

Tall Tales and Pale Ales – A Late Night Talmud Study Session

I. R' Wendy Amsellem – Babylonian Talmud Tractate Kiddushin 81a-81b

Palimo was accustomed to saying every day, “An arrow in Satan's eyes!” One day it was Yom Kippur eve and [Satan] disguised himself as a poor man and went and came to [Palimo's] door. They brought out bread to him. [Satan] said, “On a day like today, everyone is inside and I should be outside?” They brought him in and gave him bread. [Satan] said, “On a day like today, everyone is at the table and I should be alone?” They brought him in and seated him at the table. As he sat, his body was covered with scabs and ulcers, and he did repulsive things with them. [Palimo] said, “Sit properly.” [Satan] said, “Give me a cup.” They gave him a cup. He coughed and spat his phlegm into it. They scolded him. [Satan] sank down and died. They heard people saying, “Palimo has killed a man, Palimo has killed a man!” [Palimo] ran and hid himself in an outhouse. [Satan] went after him. He fell before him. When [Satan] saw that [Palimo] was suffering, he revealed himself. [Satan] said, “Why did you say this?” [Palimo] said, “Instead, what should I say?” [Satan] said, “You should say, “May God rebuke Satan.”

פלימו הוה רגיל למימר כל יומא: גירא בעיניה דשטן. יומא חד מעלי יומא דכיפורי הוה, אידמי ליה כעניא, אתא קרא אבבא, אפיקו ליה ריפתא, אמר ליה: יומא כי האידנא כולי עלמא גואי, ואנא אבראי? עייליה וקריבו ליה ריפתא. אמר ליה: יומא כי האידנא כולי עלמא אתכא, ואנא לחודאי? אתיוהו אותבוהו אתכא. הוה יתיב מלא נפשיה שיחנא וכיבי עליה, והוה קעביד ביה מילי דמאיס, א"ל תיב שפיר. אמר ליה: הבו לי כסא, יהבו ליה כסא, אכמר שדא ביה כיוח, נחרו ביה, שקא ומית. שמעו דהוה קאמרי: פלימו קטל גברא! פלימו קטל גברא! ערק וטשא נפשיה בבית הכסא, אזיל בתריה נפל קמיה. כי דחזייה דהוה מצטער גלי ליה נפשיה, אמר ליה: מאי טעמא אמרת הכי? ואלא היכי אימא? אמר ליה, לימא מר: רחמנא נגער ביה בשטן. רבי חייא בר אשי הוה רגיל כל עידן דהוה נפל.

II. Jacqueline Nichols - Babylonian Talmud Tractate Gittin 68a-b

Rabbi Yoḥanan says: There were three hundred types of demons in a place named Shihin, but I do not know what the form or nature of a demon itself is. The Master said: Here they interpreted it: Male demons and female demons.

The Gemara asks: Why was it necessary for Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, to have male demons and female demons? The Gemara answers: As it is written with regard to the building of the Temple: “For the house, when it was being built, was built of stone made ready at the quarry; and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was being built” (I Kings 6:7).

Solomon said to the sages: How shall I make it so that the stone will be precisely cut without using iron? They said to him: There is a creature called a shamir that can cut the stones, which Moses brought and used to cut the stones of the ephod. Solomon said to them: Where is it found? They said to him: Bring a male demon and a female demon and torment them together. It is possible that they know where, and due to the suffering they will reveal the place to you. Solomon brought a male demon and a female demon and tormented them together, and they said: We do not know where to find the shamir. Perhaps Ashmedai, king of the demons, knows. Solomon said to them: Where is Ashmedai? They said to him: He is on such-and-such a mountain. He has dug a pit for himself there, and filled it with water, and covered it with a rock, and sealed it with his seal. And every day he ascends to Heaven and studies in the heavenly study hall and he descends to the earth and studies in the earthly study hall. And he comes and checks his seal to ensure that nobody has entered his pit, and then he uncovers it and drinks from the water in the pit. And then he covers it and seals it again and goes. Solomon sent for Benayahu, son of Jehoiada, a member of the royal entourage, and gave him a chain onto which a sacred name of God was carved, and a ring onto which a sacred name of God was carved, and fleeces of wool and wineskins of wine. What did Benayahu do? He went and dug a pit lower down the mountain, below the pit dug by Ashmedai, drained the water, and plugged it with the fleeces of wool so that Ashmedai's pit was emptied. And he dug a pit higher up the mountain, above Ashmedai's pit. And he poured the wine into it so that the wine filled Ashmedai's pit, and he plugged the lower and upper pits that he dug. He climbed up and sat in a tree. When Ashmedai came he checked his seal, opened the pit, and found it to be filled with wine. He said that it is written: “Wine is a mocker,

