

From the Rabbi's Desk  
Rabbi Manes Kogan

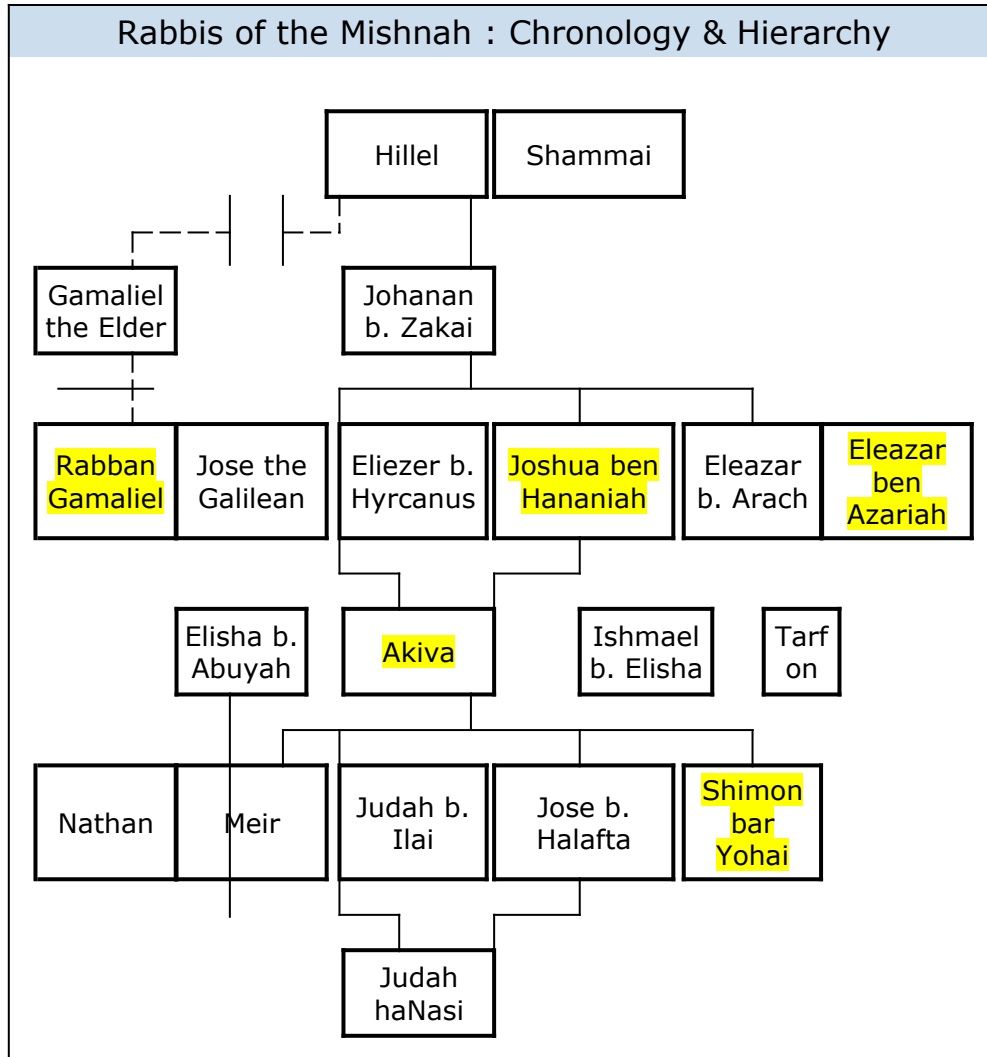
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**Stories with a Twist**  
**[84]**

**Let Us Remove Him! (A Story in Five Acts)**  
Insights into Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 27b-28a



**Background to Our Story**



The Tannaim (singular, Tanna) were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 70-200 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 130 years. It came after the period of the Zugot ("pairs"), and was immediately followed by the period of the Amoraim.

The Mishnaic period is commonly divided up into five periods according to generations. There are approximately 120 known Tannaim.

The Tannaim lived in several areas of the Land of Israel. The spiritual center of Judaism at that time was Jerusalem, but after the destruction of the city and the Second Temple, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai and his students founded a new religious center in Yavne. Other places of Judaic learning were founded by his students in Lod and in Bnei Brak.

Many of the Tannaim worked as laborers (e.g., charcoal burners, cobblers) in addition to their positions as teachers and legislators. They were also leaders of the people and negotiators with the Roman Empire.

## **Rabban Gamliel**



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

Page 7.

Nasi of the Sanhedrin and one of the most important tanna'im in the period following the destruction of the Second Temple. Rabban Gamliel's father, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel (the Elder), had also been Nasi of the Sanhedrin, as well as one of the leaders of the nation during the rebellion against Rome.

Rabban Gamliel was taken to Yavne by Rabban Yoĥanan ben Zakkai after the destruction of the Temple, so that he became known as Rabban Gamliel of Yavne. After Rabban Yoĥanan ben Zakkai's death, Rabban Gamliel presided over the Sanhedrin. Under Rabban Gamliel's leadership, Yavne became an important spiritual center. The greatest of the Sages gathered around him, including Rabbi Eliezer (Rabban Gamliel's brother-in-law), Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya.

