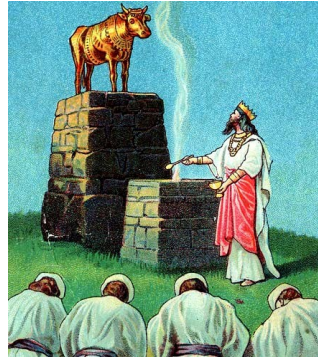


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Stories with a Twist [222]



“Had You Been There...”

Insights into Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 102b

Background to Our Story

Rabbi Ashi



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rav_Ashi

Rav Ashi (Hebrew: רב אשי) ("Rabbi Ashi") (352–427) was a Babylonian Amoraic Talmid Chacham, who reestablished the Academy at Sura and was first editor of the Babylonian Talmud. According to a tradition preserved in the academies, Rav Ashi was born in the same year that Rava, the great teacher of Mahuza, died, and he was the first teacher of any importance in the Talmudic Academies in Babylonia after Rava's death. Simai, Ashi's father, was a rich and learned man, a student of the college of Naresh near Sura, which was directed by Rav Papa, Rava's disciple. Ashi's teacher was Rav Kahana, a member of the same college, who later became president of the academy at Pumbedita.

Three kings and four commoners have no share in the World to Come (Sanhedrin 90a)

Jeroboam I, King of Israel

<http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com/>



Jeroboam 1 was the son of Nebat. He became the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel, after Israel had split away from Judah, which included the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. The prophet Ahijah prophesied that upon Solomon's death, Jeroboam would become king over ten tribes. After Solomon heard of the prophecy, he ordered Jeroboam killed, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt.

After Solomon's death, his son, Rehoboam, angered the ten tribes in the northern part of Israel with heavy taxes. This encouraged the people in the northern part of Israel to break away from Judah (the southern part of Israel) and to form a separate kingdom. Jeroboam returned from Egypt and was crowned king of the northern kingdom of Israel, which was home to ten of the tribes of Israel. Wars were continuous between Israel and Judah during Jeroboam's reign.

Jeroboam followed pagan ways. He placed golden calves in the towns of Bethel and Dan in the hopes of getting people to worship without going to the Temple in Jerusalem, which was in Judah. Jeroboam dismissed the priestly tribe of Levi and appointed his own priests. This caused many Levites to defect to Jerusalem.

The Lord sent a prophet to warn Jeroboam to turn away from his evil ways. Jeroboam's refusal eventually resulted in the destruction of his kingdom and his family. Ahijah the prophet told Jeroboam's wife of the oncoming death of their son, and also of a king over Israel who will destroy the family of Jeroboam, and how the people of Israel will be uprooted and scattered beyond the Euphrates, because they angered the Lord by worshiping idols. All this later happened. Jeroboam 1 reigned 22 years. When he died, his son Nadab became king. The story of Jeroboam 1 is found in 1 Kings, chapters 11-14. The name Jeroboam means " may the people grow numerous."

Ahab, King of Israel

<http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com/>



Ahab was the seventh King of Israel. He reigned for 22 years (871-852 BC). He was the son of Omri. He married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians. Ahab, under Jezebel's influence, built a pagan temple, and allowed idols into Samaria. Elijah the prophet warned Ahab that the country would suffer from drought if the cult of Baal was not removed from the land of Israel. After three years of drought, Elijah challenged Ahab and his pagan priests on Mount Carmel. God sent down fire to ignite a sacrifice, but the priests of Baal could not summon Baal to do the same. Then the people realized that God was the only true God. (1 Kings 18:18-39). Then, rains came and ended the drought.

Elijah denounced Ahab as a murderer because of the stoning of Naboth, which Jezebel, had instigated. Elijah told Ahab that dogs would lick his blood outside of the city, just as they had licked the blood of Naboth. He also told Ahab that none of his male heirs would survive and that Jezebel would be torn apart by the dogs of Jezreel (1 Kings 21:17-24).

After that, Ahab went into deep repentance, and the fulfillment of the prophecy was postponed. Ahab fought Ben-Hadad the King of Damascus in several wars, and then allied himself with Jehoshaphat, King of Judah to liberate Ramoth Gilead from the Arameans.

Ahab was warned by the prophet Micaiah that he would die in the battle. But Ahab went to battle anyway, disguised as a soldier, and was killed by a stray arrow. When the blood on his chariot was washed off at a pool in Samaria, the dogs licked up his blood as Elijah said. Jezebel, and eventually all of Ahab's male heirs died as the prophet said.

