

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [236]

Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta Said to Her: "What shall we do?" Insights into Ruth Rabbah 3:4

Thanks to Rabbi Uri Romano for bringing these two stories to my attention and for the analysis of Inbar Raveh



Background to Our Story

Rabbi Hiyya



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Yevamot. Part 1. Koren publishers Jerusalem

Rabbi Hiyya ben Abba, who was from the city of Kafri, Babylonia, was among the last of the tanna'im and was a disciple-colleague of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Rabbi Hiyya descended from a family of distinguished lineage that traced its ancestry back to King David and produced many Sages. While he was still in Babylonia, Rabbi Hiyya was considered a Torah luminary. When he ascended with his family from Babylonia to Eretz Yisrael, some, engaging in hyperbole, said that the Torah was about to be forgotten in Eretz Yisrael until he came from Babylonia and reestablished it. When he came to Eretz Yisrael, he became a disciple and a colleague of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, with whom he had a very close relationship. He was especially close with Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's son Shimon, who was also his business partner. All of the students of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi were Rabbi Hiyya's colleagues, and he was close with the tanna Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta. The younger disciples of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, e.g., Rabbi Hanina, Rabbi Oshaya, Rabbi Yannai, and others, studied Torah from Rabbi Hiyya and were, to a certain degree, his disciples as well. His brothers' sons, Rabba bar bar Hana, and above all, the great amora, Rav, were his primary disciples. In addition to his prominence as a Torah scholar, Rabbi Hiyya was outstanding in his piety, as reflected in several anecdotes throughout the Talmud. Rabbi Hiyya also appears as a central figure in the Zohar. He was buried in Tiberias and his two sons were later buried alongside him. Rabbi Hiyya's sons, Yehuda, son-in-law of Rabbi Yannai, and Hizkiyya, were both among the leading Torah scholars in the transitional generation between the tanna'im and the amora'im. They apparently succeeded Rabbi Hiyya at the head of his private yeshiva in the city of his residence, Tiberias. The ge'onim had a tradition, also cited in Tosafot (Bava Batra 149a), that Rabbi Hiyya's daughter Pazi was the mother of a large family that included several important Sages such as Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi and his son, Rabbi Yehuda. Out of

respect for Rabbi H̱iyya, they were referred to by Pazi's name rather than that of her husband.

Rabbi Simeon ben Halaftha

In: Bader, Gershom: The Encyclopedia of Talmudic Sages. Jason Aronson. Northvale, NJ & London. 1988.

Rabbi Simeon ben Halaftha was one of the outstanding colleagues of Rabbi Jehudah Hanasi during the latter's old age. He was a member of a family of scholars and the Talmud referred to his father as Ben Rabbi (the son of a rabbi) to indicate that at least three generations had been ordained. The family of Rabbi Simeon were loyal adherents of the dynasty of the Nasi for many generations. Rabbi Chalafta was a son of Rabbi Jose ben Chalafta who prided himself on having planted five cedar trees in Israel, referring to his five sons of whom Chalafta was one. Rabbi Simeon ben Chalafta was one of the last disciples of Rabbi Meir. Later he attended the academy of Rabbi Jehudah and was befriended by the Nasi because of the loyalty of his family to the office of Nasi. Rabbi Simeon lived in the town of Ein T'engah located between Sepphoris and Tiberias. He regularly visited Rabbi Jehudah once a month when the latter lived in Sepphoris and also after he moved to Tiberias.