אמר רבי יוחנן שלש מאות מיני שדים היו בשיחין ושידה עצמה איני יודע מה היא אמר מר הכא תרגימו שידא ושידתין שידה ושידתין

למאי איבעי ליה דכתיב (מלכים א' ו', ז) והבית בהבנותו אבן שלמה מסע נבנה וגו'

אמר להו לרבנן היכי אעביד אמרו ליה איכא שמירא דאייתי משה לאבני אפוד אמר להו היכא אישתכח אמרו ליה אייתי שידה ושידתין כבשינהו אהדדי אפשר דידעי ומגלו לך אייתי שידה ושידתין כבשינהו אהדדי אמרי אנן לא ידעינן דילמא אשמדאי מלכא דשידי ידע אמר להו היכא אייתי אמרי ליה אייתי בטורא פלן כריא ליה בירא ומליא ליה מיא ומיכסיא בטינרא וחתמיה בגושפנקיה וכל יומא סליק לרקיע וגמר מתיבתא דרקיעא ונחית לארעא וגמר מתיבתא דארעא ואתי סיר ליה לגושפנקיה ומגלי ליה ושתי ומכסי ליה וחתים ליה ואזיל שדריה לבניהו בן יהודע יחב ליה שושילתא דחקיק עלה שם ועזקתא דחקיק עלה שם וגבבי דעמרא וזיקי דחמרא אזל כרא בירא מתתאי ושפינהו למיא וסתמינהו בגבבי דעמרא וכרא בירא מעילאי ושפכינהו

