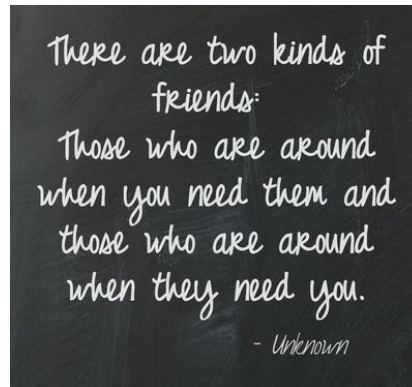


From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [53]

"...and he took offense" (Insights into the Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 20ba)

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Background to Our Story

Nehardea



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nehardea>

Nehardea or Nehardeah was a city of Babylonia, situated at or near the junction of the Euphrates with the Nahr Malka (also known as Nâr Sharri, Ar-Malcha, Nahr el-Malik , and King's Canal), one of the earliest centers of Babylonian Judaism.

Abba Arika (Rav)



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

Abba Arika (175–247): (born Abba bar Aybo) was a Jewish Talmudist who lived in Babylonia, known as an amora (commentator on the Oral Law) of the 3rd century who established at Sura the systematic study of the rabbinic traditions, which, using the *Mishnah* as text, led to the compilation of the *Talmud*. He is commonly known simply as Rav.

Shmuel



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

Samuel of Nehardea or Samuel bar Abba was a Jewish Talmudist who lived in Babylonia, known as an amora of the first generation; son of Abba bar Abba and head of the Yeshiva at Nehardea. He was a teacher of halakha, judge, physician, and

astronomer. He was born about 165 at Nehardea, in Babylonia and died there about 257. In Talmudic texts, Samuel is frequently associated with Abba Arika, From the little biographical information gleaned from the Talmud, we know that Samuel was never ordained as a Tanna, that he was very precise with his words (Kidd. 70), and that he had a special affinity for astronomy: one of his best known sayings was that "The paths of heaven are as clear to me as the pathways of Nehardea."

Rav Huna



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

Rav Huna was a Jewish Talmudist who lived in Babylonia, known as an amora of the second generation and head of the Academy of Sura; He was born about 216, died in 296-297 (608 of the Seleucid era).

Adda bar Ahavah



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

Rav Adda bar Ahavah was a Jewish Talmudist who lived in Babylonia, known as an amora of the second generation (third and fourth centuries), frequently quoted in both the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. He is said to have been born on the day that Rabbi Judah haNasi died. (Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 72a-b; Genesis Rabbah 63:2.) He was a disciple of Abba Arika (Rav), at whose funeral he rent his garments twice in mourning for the great scholar. (Jerusalem Talmud Bava Metzia 3a; Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 42b-43a.) In Pumbedita, Rav Adda gathered about him many pupils, whom he taught sometimes in the public thoroughfares. (Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 110b.) He lived to an old age, and when interrogated on the merits that entitled him to be so favored, he gave the following autobiographical sketch:

"No one has ever preceded me to the synagogue, nor has any one ever remained in the synagogue after my departure. I never walked as much as four cubits without meditating on the Law, and never thought of its contents at places not scrupulously clean. Nor did I prepare a bed for myself to enjoy regular sleep, nor did I disturb my colleagues by walking to my seat at college among them. I never nicknamed my neighbor nor rejoiced at his fall. Anger against my neighbor never went to bed with me, and I never passed the street near where my debtor lived; and while at home I never betrayed impatience, in order to observe what is said (in Psalm 101:2), 'I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.'" (Jerusalem Talmud Taanit 67a; compare Babylonian Talmud Taanit 20b.)

Such a character is generally surrounded by legend, and later ages supplied this. It is said that Rav Adda's piety was so highly valued by heaven that no favor asked by him was ever refused.

Avoiding Danger in Jewish Law and Jewish Tradition

Tractate Taanit, Artscroll Schottenstein Edition. 20b. Note 10

Avoiding Danger: This principle of the Gemara poses a philosophical question. It is a cornerstone of our faith that a person's fate is in the hands of Heaven and not subject to random events of nature. Why, then, should we be enjoined to avoid dangerous situations? If a person's time to die has arrived, or if it has been decreed upon him that he suffer some injury, these troubles will befall him even if he remains in the sanctuary of his home. And if these things have not been decreed to happen to him, why should he fear a place of danger?

This question was posed by the Sages in connection with Jacob's refusal to allow Benjamin to accompany his brothers on their trip to Egypt, "*because he said, lest an accident befall him*" (Genesis 42:4)

To this the Sages commented: "And [is it] not [possible] for an accident to befall him at home? Said Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov: From this [we learn] that the Accuser prosecutes at a time of danger" (Rashi ad loc. from Bereishit Rabbah 9l.12).

A similar idea is expressed by the Gemara (Shabbat 32a) in regard to the Mishnah's statement (31b) that "there are three sins for which women die in childbirth." The Gemara asks why they should die for these sins specifically in childbirth. The Gemara answers that the fact that a woman is in a state of danger while giving birth causes her to be called to account for her sins. [The same is true for a man in other circumstances, as the Gemara states there.]

