

JUDAISM

The Talmud

Megillah

A massive, multi-volume compendium of rabbinic debates and commentary on the Torah that forms the basis of Jewish religious law, ethics, and practice. Presents all 37 tractates with Gemara, via Sefaria's William Davidson Talmud (the Koren Talmud Bavli translation, CC BY-NC), plus Avot and Eduyot (which have no Gemara) via Michael L. Rodkinson's 1896-1918 translation.

Presented by Earth's Sacred Texts — blackbetty.space

Contents

Megillah

Megillah

Chapter 1

¹ MISHNA: The Megilla is read on the eleventh, on the twelfth, on the thirteenth, on the fourteenth, or on the fifteenth of the month of Adar, not earlier and not later. The mishna explains the circumstances when the Megilla is read on each of these days. Cities [kerakin] that have been surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua, son of Nun, read the Megilla on the fifteenth of Adar, whereas villages and large towns that have not been walled since the days of Joshua, son of Nun, read it on the fourteenth. However, the Sages instituted that the villages may advance their reading to the day of assembly, i.e., Monday or Thursday, when the rabbinical courts are in session and the Torah is read publicly, and the villagers therefore come to the larger towns.

² How so? If the fourteenth of Adar occurs on Monday, the villages and large towns read it on that day, and the walled cities read it on the next day, the fifteenth. If the fourteenth occurs on Tuesday or Wednesday, the villages advance their reading to the day of assembly, i.e., Monday, the twelfth or thirteenth of Adar; the large towns read it on that day, i.e., the fourteenth of Adar, and the walled cities read it on the next day, the fifteenth.

³ If the fourteenth occurs on Thursday, the villages and large towns read it on that day, the fourteenth, and the walled cities read it on the next day, the fifteenth. If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat eve, the villages advance their reading to the day of assembly, i.e., Thursday, the thirteenth of Adar; and the large towns and the walled cities read it on that day, i.e., the fourteenth of Adar. Even the walled cities read the Megilla on the fourteenth rather than on the fifteenth, as they do not read it on Shabbat.

⁴ If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat, both the villages and large towns advance their reading to the day of assembly, i.e., Thursday, the twelfth of Adar; and the walled cities read it on the day after Purim, the fifteenth. If the fourteenth occurs on Sunday, the villages advance their reading to the day of assembly, i.e., Thursday, the eleventh of Adar; and the large towns read it on that day, i.e., the fourteenth of Adar; and the walled cities read it on the next day, the fifteenth.

⁵ GEMARA: We learned in the mishna: The Megilla is read on the eleventh of Adar. The Gemara asks: From where do we derive this halakha? The Gemara expresses surprise at the question: What room is there to ask: From where do we derive this halakha? The reason is as we intend to say further on: The Sages were lenient with the villages and allowed them to advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, so that they would be free to supply water and food to their brethren in the cities on the day of Purim. Accordingly, the Megilla is read on the eleventh due to a rabbinic enactment.

⁶ The Gemara explains: This is what we said, i.e., this is what we meant when we asked the question: Now, all of these days when the Megilla may be read were enacted by the members of the Great Assembly when they established the holiday of Purim itself. As, if it enters your mind to say that the

members of the Great Assembly enacted only the fourteenth and fifteenth as days for reading the Megilla, is it possible that the later Sages came and uprooted an ordinance that was enacted by the members of the Great Assembly? Didn't we learn in a mishna (Eduyyot 1:5) that a rabbinical court cannot rescind the statements of another rabbinical court, unless it is superior to it in wisdom and in number? No subsequent court was ever greater than the members of the Great Assembly, so it would be impossible for another court to rescind the enactments of the members of the Great Assembly.

⁷ Rather, it is obvious that all these days were enacted by the members of the Great Assembly, and the question is: Where is the allusion to this in the Bible? The Megilla itself, which was approved by the members of the Great Assembly, mentions only the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar.

⁸ Rav Shemen bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: It is alluded to when the verse states: "To confirm these days of Purim in their times" (Esther 9:31). The phrase "in their times" indicates that they enacted many times for them and not only two days.

⁹ The Gemara objects: This verse is necessary for its own purpose, to teach that the days of Purim must be observed at the proper times. The Gemara responds: If so, let the verse say: To confirm these days of Purim in its time. What is the significance of the term "their times," in the plural? It indicates that many times were established for the reading of the Megilla.

¹⁰ The Gemara objects: But still, the plural term is necessary to indicate that the time of this walled city is not the same as the time of that unwalled town, i.e., Purim is celebrated on different days in different places. The Gemara answers: If so, let the verse say: Their time, indicating that each place celebrates Purim on its respective day. What is the significance of the compound plural "their times"? Learn from this term that although the verse (Esther 9:21) specifies only two days, the Megilla may, at times, be read on all of the days enumerated in the mishna.

¹¹ The Gemara asks: If so, say that the plural term indicates many times, and the Megilla may be read even earlier than the eleventh of Adar. The Gemara rejects this argument: The compound plural "their times," should be understood as similar to the simple plural term, their time. Just as the term their time can be understood to refer to two days, indicating that each location reads the Megilla in its respective time on the fourteenth or the fifteenth of Adar, so too, "their times" should be understood as referring to only two additional days when the Megilla may be read.

¹² The Gemara asks: Say that these two added days are the twelfth and the thirteenth of Adar. How is it derived that the Megilla may be read on the eleventh as well? The Gemara answers: It is as Rav Shmuel bar Yitzḥak said in a different context: The thirteenth of Adar is a time of assembly for all, as it was on that day that the Jews assembled to fight their enemies, and the main miracle was performed on that day. Consequently, there is no need for a special derivation to include it as a day that is fit for reading the Megilla. Here too, since the thirteenth of Adar is a time of assembly for all, there is no need for a special derivation to include it among the days when the Megilla may be read.

¹³ The Gemara objects: And say that the two additional days are the sixteenth and the seventeenth of Adar. The Gemara responds: It is written: "And it shall not pass" (Esther 9:27), indicating that the celebration of Purim is not delayed until a later date.

¹⁴ Having cited and discussed the opinion of Rav Shemen bar Abba, the Gemara cites another answer to the question of where the verses allude to the permissibility of reading the Megilla on the days enumerated in the mishna. And Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani said: These dates are alluded to

when the verse states: “As the days on which the Jews rested from their enemies” (Esther 9:22). The term “days” is referring to the two days that are explicitly mentioned in the previous verse, i.e., the fourteenth and the fifteenth. The term “as the days” comes to include two additional days, i.e., the eleventh and twelfth of Adar.

¹⁵ The Gemara asks: And say that the two additional days are the twelfth and thirteenth of Adar. How is it derived that the Megilla may be read on the eleventh as well? In answer to this question, Rav Shmuel bar Yitzhak said: The thirteenth of Adar is a time of assembly for all, and there is no need for a special derivation to include it as a day fit for reading. The Gemara objects: Say that these additional days are the sixteenth and seventeenth of Adar. This suggestion is rejected: It is written: “And it shall not pass.”

¹⁶ Since two derivations were offered for the same matter, the Gemara asks: What is the reason that Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani did not state that the days enumerated in the mishna are fit for reading the Megilla based upon the term “in their times,” in accordance with the opinion of Rav Shemen bar Abba? The Gemara answers: He does not learn anything from the distinction between the terms time, their time, and their times. Therefore, the verse indicates only that there are two days when the Megilla may be read.

¹⁷ The Gemara asks: And what is the reason that Rav Shemen bar Abba did not state that the days enumerated in the mishna are fit for reading the Megilla based upon the term “as the days,” in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani? The Gemara answers: He could have said to you: That verse is written as a reference to future generations, and it indicates that just as the Jews rested on these days at that time, they shall rest and celebrate on these days for all generations.

¹⁸ § With regard to the mishna’s ruling that the Megilla may be read on the day of assembly, Rabba bar bar Hana said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: This is the statement of Rabbi Akiva the unattributed. Most unattributed statements of tanna’im were formulated by Rabbi Akiva’s students and reflect his opinions. As, he derives halakhot based on the distinction that he draws between the terms time, their time, and their times. However, the Sages say: One may read the Megilla only in its designated time, i.e., the fourteenth of Adar.

¹⁹ The Gemara raises an objection based upon the following baraita. Rabbi Yehuda said: When is one permitted to read the Megilla from the eleventh to the fifteenth of Adar? One may read on these dates at a time when the years are established properly and the Jewish people dwell securely in their own land. However, nowadays, since people look to the reading of the Megilla and use it to calculate when Passover begins, one may read the Megilla only in its designated time, so as not to cause confusion with regard to the date of Passover, which is exactly one month from the day after Purim.

²⁰ The Gemara analyzes this baraita: In accordance with whose opinion did Rabbi Yehuda issue his ruling? If we say that it is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Akiva, whose opinion is expressed in the mishna, there is a difficulty, as Rabbi Akiva holds that even nowadays this ordinance applies. According to Rabbi Akiva, it is permitted for residents of villages to read the Megilla on the day of assembly even nowadays, as he did not limit his ruling to times when the Jewish people dwell securely in their land.

²¹ Rather, is it not in accordance with the opinion of the Sages, who disagreed with Rabbi Akiva? And, nevertheless, at least when the years are established properly and the Jewish people dwell securely in their land, the Megilla is read even prior to the fourteenth, as the Sages disagree only

about the halakha nowadays. This contradicts the statement of Rabbi Yoḥanan, who holds that the Megilla could never be read earlier than the fourteenth of Adar. The Gemara concludes: The refutation of the opinion of Rabbi Yoḥanan is indeed a conclusive refutation.

²² There are those who say a different version of the previous passage. Rabba bar bar Ḥana said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: This is the statement of Rabbi Akiva, the unattributed. However, the Sages said: Nowadays, since people look to the reading of the Megilla and use it to calculate when Passover begins, one may read the Megilla only in its designated time.

²³ The Gemara comments: This is also taught in a baraita: Rabbi Yehuda said: When is one permitted to read the Megilla from the eleventh to the fifteenth of Adar? At a time when the years are established properly and the Jewish people dwell securely in their own land. However, nowadays, since people look to the reading of the Megilla and use it to calculate when Passover begins, one may read the Megilla only in its designated time. According to this version, Rabbi Yehuda's statement is consistent with the opinion of the Sages, as cited by Rabbi Yoḥanan.

²⁴ The Gemara adds: Rav Ashi poses a difficulty based on an apparent contradiction between the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda in the aforementioned baraita and a ruling cited in a mishna in the name of Rabbi Yehuda,

²⁵ and he establishes the baraita in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda, rather than Rabbi Yehuda.

²⁶ The Gemara explains the apparent contradiction: And did Rabbi Yehuda actually say that nowadays, since people look to the reading of the Megilla and use it to calculate when Passover begins, one may read the Megilla only in its designated time? The Gemara raises a contradiction from a mishna (5a): Rabbi Yehuda said: When is one permitted to read the Megilla from the eleventh of Adar? In a place where the villagers generally enter town on Monday and Thursday. However, in a place where they do not generally enter town on Monday and Thursday, one may read the Megilla only in its designated time, the fourteenth of Adar.

²⁷ The mishna indicates that, at least in a place where the villagers enter town on Monday and Thursday, one may read the Megilla from the eleventh of Adar even nowadays. And due to this contradiction, Rav Ashi establishes the baraita in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda.

²⁸ The Gemara expresses surprise: Because Rav Ashi poses a difficulty due to the apparent contradiction between the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda in the baraita and the opinion cited in a mishna in the name of Rabbi Yehuda, he establishes the baraita in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda? How could he have emended the text just because he had a difficulty that he did not know how to resolve?

²⁹ The Gemara explains: Rav Ashi heard that there were those who taught the baraita in the name of Rabbi Yehuda, and there were those who taught it in the name of Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda. And since he had a difficulty with the apparent contradiction between one ruling of Rabbi Yehuda and another ruling of Rabbi Yehuda, he said: The one who taught it in the name of Rabbi Yehuda is not precise, whereas the one who taught it in the name of Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda is precise, and in this way he eliminated the contradiction.

³⁰ § We learned in the mishna: Cities that have been surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua, son of Nun, read the Megilla on the fifteenth of Adar. The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived, as they are not stated explicitly in the Megilla? Rava said: It is as the verse states: “Therefore the Jews of the villages, who dwell in the unwalled towns, make the fourteenth day of the month of Adar a day of gladness and feasting” (Esther 9:19). From the fact that the unwalled towns celebrate Purim on the fourteenth, it may be derived that the walled cities celebrate Purim on the fifteenth.

³¹ The Gemara challenges this answer: Say that the unwalled towns celebrate Purim on the fourteenth, as indicated in the verse, and the walled cities do not celebrate it at all. The Gemara expresses astonishment: And are they not Jews? And furthermore: It is written that the kingdom of Ahasuerus was “from Hodu until Cush” (Esther 1:1), and the celebration of Purim was accepted in all of the countries of his kingdom (Esther 9:20–23).

³² Rather, the following challenge may be raised: Say that the unwalled towns celebrate Purim on the fourteenth and the walled cities celebrate it on the fourteenth and on the fifteenth, as it is written: “That they should keep the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and the fifteenth day of the same, in every year” (Esther 9:21). This verse can be understood to mean that there are places where Purim is celebrated on both days.

³³ The Gemara rejects this argument: If it had been written in the verse: The fourteenth day and [ve] the fifteenth, it would be as you originally said. However, now that it is written: The fourteenth day and [ve’et] the fifteenth day, the particle et used here to denote the accusative comes and interrupts, indicating that the two days are distinct. Therefore, residents of these locations celebrate Purim on the fourteenth, and residents of those locations celebrate it on the fifteenth.

³⁴ The Gemara suggests: Say that residents of unwalled towns celebrate Purim on the fourteenth, as stated in the verse, and with regard to residents of walled cities, if they wish they may celebrate it on the fourteenth, and if they wish they may celebrate it on the fifteenth. The Gemara responds: The verse states: “In their times” (Esther 9:31), indicating that the time when the residents of this place celebrate Purim is not the time when the residents of that place celebrate Purim.

³⁵ The Gemara raises another challenge: Say that the walled cities should celebrate Purim on the thirteenth of Adar and not on the fifteenth. The Gemara answers: It stands to reason that the residents of walled cities, who do not celebrate Purim on the fourteenth, celebrate it as it is celebrated in Shushan, and it is explicitly stated that Purim was celebrated in Shushan on the fifteenth.

³⁶ The Gemara comments: We found a source for observing the holiday of Purim on the fourteenth of Adar in unwalled towns and on the fifteenth of Adar in walled cities; from where do we derive that remembering the story of Purim through the reading of the Megilla takes place on these days? The Gemara explains that the verse states: “That these days should be remembered and observed” (Esther 9:28), from which it is derived that remembering is compared to observing.

³⁷ § The Gemara notes that the mishna is not in accordance with the opinion of this tanna, as it is taught in the Tosefta (1:1) that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa says: Cities that have been surrounded by a wall since the days of Ahasuerus read the Megilla on the fifteenth. According to the Tosefta, the status of walled cities is determined based upon whether they were walled in the time of Ahasuerus rather than the time of Joshua.

³⁸ The Gemara asks: What is the reason for the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa? The Gemara explains that the Megilla is read on the fifteenth in cities that are like Shushan: Just as Shushan is a city that was surrounded by a wall since the days of Ahasuerus, and one reads the Megilla there on the fifteenth, so too every city that was walled since the days of Ahasuerus reads the Megilla on the fifteenth.

³⁹ The Gemara asks: What is the reason for the opinion of the tanna of our mishna? The Gemara explains: It is derived through a verbal analogy between one instance of the word unwalled and another instance of the word unwalled. It is written here: “Therefore the Jews of the villages, who dwell in the unwalled towns” (Esther 9:19), and it is written there, in Moses’ statement to Joshua before the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael: “All these cities were fortified with high walls, gates and bars; besides unwalled towns, a great many” (Deuteronomy 3:5). Just as there, in Deuteronomy, the reference is to a city that was surrounded by a wall from the days of Joshua, son of Nun, so too here it is referring to a city that was surrounded by a wall from the days of Joshua, son of Nun.

⁴⁰ The Gemara continues: Granted that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa did not state his explanation in accordance with the opinion of the tanna of our mishna because he did not hold that a verbal analogy can be established between one verse that employs the word unwalled and the other verse that employs the word unwalled. However, what is the reason that the tanna of our mishna did not state his explanation in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa?

⁴¹ The Gemara expresses astonishment: What is the reason? Isn’t it because he holds that it is derived from the verbal analogy between one usage of the word unwalled and the other usage of the word unwalled? The Gemara explains: This is what he said, i.e., this was the question: According to the tanna of our mishna, in accordance with whom does Shushan observe Purim? Shushan is not like the unwalled towns and not like the walled cities, as residents of Shushan celebrate Purim on the fifteenth, but the city was not surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua.

⁴² Rava said, and some say it unattributed to any particular Sage: Shushan is different since the miracle occurred in it on the fifteenth of Adar, and therefore Purim is celebrated on that day. However, other cities are only considered walled cities and read the Megilla on the fifteenth of Adar if they were walled since the days of Joshua.

⁴³ The Gemara asks: Granted, according to the tanna of our mishna, this is the meaning of what is written: “And these days should be remembered and observed throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city” (Esther 9:28). The phrase “every province [medina]” is expressed in the verse using repetition, so that it reads literally: Every province and province, and therefore contains a superfluous usage of the word province, is meant to distinguish between cities that were surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua, son of Nun, where the Megilla is read on the fifteenth, and a city that was surrounded by a wall since the days of Ahasuerus, where the Megilla is read on the fourteenth.

⁴⁴ The phrase “every city,” which is similarly expressed through repetition and contains a superfluous usage of the word city, also serves to distinguish between Shushan and other cities, as Purim is celebrated in Shushan on the fifteenth despite the fact that it was not walled since the time of Joshua. However, according to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa, granted that the phrase “every province” comes to distinguish between Shushan and other cities that were not walled since the days of Ahasuerus; but what does the phrase “every city” come to teach?

⁴⁵ The Gemara explains that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa could have said to you: According to the tanna of our mishna, does it work out well? Since he holds that it is derived from the verbal analogy between one verse that employs the word unwalled and the other verse that employs the word unwalled, why do I need the phrase “every province”? Rather, the verse comes for a midrashic exposition, and it comes to indicate that the halakha is in accordance with the ruling issued by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. As Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: A walled city, and all settlements adjacent to it, and all settlements that can be seen with it, i.e., that can be seen from the walled city, are considered like the walled city, and the Megilla is read there on the fifteenth.

⁴⁶ The Gemara asks: Up to what distance is considered adjacent? Rabbi Yirmeya said, and some say that it was Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba who said: The limit is like the distance from the town of Ḥamtan to Tiberias, a mil. The Gemara asks: Let him say simply that the limit is a mil; why did he have to mention these places? The Gemara answers that the formulation of the answer teaches us this: How much distance comprises the measure of a mil? It is like the distance from Ḥamtan to Tiberias.

⁴⁷ § Having cited a statement of Rabbi Yirmeya, which some attribute to Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba, the Gemara cites other statements attributed to these Sages. Rabbi Yirmeya said, and some say that it was Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba who said: The Seers, i.e., the prophets, were the ones who said that the letters mem, nun, tzadi, peh, and kaf [mantzepakh], have a different form when they appear at the end of a word.

⁴⁸ The Gemara asks: And how can you understand it that way? Isn't it written: “These are the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai” (Leviticus 27:34), which indicates that a prophet is not permitted to initiate or change any matter of halakha from now on? Consequently, how could the prophets establish new forms for the letters? And furthermore, didn't Rav Ḥisda say: The letters mem and samekh in the tablets of the covenant given at Sinai

⁴⁹ stood by way of a miracle?

⁵⁰ The Gemara answers: Yes, two forms of these letters did exist at that time, but the people did not know which one of them was to be used in the middle of the word and which at the end of the word, and the Seers came and established that the open forms are to be used in the middle of the word and the closed forms at the end of the word.

⁵¹ The Gemara asks: Ultimately, however, doesn't the phrase “these are the commandments” (Leviticus 27:34) indicate that a prophet is not permitted to initiate any matter of halakha from now on? Rather, it may be suggested that the final letters already existed at the time of the giving of the Torah, but over the course of time the people forgot them, and the prophets then came and reestablished them.

⁵² § The Gemara cites another ruling of Rabbi Yirmeya or Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba. Rabbi Yirmeya said, and some say that it was Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba who said: The Aramaic translation of the Torah used in the synagogues was composed by Onkelos the convert based on the teachings of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua. The Aramaic translation of the Prophets was composed by Yonatan ben Uzziel based on a tradition going back to the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The Gemara relates that when Yonatan ben Uzziel wrote his translation, Eretz Yisrael quaked over an area of four hundred parasangs [parsa] by four hundred parasangs, and a Divine Voice emerged and said: Who is this who has revealed My secrets to mankind?

⁵³ Yonatan ben Uzziel stood up on his feet and said: I am the one who has revealed Your secrets to mankind through my translation. However, it is revealed and known to You that I did this not for my own honor, and not for the honor of the house of my father, but rather it was for Your honor that I did this, so that discord not increase among the Jewish people. In the absence of an accepted translation, people will disagree about the meaning of obscure verses, but with a translation, the meaning will be clear.

⁵⁴ And Yonatan ben Uzziel also sought to reveal a translation of the Writings, but a Divine Voice emerged and said to him: It is enough for you that you translated the Prophets. The Gemara explains: What is the reason that he was denied permission to translate the Writings? Because it has in it a revelation of the end, when the Messiah will arrive. The end is foretold in a cryptic manner in the book of Daniel, and were the book of Daniel translated, the end would become manifestly revealed to all.

