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ḤANINA BEN DOSA: SON, FATHER, RABBI

Retelling the Life-Story of an Early Rabbi

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Preface

The purpose of this project is to explore the intersection of history and literature, theology and creative writing. I explore these through the creation of a rabbinic biography—that is, the composition of a narrative or narratives about the life and personality of a rabbi of late antiquity. It is not possible to compose a historically accurate rabbinic biography as there is no external source with which to verify the accounts of rabbinic literature—the canon of Hebrew and Aramaic texts including the Mishnah (compiled c. 200 CE), Tosefta, Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds (c. 400-500 CE), and works of Midrash (in this study, the most recent midrash comes from c. 1000 CE). Not to mention, this corpus is full of supernatural stories. However, as a subject of literary analysis, religious thought, and theology, rabbinic biography is a productive exercise. It is my assertion that writing a responsibly crafted rabbinic biography can shed light on the history of rabbinic Judaism and help contemporary Jews relate personally to that tradition.

This thesis revolves around the biography of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa (approx. 10-80 CE). The story cycle I have composed about him here is based on a range of texts found in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, and amongst a range of Midrash. While I could have chosen other figures in rabbinic literature, I restricted my search to a “Goldilocks-ian” number of sources: I required a minimum of meaningful texts to ensure the creation of a robust biography as well as an upper limit to prevent undertaking an impossible task. I found throughout my research that Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa was a man uniquely positioned amongst the sages. Through his healing prayers and wonder-working prowess, Ḥanina gained acclaim amongst the *Amei Ha’aretz* (common folk, literally people of the land), but also within the

rabbinic institution, which typically looked down upon charismatic wonder workers. But he was also a rabbi and a father - like me - and I found myself in Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa.

This project has three distinct parts: (I) Review and reflection on the academic field of rabbinic biography; (II) a narrative reconstruction of the life of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa with commentary; (III) and an index of primary sources about Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa with original translations.

In Part I, the literature review describes how various scholars have approached and derived meaning from biographical stories in rabbinic literature. Then, I summarize the various themes, ideologies, and structures scholars have associated with Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa: How he has historically been represented by scholars. Finally, I situate my own work amongst this scholarship, explaining what of these approaches informed the narrative reconstruction in Part II.

In Part II, building on the research described in Part I, I create a fictional biography of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa. This biography recognizes challenges of rabbinic biography as a genre. As such, it is not a work of historiography, but an imaginative retelling, an exercise of thought, theology, and literature. This biography focuses not on historical accuracy, but on emotional and ideological accuracy; it is an attempt to imagine the inner-life of a figure who has held significance for the Jewish people for generations. It also humanizes someone from the distant past, making him—and the rabbinic movement more generally—perhaps more comprehensible and relatable to contemporary readers and Jews.

Part III of this thesis is a compilation and translation of Hebrew texts relating to Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa. These texts are found in the Mishnah (compiled approx. 200 CE), Tosefta, Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds, and works of Midrash (in this study, the newest rabbinic

text comes from approx. 1000 CE). This index serves as a reference point for the biography. My inclusion of these primary sources which served as the basis for my narrative reconstructions, and my extensive commentary and footnotes cross referencing them differentiates this thesis from other works of rabbinic biography, notably Andrew Sanders' fictionalized biography, *Hanina My Son*.¹

¹ Andrew Sanders, *Hanina My Son: A Novel of the First Century* (Jerusalem, Israel: Gefen Pub., 2001).

PART I: Literature Review

Methods of Rabbinic Biography

While it is certainly possible to read the stories about the lives of sages in rabbinic literature as historical, and many, especially pious readers have, there is much to dissuade one from doing so. First, many stories contain a high number of improbabilities such as miracles and supernatural occurrences. Second, the texts of rabbinic literature largely live in a vacuum, that is, there is no corroborating testimony to corroborate them. Finally, as Jacob Neusner wrote, “We surely cannot declare a narrative to be historically reliable simply because it contains no improbabilities... We must not confuse verisimilitude with authenticity.”² The texts of rabbinic literature were not written to serve as historical record and thus, we should not read them as such. Instead, scholars generally use three interrelated methods to glean meaning from stories of figures in rabbinic literature which I define as: redaction criticism, historical analysis, and literary analysis.

Redaction criticism

Redaction criticism compares various versions of a single story found in multiple instances in order to uncover the story’s original form (*urtext*) and gain insights about the authors or editors and the contexts in which they lived. This method focuses on how the redactor shaped and molded the narrative to express theological and ideological goals.

Writing about Ḥanina, Baruch Bokser, for example, studies one set of traditions dealing with Ḥanina’s encounter with a lizard. He notes, “how the traditions have been molded, conveying different images of Ḥanina,” and that “variations reflect changed attitudes towards

² Jacob Neusner, *Development of a Legend: Studies on the Traditions Concerning Yoḥanan Ben Zakkai* (Leiden, 1970).

access to the divine and religious piety and leadership.”³ According to Bokser, in Tannaitic texts, Ḥanina represents a concentration in prayer that all Jews are capable of and to which one should aspire. In Amoraic texts, Ḥanina represents a miraculous individual with special access to God. This changed presentation represents a shift in rabbinic culture, from an emphasis on piety for all Jews, among the Tannaim, to individuals with miraculous traits and special access to God, among the Amoraim.

Jacob Neusner proposed a general procedure for making reasonable biographical inferences about a figure in tannaitic literature. Neusner suggested categorizing texts as "best" (of History), "better" (of Tradition), "fair", and finally, "of Legend".⁴ "Best" texts, he wrote, are marked by comments by authorities who lived at the time of the figure. "Better" texts come after that time when commentators cannot have known the figure personally or have received from their immediate circle of disciples information on their views and activities. "Fair" texts are statements that were assigned to a figure or stories told about them that appear, without prior comment or attestation in the second century. "Legendary" statements are those that make their first appearance only in later documents, the two Talmuds and the compilations of scriptural exegeses in particular. By using this organizational method, Neusner forms a complete account of the way in which the rabbinic documents appear in sequence to portray a single first-century rabbi.⁵ For example, Ḥanina appears in a story cycle found in the Mishnah and the Palestinian

³ Baruch M Bokser, "Ḥanina Ben Dosa and the Lizard: The Treatment of Charismatic Figures in Rabbinic Literature," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 1981, 1–6,1.

⁴ Neusner's classifications are subjective. One cannot know with certainty when a particular text was written or from whence a tradition originated.

⁵ Jacob Neusner, *In Search of Talmudic Biography: The Problem of the Attributed Saying* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 13.

and Babylonian Talmuds.⁶ The Mishnah is the oldest. Therefore, according to Neusner's scheme, its content is truer. Especially in this case, as the Palestinian Talmud preserves what is found in the Mishnah and adds a story onto it. Subsequently, the Babylonian Talmud preserves what the Palestinian Talmud provides and adds yet another narrative. Neusner assumes sources placed more closely to the figure in question are of greater historical veracity.

In a recent study, Monika Amsler compares stories in the Talmud to today's internet fan fiction. Amsler says talmudic discourse is like fan fiction in that there is a distinction between the conventions of an original composition and the expanded conventions of an interpretive community. For example, the stories of Ḥanina look like fan fiction in the way that the Babylonian Talmud expands on the conventions accepted by the Mishnah and Tosefta. One example of this is the addition in the Babylonian Talmud of stories about Ḥanina's family. Whereas in tannaitic sources, Ḥanina stories are only about him, in the Babylonian Talmud, the stories expand his circle of righteous influence and give more detail about the character's personal life. This is a common phenomenon in fan fiction, where writers imagine how favorite characters interact in day-to-day life.⁷ By comparing Mishnaic and Talmudic sources, Amsler is able to paint two different pictures of Ḥanina ben Dosa, revealing the confines within which the canon (Mishnah and Tosefta) places him and the expansions added by the later interpretive community (Talmuds).

⁶ Mishnah Berakhot 5:5, Palestinian Talmud Berakhot 5:5, Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 34b

⁷ Monika Amsler, "The Making of Ḥanina Ben Dosa: Fan Fiction in the Babylonian Talmud," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 31 (December 15, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2019.1647>.

Historical Analysis

While the redaction criticism approach aims to make claims about history through source comparison, our knowledge of the historical contexts also informs how we might draw inferences from the different texts. In this way, redaction criticism and historical analysis work in tandem to confirm one another.

In the same work where Bokser used redaction criticism to make claims about the historical context, he used his knowledge of the historical context to explain discrepancies in the sources at his disposal. In this case, Ḥanina seeks out an *arvad* (lizard) because his students tell him it is harming people in the Babylonian Talmud, as opposed to simply remaining concentrated in prayer, as he is depicted in the Palestinian Talmud.

The disparate literary contexts may be related to different actual roles that rabbis had in Iran and Palestine. In Iran, rabbis played a greater role in community affairs, and the Ḥanina... stories may reflect that role and serve to legitimize rabbinic authority. In Palestine, amoraic masters had a weaker foothold in the community and may have been seen... as pious students of Torah who provide a model for divine protection, and the stories may reflect this role.⁸

Put another way, in the diaspora, rabbis would have been more intimately involved in community affairs, this helps us understand why sources in the Babylonian Talmud would place Ḥanina among the people, serving their needs, while the Palestinian Talmud places him under divine protection as a result of his deep concentration in prayer.

⁸ Baruch M Bokser, “Ḥanina Ben Dosa and the Lizard: The Treatment of Charismatic Figures in Rabbinic Literature,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 1981, 1–6, 4.

Jacob Neusner also suggests a historical approach. Because the rabbinic texts we have are composite and emerged over a long period of time, we can only speak about what they represent at the moment that they came into their present form—that is the latest moment of their existence. We can only extract what they represent about the culture of the “sages,” not the Tannaim or Amoraim, or even specific named individuals. Neusner aims “at learning more about not the hero of biography but the author, or in this case, the collective authorship of the rabbinic sages themselves: how did that authorship do its work in the confrontation with an important individual.”⁹ By approaching the sources of a singular figure, Neusner aims to draw meaning about the “collective” of rabbinic Judaism or rabbinic culture generally. When Neusner writes “collective authorship,” he means that even though rabbinic texts cite this rabbi or that rabbi, Neusner rejects that they are authoritative witnesses to the lives and teachings of specific historical persons named. Rather, they represent a “collective” known as the sages in a given period. And so, the stories of Ḥanina are not about Ḥanina, but about the sages and their culture.

David Stern expresses skepticism of the use of the Talmud as “an historical resource,” because “our primary source of data for understanding the environment in which the rabbis operated is the Talmud itself.”¹⁰ Yet, cautiously, he employs general data from the broader field of the history of late-antique Judaism in order to understand the periods in which rabbinic figures purportedly lived, then, the period and circumstances in which the stories about him were finally redacted.¹¹

⁹ Jacob Neusner, *In Search of Talmudic Biography: The Problem of the Attributed Saying* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 4.

¹⁰ David Eli Stern, “Rain Men: Ḥoni the Circle Drawer, Ḥanina Ben Dosa, and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity” (thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 49.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

Jewish life in Palestine at the dawn of the common era was characterized by instability. Jews faced considerable economic difficulties. Jewish society was marked by social disequilibrium: rural and urban dwellers were at odds, and significant rifts existed between Hellenized and non-Hellenized segments of the population.¹²

Stern uses this historical background of instability within the Jewish community to make claims about Ḥanina and what stories about him might mean as a portrait of sectarian divides. He also uses historical analysis to situate these Jewish teachings among the broader cultural tendencies of the age and region: “The Jewish belief in the potential for connection with angels, demons and other occult forces partakes of a phenomenon in the broader Greco-Roman culture of late antiquity: the blurring of distinctions between the human and the divine.”¹³ Stern uses these pieces of historical information (among others) to explain why there might have been sources reflecting charismatic leaders serving as intermediaries between God and the people in the tannaitic period.

In the Amoraic period, rabbinic culture was marked by a paradox, Stern writes, “On the one hand the rabbis regarded themselves as superior; on the other, they claimed to be providing a model for popular, not merely elite, behavior.”¹⁴ While the previous generation looked to charismatic leaders as their intermediaries, in the Amoraic period, Stern identifies a shift to the

¹² David Eli Stern, “Rain Men: Honi the Circle Drawer, Hanina Ben Dosa, and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity” (thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 36.

¹³ Ibid., 42.

¹⁴ Ibid., 51-52.

Rabbi as an exemplar, and they deployed the character of Ḥanina as a bridge between these forms of rabbinic leadership.

P.J. Hartin points to archeological findings to make cultural claims about the historical context of rabbinic stories: “Being relatively poor and not having the means to erect spacious ‘synagogues,’ the Jews of that period and locality would rather meet for prayer and hold their ‘synagogue service’ in someone’s house.”¹⁵ This cultural inference is reflected in the stories of Ḥanina ben Dosa who, as a Galilean hasid, is frequently depicted in his humble home. Furthermore, Hartin sees in these stories the scars from a Jewish sectarian battle:

influential in the province was the hasid, the holy man, because of his roots and ability to make the connection between the life of the temple and everyday life in the villages of Galilee. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were far more suited to the urban way of life and hence their appeal was limited amongst the vast majority of the people of Galilee.¹⁶

Here, Hartin suggests that the historical context (also reflected in the Ḥanina ben Dosa stories) tells us that the Pharisaic or Judean concerns of urban life differed from those of the agricultural people living in the Galilee.

¹⁵ Patrick J Hartin, “The Religious Nature of First-Century Galilee As a Setting for Early Christianity,” *Neotestamentica* 27, no. 2 (1993): 331–50, 334.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 348.

Literary Analysis

Finally, beyond redactional comparison and historical context, scholars can distill meaning by analyzing the text literarily: finding linguistic patterns and comparing to other literary works.

Geza Vermes focuses on the use of a particular verb in these stories and its implications. In Mishnah, Ḥanina ben Dosa says that if his prayer is “*shegurah*” in his mouth, then he knows it is received. While this word “sh-g-r” is oft translated as “fluent,” Vermes argues that since “in similar literary units the verb *hishgir* means ‘to improvise,’ the fluent (*shegurah*) supplication in question must refer to a free composition.”¹⁷ And thus, for Vermes, the Ḥanina stories represent a paradox about how the rabbis understood prayer. It should be both formulaic *and* improvised. This paradox indicates that the Mishnah took Ḥanina’s statement about prayer that is “*shegurah*” out of context. He writes that the original statement of Ḥanina may be more accurately reflected in amoraic sources. By placing Ḥanina in a context of formulaic prayer, the redactors of the earlier Mishnah placed themselves firmly on the side of fixed prayer.

Bokser also uses literary tropes to understand the Ḥanina ben Dosa sources. He categorizes the Ḥanina story of the *arvad* (lizard) found in the Babylonian Talmud as a “miracle story” which has “three elements: (a) a problem which is brought to the attention of a person who can help; (b) the person's miraculous response; (c) the miraculous result which removes the problem.”¹⁸ By labeling the Babylonian Talmud’s

¹⁷ Geza Vermes, “Ḥanina Ben Dosa,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (1972): 28–50, <https://doi.org/10.18647/604/jjs-1972>, 29-30.

¹⁸ Baruch M Bokser, “Ḥanina Ben Dosa and the Lizard: The Treatment of Charismatic Figures in Rabbinic Literature,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 1981, 1–6, 3.

rendering of Ḥanina's encounter with a deadly lizard as a "miracle story," Bokser distinguishes the Babylonian Talmud's depiction of Ḥanina from other sources where this trope is absent. Bokser notes that the Babylonian Talmud includes more "miracle stories" than the other rabbinic corpora. And when earlier sources included miracles, they do not generally come about with a problem which is brought to the attention of a person who can help.

Neusner also compares rabbinic literature to other literary forms, specifically ancient biography. He responds to the work of Patricia Cox who states that "ancient biographies of holy men were caricatures whose aim was to evoke and thus to reveal the interior geography of the hero's life..."¹⁹ By contrast, Neusner describes the corpus of rabbinical writings as "stories about holy men proposed to illustrate and exemplify a standard applicable to all Israelites and to provoke a single effect among them."²⁰ Neusner distinguishes between rabbinic biography and ancient biography. Rabbinic biography, he tells us, is not aimed at either aggrandizement or accuracy, but to teach and model a set of behaviors.

The stories of Ḥanina ben Dosa are often explicitly introduced as a *ma'aseh*. For example: "*Ma'aseh b'makom echad sh'hayah arvad*. - There was an incident in one place where there was an arvad." Stern identifies the *ma'aseh* as a particular literary form that is primarily didactic. While not historically accurate, the story is meant to be believable. The *ma'aseh* claims to have happened as a narrative strategy. Stern argues that while the

¹⁹ Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity a Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), xi.

²⁰ Jacob Neusner, *In Search of Talmudic Biography: The Problem of the Attributed Saying* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 3.

ma'aseh has no added historical veracity, the form implies that “Since what happened once is likely to reoccur in the future, the fact that a particular form of behavior once won reward or punishment is a revealing index to its virtuous or wicked character.”²¹ It is also worthy of note that Ḥanina is referred to as an *ish ma'aseh*, a descriptive phrase I will discuss in greater detail below.

²¹ David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 13.

Who is Ḥanina?

Using these methods, scholars have identified four principal aspects of Ḥanina's persona: Prayer, poverty, deed, and institutional authority. These qualities feature prominently in the stories of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa.

Prayer

A number of stories reference Ḥanina ben Dosa's prayer triggering miracles. Ḥanina is known for offering improvised compositions, rather than stereotyped formulae. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Berakhot, Ḥanina offers a prayer of healing for the son of Rabban Gamliel. Immediately, Ḥanina proclaims that the boy is healed, even though he is in the town of Arav and the boy is in Jerusalem. Rabban Gamliel's envoys are astonished by Ḥanina's confidence and doubt whether he could know such a thing. They mark down the time and find out that Ḥanina was correct. This story supports the teaching that one knows whether a prayer is received if the prayer is fluent (*shegurah*) in his mouth. This teaching also appears in the Mishnah. According to Vermes, as discussed above, counterintuitively, the Babylonian Talmud preserves an earlier version of the story which depicts Ḥanina's healing prayer as a "free composition."²² The redactor(s) of the Mishnah took the story of Ḥanina's prayer out of context and adapted it so that it would depict Ḥanina affirming their preference for a fixed liturgy. Paradoxically, Vermes tells us, the Mishnah's telling of the Ḥanina story is less true to its "original" context.

²² Geza Vermes, "Ḥanina Ben Dosa," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (1972): 28–50, <https://doi.org/10.18647/604/jjs-1972>, 29–30.

