

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [21]

"Why Are You Disputing with Rabbi Eliezer?" (Insights into Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 59b)



Background to Our Story

Susceptibility of Utensils to Ritual Impurity

Keilim (כלים, literally "Vessels") is the first tractate in the Order of Tohorot in the Mishnah. It contains thirty chapters, making it the longest tractate in the entire Mishnah. The tractate discusses the laws of ritual purity and impurity pertaining to all types of vessels.

The Oven of Akhnai



[Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Bava Metzia Volume I. Koren publishers Jerusalem. Page 323](#)



The oven of akhnai - According to Rabbi Eliezer, if an oven is cut widthwise, according to the parallel lines in the illustration, it is considered a broken vessel incapable of contracting ritual impurity, even if it is later reassembled.

The Tannaim

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The *Tannaim* (Hebrew: תנאים, singular תנא, *tanna*) were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approx. 70-200 C.E. The period of the *Tannaim*, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 130 years. It followed

the period of the *Zugot* ("pairs"), and was immediately succeeded by the period of the *Amoraim*.

The root *tanna* (תנא) is the Talmudic Aramaic equivalent for the Hebrew root *shanah* (שנה), which also is the root-word of *Mishnah*. The verb *shanah* (שנה) literally means "to repeat [what one was taught]" and is used to mean "to learn".

The Mishnaic period is commonly divided up into five periods according to generations. There are approximately 120 known *Tannaim*.

The *Tannaim* lived in several areas of the Land of Israel. The spiritual center of Judaism at that time was Jerusalem, but after the destruction of the city and the Second Temple, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai and his students founded a new religious center in Yavne. Other places of Judaic learning were founded by his students in Lod and in Bnei Brak.

Many of the *Tannaim* worked as laborers (e.g., charcoal burners, cobblers) in addition to their positions as teachers and legislators. They were also leaders of the people and negotiators with the Roman Empire.

Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Bava Metzia Volume I. Koren publishers Jerusalem. Page 325

When the name Rabbi Eliezer occurs in the Talmud without a patronymic, it refers to Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, also known as Rabbi Eliezer the Great, who was one of the leading Sages in the period after the destruction of the Second Temple. Rabbi Eliezer was born to a wealthy family of Levites, who traced their lineage back to Moses. Rabbi Eliezer began studying Torah late in life, but he quickly became an outstanding disciple of Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai. Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai remarked: If all the Sages of Israel were on one side of a scale and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus on the other, he would outweigh them all. Rabbi Eliezer was blessed with a remarkable memory. All his life, in his Torah study and his halakhic rulings, he attempted to follow the traditions of his Rabbis without adding to them. Nevertheless, although he was the primary student of Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, who was a disciple of Beit Hillel, he was considered one who tended toward the opinions of Beit Shammai. Rabbi Eliezer's close friend, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ḥananya, completely followed the opinions of Beit Hillel, and many fundamental halakhic disputes between these Sages are recorded in the Mishna. Because of his staunch and unflinching adherence to tradition, Rabbi Eliezer was unwilling to accede to the majority opinion. Rabbi Eliezer's conduct generated so much tension among the Sages that Rabban Gamliel, who was the brother of his wife, Imma Shalom, was forced to excommunicate him to prevent controversy from proliferating. This ban was lifted only after Rabbi Eliezer's death. All of the Sages of the next generation were Rabbi Eliezer's students, most prominent among them Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Eliezer's son, also named Hyrcanus, was a Sage of the following generation.

Rabban Gamaliel II (also spelled Gamliel) was the first person to lead the sanhedrin as nasi. After the fall of the second temple, which occurred in 70 CE, Gamliel was appointed nasi approximately 10 years later. Gamaliel II was the son of Shimon ben Gamaliel, one of Jerusalem's foremost men in the war against the Romans (vide Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* iv. 3, 9, Vita 38), and grandson of Gamaliel I. To distinguish him from the latter he is also called Gamliel of Yavne (or Gamaliel of Jabneh).