⁵⁵ The Gemara asks: Was the translation of the Torah really composed by Onkelos the convert? Didn't Rav Ika bar Avin say that Rav Ḥananel said that Rav said: What is the meaning of that which is written with respect to the days of Ezra: "And they read in the book, the Torah of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and they caused them to understand the reading" (Nehemiah 8:8)? The verse should be understood as follows: "And they read in the book, the Torah of God," this is the scriptural text; "distinctly," this is the translation, indicating that they immediately translated the text into Aramaic, as was customary during public Torah readings.

⁵⁶ "And they gave the sense," these are the divisions of the text into separate verses. "And they caused them to understand the reading," these are the cantillation notes, through which the meaning of the text is further clarified. And some say that these are the Masoretic traditions with regard to the manner in which each word is to be written. This indicates that the Aramaic translation already existed at the beginning of the Second Temple period, well before the time of Onkelos. The Gemara answers: The ancient Aramaic translation was forgotten and then Onkelos came and reestablished it.

⁵⁷ The Gemara asks: What is different about the translation of Prophets? Why is it that when Onkelos revealed the translation of the Torah, Eretz Yisrael did not quake, and when he revealed the translation of the Prophets, it quaked? The Gemara explains: The meaning of matters discussed in the Torah is clear, and therefore its Aramaic translation did not reveal the meaning of passages that had not been understood previously. Conversely, in the Prophets, there are matters that are clear and there are matters that are obscure, and the Aramaic translation revealed the meaning of obscure passages. The Gemara cites an example of an obscure verse that is clarified by the Aramaic translation: As it is written: "On that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon" (Zechariah 12:11).

⁵⁸ And with regard to that verse, Rav Yosef said: Were it not for the Aramaic translation of this verse, we would not have known what it is saying, as the Bible does not mention any incident involving Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. The Aramaic translation reads as follows: On that day, the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Ahab, son of Omri, who was slain by Hadadrimmon, son of Tavrimon, in Ramoth-Gilead, and like the mourning for Josiah, son of Amon, who was slain by Pharaoh the lame in the valley of Megiddon. The translation clarifies that the verse is referring to two separate incidents of mourning, and thereby clarifies the meaning of this verse.

⁵⁹ § The Gemara introduces another statement from the same line of tradition. The verse states: “And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great trembling fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves” (Daniel 10:7). Who were these men? The term “men” in the Bible indicates important people; who were they? Rabbi Yirmeya said, and some say that it was Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba who said: These are the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

⁶⁰ The Gemara comments: In certain ways they, the prophets, were greater than him, Daniel, and in certain ways he, Daniel, was greater than them. They were greater than him, as they were prophets and he was not a prophet. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were sent to convey the word of God to the Jewish people, while Daniel was not sent to reveal his visions to others. In another way, however, he was greater than them, as he saw this vision, and they did not see this vision, indicating that his ability to perceive obscure and cryptic visions was greater than theirs.

⁶¹ The Gemara asks: Since they did not see the vision, what is the reason that they were frightened? The Gemara answers: Even though they did not see the vision, their guardian angels saw it, and therefore they sensed that there was something fearful there and they fled.

⁶² Ravina said: Learn from this incident that with regard to one who is frightened for no apparent reason, although he does not see anything menacing, his guardian angel sees it, and therefore he should take steps in order to escape the danger. The Gemara asks: What is his remedy? He should recite Shema, which will afford him protection. And if he is standing in a place of filth, where it is prohibited to recite verses from the Torah, he should distance himself four cubits from his current location in order to escape the danger. And if he is not able to do so, let him say the following incantation: The goat of the slaughterhouse is fatter than I am, and if a calamity must fall upon something, it should fall upon it.

⁶³ § After this digression, the Gemara returns to the exposition of a verse cited above. Now that you have said that the phrases “every province” and “every city” appear for the purposes of midrashic exposition, for what exposition do the words “every family” appear in that same verse (Esther 9:28)? Rabbi Yosei bar Ḥanina said: These words come to include the priestly and Levitical families, and indicate that they cancel their service in the Temple and come to hear the reading of the Megilla.

⁶⁴ As Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: The priests at their Temple service, the Levites on their platform in the Temple, where they sung the daily psalm, and the Israelites at their watches, i.e., the group of Israelites, corresponding to the priestly watches, who would come to Jerusalem and gather in other locations as representatives of the entire nation to observe or pray for the success of the Temple service, all cancel their service and come to hear the reading of the Megilla.

⁶⁵ This is also taught in a baraita: The priests at their service, the Levites on the platform, and the Israelites at their watches, all cancel their service and come to hear the reading of the Megilla. The Sages of the house of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi relied upon the halakha stated here and determined that one cancels his Torah study and comes to hear the reading of the Megilla. They derived this principle by means of an a fortiori inference from the Temple service: Just as one who is engaged in performing service in the Temple, which is very important, cancels his service in order to hear the Megilla, is it not all the more so obvious that one who is engaged in Torah study cancels his study to hear the Megilla?

⁶⁶ The Gemara asks: Is the Temple service more important than Torah study? Isn't it written: "And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood over against him with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went over to him and said to him: Are you for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, No, but I am captain of the host of the Lord, I have come now. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down" (Joshua 5:13–14).

⁶⁷ The Gemara first seeks to clarify the incident described in the verse. How did Joshua do this, i.e., how could he bow to a figure he did not recognize? Didn't Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi say: It is prohibited for a person to greet his fellow at night if he does not recognize him, as we are concerned that perhaps it is a demon? How did Joshua know that it was not a demon? The Gemara answers: There it was different, as the visitor said to him: But I am captain of the host of the Lord.

⁶⁸ The Gemara asks: Perhaps this was a demon and he lied? The Gemara answers: It is learned as a tradition that demons do not utter the name of Heaven for naught, and therefore since the visitor had mentioned the name of God, Joshua was certain that this was indeed an angel.

⁶⁹ As for the angel's mission, the Gemara explains that the angel said to Joshua: Yesterday, i.e., during the afternoon, you neglected the afternoon daily offering due to the impending battle, and now, at night, you have neglected Torah study, and I have come to rebuke you. Joshua said to him: For which of these sins have you come? He said to him: I have come now, indicating that neglecting Torah study is more severe than neglecting to sacrifice the daily offering. Joshua immediately determined to rectify the matter, as the verses states: "And Joshua lodged that night" (Joshua 8:9) "in the midst of the valley [ha'emek]" (Joshua 8:13), and Rabbi Yoḥanan said:

⁷⁰ This teaches that he spent the night in the depths [be'umeka] of halakha, i.e., that he spent the night studying Torah with the Jewish people. And Rav Shmuel bar Unya said: Torah study is greater than sacrificing the daily offerings, as it is stated: "I have come now" (Joshua 5:14), indicating that the angel came to rebuke Joshua for neglecting Torah study and not for neglecting the daily offering. Consequently, how did the Sages of the house of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi determine that the Temple service is more important than Torah study?

⁷¹ The Gemara explains that it is not difficult. This statement, with regard to the story of Joshua, is referring to Torah study by the masses, which is greater than the Temple service. That statement of the Sages of the house of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi is referring to Torah study by an individual, which is less significant than the Temple service.

⁷² The Gemara asks: Is the Torah study of an individual a light matter? Didn't we learn in a mishna: On the intermediate days of a Festival, women may lament the demise of the deceased in unison, but they may not clap their hands in mourning? Rabbi Yishmael says: Those that are close to the bier may clap. On the New Moon, on Hanukkah, and on Purim, which are not mandated by Torah law, they may both lament and clap their hands in mourning. However, on both groups of days, they may not wail responsively, a form of wailing where one woman wails and the others repeat after her.

⁷³ And Rabba bar Huna said: All these regulations were said with regard to an ordinary person, but there are no restrictions on expressions of mourning on the intermediate days of a Festival in the presence of a deceased Torah scholar. If a Torah scholar dies on the intermediate days of a Festival, the women may lament, clap, and wail responsively as on any other day, and all the more so on Hanukkah and Purim. This indicates that even the Torah study of an individual is of great importance.

⁷⁴ The Gemara rejects this argument: You speak of the honor that must be shown to the Torah, and indeed, the honor that must be shown to the Torah in the case of an individual Torah scholar is important; but the Torah study of an individual in itself is light and is less significant than the Temple service.

⁷⁵ § Rava said: It is obvious to me that if one must choose between Temple service and reading the Megilla, reading the Megilla takes precedence, based upon the exposition of Rabbi Yosei bar Ḥanina with regard to the phrase “every family” (Esther 9:28). Similarly, if one must choose between Torah study and reading the Megilla, reading the Megilla takes precedence, based upon the fact that the Sages of the house of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi relied on Rabbi Yosei bar Ḥanina’s exposition to rule that one interrupts Torah study to hear the reading of the Megilla.

⁷⁶ Furthermore, it is obvious that if one must choose between Torah study and tending to a corpse with no one to bury it [met mitzva], the task of burying the met mitzva takes precedence. This is derived from that which is taught in a baraita: One cancels his Torah study to bring out a corpse for burial, and to join a wedding procession and bring in the bride. Similarly, if one must choose between the Temple service and tending to a met mitzva, tending to the met mitzva takes precedence, based upon the halakha derived from the term “or for his sister” (Numbers 6:7).

⁷⁷ As it is taught in a baraita with regard to verses addressing the laws of a nazirite: “All the days that he consecrates himself to the Lord, he shall not come near to a dead body. For his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, he shall not make himself ritually impure for them when they die” (Numbers 6:6–7). What is the meaning when the verse states “or for his sister”? The previous verse, which states that the nazirite may not come near a dead body, already prohibits him from becoming impure through contact with his sister. Therefore, the second verse is understood to be teaching a different halakha: One who was going to slaughter his Paschal lamb or to circumcise his son, and he heard that a relative of his died, one might have thought that he should return and become ritually impure with the impurity imparted by a corpse.

⁷⁸ You said: He shall not become impure; the death of his relative will not override so significant a mitzva from the Torah. One might have thought: Just as he does not become impure for his sister, so he does not become impure for a corpse with no one to bury it [met mitzva]. The verse states: “Or for his sister”; he may not become impure for his sister, as someone else can attend to her burial, but he does become impure for a met mitzva.

⁷⁹ On the basis of these premises, Rava raised a dilemma: If one must choose between reading the Megilla and tending to a met mitzva, which of them takes precedence? Does reading the Megilla take precedence due to the value of publicizing the miracle, or perhaps burying the met mitzva takes precedence due to the value of preserving human dignity? After he raised the dilemma, Rava then resolved it on his own and ruled that attending to a met mitzva takes precedence, as the Master said: Great is human dignity, as it overrides a prohibition in the Torah. Consequently, it certainly overrides the duty to read the Megilla, despite the fact that reading the Megilla publicizes the miracle.

⁸⁰ § The Gemara examines the matter itself cited in the course of the previous discussion. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: A walled city, and all settlements adjacent to it, and all settlements that can be seen with it, i.e., that can be seen from the walled city, are considered like the walled city, and the Megilla is read on the fifteenth. It was taught in the Tosefta: This is the halakha with regard to a

settlement adjacent to a walled city, although it cannot be seen from it, and also a place that can be seen from the walled city, although it is not adjacent to it.

⁸¹ The Gemara examines the Tosefta: Granted that with regard to a place that can be seen from the walled city, although it is not adjacent to it, you find it where the place is located on the top of a mountain, and therefore it can be seen from the walled city, although it is at some distance from it. However, with regard to a settlement that is adjacent to a walled city although it cannot be seen from it, how can you find these circumstances? Rabbi Yirmeya said: You find it, for example, where the place is located in a valley, and therefore it is possible that it cannot be seen from the walled city, although it is very close to it.

⁸² And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: A walled city that was initially settled and only later surrounded by a wall is considered a village rather than a walled city. What is the reason? As it is written: “And if a man sells a residential house in a walled city” (Leviticus 25:29). The wording of the verse indicates that it is referring to a place that was first surrounded by a wall and only later settled, and not to a place that was first settled and only later surrounded by a wall.

⁸³ And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: A walled city that does not have ten idlers, i.e., individuals who do not work and are available to attend to communal needs, is treated as a village. The Gemara asks: What is he teaching us? We already learned in a mishna (5a): What is a large city? Any city in which there are ten idlers; however, if there are fewer than that, it is a village. The Gemara answers: Nevertheless, it was necessary for Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi to teach this halakha with regard to a large city, to indicate that even if idlers happen to come there from elsewhere, since they are not local residents, it is still considered a village.

⁸⁴ And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi also said: A walled city that was destroyed and then later settled is considered a city. The Gemara asks: What is meant by the term destroyed? If we say that the city’s walls were destroyed, and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi comes to teach us that if it was settled, yes it is treated as a walled city, but if it was not settled, it is not treated that way, there is a difficulty. Isn’t it taught in a baraita that Rabbi Eliezer bar Yosei says: The verse states: “Which has [lo] a wall (Leviticus 25:30),” and the word lo is written with an alef, which means no, but in context the word lo is used as though it was written with a vav, meaning that it has a wall. This indicates that even though the city does not have a wall now, as the wall was destroyed, if it had a wall before, it retains its status as a walled city.

⁸⁵ Rather, what is meant by the term destroyed? That it was destroyed in the sense that it no longer has ten idlers, and therefore it is treated like a village. However, once it has ten idlers again, it is treated like a city.

⁸⁶ And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said:

⁸⁷ The cities Lod, and Ono, and Gei HeḤarashim are cities that have been surrounded by walls since the days of Joshua, son of Nun.

⁸⁸ The Gemara asks: Did Joshua, son of Nun, really build these cities? Didn’t Elpaal build them at a later date, as it is written: “And the sons of Elpaal: Eber, and Misham, and Shemed, who built Ono and Lod, with its hamlets” (I Chronicles 8:12)? The Gemara counters: According to your reasoning, that this verse proves that these cities were built later, you can also say that Asa, king of Judah, built

them, as it is written: “And he, Asa, built fortified cities in Judah” (see II Chronicles 14:5). Therefore, it is apparent that these cities were built more than once.

⁸⁹ Rabbi Elazar said: These cities were surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua, son of Nun, and they were destroyed in the days of the concubine in Gibeon, as they stood in the tribal territory of Benjamin, and in that war all of the cities of Benjamin were destroyed (see Judges, chapters 19–21). Elpaal then came and built them again. They then fell in the wars between Judah and Israel, and Asa came and restored them.

⁹⁰ The Gemara comments: The language of the verse is also precise according to this explanation, as it is written with regard to Asa: “And he said to Judah: Let us build these cities” (II Chronicles 14:6), which proves by inference that they had already been cities at the outset, and that he did not build new cities. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, learn from this that it is so.

⁹¹ § And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi also said: Women are obligated in the reading of the Megilla, as they too were significant partners in that miracle. And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi also said: When Purim occurs on Shabbat, one asks questions and expounds upon the subject of the day.

⁹² The Gemara raises a question with regard to the last halakha: Why was it necessary to specify Purim? The same principle applies also to the Festivals, as it is taught in a baraita: Moses enacted for the Jewish people that they should ask questions about and expound upon the subject of the day: They should occupy themselves with the halakhot of Passover on Passover, with the halakhot of Shavuot on Shavuot, and with the halakhot of the festival of Sukkot on the festival of Sukkot.

⁹³ The Gemara answers: It was necessary for Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi to mention Purim, lest you say that when Purim falls on Shabbat we should decree that it is prohibited to expound upon the halakhot of the day due to the concern of Rabba, who said that the reason the Megilla is not read on a Purim that falls on Shabbat is due to a concern that one carry the Megilla in the public domain. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi therefore teaches us that expounding the halakhot of the day is not prohibited as a preventive measure lest one read the Megilla on Shabbat.

⁹⁴ And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi further said with regard to Purim: A person is obligated to read the Megilla at night and then to repeat it [lishnota] during the day, as it is stated: “O my God, I call by day but You do not answer; and at night, and there is no surcease for me” (Psalms 22:3), which alludes to reading the Megilla both by day and by night.

⁹⁵ Some of the students who heard this statement understood from it that one is obligated to read the Megilla at night and to study its relevant tractate of Mishna by day, as the term *lishnota* can be understood to mean studying Mishna. Rabbi Yirmeya said to them: It was explained to me personally by Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba himself that the term *lishnota* here has a different connotation, for example, as people say: I will conclude this section and repeat it, i.e., I will review my studies. Similarly, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s statement means that one must repeat the reading of the Megilla by day after reading it at night.

⁹⁶ The Gemara notes that this ruling was also stated by another amora, as Rabbi Ḥelbo said that Ulla Bira’a said: A person is obligated to read the Megilla at night and then repeat it during the day, as it is stated: “So that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent; O Lord, my God, I will give thanks to You forever” (Psalms 30:13). The dual formulation of singing praise and not being silent alludes to reading the Megilla both by night and by day.

⁹⁷ § We learned in the mishna that residents of unwalled towns read the Megilla on the fourteenth of Adar; however, residents of villages may advance their reading to the day of assembly, the Monday or Thursday preceding Purim. Rabbi Ḥanina said: The Sages were lenient with the villages and allowed them to advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, so that they could be free to provide water and food to their brethren in the cities on the day of Purim. If everyone would be busy reading the Megilla on the fourteenth, the residents of the cities would not have enough to eat.

⁹⁸ The Gemara asks: Is that to say that this ordinance is for the benefit of the cities? Didn't we learn in the mishna that if the fourteenth occurred on a Monday, the residents of villages and large towns read it on that very day? If it is so, that the ordinance allowing the villagers to sometimes advance their reading of the Megilla is for the benefit of the cities, let the villagers advance their reading to the previous day of assembly even when the fourteenth occurs on a Monday. The Gemara responds: That would mean that Megilla reading for them would take place on the tenth of Adar, and the Sages did not establish the tenth of Adar as a day that is fit to read the Megilla.

⁹⁹ The Gemara continues: Come and hear a proof from a different statement of the mishna: If the fourteenth occurs on a Thursday, the villages and large towns read it on that day, the fourteenth, and the walled cities read it on the next day, the fifteenth. If it is so, that the ordinance is for the benefit of the cities, let the villagers advance their reading of the Megilla to the previous day of assembly, i.e., the previous Monday, as it is the eleventh of Adar. The Gemara responds: We do not defer the reading of the Megilla from one day of assembly to another day of assembly.

¹⁰⁰ The Gemara continues: Come and hear that which was taught in the following mishna (5a): Rabbi Yehuda said: When is the Megilla read from the eleventh of Adar and onward? In a place where the villagers generally enter town on Monday and Thursday. However, in a place where they do not generally enter town on Monday and Thursday, one may read the Megilla only in its designated time, the fourteenth of Adar. The Gemara infers: If it enters your mind to say that the ordinance is for the benefit of the cities, would it be reasonable to suggest that because the villagers do not enter town on Monday and Thursday the residents of the cities should lose out and not be provided with food and water?

¹⁰¹ The Gemara accepts this argument: Do not say that the Sages allowed the villages to advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly so that they can be free to provide water and food to their brethren in the cities on the day of Purim. Rather, say that the Sages were lenient with them because the villages supply water and food to their brethren in the cities. This ordinance was established for the benefit of the villagers so that they should not have to make an extra trip to the cities to hear the reading of the Megilla. However, in a place where the villages do not go to the cities, advancing their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly will not benefit them, and therefore they must read on the fourteenth.

¹⁰² § We learned in the mishna: How so? If the fourteenth of Adar occurs on Monday, the villages and large towns read it on that day. The mishna continues to explain the days on which the Megilla is read. The Gemara asks: What is different about the first clause of the mishna, which employs the order of the dates of the month, i.e., the eleventh of Adar, and the latter clause, which employs the order of the days of the week, i.e., Monday?

¹⁰³ The Gemara answers: Since the days of the week would be reversed if the latter clause was organized according to the dates of the month, as the mishna would first have to mention a case where the fourteenth occurs on a Sunday, then a case where it occurs on a Wednesday or Shabbat, and then a case where it occurs on a Friday or Tuesday, the mishna employed the order of the days of the week in order to avoid confusion.

¹⁰⁴ § We learned in the mishna: If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat eve, Friday, the villages advance their reading to the day of assembly, i.e., Thursday, and the large towns and walled cities read it on Friday, the fourteenth of Adar. The Gemara asks: Whose opinion is expressed in the mishna? It can be either Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi or Rabbi Yosei.

¹⁰⁵ The Gemara explains: What is the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi? As it is taught in a baraita: If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat eve, villages and large towns advance their reading to the day of assembly, i.e., Thursday, and walled cities read it on the day of Purim, Friday. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi disagrees and says: I say that the readings in the large towns should not be deferred from their usual date, i.e., the fourteenth of Adar. Rather, both these, the large towns and those, the walled cities, read the Megilla on the day of Purim.

¹⁰⁶ The Gemara asks: What is the reason of the first tanna? The Gemara explains that it is as it is written: “To keep these two days, according to their writing and according to their time, in every year” (Esther 9:27), which indicates that Purim must be celebrated every year in similar fashion. Just as in every other year the large towns precede the walled cities by one day, so too here the large towns precede the walled cities by one day. Consequently, since the walled cities cannot read the Megilla on Shabbat and they are required to advance the reading to Friday, the large towns must also advance their reading a day to Thursday.

¹⁰⁷ The Gemara raises an objection: Say that the words “in every year” indicate that just as in every other year the Megilla readings in the large towns are not deferred from their usual date and they read the Megilla on the fourteenth, so too here the Megilla readings in the large towns should not be deferred from their usual date and they too should read on the fourteenth. The Gemara answers: Here it is different, as it is not possible for the large towns to fulfill all of the conditions at the same time, i.e., to read on the fourteenth and to read a day before the walled cities.

