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Bavli Berakhot, Chapters Four and Five

Bavli Berakhot, Chapter Nine

Bavli Sanhedrin, Chapter Eleven (90a-101a)

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2006-2007

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COMING TO THE AMIDAH WITH KOVED ROSH

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Talmud Bavli Berakhot 30b-32b

Teri Appleby

Text Immersion Project: Essay One

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Dr. Dvora Weisberg, Advisor

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Introduction

In Chapters Four and Five of *Bavli Berakhot*, the Gemara¹ directs its attention to the recitation of the *tefilla* - the Amidah or Shemoneh Esrei – which is recited during Shacharit, Minhah, Ma'ariv and Musaf services. The bulk of the Gemara's discussion focuses on *keva*, the fixed elements, of the Amidah.² Detailed discussions address the timing, content, and manner of the recitation of the Amidah.³

The Gemara's focus on *keva* reflects the efforts of the Rabbis to develop a discipline and culture of prayer to replace the sacrificial cult following the destruction of the second Temple.⁴ And yet, despite the Gemara's emphasis on the *keva* of the Amidah, its concerns are not limited to *keva* alone; the Gemara is also concerned with the *kavanah* – attitude and intention - of the pray-er. In chapter 4 of *Bavli Berakhot*, R. Eliezer warns, "If a man makes his prayer a fixed task it is not [genuine] supplication."⁵ Ismar Elbogen characterizes the goals of the Amoraim of the *Bavli*, as follows:

...there was a desire to cast as much as possible into fixed and established molds. This goal occasioned a great many halakhic discussions, giving the impression that the amoraim viewed the entire realm of liturgy from a purely legalistic point of view

¹ I use the term Gemara to refer to the entirety of the Talmud excluding the Mishnah. As such, the Gemara consists of materials from Tannaim, Amoraim and the Stam (or, more accurately, Stammim). I use the term Stam, or the voice of the Stam, to refer to the "authorship" of the Gemara – the Rabbis who compiled, edited and composed the materials contained in the Gemara.

² For ease of reference and to avoid confusion with the broader genre of prayer, I use the term Amidah rather than *tefilla* or prayer in this paper.

³ For example: how late or early one may pray; the obligations of the individual; communal worship; if the recitation of an Amidah is missed; special inserts; improper additions; the texts of the Havineinu (the abridged Amidah) and the Katzar (the shortened Amidah); if errors are made by the prayer leader or the individual; the origins of the three daily prayers and the significance of the varying number of blessings in the Amidah; and prayer choreography. For summaries of the topics covered by each *sugya* in Chapter Four see Appendix I, and for Chapter Five see Appendix II. In the context of this paper, I use the term *sugya* to refer to the Gemara's entire discussion following a Mishnah (or grouping of combined Mishnayot).

⁴ Rabban Gamliel II is generally credited with setting the parameters of the Amidah; however, the exact order and texts of the benedictions were not set until much later. For brief histories of the formation of the Amidah liturgy see: Elbogen, Idelsohn, Hoffman, Langer, Milgram.

⁵ *M. Berakhot* 4:4, *B. Berakhot* 29b

and forced everything into a rigid framework of regulations. But no faithful picture can be gained solely from the halakhic discussions. Wherever we are able to look into the minds of the amoraim, we become aware of them not merely as desiccated legists, but as men of delicate religious sensibilities. With all their talk of prayer as a duty, with all their debates as to the details of how this duty is fulfilled, when we inquire about their personal opinions all casuistry and argumentation fall away, and reverence is left as the sole requirement that they impose.⁶

It would seem, then, that the Gemara is concerned that pray-er of the Amidah doesn't lose touch with the roots of fixed prayer: the ability to pray spontaneously and from the heart.⁷

In the first sugya of *B. Berakhot* Chapter Five, the Gemara addresses the very topic of reverence of which Elbogen spoke. Citing the Mishnah, the Gemara begins on 30b:

אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך כובד ראש חסידים הראשונים היו שזהין שעה אחת ומתפללין כדי שיכונו לבם לאביהם שבשמים אפילו המלך שואל בשלומי לא ישיבנו ואפילו נחש כרוך על עקבו לא יפסיק

We don't stand up to pray except with reverence. The early pious ones used to tarry for one hour and then pray in order to direct their hearts to the Father Who is in Heaven. Even if a king asks about his welfare, one should not answer him. Even if a snake is coiled around his heel, one should not pause.

The focus of this paper is an examination of the Gemara's discussion of this *reverence* – or *koved rosh* – and, more specifically, the surprising nature of the Gemara's exegeses of Hannah's and Moses' prayers on 31a-32a. To understand the Gemara's discussion of *koved rosh*, we will first examine the term *kavanah*, then the exegeses of Hannah's prayer and Moses' prayer, and my analysis of these exegeses. And finally, we will look at some possible conclusions to be drawn from the Gemara's discussion of *koved rosh*.

I believe we will find that Hannah's and Moses' prayers, which are transformed in such a creative way that they become characterized as *words hurled at God*, present an attitude which we would anticipate to be in conflict with the requirement of *koved rosh*, but in fact is not only

⁶ Elbogen, 212.

⁷ As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, the Amidah includes places for personal and private supplications – in the thirteen petitionary prayers and at the end of the fixed liturgy.

justified and tolerated but it considered necessary and required. In their individual fights for justice, Hannah and Moses serve as our role models for prayer; and the term *koved rosh* is understood to embrace their seeming irreverence.

The Gemara and Kavanah

As mentioned above, the Gemara begins Chapter Five of *B. Berakhot* by quoting Mishnah 5:1. This Mishnah concerns itself with the *kavanah* with which the pray-er recites the Amidah. The Mishnah begins by telling us that one should not stand up to recite the Amidah without *koved rosh* and then goes on to tell us that, "The early pious ones used to tarry for one hour and then pray in order to direct their hearts (שיכוונו לבם) to their Father Who is in Heaven."

This directing of one's heart – *kavanah* – is generally defined as intention or concentration. However, as Tzee Zahavy points out, "a precise definition of the term has been elusive because it refers to an intangible inner state of mind, abstract concept of thought, and not a physical or tangible action."⁸

The Gemara's discussion of how to improve one's chances for proper *kavanah* while reciting the Amidah suggests a much more nuanced meaning than mere concentration.⁹ On 31a, a number of suggestions concerning preparation for proper *kavanah* are offered from various Baraitot. One should not recite the Amidah after having just discussed a matter of disputed law

⁸ Tzee Zahavy, "Kavvanah for Prayer in the Mishnah and Talmud." Ch. 3 in *New Perspectives: Religion, Literature and Society in Ancient Israel* (1987), p.37.

⁹ Zahavy (at p.38) points out that the *kavanah* required to recite the Sh'ma does not require the additional *koved rosh*; therefore, the *kavanah* required to recite the Amidah is much greater and qualitatively different than for the Sh'ma.

because one's mind will be distracted;¹⁰ one may engage in words of wisdom or study only matters of agreed upon law before reciting the Amidah.¹¹ The second Baraita on 31a instructs:

We do not stand to pray amidst sorrow, or amidst slothfulness, or amidst laughter, or amidst conversation (chatter), or amidst lightheadedness, or amidst idle words – but rather, amidst the joy of mitzvah. And thus, a person should not leave from his friend, amidst conversation (chatter) or amidst laughter, or amidst lightheadedness, or amidst idle words – but rather, amidst a matter of halakhah. For thus we find in the early prophets that they concluded their words with words of praise and consolation.

Thus, we see that *kavanah* involves an array of mental and emotional states. And it is in this context that one must come to the Amidah with *koved rosh*. Literally, *koved rosh* means a heavy head; but it is also understood to mean a bent head, a heavy heart, a solemn disposition, awe, reverence, and humility. Now let's see how the Gemara explicates the meaning of *kavanah* and *koved rosh* in the contexts of Hannah's and Moses' prayers.

Hannah's Prayer: (31a-31b)

Hannah's prayer is a private and personal prayer in which Hannah prays on her own behalf. Embittered by her barrenness, she comes to Shiloh with her husband Elkanah and prays for a son. Hannah's prayer is recorded in I Samuel 1:1-10

י וְהָיָה מִכֵּת נָפֶשׁ וְתִתְפַּלֵּל עַל־יְהוָה וּבִכָּה תִבְכֶּה : יֵא וְתִדְרֹךְ נֶדֶר וְתֹאמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱסֹרָה
תִּרְאֶה | בָּעֵי אֲמַתְךָ וּזְכַרְתִּנִּי וְלֹא־תִשְׁכַּח אֶת־אֲמַתְךָ וְנִתְּתָה לְאִמָּתְךָ זֶרַע אֲנָשִׁים וְנִתְּתִיו לַיהוָה
בְּלִימֵי חַיִּיו וּמוֹכָה לֹא־יִשְׁלַח עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ :

¹⁰The first Baraita cited on 31a states: The rabbis taught in a Baraita: We don't stand up to pray not amidst a judgment/lawsuit, nor amidst a matter of halakhah. But rather, amidst decided halakhah.

¹¹Zahavy (p.45-46) offers an insightful analysis of the three examples of undisputed laws which the Gemara offers. Abaye suggests a particular law of Niddah (an example of a strict rule); Rava suggests a law about a tithing loophole (an example of a lenient rule); and Huna suggests a law concerning the letting of blood from an animal at the Temple (an example of an abstract principle of law). Zahavy explains reasons for these suggested laws: Contemplating a strict rule allows a person to come to the Amidah with a humble spirit; contemplating a lenient rule allows a person to come with delight; and the contemplation of an abstract principle allows a person to come with great concentration. Zahavy further explains that these three choices represent sources of distraction from everyday life: the relationships between men and women; mundane monetary worries; and the confrontations between individuals and authority figures which create frustration and helplessness.

And she was bitter of spirit and she prayed to Adonai, weeping continuously. And she made a vow and said, "Adonai of hosts, if You take note of the suffering of Your maidservant, and do not forget Your maidservant, and give Your maidservant male offspring, then I shall give him to Adonai all the days of his life, and a razor shall not come upon his head.

In its composed exegesis of Hannah's prayer on *B. Berakhot* 31b, the Stam selects and presents several creative interpretations and embellishments of the Biblical verses by Amoraim.

Four strategies used by Hannah in her petition for a child are thus identified:

1. From the phrase, *And she made a vow and said*, "*Adonai Tzevaot*" Rabbi Elazar (AI, 3)¹² provides Hannah's first argument in which she points out the abundance of God's creations in the universe and makes what seems to be a reasonable request for her small and fair share.¹³

ותדר נדר ותאמר ה' צבאות אמר רבי אלעזר: מיום שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את עולמו לא היה אדם שקראו להקדוש ברוך הוא צבאות עד שבאתה חנה וקראתו צבאות אמרה חנה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: רבונו של עולם מכל צבאי צבאות שבראך בעולםך קשה בעיניך שתתן לי בן אחד

From the day that the Holy One Blessed Be He, created his universe, there was no person who called the Holy One Blessed Be He, *Tzevaot*, until Hannah came and called Him *Tzevaot*. Hannah said before the Holy One Blessed Be He: Master of the Universe! From all the hosts of hosts that You have created in Your universe, is it difficult in Your eyes to give me a son?

2. Troubled by, or at least building on, the repetition of the Hebrew root ה.א.ה in the phrase, *If You take note...*, Rabbi Elazar (AI, 3) provides a second argument in which Hannah bullies God

¹² I follow Steinsaltz's designations (as found in *The Talmud, The Steinsaltz Edition: The Reference Guide*, New York: Random House) to identify a Sage as a Tanna (T) or an Amora (A); from Bavel (B) or Eretz Yisrael (I), and a particular generation (1,2,3,4).

¹³ This interpretation of the verse is supported by a parable which the Gemara tells following R. Elazar's comments on the verse. The Gemara asks: "To what is this matter comparable?" The Gemara answers: "To a king of flesh and blood who made a feast for his servants. A poor person came and stood by the door. He said to them: 'Give me one piece!' But they paid no attention to him. He pushed and entered the place of the king. He said to him: 'My lord, the king, from all of the feast you have made, is it difficult in your eyes to give me one piece?'" In the parable, the poor man presumably represents Hannah, the human king represents God, the poor person's (reasonable) wish for a piece of bread represents Hannah's wish for a son; the servants most likely represent Eli the priest; and the abundance of the feast probably represents the multitude of God's creations. [I'm indebted to Dvora Weisberg for clarifying some of the references that were unclear to me]

into giving her a child by threatening to take the drastic measure of pretending to be a *sotah* – a woman whose husband suspects her of adultery – if God ignores her plea:

אם ראה תראה אמר רבי אלעזר אמרה חנה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של
עולם אם ראה מוטב ואם לאו תראה אלך ואסתתר בפני אלקנה בעלי וכיון דמסתתרנא משקו לי מי
סוטה ואי אתה עושה תורתך פלסתר שנאמר ונקתה ונזרעה זרע

Hannah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, if You take note (ראה), fine. But if You do not (תראה) [then] I will go and hide myself [with another man] in front of Elkanan my husband. And when I hide myself, they will give me waters of the *sotah* to drink. And You will not make Your Torah a fraud, for it says: *then she shall be proven innocent and she shall bear seed*.¹⁴

3. From the verse, *Of the suffering of Your maidservant, do not forget Your maidservant, and give Your maidservant [male offspring]*, R. Yose ben R. Hanina (AI, 2) provides another argument. He understands the repetition of “Your maidservant” to mean that Hannah argues she merits the gift of a child because she has not transgressed any of the three positive mitzvot to which women are bound: *niddah*,¹⁵ *hallah*,¹⁶ and lighting Shabbat candles.

בעני אמתך אל תשכח את אמתך ונתתה לאמתך אמר רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא שלש אמתות הללו למה
אמרה חנה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של עולם שלשה בדקי מיתה בראת באשה ואמרי לה שלשה
דבקי מיתה ואלו הן נדה וחלה והדלקת הנר כלום עברתי על אחת מהן

Why *maidservant* three times? Hannah said before the Holy One Blessed Be He: “Master of the Universe, You have created three “examiners” of death regarding women – and as others say it, three “bonds” of death – and these are they: *niddah*, and *hallah*, and the kindling of the [Shabbat] light. Have I transgressed any one of them?”

4. From the phrase, *Now Hannah, she was speaking upon (על) her heart*, R. Elazar (AI,3) explicates the meaning of על to provide Hannah’s fourth and final argument. He concludes that Hannah now argues that since God doesn’t create anything for no reason, and breasts are

¹⁴ Numbers 5:28. There is an objection to Elazar’s understanding of the impact of this biblical verse. The difference of opinion between Yishmael (T,4) and Akiva (T,4) as recorded in a Baraita is cited in the Gemara.

¹⁵ The laws of family purity

¹⁶ The laws of separating bread dough

intended for nursing, then God should give her a child so that she may nurse him and make use of her breasts.

וחנה היא מדברת על לבה אמר רבי אלעזר משום רבי יוסי בן זמרא על עסקי לבה אמרה לפניו רבונו של עולם כל מה שבראת באשה לא בראת דבר אחד לבטלה עינים לראות ואזנים לשמוע חוטם להריח פה לדבר ידיים לעשות בהם מלאכה רגלים להלך בהן דדים להניק בהן דדים הללו שנתת על לבי למה לא להניק בהן תן לי בן ואניק בהן

[This refers] to matters that were upon her heart. She said before Him: Master of the Universe, all that You created in a woman, You did not create one thing for naught - eyes to see and ears to hear; a nose to smell, a mouth to speak, hands with which to do work, feet with which to walk, and breasts with which to nurse. These breasts which you have placed upon my heart, what are they for? Aren't they to nurse with? Give me a child that I may nurse with them.

Moses' Prayer: (32a-32b)

In contrast to Hannah who offers a prayer for herself, Moses prays on the behalf of others. The Gemara analyzes a variety of verses which have to do with Moses' intercessions on behalf of the Israelites in the story of the Golden Calf¹⁷ and the story of the Twelve Spies.¹⁸ In both stories God is very angry with the Israelites because of their sins and wants to destroy them.

From The Sin of the Golden Calf: (32a)

The Gemara presents comments by several Amoraim and a few Tannaim on verses related to Moses' intercession during the incident with the Golden calf.

1. The first verse cited by the Gemara on 31a is, *And Adonai spoke to Moses: Go descend (for your people that you have brought up from Egypt have become corrupt,*¹⁹ R. Elazar (AI, 3) comments on the words, *Go descend* and imagines that God is prompting Moses to be a stronger

¹⁷ Exodus 32, retold in Deuteronomy 9

¹⁸ Numbers 14

¹⁹ Exodus 32:7

leader. For Moses must strengthen himself to be able to plead for mercy; he must be willing to get mad at God and fight for the people. In the end Moses realizes, "this matter depends on me."²⁰

וידבר ה' אל משה לך רד מאי לך רד אמר רבי אלעזר אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה משה רד מגדולתך כלום נתתי לך גדולה אלא בשביל ישראל ועכשיו ישראל חטאו אתה למה לי מיד תשש כחו של משה ולא היה לו כח לדבר וכיון שאמר הרף ממני ואשמידם אמר משה דבר זה תלוי בי מיד עמד ונתחזק בתפלה ובקש רחמים

R. Elazar said: The Holy One Blessed Be He said to Moses: "Moses, descend from your greatness. Did I grant you greatness but for the sake of Israel? But now Israel has sinned. What need have I for you?" Immediately, Moses' strength ebbed and he lacked the strength to speak. However, as soon as God said: "*Release Me, and I shall destroy them*,"²¹ Moses said: "This matter depends upon me." Immediately, he arose and strengthened himself in prayer and pleaded for mercy.

2. In the next verse cited - *And now, release Me, and My anger will flare against them and I shall annihilate them, and I shall make you a great nation, etc.*²² - R. Abahu (AI,3) interprets the phrase, *release me*, to portray Moses as becoming quite forceful and physical with God.

ועתה הניחה לי ויחר אפי בהם ואכלם ואעשה אותך לגוי גדול וגו' אמר רבי אבהו אלמלא מקרא כתוב אי אפשר לאומרו מלמד שתפסו משה להקדוש ברוך הוא כאדם שהוא תופס את חברו בבגדו ואמר לפניו רבונו של עולם אין אני מניחך עד שתמחול ותסלח להם

R. Abahu said: Were this verse not written, it would be impossible to say it. This teaches that Moses seized the Holy One, Blessed Be He, like a person seizes his friend by his garment, and said before Him: Master of the Universe, I shall not release You until You forgive and pardon them.

3. The next comment addresses the end of the verse cited above - *and I shall make you into a great nation, etc.*²³ In the full verse God offers to destroy the people and to start over with Moses as the leader of a new nation. R. Elazar (AI,3) takes a reference to the merit of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a few verses later²⁴ and imagines Moses declining this offer based on his inadequacy as a ruler. He sees Moses comparing his merit to that of the patriarchs by using the images of a

²⁰ The Gemara cites a parable which reinforces the idea of "this matter depends on me."

²¹ Deuteronomy 9:14

²² Exodus 32:10

²³ Exodus 32:10

²⁴ Exodus 32:13 *Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob), how You swore to them by Your Self and said to them: "I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and I will give to your offspring this whole land of which I spoke, to possess forever."*

three-legged stool (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and a one-legged stool (Moses). Elazar suggests Moses wanted God to feel sorry for him and therefore save the people.

ואעשה אותך לגוי גדול וגו' אמר רבי אלעזר אמר משה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של עולם ומה כסא של שלש רגלים אינו יכול לעמוד לפניך בשעת כעסך כסא של רגל אחד על אחת כמה וכמה ולא עוד אלא שיש בי בוש פנים מאכותי עכשיו יאמרו ראו פרנס שהעמיד עליהם בקש גדולה לעצמו ולא בקש עליהם רחמים

R. Elazar said: Moses said before the Holy One, Blessed Be He: Master of the Universe, if a stool of three legs cannot endure before You at the time of Your wrath, how much more so a stool with one leg. And furthermore, I am shamefaced before my forefathers. They will say now: Behold the leader installed over them. He sought greatness for himself and did not beseech mercy on their behalf.

4. Several Amoraim and Tannaim offer interpretations of the phrase, *And Moses pleaded* (יחל) *before Adonai*.²⁵ that Moses wore God out with his arguments; that Moses annulled God's vow to destroy the people; that Moses risked his life for his people; that Moses caused God to be merciful; and that Moses argued "it would be profanity" for God to destroy the people. It should be noted that the sages play with the letters in the word יחל to come up with their varied interpretations.

ויחל משה את פני ה' אמר רבי אלעזר מלמד שעמד משה בתפלה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא עד שהחלהו ורבא אמר עד שהפך לו נדרו כתיב הכא ויחל וכתוב התם לא יחל דברו ואמר מר הוא אינו מיחל אבל אחרים מחלין לו ושמואל אמר מלמד שמסר עצמו למיתה עליהם שנאמר ואם אין מחני נא מספרך אמר רבא אמר רב יצחק מלמד שהחלה עליהם מדת רחמים ורבנן אמרי מלמד שאמר משה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של עולם חולין הוא לך מעשות כדברהזה ויחל משה את פני ה' תניא רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר מלמד שעמד משה בתפלה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא עד שאחזתו אחילו מאי אחילו אמר רבי אלעזר אש של עצמות מאי אש של עצמות אמר אביי אשתא דגרמי

R. Elazar (AI, 3) said: This teaches that Moses stood in prayer before the Holy One, Blessed Be He, until he wore Him out (החלהו).

Rava (AB, 4) said: Until he annulled God's vow [to destroy Israel]. It is written here: *vayehal* (.ח.ל.ה.); and it is written elsewhere: *He shall not profane* (yahel- .ל.ל.ה.) *his word* (vow).²⁶ And Mar said: He may not profane it (the vow); but others may profane (annul the vow) for him.

Shmuel (AB, 1) said: It teaches that he (Moses) risked his life for them on their account, as it says: *but if not, erase me now from your book*.²⁷

²⁵ Exodus 32:11

²⁶ Numbers 30:3

²⁷ Exodus 32:32 *And now if you would but forgive their sin, but if not, erase me now from Your book.*

Rava (AB, 4) said in the name of Rav Yitzhak: It teaches that he caused the attribute of mercy to come to rest (החלה) upon them.

The Rabbis say: It teaches that Moses said before the Holy One Blessed Be He, "Master of the Universe, it would be profanity (חולין) for You to do this thing."

Rabbi Eliezer the Great (T, 3), cited in a Baraita: It teaches that Moses stood in prayer before The Holy One Blessed Be He until *achilu* (אחילו) seized him.²⁸

5. The last verse cited says, *Remember for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself*,²⁹ R. Elazar (AI, 3) interprets Moses' statement as an argument concerning the longevity of oaths made by God: Since God's oath to the patriarchs endures forever -because it is based on God's great name - God cannot destroy the people.

זכר לאברהם ליצחק ולישראל אשר נשבעת להם בך מאי בך אמר רבי אלעזר אמר משה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של עולם אלמלא נשבעת להם בשמים ובארץ הייתי אומר כשם ששמים וארץ בטלים כך שבועתך בטלה ועכשו שנשבעת להם בשמך הגדול מה שמך הגדול חי וקיים לעולם ולעולמי עולמים כך שבועתך קיימת לעולם ולעולמי עולמים

What is *by Yourself*? R. Elazar said: Moses said before The Holy One Blessed Be He, "Master of the Universe, if indeed You had sworn to them by the heavens and the earth, I would have said that just as the heaven and the earth can cease to exist so too your oath can cease to exist. And now that You have sworn to them by Your great name, just as Your great name endures forever and ever, so, too, Your oath endures forever and ever."

From the Sin of the Spies: (32a-32b)

Again, Moses intervenes on behalf of the Israelites when God wants to destroy them. The Gemara offers analyses of two verses from Moses' plea.

1. The first verse cited is, *Because Adonai lacked the ability* (יכלת).³⁰ R. Elazar (AI, 3) responds to the form of the verb which resembles the feminine form. He imagines a conversation between

²⁸ *Achilu* is defined as some kind affliction: bone fire/fire of the bones.

²⁹ Exodus 32:13

³⁰ Numbers 14:16 *Because Adonai lacked the ability to bring this people to the land that He had sworn to give them, He slaughtered them in the wilderness.*

Moses and God in which Moses plays upon God's ego and vanity to convince God to spare the people.

מבלתי יכלת ה' יכול ה' מיבעי ליה אמר רבי אלעזר אמר משה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של עולם עכשיו יאמרו אומות העולם תשש כחו כנקבה ואינו יכול להציל אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה והלא כבר ראו נסים וגבורות שעשיתי להם על הים אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם עדיין יש להם לומר למלך אחד יכול לעמוד לשלשים ואחד מלכים אינו יכול לעמוד אמר רבי יוחנן מנין שחזר הקדוש ברוך הוא והודה לו למשה שנאמר ויאמר ה' סלחתי כדברך תני דבי רבי ישמעאל כדברך עתידים אומות העולם לומר כן אשרי תלמיד שרבו מודה לו

Yachol (יכול) *Adonai* – it should be. R. Elazar said: Moses said before The Holy One Blessed Be He, “Master of the Universe, the nations of the world will say: ‘His power is weak as a woman and he is unable to save.’” The Holy One Blessed Be He said to Moses: “But did they not already see the miracles and mighty acts I did for them at the sea?” And he (Moses) said before Him: “Master of the Universe, they can still say: ‘To one king He is able to stand up, to thirty-one kings (of Israel) he is unable to stand up.’”

