

Oral Law Preserved: Rabbi Judah the Prince and the Redaction of the Mishnah

Who was Rebbe?

For a Master said: When R. Akiba died, Rabbi was born; when Rabbi died, Rab Judah was born; when Rab Judah died, Raba was born; when Raba died, R. Ashi was born. This teaches that a righteous man does not depart from the world until [another] righteous man like himself is created, as it is said, the sun riseth and the sun goeth down (Kiddushin 72b)

Rabbah the son of Raba, or as some say R. Hillel the son of R. Wallas also said: Between Moses and Rabbi we do not find one who was supreme both in Torah and in worldly affairs (Gittin 59a)

Rab said: if he is of the living, it would be our holy Master; if of the dead, it would have been Daniel the most desirable man.(Sanhedrin 98b)

What is an Ossuary?

Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Zadok said, my father said to me when he died, my son bury me in the valley and eventually collect my bones and put them in a deluskema (ossuary) and do not collect them with your hands, and that is what I did. (Masechet Smachot 12:9)

One does not bury one person besides another and not a body near bones or bones near a body. Rabbi Yehudah said, anyone who can sleep next to him in life, is buried next to him in death. (Masechet Smachot 13:8)

If a man sold to his fellow a place in which to make a tomb, so, too, if a man was commissioned by his fellow to make a tomb, he must make the inside of the vault four cubits by six, and open within it eight niches, three on this side, three on that side, and two opposite [the doorway]. The niches must be four cubits long, seven handbreadths high, and six handbreadths wide. (Mishnah Bava Batra 6:8)

Initially, the funeral expenditures for the deceased were more taxing for his relatives than his death, as the burials were opulent, until it reached a point where people would abandon the deceased and flee. This continued until Rabbi Gamliel came and conducted himself in a self-deprecatory manner, instructing the people that they were to take him for burial in plain linen garments. And all

the people conducted themselves following his example, and instructed their families to take them for burial in plain linen garments. (Ketubot 8b)

Rebbe's Death

Our Rabbis taught: When Rabbi was about to depart [from this life] he said, 'I require [the presence] of my sons'. When his sons entered into his presence he instructed them: 'Take care that you shew due respect to your mother. The light shall continue to burn in its usual place, the table shall be laid in its usual place [and my] bed shall be spread in its usual place. Joseph of Haifa and Simeon of Efrath who attended on me in my lifetime shall attend on me when I am dead'. . .

'I require'. he said to them, '[the presence] of the Sages of Israel', and the Sages of Israel entered into his presence. 'Do not lament for me', he said to them, 'in the smaller towns, and reassemble the college after thirty days. **My son Simeon is wise my son Gamaliel Nasi and Hanina b. Hama shall preside [at the college].**

. . . It was taught: Rabbi was lying [on his sickbed] at Sepphoris but a [burial] place was reserved for him at Beth She'arim. Was it not, however, taught: Justice, justice shalt thou follow. follow Rabbi to Beth She'arim? - Rabbi was [indeed] living at Beth She'arim but when he fell ill he was brought to Sepphoris because it was situated on higher ground and its air was salubrious.

On the day when Rabbi died the Rabbis decreed a public fast and offered prayers for heavenly mercy. They furthermore, announced that whoever said that Rabbi was dead would be stabbed with a sword.

Rabbi's handmaid ascended the roof and prayed: 'The immortals desire Rabbi [to join them] and the mortals⁴ desire Rabbi [to remain with them]; may it be the will [of God] that the mortals may overpower the immortals'. When, however, she saw how often he resorted to the privy, painfully taking off his tefillin and putting them on again, she prayed: 'May it be the will [of the Almighty] that the immortals may overpower the mortals'. As the Rabbis incessantly continued their prayers for [heavenly] mercy she took up a jar and threw it down from the roof to the ground. [For a moment] they ceased praying and the soul of Rabbi departed to its eternal rest. 'Go', said the Rabbis to Bar Kappara, 'and investigate'. He went and, finding that [Rabbi] was dead, he tore his cloak and turned the tear backwards. [On returning to the Rabbis] he began: 'The angels and the mortals have taken hold of the holy ark. The angels overpowered the mortals and the holy ark has been captured'. 'Has he', they asked him, 'gone to his eternal rest?' - 'You', he replied, 'said it; I did not say it'.

