

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist
[335]

**No Person May Touch Which is Prepared for Another
Even a Hairbreadth**

Insights into Babylonian Talmud Yoma 38a



Background to Our Story (What you need to know to better understand the story)

House of Garmu: they were experts in the preparation of the showbread.

House of Avtinas: they were experts in the preparation of the incense.

Hugras ben Levi: he knew a chapter in the art of music.

Ben Kamtzar: he knew a special act of writing.

Incense (Ketoret)

Incense (Ketoret) was offered daily on the Golden Altar in the Mishkan and Temple, and its ingredients are dictated in the Torah. There are also mystical properties associated with it, as seen from its use in protecting Jews from God's wrath in the desert (Num. 17).

Exodus 30:7-8

⁷ Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. ⁸ He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the Lord for the generations to come.

Exodus 30:34-38

³⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Take fragrant spices—gum resin, onycha and galbanum—and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, ³⁵ and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. ³⁶ Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. ³⁷ Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the Lord. ³⁸ Whoever makes incense like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from their people."

Rashi on Exodus 30:34

וּלְבָנָה זָכָה - and pure frankincense — From here our Rabbis learned that eleven spices were mentioned to Moses on Sinai as the ingredients of the incense. For the least number implied

by the plural סמיים is two; balsam, onycha and galbanum are three, making together five. The word סמיים that follows (without stating any number) is intended to add a similar number as these already prescribed, viz., five, making ten, and frankincense makes eleven. They are the following: balm, onycha, galbanum, frankincense, myrrh, cassia, spikenard and saffron...

Babylonian Talmud Kreisos 6a; Jerusalem Talmud, Maseches Yoma 4:5

The Rabbis taught: How was the incense compounded? Three hundred and sixty-eight *manim* were comprised therein, three hundred and sixty-five corresponding to the number of days in the solar year, one *maneh* for each day— half in the morning and half in the afternoon. From the three remaining *manim* the Kohein Gadol brought two handfuls [into the Holy of Holies] on Yom Kippur; [for which purpose] they were put back into the mortar on the eve of Yom Kippur, and ground [again] very thoroughly, in order to make them very fine.

Eleven kinds of spices were used for it. They were: 1) balm, 2) onycha, 3) galbanum, 4) frankincense— by weight, seventy *maneh* of each; 5) myrrh, 6) cassia, 7) spikenard and 8) saffron— in weight sixteen *maneh* of each; 9) twelve *maneh* of costus, 10) three of aromatic bark, and 11) nine of cinnamon. [Also used in the incense compound were:] Nine *kabin* of Carshina lye, Cyprus wine [measuring] three *s'in* and three *kabin*— if he had no Cyprus wine, he could use strong white wine— a fourth of a *kab* of Sodom salt, and a minute quantity of *maaleh ashan*. Rabbi Nosson of Babylonia says, Jordan amber was added of a minute quantity, and if one added honey, it (the incense) became unfit; and if one omitted any of its spices he was liable to the death penalty."

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel says: "The balm is nothing but sap which drips from the balsam tree. Why was the Carshina lye used? To refine the onycha in order to make it pleasant. Why was Cyprus wine used? The onycha was soaked in it to give it a pungent odor. Though the water of Raglayim was well suited for that purpose, they did not bring the water of Raglayim into the Temple because it would be disrespectful.

It was taught in a B'raita: Rabbi Nosson says, While [the Kohen] ground [the incense] he would say, '*Hodeik heiteiv, heiteiv hodeik,*' because the sound is good for the spices. If half the quantity of incense was prepared, it was acceptable; but we have not heard if only a third or a fourth [of it was prepared] [whether it was acceptable]."

It was taught in a B'raita: Bar Kappara says, Once in sixty or seventy years the accumulated surplus was sufficient to provide half [the yearly quantity of incense."] Bar Kappara also taught, If he would have put into it a minute quantity of honey, no one could have withstood [resisted] the scent. Why was no honey mixed with it? Because the Torah says, (*Leviticus* 2:11) For any leaven or honey, do not burn from them, [as] a fire-offering to HaShem.

Showbread or Shewbread (Lechem Hapanim)



In the Bible, "showbread," also known as the "bread of the presence," refers to the twelve loaves of bread placed on a golden table in the Tabernacle and later the Temple, symbolizing God's provision and the covenantal relationship between God and His people.