2. In the second verse cited - *But as I live*³¹ - Rava (AB, 4) understands the phrase to mean that God even thanked Moses for arguing with him on behalf of the Israelites.

ואולם חי אני אמר רבא אמר רב יצחק מלמד שאמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה משה החייתני בדברך

Rava said in the name of Rav Yitzhak: This teaches that The Holy One Blessed Be He, said to Moses: “Moses, you have kept Me alive with your words.”

Analysis

During a discussion about the proper *kavanah* one must bring to the recitation of the Amidah (*koved rosh*, awe, reverence), the Stam has composed an extraordinary and surprising exegesis of Hannah's and Moses' prayers. Their prayers, which are recorded in the Tanakh, undergo incredible transformation at the hands of the Rabbis. The Stam brings together interpretations of a handful of verses as proffered by the rabbis, particularly by Palestinian

³¹ Numbers 14:17

Amoraim. These Amoraim not only interpret the actual words used by Hannah and Moses, but they unabashedly put words in Hannah's and Moses' mouths.³² By doing so, they create and attribute such *hutzpah* – to Hannah and Moses. This attitude is created by the Amoraim; and then, it is not only condoned but it is co-created and emphasized by the Stam.

One might ask why the Rabbis (the Amoraim and the Stam) interpreted and transformed Hannah's and Moses' prayers as they did. The tension between the admonishment not to come to the Amidah without *koved rosh* and the Gemara's exegesis of Hannah's and Moses' prayers is palpable. In fact, on 31b-32a the Gemara even characterizes Hannah's prayer and Moses' prayers as *הטיחה דברים* "words hurled at God," suggesting an attitude of irreverence, insolence, and disrespect – an attitude which would seem to be improper towards God and especially inappropriate for prayer.³³

So what's going on here? Do the Rabbis believe that we should or should not come to prayer with *koved rosh*? Are Hannah's and Moses' prayers examples of coming to prayer with *koved rosh* or are these prayers with their hurled words exceptions to the general rule?³⁴ An examination of the context in which the Gemara discusses Hannah's and Moses' prayers should help answer these questions and resolve the apparent tension. Within the larger context of the first *sugya* we'll look at the Rabbis' general attitudes towards Hannah's and Moses' prayers; the efficacy of their prayers; the discussion of God's ability to control the evil inclination and the natural consequences of excess; and, finally, the discussion of the duty to rebuke a friend.

³² As Dvora Weisberg pointed out to me, it should be noted that the Palestinian Amoraim were particularly fond of *aggadah* – which was dear to the hearts of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael.

³³ The Gemara translates the word *על* as *against* rather than *to* and renders the verses in I Samuel 1:10) and Numbers 11:2 as *and she prayed against Adonai* and *And Moses prayed against Adonai*, respectively.

³⁴ It should be noted that elsewhere in the *Bavli* (*Taanit* 25a, *Megilla* 22b), R. Elazar states that one must never hurl words at God in his prayer.

The Rabbis' Attitudes Toward Hannah's and Moses' Prayers:

Nowhere in the *sugya* is there a condemnation of Hannah or Moses for their tone in prayer. In fact, both Hannah and Moses are presented as role models. Earlier in the *sugya* on 31b, the Rav Hamnuna (AB, 2-3) praises Hannah as a role model for proper prayer:

אמר רב המנונא כמה הלכתא גברותא איכא למשמע מהני קראי דחנה וחנה היא מדברת על לבה
מכאן למתפלל צריך שיכוין לבו רק שפתייה נעות מכאן למתפלל שיחתוך בשפתיו וקולה לא ישמע
מכאן שאסור להגביה קולו בתפלתו ויחשבה עלי לשכרה מכאן ששכור אסור להתפלל

Rav Hamnuna said: There are many important laws to be learned from these verses about Hannah:³⁵ *Now Hannah was speaking in her heart* – from here: one who prays [the Amidah] must direct his heart (mind). *Only her lips moved* – from here: one who prays must pronounce with his lips. *but her voice was not heard* – from here: it is forbidden to raise one's voice during his prayer. *so Eli thought her a drunkard* – from here: a drunkard is forbidden to pray.

And later on in the *sugya* at 32a, the Rav Simlai (AI, 2) praises Moses as a proper role model for prayer:

דרש רבי שמלאי: לעולם יסדר אדם שבחו של הקדוש ברוך הוא ואחר כך יתפלל מנלן ממשו דכתיב
ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההיא

R. Simlai explained: a person should always offer his praise of the Holy One Blessed Be He and afterwards pray. From where [is this rule]? From Moses. For it is written *And I implored Adonai at that time*.³⁶

The Efficacy of Hannah's and Moses' Prayers:

Not only is there no condemnation of Hannah's and Moses' prayers in the *sugya*, but we find that their prayers are effective – both are granted what they prayed for from God. In answering Hannah's and Moses' prayers, God acknowledges that they were right in their arguments and accusations.

After citing Rabbis who identified the prayers of Hannah and Moses (and Elijah) as “hurled,”³⁷ the Gemara then goes on to show that God concurred with their arguments. On 31b-

³⁵ I Samuel 1:13-14

³⁶ Deuteronomy 3:23

32a, R. Elazar (AB, 3) tells us that Hannah hurled words at God in I Samuel 1:13; and God concurred with her (by implication, when God gave Hannah a son).³⁸ R. Eliezer (T) tells us that Elijah hurled words at God at I Kings 18:37; and R. Shmuel bar Yitzhak (AI, 3) tells God concurred with him at Micah 4:6. R. Elazar also tells us that Moses hurled words at God in Numbers 11:2; and R. Shmuel bar Nachmani (AI, 3) tells us God concurred with him at Hosea 2:10. Thus, it would seem, that these “hurled words” are deemed justified in their arguments and tone – that Hannah and Moses are right in what they say to God and how they say it.

God's Ability to Control the Evil Inclination and the Natural Consequences of Excess:

After characterizing Hannah's prayer as words hurled upward against God, and identifying Elijah and Moses as others who hurled words upward, the Gemara begins a discussion of God's ability to control the evil inclination. On 32a, R. Hama b. Hanina (AI, 2) and R. Pappa (AB, 5) cite three verses and one verse, respectively, where God acknowledges some responsibility for turning the people towards the evil inclination.

אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא אלמלא שלש מקראות הללו נתמוטטו רגליהם של שונאי ישראל חד דכתיב
ואשר הרעתי וחד דכתיב הנה כחמר ביד היוצר כן אתם בידי בית ישראל וחד דכתיב והסרתי את לב
האבן מבשרכם ונתתי לכם לב בשר רב פפא אמר מהכא ואת רוחי אתן בקרבכם ועשיתי את אשר
בחקי תלכו

R. Hama the son of R. Hanina said: Were it not for the following three verses, the feet of the enemies of Israel (a euphemism for Israel) would falter. One [verse] is what is written: *and the one who I caused to be evil.*³⁹ And one [verse] is what is written: *Behold, as clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand, O House of Israel.*⁴⁰ And one [verse] is what is written: *And I will remove the stony heart from your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh.*⁴¹ Rav Pappa said: [It is] from

³⁷ R. Elazar (AB, 3) identified Hannah and Moses; R. Eliezer (T) identified Elijah;

³⁸ On B. Berakhot 31b the Gemara discusses I Samuel 1:24-27 in which Hannah returns to Shilo with Samuel – the son she had prayed for.

³⁹ Micah 4:6

⁴⁰ Jeremiah 18:6

⁴¹ Ezekiel 36:26

here: *And I will put My spirit within you, and I will make it so that you walk in My statutes.*⁴²

In each of these examples cited, God acknowledges the divine power and admits, or at least does not deny, some responsibility for turning the people towards the evil inclination.

The Gemara continues its discussion of God's responsibility by discussing the natural consequences of excess.⁴³ The academy of R. Yannai (AI, 1) offers an analogy of a lion who roars only because he was given a basket of meat. R. Oshaya's example is that of a cow who kicks his owner only because he was given *karshinim* to eat. R. Hiyya b. Abba (AI, 3) offered an example in the name of R. Yohanan (AI, 2) example: a son who sins only after his father bathed and oiled him, gave him food, drink and money, and then sat him down at the entrance of prostitutes.

These Amoraim paint a picture of a God who is, at least, partially responsible for the people's surrender to the evil inclination. The finger of blame becomes reversed. Because of God's responsibility, prayers like Hannah's and Moses' - *words hurled at God* - are justified; and, therefore, excused or tolerated. Thus, Moses is justified in grabbing God by the garment with his words because, as Danny Siegel states, "the betrayed is the betrayer and the betrayer is the betrayed."⁴⁴ Similarly, God's injustice in denying Hannah a child justifies her hurled words as she threatens to become a *sotah* whose innocence will compel God to grant her a child.

⁴² Ezekiel 36:27

⁴³ On 32a, the Gemara offers two proof texts for the statement that Moses hurled words against God. R. Elazar identifies Numbers 11:2 - *And Moses prayed to Adonai- as the source*. The academy of R. Yannai (AI, 1) identifies a different source: the word *Di-zahav* from Deuteronomy 1:1. The Stam asks: What is Di-Zahav? And answers: In the Academy of the Yannai they said: "Thus said Moses before the Holy One Blessed Be He, 'Master of the Universe, because of the silver and the gold that you have lavished upon Israel until they said, Enough! - that is what caused them to make the [Golden] Calf.'"

⁴⁴ Danny Siegel, "The Golden Calf Episode: When the Betrayed Is the Betrayer and the Betrayer the Betrayed," *Conservative Judaism*, 57/3 (Spring 2005), 23-32. God becomes the betrayer by threatening to break the vow God made to the Patriarchs to make them numerous and to give them the land of Canaan; and by withholding a child from Hannah.

The Discussion of One's Obligation to Rebuke a Friend:

In between the discussion of laws to be learned from the verses about Hannah's prayer and the interpretations of the text of Hannah's prayer, there is an elucidation on one's obligation to rebuke a fellow. This discussion provides us with further insights on the propriety of hurled words.

On the top of 31b, Amoraim comment on the interchange between Hannah and Eli from I Samuel 1:14-17.

ויאמר אליה עלי עד מתי תשתכרין וגו' אמר רבי אלעזר מכאן לרואה בחברו דבר שאינו הגון צריך להוכיחו

ותען חנה ותאמר לא אדני אמר עולא ואיתימא רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא אמרה ליה לא אדון אתה בדבר זה ולא רוח הקודש שורה עליך שאתה חושדני בדבר זה איכא דאמרי הכי אמרה ליה לא אדון אתה לאו איכא שכינה ורוח הקודש גבך שדנתני לכף חובה ולא דנתני לכף זכות מי לא ידעת דאשה קשת רוח אנכי

ויין ושכר לא שתיתי אמר רבי אלעזר מכאן לנחשד בדבר שאין בו שצריך להודיעו

אל תתן את אמתך לפני בת בליעל אמר רבי אלעזר מכאן לשכור שמתפלל כאלו עובד עבודה זרה כתיב הכא לפני בת בליעל וכתיב התם יצאו אנשים בני בליעל מקרבך מה להלן עבודה זרה אף כאן עבודה זרה

ויען עלי ויאמר לכי לשלום אמר רבי אלעזר מכאן לחושד את חברו בדבר שאין בו שצריך לפייסו ולא עוד אלא שצריך לברכו שנאמר ואלהי ישראל יתן את שלחך

And Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? etc."⁴⁵ - R. Elazar (AI, 3) said: From here [we learn]: One who sees in his friend something which is unfit - he needs to rebuke him.

And Hannah answered and said: "No, my master"⁴⁶ - Ulla (AI, 2-3) said, and some say it was R. Yose the son of Hanina (AI, 2): She said to him: You are not a master in this matter, and the Holy Spirit does not rest upon you for you suspect me of this thing. There are those who say thus she said to him: You are not a master, the Shekhinah and the Holy Spirit do not rest with you - for you judged me unfavorably and did not judge me favorably. Didn't you know that I am a woman of troubled spirit?

and I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink⁴⁷ - R. Elazar (AI, 3) said: From here

⁴⁵ Verse 14

⁴⁶ Verse 15

[we learn]: Concerning one suspected of something which is not – one needs to inform him (his accuser).

*take not your maidservant to be a worthless/wicked woman*⁴⁸ - R. Elazar (AI, 3) said: From here [we learn]: concerning a drunkard who prays – it is as if he worships idols. It is written here: *to be a bat bliyaal*; and it is written elsewhere: *Lawless men (bnei bliyaal) have come forth from your midst*.⁴⁹ Just as there – it is idol worship; so too here – it is idol worship.

*And Eli answered and said, "Go in peace."*⁵⁰ - R. Elazar (AI, 3) said: From here [we learn]: One who suspects his friend of something that is not – he needs to reconcile with him. And not only that, but he needs to bless him, for it says: *and may the God of Israel grant your request*.⁵¹

From R. Elazar's interpretations of these verses, we learn that one has an obligation to rebuke another; one must judge another fairly; a person who is wrongfully accused by another has an obligation to correct the accuser; and once corrected, the one who falsely accuses another must reconcile with him and offer him a blessing. By analogy, I would argue that Hannah's and Moses' hurled words may be understood as attempts to rebuke God for improper and unjust behavior. Therefore, not only are their hurled words justified and tolerated but, in fact, necessary and required. This understanding is supported by the parable which the Stam tells on 32a after the Amoraic discussion of the verse, *And Adonai spoke to Moses: Go descend*.

משל למלך שכעס על בנו והיה מכהו מכה גדולה והיה אוהבו יושב לפניו ומתירא לומר לו דבר אמר המלך אלמלא אוהבי זה שיושב לפני הרגתיך אמר דבר זה תלוי בי מיד עמד והצילו

A Parable: This is analogous to a king who became enraged at his son and was striking him a great beating. And the king's friend sat before him but feared to say anything to the king. The king said to the prince: Were it not for this friend of mine who is sitting before me, I would kill you. The friend said: "This matter depends upon me." Immediately, he arose and saved the prince.

⁴⁷ Verse 15

⁴⁸ Verse 16

⁴⁹ Deuteronomy 13:14

⁵⁰ I Samuel 1:17

⁵¹ Verse 17.

By analogy, the King represents God, the Prince represents the people, and the King's friend represents Moses. In each case we learn that a person must strengthen himself to intercede on behalf of another to fight an injustice; in each case there is the epiphany, *This matter depends on me*. In each case, the circumstances not only justified, but demanded, that words be hurled in order to stop an injustice: Hannah's barrenness and God's desire to kill the people after the episodes of the Golden Calf and the Twelve Spies.

Conclusion

In their prayers, both Hannah and Moses both challenge God's justice. For Hannah, God's failure to give her a child is unjust and she demands justice. It's interesting to note that Hannah does not appeal to God's compassion or mercy, but rather to God's sense of fairness and justice.⁵² For Moses, God's vows to kill the Israelites for their sins are unjust; and he must intercede on their behalf. In their prayers Hannah and Moses use harsh words and tone. And yet Hannah and Moses serve as our models for prayer – whether crying out on our own behalf or on behalf of others.

The Mishnah taught that “one should not come to pray the Amidah without *koved rosh*. The Gemara's exegeses of Hannah's and Moses' prayers paint an unexpected picture of what this *koved rosh* might look like. The Gemara's comment, that Hannah and Moses are both examples of people who “hurled words” at God during their prayers, could be understood as a criticism. I have argued in this paper that an analysis of the larger context of the *sugya* leads to a different conclusion. Even the acknowledgement of God serves as an immediate turn away from any sense of criticism.

⁵² This was pointed out by Weisberg, p.70.

One could argue that Hannah and Moses are exceptions to the general rule; that their prayers with hurled words are acceptable because they are special people. Because Hannah is often characterized as a prophetess or perhaps because she reflects the special case for women pray-ers (who don't have equal access to formal prayer and are thought to have innate aptitudes for petitionary personal prayer) she does not represent the typical pray-er.⁵³ And Moses, because he was a prophet who had a unique relationship with God – one in which he spoke to God *panim el panim* – also does not reflect the typical pray-er.

I would counter that it was not Hannah and Moses but, rather, their causes that were exceptional. The Gemara makes no reference to Hannah's gender and, as mentioned above, her manner of prayer serves as a model for all. Similarly, the Gemara does not make any reference to Moses' status. He, too, is a model for all. It seems, then, that it is the extraordinary circumstances of personal and communal injustices that trigger their exceptional pleas. In the face of God's injustice, words hurled at God are not only allowed but they are demanded. In the face of God's injustices, extraordinary attitudes in prayer are necessary.

Further support for this argument can be found in the story of Honi the Circle-Drawer who prayed for rain at the time of a drought.⁵⁴ Honi was asked to pray for rain, but none came. So he drew a circle and stood inside it and told God he would not move until God showed mercy on his people. When the rains began to drizzle, Honi objects, "I did not ask thus, but for rains that fill cisterns, pits and caves." As the rains began to fall stormily, drops the size of barrels, again Honi objects and says to God, "I did not ask thus, but rains of good-will, blessing and

⁵³ For feminist examinations of Hannah's prayer in the Bavli see: Leilah Leah Bronner, "'Remember Thy Handmaid': On Hannah and Prayer," in *From Eve to Esther: Rabbinic Reconstructions of Biblical Women*, Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994 (87-110); Leilah Leah Bronner, "Hannah's Prayer: Rabbinic Ambivalence," *Shofar* 17/2, 1999 (36-48); and Dvora Weisberg, "Men Imagining Women Imagining God: Gender Issues in the Classical Midrash," in *Agendas for the Study of Midrash in the Twenty-first Century*, Marc Lee Raphael, ed., Williamsburg, VA: Department of Religion, The College of William and Mary, 1999 (63-83).

⁵⁴ *Mishnah Ta'anit* 3:9-12 and *Bavli Ta'anit* 23a. Thanks are again due Dvora Weisberg for pointing out this text as support for my argument.

bounty.” When the rains became too much of a good thing, Honi offers another prayer on behalf of the people. Again, his prayer is answered. Shimon b. Shetah wants to place Honi under a ban because of his impertinence before God. But Shimon cannot do anything to Honi because Honi is “impertinent before God, as a son is impertinent before his father and yet he grants his desire ... Scripture says of you, *Your father and mother will rejoice; she who bore you will exult* (Proverbs 23:25).” The drastic conditions of the drought and then the subsequent flooding permitted Honi to have an attitude of impertinence – or to hurl words – towards God.

Thus, while coming to pray the Amidah with *koved rosh* does mean one should approach the Amidah with the ability to concentrate and with a sense of awe, it also means that one should not be afraid to express anguish, angst or a sense of injustice when the circumstances so warrant it. The Amidah comprises not only fixed prayer – with its fixed times and content – but also opportunities for personal supplications. As R. Eliezer warned, “If a man makes his prayer a fixed task it is not [genuine] supplication.” The Mishnah requires that one comes to pray the Amidah with a *koved rosh*; and the Rabbis of the Gemara teach that sometimes circumstances require that the *koved rosh* we bring to those supplications in the Amidah consists of words hurled at God. Otherwise, our prayers run the risk of not being genuine; they run the risk of not being offered with true *koved rosh*.

Koved rosh is a nuanced concept that requires not only awe, reverence and humility, in the presence of the sacred, and but it also requires genuine and heart-felt prayer. God deserves no less. And sometimes, *koved rosh* includes the willingness of the pray-er to strengthen himself to face God with audacity and hurled words.

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APPENDIX ONE:
Chapter Four (26a-30b):
Mishnayot, Topics, and Halakhot By Sugya

FIRST SUGYA (26a-28b)

MISHNAH: (The Timing of Tefila /Amidah)⁵⁵

The morning (Shaharit) Prayer - until noon. **Rabbi Yehuda** says, until 4 hours.

The afternoon (Minhah) Prayer - until evening. **Rabbi Yehuda** says, until ½ of Minhah.

The evening (Ma'ariv/Arvit) Prayer – it has no fixed [time].

And of Musaf – all day. (**Rabbi Yehuda** says, until 7 hours)

SUMMARY OF TOPICS IN GEMARA:

1. Timing of Shaharit
2. Discussion re missed Prayers
 - Distinction: By error and intentional
 - Compensation: By repeating Amidah
 - Missing special inserts to the Amidah
3. The origins of the 3 daily Prayers
4. Minhah: Gedolah, Ketanah, ½ (Plag) Minhah
5. Resolution of Origin
6. Use of term *עד* /until in Shaharit: Up to or up-to-and-including?
7. Discussion re 4 vs 6 hours (Yehuda vs Rabbis)
8. Timing of Minhah
9. Praying Early
 - Disrespect for teachers
 - And work
 - By error and intentional
 - And Kiddush
 - And Havdalah
10. Ma'ariv: Optional or Compulsory
 - Story: Deposition and Reinstatement of Rabban Gamliel
11. Timing of Musaf
 - Not to delay Prayer: "Negligent"
 - A ruling: On the order of Minhah vs Musaf when both are due
 - Late for Prayers
12. Praying Early, Eating before Musaf & Minhah

⁵⁵ *Tefila* and *Prayer* both refer to the Amidah

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HALAKHAH GLEANED FROM MISHNAH & GEMARA:

Shaharit: Can be recited up to 4 hours (thru 4th hr.) - follows Yehuda

If missed Ma'ariv (by error): Pray Amidah 2X at Shaharit - R. Yohanan

If missed Shaharit (by error): Pray Amidah 2X at Minhah - R. Yohanan

If missed Minhah (by error): Pray Amidah 2X at Ma'ariv - R. Yohanan

If missed Minhah on Erev Shabbat (by error): Pray Shabbat Amidah 2X on Leil Shabbat

If missed Minhah on Shabbat (by error): Pray Weekday Amidah 2X on Motzei Shabbat

Recites Havdalah in 1st Amidah, not the 2nd Amidah

"1/2 Minhah" means 1/2 of Minhah Ketanah (10-3/4 hrs into day/ 1-1/4 hrs from end of day)

עד /until: Means up-to-and-including (27a)

Minhah: Can follow either Rabbis (recite up to the evening) OR Yehuda (up to 1/2 Minhah) (27b)

If prays Ma'ariv of Shabbat early: One may recite Kiddush over the wine

If prays Ma'ariv of Motzei Shabbat early: May recite Havdalah over the wine

Ma'ariv is elective (27b - follows Jehoshua, not Gamliel)

If both Minhah and Musaf are before a person: Prays Amidah of Minhah 1st and then Musaf - follows Rabbis, not Yehuda

Musaf: Can be recited all day.

SECOND SUGYA (28b)

MISHNAH: (Prayers to be Recited Upon Entering and Exiting the Beit Midrash)⁵⁶

Rabbi Nehunya ben Hakanah used to pray, in his entering and his leaving of the Beit Midrash a short prayer. They said to him: What place is there for this prayer? He said to them: Upon my entering I pray that no [religious] offence will occur through me; and upon my going out I give thanks for my portion.

SUMMARY OF TOPICS IN THE GEMARA: (2 Baraitot and a Story)

1. Text of prayer recited upon entering the Beit Midrash
2. Text of prayer recited upon leaving the Beit Midrash
3. Four paths to follow to merit the Olam Haba per Eliezer
4. Yohanan ben Zakkai on his deathbed
 - Weeping before human king vs the King of Kings
 - Fear of heaven

⁵⁶ Study in the Beit Midrash followed prayer in the Beit Knesset

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THIRD SUGYA (28b-30a)

MISHNAH: (Daily Tefila- Obligations of the Individual; Mishnayot 4:3, 4:4, 4:5, 4:6)

Rabban Gamliel says: Every day a person prays Shemoneh Esrei (18 blessings).

Rabbi Yehoshua says: From an abstract of the 18.

Rabbi Akiva says: If his prayer is fluent in his mouth, he prays 18; but if not, an abstract of the 18.

Rabbi Eliezer says: One who makes his Prayer fixed, his Prayer is not supplication (Tahanunim)

Rabbi Yehoshua says: One who walks/travels in a dangerous place, prays a short prayer and says, "Save, O Adonai, Your people, the remnant of Israel. At every *parashat ha'ibbur*, may their needs be before You. Blessed are You Adonai Who hears/harkens to prayer."

If one is riding a donkey, he should get down and pray. And if he is not able to get down, he should turn his face. And if he is not able to turn his face, he should direct his heart towards the House of the Holy of Holies.

If one is going by boat or in (prison) stocks, he should direct his heart towards the House of the Holy of Holies.

