

Stories with a Twist

[245]

In Her Old Age, What Will Be with This woman? Insights into Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 65b



Background to Our Story

Mishna Yevamot Chapter 6:6

A man is commanded with regard to the mitzva to be fruitful and multiply, but not a woman. Rabbi Yoĥanan ben Beroka says that a woman is also commanded, as the verse states with regard to both of them (Genesis 1:28): "And God blessed them, and God said to them: Be fruitful and multiply."

The Text: Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 65b

(Two Stories)

פי הִיא דְאֵתְאֵי לְקַמֵּיהּ דְרַבִּי אָמִי, אָמְרָה לֵיהּ: הֵב לִי כְתוּבָה. אָמַר לָהּ: זֵיל, לָא מִיפְקֵדְתָּ. אָמְרָה לֵיהּ: מָסִיבוּ דִילָהּ מָאִי תִיְהוּי עָלֶיהָ דְהָךְ אֶתְתָּא? אָמַר: פִּי הָא – וְדַאי פְּפִינָן.

הִיא דְאֵתְאֵי לְקַמֵּיהּ דְרַב נַחְמָן, אָמַר לָהּ: לָא מִיפְקֵדְתָּ. אָמְרָה לֵיהּ: לָא פְּעֵינָא הֵךְ אֶתְתָּא חוּטְרָא לִידָהּ וּמְרָהּ לְקַבּוּרָהּ? אָמַר: פִּי הָא – וְדַאי פְּפִינָן.

This is like the case of a certain woman who came before Rabbi Ami and requested a divorce due to her husband's inability to father children. She said to her husband: Give me the payment for my marriage contract.

He [Rabbi Ami] said to her: Go away, as you are not commanded to be fruitful and multiply and have no right to demand a divorce.

She [the woman] said to him: In her old age, what will be with this woman, i.e., if I have no children, who will take care of me when I grow old?

Rabbi Ami said: In a situation such as this, we certainly force the husband to divorce her and pay her marriage contract.

And similarly, a certain woman came before Rav Naḥman and requested a divorce due to her husband's inability to father children.

He [Rav Naḥman] said to her: You are not commanded to be fruitful and multiply.

She [the woman] said to him: Does this woman not require a staff for her hand and a hoe for her burial?

Rav Naḥman said: In a case such as this, we certainly force the husband to divorce her.



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

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why did the men refuse to give their wives a divorce?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Answer 4 _____

Answer 5 _____

Answer 6 _____

? Why did the women come before Rabbi Ammi and Rav Nahman?

? Why did Rabbi Ammi and Rav Nahman refuse initially to grant them a divorce?

? What is the women's rationale for their request?

Bonus ? Why do you think the women in our stories were able to convince Rabbi Ammi and Rav Nahman of the merit of their request?

Bonus ? Why couldn't Rabbi Ammi and Rav Nahman see their point of view from the beginning?

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

! Confidence and assertiveness on one hand and empathy and humility on the other: a good recipe for a more just and fair society.

EPILOGUE