

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [209]

By the time he came back, all the paths of his city had changed and he did not know how to go to his home
Insights into Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 62b



Background to Our Story

Rabbi Hananya ben Hakhinai

Rabbi Hananya ben Hakhinai was one of those who deliberated before the sages in Yavne and was identified as one of the Sages who knew seventy languages. Ben Hakhinai was an especially devoted student of Rabbi Akiva. Traditions reported his name can be found throughout the Mishna, the *Tosefta* various compilations of halakhic midrash, and the Talmud. In one midrash he is listed among the renowned ten martyrs.

Marital Rights

Exodus Chapter 21: 7-11

⁷ If a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free as male servants do.⁸ If she does not please the master who has selected her for himself, he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners, because he has broken faith with her. ⁹ If he selects her for his son, he must grant her the rights of a daughter.¹⁰ If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights.¹¹ If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money.

Kosher Sex



<http://www.jewfaq.org/sex.htm>

Sex is the woman's right, not the man's. A man has a duty to give his wife sex regularly and to ensure that sex is pleasurable for her. He is also obligated to watch for signs that his wife

wants sex, and to offer it to her without her asking for it. The woman's right to sexual intercourse is referred to as *onah*, and it is one of a wife's three basic rights (the others are food and clothing), which a husband may not reduce. The Talmud specifies both the quantity and quality of sex that a man must give his wife. It specifies the frequency of sexual obligation based on the husband's occupation, although this obligation can be modified in the [ketubah](#) (marriage contract). A man may not take a vow to abstain from sex for an extended period of time, and may not take a journey for an extended period of time, because that would deprive his wife of sexual relations. In addition, a husband's consistent refusal to engage in sexual relations is grounds for compelling a man to [divorce](#) his wife, even if the couple has already fulfilled the [halakhic](#) obligation to procreate.

Although sex is the woman's right, she does not have absolute discretion to withhold it from her husband. A woman may not withhold sex from her husband as a form of punishment, and if she does, the husband may divorce her without paying the substantial divorce settlement provided for in the [ketubah](#).

Frequency of Conjugal Duty

Mishnah Ketubot 5:6

MISHNA With regard to one who vows that his wifeⁿ may not derive benefit from marital relations^h with him, Beit Shammai say: He may maintain this situation for up to **two weeks**, but beyond that he must divorce her and give her the payment for her marriage contract. Beit Hillel say: He must divorce her if it continues beyond **one week**.

Apropos the husband's obligation to his wife regarding marital relations, the Gemara mentions other aspects of this issue: **Students may leave** their homes and travel in order to **learn Torah without their wives' permission** for up to **thirty days**, and **laborers** may leave their homes without their wives' permission for up to **one week**. The set interval defining the frequency of a husband's conjugal obligation to his wife **stated in the Torah** (see Exodus 21:10),^h unless the couple stipulated otherwise, varies according to the man's occupation and proximity to his home: **Men of leisure**, who do not work, must engage in marital relations **every day**, **laborers** must do so **twice a week**, **donkey drivers** once a week, **camel drivers** once every **thirty days**, and **sailors** once every **six months**. This is the statement of Rabbi Eliezer.

Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 62b

§ The mishna stated: For **sailors**, the set interval for conjugal relations is **once every six months**. This is the statement of Rabbi Eliezer. Rav Berona said that Rav said: The *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer. Rav Adda bar Ahava said that Rav said: This is the statement of Rabbi Eliezer, but the Rabbis say: **Students may leave^h their homes to study Torah** for as long as **two or three years without permission from their wives**. Rava said: The Sages relied on Rabbi Adda bar Ahava's opinion and performed an action like this themselves,ⁿ but the results were sometimes fatal.

Is it required to knock on doors before entering?

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said: There are four things which the Holy One, blessed be He, hates, and I too dislike them [...] and of one who enters his house suddenly –much more his neighbor's house (Leviticus Rabbah 21:8)

The Text: Babylonia Talmud Ketubot 62b

רַבִּי חַנְנִיָּה בֶּן חַכְּיִנְאֵי הָיָה קְאָזִיל לְבֵי רַב
בְּשִׁילָהּ הַלּוּלִיָּה דְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאֵי.
אָמַר לִיה: אֵיעֶכְבַּ לִּי עַד דְּאָתִי בְּהַדָּךְ.
לֹא אֵיעֶכְבָּא לִיה. אֲזַל יְתִיב תְּרֵי סָרֵי
שְׁנֵי בְּבֵי רַב. עַד דְּאָתִי – אִישְׁתַּנּוּ שְׁבִילֵי
דְּמַתָּא, וְלֹא יָדַע לְמִיזַל לְבֵיתֵיהּ.

