

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this anthology is to produce a translation which conveys the meaning of the text in easily readable form. Accordingly, it avoids highly technical analyses of linguistic usage or variant manuscript readings except when those have a significant bearing on the basic meaning of the text.

Those with a background in Talmud who wish to follow along in the Hebrew should keep in mind that the originators of the Jerusalem Talmud spoke a form of Aramaic somewhat different from that used in Babylonia. In particular, they often slurred the guttural letters

For instance, the word אמר meaning “he said,” is often simply אמ, the word אנן meaning “we,” is reduced to נן, and the word כאילו meaning “as though,” becomes רבי אליעזר ליעזר רבי אבה. The names of the sages were also often shortened in this fashion. For example רבי אבה became רבי בא. In addition, the guttural letters were, sometimes used interchangeably. By way of illustration, the word איכן meaning “where” in the Babylonian Talmud is איכן in the Jerusalem Talmud.

The editors of the Jerusalem Talmud also employed many contractions. Thus, the words כמי האי meaning “like this” are contracted to כמי, and the words לית לינא meaning “should I not?” are contracted to לינא. Although scribes often employed some contractions and abbreviations partly to ease the time consuming job of copying so much material by hand, these contractions probably reflect the form of Aramaic spoken in the Land of Israel.

As noted in the introduction to Volume I, sometimes the Talmud paraphrases a verse from the Tanach or even quotes the Tanach as saying something which is only derived from a verse but not explicit in it. For the convenience of the reader, when the Hebrew text cites a Biblical reference, it is reproduced in this translation in its full correct form. In addition, to enhance the clarity of the text, names of people and places cited in Biblical verses are translated with their traditional English equivalents (Jacob, Samuel, etc.) while names and places in the Talmudic text are transliterated (Yaakov, Shemuel, etc.).

Although later scholars have traditionally studied the Jerusalem Talmud less than the Babylonian Talmud, the editors of the Babylonian Talmud had the highest esteem for their colleagues living in the Land of Israel. For example, the Babylonian Talmud portrays the scholars of the Land of Israel as showing great respect for one another and working harmoniously to arrive at the true meaning of the Torah. Moreover, the Midrash asserts that the sages in the Land of Israel delved into the Torah at great length until they had a clear understanding of it. Rabbi Zera valued the learning available in the Land of Israel to such a degree that before traveling there, he fasted one hundred

times to forget what he had learned in Babylonia so that he could study the teachings of the Land of Israel without preconceived ideas.

By contrast, the Babylonian sages viewed their own scholarship as the result of contentious debate. This may explain why the *Halachah* of the Land of Israel without preconceived ideas.

By contrast, the Babylonian sages viewed their own scholarship as the result of contentious debate. This may explain why the *Halachah* follows the opinion of the Babylonian Talmud. Studying Torah in a spirit of cooperation is praiseworthy. However, because the Babylonian scholars argued strenuously among themselves, they could be sure that any Halachic conclusion they reached had been carefully tested and was correct.

One scholar has suggested that the primacy of the Babylonian Talmud reflects the spiritual condition of the Jewish people. Just as, sadly, the Temple has remained in a state of destruction these many years and Jews have been scattered in exile, so the Talmud of the Land of Israel has been neglected. Perhaps now that the end of the long exile is approaching, it is especially fitting to study the Jerusalem Talmud.

The Talmud teaches that since the destruction of the Temple, the situation of the Jewish people has deteriorated so that all that keeps things going is the recital of Uva LeTzion (**וּבָא לְצִיּוֹן**) and the Kaddish which follows the study of Aggadoth. One reason the study of Aggadoth has such power is that it contains material which everyone can understand and appreciate, not only great scholars.

Avoth D'Rabbi Nathan says that whoever has mastered Halachah but not Midrash has not tasted fear of sin while whoever has mastered Midrash but not Halachah has not tasted wisdom. One who has mastered Midrash but not Halachah is like a mighty warrior without weaponry while whoever has mastered Halachah but not Midrash is like a weak person with weaponry. So it emerges that the study of Midrashim and Aggadoth as well as Halachoth is essential to becoming a good Jew.

The Zohar denounces those who view the Torah as mere stories. If that were the case, it would be possible to create similar stories, or perhaps even better ones, today. The reason the Torah contains what appear to be simple stories is that its great holiness cannot exist in undiluted form in the physical world nor could the physical world tolerate such holiness. Only by clothing itself in story form can the Torah exist in the physical world. Saying that the Torah is a mere storybook is as silly as

saying that the clothing a person wears is what he or she really looks like. The same principle applies to the Aggadoth of the Talmud. What appear on the surface as simple stories actually represent profound

spiritual concepts.