SUMMARY OF TOPICS IN THE GEMARA:

1. Significance of "18"
2. Bowing
3. Issues of 19 Blessings ("Heretics")
 - Error in recitation of Heretics: Remove?
 - Is it possible to turn from one's true essence?
4. Number of Blessings on Shabbat (8), Rosh Chodesh (9), Fast days (24)
5. The Abridged Shemoneh Esrei
 - Text of Havineinu (middle/petitionary blessings)
 - When Havineinu may not be recited
 - Motzei Shabbat & Motzei Yom Tov (Havdalah insert in #4)
 - Winter time ("For rain" insert in #9)
 - Ability to recite a missed insert elsewhere (in Sh'ma Koleinu, #16)
 - Rain, Havdalah
 - Repetitions by Prayer Leader
 - Realization of Error before Sh'ma Koleinu

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- Omitting insert of Rosh Chodesh
 - When is the Amidah “completed”?
- 3-4 Steps; Tahanun
- 6. “Fixed” Prayers
 - Burden. Language of Supplication. New. Redness of the Sun.
- 7. Discussion re Short (קצר) Prayer
- 8. Four Alternative Versions of the Short Prayer in Dangerous Places
- 9. Discussion re Tefila HaDerekh
 - Text of
 - When to Say
 - Sitting or Standing
 - A Story: Respecting the Minhag of Others
- 10. Differences Between Havineinu and Katar
- 11. Discussion re Tefila When Riding On a Donkey
- 12. Discussion re Facing the Temple w/ Proof Texts
- 13. Reciting Tefila Early
 - Before time of Sh'ma
 - Order of Prayer
 - Practice of Amoraim Cited

HALAKHAH TO BE GLEANED FROM MISHNAH & GEMARA:

Text of Alternative Short Prayer: Goes with “Others” (see 29b)

Havineinu: Recite while standing

Katar: Recite while standing or walking

Tefila while riding on donkey: Remain seated (follow rabbi – compare wording of Mishnah)

FOURTH SUGYA (30a-30b)

MISHNAH: (Musaf – An Individual or Congregational Duty)

Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya says: There is only the Musaf Prayer with an assembly of the town.

And the **Sages** say: With an assembly of the town and without an assembly of the town.

Rabbi Yehuda said in his (Elazar's) name: Every place where there is an assembly of the town, an individual is exempt from the Musaf Prayer.

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SUMMARY OF TOPICS IN THE GEMARA:

1. If an Individual is Obligated to Recite Musaf
 - Disagreement re Whom Halakhah Follows
 - A Story
 - Importance of Concentration
2. How Long to Wait in Between Recitations of Amidah
3. If Missed Rosh Chodesh Paragraph at Ma'ariv

HALAKHAH TO BE GLEANED FROM THE MISHNA & GEMARA:

The Individual & Musaf: If a minyan, then exempt; if there isn't a minyan, then must recite.
[Yehuda/Elazar]

APPENDIX TWO
Chapter Five (30b-34b)
Mishnayot, Topics, and Halakhot By Sugya

FIRST SUGYA (30b-33a)

MISHNAH (Kavanah: Reverence, Concentration, w/out Interruption)

We don't stand up to Pray except with a *koved rosh* (כוֹבֵד ראשׁ). The early pious ones used to tarry for one hour and then pray in order to direct their hearts to their Father Who is in Heaven.

Even if the king asks about his welfare, one should not answer him.
And even if a snake is coiled around his heel, one should not pause/interrupt.

SUMMARY OF TOPICS IN THE GEMARA

I. The First Statement in the Mishnah: Praying w/ a Koved Rosh

1. The Source for Praying w/ a koved rosh
 - a. Sources cited & Objected to
 - b. A Digression: Mixing Joy w/ Trepidation.
2. Proper Preparation for Prayer (a series of 5 Baraitot)
 - a. Avoidance of things that can interfere w/ concentration
 - i. 3 examples of "decided halakhah"
 - b. Examples from the Sages
 - i. Awe. Study (of a decided law)
 - ii. Joy of Mitzvah
 - iii. Frame of mind when leaving a Haver
 - c. Directing One's Heart towards Heaven
 - d. Akiva's practice with the congregation and in private
3. Proper Place, Time and Manner of Prayer
 - a. Windows
 - b. A series of incorrect assumptions we might make about prayer
4. Lengthy Analysis of Hannah's Prayer (I Samuel 1:11-17)
 - a. I Samuel 1:13 – Laws to be Learned From
 - b. I Samuel 1:14-17 – Rebuking a Friend
 - c. I Samuel 1:11
 - i. The significance of the emphatic ראה תראה
 - ii. The difference of opinion re the meaning of Numbers 5:28 (Yishmael vs Akiva)

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5. Analysis of I Samuel 1:24-27
 6. Analysis of I Samuel 1:10, 13
 - a. Meaning of praying upon/ על one's heart
 7. Words "Hurled" at God
 - a. Hannah, Elijah, Moses
 - b. Digression: God's Ability to Control the Evil Inclination
 - c. Digression: The Natural Consequences of Excess
 8. Analysis of Moses' Prayer
 - a. In the Story of The Sin of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32)
 - i. "This matter depends on me"
 - ii. Use of the word *yahal* – יָהַל.
 - iii. The term *achilu*
 - b. In the Story of the Sin of the Spies
 9. Praise Before Petition
 10. Various Amoraim on Prayer
 - a. A Mnemonic:
 - b. Rabbi Elazar on Prayer
 - c. Efficacy of Prayer
 - i. Prolonging Prayer
 - ii. Strengthening Oneself for Prayer
 - d. Does God Forsake and Forget and Therefore Not Answer Prayers?
- II. The Second Statement in the Mishnah: Tarrying Before and After Prayer
- III. Third Statement in the Mishnah: Interrupting Prayer for a King
1. Shortening vs Interrupting Prayer
 2. Human king vs divine King
- IV. The Fourth Statement in the Mishnah: Interrupting Prayer b/c of Danger – a Snake

HALAKHAH TO BE GLEANED FROM THE GEMARA:

From Baraita 1: We don't stand up to pray the Amidah amidst a matter of disputed halakhah

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From Baraita 2: We don't stand to recite the Amidah amidst sorrow, slothfulness, laughter, conversation (chatter), lightheadedness, or idle words – but rather, amidst the joy of mitzvah.

From Baraita 4: One who prays needs to direct his heart (mind) towards Heaven

From Rav Hiyya bar Abba: A person should always pray in a house which has windows

From Baraita 6: One prays the Amidah: no more than three times a day (unless there's Musaf); facing Jerusalem; three separate times a day: evening, and morning, and afternoon; silently. One praises and then petitions God; no supplications are offered during the Sh'ma and its blessings; supplications are offered at the end of the Amidah.

From Rav Hamnuna (from Hannah's pray): one who prays must direct his heart; articulate with his lips; not raise his voice (pray silently); and not be drunk.

SECOND SUGYA (33a-33b)

MISHNAH (Insertions Into Regular Tefila- Powers of Rain & Havdalah)

We recall the *powers of rain* (גבורות גשמים) in the *resurrection of the dead* (תחיית המתים) and a request in the *Birkat Hashanim*.

And Havdalah, during *gracious Giver of wisdom* (the 4th blessing)

R. AKIVA says: One recites it, a fourth blessing by itself.

R. ELIEZER says: In *Hoda'a* (Thanksgiving- the 18th blessing)

SUMMARY OF TOPICS IN THE GEMARA

1. Reasons for the Placements of Powers of Rain and Havdalah in the Amidah
 - Placement of "Wisdom": Important
2. Expositions on "Wisdom" (Blessing #4)
 - A challenge to these expositions re placement of word
3. Discussion of Placement of Havdalah (3 opinions in Mishnah)
 - At cup – when people are wealthy

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- Saying over cup even if said in Tefila
- If say over cup first: any need to say again in Tefila
- Reciting an unnecessary blessing
- If missed both (in Tefila and w/ cup)
- A Statement of Law: Recites Havdalah in Tefila AND Over Cup
 3. Discussion re Havdalah Recited in Hoda'ah [Eliezer]
- Story
 - Does Eliezer differ from Sages? From Akiva?
 - Don't Follow Akiva
 - "Halakhah" vs "Inclining Towards" a View
 - Following Opinion of a Meticulous Scholar

HALAKHAH TO BE GLEANED FROM THE GEMARA:

One recites havdalah in both in the tefila and over the cup

THIRD SUGYA (33b-34a)

MISHNAH (Improper Additions to the Tefila; 1st half of M. 5:3)

One who says: Your mercy extends to the bird's nest, or: Concerning goodness Your name is remembered, or: We give thanks, we give thanks – we silence him.

SUMMARY OF TOPICS IN THE GEMARA:

1. Discussion re "Your compassion extends to the bird's nest"
 - a. Two incidents are recalled re additions to Prayer
 - i. Bird's nest
 - ii. Praise of God: a parable; inadequacy of Prayer.
 - b. A teaching of R. Hanina re "fear of heaven" w/ an analogy
2. Discussion re "We give thanks, we give thanks"
 - a. Similar to "Sh'ma, Sh'ma"?
 - i. A Baraita: A disgrace, but don't silence him
 - ii. A Distinction is made: Repetition of each word vs each verse

APPENDIX TWO

HALAKHAH TO BE GLEANED FROM THE GEMARA:

Just what's in the Mishnah

FOURTH SUGYA (34a-34b)**MISHNAH (Error by Prayer Leader; Avoiding Errors & Confusion)**

One who says good ones shall bless You – behold, this is the way of heresy.

One who passes in front of the Ark (leads the prayer service) and erred – another passes in his place (takes over). And one should not refuse at such a time. And from where does he begin? From the beginning of the blessing where that one erred.

One who passes in front of the Ark, should not answer *Amen* after the Kohanim, because of confusion. And if there is no Kohane there except for himself, he doesn't lift up his palms. And if he is certain/confident that he can lift up his palms and return to his prayer – he is permitted.

SUMMARY OF TOPICS IN THE GEMARA:

1. Discussion Re Proper Response to a Request to be Prayer Leader
 - a. 2 Baraitot: Moderation
2. Where the Replacement Prayer Leader Begins the Prayer After an Error
 - a. A Baraita
3. Statements Re the Proper Presentation of Prayer:
 - a. When to ask for one's needs
 - b. Baraita: The length of the prayer
 - c. Mentioning a name in a prayer for healing
 - d. Discussion re when to bow during prayer
 - i. A Baraita
 - ii. Distinctions: Ordinary person, Kohane Gadol, a king
 1. 2 versions
 - iii. A Baraita: Definiton of bowing terms
 - iv. Style of 2 Amoraim
 - v. Contradictions re bowing at hoda'ah?

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HALAKHAH TO BE GLEANED FROM THE GEMARA:

1. If erred during first three blessings: repeat from Avot
 If erred during middle blessings: repeat from Wisdom
 If erred during last three blessings: repeat from Avodah
2. Ask for needs in middle blessings, not the first or last three blessings.
3. Don't need to mention the person's name in a prayer for healing.
4. An ordinary person: Only bows at the beginning and end of Avot and Hoda'ah
 A Kohane Gadol bows at the end of every blessing – Others: at the beginning of each
 A king: bows at the beginning and end of every blessing - Others: during entire tefila

FIFTH SUGYA (34b)**MISHNAH (Errors in Tefila; Prayer for Healing)**

One who prayed and erred, it is a bad sign for him.

And if he is the Sh'liach Tzibur, it is a bad sign for the ones who sent him; because a person's agent is like himself.

They said concerning R. HANINA ben DOSA that he used to pray for the ill and say this one lives and this one dies. They said to him: How do you know? He said to them: If my prayer is fluent in my mouth, I know that it is received; and if not, I know that it has been rejected (lit: torn).

SUMMARY OF TOPICS IN GEMARA:

1. An Error in Which Blessing is a Bad Sign?
2. A Question re Hanina ben Dosa's Healing Prayer
3. A Series of Teachings of Hiyya in Yohanan's Name Re: What Prophets Prophecy and Don't Prophecy About
 - a. Those close to Torah Scholars vs Torah Scholars
 - b. Days of the Messiah vs the World to Come
 - i. A dissenting view
 - c. Penitents vs the completely righteous

- i. Dissenting view; discussion re the far vs the near
 - d. Discussion re "what no eye has seen"
- 4. Two Stories (in Baraitot) rR Hanina ben Dosa Praying for Someone Who is Ill
- 5. Final Teachings Re Prayer:
 - a. Space w/ windows
 - b. In a valley/field
 - c. Exposing sins

HALAKHAH GLEANED FROM GEMARA:

Just what's in the Mishnah

APPENDIX THREE
Translation and Outline of *B. Berakhot* 30b-32b

[30b]

MISHNAH⁵⁷

We don't stand up to pray except with a *koved rosh* (כובד ראש).⁵⁸ The early pious ones used to tarry for one hour and then pray in order to direct their hearts to their Father Who is in Heaven.

Even if the king asks about his welfare, one should not answer him.
And even if a snake is coiled around his heel, one should not pause.

GEMARA

**I. THE FIRST STATEMENT IN THE MISHNAH IS DISCUSSED:
PRAYING WITH A KOVED ROSH**

1. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF PRAYING WITH A KOVED ROSH?

QUESTION: From where is this?⁵⁹

ANSWER 1: **R. ELAZAR** said: for Scripture says: *And she was bitter of spirit (And in her wretchedness she prayed to Adonai, weeping all the while).*⁶⁰

OBJECTION to this as the Biblical source: From where? Perhaps Hannah is different, for she was very bitter at heart.

ANSWER 2: Rather, **R. YOSE son of R. HANINA** said: It is from here: *As for me through Your abundant kindness I will enter Your House, I will prostrate myself toward Your holy Sanctuary in awe of You.*⁶¹

OBJECTION to this as the Biblical source: From where? Perhaps David was different. For he would torment himself very much in [asking for] mercy.⁶²

⁵⁷ The Mishnah is concerned with a person's frame of mind – *kavanah* – when praying.

⁵⁸ Literally a heaviness of head; also: a bent head, humility, reverence, awe.

⁵⁹ Four possible answers will be proposed

⁶⁰ I Samuel 1:10. Hannah's bitterness (מר נפש) is suggested as the source for the Mishnah's statement.

⁶¹ Psalm 5:8 - David's awe (יראתך) is suggested as the source.

⁶² These first two objections argue that Hannah's and David's manners of prayer are particular to them rather universal.

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ANSWER 3: Rather, **R. YEHOSHUA ben LEVI** said: It is from here: *Prostrate yourself before Adonai in holy splendor* (בהדרת קדש).⁶³ Don't read *b'hadrat* (splendor) but rather *b'cherdat* (awe).

OBJECTION to this as the Biblical source: From where? Perhaps, in fact, I will tell you *hadrat* is literal. Such was **R. YEHUDA** who would adorn (מציין) himself and then pray.⁶⁴

ANSWER 4: Rather, **RAV NACHMAN bar YITZHAK** said: It is from here: *Serve Adonai with awe, and rejoice with trepidation* (ברעדה).⁶⁵

A. A DIGRESSION: GEMARA INQUIRES RE REJOICE WITH TREPIDATION.⁶⁶

QUESTION: What is *and rejoice with trepidation*?

ANSWER: **RAV ADDA bar MATNA** said in the name of **RABBAH**: In a place of rejoicing, there should be trepidation.

EXAMPLES OF MIXING JOY WITH TREPIDATION:

1. **ABAYE** was sitting in front of **RABBAH**. He (Rabbah) noticed that he (Abaye) was very cheerful (בדח). He said: It is written: *And rejoice with trepidation!* He (Abaye) said to him: I am wearing tefillin.⁶⁷
2. **R. YERMIYAH** was sitting in front of **R. ZEIRA**. He (Zeira) noticed that he (Yermiyah) was very cheerful. He said to him: It is written: *In all sorrow there is profit.*⁶⁸ He (Yermiyah) said: I am wearing tefillin.
3. **MAR, the son of RAVINA**, made a wedding feast (הלולא) for his son. He noticed that the **RABBIS** were very cheerful. [31a] He brought a precious glass cup worth 400 zuz and broke it in their presence – and they were saddened (ב.צ.ע).

⁶³ Psalm 29:2

⁶⁴ Yehoshua ben Levi suggests a different vocalization of the Hebrew, which the Gemara rejects.

⁶⁵ Psalm 2:11. **RASHI**: This phrase refers to the Temple service. For us, prayer takes the place of the Temple service and must be conducted with a feeling of awe. **NOTE**: There is no objection to this answer.

⁶⁶ The Gemara digresses to discuss the second phrase of Rav Nachman bar Yitzhak's citation. The gist of the discussion is the advice that one should not be overly happy, even in times of joy.

⁶⁷ Perhaps wearing tefillin has a grounding effect; or, alternately, he is joyful because he is wearing his tefillin.

⁶⁸ Proverbs 14:23

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4. **RAV ASHI** made a wedding feast for his son. He noticed that the **RABBIS** were very cheerful. He brought a white glass cup and broke it in their presence – and they were saddened.
5. The **RABBIS** said to **RAV HAMNUNA ZUTI** during the wedding feast of **MAR**, son of **RAVINA**: Let Mar sing for us. He said to them: Woe to us that we die! Woe to us that we die! They said to him: How do we respond after you? He said to them: Here is Torah and here are Mitzvot, don't they shield us?

A Related Teaching:

R. YOHANAN said in the name of **R. SHIMON ben YOHAI**: It is forbidden for a person to fill his mouth with laughter in this world, for it is stated: *Then will our mouth be filled with laughter and our tongue with glad song.*⁶⁹

QUESTION re Yochanan's teaching: When?⁷⁰

ANSWER: At the time that *they will declare among the nations that "Adonai has done greatly with these."*⁷¹

ANOTHER REACTION to Yochanan's teaching: They said concerning **REISH LAKISH**: In all of his days, he did not fill his mouth with laughter in this world – from the time he heard this from **R. YOHANAN** his teacher.

2. THE PROPER PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

A. A BARAITA

BARAITA 1: The rabbis taught in a Baraita:

We don't stand up to pray not amidst a judgment/lawsuit nor amidst a matter of halakhah. But rather, amidst decided halakhah.⁷²

QUESTION: And what is an example of *decided halakhah*?

ANSWERS:

1. **ABAYE** said: Such as that of **R. ZEIRA**. For **R. ZEIRA** said: Daughters of Israel place themselves under greater restrictions (than the law requires), that even if they see a drop of blood like [the size of] a mustard seed (חרדל) they are inactive 7 clean days because of it.

⁶⁹ Psalm 126:2

⁷⁰ The Gemara asks for a clarification of the word *then*

⁷¹ Psalm 126:2

⁷² **RASHI**: so as not to be distracted during prayer

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2. **RAVA** said: Such as that of **RAV HOSHAYA**. For **RAV HOSHAYA** said: A person who acts deliberately/craftily (ע.ר.מ.) concerning his grain and brings it inside in its chaff in order that his animal will eat it, then he is exempt from the tithing.

3. Or if you prefer, say such as that of **RAV HUNA**. For **RAV HUNA** said in the name of **R. ZEIRA**: One who lets blood (המקִיז) from a sanctified animal – it is forbidden for benefit and me'ilah (מיעלִין)⁷³ applies to it.

B. EXAMPLES FROM THE SAGES RE PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

1. The **RABBIS** worshipped (ע.ב.ג.) according to our **MISHNAH**.⁷⁴

2. **RAV ASHI** worshipped according to the **BARAITA**.⁷⁵

3. **BARAITA 2**: The **RABBIS** taught in a Baraita:

We do not stand to pray neither amidst sorrow, nor amidst slothfulness (עצלִית), nor amidst laughter, nor amidst conversation (chatter), nor amidst lightheadedness, nor amidst idle words – but rather, amidst the joy of mitzvah.

And thus, a person should not leave from his friend, neither amidst conversation (chatter) nor amidst laughter, nor amidst lightheadedness, nor amidst idle words – but rather, amidst a matter of halakhah. For thus we find in the early prophets that they concluded their words with words of praise and consolation.⁷⁶

(i) A BARAITA is Cited as SUPPORT re Leaving From a Friend:

BARAITA 3: And thus, **MARI**, the son of **RAV HUNA**, the son of **R. YIRMIYA** bar **ABBA** taught in a Baraita: A person does not leave from his friend except amidst a matter of halakhah, for in the midst of such, he will remember him.⁷⁷

(a) An EXAMPLE of Torah Talk with a Friend:

Such as the case of **RAV KAHANA**, who accompanied (אליִיה) **RAV SHIMI** bar **ASHI** from Pum Nahara to Beit Tzinita in Bavel. When they arrived there, he (Kahana) said to him: Mar, is it true what people say - these palm trees of Bavel have existed from the [time of the] first person (Adam) until now? He (Rav Shimi) said to him: You have reminded me of a word **R. YOSE** the son of **RAV HANINA** said: What (is the meaning of) that which is written: *in a land*

⁷³ The prohibition against offering the blood as a sacrifice. See: Leviticus 15:5, 11

⁷⁴ With a *koved rosh*

⁷⁵ After studying decided law

⁷⁶ This instruction on how one should take leave a haver – a friend or study partner – suggests that one studies first and then goes to pray.

⁷⁷ *amidst a matter of Halakhah*: in other words, with words of Torah

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*through which no man passed and where no person settled?*⁷⁸ Now, since no one passed – how could one settle there? Rather, it (the verse) teaches you: Any land which the first person (Adam) decreed for settlement, was settled; and any land which the first person did not decree for settlement, was not settled.

RAV MORDECHAI accompanied RAV SHIMI bar ASHI from Hagronia to Bei Kippi, and others say up to Bei Dura.

C. ANOTHER BARAITA RE PROPER ATTITUDES FOR PRAYER

BARAITA 4: The RABBIS taught in a Baraita:

One who prays needs to direct his heart (mind) towards Heaven. **ABBA SHAUL** says: A sign of this matter is: *Direct their heart, let your ear attend.*⁷⁹

D. PROPER INTENT IS FURTHER DEFINED BY ANOTHER BARAITA

BARAITA 5: The RABBIS taught in a Baraita:

R. YEHUDA said: Such was the custom of **R. AKIVA**: When he used to pray with the public (the congregation), he would shorten and go up, because of the burden on the congregation. And when he would pray by himself, a person would leave him in this corner (זוית) and find him in another corner. And why so much [movement]? Because of the bowings and the prostrations.⁸⁰

3. LAWS RE PROPER PLACE, TIME AND MANNER OF PRAYING

A. A PLACE WITH WINDOWS

RAV HIYYA bar ABBA said: A person should always pray in a house which has windows, as it is said: *And he had windows open*, etc.⁸¹

B. INCORRECT ASSUMPTIONS WE MIGHT MAKE ABOUT PRAYER

BARAITA 6: It might be [thought that] a person may pray all of the day, all of it. But it has already been explained otherwise through Daniel: *and three times*, etc.⁸²

⁷⁸ Jeremiah 2:6

⁷⁹ Psalm 10:17. The word *sign* implies an indication, rather than proof, for the statement. The point being made is that if one concentrates during prayer, then one's prayer is more acceptable.

⁸⁰ Cf 34a where bowings are limited to four.

⁸¹ Daniel 6:11. *When Daniel learned that it had been put in writing, he went to his house, in whose upper chamber he had windows made facing Jerusalem, and three times a day he knelt down, prayed and made confession to his God as he had always done.*

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It might be [thought that] when he (Daniel) went into exile it was set (הוחלה). It has already been said: *As he had always done.*⁸³

It might be [thought that] a person may pray towards any direction (רוח) he wants. Talmud (Scripture) says: facing Jerusalem.

It might be [thought that] one may assemble them (ie recite them) at one time. It has already been explained through David, as it is written: *Evening, and morning, and afternoon, etc.*⁸⁴

It might be [thought that] one should make his voice heard during his tefilla. It has already been explained through Hannah, for it is written: *But her voice was not heard.*⁸⁵

It might be [thought that] a person should ask for his needs and afterwards pray. It has already been explained through Solomon, for it was said: *To hearken to rinah (song) and to the prayer tefilla (prayer).*⁸⁶ *Rinah*- this is tefilla;⁸⁷ *tefilla* – this is supplication.⁸⁸

One does not say a word of supplication after *Emet v'Yatziv*.⁸⁹ But, after the Tefilla, one recites - even as [longs as] the order of the vidui (confession) of Yom Kippur.⁹⁰

A Similar Law From an Amora is Cited:

It has also been said: **RAV HIYYA bar ASHI** said in the name of **RAV**: Even though they said a person may ask for his needs during "Who hears prayers"⁹¹ – if he comes to recite [supplications] after his Tefilla even as [lengthy as] the order of the vidui of Yom Kippur, he [may] recite them.

⁸² Daniel 6:11

⁸³ Daniel 6:11

⁸⁴ Psalm 55:18. *Evening, morning, and afternoon I supplicate and moan.*

⁸⁵ I Samuel 1:13

⁸⁶ I Kings 8:28

⁸⁷ RASHI: words of praise

⁸⁸ In other words, one should praise God and then petition God. The blessings of the Amidah can be divided into three parts: (1) the first three blessings - blessings of praise; (2) the middle 13 blessings - petitions; and (3) the last three - blessings of thanksgiving.

⁸⁹ The 3rd blessing of the Sh'ma

⁹⁰ Supplications may be recited during Sh'ma Koleinu, the silent personal prayer at the end of the Amidah, and/or in Tahanun - and they may be as long as one likes - but no supplications are recited during the Sh'ma and its Blessings.

⁹¹ Blessing #16 of the Amidah

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4. A LENGTHY ANALYSIS OF HANNAH'S PRAYER⁹²A. HALAKHAH LEARNED FROM I SAMUEL 1:13

RAV HAMNUNA said: There are many important laws to be learned from these verses about Hannah:

1. *Now Hannah was speaking in her heart* – from here: one who prays must direct his heart.
2. *Only her lips moved* – from here: one who prays must (pronounce) (יִחְתוֹךְ) with his lips
3. *but her voice was not heard* – from here: it is forbidden to raise one's voice during his prayer
4. *so Eli thought her a drunkard* – from here: a drunkard is forbidden to pray.

