

NOTES

And the *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of that disciple – יהלכה באותו תלמיד: Some explain that Rabbi Akiva intended to say that although he knows that there is no such tradition and Rabbi Yishmael certainly did not make that statement, nevertheless, that student's opinion seems logical (*Ge'on Ya'akov*).

Destroying the whole world in its entirety – מחריב את כל העולם כולו: See Rashi and *Tosafot*, who offer various examples demonstrating that the meaning of a verse can change with the addition or omission of a single letter. The examples illustrate that minor changes can possibly destroy the entire world, e.g., when they lead to readings that involve heresy, sacrilege, or blasphemy.

LANGUAGE

Copper sulfate [*kankantom*] – קנקנתום: From the Greek *χάλκανθος*, *chalkanthos*, meaning copper sulfate.

Scribe [*lavlar*] – לבלר: From the Latin *librarius*, meaning scribe or one whose profession is copying books.

BACKGROUND

The preparation of ink – עשיית דיו: In the talmudic period, ink was primarily a combination of soot and oil. Various substances were added to it before it was mixed with water. On most parchment, this ink was erasable and could be blotted out with water. To overcome this problem, they would occasionally utilize substances, e.g., copper sulfate, that would render the ink more permanent and prevent its erasure.

HALAKHA

Writing a Torah scroll with copper sulfate – כתיבת תורה בקנקנתום: A Torah scroll is written with ink made from the soot of burnt oils and gall water *ab initio*. However, ink with copper sulfate is acceptable after the fact (*Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a 271:6*).

רבי עקיבא אומר: על זה ועל זה נחלקו כו'.

The mishna relates that a student recited a *halakha* before Rabbi Akiva, and he did not accept the student's version of the dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, as **Rabbi Akiva said: They disagree about this, an alleyway less than four cubits wide, and about that, an alleyway more than four cubits wide.**

רבי עקיבא היינו תנא קמא! איבא בינייהו דרב אחלי ואיתימא רב יחיאל, ולא מסיימי.

The Gemara asks: In that case, the opinion of **Rabbi Akiva** is identical with the opinion **first tanna** of the mishna, as he too holds that Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagree in all cases, irrespective of the width of the alleyway. The Gemara answers: **There is a practical difference between them** with regard to the *halakha* stated by **Rav Ahlai**, and some say it was **Rav Yehiel**, that an alleyway less than four handbreadths wide requires no corrective action. However, their respective opinions **are not defined**; which *tanna* accepts the view of Rav Ahlai and which *tanna* rejects it cannot be determined.

תנא, אומר רבי עקיבא: לא אומר רבי ישמעאל דבר זה, אלא אותו תלמיד אומר דבר זה – והלכה באותו תלמיד.

It was taught in a *baraita* that **Rabbi Akiva said: Rabbi Yishmael did not state this matter**, as it is unlikely that Rabbi Yishmael would err in this manner; rather, it was **that disciple who stated that matter on his own, and the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of that disciple.**^N

הא גופה קשיא: אמרת "לא אומר רבי ישמעאל דבר זה" – אלמא לית הלכתא בותיה, והדר אמרת "הלכה באותו תלמיד"!

With regard to that *baraita* the Gemara asks: **This baraita itself is difficult. You stated initially that Rabbi Yishmael did not state this matter; apparently the halakha is not in accordance with the opinion of the disciple. And then you said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of that disciple.**

אמר רב יהודה, אומר שמואל: לא אמרה רבי עקיבא אלא לחדד בה התלמידים.

Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: Rabbi Akiva said that the halakha is in accordance with that disciple only to sharpen the minds of his students with his statement. Seeking to encourage his students to suggest novel opinions, he praised that disciple before them but did not actually rule in accordance with the disciple's opinion.

ורב נחמן בר יצחק אומר: נראין איתמר.

And Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said, in another attempt to resolve the contradiction: The statement of the disciple appears to be reasonable was stated. Although Rabbi Yishmael himself did not make that statement, the statement of the disciple is reasonable.

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: כל מקום שאתה מוצא משום רבי ישמעאל אומר תלמיד אחד לפני רבי עקיבא – אינו אלא רבי מאיר, ששימש את רבי ישמעאל ואת רבי עקיבא.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Anywhere that you find a statement introduced with: A certain disciple said before Rabbi Akiva in the name of Rabbi Yishmael, it is none other than Rabbi Meir, who was the student who served both Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva.

