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ANALYSIS AND BACKGROUND STUDY OF TWO TALHUDIC PURIM PARODIES

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מסכתות פורים

An Annotated Translation, Analysis and Background Study of Two
Talmudic Purim Parodies

By

Gary J. Robuck

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination.

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

1988

Referee: Prof. Sarason

He who reads that book called Masseket Purim will be grieved for
by all God-fearing people, who saw, and straight away were
amazed, how the author dared to print it and felt no remorse--
hopefully the book will be put away and will become like
something which has been lost, so that it shall not be seen and
shall not be found,...

Samuel ben Abraham Aboab

Devar Shemu'el

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my precious wife, Jocelyn, who has supported me so magnificently, in this effort and always. You have been my encouragement and my reward. You are like the Purim parodies presented here: playful and full of spirit.

I dedicate this to my beloved TTT, the other reason that I slept so much less this past year. May you grow to be healthy and wise, a lover of Torah and a blessing in Israel.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my parents, Leonard and Rhoda Robuck. Your lives have been an example to me. Your love for learning and support of my education have enabled me to carry out this task.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my thesis referee, Dr. Richard Sarason, for his guidance and enthusiasm. The long hours he spent reading and editing, combined with his expertise, were vital to the success of this project.

I would also like to thank Lon Moskowitz, my friend and fellow "carreler," for his constant support and invaluable assistance.

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Digest

Between the years 1319-1332, Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, a noted author and translator in Italy, wrote Masseket Purim. It was the first extensive parody in Jewish literature which utilized the Talmud as the object of parody. He imitated the style and diction of the Talmud, relied upon the hermeneutical principles established there, and supplied his arguments with all the requisite proof texts. His was the first of many such parodies. Perhaps the best known parody of this type is the second document translated here, also called Masseket Purim, which was composed in the seventeenth century by Polish Yeshiva students.

Kalonymos and his successors created not merely a parody of the Talmud, but a lampoon of Purim as well. For it is on Purim when things are seen in a significantly different light, when the restricted is permitted and the obligation to be joyous supersedes nearly all others. Indeed, Purim parodies are the most popular type of parody in Jewish literature. For Purim, like parody, sets the natural order on its head and provides a rather inverted perspective!

How unfortunate it is, therefore, that these two Purim parodies have heretofore been inaccessible to the English reader. The bulk of this thesis comprises an annotated translation of these two, intended to make available to the English reader, for the first time, the substance of the

parodies (which are sometimes amusing and enlightening). Furthermore, I hope that these translations will provide the reader with the opportunity to become familiar with the standard Talmudic methodology employed by the authors.

In addition to the annotated translations and discussions of the two Masseket Purim parodies, this thesis provides in its opening chapters some background information on Jewish parodistic literature focusing on the relationship between parody on the one hand, and Talmud and Purim on the other.

CHAPTER ONE

Parody: The Quizzical Art

Israel Davidson, considered to be the foremost expert in the area of Jewish parody and satire (and to whom I will be indebted again and again during the course of this work), began his book, Parody in Jewish Literature, with these words:

Long before man learned to ridicule or amuse his fellow-man by means of the written word, he must have resorted to the art of mimicry; before he became an adept in turning religious hymns into wine-songs and ribaldry, he must have practiced the art of imitating the mannerisms and peculiarities of those whom he loved or hated.¹

Perhaps Davidson had somewhere come across the following humorous and insightful episode:

Once there was a little girl who, to her parents' dismay, developed an abominable trick of thrusting her chin forward--a trick as incessant and as irritating as a twitch of the face; and her mother would say, "Darling, keep your head still," rather sharply; and in the end she would say, "Petronilla, if you do that again, I shall send you to bed. Now mind--I mean it." And all this led to tears and vexation of spirit. But it was her father who cured her. He bought a number of those china milk-maids, geese, ghouls, and mandarins which when agitated nod their heads aggressively and tirelessly, and he arranged them on a shelf which he suspended from the classroom ceiling, so that whenever at her lessons (the worst time of all)

¹Israel Davidson, Parody in Jewish Literature (The Columbia University Press, New York, 1907), p. XIII.

Petronilla began to thrust her chin forward, all her governess had to do was without comment to set the shelf swinging and the row of china absurdities burlesquing Petronilla. In a week she was cured.*

This scene highlights one very important characteristic of parody. By means of ridicule and imitation, parody affords us the opportunity to better see ourselves as we truly are. Through grotesque caricature, we learn both about the object being mocked and the spirit, concerns, and conditions of the parodist: and not only about the parodist, but also about the society in which he moves. By deriding the original, an author may be able to levy some authentic or outlandish criticism on his society.

Indeed, humor can teach us and reform us. The wise parodist, attentive to the ways of the world, may, with his pen alone, bring moderation to the fanatic, humble the pompous, and separate the miser from his precious fortune. The parodist places us in front of the mirror and sometimes we learn from our own reflections. Most of the time, however, we are merely amused and this is what the best parody aspires to do.

What are the ways by which a parody achieves this unassuming goal? What are the techniques most commonly employed by the parodist? The first technique might be called "word rendering," which involves the change of a letter or a vowel. This can be described as mere punning. It is a basic type of imitation which relies upon a simple substitution of motives and a replacement of well-known words. A more complex and interesting parody emerges

*Christopher Stone, The Art and Craft of Letters: Parody (George H. Doran Company, New York), pp. 8-9.

when a parodist imitates the style of another work and mocks its form. Still a third, like the Masseket Purim of Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, attempts to follow a train of thought, precisely along the same lines that the original might have pursued, given the same premises.³

Israel Davidson suggests other common and frequently used ways in which an original work might be exposed to ridicule. For instance, a pause may be misplaced in the original work in such a way as to bring an entirely new and ridiculous meaning to a well-known passage:

*Come thou and all thy house into the ark;
For thee I have seen righteous before me in
this generation of every clean beast.*

(Genesis 7:1-2)

Frequently in the Purim parodies found in this thesis, the author(s) intentionally misapplies a familiar verse or Scriptural passage, in order to produce an absurd result. / Humor thus emerges without changing a word!

Other methods of parody include the usage of assonance and antithesis which both produce unexpected and laughable outcomes.⁴

It should already be clear that parody is a complex and interesting phenomenon. It is instructive, amusing and perhaps a bit of a parasite, living off the original, drawing from it, and

³A Parody Anthology, ed. by Carolyn Wells (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1904), p. XXV.

⁴Stone, p. 26.

sometimes degrading it. To what extent is this true and to what degree is a parody an independent work?

Clearly, a work of parody is dependent on an original. Yet, as Davidson points out, "Parody, though closely following the style and the diction of the original, assumes a tone of playfulness altogether foreign to that original."⁸ There is little question that a good parody, the purpose of which is merely to amuse intelligently and cleverly, may cause us to appreciate the original work even more. So, even though a parody may stand alone, a reader who cannot see the allusions to the original being imitated will rarely be entertained.

Parody is a "quizzical art," slightly parasitic, plainly original. It is an extension of an original which reflects the ancient tendency of man to imitate. It catches the ring of the original and emphasizes mannerisms, peculiarities, and catchwords. Parody is instructive, as has already been shown, and humorous, as we will later see. All in all, it is worthy of investigation and merits appreciation by a wide audience.

⁸Davidson, p. XVIII.

Talmud as the Object of Parody: Any Objections?

Could it be imagined that the Talmud, a great repository of original thought, the corpus of Jewish Law, long revered and studied, could remain forever impervious to the parodist's pen? Indeed, it could not! What remains, however, is to determine the reasons why the Talmud would become an object of parody (as in the Purim parodies), and what the reactions to its satirical treatment would be.

Several reasons can be cited which demonstrate why the Talmud was a likely candidate for parody. Firstly, the Talmud gained tremendous popularity among select circles of Jewish scholars. Some time after its codification in or around the beginning of the sixth century C.E., these oral traditions, once known only to a few, gradually became accessible and were more widely circulated. One can imagine that by the time that Kalonymos set out to write his Masseket Purim in the fourteenth century, even the lay person enjoyed a good amount of knowledge and could recognize Talmudic aphorisms. The especially proficient Talmud "bocher" could, from one verse, glean a vast array of meanings; a single word might well summon numberless associations with other texts. To parody the Talmud, therefore, was not difficult, due to the considerable familiarity of its readership and the popularity of its issue. It could be mused that familiarity breeds not only contempt, but the right to ridicule as well!

The Talmud lends itself to parody, due, in part, to the nearly exhaustive scope of topics it assembles. Within its pages, one can slip in and out between the holy and the profane, moving from the marriage bed to the privy, all in the name of Torah. Fantastic tales, anecdotes and jests of all sorts are found in the Talmud.

Yet the reason why Talmud is susceptible to parody may lie, just as well, in the manner of argumentation employed by the great sages and students of Israel's past. The carefully constructed hermeneutical principles found in the Talmud allow for each and every consideration, and result in an endless number of conclusions and exceptional rulings. This familiar style, carefully crafted by the most serious hands, could therefore be imitated and used to deduce fantastic things--all this, the stuff of parody.

All of these factors--its seminality (in formal Jewish/rabbinic study), its scope and its style--contribute to make the Talmud at first vulnerable to, and later, subject to, parody. And it is not a surprise that a parody of this revered work could raise some learned eyebrows. In fact, the general view throughout Jewish history was firmly set against engaging in parody of sacred or liturgical texts. In the opinion of the rabbis, parody served only to degrade the original.*

* Ibid.

In each generation, voices were raised in protest against parody. Saadia Gaon, writing in the tenth century, imitated the Biblical style by placing vowel points and accents in some of his works. For this, he was accused of assuming the role of prophet. In an even more extreme example, Rabbi Judah Hasid of Regensburg, forbade anyone to sing children to sleep with melodies that were used in religious services!⁷ Worse yet was the Masseket Purim of the seventeenth century (the second document translated here), which was so "shocking" that it even disturbed a Karaite!⁸

Due to the heated objection coming from some quarters, some parodists thought it necessary to place postscripts on their own works. Disclaimers like, "This should be read only on festive occasions,"⁹ or as Kalonymos himself wrote, "It was written only in jest, to amuse people on Purim. He who reads this treatise is none the worse for it than if he read books on medicine, and similar topics, which prove beneficial to the body and harmless to the soul."¹⁰

Similar caution was evident, too, in the Catholic Church. In 1517, Pope Leo X issued a bull against "the work of perverse writers who have lost all fear of God and man."¹¹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Such a disclaimer can be found in the colophon of Masseket Purim, version three, seventeenth century.

¹⁰ Colophon of Masseket Purim of Kalonymos.

¹¹ Davidson, p. XXII.

What was so objectionable about such parody of religious or sacred literature? Apparently, parody of religious works undercut the associations which people had with these texts and which they held so dear. The parodist, wishing perhaps only to amuse, was met with opposition because he dared to ridicule, and thus, relegated objects of reverence to mere objects of scrutiny and fun. In the case of the Talmud, it was a way of life itself which was being ridiculed.

Let us now examine how the spirit of Purim joined with the Talmud, together becoming perfect partners in parody.

Purim: The Holiday of Release

During the Passover Seder, the youngest son present is required to say, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" Different it is. Throughout the Seder meal, participants recline in their seats, thereby reminding the assembled that they are slaves no more. On Passover, observant Jews are scrupulous about what they eat and the manner in which the food is prepared. For Passover, elaborate laws and rules of all kinds have been established to insure that the holiday be set apart, different from all other days, a remembrance of freedom and the Exodus from Egypt. What a relief it must have been to sit comfortably at the Seder table many years ago in the lands of the Diaspora, when outside stood hardship and despair.

Purim, too, in its ritual celebrations and its many customs, symbolizes the Jews' need for release. It is Purim, even more than Passover, which has annually lifted the Jewish heart in joy and merriment.

Purim accomplishes still more. In our celebration of Purim, we turn the tables on wickedness and reacquaint ourselves, under favorable conditions, with Amalek (the eternal nemesis of the Jewish people), in the person of Haman. In song and in revelry, through wine and feasting, Purim casts Amalek into the light, permitting the Jewish community to vent their frustrations and to enjoy a much-needed catharsis. Such an atmosphere is very conducive to parodists.

Purim observances, such as the custom of appointing a Purim rabbi, partaking of elaborate feasts, and drinking until one cannot distinguish between "blessed be Mordechai and cursed be Haman," are all playful ways which bring the story of Esther to life.

All of these customs and practices suggest an elaborate switching of roles and a reversal of fates. Just as the Jews of Shushan were able to avoid the evil decree and to enjoy *light and gladness*,¹² an annual reenactment of the Purim saga allows the Jewish imagination to soar and to dream of a better time and a brighter destiny. Pious Jews can, on Purim, visualize themselves smartly aligned with the "hidden God" of the Megillah, working together with Him to reshape the future. Purim remains today a paradigm of hope.

A prevalent belief in the Jewish tradition has been that "should all the festivals be abolished, Purim will remain."¹³ For Purim has always been a folk holiday, with popular and beloved customs which originate from the psychic needs of the Jew. The blotting out of Haman's name in the synagogue, and the burning of his effigy in the streets, are but two examples of ways by which the frustrations of a people are effectively and harmlessly exorcised.

Purim permits a psychological release. The composers of the several Masseket Purims, in both the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, seized upon the freedom and breadth which Purim

¹² Esther 8:16.

¹³ Talmud Yerushalmi, Megillah 1.5.

provided and used it as a springboard to exercise their keen wits and satirical tendencies; the Talmud was their vehicle.

CHAPTER TWO

The Emergence of Major Jewish Parodists in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

While it may be true that satire, witticisms and word plays appear in Biblical literature, and that the Rabbis of the Talmud frequently used humorous aphorisms and proposed punning etymologies of biblical words,¹ it is nevertheless accurate to say that systematic, playful attempts at parody did not really exist in Jewish literature until nearly the thirteenth century.² After the codification of the Talmud and the establishment of academies in great centers of learning like Sura and Pumbeditha, halacha was the order of the day and responsa literature was increasingly important to distant Jewish communities desiring to live in accordance with Jewish law. For this reason, parody had no room to grow and little audience to entertain. It is true that we find parody appearing in the eighth century in response to the Karaite movement, but it is neither extensive nor terribly engrossing.

¹Cf. two excellent theses on the subjects of humor and satire in Biblical and Talmudic times. Meyer Heller, "Humor in the Talmud", HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, Ohio 1950, and, C. Corydon Randall, "Satire in the Bible", HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1967.

²It would be appropriate to characterize certain portions of the Bible, such as Judges 9:7-15 and II Samuel 12:1-13, as fables and parables. In I Kings 18:27, Elijah mocks and ridicules the people, yet it is not done in a playful manner, thus eliminating it from the category of true parody. Talmudic aphorisms are significant with respect to the subjects that they ridicule, but are not similar in style to parody for they do not deal systematically with the subject or in a playful manner. Ben Sira was closer to parodic style in his social commentary on the frailty of women, the fickleness of friends and the arrogance of the rich.

Later, in the twelfth century of Spain, with the Arabic literary culture (poetry and grammar) at its height, the work of great and prolific writers like Judah HaLevi and Maimonides (who knew of these riches), made it easier for those who wished to gain expression through different types of literature. HaLevi's creative use of poetry and Maimonides' philosophy and original setting for the Mishnah in his Mishneh Torah, created fertile soil for the emergence of parody.

Menachem ben Aaron, an author with a brief and uncertain career and background, wrote a Hymn for the Night of Purim, a parody of Meri ben Isaac's Hymn for the Night of Passover. Menachem's work was considered significant enough to be included in the Mahzor Vitry (12th century). It is interesting, and within the scope of this study, to cite a portion of it here:

This night (of Purim) is a night for drunkards,
a night for wine drinking and rejoicing...On
this night all creation is intoxicated...and
woe betide the man who should put forth his
hand for the bitter water.*

In this parody, Menachem emphasizes both the merrymaking necessary on Purim, as well as the responsibilities we have to care for our neighbor:

*Davidson, Parody in Jewish Literature, Part I, p. 5.
"Bitter" or evil water is a major theme in the later Purim parodies as well.

In order to make our happiness complete,
we must remember the needy, and share our
luxuries with those that are in want of them.*

Also, in the twelfth century, Abraham Ibn Ezra, engaged in an element of parody in a form of mock-heroic style.⁸ He also wrote epigrams--short witty poems and sayings--in which he spoke out on the arrogance of the rich and the misfortune of the impoverished.

* Ibid.

⁸A portion of his poem, "Concerning the Flies," is translated in prose in Davidson, p. 4.

Judah ben Solomon Al-Harizi

The curtain really does not go up on parody in Spain until we meet the Hebrew poet and translator Judah ben Solomon Al-Harizi. Born in 1170, Al-Harizi began his major work, Tahkemoni, sometime after the death of Maimonides in 1204. For this reason, he is considered a thirteenth-century personality. Al-Harizi was a remarkable translator and admirer of the Arabic poet, Al-Hariri, and, in his translations, was able to replicate the elusive word plays and style of Maqama, an Arabic literary form of rhyming prose. His translation of Al-Hariri's work, entitled Mahbarot Iti'el (notebooks of Ithiel), of which only a portion has been preserved, was significant in the respect that Hebrew readers could gain greater access to Arabic culture and ideas.

Al-Harizi was not only a translator, but also an acute observer. Al-Harizi was known to have travelled extensively to far-flung Jewish communities throughout the medieval world, effectively tying his native Spanish-Hebrew culture to theirs. All the while, Al-Harizi was observing his contemporaries and drawing broad caricatures of their customs. His satire stops for short spells to comment upon what he regarded as stupid superstitions. For example, he deals with the ritual of killing fowl on the morning of Yom Kippur, called kapparot. Al-Harizi places the elegance of a prophet in the mouth of a rooster, and the rooster argues nobly to preserve his life:

Have I not served mankind faithfully?
Have I not roused them for prayer in the
morning and entertained them with my voice
in the day, and have I not brought forth a
whole brood of young fowl for their
pleasure? Besides, what good can come from

killing me now, that I am old and lean?
The healthy cannot relish my tough flesh, and
the sick will only die sooner if they taste it.*

This "sermon" is contained in his most famous work, Tahkemoni, which sheds light on the state of Hebrew culture and describes the scholars and leaders of the communities he visited. The book covers far-reaching and varied topics, including fables and proverbs, as well as riddles, love songs and satire.⁷

In both his translations and original works, Al-Harizi stretched the constraints of typical Jewish scholarship of the time by reporting the flaws along with the virtues, while commenting upon a variety of things from the perspective of many different communities.

*Ibid., p. 7.

⁷"Al-Harizi, Judah ben Solomon," Encyclopedia Judaica, [1971], Vol. II, p. 628.

Judah ben Isaac ibn Shabbetai

Another thirteenth-century parodist, Judah ben Isaac ibn Shabbetai, born in Toledo or Burgos in the thirteenth century, was Al-Harizi's contemporary. In his parodies entitled The Tribute of Judah the Misogynist^a (date unknown),^a The War of Wisdom and Wealth (1214), and The Words of the Curse and the Ban (date unknown), Shabbetai uses original works as frameworks for his parodies. For example, in The Tribute of Judah the Misogynist, Shabbetai alludes to the story of Job. His main character suffers complete humiliation and later achieves an unexpected salvation. Like Job, he is visited by three friends whose intent it is to console him. Later, when the marriage of the main character is to occur, the Jewish marriage contract, or kethubah, is parodied through rhyme and paraphrase.

In Dialogue Between Wisdom and Wealth, the question of whether wisdom or wealth is more important is discussed and disputed. What is interesting is the manner in which the decision is rendered. The style and methods parody a typical interpretation identical to the Jewish legal form of Pesak Din.

^aThis parody is typically misunderstood as a result of its appositional (or second) title, Woman-Hater. The parody is not directed against women, but instead serves to warn men of the vengeance of some women and to urge men against hasty marriages.

^aThe best and least confusing dating for this document testifies to three revisions: the first draft when the author was twenty years old (1188), then re-written twenty years later (1205, a date found in a manuscript), and finally, for the third time in 1225. This, according to Halberstam. Cf. Davidson, note 33, p. 8.

Additional significance is brought to the "Dialogue" when it is compared to other literature of the times:

While the Tractatus Garsiae Tholetani Canonica de Albin et Rufino exposes the corruption of the Papal court in the time of Urban II, and shows how Pope, Cardinal and Monk were blinded by the sparkle of silver and the glitter of gold (Albinus et Rufinus), the "Dialogue" holds up a Talmudist as the impartial judge of the merits of wisdom and wealth.¹⁰

In Shabbetai's third parody, The Writ of Excommunication, the author lashes back by way of denunciation at the narrowness of mind exhibited by certain great men of his time, while making a clever parody of his excommunication.

After the emergence of the parodies of Shabbetai, the history of Spanish parody was stilled and a flourishing style, such as that of Shabbetai and Al-Harizi, was not seen for some seven centuries in Provence and Italy.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

Immanuel of Rome

Caught merrily in the web of two cultures (Italian and Jewish), was the father of exegetical parody, Immanuel of Rome; widely read in secular and Jewish sources, and the author of outrageous wine songs, religious poems, and wildly erotic love sonnets. He is indisputably a part of the fourteenth-century Italian Renaissance.

Importantly too, and as his name suggests, Immanuel resided in Rome. He is symbolic of the change of locale in Jewish parody, away from Spain, and to Provence and Italy. Immanuel was indirectly the beneficiary of the enlightened King Charles of Anjou (1266-1288), who permitted the Jews in Italy to play a larger cultural role and to achieve success in philosophy and medicine. He belonged to a community of poets, parodists and satirists, which was actively observing and commenting upon the birth of the Renaissance:

Neither truth nor right prevails among us
today, the desire of the eyes is the only law;
jealousy and lust rule without restraint.¹¹

Immanuel was called "the happily laughing soul"¹² and, while a young man, spent a good deal of time in the company of beautiful women. His behavior ultimately outraged the elders of Rome.¹³

¹¹Israel Zinberg, A History of Jewish Literature, trans. and ed. by Bernard Martin (Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), p. 185.

¹²Ibid., p. 203.

¹³Ibid.

Yet, despite his youthful "indiscretions," Immanuel of Rome was a significant literary personality. He wrote many songs of love like this one:

If I were not ashamed before God and
did not fear the holy people of Israel,
I would build altars to the goddess of
love; I would fall on my knees before
beautiful women and kiss the dust
before their feet.¹⁴

Immanuel was impudent too. In what he called "The Jestings Questions," Immanuel shows off his expertise in Biblical exegesis and grammar, by fending off a series of sixty questions by "jesters," each of whom come to him with a sillier question than the last. Remarkably, Immanuel wrote it in rhyme:

The first man approached and said: 'I am
puzzled in every way, for I found the contrary
of what I was taught in my day. I have it by
tradition, that Mt. Sinai was the place, where
God gave the law to our race. And now, from
a book venerable with years, the "Law was given
in Shushan" it appears.'

