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## Stories with a Twist [231]



### **I Have Responded to Your Contention. Arise and Eat!**

Insights into Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67b

#### **Background to Our Story**

##### **Deuteronomy 15:7-8**

If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother.

*But you shall surely open your hand to him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his deficiency in that which is deficient for him.*

#### **Stories in Context (Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67a & b)**

##### **MISHNA:**

*With regard to one who marries off his daughter with the terms of the dowry **unspecified, he must not give her less than fifty dinars.** If the bride's father **pledged to bring her** into the marriage **bare**, by saying that he refuses to give her anything, **the husband should not say: When I bring her into my house, I will clothe her with my clothing,** but not beforehand. **Rather, he must clothe her while she is yet in her father's house,** and she enters the marriage with the clothing in hand. **And similarly,** with regard to a charity administrator **who marries off an orphan girl, he must not give her less than fifty dinars.** **If there are sufficient resources in the charity fund, the charities provide even more for her,** furnishing a dowry and her other needs **according to her dignity.***

## GEMARA:

...

**The Sages taught:** Concerning an orphan boy and an orphan girl who have come and appealed to be supported by the charity fund, the distributors provide for the orphan girl first and afterward they provide for the orphan boy. This is because it is the way of a man to circulate about the entryways to ask for charity, and it is not a woman's way to circulate for charity. Therefore, her need is greater. Concerning an orphan boy and orphan girl: who have come to appeal to the charity fund to be married off, the administrators marry off the orphan girl first and afterward they marry off the orphan boy, because the humiliation of a woman who is not married is greater than that of an unmarried man.

**The Sages taught:** Concerning an orphan boy who has come to marry, the community tries its utmost to provide for all of his needs. The charities rent a house for him, arrange for him a bed and all his utensils, and thereafter they marry him a wife, as it is stated: "But you shall surely open your hand to him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his deficiency in that which is deficient for him" ([Deuteronomy 15:8](#)). With regard to the phrase "sufficient for his deficiency," this is referring to the house. "Which is deficient"; this is referring to a bed and table. "For him [lo]"; this is referring to a wife. And similarly the verse states: "I will make him [lo] a helpmate for him" ([Genesis 2:18](#)), when God created a wife for Adam.

The Sages taught: "Sufficient for his deficiency"; this teaches that you are commanded with respect to the pauper to support him, but you are not commanded with respect to him to make him wealthy, as the obligation encompasses only that which he lacks, as indicated by the word deficient. However, the verse also states: "Which is deficient for him"; this includes even a horse upon which to ride and a servant to run in front of him for the sake of his stature, if necessary. For someone accustomed to these advantages, their absences constitute a true deficiency, not an extravagant indulgence.

They said about Hillel the Elder that he obtained for a poor person of noble descent a horse upon which to ride and a servant to run in front of him. One time he did not find a servant to run in front of him, and Hillel himself ran in front of him for three mil (about 2 miles).

## Rava



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rava\\_\(amora\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rava_(amora))

Abba ben Joseph bar Ḥama (c. 280 – 352 CE), who is exclusively referred to in the [Talmud](#) by the name Rava (רבא), was a fourth-generation rabbi ([amora](#)) who lived in Mahoza, a suburb of [Ctesiphon](#), the capital of [Babylonia](#). He is one of the most often-cited rabbis in the [Talmud](#). He studied at the [Talmudical Academy](#) at [Pumbedita](#), site of modern-day Falluja, Iraq. There he, traditionally, became famous for his debates with his study-partner [Abaye](#). The debates between Abba ben Joseph and [Abaye](#) are considered classic examples of Talmudic dialectical logic. Of their hundreds of recorded disputes, the law is decided according to the opinion of Abba ben Joseph in all but six cases. His methodology greatly influenced not only his students, but the [stammaim](#), as well.

Rava married the daughter of third-generation amora Rav Hisda after she'd been widowed from Rami bar Chama. In TB Bava Batra 12b, Rav Hisda's daughter is sitting in her father's classroom, while his students, Rava and Rami bar Chama, stand before them. When Rav Hisda asks her which of the two she wants to marry, she replies "both of them," and Rava adds, "I'll be the last one" (commentators let us know that she indeed married Rami first

and Rava second). They had five sons, the eldest of whom, Joseph, died during his parents' lifetime.

When [Rabbah bar Nahmani](#), the head of the [yeshiva](#) of [Pumbedita](#), retired, the position went to [Abaye](#). At that point, Abba ben Joseph returned to [Mahoza](#), in [Babylonia](#), where he established a yeshiva there. After the death of Abaye, many of his students moved from Pumbedita to Mahoza, to join Abba ben Joseph's Yeshiva, which had become one of the intellectual centers of the Babylonian Jewish Community. Rava died ca 355.

