

V

THE STRUCTURE OF BABYLONIAN TALMUD MEGILLAH

Whether or not the Talmud of Babylonia is carefully organized in large-scale, recurrent structures and guided by a program that we may call systematic forms the principal question addressed by an academic commentary. The preceding chapters therefore have pointed toward the presentation set forth here.

By “structure” I mean, a clearly-articulated pattern that governs the location of fully-spelled out statements. By “system,” I mean, a well-crafted and coherent set of ideas that explain the social order of the community addressed by the writers of a document, a social philosophy, a theory of the way of life, world view, and character of the social entity formed by a given social group. I see a collective, anonymous, and political document, such as the one before us, as a statement to, and about, the way in which people should organize their lives and govern their actions. At issue then in any document such as the remarkable one before us is simple: does this piece of writing present information or a program, facts to whom it may concern, or a philosophically and aesthetically cogent statement about how things should be?

The connection between structure and system is plain to see. From the way in which people consistently frame their thoughts, we move to the world that, in saying things one way rather than in some other, they wish to imagine the world in which they wish to live, to which they address these thoughts. For if the document exhibits structure and sets forth a system, then it is accessible to questions of rationality. We may ask about the statement that its framers or compilers wished to make by putting the document together as they did. But if we discern no structure and perceive no systematic inquiry or governing points of analysis, then all we find here is inert and miscellaneous information, facts but no propositions, arguments, viewpoints.

Now the Talmud commonly finds itself represented as lacking organization and exhibiting a certain episodic and notional character. That view moreover characterizes the reading and representation of the document by learned and experienced scholars, who have devoted their entire lives to Talmud study and exegesis. It must follow that upon the advocate of the contrary view — the one implicit in the representation of the document for academic analysis — rests the burden of proof. I set forth the allegation that the Talmud exhibits a structure and follows a system and therefore exhibits a commonly-intelligible rationality. The claim to write an academic commentary explicitly states that proposition. For the tractate before us, I have therefore to adduce evidence and argument.

I maintain that through the normal procedures of reasoned analysis we may discern in the tractate a well-crafted structure. I hold that the structure made manifest, we may further identify the purpose and perspective, the governing system of thought and argument, of those who collected and arranged the tractate's composites and put them together in the way in which we now have them. By "structure" I mean, how is a document organized? and by "system," what do the compilers of the document propose to accomplish in producing this complete, organized piece of writing? The answers to both questions derive from a simple outline of the tractate as a whole, underscoring the types of compositions and composites of which it is comprised. Such an outline tells us what is principal and what subordinate, and how each unit — composition formed into composites, composites formed into a complete statement — holds together and also fits with other units, fore and aft. The purpose of the outline then is to identify the character of each component of the whole, and to specify its purpose or statement. The former information permits us to describe the document's structure, the latter, its system.

While the idea of simply outlining a Talmud-tractate beginning to end may seem obvious, I have never made such an outline before, nor has anyone else.* Yet, as we shall now see, the character of the outline dictates all further analytical initiatives. Specifically, when we follow the layout of the whole, we readily see the principles of organization that govern. These same guidelines on organizing discourse point also to the character of what is organized: complete units of thought, with a beginning, middle, and end, often made up of smaller, equally complete units of thought. The former we know as composites, the latter as compositions.

*I have provided complete outlines for the Mishnah and for the Tosefta in relationship to the Mishnah, and, not always in outline form, for the Midrash-compilations of late antiquity as well.

Identifying and classifying the components of the tractate — the composites, the compositions of which they are made up — we see clearly how the document coheres: the plan and program worked out from beginning to end. When we define that plan and program, we identify the facts of a pattern that permit us to say in a specific and concrete way precisely what the compilers of the tractate intended to accomplish. The structure realizes the system, the program of analysis and thought that takes the form of the presentation we have before us. From what people do, meaning, the way in which they formulate their ideas and organized them into cogent statements, we discern what they proposed to do, meaning, the intellectual goals that they set for themselves.

These goals — the received document they wished to examine, the questions that they brought to that document — realized in the layout and construction of their writing, dictate the points of uniformity and persistence that throughout come to the surface. How people lay out their ideas guides us into what they wished to find out and set forth in their writing, and that constitutes the system that defined the work they set out to accomplish. We move from how people speak to the system that the mode of discourse means to express, in the theory that modes of speech or writing convey modes of thought and inquiry.

We move from the act of thought and its written result backward to the theory of thinking, which is, by definition, an act of social consequence. We therefore turn to the matter of intention that provokes reflection and produces a system of inquiry. That statement does not mean to imply I begin with the premise of order, which sustains the thesis of a prior

system that defines the order. To the contrary, the possibility of forming a coherent outline out of the data we have examined defines the first test of whether or not the document exhibits a structure and realizes a system. So everything depends upon the possibility of outlining the writing, from which all else flows. If we can see the order and demonstrate that the allegation of order rests on ample evidence, then we may proceed to describe the structure that gives expression to the order, and the system that the structure sustains.

The present work undertakes the exegesis of exegesis, for the Talmud of Babylonia, like its counterpart in the Land of Israel, is laid out as a commentary to the Mishnah. That obvious fact defined the character of my academic commentary, since we have already faced the reality that our Bavli-tractate is something other than a commentary, though it surely encompasses one. The problems that captured my attention derived from the deeper question of how people make connections and draw conclusions. To ask about how people make connections means that we identify a problem — otherwise we should not have to ask — and what precipitated the problem here has been how a composition or a composite fits into its context, when the context is defined by the tasks of Mishnah-commentary, and the composition or composite clearly does not comment on the Mishnah-passage that is subjected to comment.

The experience of analyzing the document with the question of cogency and coherence in mind therefore yields a simple recognition. Viewed whole, the tractate contains no gibberish but only completed units of thought, sentences formed into intelligible thought and self-contained in that we require no further information to understand those sentences, beginning to end. The tractate organizes these statements as commentary to the Mishnah. But large tracts of the writing do not comment on the Mishnah in the way in which other, still larger tracts do. Then how the former fit together with the latter frames the single most urgent question of structure and system that I can identify.

Since we have already examined enormous composites that find their cogency in an other than exegetical program, alongside composites that hold together by appeal to a common, prior, coherent statement — the Mishnah-sentences at hand — what justifies my insistence that an outline of the document, resting on the premise that we deal with a Mishnah-commentary, govern all further description? To begin with, the very possibility of outlining Babylonian Talmud tractate Sotah derives from the simple fact that the framers have given to their document the form of a commentary to the Mishnah. It is in the structure of the Mishnah-tractate that they locate everything together that they wished to compile. We know that is the fact because the Mishnah-tractate defines the order of topics and the sequence of problems.

Relationships to the Mishnah are readily discerned; a paragraph stands at the head of a unit of thought; even without the full citation of the paragraph, we should find our way back to the Mishnah because at the head of numerous compositions, laid out in sequence one to the next, clauses of the Mishnah-paragraph are cited in so many words or alluded to in an unmistakable way. So without printing the entire Mishnah-paragraph at the head, we should know that the received code formed the fundamental structure because so many compositions cite and gloss sentences of the Mishnah-paragraph and are set forth in sequence dictated by the order of sentences of said Mishnah-paragraph. Internal evidence alone suffices, then, to demonstrate that the structure of the tractate rests upon the Mishnah-tractate cited and discussed here. Not only so, but the sentences of the Mishnah-

paragraphs of our tractate are discussed in no other place in the entire Talmud of Babylonia in the sequence and systematic exegetical framework in which they are set forth here; elsewhere we may find bits or pieces, but only here, the entirety of the tractate.

That statement requires one qualification, and that further leads us to the analytical task of our outline. While the entire Mishnah-tractate of Sotah is cited in the Talmud, the framers of the Talmud by no means find themselves required to say something about every word, every sentence, every paragraph. On the contrary, they discuss only what they choose to discuss, and glide without comment by large stretches of the tractate. A process of selectivity, which requires description and analysis, has told the compilers of the Talmud's composites and the authors of its compositions* what demands attention, and what does not. Our outline has therefore to signal not only what passage of the Mishnah-tractate is discussed, but also what is not discussed, and we require a general theory to explain the principles of selection ("making connections, drawing conclusions" meaning, to begin with, making selections). For that purpose, in the outline, I reproduce the entirety of a Mishnah-paragraph that stands at the head of a Talmudic composite, and I underscore those sentences that are addressed, so highlighting also those that are not.

*This statement requires refinement. I do not know that all available compositions have been reproduced, and that the work of authors of compositions of Mishnah-exegesis intended for a talmud is fully exposed in the document as we have it. That is not only something we cannot demonstrate — we do not have compositions that were not used, only the ones that were — but something that we must regard as unlikely on the face of matters. All we may say is positive: the character of the compositions that address Mishnah-exegesis tells us about the concerns of the writers of those compositions, but we cannot claim to outline all of their concerns, on the one side, or to explain why they chose not to work on other Mishnah-sentences besides the ones treated here. But as to the program of the compositors, that is another matter: from the choices that they made (out of a corpus we cannot begin to imagine or invent for ourselves) we may describe with great accuracy the kinds of materials they wished to include and the shape and structure they set forth out of those materials. We know what they did, and that permits us to investigate why they did what they did. What we cannot know is what they did not do, or why they chose not to do what they did not do. People familiar with the character of speculation and criticism in Talmudic studies will understand why I have to spell out these rather commonplace observations. I lay out an argument based on evidence, not on the silences of evidence, or on the absence of evidence — that alone.

It follows that the same evidence that justifies identifying the Mishnah-tractate as the structure (therefore also the foundation of the system) of the Talmud-tractate before us also presents puzzles for considerable reflection. The exegesis of Mishnah-exegesis is only one of these. Another concerns the purpose of introducing into the document enormous compositions and composites that clearly hold together around a shared topic or proposition, e.g., my appendix on one theme or another, my elaborate footnote providing information that is not required but merely useful, and the like. My earlier characterization of composites as appendices and footnotes signalled the fact that the framers of the document chose a not-entirely satisfactory way of setting out the materials they wished to include here, for large components of the tractate do not contribute to Mishnah-exegesis in any way at all. If these intrusions of other-than-exegetical compositions were proportionately modest, or of topical composites negligible in size, we might dismiss them as appendages, not structural components that bear much of the weight of the edifice as a whole. Indeed, the language that I chose for identifying and defining these composites —

footnotes, appendices, and the like — bore the implication that what is not Mishnah-commentary also is extrinsic to the Talmud's structure and system.

But that language served only for the occasion. In fact, the outline before us will show that the compositions are large and ambitious, the composites formidable and defining. Any description of the tractate's structure that dismisses as mere accretions or intrusions so large a proportion of the whole misleads. Any notion that "footnotes" and "appendices" impede exposition and disrupt thought, contribute extraneous information or form tacked-on appendages — any such notion begs the question: then why fill up so much space with such purposeless information? The right way is to ask whether the document's topical composites play a role in the re-presentation of the Mishnah-tractate by the compilers of the Talmud. We have therefore to test two hypotheses:

1. the topical composites ("appendices," "footnotes") do belong and serve the compilers' purpose,

or

2. the topical composites do not participate in the re-presentation of the Mishnah-tractate by the Talmud and do not belong because they add nothing and change nothing.

The two hypotheses may be tested against the evidence framed in response to a single question: is this topical composite necessary? The answer to that question lies in our asking, what happens to the reading of the Mishnah-tractate in light of the topical composites that would not happen were we to read the same tractate without them? The outline that follows systematically raises that question, with results specified in due course. It suffices here to state the simple result of our reading of the tractate, start to finish: the question of structure, therefore also that of system, rests upon the position we identify for that massive component of the tractate that comprises not Mishnah-commentary but free-standing compositions and composites of compositions formed for a purpose other than Mishnah-commentary.

The principal rubrics are given in small caps. The outline takes as its principal rubrics two large-scale organizing principles.

The first is the divisions of the Mishnah-tractate to which the Talmud-tractate serves as a commentary. That simple fact validates the claim that the tractate exhibits a fully-articulated structure. But the outline must also underscore that the Mishnah-tractate provides both more and less than the paramount outline of the Talmud-tractate. It is more because sentences in the Mishnah-tractate are not analyzed at all. These untreated Mishnah-sentences are given in bold face lower case caps, like the rest of the Mishnah, but then are specified by underlining and enclosure in square brackets.

Second, it is less because the structure of the tractate accommodates large composites that address topics not defined by the Mishnah-tractate. That brings us to the second of the two large-scale modes of holding together both sustained analytical exercises and also large sets of compositions formed into cogent composites. These are treated also as major units and are indicated by Roman numerals, alongside the Mishnah-paragraphs themselves; they are also signified in small caps. But the principal rubrics that do not focus on Mishnah-commentary but on free-standing topics or propositions or problems are not given in boldface type. Consequently, for the purposes of a coherent outline we have to

identify as autonomous entries in our outline those important composites that treat themes or topics not contributed by the Mishnah-tractate.

I. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:1-2

A. THE MEGILLAH MAY BE READ ON THE ELEVENTH, ON THE TWELFTH, ON THE THIRTEENTH, ON THE FOURTEENTH, AND ON THE FIFTEENTH OF THE MONTH OF ADAR, NOT BEFORE AND NOT AFTER.

1. I:1: From where do we know that the Megillah is read on the eleventh ...of Adar (M **1:1A**)? Since, further on, we find it necessary to state, “The sages ruled leniently regarding the villages, allowing them to advance the Megillah reading to the day of assembly, in order that they could provide water and food for their relatives in the walled cities” thereby advancing the date to as early as Adar 11 and extending the celebration to five days in contrast to the two that appear to be intended in Est. 9:31, we therefore rule as follows: In fact, the Men of the Great Assembly instituted all five of them.

2. I:2: Where is this notion that Esther may be read on five different days, M **1:1A**, hinted at in Scripture?

3. I:3: Said Rabbah bar Bar Hanna, said R. Yohanan: This i.e., M 1:1 is the words of R. Aqiba, the anonymous one, who expounded “time,” “their time,” “their times.” But the sages say: One does not read it the Megillah other than at its proper time i.e., Adar 14 or 15.

4. I:4: From where do we derive these words? Said Rava, Scripture has said: “Therefore, the Jews who live in the unwalled cities observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar...” (Est. 9:19). Since the unwalled cities read Esther on the fourteenth, the walled cities read on the fifteenth.

B. CITIES THAT HAVE BEEN SURROUNDED BY A WALL SINCE THE TIME OF JOSHUA BIN NUN READ ON THE FIFTEENTH. VILLAGES AND LARGE TOWNS READ ON THE FOURTEENTH:

1. II:1: What is the scriptural source of this rule?

2. II:2: The Mishnah 1:1A is not in accordance with this next quoted Tannaite authority, as is taught: R. Joshua ben Qorha says: Cities that have been surrounded by a wall since the time of Ahasuerus read on the fifteenth (cf. T **Meg. 1:1A**).

C. GLOSSING B.2. AND FOUR TEACHINGS OF RABBI YERMIAH OR RABBI HIYYA BAR ABBA

a. II:3: Glossing the concluding statement of the foregoing, B.2: said R. Joshua ben Levi: A city, and everything near it, and everything seen together with it, are considered like the city for purposes of determining the date of reading, How far does this area around the city extend? Said R. Yermiah, or, if you prefer, R. Hiyya bar Abba: About the distance from Hamtan to Tiberias, a mil.”

I. II:4: And said R. Yermiah, or, if you prefer, R. Hiyya bar Abba: The seers (sofim) the biblical prophets established the double forms of the letters Mem, Nun, Sadi, Pe, and Qof.

II. II:5: And said R. Yermiah, or, if you prefer, R. Hiyya bar Abba: Onkelos the proselyte translated the Aramaic rendition of the Torah following R. Eliezer and R. Joshua.

III. II:6: “And I alone, Daniel, saw the vision; and the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled into hiding” (Dan. 10: 7). Who are the men? Said R. Yermiah, or, if you prefer, R. Hiyya bar Abba: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

D. REVERTING TO B.2’S PROOF. THE IMPORTANCE OF READING THE MEGILLAH

1. II:7: And now that you have said that “...province by province and city by city...” (Est. 9:28) is to be used for midrashic exposition (V.M), why is “...family by family...” included?

a. II:8: Gloss of a tangential detail of the foregoing.