'Nay,' said I, 'Sinai alone saw the revelation
of the divine law. But Sivan was the time of
year, and "Shoshan" should be read here.'¹⁵

Immanuel was full of wit, yet suffered bouts of depression and despair. Some of this can be detected in his religious poetry where he writes:

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁵ Davidson, p. 18. The passage itself is a parody of Esther 3:15.

Were it not for God, I would make an
end of myself, for life is without value
when the wells of knowledge and understanding
are degraded, and baseness and hypocrisy
are on high.¹⁶

Of all of these forms, Immanuel was proudest of his poetry and even went so far as to declare himself "prince of the poets."¹⁷ But he was not a prince to everyone and, during his later years, suffered the fate so commonly experienced by original and controversial thinkers; his work was banned. No less an authority than Joseph Karo ruled that it was forbidden to read Immanuel's poems, either on the Sabbath or on weekdays, because of the prohibition against "sitting in the seat of scorners."¹⁸ Karo's ban was effective until the eighteenth century, when at last Immanuel's work, Mahberot, was printed again. Only at that time was Immanuel of Rome, a great parodist and exegete of Biblical style and spirit, and a product of the Italian Renaissance, restored to life again by the winds of haskalah.

¹⁶Zinberg, vol II., p.215.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 216.

¹⁸Shulchan Aruch, Drah Hayyim, Hilchot Shabbat, Chapter 307, sec. 16.

Kalonymos ben Kalonymos

During this golden age of creativity and satirical invention, no parodist stands out more than Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, the author of Masseket Purim, Eben Bohan and several other works. Kalonymos was a prolific translator as well, and was dubbed "King among Translators" by his friend and contemporary, Immanuel of Rome. He wrote in prose and partly-rhymed prose, taking idiomatic phrases from the Talmud and representing them in unique and unpredictable ways. His work was epigrammatic and was always punctuated with Scriptural quotes and allusions.

Kalonymos was able to do all these things due to a thorough background in both general and Jewish education. As a result, a king eventually requested that Kalonymos translate Hebrew works into Arabic and Latin,¹⁹ thus bridging a gap between East and West.

Little is really known about Kalonymos' life. It is believed that he enjoyed a high position in the Roman Jewish community and was a part of the philosophical circles of leading intellectuals of the time. It seems that, at one point, he was selected to bring a petition to the Pope on behalf of the besieged community of Avignon, whose Christian population had threatened to exterminate it.²⁰

¹⁹Zinberg, vol. II., p. 223. The king was Charles of Anjou, who was responsible for bringing Kalonymos from his home in the Provencal city of Arles to Rome, where he began his literary career.

²⁰Joseph Chotzner, "Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, A

Kalonymos is best known for his Masseket Purim and Eben Bohan (The Touchstone). The latter, written in 1322 or 1323, is a didactic work written in rhymed prose, somewhat in the same style of Mahberot, written by his friend, Immanuel. It is filled with puns and parodistic passages, playfully levying criticism every which way he gazes. Kalonymos spares no one, having a go at the wealthy, the ignorant, the meticulous and boring grammarians, the quack physician, and especially rabbis, women and hypocrites. His disdain for Rabbis is evident when he writes:

They carry on constant controversies among themselves. Each tries to bring the other down. If one permits something, the other at once forbids it. Their learning is only for the sake of their glory.*

In the following passage, Kalonymos compares the difficult existence of the Jewish boy with the carefree and simple life of the Jewish girl, perhaps indicating his own difficulty in bearing up under the rigors of traditional Jewish life:

"Thirteenth Century Satirist" in Jewish Quarterly Review, 13 (1901), p. 129

*Zinberg, vol. II., p. 226.

O Thou, in heaven, our Sire,
 Thou hast saved our fathers
 from flood and from fire;
 The heat of *Ur-Kasdim* thou hast cooled,
 The sperm *Be Dinah* thou hast ruled;
 Hast turned staff into snake,
 And clean hands didst leprous make;
 Hast changed the Red Sea into land,
 And the bed of the Jordan into dry sand;
 At thy bidding water gushed from rocky mass;
 O, that Thou wouldst refashion me a lass.
 Were I blessed with fortune rare,
 I would be a lady free from care.**

Though Kalonymos was known to have served in a leadership position while in Rome, he saves perhaps his most pointed criticism for the "hypocrites" who run the community:

I know them well, these hypocrites with
 glazed eyes, who are supposedly entirely
 separated from the present world and constantly
 pray to God, but in secret do the most shameful
 deeds.**

These quotations throw a good deal of light on life in Rome in the fourteenth century. Yet, the conclusion of Eben Bohan indicates that this work was primarily intended as a self-examination in which Kalonymos shares his own struggle with the "evil inclination in himself."** In a particular section, Kalonymos, "in fine language replete with puns and short parodistic passages,"** calls upon his own heart to prepare for its ultimate journey.

**Davidson, p. 28.

**Zinberg, vol II, p. 225.

**Ibid., p. 224.

**Meyer Waxman, A History of Jewish Literature (Thomas Yoseloff Ltd. 1933), vol. 2, p. 608.

It is possible that this type of introspection on Kalonymos' part is indicative of a different period of his life, the years spent outside of Rome. Kalonymos returned to his family home in Provence in or around 1323, soon after that community had experienced massive pogroms. The aftermath of these incidents left Kalonymos humble and penitent.²⁶

Kalonymos' life went full circle. Early in his career, while still living in Provence, he condemned Joseph ibn Kaspi for behaving with insufficient respect while mentioning the matriarch, Rebecca.²⁷ Later, having become a part of the spirit of Rome, Kalonymos rose to become "the greatest stylist of his time."²⁸ Finally, at the end of his life,²⁹ Kalonymos was contrite of heart once again.

With the work of Kalonymos, this period of creativity comes to an end.³⁰ Jewish parodists seized a brief moment of enlightenment during the Renaissance, and "took no prisoners," commenting on every segment and interest in their societies. Through their exegetical and prosaic style, these parodists succeeded in fashioning for us a period where, for the most part,

²⁶Zinberg, vol II., p. 227.

²⁷Ibid., p. 223.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Chotzner, op. cit., quoting Graetz, History of the Jews vol. VII, p. 305. Here, Graetz suggests that Kalonymos likely died in the year 1337.

³⁰Levi ben Gerson wrote his Megillat Seterim and Sefer Habakbuk HaNavi at around the same time, and these, too, gained a good deal of popularity. The fourteenth century came to a close with a number of anti-Christian polemics born out of the frustration of persecution.

literary creativity was applauded, and new and different forms were considered acceptable. Soon after the writings of Kalonymos, persecution increased and codes like Karo's Shulchan Aruch were set into place for the people to observe. This resulted in a turning inward among Jews and such prolific and exciting literature such as the parody of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries would not be seen again until another Masseket Purim appeared on the scene late in the seventeenth century.

CHAPTER THREE

The Masseket Purim of the Fourteenth Century

Structure and Themes

The annotated translation which follows is taken from the third edition of Masseket Purim (מגלת סתר'ים וס' מסכת פורים), published by Jonas Willheimer (Vienna, 1871), which itself is taken from an earlier eighteenth-century manuscript.¹ Masseket Purim is believed to have been written during Kalonymos' stay in Rome between the years 1319-1332.²

Masseket Purim is a masterful piece of Talmudic parody. The style of the parody, its form and its method of interpretation are all very similar to the Talmud itself. Subjects which would seem to have nothing to do with one another are artfully woven together. Verses are missapplied and taken out of context. Unlikely laws are deduced in true "pilpulistic" style. Discussions take place between the most unlikely people (cf. in particular, the interaction between Haman and Mordechai in Chapter 3: "[I]f Purim should fall on Shabbat...").

¹Davidson, Parody in Jewish Literature, Part II, p. 118. Davidson invites the truly curious to cf. Roest, מגילת סתר'ים no. 5151. Kalonymos' Masseket Purim is believed to have been printed three times: in Pessano in 1507, in Venice in 1552, and finally in Vienna in 1871. For more bibliographic information cf. Davidson, Part II until the end.

²Ibid. Part I, p. 19.

Kalonymos selects certain unfortunates to be the objects of his ridicule. Throughout the parody, drinking to excess is considered virtuous, but the "drunkard" is laughed at. The "glutton" is a preposterous beast, seen diving into a bowl of soup in search of his quota of meat (cf. Chapter 1: "On the first day of Adar..."). The laziness of the "idler" is scorned, lest perchance it result in disaster the likes of which were "responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem" (cf. Chapter 4: "They may read..."). Kalonymos also applies his formidable wit and keen satirical sense to examine the conduct of the "miser" (cf. Chapter 1: On the first day of Adar...).

Kalonymos reserves a rather cruel caricature for the idiot or imbecile (cf. Chapter 1: On the first day of Adar...). It is not inconceivable that Kalonymos was actually describing the type of ignominious treatment which the mentally impaired received at that time:

They bring the fools [idiots; like court jesters] and ply them with wine until they lose their senses and become confused. They show their teeth and blink their eyes until they have displayed their utter folly to everyone...

It is clear that Kalonymos tells us much about his own time and place. Included in Chapter 1: "On the first day of Adar..." is a list of twenty-four special dishes which were prepared by Italian Jews during that period. We learn that something resembling chess was played in Italy of that day (Chapter 3: [If] Purim should fall on Shabbat...). Kalonymos cautions us to be on the lookout for suspicious characters, "deceivers" (or "forbidden mixtures") who move about with the truly indigent and

bilk the charitable community out of its Purim-coins (cf. Chapter 1: "On the first day of Adar..."). Kalonymos describes, in elaborate detail, one Purim custom in particular, Ira (cf. Chapter 2: "The wealthy man..."), which Davidson asserts is mentioned nowhere else.³

Kalonymos makes several other observations which are particularly interesting. In a number of places in Chapter 4: ("They may read...") he mentions what seems to be an upper class in the Jewish community. In one case men accustomed to drinking from crystal vessels are instructed by R. Shachran to drink from silver and gold vessels on Purim. Later, in the same chapter, children of the rich are singled out to receive Purim-coins of gold and silver.

Also in that chapter, Kalonymos makes a distinction between the customs of Eretz Yisrael and those of his region of Italy. In this way, Kalonymos depicts the dependency of the Italian Jewish community on money-lending:

the residents of the land of Israel own fields and vineyards from which they derive their livelihood in abundance, however, the residents of Babylonia and Byzantine Italy have nothing by which to support themselves other than loans...

In another vein, it is possible to conclude from Masseket Purim that Kalonymos advocated the reform of certain traditional Jewish practices. In two instances, he suggests changes which would likely ruffle the feathers of some of his contemporaries. In the beginning of Chapter 4:

³ Ibid. Part I, p. 21.

"They may read...", Kalonymos, in his own name, draws the inference that the Megillah may be read in the vernacular. Unquestionably, this represents a split with the status quo of the time. And, toward the end of Chapter 3: "If Purim should fall on Shabbat...", Kalonymos raises the question of men and women dancing together. The matter is left unresolved, but is significant nevertheless.

In short, Masseket Purim is replete with fanciful laws and far-fetched deductions of all kinds. While Kalonymos makes fun of some of the more unfortunate members of his society, he does so playfully and without malice. Kalonymos' extensive use of Biblical and Talmudic proof-texts indicates that his audience was a very literate one and that he, himself, possessed a good deal of background in, and reverence for, the traditions and teachings of his people.

This Masseket Purim is a very diverse document. Through its use of genuine halachic material and established hermeneutical principles, it succeeds in bringing to light many of the customs and traditions existing in Italian-Jewish culture at that time. In the same breath, Kalonymos establishes, by virtue of his extraordinary imitation of the style and diction of the sages of old, a new precedent for Talmudic parody.

Wise Guys: The "Talmudic" Discussants

In the vast majority of instances in Masseket Purim, the "Rabbi's" names have been invented to correspond directly and humorously to the content of the argument itself. For example, R. Hamra (wine) will be involved in discussions about the appropriate use and/or amount of wine necessary on Purim, and may be the authority. In a minority of instances, the "Rabbi's" names are those of a real Talmudic predecessor or an historical figure. In addition, Davidson provides an extensive listing of names assumed to be Italian.*

"Rabbis" In Order Of Appearance:

Parnach--an actual Amora (cf. footnote 2, Chapter 1: "On the first day of Adar...")

Samchan--"happy one"

Balaam--"destroyer of the people" (cf. footnote 6, Chapter 1: "On the first day of Adar...")

Rafram--a Roman name

Ravha--"to make room, leave space" (cf. context, Chapter 1: "On the first day of Adar...")

Shachachan--"forgetful one"

Batlan--"idler," "shirker"

Amalan--"laborer" (cf. the contrasting opinions and attitudes of Batlan and Amalan, Chapter 1: "On the first day of Adar...")

Atzlan--"laggard," "lazy"

Amram--the father of Moses (A Roman name?!)

Mordechai--Biblical character, common name.

*Davidson, Part I, p. 24.

Listing of "Rabbis" continued

Achlan--"glutton"

Ra'avtan--"hungry one," "ravenous"

Shatyan--"drunkard"

Shachran--"drunkard," "shikkun"

Hillel--actual name, ^{an early rabbinic master, pre-70 ce} ~~the leading Babylonian amora~~

Gargaran--"quaffer," "chugger"

Yom Tov--"holiday," "festival"

Hillel the Doctor

Zuhamai

Nachtom--"baker"

Rab Shakeh--Biblical name, or perhaps "one who gives drinks"

Shammai (Shabbai)--appears just once (cf. exchange with Hillel, Chapter 2: "The wealthy man...")

Shabbatai--from Shabbat, an expert on questions in regard to the Sabbath

Tarphon--Roman name, also an early rabbinic master

Kamtzan--"miser"

Shemen--"fat"

Hatach--a eunuch in Ahasuerus' court

Shabbai--"captor"

Shalman----"pacifier," "peacemaker"

Tabael--Roman name

Azavot--"abandon"?

Tachlifa--"exchange"

Tuvya--common name

Rab Shabbatai HaParnas--the head of the community

Shebaki--"bottle"

Listing of "Rabbis" continued

Abraham Rossi--son of Rabbi Shabbatai

Benjamin b. Isaac--common name

Meir--common name

Simcha--"joy"

Isaac--common name

Menachem--common name

Achan--the son of Karmi (Joshua 7:1) or, "circle" (cf. context, Chapter 3; "If Purim should fall on Shabbat...")

Rav--"teacher," "master"

Haman--Biblical character

Amalek--Biblical character

Shakran--"liar"

Kozban--"liar"

Benjamin b. Yechiel

Nachmani--common name

Shimon--common name

Hamsan--"extortioner," "violent man"

Lakhan--"one who takes from other," "thief"

Gazlan--"robber"

Daniel from Kfar Lupideo

Zamran--"singer"

Rehavia--"broad space"

Boki--"bottle," "pitcher"

Sarban--"stubborn"

Yechiel b. Isaac--common name

Kalonymos--Greek, "praiseworthy"

Tzidkiya--"the just"

Listing of "Rabbis" continued

Tzahakan--"playful," "jester"

Madon

Shaftan--"judge"

Bar Kamtza

Memuchan--one of the princes of Persia and Media

Tsadkan--"just"

Bahaman--"bestial"

Natan-- common name

Ben Meir--common name

Antoninus--Roman

Pashran--"compromiser"

Yechiel the Fat

Nissim Halevi--common name

Judah the Fat b. Yechiel

"On the first day of Adar..."

Mishnah

On the first day of Adar, we make proclamation concerning fools, wine, forbidden mixtures and hunters. And some say: Also concerning bakers.¹ R. Parnach says:² "Also concerning guests."

A miser should not travel on the road from the beginning of Adar until the sixteenth day of the month [i.e., after Purim]. The same applies to one who is feeble. R. Samchan says: "From the beginning of Adar until its end," for thus did R. Samchan say: "When Adar enters rejoicing [simcha] is increased."³

In a place [community] where it is customary to do work on Purim, they work.⁴ However, in a place where it is not customary

¹This is a parody of the beginning of Mishnah Tractate Shekalim: "On the first day of Adar, we make proclamation concerning shekels and forbidden mixtures." On the first day of Adar, the Bet Din used to proclaim throughout the land of Israel that every adult male, whether rich or poor, must contribute a half shekel to the treasury towards the upkeep of the Temple." ש"ס, "fools", is a pun on ש"ס, "shekels". ש"ס, "mixtures", can refer to ש"ס, the forbidden mixture between heterogeneous plants in the same vineyard or orchard.

²A R. Parnach is mentioned several times in the Babylonian Talmud, e.g., at Megillah 32a, "R. Parnach said in the name of R. Yochanan: 'Whoever takes hold of a scroll of the Torah without covering is buried without a covering!'"

³b. Taanith 29a. R. Judah the son of R. Samuel b. Shilath said in the name of Rab: "Just as at the beginning of Ab rejoicing is curtailed, so at the beginning of Adar rejoicing is increased."

⁴b. Megillah 5b: Rab and Rabbi disagree as to whether work is permitted on Purim. Rab cursed a man for "sowing flax on Purim", while Rabbi's locale did work. Moreover, we are told here that Rabbi even "planted a festive shoot."

to do (work), they do not work. In all cases [in every community] students (of Torah) are exempt (from studying on Purim)."

We do not marry on Purim on account of neglect (from) eating and drinking. However, a man may take back his female servant (on Purim) for she is well versed in cooking.

A man is obligated to eat fourteen feasts on Purim, including both evening and daytime.

R. Balaam^a says: "[This obligation applies to] daytime only. For behold, the sages have said: 'If one eats his Purim feast during the evening [of the fourteenth], he does not fulfill his obligation.'"

These are the (kinds of foods) with which a man fulfills his obligation on Purim: meat (of non-domesticated animals) and fowl (this applies both to meat and fowl)--whether roasted or boiled--stew, minced meat pudding, and (all) types of pastries. But one does not fulfill his obligation (by eating) the meat of cattle or fish, locusts [insects] or vegetables. In fact, they said [it is

^ab. Megillah 3a. "It has been taught to the same effect: Priests at their (Temple) service, Levites on their platform, lay Israelites at their station - all desist from their service in order to come and hear the reading of the Megillah. It was in reliance on this dictum that the members of the house of Rabbi were wont to desist from the study of Torah in order to come and hear the reading of the Megillah."

^aBalaam. Cf. Numbers 22 ff. and b. Sanhedrin 105a ff. **וְיָבִיחַ** - the name is explained as "destroyer of the people," who leads them to debauchery through strong drink.

^ab. Megillah 7b. This citation is attributed to Rabba. The text there continues: "And what is the reason... (for) it is written, days of feasting and gladness (Esther 9:22).

an established legal rule]: a woman may fill a pot with meat and put it before [serve it to] guests; even the meat of cattle and fish.

A woman should not wear either colorful clothing or ironed garments,⁸ and she should not go about (in the streets) on the days between the eleventh and the sixteenth of Adar. (Rather), she should continuously sit between the stove and the fireplace, for even though this is degrading to her, it is really to her credit [praise]. And even though it pains her (now to behave this way), she will be happy about it later [i.e., she will enjoy the Purim food later].

Gemara

On the first day of Adar we make proclamation concerning fools, wine, etc... What is the reason for this halacha? To make joyful the sad ones, for we have learned (in a "baraita"): With what does one rejoice on Purim? With eating and drinking.⁹ Evil-merodach¹⁰ says: "With foolishness, as it is written: *A little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.*"¹¹ And how is this done? They bring the fools [idiots; like court jesters] and ply them with wine until they lose their senses and become confused.

⁸b. Pesachim 109a. It was the custom on Passover that women in Babylonia would add to their rejoicing by wearing colorful clothing while women in Eretz Israel would wear ironed garments.

⁹The same question is, in essence, asked about Passover in b. Pesachim 109a. It reads: "With what does he make them rejoice? With wine."

¹⁰The Babylonian general, II Kings 25:27.

¹¹Ecclesiastes 10:1.

They show their teeth and blink their eyes [i.e., they stumble around inebriated] until they have displayed their utter folly to everyone, to fulfill that which has been written: *Yea also, when a fool walks by the way, his understanding fails him, and he reveals to everyone that he is a fool.*¹²

"And whoever has never celebrated the water drawing ceremony has not seen joy in his life."¹³ And our "Mishnah" also (has the same sense)¹⁴ when it says, "concerning foolishness and wine." This corresponds to what is written: *Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish and wine to those of heavy heart.*¹⁵ Rearrange (the wording of) the verse and interpret it: Give strong drink and wine to him that is ready to perish [i.e., the idiots] in order to make joyful the heavy heart.

Concerning forbidden mixtures, etc... What is the reason for this halacha? (For) what are mixed seeds? Deceitful people. And why does one make proclamation concerning them? So that they not lead the people astray through their deception. For it is their custom to join in with the wayfarer, and to come and receive Purim-coins with them [i.e., the gifts intended for the

¹² Ibid., 10:3.

¹³ Mishnah Sukkah 5:1. Cf. also b. Sukkah 53a and y. Sukkah 5:1. The water drawing ceremony is mentioned here in order to demonstrate "that the spirit of holiness rests only in a heart filled with joy" (y. Sukkah 5:1).

¹⁴ I.e., whoever has not seen this has not seen merrymaking in his life.

¹⁵ Proverbs 31:6.

truly poor] and then go on their way.¹⁵ And we do this [warn about them] so that none of the wayfarers will willingly join with them or form a partnership with them (to defraud and divide the money), as it is written: *There is no trustworthiness among the Gentiles, nor even among evil Jews.*¹⁷

R. Parnach said: "(Once) I saw a particular wayfarer who made a partnership (to defraud) with a deceiver and together they collected many coins on Purim. And when the time arrived to distribute the portions they stole from one another, and they hit one another until they (both) died. At that time (the sages) said: 'Do not join forces with the deceivers, even during the rest of the year, and all the more so on Purim.'"

And concerning hunters. What is the reason for this halacha? (To instruct the hunter) to hunt venison or fowl for the Purim feast. And why do they announce this in advance? Lest guests arrive and prevent him from participating in Purim's joy [i.e., lest the arrival of guests prevent him from hunting food for the Purim feast and he thereby has less to eat on Purim].

But surely there are geese and chickens (available to eat) and surely there are Herodian [domesticated] doves.¹⁶ Rather,

1:5. "They do not investigate too closely to see whether the poor are deserving." That is, one gives coins on Purim to whomever asks for them.

17b. Hullin 133b. This statement is introduced by ה"י כו' דכתיב which is an improper formula for a rabbinic quotation. ה"י כו' דתנא would be better, since this is not a biblical citation.

12 I.e., surely there are other kinds of food available, so that even if guests come and he can't go out and hunt, there is still good poultry available for Purim.

the reason that we advance notice to the first of Adar is so that there should be more hunters and they should sell (their meat) more cheaply. (Also because a good buy brings out more business and more common folk to buy ,¹ as the saying goes, following the judgment [business sense] of the laborer, one will find a good bargain in the market-place.)