B. INTERPRETATIONS OF I SAMUEL 1:14 - 17⁹³

5. *And Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? etc."*⁹⁴

R. ELAZAR said: From here [we learn]: One who sees in his friend [31b] something which isn't fit/worthy (הַגוֹן) - he needs to reprove him (י.ב.ח.).⁹⁵

6. *And Hannah answered and said: "No, my master."*⁹⁶

a. **ULLA** said, and some say it was **R. YOSE** the son of **HANINA**: She said to him: You are not a master in this matter, and the Holy Spirit does not rest (שׁוֹרָה) upon you that you suspect me (ח.ש.ח.) of this thing.⁹⁷

b. There are those who say thus she said to him: Are you not a master? Isn't the Shekhina and the Holy Spirit with you (גִּבּוֹר) – that you judged me unfavorably (לְכַף חֹזֶבָה) and did not judge me favorably (לְכַף זְכוּת)? Didn't you know that I am a woman of hard/difficult (קָשָׁה) spirit?

7. *and I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink.*⁹⁸

R. ELAZAR said: From here [we learn]: Concerning one suspected of something which is not – one needs to inform him (his accuser).⁹⁹

⁹² Found in I Samuel 1:12-17

⁹³ These verses are analyzed as lessons to be learned about how to reprove a friend.

⁹⁴ I Samuel 1:14

⁹⁵ From here we learn than one needs to reprove a friend.

⁹⁶ I Samuel 1:15

⁹⁷ One must judge another fairly.

⁹⁸ I Samuel 1:15

⁹⁹ One who is wrongly accused by another has the duty to correct the misunderstanding.

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8. *take not your maidservant to be a worthless/wicked woman* (בת בליעל)¹⁰⁰

R. ELAZAR said: From here [we learn]: concerning a drunkard who prays – it is as if he worships idols. It is written here: *to be a bat bliyaal*; and it is written elsewhere: *Lawless men (bnei bliyaal) have come forth from your midst*.¹⁰¹ Just as there – it is idol worship; so too here – it is idol worship.

9. *And Eli answered and said, "Go in peace."*¹⁰²

R. ELAZAR said: From here [we learn]: One who suspects his friend of something that is not – he needs to appease/reconcile with him (פ.י.ס.). And not only that, but he needs to bless him, for it is said: *and may the God of Israel grant your request*.¹⁰³

C. ANALYSIS OF I SAMUEL 1:11¹⁰⁴

10. *And she made a vow and said, "Adonai Tzevaot (hosts)"*

R. ELAZAR said: From the day that the Holy One, Blessed be He, created His universe, there was no person who called the Holy One, Blessed be He, *Tzevaot* until Hannah came and called Him *Tzevaot*. Hannah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe! From all the hosts of the hosts that You have created in Your universe, is it difficult in Your eyes to give me one son?¹⁰⁵

A PARABLE: To what is the matter comparable?

To a king of flesh and blood who made a feast for his servants. A poor person came and stood by the door. He said to them: Give me one piece! But they paid no attention (ש.ג.ח.) to him. He pushed and entered the place of the king. He said to him: My lord, the king, from all of the feast you have made, is it difficult in your eyes to give me one piece?¹⁰⁶

11. *If you take note* (ראה תראה)¹⁰⁷

R. ELAZAR said: Hannah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, if you take note (ראה), fine. But if not, You will take note (תראה). I will go and

¹⁰⁰ I Samuel 1:16

¹⁰¹ Deuteronomy 13:14. *Lawless men have emerged from your midst saying "let us go and worship the gods of others."*

¹⁰² I Samuel 1:17. One who falsely accuses another must reconcile with him and offer him a blessing.

¹⁰³ I Samuel 1:17

¹⁰⁴ Hannah's prayer is recorded in I Samuel 1:10 -11.

¹⁰⁵ What Hannah is asking for seems reasonable (her fair share) and would require little effort on God's part

¹⁰⁶ In the parable, the poor person represents Hannah; the human king represents God, the poor person's wish for a piece of bread represents Hannah's wish for a son; the abundance of the feast represents the hosts of hosts. The servants who deny the poor person's request do not appear to represent anyone in Hannah's story.

¹⁰⁷ The full text of the phrase reads: *If you take note of the suffering of your maidservant*. The Gemara's comment is prompted by the repeated use of the Hebrew root: ר.א.ה.

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hide myself [with another man] in front of Elkanan my husband. And when I hide myself, they will give me waters of the *sotah* to drink. And You will not make Your Torah/Law a fraud (פלסתר), for it is said: *then she shall be proven innocent and she shall bear seed.*¹⁰⁸

OBJECTION: The Gemara challenges Elazar's interpretation of the repetition of the verb:

a) It is well according to the one who says [the verse means]: If she was barren (עקרה), she will be remembered – it is pleasing (שפיר).

b) But, according to the one who says [the verse means]: If she used to give birth with difficulty, she will give birth with ease (בריוח); [if] females, she will give birth to males; [if] dark ones, she will give birth to fair ones; [if] short ones, she will give birth to tall ones - What is there to say (about the repetition)?

The Gemara Cites a Baraita Which Records This Difference of Opinion:

BARAITA 7: For it was taught in a Baraita:

Then she shall be proven innocent and she shall bear seed. This teaches that if she was barren, she will be remembered – the words of **R. YISHMAEL**.

R. AKIVA said to him: If so, all barren women will go and hide themselves [with a strange man], and the one who was not corrupt/disgraced with immorality (קלקלה) will be remembered. Rather, [the verse] teaches, that if she used to give birth with difficulty, she will give birth with ease; [if] short ones, she will give birth to tall ones; [if] dark ones, she will give birth to fair ones; [if] one, she will give birth to two (twins).

QUESTION re the Repetition: What [is the reason for] *im ra'oh tireh*?

ANSWER: The Torah spoke according to the language of human beings.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Numbers 5:28 See Numbers 5:11-31 for a description of the sotah and the ritual. According to Elazar, Hannah threatens to act as a sotah, in order to force God to give her a son.

¹⁰⁹ In other words, there is no special meaning to the repetition – this is just the way people speak.

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12. *Of the suffering of Your maidservant, do not forget Your maidservant, and give Your maidservant.*

R. YOSE the son of R. HANINA said: Why *maidservant* three times? Hannah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, You have created three "examiners" (.ק.ד.ב) of death regarding a woman – and, as others says it, three "bonds" (.ק.ב.ד) of death - and these are they: *niddah*, and *challah*, and the kindling of the [Shabbat] light. Have I transgressed any one of them?¹¹⁰

13. *And give Your maidservant male offspring.*

QUESTION: What is [the meaning of] *zera anashim*?¹¹¹

ANSWER 1: **RAV** said: A man among men.

ANSWER 2: **SHMUEL** said: An offspring that anoints (מִשָּׁח) two men (as kings). And who are they? Saul and David.

ANSWER 3: **R. YOHANAN** said: An offspring that is equivalent to two men. And who are they? Moses and Aaron. As it is said: *Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among those who invoke His name.*¹¹²

ANSWER 4: The **RABBIS** say: *Zera anashim* [means] offspring that mingles/mixes (מִזְבֵּל) with the people.

GEMARA COMMENTS on (d): When **R. DIMI** came he said: Neither tall, nor short/dwarfish (גוֹץ); neither small, nor strong/thick (stocky) (אֵלִים); neither pale (צָהוּר), nor red-spotted/ruddy (גִּיחֹר); neither wise, nor stupid.

D. AN ANALYSIS OF I SAMUEL 1:24-27¹¹³

14. *I am the woman who stood with you here.*¹¹⁴

R. YEHOASHUA ben LEVI said: From here [we learn] that it is forbidden to sit within 4 *amot* of one who is praying.¹¹⁵

15. *For this child did I pray.*¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Here, Hannah argues her merit - that she has not violated any of the three positive mitzvot women are obligated to perform.

¹¹¹ Literally: seed of men. The Gemara will try to figure out the significance of the unusual phrase.

¹¹² Psalm 99:6

¹¹³ When Hannah returns to Shiloh with Samuel

¹¹⁴ I Samuel 1:26

¹¹⁵ The Gemara comments on the word *here*. One's personal praying space is four *amot*.

¹¹⁶ I Samuel 1:27

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R. ELAZAR said: Samuel taught halakhah in front of his teacher, for it is said: *And they slaughtered the bull and brought the child to Eli.*

Because they slaughtered the bull they brought the child to Eli? Rather, Eli said to them: Call a Kohane, let him come and slaughter [the sacrifice].

Samuel saw them going about after a Kohane to slaughter. He (Samuel) said to them: Why do you go about after a Kohane to slaughter? Slaughter by a non-Kohane (זר) is proper. They brought him (the child) before Eli. He (Eli) said to him: From where is this (known) to you?

He (Samuel) said to him: Is it written, "and the Kohane shall slaughter"? *And... the Kohanim shall bring near* is written.¹¹⁷ From the receiving (of the blood) and onward is a commandment of the Kehunah. From here [we learn] that the slaughter is proper by a non-Kohane.

He (Eli) said to him: You have spoken well. Nevertheless, you have taught halakhah in the presence of your teacher, and anyone who teaches halakhah in the presence of his teacher is liable to death.

Hannah came and cried out before (Eli): *I am the woman who stood with you here*, etc.

He (Eli) said to her: Allow me to punish him, and I will beseech for mercy and He will give you [a son] greater than this one. She (Hannah) said to him: *For 'this' child did I pray*

E. FINAL COMMENTS ON I SAMUEL 1:10, 13

16. *Now Hannah, she was speaking upon (על) her heart.*¹¹⁸

R. ELAZAR said in the name of **R. YOSE ben ZIMRA**: [This refers] to matters that were upon her heart. She said before Him: "Master of the Universe, all that You created in a woman, You did not create one thing for naught (בטלה) - eyes to see and ears to hear; a nose (חוטם) to smell, a mouth to speak, hands with which to do work, feet with which to walk, and breasts (דדים) with which to nurse (להניק). These breasts which you have placed upon my heart, what are they for? Aren't they to nurse with? Give me a child that I may nurse with them."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Leviticus 1:5

¹¹⁸ I Samuel 1:13

¹¹⁹ Hannah is understood to be praying about what is literally on her heart (breasts unused for nursing a child) rather than praying what's in heart.

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An Unrelated Teaching By The Same Amoraim

And **R. ELAZAR** said in the name of **R. YOSE ben ZIMRA**: Anyone who sits in fasting on Shabbat, they annul (ק.ר.ע.) for him a decree of 70 years. Nevertheless, they return and punish him for the offense of the delight (oneg) of Shabbat. What is his repair? **R. NACHMAN bar YITAZHAK** said: He should observe a fast for his fast.

17. And **R. ELAZAR** said: Hannah hurled (הטיחה) words upward, as it is says: *and she prayed against (על) Adonai*.¹²⁰ This teaches that she hurled words upward.¹²¹

5. OTHERS WHO HURLED WORDS AT GOD

A. ELIJAH

And **R. ELAZAR** said: Elijah hurled words upward, as it is said: *and You have turned their hearts backwards*.¹²²

QUESTION: **R. SHMUEL bar YITZHAK** said: From where [do we know], that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, returned and concurred with Elijah? [32a]

ANSWER: For it is written: *and the one who I caused to be evil*.¹²³

(i) A DIGRESSION: Discussion Re God's Ability to Control The Evil Inclination

a). **R. HAMA the son of R. HANINA** said: Were it not for the following three verses, the feet of the enemies of Israel would falter (נתמוטטו).

One [verse] is what is written: *and the one who I caused to be evil*.¹²⁴

And one [verse] is what is written: *Behold, as clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand, O House of Israel*.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ I Samuel 1:10.

¹²¹ הטיחה – ט.ו.ח. – Jastrow: to speak rebelliously, to reproach (God). Steinsaltz: same as ק.ר.ע.: to throw, fling, hurl (Alcalay)

¹²² I Kings 18:37. *Answer me, Adonai, answer me, that this people may know that You, Adonai, are God; for you have turned their hearts backward*. Elijah is praying that God will give a sign (the burning of offered sacrifices) in a test of power between Baal and God. The implication from Elijah's statement is that it was God who turned the people's hearts away from God and toward Baal; and it is God who has the power to reverse this turning away.

¹²³ Micah 4:6. *On that day – a declaration of Adonai – I will assemble the limping one and gather in the one driven away, and the one who I caused to be evil*. This is used as a proof-text that God agrees with Elijah's earlier characterization (accusation) that God is responsible for when the people turn to evil.

¹²⁴ Micah 4:6

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And one [verse is what is written: *And I will remove the stony heart from your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh.*¹²⁶

b). An Alternative source is cited: **RAV PAPPA** said:

[It is] from here: *And I will put My spirit within you, and I will make it so that you walk in My statutes.*¹²⁷

B. MOSES

SOURCE 1: And **R. ELAZAR** said: Moses hurled words upward, as it is said: *And Moses prayed to Adonai.*¹²⁸ Do not read “to Adonai” (אל ה'), rather “against Adonai” (על ה'). For in the House (academy) of **R. ELIEZER ben YAAKOV** they read *alephs* as *ayins* and *ayins* as *alephs*.

SOURCE 2. The House of **R. YANNAI** says: [It is] from here: *and Di-zahav*¹²⁹

QUESTION: What is *Di-zahav*?

ANSWER/EXPLANATION: In the **Academy of YANNAI** they said: Thus said Moses before the Holy One Blessed Be He: Master of the Universe, because of the silver and gold that You have lavished (השפעת) upon Israel until they said, Enough! – that is what caused them to make the [Golden] Calf.¹³⁰

(i) DIGRESSION: The Natural Consequences of Excess
(3 Analogies)

1. In the Academy of **R. YANNAI** they said: A lion does not roar (נודם) amid a basket of straw (תבן) but rather amid a basket of meat.

2. **R. OSHAYA** said: This is analogous (משל) to a person who had a cow that was lean and bony. He fed it *karshinim* and it would kick him. He said to it: What caused you to kick me if not the *karshinim* that I fed you?

3. **R. HIYYA bar ABBA** said in the name of **R. YOHANAN**: This is analogous to a person who had a son. He bathed him and anointed him (with oil), fed him and supplied him with drink, and hung a purse (with money) on his neck and sat

¹²⁵ Jeremiah 18:6

¹²⁶ Ezekiel 36:26

¹²⁷ Ezekiel 36:27

¹²⁸ Numbers 11:2

¹²⁹ Deuteronomy 1:1

¹³⁰ Here, *di-zahav* is read as *dai zahav* – enough gold! In other words, it's God's fault that the people made the Golden Calf: they only built it because God gave them an excess of gold.

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him down at the entrance of prostitutes. What should the son do that he doesn't sin?

(a) Three Biblical Proof Texts re The Consequences of Excess:

1. **RAV ACHA** the son of **RAV HUNA** said in the name of **RAV SHEISHET**: This is the popular saying: One who fills his stomach commits all types of evils, as it is said: *Upon coming to their pasture they became sated; they were sated and their hearts grew haughty; therefore they have forgotten Me.*¹³¹

2. **RAV NACHMAN** said: [The proof is] from here: *And your heart will become haughty and you will forget Adonai.*¹³²

3. And the **RABBIS** say: [The proof is] from here: *And he will eat, be sated, and grow fat, and turn (to other Gods).*¹³³ Or if you prefer, say it is from here: *Jeshurun grew fat and kicked.*¹³⁴

(ii) A QUESTION RE MOSES' HURLED WORDS

QUESTION: **R. SHMUEL bar NACHMANI** said in the name of **R. YOHANAN**: From where is it that the Holy One Blessed Be HE, returned and concurred with Moses?

ANSWER: For it is said: *and I lavished silver upon her, and gold, but they used it for Baal.*¹³⁵

6. ANALYSIS OF MOSES' PRAYERS

A. THE INCIDENT OF THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF¹³⁶

1. *And Adonai spoke to Moses: Go descend.*¹³⁷

QUESTION: What is *Go descend*?

ANSWER: **R. ELAZAR** said: The Holy One Blessed Be He said to Moses: "Moses, descend from your greatness. Did I grant you greatness but for the sake of Israel? But

¹³¹ Hosea 13:6

¹³² Deuteronomy 8:14

¹³³ Deuteronomy 31:20

¹³⁴ Deuteronomy 32:15

¹³⁵ Hosea 2:10. God agrees with Moses that God was partially to blame for the people's sin.

¹³⁶ Exodus 32

¹³⁷ Exodus 32:7 – *Go descend for your people that you have brought up from Egypt have become corrupt.*

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now Israel has sinned. What need have I for you?" Immediately, Moses' strength ebbed and he lacked the strength to speak. However, as soon as God said: "*Release Me, and I shall destroy them.*"¹³⁸ Moses said: "This matter depends upon me." Immediately, he arose and strengthened himself in prayer and pleaded for mercy.

A PARABLE: This is analogous to a king who became enraged at his son and was striking him a great beating. And the king's friend sat before him but feared to say anything to the king. The king said to the prince: Were it not for this friend of mine who is sitting before me, I would kill you. The friend said: "This matter depends upon me." Immediately, he arose and saved the prince.¹³⁹

2. *And now, release Me, and My anger will flare against them and I shall annihilate them, and I shall make you a great nation, etc.*¹⁴⁰

R. ABAHU said: Were this verse not written, it would be impossible to say it. This teaches that Moses seized (תפסו) the Holy One, Blessed Be He, like a person seizes his friend by his garment, and said before Him: Master of the Universe, I shall not release You until You forgive and pardon them.

3. *and I shall make you into a great nation, etc.*¹⁴¹

R. ELAZAR said: Moses said before the Holy One, Blessed Be He: Master of the Universe, if a stool of three legs cannot endure before You at the time of Your wrath, how much more so a stool with one leg. And furthermore, I am shamefaced before my forefathers. They will say now: Behold the leader installed over them. He sought greatness for himself and did not beseech mercy on their behalf.¹⁴²

4. *And Moses pleaded (יחל) before Adonai.*¹⁴³

(a) **R. ELAZAR** said: This teaches that Moses stood in prayer before the Holy One, Blessed Be He, until he wore Him out (החליה).

¹³⁸ Deuteronomy 9:14

¹³⁹ In the parable, the king represents God, the Prince represents the people, and the king's friend represents Moses. In each case a person must strengthen himself to intercede on behalf of another; and the ability to do so was in response to something the king/God said to them.

¹⁴⁰ Exodus 32:10

¹⁴¹ Exodus 32:10

¹⁴² The stool with three legs refers to the three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob); the stool with one leg refers to Moses as the single leader of the people. At this point in time Moses feels inadequate as a leader.

¹⁴³ Exodus 32:11. The Gemara examines the use of the Hebrew word *yahal* by looking at the various meanings of the root *ח.ל.ל.* and the root *ל.ל.ל.* In the Pi'el *ח.ל.ל.* means: to appease, entreat (BDB); to soften, sweeten, assuage by prayer (Jastrow). In the Hiph'il: to assuage, wear out (Jastrow). The root *ל.ל.ל.* means to profane, to break a vow (Jastrow).

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(b) And **RAVA** said: Until he annulled God's vow [to destroy Israel]. It is written here: *vayehal* (ח.ל.ל.); and it is written elsewhere: *He shall not profane* (yahel- ח.ל.ל.) *his word* (vow).¹⁴⁴ And **Mar** said: He may not profane it (the vow); but others may profane (annul the vow) for him.

(c) And **SHMUEL** said: It teaches that he (Moses) risked his life for them (מסר עצמולמיתתם)¹⁴⁵ on their account, as it says: *but if not, erase me now from your book*.¹⁴⁶

(d) **RAVA** said in the name of **RAV YITZHAK**: It teaches that he caused the attribute of mercy to come to rest (החלה) upon them.¹⁴⁷

(e) And the **RABBIS** say: It teaches that Moses said before the Holy One Blessed Be He, "Master of the Universe, it would be profanity (חולין) for You to do this thing."

(f) **BARAITA 8**: *And Moses pleaded before Adonai*. It was taught in a Baraita: Rabbi **ELIEZER THE GREAT** says: It teaches that Moses stood in prayer before The Holy One Blessed Be He until *achilu* (אחילו) seized him.

Explanation of the Term *Achilu*

QUESTION: What is *achilu*?

ANSWER: R. **ELAZAR** said: Fire of the bones.

QUESTION: What is *fire of the bones*?

ANSWER: **ABAYE** said: Bone fire (אשתא דגרמי).

*5 Remember for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself*¹⁴⁸

QUESTION: What is *by Yourself*?

ANSWER: R. **ELAZAR** said: Moses said before The Holy One Blessed Be He, "Master of the Universe, if indeed You had sworn to them by the heavens and the earth, I would have said that just as the heaven and the earth can cease to exist (ב.ט.ל.) so too your oath can cease to exist. And now that You have sworn to them by your great name, just as Your great name endures forever and ever, so too, Your oath endures forever and ever."

¹⁴⁴ Numbers 30:3

¹⁴⁵ Literally: he delivered himself to death

¹⁴⁶ Exodus 32:32. *And now if You would but forgive their sin, but if not, erase me now from Your book.*

¹⁴⁷ **RASHI**: like the language in II Samuel 3:29 –May they come to rest (yahulu) upon the head of Job – the language of to rest (הניח)

¹⁴⁸ Exodus 32:13

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6. *And You told them: I shall increase your offspring like the stars of heaven, and this entire land of which I spoke*¹⁴⁹

QUESTION: This *of which I spoke* – shouldn't it be *of which You spoke*?

ANSWER 1: **R. ELAZAR** said: Until here are the words of the student (Moses), and from here on are the word of the Rav (God).

ANSWER 2: And **R. SHMUEL bar NACHMANI** said: These [words] and those [words] are the words of the student (Moses). Rather, thus said Moses before The Holy One Blessed be He, "Master of the Universe, the words that You said to me - 'Go, say them to Israel for My name' – I went and said them in Your name. Now, what am I to say to them?"

B. IN THE STORY OF THE SIN OF THE SPIES¹⁵⁰

7. *Because Adonai lacked the ability* (יכלה)¹⁵¹

QUESTION 1: *Yachol* (יכול) *Adonai* – it should be.

ANSWER 1: **R. ELAZAR** said: Moses said before The Holy One Blessed Be He, "Master of the Universe, the nations of the world will say: 'His power is weak (.ש.ש.ת) as a woman and he is unable to save.'" The Holy One Blessed be He said to Moses: "But did they not already see the miracles and mighty acts I did for them at the sea?" And he (Moses) said before Him: "Master of the Universe, they can still say: 'To one king He is able to stand up, to thirty-one kings (of Israel) he is unable to stand up.'"

QUESTION 2: **R. YOCHANAN** said: From where is it that the Holy One Blessed Be He, returned and concurred with Moses?

ANSWER 2a: As it says: *And Adonai said, I have forgiven according to your words.*¹⁵²

ANSWER 2b: **BARAITA 9**: A Baraita was taught in the Academy of **R. Ishmael**: (God speaking to Moses): It is as you said, the nations of the world would have said so.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Exodus 32:13 And You told them: I shall increase your offspring like the stars of heaven, and this entire land of which I spoke I shall give to your offspring.

¹⁵⁰ Numbers 14. Again the people have sinned, God wants to destroy them, and Moses intercedes on their behalf.

¹⁵¹ Numbers 14:16. *Because Adonai lacked the ability to bring this people to the Land that He had sworn to give them, He slaughtered them in the Wilderness.* Moses uses God's vanity to persuade God not to destroy the people.

¹⁵² Numbers 14:10. That God forgave Israel on the basis of Moses' argument in Numbers 14:16.

¹⁵³ Here, God concurs that the other nations would say what Moses argued they would say - that God lacked the power to save.

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Fortunate is the student whose Rav concurs with him.

8. *But as I live.*¹⁵⁴

RAVA said in the name of **RAV YITZHAK**: This teaches that The Holy One Blessed Be He, said to Moses: "Moses, you have kept Me alive with your words."¹⁵⁵

7. GEMARA RETURNS TO THE TOPIC OF PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

A. PRAISE BEFORE PETITION: MOSES AS AN EXAMPLE

STATEMENT: **R. SIMLAI** explained: A person should always offer his praise (יסדר שבחו) of The Holy One Blessed Be He, and afterwards pray.

QUESTION: From where [is this rule]?

ANSWER: From Moses.

For it is written: *And I implored Adonai at that time.*¹⁵⁶

And it is written: *Adonai, God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand, for what power is there in the heaven or on the earth that can perform according to Your deeds and according to Your mighty acts?*¹⁵⁷

And it is written afterwards: *Let me now cross and see the good land, etc.*¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Numbers 14:17

¹⁵⁵ Alive among the nations

¹⁵⁶ Deuteronomy 3:23

¹⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 3:24

¹⁵⁸ Deuteronomy 3:25

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8. AMORAIM ON THE GREATNESS & EFFICACY OF PRAYER

A. A MNEMONIC

A mnemonic: Deeds, Tzedakah, Offering, Kohane, Fast, Lock, Iron. [32b]

B. R. ELAZAR ON PRAYER

(1) Prayer vs Deeds: And R. ELAZAR said: Prayer is greater than good deeds, for you have no one greater in good deeds than Moses our teacher; nevertheless he was only answered through prayer. As it is said: *Do not continue to speak to Me (further about this matter).*¹⁵⁹ And adjacent to it: *Ascend to the top of the cliff (... and see with your eyes).*¹⁶⁰

(2) Fasting vs Tzedakah: And R. ELAZAR said: Fasting is greater than charity. What is the reason? This one is by one's body (ie person/self) and that one is by one's money.

