

Unlocking the Mysteries of the Talmud (1)

Source Sheet by Binyomin Bitton

Bava Batra 73b

And Rabba bar bar Hana said: Once we were traveling in the desert and we were accompanied by a certain Arab who would take dust and smell it and say: This is the road to such and such a place, and that is the road to such and such a place. We said to him: How far are we from water? And he said to us: Bring me dust. We brought it to him, and he said: Eight parasangs. Later, we said this a second time, and gave him dust, and he said to us that we are at a distance of three parasangs. I switched the type of dust to test him, but I could not confuse him, as he was an expert in this matter.

Bava Batra 73b

That Arab said to me: Come, I will show you the dead of the wilderness, i.e., the Jewish people who left Egypt and died in the wilderness. I went and saw them; and they had the appearance of one who is intoxicated,

Bava Batra 74a

and they were lying on their backs. And the knee of one of them was elevated, and he was so enormous that the Arab entered under his knee while riding a camel and with his spear upright, and he did not touch him. I cut one corner of the sky-blue garment that contains ritual fringes of one of them, and we were unable to walk. The Arab said to me: Perhaps you took something from them? Return it, as we

בבא בתרא ע"ג ב

ואמר רבה בר בר חנה זימנא חדא הוה קא אזלינן במדברא ואיתלוי בהדן ההוא טייעא דהוה שקיל עפרא ומורח ליה ואמר הא אורחא לדוכתא פלן והא אורחא לדוכתא פלן אמרינן ליה כמה מרחקינן ממיא ואמר לן הבו לי עפרא יהבינן ליה ואמר לן תמני פרסי תנינן ויהבינן ליה אמר לן דמרחקינן תלתא פרסי אפכית ליה ולא יכילית ליה

בבא בתרא ע"ג ב

אמר לי תא אחוי לך מתי מדבר אזלי חזיתיהו ודמו כמאן דמיבסמי

בבא בתרא ע"ד א

וגנו אפרקיד והוה זקיפא ברפיה דחד מינייהו ועיל טייעא תותי ברפיה כי רכיב גמלא וזקיפא רומחיה ולא נגע ביה פסקי חדא קרנא דתכלתא דחד מינייהו ולא הוה מסתגי לן אמר לי דלמא שקלת מידי מינייהו אהדריה דגמירי דמאן דשקיל מידי מינייהו לא מסתגי ליה אזלי אהדרתיה והדר מסתגי לן

know by tradition **that one who takes something from them cannot walk. I then returned** the corner of the garment, **and then we were able to walk.**

Bava Batra 74a

When I came before the Sages, they said to me in rebuke: **Every Abba is a donkey, and every bar bar Ḥana is an idiot.** For the purpose of clarifying **what *halakha* did you do that?** If you wanted **to know whether the *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Beit Shammai or in accordance with the opinion of Beit Hillel,** as to whether there are four or three threads and joints in ritual fringes, in that case there was no need to take anything with you, as **you should have simply counted the threads and counted the joints.**

בבא בתרא ע"ד א

כִּי אֶתְּאִי לְקַמֵּיהּ דְּרַבְּנָן אָמְרוּ לִי כֹל אַבָּא
חִמְרָא וְכֹל בַּר בַּר חָנָה סִיכָסָא לְמַאי
הִלְכְתָּא עֲבַדְתָּ הֲכִי לְמִידַע אִי כְּבֵית
שְׁמַאי אִי כְּבֵית הִלֵּל אִיבַעֵי לָךְ לְמִימְנֵי
חוּטִין וּלְמִימְנֵי חוּלִיּוֹת



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Unlocking the Mysteries of the Talmud (2)

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Sukkah 56a

The standard procedure was that the members of **the incoming** watch **divide** the shewbread **in the north** section of the courtyard, **and the outgoing** watch **in the south**. However, there was one exception: The watch of **Bilga**, due to a penalty imposed upon it, **always divides** the shewbread to its members **in the south**, even when it is the incoming watch. **And its ring** used to facilitate slaughter of the animals **was fixed** in place, rendering it useless, **and its niche** among the niches in the wall of the Chamber of Knives, where the priests would store their knives and other vessels, was **sealed**.

