

Beyond the Text Part 2

#5 Off the Beaten Track

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)

Nidui

“All who entered the Temple Mount entered by the right and went and went out by the left,” save for one to whom something had happened, who entered and went round to the left. [He was asked]: “Why do you go round to the left?” [If he answered] “Because I am a mourner,” [they said to him], “May He who dwells in this house comfort you.” [If he answered] “Because I am excommunicated” [they said]: “May He who dwells in this house inspire them to draw you near again,” the words of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yose to him: you make it seem as if they treated him unjustly. Rather [they should say]: “May He who dwells in this house inspire you to listen to the words of your colleagues so that they may draw you near again.” (Mishnah Middot 2:2)

What's Your Name?

Names that are **Biblical** in origin, like those of the sons of Jacob, or Joshua or Isaac

Names that are **Hebrew but are not found in the Bible**, like Gamliel, Meir, Yochanan and Akiva (a derivative of Yaakov)

Names that are **Aramaicized Hebrew**, like Yossi (not Yosef), or Tabai (not Tuvia).

Greek and Latin names: Antigonus, Lulianus, Dosa, Pappos, Symmachos (סומכוס), Tarfon.

Most popular:

Shimon (33) followed by Yehuda (23) and Elazar and Eliezer

Least popular:

Moshe, Avraham, David, Shlomo, Yisrael

“Rabbi Huna said in the name of bar Kappara: By virtue of four matters, Israel was redeemed from Egypt: That they did not change their name, they did not change their language, they did not speak slander, and not one of them was steeped in licentiousness. They did not change their name: Reuben and Simeon descended [to Egypt]; Reuben and Simeon ascended. They did not call Reuben Rufus, they did not call Simeon Luleyani, Joseph, Listis, or Benjamin, Alexandra.” (Shir haShirim Rabba 4:12))

“have you ever heard of someone naming their child Pharaoh, Sisera or Sennacherib?!” (Bereshit Rabba 49:1)

bills of divorce that come from a country overseas, and witnesses are signed upon them, even though the names of the witnesses are like the names of gentiles, they are valid, because the names of most Jews outside of Eretz Yisrael are like the names of gentiles. (Gittin 11b)

Yonatan ben Uziel

“the Sages taught: Hillel the Elder had eighty students. Thirty of them were sufficiently worthy that the Divine Presence should rest upon them as it did upon Moses our teacher, thirty of them were sufficiently worthy that the sun should stand still for them as it did for Joshua bin Nun, and twenty were on an intermediate level. The greatest of all the students was Yonatan ben Uziel, and the least of them was Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai.” (Bava Batra 134a)

“Yonatan ben Uziel’s father vowed not to let him have any enjoyment from his property and in his will gave his part to Shammai. What did Shammai do? He sold some, gave some to the sacred fund, gave Yonatan the remainder as a gift, and said: He who wants to attack this gift, let him first get back [the merchandise] from the buyers and from the sacred fund; after that he can get [the remainder] back from this” (Yerushalmi Nedarim 5:6)

“The Sages taught: There was an incident involving one man whose children did not act properly. He arose and wrote a document transferring all his property to Yonatan ben Uziel” (Bava Batra 133b)

“The translation of the Prophets was composed by Yonatan ben Uziel based on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. [when Yonatan ben Uziel wrote his translation] Eretz Yisrael quaked over an area of four hundred parasangs [*parsa*] by four hundred parasangs, and a Divine Voice emerged and said: Who is this who has revealed My secrets to mankind?” (Megillah 3a)

“Yonatan ben Uziel, when he sat and was engaged in Torah any bird that flew over him was immediately incinerated.” (Sukkah 28a)

Honi HaMe'aagel

“An incident occurred in which the people said to Honi HaMe'aggel: Pray that rain should fall. He said to them: Go out and bring in the ovens used to roast the Paschal lambs, so that they will not dissolve. He prayed, and no rain fell at all. What did he do? He drew a circle and stood inside it and said before God: Master of the Universe, Your children have turned their faces toward me, as I am like a member of Your household. Therefore, I take an oath by Your great name that I will not move from here until You have mercy upon Your children” (Taanit 19a)

“They came and said to him: Just as you prayed over the rains that they should fall, so too, pray that they should stop. He said to them: Go out and see if the Claimants' Stone, has been washed away.” (Taanit 19a)