In Yavne, during the siege of Jerusalem, the scribes of the school of Hillel had taken refuge by permission of Vespasian, a new centre of Judaism arose under the leadership of the aged Johanan ben Zakkai, a school whose members inherited the authority of the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem. Gamaliel II became Johanan ben Zakkai's successor, and rendered immense service in the strengthening and reintegration of Judaism, which had been deprived of its former basis by the destruction of the Temple and by the entire loss of its political autonomy. He put an end to the division which had arisen between the spiritual leaders of Palestinian Judaism by the separation of the scribes into the two schools called respectively after Hillel and Shammai, and took care to enforce his own authority as the president of the chief legal assembly of Judaism with energy and often with severity. He did this, as he himself said, not for his own honor nor for that of his family, but in order that disunion should not prevail in Israel.

Gamaliel's position was recognized by the Roman government also. Towards the end of Domitian's reign (c A. D. 95) he went to Rome in company with the most prominent members of the school of Jabneh, in order to avert a danger threatening the Jews from the action of the terrible emperor. Many interesting particulars have been given regarding the journey of these learned men to Rome and their sojourn there. The impression made by the capital of the world upon Gamaliel and his companions was an overpowering one, and they wept when they thought of Jerusalem in ruins. In Rome, as at home, Gamaliel often had occasion to defend Judaism in polemical discussions with pagans, and also with professed Christians. In an anecdote regarding a suit which Gamaliel was prosecuting before a Christian judge, a converted Jew, he appeals to the Gospel and to the words of Jesus in Book of Matthew V. 17 (Sabb. 116 a, b).

Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Bava Metzia Volume I. Koren publishers Jerusalem. Page 55

This *tanna*, often referred to simply as Rabbi Yehoshua, lived in the generation following the destruction of the Temple. He had been one of the Levite singers in the Temple and he married the daughter of a priest. While in Jerusalem he studied under Rabban Yoĥanan ben Zakkai, and he even aided Rabban Yoĥanan ben Zakkai's famed escape from the siege of Jerusalem. After the Sanhedrin was reestablished in Yavne, Rabbi Yehoshua became one of the most prominent members there. Later, he moved to Peki'in, where he established his own study hall. Rabbi Yehoshua was well-known for his sharp mind as well as for his great modesty. There are many stories told of his encounters with a Roman emperor, apparently Hadrian, as well as with the sages of other nations.

Rabbi Akiva



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Kiddushin. Koren publishers Jerusalem. 459.

Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef was one of the greatest of the *tanna'im*. He lived from just after the destruction of the Second Temple until the bar Kokheva revolt. According to legend, Rabbi Akiva began his studies at the age of forty, when Raĥel, the daughter of the wealthy Kalba Savua, consented to marry him on condition that he would study Torah.

Rabbi Akiva became the student of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ĥananya. Ultimately, he became a prominent Torah scholar with twenty-four thousand students. Among Rabbi Akiva's first students were Shimon ben Azzai and

Shimon ben Zoma, with whom he entered the orchard (see *Hagiga* 14b), i.e., engaged in the study of esoteric elements of the Torah.

Subsequently, Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai, among others, became his students. He was a staunch supporter of bar Kokheva's revolt against Rome and even declared him the Messiah. During the period of the Roman emperor Hadrian's decrees, Torah study was prohibited, but Rabbi Akiva continued convening assemblies and teaching Torah. Ultimately, he was apprehended and executed, and he is one of the ten martyrs whose execution is described in liturgy.

Rabbi Akiva collected early rabbinic statements and began organizing the material of the Oral Torah. The Mishna, redacted by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi and his disciples, is based on his work.

Tachanun



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

Tachanun or Taḥanun (Hebrew: תחנון "Supplication"), also called nefillat apayim ("falling on the face") is part of Judaism's morning (Shacharit) and afternoon (Mincha) services, after the recitation of the Amidah, the central part of the daily Jewish prayer services. It is omitted on Shabbat, Jewish holidays and several other occasions (e.g., in the presence of a groom in the week after his marriage). Most traditions recite a longer prayer on Mondays and Thursdays.

