

III.

Bavli Abodah Zarah Chapter Three

Folios 40B-49B

3:1

- A. “All images are prohibited,
 - B. “because they are worshipped once a year,” the words of R. Meir.
 - C. And sages say, “Prohibited is only one which has in its hand a staff, bird, or sphere.”
 - D. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, “Any which has anything at all in its hand.”
- I.1** A. *If the idols are worshipped once a year, then how come rabbis permit them?*
- B. Said R. Isaac bar Joseph said R. Yohanan, “In the locale of R. Meir they would worship them once a year. *And since R. Meir takes into consideration the actions of the minority, he made a precautionary decree against the images located in other places on account of the place in which the idols are annually worshipped. Rabbi, however, who does not take into consideration the actions of the minority, made no such decree concerning other places on account of the place in which they are annually worshipped.*”
- I.2** A. Said R. Judah said Samuel, “We have learned to repeat the rule of the Mishnah only with reference to royal statues.”
- B. Said Rabbah bar bar Hana said R. Yohanan, “We have learned to repeat the rule of the Mishnah only with reference to statues that are located at the gate of the city.”
 - C. **[41A]** Said Rabbah, “The dispute concerns those in the villages, but as to those that are in the towns, all concur that they are permitted. *What*

is the operative consideration? They are made merely for decoration.”

- D. *And is there any authority who maintains that in the villages they are made merely for decoration? In the villages they are certainly made to be worshipped! Rather, if that statement was made, this is the form in which it was made: said Rabbah, “The dispute concerns the case of those made in the cities. But as for those in the villages, all concur that they are forbidden.”*

II.1 A. And sages say, “Prohibited is only one which has in its hand a staff, bird, or sphere”:

- B. **A staff**, for it rules the whole world as with a staff;
C. **a bird**, for it holds the whole world in its hand like a bird;
D. **a sphere**, because it holds the whole world like a ball.

II.2 A. It has been taught as a Tannaite statement:

- B. They added to the list a sword, crown, and ring:
C. *A sword: to begin with it was regarded as a sign of thugs in general, but at the end it was regarded as a mark that it has the authority to kill the whole world;*
D. *A crown: at the beginning it was thought to be a mere woven wreath, but at the end it was regarded as a crown for a king;*
E. *A ring: at the beginning it was thought to be a mark of distinction, but in the end it was seen to have the power to seal the whole world’s fate, for death.*

III.1 A. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, “Any which has anything at all in its hand”:

- B. *It has been taught as a Tannaite statement:*
C. Even a pebble, even a chip of wood.

III.2 A. R. Ashi raised the question, “If it was holding in its hand a piece of shit, what is the law? Do we maintain that in the idol’s view, everybody is like shit? Of perhaps, in everybody’s view, the idol is like shit?”

- B. *The question stands.*

I.1 explains the operative considerations for the authorities of the Mishnah. No. 2 provides an exegesis of the Mishnah. II.1, 2 and III.1, follow the same program. No. 2

raises a secondary question, showing once again that our sages of blessed memory had, among them, men with a fine sense of humor.

3:2

- A. **He who finds the sherds of images — lo, these are permitted.**
- B. **[If] one found [a fragment] shaped like a hand or a foot, lo, these are prohibited,**
- C. **because objects similar to them are worshipped.**

I.1 A. Said Samuel, "Even sherds of idols [are permitted]."

- B. *But lo, we have learned in the Mishnah: **the sherds of images** [which should exclude the fragments of idols themselves]!*
- C. *That is the same rule that covers sherds of idols, and the reason that the Tannaite framer of the Mishnah has made reference to **the sherds of images** is that he wishes to make a further statement later on in the same passage, as follows: **[If] one found [a fragment] shaped like a hand or a foot, lo, these are prohibited, because objects similar to them are worshipped.***

I.2 A. *We have learned in the Mishnah: **[If] one found [a fragment] shaped like a hand or a foot, lo, these are prohibited, because objects similar to them are worshipped.***

- B. *Now why should this be so? **[41B]** Lo, they are mere sherds!*
- C. *Samuel explained, "We deal with a case in which they are standing on their base [not part of an image but set on a base, to be worshipped on their own]."*

I.3 A. *It has been stated:*

- B. An idol that broke on its own [and was not deliberately demolished] —
- C. R. Yohanan said, "Its sherds are forbidden."
- D. R. Simeon b. Laqish said, "Its sherds are permitted."
- E. R. Yohanan said, "Its sherds are forbidden": *for lo, the idol has not been deliberately nullified.*
- F. R. Simeon b. Laqish said, "Its sherds are permitted": *for [the owner] may be assumed to nullify the idol, thinking, "It could not save itself, how will it save me?"*
- G. R. Yohanan raised the following objection to R. Simeon b. Laqish: "“And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands lay cut off...therefore neither the

priests of Dagon nor any that come into Dagon's house tread' (1Sa. 5: 4) [so they treat the fragments with reverence].”

- H. *He said to him, “Is there proof from that case? There they abandon Dagon and worship the threshold, for, they maintain, their taboo has abandoned Dagon and come and taken residence on the threshold.”*
- I. *He raised an objection, “**He who finds the sherds of images — lo, these are permitted.** It follows that sherds of idols are forbidden.”*
- J. *“Do not suppose that sherds of idols are forbidden. Rather, conclude that the idols themselves are forbidden, and the unattributed statement in the Mishnah represents the position of R. Meir [“**All images are prohibited, because they are worshipped once a year**” — all images are forbidden, but the fragments are permitted].”*
- K. *And from the perspective of R. Yohanan, out of the statement of R. Meir we may infer the position of rabbis. Has not R. Meir taken the position that, while images are prohibited, the fragments of images are permitted? Then from the perspective of rabbis, while an idol is forbidden, its fragments are permitted [so how come Yohanan forbids the use of fragments of idols]?*
- L. *How now! [The analogy is a false one, for] there, dealing with images, it is possible that they were worshipped and possible that they were not worshipped, and if they had been worshipped, it is possible that they had been annulled. But in the case of an idol, we know for sure that it has been worshipped, and who can tell whether or not it has been annulled. In this case, therefore, we have a matter of doubt and a matter of certainty, and a matter of doubt cannot set aside a matter of certainty.*
- M. *And is it the fact that a matter of doubt cannot set aside a matter of certainty? And has it not been taught on Tannaite authority: If a fellow [who is meticulous about tithing his produce] died and left a granary full of produce, even though they are only a day old, lo, they are assumed to have been properly tithed.*
- N. *Now here we have a case in which the produce is subject to the certainty that it was untithed, and it is a matter of doubt whether or not it has been tithed, and yet, the matter of doubt comes along and sets aside the matter of certainty!*
- O. *There you really have a case of the conflict of two matters of certainty, for he has certainly tithed the produce, in line with what R. Hanina of Khuzistan said, for R. Hanina of Khuzistan said, “It is the assumption*

concerning an associate that he does not release from his possession anything at all that has not been properly prepared through tithing.”

- P. *If you prefer, moreover, I shall say that what you have there is a case of the conflict of two matters of uncertainty, and that is in accord with the statement of R. Oshaia, for said R. Oshaia, “One may undertake a legal fiction with his produce by storing the produce together with the chaff [not winnowing the produce and so subjecting it to the obligation of tithing] so that his cattle may eat it and it will be exempt from tithing.”*
- Q. *Still, is it really the fact that a matter of doubt does not set aside a matter of certainty? And has it not been taught on Tannaite authority:*
- R. **Said R. Judah, “There was the case of the servant girl [42A] of an olive farmer [or: tax collector] in Rimmon, who threw an abortion into a cistern. A priest came and looked to see what she threw in — to ascertain whether it was male or female — [and so may or may not have overshadowed corpse and been made unclean]. The case came before sages, and they declared him clean, on the grounds that the weasel or panther will draw it away forthwith” [T. Ahilot 16:13A].**
- S. *Now here you have a case in which the woman assuredly tossed the abortion, but it is a matter of doubt whether the wild animals dragged it off or did not drag it off, and here a matter of doubt comes along and sets aside a matter of certainty.*
- T. *Do not read the report as “threw an abortion into a cistern.” Rather, read it as, “some kind of an abortion.” [We do not know for sure that it was a child at all, so it is doubt against doubt.]*
- U. *And lo, the exact language is, **A priest came and looked to see what she threw in — to ascertain whether it was male or female!***
- V. *This is the required sense of the matter: and the priest came along and looked to see whether she had aborted an inflated object or a premature child.*
- W. *And if you say that it was a premature child that she aborted, then it was to see whether it was a male or a female.*
- X. *And if you prefer, I shall say, “Since the weasel or the panther are present in the area, they most assuredly dragged it away [and it is not a matter of doubt at all].”*

- Y. *An objection was raised: [If] one found [a fragment] shaped like a hand or a foot, lo, these are prohibited, because objects similar to them are worshipped. Now why should that be so? They are merely fragments!*
- Z. *Samuel explained, "We deal with a case in which they are standing on their base [not part of an image but set on a base, to be worshipped on their own]."*
- AA. *An objection was raised: A gentile has the power to nullify an idol belonging either to himself or his fellow. But an Israelite has not got the power to nullify an idol belonging to a gentile [M. A.Z. 4:4C-D]. But why should an Israelite not be able to nullify an idol? Let it fall into the classification of an idol that was broken willy-nilly?*
- BB. Said Abbaye, "[The passage refers to a case where the Israelite merely] defaced it."
- CC. *But even if he merely defaced it, what difference does it make? Lo, we have learned in the Mishnah: How does one nullify it? [If] he has cut off the tip of its ear, the tip of its nose, the tip of its finger, [if] he battered it, even though he did not break off [any part of] it, he has nullified it [M. A.Z. 4:5C-D]!"*
- DD. *That rule refers to a case in which a gentile defaced it, but if an Israelite defaced it, he has not nullified it.*
- EE. *And Raba said, "In point of fact the rule speaks of a case in which an Israelite, too, has battered it, in which case he also has nullified it. But we have a precautionary decree, lest the Israelite might lift it up and then annul it, in which case it would be an idol within the domain of an Israelite, and any idol in the domain of an Israelite can never be annulled."*
- FF. *An objection was raised: If a gentile brought stones from a statue of Mercury and used them to pave roads of amphitheaters, it is permitted [for Israelites to walk there], but if an Israelite brought stones from a statue of Mercury and used them to pave roads of amphitheaters, it is forbidden for Israelites to walk there. But why should this be the case? Let it fall into the classification of an idol that was broken willy-nilly?*
- GG. *Here, too, the answer accords with that which Raba said ["In point of fact the rule speaks of a case in which an Israelite, too, has battered it, in which case he also has nullified it. But we have a precautionary decree, lest the Israelite might lift it up and then annul it, in which case it would be an idol within the domain of an Israelite, and any idol in the domain of an Israelite can never be annulled."]*

