

# Beyond the Text Part 2

## #3 Life and Death

### Sundials and Time

So the prophet Isaiah called to the LORD, and He made the shadow which had descended on the dial of Ahaz recede ten steps. (Kings 2 20:11)

”Rabbi Meir says: one may eat [chametz] the whole of the five [hours] and must burn [it] at the beginning of the sixth. Rabbi Judah says: one may eat the whole of the four [hours], suspend it the whole of the fifth, and must burn it at the beginning of the sixth. (Mishnah Pesachim 1:4-5)

Rava said to his servant: You, who are not expert in the measures of the Sages, when the sun is at the top of the palm trees, light the Shabbat lights. [His servant asked him:] What should we do on a cloudy day? : In the city, watch the roosters. In a field, watch the ravens. Alternatively, you can watch the plants [adane] The Sages taught: They sound six blasts on Shabbat eve (Shabbat 35b)

Three things Rabbi Tzadok [declares able to become] impure, and the Sages [declare] pure: the nail of a money-changer, the closet of grinders, and the nail of a stone sundial. (Mishnah Eduyot 3:8)

### Desert, Shepherd, Leader, Speaker

◇ ומִשָּׁה הָיָה רָעִי יְתַעֲבֹב דִּיתְרוֹ חֲמוּהֵי רַבָּא דְּמַדְיָן וְדַבֵּר יְתַעֲבֹב

◇ וְרַעֲוֵי כְּבָשִׂים כְּדַבְרָם וְחֲרֻכּוֹת מַחִים גְּרִים יֵאָכְלוּ:

Then shall the lambs feed as in their pasture, and fat ones and strangers shall feed in the ruins. (Isaiah 5:17)

◇ אמר לו הקב"ה טול מקל והך על קדקדם דבר אחד לדור ואין שני דברין לדור

There must be one leader for the generation, and not be two leaders for the generation. (Sanhedrin 8a)

◇ עֲבָדַי יֵרְדוּ מִן־הַלְּבָנוֹן יִמָּה וְאֲנִי אֲשִׁימָם דְּבָרוֹת בַּיָּם

“My servants will bring them down to the sea from the Lebanon; and at the sea I will make them into floats” (Kings 1 5:23)

◇ פוק חזי מאי עמא דבר

“Go out and see how the people are conducting themselves” (Eruvin 14b)

## **Caves**

“Rav Idi bar Avin said that Rabbi Yitzhak bar Ashyan said: If there is a single hideaway (מחבואה) there it saves all the women married to priests.” (Ketubot 27a)

“his mother and another woman had two sons, one each, and they then gave birth to two other sons in hiding,” (Yevamot 99a)

“If a man spent Shabbat in . . . a cave, even though it was like the cave of Zedekiah king of Judah, he may walk through the whole of it and two thousand cubits beyond.” (Eruvin 61)

## **Burial: First Temple Times: Gathered Unto His Fathers**

“And Abraham breathed his last, dying at a good ripe age, old and contented; and he was gathered to his kin.” (Bereshit 25:8)

God’s hand came upon me. I was taken out by the spirit of God and set down in the valley. It was full of bones. (Ezekiel 37:1-2)

## **An Unusual Burial Cave**

“But the king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh from Lachish with a large force to King Hezekiah in Jerusalem. They marched up to Jerusalem; and when they arrived, they took up a position near the conduit of the Upper Pool, by the road of the Fuller’s Field. They summoned the king; and Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, who was in charge of the palace, Shebna the scribe, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went out to them” (Kings II 18:17-18)

“Thus said my Sovereign God of Hosts: Go in to see that steward, that Shebna, in charge of the palace: What have you here, and whom have you here, That you have hewn out a tomb for yourself here?” (Isaiah 22:15-16)

“He [Shebna] would teach Torah to 130,000, [whereas King Hezekiah] would teach to 110,000” (Sanhedrin 26a)

“Wasn’t there Hezekiah? There was Shebna” [who was Hezekiah’s equal in Torah knowledge.] (Sanhedrin 36a)

“This is the grave of . . . yahu asher al habayit. There is no silver or gold here, only his bones and the bones of his maidservant with him. Cursed is the person who opens this.”

## **Burial: Second Temple Times: Ossuaries**

Rabbi Meir also stated : A person may gather the bones of his father and mother [on chol hamoed] because it is a source of joy for him. Rabbi Yosei says: it is a source of mourning for him. (Mishnah Moed Katan 1:5)

One may not dig crypts or graves on the intermediate days of a Festival (Mishnah Moed Katan 1:6)

R. Eliezer b. Zadoq said: When my father was dying he gave me this instruction, 'On my death bury me first in a valley, and later gather my bones and place them in a cedar coffin, but do not gather them with your hands'. And I did so for him. (Masechet Smachot 12:9)

## **Purity**

This is the ritual: When a person dies in a tent, whoever enters the tent and whoever is in the tent shall be impure seven days; and every open vessel, with no lid fastened down, shall be impure. (Bamidbar 19:14-15)

Stone vessels and dung vessels and earth vessels [pottery that was not fired] are not susceptible to ritual impurity, neither by Torah law nor by rabbinic law (Menachot 69b)

