

From the Rabbi's Desk
Rabbi Manes Kogan

Hillcrest Jewish Center
183-02 Union Turnpike, Flushing, NY 11366
rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org

Stories with a Twist

[204]

Once, I visited a Certain Town, by the Name of Kushta (A Very Strange Story. You've been Warned)

Insights into Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 97a



Background to Our Story

Rav Tavus, Rav Tavyomei: 5th generation Babylonian Amora

Kushta: truth, in Aramaic

The Text: Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 97a

אמר רבא מריש הוה אמינא ליכא
קושטא בעלמא אמר לי *ההוא מדבנן ורב
טבות שמיה ואמרי לה רב טביומי שמיה
דאי הוו יהבי ליה כל חללי דעלמא לא הוה
משני בדבוריה זימנא חדא איקלעי לההוא
אתרא וקושטא שמיה ולא הוו משני
בדיבוריהו ולא הוה מיית איניש מהתם בלא
זימניה נסיבי איתתא מינהון והוו לי תרתין
בנין מינה יומא חד הוה יתבא דביתו וקא
חויפא רישה אחאי שיבכתה טרפא אדשא
*סבר לאו אורח ארעא *אמר לה ליתא הכא
שכיבו ליה תרתין בנין אתו אינשי דאתרא
לקמיה אמרו ליה מאי האי אמר להו הכי
הוה מעשה א"ל במטותא מינך פוק מאתריך
ולא תגרי בהו מותנא בהנך אינשי

Rava said: At first I used to say “there is no truth in the world” but then one of the rabbis said to me, - and Rav Tavus was his name, and some say that Rav Tavyomei was his name, - that even if they would give him all the riches in the world - he would not tell a lie.

Once, I [Rav Tavus or Rav Tavyomei] visited a certain town – by the name of Kushta [whose inhabitants] would not tell a lie – and none of the people from there died before his time.

I [Rav Tavus or Rav Tavyomei] married a woman from among them, and I had two sons by her.

The narrative continues in the third person.

One day, his wife [the wife of Rav Tavus or Rav Tavyomei] was sitting and washing her hair. Her neighbor came and knocked on the door, asking to speak to her. Thinking that it would not be proper to tell the neighbor that his wife was washing her hair he said to [the neighbor]: “she is not here.”

Subsequently, his two sons died.

The people of that town came to him and asked him: “What is the reason for this?”

He [Rav Tavus or Rav Tavyomei] told them what had happened.

They [The people of that town, Kushta] said to him: “We beg you, leave our town, and do not incite death against these (a euphemism for the inhabitants of Kushta) people!”



Explaining the sequence of events in the story (Two Ways of Reading Our Story).

First	<input type="text"/>
next	<input type="text"/>
then	<input type="text"/>
Last	<input type="text"/>

Comprehension and Analysis Questions (for reading #1)

? Why did Rav Tavyomei say “that even if they would give him all the riches in the world - he would not tell a lie”?

? Why did Rav Tavyomei’s sons die?

? Why did the people of Kushta beg Rav Tavyomei to leave town?

“The Twist” (for reading #1)

! The unpredictably tragic story of Rav Tavyomei!

Comprehension and Analysis Questions (for reading #2)

Extra Bonus ? Why did Rav Tavyomei say “that even if they would give him all the riches in the world - he would not tell a lie”?

Bonus ? Why did Rav Tavyomei marry a woman from Kushta?

? Why did Rav Tavyomei tell the neighbor that his wife wasn’t in the house? Do you consider this to be a lie?

? Why did Rav Tavyomei’s sons die?

? Why did the people of Kushta inquire for the reason for the death of Rav Tavyomei’s sons?

? Why did the people of Kushta beg Rav Tavyomei to leave town?

“The Twist” (for reading #2) – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

! A predictable tragic story - The danger of “living in Kushta:” a lesson Rav Tavyomei learned the hard way.