The source of the supplicatory prayer (Taḥanun) is in Daniel (9:3) and I Kings (8:54), where the verses indicate that prayer should always be followed by supplication. Based on this, Talmudic sages developed the habit of adding a personal appeal to God following the set prayers (some examples are listed in the Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 16b). In the fourteenth century, these spontaneous supplications were standardized and turned into the prayer of Tachanun.

The custom of bending over and resting the face on the left hand is suggested by the first line of the text which includes the words "nip'lah na b'yad Adonai" ("let us fall into the hands of God"). It is also reminiscent of the Daily Sacrifice brought in the Temple, which was laid on its left side to be slaughtered. A person's arm should be covered with a sleeve, tallit, or other covering. This posture, developed in the post-Talmudic period, is symbolic of Temple practice, in which people knelt down until their faces touched the ground to show humility and submission to God. The pose was also used by Moses and Joshua, who fell on their faces before God after the sin of the Golden Calf. Because of this practice, Tahanun is also known as nefilat apayim ("falling on the face"). Because Joshua fell on his face before the Ark, one only puts one's head down when praying in front of an Ark containing a Torah scroll. Otherwise, it is proper to sit with the head up.

The Text: Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 59b

תַּנּוּן הַתָּמִים: תַּתְּכוּ חוֹלִיּוֹת וְנָתַן חוֹל בֵּין חוֹלִיאַ לְחוֹלִיאַ, רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר מְטַהֵר וְתַכְמִים מְטַמְּאִין.

וְזֶה הוּא תַנּוּן שֶׁל עֵבְרָאִי. מַאי עֵבְרָאִי? אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: שֶׁהִקִּיפוּ דְבָרִים כְּעֵבְרָא זֶה, וְטַמְאָהוּ. תָּנָא: בְּאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם הִשִּׁיב רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר כָּל תְּשׁוּבוֹת שֶׁבְעוֹלָם וְלֹא קִיבְלוּ הֵימָנוּ.

אָמַר לָהֶם: אִם הִלַּכְהֶם כְּמוֹתִי – תְּרוּב זֶה יוֹכִיחַ. גִּעְקָר תְּרוּב מִמְקוֹמוֹ מֵאַה אֲמָה, וְאָמְרִי לָהּ: אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אֲמָה. אָמְרוּ לוֹ: אֵין מְבִיאִין רְאִיָּה מִן הַתְּרוּב. תָּזַר וְאָמַר לָהֶם: אִם הִלַּכְהֶם כְּמוֹתִי אֲמַת הַמַּיִם יוֹכִיחוּ. תָּזְרוּ אֲמַת הַמַּיִם לְאַחֲרֵיהֶם. אָמְרוּ לוֹ: אֵין מְבִיאִין רְאִיָּה מֵאַמַּת הַמַּיִם. תָּזַר וְאָמַר לָהֶם:

אם הלכה כמותי – פותלי בית המדרש יוכיחו. הטו פותלי בית המדרש ליפול. גער בָּהֶם רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, אָמַר לָהֶם: אִם תְּלַמִּידֵי חֲכָמִים מְנַצְּחִים זֶה אֶת זֶה בְּהִלְכָה – אַתֶּם מֵה טִיבְכֶם? לֹא נָפְלוּ מִפְּנֵי כְבוֹדוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְלֹא זָקְפוּ מִפְּנֵי כְבוֹדוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר, וְעַדִּין מֵטִיב וְעוֹמְדִין.

חֲזַר וְאָמַר לָהֶם: אִם הִלְכָה כְּמוֹתִי – מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם יוֹכִיחוּ. וְצִאֲתָה בַת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה: מַה לָּכֶם אֶצֶל רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר שֶׁהִלְכָה כְּמוֹתוֹ בְּכָל מְקוֹם!

