

# Beyond the Text Part 2

## #4 Others

### 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)

### Samaritans: Our Story and Their Story

“The king of Assyria brought [people] from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and he settled them in the towns of Samaria in place of the Israelites; they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its towns. When they first settled there, they did not worship GOD; so GOD sent lions against them that killed some of them. They said to the king of Assyria: “The nations that you deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know the rules of the God of the land; therefore [that God] has let lions loose against them that are killing them—for they do not know the rules of the God of the land.” The king of Assyria gave an order: “Send there one of the priests whom you have deported; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the practices of the God of the land” (Kings II 17:24-27)

### Gerizim VS Moriah

“The *matza* of a Samaritan is permitted, and a person can fulfill his obligation of Passover with it; but Rabbi Eliezer prohibits it, since Samaritans are not well versed in the details of mitzvot, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says that any

mitzva that Samaritans embraced and accepted, they are more exacting in its observance than are Jews.” (Kiddushin 76a)

When may they be received into the Jewish community? When they have renounced Mount Gerizim and acknowledged Jerusalem and the resurrection of the dead. From then onwards one who robs a Samaritan is like one who robs an Israelite. (Kutim 2:8)

### **Which Writing is Best?**

Mar Zutra says, and some say that it is Mar Ukva who says: Initially, the Torah was given to the Jewish people in *Ivrit* script, the original form of the written language, and the sacred tongue, Hebrew. It was given to them again in the days of Ezra in *Ashurit* script and the Aramaic tongue. The Jewish people selected *Ashurit* script and the sacred tongue for the Torah scroll and left *Ivrit* script and the Aramaic tongue for the commoners. The Gemara asks: Who are these commoners? Rav Hisda said: The Samaritans [*Kutim*]. (Sanhedrin 21b)

### **Sects and Parties in Second Temple Judaism**

For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees, of the second, the Sadducees, and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essenes. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have. These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons children while they are pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behaviour of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man. , (Josephus, The Jewish War 2:8)

A sect is a small, organized group that separates itself from a larger religious body and asserts that it alone embodies the ideals of the larger group because it alone understands God’s will. (From the Maccabees to the Mishnah, S.J.D. Cohen)

### **Did the Rabbis Talk About the Sects?**

**The Sadducees say: we complain against you, Pharisees**, because you say that the Holy Scriptures defile the hands, but the books of Homer do not defile the hands. Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai said: Have we nothing against the Pharisees but this? Behold they say that the bones of a donkey are clean, yet the bones of Yohanan the high priest are unclean. They said to him: according to the affection for them, so is their impurity, so that nobody should make spoons out of

the bones of his father or mother. He said to them: so also are the Holy Scriptures according to the affection for them, so is their uncleanness. The books of Homer which are not precious do not defile the hands. (Mishnah Yadayim 4:6)

How would they do it [reap the omer]? The agents of the court used to go out on the day before the festival and tie the unreaped grain in bunches to make it the easier to reap. All the inhabitants of the towns near by assembled there, so that it might be reaped with a great demonstration. As soon as it became dark he says to them: "Has the sun set?" And they answer, "Yes." "Has the sun set?" And they answer, "Yes." "With this sickle?" And they answer, "Yes." "With this sickle?" And they answer, "Yes." "Into this basket?" And they answer, "Yes." "Into this basket?" And they answer, "Yes." On the Sabbath he says to them, "On this Sabbath?" And they answer, "Yes." "On this Sabbath?" And they answer, "Yes." "Shall I reap?" And they answer, "Reap." "Shall I reap?" And they answer, "Reap." He repeated every matter three times, and they answer, "yes, yes, yes." And why all of this? **Because of the Boethusians who held that the reaping of the omer was not to take place at the conclusion of the [first day of the] festival.** (Mishnah Menachot 10:3)

## Jews and Jewish Christians

the blank folios [הגיליונין *hagilyonin*] and the Torah scrolls of the heretics, one does not rescue them from the fire. Rabbi Yosei says: During the week, one cuts the names of God contained therein and buries them, and burns the rest. Rabbi Tarfon said: I will bury my sons [if I fail to do the following,] that if these books come into my possession I will burn them and the names contained therein.

