

**GIVE ME YAVNEH:  
THE REBIRTH OF RABBINIC JUDAISM BY THE HANDS OF ONE MAN**

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and let everyone come and ask about you.<sup>[35]</sup> נְאִייתוּ מִיָּדִי וְכָךְ כִּי יֹאמְרוּ בְּבָרְכֵי רַבְּנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נָחֳמָן וְכָךְ כִּי יֹאמְרוּ בְּבָרְכֵי רַבְּנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נָחֳמָן וְכָךְ כִּי יֹאמְרוּ בְּבָרְכֵי רַבְּנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נָחֳמָן... [The baryonei] wanted to shove [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] to see whether he would cry out. [Abba Sikra] said to them, [Abba Sikra] said to them, [Abba Sikra] said to them... [The baryonei] finally opened the gate for him, and he was carried out. [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] reached [the Roman camp], he said to Vespasian, "Peace be upon you, O king! Peace be upon you, O king!"... [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] did as he was advised. R' Eliezer entered and took hold of his bed on one side and R' Yehoshua on the other side. They carried the bed to the gate of the city. When they reached the gate, [the baryonei] who were guarding the gate wanted to stab [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] with spears to make sure

he was really dead. [Abba Sikra] said to [them], "Shall [the Romans] say that [the Jews] stabbed their Rabbi?" [The baryonei] wanted to shove [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] to see whether he would cry out. [Abba Sikra] said to them, "Shall they say that [the Jews] shoved their Rabbi?" [The baryonei] finally opened the gate for him, and he was carried out. [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] reached [the Roman camp], he said to Vespasian, "Peace be upon you, O king! Peace be upon you, O king!" [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] did as he was advised. R' Eliezer entered and took hold of his bed on one side and R' Yehoshua on the other side. They carried the bed to the gate of the city. When they reached the gate, [the baryonei] who were guarding the gate wanted to stab [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] with spears to make sure

מסורת הש"ס

א"ל : (א) וְכָךְ כִּי יֹאמְרוּ בְּבָרְכֵי רַבְּנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נָחֳמָן וְכָךְ כִּי יֹאמְרוּ בְּבָרְכֵי רַבְּנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נָחֳמָן וְכָךְ כִּי יֹאמְרוּ בְּבָרְכֵי רַבְּנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נָחֳמָן... [The baryonei] wanted to shove [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] to see whether he would cry out. [Abba Sikra] said to them, [Abba Sikra] said to them, [Abba Sikra] said to them... [The baryonei] finally opened the gate for him, and he was carried out. [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] reached [the Roman camp], he said to Vespasian, "Peace be upon you, O king! Peace be upon you, O king!"... [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] did as he was advised. R' Eliezer entered and took hold of his bed on one side and R' Yehoshua on the other side. They carried the bed to the gate of the city. When they reached the gate, [the baryonei] who were guarding the gate wanted to stab [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] with spears to make sure

דע לפי נא אנה

NOTES

35. As if you were dying (Rashi).
36. [A living being automatically tends to balance its weight, making it easier to carry. A corpse (or inanimate object) of the same weight is harder to carry; hence the expression "dead weight." ]
37. It is forbidden to bury a human corpse inside Jerusalem (Rambam, Hil. Beis HaBechirah 7:14, from Tosefta Bava Basra 1:7 and Sifri 26:25). This custom was observed even during the siege of Jerusalem (see Rashi to Leviticus 26:25 וְדִיָּה וְשִׁלַּחְתָּ; see also Kli Chemdah there).
38. Literally: he went out.
39. Rashi; cf. Maharsha, Maharam Schif.









*Hashem shall choose [in the territory of] one of your tribes. Only there shall you sacrifice burnt offerings (Derrivin 12:13,14).*

What then were the acts of kindness Daniel did? He provided for a bride and rejoiced her heart, escorted the dead, gave a permit to a poor man, and prayed three times a day. And his prayer was received with favor, as it says, *When Daniel learned that [the decree] had been put in writing, he went home. He had windows made in his upper chamber facing Yerushalayim, and three times a day he knelt down and prayed, giving thanks before his G-d, exactly as he used to do before this (Daniel 6:11).*

### RABBI YOCHANAN AND VESPASIAN<sup>43</sup>

When Vespasian [the Roman general] came to destroy Yerushalayim, he said [to the people of Yerushalayim]: "Fools, why are you trying to destroy this city and burn the Temple [by refusing to surrender]? All I ask is that you send me one bow and arrow [as a token of submission], and I will withdraw [my forces]."