Rabban Gamliel sought to create a spiritual center for the Jews that would unite the entire people, a role filled by the Temple until its destruction. Therefore, he strove to enhance the prominence and central authority of the Sanhedrin and its Nasi. His strict and vigorous leadership eventually led his colleagues to remove him from his post for a brief period, replacing him with Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya. However, since everyone realized that his motives and actions were for the good of the people and were not based on personal ambition, they soon restored him to his position.

We do not possess many halakhic rulings explicitly in the name of Rabban Gamliel. However, in his time, and under his influence, some of the most important decisions in the history of Jewish spiritual life were made. These included the decision to follow Beit Hillel, the rejection of the halakhic system of Rabbi Eliezer, and the establishment of fixed formulas for prayers. In those halakhic decisions attributed to Rabban Gamliel, we find an uncompromising approach to the halakha; in reaching his conclusions, he was faithful to his principles. We know that two of his sons were Sages: Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, who served as Nasi of the Sanhedrin after him, and Rabbi Ĥanina ben Gamliel.

## **Rabbi Akiva**



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Pesachim, Part Two. Koren publishers Jerusalem.

Page 26

Rabbi Akiva, who lived just after the destruction of the Second Temple, was one of the greatest of the tanna'im. Unlettered until the age of forty, Akiva was encouraged by his wife Rachel to devote himself to the study of Torah. After years of study under the tutelage of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, Yehoshua ben Hananya, and others, he acquired thousands of students and established his own academy in Bnei Brak. Rabbi Akiva systematized and arranged the many oral traditions, and it was the mishna of Rabbi Akiva as received by his disciple, Rabbi Meir, that ultimately became the basis of the six orders of the Mishna. Rabbi Akiva was the spiritual leader of the bar Kokheva revolt. He even proclaimed bar Kokheva to be the Messiah early in the struggle, but he later retracted this opinion. Despite Roman decrees against disseminating Torah, the aged Rabbi Akiva continued to teach. Rabbi Akiva was arrested by the Romans, imprisoned, tried, and sentenced to death. As one of the Ten Martyrs, he suffered a martyr's death at the hands of the Romans. As the Romans were torturing him to death, he recited Shema and explained to his students that he now has the opportunity to fulfill the true meaning of loving God with all of one's soul.

### **Rabbi Yehoshua**



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Sukkah. Koren publishers Jerusalem.

Page 200

This is Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananya the Levite, one of the leading Sages in the generation following the destruction of the Second Temple. He served as one of the Levite singers in the Temple. After its destruction, he was among the students who followed their primary teacher, Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, to Yavne. Rabbi Yehoshua lived a life of poverty, working as a blacksmith, and was recognized by all as one of the leading Torah authorities. While he disagreed with Rabban Gamliel's rulings on several occasions, he ultimately accepted the authority of the Nasi. After Rabban Gamliel's death, he served as a leader of the Sages.

### **Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya**



Koren Talmud Bavli, The Noe Edition. Sukkah. Koren publishers Jerusalem.

Page 200

One of the most significant tanna'im in the generation following the destruction of the Temple, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya descended from a family blessed with great wisdom, distinguished lineage, and wealth. His father, Azarya, was also a Torah scholar and an extremely wealthy man. Azarya supported his brother Shimon, one of the Sages, who is therefore referred to as Shimon, brother of Azarya. Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya was from a family of priests descended from Ezra the Scribe, and there are traditions that draw parallels between them. The Gemara describes how his knowledge, wealth, and family lineage led to his being chosen by the Sages to replace Rabban Gamliel as Nasi when the latter was removed from his position of leadership after publicly humiliating Rabbi Yehoshua repeatedly (Berakhot 27b).

### **Ḥutzpit the Disseminator - חוֹצְפִית הַתּוֹרָגְמָן**



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

Page 181

Rabbi Ḥutzpit, one of the Sages of the Mishna (see *Shevi'it* ch. 10) is known as Rabban Gamliel's *turgeman*. That position entailed more than merely repeating the Sage's lecture aloud. He also expanded upon the concise, cryptic statements made by that Sage during the lecture. Because of his skill in explaining Rabban Gamliel's lectures, Rabbi Ḥutzpit was called: The mouth that produced pearls. We know

nothing else about him, except that he died as one of the ten martyrs at the hands of the Roman empire.

## Shimon bar Yochai



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shimon\\_bar\\_Yochai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shimon_bar_Yochai)

Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, was a famous rabbi who lived in the era of the Tannaim (scholars of the Mishnah) in the area of what is today Israel during the Roman period, after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. He was one of the most eminent disciples of Rabbi Akiva, and is attributed by many with the authorship of the Zohar, the chief work of modern-day Jewish mysticism. In addition, the important legal homilies called Sifre and Mekhilta are attributed to him. In the Mishnah, he is often referred to as simply "Rabbi Shimon."

According to the Talmud, Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai criticized the Roman government and was forced to go into hiding with his son for thirteen years. He acquired a reputation as a worker of miracles.

Lag Ba'omer is traditionally regarded as his Yahrzeit (the anniversary of the death).

