

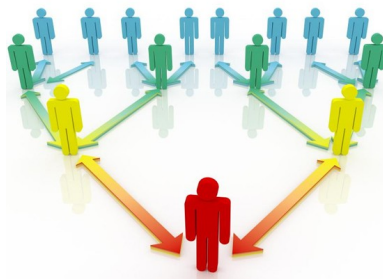
From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [195]

"Do You Quarrel with Me?"

Insights into Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 85b



Background to Our Story

Judah the Prince



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judah_the_Prince

Judah the Prince (Hebrew: יהודה הנשיא, Yehudah HaNasi) or Judah I, also known as Rabbi or Rabbenu HaQadosh (Hebrew: רבנו הקדוש, "our Master, the holy one"), was a 2nd-century CE rabbi and chief redactor and editor of the Mishnah. He was a key leader of the Jewish community during the Roman occupation of Judea . According to the Talmud he was of the Davidic line, the royal line of King David, hence the title nasi, meaning prince. The title nasi was also used for presidents of the Sanhedrin. Judah died on 15 Kislev around 217 CE.^[4]

Judah the Prince was born in 135 CE. According to the Midrash, he came into the world on the same day that Rabbi Akiva died a martyr's death. The Talmud suggests that this was a result of Divine Providence: God had granted the Jewish people another leader of great stature to succeed Rabbi Akiva. His place of birth is unknown; nor is it recorded where his father, Shimon ben Gamliel II, sought refuge with his family during the persecutions under Hadrian. He is the only tanna known as Rabbeinu haQadosh, "our holy teacher" due to his deep piety.

Upon the restoration of order in the Land of Israel, Usha became the seat of the academy and Judah spent his youth there. His father presumably gave him the same education that he himself had received, including Greek language. This knowledge of Greek enabled him to become the Jews' intermediary with the Roman authorities. He favored Greek as the language of the country over Syriac (Aramaic). It is said that in Judah's house, only Hebrew was spoken, and even the maids spoke it.

"During Rabbi's career, not only did the scope of rabbinic jurisdiction increase, but the power of the central rabbinic office increased as well. In contrast with his predecessors,

Rabbi assumed the responsibilities of a communal functionary by appointing and deposing local leaders and by checking the family purity of Jews in a distant locale. Similarly, he made unprecedented efforts to create a more popular halakhic system. In this vein, he permitted the use of produce immediately following the end of the sabbatical year, the import of produce into the Holy Land, and the acquisition of land from a sikarikon. Thus, while Rabbi strengthened his ties with the wealthy, he also broadened his power base by becoming a more popular figurehead."

According to the Talmud (Avodah Zarah 10a-b), Judah haNasi was very wealthy and greatly revered in Rome. He had a close friendship with "Antoninus", possibly the Emperor Antoninus Pius, though it is more likely his famous friendship was with Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus who would consult Judah on various worldly and spiritual matters.

The Talmud records the tradition that Judah haNasi was buried in the necropolis of Beit She'arim, in the Lower Galilee.

Hiyya the Great



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiyya_the_Great

Rabbi Hiyya or Hiyya the Great (Hebrew: רבי חייא הגדול, or רבי חייא) was a Jewish sage of the Land of Israel during the transitional generation between the Tannaic and Amoraic Jewish sages eras (1st Amora Generation). He is accounted as one of the notable sages of these times, and was the son of Abba Karsala from Kafri in Babylon.

Rabbi Hanina bar Hama



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanina_bar_Hama

Hanina bar Hama (died ca. 250) (Hebrew: חנינא בר חמא) was a Jewish Talmudist, halakist and haggadist frequently quoted in the Babylonian and the Jerusalem Talmud, and in the Midrashim.

