

It's Hard to be a Saint in the City

Source Sheet by Joshua Mikutis

Intermingling

Sotah 49b

It is understood from both the mishna and the *baraita* that it is prohibited to learn Greek. The Gemara raises a question: **Is that so? But didn't Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi say: In Eretz Yisrael, why** should people speak **the tongue of Syriac [*Sursi*]**, the Aramaic commonly spoken in Eretz Yisrael? **Rather**, they should speak **either in the sacred tongue, Hebrew, or in the beautiful tongue of Greek. And Rav Yosef** similarly **said: In Babylonia, why** should they speak in **the vernacular tongue of Aramaic? Rather**, they should speak **either in the sacred tongue, Hebrew, or in the tongue of Persian**, used by the authorities. The Gemara answers that there is a difference: **The Greek tongue is discrete and Greek wisdom is discrete**, and the Sages prohibited the latter but not the former.

סוטה מ"ט ב

איני והאמר רבי בא"י לשון סורסי
למה אלא אי לשון הקודש אי לשון
יוונית ואמר רב יוסף בבבל לשון ארמי
למה אלא או לשון הקודש או לשון
פרסי לשון יוונית לחוד וחכמת יוונית
לחוד

Genesis 11:4-8

(4) And they said, "Come, let us build us a city, and a tower with its top in the sky, to make a name for ourselves; else we shall be scattered all over the world." (5) The LORD came down to look at the city and tower that man had built, (6) and the LORD said, "If, as one people with one language for all, this is how they have

בראשית י"א:ד'-ה'

(ד) ויאמרו הבה | נבנה-לנו עיר ומגדל
וראשו בשמים ונעשה-לנו שם פן-נפוז
על-פני כל-הארץ: (ה) וירד יהוה לראת
את-העיר ואת-המגדל אשר בנו בני
האדם: (ו) ויאמר יהוה הן עם אחד ושפה
אחת לכלם וזה החלם לעשות ועתה

begun to act, then nothing that they may propose to do will be out of their reach. (7) Let us, then, go down and confound their speech there, so that they shall not understand one another's speech." (8) Thus the LORD scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

לֹא־יִבְצֹר מֵהֶם כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִזְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת: (ז)
הִבֵּה גִרְדָּה וְנִבְלָה נֶשֶׁם שְׂפָתָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא
יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שְׂפַת רֵעֵהוּ: (ח) וַיִּפְץ יְהוָה
אֹתָם מִשָּׁם עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ וַיַּחְדְּלוּ
לְבַנֵּת הָעִיר:

Shabbat 56b

Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: When Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, she brought to him a thousand musical instruments and said to him: This is the way we do it for this idolatry, and this is the way we do it for that idolatry, and he did not protest that talk. Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: When Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, the angel Gabriel descended from heaven and implanted a reed into the sea, and a sandbar grew around it, growing larger each year, and upon it the great city of Rome was built, which became God's instrument to punish Israel.

שבת נ"ו ב

אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל בשעה שנשא שלמה את בת פרעה הכניסה לו אלף מיני זמר ואמרה לו כך עושין לעבודה זרה פלונית וכך עושים לעבודה זרה פלונית ולא מיחה בה אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל בשעה שנשא שלמה את בת פרעה ירד גבריאל ונעץ קנה בים ועלה בו שירטון ועליו נבנה כרך גדול [של רומי]

Diversity of Thought

Bava Kamma 38a

The Sages taught the following story in the context of the aforementioned *halakha*: **And the Roman kingdom once sent two military officials [sardeyotos] to the Sages of Israel, and ordered them in the name of the king: Teach us your Torah.** The officials read the Torah, **and repeated it, and repeated it again, reading it for the third time. At the time of their departure, they said to the Sages: We have examined your entire Torah and it is true, except for this one matter that you state, i.e., that**