Another series of vignettes describe a lizard (*arvad/havarber*) biting Ḥanina during prayer. Ḥanina does not stop his prayer, nor does the bite kill him. Instead, the lizard dies. Bokser claims these stories also depict the Palestinian Talmud's interest in fostering concentration in prayer and its implications. In the Palestinian Talmud's version of the story, Ḥanina's concentration in prayer leads to God's placing of a spring under his feet. Bokser writes that the Palestinian Talmud presents Ḥanina in order to show a "concern for the rules and effectiveness of prayer no longer as ends in themselves but as a means to gain a special relationship with God and divine protection."²³ The reward for concentration in prayer is God's protection and relationship.

In the Babylonian Talmud tractates Ta'anit and Yoma,²⁴ there is a story about Ḥanina controlling rain. Stern argues that this story is meant to show how one's power and influence in society is related to the efficacy of one's prayers. He cites the words of R. Yosef, "What effect does the prayer of the High Priest have compared to Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa?"²⁵ In Stern's words, this indicates "Ḥanina's distinctiveness and superiority in relation to the paradigmatic representative of Jewish institutionalism (the High Priest)," and at the same time link the two by implying that they "are engaged in the same activity, identified here by the word 'prayer.'"²⁶ In the rabbis' minds prayer is equal to and replaces sacrifice, therefore, Ḥanina (as a representative of the rabbis) is equal to and replaces the High Priest, following the destruction of the Temple.

²³ Baruch M Bokser, "Ḥanina Ben Dosa and the Lizard: The Treatment of Charismatic Figures in Rabbinic Literature," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 1981, 1–6, 3.

²⁴ The Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 24b and Yoma 53b

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ David Eli Stern, "Rain Men: Honi the Circle Drawer, Hanina Ben Dosa, and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity" (thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 102.

Poverty

According to Stern, Ḥanina exemplifies poverty as a meritorious existence. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Ta'anit,²⁷ Ḥanina's wife complains about their poverty. Ḥanina prays and receives a golden table leg from heaven. But that night, Ḥanina's wife sees in a dream that the golden table leg is missing from their table in the World-to-Come. Stern points out that this story "links Ḥanina's poverty in this world to his reward in the World-to-Come... by choosing to return the table leg, he opts symbolically to refrain from using his powers for his own (and his wife's) material relief."²⁸ Asceticism and denial of wealth, the rabbis tell us, are practices that God rewards in the World-to-Come.

Hartin agrees, and argues that that the Ḥanina stories are emblematic of "a specific style of life" in the Galilee "that incorporated homelessness, the rejection of riches and the abandonment of family ties."²⁹ Hartin concludes that the sources which emphasize Ḥanina's poverty, describe a geographical context, far from the institutional resources of the Temple, where life was simpler and the values more austere. Ḥanina's poverty brought him renown not only with the Divine, but among the agricultural people of the Galilee.

Binyamin Lau points out that in Kohelet Rabbah, "Rabbi Ḥanina has no desire to alter the natural order. He is a simple, unpretentious person whose sole desire is to partake in a religious act, and it is precisely this simplicity that makes him deserving of reward."³⁰ Lau contrasts

²⁷ Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 25a

²⁸ David Eli Stern, "Rain Men: Ḥoni the Circle Drawer, Ḥanina Ben Dosa, and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity" (thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 105.

²⁹ Patrick J Hartin, "The Religious Nature of First-Century Galilee As a Setting for Early Christianity," *Neotestamentica* 27, no. 2 (1993): 331–50, 345.

³⁰ Binyamin La'u, "His Fear Precedes His Wisdom: Ḥanina Ben Dosa," chapter, in *The Sages: Character, Context & Creativity* (Jerusalem: Maggid Books, 2013), 69–83, 71.

Ḥanina to Honi the Circle maker, another enigmatic and charismatic figure in rabbinic literature, who makes demands. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Ta'anit,³¹ Honi prays for rain, but does so through protest. He draws a circle around himself and proclaims that he will not move from the circle until the rain begins to fall. Even after the rains fall, Honi continues protesting until the “right” rain falls. The rabbis conclude the story by comparing Honi to a son who nags his father (in this case, God) and gets what he wants. Ḥanina, on the other hand, despite his poverty, only wants to bring an offering to the Temple. Lau argues that because Ḥanina's poverty does not allow him to do what others can (i.e. buy a sacrifice and send it to the Temple), it is his effort and desire to come close to God that make him worthy of regard and reward.

Deed (*Ma'aseh*)

The Mishnah, tractate Sotah³² praises Ḥanina as a “man of deed—*ish ma'aseh*.” Stern offers two different interpretations of this phrase. First, following Rashi, he explains the term refers to “one whose piety is certain and who performs wondrous deeds.”³³ This is in line with the standard descriptions of Ḥanina as a “wonder-worker.” Stern also offers a more modern interpretation, building on the work of Adolph Buchler and Shmuel Safrai who suggest that “the term *ma'aseh* should be understood as ‘deed,’ in contrast to rabbinic terms for study such as *talmud*, *midrash*, and *mishnah*.” Ḥanina's “righteous acts,” in contrast to the more sedentary

³¹ Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 23a

³² Mishnah Sotah 9:15

³³ Rashi's commentary to the Babylonian Talmud Sotah 49a. Quoted in David Eli Stern, “Rain Men: Honi the Circle Drawer, Hanina Ben Dosa, and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity” (thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 96.

pursuits of rabbinic life, “define the ‘pious men’ and the ‘men of deeds.’”³⁴ Ḥanina’s piety thus represents an alternative value system to the standard intellectual attainments valorized by the rabbis.³⁵ Stern further poses the question, which he leaves unanswered, whether Ḥanina is a “man of deed” because he performs miracles, or he is able to perform miracles because he is a “man of deed.” Vermes weighs in suggesting the former, that Ḥanina’s miracles are not the reason for God’s favor, but the result of it.³⁶

Lau identifies Ḥanina ben Dosa as an exemplar of the late antique pietism (hasidism). In contrast to “the sages, the Hasidim were distinguished for their virtues, their devotion and their humility.”³⁷ For Lau, Ḥanina is a “man of deed” because of how he acts despite the power granted to him: “Rabbi Ḥanina does not presume to create havoc in the supernal worlds by using his powers, and he actually attempts to conceal them.”³⁸ In Lau’s view, “the secret of his power and influence lay precisely in the simplicity of his character, in his honesty and his refusal to seek refuge in miracles.”³⁹

Institutional Authority

For some scholars, Ḥanina represents the antithesis of the rabbinic institution. Vermes explains that “Ḥanina is represented as highly popular with persons in need, but disliked and

³⁴ David Eli Stern, “Rain Men: Ḥoni the Circle Drawer, Ḥanina Ben Dosa, and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity” (thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 97.

³⁵ Ibid., 126.

³⁶ Geza Vermes, “Ḥanina Ben Dosa,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (1972): 28–50, <https://doi.org/10.18647/604/jjs-1972>, 39.

³⁷ Binyamin La’u, “His Fear Precedes His Wisdom: Ḥanina Ben Dosa,” chapter, in *The Sages: Character, Context & Creativity* (Jerusalem: Maggid Books, 2013), 69–83, 69.

³⁸ Ibid., 74.

³⁹ Ibid., 77–78.

distrusted by doctrinaire rabbis.”⁴⁰ Vermes argues that “the power of such a charismatic was suspect among the spokesmen of the establishment... and the literary history of the traditions discloses their repeated attempts to eliminate... the supernatural element and to cut the miracle-worker down to size.”⁴¹ Support for this view may be found in the Babylonian Talmud, tractates Yevamot and Bava Kama,⁴² where Ḥanina saves Nehunya’s daughter from a well and the rabbis “ascribe her deliverance to the merit of the Akedah, and not to Ḥanina’s intercession.”⁴³

Bokser’s explanation of the different roles of rabbis in Sassanian Persia and Palestine supports the claim that Ḥanina’s character exemplifies rabbinic authority in different historical contexts. In the diaspora, rabbis would have been more intimately involved in community affairs, this helps us understand why sources in the Babylonian Talmud would place Ḥanina among the people, praying for their healing, exemplifying charismatic authority. The Palestinian Talmud places him under divine protection as a result of his deep concentration in prayer, specifically the fixed institutionalized prayer of the rabbis.⁴⁴

Stern classes Ḥanina, like Honi, as a paragon of charismatic leadership. While institutional and charismatic authority are often perceived as at odds with one another, Stern argues that Ḥanina breaks down this dichotomy. Stern cites an exchange between Rabbi Yoḥanan and his wife about the roles he and Ḥanina play in Israelite society, where Yoḥanan compares

⁴⁰ Geza Vermes, “Ḥanina Ben Dosa,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (1972): 28–50, <https://doi.org/10.18647/604/jjs-1972>, 32.

⁴¹ Ibid., 37.

⁴² Yevamot 121b and Bava Kama 50a

⁴³ Geza Vermes, “Ḥanina Ben Dosa,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (1972): 28–50, <https://doi.org/10.18647/604/jjs-1972>, 33.

⁴⁴ Baruch M Bokser, “Ḥanina Ben Dosa and the Lizard: The Treatment of Charismatic Figures in Rabbinic Literature,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 1981, 1–6, 4.

himself and Ḥanina to a prince and a servant before God, respectively.⁴⁵ While Ḥanina has easier access and can ask the King (God) for small favors more easily, Yoḥanan knows God's greater plans and has a hand in carrying them out. According to Stern, this "may best sum up the rabbinic view of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa: it combines an explicit recognition of Ḥanina's wondrous abilities with an institution-bound, if not always effective, assertion of traditional hierarchies and categories."

⁴⁵ Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 34b

Hanina and Me

These scholarly approaches and insights have inspired my own narrative rendering of the life of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa. As redaction criticism demonstrates, retelling a story involves change and interpretive choice, but it is with great care and attention that I approach the enterprise of adapting the rabbinic narratives in light of my own post-modern sensibility. As Neusner notes, in interpreting these texts, we learn more about the interpreter than the hero of the story. While I write this narrative about Hanina, it is ultimately a reflection of my own worldview as a new father and “Erev Rav.”⁴⁶

Stern’s view that Hanina was a non-traditional charismatic, straddling the line that separates personal and institutional authority, is what I believe to be the central power of the corpus of Hanina stories. I believe we all struggle to navigate being individual selves while fitting into bigger systems. As children, the first system we learn to navigate is our family and our experience of our family as children shapes how we exist in other social settings as we age. Awareness of the import of family systems led me to emphasize Hanina’s family life in my stories of him.

While Vermes highlights Hanina’s role as a healer, miracle-worker, and teacher, I choose to highlight his identity as a son, father, and rabbi. While no stories tell of Hanina’s relationship

⁴⁶ Gail Labovitz, “What It Means to Be ‘Erev Rav,’” Hadassah-Brandeis Institute | Brandeis University, February 3, 2017, <https://www.brandeis.edu/hbi/blog/2017/0203-what.html>.

Rabbinical students in their final year of rabbinic training sometimes refer to themselves (or are referred to by others) as “erev rav.” In Hebrew, “erev” means evening, and can also, just like the English “eve,” mean the time just before and leading up to something — for example, the day or the evening before, as in “New Year’s Eve.” Friday, and not just Friday night after sunset, is often referred to in rabbinic and later Hebrew as “erev Shabbat.” A rabbinical student in his or her last year of training is on the eve of becoming a “Rav,” a rabbi.

The term is somewhat tongue-in-cheek because in Exodus 12:38 it refers to the “mixed multitude” or “rabble” that left Egypt alongside the Israelites.

with his own parents, in the Babylonian Talmud tractates Berakhot and Ta'anit,⁴⁷ a voice from Heaven calls him "My son." I take this appellation as more than a term of endearment, signifying Ḥanina's youth and God's paternal care for him. As I discussed above, Ḥanina's charismatic authority might appear to contrast with his authority as a rabbi. But, in my stories, I choose to show development: from Ḥanina as a son—immature, selfish, individually-focused— to Ḥanina as a father, a role that demands sacrifice of self and humility. This transformation opens the door to the interpretation of Ḥanina that links his coming of age as a father to his emergence as a rabbi. To be a rabbi is to be a teacher. It requires hollowing out oneself in order to be a sacred vessel (*kli kodesh*), a conduit for transmission of the Jewish tradition from one generation to the next, much like a father who sacrifices his own comfort for the betterment of his children.

⁴⁷ Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 17b and Ta'anit 24b

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PART II: Story Cycle

Introduction

The following is a translation of a recently found ancient scroll in the Galilean city of Arav, near the alleged burial site of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa. It appears to be written by the rabbi's daughter, Emuna. The authenticity of its authorship cannot be confirmed... nor denied.

Megillat ben Dosa

I write this in memory of my father z”l.⁴⁸ He was known widely, but never as deeply as he would have liked. He was and continues to be, highly regarded and even worshiped by those whose lives he touched, which always made him uncomfortable. Some had even thought for a time that my father could have been the messiah. His kind actions of healing and miraculous luck made him appear as an angel among men, or perhaps a man among common donkeys.⁴⁹ People are afraid there will never be another like him.⁵⁰ My hope in sharing the stories of his life is to soften the lofty narratives that I imagine will arise from the kind, loving people of the Galilee who have been so influenced by my father. While I was quite close with my father, in order to recount stories of him from before my birth, I have also sought input of those knew him: his wife (my mother, Ashira), his teacher (Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakai), and oddly enough, our neighbor, Ikku, who has lived next door since before I was born. It is with great love and admiration that I offer these tales: The Lives of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa.

⁴⁸ *Zichrono livracha*, “may his memory be a blessing.”

⁴⁹ Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 112b

⁵⁰ Mishnah Sotah 9:15

Hanina My Son

The Jerusalem Stone.

In Midrash Kohelet Rabbah and Shir HaShirim Rabbah,⁵¹ there is a story about angels helping Hanina to bring a stone to the Temple as an offering. I have started the story cycle here because Hanina displays a certain naiveté and youthful enthusiasm for Temple ritual. He is honest to a fault and he seeks the direction and approval of the sages. Ironically, the depiction of Hanina within the structure of institutional authority is, I argue, the end result of Hanina's maturation. Beginning Hanina's story here may serve as foreshadowing or perhaps the baseline that makes his integration amongst the sages possible.

This story, like many other Hanina stories,⁵² is described in the text as a "ma'aseh." As Stern describes it, "The ma'aseh most resembles what Aristotle called a paradeigma, an example, or exemplum: an anecdote told to exemplify or illustrate a lesson, moral, or otherwise... the ma'aseh purports to tell a story that actually took place... as a rhetorical claim, the assertion of historical veracity is a valuable key to the ma'aseh's basic narrative strategies."⁵³ In this case, the moral exemplified by Hanina, a simple, unpretentious person who desires to partake in a religious act deserving of reward.

Finally, I have recast this story as the meeting place for Hanina and his wife, Ashira. Not only does this provide structure for the story and the larger cycle, but it also pays homage to

⁵¹ Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 1:1 and Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:1:4

⁵² Palestinian Talmud Berakhot 5:5, Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 33a, 34b, Yevamot 121b, Bava Kama 50a, Avot DeRabbi Natan 8:8, Midrash Tanhuma Vaera 4, Tanhuma Vayigash 3, Shemot Rabbah 3:12

⁵³ David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 13.

events in my own life, when I met my wife in Jerusalem, having come from the same place. (Not Arav, but Los Angeles.)

I have asked my mother, Ashira, to tell the story of how she met my father, Hanina. These are her words:

I was accompanying my father who was bringing an offering to the Temple. I didn't know it then, but your father saw us as we left town and he was determined to bring his own offering to the Temple. I always said he was looking for any excuse to be righteous, but he would say he just wanted an excuse to talk to me.

Abba didn't have any money or animals to bring to the Temple, so he went out and found a big rock. He chiseled it, smoothed it, painted it. It really was a work of art. And then he tried to hire laborers, but they were too expensive and wanted their payment upfront. Abba said he had given up, but then five angels arrived and offered to carry the rock if only he would help them. Well, he didn't know they were angels in the moment. They looked like regular men. But when they lifted the stone, it was as if they were in Jerusalem in an instant! They reached the Temple before my father and I did! And that's when I saw him, standing there with a big rock. I said to him, "Your goat looks a little stiff." And he was so confused. Or maybe nervous. Maybe he didn't pick up on my sarcasm and he thought I didn't know the difference between a goat and a rock? He just stood there looking around like he had lost something.

And he asked me, "Did you see which way they went?"

And I thought he lost his mind, I said "They?"

"The guys that helped me carry my goat here," he said with a smile, "I owe them their pay."

“Oh? Where are you coming from? Is this a big payday?” I replied.

“From Arav, but-”

I interrupted excitedly, “Really?! I’m from Arav!”

“Well, hopefully, this won’t be the last I see of you then.”

And that was it. I knew we’d be together forever after that. I followed him through Jerusalem as he looked for the men who helped him.

Finally, we went to the Chamber of Hewn Stone and the sages told him they must have been angels. And still, that man could not just hold onto the tiny amount of money he had; he gave it to the sages.

I invited him to join our caravan back to Arav, and that’s when people started to see what I saw in Hanina.

Woe to the *arvad*.

In tractate Berakhot of the Tosefta and Palestinian Talmud, and in Midrash Tanhuma Vaera⁵⁴, there is a story about Hanina’s concentration in prayer saving him from the bite of a deadly lizard (arvad). There are other versions of the same story in the Babylonian Talmud and Shemot Rabbah, but the message is so different that I have interpreted them as an entirely different encounter with a deadly lizard later in the story cycle. In this encounter, Hanina is oblivious to the danger of the lizard because of his deep concentration in prayer, which is also what merits divine protection from the lizard’s deadly bite. Hanina is still not aware of his own abilities, he simply benefits from divine favor as a result of his piety.

⁵⁴ Tosefta Berakhot 3:20, Palestinian Talmud Berakhot 5:1:22, Midrash Tanhuma Vaera 4

My mother, Ashira continued:

Ḥanina asked to stop and pray. So we waited for him. I watched him standing there on the side of the road so deeply concentrated in prayer. Everyone else rolled their eyes, but I was completely in love with him. He was so sincere, so innocent.

As he concentrated in prayer and I concentrated on him, a shriek stole my attention. “Look out for that *arvad*⁵⁵!” But nothing could pull Ḥanina away from his prayer, not even the bite of a ferocious animal. We all thought that would be the end of him, but he didn’t even flinch. He finished his prayer and thanked us for our patience.

Everyone gathered around him asking him questions, “Didn’t you hear us?” “Didn’t you notice?” “Did it hurt?”