Leviticus 24:5-9

⁵“Take the finest flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. ⁶ Arrange them in two stacks, six in each stack, on the table of pure gold before the Lord. ⁷ With each row you shall place pure frankincense which is to be a token offering for the bread, as an offering by fire to the Lord. ⁸ This bread is to be set out before the Lord regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. ⁹ It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in the sanctuary area, because it is a most holy part of their perpetual share of the food offerings presented to the Lord.”

Coin System from the Talmud (Not so simple)

- 1 Perutah = ½ barley kernel
- 1 Isar = 8 Perutahs = 4 barley kernels
- 1 Me'ah/Gayrah = 2 Pundyonin. = 16 barley kernels
- 1 Dinar (also called Zuz) 6 Me'ain = 192 Perutahs = 96 barley kernels
- 1 Sela (Talmudic Shekel) = 4 Dinarin = 384 barley kernels (weight).

- 1 Dinar Zahav (Gold Dinar) = 25 dinarim
- 1 Maneh = 4 Dinar Zahavim
- 1 Maneh Shel Kodesh = 2 Manehim
- 1 Kikar (talent) = 60 Maneh Shel Kodesh
- 1 Kikar shel Kodesh = 2 Kikarin

Rabbi Akiva



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Kiddushin. Koren publishers Jerusalem. 459.

Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef was one of the greatest of the *tanna'im*. He lived from just after the destruction of the Second Temple until the bar Kokheva revolt. According to legend, Rabbi Akiva began his studies at the age of forty, when Raḥel, the daughter of the wealthy Kalba Savua, consented to marry him on condition that he would study Torah.

Rabbi Akiva became the student of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ḥananya. Ultimately, he became a prominent Torah scholar with twenty-four thousand students. Among Rabbi Akiva's first students were Shimon ben Azzai and Shimon ben Zoma, with whom he entered the orchard (see *Ḥagiga* 14b), i.e., engaged in the study of esoteric elements of the Torah.

Subsequently, Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai, among others, became his students. He was a staunch supporter of bar Kokheva's revolt against Rome and even declared him the Messiah. During the period of the Roman emperor Hadrian's decrees, Torah study was prohibited, but Rabbi Akiva continued convening assemblies and teaching Torah. Ultimately, he was apprehended and executed, and he is one of the ten martyrs whose execution is described in liturgy.

Rabbi Akiva collected early rabbinic statements and began organizing the material of the Oral Torah. The Mishna, redacted by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi and his disciples, is based on his work.

Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Berakhot. Koren publishers Jerusalem. 371.

Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha the first, whose son and daughter were taken into captivity, is the one called Rabbi Yishmael High Priest. He served as High Priest at the end of the Second Temple period and was renowned for his piety. The Talmud describes the vision that he saw when serving in the Holy of Holies. In addition, a kabbalistic work, *Pirkei*

Heikhalot, is attributed to him. Since he was one of the prominent leaders of the people after the destruction of Jerusalem, he was apprehended by the Romans, together with his close friend, the *Nasi*, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel the first. He was tortured to death by the Romans. His death is depicted in the liturgical prayer: These I shall remember [*Ele Ezkera*], recited in many communities on Yom Kippur, as well as in one of the *kinot* recited on the Ninth of Av.

Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha's grandson, Yishmael ben Elisha the second, is the Rabbi Yishmael widely quoted in the Mishna and the Talmud.

As related in the Gemara, he, too, was taken into captivity, and was redeemed by Rabbi Yehoshua for a significant ransom. He then became a student of Rabbi Yehoshua and one of the prominent speakers in Yavne. He was a friend of Rabbi Akiva, with whom he engaged in many disputes. Each established a significant halakhic exegetical schools of thought. The thirteen hermeneutic principles of the Torah, as articulated by Rabbi Yishmael, are the foundations of midrash and *halakha*. Many of his Torah statements are attributed to him in the Mishna and very many of his opinions appear in the Gemara under the general rubric: The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught. The Sages of the following generation studied with him and Rabbi Yoshiya and Rabbi Yonatan were his primary students. Apparently, he died before the bar Kokheva revolt. His sons and daughters are mentioned in the Gemara and it is possible that the *tanna*, Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yishmael, was his son.