E. GLOSSING B. 2. AND FURTHER TEACHINGS OF RABBI JOSHUA BEN LEVI ON MATTERS RELATED TO PURIM

1. II:9: Said R. Joshua ben Levi: A city (kerakh), and all that is near it, and all that is seen with it is considered like the city.

2. II:10: And said R. Joshua ben Levi: A city that was settled and later surrounded by a wall is considered like a village.

3. II:11: And said R. Joshua ben Levi: A city (kerakh) in which there are not ten idle men is considered like a village.

4. II:12: And said R. Joshua ben Levi: A city (kerakh) that was destroyed and subsequently resettled is treated like a city.

5. II:13: And said R. Joshua ben Levi: Lod, and Ono, and Gei HaHarashim have been surrounded by a wall since the time of Joshua bin Nun.

6. II:14: And said R. Joshua ben Levi: Women are obligated to observe the reading of the Megillah, because they, too, were included in that miracle.

7. II:15: And said R. Joshua ben Levi: When Purim falls on the Sabbath, one asks about and expounds the matters of the day even though the Megillah is read on a different day.

8. II:16: And said R. Joshua ben Levi: One is required to read the Megillah at night of the appropriate day and to go over it in the daytime, as is said, “My God, I will read in the daytime, even though you do not answer, and at night, I am not quiet. (Psa. 22: 3).

F. BUT THE VILLAGES MAY ADVANCE TO THE PRECEDING DAY OF ASSEMBLY

1. III:1: Said R. Hanina: The sages ruled leniently regarding the villages, allowing them to advance the Megillah reading to the day of assembly, in order that they could provide water and food for their relatives in the walled cities.

G. HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN? IF THE FOURTEENTH FALLS ON THE SECOND DAY, VILLAGES AND LARGE TOWNS READ ON THAT VERY DAY, AND WALLED CITIES ON THE NEXT DAY ADAR 15. IF ADAR 14 FALLS ON THE THIRD OR ON THE FOURTH DAY OF THE WEEK, VILLAGES ADVANCE TO THE DAY OF ASSEMBLY MONDAY, ADAR 13 OR 12, RESPECTIVELY; AND LARGE TOWNS READ ON THAT VERY DAY TUESDAY OR WEDNESDAY, ADAR 14; AND WALLED CITIES ON THE NEXT DAY WEDNESDAY OR THURSDAY, ADAR 15. IF ADAR 14 FALLS ON THE FIFTH DAY, VILLAGES AND LARGE TOWNS READ ON THAT VERY DAY, AND WALLED CITIES ON THE NEXT DAY FRIDAY, ADAR 15.

1. IV:1: Why is the first part of the Mishnah, which follows the sequence of the days of the month, different from the last part of the Mishnah, which follows the sequence of the days of the week?

H. IF ADAR 14 FALLS ON THE EVE OF THE SABBATH, VILLAGES ADVANCE TO THE DAY OF ASSEMBLY THURSDAY, ADAR 13, AND LARGE TOWNS AND WALLED CITIES READ ON THAT VERY DAY FRIDAY. IF ADAR 14 FALLS ON THE SABBATH, VILLAGES AND LARGE TOWNS ADVANCE AND READ IT ON THE DAY OF ASSEMBLY THURSDAY, ADAR 12, AND WALLED CITIES ON THE NEXT DAY SUNDAY, ADAR 15. IF ADAR 14 FALLS AFTER THE SABBATH ON SUNDAY, VILLAGES ADVANCE TO THE DAY OF ASSEMBLY THURSDAY, ADAR 11, AND LARGE TOWNS READ ON THAT VERY DAY, AND WALLED CITIES ON THE NEXT DAY MONDAY, ADAR 15.

1. V:1: According to whom is the Mishnah formulated, R. Judah the Patriarch or R. Yosé?

a. V:2: Gloss of a detail of the foregoing. Does R. Judah the Patriarch really think that we never reschedule the towns back to the preceding day of assembly

2. V:3: In any case, everyone agrees that we do not read the Megillah on the Sabbath. What is the reason? Said Rabbah: Everyone is obligated to hear the reading of the Megillah and the blowing of the Shofar, but not everyone is expert in the way to do the reading of the Megillah, so we prohibit reading it on the Sabbath, lest one take it in his hand and go to an expert to learn how to read it and carry it four cubits in a public domain in violation of the Sabbath law. Rav Joseph said: Because the eyes of the poor are lifted up during the reading of the Megillah to await the distribution of the gifts for the poor, which cannot be done on the Sabbath.

3. V:4: Said Rav: At the proper time, one may read the Megillah, even in private; not at the proper time, it may be read only among ten people; i.e., in public. Rav Asi said: Whether at the proper time or not at the proper time, one reads the Megillah only among ten people.

II. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:3

A. WHAT IS CONSIDERED A “LARGE TOWN”? ONE IN WHICH THERE ARE TEN IDLE MEN. LESS THAN THAT IS CONSIDERED A VILLAGE.

1. I:1: Ten idle men in the synagogue.

B. REGARDING THESE THEY SAID, “...ONE MAY ADVANCE, BUT ONE MAY NOT POSTPONE:”

1. II:1: What is the reason? Said R. Abba, said Samuel: Scripture said, “...and it may not pass”(Est. 9:27).

a. II:2: Other sayings of Abba: And said R. Abba, said Samuel: From where i.e., from which biblical source do we know that one should not count years by the days?

C. BUT THE TIME OF THE WOOD OFFERING FOR THE PRIESTS AND THE NINTH OF AV, AND THE HOLIDAY OFFERING, AND THE SEVEN-YEAR ASSEMBLY — ONE MAY POSTPONE BUT NOT ADVANCE.

EVEN THOUGH THEY SAID, “ON THESE OCCASIONS ONE MAY ADVANCE BUT NOT POSTPONE...,” THEY THESE DAYS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR EULOGY, AND FOR FAST, AND FOR GIVING GIFTS FOR THE POOR. SAID RABBI JUDAH: WHEN IS THIS APPLICABLE? IN A PLACE WHERE THEY ASSEMBLE ON THE SECOND AND FIFTH DAYS OF THE WEEK, BUT IN A PLACE WHERE THEY DO NOT ASSEMBLE ON THE SECOND AND ON THE FIFTH DAYS OF THE WEEK, ONE DOES NOT READ IT OTHER THAN AT ITS PROPER TIME.

1. III:1: “The Ninth of Av...” (M **1:2B**) is not advanced, because we do not advance suffering. “Holiday offering and the seven-year gathering...” are not advanced, because the time of their obligations has not yet arrived.

a. III:2: Said R. Eleazar, said R. Hanina: R. Judah the Patriarch did planting on Purim, and washed in the public fountain of Sepphoris on the Seventeenth of Tamuz, and tried to abolish the Ninth of Av, but they i.e., the rabbis did not agree with him.

1. III:3: But how could R. Judah the Patriarch plant something on Purim? For Rav Joseph has taught: “...rejoicing, and drinking, and holiday celebration...” (Est. 9:19); “rejoicing” teaches that they i.e., the days of Purim are prohibited as a time of mourning; “drinking” teaches that it Purim is prohibited as a time of fasting; “and holiday celebration” teaches that it is prohibited as a time of doing work.

A. III:4: Reverting to a detail of the foregoing.

B. III:5: Continuation of the foregoing.

C. III:6: The characteristics of various locales.

D. III:7: The characteristics of various locales, continued.

E. III:8: The characteristics of various locales, continued.

F. III:9: The characteristics of various locales, continued.

G. III:10: The characteristics of various locales, continued.

H. III:11: The characteristics of various locales, continued.

I. III:12: The characteristics of various locales, continued.

J. III:13: Continuation of foregoing.

K. III:14: The characteristics of various locales.

III. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:4

A. IF THEY READ THE MEGILLAH IN THE FIRST ADAR, AND SUBSEQUENTLY THE YEAR WAS DECLARED A LEAP YEAR, THEY MUST READ IT AGAIN IN THE SECOND ADAR.

THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FIRST ADAR AND THE SECOND ADAR:

1. I:1: But, regarding the order of the special Sabbath Torah portions, they are equal.
2. I:2: According to whom is our Mishnah formulated? Not the first Tannaite authority of the following baraita and not R. Eliezer beRabbi Yosé, and not Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel.

B. ...EXCEPT THE READING OF THE MEGILLAH:

1. II:1: Said Rav Samuel bar Judah: Esther sent to the sages: Establish me for all generations. They sent to her: You are stirring up enmity against us among the nations of the world. She sent to them: I am already recorded in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.
2. II:2: Said Rav Judah, said Samuel: The scroll of Esther does not defile the hands, meaning that Samuel thinks that Esther was not said through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
3. II:3: R. Eliezer says: The scroll of Esther was said through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as is said, "And Haman thought to himself" (Est. 6: 6). R. Aqiba says: Esther was said through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as is said, "and Esther found favour in the eyes of all who saw her" (Est. 2:15). R. Meir says: Esther was said through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as is said "and the thing became known to Mordecai" (Est. 2:22). R. Yosé son of the Damascene woman says: Esther was said through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as is said, "and they did not take any of the spoils" (Est. 9:15).

C. ...AND "GIFTS TO THE POOR:"

1. III:1: Taught Rav Joseph: "...and sending portions of food, one to another" (Est. 9:22) means two portions of food to one person; "and gifts to the poor" means two gifts to two people.
 - a. III:2: R. Judah Nesi'ah sent R. Oshiah the thigh of a three year old calf and a sock of wine.
 - a. III:3: Rabbah sent to Mari bar Mar through Abayye a basket full of dates and a bowl full of the flour of dried grain.
 - a. III:4: Abayye bar Abbin and Rav Hanina bar Abbin exchanged meals.
2. III:5: Said Rava: A man is obligated to drink on Purim until he no longer knows the difference between cursed Haman and blessed Mordecai.
3. III:6: Said Rava: Through a Purim meal eaten at night, one has not fulfilled his obligation.

IV. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:5

A. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BEHAVIOR PROHIBITED ON A HOLIDAY AND THAT PROHIBITED ON THE SABBATH, EXCEPT THE PREPARATION OF FOOD.

1. I:1: But, regarding the utensils for the preparation of food, they are equal in that, in either case, it is prohibited to prepare one.
2. I:2: The Mishnah is not in accord with the teaching of R. Judah, as is taught: There is no difference between a holiday and the Sabbath except the preparation of food; R. Judah permits even utensils for the preparation of food (T **Meg. 1: 7**).

V. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:6

A. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SABBATH AND YOM KIPPUR, EXCEPT THAT INTENTIONAL VIOLATIONS OF ONE I.E., THE SABBATH ARE PUNISHED BY MAN AND OF THE OTHER YOM KIPPUR THROUGH KARET.

1. I:1: But, regarding the matter of payments of damages to property, caused during the violation, they are equal in that, in neither case, does he pay.
2. I:2: According to whom is our Mishnah formulated? It is R. Nehuniah ben HaQanna, as is taught: R. Nehuniah ben HaQanna used to consider Yom Kippur like the Sabbath regarding payments etc., arguing that just as for a violation of the Sabbath one is guilty of a capital crime and exempt from payments etc., so for a violation of Yom Kippur, one is guilty of a capital crime and exempt from payments (cf. T **Meg. 1: 7**).

VI. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:7

A. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ONE PROHIBITED BY A VOW FROM DERIVING BENEFIT FROM ANYTHING THAT BELONGS TO HIS FRIEND AND ONE PROHIBITED BY A VOW FROM DERIVING BENEFIT FROM HIS FOOD:

1. I:1: But, regarding the matter of vessels in which one does prepare food, they are equal.

B. ...EXCEPT PASSING THROUGH HIS PROPERTY AND VESSELS IN WHICH ONE DOES NOT PREPARE FOOD BOTH OF WHICH ARE FORBIDDEN TO THE FORMER

1. II:1: People do not really worry about this.

VII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:8A-B

A. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VOWS AND GIFT OFFERINGS, EXCEPT THAT ONE IS OBLIGATED TO REPLACE VOWS IF THEY ARE LOST OR DAMAGED, AND ONE IS NOT OBLIGATED TO REPLACE GIFT OFFERINGS IF THEY ARE LOST OR DAMAGED.

1. I:1: But, regarding the matter of not bringing them late, they are equal in that neither may be brought late.
2. I:2: It is taught there: What is a vow? If one says: "An offering is upon me." What is a gift offering? If one says: "This animal is an offering." And what is the

practical difference between vows and gift offerings? If animals designated as vows died, or were stolen, or were lost, the donor is obliged to replace them; if those designated as gift offerings died, or were stolen, or were lost, the donor is not obliged to replace them (M **Kin. 1: 1**). From where do we derive these words?

VIII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:8C-D

A. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A QUARANTINED LEPER AND A CERTIFIED LEPER, EXCEPT EXPOSING THE HEAD AND TEARING THE CLOTHES.

1. I:1: But, regarding the matter of lying, and sitting, and the counting of seven clean days, they are equal.
2. I:2: From where do we derive these words?

IX. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:9

A. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ONE DECLARED PURE AFTER QUARANTINE AND ONE DECLARED PURE IMMEDIATELY, EXCEPT SHAVING AND THE OFFERING OF BIRDS BY THE LATTER.

1. I:1: But, regarding the matter of being sent outside the camp and defilement, they are equal
2. I:2: From where do we derive these words?

X. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:10

A. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCROLLS OF BIBLICAL BOOKS ON THE ONE HAND AND TEFILLIN AND MEZUZOT ON THE OTHER,

1. I:1: A. But, regarding the rules about sewing them with sinews and defiling the hands, they are equal.

B. ...EXCEPT THAT SCROLLS MAY BE WRITTEN IN ANY LANGUAGE I.E., SCRIPT OR TONGUE, WHILE TEFILLIN AND MEZUZOT MAY NOT BE WRITTEN OTHER THAN IN ASHURIT:

1. II:1: An objection was raised: Hebrew scriptural passage that one has written in Aramaic, or an Aramaic scriptural passage that one has written as Hebrew Scripture, or a Hebrew passage written in paleo-Hebraic script, does not defile the hands, until it is written in Ashurit,"on a scroll, and with ink" (Jer. 36:18) (M **Yad. 4: 5**).

I. II:2: On the translation of Scripture into Greek.

C. RABBAN SHIMON BEN GAMALIEL SAYS: EVEN REGARDING SCROLLS, THEY DID NOT PERMIT THAT THEY BE WRITTEN IN OTHER THAN GREEK IN ADDITION TO ASHURIT:

1. III:1: Said R. Abahu, said R. Yohanan: The law is according to the teaching of Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel. And, said R. Yohanan: What is the reason of Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel?

XI. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:11

A. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PRIEST ANOINTED WITH ANOINTING OIL AND ONE WHO WORE ONLY THE FULL PRIESTLY COSTUME, EXCEPT THE BULL OFFERED FOR ALL COMMANDMENTS THE VIOLATION OF WHICH BRINGS A PENALTY OF KARET AND REGARDING WHICH HE RULED INCORRECTLY:

THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PRIEST WHO SERVES IS RENDERED UNFIT, IS REPLACED, AND SUBSEQUENTLY RETURNS TO SERVICE AND A PRIEST WHO HAS TEMPORARILY REPLACED HIM, EXCEPT THE BULL OF YOM KIPPUR AND THE TENTH OF THE EPHAH.

1. I:1: But, regarding the matter of the bull of Yom Kippur and the tenth of the Ephah, they are equal
2. I:2: This is a Mishnah that is not according to R. Meir, for if it were according to the teaching of R. Meir, it is taught: A fully costumed priest may offer the bull brought for an incorrect ruling regarding any of the commandments, the words of R. Meir. And the sages say: He may not offer it.

XII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:12

A. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LARGE BAMAH AND A SMALL BAMAH, EXCEPT PASCAL SACRIFICES. THIS IS THE GENERALIZATION: ANYTHING THAT IS VOWED OR GIVEN AS AN OFFERING MAY BE OFFERED ON A BAMAH; AND ANYTHING THAT IS NEITHER VOWED NOR GIVEN MAY NOT BE OFFERED ON A BAMAH.