One day, he was walking along the road when he saw a certain man planting a carob tree. Honi said to him: This tree, after how many years will it bear fruit? The man said to him: until seventy years. Honi said to him: Is it obvious to you that you will live seventy years? He said to him: That man found a world full of carob trees. Just as my ancestors planted for me, I too am planting for my descendants. Honi sat and ate bread. Sleep overcame him and he slept. A cliff formed around him, and he disappeared from sight and slept for seventy years. (Taanit 23a)

Ben Azzai

“They deliberated before the Sages, this is referring to Shimon ben Azzai, and Shimon ben Zoma, and Hanan the Egyptian, and Hananya ben Hakhinai.” (Sanhedrin 17b)

“Abaye said: Behold I am like ben Azzai, [who would regularly expound on the Torah] in the markets of Tiberias.” (Kiddushin 20a)

“when Ben Azzai died, the diligent ceased;” (Sotah 9:15)

He used to say: do not despise any man, and do not discriminate against anything, for there is no man that has not his hour, and there is no thing that has not its place (Avot 4:3)

“Ben Azzai says: All the Sages of Israel appear to me as garlic peel, except for this bald one, [i.e., Rabbi Akiva].” (Behorot 58a)

“What shall I do, as my soul yearns for Torah,. It is possible for the world to be maintained by others,” (Yevamot 63b)

Rabbi Akiva’s daughter did the same thing for ben Azzai,. This explains the folk saying that people say: The ewe follows the ewe; the daughter’s actions are the same as her mother’s. (ketubot 63a)

The Sages taught: Four entered the orchard, and they are as follows: Ben Azzai; and ben Zoma; Aher, and Rabbi Akiva . . . Ben Azzai glimpsed and died. (Hagigah 14b)

Aher

“And some were saying because he saw the tongue of Rabbi Judah the baker given to the mouth of a dog. And Elisha said: "If the tongue which occupied itself every day in Torah [is treated] thus, how much more the tongue of the one who knows nothing and is not occupied in Torah!" and thus he said "If so then there is no reward for the righteous and no resurrection of the dead!"” (Ruth Rabba 6)

“And he did not know that it had been interpreted by Rabbi Akiva in public: "that you may fare well (*tov*)" in the world that is entirely good and "have a long life (*ha'arakhta*)" that is in the length (*'arokh*) of eternity".” (Ruth Rabba 6)

“Rabba bar Sheila found Elijah. He said to Elijah: What is the Holy One, Blessed be He, doing? Elijah said to him: He is stating *halakhot* transmitted by all of the Sages, but in the name of Rabbi Meir He will not speak. He said to him: Why? He replied: Because he learned *halakhot* from the mouth of Aher. He said to him: Why should he be judged unfavorably for that? Rabbi Meir found a pomegranate and ate its contents while throwing away its peel. He said to him: Indeed, your defense has been heard above. Now God is saying: My son, Meir, says” (Hagigah 15b)

“After many days Elisha the son of Avuya became sick and they said to Rabbi Meir: "Elisha your teacher is sick." He went to greet him and said "Repent again". And Elisha responded: "After this they would accept me?" And Rabbi Meir said: "You return man to dust (Psalm 90:3)"; until the crushing of the soul". As soon as he heard this Elisha son of Avuya wept and died. And Rabbi Meir was rejoicing and said: "my teacher was taken as he repented!".” (Ruth Rabba 6)

RaSHbi and Rabbi Elazar

“Rabbi Yehuda opened and said: How pleasant are the actions of this nation, [the Romans] as they established marketplaces, established bridges, and established bathhouses. Rabbi Yosei was silent. Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai responded and said: Everything that they established, they established only for their own purposes. They established marketplaces, to place prostitutes in them; bathhouses, to pamper themselves; and bridges, to collect taxes from them.” (Shabbat 33b)

“And Ḥizkiya said that Rabbi Yirmeya said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai: I have seen people who are elite [truly righteous], and they are few. If they number one thousand, I and my son are among them. If they number one hundred, I and my son are among them; and if they number two, I and my son are they” (Sukkah 45b)

“A Divine Voice emerged and said: Emerge from your cave. They emerged. Everywhere that Rabbi Elazar would strike, Rabbi Shimon would heal.” (Shabbat 33b)

Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi became offended. He came and told his father. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said to him: My son, do not let his actions offend you, as he is a lion, son of a lion, and you are a lion, son of a fox. (Bava Metzia 84b)