Rabbi Yoĥanan ben Nuri



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Rosh Hashana. Koren publishers Jerusalem.

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Rabbi Yoĥanan ben Nuri was one of the most important Sages of Yavne, despite his youth. Most of his discussions of *halakha* were held with Rabbi Akiva and other Sages of his generation. Rabbi Yoĥanan ben Nuri lived in the lower Galilee, in Ganigar or Beit She'arim. He maintained close ties with the Sages of the Galilee, such as Abba Ĥalafta, the father of Rabbi Yosei, and others. His main students were also Sages from the Galilee, e.g., Rabbi Yosei and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korĥa. Little is known about Rabbi Yoĥanan ben Nuri's private life. However, it is related that he was poor and lived off gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and produce of the corners. The Sage Isi ben Yehuda praised his expertise in all areas of Torah, and he was considered a paradigm of one who has fear of sin.

Background Text: Mishna Yoma 3:9-10

משנה יומא ג:9-10

בא לו למזרח העזרה, לצפון המזבחה, הסגן מימינו וראש בית אב משמאלו. ושם שני שעירים, וקלפי היתה שם ובה שני גורלות. של אשפרוע היו, ועשאן בן גמלא של זהב, והיו מזכירין אותו לשבח:

בן קטין עשה שנים עשר דד לפיור, שלא היו לו אלא שנים. ואף הוא עשה מוכני לפיור, שלא היו מימיו נכסליו בלינה. מנבו המלך היה עושה כל דות הכלים של יום הכפורים של זהב. הילני אמו עשתה נברשת של זהב על פתחו של היכל. ואף היא עשתה טבלא של זהב שפרשת סוטה כתובה עליה. ניקנור נעשו נסים לדלתותיו, והיו מזכירין אותו לשבח:

The Text: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 38a

מתני'

ואלו לגנאי: של בית גרמו לא רצו ללמד על מעשה להם הפנים, של בית אבטינס לא רצו ללמד על מעשה הקטורת. הוגרס בן לוי היה יודע פרק בשיר ולא רצה ללמד, בן קמצר לא רצה ללמד על מעשה הפתב. על הראשונים נאמר: "זכר צדיק לברכה", ועל אלו נאמר: "ושם רשעים ורקב".

תנו רבנן: בית גרמו היו בקיאיין במעשה להם הפנים ולא רצו ללמד. שלחו חכמים והביאו אומנין מאלכסנדריא של מצרים. והיו יודעין לאפות כמותן, ולא היו יודעין לרדות כמותן. שהללו מסיקין מבחויץ ואופין מבחויץ, והללו מסיקין מבפנים ואופין מבפנים. הללו פיתן מתעפשת, והללו אין פיתן מתעפשת.

כששמעו חכמים בדבר, אמרו: כל מה שפרא הקדוש ברוך הוא לכבודו בראו, שונאמר: "כל הנקרא בשמי ולכבודי בראתי". וחררו בית גרמו למקומן. שלחו להם חכמים — ולא באו, כפלו להם שכרן ובאו. בכל יום היו נוטלין שנים עשר מנה, והיום עשרים וארבעה. רבי יהודה אומר: בכל יום עשרים וארבעה, והיום ארבעים ושמונה.

אמרו להם חכמים: מה ראיתם שלא ללמד? אמרו להם: יודעין היו של בית אבא שבית זה עתיד ליתרב, שמה ילמוד אדם שאינו מהוגן וילך ויעבוד עבודה זרה בכה. ועל דבר זה מזכירין אותן לשבח: מעולם לא נמצאת פת נקיה ביד בניהם, שלא יאמרו ממעשה להם הפנים זה ניוונין, לקיים מה שונאמר: "והייתם נקיים מה' ומישראל".

של בית אבטינס לא רצו ללמד על מעשה הקטורת. תנו רבנן: בית אבטינס היו בקיאיין במעשה הקטורת ולא רצו ללמד, שלחו חכמים והביאו אומנין מאלכסנדריא של מצרים. והיו יודעין לפטם כמותם ולא היו יודעין להעלות עשן כמותן. של הללו — מתמר ועולה כמקל, של הללו — מפציע לכאן ולכאן.