¹⁰⁸ The Gemara asks: And Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, what is his reason? The Gemara explains that it is also based upon the words “in every year”; just as in every other year the readings in the large towns are not deferred from their usual date and they read on the fourteenth, so too here, the readings in the large towns are not deferred from their usual date, but rather they read on the fourteenth.

¹⁰⁹ The Gemara raises an objection: Say that the words “in every year” indicate that just as every year the large towns precede the walled cities by one day, and read on the fourteenth, so too here the large towns precede the walled cities by one day, and read on the thirteenth. The Gemara answers: Here it is different, as it is not possible to fulfill all of the conditions at the same time, i.e., to read on the fourteenth and to read a day before the walled cities.

¹¹⁰ The Gemara asks: What is the opinion of Rabbi Yosei? As it is taught in a baraita: If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat eve, the walled cities and villages advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, and the large towns read it on the day of Purim itself. Rabbi Yosei says: The walled cities never precede the large towns; rather, both these, the large towns, and those, the walled cities, read on that day, i.e., Friday, the fourteenth of Adar.

¹¹¹ The Gemara asks: What is the reason of the first tanna? As it is written: “In every year”; just as in every other year the large towns read the Megilla on the fourteenth, and the time for this type of settlement to read the Megilla is not the time for that type of settlement to read the Megilla, as the large towns and walled cities never read the Megilla on the same day, so too here, the large towns read the Megilla on the fourteenth, and the time for this type of settlement to read the Megilla is not the time for that type of settlement to read the Megilla. Therefore, the walled cities must advance their reading of the Megilla by two days to the day of assembly, Thursday.

¹¹² The Gemara raises an objection: Say that the words “in every year” indicate that just as in every other year the walled cities do not precede the large towns, so too here, the walled cities do not precede the large towns. The Gemara answers: Here it is different, as it is not possible to fulfill all of the conditions at the same time, i.e., that the large towns should read on the fourteenth, the large towns and the walled cities should read on different days, and the walled cities should not precede the large towns.

¹¹³ What is the reason of Rabbi Yosei? It is based upon the words “in every year”; just as in every other year the walled cities do not precede the large towns, so too here, the walled cities do not precede the large towns.

¹¹⁴ The Gemara raises a difficulty: Say that the words “in every year” indicate that just as in every other year, the time for this type of settlement to read the Megilla is not the time for that type of settlement to read the Megilla, so too here, the time for this type of settlement to read the Megilla is not the time for that type of settlement to read the Megilla. Therefore, since the large towns read on the fourteenth, the walled cities read on the thirteenth. The Gemara answers: Here it is different, as it is not possible to fulfill all the conditions. It is clear from these baraitot that the tanna of the mishna can either be Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi or Rabbi Yosei, but not either of two anonymous tanna'im.

¹¹⁵ The Gemara asks: Does Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi really hold that one does not defer the reading of the Megilla in large towns to the day of assembly? Isn't it taught in a baraita: If the fourteenth occurs on Shabbat, the villages advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, the large towns read it on Shabbat eve, and the walled cities read it the next day, i.e., on Sunday. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi says: I say that since the readings in the large towns were already deferred from their usual date, i.e., the fourteenth, they are deferred to the day of assembly, i.e., to Thursday. Consequently, even Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi agrees that the reading in the large towns can be shifted to the day of assembly. Why doesn't he also hold that large towns read the Megilla on the day of assembly when the fourteenth occurs on a Friday?

¹¹⁶ The Gemara responds: How can these cases be compared? There, in the second baraita, the designated time for them to read the Megilla is Shabbat, but the Megilla is not read on Shabbat, and therefore they must read it on a different day. Therefore, since the readings in the large towns have been deferred, they are deferred an additional day, and take place on Thursday, the day of assembly, at the same time as the readings in the villages. Here, their designated time is Shabbat eve, and there is no reason to move the reading from that day.

¹¹⁷ The Gemara asks: In accordance with whose opinion is that which Rabbi Helbo said that Rav Huna said: When Purim occurs on Shabbat, the reading of the Megilla in all places is deferred to the day of assembly? The Gemara corrects the wording of Rav Huna's statement: Can it enter your mind to say that the reading of the Megilla in all places is deferred to the day of assembly? Aren't there

walled cities that perform this ceremony the next day, i.e., on Sunday? Rather, Rav Huna's statement should say as follows: All readings that are deferred are deferred to the day of assembly. In accordance with whose opinion was this stated? It is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi.

¹¹⁸ In any case, it is apparent from the mishna and the baraitot that everyone agrees that one does not read the Megilla on Shabbat. What is the reason for this? Rabba said: Everyone is obligated to participate in reading the Megilla on Purim and blowing the shofar on Rosh HaShana, and not everyone is proficient in reading the Megilla. Therefore, the Sages issued a rabbinic decree that the Megilla is not read on Shabbat, lest one take the Megilla in his hand and go to an expert to learn how to read it or to hear the expert read it, and, due to his preoccupation, he will carry it four cubits in the public domain, and thereby desecrate Shabbat.

¹¹⁹ The Gemara comments: And this same concern for the sanctity of Shabbat is the reason that the Sages decreed that the shofar is not blown when Rosh HaShana occurs on Shabbat. And this same concern is the reason that the Sages decreed that one may not take the lulav on Shabbat.

¹²⁰ Rav Yosef said that there is another reason the Megilla is not read on Shabbat: Because the eyes of the poor are raised to the reading of the Megilla. The poor await the day on which the Megilla is read, because on that day gifts are distributed to the poor. If the Megilla is read on Shabbat, it will not be possible to distribute gifts to the poor, who will be deeply disappointed. The Gemara notes that this is also taught in a baraita: Even though the Sages said that the villages advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, they also collect the gifts for the poor on that day, and they distribute them to the poor on that day.

¹²¹ The Gemara is troubled by the wording of this baraita. Does the baraita read: Even though the Sages said? On the contrary, it is because they said that the villages advance their reading to the day of assembly that the gifts must be collected and distributed to the poor on that very day. Rather, the baraita should read as follows: Since the Sages said that the villages advance their reading of the Megilla to the day of assembly, they collect the gifts for the poor on that day and they distribute them on that day, because the eyes of the poor are raised to the reading of the Megilla, and they should not be disappointed. However,

¹²² the rejoicing that takes place on Purim is practiced only in its designated time, the fourteenth of Adar.

¹²³ § Rav said: One may read the Megilla in its proper time, i.e., on the fourteenth of Adar, even privately. However, when it is read not at its proper time, e.g., when the villages advance their reading to the day of assembly, it must be read with a quorum of ten, because the enactment allowing the Megilla to be read before its proper time was only made for a community. Rav Asi disagreed and said: Both at its proper time and not at its proper time, the Megilla must be read with a quorum of ten. The Gemara relates that there was an incident where Rav had to read the Megilla on Purim, and he was concerned for this opinion of Rav Asi and gathered ten men even though he was reading the Megilla in its proper time, on the fourteenth of Adar.

¹²⁴ The Gemara asks: And did Rav actually say this, that when the Megilla is read not at its proper time, it can only be read with a quorum of ten? Didn't Rav Yehuda, son of Rav Shmuel bar Sheilat, say in the name of Rav: If Purim occurs on Shabbat, Shabbat eve is the proper time for reading the Megilla? The Gemara expresses surprise with regard to the wording of Rav's statement: Is Shabbat

eve the proper time for reading the Megilla? Isn't Shabbat itself its proper time? Rather, is it not true that this is what he said, i.e., that this is the way his statement should be understood: Reading the Megilla not at its proper time is like reading it at its proper time; just as at its proper time, it can be read even privately, so too, not at its proper time, it can be read even privately.

¹²⁵ The Gemara rejects this argument: Rav's statement was not made with regard to reading the Megilla with a quorum of ten. Rather, what is the meaning of Rav's statement that Shabbat eve is the proper time? It was meant to exclude the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, who said: Since the readings in the large towns were already deferred from their usual date and the Megilla was not read on the fourteenth, they are deferred to the day of assembly. This statement of Rav teaches us that Shabbat eve is the proper time for these towns to read the Megilla, as stated in the mishna.

¹²⁶ MISHNA: What is considered a large city, where the Megilla is read on the fourteenth of Adar? Any city in which there are ten idlers. However, if there are fewer than that, it is considered a village, even if it has many inhabitants.

¹²⁷ It was with regard to these times for reading the Megilla that the Sages said that one advances the reading of the Megilla before the fourteenth of Adar and one does not postpone the reading to after its proper time. However, with regard to the time when families of priests donate wood for the fire on the altar, which were times those families would treat as Festivals; as well as the fast of the Ninth of Av; the Festival peace-offering that was brought on the Festivals; and the commandment of assembly [hakhel] of the entire Jewish people in the Temple courtyard on Sukkot in the year following the Sabbatical year to hear the king read the book of Deuteronomy; one postpones their observance until after Shabbat and does not advance their observance to before Shabbat.

¹²⁸ The mishna continues: Even though the Sages said that one advances the time for reading the Megilla and one does not postpone the reading, one is permitted to eulogize and fast on these days, as they are not actually Purim; nevertheless, gifts for the poor are distributed on this day. Rabbi Yehuda said: When is the Megilla read on the day of assembly, before the fourteenth of Adar? In a place where the villagers generally enter town on Monday and Thursday. However, in a place where they do not generally enter town on Monday and Thursday, one may read the Megilla only in its designated time, the fourteenth of Adar.

¹²⁹ GEMARA: We learned in the mishna that a large city is one that has ten idlers. It was taught in a baraita: The ten idlers that are mentioned here are ten idlers that are in the synagogue, i.e., men who do not have professional responsibilities other than to sit in the synagogue and attend to communal religious needs. The presence of ten such men establishes a location as a prominent city.

¹³⁰ We learned in the mishna: It was with regard to these times for reading the Megilla that the Sages said that one advances the reading of the Megilla and one does not postpone it. The Gemara asks: What is the reason for this? Rabbi Abba said that Shmuel said: The verse states: "The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all who joined themselves to them, and it shall not pass, that they should keep these two days" (Esther 9:27), which indicates that the designated time must not pass without the reading of the Megilla.

¹³¹ Having mentioned a teaching of Rabbi Abba in the name of Shmuel, the Gemara cites another of his statements: And Rabbi Abba said that Shmuel said: From where is it derived that one does not count days to make up years, i.e., a year is considered to be comprised of either twelve or thirteen

lunar months, and not 365 days? As it is stated: “Of the months of the year” (Exodus 12:2), which indicates that you count months to make up years, but you do not count days to make up years.

¹³² The Gemara adds: And the Sages of Caesarea said in the name of Rabbi Abba: From where is it derived that one does not calculate hours to reckon the months? A lunar cycle takes approximately twenty-nine and a half days, but a calendar month is considered to be twenty-nine or thirty full days and not precisely a lunar cycle. As it is stated: “Until a month of days” (Numbers 11:20), which indicates that you calculate days to reckon the months, but you do not calculate hours to reckon the months.

¹³³ § We learned in the mishna: However, with regard to the time when families of priests donate wood for the fire on the altar, the fast of the Ninth of Av, the Festival peace-offering, and the commandment of assembly [hakhel], one postpones their observance until after Shabbat and does not advance their observance to before Shabbat. The Gemara explains the reason for this halakha with respect to each item mentioned in the mishna. The fast of the Ninth of Av is not advanced because one does not advance calamity; since the Ninth of Av is a tragic time, its observance is postponed as long as possible. The Festival peace-offering and the commandment of assembly [hakhel] are not advanced because the time of their obligation has not yet arrived, and it is impossible to fulfill mitzvot before the designated time has arrived.

¹³⁴ It was taught in a baraita: One postpones the Festival peace-offering and the entire time period of the Festival peace-offering. The Gemara attempts to clarify this statement: Granted that when the baraita says that the Festival peace-offering is postponed, it means that if a Festival occurs on Shabbat, when the Festival peace-offering cannot be sacrificed, one postpones it until after Shabbat and sacrifices the offering on the intermediate days of the Festival. However, what is the meaning of the phrase: The time period of the Festival peace-offering?

¹³⁵ Rav Oshaya said: This is what the baraita is saying: One postpones the Festival peace-offering if the Festival occurs on Shabbat, and one postpones the burnt-offering of appearance even due to the Festival itself. Despite the fact that a Festival day is the time for sacrificing a Festival peace-offering, the burnt-offering of appearance may not be sacrificed until after the Festival day.

¹³⁶ The Gemara adds: Whose opinion is reflected in the mishna according to Rav Oshaya’s explanation? It is the opinion of Beit Shammai, as we learned in a mishna (Beitza 19a) that Beit Shammai say: One may bring peace-offerings on a Festival day to be sacrificed in the Temple. Most portions of a peace-offering are eaten by the priests and the individual who brought the offering. Consequently, its slaughter is considered food preparation, which is permitted on a Festival day. And one may not place his hands on the head of the offering, as that includes leaning with all one’s might upon the animal, which is prohibited on a Festival.

¹³⁷ However, burnt-offerings may not be brought at all on the Festival. Since they are not eaten, their slaughter is not considered food preparation, and it therefore constitutes a prohibited labor on the Festival. Beit Hillel disagree and say: One may bring both peace-offerings and burnt-offerings on a Festival day, and one may even place his hands on them.

¹³⁸ Rava said that the baraita should be understood as follows: One postpones the Festival peace-offering for the entire time period of the Festival peace-offering, i.e., for the entire duration of the Festival. However, it may not be postponed for longer than this. As we learned in a mishna (Ḥagiga 9a): One who did not offer the Festival peace-offering on the first Festival day of the festival of

Sukkot may offer the Festival peace-offering for the duration of the entire pilgrimage Festival, including the intermediate days and the last day of the Festival. If the pilgrimage Festival has passed and he did not yet bring the Festival peace-offering, he is not obligated to pay restitution for it. The obligation is no longer in force, and he therefore is not liable to bring another offering as compensation.

¹³⁹ Rav Ashi said that the baraita should be understood as follows: The Festival peace-offering may be postponed for the entire time period of a Festival peace-offering. This indicates that even if Shavuot, which is one day, occurs on Shabbat, one postpones the Festival peace-offering and offers it on one of the six days after Shavuot. As we learned in a mishna (Ḥagiga 17a): Beit Hillel concede that if Shavuot occurs on Shabbat, the day of slaughter is after Shabbat. Since the Festival peace-offering and the burnt-offering of appearance cannot be sacrificed on Shabbat, they are slaughtered after Shabbat. This indicates that the Festival peace-offering may be slaughtered after the Festival day of Shavuot, as is the case on the other Festivals.

¹⁴⁰ Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Ḥanina said: Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi did several unusual things: He planted a sapling on Purim, and was not concerned about performing labor and thereby possibly denigrating the day.

¹⁴¹ And he bathed at the time when the wagons [kerona] were traveling through Tzipori, i.e., on the market day, when the public would know about it, on the seventeenth of Tammuz, to show that bathing is permitted on that day. And he sought to abolish the fast of the Ninth of Av. And with respect to the Ninth of Av, the Sages did not agree with him.

¹⁴² Rabbi Abba bar Zavda said to Rabbi Elazar: My teacher, the incident did not occur in this fashion. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi never sought to abolish the fast of the Ninth of Av. Rather, it was a year when the Ninth of Av occurred on Shabbat, and they postponed it until after Shabbat. And Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said about that case: Since it has already been deferred from its usual time, let it be altogether deferred this year. And the Rabbis did not agree with him. Rabbi Elazar read the verse about Rabbi Abba bar Zavda: “Two are better than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9), meaning, it is good that you were here to provide an accurate report about that incident.

¹⁴³ The Gemara asks: And how could Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi plant a sapling on Purim? Didn’t Rav Yosef teach with regard to the verse: “Therefore the Jews of the villages, who dwell in the unwalled towns, make the fourteenth day of the month of Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day [yom tov]” (Esther 9:19), that the term “gladness” teaches that it is prohibited to eulogize on Purim; “feasting” teaches that it is prohibited to fast; and the term “good day” [yom tov] teaches that it is prohibited to perform labor, just as on a Festival, which is also referred to as a yom tov? Rather, what happened was as follows: Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi was in a place that observed Purim on the fourteenth, and when he planted the sapling, he planted it on the fifteenth.

¹⁴⁴ The Gemara asks: Is that so? Wasn’t Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi in Tiberias, and Tiberias was surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua, son of Nun. Consequently, he was obligated to observe Purim on the fifteenth. Rather, say just the opposite: Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi lived in a place that observed Purim on the fifteenth, and when he planted the sapling, he planted it on the fourteenth.

¹⁴⁵ The Gemara asks: Was it obvious to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi that the city of Tiberias was surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua, son of Nun? Didn’t Hezekiah read the Megilla in Tiberias both on the fourteenth and on the fifteenth of Adar, because he was uncertain if it had been

surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua, son of Nun, or not? The Gemara answers: Hezekiah was indeed uncertain about the matter, whereas it was obvious to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi that Tiberias had been surrounded by a wall in the time of Joshua.

¹⁴⁶ The Gemara asks further: And when it was obvious to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi that the Megilla should be read in Tiberias on the fifteenth, was it permitted to plant there on the fourteenth? Isn't it written in Megillat Ta'anit that the fourteenth day and the fifteenth day of Adar are the days of Purim, and one is not permitted to eulogize on them?

¹⁴⁷ And Rava said: This statement is necessary only to prohibit those who observe Purim on this day to eulogize on that day, and those who observe Purim on that day to eulogize on this day. Since the two days are mentioned in the Bible, it was only necessary to mention them in Megillat Ta'anit in order to indicate that the prohibition against eulogizing applies to both days. Presumably, the same should apply to the prohibition against performing labor. Consequently, how could Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi plant a sapling on the fourteenth of Adar? The Gemara answers: That applies only to eulogies and fasting. However, labor is prohibited for only one day, either the fourteenth or the fifteenth, and no more.

¹⁴⁸ The Gemara asks: Is that so? Didn't Rav see a certain man planting flax on Purim, and cursed him, and the man's flax never grew. The Gemara answers: There, the man was obligated to observe Purim on that day that he planted the flax. Therefore, it was certainly prohibited to perform labor.

¹⁴⁹ Rabba, son of Rava, said a different answer to the question: Even if you say that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi planted the sapling on his own day of Purim, i.e., on the day that the Megilla was read in his location, it was still permitted to plant the sapling. This is because the Jewish people accepted upon themselves the prohibitions against eulogizing and fasting on Purim, but they did not accept upon themselves the prohibition against performing labor.

¹⁵⁰ This can be proven from the fact that initially, when Mordecai and Esther proposed the celebration of Purim, it is written: "A day of gladness and feasting and a good day [yom tov]" (Esther 9:19), and at the end, when the celebration of Purim was accepted by the Jewish people, it is written: "That they should make them days of feasting and gladness" (Esther 9:22), whereas the term good day [yom tov], which alludes to a day when it is prohibited to perform labor, is not written. The people never accepted upon themselves the prohibition against performing labor on Purim as if it were a Festival, and therefore the prohibition never took effect.

¹⁵¹ The Gemara asks: If labor is permitted on Purim, what is the reason that Rav cursed that man who planted the flax? The Gemara answers: It was a case of matters that are permitted by halakha, but others were accustomed to treat them as a prohibition, in which case one may not permit these actions in their presence, lest they come to treat other prohibitions lightly. In the place where that man planted his flax, it was customary to abstain from labor on Purim. However, in Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's place, it was not the custom to abstain from labor on Purim, and therefore it was permitted for him to plant the sapling even in public.

¹⁵² And if you wish, say an alternative answer: Actually, it was the custom to abstain from labor on Purim in Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's place, and Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi engaged in a joyful act of planting, for pleasure rather than for financial benefit. As we learned in a mishna with regard to public fasts: If these fasts for rain have passed and the community's prayers have still not been

answered, and the drought continues, one decreases his business activities, as well as construction, planting, betrothals, and marriages.

¹⁵³ And it was taught in a baraita about this mishna: When the Sages said that construction must be decreased on public fasts, they were not referring to the construction of homes for people who have nowhere to live, but to joyful construction. Similarly, when they said that planting must be decreased, they were not referring to planting food crops, but to joyful planting. What is meant by joyful construction? This is referring to one who builds a wedding chamber for his son. It was customary to build a special house where the wedding would take place, and at times the couple would also live there. What is meant by joyful planting? This is referring to one who plants trees for shade and pleasure such as one might find in a royal garden [avurneki]. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi engaged in joyful planting on Purim, in keeping with the joyous nature of the day.

¹⁵⁴ § The Gemara examines the matter itself cited in the previous discussion. Hezekiah read the Megilla in Tiberias both on the fourteenth and on the fifteenth of Adar, because he was uncertain if it had been surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua, son of Nun, or not. The Gemara asks: Was he really uncertain about the matter of Tiberias? Isn't it written: "And the fortified cities were Ziddim-zer, and Hammath, Rakkath, and Chinnereth" (Joshua 19:35), and we maintain that Rakkath is Tiberias? The Gemara answers: This is the reason that he was uncertain: Although Tiberias was surrounded by a wall in the time of Joshua, Hezekiah was uncertain about the halakha due to the fact that on one side, there was a wall of the sea, i.e., there was no physical wall, but the city was protected due to the fact that it adjoined the sea.