And he just gave them that same bewildered look he gave me when I first met him and he said, “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I didn’t feel a thing.”

As we set out to leave, I saw the *arvad*’s dead body lying at the mouth of its hole and I heard the rumors start to fly about Ḥanina: “Woe to the man bitten by an *arvad*, but woe to the *arvad* that bites Ḥanina ben Dosa.”

And that is when things started to change for Ḥanina. He started being recognized as someone with special skills and powerful prayers. But lucky for me, it took awhile before he started to see it in himself.

⁵⁵ I have refrained from translating *arvad* as it is unclear what kind of creature this is. Midrash Tanhuma Vaera 4 and Shemot Rabbah 3:12 compare the *arvad* to the serpents of Gan Eden and Moses’ staff. The Palestinian Talmud places the word with *havarbar*, which implies “hiding in darkness.” Most translations render the creature to be a deadly reptile, similar to a snake or lizard.

Ḥanina is miserable.

In the Babylonian Talmud, tractates Ta'anit and Yoma⁵⁶ there is a story about Ḥanina's prayer and piety stopping and starting rain. I have used this story as the basis for the following tale. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Ta'anit⁵⁷ Honi the Circle Maker similarly displays the ability to miraculously control the weather, but does so by way of a temper tantrum, refusing to move from a single spot. He makes demands of God and thus the rabbis describe him as a "petulant child." Ḥanina, on the other hand, does not demand anything of God, rather he simply expresses his own suffering. It is Ḥanina's piety and prayer that merits the miracle of stopping and starting rainfall. I have tried to dramatize Ḥanina's own self-awareness of his immense responsibility as a charismatic leader of the people, in contrast to Honi's lack of self awareness

In the early years of our marriage, Ḥanina would travel often to Jerusalem. I think in his younger years he felt a bit like a fish outgrowing a small pond. On one long journey home from Jerusalem, Ḥanina was accompanied by a torrential downpour. He slogged and trudged, knowing full well how desperately the land needed the rain. He held his tongue as long as he could, but the rain came down so hard that he could no longer see his own feet — submerged in the waters. He said before God: "Master of the Universe, the whole world is comfortable, but Ḥanina is suffering!" And in response, the heavens opened to reveal the sun shining down on the earth. But a depressing realization accompanied his relief — he had just undone the prayers of the High Priest,⁵⁸ the public fast ordered on the Jews. He was alone among his people, when they would

⁵⁶ Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 25a and Yoma 53b

⁵⁷ Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 23a

⁵⁸ The text concludes with a rabbinic statement comparing the power of Ḥanina's prayer to that of the High Priest.

rejoice he would be in misery, when he would rejoice, they would be in misery. He may find joy in their joy, but it would not be his own, it would come at a cost to him. So he would sacrifice his comfort, his joy, for theirs.

“Master of the Universe,” he implored “the whole world is suffering and Ḥanina is comfortable?” And in response, the rain returned. But he could hardly feel it because for the first time, he felt at home.⁵⁹

Ikku's house.

In the Babylonian Talmud tractate Ta'anit⁶⁰ there is a story about Ḥanina's prayer miraculously fixing the roof of his neighbor, Ikku. While this is one of several stories that include neighbors, this story in Ta'anit names her. The inclusion of neighbors in Ḥanina stories reflects what Stern points out as the nature of the charismatic rabbi gaining authority from the common people or amei ha'aretz. Bokser also explains that this may reflect the difference between rabbis of Palestine and of the diaspora (Palestinian vs. Babylonian Talmuds) who have different relationships to the “commoners”.

I have merged the neighbor figures found in the story cycle into one character, Ikku, which is both the woman's name, and “an Aramaic optative particle.”⁶¹ The optative is a category of grammatical mood that expresses a wish, hope, or desire, yielding a translation for Ḥanina's response: “Oh, that your joists might be joined together!” Stern points out that these

⁵⁹ Rather than Ḥanina waiting until his arrival home to ask God for the rain to return, here he *feels* at home knowing the rain is needed. It is no longer physical comfort, but spiritual comfort that stokes his prayer.

⁶⁰ Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 25a

⁶¹ David Eli Stern, “Rain Men: Honi the Circle Drawer, Ḥanina Ben Dosa, and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity” (thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 105.

words resemble an incantation more than a prayer. However, a parallel can also be drawn to Hanina's words when he refutes a claim (also made by neighbors) that his goats are causing damage. "If so ('ika) let them be eaten by bears." This would imply that Ikku's honesty is what merits the joists of her home to extend together, just as Hanina's honesty merits the miracle of goats returning with bears on their horns instead of being eaten. If Ikku is indeed evil, something as simple as telling the truth about her name may be an act of teshuvah, rehabilitation. It also may be an act of vulnerability to admit her poverty and use her real name.

My focus in this story is to portray the people who would have encountered Hanina. His neighbors are initially skeptical but ultimately come to love him for his kindness and humility. Ikku, here, assumes the worst of Hanina but he wins her over in the end with his magic.

Similarly, I asked our neighbor, Ikku, to share her first encounter with my father:

When I first arrived in Arav⁶² we had very little. And it seemed everyone had very little.⁶³ I suppose those who resort to starting anew have nothing to lose.

I tried to build a house so that my children and I would have shelter, but I had no experience with such things, nor did I have the necessary materials. When I finished, the joists were not long enough to reach from one wall to the other. I was devastated. I had worked so hard to get here, to make a new life for my family. We had four walls but continued to lack a roof over our heads.

I wanted this to be something I did without anyone's help, but I had reached my tipping point.

Maybe a neighbor could tell me what to do, where I could get more wood for my beams. I came

⁶² Patrick J Hartin, "The Religious Nature of First-Century Galilee As a Setting for Early Christianity," *Neotestamentica* 27, no. 2 (1993): 331–50, 334.

⁶³ Ibid.

before my neighbor, Ḥanina ben Dosa. I said to him, “I’ve built my house just over there, but my joists do not reach the walls-”

And before I could continue, he interrupted me, “What is your name?”

I didn’t even introduce myself, where are my manners? “Ikku,” I replied.

And without missing a beat, he prayed, “If so (*Ikku*), may your joists reach.”

I couldn’t believe it. The nerve! That’s it? A crumby pun? I stormed off, ready to recount my story to anyone who would listen, perhaps others in the area would share their own stories of this awful man. But then I saw it. My house. It was complete. As if a roof was placed carefully on top by God’s own hand.⁶⁴ It was beautiful. It even extended beyond the walls, providing shade and shelter surrounding our home.

I did indeed recount my story to anyone who would listen, and I was not surprised to hear others share their own stories of this righteous man.

“Tikvah” bat Nahunya.

There are two nearly identical versions of the story of Nahunya’s daughter in the Babylonian Talmud, tractates Yevamot and Bava Kama.⁶⁵ Nahunya’s daughter falls into a great cistern and Ikku approaches Ḥanina to save her. Nahunya is a well-digger, meaning it was his own handiwork that put his daughter in danger. Ḥanina cites this as the reason that he knew she would not be harmed, for God would not let such a tragedy happen in such a way. This response is accompanied by Ḥanina’s rejecting the title of “prophet” (ironically, with the words of the

⁶⁴ This phrase is taken from another Ḥanina miracle in which something like the palm of a hand emerges from heaven and gifts him a golden table leg (Babylonian Talmud Ta’anit 25a).

⁶⁵ Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 121b and Bava Kama 50a

prophet Amos). These two statements work in tandem to paint Hanina as faithful above all else. Even without miraculous power or unique access to God, like Abraham, his faith assures him that everything will be okay.

Ikku continued:

I remember when Tikvah⁶⁶ fell into the great cistern, I had no idea what to do so I ran as fast as I could to tell Hanina. I told him, “Tikvah fell into the great cistern about an hour ago. I got here as fast as I could.”

And he just said, “Shalom.”

I racked my brain trying to figure it out. Was this a courtesy thing again? I went back to him and said, “Shalom, Hanina, Tikvah has been stuck in that well for two hours now and-” he raised his hand to stop me.

Again he said, “Shalom.”

I thought he was telling me to leave, so I left and I went back to check on Tikvah. She was still stuck so I went back to Hanina a third time. I was losing my patience, “Shalom, Hanina, look, if you’re not going to help Tikvah out of the well, if you can’t for some reason just-”

And he interrupted me again, this time with a smile on his face, “She has ascended from the cistern.”

I rushed to the cistern to see Tikvah and Hanina walked slowly behind me. When I got there, she was livid.

“I was down there for three hours? What was everyone doing? Why didn’t anyone help me?”

⁶⁶ Named Tikvah for the hope (or lack thereof) she felt at the bottom of the well. It is also worthy of note that Nahunya and Hanina have very similar names, both coming from *Hein* meaning grace.

I tried to tell her, “I did help, I went and told Rabbi Ḥanina-”

“Oh ya, real helpful...” she snapped.

“Well, you were saved, weren’t you? Who do you think is responsible for that?” I asked.

“Who helped me out of there? It was a ram being led by an old man! Not you and not Rabbi Ḥanina.”

But I defended him, and myself: “Of course it was Rabbi Ḥanina! He knew exactly when you’d be rescued.”

She asked him sarcastically, “Rabbi Ḥanina, are you a prophet?”

He replied, “I am no prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet.⁶⁷ But would a righteous man like your father, Nahunya, who dug this very cistern, be so afflicted by the fruits of his own labor?”

Ironically, it was less than a year later that Nahunya’s son died of thirst.

But that is only because Nahunya was so close to God that he was afflicted this way. God is harshest to those who are closest to Him, after all. Tikvah never found much comfort in that.

⁶⁷ Amos 7:14

Growing Pains of Fatherhood⁶⁸

Sick kids.

In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Berakhot⁶⁹ there is a collection of stories about Ḥanina's prayers healing the sick, specifically for the children of Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai. These stories respond to Ḥanina's assertion in the Mishnah⁷⁰ that he knows his prayers are heard when the words are fluent in his mouth. Ḥanina's healing of Rabban Gamliel's son (also found in the Palestinian Talmud⁷¹) serves as a proof of this idea, since Ḥanina is not present with them when he prays or when the boy is healed (which happen simultaneously). However, the final story in the cycle found in the Babylonian Talmud takes this one step further, placing Ḥanina in the room with Rabbi Yoḥanan and his son as he prays for the boy's healing. No longer is the story about the value of prayer fluency, but about the relationship between prayer and study (or charismatic and institutional power) personified by Ḥanina and Yoḥanan respectively.

I have written two accounts of this story. The first focuses on the dynamic between Yoḥanan and his student, Ḥanina, and dramatizing the story based on Yoḥanan's message, at the end, comparing Ḥanina to God's servant and himself to God's minister.

The second, told by Ḥanina's wife, Ashira, focuses on Ḥanina's perspective, expanding upon the ambiguity of Yoḥanan saying, "Ḥanina, my son." Not knowing whether he is referring

⁶⁸ Midrash Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 29 credits Ḥanina with teaching that those who are circumcised enter into a parent-child relationship with God on the basis of a wordplay between "pain" (*Ko'ev*) and "like a father" (*k'av*).

⁶⁹ Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 34b

⁷⁰ Mishnah Berakhot 5:5

⁷¹ Palestinian Talmud Berakhot 5:5

to Ḥanina as his son or drawing Ḥanina's attention to his son provides an opening for interpretation. The Babylonian Talmud, tractates Berakhot and Ta'anit⁷² say that each day a bat kol (heavenly voice) emerges and proclaims that the world exists on the merit of "Ḥanina, My son." While Yoḥanan's expresses fear of the broader implications of his authority, Ḥanina's perspective is contained within his own spiritual world. He does not consider the power dynamics between Yoḥanan and himself, which, in a way, confirms Yoḥanan's teaching about the difference between the two of them.

The following are the words of Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, who studied with my father for several years:

He'd always say, "Actions speak louder than words."⁷³ But his words were particularly powerful.

Rabban Gamliel had told me how Ḥanina healed his son,⁷⁴ so when my son fell ill, I invited Ḥanina to study at my home. Ḥanina looked over at my boy in his bed. I turned and saw that he was stiff as a board, no longer squirming from the discomfort of his symptoms. I went to check on him and he was unresponsive. I was panicked; I didn't know what to do.

"I've tried everything," I told Ḥanina, "every prayer, every medicine money can buy,⁷⁵ and he only gets worse! Please, Ḥanina, my son,⁷⁶ pray for him that he may live."

⁷² Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 17b and Ta'anit 24b

⁷³ In order to contrast the styles of Yoḥanan and Ḥanina, I've used this adaptation of Pirkei Avot 3:9. Yoḥanan, on the other hand, emphasized that Torah was the prerequisite of piety.

⁷⁴ Palestinian Talmud Berakhot 5:5

⁷⁵ Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 2 depicts Yoḥanan hosting the wealthiest magnates of Israel.

⁷⁶ In this story in the Babylonian Talmud, it is unclear whether Yoḥanan is referring to his son, or calling Ḥanina his son. However, elsewhere (Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 17b and Ta'anit 24b) it is said that each day a *bat kol* emerges and proclaims that the world exists on the merit of "Ḥanina, My son."

I looked up, expecting a reply, but I no longer saw Ḥanina sitting at the table.

“Ḥanina?” I inquired as I began toward the table, and then I saw that he hadn’t gotten up from his seat, but had bent over placing his head between his knees. For a moment, he hardly resembled Ḥanina at all. No, in that moment, I watched the prophet Elijah.⁷⁷

And then, simultaneously, Ḥanina rose up from between his knees, and my son began to sit up in his bed. I didn’t know who to hug and kiss first. I stood there in awe when Ḥanina said to me, “Go, be with him. Our study can wait. I’m just glad he will be ok. Thank you for the lesson you have taught me today.”

I rushed to kiss my boy and hold him close. I thanked Ḥanina desperately, “Thank you, thank you my dear student, you have saved my son, I am eternally grateful. But what lesson could I have possibly taught you today?”

But as I looked up for his reply, again he was gone. This time, not bent over in his chair, but truly gone.

Just then my wife burst into the room, “What happened, is everything ok?”

“Yes, my love,” I replied, “Our son is healed.”

“How can it be?” She asked.

I answered, “I have prayed every word, in every position to no avail, but that boy Ḥanina ben Dosa came in here and in an instant, snatched our son from the jaws of death.”

“Wow.” She paused, “Are you okay?”

“Am I okay?” I said.

⁷⁷ Scholars agree that the posture of Ḥanina’s prayer is a direct link to Elijah. The Hebrew phrase *bein birkav*, “between his knees,” could be a wordplay on a theme of the story, *ben birkato*, “a son is his blessing.”

“Yes, to watch your student surpass you can be a troubling thing.”

“No, he hasn’t surpassed me,” I said aloud, adding a question mark in my head. “You see, he is like a servant before the King, while I am like the prince. The servant may be able to enter the king’s quarters at all times, but the prince may exert influence on matters more important than those for which the servant approaches his master.”

“Of course, how silly of me,” she said in embarrassment. But I never saw Ḥanina ben Dosa the same way again. I was threatened, though I could never admit it. He, a lowly Galilean eating nothing but carobs from one Shabbat to the next,⁷⁸ while I lived a life of luxury. How could anyone think he was greater than me? Well, they might start to if I ever admitted that I thought so too.⁷⁹

My mother, Ashira, recounted the same story as she remembers it:

He burst into the house, “Ashira,⁸⁰ Ashira! I must tell you the most amazing thing that happened today!”

⁷⁸ Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 17b and Ta’anit 24b

⁷⁹ David Eli Stern, “Rain Men: Ḥoni the Circle Drawer, Ḥanina Ben Dosa, and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity” (thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 105:

“Yohanan’s statement is notable as an attempt to assert traditional hierarchy in the face of Ḥanina’s non-traditional power. His message, however, aside from being somewhat cryptic, is compromised by the fact that Ḥanina’s healing of Yohanan’s son can hardly be described as the trivial affair of a slave. Yohanan’s concluding statement, therefore, is not as powerful as the action by Ḥanina which prompted it.”

⁸⁰ It is evident among the sources that Ḥanina (and his family) live in poverty. In the story of the golden table leg in particular (as well as in the story of the bread in the oven) Ḥanina’s wife seems to push back against the piety of poverty. For this reason, I have named her Ashira, meaning wealth. I would also interpret it not that she values material wealth, but perhaps she is the wealth that Ḥanina is afforded despite the asceticism of being a pious man in the Galilee.

Patrick J Hartin, “The Religious Nature of First-Century Galilee As a Setting for Early Christianity,” *Neotestamentica* 27, no. 2 (1993): 331–50, 334:

“the Sayings Gospel Q, does shed light upon the religious world of its home, Galilee. These sayings place emphasis on a specific style of life—a life that incorporated homelessness, the rejection of riches and the abandonment of family ties.”

“What is it, Ḥanina?” I replied.

“Ashira, I was at the Rabbi’s home, we were in a heated dispute,”

“What about this time? I don’t see why you always have to disagree with him-”

“That’s not the point, Ashira! I looked over at his son who was extremely ill, I worried about him. As the Rabbi got up to check on him, I started to pray. I was so deeply concentrated, my head bowed all the way down between my knees!”

“This is so amazing? That you’re moderately flexible?”

“Of course not, Ashira, let me finish!”

“Well, out with it then!”

“Ashira, I think it is time we grow our family.”

“I’m sorry?”

“I think we should have a baby.”

“A baby? Are you crazy? We barely survive just the two of us.⁸¹ How will we sustain the life of a baby?”

“Let me finish the story and you’ll understand!”

“Okay, okay,”

“So I was praying and I heard a voice say, ‘Ḥanina, my son,’⁸² it echoed in my head as I pled for God’s mercy on the boy. And as I came out of my prayer, the Rabbi’s son began to sit up. The Rabbi was stunned. And I saw in his eyes something that I had never seen before. He had called me his son before, but I knew in that moment that what we have is not the same. The love he has

⁸¹ Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 17b and Ta’anit 24b
“On a kav of carobs from one shabbat to the next”

⁸² Again, it is unclear whether this is the voice of Yoḥanan or the *bat kol* from the Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 17b and Ta’anit 24b.

for his child is far more than anything I can even comprehend. And I think it is the love God has for me, for us. I think it was God's voice I heard in my prayerful concentration."

"And so you think God will help us have a child of our own?"

"I do, but even more important, I fear⁸³ that we will never fully love God, if we never experience the love of a parent for their child."

And I said to him, "It's about time you came around."

Bread in the oven.