And there are others who say: What is the reason that we do all of this so early? So that people may begin to eat and rejoice from the beginning of Adar. As we have learned, *When Adar enters, the people's joy increases.*²

And some say: Also about bakers. So why did the first tanna not teach this? These [bakers or baked goods] are deemed to be commonplace, easily available (and hence not in need of special advanced preparation).

R. Parnach said: "Also concerning guests." Who mentioned anything about guests [i.e., why are they a relevant concern here]? They are mentioned here, as Scripture says: *and gifts to the poor.*³ Why do they require a proclamation? If they come around, let us give them (gifts, coins); if they do not come, we are not required to do so. So why then (we ask again), is a proclamation required? Said R. Parnach "We make a proclamation about guests, so that they (too) may come to hear the reading of the Megillah. And to anyone who has not come to hear the reading

¹The meaning is unclear. Perhaps, a good buy will cause simple folk, common folk, to come running to empty their pockets, and to take out their money.

²b. Taanith 29a.

³Esther 9:22.

of the Megillah, we do not give coins." And thus is the halacha established.

A miser should not travel on the road. Granting (the logic of this ruling with regard to) the miser, since he picks nits and quarrels with everyone and prevents the masses from making a nice Purim feast, but what is the reason that the feeble person (may not travel)? We infer (from the case of the miser) the (case of the) feeble person whose health is bad and whose stomach [digestion] is bad, and who hates himself [is bitter]. And anyone who hates himself cannot love his fellow. He feels sorry for himself when he sees a company of his fellows eating and drinking and rejoicing while he is sad that he cannot digest his food. As the saying goes: One's pain increases sixty-fold who hears the levity of his fellow.

It has been taught (in a "baraita"): One who is out on the road and meets a miser should go to the side of the road [i.e., avoid him] and not inquire as to his welfare and respond (to him) weakly and with formality. And this ruling applies during the rest of the year, but in Adar, one should flee from him. How far? Said R. Rami: "(From) out of his sight."

R. Balaam was sitting before Ravha and asked him: "If one came upon a feeble person (on the road), what [should he do]?" He said to him: "It is not different (from the case of the miser)." Ravha asked: "What is the case if one stands within four arms' lengths of a miser during the rest of the year?" Now if you wish to say that during the rest of the year it is

permitted, what about on the new moon of Adar? And on Purim (itself) what? The question remains (unanswered).

R. Samchan says: "It is written (in one place): *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth...*^{**} And it is written (elsewhere): *Rejoice not, O Israel...*^{***} (Aren't these verses contradictory?) This is not difficult. One [the second] refers to the balance of the year; the other [the first] refers to Purim, about which it is written: *Days of feasting and rejoicing.*^{**}

It has been taught: A man is obligated to make his wife rejoice on Purim since women too were included in the miracle.^{**} How do they cause them to rejoice? (With) sexual intercourse. R. Balaam says: "With eating and drinking."

In a place where it is customary to work... Why (is a scholar) exempted? Isn't Torah-study a source of enjoyment for him? As it is written: *The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.*^{**} Why then, are they exempt? Because joyous occasions should not be mixed. The rejoicing for Torah is separate, while the rejoicing for Purim is separate.

R. Shachachan asked: "But what is the ruling in the case of someone like myself and Rabbi who do not enjoy our study (of Torah)?" The question remains (unanswered).

^{**}Ecclesiastes 11:9.

^{**}Hosea 9:1.

^{**}Esther 9:22.

^{**}Cf. b. Pesachim 109a, and Mishnah Pesachim 10:4. On Passover, a man should cause his wife and children to rejoice through wine, as was noted earlier.

^{**}Psalms 19:9.

R. Shachachan said in the name of R. Batlan: "A scholar must not commence his regular session on the evening of the thirteenth breaking into the fourteenth, lest his studies absorb him and he come to neglect²⁷ his celebration of Purim."

R. Batlan also sat and said in his own name: "The one who desires to prepare a Purim feast according to the halacha [i.e., appropriately], should exempt himself from work from the beginning of the month of Adar. And the women of his household should stop work from the first of the month of Adar until the sixteenth.

R. Amalan contradicted this, (citing a "Mishnah"): *Even if his wife brings in [to the marriage] one hundred servants and one hundred handmaidens, he should still make her work with wool, for idleness leads to immodest behavior.*²⁸ This represents no contradiction. One (R. Amalan) refers to the balance of the year, one (R. Batlan) refers to Adar.

One does not marry. R. Amalan teaches: "One who has neither a wife nor a handmaiden should not cook on Purim on account of the toil (necessary)." Therefore, the sages said (in the "Mishnah"): "A man should take back his handmaiden." And the text is exact in this regard, for it says: "For she is familiar with cooking"—which implies that if she is not familiar (with cooking), he should not do so.

²⁷b. Pesachim 4a. That is, this would constitute an overlapping.

²⁸Mishnah Ketubot 5:5.

Similarly, R. Atzlan sat²⁰ before R. Amram, and asked him: "What is the ruling in the case of one who cooks cabbage and beets without meat, for is it not taught: 'Not with meat and not with vegetables.'?" R. Atzlan cites the following Mishnah against him: *These are the vegetables by which a man may fulfill his obligation to eat (לֶחֶם) on Passover.*²¹ Passover is different for they (the vegetables) are (required by) from Scripture, (i.e., that the לֶחֶם is eaten with מַצָּה and לֶחֶם = vegetables) and Scripture does not need (additional) support. Purim's origins (on the other hand) are post-Biblical [scribal] and post-Biblical rulings need Scriptural support; hence the fact that vegetables are required on Passover says nothing about Purim.²²

R. Balaam was, in his own eyes, a lazy scholar. He (once) sat before R. Samchan on the day of Purim, who saw that he was sad. He [Samchan] said to him [Balaam]: "Why are you sad?" He responded: "Because I have not made preparations for the Purim feast on account of the labor involved." He [Samchan] said to

²⁰Text reads: "said"—but "sat" is formulaically more appropriate here.

²¹Mishnah Pesachim 2:6.

²²The issue is: What is the ruling about cabbage and beets without meat? The answer: No, because the "Mishnah" says—one does not fulfill his obligation with vegetables (nor with meat or cattle)—לֶחֶם בִּלְבַד juxtafposes with לֶחֶם בְּלֶבֶד—the objections: but on Pesach one does fulfill one's obligation with vegetables (לֶחֶם). The response: Pesach is different, because רַמּוֹת is required by Scripture—but only for Pesach. The uncertainty in the text is one of attribution. Atzlan asks the first question and also raises the objection. Amram should provide the answer, which is probably what he did.

him: "Rely on my (preparations)--i.e., eat with me." The following year, he [Samchan] saw that he [Balaam] was sad. He [Samchan] said to him [Balaam]: "Why are you sad?" He replied: "Because I have not made preparations for the Purim feast." He [Samchan] said: "You are a sinner! For others it is permissible (to labor making the Purim feast) while for you it is prohibited!?" When he departed from him, he [Samchan] saw that he [Balaam] was crying. He said to his attendant: "Give him a doveling," for surely it is written: *Gifts to the poor,*²² and there is no one poorer than this. He (his attendant) went and gave him a live chick which he did not accept. He asked him: "When can I slaughter it? When can I remove the feathers? When can I cook it? Better a burned loaf of bread and peace of mind with it!"

R. Samchan was angry and said to him: "Bastard (lit., "Dark offspring of a promised horse")! Don't make requests! I compel you (to take what I've offered you)!" He took it and left, and he was crying. He (R. Samchan) said to his attendant: "Give him a young pigeon in order that people should not say that R. Samchan had not fulfilled [the injunction] *and gifts to the poor.*"

Fourteen Purim feasts. It is taught R. Mordechai said, "Twenty-four kinds of festive foods were transmitted to Moses on Mount Sinai, and one is obligated to (eat) all of them on Purim. They are [as taken from Italian]:²³ friture chose e gustose

²²Esther 9:22.

²³Davidson, p. 22.

colla redice odoratissimo del costo, stuffed lamb,³⁴ torticcine, wafers, torte, mostaccioli (pastries), tocchetto (ragout), roasted ears of corn,³⁵ focanie colla infarno, ram's meat, deer, roebuck, goose, hen, pigeons, turtle doves, chick, swan,³⁶ anatre (ducks), fasani (pheasants), perdici (partridges), young turkeys, paunch of a stuffed fowl, quails. It is taught in addition to them: pancakes, maccheroni (macaroni) and gelatine (gelatin)-- according to the words of R. Achlan.

R. Ra'avtan said: "We eat no fewer than ten nor do we eat more than twenty-four [foods] corresponding to the twenty-four priestly gifts,³⁷ and this also corresponds to the twenty-four books of the Torah. And thus would Harbonah³⁸ say: 'Even the poor Israelite may not be fed less than ten types of dishes.'³⁹ These correspond to the ten sons of Haman."

The question was posed: What about drinking [i.e., what is the proper amount]? Did the sages prescribe a fixed measure only in regard to eating? R. Shatyan said: "There is no fixed measure for drinking." R. Achlan said: "There is a fixed measure with regard to drinking." R. Shachran objected: "But it is written:

³⁴Cf. b. Pesachim 74a.

³⁵Cf. b. Ketubot 17b.

³⁶Tosefta, Hallah II,7: "Twenty-four priestly gifts belong to Aaron and to his descendants..." (viz., Numbers 18:8).

³⁷Harbonah and Hatach: Two of the King's chamberlains; Esther 1:10, 4:6,9.

³⁸Cf. Mishnah Pesachim 10:1: Even a poor man of Israel should not (drink) less than four cups).

And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel."²²

This indeed poses a difficulty according to R. Achlan's opinion.

Hatach²³ asked: "What about diluting wine with water on Purim?"

R. Shachran said: "It is forbidden." But is it not taught: You may use wine for an Erub for the benefit of a Nazirite, and heave offering for a non-Priest?²⁴ Does not this mixing [commingling] for an erub diluting [i.e., mixing with water]? Mixing with water--No! What is mixed [commingled] is white wine with red wine. Why is this so? It is so that the law of the erub will not be forgotten in our land [i.e., how to make it properly].

These are the kinds of foods... Why is meat of cattle [i.e., domesticated animals] not permitted? Because it stands on your stomach [fills you up] and surely we have learned: R. Hillel, the doctor, says: "We should eat only those things on Purim which are easy to digest in order that one may eat fourteen festive meals--following the opinion of R. Balaam."

Gargaran objected to R. Hillel: "But there are types of pastries which are not easy to digest and they are permitted, as it is taught: and with types of pastries."

R. Hillel said to him: "Pastries are different [permissible], because they are only eaten to satisfy one's appetite. And we infer from this that everything which satisfies a man's appetite is easy to digest."

²²Esther 1:8.

²³Harbonah and Hatach: Two of the King's chamberlains; Esther 1:10, 4:5,9.

²⁴Mishnah Eruvin 3:1.

R. Achlan objected: *Since your heart's desire is to eat meat, you may eat as much meat as your heart desires.*⁴² From here the sages said: "We eat meat only to satisfy our appetite."

This ruling applies (only) to meat of non-domesticated cattle, and fowl which are not to be found nearby and hence are expensive. But meat of (domesticated) cattle is found (nearby), as it is written: *And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening.*⁴³ This corresponds to the popular saying: "Cattle [meat] is prince of all types of food."⁴⁴ And in the west (Eretz Yisrael) they say: "A dish [meal] without meat is like a home without a wife." What is the halacha? R. Yom Tov said: "The halacha is according to R. Hillel." And so did R. Shatyan say: "The halacha is according to R. Hillel." And so, indeed, is the halacha.

Returning to the body of the tradition cited: R. Hillel the doctor says: "We should eat on Purim only those things which are easy to digest in order that one may eat fourteen festive meals on Purim day."

One who is feeble (prone to indigestion) or ill and wants to eat fourteen festive meals on Purim, we do not prevent him from doing so. And even (with regard to) the twenty-four types of foods, which are decreed in regard to the Purim feasts--he may be fed from all of them. And I will vouch for the matter that it

⁴²Deuteronomy 12:20.

⁴³I Kings 17:6.

⁴⁴This is a wordplay on the alliteration, Basar and Sar.

will not hurt him, since it is a (divinely commanded) meal, so the food goes in for good and not for bad.

And not by meat (of cattle) fish, and locusts. (In regard to) meat of cattle, fish and locusts, what is the reason that they are not permitted? Because they are cold and expensive and the season is cold (i.e., they are out of season at this time of year). and their expense upsets the heart, and the cold upsets the stomach. If he should eat them on Purim he puts himself into danger.

And not from vegetables. What is the reason? Lest his stomach should become full from them and his throat not be free to eat fourteen festive meals for which he is obligated, and he thereby would be prevented from celebrating Purim.

In fact the sages said: "Did they indeed permit this? But is it not taught: But man does not fulfill his obligation with any of these: not with cattle or fish or vegetables." (The rule pertaining to) "cattle" (here) surely contradicts (the rule pertaining to) "cattle" (in the previous tradition). (The rule pertaining to) "fish" (here) surely contradicts (the rule pertaining to) "fish" (in the previous tradition). The rule in regard to "cattle" poses no contradiction. The first tradition ("permitted"), refers to a situation in which one is accustomed (to eating cattle), the second tradition ("prohibited"), refers to a situation in which one is not accustomed (to eating cattle). If so, (no distinction is drawn between) small and large (cattle). The rule in regard to "fish" poses no contradiction. The first tradition refers to large (fish) while the second

tradition refers to small (fish). The large fish are forbidden; the small, permitted. For the sages have said: "Small fish are fruitful and multiply and make one healthy."

A woman should not wear... Our Rabbis have taught: "A woman should not anoint herself (with oil) on Purim, nor wear ornaments. Rather she should remain [sit] between the stove and the fireplace [i.e., preparing food]."

R. Zuhamai says: "From the new moon of Adar until the sixteenth." For we have learned (in our "Mishnah"): "A woman should not wear colorful clothing nor ironed garments. From the new moon of Adar until the sixteenth." What is the reason? So that she should not constantly be gadding about but rather should remain constantly in her house, between stove and fireplace, and involved with (preparations for) the Purim feast. We can infer from this that no woman (should) go out from the doorway of her house in her cooking clothes (apron) because they are full of soot.

And R. Nachtom said: "The daughters of Israel are hard on themselves, for if they see even a drop of soot on their clothing the size of a mustard seed, they break off cooking and do not go out from the doorway of their houses with them."¹

And thus the sages have said: "Clothing which one has worn while cooking a dish for his master should not be worn while

¹This is a parody of the laws of Niddah.

mixing the cup for his master.** And it is not the way of a woman to go out until she has adorned herself, as is befitting."

R. Yom Tov asked: "What about an important woman?" After having raised the question he answered it himself: "If a woman is important she should [be permitted to] dress as she wishes and apply cosmetics as she wishes so as to not detract from the joy of Purim; as long as her male and female servants are well-versed with the laws of Purim as befits them."

**b. Yoma 23b: "For the School of R. Ishmael taught : One should not offer a cup of wine to one's teacher while wearing the garment wherein one has cooked a dish for him."

"The wealthy man..."

Mishnah

The wealthy man whose custom it is to eat meat and fowl daily, should, on Purim, change (his eating habits). (If) it is his custom to eat roasted (meat) he should eat cooked (meat). (If it is his custom to eat) cooked (meat), he should eat roasted (meat).

R. Shachran says: "(If) it is his custom to drink four cups, he (should) drink eight. If (it is his custom to drink) eight, he (should) drink sixteen." R. Yom Tov says: "(If) it is his custom to drink from crystal vessels, he should drink from silver vessels. (If it is his custom to drink from) silver vessels, he should drink from vessels of gold, as it is written: *And they gave them drink in vessels of gold.*¹"

"One who makes mulled wine for Purim, should not prepare it before the fast,² so that its taste will not weaken (before it is to be drunk on Purim). And he should not put any pepper in it"--the words of Rab Shakah. Rav Shatyan says: "He should not add too much honey because this closes up one's veins [i.e., it is not healthy] and no man is able to drink it. And the Scripture says: *It is not good to eat much honey.*"³

¹Esther 1:7.

²The Fast of Esther is referred to in Esther 4:16. It is held on the thirteenth day of Adar, the day before Purim.

³Proverbs 25:27.

"One who has sweet wine is exempt from drinking [or preparing] mulled wine"--the words of R. Hillel. R. Shammai [or Shabbai]* says: "He is (still) obligated because it makes public the miracle."²

One who hires workers on Purim is obligated for the meals of his [i.e., the worker's] wife and his children. R. Hillel says: "The one who gives the minimal amount should not provide less than three (meals). And the one who is generous, should not provide more than seven (meals)." R. Shabbai says: "Everything follows what is customary in that place [i.e., the amount of food provided depends on what people customarily eat in that place]."

"One who eats the Purim feast by himself has fulfilled (his obligation)"--the words of R. Yom Tov. R. Shabbatai says: "He has not fulfilled his obligation."

"On the Sabbath nearest to Purim, we eat a symbolic Purim feast"--these are the words of R. Shabbai. R. Hillel says: "Everyone who does not eat at those two meals [i.e., both the Sabbath before and the Sabbath after] a symbolic Purim feast has no share in the world to come."

It once happened that Bathsheba, the wife of R. Shabbatai the Provider, prepared a symbolic Purim feast on the Shabbat

*This should likely be Shabbai, which is the name found throughout the rest of the text where reference is made. Shammai is, of course, Hillel's classic adversary, so it is effective paradistically.

²This is a frequent expression. Cf. especially, b. Shabbat 23b in regard to the Hanukkah lamp.

before Purim, and not on the Shabbat afterwards. And R. Shabbatai conceded the rectitude of her actions.*

We do not eat any kinds of fruit on Purim, nor any kinds of beans. R. Tarphon says: "Also intestines [*kishke*] for the sages have said: 'Intestines are not deemed to be meat such that a person should eat them.'"

"A man is obligated to drink on Purim twice as much (wine) as he is accustomed to"--this is according to R. Shatyan. R. Sachran says: "There is no fixed measure to his drinking. Rather, he should continue to drink until he cannot tell the difference between 'cursed by Haman' and 'blessed be Mordechai'."*

Gemara

The wealthy man whose custom it is to eat. "Who is wealthy? The one who is content with his lot."*--these are the words of R. Samchan. R. Kamtzan says: "The one who is born rich."

It was a familiar saying of R. Kamtzan: "No man is able to become rich unless he restricts his expenses (like a miser) as it is written: *He who gathers (wealth) little by little will increase it.*"* And thus the sages said: "He who desires to become wealthy should deal in small cattle."**

*This is a misprint in the text. It should read, *הרבה*.

*b. Megillah 7b.

*Pirke Avot 4:1.

*Proverbs 13:11.

**b. Hullin 84b. R. Jochanan said: "Whoso wishes to become rich should engage in (the breeding of) small cattle."

R. Shemen objected: "Is it not written, *The hand of the diligent makes rich.*"¹¹ And it is written: *Thou shalt surely tithe.*¹² Which is to say: "You shall tithe in order to become rich." This is indeed a difficulty for R. Kamtzan.

They said about R. Kamtzan that all his days he would wear worn-out clothes, and eat (simple) bran bread, and drink inferior wine [i.e., wine made from water and grape husks] until he amassed great wealth. And on the day of his death he went and buried (his assets) in a garbage heap and went back to his house and dressed in a striped coat and a cloak of fine wool in order to fulfill the verse, *(The wicked) pile it up, but the just will wear it.*¹³ At that very moment they said: "Who is rich? The one who rejoices in his portion," which corresponds to the popular proverb: "You cannot fool/outwit a good man, nor can you cause a bad man to prosper."

The one who makes mulled wine for Purim. What is mulled wine? "Caldera," in the vernacular and the Romans [Italians] call it "foishonne." How is it made? R. Hillel the Doctor says: "[First] one brings three seahs of white Roman [Italian] wine

¹¹Proverbs 10:4.

¹²Deuteronomy 14:22. A pun on עושר (wealth) and עשר (tithe). Also a pun on the syntactic construction which uses infinitive absolute as an emphatic.

¹³This citation is taken roughly from Job 27:17, *He may prepare it but the just shall put it on.* This is germane to our discussion due to its context. Cf. also Job 27:19: *A rich man shall he lie down, as though his wealth could not be summed up; he opens his eyes, and it is gone.* That is, you can never depend on wealth, for it is a fleeting commodity. Note also that Kalonymos adds the word, רשע (wicked) to his citation of the verse from Job 27:17.

and three logs of red honey and spiced cinnamon and ginger and saffron and other kinds of spices of a beka's weight--all of them ground up. (Then) one brings a measuring stick and stirs them all together in a large stone vessel or wooden vessel or clay vessel, in the same way as one scrambles an egg in a dish, until everything is properly mixed. Afterwards, one brings the strainer and strains it ten times or more as needed, until it is clear and red and shiny like a star.

And thus said Harbonah the eunuch: "Why is her name called Esther?" Because her face shines like a star, for in the coastal towns they call a star, Esther (estreyya). And foreign speakers who live in Italy call Esther, "Klaratilla."

R. Hatach said that it [= Roman?] should be written: "Mar-uman." "Mar" is an allusion to Mordechai while, "man" is an allusion to Haman.

There is support for Harbonah's position in Midrash Esther, where it is written: "On the day that Esther went to petition before Ahashuerus and to request [mercy] from him on behalf of her people, the king was sitting on the royal throne. And the throne was inlaid with precious stones and gems whose brilliant light shone to the distance of an entire parasang. And when Esther came before the gate of the king, all the stones became dim and their brilliance was eclipsed."¹⁴ The king fell on his face and he did not have (enough) strength to look, because her face shone like a star. Then the king reached out his golden

¹⁴Ginsberg, Legends of the Jews, Vol. 4, p. 384. He writes: "Above all, she was the hidden light that suddenly shone upon Israel in his rayless darkness."

scepter to her, and she covered her face.^{1*} And the king got up on his feet and sat on his throne. For this reason did the sages say: "We make mulled wine for Purim in remembrance of Esther."

One who has sweet wine. What is the reasoning of R. Hillel?^{1*} Because it [sweet wine] tastes just like mulled wine. R. Shabbai said to him: "Behold there are a number of sweet wines that do not taste like mulled wine!" I can reply (to this objection): "(Sweet wine will suffice) provided it tastes like mulled wine." "But sweet wine does not look like mulled wine!" I can reply: "Provided it has both the taste and appearance of mulled wine."

R. Shabbai said to him: "You have (significantly) qualified your words. People will say (that) all sweet wines are forbidden, but the wines of Hillel are permitted." This is indeed a difficulty. And this is one of the matters on which R. Hillel conceded to R. Shabbai. And the halacha is according to R. Shabbai.