(3) Prayer vs Sacrifices: And R. ELAZAR said: Prayer is greater than sacrificial offerings, as it is said: *Why for Me are your numerous sacrifices?*¹⁶¹ And it is written: *And when you spread your palms....*¹⁶²

A Different Teaching From Another Amora on Isaiah 1:15

Kohanes: R. YOCHANAN said: Any Kohane who has killed a person may not raise his palms, as it is said: *your hands are full of blood.*¹⁶³

(4) Gates of Prayer vs Gates of Tears: And R. ELAZAR said: From the day that Temple was destroyed (ח.ר.ב.) the gates of prayer were locked (ל.ע.ל.), as it is said: *Though I would cry out and plead, He shut our my prayer.*¹⁶⁴ But even though the gates of prayer are locked, the gates of tears (דמעה) are not locked, for it is said: *Hear my prayer, Adonai, give ear to my outcry; to my tears be not silent.*¹⁶⁵

Another Teaching About A Barrier to Prayer

Clouds: RAVA would not decree a fast on a cloudy (עננא) day because as it is said: *You walled yourself in with a cloud so that prayer cannot pass.*¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 3:26

¹⁶⁰ Deuteronomy 3:27

¹⁶¹ Isaiah 1:11

¹⁶² Isaiah 1:15 *And when you spread your palms I will hide my eyes from you*

¹⁶³ *And when you spread your palms I will hide my eyes from you, your hands are full of blood*

¹⁶⁴ Lamentations 3:8. After the destruction of the Temple there are now barriers to prayer.

¹⁶⁵ Psalm 39:13. However, prayer that emanates from deep within the heart is heard.

¹⁶⁶ Lamentations 3:44

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(5) A Wall of Iron: And R. ELAZAR said: From the day that the Temple was destroyed, a wall of iron (ברזל) separates (פ.ט.ק.) Israel and their Father in Heaven as it is said: *And as for you, take yourself an iron pan and emplace it as an iron wall between yourself and the city.*¹⁶⁷

C. OTHER AMORAIM ON THE EFICACY OF PRAYER

(1) PROLONGED PRAYER: R. CHANIN said in the name of R. HANINA: Anyone who prolongs his prayer will not return empty (unfulfilled-ריקים).

QUESTION: From where do we derive this?

ANSWER: From Moses our teacher, as it is said: *And I prayed to Adonai.*¹⁶⁸ And it is written afterwards: *and Adonai listened to me that time as well.*¹⁶⁹

OBJECTION: Is this so? R. HIYYA bar ABBA said in the name of R. YOHANAN: Whoever prolongs his prayer and speculates (מעייין) on it,¹⁷⁰ in the end heartache will come to him, as it is said: *Prolonged prayer makes the heart sick.*¹⁷¹ What is his cure? Let him busy himself in Torah, as it is said: *but the tree of life is desire fulfilled.*¹⁷² And there is no "tree of life" except Torah, as it is said: *It is a tree of life to those who grasp it.*¹⁷³

CLARIFICATION OF THIS SEEMING CONTRADICTION: There is no difficulty. This one (Yohanan) is when he prolongs and speculates on it; and this one (Hanina) is when he prolongs but does not speculate on it.

(2) IF PRAYERS ARE UNANSWERED: R. HAMA the son of R. HANINA said: If a person sees that he has prayed but has not been answered he returns and prays [again], as it is said: *Hope to Adonai, strengthen yourself and He will give you courage, and hope to Adonai.*¹⁷⁴

A Related Teaching From A Baraita re "Strengthening"¹⁷⁵

BARAITA 10: The RABBIS taught in a Baraita: Four [things] need strengthening, and these are they: Torah; Good Deeds; Prayer; and a Secular Occupation.

¹⁶⁷ Ezekiel 4:3

¹⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 9:26

¹⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 10:10 *And I remained on the mountain as on the first days – forty days and forty nights - and Adonai listened to me that time as well*

¹⁷⁰ Assumes his prayers will be answered because they are long

¹⁷¹ Proverbs 13:12

¹⁷² Proverbs 13:12

¹⁷³ Proverbs 13:18

¹⁷⁴ Psalm 27:14

¹⁷⁵ Strengthening – renewal of one's efforts

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Question: Torah and Good Deeds – from where is this?

Answer: As it is said: *Only be very strong and courageous to observe, to do in accordance with the entire Torah.*¹⁷⁶ *Be strong in Torah, and be courageous in good deeds.*

Question: Prayer – from where is this?

Answer: For it is said: *Hope to Adonai strengthen yourself and He will give you Courage, and hope to Adonai.*¹⁷⁷

Question: A Secular Occupation – from where is this?

Answer: As it is said: *Be strong and let us strengthen ourselves on behalf of our people, etc.*¹⁷⁸

D. DOES GOD FORSAKE, FORGET PEOPLE AND NOT ANSWER PRAYERS?

And Zion said, *Adonai has forsaken me and the Lord has forgotten me.*¹⁷⁹ Forsaken is the same as forgotten.

REISH LAKEISH said:

The Congregation of Israel said before The Holy One Blessed Be He: "Master of the Universe, a man who marries a wife upon his first wife, he remembers the deeds of the first. But You have forsaken me and forgotten me."

The Holy One Blessed Be He said to her: "My daughter, 12 constellations did I create in the firmament, and about each constellation I created 30 army commanders, and about each and every army commander I created 30 *ligyon*, and about each and every *ligyon* I created 30 *rahaton*, and about each and every *rahaton* I created 30 *karton*, and about each and every *karton* I created 30 *gastera*, and about each and every *gastera* I suspended in 365,000 myriads of stars corresponding to the days of the solar year, and all of them I created only for your sake, and you say, 'You have forsaken and forgotten me!'"¹⁸⁰

Can a woman forget her baby (עולה- oolah) ?

The Holy One Blessed Be He said: "Can I possibly forget the burnt offerings (olot) of rams and the first issues of the womb that you sacrificed before Me in the wilderness?"¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Joshua 1:17

¹⁷⁷ Psalm 27:14

¹⁷⁸ II Samuel 10:12

¹⁷⁹ Isaiah 49:14

¹⁸⁰ In other words, God is steadfast and does not forsake Israel.

¹⁸¹ Does God forget the good (offered sacrifices) that is done? No.

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She (the Congregation of Israel) said before Him (God): "Master of the Universe, as there is no forgetfulness before Your Throne of Glory, perhaps You will not forget the incident of the Calf."

He said to her: "Even *these* will be forgotten."¹⁸²

She said before Him: "Master of the Universe, as there is forgetfulness before Your Throne of Glory, perhaps You will forget me with the incident at Sinai."

He said to her: "But the *I*, I will not forget for you."¹⁸³

Another Amora Interprets This Verse The Same Way

And this is the same that **R. ELAZAR** said in the name of **R. OSHAYA**: What is the meaning of what is written - "Even *these* will be forgotten"? This refers to the incident of the Calf. But the "*I*, I will not forget you?" This refers to the incident at Sinai.

¹⁸² Does God forget the bad (the sin of the Golden Calf)? Yes.

¹⁸³ Does God forget the good? No.

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SAGES CITED:

Abbah Shaul: T, 4-5

Akiba: T,4

Eliezer ben Yaakov: T,3

Eliezer the Great:

Shimon ben Yohai: T,5

Yehuda: T,5 or AI,1

Yehuda: T,5 or AI,1

Yishmael: T,4

Abahu: AI, 3

Abaye: AB,4

Adda bar Matna:

Ashi: AB,6

Dimi: AB,3-4

Elazar: AI, 3

Hama b. Hanina: AI, 2

Hamnuna Zuti: AB, 2 or 3

Hiyya bar Abba: AI,3

Hiyya bar Ashi: AB,2

Kahana: AB (1,2,3,5, or 6)

Mar: AB, 7 (?)

Mari bar Huna:

Nachman bar Yitzhak: AB,4

Papa: AB, 5

Rabbah: AB,3

Rav: AB,1

Rava:AB, 4

Ravina: AB, 6 or 8

Reish Lakish: AI,2 (Shimon ben Lakish)

Shimi bar Ashi:

Shnuel: AB, 1

Shmuel ben Yitzhak: AI,3

Simlai: AI, 2

Ulla: AI, 2-3

Yehoshua ben Levi: AI,1

Yermiyah: AI,3-4

Yohanan: AI,2

Yose ben R. Hanina: AI,2

Yose ben Zimra:

Zeira: AI,3 or AB,4

A STUDY OF THE WORLD OF SPIRITS
EMBEDDED
IN
BAVLI BERA KHOT CHAPTER NINE

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its interpretation. There is a lengthy story at 56a *gimmel* about Abaye (AB, 4), Rava (AB, 4) and the professional dream-interpreter Bar Hedyā that expresses the Rabbis' skepticism. Abaye pays bar Hedyā and all his dreams are interpreted as good omens; Rava doesn't pay him, and all his dreams (which are identical to Abaye's dreams) are interpreted as bad omens.

In spite of their skepticism, the Rabbis are preoccupied with how to transform a dream's meaning so that it will be a good omen. There are sixteen references to dreams as good or bad omens in the chapter.²⁷ The Rabbis suggested several safeguards against a dream being a bad omen: (1) Have the dream interpreted in a positive light by a Sage (56b *aleph*). (2) Perform a ritual to remedy a bad omen: The dream is interpreted in front of three people who recite a supplication/incantation and then recite nine biblical verses (55b *bet*).²⁸ (3) Offer a supplication to God during the priestly benediction during the Amidah (55b *gimmel*). (4) Pay the dream interpreter for his services (56a *gimmel*). (5) Recite a positive biblical verse that is associated with a particular dream vision before a negative biblical verse, also associated with the vision, comes to mind (56b *dalet*).

The Rabbis, themselves, are also actively engaged in dream interpretation and in *oneirocritica* - the science of the symbolic meanings of dream visions. R. Yishmael's (T, 4) and R. Judah HaNasi's (T,6) are both engaged in dream interpretations (56a *aleph*). The meanings of numerous dreams visions, proposed by Tannaim and Amoraim, are cited extensively in the chapter (56b *gimmel, hey*; 57a *aleph, bet, gimmel, dalet*; 57b *aleph, bet*).²⁹

²⁷ See Appendix Four for a list of all the references.

²⁸ See the entry in Appendix Five for more details.

²⁹ See Appendix Three for an extensive catalog of dream symbols found in Chapter Nine.

Introduction

Chapter Nine, the culmination of *Bavli Tractate Berakhot*, is at once a systematic exegesis of the Mishnah and an unusually large collection of topical tracts that are loosely, if at all, related to the topic and discussion of the Mishnah.¹ The primary focus and subject matter of the Mishnah has to do with the blessings Jews are to recite on a variety of occasions: upon seeing places where God created miracles or uprooted idolatry; upon seeing and experiencing the wonders of the natural world; for all of life's experiences - the good and the bad. Chapter Nine identifies so many occasions on which to recite a blessing, that it could be called *The Book of Blessings*.² Within Chapter Nine we also find discussions on such topics as dreams and dream interpretation; the evil inclination; rules of conduct in the privy, and hospitality to, and the importance of, Torah scholars.³ The discussion on dreams and dream interpretation is so comprehensive and lengthy (55a-57b) that it is commonly referred to as *The Dream Book*.⁴

As one reads through the chapter (both the exegeses and the topical tracts) the Rabbis, whether Tannaim, Amoraim or Stamaim,⁵ paint a picture of a world in which life is precarious and dangers abound - from humans, animals, nature, and even God. The human being is viewed as quite vulnerable and in need of protection. And so Jews are to be mindful of their behavior; to

¹ Neusner, in fact, finds that the imbalance between Mishnah exegeses and unrelated topical tracts, found in both *Bavli Berakhot* Chapters Nine and One, is so unusual that this distinguishes them from the entirety of the Talmud. (*The Talmud of Babylonia: An Academic Commentary, Bavli Tractate Berakhot*, p.532-539).

² See Appendix Two: Occasions for Blessings in *Bavli Berakhot* Chapter Nine, for a complete list of all the blessings, and the circumstances under which they are recited that are found in Chapter Nine.

³ See Appendix One: Organization of *Bavli Berakhot* Chapter Nine for an outline of the exegeses on the Mishnah and the topical tracts in the chapter.

⁴ See Appendix Three: *Bavli Berakhot's* Dream Book for an extensive and representative sample of rabbinic thoughts about dreams, dream interpretation, and the meanings and omens attached to certain dream visions, that can be gleaned from Chapter Nine.

⁵ I use the terms *Stam* and *Stamaim* to refer to the unidentified voice and authorship of the Gemara - the compilers, editors, and composers of the Gemara.

try to lead righteous lives informed by Torah. And they are to recite blessings that not only provide opportunities to thank and praise God, but also to seek God's protection and mercy.

As the Gemara paints this picture of the human being's vulnerability and desire to prevent or combat the danger that constantly surrounds him, there is an underlying and pervasive sense of the presence of other players in the drama we call life. There is a world of spirits with its myriad angels, demons, the evil eye, spells and magic, dreams, evil and good inclinations that influence our lives and determine our futures.⁶

It is on this world of spirits embedded in Chapter Nine that I focus my attention in this essay. I will first briefly survey the variety of forces and spirits that are referenced, whether explicitly or implicitly, in the chapter; an analysis of the survey follows; and, finally, I will address the questions of God's relationship to these spirits; and the relationship between the thematic thread of the world of spirits and the larger context of Chapter Nine.

A Brief Survey of Spirits and Forces⁷

I. Demons and Angels: The Other Spirits

Demons and angels are overwhelmingly the most frequently mentioned force or spirit in Chapter Nine and the Rabbis take their powers seriously.⁸ In addition to impacting a person's

⁶ See Appendix Four: Index to Spirits and Forces in *Bavli Berakhot* Chapter Nine for the location and frequency of each category.

⁷ A complete survey of the references to forces and spirits, organized by the order in which they appear in Chapter Nine, may be found in Appendix Five.

⁸ Angels are mentioned eleven times (Satan, four times, other angels 7 times); Demons are mentioned 10 times. See Appendix Four for the places where they are mentioned and Appendix Five for the summary of each reference. The chapter also mentions a *bat kol* - an echo of the divine voice - who is engaged in a conversation with angels and God after the tragic death of R. Akiva. At 61b *bet* the *bat kol* comments that Akiva must be happy because he died with the Sh'ma on his lips and his soul is ready for the *olam haba*. The two inclinations - the *yetzer ha-tov* and *yetzer ha-ra* - are also mentioned a few times (see 601a-61b). It's not clear if the Rabbis consider them independent external forces or internal forces that are part of the human mind, psyche, and personality. Therefore, I've chosen not to include them in this survey. However, it should be noted that the evil inclination is very powerful and humans need to control it.

physical well-being, demons and angels are understood to be able to send and to change the nature of dreams (55b *dalet*);⁹ and they can influence a person's *yezer ha-ra* (62b *gimmel*). In the Rabbis' minds demons always pose a danger to human beings, whereas angels can both protect us or pose a threat.

Human Vulnerability: The Rabbis note that people are particularly vulnerable to harm from demons at certain moments in their lives: when they get married, give birth, or are in mourning (54b *dalet*); when they are ill (54b *dalet*; 55b *gimmel*) or when they are alone.¹⁰ Demons act out when they are attracted to a person's weakened condition or when there is a decrease in a person's *mazal* (good fortune); and they also act out when they are jealous of a person's good fortune (times of celebration, a person's wealth, beauty, or Torah knowledge). People are also vulnerable to demons in certain places, such as a public bath (60a *heh*), the privy (60b *aleph*; 62a *bet*), or near excrement. It is also said that there is a demon, or evil spirit, on people's hands they wake up in the morning (60b *bet*).¹¹ And humans are considered more vulnerable at certain times of the day, such as night time (54b *dalet*).

Torah scholars are both more and less vulnerable than others. They are more vulnerable to demons if alone at night (54b *dalet*) or if they trigger a demon's jealousy of them (62a *bet*). At the same time, Torah scholars are more protected than others because of their Torah knowledge and their Torah study (63a *gimmel*).

Human beings are usually accompanied by angels who are assigned to protect them (62b *aleph*). However, the angel Satan scrutinizes human behavior and reports back to God for appropriate punishment if people draw attention to themselves. A person is said to "give Satan an

⁹ A dream with a true prophetic vision is sent by an angel; a dream with no prophetic meaning is sent by a demon.

¹⁰ See f.n.7

¹¹ In explaining the morning hand-washing ritual and blessing the Schottenstein commentary (60b, f.n.42) uses the term "evil spirit." I make the assumption that this evil spirits is the same as, or at least, similar to a demon.

opening.” In general, a person is advised not to vividly discuss his hardships or a potential danger; or to place himself in a situation that will make him afraid. For example, the Gemara teaches us that when a person becomes ill, he should not reveal his illness to others on the first day so that his *mazal* does not take a turn for the worse; after the first day, he may reveal his illness. The reason given is that the person is especially vulnerable to Satan on the first day; but afterwards will benefit from the prayers of others and God’s mercy (55b *gimmel*). Abaye (AB, 4) objects to a Baraita’s suggested wording for a blessing one is to say before entering a public bath because it includes a reference to the possibility of one’s death which would give Satan an opening (60a *heh*). In a different Baraita Ben Azzai (T, 4) warns a person not to sit a high beam lest he becomes afraid and gives Satan an opening (62b *aleph*).

Satan can also incite people to behave improperly and has the ability to destroy property and people. At 62b *gimmel* there is a discussion concerning King David’s improper taking of a census and the subsequent plague inflicted upon the people. R. Elazar (AB, 3) suggests that it was Satan, acting as the *Yetzer HaRa*, who incited David to take the census improperly. He further suggests that it was God who sent Satan to incite David.¹² A second entry at 62b *gimmel* comments that when Satan stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, God displayed mercy and ordered him to stop.

As mentioned previously, the job of most angels is to help and protect human beings. The Gemara provides a few examples: At 60b *aleph*, there is a blessing one says to his angels before entering a privy. Abaye (AB, 4) objects to the wording (and offers an alternative) because it tells the angels to leave the person while he does his business in the privy. Rashi explains that every person is accompanied by two ministering angels who watch over him, as it says, *He will assign*

¹² David counted the people’s heads rather than counting shekels donated by the people as atonement. See the entries in Appendix Five at 62b *gimmel* for a fuller discussion.

*His angels to you, to protect you in all your ways.*¹³ At 62b *gimmel*, in a discussion of David's census and the destruction that followed, we learn that God intervened and stopped Satan from further destruction. The Stam asks on what grounds did the people merit God's mercy. Rav (AB, 1) answered their merit was based on Jacob's response to seeing God's angels - *This is an encampment of God.*¹⁴ Thus, the very act of acknowledging the angels can be protective.

Even though angels are there to help and protect a person, they may not do so if they are offended. The Rabbis tell us if a person is not modest in the privy, his angels will be offended and leave him; if a person weakens his commitment to Torah study and mitzvot the angels that normally give him the strength to withstand tribulations will not aid him (63a *gimmel*).

Precautions Humans Can Take: Despite the powers of demons and angels, human beings can take precautions. Demons are thought to be less active during the day and won't harm two people together, so the first step is to be out during the day or with a companion (62b *bet*). Alos, one can be careful not to draw Satan's attention to himself or to offend his protecting angels.

The Gemara spends a great deal of time addressing the issue of the danger posed by demons in the privy and the precautions people should take (62a *bet*). Amoraim make several suggestions: R. Tanhum bar Hanilai says that modesty in the privy will protect a person from demons. R. Ami (AI, 3) and R. Assi (AI, 3) say modesty and silence are protective.¹⁵ Abaye's (AB, 4) mother sent a sheep into the privy with him so he wouldn't be alone. Rava's (AB, 4) wife would shake a rattle from inside their house (presumably demons don't like noise) to

¹³ Psalms 91:11. Another reference to ministering angels (who have a conversation with God and a Bat Kol after Akiva is executed) can be found at 61b *bet*. In this instance, the angels take the role of "the devil's advocate." Upon witnessing Akiva's execution, the ministering angels comment, "This is Torah and this is its reward?"

¹⁴ Genesis 32:3.

¹⁵ At 62b *aleph*, R. Abba (I,3) chastises R. Safra (AI, 4) for his immodesty when Safra speaks to Abba instead of returning a cough to indicate his presence in the privy.

protect him; but after he was made Head of the Academy in Bavel, she built a window in the privy so she could put her hand on Rava's head.

II. Curses, The Evil Eye, and Magic Spells: Humans Beings Can Impact The Future

In the Rabbis' world view, human beings could be harmed when others engaged forces in the spiritual realm. Namely, they could be harmed from a curse, a look from the evil eye, or by magic spells. The Rabbis also believed people could take preventative and remedial measures.

Curses: Sages have the power to curse other people. Near the end of the story of Rava and the dream interpreter Bar Hedyā, Rava curses Bar Hedyā as follows: "May it be the will (of God) that this man be handed over to a regime that will have no pity on him." Bar Hedyā responds, "There is a tradition that the curse of a sage, even if it is unprovoked, will be fulfilled." Later, Bar Hedyā is, in fact, put to death in exile at the hands of the Romans (56a *gimmel*).

The Evil Eye: The evil eye – the look of a jealous person or the look of a Torah scholar angered by another's arrogance - can harm and even kill a person. The Gemara discusses the danger posed by the evil eye three times in Chapter Nine. At 55b *gimmel*, Mar Zutra (AB, 6) teaches what a person should do if traveling to a city and is afraid of encountering an evil eye:

Take the thumb of your right hand and place it in your left hand; and take the thumb of your left hand and place it in your right hand, and say: "I, So-and-so, the son of So-and-so, I come from the progeny of Joseph, over whom an evil eye has no power."¹⁶

There are two incidents when a sage "set his eyes" on someone and the person died. The first (58a *bet*,) is an incident involving Rav Sheshet (AB, 3) and a Sadducee who were going to greet

¹⁶ In the commentary, Rashi explains that Joseph and his descendants are "above" the evil eye, as it has no power over them.

the king.¹⁷ The Sadducee impolitely questions the propriety of Sheshet's desire to greet and then to actually offer a blessing to the king (because Sheshet is blind). Sheshet in fact knows when the king is approaching and offers him a blessing at the appropriate time. There are two versions of the Sadducee's fate: (1) Some say his friends gouged¹⁸ the Sadducee's eyes out; (2) Others say Rav Sheshet set his eyes (נחן עיניו בו) on him and the Sadducee became a heap of bones.¹⁹ The second incident, recorded at 58b *gimmel*, involves Rav Pappa (AB, 5) and Rav Huna (AB, 5) who were walking down the road when they met Rav Hanina. During an exchange of blessings, Hanina displayed arrogance towards the law concerning the proper blessings to recite upon greeting a Sage. Pappa and Huna set their eyes upon (יהבי ביה עיניהו) Hanina and he died.

Magic Spells: People can be harmed by magic spells but counter measures are available. A Baraita (at 62a *dalet*) discusses proper modesty while one defecates. Ben Azzai (T, 4) warns that a person should "manipulate" himself prior to squatting down because if he manipulates himself after he squats he is vulnerable to magic spells cast even from places as far away as Spain. However there is a remedy. When he rises he says:

Not upon me, not upon me. Neither *tachim* (תחים) or *tachtim* (תחתים). Neither these or those. Neither the spells (חרשי) of a sorcerer (חרשא) or the spells of a sorceress (חרשתא).²⁰

¹⁷ The Vilna text in the Schottenstein uses the word צדוקי (translated as Sadducee) whereas the Vilna text used by Steinsaltz uses the word מינא – heretic.

¹⁸ Rashi. The literal is *painted*

¹⁹ His flesh decomposed and all that was left was a heap of bones. The commentary in Schottenstein (58a f.n.43) explains that *Eruvin* 21b teaches that whoever transgresses or mocks the words of the Sages is liable to the death penalty for breaching their authority.

²⁰ Rashi understands the first phrase to mean, "let not the spells affect me;" and he explains that *tachim* and *tachtim* are the names of two kinds of magic that are generated with excrement. Rashi offers two explanations for the meaning of the third phrase (neither these or those): (1) Let neither these spells or a portion of these spells come upon me; or (2) It should read ולא מהני – and let them (the magical spells) be successful no longer.

III. Astrologers, Signs and Dreams: Predicting the Future

People are naturally curious about what the future has in store for them. But can the future be accurately predicted? If so, should we try to change the prediction if it is disturbing? Chapter Nine discusses three methods that are used to predict or know the future.

Astrologers: The Gemara makes one reference to astrologers.²¹ At 64a *aleph*, Rav Yosef (AB, 3) declines an appointment as head of the academy in Bavel after astrologers tell him he would only lead for two years and then die. Twenty-two years later, after the death of Rabbah, Rav Yosef accepted the position and served for two and one-half years before his death. The astrologers' prediction, it turns out, was quite accurate.²²

A Good Sign: At 57b *dalet* a Baraita lists six good signs for someone who is sick: various bodily discharges (sneezing, perspiration, loose bowels movements, and a seminal discharge), sleep and a dream are all signs that a person will recover from his illness.

Dreams: The Gemara spends a great deal of time discussing the import of dreams and dream interpretation. Philip Alexander accurately characterizes the Rabbis' attitude towards dreams when he says, "The Dream Book displays a skeptical, deeply ambivalent, attitude towards dreams."²³ ²⁴ This skepticism and ambivalence is expressed in two conflicting verses quoted at 55b *dalet*: *In a dream I (God) shall speak to him*²⁵ and *Dreams speak lies*.²⁶ Elsewhere the Rabbis have said, "Dreams are one sixtieth prophecy" (57b *dalet*) and "the meaning of a dream follows the mouth" (56a *gimmel*) – in other words, the meaning of a dream depends upon

²¹ Astrology is generally said to refer to a study of the positions and relationships of the sun, moon, stars, and the planets in order to judge their influence on human actions.

