

Rabbi Yoḥanan – רבי יוחנן: Rabbi Yoḥanan bar Nappaḥa was one of the greatest *amora'im*, whose statements are fundamental components of both the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud. He resided in Tiberias and lived to an advanced age. Rabbi Yoḥanan was orphaned at a young age, and although his family apparently owned considerable property, he spent virtually all of his resources in his devotion to the study of Torah, eventually becoming impoverished. In his youth he had the privilege of studying under Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, the redactor of the Mishna, but most of his Torah study was accomplished under Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's students: Hizkiyya ben Hiyya, Rabbi Oshaya, Rabbi Ḥanina, and Rabbi Yannai, who lavished praise upon him. In time, he became the head of the yeshiva in Tiberias, at which point his fame and influence increased greatly. For a long time Rabbi Yoḥanan was the leading rabbinic scholar in the Jewish world, not only in Eretz Yisrael but in Babylonia as well, where he was respected by the Babylonian Sages. Many of them emigrated to Eretz Yisrael in order to become his students.

Reish Lakish – ריש לקיש: Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, often referred to as Reish Lakish, was among the greatest *amora'im* in Eretz Yisrael. He was the friend and brother-in-law of Rabbi Yoḥanan. Reish Lakish led an extraordinary life. He studied Torah at a young age, but subsequently sold himself to a Roman circus as a gladiator, perhaps due to dire financial straits. Many stories in the Talmud attest to his great strength. Some time later, in the wake of an encounter with Rabbi Yoḥanan, as described here, he resumed his Torah study, first as a student of Rabbi Yoḥanan, then as a colleague. He married Rabbi Yoḥanan's sister.

Many halakhic disputes are recorded between Reish Lakish and Rabbi Yoḥanan concerning central issues in the Talmud. His objective was not to disagree with Rabbi Yoḥanan but rather to help him sharpen his opinion through debate. Rabbi Yoḥanan referred to Reish Lakish with great respect, often saying: My peer disagrees with me. Reish Lakish was well known for his strict piety, to the extent that anyone with whom he was seen conversing in public was said to be able to borrow money without guarantors, as Reish Lakish associated only with people beyond reproach. When he died he was survived by his wife and son, who was a child prodigy (see *Ta'anit* 9a).

Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat – רבי אלעזר בן פדת: In the Gemara, citations of Rabbi Elazar without a patronymic refer to Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat, a second-generation *amora* from Eretz Yisrael. He was born in Babylonia, where he was a student of both Rav and Shmuel. In his youth he immigrated to Eretz Yisrael, where he married and became the primary student of Rabbi Yoḥanan. The connection between Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Yoḥanan was so close that at times the Gemara raises a contradiction between the statement of one and the statement of the other, under the assumption that it was unlikely that they would hold different opinions in matters of *halakha*.

LANGUAGE

Dagger [pigyon] – פגיון: From the Latin pugio, or pugionis in the genitive, meaning dagger.

יומא חד הוה קא סחי רבי יוחנן בירדנא. חזייה ריש לקיש ושנור לירדנא אבתריה. אמר ליה: חילך לאורייתא! אמר ליה: שופך לנשי! אמר ליה: אי הדרת בך – הויבנא לך אחותי, דשפירא מנאני. קביל עליה. בעי למיהדר לאתני מאניה – ולא מצוי הדר.

אקרייה ואתנייה, ושוייה גברא רבא. יומא חד הוה מפלגי בי מדרשא: הסייף והפגיון והרומח ומגל יד ומגל קוצר מאימתי מקבלין טומאה? משעת גמר מלאכתן.

ומאימתי גמר מלאכתן? רבי יוחנן אומר: משיצפרם בכבשן. ריש לקיש אומר: משיצחצחון במים. אמר ליה: לטטאה בלסטיותיה ידע! אמר ליה: ומאי אהנת לוי התם רבי קרו לי. הךא רבי קרו לי. אמר ליה: אהנאי לך דאקריבנך תחת כנפי השכינה.

חלש דעתיה דרבי יוחנן, חלש ריש לקיש. אתאי אחתיה קא בבאי, אמרה ליה: עשה בשביל בני! אמר לה: "עובה יתמיך אני אחיה". עשה בשביל אלמנותי אמר לה: "ואלמנותיך עלי תבטחו".

נח נפשיה דרבי שמעון בן לקיש, והוה קא מצטער רבי יוחנן בתריה טובא. אמרו רבנן: מאן ליוול ליתביה לדעתיה? ניוול רבי אלעזר בן פדת, דמתדין שמעתיה.

The Gemara relates: **One day, Rabbi Yoḥanan^p was bathing in the Jordan River. Reish Lakish^p saw him and jumped into the Jordan, pursuing him.** At that time, Reish Lakish was the leader of a band of marauders. **Rabbi Yoḥanan said to Reish Lakish: Your strength is fit for Torah study. Reish Lakish said to him: Your beauty is fit for women.** Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: **If you return to the pursuit of Torah, I will give you my sister in marriage, who is more beautiful than I am.** Reish Lakish accepted upon himself to study Torah. Subsequently, Reish Lakish wanted to jump back out of the river to bring back his clothes, but he was unable to return, as he had lost his physical strength as soon as he accepted the responsibility to study Torah upon himself.