In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Ta'anit⁸⁴ there is a story about Hanina's wife miraculously finding bread in her oven to save her embarrassment at not having the means to observe Shabbat. The English language preserves what must be an ancient association of motherhood, pregnancy, bread, and bread baking, in the (sexist) euphemism, "bun in the oven."⁸⁵ As an expectant father, I perhaps could not help but read a story of bread miraculously appearing in an oven as an allusion to female fertility and procreation.

⁸³ I chose the word "fear" here to reflect the first half of Hanina's teaching in Pirkei Avot 3:9: "Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa said, anyone whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom will endure. And anyone whose wisdom precedes his fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure."

⁸⁴ Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 25a

⁸⁵ Selena Simmons-Duffin, "'Bun in the Oven' Is an Ancient Pregnancy Metaphor. This Historian Says It Has to Go," opb, October 31, 2023, <https://www.opb.org/article/2023/10/31/bun-in-the-oven-is-an-ancient-pregnancy-metaphor-this-historian-says-it-has-to-go/>.

Kathleen Crowther: "a bun in the oven." That metaphor is really old – it first appears in texts by Hippocrates about 2,000 years ago to describe the process of gestation.

But if you think about that, if you've baked bread, the real work of baking bread goes on before you put it in the oven – the proofing the yeast and kneading the dough. That work takes time, it takes skill, it takes effort. Once you put the dough in the oven, all you're doing is waiting.

So why do we use that metaphor to describe pregnancy? That suggests that the active work has been done, presumably by the man, and then the uterus is just like this incubator that's growing this thing that was already made. I don't think most people who use that metaphor are being misogynistic. But I think it actually does come from a deeply misogynistic tradition of thinking about women's bodies as passive.

The modern Shabbat dinner was originally intended as a precursor to lovemaking between a married couple. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Shabbat 118b: “How should one delight in the Sabbath? With a dish of beets, large fish, and garlic heads”—all certified aphrodisiacs. It is no coincidence; right after the laws about what to serve and eat on Shabbat come the laws about sexual conjugal rights. Maimonides writes in his Mishneh Torah, “Sexual relations are considered a dimension of Sabbath pleasure.”⁸⁶ Adding in the sexual and romantic connotations of Shabbat gives further validation to the reading that this story about baking bread for Shabbat may be related to conception.

There is a rich tradition of Jewish women having difficulty with conception from the matriarchs⁸⁷ to Hannah⁸⁸ and beyond. In these stories, God intervenes to allow for the family line, the lineage of the Jewish people, to continue. In this story, Hanina is noticeably absent yet the miracle of the bread in the oven is attributed to his merit and the humility of his manner.

My mother continued:

⁸⁶ Mishneh Torah Shabbat 30:14

⁸⁷ Genesis 16:1, Genesis 25:21, Genesis 29:31

⁸⁸ I Samuel 1:4

Every Friday, I prepared for Shabbat. I cleaned meticulously, making sure everything was elevated for the holy day. And all the more so, I prepared myself.⁸⁹ I let my hair down, I prayed, and I burned twigs⁹⁰ for the scent and the romantic ambiance.

One Friday afternoon, our neighbor, Ikku,⁹¹ came to inquire about the smoke coming from our home. When she knocked on the door, I rushed up to a private room to hide my nakedness.

“Ashira, where are you? What’s with all the smoke?”

Embarrassed, I emerged to tell her why I was burning twigs, “We are trying, Ikku. I don’t know why it’s not happening for me. What have I done to deserve this?”

Ikku responded cruelly, “What have you done? It’s Friday afternoon and you have no Challah!

When there is bread in that oven, so too will there be life in your womb.”

I ascended again to cry alone when Ikku yelled, “Ashira, Ashira, bring your shovel!”⁹²

We ate Challah that Shabbat, and it was 40 weeks later to the day that you were born, Emuna.

The golden table leg.

In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Ta’anit⁹³, there is a story about Ḥanina’s wife complaining about their poverty (which is similar to Ḥanina complaining to God about the

⁸⁹ The text cites the reason for Ashira’s smoke-making as “embarrassment.” It is plausibly inferred that her embarrassment comes from their poverty and consequently their inability to keep Shabbat properly. However, I imagine that her embarrassment might stem from their struggle to conceive. I read the lack of bread in her oven as a metaphor for the lack of a child in her womb.

⁹⁰ If Ashira is embarrassed by her inability to conceive, the burnt twigs and their smoke which are interpreted as a substitute for the bread in the oven may be metaphorically interpreted as a “smokescreen”. However, I think reading the smoke as an added layer of sexy ambiance which Ashira is attempting to curate adds to the care she puts into her endeavor and consequently her embarrassment.

⁹¹ Given that there are several stories that include a neighbor figure, I have decided to interpret them all to be the same neighbor, named in the story which follows (from The Babylonian Talmud Ta’anit 25a). I have also tried to take the “evil” moniker from this story to apply it to the others.

⁹² The tool used for taking bread out of the oven. This indicates that there is bread in the oven to be taken out.

⁹³ Babylonian Talmud Ta’anit 25a

absence of rain). Ḥanina prays and receives a golden table leg from heaven. While a golden table leg might be sold to support them financially, this table leg is meant for their table in the World-to-Come. The implication is that Ḥanina's piety and humility in this world will be rewarded in the World-to-Come. The image of the table leg⁹⁴ is particularly powerful in that it is a support for them financially in this world and perhaps spiritually in the World-to-Come. While the story is most often read as Ashira, Ḥanina's wife, resisting their impoverished lifestyle, here I suggest that Ashira is not so upset that they are poor, but that Ḥanina seems to use his power for everything but making their life better. Ḥanina is everything to everyone but his beloved, and Ashira resents Ḥanina's emotional and spiritual absence from their marriage. What she really seeks is, aptly, a show of support.

My mother continued:

When I was pregnant, I was ravenously hungry, and I said to Ḥanina, “Ḥanina, must we suffer our whole lives?”

“What suffering?”

I said, “We eat nothing but carobs day after day!”⁹⁵

“What can I do?” he asked.

“I don't know! You spend so much time praying for everybody else,⁹⁶ what about me? What about us? Why don't you ever pray for OUR life?”

⁹⁴ There is another story in the Palestinian Talmud Demai 1:3:14 in which Ḥanina's wife borrows spices that are not tithed, and as a result their table breaks during their meal. Ḥanina cites an exception to the rule and the table fixes itself.

⁹⁵ Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 17b and Ta'anit 24b: “On a kav of carobs from one shabbat to the next”

⁹⁶ Rabban Gamliel's son, Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakai's son, Nehunya's daughter, Ikku, etc.

“I didn’t realize you were ill...”

I explained, “I’m not ill, but I am suffering!”

“Then I will pray for your relief...”

I thought I had gotten through to him. Until the next day...

I screamed at him, “What in the World-to-Come⁹⁷ did you pray for?!”

He responded defensively, “You said our poverty was insufferable for you, so I prayed for wealth!”

“Ḥanina, this is not wealth, this golden table leg is meant for our time in the World-to-Come.”

“You want to sit at a defective table in the World-to-Come?”⁹⁸

I just about lost it. “Of course not, Ḥanina! Return it! I didn’t want it in the first place! I only wanted relief. I only wanted you to pray for me the way you pray for everyone else...”⁹⁹

And he felt so bad. He softened his voice and said, “My love, I am so sorry, I will pray for you, I will pray for our family.”

Ḥanina’s prayer was so strong, that the golden table leg was returned to Heaven, an even greater miracle than the first, as Heaven does not accept returns.

⁹⁷ A play on words since this gift comes from the heavens and “for Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa, the World-to-Come was created” (Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 61b).

⁹⁸ Avraham Infeld teaches that Jewish identity is like a 5 legged table (Memory, Family, Sinai, Israel, Hebrew). Each person’s table needs 3 legs to stand and it ensures that all Jews share at least one leg. Applying this teaching to Ḥanina would imply that one of the core supports of Ḥanina’s Jewish identity was called into question: Family.

⁹⁹ It’s about the care for the “collective” (family) above all else, which Ḥanina is unable to understand. His reaction is to the poverty, and his action is to pray for material wealth, not necessarily to pray for his family.

The chicken dance.

In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Ta'anit,¹⁰⁰ Ḥanina's goats are accused of damaging neighboring property and Ḥanina refutes the claim by performing a miracle. Immediately following this vignette, the text turns to explain how Ḥanina has goats in the first place, since he is a poor man. Apparently, we learn, Ḥanina came by his goats because he bought them with the proceeds from the more usual chickens. The text states cryptically that "a man" left these chickens at Ḥanina's house, and that Ḥanina, as an honest man, resisted this surprising gift. As a result of his honesty¹⁰¹, Ḥanina's chickens became the more valuable goats.

My mother continued:

But Ḥanina could not help but be Ḥanina. Not long after that, chickens appeared in our yard.

Naturally, I was thrilled! I thought we could have some eggs, eventually chicken soup, what a blessing! But Ḥanina, he just could not let an opportunity to do the annoyingly right thing go to waste. He said to me, "We can't take the eggs, these aren't our chickens."

I said, "So what do we do with them?"

He told me, "You're about to become a mother, and so will these hens. And when their owner comes back looking for them, they'll take all the chickens."

I hated it, but he was right. The chickens multiplied faster than we could keep track of. And when you were a baby, Emuna, we had more chickens than I could count. We were waking up in the

¹⁰⁰ Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 25a

¹⁰¹ Midrash Mekhilta DeRabbi Yishmael and Mekhilta DeRashbi Shemot 18:21 both describe Ḥanina as a "man of truth"

middle of the night to comfort you and feed you, and the chickens would wake up with us and cause a racket. It wasn't long before I convinced Ḥanina to do something about the chickens. But still, he insisted that they were not our chickens and so he sold them and bought goats with the proceeds.

Every day he would send them out to pasture without a shepherd. It almost seemed like he didn't want them to come back, but every evening they'd return.

Until one day, Ikku came to us and complained about the goats. She said it was irresponsible to send them out unaccompanied.

But Ḥanina insisted, "Let them be eaten by bears if they're causing anyone trouble. If not, let them come back with bears on their horns."

And so that evening the goats returned with bears on their horns. No matter what he did, Ḥanina could not get rid of these animals. It was two years before the owner of the chickens happened by our home and we were able to return to him the goats he never knew he had.

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa

Demons in the dark.

In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Pesachim,¹⁰² Ḥanina displays empathy and mercy for Agrat, a demon of destruction. This story appears within a larger discussion of the teaching that one should not go out alone in the evening, especially on Tuesday or Friday nights, because Agrat and her band of destructive demons wreak havoc on those nights. In my retelling, I have placed the rabbis' fears of the dark into the mouth of Ḥanina's daughter: It is common for children to be afraid of the dark and it is also common for parents to comfort them by assuring their protection. Ḥanina comforts his daughter by telling her this story about his encounter with Agrat, which emphasizes how those who have good Torah¹⁰³ hold power over the forces of evil.

In his story, Ḥanina banishes the demon and then, upon her supplication, permits her to return but two nights a week. Ḥanina's acceptance of the demon's supplication alludes to his acceptance of the reality that bad things happen in our world. Had he banished her completely, one might expect that nothing bad could happen.

There is a similar story in Midrash Tanhuma, Vayigash¹⁰⁴, of Ḥanina shooing a lion away by calling it weak. But when the lion turns to leave, Ḥanina apologizes and chases after it quoting Proverbs: "The lion is mightiest of the beasts." Ironically, the continuation of the Proverbs verse is "and recoils before none."¹⁰⁵ In this story, Ḥanina displays a unique ability to

¹⁰² Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 112b

¹⁰³ Midrash Mishlei 11 also credits Hanina with the teaching that "there is no righteousness for you that saves man from the judgment of hell except Torah alone."

¹⁰⁴ Midrash Tanhuma Vayigash 3

¹⁰⁵ Proverbs 30:30

“domesticate chaos,” a core characteristic of the charismatic, as Stern describes it.¹⁰⁶ However, as in his concession to Agrat, Ḥanina regrets his use of power and attempts to repair his relationship with the lion.

The theme that binds these two stories is Ḥanina’s desire to restrict his own charismatic power. Ḥanina recognizes that while he wants to protect his daughter, he will not always be able to do so. Eventually, rather than coming to her aid, he will have to provide her with the tools to defend herself. So too, he recognizes that he cannot sustain the responsibility for his people on the basis of his charisma; the framework of the rabbinic institutions are meant to serve the same purpose, and protect the Jewish people in perpetuity.

These stories have spoken about a different man than the one I knew my father to be.

The oldest memory of my father is from when I was a very little girl. I was afraid of everything.

The world was a scary place, especially in the dark. I was so afraid that I refused to go outside after the sun went down. One night, my father tried to coax me out to see the moon and the stars, but I would not budge. Not until he told me this story:

It used to be that Agrat bat Mahalat and her band of evil angels would come out every night and wreak havoc. They would make messes and loud noises, and it was very scary. 180,000 angels of destruction, all capable alone, and even more frightening together. But one night, I came across Agrat, and she said to me “They warned me about you in Heaven. They said, ‘Be careful of Ḥanina and his Torah.’”

¹⁰⁶ David Eli Stern, “Rain Men: Honi the Circle Drawer, Ḥanina Ben Dosa, and the Rabbinic Portrait of Charismatic Activity” (thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 105.

So I said to her, “If I am so important in Heaven, then I decree that you should never return to inhabited places such as this.”

And in that moment, Agrat was not scary, she was scared.

She begged me, “Please, no, leave me a little space to play! It is all I have...”

My heart couldn’t bear to see her so upset, even if she was an angel of destruction.

So I said to her, “Fine, you may return on Shabbat nights and Tuesday nights.”

So my love, you have nothing to worry about. Five nights a week, the demons take their leave.

And on the two nights that they join us, I promise you, they are more afraid of us, than we are of them. Especially those of us who fear God.

And this story made me feel so much better. So much so that I went out every night trying to pick a fight with Agrat bat Mahalat. I would cry out to her, “I’m not afraid of you! I fear God, just like you!”

Emuna’s lamp.

In the Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit,¹⁰⁷ there is a story about Ḥanina’s daughter lighting a lamp with vinegar instead of oil. She is sad that the lamp will not last, but Ḥanina assures her that God makes the oil burn and can make vinegar burn just the same. What I highlight in this interpretation of the story is the relationship between a daughter wanting to please her parent and a parent who could not be disappointed in his child. While most scholars agree that this story is about faith, linking it to the Hanukkah miracle, I think the tender response of Ḥanina to his daughter is more than an affirmation of faith. Ḥanina does not ask for or promise a miracle, but assures his daughter that she did nothing wrong. It appears to me that his daughter’s self-

¹⁰⁷ Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 25a

esteem and love for Judaism are more important to him than doing the rituals perfectly. Ḥanina's tenderness demonstrates the value of kavannah (sincere intention) over keva (punctilious observance), a repeated theme in Ḥanina stories.¹⁰⁸

And I did fear God. I still do. My parents made sure of it. Everything was “God this, God that,” in our house. Nothing ever just happened, it was always, “God’s Will.” My friends didn’t always understand, but it made sense to me. God was intervening in our house all the time.

One Shabbat, my parents asked me to help them to prepare the lamp. I was so excited, I never got to help with anything. I sprinted to the cabinet and fetched the lamp and flew through the kitchen, snatching the bottle of oil. I poured it into the lamp, I lit the flame and as it burned, I recognized the bitter smell of vinegar. I had grabbed the wrong bottle. A sudden and very strong feeling of disappointment overcame me. I messed it up. Would they ever trust me to help again? And at that moment, my father came into the room and saw my fallen face.

“Emuna,¹⁰⁹ my beloved daughter, why are you so sad?”

“I took the wrong bottle and lit the Shabbat lamp with vinegar instead of oil. Soon the light will be extinguished and we will be left in the dark.”

“My child, is that all you’re concerned about? If God can make oil burn, why couldn’t God make vinegar burn?”

¹⁰⁸ Examples of *kavanna* over *kava* include: Ḥanina’s early start of Shabbat in the Palestinian Talmud Berakhot 4:1:31, Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 10:8, and Pesikta Rabbati 23. Also, the family’s lack of bread on Shabbat in the Babylonian Talmud Ta’anit 25a

¹⁰⁹ Named Emuna for the faith in God that Ḥanina teaches her in this story.

And I thought he was just being nice, trying to cheer me up. Maybe he was saying that it was God's will that I grabbed the wrong bottle or that my intention to light the lamp was all that mattered. But then the lamp burned well into the night. We stayed up later than usual watching it dance to our Shabbat songs. The flame continued to flicker through our dreams and into the daylight. The vinegar burned all the way to Havdalah!

Not your average donkey.

In Avot DeRabbi Natan¹¹⁰, there is a story about Ḥanina's donkey refusing to eat food provided by the robbers who stole it. The story is used to support the teaching that those who are righteous and pious influence even the animals in their midst. The fact that Ḥanina has influence on his donkey would suggest that all the more so he has righteous influence on his children, students, and neighbors.

My father always had many followers, but as he grew older, what he really wanted were students. He would teach anyone who would listen, but most people thought that what made my father so special could not be taught. They only saw his miracles, never his Torah. He was quite lenient when it came to the judgement of others, but in his own actions, he was extremely pious. Those who accepted my father as a teacher were better off for following his mantra "Do as I do, not as I say."

¹¹⁰ Babylonian Talmud Avot DeRabbi Natan 8:8

My father loved teaching so much that he even taught the animals in our midst. I remember once that our donkey was stolen by robbers. They put it in a courtyard and placed straw, barley, and water in front of it, but it would not eat or drink.

They said: “How can we leave it here? It will just die and rot in the courtyard.”

So they opened the door and put the animal outside, and it started walking and kept going until it came all the way home.

My brother heard it braying. He said: “Father, isn’t this voice like the voice of our donkey? I thought he was stolen!”

Abba said to him: “Open the door for him, he must be starving!”

He got up and opened the door, and put straw and barley and water in front of him, and he ate and drank. Though my father continued to eat only carobs from one Shabbat to the next, our donkey would only eat barley that was properly tithed.

Sin kills.

As mentioned earlier, there are two different versions of Ḥanina’s encounter with a lizard. One version appears in tractate Berakhot of the Tosefta and Palestinian Talmud, and in Midrash Tanhuma Vaera. There, Ḥanina’s concentration in prayer saves him from the bite of a deadly lizard. In the other version of the story in the Babylonian Talmud and Shemot Rabbah,¹¹¹ Ḥanina seeks out the lizard to kill it and save the people who have sought his help. Ḥanina is well aware of his own abilities, and uses them not just for the benefit of those who seek his help, but in order

¹¹¹ Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 33a and Midrash Shemot Rabbah 3:12

to teach a lesson about how to act. Rabbi Ḥanina teaches his students, “it is not the lizard that kills, rather sin kills.”