Peah 1:1 (compare B.T. Shabbath 133B)

תני רבי ישמעאל: " ... זה אֱ-לֹהֵי וְאֵינָהּ ... " (שמות טו:ב). וכי אפשר לו לאדם לנוואות את בוראו? אלא אנווהו לפניו במצות. אעשה לפניו לולב נאה, סוכה נאה, שופר נאה, ציצית נאין, תפילין נאין. אבאשאולאומר: אדמהלו. מההוארחוסוחנון, אףאת. תהא רחוס וחנון מעשה ברבי ישבב שעמד והחליק את כל נכסיו לעניים. "?! שלח לו רבן גמליאל, "והלא אמרו, 'חומש מנכסיו למצות? ורבן גמליאל לא קודם לאושא היה

רבי יוסי ברבי בון בשם רבי לוי: כך היתה הלכה בידם ושכחוה ועמדו הַגִּים והסכימו על דעת הראשונים ללמדך שכל דבר שבית דין נותנין נפשן עליו הוא מתקיים כמה שנאמר למשה. מסיני ואתייה כיי דאמר רבי מנא: "י א בר קה א מם..." (דברים לב:מז) ואם הוא ק, מכס הוא. למה? שאין אתם יגיעין בתורה. "...י ה א ח יכס..." (שם שם). אימתי הוא חייכם? כשאתם יגיעין בו רביתנחומאבשםרבהונא: "בְּצִלְאֵל וְאֵיבֹחַ רְלִמְהִי הֵה עָה אֵת לְאֶרְצָה ה' אֵת מְה" (שמות לח:כב). "א ת מְה" אין כתיב כאן, אלא "אֶרְצָה ה' אֵת מְה". אפילו דברים. שלא שמע מפי רבו הסכימה דעתו כמה שנאמר למשה מסיני

אֵת מְה עֵבְד. וְמְה" אין כתיב כאן, אלא "אֶרְצָה ה' אֵת מְה" רבי יוחנן בשם רבי בניי ה. "אפילו דברים. שלא שמע מפי רבו הסכימה דעתו כמה שנאמר למשה מסיני רבי יוחנן בשם רבי בניי: "אֶרְצָה ה' אֵת מְה עֵבְד. וְצָה מְה אֵת יְהֵ עֵ וְכֹן עָה יְהֵ עֵ א הִסִיר בְּרַ מְ לְאֶרְצָה ה' אֵת מְה" (יהושע יא:טו). "א ת מְה" אין כתיב כאן, אלא "מְ לְאֶרְצָה ה' אֵת מְה". אפילו דברים שלא שמע מפי רבו הסכימה דעתו כמה שנאמר למשה מסיני רבי יוחנן בשם רבי בניי, רבי חונה בשם רבי: "ת אֵמֶת הִתְהַפִּיחַ ... (מלאכיב:ו) - דברים ששמע מפירבו. "...וְעֹלָה א. נְמָצָה בְּפִתְיוֹ..." (שם שם) - אפילו דברים שלא שמע מפי רבו ורבנן אמרי: "י ה' יְהִיָּה בְּכֶסֶלְךָ מֵרַ גְּלָמְךָ" (משלי ג:כו). אפילו דברים שאתה כסיל בהן, "וְ מֵרַ גְּלָמְךָ". רבי דוסאמר: מן ההוריי. ורבנן אמרי: מן העבירה. רבילויאמר: מן המזיקין אמר רבי אבא: אם נתת מכיסך צדקה, הקדוש ברוך הוא. משמרך מן הפיסין ומן הזימיות ומן הגלגלות ומן הארנוניות

Rabbi Yishmael taught: "...this is my God and I will beautify Him..." Is it then possible for a person to beautify his Creator? Rather the meaning is, "I will beautify Mitzvoth before Him." I will prepare before Him a beautiful Lulav, a beautiful Sukkah, a beautiful Shofar, beautiful Tzitzioth, and beautiful Tefillin.

Abba Shaul says: [The phrase "...this is my God and I will beautify Him..." means] "I will emulate Him." Just as He is merciful and gracious, so should you be merciful and gracious.

An incident occurred where Rabbi Yeshavov arose and distributed all his property to the poor [based on this concept of "beautifying" the Mitzvah of charity or imitating God by being merciful]. Rabban Gamliel sent him [a message], "Did not

the sages say to limit contributions for Mitzvoth to one-fifth of one's property?"