strong drink is riotous; and whosoever wallows in it is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1), and it is written: "Harlotry, wine, and new wine take away the heart" (Hosea 4:11). He concluded: I will not drink this wine. Eventually, when he became thirsty, he was unable to resist the wine and he drank, became intoxicated, and fell asleep. Benayahu descended from the tree, came, and threw the chain around Ashmedai, and enclosed him within it. When Ashmedai awoke he struggled to remove the chain. Benayahu said to him: The name of your Master is upon you, the name of your Master is upon you, do not tear the chain. God's name is written on this chain, and it is forbidden to destroy it. When Benayahu took Ashmedai and came to Jerusalem he reached a palm tree and Ashmedai rubbed against it and knocked it down. He reached a house and knocked it down. He reached a small shack [kuva] belonging to a certain widow. This widow emerged, and she begged him not to knock down the house. He bent his body away from her, to the other side, and broke one of his bones. He said: This is as it is written: "Soft speech can break a bone" (Proverbs 25:15). Ashmedai saw a blind man who was lost on the road and he brought him to the correct road. He saw a drunk who was lost on the road and he brought him to the correct road. He saw the joy of a wedding celebration in which they were celebrating, and he cried. He heard a certain man say to a shoemaker [ushkafa]: Make me shoes that will last for seven years, and he laughed. He saw a certain sorcerer performing magic, and he laughed. When Ashmedai arrived there, in Jerusalem, they did not bring him before Solomon until three days had passed. On the first day he said to them: Why doesn't the king want me to come to him? They said to him: He drank too much and was overcome by drink. Ashmedai took a brick and placed it on top of another brick. The servants came and told Solomon what he had done. Solomon interpreted the action and said to them: This is what he said to you through this allusion: Return and give the king more to drink. The following day Ashmedai said to them: And why doesn't the king want me to come to him? They said to him: He ate too much and was overcome by food. Ashmedai took the brick off the other brick and placed it on the ground. The servants came and told Solomon what Ashmedai had done. He interpreted Ashmedai's actions and said to them: This is what he said to you through this allusion: Take his food away from him. At the end of three days Ashmedai came before Solomon. Ashmedai took a reed and measured four cubits [garmidei], and threw it before him. He said to Solomon: See, when that man, Solomon, dies, he will have nothing in this world except the four cubits of his grave. Now you have conquered the entire world and yet you are not satisfied until you also conquer me? Solomon said to him: I need nothing from you. I want to build the Temple and I need the shamir for this. Ashmedai said to him: The shamir was not given to me, but it was given to the angelic minister of the sea. And he gives it only to the wild rooster, also known as the dukhifat or the hoopoe, whom he trusts by the force of his oath to return it. And what does the wild rooster do with it? He brings it to mountains that are not fit for habitation, and he places the shamir on the craggy rock and the mountain splits. And he takes and brings seeds of trees, throws them there, and it becomes fit for habitation. And this is why we interpret the word dukhifat as a cutter of mountains [naggar tura], i.e., the Aramaic translation of the word dukhifat in the Bible is naggar tura, cutter of mountains. They investigated and found the nest of a wild rooster in which there were chicks, and he covered its nest with translucent glass. When the rooster came it wanted to enter the nest but was unable to do so. It went and brought the shamir and placed it on top to crack the glass. Solomon's servant threw a clump of dirt at the rooster and the rooster knocked over the shamir. The man took it and the wild rooster went and strangled itself over the fact that it had not kept its oath, by not returning the shamir. Later, Benayahu said to Ashmedai: What is the reason that when you saw that blind man who was lost on the road you brought him to the correct road? Ashmedai said to him: They proclaim about him in heaven that he is a completely righteous man, and anyone who does good for his soul shall merit to enter the World-to-Come. Then Benayahu asked: And what is the reason that when you saw the drunk man who was lost on the road you brought him to the correct road? Ashmedai said to him: They proclaim about him in heaven that he is a completely wicked man. And I did good

לחמרא וטמיניהו סליק יתיב באילנא כי אתא סייריה לגושפנא גלייה אשכחיה חמרא אמר כתיב (משלי כ, א) לץ היין הומה שכר וכל שוגה בו לא יחכם וכתיב (הושע ד, יא) זנות ויין ותירוש יקה לב לא אישתי כי צחי לא סגיא ליה אישתי ריה וגנא נחית אתא שדא ביה שושילתא סתמיה כי אתער הוה קא מיפרזל א"ל שמא דמרך עלך שמא דמרך עלך כי נקיט ליה ואתי מטא דיקלא חף ביה שדייה מטא לביתא שדייה מטא גבי כובא דההיא ארמלתא נפקא