Rabbi Yoḥanan taught Reish Lakish Bible, and taught him Mishna, and turned him into a great man. Eventually, Reish Lakish became one of the outstanding Torah scholars of his generation. **One day the Sages of the study hall were engaging in a dispute concerning the following baraita:** With regard to the sword, the knife, the dagger [vehapigyon],¹ the spear, a hand sickle, and a harvest sickle, from when are they susceptible to ritual impurity?² The baraita answers: It is from the time of the completion of their manufacture, which is the *halakha* with regard to metal vessels in general.

These Sages inquired: **And when is the completion of their manufacture? Rabbi Yoḥanan says:** It is from when one fires these items in the furnace. **Reish Lakish said:** It is from when one scours them in water, after they have been fired in the furnace. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to Reish Lakish: **A bandit knows about his banditry,**³ i.e., you are an expert in weaponry because you were a bandit in your youth. Reish Lakish said to Rabbi Yoḥanan: **What benefit did you provide me by bringing me close to Torah? There, among the bandits, they called me: Leader of the bandits, and here, too, they call me: Leader of the bandits. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: I provided benefit to you, as I brought you close to God, under the wings of the Divine Presence.**

As a result of the quarrel, **Rabbi Yoḥanan was offended**, which in turn affected Reish Lakish, who fell ill. Rabbi Yoḥanan's sister, who was Reish Lakish's wife, came crying to Rabbi Yoḥanan, begging that he pray for Reish Lakish's recovery. **She said to him: Do this for the sake of my children**, so that they should have a father. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to her the verse: **"Leave your fatherless children, I will rear them"** (Jeremiah 49:11), i.e., I will take care of them. She said to him: **Do so for the sake of my widowhood. He said to her the rest of the verse: "And let your widows trust in Me."**

Ultimately, **Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, Reish Lakish, died. Rabbi Yoḥanan was sorely pained over losing him. The Rabbis said: Who will go to calm Rabbi Yoḥanan's mind and comfort him over his loss?** They said: **Let Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat^p go, as his statements are sharp**, i.e., he is clever and will be able to serve as a substitute for Reish Lakish.

HALAKHA

The sword... from when are they susceptible to ritual impurity – מטאימתי מקבלין טומאה – הסייף... מאימתי מקבלין טומאה – What is considered complete in this regard? A sword is suscep-

tible to ritual impurity only when it is scoured in water, and a knife once it is sharpened. This *halakha* is in accordance with the mishna in *Kelim* (14:4), and not the Gemara here (Rambam *Sefer Tahara, Hilkhoh Kelim* 8:2).

NOTES

A bandit knows about his banditry – לטטאה בלסטיותיה ידע: Many commentaries ask how Rabbi Yoḥanan could say this to Reish Lakish, as the Torah explicitly prohibits verbal mistreatment of others (see Leviticus 25:17). Some explain that a principal teacher is allowed to berate his pupil for a constructive purpose (Ein Yehosef; Maharshah). According to this interpretation, Reish Lakish replied that he had studied Torah prior to encountering Rabbi Yoḥanan. Consequently, Rabbi Yoḥanan could not be

considered his principal teacher and therefore he had no right to berate him. Others suggest that Rabbi Yoḥanan spoke in a jocular fashion as a way of piquing the attention of the other Sages. He wanted them to listen to the opinion of Reish Lakish, who was an expert in the matter at hand. Reish Lakish misconstrued Rabbi Yoḥanan's intent and was upset by his remark (Ein Yehosef).

עשרין – twenty-four difficulties... twenty-four answers – עשרין וארבע קושייתא... עשרין וארבעה פרוקי: Twenty-four is a generic number in rabbinic literature, which represents a large quantity; it should not be taken literally. Other such numbers are sixty and three hundred (*Torat Hayyim*). Some commentaries suggest that this number alludes to the idea that a Sage must be expert in all twenty-four books of the Bible (*Ein Ya'akov*). Others note that the twenty-four difficulties, twenty-four answers, and the final *halakha* mentioned here equal forty-nine, which symbolizes the traditional forty-nine facets of Torah, as alluded to in Proverbs 2:4 (Maharsha).

NOTES

Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, did not rely on his own opinion – לא סמך רבי אלעזר ברבי שמעון אדעתיה: Some commentaries explain that although those whom he convicted were in fact wicked, Rabbi Elazar was nevertheless concerned that perhaps righteous people would have descended from them. The continuation of the story shows that the reverse was the case, as Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, was actually the cause of the birth of many righteous sons (*Ma'ayanei HaHokhma*).

She is like the merchant-ships – היתה כאניות סוחר: The Torah is likened to a woman on numerous occasions in Proverbs. Accordingly, in the absence of his wife, Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, quoted this verse in reference to the Torah, as his financial status improved due to his Torah study (*Ein Yehosef*).