They brought Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, and he proceeded to arrest thieves. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa sent Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, the following message: You are vinegar, son of wine. Until when will you inform on the nation of our God to be sentenced to execution? Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, sent a message back to him: I am merely eradicating thorns from the vineyard Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa sent back to him: Let the Owner of the vineyard,, come and eradicate His own thorns. (Bava Metzia 83b)

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi

“Rebbi Ḥanina and Rebbi Joshua ben Levi appeared before the proconsul of Caesarea. He saw them and rose before them. They said to him, you get up before these Jews? He said to them, I saw faces of angels.” (Yerushalmi Berachot 5:1)

“Rebbi Yehoshua ben Levi was used to hear the lesson of his grandson every Friday. Once he forgot and went bathing in the public baths of Tiberias; he was leaning on Rebbi Ḥiyya bar Abba’s shoulder. He remembered that he had not heard his grandson’s lesson, turned around and left . . . Rebbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said to him, did our teacher not teach us “if they started they should not interrupt”? He said to him, Ḥiyya my son, is that unimportant in your eyes? For

anyone who hears the lesson from his grandson is as if he heard it from Sinai.
“(Yerushalmi Shabbat 1:2)

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi would attach himself to them and study Torah, saying :
“a loving hind and a graceful doe” (Proverbs 5:19). If it bestows grace on those
who learn it, does it not protect (Ketubot 77b)

When Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi was dying, they said to the Angel of Death: Go
and perform his bidding,. The Angel of Death went and appeared to him. Rabbi
Yehoshua ben Levi said to him: Show me my place in paradise. He said to him:
Very well. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to him: Give me your knife, lest you
frighten me on the way. He gave it to him. When he arrived there,, he lifted Rabbi
Yehoshua and he showed it to him. Rabbi Yehoshua jumped and fell into that
other side, (Ketubot 77b)

"הארון הזה... / בתו של רבי יהושוע... / זכר / צדיקים לברכה", "זו ארונו של רבי יהושוע ה...", "זו
ארו (נ)ה של קירה מנה / אשתו של רבי יהושוע / בן לוי שלום"

Rabbi Zeira, Ultimate Immigrant

“Rabbi Zeira said: May it be God’s will that I merit to ascend to Eretz Yisrael, and
that I learn this *halakha* from the mouth of its Master, Rabbi Elazar.” (Niddah
48a)

“As Rav Yehuda said: Anyone who ascends from Babylonia to Eretz Yisrael
transgresses a positive commandment, as it is stated: “They shall be taken to
Babylonia and there they shall remain until the day that I recall them, said the
Lord” (Jeremiah 27:22).” (Shabbat 41a)

When Rabbi Zeira ascended to Eretz Yisrael he could not find a ferry to cross.
He took hold of a rope and crossed the Jordan. A certain Sadducee said to him:
Hasty people who put your mouths before your ears, you remain hasty Rabbi
Zeira said to him: a place where Moses and Aaron did not merit entering; who is
to say that I will merit? (Ketubot 112b)

“He went and wanted to buy a pound of red meat from a butcher. He asked him:
How much is that pound? He said to him, 50 minas and one slap. He said to him:
Take 60 [and do not slap me], but he did not accept. Take 70, but he did not
accept. Take 80, take 90, until he came to 100 and he did not accept. Then he
said: Do what is your routine. The next morning he went to the Academy and
said to them: Rabbis, what is this bad practice here that nobody can eat a pound
of red meat unless they slap him!” (Yerushalmi Berachot 2:8)

When Rabbi Zeira ascended to Eretz Yisrael, he fasted one hundred fasts so that
he would forget the Babylonian method of studying Gemara, so that it would not
hinder him (Bava Metzia 85a)

“The land of Shinar [Babylonia] conceived and gave birth to him but the land of beauty [Eretz Yisrael] raised the darling of Babylonia” (Moed Katan 25b)

Rav Yosef: Broken and Whole

Rav Yosef, on the day of *Shavuot*, would say: Prepare me a choice third-born calf. He said: If not for this day on which the Torah was given that caused the Jewish people to have the Torah, how many Yosefs would there be in the market? (Pesachim 68b)

Rav Yosef said: Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi teaches that if there were three they are prohibited from carrying without an *eiruv*. Rav Beivai said to the Sages: Do not listen to him, as he is mistaken. I told it to him, and I told it to him in the name of Rav Adda bar Ahava, not Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. When he heard this, Rav Yosef said in astonishment: Master of Abraham! I mistook the word Rabbi for the word many [*rabbim*].