בבא קמא ל"ח א

ת"ר וכבר שלחה מלכות רומי שני סרדיוטות אצל חכמי ישראל למדונו תורתכם קראו ושנו ושלשו בשעת פטירתן אמרו להם דקדקנו בכל תורתכם ואמת הוא חוץ מדבר זה שאתם אומרים שור של ישראל שנגח שור של כנעני פטור של כנעני שנגח שור של ישראל בין תם בין מועד משלם נזק שלם ממ"נ אי רעהו דוקא אפילו דכנעני כי נגח דישאל ליפטר ואי רעהו לאו דוקא

with regard to **an ox of a Jew that gored the ox of a gentile**, the owner is **exempt** from liability, whereas with regard to the **ox of a gentile that gored the ox of a Jew, whether** it was **innocuous or forewarned**, the owner **pays the full** cost of the **damage**. The officials' reasoning was that this *halakha* is difficult **whichever way you** look at it. **If** the phrase **“of another”** is meant in a **precise** manner, that the owners of both oxen must both be Jewish, then **even when** the **ox of a gentile gores the ox of a Jew** the owner of the ox **should be exempt** from liability. **And if** the phrase **“of another”** is **not** meant in a **precise** manner, and the oxen of all are included, then **even when** the **ox of a Jew gores the ox of a gentile** the owner **should be liable**. They added: **But we will not inform this matter to the kingdom;** having acknowledged that the entire Torah is true, we will not reveal this ruling, as it will displease the kingdom.

אפילו דישראל כי נגח דכנעני לחייב
ודבר זה אין אנו מודיעים אותו למלכות

Menachot 99b

Ben Dama, son of Rabbi Yishmael's sister, asked Rabbi Yishmael: In the case of one **such as I, who has learned the entire Torah, what is the *halakha* with regard to studying Greek wisdom?** Rabbi Yishmael **recited this verse about him: “This Torah scroll shall not depart from your mouth, and you shall contemplate in it day and night.” Go and search for an hour that is neither part of the day nor part of the night, and learn Greek wisdom in it.**

מנחות צ"ט ב

שאל בן דמה בן אחותו של ר' ישמעאל את ר' ישמעאל כגון אני שלמדתי כל התורה כולה מהו ללמוד חכמת יונית קרא עליו המקרא הזה לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיו והגית בו יומם ולילה צא ובדוק שעה שאינה לא מן היום ולא מן הלילה ולמוד בה חכמת יונית

Shabbat 33b

In this *baraita* Rabbi Yehuda is described as head of the speakers in every place. The Gemara asks: **And why did they call him head of the speakers in every place?** The Gemara relates that this

שבת ל"ג ב

ואמאי קרו ליה ראש המדברים בכל מקום דיתבי רבי יהודה ורבי יוסי ורבי שמעון ויתבי יהודה בן גרים גביהו פתח רבי יהודה ואמר כמה נאים מעשיהן של

resulted due to an incident that took place **when Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Yosei and Rabbi Shimon were sitting, and Yehuda, son of converts, sat beside them. Rabbi Yehuda opened and said: How pleasant are the actions of this nation, the Romans, as they established marketplaces, established bridges, and established bathhouses. Rabbi Yosei was silent. Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai responded and said: Everything that they established, they established only for their own purposes. They established marketplaces, to place prostitutes in them; bathhouses, to pamper themselves; and bridges, to collect taxes from all who pass over them. Yehuda, son of converts, went and related their statements to his household, and those statements continued to spread until they were heard by the monarchy. They ruled and said: Yehuda, who elevated the Roman regime, shall be elevated and appointed as head of the Sages, the head of the speakers in every place. Yosei, who remained silent, shall be exiled from his home in Judea as punishment, and sent to the city of Tzipori in the Galilee. And Shimon, who denounced the government, shall be killed.**

אומה זו תקנו שווקים תקנו גשרים תקנו מרחצאות רבי יוסי שתק נענה רבי שמעון בן יוחאי ואמר כל מה שתקנו לא תקנו אלא לצורך עצמן תקנו שווקין להושיב בהן זונות מרחצאות לעדן בהן עצמן גשרים ליטול מהן מכס הלך יהודה בן גרים וסיפר דבריהם ונשמעו למלכות אמרו יהודה שעילה יתעלה יוסי ששתק יגלה לציפורי שמעון שגינה יהרג

Access? or too much access?