The question was asked: (If one has both) home-made wine and mulled wine, which (should he drink)? Is home-made wine preferred for the sake of domestic peace, or perhaps, mulled wine should be preferred? R. Shalman says: "Home-made wine is preferred for the sake of domestic peace." R. Shabbai says: "Mulled wine is preferable because it publicizes the miracle (of

^{1*}Cf. in Exodus 3:6 And Moses hid his face - so radiant was he after having beheld the presence face of God.

^{1*}For exempting from the obligation to drink mulled wine anyone who has sweet wine.

Purim) as it was written: *There is no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked.*¹⁷

R. Shachran objected: "We have learned: 'He shall not put pepper in it'--the words of Ravshakeh. R. Shetey-yayin says: 'Also he should not add too much honey to it.' Now honey is understandable, because it gives flavor to wine, but why (should anyone add) pepper? Is it not because it causes the throat to become dry? On the contrary, it helps one to digest food and brings on thirst and there is nothing greater than this on Purim." Ravshakeh said to him: "For this reason let people say that the Torah was given to drunkards. This I have received [directly] from Hillel the Doctor [who said] that pepper is hot and dry, and kindles one's thirst and burns the throat, and one comes thereby into danger." And thus is the halacha [i.e., not to use it].

One who hires workers. Do we indeed work on Purim? Yes, in a place where this is the custom. As it is taught: *In a place where it is the custom to do work on Purim one may do so.* Even in a place where they do not (customarily) work this rule applies. For instance, when one hired them to shell nuts or peanuts or almonds for the Purim feast.

He should not provide less for him... (On this basis) they said: "*One who hires a Hebrew slave is like one who hires a master for himself.*"¹⁸

¹⁷ Isaiah 48:22.

¹⁸ b. Arachin 32a.

R. Hillel says. "What did he say? Something is missing here (in the text). This is what he said: 'One who invites guests on Purim should not provide less than three litras of meat per dish. And the one who is generous should not provide more than seven'"--this according to R. Hillel. What is the reason? So that the soup should not cover up the meat [i.e., should not be the prominent part of the meal]. And if the soup should cover up the meat, what of it? Perhaps he will be endangered thereby. What is the danger? Said R. Hillel: "I saw a certain guest who had placed before him on Purim a dish on which the soup covered up the meat. And as he thought that it was not a meat dish, he waited there for them to bring him another dish with meat (as the prominent part of the meal). And so he waited until he was embarrassed. And when he saw that they were not going to bring him (a meat dish) he said: 'Perhaps there is a small quantity of meat (here) and it has fallen to the bottom of the dish, and it is not possible to bring it up [take it out] without nets and fishnets.' What did he do? He got up from the table, stripped off all his clothes, and went down in the midst of the dish to look through the soup to find the meat. And he nearly drowned in it. On that very day, Hillel ruled that one should not provide less than three litras of meat in any dish--all this on account of the incident which occurred.

And he should not add more than seven (litras of meat). What is the reason? So as to not upset the stomach.

One who eats the Purim feast. R. Tabael sat and expounded on this at the lesson: "A man may eat the Purim feast alone"--

according to the words of R. Shabbai. Even directly at the outset.

R. Azavot objected: "Even directly at the outset? But have we not learned, *"One who eats the Purim feast by himself has fulfilled his obligation"*--these are the words of R. Shabbai. R. Hillel says: *"He has not fulfilled his obligation.* Even R. Shabbai who permitted this held this (view only in regard to permissibility) after the fact. And this corresponds to what was taught: *'One who eats...'* implying that this is not permissible at the outset."

R. Tabaël said to him: "Surely the solitary person to whom we refer is not really solitary, but is rather one who is alone without guests, but his wife and children are with him. But with respect to a genuinely solitary individual--this is not permitted, since it is written: *Two are better than one*¹⁹ And thus is the halacha."

What then is the solution for the solitary individual? Let him join in with his fellows and eat in (their) company.

And Rav Tachlifa said: "The solitary individual may exchange his meal with his fellow, and he is exempt (from eating with others) for this is only required in order to alter (one's normal routine). And in this way he has altered (his routine)."

And R. Tuvia said: "Anyone who alters (his normal routine) is at a disadvantage"--and the halacha does not follow R. Tachlifa.

¹⁹Ecclesiastes 4:9.

On the Shabbat which immediately precedes (Purim) we eat a symbolic Purim feast--these are the words of R. Yom Tov. R. Shabbatai the Leader says: "Either before (Purim) or afterwards."

It has been taught: R. Yom Tov says: "A man always should eat a symbolic Purim feast on the Shabbat closest to Purim before it." What is the reason? Because on that day we read the Torah portion, *Remember ("Zachor") what Amalek did to thee*^{**}. Remember (and) commemorate him through eating and drinking.

And so did the sages say: *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*^{**}. Remember it from the first day of the week (onwards) to exalt it, so that one might select a good portion (of food) for Shabbat and good portion for Purim.

R. Shabbatai the Leader says: "Anyone who does not prepare on the eve of Shabbat Zachor a symbolic Purim feast [which may carry over] for two Sabbaths,^{**} has no place in the world to come!"

It once happened that Bathsheba, the wife of R. Shabbatai the Provider, prepared on the eve of Shabbat a symbolic Purim feast (which was intended to carry over for) two Sabbaths. But they ate it (all) on one Sabbath, and R. Shabbati conceded the rectitude of her actions. And R. Shabbati said: "Our lodger"^{**}

^{**}Deuteronomy 25:17.

^{**}Exodus 20:8.

^{**}That is, one before and one after.

^{**}The meaning is unclear. Perhaps, "Diran", a proper name.

was a daughter of the house of the patriarch and they called her 'Kardilanit.' And if we had not seen that they follow this practice in the house of the patriarch, she [my wife] would not have done this."

R. Abraham Rossi sat before R. Shebaki,** his father, and asked: "One who has no share in this world, does he have a share in the world to come or not?" He responded to him: "I will tell you a parable. To what can this matter be compared? To a king who has a great palace and before the palace was a portal with a covered area in front and a gallery, and a balcony as well as a vestibule and a reception room. A certain man came and wanted to enter the reception room, but he was not able to enter there. Afterwards, he entered through the portal with a covered corridor and the gallery and the balcony and the vestibule (and into the reception room). And this world is likened to the vestibule before the world to come--prepare yourself in the vestibule in order that you may enter the reception room.*** When R. Abraham, his son, heard this he went out and acquired many nice things and much movable property, and he ate and drank and lived well, thereby acquiring his share in this world, in order to acquire his life in the world to come. This is a familiar saying of R. Abraham: "Thus I have received from my grandfather's house; anyone who has no share in this world, has no share in the

**The text reads 'P22--it should read--'P22.

***This is a familiar parable. For example, in Mishnah Avot 4:16.

world to come and [conversely], one who has a share in this world, has a share in the world to come."

We do not eat. It has been taught: R. Benjamin b. Isaac says: "Anyone who eats any kinds of fruits on Purim endangers his life."

This is a familiar saying of R. Meir, the son of Benjamin b. Isaac: "Meat is the prince of foods, and anyone [who] wishes to know the taste of meat should only eat it cooked in water and should not remove it from the pot until when he has touched it, [it crumbles and falls into pieces]."

They said about R. Benjamin b. Isaac, that each and every Purim they would bring to him a fool from the market, and he would plough him with wine and wash him with wine until he would prophesy and talk nonsense. And this corresponds to that which has been taught: [Proclamation is made] concerning fools and wine.**

It happened one Purim that they did not find a (suitable) fool in the market. So they brought before him a traveler who was half-mad, and they ploughed him with wine. And he washed his head and face in wine until he could not distinguish between, *cursed be Haman and blessed be Mordechai*.*

When R. Benjamin came to the Bet Midrash, they asked him: "What [is the ruling with regard to] performing ira on Purim?"**

**Cf. our "Mishnah" chapter 1.

**b. Megillah 7b. This is a familiar Purim measure which determines sufficient intoxication.

**"Ira" apparently comes from the Latin, meaning vengeance. Its meaning here was first determined by

He said, "[It is permissible] not only on Purim but even during the rest of the year and this pertains specifically at the time of drinking [inebriation], but not when it is not the time for drinking."

What about on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur? He did not have the answer at hand. (So) he left and asked the question in the Bet Midrash. Two Amoraim disputed the matter. One forbid it and one permitted it, and the halacha follows the (one who) forbid it.

What is ira? R. Mordechai said: "*Cursed be Haman.* And even though there is no explicit Scriptural proof for the matter, there is an allusion to the matter, as it is said: *Come, curse Jacob for me.*"* Do not read, *curse* rather ira (vengeance)."

R. Simcha said: "I saw R. Benjamin, the son of R. Isaac, who did ira in his neighborhood on Purim. How did he do it? He went out and gathered up all the residents in his neighborhood in front of his house and he hoisted a puppet** up and he would shout in a loud voice: 'Ira, ira, ira' until their voices could be heard from a distance of ten paraot. And the entire city [would engage in] joyful shouting. At that point, a boy goes out whose name is T'enim, with two trumpets in his hand. And another boy, whose name is Tabel, who has a shofar in his hand. And the shofar blew long blasts and the trumpets blew short blasts, And

Professor C.L. Speranza of Columbia University (Cf. note in Davidson, page 21).

*Numbers 23:7, the curses of Balaam.

**Lit., "man." Gudemann (Gesch. Vol. 2, p. 211) construes to mean "puppet".

all the people saw the sound and heard the blasts,²¹ and they were banded together in groups. Then the Messiah heard and was happy and thought that it was the time of redemption and that the end [of days] had arrived, as it is written: *And it shall come to pass on that day, that a great shofar shall be blown.*²² And the Messiah nearly came. On that same day, a heavenly voice went forth and said: 'R. Benjamin has fulfilled the mitzvah of ira properly.'

A man is obligated to drink on Purim. R. Menachem, the son of R. Benjamin, sat in the Beth Midrash and asked: "May one mix mulled wine on Purim?" R. Kamtzan says: "It is permitted." R. Samechan says: "It is forbidden."

R. Menachem objected to R. Kamtzan: "But wine, which is not as important as mulled wine, is forbidden (to be mixed on Purim)." (R. Kamtzan responded): "Wine is different because its mixing is forbidden in the Torah, as it is said: *Thy wine is mixed with water.*"²³

One could retort: Now, (it is forbidden to mix) strong drink (on Purim) because it is not to be found in every place. Will you say the same (holds true) for mulled wine? New wine will prove the case (by analogy), since it is found everywhere and, at the same time, is forbidden (to be mixed on Purim day). So too, mulled wine.

²¹Exodus 20:15, *And all the people perceived the thunderings.* This is meant to be reminiscent of the theophany at Sinai, so awesome was the spectacle.

²²Isaiah 24:3.

²³Isaiah 1:22.

One could retort: But new wine is different because it is sweet. Will you say the same (holds true) for mulled wine? (Yes), it too is sweet, or tends to be sweet. The common factor between them is that they are (lit., it is) sweet and customary in all places. This holds as well for mulled wine, which (also) is sweet and customary in all places. And, (thus) it may not be mixed. And this is the halacha.

"(If) Purim should fall on Shabbat..."

Mishnah

(If) Purim should fall on Shabbat, we eat the Purim feast on that same day. However, (the) Megillah is not read. Rather, villages and large towns push forward (their reading) and read on the day of assembly (Thursday), and walled cities (read) on the next day (Sunday).¹

Everyone is obligated to partake of the Purim feast: Priests, Levites, and Israelites, resident aliens [or converts], women and slaves, for they too, (are considered) as having part in the miracle.²

Cities which have been walled since the days of Joshua b. Nun eat the Purim feast on the fifteenth of Adar. Villages and large towns eat on the fourteenth.

If they ate (their) Purim (feast) in the first Adar and the year was intercalated, they must eat it again in the second Adar, since the first Adar differs from the second Adar only with regard to the reading of the scroll and the giving of gifts to

¹Cf. Mishnah Megillah, 1:1 and b. Megillah 2a where the discussion of when to read from the Megillah is central. Note too that there is a misprint in the Willheimer edition. For בפ"ד, read בפ"ה, as in Mishnah Megillah 1:2.

²Cf. b. Pesachim 108a-b: R. Joshua ben Levi also said: Women are subject to (the law of) the four cups because they too were included in that miracle. And, b. Megillah 4a: R. Joshua ben Levi also said: Women are under obligation to read the Megillah since they also profited by the miracle than wrought. (Since Haman plotted to destroy the women also). Cf. also b. Sotah 11b: R. Awira expounded: As the reward for the righteous women who lived in that generation were the Israelites delivered from Egypt.

the poor," which implies that in respect to the matter of eating and drinking, they are equivalent to one another.

Gemara

If Purim should fall on Shabbat. Our Rabbis taught: "Should the fourteenth [of Adar] fall on Shabbat, villages and large towns eat the festive Purim meal on that same day"—these are the words of R. Balaam. R. Kamtzan says: "We eat (only half of the meal) on that day; and we save half of it for the next day, since the inhabitants of villages (and large towns) read the Megillah on the next day."

R. Balaam objected: "But is it not taught with respect to the reading of the Megillah that villages push forward its reading to the day of assembly?" (The time for the) reading of the Megillah is pushed forward but (the time for) the Purim feast is delayed.

Quite so! For it has been taught: Concerning these matters, they [the sages] have said; that one may push forward the time but not postpone; *the reading of the Megillah*, and the contribution of the head tax [shekel],⁴ which implies that the Purim feast, and the feast for the new Moon may be postponed but may not be anticipated.

R. Amram objected: "One to whom it was vowed, ' (You may) take the eggs today or the chicken tomorrow,' should take the

³Mishnah Megillah 1:4.

⁴Cf. Tosefta Megillah 1:4: "The reading of the Megillah and the contribution of the shekels (for use in the upkeep of the Temple and the altar) do they push forward, but not postpone (beyond the fourteenth of Adar)."

eggs today and not the chicken tomorrow, as it is said: *Do not boast about tomorrow, for you never know what a day will bring forth,*⁶ and this presents a difficulty for R. Kamtzan.

Rav said: "I do not understand this, since it is written: *And tomorrow will be like today, or greater far!*"⁶ What is the halacha? R. Achan⁷ says: "The halacha is according to R. Kamtzan." R. Samchan says: "The halacha is according to R. Balaam." And the halacha is according to R. Balaam.

Everyone is obligated. What does (the word) "all" mean to include? It means to include the deaf-mute, the imbecile and the minor, for they too (are to be considered) as having part in the miracle. Haman⁸ objected: "Granted that a minor (is to be considered) as having part in the miracle since it is written, *Women and children in one day.*"⁹ But where do we have any reference to the deaf-mute and the imbecile [i.e., how do we know that they too are included]?"

R. Mordechai¹⁰ said to him: "You assume (that we are dealing with) the deaf-mute who is unable to hear and unable to

⁶Proverbs 27:1.

⁷Isaiah 56:12.

⁸Joshua 7:1. *Achan, the son of Karmi...* This name is used in the parody due to Karmi, or, "My vineyard".

⁹Haman. The villain of the book of Esther whose defeat is the hallmark of the book of Esther and the celebration of Purim.

¹⁰Esther 3:13. It was Haman's plot to exterminate young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

¹¹Mordechai. Haman's chief adversary and the hero of the book of Esther.

speak, but the deaf person mentioned here (in fact) is the one who can speak but cannot hear, and he is (deemed to be) like a (legally) competent person in every respect."

Haman said to him: "In any event, the case of the imbecile is difficult."

R. Mordechai said to him: "Here, too, the '(imbecile)' mentioned is the one who is only half-crazed."

Haman objected to R. Mordechai: "Is it not taught, *All are deemed fit to read the Megillah with the exception of the deaf mute, the imbecile and the minor?*¹¹ And if this follows your reasoning, why are they not eligible?" The cases of both the deaf and the imbecile would appear to be contradictory.

The case of the deaf is not contradictory. (One ruling) refers to a deaf person who can speak, and (one ruling) refers to a deaf mute who cannot speak.

The case of the imbecile, too, is not contradictory. (One) refers to a half-crazed person, and (one) to one who is a complete imbecile.

Haman objected: "If (the Mishnah's ruling refers to) the deaf person who is unable to speak, why expressly teach it?" It is obvious! If he is unable to speak, how can he read?

R. Mordechai said to him: "The deaf mute was included here as a matter of routine [lit., he was 'drawn along'], since the tanna wanted to teach us about the imbecile and the minor, [so] he [routinely] included also the deaf mute." Our difficulty

¹¹Mishnah Megillah 2:4.

returns to its place [i.e., this explanation still presents a difficulty].

The case of the "imbecile" nonetheless is still problematic. For if you say the Mishnaic ruling refers to one who is half-mad, that is all right, but if you say that it refers to one who is a complete imbecile, this should be obvious. How can he read? This is difficult!

Amalek¹² said: "What does the word 'all' [in the 'Mishnah'] mean specifically to include? It means specifically to include one whose sex is unknown [a person of hidden or underdeveloped genitalia] and the hermaphrodite [i.e., one with the genitalia of both male and female]."

An uncultured old man said to him: "What do you want here? Go to the land of the south¹³ for that is your place, as it is said, *The Amalekites who live in the Negev.*¹⁴ Is the person of unknown sex mentioned in the Scroll of Esther, or is the hermaphrodite mentioned in it?"

Amalek said to him: "*(Israel) O race of evil-doers.*¹⁵ Surely you have learned that Amalek was the first among the nations."¹⁶

¹²An interesting choice of discussants: The historic enemy of Israel and ancestor of Haman.

¹³This is a pun on the words ארץ דרומא which can also mean "Italy," the land of Rome.

¹⁴Numbers 13:29.

¹⁵Isaiah 1:4.

¹⁶Numbers 24:20.

He said to him: "Go down to the end of the verse: *His end shall be utter destruction.*"¹⁷

Amalek said to him: "Son of a thousand abominations! About you it is written: *His end shall be utter destruction*¹⁸; for you descend from his grandchildren, and grandchildren are like children.¹⁹ And what is the end of a man? You must say, these are his children." Immediately, Haman [i.e., the descendent of Amalek] became an apostate.

When Mordechai knew all that had happened.²⁰ He knew. What did he know? (That) Haman had become an apostate, and he was happy in his heart (privately) before he shamed him publicly. And how did he do so? By posing halachic conundrums.

How could he have done this? Is it not written: *Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, do not gloat in your heart when he is brought down?*²¹ And Rav said: "In my life I have never rejoiced at the disgrace of my fellow." This [the Proverbs verse and Rav's dictum] refers to one's fellow who is worthy. The other [Mordechai's reaction] refers to one's fellow who is unworthy. He [Haman] went out and became (even further) demented and became the highest ranking minister, second only to the king. And all the people bowed down and prostrated themselves before Haman, at the command of the king, but Mordechai would not bow

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Cf. b. Yebamot 61a-b.

²⁰ Esther 4:1.

²¹ Proverbs 24:17.

down or prostrate himself before him,** since Mordechai held a writ of possession against Haman whom he had acquired as a slave in perpetuity, in exchange for some cakes of barley and some loaves of bread. He [Mordechai] said: "To whom does the slave belong? To whom does the (slave's) property belong?" Everyone was muttering about Haman and saying: "This one is Mordechai's slave! This one is Mordechai's slave!" Then [on account of this] Haman became very angry, as it is written: *Haman was filled with rage (against Mordechai).*²² He said: "Not only does he not bow down and prostrate himself before me, but he also tells disgraceful things about me to everyone." What did that wicked one do? He did not want to take revenge against Mordechai alone, but rather against all Israel, as it is said: *(On learning who Mordechai's people were) he scorned to lay hands on him alone.*²⁴

And when did Mordechai acquire Haman (as a slave)? After he [Haman] had apostasized and before he [Haman] had risen to prominence.

It once happened that Ahasuerus sent out his army against (the inhabitants) of a certain city, the name of which was Kfar Morninos. They [his soldiers] remained there in siege three years, and Haman's tent was (pitched) near Mordechai's tent. One day, Mordechai saw that Haman was sad. He said to him: "Why are you sad?" He responded to him: "I have no food." (Mordechai

²²Cf. Esther 3:2 (The wording is not verbatim).

²³Ibid., 5:9.

²⁴Ibid., 3:6.

inquired): "Do you have any money?" He (Mordechai) said to him: "Do you have a horse?" He (Haman) said to him: "No." (Mordechai asked): "Do you have any movable property?" He (Haman) said: "No, I have nothing but an ass and I have neither straw nor a covering for it." Mordechai said to him: "We have more than enough straw and fodder and also a place to lodge." (Haman) said: "Let us make a deal, sir." He [Mordechai] said to him: "Give me a pledge." (Haman) replied: "I have nothing; (rather) acquire me [my person] and my land in exchange for food." He [Mordechai] said to him: "Draw up a writ." (And) he drew up the writ for him. Mordechai (then) gave him straw and covering for the ass and bread to feed his household, and acquired him as a servant in perpetuity. And they called him the servant who consumes his property.

After Haman reached high standing, he said to Mordechai: "I have had enough of this agreement. Receive [take] from my property an amount equal to my valuation at the time at which I was acquired." Mordechai said to him: "Give me what you are worth today." He [Haman] said in response to him: "If I (give you) what my worth is today, all my property (will be) yours. As people say, 'A man's worth is according to his wealth'." He (Mordechai) said to him: "If the servant belongs to someone, the property also belongs to that person."** As a result, Haman was filled with anger against Mordechai.** And this is why Haman

**I.e., the property of a slave belongs (in any case) to his master. Cf. b. Kiddushin 23b.

**Esther 5:9.

said to his advisors and to Zeresh, his wife: "And all of this is not worth my valuation."²⁷ Zeresh, his wife, said to him: "You fool! You enter into legal disputation with him? Go (instead) and hang him from a tree. There is no (higher) justice nor (higher) judge (than you) for you are second to the king. Who is going to question what you do?"

He said to her: "And if a hang him, his seed [legal heirs] will remain and will acquire me as a servant in perpetuity, both he and his descendants after him." • Thus is it written in the deed: "If he dies, the deed's [force] remains."