Sukkah 56b

We learned in the mishna that **Bilga always divides** the shewbread **in the south**, even when it is the incoming watch. The Gemara elaborates: **The Sages taught** in a *baraita*: There was an **incident involving Miriam, the daughter** of a member of the **Bilga** watch, **who apostatized and went and married a soldier** [*sardeyot*] serving in the army **of the Greek kings**. **When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary**, she entered with them and **was kicking with her sandal on the altar and said: Wolf, wolf** [*lokos*], **until when will you consume the property of the Jewish people, and yet you do not stand with them when they face exigent circumstances?** **And** after the victory of the Hasmoneans over the Greeks, **when the Sages heard about this matter** and how she denigrated the altar, **they fixed the ring** of

סוכה ג"א

הַנִּכְנָסִין חוֹלְקִין בְּצָפוֹן, וְהַיּוֹצֵאִין בְּדָרוֹם.
בִּילְגָה לְעוֹלָם חוֹלְקֵת בְּדָרוֹם, וְטַבְעֵתָהּ
קְבוּעָה, וְחַלּוֹנָה סְתוּמָה.

סוכה ג"ב

בִּילְגָה לְעוֹלָם חוֹלְקֵת בְּדָרוֹם. תָּנוּ רַבָּנָן:
מַעֲשֵׂה בְמַרְיָם בַּת בִּילְגָה שֶׁהִמְרִיהָ דָּתָהּ,
וְהִלְכָה וְנִשְׂאֵת לְסַרְדֵּיּוֹת אֶחָד מִמַּלְכֵי
יוֹנִים. כְּשֶׁנִּכְנְסוּ יוֹנִים לְהִיכָל, הִיתָה
מַבְעֵטֶת בְּסִנְדָּלָה עַל גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ,
וְאָמְרָה: לֹקוֹס לֹקוֹס! עַד מָתִי אֶתָּה
מַכְלָה מִמוֹנֵן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִי אֶתָּה עוֹמֵד
עֲלֵיהֶם בְּשַׁעַת הַדְּחָק! וְכִשְׁשָׁמְעוּ חֲכָמִים
בְּדָבָר, קָבְעוּ אֶת טַבְעֵתָהּ וְסָתְמוּ אֶת
חַלּוֹנָהּ.

the Bilga watch in place, rendering it nonfunctional, **and sealed its niche.**



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Unlocking the Mysteries of the Talmud (3)

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Chullin 7a

Rabbi Yirmeya said to Rabbi Zeira: **And perhaps** it was **not on** Rabbi Meir's **mind**, and his attention was diverted when he ate the leaf. Rabbi Zeira answered: **Now**, since even with regard to **the animals of the righteous, the Holy One, Blessed be He, does not generate mishaps through them**, is it **not all the more so** true that **the righteous themselves** would not experience mishaps?

חולין ז' א

ודלמא לאו אדעתיה השתא בהמתן של צדיקים אין הקב"ה מביא תקלה על ידן צדיקים עצמן לא כל שכן

Chullin 7a

§ The Gemara asks: **What is** the reference to **animals of the righteous**, about whom it is stated that God does not generate mishaps through them? It is based on the incident **where Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir was going to engage in the redemption of captives, and he encountered the Ginai River.**

חולין ז' א

מאי בהמתן של צדיקים דרבי פנחס בן יאיר הוה קאזיל לפדיון שבויין פגע ביה בגינאי נהרא

Chullin 7a

He said to the river: **Ginai, part your water for me and I will pass through you.** The river **said to him: You are going to perform the will of your Maker and I am going to perform the will of my Maker**, to flow in my path. With regard to **you**, it is **uncertain** whether you will **perform** His will successfully, **and** it is **uncertain** whether **you will not perform** His will successfully. **I will certainly perform** His will successfully. Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir **said to** the river: **If you do not part, I will decree upon you that water will never flow through you.** The river **parted for him.**