Rava apparently had to reply to a deep-seated skepticism toward rabbinic authority and to defend the authenticity of the rabbinic oral tradition. The skepticism of Mahozan Jewry was fueled in part by the acceptance of the [Manichaean](#) polemic against [Zoroastrianism](#) and its insistence on oral transmission, and by a strong concern with the problem of [theodicy](#), encouraged by a familiarity with Zoroastrian theology. Rava's creativity was fueled by his cosmopolitan urban environment. For instance, he ruled that one who habitually ate certain non-kosher foods because he liked the taste was nevertheless trustworthy as a witness in cases involving civil matters. So too did he suggest that a lost object belongs to the person who discovers it even before the loser is aware of his loss, because it prevented the loser from resorting to urban courts to try to get his property back and eliminated the period of uncertainty of possession. It also led to the legal concept that 'future [psychological] abandonment [of possession] when unaware [of the loss] is [nevertheless retrospectively accounted] as abandonment'. Ultimately, Rava's views were decisive in shaping the [Bavli's](#) approach to the problem of theodicy, legal midrash, and conceptualization, all of which stand in stark contrast to the [Yerushalmi](#)."

## The Text: Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67b

A certain person came before Rava to request charity.

He [Rava] said to him: On what do you normally dine?

He [the person who came before Rava] said to him: On a fattened hen and aged wine.

He [Rava] said to him: And were you not concerned for causing a burden to the community?

He [the person who came before Rava] said to him: Is that to say that it is from their funds that I eat? I eat from the support of the Merciful One, as we already learned "*the eyes of all wait for You, and You give them their food in its time*" ([Psalms 145:15](#)), the phrase: At their time, is not stated, rather "in its time." This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, gives each and every one his personally appropriate sustenance at its proper time, and the community is merely His agent in discharging His will.

In the meantime, while they were talking, Rava's sister, who had not seen him for thirteen years, came. And as a gift, she brought him a fattened hen and aged wine. Rava said to himself: What is this that happened in front of me that suddenly I am brought food that I do not usually eat?

Rava said to him: I have responded [*na'aneti*] to your contention. Arise and eat.



## Explaining the Story

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

### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

#### Extra Bonus ?



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

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

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



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

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

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

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



EPILOGUE

# A Helpful Guide to Overcoming Envy

## About Joshua Becker

*"Envy is ignorance."* –Ralph Waldo Emerson

Very few people would argue for the positive influence of envy in our lives. In fact, most of us can quickly recognize its harmful effects:

- It fosters discontent and distress.
- It binds our freedom.
- It leads to resentment and bitterness.
- It causes us to do things we wouldn't normally do.
- It can spiral into depression.

And yet, [the wasted emotions](#) of envy and jealousy continue to be present in our lives. It is a constant battle that wars against our heart and soul. We experience envy over other peoples' appearance, talents, relationships, and bank accounts. It offers no positive contribution to our lives. Yet, it remains. It is time to break free. Certainly, each of us desire to live in freedom from jealousy and envy. How then, can we overcome it?

### **Consider these helpful, life-changing steps to overcoming envy:**

#### **1. Shift your focus to the goodness in your life.**

One of the biggest reasons we envy the life of another is because we have begun to take our blessings for granted. Count them again. You are talented. You are gifted. You are cared for. You are unique. [Your life is too valuable to be lived like everyone else](#). You have countless reasons to be grateful for the life you have been given. Remind yourself again.

#### **2. Remind yourself that nobody has it all.**

[Comparing your life](#) with others is always a losing proposition. There will always appear to be people who have it better than you. But remember, we always compare the worst of what we know about ourselves to the best assumptions we make about others. Be reminded, nobody has it all. Each person you meet experiences problems, trials, and weaknesses—just like you. This is what makes us human. Nobody is exempt. Nobody has it all. Nobody.

#### **3. Avoid people who habitually value the wrong things.**

If you spend all your time with people who compare the latest fashions, you are going to start desiring the latest fashions. If you spend all your time with people who talk about their salaries, their new cars, or their extravagant vacations, you are going to naturally fall into the inevitable trap of comparing your possessions to theirs. But there are [far more important](#)

[things](#) to pursue. Remove yourself from the conversation (and the relationship if necessary).

#### **4. Spend time with grateful people.**

Gratitude is highly contagious—that is why I spend time reading [Tammy Strobel](#). You can read gratitude in almost every word she writes. Find grateful people who experience contentment in their lives and spend quality time with them. You can find them online or you can find them in person. But the more you invest your time with them, the more their spirit will become yours... and soon, others will desire what you have.

#### **5. Understand that marketers routinely fan the flame.**

One of the most effective tools for advertisers in our culture is to foster jealousy and envy among us. After all, if they can cause us to recklessly desire the possessions of another, they can drive us to great lengths to acquire it for ourselves. Be on guard against their tactics. Recognize them. Avoid them. And refuse to succumb to their deception.

#### **6. Celebrate the success of others.**

Genuinely and practically, rejoice in the fortune of others. When somebody receives something that you desire, be happy for them. If you wanted it, they probably did too. [Stop viewing life as a competition](#). Joy is not a finite resource. And the moment you learn to experience happiness in others' joy is the day you take a huge step to overcoming envy once and for all.

#### **7. Be generous.**

Even if you have to force yourself into it at first, make generosity an essential habit in your life. Give your time. Give your finances. Give your abilities, talents, and skills. Volunteer in your community. Support a cause that promotes social justice. And get your hands dirty. As you begin to spend more time and more energy with those who have less than you, the more you will find fulfillment and meaning. And when you do, the allure of another's person life will quickly fade away.

Envy has held us hostage for far too long. It is time, once and for all, to break free from envy and experience a more fulfilled life because of it.