## Tractate Eduyot

[www.mishnahyomit.org](http://www.mishnahyomit.org)

Tractate Eduyot is a unique tractate. Instead of being organized by topic, as is every other tractate, Eduyot is organized by the names of the Sages transmitting the mishnah. Eduyot begins with disputes between Shammai and Hillel, it continues with disputes between the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai and follows this type of pattern throughout its eight chapters. Most of the mishnayot in Eduyot are found in other tractates which discuss those specific topics discussed in each individual mishnah.

Eduyot is probably the first tractate of the Mishnah to have been composed. The Tosefta, which is a collection of material that accompanies the Mishnah, provides the following background to the compilation of Eduyot: "When the Sages gathered in the vineyard of Yavneh, they said, 'In the future a person might look for something from the words of the Torah and not find it, from the words of the Soferim (Rabbis) and not find it.' They said, 'Let's begin with Hillel and Shammai.'" In other words, after the Temple was destroyed (70 C.E.) the Sages of Israel gathered in Yavneh to put some organization to the ever-growing Oral Torah. The original organization created in Yavneh was not topical. Rather the Mishnah was organized by the name of the teacher. Later Sages, most notably Rabbi Akiva, began to organize the material of the Mishnah into topical orders and tractates. As they did so they took mishnayot from Eduyot and put them into their proper context. With this topically organized work, one could truly search for a topic in the Oral Torah.

## Deuteronomy 23.3

*No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, not even in the tenth generation.*

## The Text: Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 27b

### Act 1

תָּנוּ רַבָּנוּ: מַעֲשֵׂה בְּתַלְמִיד אֶחָד שָׁבָא לְפָנֵי רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ. אָמַר לוֹ: תְּפִלַּת עַרְבִית רְשׁוּת אוֹ חֻבָּה?  
אָמַר לֵיהּ: רְשׁוּת.

בא לפני רבן גמליאל, אמר לו: תפלת ערבית רשות או חובה? אמר לו: חובה. אמר לו: והלא רבי יהושע אמר לי רשות!? אמר לו: המתן עד שיפגשו בעלי תריסין לבית המדרש.

כשפגשו בעלי תריסין, עמד השואל ושאל: תפלת ערבית רשות או חובה? אמר לו רבן גמליאל: חובה. אמר להם רבן גמליאל לחכמים: כלום יש אדם שחולק בדבר זה? אמר ליה רבי יהושע: לאו. אמר לו: והלא משמך אמרו לי רשות!

אמר ליה: יהושע, עמוד על רגליך ויעידו בך. עמד רבי יהושע על רגליו ואמר אלמלא אני חי והוא מת — יכול החי להכחיש את המת. ועכשיו שאני חי והוא חי — היאך יכול החי להכחיש את החי?

היה רבן גמליאל יושב ודורש ורבי יהושע עומד על רגליו, עד שרגנו כל העם ואמרו לחוצפית התורגמן: עמוד! ועמד.

אמרי: עד כמה נצעריה וניזיל, בראש השנה אשתקד צעריה. בבכורות במעשה דרבי צדוק צעריה. הכא נמי צעריה, תא ונעברייה!

The Sages taught: There was an incident involving a student, who came before Rabbi Yehoshua. The student said to him: Is the evening prayer optional or obligatory? Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: Optional.

The same student came before Rabban Gamliel and said to him: Is the evening prayer optional or obligatory? Rabban Gamliel said to him: Obligatory.

The student said to Rabban Gamliel: But didn't Rabbi Yehoshua tell me that the evening prayer is optional?

Rabban Gamliel said to the student: Wait until the "masters of the shields," a reference to the Torah scholars who battle in the war of Torah, enter the study hall, at which point we will discuss this issue.

When the masters of the shields entered, the questioner stood before everyone present and asked: Is the evening prayer optional or obligatory? Rabban Gamliel said to him: Obligatory.

Rabban Gamliel said to the Sages: Is there any person who disputes this matter? Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: No.

Rabban Gamliel said to Rabbi Yehoshua: But was it not in your name that they told me that the evening prayer is optional?

Rabban Gamliel said to Rabbi Yehoshua: Yehoshua, stand on your feet and they will testify against you.

Rabbi Yehoshua stood on his feet and said: If I were alive and the student were dead, the living can contradict the dead, and I could deny issuing that ruling. Now that I am alive and he is alive, how can the living contradict the living?

In the meantime, Rabban Gamliel, as the Nasi, was sitting and lecturing, and Rabbi Yehoshua all the while was standing on his feet, because Rabban Gamliel did not instruct him to sit. This continued for some time, until it aroused great resentment against Rabban Gamliel, and all the people assembled began murmuring and said to Hutzpit the disseminator: Stop conveying Rabban Gamliel's lecture. And he stopped.

They [the Sages] said: How long will Rabban Gamliel continue afflicting him? Last year on Rosh HaShana, he afflicted him; Rabban Gamliel ordered Rabbi Yehoshua to come to him carrying his staff and bag, on the day on which Yom Kippur occurred, according to Rabbi Yehoshua's calculations. Regarding the firstborn, in the incident involving the question of Rabbi Tzadok, he afflicted him just as he did now, and forced him to remain standing as punishment for his failure to defend his differing opinion. Here too, he is afflicting him. Let us remove him from his position as Nasi.



