

Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 83b-84a Week 3



CONTENTS

p.1: Introduction and Blessing for Study

p.2: The Hebrew Text

p.5: Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 83b-84a (Hebrew & English) with questions

p.12: A Guide to the Texts

'Iron sharpens iron, so a person sharpens the wit of their friend.'

Proverbs 27:17



Introduction

Welcome to the third week of this course of the Alyth Chavruta Project. In this course, we will once again dive into a *sugya* from the Babylonian Talmud. This week, we continue to delve into the Talmud, which launches onto a very different tangent, prompted by the discussion of the line from Psalm 104. This discussion comes with a content warning: this Talmud contains comments about body type and references to the size of genitalia.

The material in this text pack is designed to be studied over three weeks, while we take a break for the winter holidays. With your chavruta partner, you can decide how many sessions to divide into. The text itself can be found here in both Hebrew only and Hebrew with translation. For those with some knowledge of Hebrew, we encourage you to attempt your own translation, but there is absolutely no expectation that you engage with the Hebrew. As usual, there is also no requirement to get to the end of the pack – we have provided more than you can get through in an hour of study, and we encourage you to focus on understanding a small amount rather than becoming confused by a greater amount.

Further resources and advice on how to get the most out of chavruta can be found in our $\overline{\text{FAQs}}$. We look forward to seeing you on Monday to share our learning with each other.

Blessing for Study

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהָינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִּדְשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתִיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדְבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

Blessed are You, our Living God, Sovereign of the universe, whose commandments make us holy, and who commands us to devote ourselves to the study of Torah.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu la-asok b'divrey Torah.

רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אַשְׁכַּח לְהָהוּא פַּרְהַגְוָנָא דְּקָא תָפֵּיס גַּנָּבִי,
אֲמֵר לֵיהּ: הֵיכִי יָכְלַתְּ לְהוּ, לָאו כְּחֵיוָתָא מְתִילִי, דְּכְתִיב: "בּוֹ תִרְמֹשׁ
כָּל חַיְתוֹ יָעַר"? אִיכָּא דְאָמְרִי מֵהַאי קְרָא קַאָמֵר לֵיהּ: "יָאֶרבׁ בַּמִּסְתָּר
כְּאַרְיֵה בְסָכֹּה". דִּלְמָא שָׁקְלַתְּ צַדִּיקֵי וְשָׁבְקַתְּ רַשִּׁיעֵי?

אָמַר לֵיה: וּמַאי אָעֱבֵיד? הַרְמָנָא דְמַלְכָּא הוּא.

אָמַר: תָּא אַגְמְרָךְ הֵיכִי תַּצְבֵיד. עוּל בְּאַרְבַּע שָׁעֵי לְחָנוּתָא, כִּי חָזֵית אִינִישׁ דְקָא שָׁתֵי חַמְרָא וְקָא נָקִיט כָּסָא בִּיבִיה וְקָא מְנַמְנֵם, שְׁאוֹל עִילְנִים דְקָא שָׁתֵי חַמְרָא וְנָזִים – אקדוֹמִי קַבִּים לְגִרְסֵיה. אִי עִילְנִיה. אִי צוּרְבָּא מֵרַבָּנַן הוּא וְנָיֵים – אקדוֹמִי קַבִּים לְגִרְסֵיה. פִּוֹעֵל הוּא – קַבִים קָא עָבִיד עֲבִידְתֵּיה, וְאִי עֲבִידְתֵּיה בְּלֵילְיָא – בּנָבָא הוּא וְתִפְּסֵיה.

אִישְׁתְּמַע מִילְּתָא בֵּי מַלְכָּא, אֲמַרוּ: קַרְיָינָא דְאִיגַּרְתָּא אִיהוּ לֶיהֶוִי פַּרְוַנְקָא. אַתְיוּהּ לְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן, וְקָא תָפֵיס גַּנָבֵי וְאָזֵיל.

שְׁלַח לֵיהּ רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן קְרְחָה חוֹמֶץ בֶּן יַיִן! עַד מָתַי אַתָּה מוֹסֵר עַמּוֹ שֶׁל אֱלֹהֵינוּ לַהֲרִיגָה? שְׁלַח לֵיהּ: קוֹצִים אֲנִי מְכַלֶּה מִן הַכֶּרֶם. שְׁלַח לֵיהּ: יָבֹא בַּעַל הַכֵּרֶם וִיכַלֵּה אֵת קוֹצֵיו.