- HH. *An objection was raised: A gentile who chipped off pieces of an idol for his own use — the idol and the chips are permitted. If it was for the sake of the idol, the idol is forbidden but the chips are permitted. But if an Israelite chipped off pieces from an idol, whether it was for his own use or for the use of the idol, the idol and the chips are forbidden [cf. T. A.Z. 6:9C-D]. But why should this be the case? Let it fall into the classification of an idol that was broken willy-nilly?*
- II. *Here, too, the answer accords with that which Raba said [“In point of fact the rule speaks of a case in which an Israelite, too, has battered it, in which case he also has nullified it. But we have a precautionary decree, lest the Israelite might lift it up and then annul it, in which case it would be an idol within the domain of an Israelite, and any idol in the domain of an Israelite can never be annulled.”]*
- JJ. *An objection was raised: R. Yosé says, “One breaks them into pieces and throws the powder to the wind or drops them into the sea.” They said to him, “Also: they may be made into manure, as it is said, ‘And there will cleave nothing of a devoted thing to your hand’ (Deu. 13:18)” [M. A.Z. 3:3C-D]. But why should this be the case? Let it fall into the classification of an idol that was broken willy-nilly?*
- KK. *Here, too, the answer accords with that which Raba said [“In point of fact the rule speaks of a case in which an Israelite, too, has battered it, in which case he also has nullified it. But we have a precautionary decree, lest the Israelite might lift it up and then annul it, in which case it would be an idol within the domain of an Israelite, and any idol in the domain of an Israelite can never be annulled.”]*
- LL. *An objection was raised: R. Yosé b. Yasian says, “If one found the figure of a dragon with its head cut off, and there is a doubt whether it was a gentile who cut it off or an Israelite who cut it off, it is permitted. If it was certain that an Israelite cut it off, it is forbidden. But why should this be the case? Let it fall into the classification of an idol that was broken willy-nilly?”*
- MM. *Here, too, the answer accords with that which Raba said [“In point of fact the rule speaks of a case in which an Israelite, too, has battered it, in which case he also has nullified it. But we have a precautionary decree, lest the Israelite might lift it up and then annul it, in which case it would be an idol within the domain of an Israelite, and any idol in the domain of an Israelite can never be annulled.”]*

- NN. *An objection was raised: R. Yosé says, “Also: [under an asherah one may] not [plant] vegetables in the rainy season, because the foliage drops on them and serves as manure for them” [M. A.Z. 3:8F-G]. But why should this be the case? Let it fall into the classification of an idol that was broken willy-nilly?*
- OO. *That case is exceptional, for the fundamental portion of the idol is still standing.*
- PP. **[42B]** *But lo, there is the case of the chips, in which instance the fundamental portion of the idol is still standing [and yet that is not the rule], for it has been taught in the Tannaite rule: A gentile who chipped off pieces of an idol for his own use — the idol and the chips are permitted. If it was for the sake of the idol, the idol is forbidden but the chips are permitted!*
- QQ. R. Huna b. R. Joshua said, “The reason is that an idol is not nullified through the course of nature.” [Cohen: In the course of nature the foliage falls, but to chip a piece off an idol there has to be a conscious act on the part of a human being.]
- RR. R. Simeon b. Laqish objected to R. Yohanan: If a bird’s nest is at the top of a tree that belongs to the sanctuary, people may not derive benefit from it, but the laws of sacrilege do not apply to it. If it was on the top of an *asherah* tree, one may knock it down with a stick. *Now the premise is that the case is one in which a bird has broken off twigs from an asherah tree and built a nest of them, and yet it is taught, one may knock it down with a stick! [One may use the nest for fuel, and hence the fragments of an idol may be used, contrary to Yohanan’s position].*
- SS. *Here with what sort of a case do we deal? It is one in which the bird brought twigs from various places and made the nest of them. And that is shown by the formulation in the context of a tree that belongs to the sanctuary: If a bird’s nest is at the top of a tree that belongs to the sanctuary, people may not derive benefit from it, but the laws of sacrilege do not apply to it. Now if you take the position that the bird has brought twigs from various places, that is why it is taught in connection with the tree belonging to the sanctuary, people may not derive benefit from it, but the laws of sacrilege do not apply to it. People may not derive benefit from it — by decree of rabbis. But the laws of sacrilege do not apply — by the law of the Torah, for lo, the twigs do not belong to the sanctuary. But if you take the view that the bird broke twigs from the tree itself and built a nest with them, why should the laws of sacrilege not apply, since the twigs had been dedicated to the sanctuary?*

- TT. *But what makes you see matters in that way, for here we deal with twigs that grew after the tree had been dedicated to the sanctuary, and the framer of the rule maintains that there is no applicability of the laws of sacrilege in connection with aftergrowth.*
- UU. *And R. Abbahu said R. Yohanan [said], "What is the meaning of the language, one may knock it down with a stick? It means, 'one may knock off the nest to get at the young birds.'"*
- VV. *Said R. Jacob to R. Jeremiah bar Tahalipa, "I shall show you the reasoning here: as to the young birds, they are permitted no matter what [wherever the tree is located]. As for the eggs, they are forbidden no matter what [since the tree has been used as a resting place for the eggs]."*
- WW. *Said R. Ashi, "But the fledglings that still require their mother are in the classification of eggs [and prohibited]."*

I.1 carries to its logical conclusion the rule of the Mishnah. No. 2 proceeds with the amplification of the rule of the Mishnah begun at No. 1. No. 3 pursues the problem of the Mishnah, now with a secondary but indicative question, which develops the theory of the way in which an idol is nullified. This leads us deep into a general problem of doubt as against certainty.

3:3A-B

- A. He who finds utensils upon which is the figure of the sun, moon, or dragon, should bring them to the Salt Sea.**
- B. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, "Those that are found on objects of value are prohibited, but those that are found on objects of no worth are permitted."**
- I.1** A. *Does the Mishnah's statement bear the implication that these in particular they worship, while other things they do not worship? But an objection may be raised from the following: He who carries out an act of slaughter of an animal for the sake of seas, rivers, a desert, the sun, moon, stars, planets, Michael the Great Prince, a tiny worm — lo, these are classified as "sacrifices of the dead." [So gentiles worship just about anything.]*
- B. *Said Abbaye, "As to worshipping, they worship anything they put their hands on. As to making images for worship, they create only these three types of items that are enumerated, which they prize in particular, but as for other figures, they make them only for decoration."*

I.2 A. *R. Sheshet would gather difficult passages of the Mishnah and repeat them:*

B. Icons of all planets are permitted, except for those of the sun and the moon; icons of all faces are permitted, except for a human face; icons of all figures are permitted, except for that of a dragon.

I.3 A. A master has stated, "Icons of all planets are permitted, except for those of the sun and the moon":

B. *With what sort of a case do we deal here? If one proposes that it is with making them, then is it permitted to make any of the planets, since it is written, "You shall not make with me" (Exo. 20:23), meaning, you shall not make anything that looks like my attendants, who serve before me in the heights. Rather, it is obvious, what we deal with is a case of one's finding them, and it is in accord with that which we have learned in the Mishnah: **He who finds utensils upon which is the figure of the sun, moon, or dragon, should bring them to the Salt Sea.***

C. *But if we deal with merely finding them, then notice what the middle clause says: icons of all faces are permitted, except for a human face. Now if we deal with one's merely finding them, if one finds the face of a human being, is it forbidden? And lo, we have learned in the Mishnah: **He who finds utensils upon which is the figure of the sun, moon, or dragon, should bring them to the Salt Sea.** Thus if it is the figure of a dragon, it is covered by the rule, but if it is the human figure, it is not!*

D. *Rather, it is self-evident, we deal with actually making them, and the rule accords with the view of R. Huna b. R. Joshua [who maintains that Exo. 20:23 refers to man, made in the image of God, and not God's attendants in heaven].*

E. *Then note the concluding clause: icons of all figures are permitted, except for that of a dragon. Now if the passage refers to the image of a dragon, is it forbidden to make such an image, since it is written, "You shall not make with me gods of silver or gods of gold" [43A] so these are covered by the law, but the figure of a dragon is not. Rather, it is obvious, what we deal with is a case of one's finding them, and it is in accord with that which we have learned in the Mishnah: **He who finds utensils upon which is the figure of the sun, moon, or dragon, should bring them to the Salt Sea.***

- F. *Thus does it follow that the initial and the final clauses deal with finding such a thing, but the middle clause deals with making it?*
- G. *Said Abbayye, "That is quite true: the initial and the final clauses deal with finding such a thing, but the middle clause deals with making it."*
- H. *Raba said, "The whole of the passage deals with finding such a thing, but the middle clause represents, anonymously, the position of R. Judah. For it has been taught on Tannaite authority: R. Judah adds to the list the picture of a woman giving suck, and Serapis. A woman giving suck — in the name of Eve, who gives suck to the whole world, and Serapis, in the name of Joseph, who was prince and pleased the whole world. The figure of Serapis is prohibited only when it is holding a measure and measuring, and the figure of Isis is forbidden only when she is holding a child and giving it suck."*

I.4 A. *Our rabbis have taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. **What is the sort which has a dragon, which is prohibited? R. Simeon b. Eleazar says, "Any from which the projections go forth from the shoulder [of the figure]. But if it was smooth, lo, this is permitted" [T. A.Z. 5:2R-T].**
 - C. *R. Assi clarified, "Between the joints of the neck."*
 - D. *Said R. Hama b. R. Hanina, "The decided law is in accord with the position of R. Simeon b. Eleazar."*

I.5 A. *Said Rabbah bar bar Hana said R. Joshua b. Levi, "One time I was walking along following R. Eleazar Haqqappar b. Ribbi, and he found there a ring on which was the figure of a dragon. He found a gentile child but said nothing to him. He found a gentile adult and said to him, "Nullify it," but he did not nullify it. He hit him, and he nullified it.*

- B. *Three conclusions may be drawn from that story:*
- C. *The first conclusion is that a gentile may nullify his idol and that belonging to his fellow; the second is that one who knows the character of an idol and its appurtenances may nullify an idol, but one who does not know the character of an idol and its appurtenances may not nullify an idol, and the third is that a gentile may be forced to nullify an idol.*
- D. *R. Hanina ridiculed that statement: "But does not R. Eleazar Haqqappar b. Ribbi accept the position of that which has been taught on Tannaite authority: 'He who rescues property from the jaws of a lion or bear or panther or from a*

marauding troop, from the river, from the fury of the sea or the overflow of a river, he who finds something on the parade ground or main road or in a place where many people congregate — behold, what he finds belongs to him, because the original owner has given up hope of ever recovering the property’?” [Cohen: It may therefore be assumed that the owner of the ring, having given up hope of finding it, must have annulled it; why then did the rabbi go to the trouble of having it annulled?]

- E. Said Abbaye, “Granted that the owner despaired of recovering that ring, did he give up hope of believing in it? He will have thought, if a gentile finds it, he will worship it. If an Israelite finds it, since it is worth a great deal, he will sell it to a gentile, who will worship it.”