איחננא ליה כפא לקומתיה מיניה איתבר ביה גרמא אמר היינו דכתיב (משלי כה, טו) ולשון רכה תשבר גרם חזא סמיה דהוה קא טעי באורחא אסקיה לאורחיה חזא רויא דהוה קא טעי באורחא אסקיה לאורחיה חזא חדוותא דהוה קמחדי לה בכה שמעיה להווא גברא דהוה קאמר לאושכפא עביד לי מסאני לשב שני אחיך חזא הווא קסמא דהוה קסים אחיך כי מטא להתם לא עייליה לגביה דשלמה עד תלתא יומי יומא קמא אמר להו אמאי לא קא בעי לי מלכא לגביה א"ל אנסיה מישתי שקל לבינתא אותיב אחרתה אתו אמרו ליה לשלמה אמר להו הכי אמר לכו הדור אשקויה למחר אמר להו ואמאי לא קא בעי לי מלכא לגביה אמרו ליה אנסיה מיכלא שקל לבינתא מחברתה אותבה אארעא אתו אמרו ליה לשלמה אמר להו הכי אמר לכו נגידו מיניה מיכיליה [לסוף] תלתא יומי עייל לקמיה שקל קניא ומשח ארבעה גרמידי ושדא קמיה א"ל מכדי כי מיית הווא גברא לית ליה בהדין עלמא אלא ד' גרמידי השתא כבשתיה לכולי עלמא ולא שבעת עד דכבשת נמי לדידי א"ל לא קא בעינא מינך מידי בעינא דאיבנייה לבית המקדש וקא מיבעי לי שמירא א"ל לדידי לא מסיר לי לשרא דימא מסיר ליה ולא יהיב ליה אלא לתרגולא ברא דמהימן ליה אשבועתיה ומאי עבד ביה ממטי ליה לטורי דלית בהו ישוב ומנח לה אישנא דטורא ופקע טורא ומנקיט מייתי ביזורי מאילני ושדי התם והווי ישוב והיינו דמתרגמינן נגר טורא בדקו קינא דתרגולא ברא דאית ליה בני וחפוייה לקיניה זוגיתא חירתי כי אתא בעי למיעל ולא מצי אזל אייתי שמירא ואותביה עלויה רמא ביה קלא שדייה שקליה אזל חנק נפשיה אשבועתיה אמר ליה בניהו מאי טעמא כי חזיתיה להווא

for his soul so that he will consume his reward in this world and not have any reward in the World-to-Come. Benayahu continued and asked him: What is the reason that when you saw that joy of the wedding you cried? Ashmedai said to him: I knew that this man will die within thirty days. And his wife is required to wait for the yavam, the husband's brother, who is a minor, to reach the age of thirteen years, the age of majority, so that he can release her through ḥalitza, the ritual through which the yavam frees the yevama of her levirate bonds. In addition, he asked: What is the reason that when you heard that man say to a shoemaker: Make me shoes that will last for seven years, you laughed? Ashmedai said to him: That man does not have seven days to live; does he need shoes that will last for seven years? Benayahu then asked: What is the reason that when you saw that sorcerer performing magic you laughed? Ashmedai said to him: Because he was sitting on the king's treasury [bei gaza]. Let him use his magic to know what there is buried underneath him. Solomon kept Ashmedai with him until he completed building the Temple. One day he stood with Ashmedai alone. He said to Ashmedai: It is written: "For him like the lofty horns of the wild ox" (Numbers 24:8), and the Sages say in explanation of the verse: "Like the lofty horns"; these are the ministering angels. "The wild ox"; these are the demons. In what way are you greater than us? Why does the verse praise your abilities and powers over those of human beings? Ashmedai said to him: Take the chain engraved with God's name off me and give me your ring with God's name engraved on it, and I will show you my strength. Solomon took the chain off him and he gave him his ring. Ashmedai swallowed the ring and grew until he placed one wing in the heaven and one wing on the earth. He threw Solomon a distance of four hundred parasangs. With regard to that moment Solomon said: "What profit is there for a person through all of his toil under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:3). With Solomon deposed from the throne, Ashmedai took his place. With regard to the verse: "And this was my portion from all of my toil" (Ecclesiastes 2:10), the Gemara asks: What is the meaning of the expression: "And this"? This expression is always an allusion to an item that is actually in his hand or can be shown. Rav and Shmuel disagree with regard to the meaning of this phrase. One said: This is referring to Solomon's staff that remained in his hand. And one said: This is referring to his cloak. Solomon circulated from door to door collecting charity, and wherever he arrived he would say: "I, Ecclesiastes, was king over Israel in Jerusalem" (Ecclesiastes 1:12). When he finally arrived at the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem the sages said: Now, an imbecile does not fixate on one matter all of the time, so what is this matter? Is this man perhaps telling the truth that he is Solomon? The sages said to Benayahu: Does the king require you to be with him? Benayahu said to them: No. They sent to the queens and asked: Does the king come to be with you? The queens sent a response to them: Yes, he comes. They sent a request to the queens: Check his feet to see if they are human feet. The queens sent a response to the sages: He always comes in socks [bemokei], and it is not possible to see his feet. The queens continued discussing the king's behavior: And he demands of them, i.e., the queens, to engage in sexual intercourse when they are menstruating. And he also demands that Bathsheba his mother engage in sexual intercourse with him. Once the Sanhedrin heard this they understood that this was an imposter and not actually Solomon. They brought Solomon, gave him a ring and the chain on which the name of God was carved. When Solomon entered, Ashmedai saw him and fled. The Gemara adds: And even so, although Ashmedai fled, Solomon was fearful of him, and this is as it is written: "Behold the bed of Solomon surrounded by sixty strong men from the warriors of Israel. All of them holding swords and trained in war, each man with his sword on his thigh from fear in the nights" (Song of Songs 3:7-8). Rav and Shmuel disagreed with regard to this story of Solomon. One said: He was a king and afterward he became a commoner, and never returned to his position as king. And one said: He was a king, and became a commoner, and a king, as ultimately he returned to his throne and defeated Ashmedai.