יוֹמָא חַד פְּגַע בֵּיה הָהוּא כּוֹבֵס, קַרְיֵיה ״חוֹמֶץ בֶּן יַיִּן״. אָמַר: מִדַּחֲצִיף כּוֹבֶס, הַרְיֵיה ״חוֹמֶץ בֶּן יַיִּן״. אָמַר: מִבְּסוּה. כּוּלֵי הַאִּי – שְׁמַע מִינַּה רַשִּׁיעָא הוּא. אֲמַר לְהוּ: תִּפְּסוּה. תַפְּסוּה. לְבָתַר דְּנָח דַעְתֵּיה, אֲזַל בָּתְרֵיה לְפָּרוֹמֵיה וְלָא מָצֵי. קָרֵי עֲלֵיה: ״שֹׁמֵר לְבָּתוֹי שֹׁמֵר מִצָּרוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ״. זַקְפּוּה.

קָם תּוּתֵי זְקִיפָּא וְקָא בָכֵי. אֲמַרוּ לֵיהּ: רַבִּי, אַל יֵרַע בְּעֵינֶיךּ שֶׁהוּא וּכָנוֹ בָּעֵלוּ נַעֲרָה מְאוֹרָסָה בִּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים.

הָנִיחַ יָדוֹ עַל בְּנֵי מֵעָיו אָמַר: שִּׁישׁוּ בְּנֵי מֵעַי, שִּׁישׂוּ! וּמָה סְפֵּיקוֹת שֶׁלָּכֶם כָּךְ, וַדָּאוֹת שֶׁלָּכֶם – עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה. מוּבְטָח אֲנִי בָּכֶם, שָׁאֵין רִמָּה וְתוֹלֵעָה שׁוֹלֶטֶת בָּכֶם וַאֲפִּילוּ הָכִי לָא מְיַיִתְּבָא דַּעְתֵּיה.

אַשְּקִיוּה סַמָּא דְשִׁינְתָּא וְעַיְּילוּה לְבֵיתָא דְשֵׁישָׁא וּקְרַעוּ לִכְרֵיסֵיה. הַווֹ מַפְּקִי מִינֵּיה דִּיקוּלֵי דִיקוּלֵי דְתַרְבָּא וּמוֹתְבִי בְּשִׁמְשָׁא בְּתַמּוּז וְאָב וִלָא מַסְרִחִי.

כּל תַּרְבָּא נָמֵי לָא (סריח) [מַסְרַח]! כּל תַּרְבָּא (לָא סְרִיחַ), [כִּי אִית בַּה] שֻׁרְיָקֵי סֻמָּקֵי מַסְרַח. הָכָא, אַף עַל גַּב דְאִכָּא שֻׁרְיָקֵי סֻמָּקִי – לָא מַסְרַח. קָרֵי אַנַּפְּשֵׁה: "אַף בְּשָׁרִי יִשְׁכֹּן לָבֶטַח".

וְאַף רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּרַבִּי יוֹסֵי מְטָא כִּי הַאי מַעֲשֶּׂה לִידֵיה. פְּגַע בֵּיה אֵלִיָּהוּ, אֲמַר לֵיה: עַד מָתַי אַתָּה מוֹסֵר עַמוֹ שֶׁל אֱלֹהֵינוּ לַהְרִיגָה?

אָמַר לֵיהּ: מַאי אָעֱבֵיד? הַרְמָנָא דְמַלְכָּא הוּא! אָמַר לֵיהּ: אֲבוּך עֲרַק לְאַסְיָא, אַתְּ עֲרוֹק לְלוּדְקִיָּא.

כִּי הֲוֹוֹ מִקַּלְעִי רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּרַבִּי יוֹמֵי וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בַּהֲדִי הֲדָדִי, הֲוָה עָיֵיל בַּקְרָא דְתוֹרֵי בֵּינַיְיהוּ וְלָא הֲוָה נָגְעָה בְּהוּ.