דתנא, אומר רבי מאיר: בשתייתי אצל רבי ישמעאל הייתי מטיל קנקנתום לתוך הדיו ולא אומר לי דבר. בשבאתי אצל רבי עקיבא, אסרה עלי.

As it was taught in a *baraita* that **Rabbi Meir said: When I was a student with Rabbi Yishmael, I used to put copper sulfate [*kankantom*]^l into the ink^b with which I wrote Torah scrolls,^h and he did not say anything to me. When I came to study with Rabbi Akiva, he prohibited me from doing so.**

איני? והאמר רב יהודה, אומר שמואל משום רבי מאיר: בשתייתי לומד אצל רבי עקיבא הייתי מטיל קנקנתום לתוך הדיו ולא אומר לי דבר. וכשבאתי אצל רבי ישמעאל, אומר לי: בני, מה מלאכתך? אמרתי לו: לבלר אני. אומר לי: בני, הוי זהיר במלאכתך, שמלאכתך מלאכת שמים היא, שפא אתה מחסר אות אחת או מיתר אות אחת – נמצאת מחריב את כל העולם כולו.

The Gemara challenges this statement: **Is that so? Didn't Rav Yehuda say that Shmuel said in the name of Rabbi Meir: When I studied with Rabbi Akiva as his disciple, I used to put copper sulfate into the ink, and he did not say anything to me. But when I came to study with Rabbi Yishmael, he said to me: My son, what is your vocation? I replied: I am a scribe [*lavlar*]^l who writes Torah scrolls. He said to me: My son, be careful in your vocation, as your vocation is heavenly service, and care must be taken lest you omit a single letter or add a single letter out of place, and you will end up destroying the whole world in its entirety.**^N Addition or omission of a single letter can change the meaning from truth [*emet*] to death [*met*].

Dalet and reish – דלית ריש: This example also alludes to a specific instance, namely, the phrase: “The Lord is One [ehad]” (Deuteronomy 6:4). If the crown of the letter *dalet* is erased, the letter becomes a *reish*, and the phrase becomes: God is other [*aher*], which is blasphemous.

Erasing the Torah passage with regard to a *sota* – מחיית פְּרִשְׁת סוּטָה: The *halakhot* of *sota* are detailed in the Torah (Numbers 5) and in tractate *Sota*. The relevant details in this context are elements in the ordeal to which the *sota* is subjected. The curses stated in the Torah with regard to a *sota* were written on a scroll, which was then immersed in water until the writing dissolved, after which the woman drank from the water. The dispute between the Sages here relates to the question which of these actions, the writing or the erasing of the scroll in water, must be performed specifically in the name of the particular woman undergoing the ordeal.

HALAKHA

The Torah passage with regard to a *sota* used in the Temple – פְּרִשְׁת סוּטָה שְׁבִמְקֶדֶשׁ: The scroll used in the ordeal of a *sota* in the Temple may not be written in ink with copper sulfate, since in that case the writing would not be erasable (Rambam *Sefer Nashim*, *Hilkhot Sota* 3:8).

אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: דָּבָר אֶחָד יֵשׁ לִי וְקִנְקַנְתּוֹם שְׁמוֹ, שְׂאֲנִי מִטֵּיִל לְתוֹךְ הַדִּיּוֹ. אָמַר לִי: וְכִי מִטֵּיִלִּין קִנְקַנְתּוֹם לְתוֹךְ הַדִּיּוֹ? וְהֲלֹא אָמַרְהָ תוֹרָה “וּכְתַב” וּמַחְהָ – פְּתַב שְׂיִכּוֹל לְמַחֹת.

I said to him: I have one substance called copper sulfate, which I place into the ink, and therefore I am not concerned. He said to me: May one place copper sulfate into the ink? Didn't the Torah state with regard to *sota*: “And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out into the water of bitterness” (Numbers 5:23)? The Torah requires writing that can be blotted out.

מֵאֵי קָאָמַר לֵיהּ, וּמֵאֵי קָאָ מְהַדְרָ לֵיהּ?

The Gemara clarifies elements of the conversation: **What is Rabbi Yishmael saying to Rabbi Meir, and what is he answering him?** Rabbi Meir's response with regard to copper sulfate does not seem to address Rabbi Yishmael's comments with regard to omissions and additions.