### Explaining the Story

What's going on in our story? (The sequence of events)

### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

**?** Where did this part of the story take place?

**?** Why did the student ask Rabbi Yehoshua if the evening prayer was optional or obligatory?

**Bonus ?** Why did the same student ask Rabban Gamliel the same question?

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

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

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

**Bonus ?** Why do you think the student reported to Rabban Gamliel Rabbi Yehoshua's answer?

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

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

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

**Bonus ?** Why did Rabbi Yehoshua answer “no” when Rabban Gamliel asked: Is there any person who disputes this matter?

**?** “If I were alive and the student were dead, the living can contradict the dead, and I could deny issuing that ruling. Now that I am alive and he is alive, how can the living contradict the living?” What did Rabbi Yehoshua mean by these words?

**Bonus ?** Why didn't Rabbi Yehoshua sit down?

**?** Why did the people tell Huzpit the disseminator to stop?

**?** Who suggested removing Rabban Gamliel? Why?

### “The Twist” – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from This Text.

! Dramatic controversies can be sparked overnight, but usually they don't start overnight.

! Sometimes, enough is enough.

! You may mean well, and still mess things up big time.

### Act 2

מאן נוקמים ליה? נוקמיה לרבי יהושע — בעל מעשה הוא. נוקמיה לרבי עקיבא — דילמא עניש ליה, דלית ליה זכות אבות. אלא נוקמיה לרבי אלעזר בן עזריה, דהוא חכם, והוא עשיר, והוא עשירי לעזרא. הוא חכם — דאי מקשי ליה, מפרק ליה. והוא עשיר — דאי אית ליה לפלוחי לבי קיסר, אף הוא אזל ופלת. והוא עשירי לעזרא — דאית ליה זכות אבות, ולא מצי עניש ליה.

אתו ואמרו ליה: ניתא ליה למר דליהוי ריש מתיבתא? אמר להו: איזיל ואימליה באינשי ביתי. אזל ואמליה בדביתהו. אמרה ליה: דלמא מעברין לה. אמר לה: לשתמש אינש יומא חדא בכסא דמוקרא, ולמתר ליתבר. אמרה ליה: לית לה חיוורתא. ההוא יומא בר תמני סרי שני הוה, אתרחיש ליה ניסא ואהדרו ליה תמני סרי דרי חיוורתא. הנינו דקאמר רבי אלעזר בן עזריה: הרי אני כבן שבועים שנה. ולא “בן שבועים שנה”.

It was so agreed, but the question arose: Whom shall we establish in his place? Shall we establish Rabbi Yehoshua in his place? The Sages rejected that option because Rabbi Yehoshua was party to the incident for which Rabban Gamliel was deposed. Shall we establish Rabbi Akiva in his place? The Sages rejected that option because Rabbi Akiva, who descended from a family of converts, would be

vulnerable. Perhaps due to Rabban Gamliel's resentment he would cause him to be divinely punished as he lacks the merit of his ancestors to protect him. Rather, suggested the Sages, let us establish Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya in his place, his outstanding characteristics set him apart from the other candidates. He is wise, rich, and a tenth-generation descendant of Ezra. The Gemara explains: He is wise, so if Rabban Gamliel raises a challenge in matters of Torah, he will answer it and not be embarrassed. And he is rich, so if the need arises to pay homage to the Caesar's court and serve as a representative of Israel to lobby and negotiate, he has sufficient wealth to cover the costs of the long journeys, taxes, and gifts, so he too is able to go and pay homage. And he is a tenth-generation descendant of Ezra, so he has the merit of his ancestors, and Rabban Gamliel will be unable to cause him to be punished.

They [the Sages] came and said to him: Would the Master consent to being the Head of the Yeshiva? He [Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya] said to them: I will go and consult with my household. He went and consulted with his wife. She said to him: There is room for concern. Perhaps they will remove you from office just as they removed Rabban Gamliel.

He [Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya] said to her, based on the folk saying: Let a person use an expensive goblet one day and let it break tomorrow.

She said to him: You have no white hair, and it is inappropriate for one so young to head the Sages. The Gemara relates: That day, he was eighteen years old, a miracle transpired for him, and eighteen rows of hair turned white. That explains that which Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya said: I am as one who is seventy years old, and he did not say: I am seventy years old.



### **Explaining the Story**

What's going on in our story? (The sequence of events)

## **Comprehension and Analysis Questions**

**?** Where did this part of the story take place?

**?** Why did someone suggest appointing Rabbi Yehoshua to serve as the Head of the Yeshiva? Why was the suggestion rejected?

**?** Why did someone suggest appointing Rabbi Akiva to serve as Head of the Yeshiva? Why was the suggestion rejected?

**?** "...let us establish Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya. He is wise, rich, and a tenth-generation descendant of Ezra." Why are these qualifications important?

**?** Why do you think Rabbi Eleazar ben Azarya consulted his wife before accepting the important position he was offered? What do we learn from his behavior?

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

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

**Bonus ?** What is Rabbi Eleazar ben Azarya's wife concerned about? What isn't she concerned about?

**?** "Let a person use an expensive goblet one day and let it break tomorrow." What do you think about Rabbi Eleazar ben Azarya's reply to his wife?

**Bonus ?** What can we learn from the fact that a miracle occurred, and eighteen rows of Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya's hair turned white?