I.6 A. *There we have learned in the Mishnah: A picture of the shapes of the moon did Rabban Gamaliel have on a tablet and on the wall of his upper room, which he would show ordinary folk, saying, “Did you see it like this or like that?” [M. R.H. 2:8A]. Now is doing so permitted? And has it not been written, “You shall not make with me” (Exo. 20:23), meaning, you not make anything that looks like my attendants, who serve before me in the heights”?*

- B. Said Abbaye, “The Torah has prohibited making copies of only those attendants if it is possible to reproduce them in facsimile.”

C. *That is in line with that which has been taught on Tannaite authority: A person may not make a house in the model of the Temple, or a porch in the model of the Temple porch, or a courtyard in the model of the Temple courtyard, or a table in the model of the Temple’s table, or a candelabrum in the model of the Temple candelabrum. But he may make one that has five, six, or eight branches, but he may not make one with seven, even though it is of metals other than the ones used in the Temple.*

D. R. Yosé b. R. Judah says, “Even one of wood he may not make, because that is how the Hasmonaeans made it.”

E. Said the rabbis to him, “Is there any proof from that precedent? It was made of metal staves plated with tin. When they got rich, they made one of silver. When they got still richer, they made one of gold.”

I.7 A. *But is it really permitted to make copies of those attendants that one cannot reproduce in facsimile? And has it not been taught on Tannaite*

authority: “You shall not make with me” (Exo. 20:23), meaning, you not make anything that looks like my attendants, who serve before me in the heights”?

- B. Said Abbayye, **[43B]** “The Torah has prohibited only the making of copies of the four faces *together*. ”
- C. *Then the face of a man by itself should be permitted, so wherefore has it been taught on Tannaite authority: All faces may be reproduced except the human face?*
- D. *Said R. Judah b. R. Joshua, “From the lesson of Abbayye I have heard: ‘You shall not make with me....’ is to be read as though the vowels yielded, ‘you shall not make me’ — but other attendants are permitted [and God and man have the same face].”*

- I.8** A. *But is it really permitted to make copies of the other attendants? And has it not been taught on Tannaite authority: “You shall not make with me” (Exo. 20:23), meaning, you not make anything that looks like my attendants, who serve before me in the heights, for example, Ophanim, Seraphim, the holy Hayyot, and the ministering angels?*
- B. Said Abbayye, “The Torah has prohibited only making copies of the attendants who are at the highest level.”

I.9 A. *But is it really permitted to make copies of the attendants at the lower level? Has it not been taught on Tannaite authority: “...that is in heaven” (Exo. 20: 4) — to encompass the sun, moon, stars, and planets; “above” — to encompass the ministering angels?*

- B. *That Tannaite statement refers in particular to serving them.*
- C. *If it refers only to serving them, then representing even a tiny worm also is covered by the prohibition!*
- D. *Quite true, as shown by the continuation of the interpretation of the same verse, for it has been taught on Tannaite authority: “or that is in the earth” — to encompass seas, rivers, mountains, and hills; “beneath” — to encompass a tiny worm.*
- E. *But is it permitted even merely to make them [without worshipping them]? Had it not been taught on Tannaite authority: “You shall not make with me” (Exo. 20:23),*

meaning, you not make anything that looks like my attendants, who serve before me in the heights — meaning, the sun, moon, and planets?

F. *The case of Rabban Gamaliel was exceptional, because other people had made the charts for him.*

I.10 A. *And lo, there is the case of R. Judah, for whom third parties made a ring with a design on it, and yet said Samuel to R. Judah, “Smartass, put out the eyes!”*

B. *That statement concerned a ring the signet of which was cut in relief, and the prohibition was on account of a precautionary decree, for it has been taught on Tannaite authority: **A ring, the signet of which is cut in relief, is forbidden for wearing but permitted for use as a seal; a ring, the signet of which is incised, is for wearing but forbidden for use as a seal.***

C. *But do we take account of the possibility [that an object may be worshipped]? Lo, there is the case of the synagogue “that moved and settled” in Nehardea, in which a statue of a man was situated, and the father of Samuel and Levi went in there to pray without taking account of the possibility [that the object might have been worshipped]?*

D. *A case of involving the public is exceptional [since there would be no worshipping of idols in an Israelite community].*

E. *But the case of Rabban Gamaliel involves only an individual!*

F. *Since he was a patriarch, the public was constantly in his presence.*

G. *And if you prefer, I shall say, the chart was in sections.*

H. *And if you prefer, I shall say, the case of what is made for instructional purposes is different. For it has been taught on Tannaite authority: “You shall not learn to do” (Deu. 18: 9) — but you may learn in order to understand and to teach.*

II.1 A. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, “Any which has anything at all in its hand”:

B. Which ones are treated with honor, and which ones are treated with indifference?

- C. Said Rab, “The ones that are treated with honor are those that are above the water [on the upper part of utensils], and the ones that are treated with indifference are those that are below the water level.”
- D. Samuel said, “These and those both are treated with indifference, but those that are treated with honor are on bracelets, nose rings, and signet rings.”
 - E. *It has been taught on Tannaite authority in accord with the position of Samuel:*
 - F. **Those that are treated with honor are those located on bracelets, nose rings, and signet rings; those that are treated with indifference are on kettles, pots, boiling pots, sheets, and towels.**

I.1 clarifies the implications of the language of the Mishnah. No. 2 sets the stage for the analysis of No. 3. No. 4 then provides a Tannaite amplification of the rule. No. 5 then adds a story to enrich the prior discussion. No. 6 introduces an ancillary problem, representing various objects that can have been worshipped. Nos. 7, 8, 9, 10 continue No. 6. II.1 complements the Mishnah with some clarifying details.

3:3C-D

- C. **R. Yosé says, “One breaks them into pieces and throws the powder to the wind or drops them into the sea.”**
- D. **They said to him, “Also: they may be made into manure, as it is said, ‘And there will cleave nothing of a devoted thing to your hand’ (Deu. 13:18).”**

I.1 A. *It has been taught on Tannaite authority:*

- B. Said to them R. Yosé, “Lo, it says, ‘Then I took the sinful thing, the calf [44A] which you had made, and burned it with fire [and crushed it, grinding it very small, until it was as fine as dust, and I threw the dust of it into the brook that descended out of the mountain]’ (Deu. 9:21).”
- C. They said to him, “Is there proof from that Scripture? [But lo, it has also been said, ‘[And he took the calf which they had made and burnt it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it upon the water and made the people of Israel drink it]’ (Exo. 32:20).
- D. “For he wanted only to test them just in the way in which they test women accused of adultery.”
- E. Said to them R. Yosé, “Lo, Scripture says, ‘Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother, because she had made an abominable image for Asherah’ (2Ch. 15:16).

- F. **“He removed it and took it out.”**
- G. **They said to him, “Is there any proof of that matter? The Kidron does not grow grass.”**
- H. *And does it not? And has it not been taught on Tannaite authority: The blood of sacrifices mixed together in the sewer and flowed down into the brook of Qidron and was sold to farmers for manure, and the law of sacrilege applies to that blood?*
- I. There are places that grow grass, and there are places that do not grow grass.

I.2 A. *What is the meaning of “abominable image”?*

- B. *Said R. Judah, “An object that serves as an aphrodisiac, as it has been taught as a Tannaite formulation by R. Joseph, ‘She had a kind of phallus with which she had sexual relations every day.’”*

I.3 A. **Said to them R. Yosé, “Lo, Scripture says, ‘[He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah.] And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had burned incense in it; it was called Nehushtan’ (2Ki. 18: 4).”**

- B. **They said to him, “Is there any proof of that fact? Lo, Scripture says, ‘And the Lord said to Moses, Make for yourself a fiery serpent’ (Num. 21: 8) — it should be made for you — from your own property, and someone may not impose a prohibition on something that to begin with is not his own property.”**

- C. *In the matter of the bronze snake there was no need to break it into pieces, but when Hezekiah saw that the Israelites were erring in following it, he went and chopped it up.*

D. **Said to them R. Yosé, “Lo, Scripture says, ‘And the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away’ (2Sa. 5:21).”**

- E. *What is the meaning of this language, and David and his men carried them away?*

- F. *It is language that means “scattering them,” as R. Joseph presented as the translation of the word in the passage, “And you shall fan them and the wind shall carry them away” (Isa. 41:16) [meaning, scatter them], when we translate, “you shall winnow them and the wind will disperse them.”*

- G. **They said to him, “Now is there any proof from that verse? And lo, it has also been said, ‘And they left their gods there, and David gave command, and they were burned’ (1Ch. 14:12). And since it is not written, ‘and he burned**

them and took them away,’ one should draw the conclusion that ‘took them away’ means, literally [not scattering them].”

I.4 A. *In any event the two verses of Scripture contradict one another.*

- B. *The solution accords with that which R. Huna said, for R. Huna contrasted these verses: “It is written, ‘and David gave command, and they were burned’ (1Ch. 14:12). And it is further written, ‘and David and his men carried them away’ (2Sa. 5:21). But there is no contradiction. The former passage refers to the time before Ittai the Gittite came, the latter verse, afterward, as it is written, ‘And he took the crown of Malcam from off his head, and it weighed a talent of gold” (2Sa. 12:30).”*
- C. *But would it have been permitted, since it is forbidden to derive any advantage from the idol?*
- D. *Said R. Nahman, “Ittai the Gittite came and nullified it.”*
- E. *But if the crown weighed a talent of gold, how could David have put it on his head?*
- F. *Said R. Judah said Rab, “It was worthy of resting on the head of David.”*
- G. *R. Yosé b. R. Hanina said, “There was a lodestone in it, that raised it up.”*
- H. *R. Eleazar said, “There was a precious stone in it, that was worth a talent of gold.”*

I.5 A. *“This [crown] I have had because I kept your commandments” (Psa. 119:46) —*

- B. *What is the sense of this statement?*
- C. *This is the sense of this statement: “As a reward for my keeping your commandments, ‘this’ is the testimony in my behalf.”*
 - D. *What is the testimony that it gave?*
 - E. *Said R. Joshua b. Levi, “He put it in the place on the head in which one sets one’s tefillin, and it fitted him.”*
 - F. *But he would have had also to put on his tefillin, [and where would that have gone]?*
 - G. *Said R. Samuel bar R. Isaac, “There is a place on the head where it is suitable to put two tefillin.”*

- I.6** A. “Then he brought out the king’s son and put on him the *neser* and the testimony” (2Ki. 11:12) —
- B. *“The nesar” is the crown, and as to the testimony?*
- C. Said R. Judah said Rab, “It was testimony concerning the house of David that whoever was suitable for the throne would fit into the crown, and whoever was not suitable for the throne would not fit into the crown.”
- I.7** A. “Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king” (1Ki. 1: 5):
- B. Said R. Judah said Rab, “He exalted himself assuming that the crown would fit him, but it did not.”
- I.8** A. “And he prepared his chariots and horsemen and fifty men to run before him” (1Ki. 1: 5):
- B. *And what distinguished them?*
- C. *It has been taught as a Tannaite version:* All of them had had their spleen removed and the soles of their feet hollowed out [making them faster].