Sanhedrin 17b

And it is taught in a *baraita*: A Torah scholar is not permitted to reside in any city that does not have these ten things: A court that has the authority to flog and punish transgressors; and a charity fund for which monies are collected by two people and distributed by three, as required by *halakha*. This leads to a requirement for another three people in the city. And a synagogue;

סנהדרין י"ז ב

ותניא כל עיר שאין בה עשרה דברים הללו אין תלמיד חכם רשאי לדור בתוכה בית דין מכין ועונשין וקופה של צדקה נגבית בשנים ומתחלקת בשלשה ובית הכנסת ובית המרחץ וביהכ"ס רופא ואומן ולבלר (וטבח) ומלמד תינוקות משום ר' עקיבא אמרו אף מיני פירא מפני שמיני פירא מאירין את העינים:

and a bathhouse; and a public bathroom; a doctor; and a bloodletter; and a scribe [velavlar] to write sacred scrolls and necessary documents; and a ritual slaughterer; and a teacher of young children. With these additional requirements there are a minimum of 120 men who must be residents of the city. **They said in the name of Rabbi Akiva:** The city must **also have varieties of fruit, because varieties of fruit illuminate the eyes.**

Mishneh Torah, Human Dispositions 6:1

(1) It is a natural tendency of man to be influenced in his ideas and conduct by his fellows and associates, and to follow the usage of the people of his state. Because thereof, it is necessary for man to be in the company of the righteous, and to sit near the wise, in order to learn from their conduct, and to distance himself from the evil-doers who follow the path of darkness, in order not to learn from their conduct; for of such Solomon said: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall smart for it" (Prov. 13.20); and it is also said: "Happy is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the wicked etc. (Ps. 1.1.). Likewise, if a man be in a state where evil customs prevail and where the people are not following the righteous ways, he should go to a place where the inhabitants are righteous and follow the way of the good. If all the states known to him, or of which intelligence reached him, be followers of a path which is not good, even as it is in our own times, or if he be unable to migrate to a state whose rules of conduct are good, either on account of military operations or on account of sickness, he should isolate himself and live in seclusion, even as it is said on the subject: "Let him sit alone and keep silence" (Lam. 3.28). And, if

משנה תורה, הלכות דעות ו' א'