²² Note: The Gemara doesn't explain how Rav Yosef received this information – whether the astrologers came to him or vice-versa.

²³ Alexander (p.245).

²⁴ Appendix Three contains a number of statements by the Rabbis concerning dreams and dream interpretation.

²⁵ Numbers 12:6

²⁶ Zechariah 10:2

its interpretation. There is a lengthy story at 56a *gimmel* about Abaye (AB, 4), Rava (AB, 4) and the professional dream-interpreter Bar Hedyā that expresses the Rabbis' skepticism. Abaye pays bar Hedyā and all his dreams are interpreted as good omens; Rava doesn't pay him, and all his dreams (which are identical to Abaye's dreams) are interpreted as bad omens.

In spite of their skepticism, the Rabbis are preoccupied with how to transform a dream's meaning so that it will be a good omen. There are sixteen references to dreams as good or bad omens in the chapter.²⁷ The Rabbis suggested several safeguards against a dream being a bad omen: (1) Have the dream interpreted in a positive light by a Sage (56b *aleph*). (2) Perform a ritual to remedy a bad omen: The dream is interpreted in front of three people who recite a supplication/incantation and then recite nine biblical verses (55b *bet*).²⁸ (3) Offer a supplication to God during the priestly benediction during the Amidah (55b *gimmel*). (4) Pay the dream interpreter for his services (56a *gimmel*). (5) Recite a positive biblical verse that is associated with a particular dream vision before a negative biblical verse, also associated with the vision, comes to mind (56b *dalet*).

The Rabbis, themselves, are also actively engaged in dream interpretation and in *oneirocritica* - the science of the symbolic meanings of dream visions. R. Yishmael's (T, 4) and R. Judah HaNasi's (T,6) are both engaged in dream interpretations (56a *aleph*). The meanings of numerous dreams visions, proposed by Tannaim and Amoraim, are cited extensively in the chapter (56b *gimmel, hey*; 57a *aleph, bet, gimmel, dalet*; 57b *aleph, bet*).²⁹

²⁷ See Appendix Four for a list of all the references.

²⁸ See the entry in Appendix Five for more details.

²⁹ See Appendix Three for an extensive catalog of dream symbols found in Chapter Nine.

Analysis

Now that we have finished a brief survey of the world of spirits and forces found in *Bavli Berakhot* Chapter Nine, what have we learned? First, and what I find most surprising, is how the Rabbis of the academies – the elite of the Jewish populations in Eretz Yisrael and Bavel – embraced the religious beliefs, concerns, and practices of the folk.³⁰ The Rabbis take for granted that there are spiritual forces in the world besides God that can impact our lives. Throughout the numerous references to the world of spirits, the Gemara finds no need to define any terms (this is left to the commentators); and for the most part, how angels, demons, dreams, the evil eye, and the other forces in the world of spirits, do what they do is not discussed. Except for a warning against bone necromancers (59a *aleph*), there is no condemnation or rejection of the folk beliefs and practices. In fact, they are accepted, viewed as efficacious, and even utilized by the Rabbis themselves. Second, the Rabbis give voice to the people's fears and anxieties and the human need to try to predict and/or control the future; the need to prevent or, at least, counter the potential threat of harm from a variety of sources. In the Rabbis' minds, human beings have an active role to play in safeguarding themselves from harm - through proper behavior, the recitation of the right words, and the performance of certain rituals. And, the Rabbis give themselves an active and pivotal role to play in that process.

There are three areas I'd like to focus our attention on now: The power of words; the role the Rabbis and their exertion of authority; and God's relationship to the world of spirits.

³⁰ For descriptions and analyses of the folk beliefs that are reflected in rabbinic literature see: Joshua Trachtenberg, "The Folk Element in Judaism," in *The Journal of Religion*, 22/2 (1942), and *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (1939/2004); Daniel Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature* (1994); Ronald Isaacs, *Divination, Magic and Healing: The Book of Jewish Folklore* (1998); and Jacob Neusner, *Wonder-Working Lawyers of Talmudic Babylonia: The Theory and Practice of Judaism in its Formative Age* (1987).

1. The Power of Words: Words - whether in the form of a Torah scholar's curse, a dream interpretation, a spell, a prayer, blessing, incantation, or the recitation of a biblical verse – can be enormously powerful. There is an underlying assumption that these types of utterances are effective. There is a sense of mystery surrounding the power of words. Why are they effective? And who is listening? It is important note that in all the examples discussed by the Rabbis, utterances are addressed, directly or indirectly, to God or an angel. Ultimately, they all seek protection or intervention from God or an angel. In his study of Hekhalot literature (Jewish magic texts of late antiquity), Peter Schafer makes an interesting observation that a close connection between incantation and prayer is clearly discernable. One of the major characteristics of this literature is the conjuring of angels to execute the will of man.³¹ Words have an almost magical ability to change one's actual destiny. And maybe just as important, words have the ability to change one's internal sense of well-being.

2. The Role of the Rabbis: The Rabbis see themselves as holy men and as the sole interpreters of God's will. The Rabbis of the Talmud present themselves, and are generally believed to be, holy men. They possess considerable personal charisma and are believed able to do miraculous deeds. Neusner comments that their charisma weighs in at least as heavily as their learning and their learning encompasses far more than a mere collection of ancient traditions of Scriptural exegesis.³² As a result of their special knowledge, study, and piety Torah scholars appear to have a special influence in the spiritual sphere. Recall the efficacy of the Rabbis' curses and their setting of the evil eye against others. Chapter Nine ends with a teaching from R. Elazar (AI, 3), said in the name of R. Hanina: "Disciples of the wise increase peace in the world. For it is said,

³¹ Schafer, pp.76-77.

³² Neusner (*The Wonder-Working Lawyers of Talmudic Babylonia*, pp.46-54).

'All your children shall be taught of Adonai; and great shall be the peace of your children.' Do not take *banayikh* to mean your 'children,' but *bonayikh*, 'your scholars.'"³³

The Rabbis' response to dreams is a polemic that reveals a strategy to maintain their authority and serves as an illustration of their need to do so. We've seen that the Rabbis were skeptical and ambivalent about dreams. According to Alexander, this is because they posed an acute theological problem for the Rabbis. He explains, dreams are clearly significant in the Bible, where they function as a channel through which God communicates directly with men. But prophecy ceased in the time of Ezra. From the Rabbis' point of view, they were living in a post-prophetic, post-biblical world, in which revelation was mediated through the biblical interpretation of the Sages. But they had a problem: people – including themselves – dreamed. So, how could the Rabbis concede that such dreams might still be prophetic without opening up the possibility of fresh revelation which might abrogate Torah and undermine their authority? Alexander points out three ways the Rabbis coped: (1) They allowed that dreams in their own day might contain revelation, but only in a very limited way - they were a minor prophecy – one sixtieth prophecy. No one in rabbinic society was expected to dream about anything with any significance beyond his or her destiny. And they viewed dream interpretation as strongly therapeutic and aimed primarily at diffusing the personal anxiety aroused by dreams.³⁴ (2) The rabbis adopt an *oneirocritica* (science of dream symbolism) which subtly distances the dreams of their own day from those of Scripture. For instance, they don't start the Dream Book with biblical examples of, say, Daniel or Joseph. Rather, they take over the standard *oneirocritica* of their own day and rabbinize it. (3) The Rabbis quite categorically assert their supreme

³³ Robert Gordis ("Increasing Peace in the World," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 67, 1976, p.46) argues that *bonaykh* should be translated as "your scholars" rather than the common "your builders."

³⁴ Alexander ("Bavli Berakhot 55a-56b: The Talmudic Dreambook in Context," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 46, 1995, p. 245).

authority.³⁵ Recall the polemic in the Rava and bar Hedyā story. Its essence is really a story about the conflict between the authority of the Rabbis and the dream-interpreters. Professional dream-interpreters are warned to watch out for the rabbinic curse, for it is the Rabbi who wields ultimate spiritual power. If dreams are to be interpreted, then one would be better advised to resort to the Rabbis – such as R. Yishmael – than to the professional dream interpreters. Another ploy the rabbis used was to explain much of the symbolism of dreams by reference to Scripture. In Alexander's words, "this was playing with fire since it effectively raised the dream-text to the level of Scripture. But it had one major advantage: it transferred the *oneirocritica* into the realm of rabbinic competence; it brought it under the jurisdiction of the Rabbis, the authoritative interpreters of Scripture."³⁶

3. The Relationship Between God and the Spirits: As we have seen in *Bavli Berakhot* Chapter Nine, the Rabbis acknowledge and accept that there are spirits and forces in the world other than God that have power and are responsible for the harm (and the good) that occurs to human beings. The question arises, then: What is the relationship between these other players in the world of spirits and God? Are their powers independent of God, or are they dependent upon God? Is there problem similar to dualism here?

Trachtenberg and Neusner³⁷ reject any notion of dualism. They find that demons and angels have no powers independent of God, they are not free agents. In the Rabbis' belief system, God created both angels and demons and they are active players in the world of spirits. In Chapter Nine, however, their genesis and purpose are not the focus of the Rabbis' attention.

³⁵ Alexander (p. 247).

³⁶ Alexander (p. 248).

³⁷ See Isaacs, Trachtenberg, and Neusner for references to biblical and rabbinic statements concerning the genesis and characteristics of demons, angels, and other spiritual forces.

The Genesis and Role of Angels: We know from Scripture that God created the angels,³⁸ although the exact day they were created on is debated. The Rabbis understood them to be the heavenly counterparts of all earthly phenomena, direct servants and emissaries of God, and closest to God's ear. Therefore, the person who possessed the secret of bending the angels to his will was very powerful as well.³⁹ Magic spells, for example, were thought to rely upon the powers of good: the angels and the various differentiated and personalized attributes of God.⁴⁰ It not surprising then, that petitions were also frequently addressed to Heaven by way of the intervening angels.⁴¹ Since the Rabbis held a dual belief of God's transcendence and immanence the role of the angel as intermediary creates a tension.

The Genesis and Role of Demons: Among the peoples of the Ancient Near East evil spirits and demons were considered messengers of the lord of the underworld and wield destructive power over human beings.⁴² In Rabbinic thought, these spirits are God's creatures, subject to God's will, and respectful of God's divinity.⁴³ The Bible is silent as to the creation of demons, however I Samuel 16:14-16 says, *an evil spirit from God terrifies you* (referring to King Saul). Not an evil spirit separate from God, but an evil spirit from God. According to Talmudic tradition, demons were created by God at twilight on the eve of the first Sabbath.⁴⁴ God fashioned their souls but was not able to complete the job, because of the hastening of the first Shabbat, and therefore had to leave them bodyless.⁴⁵ In *Bavli Hagigah* (16a), the rabbis describe some of the characteristics of demons: Six things are said concerning demons. With regard to

³⁸ The picture of a celestial court, with God as King surrounded by a host of ministering angels is found in many places in the Bible (for instance, I Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1; Job 1:6)

³⁹ Trachtenberg (*Jewish Magic and Superstition*, p.25).

⁴⁰ Trachtenberg (*The Folk Element in Judaism*, p.184).

⁴¹ Trachtenberg (*Jewish Magic and Superstition*, p.74).

⁴² Ronald Isaacs (*Divination, Magic and Healing: The Book of Jewish Folklore*, p.125)

⁴³ Trachtenberg (*The Folk Element in Judaism*, p.177)

⁴⁴ According to Isaacs, based on Ethics of the Fathers, 5:6 (p.126-127).

⁴⁵ Trachtenberg (*The Folk Element In Judaism*, p.178; *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, p.29)

three, they are like ministering angels. With regard to three they are like human beings. They are like ministering angels in that they have wings, they fly from one end of the world to the other, and they hear what goes on behind the curtain of heaven. They are like human beings in that they eat and drink like humans, they procreate like humans, and they die like humans.”

God is the Ultimate Responsible Party: In Chapter Nine itself, one can glean from the Rabbis’ a view that God is the responsible party for the good and the bad in the world. In Mishnah 9:2, 9:3 and 9:4 God is blessed for the good and the bad.⁴⁶ In the Gemara’s discussion of these Mishnayot it becomes abundantly clear that God, ultimately, is in control of what happens in the universe. It is God who has the power to prevent or allow the good and the evil that befalls us. This viewpoint is reflected several places on *B. Berakhot* 60a: (1) In the incident involving Hillel, who hears screams coming from his home town as he is walking on the road, and the Baraita comments “of evil tidings he will have no fear; his heart is firm, confident in Adonai;” (2) In the four prayers one says upon entering and exiting a dangerous city; (3) and the prayers one says upon entering and exiting a bath house.⁴⁷ The texts of the blessing which is said with the bedtime Shema and the blessing recited when washing one’s face upon awakening, provide strong support for the view that God is the one who has supreme control over our fate and, therefore, the one from whom we should seek protection. The blessing recited with the nighttime Shema, on 60b, reads:

Blessed ...Who casts bonds of sleep upon my eyes and slumber upon my eyelids,
and Who illuminates the pupil of the eye. May it be Your will, Adonai, my God,
that You lay me down to sleep toward peace, and grant me my share in your Torah

⁴⁶ Mishnah 9:2: ... On rain and on good tidings one says “Blessed Who is good and does good.” On bad tidings one says, “Blessed the true Judge.” Mishnah 9:3: ... One should recite the blessing [the true judge] over evil that has the potential to be good. And [one should recite the blessing Who is good and does good] over good that has the potential to be evil. Mishnah 9:5: A person is obligated to bless God for the bad just as he blesses God for the good....

⁴⁷ The text of these prayers may be found in Appendix Two.

and accustom me to the rule of Your mitzvot, but do not accustom me to the rule of transgression. Do not bring me into the grasp of an error, nor into the grasp of a sin, nor into the grasp of a challenge, nor into the grasp of scorn. Let the good inclination dominate me, but not let the evil inclination dominate me. Rescue me from an evil mishap and from terrible diseases. May I not be confused by bad dreams or bad thoughts; may my offspring be perfect before You; and may You illuminate my eyes lest I die in sleep. Blessed are You, Adonai, my God, Who illuminates the entire world with His glory.

Thus, we find that the sentiment of the Rabbis is consistent with what we read in Isaiah 45:7, that God *makes peace and creates evil*. Not two or more independent forces in the universe, but one.

Conclusion

In Chapter Nine of *Bavli Berakhot* the Rabbis authenticate, and one might say they adopt as well, the folk beliefs of the immediacy of the spirit world and the forceful impact it has upon the everyday activities of human beings. We have seen a world fraught with danger; where the human being is vulnerable at all times. Angels and demons are everywhere; as are dreams, curses, the evil eye, spells, and signs. The human being must be mindful of his behavior at all times and aware of the habits and character of the different spirits. A person has to be constantly prepared to defend himself against their attack, to appease them, and to enlist their aid when necessary. The spirits can either intercede on his behalf with God or turn the wrath of God against him. Although the human being can be a victim of the spirit world, he is not expected to sit by passively; rather, he is to take an active part in trying to avoid, prevent, or remedy threats to his safety and security. We've seen that it is possible to avoid harm from demons, the evil eye, and the angel Satan if people are careful about their behavior: if they are modest and silent in the privy; if they study Torah⁴⁸ and study in chevruta;⁴⁹ and if they refrain from showing off their

⁴⁸ 63a *gimmel*

⁴⁹ On *B. Berakhot* 63b *bet* the Stam notes that one must form groups upon groups to engage in Torah study for Torah is only acquired by studying with companions. R. Yose ben R. Hanina warned against studying Torah alone – it is dangerous to do so, they risk becoming foolish (mistaken), and they sin by doing so.

good fortune. Words have power, therefore people may avoid harm by reciting incantations, a blessing, or biblical verses. They can also ward off danger by performing rituals.

The Rabbis' embrace of the fears, beliefs, and practices of the folk reflects their ability to respond to human fears and needs. And their ability to do so is necessary if they want to maintain their authority. As Trachtenberg suggests the Rabbis may not have really had a choice:

It is true of all major religions, however fervently they may preach the oneness and unity of God, that they have judiciously refrained from banishing completely lesser manifestations of the supernatural. The conception of one and only one supernatural power is too austere to satisfy the craving of man for intimate association with and ready access to the supramundane forces that seem to him to control nature. To acquiesce in their retirement into a single remote godhead is to surrender his own sense of security.... In the absence of a convincing substitute, the conception of a densely populated spirit world persisted unimpaired, and monotheism could progress no farther than to reserve to the one God the ultimate rule and direction of the infinitely variegated forms which the supernatural assumes in the folk consciousness.⁵⁰

A palpable but unavoidable tension remains when humans hold God responsible for both the good and the bad in the world. The folk's stubbornness in holding on to the idea of the world of spirits may be one solution to this tension. In the end, the question as to why God created angels and, especially why God created demons, remains unanswered. As does the question of how the various powers in the universe work in relation to each other. Perhaps God needs angels and demons because they correspond to God's two inclinations – just as humans have a yetzer tov and yetzer ha-ra, God does, too. Perhaps God created them to do the little jobs in the universe. Or perhaps, they are a way for humans to personify nature or the abstract concepts of good and evil. Maybe they are a way to distance God from the minor or unpleasant tasks. In Chapter Nine, the Rabbis are not interested in these questions.

⁵⁰ Trachtenberg (*The Folk Element in Judaism*, pp.176-177)

A last note: One might ask how the thread of the world of spirits that permeates Chapter Nine fits in with the larger context of the chapter. I would suggest that the material on the world of spirits is closely related to the larger context of blessings. The concern of each is really the same: how do human beings stay in God's good grace so God will protect them and they stay out of harm's way. Ultimately, it is God Who protects people or allows people to be harmed by the other forces in the spiritual sphere. The fundamental messages of both sets of materials are the same: The world is a dangerous place. People can take measures to protect themselves. Human behavior matters. The words people recite matter - whether contained in incantations, biblical verses, prayers, or blessings - words have magical powers. And the Rabbis play a central role in showing people how to behave and how to seek God's favor.

The import of all the blessings the Rabbis provide us with in Chapter Nine is that people should not only praise and thank God, but should acknowledge God as the ultimate power in the universe. If a person stands before God with an attitude of humility - rather than arrogance - he will merit protection. At the same time, it is also clear that no matter how attentive an individual is to his behavior and words, it is not always possible to avoid or remedy the evil in the world.

Rav Huna bar Berekhyah taught the following in the name of Rabbi Elazar HaKappar: "Anyone who makes the Name of Heaven a partner in his distress - they double his livelihood for him."⁵¹ One makes God a partner in his distress through prayer - either by willingly accepting God's decree with the blessing "Blessed is the true judge," or by asking God for mercy. In the end, it is God Who matters the most in the world of spirits. And it is the Rabbis who can help the people navigate through this world of spirits.

⁵¹ 63a *gimmel*

GLOSSARY

Angels

Angel (מלאך)

Ministering Angels (מלאכי השרת)

Satan (שטן)

Astrologer (כלדאי)

Bat Kol (בת קול)

Blessing (ברכה)

Bone Necromancer (אובא טמיא)

Curse (קללה)

Demons

Demon (שד)

Demons (מזיקין)

Goat Demon (שעיר)

Dream (חלום)

Dream Interpreter: (מפשר חלמי)

Eye:

Evil Eye (עינא בישא, עין רעה)

Set One's Eyes on Someone (נתן עיניו, יהבי עינייהו)

Inclinations:

Evil Inclination (יצר הרע)

Good Inclination (יצר טוב)

Luck (מזל)

Magic

Magic (כשפים):

Spells (חרשי):

Sorcerer/ Sorceress (חרשא /חרשתא)

Miracles (נסים):

Sign (סימן):

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APPENDIX I:

ORGANIZATION OF BAVLI BERAKHOT CHAPTER NINE
Exegeses of Mishnayot and *Topical Tracts*¹

MISHNAH: Mishnayot 9:1-5: 54a

GEMARA:

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II. Exegesis of Mishnah: Blessing at a Place Where Idolatry Was Uprooted (9:1B) 57b

Other Occasions for Blessings: Crowds of Israelites; Sages; Israelite homes,
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III. Exegesis of Mishnah: 58b-59b

Blessing When One Sees Meteors; Earthquakes; Thunder; Wind; Lightning (9:2)

Blessing When One Sees Mountains, Hills, Seas, Rivers & Deserts (9:2)

Blessing When One Sees The Great Sea (9:2)

IV. Exegesis of Mishnah: Blessing for Rain & Good News (9:2): 59b

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VI. Exegesis of Mishnah: Blessing For Good and Evil (9:3) 60a

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¹ Modeled after Jacob Neusner's outline of *Bavli Berakhot*. in *Talmud Bavli Berakhot: The American Translation*

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Other Blessings: Bath House, Blood Letting; Privy; Sleep; Waking Up;

Morning Blessings; Washing Hands; Washing Face

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Bless God For The Evil & The Good (9:5); 60b-61a

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Not to Act Light-heartedly While Facing the Temple Mount 61b-62a

Rules of Conduct in the Privy: 61b-62b

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Conclusion of Blessings said in the Temple 63a

Greeting One's Fellow in God's Name 63a

XI. Exegesis of Mishnah: Change in Law/Crisis (9:5) 63a

Hospitality; Honoring Torah/Discipleship, 63b-64a

APPENDIX TWO:

OCCASIONS FOR BLESSINGS IN *BAVLI BERAKHOT* CHAPTER NINE

One who sees a place where miracles were performed on behalf of the Jewish people:

Blessed ... Who performed miracles for our ancestors in this place (M. 9:1)

One who sees a place from which idolatry has been uprooted:

Blessed ... Who uprooted idolatry from our land (M. 9:1)

Upon seeing comets, earthquakes, thunder, winds or lighting:

Blessed ... Whose strength and might fill the world (M. 9:2)

Upon seeing mountains, hills, seas, rivers or deserts:

Blessed ... Who makes the work of Creation (M. 9:2)

One who sees the Great Sea:

Blessed ... Who made the Great Sea (M. 9:2)

On rain and on good tidings:

Blessed ... Who is good and does good. (M. 9:2)

On bad tidings:

Blessed ... the true judge. (M. 9:2)

If one builds a new house or purchases new vessels:

Blessed ... Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season. (M. 9:3)

On a calamity that has the potential to be a favorable occurrence:

Blessed ... the true judge. (M. 9:3)

On a favorable occurrence that has the potential to be a calamity:

Blessed ... Who is good and does good. (M. 9:3)

One who sees a place where a miracle was performed for him personally:

Blessed ... Who performed a miracle for me in this place (54a)

One who sees the remains of Lot's wife:

Blessed ... the true judge (54b)

Upon Lot one says:

Blessed ... Who remembers the righteous (54b)

APPENDIX TWO:

Four types of people must give thanks (for surviving dangerous situations): seafarers, those who go through wildernesses, one who was ill and recovered, one who was incarcerated and was released:

Blessed ... Who bestows beneficial kindnesses (Birkat HaGomeil) (54b)

If one sees [an idol of] Merkulis:

Blessed ... Who has shown forbearance (been patient) to the transgressors of His will. (57b)

If one sees a place [in Eretz Yisrael] from which idolatry has been uprooted

Blessed ... Who uprooted idolatry from our land; and just as it has been uprooted from this place, so may it be uprooted from all places of Israel, and bring back the hearts of those who serve them to serve You. (57b)

Five Blessings to Recite If One Sees Various Sites in Wicked Babylonia

If one sees the [ruins of the city of] Babylon:

Blessed ... Who destroyed the wicked Babylon (57b)

If one sees the [ruined] house/palace of Nebuchadnezzar

Blessed ... Who destroyed the house of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar (57b)

If one sees the lion's den or the fiery furnace:

Blessed ... Who performed miracles on behalf of our ancestors in this place. (57b)

If one sees [an idol of] Merkulis:

Blessed ... Who has shown forbearance to the transgressors of His will. (57b)

If one sees the place from which they take earth:

Blessed ... Who says and does, decrees, and implements. (57b)

If one sees multitudes of Jews¹:

Blessed ... The Sage of the secrets.² (58a)

Blessed ... Who created all these to serve me. (Ben Zoma)³ (58a)

If one sees multitudes of idolaters:

Your mother is embarrassed, etc.⁴ (58a)

¹ 600,000; in Eretz Yisrael

² Rashi: The One Who knows the secret thoughts of every person in the crowd.

³ Ben Zoma is grateful for the efforts of others (who make/prepare bread, clothing, etc)

⁴ Jeremiah 50:12

APPENDIX TWO:

If one sees sages of Israel:

Blessed ... Who apportioned from His wisdom to those who fear Him. (58a)

If one sees sages of idolaters:

Blessed ... Who gave of His wisdom to His creatures. (58a)

If one sees kings of Israel:

Blessed ... Who apportioned from His glory to those who fear Him. (58a)

If one sees kings of idolaters:

Blessed ... Who gave from His glory to his creatures. (58a)

If one sees houses of Israel in their inhabited state:

Blessed ... Who establishes the boundary of the widow.⁵ (58b)

If one sees them in their ruined state:

Blessed ... the true Judge. (58b)

If one sees houses of idolaters in their inhabited state:

Adonai will uproot the house of the arrogant. (58b)

If one sees them in their ruined state:

O God of vengeance; Adonai, O God of vengeance, appear. (58b)

If one sees graves of Jews:

1. Blessed ... Who created you in judgment, fed you in judgment, sustained you in judgment, gathered you in judgment, and in the future will raise you in judgment. (58b)

2. Blessed ... Who created you in judgment, fed you in judgment, sustained you in judgment, gathered you in judgment, and in the future will raise you in judgment. And He knows the number of all of you, and in the future He will revive you and support you.