Judah Ha-Nasi



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judah_ha-Nasi

Rabbi Judah haNasi, (pronounced Yehuda haNasi, "Judah the Prince"), also known as "Rabbi" and "Rabeinu HaKadosh" ("our holy rabbi"), was a key leader of the Jewish community of Judea toward the end of the 2nd century CE, during the occupation by the Roman Empire. He is best known as the chief editor/[redactor](#) of the Mishnah. He was of the Davidic line, the royal line of King David, hence the title nasi, meaning Prince; the title nasi was also used for presidents of the Sanhedrin.^[2]

Judah haNasi was born in 135. According to the midrash, he came into the world on the same day that Rabbi Akiva died a martyr's death (Midrash Genesis Rabbah lviii.; Midrash Eccl. Rabbah i. 10) The Talmud suggests that this was a result of Divine Providence: God had granted the Jewish people another leader of great stature to succeed Rabbi Akiva. His place of birth is unknown; nor is it recorded where his father, Shimon ben Gamliel II, sought refuge with his family during the persecutions under Hadrian.

On the restoration of order in the Land of Israel, Usha became the seat of the academy and Judah spent his youth there. His father presumably gave him the same education that he himself had received, including Greek (Talmud Sotah 49b). This knowledge of Greek enabled him to become the Jews' intermediary with the Roman authorities. He favored Greek as the language of the country over Syriac (Aramaic) (Sotah, ibid). It is said that in Judah's house, only Hebrew was spoken and even the maids spoke it (Meg. 18a; R. H. 26b; Naz. 3a; 'Er. 53a).

According to the Talmud (Avodah Zarah 10a-b), Rabbi Judah the Prince was very wealthy and greatly revered in Rome. He had a close friendship with "Antoninus", possibly the Emperor Caracalla,^[3] who would consult Rabbi Judah on various worldly and spiritual matters.

The Talmud records the tradition that Rabbi Judah haNasi was buried in the necropolis of Beit She'arim, in the Lower Galilee.^[4]

According to Jewish tradition, God gave the Jewish nation the Written Law - Torah - and revealed to Moses additional laws and customs, called the Oral Law. For centuries, only the

Torah appeared as a written text. Fearing that the oral traditions might be forgotten, Rabbi Judah Hanasi undertook the mission of compiling them in what became known as the Mishna. The Mishna consists of 63 tractates codifying Jewish law, which are the basis of the Talmud.

References

1. Talmud Yerushalmi, quoted in Tosafos, Sanhedrin 5a
2. Mishna Chagiga 2:2
3. A. Mischcon, Abodah Zara, p.10a Soncino, 1988. Mischcon cites various sources, "SJ Rappaport... is of opinion that our Antoninus is Antoninus Pius." Other opinions cited suggest "Antoninus" was Caracalla, Lucius Verus or Alexander Severus.
4. Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Bavli), Tractate Bava Metzia 85a, Tractate Pesachim 49b; Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Kelaim 9, 32a-b.

Reish Lakish



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

Simeon ben Lakish (in Hebrew, *Shimon ben Lakish*; in Aramaic, *Shimon bar Lakish* or *bar Lakisha*), better known by his nickname Resh Lakish, was an amora who lived in the Roman province of Syria Palaestina in the third century CE. He was reputedly born in Bosra, east of the Jordan River, in around 200 CE, but lived most of his life in Sepphoris (Grätz, "Gesch." v. 240). 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 gladiator. He was regarded as one of the most prominent amoraim of the second generation, the other being his brother-in-law and halakhic opponent Rabbi Yochanan.

The World to Come (Olam Ha-Ba)



<http://www.jewfaq.org/olamhaba.htm>

The spiritual afterlife is referred to in Hebrew as *Olam Ha-Ba* (oh-LAHM hah-BAH), the World to Come, although this term is also used to refer to the [messianic age](#). The *Olam Ha-Ba* is another, higher state of being. In the [Mishnah](#), one rabbi says, "This world is like a lobby before the *Olam Ha-Ba*. Prepare yourself in the lobby so that you may enter the banquet hall." Similarly, the Talmud says, "This world is like the eve of [Shabbat](#), and the *Olam Ha-Ba* is like Shabbat. He who prepares on the eve of Shabbat will have food to eat on Shabbat." We prepare ourselves for the *Olam Ha-Ba* through [Torah](#) study and good deeds.