1. I:1: “Pascal offerings” and nothing more?
2. I:2: According to whom is this i.e., M 1:12A formulated?

XIII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 1:13

A. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SHILO AND JERUSALEM, EXCEPT THAT, IN SHILO, ONE COULD EAT MINOR HOLY THINGS AND SECOND TITHE IN ANY AREA WITHIN SIGHT OF THE CITY, WHILE IN JERUSALEM THIS WAS PERMITTED ONLY WITHIN THE CITY WALL. AND IN BOTH PLACES, MINOR HOLY THINGS MAY BE EATEN WITHIN THE CURTAINS. THE SANCTIFICATION OF SHILO WAS TEMPORARY AND NOT EXCLUSIVE, IN THAT IT WAS ACCOMPANIED BY PERMISSION TO OFFER AT THE BAMOT AFTER ITS DESTRUCTION. THE SANCTIFICATION OF JERUSALEM WAS PERMANENT IN THAT IT WAS EXCLUSIVE, AND WAS NOT ACCOMPANIED BY SUCH PERMISSION.

1. I:1: Said R. Isaac: I have heard that: One may sacrifice in the Temple of Onias nowadays, meaning that the Temple of Onias is not a place of idolatry; and that he thinks that the initial sanctification of Jerusalem sanctified it for that time, but not for the indefinite future, as is written, “For you have not come until now to the resting place and to the permanent acquisition” (Deu. 12: 9); “resting place” is Shilo, “permanent acquisition” is Jerusalem. It the text juxtaposes “permanent acquisition” to “resting place.” Just as there is permission to offer on the bamot after the sanctification of Shilo as the “resting place,” so is there permission to

offer on the bamot after the sanctification of Jerusalem as the “permanent acquisition.

Commentary on the Book of Esther

Interpretation of Esther Chapter One

XIV. Esther 1:1: “And it was in the days of Ahasuerus...”

A. “AND IT WAS IN THE DAYS OF AHASUERUS...”

1. I:1: Said R. Levi and, if you wish, say R. Jonathan: This matter is a tradition that we have from the Men of the Great Assembly: Every place where “and it was” (wa-yehi) is said is an expression connoting suffering. Said Rav Ashi: Every “And it was” — there are some this way negative and some the other way positive. Only “And it was in the days of...” is an expression connoting suffering.

1. I:2: Gloss of a detail of the foregoing: Levi: “Amoz and Amaziah Were Brothers.” And other statements of the same authority.

XV. Proems to the Midrashic Interpretation of the Book of Esther

A. “AND I WILL ARISE AGAINST THEM - THE WORD OF THE LORD OF HOSTS — AND I WILL DESTROY BABYLON’S NAME AND REMNANT AND KITH AND KIN, THE WORD OF THE LORD” (ISA. 14:22):

1. I:1: R. Jonathan began his exposition of this portion from here: “And I will arise against them - the word of the Lord of Hosts — and I will destroy Babylon’s name and remnant and kith and kin, the word of the Lord” (Isa. 14:22). “Name” is the writing; “remnant” is language; “kith” is monarchy; and “kin” is Vashti.

B. “IN PLACE OF THE BRIER WILL GROW A CYPRESS, AND IN PLACE OF A NETTLE WILL GROW A MYRTLE AND IT WILL BECOME A MEMORIAL TO GOD, AN ETERNAL SIGN THAT WILL NEVER BE CUT DOWN” (ISA. 55:13):

1. II:1: R. Samuel bar Nahmani began his exposition of this portion from here: “In place of the brier will grow a cypress, and in place of a nettle will grow a myrtle and it will become a memorial to God, an eternal sign that will never be cut down” (Isa. 55:13). “In place of the brier: means in place of the evil Haman who made himself an object of idolatry, as is written, “...and of all the briers and brambles” (Isa. 7:19).

C. “JUST AS THE LORD REJOICED OVER YOU TO DO GOOD TO YOU, SO WILL HE REJOICE TO DO EVIL TO YOU” (DEU. 28:63):

1. III:1: R. Joshua ben Levi began his exposition of this portion from here: “Just as the Lord rejoiced over you to do good to you, so will He rejoice to do evil to you” (Deu. 28:63). And does The Holy One, Blessed Be He, rejoice at the downfall of the wicked? And it is written, “...going out before the vanguard; and they say ‘Give thanks to the Lord for his mercy lasts for ever’” (2Ch. 20:21).

D. “TO THE PERSON WHO IS GOOD BEFORE HIM, HE GAVE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE AND HAPPINESS; AND TO THE SINNER HE GAVE THE DESIRE TO

GATHER AND TO COLLECT, IN ORDER TO GIVE IT TO THE ONE WHO IS GOOD BEFORE GOD...:"

1. IV:1: R. Abba bar Kahana began his exposition of this portion from here: "To the person who is good before Him, He gave wisdom and knowledge and happiness; and to the sinner He gave the desire to gather and to collect, in order to give it to the one who is good before God..." (Qoh.. 2:26). To the person who is good before Him, He gave wisdom and knowledge and happiness," this is the righteous Mordecai; "and to the sinner He gave the desire to gather and to collect," this is Haman; "in order to give it to the one who is good before God," this is Mordecai and Esther, as is written, "and Esther appointed Mordecai over the House of Haman" (Est. 8: 2).

E. "AND I WILL PLACE MY THRONE IN ELAM, AND I WILL DESTROY FROM THERE BOTH KING AND OFFICERS" (JER. 49:38):

1. V:1: Rabbah bar Ophran began his exposition of this portion from here: "And I will place my throne in Elam, and I will destroy from there both king and officers" (Jer. 49:38). "King" is Vashti, and "officers" is Haman and his ten sons.

F. "FOR WE ARE SLAVES, BUT IN OUR SLAVERY WE HAVE NOT LEFT OUR GOD, AND HE HAS GIVEN US FAVOUR BEFORE THE KINGS OF PERSIA" (EZR. 9: 9):

1. VI:1: Rav Dimi bar Isaac began his exposition of this portion from here: "for we are slaves, but in our slavery we have not left our God, and He has given us favour before the kings of Persia" (Ezr. 9: 9). When? In the time of Haman.

G. "YOU HAVE LET A MAN RIDE ON OUR HEAD, WE HAVE COME THROUGH FIRE AND WATER, AND YOU BROUGHT US OUT TO PLENTY" (PSA. 66:12):

1. VII:1: R. Haninah bar Pappa began his exposition of this portion from here: "You have let a man ride on our head, we have come through fire and water, and you brought us out to plenty" (Psa. 66:12). "Through fire" in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, the evil one; "and through water" in the days of Pharaoh; "and You brought us out to plenty" in the days of Haman. should be about Abraham

H. "HE HAS REMEMBERED HIS MERCY AND FAITH TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL; ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH HAVE WITNESSED THE SALVATION OF OUR GOD" (PSA. 98: 3):

1. VIII:1: R. Yohanan began his exposition of this portion from here: "He has remembered his mercy and faith to the House of Israel; all the ends of the earth have witnessed the salvation of our God" (Psa. 98: 3). When did all the ends of the earth witness the salvation of our God? In the days of Mordecai and Esther.

I. "A ROARING LION AND A PROWLING BEAR IS AN EVIL RULER OVER A WEAK PEOPLE (PRO. 28:15):

1. IX:1: Resh Laqish began his exposition of this portion from here: "A roaring lion and a prowling bear is an evil ruler over a weak people (Pro. 28:15). "A roaring lion," this is the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, for it is written about him, "The lion has come up from his thicket" (Jer. 4: 7). "A prowling bear," this is Ahasuerus, about whom is written, "...and behold a beast behind me..., the second resembled a bear" (Dan. 7: 5).

J. “THE CEILING SAGS FROM LAZINESS, AND THE HOUSE COLLAPSES FROM IDLE HANDS” (QOH. 10:18):

1. X:1: R. Eleazar began his exposition of this portion from here: “The ceiling (hameqareh) sags from laziness, and the house collapses from idle hands” (Qoh. 10:18). Because of Israel’s laziness, that they did not study Torah, the “enemy” of The Holy One, Blessed Be He, grows thin (makh).

K. “A SONG OF ASCENTS OF DAVID” (PSA. 124: 2). “WERE IT NOT FOR THE LORD, WHO WAS WITH US, MAY ISRAEL STATE; WERE IT NOT FOR THE LORD WHO WAS WITH US, WHEN A MAN ATTACKED US” (PSA. 124: 2):

1. XI:1: Rav Nahman bar Isaac began his exposition of this portion from here: “A Song of Ascents of David” (Psa. 124: 2). “Were it not for the Lord, who was with us, may Israel state; were it not for the Lord who was with us, when a man attacked us” (Psa. 124: 2). “A man,” not a king.

L. “FROM A MULTITUDE OF RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE THE PEOPLE REJOICES, AND FROM AN EVIL RULER A PEOPLE GROANS” (PRO. 29: 2):

1. XII:1: Rava began his exposition of this portion from here: “From a multitude of righteous people the people rejoices, and from an evil ruler a people groans” (Pro. 29: 2). “From a multitude of righteous people the people rejoices” this is Mordecai and Esther, as is written, “...and the city Susa was happy and rejoicing” (Est. 8:15); “and from an evil ruler a people groans” this is Haman, as is written, “...and the city of Susa was perplexed” (Est. 3:15).

M. FIVE PARTIAL PROEMS:

1. XIII:1: Rav Matna said from here: “And who is such a great nation who has God close to him” (Deu. 4: 7). Rav Ashi said from here: “Or has any god tried to go and take for himself one nation from the midst of another...” (Deu. 4:34). Rav said from here: “...and you will be sold...” (ibid. 28:68). R. Levi said from here: “And if you will not dispossess the inhabitants of the land...” (Num. 33:55). R. Hiyya said from here: “And it will be that what I planned to do to them I will do to you” (Num. 33:56).

XVI. Further Interpretation of Esther Chapter One 1:1

A. “...AHASUERUS:”

1. I:1: Said Rav: The brother of the head and the colleague of the head. And Samuel said: Because, in his days, the faces of Israel were blackened (hushharu) like the sides of a pot.

2. I:2: “This is Ahasuerus” (Est. 1: 1) — he in his wickedness from beginning to end.

B. “...WHO REIGNS...”

1. II:1: Said Rav: He came to power on his own. Some say this positively; some say it negatively.

C. “...FROM INDIA TO KUSH I.E., ETHIOPIA...”

1. III:1: Rav and Samuel: One said: India is at the end of the world and Kush is at the other end of the world; and the other said: India and Kush are situated next to each other. Just as he ruled over India and Kush, so did he rule from one end of the world to the other.

D. "...SEVEN AND TWENTY AND ONE HUNDRED PROVINCES."

1. IV:1: Said Rav Hisda: At first he ruled over seven; later he ruled over twenty; and finally he ruled over one hundred.

2. IV:2: The rabbis taught: Three kings ruled over the entire world, and they are Ahab, and Ahasuerus, and Nebuchadnezzar.

XVII. Interpretation of the Remainder of Esther Chapter One

A. "IN THOSE DAYS, WHEN THE KING SAT...IN THE THIRD YEAR OF HIS REIGN:"

1. I:1: Said Rava: What is the meaning of "when he sat"? After he stopped worrying.

B. "...THE SOLDIERS OF PERSIA AND MEDIA, THE PARTHIANS:"

1. II:1: But it is written, "...to the kings of Media and Persia..." (Est. 10: 2) in reverse order. Said Rava: They made an agreement with each other: If the kings are from us, the officials are from you; and if the kings are from you, the officials are from us.

C. "DURING HIS SHOWING THE WEALTH OF THE GLORY OF HIS KINGDOM..."

1. III:1: Said R. Yosé bar Hanina: This teaches that he put on the priestly garments.

D. "AND AT THE END OF THESE DAYS..."

1. IV:1: Rav and Samuel: One said he was a shrewd king, and one said he was a stupid king. The one who said he was a shrewd king concluded this because he did a good thing, in that first he brought those far away close by inviting those from all over the empire before the local people, for he could placate the people of his own place any time he chose to. And the one who said he was stupid concluded this because he should have invited the people of his own place first, for, if they rebelled against him, the others would have joined them.

2. IV:2: His students asked R. Shimon ben Yohai: Why were the Jews of that generation worthy of being destroyed?

E. "...IN THE COURTYARD OF THE PALACE GARDEN."

1. V:1: Rav and Samuel: One said: "A guest worthy of the courtyard was received in the courtyard; one worthy of the garden was received in the garden; one worthy of the palace was received in the palace. And one said: He seated them in the courtyard, but it did not hold them, and in the garden, but it did not hold them, until he brought them into the palace, and it held them.

F. "WHITE (HUR), COTTON AND BLUE..."

1. VI:1: What is "hur"?

2. VI:2: "...cotton..." (karpas) Said R. Yosé bar Hanina: Striped pillows.

G. "...ON SILVER RODS AND PILLARS OF IVORY, COUCHES OF GOLD AND SILVER..."

1. VII:1: It is taught: R. Judah says: A guest worthy of silver was assigned to a silver couch; one worthy of gold was assigned to a golden couch.

H. "...ON A FLOOR OF MARBLE, ALABASTER, MOTHER OF PEARL, AND MOSAICS."

1. VIII:1: Said Rav Asi: Stones that shine back at their owner, as it says, "...like jewels of a crown sparkling on His land" (Zech. 9:16).

I. "...AND SHELL MOTHER OF PEARL AND ONYX MARBLE"

1. IX:1: Rav said: rows by rows (dari dari). And Samuel said: There is a precious stone found in seaports, and it is called dara. He placed it in the middle of the feast, and it gave them light like the noon sun.

J. "AND THE SERVING WAS IN GOLDEN VESSELS, AND THE VESSELS WERE DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER:"

1. X:1: It should say "strange."

K. "AND ROYAL WINE, MUCH BEFITTING A KING."

1. XI:1: Said Rav: This teaches that they served each and every person wine that was older than he.

L. "AND THE DRINKING WAS ACCORDING TO LAW, THERE WAS NO COMPULSION."

1. XII:1: What is "according to law"

2. XII:2: "...no compulsion..." Said R. Eleazar: This teaches that they served each and every one the wine of his own country.

M. ...TO DO ACCORDING TO THE DESIRE OF EACH AND EVERY MAN:"

1. XIII:1: B. Said Rava: This means to do according to the desire of Mordecai and Haman

N. "ALSO, VASHTI THE QUEEN MADE A PARTY FOR THE WOMEN IN THE ROYAL PALACE..."

1. XIV:1: It should say "in the women's palace" i.e., separate parties for the men and the women. Said Rava: Both of them had immoral intentions.

O. "ON THE SEVENTH DAY, WHEN THE KING'S HEART WAS HAPPY FROM WINE..."

1. XV:1: Until now was his heart not happy from wine?

P. "AND THE QUEEN VASHTI REFUSED..."

1. XVI:1: Since she was an immoral woman, as a master said: "Both of them intended to commit an immoral act," why did she not go?

Q. "AND THE KING WAS VERY ANGRY, AND HIS ANGER BURNED IN HIM"

1. XVII:1: Why was it burning in him to such an extent?

R. "AND THE KING SAID TO THE SAGES..."

1. XVIII:1: Who are the "sages"? The rabbis.

S. "...WHO KNOW THE TIMES..."

1. XIX:1: What Times? Who know when to intercalate the years and how to set the months.

2. XIX:2: He Ahasuerus said to them i.e., the sages: Judge her for me. They said: What should we do? If we tell him, “Kill her,” tomorrow he will become sober, and will require her of us. If we tell him, “Leave her alone,” she has disgraced the kingdom and we will appear implicated.

T. “AND THE CLOSEST TO HIM WERE CARSHENA, SHETAR, ADMATA, TARSHISH, MERES, MARSENA, MEMUKHAN...”

1. XX:1: Said R. Levi: This entire verse was said about the sacrifices, i.e., each name can be interpreted as a reference to a sacrifice.

U. “AND MEMUKHAN SAID...”

1. XXI:1: One taught: Memukhan is Haman. And why is his name called Memukhan? Because he is always ready to be the cause for suffering.

