The Rif and others disagree and permit it, and in the 332 BCE. In its glory days, during the Ptolemaic rule in Egypt Alexandria –

Alternating –

Writing a scroll for a child –

One may write a scroll –

Of the very familiar with Alexandrian doctors and held them in

throughout the entire world. The Sages of the Talmud were

were written out of sequence, or in lines of three words

fi

Perek III

Daf 38 Amud a

HALAKHA

Alternating – מִשְׁבָּת: It is permitted to write a passage from the Torah on a scroll with three words to a line. That is how the Rambam interprets the term alternating words (see Rabbeinu Yeruham; Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a 283:3).

BACKGROUND

Alexandria – אֲלֶכְּסַנְדְּרִיָּא. This port city, which lies west of the Nile delta, was founded by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE. In its glory days, during the Ptolemaic rule in Egypt and until the end of the mishnaic period, Alexandria was one of the largest cities and cultural centers in the world. The greatest scientists, doctors and artisans of the time lived in Alexandria, and Alexandrian doctors were renowned throughout the entire world. The Sages of the Talmud were very familiar with Alexandrian doctors and held them in high regard, often praising the medical accomplishments of this important urban center.

5 The mishna relates: Queen Helene also fashioned a golden table on which the *sota* Torah portion was written. The Gemara comments: You learn from this that one may write a scroll* that contains only several portions of the Torah, *from which a child may be taught.* The Sages disputed whether it is permitted to do so even for the purpose of education. Reish Lakish said in the name of Rabbi Yannai: There is no proof from this mishna, as the tablet prepared by Queen Helene consisted of the letters of the *alef-beit,* i.e., only the first letter of each word was written on the tablet, representing the word.

The Gemara raises an objection from the halakhot of *sota.* When the scribe writes the *sota* scroll, he looks and writes that which is written on the tablet. Apparently, the full text of the passage was written on the tablet. The Gemara rejects this: Emend the *bara'ita* and say: He looks and writes like that which is written on the tablet. The tablet aids the scribe in remembering the text that must be written.

The Gemara raises an objection from a different *bara'ita:* When he writes, he looks and writes that which is written on the tablet. And what is written on the tablet? If a man lay with you… and if he did not lay with you; if you strayed… if you did not stay (see Numbers 5:19–20). Apparently, the full text of the passage was written on the tablet. The Gemara answers: There, it was written

The mishna related: For Nicanor, miracles were performed to his doors. The Sages taught in the Tosefta: What miracles occurred for his doors? They said: When Nicanor went to bring copper doors for the eastern gate of the Temple from Alexandria* in Egypt, famous for its craftsmanship, on his return voyage by ship, a storm arose in the sea and threatened to drown him. The ship’s passengers took one of the doors, which were exceedingly heavy, and cast it into the sea, fearing that the weight of the doors would sink the ship. And still the sea did not rest from its rage.

* The primary concern is that since the Torah is a single unit, one may not separate it into independent segments. The question is whether it is permitted to do so in order to facilitate fulfillment of a mitzva like the study of Torah (see Otot HaHalakho).
They sought to cast the other door into the sea, at which point Nicarnor stood and embraced it and said to them: Cast me into the sea with it. Immediately, the sea rested from its rage, and it was necessary to cast neither the door nor Nicarnor into the sea. The ship continued its journey with one door and for the entire voyage, he regretted the fate of the other door that he allowed them to cast into the sea. When they arrived at the port of Akko and prepared to disembark, despite the fact that it was made of copper, the door that was thrown into the sea was poking out under the sides of the ship. And some say a sea creature swallowed it and spewed it onto the land.

And with regard to this, Solomon said: “The beams of our houses are cedars, and our doors are cypresses [berotim]” (Song of Songs 1:17), and the Sages interpreted it homiletically: Do not read it as berotim but as berit yam, covenant of the sea, meaning that the door forged a covenant with the sea for the sea to deliver it to its place. Therefore, when the nation prospered and the people replaced the doors made of various metals, the doors in all the gates in the Temple were altered to become doors of gold except the doors in the Gates of Nicarnor because miracles were performed to them. And some say it was because their copper was brightly-colored and of high quality. Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya’akov says it was refined [kelonita] copper, and it illuminated its surroundings like gold.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{MISHNA}

Apropos the mention in the mishna of people who took action in the Temple and were mentioned favorably, the mishna lists those who took action in the Temple and were mentioned unfavorably. The craftsmen of the House of Garmu did not want to teach the secret of the preparation of the shewbread and sought to keep the secret within their family. The craftsmen of the House of Avtinas\textsuperscript{13} did not want to teach the secret of the preparation of the incense.