אֲמַרָה לְהוּ הָהִיא מַטְרוֹנִיתָא: בְּנֵיכֶם אֵינָם שֶׁלְּכֶם. אֲמַרוּ לַהּ: שֶׁלָּהֶן גָּדוֹל מִשֶּׁלָנוּ. כָּל שֶׁכֵּן. אִיכָּא דְאָמְרִי, הָכִי אֲמַרוּ לַהּ: "כִּי כָאִישׁ גְּבוּרָתוֹ". אִיכָּא דְאָמְרִי הָכִי, אֲמַרוּ לַהּ: "אַהֲבָה דּוֹחֶקֶת אֶת הַבָּשָּׁר".

וּלְמָה לְהוּ לְאַהְדּוֹרֵי לַהּ? וְהָא כְּתִיב: "אַל תַּעַן כְּסִיל כְּאִוַּלְתּוֹ"! שֶׁלֹא לְהוֹצִיא לַעַז עַל בְּנֵיהֶם.

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אֵיבְרֵיה דְּרַבִּי יִשְׁמָצֵאל [בְּרַבִּי יוֹמָי] כְּחֵמֶת בַּת תֵּשַׁע קַבִּין. אָמַר רַב פָּפָּא: אֵיבְרֵיה דְּרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן כְּחֵמֶת בַּת חֲמֵשֶׁת קַבִּין, וְאָמְרִי לַה בַּת שָׁלשֶׁת קַבִּין. דְרַב פָּפָּא גּוּפֵיה כִּי דְקוּרֵי דְהַרְפְּנָאֵי.



רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אַשְׁכַּח לְהָהוּא פַּרְהַגְּוָנָא דְּקָא תָפֵּיס גַּנָּבִי, אֲמֵר לֵיה: הֵיכִי יָכְלַתְּ לְהוּ, לָאו כְּחֵיוָתָא מְתִילִי, דְּכְתִיב: "בּוֹ תִרְמֹשׁ כָּל חַיְתוֹ יָעַר"? אִיכָּא דְאָמְרִי מֵהַאי קְרָא קָאָמֵר לֵיהּ: "יָאֶרֹב בַּמִּסְתָּר כָּאַרְיֵה בְסַכֹּה". דִּלְמָא שֶׁקְלַתִּ צַדִּיקֵי וְשָׁבְקַתִּ רַשִּׁיעֵי?

אָמַר לֵיה: וּמַאי אָעֱבֵיד? הַרְמָנָא דְמַלְכָּא הוּא.

אָמַר: תָּא אַגְמְרָךְּ הֵיכִי תַּעֲבֵיד. עוּל בְּאַרְבַּע שָׁעֵי לְחָנוּתָא, כִּי חָזֵית אִינִישׁ דְּקָא שָׁתֵי חַמְרָא וְקָא נָקִיט כָּסָא בִּידִיהּ וְקָא מְנַמְנֵם, שְׁאוֹל עִילְנִישׁ דְּקָא שָׁתֵי חַמְרָא וְקָא נָקִיט כָּסָא בִּידִיהּ וְקָא מְנַמְנֵם, שְׁאוֹל עִילְנִיה. אִי צוּרְבָּא מֵרַבָּנַן הוּא וְנָיֵים – אקדוֹמֵי קַדִּים לְגִרְסֵיה. אִי פּוֹעל הוּא – קַדִים קָא עָבִיד עֲבִידְתֵּיה, וְאִי עֲבִידְתֵּיה בְּלֵילְיָא – רַדּוֹדֵי רַדֵּיד. וְאִי לָא – גַנָּבָא הוּא וְתִפְּסֵיה.

אִישְׁתְּמַע מִילְתָא בֵּי מַלְכָּא, אֲמַרוּ: קַרְיָינָא דְאִיגַּרְתָּא אִיהוּ לֶיהֵוִי פַּרְוַנְקָא. אַתִיוּהּ לְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן, וְקָא תָפֵיס גַּנָּבֵי וְאָזֵיל.

שְׁלַח לֵיהּ רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן קְרְחָה חוֹמֶץ בֶּן יַיִן! עַד מְתַי אַתָּה מוֹסֵר עַמּוֹ שֶׁל אֱלֹהֵינוּ לַהְרִיגָה? שְׁלַח לֵיהּ: קוֹצִים אֲנִי מְכַלֶּה מִן הַכֶּרֶם. שְׁלַח לֵיהּ: יָבֹא בַּעַל הַכֶּרֶם וִיכַלֶּה אֶת קוֹצִיו.

