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MOURNING IN THE AGADA

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
New York, New York

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I thank my parents for their diligent aid, Mr. Philip Miller and his staff for their willing assistance, Rabbi Lee Bycel for freely offering the wisdom of his experience, my classmate, Martin Levy, for his listening and for his sharing, my soon-to-be wife and colleague, Deborah Zecher, for her enthusiastic support, and my teacher, Professor Eugene B. Borowitz, for his patient guidance.

## CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. Synopsis of the Work	1
B. The Nature of the <u>Agada</u>	2
C. The Study of the <u>Agada</u>	4
II. <u>AVELUT</u> IN THE <u>BIBLE</u>	7
A. Introduction	7
B. The Mourning for an Individual	7
C. The Mourning for a Collective Tragedy	10
D. The Mourning of Nature and the Mourning of the Spirit	11
E. The Comforting of Mourners	13
III. INDIVIDUAL <u>AVELUT</u>	18
A. Introduction	18
B. Who is Mourned	18
C. The Behaviors of Mourning for an Individual	20
1. Introduction	20
2. The Psychology of Mourning for an Individual	20
3. The Sociology of Mourning for an Individual	25
4. The Theology of Mourning for an Individual	27
D. The Intensity of Mourning for an Individual	32
E. The Limit of Mourning for an Individual	38
IV. COLLECTIVE <u>AVELUT</u>	47
A. Introduction	47
B. The Objects of Mourning for a Collective Event	47
C. Those Who Mourn Collectively	48
D. The Theology of Mourning for a Collective Event	49



E. The Behaviors of Mourning for a Collective Event	50
F. The Intensity of Mourning for a Collective Event	53
G. The Limit of Mourning for a Collective Event	55
H. Royal, Natural, Spiritual, and Divine Mourning	56
V. THE COMFORTING OF MOURNERS	64
A. Introduction	64
B. The Importance of Comforting Mourners	64
C. Those Who Comfort Mourners	66
D. The Means of Comforting Mourners	67
E. The Comforting of Mourners as a Function of Time	72
VI. AVELUT IN COMPARISON	77
A. Introduction	77
B. The Mourner and the Leper and the Excommunicant	77
C. Mourning and Marriage	79
VII. CONCLUDING COMMENTS	83
A. The Nature of the <u>Agada</u>	83
B. The Mourner as Depressive	85
C. The Mixture of Sorrow and Joy	86

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Synopsis of the Work

The present study examines connotations of the root סalc in the agada. It describes the rabbinic views of the mourner's feelings, the relationship of the mourner's feelings and behavior, the mourning for a family member in comparison to the mourning for a national calamity, the dissipation of the feelings and behaviors of mourning, the comforting of mourners, and the relationship of God to mourning and to the comforting of mourners.

The first chapter, the introduction, discusses the nature of the agada, and the methodology for the study of the agada employed in the present work. The second chapter describes avelut in the Bible as the basis for avelut in the agada. The third chapter considers the feelings and the behaviors the rabbis in the agada associate with the mourning of a close marital or blood relationship. The fourth chapter depicts the rabbinic conception of mourning for a national calamity. The fifth chapter deliniates the rabbinic way of comforting the mourner. The sixth chapter presents the rabbinic contrast of mourning to categories as marriage and excommunication. The concluding chapter examines several issues related to avelut in the agada.

In brief, the rabbis expand the biblical conception of avelut. They define mourning as the feeling and behavioral expression of sorrow over the death of a close relative or over a national calamity. In response to a personal bereave-

ment, the mourner feels sad and personally vulnerable. The distress of breavement must be expressed through such actions as the sleeping on an overturned bed and sitting in silence. Gradually, with a reduction in both the grief and in the special actions of mourning, the mourner returns to normal feeling and routine activity.

The rabbis demand and describe mourning for a collective calamity as the death of a national leader and the destruction of Jerusalem. Collective mourning is so critical a rabbinic concept that the rabbis describe God, Himself, as a mourner following national trauma.

The rabbis also require and depict the comforting of mourners by neighbors who provide food for the bereaved family. Even God consoles avelim, reciting the Blessing of Mourners for their comfort.

The rabbis contrast the status of one in mourning to the situation of the leper, the excommunicant, a woman and to one getting married.

#### B. The Nature of the Agada

The agada must be viewed in relation to the halacha. The halacha is legal literature. It stipulates the behaviors a Jew must perform to fulfill the covenantal relationship with God.<sup>1</sup> The halacha deals with the forbidden, the required, and the permitted.<sup>2</sup>

The rabbis want Jews to meet the rabbinic legal demands. The sages believe that Jews will observe their laws if they are aware of the laws' existence.

Thus, the rabbis try to educate their audience in the ways of the halacha, encouraging popular halachic observance. The agada, one rabbinic educational aid, helps teach Jewish law through the exemplification of legal observance, the clarification of the legal imperatives, the rationalization of the law and the encouragement of its keeping, all in a style designed to arouse the listener's interest.

The rabbis believe their audience will imitate the behaviors of well known, respected individuals. Thus, in the agada, the rabbis describe the legal observance of prominent biblical and rabbinic figures in their attempt to encourage widespread halachic performance. The rabbis, aware that precise halachic definition will facilitate appropriate halachic observance, also provide anecdotal exemplification of the keeping of their teaching to present a more refined definition of the halacha.

The agada also provides legal rationalization. The rabbis assume the people will meet legal requirements if they comprehend the bases of such requirements. Thus, in the agada, the rabbis offer reasons for the formulation and the practice of rabbinic law.

In the agada, the sages also root their law in the biblical text through the process of asmachta.<sup>3</sup> The agada records the rabbinic attempt to find biblical support for their dicta. By linking rabbinic law to the Bible, the rabbis enhance the value of their teaching, giving greater authority to their word.

The agada encourages its listener to fulfill the law. In its description of the rewards of legal fulfillment and the punishments of legal violation, the agada supports Jewish legal commitment.

The agada also arouses the interest of its listener.<sup>4</sup> Through legend, through metaphor, and through pun, the agada excites its audience, adding color and humor to study of the law.

Through its means of legal explication, the agada inspires the collective desire to keep rabbinic law, including those regulations pertaining to mourning.

#### C. The Study of the Agada

The agada elucidates the concepts of the sages in a disorganized manner. Agadic literature rarely presents a continuous discourse on a single theme.<sup>5</sup> The rabbis usually weave several ideas into one agadic text.

Agadic study necessitates the arrangement of scattered though related material into an integrated form. In structuring agadic texts, one may select a key word, representing a specific rabbinic value, trace the word through the literature, and organize the individual citations according to their various connotations. The present work employed such a method of linguistic investigation and structure.

The above procedure has its problems. Since no comprehensive agadic reference has been written, not every reference to a given term or concept can be discovered. In addition, some passages related to the idea under study will not contain

the selected key word. Thus, due to the methodology of investigation, some agadic passages must be omitted. Nevertheless, one can obtain a reliable, in-depth knowledge of the agada and its concepts through the utilization of the extant aids to agadic study.

References employed in this study include M. Gross' Otsar Haagada, the Kosovsy concordances to the Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, and Midrashei Halacha, indices to English translations of Midrashic works as Braude and Kapstein's Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, and J. Slotki's index to the Soncino Midrash Raba, and the indices to Midrashic anthologies as Bialik and Ravnitsky's Sefer Haagada and B. Cohen's index to Ginzberg's Legends of the Jews.

1. Karff, Pp. 8-9.
2. Urbach, Vol. I, P. 3.
3. Kadushin, P. 124.
4. Moore, Vol. I, P. 162.
5. Urbach, Vol. I, P. 4.



## CHAPTER II

AVELUT IN THE BIBLEA. Introduction

The rabbis base agadic concepts on biblical literature. As noted on P. 3, the rabbis employ the process of asmachta to root their teachings in the Bible. The rabbis also use the Bible as their conceptual source. They borrow biblical ideas, continuing in their conceptual pattern or shifting the biblical ideational mood. Thus an understanding of the biblical view of avelut would be helpful in the study of avelut in the agada. This second chapter deals with avelut in the Bible.

B. The Mourning for an Individual

There are no biblical commandments to mourn the death of a blood relative. However, the Bible prohibits the mourner from taking certain action. The mourner may not cut his hair:

You shall not<sup>1</sup> shave the front of your head  
for the dead.

The Bible also forbids self-mutilation:

You shall not make any gashes in your flesh<sup>2</sup>  
for the dead, or incise any marks on yourself.

The Bible assumes the bereaved will mourn in some way. The biblical text does not specify that one should mourn any particular manner because the Bible presumes people mourn in some way.

The Bible describes mourning for a parent, for a wife, and for sons.

Joseph mourns his father for seven days.<sup>3</sup> In poetic image, a child bows in gloom in avelut for his mother.<sup>4</sup>



God tells Ezekiel not to mourn his wife.<sup>5</sup> The biblical reader may assume Ezekiel would have mourned his wife had he not received God's special instructions. Jacob, believing Joseph dead, mourns his son many days.<sup>6</sup> David rents his garments in mourning his son, Amnon,<sup>7</sup> and cries bitterly in avelut for Absalom.<sup>8</sup> The most bitter mourning is over the death of an only son.<sup>9</sup>

Biblical narrative presents a number of behavioral signs of mourning. The Bible associates the abstinence from food, bathing, cosmetic anointment, and hair cutting with mourning. The Bible describes the renting of one's clothing, the wearing of sackcloth, sitting, and prostration as signs of mourning. The Bible also depicts the mourner walking barefoot, keeping silent, weeping, covering the head, and wearing ashes.

The mourner fasts. Thus David does not eat after the burial of Abner.<sup>10</sup>

The mourner refrains from cosmetic anointment. The woman of Tekoah does not anoint as she feigns mourning.<sup>11</sup>

As noted, the Bible prohibits the cutting of the mourner's hair.<sup>12</sup> When Moses tells Aaron, Elazar, and Etamar

"Do not dishevel your hair."<sup>13</sup>

in mourning for Nadab and Abihu, the Bible implies that the mourner usually lets his hair grow unkempt. However, Job shaves his head in his avelut.<sup>14</sup>

The mourner usually tears his clothing. Jacob rents his garments in mourning for Joseph.<sup>15</sup> David rips his

clothing following the report of Amnon's death.<sup>16</sup> Job tears his mantle in mourning,<sup>17</sup> and his friends tear their mantles in sympathy.<sup>18</sup>

The mourner dons special mourning garments.<sup>19</sup> Jacob wears sackcloth in his mourning for Joseph.<sup>20</sup> One wears sackcloth in the particularly bitter mourning for an only son.<sup>21</sup>

The mourner holds a special body position. David lies on the ground in avelut for Amnon.<sup>22</sup> One bows in gloom in mourning for a mother.<sup>23</sup> Job sits on the ground during his mourning.<sup>24</sup>

The mourner goes shoeless. God tells Ezekiel to wear shoes though mourning his wife, implying that the mourner walks barefoot.<sup>25</sup>

The observance of silence is a sign of mourning.<sup>26</sup> Thus Aaron keeps silent following the death of Nadab and Abihu.<sup>27</sup>

The Bible depicts weeping as a sign of mourning, referring to weeping and mourning in poetic parallel:

Behold, my harp is for mourning and my organ  
is for the voice of weeping.<sup>28</sup>

David cries bitterly believing Absalom has died.<sup>29</sup>

The mourner wears a head covering. Feeling disgrace after honoring Mordechai, Haman hurries home

his head covered in mourning.<sup>30</sup>

God especially instructs Ezekiel

Put on your turban<sup>31</sup>

as he is to abstain from mourning his wife. From God's command, one may infer that the mourner usually covers his

head. Jeremiah speaking in metaphor says that one mourning an only son covers his head with ashes.<sup>32</sup>

Though biblical law prohibits self-mutilation,<sup>33</sup> it may have been practiced by Jews.<sup>34</sup>

In the Bible mourning for an individual is a function of time. Joseph keeps seven days of avelut for his father.<sup>35</sup> He mourns no longer than a week. Jacob and Ephriam mourn their sons "many days".<sup>36</sup>

### C. The Mourning for a Collective Tragedy

There are no biblical laws regarding collective mourning.

The Bible describes collective mourning following the death of a leader, as Moses<sup>37</sup> the witnessing of an ominous prophetic vision,<sup>38</sup> the issuance of an anti-Jewish proclamation,<sup>39</sup> a military defeat,<sup>40</sup> and the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>41</sup>

The biblical signs of collective and individual mourning are generally alike.