הֵבִי קָאָמַר לֵיהּ: לֹא מִבְּעֵינֵי בְּחִסְרוֹת וּבִיְתִירוֹת [דְּלֹא טְעִינָא] דְּבָקִי אָנָּא, אֶלְיָא אֶפִּילוּ מִיַּחַשׁ לְיִבּוּב נְמִי, דִּילְמָא אֲתִי וְיִתִּיב אֲתַגִּיחַ דְּדַלִּית וּמַחִיק לֵיהּ וּמְשׁוּי לֵיהּ רִישׁ, דָּבָר אֶחָד יֵשׁ לִי וְקִנְקַנְתּוֹם שְׁמוֹ שְׂאֲנִי מִטֵּיִל לְתוֹךְ הַדִּיּוֹ.

The Gemara explains that this is what Rabbi Meir is saying to Rabbi Yishmael: **There is no need to mention defective and plene words, as I am an expert; however, even with regard to the concern that a fly might come and land on the crown of the letter *dalet* and blot it out and render it a *reish*,**^N thereby changing the meaning of the word, I am not concerned, as I have a substance called copper sulfate that I place into the ink so that it will not be erased.

קְשִׁיָּא שִׁימוּשׁ אֲשִׁימוּשׁ, קְשִׁיָּא אֲסָרָה אֲאָסָרָה!

Nevertheless, **there is a difficulty between service and service**, as one source states that Rabbi Meir initially served Rabbi Akiva, whereas the other source states that he served Rabbi Yishmael first. **There is a difficulty between the words he prohibited it in the *baraita*, which is referring to Rabbi Akiva, and he prohibited it in the statement of Rav Yehuda, which is referring to Rabbi Yishmael.**

בְּשִׁלְמָא שִׁימוּשׁ אֲשִׁימוּשׁ לֹא קְשִׁיָּא; מַעֲקָרָא אֲתָא לְקַמְיָה דְּרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא, וּמַדְלָא מְצִי לְמִיקָם אֶלְיָבִיָּה – אֲתָא לְקַמְיָה דְּרַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֲלֵא וְגַמְרָא וְהִדְרָ אֲתָא לְקַמְיָה דְּרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא וְסָבַר סָבְרָא.

The Gemara comments: **Granted, there is no difficulty between the accounts in the two sources with regard to service and service**, as it can be suggested as follows: Rabbi Meir initially came to study before Rabbi Akiva, and since he was unable to comprehend the teachings in accordance with his opinion, he came before Rabbi Yishmael and studied the tradition, and again came before Rabbi Akiva and studied logical analysis. After studying the basic principles from Rabbi Yishmael, he was able to understand the more complex teachings of Rabbi Akiva.

אֶלְיָ אֲסָרָה אֲאָסָרָה קְשִׁיָּא! קְשִׁיָּא.

Having reconciled the first difficulty, the Gemara continues: **However, the difficulty with regard to whether Rabbi Akiva prohibited copper sulfate or Rabbi Yishmael prohibited it remains difficult.** The Gemara notes: It indeed remains difficult; no answer was found.

תֵּנְיָא רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר, רַבִּי מְאִיר הֵיךְ אוֹמֵר: לְכָל מִטֵּיִלִּין קִנְקַנְתּוֹם לְתוֹךְ הַדִּיּוֹ, חוּץ מִפְּרִשְׁת סוּטָה. וְרַבִּי יַעֲקֹב אוֹמֵר מִשְׁמוֹ: חוּץ מִפְּרִשְׁת סוּטָה שְׁבִמְקֶדֶשׁ.

The Gemara continues the discussion of copper sulfate. **It was taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yehuda says that Rabbi Meir would say: One may place copper sulfate into the ink that is to be used for all sacred writings, except for the writing of the Torah passage with regard to a *sota*, as it must be possible to erase that writing.**^N **Rabbi Ya'akov says in his name: Except for the writing of the Torah passage with regard to a *sota* used in the Temple^H in the ordeal to determine the guilt or innocence of the wife suspected of adultery.**

מֵאֵי בִּינְיָהוּ? אָמַר רַב יְרֵמְיָהּ: לְמַחֹק לָהּ מִן הַתּוֹרָה אִיבָא בִּינְיָהוּ.