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

**!** "Let a person use an expensive goblet one day and let it break tomorrow." The Talmudic version of Carpe Diem.

**!** Learn from Rabbi Eleazar ben Azarya's wife and never underestimate the way others perceive you.

### Act 3

תָּנָא אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם, סִלְקוּהוּ לְשׁוּמְרֵי הַפֶּתַח וְנִתְּנָה לְהֵם רְשׁוּת לְתַלְמִידִים לִיכְנֹס. שְׁהֵי רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל מְכַרִּיז וְאוֹמֵר: כָּל תַּלְמִיד שֶׁאֵין תּוֹכוֹ כְּבָרוֹ, לֹא יִכְנֹס לְבֵית הַמְדָּרֶשׁ.

הֵהוּא יוֹמָא אֲתוּסְפוּ כַּמָּה סַפְסְלִי. אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: פְּלִיגִי בֵּה אַבָּא יוֹסֵף בֶּן דּוֹסֶתַאי וְרַבְּנָן. תַּד אָמַר: אֲתוּסְפוּ אַרְבַּע מָאָה סַפְסְלִי. וְחַד אָמַר: שְׁבַע מָאָה סַפְסְלִי. הָוָה קָא חֲלִשָׁה דְעֵתִיהָ דְרַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל, אָמַר: דְּלִמָּא חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם מְנַעַתִי תוֹרָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. אַחֲזוּ לִיה בְּחַלְמִיָּה חֲצָבִי חִירוּרִי דְמַלְיִין קִטְמָא. וְלֹא הִיא, הִיא לִיתוּבִי דְעֵתִיהָ, הוּא דְאַחֲזוּ לִיה.

תָּנָא: עֲדוּת בּוּ בַיּוֹם נִשְׁנִית. וְכָל הֵיכָא דְאֲמַרְיִנָן "בּוּ בַיּוֹם", הֵהוּא יוֹמָא הָוָה. וְלֹא הֵיטָה הֶלְכָה שְׁהֵיטָה תְלוּיָה בְּבֵית הַמְדָּרֶשׁ שְׁלֹא פִירְשׁוּהָ. וְאַף רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל לֹא מְנַע עֲצָמוּ מִבֵּית הַמְדָּרֶשׁ אֲפִילוּ שְׁעָה אַחַת.

דַּתְנֵן: בּוּ בַיּוֹם בָּא יְהוּדָה גַּר עֲמוּנֵי לְפָנֵיהֶם בְּבֵית הַמְדָּרֶשׁ. אָמַר לָהֶם: מָה אֲנִי לְבֹא בְּקֶהֱלָ? אָמַר לוֹ רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: אֲסוּר אֲתָה לְבֹא בְּקֶהֱלָ. אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ: מוֹתֵר אֲתָה לְבֹא בְּקֶהֱלָ. אָמַר לוֹ רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: וְהֲלֹא כָּבֵד נִאֶמַר "לֹא יָבֹא עֲמוּנֵי וּמוֹאָבֵי בְּקֶהֱלָ הִיא"? אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ: וְכִי עֲמוּן וּמוֹאָב בְּמִקּוֹמָן הֵן יוֹשְׁבֵינָן? כָּבֵד עָלֶיהָ סִנְחֵרִיב מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר וּבִלְבָל אֶת כָּל הָאוּמוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְאֲסִיר גְּבוּלוֹת עַמִּים וְעַתּוּדוֹתֵיהֶם שׁוֹשֵׁתִי וְאוֹרִיד כְּבִיר יוֹשְׁבֵיהֶם", וְכָל דְּפָרִישׁ — מְרוּבָא פְּרִישׁ. אָמַר לוֹ רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: וְהֲלֹא כָּבֵד נִאֶמַר "וְאֲחֵרֵי כֵן אֲשִׁיב אֶת שְׁבוֹת בְּנֵי עֲמוּן נְאֻם ה'", וְכָבֵד שְׁבוּ! אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ: וְהֲלֹא כָּבֵד נִאֶמַר "וְשַׁבְּתֵי אֶת שְׁבוֹת עַמֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל", וְעַדִּינָן לֹא שְׁבוּ. מִיַּד הַתִּירוּהוּ לְבֹא בְּקֶהֱלָ.

It was taught: On that day that they removed Rabban Gamliel from his position and appointed Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya in his place, there was also a fundamental change in the general approach of the study hall as they dismissed the guard at the door and permission was granted to the students to enter. Instead of Rabban Gamliel's selective approach that asserted that the students must be screened before accepting them into the study hall, the new approach asserted that anyone who seeks to study should be given opportunity to do so. As Rabban Gamliel would proclaim and say: Any student whose inside, his thoughts and feelings, are not like his outside, i.e., his conduct and his character traits are lacking, will not enter the study hall.

On that day several benches were added to the study hall to accommodate the numerous students. Rabbi Yohanan said: Abba Yosef ben Dostai and the Rabbis disputed this matter. One said: Four hundred benches were added to the study hall. And one said: Seven hundred benches were added to the study hall.

When he saw the tremendous growth in the number of students, Rabban Gamliel was disheartened. He said: Perhaps, Heaven forbid, I prevented Israel from engaging in Torah study. They showed him in his dream white jugs filled with ashes alluding to the fact that the additional students were worthless idlers. The Gemara comments: That is not the case, but that dream was shown to him to ease his mind.