The Bible describes fasting in collective avelut. After Saul's burial, the men of Yavesh-Gilead fast for seven days.<sup>42</sup> Following a Jewish military defeat marked by the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, David and those with him abstain from food.<sup>43</sup> The Jews of Persia fast in anticipatory mourning for their impending destruction.<sup>44</sup> In his avelut, Daniel says

I ate no pleasant bread, neither meat nor wine came to my mouth.<sup>45</sup>

Ezra abstains from bread and from water in mourning for collective transgression.<sup>46</sup>

As in individual mourning, one observing collective mourning refrains from cosmetic anointment. Isaiah, through

his poetry, states that avelei tsiyon, those mourning for Jerusalem, do not anoint.<sup>47</sup> Daniel does not anoint for the three full weeks of his mourning.<sup>48</sup>

The Bible forbids the cutting of one's hair in mourning for any dead:

You shall not...shave the front of your heads for the dead.<sup>49</sup>

Yet Amos associates collective mourning and baldness:

I will put...tonsure on every head.<sup>50</sup>

Biblical figures tear their clothing in collective mourning. David and others rent their garments after a military defeat marked by the deaths of Saul and Jonathan.<sup>51</sup> Joshua tears his clothing following the Israelite loss at Ai.<sup>52</sup>

The Bible notes that there are special garments for individual and collective avelut. God declares

I will put sackcloth on all loins<sup>53</sup>

in mourning. The Jews of Persia don sackcloth in mourning their expected destruction.<sup>54</sup>

The Bible associates weeping with collective as well as with individual mourning. David and his men weep following the battlefield deaths of Saul and Jonathan.<sup>55</sup> For thirty days, the Israelites shed tears for Moses.<sup>56</sup>

The Bible uses the terms misped, lament, nehi, wailing, and the exclamation, ho, woe, in context with collective mourning. In a dismal prophecy, uttered to encourage the repentance of sinning Israelites, Amos envisions that

בְּכָל־מִקְדָּם יִלְלִי וְיִבְכֵּי  
 בְּכָל־חֵמְלָם יִלְלִי וְיִבְכֵּי  
 בְּכָל־חֵמְלָם יִלְלִי וְיִבְכֵּי

In every square there shall be lamenting,  
 In every street cries of "Ah, woe!"  
 And the farmhand shall be called to mourn,  
 And those skilled in wailing to lament;  
 For there shall be lamenting in every vineyard, too,  
 When I pass through your midst

--said the Lord.<sup>57</sup>

Persian Jews also lament upon receipt of Ahashuerus' decree of death.<sup>58</sup>

The Bible describes the use of afar, earth and ayfer, ashes as signs of mourning. Israelites place earth on their heads mourning their defeat at Ai.<sup>59</sup> Avelei tsiyon employ ashes in an unspecified manner.<sup>60</sup> The Jews of Persia lay in ashes mourning their expected decimation.<sup>61</sup>

The priests do not offer sacrifices during collective mourning:

Offering and libation have ceased  
 From the House of the Lord;  
 The priests must mourn who  
 Who minister to the Lord.<sup>62</sup>

#### D. The Mourning of Nature and the Mourning of the Spirit

The prophets depict the mourning of nature, poetically equating human evil with the avelut of animals and the earth. Through metaphor, the prophets encourage Israel to shun sin and embrace righteousness. In foreseeing the destruction of Jerusalem, Micah envisions his lamenting

As sadly as the jackals  
 As mournfully as the ostriches. <sup>63</sup>

In the words of Jeremiah,

The land mourns because of a curse;  
The pastures of the wilderness are dried up.  
For they run to do evil,  
They strain to do wrong.<sup>64</sup>

For this the earth mourns,  
And the skies are dark above <sup>65</sup>

Through the frightening image of the mourning of nature,  
the prophets urge Israel to repent.

The Bible poetically describes the mourning of the soul  
for the body it has left:

But his flesh pains him  
And his soul mourns him.<sup>66</sup>

This is the only reference to spiritual mourning in the  
Bible.

#### E. The Comforting of Mourners

No biblical law requires the comforting of mourners.  
The Bible assumes friends of the bereaved will act to console  
the mourner for his loss and therefore need not explicitly  
require the practice. However, the Bible encourages its  
reader to comfort the mourner, symbolically associating the  
act of attending the house of mourning with wisdom:

It is better to go to a house of mourning than  
to a house of feasting; for that is the end of  
every man, and a living one shall take it to  
heart. Vexation is better than revelry; for  
though the face may be sad, the heart may be  
glad. Wise men are drawn to a house of mourn-  
ing and fools to a house of merrymaking.<sup>67</sup>

The biblical writer also uses the term bait marzayach as  
a synonym for bait haavel.<sup>68</sup>

The Bible also describes the comforting of the mourner.  
When Jacob believed his son Joseph dead, all Jacob's  
sons and daughters sought to comfort him;

but he refused to be comforted, saying, "No,  
I will go down mourning to my son in Sheol".<sup>69</sup>

The bereaved ate a mourner's meal and drank from a cup of consolation. Jeremiah warns that Israel will not take this comfort of a mourner as long as the land is full of sinful behavior:

They shall not break bread for a mourner to comfort him for a bereavement, nor offer one a cup of consolation for the loss of his father or mother.<sup>70</sup>



1. Dt. 14:1.
2. Lv. 19:28.
3. Gn. 50:10.
4. Ps. 35:14.
5. Ezek. 24:16-18.
6. Gn. 37:34.
7. II Sam. 13:31.
8. II Sam. 19:2.
9. Jer. 6:26; also, Amos 8:10.
10. II Sam. 3:35.
11. II Sam. 14:2.
12. Dt. 14:1.
13. Lv. 10:6.
14. Job 1:20.
15. Gn. 37:34.
16. II Sam. 13:31.
17. Job 1:20.
18. Job 2:12.
19. II Sam. 14:2.
20. Gn. 37:34.
21. Jer. 6:26.
22. II Sam. 13:31.
23. Ps. 35:14.
24. Job 2:13.
25. Ezek. 24:17.
26. Ps. 30:12-13.
27. Lev. 10:3.



28. Job 30:31.
29. II Sam. 13:36.
30. Est. 6:12.
31. Ezek. 24:17.
32. Jer. 6:26.
33. Lv. 19:28.
34. Jer. 16:6.
35. Gn. 50:10.
36. Gn. 37:34; I Ch 7:22.
37. Dt. 34:8.
38. Dan. 10:3.
39. Est. 4:3.
40. Josh. 7:6.
41. Neh. 1:4.
42. I Sam. 31:13.
43. II Sam. 1:12.
44. Est. 4:3.
45. Dan. 10:3.
46. Ezra 10:6.
47. Isa. 61:3.
48. Dan. 10:3.
49. Dt. 14:1.
50. Amos 8:10.
51. II Sam. 1:11
52. Josh. 7:6.
53. Amos 8:10

54. Est. 4:3.
55. II Sam. 1:12.
56. Dt. 34:8.
57. Amos 5:16-17.
58. Est. 4:3.
59. Josh. 7:6.
60. Isa. 61:3.
61. Est. 4:3.
62. Joel 1:9.
63. Micah 1:8.
64. Jer. 23:10.
65. Jer. 4:28.
66. Job 14:22.
67. Ecc. 7:2-4.
68. Jer. 16:5.
69. Gn. 37:35.
70. Jer. 16:7.

### CHAPTER III

#### INDIVIDUAL AVELUT

#### A. Introduction

The rabbis describe the people one mourns, the feelings and behaviors associated with mourning an individual, the variations in the intensity of mourning an individual, and the upper and lower limits of individual mourning.

#### B. Who is Mourned

In the halacha, Raba cites the obligation to mourn one's five nearest kin. He does not specify the five kin he has in mind,<sup>1</sup> probably because, by his time, most people knew who they were required to mourn.

In the agada, the rabbis describe mourning for immediate blood relatives and for relatives by marriage. The rabbis associate avelut with the death of parents, siblings, wives and children.

A son mourns the passing of his father.<sup>2</sup> Isaac mourns on the day of Abraham's death.<sup>3</sup> R. Yosi, as the Bible,<sup>4</sup> tells of Joseph's seven days of mourning for Jacob.<sup>5</sup> Elezar mourns Aaron.<sup>6</sup>

Mothers are mourned in the agada. Isaac mourns the passing of his mother for three years, according to R. Yosi.<sup>7</sup> R. Shmuel b. Nachman tells of Jacob's crying, mourning the death of his mother, Rebecca.<sup>8</sup>

The agada describes mourning for siblings. Moses and Aaron sit in avelut for their sister, Miriam.<sup>9</sup> In another citation, Moses mourns his brother, Aaron.<sup>10</sup>

One mourns one's wife. As a sign of mourning

Sarah, Abraham sits and abstains from prayer.<sup>11</sup> R.

Tarfon mourns his wife though, out of necessity, he proposes marriage to his sister-in-law at his wife's graveside.<sup>12</sup>

No agadic description of a wife mourning her husband was discovered.

The rabbis depict the mourning of parents for their children. Adam and Eve sit and cry for Abel.<sup>13</sup> Jacob mourns twenty-two years for Joseph.<sup>14</sup> Elisheva's joy over the priesthood of her sons, Nadab and Abihu, turns into mourning when they die.<sup>15</sup>

As in the Bible,<sup>16</sup> David grieves in mourning for Absalom.<sup>17</sup> Job keeps silent in avelut for his sons and daughters.<sup>18</sup>

R. Simon says one mourns with a family member one mourns for. Isaac is not required to mourn when his grandson, Joseph, is believed dead. However, he mourns in sympathy with his son, Jacob.<sup>19</sup> In another citation, Joseph eats and drinks while his father mourns. The rabbis take a dim view of his not fasting while his father is an avel.<sup>20</sup>

There is no mourning for the loss of property in the halacha or in the agada:

R. Eliezer's woman slave died. His students came to comfort him. When he saw them...he said, "Didn't I teach you that we do not stand in a comforter's line after the burial of slaves, we do not say the mourners' blessing over them, nor do we offer condolences for them. What do we say for a slave? What we say to someone upon the death of his ox or donkey, 'May God replenish your loss.'" <sup>21</sup>

The rabbis describe mourning for non-relatives with whom one feels close:

When Moses died, Joshua mourned strongly, crying, "My father! My father! My teacher! My teacher! My father who nurtured me! My teacher who taught me Torah!"<sup>22</sup>

Joshua mourns Moses even though they have no blood or marital relationship. To the rabbis, Moses was Joshua's rav, his teacher. A rav is like a father and therefore should be mourned. Jacob cries for the death of his wet nurse as strongly as he cries for the death of his mother. Jacob mourns the woman who cared for him, Deborah, as he mourns a member of his family. The rabbis presume a deep emotional attachment between Jacob and Deborah.<sup>23</sup>

### C. The Behaviors of Mourning for an Individual

#### 1. Introduction

Rabbinic acts of mourning symbolize psychological, social, and theological rabbinic values. Thus this section examines the relationship of the mourner to the self in its study of connotations of behaviors of individual avelut that are significant primarily to the avel. It views individual avelut in relationship to the community, looking at the social connotations of behaviors of individual avelut. Also, in its study of the theology of individual avelut it analyzes individual avelut with respect to God.

#### 2. The Psychology of Mourning for an Individual

The rabbis believe that the avel's behavior reflects the avel's emotions. What the avel does is based upon what the avel feels. Thus, this section on the psychology of individual avelut first discusses the rabbinic conception of the mourner's internal state and then looks at the mourner's self-

directed conduct.

The rabbis describe the mourner as severely distressed. The mourner is called a mari nefesh, an embittered soul.<sup>24</sup> The mourner feels burdened, as if his soul weighs heavily.<sup>25</sup> Bar Abin identifies the deeper source of the mourner's sorrow. The mourner is not concerned about the deceased, but about himself. He is preoccupied with his bereavement:

Cry for the mourners, not for the deceased  
who now rests. We survivors are the ones  
grieving.<sup>26</sup>

R. Levi says that the avel is afraid of his own death:

For the first three days of mourning, the mourner feels as though a sword rests between his thighs. From the third day of mourning to the seventh day of mourning, the mourner feels as though the sword is outstretched against him at the street corner. From the seventh day on, the mourner feels as if the outstretched sword passes him in the market.<sup>27</sup>

To R. Levi, the avel feels menaced by an overhanging sword. The sword symbolizes the mourner's fear that he himself is going to die. Thus, to the rabbis, mourning is the fear of one's own demise. The mourner is more concerned about himself than about the deceased.

The mourner's dread of death is inescapable. As the sword is omnipresent, death threatens wherever the mourner goes. The avel is powerless as he faces his presentiment. The passage of time, symbolized by the sword's withdrawal, partially eases the avel's fear. But the mourner, himself, cannot lighten the weight of his overbearing concern.

The mourner's feelings affect the mourner's behavior. The sorrow and fear of avelut cause the mourner to treat

himself in an irregular manner. The mourner is so upset, that he meets personal needs marginally or neglects them entirely. The mourner's basic life functions of eating, sleeping, sex, dress, grooming, and speech are disturbed by his state of consternation.