Rabbi Yoḥanan recounts a story from my fathers final days in the *beit midrash*:

It was Parashat Shemot and I was teaching in the *beit midrash*. A voice called out from amongst the student asking about Moses, “Why did he flee from his staff when it became a serpent?”

I answered, “Rabbi Yosei (HaGelili¹¹²) taught that a gentile woman said to him, “My god is greater than your God. When your God revealed Himself to Moses at the bush, Moses concealed his face, but when he saw the serpent, which is my god, immediately: “Moses fled from before it.”

He said to her: “When our God revealed Himself at the bush, there was no place to flee. Where could he flee; to the heavens, to the sea, or to dry land? What is stated regarding our God? ‘Don’t I fill the heavens and the earth – the utterance of the Lord’ (Jeremiah 23:24). However, the serpent, that is your god, when a person flees two or three steps from it, he can be saved; therefore, it is written: ‘Moses fled from before it.’”

And as I finished my teaching, a group of students came rushing in, “An *arvad* is wreaking havoc, everybody be careful not to be bitten!”

¹¹² In all likelihood, this teaching is attributed to Rabbi Yosei ben Halafta, who lived generations after Ḥanina and Yoḥanan. However, the existence of a contemporaneous Yosei of the Galilee makes this creative reading possible.

Ḥanina stood up and demanded that they show him the creature's hole. They directed him to the hole, making sure not to get too close, but Ḥanina walked straight up to it and placed his heel over the hole.¹¹³

He lifted his foot and pulled the dead *arvad* from his heel. He slung it over his shoulder and burst into the *beit midrash*.

He proclaimed, "Why did Moses flee from the serpent? Because he had sinned with his words. Had he not sinned, he would have no reason to flee. My sons, it is not the serpent that kills, but sin."

And in that moment, I could not address the fact that Ḥanina himself was carrying an unclean animal into the *beit midrash*, nor could I defend my teaching. The only words I could muster were, "Woe to the man who is attacked by an *arvad*, but woe to the *arvad* who is attacked by Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa."

¹¹³ Two cases of Sabbath law were brought to Yoḥanan. The first was whether on the Sabbath one may cover a scorpion with a dish so that it will not sting anyone, or whether this would be considered an act of hunting (destruction of life), and therefore would be forbidden on the Sabbath. When the case was brought to Yoḥanan, he stated, "I doubt whether he is not liable to bring a sin-offering for such an act."

This is a striking contrast to the famous story of Ḥanina smiting an ambiguously defined creature (serpent, lizard, snake, scorpion). For this reason, I have loosely referenced that Ḥanina MIGHT cite his own hunting incident as proof against Yoḥanan's ruling.

PART III: Primary Source Index

Mishnah

Berakhot 5:5

המתפלל וטעה, סימן רע לו. ואם שליח צבור הוא, סימן רע לשולחיו, מפני ששליחו של אדם כמותו. אמרו עליו על רבי חנינא בן דוסא, כשהיה מתפלל על החולים ואומר, זה חי וזה מת. אמרו לו, מנין אתה יודע. אמר להם, אם שגורה תפילתי בפי, יודע אני שהוא מקבל. ואם לאו, יודע אני שהוא מטרף.

One who prays and errs in his prayer, it is a bad omen for him. And if he is the communal prayer leader, it is a bad omen for those who sent him, because a person's agent has legal status equivalent to his own. They said about Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa that he would pray on behalf of the sick and say: This one shall live and this one shall die. They said to him: From where do you know? He said to them: If my prayer is fluent in my mouth, I know that my prayer is accepted. And if not, I know that my prayer is rejected.

Sotah 9:15

משמת רבי מאיר, בטלו מושלי משלים. משמת בן עזאי, בטלו השקדנים. משמת בן זומא, בטלו הדרשנים. משמת רבי יהושע, פסקה טובה מן העולם. משמת רבן שמעון בן גמליאל, בא גובי ורבוי צרות. משמת רבי אלעזר בן עזריה, פסק העשר מן התכמים. משמת רבי עקיבא, בטל כבוד התורה. משמת רבי חנינא בן דוסא, בטלו אנשי מעשה. משמת רבי יוסי קטנותא, פסקו חסידים. ולמה נקרא שמו קטנותא, שהיה קטנותו של חסידים. משמת רבן יוחנן בן זכאי, בטל זיו התכמה. משמת רבן גמליאל הזקן, בטל כבוד התורה ומתה טהרה ופרישות. משמת רבי ישמעאל בן פאבי, בטל זיו הכהנה. משמת רבי, בטלה ענוה ויראת חטא.

From the time when Rabbi Meir died, those who relate parables ceased; from the time when ben Azzai died, the diligent ceased; from the time when ben Zoma died, the exegetists ceased; from the time when Rabbi Joshua died, good broke from the world; from the time when Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel died, calamities increased; from the time when Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria died, treasure broke from the sages; from the time when Rabbi Akiva died, the honor of the Torah ceased; from the time when Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa died, the men of wondrous action ceased; from the time when Rabbi Yosei the Small died, the pious were no more. And why was he called the Small? Because he was the smallest of the pious, meaning he was one of the least important of the pious men. From the time when Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai died, the glory of wisdom ceased; from the time when Rabban Gamliel the Elder died, the honor of the Torah ceased, and purity and asceticism died. From the time when Rabbi Yishmael ben Pavi died, the glory of the priesthood ceased; from the time when Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi died, humility and fear of sin ceased.

Pirkei Avot 3:9-10

רבי חנינא בן דוסא אומר, כל שיראת חטאו קודמת לחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת. וכל שחכמתו קודמת ליראת חטאו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת. הוא היה אומר, כל שמעשיו מרבין מחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת. וכל שחכמתו מרבית ממעשיו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת... הוא היה אומר, כל שרית הבריות נוחה הימנו, רית המקום נוחה הימנו. וכל שאין רית הבריות נוחה הימנו, אין רית המקום נוחה הימנו.

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa said: anyone whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom is enduring, but anyone whose wisdom precedes his fear of sin, his wisdom is not enduring. He used to say: anyone whose deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom is enduring, but anyone whose

wisdom exceeds his deeds, his wisdom is not enduring... He used to say: anyone with whom the spirit of creation is pleased, the Spirit of God is pleased. But anyone with whom the spirit of creation is displeased, the Spirit of God is displeased.

Tosefta

Berakhot 3:20

היה עומד בסרטיא ובפלטיא הרי זה עובר פני חמור ופני חמר ופני קדר אינו מפסיק אמרו עליו על ר' חנינא בן דוסא
שהיה עומד ומתפלל נשכו ערוד ולא הפסיק הלכו תלמידיו ומצאו מת ע"פ חורו אמרו אוי לו לאדם שנשכו ערוד אוי לו
לערוד שנשכו לבן דוסא.

One standing and praying in a main road or on a plaza may move for a donkey, or a donkey
driver, or a potter, and he does not stop (his prayer). They said about Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa that
he was standing and praying when he was bitten by an Arvad, but he did not stop. His students
went and found it dead on top of its hole. They said, “Woe to the man who was bitten by an
Arvad, woe to an Arvad who has bitten ben Dosa.”

Sotah 15:5

משמת בן זומא, בטלו הדרשנין. משמת ר' חנינא בן דוסא, בטלו אנשי מעשה מישראל. משמת אבא יוסי בן קטנית איש
קטנתה, נתקטנה חסידות מישראל. למה נקרא שמו איש [קטנתא, שהוא] קוטנה של חסידות. משמת רבן שמעון בן
גמליאל, בא גוביי, ורבו צרות.

from the time when ben Azzai died, the diligent ceased; from the time when Rabbi Ḥanina ben
Dosa died, the men of wondrous action ceased from Israel; from the time Father Yossi ben
Katanit, a small man, died, the piety of Israel shrank. And why was he called small? Because he
was the smallest (least important) of the pious. From the time that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel
died, calamities increased.

The Palestinian Talmud

Berakhot 4:1:31

רבי מיפקד לאבדן אמוריה אכריז קומי ציבורא מאן דמצלי יצלי דרמשא עד יומא קאים. רבי חייא בר ווא מפקד לאמוריה אכריז קומי ציבורא מאן דמצלי יצלי דרמשא עד יומא קאים. אמר רבי חנינא משכני רבי ישמעאל בי רבי יוסי אצל פונדוק אחד אמר לי כאן נתפלל אבא של לילי שבת בערב שבת. אמר רבי אמי רבי יוחנן פליג ולא הנה צריך מפלגה על הדא למה שכן מוסיפין מחול על הקודש. ועוד דסלקון חמרינא מן ערב לציפורין ואמרין כבר שבת רבי חנינא בן דוסא בעירו. וידה אמרה דא דאמר רבי חנינא משכני רבי ישמעאל בי רבי יוסי אצל פונדוק אחד אמר לי כאן נתפלל אבא של מוצאי שבת בשבת ואף עלה לא הנה צריך מפלגה דרבי מיפקד לאבדן אמוריה אכריז קומי ציבורא מאן דמצלי יצלי דרמשא עד יומא קאים. רבי חייא בר ווא מפקד לאמוריה אכריז קומי ציבורא מאן דמצלי יצלי דרמשא עד יומא קאים. דבית רבי ינאי אמרין עלה אדם על מיטתו אין מטריחין אותו לירד. אמר רבי זעירא כל מאן דהוינא עבד בן הוינא מפקד בליליא. לית לך אלא כהדא דרבי מיפקד לאבדן אמוריה אכריז קומי ציבורא מאן דמצלי יצלי עד יומא קאים. רבי חייא בר ווא מפקד לאמוריה כו'.

Rabbi commanded his speaker Abdan: Proclaim before the congregation that he who wants to pray, should pray evening prayers as long as it is still daylight. Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba commanded his speaker: Proclaim before the congregation that he who wants to pray should pray evening prayers as long as it is still daylight. Rabbi Ḥanina said: Rabbi Ismael ben Rabbi Yose drew me to an inn and said to me: Here my father prayed Saturday (Friday night) prayers on Friday. Rabbi Ammi said: Rabbi Yohanan disagrees but he should not have disagreed since one adds from the profane to the holy time; in addition, donkey drivers come from Arab to Sepphoris and say, Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa already did consecrate the Sabbath in his town. But so it has been said, that Rabbi Ḥanina said: Rabbi Ismael ben Rabbi Yose drew me to an inn and said to

me, here my father prayed Saturday night prayers on the Sabbath. But even with that he should not have disagreed, since Rabbi commanded his speaker Abdan: Proclaim before the congregation that he who wants to pray should pray evening prayers as long as it is still daylight. Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba commanded his speaker: Proclaim before the congregation that he who wants to pray should pray evening prayers as long as it is still daylight. In the house of Rabbi Yannaï they said: If a man went to bed, one does not bother him to get up. Rabbi Zeïra said, all the time that I followed this rule, I was afraid in the night. You have only what Rabbi commanded his speaker Abdan: Proclaim before the congregation that he who wants to pray should pray evening prayers as long as it is still daylight. Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba commanded etc.

Berakhot 5:1:22

אָמְרִין עָלָיו עַל רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶּן דּוֹסָא שֶׁהָיָה עוֹמֵד וּמִתְפַּלֵּל וּבָא חֲבַרְבָּר וְהִכִּישׁוּ וְלֹא הִפְסִיק אֶת תְּפִלָּתוֹ וְהָלְכוּ וּמָצְאוּ אוֹתוֹ חֲבַרְבָּר מֵת מוּטָל עַל פִּי חוּרוֹ. אָמְרוּ אִי לוֹ לְאֲדָם שֶׁנִּשְׁכָּח חֲבַרְבָּר. וְאִי לוֹ לְחֲבַרְבָּר שֶׁנִּשְׁשָׁף אֶת רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶּן דּוֹסָא. מַה עִיסְקִיָּה דִּהְדִּין חֲבַרְבָּרָא כַּד הָוָה נִכִּית לְבַר נִשָּׂא אֵין בַּר נִשָּׂא קָדִים לְמָא חֲבַרְבָּרָא קָדִים לְמָא בַּר נִשָּׂא מִיִּית. אָמְרוּ לוֹ תִּלְמִידֵי רַבִּי לֹא הִרְגִּישְׁתָּ. אָמַר לָהֶן יָבֹא עָלֵי מָמָה שֶׁהָיָה לְבִי מִתְכַּוֵּן בְּתַפִּילָּה אִם הִרְגִּישְׁתָּ. אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק בַּר אֱלִעֶזֶר בָּרָא לוֹ הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מַעֲיֵן תַּחַת כַּפּוֹת רַגְלָיו לְקַיֵּם מַה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר רְצוֹן יִרְאִיו יַעֲשֶׂה וְאֵת שׁוֹעֲתָם יִשְׁמַע וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵם.

They said about Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa that he was standing in prayer when a havarbar came and bit him. But he did not interrupt his prayer. They went and found that havarbar lying dead at the entrance of its hole. They said, “woe to the man who is bitten by a havarbar, but woe to the havarbar that bites Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa. What is the nature of the havarbar? If it bites a human and the human reaches water first, the havarbar dies, but if the havarbar reaches water

first, the human dies. His students asked him: Rabbi, did you not notice? He said to them: There should happen to me these things; I was concentrating on my prayer and did not notice! Rabbi Isaac ben Eleazar said, the Holy One, praise to Him, created a well under his foot soles, to confirm what has been said (Ps. 145: 19): “He will do the will of those who fear Him, He will hear their entreaties and save them.”

Berakhot 5:5

מעשה ברבן גמליאל שחלה בנו ושלח שני תלמידי חכמים אצל רבי חנינא בן דוסא בעירו. אמר לון המתינו לי עד שאעלה לעלייה ועלה לעלייה וירד אמר להן בטוח אני שנינוח בנו של רבן גמליאל מחלייו וסימו באותה שעה תבע מזון. אמר רבי שמואל ברבי נחמני אם פונת את לבך בתפילה תהא מבושר שנשמעה תפילתך. ומה טעם תכין לכם תקשיב אזניך. אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי אם עשו שפתותיו של אדם תנוכה יהא מבושר שנשמעה תפילתו. מה טעם בורא נבי שפתים שלום שלום לרחוק ולקרוב אמר יי ורפתיו.

It happened that the son of Rabban Gamliel fell ill and he sent two scholars to Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa in his city. He said to them, wait until I go to the upper floor. He ascended to the upper floor, came back, and said to them: I am sure that Rabban Gamliel's son will get respite from his sickness. They noted that at this same hour he asked for food. Rabbi Samuel ben Rabbi Nahmani said: If you were able to concentrate your attention on your prayer, you are told that your prayer was heard. What is the reason? (Ps. 10:17) “You prepare their hearts, You will listen with Your ears.” Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: If a person's lips bore fruit he is told that his prayer was heard. What is the reason? (Is. 57:19) “He Who created the fruit of lips: peace, peace to the far and the near said the Eternal, I shall heal him.”

Demai 1:3:14

רבי חנינא בן דוסא הוה יתיב אכיל בלילי שבת פחת פתורא קומוי. אמרו ליה מהו כן. אמרה ליה תבלין שאלתי משכנתי
ולא עישרתיו. והזכיר תינינו ועלה השולחן מאליו.

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa was sitting down to eat on Friday night when the table sank before him.

He said to her, what is that? She said to him, I borrowed spices from my neighbor and forgot to
give tithes from it. He mentioned a condition and the table rose by itself.

Babylonian Talmud

Berakhot 17b

"אין פריז" — שלא תהא סיעתנו כסיעתו של דוד שיצא ממנו אחיתופל. "ואין יוצאת" — שלא תהא סיעתנו כסיעתו של שאול שיצא ממנו דואג האדומי. "ואין צוהה" — שלא תהא סיעתנו כסיעתו של אלישע שיצא ממנו גחזי. "ברחובותינו" — שלא יהא לנו בן או תלמיד שמקדיח תבשילו ברבים, כגון ישו הנוצרי. "שמעו אלי אבירי לב הרחוקים מצדקה", רב ושמואל, ואמרי לה רבי יוחנן ורבי אלעזר. חד אמר: כל העולם כולו נזונין בצדקה, והם נזונין בזרוע. וחד אמר: כל העולם כולו נזונין בזכותם, והם אפילו בזכות עצמן אין נזונין. כדבר יהודה אמר רב. דאמר רב יהודה אמר רב: בכל יום ויום בת קול יוצאת מהר חורב ואומרת: כל העולם כולו נזונין בשביל חנינא בנאי, וחנינא בנאי די לו בקב חרובין מערב שבת לערב שבת. ופליגא דרב יהודה. דאמר רב יהודה מאן "אבירי לב" — גובאי טפשי. אמר רב יוסף: תדע, דהא לא איגזיר גיורא מינייהו. אמר רב אשי: בנאי מתא מחסיא "אבירי לב" נינהו, דקא חזו יקרא דאורייתא תרי זמני בשתא, ולא קמגזיר גיורא מינייהו.

"There is no breach"; that our faction should not be like the faction of David, from which Ahitophel emerged. "And no going forth"; that our faction should not be like the faction of Saul, from which Doeg the Edomite emerged. "And no outcry"; that our faction should not be like the faction of Elisha, from which Geihazi emerged. "In our open places"; that we should not have a child or student who overcooks his food in public, like Jesus the Nazarene. "Hear Me, stubborn-hearted who are far from charity" (Isaiah 46:12). Rav and Shmuel, and some say Rabbi Yohanan and Rabbi Elazar, disagreed. One said: The entire world is sustained by God's charity, while the righteous are sustained by force. And one said: The entire world is sustained by the merit of their righteousness, while they are not sustained at all, not even by their own merit, in accordance with the statement that Rav Yehuda said that Rav said.

As Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: Every day a Divine Voice emerges from Mount Horeb and says: The entire world is sustained by the merit of Ḥanina ben Dosa, my son, and for Ḥanina, my son, a *kav* of carobs is sufficient from one Shabbat eve to the next Shabbat eve.

And this disagrees with the opinion of Rav Yehuda, as Rav Yehuda said, who are the stubborn-hearted? They are the foolish heathens of Gova'ei. Rav Yosef said: Know that this is so, as no convert has ever converted from their ranks.

Berakhot 33a

תנו רבנן: מעשה במקום אחד שהיה ערוך, והיה מזיק את הבריות. באו והודיעו לו לרבי חנינא בן דוסא. אמר להם: הראו לי את חורו! הראוהו את חורו. נתן עקבו על פי החור, יצא ונשכו — ומת אותו ערוך. נטלו על כתפו והביאו לבית המדרש. אמר להם: ראו בני, אין ערוך ממית, אלא החטא ממית. באותה שעה אמרו: אוי לו לאדם שפגע בו ערוך, ואוי לו לערוך שפגע בו רבי חנינא בן דוסא.