Also, Hugras\textsuperscript{14} ben Levi knew a chapter in the art of music,\textsuperscript{15} as will be explained, and he did not want to teach it to others. And the scribe ben Kamtzar did not want to teach a special act of writing. He was expert at writing all four letters of a four-letter name simultaneously. About the first ones, who were mentioned favorably, it is stated, “The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing” (Proverbs 10:7); and about these who were concerned only for themselves it is stated: “But the name of the wicked shall rot” (Proverbs 10:7).

\textbf{NOTES}

\textit{Berotim, bent yam} – בְּרוֹתִים, בֵּרִית יָם: Some commentaries write that the doors were fashioned from copper-plated cypress wood. That is why the Gemara cited the verse. And our doors are cypresses. Riba, citing the gemara, has a variant reading: Birya; meaning that the doors forged a covenant with each other.

\textbf{BACKGROUND}

The Gates of Nicarnor – הַבָּתֵינוּ: All the Temple gates were ten cubits wide and twenty cubits high. All the doors were gold-plated except for the eastern gate, which was copper-plated with high-quality copper resembling gold. This was called the Upper Gate or the Gate of Nicarnor (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Bet Halehibah 5:2).

\textbf{LANGUAGE}

Refined [kelonita] – קְלוֹנִיתָא: This is apparently a variant form of the Greek καλούτα, Cznathis, meaning of the city of Corinth. This Greek city was famous for its outstanding craftsmanship. Ancient writers praised the copper vessels produced there as being superior to gold.

Avtinas – אַבְּתִינָא: The origin of this Greek name is unclear. Some believe it derives from Avtinus or Otinus, meaning fine sap or resin or a tree of fine fragrance. According to that interpretation, the family was called Avtinas due to their expertise in the area of incense. Others claim that the name is Avtinus, related to the Greek name Euthynus or εὔθυνος, eutynos, meaning righteous judge or one who paves the way for the public. This is perhaps related to the Hebrew name Shafaya.

Hugras – חוּגְרָס: From Greek, possibly from the name Ἐὐαγγέλιος, Evangelos, meaning one successful in hunting.

\textbf{AKKO – אוֹמֵר:}

\textbf{BEACH AND PORT OF AKKO}

\textit{It illuminated its surroundings like gold} – בְּרוֹתֵיָּהּ לְפָעַלְתָּא קַלָּוְתָּא בֵּרִית יָם: In the Jerusalem Talmud the contention is that as the verse states: “And vessels of good shining copper, as precious as gold” (Ezra 8:27), the copper was superior to gold (Rav Ya’akov Emden).

\textbf{THINGS MADE OF REFINED COPPER, THEIR COLOR RESEMBLING GOLD}
GEMARA The Sages taught in a baraita: The craftsmen of the House of Garmu were expert in the preparation of the shewbread, and they did not want to teach others the secret of its production. The Sages dismissed them and sent for and brought craftsmen from Alexandria in Egypt, a large city with many experts. And those craftsmen knew how to bake like the members of the House of Garmu did, but they did not know how to remove the bread from the oven like they did. The shewbread was baked in a complex shape, and it was difficult to place it in the oven and remove it without breaking it. The difference was that these Alexandrians light the fire outside the oven and bake it outside the oven, and these members of the House of Garmu light the fire inside the oven and bake it inside. In the case of these Alexandrians, their bread becomes moldy over the course of the week, and in the case of these members of the House of Garmu, their bread does not become moldy.

When the Sages heard of the matter that the bread of the imported craftsmen was of lower quality than before, they said: Whatever the Holy One, Blessed be He, created, He created in His honor, as it is stated: “Everyone who is called by My name, I have created for My glory” (Isaiah 43:7). In deference to God, the Sages should diminish their honor for the greater glory of God and let the House of Garmu return to their original station. The Sages sent for them to reassure their previous position, and they did not come. They doubled their wages and they came. Each day until then they would take wages of twelve maneh, and today they take wages of twenty-four maneh. Rabbi Yehuda says: Each day they took twenty-four maneh, and today they take forty-eight.

The Sages said to them: What did you see that led you not to teach others this craft? They said: The members of our father’s house knew that this house, the Temple, is destined to be destroyed, and they were concerned lest an unworthy man learn our skill of baking and go and engage in idol worship with that skill. Therefore, they attempted to prevent this skill from spreading beyond their family. The Gemara comments: And for this matter they are mentioned favorably: Never was refined bread of fine flour found in the hands of their descendants, so that people would not say that they are sustained from that technique of preparing the shewbread. They ate only bread made of coarse flour mixed with bran, to fulfill that which is stated: “And you shall be clear before the Lord and before Israel” (Numbers 33:22). Not only must one’s behavior be beyond reproach, he should also make certain to be beyond suspicion.