וכששמעו חכמים בדבר, אמרו: כל מה שפרא הקדוש ברוך הוא — לכבודו בראו, שונאמר: "כל פעל ה' למענהו", וחררו בית אבטינס למקומן. שלחו להם חכמים ולא באו, כפלו להם שכרן ובאו. בכל יום היו נוטלין שנים עשר מנה, והיום עשרים וארבעה. רבי יהודה אומר: בכל יום עשרים וארבעה, והיום ארבעים ושמונה.

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תנא, אמר רבי ישמעאל: פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך ומצאתי אחד מבני בניהם, אמרתי לו: אבותיך בקשו להרבות כבודן ורצו למעט כבוד המקום, עכשיו כבוד מקום במקומו, ומיעט כבודם.

אמר רבי עקיבא: (פעם אחת) סח לי רבי ישמעאל בן לוגא: פעם אחת יצאתי אני ואחד מבני בניהם לשדה ללקט עשבים, וראיתי (ששחק ובכה). אמרתי לו: מפני מה בכית? אמר לי: כבוד אבותי נזכרת. ומפני מה שתקת? אמר לי: שעתידי הקדוש ברוך הוא להחזירנה לנו. ומפני מה נזכרת? אמר לי: מעלה עשן כנגדי. הראהו לי! אמר לי: שבועה היא בנדינו שאין מראין אותו לכל אדם.

אמר רבי יוחנן בן נורי: פעם אחת מצאתי זקן אחד ומגילת סממנין בידו. אמרתי לו: מאין אתה? אמר לי: מבית אבטינס אני. ומה בידך? אמר לי: מגילת סממנין. הראהו לי! אמר לי: כל זמן שבית אבא היו קנימין, לא היו מוסרין אותו לכל אדם, ועכשיו הרי הוא לה, והנהרה בה. וכשבאתי וסחתי דברי לפני רבי עקיבא, אמר לי: מעתה אסור לספר בגנותן של אלו.

מכאן אמר בן עזאי: בשמה קראוה, ובמקומה יושבוה ומשלח ותנו לה. אין אדם נוגע במוכן לחבירו, ואין מלכות נוגעת בתקרתה אפילו כמלא נימא.

”הוגרס בן לוי” וכו’. תניא: פשהוא גותן קולו בנעימה מכניס גודלו לתוך פיו, ומניח אצבעו בין הנימין, עד שיהיו אטיו הכהנים נזקרים בבת ראש לאחוריהם.

תנו רבנן: בן קמצר לא רצה ללמד על מעשה הכתב. אמרו עליו שיהיה נוטל ארבעה קולמוסין בין אצבעותיו, ואם הייתה תיבה של ארבע אותיות – היה פותחה בבת אחת. אמרו לו: מה ראית שלא ללמד? פולן מצאו תשובה לדבריהם, בן קמצר לא מצא תשובה לדבריו. על הראשונים נאמר: ”זכר צדיק לברכה” ועל בן קמצר ותביריו נאמר: ”ישם רשעים ירקב”.

Background Text: Mishna Yoma 3:9-10

The priest then came to the eastern side of the Temple courtyard, farthest from the Holy of Holies, to the north of the altar. The deputy was to his right, and the head of the patrilineal family belonging to the priestly watch that was assigned to serve in the Temple that week was to his left. And they arranged two goats there, and there was a lottery receptacle there, and in it were two lots. These were originally made of boxwood, and the High Priest Yehoshua ben Gamla fashioned them of gold, and the people would mention him favorably for what he did

The High Priest ben Katin made twelve spigots for the basin so that several priests could sanctify their hands and feet at once, as previously the basin had only two. He also made a machine [*mukheni*] for sinking the basin into flowing water during the night so that its water would not be disqualified by remaining overnight. Had the water remained in the basin overnight, it would have been necessary to pour it out the following morning. By immersing the basin in flowing water, the water inside remained fit for use the next morning. King Munbaz would contribute the funds required to make the handles of all the Yom Kippur vessels of gold. Queen Helene, his mother, fashioned a decorative gold chandelier above the entrance of the Sanctuary. She also fashioned a golden tablet [*tavla*] on which the Torah portion relating to *sota* was written. The tablet could be utilized to copy this Torah portion, so that a Torah scroll need not be taken out for that purpose. With regard to Nicanor, miracles were performed to his doors, the doors in the gate of the Temple named for him, the Gate of Nicanor. And the people would mention all of those whose contributions were listed favorably.