The mourner does not customarily eat as David,<sup>28</sup> who in the Bible, abstains from food after the burial of Abner.<sup>29</sup> In the agada, Isaac abstains from food following the assumed death of his grandson, Joseph.<sup>30</sup> Joseph, who eats and drinks when he should be mourning, is punished for his violation of avelut.<sup>31</sup>

The halacha requires the mourner sleep on an overturned bed. The rabbis desire that the mourner constantly consider his status as an avel. Thus they upset the mourner's bed to make the mourner aware of his avelut:

R. Yona and R. Yose both quote R. Shimon b. Lekesh: Why does the mourner sleep on an inverted bed? So that he be woken at night and reminded that he is a mourner.<sup>32</sup>

The rabbis forbid the mourner to have sexual intercourse.<sup>33</sup> The rabbis exemplify their negative attitude toward those who partake of sex during mourning:

The carcass of one fellow engaging in sexual intercourse during avelut was hauled off by swine.<sup>34</sup>

To the rabbis, burial is a sign of respect. The remains of this man who had sex were not properly interred. The rabbis feel that sex during avelut is as dishonorable and disgraceful as acting to insure one's remains go unburied upon one's death.



If necessary, one may wed during avelut but may not immediately consummate the marriage. R. Tarfon, needing someone to tend to his children following the death of his wife, wedded as an avel, but let pass the first thirty days of mourning before consummation of the relationship.<sup>35</sup>

The prohibition against sex during avelut is implied by the term הפלת המטה "use of the bed" is hampered by הפלת המטה "inversion of the bed". Overturning the bed is a symbol for sexual abstinence.

The rabbis believe that the mourner has a low sexual desire. R. Levi compares the feeling associated with avelut to the feeling one would have when a sword is placed between one's thighs.<sup>36</sup> The sword of mourning is a symbolic threat of genital dismemberment. The avel fears bodily harm and does not consider having sex. The rabbis believe that the sexual urge is reduced during mourning.

The rabbis restrict the mourner's bathing and cosmetic anointing.<sup>37</sup> As in the biblical account of the woman of Tekoah who is told not to anoint while feigning avelut,<sup>38</sup>

A mourner is forbidden to wash, as it is written, "Do not anoint with oil."<sup>39</sup> And bathing is implied by anointing.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, in the agada, Isaac does not anoint when he mourns Joseph.<sup>41</sup> The agada also clarifies the law on the mourner's bathing, legally permitting the pleasure of bathing to a mourner suffering physical pain or severe emotional distress. R. Gamliel bathed on the night of his wife's death:



His students asked: Did you not teach us, rabbi, that a mourner is forbidden to wash? He said: My<sup>42</sup> health is not like everyone else's. I am sick.

According to R. Abba, the Priest, who quoted R. Yosi, the Priest, the sons of R. Yosi b. Hanina died in succession. R. Yosi's avelut was considered "heavy" and he was allowed to bathe.<sup>43</sup>

The Bible prohibits the cutting of the mourner's hair.<sup>44</sup> The biblical mourner lets his hair grow unkempt.<sup>45</sup> However, the Bible also tells of Job who shaves his head in avelut.<sup>46</sup> In the halacha, the rabbis infer that only a priest cuts his hair in mourning. All others let their hair grow in avelut.<sup>47</sup>

The biblical and rabbinic mourners rent their clothing. In both the Bible and the agada, Job tears his garments.<sup>48</sup>

As the woman of Tekoah,<sup>49</sup> the mourner must leave his garments unlaundered.<sup>50</sup>

The mourner is to sit as did Job in the Bible.<sup>51</sup> Jacob sits in avelut for his wet nurse.<sup>52</sup> Moses and Aaron sit and mourn Miriam's death. Their standing symbolizes the end of avelut for Miriam.<sup>53</sup>

The mourner is to walk barefoot. Thus when God told Ezekiel to wear shoes in mourning his wife,<sup>54</sup> the rabbis infer that everyone else is to walk shoeless.<sup>55</sup> Hiyya requests his ministering disciples to remove his sandals when he is in avelut.<sup>56</sup> The mourner has no need for shoes. The mourner sits, and may as well be barefoot. Since the avel goes nowhere, the avel does not wear shoes.

The mourner must keep silent. The Bible tells of Aaron's

silence following the deaths of Nadob and Abihu.<sup>57</sup> The mourner's abstinence from speech is, in the agada, symbolized by the lentil, eaten at the meal of comfort. The sealed cleft of the lentil represents the mourner's keeping silent:

As a lentil has no mouth, the mourner is forbidden to speak.<sup>58</sup>

The lentil has no mouth as a mourner has no mouth.<sup>59</sup>

The rabbis reflect the biblical association of weeping with avelut.<sup>60</sup> Adam and Eve sit and cry after Abel's death.<sup>61</sup> Isaac sheds tears in mourning Joseph.<sup>62</sup> Jacob weeps for for his wet nurse and for his mother.<sup>63</sup> Joshua cries and laments the passing of Moses.<sup>64</sup>

The Bible prohibits self-mutilation as a sign of mourning.<sup>65</sup> There is no reference to the rabbinic practice or prohibition of self-mutilation in the agada. However, the mourner is to be guarded at night.<sup>66</sup> During the day, the mourner is surrounded by comforters who would stop him if he attempted to cut his flesh. At night, he is alone. A guard would prevent him from attempting self-mutilation. Perhaps the rabbis did not discuss self-mutilation because, by their time, the practice had become so abhorrent, no one performed it.

### 3. The Sociology of Mourning for an Individual

The avel's behavior can be seen in social perspective. The mourner is forbidden to exchange greetings. He must cover his head and abstain from work. These behaviors demonstrate the mourner's withdrawal from the community.

The mourner may not share words of welcome in the accustomed manner:

Our rabbis taught that the mourner may not extend or acknowledge greetings during the first three days of avelut. From the third day to the seventh day of avelut, the mourner may respond to another's greetings, but he may not be the first to greet. After the seventh day of avelut, he may extend and acknowledge greetings as usual.<sup>67</sup>

Ezekiel was forbidden to greet during avelut for his wife.<sup>68</sup>

The prohibition of the avel's greeting is related to the quiet the avel must keep.<sup>69</sup> Greeting would break the avel's silence.

The mourner's lip must be covered and his head must be muffled. Both lip and head were probably covered simultaneously. Ezekiel was instructed to leave his lip uncovered as he mourned his wife.<sup>70</sup> The rabbis infer that everyone else is to cover their entire head while they mourn.<sup>71</sup> R.Yosef covered his head during avelut, arousing public attention.<sup>72</sup> R. Helbo says the mourner is one who covers his lips and cries.<sup>73</sup> The covering of the lip bespeaks the avel's status to the community:

Israelites walked to the Temple on Shabbat and sat between the Temple's two gates of entrance... some people entered the mourner's gate with covered lips. The covered lips of the mourners alerted the seated Israelites to their status as avelim. Upon seeing the mourners, the seated Israelites would say, "May the One dwelling in this House comfort you."<sup>74</sup>

As the Bible, the agada tells of Haman who covers his head as he mourns his disgrace.<sup>75</sup> The mourner's covered lip arouses communal attention and elicits the community's words of comfort. Also, the covered lip is related to the silence

observed during avelut. It shows the community that this person is a mourner and may not converse.

The mourner is forbidden to work. The prohibition of labor is based upon the biblical passage in which God says

I will turn your festivals into mourning.<sup>76</sup>

Thus the rabbis infer

as labor is forbidden on a festival, a mourner is forbidden to work.<sup>77</sup>

Though the rabbis prohibit work during the seven days of avelut, a mourner in dire economic circumstances is permitted to work after three days of mourning.<sup>78</sup>

#### 4. The Theology of Mourning for an Individual

The theological dynamics of avelut are consistent with the rabbinic attitudes regarding divine retribution. In the rabbinic model of divine retribution, God rewards those keeping his law and punishes those ignoring or violating the commandments. Humans have the freedom to choose between good and evil acts. Retribution is then ordained according to the merits of the unimpeded behavioral selection.<sup>79</sup>

Avelut falls under a number of constructs within the rabbinic system of divine retribution.

According to one rabbinic interpretation, sin is the indirect cause of mourning. Sinful behavior brings God's punishments of death and mourning.

In another view, mourning is a mitsva, the fulfillment of divine will, and the mourner is rewarded either with the forgiveness of one's sins, with protection from evil, or with

a share in the world to come. The rabbis also claim that ignoring of the requirement to mourn will bring punishment.

The rabbis say that one mourns because one has sinned. As noted earlier, mourning is a sorrowful, frightening and undesirable experience. The rabbis claim that the world was free from transgression and the punishments of death and mourning before the expulsion from Eden. The sin of eating of the forbidden tree brought the chastisements of death and mourning into the world.<sup>80</sup>

The rabbis describe the recompense for mourning to induce their listeners to mourn. The rabbis tell that God forgives the sins of those fulfilling his commandments.<sup>81</sup> Thus the rabbis teach, through hyperbole, that the performance of the mitsva of mourning an adam kasher, a righteous person, brings pardon for all one's iniquities.<sup>82</sup>

Avelut protects the mourner from harm, the punishment for sin. Aaron follows the commandment to mourn at the door of the tent of meeting. As

One fulfilling a commandment will not know  
evil<sup>83</sup>

his mourning was a safeguard. He was shielded from the flames that ended the lives of Nadab and Abihu, his two non-mourning sons.<sup>84</sup>

The rabbis employ hyperbole to encourage mourning by describing its messianic rewards. How shall we bring about the coming of the age of redemption?



Shmuel said: It is sufficient if a mourner properly observes his avelut.<sup>85</sup>

Thus Joseph mourns Jacob in this world. His avelut will be turned to joy in the world to come. In reward, he will witness the restoration of Jerusalem.<sup>86</sup>

The rabbis warn against the violation of avelut with a description of brutality and disgrace awaiting the non-mourner:

The carcass of one having sex during avelut was hauled off by pigs.<sup>87</sup>

Actions of individual mourning depict the avel's relationship to God. Rabbinic theology is evident in the interaction of the avel and the mitsvot in general, as well as between the avel and acts as prayer, study, in the overturning of bed, and in the covering of the head.

There are two views of the avel in relation to the mitsvot. According to one perspective,

the mourner is exempt from the fulfillment of all the commandments.<sup>88</sup>

In another citation, the mourner is obligated to honor all divine directives because

הוא זקוק לכל דבר של מצוה

he needs each mitsva.<sup>89</sup>

The mourner does not worship as usual. The avel is exempt from prayer.<sup>90</sup> Abraham did not worship while mourning Sarah.<sup>91</sup> The mourner should not go to synagogue on the first Shabbat of his avelut. On the second Shabbat, he attends the synagogue service but does not sit in his usual seat.<sup>92</sup>

The rabbis justify the prohibition against wearing tefillin:

אבל אדם לא יתעורר  
מקדומו ליהנות מן המצוה  
הוא ע"י כבודו ודעתו

A mourner is forbidden to wear tefillin as God said to Ezekiel, "Wear your turban." <sup>93</sup> From this, the rabbis infer that everyone else is forbidden to wear tefillin.<sup>94</sup>

The term תurban, turban, symbolizes beauty and the tefillin which are considered beautiful.<sup>95</sup>

Neither an avel or an onen may bring sacrifices, echoing the biblical description of the cessation of sacrificial offering during collective avelut.<sup>96</sup> One presenting a sacrifice must not feel bereaved but feel at peace with himself and feel complete:

אבל אינו מביא קרבנות והוא רשאי  
אשר יביאם ביום שישם ולא ביום שישם אמן

An avel does not send his sacrifices, as it is taught: R. Shimon says, "Shelaimim" <sup>97</sup> When one is shalem but not when one is an onen.<sup>98</sup>

The rabbis use the terms avel and onen interchangeably.