¹⁵⁵ The Gemara asks: If so, why was he uncertain? The sea is certainly not a wall. As it is taught in a baraita with regard to the sale of houses in walled cities, the phrase: "Which has a wall" (Leviticus 25:30), indicates that the city has a bona side wall and not merely a wall of roofs. If a city is completely encircled by attached houses but there is no separate wall, it is not considered a walled city. The next verse, which is referring to cities that have no wall "round about them" (Leviticus 25:31), excludes Tiberias from being considered a walled city, as the sea is its wall on one side and it is not fully encircled by a physical wall. Consequently, Tiberias is not considered a walled city.

¹⁵⁶ The Gemara answers: With regard to the sale of houses of walled cities, Hezekiah was not uncertain. Where he was uncertain was with regard to the reading of the Megilla: What are the unwalled towns and what are the walled cities that are written with regard to the reading of the Megilla? Is the difference between them due to the fact that these unwalled towns are exposed, whereas those walled cities are not exposed? If so, since Tiberias is also exposed, as it is not entirely surrounded by a wall, it should be considered unwalled. Or perhaps the difference is due to the fact that these walled cities are protected, whereas those unwalled towns are not protected, and Tiberias is also protected by the sea and should be treated as a walled city. It was due to that reason that Hezekiah was uncertain when to read the Megilla.

¹⁵⁷ The Gemara relates that Rav Asi read the Megilla in the city of Huzal in Babylonia on both the fourteenth and the fifteenth of Adar, because he was uncertain if it had been surrounded by a wall since the days of Joshua, son of Nun, or not. Huzal was an ancient city, and it was possible that it had been surrounded by a wall in the time of Joshua. Some say a different version of this report, according to which there was no uncertainty. Rav Asi said: This city of Huzal of the house of Benjamin was walled since the days of Joshua, son of Nun.

¹⁵⁸ Incidental to the previous discussion concerning Tiberias, the Gemara relates that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: When I was a child I said something that I later asked the Elders about,

¹⁵⁹ and it was found in accordance with my opinion. I said that Hammath is Tiberias. And why was it called Hammath? On account of the hot springs of [ḥammei] Tiberias that are located there. And I said that Rakkath is Tzippori. And why was it called Rakkath? Because it is raised above the surrounding areas like the bank [rakta] of a river. And I said that Chinnereth is Ginosar. And why was it called Chinnereth? Because its fruit are sweet like the sound of a harp [kinnor].

¹⁶⁰ Rava said: Is there anyone who says that Rakkath is not Tiberias? Isn't it true that when a great man dies here, in Babylonia, they lament his demise there, in Tiberias, as follows: Great was he in Sheshakh, i.e., Babylonia (see Jeremiah 25:26), and he had a name in Rakkath? Furthermore, when they bring up the casket of an important person to there, to Tiberias, they lament his demise as follows: You lovers of the remnants of the Jewish people, residents of Rakkath, go out and receive the dead from the deep, i.e., the low-lying lands of Babylonia.

¹⁶¹ Similarly, the Gemara relates that when Rabbi Zeira died, a certain eulogizer opened his eulogy for him with these words: The land of Shinar, i.e., Babylonia, Rabbi Zeira's birthplace, conceived and bore him; the land of the deer, i.e., Eretz Yisrael, where Rabbi Zeira lived as an adult and rose to prominence, raised her delights. Woe unto her, said Rakkath, for she has lost her precious instrument. It is apparent from these examples that Rakkath is Tiberias.

¹⁶² Rather, Rabba said: Hammath is the hot springs of Gerar that are adjacent to Tiberias; Rakkath is Tiberias; and Chinnereth is Ginosar. And why was Tiberias called Rakkath? Because even the empty ones [reikanin] of Tiberias are as full of mitzvot as a pomegranate is full of seeds. Rabbi Yirmeya said: In fact, Rakkath is its real name; and why was it called Tiberias? Because it sits in the very center [tabbur] of Eretz Yisrael. Rava said: Rakkath is its real name, and why was it called Tiberias? Because its appearance is good [tova re'iyata].

¹⁶³ § While continuing to identify places that are mentioned in the Bible, Zeira said: The city of Kitron that is mentioned in the Bible is the city of Tzippori. And why was it called Tzippori? Because it sits on top of a mountain like a bird [tzippor].

¹⁶⁴ The Gemara asks: Is Kitron really Tzippori? Wasn't Kitron in the tribal territory of Zebulun, as it is written: "Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol" (Judges 1:30)? And the tribe of Zebulun was resentful of its portion, as it is stated: "Zebulun was a people that jeopardized their lives to the death" (Judges 5:18). What is the reason for their resentfulness? Because "Naphtali was on the high places of the field" (Judges 5:18).

¹⁶⁵ The verse should be interpreted as follows: Zebulun said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe! To my brothers, the tribes whose territory is adjacent to mine, You gave fields and vineyards, whereas to me You gave mountains and hills; to my brothers You gave lands, whereas to me You gave seas and rivers. God said back to him: Nevertheless, all will need you due to the ḥilazon, the small sea creature residing in your territory that is the source of the dye used in the ritual fringes [tzitzit]. As it is stated in Moses' blessing to Zebulun: "They shall call the people to the mountain: There they shall sacrifice offerings of righteousness; for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the hidden treasures of the sand" (Deuteronomy 33:19).

¹⁶⁶ Rav Yosef teaches about this: “Treasures”; this is referring to the ḥilazon, which is found in the waters of Zebulun. “Hidden”; this is referring to the tarit, a type of sardine, which is also found in Zebulun’s coastal waters. “Sand”; this is referring to the sand from which white glass is made. Zebulun said to Him: All of these resources are indeed found in my territory, but Master of the Universe, who will inform me if others take them without permission? He said to the tribe of Zebulun: “There they shall sacrifice offerings of righteousness.” This shall be a sign for you that anyone who takes these items from you without making payment will not prosper at all in his business.

¹⁶⁷ It is clear from the exposition of the verse in Judges that the territory of Zebulun did not contain fields and vineyards. And if it enters your mind to say that Kitron is Tzippori, why was Zebulun resentful of his portion? Wasn’t Tzippori in his territory, which was land that was vastly superior with regard to its produce? And if you would say that Zebulun’s portion did not have quality land flowing with milk and honey, didn’t Reish Lakish say: I myself have seen the land flowing with milk and honey around Tzippori, and it was sixteen mil by sixteen mil?

¹⁶⁸ And if you would say that the part of his territory that flowed with milk and honey was not as vast as that of his brothers, the other tribes, didn’t Rabba bar bar Ḥana say that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: I myself have seen the land flowing with milk and honey over all of Eretz Yisrael. And the size of the fertile land was like the distance from Bei Kovei to the fortress of Tulbakni, a total of twenty-two parasangs [parsa] in length and six parasangs in width. A parasang is four mil; consequently, the area flowing with milk and honey around Tzippori was four by four parasangs, which is more than the fair share of one tribe among twelve.

¹⁶⁹ The Gemara answers: Even so, fields and vineyards were preferable to Zebulun. The fertile land in Zebulun’s territory is in a mountainous region, which makes it more difficult to cultivate. The Gemara comments: The language of the verse is also precise according to this explanation, as it is written: “And Naphtali was on the high places of the field,” which indicates that Zebulun’s complaint was due to the fact that Naphtali had fields. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, learn from here that this is so.

¹⁷⁰ § The Gemara continues its discussion with regard to identifying places mentioned in the Bible. Rabbi Abbahu said: “And Ekron shall be uprooted” (Zephaniah 2:4). This is an allusion to Caesarea, daughter of Edom, which is situated among the sands. Caesarea was primarily populated by Greeks and Romans, and it served as the seat of Roman rule when the Romans, who are identified with Edom in Jewish literature, ruled Eretz Yisrael. And it was a spike stuck in the side of the Jewish people already in the days of the Greeks, as it was an obstacle to the spread of Jewish settlement. When the Hasmonean monarchy prevailed and triumphed over them, they called it: The captured tower of Shir.

¹⁷¹ Rabbi Yosei bar Ḥanina said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his detestable things from between his teeth, and he also shall be a remnant for our God; and he shall be as a chief in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite” (Zechariah 9:7)? The verse should be understood as follows: “And I will take away his blood out of his mouth”; this is referring to their house of altars, where they sacrifice offerings. “And his detestable things from between his teeth”; this is referring to their house of piles, where they heap their ritual stones.

¹⁷² “And he also shall be a remnant for our God,” these words are referring to the synagogues and study halls in Edom. “And he shall be as a chief [aluf] in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite,” these words are referring to the theaters [tere’atrayot] and the circuses [kirkesayot] in Edom where the officers of Judah are destined to teach Torah in public.

¹⁷³ Rabbi Yitzḥak said: “And the children of Dan went up and fought against Leshem” (Joshua 19:47); this is referring to the city that was known in the Talmudic period as Pamyas. “Ekron shall be uprooted” (Zephaniah 2:4); this is referring to Caesarea, the daughter of Edom, which was a metropolis [metropolin], i.e., a capital city, of kings. There are those who say this means that kings were raised there, and there are those who say it means that kings were appointed from there, meaning the kings of Edom were appointed from among the residents of this city.

¹⁷⁴ The Sages said that the fortunes of Caesarea, which represents Rome, and Jerusalem are diametric opposites. If, therefore, someone says to you that both cities are destroyed, do not believe him. Similarly, if he says to you that they are both settled in tranquility, do not believe him. If, however, he says to you that Caesarea is destroyed and Jerusalem is settled, or that Jerusalem is destroyed and Caesarea is settled, believe him. As it is stated: “Because Tyre has said against Jerusalem: Aha, the gates of the people have been broken; she is turned to me; I shall be filled with her that is laid waste” (Ezekiel 26:2), and Tyre, like Caesarea, represents Rome. Consequently, the verse indicates that if this city is filled, that one is laid waste, and if that city is filled, this one is laid waste. The two cities cannot coexist.

¹⁷⁵ Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak said: The same idea may be derived from here, a verse dealing with Jacob and Esau: “And the one people shall be stronger than the other people” (Genesis 25:23), teaching that when one nation rises, the other necessarily falls.

¹⁷⁶ § Having mentioned Edom, the Gemara cites what Rabbi Yitzḥak said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord” (Isaiah 26:10)? Isaac said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, let favor be shown to Esau, my beloved son. God said to him: Esau is wicked. Isaac said to God: “Yet will he not learn righteousness,” i.e., is there no one who can find merit in him? God said to him: “In the land of uprightness he will deal wrongfully,” meaning that he is destined to destroy Eretz Yisrael. Isaac said to God: If it is so that he is that wicked, “he will not behold the majesty of the Lord.”

¹⁷⁷ And Rabbi Yitzḥak also said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; further not his evil device, so that they not exalt themselves. Selah” (Psalms 140:9)? Jacob said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, grant not to the wicked Esau the desires of his heart, as he wishes to destroy us. Further not his evil device [zemamo]; do not remove the muzzle [zamam] that constrains him and prevents him from breaking out and gathering further strength. This is a reference to

¹⁷⁸ Germamya of Edom, i.e., Germany, which is near the land of Edom, i.e., Rome. As, if the Germans would go forth, they would destroy the entire world.

¹⁷⁹ And Rabbi Ḥama Bar Ḥanina said: There are three hundred young princes with crowns tied to their heads in Germamya of Edom, and there are three hundred and sixty-five chieftains [marzavnei] in Rome. Every day these go out to battle against those, and one of them is killed, and they are preoccupied with appointing a new king in his place. Since neither side is united, neither side is able

to achieve a decisive victory. It is these wars between Rome and the Germanic tribes that act as a muzzle upon Esau-Edom-Rome and prevent it from becoming too strong.

¹⁸⁰ § Rabbi Yitzḥak said in the style of a previous passage: If a person says to you: I have labored and not found success, do not believe him. Similarly, if he says to you: I have not labored but nevertheless I have found success, do not believe him. If, however, he says to you: I have labored and I have found success, believe him.

¹⁸¹ The Gemara comments: This applies only to matters of Torah, as success with respect to Torah study is in accordance with the toil and effort invested. But with regard to success in business, it all depends upon assistance from Heaven, as there is no correlation between success and effort. And even with regard to matters of Torah, we said this only with regard to sharpening one's understanding of Torah, as the more one labors, the deeper the understanding of the material he achieves. However, to preserve what one has learned, it is dependent upon assistance from Heaven. Not everyone achieves this, even with much effort.

¹⁸² And Rabbi Yitzḥak also said: If you see a wicked man whom the hour is smiling upon, i.e., who is enjoying good fortune, do not provoke him, as it is stated: "Contend not with evildoers" (Psalms 37:1). And not only that, but if you provoke him, his undertakings will be successful, as it is stated: "His ways prosper at all times" (Psalms 10:5). And not only that, but even if he is brought to court, he emerges victorious in judgment, as it is stated: "Your judgments are far above him" (Psalms 10:5), as though the trial is far removed from him and does not affect him. And not only that, but he will see his enemies fall, as it is stated: "As for all his enemies, he hisses at them" (Psalms 10:5).

¹⁸³ The Gemara asks: Is that so? Didn't Rabbi Yoḥanan say in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai: It is permitted to provoke the wicked in this world, as it is stated: "They that forsake the Torah praise the wicked; but they who keep the Torah contend with them" (Proverbs 28:4)? And furthermore, it is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Dostai bar Matun said: It is permitted to provoke the wicked in this world, and if a person whispers to you to say that this is not so, relying on the verse: "Contend not with evildoers, nor be envious against the workers of iniquity" (Psalms 37:1), know that only one whose heart strikes him with pangs of conscience over sins that he committed says this.

¹⁸⁴ Rather, the true meaning of that verse is: "Contend not with evildoers," to be like the evildoers; "nor be envious against the workers of iniquity," to be like the workers of iniquity. And it says elsewhere: "Let not your heart envy sinners, but be in the fear of the Lord all the day" (Proverbs 23:17). In this context, to be envious of sinners means to desire to be like them. Rabbi Yoḥanan and Rabbi Dostai indicate that one is permitted to provoke the wicked, against the opinion of Rabbi Yitzḥak.

¹⁸⁵ The Gemara explains: This is not difficult, as it can be understood that this, Rabbi Yitzḥak's statement that one may not provoke the wicked, is referring to his personal matters, while that, the statements of Rabbi Yoḥanan and Rabbi Dostai that it is permitted to provoke them, is referring to matters of Heaven, i.e., religious matters.

¹⁸⁶ And if you wish, say: Both this statement and that statement are stated with regard to his own affairs, and still it is not difficult. This statement, that it is permitted to provoke the wicked, applies to a completely righteous individual; that statement, that one may not provoke them, applies to an individual who is not completely righteous. As Rav Huna said: What is the meaning of that which is written: "Why do you look upon them that deal treacherously, and remain silent when the wicked

devours the man that is more righteous than he” (Habakkuk 1:13)? This verse indicates that the wicked devours one who is more righteous than he; however, he does not devour one who is completely righteous.

¹⁸⁷ And if you wish, say instead: When the hour is smiling upon him, i.e., when the wicked individual is enjoying good fortune, it is different. He is receiving divine assistance, and even the completely righteous should not provoke him.

¹⁸⁸ § Having mentioned Rome, the Gemara cites what Ulla said. Greek Italy, i.e., southern Italy, is the great city of Rome, and it is three hundred parasang [parsa] by three hundred parasang. It has three hundred and sixty-five markets, corresponding to the number of days in the solar year, and the smallest of them all is the market of poultry sellers, which is sixteen mil by sixteen mil. And the king, i.e., the Roman emperor, dines every day in one of them.

¹⁸⁹ And one who resides in the city, even if he was not born there, receives an allowance for his living expenses from the king’s palace. And one who was born there, even if he does not reside there, also receives an allowance from the king’s palace. And there are three thousand bathhouses in the city, and five hundred apertures that let the smoke from the bathhouses out beyond the walls in a way that doesn’t blacken the walls themselves. One side of the city is bordered by the sea, one side by mountains and hills, one side by a barrier of iron and one side by gravel [hulsit] and swamp.

¹⁹⁰ MISHNA: If the people read the Megilla during the first Adar and subsequently the year was then intercalated by the court and now the following month will be the second Adar, one reads the Megilla again during the second Adar. The Sages formulated a principle: The difference between the first Adar and the second Adar with regard to the mitzvot that are performed during those months is only that the reading of the Megilla and distributing gifts to the poor are performed in the second Adar and not in the first Adar.

¹⁹¹ GEMARA: The Gemara infers that with regard to the matter of the sequence of Torah portions read each year on two Shabbatot before Purim, the portions of Shekalim and Zakhor, and on two Shabbatot after Purim, Para and HaḤodesh, this, the first Adar, and that, the second Adar are equal, in that reading them during the first Adar exempts one from reading them in the second Adar.

¹⁹² The Gemara asks: If so, whose opinion is taught in the mishna? It is neither the opinion of the anonymous first tanna of the following baraita, nor that of Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yosei, nor that of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, as it is taught in a baraita: If they read the Megilla during the first Adar and the year was then intercalated, they read it during the second Adar, as all mitzvot that are practiced during the second Adar are practiced in the first Adar, except for the reading of the Megilla.

¹⁹³ Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yosei, says: They do not read it again during the second Adar, as all mitzvot that are practiced during the second Adar are practiced during the first Adar. Once the Megilla was read during the first Adar, one need not read it again during the second Adar.

¹⁹⁴ Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says in the name of Rabbi Yosei: They even read it again during the second Adar, as all mitzvot that are practiced during the second Adar are not practiced during the first Adar. And they all agree with regard to eulogy and with regard to fasting that they are prohibited on the fourteenth and the fifteenth days of this month of the first Adar and on that month of the second Adar.

¹⁹⁵ The Gemara analyzes the baraita. The opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel is identical to that of the first tanna. What novel element does he introduce? Rav Pappa said: There is a practical difference between them with regard to the sequence of four Torah portions, as the first tanna maintains: They should read those portions during the second Adar, *ab initio*. However, if they did so during the first Adar, they did so; and they fulfilled their obligation and need not read them again during the second Adar, except for the reading of the Megilla, as even though they already read it during the first Adar, they read it again during the second Adar.

¹⁹⁶ And Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yosei, maintains that even the reading of the Megilla may be performed during the first Adar, *ab initio*, and they need not read it again during the second Adar. And Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel maintains: Even with regard to the sequence of four Torah portions, if they read them during the first Adar, they read them again during the second Adar.

¹⁹⁷ Returning to the original question, according to whose opinion is the mishna taught? If it is the opinion of the first tanna, the halakha of gifts to the poor is difficult. The first tanna does not mention these gifts, indicating that he maintains that if gifts were distributed during the first Adar one need not distribute gifts to the poor during the second Adar. And if the mishna was taught according to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yosei, the reading of the Megilla is also difficult. And if it is the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, the sequence of Torah portions is difficult.

¹⁹⁸ The Gemara answers: Actually, the mishna is according to the opinion of the first tanna, and he taught the halakha with regard to the reading of the Megilla, and the same is true with regard to gifts to the poor, as this mitzva is dependent upon that one. The Gemara already explained that the gifts to the poor are distributed on the day that the Megilla is read.

¹⁹⁹ And if you wish, say instead: Actually, the mishna is according to the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, and the mishna is incomplete and is teaching the following: The difference between the fourteenth day of the first Adar and the fourteenth day of the second Adar is only with regard to the reading of the Megilla and distributing gifts to the poor. The Gemara infers that with regard to the matter of eulogy and fasting, this, the first Adar, and that, the second Adar are equal, while about the sequence of Torah portions, the mishna does not speak at all. The mishna limits its discussion to the halakhot of Purim.

²⁰⁰ Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Avin said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, who said it in the name of Rabbi Yosei.

²⁰¹ Rabbi Yoḥanan said: And both of them, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel and Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yosei, interpreted the same verse differently, leading them to their conclusions. It is written: “To enjoin upon them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and the fifteenth day of the same, in each and every year” (Esther 9:21). Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yosei, maintains: “In each and every year” teaches that Purim must be celebrated the same way each year, even if it is intercalated: Just as each and every year Purim is celebrated during Adar that is adjacent to Shevat, so too here in an intercalated year Purim is celebrated during Adar that is adjacent to Shevat.

²⁰² And Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel maintains: “In each and every year” teaches that just as each and every year Purim is celebrated in Adar that is adjacent to Nisan, so too here, in an intercalated year, Purim is celebrated during Adar that is adjacent to Nisan.

²⁰³ The Gemara asks: Granted, according to Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yosei, the reason for his opinion is logical, based on the principle that one does not forego performance of the mitzvot; rather, when presented with the opportunity to perform a mitzva, one should do so immediately. However, with regard to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, what is the reason for his opinion?

²⁰⁴ Rabbi Tavi said: The reason for the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel is that juxtaposing the celebration of one redemption, Purim, to the celebration of another redemption, Passover, is preferable.

²⁰⁵ Rabbi Elazar said: The reason for the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel is derived from here, as it is written: “To confirm this second letter of Purim” (Esther 9:29), indicating that there are circumstances where the Megilla is read a second time (Jerusalem Talmud), i.e., when the year was intercalated after the Megilla was read in the first Adar.

²⁰⁶ The Gemara comments: And it was necessary to write

²⁰⁷ the term: The second, and it was also necessary to write the phrase: In each and every year; proof from one of the verses would have been insufficient. As, if I had derived the halakha only from the phrase: In each and every year, I would have said my conclusion according to our question raised earlier: Why not celebrate Purim in the Adar adjacent to Shevat? Therefore, it teaches us using the term: The second. And had it taught us only the term: The second, I would have said that Purim must be celebrated both in the first Adar and in the second Adar, *ab initio*. Therefore, it teaches us: In each and every year, indicating that even in an intercalated year, just as in an ordinary year, Purim is to be celebrated only once.