The Gemara asks: **What is the difference between their opinions, i.e., what is their point of dispute?** The Gemara answers: **Rav Yirmeya said: The difference between their opinions is whether it is permissible to erase the passage of a *sota* from a Torah scroll.** The *tanna'im* of the *baraita* disagree whether or not a section taken from a Torah scroll may be used for this purpose, or whether a special scroll must be written for use in the ordeal of the *sota*.

וְהֵי תֵנְיָא כִּי הֵי תֵנְיָא; דְּתֵנְיָא: אִין מְגִילְתָּה בְּשִׁירָה לְהַשְׁקוֹת בָּהּ סוּטָה אַחֲרָת. רַבִּי אֲחִי בַר יֹאשִׁיָּה אָמַר: מְגִילְתָּה בְּשִׁירָה לְהַשְׁקוֹת בָּהּ סוּטָה אַחֲרָת.

And those *tanna'im* disagree in the same dispute as these *tanna'im*, as it was taught in a *baraita*: A scroll that was written for one woman suspected of infidelity but was not used, her scroll is not fit to prepare the water to give to another *sota* to drink. However, **Rabbi Aḥai bar Yoshiya said: Her scroll is fit to be used to prepare the water to give another *sota* to drink.** The legal status of a Torah scroll, which is not written for a particular *sota*, should be the same.

Writing the *sota's* scroll in her name – פְּרֻשֵׁת סוּטָה לְשֵׁמָה: A *sota's* scroll must be written in her name. If it was not written or erased in her name, it is invalid. This ruling is in accordance with the conclusion of the Gemara's discussion in tractate *Sota* (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota* 3:8).

אָמַר רַב פֶּפֶּא: דִּילְמָא לָא הִיא; עַד בְּאֵן לָא קְאָמַר תְּנָא קַמָּא הָתָם – אֵלָא בֵּין דְּאִינְתִּיק לְשׁוּם רַחֵל, תּוּ לָא הִדְרָא מִינְתְּקָא לְשׁוּם לְאָהָ. אָבַל גַּבִּי תוֹרָה דְּסִתְמָא מִיבְתָּבָא – הִכִּי נִמְי דְּמַחְקִינָן.

אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק: דִּילְמָא לָא הִיא; עַד בְּאֵן לָא קְאָמַר רַבִּי אַחֵי בַר יֹאשִׁיָה הָתָם – אֵלָא דְּאִיבְתִּיב מִיְהִת לְשׁוּם סוּטָה בְּעוֹלָם, אָבַל גַּבִּי תוֹרָה דְּלֵהֲתַלְמִיד כְּתִיבָא – הִכִּי נִמְי דְּלָא מַחְקִינָן.

וְלִית לִיהּ לְרַבִּי אַחֵי בַר יֹאשִׁיָה הָא דִּתְנָן: כְּתִב [גַּט] לְגַרְשׁ אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ,

Rav Pappa said: Perhaps that is not the case, as the two circumstances are not comparable. The first *tanna* of the *baraita* stated his opinion that one woman's scroll may not be used for another woman **only there; since it had originally been designated in the name of one woman, e.g., Rachel, it cannot then be designated in the name of another woman, e.g., Leah.**^h However, in the case of a Torah scroll, which is written with no particular person in mind, he too may say that we may erase it to be used for another woman, and it is not disqualified because it was not written in her name.

Furthermore, Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said in another attempt to resolve the matter: Perhaps it is not so, as an additional distinction exists between the two cases: Rabbi Aḥai bar Yoshiya stated his opinion that the first woman's scroll may be used for another woman **only there because at least, in that case, it was written for a particular *sota* in the world. However, in the case of a Torah scroll, which was written for study, he too would agree that we do not erase it.**

The Gemara asks: And does Rabbi Aḥai bar Yoshiya not hold in accordance with that which we learned in a mishna: If one wrote a bill of divorce to divorce his wife,

Perek I
Daf 13 Amud b

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Meir – רַבִּי מֵאִיר: One of the greatest *tanna'im* of the generation that preceded the redaction of the Mishna. There is no clear information available concerning Rabbi Meir's parents, though it is told that he descended from a family of converts from the house of the Roman emperors.

His exceptional brilliance in Torah study was evident from a very early age, and he was a student of the two greatest scholars of the generation, Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva. He was also the lone Sage who continued to study with Elisha ben Avuya, despite the latter's estrangement from Judaism. His primary teacher was Rabbi Akiva, who ordained him at a very young age, which is the reason that he was ordained a second time by Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava.