[The *Biryonim*<sup>44</sup>] said to Vespasian: "Just as we fought against the first two<sup>45</sup> who were here before you killing them, so will we fight against and kill you."

When R. Yochanan b. Zakkai heard this he summoned the [heads of the *Biryonim*] telling them; "My children, why do you want to destroy our city and cause the Beis Hamikdash to be

<sup>43</sup> Since R. Yochanan b. Zakkai was mentioned above in connection with the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, another episode about his role in these tragic events is related here.

<sup>44</sup> At that time there was a civil war raging in Yerushalayim among three Jewish factions: moderates who were followers of the Rabbis; the corrupt and assimilated Sadducees who were Roman sympathizers and opponents of the Rabbis and *hachabim*, and the Zealots [*Kanai'im*], extreme nationalists who advocated open warfare to overthrow Roman domination. The violently militant members of the Zealot party were called *Biryonim*.

<sup>45</sup> A reference to Florus and Cestius Gallus who were defeated by the Zealots in an earlier uprising.

### CHAPTER 4:5

burned? All [Vespasian] wants is one bow or arrow, and he'll withdraw his forces."

They replied: "Just as we fought against the first two, who were here before him, killing them, so will we fight against and kill him."

Vespasian had [Jewish collaborators] stationed inside the walls of Yerushalayim. They wrote down every word they overheard, attaching the message to an arrow and shooting the arrow over the wall [making it appear as if they were attacking the Romans]. Overhearing what R. Yochanan told the *Biryonim*, they informed the Romans that R. Yochanan b. Zakkai was a Roman sympathizer.

Day after day, R. Yochanan pleaded with the *Biryonim* [to submit to Vespasian's demand]; it was to no avail. He then sent for his disciples, R. Eliczer and R. Yehoshua.

"My sons," he said to them, "Take me out of here. Make a coffin for me to lie in."

R. Eliczer carried the head of the coffin and R. Yehoshua carried the foot. As the sun set they reached the gates of Yerushalayim. "Who is this?" the [*Biryonim*] gatekeepers inquired.

"A dead man," they replied. "Don't you know that a corpse may not be left overnight in Yerushalayim?"

"If it's a dead man," the gatekeepers said, "go ahead."

They carried him to Vespasian. When they opened the coffin, R. Yochanan stood up before him.

"Are you Rabbi Yochanan b. Zakkai?" Vespasian inquired, "Ask me a favor, and I will grant it."

[Seeing that Yerushalayim was lost, R. Yochanan wanted to preserve the spiritual heritage of the Jewish people,] so he requested, "Give me the city of Yavneh where I will teach my disciples, establish a prayer house and perform all the commandments of the Torah. [At least the Torah will survive and continue to flourish]." "Go," replied Vespasian, "and do whatever you want to do."

<sup>46</sup> R. Yochanan b. Zakkai's request to set up a yeshiva in Yavneh was of crucial importance. It was the instrument through which G-d ensured the continued existence of the Jewish people during the long exile.

Said R. Yochanan, "With your permission, I will tell you something."

"Speak," Vespasian answered.

Said R. Yochanan: "You are about to become the emperor of Rome."

"How do you know that?" Vespasian asked.

R. Yochanan replied: "We have a tradition that the Temple will not fall into the hands of a commoner, but to a king, for it says, *Lebanon will fall by a mighty one (adir)*" (*Yeshayahu* 10:34), [*adir* refers specifically to a king, and *Lebanon* refers to the Beis Hamikdash].

Three days later, messengers arrived from Rome reporting that the emperor had died, and that Vespasian had been elected as his successor.

A Roman ballista<sup>47</sup> was brought up against the wall of Yerushalayim. Boards of cedar were inserted into the ballista, and hurled against the wall until it was breached. Then they placed a swine's head in the ballista, hurling it toward the sacrifices on the altar.

R. Yochanan b. Zakkai fearfully awaited the report that Yerushalayim was conquered, just as Eli sat and waited [to hear what had happened to the Ark in the battle against the Philistines], as it says, *Eli was seated in a chair next to the road, looking out, for his heart was fearful about the Ark of G-d* (1 *Shmuel* 4:13). When R. Yochanan b. Zakkai heard that Yerushalayim was destroyed and the Beis Hamikdash burned, he and his disciples tore their clothes, crying and mourning tearfully.

It says, *Open your doors, O Lebanon, and let fire consume your cedars!* (*Zachariah* 11:1).

*Open your doors, O Lebanon* refers to the Beis Hamikdash.