? What are the names of those who the people would mention favorably?

Text: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 38a

MISHNA:

Apropos the mention in the Mishna of people who acted in the Temple and were mentioned favorably, the mishna lists those who acted in the Temple and were mentioned unfavorably. The craftsmen of the House of Garmu did not want to teach the secret of the preparation of the shewbread. The craftsmen of the House of Avtinas did not want to teach the secret of the preparation of the incense.

Also, Hugas ben Levi knew a chapter in the art of music, and he did not want to teach it to others. And the scribe ben Kamtzar did not want to teach a special act of writing. About the first ones it is stated: "The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing" (Proverbs 10:7); and about these it is stated: "But the name of the wicked shall rot" (Proverbs 10:7).

? According to Mishna, why didn't the House of Garmu, the House of Avtinas, Hugas ben Levi, and ben Kamtzar want to share the secrets of their special skills?

? "About the first ones it is stated...and about these it is stated..." Who are "the first ones"? Who are "these"?

About the first ones it is stated: The identity of the first ones who are praised in the mishna and the others who are denigrated is unclear. Some explain that the first ones are the individuals praised in the previous mishna, and the phrase: The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing, relates to them. Some explain that since even those initially criticized in the mishna eventually explained their unwillingness to share their craft, except for ben Kamtzar, the phrase: But the name of the wicked shall rot, applies only to him (see *Me'iri*)

GEMARA

1

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: The craftsmen of the House of Garmu were expert in the preparation of the shewbread, and they did not want to teach others the secret of its production. The Sages dismissed them and sent for and brought craftsmen from Alexandria in Egypt, a large city with many experts. And those craftsmen knew how to bake like the members of the House of Garmu did, but they did not know how to remove the bread from the oven like they did. The shewbread was baked in a complex shape, and it was difficult to place it in the oven and remove it without breaking it. The difference was that these Alexandrians light the fire outside the oven and bake it outside the oven; and these members of the House of Garmu light the fire inside the oven and bake it inside. In the case of these Alexandrians,

their bread becomes moldy over the course of the week, and in the case of these members of the House of Garmu, their bread does not become moldy.

When the Sages heard of the matter that the bread of the imported craftsmen was of lower quality than before, they said: Whatever the Holy One, Blessed be He, created, He created in His honor, as it is stated: "Everyone who is called by My name, I have created for My glory" (Isaiah 43:7). In deference to God, the Sages should diminish their honor for the greater glory of God and let the House of Garmu return to their original station. The Sages sent for them to reassume their previous position, and they did not come. They doubled their wages, and they came. Each day until then they would take wages of twelve *maneh*, and today they take wages of twenty-four *maneh*. Rabbi Yehuda says: Each day they took twenty-four *maneh*, and today they take forty-eight.

The Sages said to them: What did you see that led you not to teach others this craft? They said: The members of our father's house knew that this house, the Temple, is destined to be destroyed, and they were concerned lest an unworthy man learn our skill of baking and go and engage in idol worship with that skill.

And for this matter they are mentioned favorably: Never was refined bread of fine flour found in the hands of their descendants, so that people would not say that they are sustained from that technique of preparing the shewbread. They ate only bread made of coarse flour mixed with bran, to fulfill that which is stated: "And you shall be clear before the Lord and before Israel" (Numbers 32:22).



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

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why did the Sages want the craftsmen of the House of Garmu to teach the secret of the preparation of the shewbread?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? Why did the Sages dismiss the craftsmen of the House of Garmu?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

? What was the particular problem with the shewbread prepared by the Alexandrian craftsmen?

Extra Bonus ? Why weren't the Alexandrian craftsmen able to replicate the quality of the shewbread that the House of Garmu prepared?

Extra Bonus ? Why didn't the craftsmen of House of Garmu want to come back to prepare the shewbread when the Sages called them?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

? Why did the craftsmen of the House of Garmu return to prepare the shewbread when their wages were doubled?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Extra Bonus ? After the craftsmen of House of Garmu returned to their post, the Sages asked them for the reason why they didn't want to share their knowledge and expertise with others. Why didn't the Sages ask the same question before they fired them?