V. “...THAT EVERY MAN SHOULD BE MASTER IN HIS HOUSE...”

1. XXII:1: Said Rava: Were it not for the first set of letters that the king sent, not even a tattered remnant of Israel would have remained.

XVIII. Interpretation of Esther Chapter Two

A. “And let the king appoint officials...”

1. I:1: Said Rav: What is meant by “Every shrewd man acts with knowledge, but a fool exposes his folly” (Pro. 13:16)? “Every shrewd man acts with knowledge” is David, as is written, “His servants said to him: Let them seek a young virgin for my master the king” (1Ki. 1: 2). Everyone who had a daughter brought her. “But a fool exposes his folly” is Ahasuerus, as is written, “And let the king appoint officials” (Est. 2: 3); everyone who had a daughter hid her from him.

B. “THERE WAS A MAN OF JUDAH I.E., JUDEA IN SUSAN THE CAPITAL AND HIS NAME WAS MORDECAI SON OF YAIR, SON OF SHIM’I, SON OF KISH, A MAN OF BENJAMIN.”

1. II:1: What is the point of this saying? If its purpose is to establish his lineage, it should have presented his lineage all the way to Benjamin. So why did it do it this way? One taught: All of them are actually his i.e., Mordecai’s names. R. Yohanan said: He really came from Benjamin; and why was he called “a man of Judah” here taken, as is usually the case in post-biblical Hebrew, as Jew? Because he rejected idolatry, for anyone who rejects idolatry is called a Jew, as is written, “there are Jewish men...” (Dan. 3:12).

a. II:2: Complement to a detail of the foregoing. When R. Shimon ben Pazi began to expound Chronicles, he said as follows: All your words are one probably meaning one with the parallel and seemingly contradictory passages of Scripture, and we know how to explain them: “And his Jewish wife (ishto ha-yehudiyah) bore Yered, father of Gedor, and Heber, father of Sokho, and Yequtiel, father of Zenoah. And these are the sons of Bityah, daughter of Pharaoh whom Mered married” (1Ch. 1:14). Why was she called “Jewish”? Because she rejected idolatry, as is written, “and Pharaoh’s daughter went down to wash on the shore of the Nile” (Exo. 2: 5).

C. “...WHO HAD BEEN EXILED FROM JERUSALEM...”

1. III:1: Said Rava: Who had been exiled willfully.

D. “AND HE RAISED HADASSAH...”

1. IV:1: She was called Hadassah, and she was called Esther.

E. “...BECAUSE SHE HAD NEITHER FATHER NOR MOTHER; AND WHEN HER FATHER AND MOTHER DIED, MORDECAI TOOK HER TO HIM AS A DAUGHTER.”

1. V:1: Why do I need “...and when her father and mother died...” these words appear redundant?

F. “...AND WHEN HER FATHER AND MOTHER DIED, MORDECAI TOOK HER TO HIMSELF AS A DAUGHTER.”

1. VI:1: One taught in the name of R. Meir: Do not read it “as a daughter” (le-vat), but rather as a wife (le-vayit).

G. “...AND THE SEVEN MAIDSERVANTS...”

1. VII:1: Said Rava: She used to count the days of the week through them one for each day.

H. “...AND HE CHANGED HER AND HER MAIDSERVANTS...”

1. VIII:1: Rav said that he fed her Jewish food. And Samuel said that he fed her qodelei de-haziri.

I. “...SIX MONTHS IN MYRRH OIL...”

1. IX:1: What is myrrh oil?

J. “SHE WOULD GO AT NIGHT AND RETURN IN THE MORNING...”

1. X:1: Said R. Yohanan: We have learned a positive quality about this evil man from his negative behavior, for he did not engage in sexual intercourse during the day.

K. AND ESTHER FOUND FAVOUR IN THE EYES OF ALL WHO SAW HER.”

1. XI:1: Said R. Eleazar: This teaches that Esther appeared to everyone like a member of his own nation.

L. “AND ESTHER WAS TAKEN TO KING AHASUERUS, TO HIS ROYAL PALACE, IN THE TENTH MONTH, WHICH IS THE MONTH OF TEBET...”

1. XII:1: A month in which one body enjoys another.

M. “AND THE KING LOVED ESTHER MORE THAN ANY OF THE OTHER WOMEN, AND SHE FOUND FAVOUR BEFORE HIM MORE THAN ALL THE VIRGINS...”

1. XIII:1: Said Rav: If he wished to experience (li-te'om ta'am) a virgin he did so; if he wished to experience a non-virgin, he did so.

N. “AND THE KING MADE A GREAT PARTY...”

1. XIV:1: He made a party, but she would not tell him her nation or birthplace; he removed taxes, but she would not tell him; he sent gifts, but she would not tell him.

O. “AND WHEN THE VIRGINS WERE ASSEMBLED AGAIN...”

1. XV:1: He Ahasuerus went and consulted Mordecai. He Mordecai said: A woman is made jealous only by the thigh of her rival. But even then she would not tell him, as is written, “Esther would not reveal her birthplace or her nation” (Est. 2:20).

2. XV:2: Said R. Eleazar: Why is it written, “He does not withhold his eyes from the righteous” (Job. 36: 7)? As a reward for Rachel’s modesty, she merited that Saul descended from her; and as a reward for Saul’s modesty, he merited that Esther descended from him.

3. XV:3: And said R. Eleazar: When The Holy One, Blessed Be He, designates greatness for someone, he designates it to his children and grandchildren to the end of the generations, as is said, “...and he seats them forever” (Job. 36: 7). But if he becomes haughty, The Holy One, Blessed Be He, brings him down, as is said, “If they are tied with ropes...He tells them what they have done...” (Job. 36: 8-9).

P. “...AND ESTHER DID WHAT MORDECAI SAID...”

1. XVI:1: Said R. Yermiah; This means that she used to show menstrual stains to the sages.

Q. “IN THOSE DAYS, WHILE MORDECAI WAS SITTING AT THE KING’S GATE, BIGTHAN AND TERESH BECAME ANGRY...”

1. XVII:1: Said R. Hiyya bar Abba, said R. Yohanan: The Holy One, Blessed Be He, made a master angry with his servants just to fulfill the desire of a righteous person. And who is it? Joseph, as is said, “And there with us was a Hebrew youth” (Gen. 41:12). ... servants angry with their masters, just to perform a miracle for a righteous person. And who is it? Mordecai, as is written, “...and the thing became known to Mordecai” (Est. 2:22).

XIX. Interpretation of Esther Chapter Three

A. “AFTER THESE THINGS...”

1. I:1: After what? Said Rava: After The Holy One, Blessed Be He, created the cure for the illness. For said Resh Laqish: The Holy One, Blessed Be He, does not smite Israel unless he creates for them a cure first, as is said, “When I cure Israel, the sin of Ephraim will become clear” (Hos. 7: 1).

B. “AND IT SEEMED WORTHLESS IN HIS EYES TO HARM MORDECAI ALONE...”

1. II:1: Said Rava: At first he plotted against Mordecai alone, and subsequently against Mordecai’s people. And who are they? The rabbis. And finally, against all the Jews.

C. III.1 A. “...HE CAST THE PUR, WHICH IS THE LOT...”

1. III:1: One taught: When the lot fell on the month of Adar, he rejoiced greatly. He said: The lot fell for me in the month in which Moses died.

D. IV.1 A. “THERE IS ONE NATION SCATTERED AND DISPERSED AMONG THE PEOPLES IN ALL THE PROVINCES OF YOUR KINGDOM”

1. IV:1: Said Rava: No one knew evil speech like Haman. He Haman said to him Ahasuerus: Let us destroy them. He Ahasuerus said to him: I fear from his God, lest he do to me what he did to my predecessors.

E. "...AND THEIR LAWS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF EVERY OTHER NATION..."

1. V:1: For they do not eat from our food, nor do they marry our women, nor do they marry their women to us.

F. "...AND THEY DO NOT OBEY THE KING'S LAWS ..."

1. VI:1: For they spend all the time with foolishness.

G. VII. A. "...AND IT IS NOT WORTHWHILE FOR THE KING TO TOLERATE THEM."

1. VII:1: For they eat and drink and deprecate the kingdom.

H. VIII.1 A. "IF IT IS GOOD FOR THE KING, LET IT BE WRITTEN TO DESTROY THEM; AND 10,000 TALENTS OF SILVER..."

1. VIII:1: Said Resh Laqish: It was clearly known to the one who spoke and made the world come into being that Haman would pay sheqels for Israel. Therefore He advanced their sheqels to his.

I. IX.1 A. "AND THE KING SAID TO HAMAN: THE MONEY IS GIVEN TO YOU AND ALSO THE PEOPLE, TO DO WITH IT AS IS GOOD IN YOUR EYES."

1. IX:1: Said R. Abba: To what are Ahasuerus and Haman comparable? To two people, one of whom had a mound in his field and one of whom had a trench in his field. The owner of the trench said: Would that someone would sell me this mound. The owner of the mound said: Would that someone would sell me this trench. After a time, the two were paired up. The owner of the trench said to the owner of the mound: Sell me your mound. He the owner of the mound said to him: Take it for free, gladly.

J. "AND THE KING REMOVED HIS SIGNET RING..."

1. X:1: Said R. Abba bar Kahana: Removing the signet ring was greater i.e., had a greater impact than 48 prophets and 7 prophetesses that prophesied to Israel, for all of them together failed to make them i.e., Israel return to their proper state, while Ahasuerus' removing the signet ring made them return to their proper state.

2. X:2: The rabbis taught: Forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses prophesied to Israel, and they did not delete from or add to what was written in the Torah, except the reading of the Megillah.

3. X:3: And are there no more prophets in addition to the forty eight?

4. X:4: And are there no more prophets in addition to the forty eight?

a. X:5: Seven prophetesses: Who are they? Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, and Esther.

l. X:6: Said Rav Nahman: Haughtiness is not appropriate for women. There were two haughty women, and their names are offensive. One was named Ziburta i.e., "bee," Deborah, and one was named Carcushta i.e., "weasel," Huldah.

A. X:7: Gloss of a detail of the foregoing.

b. X:8: The rabbis taught: There were four beautiful women in the world: Sarah, Rahab, Abigail, and Esther.

XX. Interpretation of Esther Chapter Four

A. “AND MORDECAI KNEW ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED, AND MORDECAI RENT HIS GARMENTS, AND HE PUT ON SACK CLOTH AND ASHES, AND HE WENT OUT INTO THE CITY, AND CRIED A GREAT AND BITTER CRY.”

1. I:1: What did he say?

B. “AND THE QUEEN BECAME UPSET...”

1. II:1: What is meant by “became upset”?

C. “AND ESTHER CALLED TO HATHAK”

1. III:1: Said Rav: Hathak is Daniel. And Why is he called Hathak? Because they cut him down from his greatness.

D. “...TO LEARN WHAT THIS IS (MAH ZEH), AND WHY THIS IS

1. IV:1: Said R. Isaac: She sent to him to Mordecai: Perhaps Israel has violated the five parts of the Torah, in which is written, “from this side and that (mi-zeh u-mi-zeh) they are written” (Exo. 32:15).

E. V.1 A. “AND THEY TOLD MORDECAI THE WORDS OF ESTHER”

1. V:1: And he Hathak? did not go to him.

F. “GO GATHER ALL THE JEWS IN SUSAN, AND FAST FOR ME; DO NOT EAT OR DRINK FOR THREE DAYS, DAY OR NIGHT, AND I AND MY MAIDENS WILL DO LIKEWISE, AND IN THIS MANNER I WILL APPROACH THE KING UNLAWFULLY...”

1. VI:1: Said R. Abba: This approach to the king was unlawful, because every single time she approached the king until now, she was forced; now she did so willfully.

G. “...AND IF I AM TO BE LOST, I WILL BE LOST.”

1. VII:1: Just as I am lost to my father’s house, so will I be lost to you.

H. “AND MORDECAI PASSED...”

1. VIII:1: Said Rav: This means that he passed the first day of Passover in fasting. And Samuel said: It means that he passed over a river in order to inform people what was happening.

XXI. Interpretation of Esther Chapter Five

A. I.1 A. “AND ON THE THIRD DAY ESTHER WORE ROYAL...”

1. I:1: It should say “Esther wore royal garb.”

B. Said R. Eleazar, said R. Hanina: This teaches that the Holy Spirit clothed her. Here is written, “and she wore” (Est. 5: 1), and there is written, “and the spirit clothed Amasai” (1Ch. 12:18).

a. I:2: And said R. Eleazar, said R. Hanina: The blessing of a commoner should never be treated lightly by you, because two commoners blessed two leaders of the generation, and it was fulfilled.

b. I:3: And said R. Eleazar, said R. Hanina: The curse of a commoner should never be treated lightly by you, because Abimelekh cursed Sarah saying, “here is an eye covering for you” (Gen. 20:16), and it was fulfilled in her children, “and behold when Isaac was old, his eyes dimmed” (Gen. 27: 1).

c. I:4: And said R. Eleazar, said R. Hanina: Come and see that the quality of humans is not like the quality of The Holy One, Blessed Be He. The quality of humans is that one first places a pot on the fire and then puts water in it; but The Holy One, Blessed Be He, places the water in the pot first and then places the pot on the fire, in order to fulfill what is said, “...to the sound of his placing much water in the heavens” (Jer. 10:13).

d. I:5: And said R. Eleazar, said R. Hanina: Anyone who repeats something in the name of the one who said it brings salvation to the world, as is said, “and Esther said it to the king in Mordecai’s name” (Est. 2:22)

e. I:6: And said R. Eleazar, said R. Hanina: A righteous person who is lost is lost to his generation. This is comparable to a man who lost a pearl. Wherever the pearl is, it is; it is lost only to its owner.

B. “AND ALL THIS IS OF NO VALUE TO ME...”

1. II:1: And said R. Eleazar, said R. Hanina: When Haman saw Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate, he said, “...all this is of no value to me” (Est. 5:13).

2. II:2: This teaches that all the contents of this evil man’s treasures i.e., of those of Haman were always on his mind; and when he saw Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate, he said: “And all this is of no value to me” (5:13).

a. II:3: A final item in the repertoire of attributions to Eleazar: And said R. Eleazar, said R. Hanina: The Holy One, Blessed Be He, will be a crown on the head of every righteous person, as is said, “On that day will the Lord of Hosts be a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of his people, and a spirit of judgment for the one who sits in judgment, and (a spirit) of bravery for those who fight a war at the gate” (Isa. 28: 5-6).

C. “AND SHE STOOD AT THE INNER COURT OF THE PALACE”

1. III:1: Said R. Levi: When she reached the idol room, the divine presence left her. She said: “My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?” (Psa. 22: 2).

D. “AND WHEN THE KING SAW ESTHER THE QUEEN”

1. IV:1: Said R. Yohanan: Three ministering angels were made available to her at that time, one who lifted her neck, and one who draped a thread of grace around her, and one who extended the scepter.

E. “AND THE KING SAID TO HER: WHAT DO YOU WANT, QUEEN ESTHER, AND WHAT IS YOUR REQUEST; UP TO HALF THE KINGDOM WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU.

1. V:1: B. Half the kingdom, but not all of the kingdom. And nothing that divides the kingdom. And what is that? The building of the Temple.

F. “LET THE KING AND HAMAN...COME TO THE PARTY”

1. VI:1: The Rabbis taught: What did Esther see i.e., what was she thinking that she invited Haman?

G. “AND HAMAN TOLD THEM OF THE GLORY OF HIS WEALTH AND HIS MANY SONS...”

1. VII:1: And how many is “his many sons”?

XXII. Interpretation of Esther Chapter Six

A. “ON THAT NIGHT THE SLEEP OF THE KING WAS DISTURBED”

1. I:1: Said R. Tanhum: This means the sleep of the king of the world was disturbed. And the rabbis said: The upper figures were disturbed, and the lower ones were disturbed.

B. “...AND HE ORDERED TO BRING THE BOOK OF RECORDS, THE CHRONICLES; AND THAT THEY BE READ...” “...AND IT WAS FOUND WRITTEN...”