Similarly, the mishna related: The craftsmen of the House of Avtinas did not want to teach about the secret of the preparation of the incense, at which they were particularly adept. The Sages taught in a baraita: The members of the House of Avtinas were expert in the technique of preparing the incense, and they did not want to teach others. The Sages dismissed them and sent for and brought craftsmen from Alexandria in Egypt. And the Alexandrian craftsmen knew how to blend the spices like they did, but they did not know how to cause the smoke to rise like the House of Avtinas did. The smoke of the incense blended by these members of the House of Avtinas rises in a column like a stick; the smoke of the incense blended by these Alexandrians branched out to here and to there and did not rise in a straight line.

When the Sages heard of the matter, they said: Whatever the Holy One, Blessed be He, created, He created in His honor, as it is stated: “God made everything for His sake” (Proverbs 16:4), and they let the House of Avtinas return to their original station. The Sages sent for the members of the House of Avtinas to reassure their previous position, and they did not come. They doubled their wages and they came. Each day until then they would take wages of twelve maneh, and today they take wages of twenty-four maneh. Rabbi Yehuda says: Each day they took twenty-four maneh, and today they take forty-eight.
The Sages said to them: What did you see that led you not to teach others this craft? They said: The members of our father's house knew that this house, the Temple, is destined to be destroyed, and they were concerned lest an unworthy man learn our skill of preparing incense and go and engage in idol worship with that skill. Therefore, they attempted to prevent this skill from spreading beyond their family. The Gemara comments: And for this matter they are mentioned favorably: Never did a perfumed bride emerge from their homes. And when they marry a woman from a different place, they stipulate with her that she will not perfume herself, so that cynics would not say that it is with the work of the incense that they perfume themselves, to fulfill that which is stated: "And you shall be clear before the Lord and before Israel" (Numbers 32:22).

It was taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yishmael said: One time I was walking along the road and I found one of the descendants of the House of Avtinas. I said to him: Your fathers sought to enhance their honor and sought to diminish God's honor by not revealing their secret to others. Now, although the Temple was destroyed, the honor of God remains as it was, and He diminished their honor, as their significance stemmed from their Temple service.

Rabbi Akiva said: One time Rabbi Yishmael ben Logo related to me: One time I and one of the descendants of the House of Avtinas went out to the field to collect herbs, and I saw that he laughed and he cried. I said to him: Why did you cry? He said to me: I was reminded of the honor of my forefathers, how important they were in the Temple. I said to him: And why did you laugh? He said to me: The Holy One, Blessed be He, is going to restore it to us in the future and we will be honored again. I said to him: And why are you reminded of this now? He said to me: The smoke-raising herb is before me, here in the field, reminding me of the past. I said to him: Show it to me; which one is it? He said to me: We are bound by oath not to show it to any person other than the members of our family.

Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Nuri said: One time I found an old man who had in his hand a scroll with the location and formula for blending of spices. I said to him: Where are you from? What is your ancestry? He said to me: I am from the House of Avtinas. I asked him: And what is in your hand? He said to me: A scroll of spices. I said to him: Show it to me. He said to me: As long as the House of Avtinas, my forefathers, were extant, they would not pass it on to anyone. And now, here it is; and be careful with it not to give it to anyone. And when I came and related my statement before Rabbi Akiva, he said to me: And now that they have surrendered the scroll to worthy recipients since they are unable to maintain its sanctity, it is prohibited to mention them unfavorably, as even their earlier reticence was apparently for the glory of God.

From here, with regard to the cases of the Temple's craftsmen whom the Sages restored to their posts, ben Azzai said: One should not be concerned that others might usurp his livelihood and success, since at the appropriate moment, by your name they shall call you to return to your previous position, and in your place, they shall seat you.

**NOTES**

Sought to diminish God's honor – This is because they refused to return to work unless their wages were doubled (Tosefat Yitzḥak). The simple understanding of this accusation is that they would not teach others and thereby prevented others from worshipping God in the appropriate manner.

By your name they shall call you – Rabbi Elyakim explains that even if a person's work is wrongly disparaged, ultimately he will be addressed with the appropriate deference. This is apparent with regard to the houses of Avtinas and Garmu, whose explanations were accepted by the Sages.
We do not call others by their names – so named as Ishmael, son of Abraham? One approach is to explain that Ishmael repented in his lifetime, rendering him a righteous person.