סמיה דהוה קא טעי באורחא אסיקתיה לאורחיה אמר ליה מכרזי עליה ברקיעא דצדיק גמור הוא ומאן דעבד ליה ניחא נפשיה זכי לעלמא דאתי ומאי טעמא כי חזיתיה להווא רויא דקטעי באורחא אסיקתיה לאורחיה א"ל מכרזי עליה ברקיעא דרשע גמור הוא ועבדי ליה ניחא נפשיה כי היכי דליכיליה לעלמא מאי טעמא כי חזיתיה להווא חדוותא בכית אמר ליה בעי מימת גברא בגו תלתין יומין ובעיא מינטר ליבם קטן תליסרי שנין מאי טעמא כי שמעתיה להווא גברא דאמר ליה לאושכפא עביד לי מסאני לשב שנין אחיכת אמר ליה ההוא שבעה יומי לית ליה מסאני לשב שנין בעי מ"ט כי חזיתיה להווא קסמא דהוה קסים אחיכת אמר ליה דהוה יתיב אבי גזא דמלכא לקסום מאי דאיכא תותיה תרחיה גביה עד דבנייה לבית המקדש יומא חד הוה קאי לחודיה אמר ליה כתיב (במדבר כד, ח) כתועפות ראם לו ואמרינן כתועפות אלו מלאכי השרת ראם אלו השדים מאי רבותיכו מינן א"ל שקול שושילתא מינאי והב לי עיזקתך ואחוי לך רבותאי שקליה לשושילתא מינייה ויהיב ליה עיזקתיה בלעיה אותביה לחד גפיה ברקיעא ולחד גפיה בארעא פתקיה ארבע מאה פרסי על ההיא שעתא אמר שלמה (קהלת א, ג) מה יתרון לאדם בכל עמלו שיעמול תחת השמש (קהלת ב, י) וזה היה חלקי מכל עמלי מאי וזה רב ושמואל חד אמר מקלו וחד אמר גונדו היה מחזור על הפתחים כל היכא דמטא אמר (קהלת א, יב) אני קהלת הייתי מלך על ישראל בירושלים כי מטא גבי סנהדרין אמרו רבנן מכדי שוטה בחדא מילתא לא סריך מאי האי אמרו ליה לבניהו קא בעי לך מלכא לגביה אמר להו לא שלחו להו למלכותא קאתי מלכא לגבייכו שלחו להו אין קאתי שלחו להו בידקו בכרעיה שלחו להו במוקי קאתי וקא תבע להו בנידותייהו וקא תבע לה נמי לבת שבע אימיה אתייה לשלמה והבו ליה עזקתא ושושילתא דחקוק עליה שם כי עייל חזייה פרח ואפילו הכי הוה ליה ביעתותא מינייה והיינו דכתיב (שיר השירים ג, ז) הנה מטתו שלשלמה ששים גבורים סביב לה מגבורי ישראל כולם אחוזי חרב מלומדי מלחמה איש חרבו על יריכו מפחד בלילות רב ושמואל חד אמר מלך והדיוט וחד אמר מלך והדיוט ומלך