Rashi: When I forgot the matter in my illness

Rav Yosef fell ill and his studies were forgotten. Abaye restored his studies before him. This is what we say everywhere Rav Yosef said: I did not learn this *halakha*, and Abaye said to him: You said this to us (Nedarim 41a)

When Rava took leave of Rav Yosef, he would walk backward, until his legs were bruised and the threshold of Rav Yosef's house was bloodied (Yoma 53a)

Rav Yosef, said: At first I would say: If someone would tell me that the *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, who says: A blind person is exempt from fulfilling the mitzvot, I would make a festive day for the rabbis, as I am not commanded and yet I perform (Kiddushin 31a)

Rav Yosef teaches a *baraita*: This verse teaches that both the tablets of the Covenant and the pieces of the broken tablets are placed in the Ark. One should learn from here that with regard to a Torah scholar who has forgotten his Torah knowledge due to circumstances beyond his control, one may not behave toward him in a degrading manner. (Menachot 99a)

Rabbi Confusion #1: Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov

“Rav Huna said: Who is the tanna who taught the mishnayot in tractate Middot? It is Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov,” (Yoma 16a)

Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov said: once they found my mother's brother asleep, and they burnt his clothes.” (Mishnah Middot 1:2)

“It is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai said: I found a scroll recording people's lineages, in Jerusalem. . . it was also written in it: The

teachings of Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov measure only a kav but are clean and accurate, (משנת רבי אליעזר בן יעקב קב ונקי) (Yevamot 49b)

“Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov entered and expounded: “Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel, saying: Pay attention and hear Israel, this day you have become a people [to the Lord your God]” (Deuteronomy 27:9). Was it that day that they received the Torah? Had it not been forty years already since they received the Torah, and you say “this day”? Rather, it teaches that since Moses reviewed the Torah for them and they received it welcomingly, the Torah ascribed them credit as though they had received it that day from Mount Sinai. That is why it is stated: “This day you have become a people to the Lord your God.” And you, our brethren, residents of Usha, who hospitably welcomed our Rabbis, all the more so.” (Shir Hashirim Rabba 2:5)

“This is as it is taught in a baraita that Isi ben Yehuda would recount the praise of the Sages: Rabbi Meir, a scholar and scribe; . . . the mishna of Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov is measured [kav] and immaculate; . . .” (Gittin 67a)

“For there came a blind man to Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov’s town; Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov sat below him. so that they should say if he were not a great person, Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov would not sit below him. They provided for him in honor. He asked them, what is this? They told him, because Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov sat below you. He prayed for him the following prayer: You did a good deed for one who is seen but does not see; He Who sees but is not seen may be appeased by you and do good for you.” (Yerushalmi, end of Peah)

Rabbi Confusion #2: Too Many Kahanas

Rav Kahana bar Taḥalifa said in the name of Rav Kahana bar Minyumi, who said in the name of Rav Kahana bar Malkiyu, who said in the name of Rav Kahana, the teacher of Rav; and some say that Rav Kahana bar Malkiyu is Rav Kahana, the teacher of Rav:

Rav Kahana said: Since this involves *halakhot* of Sages named Kahana, I too will say something with regard to it: (Eruvin 8b)

Rav then said to Rav Kahana: Kahana, until now there were Persian rulers who were not particular about bloodshed. But now there are Greeks who are particular about bloodshed, and they will say: Murder [*meradin*], murder, , get up and ascend to Eretz Yisrael and accept upon yourself that you will not raise any difficulties to the statements of Rabbi Yoḥanan for seven years. Rav Kahana went to Eretz Yisrael and found Reish Lakish, who was sitting and reviewing Rabbi Yoḥanan’s daily lecture in the academy for the Rabbis, i.e., , Rav Kahana said to the students: Where is Reish Lakish? They said to him: Why do you wish to see him? Rav Kahana said to them: I have this difficulty and that difficulty with his review of Rabbi Yoḥanan’s lecture, and this resolution and that resolution to

the questions he raised. They told this to Reish Lakish. Reish Lakish then went and said to Rabbi Yoḥanan: A lion has ascended from Babylonia, and the Master ought to examine the discourse he will deliver in the academy tomorrow, (Bava Kamma 117b)