It was taught: There is a tradition that tractate Eduyyot was taught that day. And everywhere in the Mishna or in a baraita that they say: On that day, it is referring to that day. There was no halakha whose ruling was

pending in the study hall that they did not explain and arrive at a practical halakhic conclusion. And even Rabban Gamliel did not avoid the study hall for even one moment.

As we learned in a mishna: On that day, Yehuda, the Ammonite convert, came before the students in the study hall and he said to them: What is my legal status in terms of entering into the congregation of Israel, i.e., to marry a Jewish woman?

Rabban Gamliel said to him: You are forbidden to enter into the congregation. Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: You are permitted to enter into the congregation. Rabban Gamliel said to Rabbi Yehoshua: Wasn't it already stated: "An Ammonite and a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to the tenth generation shall none of them enter into the congregation of the Lord forever" (Deuteronomy 23:4)? How can you permit him to enter the congregation?

Rabbi Yehoshua said to Rabban Gamliel: Do Ammon and Moab reside in their place? Sennacherib already came and, through his policy of population transfer, scrambled all the nations and settled other nations in place of Ammon. Consequently, the current residents of Ammon and Moab are not ethnic Ammonites and Moabites, as it is stated in reference to Sennacherib: "I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and have brought down as one mighty the inhabitants" (Isaiah 10:13). And although it is conceivable that this particular convert is an ethnic Ammonite, nevertheless, there is no need for concern due to the halakhic principle: Anything that parts from a group parts from the majority, and the assumption is that he is from the majority of nations whose members are permitted to enter the congregation.

Rabban Gamliel said to Rabbi Yehoshua: But wasn't it already stated: "But afterward I will bring back the captivity of the children of Ammon, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 49:6) and they have already returned to their land? Therefore, he is an ethnic Ammonite and he may not convert.

Rabbi Yehoshua said to Rabban Gamliel: That is no proof. Wasn't it already stated in another prophecy: "And I will turn the captivity of My people Israel and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the

fruit of them" (Amos 9:14), and they have not yet returned? In rendering the ruling, only proven facts may be taken into consideration.

They immediately permitted him to enter the congregation. This proves that Rabban Gamliel did not absent himself from the study hall that day and participated in the halakhic discourse.



### **Explaining the Story**

What's going on in our story? (The sequence of events)

### **Comprehension and Analysis Questions**

**?** Where did this part of the story take place?

**Bonus ?** The expression "on that day" appears a few times in our story and many other times throughout the rabbinic literature. What do you think this expression is teaching us?

**?** Why did the Sages dismiss the guard at the door and allow all the students to enter the House of Study?

**Bonus ?** Why did they add more benches to the House of Study?

**Bonus ?** Abba Yosef ben Dostai and the Rabbis had a dispute over the number of benches that were added on the day Rabban Gamliel was demoted. Why do you think this detail is important?

**?** Why was Rabban Gamliel distressed when he saw than many more benches were added?


**?** "They showed him in his dream white jugs filled with ashes." Who is "They"?

**?** Why was Rabban Gamliel shown in a dream white jug filled with ashes?


**?** "That is not the case, but that dream was shown to him to ease his mind."


What is the purpose of this parenthetical comment in the story? What can we learn from the fact that "They" was interested in easing Rabban Gamliel's mind?

**Bonus ?** What is so special in the fact that even Rabban Gamliel did not avoid the study hall for even one moment?

**Extra Bonus**  How is Rabbi Yehoshua's demeanor in the discussion with Rabban Gamliel regarding Yehuda the Ammonite different from the demeanor of Rabbi Yehoshua at the beginning of our story?

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

 Open the doors, and they will come. About the importance of democratizing learning.

 In Heaven they go out of their way to appease hurt people. You should do the same!

### **Act 4**

אמר רבן גמליאל: הואיל וקמי הנה, איזיל ואפייסיה לרבי יהושע. כי מטא לביתיה, תזינהו לאשיתא דביתיה דמשחרן. אמר ליה: מפותלי ביתך אתה ניכר שפקמי אתה. אמר לו: אוי לו לדור שאתה פרנסו, שאי אתה יודע בצערן של תלמידי חכמים, במה הם מתפרנסים ובמה הם נזונים.

אמר לו: נעניתי לך מחול לי. לא אשגח ביה: עשה בשביל פבוד אבא. פייס

Rabban Gamliel said to himself: Since this is the situation, it would be appropriate for me to go and appease Rabbi Yehoshua.

When he reached Rabbi Yehoshua's house, he saw that the walls of his house were black.

Rabban Gamliel said to Rabbi Yehoshua in wonderment: From the walls of your house, it is apparent that you are a blacksmith.

Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: Woe unto a generation that you are its leader as you are unaware of the difficulties of Torah scholars, how they make a living and how they feed themselves.

Rabban Gamliel said to him: I insulted you, forgive me. Rabbi Yehoshua paid him no attention and did not forgive him.

He [Rabban Gamliel] asked him again: Do it in deference to my father, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, who was one of the leaders of Israel at the time of the destruction of the Temple. He [Rabbi Yehoshua] was appeased.