III. R' Sara Wolkenfeld – Babylonian Berakhot 19a

Wasn't it taught in a baraita: There was an incident involving a pious man who gave a poor man a dinar on the eve of Rosh HaShana during drought years, and his wife mocked him for giving so large a sum at so difficult a time? **And** in order to escape her incessant mockery, **he went and slept in the cemetery.** That night in his dream (Ritva, *HaKotev*, Maharsha), **he heard two spirits conversing with each other. One said to the other: My friend, let us roam the world and hear from behind the heavenly curtain [pargod],** which separates the Divine Presence from the world, **what calamity will befall the world. The other spirit said to her: I cannot go with you, as I am buried in a mat of reeds, but you go, and tell me what you hear. She went, and roamed, and came back. The other spirit said: My friend, what did you hear from behind the heavenly curtain? She replied: I heard that anyone who sows during the first rainy season of this year, hail will fall and strike his crops. Hearing this, the pious man went and sowed his seeds during the second rainy season. Ultimately, the crops of the entire world were stricken by hail and his crops were not stricken.**

The following year, on the eve of Rosh HaShana, the same pious man went and slept in the cemetery at his own initiative, and again he heard the two spirits conversing with each other. One said to the other: Let us roam the world and hear from behind the heavenly curtain what calamity will befall the world. She said to her: My friend, have I not already told you that I cannot, as I am buried in a mat of reeds? Rather, you go, and tell me what you hear. She went, and roamed, and returned. The other spirit said to her: My friend, what did you hear from behind the curtain? She said to her: I heard that those who sow during the second rainy season blight will strike his crops. That pious man went and sowed during the first rainy season. Since everyone else sowed during the second rainy season, ultimately, the crops of the entire world were blighted and his crops were not blighted.

The pious man's wife said to him: **Why is it that last year, the crops of the entire world were stricken and yours were not stricken, and now this year, the crops of the entire world were blighted and yours were not blighted? He related to her the entire story. They said: It was not even a few days later that a quarrel fell between the pious man's wife and the mother of the young woman who was buried there. The pious man's wife said to her scornfully: Go and I will show you your daughter, and you will see that she is buried in a mat of reeds. The following year, he again went and slept in the cemetery, and heard the same spirits conversing with each other. One said to the other: My friend, let us roam the world and hear from behind the heavenly curtain what calamity will befall the world. She said to her: My friend, leave me alone, as words that we have privately exchanged between us have already been heard among the living. Apparently, the dead know what transpires in this world.**

והתנא: מעשה בחסיד אחד שנתן דינר לעני בערב ראש השנה בשני בצורת, והקניטתו אשתו, והלך ולן בבית הקברות. ושמע שתי רוחות שמספרות זו לזו. אמרה תדא לתברתה: תברתי, בואי ונשוט בעולם, ונשמע מאחורי הפרגוד מה פורענות בא לעולם? אמרה לה תברתה: איני יכולה, שאני קבורה במחצלת של קנים. אלא לכי את, ומה שאת שומעת אמרי לי. הלכה היא ושטה ובאה. ואמרה לה תברתה: תברתי, מה שמעת מאחורי הפרגוד? אמרה לה: שמעתי שכל הזרע ברביעה ראשונה ברד מלקה אותו. הלך הוא וזרע ברביעה שנייה. של כל העולם כולו לקה, של — לא לקה

לשנה האחרת הלך ולן בבית הקברות, ושמע אותן שתי רוחות שמספרות זו עם זו. אמרה תדא לתברתה: בואי ונשוט בעולם ונשמע מאחורי הפרגוד מה פורענות בא לעולם. אמרה לה: תברתי, לא כך אמרתי לך, איני יכולה שאני קבורה במחצלת של קנים! אלא לכי את, ומה שאת שומעת בואי ואמרי לי. הלכה ושטה ובאה. ואמרה לה תברתה: תברתי, מה שמעת מאחורי הפרגוד? אמרה לה: שמעתי שכל הזרע ברביעה שנייה שדפון מלקה אותו. הלך וזרע ברביעה ראשונה, של כל העולם כולו נשדף ושלול לא נשדף