One who left an am ha'aretz in his house to guard him, if he can see those that enter and leave, only food and liquids and uncovered earthenware are unclean, but couches and seats and earthenware that have tightly fitting covers remain clean. (Mishnah Toharot 7:5)

The size of a hole that renders an earthen vessel clean: If the vessel was made for food, the hole must be big enough for olives [to fall through]. If it was used for liquids it suffices for the hole to be big enough for liquids (Mishnah Keilim 3:1)

## **Shallow Waters**

Regarding a [impure] needle on the steps of a cavern [which houses a *mikveh*], if one was moving the waters back and forth [by stirring the waters around with one's hands or feet], once a wave passes over it [the needle], it is pure. (Mishnah Mikvaot 7:7)

MISHNA: One must wash his hands before eating non-sacred food, and for tithes and for teruma; but for eating sacrificial food one must immerse one's hands in purification waters (Hagigah 18b)

## **Many Mikvaot**

The way down to the place of immersion, they are impure; the way up, they are pure, since the way down is not the same as the way up. (Shekalim 21)

Come and see how far purity has spread in Israel! (Shabbat 13a)

After which they assemble themselves together again into one place, and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water. And after this purification is over, they every one meet together in an apartment of their own, into which it is not permitted to any of another sect to

enter; while they go, after a pure manner, into the dining-room, as into a certain holy temple, and quietly set themselves down; upon which the baker lays them loaves in order; the cook also brings a single plate of one sort of food, and sets it before every one of them; but a priest says grace before meat; and it is unlawful for any one to taste of the food before grace be said. (Josephus Jewish War Book 2, chapter 8)

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (Matthew 3:13)

## Demons

Rava said: The crowding at the *kalla*, is from the demons; those knees that are fatigued is from the demons; those clothes of the Sages that wear out, is from friction with the demons; those feet that are in pain is from the demons. (Brachot 6a)

MISHNA: one who was thrown into a pit and he said that anyone who hears his voice should write a bill of divorce for his wife those who hear him should write this bill of divorce and give it Gemara: But let us be concerned that perhaps [the source of the voice in the pit] is a demon, (Gittin 66a)

"I got myself *sharim* and *sharot*, and human pleasures, *shidda* and *shiddot*' (Ecclesiastes 2:8) . . . "*Shidda* and *shiddot*": Here, in Babylonia, they interpreted: Male demons [*shidda*] and female demons [*shiddetin*]. In the West, Eretz Yisrael, they said that these words are referring to carriages [*shiddeta*]." (Gittin 68a)

in the West, they were not particular with regard to pairs. (Pesachim 110b)

This is a divorce writ for the Lilith<sup>[12]</sup> that curses which I have written for Imi daughter of Qaqi **and any name she has**. (Aramaic incantation bowl, Babylonia)

"Demons did exist. . . but as soon as Maimonides denied their existence, they disappeared from the world to honor him and from then on there are no more demons." (Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk 1787-1859)

## Gladiators

"If somebody sells himself and his children to Gentiles," if he sold himself repeatedly. But if he sold himself once, one buys him back, but if he sold himself to the ludim, one does not buy him back. (Yerushalmi Gittin 4:9)

There was a case of one who sold himself to the "ludim"; the case came before Rabbi Abbahu, who said, what can we do? He did it for his livelihood. (Yerushalmi Gittin 4:9)

"Reish Lakish sold himself to ludim." (Gittin 47b)

“If one goes to the Gentiles' theaters for government purposes, it is permitted, for enjoyment it is forbidden. If one sits in the theater, it is as if he shed blood. Rabbi Natan allows it for two purposes: because he can shout and save lives and so he can testify that a woman can remarry.” (Tosefta Avodah Zarah 2:7)

“Rabbi Nehunia ben HaKaneh would pray a short prayer when he entered and when he exited the study hall. . . when I exit I give thanks for my lot. What did he say? I thank You my God and God of my fathers that You have put me among those who sit in the study halls and the synagogues and **You did not put me among those who sit in the theaters and circuses**; for I work and they work, I am diligent and they are diligent, I work to inherit paradise and they work towards the grave.” (Talmud Yerushalmi Berakhot 4:7 )

## **Crucifixion**

“If they saw a man whose limbs had been severed or crucified on a cross, and he signaled and thereby stated: Write a bill of divorce for my wife, then those present should write and give” (Gittin 70b)

“one may not testify that a person died until his soul actually departs. And even if one saw him cut open or crucified” (Yevamot 120a)

“Or crucified on the cross,” I say a noble lady passed by and redeemed him. (Yerushalmi Yevamot 16:3)

“Why are you going out to be executed? Because I circumcised my son, the Jew. Why are you going out to be burned? Because I read in the Torah. **Why are you going out to be crucified? Because I ate matzoh.** Why are you being given a hundred lashes? Because I took the lulav.” (Mechilta deRabbi Yishmael 20:6:1)

“One may go out on Shabbat with a locust egg, and with a fox tooth, and with a nail from the crucified, for the purpose of healing” (Mishnah Shabbat 6:10)

”And Avraham took the wood of the burnt-offering (Gen. 22:6)’ — like one who carries his own cross (צלבו) on his shoulder.” (Bereshit Rabbah Parsha 56:3)