

From the Rabbi's Desk  
Rabbi Manes Kogan  
Hillcrest Jewish Center  
183-02 Union Turnpike, Flushing, NY 11366  
[rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org](mailto:rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org)

## Stories with a Twist [296]

### I Robbed Only the Shepherd, but You Have Robbed the Entire City.

(Insights into Babylonian Talmud Yoma 83b)



### Background to Our Story

#### Rabbi Yosei



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Berakhot. Koren publishers Jerusalem. 14.

This is Rabbi Yosei ben Ḥalafta, one of the greatest of the *tanna'im*. He lived in the generation prior to the redaction of the Mishna, and the imprint of his teachings is evident throughout tannaitic literature. His father, known as Abba Ḥalafta, was also considered one of the great Sages of his generation, and his family, according to one tradition, was descended from Yehonadav the son of Rekhav (see II Kings 10:15). In addition to studying with his father, Rabbi Yosei was an outstanding student of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Yosei and his contemporaries, the other students of Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yehuda, and Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai, formed the center of talmudic creativity of that entire generation.

In his halakhic approach, as in his way of life, Rabbi Yosei was moderate; he refrained from taking extreme positions on halakhic issues. Because of his moderation and the logic of his teachings, the *halakha* is ruled in accordance with his opinion in every instance of disagreement with his colleagues. A well-known principle in the *halakha* is that "Rabbi Yosei's opinions are based on sound reasoning," and therefore the *halakha* is always in accordance with his opinion.

In addition to being a great master of *halakha*, Rabbi Yosei was also famous for his piety. The Talmud relates many stories about his modesty, his humility, and his sanctity. It is related that Elijah the prophet would reveal himself to him every day, and several conversations between him and Elijah are related in the Talmud. Rabbi Yosei was apparently the primary redactor of a series of *baraitot* on the history of the Jewish people known as

*Seder Olam*. For many years he lived in Tzipori in the Galilee, and earned his living as a tanner. Many of the prominent Sages of the following generation, including Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, the redactor of the Mishna, were his students. But his main students were his five sons, all of whom were Sages in their generation. The most famous of them were Rabbi Eliezer the son of Rabbi Yosei, one of the great masters of *aggada*, and Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yosei.

## Rabbi Yehuda



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Megilla. Koren publishers Jerusalem. 323.

Rabbi Yehuda – רבן יהוּדָה : Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai was a *tanna* from the fourth generation of *tanna'im*. He was born in Usha in the Galilee and studied under Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon. He received rabbinic ordination from Rabbi Yehuda ben Baba, but was then forced to flee due to the Hadrianic persecutions. The Talmud (*Shabbat* 33b) describes a conversation between the Sages with regard to Roman rule in the land of Israel, and Rabbi Yehuda's positive response led the authorities to appoint him to the position of head of the speakers on all occasions. The Mishna records more than six hundred teachings in the name of Rabbi Yehuda, and he is mentioned in almost every tractate. We find his teachings recorded in the *Tosefta* and *Sifra* more frequently than those of any other *tanna*.

## Bulimia Nervosa



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulimia\\_nervosa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulimia_nervosa)

Bulimia nervosa, also known as simply bulimia, is an eating disorder characterized by binge eating followed by purging; and excessive concern with body shape and weight. The aim of this activity is to expel the body of calories eaten from the binging phase of the process. Binge eating refers to eating a large amount of food in a short amount of time. Purging refers to the attempts to get rid of the food consumed.

## Bulmos



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Yoma. Koren publishers Jerusalem. 415.

Bulmos – בּוּלְמוֹס : From the Greek βουλιμία, boulimia, meaning unhealthy hunger

## Mishna Yoma 8:6

מתני'

מִי שֶׁאֶחָזוּ בּוּלְמוֹס – מֵאֲכִילִין אוֹתוֹ אֶפְלוּ דְבָרִים טְמֵאִים, עַד שֶׁיֵּאָרוּ עֵינָיו.

## Mishna

In the case of one who is seized with the life-threatening illness *bulmos*, causing him unbearable hunger pangs and impaired vision, one may feed him even impure foods on Yom Kippur or any other day until his eyes recover, as the return of his sight indicates that he is recovering.

## Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim 618:9



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Yoma. Koren publishers Jerusalem. 415.

One who is seized with *bulmos*: If one is afflicted with *bulmos* and his eyes are dimmed from hunger, he should be fed, even on Yom Kippur, until his eyes recover. If there is no

permitted food available, one should feed him forbidden food, starting with the most minor prohibitions (*Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Hayyim* 618:9).

**?** Why if one is afflicted with bulmos should he be fed even on Yom Kippur and even forbidden food?

### The Text: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 83b

רבי יהודה ורבי יוסי הוו קא אָזלי באַורקא, אחזיה בולמוס לרבי יהודה – קפחיה לרוּעָה, אַכְלִיה לריפתא.  
אָמַר ליה רבי יוסי: קפחַת אַת הרוּעָה!  
פִּי מָטוּ לְמַתָּא אחזיה בולמוס לרבי יוסי, אהדרוהו בלגני וצעי. אָמַר ליה רבי יהודה: אַנִּי קפחתי אַת  
הרוּעָה וְאַתָּה קפחַת אַת הַעִיר כּוּלָּהּ!

Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Yosei were walking on the road when Rabbi Yehuda was seized with *bulmos*. He overpowered a nearby shepherd and ate the bread that the shepherd had in his hand.

Rabbi Yosei said to him: You have robbed that shepherd.

When they reached the city, Rabbi Yosei was seized with *bulmos*, and all the people of the city surrounded him with jugs and plates with all sorts of sweets.

Rabbi Yehuda said to him: I robbed only the shepherd, but you have robbed the entire city.



**Explaining the Story** - What is going on in our story? (Explain the sequence of events)

### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

**?** Why did Rabbi Yehuda overpower a shepherd and take his bread when he was seized with bulmos?

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

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

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

**?** Why did Rabbi Yosei tell Rabbi Yehuda: "You have robbed that shepherd"?

**Extra Bonus** **?** Why didn't Rabbi Yehuda reply to Rabbi Yosei's comment?

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

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

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

**Bonus ?** Why did the people of the city surround Rabbi Yosei with plates and jugs when he was seized with bulmos?

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

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

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

**Bonus ?** How did Rabbi Yosei rob the entire city according to the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda?

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

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

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

### **“The Twist” – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from These Texts**

**!** Never judge a person until you have walked in his shoes: a lesson Rabbi Yosei learned the hard way.



Our brief story illustrates the desperation of a person seized with bulmos, a desperation that doesn't recognize moral codes, etiquette, or proper behavior. After Rabbi Yehuda is seized with bulmos and overpowers a shepherd to take his bread, Rabbi Yosei, perhaps flabbergasted by the behavior of his colleague, rushes to judge him harshly.

Rabbi Yehuda remains silent probably because he is ashamed of the embarrassing nature of his behavior.

Later on, it is the harsh Rabbi Yosei who is seized by bulmos. Already at the entrance of the city, all the residents surround the well-known Rabbi with plates and jugs to alleviate his infirmity. Rabbi Yehuda points to Rabbi Yosei that using his

rabbinic status to procure food, even if the latter was given voluntarily, is tantamount to robbing, not only one person but the entire community.

The main point of our story, however, is not to clarify the laws of bulmos and robbery, but to illustrate the utmost imperative of judging others with kindness and compassion, especially if we haven't ever walked in their shoes.