אמרה לו אשתו: מפני מה אשתקד של כל העולם כולו לקה ושלך לא לקה, ועכשיו של כל העולם כולו נשדף ושלך לא נשדף? סח לה כל הדברים הללו. אמרו: לא היו ימים מועטים עד שנפלה קטטה בין אשתו של אותו חסיד ובין אמה של אותה ריבה. אמרה לה: לכי ואראך בתוך שהיא קבורה במחצלת של קנים לשנה האחרת הלך ולן בבית הקברות ושמע אותן רוחות שמספרות זו עם זו. אמרה לה: תברתי, בואי ונשוט בעולם ונשמע מאחורי הפרגוד מה פורענות בא לעולם. אמרה לה: תברתי, הניחיני, דברים שביני לבינה כבר נשמעו בין התיים. אלמא ידעי

IV. R' Yaffa Epstein – Babylonian Talmud Tractate 21a

Ilfa and Rabbi Yoḥanan studied Torah together, and as a result they became very hard-pressed for money. **They said: Let us get up and go and engage in commerce, and we will fulfill, with regard to ourselves, the verse: “Although there should be no needy among you”** (Deuteronomy 15:4), as we will no longer be complete paupers. **They went and sat under a dilapidated wall and were eating bread, when two ministering angels arrived.**

Rabbi Yoḥanan heard that one angel said to the other: Let us knock this wall down upon them and kill them, as they abandon eternal life of Torah study and engage in temporal life for their own sustenance. The other angel said to him: Leave them, as there is one of them whose time of achievement stands before him, i.e., his time has yet to come. Rabbi Yoḥanan heard all this, but Ilfa did not hear the angels’ conversation.

Rabbi Yoḥanan said to Ilfa: Did the Master hear anything? Ilfa said to him: No. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to himself: Since I heard the angels and Ilfa did not hear, I can learn from this that it is I whose time of achievement stands before me.

Rabbi Yoḥanan said to Ilfa: I will return home and fulfill with regard to myself the contrary verse: “For the poor shall never cease out of the land” (Deuteronomy 15:11).

Rabbi Yoḥanan returned to the study hall, and Ilfa did not return, but went to engage in business instead. By the time that Ilfa came back from his business travels, Rabbi Yoḥanan had been appointed head of the academy.

His colleagues said to Ilfa: **If the Master had sat and studied, instead of going off to his business ventures, wouldn’t the Master have been appointed head of the academy? Ilfa went and suspended himself from the mast [askariya] of a ship, saying: If there is anyone who can ask me a question concerning a baraita of Rabbi Ḥiyya and Rabbi Oshaya, and I do not resolve his problem from a mishna, I will fall from the mast of this ship and be drowned.** Ilfa sought to demonstrate that despite the time he had spent in business, he still retained his extensive Torah knowledge.

A certain old man came and taught a baraita before him: If there is a man who, upon his deathbed, says in his will: **Give a shekel to my sons every week, but this is a situation where, based on their needs, they are fit for the court to give them a sela, i.e., double the amount, they give them a sela.** When the dying man mentioned a shekel, he presumably meant that they should be given a sum in accordance with their actual requirements, not that specific amount. **But if he said: Give them only a shekel, the court gives them only a shekel and no more.**

The *baraita* further states that **if one said: If my sons die, others should inherit their portion in their stead, regardless of whether he said: Give them a shekel, or whether he said: Give them only a shekel, then the court gives his sons only a shekel per week, as their father clearly stated that he wishes to give his sons only a specific stipend and that he intends to leave the bulk of his property to others. Ilfa said to the old man: In accordance with whose opinion is this ruling? It is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir, who said: It is a mitzva to fulfill the statement of the dead.** This entire *baraita* can be explained based on a principle that appears in a mishna: In all cases, one should try to execute the wishes of the deceased.