In the halacha, the mourner may not fulfill the mitsva of study:

An avel is forbidden to study, as God told Ezekiel, "Quiet".<sup>99</sup>

The mourner may not study the Pentatuch, the Prophets, the Writings, the Mishna, the Midrash, halachot, or agadot. One may read or teach new material.<sup>100</sup> R. Judah permits study of

of the books of Lamentations, Job, and the sad parts of-  
Jeremiah. He adds that

children are exempt from school because  
scripture says, "The precepts of the Lord  
are right, rejoicing the heart." 101

The joy of study of God's law is inconsistent with the  
sorrow of avelut. However, if the community's only avail-  
able instructor is in mourning and the community requires his  
services for their fulfillment of the mitsva of study, he may  
teach.<sup>102</sup> In this light, the agada provides examples of  
rabbis who studied and taught while mourning:

The son of R. Yosi of Tsipori died. R. Yosi  
went to the house of study and taught the  
entire day.<sup>103</sup>

R. Hanina b. Gamliel discussed halachot and agadot at a  
house of mourning.<sup>104</sup> When R. Yehuda b. Elai was in  
mourning, he whispered his teachings to R. Hanania b. Akabia  
who transmitted them to a translator who spoke the lesson  
aloud.<sup>105</sup>

The mourner must sleep on an overturned bed. Bar Kapara  
believes that people were created with the potential of eternal  
life. People can live forever, just as God. But through  
their sin, they lose their immortality. God punishes their  
transgression by inflicting death, breaking the analogy between  
human and divine immortality. The overturned bed symbolizes  
the deceased, who is no longer in God's eternal image:

As Bar Kapara taught, "People are a likeness of  
my divine image. I have upset their likeness  
because of their sins. Let your bed be overturned  
because of it." 106

The mourner's head is to be covered.<sup>107</sup> R. Dimi believes



head covering is a sign of the mourner's cursed state. The curse is related to the sin which caused the death of the one being mourned. He compares the curse to the curse of the woman. The woman is cursed as Eve who ate of the forbidden fruit and brought death and mourning into the world.<sup>108</sup>

Feldman explains the mourner's state existentially. He believes that the mourner is estranged from God. Avelut is a punishment for sin. The mourner, in this state of transgression, is withdrawn from God. The mourner is tame, ritually impure for having fulfilled the requirement for burial of his deceased. Sin and tumah have placed the mourner at a distance from God. Thus the mourner does not fulfill the mitsvot of prayer, tefillin, study, instruction, or offering sacrifice. He sleeps on an overturned bed and wears a turban as symbols of his remoteness from God.<sup>109</sup>

#### D. The Intensity of Mourning for an Individual

The severity of individual avelut varies with the physical condition of the remains of the deceased and with time.

The intensity of individual avelut is a function of the state of the body of the deceased. The decomposition of the deceased results in the soul's departure and a peak in the avel's grief. On the third day, the mourner realizes that the deceased will not return to life. This triggers a psychological reaction. His mourning reaches its highest intensity when he is forced to admit the deceased is dead:

Bar Kapara taught: The third day of avelut is the most severe. Prior to the third day, the soul of the deceased hovers above the grave, believing it will return to the body. On the third day, the soul sees that decay has made the deceased's facial appearance unrecognizable and it abandons the body.<sup>110</sup>

The intensity of avelut varies as a function of time. Avelut begins with the conclusion of aninut and avelut, periods distinct from one another.<sup>111</sup> Aninut, initiated by the death of a relative, is characterized by the exemption from the positive time-bound commandments. There are two reasons why the onen is freed from mitsvot as the recitation of the shema and the wearing of the tefillin. The onen sees his relative lying before him and his mind becomes confounded.<sup>112</sup>

The onen cannot perform the mitsvot with proper kavana while his deceased is unburied. His mind is preoccupied with his special requirement to tend to the remains of his deceased. He is disoriented. He is deeply disturbed and cannot summon the appropriate ritual intent.<sup>113</sup> According to another source, the onen is freed from the positive time-bound mitsvot to enable him to devote his full attention to the funeral and the burial of the deceased.<sup>114</sup>

The degree of avelut is related to the passage of time. There are a number of temporal demarcations in avelut. The first, third, seventh, and thirtieth days and the first, third and twenty-second year each signify the end of a stage of mourning or the conclusion of mourning.

Avelut commences with the conclusion of aninut, the initial stage of bereavement. The close of the burial service marks the transition from aninut to avelut:

R. Ashi said: When does avelut begin? When the rolled stone closes the grave. <sup>115</sup>

During aninut, the deceased is the object of the attention of the halacha and of the survivors. The remains of the deceased must be ritually purified and properly buried during aninut. During avelut, the avel becomes the focus of the halacha and the community. <sup>116</sup>

The rabbis speak on the basis of their observation of the emotions associated with mourning. In their experience, the severity of the avel's feeling and the quantity of mourning behavior decrease with time. The first day of avelut begins with the sealing of the grave and ends at sunset. According to one citation,

The bulk of the bitterness lasts for one day. <sup>117</sup>  
Other sources claim that some of the sorrow endures beyond the first sunset:

Mourning is usually most severe on the first day. It eases with the progression of time. <sup>118</sup>

The end of the third day signifies a decline in the intensity of avelut:

For the first three days of mourning, the mourner feels as though a sword rests between his thighs. After the third day...the mourner feels as though the sword is outstretched against him at the street corner. <sup>119</sup>

Initially, the mourner feels as though he is going to die. His fear of death eases on the third day, symbolized by the sword's withdrawal. Also, the conclusion of the third day brings the mourner into greater social interaction. While the mourner is forbidden to greet or respond to greetings during the first three days of avelut, he may respond

to greetings on the fourth day.<sup>120</sup> Though the mourner is to abstain from labor for seven days, he may work to prevent economic hardship after day three.<sup>121</sup>

By the conclusion of the seventh day, avelut has significantly tapered or disappeared. The threat of death, represented by the overhanging sword, no longer faces the mourner. It hovers at a distance.<sup>122</sup> The mourner feels more distant from his demise, symbolized by the sword's withdrawal. His social behavior returns to normal. He goes back to work.<sup>123</sup> He greets and responds to greeting as usual.<sup>124</sup> The rabbis describe the seventh day as the last day of avelut. R. Yosi says

Jacob, our father, was mourned seven days by Joseph, as is written, "He mourned his father seven days." <sup>125</sup>

The institution of a week of avelut is also attributed to Moses.<sup>126</sup>

The seven day requirement to mourn resembles the seven days of the leper's quarantine,<sup>127</sup> the seven days of the wedding feast,<sup>128</sup> and the seven days of the festivals.<sup>129</sup>

Mourning is then observed for thirty days. The mourner may not take a wife or attend a wedding feast for thirty days. The rabbis condone marriage during avelut under extenuating circumstances but the marital relationship should not be consummated. When R. Tarfon's wife died, he encountered financial difficulty. He quickly married his late wife's sister who tended to the children while he worked. However he did not consummate the marriage until thirty

days had passed.<sup>130</sup>

The feelings of mourning are strongest on the first day and gradually weaken until the twelfth month.<sup>131</sup>

Mourning does not usually last for more than one year. However, in exceptional instances in the agada, individuals mourn more than is legally required. Isaac mourned his mother for a total of three years; one year because Sarah was his mother, one year for her righteousness, and one year for her prophecy.<sup>132</sup> He honored his mother with this extended mourning period. Also, Jacob mourned Joseph for twenty-two years.<sup>133</sup>

One should not mourn once the mourning period has ended:

"A time for crying", at the time of mourning,  
"and a time for laughter", after mourning. "A  
time for lamenting", at the time of mourning,  
"and a time for dancing", after mourning.<sup>134</sup>

To some rabbis the halacha requires the practice of avelut on the Shabbat. For example, the mourner should not attend synagogue on the first Sabbath of avelut. He is to attend synagogue on the second Sabbath but he is not to sit in his usual seat nor is he to speak to anyone. On the third Sabbath, he is to sit in his usual seat, still not conversing. On the fourth Sabbath he is to attend synagogue as usual.<sup>135</sup>

To some rabbis in the agada, as Abaye and R. Meir, there is no avelut on the Sabbath. R. Yosef permits Sabbath mourning under certain conditions:



Abaye met R. Yosef as R. Yosef was entering and leaving his house on the Sabbath with a covered head. Abaye said: Do you not believe sir, that there is no mourning on the Sabbath?  
 R. Yosef quoted R. Yohanan: "One may mourn privately on the Sabbath." 136

R. Meir subtly reprimands a group that comforts mourners on the Sabbath:

R. Yosi b. Halafta praised R. Meir to the people of Tsipori. He said to them, A great and holy man." The people of Tsipori responded, "Once he saw people standing in a comforter's line on the Sabbath. R. Meir said to them, "Peace to you!" They said to him, "Is this the man you praise?" R. Yosi responded, "Know how great this man is. He came to tell you there is no mourning on the Sabbath." 137

According to halacha, there is no avelut on a festival because

it says, "You should rejoice on your feast." 138

The commandment to celebrate Pesach, Sukkot, and Shavout, is a positive mitsva incumbent upon the community. Avelut is a positive mitsva incumbent on an individual. Thus the commandment to celebrate a festival overrides the mitsva of avelut. 139 However, the agada provides an example of the comforting the mourners on Sukkot. Since people comforted mourners on Sukkot, others must have mourned on Sukkot:

R. Elezar b. Tsadok says: This was the custom of the people of Jerusalem: A person would leave his house with his lulav in his hand... he went to visit the sick and comfort mourners with his lulav in his hand. 140

There is no anticipatory mourning for an individual:

A mortal does not know what the future will be. He does not mourn until the deceased dies. 141

An epikoros asked R. Yehosua: Do you believe God knows the future?

R. Yehoshua said: Yes

He said: Then why is it written, "God regretted?" 142

R. Yehosua said: Did you ever have a son?  
 He said: Yes.  
 R. Yehosua said: Did you rejoice when he was born?  
 He said: I rejoiced. I was glad.  
 R. Yehosua said: Did you know he was to eventually die?  
 He said: When it is time to rejoice, rejoice!  
 When it is time to mourn, mourn! 143

Esau would not avenge his stolen birthright during his father's lifetime. He looked forward to the death and mourning of his father as a time for striking a counterblow against Jacob. The rabbis view Esau's anticipation of his father's avelut with disdain.<sup>144</sup>

According to R. Yohanan, a report of the death of a relative received thirty days after the death or later, requires one day of avelut.<sup>145</sup> The delayed news of death elicits less sorrowful feeling and behavior than ordinary.

#### . The Limit of Mourning for an Individual

The rabbis outline clear minimum and maximum limits for mourning behavior.

The behaviors discussed in this section are the lower bounds of avelut. Generally, the deceased's immediate blood and marital relatives must fast, sleep on an overturned bed, rent their clothing, walk shoeless, keep silent, cover the lip and head, and refrain from sex, bathing, cutting the hair, laundering garments, extending and receiving greetings, and from the performance of mitsvot as worship, tefillin, sacrifice and study. These rules are generally in effect for seven days.

The rabbis caution against the violation of these minimal halachot of avelut. Joseph ate and drank instead of mourning and met with punishment.<sup>146</sup>



The carcass of one fellow engaging in sexual intercourse during avelut was hauled off by swine. 147

The rabbis circumscribe an upper limit for mourning behavior.

The mourner need not suffer excessive personal discomfort nor financial hardship because of his avelut. One who is physically ill is permitted to bathe. The invalid, R. Gamliel, thus washes himself while in mourning. 148

Though the mourner may not labor for seven days under ordinary circumstances, one may return to work after three days if this halacha would bring excessive economic harm. The mourner himself determines if his grief is excessive or if his finances are endangered, warranting his violation of avelut.

The rabbis say God desires to limit excessive mourning to demonstrate their concern that the avel may over-mourn. Following the death of Moses, the rabbis say Joshua

mourned many days until God said to him,  
"Joshua, how much more will you mourn?" 149

The avel's mourning behavior should not cause the death of anyone:

The well gave water because of Miriam's merit, as is written, "Miriam died there" 150 and immediately there was no water for the community of Israel. When the well ran out, the people began to assemble about Moses and Aaron as is written, "The people gathered around Moses and Aaron" 151 Moses and Aaron sat and mourned for Miriam. God said to Moses and Aaron, "Why are you mourning? They will die of thirst, get up, take your staff, and provide water for the people and for their animals." 152

1. MK, 20a.
2. YS, P. 1082.
3. BB, 16b; also, Sota, 14a.
4. Gen, 50:10.
5. PRE, 39b; also, BR, 100:13.
6. PRK, 19:2.
7. PRE, 73a; MHG, Gn, 23:1.
8. EcR, 7:2:3, BR, 81:5.
9. YS, P. 521.
10. PRK, 19:2.
11. MA, Gen, 23:3.
12. EcR, 9:9:1.
13. PRE, 49b.
14. BR, 84:20-21.
15. LR, 20:2; PRK, 26:2-3.
16. II Sam, 19:2-3.
17. BR, 27:4, 32:7
18. MK, 28a.
19. BR, 84:21.
20. Tanh, Vaysh, 8.
21. Ber, 16b.
22. Sifre, Dt, 31:14.
23. BR, 81:5; EcR, 7:2:3; PRK, 3:1.
24. San, 70a.
25. LR, 34:13.
26. MK, 25b.
27. MK, 27b; also, BR, 100:7.

28. Taan, 30a.
29. II Sam, 3:35.
30. BR, 84:21.
31. Tanh, Vaysh, 8.
32. JMK, 16b.
33. MK, 24a.
34. MK, 24a.
35. EcR, 9:9:1.
36. MK, 27b.
37. MK, 21a.
38. II Sam, 14:2.
39. II Sam, 14:2.
40. MK, 15b.
41. ER, 84:21.
42. Ber, 2:6.
43. Taan, 13a-b.
44. Dt, 14:1.
45. Lev. 10:6.
46. Job, 1:20.
47. MK, 14b.
48. Job, 1:20; BR, 57:4, JMK, 18a.
49. II Sam, 14:2.
50. MK, 15a.
51. Job, 2:13.
52. PRK, 3:1.
53. YS, P. 521.
54. Ezek, 24:17.