Dinar & Maneh



"Dinar" (pl. *Dinarim*) - a Roman silver coin ([Denarius](#) (pl. *denarii*, (Hebrew [Zuz](#), pl. *zuzim*) - 4.26 grams. In Hebrew, a silver Dinar was called a "Zuz" to avoid confusion with the [gold Dinar](#).

"Minah" (pl.) - a silver coin - 424.87 grams - equivalent with *maneh* which is 100 [zuzim](#).

The Text: Ruth Rabbah 3:4

ד. דילמא רבי חייא רבה ורבי שמעון בן חלפתא הוו
תבין לעיין באורייתא בהדין בית מדרשא רבא דטבריא
בערוכת פיסחא ואית דאמרי בערוכת צומא רבא ושמע
קלהון דברייאתא בייבין אמר ליה אילין פרייתא מה
עסקון אמר דאית ליה זבן ודלית ליה אזיל לגבי מרי
עבדתיה והוא יהיב ליה אמר ליה אם פן הוא אף אנא
איזיל גבי מרי עבדתי והוא יהב לי נפק וצלי פחדא
אילוסיס דטבריא וחזא חד ידא מושטא ליה חדא
מרגליתא אזל טעין גבי רבנו אמר ליה חדא מנא אית לך
חדא מילא דאיסטופיטא היא אלא הא לך תלתא דינרין
ואזל ועבד ליקרא דיומא ובתר יומא טבא אנן שטחין
קליה ומה דהוא עביד טימיתה תיסב נסב תלתא דינרין
ואזיל זבן זבונין ועל לביתיה אמרה ליה דביתהו שמעון
שרית גניב כל פעלך לית הוא אלא מאה מנה ואילן
זבינתה מה אינון מיד תני לה עובדא אמרה ליה מאי את
בעי תהי גנונה חסר מן דחברך חדא מרגליתא לעלמא
דאתי אמר לה ומה נעבד אמרה ליה זיל תחזור זבינתא
למריהון ודינרין למריהון ומרגליתא למרה פד שמע רבנו
מצטער שלח ואיתיתה אמר לה כל הדין צערא צערת
להדין צדיקא אמרה ליה מה את בעי דיהא גנוניה חסר
מדידכון חדא מרגליתא לעלמא דאתי אמר לה ואין הוה
חסר לית בן ממלגיה יתיה אמרה ליה רבי בהדין עלמא
זכינן מחמי אפך ולא אמר ריש לקיש כל צדיק וצדיק יש
לו מדור בפני עצמו והודה לה ולא עוד אלא שדרפן של
עליונים לתן ואין דרפן לטל הגס האחרון קשה מן
הראשון מנסיב ליה הות ידא ארעיא (למטה) ומי מושטא
ליה הוה ידא עלאה פאיניש דמוזיף לחבריה.

Once Rabbi Hiyya the Great and Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta were sitting studying Torah in the great study hall of Tiberias on the eve of Passover [some say on the eve of Yom Kippur], and they heard the sound of people murmuring.

Rabbi Simeon asked him [Rabbi Hiyya the Great], "What are these people doing?"

He [Rabbi Hiyya] answered: "He who has [money] is purchasing [his needs for the festival], and he who has not is going to his master [employer], that he may give it to him."

He [Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta] said: "If so, I will also go to my Master, that He may give me."

He went out and prayed in the field of Tiberias, and he saw a hand holding out a pearl to him. He went and took it to *our teacher* [Rabbi Judah the Prince].

[Rabbi Judah] said to him: "From where did you obtain this? It is priceless [literally, *stardust*]. Take these three dinars and go and make preparations in honor of the day, and after the festival we shall advertise it, and whatever price we obtain for it, you shall have."

He [Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta] took the three dinars, made his purchases, and went home.

His wife said to him, "Simeon! Have you turned to theft? Everything you have is worth a hundred maneh (This is actually a large amount of money and it looks she was speaking sarcastically) and what, then, is [the meaning of] these purchases?"