²⁰⁸ The Gemara asks: And Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yosei, what does he do with this term: The second? Since he holds that the Megilla is read in the first Adar, what does he derive from the verse? The Gemara answers: He requires the term to derive that statement of Rav Shmuel bar Yehuda, as Rav Shmuel bar Yehuda said: Initially, they established the observance of Purim in the city of Shushan alone, and ultimately they established it throughout the world, according to the second letter of Purim.

²⁰⁹ Apropos the statement of Rav Shmuel bar Yehuda with regard to the establishment of the holiday of Purim, the Gemara cites a related statement. Rav Shmuel bar Yehuda said: Esther sent to the Sages: Establish me for future generations. Esther requested that the observance of Purim and the reading of the Megilla be instituted as an ordinance for all generations. They sent to her: You will thereby arouse the wrath of the nations upon us, as the Megilla recounts the victory of the Jews over the gentiles, and it is best not to publicize that victory. She sent back to them: I am already written in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia, and so the Megilla will not publicize anything that is not already known worldwide.

²¹⁰ It was related that Rav and Rabbi Ḥanina and Rabbi Yoḥanan and Rav Ḥaviva taught the statement cited below. The Gemara comments: Throughout the order of Moed, wherever this latter pair of Sages is mentioned, exchange Rabbi Yoḥanan and insert Rabbi Yonatan in his place. They said: Esther sent to the Sages: Write me for future generations and canonize my book as part of the Bible. They sent to her that it is written: “Have I not written for you three times” (Proverbs 22:20), indicating that Israel’s battle with Amalek is to be mentioned three times in the Bible and not four times? Since it is already mentioned three times (Exodus 17:8–16; Deuteronomy 25:17–19; I Samuel 15), there is no need to add a fourth source.

²¹¹ The Sages did not accede to Esther's request until they found a verse written in the Torah: "Write this for a memorial in the book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: That I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens" (Exodus 17:14). The Sages interpreted the verse: "Write this," that which is written in the Torah here in Exodus, and in Deuteronomy; "a memorial," that which is written in the Prophets, i.e., in I Samuel, on this matter; "in the book," that which is written in the Megilla. The Megilla is the third mention of Amalek and not the fourth, as both mentions in the Torah pertaining to Amalek are considered one; therefore, Esther would be the third, not the fourth source.

²¹² The Gemara comments: This matter is parallel to a dispute between the tanna'im, as it was taught in a baraita: "Write this," that which is written here, in the book of Exodus; "a memorial," that which is written in Deuteronomy; "in the book," that which is written in the Prophets; this is the statement of Rabbi Yehoshua. Rabbi Elazar HaModa'i disagrees and says: "Write this," that which is written in the Torah here in Exodus, and in Deuteronomy; "a memorial," that which is written in the Prophets on this matter; "in the book," that which is written in the Megilla. Here too, the tanna'im disagreed whether or not the book of Esther has the same force and sanctity as that of the canonized books of the Bible.

²¹³ Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: The book of Esther does not render the hands ritually impure. Although the Sages issued a decree that sacred scrolls render hands ritually impure, the book of Esther was not accorded the sanctity of sacred scrolls.

²¹⁴ The Gemara asks: Is this to say that Shmuel maintains that the book of Esther was not stated with the inspiration of the Divine Spirit? But didn't Shmuel himself say elsewhere that the book of Esther was stated with the inspiration of the Divine Spirit? The Gemara answers: It was stated with the Divine Spirit that it is to be read in public; however, it was not stated that it is to be written. Therefore, the text was not accorded the sanctity of sacred scrolls.

²¹⁵ The Gemara raises an objection from a baraita. Rabbi Meir says: The book of Ecclesiastes does not render the hands ritually impure, as it was not accorded the sanctity of sacred scrolls; however, there is a dispute with regard to whether or not the Song of Songs renders the hands impure. Rabbi Yosei says: The Song of Songs renders the hands ritually impure, but there is a dispute with regard to the book of Ecclesiastes. Rabbi Shimon says: The ruling with regard to Ecclesiastes is among the leniencies of Beit Shammai and among the stringencies of Beit Hillel, as according to Beit Hillel it renders the hands impure and according to Beit Shammai it does not. However, everyone agrees that the books of Ruth, and the Song of Songs, and Esther render the hands ritually impure, contrary to the opinion of Shmuel. The Gemara answers: It was Shmuel who stated his opinion in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua cited earlier that the book of Esther was not accorded the sanctity of sacred scrolls.

²¹⁶ It is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya says: The book of Ecclesiastes does not render the hands ritually impure because it is the wisdom of Solomon, and not divinely inspired. They said to him: It was certainly divinely inspired and that is the reason that the book of Ecclesiastes was added to the canon; as was it this alone that Solomon said? Wasn't it already stated: "And he spoke three thousand proverbs, and his poems were a thousand and five" (I Kings 5:12)? Solomon spoke many proverbs, but only a portion of them were canonized in the Bible. Apparently,

what is unique about those in Ecclesiastes is that they were divinely inspired. And it says: “Add you not unto his words” (Proverbs 30:6).

²¹⁷ The Gemara asks: What is added by the proof introduced with the phrase: And it says? Why wasn’t the first proof sufficient? The Gemara answers: And if you would say that in terms of what he said, he said a great deal, with regard to which, if he so desired, it was written, and if he so desired, it was not written; then that is why not all of his statements were preserved. Therefore, come and hear: Add you not unto his words. Apparently, the reason that it is prohibited to add to the proverbs is that the book of Ecclesiastes was divinely inspired.

²¹⁸ It is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Eliezer says: The book of Esther was said with the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, as it is stated: “And Haman thought in his heart” (Esther 6:6). If the book of Esther was not divinely inspired, how was it known what Haman thought in his heart? Rabbi Akiva says: The book of Esther was said with the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, as it is stated: “And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all those who looked upon her” (Esther 2:15); this could have been known only through divine inspiration.

²¹⁹ Rabbi Meir says: The book of Esther was said with the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, as it is stated with regard to the conspiracy of Bigtan and Teresh against Ahasuerus: “And the thing became known to Mordecai” (Esther 2:22). This too could have been known only through divine inspiration. Rabbi Yosei ben Durmaskit says: The book of Esther was said with the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, as it is stated: “But they did not lay their hands on the plunder” (Esther 9:15). The only way that could have been stated with certainty is through divine inspiration.

²²⁰ Shmuel said: Had I been there among the tanna'im, I would have stated a matter that is superior to them all, as it is stated: “They confirmed, and took upon themselves” (Esther 9:27), which was interpreted to mean: They confirmed above in heaven what they took upon themselves below on earth. Clearly, it is only through divine inspiration that this could have been ascertained.

²²¹ Rava said: There is a refutation for all of these proofs, except for the proof cited by Shmuel, for which there is no refutation. The Gemara elaborates. That which Rabbi Eliezer said with regard to knowledge of what Haman was thinking in his heart can be refuted, as it is based on logical reasoning to conclude that this was his thinking. There was no other person as important to the king as he was; and the fact is that when he elaborated extensively and said: “Let the royal apparel be brought” (Esther 6:8), he said it with himself in mind.

²²² That which Rabbi Akiva said with regard to the knowledge that Esther found favor in the eyes of all, perhaps it can be understood and refuted in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Elazar, who said: This teaches that she appeared to each and every one as one of his nation, and they expressed that sentiment aloud.

²²³ And that which Rabbi Meir said, i.e., that the divine inspiration of the book of Esther is clear from the fact that Mordecai exposed the conspiracy against Ahasuerus, perhaps this can be explained and refuted in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba, who said: Bigtan and Teresh were both members of the Tarsi people and conversed in their own language. Mordecai, who was a member of the Sanhedrin and therefore fluent in many languages, understood what they were saying.

²²⁴ And that which Rabbi Yosei ben Durmaskit said with regard to the knowledge that no spoils were taken, perhaps this can be explained and refuted by the fact that they dispatched messengers who

informed them of the situation. However, with regard to Shmuel's proof from the fact that they confirmed above what they took upon themselves below, there is certainly no refutation. Ravina said: This explains the folk saying that people say: One sharp pepper is better than a basketful of pumpkins, as the quality of the pepper's taste is more significant than the quantity of the pumpkins.

²²⁵ Rav Yosef said: Proof that the book of Esther was divinely inspired may be cited from here: "And these days of Purim shall not cease from among the Jews" (Esther 9:28), an assertion that could have been made only with divine inspiration. Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak says: Proof may be cited from here, at the end of that verse: "Nor the memorial of them perish from their seed" (Esther 9:28).

²²⁶ The mishna mentions: And gifts distributed to the poor. Rav Yosef taught a baraita that the verse states: "And of sending portions one to another" (Esther 9:22), indicating two portions to one person. The verse continues: "And gifts to the poor" (Esther 9:22), indicating two gifts to two people.

²²⁷ The Gemara relates that, on Purim, Rabbi Yehuda Nesia sent to Rabbi Oshaya the leg of a third-born calf and a jug of wine. Rabbi Oshaya sent him a message of gratitude:

²²⁸ You have fulfilled two mitzvot through us, our teacher: The mitzva of: "And sending portions one to another," and the mitzva of: "And gifts to the poor," as Rabbi Oshaya was poor and this was a substantial gift.

²²⁹ The Gemara relates that Rabba sent Purim portions from the house of the Exilarch to Marei bar Mar in the hands of Abaye, who was his nephew and student. The Purim portions consisted of a sack [taska] full of dates [kashva] and a cupful of roasted flour [kimḥa de'avshuna]. Abaye said to him: Now, Mari will say the popular expression: Even if a farmer becomes the king, the basket does not descend from his neck. Rabba was named the head of the yeshiva in Pumbedita, and nevertheless, he continued to send very plain gifts, because he was impoverished.

²³⁰ Marei bar Mar sent back to him a sack full of ginger and a cupful of long peppers [pilpalta arikha], a much more expensive gift. Abaye said to him: The master, Rabba, will now say: I sent him sweet items and he sent me pungent ones.

²³¹ In describing that same incident, Abaye said: When I left the house of the master, Rabba, to go to Marei bar Mar, I was already satiated. However, when I arrived there at Marei bar Mar's house, they served me sixty plates of sixty kinds of cooked dishes, and I ate sixty portions from each of them. The last dish was called pot roast, and I was still so hungry that I wanted to chew the plate afterward.

²³² And in continuation Abaye said: This explains the folk saying that people say: The poor man is hungry and does not know it, as Abaye was unaware how hungry he had been in his master's house. Alternatively, there is another appropriate, popular expression: Room in the stomach for sweets can always be found.

²³³ The Gemara relates that Abaye bar Avin and Rabbi Ḥanina bar Avin would exchange their meals with each other to fulfill their obligation of sending portions on Purim.

²³⁴ Rava said: A person is obligated to become intoxicated with wine on Purim until he is so intoxicated that he does not know how to distinguish between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordecai.

²³⁵ The Gemara relates that Rabba and Rabbi Zeira prepared a Purim feast with each other, and they became intoxicated to the point that Rabba arose and slaughtered Rabbi Zeira. The next day, when he became sober and realized what he had done, Rabba asked God for mercy, and revived him. The next

year, Rabba said to Rabbi Zeira: Let the Master come and let us prepare the Purim feast with each other. He said to him: Miracles do not happen each and every hour, and I do not want to undergo that experience again.

²³⁶ Rava said: A Purim feast that one ate at night did not fulfill his obligation. What is the reason? “Days of feasting and gladness” (Esther 9:22) is written, i.e., days and not nights. The Gemara relates: Rav Ashi was sitting before Rav Kahana his teacher on Purim, and it grew dark and the Sages who usually came to study with him did not come. Rav Ashi said to him: What is the reason that the Sages did not come today? Rav Kahana answered: Perhaps they are preoccupied with the Purim feast. Rav Ashi said to him: Wasn’t it possible for them to eat the feast at night on Purim, instead of being derelict in their Torah study on Purim day? Rav Kahana said to him: Didn’t the master learn that which Rava said: A Purim feast that one ate at night did not fulfill his obligation? Rav Ashi said to him: Did Rava say that? Rav Kahana said to him: Yes. Rav Ashi then learned it from him forty times until he remembered it so well that it seemed to him as if it were placed in his purse.

²³⁷ MISHNA: The previous mishna concluded with the formula: The difference between...is only, thereby distinguishing between the halakhot in two different cases. The following mishnayot employ the same formula and distinguish between the halakhot in cases unrelated to Purim and the Megilla. The first is: The difference between Festivals and Shabbat with regard to the labor prohibited on those days is only in preparing food alone. It is permitted to cook and bake in order to prepare food on Festivals; however, on Shabbat it is prohibited.

²³⁸ GEMARA: The Gemara infers that with regard to the matter of actions that facilitate preparation of food, e.g., sharpening a knife for slaughter, this, Shabbat, and that, Festivals, are equal, in that actions that facilitate preparation of food are prohibited.

²³⁹ The Gemara comments: If so, the mishna is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, as it is taught in a baraita: The difference between Festivals and Shabbat is only preparing food. Rabbi Yehuda permits even actions that facilitate preparation of food on Festivals.

²⁴⁰ The Gemara elaborates. What is the reason for the opinion of the first tanna? It is as the verse states: “Except that which every person must eat, only that may be done for you” (Exodus 12:16). “That” is permitted, and not actions that facilitate it. And Rabbi Yehuda says: “For you” means for you, for all your needs.

²⁴¹ The Gemara asks: And for the other, first, tanna too, isn’t it written: “For you”? The Gemara answers: He infers: For you, and not for gentiles; for you, and not for dogs. It is forbidden to perform labors for the sake of gentiles, or for animals, even if it is to feed them.

²⁴² The Gemara asks further: And for the other tanna, Rabbi Yehuda, too, isn’t it written: “That,” which is a restrictive term that limits the application of a particular halakha? The Gemara answers: It is written: “That,” which is restrictive, and it is written: “For you,” which is inclusive. Rabbi Yehuda resolves the conflict between the two: Here, the word: “That,” is referring to actions that facilitate, in which it is possible to perform them on the Festival eve but which are prohibited on the Festival; there, the phrase: “For you,” is referring to actions that facilitate, in which it is impossible to perform them on the Festival eve and which are permitted even on the Festival.

²⁴³ MISHNA: The difference between Shabbat and Yom Kippur with regard to the labor prohibited on those days is only that in this case, i.e., Shabbat, its intentional desecration is punishable at the

hand of Man, as he is stoned by a court based on the testimony of witnesses who forewarned the transgressor; and in that case, i.e., Yom Kippur, its intentional desecration is punishable at the hand of God, with karet.

²⁴⁴ GEMARA: The Gemara infers that with regard to the matter of payment of damages, both this, Shabbat, and that, Yom Kippur, are equal in that one is exempt in both cases. If one performs an action on Shabbat that entails both a prohibited labor and damage to another's property, since his transgression is punishable by death, he is exempt from paying damages. Apparently, according to the mishna, the same halakha applies to Yom Kippur.

²⁴⁵ The Gemara asks: According to whose opinion is the mishna taught? The Gemara answers: It is according to the opinion of Rabbi Nehunya ben HaKana, as it is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Nehunya ben HaKana would render Yom Kippur like Shabbat with regard to payment of damages. Just as in the case of one who intentionally desecrates Shabbat he is liable to receive the death penalty and is therefore exempt from the obligation of payment of damages caused while desecrating Shabbat, so too, in the case of one who intentionally desecrates Yom Kippur, he is liable to receive the death penalty and is therefore exempt from the obligation of payment of damages caused while desecrating Yom Kippur.

²⁴⁶ We learned there in a mishna (Makkot 23a): All those liable to receive karet who were flogged in court were exempted from their karet, which is imposed by heaven. Most transgressors are liable to receive karet for violating prohibitions that are punishable by flogging. If they are flogged, they are exempt from karet, as it is stated with regard to one liable to receive lashes: "Then your brother shall be dishonored before you" (Deuteronomy 25:3), indicating that once he was flogged he is like your brother, and his sins have been pardoned; this is the statement of Rabbi Hananya ben Gamliel. Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Rabbi Hananya ben Gamliel's colleagues disagree with him on this issue.

²⁴⁷ Rava said that the Sages of the school of Rav said: We learned: The difference between Yom Kippur and Shabbat is only that in this case, Shabbat, its intentional desecration is punishable at the hand of Man; and in that case, Yom Kippur, its intentional desecration is punishable with karet. And if the statement of Rabbi Hananya ben Gamliel is so, in both this case, Shabbat, and that case, Yom Kippur, the punishment is at the hand of Man.

²⁴⁸ Rav Naḥman said: There is no proof from here that Rabbi Hananya ben Gamliel's colleagues disagree with him, as in accordance with whose opinion is this mishna taught? It is according to the opinion of Rabbi Yitzḥak, who said: There are no lashes in cases of those liable to receive karet, as it is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yitzḥak says: All those liable to receive karet in cases of incest were included in the principle: "For whoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the persons that commit them shall be cut off from among their people" (Leviticus 18:29). And why was karet administered to one's sister excluded from this verse and mentioned independently (Leviticus 20:17)? It is to sentence her to the punishment of karet and not to the punishment of lashes. This serves as a paradigm; wherever one is liable to receive karet, there are no lashes.

²⁴⁹ Rav Ashi said: Even if you say that the mishna is according to the opinion of the Rabbis who disagree with Rabbi Yitzḥak and hold that there are lashes even in cases where there is liability for karet, there is no proof that Rabbi Hananya ben Gamliel's colleagues disagree with him. The mishna can be understood as follows: In this case, Shabbat, the primary punishment for its intentional

desecration is at the hand of Man; and in that case, Yom Kippur, the primary punishment for its intentional desecration is with karet. If, however, he was flogged, he is exempt from karet.

²⁵⁰ MISHNA: The difference between one for whom benefit from another is forbidden by vow and one for whom benefit from another's food is forbidden by vow is only with regard to stepping foot on his property, and with regard to borrowing utensils from him that one does not use in the preparation of food, but for other purposes; as those two benefits are prohibited to the former, but permitted to the latter.

²⁵¹ GEMARA: The Gemara infers that with regard to the matter of utensils that one uses in preparation of food, both this, one who vowed that any benefit is forbidden, and that, one who vowed that benefit from food is forbidden, are equal. It is prohibited for both to derive benefit from utensils used in the preparation of food.

²⁵² The mishna stated that for one for whom benefit from another is forbidden by vow, stepping foot on the latter's property is prohibited. The Gemara asks: What benefit is that? Aren't people not particular about other people treading on their property? Rava said: In accordance with whose opinion is this mishna taught? It is the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, who said: Overlooking is prohibited in the case of one for whom benefit is forbidden by vow. For one for whom benefit from another is forbidden by vow, benefit is forbidden even in matters with regard to which one is typically not particular and overlooks others' use of his property, e.g., stepping foot on it.

²⁵³ MISHNA: The difference between animals consecrated to the Temple as vow offerings and animals consecrated as gift offerings is only that in the case of vow offerings, if they died or were lost before being sacrificed on the altar, one is obligated in the responsibility to replace them, and in the case of gift offerings, if they died or were lost, one is not obligated in the responsibility to replace them.

²⁵⁴ GEMARA: The Gemara infers that with regard to the matter of the prohibition: Do not be slack to pay one's pledges, both this, a vow offering, and that, a gift offering, are equal. If one delayed bringing either a vow offering or a gift offering, he violates the prohibition.

²⁵⁵ We learned in a mishna there: Which is the case of a vow offering? It is one who says: It is incumbent upon me to bring a burnt-offering. Which is the case of a gift offering? It is one who says: This animal is a burnt-offering. And what is the difference between a vow offering and a gift offering? With regard to vow offerings, if the animals died or were stolen or were lost, the one who vowed is obligated in the responsibility to replace them, as he undertook to bring a burnt-offering and he is not absolved of his obligation until he brings the offering. With regard to gift offerings, however, if the animals died or were stolen or were lost, the one who vowed is not obligated in the responsibility to replace them.

²⁵⁶ The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived? The Gemara answers: It is as the Sages taught in a baraita with regard to a burnt-offering, that the verse states: "And it shall be accepted for him to make atonement upon him" (Leviticus 1:4). Rabbi Shimon says: That which is incumbent upon him, i.e., which he accepted as a personal obligation, he bears responsibility to replace it if it died or was stolen; however, that which is not incumbent upon him, i.e., that which he did not accept as a personal obligation but which he designated as an offering, he does not bear responsibility to replace it.

²⁵⁷ The Gemara asks: From where may that conclusion be inferred from the verse? Rabbi Yitzḥak bar Avdimi said: Since he said it is incumbent upon me to bring a burnt-offering, he is considered as one who bears it upon his shoulders. The expression: Upon me, indicates an assumption of responsibility to bring an offering.

²⁵⁸ MISHNA: The difference between a zav who experiences two emissions of a pus-like discharge from his penis and one who experiences three emissions is only that the zav who experienced three emissions is obligated to bring an offering after he recovers, in order to complete his purification process.

²⁵⁹ GEMARA: The Gemara infers that with regard to the matter of transmitting ritual impurity to a surface designated for lying and a surface designated for sitting, and similarly with regard to the counting of seven days clean of emissions so that he may immerse in a ritual bath as part of the purification process, both this, i.e., one who experienced two emissions, and that, one who experienced three emissions, are equal.

²⁶⁰ The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived? The Gemara answers: It is as the Sages taught in a baraita that Rabbi Simai says: The verse enumerated two emissions: “When any man has an emission out of his flesh, due to his emission he is impure” (Leviticus 15:2), and it called the zav impure. Another verse enumerated three emissions: “And this shall be his impurity in his emission: Whether his flesh runs with his emission, or his flesh be stopped from his emission, it is his impurity” (Leviticus 15:3), and it too called him impure. How so? If he is impure after two emissions, for what purpose does the Torah mention three? It is to teach: Two emissions to establish impurity and three to render him liable to bring an offering.