Rabbi Elazar son of Rabbi Shimon¹ came across a superintendent who was arresting thieves. He said to him, 'How do you prevail over them? Are they not like beasts, as it is written, "when all the beasts of the forest stir" (Psalm 104:20). (There are those who say that he said to him from this verse: 'He

¹ Rabbi Elazar was the son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. According to a famous legend, the two of them hid from the Romans in a cave for twelve years. Rabbi Elazar lived in the Land of Israel in the second century CE. Part of the purpose of this story is to show that he was not as great a sage as his father had been.

lies in wait in a secret place, like a lion in its lair' (Psalm 10:9).) Perhaps you are apprehending the righteous and leaving the wicked.'

He said to him, 'But what can I do? It is the king's order.'

He said, 'Come, I will teach you what to do. In the fourth hour of the day, enter the tavern. If you see someone who is drinking wine, and they hold the cup in their hand while dozing off, inquire about him. If they are a young person from among the rabbis, and they doze, [it is because] they awoke early to study. If they are a worker, they did their work early. And if their work is at night – they are lengthening metal.² Bit of they are not [any of these], they are a thief, and you should arrest them.'

The matter was heard in the palace. They said, 'The reader of the letter should be its deliverer!' They brought Rabbi Elazar son of Rabbi Shimon, and he set about arresting thieves.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah sent [a message] to him:³ 'Vinegar son of wine! How long will you hand over the people of our God to murder?' He sent back: 'I am ridding the vineyard of thorns.' He sent to him: 'Let the Master of the vineyard come and rid it of thorns.'

Questions

- What is Rabbi Elazar's method for identifying thieves?
- What is the meaning of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah's message to Rabbi Elazar? Why does he call him 'Vinegar son of wine'?
- What is the meaning of the disagreement around ridding the vineyard of thorns? Do you agree with either Rabbi Elazar or Rabbi Yehoshua?

² The logic of this statement is that one might think that they were not a night worker if their home is quiet, whereas someone who lengthens metal by passing it through a tool that has progressively smaller holes would not necessarily make noise in their work.

³ Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah was a rabbi in the Land of Israel in the second century CE. Page | 6



יוֹמָא חַד פְּגַע בֵּיה הָהוּא כּוֹבֵס, קַרְיֵיה ״חוֹמֶץ בֶּן יַיִּן״. אָמַר: מִדַּחֲצִיף כּוֹמָא חַד פְּגַע בֵּיה הָהוּא כּוֹבֵס, קַרְיֵיה ״חוֹמֶץ בָּן יַיִּן״. אָמַר: תִּפְּסוּה. תַּפְּסוּה. לְּבָּת דְנָח דְּנָח דַעְתֵּיה, אֲזַל בָּתְרֵיה לְפָּרוֹקֵיה וְלָא מָצֵי. קָרֵי עֲלֵיה: ״שֹׁמֵר לְבָּתוֹ שֹׁמֵר מִצָּרוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ״. זַקְפּוּה.

קָם תּוּתֵי זְקִיפָּא וְקָא בָכֵי. אֲמַרוּ לֵיהּ: רַבִּי, אַל יֵרַע בְּעֵינֶיךְ שֶׁהוּא וּכְנוֹ בָּעֲלוּ נַעֲרָה מְאוֹרָסָה בִּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים.

הָנִּיחַ יָדוֹ עַל בְּנֵי מֵעָיו אָמַר: שִּׁישׁוּ בְּנֵי מֵעַי, שִּׁישׂוּ! וּמָה סְפֵּיקוֹת שֶׁלָּכֶם כָּךְ, וַדָּאוֹת שֶׁלָכֶם – עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה. מוּבְטָח אֲנִי בָּכֶם, שֶׁאֵין רִמָּה וְתוֹלֵעָה שׁוֹלֶטֶת בָּכֶם וַאֲפִילוּ הָכִי לָא מְיַיִּתְּבָא דַּעְתִּיה.