Blessed ... Who resurrects the dead. (Per Mar) (58b)

If one sees graves of idolaters:

Your mother is embarrassed, etc. (Jeremiah 50:12)(58b)

If one sees his friend after a lapse of thirty days:

Blessed ... Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season. (58b)

⁵ Israel is referred to as a widow after the destruction of the First Temple

APPENDIX TWO:

If one sees him after a lapse of twelve months:

Blessed ... Who resurrects the dead. (58b)

If one sees spotted (freckled) people:

1. Blessed ... Who diversifies the creatures. (58b)⁶

2. Blessed ... the true judge.⁷ (58b)

If one sees a person with unusually black skin, unusually red skin, unusually white skin; a person who is obese; a dwarf; a person with warts:

Blessed ... Who diversifies the creatures. (58b)

If one sees a person whose hands are amputated; a blind person, a person whose hair is matted; a person whose leg is amputated; a person smitten with boils; or people who are spotted:

Blessed ... the true Judge. (58b)

If one sees an elephant, monkey, or owl:

Blessed ... Who diversifies the creatures. (58b)

If one sees beautiful creatures, or beautiful trees:

Blessed ... Who has such in his world. (58b)

If one sees a rainbow:

Blessed ... Who remembers the Covenant (per Gemara, 59a)

Blessed ... Who is trustworthy in His Covenant and fulfills his word (Baraita – 59a)

Blessed ... Who remembers the Covenant, and is trustworthy in His Covenant, and fulfills his word. (Rav Pappa – 59a)

One who sees comets, earthquakes, thunder, winds, lightning (59a):

Blessed ... for His strength and his might fill the world.

Blessed ... Who makes the work of creation.⁸

One who sees a clear sky after a storm:

Blessed ... Who makes the work of Creation (59a)

One who sees sun at the beginning of its cycle⁹; the moon in its mightiest; the planets in their orbits; or the signs of the zodiac in their order:

Blessed ... Who makes the works of Creation (59b)

⁶ If condition is since the time of birth.

⁷ If conditioned developed later on.

⁸ The Gemara (per Rava) adds this second blessing; cf Mishnah.

⁹ This occurs every 28 years – when the vernal/spring equinox falls in the hour of Saturn on a Tuesday evening.

APPENDIX TWO:

One who sees the Euphrates River upon the Bridge of Babylon¹⁰ or the Tigris River upon the Shabistana Bridge:

Blessed ... Who makes the works of Creation (59b)

One who sees a light rain:

We thank You for every single drop that You have brought down for us (R. Yehuda).

Were our mouths as full as song as the sea, etc. we still could not thank You sufficiently, Adonai our God ... until every erect spine prostrates itself.

Blessed are You Adonai with most thanksgivings (R. Yohanan)

... Blessed are You Adonai, God of thanksgivings. (Rava)

... Blessed are You Adonai with many thanksgivings, God of thanksgivings (Pappa) (59b)

One who sees a heavy rain:

Blessed ... Who is good and does good. (59b)¹¹

Good fortune shared w/ others:

Blessed ... Who is good and does good (59b)

Good fortune not shared w/ others:

Blessed ... Who has kept us alive, sustained us, etc. (59b)

If one's wife gives birth to a male child:

Blessed ... Who is good and does good (59b)

Blessings Before Dangerous Situations

Before entering a city:

May it be Your will Adonai, my God, that you bring me into this city safely. (60a)

After entering a city:

I thank you Adonai, my God, for having brought me into this city safely. (60a)

Before leaving a city:

May it be Your will Adonai, my God, and God of my ancestors, that You bring me out of this city safely. (60a)

¹⁰ Or upstream from the point where the river has been diverted

¹¹ Or:: with a heavy rain, both blessings are recited. Or: only a landowner says "Who is good and does good.." Or: a landowner says the Shehecheyanu.

APPENDIX TWO:

After leaving a city:

I thank You Adonai, my God, for having brought me out of this city safely. And just as You have brought me out toward peace, so should you lead me towards peace, uphold me toward peace, and direct me toward peace. And may you rescue me from the hand of every foe and ambush along the way. (60a)

Upon entering a public Bath House:

May it be Your will Adonai, my God, that You save me from this and similar [danger], and may no matter of ruin or iniquity fall upon me. But if a matter of ruin or iniquity fall upon me, then let my death be atonement for all my sins.¹² (Baraita - 60a)

Upon leaving a Bath House:

I thank you Adonai, my God, Who for saved me from the fire. (Rav Aha - 60a)

Before undergoing medical treatment:

May it be Your will Adonai, my God, that his therapy should serve me as a remedy, and that You shall heal me, for You are God, the faithful Healer, and Your remedy is genuine, for it is not the place of people to seek medical treatment, but so have they accustomed themselves.¹³ (R. Aha - 60a)

After receiving medical treatment:

Blessed are You the free healer. (R. Aha - 60a)

Upon entering a restroom:

Be honored, O honored ones, holy ones, servants of the Supreme One, give honor to the God of Israel. Loosen yourselves from me until after I enter, do my will, and come to you. (Gemara -60b)

Guard me, guard me; help me, help me; support me, support me; wait for me, wait for me; until I enter and exit, for such is the way of people (Abaye - 60b)

Upon leaving a restroom:

Blessed ...Who formed the human being with wisdom, and created in him many orifices and cavities. It is revealed and known before Your Throne of Glory, that if one of them opened or one of them closed it would be impossible to stand before You. (60b)

[end with]: Who heals the sick (Rav)

Who heals all flesh (Shmuel)

Who acts wondrously. (Rav Sheishet)

Who heals all flesh and acts wondrously. (Rav Pappa)

¹² The Gemara - citing Abaye - objects to the recitation of the last line; one should not give Satan an opening by mentioning a specific disaster facing him..

¹³ Abaye objects to the inclusion of this last line; for it is permissible for people to seek medical treatment rather to rely on prayers to God for healing.

APPENDIX TWO:

Upon going to sleep on a bed:

[From:] Hear, O Israel – [Until:] And it will come to pass that if you harken¹⁴
Blessed ... Who casts bonds of sleep upon my eyes and slumber upon my eyelids, and
Who illuminates the pupil of the eye. May it be Your will, Adonai, my God, that You lay
me down to sleep toward peace, and grant me my share in your Torah and accustom me
to the rule of Your mitzvot, but do not accustom me to the rule of transgression. Do not
bring me into the grasp of an error, nor into the grasp of a sin, nor into the grasp of a
challenge, nor into the grasp of scorn. Let the good inclination dominate me, but not let
the evil inclination dominate me. Rescue me from an evil mishap and from terrible
diseases. May I not be confused by bad dreams or bad thoughts; may my offspring be
perfect before You; and may You illuminate my eyes lest I die in sleep. Blessed are You,
Adonai, my God, Who illuminates the entire world with His glory. (60b)

Upon waking up:

My God, the soul You have given me is pure; You formed it within me, You breathed it
into me, You safeguard it within me, and in the future You will take it from me, and
return it to me in the time to come. As long as the soul is within me, I thank You Adonai,
my God, and the God of my ancestors, master of all worlds, Lord of all souls. Blessed are
You, Adonai, Who returns souls to dead bodies. (60b)

15 Morning Blessings (60b):

Upon hearing the crow of a rooster:

Blessed ... Who gave the heart understanding to distinguish between day and night.

Upon opening one's eyes:

Blessed ... Who gives sight to the blind.

Upon straightening and sitting up:

Blessed ... Who releases the captive.

Upon getting dressed:

Blessed ... Who clothes the naked.

Upon standing up:

Blessed ... Who straightens the bent.

Upon going down upon the floor:

Blessed ... Who spreads out the earth upon the waters.

Upon walking:

Blessed ... Who makes firm a person's footsteps.

¹⁴ The first of the three passages of the Sh'ma (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

APPENDIX TWO:

Upon putting on one's shoes:

Blessed ... Who has provided me with my every need.

Upon fastening one's belt:

Blessed ... Who girds Israel with strength.

Upon spreading a cloth upon one's head:

Blessed ... Who crowns Israel with splendor.

Upon wrapping oneself with tzitzit:

Blessed ... Who has sanctified us with the mitzvot and commanded us to wrap ourselves in tzitzit.

Upon putting tefillin on one's arm:

Blessed ... Who has sanctified us with the mitzvot and commanded us to put on tefillin.

Upon putting tefillin on one's head:

Blessed ... Who has sanctified us with the mitzvot and commanded us concerning the commandment of tefillin.

Upon washing one's hands:

Blessed ... Who has sanctified us with the mitzvot and commanded us concerning immersing the hands.

Upon washing one's face:

Blessed ... Who removes the bonds of sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids. And may it be Your will, Adonai, my God, that You accustom me to Your Torah and attach me to Your commandments. Do not bring me into the grasp of an error, nor into the grasp of a sin, nor into the grasp of a test, not into the grasp of scorn, and compel my [evil] inclination to be subservient to You. Distance me from an evil person and an evil companion. Attach me to the good inclination and to a good companion in Your world. Grant me today and every day grace, kindness, and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see me. Blessed are You, Adonai, my God, Who bestows beneficent kindnesses upon His people Israel.

APPENDIX THREE:

BAVLI BERAKHOT'S DREAM BOOK

The Rabbis on Dreams and Dream Interpretation

Rav Yehudah, in the name of Rav: Three things require God's mercy - a good king, a good year, and a good dream. (55a *bet*)

Rav Hisda on Dreams: (55a *dalet*)

Let one dream any dream but not about fasting.

A dream that has not been interpreted is like a letter that has not been read.

A positive dream is not destined to be fulfilled in its entirety; nor is a negative dream destined to be fulfilled in its entirety.

A negative dream is better than a positive dream.

As for a negative dream, its sadness suffices for it; as for a positive dream its joy suffices for it.

Seeing a negative dream is worse than a lashing.

R. Yohanan, in the name of R. Shimon ben Yohai: Just as it is impossible to have wheat without chaff mixed within it, so is it impossible to have a dream with meaning without some senseless matters mixed within it. (55a *dalet*)

Rav Berechyah: A dream that portends a future event, even though part of it may be fulfilled, all of it will not be fulfilled. (55a *dalet*)

R. Levi: A person may reasonably hope for the realization of a positive dream for as long as 22 years. (55b – end of *dalet* on 55a)

Rav Huna: A positive dream is not shown to a good person, and a negative dream is not shown to an evil person. (55b *aleph*)

Gemara on Rav Huna: Rather, say Huna means: The righteous person does not see a negative dream himself; others see a negative dream about him. (55b *aleph*)

Gemara on Rav Huna: Rather, say Huna means: A righteous person does see dreams - he sees positive dreams - but when he awakes he has no knowledge of what he saw. (55b *aleph*)

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Rav Hisda, in the name of R. Yirmiyah bar Abba: This is a blessing that neither negative dreams nor evil thoughts will confound you (a righteous person). (55b *aleph*)

R. Ze'ira: Whoever sleeps for 7 days without a dream is called wicked. (55b *aleph*)

What to do if One is Troubled by a Dream

Rav Huna, in the name of R. Pedas, in the name of R. Yohanan: One who sees a dream, and his soul is distressed about it should go and have it interpreted in the presence of three people. (55b *bet*)

Gemara on R. Huna: Rather say: If one is distressed by a dream he has seen, let him "remedy" the dream in the presence of 3 people. (55b *bet*)

Gemara: Let him bring three people and say to them: "I have seen a good dream." And let them say to him: "It is good, and may it be good. May the Merciful One transform it for the better. May it be decreed upon you seven times from Heaven that it be good, and may it be good."

Gemara: Let them recite three verses of Transformation, three verses of Redemption, three verses of Peace: (55b *bet*)

Transformation:

1. *You have transformed my lament into dancing for me; You undid my sackcloth and girded me with gladness* (Psalms 30:12).

2. *Then the maiden shall rejoice with dance – and young men and old men shall rejoice together; I shall transform their mourning into joy*, etc (Jeremiah 31:12).

3. *But Adonai your God was unwilling to listen to Balaam, and He transformed (for your sake Balaam's curse into a blessing* - Deuteronomy 23:6).

Redemption:

1. *He redeemed my soul in peace from battles against me*, etc. (Psalms 55:19).

2. *Then the redeemed of God will return*, etc. (and come to Zion with song and everlasting joy - Isaiah 35:10).

3. *But the people said to Saul: Shall Jonathan die who has achieved this great salvation*, etc (I Samuel 14:45).

APPENDIX THREE:

Peace:

1. *I will create a new speech of the lips: "Peace, peace, for far and near," said Adonai, "and I will heal Israel"* (Isaiah 57:19).

2. *A spirit came upon Amasai, etc.* (I Chronicles 12:19).

3. *And say [to him]: Such [success] for life! Peace be upon you, peace be upon your household, etc.* (I Samuel 25:6).

When Shmuel saw a negative dream would say: *Dreams speak lies* (Zecharia 10:2). When he would see a positive dream would say: *But do dreams speak lies? Surely it is written, in a dream I shall speak with him* (Numbers 12:6) (55b dalet)

Rava on Shmuel: Prophetic dreams are sent through angels; false dreams are sent through demons. (55b dalet)

R. Bizna bar Zavda, in the name of R. Panda, in the name Rav Nahum, in the name of R. Bi'rayim, in the name of a certain elder (R. Bana'ah): All dreams follow the mouth. (55b dalet)

R Yohanan: Three kinds of dreams are destined to be fulfilled: A dream one sees in the morning just before he wakes up; a dream that his friend dreamed about him; and a dream that is interpreted within a dream.

And some say: A dream that is repeated. (55b dalet)

R. Shmuel bar Nahmani, in the name of R. Yonatan: A person is only shown in his dreams products of his own thoughts. (55b hey)

A Baraita: A Dream is one sixtieth prophecy. (57b dalet)

Six things are a good sign for a sick person and a dream.

Dreams: Their Symbols and OmensOn 56b gimmel

A Well: A Good Omen – Peace for yourself (R. Hanina); You have found Torah (R. Nassan); Actual Life (Rava)

A River, Bird, or Kettle: A Good Omen – All foretell peace

APPENDIX THREE:

On 56b dalet

A River, Bird, Kettle, Grapes, Mountain, Shofar, Dog, Lion,
 Shaving, Well, Reed, or Ox: Ambiguous Omens¹
 A Reed: A Good Omen – You will acquire wisdom
 Reeds: A Good Omen – You will acquire understanding
 A Gourd, Heart of Palm, or Wax (all reed sound-alikes): Good Omens

Oneself Eating Ox Meat: A Good Omen – You will become wealthy
 Oneself Gored by an Ox: A Bad Omen – You will have sons that gore you
 Oneself Bitten by an Ox: A Bad Omen – Afflictions will befall you
 Oneself Kicked by an Ox: A Good Omen – A long journey awaits you
 Oneself Riding on an Ox: A Good Omen – You will rise to greatness
 An Ox Riding on You: A Bad Omen – You will die

On 56b hey to the end of hey on 57a

A Donkey: A Good Omen – Salvation will come to you

 A Cat, in a Place Where They Call a Cat *Shunra*: A Good Omen – A beautiful song has been composed for you
 A Cat, in a Place Where They Call a Cat *Shinra*: A Bad Omen – A change for the worse for you

 White Grapes: A Good Omen
 Black Grapes, Grown in Their Season: A Good Omen
 Black Grapes, Not Grown in Their Season: A Bad Omen

 A White Horse: A Good Omen
 A Red Horse, Trotting Gently: A Good Omen
 A Red Horse, Galloping: A Bad Omen

 Ishmael, son of Abraham: A Good Omen – Your prayer has been heard by God
 A Camel: A Good Omen – Death has been decreed upon you from heaven but you have been saved

 Pinhas: A Good Omen - A wonder will be performed for you

 An Elephant, if Saddled: A Good Omen – A wonder will be performed for you
 Elephants: A Good Omen – Wonders upon wonders will be performed for you
 An Elephant, Not Saddled: A Bad Omen

¹ Each of these has a positive and a negative biblical verse associated with it. For it to be a positive omen, one must recite the positive biblical verse before the negative verse comes to mind.

APPENDIX THREE:

A Monkey: A Bad Omen

The Name Huna: A Good Omen – A miracle will be performed for you

The Names Hanina, Hananya or Yohanan: Good Omens – Miracles upon miracles will be performed for you

A Hesped, in Writing: A Good Omen – Heaven has spared and redeemed the deceased

On 57a aleph

Oneself Responding to the Kiddush by Saying, “Amen, May His Great Name be Blessed”:

A Good Omen – You are destined for the Olam HaBa

Oneself Reciting the Shema: A Good Omen – You merit the Shekhinah resting upon you

Oneself Laying *Tefillin* (R. Eliezer HaGadol says only the head *tefillin*): A Good Omen – You will rise to greatness

Oneself Praying (as long as you don't complete the prayer before waking up): A Good Omen

Oneself Cohabiting with His Mother: A Good Omen – You will acquire understanding

Oneself Cohabiting with a Betrothed Maiden: A Good Omen – You will acquire Torah

Oneself Cohabiting with his Sister: A Good Omen – You will acquire wisdom

Oneself Cohabiting with a Married Woman: A Good Omen – You are destined for the Olam HaBa

On 57a bet

Wheat: A Good Omen – You have seen peace

Barley: A Good Omen – Your sins have left you

A Vine with Grapes: A Good Omen – Your wife will not bear stillborn children

A Branch of a Vine: A Good Omen – You may expect the Messiah

A Fig: A Good Omen – You will not forget your Torah knowledge

Small Pomegranates: A Good Omen – Your business will become fruitful like a pomegranate

Large Pomegranates: A Good Omen – Your business will increase like a pomegranate

Split Pomegranates: A Good Omen –

If you are a Torah Scholar – You will acquire more Torah knowledge

If you are an Ordinary Person – You will merit to perform mitzvot well

Small Olives: A Good Omen – Your business will be fruitful, increase, and endure like olives

Olive Trees: A Good Omen – You will have many children

An Olive: A Good Omen – You will have a good reputation

Olive Oil: A Good Omen – You will perceive the light of Torah

Dates: A Good Omen – Your sins have ended

APPENDIX THREE:

A Goat: A Good Omen – The coming year will be blessed for you

Goats: A Good Omen – Many years will be blessed for you

A Myrtle Branch: A Good Omen –

If You Have Assets – They will perform successfully for you

If You Don't Have Assets – You will receive an inheritance

An Etrog: A Good Omen – You are beautiful in the eye of your Maker

A Lulav: A Good Omen – You have just one heart and it is devoted to God

A Goose: A Good Omen – You will acquire wisdom

Yourself Cohabiting with a Goose: A Good Omen – You will become head of an academy

A Rooster: A Good Omen – You will have a son

Roosters: A Good Omen – You will have several sons

A Hen: A Good Omen – You will have a beautiful garden and rejoice

Eggs, Unbroken: An Ambiguous Omen – Your wish is held in suspension

Eggs, Broken: A Good Omen – Your wish will be fulfilled

Nuts, Cucumbers, Glassware, or Anything That Can Break - And are Broken: Good Omens –
Your wish will be fulfilled

On 57a gimmel

Oneself Entering a Large Town: A Good Omen – Your wishes will be fulfilled

Oneself Cutting the Hair of His Head: A Good Omen – for you

Oneself Cutting His Head and beard: A Good Omen – for you and your entire family

Oneself Sitting in a Small Boat: A Good Omen – You will have a good reputation

Oneself Sitting in a Large Boat: A Good Omen – You and your family will have a
good reputation

Relieving Oneself: A Good Omen (only if you didn't wipe yourself)

Oneself Ascending to a Roof: A Good Omen – You will rise to prominence

Oneself Descending From a Roof: You will descend from your prominence²

Tearing One's Own Garments: A Good Omen – A harsh decree of judgment against you is
being torn up

Oneself Standing Naked in Bavel: A Good Omen – You stand without sin

Oneself Standing Naked in Eretz Yisrael: You stand without having performed mitzvot

Oneself Seized by a Roman Officer: A Good Omen – Heavenly protection has been established
for you

² Abaye and Rava disagree: a person does not descend from prominence obtained

APPENDIX THREE:

Oneself Placed in Chains by a Roman Officer: A Good Omen – Protection upon protections has been established for you

Oneself Entering a Marsh: A Good Omen – You will become head of an academy

Oneself Entering a Forest: A Good Omen – You will become head of the members of the *kallah*³

Oneself Letting Blood: A Good Omen – Your sins are forgiven

A Snake: A Good Omen – Your livelihood is prepared for you

Oneself Bitten by the Snake: A Good Omen – Your livelihood will be doubled for you

Oneself Killing the Snake: A Bad Omen – Your livelihood will be ruined

On 57a dalet

Oneself Drinking All Kinds of Beverages, Except Wine: A Good Omen -

Oneself Drinking Wine: An Ambiguous Omen – Good for some, bad for others

Oneself Drinking Wine, if You are a Torah Scholar: Always a Good Omen – for you

On 57b aleph

Oneself Rising From Sleep and a Biblical Verse Immediately Falls Into One's Mouth: A Good Omen – This is a minor prophecy

Kings

King David: A Good Omen – You will acquire piety

King Solomon: A Good Omen – You will acquire wisdom

King Ahab: A Bad Omen - You should fear Heavenly retribution

Books of Prophets

The Book of Kings: A Good Omen – You will rise to prominence

Ezekiel: A Good Omen – You will acquire wisdom

Isaiah: A Good Omen – You will receive consolation

Jeremiah: A Bad Omen – You should fear Heavenly retribution

Larger Books of Writings

The Book of Psalms: A Good Omen – You will acquire piety

Proverbs: A Good Omen – You will acquire wisdom

Job: A Bad Omen – You should fear Heavenly retribution

Smaller Books of Writings

The Song of Songs: A Good Omen – You will acquire piety

³ The members of the *kallah* are the better educated

APPENDIX THREE:

Ecclesiastes: A Good Omen – You will acquire wisdom
Lamentations: A Bad Omen – You should fear Heavenly retribution
Scroll of Esther: A Good Omen – A miracle will be performed for you

Tannaitic Sages

Rebbe/ Judah HaNasi: A Good Omen – You will acquire wisdom
R. Elazar ben Azariah: A Good Omen – You will acquire wealth
R. Yishmael ben Elisha: A Bad Omen – You should fear Heavenly Retribution

Students of the Sages

Ben Azzai: A Good Omen – You will acquire piety
Ben Zomah: A Good Omen – You will acquire wisdom
Aher: You should fear Heavenly retribution

On 57b bet

All Kinds of Beasts, Except a Saddled Elephant, a Monkey and a Marten: Good Omens

All Kinds of Metal Tools, Except a Hoe, a Mattock, and an Axe (when the blades are set in their handles): A Good Omen

All Kinds of Fruits, Except for Unripe Dates: A Good Omen

All Kinds of Vegetables, Except Turnip Tops: A Good Omen

All Colors, Except for *Teheilet*: A Good Omen

All Kinds of Birds, Except for a Karya, a Kepufa and a Kurpe'rai (kinds of owls): A Good Omen

On 57b hey

A Corpse in a House: A Good Omen – A sign of peace in the house
A Corpse That Ate and Drank in a House: A Good Omen – for the house
A Corpse That Took Vessels (except a shoe or sandal) From a House: A Good Omen
A Corpse That Took A Shoe or a Sandal: A Bad Omen
A Corpse That Puts Anything in a House, Except Dirt or Mustard: A Good Omen

APPENDIX FOUR:
INDEX TO SPIRITS AND FORCES IN *BAVLI BERAKHOT* CHAPTER NINE

ANGELS (11):

Satan: 55b *gimmel*; 60a *hey*; 62b *aleph*; 62b *gimmel*Others: 55b *dalet*; 60b *aleph*; 61b *bet*; 62b *gimmel* (2 references); 63a *bet*, *gimmel*ASTROLOGERS (1): 64a *aleph*BAT KOL (1): 61b *bet*BONE NECROMANCER (1): 59a *aleph*CURSE (1): 56a *gimmel*DEMONS (10): 54b *dalet*; 55b *dalet*; 60b *bet*; 62a *bet* (6 references); 62b *aleph*DREAMS AS GOOD/EVIL OMENS (16): 55a *dalet*; 55b *bet*, *dalet*; 56a *gimmel*; 56b *aleph*, *bet*, *gimmel*, *dalet*, *hey*; 57a *aleph*, *bet*, *gimmel*, *dalet*; 57b *aleph*, *bet*, *dalet*EVIL EYE/SET AN EYE (3): 55b *gimmel*; 58a *bet*; 58b *gimmel*LUCK/MAZAL (2): 55b4 *gimmel*; 60a *hey*MAGIC/SPELLS (1): 62a *dalet*SIGN (GOOD) (1): 57b *dalet*

APPENDIX FIVE:

A SURVEY OF REFERENCES TO FORCES AND SPIRITS
In The Order They Appear in Chapter NineDemons: People Who Need Protection from Them: 54b dalet¹

Rav Yehudah (AB 2)² and a Baraita list categories of people who need protection from an unnamed source. Rav Yehudah names a sick person, a bridegroom, and a bride. A Baraita lists a sick person, a woman who has given birth, a bridegroom, and a bride; and some say, also a mourner; and some say, also Torah scholars at night.