1. II:1: This teaches that they were read by themselves i.e., they read themselves. “...and it was found written...” It should say “and a document was found...” or, perhaps, “he found a document,” reading the Hebrew as if it said, “And he found it really written”.

C. “NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE FOR HIM”

1. III:1: Said Rava: Not because they love Mordecai, but because they hate Haman.

D. “PREPARED FOR HIM”

1. IV:1: One taught: This means “prepared for himself.”

E. “...AND DO SO TO MORDECAI”

1. V:1: He Haman said to him Ahasuerus: Who is Mordecai? He Ahasuerus said: “...the Jew.” He Haman said to him: There are many Mordecai’s among the Jews. He Ahasuerus said to him: “the one who sits in the king’s gate.” He Haman said to him: One village is enough for him, or one river to use as a royal land grant for income.

F. “AND HAMAN TOOK THE GARMENTS AND THE HORSE...”

1. VI:1: He Haman went and found the rabbis sitting before him Mordecai, and he was telling them the rabbinic laws of the handful of flour used for certain offerings. When Mordecai saw him approaching, and holding the reins of his horse in his hand, he trembled. He said to the rabbis: This evildoer is coming to kill me. Depart from me, so that you will not be singed with his coal. Then Mordecai wrapped himself and rose for prayer. Haman came and sat before them i.e., the rabbis and waited until Mordecai finished his prayer. He Haman said to them: What were you studying? They said to him: When the Temple is in existence, one who donates a minhah-offering brings a handful of grain, and it atones for him. He Haman said to them: Your fist full of grain comes along and pushes aside my ten thousand talents of silver.

G. “AND HE HAMAN CALLED BEFORE HIM: THUS SHALL BE DONE TO THE MAN WHOM THE KING WISHES TO HONOR.”

1. VII:1: When he went along the road on which Haman’s house was located, his i.e., Haman’s daughter, who was standing on the roof, saw him. She thought the one riding to be her father, and the one walking before him to be Mordecai. She took the chamber pot and dumped it on her father’s head. He Haman looked up, and she saw that it was her father. She fell from the roof to the ground and died. And that is as is written, “And Mordecai returned to the king’s gate” (Est. 6:12) i.e., alone, without Haman.

H. “AND HAMAN RETURNED MOURNING AND DOWNCAST TO HIS HOUSE”

1. VIII:1: “Mourning” for his daughter and “downcast” over what happened to him.

I. “AND HAMAN TOLD ZERESH HIS WIFE AND ALL THOSE WHO LOVED HIM”

1. IX:1: It Scripture called them “those who loved him,” and it called them “his sages.”

J. “IF MORDECAI IS DESCENDED FROM THE JEWS...”

1. X:1: They Haman’s family and friends said to him: If he comes from the other tribes, you can vanquish him; if he comes from the tribes of Judah, or Benjamin, or Ephraim, or Menasseh, you cannot vanquish him.

K. “...BECAUSE YOU WILL SURELY FALL BEFORE HIM”

1. XI:1: R. Judah bar Ilai expounded: Why are these two words of falling needed? They said to him: This nation is compared to dust and is compared to the stars. When they descend, they descend to the dust; and when they ascend, they ascend to the stars.

L. “...AND THE KING’S EUNUCHES ARRIVED; AND THEY HUSTLED...”

1. XII:1: This teaches that they brought him to Esther’s chamber in a great confusion.

XXIII. Interpretation of Esther Chapter Seven

A. “FOR WE HAVE BEEN SOLD, I AND MY PEOPLE...BECAUSE THE ENEMY IS NOT WORTH THE DAMAGE TO THE KING.”

1. I:1: She said to him: This enemy does not take into account the damage he causes to the king. He Haman was jealous of Vashti, and killed her; now he is jealous of me, and wants to kill me.

B. “AND KING AHASUERUS SAID, AND HE SAID TO ESTHER THE QUEEN.”

1. II:1: Why does it say: “And he said” twice?

C. “AND ESTHER SAID: A MAN, A FOE, AND AN ENEMY IS THIS EVIL HAMAN”

1. III:1: Said R. Eleazar: This teaches that she was about to indicate Ahasuerus, but an angel came and pushed her hand toward Haman.

D. “AND THE KING AROSE IN HIS ANGER...AND THE KING RETURNED FROM THE PALACE GARDEN”

1. IV:1: The text juxtaposes rising with returning. Just as the rising from the party was in anger, so the returning from the garden was in anger, for he went and found that the ministering angels, who appeared to him as men, had torn up the trees of his garden.

E. “AND HAMAN WAS FALLING ON THE COUCH...”

1. V:1: “Falling”? It should say “had fallen.”

F. “AND HARBONAH SAID...”

1. VI:1: Said R. Eleazar: Even Harbonah was an evildoer in the conspiracy against the Jews, but when he saw that his suggestion had failed, he immediately fled. And that is as is written “The east wind... hurls itself at him and shows no mercy, he flees from its strength into the wind.”

G. “AND THE KING’S ANGER QUIETED DOWN (SHEKHAKHAH)”

1. VII:1: Why are these two shekhakhah’s found in the verse? One quieting down is that of the king of the world, and one is that of Ahasuerus.

XXIV. Interpretation of Esther Chapter Eight

A. “TO ALL OF THEM, TO A MAN, HE GAVE CHANGES OF CLOTHES, AND TO BENJAMIN HE GAVE...FIVE CHANGES”

1. I:1: “To all of them, to a man, he gave changes of clothes, and to Benjamin he gave...five changes” (Gen. 45:22): Is it possible that that righteous man would err through the same thing that caused him so much pain? For said Rava bar Mehasiah, said Rav Hama bar Guria’, said Rav: Because of the weight of two sela’im of wool that Jacob added to Joseph’s portion over that of the rest of his brothers, it evolved that our forefathers descended to Egypt. Said R. Benjamin bar Yefet: The reason Joseph gave Benjamin this particular gift was that he hinted to him that a son who would go forth from before the king in five royal garments would descend from him, as is said, “and Mordecai went out...in royal garb, blue and white, a large golden crown, and a cloak of linen and purple” (Est. 8:15).

B. “TO THE JEWS THERE WAS LIGHT, AND JOY, AND HAPPINESS, AND HONOR”

1. II:1: Said Rav Judah: “Light” is Torah, and thus it says. “because commandment is light and Torah is light” (Pro. 6:23); “joy is a holiday, and thus it says, “you shall rejoice on your festival” (Deu. 16:14); “happiness” is circumcision, and thus it says, “I am happy over your word” (Psa. 119:162); “and honor,” these are Tefillin, and thus it says, “and all the nations of the world will see that God’s name is read on you and will fear you” (Deu. 28:10)

XXV. Interpretation of Esther, Chapter Nine

A. “AND PARSHANDATA...TEN SONS OF HAMAN”

1. I:1: Said Rav Ada from Jaffo: The reader must read the names of Haman’s ten sons and the subsequent word “ten” in one breath. Why? Their life-breaths came out at the same time as the reader’s will appear to do.

B. “AND THE KING SAID TO ESTHER THE QUEEN: IN THE FORTRESS OF SUSANNA THE JEWS KILLED...”

1. II:1: Said R. Abahu: This teaches that an angel came and slapped his mouth.

C. AND THROUGH HER COMING BEFORE THE KING, HE SAID WITH A BOOK...”

1. III:1: “He said”? It should say, “she said.” Said R. Yohanan: She said to him: Let what is written in the book be said aloud.

D. “...WORDS OF PEACE AND TRUTH”

1. IV:1: Said R. Tanhum, and some say said R. Asi: This teaches that it the scroll of Esther requires scratching of the guide lines for scribes, like the truth of the lines of the Torah.

E. “AND THE WORD OF ESTHER WAS FULFILLED”

1. V:1: The “word of Esther” yes, and the “words of the fasts” (Est. 9:31) no? Said R. Yohanan: “words of the fasts...and the word of Esther was fulfilled, these days of Purim.”

XXVI. Interpretation of Esther, Chapter Ten

A. I.1 A. “BECAUSE MORDECAI THE JEW WAS SECOND TO KING AHASUERUS, AND GREAT FOR THE JEWS, AND WANTED BY MOST OF HIS BROTHERS”

1. I:1: “...and wanted by most of his brothers,” but not by all his brothers. This teaches that some of the members of the Sanhedrin separated from him.

2. I:2: Said Rav Joseph: Torah study is greater than saving lives, for at first Mordecai was counted after four and subsequently after five. At first is written, “...who came with Zerubavel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai Bilshan” (Ezr. 2: 2), and subsequently is written, “...who came with Zerubavel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai Bilshan” (Ezr. 2: 2). Said Rav, and some say Rav Samuel bar Marta: Torah study is greater than building the Temple, because throughout the time that Baruch ben Neriah was alive, Ezra did not abandon him and go up to the holy land. Said Rabbah, said Rav Isaac bar Samuel bar Marta: Torah study is greater than honoring one’s father or mother, because Jacob was not punished for all those years he spent studying in the house of Eber.

XXVII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 2:1

A. ONE WHO READS THE MEGILLAH OUT OF ITS LITERARY SEQUENCE HAS NOT FULFILLED HIS OBLIGATION:

1. I:1: From where do we derive these words i.e., that the text cannot be read out of its proper sequence? Said Rava, Scripture said, “...according to their writing and according to their time...” (Est. 9:27). Just as “their time” cannot be out of sequence, so “their writing” cannot be out of sequence.

2. I:2: One learned: and similarly regarding Hallel, and similarly regarding the recitation of the Shema, and regarding the Prayer

a. I:3: Gloss of foregoing: From where do we know this about Hallel i.e., that it requires proper sequencing?

b. I:4: As above: From where do we know that the same rule applies to the recitation of the Shema?

c. I:5: From where do we know that this applies to the Prayer?

I. I:6: Gloss of a detail of the foregoing.

II. I:7: Continuation of the foregoing.

B. IF HE READ THE MEGILLAH FROM MEMORY:

1. II:1: From where do we know. Said Rava: From the two uses of “remembering” (zekhirah) translated idiomatically above as “commemoration.” Here is written, “...and these days are remembered (nizkarim)” (Est. 9:28), and there is written, “write this for a memorial (zikkaron) in the book” (Exo. 17:14). Just as that latter verse requires that it be written in the book, so here should it be written in a book.

C. IF HE READ IT IN TRANSLATION INTO ANY LANGUAGE, HE HAS NOT FULFILLED HIS OBLIGATION.

1. III:1: How does this happen?

D. ...BUT ONE MAY READ IT TO NON-SPEAKERS OF HEBREW IN OTHER LANGUAGES:

1. IV:1: But you said: If one read it in any language other than Hebrew he has not fulfilled his obligation. Rav and Samuel, who both said: This is talking about Greek.

E. AND A SPEAKER OF ANOTHER LANGUAGE WHO HEARD ASHURIT THE TEXT READ FROM A SCROLL WRITTEN IN HEBREW LANGUAGE AND IN SQUARE SCRIPT HAS FULFILLED HIS OBLIGATION.

1. V:1: But he does not know what they are saying.

F. IF HE READ IT INTERRUPTING BETWEEN SECTIONS...HE HAS FULFILLED HIS OBLIGATION.

1. VI:1: The rabbis did not know what was the meaning of seirugin. They heard the maid in R. Judah the Patriarch’s house, who said to the rabbis who were entering Rabbi’s house in groups: How long will you continue to enter in groups (seirugin seirugin).

2. VI:2: The rabbis taught: One who read Esther in parts (seirugin) has fulfilled his obligation; reordered (seirusin), he did not fulfill his obligation. R. Mona says in the name of R. Judah: Even in parts, if he waited between the sections long enough to complete it i.e., to finish reading the entire book, he must return to the beginning

3. VI:3: If the scribe omitted letters or verses from it i.e., from the hand copied text of Esther, and the reader read them like an announcer who announces i.e., who repeats what he hears in a loud voice from memory, he has fulfilled his obligation.

4. VI:4: If the reader omitted one verse of the Megillah, he should not say, “I will read all the rest of it, and afterward I will read that verse,” but he should read

again from that verse onward. If he entered the synagogue and found the congregation had read half of it, he should not say, “I will read the second half of it with the congregation, and afterward I will read the other half,” but he should read it in its entirety in its proper sequence, from its beginning to its conclusion (cf. T 2:2-3).

G. ...OR DOZING ON AND OFF, HE HAS FULFILLED HIS OBLIGATION:

1. VII:1: What is meant by “dozes off”?

H. ONE WHO WAS WRITING IT, EXPOUNDING IT, OR CORRECTING IT, IF HE HAD IN MIND TO READ THE MEGILLAH AS REQUIRED BY THE RITUAL, HE HAS FULFILLED HIS OBLIGATION; IF NOT, HE HAS NOT FULFILLED HIS OBLIGATION.

1. VIII:1: How does this occur?

a. VIII:2: Gloss of a detail of the foregoing: Said Rabbah bar Bar Hannah, said R. Yohanan: It is forbidden to write one letter that is not written.

I. IF IT WAS WRITTEN WITH ORPIMENT OR RED PIGMENT OR WITH GUM OR WITH QANQANTOM, ON PAPER OR ON UNTANNED SKIN, HE HAS NOT FULFILLED HIS OBLIGATION:

1. IX:1: Sam is sama, “orpiment”. What is siqra, “red pigment”? Said Rabba bar Bar Hannah: It is called siqreta.

J. UNTIL IT IS WRITTEN IN ASHURIT:

1. X:1: As is written, “...according to their writing and according to their time” (Est. 9:27).

K. ON A SCROLL, AND WITH INK:

1. XI:1: From where do we derive this? From the two uses of “writing” (ketivah). Here is written “...and Esther the queen wrote” (Est. 9:29), and there is written “And Baruch said to them: From his mouth he would recite to me all of these things, and I would write them on a text with ink” (Jer. 36:18).

XXVIII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 2:2-3

A. A TOWNSMAN WHO WENT TO A CITY, OR A CITY DWELLER WHO WENT TO A TOWN — IF HE WILL RETURN TO HIS PLACE, HE READS THE MEGILLAH AT THE TIME OF HIS PLACE; AND IF NOT, HE READS WITH THEM I.E., WHERE HE IS AT THE TIME OF THE READING.

1. I:1: Said Rava: They taught this, i.e., M 2:2A only if he will return home by the evening of the fourteenth of Adar; but if he will not return home by the evening of the fourteenth, he reads with them.

2. I:2: And said Rava: A villager who went to a town, in either case reads with them.

B. AND FROM WHERE MUST ONE READ THE MEGILLAH IN ORDER TO FULFILL HIS OBLIGATION? RABBI MEIR SAYS: ALL OF IT. RABBI JUDAH SAYS: FROM “A JEWISH MAN.” RABBI YOSÉ SAYS: FROM “AFTER THESE THINGS.”

1. II:1: It is learned: R. Shimon bar Yohai says: From “On that night” (Est. 6: 1) cf. T 2:9. Said R. Yohanan: All of them the rabbis in the Mishnah and the one added here expounded one passage: “And Esther the queen wrote...and Mordecai the Jew with all force” (Est. 9:29). Said R. Helbo, said Rav Hama bar Guriah, said Rav: The halakhah is like the one who says “All of it must be read” in order to fulfill the obligation.

a. II:2: Saying assigned to the authority who gives the final decision in the foregoing: And said R. Helbo, said Rav Hama bar Guriah, said Rav: The Megillah (megillah) is called “scroll” (sefer), and is called “letter” (iggeret).

2. II:3: Said Rav Judah, said Samuel: One who reads from a copy of the Megillah written among the other books of the Hagiographa has not fulfilled his obligation.

a. II:4: Illustrative story.

3. II:5: Said R. Hiya bar Abba, said R. Yohanan: One who reads a scroll written among the other books of the Hagiographa has not fulfilled his obligation. And they hit him over the head.

XXIX. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 2:4

A. EVERYONE IS ACCEPTABLE TO READ THE MEGILLAH EXCEPT A DEAF MUTE, A MENTALLY DISABLED PERSON, AND A MINOR:

1. I:1: Who is the one who taught that a Megillah reading by a deaf mute is invalid even after the fact?

B. RABBI JUDAH ACCEPTS A READING DONE BY A MINOR:

1. II:1: Said R. Judah: When I was a minor, I read it in the presence of R. Tarfon and the elders in Lod. They said to him: One may not bring a proof from a minor (cf. T 2: 8).