Bonus ? Why did the craftsmen of the House of Garmu and their families eat only coarse bread, made with unrefined flour? What does this say about them?

2

Similarly, the Mishna related: The craftsmen of the House of Avtinas did not want to teach about the secret of the preparation of the incense, at which they were particularly adept. The Sages taught in a *baraita*: The members of the House of Avtinas were expert in the technique of preparing the incense, and they did not want to teach others.

The Sages dismissed them and sent for and brought craftsmen from Alexandria in Egypt. And the Alexandrian craftsmen knew how to blend the spices like they did,

but they did not know how to cause the smoke to rise like the House of Avtinas did. The smoke of the incense blended by these members of the House of Avtinas rises in a column like a stick; the smoke of the incense blended by these Alexandrians branched out to here and to there and did not rise in a straight line.

When the Sages heard of the matter, they said: Whatever the Holy One, Blessed be He, created, He created in His honor, as it is stated: "God made everything for His sake" (Proverbs 16:4), and they let the House of Avtinas return to their original station. The Sages sent for the members of the House of Avtinas to reassume their previous position, and they did not come. They doubled their wages, and they came. Each day until then they would take wages of twelve *maneh*, and today they take wages of twenty-four *maneh*. Rabbi Yehuda says: Each day they took twenty-four *maneh*, and today they take forty-eight.

The Sages said to them: What did you see that led you not to teach others this craft? They said: The members of our father's house knew that this house, the Temple, is destined to be destroyed, and they were concerned lest an unworthy man learn our skill of preparing incense and go and engage in idol worship with that skill.

And for this matter they are mentioned favorably: Never did a perfumed bride emerge from their homes. And when they marry a woman from a different place, they stipulate with her that she will not perfume herself, so that cynics would not say that it is with the work of the incense that they perfume themselves, to fulfill that which is stated: "And you shall be clear before the Lord and before Israel" (Numbers 32:22).



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

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why did the Sages want the craftsmen of the House of Avtinas to teach the secret of the preparation of the incense?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? Why did the Sages dismiss the craftsmen of the House of Avtinas?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

? What was the particular problem with the incense prepared by the Alexandrian craftsmen?

Extra Bonus ? Why weren't the Alexandrian craftsmen able to make the smoke rise?

Extra Bonus ? Why didn't the craftsmen of the House of Avtinas want to come back to prepare the incense when the Sages called them?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

? Why did the craftsmen of the House of Avtinas return to prepare the incense when their wages were doubled?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Extra Bonus ? After the craftsmen of the House of Avtinas returned to their post, the Sages asked them for the reason why they didn't want to share their knowledge and expertise with others. Why didn't the Sages ask the same question before they fired them?

Bonus ? Why did the women of the House of Avtinas never use perfume? What does this say about the members of the House of Avtinas?

3

It was taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Yishmael said: One time I was walking along the road, and I found one of the descendants of the House of Avtinas. I said to him: Your fathers sought to enhance their honor and sought to diminish God's honor by not revealing their secret to others. Now, although the Temple was destroyed, the honor of God remains as it was, and He diminished their honor, as their significance stemmed from their Temple service.


Rabbi Akiva said: One time Rabbi Yishmael ben Loga related to me: One time I and one of the descendants of the House of Avtinas went out to the field to collect herbs, and I saw that he laughed and he cried. I said to him: Why did you cry? He said to me: I was reminded of the honor of my forefathers, how important they were in the Temple. I said to him: And why did you laugh? He said to me: The Holy One, Blessed be He, is going to restore it to us in the future and we will be honored again. I said to him: And why are you reminded of this now? He said to me: The smoke-raising herb is before me, here in the field, reminding me of the past. I said to him: Show it to me; which one is it? He said to me: We are bound by oath not to show it to any person other than the members of our family.


Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Nuri said: One time I found an old man who had in his hand a scroll with the location and formula for blending of spices. I said to him: Where are you from? What is your ancestry? He said to me: I am from the House of Avtinas. I asked him: And what is in your hand? He said to me: A scroll of spices. I said to him: Show it to me. He said to me: As long as the House of Avtinas, my forefathers, was extant, they would not pass it on to anyone. And now, here it is and be careful with. And when I came and related my statement before Rabbi Akiva, he said to me: and it is prohibited to mention them [the House of Avtinas] unfavorably.



