

# Beyond the Text #7

## Ladies First

### From City Gate to City Square

“they remove the ark to the main city square and place burnt ashes upon the ark,” (Taanit 15a)

“Why do they go out to the square? Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said: to say: We cried out in private and we were not answered. We will therefore disgrace ourselves in public. Reish Lakish said: We have been exiled; may our exile atone for us.” (Taanit 16a)

“How were the bikkurim taken up [to Jerusalem]? All [the inhabitants of] the cities of the maamad would assemble in the city of the maamad, and they would spend the night in the open street and they would not enter any of the houses.” (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:2)

“Residents of a town who sold the town square, may purchase a synagogue with the proceeds. If they sold a synagogue, they may purchase an ark.” (Mishnah Megillah 3:1)

### Bet Midrash

“there cannot be a study hall without a novelty.” (Hagigah 3a)

“And Rav Pappi said in the name of Rava: To convert a building from a synagogue into a study hall is permitted, but from a study hall into a synagogue is prohibited,” (Megillah 26b)

“Rabbi Levi bar Ḥiyya said: One who leaves the synagogue and enters the study hall and engages in Torah study, is privileged to receive the Divine Presence, as it is stated: ‘They go from strength to strength, every one of them appears before God in Zion’ ” (Psalms 84:8) (Berachot 64a)

“Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi, despite the fact that they had thirteen synagogues in Tiberias, they would only pray between the pillars where they studied.” (Berachot 8a)

### Synagogue Styles

“The synagogue, more than any other Jewish institution of antiquity, demonstrates a fascinating synthesis of Jewish and non-Jewish elements within a single framework. The integration of these elements in every aspect of the institution – from the physical dimensions of art and architecture to the spiritual

dimension of liturgy, offers a glimpse into the diverse and dynamic nature of Jewish life at the time, socially, religiously and culturally.” (Professor Israel Levine, The Ancient Synagogue)

## **Did Women Attend Synagogue?**

“a certain widow in whose neighborhood there was a synagogue, and despite this every day she went and prayed in the study hall of Rabbi Yoḥanan. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to her: My daughter, is there not a synagogue in your neighborhood? She said to him: My teacher, don't I attain a reward for all the steps I take while walking to pray in the distant study hall?” (Sotah 22a)

“Rabbi Meir used to preach in the synagogue of Hammat every Friday night and a certain woman there used to listen to his voice. One day he preached for a long time. She went and tried to enter her house but found that the lamp had gone out. Her husband said to her where have you been. She said I was listening to the preacher. He said to her I swear you will never enter this house until you spit in the face of the preacher.” (Yerushalmi Sotah 1:4 )

“And on the Sabbath day we went forth without the gate by the riverside, where it seemed likely that there would be a place of prayer: and we sat down, and spake unto the women which were come together.” (Apostles 16:13 )

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis they went down to Apollonis, and thence to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, [and] for three sabbath days discoursed with them from the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it behoved [the] Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, and that this is Christ, Jesus whom, said he, I [81] proclaim unto you. And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas, in the teaching: and many of the devout, and of Greeks a great multitude, and women, of the first rank, not a few.” (Apostles 17)

## **Was There a Women's Section in Ancient Times?**

“One who did not see the Celebration of the Place of the Drawing of the Water never saw celebration in his days. This was the sequence of events: At the conclusion of the first Festival day the priests and the Levites descended from the Israelites' courtyard to the Women's Courtyard, where they would introduce a significant repair . . . What is this significant repair? Rabbi Elazar said that it is like that which we learned surrounded the courtyard with a balcony [*gezuztra*]. And they instituted that the women should sit above and the men below. . . The Sages taught in the *Tosefta*: Initially, women would stand on the inside of the Women's Courtyard, and the men were on the outside. And they would come to conduct themselves with inappropriate levity in each other's company,. Therefore, the Sages instituted that the women should sit on the outside and the

men on the inside, and still they would come to conduct themselves with inappropriate levity. Therefore, they instituted in the interest of complete separation that the women would sit above and the men below. .” (Sukkah 51)

תוספתא מסכת ערכין (צוקרמאנדל) פרק ב לעולם לא נראית אשה בעזרה אלא בשעת קרבנה בלבד

“R. Kahana said: If there are men without [i.e., in the outer chamber] and women within, we have no fear of privacy. If there are men in the inner chamber and women in the outer, we have fear of privacy. In a Baraita the reverse was taught. Said Abaye: Now that R. Kahana ruled thus, while the Baraita taught the reverse, let us act stringently. Abaye made a partition of jugs; Raba made a partition of canes.” (Kiddushin 81a)

### **Donors and Leaders**

"Rufina, Judean, head of the synagogue [*archisynagogos*], prepared the burial-niche for her freedmen and slaves. No one else has the authority to bury anyone else [here]. Now if anyone dares to do so, that person will pay 1500 denarii to the most holy treasury and 1000 denarii to the people [*ethnos*] of the Judeans. (synagogue inscription, Smyrna, 2-3 century CE)

### **Jewels Jewels and More Jewels**

“And, likewise, a woman may neither go out with the ornament called *totefet*, nor with *sarvitin* that are not sewn into her head covering, nor with a *kavul* into the public domain. And, likewise, a woman may neither go out with a city of gold ornament, nor with a *catela* ornament, nor with nose rings, nor with a ring that has no seal on it, nor with a needle that is not perforated,” (Mishnah Shabbat 6:1)

“Our sages maintain that she is forbidden to wear them in public even on a weekday, for people would stare at her if she did so, and that is discreditable to a woman. Ornaments were given to woman to wear only inside her home.” (Tanhuma VaYishlach 5:2)