I.1, 3 go over the Tosefta’s complement, which is glossed here and there; No. 2 footnotes No. 1, and No. 4, No. 3. Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8 continue the exposition of the theme, the crown, and the occasion, coronation, begun at No. 4.

3:4

- A. [44B] Peroqelos b. Pelosepos [“Pericles the Philosopher”] asked Rabban Gamaliel in Akko, when he was washing in Aphrodite’s bathhouse, saying to him, “It is written in your Torah, ‘And there shall cleave nothing of the devoted thing to your hand’ (Deu. 13:18). How come you’re taking a bath in Aphrodite’s bathhouse?”
- B. He said to him, “They do not give answers in a bathhouse.”
- C. When he went out, he said to him, “I never came into her domain. She came into mine. They don’t say, ‘Let’s make a bathhouse as an ornament for Aphrodite.’ But they say, ‘Let’s make Aphrodite as an ornament for the bathhouse.’”
- D. “Another matter: If someone gave you a lot of money, you would never walk into your temple of idolatry naked or suffering a flux, nor would you urinate in its presence.

- E. **“Yet this thing is standing right at the head of the gutter and everybody urinates right in front of her.**
- F. **“It is said only, ‘...their gods’ (Deu. 12: 3) — that which one treats as a god is prohibited, but that which one treats not as a god is permitted.”**

I.1 A. *Now how could [Gamaliel] have done any such thing? For has not Rabbah bar bar Hana said R. Yohanan said, “In all locations it is permitted to reflect [on Torah sayings], except for the bathhouse and the privy.” And should you say that he spoke with him in a profane language [and not in Hebrew], has not Abbaye said, “It is permitted to state profane things in the holy language, but it is forbidden to state holy things in a profane language.”*

B. *A Tannaite version has it: “When he came out, he said to him, ‘People are not to reply [to Torah teachings] in a bathhouse.’”*

I.2 A. Said R. Hama bar Joseph b. Ribbi said, “R. Oshaia said, ‘Rabban Gamaliel gave him a fraudulent answer to that hegemon,’ but I say, ‘It was not a fraudulent answer.’ *Now what made it a fraudulent answer? He said to him, ‘Yet this thing is standing right at the head of the gutter and everybody urinates right in front of her,’ but if people urinate in front of it, what difference does it make? Has not Raba said, ‘Peor proves the opposite, because people shit in front of it every day, but in consequence it is not treated as nullified.’* but I say, ‘It was not a fraudulent answer.’ For in the case of Peor, that is how people worship it, but with Aphrodite, that is not how people worship it.”

B. *Said Abbaye, “What made it a fraudulent answer is this: that he said to him, ‘I never came into her domain. She came into mine! Now if she had come into his domain, what difference would that have made anyhow? And have we not learned in the Mishnah: they derive benefit from them [when it is] not to the advantage [of the temple], but they do not derive benefit from them [when it is] to the advantage [of the temple] [M. A.Z. 4:3C-D]. ‘...but I say, ‘It was not a fraudulent answer’: for what serves to the advantage of Rabban Gamaliel is not the same as what serves to the advantage of anybody else [for gentiles would regard it as an honor if he used the bathhouse free of charge].”*

C. *R. Shimi bar Hiyya said, “What made it a fraudulent answer is this: that he said to him, ‘Yet this thing is standing right at the head of the gutter and everybody urinates right in front of her.’ So if people do piss in front of the statue, what difference does it make anyhow? And have we not learned in the*

Mishnah: [If] he spit in its face, urinated in front of it, scraped it, threw shit at it, lo, this does not constitute an act of nullification [M. A.Z. 4:6E]? ‘...but I say, ‘It was not a fraudulent answer’: for in the cited rule of the Mishnah, it may have been just for that moment that the man was outraged against the idol, but later on he made his peace with it, but here the statue is always treated in a contemptuous way.”

- D. *Rabbah bar Ulla said, “What made it a fraudulent answer is this: that he said to him, They don’t say, ‘Let’s make a bathhouse as an ornament for Aphrodite.’ But they say, ‘Let’s make Aphrodite as an ornament for the bathhouse.’ But if someone said, ‘Let’s make Aphrodite as an ornament for the bathhouse,’ what difference would that make anyhow? Has it not been taught on Tannaite authority: He who says, ‘This house is for idolatry,’ ‘this cup is for idolatry,’ he has said nothing whatsoever, for the category of sanctification does not pertain to idolatry. ‘...but I say, ‘It was not a fraudulent answer’: for even though using the bath is not forbidden, still it was meant as a decoration for the idol and that is forbidden.*

I.1 asks an obvious question and so harmonizes Gamaliel’s behavior with the established law. No. 2 expands on the argument.

3:5

- A. [45A] Gentiles who worship hills and valleys —
- B. these [hills or valleys] are permitted, but what is on them is forbidden [for Israelite use],
- C. as it is said, “You shall not covet the silver or gold that is upon them not take it.”
- D. R. Yosé says, “Their gods are on the mountains, and the mountains are not their gods. Their gods are in the valleys, and the valleys are not their gods.”
- E. On what account is an asherah prohibited? Because it has been subject to manual labor, and whatever has been subject to manual labor is prohibited.
- F. Said R. Aqiba, “I shall explain and interpret the matter before you:
- G. “In any place in which you find a high mountain, a lofty hill, or a green tree, you may take for granted that there is an idol there.”

I.1 A. *But the opinion of R. Yosé the Galilean is the same as that of the initial Tannaite authority!*

B. *Said R. Ammi bar Hama said R. Simeon b. Laqish, “What is at stake between them is whether the covering of a mountain is the same as the mountain itself. The initial Tannaite authority takes the view that the covering of a mountain is not the same as the mountain, so it is prohibited, and R. Yosé the Galilean takes the view that the covering of the mountain is the same as the mountain and is permitted.”*

C. *R. Sheshet said, “All parties concur that the covering of the mountain is not the same as the mountain, [45B] but here what is at issue between them? They differ in respect to a tree that was planted and only later on was worshipped. The initial Tannaite authority maintains that a tree that was planted and only afterward was worshipped is permitted, and R. Yosé takes the view that such a tree is forbidden.”*

D. *And how do we know that R. Yosé takes that view?*

E. *The answer derives from the closing clause of the same Mishnah paragraph: **On what account is an asherah prohibited? Because it has been subject to manual labor, and whatever has been subject to manual labor is prohibited.** Now what does the language, **subject to manual labor**, serve to encompass? Is it not meant to cover a tree that was planted and later on worshipped?*

I.2 A. *R. Yosé b. R. Judah likewise takes the view that a tree that was planted and only later on was worshipped is prohibited. For it has been taught on Tannaite authority: R. Yosé b. R. Judah says, “‘Since it is said, **‘Their gods are on the mountains,’ and the mountains are not their gods. ‘Their gods are in the valleys,’ and the valleys are not their gods,** shall I then infer, ‘their gods under every green tree’ — and it is not the tree itself that is their god? Accordingly, Scripture states, ‘and burn their asherim with fire’ (Deu. 12: 3).”*

B. *Why then does scripture state, “under every green tree”?*

C. *That is required in accord with what R. Aqiba has said, for said R. Aqiba, **“I shall explain and interpret the matter before you: In any place in which you find a high mountain, a lofty hill, or a green tree, you may take for granted that there is an idol there.”** [Cohen: This proves that Yosé b. R. Judah prohibits the use of a tree that had*

been planted and subsequently worshipped, for otherwise he could have explained the phrase “under every green tree” as teaching that “the green tree itself which is their god,” if it had not been originally planted as an idol, is permitted.]

- D. *And rabbis, [who permit use of trees that had not been planted for idolatrous worship but were only subsequently worshipped], how do they interpret this verse, “and burn their asherim with fire”?*
- E. *They require it to make the point that a tree that was to begin with planted for idolatry [may not be used in a beneficial manner by Israelites].*
- F. *And does not R. Yosé b. R. Judah require a verse to make this same point?*
- G. *Certainly he does.*
- H. *Then how does he derive his position, that a tree that had been planted and afterward was worshipped is forbidden?*
- I. *He derives that rule from the clause, “and hew down their asherim ” (Deu. 7: 5). Now what is the tree the later growth of which is forbidden [after the trunk was cut down] while the root is permitted? You must say that it is a tree that had been planted and later on was worshipped.*
- J. *But lo, the phrase is, “and hew down their asherim with fire” (Deu. 7: 5)!*
- K. *He derives his interpretation from the mode of argument, “if it had not been stated...,” in the following manner: if it had not been stated, “and burn their asherim with fire,” I would have said that “and hew down their asherim” refers to a tree that to begin with had been planted for idolatry. Since Scripture states, “and burn their asherim with fire,” what need is there for the phrase, “and hew down their asherim” is hardly required. So it presumably refers to a tree that had been planted and later on was worshipped.*
- L. *And as to rabbis, how do they interpret the phrase, “and hew down their asherim”?*
- M. *They interpret it in line with what R. Joshua b. Levi said, for said R. Joshua b. Levi, “Cutting down trees that have served for idolatry takes precedence over the conquest of the Land of Israel. The conquest of the Land of Israel takes precedence over burning trees that have served*

for idolatry. [Cut down the tree and leave the stump, conquer the land, then burn the stump.]”

- N. *For R. Joseph repeated as a Tannaite version, “‘You shall break down their altars’ (Deu. 7: 5) — and leave them; ‘and dash in pieces their pillars’ — and leave them. Now would it ever enter your mind that they really are to be left? The sense must be, [afterward] they are to be burned.”*
- O. Said R. Huna, “Pursue, then burn.”
- P. *And as to R. Yosé b. R. Judah, whence does he derive this reasoning [since in his view the verse refers to a tree that had been planted and then worshipped]?*
- Q. He derives the rule from “destroying, you shall destroy” (Deu. 12: 2), namely, “destroying” by breaking them down, and afterward, “you shall destroy” by burning.
- R. *[And how do] rabbis [read that phrase]?*
- S. *They require that clause to make the point that one who uproots an idol must eradicate every trace of it.*
- T. *And as to R. Yosé b. R. Judah, how does he derive the rule that one who uproots an idol must eradicate every trace of it?*
- U. *He derives that rule from the verse, “and you shall destroy their name out of that place” (Deu. 12: 3).*
- V. And rabbis?
- W. *From that verse they derive the rule that the idol must be renamed, as it has been taught on Tannaite authority:*
- Y. R. Eliezer says, “How on the basis of Scripture do we know that one who uproots an idol must eradicate every trace of it? Scripture says, ‘And you will destroy their name.’”
- Z. **[46A]** Said to him R. Aqiba, “But is it not in any event stated, ‘Destroying, you shall destroy...’? So why is there a verse to teach, ‘you shall destroy their name out of that place’? It means that one has to rename the spot. But can one suppose that renaming the spot is meant in a praiseworthy way?”
- AA. *And would it enter your mind that one should rename the spot in a praiseworthy way?!*

BB. Rather, “Can one suppose that the renaming may be done in neither a praiseworthy nor a contemptuous way? Scripture states, ‘You shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it’ (Deu. 7:26). How so? If they called it ‘house of revelation’ you call it ‘house of obfuscation’ [effected by changing the letter G to a K]. If they called it ‘all-seeing eye’ you call it ‘eye of a thorn.’”