As Rashi explains, this means that in ordinary circumstances, her merits for the good deeds she has done may be sufficient to protect her from being punished for these sins. However, once she enters a state of danger, such as childbirth, she requires a greater measure of Divine Providence to save her from the inherent in her situation. This causes the records of her deeds to be re-examined to determine whether she merits that increased level of protection. When this happens, her sins are recalled and she is prosecuted for them

Ran, in his Derashos (Derashah 4, p. 55 in the Feldman ed.), elaborates this as follows: God created situations and conditions that pose a natural threat to a person's health and survival This threat is significant because it is His will that these conditions have the power to harm a person [even apart from what has otherwise been decreed for him]. Thus, without God's special protection, he may indeed come to harm in these circumstances.

The Chinuch (Mitzvah 546) expresses a similar idea explaining the obligation to put up a fence around one's roof to prevent people from falling off and being killed. The reason, he explains, is that it is God's will that the world operates according to a natural order, and that man be subject to that natural order, including its dangers; thus, the Torah commands him to take proper precautions to avoid such situations.

He adds, however, that there are certain people who attain such a level of perfect righteousness, and closeness to God that they are no longer subject to natural law. Thus, Abraham was not burned when he was cast into the fiery kiln by Nimrod, or where Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah when they were thrown into a fire by Nebuchadnezzar.

However, lesser mortals, who are to some extent tainted by sin, are subject to the natural order and are thus obligated to take precautions against natural dangers. See also Moreh Neuuchim 3:18 and Ramban's commentary to Job 36:7 for a broader discussion of this last point. [Compare Chovot HaLevavot (Shaar HaBitachonChapter 4).] See also Kesubos 30a, with Tosofos ad loc. for other aspects of this issue.

The Text: Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 20b

כִּי הָיָא אֲשֵׁיתָא רְעוּשָׁה דְהוּאֵי בְּגִהָרְדָּעָא, דְלָא הָוָה חֲלִיפָּה רַב וְשִׁמוּאֵל תּוֹתָהּ, אָף עַל גַּב דְּקִימָא בְּאַתְרָהּ תְּלִיסַר שָׁנִין.

יִזְמָא חַד אִיקְלַע רַב אֲדָא בְּרַ אֶהָבָה לְהִתָּם. אָמַר לִיהּ שִׁמוּאֵל לְרַב: נִיתִי מָר, נִקִּיף אָמַר לִיהּ: לֹא צְרִיכָנָא הָאִידָנָא, דְאִיכָּא רַב אֲדָא בְּרַ אֶהָבָה בְּהַדְרָן דְנִפְיֵשׁ זְכוּתֵיהּ, וְלֹא מִסְתַּפִּינָא.

רַב הוּנָא הָוָה לִיהּ הָהוּא תַמְרָא בְהָהוּא בֵיתָא רְעִיעָא, וּבְעֵי לְפַנּוּיָהּ. עֵיילָהּ לְרַב אַדָּא בַר אַהֲבָה לְהַתָּם, מְשַׁכִּיחַ בְּשִׁמְעָתָא עַד דְּפַנּוּיָהּ. בְּתַר דְּנִפְקָ, נָפַל בֵּיתָא. אַרְגִּישׁ רַב אַדָּא בַר אַהֲבָה אִיקְפֵּד.

I

This is like that dilapidated wall that was in Neharde'a, under which Rav and Shmuel would not pass, although it stood in place thirteen years.

One day Rav Adda bar Ahava happened to come there and walked with them. As they passed the wall, Shmuel said to Rav: Come, Master, let us circumvent this wall, so that we do not stand beneath it.

Rav said to him: It is not necessary to do so today, as Rav Adda bar Ahava is with us, whose merit is great, and therefore I am not afraid of its collapse.

II

Rav Huna had a certain quantity of wine in a certain dilapidated house and he wanted to move it, but he was afraid that the building would collapse upon his entry.

He brought Rav Adda bar Ahava to there, to the ramshackle house, and he dragged out a discussion with him concerning a matter of *halakha* until they had removed all the wine.

As soon as they exited, the building collapsed.

Rav Adda bar Ahava realized what had happened and he took offense.



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

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why wouldn't Rav and Shmuel pass beneath the dilapidated wall in Nahardea?

? Why wouldn't Rav be afraid to go beneath the wall when Adda bar Ahava was with him?

? Why did Rav Huna bring Rav Adda bar Ahava to the dilapidated house where he had his wine and engage him in a Torah discussion?

? Why did the house collapse after Rav Adda bar Ahava went out?

Extra Bonus ? What would have been the ideal situation for Rav Huna? Why?

Extra Bonus ? Why didn't Rav Huna tell Rav Adda bar Ahava the real reason why he wanted him to accompany him into the dilapidated house?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Answer 4 _____

Analysis Questions

? Why did Rav Adda bar Ahava take offense?



Let's Explore Other Sources

Mishna Avot 5:19

"Any love which is dependent on something, when the 'something' ceases, the love ceases. Any love which is not dependent on anything will never cease. What is a love which is dependent? The love of Amnon for Tamar. And which is not dependent? The love of David and Jonathan"

"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from These Texts

! Friendship and "Friendship" - or the story of an offense well taken!



The main hero of our story, Adda bar Ahava, is a pious man who enjoys the favor and protection of God. His colleagues (great sages in their own merit) recognize Adda bar Ahava's superior moral and spiritual stature, and feel protected by his mere company, all the while Adda bar Ahava himself is oblivious to his own greatness.

When Rav Huna decides to trick Adda bar Ahava into accompanying him into a dilapidated house to retrieve some barrels of wine, the latter takes offense realizing that he has been "used" by his "friend."