[How could Rabban Gamliel have sent such a message?] Did not Rabban Gamliel live at a time before the Sanhedrin met in Usha [and issued a decree limiting charitable contributions to a fifth of one's wealth]?

Rabbi Yossi bar Bon said in the name of Rabbi Levi: So had the earlier rabbis established the Halachah, but it became forgotten. Later ones arose who agreed with the opinion of the first ones. [The Sanhedrin in Usha established the exact same rule as existed in earlier times but which had been forgotten in the interim.] This teaches that any issue upon which a court diligently labors becomes correctly established just as it was related to Moses at Sinai.

This accords with that which Rabbi Manna said: "For it [the Torah] is not an empty matter for you..." And if it is empty, it is because of you. Why? Because you have not exerted [sufficient] effort in Torah study. [Since the Torah promises success to those who study it, the only reason a person can fail to understand it is lack of effort.] The verse continues, "...for it is your life..." When is it your life? When you exert effort on it.

Rabbi Tanchuma said in the name of Rav Huna: "And Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah did all which the Lord commanded Moses." It is not written here "which Moses commanded him," but rather "which the Lord commanded Moses." Even things which he did not hear from his master's mouth he deduced on his own just as they were told to Moses at Sinai.

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Banai: "Just as the Lord commanded Moses, His servant, so Moses commanded Joshua and so did Joshua [do]; he did not omit a thing from all which the Lord commanded Moses." It is not written here "he did not omit a thing from all which Moses commanded him," but rather "from all which the Lord commanded Moses." Even things which he did not hear from Moses's mouth he deduced on his own just as they were told to Moses at Sinai.

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Banai and Rav Chuna commanded Moses." Even things which he did not hear from Moses's mouth he deduced on his own just as they were told to Moses at Sinai.

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Banai and Rav Chuna in the name of Rabbi: "A law of truth was in his mouth..." refers to words which he heard from his master. "...and injustice is not found on his lips..." means even things which he did not hear from his master [were nonetheless correct].

The rabbis say: "For the Lord will be your security [and guard your foot from danger." Even matters concerning which you are a fool [God will "...guard your foot from danger." Rabbi Dosa said that "danger" refers to erroneous teaching. The rabbis say it means sin.

Rabbi Levi said it refers to demons.

Rabbi Abba said that the above verse means: If you dispense charity from your wallet, then the Holy One, Blessed be He, will guard you from tributes, fines, head taxes and taxes in kind. [The Hebrew term *בְּכִסְלְךָ* is similar to “your wallet *בְּכִסְלְךָ* your security”]

The Torah says, “You shall come to the Levite priests and to the judge who shall be in those days and inquire, and they will tell you the words of the law. You shall do according to the words which they tell you from the place which the Lord will choose and be careful to do according to all that they will instruct you. According to the law which they instruct you and the statute which they tell you, you shall do; do not stray from the words which they tell you right or left.”

Scripture refers to “the judge who shall be in those days” to emphasize that the Jewish people must rely on the rabbis and teachers of the generation in which they live. It does not matter whether current leaders rise to the level of those of earlier generations. Moreover, one must obey the rulings of such leaders even if they appear to say that “right is left and left is right,” meaning that what they say appears illogical.

In the foregoing passage, the Talmud explains that the faith in the rabbinical leadership of the Jewish people which the Torah requires is justified because when one studies Torah with sufficient diligence, he is bound to come to correct conclusions, even correctly figuring out matters which were forgotten over time due to persecution or for other reasons.

Accordingly, when dealing with Halachic rulings, one cannot assume that everyone’s view is of equal value. Instead, those outstanding rabbis who study with great dedication and self-sacrifice are bound to come to correct conclusions which must be followed.

Peah 1:1 (continued) (compare B.T. Baba Bathra 11A)