אַשְּקְיוּה סַמָּא דְשִׁינְתָּא וְעַיְילוּה לְבֵיתָא דְשֵׁישָׁא וּקְרַעוּ לְכְרֵיסֵיה. הַווֹ מַפְּקִי מִינֵיה דִּיקּוּלֵי דִּיקּוּלֵי דְּתַרְבָּא וּמוֹתְבִי בְּשִׁמְשָׁא בְּתַמוּז וְאָב וְלָא מַסְרְחִי.

כּל תַּרְבָּא נָמֵי לָא (סריח) [מַסְרַח]! כּל תַּרְבָּא (לָא סְרִיחַ), [כִּי אִית בָּה] שֻׁרְיָקֵי סֻמָּקֵי מַסְרַח. הָכָא, אַף עַל גַּב דְּאִכָּא שֻׁרְיָקֵי סֻמָּקֵי – לָא מַסְרַח.

ָקָרֵי אַנַּפְּשֵׁה: ״אַף בְּשָׂרִי יִשְׁכֹּן לָבֶטַח״.

One day, a certain laundryman encountered him, calling him 'Vinegar son of wine.' He said, 'From [the fact] that was so impudent, conclude that he is wicked.' He said to them [his deputies], 'Arrest him!' They arrested him. After his mind was at ease, he went after him to redeem him, but he was unable to. He read this verse about him: 'The one who guards their mouth and tongue guards themselves from trouble' (Proverbs 21:23). They hanged him.

He stood under the gallows and cried. They said to him, 'Rabbi, do not be troubled, for he and his son had sex with a betrothed young woman⁴ on Yom Kippur!'⁵

He rested his hands on his belly [and] said, 'Rejoice, my innards, rejoice! If your doubtful [judgments] are thus, [then] your certain [judgments] all the more so. I am confident in you, that no worm or maggot will rule over you.' But despite this, his mind was not calmed.

They gave him a sleeping draft, and brought him into a house of marble, and cut his belly. They removed baskets [and] baskets of fat from it, placed them in the sun in Tammuz and Av, and it did not decompose.

[But surely] all fat does not decompose! All fat does not decompose, but there are within it red veins [that] do decompose.

He read this verse about himself: 'Even my flesh will rest secure' (Psalm 16:9).

Questions

- Why does Rabbi Elazar react differently to the laundryman than he did to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah?
- Why was Rabbi Elazar's mind eased and should it have been?
- What is the relationship between the decomposing of flesh and moral rightness?

Page | 8

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⁴ The word used for 'young woman' here is *na'arah*, which is a technical term to describe a woman who has either turned twelve or who has two pubic hairs. She is considered a *na'arah* for the six months after the point, after which she is referred to as an *ishah* (woman).

⁵ Having sex with a betrothed woman is an offense punishable by stoning. According to the Talmud, those who were stoned would also be hanged afterwards. Thus, those who are speaking to Rabbi Elazar are reassuring him that the laundryman would have been deserving of this punishment anyway.



וְאַף רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּרַבִּי יוֹסֵי מְטָא כִּי הַאי מַעֲשֶׂה לִידִיה. פְּגַע בֵּיה אֵלְיָהוּ, אֲמַר לֵיה: עַד מָתַי אַתָּה מוֹסֵר עַמוֹ שֶׁל אֱלֹהֵינוּ לַהְרִיגָה? אֲמַר לֵיה: מַאי אֶעֱבִיד? הַרְמָנָא דְמַלְכָּא הוּא! אֲמַר לֵיה: אֲבוּךְ עֲרַק לְאַסְיָא, אַתְּ עֲרוֹק לְלוּדְקִיָּא.

So too a similar thing happened to Rabbi Yishmael son of Rabbi Yosei.⁶ Elijah encountered him [and] said to him, 'How long will you hand over the people of our God to murder?' He said to him, 'What can I do? It is the king's order.' He said to him, 'Your father fled to Asya; you should flee to Ludkiya.'

Questions

- What is similar or different about the stories of Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Elazar?
- Why does Elijah say that Rabbi Yishmael ought to flee?

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⁶ Rabbi Yishmael was the son of Rabbi Yosei, who had been one of the foremost rabbis in the Land of Israel in the first century CE. As with Rabbi Elazar, part of the purpose of this story is to show that Rabbi Yishmael was not as great as his famous father.