אילפא ורבא יוחנן הוו גרסי
 באורייתא, דחיקא להו מילתא טובא,
 אָמְרִי: נִיקוּם וְנִיזִיל וְנִיעֵבֵד עֵיסְקָא
 וְנִקְמִים בְּנַפְשֵׁינָן אֲפָס כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה בָּךְ
 אֶבְיוֹן.”

אָזְלוּ, אוֹתִיבוּ תוֹתֵי גוּדָא רְעִיעָא, הוּוּ
 קָא פְּרָכִי רִיפְתָּא, אָתוּ תְרִי מְלָאכִי
 הִשְׁרָתוּ .

שְׁמַעֲיָה רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן דְּאָמַר עַד לְחַבְרִיהָ:
 נִישְׁדִּי עֲלִייהוּ הָאֵי גוּדָא וְנִקְטְלִינְהוּ,
 שְׁמַעֲיָחִין חֲנִי עוֹלָם הֵבָא וְעוֹסְקִין בְּחֲנִי
 שְׁעָה! אָמַר לִיהָ אֵידָב: שְׁבִקְיָנְהוּ,
 דְּאִיכָא בָּהוּ עַד דְּקִימָא לִיהָ שְׁעָתָא.

רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן שְׁמַע, אִילְפָא לֹא שְׁמַע.
 אָמַר לִיהָ רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן לֹאִילְפָא: שְׁמַע
 מִרְ מִדְּי? אָמַר לִיהָ: לֹא. אָמַר
 מִדְּשַׁמְעֵי אָנָּא וְאִילְפָא לֹא שְׁמַע, שְׁמַע
 מִינְהָ לְדִידֵי קִימָא לִי שְׁעָתָא .

אָמַר לִיהָ רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אֵיִהְדֵּר, וְאוֹקִי
 בְּנַפְשָׁאֵי “כִּי לֹא יִחַדֵּל אֶבְיוֹן מִקְרָב
 הָאָרֶץ.” רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן הִדֵּר, אִילְפָא לֹא
 הִדֵּר. עַד דְּאָתָא אִילְפָא, מְלִיד רַבִּי
 יוֹחָנָן .

אָמְרוּ לוֹ: אֵי אֲתִיב מִרְ וְגִרְסִי, לֹא הִנֵּה
 מְלִיד מִרְ. אָזְל תְּלָא נַפְשִׁיהָ בְּאֶסְקְרִיא
 דְּסַפִּינְתָּא, אָמַר: אֵי אִיכָא דְשָׂאִיל לִי
 בְּמַתְנִיתָא דְרַבִּי חֲזִיָּא וְרַבִּי אוֹשְׁעִיא
 וְלֹא פְּשִׁטְנָא לִיהָ מִמַּתְנִיתִין, נְפִילְנָא
 מִאֶסְקְרִיא דְּסַפִּינְתָּא וְטַבְעָנָא .

אָתָּא הָהוּא סְבָא, תְּנָא לִיהָ: הָאוּמֵר
 תְּנֹו שְׁקֵל לְבְנֵי בְּשִׁבְתָּ, וְהֵן רְאוּיִין
 לְתַת לְהֵם סְלַע — נוֹתְנִין לְהֵם סְלַע.
 וְאִם אָמַר: אַל תְּתַנּוּ לְהֵם אֶלָּא שְׁקֵל
 — אִין נוֹתְנִין לְהֵם אֶלָּא שְׁקֵל .

אִם אָמַר: אִם מְתוּ יְרִשׁוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם
 תְּתַתִּיהֶם — בִּין שְׁאָמַר “תְּנֹו” בִּין
 שְׁאָמַר “אַל תְּתַנּוּ” — אִין נוֹתְנִין
 לְהֵם אֶלָּא שְׁקֵל. אָמַר לִיהָ: הָא מְנִי
 — רַבִּי מֵאִיר הִיא, דְּאָמַר: מְצָנָה
 לְקִיָּים דְּבָרֵי הַמֵּת .