*And let fire consume your cedars* refers to the kohanim in the Beis Hamikdash who threw their keys toward heaven, saying: "Master of the universe! Here are Your keys which You entrusted to us. Since we were not privileged to be faithful agents to do the King's work

<sup>47</sup> An engine used by the Romans for hurling missiles.

and to eat at the King's table, we herewith return the keys to you." Then the kohanim jumped from the roof and fell into the flames.

Avraham, Yitzhak, Yaakov, and the twelve tribes wept, crying mournfully, *Wail, O cypress for the cedar has fallen, for the mighty ones have been vanquished; wail, O oaks of Bashan, because the impregnable forest has come down* (*Zachariah* 11:2).

*Wail, O cypress for the cedar has fallen* refers to the Beis Hamikdash.

*For the mighty ones have been vanquished* refers to Yisrael.

*Wail, O oaks of Bashan* refers to Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam. *Because the impregnable forest has come down* refers to the Holy of Holies.

*There is a sound of shepherds' wailings, for their power has been vanquished* (*Zachariah* 11:3) refers to David and Shlomo, his son.

*There is a sound of young lions' roars, for the heights of the Jordan have been vanquished* (*Zachariah* 11:3) refers to Elyahu and Elisha.

## DIFFERENCES AMONG MEN

**6.** A person is different than his neighbor in three ways: in voice, taste, and appearance.

G-d gave each person a different voice. Had He had not done so there would be a great deal of immorality in the world. A man would leave his house [at night], and another man would enter his home and take his wife. [For if all men had the same voice, she would not realize it was not her husband]. Therefore, G-d gave each person his own distinctive voice.

G-d gave each person a taste different from that of his neighbor. Had he not done so, people would envy each other [for everyone would hanker for the same thing]. Therefore G-d gave each person his own taste which differs from his neighbor's taste.

G-d made each person look different from anyone else. Had he not done so, women would not recognize their husbands, and men would not recognize their wives. Therefore, G-d made them look different.



Rosh Hashana (ו) (6)

**Misnaf:** The Mishnah discusses the law of shofar blowing when Rosh Hashanah occurs on the Sabbath: When the Yom Tov of Rosh Hashanah fell on the Sabbath, but not in the Temple, they would blow the shofar in the Temple, but not in the provinces. After the Second Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai instituted that they should blow the shofar wherever there is a Beis Din. R' Elazar said: אמר רבי אלעזר - אמרו לו - They said to him: אחר יבנה ואחר - אמרו לו - אמרו לו - He instituted it both for Yavneh and for any other place in which there is a Beis Din. The Mishnah continues:

And in this additional respect was Jerusalem superior to Yavneh: and could hear, and was near, and could come to Jerusalem, would blow the shofar on the Sabbath; whereas in Yavneh, they would blow only in the Beis Din itself.

סנהדרין 87: סנהדרין

The Gemara returns to the subject of choosing a court: The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: "צדק צדק תרדף", - The verse states: *RIGHTEOUSNESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS, SHALL YOU PURSUE.* This teaches that one should GO AFTER THE SAGES TO the place of THE ACADEMY to have his case adjudicated, - for example, AFTER R' ELIEZER TO LOD, AFTER RABBAN YOCHANAN BEN ZAKKAI TO BEROR CHAYIL, AFTER R' YEHOSHUA TO PEK'IN, AFTER RABBAN GAMLIEL TO YAVNEH, AFTER R' AKIVA TO BNEI BRAK, AFTER R' MASYA TO ROME, AFTER R' CHANANYA BEN TERADYON TO SICHNI, AFTER R' YOSE TO TZIPPORI, AFTER R' YEHUDAH BEN BESEIRAH TO NETZIVIN, AFTER R' YEHOSHUA TO THE DIASPORA in Pumbedra.

Rosh Hashana (ו) (10)

The Gemara continues its citation of R' Yochanan's original statement: And correspondingly, the Great Sanhedrin was exiled the following ten exiles at the Second Destruction, as is known from Oral Tradition: First they went from the Chamber of Hewn Stone to a store on the Temple Mount, then from that store to Jerusalem proper, then from Jerusalem to Yavneh, then from Yavneh to Usha, then from Usha back to Yavneh, then from Yavneh to Usha once again, then from Usha to Shefar'am, then from Shefar'am to Beis Shearim, and finally from Beis Shearim to Tzippori, and from Tzippori to Tiberias. And Tiberias was the deepest exile of them all, as it is stated: You will sink down; from the ground will you speak; downtrodden from the dust will your speech be.