The early commentaries ask:

> זכר וידבר, חפץ בחפץ: שבשונה תומך, שתומך בו, כן פעמיים במקרא. שולח א葉י אליך, ועוזר לך ממצין.

§ The mISHNA relates that Hugra ben Levi knew a lesson in the art of music and he did not want to teach it to others. It was taught in a BARaitA: When Hugra ben Levi projects his voice in a sweet melody, he places his thumb into his mouth and places his finger between the strings of a lyre and sings. This produced a sound so sweet that his brethren the priests were abruptly taken aback.

The Sages taught: Ben Kamtzar did not want to teach others a special technique of writing. What was that technique? They said about him that he would take four quills between his fingers, and if there was a word consisting of four letters that he wanted to write, he could write it simultaneously. They said to him: What did you see that led you not to teach that technique? All the others with unique skills came up with a response to questions about the matter of their conduct, claiming that they sought to prevent their technique from being used in idol worship. However, Ben Kamtzar did not come up with a response to questions about the matter of his conduct, and it was clear that his only motivation in preventing his skill from being disseminated was his own personal honor. With regard to the first people listed, it is stated: “The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing” (Proverbs 10:7); and about Ben Kamtzar and his counterparts it is stated: “But the name of the wicked shall rot” (Proverbs 10:7).

§ Apropos the verse cited, the Gemara asks: What is the meaning of: But the name of the wicked shall rot? How does one name rot? Rabbi Elazar said: It means that decay will spread on their names, meaning that we do not call others by their names; and the name will sink into oblivion. Ravina raised an objection from an incident that transpired during the Second Temple era. There was an incident involving Doeg ben Yesof, whose father died and left him as a young child to his mother, who loved him. Each day his mother measured his height in handbreadths and donated a measure of gold equivalent to the weight that he gained to the Temple. Later, when the enemy prevailed and there was a terrible famine in the city, she slaughtered and ate him.

And with regard to her and others like her Jeremiah lamented: “Shall the women eat their fruit, their children in their care [tipuhim]?” (Lamentations 2:20). The Gemara interprets the term tipuhim homiletically as referring to this baby, who was measured in handbreadths [tifahim]. Even he was eaten by his mother. And the Divine Spirit responds and says: Why did this happen? “Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the Temple of the Lord?” (Lamentations 2:20). It is punishment for the murder of the priest Zechariah ben Jehoiada. This incident involves a boy named Doeg; even though the person with that name was wicked (see 1 Samuel, chapter 22), the boy was named for him. The Gemara responds: See what befell him. Clearly, his name was a bad omen.

Rabbi Elazar said: A righteous person is praised for his own actions, and a wicked person is cursed not only for his own actions but also for the actions of his wicked counterpart. A righteous person is praised for his actions, as it is written: “The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing”; righteous is written in the singular. A wicked person is also cursed for the actions of his wicked counterpart, as it is written: “But the name of the wicked shall rot”; wicked is written in the plural. Once one wicked person is mentioned, his wicked counterparts are cursed as well.
Ravina said to one of the Sages who would organize aggadic statements before him: From where is this matter that the Sages stated: The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing, derived? He said to him: As it is written explicitly in the book of Proverbs: “The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing.” Then he then asked him: From where in the Torah do we derive this? He said to him: As it is written: “And God said: Shall I hide from Abraham that which I am doing?” (Genesis 18:17). And as soon as Abraham’s name is mentioned, it is written: “And Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation” (Genesis 18:18), although there is no clear connection to the previous verse. Apparently, once the name of a righteous person is mentioned, it is followed directly by praise of the individual. That is the Torah source for the statement that the mention of the righteous is for blessing.

Then he asked: From where is this matter that the Sages said: But the name of the wicked shall rot, derived? He said to him: As it is written explicitly in the book of Proverbs: “But the name of the wicked shall rot.” He then asked him: From where in the Torah do we derive this? He said to him: As it is written with regard to Lot: “And he moved his tent as far as Sodom” (Genesis 13:12). And as soon as Sodom is mentioned, it is written: “And the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful to God” (Genesis 13:13).

Apropos these statements, the Gemara cites another statement that Rabbi Elazar said: There was a righteous person who lived between two wicked people and did not learn from their actions; there was a wicked person who lived between two righteous people and did not learn from their actions. How so? A righteous person lived between two wicked people and did not learn from their actions is Obadiah, who was a minister for Ahab and Jezebel and nevertheless remained God-fearing (see 1 Kings, chapter 18). A wicked person who lived between two righteous people and did not learn from their actions is Esau, who was born and raised in the house of Isaac and Rebecca and nevertheless remained wicked.