She said to him: "O seed of Amalek, most vulgar of commoners, [don't you know that] this is the manner of kings? In the case of anyone who goes up to the gallows to be judged and is condemned to death, all his property is confiscated by the king. And you are second in command to the king and will receive the deed together with all of his property, and you will go free!" And he accepted her advice, as it is written: *And the thing pleased Haman and he caused the gallows to be made.*²⁸ Some say, he actually prepared the tree. While others say, her words appealed to him, and he accepted her advice. R. Shakran expounded: "Why is it written: *And Esther answered, if it seem good to the king, let the king and Haman come this day to the banquet?*"²⁹ Why did Esther see fit to invite Haman to the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5:13. Literally, *And all of this is not worthy anything to me.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5:14.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5:4.

banquet? She reasoned: 'I am beautiful of appearance. As soon as the king sees that I am drawing Haman near to show him affection and to be flirtatious, he will at once view him with hostility and be jealous of him. For just as the way to arouse a woman is to make her jealous [lit., a woman is only jealous of the thigh of another], so too, the way to arouse a man is to make him jealous.'³⁰ And thus have the sages said: *She made the king jealous (of him) and she made the princes jealous of him.*³¹ (For) as soon as the king saw that Esther had invited Haman to the first feast, he was immediately jealous of him, and his heart was set against him, as it is written: *On that night the king could not sleep,*³² for he suspected Esther on account of (the invitation to) Haman, and (he suspected) Haman on account of Esther. So sleep departed from his eyes. Immediately he got up from his bed to consider how to decree Haman's death, as it is written: *So he commanded the book of records of the chronicles to be brought,*³³ before him to see if any accusation was written there about Haman which would afford him a pretext to punish him, but he did not find (anything). Yet he did find written: *That Mordechai had told of Bigtana and Teresh.*³⁴ And he [the king] didn't give this matter any thought. Then a heavenly voice went

³⁰Cf. b. Megillah 13a; "Why did Esther see fit...?"

³¹b. Megillah 15b. "R. Eliezer of Modi'im says, 'She made the king jealous of him and she made the princes jealous of him.'"

³²Esther 6:1.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 6:2.

out and said: 'This Mordechai is the enemy of Haman.' Immediately, The king said: 'What honor and dignity have been done to Mordechai for this.' And they (the king's servants that ministered to him) said, 'Nothing has been done for him.'²⁵ And this corresponds to what is written: *And it was found written.*²⁶ He [the king] found is not written here, rather, *It was found written*--by the intervention of a bat kol!²⁷ And this corresponds to the popular saying: 'It was not out of love for Mordechai but out of hatred for Haman'--(that is), out of the great hatred and jealousy towards Haman that was in Ahasuerus' heart--he thought to promote Mordechai. And this corresponds to what is written: *What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?*²⁸

And at that time [moment] when Esther accused Haman and said: *the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman,*²⁹ the king was very angry, as it is written: *And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden.*³⁰ And his heart was languid within him. So he went back and forth from the courtyard to the palace garden and from the palace garden to

²⁵ Ibid., 6:3.

²⁶ Ibid., 6:2.

²⁷ Ibid. The issue (in typical midrashic fashion) is the significance of the passive form of the verb. While it might seem to be forced or unnatural, it is in fact appropriate and allows for divine intervention by means of a Bat Kol.

²⁸ Ibid., 6:6.

²⁹ Ibid., 7:6.

³⁰ Ibid., 7:7.

the courtyard, because he could not find in the matter a pretext [legal justification] to decree death on him, according to the laws of the nations of the world, since Haman would respond: "Indeed I thought to destroy the Jews, but I have not done it". But when he [the king] saw him [Haman], *fallen upon the divan whereon Esther lay*, he was angry and said: *Will he even assault the queen in my own presence in the house?*^{*1}

What is meant by *my own presence in the house*?^{**} Without witnesses. For if there had been witnesses present there, he could have decreed death upon him.

Then, *the king was very angry and his anger burned in him*, for he did not discover witnesses (who could testify) to their privacy [i.e., to Esther's retirement with Haman under suspicious circumstances].

Then (however), there came before him two witnesses. The name of the first one was Shakran and the name of the second was Kozban. And they testified before him that, before Haman had been raised to high status, they had seen (him) steal and attack and rob people in the cities and in the border areas. Then the king was happy and he cried: "This is the day for which I have waited." I have found, I have seen (an opportunity to sentence Haman to death). Still, his heart was languid within him and he was afraid to pass judgment on him [Haman] in public (with such limited evidence) lest he [Haman] find (legal) assistance (countervailing evidence). Then, Harvona, one of the

^{*1} Ibid., 7:8.

^{**} Ibid.

chamberlains, went out and said: "Why do you stand sorrowfully? Behold, the gallows (fifty cubits high) which (Haman) made for Mordechai."³ You have only to command, and to pass judgment that he be hanged, for behold, they have brought testimony against him that he stole." Then, the king was joyous and he issued a command to hang him, as it is written: *Then the king said, "Hang him on that."*⁴ And thus it is said: *So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordechai. Then the king's wrath was pacified.*

And this corresponds to what is written: *Therefore, they called these days Purim, after the name of pur,*⁵ namely after the name of the thief, for in the region of Ancona⁶ they call a thief, puria.

Cities which have been walled since the days of Joshua b. Nun. What is the Scriptural basis (for this ruling)? As it is written: *Therefore the Jews of the villages, who dwell in the unwalled towns, make the fourteenth.*⁷ Now since those who dwell in cities which are unwalled observe the fourteenth, (those who live in) walled cities observe the fifteenth, for it is written: *They should keep the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same.*⁸

³Ibid., 7:9.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 9:26.

⁶A seaport city in Italy.

⁷Esther 9:19.

⁸Ibid., 9:21.

R. Achlan asked: "Is the inhabitant of a city which had eaten its festive Purim meal [properly according to the halacha] on the fourteenth, permitted to eat a festive Purim meal on the fifteenth? Does doing so constitute a violation of [the injunction] not to add or not?"

R. Kamtzan says: "It is forbidden. For it is written, *that it not be altered.*"**

R. Ra'avtan says: "It is permitted, for that which is written: *that it not be altered*, pertains to the fifteenth [alone]."

They went, and asked the question in the Bet Midrash. R. Simcha and R. Yom Tov were sitting there, but were both unable to answer it.

Meanwhile, R. Balaam came and they asked him: "What is the ruling with respect to observing two days of Purim?" He said to them: "It is permitted, because 'Purim' is written [in the plural - i.e.,] the minimal plural [Purim] is two, and this was stated only in regard to the fourteenth and the fifteenth [of Adar], but before this [the fourteenth] and after this [the fifteenth] is not permissible, because it is written: that it not be altered.

R. Benjamin b. Yechiel sat in the Bet Midrash and he asked: "What is the [law] in regard to riding on a horse on Purim, and running, and having fun in cypress trees or oak trees?"** R.

**Ibid., 9:27. That is, the observance of the two days, the fourteenth and the fifteenth.

**Davidson, p. 21.

Samchan said: "It is permitted." R. Benjamin said to him "I did not ask whether it is permissible. Rather I asked whether it is an obligation or a commandment." He (R. Samchan) did not have the answer.

He came before R. Nachmani. R. Nachmani said to him: "I am neither a rider nor the son of a rider¹. Rather, I am a physician and a druggist [i.e., I have no ideal]."

He went and asked at another Bet Midrash and R. Simcha and R. Yom Tov were there. R. Simcha says: "It is a religious commandment." R. Yom Tov says: "It is an obligation." And the halacha does not follow any of these teachings. Rather, a man would ride on a horse during Purim with palm branches in his hand and run with all his might and shake them only (as he utters the words) "we beseech," "save now" (during the Hoshanot).² But this ruling does not pertain to everyone, only to expert riders who honor Israel by their horsemanship.

If one ate the festive Purim meal during the first of Adar (should the year be intercalated) etc...

R. Sachakan asked: "What is the law in regard to playing dice on Purim?" R. Shimon the drunkard said: "I have seen a place in the Roman [Italian] state where they play on Purim, and they call it sacchieri [chess(board)]. And I do not recall if it was played with dice or with nard or with checkers." R. Hamsan says: "Is this probative? We cannot bring proof from chess[board] for even during the rest of the year they play with

¹Cf. Amos 7:14.

²Davidson, p. 21, note 32.

dice there! So you have not told us anything [of consequence]." R. Hamsan also said: "I myself played there both on Purim and during the rest of the year, so you have not told us anything." What is the halacha? R. Gazlan says: "It is permitted." R. Hamdan says: "It is forbidden."

R. Lakhan objected: *These are the people who are unfit to give testimony: he who plays dice, etc.*⁸³ This contradicts R. Gazlan. There is no problem. One (R. Gazlan's case) refers to Purim; the other (the Mishnah) to the remainder of the year. And the halacha is according to R. Lakhan who holds as does R. Hamdan that it is forbidden. For behold, the sages said: *Play and irreverent behavior accustom a man to licentiousness.*⁸⁴

R. Daniel from Kfar Lupideo [probably an Italian place name] was sitting in the Bet Midrash. They asked before him: "What is the law in regard to dancing on Purim?" He said to them: "Men by themselves and women by themselves are both permitted." R. Sachakan objected: "Is it not written: *Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together.*"⁸⁵ R. Daniel said to him: "This verse pertains to the future world, where the evil impulse will not rule, as it is written: *And I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh,*"⁸⁶ and it is written: *For the earth shall be*

⁸³Cf. Mishnah Sanhedrin 3:3.

⁸⁴Mishnah Avot 3:13.

⁸⁵Jeremiah 31:12. There is a printing error in ed. Willheimer here. For ל'ל'ל', read ל'ל'ל'.

⁸⁶Ezekiel 11:19.

full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters are full of the sea."¹⁷

However, at this time when the evil impulse rules, men are permitted to dance among themselves and women among themselves. However, it is forbidden for men and women to dance together. For behold the sages have said: *When men sing and women join in, it is licentiousness; when women sing and men join in it is like fire in tow.*¹⁸ All the more so should it be forbidden for men, women and children to dance together.

Shall we say then that the following "Mishnah" supports this position: "A woman should not wear colorful clothing nor ironed garments and she should not walk about [outside] on the days from the beginning of Adar until the sixteenth."¹⁹ What is the reason? So that she not dance with men, and this "Mishnah" would support the opinion of R. Daniel.

No. This is not the reason (behind the "Mishnaic" ruling). Rather, it is in order that she busy herself with that which is required for preparing the Purim feast, and this corresponds to that which is taught (later in the same "Mishnah"): "[She should] sit continuously between the stove and the fireplace"--in order to prepare the Purim feast.

R. Zamran objected: "If the reason (why men and women can't dance together on Purim) is because of the evil impulse, let them dance [lit., let it be done] with relatives (of the opposite

¹⁷ Isaiah 11:9.

¹⁸b. Sotah 48a.

¹⁹Cf. "Mishnah," chapter 1.

sex), for we may conclude that the evil impulse has no effect on relatives."

Quite so! It is (rather) a decree [i.e., not to be deduced]: this [is prohibited] on account of that [i.e., dancing with relatives is prohibited only lest one come thereby to dance with someone who is not a relative]. Moreover, it is (decreed thus) also on account of rogues [deceivers] for about them the sages have said: *Come, let us be grateful to the rogues.*^{**} For they would say: "We are relatives," when in fact, they are not relatives.

R. Zamran asked: "What about the cases of Adam and Eve, and Isaac and Rebekkah [i.e., they were related - didn't they dance together]?" It is left unresolved.

^{**}b. Ketuboth 68a.

"They may read..."

Mishnah

They may read the Megillah to women only in the vernacular [in translation] for the sages said: *But they may read it to those who speak a foreign tongue [i.e., those who do not understand Hebrew] in that language, provided it is written in that language; but if one who spoke a foreign language heard it in Hebrew, he has fulfilled his obligation. So also with regard to women.*¹

"We hurry to go to the synagogue on Purim and we hurry to leave"--these are the words of R. Tzidkiya the Modest. R. Kalonymos says: "We tarry to go and we tarry to leave."

"We teach children on Purim"--these are the words of R. Amalek. Ben Madon says: "Even on Sabbath and festivals."

"One who gives Purim coins² to guests should not give less than a perutah nor more than a peshut"³--these are the words of R. Kamtza. R. Rahavia says: "It is all according to (the need of) the guests."

"One who sends portions [of food] to his fellow should send him only from that which has already been prepared"--these are the words of R. Boki. R. Sarban says: "We do not even accept

¹Mishnah Megillah 2:1. This is an expansion on the Mishnah, for it adds women as the principle matter.

²Cf. b. Abodah Zarah 17b.

³Later, in the "Gemara", we learn that this is an Italian coin equal to one-eighth of an Italian issar.

[as Purim gifts portions of food that have not already been prepared]."

"The Bet Din [court] does not hold session from the first of Adar until the sixteenth of the month"--(this according to) R. Gazlan. And R. Hamsan says: "From the beginning of Adar until its end."

"We do not loan money on interest during Purim, even to a non-Jew"--this according to R. Achlan. Rav Shakeh says: "We even lock up the store."

"The woman whose husband has gone overseas or (merely) to a faraway inland place (of a distance comparable to overseas travel), is exempt from (preparing) the Purim feast"--these are the words of R. Kamtzan. Bar Kamtza says: "Even the man whose wife is not with him is exempt from (preparing) the Purim feast." But the sages do not agree with him.

R. Shakran says: "Todos [Thaddeus] the Roman^a instituted the custom among Italian [Jews] to give Purim coins to youths (who, while not adults, still observed mitzvot)."
R. Kozban says: "[Purim] coins are even given to minors, and the children of the rich [are given] gold and silver."

^aTodos (Thaddeus) is mentioned a number of times in the Babylonian Talmud. For instance, Pesachim 53b, Berachot 19a, Betza 23a. In Berachot 19a: "Were you not Thaddeus, I would pronounce sentence of ex-communication on you, because you make Israel appear to eat holy things outside the Temple precincts."

Gemara

They may read the Megillah only in the vernacular. This applies only after the fact, but at the outset we do not read (the Megillah) in a foreign tongue, for the "Mishnah" reads, "Has fulfilled his obligation," which means after the fact. (But) at the outset, one may read it to speakers of a foreign language in that language, and so also with regard to women.

R. Atzlan raised an objection: "If you say that we may read it [in] the vernacular, is it not written: *The Jews ordained, and took upon themselves...that they should keep...these days of Purim...according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year.*"*

Doesn't according to their writing mean in the holy tongue (Hebrew)? Kalonymos said to him: "Had it been written 'in their language' we should have drawn your inference, but what then, does according to their writing mean? That it is written in Hebrew characters, in the vernacular tongue."*

R. Yechiel b. Isaac objected: "Is this not too rigorous for the congregation? For [a text written in] a foreign tongue takes longer [to read] than [that same text written in] the holy tongue and we have learned 'we hurry to go to the synagogue and we hurry to leave.'"

Kalonymos said to him: "This teaching [to which you refer] is a separate matter, and the halacha does not follow his

*This is taken primarily from Esther 9:27. The wording is imprecise.

*I.e., Judeo-Italian, Judeo-Greek, Judeo-Arabic, etc.

[Yechiel's] opinion. Moreover, that which makes public the miracle is to be preferred."

We hurry to go. What is the reason behind the words of R. Tzidkiya? In order that the house and the pot (of food being warmed) not become smokey and full of soot, which would prevent one from celebrating the joy of Purim.

Kalonymos said to him: "Granted that would we 'hurry to leave (the synagogue)' lest the house and pot become smokey and full of soot, but [why on this account should we] 'hurry to go' [to synagogue]?" (The other replied:) "In order to recite Keriat Shema at its proper time [i.e., at sunrise]."

Kalonymos said to him: "And when, then has [the time for preparing] the Purim feast passed?"* (Reply:) "He has prepared it from the day before."

Kalonymos said to him: "On the contrary, to smoke [simmer] one must warm up (the food) with hot water, as on the eve of Shabbat." (Reply:) "Granting that this holds for kinds (of foods) which are suited (for early preparation and subsequent warming [i.e., simmering], but what can be said about those kinds (of foods) which are unsuited (for early preparation and subsequent) simmering?" (Kalonymos) was silent.

R. Tzidkiya said to him: "According to your opinion, we 'tarry to go' (to the synagogue). This is right [if the reason

*That is, it is all right to read the Megillah in a foreign tongue since this effectively makes public the miracle of the great Purim victory.

*I.e., Shouldn't we be preparing the Purim feast at this hour so that we would not be rushing to go to synagogue.

is] in order to prepare the Purim feast, but why (on this account) should we 'tarry to leave' (the synagogue)?" (Reply:) "In order to read the Megillah twice--(once) in Hebrew for the men and (once) in the vernacular for the women. Or also, in order to wait for the bakers, for they too are required to hear (it read), in any case, just like the men." (Reply:) "But I have a problem (with this response) for are not the bakers men [in which case they should be there to hear the first reading]?" (Reply:) "They are men, but they are similiar to women since they do women's work."⁹

We teach children. What do we teach them? "To fight with each other"--these are the words of R. Benjamin b. Isaac. R. Sachakan says: "What do we teach them? To play with walnuts and almonds." What is the reason (behind the ruling) of R. Benjamin D. Isaac? So that they will learn the rules of battle. For if they should merit seeing the days of the Messiah, they will be quick and well-versed in the order of battle in order to fight the wars of the Lord.¹⁰

"It was said about R. Benjamin b. Isaac that each Shabbat he would bring children into his house to train them to fight"--this according to R. Madon. And the sages agreed with him.

⁹Bakers are placed in the same legal category as women since they are both responsible for preparing the Purim feast.

¹⁰The translation is based upon Davidson's rendering, page 20.

One gives Purim coins to guests, etc... What is a perutah? One-fourth of a Roman peshut which is one-eighth of an Italian issar!¹¹

Do not give more than a peshut. It is taught: Which peshut!¹² were they talking about? A Roman peshut, which is called in Italian a provinso.

Rahavya says, (etc.) The halacha does not follow his opinion, for a man is not able to distinguish between a wicked [undeserving] guest and a good [deserving] guest. Therefore, the halacha is according to Bar Kamtza.

One who sends portions (of food). Memuchan!¹³ sat before R. Tarban and asked him: "If one has received [something unprepared] is it permitted to benefit!¹⁴ from it or not?" He said: "It is permitted." "What about eating it?" He said to him: "It is forbidden both during the day itself and at night because it would be necessary to prepare it [and preparing food on Purim is forbidden]."

And further, they asked of him: "Is (a portion of food which has not been prepared and) which comes to a particular Jew permitted for another Jew (to eat) or not?" He said to him:

¹¹Issar - a Roman coin; usually one-twenty-fourth of a denar.

¹²Peshut - might also be the most commonly employed coin of the realm, i.e., the standard denomination.

¹³Memuchan, cf. Esther 1:14, where he is advisor to the king in the matter of Queen Vashti. This is a great pun in our text, since the topic is מן המוכן.

¹⁴Likely, may one resell it in order to gain its monetary value?

"Eating it is permitted even on that very day. For we have learned: 'that which comes to a particular Jew is permitted for other Jew[s]!' Then why is it forbidden for the first Jew? So that people not become accustomed to sending portions (of food) which have not already been prepared. And if they do become so accustomed, what of it? We must say that it is a decree on account of laggards and on account of a certain incident which once occurred. It has been taught: It once happened that a particular laggard had portions sent to him on Purim--turtledoves and young pigeons, which had not been slaughtered--and he did not have a chance to cook them before it became dark, so that he did not fulfill his obligation. For we have learned: (If) the Purim feast was eaten at night [presumably during the evening just after Purim], one does not fulfill his obligation (thereby), which corresponds to that which was written: *A lazy man hides his hand in the dish.*¹⁸

At that same time¹⁸ they said: "One who sends portions of food to his fellow should send only from that which has already been prepared."

There was a certain laggard in the neighborhood of R. Yom Tov and they called him "Bar Kamtza." When the day of Purim arrived, R. Yom Tov said to his attendant: "Go, call on Bar Kamtza, who has nothing, that he may receive (from us) a young pigeon that has been cooked, so that we may fulfill the mitzvah of gifts to the poor." His attendant said to him: "I do not

¹⁸Proverbs 26:15.

¹⁸I.e., on account of this incident.

know him." He [R. Yom Tov] said: "Go to such and such a place where he lives." When he [the attendant] arrived at his [Bar Kamtza's] house, it was meal time. He found his house (but) the gates were locked. He said: "Concerning this [situation], Scripture says: *As the door turns on its hinges, so does the slothful upon his bed.*"¹⁷ He [the attendant] raised his voice [shouted]: "Where are you Bar Kamtza, where are you Bar Kamtza?" Bar Kamtza answered: "What do you want? It is a toilsome thing for me to get up from my bed." He said to him: "Come and receive a young pigeon that has been cooked from R. Yom Tov." He said to him: "I am coming!"

He got up from his bed intending to go. When he had come out of his house, he ran into a certain joker whom they called Pir Kamtzan. Pir Kamtzan said to Bar Kamtza: "Where are you going?" He said to him: "I am going to the house of R. Yom Tov who wants to give me a young pigeon that has been cooked for the festive Purim meal." He [Pir Kamtzan] said to him: "Do not go. A lion¹⁸ is standing in the street and just now ate a man." He (Bar Kamtza) returned home, corresponding to that which Scripture says: *The lazy man says, there is a lion outside.*¹⁹

Pir Kamtzan went to R. Yom Tov's to receive the young pigeon (instead). R. Yom Tov said to his attendant: "Bring me the young pigeon about which I spoke." (The attendant turned to Pir Kamtzan and) said to him: "Who are you?" He said to him: "Pir

¹⁷Proverbs 26:14.

¹⁸Misprint in the Willheimer ed.

¹⁹Proverbs 22:13.

Kamtzan." Since he (the attendant) thought that he was Bar Kamtza, he gave it to him.

Finally (later), Bar Kamtza came before R. Yom Tov to receive the young pigeon. R. Yom Tov said to his attendant: "Give me the young pigeon for Bar Kamtza." He said to him: "Did I not tell you that I would not know him [the right one]? Someone else by the name of Pir Kamtzan has already come and since I could not distinguish between Bar Kamtza and Pir Kamtzan, I have [already] given it to him."

Bar Kamtza raised his voice (shouted) and cried and said: "Give me the wisdom to get even with [this joker], Pir Kamtzan, and to get the gift back from his hand." This corresponds to that which is written: *The destruction of Jerusalem came through a Kamtza and a Bar Kamtza.***

R. Yom Tov said to him: "How did this happen?" He said to him: "Thus and such happened." R. Yom Tov said to him: "You are the greatest fool of all. You have brought this on yourself,** as people say, 'When you go to a [different, far away] country, do not ask after [inquire about] fools, for they will show themselves to you'! It is about you that Scripture says, *Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep,*** and it was about you that

**b. Gittin 55b. The switching of identities in our parody is very reminiscent of this Talmudic passage which describes the ridiculous and disastrous consequences which happen when people bear grudges indefinitely.

** Presumably for being so lazy in the first place and for neglecting a mitzvah.

**Proverbs 19:15.

Solomon said,** *Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.**** He returned to his house a mourner and in shame.** A mourner, since he did not eat the Purim feast, and ashamed, for thus did R. Yom Tov command him: *"See my face no more; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die."****

R. Kozban says: "I have seen a laggard in the great city of Rome who, at seventy years old, married a woman on the eve of Shabbat Zachor,** (just after) he had eaten his meal.** One of his wedding attendants said to him: 'Master, the Shabbat meal must be prepared today on the day before the Sabbath!' He said to him: 'I know, my son. (And) I am aware that it is the eve of the Sabbath, but we are greatly satiated (from the wedding feast) and do not need to do this [to prepare a Shabbat meal].'