The Sages taught: There was an incident in one place where an arvad was harming the people. They came and told Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa. He told them: Show me its hole. They showed him its hole. He placed his heel over the mouth of the hole and the arvad came out and bit him, and died. Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa placed the arvad over his shoulder and brought it to the study hall. He said to them: See, my sons, it is not the arvad that kills, rather sin kills. At that moment they said: Woe unto the man who was attacked by an arvad and woe unto the arvad that was attacked by Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa.

תנו רבנן: מעשה שחלה בנו של רבן גמליאל. שגר שני תלמידי חכמים אצל רבי חנינא בן דוסא לבקש עליו רחמים. כיון שראה אותם, עלה לעלייה, ובקש עליו רחמים. בירידתו אמר להם: לכו, שחלצתו חמה. אמרו לו: וכי נביא אתה?! אמר להן: לא נביא אנכי ולא בן נביא אנכי, אלא כך מקובלני: אם שגורה תפילתי בפי — יודע אני שהוא מקובל, ואם לאו — יודע אני שהוא מטורף. ישבו וכתבו וכוונו אותה שעה. וכשבאו אצל רבן גמליאל, אמר להן: העבודה, לא חסרתם ולא הותרתם, אלא כך היה מעשה באותה שעה חלצתו חמה ושאל לנו מים לשותות. ושוב מעשה ברבי חנינא בן דוסא שחלה ללמוד תורה אצל רבי יוחנן בן זכאי, וחלה בנו של רבי יוחנן בן זכאי. אמר לו: חנינא בנאי, בקש עליו רחמים ויחיה. הניח ראשו בין ברקיו ובקש עליו רחמים, ויחיה. אמר רבי יוחנן בן זכאי: אלמלי הטיח בן זכאי את ראשו בין ברקיו כל היום כולו — לא היו משגיחים עליו. אמרה לו אשתו: וכי חנינא גדול ממך? אמר לה: לא, אלא הוא דומה כעבד לפני המלך, ואני דומה כשר לפני המלך.

The Sages taught: It happened that Rabban Gamliel's son fell ill. He dispatched two scholars to Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa to pray for mercy on his behalf. When he saw them, he went up to the attic and prayed for mercy on his behalf. Upon his descent, he said to them: Go as the fever has already left. They asked him: Are you a prophet? He replied to them: I am neither a prophet nor son of a prophet (Amos 7:14), but I have received this: If my prayer is fluent in my mouth, I know that my prayer is accepted. And if not, I know that my prayer is rejected. They sat and wrote and approximated that precise moment. When they came before Rabban Gamliel he said to them: By the Temple service you were neither earlier or later; rather, this is how the event transpired: Precisely at that moment his fever broke and he asked us for water to drink.

It also happened that Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa went to study Torah before Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, and Rabbi Yoḥanan's son fell ill. He said to him: Hanina, my son, pray for mercy on his

behalf so that he will live. Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa placed his head between his knees and prayed for mercy upon his behalf, and he lived. Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai said: Had ben Zakkai stuck his head between his knees throughout the entire day, they would have paid him no attention. His wife said to him: And is Ḥanina greater than you? He replied to her: No, but he is like a servant before the King. I, am like a minister before the King.

Berakhot 61b

אמר רב: לא איברי עלמא אלא לאחאב בן עמרי ולרבי חנינא בן דוסא. לאחאב בן עמרי — העולם הזה, ולרבי חנינא בן דוסא — העולם הבא.

Rav said: The world was only created for the wicked Ahab ben Omri and for Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa. For Ahab ben Omri, and for Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa, the World-to-Come was created.

Shabbat 112b

אמר רבי זירא אמר רבא בר זימנא: אם ראשונים בני מלאכים — אנו בני אנשים. ואם ראשונים בני אנשים — אנו בןמורים. ולא בןמורו של רבי חנינא בן דוסא ושל רבי פנחס בן יאיר, אלא כשאר בןמורים.

Rabbi Zeira said that Rava bar Zimuna said: If the early generations are characterized as sons of angels, we are the sons of men. And if the early generations are characterized as the sons of men, we are akin to donkeys. And I do not mean that we are akin to either the donkey of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa or the donkey of Rabbi Pinḥas ben Yair; rather, we are akin to other typical donkeys.

Pesachim 112b

אל תצא יחידי בלילה, דתניא: לא יצא יחידי בלילה, לא בלילי רביעיות ולא בלילי שבתות, מפני שאגרת בת מקלית, היא ושמונה עשרה רבוא של מלאכי חבלה יוצאים, וכל אחד ואחד יש לו רשות לחבל בפני עצמו. מעיקרא הווי שכיחי כולי

יֹמָא. זְמַנָּא קָדָא פִּגְעָה בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶּן דּוֹסָא, אָמְרָה לֵיהּ: אִי לֹאוּ דְּמַכְרִזֵּן עָלֶיךָ בְּרַקִּיעַ: "הִנֵּהמָרוּ בְּחִינָא וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ" — סַבְנָתִיד. אָמַר לֵיהּ: אִי תְּשִׁיבָנָא בְּרַקִּיעַ, גּוֹזֵר אֲנִי עָלֶיךָ שְׁלֹא תַעֲבֹרִי בִּישׁוּב לְעוֹלָם. אָמְרָה לֵיהּ: בְּמָטוּתָא מִינָּךְ, שָׁבַק לִי רוּחָא פּוֹרְתָא. שָׁבַק לָהּ לֵילֵי שַׁבָּתוֹת וְלֵילֵי רַבִּיעִיּוֹת.

With regard to the instruction: Do not go out alone at night, it was taught in a baraita: One should not go out alone at night, neither on Tuesday nights nor on Shabbat nights, i.e., Friday nights, because the demon Agrat, daughter of Maḥalat, she and 180,000 angels of destruction go out at these times. And as each and every one of them has permission to destroy by itself, they are all the more dangerous when they go forth together. Initially, these demons were present every day. Once Agrat, daughter of Maḥalat, met Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa and said to him: Had they not announced about you in the Heavens: “Be careful of Ḥanina and his Torah,” I would have placed you in danger. He said to her: “If I am considered important in Heaven, I decree upon you that you should never travel through inhabited places.” She said to him: I beg you, leave me a little space. He left for her Shabbat nights and Tuesday nights.

Yoma 53b

רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶּן דּוֹסָא הָיָה קָא אֲזִיל בְּאוֹרְחָא. שָׁדָא מִטְרָא עָלֵיהּ, אָמַר: רַבּוֹנוּ שְׁל עוֹלָם! כָּל הָעוֹלָם פּוֹלֵוּ בְּנַחַת, וְחֲנִינָא בְּצַעַר. פֶּסֶק מִיטְרָא. כִּי אָתָּא לְבֵיתֶיהּ, אָמַר: רַבּוֹנוּ שְׁל עוֹלָם! כָּל הָעוֹלָם פּוֹלֵוּ בְּצַעַר, וְחֲנִינָא בְּנַחַת. אָתָּא מִיטְרָא. אָמַר רַב יוֹסֵף: מַאי אֶהְיָנָא לֵיהּ צְלוּתִיהּ דְּכֹהֵן גָּדוֹל לְגַבִּי רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶּן דּוֹסָא.

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa was walking on the road when rain fell upon him. He said: Master of the Universe, the entire world is comfortable and Ḥanina is suffering. The rain stopped. When he came to his house he said: Master of the Universe, the entire world is suffering and Ḥanina is

comfortable. The rain came back. Rav Yosef said: What effect does the prayer of the High Priest have with regard to Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa?

Ta'anit 24b-25a

רבי חנינא בן דוסא הוה קא אזיל באורחא, אמתא מיטרא. אמר לפניו: רבונו של עולם, כל העולם כולו בנחת, וחנינא בצער! פסק מיטרא. כי מטא לביתה, אמר לפניו: רבונו של עולם, כל העולם כולו בצער וחנינא בנחת? אמתא מיטרא. אמר רב יוסף: מאי אהניא ליה צלותא דכהן גדול לגבי רבי חנינא בן דוסא. דתנן: הנה מתפלל תפלה קצרה בבית החיצון. מאי מצלי? רבין בר אבא ורבא בר אבא דאמרי תרוניהו משמיה דרב יהודה: יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו שתהא השנה הזו גשומה ושחונה. שחונה מעלייתא היא? אדרבה, גריעותא היא! אלא: אם שחונה — תהא גשומה וטלולה. ואל יכנס לפניך תפילת עוברי דרכים. רב אחא בריה דרבא מסיים משמיה דרב יהודה: לא יעדי עבד שולטן מדבית יהודה, ואל יהו עמך ישראל צריכין להתפרנס זה מזה, ולא לעם אחר. אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: בכל יום ויום בת קול יוצאת ואומרת: כל העולם כולו ניזון בשביל חנינא בני, וחנינא בני דיו בקב חרובים מערב שבת לערב שבת. הנה רגילא דביתהו למיחמא תנורא כל מעלי דשבתא ושדניא אקטרמא משום כסופא. הנה לה הך שיכבתא בישתא, אמרה: מכדי ידענא דלית להו ולא מידי, מאי כולי האי? אזלא וטרפא אבבא, איכספא ועיילא לאינדרונא, איתעביד לה נסא דחזינא לתנורא מלא לחמא ואגנא מלא לישא, אמרה לה: פלגיתא, פלגיתא! אייתי מסא, דקא חריף לחמיה. אמרה לה: אף אנא להכי ציילי. תנא: אף היא להביא מרדה נכנסה, מפני שמלומדת בנסים. אמרה ליה דביתהו: עד אימת גיזיל ונצטער כולי האי? אמר לה: מאי נעביד? בעי רחמי דניתבו לך מידי. בעא רחמי, יצתה כמין פיסת יד ויהבו ליה חד פרעא דפתורא דדחבא. חזינא בחלמא, עתידי צדיקי דאכלי אפתורא דדחבא דאית ליה תלת פרעי, ואיהו — אפתורא דתרי פרעי. אמר לה: ניתא לך דמיכל אכלי כולי עלמא אפתורא דמשלם ואנן אפתורא דמחסר. אמרה ליה: ומאי נעביד? בעי רחמי דנשקלינהו מינך. בעי רחמי ושקלוהו. תנא: גדול הנה נס אחרון יותר מן הראשון. דגמירי, דמיהב יתבי מישקל לא שקלי. חד בי שמשי חזייה לברתיה דהוות עציבא, אמר לה: בתי אמאי עציבת? אמרה ליה: כלי של חומץ נתחלף לי בכלי של שמן והדלקתי ממנו אור לשבת. אמר לה: בתי, מאי אכפת לך? מי שאמר לשמן ויחלוק, הוא יאמר לחומץ

וידלוק. תנא: הנה דולק והולך כל היום כולו, עד שהביאו ממנו אור להבדלה. רבי חנינא בן דוסא הווי ליה הנך עיני, אמרו ליה: קא מפסדן. אמר: אי קא מפסדן — גיכליגהו דובי, ואי לא — כל תדא ותדא תיתי לאורמא דובא בקרנניהו. לאורמא אייתי כל תדא ותדא דובא בקרנניהו. הנה ליה הדיא שייבכתא דקא בנא ביתא ולא מטו פשוירי. אתיא לקמיה, אמרה ליה: בנתי ביתי ולא קמטו פשוירא. אמר לה: מה שמד? אמרה ליה: איכו. אמר: איכו גימטו פשוירי. תנא: הגיעו עד שיצאו אמה לכאן ואמה לכאן. ויש אומרים: סניפין עשאום. תנא, פלימו אומר: אני ראיתי אותו הבית, והיו קורותיו יוצאות אמה לכאן ואמה לכאן, ואמרו לי: בית זה שקרה רבי חנינא בן דוסא בתפלתו. ורבי חנינא בן דוסא מהיכן הווי ליה עזים? והא עני הני! ועוד, אמרו חכמים: אין מגדלין בהמה דקה בארץ ישראל? אמר רב פנחס: מעשה ועבר אדם אחד על פתח ביתו והניח שם תרנגולין, ומצאתו אשתו של רבי חנינא בן דוסא, ואמר לה: אל תאכלי מביציהן. והרבו ביצים ותרנגולין והיו מצערין אותם, ומכרו וקנה בדמיהן עזים. פעם אחת עבר אותו אדם שאבדו ממנו התרנגולין ואמר לחבירו: בקאן הנחתי התרנגולין שלי. שמע רבי חנינא, אמר לו: יש לך בהן סימן? אמר לו: הן. נתן לו סימן ונטל את העיזין, והן הן עיני דאיתו דובי בקרנניהו.

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa was traveling along a road when it began to rain. He said before God: Master of the Universe, the entire world is comfortable, but Ḥanina is suffering. The rain ceased. When he arrived at his home, he said before God: Master of the Universe, the entire world is suffering and Ḥanina is comfortable? It began to rain. Rav Yosef said: What effect does the prayer of the High Priest have against Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa? As we learned in a mishna: he would recite a brief prayer in the outer chamber. What would he pray? Ravin bar Adda and Rava bar Adda both say in the name of Rav Yehuda: May it be Your will, Lord our God, that this year shall be rainy and hot. The Gemara expresses surprise at this request: Is heat good? On the contrary, it is unfavorable. Rather, say that he recited the following: If it is hot, may it also be rainy and moist. And let not the prayer of travelers enter Your presence.

Rav Aḥa, son of Rava, in the name of Rav Yehuda, concluded: May the rule of power not depart from the house of Judea. And may Your nation Israel not depend upon each other for sustenance, nor upon another nation.

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: Each and every day a Divine Voice emerges and says: The entire world is sustained for My son Ḥanina, and for Ḥanina, My son, a kav of carobs is sufficient to sustain him from one Shabbat eve to the next Shabbat eve.

His wife would heat the oven every Shabbat eve and create smoke, due to embarrassment. She had a certain evil neighbor who said: Now, I know that they have nothing. What is all this? She went and knocked on the door. She was embarrassed, and she ascended to an inner room [*inderona*]. A miracle was performed for her, as she saw the oven filled with bread and the kneading basin filled with dough. She said to her: So-and-so, so-and-so, bring a shovel, as your bread is burning. She said to her: I too went inside for that. A tanna taught: She too had entered to bring a shovel, because she was accustomed to miracles.

His wife said to him: Until when will we continue to suffer this? He said to her: What can we do? Pray for mercy that something will be given to you. He prayed for mercy and like the palm of a hand emerged and gave him one leg of a golden table. That night, his wife saw in a dream that in the future, the righteous will eat at a golden table that has three legs, but her table has two legs. He said to her: Are you content that everyone will eat at a complete table and we at a defective table? She said to him: But what can we do? Pray for mercy, that it be taken from you. He prayed for mercy, and it was taken. A tanna taught: The last miracle was greater than the first, as it is learned: no take-backs.

One evening, he saw that his daughter was sad. He said to her: My daughter, why are you sad? She said to him: I confused a vessel of vinegar for a vessel of oil and I lit the Shabbat lamp with it. He said to her: My daughter, what are you concerned about? He Who said to the oil "burn" can say to the vinegar "burn." A tanna taught: It burned continuously the entire day, until they brought from it light for havdala.

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa had some goats. They said to him: They are damaging our property. He said to them: If they are causing damage, let them be eaten by bears. But if not, let each of them, this evening, bring a bear between its horns. That evening, each one brought in a bear between its horns.

He had a certain neighbor who was building a house, but the ceiling beams did not reach. She came before him and said: I built my house, but my beams do not reach the walls. He said to her: What is your name? She said to him: Ikku. He said: If so [ikku], may your beams reach your walls. A tanna taught: They reached until they jutted out a cubit from this side and a cubit from that side. And some say that they extended with segments [senifin]. It is taught Palaimo says: I saw that house, and its beams jutted out a cubit on this side and a cubit on that side. And they said to me: This is the house that Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa roofed by means of his prayer.

And Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa, from where did he have goats? Wasn't he poor? And furthermore, the Sages have said: One may not raise small, domesticated animals in Eretz Yisrael? Rav Pineḥas said: An incident- a certain man passed by the entrance of his house and left chickens there. And Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa's wife found them. And he said to her: Do not eat of their eggs. And they laid many eggs, and (more) chickens. But they were distressing them, so they sold them and bought goats with their proceeds. Once that same man who lost the chickens

passed by and said to his companion: Here is where I left my chickens. Rabbi Ḥanina heard and said to him: Do you have a sign for them? He said to him: Yes. He gave him the sign and took the goats. And these are the very goats that brought bears between their horns.

Chagigah 14a

“וְנִשְׂוֵא פָּנִים” — זֶה שְׂנוּשְׂאֵין פָּנִים לְדוֹרוֹ בְּעִבּוּרוֹ. לְמַעַלָּה, כְּגוֹן רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶּן דּוֹסָא. לְמַטָּה, כְּגוֹן רַבִּי אֶבְהוֹ בִּי קִיסָר.
 “And the man of favor”; this is one for whose sake favor is shown to his generation: Some garner favor above, such as Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa. Others gain favor below, for example: Rabbi Abbahu.

Yevamot 121b

תָּנוּ רַבָּנָן: מַעֲשֵׂה בְּבִתּוֹ שֶׁל נְחוּנְיָא חוֹפֵר שִׁיחִין שֶׁנִּפְלָה לְבוֹר הַגָּדוֹל, וּבָאוּ וְהוֹדִיעוּ לְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶּן דּוֹסָא. שָׁעָה רִאשׁוֹנָה, אָמַר לָהֶם: שְׁלוֹם. שְׁנִיָּה, אָמַר לָהֶם: שְׁלוֹם. שְׁלִישִׁית, אָמַר לָהֶם: עֲלֵתָהּ. אָמַר לָהּ: בְּתִי, מִי הָעֵלְךָ? אָמְרָה לוֹ: זָכַר שֶׁל רַחֲלִים נִזְדַּמְּן לִי, וְזָמַן מִנְהִיגוֹ. אָמְרוּ לוֹ: נִבְיָא אַתָּה? אָמַר לָהֶם: “לֹא נִבְיָא אֲנִכִּי וְלֹא בֶּן נִבְיָא אֲנִכִּי”, אָלֵא: דְּבָר שֶׁהַצַּדִּיק מִתְעַסֵּק בּוֹ — יִכָּשֶׁל בּוֹ זֶרַעוֹ? אָמַר רַבִּי אֶבְהוֹ: אֵף עַל פִּי כֵּן מֵת בְּנֹו בְּצִמָּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וַיִּסְבִּיכּוּ נִשְׁעָרָה מְאֹד”, מִלְּמַד שֶׁהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִזְקֵדֵק עִם סְבִיבּוֹ כַּחוּט הַשְּׁעָרָה. רַבִּי חֲנִינָא אָמַר, מִהֲבָא: “אַל נַעֲרָץ בְּסוֹד קְדוֹשִׁים רַבָּה וְנוֹרָא עַל כָּל סְבִיבּוֹ”.