עֲמַד רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עַל רַגְלָיו וְאָמַר: "לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הִיא". מֵאֵי "לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הִיא"? אָמַר רַבִּי יְרֵמְיָה: שֶׁכָּבַר נְתַנְה תּוֹרָה מֵהַר סִינַי, אֵין אָנוּ מְשַׁגְּיחִין בְּבַת קוֹל, שֶׁכָּבַר פְּתַבְתָּ בְּהַר סִינַי בְּתוֹרָה: "אַתְּ רַבִּים לְהַטֹּת". אֲשַׁכַּחֲתִיהָ רַבִּי נְתַן לְאַלְיָהוּ, אָמַר לִיהִ: מֵאֵי עֲבִיד קוֹדֶשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא בְּהִיא שְׁעֵתָא? אָמַר לִיהִ: קָא חֲרִיד וְאָמַר נְצַחוּנֵי בְּנֵי, נְצַחוּנֵי בְּנֵי.

אָמְרוּ: אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם הֵבִיאוּ כָּל טְהוֹרוֹת שְׁטִיחָהּ רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר וְשָׂרְפוּם בָּאֵשׁ, וְנִמְנְנוּ עָלָיו וּבְרַכּוּהוּ. וְאָמְרוּ: מִי יִלֵּךְ וְיִוִּדְעוּ? אָמַר לָהֶם רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא: אֲנִי אֵלֶּךְ, שְׁמָא יִלֵּךְ אָדָם שְׂאִינוּ הֶגְוִן וְיִוִּדְעוּ, וְנִמְצָא מִחְרִיב אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלָם כּוֹלוֹ.

מַה עָשָׂה רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא? לְבַשׁ שַׁחוּרִים, וְנִתְעַטַּף שַׁחוּרִים, וַיָּשָׁב לְפָנָיו בְּרִיחוּק אַרְבַּע אַמּוֹת. אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר: עֲקִיבָא, מַה יוֹם מִיּוֹמִים? אָמַר לוֹ: רַבִּי, כְּמַדּוּמָה לִי שַׁחְבִּירִים בְּדִילִים מִמֶּךָ. אֵף הוּא קָרַע בְּגָדָיו וְחָלַץ מִנְעָלָיו, וְנִשְׁמַט וַיָּשָׁב עַל גְּבֵי קַרְקַע.

זָלְגוּ עֵינָיו דְּמַעוֹת, לָקַח הָעוֹלָם שְׁלִישׁ בְּזִיתִים, וְשָׁל יֵשׁ בַּחֲטָיִם, וְשָׁלִישׁ בְּשַׁעוֹרִים. וַיֵּשׁ אוֹמְרִים: אֵף בָּצַק שְׁבִידֵי אִשָּׁה טַפַּח. תָּנָא: אֵף גְּדוֹל הִנָּה בְּאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם, שֶׁבְּכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁנִּתְּן בוֹ עֵינָיו רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר נִשְׂרַף וְאֵף רַבִּן גְּמְלִיאֵל הִנָּה בָּא בְּסַפִּינָה, עֲמַד עָלָיו נִחְשׂוֹל לְטַבְּעוֹ. אָמַר: כְּמַדּוּמָה לִי שְׂאִין זֶה אֵלָּא בְּשִׁבִיל רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן הוֹרְקָנוֹס. עֲמַד עַל רַגְלָיו וְאָמַר: רַבּוֹנוּ שָׁל עוֹלָם, גְּלוּי וְיָדוּעַ לְפָנֶיךָ שְׁלֹא לְכַבּוֹדִי עֲשִׂיתִי, וְלֹא לְכַבּוֹד בֵּית אַבָּא עֲשִׂיתִי, אֵלָּא לְכַבּוֹדְךָ, שְׁלֹא יִרְבוּ מִחְלוּקוֹת בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. נַח הַיָּם מִזְעָפוֹ.

אֵימָא שְׁלוֹם דְּבֵיתָהּ דְּרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אַחֲתִיהָ דְּרַבִּן גְּמְלִיאֵל תּוֹאֵי. מַה הוּא מַעֲשָׂה וְאֵילֶךְ לָא תְּהוּ שְׁבַקָה לִיהִ לְרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר לְמִיפַל עַל אֶפְיָה. הַהוּא יוֹמָא רִישׁ יַרְחָא תְּהוּ, וְאֵיחְלַף לָהּ בֵּין מְלֵא לְחֶסֶר. אֵיכָא דְאָמְרִי: אַתָּא עֲנִיא וְקָאֵי אַבְבָּא, אֶפְיָא לִיהִ רִיפְתָּא.