"And so he responded to the second attendant, and so to the third attendant. When the attendants saw this, they desisted (from reminding him) and all went away. And he had not prepared anything for a Shabbat meal the next day; he did not even have

**Solomon has been traditionally given credit for composing the Book of Proverbs.

**Proverbs 6:6.

**Esther 6:12. Just after Haman, at the king's command, was forced to array Mordechai in costly garments and parade him through the streets of the city, his own destiny was fulfilled by another; thus he mourns.

**Exodus 10:28 (Pharaoh to Moses).

**The Shabbat just before Purim is always referred to as "Shabbat Zachor" on account of the special Scriptural reading read on that day: *Remember what Amalek did to thee by the way, when you were come out of Egypt.* (Deuteronomy 25:17).

**Presumably, his anticipatory Purim meal (as above).

any bread for Shabbat. (As a result), he quarreled with his wife, for he had nothing to eat. His wife said to him: 'Bastard [lit., 'son of darkness'], why are you crying to me?! He who has taken pains (to prepare food) on the eve of the Sabbath will eat on the Sabbath, but he who has not taken pains (to prepare food) on the eve of the Sabbath will not eat on Shabbat.'²⁹

"He said: 'Behold, I am almost seventy years old (and in all my years) I have never merited to eat such a large meal as I did yesterday. For this reason, I was lazy about preparing for Shabbat!' His wife said to him: 'About you it is written: *The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes (than seven men that can give sensible reasons)*,'³⁰ which corresponds to the popular proverb: 'An old man in the house is a bad omen.'

"Immediately, she left his house and went to her father's house, and never came back to him again."³¹

The Bet Din does not hold session. Our Rabbis taught: "No legal decisions are rendered on Purim in either civil or capital cases."³² R. Gazlan says: "(This holds) from the beginning of Adar until the sixteenth thereof." R. Hamsan says: "From the beginning of Adar until its end," and they objected (to both of these, as follows): R. Shaftan says: *Now these are the judgments*

²⁹b. Abodah Zarah 3a. This, in regard to gentiles not laggards.

³⁰Proverbs 26:16.

³¹Genesis 8:12. In the same way, the second dove which Noah sent forth from the ark *never came back to him again*.

³²Similar to more important holidays and festivals on which the courts are not in session. This is an attempt to raise the significance of the holiday.

which thou shalt set before them,³³ and not before the gentiles [in their courts]. But if no Jewish court is in session, they will go before a secular court." This is a difficulty for both (opinions).

R. Tsadkan sat before R. Shaftan and asked him: "Does the court hold session on Purim or not?" He said to him: "It holds session." R. Tsadkan objected: "Have we not learned (that) the Bet Din does not hold session from the beginning of Adar until the sixteenth?" This teaching deals with a separate issue and the halacha does not follow it.

A certain judge (peace be unto him), by the name of R. Bahaman, once presided over a case on Purim. Two litigants came before him for judgment. One litigant began, saying: "I loaned a portion to this one." He [the judge] said to his fellow (litigant): "Go, pay off the debt!" He responded to him [the judge]: "This thing never happened." He (the judge) said: "If so, do not pay off the debt!" The first (litigant) said to him: "Rabbi, I have a written claim against him (to prove it)." He [the judge] said to him [the other litigant]: "Go repay him [make it right]!" The second (litigant) said to him: "I have already repaid him." He [the judge] said to him: "If so, (then) don't repay him!" And so did he [the judge] continue to behave until the litigants were reconciled with one another, all the members of the city were reconciled with one another, and there was no claim among them all the days of R. Bahaman.

³³Exodus 21:1. *Them*, i.e., The Israelites, and by extension, Jewish courts.

And this corresponds to the popular proverb: "[The character of] the judges [determines] whether claims are brought." Therefore the sages said: *One who shuns the role of judge removes from himself, enmity, robbery, and false oaths.*²⁴ They said about R. Bahaman that all his days were without sadness and without deliberation [carefree] and without malice and enmity. And this corresponds to that which Scripture says: *And he that increases knowledge increases sorrow.*²⁵

We do not loan money on interest during Purim. The question was asked: "What is the law in regard to a man collecting his money on Purim?" According to Rab Shakeh, the question should never even arise, since it is said (in the "Mishnah":) "We even lock up the stores."

What is the rule on R. Achlan's opinion? R. Achlan says: "Should they come (to you) by themselves it is permitted (to do so)." R. Shatyan says: "Even should they come (to you) by themselves, it is forbidden, for it is decreed against collecting on account of loaning [i.e., collecting a debt is prohibited, lest it lead to giving out loans]." Rav asked: "What if a man allows someone else to request a creditor to repay? Or what if he happens to meet him [his debtor] on the road?" The question remains unanswered.

R. Natan objected: "But what about the following [tradition]? Someone who has a legal judgment pending with a non-Jew in Ab should avoid him, for it is bad luck, but in Adar,

²⁴Mishnah Avot 4:7.

²⁵Ecclesiastes 1:18.

he should seek him out, for his luck clears up." (Reply:) "This tradition refers (specifically) to a legal judgment. But we do not collect debts (from gentiles on Purim)."²⁶ R. Shatyan said: "These words [those of the aforementioned tradition] apply to the rest of the days in Adar, but not to Purim, for *days of feasting and gladness*²⁷ is written [with reference to Purim--i.e., not business as usual]."

R. Natan objected, referring to the specific wording of the verse: "Can one really have *gladness* without prosperity? Rather, one who particularly enjoys gladness fulfills (his obligation) through gladness [revelry], while one who particularly enjoys prosperity fulfills [his obligation] through prosperity [i.e., increasing his wealth]. Therefore, there is no need to ask about collecting (debts on Purim) which (obviously) is permitted; in fact, it is even permitted to lend out money (on Purim)."

Ben Meir objected to him: "But is it not taught, 'one may {not}²⁸ make a loan on interest during Purim, even to a non-Jew'--

²⁶Cf. b. Taanith 29b. R. Papa said: "Therefore, a Jew who has any litigation with Gentiles should avoid him in Ab because his luck is bad and should make himself available in Adar when his luck is good." Historically, Ab has been a month of misfortune. b. Taanith 29a recalls that on that ninth of Ab, "it was decreed that our fathers should not enter the (promised) land." It is said that on the ninth of Ab, "the Temple was destroyed the first time...and second time." "Just as with the beginning of Ab, rejoicings are curtailed, so with the beginning of Adar, rejoicings are increased."

²⁷Esther 9:17.

²⁸The word 'X has been omitted from the text and should appear in Ben Meir's objection.

-these are the words of R. Achlan." R. Natan said to him: "These words [apply] in the land of Israel; however, in Babylonia or in Byzantine Italy [Italy of the Greeks], it is permitted."

And why is Eretz Yisrael different that it should not be permitted there? Because the residents of the land of Israel own fields and vineyards from which they derive their livelihood in abundance [prosperity]; however, the residents of Babylonia and Byzantine Italy have nothing by which to support themselves other than loans, such that even if they should not engage in loaning for a single day, they would suffer a loss [be disadvantaged].³⁹ Ben Meir strenuously objected: "(Should we follow) your opinion, Purim would fall by the wayside! If (on Purim) it is permitted to collect (debts) and to loan out funds, what is to become of Purim?" Rav Natan said: "Loss of money is an exception, for thus did R. Kamtzan say: '[So] great is loss of money, that it supercedes the negative commandments in the Torah.' *Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread.*⁴⁰ This teaches that during the intermediate days [of Passover] it is forbidden to do work."⁴¹ And it is taught: *One may water fields on the festival*⁴² on account of loss of money [i.e., otherwise there will be a loss of money]. Therefore, R. Natan said: "[On

³⁹Italian Jews were, at this time, severely restricted with respect to the means of their livelihood and, perhaps more importantly, in their eligibility to own land.

⁴⁰Exodus 23:15.

⁴¹b. Hagiga 18a.

⁴²Cf. Mishnah Moed Qatan 1:1.

account of] anything from which one might suffer a loss of money, one need not give honor to Purim."

Ben Meir said to him: "Granted, regarding loaning [out money]. But what about collecting debts [i.e., is a loss of money an issue here, too?]" Here, too, there is a potential loss. For (if) one comes to collect (a debt from him) and does not find him, he will be more stringent, so it turns out that we thereby make matters more difficult for the creditors in the future. That is to say, (the next time a potential creditor) will say: "Since you did not give a surety to my neighbor, I will not take money from you with interest."

R. Ben Meir said to him: "Is it not written that they are to be *days of feasting and gladness*⁴³? And if you say, can there be gladness without prosperity [with respect to Purim], then [you might also say] with respect to Sabbaths and festivals, can there be gladness without prosperity [i.e., business dealings which are clearly forbidden by the Torah]?"

Moreover, may one who marries a woman lend money and collect (sureties and debts) on his wedding day? Therefore have we learned: "Woe to that man who does not stand under the chuppah with his wife."

He was perplexed for a moment. R. Natan said to him: "According to your opinion, what would become of Purim expenditures? For if one does not prosper, he will reduce his outlays for Purim and will come thereby to diminish his

⁴³Esther 9:17.

celebration of Purim!" R. Ben Meir said concerning him: "Nathan the Miser gives support to the misers!"

For this reason it has been taught: *The entire sustenance of man [for the year] is fixed [i.e., predestined] for him from [one] new year's (festival) to the next, except for his expenditures for Sabbaths and festivals and his expenditures for teaching his sons Torah, for if he spends less [on these], they allot him less (on high). While if he spends more, they allot him more [on high--both in terms of income, and presumably, of merit].*^{**} He [Natan] became silent. R. Natan (therefore) conceded to Ben Meir. But it has also been taught to the contrary, that he did not concede to him. (How then do we reconcile these two traditions? As follows:) He concedes to him in one case and disagrees with him in the other case. He concedes to him in the one case--(in reference to) collecting, and disagrees with him in the other case--(in reference to) loaning. What is the halacha? Kalonymos says: "The halacha is according to R. Natan." Antoninus says: "The halacha is according to Ben Meir." R. Pashran says: "[In reference] to loaning, the halacha is according to R. Natan. [In reference] to collecting, it is according to Ben Meir." And thus (indeed) is the halacha (namely, according to R. Pashran).

The sons of R. Yehiel the Fat lived in Natala in Ancona.^{**} When they came to the Bet Midrash, they articulated this ruling:

^{**b. Betza 16a.} The additional expenditure for Purim will, evidently, be provided by God.

^{**Presumably, "Natala in Ancona" refers to a region in Italy.}

"A man is obligated to honor Pûrim with clean clothing, for it is written that they are *days of feasting and gladness* and *gladness* refers only to fine clothes, as people say: 'In accordance with your clothes will we prepare your place.'" An objection was raised from the following "Mishnah": "A woman should not dress in colorful clothing nor in fine laundered linen garments." And a woman's (status) is similar to a man's with respect to all punishments in the Torah--so if a woman shouldn't get dressed up for Purim, this would seem to imply that neither should a man. They answered: "It is different here [i.e., this is a special case] for the woman is occupied with preparations for the Purim feast and one who is occupied with one mitzvah is exempt from another mitzvah. This is also to be proven from the specific language of the 'Mishnah' which reads, 'And she should sit at all times between the stove and the fireplace.'" But the man, who is not so occupied, must wear clean clothes.

And not only with respect to Purim did they state this, but also every day he must honor himself by wearing nice dress and clean clothes, for so it is written: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*.^{**} And if you are obligated to love your fellow and to honor him, all the more so yourself. For one who does not love himself will not [cannot] love his fellow.

Further, they sat before R. Nissim Halevi and they asked him: "We, for example, who dress well every day, how can we honor Purim?" He said to them: "By eating and drinking." They answered: "Isn't this what we asked? Since we eat well every

^{**}Leviticus 19:18.

day, so when we eat during Purim how can we honor it?" He said to them: "With vessels of silver and gold, as it is said, *And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, the vessels being diverse one from another.*"⁴⁷

And it is taught (in the "Mishnah"--chapter 2) the rich man who customarily eats meat (of non-domesticated animals) and fowl daily, should change on Purim. If it was customary (for him) to eat (his meat) roasted, he should eat it cooked, if (it was his custom to eat it) cooked, he should eat it roasted. R. Shachran said: "If he was accustomed to drinking four cups, he should drink eight. If (he was accustomed) to drinking eight, he should drink sixteen. So also, if you are accustomed to drinking (out of) crystal vessels, you should drink from gold vessels and silver vessels."

They said to him: "You have spoken well, but there is nothing special in (your advice) that people haven't (already) seen." He said to them: "Go, make a girdle (belt) of silver and cover it [inlay it] with gold." It was taught: Only a few days passed before R. Judah the Fat b. Yechiel made a strap of silver covered with gold in honor of Purim, and the sages conceded to him (the propriety of doing so).

The woman whose husband goes overseas. The question was raised: "According to the opinion of R. Kamtzan, is she exempt from [preparing] the fourteen Purim feasts but obligated with respect to the twenty-four meals (mentioned in the "Gemara" in chapter. 1)? He said to them: "She is exempt from both."

⁴⁷Esther 1:7.

Come and hear: "She is exempt from the Purim feast," but (since) one thing depends on the other thing. So what is the reason (that it is necessary to state that): "She may be exempt from both?" On account of favor, namely that she may find favor in the eyes of her husband, in that she is punctilious about expenditures (in his absence). (That is, she doesn't spend money on a Purim feast while he is not there to enjoy it.)

What is the halacha (in this case)? One tanna [tradition] holds that the halacha is according to R. Kamtzan and another tanna [tradition] holds that the halacha is not according to R. Kamtzan. There is, thus, a contradiction between one halachic tradition and another.

(No), there is no contradiction. One tanna [tradition] refers to the Purim feast, the other refers to the symbolic Purim meal (made on the preceding Shabbat), for it has been taught: R. Kamtzan (holds that) even though they [the sages] have said: "The woman whose husband goes overseas is exempt from the Purim feast," nonetheless, she should prepare a symbolic Purim meal in order that her child should see and ask questions.**

Kalonymos asked: "As for those who loan money on interest and are away from their homes for a year or two-- what should their wives do about the Purim feast?" Come and hear, for we have learned: "Or to a faraway place which is just like (going to) an overseas country." And this (situation to which Kalonymos

**Mishnah Pesachim 10:4. This is a parody on the Passover Seder.

refers) is: "just like going to an overseas country," (i.e., the same halacha applies).

R. Shakran says, "Todos the Roman, etc. What is the reason? So that the child will take notice (that something out of the ordinary is happening) and ask questions (like on Passover). It is sufficient (to distribute) parched ears of corn and nuts, as it is taught: *We distribute to them parched ears of corn and nuts so that the child will take notice and ask (questions).*^{**}

Was it so taught regarding children, as you have said? Our "Mishnah" rather teaches regarding youths--and youths will not be satisfied with just parched ears of corn and nuts! For this reason did Todos of Rome rule that in Rome they give to them Purim coins.

But has it not been taught: "R. Kozban said: 'Even to children should [Purim coins be given]?'" R. Kozban (however) retracted, as it is taught: "R. Kozban says: 'This [ruling] that we should give Purim coins to children now is not obligatory. Rather it was customary to do so in order to preserve the peace [and] in order to fulfill what is written: *Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.*'"^{***}

And the children of the rich (are given) gold and silver coins. He said to him: "Is this a custom or an obligation?" R.

^{**}b. Pesachim 108b. Corn and nuts are distributed to the children so that they will not fall asleep and will ask questions.

^{***}Proverbs 3:17.

Shakran says: "An obligation." R. Kozban says: "A custom."

And the halacha is according to R. Kozban.

Coins of gold and silver. What (specifically) are these?

They are flowers (florins)^{§1} of gold and flowers of silver. And this is what is said: *It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing.*^{§2} And R. Simcha said: "What is meant by *it shall blossom abundantly*?" (To teach that) there are two types of flowers. Paroach is to indicate flowers of silver, tifrach is to indicate flowers of gold!

^{§1}In Italian, a flower is called a fiore or flore.

^{§2}Isaiah 35:2.

We will return to you, Chapter Ein Korin [We do not read], and we have thereby completed Tractate Purim, with Divine mercy. These are the four chapters and these are their mnemonics; "In Adar," "The rich," "Purim," "We do not read."

Happy are you, Tractate Purim, that you began with "foolishness" and concluded with "gold." Happy are the fools which are found on the day of Purim. Great love have You made known to them for He began the Tractate Purim with them.

Happy is the one who has no knowledge on Purim for (on that day) foolishness befits (both) fools and everyone else, for thus did Solomon say, in his wisdom: *Yet guiding my heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly.*³³ *Yet guiding my heart with wisdom: the rest of the year, and to lay hold on folly: during Purim.*

Why does this Tractate close with the chapter, "We are not to read"? Because we are not to read this treatise except when it is neither day nor night.³⁴ For it was written only in jest, to amuse people on Purim. He who reads this treatise is none the worse for it than if he read books on medicine, and similar topics, which prove beneficial to the body and harmless to the soul.³⁵ For the words of this tractate were made up by me, Kalonymos, both the Mishnah and the Gemara. And I call faithful witnesses to testify to this; R. Shakran (the Liar) and R. Kozban

³³Ecclesiastes 2:3.

³⁴Cf. Zechariah 14:7. I.e., we are not to read this treatise except when we are inebriated and cannot tell the difference between day and night.

³⁵Here, I am indebted to Davidson, p. 19.

(the Deceiver), his brother, who are inscribed at the end of the tractate.

If I am in error in regard to anything, may my Maker uphold me, and let it be as if my words are nothing.**

**In his conclusion, Kalonymos urges his fellow Jews not to take offense at his creation.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Masseket Purim of the Seventeenth Century

Structure and Themes

This annotated translation is taken from version five of the seventeenth-century Masseket Purim (מסכת פורים, חלמוד שפריס, Lemberg 1854). It is very likely that this particular version was first printed in Sulzbach in 1814, and only later reprinted in Lemberg, both in 1847 and 1854.¹ Unlike the fourteenth-century Masseket Purim of Kalonymos, this version can claim no one individual as its author. Instead, it is believed that this fifth version of the seventeenth-century Masseket Purim was compiled by Polish Yeshiva students.*

It is important to briefly mention the development and literary history of this popular tractate. In its first version late in the seventeenth century, Masseket Purim was a simpler document. It contained a good deal of aggadic or narrative material and little halachic argumentation. Slowly, over the course of time, Masseket Purim dropped much of the free-flowing narrative style which characterized it early on in favor of a more concise form with a greater emphasis on halacha. Our

¹ Davidson, Parody in Jewish Literature, Part II, p. 172 ff. Davidson demonstrates that, though there are five sometimes significantly different versions of this seventeenth century Masseket Purim, they are actually one and the same parody. This is a translation of the fifth and final version.

*Ibid., Part I, p. 45. This opinion was first suggested by Steinschneider in Letterbode, IX, p. 49.

version is the culminating effort in the development of the seventeenth-century Masseket Purim. It is rather terse, with little narrative material.

Version five does introduce a novel invention. This version presents, for the first time, the parodistic commentaries of Jewish history's greatest minds. "Rashi" is in his place, opposite the "Tosafot," and the commentary of "Rabbi Samuel Edels" appears below them. These remarkable commentaries imitate the originals in a superb fashion and do, indeed, provide important insights into the text itself. A number of times in the course of the translation, I call upon the services of "Rashi." For example, from "Rashi" we learn that rain is a "bad omen" for the Jews on Purim (cf. Chapter 1: "On the eve of the fourteenth..."). The addition of these commentators brings an authentic look to this version of the Masseket Purim to go along with the familiar ring of its words.

Like the Masseket Purim of Kalonymos (though it bears no literary relationship to it), this parody frequently uses word plays and regularly relies upon established hermeneutical rules, such as gezera shava³ to deduce new laws. This Masseket Purim also utilizes gematria to arrive at some rather absurd results!

The themes of this document are easy to see, and are apparent to even the casual reader. Naturally, the first and most pervasive theme is drinking. Throughout the parody, we find

³In Talmudic phraseology, this denotes an analogy of expressions. On the basis of similar phraseology (similar word choice or the appearance of the same word in two contexts), a substantive similarity or identity is created between the contexts.

laws which seek to determine who should drink and how much, which types of inebriating beverages are acceptable and which do not fulfill one's requirement for drinking on Purim. At other points, questions arise as to the extent to which one's beverages can be diluted, and from when it is permitted to drink. Always, and in good Talmudic style, each possible exception is considered.

Another theme which runs throughout the document might be called "hydrophobia" or, more precisely, the caution one must take on Purim to avoid anything resembling water. The Gemara, in Chapter 1: "On the eve of the fourteenth..." ponders the various considerations should "a water pipe run through a city." The Rabbis, in the same chapter, discuss the ramifications of rain on Purim. It is such an important matter that at one point in the initial chapter, the Rabbis conclude: "One who finds water within his house on Purim needs to bury it with dirt...as deep as a dog can dig."

Gematria is utilized two times in the course of the parody. In one instance, in Chapter 2: "All are obligated to drink...", gematria establishes a connection between an historical event and the holiday of Purim:

And Rav Kada said: "That very day on which Lot drank wine was Purim." Even though there is no explicit proof for it, there is an allusion to it: *I lay down last night* (שנא), (and in gematria, (ש"נא) is the same as Purim.

Another time, gematria explains the miraculous appearance before Abraham of three "ministering angels," who came only to drink wine (cf. Chapter 3: "On the eve of Purim...")!

Though not to the same extent as Kalonymos' Masseket Purim, this document, too, reveals a bit about the era in which it was written. For example, in Chapter 4: "All wine is fit for drinking...", we learn that foods such as blintzes and hamantaschen, indeed sweets of all kinds, were specially prepared for Purim.

All in all, this Masseket Purim is an amusing and brilliant parody, both in form and content. According to Davidson,* though it was not published until 1814, it is this tractate, and not the lengthier Masseket Purim of Kalonymos, which has achieved the greatest popularity. This may be due simply to its wider distribution and the very Roman nature of Kalonymos' work. In any case, it is a superb parody, exemplifying the spirit of imitation in man and carrying it off faithfully and with playfulness.

*Davidson, Part I, p. 45.

Wise Guys: The "Talmudic" Discussants

Unlike the Masseket Purim written by Kalonymos, the names of the "rabbis" which appear here do not relate directly to the context in which they appear. The vast majority of names are connected with wine and drinking in some form or manner. Furthermore, the names which follow are less ingenious than in the earlier Masseket Purim and should indicate to the reader that the document's scope is far more restricted and its interests fewer.