I.3 A. *A Tannaite memorizer repeated as a Tannaite version before R. Sheshet, “Gentiles who worship hills and valleys [M. 3:5A] — even though the [hills and valleys] are permitted, those who worship them are put to death by the sword. If they worshipped plants and grass, the latter are prohibited, and the worshippers are put to death with the sword [cf. T. A.Z. 6:8A-D].”*

B. *He said to him, “Who told you this?”*

C. *“R. Yosé b. R. Judah, who has said, ‘A tree that was planted and only later on was worshipped is prohibited.’”*

D. *“But why not refer the cited passage to the case of a tree that to begin with was planted for idolatry, and so the statement represents the views of rabbis?”*

E. *“Don’t let that proposition enter your mind, for it has been taught that the matter is comparable to the case of a mountain: just as a mountain, which was not placed there to begin with for idolatrous purposes, so this also was not planted for idolatry to begin with.”*

I.4 A. *It has been stated:*

B. As to boulders of a mountain, which had rolled off —

C. the sons of R. Hiyya and R. Yohanan:

D. one said, “They are forbidden.”

E. And the other said, “They are permitted.”

F. *What is the logic behind the position of him who has said that they are permitted?*

G. *They are comparable to the mountain itself. Just as the mountain has not been subject to manual labor and is permitted, so these have not been subjected to manual labor and are permitted.*

H. But the distinguishing trait of the mountain is that it is attached to the ground [which does not, by definition, apply to the rolling stones]!

I. A beast will prove the contrary [since it is not attached to the ground, but if it had been worshipped for idolatry, still it may be used for secular purposes].

- J. But the distinguishing trait of a beast is that it is animate.
- K. A mountain will prove to the contrary.
- L. Now we are going around in circles, but the upshot is that the indicative trait of the one is not the same as the indicative trait of the other, and the indicative trait of the other is not the same as the indicative trait of the one, but what the two have in common is that neither one has been subjected to manual labor, and so is permitted. So anything that has not been subjected to manual labor [but has been worshipped] will be permitted.
- M. The indicative trait of them both, to the contrary, is that neither one of them has been changed from their original, natural condition.
- N. *[Then derive the rule that a boulder is permitted by drawing] an analogy from the case of a beast that has been blemished, or from the case of a mountain; or from the case of a beast that has not been blemished and from that of a withered tree. [Cohen: The animal while unblemished was worshipped; it may be used later if it was blemished; so the criterion of not having changed its form cannot apply to the boulder. The withered tree is changed from its original condition but is permitted because its existence is not due to human action.]*
- O. *One who prohibits the boulders derives the rule from Scripture's statement, "You shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it" — on which account, even though through reason one might conclude that they are permitted, yet do not draw that conclusion. [Cohen: Allow only what the Torah expressly permits.]*
- P. *In point of fact, it is the sons of R. Hiyya who permitted [use of the boulders], for Hezekiah [Hiyya's son] raised the question, "If one set up an egg to bow down to it, what is the law?"*
- Q. *The premise of the question is that one set up the egg to bow down to it and then bowed down to it. And this is the basis of the question: Is this act of setting up the egg classified as an action or not classified as an action? But if he had not set up the egg, the egg would not have been forbidden. And that yields the inference that it was the sons of R. Hiyya who permitted use of the boulders [for no human action was involved].*
- R. *Not at all, for I might say to you that the sons of R. Hiyya are the ones who forbade use of the boulders, on the premise that the question involves the man's actually having bowed down to the egg, even though he had not set it up, in which case it is forbidden, and here with what sort of case do we deal? It is with a man who set up the egg to worship it but did not do so.*

- S. *But in accord with whom is the question raised? If it were in accord with the position of him who maintains that in the case of an idol that belongs to an Israelite, it is forbidden forthwith, obviously the egg would be forbidden. If it is in accord with the position of him who has said that it is forbidden only once it will have been worshipped, lo, one has not worshipped it.*
- T. *In point of fact, the case must involve a situation in which one set up an egg to worship it but did not worship it, and then a gentile came along and worshipped it. That is in line with what R. Judah said Samuel said, “An Israelite who set up a brick to worship but did not worship it, and a gentile came along and worshipped it, — the brick is forbidden. And when Hezekiah framed his question, it was this: “Did he specify ‘a brick’ because setting it up is clearly to be discerned, but the law as to an egg would be different, or perhaps there is no difference between a brick and an egg?” And that question stands.*
- I.5** A. *The question was raised by R. Ammi bar Hama, “He who bows down to a mountain — what is the law as to using boulders from the mountain for the altar? [46B] Does the law that prohibits the use for the Temple service of objects that have been worshipped apply to things that were attached to the ground, or does that law not apply to things that were attached to the ground? And if you should say that the law that prohibits the use for the Temple service of objects that have been worshipped apply to things that were attached to the ground, are things that are used in preparation of an offering *classified as equivalent* to an offering or are things that are used in preparation of an offering *not classified as equivalent* to an offering?”*
- B. Said Raba, “The answer derives from an argument a fortiori based on the hire of a harlot. If the hire of a harlot which is not fixed to the ground may be used for secular purpose, but the hire of a harlot which is fixed to the ground may not be used for the Most High — in line with the verse, ‘You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog’ (Deu. 23:19) — so there is no distinction, so far as the divine service is concerned, whether it is not fixed to the ground or fixed to the ground — in the case of an object that has been worshiped, which, when it is not fixed to the ground, may not be used for secular purposes, surely should not be available for use in the divine purpose when it is fixed to the ground!”
- C. Said R. Huna b. R. Joshua to Raba, “Or reverse the argument: If that which has been worshipped, which is forbidden for use in common purposes when it is

detached from the ground but is permitted for use by the Most High, — as it is said, **‘Their gods are on the mountains,’ and the mountains are not their gods. ‘Their gods are in the valleys,’ and the valleys are not their gods,** so there is no difference whether the use is for ordinary purposes or for the Most High — then the hire of a harlot, which when detached from the ground may be used for ordinary purposes, surely should be permitted for the Most High when it is fixed to the ground! *And if the contrary argument is proposed on the strength of the words, ‘into the house of the Lord your God’ (Deu. 23:19), that is required in line with that which has been taught on Tannaite authority: “‘Into the house of the Lord your God” — excluding the red cow, which does not enter the sanctuary but is offered up outside of it,’ the words of R. Eliezer; but sages say, ‘It is to encompass plates of beaten gold.’”*

- D. *He said to him, “I make a statement that moves from the lenient to the strict view, and you make a statement that moves from the strict to the lenient side. The established rule is that, where it is possible to reach either a lenient or a strict conclusion, we argue in such wise as to produce the strict conclusion.”*
- E. *Said R. Pappa to Raba, “And is it the fact that in any case in which one may argue either for a lenient or a strict ruling, then we do not compose an argument in favor of the lenient ruling? And lo, there is the case of sprinkling [someone made unclean through corpse uncleanness, in which instance the seventh day, on which he should be sprinkled with purification water, falls on the eve of] Passover. [If that day is the Sabbath, do we postpone the rite or carry it out?] There is in that matter the dispute between R. Eliezer and R. Aqiba. R. Eliezer reasons in such wise as to produce a strict result and makes the man liable to bring the Passover lamb, and R. Aqiba takes the lenient side and relieves him of that obligation. And still, R. Aqiba there argues in favor of the lenient position, for it has been taught on Tannaite authority: **These matters regarding the Passover sacrifice override [the prohibitions of] the Sabbath: (1) slaughtering it, (2) tossing its blood, (3) scraping its entrails, and (4) burning its [sacrificial] pieces of fat. But roasting it and rinsing its entrails do not override [the prohibitions of] the Sabbath. Carrying it [to the Temple], bringing it from outside to inside the Sabbath limit, and cutting off a wen which is on it do not override [the prohibitions of] the Sabbath. R. Eliezer says, “They do override [the prohibitions of the Sabbath].” Said R. Eliezer, “Now is it not logical [that these, too, should override the prohibitions of the Sabbath]? Now if slaughtering, which is prohibited under the category of labor, overrides [the prohibitions of] the***

Sabbath, these, which are [prohibited only] by reason of Sabbath rest [relying not upon the scriptural prohibition of actual labor] — should they not override [the prohibitions of] the Sabbath?” Said to him R. Joshua, “A festival day will prove [to the contrary. On festival days it is permitted to prepare necessary food, Exo. 12:16]. For they permitted work to be done on that day which is normally prohibited by reason of labor, but it is prohibited to do on that day [other actions] which are prohibited [merely] by reason of Sabbath rest.” Said to him R. Eliezer, “Now what is the meaning of this, Joshua? How shall proof be derived from that which is an optional deed for that which is an obligatory one?” R. Aqiba replied and said, “Sprinkling [purification water on an unclean person] will prove the case. For it is an obligatory deed, and it is normally prohibited by reason of Sabbath rest, and it does not override [the prohibitions of] the Sabbath. So you, do not be surprised concerning these matters, for even though they are obligatory deeds, and they are prohibited merely by reason of Sabbath rest, they should not override [the prohibition of] the Sabbath.” Said to him R. Eliezer, “And upon this very fact I base my reasoning. Now, if slaughtering, which is prohibited by reason of constituting an act of labor, overrides [the prohibitions of] the Sabbath, sprinkling [purification water on an unclean person], which is prohibited [merely] by reason of Sabbath rest — is it not logical that it [too] should override [the prohibitions of] the Sabbath?” Said to him R. Aqiba, “Matters are just the opposite. Now if sprinkling [purification water on an unclean person], which is prohibited by reason of Sabbath rest, does not override [the prohibitions of the Sabbath], slaughtering, which is prohibited by reason of constituting a prohibited act of labor — is it not logical that it, too, should not override [the prohibitions of] the Sabbath?” [Said to him R. Eliezer, “Aqiba, you have uprooted that which is written in the Torah: At the twilight, at its appointed time (Num. 9: 3) — whether this be an ordinary day or the Sabbath.” He said to him, “Rabbi, bring me an ‘appointed time’ referring to these matters just as ‘appointed time’ refers to the actual act of slaughtering.” A governing principle did R. Aqiba state, “Any form of labor which it is possible to carry out on the eve of the Sabbath does not override the Sabbath. Slaughtering, which it is not possible to carry out on the eve of the Sabbath, does override the Sabbath” [M. [Pes. 6:2A-M](#)]. [The important entry is as follows:] Said to him R. Aqiba, “Matters are just the

opposite. Now if sprinkling [purification water on an unclean person], which is prohibited by reason of Sabbath rest, does not override [the prohibitions of the Sabbath], slaughtering, which is prohibited by reason of constituting a prohibited act of labor forbidden by the Torah — is it not logical that it, too, should not override [the prohibitions of] the Sabbath?”