חולין ז' א

אמר ליה גינאי חלוק לי מימך ואעבור בך אמר ליה אתה הולך לעשות רצון קונך ואני הולך לעשות רצון קוני אתה ספק עושה ספק אי אתה עושה אני ודאי עושה אמר ליה אם אי אתה חולק גזרני עליך שלא יעברו בך מים לעולם חלק ליה

Chullin 7a

There **was a certain man who was carrying wheat** for the preparation of *matza* for **Passover**. Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir **said to the river: Part your waters for that person too, as he is engaged in the performance of a mitzva**. The river **parted for him**. There **was a certain Arab [*taya'a*] who was accompanying them**. Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir **said to the river: Part your waters for that person too, so that he will not say: Is that what one does to a person who accompanies him? The river parted for him**.

Chullin 7a

Rav Yosef said: How great is this man, Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir, greater **than Moses and the six hundred thousand** who left Egypt, **as there**, at the Red Sea, the waters parted **one time, and here** the waters parted **three times**. The Gemara asks: **And perhaps here too**, the waters parted **one time**, and the river began to flow again only after all three of them passed. **Rather**, this man was as great **as Moses and the six hundred thousand** children of Israel.

Chullin 7a

After crossing the river, Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir **happened to come to a certain inn [*ushpiza*]**. His hosts **cast barley before his donkey** for him to eat. The donkey **did not eat it**.

Chullin 7b

The hosts **sifted** the barley with a utensil, but the donkey **did not eat it**. **They separated** the chaff from the barley by hand, but the donkey **did not eat** it. They wondered why the donkey would not eat the barley. Rabbi Pineḥas ben Ya'ir **said to his hosts: Perhaps the barley is not tithed**.

חולין ז' א

הוה ההוא גברא דהוה דארי חיטי לפיסחא אמר ליה חלוק ליה נמי להאי דבמצוה עסיק חלק ליה הוה ההוא טייעא דלווה בהדיהו אמר ליה חלוק ליה נמי להאי דלא לימא כך עושים לבני לוייה חלק ליה

חולין ז' א

אמר רב יוסף כמה נפיש גברא ממשה ושתין רבוון דאילו התם חד זימנא והכא תלתא זימנין ודלמא הכא נמי חדא זימנא אלא כמשה ושתין רבוון

חולין ז' א

אקלע לההוא אושפיזא רמו ליה שערי לחמריה לא אכל

חולין ז' ב

חבטינהו לא אכל נקרינהו לא אכל אמר להו דלמא לא מעשרן עשרינהו ואכל אמר ענייה זו הולכת לעשות רצון קונה ואתם מאכילין אותה טבלים

They **tithed it and** the donkey **ate** it. Rabbi Pinehas ben Ya'ir **said: This poor animal is going to perform the will of its Maker, and you are feeding it untithed produce?** Rabbi Zeira was referring to this donkey when it spoke of God preventing mishaps from occurring through animals of the righteous.



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Unlocking the Mysteries of the Talmud (4)

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Makkot 24a

§ Apropos tribulations of exile and hope for redemption, the Gemara relates: **And it once was that Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Akiva were walking along the road in the Roman Empire, and they heard the sound of the multitudes of Rome from Puteoli at a distance of one hundred and twenty mil.** The city was so large that they were able to hear its tumult from a great distance. **And the other Sages began weeping and Rabbi Akiva was laughing. They said to him: For what reason are you laughing? Rabbi Akiva said to them: And you, for what reason are you weeping? They said to him: These gentiles, who bow to false gods and burn incense to idols, dwell securely and tranquilly in this colossal city, and for us, the House of the footstool of our God, the Temple, is burnt**

Makkot 24b

by fire, and shall we not weep? Rabbi Akiva **said to them: That is why I am laughing. If for those who violate His will, the wicked, it is so and they are rewarded for the few good deeds they performed, for those who perform His will, all the more so will they be rewarded.**

Makkot 24b

The Gemara relates another incident involving those Sages. **On another occasion they were ascending to Jerusalem** after the destruction of the Temple. **When they**