In his commentary, Rashi tells us that the needed protection is from the demons (mazikin - המזיקין). He explains that a sick person needs protection since his fortune (mazel) has taken a turn for the worse and, therefore, he is more susceptible to being harmed by a demon.³ A woman who has recently given birth and a mourner are also weakened and, therefore, more susceptible to demons. A bride, bridegroom, and Torah scholar at night need protection because demons are liable to attack those of whom they are jealous.⁴

Dreams: If Not Interpreted: 55a dalet

Rav Hisda (AB,3) makes several statements about the nature and power of dreams and dream interpretation in Chapter Nine. One of his first teachings is: "A dream that has not been interpreted is like a letter that has not been read." In his commentary, Rashi explains that a dream

¹ For easier reference, I use the page and paragraph numbers from the Steinsaltz Hebrew edition of *B. Berakhot*.

² I follow Steinsaltz's designations (as found in *The Talmud, The Steinsaltz Edition: The Reference Guide*, New York: Random House, 1989) to identify a Sage as a Tanna (T) or an Amora (A); from Bavel (B) or Eretz Yisrael (I), and particular generation (1,2,3,4).

³ Rashi also uses a second term for demon: sheid (שׂיט)

⁴ Commentary in the Schottenstein (*B. Berakhot*, p.54b, f.n. 44, 49.) explains: "Protection" means that they must always be accompanied by another person, both by day and by night, whether they are at home or outside (citing, *Shulhan Arukh, Even HaEzer* 64:3); for Demons only attack a person when he is alone. Although a Torah scholar is generally protected in the merit of his studies, he, too, requires extra protection in the darkness of night, when danger abounds. It is also suggested that no one should sleep alone at night.

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which hasn't been interpreted is neither good nor evil, for a dream follows its interpretation. This implies that an interpreted dream is either a good or a bad omen.⁵

Dreams: How to "Remedy" a Disturbing Dream: 55b bet:

The Gemara provides a ritual one should engage in if he has a dream with a bad omen. First, Rav Huna bar Ami (A) suggests that one whose soul is distressed by a dream he sees should go and have the dream interpreted in the presence of three people. The Stam corrects the word *interpreted* and substitutes the word *remedy* (יִטְרֵנוּ). The Stam then describes a procedure to remedy a dream – to turn a dream with a bad omen into a dream with a good omen:

The person who had the dream says: "I have seen a good dream."

The three people say: "It is good, and may it be good. May the Merciful One change it for better. May it be decreed upon you seven times from Heaven that it will be good; and may it be good."

Afterwards, they are to recite specific biblical verses: Three verses of transformation;⁶ three verses of redemption;⁷ and three verses of peace.⁸

⁵ Hisda also teaches that a dream (whether good or bad) is not fulfilled in its entirety. (55a dalet)

⁶ The three verses of transformation are: (1) *You have transformed my lament into dancing for me; You undid my sackcloth and girded me with gladness* (Psalms 30:12). (2) *Then the maiden shall rejoice with dance, and young men and old [shall rejoice] together; I shall transform their mourning into joy, etc.* (Jeremiah 31:12). (3) *But Adonai, your God, was unwilling to listen to Balaam, and He transformed for your sake his curse into a blessing* (Deuteronomy 23:6).

⁷ The three verses of redemption are: (1) *He redeemed my soul in peace from battles against me, etc.* (Psalms 55:19). (2) *Then the redeemed of God will return and come to Zion with everlasting joy* (Isaiah 35:10). (3) *But the people said to Saul: Shall Jonathan die who has achieved this salvation for Israel?.... So the people redeemed Jonathan and he did not die* (I Samuel 14:45).

⁸ The three verses of peace are: (1) *I will create a speech of the lips: "Peace, Peace, for far and near," said Adonai, "and I will heal [Israel]."* (Isaiah 57:19). (2) *A spirit came upon Amasai the head of the captains. He said: We are yours, David, and we are with you, son of Jesse. Peace, Peace unto you and peace unto those who assist you.* (I Chronicles 12:19). (3) *And say [to him]: Such for life. Peace be upon you, peace be upon your household, etc.* (I Samuel 25:6).

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Dreams: A Supplication So That a Dream will be a Positive Omen: 55b gimel

Three Amoraim (Ameimar, Mar Zutra, Rav Ashi) were sitting together and challenged each other to teach something new. Ameimar (AB, 5-6) taught a supplication one may recite when a person doesn't know if his dream is a good or bad omen. To make sure his dream will be a good omen, a person should stand before the *Kohanim* when they are giving the priestly benediction, and should say:

Master of the Universe, I am Yours, and my dreams are Yours. I have dreamed a dream but I do not know what it means. Whether I dreamed about myself, or my friends dreamed about me, or I have dreamed about others - if these are good ones strengthen them and fortify them like the dreams of Joseph. But if they require healing, heal them like You healed the water of Marah through the hand of Moses our teacher; and like You healed Miriam from her *tzara'at*; and like You healed King Hizkiyah from his illness; and like You healed the waters of Jericho through Elisha. And just as You transformed the curse of the wicked Balaam into a blessing, so may You transform all of my dreams regarding myself to goodness.

The person should finish reciting this supplication at the same time as the *Kohanim* so that the congregation says *Amen* to both. But if he finishes before the *Kohanim*, he says: "Mighty One on high, He Who dwells in power, You are Peace and Your name is Peace. May it be your will that You grant us peace."

The Evil Eye: 55b gammel

Mar Zutra (AB, 6), the second Amora mentioned above, shared a teaching concerning the evil eye:⁹ One who is traveling to a city and is afraid of encountering an evil eye should do the following:

Take the thumb of your right hand and place it in your left hand; and take the thumb of your left hand and place it in your right hand, and say: "I, So-and-so, the son of So-and-so, I come from the progeny of Joseph, over whom an evil eye has no power."¹⁰

⁹ The commentary in Schottenstein (55b, f.n. 37) explains that public exhibitions of coveted qualities (such as beauty and wealth) will attract the *evil eye* - jealous attention and the misfortune which follows.

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And if a person is afraid of his own evil eye, Mar Zutra teaches he is to look at the surface of his left nostril.

Satan: Opening One's Luck to Satan: 55b *gimmel*

Rav Ashi (AB, 6), the third Amora mentioned above, offered a teaching concerning a person who becomes ill. On the first day, he should not reveal his illness to others, so that his luck (*mazal*) doesn't take a turn for the worse. However, after the first day he should reveal his illness to others. This is exactly what Rava (AB, 4) did when he became ill for the following reason: on the first day a person is especially vulnerable to Satan; but afterwards he will benefit from the prayers of others and God's mercy.¹¹

Dreams: Sent Through an Angel Versus Sent Through a Demon: 55b *dalet*

In an attempt to reconcile two seemingly contradictory verses – *In a dream I (God) shall speak to him*¹² and *Dreams speak lies*¹³ – Rava (AB,4) explains that a dream with true prophetic vision is sent by an angel; and a dream with no prophetic meaning is sent by a demon (77).

Dream Interpretation: Converting Dreams into Evil Omens: 56a *gimmel*

There is a lengthy story about the professional dream-interpreter Bar Hedyā and his dream interpretations (56a *aleph-gimmel*). If a person who wanted his dreams interpreted gave

¹⁰ In the commentary, Rashi explains that Joseph and his descendents are "above" the evil eye, as it has no power over them.

¹¹ The commentary in Schottenstein explains that the Gemara (at *B. Berakhot* 19a) warns that one should not speak of punishments he thinks he might deserve because by doing so he gives Satan (who functions as the prosecutor in the Heavenly Court) an opening to demand that he be so punished. It is explained that this principle is extended here: one should not vividly discuss his hardships, lest this create an opening for Satan.

¹² Numbers 12:6

¹³ Zechariah 10:2.

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Bar Hedya money, the dream would be interpreted as a good omen; if the person didn't give him money, the dream would be interpreted as a bad omen. Rava (AB, 4) and Abaye (AB, 4) came to Bar Hedya with a series of identical dreams. Abaye paid him; Rava didn't. Abaye's dreams were always interpreted as good omens; Rava's always as bad omens. Rava began to come to bar Hedya without Abaye, and his dreams were still interpreted as bad omens. In the end Rava paid Bar Hedya. Afterwards, Bar Hedya interpreted all of Rava's dreams as good omens.

Rava and Bar Hedya were once traveling on a boat together. For some reason he thinks the boat is going to sink and a miracle will save Rava (and not him) and so he decides to get off the boat. As he gets off a book falls from him. Rava finds it and reads, "All dreams follow the mouth."¹⁴ Rava calls bar Hedya a wicked man; he says the interpretation of his dreams were dependent on him and it was Bar Hedya who caused him so much pain. In his commentary, Rashi explains that it was within Bar Hedya's powers to interpret Rava's dreams as good or bad omens; Rava accuses him of converting his dreams into bad omens.

Curse: The Curse of a Sage: 56a *gimmel*

Near the end of the story of the dream interpreter Bar Hedya, Rava curses Bar Hedya: "May it be the will (of God) that this man be handed over to a regime that will have no pity on him." Bar Hedya responds by saying, "There is a tradition that the curse of a sage, even if it is unprovoked, will be fulfilled." At the end of the story, Bar Hedya is put to death in exile at the hands of the Romans.¹⁵

¹⁴ In other words, the meaning of a dream depends on the interpretation given to it.

¹⁵ Ironically, Bar Hedya was put to death because he refused to interpret a dream that predicted an avoidable disaster until he was paid. The delay caused the disaster to occur.

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Dream Interpretation: 56b aleph

R. Yishmael (T, 4) and R. Judah HaNasi (T,6) both interpret dreams. Although each of the dreams they interpreted contained disturbing visions, they interpreted them positively.

Dream Interpretation: 56b bet

R. Yishmael (T, 4) interprets the dreams of a Sadducee.¹⁶ Although the visions in the Sadducee's dreams appear to be positive, or at least, neutral, Yishmael interprets all but one of them negatively - revealing evil acts committed by the Sadducee. In the end, it turns out Yishmael was correct in his interpretations, and accusations of wrong-doing.

Dream Interpretation: Symbolic Meanings of Various Visions: 56b gimme!'¹⁷

Several Amoraim (R. Hanina, Natan, Rava, and Hanan) provide the symbolic meanings for a few dream visions.

Dreams: Reciting Positive Biblical Verses To Guarantee a Positive Omen: 56b dalet

A series of dream visions that trigger associations with two biblical verses - one positive and the other negative - are presented.¹⁸ R. Yehoshuah ben Levi (AI, 1) suggests that one should "arise and say" the verse that is associated with a good omen before the verse associated with an evil omen comes to mind first. The implication is that whichever verse is recited first determines whether the particular vision is a good or bad omen.

¹⁶ The Sages considered the Sadducees heretics.

¹⁷ More dream visions and meanings attributed to them by Tannaim and Amoraim can be found on 56b hey; 57a aleph, bet, gimme!, dalet; 57b aleph, and bet.

¹⁸ The visions presented are: a river, bird, kettle, grapes, mountain, shofar, dog, lion, shaving, a well, and a reed.

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Dreams: As Prophecy: 57b dalet

A Baraita lists five things that are one sixtieth of something else. The list includes a dream, which is “one sixtieth of prophecy.”

Sign: Good Signs for a Sick Person: 57b dalet

A Baraita lists six things that are a good sign (סימן יפה) for someone who is sick: sneezing, perspiration, loose bowel movement, seminal discharge, sleep, and a dream. The Stam explains the inclusion of a dream by providing the following biblical source: *May You make me dream and give me life.*¹⁹

Setting One's Eye: A Sage Sets His Eyes on Someone: 58a bet

There is an incident involving Rav Sheshet (AB, 3) and a Sadducee who were going to greet the king.²⁰ The Sadducee impolitely questions the propriety of Sheshet's desire to greet and then to actually offer a blessing to the king because Sheshet is blind. Sheshet in fact knows when the king is approaching and offers him a blessing at the appropriate time. There are two versions of the Sadducee's fate: (1) Some say his friends gouged²¹ the Sadducee's eyes out; (2) Others say Rav Sheshet set his eyes (נתן עיניו בו) on him and the Sadducee became a heap of bones.²²

¹⁹ Isaiah 38:16

²⁰ The Vilna text in the Schottenstein uses the word צדוקי (translated as Sadducee) whereas the Vilna text used by Steinsaltz uses the word מינא – heretic.

²¹ Rashi. The literal is *painted*

²² His flesh decomposed and all that was left was a heap of bones. The commentary in Schottenstein (58a f.n.43) explains that *Eruvin* 21b teaches that whoever transgresses or mocks the words of the Sages is liable to the death penalty for breaching their authority.

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Setting One's Eye: Two Sages Set their Eyes Upon Someone: 58b *gimmel*

Rav Pappa (AB, 5) and Rav Huna b. Rav Yehoshua (AB, 5) were walking down the road when they met Rav Hanina b. Ilka. During an exchange of blessings, Hanina displayed arrogance towards the law concerning the proper blessings to recite upon greeting a Sage. Pappa and Huna set their eyes upon (יהבי ביה עיניהו) Hanina and he died.

Bone Necromancer: 59a *aleph*

A powerful earthquake occurred just as Rav Ketina (AB, 2) came to the door of a bone necromancer (אובא טמא).²³ Rav Ketina asked him if he knew what causes such earthquakes. The bone necromancer offers an explanation; Ketina responds by calling him a fraud and stating his words are false. Although there was some truth to the bone necromancer's explanation, the Stam explains that Rav Ketina called him a fraud so that the whole world wouldn't make the mistake of following the necromancer in other things.²⁴

Satan: Giving Satan an Opening By Speaking of a Threatening Danger: 60a *heh*

A Baraita teaches the blessing to say when one enters a public bath:

May it be Your will, Adonai, my God, that you spare me from this and similar danger; and may no matter of ruin or iniquity fall on me. But if a matter of ruin or iniquity falls on me, then let my death be an atonement for all my sins.

Abaye (AB, 4) objects to the last line of the blessing which mentions death; he warns that a person should not say this lest he give Satan an opening. For both Reish Lakish (AI, 2) and a Baraita, in the name of R. Yose (T, 5), teaches: One should never give Satan an opening.

²³ Rashi: *bone necromancer* is the term used for a sorcerer who performs witchcraft using the bones of a corpse.

²⁴ The necromancer had suggested that the earthquake was caused by two tears which God shed upon seeing the miserable plight of the Jews. When the two tears fall into the Great Sea the sound that is heard from one end of the world to the other is an earthquake.

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Angels: And Entering a Privy: 60b aleph

The Stam cites a blessing to say [to the angels who accompany him all the time]²⁵ upon entering a privy:

Be most honored, O honored ones, holy ones, servants of the Most High. Give honor to the God of Israel. Loosen yourselves from me until after I enter, perform my will and return to you.

Abaye (AB, 4) objects to this wording and cautions that one should not tell his angels to leave him. Rather, one should say:

Guard me, guard me. Help me, help me. Support me, support me. Wait for me, wait for me until I go in and come out. For this is the way of mortals.

Rashi's commentary tells us that every person is accompanied by two ministering angels (מלאכי) who watch over him,²⁶ as it says in Psalms 91:11: *He will assign His angels to you, to protect you in all your ways.*

Evil Spirit: The Evil Spirit on One's Hands in the Morning: 60b bet

The Stam cites the numerous blessings which one recites upon waking in the morning, including a blessing for washing hands: "Blessed ... Who sanctifies us with His mitzvot and commanded us concerning the washing of hands."

According to the commentary in Schottenstein, one reason for this hand-washing is based on a teaching from *B. Shabbat* (108b-109a) that an evil spirit rests on one's hands before he washes them. This spirit renders the hands dangerous if they have contact with the eyes or ears,

²⁵ Steinsaltz, *Bavli Berakhot*, p.264.

²⁶ Schottenstein commentary (p. 60b, f.n.1) further explains that these angels also bear witness to the good and bad deeds a person does in private (*Ta'anit* 11a).

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etc. The nature of this evil spirit is such that it will not depart unless water is poured three times over the hands and they are thus washed well.²⁷

Bat Kol and Ministering Angels: They Speak When Akiva Dies: 61b bet

A Baraita tells the story of Rabbi Akiva's death. Rabbi Akiva had been arrested for engaging in the study of Torah which violated the Roman ban on such study. When the Romans took Akiva out for his execution, it was the time for the recitation of the Sh'ma. Akiva died with the words of the Sh'ma – specifically *echad* - on his lips. After Akiva dies, there is an exchange between a *bat kol*,²⁸ the ministering angels, and God.

Bat Kol: "Happy are you Akiva that your soul departed as you said *echad*."

Ministering Angels (to God): "This is Torah and this is its reward? *O to be among those who die by Your hand Adonai, who die of old age.*"²⁹

God: *Their portion is eternal life.*³⁰

Bat Kol: "Happy are you Akiva, for you are ready for the life of the world to come."

Demons: In the Privy: 62a bet

The lengthy discussion of privy etiquette (that began on 61b *gimel* continues and now addresses the topic of demons in the privy and precautions that should be taken.

1. Modesty and Demons: R. Tanhum bar Hanilai said, "Whoever is modest in the privy is saved from three things: snakes, scorpions, and demons (מזיקין). And some say: Even his dreams

²⁷ Schottenstein, p.60b, f.n.42.

²⁸ an echo, a divine voice, a sort of substitute for prophecy (Jastrow).

²⁹ Psalms 17:14

³⁰ Continuation of Psalms 17:14

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will be calming to him.” Rashi’s commentary explains that even demons will not bother someone who is modest.³¹

2. Two Entering a Privy Together: There was a privy in Tiberias that was so dangerous that even when two entered it during the daytime, they would be harmed by demons.³²

3. Modesty and Silence Protect: R. Ami (AI, 3) and R. Assi (AI, 3) entered this same privy in Tiberias, one at a time, and they were not harmed by the demons. When the Rabbis inquired of them, they attributed their protection to their modesty and silence.

4. A Sheep in the Privy: Abaye’s (AB, 4) mother (actually nursemaid) raised and trained a sheep to follow Abaye into the privy (so he wouldn’t be alone) to protect him from the demons.

5. Why a Sheep and Not a Goat? The Stam wonders why a goat wasn’t used by Abaye’s mother and answers the question by suggesting that a goat could be confused with a goat-demon. Rashi’s commentary explains that a privy demon is similar in appearance to a goat.³³

6. Protecting Rava: Before Rava (AB, 4) was Head of the Academy in Bavel, his wife (the daughter of Rav Hisda) shook a rattle from inside their house while he defecated nearby in order to protect him from demons. After Rava became Head of the Academy his wife built a window so that she could put her hand on his head while he defecated in order to protect him from the demons. Rashi’s commentary notes that Rava needed more protection from demons after he was made Head of the Academy because demons are jealous of Torah scholars and want to harm them more than other people.

³¹ At 55b above, Rashi commented that one’s dreams are often brought on by the activities of demons; however they will not disturb the sleep of someone who is modest.

³² Generally, demons won’t harm two people together and are less active during the day, so the demons of this privy were especially dangerous. (Schottenstein, 62a, f.n.17)

³³ Isaiah 13:21 describes the destruction that will happen to Babylonia and says *goat-demons will dance there*.

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Magic Spells: And Modesty While Defecating: 62a dalet

A discussion of what constitutes modesty began on 62a *gimmel*. At 62a *dalet*, a Baraita cites Ben Azzai (T,4) who warns that one should “manipulate” himself prior to squatting. If one squats and manipulates afterwards, he warns that one is vulnerable to magic spells (כשפים)³⁴ caste even from places as far away as Spain. If one forgets (he sits and then “manipulates” himself), the Baraita provides a remedy. When he rises he says:

Not upon me, not upon me. Neither *tachim* (תחים) or *tachtim* (תחתים). Neither these or those. Neither the spells (חרשי) of a sorcerer (חרשא) or the spells of a sorceress (חרשתא).³⁵

Satan: Lest Satan Agitates Against You: 62b aleph

In a Baraita, Ben Azzai (T, 4) teaches: “Lie upon any couch, except the ground; sit in any chair except a high beam.” The Schottenstein commentary explains that one perched on a high beam may become afraid, whereupon Satan, the heavenly adversary will begin to agitate against him.³⁶

Goat Demon: A Play on Words: 62b aleph

An incident occurred at a privy with Rav Safra (AI,4) and R. Abba (AI,3). Safra entered the privy then Abba came and coughed at the door to signal his presence. Instead of coughing back, Safra spoke to Abba (which is considered immodest). When Safra came out, Abba reproached him for his immodesty and accused him of following the immodest customs of those

³⁴ Also: sorcery, witchcraft (Jastrow)

³⁵ Rashi understands the first phrase to mean, “let not the spells affect me;” and he explains that *tachim* and *tachtim* are the names of two kinds of magic that are generated with excrement. Rashi offers two explanations for the meaning of the third phrase (neither these or those): (1) Let neither these spells or a portion of these spells come upon me; or (2) It should read ולא מהני – and let them (the magical spells) be successful no longer.

³⁶ Schottenstein, p.62b, f.n.2; the reader is also referred to *B. Shabbat* 32a for a discussion of the peril faced by one who places himself in a dangerous situation.

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from Sei'ir (שעיר). Rashi points out that Sei'ir is in the land of the Edomites. The commentary in Schottenstein suggests that Abba's use of the less common term *Sei'ir*, rather than the more common *Edom*, is an intentional play on words with *Sa'ir* (שעיר) which is a goat-demon.³⁷

Satan, "The Inciter," and the Yetzer HaRa: 62b *gimmel*

After discussing an incident in which David spared Saul's life because Saul displayed modesty while defecating, the Gemara discusses biblical verses which follow a second time David spared Saul's life. David says: *If Adonai incited you [Saul] against me, let Him accept as an offering my prayer to avert your wrath.*³⁸ R. Elazar (AI, 3) suggests that God responds angrily to David saying, "You call Me an inciter? Behold I will cause you to stumble regarding a thing that even school children know."³⁹ And then, according to Elazar, God punishes David for such irreverence: *An inciter (Satan) arose against Israel.*⁴⁰ David was incited by Satan to take a census improperly (he counted the heads of the people rather than counting the shekels donated as atonement). As punishment, God sent a plague upon the people.

The commentary in Schottenstein explains *inciter* refers to Satan who as functioning in his role as the *yetzer hara*, the Evil Inclination, in which he incites man (in this case David) to sin.

An Angel: And David's Census: 62b *gimmel*

The Stam expounds on verses concerning the plague mentioned in the entry above. At the height of the plague an angel stretches his hand outward towards Jerusalem in order to destroy it.

³⁷ Schottenstein (p.62b, f.n.11).

³⁸ I Samuel 26:19

³⁹ How to take a proper census

⁴⁰ I Chronicles 21:1

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God displays mercy and intervenes, telling the angel to stop: *And He said to the angel who was destroying many among the folk, "Now stay your hand."*⁴¹

Angels: Jacob's Merit is From Greeting Them: 62b *gimmel*

The Stam further discusses the mercy God showed upon the people during the plague (noted in the last two entries). After quoting the biblical verse, *And during the destruction, Adonai saw, and reconsidered*,⁴² the Stam asks what God saw that merited God to reconsider the punishment imposed on the people. Rav (AB,1) suggests that God saw Jacob. For it is written: *And Jacob said when he saw them* (the angels of God), *"This is an encampment of God."*⁴³

Angels: And Greeting Another in God's Name: 63a *bet*

Here, the Stam inquires into the reason the Mishnah found it necessary to include all the proofs for the statement that a person should greet another with the name of God. Wasn't the example provided by Boaz enough? In one of the proofs provided, an angel greets Gideon as follows: *Adonai is with you mighty man of valor*.⁴⁴ The Stam discusses whether the angel was independently greeting Gideon in this manner, or was merely reciting words God had instructed him to say to Gideon.

Angels: And Weakening One's Self From Words of Torah: 63a *gimmel*

A discussion of a variety of safeguards for times of distress includes the commitment to study Torah and perform mitzvot. R. Tavi, in the name of R. Yoshiyah (T, 5) warns, "Anyone

⁴¹ II Samuel 34:16

⁴² I Chronicles 21:15

⁴³ Genesis 32:3

⁴⁴ Judges 6:12

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who weakens himself from words of Torah will have no strength to stand in a day of distress.”

Rav Ami bar Masnah, in the name of Shmuel (T, 3 or AB, 1), adds, “even (if one has weakened himself) in a single commandment.” Rashi explains, the angels that normally give a person the strength to withstand his tribulations will not aid him.

Astrologer: A Sage’s Decision Is Based on an Astrologer’s Prediction: 64a aleph

When the Rabbis needed to appoint a new head of the academy in Bavel, they first offered the position to Rav Yosef (AB, 3) and then to Rabbah (AB, 3). R. Yosef declined the offer because astrologers (כלדאי)⁴⁵ had told him he would only rule as head of the academy for two years (and then die). The Rabbis appointed Rabba, who served for twenty-two years. Upon Rabba’s death Yosef accepted the position and served for two-and-a-half years.

⁴⁵ כלדאי literally translates to Chaldeans. Rashi translates as astrologers. Schottenstein explains (f.n10, p.64a) the Chaldeans were an ancient Semitic people known for their expertise in predicting the future by means of astrology.