In recognition of his outstanding scholarship, Rabbi Meir was officially appointed *hakham*, literally, wise man, the third level below *nasi*, head of the Sanhedrin. The halakhic discussions between him and his colleagues Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Yosei, Rabbi Shimon, and Rabbi Elazar form one of the most important foundations of the Mishna.

Rabbi Meir's greatest undertaking appears to have been a structured, oral redaction of the Oral Law, including establishing specific formats for the *halakhot*. Apparently, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi followed in Rabbi Meir's footsteps and incorporated his work in the Mishna. Consequently, it is a well-known principle that the author of an un-attributed statement in the Mishna is Rabbi Meir, as the assumption is that this was one of the *mishnayot* he formulated.

Due to his involvement in the attempt to depose Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, the head of the Sanhedrin, he was punished by the latter, and for a long period his teachings were not cited in his name but were introduced with the words: Others say.

His private life was full of suffering. His two sons died during his lifetime, and his extraordinary wife Beruria also died in painful circumstances. Nevertheless, it is known that a daughter of his survived. He was eventually forced into exile to Asia Minor, where he died, with the order that his coffin be transferred to Eretz Yisrael and that he be temporarily interred on the shore of the sea whose waves reach the Holy Land.

Rabbi Meir was famous in his lifetime, not only for his sharp intellect, which exceeded that of all his peers, but also for his personal attributes, his efforts as a peacemaker, and his willingness to relinquish personal honor for the good of others. He was known as a magnificent public speaker. It is said that following his death, those who composed parables ceased. Several of his animal parables were repeated for many generations. He was also renowned as a miracle worker, and for many years a charity fund named after him, Rabbi Meir the Miracle Worker [*Ba'al HaNes*] served as the main source of funding for the Jews in Eretz Yisrael.

וְנִמְלֵךְ, וּמֵצֵאָא בֶּן עִירוֹ וְאָמַר: שְׂמֵךְ כְּשֵׁמִי וְשֵׁם אִשְׁתִּי כְּשֵׁם אִשְׁתִּי – פְּסוּל לְגַרְשׁ בּוֹ!

הִכִּי הִשְׁתַּאֲ? הָתָם "וְכָתַב לָהּ" כְּתִיב – בְּעֵינֵי כְּתִיבָה לְשֵׁמָה, הִכָּא "וְעָשָׂה לָהּ" כְּתִיב – בְּעֵינֵי עֲשִׂיָה לְשֵׁמָה, עֲשִׂיָה דִּידָהּ מִחִיקָה הִיא.

אָמַר רַבִּי אַחָא בַר חֲנִינָא: גְּלוּי וְדוּעַ לְפָנֵי מִי שְׂאָמַר וְהִיא הָעוֹלָם שְׂאִין בְּדוּרוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי מֵאִיר בְּמוֹתוֹ, וּמִפְּנֵי מַה לָּא קִבְּעוּ הֶלְכָה בְּמוֹתוֹ – שְׁלֵא יְכֻלוּ חֲבֵירָיו לַעְמוּד עַל סוּף דְּעֵתוֹ. שְׁהוּא אָמַר עַל טְמֵא טְהוֹר וּמְרָאָה לֹא פָּנִים, עַל טְהוֹר טְמֵא וּמְרָאָה לֹא פָּנִים.

but later reconsidered and did not divorce her, and a resident of his city found him and said: Your name is the same as my name, and your wife's name is the same as my wife's name, and we reside in the same town; give me the bill of divorce, and I will use it to divorce my wife, then this document is invalid to divorce with it? Apparently, a man may not divorce his wife with a bill of divorce written for another woman, and the same should apply to the scroll of a *sota*.

The Gemara rejects this argument: How can you compare the two cases? There, with regard to a bill of divorce, it is written: "And he shall write for her" (Deuteronomy 24:1), and therefore we require writing it in her name, specifically for her;^h whereas here, with regard to a *sota*, it is written: "And he shall perform with her all this ritual" (Numbers 5:30), and therefore we require performance in her name. In her case, the performance is erasure; however, writing of the scroll need not be performed specifically for her.