55. MK, 15b.
56. Pes, 4a; MK, 20b.
57. Lev, 10:6.
58. BR, 63:14.
59. BB, 16b.
60. II Sam, 13:36; Job, 30:31.
61. PRE, 49b.
62. BR, 84:21.
63. PRK, 3:1, BR, 81:5.
64. Sifre, Dt, 31:14.
65. Lv, 19:28.
66. Ber, 54b.
67. MK, 21b.
68. MK, 15a.
69. MK, 15a; BR, 63:14.
70. Ezek, 24:17.
71. MK, 15a.
72. MK, 24a.
73. SSR, 1:7:1.
74. PRE, 41b.
75. Est, 4:3; AE, 4:3.
76. Amos, 8:10.
77. MK, 15b.
78. Tanh, Mik, 4.
79. Moore, V. I, Pp. 113-114, 454.
80. BR, 15:7.
81. Schechter, P. 294, Urbach, V. I, P. 464.

82. MK, 25a; Shab, 105b.
83. Ecc, 8:5.
84. Tanh, Shem, 1.
85. San, 97b.
86. BR, 100:13.
87. MK, 24a.
88. MA, Gen, 23:3.
89. DR, 9:1.
90. MA, Gen, 23:3.
91. MA, Gen, 23:3.
92. JMK, 14a.
93. Ezek, 24:17.
94. MK, 15a.
95. Suk, 25b.
96. Joel, 1:9.
97. Dt, 27:7.
98. MK, 15b.
99. MK, 15a.
100. MK, 15a, 23a; Taan, 30a.
101. Taan, 30a.
102. MK, 21a.
103. MK, 21a.
104. MK, 23a.
105. MK, 21a.
106. MK, 15a-15b.
107. MK, 15a.
108. Eruv, 100b; BR, 15:7; also, PRE, 34a.

109. Feldman, Fp. 94, 104-106.
110. BR, 100:7; PRE, 80b; Shab, 152a; EcR, 12:6:1; JMK, 14a; LR, 18:1.
111. Epstein, P. 78.
112. DR, 9:1.
113. Soloveitchick, Pp. 76ff.
114. Lamm, Pp. 23-24.
115. San, 47b.
116. Lamm, Pp. 66-67.
117. MK, 21a.
118. AE, 4:3.
119. MK, 27b.
120. MK, 21b.
121. Tanh, Mik, 4.
122. MK, 27b.

- 123. Tanh, Mik, 4.
- 124. MK, 21b.
- 125. PRE, 39b, on Gen, 50:10
- 126. JKet, 2b.
- 127. BR, 100:7.
- 128. Tanh, Vayehi, 17; BR, nv, 97; DR, 9:1.
- 129. BR, 100:7; DR, 9:1.
- 130. EcR, 9:9:1.
- 131. EsR, 8:2.
- 132. MHG, Gen, 23:1; also, PRE, 73a.
- 133. BR, 84:20.
- 134. EcR, 3:4:1.
- 135. JMK, 14a.



136. MK, 24a.
137. BR, 100:7.
138. MK, 14b, on, Dt. 16:14.
139. MK, 14b.
140. Suk, 41b, TSuk, 2:10.
141. Gen, 6:6.
142. BR, 27:4; EcR, 3:1:4.
143. JMK, 15a.
144. YR, 42a.
145. BR, 100:7; Pes, 4a; MK, 20b.
146. Tanh, Vaysh, 8.
147. MK, 24a.
148. Ber, 2:6.
149. Sifre, Dt, 31:14.
150. Nu, 20:1.
151. Nu, 20:2.
152. YS, P. 521.

## CHAPTER IV

COLLECTIVE AVELUTA. Introduction

Collective mourning is the public expression of grief over a common calamity as the destruction of a country's capital city or the death of a national leader. The rabbis describe the collective mourning of gentiles and Jews, basing the dynamics of behaviors of collective mourning upon those of individual mourning.

B. The Objects of Mourning for a Collective Event

The agada describes communal mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem, the issuance of King Ahashuerus' anti-Jewish decree, and the death of public figures.

The rabbis, following Nehemiah's example of mourning the destruction of Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> mourn for the city. Mourning for Jerusalem is an honor<sup>2</sup> rewarded with the opportunity to rejoice with the city's rebuilding in the world to come.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup>As in the Bible, Persian Jews collectively mourn their anticipated destruction. Under the inspiration of Haman, King Ahashuerus commands that Jews living in his kingdom be destroyed. The Jews react to his edict with an avel gadol, a great mourning.<sup>5</sup>

The agada describes collective mourning for important individuals. The rabbis encourage mourning an adam kasher, a worthy person, claiming such mourning atones for the sinner's evil.<sup>6</sup> Methuselah is mourned for seven days prior to the coming of the flood. Avelut for this righteous man postpones

the waters of retribution.<sup>7</sup> The children of Hail weep in mourning after the death of Sarah.<sup>8</sup> Jacob is mourned by both Canaanites and Egyptians.<sup>9</sup> The Israelites were attacked by Amalekites while mourning Aaron.<sup>10</sup> The period of mourning Moses is characterized by much crying.<sup>11</sup> Samuel is mourned for seven days.<sup>12</sup> The death of Absalom is followed by crying among Israel.<sup>13</sup>

### C. Those Who Mourn Collectively

The rabbis describe the collective mourning of gentiles, Israel, Jewish children, women, grooms, rabbis, and ascetics.

The rabbis praise the collective mourning of gentiles attempting to encourage the collective mourning of Jews. The rabbis hope that the Jewish readers will not wish to be outdone by gentiles and will also mourn collectively. Thus the leaders of the gentile nations mourn the death of Jacob. As an act of loving kindness, they join Joseph in mourning his father.<sup>14</sup> The Canaanites mourn Jacob, encircling his casket.<sup>15</sup> As described by the Bible, the Egyptians also mourn him heavily.<sup>16</sup>

Israel mourns as an entire people. The children of Israel mourn the death of Aaron.<sup>17</sup> The destruction of Jerusalem is to be mourned by all Israel each ninth day of the month of Av.<sup>18</sup> Persian Jews also mourn their expected decimation.<sup>19</sup>

Groups of Jews also mourn the destruction of Jerusalem. The Rechabites, mourning in anticipation of Jerusalem's decimation, neither anoint themselves with oil nor drink wine.<sup>20</sup>

Children mourn on Tisha B'Av. Their classes are cancelled because the joy of study is inconsistent with the day's somber tone.<sup>21</sup> According to Rav, women are to mourn Jerusalem by refraining from the plucking of the hair on their temples.<sup>22</sup> A groom is to wear ashes on his forehead as a sign of mourning for Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup> R. Eliezer Zera wears black sandals in public mourning for the Temple.<sup>24</sup> A special group of ascetics, the aveli tsiyon, refrain from meat and from wine.<sup>25</sup>

#### D. The Theology of Mourning for a Collective Event

Collective avelut carries several theological implications. The rabbis believe that national punishment is a result of collective sin. All Israel violates the halacha and is chastised for their wrongdoing.<sup>26</sup> God destroys the Jerusalem Temple and the Jews mourn the destruction of their ritual shrine.

The fulfillment of the obligations of collective mourning brings reward. The rabbis encourage mourning for the righteous, claiming such mourning atones for the sinner's evil.<sup>27</sup>

The rabbis believe collective mourning postpones punishment for sin:

Rav said: Mourning for the righteous delays the advent of hardship.<sup>28</sup>

They encourage the practice of collective mourning, specifying the consequences of the neglect of the commandment to mourn:

Who ever does not mourn Jerusalem will not witness its joy<sup>29</sup>

in its redemption.

Those not mourning Jerusalem are liable to be punished:

A man wanted to divorce his wife and avoid paying off her large ketuba price. He invited his friends, fed them well, made them drunk, and put them to sleep on one bed. Then he put egg white on them while they were asleep, claimed the egg white was semen, and accused his wife of committing adultery with the men. He brought witnesses with him to court asking to be freed from the obligations of the ketuba on the grounds of his wife's alleged adultery. An elder, Baba b. Buta, a disciple of the elder, Shammai, told the court, "This is what the elder, Shammai, taught me, 'Egg white contracts by a flame while semen thins by a flame'". The court tested the substitute and found it contracted by a flame as would egg white. The court had the accuser flogged and made him pay his wife's ketuba. Abaye, noting that this man's three friends were punished asked R. Yosef, "Since the three men were innocent, why were they punished?" R. Yosef said, "Because at some point, they did not mourn for Jerusalem." 30

Mourning does not always protect the mourner from harm. The Israelites are attacked by Amalakites while they mourn the death of Aaron.<sup>31</sup>

#### E. The Behaviors of Mourning for a Collective Event

The halachot of individual and collective avelut are similar. For example, on Tisha B'Av, the annual day of mourning the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, one mourns in collective avelut as one mourns in individual avelut:

כל מצות העומדת כאהל שומרת בה יאב

All mitsvot customarily observed by the avel are customary on T'isha B'Av.<sup>32</sup>

During collective avelut, one fasts, abstains from sex, and from bathing, and does not use cosmetics. One also dresses differently, cries, abstains from work and from study.

The rabbis describe fasting as a sign of mourning. Jews are forbidden to eat on Tisha B'Av:<sup>33</sup>

R. Shimon b. Gamliel says, Anyone eating or drinking on Tisha B'Av is as one who eats on Yom Kipur.<sup>34</sup>

In the agada as in the Bible, the men of Yavesh Gilead mourn Saul with seven days of fasting.<sup>35</sup>

The rabbis demand and describe the omission of certain foods in collective avelut. In the halacha, the rabbis tell Israel to remind themselves of the destruction of Jerusalem by not serving fish pies at their banquets.<sup>36</sup> In the agada, ascetics mourn Jerusalem by abstaining from meat and from wine.<sup>37</sup>

Sexual intercourse, bathing, anointing, and the wearing of shoes are forbidden during individual avelut and on Tisha B'Av.<sup>38</sup>

There are a number of cosmetic reminders of the destruction of Jerusalem. In rabbinic times, women beautified themselves by removing the hair of their temples. As a sign of the city's ruin, the rabbis instructed women to leave the hair unplucked. As another reminder of the razing of Jerusalem, a groom is to place ashes upon his forehead. The ashes are to rest where his tefillin would lie.<sup>39</sup>

As in the Bible, clothing also signifies collective avelut.<sup>40</sup> According to R. Eliezer, the Canaanites undid their girdles as a sign of mourning for Jacob.<sup>41</sup> R. Shimon b. Lakish claims that these Canaanites released their shoulder knots.<sup>42</sup> All Jews wear sackcloth upon hearing of Ahasuerus' decree of



their death.<sup>43</sup> The population of a country wears black following the death of a king's son.<sup>44</sup>

The mourner sits on the ground. The Jews of Persia sit as they mourn in fear of their impending destruction.<sup>45</sup> The Canaanites, however, stand upright when they mourn the death of Jacob.<sup>46</sup>

There are oral signs of collective avelut. The people of Yavesh Gilead cry after the death of Saul.<sup>47</sup> Joshua shouts in his grief for the death of Moses.<sup>48</sup>

As a sign of mourning for Jerusalem, one square cubit of every house should remain unplastered, according to R. Yosef. This unfinished area should be opposite the door, according to R. Hisda.<sup>49</sup>

Work is prohibited during collective avelut as during individual avelut:

Whoever works on Tisha B'Av does not mourn Jerusalem.<sup>50</sup>

Men and women do not sit together at public assembly during mass mourning.<sup>51</sup>

As during individual avelut, one may not study the Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Writings, the Mishna, the Talmud, the Midrash, halachot, or agadot. One may read unfamiliar passages. R. Judah permits study of the books of Lamentations, Job, and the sad parts of Jeremiah. He adds that

children are excused from school because Scripture says, "The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart."<sup>52</sup>

The joy of study is inconsistent with the serious spirit of mourning on Tisha B'Av. Collective mourning affects memory:



R. Yehuda quoted R. Shmuel: 3,000 halachot were forgotten during the days of mourning for Moses...R. Isaac the Smith said: Even the law regarding the sin offering whose owner died was forgotten during the period of mourning for Moses...It was taught: 1,700 kal vehomer hermenutic derivitives, gezera shava hermeneutic derivitives, and fine points of the scribal arts were forgotten during the period of mourning for Moses.<sup>53</sup>

The rabbis are making a number of points by stating that halachic material was forgotten during avelut for Moses. Since study is limited during avelut, halachot that ordinarily would be reviewed were neglected during avelut for Moses. The peoples' memories could not be refreshed and the laws were forgotten. The rabbis are also demonstrating the intensity of mourning for Moses. The avelut for Moses was so difficult to bear, that it affected memory severely. Thus the rabbis, speaking psychologically, claim that grief as intense as the grief of mourning for Moses, causes forgetfulness.