כִּי הֲווֹ מִקַּלְעִי רַבִּּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּרַבִּי יוֹסֵי וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בַּהֲדֵי הַדָּדֵי, הֲוָה עָיֵיל בַּקְרָא דְתוֹרֵי בֵּינַיְיהוּ וְלָא הֲוָה נָגְעָה בְּהוּ.

אֲמַרָה לְהוּ הָהִיא מַטְרוֹנִיתָא: בְּנֵיכֶם אֵינָם שֶׁלְּכֶם. אֲמַרוּ לַהּ: שֶׁלְהֶן גָּדוֹל מִשֶּׁלָנוּ. כָּל שֶׁכֵּן. אִיכָּא דְאָמְרִי, הָכִי אֲמַרוּ לַהּ: "כִּי כָאִישׁ גְּבוּרָתוֹ". אִיכָּא דְאָמְרִי הָכִי, אֲמַרוּ לַהּ: "אַהֲכָה דּוֹחֶקֶת אֶת הַבָּשָּׁר".

וּלְמָה לְהוּ לְאַהְדּוֹרֵי לַהּ? וְהָא כְּתִיב: "אַל תַּעַן כְּסִיל כְּאָוַלְתּוֹ"! שֶׁלֹא לְהוֹצִיא לַעַּז עַל בָּנִיהֶם.

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אֵיכְרֵיה דְּרַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל [בְּרַבִּי יוֹמֵי] כְּחֵמֶת בַּת תֵּשַׁע קַבִּין. אָמַר רַב פָּפָּא: אֵיבְרֵיה דְּרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן כְּחֵמֶת בַּת חֲמֵשֶׁת קַבִּין, וְאָמְרִי לַה בַּת שָׁלשֶׁת קַבִּין. דְרַב פָּפָּא גוּפֵיה כִּי דְקוּרֵי דְּהַרְפְּנָאֵי.

When Rabbi Yishmael son of Rabbi Yosei and Rabbi Elazar son of Rabbi Shimon would meet each other, a pair of cattle would pass between them without touching them.

A certain [Roman] matron said to them, 'Your children are not yours.' They said to her, 'Their [bellies?] are bigger than ours.' [She responded,] 'All the more so.' There are those who say this is what they said to her. 'For strength comes from manhood' (Judges 8:21). And there are those who say this is what they said to her. 'Love drives back the flesh.'

But why did they answer her? For it is written, 'Do not answer a fool according to their folly' (Proverbs 26:4). So as not to spread rumours about their children.



Rabbi Yochanan said,⁷ 'Rabbi Yishmael's limb was the size of a nine-*kav* canteen.' Rav Pappa said,⁸ 'Rabbi Yochanan's limb was the size of a five-*kav* canteen.' And some say a three-*kav* canteen. That of Rav Pappa himself was the size of Harpinian baskets.

Questions

- What do you think is being communicated by the Talmud by emphasising the size of the bodies of these two rabbis?
- Why does the matron say that their children are not theirs? How do they respond to this comment?
- This discussion might seem very strange as an inclusion in a religious document like the Talmud. Why do you think this section is included?

⁷ Rabbi Yochanan (bar Nappacha) was one of the pre-eminent sages in the Land of Israel in the 3rd century CE, teaching at Sepphoris and later in Tiberias where he was the head of the rabbinic academy.

 $^{^{\}rm 8}$ Rav Pappa (bar Chanan) was a sage in Babylonia in the mid-fourth century CE.

A Guide to the Texts

The **Mishnah** is a Jewish legal code from approximately 200 CE, containing legal rulings and disputes of the sages which are written down there for the first time. It is the first part of what is called the 'Oral Law', which for traditional Jews is just as authoritative as the Written Law (the Tanach). The Mishnah is divided into six 'orders', and each order is divided into tractates. Tractate Bava Metzia (literally meaning 'the middle gate') is included in the order of *Nezikin* (Damages).

The **Babylonian Talmud** is the equivalent of the Jerusalem Talmud, but was instead produced in Babylonia. It was finished later (approximately 700 CE), and is generally considered to be more authoritative in matters of *halachah*. The Talmud follows the structure of the Mishnah.

HAPPY STUDYING!

If you have any further questions, please be in touch with Rabbi Elliott

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