מונבז המלך עמד ובזבז כל נכסיו לעניים. שלחו לו קרוביו ואמרו לו, "אבותיך הוסיפו על שלהן ועל של אבותיהן." ואתה ביזבזתה את שלך ואת של אבותיך אמר להו, "כל שכני! אבותי גנזו בארץ ואני גנזתי בשמים שנאמר, 'אַמֶּת מֵאָרֶץ צֶמַח וְצֶקֶם מִמַּיִם נִיָּה' (תהלים פה:יב). אבותי גנזו אוצרות שאין עושין פירות ואני גנזתי אוצרות שהן עושין פירות שנאמר, 'אַמֶּר צֶדֶק יִטְבֵּי יִפְיֵי מַעֲלָלֵיהֶם יֶאֱכֹל' (ישעיה ג:י). אבותי גנזו במקום שהיד שולטת בו ואני גנזתי במקום שאין היד שולטת בו שנאמר, 'צֶקֶם מִטְּמֵךְ וְסֵאֵף אֶחָסֵד וְאַמֶּת? מִפְּנֵי' (תהלים פט:טו). אבותי גנזו ממון ואני גנזתי נפשות שנאמר, '... וְחַיֵּי תְּחַכֵּם' (משלי יא:ל). אבותי גנזו לאחרים ואני גנזתי לעצמי שנאמר, '... לְהִיָּה צֶדֶק הַ... ' (דברים כד:יג). אבותי גנזו בעולם הזה ואני גנזתי לעולם הבא שנאמר, '[אֵי עֵיל הַן יִסְעֵב הַן צֶדֶק הַ... יֵל מִנֶּת] (משלי יא:ד). ולא מית? ". אלא שלא ימות לעולם הבא

King Munbaz arose and distributed all his property to the poor." אלא שלא ימות לעולם הבא

King Munbaz arose and distributed all his property to the poor. His relatives sent

him a letter saying, “Your ancestors added upon their wealth and that of their own forebears whereas you disbursed yours and that of your ancestors!?!”

He answered, “I have accumulated more than they, for my ancestors amassed wealth on Earth whereas I amass it in Heaven, as it says, ‘Truth shall sprout forth from the Earth and charity be seen from Heaven.’ My ancestors amassed in storehouses which produce no further wealth, whereas I have amassed in storehouses which produce further wealth, as it says, ‘Tell the righteous that he is good, for the fruit of their deeds they will eat.’ My ancestors amassed in a place which the hand can reach [and, so, may be lost or stolen], whereas I have amassed in a place where the hand cannot reach, as it says, ‘Charity and justice are the habitation of Your throne; kindness and truth go before Your countenance.’ My ancestors amassed money, whereas I have amassed lives, as it says, ‘...and a wise one takes lives.’ [By providing for the needs of the poor, King Munbaz prolonged or improved their lives. So, in a manner of speaking, he “amassed lives.”] My ancestors amassed for others, whereas I have amassed for myself, as it says, ‘...and for you it shall be charity....’ [When one dies, others inherit his or her wealth. By contrast, the merit of giving charity belongs to the donor forever. The expression “for you” in the verse highlights this point.] My ancestors amassed in this world, whereas I have amassed in the world to come, as it says, ‘Wealth will not help on the day of wrath, but charity saves from death.’ Will one who gives charity never die? Rather, the verse means that he will not die in the world to come.”

The Babylonian Talmud tells how astrologers predicted that a snake would bite the daughter of Rabbi Akiva on her wedding day and kill her. In those times it was customary for people to store small items between the cracks in the stone walls of the houses they inhabited. As she undid her hair after her wedding, Rabbi Akiva’s daughter stuck her hairpin into a crack in the wall of her room. In the morning, she discovered that she had thus killed a poisonous snake which had been hiding there.

When Rabbi Akiva discovered what had happened, he asked his daughter whether she had done anything unusual that day. She replied that a poor person had come begging at the entrance to the wedding hall, but none of the guests paid any attention because they were preoccupied with the banquet, so she herself got up and gave her meal to the beggar.

Citing the verse, “...charity saves from death,” Rabbi Akiva declared that the Mitzvah of Tzedakah had saved his daughter’s life. He added that not only does Tzedakah save one from an unusual death, but even from death itself.

The Talmud cites a similar story about a man whom Shemuel observed going out to chop wood. Although an astrologer predicted his death, an act of Tzedakah saved him. Shemuel then proclaimed that Tzedakah saves one both from an unusual death and even from death itself.

The above incidents appear to contradict the passage of the Jerusalem Talmud just translated which points out that all people eventually die so that the expression “...charity saves from death” must refer to death in the world to come rather than to physical death. What do Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues say about the fact that people do eventually die? How can charity save one even from death itself?

The expression “...charity saves from death” occurs twice in the book of Proverbs. This repetition serves as the basis for the teaching that Tzedakah saves a person from two deaths: an unusual death and death itself. True everyone dies, but death can be a gruesome ordeal or relatively painless. Accordingly, one benefit Tzedakah provides its donors is protection from an unusual, gruesome death when the time to die *arrives*.