- F. *“In that case, R. Eliezer himself had taught the rule to R. Aqiba but then had forgotten his own position, so R. Aqiba came and reminded him of it. And that is in line with what he said to him, ‘My Lord, do not make atonement in the time of judgment [and say that my death will atone for my sins, that is, do not be angry with me]. This is what I have received from you as a tradition: sprinkling the water of purification is prohibited only by reason of the consideration of Sabbath rest, and therefore will not override the prohibitions of the Sabbath.’”*

I.6 A. R. Ammi bar Hama raised the following question: “He who bows down to standing grain in a field — what is the law as to using that grain for meal-offerings? Does a change in the condition of material make it permissible to use for such a purpose what has been used for idolatry, or does a change in the condition of material not make it permissible to use for such a purpose what has been used for idolatry?”

- B. *Said Mar Zutra b. R. Nahman, “Come and take note: **All those animals which are prohibited for the altar — their offspring are permitted [M. Tem. 6:5A].** In this connection it has been taught on Tannaite authority: R. Eliezer forbids using the offspring for such a purpose. [So this is at issue among Tannaite authorities.] But was it not stated in that same matter: Said R. Nahman said Rabbah bar Abbuha, “The dispute concerns a case in which the beasts were pregnant and then fucked by a man, [in which case, R. Eliezer takes the view that the status of the embryo is equivalent to the status of the thigh of the mother, while rabbis maintain that it is not merely equivalent to the mother’s thigh.] [47A] But if the beasts had been fucked by a man and only afterward gotten pregnant, all parties concur that the offspring are permitted for use on the altar.] Now here, too, we have a case to be classified like the one in which they got pregnant and afterward were fucked.”*

- C. *There are those who say, “The dispute deals with a case in which the animals were fucked by a man and only afterward became pregnant, since R. Eliezer holds the view that if there were two efficient causes,*

one of which is subject to a prohibition, then the offspring is forbidden, while rabbis take the position that if there were two efficient causes, one of which is subject to a prohibition, then the offspring is permitted. But if the beasts were pregnant and only were afterward subjected to bestiality, all parties concur that they are forbidden.” And here, too, the case falls into the classification of one in which the beasts were pregnant and then got fucked.

D. *But is that analogy a valid one? In the one case it began as a beast and now is a beast, and only the door has been closed in its face. Here by contrast, it was originally wheat and now has been turned into flour.*

I.7 A. R. Simeon b. Laqish raised the following question: “He who worships a palm tree — as to its branch, what is the law on using it for the religious duty [of taking a palm branch on Tabernacles]? *The question concerns not a tree that one planted to begin with for idolatry, for it is forbidden even for everyday use, but the question concerns a tree that was planted and only afterward was worshipped. Furthermore, the question does not arise within the position of R. Yosé b. R. Judah, for in his view even for use for ordinary purposes the branch would be forbidden. When the question is raised, it is within the premise of rabbis, and with special reference to whether or not the branch may be used for the purpose of fulfilling a religious obligation. What is the rule? Has the branch been rendered revolting to the Most High, or is that not the case?*”

B. *When R. Dimi came, he said, “The question has been raised in connection with an asherah that was nullified, specifically to find out whether a disability continues in respect to carrying out religious duties, or whether a disability does not continue in respect to carrying out religious duties?”* [Cohen: The disability in this case was removed when the asherah was annulled. That leaves it available for secular use. But does the disability pertain when using the palm branch for a religious duty?]

C. *You may solve the problem in line with that which we have learned in the Mishnah: [If] he covered up [the blood] and it became uncovered, he is free of liability to cover it up [again]. [If] the wind [blew dirt and] covered it up [and it became uncovered], he is liable to cover it up [M. Hul. 6:2F-G].* And said Rabbah bar bar Hana said R. Yohanan, “This teaching has been repeated only in a case in which the wind again uncovered it, but if the wind

did not again uncover the blood, one is free of the obligation to cover the blood any further. *And in this connection we raised the objection, "So if the wind uncovered it, what difference does that make? Since the blood was obliterated by being covered up, it has been obliterated once for all."* And said R. Pappa, "That is to say, a disability does not continue in respect to carrying out religious duties." [Cohen: When the disability is removed, the religious duty, covering the blood, must be carried out.]

- D. *But there is a question that pertains to R. Pappa himself, specifically, does R. Pappa regard it as clear that a disability does not continue in respect to carrying out religious duties, with the result that one takes a lenient or a strict view, or perhaps he is in doubt, in which case we apply that principle to the strict view and not to the lenient view.*
- E. *That question then stands.*

I.8 A. *R. Pappa raised the following question: "He who bows down to an animal — as to its wool, may it be used for blue thread?"*

- B. *For blue thread? Whatever for! If it is blue thread for use in the garments of the priests, that is covered by the question just now raised by R. Ammi bar Hama. If it is blue thread for use in the show fringes, that is covered by the question raised by R. Simeon b. Laqish.*
- C. *True enough, so there is no need for R. Pappa to raise the question. The reason that he raised it is because there are other, similar matters that go along the same lines: What is the law on using the wool for the blue thread, the horns for trumpets, the bones of the legs for flutes, the intestines for harp strings [for the Temple]? Now from the viewpoint of him who says that the principal component of song lies in the musical instrument, then there is no issue, that use for such a purpose is certainly forbidden. Where the question arises, it has to do with the position of him who says that the principal component of song lies in the voice. Is the use of the musical instrument then to sweeten the sound, in which case we may use the instruments made of these materials, or perhaps, even when it is solely for an ancillary purpose, the prohibition still remains?*
- D. *The question stands.*

- I.9** A. *Rabbah raised the question: “He who bows down to a spring of water, what is the law as to using the water of that spring for libation offerings?”*
- B. *What sort of question troubles him here? Should one say that it is to the man’s own reflection that he bowed down? Or perhaps it was to the water that he bowed down? In that case, he can have raised the same question about bowing down to a bowl of water and then using the water for everyday purposes!*
- C. *This is the question that he meant to raise: “It is the fact that he bowed down to the water, and this is what he wanted to know: did he bow down to the water that was in front of him, and that water has now flowed away, or did he bow down to the entire stream of water?”*
- D. *But even so, would it have then been forbidden? And lo, said R. Yohanan in the name of R. Simeon b. Yehosedeq, “Water belongs to the public [and] cannot be forbidden [by an individual’s act of worship]”?*
- E. *The question is required to address water that wells up from the earth [and belongs to an individual].*

I.1 asks an obvious exegetical question, aimed at showing that the Mishnah contains no imperfections. No. 2 then pursues the inquiry begun at No. 1 into the issue of a tree that only after planting was subjected to a prohibition. No. 3 then continues the foregoing and at the same time reverts to the basic theme of the Mishnah, the distinction between things in nature that idolators worship and idolatry itself. No. 4 expands the range of the application of the principle established by the Mishnah’s rule. No. 5 pursues a question parallel to the foregoing, on planting a tree and only afterward worshipping it. The set of theoretical questions is continued at No. 6, which pursues the problem raised in the foregoing. Nos. 7, 8 go on in the same direction. That the entire composite is unitary is proven by the character of No. 7, which explicitly builds on the foregoing. So this entire elegant composite in fact constitutes a composition.

3:6

- A. **He [the wall of] whose house was adjacent to [and also served as the wall of the temple of] an idol, and [whose house] fell down —**
- B. **it is forbidden to rebuild it.**
- C. **What should he then do?**
- D. **He pulls back within four cubits inside his own property and then rebuilds his house.**
- E. **[If there was a wall belonging] both to him and to [the temple of an] idol, [47B] it is judged to be divided half and half.**

- F. The stones, wood, and mortar deriving from it impart uncleanness in the status of a dead creeping thing, for it is said, “You will utterly detest it” (Deu. 7:26).
- G. R. ‘Aqiba says, “In the status of a menstruant[‘s uncleanness], as it is said, ‘You shall cast them away as a menstrual thing; you shall say unto it, Get you hence (Isa. 30:22).
- H. “Just as a menstruating woman imparts uncleanness to one who carries her [or objects that she carries], so also an idol imparts uncleanness to one who carries it.”

- I.1** A. *But lo, [if he does as directed], he enlarges the space for the temple!*
- B. *Said R. Hanina of Sura, “What he does is make himself a privy [in the four cubits that he yields].”*
- C. *But what about the consideration of modesty?*
- D. *What he does is make himself a privy for use by night.*
- E. *But lo, a master has said, “Who is regarded as a fastidious person? One who relieves himself by night in the same place in which he does so by day.” And even though we have established the context of that statement, “in the same place,” to mean, “in the same manner,” still there is the consideration of modesty!*
- F. *What he should do is make a privy for children, or make a fence with thorns and shrubs in that space [which then cannot be used by the temple].*

The Talmud asks and answers an obvious question, deriving from the established principle of the law that Israelites may do nothing to the advantage of a temple to idolatry.

3:7A-D

- A. **There are three sorts of houses [so far as use as a shrine for idolatry is concerned]:**
- B. **(1) a house which was built to begin with for the purposes of idolatry — lo, this is prohibited.**
- C. **(2) [If] one stuccoed and decorated it for idolatry and renovated it, one removes the renovations.**
- D. **(3) [If] one brought an idol into it and took it out — lo, this is permitted.**
- I.1** A. Said Rab, “He who bows down to a house has prohibited it[s use].” *Therefore he takes the view that an object that was not attached to the ground but*

subsequently became attached to the ground is classified as an object that is not attached to the ground. [The materials were not attached to the ground but having been built into the house they are now attached to the ground; therefore the house is prohibited (Cohen).] *But we have learned in the Mishnah: a house which was built to begin with for the purposes of idolatry*, and that is the case even though one has not bowed down to the house. [So if it was not built for that purpose, it is not forbidden.]

- B. If one has built the house originally for idolatry, even though no one has bowed down to it, or if one has bowed down to it even though one has not built it, [the house is forbidden]
- D. *If so, instead of listing three categories of house, the Mishnah ought to list four.*
- E. *Since at stake is the matter of nullification, building and bowing down are classified in one and the same category.*

The point of interest is the identification of the position of our Mishnah paragraph on a pertinent, but autonomous issue. The solution to the problem is to clarify the sense of the Mishnah in light of the issue raised in this analysis.

3:7E-G

- E. **There are three sorts of stones:**
- F. **(1) a stone which one hewed to begin with for a pedestal — lo, this is forbidden.**
- G. **(2) [If] he set up an idol on [an existing] stone and then took it off, lo, this is permitted.**

- I.1** A. Said R. Ammi, “The prohibition pertains only if he plastered and stuccoed in the stone itself [using the stucco not just for ornament but making incisions in the stone and inserting the stucco (Cohen)].”
- B. *But lo, we have learned in the Mishnah that it is analogous to the house, and, in the case of the house, the plaster is not actually inserted into the material, and yet the plaster is forbidden!*
- C. *In the case of the house, too, the plaster is inserted in the space between the bricks. But are we not here dealing with a case in which he plastered the house, then replastered it [and the latter was solely for idolatry]? Rather, when the statement of R. Ammi was said, it had to do with nullification [of the stone that had been designated for the service of idolatry], and while the owner plastered and stuccoed into the stone itself, if he removes the renovation, he*

has set matters right. For what otherwise might you have supposed? Since he plastered and stuccoed in the material of the stone, it is classified with stone that had originally been cut for idolatry, the whole of which is prohibited. So he has informed us that that is not the case.