Rabbi Elazar said: From the blessing of the righteous you infer a curse for the wicked; and conversely, from the curse of the wicked you infer a blessing for the righteous. How so? From the blessing of the righteous you infer a curse for the wicked, as it is written with regard to Abraham: “For I have known him to the end that he will command his children and his household after him” (Genesis 18:19), and it is written thereafter: “The cry of Sodom and Goimerah is very great” (Genesis 18:20). The righteousness of Abraham underscores the relative wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, exacerbating their punishment.

Conversely, from the curse of the wicked you infer a blessing for the righteous, as it is written: “And the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful to God” (Genesis 13:13), after which it is written: “And God said to Abram, after that Lot had separated from him” (Genesis 13:14); God proceeds to bless him. And Rabbi Elazar said: Even for one righteous person an entire world is created, as it is stated: “And God saw the light, that it was good” (Genesis 1:4), and good means nothing other than righteous, as it is stated: “Say of the righteous that he is good” (Isaiah 3:10).

Rabbi Elazar further said: One who causes himself to forget a matter of his studies ultimately causes exile for his children, as it is stated: “Because you have forgotten the Torah of your God, I will also forget your children” (Hosea 4:6). Rabbi Abbahu said: With regard to he who causes his studies to be forgotten, one reduces him from his prominence, as it is stated: “Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you; you shall not serve Me” (Hosea 4:6).
He will keep the feet of His pious ones – "He will keep the feet of His pious ones": a particular foul odor, which is why it may not be used to light the Shabbat lamps, and Persian crude oil emits a particularly foul odor.

Naphtha – נפחta. Apparently from the Persian naftha, via the Greek νάφθας, naftha or ναφθά, naphthas, meaning mineral oil. Some believe that the word has a Semitic root.

Balsam – בַּלָּסָם. Balsam is the plant Commiphora apobalsamum, a short tree or bush that can reach a height of 3–5 m. Its branches are very thin and its leaves are complex. The fine fragrance seeps from the tips of the pedicels in small drops, but most of the perfume is derived by boiling the branches. Balsam oil is also used medicinally, but its primary purpose is for incense and fragrant oil. Balsam was so valuable that it was sold for its weight in gold.

Apropos the righteous, Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: No righteous person departs from this world until another comparable righteous person is created, as it is stated: “And the sun rises and the sun sets” (Ecclesiastes 1:5); before the sun sets the new sun has already risen. Before the sun of Eli was extinguished, the sun of Samuel of Ramah had already shone (see 1 Samuel, chapter 3), and so on throughout the generations. And Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, saw that righteous people were few, so He arose and planted some of them in each and every generation to ensure the presence of at least one righteous person in each generation. As it is stated: “For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and He has set the world upon them” (1 Samuel 2:8). Since the world rests upon the righteous, each generation requires the presence of a righteous person to provide that support.

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Even for one righteous person the world exists, as it is stated: “But the righteous is the foundation of the world” (Proverbs 10:25).

Rabbi Hiyya himself said: The proof is from here, as it is stated: “He will keep the feet of His pious ones” (1 Samuel 2:9), meaning that God maintains the world due to the pious people. The Gemara questions this proof; “pious ones” indicates many rather than a single righteous person. Rav ḤaNaḥ bar Yitzḥak said: Although the text is vocalized in the plural, it is written in the singular: “His pious one”; God maintains the world even for a single pious individual.

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Once most of a person’s years have passed and he did not sin, he will never sin, as it is stated: “He will keep the feet of His pious ones” (1 Samuel 2:9). Once a person has established himself as righteous, God will keep him from falling thereafter. In the school of Rabbi Shelia they say: Once the opportunity to perform a sinful act presents itself to a person a first time and a second, and he does not sin, he will never sin, as it is stated: “He will keep the feet of His pious ones” (1 Samuel 2:9). Once he has refrained from sin several times, he has established himself as pious and God will protect him thereafter.

Reish Lakish said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “Itit concerns the scorners, He scornt them, but to the humble He gives grace” (Proverbs 1:34)? If one comes to impurify, they open before him the opportunity to exercise his free will and do as he pleases. If one comes to purify, they assist him. In the school of Rabbi Yishmael it was taught with regard to this verse: This is comparable to the case of a man who was selling both crude naphtha [نظر], whose odor is vile, and balsam, whose fragrance is pleasant.