מכות כ"ד א

וכבר היה ר"ג ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי יהושע ורבי עקיבא מהלכין בדרך ושמעו קול המונה של רומי מפלטה [ברחוק] מאה ועשרים מיל והתחילו בוכין ורבי עקיבא משחק אמרו לו מפני מה אתה משחק אמר להם ואתם מפני מה אתם בוכים אמרו לו הללו כושיים שמשתחווים לעצבים ומקטרים לעבודת כוכבים יושבין בטח והשקט ואנו בית הדום רגלי אלהינו שרוף

מכות כ"ד ב

באש ולא נבכה אמר להן לכך אני מצחק ומה לעוברי רצונו כך לעושי רצונו על אחת כמה וכמה

מכות כ"ד ב

שוב פעם אחת היו עולין לירושלים כיון שהגיעו להר הצופים קרעו בגדיהם כיון שהגיעו להר הבית ראו שועל שיצא

arrived at Mount Scopus and saw the site of the Temple, **they rent their garments** in mourning, in keeping with halakhic practice. **When they arrived at the Temple Mount, they saw a fox that emerged from the site of the Holy of Holies. They began weeping, and Rabbi Akiva was laughing. They said to him: For what reason are you laughing? Rabbi Akiva said to them: For what reason are you weeping? They said to him: This is the place concerning which it is written: "And the non-priest who approaches shall die" (Numbers 1:51), and now foxes walk in it; and shall we not weep?**

Makkot 24b

Rabbi Akiva **said to them: That is why I am laughing, as it is written**, when God revealed the future to the prophet Isaiah: **"And I will take to Me faithful witnesses to attest: Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah"** (Isaiah 8:2). **Now what is the connection between Uriah and Zechariah?** He clarifies the difficulty: **Uriah prophesied during the First Temple period, and Zechariah prophesied during the Second Temple period**, as he was among those who returned to Zion from Babylonia. **Rather, the verse established that fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah is dependent on fulfillment of the prophecy of Uriah.**

Makkot 24b

In the prophecy of Uriah it is written: "Therefore, for your sake Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become rubble, and the Temple Mount as the high places of a forest" (Micah 3:12), where foxes are found. There is a rabbinic tradition that this was prophesied by Uriah. **In the prophecy of Zechariah it is written: "There shall yet be elderly men and elderly women sitting in the streets of**

מבית קדשי הקדשים התחילו הן בוכין ור"ע מצחק אמרו לו מפני מה אתה מצחק אמר להם מפני מה אתם בוכים אמרו לו מקום שכתוב בו (במדבר א, נא) והזר הקרב יומת ועכשיו שועלים הלכו בו ולא נבכה

מכות כ"ד ב

אמר להן לכך אני מצחק דכתיב (ישעיהו ח, ב) ואעידה לי עדים נאמנים את אוריה הכהן ואת זכריה בן יברכיהו וכי מה ענין אוריה אצל זכריה אוריה במקדש ראשון וזכריה במקדש שני אלא תלה הכתוב נבואתו של זכריה בנבואתו של אוריה

מכות כ"ד ב

באוריה כתיב (מיכה ג, יב) לכן בגללכם ציון שדה תחרש [וגו'] בזכריה כתיב (זכריה ח, ד) עוד ישבו זקנים וזקנות ברחובות ירושלם עד שלא נתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה הייתי מתיירא שלא תתקיים נבואתו של זכריה עכשיו שנתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה בידוע שנבואתו של זכריה מתקיימת בלשון

Jerusalem” (Zechariah 8:4). **Until the prophecy of Uriah** with regard to the destruction of the city **was fulfilled I was afraid that the prophecy of Zechariah would not be fulfilled**, as the two prophecies are linked. **Now that the prophecy of Uriah was fulfilled**, it is **evident that the prophecy of Zechariah remains valid**. The Gemara adds: The Sages **said to him**, employing **this formulation: Akiva, you have comforted us; Akiva, you have comforted us**.

הזה אמרו לו עקיבא ניהמתנו עקיבא
ניהמתנו:

Makkot 24b

We will return to you and we have acquired
Tractate Makkos.

מכות כ"ד ב

הדרן עלך אלו הן הלוקין
וסליקא לה מסכת מכות



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