#### F. The Intensity of Mourning for a Collective Event

Collective avelut varies as a function of who is mourning and as a function of time.

The intensity of collective avelut varies as a function of who is mourning. On certain occasions, as upon the deaths of Jacob and Moses or the issuance of King Ahashuerus' anti-Jewish decree, people mourn more intensely. According to the rabbis, the Canaanites see the mourning of the Egyptians following the death of Moses and remark that there is an avel kaved, "a heavy mourning".<sup>54</sup> The mourning of Moses was also intense, characterized by much memory loss<sup>55</sup> and thirty

days of weeping.<sup>56</sup> In other citations, Moses is mourned - a total of ninety days.<sup>57</sup>

Mourning for oneself in anticipation of one's own death is also a more severe form of mourning. When Ahashuerus called for the decimation of the Jews, his edict provoked

"throughout the land...a great mourning for the Jews".<sup>58</sup> Why is it called a great mourning?...because this mourning, as it progresses, becomes more severe, that a man might say, "Tomorrow I will be killed"<sup>59</sup>

Collective avelut is also dependent on time. The agada describes mourning prior to the event, following the event, and on the yearly anniversary of the event. The rabbis also say that God plans human death to avoid concurrent public mourning for the righteous and for the wicked.

The rabbis describe collective anticipatory mourning, mass grief prior to a national catastrophe. The Israelites mourn for 30 days prior to Moses' death.<sup>60</sup> The Jews mourn their expected demise upon learning Ahashuerus' decree.<sup>61</sup> Anticipatory mourning is unlike mourning after the event. Ordinary mourning eases with time while anticipatory mourning strengthens. As the time of the disaster nears, those mourning in anticipation feel as though the coming day will be their last.<sup>62</sup> They also feel that there remains one day less of their lives to be lived.<sup>63</sup> Thus anticipatory avelut becomes more severe as time progresses.

Collective mourning often ends after seven days. Rav says Methuselah was mourned for seven days.<sup>64</sup> There were also seven days of mourning following the death of Samuel.<sup>65</sup>

The rabbis believe that Israel felt the death of Moses so intensely that they observed a total of ninety days of avelut for him. The Israelites wept in mourning thirty days prior to his death and an additional sixty days following his death.<sup>66</sup>

The destruction of Jerusalem is mourned annually on Tisha B'Av.<sup>67</sup>

The rabbis believe God plans human death to prevent the concurrent mourning of the righteous and the wicked. The evil Nabal was kept in life during avelut for Samuel. God caused Nabal's death after the conclusion of Samuel's avelut. Thus the righteous Samuel and the wicked Nabal were not mourned simultaneously.<sup>68</sup>

#### G. The Limits of Mourning for a Collective Event

The halacha sets lower and upper bounds for collective mourning.

As a minimum sign of mourning on Tisha B'Av, one must refrain from eating, drinking, anointing, wearing shoes, and sex. Study on Tisha B'Av is limited.<sup>69</sup> R. Yehoshua says it is impossible not to mourn Jerusalem at all. Every Jew must mourn the destruction of the Temple. As signs of such avelut, the groom should wear ashes upon his forehead, and one arranging a banquet meal must omit the fish pie.<sup>70</sup> This is the accepted minimum of collective avelut.

As a behavioral maximum, collective avelut should not cause death or severe inconvenience.

The rabbis proscribe a behavioral mean for collective avelut. In the following passage God destroyed Jerusalem on

account of collective Jewish sin. Jews must mourn something in response to the ruin of their capital city. But, the rabbis do not request the community to mourn more than they can endure. The rabbis do not wish to impose too heavy a burden on their community. The rabbis do not request their audience to mourn in a way that would bring the death of the mourner:

Our rabbis taught: When the second Temple was destroyed, there was an abundance of ascetics in Israel who did not eat meat or drink wine. R. Yehoshua met them and said: My sons, why do you abstain from meat and from wine? They said to him: Shall we eat of the meat no longer sacrificed atop the Temple altar? Shall we drink the wine no longer used for anointing atop the Temple altar? R. Yehoshua said to them: Thus we should not eat bread because there are no longer any meal offerings. They said: We will eat fruit instead. He said: We cannot eat fruit because there are no longer offerings of the first fruit. They said: So we will eat other fruit that is not of the first fruit. He said: We cannot drink water because there are no longer any libations. They were silent. R. Yehoshua said: Come, it is impossible not to mourn at all because we are commanded to mourn. It is impossible to over-mourn because we do not impose rules upon the community that cannot be withstood by the majority.<sup>71</sup>

#### H. Royal, Natural, Spiritual, and Divine Avelut

The rabbis describe the mourning of kings, nature, souls, angels, and God.

A king mourns as do common people. According to Bar Kapara, a monarch overturns his bed and tears his royal purple garment.<sup>72</sup> R. Yohanan of Kfar Hanan claims that his garment is woolen.<sup>73</sup> R. Shmuel says that a king

wears black and covers his head with sackcloth.<sup>74</sup>

The rabbis also describe a king's hanging sackcloth over the door of his residence, extinguishing his lamps, sitting silently and lamenting.<sup>75</sup> To the rabbis, royalty and the common person mourn in a similar fashion. The rabbis thus believe that death and mourning touch all individuals, regardless of their social stature.

Nature itself mourns. As in the Bible, the yaana, the ostrich, mourns its young.<sup>76</sup> The rabbis, playing on biblical hyperbole, speak of the mourning of nature for the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>77</sup> The mountains tremble and the hills shake. The land goes empty—fig trees do not flower, vines do not yield fruit, and the olive crop fails. Animals also mourn for Jerusalem. Sheep vanish from the flock and cattle disappear from the pen.<sup>78</sup> The quaking of the earth, the desolation of crops and the loss of animals are also signs of war. The rumble of chariots shakes the ground. In war, fields are overrun, and attacking troops slaughter domestic animals for food. Human survivors of the war bringing the destruction of Jerusalem would mourn the extensive loss of life and property in the Jewish defeat. The rabbis project the severe Jewish grief over the razing of Jerusalem onto nature.

The nefesh, the soul, mourns the body it once inhabited:

R. Hisda said: A man's soul mourns him all seven days, as is written, "His soul will mourn him."<sup>79</sup>



R. Abba quoted R. Papi and R. Yehoshua of Sinchnin who quoted R. Levi: For three days, the soul hovers over the body, thinking it will return. When the soul sees the facial appearance of the deceased has changed, it leaves the area of the body.<sup>80</sup>

The soul realizes it will never again live in the deceased's body. At that point, its mourning is concluded.

The ministering angels cry bitterly in their mourning the decimation of Jerusalem.<sup>81</sup>

The rabbis even say that God Himself mourns worldly calamity. He mourns as He prepares to witness the destruction of the flood.<sup>82</sup> He mourns as if He is the only one affected by the death of Moses.<sup>83</sup> He mourns the razing of Jerusalem.<sup>84</sup>

God and people mourn in a similar fashion. The rabbis, in their poetic way of speech, ascribe human action to God. When God brings the flood to the world, He mourns by

ceasing His reading, His teaching, and all His other work.<sup>85</sup>

Bar Kapara describes God's mourning Jerusalem. In his avelut, He clothes the heavens in darkness and makes their raiment sackcloth. He darkens the sun and the moon and causes the stars to withdraw their brightness. He makes whirlwinds and storms. He upsets his throne, sits silently, and laments the loneliness of Jerusalem.<sup>86</sup> God's silence is a symbol of the end to prophecy coinciding with the exile.

These signs of divine mourning are nisim, miraculous departures from the order of Creation.<sup>87</sup> The rabbis believe that God shares the divinely ordained sufferings of Israel

and humanity. The idea that God mourns demonstrates the rabbinic attribution of human traits to the deity. God knows the sadness felt by any person. The humanization of God makes Him seem readily accessible to people. A God that is close to humanity will listen and act upon human pleading.<sup>88</sup>

The rabbis, in describing the mourning of God, hope to encourage people to follow mourning laws. They show how sadly they react to this destruction of Jerusalem, and how important they feel it is to react to this loss. They hope people, considered to live in God's image, will follow God's example.<sup>89</sup>



1. Neh, 1:4.
2. BK, 59b.
3. TTaan, 4:14.
4. Est, 4:3.
5. EsR, 8:2; AE, 4:3.
6. MK, 25a; Shab, 105b.
7. San, 108b; TSotā, 10:3; BR, 3:6, 32:7.
8. MHG, Gen, 23:3.
9. PRK, 11:9; Tanh, Vayehi, 17.
10. YS, P. 524.
11. MTa,Dt, 34:8; Sifre, Dt, 34:8.
12. MTe, 26:7; MS, 23:13.
13. Tanh, Shem, 1.
14. PRE, 39b.
15. Gen, 50:10.
16. Tanh, Vayehi, 17.
17. MA, Nu 26:12.
18. Taan, 30a.
19. AE, 4:3; EsR, 8:2.
20. MR, Ex, 18:27.
21. Taan, 30a.
22. BB, 60b.
23. BB, 60b.
24. BK, 59b.
25. BB, 60b.
26. Moore, V. I, P. 113.
27. MK, 25a; Shab, 105b.

28. San, 108b.
29. Taan, 30b.
30. Git, 57a.
31. YS, P. 524.
32. Taan, 30a.
33. Taan, 30a.
34. Taan, 30b.
35. PRE, 40a-40b, on I Sam, 31:13.
36. BB, 60b.
37. BB, 60b.
38. Taan, 30a.
39. BB, 60b.
40. II Sam, 1:11; Est, 4:3.
41. PRK, 11:9.
42. PRK, 11:9; Tanh, Vayehi, 17.
43. AE, 4:3.
44. PRK, S, 5:2.
45. AE, 4:3.
46. PRK, 11:9.
47. PRE, 40b.
48. Sifre, Dt, 31:14.
49. BB, 60b.
50. Taan, 30b.
51. JSuk, 23b.
52. Taan, 30a, on Ps 19:9.
53. Tem, 15b-16a.
54. Tanh, Vayehi, 17.
55. Tem, 15b-16a.

56. MK, 21a.
57. Sifre, Dt, 34:8; also MTa, Dt, 34:8.
58. Est, 4:3.
59. AE, 4:3.
60. Sifre, Dt, 34:8; also MTa, Dt, 34:8.
61. AE, 4:3; EsR, 8:2.
62. AE, 4:3.
63. EsR, 8:2.
64. San, 108b.
65. MTe, 26:7.
66. Sifre, Dt, 34:8; also MTa, Dt, 34:8.
67. Taan, 30a.
68. MTe, 26:7.
69. Taan, 30a.
70. BB, 60b.
71. BB, 60b.
72. PRK, 15:3; LamR, 1:1:1.
73. PRK, 15:3.
74. LamR, 3:10:4.
75. PRK, 15:3; also, LamR, 1:1:1.
76. Micah, 1:8; Hul, 64b.
77. Jer, 4:28; 23:10.
78. PRK, S, 6.2.
79. Shab, 152a, on Job, 14:22.
80. LevR, 18:1; also, JMK, 14a; Tanh, Mik, 4.
81. PRK, S, 6:2.

82. Tanh, B, Noah, 4; BR, 27:4, 32:7; ElR, P. 162.
83. Sifre, Dt, 31:14.
84. PRK, 15:3; LamR, 1:1:1; 3:10:4.
85. ElR, P. 162.
86. PRK, 15:3.
87. Kadushin, P. 153.
88. Schechter, Pp. 36ff; Karff, Pp. 50-51.
89. Moore, V. I, Pp. 440-441.

## CHAPTER V

### THE COMFORTING OF THE MOURNERS

#### A. Introduction

The rabbis believe it is a mitsva to comfort the mourner. The requirement to comfort is incumbent with the termination of aninut and the commencement of avelut. At graveside, comforters stand. The mourners leave the cemetery, passing by the comforters.<sup>1</sup> Most of the comforting of the mourner occurs at the mourner's home. The community refers to the mourner's home as the beit haavel in the Bible and in agadic literature.<sup>2</sup> The mourners of the community visit the house of mourning, expressing their desire to comfort by their silent presence, through prayer, and with food, wine and money given the mourner.

#### B. The Importance of Comforting Mourners

The agada provides several reasons for comforting the mourner. Comforting is in the interest of the bereaved and the comforter.