He is generally cited by his praenomen alone (R. Ḥanina), but sometimes with his patronymic (Ḥanina b. Ḥama), and occasionally with the cognomen "the Great" ("ha-Gadol"; Ta'an. 27b; Pesiq. R. v. 15a). Whether he was a Palestinian by birth and had only visited Babylonia, or whether he was a Babylonian immigrant in Palestine, cannot be clearly established. In the only passage in which he himself mentions his arrival in Palestine he refers also to his son's accompanying him (Yer. Soṭah i. 17b), and from this some argue that Babylonia was his native land. It is certain, however, that he spent most of his life in Palestine, where he attended for a time the lectures of Bar Kappara and Hiyya the Great (Yer. Sheb. vi. 35c; Yer. Niddah ii. 50a) and eventually attached himself to the academy of Judah I. Under the last-named he acquired great stores of practical and theoretical knowledge (Yer. Niddah ii. 50b), and so developed his dialectical powers that once in the heat of debate with his senior and former teacher Hiyya he ventured the assertion that were some law forgotten, he could himself reestablish it by argumentation (Ket. 103b).

Judah loved him, and chose him in preference to any other of his disciples to share his privacy. Thus when Antoninus once visited Judah, he was surprised to find Ḥanina in the chamber, though the patriarch had been requested not to permit any one to attend their interview. The patriarch soothed his august visitor by the assurance that the third party was not an ordinary man (Ab. Zarah 10a). No doubt Ḥanina would have been early promoted to an honorable office had he not offended the patriarch by an ill-judged exhibition of his own

superior familiarity with Scriptural phraseology (see Hamnuna of Babylonia). However, the patriarch, on his death-bed, instructed Gamaliel, his son and prospective successor, to put Ḥanina at the head of all other candidates (Yer. Ta'an. iv. 68a; comp. Ket. 103a). Ḥanina modestly declined advancement at the expense of his senior Efes, and even resolved to permit another worthy colleague, Levi b. Sisi, to take precedence. Efes was actually principal of the academy for several years, but Sisi withdrew from the country, at which time Ḥanina assumed the long-delayed honors (ib.; Shab. 59b). He continued his residence at Sepphoris, where he became the acknowledged authority in Halakah (Yer. Shek. i. 46a; Yer. Beḥa i. 60a; Yer. Giṭ. iv. 46b), and where also he practised as a physician (Yoma 49a; comp. Yer. Ta'an. i. 64a).

According to Hanina, 99% of fatal diseases result from colds, and only 1% from other troubles (Yer. Shab. xiv. 14c). He therefore would impress mankind with the necessity of warding off colds, the power to do so, he teaches, having been bestowed upon man by Providence (B. M. 107b). But neither his rabbinical learning nor his medical skill gained him popularity at Sepphoris. When a pestilence raged there, the populace blamed Ḥanina for failing to stamp it out. Ḥanina heard their murmurs and resolved to silence them. In the course of a lecture, he remarked, "Once there lived one Zimri, in consequence of whose sin twenty-four thousand Israelites lost their lives (see Num. xxv. 6-15); in our days there are many Zimris among us, and yet ye murmur!" On another occasion, when drought prevailed, the murmurs of the Sepphorites again became loud. A day was devoted to fasting and praying, but no rain came, though at another place, where Joshua ben Levi was among the suppliants, rain descended; the Sepphorites therefore made this circumstance also to reflect on the piety of their great townsman. Another fast being appointed, Ḥanina invited Joshua b. Levi to join him in prayer. Joshua did so, but no rain came. Then Ḥanina addressed the people: "Joshua b. Levi does not bring rain down for the Southerners, neither does Ḥanina keep rain away from the Sepphorites: the Southerners are soft-hearted, and when they hear the word of the Law, they humble themselves, while the Sepphorites are obdurate and never repent" (Yer. Ta'an. iii. 66c).

Five Books of the Torah

Bereishith (In the beginning...) (Genesis)
Shemoth (The names...) (Exodus)
Vayiqra (And He called...) (Leviticus)
Bamidbar (In the wilderness...) (Numbers)
Devarim (The words...) (Deuteronomy)

Mishna (Six Orders of the Mishna)



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah>

The Mishnah or Mishna (/ˈmɪʃnə/; Hebrew: מִשְׁנָה, "study by repetition"), from the verb *shanah* שָׁנָה, or "to study and review", also "secondary," is the first major written redaction of the Jewish oral traditions known as the "Oral Torah". It is also the first major work of Rabbinic literature. The earliest known copy of the Mishnah has additions, and is contained within a book featuring commentary that was printed in Naples, Italy during the late 15th century.