### **Explaining the Story**

What's going on in our story? (The sequence of events)

## Comprehension and Analysis Questions

**?** Where did this part of the story take place?

**?** "Rabban Gamliel said to himself: Since this is the situation, it would be appropriate for me to go and appease Rabbi Yehoshua." Which situation is Rabban Gamliel referring to?

**?** What do we learn about Rabban Gamliel from his comment about Rabbi Yehoshua's occupation?

**Bonus ?** What do we learn about Rabbi Yehoshua about his sharp reply to Rabban Gamliel?

**Extra Bonus ?** "Rabban Gamliel said to him: I insulted you, forgive me." What is Rabban Gamliel asking Rabbi Yehoshua to forgive him for?

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

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

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

**?** Why didn't Rabbi Yehoshua pay attention to Rabban Gamliel request for forgiveness?

**Bonus ?** Why do you think Rabbi Yehoshua was willing to forgive Rabban Gamliel when he said: "Do it in deference to my father?"

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

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

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

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

**!** Hurt and resentment can be legitimate feelings. So are contrition and forgiveness.

#### Act 5

אמרו: מאן ניזיל ולימא להו לרבנן. אמר להו ההוא פובס: אנא אזילנא. שלח להו רבי יהושע לבי מדרשא: מאן דלביש מדא — ילביש מדא, ומאן דלא לביש מדא נימר ליה למאן דלביש מדא: שלח מדף ואנא אלבשיה!? אמר להו רבי עקיבא לרבנן: טרוקו גלי דלא ליתו עבדי דרבן גמליאל ולצערו לרבנן.

אמר רבי יהושע: מוטב דאיקום ואיזיל אנא לגבייהו. אתא טרף אפבא. אמר להו: מזה בן מזה יזה. ושאינו לא מזה ולא בן מזה יאמר למזה בן מזה מימיה מי מערה ואפרה אפר מקלה. אמר לו

רבי עקיבא: רבי יהושע, נתפייסת? כלום עשינו אלא בשביל כבודך, למחר אני ואתה נשפים לפתחו.

אמרי: היכי נעביד, נעבריה — גמירי מעלין בקדש ואין מורדין. נדרוש מר קדא שבתא ומר קדא שבתא — אתי לקנאווי. אלא: לדרוש רבן גמליאל תלתא שבתא ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה קדא שבתא. והיינו דאמר מר שבת של מי היתה — של רבי אלעזר בן עזריה היתה.

ואותו תלמיד רבי שמעון בן יוחאי הוה.

Now that Rabbi Yehoshua was no longer offended, it was only natural that Rabban Gamliel would be restored to his position. They said: Who will go and inform the Sages?

This launderer said to them: I will go. Rabbi Yehoshua sent the Sages to the study hall: The one who wears the uniform will continue to wear the uniform, the one who did not wear the uniform will not say to the one who wears the uniform, remove your uniform and I will wear it.

Rabbi Akiva said to the Sages: Lock the gates so that Rabban Gamliel's servants will not come and disturb the Sages.

When he heard what happened, Rabbi Yehoshua said: It is best if I go to them. He came and knocked on the door. He said to them with a slight variation: One who sprinkles pure water on those who are ritually impure, son of one who sprinkles water shall continue to sprinkle water. And it is inappropriate that he who is neither one who sprinkles nor son of one who sprinkles will say to one who sprinkles son of one who sprinkles: Your water is cave water and not the running water required to purify one exposed to ritual impurity imparted by a corpse and your ashes are burnt ashes and not the ashes of a red heifer.

Rabbi Akiva said to him: Rabbi Yehoshua, have you been appeased? Everything we did was to defend your honor. If you have forgiven him, none of us is opposed. Early tomorrow you and I will go to Rabban Gamliel's doorway and offer to restore him to his position as Nasi.

The question arose what to do with Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya? They said: What shall we do? Remove him from his position. That is inappropriate as we learned a halakha through tradition: One elevates to a higher level of sanctity and does not downgrade. Therefore, one who was the Nasi of the Sanhedrin cannot be demoted. Let one Sage lecture one week and the other Sage one week, they will come to be jealous one of another, as they will be forced to appoint one as the acting head of the Sanhedrin. Rather, Rabban Gamliel will lecture three weeks and Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya will lecture as head of the yeshiva one week. That arrangement was adopted and that is the explanation of the exchange in tractate Hagiga: Whose week was it? It was the week of Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya.

One final detail: That student who asked the original question that sparked this entire incident was Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai.



### ***Explaining the Story***

What's going on in our story? (The sequence of events)

## **Comprehension and Analysis Questions**

**?** Where did this part of the story take place?

**Extra Bonus ?** "They said: Who will go and inform the Sages?" What ought to be informed to the Sages? Who is asking the question? Why is it important at all who is the one who goes to inform the Sages?

**?** Who is the one who "wears the uniform"?


**?** What did Rabbi Yehoshua mean by his "cryptic" message?


**?** Why was the launderer's mission unsuccessful?


**?** Why did Rabbi Yehoshua decide to go himself to the House of Study to inform the Sages about the new development?

**Extra Bonus ?** What did Rabbi Yehoshua mean by his second "cryptic" message? How was it supposed to work better than the first one?