XXX. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 2:5

A. ONE MAY NOT READ THE MEGILLAH:

1. I:1: From where do we derive that the reading of Esther must follow sunrise, 2:4A1?

B. NOR CIRCUMCISE:

1. II:1: As is written, “and on the eighth day emphasizing the daytime, he shall circumcise” (Lev. 12: 3).

C. NOR IMMERSE IN A MIKVEH, NOR SPRINKLE:

1. III:1: As is written, “and the pure one shall sprinkle on the impure one...on the seventh day” (Num. 19: 9), and immersion was juxtaposed to sprinkling.

D. NOR, SIMILARLY, MAY ONE WHO WAITS A SINGLE DAY FOR PURIFICATION CORRESPONDING TO A SINGLE DAY OF IMPURITY, IMMERSE HERSELF UNTIL SUNRISE:

1. IV:1: It M 2:4A5 is obvious. Why is one who waits a single day for purification corresponding to a single day of impurity different from any other people obligated to perform immersion?

E. AND ANY OF THEM WHO DID THE PRESCRIBED ACT AFTER THE BEGINNING OF DAYLIGHT, IT IS ACCEPTABLE:

1. V:1: From where do we derive these words?

XXXI. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 2:6

A. THE ENTIRE DAY IS PROPER FOR READING THE MEGILLAH:

1. I:1: How do we know that the entire day is acceptable for reading the Megillah?

B. AND FOR RECITING THE HALLEL:

1. II:1: As is written, “from the rising of the sun until its setting” (Psa. 113: 3).

C. AND FOR WAVING THE PALM BRANCH:

1. III:1: As is written, “And you should take for yourselves on the first day...” (Lev. 23:40).

D. AND FOR BLOWING THE SHOFAR:

1. IV:1: As is written, “it should be a day of blowing for you” (Num. 29: 1).

E. AND FOR THE ADDITIONAL PRAYER RECITED ON SABBATHS AND BOTH MAJOR AND MINOR BIBLICAL HOLY DAYS:

1. V:1: The rabbis made it like the additional sacrifices.

F. AND FOR THE ADDITIONAL SACRIFICES:

1. VI:1: As is written, “the daily matter on its day” (Lev. 23:37).

G. AND FOR THE CONFESSION OVER BULLS:

1. VII:1: Because he learns a comparison of the word “atonement” used in the context of the confession over bulls and also in the context of Yom Kippur, as is learned regarding Yom Kippur:

H. AND FOR THE CONFESSION OVER THE TITHE:

1. VIII:1: As is written, “and you shall say before the Lord your God: I have removed the holy stuff from the house” (Deu. 26:13).

I. AND FOR THE CONFESSION OF YOM KIPPUR:

ALSO FOR PLACING THE HANDS ON SACRIFICES, FOR SLAUGHTERING SACRIFICES:

1. IX:1: As is written, “and he should place...and he should slaughter” (Lev. 3: 8); And it is written regarding slaughtering, “on the day of your sacrifice” (Lev. 19: 6).

J. FOR WAVING THE OFFERING:

1. X:1: As is written, “on the day of your waving the Omer” (Lev. 23:12).

K. FOR PRESENTING GRAIN OFFERINGS:

1. XI:1: Because it is juxtaposed to waving, as is written, “and the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman and wave it...and offer” (Num. 5:25).

L. FOR PINCHING THE GRAIN OFFERINGS, AND FOR BURNING WHAT WAS PINCHED AND THROWN INTO THE FIRE. ALSO FOR SEVERING THE NECK OF FOWL OFFERED AS SACRIFICES, FOR COLLECTING BLOOD FROM SACRIFICES, AND FOR SPRINKLING THE BLOOD:

1. XII:1: As is written, “on the day he commanded Israel” (Lev. 7:37-38).

M. AND FOR MAKING AN ACCUSED ADULTERESS DRINK:

1. XIII:1: There is an analogous use of the word “law” (torah) here and elsewhere. Here is written, “and the priest shall apply to her all of this law (torah)” (Num. 5:30), and there is written, “...according to this law (torah) that they will teach you and according to the judgment...” (Deu. 17:11). Just as judgment is carried out during the day, so here the case of the accused adulteress is dealt with during the day.

N. AND FOR BREAKING THE CALF’S NECK:

1. I:XIV: Say those of the house of R. Yannai: Atonement is written about, like sacrifices.

O. AND FOR THE PURIFICATION OF A LEPER:

1. I:XV: As is written, “this shall be the law of the leper on the day of his purification” (Lev. 14: 2).

P. THE ENTIRE NIGHT IS ACCEPTABLE FOR HARVESTING THE OMER:

1. XVI:1: As a master said: Harvesting and counting are done at night, and bringing it is done during the day.

Q. AND FOR BURNING LEFTOVER SACRIFICIAL FATS AND LIMBS.

1. XVII:1: As is written “...all night until the morning” (Lev. 14: 7).

R. THIS IS THE GENERALIZATION: A THING WHOSE COMMANDMENT MUST BE FULFILLED DURING THE DAY, IS ACCEPTABLE THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE DAY

1. XVIII:1: What does “This is the generalization” include?

S. A THING WHOSE COMMANDMENT MUST BE FULFILLED DURING THE NIGHT, IS ACCEPTABLE THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE NIGHT.

1. XIX:1: What does this include? It includes eating Paschal sacrifices, and not according to the teaching of R. Eleazar ben Azariah.

XXXII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 3:1-4

A. ONE WHO READS THE MEGILLAH MAY STAND OR SIT:

1. I:1: One taught: Which is not true of the Torah. Standing is required of the Torah reader. From where do we derive these words ?

2. I:2: One scriptural passage says “and I sat on the mountain” (Deu. 9: 9), and another scriptural passage says “and I stood on the mountain” (Deu. 9:10). Said

Rav: Standing while learning, sitting while reviewing. R. Hanina said: Neither standing nor sitting but bent.

B. IF ONE PERSON READ IT, OR IF TWO PEOPLE READ IT, THEY HAVE FULFILLED THEIR OBLIGATION:

1. II:1: One taught: Which is not the case with the Torah. The rabbis taught: Regarding the Torah, one person reads, and one translates, as long as one does not read and two translate. And regarding the Prophets, one person reads, and two may translate, as long as two do not read and two translate. And regarding Hallel, and the Megillah, even ten may read and even ten may translate (T 3:20).

C. IN A PLACE WHERE IT IS CUSTOMARY TO RECITE A BLESSING IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE READING, ONE RECITES A BLESSING; AND IN A PLACE WHERE IT IS CUSTOMARY NOT TO RECITE A BLESSING, ONE DOES NOT RECITE A BLESSING:

1. III:1: Said Abayye: They did not teach this other than regarding the blessing recited after it; but before it, there is a requirement to recite a blessing.

2. III:2: What blessing does he recite before it? What blessing should one recite after it?

D. ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE WEEK AND ON THE FIFTH, AND ON THE SABBATH AT THE AFTERNOON SERVICE, THREE READ IN THE TORAH.

1. IV:1: To what do these three correspond? Said Rav Assi: To Torah, Prophets, and Hagiographa. Rava said: To Priests, Levites, and Israelites.

2. IV:2: Said Rava: A first reader who read four verses is praiseworthy; a second reader who read four verses is praiseworthy; a third reader who read four verses is praiseworthy.

E. ONE MAY NEITHER REDUCE THEM NOR AUGMENT THEM; AND ONE DOES NOT CONCLUDE WITH A READING FROM A PROPHET. THE ONE WHO BEGINS THE TORAH READING AND THE ONE WHO CONCLUDES IT RECITES A BLESSING, THE FORMER BEFORE IT AND THE LATTER AFTER IT.

1. V:1: One taught: The one who opens recites a blessing before it, and the one who closes recites a blessing after it cf. M 3:2C.

F. ON NEW MOONS AND ON THE WEEKDAYS OF A WEEK-LONG FESTIVAL, PRECISELY FOUR READ.

ON NEW MOONS AND ON THE NON-SACRED DAYS OF A FESTIVAL, FOUR READ IN THE TORAH. ONE MAY NEITHER REDUCE THEM NOR AUGMENT THEM; AND ONE DOES NOT CONCLUDE WITH A READING FROM A PROPHET. THE ONE WHO BEGINS THE TORAH READING AND THE ONE WHO CONCLUDES IT RECITES A BLESSING, THE FORMER BEFORE IT AND THE LATTER AFTER IT.

1. VI:1: Ulla bar Rav asked Rava: How does one read the passage about the New Moon in Num. 28: 1-15, which is divided into three paragraphs in the text, verses 1-8, 9-10, and 11-15? Refining or repeating the question: What should we do regarding "Command the Israelites and say to them: My sacrifice, My food..." (Num. 28: 1-8), which consists of eight verses?

a. VI:2: Continuation of a detail of the foregoing.

G. THIS IS THE GENERALIZATION: ANY DAY ON WHICH THERE IS MUSAF AND IS NOT A HOLIDAY, FOUR READ IN THE TORAH:

1. VII:1: It was asked of them: On a public fast day into how many portions should the reading be divided?

a. VII:2: And according to Rav Ashi, who is the author of the opinion in the Mishnah?

i. VII:3: Secondary development of a detail of the foregoing.

A. VII:4: Gloss of foregoing.

H. ON A HOLIDAY, FIVE. ON YOM KIPPUR, SIX. ON A SABBATH, SEVEN.

ONE MAY NOT REDUCE THEM, BUT ONE MAY AUGMENT THEM; AND ONE CONCLUDES WITH A READING FROM A PROPHET. THE ONE WHO BEGINS THE TORAH READING AND THE ONE WHO CONCLUDES IT RECITES A BLESSING, THE FORMER BEFORE IT AND THE LATTER AFTER IT.

1. VIII:1: According to whom is our Mishnah?

2. VIII:2: To whom do these three, five and seven people who read in the Torah correspond?

3. VIII:3: Jacob the heretic said to Rav Judah: To whom do these six readers of Yom Kippur correspond?

4. VIII:4: All people count among the number seven, even a minor, and even a woman. But the sages said: A woman should not read the Torah because of the dignity of the congregation (T [3:11](#)).

XXXIII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 3:5

A. ONE DOES NOT CONDUCT THE RECITATION OF THE SHEMA; AND ONE DOES NOT PASS BEFORE THE ARK; AND ONE DOES NOT RAISE HIS HANDS; AND ONE DOES NOT READ IN THE TORAH; AND ONE DOES NOT CONCLUDE FROM A PROPHET:

1. I:1: From where do we derive these words?

B. AND ONE DOES NOT STOP AND SIT AFTER ATTENDING A FUNERAL

1. II:1: This is because one must say: "Stand, dear ones, stand; sit, dear ones, sit." It is not proper to do this with fewer than ten people.

2. I:2: What is the blessing for mourners?

C. AND ONE DOES NOT RECITE THE BLESSING FOR MOURNERS OR CONSOLATIONS FOR MOURNERS, OR THE GROOMS' BLESSING; AND ONE DOES NOT INVITE PEOPLE TO SAY THE GRACE AFTER A MEAL IN GOD'S NAME AMONG FEWER THAN TEN:

1. III:1: This is because one must say "Let us bless our God"; it is not proper to do this with fewer than ten people.

D. AND REGARDING THE REDEMPTION OF LAND THAT BELONGS TO THE TEMPLE, A MAXIMUM OF NINE NON-PRIESTS AND A PRIEST:

1. IV:1: From where do we derive these words?

E. AND SIMILARLY REGARDING THE REDEMPTION OF A PERSON:

1. V:1: Is a person holy property?

XXXIV. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 3:6

A. ONE WHO READS FROM THE TORAH SHOULD NOT READ LESS THAN THREE VERSES:

1. I:1: To what do these three verses cf. M 3:6A correspond?

B. AND HE SHOULD NOT READ TO THE TRANSLATOR MORE THAN ONE VERSE AT A TIME, AND FROM A PROPHET, NO MORE THAN THREE VERSES. IF THE THREE VERSES OF THE PROPHETIC BOOK WERE THREE PARAGRAPHS, ONE SHOULD READ THEM ONE BY ONE:

1. II:1: Like these three one-verse paragraphs: “For thus said the Lord: You have been sold for nothing” (Isa. 52: 3), “For thus said the Lord, God: At first my people went down to Egypt...” (Isa. 52: 4), and “And now, what have I here, said the Lord...” (Isa. 52: 5).

C. ONE MAY SKIP PARTS OF THE TEXT IN A PROPHET, BUT ONE MAY NOT SKIP IN THE TORAH. HOW MUCH MAY ONE SKIP? AS LONG AS THE TRANSLATOR DOES NOT STOP:

1. III:1: And he threw back. On Yom Kippur one reads the passage beginning “...after the death of Aaron’s two sons” (Lev. 16: 1) and the passage beginning “Even on the tenth of the seventh month (Lev. 23:26 ff) (T 3: 7), and therefore one may skip.

XXXV. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 3:7

A. ONE WHO CONCLUDES FROM A PROPHET CONDUCTS THE RECITATION OF THE SHEMA, AND PASSES BEFORE THE ARK, AND RAISES HIS HANDS FOR THE PRIESTLY BLESSING. AND IF HE WAS A MINOR, HIS FATHER OR TEACHER PASSES BEFORE THE ARK NEXT TO HIM. A MINOR MAY READ IN THE TORAH OR TRANSLATE IT, BUT HE MAY NOT CONDUCT THE RECITATION OF THE SHEMA, OR RAISE HIS HANDS IN THE PRIESTLY BLESSING, OR PASS BEFORE THE ARK:

1. I:1: What is the reason that one who concludes from a Prophet should also conduct the recitation of the Shema, pass before the ark, and participate in the priestly blessing?

B. ONE WHO WEARS TORN CLOTHES MAY CONDUCT THE RECITATION OF THE SHEMA AND TRANSLATE THE BIBLICAL TEXTS THAT ARE READ, BUT HE MAY NOT READ FROM THE TORAH, AND HE MAY NOT PASS BEFORE THE ARK, AND MAY NOT RAISE HIS HANDS FOR THE PRIESTLY BLESSING:

1. II:1: Ulla bar Rav asked Abbaye: May a minor in torn clothes read from the Torah?

C. A BLIND MAN MAY CONDUCT THE RECITATION OF THE SHEMA AND TRANSLATE THE BIBLICAL TEXTS THAT ARE READ. RABBI JUDAH SAYS: ANYONE WHO NEVER SAW LIGHT THROUGHOUT HIS LIFETIME MAY NOT CONDUCT THE RECITATION OF THE SHEMA:

1. III:1: It is taught: They said to R. Judah: Many have anticipated expounding the secrets of the divine chariot cf. Eze. 1-3, but never saw it in their lifetimes (T 3:28). And R. Judah would say: There regarding the Merkavah, the matter depends on the understanding of the mind; he concentrates and knows. Here, it is because of benefit of the lights mentioned in the blessings before the Shema; and a blind person has no benefit from them.

XXXVI. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 3:8

A. A PRIEST WHO HAS BLEMISHES ON HIS HANDS MAY NOT RAISE HIS HANDS I.E., MAY NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE PRIESTLY BLESSING:

1. I:1: The blemishes of which they spoke are on his face, his hands and his feet (cf. T 3:29). Said R. Joshua ben Levi: If his hands were misshaped, he may not raise his hands.

2. I:2: Said Rav Assi: One from Haifa or Beit Shan may not raise his hands. It is learned this way also in a baraita: One does not permit men of Beit Shan or men of Beit Haifa, or men of Tivonin to descend before the ark, because they pronounce Alephs as Ayyins and Ayyins as Alephs.

a. I:3: Said R. Hiyya to R. Shimon bar R. Judah the Patriarch: Were you a Levite, you would be barred from the platform from which the Levites sang, because your voice is husky.