Rabbi Meir would call it the wicked folio [*aven gilyon*]; Rabbi Yohanan called it the sinful folio [*avon gilyon*]. (Shabbat 116a)

An objection was raised: 'No man should have any dealings with Minim, nor is it allowed to be healed by them even [in risking] an hour's life. It once happened to Ben Dama the son of R. Ishmael's sister that he was bitten by a serpent and Jacob, a native of Kefar Sekaniah, came to heal him but R. Ishmael did not let him; whereupon Ben Dama said, 'My brother R. Ishmael, let him, so that I may be healed by him: I will even cite a verse from the Torah that he is to be permitted'; but he did not manage to complete his saying, when his soul departed and he died. Whereupon R. Ishmael exclaimed, Happy art thou Ben Dama for thou wert pure in body and thy soul likewise left thee in purity; nor hast thou transgressed the words of thy colleagues, who said, (Kohélet 10) *He who breaketh through a fence, a serpent shall bite him?* — It is different with the teaching of *Minim*, for it draws, and one [having dealings with them] may be drawn after them: (Avodah Zarah 27b)

## Encounters in the Zippori Market

Once Rabbi Eliezer was accused of heresy (*minut*) and was brought before the ruler to be judged . . . after he was released he was upset that he had been accused of heresy. His students came in to comfort him but he was not comforted. Rabbi Akiva entered and said to him: Rebbe, maybe one of the heretics said something to you and you enjoyed it? Rabbi Eliezer said, from the heavens you have reminded me! Once I was walking on the main street in Zippori and a man named Yaakov of Kfar Sakhnaya came and told me something in someone's name and I enjoyed it. (Kohelet Rabba 1:8 )

## Converts

The Sages taught a potential convert who comes to convert, at the present time, they say to him: What did you see that you to come to convert? Don't you know that the Jewish people at the present time are anguished, suppressed, despised, and harassed, and hardships are visited upon them? If he says: I know, and I am unworthy, then the court accepts him immediately (Yevamot 47a)

Rabbi Helbo said: Converts are as harmful to the Jewish people as a leprous scab [*sappaḥaf*] (Yevamot 47b)

Come and hear: Beloreya the convert once asked Rabban Gamliel: It is written in your Torah: "The great, mighty, and awesome God who favors no one" (Deuteronomy 10:17), and elsewhere it is written: "The Lord shall show favor to you and give you peace" (Numbers 6: 26). (Rosh HaShanah 17b)

"There was an incident involving Beloreya the female convert in which her slaves preempted her and immersed before her own immersion for her own conversion. And the details of the incident came before the Sages, and they said: The slaves acquired themselves and became freemen."(Yevamot 46a)

These bring [bikkurim] but do not read the declaration: The convert, since he cannot say: "Which the Lord has sworn to our fathers, to give to us" (Deuteronomy 26:3). If his mother was an Israelite, then he brings bikkurim and recites. When he prays privately, he says: "God of the fathers of Israel," but when he is in the synagogue, he should say: "The God of your fathers." (Mishnah Bikkurim 1:4)

Some of Haman's descendants studied Torah in Bnei Brak, and some of Sisera's descendants taught children Torah in Jerusalem, and some of Sennacherib's descendants taught Torah in public. Who are they? They are Shemaya and Avtalyon (Gittin 57b)

## Roman Army

“the gulyarim initiate the war and the giborim follow them and prevail.” (Nazir 66b)

“As long as they occupy themselves with the Temple service, they will not be delivered into your hands. The next day they lowered down money in a box as usual, but this time they sent up to them a pig. When the pig reached to the midpoint of the Temple wall it stuck its hooves into the wall, and Eretz Yisrael quaked over an area of four hundred parasangs by four hundred parasangs.” (Bava Kama 82b)

## Sandals

MISHNA: A man may not go out on Shabbat with a spiked sandal. . .

the sandal of one of them was reversed, the front of the sandal was in the back, and his footprints appeared like the steps of one leaving the cave. They thought that one of them left and feared that their enemies saw him and were now coming upon them to attack. In their panic, they pushed one another and killed one another in greater numbers than their enemies had killed among them.” (Shabbat 60a)

## 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)