The Sages taught: An incident occurred involving the daughter of Neḥunya the well digger, who fell into the Great Cistern, and they came and notified Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa and asked that he pray for her. After the first hour, he said to them: She is at peace. After the second hour, he said to them: She is at peace. After the third hour he said to them: She has ascended from the cistern. When she came to Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa, he said to her: My daughter, who pulled you up from

the cistern? She said to him: A male sheep, i.e., a ram, happened by and sensed me in that cistern, and there was an old man leading him who pulled me out. They said to Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa: Are you a prophet? He said to them: “I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet am I” (Amos 7:14). Rather: Could it be that the fruits of the righteous Nehunya’s labor kill his own offspring? Rabbi Abba said: Even so, the son of Nehunya the well digger died of thirst, as is stated: “And around Him it storms [nisara] mightily” (Psalms 50:3), which teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is exacting with His surroundings, i.e., the righteous who are close to Him, up to a hairsbreadth [sa’ara], so that even slight deviations can elicit severe punishment. Rabbi Ḥanina said: This idea is derived from here: “A God dreaded in the great council of the holy ones, and feared by all that are about Him” (Psalms 89:8). This indicates that God is most feared by those that are nearest to Him, i.e., the righteous, because He is more exacting of them.

Sotah 49a-b

מִשְׁמֵת רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה בָּטְלוּ עֲטָרוֹת חֲכָמָה, שֶׁ"עֲטָרַת חֲכָמִים עֲשָׂרָם". מִשְׁמֵת רַבִּי הֲנִינָא בֶן דּוֹסָא בָּטְלוּ אֲנָשִׁי מַעֲשֵׂה. מִשְׁמֵת אַבָּא יוֹסֵי בֶן קַטָּוִנְתָּא בָּטְלוּ חֲסִידִים, וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ אַבָּא יוֹסֵי בֶן קַטָּוִנְתָּא — שֶׁהָיָה מְקַטְנֵי חֲסִידִים.

From the time when Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya died, the crowns of wisdom ceased, as “the crown of the wise is their riches” (Proverbs 14:24), and he was both a great Torah scholar and a very wealthy man. From the time when Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa died, the men of wondrous deeds ceased. From the time when Abba Yosei ben Katonta died, the pious men ceased. And why was he called Abba Yosei ben Katonta? Because he was among the diminished [miktanei] of the pious people.

Bava Kama 50a

תנו רבנן: מעשה בבתו של נחוניא חופר שיחין שנפלה לבור גדול, באו והודיעו את רבי חנינא בן דוסא. שעה ראשונה אמר להם: שלום. שניה אמר להם: שלום. שלישית אמר להם: עלתה. אמרו לה: מי העלה? אמרה להם: זכר של רחלים נודמן לי, וזמן אחד מנהיגו. אמרו לו: נביא אתה? אמר להם: "לא נביא אנכי, ולא בן נביא אנכי", אלא כך אמרתי: דבר שאותו צדיק מצטער בו – יכשל בו וירעו? אמר רבי אחא: אף על פי כן, מת בנו בצמא. שנאמר: "וסביביו נשערה מאד" – מלמד שהקדוש ברוך הוא מדקדק עם סביביו אפילו כחוט השערה. רבי נחוניא אמר מהכא: "אל נערץ בסוד קדשים רבה, ונורא על כל סביביו". אמר רבי חנינא: כל האומר הקדוש ברוך הוא ותרן הוא, יותרו חיו, שנאמר: "הצור תמים פעלו, פי כל דרכיו משפט". אמר רבי חנא ואיתימא רבי שמואל בר נחמני, מאי דכתיב: "ארוך אפים" – ולא כתיב "ארוך אף"? ארוך אפים לצדיקים ולרשעים.

The Sages taught: An incident occurred involving the daughter of Nehunya the ditchdigger, where she fell into a large cistern. They came and informed Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa. When the first hour had passed, he said to them: She is at peace. After the second hour, he said to them: She is at peace. After the third hour, he said to them: She has ascended. They said to her: Who brought you up? She said to them: A male sheep, happened to come to me, and a certain old man, was leading it. They said to Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa: Are you a prophet? He said to them: "I am no prophet, neither am I a prophet's son" (Amos 7:14), rather I said to myself: Shall the offspring of Nehunya stumble by means of the very matter which distressed that righteous man? Rabbi Aha says: Even so, his son died of thirst, fulfilling that which is stated: "And around Him it storms [nisara] mightily" (Psalms 50:3). This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is scrupulous with those around Him, even to the extent of a hairsbreadth [hasa'ara]. Rabbi Nehunya says: The same idea may be learned from here: "A God dreaded in the great council of

the holy ones, and feared by all those that surround Him” (Psalms 89:8). Rabbi Ḥanina says: Anyone who states that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is forgiving [vateran] of transgressions, his life will be relinquished [yivatru], as it is stated: “The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice” (Deuteronomy 32:4). Rabbi Ḥana says, and some say that Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani says: What is the meaning of that which is written: “Long-suffering [erekh appayim]” (Exodus 34:6), and it is not written as erekh af, in the singular? In order to teach that He is long-suffering for both the righteous and for the wicked.

Bava Metzia 106a -b

מתיב רב ששת רועה שהיה רועה והניח עדרו ובא לעיר ובא זאב וטרף ובא ארי ודרס אין אומרים אילו היה שם היה מציל אלא אומדין אותו אם יכול להציל חייב ואם לאו פטור ואמאי נימא ליה אי הוית התם הוה מקיים בי (שמואל א יז, לו) גם את הארי גם (את) הדוב הכה עבדך משום דאמר ליה אי הוית חזית לאיתרחושי לך ניסא הוה איתרחיש לך ניסא כר' חנינא בן דוסא דמתיין עיזי דובי בקרנייהו ונימא ליה נהי דלניסא רבה לא הוה חזינא לניסא זוטא חזינא קשיא

Rav Sheshet raises an objection from a baraita: In the case of a shepherd who was herding the animals of others, and he left his flock and came to the town, and in the meantime a wolf came and tore an animal to pieces, or a lion came and trampled one of the flock, we do not say definitively that had he been there he would have rescued them and therefore he is liable due to his absence. Rather, the court estimates with regard to him: If he could have rescued his animal by chasing a beast of this kind away, he is liable, as his departure from the scene was certainly a contributing factor to the damage. If not, he is exempt from liability. According to Shmuel's opinion, why is the shepherd exempt from liability? Let the owner say to him: Had you been there, the following verse would have been fulfilled for me: “Your servant smote both the lion

and the bear” (I Samuel 17:36). This is because the shepherd could say to the owner: If you were worthy of a miracle occurring to you, a miracle would have indeed occurred to you as it did to Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa, when his goats brought bears impaled on their horns without any assistance on the part of a shepherd (see Ta’anit 25a). And let the owner say to him: Granted that I was not worthy of a great miracle, but of a small miracle I was worthy. Indeed, this is difficult.

Bava Batra 74a -b

רבי יוחנן משמע: זימנא חדא הוה קא אזלינן בספינתא; וחזינו הדיא קרטליה, דהו קא מקבעי בה אבנים טובות ומרגליות, והדרי לה מיני דכוורי דמקרי פרשא. נחית בר אמוראי לאתויה, ורגש ובעי לשמטיה לאטמיה, ושדא זיקא דחלא ונחת. נפק בת קלא אמר לן: "מאי אית לכו בהדי קרטליה דדביתהו דרבי חנינא בן דוסא, דעתידה דשדא תכלתא בה לצדיקי לעלמא דאתי!"

Rabbi Yoḥanan relates: Once we were traveling on a ship and we saw a certain crate [*kartalita*] in which precious stones and pearls were set, and a species of fish called sharks encircled it. A diver [*bar amoraei*] descended to bring it up, and the fish became angry and sought to sever his thigh, but the diver threw upon it a flask of vinegar and they descended. A Divine Voice emerged and said to us: What right do you have to touch the crate of the wife of Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa, as she is destined to insert sky-blue wool in it to be used in the ritual fringes of the righteous in the World-to-Come?

Avot DeRabbi Natan 8:8

כשם שהצדיקים הראשונים היו חסידים כך בהמתן היו חסידות אמרו גמליו של אברהם אבינו לא נכנסו לבית שיש בו עבודת כוכבים שנאמר (בראשית כ"ד:ל"א) ואנכי פניתי הבית ומקום לגמלים [ואנכי פניתי הבית מתרפים ומת"ל ומקום לגמלים] מלמד שלא נכנסו לבית לבן הארמי עד שפנו כל העבודת כוכבים מפניהם. מעשה בחמורו של ר"ח בן דוסא

שגנבוהו לסטים וחבשו את החמור בחצר והניחו לו תבן ושעורין ומים ולא היה אוכל ושותה. אמרו למה אנו מניחין אותו שימות ויבאיש לנו את החצר עמדו ופתחו לה את הדלת והוציאוה והיתה מושכת והולכת עד שהגיעה אצל ר' חנינא בן דוסא כיון שהגיעה אצלו שמע בנו קולה א"ל אבא דומה קולה לקול בהמתנו א"ל בני פתח לה את הדלת שכבר מתה ברעב עמד ופתח לה הדלת והניח לה תבן ושעורים ומים והיתה אוכלת ושותה. לפיכך אמרו כשם שהצדיקים הראשונים היו חסידים כך בהמתן חסידות כמותן:

Just as the early righteous people were pious, so too were their animals. They say that Abraham's camels would not go into a house that had idols in it, as it says (Genesis 24:31), "I have cleared the house, and made space for the camels." ["I have cleared the house" – of idols. But what do you learn from "and made space for the camels"?] That teaches us that they would not go into the house of Lavan the Aramean until all the idols were cleared out. An incident- Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa's donkey was stolen by robbers. They put it in the courtyard and placed straw, barley, and water in front it, but it would not eat or drink. They said: How can we leave it here? It will just die and rot in the courtyard. So they opened the door and put the animal outside, and it started walking and kept going until it reached Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa. When it got there, his son heard it braying. He said: Father, isn't this voice like the voice of our animal? He said to him: Son, open the door for it, for it is clearly dying of hunger. He got up and opened the door, and put straw and barley and water in front of it, and it ate and drank. That is why they say: Just as the early righteous people were pious, so too were their animals."

Avot DeRabbi Natan 22:1

רבי חנינא בן דוסא אומר כל שיראת חטאו קודמת לחכמתו חכמתו מתקיימת שנא' (תהילים קי"א:י) ראשית חכמה יראת ה'. הוא היה אומר כל שמעשיו מרובין וכו' שנא' נעשה ונשמע. אמרו לפני רבן יוחנן בן זכאי חכם וירא חטא מה הוא אמר להם הרי זה אומן וכלי אומנתו בידו ואין ירא חטא מהו אמר להם הרי זה אומן ואין כלי אומנתו בידו. ירא חטא ואין חכם מהו אמר להם אין זה אומן אבל כלי אומנתו בידו.

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa would say: Anyone whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom will endure, as it says (Psalms 111:10), “The beginning of wisdom is fear of the Eternal.” He would also say: Anyone whose actions are greater [than his wisdom, his wisdom will endure], as it says (Exodus 24:7), “We will do, and then we will understand.” They asked Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai: A wise person who fears sin – what is he like? He replied: Like a craftsman with his tool in hand. Then they asked: A wise person who does not fear sin – what is he like? He replied: Like a craftsman who does not have his tool in hand. Then they asked: A person who fears sin but is not wise – what is he like? He replied: Like someone who does not know the craft, but has a tool in his hand.

Midrash

Mekhilta DeRabbi Yishmael Shemot 18:21

שמות יח, כא) [”ואתה תחזק מכל העם אנשי חיל יראי אלהים, אנשי אמת, שנאי בצע, ושמתי עליהם שרי אלפים, שרי מאות, שרי חמשים ושרי עשרות.”] [”ואתה תחזק מכל העם אנשי חיל”, אתה תחזק להם בנבואה; ”אנשי חיל”, אלו עשירין ובעלי ממון; ”יראי אלהים”, אלו שהן יראין מן המקום בדיו; ”אנשי אמת”, אלו בעלי אבטחה; ”שנאי בצע”, אלו שהן שונאין לקבל שחד בדיו; כדברי רבי יהושע. רבי אלעזר המודעי אומר: ”ואתה תחזק מכל העם”, אתה תחזק להם בספוקלרנא, כמחזית זו שחזין בה המלכים; ”אנשי חיל”, אלו בעלי אבטחה; ”יראי אלהים”, אלו שהן עושין פשרה בדיו; ”אנשי אמת”, כגון רבי חנינה בן דוסה וחסדיו; ”שנאי בצע”, אלו שהן שונאים ממון עצמן, ואם ממון עצמן שונאין, קל וחסד ממון חסדיו.

(Exodus 18:21) “And you shall seek from all the people men of valor, fearers of God, men of truth, haters of gain, and you shall appoint over them chiefs of 1000, chiefs of 100, chiefs of 50, and chiefs of 10.” “And you shall seek from all the people”: by prophecy. “men of valor”: men of wealth and men of means. “fearers of God”: in judgment. “men of truth”: trustworthy men. “haters of gain”: who hate to accept money (for collusion) in judgment. These are the words of R. Yehoshua. R. Elazar Hamodai says: “And you shall see from all the people”: clearly, as by the glass through which the kings look. “men of valor”: trustworthy men. “fearers of God”: those who compromise in judgment. “men of truth”: such as R. Hanina b. Dosa and his colleagues. “haters of gain”: who “hate” (i.e., who are prepared to lose) their own money in judgment. If they (thus) “hate” their own money, how much more so (are they solicitous for) the money of others!

Mekhilta DeRashbi Shemot 14:15

ר' נתן אומר משום ר' יוסי המחוסה אמר לו הקב"ה למשה כבר הכתבתי עליך בתורה (במדבר י"ב:ז') בכל ביתי נאמן הוא אתה ברשותי והים ברשותי כבר עשיתיך גזבר עליו: [ר' חנינא בן דוסא אומר אמר לו הקב"ה כבר כתבתי (משלי י"ז:י"ז) אח לצרה יולד אח אני לישראל בשעת צרתן אין אחים אלא ישראל שנ' (תהלים קכ"ב:ח') למען אחי ורעי וגו'].
[Rabbi Natan said in the name of Rabbi Yosi [hamahosi] The Holy Blessed One said to Moses: I already wrote about you in Torah: "In all My house he is faithful." (Numbers 12:7) [Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa said: The Holy Blessed One said to him: I already wrote: "a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17) I am a brother to Israel. In the time of adversity Israel is the only brother as it is said: "For my brothers' and companions' sakes, etc." (Psalms 122:8)]

Mekhilta DeRashbi Shemot 18:21

שונאי בצע – אלו ששונאין לקבל ממון: כך דברי ר' יהושע: ר' אלעזר המודעי אומר ואתה תחזה מכל העם תחזה להם באספקלריא כמחזית זו שהמלכים חוזין בה: אנשי חיל אלו בעלי הבטחה: יראי אלהים אלו שעושין פשרה בדין: אנשי אמת כגון ר' חנינא בן דוסא וחביריו: שונאי בצע אלו ששונאין ממון עצמן והלא דברים קל וחומר ומה אם ממון עצמן היו שונאין ממון אחרים על אחת כמה וכמה.
[Haters of ill-gotten gain - those who hate to receive money: these are the words of R. Joshua. R. Elazar Hamodai says: "And you shall seek from all the people": clearly, as by the glass through which the kings look. men of valor - those who are masters of clarity God-fearers - those who make compromise in judgement. men of truth - such as Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa and his friends. haters of ill-gotten gain - those who hate their own money. and all the more so, If they "hate" their own money, how much more so, the money of others!]

Bereshit Rabbah 10:8

וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וּגו', אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא מְשַׁכְּנֵי רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן רַבִּי יוֹסִי אֶצֶל פּוֹנֵדֵק אֶחָד וְאָמַר לִי כָאן הִתְפַּלֵּל אָבָא שֶׁל שַׁבָּת בְּעֶרְב שַׁבָּת. רַבִּי יִרְמְיָה וְרַבִּי אֶחָא אָמְרֵי רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִקְּשֵׁי כָאן הִתְפַּלֵּל אָבָא שֶׁל שַׁבָּת בְּעֶרְב שַׁבָּת, אֶתְמַהָא. וְלֹא צָרִיד מִקְּשֵׁי, דִּהָא חֲמַרְיָא הוּוּ סְלָקִין מִן עֶרְב לְצַפּוֹרִין, וְהוּוּ אָמְרִין כְּבֵר שַׁבָּת רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶּן דּוֹסָא בְּעִירוֹ. וְאִי בְעִית מִקְּשֵׁי עַל הָדָא קִשְׁיָא, דְּאָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא מְשַׁכְּנֵי רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּרַבִּי יוֹסִי אֶצֶל פּוֹנֵדֵק אֶחָד, וְאָמַר לִי כָאן הִתְפַּלֵּל אָבָא שֶׁל אַחֵר שַׁבָּת בְּשַׁבָּת. אָמַר רַבִּי אָבָא אִף עַל דָּא לֹא הָוִי צָרִיד לְמִקְּשֵׁי, דִּהָא רַבִּי הֵוָה יְתִיב וְדָרַשׁ וְהָוָה אָמַר לְאָבָא יוֹדֵן אַמְוִרִיה אֶכְרוֹז קוּמִי דְּצַבּוֹרָא, יִצְלוֹן דְּחוּלָא עַד יוֹמָא קָאִים.

“God completed on the seventh day, etc.” – Rabbi Ḥanina said: Rabbi Yishmael ben Rabbi Yosei took me to a certain inn and said to me: ‘Here my father prayed the Shabbat [evening] prayer before Shabbat.’ Rabbi Yirmeya and Rabbi Aḥa say: Rabbi Yoḥanan raised it as a difficulty: ‘Did my father pray the Shabbat [evening] prayer here before Shabbat?’ he asked in bewilderment. But there was no need to raise a difficulty, as the donkey drivers had come up from Arav to Tzippori, and said: ‘Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa has already begun to observe Shabbat in his city.’ If you wish to raise a difficulty, raise it concerning this [version of the incident]: Rabbi Ḥanina said: Rabbi Yishmael ben Rabbi Yosei took me to a certain inn and said to me: ‘Did my father pray the post-Shabbat [evening] prayer here on Shabbat?’ Rabbi Abba said: ‘Concerning this as well there is no need to raise a difficulty, as Rabbi once was sitting and giving a lecture, and [afterwards] he said to Abba Yudan, his spokesman: Announce to the congregation that they should pray the weekday [evening] prayer now, though it is still daytime.’