The Mishnah was redacted by Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi before his death around 217 CE, in a time when, according to the Talmud, the persecution of the Jews and the passage of time raised the possibility that the details of the oral traditions of the Pharisees from the Second Temple period (536 BCE – 70 CE) would be forgotten. The majority of the Mishnah is written in Mishnaic Hebrew, while some parts are Aramaic.

The Mishnah consists of six orders (*sedarim*, singular *seder* סדר), each containing 7–12 tractates (*masechtot*, singular *masechet* מסכת; lit. "web"), 63 in total. Each *masechet* is divided into chapters (*peraqim*, singular *pereq*) and then paragraphs (*mishnayot*, singular *mishnah*). In this last context, the word *mishnah* means a single paragraph of the work, i.e. the smallest unit of structure, leading to the use of the plural, "Mishnayot", for the whole work.

Because of the division into six orders, the Mishnah is sometimes called *Shas* (an [acronym](#) for *Shisha Sedarim* – the "six orders"), though that term is more often used for the Talmud as a whole.

The six orders are:

- *Zera'im* ("Seeds"), dealing with prayer and blessings, tithes and agricultural laws (11 tractates)
- *Mo'ed* ("Festival"), pertaining to the laws of the Sabbath and the Festivals (12 tractates)
- *Nashim* ("Women"), concerning marriage and divorce, some forms of oaths and the laws of the nazirite (7 tractates)
- *Nezikin* ("Damages"), dealing with civil and criminal law, the functioning of the courts and oaths (10 tractates)
- *Kodashim* ("Holy things"), regarding sacrificial rites, the [Temple](#), and the [dietary laws](#) (11 tractates) and
- *Tohorot* ("Purities"), pertaining to the laws of purity and impurity, including the impurity of the dead, the laws of food purity and bodily purity (12 tractates).

The Text: Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 85b

כִּי הָיוּ מִנְנֵי ר' הַנִּינָא וְר' חִיָּיא אָמַר לֵיהּ ר' הַנִּינָא לֵרִי
הָיִיא בְּהַדִּי דִּידִי קָא מִנְנִית הָוֵי אִי מִשְׁתַּבַּח תּוֹרַת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל כְּהָדִנְנָא לֵהּ
מִפְּלִפְלִי אָמַר לֵיהּ ר' הָיִיא לֵרִי הַנִּינָא בְּהַדִּי דִּידִי קָא מִנְנִית דְּעַבְדִּי לְתוֹרַת
דְּלֵא חֲשַׁבְתָּ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מֵאָ עֲבִידְנָא אֹלְתָנָא וְשִׁדְיָנָא כִּדְנָא וְנִרְלָנָא נִישְׁבִּי
וְצִידְנָא מְבִי וּמַאֲבִלְנָא בְּשִׁרְיֵיהּ לִחְבֵּי וְאִדְבָנָא מְגִלְתָּא וְכַתְּבָנָא דְּמִשְׁנָה
חִימְשֵׁי וּמְלִיקְנָא לְמַתָּא וּמְקָרְנָא דְּמִשְׁנָה עֵקֶי בְּרַמְשָׁה דְּחִמְשֵׁי וּמְתַנְנָא שְׂרָא
עֵקֶי שְׂרָא סוּדִי וְאִמְרָנָא לְדוּ עַד דְּהָדְנָא וְאִתְּנָא אֶקְדוּ אַחֲדִי וְאִתְּנָא אַחֲדִי
וְעַבְדִּי לֵהּ לְתוֹרַת דְּלֵא חֲשַׁבְתָּ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל הָיִינוּ דָּאִמְרִי רַבִּי כְּמַה גְּדוּלָּתִים מִנֵּשׁ
דִּיִּיא

When Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Hiyya used to quarrel, Rabbi Hanina would say to Rabbi Hiyya: "Do you dare to quarrel with me? Even if, God forbid, the entire Torah were to be forgotten in Israel, I would be able to restore it, relying on my powers of argumentation."