אֲשַׁכַּחֲתִיהָ דְּנָפַל עַל אֲנַפְיָה, אָמְרָה לִיהִ: קוּם, קַטְלִית לְאַחֵי. אַדְּהֵכִי נָפַק שִׁיפוֹרָא מִבֵּית רַבִּן גְּמְלִיאֵל דְּשָׁכִיב. אָמַר לָהּ: מָנָא יָדְעַת? אָמְרָה לִיהִ: כְּךָ מְקוּבְלָנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי אַבָּא: כָּל הַשְּׁעָרִים נִנְעָלִים חוּץ מִשְׁעָרֵי אוֹנָא.

We learned in a mishna there (*Kelim* 5:10): If one cut an earthenware oven widthwise into segments, and placed sand between each and every segment, Rabbi Eliezer deems it ritually pure. Because of the sand, its legal status is not that of a complete vessel, and therefore it is not susceptible to ritual impurity. And the Rabbis deem it ritually impure, as it is functionally a complete oven.

And this is known as the oven of *akhnai*. The Gemara asks: What is the relevance of *akhnai*, a snake, in this context? Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel

said: It is characterized in that manner due to the fact that the Rabbis surrounded it with their statements like this snake, which often forms a coil when at rest, and deemed it impure.

The Sages taught: On that day, when they discussed this matter, Rabbi Eliezer answered all possible answers in the world to support his opinion, but the Rabbis did not accept his explanations from him.

After failing to convince the Rabbis logically, Rabbi Eliezer said to them: If the *halakha* is in accordance with my opinion, this carob tree will prove it. The carob tree was uprooted from its place one hundred cubits, and some say four hundred cubits. The Rabbis said to him: One does not cite halakhic proof from the carob tree.

Rabbi Eliezer then said to them: If the *halakha* is in accordance with my opinion, the stream will prove it. The water in the stream turned backward and began flowing in the opposite direction. They said to him: One does not cite halakhic proof from a stream.

Rabbi Eliezer then said to them: If the *halakha* is in accordance with my opinion, the walls of the study hall will prove it. The walls of the study hall leaned inward and began to fall. Rabbi Yehoshua scolded the walls and said to them: If Torah scholars are contending with each other in matters of *halakha*, what is the nature of your involvement in this dispute? The Gemara relates: The walls did not fall because of the deference due Rabbi Yehoshua, but they did not straighten because of the deference due Rabbi Eliezer, and they still remain leaning.

Rabbi Eliezer then said to them: If the *halakha* is in accordance with my opinion, Heaven will prove it. A Divine Voice emerged from Heaven and said: Why are you disputing with Rabbi Eliezer, as the *halakha* is in accordance with his opinion in every place that he expresses an opinion?

Rabbi Yehoshua stood on his feet and said: It is written: "It is not in heaven" (Deuteronomy 30:12). The Gemara asks: What is the relevance of the phrase "It is not in heaven" in this context? Rabbi Yirmeya says: Since the Torah was already given at Mount Sinai, we do not regard a Divine Voice, as You already wrote at Mount Sinai, in the Torah: "After a majority to incline" (Exodus 23:2). Since the majority of Rabbis disagreed with Rabbi Eliezer's opinion, the *halakha* is not ruled in accordance with his opinion. The Gemara relates: Years after, Rabbi Natan encountered Elijah the prophet and said to him: What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do at that time, when Rabbi Yehoshua issued his declaration? Elijah said to him: The Holy One, Blessed be He, smiled and said: My children have triumphed over Me; My children have triumphed over Me.

The Sages said: On that day, the Sages brought all the ritually pure items deemed pure by the ruling of Rabbi Eliezer and burned them in fire, and the Sages reached a consensus in his regard and ostracized him.

And the Sages said: Who will go and inform him of his ostracism?

Rabbi Akiva, his beloved disciple, said to them: I will go, lest an unseemly person go, and he would thereby destroy the entire world.