(א) דָּרָךְ בְּרִיתוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם לִהְיוֹת נִמְשָׁךְ בְּדַעוֹתָיו וּבְמַעֲשָׂיו אַחַר רְעֵיו וְחֻבְרָיו וְנוֹהֵג בְּמִנְהַג אַנְשֵׁי מְדִינָתוֹ. לְפִיכֹךְ צָרִיךְ אָדָם לְהִתְחַבֵּר לְצַדִּיקִים וְלִישֵׁב אֲצֵל הַחֲכָמִים תָּמִיד כְּדֵי שִׁילְמַד מִמַּעֲשֵׂיהֶם. וְיִתְרַחֵק מִן הָרָשָׁעִים הַהוֹלְכִים בַּחֲשֵׁךְ כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא יִלְמַד מִמַּעֲשֵׂיהֶם. הוּא שֶׁשָּׁלְמָה אוֹמֵר (מְשָׁלִי יג כ) "הוֹלֵךְ אֶת חֲכָמִים יִחְכֵּם וְרָעָה כְּסִילִים יִרְעֶה". וְאוֹמֵר אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ וְגו'. וְכֵן אִם הָיָה בְּמְדִינָה שֶׁמִּנְהַגוֹתֶיהָ רָעִים וְאִין אַנְשֵׁי הוֹלְכִים בְּדָרָךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמָקוֹם שֶׁאֲנָשֵׁי צַדִּיקִים וְנוֹהֲגִים בְּדָרָךְ טוֹבִים. וְאִם הָיוּ כָּל הַמְּדִינוֹת שֶׁהוּא יוֹדֵעַם וְשׁוֹמֵעַ שְׂמוֹעָתָן נוֹהֲגִים בְּדָרָךְ לֹא טוֹבָה כְּמוֹ זְמַנְנוּ. אוֹ שֶׁאִינוּ יְכוּלִים לְלַכֵּת לְמְדִינָה שֶׁמִּנְהַגוֹתֶיהָ טוֹבִים מִפְּנֵי הַגְּיוֹסוֹת אוֹ מִפְּנֵי הַחֲלִי יִישֵׁב לְבַדּוֹ יְחִידִי כְּעֶנְיָן שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר (איכה ג כח) "יִישֵׁב בְּדָד וַיִּדָּם". וְאִם הָיוּ רָעִים וְחֲטָאִים שֶׁאִין מְנַיְחִים אוֹתוֹ לִישֵׁב בְּמְדִינָה אֲלֵא אִם כֵּן נִתְעַרַּב עִמָּהֶן וְנוֹהֵג בְּמִנְהַגֵּם הָרַע יֵצֵא לְמַעֲרוֹת וְלַחֲרוֹתִים וְלַמְדַּבְּרוֹת. וְאֵל יִנְהִיג עֲצָמוֹ בְּדָרָךְ חֲטָאִים כְּעֶנְיָן שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר (ירמיה ט א) "מִי יִתְנַנְּנִי בַּמְדַּבֵּר מְלוֹן אֲרָחִים":

the inhabitants of his state be evildoers and sinners, who deny him the right of residence in the state unless he become assimilated with them, and follows their evil conduct, he should go forth and dwell in caves, or cliffs, or deserts, but not accustom himself in the way of the sinners, even as it is said on the subject: "Oh that I were in the wilderness,¹ in a lodging place of wayfaring men" (Jer. 9.1.).

Community

"To the people of East Tremont, East Tremont was family. In its bricks were generations... East Tremont were friends— real friends, not just acquaintances you happened to meet because they took their children to the same playground to which you took your children... but friends whom you had grown up with and were growing to grow old with, boys and girls—turned men and women— who knew and understood you and whose you knew and understood. Says Mrs. Helen Lazarcheck: "Everyone seemed to help one another. If there was trouble, everyone would do something for you if they could. They were always coming and sharing what they had." East Tremont was a feeling of being known... East Tremont was a sense of continuity, of warmth, or the security that comes—and only comes—with a sense of belonging... In East Tremont, the Yiddishist and Hebraist each had his own following with a supporting system of cultural clubs, bookstores, debating societies, etc. The neighborhood's seven synagogues were constantly competing for members and prestige." (Robert Moses, *The Power Broker*, 853-854).

Anonymity

Moed Katan 17a

The Gemara asks: **What is the reason** that he was accepted there? The Gemara answers: Even though he sinned, **he still acted in accordance with** the opinion of **Rabbi Ilai, as it is taught** in a *baraita*: **Rabbi Ilai says: If a person sees that his evil inclination is gaining control over him** and he cannot overcome it, then **he should go to a place where he is not known. He should wear black, and**

מועד קטן י"ז א

מ"ט דעבד כר' אילעאי דתניא ר' אילעאי אומר אם רואה אדם שיצרו מתגבר עליו ילך למקום שאין מכירין אותו וילבש שחורים ויתעטף שחורים ויעשה מה שלבו חפץ ואל יחלל שם שמים בפרהסיא

he should wrap his head in black, as if he were a mourner. Perhaps these changes will influence him, so that he not sin. Even if these actions do not help, **he should** at least **do as his heart desires** in private **and not desecrate the name of Heaven in public**. Although this person had sinned, he did so in private and in a manner that did not publicly desecrate God's name, and therefore it was fitting that he be given an honorable burial.



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