"Rabbis" in Order of Appearance:

Hamra--"wine"

Yayna--"wine"

Shtaya--"strong drink"

Shatyan--"drunkard"

Kada--"wine cask"

Dana--"jar"

Shakran--"drunkard"

Rav Yayna the Elder

Shatyan the Great

Rabba--"teacher," "master"

Batzel--"onion"

Shomen--"fat"

Achlan--"glutton"

Ravaya--"drunk," "drunkard"

Tzahakan--"jester," "playful one"

Barza--"bung hole" (the place from which the first gush of wine comes)

Listing of "Rabbis" continued

Magepha--"stopper" (seal on a wine cask)

Suba--"elder," "scholar"

"On the eve of the fourteenth..."

Mishnah

On the eve of the fourteenth (day of Adar) one searches for [i.e., removes] water from houses and courtyards. (However,) every place into which water is not (usually) taken does not require searching.¹

Gemara

From where (in Scripture) is this derived? Scripture says: *Remove evil from within your midst.*² And evil refers only to water, as it is said: *And the water is bad.*³

Rav Hamra said: "Fruit juice is forbidden for drinking on Purim!" What is the reason? On account of that which Scripture says: *That they should make them days of feasting and joy.*⁴ And there is joy only with wine, as it is said: *And wine makes glad the heart of man.*⁵

An objection was raised by Rav Yayna: "If one was unable to find wine, let him drink assis [i.e., wine not fully aged]".⁶ But assis is fruit juice, as it is said: *From spiced wine of the*

¹Cf. Mishnah Pesachim 1:1: "On the eve of the fourteenth (day of Nisan) one searches for leaven by the light of a lamp. (However,) every place into which leaven is not (usually) taken does not require searching."

²Deuteronomy 13:6.

³II Kings 2:19.

⁴Esther 9:22.

⁵Psalms 104:15. Cf. also b. Pesachim 109a.

⁶This objection cites a "baraita" from "Maseket Shikurim"; cf. "Rashi" commentary.

juice (assis) of my pomegranate.⁷ Assis is an exception because it is likened to wine, since Scripture refers to both of them (in the same verse).

Granting (that) assis (may be drunk on Purim), what can one say about honey water? Honey water (also) is an exception because it causes inebriation.

If so, what about honey itself? Honey is bee's (honey), which is not fruit juice.⁸ Consequently, fruit juice (must refer to) brandy (liquor), which should then be forbidden.

But if you say this, too, is it not taught (in a "baraita") that "one who drinks brandy on Purim fulfills his obligation?" (Rather, more correct is the ruling that we have learned earlier⁹ (i.e., our first explanation is the better one), and it supports that which Rav Shatay said that Rav Shatyan¹⁰ said: "A man fulfills his obligation on Purim with any drink which inebriates," even fruit juice.

Rav Kada happened to go to Nabat to sell (or buy) sesame. He found Rav Yayna who was standing and leaning against the side of the doorway. He asked him whether beer fulfills one's

⁷Song of Songs 8:2.

⁸Honey is not derived from fruit (that is, it is not from a similar source), and consequently is not pertinent to the discussion.

⁹In the case of honey water, which inebriates. If the drink inebriates, then one has fulfilled his obligation.

¹⁰This may be a textual error. Text probably should read שתייה דא"ר שתייה דא"ר which is a common formulaic construction in the Talmud. The form printed here is less common.

obligation (to drink) on Purim. He (Rav Yayna) answered him: "No and yes."

(The matter) was undecided until Rav Dana came and said that beer also fulfills (one's obligation). Rav Kada said to him: "How do you know this? From where do you learn this?" He responded: "I am expounding Scripture"--*Do not drink wine or strong drink.*¹¹ We derive from this¹² that beer (strong drink) also fulfills one's obligation.

Now, at this stage of the argument,¹³ the "fruit juice" (mentioned earlier comes) to exclude apple juice and pear juice,¹⁴ but with respect to that which was taught:¹⁵ "If one was unable to find wine, let him drink assis;" that teaching does not also include (i.e., mention) beer (as permissible) to drink on Purim. This is because he teaches (the tanna cited by Rav Yayna) yet leaves something over.¹⁶ And what is this item which is left out? He leaves out brandy!

Rav Shatyan sat and expounded (Scripture): "Sisera was killed on Purim."¹⁷ It is written here: *As evil fell*¹⁸ and it

¹¹Leviticus 10:7.

¹²Namely, from the juxtaposition of beer with wine in the cited verse.

¹³Lit., "Now that we have come this far."

¹⁴The statement of Rav Hamra at the outset would seem to exclude these from the category of permissible drinks on Purim.

¹⁵In the earlier "baraita" according to Rav Yayna.

¹⁶"Rashi": The statement of Rav Yayna is not meant to be exhaustive, only exemplary.

¹⁷Cf. Judges 4:19. Pay heed: Under no circumstances ask for water on Purim as did Sisera.

is said there: *Thou hast begun to fall.*^{1*} Just as the latter verse refers to Purim, so the former verse refers to Purim. Since it was Purim, why did she (Yael) give him (Sisera) milk?^{2*} He made an improper request, so she gave him an improper response. He made an improper request, as Scripture says: *He asked for water.*^{3*} She gave an improper response, as it is said: *He asked for water (but) she gave him milk.*

Rav Shatyan said: "The tree from which Haman was hung was a grapevine, as it is said: *So they hung Haman on the tree.*^{4*} And it is said: *As the vine among the trees.*^{5*} The meaning of tree can be derived by analogy (from the first verse to the second)."

Rav Hamra said: "It would have been fitting for Haman to hang from a barren tree. Why did he merit a grapevine? Because he caused Israel to rejoice on Purim (i.e., through the fruit of the grapevine)."

From houses and courtyards. Why is this teaching stated in regard to both houses and courtyards (isn't this superfluous)? (Both are) necessary, for if it were stated (only) about houses, I might think that it applies only to houses, where it (water) would be in one's immediate domain, but not to courtyards where

^{1*} Ibid., 5:27. This describes the murder of Sisera.

^{2*} Esther 6:13.

^{3*} "Rashi": Since milk is only for drinking and not for getting drunk.

^{4*} Judges 5:25.

^{5*} Esther 7:10.

^{6*} Ezekiel 15:6.

it (water) would not be in one's immediate domain. Therefore, it is stated thusly (to preclude this incorrect inference).

"Every place into which water is not (usually) taken..."

What specifically does "every" mean [i.e., come] to include? It means to include a cellar.

Our rabbis taught: "One who finds water within his house on Purim needs to bury it with dirt. How deep [must he bury it]? As deep as a dog can dig."**

Mishnah

One who has a cistern in his courtyard is obligated on Purim to renounce (possession) from the third partition onward.**

Gemara

It has been taught: "Should a water pipe run through a city, one is forbidden to go near its mouth [i.e., lip] on Purim." How much distance should one keep? Rav Shatyan and Rav Shakran disputed this point. The first said: "Four cubits." And the other said: "As far as the eye can see."** The one who said "four cubits" holds that we do not rule against seeing (the water as a precaution) lest he (thereby come to) drink (from it). And the one who said "as far as the eye can see" holds that we do rule against seeing (the water as a precaution) lest he (thereby come to) drink (from it).

**Mishnah Pesachim 2:3—Rabbai Simeon ben Gamliel says: "Whatsoever a dog is unable to search out [is deemed removed]."

**Cf. Mishnah Eruvin, Chapter 8.

**"Four Cubits"—an area big enough so that the water does not pass from one domain to another.

The master said: "Should a water pipe run..." [i.e., returning to the substance of the cited tradition itself]. Rav Yayna said: "This is taught only in regard to clear (water). However, not in regard to muddy (water)."

What is the reasoning (behind this distinction)? (It is prohibited to approach the water as a precaution) lest he (thereby) come to drink from it, so if the water is muddy, we do not prohibit (approaching) it (since he surely will not drink from it).

This supports that which Rav Dana said, for Rav Dana said: "It is permitted to walk along the banks of the river on Purim." What is his reason? Because one is not inclined to drink from it. Rav Dana (also) said: "It is permitted during Purim to sail on the river aboard a ship which is full of jugs of wine." What is his reason? One is not about to leave the permitted for the sake of the forbidden (i.e., one will not, in this instance, prefer to drink water instead of wine!).

Our rabbis taught: "Should it rain on Purim, one should remain within his house and eat, drink and gladden his heart, for if he ventures out, he transgresses a negative commandment."

Rav Hamra disputed this (ruling): "Your own [water] you may not see, but you may see that belonging to others and to the Most High."²⁷

²⁷Cf. b. Pesachim 5b, where only the leaven that belongs to a certain person may not be seen by him. But he may see that which belongs to others, or to the Most High. So too, in our case, on Purim, one may see rain, because it belongs to the Most High.

(However, another opinion holds that) when it (rain) has fallen to the earth it is accounted as his own, as it is said: *But He has given the earth to the children of men.*²⁰

And from where do you derive that it is a mitzvah to close (one's doors)? Rav Hamra said: "As it is said: *Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee...until the indignation be overpast.*"²¹ Do not read indignation [עֲרִי], rather 'stream' [נָחַל]; and 'stream' refers only to rain, as it is said: *The stream of water passed by.*"²²

And Rav Shatyan said: "We derive this ruling, that it is a mitzvah to close one's doors, from here [i.e., from Isaiah 26:20], as it is said: *It shall pass* and 'passing' refers only to water, as it is said: *The stream of water passed by.*"²³ But 'passing' is written, too, in regard to wine, as it is said: *I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome.*"²⁴ But that is written with respect to a man.²⁵

Rav Kada went out to the market on the day of Purim and when it began to rain, he shut his eyes and ran (back) to his house. What is the prooftext (validating this behavior)? *One should*

²⁰ Psalms 115:16.

²¹ Isaiah 26:19.

²² Habbakuk 3:10.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Jeremiah 23:9.

²⁵ I.e., the wine overcomes a man; it doesn't pass by in a stream. So Isaiah 26:20 can't refer to the passing of wine.

shut his eyes in the sight of evil²⁴—and evil refers only to water, which is bad (on Purim). (One might ask), since he shut his eyes, how was he able to run (i.e., how could he find his way while running)? Rav Kadda is an exception because he was a great man, (so much so) that a miracle happened for his sake.²⁵

Rav Shatyan said: "Rain on Purim is a bad sign [omen] for [the enemies of] Israel."²⁶ To what may the matter be compared? To a slave who prepares a tray (of food) for his master and his master comes and pours a ladle of water on his face.²⁷

Mishnah

One who causes the loss [damage] of another's wine on Purim—
—Rav Shatyan restores twice the amount (of the loss).²⁸

Gemara

²⁴ Isaiah 33:15.

²⁵ There are a number of instances in the Talmud in which Divine intervention affects the fortunes of the truly meritorious. For instance, in Baba Metzia 106a: "Had you been worthy that a miracle should happen on your behalf, it would have happened as in the case of R. Hanina b. Dosa whose goats brought in bears by their horns."

²⁶ The same is true on Sukkot; cf. Mishnah Sukkah 2:9. "Enemies of Israel" is a euphemism for Israel.

²⁷ I.e., the slave's face. Here, the slave, (Israel), would perform his duties (the observance of the feasts and living in booths) but his master (God) only shows his displeasure (on Sukkot, by causing rain).

²⁸ Cf. Exodus 22:3-4 where it is written: If a man causes a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall let his beast loose, and it feeds in another man's field, of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution. It is similar, too, to the discussion in Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:1: "Claims for full damages or half-damages; two-fold restitution." "Rashi" adds: "(Two-fold restitution) in order to compensate for one's embarrassment for not having wine on Purim."

Why does Rav Shatyan act thusly? Rather, read (the "Mishnah"-text as follows:) Rav Shatyan said: "[He] restores twice the amount [of the loss]." What is Rav Shatyan's reason? One (portion is restored) on account of the loss of property; the other (portion is restored) on account of the mitzvah's non-fulfillment.

Rav Shachran required that four (times as much compensation be paid to one who had suffered the loss of his wine). (For): Damage, grief, cessation (interruption) and shame. Damage, according to Scripture('s requirement). Grief, because all of Israel is joyous, yet his appearance is sad. Cessation, for interruption of (his) enjoyment. Shame, for the embarrassment of his neighbor. Are not pain and cessation, then, defined the same way? (No), pain includes the non-fulfillment of the mitzvah. Must we say, then, that Rav Shachran contradicts the Mishnah? Yes, (because) Rav Shachran is a Tanna and may dispute (with other Tannaitic teachings).

It has been said (i.e., in an Amoraic ruling): "It is forbidden to engage in prayer on Purim." (But) those of the schools of Rav Shachran and Rav Yayna said that prayer is required. What is the reason of the first authority? If we say: "Because of drunkenness," let us pray (first) and then drink! Rather (prayer is forbidden) in order not to say: "Grant dew and rain."** But Rav Yayna would pray, and thus would he pray: "Grant wine and beer."

**"Rashi": For a drunkard cannot bring his mind to bear on prayers.

A certain person descended (in front of the ark to lead the Tefillah) in the presence of Rav Shatyan on Purim. He said: "Grant dew and rain" and Rav Shatyan rebuked him. He [i.e., the man] said to him [Rav Shatyan]: "Is the teaching of Rav Shachran unknown to you?" His students said to him: "Our master, has he not already said: '(God) who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall' [in the second benediction]?" (But) the petition (for rain) is (deemed to be) different from the (single) mention of rain.*

How then was this resolved? Rav Kada said: "Our rabbis of the School of Rav Shatyan already outnumbered [i.e., outvoted] those of Rav Shachran and ruled that we pray: 'and grant dew and rain.'"^{**} But the halacha is (that we pray): "and grant wine and beer!"

WE WILL RETURN TO YOU, CHAPTER "ON THE EVE OF THE FOURTEENTH."

*"Rashi": For this prayer is a petition for rain, which is a "bad omen" for Jews on Purim, (as it is on Sukkot).

**Cf. b. Taanith 4a. "Are 'praying for' and 'making mention of' the same thing? The scholars say yes; the halacha is that they are not."

**It should read: "Our rabbis of the School of Rav Shachran already outnumbered those of Rav Shatyan"...Since it was Rav Shatyan who rebuked the man for saying the benediction for dew and rain in the previous paragraph.

"All are obligated to drink..."

Mishnah

All are obligated to drink--both men as well as women, slaves, and handmaidens. Rav Shachran says: "Even domesticated animals, wild beasts, and fowl."¹

Gemara

All are obligated to drink. From where (in Scripture) is this derived? Rav Dana said: "Scripture says, *And that these days should be remembered and kept,*² and remembrance refers only to wine as it is said: *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.*³ Just as remembrance, when mentioned in connection with Shabbat, refers to wine, so, too, when mentioned in connection with Purim, does it refer to wine."

Rav Kada said: "Surely it is not necessary to cite Scripture [at all]! [Rather] it can be derived through argument from minor to major with respect to Passover. If [on] Passover, when one is [merely] saved from slavery and brought to redemption, he is obligated to drink wine, so much the more so [on] Purim, when one is saved from death and restored to life, should he not be obligated to drink wine?"

Whichever master's (teaching) one follows, on this basis I know only that drinking (is required). From where do they derive (that) drunkenness (is required)?

¹Cf. Mishnah Pesachim 2:1.

²Esther 9:28.

³Exodus 20:8 and cf. b. Pesachim 106a.

This is not difficult for the first tanna: Since Scripture finds reason to say: *should be remembered*,⁴ why do I need and kept? If this (additional word) does not refer to drinking, make it refer to drunkenness.

But, according to Rav Kada('s opinion), how does one derive this? Rav Kada will say to you: "'Drunkenness' does not require Scriptural proof; it is a logical inference."

Rav Kada said: "Come and see: Whenever [in Scripture] you find salvation, there you find both salvation and drunkenness." And from where do we learn this? From Noah and Lot.

Noah was saved from the flood, (and about him) it is written: *And he drank the wine and was drunk.*⁵ Lot was saved from the earthquake, (and about him) it is written: *And they made their father...drink wine.*⁶ And it is written after this, *and he perceived not when she lay down, or when she arose.*⁷

If (that is) so (that salvation and drunkenness always go together in Scripture), then with respect to Passover,⁸ too, (there should be a requirement of drunkenness).

(No,) Passover is different, for there the salvation was only from servitude.

⁴Esther 9:28.

⁵Genesis 9:21.

⁶Ibid., 19:35.

⁷Ibid.

⁸"Rashi"—a holiday on which drinking is also obligatory, on which one is obligated to drink four cups.

Rav Kada said: "That very day on which Noah drank wine was Purim. It is written here: *And Noah began,*⁹ and there (in the Book of Esther it is written): *had rest from his enemies.*¹⁰ Just as this second passage refers to Purim, so, too, does the first refer to Purim. And Rav Kada said: "That very day on which Lot drank wine was Purim." Even though there is no explicit proof for it,¹¹ there is an allusion to it: *I lay down last night*¹² (שָׁנָה), (and in gematria, (שָׁנָה) is the same as Purim).¹³

Rav Shachran says: "Even domesticated animals, wild beasts and fowl." Wherein lies the dispute? The first Tanna reasons (as follows): (The Jews) ordained, and took upon themselves, and upon their seed.¹⁴ Upon their seed, and not upon their animals.

But Rav Shachran says: "Scripture says, and upon all who joined themselves to them."¹⁵ (This means) to include domesticated animals, wild beasts, and fowl."

But the other (the first Tanna) may retort: "And upon all who joined means to include gentiles."

⁹Genesis 8:20.

¹⁰Esther 9:16. In Hebrew, a word play on נָח-נָח. By finding נָח in the Book of Esther, Noah's exploits can be said to have happened on Purim.

¹¹I.e., Scriptural hermeneutical proof.

¹²Genesis 19:34.

¹³"Rashi" tells us that the equivalence is obtained by adding the letter value of five (i.e., five letters) to the word שָׁנָה (336). This yields שָׁנָה (341).

¹⁴Esther 9:27.

¹⁵Ibid. They, too, would observe the days of Purim in every generation.

But the other (Rav Shachran) may retort: "Let Scripture simply say: *those who joined*. Why do I need *and upon all* (who joined)? To include domesticated animals..."

But the other (the first Tanna) may retort: "*and upon all* means to include slaves and handmaidens."

But the other (Rav Shachran) may retort: "*and upon all* means absolutely all [including domesticated animals...]."

Some explain (the dispute) thusly: The first Tanna holds that all who were included in the (plotted) destruction are included in the obligation to drink (on Purim). All who were not included in the (plotted) destruction are not included in the obligation to drink (i.e., not cattle). Rav Shachran (on the other hand) reasons that it can be derived by analogy from *rest*, *rest* in conjunction with Shabbat. It is written here¹⁶ (in the case of Purim): *As the days on which the Jews rested from their enemies*, and written there¹⁷ (in the case of Shabbat): *That thy ox and thy ass may rest*. Just as in the latter instance (the commandment includes) domestic animals, beasts, and fowl, so, too, in the former instance (does the commandment include) domestic animals, beasts, and fowl.

Our rabbis taught (a "baraita"): All who become drunk on Purim merit seeing the beauty of the vine in all its distinctive charm. In another "baraita" it was taught: One should always

¹⁶ Ibid., 9:22.

¹⁷ Exodus 23:12.

sell all that he has (if necessary) in order that he may buy wine for Purim.^{1*}

Rav Shachran said: "Once I was walking on the way, and it was Purim, and I had nothing with which to buy wine to drink. I was feeling quite sad [sorry for myself] when [suddenly] a miracle happened to me--I happened upon a cave, and it was Lot's cave!"^{2*} There I found a ladle filled with wine and I became drunk." When Rav Shachran died, Lot went out before him and said: "Happy are you, my son! Happy are you!"

It was said (in an Amoraic ruling): Regarding (the extent of) drunkenness (required) on Purim, Rav Shatyan said: "Until vomiting [overcomes him]."

And Rav Hamra said: "Until sleep [overcomes him]."

What is Rav Shetey-yayin's reason? Scripture says: *Drink, and be drunk, and vomit.*^{3*}

And what is Rav Hamra's reason? He reasons by analogy--take, take from the case of Adam. Take is written here (with respect to drunkenness): *Harlotry and wine and new wine take away the heart.*^{4*} And take is written there (with respect to Adam): *(And the Lord God) caused a deep sleep to fall upon man,*

^{1*}"Rashi"--one has even to pledge his tefillin and mezuzah in order to buy wine for Purim. Similarly, Pesachim 49a, "Let a man always sell all he has and marry the daughter of a scholar."

^{2*}I.e., the same cave in which Lot engaged in drunken, incestuous revelry (Genesis 19:30).

^{3*}Jeremiah 25:27.

^{4*}Hosea 4:11.

and he slept, and he took...²² Just as the latter instance refers to sleep, so, too, the former instance refers to sleep.

Mishnah

All who require immersion—should the time for their purification coincide with Purim, they should immerse in wine. The faithless wife and the Nazirite should drink (wine on Purim), and we do not scruple.

Gemara

Whence are these rulings derived? Scripture says: *I sought in my heart to stimulate my body with wine.*²³ Do not read, *טָהַרְתִּי* (*I sought*), rather (read), *טָהַרְתִּי* (*I purified*).²⁴

• And the faithless wife and the Nazirite should drink and we do not scruple. As for the faithless wife, where do we derive this? Scripture says: *Later, you will drink water.*²⁵ But [now] we fulfill [i.e., fill up] the measure.

And the Nazirite, where do we derive this? Rav Shetey-yayin said: "Scripture says, *And the days that were before shall be lost.*"²⁶ These are the days of Purim, for abstinence is not observed on them.

²²Genesis 2:21.

²³Ecclesiastes 2:3.

²⁴This is an oral word play since the spellings differ.

²⁵Deuteronomy 11:11. "Later" - when in the land of Israel.

²⁶Numbers 6:12. Part of the vows of the Nazirite.

Our Rabbis taught (a "baraita"): "One who is sick on Purim is permitted to drink water."¹⁷ Yet, have we not learned, "all are required to drink wine [on Purim]"? Does not this apply even to one who is sick? No, only to one who is healthy.

But with regard to one who is sick, why not? If this be the case (i.e., the one who is ill is exempt from drinking wine on Purim), what does "all" mean to include? ("All" is meant to include) those who are deaf, dumb, and the minor. Know that this is so, for if you do not hold thuswise, behold it is written in relation to Daniel: *Nor did meat or wine come into my mouth.*¹⁸ Now, what would Daniel have done on Purim? But Daniel was an exception because he was ill, as it is written: *And I, Daniel, fainted, and was sick certain days.*¹⁹

A doctor tending a sick person on Purim may give him water to drink. Rav Kada said: "This ruling applies only in regard to the sick person who faces impending danger [imminent death]. However, a sick person for whom no such danger exists--no!"

