

From the Rabbi's Desk  
Rabbi Manes Kogan

Hillcrest Jewish Center  
183-02 Union Turnpike, Flushing, NY 11366  
[rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org](mailto:rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org)

## Stories with a Twist [213]



### “And What Difference Does It Make to You?”

Insights into Babylonian Talmud Sota 40a

#### Background to Our Story

##### Abba of Acre



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abba\\_of\\_Acre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abba_of_Acre)

Abba of Acre ([Hebrew](#): אבא דמן עכו, [translit](#): *Abba d'min Akko*), was an [amora](#) from [Acre](#) who flourished at the end of the 3rd century. He was greatly respected by Rabbi [Abbahu](#) and praised as an example of modesty.

##### Abbahu

**JewishEncyclopedia.com**

A celebrated Palestinian amora of the third amoraic generation (about 279-320), sometimes cited as R. Abbahu of Cæsarea (ḳisrin). His rabbinic education was acquired mainly at Tiberias, in the academy presided over by R. Johanan, with whom his relations were almost those of a son (Yer. Ber. ii. 4*b*; Giṭ. 44*b*; B. B. 39*a*). He frequently made pilgrimages to Tiberias, even after he had become well known as rector of the Cæsarean Academy (Yer. Shab. viii. 11*a*; Yer. Pes. x. 37*c*). He was an authority on weights and measures (Yer. Ter. v. 43*c*). He learned Greek in order to become useful to his people, then under the Roman proconsuls, that language having become, to a considerable extent, the rival of the Hebrew even in prayer (Yer. Soṭah, vii. 21*b*); and, in spite of the bitter protest of Simon b. Abba, he also taught his daughters Greek (Yer. Shab. vi. 7*d*; Yer. Soṭah, ix. 24*c*; Sanh. 14*a*). Indeed, it was said of Abbahu that he was a living illustration of the maxim (Eccl. vii. 18; compare Targum), "It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this [the study of the Law]; yea, also from that [other branches of knowledge] withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all" (Eccl. R. to vii. 18).



In the Talmud itself, the singular *amora* generally refers to a lecturer's assistant; the lecturer would state his thoughts briefly, and the *amora* would then repeat them aloud for the public's benefit, adding translation and clarification where needed.

### The Text: Babylonia Talmud Sota 40a

And Rabbi Abbahu says: At first, I would say to myself that I was humble. Since I saw that Rabbi Abba of Akko himself stated one reason for a matter, and his interpreter stated one other reason of his own rather than delivering the reason that Rabbi Abba stated, and yet Rabbi Abba did not mind, I say to myself that I am not humble.

And what was the humility of Rabbi Abbahu?

The Gemara relates that Rabbi Abbahu's interpreter's wife said to Rabbi Abbahu's wife: This one of ours, i.e., my husband, has no need for your husband. And the fact that he bends over to listen to Rabbi Abbahu, and then stands up above him, and repeats his words to the congregants is merely to show respect for him.

[Rabbi Abbahu's] wife went and told this to Rabbi Abbahu.


He [Rabbi Abbahu] said to her [to his wife]: And what difference does it make to you? Through me and through him the One above will be exalted, and it does not matter which one of us is teaching.



### Explaining the Story

What is the sequence of events that take place in the story?

### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

**Bonus Question**  Why would Rabbi Abbahu say (to himself) that he was humble?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**?** What was the humility of Rabbi Abba of Akko?

**?** What did Rabbi Abbahu's interpreter's wife say to Rabbi Abbahu's wife?

**Bonus Question ?** Why did Rabbi Abbahu's interpreter's wife say the things that she said to Rabbi Abbahu's wife?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Bonus Question ?** Why did Rabbi Abbahu's wife tell her husband what had transpired between her and the interpreter's wife?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Bonus Question ?** Do you think Rabbi Abbahu's wife

**Should have told her husband about the interpreter's wife? Bonus Question**

**?** Rabbi Abbahu's answer to his wife is comprised of two parts: 1) "*And what difference does it make to you?*" and 2) "*Through me and through him the One above will be exalted!*" Please explain Rabbi Abbahu's answer, addressing the need for each of the two parts of his answer.

**Bonus Question ?** What was the humility of Rabbi Abbahu?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**!** "If it is not my problem, why should it be yours?" Rabbi Abbahu's infallible recipe to end tattling and to reduce conflict.

## EPILOGUE

Rabbi Abbahu's humility is a natural way through which he ends tattling and reduces conflict. The interpreter's wife and Rabbi Abbahu's wife went down a dangerous path which could have ended in a major conflict and affected many people. Rabbi Abbahu, in his humility, deflates an explosive situation and establishes the basis for conflict avoidance in the future.