The mourner is upset and needs the consolation and loving kindness of the comforter.<sup>3</sup>

The rabbis praise the act of comforting the mourner. They echo the biblical association of the comforting of the mourner and wisdom.<sup>4</sup> One visiting the house of mourning instead of attending a banquet acts wisely because he concerns himself with both the bereaved and the deceased, with life and death rather than only with life.<sup>5</sup>

The rabbis presume that both the wealthy mourner and the indigent

mourner require comfort. Thus one passing up the invitation to a banquet to visit a house of mourning demonstrates concern for social equality. Since only rich people can give banquets,

It is better to go where there is dealing with the rich and with the poor than where there is dealing with the rich alone.<sup>6</sup>

The comforter also acts in self-concern. By assuaging the grief of others, the comforter assures that when he is a mourner, those who benefited from his solace will act to console him in reciprocity. Since the comforter may not be capable of affording to one day have his own banquet, he should visit the house of mourning before the house of feasting because

it is better to go where there is a measure of reciprocity than where there is no measure of reciprocity.<sup>7</sup>

Thus R. Yosef and Rabba alternatively comfort each other with a mourner's meal.<sup>8</sup>

The rabbis ascribe considerable importance to the fulfillment of the command to comfort. Thus they say that even God Himself rewards the comforter:

Our brothers, bestowing loving kindness, the Master of bestowal will repay your bestowal.<sup>9</sup>

God brings fame to the comforter:

R. Simon says that the names of those attending the house of banquet were not recorded in the Bible. However, the names of those visiting the house of mourning were recorded. Og, King of Bashan, attended Abraham's banquet and his name is not mentioned. But, Job's three friends went to the house of mourning and the Bible mentions their names.<sup>10</sup>

The comforter is granted salvation:

R. Isachar of Kfar Mendi said: The three friends of Job went to the house of mourning and were spared gehenom. The Holy Spirit rested upon them.<sup>11</sup>

One not comforting the mourner violates the halacha. Such an individual is viewed negatively in the agada. He is associated with the evil inclination.<sup>12</sup> The neighbors of a mourner are to provide the mourner with economic support, if necessary. And

The neighbors of one forced to work while mourning are to be cursed.<sup>13</sup>

#### C. Those Who Comfort Mourners

Famous individuals, common people, students, rabbis, wealthy and the poor console the bereaved.

Abraham comforts the children of Hail in their mourning for Sarah.<sup>14</sup> Jacob prepares a meal of lentils to ease Isaac's mourning for Abraham.<sup>15</sup> The high priest, accompanied by his assistant and by the former high priest, comforts the bereaved. The former high priest may not comfort the new high priest. The rabbis assume the former high priest was reluctant to leave his position, bears a grudge against the man now holding his previous post, and would rejoice at the new high priest's misfortune.<sup>16</sup> The rabbis therefore believe that it is wrong to comfort a mourner if the viewing of the pain of the bereaved would bring pleasure to the comforter. Rabba and R. Yosef alternatively comfort each other.<sup>17</sup>

To the rabbis, a slave is not one's relative but one's property. Thus there is no mourning for the death of one's slave nor is there comforting for the deceased slave's owner.



The slave of R. Eliezer died and R. Eliezer avoided his students' attempts to comfort him claiming

when a servant dies, no one stands in rows, no birkat avelim is recited, and there is no comforting of mourners.<sup>18</sup>

The rabbis desire to console the mourner and to encourage their listener to comfort the mourner. Thus they say that God comforts the mourner, suggesting that their audience follow God's example and console the bereaved. They also hope the mourner will feel relieved knowing that God desires to ease the pain of his loss. Thus, God turns the grief of avelut into joy.<sup>19</sup> God consoles Isaac with blessing after the death of his mother and his wet nurse.<sup>20</sup>

#### D. The Means of Comforting Mourners

The agada describes the offering of comfort through gifts of food and money, consumption of wine, keeping silent in the mourners presence and the recitation of non-liturgical and liturgical words of comfort.

The Bible describes a mourner's meal.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the rabbis demand that the comforter console the mourner with food and they depict the mourner's comfort in eating. According to the halacha, the avel may not eat of his own provisions on the first day of mourning.<sup>22</sup> He is to eat of the food of others. Thus the comforters are required to bring food to the mourner's house. In the agada, even gentiles partake of the meal of comfort. The spies scouting the land of Canaan for the children of Israel observe Canaanites seated in the shade of cedars eating the mourner's meal.<sup>23</sup> The seudat havraa implies the meal of the mourners. The root, הווא implies strengthening.<sup>24</sup> Thus the rabbis assume that the mourner

does not eat and requires food for the restoration of his stamina.

The rabbis spare the poor embarrassment in comforting the mourner and in providing hospitality to the comforter. They stress that the comforter and the mourner be sensitive to economic differences in this difficult time:

Originally, when people brought food to the house of mourning, the rich used gold and silver baskets while the poor used wicker baskets made of peeled willow. The rabbis decreed that everyone use wicker baskets of peeled willow to carry their food, out of respect to the poor. Our rabbis taught that originally, rich mourners served drinks to comforters from white vessels and the poor used colored vessels. The poor felt ashamed, so the rabbis decreed that everyone serve drinks in colored glasses out of respect for the poor.<sup>25</sup>

The rabbis describe several foods of comfort. In the agada, the mourner eats lentils:

R. Eliezer says: The lentil is a food of sorrow and of mourning. When Abel is killed, his parents ate lentils in mourning and sorrow. When Haran burned to death in the furnace of Kasdim, his parents ate lentils in mourning and in sorrow. Jacob ate lentils in mourning and in sorrow. Israel eats lentils in sorrow and in mourning for the Temple.<sup>26</sup>

To the rabbis explaining the origin of the consumption of lentils, lentils symbolize the mourner's silence and the notion that death and mourning are universal:

On the day our father Abraham died, Jacob, our father, made a dish of lentils to comfort Isaac, his father. Why lentils? In the West, they quote Rabba b. Mari: As the lentil has no cleft, the mourner keeps silent as if he has no mouth. Others say: as the lentil rolls<sup>27</sup> and rolls, mourning rolls, affecting everyone.

The mourner also takes comfort from bread<sup>28</sup> and from eggs.<sup>29</sup>

If necessary, the community should provide the mourner with financial support.<sup>30</sup>

The rabbis are aware of the soothing effect of a drink of wine. They note that wine eases the heaviness of the mourner's soul.<sup>31</sup> R. Hanan extolls the role of wine in the comforting of the mourner. It makes the mourner happy and the sinner more liable to sin and be punished:

Wine was created solely for the purpose of comforting mourners and for rewarding the wicked, as it is written, "Reward the one who is lost and give wine to the bitter of soul."<sup>32</sup>

The rabbis require that the comforter drink wine, also. They decree that each person at the house of mourning consume ten cups of wine—three prior to eating for the purpose of opening the bowels, three during the meal to dissolve the food in the bowels, and an additional four cups corresponding to four blessings in the grace after meals. Four more cups were added in honor of local leaders, R. Gamliel, and in commemoration of the destruction of the Temple. This came to a total of fourteen cups of wine consumed at the house of mourning. As comforters often became drunk from the consumption of such a large amount of wine, the rabbis reduced the required number from fourteen to the original ten.<sup>33</sup> The "cup of peace" is consumed in Babylonian homes of mourning.<sup>33a</sup> Drunkenness is not in keeping with the responsibilities to mourn and to comfort mourners.

The halacha regulates the comforter's speech:

R. Yohanan said: Comforters are not permitted to say a thing until the mourner speaks.<sup>34</sup>

R. Yohanan bases his rule upon the silence kept by Job's friends.

They speak only after Job opens the conversation. The agada cautions the comforter against excessive chatter:

The merit in visiting a house of mourning  
lies in observing silence.<sup>35</sup>

The rabbis describe non-liturgical words of comfort. If someone's son dies, the comforter may say

Your remaining son should live long.

If the mourner has no other son, the comforter might say

Let your days be lengthened.<sup>36</sup>

The halacha and agada offer several belessings to be recited in the house of mourning. Such blessings are included in the liturgical rubric of birkat avelim, the mourners' blessing.

According to R. Nahmanb. Isaac, the mourners' blessing emphasizes God's righteousness in his decree of death. To R. Nahman birkat avelim stresses the belief that God does not inflict death capriciously:

Blessed is the good one that does good

To R. Akiba, death is also a matter of God's justice. Thus he argues for the recitation of

Blessed is the true Judge.<sup>37</sup>

R. Yehuda lectures upon the nature of mourning and the comforting of mourners. To R. Yehuda, the mourner's realization of the eternity and the universality of avelut and the mourner's anticipated comfort from God should provide solace. His discourse on the bitter cup of avelut can be viewed as a mourners' blessing:

Our brothers, grieved and afflicted in this mourning, give heed and examine. Mourning always existed, it is the way since the six days of creation. Many drank, many will drink. The first and the last generations drink alike. Our brothers, the Master of comfort will comfort you. Blessed is the Comforter of mourners.<sup>38</sup>

Another birkat avelim, recited by Mar Zutra during the grace after meals at R. Ashi's house of mourning, expresses thanksgiving to God and lauds His justice:

Who is good and does good, a true God, judging in truth and righteousness with justice. He rules the world according to His will and His just ways. All is His and we, His people, His servants, are obligated to thank and to bless Him. The One sealing the breaches in Israel will seal this breach in Israel, for the sake of life.<sup>39</sup>

The rabbis present several versions of birkat avelim. Evidently, the liturgy of mourning was not fully formulated in amoraic times. Though the thematic content of the mourners' blessing was fixed, its precise wording apparently was not.<sup>40</sup> This hypothesis would account for the variation found in the mourners' blessing text and for the difficulties in the prayer's expression. Thus R. Hanina of Tsipori relates the phrase

A rose among thorns<sup>41</sup>

to the exceptional man in ten who can successfully recite the birkat avelim. R. Yona taught his disciples the way to recite the birkat avelim should they be called upon to do so.<sup>42</sup>

Any beracha, as birkat avelim, evokes a consciousness of God.<sup>43</sup> Thus the mourner's blessing signifies that God is present, not absent, in death and in mourning.



The rabbis say that God comforts the mourner in the Messianic era. They speak of God's acting to console, hoping to encourage their audience to follow God's example and comfort mourners:

"I will turn their mourning into joy.<sup>44</sup>  
As I comfort you, I will comfort Zion and her ruins, as it says, "Because God comforted Zion, He comforted all her ruins. He put her wilderness as Eden and her desert as the garden of the Lord. Gladness and joy shall abide there, thanksgiving and the sound of music."<sup>45</sup>

The rabbis limit the amount of comfort the avel relieves.

A mourner must not feel joyous during avelut:

A mourner should not rest a child on his lap because the child may make him laugh<sup>46</sup>

#### E. The Comforting of Mourners as a Function of Time

The requirement to comfort varies as a function of time. On the day of Abraham's death, Jacob prepares a meal of lentils to comfort his mourning father.<sup>47</sup> In another citation, the mourner can be comforted after the third day of mourning.<sup>48</sup> According to R. Hanina, the rabbis did not originally allow comforting of the mourners on the Sabbath, but reluctantly permitted the practice.<sup>49</sup> They believed that the visitation of the mourner dampens the joyous spirit of Shabbat.<sup>50</sup>

The grief of mourning for an individual dissipates after twelve months under ordinary circumstances.<sup>51</sup> Thus all comforting words should be spoken during the first year of avelut:

R. Meir said: When a person offers words of comfort to a mourner after twelve months of mourning, it is as if a doctor says the following to a person whose broken foot has healed: Come to me so I can break your leg again to show you the

effectiveness of my medicines.<sup>52</sup>

One mourning in anticipation of his own death cannot be comforted. No consolation could be offered the Jews of Persia as they mourned their expected decimation because they feared they would all die and all would be lost.<sup>53</sup>



1. San, 19a.
2. TNid, 9:17; MK, 27a; EcR, 7:2:1.
3. EcR, 7:2:1.
4. EcR, 7:2:1.
5. EcR, 7:2:1.
6. EcR, 7:2:1.
7. EcR, 7:2:1.
8. MK, 27b.
9. Ket, 8b.
10. EcR, 7:2:4.
11. EcR, 7:2:4.
12. YS, P. 1016.
13. BR, 100:7.
14. MHG, Gen, 23:3.
15. BR, 63:14; BB, 16b.
16. San, 19a.
17. MK, 27b.
18. Ber, 16b.
19. BR, 100:13; EcR, 7:2:1.
20. BR, 81:5, 82:1, 82:3; PRK, 3:1; EcR, 7:2:2-3.
21. Jer, 16:7.
22. MK, 27b.
23. Sota, 35a.
24. Jastrow, P. 192.
25. MK, 27a.