### **City of Gold**

“We learned in the mishna: And neither may a woman go out on Shabbat to the public domain with a city of gold. The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of: With a city of gold? Rabba bar bar Ḥana said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Jerusalem of Gold, a gold tiara engraved with a depiction of the city of Jerusalem, like the one that Rabbi Akiva made for his wife.” (Shabbat 59b)

“Rabbi Akiva became betrothed to the daughter of bar Kalba Savua. When bar Kalba Savua heard about their betrothal, he took a vow prohibiting her from eating all of his property. Despite this, she went ahead and married Rabbi Akiva. In the winter they would sleep in a storehouse of straw, and Rabbi Akiva would

gather strands of straw from her hair. He said to her: If I had the means I would place on your head a Jerusalem of Gold, a type of crown.” (Nedarim 50a)

“They further taught that in the war of Titus the Sages decreed upon the crowns of brides. The Gemara clarifies: What are the crowns of brides? Rabba bar bar Hana says that Rabbi Yoḥanan says: A city of gold.” (Sotah 49b)

## **Apiryon**

פְּרִיזוֹן עֲשָׂה לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה מֵעֵץ הַלְבָּנוֹן

“King Solomon made him an apiryon of wood from Lebanon. “(Song of Songs 3:9)

“Rav Yehuda bar Zevina says: He performed an act of marriage. He sat her on a palanquin [apiryon], and Aaron and Miriam danced before her, and the ministering angels said: “A joyful mother of children” (Psalms 113:9).” (Sotah 12a)

“Rabbi Yehuda said more than that: Even if she is sitting in a bridal chair [apiryon] going from her father’s house to her husband’s house and said along the way: I do not want so-and-so as my husband, this constitutes a refusal.” (Yevamot 108a)

“In the last war [the Bar Kokhba Revolt], they decreed that a bride may not go out in an apiryon inside the city, but our [later] Sages permitted a bride to go out in an apiryon inside the city,” (Mishnah Sotah 9:14)

“Rav says (concerning the decree banning the wearing of crowns that) they taught this *halakha* only with regard to crowns of salt and sulfur, but those of myrtle and rose are permitted. And Shmuel says that even crowns of myrtle and rose are prohibited, but those made of reeds and bulrush are permitted. And Levi says: Even crowns of reeds and bulrush are prohibited. And likewise Levi teaches in his *baraita*: Even those of reeds and bulrush are prohibited.” (Sotah 49b)

## **The Tallit: Garment of Scholars**

“Rabbi Yosi says: eighteen garments, and these are the eighteen garments: A cloak [miktoren], a cape [unkali], , and a large hollow belt [punda], a wide linen garment [kalbus], and a robe worn against the skin [chaluk], a robe wrapped above [apilyon], and a kerchief, and two straps, and two shoes, and two socks [anpilaot], and two tall boots [pargod], and a belt around one’s loins, and a hat on one’s head, and a scarf around one’s neck [sudar].” (Shabbat 120a)

“Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: anyone who glorifies himself by wearing a tallit of a Torah scholar, but he is not a Torah scholar, he will not be brought within the boundary of the Holy One, Blessed be He” (Bava Batra 98a)

“Rabbi Yoḥanan asked Rabbi Bena’ā . . . How should a Torah scholar wear his tallit? He replied: So that a handbreadth of his garment worn under his clothes is not visible from beneath it.” (Bava Batra 57b)

“It was said about Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Ilai, that six of his students would cover themselves with one tallit and they would engage in Torah study.” (Sanhedrin 20a)

## Like a Rainbow

“if the owner gave wool to a dyer to dye it red for him and instead he dyed it black, or to dye it black and he dyed it red, Rabbi Meir says: The dyer gives the owner of the wool the value of his wool. Rabbi Yehuda says: Here too, if the value of the enhancement exceeds the dyer’s expenses, the owner of the wool gives the dyer the expenses. And if the expenses exceed the enhancement, he gives him the value of the enhancement.” (Bava Kamma 100b)

“Rabbi Yehuda says: Even one whose hands were colored with *satis*, a blue dye, may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction because the congregation will look at him.” (Megillah 24b)

“What is species of dyeing matter? Aftergrowths of woad and madder. . . The peels and the blossom of the pomegranate, the nutshells, and fruit seeds the laws of sabbatical produce apply to them and to their money substitutes. The dyer may use them for himself, but he may not dye with them for a wage, since one may not engage in business with seventh year produce” (Mishnah Sheviit 7:1,3)

פואה: madder (red)

סטיוס: woad (blue)

תולעת שני: (red)

קלא אילן : indigo (blue)

Issachar’s sons: Tola, Puvah, Iob, and Shimron. (Bereshit 46:13)

## True Blue

“And I am also He Who is destined to exact punishment from one who hangs ritual fringes dyed with indigo [*kala ilan*] dye on his garment and says it is dyed with techelet” (Bava Metzia 61b)

“The Sages taught: This *hilazon*, which is the source of the sky-blue dye used in ritual fringes, has the following characteristics: Its body resembles the sea, its form resembles that of a fish, it emerges once in seventy years, and with its blood one dyes wool techelet for ritual fringes. It is scarce, and therefore it is expensive.” (Menachot 44a)

“because techelet is similar in its color to the sea, and the sea is similar to the sky, and the sky is similar to the Throne of Glory, as it is stated: ‘And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet the like of a paved work of sapphire stone, and the like of the very heaven for clearness’ ” (Exodus 24:10). (Sotah 17a)