**?** Why doesn't Rabbi Yehoshua tell the Sages straight: "Rabban Gamliel is reinstated"?

**Extra Bonus**  What do we think of the Sages' arrangement that addressed the reinstatement of Rabban Gamliel? Do you think Rabban Gamliel was pleased with the arrangement? Why? Do you think Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah was pleased with the arrangement? Why?


 Why do you think Rabban Gamliel wasn't reinstated with four full weeks of service?


 At the end of our story, we learn that the student who asked the question that sparked the dramatic controversy was Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai. Why do you think the Gemara divulges his name?



 How long do you think our entire story took?

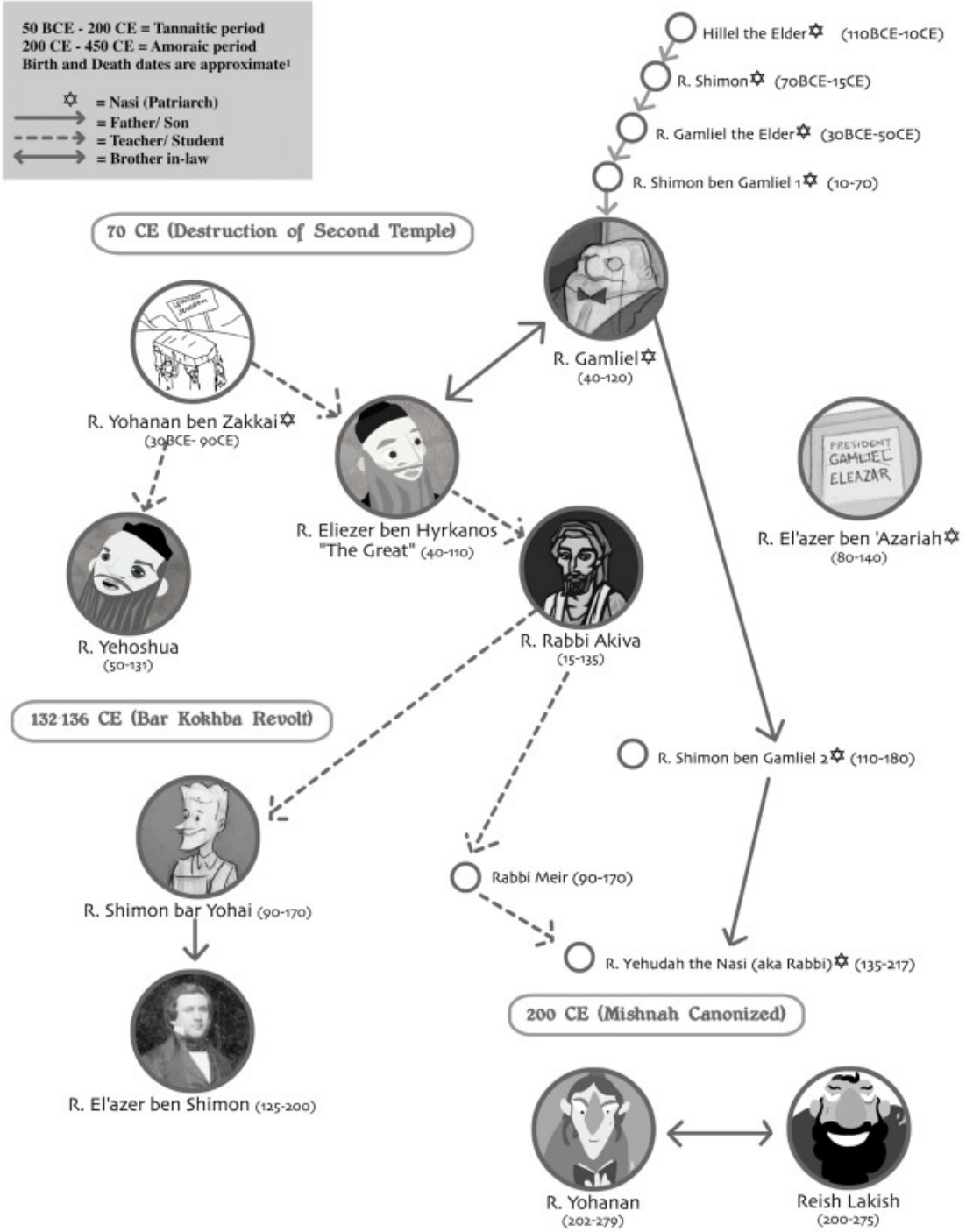
### **“The Twist” – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from This Text.**

 There is a simple solution to a complicated problem. And it is usually a bad one. The long and deliberate way it took the Sages involved in our story to make things right again.

 It takes just one question to mess things up. It takes an entire story to fix them.

50 BCE - 200 CE = Tannaitic period  
 200 CE - 450 CE = Amoraic period  
 Birth and Death dates are approximate!

☆ = Nasi (Patriarch)  
 → = Father/ Son  
 - - - → = Teacher/ Student  
 ↔ = Brother in-law



†The birth and death dates are projections based on a comparison of rabbinic and non-rabbinic sources. So for example, we know from external sources that Rabbi Akiva probably died around the year 135 CE. The rabbinic sources have him living until 120 years old. So even though the number 120 is probably symbolic and not historical, Rabbi Akiva's birth date is listed as 15 CE.