The amplification of Ammi's statement in light of the preceding rule provides a more subtle reading of the Mishnah than the Mishnah's own statement can have precipitated.

3:7H-K

H. [48A] There are three kinds of asherahs:

I. (1) A tree which one planted to begin with for idolatry — lo, this is prohibited.

J. (2) [If] he chopped it and trimmed it for idolatry, and it sprouted afresh, he may remove that which sprouted afresh.

K. (3) [If] he set up an idol under it and then annulled it, lo, this is permitted.

I.1 A. *Said members of the household of R. Yannai, “[With reference to the rule, [If] he chopped it and trimmed it for idolatry, and it sprouted afresh, he may remove that which sprouted afresh], that is the rule if one has trained a branch and grafted it on the trunk of the tree [then what grows on the grafted branch is forbidden, but if he merely trimmed the tree without grafting on to it, it is not prohibited (Cohen)].”*

B. *But we have learned in the Mishnah, [without reference to grafting], [If] he chopped it and trimmed it for idolatry....*

C. *Rather, when the statement of the members of the household of R. Yannai was made, it was made with reference to nullification [not prohibiting the tree to begin with], specifically, even though he has trained a branch and grafted it onto the trunk of the tree, if he has removed the new growth on the grafting, then matters have been done rightly. You might have thought that, since he had trained a branch and grafted it on the trunk of the tree, it is classified as a tree that has originally been planted for idolatry, so that the whole of it should be prohibited. So we are informed that that is not the case.*

I.2 A. *Said Samuel, “He who bows down to a tree — the later growth on the same tree is forbidden.”*

B. *Objected R. Eleazar, “ [If] he chopped it and trimmed it for idolatry, and it sprouted afresh, he may remove that which sprouted afresh. Therefore if he chopped and trimmed the new growth, it is prohibited, but otherwise it is not.”*

- C. Samuel may say to you, “Whose view is represented? It is that of rabbis, but Samuel has given his view in accord with the principle of R. Yosé b. R. Judah, who has said, ‘A tree which one has planted and only afterward worshipped is forbidden [including the new growth].’”
- D. Objected R. Ashi, “How do you know, however, that it is in particular with reference to the additional growth that R. Yosé b. R. Judah and rabbis are at odds? Perhaps, so far as the new growth, all parties concur that it is forbidden, but at issue between them is the trunk itself. Then R. Yosé b. R. Judah takes the view that the trunk of a tree that has been worshipped is forbidden, in line with, ‘and burn their asherim with fire,’ and rabbis maintain that the trunk of the tree is permitted, in line with the statement, ‘and hew down their asherim.’ That they read in this way: What is the tree that has a hewn part that is prohibited while the trunk is permitted? It is a tree that was planted and only afterward was worshipped. And should you maintain that, when the issue was treated earlier [at 45B], that is not how these verses were read, I may reply: reverse the reading of the cited verses by rabbis and R. Yosé b. R. Judah [to conform with this version of how they are to be read].”
- E. If so, then who is responsible for the statement, “[If] he chopped it and trimmed it for idolatry, [and it sprouted afresh, he may remove that which sprouted afresh]? [That bears the implication that if he did not chop and trim the tree, the new growth would have been permitted.] It is neither rabbis nor R. Yosé b. R. Judah. If it were rabbis, then even if one had not chopped and trimmed the tree, the new growth still would have been prohibited. And in the view of R. Yosé b. R. Judah, even the trunk of the tree would be prohibited.
- F. If you wish, I shall maintain that the Mishnah accords with rabbis, and if you wish, I shall maintain that the Mishnah accords with R. Yosé b. R. Judah.
- G. If you wish, I shall maintain that the Mishnah accords with R. Yosé b. R. Judah. When R. Yosé b. R. Judah takes the position that he does, it is that the trunk is prohibited when the tree has not been chopped and trimmed, but if the man chopped and trimmed the tree, he revealed that it was his intention to worship the new growth, not the trunk.
- H. If you wish, I shall maintain that the Mishnah accords with rabbis. As to the phrase, [If] he chopped it and trimmed it for idolatry, [and it sprouted afresh, he may remove that which sprouted afresh], that is required to deal with the contrary proposition that because he does this to the tree itself, the

trunk is prohibited. So we are informed that what is prohibited is only the new growth.

The reading of the Mishnah's language at I.1 yields an important clarification, which also proves a familiar formal argument. No. 2 succeeds admirably in relating our rule to other intersecting ones, showing us the limits of the several possible positions.

3:7L-Q

- L. What is an asherah? Any tree under which is located an idol.
- M. R. Simeon says, "Any [tree] which people worship."
- N. M'SH: In Sidon there was a tree which people worshipped, and they found a pile of stones underneath it.
- O. Said to them R. Simeon, "Investigate the character of this pile of stones."
- P. They did investigate it and found an image on it.
- Q. He said to them, "Since they are worshipping the image [and not the tree], let us permit them to make use of the tree [itself]."

I.1 A. What is an *asherah*? But, lo, we have learned in the Mishnah: There are three kinds of *asherahs*!

- B. Two of those definitions represent the opinions of all parties, and concerning one of them there is the dispute between R. Simeon and rabbis.
- C. And which is the classification of *asherah* concerning which R. Simeon and sages have differed? It is any under which is located an idol [(3) (If) he set up an idol under it and then annulled it, lo, this is permitted]. R. Simeon says, "It is any tree that is worshipped."

I.2 A. What is the definition of an unidentified tree that is in fact an *asherah*?

- B. Said Rab, "It is any under which priests sit without eating the fruit."
- C. And Samuel said, "Even if they say, 'The produce of this tree are for a house of Naserepé, it is forbidden, for they brew a liquor from them, which they drink on their feast days.'"
- D. Said Amemar, "A sage of Pumbedita told me, 'The decided law accords with the opinion of Samuel.'"

I.1 clarifies how the present Mishnah paragraph can relate to the foregoing. No. 2 then supplies a definition required by No. 1.

3:8A-C

- A. [48B] One should not sit in [an asherah's] shade, but if he sat in its shade, he is clean.
- B. And he should not pass underneath it, but if he passed underneath it, he is unclean.
- C. If it was overshadowing public domain, taking away property from public use, and one passed beneath it, he is clean.

I.1 A. One should not sit in [an *asherah*'s] shade: so what else is new?

- B. Said Rabbah bar bar Hana said R. Yohanan, "The rule was required only to deal with the shade of its shade." [Cohen: That is the additional shadow, beyond the shadow corresponding to the height of the tree, which is cast when the sun is in the east or west. The true shadow of the tree is denser than is its extension through the slanting rays of the sun, and the thinner shade is the shadow of the shadow.]
- C. Is that to imply that if one sat in the shadow itself corresponding to the height of the tree, he is made unclean?
- D. No, for in point of fact even if he sat in the shade cast by the height of the tree itself, he is still clean. So we are informed that, in any event, one may still not sit even in the shade of its shade.
 - E. There are those who repeat this entire version with reference to the concluding clause of the same passage:
 - F. **but if he sat in its shade, he is clean:** so what else is new?
 - G. Said Rabbah bar bar Hana said R. Yohanan, "The rule was required only to deal with the shade of its shade."
 - H. Is that to imply that even to begin with one may sit in the shadow of the shadow?
 - I. No, but so we are informed that even if he sat in the shade cast by the height of the tree itself, he is still clean.

II.1 A. And he should not pass underneath it, but if he passed underneath it, he is unclean:

- B. What is the operative consideration [that leads us to say he is unclean]?
- C. It is simply not possible that there will be no remnants of offerings to idols under the tree.

II.2 A. Who is the authority behind this unassigned rule?

- B. *It is R. Judah b. Beterah, for it has been taught on Tannaite authority:*
- C. How on the basis of Scripture do we know that the remnant of an offering to an idol imparts uncleanness by means of overshadowing to all that are located within its shadow? As it is said, ‘They joined themselves also to Baal Peor and ate the sacrifices of the dead’ (Psa. 106:28): just as a corpse conveys uncleanness by means of overshadowing to all that are located within its shadow, so what has been offered to an idol conveys uncleanness by means of overshadowing to all that are located within its shadow.

III.1 A. If it was overshadowing public domain, taking away property from public use, and one passed beneath it, he is clean:

- B. *The question was raised:* “Is the proper reading, ‘has passed’ or ‘passes’?” [Cohen: Are we dealing with an act that is to begin with prohibited but condoned after the fact?]
- C. R. Isaac b. Eleazar in the name of Hezekiah said, “Passes.”
- D. And R. Yohanan said, “If one has passed....”
- E. *But there is no dispute. The one rules for a case in which there is an alternate route, the other if there is not.*

III.2 A. Said R. Sheshet to his servant, “When you get there, rush me by.”

- B. *Now how are we to understand this? If there was no alternate route, then why did he have to rush by, for it was entirely permitted to pass that way, and if there was an alternate route, even though he said, “Rush me by,” still, was such an action to begin with permitted anyhow?*
- C. *There was assuredly no alternative, but the rule governing a major authority is exceptional [and more stringent].*

I.1 clarifies the implications of the Mishnah’s language. II.1 sets out the reasoning behind the rule. No. 2 then identifies the principle at hand by finding the authority. III.1 again clarifies the word choices of the Mishnah, and No. 2 is inserted to develop the foregoing.