On the topic of Rabbi Meir and his Torah study, the Gemara cites an additional statement. Rabbi Aḥa bar Ḥanina said: It is revealed and known before the One Who spoke and the world came into being that in the generation of Rabbi Meir^p there was no one of the Sages who is his equal. Why then didn't the Sages establish the *halakha* in accordance with his opinion? It is because his colleagues were unable to ascertain the profundity of his opinion. He was so brilliant that he could present a cogent argument for any position, even if it was not consistent with the prevalent *halakha*. As he would state with regard to a ritually impure item that it is pure, and display justification for that ruling, and likewise he would state with regard to a ritually pure item that it is impure, and display justification for that ruling. The Sages were unable to distinguish between the statements that were *halakha* and those that were not.

HALAKHA

Writing a bill of divorce in her name – כְּתִיבַת גַּט לְשֵׁמָה: A bill of divorce that was written in the name of one woman cannot be used in the divorce proceedings of another woman. This restriction applies even if the names of the

women, their husbands, and their places of residence are the same, because a bill of divorce must be written in the name of a particular woman (*Shulhan Arukh, Even HaEzer* 131:2).

HALAKHA

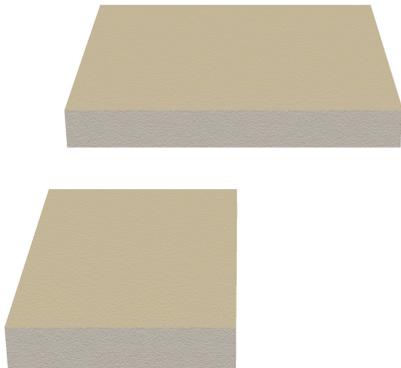
Whose head and most of his body were in the sukka – ראשו ורובו בסוכה: If one sits with his head and most of his body in the sukka, but his table is inside the house, it is as though he were not sitting in the sukka, in accordance with the opinion of Beit Shammai, with whom Beit Hillel ultimately agreed on this matter (Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Hayyim 634:4).

The width of the cross beam – רוחב הקורה: A cross beam must be at least a handbreadth wide to render an alleyway fit for one to carry within it on Shabbat (Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Hayyim 363:17).

The sturdiness of the cross beam – חזקת הקורה: A cross beam must be sturdy enough to support a small brick. In the Jerusalem Talmud, the criterion is that it be sturdy enough to support bricks lined up along its entire length, up to three handbreadths away from the two sides of the alleyway (Magen Avraham, based on Beit Yosef; Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Hayyim 363:17).

BACKGROUND

A small brick and a large brick – אריח ולבנה: A large brick is usually a square of three by three handbreadths. A small brick, which is half a brick, is a rectangle three handbreadths long and one and a half handbreadths wide.



Large brick and small brick

באותה ששנינו: "מי שהיה ראשו ורובו בסוכה ושלחנו בתוך הבית בית שמאי פוסקין ובית הלל מכשירין. אמרו בית הלל לבית שמאי: לא כך היה מעשה שהלכו זקני בית שמאי וזקני בית הלל לבקר את רבי יוחנן בן החורנית, ומצאוהו יושב ראשו ורובו בסוכה ושלחנו בתוך הבית. אמרו להן בית שמאי: אי משום ראיה? אף הן אמרו לו: אם כך היית נוהג לא קיימת מצות סוכה מימך."

ללמדך, שכל המשפיל עצמו – הקדוש ברוך הוא מגביהו, וכל המגביה עצמו – הקדוש ברוך הוא משפילו. כל המחזיר על הגדולה – גדולה בורחת ממנו, וכל הבורח מן הגדולה – גדולה מחזרת אחריו. וכל הדוחק את השעה – שעה דוחקתו, וכל הנדחה מפני שעה – שעה עומדת לו.

תנו רבנן: שתי שנים ומחצה נחלקו בית שמאי ובית הלל, הללו אומרים: נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא, והללו אומרים: נוח לו לאדם שנברא יותר משלא נברא. נמנו וגמרו: נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא, עכשיו שנברא – יפשפש במעשיו. ואמרי לה: ימשמש במעשיו.

מתני' הקורה שאמרו – רחבה כדי לקבל אריח. ואריח חצי לבנה של שלשה טפחים. דיה לקורה שתהא רחבה טפח כדי לקבל אריח לרחבו.

רחבה כדי לקבל אריח, ובריאה כדי לקבל אריח. רבי יהודה אומר: רחבה אף על פי שאין בריאה. היתה שלקש ושל קנים – רואין אותה כאילו היא של מתכת.