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

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Bonus  Knowing the background of Rabbi Yishmael, why do you think he is particularly resentful of the behavior of the House of Avtinas, even after the Sages returned them to their posts?

Extra Bonus  Why doesn't the member of the House of Avtinas who interacts with Rabbi Yishmael reply to the Sage's sharp comment?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Answer 4 _____

Extra Bonus ? Why did the old man from the House of Avtinas surrender the scroll of spices to Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Nuri?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Extra Bonus ? Why did Rabbi Akiva change his mind regarding the House of Avtinas?

4

From here, with regard to the cases of the Temple's craftsmen whom the Sages restored to their posts, ben Azzai said: One should not be concerned that others might usurp his livelihood and success, since at the appropriate moment, by your name they shall call YOU to return to your previous position, and in your place, they shall seat you, and from your own they shall give you. Everyone has a portion designated for him by God, and the individual is privileged to receive what is coming to him, as was the case with the House of Avtinas.

The principle is: No person may touch (get) that which is prepared for another by God; everyone receives what is designated for him. And one reign does not overlap with another and deduct from the time allotted it even a hairbreadth.



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

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? How can you explain ben Azzai's principle in simpler words?

? How can ben Azzai's principle help you live a happier life?

5

The mishna related that Hugas ben Levi knew a lesson in the art of music, and he did not want to teach it to others. It was taught in a *baraita*: When Hugas ben Levi projects his voice in a sweet melody, he places his thumb into his mouth and places his

finger between the strings of a lyre and sings. This produced a sound so sweet that his brethren the priests were abruptly taken aback.

The Sages taught: Ben Kamtzar did not want to teach others a special technique of writing. What was that technique? They said about him that he would take four quills between his fingers, and if there was a word consisting of four letters that he wanted to write, he could write it simultaneously. They said to him: What did you see that led you not to teach that technique? All the others with unique skills came up with a response to questions about the matter of their conduct. However, ben Kamtzar did not come up with a response to questions about the matter of his conduct. With regard to the first people listed, it is stated: "The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing" (Proverbs 10:7); and about ben Kamtzar and his counterparts it is stated: "But the name of the wicked shall rot" (Proverbs 10:7).



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

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? In which way is ben Kamtzar similar to the members of the House of Garmu and the House of Avtimas? In which way is he different?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? In which group would you include Hugas ben Levi? Why?

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

Background to Our twist: Understanding Hishtadlut (Compliments of AI Overviews in Google Search)

In Jewish philosophy, Hishtadlut refers to the human effort and initiative taken to achieve a desired outcome, while also acknowledging God's role in bringing about that outcome. It's about balancing faith (Bitachon) and taking practical steps to make things happen.

Here's a more detailed explanation:

- Balancing Bitachon and Hishtadlut:

The Jewish tradition emphasizes both Bitachon (trust in God) and Hishtadlut (personal effort). One should not solely rely on faith or solely rely on effort, but rather strive to find a balance between the two.

- Hishtadlut in Action:

Hishtadlut involves taking practical steps, utilizing one's skills and resources, and actively seeking opportunities to achieve one's goals, such as earning a living, maintaining safety, or pursuing education.

- Not a Guarantee:

While Hishtadlut is important, it doesn't guarantee success. One must also recognize that God's role and intervention can be necessary for a desired outcome to be achieved.

- Different Perspectives:

There are varying views on the proper balance between Hishtadlut and Bitachon. Some lean more towards Bitachon (trust in God), while others emphasize Hishtadlut (personal effort).

- Examples of Hishtadlut:

Examples of Hishtadlut include working hard to earn a living, studying diligently to improve one's knowledge, or taking precautions to ensure one's safety.

! Be honest, work hard, use your gifts wisely, and let God handle the rest!



The beginning of our story finds the Sages differentiating sharply between the generosity of a few individuals and the selfishness of others. As our story unfolds, we see that the story might be more complex than it looks at first sight. The Sages learn the hard way that their rushed judgment might have been unjustified. They also learn -and teach us- that each person's lot in life is determined not only by their effort and hard work, but also by God's grace.