He [Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta] immediately told her what had happened.

She said: "Do you then desire that your canopy should contain one pearl less than that of your fellow in the world to come?"

He [Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta] said to her: "What shall we do?"

She said to him, "Go and return your purchases to their owners, and the dinars to their owner, and the pearl to its owner."

When our teacher [Rabbi Judah the Prince] heard of it, he was grieved; he sent and had her [Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta's wife] brought to him. He said to her, "How much anguish you have caused this righteous man."

She answered him, "Do you then desire that his canopy under which the righteous will sit in the World to Come should contain one less pearl on your account in the world to come?"

He [Rabbi Judah the Prince] said to her, "Even if it contains less, can we not make it up?"

She answered him, "Rabbi, in this world we have merited to see your face, but did Resh Lakish not teach that every righteous man has his own chamber?"

And he [Rabbi Judah the Prince] acknowledged that she was right.

Moreover, it is the way of celestial beings to give but not to take back [nevertheless the pearl was returned]. [Thus,] this latter miracle was [even] greater than the former: When [Rabbi Simeon] accepted [the pearl], his hand was below, but when he returned it his hand was above, as a man who lends to his fellow.



Explaining the Story (What is the sequence of events that take place in the story?)

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why were people murmuring in the great study hall of Tiberias on the eve of Passover?

Bonus ? Why did Rabbi Simeon ask Rabbi Hiyya about what the people were doing? Why does Rabbi Hiyya know but Rabbi Shimon does not?

? Who is Rabbi Shimon's Master?

Bonus ? Why did Rabbi Shimon take the pearl to his teacher?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Bonus ? Rabbi Judah asked Rabbi Shimon: "From where did you obtain this?" Why doesn't he wait for the answer?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Bonus ? Why does Rabbi Judah give Rabbi Shimon three dinars instead of advertising the pearl and selling it right away?

Extra Bonus ? Why didn't Rabbi Judah give Rabbi Shimon money to buy what he needs for the festival from the onset?

Extra Bonus ? Do you think the three dinarim Rabbi Judah gave to Rabbi Shimon was a gift or a loan? Justify your answer.

? Why does Rabbi Shimon's wife ask her husband if he had turned to theft?

? Why does Rabbi Shimon's wife instruct her husband to return the items, the dinars, and the pearl?

Bonus ? Why does Rabbi Shimon accept his wife's admonition and directives?

Bonus ? How do we know that Rabbi Shimon willingly accepted his wife's admonitions and directives?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

? Why did Rabbi Judah admonish Rabbi Shimon's wife?

? Why didn't Rabbi Shimon's wife accept the admonition from Rabbi Judah?

Extra Bonus ? What did Rabbi Shimon's wife mean by "every righteous man has his own chamber?"

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

? What did Rabbi Shimon think his wife wanted?

? What did Rabbi Shimon's wife actually want?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Answer 4 _____

Extra Bonus ? Why did *Heaven* take the gift back?

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

! If you wish to make someone else happy, make sure he or she is onboard with the plan! In other words: Joint priorities must be negotiated and agreed upon in order to be "joint."

EPILOGUE

Rabbi Shimon ben Halaftha is poor but he doesn't seem to care until he learns that other people are making arrangements to buy the needs for the holiday. Wanting to

imitate what the others do, he goes and asks his Master for a gift, which he receives in the shape of an invaluable pearl. He gets an advance and brings home the necessary items needed for the holiday "to make his wife happy." The problem is that Rabbi Shimon has yet to learn what makes his wife happy.

It seems that Rabbi Shimon's wife is happy when she doesn't owe anything to anybody, when she doesn't need to be concerned about her future and the future of her loved ones, when her husband studies Torah without focusing on what others have or don't have, and most importantly, when her husband consults with her about what is important to her.

Rabbi Shimon, Rabbi Judah, and even God, so to speak, seem to acknowledge this important truth about healthy and happy relationships and how to get there.