that he did fast from the ninth hour onwards: ‘See you how Ahab humbles himself before me’ (1Ki. 21:29).”

XVI.2 A. R. Judah the Patriarch decreed a fast and it rained after dawn. He considered that people should complete the fast. Said to him R. Ammi, “We have learned: before noontime...after noontime.”

XVI.3 A. Samuel the Younger decreed a fast and it rained before dawn. The people thought that it was a gesture of praise for the community. He said to them, “I shall tell you a parable: to what is the matter to be compared? To a slave who asked his master for a favor, and the master said to them, ‘Give it to him, so I don’t have to hear his voice.’”

XVI.4 A. Again Samuel the Younger decreed a fast, and it rained after sunset. The people thought that it was a gesture of praise for the community. He said to them, “This is not a gesture of praise to the community. But I shall tell you a parable: to what is the matter to be compared? To a slave who asked his master for a favor, and the master said, ‘Let him wait until he is submissive and upset and then give him his favor.’”

- B. And then, from the viewpoint of Samuel the Younger, *what would represent a case that* involved a gesture of praise to the community at all?
- C. He said, “[a case in which they recited the prayer, ‘he causes the wind to blow,’ and the wind blew; ‘he causes rain to fall’ and rain fell.”

XVII.1 A. WM'SH S: They decreed a fast in Lud. It rained before noon. R. Tarfon said to them, “Go, eat and drank and celebrate a festival.” So they arose and ate and drank and celebrated a festival day. Then they assembled it twilight and proclaimed the Great Hallel [that is. Psa. 136]:

- B. *Shouldn't they have said Hallel to begin with?*
- C. *Abbayye and Raba both said, “It is because they say Hallel [26A] only in a sated spirit with a fully belly.”*
- D. *Is that so? And lo, R. Pappa came to the synagogue at Abi-Gobar, and he decreed a fast and it rained before noontime, and he said Hallel, and afterward they ate and drank.*
- E. *The people of Mahoza are in a separate category, because drunkenness is common among them.*