אֲזַל יְתִיב אַגּוּדָא דְנִהְרָא. שְׁמַע לְהֵהִיא
רַבִּיתָא דְדָהוּוּ קָרוּ לָהּ: בֵּית חַכְּיִנְאֵי, בֵּית
חַכְּיִנְאֵי, מְלִי קוּלְתַךְ וְתָא נִיזִיל. אָמַר:
שְׁמַע מִינָהּ, הֵיא רַבִּיתָא דִּידָן. אֲזַל
בְּתַרְהּ, הָיָה יְתִיבָא דְבֵיתָהּ קָא נִהְלָה
קְמַתָּא. דָּל עֵינָהּ, חֲזוּתֵיהּ, סָרֵי לְבָהּ, פָּרַח
רוּחָהּ. אָמַר לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוּ שְׁל עוֹלָם, עֲנִיָּה
זוּ, זֶה שְׁכָרָה?! בְּעָא רַחֲמֵי עָלֶיהָ וְחַיָּיהּ.

Rabbi Hananya ben Hakhinai went to the study hall at the end of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai's wedding feast. [Rabbi Shimon] said to him: Wait for me until I come with you, after my days of celebration are over. He [Rabbi Hananya ben Hakhinai] did not wait and went and sat for twelve years in the study hall.

By the time he came back, all the paths of his city had changed and he did not know how to go to his home. He went and sat on the bank of the river and heard people calling to a certain girl: Daughter of Hakhinai, daughter of Hakhinai, fill your pitcher and come up.

He [Rabbi Hananya ben Hakhinai] said: I can conclude from this that this is our daughter, meaning his own daughter, whom he had not recognized after so many years. He followed her to his house. His wife was sitting and sifting flour. She lifted her eyes up, saw him and her heart fluttered with agitation and she

passed away. [Rabbi Hananya] said before [God]: Master of the universe, is this the reward of this poor woman? He pleaded for mercy for her and she lived.



Explaining the Story

What is the sequence of events in the story?

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why did Rabbi Shimon ask Rabbi Hananya to wait for him?

? Why didn't Rabbi Hananya wait for Rabbi Shimon?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

? Why couldn't Rabbi Hananya find his way to his home?

? What did Rabbi Hananya do to find his way to his home?

? Why didn't Rabbi Hananya ask for directions to his home?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? Why didn't Rabbi Hananya address his daughter at the river?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? Why didn't Rabbi Hananya announce himself?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____



The high price of selfishness and emotional disconnect.

EPILOGUE

Rabbi Hananya ben Hakhinai, like many other rabbis in his time, is eager to go away to study Torah at one of the great academies. In order to be

exposed to the greatest teachers and to avoid distractions, he leaves his wife and young children at home in the care of another male figure (probably his wife's father) or at the mercy of the town people.

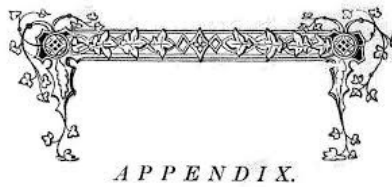
Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, asks Rabbi Hananya to wait for him a couple of days so they can travel together, but Rabbi Hananya is in such a rush that he cannot, or wishes not, to wait

His studies take him away for twelve years. When he returns, he finds his town changed and his daughter unrecognizable.

Rabbi Hananya is lost in more than one sense. Disconnected from his wife, from his daughter, and not wanting to ask for directions to his own house, he shocks his wife to death by appearing unannounced.

Rabbi Hananya himself and the people around him (his wife, his daughter, his friend) pay the high price of Rabbi Hananya's selfishness and emotional disconnect.

Rabbi Hananya's wife's resuscitation at the end of the story can barely provide some comfort to the reader. In essence, our story doesn't have a happy ending. Most stories involving selfishness and emotional disconnect rarely do.



An alternative version of our story (Leviticus Rabbah 21:8)

Rabbi Hananya ben Hakhinai and Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai went to study Torah at Rabbi Akiva's academy at Benei Barak and stayed there thirteen years.

Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai used to send home for news, and knew what was happening at his house. Rabbi Hananya did not send and did not know what was happening at his house.

His wife [Rabbi Hananya] sent him word and told him: "your daughter is marriageable, come and get her married."

He [Rabbi Hananya] said nothing to his master. Nevertheless, Rabbi Akiva saw it by means of the Holy Spirit and said to him [to Rabbi Hananya]: "if anyone has a marriageable daughter he may go and get her married."

He [Rabbi Hananya] understood what he meant, so he rose, took leave and went.

He [Rabbi Hananya] sought to enter into his house, but found that it had been turned in a different direction. (By the time he came back, all the paths of his city had changed and he did not know how to go to his home.) He [Rabbi Hananya] went and sat down at the place where the women drew water and heard the voice of little girls saying: "Daughter of Hananya, fill your pitcher and go!"

What did he [Rabbi Hananya ben Hakhinai] do? He followed her until she entered his house. He [Rabbi Hananya] went in after her suddenly. No sooner did his wife see him than her soul departed.

[Rabbi Hananya] said to Him [to God]: "Master of the universe, is this the reward of this poor woman after thirteen years of waiting for me?"

Consequently, her soul returned to her body.