²⁶¹ The Gemara raises an alternative. And say instead: Two emissions to establish impurity but not to render him liable to bring an offering; three emissions to render him liable to bring an offering, but not to establish impurity. The Gemara rejects this: That is impossible, as you can say that until he experienced three emissions, he already experienced two, and therefore he is impure in the case of three emissions as well.

²⁶² The Gemara raises a different alternative. And say instead: Two emissions to render him liable to bring an offering, but not to establish impurity; three emissions to establish impurity as well. The Gemara answers that this suggestion cannot enter your mind, as it is taught in a baraita that the verse states: “And the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord from his emission” (Leviticus 15:15). The preposition “from” that precedes the words “his emissions” indicates that some with the status of a zav bring an offering and some with the status of a zav do not bring an offering. How so? If he experienced three emissions, he brings an offering; if he experienced two emissions, he does not bring an offering.

²⁶³ The baraita suggests: Or perhaps, it means nothing other than that if one experienced two emissions, he brings an offering; if he experienced three emissions, he does not bring an offering. The baraita rejects this: That is impossible, as you can say that until he experienced three emissions, he already experienced two, and therefore he is obligated to bring an offering in the case of three emissions as well.

²⁶⁴ The Gemara comments: It was necessary to cite the proof of Rabbi Simai based on the number of mentions of the word emissions in the two verses, and it was necessary to cite the proof from the words: From his emission. As if the difference between two and three emissions was derived from

the statement of Rabbi Simai, I would have said in accordance with our question: Perhaps one who experiences two emissions brings an offering, and one who experiences three emissions is impure and brings an offering. Therefore, it teaches us: From his emission. And if the difference between two and three emissions was derived from the term: From his emission, I would not have known how many emissions render him liable to bring an offering, only that some with the status of a zav are not required to bring an offering. Therefore, it teaches us the proof cited by Rabbi Simai.

²⁶⁵ The Gemara asks: And now that you said that the term: From his emission, is exclusionary and comes for derivation, what do you derive from the verse: “And when the zav is cleansed from his emission” (Leviticus 15:13)?

²⁶⁶ The Gemara answers: That verse is needed to derive that which was taught in a baraita. It is written: “And when the zav is cleansed from his emission, then he shall count to himself seven days for his purification” (Leviticus 15:13), when his emissions cease. The baraita infers from the term: From his emission, that he needs to be cleansed only from his emission, but not from his emission and his leprosy. If one was both a zav and also had leprosy, he need not wait until he is asymptomatic of his leprosy before counting seven clean days. Rather, he counts seven clean days, and after the leprosy symptoms cease, he immerses for both impurities. “From his emission, then he shall count”: This teaches concerning a zav who experienced two emissions, that he too requires a count of seven clean days.

²⁶⁷ The baraita continues: But in order to derive that halakha, the verse is unnecessary, as isn’t it only logical? If a zav who experienced two emissions renders a surface designated for lying and a surface designated for sitting ritually impure and all strictures of a zav apply to him, wouldn’t he require a count of seven clean days to become purified?

²⁶⁸ A woman who observes a clean day for one day or two days that she experiences a discharge will prove that this is not the case. This refers to a woman who experienced one or two days of bleeding not during her menstrual period and is required to wait one day without any further discharge of blood before immersion in a ritual bath. This is significant because she renders a surface designated for lying and a surface designated for sitting ritually impure, and nevertheless she does not require a count of seven clean days to become purified.

²⁶⁹ And you too should not then be surprised that this zav, although he renders a surface designated for lying and a surface designated for sitting ritually impure, he does not require a count of seven clean days to become purified. Therefore, the verse states: “From his emission, then he shall count,” meaning that even a partial zav is obligated in the mitzva of: Then he shall count. This teaches concerning a zav who experienced two emissions, that he too requires a count of seven clean days.

²⁷⁰ Rav Pappa said to Abaye: What is different about this verse that states: “From his emission,” which is interpreted to include a zav who experienced two emissions in the obligation to count seven clean days; and what is different about that verse that states: “From his emission,” which is interpreted to exclude a zav who experienced two emissions from the obligation to bring an offering? Why is the identical term interpreted once as inclusionary and once as exclusionary?

²⁷¹ Abaye said to him: If it enters your mind to say that this instance of the term: “From his emission,” comes to exclude a zav who experienced two emissions from the obligation to count seven clean days, let the verse remain silent and omit the term, as there would have been no basis to include a zav who experienced two emissions in that halakha. And if you would say that this can be

inferred logically, a woman who observes a day for a day will prove that there is no correlation between ritual impurity transmitted to a surface designated for lying and a surface designated for sitting, and the obligation to count seven clean days.

²⁷² And if you would say that this term: From his emission, is needed to derive a different inclusion, i.e., that he counts seven days when he is clean from his emission and not from his leprosy and therefore it was necessary to write this term, that is not so. As if it were so, then let the verse write: “And when the zav is cleansed” and let the verse remain silent and omit the term, and it would have been clear that even one afflicted with leprosy counts seven clean days once he is cleansed from his emission. Why then do I need the term: From his emission? Rather, it must be understood as an inclusionary term that teaches concerning a zav who experienced two emissions, that he too requires a count of seven clean days.

²⁷³ MISHNA: The difference between a quarantined leper, i.e., one examined by a priest who found his symptoms to be inconclusive, and who must therefore remain in isolation for a period of up to two weeks waiting to see if conclusive symptoms develop; and a confirmed leper, i.e., one whose symptoms were conclusive and the priest declared him an absolute leper, is only with regard to letting the hair on one’s head grow wild and rending one’s garments. A confirmed leper is obligated to let the hair on his head grow wild and rend his garments; a quarantined leper is not.

²⁷⁴ The difference between a leper purified from quarantine, whose symptoms never became conclusive, and a leper purified from a state of confirmed leprosy is only with regard to shaving the hair on all his body and bringing birds as a purification offering, which are obligations incumbent only upon the confirmed leper.

²⁷⁵ GEMARA: The Gemara infers that with regard to the matter of expulsion, from all three camps in the encampment of the Israelites in the desert and from the walled cities in Eretz Yisrael, and the ritual impurity of a leper: Both this, the quarantined leper, and that, the confirmed leper, are equal.

²⁷⁶ The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived? The Gemara answers: It is as Rav Shmuel bar Yitzḥak taught in a baraita before Rav Huna. It is written with regard to a leper who was purified from quarantine: “The priest shall pronounce him clean: It is but a scab, and he shall wash his clothes and be purified [vetaher]” (Leviticus 13:6). The word vetaher is not in the future tense, which would indicate that from that point he is purified; it is rather in the present tense, indicating that at the outset, even before the priest’s pronouncement, he was pure in the sense that he was exempt from the initial obligation of letting the hair on his head grow wild and rending his garments, as those obligations are incumbent exclusively upon the confirmed leper.

²⁷⁷ Rava said to him: However, if that is so, i.e., that vetaher means that one is somewhat pure at the outset, then with regard to a zav, as it is written: “And he shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and he shall be clean [vetaher]” (Leviticus 15:13), there, what sense of: And he shall be clean, at the outset is there in that case? Up until that point, the zav was ritually impure in every sense.

²⁷⁸ Rather, vetaher means that he is now pure from rendering earthenware vessels impure through movement. There is a halakha that a zav renders a vessel impure if he causes it to be moved, even though he did not come into direct contact with it, even if the opening of the vessel is smaller than a fingerbreadth. The verse teaches that once the zav is purified through counting and immersion, he no longer renders vessels impure in that manner. The novelty here is that even if he then experiences

another emission, he does not render the vessels impure retroactively. This emission is unrelated to the previous emissions. Therefore, upon experiencing the emission, the zav is not retroactively considered to have been ritually impure the entire time, even after immersion. Rather, since he counted seven clean days and immersed, the legal status of this latest emission is that of a new emission.

²⁷⁹ Here too, with regard to the leper, *vetaher* means that the quarantined leper is now pure from retroactively rendering the contents of a house impure by his entrance into the house. If someone with inconclusive symptoms of leprosy was quarantined and then declared ritually pure, and subsequently conclusive symptoms of leprosy developed, he is not considered to have been a leper from the time of the original quarantine, in which case the contents of any house he entered from that point would be rendered impure retroactively. Rather, once he was purified, he was absolutely pure. These subsequent conclusive symptoms are unrelated to the previous inconclusive symptoms. Therefore, the proof adduced by Rav Shmuel bar Yitzḥak is no proof.

²⁸⁰ Rather, Rava said that the *halakha* that a quarantined leper is exempt from the obligation to let his hair grow and to rend his clothing is derived from here. It is written: “And the leper in whom [bo] the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and the hair of his head shall grow wild” (Leviticus 13:45), indicating that only one whose leprosy is dependent on the state of his body, in whom the plague is, is obligated to let his hair grow wild and to rend his garments. This excludes that leper whose leprosy is not dependent solely on the state of his body, but rather on the passage of days, as he is obligated to wait seven days.

²⁸¹ Abaye said to him: However, if that is so, then also with regard to the verse: “All the days during which the plague shall be in him [bo] he shall be impure” (Leviticus 13:46), say one whose leprosy is dependent on the state of his body requires expulsion from the camp, and one whose leprosy is not dependent solely on the state of his body, but rather on the passage of days, does not require expulsion.

²⁸² And if you would say: Indeed that is so, but isn’t it taught in the *mishna*: The difference between a quarantined leper and a confirmed leper is only with regard to letting the hair on one’s head grow wild and rending one’s garments? And it is inferred that with regard to the matter of expulsion and the capacity of a leper to render impure the contents of a house by entry into the house, both this, the quarantined leper, and that, the confirmed leper, are equal.

²⁸³ Rava said to him: There is a different source for the obligation to expel the quarantined leper from the camp. The verse could have stated: The days during which the plague shall be upon him. Instead the verse states: All the days, to include a quarantined leper in the obligation of expulsion from the camp, like a confirmed leper.

²⁸⁴ The *Gemara* asks: If that is so, what is the reason that a quarantined leper is not obligated in shaving the hair on all his body and bringing birds as a purification offering as part of his purification process? As it teaches in the *mishna*: The difference between a leper purified from quarantine, whose symptoms never became conclusive, and a leper purified from a state of confirmed leprosy, is only with regard to shaving the hair on all his body and bringing birds as a purification offering.

²⁸⁵ Abaye said that the verse states: “And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall look, and behold, if the plague of leprosy is healed in the leper” (Leviticus 14:3), then the purification process that includes shaving and bringing birds commences. This indicates that these

halakhot apply to a confirmed leper whose leprosy is dependent on healing, to exclude that leper whose leprosy is not dependent solely on healing but rather on the passage of days. Even if his symptoms are healed, he is pure only at the conclusion of the seven days of quarantine.

²⁸⁶ MISHNA: The difference between Torah scrolls, and phylacteries and mezuzot, in terms of the manner in which they are written, is only that Torah scrolls are written in any language, whereas phylacteries and mezuzot are written only in Ashurit, i.e., in Hebrew and using the Hebrew script.

²⁸⁷ Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: Even with regard to Torah scrolls, the Sages permitted them to be written only in Greek. Torah scrolls written in any other language do not have the sanctity of a Torah scroll.

²⁸⁸ GEMARA: The Gemara infers that with regard to the matter of stitching the sheets of parchment with sinews, and with regard to rendering the hands of one who touches them impure, both this, Torah scrolls, and that, phylacteries and mezuzot, are equal. The Sages issued a decree rendering the hands of one who touches sacred scrolls impure with second-degree ritual impurity.

²⁸⁹ The mishna stated: Torah scrolls are written in any language. And the Gemara raises a contradiction from a baraita: A Torah scroll containing a Hebrew verse in the Bible that one wrote in Aramaic translation, or a verse written in Aramaic translation that one wrote in the Hebrew of the Bible, or that was written in the ancient Hebrew script and not in Ashurit, renders the hands impure only if one writes it in Ashurit script, on a parchment scroll, and in ink. Apparently, contrary to the mishna, a scroll written in a language other than Hebrew is not sacred.

²⁹⁰ Rava said: This is not difficult.

²⁹¹ Here, the mishna is referring to Torah scrolls written in another language in our script, i.e., in Hebrew letters. There, the baraita is referring to Torah scrolls written in another language in their script, in the letters of another alphabet.

²⁹² Abaye said to Rava: How did you establish that baraita, i.e., that it is referring to Torah scrolls written in another language in their script? If it is so, why did the baraita specifically teach that the legal status of a Hebrew verse in the Bible that one wrote in Aramaic translation, or a verse written in Aramaic translation that one wrote in the Hebrew of the Bible, is not that of sacred writings? The legal status of even a Hebrew verse in the Bible that one wrote in the Hebrew of the Bible and a verse written in Aramaic translation that one wrote in Aramaic translation are also not that of sacred writings, as it is taught at the end of the baraita: A Torah scroll renders the hands impure only if one writes it in Ashurit script, on a parchment scroll, and in ink.

²⁹³ Rather, the matter must be explained differently. This is not difficult. This ruling in the mishna is according to the Rabbis, who permit writing Torah scrolls in any language, and that ruling in the baraita is according to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel.

²⁹⁴ The Gemara asks: If the baraita is according to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, in addition to Ashurit, isn't there Greek in which the Torah may also be written? Rather, say this is not difficult. Here, the mishna is referring to Torah scrolls, which may be written in any language; there, the baraita is referring to phylacteries and mezuzot, which may be written only in Hebrew, using Hebrew script.

²⁹⁵ The Gemara asks: With regard to phylacteries and mezuzot, what is the reason that they must be written in Hebrew? The Gemara explains: It is because it is written with regard to them: "And these

words shall be” (Deuteronomy 6:6), indicating that as they are so shall they be, without change. The Gemara raises a difficulty: If the baraita is referring to phylacteries and mezuzot, what Aramaic translation that one wrote in the Hebrew of the Bible is there? Granted, in the Torah there is a verse written in Aramaic translation: “Yegar sahaduta” (Genesis 31:47); however, here, in phylacteries and mezuzot, what verses in Aramaic translation are there that could be written in Hebrew?

²⁹⁶ Rather, say this is not difficult. Here, the baraita is referring to the Megilla, the Scroll of Esther, which must be written in Hebrew; there, the mishna is referring to Torah scrolls, which may be written in any language. The Gemara asks: What is the reason that the Megilla must be written in Hebrew? It is due to the fact that it is written with regard to the Megilla: “According to their writing, and according to their language” (Esther 8:9), without change. The Gemara asks: But if the baraita is referring to the Megilla, what Aramaic translation that one wrote in the Hebrew of the Bible is there? The entire Megilla is written in Hebrew.

²⁹⁷ Rav Pappa said that it is written: “And when the king’s decree [pitgam] shall be publicized” (Esther 1:20), and that pitgam is essentially an Aramaic word. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said that it is written: “And all the wives will give honor [yekar] to their husbands” (Esther 1:20), and yekar is Aramaic for honor.

²⁹⁸ Rav Ashi suggested a different explanation and said: When that baraita is taught it is taught with regard to the rest of the books of the Bible, other than the Torah. And it is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, as it is taught in a baraita: Phylacteries and mezuzot are written only in Ashurit; and our Rabbis permitted writing them in Greek as well.

²⁹⁹ The Gemara asks: How did our Rabbis permit this? Isn’t it written with regard to phylacteries and mezuzot: “And these words shall be” (Deuteronomy 6:6), indicating that their language may not be changed. Rather, say that this is what the baraita is saying: Torah scrolls are written in any language; and our Rabbis permitted writing them in Greek as well. Once again the Gemara asks: Our Rabbis permitted? By inference, apparently the first tanna prohibits writing a Torah scroll in Greek. However, he explicitly permits writing a Torah scroll in any language.

³⁰⁰ Rather, say in explanation of the baraita: And our Rabbis permitted them to be written only in Greek. And it is taught in another baraita that Rabbi Yehuda said: Even when our Rabbis permitted Greek, they permitted it only in a Torah scroll, and not for other books of the Bible, which must be written only in Hebrew.

³⁰¹ The Gemara continues: And this was due to the incident of King Ptolemy, as it is taught in a baraita: There was an incident involving King Ptolemy of Egypt, who assembled seventy-two Elders from the Sages of Israel, and put them into seventy-two separate rooms, and did not reveal to them for what purpose he assembled them, so that they would not coordinate their responses. He entered and approached each and every one, and said to each of them: Write for me a translation of the Torah of Moses your teacher. The Holy One, Blessed be He, placed wisdom in the heart of each and every one, and they all agreed to one common understanding. Not only did they all translate the text correctly, they all introduced the same changes into the translated text.

³⁰² And they wrote for him: God created in the beginning [bereshit], reversing the order of the words in the first phrase in the Torah that could be misinterpreted as: “Bereshit created God” (Genesis 1:1). They did so to negate those who believe in the preexistence of the world and those who maintain that there are two powers in the world: One is Bereshit, who created the second, God. And they wrote: I

shall make man in image and in likeness, rather than: “Let us make man in our image and in our likeness” (Genesis 1:26), as from there too one could mistakenly conclude that there are multiple powers and that God has human form.

³⁰³ Instead of: “And on the seventh day God concluded His work” (Genesis 2:2), which could have been understood as though some of His work was completed on Shabbat itself, they wrote: And on the sixth day He concluded His work, and He rested on the seventh day. They also wrote: Male and female He created him, and they did not write as it is written in the Torah: “Male and female He created them” (Genesis 5:2), to avoid the impression that there is a contradiction between this verse and the verse: “And God created man” (Genesis 1:27), which indicates that God created one person.

³⁰⁴ Instead of: “Come, let us go down, and there confound their language” (Genesis 11:7), which indicates multiple authorities, they wrote in the singular: Come, let me go down, and there confound their language. In addition, they replaced the verse: “And Sarah laughed within herself [bekirba]” (Genesis 18:12), with: And Sarah laughed among her relatives [bikroveha]. They made this change to distinguish between Sarah’s laughter, which God criticized, and Abraham’s laughter, to which no reaction is recorded. Based on the change, Sarah’s laughter was offensive because she voiced it to others.

³⁰⁵ They also altered the verse: “For in their anger they slew a man and in their self-will they slaughtered an ox” (Genesis 49:6), to read: For in their anger they slew an ox and in their self-will they uprooted a trough, to avoid the charge that Jacob’s sons were murderers. Instead of: “And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon a donkey” (Exodus 4:20), they wrote: And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon a carrier of people, which could be understood as referring to a horse or a camel rather than the lowly donkey.

³⁰⁶ Instead of: “And the residence of the children of Israel, who resided in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years” (Exodus 12:40), which when read literally is imprecise, for they did not dwell in Egypt that long, they wrote: And the residence of the children of Israel, who resided in Egypt and in other lands, was four hundred years. Instead of: “And he sent the youth of the children of Israel, who brought burnt-offerings” (Exodus 24:5), which evokes the question of why young men were sent to perform that service, they wrote: And he sent the elect [za’atutei] of the children of Israel. The same term was substituted again several verses later, rendering the verse: “And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand” (Exodus 24:11), as: And upon the elect of the children of Israel He laid not His hand.

³⁰⁷ Instead of Moses’ assertion: “I have not taken one donkey [ḥamor] from them” (Numbers 16:15), they wrote in more general terms: “I have not taken one item of value [ḥemed] from them,” to prevent the impression that Moses took other items. To the verse that discusses the worship of the sun and the moon, about which it is written: “Which the Lord your God has allotted to all the nations” (Deuteronomy 4:19), they added a word to make it read: “Which the Lord your God has allotted to give light to all the nations,” to prevent the potential misinterpretation that the heavenly bodies were given to the gentiles so that they may worship them.

³⁰⁸ The verse: “And has gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or the moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded” (Deuteronomy 17:3), could be understood as indicating that God did not command their existence, i.e., these entities created

themselves. Therefore, when these Elders translated the verse they added a word to the end of the verse to make it read: Which I have not commanded to serve them.

³⁰⁹ And in the list of unclean animals they wrote for him: The short-legged beast [tze'irat haraglayim]. And they did not write for him: "And the hare [arnevet]" (Leviticus 11:6), since the name of Ptolemy's wife was Arnevet, so that he would not say: The Jews have mocked me and inserted my wife's name in the Torah. Therefore, they did not refer to the hare by name, but by one of its characteristic features.

³¹⁰ The mishna cites that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: Even with regard to Torah scrolls, the Sages permitted them to be written only in Greek. Rabbi Abbahu said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. And Rabbi Yoḥanan said: What is the reason for the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel? He based his opinion on an allusion in the Torah, as the verse states: "God shall enlarge Japheth, and He shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9:27), indicating that the words of Japheth shall be in the tents of Shem. The language of Javan, who is the forbear of the Greek nation and one of the descendants of Japheth, will also serve as a sacred language in the tents of Shem, where Torah is studied.

³¹¹ The Gemara asks: And say that it is the languages of Gomer and Magog that serve as sacred languages, as they too were descendants of Japheth (see Genesis 10:2). The Gemara answers that Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said: This is the reason, as it is written: "God shall enlarge [yaft] Japheth [Yefet]." Yaft is etymologically similar to the Hebrew term for beauty [yofi]. The verse teaches that the beauty of Japheth shall be in the tents of Shem, and Greek is the most beautiful of the languages of the descendants of Japheth.