Nonetheless, Rav Kada himself did not behave thusly (toward himself). For once, Rav Kada was sick and slightly recovered on Purim. A doctor came and gave him that which a doctor gives a sick person (i.e., medicine). Afterwards, he gave him water, but he (Rav Kada) refused it. He (Rav Kada) said to him (the doctor): "To such an extent, we do not grant a leniency."

¹⁷ Similar leniency is shown toward one who is ill and fasting on Yom Kippur.

¹⁸ Daniel 10:3.

¹⁹ Ibid., 8:27.

When Rav Kada died, a river of wine flowed from his grave. Everyone said: "This is on account of his merit!"

Mishnah

In a place where it is customary to drink unmixed (wine), it is forbidden to dilute. In a place where it is customary to dilute, we do not dilute more than a third (i.e., one-third water to two-thirds wine).²⁰

Gemara

What is the reason that (one should dilute) only as much as one-third? So that a man might still add to his drunkenness while (slightly) neutralizing the taste (harshness).

But we require drunkenness and (here) there is none!

Rav Shachran said: "That which we have learned, as much as a third, pertains only to strong wine. But with regard to weak [wine], one must not dilute it at all."

It has been said: "Wine which has been diluted with water before Purim is forbidden to drink on Purim. Meat which has been cooked with water before Purim is, [however], permissible to eat on Purim."

What is the difference between the former case and the latter case?

Rav Kada said: "In the former case, since it [the dilution] was not done intentionally [with Purim in mind], we scruple lest more [water] have been added than the appropriate measure and, as such, the water [would] spoil the wine [render it unfit for use on Purim]. The reason in the latter case is because the water is

²⁰"Rashi"—This according to the drinking maven. At least 2/3 wine is necessary in order to become drunk.

neutralized in the meat (i.e., it loses its identity and becomes the meat's juices and not water itself)."

WE WILL RETURN TO YOU, CHAPTER "ALL ARE OBLIGATED"

"On the eve of Purim..."

Mishnah

On the eve of Purim, near the hour of Mincha, it is forbidden to drink wine, assis [not fully-aged wine], and all types of inebriating drink, so that, on Purim, one will drink wine with gusto.¹

Gemara

Our Rabbis taught (in a "baraita")²: The pious ones of old would abstain (from wine and strong drink) seven days before Purim (in order to prepare themselves for Purim). However, the later pious ones³ drink and get drunk every day! They said: "Every hour is good for drunkenness."

Mishnah

From what time on Purim may one begin to drink? From the setting of the sun. Those of the School of Rav Shachran and Rav Yayna said: "From the time that the stars come out."⁴

¹A similar discussion appears in Mishnah Pesachim 10:1. The Mishnah instructs one not to eat until nightfall on the eve of Passover. This abstention from food, from Mincha and onward on the eve of Passover, enables one to have an appetite for matzah at the first meal on the festival or Shabbat.

²My feeling is that this refers to the authors of this parody.

³A parody of Mishnah Berakhot 1:1 which asks, "From what time may one recite the Shema in the evening?".

Gemara

Rav Kada said in the name of Rav Shachran: "It is a mitzvah to begin one's drinking early on Purim and to delay its cessation."

What is the Scriptural source (for this opinion)? Scripture says: *They who rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, who continue until night, till wine inflames them!*^a

When Rav Yayna came, he said in the name of Shachran, who heard it (told) in the name of Rav Shatyan (and some said Rav Kada): "All who drink wine on Purim with a full mouth [i.e. with gusto], about them Scripture says: *But let them that love him be as the sun when it comes out in its might.*"^b Just as the sun warms the entire world, so does wine warm the entire body.

It has been taught: "Once, all the sages of the drunkards were assembled in a vineyard at Yavneh where they drank all day and night, and they did not budge from there until they were unable to stand on their feet."^c Our Rabbis taught: "Anyone who neglects to observe the drinking of wine on Purim--five types of afflictions will come upon him. As it is said: *Who cries, woe? Who cries, alas? Who has quarrels? Who has complaints? Who has*

^aIsaiah 5:11.

^bJudges 5:31.

^cAccording to... "Rashi," being able to stand on one's feet separates the men from the boys. The great "Shikkurim" of days past were apparently able to get up on their feet, despite their mind being clouded and mixed up. They were strong men, heroes. This age, however, seems to produce weaker men who drink less, maintain a clear head, yet are still unable to get up on their feet.

causeless injuries? Who has redness of eyes? And it says (immediately) afterwards: *They who tarry long at the wine.*"*

Rav Yayna happened upon Rav Kada. He (Rav Yayna) said to him (Rav Kada): "Let [the] master teach us some Torah." He (Rav Kada) said to him (Rav Yayna), "Thus did Rav Hamra say: 'I remember as a youngster standing before Rav Yayna the Elder and he said: "On this [mortar-shaped] seat Rav Shatyan the Great [once] sat and drank four hin (of wine) on one rock until the rock's face was dulled."' This is as people say: One who drinks continuously, spills out on the rugged ground [i.e., the more drink, the more urination]."

Rabba, the son of Bar Hamra said:⁹ "I have seen the place myself. There was a river, three hundred parasangs wide and as deep [as the distance] between the earth and sky. From it [this river] all the drunkards come to drink." Rav Shatyan said:¹⁰ "I [too] have seen it myself. It was like the Krokha which is between the garonia." What is the "Krokha....?" He said: "It is Klal sfigin." What is "sfigin?" Rav Batzel said:

⁹Proverbs 23:29.

¹⁰Ibid., 23:30. The parody rests on a reworked interpretation of לֹא יִתְמַדּוּ, i.e., not *those who tarry long at the wine*, but *those who tarry before they get to the wine*.

⁹A pun on Rabba bar bar Hannah.

¹⁰The following passage is a parody in form and style of the fanciful tales of Rabba bar bar Hana, in b. Baba Bathra 73b-74a. While the words are unclear, it is apparent that the passage deals with food of unknown character. We know this by looking at the names of the rabbis involved in this discourse, for instance, R. Batzel (onion), R. Shomen (fat) and R. Achlan (food).

"Kaladigin." What is "Kaladigin?" Rav Shomen said: "Atligin." What is "atligin?" Rav Achlan said: "prandranousia."

Mishnah

The only difference between Yom Tov and Purim is in respect to drunkenness.¹¹

Gemara

And no more? Is not there also (the requirement to) disguise (oneself, i.e., put on a costume)? No, only drunkenness is obligatory, disguising oneself is not obligatory, but only a custom. (But) since the customary behavior of Jews is deemed to be Torah, what is the difference?

Rav Dana said: "A certain oldman told me a story, and Ravya was his name. Once the Gentile authorities decreed that Jews may no longer drink wine on Purim. What did they do? They disguised themselves in Gentile-type clothing and put masks on their faces. So they drank and were not recognized. From that time, it became established as a memorial for all generations."

Rav Shatyan said: "Is this not as Scripture says: *For when the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*¹² Do not read *foundations* (הַשְׁתָּרִית), rather, 'drinking' (הַשְׁתִּירִית) [i.e., when drinking is prohibited, what are the righteous to do?!]"

David foresaw that in the future an evil kingdom would reign over Israel and that it would decree that they could not drink wine on Purim. He said (in his psalm): "If the mitzvah of

¹¹Similarly in b. Shabbat 124a and Mishnah Megillah 1:5, "The only difference between festivals and the Sabbath is in respect to [preparing] food for consumption."

¹²Psalms 11:3.

drinking [on Purim] should be abolished, what can the righteous (one) do?"¹² And righteous one refers only to Noah, as it is written: *Noah was a righteous man.*¹⁴ What can he do? (refers to the fact) that he planted a vineyard.¹⁵

Rav Yayna, when he arrived at that Scriptural verse,¹⁶ would cry because (it decrees) the desolation of the vine.

Rav Kada said to him: "Master, why do you cry? Is it not written: *The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines in blossom give their scent?*"¹⁷

He (Rav Yayna) said to him: "You have comforted me, my son, you have comforted me."

Rav Dana said: "At the moment when Joel said, *There shall be no grapes on the vine,*¹⁸ the faces of the drunkards turned black (lit., like the bottom of a pot), as it is said: *All faces are covered with blackness.*¹⁹ (This remained the case) until

¹² Ibid.

¹⁴ Genesis 6:9.

¹⁵ "Rashi": From this we learn that each man should try to plant a vineyard in his own day in order that there should always be enough wine for succeeding generations.

¹⁶ I.e., Psalms 11:3.

¹⁷ Song of Songs 2:13.

¹⁸ This is possibly a copyist's error, or a faulty recollection on the part of the parody's author. The precise words, are found spoken by God in Jeremiah, not Joel. However, Joel reads: *Awake, drunkards, and weep; and howl, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine; for it is cut off from your mouth* (Joel 2:5). And, in verse 7: *He has laid my vine waste.*

¹⁹ Joel 2:6. So often, the ruin, shame and desolation of Israel may be described in terms of an abandoned or destroyed vineyard.

Solomon came and said: *The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines in blossom give their scent.*"**

Rav Yayna said: "The ministering angels appeared before Abraham only to drink wine, as it is said: *For this reason (ך ך) are you come to your servant.*"* [ך] in gematria is the same [as wine, ך], thus, for wine are you come.]"**

WE WILL RETURN TO YOU, CHAPTER "ON THE EVE OF PURIM"

**Song of Songs 2:13; Solomon is traditionally believed to have authored the Song of Songs.

*"Others" hold that these "men " appeared before Abraham in order to predict the birth of Isaac (Genesis 18:5).

**Both ך and ך equal the number 70.

"All wine is fit for drinking..."

Mishnah

All wine is fit for drinking (on Purim) except for wine whose appearance has changed (because something has fallen into it), and wine which has fermented, and wine which has been diluted with water.

Gemara

What is "all" meant specifically to include? (It is meant) to include brandy. From where in Scripture do we learn that brandy is also called wine? From where in Scripture do we learn this?! Behold, we learn it from the specificity of the Mishnah's language (i.e., we do not need Scriptural proof--the intent of the Mishnah suffices). Rather, (ask) where is it alluded to in Scripture. Scripture says: *The wine inflames them.*¹ Do not read, *wine inflames them* (וַיִּשְׁתְּ), rather, "their inflamed wine (וַיִּשְׁתְּ)." ² What difference does it make (whether or not brandy is called wine)? (The difference is) in the receiving of a reward (for the fulfillment of the commandment to drink wine on Purim).

Mishnah

(In regard to) jugs of wine which one opened before Purim, he is not permitted to drink from them on Purim. (In regard to)

¹ Isaiah 5:11.

²By dropping the yod, the word and meaning are significantly altered and this word play emerges.

jugs of wine which one opened on Purim, it is forbidden to drink from that which is left over after Purim.*

Gemara

What is the reason for the first part (of the ruling)? We are cautious lest water may have fallen into it (in the meantime).⁴ And we have learned (in a "baraita")⁵: "Wine with which water has been mixed--one does not fulfill with it his obligation [to drink wine on Purim]."

What is the reason behind the latter (part of the ruling)? It is to serve as a penalty, for we penalize one who transgresses the negative commandment of: Do not leave any remainder of it.⁶

Mishnah

One is obligated in regard to three things on Purim: eating, drinking and frivolity.

Gemara

Our rabbis taught: Eating, in what respect? Meat and fish, roasted meat and boiled meat and things prepared in a deep pan. What is prepared in a deep pan? Hamantaschen and pastries and tarsinin and blintzes and all types of sweets.⁷ What is the Scriptural justification? Scripture says: *And the sending of*

³This is an effort to insure as much drinking as possible on Purim.

⁴The wine which has been opened before Purim may be "contaminated" with water. Only such wine which is still unopened on the eve of the 14th (cf. chapter 1) is permitted.

⁵This is a parody on Exodus 12:10 and refers to the Passover sacrifice.

⁶"Rashi": fine flour baked with butter and cream; kuchen and kreplach.

portions. Don't read portions (manot), rather, "breads" (lahmaniot).⁷ Rav Achlan said: "[This refers to] all types of sweets [which are acceptable]."

Drinking: how so? Ten logs. It is taught in the Mishnah: "One hundred cups." And how many (logs) constitute a cup? Ten logs. And how much is a log? Approximately the measure of three kavs. And a kav is (the equivalent of) four middot. And each middah (measure) must be a large one. Beyond this amount, all those who add (i.e., drink more), it is added to them (i.e., their life is lengthened). And all those who (drink) less, it is taken from them (i.e., their life is shortened).

The question was raised: If one repeatedly interrupted his drinking, what (is his status; has he fulfilled his obligation)? Shall we say that the (interruptions) join together (to constitute a cessation) or not, and that he must start drinking all over again? The question remains unanswered.

The question was raised: (Is it permissible) for one to drink brine or vinegar or to eat salty food after drunkenness in an effort to mitigate its effects? Shall we say that such drunkenness is a mitzvah which one thereby undermines, or not? This question (too) remains unanswered.

Frivolity. From where is this derived? It is to be derived by analogy from "doing", "doing" (לַעֲשׂוֹת). It is written here: to do and elsewhere: God is making fun of me.⁸ Just as

⁷Play on words.

⁸Gezera Shava: Genesis 6:21 and Esther 9:22.

there, the *doing* refers to *making fun*, so here, the *doing* refers to *making fun*.

Our rabbis taught: One is obligated in regard to three things on Purim: eating, drinking and frivolity. If he ate and did not drink or drank and did not laugh, he has not fulfilled his obligation until he eats, drinks and laughs, as it is said: *A threefold cord is not quickly broken.*⁹

Mishnah

A man is obligated to try and find companions with whom to jest on Purim about Haman and his sons, and wicked ones like him, whose end will be bitter as wormwood.¹⁰

Gemara

From whence these words? Scripture says: *The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities.*¹¹ If (they did this) in order to drink, a public gathering is not necessary. So we must infer that it refers to frivolity.

Our rabbis taught: It once happened that Rav Kadda and Rav Yayna and Rav Ravaya and Rav Tshakan, and Rav Batzel, and Rav Shomen and Rav Achlan, and Rav Shatyan, and Rav Shachran, were gathered together in Rav Dana's cellar where they were eating and drinking and jesting throughout the night about Haman and his sons and the wicked ones like him who had perished from the world, when their students arrived and said: "Our masters, the

⁹Ecclesiastes 4:12.

¹⁰"Rashi": no less than three constitute a chavurah. Two, however, will do in a pinch.

¹¹Esther 9:2.

time for reciting the morning's Shema has arrived!"¹² They responded: "Drinking precedes prayer, as it is written, *So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shilo and after they had drunk....and prayed.*"¹³ (This proves that) eating and drinking precede prayer. (Prayer) should be recited in public and drinking should be done in assembly.

The question was raised: If there are three groups, one of which eats, and one of which drinks and one of which jokes, which one is to be preferred? Rav Achlan said: "The one which eats is to be preferred as Scripture says: *And the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to disport themselves.*"¹⁴ So we see that eating [comes first] and then drinking, then laughter."

Rav Tshakan, in such a situation, would behave thusly: with one hand, he would drink and, with the other, he would gesture playfully. This is alluded to in Scripture, as it is written: *Take hold of this; but do not withdraw thy hand from that either.*"¹⁵

And about his sons. It was said: Why were Haman's ten sons hanged?

Rav Shomen said: "In order to shame them."

¹²Reminiscent of the rabbis who, on the eve of Passover, would study the laws of Passover until being interrupted in order to recite the morning's Shema. This is a parody of the baraita in the Passover Haggadah (to which there is a parallel in Tosefta Pesachim 10:12).

¹³Samuel I 1:9. Later, in verse 10, Hannah prays.

¹⁴Exodus 32:6.

¹⁵Ecclesiastes 7:18. A slightly inaccurate citation. It should read: "תחזק בזה וגם מזה אל תנח." "

And Rav Barza said: "In order to exploit them [i.e., to sell their carcasses like meat in the market]."

Rav Magepha said: "To show off their wealth."

Rav Suba said: "To show off their wisdom."

Rav Ravaya said: "To each of these [explanations] there is a refutation except to the explanation of Rav Shomen. To the explanation of Rav Barza, [one may retort]: There is [among Haman's sons] Purata [i.e., 'cow' in Aramaic], and how can a man exploit his neighbor's cow?"¹⁶ To Rav Magepha, who said: 'To show off their wealth,' one [may retort]: 'But there is Dalfon, who was poor.'¹⁷ And to Rav Suba, who said: 'To show off their wisdom,' one [may retort]: 'But this is Vizata, about whom tradition has it that he was a great fool.' Rather, the reason [why Haman's sons were hanged] certainly must be to shame them."¹⁸

Rav Ravaya said: "One who loses his money on Purim, they ply him with drink until he becomes drunk, as it is written: *Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish.*"¹⁹

Our rabbis taught: Should a man not find another to participate in frivolity with him, he should induce his family to

¹⁶M. Baba Metzia 3:2. Why should that other traffic with his fellow's cow! But, rather, the value (of the cow) is returned to the owner.

¹⁷Perhaps a play on the root, ṭṭṭ = dripping?

¹⁸"Rashi"—this, the "rabbis" teach us, is the reason that Purim is not considered חג מועד, a festival, for on such an occasion the embarrassment of another is never permitted.

¹⁹Proverbs 31:6. Play on the word, ṭṭṭ—"lose, perish".

drink in order that they might join in the frivolity with him about Haman (and) in order to fulfill the commandment of frivolity, as it is written: *Behold Isaac was sporting with Rebecca his wife*** about the destruction of the wicked, who are like beasts.

And if he has no wife, he should sport with himself,** as it is written: (God) *made fun of me*, (reading rather, "I will sport with myself") nonetheless.

Rav Shatyan said: "Even though they [sages] said that it is obligatory to drink on Purim, one who drinks all year long is praiseworthy.** Moreover, he is called [by Scripture] a merry soul, as it is said: *He that has a merry heart has a continual feast.*"**

WE WILL RETURN TO YOU, CHAPTER "ALL WINE", AND THUS CONCLUDES THE TREATISE ON PURIM.

**Genesis 26:8.

**Ibid., 21:6. "Rashi": he should dance and sing with all his might.

**"Rashi": provided that he show some restraint.

**Proverbs 15:15.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

It seems more correct to say that from as far back as Biblical times down to nearly the beginning of the nineteenth century, to judge by the available evidence, they (Jews) were a rather humorless people.¹

Throughout the course of Jewish history, Jews have met with adverse and often hostile conditions in the lands of their dispersion. Nevertheless, time after time and in each generation, witty personalities have come forward to relieve the tension, if only for a moment. It did not take long until the first joke was recorded:

Because there were no graves in Egypt thou hast taken us away to die in the wilderness?²

During the Talmudic period, sages playfully tackled and ridiculed the pursuit of wealth and the display of excess pride. With their tongues planted firmly in their cheeks, the rabbis sculpted aphorisms in praise of wine:

Pour in the wine, and secrets flow;
Pour in the wine, and reason will go.³

Drink the wine till you're drunk
and sin within you shall have sunk.⁴

¹Sid Altman, The Comic Image of the Jews, (Associated University Press), Cranbury, New Jersey 1971, p. 123.

²Exodus, 14:11.

³b. Sanhedrin 38a.

⁴b. Berachot 29b.

Despite persecution and exile, humor was always there; an amusement, something with which to pass an idle hour or to provide relief from day to day pursuits and concerns. Rarely, though, was it systematically applied or meant to be taken seriously.

Only during the age of the great parodists, in Spain and Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, did individuals begin to treat literary humor seriously. Writers such as Judah ben Solomon Al-Harizi and Judah ben Isaac ibn Shabbetai combined their familiarity with Arabic and Romance cultures and literary styles with their knowledge of Jewish traditions and teachings to amuse their contemporaries and to comment upon their excesses.

Other parodists, like Immanuel of Rome and Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, were masters of exegetical parody. Fully-conversant in the sacred writings of their people, they used these texts to create intricate parodies which mirrored, in style and form, the oldest and most treasured works of Israel. Their parodies, like those of the Spanish parodists before them, took into account both the world of their fathers and the society in which they moved. In both places, they found the raw material from which to develop their parodies.

These parodies, so skillfully done, both amused and informed, criticized and reformed. Their intense scrutiny of people, institutions and things, crafted through use of sacred sources such as the Talmud, assisted readers in realizing the foibles of their own generation.

The Purim parodies translated and annotated here were part of this tradition of humor. Especially in the work of Kalonymos, the intuitive desire of man to imitate life and to present it humorously was realized. Kalonymos selected from all the different characters which make up any society--the miser, the glutton, the lazy man, the drunkard--and placed them in front of the mirror so that they might ask: To what can I be compared? Who am I? How do others see me?

Such an investigation may be humorous on account of the absurd caricatures which are created, but it is not natural. Indeed, the type of humor found in these parodies is artificial and intended specifically for the insider to Talmudic studies. Such is the case, particularly, in the seventeenth-century Masseket Purim, which rarely comments on the secular world outside of the Yeshiva walls. Unquestionably, the seventeenth-century document is much different than its forerunner. It is less complex and its range of interests are limited. It reflects a certain lack of vision and a narrow range of interests.

Earlier, we noted that many had objections to the parodies presented here. But these objections were unwarranted, for the intent of the parodist was never to disparage or to ridicule the original. Instead, their goal was to draw from the genius of an earlier form and to emulate it, to provide a vehicle for satire and, perhaps most importantly, to amuse. Kalonymos, and the Yeshiva students after him, might have chosen another model from which a parody could emerge, but they did not. Instead, they elected to turn their attention and creativity toward the Talmud

and to discover in it yet another way to draw life and meaning from its pages. With reverence, and not with disdain, they turned the text on its head and unveiled in it an underlying potential for playfulness.

And this was, indeed, the rather simple intention of the parodies presented here: to play and to enjoy. As Kalonymos wrote in his colophon: "It was written in mere fun to amuse people on Purim." Certainly, these parodies provide some insight into the culture and the period in which they were originally written. At some points, one can identify social criticisms and, particularly in Kalonymos' work, some desire for reform. But these were not the primary intentions of the authors. Instead, the parodies found here provided yet another way with which to experience the joy and merriment intrinsic to the festival of Purim--the holiday of release--during which time the vanquished become the victors, and restraint and convention are thrown to the wind.

It should be obvious that humor and parody have been vital to the psychic needs of the Jewish people. They have served as coping devices throughout the long years of dispersion amidst the nations of the world. Further, it may be said with fairness that

"tears and laughter lie very close together in Jewish humor and the Jewish parodist is not always merely a clown, but more often he is a preacher disguised in the garb of a jester."⁸ Such was the goal of these parodists: to provide amusement in a clever and creative way, while moving their readers to view themselves and their world in a novel and unexpected light.

⁸ Israel Davidson, Parody in Jewish Literature, (Columbia University Press), New York, 1907, p. XIX.

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