Rabbi Hiyya would respond to Rabbi Hanina: "Do you dare to quarrel with me? Consider what I have done to ensure that the Torah not be forgotten in

Israel. What do I do? I go and plant flax, and after the flax is processed I weave nets from it. When the nets are ready I catch deer, and give the meat to orphans. From the skins of those deer I prepare scrolls, upon which I write the five books of Torah. Then I go to a town and teach the five books of Torah to five children, one book to each child. Then I teach the six orders of the Mishnah to six children, one order to each child. And I say to each of the children: 'Until I return teach each other Torah and teach each other Mishnah,' and [thus] I labor for the Torah so that it is not forgotten in Israel."

This is what Rabbi [Yehuda Hanasi] said: "How great are the deeds of Hiyya!"



Explaining the Structure of the Story

What is the sequence of events in the story?

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why did Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Hiyya quarrel? **?** How often do you think Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Hiyya used to quarrel?

? What is Rabbi Hanina's greatness? (At what is Rabbi Hanina very good?)

? What is Rabbi Hiyya's greatness? (At what is Rabbi Hiyya very good?)

? What does Rabbi Hiyya do to ensure that Torah is not forgotten in Israel? Describe the process (pay attention to the many verbs used).

*כי הוּוּ מִנְצוּ ר' חֲנִינָא וְר' חֵיִיא אָמַר לִיה ר' חֲנִינָא לֵר' חֵיִיא בְהָדִי דִּידִי קָא מִנְצִית ח"ו אִי מִשְׁתַּכַּח תּוֹרָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מִהֲדַרְנָא לָהּ מִפִּילְפּוּלֵי אָמַר לִיה ר' חֵיִיא לֵר' חֲנִינָא בְהָדִי דִּידִי קָא מִנְצִית דְּעַבְדִּי לַתּוֹרָה דְּלֹא תִשְׁתַּכַּח מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מֵאִי עֲבִידְנָא אֲוֵלִנָא וְשִׁדְיָנָא כִּיתְנָא וְגַדִּילְנָא נִישְׁבִּי וְצִיִּידְנָא מְבִי וּמֵאֲכִילְנָא בְּשִׁרְיֵיהּ לִיתְמֵי וְאֲרִיכְנָא מְגִילְתָּא וּכְתַבְנָא חֲמִשָּׁה חִימְשֵׁי וְסִלְקְנָא לְמַתָּא וּמְקַרְיָנָא חֲמִשָּׁה יְנוּקֵי בְּחֲמִשָּׁה חֻמְשֵׁי וּמְתַנִּינָא שִׁיתָא יְנוּקֵי שִׁיתָא סְדְרֵי וְאִמְרָנָא לְהוּ עַד דְּהֲדַרְנָא וְאִתִּינָא אַקְרוּ אַהֲרָדִי וְאִתְּנוּ אַהֲרָדִי וְעַבְדִּי לָהּ לַתּוֹרָה דְּלֹא תִשְׁתַּכַּח מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל הֵיִינוּ דְּאָמַר רַבִּי כַּמָּה גְדוּלִים מַעֲשֵׂי חֵיִיא

? What does the seemingly superfluous detail that Rabbi Hiyyaa fed the meat of the deer to orphans add to our story?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

? Why doesn't Rabbi Hiyya buy "already made parchments" to ease the process?

Bonus ? Why doesn't Rabbi Hiyya write the six orders of the Mishnah on parchment as well?

Bonus ? Rabbi Hiyya said to each child: "*Until I return teach each other Torah and teach each other Mishnah.*" From where does Rabbi Hiyya need to return?

Extra Bonus ? Our story concludes with Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi's words: "How great are the deeds of Hiyya!" Why do you think Rabbi's words of praise are necessary?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

! Hard work and empowerment: the great (but not always appreciated) deeds of Hiyya!