עקומה – רואין אותה כאילו היא פשוטה, עגולה – רואין אותה כאילו היא מרובעת. כל שיש בהיקיפו שלשה טפחים – יש בו רוחב טפח.

As in the mishna that we learned: In the case of one whose head and most of his body were in the sukka,^h but his table was in the house, Beit Shammai deem this sukka invalid; and Beit Hillel deem it valid. Beit Hillel said to Beit Shammai: Wasn't there an incident in which the Elders of Beit Shammai and the Elders of Beit Hillel went to visit Rabbi Yohanan ben HaHoranit, and they found him sitting with his head and most of his body in the sukka, but his table was in the house? Beit Shammai said to them: From there do you seek to adduce a proof? Those visitors, too, said to him: If that was the manner in which you were accustomed to perform the mitzva, you have never fulfilled the mitzva of sukka in all your days. It is apparent from the phrasing of the mishna that when the Sages of Beit Hillel related that the Elders of Beit Shammai and the Elders of Beit Hillel visited Rabbi Yohanan ben HaHoranit, they mentioned the Elders of Beit Shammai before their own Elders.

This is to teach you that anyone who humbles himself, the Holy One, Blessed be He, exalts him, and anyone who exalts himself, the Holy One, Blessed be He, humbles him. Anyone who seeks greatness, greatness flees from him, and, conversely, anyone who flees from greatness, greatness seeks him. And anyone who attempts to force the moment and expends great effort to achieve an objective precisely when he desires to do so, the moment forces him too, and he is unsuccessful. And conversely, anyone who is patient and yields to the moment, the moment stands by his side, and he will ultimately be successful.

The Sages taught the following baraita: For two and a half years, Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagreed. These say: It would have been preferable had man not been created than to have been created. And those said: It is preferable for man to have been created than had he not been created. Ultimately, they were counted and concluded:ⁿ It would have been preferable had man not been created than to have been created. However, now that he has been created, he should examine his actions that he has performed and seek to correct them. And some say: He should scrutinize his planned actionsⁿ and evaluate whether or not and in what manner those actions should be performed, so that he will not sin.

MISHNA The cross beam, which the Sages stated may be used to render an alleyway fit for one to carry within it, must be wide enough to receive and hold a small brick.^{nh} And this small brick is half a large brick, which measures three handbreadths,^b i.e., a handbreadth and a half. It is sufficient that the cross beam will be a handbreadth in width, not a handbreadth and a half, enough to hold a small brick across its width.

And the cross beam must be wide enough to hold a small brick and also sturdy enough to hold a small brick^h and not collapse. Rabbi Yehuda says: If it is wide enough to hold the brick, even though it is not sturdy enough to actually support it, it is sufficient. Therefore, even if the cross beam is made of straw or reeds, one considers it as though it were made of metal.

If the cross beam is curved, so that a small brick cannot rest on it, one considers it as though it were straight;ⁿ if it is round, one considers it as though it were square. The following principle was stated with regard to a round cross beam: Any beam with a circumference of three handbreadths is a handbreadth in width, i.e., in diameter.

NOTES

They were counted and concluded – נמנו וגמרו: Some commentaries explain that the question was whether or not the potential positive actions of a person are greater than his opportunities for failure. Ultimately, they counted the mitzvot and concluded that there are more negative precepts than positive precepts, which means that the danger of transgressing negative commandments is greater than the possibility of fulfilling positive ones. Due to this danger, it would have been preferable had a person not been created (Maharsha).

Examine and scrutinize – יפשפש וימשמש: Some explain that

a person should examine the actions that he has already performed and scrutinize the actions that he plans to undertake (Ritva). Others suggest that one should examine the totality of one's actions and scrutinize each individual action (Mesillat Yesharim).

Enough to receive a small brick – כדי לקבל אריח: In the Jerusalem Talmud, it is explained that the cross beam must be sturdy enough to bear a complete row of bricks along its entire length, with the bricks laid out lengthwise or widthwise. The rationale

is that otherwise the cross beam would look as though it were a small wooden plank not placed permanently in that spot.

Curved...as though it were straight – פשוטה היא כאילו... עקומה: It is said in the Jerusalem Talmud that the entire latter section of the mishna is stated in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda. According to most commentaries, that is not the understanding in the Babylonian Talmud, although some commentaries, including Rabbeinu Yehonatan, dispute this.