LANGUAGE

Relish [*lifda*] – לפדא: Some maintain that this is from the Greek *λοπάς*, *lopas*, or *λοπάδος*, *lopados*, in the genitive, meaning a type of flat plate. Others relate it to the Greek *λεπίδι*, *lepidi*, a dish prepared from figs (Rashi).

אזל יתיב קמיה. כל מילתא דהוה דהוה אמר רבי יוחנן אמר ליה: תניא דמסייעא לך. אמר: את כבר לקיטא? בר לקיטא. כי הוה אמינא מילתא – הוה מקשי לי עשרין וארבע קושייתא. ומפיקינא ליה עשרין וארבעה פרוקי, וממילא רוחא שמעתא. ואת אמרת תניא דמסייע לך. אטו לא ידענא דשפיר קאמינא?

Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat went and sat before Rabbi Yohanan. With regard to every matter that Rabbi Yohanan would say, Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat would say to him: There is a ruling which is taught in a *baraita* that supports your opinion. Rabbi Yohanan said to him: Are you comparable to the son of Lakish? In my discussions with the son of Lakish, when I would state a matter, he would raise twenty-four difficulties against me in an attempt to disprove my claim, and I would answer him with twenty-four answers,ⁿ and the *halakha* by itself would become broadened and clarified. And yet you say to me: There is a ruling which is taught in a *baraita* that supports your opinion. Do I not know that what I say is good? Being rebutted by Reish Lakish served a purpose; your bringing proof to my statements does not.

הוה קא אזיל וקרע מאניה, וקא בכי וקאמר: היכא את בר לקיטא, היכא את בר לקיטא. והוה קא צוח עד דשף דעתיה מיניה. בעו רבנן רחמי עליה ונח נפשיה.

Rabbi Yohanan went around, rending his clothing, weeping and saying: Where are you, son of Lakish? Where are you, son of Lakish? Rabbi Yohanan screamed until his mind was taken from him, i.e., he went insane. The Rabbis prayed and requested for God to have mercy on him and take his soul, and Rabbi Yohanan died.

Perek VII

Daf 84 Amud b

ואפילו הכי לא סמך רבי אלעזר ברבי שמעון אדעתיה. קביל עליה יסורי באורתא הוה מייכי ליה שיתין נמטי; לצפרא נגדי מתותיה שיתין משיכלי דמא וכיבא.

After this digression, the Gemara returns to the story of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon. And although his flesh did not putrefy, even so Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, still did not rely on his own opinion,ⁿ as he was worried that he may have erred in one of his decisions. He accepted afflictions upon himself as atonement for his possible sins. At night his attendants would spread out sixty felt bed coverings for him. In the morning, despite the bed coverings, they would remove sixty basins of blood and pus from underneath him.

למחר עבדה ליה דביתהו שיתין מיני לפדא, ואכיל להו וברי ולא הות שבקא ליה דביתהו למיפק לבי מדרשא. כי היכי דלא לדחקוהו רבנן.

The following day, i.e., every morning, his wife would prepare for him sixty types of relish [*lifda*]¹ made from figs, and he would eat them and become healthy. His wife, concerned for his health, would not allow him to go to the study hall, so that the Rabbis would not push him beyond his limits.

באורתא אמר להו: אחיי ורעי בואו! בצפרא אמר להו: זילו, מפני ביטול תורה. יומא חד שמעה דביתהו. אמרה ליה: את קא מיתית להו עליוך, בלית ממון של בית אבא! אימרדה, אזלה לבית נשא.

In the evening, he would say to his pains: My brothers and my friends, come! In the morning he would say to them: Go away, due to the dereliction of Torah study that you cause me. One day his wife heard him inviting his pains. She said to him: You are bringing the pains upon yourself. You have diminished the money of my father's home due to the costs of treating your self-imposed afflictions. She rebelled against him and went back to her father's home, and he was left with no one to care for him.

סליקו ואתו הנך [שיתין] ספונאי, עילו ליה שיתין עבדי כי נקישו שיתין ארנקי, ועבדו ליה שיתין מיני לפדא, ואכיל להו.

Meanwhile, there were these sixty sailors who came and entered to visit Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon. They brought him sixty servants, each bearing sixty purses, and prepared him sixty types of relish and he ate them. When they had encountered trouble at sea, these sailors had prayed to be saved in the merit of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon. Upon returning to dry land, they presented him with these gifts.

יומא חד אמרה לה לברתה: זילי בקי באבונך מאי קא עביד האינדא. אתיא. אמר לה: זילי אמרי לאמך, שלנו גדול משלהם. קרי אנפשיה "היתה כאניות סוחר ממרחק תביא לחמה". אכל ושתי וברי נפק לבי מדרשא.

One day, the wife of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, said to her daughter: Go and check on your father and see what he is doing now. The daughter came to her father, who said to her: Go and tell your mother that ours is greater than theirs, i.e., my current financial status is greater than that of your father's household. He read the verse about himself: "She is like the merchant-ships;ⁿ she brings her food from afar" (Proverbs 31:14). As he was unhindered by his wife from going to the study hall, Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, ate and drank and became healthy and went out to the study hall.