³¹² MISHNA: The difference between a High Priest anointed with the oil of anointing, which was the method through which High Priests were consecrated until the oil was sequestered toward the end of the First Temple period, and one consecrated by donning multiple garments unique to the High Priest, which was the practice during the Second Temple period, is only that the latter does not bring the bull that comes for transgression of any of the mitzvot. An anointed High Priest who unwittingly issued an erroneous halakhic ruling and acted upon that ruling, and transgressed a mitzva whose unwitting violation renders one liable to bring a sin-offering, is obligated to bring a sin-offering unique to one in his position.

³¹³ The difference between a High Priest currently serving in that capacity and a former High Priest, who temporarily filled that position when the High Priest was unfit for service, is only with regard to the bull brought by the High Priest on Yom Kippur, and the tenth of an ephah meal-offering brought daily by the High Priest. Each of these offerings is brought only by the current High Priest, and not by a former High Priest.

³¹⁴ GEMARA: The Gemara infers that with regard to the matter of the bull brought by the High Priest on Yom Kippur, and with regard to the tenth of an ephah meal-offering, both this, the anointed High Priest, and that, the High Priest consecrated by donning multiple garments, are equal.

³¹⁵ The Gemara comments: The mishna is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir, as if it were in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir, it would be difficult. Isn't it taught in a baraita: A High Priest consecrated by donning the multiple garments unique to the High Priest brings the bull brought for the unwitting violation of any of the mitzvot; this is the statement of Rabbi Meir. And the Rabbis say: He does not bring that offering.

³¹⁶ The Gemara asks: What is the reason for the opinion of Rabbi Meir? It is as it is taught in a baraita that it is written: “If the anointed priest shall sin” (Leviticus 4:3). From the word anointed, I have derived only that this halakha applies to a High Priest who was actually anointed with the oil of anointing. From where do I derive that even a High Priest consecrated by donning the multiple garments is also included in this halakha? The verse states: “The anointed,” with the definite article, indicating that the halakha applies to every High Priest.

³¹⁷ The Gemara asks: How did we establish the mishna? We established that it is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir. Say the latter clause of the mishna: The difference between a High Priest currently serving in that capacity and a former High Priest is only with regard to the bull brought on Yom Kippur, and the tenth of an ephah meal-offering. The Gemara infers that with regard to all other matters, both this, a High Priest currently serving, and that, a former High Priest, are equal. If so we have arrived at the opinion of Rabbi Meir, as it is taught in a baraita: If temporary disqualification befell the High Priest, and they appointed another priest in his stead, then after the cause of disqualification of the first priest passes, he returns to his service as High Priest. With regard to the second priest, all of the mitzvot of the High Priest are incumbent upon him; this is the statement of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yosei says: The first returns to his service; the second is fit to serve neither as a High Priest nor as a common priest.

³¹⁸ And Rabbi Yosei said: There was an incident involving the priest Rabbi Yosef ben Elem of Tzipori, who, when disqualification befell a High Priest, the priests appointed him in his stead. And after the cause of the disqualification was resolved, the incident came before the Sages for a ruling with regard to the status of Rabbi Yosef ben Elem. And the Sages said: The original High Priest returns to his service, while the second is fit to serve neither as High Priest nor as a common priest.

³¹⁹ The Gemara explains: Neither as a High Priest, due to hatred, jealousy, and bitterness that would arise if there were two High Priests with equal standing in the Temple; nor as a common priest, because the principle is: One elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity and one does not downgrade. Once he has served as a High Priest he cannot be restored to the position of a common priest. Is that to say that the first clause of the mishna is in accordance with the opinion of the Rabbis, who disagree with Rabbi Meir, and the latter clause is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir?

³²⁰ Rav Ḥisda said: Indeed, the first clause of the mishna is in accordance with the opinion of the Rabbis, and the latter clause is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir. Rav Yosef said: The entire mishna is according to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, and he formulates it according to the opinions of different tanna'im, that is to say, resulting in a third opinion, in accordance with the opinion of the Rabbis with regard to a High Priest consecrated by donning multiple garments, and the opinion of Rabbi Meir with regard to a former High Priest.

³²¹ MISHNA: The difference between a great, public altar, such as the altars established at Nob and Gibeon, which served as religious centers following the destruction of the Tabernacle in Shiloh, and a small, personal altar on which individuals would sacrifice their offerings, is only with regard to Paschal lambs, which may not be sacrificed on a small altar. This is the principle: Any offering that is vowed or contributed voluntarily is sacrificed on a small altar, and any offering that is neither vowed nor contributed voluntarily, but rather is compulsory, e.g., a sin-offering, is not sacrificed on a small altar.

³²² GEMARA: The Gemara asks: Is the difference only Paschal lambs and nothing more? The continuation of the mishna indicates that there are additional differences. The Gemara answers: Say that the difference between them is only with regard to offerings that are similar to Paschal lambs.

³²³ The Gemara asks: According to whose opinion is the mishna taught? The Gemara answers: It is according to the opinion of Rabbi Shimon, as it is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Shimon says: Even the public sacrificed only Paschal lambs and compulsory offerings for which there is a set time, like fixed communal offerings. However, compulsory offerings for which there is not a set time, e.g., sin-offerings brought for an unwitting transgression committed by the community, are sacrificed neither here on a small altar nor here on a great altar; they are sacrificed only in the Temple.

³²⁴ MISHNA: The difference between the Tabernacle in Shiloh and the Temple in Jerusalem is only that in Shiloh one eats offerings of lesser sanctity, e.g., individual peace-offerings, thanks-offerings, and the Paschal lamb, and also the second tithe, in any place that overlooks Shiloh, as Shiloh was not a walled city and any place within its Shabbat boundary was regarded as part of the city. And in Jerusalem one eats those consecrated items only within the walls.

³²⁵ And here, in Shiloh, and there, in Jerusalem, offerings of the most sacred order are eaten only within the hangings. The Tabernacle courtyard in Shiloh was surrounded by hangings and the Temple courtyard in Jerusalem was surrounded by a wall. There is another difference: With regard to the sanctity of Shiloh,

³²⁶ after the Tabernacle was destroyed, there is permission to sacrifice offerings on improvised altars. But with regard to the sanctity of Jerusalem, after the Temple was destroyed, there is no permission to sacrifice offerings on improvised altars, as the prohibition remains intact.

³²⁷ GEMARA: Rabbi Yitzḥak said: I heard that one sacrifices offerings in the temple of Onias in Egypt at the present time. The Gemara cites the basis for the statement of Rabbi Yitzḥak. He maintains that the temple of Onias is not a house of idol worship but rather a temple devoted to the service of God, and he maintains that the initial consecration sanctified Jerusalem for its time and did not sanctify Jerusalem forever. Therefore, after the destruction of the Temple, the sanctity of Jerusalem lapsed and the sacrifice of offerings elsewhere was no longer prohibited. For these reasons it was permitted to sacrifice offerings in the temple of Onias after the Temple was destroyed.

³²⁸ The Gemara cites the source of this halakha. It is as it is written: “For you are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance” (Deuteronomy 12:9), which is interpreted: “Rest,” this is Shiloh; “inheritance,” this is Jerusalem. The verse juxtaposes and likens inheritance to rest: Just as in the place of rest, Shiloh, after its destruction there is permission to sacrifice offerings on improvised altars, so too in the place of inheritance, Jerusalem, after its destruction there is permission to sacrifice offerings on improvised altars.

³²⁹ The Gemara reports that the other Sages said to Rabbi Yitzḥak: Did you say this halakha with regard to the temple of Onias? He said to them: No, I did not say that. Rava said, reinforcing his assertion with an oath: By God! Rabbi Yitzḥak did in fact say this, and I myself learned it from him, but he later retracted this ruling.

³³⁰ The Gemara asks: And what is the reason he retracted his ruling? The Gemara explains: It is due to the difficulty raised by Rav Mari, as Rav Mari raised an objection from the mishna: With regard to the sanctity of Shiloh, after the Tabernacle was destroyed there is permission to sacrifice offerings on

improvised altars. But with regard to the sanctity of Jerusalem, after the Temple was destroyed there is no permission to sacrifice offerings on improvised altars. And furthermore, we learned in a mishna (Zevahim 112b): Once they came to Jerusalem, improvised altars were prohibited, and they did not again have permission to do so, and Jerusalem became the everlasting inheritance.

³³¹ The Gemara comments: This matter is subject to a dispute between tanna'im, as it is taught in a mishna (Eduyyot 8:6): Rabbi Eliezer said: I heard that when they were building the Sanctuary in the Second Temple, they fashioned temporary hangings for the Sanctuary and temporary hangings for the courtyard to serve as partitions until construction of the stone walls was completed. The difference was only that in building the Sanctuary, the workers built the walls outside the hangings, without entering, and in the courtyard, the workers built the walls inside the hangings.

³³² And Rabbi Yehoshua said: I heard that one sacrifices offerings on the altar even though there is no Temple, one eats offerings of the most sacred order in the Temple courtyard even if there are no hangings, and one eats offerings of lesser sanctity and second tithe produce in Jerusalem even if there is no wall surrounding the city, due to the fact that the initial consecration sanctified Jerusalem for its time and also sanctified Jerusalem forever. Even if the walls do not exist, the sanctity remains intact. The Gemara concludes: From the fact that Rabbi Yehoshua based his opinion on the principle that the initial sanctification sanctified Jerusalem forever, by inference one can conclude that Rabbi Eliezer holds: It did not sanctify Jerusalem forever. Apparently, this issue is subject to a dispute between tanna'im.

³³³ Ravina said to Rav Ashi: From where do you draw this inference? Perhaps everyone maintains that the initial consecration sanctified Jerusalem for its time and also sanctified Jerusalem forever. And one Sage, Rabbi Eliezer, stated that tradition, which he heard from his teachers, and one Sage, Rabbi Yehoshua, stated that tradition, which he heard from his teachers, and there is no dispute between them. And if you would say: Why then do I need hangings at all according to Rabbi Eliezer? The original sanctity remained when Jerusalem was not surrounded by walls, and the presence or absence of hangings is irrelevant as well. The Gemara answers: The hangings were established merely for seclusion, as it would have been unbecoming for the activity in this most sacred venue to be visible to all.

³³⁴ Rather, this matter is subject to the dispute between these tanna'im, as it is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Yosei, said: Why did the Sages enumerate these nine cities in tractate Arakhin as cities walled since the days of Joshua, son of Nun? Weren't there many more? As, when the exiles ascended to Eretz Yisrael from Babylonia, they discovered these cities and consecrated them as walled cities; but the sanctity of the first walled cities enumerated in the book of Joshua was negated when settlement in the land was negated and the Jewish people were exiled. Apparently, Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Yosei, maintains: The initial consecration sanctified Jerusalem for its time only and did not sanctify Jerusalem forever.

³³⁵ The Gemara raises a contradiction from a different baraita. Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Yosei, said: Were these cities that were enumerated in tractate Arakhin the only walled cities? Wasn't it already stated: "Sixty cities, all the region of Argov" (Deuteronomy 3:4), and concerning these cities it is written: "All these cities were fortified with high walls, gates and bars" (Deuteronomy 3:5), indicating that there were a great number of walled cities? Rather, why then did the Sages enumerate

these specific cities? It is due to the fact that when the exiles ascended from Babylonia they discovered these and consecrated them as walled cities.

³³⁶ The Gemara asks: Consecrated them? If their sanctity remained, why was it necessary to consecrate them?

³³⁷ Now, didn't they say later in the same baraita that it is not necessary to consecrate them? Rather, this is what the baraita means to say: It is due to the fact that when the exiles ascended from Babylonia they discovered these and enumerated them.

³³⁸ The baraita continues. And not only these, but in any city with regard to which you receive a tradition from your ancestors that it was surrounded by a wall from the days of Joshua, son of Nun, all these mitzvot are observed in it, due to the fact that the initial consecration sanctified Eretz Yisrael for its time and sanctified Eretz Yisrael forever. This is difficult, as there is a contradiction between one statement of Rabbi Yishmael and another statement of Rabbi Yishmael.

³³⁹ The Gemara answers: This is a dispute between two later tanna'im, who hold according to the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael, son of Rabbi Yosei. Each transmitted Rabbi Yishmael's opinion in a different manner. And if you wish, say instead that one of the traditions is mistaken, as with regard to this statement, Rabbi Elazar bar Yosei said it, as it is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Yosei, said that the verse states: "Which has [lo] a wall" (Leviticus 25:30). The word lo is written with an alef, meaning no, that it does not have a wall, but its vocalization is in the sense of its homonym, lo with a vav, meaning that it has a wall. This indicates that even though it does not presently have a wall, as it was destroyed, but it had a wall previously, it retains its status as a walled city. It is Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Yosei, who maintains that the first consecration sanctified Jerusalem forever.

³⁴⁰ § The Gemara returns to the primary topic of this chapter, the book of Esther. The Gemara cites various aggadic interpretations of the verses of the Megilla. The opening verse of the Megilla states: "And it came to pass [vayhi] in the days of Ahasuerus" (Esther 1:1). Rabbi Levi said, and some say that it was Rabbi Yonatan who said: This matter is a tradition that we received from the members of the Great Assembly. Anywhere that the word vayhi is stated, it is an ominous term indicating nothing other than impending grief, as if the word were a contraction of the words vai and hi, meaning woe and mourning.

³⁴¹ The Gemara cites several proofs corroborating this interpretation. "And it came to pass [vayhi] in the days of Ahasuerus" led to grief, as there was Haman. "And it came to pass [vayhi] in the days when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1) introduces a period when there was famine. "And it came to pass [vayhi], when men began to multiply" (Genesis 6:1) is immediately followed by the verse: "And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth" (Genesis 6:5).

³⁴² "And it came to pass [vayhi] as they journeyed from the east" (Genesis 11:2) is followed by: "Come, let us build us a city" (Genesis 11:4), which led to the sin of the Tower of Babel. The Gemara cites further examples: "And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel" (Genesis 14:1), about whom it is stated: "These made war" (Genesis 14:2). Another verse states: "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho" (Joshua 5:13), it was there that he saw an angel "with his sword drawn in his hand" as a warning. It is written: "And the Lord was [vayhi] with Joshua" (Joshua 6:27), and immediately afterward: "But the children of Israel committed a trespass" (Joshua 7:1). It states: "And it came to pass that there was a certain man of Ramathaim" (I Samuel 1:1), and it mentions shortly afterward

Hannah's inability to conceive: "For he loved Hannah, but the Lord had closed up her womb" (I Samuel 1:5).

³⁴³ Similarly, the verse states: "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old" (I Samuel 8:1), and then it is written: "And his sons did not walk in his ways" (I Samuel 8:3). Also, it states: "And it came to pass that David was successful in all his ways, and the Lord was with him" (I Samuel 18:14), and only a few verses prior it is written: "And Saul viewed David with suspicion" (I Samuel 18:9). In another instance, the verse states: "And it came to pass, when the king dwelt in his house" (II Samuel 7:1). Here King David mentioned his desire to build a temple for God, but it is written elsewhere that he was told: "Yet you shall not build the house" (II Chronicles 6:9).

³⁴⁴ After citing several verses where *vayhi* portends grief, the Gemara mentions a number of verses that seem to indicate otherwise. But isn't it written: "And it came to pass [*vayhi*] on the eighth day" (Leviticus 9:1), which was the day of the dedication of the Tabernacle? And it is taught in a baraita with regard to that day: On that day there was joy before the Holy One, Blessed be He, similar to the joy that existed on the day on which the heavens and earth were created. The Gemara cites a verbal analogy in support of this statement. It is written here, with regard to the dedication of the Tabernacle: "And it came to pass [*vayhi*] on the eighth day," and it is written there, in the Creation story: "And it was [*vayhi*] evening, and it was morning, one day" (Genesis 1:5). This indicates that there was joy on the eighth day, when the Tabernacle was dedicated, similar to the joy that existed on the day the world was created. Apparently, the term *vayhi* is not necessarily a portent of grief.

³⁴⁵ The Gemara answers: This verse does not contradict the principle. On the day of the dedication of the Tabernacle, a calamity also befell the people, as Nadav and Avihu died.

³⁴⁶ The Gemara cites additional verses where *vayhi* is not indicative of impending grief: But isn't it written: "And it came to pass [*vayhi*] in the four hundred and eightieth year" (I Kings 6:1), which discusses the joyous occasion of the building of the Temple? And furthermore, isn't it written: "And it came to pass [*vayhi*] when Jacob saw Rachel" (Genesis 29:10), which was a momentous occasion? And isn't it written: "And it was [*vayhi*] evening, and it was [*vayhi*] morning, one day" (Genesis 1:5)? And isn't there the second day of Creation, and isn't there the third day, where the term *vayhi* is used? And aren't there many verses in the Bible in which the term *vayhi* appears and no grief ensues? Apparently, the proposed principle is incorrect.

³⁴⁷ Rather, Rav Ashi said: With regard to every instance of *vayhi* alone, there are some that mean this, grief, and there are some that mean that, joy. However, wherever the phrase "and it came to pass in the days of [*vayhi bimei*]" is used in the Bible, it is nothing other than a term of impending grief.

³⁴⁸ The Gemara states that there are five instances of *vayhi bimei* in the Bible. "And it came to pass in the days of [*vayhi bimei*] Ahasuerus"; "And it came to pass in the days [*vayhi bimei*] when the judges ruled"; "And it came to pass in the days of [*vayhi bimei*] Amraphel"; "And it came to pass in the days of [*vayhi bimei*] Ahaz" (Isaiah 7:1); "And it came to pass in the days of [*vayhi bimei*] Jehoiakim" (Jeremiah 1:3). In all those incidents, grief ensued.

³⁴⁹ § Apropos the tradition cited by Rabbi Levi above, the Gemara cites additional traditions that he transmitted. Rabbi Levi said: This matter is a tradition that we received from our ancestors: Amoz, father of Isaiah, and Amaziah, king of Judea, were brothers. The Gemara questions: What novel element is this statement teaching us?

³⁵⁰ The Gemara responds: It is in accordance with that which Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: Any bride who is modest in the house of her father-in-law merits that kings and prophets will emerge from her. From where do we derive this? From Tamar, as it is written: “When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a prostitute; for she had covered her face” (Genesis 38:15). Can it be that because Tamar covered her face he thought her to be a prostitute? On the contrary, a harlot tends to uncover her face.

³⁵¹ Rather, because she covered her face in the house of her father-in-law and he was not familiar with her appearance, Judah didn’t recognize Tamar, thought she was a harlot, and sought to have sexual relations with her. Ultimately, she merited that kings and prophets emerged from her. Kings emerged from her through David, who was a descendant of Tamar’s son, Peretz. However, there is no explicit mention that she was the forebear of prophets. This is derived from that which Rabbi Levi said: This matter is a tradition that we received from our ancestors. Amoz, father of Isaiah, and Amaziah, king of Judea, were brothers, and it is written: “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz” (Isaiah 1:1). Amoz was a member of the Davidic dynasty, and his son, the prophet Isaiah, was also a descendant of Tamar.

³⁵² And Rabbi Levi said: This matter is a tradition that we received from our ancestors: The place of the Ark of the Covenant is not included in the measurement of the Holy of Holies in which it rested.

³⁵³ The Gemara comments: This is also taught in a baraita: The Ark crafted by Moses had ten cubits of empty space on each side. And it is written in the description of Solomon’s Temple: “And before the Sanctuary, which was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth” (I Kings 6:20). The place “before the Sanctuary” is referring to the Holy of Holies. It was twenty by twenty cubits. If there were ten cubits of empty space on either side of the Ark, apparently the Ark itself occupied no space. And it is written: And the wing of one of the cherubs was ten cubits and the wing of the other cherub was ten cubits; the wings of the cherubs occupied the entire area. If so, where was the Ark itself standing? Rather, must one not conclude from it that the Ark stood by means of a miracle and occupied no space?

³⁵⁴ § The Gemara cites prologues utilized by various Sages to introduce study of the Megilla: Rabbi Yonatan introduced this passage, the book of Esther, with an introduction from here: “For I will rise up against them, says the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylonia name, and remnant, and offspring [nin], and posterity, says the Lord” (Isaiah 14:22). This verse may be interpreted homiletically: “Name,” this is the writing of ancient Babylonia that will disappear from the world. “Remnant,” this is the language of ancient Babylonia. “Offspring,” this is their kingdom. And “posterity,” this is Vashti, who according to tradition was Nebuchadnezzar’s granddaughter, and the book of Esther relates how she too was removed from the throne.

³⁵⁵ Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani introduced this passage with an introduction from here: “Instead of the thorn shall the cypress come up, and instead of the nettle shall the myrtle come up; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off” (Isaiah 55:13). Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani interpreted the verse homiletically as referring to the righteous individuals who superseded the wicked ones in the book of Esther.

³⁵⁶ “Instead of the thorn”; this means instead of the wicked Haman. He is referred to as a thorn because he turned himself into an object of idol worship, as he decreed that all must prostrate themselves before him. The Gemara cites proof that the term thorn is used in connection with idol

worship, as it is written: “And upon all thorns, and upon all brambles” (Isaiah 7:19), which is understood to be a reference to idol worship.

³⁵⁷ The next section of the verse discusses what will replace the thorns, i.e., Haman: “Shall the cypress [berosh] come up”; this is Mordecai. Why is he called a cypress [berosh]? Because he was called the chief [rosh] of all the spices, as it is stated: “Take you also to yourself the chief spices, of pure myrrh [mar deror]” (Exodus 30:23), and we translate “pure myrrh,” into Aramaic as mari dakhei. Mordecai was like mari dakhi, the chief [rosh] of spices, and therefore he is called berosh.