3:8D-G

- D. **And they sow seeds underneath it in the rainy season, but not in the dry season.**
- E. **But as to lettuce, neither in the dry season nor in the rainy season [may one plant it there].**

F. R. Yosé says, “Also: [under an asherah one may] not [plant] vegetables in the rainy season,

G. “because the foliage drops on them and serves as manure for them.”

I.1 A. *Does this rule bear the implication that R. Yosé takes the view that the result of multiple causes, one of which is forbidden, is prohibited [Cohen: We deal with vegetables planted in winter; manure is the prohibited cause, the soil is permitted], and rabbis take the view that the result of multiple causes, one of which is prohibited, is permitted?*

B. *But we have heard the reverse, for we have learned in the Mishnah: R. Yosé says, “One breaks them into pieces and throws the powder to the wind or drops them into the sea.” They said to him, “Also: they may be made into manure, as it is said, ‘And there will cleave nothing of a devoted thing to your hand’ (Deu. 13:18)” [M. 3:3C-D]. The rabbis’ views then prove contradictory, and R. Yosé’s views prove contradictory.*

C. *In point of fact, R. Yosé’s views do not contradict one another, for in the case given in the Mishnah passage just now cited, R. Yosé permits use of the dust as manure because the man goes on and destroys the idol; but in our case, where he does not destroy the idol, the dust is prohibited for use as manure. But, as a matter of fact, then rabbis really do contradict themselves.*

D. *Reverse the attributions.*

E. *Or, if you prefer, I may say, there is no need to reverse the attributions. The position of R. Yosé remains as explained. The view of rabbis accords with that which R. Mari b. R. Kahana said, “What makes the hide valuable decreases the value of the meat.” [Cohen: If an animal dedicated to the Temple was blemished, it is sold and the proceeds go to the treasury. But the hide may not be flayed whole, since this would lessen the value of the meat, which would be cut up in the process, and the gain in the enhanced value of the hide would be lost by the lower value of the meat.] Here, too, the benefit gained through the foliage is lost by reason of the shade [Cohen: While the fall of the leaves helps the vegetables, the shadow cast by the tree is to their detriment].*

I.2 A. *But does R. Yosé really take the view that the result of multiple causes, one of which is forbidden, is prohibited? But have we not learned in the Mishnah: R. Yosé says, “They may plant a young shoot of [an] orlah [tree], but they may not plant a walnut of [an] orlah [tree], because [the walnut] is fruit [and subject to the restrictions of*

orlah]. And they may not graft with [a young shoot of] early date berries of [an] orlah [tree]” [M. **Orl. 1:9A-B**]. And said R. Judah said Rab, “R. Yosé concedes [49A] that if one has planted a nut in the status of orlah fruit, or trained and grafted a shoot that is in the status of orlah onto an old tree, the produce that grows from it is permitted” [Cohen: despite the fact that one contributory cause, being orlah, was prohibited, and this proves that Yosé permits the product of combined causes, one of which is forbidden]. *Now should you maintain that R. Yosé distinguishes other prohibitions from that of idolatry* [which is subject to a more strict rule, so that if idolatry is a contributory cause, then the produce of combined causes, one of which is prohibited, will be prohibited, but that would not be the case elsewhere (Cohen)], *does he make any such distinction? And has it not been taught on Tannaite authority: A field that is manured with shit that has been dedicated to idolatry, and so, too, a cow that has been fattened with vetches that have been dedicated to idolatry — one Tannaite version has it, the field may be sown, the cow may be slaughtered, and a further Tannaite version has it, the field must be left fallow, and the cow must be left to starve to death. Is it not that the one represents the opinion of R. Yosé [who allows the field to be sown just as he allows the fruit that derives from the orlah pit], and the other that of rabbis [who prohibit grinding the idol to powder, lest it be used for manure (Cohen)]?*

- B. *No, the one represents the position of R. Eliezer, and other that of rabbis [so Yosé may be left with the position that idolatry is a special case].*
- C. *Which case involving R. Eliezer and rabbis? May one say that it is the case of R. Eliezer and rabbis of the matter of leaven? For we have learned in the Mishnah: **Leaven of common produce and [leaven] of heave-offering which fell into dough, [and there is] not enough of either to leaven [the dough], [but] they combined and leavened [it] — R. Eliezer says, “I rule [on the status of the dough] according to the last [leaven which fell in].” But sages say, “Whether the prohibited [leaven] fell in first or last, it does not render [the dough] prohibited unless there is enough of it to leaven [by itself]”** [M. **Orl. 2:11**]. And said Abbaye, “The rule of R. Eliezer pertains only if one had first removed the matter that disqualifies, but if he had not first removed the disqualifying matter, the dough is*

prohibited.” [Cohen: That is so whichever fell in last. Consequently we have here an instance of combined causes, and since one of them is prohibited, the effect is also prohibited. According to sages, it is permitted.]

- D. *But how do we know that the critical consideration of R. Eliezer is in accord with what Abbaye has said? Perhaps the operative consideration of R. Eliezer is, “I rule [on the status of the dough] according to the last [leaven which fell in].” If the process ended with what is forbidden, then the dough is forbidden, and if it ended with what is permitted, then the dough is permitted, and this is without regard to whether or not he first removed the disqualifying matter.*
- E. *Rather, it is the case of R. Eliezer and rabbis of the matter of the wood of an asherah, for we have learned in the Mishnah: [If] one has taken pieces of wood from [an asherah], they are prohibited for benefit. [If] he lit a fire in the oven with them, if it is a new oven, it is to be overturned. If it is an old oven, it must be allowed to cool down. [If] he baked a loaf of bread in [the oven heated by the wood of an asherah], it is prohibited for benefit. [If] the loaf of bread was mixed up with other loaves of bread, all of them are prohibited as to benefit. R. Eliezer says, “Let him take the [funds received for the sale as a] benefit [from the tree] to the Salt Sea.” They said to him, “There is no form of redemption for an idol” [M. 3:9, below]. Now who are the rabbis who [who permit the result of combined causes, one of which is prohibited] differ from R. Eliezer? Should one say they are those whose opinion has just now been cited on the pieces of wood? They take the stricter view [but we want to show that Eliezer takes the stricter view on the matter of the combined causes, one of which is forbidden]. Rather, it must be rabbis whose opinion has been quoted on the subject of leaven.*
- F. *Then even though rabbis take the lenient view in the matter of leaven, do they take the lenient view when the issue is idolatry? Rather, in point of fact one is the view of R. Yosé, the other of rabbis, and R. Yosé is simply in the process of analyzing the position of rabbis. This is then what he is saying to them: “In my view, the product of combined causes, one of which is prohibited, is permitted. But even according to your view, that the product of combined causes, one of which is prohibited, is prohibited, you must at least concede to me that*

the sowing of vegetables in winter is prohibited [for the foliage is a contributory cause]! And rabbis respond in accord with that which R. Mari b. R. Kahana said R. Judah said Samuel said, "The decided law accords with R. Yosé."

I.3 A. *There was a garden patch that was fertilized with shit belonging to an idol. Sent R. Amram to R. Joseph. He said to him, "This is what R. Judah said Samuel said, "The decided law accords with R. Yosé."*

I.1 explains that the principle at issue here links our rule to another, but the apparent contradiction that results can be harmonized. No. 2 then pursues the issue that forms the premise of the problem of No. 1. No. 3 is tacked on as relevant to the foregoing.

3:9

- A. [49B] [If] one has taken pieces of wood from [an asherah], they are prohibited for benefit.
- B. [If] he lit a fire in the oven with them, if it is a new oven, it is to be overturned. If it is an old oven, it must be allowed to cool down.
- C. [If] he baked a loaf of bread in [the oven heated by the wood of an asherah], it is prohibited for benefit.
- D. [If] the loaf of bread was mixed up with other loaves of bread, all of them are prohibited as to benefit.
- E. R. Eliezer says, "Let him take the [funds received for the sale as a] benefit [from the tree] to the Salt Sea."
- F. They said to him, "There is no form of redemption for an idol."
- G. [If] one took a piece of wood for a shuttle, it is forbidden for benefit.
- H. [If] he wove a garment with the shuttle, the garment is forbidden for benefit.
- I. [If] it was mixed up with other garments, and other garments with still others, all of them are forbidden for benefit.
- J. R. Eliezer says, "Let him take the funds derived from the benefit to the Salt Sea."
- K. They said to him, "There is no redemption price for a matter of idolatry."

I.1 A. *Both [baking and weaving] were required by way of example. For had we been given the former, one might have thought that it is in particular in the case of baking that R. Eliezer takes the position that he dies, because at the moment that the bread is finished baking, the wood that is the prohibited material has*

been consumed, but in the case of weaving, since the shuttle remains discernible as a forbidden object after the weaving has been concluded, we may have supposed that he concurs with rabbis. And had we been given only the case of the shuttle, one might have supposed that here rabbis take the position that they do, but in the case of baking the loaf, they concur with R. Eliezer. So both cases are necessary.

I.2 A. Said R. Hiyya b. Rabbah bar Nahmani said R. Hisda said Zeiri, “The decided law is in accord with R. Eliezer.”

B. *There are those who say*, said R. Hisda, “Said to me Abba bar R. Hisda, ‘This is what Zeiri said, “The decided law accords with R. Eliezer.”’”

I.3 A. Said R. Adda b. Ahbah, “They formulate matters as they do only in the case of a loaf, but not in the case of a cask of wine [where Eliezer concedes that **there is no form of redemption for an idol**].

B. And R. Hisda said, “Even the case of a cask of wine would in his view be permitted.”

I.4 A. *Someone mixed a cask of libation wine with his own wine. He came before R. Hisda, who said to him, “Take four zuz and throw the money into the river, and the wine will then be available for your benefit.”*

I.1 shows why what appears to be repetition in fact is crucial. No. 2 then provides the decided law. No. 3 presents a dispute on the Mishnah interpretation, and No. 4 adds a case.

3:10

A. How does one desecrate [an asherah]?

B. [If] one trimmed it or pruned it, took from it a branch or twig, even a leaf — lo, this constitutes desecration.

C. [If] one has trimmed it for the good of [the tree], it remains forbidden.

D. [If he trimmed it] not for the good of the tree, it is permitted.

I.1 A. And as to the chips off the *asherah*, what is to be done with them?

B. *R. Huna and Hiyya b. Rab differed on that matter:*

C. One said, “[Utilization of the chips] is forbidden.”

D. And the other said, “[Utilization of the chips] is permitted.”

E. *It has been taught on Tannaite authority in accord with the opinion of him who has said that they are permitted, for it has been taught on*

Tannaite authority: A gentile who chipped off pieces of an idol for his own use — the idol and the chips are permitted. If it was for the sake of the idol, the idol is forbidden but the chips are permitted. But if an Israelite chipped off pieces from an idol, whether it was for his own use or for the use of the idol, the idol and the chips are forbidden.

I.2 A. *It has been stated:*

- B. An idol that broke [on its own] —
- C. Rab said, “One has to nullify every sherd.”
- D. And Samuel said, “An idol can be nullified only as it has taken shape [Cohen: in its natural form].” [Cohen: If it has been damaged, it ceases to be an idol, and further annulment is unnecessary.]
- E. *To the contrary, can one nullify it as it has taken shape [that is, when it is in good condition]? Rather, the sense is, “An idol does not have to be nullified unless it is as it has taken shape.”*
 - F. *May one say that at issue between the two is this matter: one party maintains that gentiles will worship even the fragments of idols, and the other takes the position that they do not worship the fragments of idols?*
 - G. *Not at all, all parties take the view that they do worship sherds of remnants. But here what is at issue is the sherds of sherds. One party takes the view that the sherds of sherds are prohibited for Israelite benefit, and the other party takes the position that sherds of sherds are permitted.*
 - H. *And if you prefer, I shall propose, all parties concur that the sherds of sherds are permitted. But here what is at issue is an idol that is made up in sections, but one that can be put back together by an unskilled person. One party takes the view that since an unskilled person can put the idol back together, it is not nullified, and the other party maintains that an idol can be nullified only when as it has taken shape, that is, that is in the form that it ordinarily assumes. In this case, since it is not in its ordinary form, there is no requirement to nullify it.*

I.1 answers a question left open by the Mishnah. No. 2 builds on the issue addressed by No. 1.