3. I:4: Said Rav Huna: One whose eyes constantly tear may not raise his hands.

4. I:5: Said R. Yohanan: A person who is blind in one of his eyes may not raise his hands.

B. RABBI JUDAH SAYS: EVEN SOMEONE WHOSE HANDS ARE DYED BLUE MAY NOT RAISE HIS HANDS IN THE PRIESTLY BLESSING, BECAUSE THE PEOPLE LOOK AT HIM ATTENTIVELY

1. II:1: One taught: If the work of most of the townspeople is with it, it is permitted cf. T 3:29.

XXXVII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 3:9

A. ONE WHO SAYS “I WILL NOT PASS BEFORE THE ARK I.E., LEAD THE AMIDAH IN COLORED CLOTHES” MAY NOT PASS BEFORE THE ARK EVEN IN WHITE CLOTHES. I WILL NOT PASS BEFORE THE ARK IN SANDALS” MAY NOT PASS BEFORE THE ARK EVEN BAREFOOT:

1. I:1: What is the reason for M 3:9A-B?

B. IF ONE SHAPES HIS TEFILLIN ROUND, IT IS A DANGER, AND THERE IS NO FULFILLMENT OF THE COMMANDMENT THROUGH IT. IF HE PLACED IT I.E., ONE OF THE TEFILLIN ON HIS FOREHEAD OR ON THE PALM OF HIS HAND, THIS IS THE MANNER OF HERESY. IF HE OVERLAID THEM WITH GOLD OR PLACED IT I.E., THE TEFILLIN SHEL YAD ON HIS SLEEVE, THIS IS THE WAY OF OUTSIDERS.

1. II:1: One may say that we have learned this, for the rabbis learned: Square phylacteries are a halakhah to Moses from Sinai.

XXXVIII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 3:10

A. IF ONE SAYS “MAY THE GOOD ONES BLESS YOU,” THIS IS THE WAY OF HERESY; “MAY YOUR MERCIES REACH TO THE BIRD’S NEST, AND MAY YOUR NAME BE MENTIONED FOR GOOD”; OR “THANK YOU..., THANK YOU...,” WE SILENCE HIM:

1. I:1: The statement in the Mishnah (3:10A2) “Thank you..., thank you...” is appropriate, because it looks like belief in two domains; and similarly the statement “...may your name be mentioned for good” because it suggests for good, yes, but for evil, no.

a. I:2: Someone who descended before the ark before Rabbah said: You had mercy on the “bird’s nest” (Deu. 22: 6), Have mercy and compassion on us; You had mercy on “it and its child” (Lev. 22:28), Have mercy and compassion on us.”

b. I:3: Someone who descended before the ark before R. Hanina said: “...The God who is great, powerful, awesome, glorious, mighty, and strong...” He R. Hanina said to him: have you finished your master’s praises? Now these three i.e., great, powerful, and awesome, if Moses had not written them in the Torah at Deu. 10:17 and the Men of the Great Assembly had not come and formalized them, we would not say even them; and you have said all of these others, too?

l. I:4: Said R. Hanina: Everything is in the hands of heaven except fear of heaven, as is said, “And now Israel what does your God ask of you except to fear the Lord your God...? (Deu. 10:12).

2. I:5: Said R. Zeira: One who says “Hear, O Israel...Hear, O Israel... is like one who says “Thank you... Thank you...”

B. IF ONE PARAPHRASES THE BIBLICAL PASSAGES ABOUT FORBIDDEN SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS, WE SILENCE HIM:

1. II:1: Rav Yosef taught: For example he says “...the disgrace (qalon) of his father” or “...the disgrace of his mother” instead of “the sexuality (or: the nakedness, `ervat) of your father” or “sexuality (or: the nakedness, `ervat) of your mother” (Lev. 18: 7).

C. IF ONE TRANSLATES “AND YOU SHALL NOT PERMIT OF YOUR SEED TO PASS TO MOLEKH” AS “DO NOT IMPREGNATE AN ARAMEAN WOMAN,” WE SILENCE HIM ABRUPTLY:

1. III:1: One of the house of R. Ishmael taught: Scripture is talking about an Israelite who had intercourse with a Kuthean i.e., a Samaritan and sired a child from her for foreign worship.

XXXIX. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 3:11

A. THE STORY OF REUBEN GEN. 35 IS READ AND NOT TRANSLATED. THE STORY OF TAMAR GEN. 38 IS READ AND TRANSLATED. THE FIRST STORY OF THE GOLDEN CALF EXO. 32: 1-20 IS READ AND TRANSLATED; AND THE SECOND EXO. 32:22-24 IS READ BUT NOT TRANSLATED. THE PRIESTLY BLESSING NUM. 6:22-27 AND THE

STORY OF DAVID AND AMNON CF. 2SA. 13 ARE READ BUT NOT TRANSLATED. ONE MAY NOT CONCLUDE THE TORAH READING WITH THE PASSAGE IN EZE. 1-3 ABOUT THE DIVINE CHARIOT, BUT RABBI JUDAH PERMITS IT. RABBI ELIEZER SAYS: ONE MAY NOT CONCLUDE THE TORAH READING WITH THE PROPHETIC PASSAGE BEGINNING “ANNOUNCE TO JERUSALEM” (EZE. 13):

1. I:1: There are biblical passages that are read and translated; and there are biblical passages that are read but are not translated; and there are biblical passages that are neither read nor translated (T **3:31**). Which passages are read and translated? And which passages are read but not translated?

2. I:2: All passages written in the Torah negatively are read positively, like: yishgalenah, “they will be ravished” (Deu. 28:30), which is read yiskavenah “they will be laid with.”

3. I:3: Said Rav Nahman: All jocularity is forbidden except jocularity directed at foreign worship, which is permitted, as is written, “Bel crouches, Nebo squeezes” (Isa. 46: 1), and as is written, “they squeezed and crouched together, but were unable to expel the load” (Isa. 46: 2).

XL. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 4:1

A. TOWNSPEOPLE WHO SOLD THE TOWN SQUARE MAY BUY A SYNAGOGUE WITH ITS PROCEEDS:

1. I:1: Said Rabbah bar Bar Hannah, said R. Yohanan: These are the words of R. Menahem bar Yosé, the anonymous one, but the sages say: The square has no sanctity.

B. A SYNAGOGUE MAY BUY AN ARK WITH ITS PROCEEDS; AN ARK MAY BUY TORAH WRAPPINGS WITH ITS PROCEEDS; TORAH WRAPPINGS MAY BUY SCROLLS WITH ITS PROCEEDS; SCROLLS MAY BUY A TORAH WITH ITS PROCEEDS.

1. II:1: Said Samuel bar Nahmani, said R. Jonathan: They did not teach this other than regarding a village synagogue; but a city synagogue, since people come to it from the world at large, they may not sell it, because it belongs to the public.

2. II:2: Said Rava: They taught this, i.e., M **4:1** only when the seven leaders of the city did not sell it at a meeting of the people of the city. But if the seven leaders of the city sold it at a meeting of the people of the city, it is acceptable even to drink beer from it.

a. II:3: Ravina had a certain mound of a synagogue. He approached Rav Ashi; he said to him: Is it permitted to plant it? He Rav Ashi said to him: Go buy it from the seven leaders of the town, at a meeting of the townspeople, and you may plant it.

b. II:4: Rami bar Abba was building a synagogue. The existing synagogue was old; he wanted to destroy it and to take bricks and beams from it and to bring them there i.e., to the new synagogue. He sat and was perplexed about what Rav Hisda said, for said Rav Hisda: One should not destroy a synagogue until he has built another synagogue.

3. II:5: Said Rava: The sale or exchange of this synagogue is permitted; its rental or use as collateral is not.

4. II:6: Regarding a gift, Rav Aha and Ravina disagree. One prohibited removing its sanctity, and one permitted it.

5. II:7: Aids used in performing a commandment may be discarded after use; aids to sacred objects must be stored away after use.

6. II:8: Said Mar Zutra: Scroll wrappings that wore out can be made into shrouds for an unclaimed corpse, and this is their form of being stored away.

a. II:9: A saying in the foregoing composite figures in a subordinate position in this item.

C. BUT IF THEY SOLD A TORAH, THEY MAY NOT BUY SCROLLS WITH ITS PROCEEDS; SCROLLS, THEY MAY NOT BUY TORAH WRAPPINGS; TORAH WRAPPINGS, THEY MAY NOT BUY AN ARK; AN ARK, THEY MAY NOT BUY A SYNAGOGUE; A SYNAGOGUE, THEY MAY NOT BUY THE TOWN SQUARE:

1. III:1: It was asked of them: What about selling an old Torah scroll in order to buy a new one? Since they are not raising the level of sanctity, is it forbidden; or perhaps, since it is impossible to raise it higher, is it permissible?

D. AND SIMILARLY WITH THEIR LEFT OVER FUNDS.

1. IV:1: Said Rava: They did not teach this, except when they made a sale and a purchase and had some money left over; but if they collected money and made the anticipated purchase, and had some money left over, it is permitted to use it for some other purpose.

a. IV:2: Gloss of a detail of the foregoing.

2. IV:3: Said R. Yohanan in the name of R. Meir: Townsmen who went to another town and were solicited to give charity must give it (T. 2:15).

XLII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 4:2

A. ONE MAY NOT SELL SOMETHING OF THE COMMUNITY TO AN INDIVIDUAL, BECAUSE ONE WOULD THEREBY LOWER IT FROM ITS LEVEL OF SANCTITY, THE WORDS OF RABBI MEIR. THEY SAID TO HIM: IF SO, THINGS SHOULD NOT BE SOLD EVEN FROM A LARGE TOWN TO A SMALL TOWN.

1. I:1: The rabbis in M 4:2B spoke well to R. Meir. And R. Meir, who prohibits selling something from a large town to a small town assumes: Before it was holy, and now, too, it is holy; but if sold from a community to an individual, it has no sanctity.

XLIII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 4:3

A. ONE MAY NOT SELL A SYNAGOGUE UNLESS ON CONDITION, THAT IF THE SELLERS WANT, THE BUYERS WILL RETURN IT, THE WORDS OF RABBI MEIR:

1. I:1: And according to R. Meir how can one live there on condition that the seller may demand return of the property at some later date. It is taking interest because,

upon the return of the purchase price, the buyer will effectively have had use of the building for the loan of the money. Said R. Yohanan: R. Meir said it according to the approach of R. Judah, who said: One side in interest i.e., benefit that results retroactively from having reversed an agreement is permitted,

. **B. AND THE SAGES SAY: ONE MAY SELL IT PERMANENTLY, EXCEPT FOR FOUR THINGS: A BATH HOUSE, OR A TANNERY, A PLACE OF RITUAL IMMERSION, OR A TOILET. RABBI JUDAH SAYS: ONE CAN SELL IT AS PROPERTY, AND THE BUYER CAN DO WITH IT WHAT HE WANTS.**

1. II:1: Said R. Judah, said Samuel: One may urinate within four cubits of a place of prayer.

C. TOPICAL APPENDIX: ACCOUNTING FOR LONG LIFETIMES, INCLUSIVE OF AN ITEM PERTINENT TO THE FOREGOING

a. II:2: R. Zakkai's students asked him: Through what have you attained long life. He said to them: In my entire life, I never urinated within four cubits of prayer; and I never called my fellow a nickname; and I never missed the daytime Qiddush.

I. II:3: Gloss of a detail of the foregoing, concerning the daytime Qiddush.

II. II:4: As above.

b. II:5: R. Eleazar ben Shamua's students asked him: Through what have you attained long life?

c. II:6: R. Pereidah's students asked him: Through what have you attained long life?

I. II:7: Gloss of a detail of the foregoing.

d. II:8: Nehuniah ben HaQaneh's students asked him: Through what have you attained long life?

e. II:9: R. Aqiba asked R. Nehuniah HaGaddol: Through what have you attained long life?

f. II:10: R. asked R. Joshua ben Qorha: Through what have you attained long life?

g. II:11: R. Zeira's students asked him: Through what have you attained long life?

XLIII. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 4:4

A. MOREOVER, SAID RABBI JUDAH: A SYNAGOGUE THAT HAS BEEN DESTROYED: ONE MAY NOT MOURN IN IT; AND ONE MAY NOT SPREAD OUT ROPES IN IT; AND ONE MAY NOT SPREAD TRAPS IN IT; AND ONE MAY NOT SPREAD FRUIT ON ITS ROOF TO DRY:

1. I:1: The rabbis taught: Regarding synagogues: One may not behave in a lightheaded manner in them; one may not eat in them; and one may not drink in them; and may not dress up in them; and one may not stroll in them; and one may not enter them in the season of the sun, because of the sun, or in the season of the

rain, because of rain; and one may not conduct mourning in them for an individual. But one may read i.e., the Bible in them; and one may study the Mishnah in them; and one may conduct public mourning there. Said R. Judah: When? When they are populated; But when they are destroyed, one must leave them alone, and blades of grass grow in them, but one should not pluck them out, because of anguish (T **2:18**).

a. I:2: The synagogues in Babylonia are built on condition, and even so, one should not conduct oneself lightheadedly in them.

b. I:3: And one should not get dressed up there: Said Rava: Sages and their students are permitted to do so, as said R. Joshua ben Levi: What is the meaning of the “house of the rabbis”? The home of the rabbis.

c. I:4: and one may not enter them in the season of the sun because of the sun, or in the season of the rain, because of rain: Similarly, Ravina and Rav Ada bar Matana were standing and asking Rava a question. A downpour came; they entered the synagogue.

d. I:5: Said Rav Aha son of Rava to Rav Ashi: If someone must call a person from the synagogue, what should he do?

e. I:6: ...and one may conduct public mourning there: What is meant by “public mourning”?

I. I:7: Gloss of a detail of the foregoing.

II. I:8: Continuation of the foregoing.

A. I:9: As above.

B. TOPICAL APPENDIX ON THE SYNAGOGUES OF BABYLONIA

1. I:10: R. Shimon ben Yohai says: Come and see how dear the nation of Israel is before The Holy One, Blessed Be He, for wherever they were exiled, the Divine Presence was with them. When they were exiled to Egypt, the Divine Presence was with them, as is said, “was I not exiled to your father’s house when they were in Egypt” (1Sa. 2:27). When they were exiled to Babylonia, the Divine Presence was with them, as is said, “for your sake I sent to Babylonia” (Isa. 43:14).

a. I:11: Samuel’s father and Levi were sitting in the synagogue of Shaf VeYativ in Nehardea. The Divine Presence came, and they heard the sound of the disturbance.

b. I:12: Rav Sheshet was sitting in the synagogue of Shaf VeYativ in Nehardea. The Divine Presence came, and he did not leave.

2. I:13: “And I will be for them as a small sanctuary” (Eze. 11:16). Said R. Isaac: These are the synagogues and the academies that are in Babylonia.

3. I:14: Expounded Rava: What is meant by what is written, “Lord, you have been a dwelling place for us” (Psa. 90: 1)? These are the synagogues and academies.

4. I:15: It is taught: R. Eleazar HaKapar says: The synagogues and academies that are in Babylonia will be established in the Land of Israel, as is said “for like Tabor will come from the mountains, and like Carmel will come from the sea” (Jer. 46:18).

C. AND ONE MAY NOT USE IT AS A SHORTCUT, AS IS SAID, “AND I WILL DESTROY YOUR SANCTUARIES” (LEV. 26:31) MEANING THEIR SANCTITY REMAINS AFTER THEY ARE DESTROYED:

1. II:1: What is a kapandariah translated here as “shortcut”?

D. IF BLADES OF GRASS GREW IN IT, ONE MAY NOT PLUCK THEM OUT, BECAUSE OF ANGUISH:

1. III:1: But it is learned: One may not pluck them out and feed them to an animal, but one may pluck them and leave them.

XLIV. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 4:5

A. ON THE NEW MOON OF THE MONTH OF ADAR THAT FALLS ON A SABBATH, ONE READS THE TORAH PORTION ABOUT SHEQELS:

1. I:1: We have learned there: On the first of Adar one should announce about the sheqels and about mixed products (M **Sheq. 1: 1**). It makes sense that one should announce about the mixed products, because it is the time of planting; but from where do we know that one should announce about the sheqels?