26. PRE, 81b.
27. BB, 16b; also, BR, 63:14.
28. PRE, 40a.
29. BB, 16b.
30. BR, 100:7.
31. LevR, 34:13.
32. San, 70a on Prov, 31:6; Eruv, 65a; LevR, 34:13; PRE, 40a.
33. Ket, 8b.
- 33a. Ned. 38a
34. MK, 28b.
35. Ber, 6b.
36. EsR, 8:2.
37. Ber, 46a.
38. Ket, 8b.
39. Ber, 46a.
40. Hoffman, P. 146; Simon, P. 97.
41. SS, 2:2.
42. SSR, 2:2:4.
43. Kadushin, P. 174.
44. Jer, 31:13.
45. BR, 100:13 on Isa 51:3; BR, NV, 97; Tanh, Vaychi, 17.
46. MK, 26b.
47. BB, 16b.
48. Tanh, Mik, 4.
49. Shab, 12b
50. Moore, V. 2, P. 37.

51. EsR, 8:2.

52. MK, 21a.

53. EsR, 8:2.

## CHAPTER 6

AVELUT IN COMPARISONA. Introduction

The rabbis compare avelut to other halachic categories and agadic images. The rabbinic comparisons of the mourner to the leper, to the excommunicant, and to the bride and the groom, help define the rabbinic attitudes toward avelut.

B. The Mourner and the Leper and the Excommunicant

The rabbis present a halachic comparison of the mourner and the leper.<sup>1</sup> Neither the mourner nor the leper may cut their hair, extend greetings, launder their garments, participate in sexual intercourse, or offer sacrifices. The mourner and the leper must cover their heads and rent their clothing. Unlike the mourner, the leper may study, and while the advent of a festival terminates the mourning period, the leper remains a leper through all holidays.

The agada also views the leper as similar to an avel. The leper covers his head as a mourner.<sup>2</sup> And, as the leper is quarantined for seven days, there are seven days of mourning.<sup>3</sup>

The halacha makes similar demands upon the mourner and upon the excommunicant. Neither may cut their hair, exchange greetings, launder their garments, wear shoes, or offer sacrifices. Both are to cover their heads and rent their garments. While the rabbis limit the mourner's study to sad biblical passages and to new rabbinic material, the excommunicant may study what he wishes, in private. Though the mourner may not wash

or work during avelut, the excommunicant may wash his face, feet and hands, and is permitted to work but only at night.<sup>4</sup>

In the agada, the mourner enters the Temple via the same gate as the excommunicant. Their use of this entrance arouses the attention of the community and elicits a communal reaction. Where Israelites seated at the Temple gate say to the mourner,

"The One living in this House will comfort you"  
they tell the excommunicant,

"The One living in this House will comfort you  
that you listen to your associates and they  
will draw you near."<sup>5</sup>

According to Feldman, the mourner resembles the leper and the excommunicant in matters of ritual purity. They are all tame, living in a profane status. Since God and their tuma are incompatible, according to Feldman, they are estranged from God. They are removed from God's holiness.<sup>6</sup>

The mourner's tuma and resulting distance from God is due to the mourner's contact with the body of the deceased. Spiro notes that one touching a corpse becomes ritually impure for seven days.<sup>7</sup> The agada in fact uses the root לנח as a synonym for the root נח.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the mourner who has fulfilled his obligation to bury the remains of the deceased is now impure.<sup>9</sup>

The leper is also in a state of tuma. According to the Bible, the leper is close to death because his flesh decays.<sup>10</sup> The mourner's and the leper's proximity to death places them at a similar distance from God and in a similar halachic

category of impurity and behavior.

The excommunicant is also tame. Through his sin, the excommunicant removes himself from God and is punished by being banned from the community. Through their prohibition of private study, for example, the mourner and the excommunicant express their remoteness from God and from the community.<sup>11</sup>

### C. Mourning and Marriage

The rabbis view marriage and mourning as both similar and contrasting.

In the halacha, both the groom and the mourner require guarding at night.<sup>12</sup>

The agada also compares the mourner and the newlywed. When Solomon built the Jerusalem Temple, he made two special gates, one for the use of grooms and one for the use of mourners and excommunicants. When a mourner entered the Temple those seated in the area of the gate said

"The One living in this House will comfort you."

When a groom passed by, they said

"The One living in this House will make you rejoice with sons and daughters."

After the destruction of the Temple, mourners and grooms went to houses of study and to synagogues. Those present rejoiced with the groom and sat on the floor with the mourner.<sup>13</sup>

R. Yanni contrasts the mourner and the groom. He assumes grooms and those in heaven wear white as he tells his sons

"Do not bury me in black shrouds or in white shrouds. If I am buried in black and I merit a place in the world to come, I will look like a mourner among grooms. If I am buried in white and I do not merit a place in the world to come, I will look like a groom among mourners.<sup>14</sup>

R. Abba Bar Kahana also compares mourning and marriage:

Of what benefit is rejoicing? Once an important man of Kabul wedded his son. On the fourth day, he invited guests who ate and drank a good deal. He said to his son; "Go up to the attic and bring down a barrel for us." As soon as the son went into the attic, a snake bit him and he died. His father, meanwhile, was waiting for him to return but he did not. The father said, "I am going up to see what's the matter with my son." He went up and found him bitten by a snake, lying dead among the barrels. The father waited in the attic until the guests finished their meal. "People, you did not come to bless my son with the groom's blessing. Rather, recite the mourner's blessing over my son. You did not come to bring my son in the bridal canopy. Come, bring him to his grave."<sup>15</sup>

The rabbis note that both the mourner and the groom are blessed as the bride is adorned:

R. Simlai said: We find that God blesses grooms and adorns brides. Blesses grooms? How? "And God blessed them"(Adam and Eve)<sup>16</sup> And adorns brides? How? "And the Lord God fashioned the rib that He had taken from the man into a woman."<sup>17</sup> R. Shmuel b. Nahman said: He even visits the mourner, as it is written, "God appeared to Jacob again on his arrival from Padan-aram and he blessed him."<sup>18</sup> With what blessing did he bless him? R. Yohanan said: The blessing of mourners.<sup>19</sup>

From their comparison of mourning and marriage, the rabbis show the common needs of people in both categories. The mourner and the newlywed face new life situations. While the mourner learns to live without a family member, newlyweds must learn to live with one another. The community therefore has an obligation to the mourner, and to the bride and groom. The community must guard the mourner and the groom, to be



with these individuals in a critical moment of change in life. They recite blessings, provide adornments and comforts for those in mourning and those about to enter marriage.

The mourner and the newly married approach the future differently. The mourner wishes to avoid the future while the newly wedded couple eagerly anticipates the future. The mourner fears his own death and feels regret over the loss of a family member. Recently married individuals look toward the upcoming life with a spouse and the opportunity to raise children with joy.

D. Other Comparisons

In the halacha, the mourner requires guarding as an invalid, a midwife, and a scholar at night.<sup>20</sup>

In the agada, R. Gamliel compares the Egyptian bondage to mourning. To R. Gamliel, the darkness and pain of slavery resemble mourning.<sup>21</sup>

1. MK, 14b-15b; Feldman, P. 39.
2. Sifra, 12:8 to Lev, 13:45.
3. BR, 100:7.
4. MK, 14b-15b; Feldman, P. 105.
5. PRE, 41b; Mid 2:2.
6. Feldman, Pp. 39, 53, 72, 105.
7. P. 78 on Lev, 21:2; Nu, 5:2.
8. Ber, 6b.
9. Feldman, Pp. 13-14.
10. Feldman, Pp. 37-38 on Nu, 12:12.
11. Feldman, Pp. 31, 106.
12. Ber, 54b.
13. PRE, 41b; Mid, 2:2.
14. Nid, 20a.
15. LR, 20:3; EcR, 2:2:4; PRK, 26:2.
16. Gn, 1:28.
17. Gn, 2:22.
18. Gn, 35:9.
19. BR, 81:3.
20. Ber, 54b.
21. Pes, 10:5.

CHAPTER VII  
CONCLUDING COMMENTS

A. The Nature of the Agada

Based on my study of the connotations of avelut in the agada, I will offer some comments on the relationship of the agada to the Bible, on the relationship of the agada to the halacha, and on the agadic use of language.

The study of the agada reveals the rabbinic attitudes toward the Bible. The agada shows that the rabbis use the Bible to suit their purposes. The rabbis, in their discussion of the biblical material, speak in terms of their own needs, not in terms of the needs of the biblical writer.

The rabbis desire that their audience comfort the mourner. They draw upon and embellish the biblical image of comforting the mourner. Scripture says that it is wise to visit the house of mourning.<sup>1</sup> The agada, reflecting the rabbinic desire to console the mourner, expands the biblical association of wisdom and the comforting of mourners. Those who act to console others will themselves be consoled when they are bereaved.<sup>2</sup> The agada refines biblical values to suit the rabbinic purpose.

The rabbis ignore the Bible when it does not speak to their needs. The rabbis want their audience to comfort the mourner. However, in the Bible, Jacob refuses the comfort of his children when they rise to console his mourning for Joseph.<sup>3</sup>

But in the agada, no rabbinic mourner shuns comfort. The rabbis ignore Jacob's rejection of his children's consolation. Rather, they focus on the mourner's need for comfort because they want to see nichum avelim. Thus the rabbis embellish biblical values they find appealing and ignore biblical images that do not reflect their own concerns.

The agada also clarifies the halacha. For example, the halacha does not let the mourner wash. However, the agada describes the invalid R. Gamliel bathing the night of his wife's death. Here the agada teaches that an invalid mourner may wash. The agada also describes the bathing of R. Yosi following the successive deaths of his sons. The agada claims that since R. Yosi's mourning is more severe, he, too, is legally entitled to wash. Thus the agada refines the halachic teaching. The agada describes conditions in which a mourner may legally bathe, conditions which the mourner would not be aware without the agada.<sup>4</sup>

The literary nature of the agada varies. At times, the agada speaks simply, using plain language to describe ordinary human behavior. On other occasions, the agada speaks in a highly emotional manner.

At times, the agada simply narrates. It plainly describes the reciprocal comforting of Raba and R. Yosef following their bereavements. Here the agada speaks in simple language. On other occasions, as in describing the mourning of nature and in comparison of mourning and marriage, the agada becomes more symbolic and deals with highly emotional images. The Bible

describes the mourning of nature saying that pastures dry up and the sky darkens.<sup>5</sup> The Bible mentions these striking signs of nature to reflect the anguish of human avelut. The agada, continuing in the biblical image, describes the trembling of mountains and the shaking of hills.<sup>6</sup> The agada creatively embellishes the biblical text.

The agada also speaks in a highly emotional fashion as it compares mourning and marriage. R. Aba bar Kahana tells of a groom who dies at his wedding feast. The groom's father tells his guests

You did not come to bring my son to the bridal canopy. Come, bring him to the grave.<sup>7</sup>

The shocking shift in tone from the joy of marriage to the sorrow of death and of mourning depicts the emotional content of the agada.

The rabbis use language less formally in the agada than in the halacha. The rabbis take much linguistic freedom in the agada. Though the halacha considers one whose dead lies unburied an onen, at times the agada refers to him as an avel. Prior to Cain's interment, the rabbis say

Adam and his helper sit and cry and mitavlim.<sup>8</sup>

The agada is non-legal literature and can therefore take a flexible approach to language.

#### B. The Mourner as Depressive

The rabbinic description of the mourner's feelings and behaviors resembles a contemporary clinical description of the depressive:

The depressive is characterized by a general slowing of activities. He seems to have lost all enthusiasm or zest for living. He may sit and stare. He may fail to eat. He feels sinful, guilty, and worthless... He reports...(an)inability to sleep and loss of appetite. Often, there is preoccupation with suicidal thoughts. 9

There is a similarity between the avel and the depressive. Both appear perturbed. They sit in silent reflection on personal mortality and upon their sinful states. They fail to eat or sleep. Any sexual desire they once possessed has dissipated.

Depression and avelut have similar causes. One mourns the loss of one's beloved. Similarly, depression is attributed to

the loss of major sources of reinforcement...  
depression is precipitated by the loss of  
something of great value. 10

Thus the depressive and the mourner behave in a similar fashion for similar reasons. However, one should not characterize the rabbinic mourner as identical to the twentieth century depressive. The comparison is literary. The depressive and the mourner are metaphorically alike.

#### C. The Mixture of Sorrow and Joy

The rabbis believe that pain and joy are mingled. Happiness and sorrow are not mutually exclusive. Life is a blend of both, symbolized by the lentil:

What is this lentil? It contains both mourning and joy. Mourning—that Abraham, our father, died. Joy—because of the lentil, Jacob took the birthright.11

Sorrow and happiness are mingled.

1. Pp. 13-14.
2. Pp. 64-65.
3. Pp. 13-14.
4. Pp. 23-24.
5. Pp. 12-13.
6. P. 73.
7. P. 80.
8. PRE, 49b.
9. Ullman, P. 417.
10. Ullman, P. 421.
11. BR, 63:14



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Midrash Raba  
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Midrash Tanaim  
Midrash Tanchuma  
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Midrash Tehilim  
Mishna  
Pesikta de Rav Kahana  
Pirke de Rebi Eliezer  
Sifra  
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