דָּבָר אַחֵר, חֲזִיתָ אִישׁ מְהִיר בְּמִלְאָתוֹ, זֶה רַבִּי חֲנִינָא, אָמְרוּ פַּעַם אַחַת רָאָה אֲנָשִׁי עִירוֹ מַעֲלִים עוֹלוֹת וּשְׁלָמִים, אָמַר כָּלֵם מַעֲלִים שְׁלָמִים לִירוּשָׁלַיִם וְאֲנִי אֵינִי מַעֲלָה כָלוּם, מָה אַעֲשֶׂה, מִיָּד יֵצֵא לְמִדְבָּרָהּ שֶׁל עִירוֹ בְּחוּרְכָּהּ שֶׁל עִירוֹ, וּמֵצֵא שָׁם אֶבֶן אַחַת, יֵצֵא וְסִדְקָה וְסִתְקָה וְכִרְכְּמָה, אָמַר הָרִי עָלִי לְהַעֲלוֹתָהּ לִירוּשָׁלַיִם, בִּקְשׁ לְשֹׁכֵר לוֹ פּוֹעָלִים, אָמַר לָהֶם מַעֲלִים לִי אַתֶּם אֶת הָאֶבֶן הַזֹּאת לִירוּשָׁלַיִם, אָמְרוּ לוֹ, תֵּן לָנוּ שְׂכָרְנוֹ מֵאָה זֹהוּבִים וְאָנוּ מַעֲלִים לָךְ אֶת אֶבְנֶךָ לִירוּשָׁלַיִם. אָמַר לָהֶם, וְכִי מִנֵּינוּ לִי מֵאָה זֹהוּבִים אוֹ חֲמִשִּׁים לָתֵת לָכֶם, וְלֹא מֵצֵא לְשַׁעֲהָ, מִיָּד הִלְכוּ לָהֶם. מִיָּד זָמַן לוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא חֲמִשָּׁה מִלְּאָכִים בְּדַמּוֹת בְּנֵי אָדָם, אָמְרוּ לוֹ רַבִּי תֵּן לָנוּ חֲמִשָּׁה סָלְעִים וְאָנוּ מַעֲלִים אֶבְנֶךָ לִירוּשָׁלַיִם, וּבִלְבָד נִשְׁתַּתֵּן יָדְךָ עִמָּנוּ, וְנִתֵּן יָדוֹ עִמָּהֶם וְנִמְצָאוּ עוֹמְדִין בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם, בִּקְשׁ לָתֵן לָהֶם שְׂכָרָם וְלֹא מֵצָאוּ. בָּא הַמַּעֲשֶׂה לְלִשְׁכַּת הַגְּזִית, אָמְרוּ לוֹ דּוֹמָה רַבֵּנוּ שְׂמִלְאָכִי הַשָּׂרֵת הָעָלוּ לָךְ אֶת הָאֶבֶן לִירוּשָׁלַיִם, מִיָּד נָתַן לַחֲכָמִים אוֹתוֹ הַשְּׂכָר שֶׁהַשְּׁכִיר עִם הַמִּלְאָכִים.

Another matter, “have you seen a man diligent in his labor,” this is Rabbi Hanina. They said:

One time, he saw the residents of his city taking up burnt offerings and peace offerings [to the Temple in Jerusalem]. He said: All of them are taking peace offerings up to Jerusalem and I am not taking up anything. What shall I do? Immediately, he went to the wilderness of his city, in the ruins of his city. He found a particular stone there and he went and smoothed it, chiseled it, and painted it. He said: ‘I take it upon myself to take it up to Jerusalem.’ He sought to hire laborers, he said to them: ‘Will you take this stone up to Jerusalem for me?’ They said to him: ‘Give us one hundred gold pieces as our wages and we will take your stone to Jerusalem for you.’ He said to them: ‘From where do I have one hundred gold pieces, or [even] fifty to give to you?’ He was unable to find [enough money] at that time, and immediately they went on their way.

Immediately, the Holy One blessed be He summoned for him five angels in the guise of men.

They said to him: ‘Rabbi, give us five *sela* and we will take your stone up to Jerusalem for you, provided that you give your hand [and carry it] with us.’ He gave his hand and they found

themselves standing in Jerusalem. He sought to give them their wages but did not find them. The incident came to the Chamber of Hewn Stone. They said to him: ‘Our rabbi, it appears that ministering angels took the stone to Jerusalem for you.’ Immediately, he gave the Sages those wages with which he hired the angels.

Kohelet Rabbah 1:1

דברי קהלת בן דוד מלך בירושלם, זה שאמר הכתוב ברוח הקדש על ידי שלמה מלך ישראל (משלי כב, כט): חזית איש מהיר במלאכתו לפני מלכים יתיצב, מעשה ברבי חנינא בן דוסא שראה בני עירו מעליו נדרים ונדבות לירושלים, אמר הכל מעליו לירושלים נדרים ונדבות ואני איני מעלה דבר, מה עשה, יצא למדברה של עירו וראה שם אבן אחת, ושברה וסתתה ומרקה, ואמר הרי עלי להעלותה לירושלים, בקש לשכר לו פועלים, נזדמנו לו חמשה בני אדם, אמר להן מעליו לי אתם אבן זו לירושלים, אמרו לו הן לנו חמשה סלעים ואנו מעלים אותה לירושלים, בקש להן להם ולא נמצא בידו דבר לשעה, הניחיהו והלכו להם, זמן לו הקדוש ברוך הוא חמשה מלאכים בדמות בני אדם, אמר להם אתם מעליו לי אבן זו, אמרו לו הן לנו חמשה סלעים ואנו מעליו לה אבנה לירושלים, ובלבד שתתן ידך ואצבעך עמנו, נתן ידו ואצבעו עמם ונמצאו עומדים בירושלים, בקש להן להם שכרן ולא מצאו, נכנס ללשכת הגזית ושאל בשבילם, אמרו לו דומה שמלאכי השרת העלו אבנה לירושלים, וקראו עליו המקרא הזה: חזית איש מהיר במלאכתו לפני מלכים יתיצב, קרי ביה לפני מלאכים יתיצב.

“The words of Kohelet, son of David, king in Jerusalem” (Ecclesiastes 1:1). This is what the verse said, inspired by the Divine Spirit, [written] by Solomon, king of Israel: “Have you seen a man diligent in his labor? He will stand before kings” (Proverbs 22:29). There was an incident involving Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa, who saw the residents of his city taking up vow offerings and gift offerings to Jerusalem. He said: Everyone is taking up vow offerings and gift offerings to

Jerusalem; will I not take anything up? What did he do? He went out to the wilderness [outside] of his city and noticed a certain stone there. He broke it, he chiseled it, and he polished it. He said: I take it upon myself to bring it up to Jerusalem. He sought to hire laborers, and five people came before him. He said to them: ‘Will you take up this stone to Jerusalem for me?’ They said to him: ‘Give us five *sela* and we will take it up to Jerusalem.’ He sought to give it to them, but he did not have anything in his possession at that time. They left him and went on their way. The Holy One blessed be He arranged for five angels [to appear] to him in the guise of men. He said to them: ‘Will you take up this stone [to Jerusalem] for me?’ They said to him: ‘Give us five *sela* and we will take your stone up to Jerusalem for you, provided that you join us [in carrying the stone] with your hand and finger.’ He joined them with his hand and finger, and they found themselves standing in Jerusalem. He sought to give them their payment but he did not find them. He entered the Chamber of the Hewn Stone and asked after them. They said to him: ‘It appears that ministering angels took your stone up to Jerusalem,’ and they read this verse in his regard: “Have you seen a man diligent in his labor? He will stand before kings [*melakhim*].” Read, in his regard: “He will stand before angels [*malakhim*].”

Shemot Rabbah 3:12

דָּבָר אַחֵר, לָמָּה נָס, לִפְנֵי שְׁחָטָא בְּדַבְּרֵיוֹ, וְשָׂאֵלוּ לֹא חָטָא לֹא הָיָה נָס, וְשָׂאִין נֶחֱשׁ מִמֵּית אֶלָּא הַחָטָא מִמֵּית, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב
בְּמַעֲשֵׂה רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶן דּוּסָא.

Another interpretation: Why did he flee? It is because he sinned with his words, as had he not sinned, he would not have fled, because it is not the serpent that kills, but rather the sin that kills, as it is written in the incident involving Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa.

Tanhuma Vayigash 3

וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה. זֶה שֶׁאָמַר הַפְּתוּב: לִישׁ גִּבּוֹר בְּבִהְמָה וְלֹא יָשׁוּב מִפְּנֵי כָל (משלי ל, ל). מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶן דּוּסָא, שִׁרְאָה אֶת הָאֲרִי וְאָמַר לוֹ: אֵי מֶלֶךְ חַלְשׁ, לֹא הִשְׁבַּעְתִּיךָ שְׁלֹא תִרְאֶה בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל. מִיָּד בָּרַח. רַץ אַחֲרָיו רַבִּי חֲנִינָא, אָמַר לוֹ: נַעֲנִיתִי לָךְ שֶׁקִּרְאתִיךָ חַלְשׁ, וּמִי שֶׁבִּרְאָךְ קִרְאָךְ גִּבּוֹר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: לִישׁ גִּבּוֹר בְּבִהְמָה.

“Then Judah came near unto him.” (Genesis 44:18) This is as it is written: “The lion, which is the mightiest of beasts, turneth not away for anyone” (Prov. 30:30). It happened that R. Ḥanina ben Dosa, upon seeing a lion, shouted at it: “O weak king, did I not adjure you not to be seen in the land of Israel?” It fled immediately. Thereupon R. Ḥanina ran after it, shouting: “Forgive me for calling you weak when He who created you called you mighty,” as it is said: “The lion, which is the mightiest among beasts” (ibid.).

Tanhuma Vaera 4

כִּי יַדְבֵּר אֲלֵיכֶם פֶּרַעַה לֵאמֹר. רַבְּנוּ, מִי שֶׁעָמַד לְהַתְּפִלָּל וּבֹא הִנָּחֵשׁ וּנְשָׁכוּ, מִהוּ שִׁיפְסִיק. כֹּךְ שְׁנֵי רַבּוֹתֵינוּ, הָעוֹמֵד בְּתַפְלָה, אֲפִלּוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ שׁוֹאֵל בְּשָׁלוֹמוֹ, לֹא יִשְׁיבֵנוּ. אֲפִלּוּ נָחֵשׁ כְּרוּף עַל עֵקֶבוֹ, וְלֹא יִפְסִיק. מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶן דּוּסָא שֶׁהָיָה עוֹמֵד וּמִתְּפַלֵּל, בָּא עֲרוֹד וּנְשָׁכוּ, וּבְרַחוּ הַתַּלְמִידִים. אַחֵר שָׁעָה בָּאוּ וּמָצְאוּ אוֹתוֹ עֲרוֹד מֵת מִשְׁלָף עַל פִּי חוּרוֹ. אָמְרוּ: וַיְלֹךְ אֲדָם שֶׁנְּשָׁכוּ עֲרוֹד, וַיִּלְעָרוֹד שֶׁפָּגַע בּוֹ רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶן דּוּסָא. וּמָה רָאוּ חֻמְכִּים לְהַקִּישׁ כְּרִיכַת נָחֵשׁ לְמַלְכוּת? אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פִּזִּי: דְּכַתִּיב: קוֹלָה בְּנָחֵשׁ יִלֹךְ כִּי בְּחִיל יִלְכוּ וּבְקִרְדָּמוֹת בָּאוּ לָהּ כְּחֻטְבֵי עֲצִים (ירמיה מו, כב). מִה הִנָּחֵשׁ מְלַחֵשׁ וְהוֹרֵג, אִף הַמַּלְכוּת מְלַחֶשֶׁת וְהוֹרֵגַת אֶת הָאָדָם. הוּא נָתוּן בְּבֵית הָאִסּוּרִין, מְלַחֵשׁ עָלָיו וְהוֹרֵגוֹ.

“When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying” (Exod. 7:9). Our teachers, a man who is bitten by a serpent while standing in prayer, may he stop praying? Our teachers teach us: A man standing in prayer may not even respond to the greeting of a king, nor may he stop praying when a serpent encircles his heel. It happened that an *arvad* bit R. Ḥanina ben Dosa while he was standing in prayer and his disciples fled in fear. Upon their return an hour later, they found the *arvad* lying dead near its den. They said: “Woe to the man whom an *arvad* bites, but woe to the *arvad* that attacks R. Ḥanina ben Dosa.” Why did the sages compare a serpent that winds itself about the heel of a man with the kingdom of Egypt? R. Yosé the son of Pazzi said: Because it is written: The sound thereof shall go like the serpent’s; for they march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood (Jer. 46:22). Just as the serpent hisses and kills, so the kingdom of Egypt hisses and kills a man. He would imprison a man, accuse him in secret, and surreptitiously execute him.

Pesikta Rabbati 23

אמר ר' חנינא פעם אחת משכני רבי ישמעאל אצל פונדקי אחד ואמר לי כאן התפלל אבא של לילי שבת בערב שבת
אמר רבי אחא רבי יוחנן פליג ולא הוה צריך למתפלגה שכן מוסיפין מחול על הקודש (ועד דסלקיה) [ועוד דסלקין]
מערב שבת לציפורי ואמרו כבר התפלל רבי חנינא בן דוסא בעירו (והיו) [והידא] אמרה הדא דרבי מפקד לאמוריה
לאבדן מכריז קמי ציבורא כל דמצלי יצלי דרמשא עד דיומא קיים דבי רבי ינאי אמרים עלה על מיטתו אין מטריחים
עליו עד שירד אמר רבי זעירא אנא כד לית אנא מצלי רומשא אני מתחביל אמרין ליה לית לך אלא מן הדא דרבי הוה
מפקד (כתב).

Rabbi Ḥanina said: One time, Rabbi Ismael ben Rabbi Yose drew me to an inn and said to me:

Here my father prayed Saturday (Friday night) prayers on Friday. Rabbi Aha said: Rabbi

Yohanan disagrees but he should not have disagreed since one adds from the profane to the holy time; in addition, donkey drivers come from Arab to Sepphoris and say, Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa already did consecrate the Sabbath in his town. But so it has been said, since Rabbi commanded his speaker Abdan: Proclaim before the congregation that he who wants to pray should pray evening prayers as long as it is still daylight. In the house of Rabbi Yannai they said: If a man went to bed, one does not bother him to get up. Rabbi Zeira said: Please, when it is not, please pray the evening prayers, I am in ruins. They said: You have only what Rabbi commanded his speaker Abdan.

Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 29

ר' חנינא בן דוסא אומ' כל הנמולים ביום השלישי כאב להם שנ' ויהי ביום השלישי בהיותם כואבים ומרחיצין את הקטן ביום השלישי שחל להיות בשבת וכל צרכי מילה מותר לעשות בשבת וכל ערל לא יאכל בו ולא יגע בקדש והפורש מן המילה כפורש מן הב"ה

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa said: All who are circumcised on the third day, (God) is like a father (*k'av*) to them, as it is said, "And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore (*ko'avim*)" (Gen. 34:25). They may wash the child on the third day, when it happens to fall on the Sabbath, and all things necessary for a circumcision are permitted to be done on the Sabbath. "Every uncircumcised (man) shall not eat (of the Paschal offering)" (Exodus 12:48), and shall not touch the sanctuary. He who separates himself from circumcision is like one separated from the Holy One, blessed be He.

וצדקה תציל ממוות (משלי י"א:ד') – מדינה של גיהנם. יש אדם שהוא נותנה למי שראויה לו ולמי שאינה ראויה לו, יכול אם נותנה למי שאינה ראויה לו תהי מצלת אותו? הוי אומר לו: אין לך צדקה אלא תורה, שנאמר: "וצדקה תהיה לנו כי נשמור לעשות וגו'" (דברים ו':כ"ה). מאן דבעי ישמיענה מהכא, דאמר רבי יוסי: יהי חלקי עם גבאי צדקה ולא עם מחלקי צדקה, שהנוטלה יודע ממי נוטלה, אבל הנותנה אינו יודע למי נותנה. אמר רבי חנינא בן דוסא: אין לך צדקה שמצלת את האדם מדינה של גיהנם אלא תורה בלבד, לכך נאמר "וצדקה תציל ממוות", שיש בה כוח להציל מיום הדין יכול אפלו אם נתחייב אדם בדבר עבירה שהיא מצלת אותו ביום הדין? תלמוד לומר: "צדיק מצרה נחלץ, ויבוא רשע תחתיו" (משלי י"א:ח'). הרי לנו מכאן לתלמיד חכם שעובר בדבר עבירה, שהיא מצלת אותו ליום הדין. צדיק גמור מניין? אמר רבי עקיבה: אין את צריך לומר, אלא מעשיהם הן מצילים אותם, שנאמר: "צדקת ישרים תצילם" (משלי י"א:ר'). פ

"But righteousness saves from death." (Proverbs 11:4)- from the judgement of hell. There is one who gives to someone who (sees?) him and to someone who does not (see) him. If he is able to give to someone who does not (see?) him, will he be saved? So, say to him: your only righteousness is Torah, As it is said: It will be therefore to our merit(righteousness) before our God to observe faithfully this whole Instruction, as [God] has commanded us. Which request we hear from here: As Rabbi Yosi says: my portion will be with accountants of righteousness and not with the portions of the righteous For the bearer knows from whom he is burdened, but the giver does not know to whom he gives. Rabbi Hanna ben Dosa says: there is no righteousness for you that saves man from the judgment of hell except Torah alone. Thus we say: But righteousness saves from death. For there is strength in it to save from the day of judgement Even if a man is guilty of sin, is he able to be saved from the day of judgment? Scripture

teaches: The righteous man is rescued from trouble And the wicked man takes his place.

(Proverbs 11:8) Thus we know from here that a learned scholar that transgresses a sin is saved from the day of judgement From where do we learn of a complete righteous man? Rabbi Akira says: you don't need to say, except their deeds save them. As it is said: The righteousness of the upright saves them,