What did Rabbi Akiva do? He wore black and wrapped himself in black, as an expression of mourning and pain, and sat before Rabbi Eliezer at a distance of four cubits, which is the distance that one must maintain from an ostracized individual. Rabbi Eliezer said to him: Akiva, what is different about today from other days, that you comport yourself in this manner?

Rabbi Akiva said to him: My teacher, it appears to me that your colleagues are distancing themselves from you.

Rabbi Eliezer too, rent his garments and removed his shoes, as is the custom of an ostracized person, and he dropped from his seat and sat upon

the ground. His eyes shed tears, and as a result the entire world was afflicted: One-third of its olives were afflicted, and one-third of its wheat, and one-third of its barley. And some say that even dough kneaded in a woman's hands spoiled.

The Sages taught: There was great anger on that day, as any place that Rabbi Eliezer fixed his gaze was burned. And even Rabban Gamliel, the *Nasi* of the Sanhedrin at Yavne, the head of the Sages who were responsible for the decision to ostracize Rabbi Eliezer, was coming on a boat at the time, and a large wave swelled over him and threatened to drown him. Rabban Gamliel said: It seems to me that this is only for the sake of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. Rabban Gamliel stood on his feet and said: Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You that neither was it for my honor that I acted when ostracizing him, nor was it for the honor of the house of my father that I acted; rather, it was for Your honor, so that disputes will not proliferate in Israel. In response, the sea calmed from its raging.

The Gemara further relates: Imma Shalom, the wife of Rabbi Eliezer, was the sister of Rabban Gamliel. From that incident forward, she would not allow Rabbi Eliezer to lower his head and recite the *tahánun* prayer, which includes supplication and entreaties. She feared that were her husband to bemoan his fate and pray at that moment, her brother would be punished. A certain day was around the day of the New Moon, and she inadvertently substituted a full thirty-day month for a deficient twenty-nine-day month, i.e., she thought that it was the New Moon, when one does not lower his head in supplication, but it was not. Some say that a pauper came and stood at the door, and she took bread out to him. The result was that she left her husband momentarily unsupervised.

When she returned, she found him and saw that he had lowered his head in prayer. She said to him: Arise, you already killed my brother. Meanwhile, the sound of a *shofar* emerged from the house of Rabban Gamliel to

announce that the *Nasi* had died. Rabbi Eliezer said to her: From where did you know that your brother would die? She said to him: This is the tradition that I received from the house of the father of my father: All the gates of Heaven are apt to be locked, except for the gates of prayer for victims of verbal mistreatment.



Explaining the Story - What is going on in our story? (Explain the sequence of events)

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Bonus ? Why do you think Rabbi Eliezer was so inflexible about his halachic opinion?

? In which way do you think Rabbi Eliezer was right?

Bonus ? In which way do you think Rabbi Eliezer was at fault?

? Why did God say "My children have triumphed over Me; My children have triumphed over Me"? Why did He smile?

? Why did the Sages bring all the ritually pure items deemed pure by the ruling of Rabbi Eliezer and burn them in fire?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? Why did the Sages ostracize Rabbi Eliezer?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? Why did Rabbi Akiva volunteer to inform Rabbi Eliezer of the fact that he has been ostracized?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Bonus ? Why was it a "great anger" on the day Rabbi Eliezer was ostracized? How did this great anger manifest itself?

Bonus ? Do you think it was Rabbi Eliezer's intention to bring calamity to the world or to drown Rabban Gamliel? If not, why did this happen?

? Why did Imma Shalom want to prevent Rabbi Eliezer from lowering his head during tahanun?

? In which way do you think the Sages were right?

? In which way do you think the Sages were at fault?

? In this story, we see examples of lack of flexibility. Can you point them out?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? In this story, we also see examples of some flexibility or attempts to bridge between the sides. Can you point them out?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? Our story is a tragic story with a tragic end. Knowing "the actors" of our story, can you think of another possible course of action that would have prevented such a tragic end?

"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from These Texts

! When being right is not enough....

! When being powerful is not enough...