The Bible lists Ahab as the most evil of all the kings before him (1 Kings 16:30). Ahab's son Ahaziah became the new king. The story of Ahab is found in 1 Kings, chapters 16-22.

Manasseh, king of Judah

<http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com/>



Manasseh, son of King Hezekiah, and mother Hephzibah, began his reign at age 12. He reigned 55 years, the longest of any Hebrew King, but it was an evil reign. He rebuilt the heathen altars that his father Hezekiah had destroyed - the altars of Baal. He even built pagan altars in both courts of the Temple of the Lord, for worshipping the sun, moon and stars.

And Manasseh sacrificed his own children as burnt offerings in the valley of Hinnom. He consulted spirit mediums, fortune tellers and sorcerers. He angered the Lord by encouraging every sort of evil (2 Chronicles 33:4-6). He also murdered large numbers of innocent people (2 Kings 21:16).

Warnings by the Lord were ignored by both Manasseh and his people, so God sent the Assyrian armies, who captured him and took him into exile. It was in captivity that he came to his senses and cried out to God for help. As recorded in 2 Chronicles 33:13, The Lord answered his prayers by returning him to Jerusalem. At that point Manasseh realized that the Lord was really God. Manasseh removed the foreign idols from the hills and the Temple and tore down the pagan altars. He then rebuilt the altar of the Lord, and offered sacrifices upon it. When Manasseh died, he was buried beneath his own palace, and his son Amon became the new king. The story of Manasseh is found in 2 Kings 21:1-17, and 2 Chronicles 33:1-20.

Breaking Bread for Hamotzi



The Text: Babylonia Talmud Sanhedrin 102b

It once happened that Ravi Ashi concluded his lecture when he came to the three kings.

He [Rav Ashi] said to his students: "Tomorrow we shall commence our studies with the Mishnah concerning our colleagues, i.e. the three kings."

That night, Menashe came and appeared to [Rav Ashi] in his dream. – [Menashe] said: "You refer to us as 'your colleagues' and 'the colleagues of your father'?! Answer me, then, this question of Jewish law: From where are you supposed to break the loaf of bread over which you recite the hamotzi?"

[Rav Ashi] said to [Menashe]: "I do not know." The law is that upon reciting a blessing over bread, one should break off and eat his first bite from the choicest part of the loaf. Rav Ashi certainly knew this law. Menasheh, however, asked him if he knew *which* section of the loaf is considered the choicest part (*Yad Ramah*).

[Menashe] said to [Rav Ashi]: - "You have not learned a simple law as from where you are supposed to break the bread for the hamotzi, yet you refer to us as your colleagues?!".

[Rav Ashi] said to [Menashe]: "Teach me [this rule], - and tomorrow I will teach it in your name in the lecture."

[Menashe] said to [Rav Ashi]: "From the part that is baked into a crust."

[Rav Ashi] said to [Menashe]: "Since you are so learned, why did you worship idols?"

[Menashe] said to [Rav Ashi]: "Had you been there, i.e. had you been living when I was alive, you would have lifted the bottom of your garment and run after me!"

The next day, Rav Ashi said to the Rabbis as he began his lecture: "We will commence today's lecture with our teachers."



Explaining the Story

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

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? “He [Rav Ashi] said to his students: “Tomorrow we shall commence our studies with the Mishnah concerning our colleagues, i.e. the three kings.” What was Rav Ashi planning to teach his students?

? Why was Menashe upset with Rav Ashi?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

? Which law didn’t Rav Ashi know?

? Why did Rav Ashi ask Menashe to teach him the law?

? Why did Menashe teach Rav Ashi the law he didn’t know even though he was upset with him?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? What is Rav Ashi puzzled about?

Extra Bonus ? At the end of our story, when Rav Ashi refers to the three kings on the following day, he addresses them as “our teachers.” What did Menashe teach Rav Ashi?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

“The Twist” – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

! Don’t judge your fellow until you walk in his shoes. And if you must judge him, do it with kindness and compassion. This is the most important lesson Rav Ashi learned from King Menashe.

EPILOGUE

In our story, Rav Ashi learns a lesson in humility from the most unlikely teacher: King Menashe. Positioned in a place of authority and piety, Rav Ashi is planning to pummel “the three kings” in his next lecture when he is reminded not only that his knowledge of Torah is lacking, but most importantly, that his character traits can be improved upon, as well.