Rabbi, at the time of his passing, raised his ten fingers towards heaven and said: 'Sovereign of the Universe, it is revealed and known to you that I have laboured in the study of the Torah with my ten fingers and that I did not enjoy [any worldly]

benefits even with my little finger. May it be Thy will that there be peace In my [Jast] resting place'. A bath kol echoed, announcing, He shall enter into peace; they shall rest on their beds. (Ketubot 103a-b)

"And they afforded him honor in his death" (II Chronicles 32:33). This teaches that they established a yeshiva at his grave to study Torah there. (Bava Kama 16b)

Compiling the Mishnah

Our Holy Master compiled the Mishna. From the days of Moses our Master till our Holy Master no text book of the Oral Torah for public instruction had been issued, the practice theretofore being for the president of a tribunal or a prophet who flourished in a given generation to keep privately written memoranda of his Masters' oral teachings, out of which he, in turn, instructed the public orally... .

and he collected all traditional precedents, judicial pronouncements, expositions and explanations, whether they were traditionally attributed to Moses our Master or whether they were so instructed by the tribunals in each and every generation, the scope of which embraced the whole Torah, and from it all he compiled the Book of the Mishna, out of which he gave public instruction to scholars, and its fame reached to all Israel, and written copies of it were made universally, and its circulation reached everywhere, so that the Oral Torah be not forgotten from the midst of Israel. But why did our Holy Master thus, and did not leave the matter as it was heretofore? Because he observed that the number of students continued to decrease, whereas the volume of oppression continued to increase with renewed strength; that the Roman Empire continued to spread out its boundaries in the world and conquer, whereas Israel continued to drift aimlessly and follow extremes, he, therefore, compiled one book, a handy volume for all, so that they may study it even in haste and not forget it. And his whole lifetime, he sat together with the members of his tribunal and gave public instruction in the Mishna. (Maimonides, Introduction to the Mishneh Torah)

Six Orders of Mishnah

Zeraim ("Seeds"), dealing with prayer and blessings, tithes and agricultural laws (11 tractates)

Moed ("Festival"), pertaining to the laws of the Sabbath and the Festivals (12 tractates)

Nashim ("Women"), concerning marriage and divorce, some forms of oaths and the laws of the nazirite (7 tractates)

Nezikin ("Damages"), dealing with civil and criminal law, the functioning of the courts and oaths (10 tractates)

Kodashim ("Holy things"), regarding sacrificial rites, the Temple, and the dietary laws (11 tractates) and

Tohorot ("Purities"), pertaining to the laws of purity and impurity, including the impurity of the dead, the laws of food purity and bodily purity (12 tractates).

Zippori

Zeira said: The city of Kitron that is mentioned in the Bible is the city of Zippori. And why was it called Zippori? Because it sits on top of a mountain like a bird [zippor]. (Megillah 6a)

With regard to figures of human faces [*partzufot*] that spray water in the cities, i.e., fountains, one may not place his mouth on the mouths of the figures and drink, because he appears to be kissing the object of idol worship (Avoda Zara 12a)

Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus remembered that he was walking on the main street of Zippori and Jacob of Kfar Sachnaya came and told him some Torah and it pleased him (Kohelet Rabba 1:8)

Synagogue

Rabbi Levi said: Abraham Avinu saw the ram leave one bramble and become entangled in another bramble. God said to him: this is how your children will be in the future, entangled in the empires: from Babylon to Medea, from Medea to Greece, from Greece to Edom, and ultimately they will be redeemed with the horn of a ram as it says: God will blow the shofar. (Bereshit Rabba Parsha 56)

"his carriage is purple" (argaman): this is the sun that is placed above and rides in a chariot and lights up the world, as it is said "and he is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber," and from the power of the sun the rain falls and from the power of the sun the earth gives fruit and therefore it is called 'argaman,' that God made it to weave (laarog) manna (man) for the world and manna is fruit and food. (Bamidbar Rabba 12:4)

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו ואלקי אבותינו. אלהי אברהם. אלהי יצחק. אלהי יעקב. הַאֱלֹהִים הָגָדוֹל הָגָבָר
וְהַנּוֹרָא אֵל עֲלֵינוּ. גּוֹמֵל חֶסֶדִים טוֹבִים. וְקֹנוֹת הַכָּל. וְזָכֵר חֶסֶדִי אֲבוֹת. וּמְבִיא גּוֹאֵל לְבָנֵינוּ בְּנֵינוּם
לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בָּאֶחָבָה:

Blessed are You, Lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob; **the great, mighty and awesome God, the most high God**, Who bestows loving kindness and goodness and is master/creator of all,

Who remembers the good deeds of the fathers, and brings a redeemer to their children, in love and for the sake of His name. (First blessing of the amida prayer)