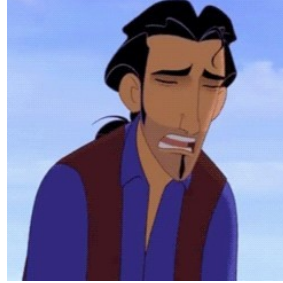


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## Stories with a Twist [220]



### "He Came to Comfort and Instead He Upset Him?!"

Insights into Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 8b

#### Background to Our Story

##### Rabbi Hiyya bat Abba



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiyya\\_bar\\_Abba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiyya_bar_Abba)

Hiyya bar Abba or Rabbi Hiyya was a third generation *amoraic* sage of the Land of Israel, of *priestly descent*, who flourished at the end of the third century.

He may have briefly studied with *Samuel of Nehardea* (Weiss, "Dor," iii.94) in *Babylon*, his native land. When he was still very young, Hiyya migrated to Israel where he studied under *Hanina* and *Joshua ben Levi*. He may also have been influenced by *Simeon bar Lakish*. Hiyya was also a disciple of *Rabbi Johanan*. After Rabbi Johanan's death, Hiyya and his friends *Ammi* and *Assi* became recognized as some of Palestine's brightest Halakah scholars.

Hiyya was forced to lecture from town to town in an effort to make ends meet. He even had to leave Palestine temporarily (Yer. Ma'as. Sh. v.56b). To improve his circumstances, Hiyya accepted a commission from *Judah II* to collect money to help rebuild the decaying *patriarchate*.

The esteem in which Hiyya was held is evident in a letter of introduction *Eleazar ben Pedath* provided for him: "Behold, we have sent you a great man, our envoy. Until his return he possesses all the powers that we do." According to another version, the introduction read: "Behold, we have sent you a great man. His greatness consists in this, that he is not ashamed to say 'I know not' " (Yer. Hag. i.76d; Yer. Ned. x.42b).

##### Shim'on ben Lakish



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shimon\\_ben\\_Lakish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shimon_ben_Lakish)

Shim'on ben Lakish (*Hebrew*: שמעון בן לקיש), better known by his nickname Resh Lakish, was an *amora* who lived in the *Roman province* of *Syria Palaestina* in the third century. He was

reputedly born in [Bosra](#), east of the [Jordan River](#), around 200 CE, but lived most of his life in [Sepphoris](#). Nothing is known of his ancestry except his father's name.

He is something of an anomaly among the giants of Torah study as he was supposed to have been in his early youth a [bandit](#) and a [gladiator](#).

Resh Lakish was regarded as one of the most prominent amoraim of the second generation, the other being his brother-in-law and [halakhic](#) opponent, [Johanan bar Nappaha](#).

### **Yehuda bat Nachmani**

Frieman, Shulamis: Who's Who in the Talmud. Jason Aronson Inc. Northvale, New Jersey/ Jerusalem. 1995.

- amora – second and third generations
- Eretz Yisroel, Teveriah
- colleague of R'Levi
- men. (Chag. 16a; Sot. 37b; Git. 6b; PRK 45:2; Eich. R. 1:3; Mid. Tehillim 47:7); transmits in the name of Reish Lakish (BR 33:6; Sh. R. 47:6; BaMid. R. 11:3)
- He and R'Levi were darshanim ("preachers") in the beis midrash of R'Yochanan (JT Suk. 5:1; BR 98:11). He was also the meturgeman (lit. "interpreter"; one who repeats and explains the lecture to the audience) of Reish Lakish in the yeshiva of Teveriah (Chag. 16a).
- He once acted as a meturgeman for a dayan who had been appointed by the Nassi. The dayan was not a scholar and when R'Yehuda bent over to heed what he had to say, the dayan did not say anything, whereupon R'Yehuda quoted the verse from Chabakuk (2:19) as the text: "Woe unto him who says to wood, Awake! Arise, to the dumb stone. Can this teach? Behold it is overlaid with gold and silver and there is no breath within it" (Sanh. 7b).
- He went with Reish Lakish to comfort R'Chiya bar Adda when the latter's son died (Kes. 8b).

Rabbi Yehuda bar Nahmani was also known as Rabbi Yudan, and his father was identified at times as bar Nahman or bar Nehemya. He was one of the great homiletic experts of his generation. In addition to his role as disseminator of the Torah of Reish Lakish, both he and his colleague Rabbi Levi would lecture on *aggada* before the congregation, as a prelude to the central lecture of Rabbi Yobanan. The Talmud and Midrash cite several homiletic interpretations attributed to him, and he often Cited the statements of Reish Lakish.

### **The Text: Babylonia Talmud Ketrubot 8b**

This is similar to that incident involving Rav Hiyya bar Abba, who was the Bible teacher of the sons of Reish Lakish and some say that he was the Mishna teacher of the son of Reish Lakish. His child died.

On the first day, Reish Lakish did not go to comfort him. The next day, he took Yehuda bar Nahmani, his disseminator, with him to comfort Rav Hiyya bar Abba. Reish Lakish said to his disseminator. Stand and say a matter of comfort with regard to the child.

He [Yehuda bar Nahmani] began and said: "*And the Lord saw it and He abhorred them, due to the provocation of His sons and His daughters*" (*Deuteronomy 32:19*). A generation in which the fathers abhor the Holy One,

Blessed be He, He is angered at their sons and their daughters, and they die when they are small.

...

The Gemara asks about this incident: He came to comfort and instead he upset him?!



### Explaining the Story

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

### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

**?** Why did Reish Lakish go to comfort Rav Hiyya bar Abba?

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

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

**Bonus ?** Why didn't Reish Lakish go to comfort Rav Hiyya bar Abba on the first day of his mourning?

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

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

**Bonus ?** Why did Reish Lakish take Rabbi Yehuda bar Nahmani with him when he went to comfort Rav Hiyya bar Abba?

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

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

**Extra Bonus ?** The Gemarah is shocked by the inappropriateness of Rabbi Yehuda bar Nahmani's exegesis. Why indeed did Rabbi Yehuda bar Nahmani say what he said?

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

**!** It is not about you, Rabbi Yehuda! Or the crudeness of shining at the expense of others.

## EPILOGUE

Reish Lakish goes to comfort Rav Hiyya bar Abba and takes Rabbi Yehuda bar Nachmani, one of the great homiletics experts of his generation, with him. The job is to comfort Rav Hiyya, but Rabbi Yehuda uses the opportunity to show off his homiletical gifts in front of his teacher. By making himself the center of attention, he not only relinquishes the purpose of his visit, but he causes unnecessary pain.