2. I:2: What is the “portion about sheqels”?

a. I:3: And said R. Isaac Napaha: On the New Moon of the month of Tevet that falls on a Sabbath, one brings three Torahs and reads them: one about the subject of the day, and one about that of the New Moon, and one about Hannukah.

B. IF IT THE NEW MOON FALLS DURING THE WEEK, ONE ADVANCES IT THE READING TO THE ONE THAT PASSED I.E., TO THE PREVIOUS SABBATH AND INTERRUPTS THE CYCLE OF SPECIAL READINGS UNTIL THE NEXT SABBATH WHICH WILL FALL BETWEEN ONE AND TWO WEEKS AFTER THE NEW MOON:

1. II:1: A. It was said: On the New Moon of the month of Tevet that falls on a weekday — Said R. Isaac: Three people read about the New Moon, and one about Hannukah. And Rav Dimi who was from Haifa said: Three read about Hannukah, and one about the New Moon.

2. II:2: It was said: If it the New Moon of the month of Adar falls on the Sabbath of the weekly Torah reading that begins Ve-Attah Tetzaveh (Exo. 27:20), said R. Isaac Napaha: Six read from Ve-Attah Tetzaveh, (Exo. 27:20) until Ki Tisa’, “When you count...” (Exo. 30:11), and one reads from Ki Tisa’ until “and you should do” (Exo. 30:17).

3. II:3: If it i.e., the New Moon of Adar falls on the Sabbath of the weekly Torah reading that begins Ki Tisa’, “when you count,” (Exo. 30:11), itself, Said R. Isaac Napaha: Six should read from Ve-`Asita, “and you should do,” (Exo. 30:17) until Va-Yaqhel, “and he Moses assembled,” (Exo. 35: 1) and one reads from Ki Tisa’ until Ve-`Asita.

4. II:4: If it fell during the week, one advances to the Sabbath that passed (M **4:5B**). It is said: If the New Moon of Adar that fell on the Sabbath eve Friday, Rav said: They advance the reading a week. And Samuel said: They postpone the reading to the approaching Sabbath.

C. ON THE SECOND SPECIAL SABBATH, ONE READS THE TORAH PORTION BEGINNING “REMEMBER” (DEU. 25:17-19):

1. III:1: It was said: Regarding Purim that falls on the eve of the Sabbath Friday, Rav said: One advances the reading of the passage beginning “Remember” (Deu. 25:17-19). And Samuel said: One postpones.

a. III:2: If it the New Moon of Adar fell on the Sabbath itself: Said Rav Huna: According to everyone, one should not advance the reading. And Rav Nahman said: It is still a disagreement.

D. ON THE THIRD SPECIAL SABBATH, ONE READS THE TORAH PORTION ABOUT “A RED HEIFER” (NUM. 19: 1 FF):

1. IV:1: The rabbis learned: Which is the third Sabbath? That which is closest following Purim (T 3: 3).

E. ON THE FOURTH SPECIAL SABBATH, ONE READS THE TORAH PORTION BEGINNING “THIS MONTH IS TO YOU” (EXO. 12:1 FF):

1. V:1: On the New Moon of the month of Adar that fell on the Sabbath, one reads Ki Tisa’, “when you count” (Exo. 30:11 ff; M 4:5A), and one supplements with Jehoiadah 2 Kings 11-12. And what is the first week (shabbat)? That in which the New Moon of Adar falls, even the eve of the Sabbath (T 3: 1).

F. ON THE FIFTH SABBATH, ONE RETURNS TO THEIR REGULAR SEQUENCE. ONE INTERRUPTS THE REGULAR SEQUENCE OF SABBATH TORAH READINGS FOR ALL SPECIAL OCCASIONS: ON NEW MOONS, ON HANNUKAH, AND ON PURIM; ON FASTS, AND ON SPECIAL PRAYER ASSEMBLIES, AND ON YOM KIPPUR:

1. VI:1: To which order? R. Ami said: One returns to the order of the weekly Torah readings. R. Yermiah said: One returns to the order of the supplemental prophetic readings.

XLV. Mishnah-Tractate Megillah 4:6

A. ON PASSOVER ONE READS THE HOLIDAY PORTION OF LEVITICUS 23:

1. I:1: Our rabbis taught: On Passover one reads the holiday portion in Leviticus, chapt. 23 (M 4:6A). And one concludes with “Passover in Gilgal” Joshua 5. And now that there are two days of the holiday, the first day one concludes with the prophetic portion about “Passover in Gilgal”; and the next day about “Passover of Josiah” 2 Kings 23.

B. ON ASERET ONE READS “SEVEN WEEKS:”

1. II:1: and one concludes from Habakkuk. Others say one reads “In the third month...” (Exo. 19; T 3: 5); and one concludes with the prophetic portion about “The Chariot” Eze. 1.

C. ON ROSH HASHANNAH ONE READS “IN THE SEVENTH MONTH ON THE FIRST OF THE MONTH:”

1. III:1: And one concludes with “Is Ephraim a dear son to me?” (Jer. 31:20). And some say one reads “And God remembered Sarah” (Gen. 21:1 ff; T 3: 6).

D. ON YOM KIPPUR ONE READS “...AFTER THE DEATH...:”

1. IV:1: and one concludes with “For thus said the high and exalted one” (Isa. 57:15); and at the afternoon service, one reads about forbidden marriages Lev. 18; and one concludes with Jonah.

a. IV:2: Said R. Yohanan: Anywhere you find the greatness of The Holy One Blessed Be He, you find His concern for the unfortunate.

E. ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE FESTIVAL SUKKOT ONE READS THE SECTION ABOUT THE HOLIDAYS IN LEVITICUS 23:

1. V:1: and one concludes with “Behold a day for the Lord is coming...” (Zec. 14: 1 ff).

F. AND ALL THE REST OF THE DAYS OF THE FESTIVAL SUKKOT ONE READS ABOUT THE SACRIFICES OF THE FESTIVAL (NUM. 29:12-34):

1. VI:1: The last day of the Festival, one reads “commandments, and statutes, and all first-borns” i.e., Deu. 14:22 ff. And one concludes “And when Solomon finished” (1Ki. 8:54 ff).

G. ON HANNUKAH ONE READS THE PORTION ABOUT THE PRINCES NUM. 7:

1. VII:1: and if it is a Sabbath, one concludes with the prophetic portion about the lights of Zechariah Zech. 4.

H. ON PURIM ONE READS “AND AMALEQ CAME” (EXO. 17: 8 FF); ON NEW MOONS ONE READS “AND ON YOUR NEW MOONS...” (NUM. 28:11 FF):

1. VIII:1: On a New Moon that falls on a Sabbath, we conclude “And it will be from New Moon to New Moon...” (Isa. 66:23 ff) and presumably what precedes it.

2. VIII:2: On the Ninth of Av itself, what is the concluding prophetic reading? Said Rav: “How...like a prostitute” (Isa. 1:21 ff). What is the Torah reading?

I. AT PRAYER ASSEMBLIES ONE READS ABOUT THE ACT OF CREATION:

1. IX:1: From where are these words derived? Said R. Ami: Were not for the special prayer assemblies, the heavens and earth would not exist, as is said, “If not for My covenant by day and by night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth” (Jer. 33:25).

J. ON FAST DAYS, ONE READS THE BLESSINGS AND CURSES. ONE MAY NOT INTERRUPT DURING THE CURSES, BUT RATHER ONE PERSON READS THEM ALL:

1. X:1: From where are these words derived? Said Rav Hiyya bar Gamda, said R. Asi: As scripture said: “My son, do not reject the teaching of the Lord, do not reject his chastisement” (Pro. 3:11). Resh Laqish said: Because one does not recite a blessing over suffering.

a. X:2: Levi bar Buti was reading the Torah and stammering in the presence of Rav Huna in the section containing the curses. He Rav Huna said to him: As you will. They did not learn that one may not interrupt in the curses other than in Leviticus, but during the reading of those in Deuteronomy, one may interrupt.

2. X:3: It is learned: R. Shimon ben Eleazar says: Ezra instituted for Israel that they should read the curses in Leviticus before Aseret, and those in Deuteronomy before Rosh HaShannah.

a. X:4: It is learned: R. Shimon ben Eleazar says: If the elders say to you “Knock down,” and the youngsters say to you “Build,” knock down and do not build, because the knocking down of elders is building, and the building of children is knocking down.

3. X:5: A. The place where they conclude the Torah reading on the Sabbath morning is where they begin to read at the afternoon service. The place where they conclude the Torah reading at the Sabbath afternoon service is where they begin to read at the morning service of the second day Monday. The place where they conclude the Torah reading at the morning service of the second day Monday is where they begin to read at the morning service of the fifth day Thursday. The place where they conclude the Torah reading at the morning service of the fifth day Thursday is where they begin to read on the next Sabbath, the words of R. Meir. R. Judah says: The place where they conclude the reading at the Sabbath morning service is where they begin at the Sabbath afternoon service, and on the second and fifth days of the week, and on the following Sabbath (T 3:10).

4. X:6: One should open the scroll and see the passage to read, roll it closed and recite the blessing, and open it again and read, the words of R. Meir. R. Judah says: One should open the scroll and see the passage to read, and recite the blessing, and read it.

5. X:7: Said R. Shefatiah, said R. Yohanan: One who rolls up a Torah scroll must stand it i.e., locate the opening over the stitching i.e., a seam between pieces of parchment. And said R. Shefatiah, said R. Yohanan: One who rolls up a Torah scroll should roll it from the outside but not from the inside; and when he fastens it, he should fasten it from the inside but not from the outside. And said R. Shefatiah, said R. Yohanan: If ten people read in the Torah, the greatest of them should roll it up. And said R. Shefatiah, said R. Yohanan: From where do we derive the notion that one may listen to a small voice? And said R. Shefatiah, said R. Yohanan: Regarding anyone who reads the Bible without melody or studies Mishnah without singing, Scripture says “and I have given them laws that are not good and statutes according to which they cannot live” (Eze. 20:25).

6. X:8: Said R. Parnakh, said R. Yohanan: Anyone who holds a Torah Scroll naked will be buried naked.

K. ON THE SECOND AND ON THE FIFTH DAYS OF THE WEEK AND ON THE SABBATH AT THE AFTERNOON SERVICE, ONE READS ACCORDING TO THE REGULAR ORDER. AND THESE LAST READINGS DO NOT COUNT AMONG THE NUMBER ASSIGNED TO THE WEEKLY PORTION FOR THE SABBATH; AS IS SAID, “AND MOSES COMMANDED THE HOLIDAYS OF THE LORD TO THE ISRAELITES” (LEV. 23:44), MEANING THEIR COMMANDMENT IS THAT THEY SHOULD READ EACH AND EVERY ONE AT ITS APPROPRIATE TIME.

1. X1:8: “And Moses commanded the holidays of the Lord to the Israelites” (Lev. 23:44) meaning their commandment is that they should read each and every one at its appropriate time (M 4:6 end). The rabbis learned: Moses instituted for

Israel that they should ask about and expound the matters of the day, the laws of Passover on Passover, the laws of Aseret on Aseret, the laws of the Festival Sukkot on the Festival (T [3:5](#); Sifra, Lev. 23:44).

Points of Structure

1. DOES BABYLONIAN TALMUD-TRACTATE MEGILLAH FOLLOW A COHERENT OUTLINE GOVERNED BY A CONSISTENT RULES?

Two coherent outlines govern, one for most of the tractate, the other, as indicated, for a considerable part of Chapter One. The former is the outline dictated by our Mishnah-tractate, the latter, a partial presentation of the book of Esther, following more or less the main lines of the biblical narrative. That some MSS omit the sizable composite underscores the anomalous character of what is before us. But what we have is, at any rate, a quite different presentation from the counterpart in Esther Rabbah I, as the appendix that follows indicates quite clearly. It follows that, overall, our tractate follows the sequence of the Mishnah, and no major composite except the indicated one diverges from that plan.

2. WHAT ARE THE SALIENT TRAITS OF ITS STRUCTURE?

As throughout the Bavli, the main traits of structure are dictated by the requirement of Mishnah-commentary; a great deal of clarification is contributed, much attention is paid to concrete rules and normative practices. But in the end, what we have is a well-constructed work of Mishnah-exegesis, taking account of some rich amplification here and there.

3. WHAT IS THE RATIONALITY OF THE STRUCTURE?

The Mishnah follows a suitable order and structure so that all further discussion of the topic of the Mishnah can and should organize itself around the Mishnah's discussion. There is no need to recast matters or to reshape the discussion of the topic in such a way as to treat the Mishnah-tractate as a mere source of information. Quite to the contrary, the basic presentation of the topic by the Mishnah-tractate is now re-presented here.

4. WHERE ARE THE POINTS OF IRRATIONALITY IN THE STRUCTURE?

These are the designated composites that form considerable statements on their own, without reference to the proposition or even the topic of the Mishnah. In my discussion, below, I differentiate those composites that stand on their own from the ones that are carried in the wake of a statement that is required for the purpose of Mishnah-exegesis, with the former at the left, the latter at the right-hand margin; there is none. Omitting reference to the exegesis of the book of Esther, these are the items that require attention: I.C GLOSSING B.2. AND FOUR TEACHINGS OF RABBI YERMIAH OR RABBI HIYYA BAR ABBA; I.E GLOSSING B. 2. AND FURTHER TEACHINGS OF RABBI JOSHUA BEN LEVI ON MATTERS RELATED TO PURIM; XLII.C TOPICAL APPENDIX: ACCOUNTING FOR LONG LIFETIMES, INCLUSIVE OF AN ITEM PERTINENT TO THE FOREGOING; XLIII.B TOPICAL APPENDIX ON THE SYNAGOGUES OF BABYLONIA.

Points of System

1. DOES THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD-TRACTATE MEGILLAH SERVE ONLY AS A REPRESENTATION OF THE MISHNAH-TRACTATE OF THE SAME NAME?

If we regard the huge Scripture-exegetical unit as integral to our tractate, then the answer is negative. This is the only Bavli-tractate that subjects to sustained exegetical work of a fundamental importance to the structure of the tractate a document other than Scripture. As to the treatment of the Mishnah, most, though not all, sentences of the Mishnah are supplied with an ample explanation.

2. HOW DO THE TOPICAL COMPOSITES FIT INTO THE TALMUD-TRACTATE AND WHAT DO THEY CONTRIBUTE THAT THE MISHNAH-TRACTATE OF THE SAME NAME WOULD LACK WITHOUT THEM?

I.C Glossing B.2.

And Four Teachings of Rabbi Yermiah or Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba

I.E Glossing B. 2.

And Further Teachings of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi on Matters Related to Purim

XLII.C Topical Appendix: Accounting for Long Lifetimes, inclusive of an item pertinent to the foregoing

XLIII.B Topical Appendix on the Synagogues of Babylonia.

3. CAN WE STATE WHAT THE COMPILERS OF THIS DOCUMENT PROPOSE TO ACCOMPLISH IN PRODUCING THIS COMPLETE, ORGANIZED PIECE OF WRITING?

Two large-scale composites supply to the tractate a perspective other than the Mishnah's. One stresses the special value of the synagogues in Babylonia, the particular affection that God shows to Babylonian Jews, and the Presence of God in that locale. Given the topic of the book of Esther, which Babylonian Jews regarded as an account of their own immediate past (as the Dura Europos synagogue paintings show, with their ample illustration of the book of Esther), we can hardly find that fact surprising. What impact does the other topical appendix make? With its stress on the life-nourishing power of rabbinical virtue — restraint, respect, self-abnegation, dignity — that excellent composite makes the point that people can do much, through proper conduct, to secure for themselves the desired longevity. But it is not clear to me that the composite has found its place here because of the Talmud's compilers' desire to make some further, oblique observation about the book of Esther. Since they stress Mordecai's virtues and present Esther as wholly virtuous, it seems to me unjustified to suggest that that may be so. We are therefore left with the fairly obvious and unsurprising observation that what the Bavli's compilers add is a composite pleasing to local self-esteem. Our sages in forming the Talmud to Mishnah-tractate Megillah seem to me to have remained well within the framework of the Mishnah's perspectives and to have added nothing surprising or jarring or, therefore, consequential for the history of Judaism except in one aspect. Keeping things the same also makes a difference.