³⁵⁸ The verse continues: “And instead of the nettle [sirpad],” this means instead of the wicked Vashti. Why is she called a nettle [sirpad]? Because she was the daughter of the son of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, who burned the ceiling [saraf refidat] of the House of God, as it is written: “Its top [refidato] of gold” (Song of Songs 3:10).

³⁵⁹ The next section of the verse states: “Shall the myrtle [hadas] come up”; this is the righteous Esther, who was called Hadassah in the Megilla, as it is stated: “And he had brought up Hadassah; that is, Esther” (Esther 2:7). The concluding section of the verse states: “And it shall be to the Lord for a name”; this is the reading of the Megilla. “For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off”; these are the days of Purim.

³⁶⁰ Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi introduced this passage with an introduction from here: “And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to cause you to perish, and to destroy you” (Deuteronomy 28:63). The verse indicates that just as the Lord rejoiced in the good he did on behalf of Israel, so too, the Lord will rejoice to cause you harm.

³⁶¹ Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked: Does the Holy One, Blessed be He, in fact rejoice over the downfall of the wicked? But it is written: “As they went out before the army, and say: Give thanks to the Lord, for His kindness endures forever” (II Chronicles 20:21), and Rabbi Yoḥanan said: For what reason were the words: “for He is good” not stated in this statement of thanksgiving, as the classic formulation is: “Give thanks to the Lord; for He is good; for His kindness endures forever” (I Chronicles 16:34)? Because the Holy One, Blessed be He, does not rejoice over the downfall of the wicked. Since this song was sung in the aftermath of a military victory, which involved the downfall of the wicked, the name of God was not mentioned for the good.

³⁶² And similarly, Rabbi Yoḥanan said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “And the one came not near the other all the night” (Exodus 14:20)? The ministering angels wanted to sing their song, for the angels would sing songs to each other, as it states: “And they called out to each other and said” (Isaiah 6:3), but the Holy One, Blessed be He, said: The work of My hands, the Egyptians, are drowning at sea, and you wish to say songs? This indicates that God does not rejoice over the downfall of the wicked.

³⁶³ Rabbi Elazar said that this is how the matter is to be understood: Indeed, God Himself does not rejoice over the downfall of the wicked, but He causes others to rejoice. The Gemara comments: One can learn from the language of the verse as well, as it is written: “So the Lord will rejoice [ken yasis]” (Deuteronomy 28:63). And it is not written yasus, the grammatical form of the verb meaning: He will rejoice. Rather, it is written yasis. The grammatical form of this verb indicates that one causes another to rejoice. Consequently, these words are understood to mean that God will cause others to rejoice. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, learn from it that this is the case.

³⁶⁴ Rabbi Abba bar Kahana introduced this passage with an introduction from here. The verse states with regard to God's reward to the righteous: "He gives to a man that is good in His sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy" (Ecclesiastes 2:26). The Gemara explains that this verse is referring to the righteous Mordecai. With regard to the next part of the verse: "But to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and heaping up," this is referring to Haman. The conclusion of the verse states: "That he may give it to one who is good before God" (Ecclesiastes 2:26). This is Mordecai and Esther, as it is written: "And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman" (Esther 8:2).

³⁶⁵ Rabba bar Oferan introduced this passage with an introduction from here: "And I will set my throne in Elam, and destroy from there the king and the princes, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 49:38). "The king" who was destroyed; this is referring to Vashti. "And the princes"; this is referring to Haman and his ten sons.

³⁶⁶ Rav Dimi bar Yitzḥak introduced this passage with an introduction from here:

³⁶⁷ "For we are bondmen; yet our God has not forsaken us in our bondage, but has extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia" (Ezra 9:9). When did this occur? In the time of Haman.

³⁶⁸ Rabbi Ḥanina bar Pappa introduced this passage with an introduction from here: The verse states: "You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but You brought us out into abundance" (Psalms 66:12). "Through fire"; this was in the days of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, who cast the righteous into the furnace. "And through water"; this was in the days of Pharaoh, who decreed that all newborn males be cast into the water. "But You brought us out into abundance"; this was in the days of Haman, where abundant feasts played a pivotal role in their peril and salvation.

³⁶⁹ Rabbi Yoḥanan introduced this passage with an introduction from here: The verse states: "He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness toward the house of Israel: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Psalms 98:3). When did all the ends of the earth see the salvation of our God? In the days of Mordecai and Esther, for their peril and salvation became known through the letters sent throughout the empire.

³⁷⁰ Reish Lakish introduced this passage with an introduction from here: "As a roaring lion, and a ravenous bear, so is a wicked ruler over a poor people" (Proverbs 28:15). "A roaring lion"; this is the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, as it is written about him: "The lion has come up from his thicket" (Jeremiah 4:7). "A hungry bear"; this is Ahasuerus, as it is written about him: "And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear" (Daniel 7:5). And Rav Yosef taught that these who are referred to as a bear in the verse are the Persians. They are compared to a bear, as they eat and drink in large quantities like a bear; and they are coated with flesh like a bear; and they grow their hair long like a bear; and they never rest like a bear, whose manner it is to move about from place to place.

³⁷¹ "A wicked ruler"; this is Haman. "Over a poor people"; this is the Jewish people, who are referred to in this manner because they are poor in their observance of the mitzvot.

³⁷² Rabbi Elazar introduced this passage with an introduction from here: "Through laziness the rafters [hamekare] sink in [yimakh]; and through idleness of the hands the house leaks" (Ecclesiastes 10:18). Rabbi Elazar interprets the verse homiletically: Through the laziness of the Jewish people, who did not occupy themselves with Torah study, the enemy of the Holy One, Blessed be He, a euphemism for God Himself, became poor [makh], so that, as it were, He was unable to help them,

as makh is nothing other than poor, as it is stated: “But if he be too poor [makh] for the valuation” (Leviticus 27:8). And the word mekare in the verse is referring to no one other than the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is stated: “Who lays the beams [hamekare] of His chambers in the waters” (Psalms 104:3).

³⁷³ Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak introduced this passage with an introduction from here: “A song of ascents of David. If not for the Lord Who was with us, let Israel now say; if not for the Lord who was with us, when a man rose up against us” (Psalms 124:1–2). The verse speaks of “a man” who rose up against us and not a king. This occurred in the days of Haman, as he, and not King Ahasuerus, was the chief enemy of the Jewish people.

³⁷⁴ Rava introduced this passage with an introduction from here: “When the righteous are on the increase, the people rejoice; but when the wicked man rules, the people mourn” (Proverbs 29:2). “When the righteous are on the increase, the people rejoice”; this is Mordecai and Esther, as it is written: “And the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad” (Esther 8:15). “But when the wicked man rules, the people mourn”; this is Haman, as it is written: “But the city of Shushan was perplexed” (Esther 3:15).

³⁷⁵ Rav Mattana said his introduction from here: “For what nation is there so great, that has God so near to them” (Deuteronomy 4:7), as to witness the great miracles in the days of Mordecai and Esther? Rav Ashi said his introduction from here: The verse states: “Or has God ventured to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation?” (Deuteronomy 4:34), as in the times of Esther, God saved the Jewish people who were scattered throughout the Persian Empire.

³⁷⁶ § The Gemara returns to its interpretation of the book of Esther. The verse states: “And it came to pass [vayhi] in the days of Ahasuerus” (Esther 1:1). Rav said: The word vayhi may be understood as if it said vai and hi, meaning woe and mourning. This is as it is written: “And there you shall sell yourselves to your enemies for bondsmen and bondswomen, and no man shall buy you” (Deuteronomy 28:68). The repetitive nature of the verse, indicating that no one will be willing to buy you for servitude, but they will purchase you in order to murder you, indicates a doubly horrific situation, which is symbolized by the dual term vayhi, meaning woe and mourning.

³⁷⁷ And Shmuel said his introduction from here: “And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God” (Leviticus 26:44). Shmuel explains: “I will not reject them”; this was in the days of the Greeks. “Nor will I abhor them”; this was in the days of Vespasian. “To destroy them utterly”; this was in the days of Haman. “To break My covenant with them”; this was in the days of the Persians. “For I am the Lord their God”; this is in the days of Gog and Magog.

³⁷⁸ An alternative understanding was taught in a baraita: “I will not reject them”; this was in the days of the Chaldeans, when I appointed for them Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to pray on their behalf. “Nor will I abhor them”; this was in the days of the Greeks, when I appointed Shimon HaTzaddik for them, and the Hasmonean and his sons, and Mattithiah the High Priest. “To destroy them utterly”; this was in the days of Haman, when I appointed for them the righteous leaders Mordecai and Esther. “To break My covenant with them”; this was in the days of the Romans, when I appointed for them the Sages of the house of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi and the Sages of other

generations. “For I am the Lord their God”; this will be in the future, when no nation or people of a foreign tongue will be able to subjugate them further.

³⁷⁹ Rabbi Levi said his introduction from here: “But if you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come to pass, that those whom you allow to remain of them shall be as thorns in your eyes” (Numbers 33:55). King Saul’s failure to completely annihilate Amalek allowed for the existence of his descendant Haman, who acted as a thorn in the eyes of Israel during the Purim episode.

³⁸⁰ Rabbi Ḥiyya said his introduction from here, the continuation of the previously cited verse: “And it shall come to pass, that as I thought to do unto them, so I shall do unto you” (Numbers 33:56). Prior to the miracle of Purim, the Jewish people were subject to the punishment that the Torah designated for its enemies, because they did not fulfill God’s commandments.

³⁸¹ The Gemara continues with its explanation of the book of Esther, beginning with a discussion of the name Ahasuerus. Rav said: The name should be viewed as a contraction: The brother of the head [aḥiv shel rosh] and of the same character as the head [ben gilo shel rosh]. Rav explains: The brother of the head, i.e., the brother of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, who is called “head,” as it is stated: “You are the head of gold” (Daniel 2:38). Of the same character as the head, for he, Nebuchadnezzar, killed the Jews, and he, Ahasuerus, sought to kill them. He destroyed the Temple, and he sought to destroy the foundations for the Temple laid by Zerubbabel, as it is stated: “And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote to him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem” (Ezra 4:6), and he ordered that the construction of the Temple cease.

³⁸² And Shmuel said: The name Ahasuerus should be understood in the sense of black [shaḥor], as the face of the Jewish people was blackened in his days like the bottom of a pot. And Rabbi Yoḥanan said a different explanation: Everyone who recalled him said: “Woe upon his head” [aḥ lerosho]. And Rabbi Ḥanina said: The name alludes to the fact that everyone became poor [rash] in his days, as it is stated: “And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land” (Esther 10:1).

³⁸³ The Gemara continues: “This is [hu] Ahasuerus” (Esther 1:1); the term hu, this is, comes to teach that he remained as he was in his wickedness from beginning to end. Similarly, wherever the words “this is” appear in this manner, the verse indicates that the individual under discussion remained the same from beginning to end, for example: “This is [hu] Esau” (Genesis 36:43); he remained in his wickedness from beginning to end. “This is [hu] Dathan and Abiram” (Numbers 26:9); they remained in their wickedness from beginning to end. “This is [hu] the king Ahaz” (II Chronicles 28:22); he remained in his wickedness from beginning to end.

³⁸⁴ The Gemara continues: The word hu is also used to recognize sustained righteousness. “Abram, this is [hu] Abraham” (I Chronicles 1:27); this indicates that Abraham didn’t change, as he remained in his righteousness from beginning to end. Similarly, “This is [hu] Aaron and Moses” (Exodus 6:26); they remained in their righteousness from the beginning of their life to the end of their life. Similarly, with respect to David: “And David, this was [hu] the youngest” (I Samuel 17:14), indicates that he remained in his humility from beginning to end. Just as in his youth, when he was still an ordinary individual, he humbled himself before anyone who was greater than him in Torah, so too, in his kingship, he humbled himself before anyone who was greater than him in wisdom.

³⁸⁵ The next term in the opening verse: “Who reigned” (Esther 1:1), is now interpreted. Rav said: This comes to teach that he reigned on his own, without having inherited the throne. Some say this to

his credit, and some say it to his disgrace. The Gemara explains: Some say this to his credit, that there was no other man as fit as him to be king. And some say it to his disgrace, that he was not fit to be king, but he distributed large amounts of money, and in that way rose to the throne.

³⁸⁶ The opening verse continues that Ahasuerus reigned “from Hodu to Cush.” Rav and Shmuel disagreed about its meaning. One said: Hodu is a country at one end of the world, and Cush is a country at the other end of the world. And one said: Hodu and Cush are situated next to each other, and the verse means to say as follows: Just as Ahasuerus reigned with ease over the adjacent countries of Hodu and Cush, so too, he reigned with ease from one end of the world to the other.

³⁸⁷ On a similar note, you say with regard to Solomon: “For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the river, from Tiphseh even to Gaza” (I Kings 5:4), and also with regard to this Rav and Shmuel disagreed. One said: Tiphseh is at one end of the world, whereas Gaza is at the other end of the world. And one said: Tiphseh and Gaza are situated next to each other, and the verse means to say as follows: Just as Solomon reigned with ease over the adjacent Tiphseh and Gaza, so too, he reigned with ease over the entire world.

³⁸⁸ The opening verse continues, stating that Ahasuerus reigned “over seven and twenty and a hundred provinces” (Esther 1:1). Rav Hisha said: This verse should be understood as follows: At first he reigned over seven provinces; and then he reigned over twenty more; and finally he reigned over another hundred. The Gemara asks: However, if that is so, with regard to the similarly worded verse: “And the years of the life of Amram were seven and thirty and a hundred years” (Exodus 6:20), what would you expound from it? The Gemara answers: It is different here, in the book of Esther, as this part of the verse is entirely superfluous. Since it is already written: “From Hodu to Cush,” why then do I need “Seven and twenty and a hundred provinces”? Rather, learn from here that these words come for this exposition, to teach that Ahasuerus did not begin to reign over all of them at the same time.

³⁸⁹ § Apropos the discussion of the kingdoms of Ahasuerus and Solomon, the Gemara cites a baraita in which the Sages taught: Three men ruled over the entire world, and they were Ahab, and Ahasuerus, and Nebuchadnezzar. The Gemara explains: Ahab, as it is written in the words of Obadiah, servant of Ahab, to Elijah: “As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to seek you, and they said: He is not there; and he made the kingdom and nation swear, that they had not found you” (I Kings 18:10). And if he did not reign over them, how could he have made them swear? Apparently, then, he reigned over the entire world.

³⁹⁰ Nebuchadnezzar also ruled over the whole world, as it is written: “And it shall come to pass, that the nation and the kingdom that not serve this same Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonia, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylonia, that nation will I visit, says the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand” (Jeremiah 27:8). Ahasuerus also ruled the world, as we have said above.

³⁹¹ After mentioning three kings who ruled over the world, the Gemara presents a mnemonic for the names of other kings that will be discussed below: Shin, Solomon, i.e., Shlomo; samekh, Sennacherib; dalet, Darius; kaf, Cyrus, i.e., Koresh. The Gemara asks: But is there no other king besides those previously mentioned who ruled over the entire world? But there is King Solomon who ruled over the world and should be added to the list. The Gemara answers: Solomon did not complete

his kingship, as he left the throne during his lifetime, and therefore, his name doesn't appear on the list.

³⁹² The Gemara asks: This works out well according to the one who said that Solomon was first a king and then a commoner, never returning to the throne. But according to the one who said that he was first a king and then a commoner, and then afterward he returned again to be a king, what can be said to explain why he is not mentioned in the list of kings who ruled over the entire world? The Gemara answers: There was something else about Solomon that makes it impossible to compare him to the others, for he ruled over the inhabitants of the heavenly worlds, i.e., demons and spirits, as well as the human inhabitants of the earthly worlds, as it is stated: "Then Solomon sat upon the throne of the Lord as king" (I Chronicles 29:23), which indicates that his reign extended even to the heavenly worlds, with King Solomon sitting upon the throne of the Lord, and therefore he cannot be compared to the others, who merely ruled on earth.

³⁹³ The Gemara asks further: But there was Sennacherib, who ruled over the entire world, as it is written: "Who are they among all the gods of these countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" (Isaiah 36:20). The Gemara answers: There is Jerusalem that he did not conquer, as indicated in the verse.

³⁹⁴ The Gemara continues to ask: But there is Darius, as it is stated: "Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you" (Daniel 6:26). The Gemara answers: There are the seven provinces over which he did not rule, as it is written: "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty satraps" (Daniel 6:2). It is apparent from here that Darius did not rule over the entire world, for his son Ahasuerus ruled over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, an additional seven.

³⁹⁵ The Gemara raises another question: But there is Cyrus, as it is written: "Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: The Lord, God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth" (Ezra 1:2). The Gemara answers: This is not proof that he ruled the world, for there he was merely boasting about himself, although in fact there was no truth to his words.

³⁹⁶ § The second verse in Esther states: "In those days when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom" (Esther 1:2), implying that the events to follow took place during the first year of his reign; and one verse afterward it is written: "In the third year of his reign" (Esther 1:3), indicating that it was the third year, not the first. Rava said: There is no contradiction. What is the meaning of "when he sat" [keshevet]? It is intended to indicate that he acted not immediately upon his rise to the throne, but rather after his mind was settled [shenityasheva], and he overcame his anxiety and worry with regard to the redemption of the Jewish people. He said to himself as follows: Belshazzar, the king of Babylonia, calculated and erred with regard to the Jewish people's redemption. I too will calculate, but I will not err.

³⁹⁷ The Gemara explains: What is this calculation? As it is written with regard to Jeremiah's prophecy of a return to Eretz Yisrael: "After seventy years are accomplished for Babylonia I will remember you and perform My good word toward you, enabling you to return to this place" (Jeremiah 29:10), and elsewhere it is written in a slightly different formulation: "In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, meditated in the books, over the number of the years, which the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish for the desolations of Jerusalem seventy years" (Daniel 9:2). He, Belshazzar, calculated as follows: Forty-five years of Nebuchadnezzar, and

twenty-three of Evil-merodach, and two of his own, for a total of seventy years that had passed without redemption. He was therefore certain that Jeremiah's prophecy would no longer be fulfilled, and he therefore said: I will take out the vessels of the Holy Temple and use them.

³⁹⁸ The Gemara asks: From where do we derive that Nebuchadnezzar reigned for forty-five years? As the Master said: They were exiled in the seventh year; they were exiled in the eighth year; they were exiled in the eighteenth year; and they were exiled in the nineteenth year.

³⁹⁹ The Gemara explains: They were exiled in the seventh year after Nebuchadnezzar's subjugation of Jehoiakim, in what was known as the exile of Jehoiachin, which was actually the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Then later they were exiled a second time in the eighteenth year after the subjugation of Jehoiakim, in what was known as the exile of Zedekiah, which was actually in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, as the Master said: In the first year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar conquered Nineveh; in his second year he conquered Jehoiakim. And it is written: "And it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin, king of Judea, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth day of the month, that Evil-merodach, king of Babylonia, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin, king of Judea, and brought him out of prison" (Jeremiah 52:31).

⁴⁰⁰ The Gemara calculates: Since Evil-merodach acted in the first year of his reign, immediately after coming to power, it turns out that Nebuchadnezzar ruled for eight years before he sent Jehoiachin into exile, and thirty-seven years during which Jehoiachin was in prison. This equals forty-five years of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. And the twenty-three years of Evil-merodach are known through tradition. And together with the two years of Belshazzar, this brings the count of the years of exile to seventy. At that point Belshazzar said to himself: Now for sure they will not be redeemed. Therefore, I will take out the vessels of the Holy Temple and use them.

⁴⁰¹ This is that which Daniel said to him with regard to his impending punishment for using the Temple's vessels: "But you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His House before you" (Daniel 5:23). And it is written further in the chapter: "In that night Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, was slain" (Daniel 5:30). This was the description of Belshazzar's mistaken calculation. And it states after the fall of Belshazzar: "And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old" (Daniel 6:1).

⁴⁰² Ahasuerus said: He, Belshazzar, erred. I too will calculate, but I will not err, thinking he understood the source of Belshazzar's mistake. Is it written: "Seventy years for the kingdom of Babylonia"? It is written: "Seventy years for Babylonia." What is meant by "for Babylonia"? These words are referring to the seventy years for the exile of Babylonia. How many years are still lacking from the seventy years? Eight years. He calculated, and inserted in their stead one year of Belshazzar, and five years of Darius and Cyrus, and two years of his own, bringing the total to seventy. Once he saw that seventy years had been completed, and the Jewish people were still not redeemed, he said: Now for sure they will not be redeemed. Therefore, I will take out the vessels of the Temple and use them. What happened to him? As a punishment for what he did, the Satan came and danced among them, and brought confusion to his celebration until he killed Vashti.

⁴⁰³ The Gemara asks: But he calculated properly; why then did this happen? The Gemara answers: He too erred in his calculation, for he should have counted from the destruction of Jerusalem at the time of the exile of Zedekiah and not from the first exile of Jehoiachin.

⁴⁰⁴ The Gemara asks: Ultimately, how many years were lacking? Eleven, for the exile of Zedekiah took place eleven years after that of Jehoiachin. How many years did Ahasuerus reign as king? Fourteen. Indeed, in his fourteenth year, then, the Temple should have been built. If so, why is it written: “Then the work of the House of God, which is in Jerusalem, ceased; so it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia” (Ezra 4:24), which indicates that the Temple was not built during the entire reign of Ahasuerus? Rava said: The years reckoned were partial years. To complete the seventy years, it was necessary to wait until the second year of the rule of Darius II, when indeed the Temple was built.

⁴⁰⁵ This is also taught in a baraita, as an indication that the years counted were only partial years: And when Belshazzar was killed, there was still another year left for Babylonia before the reckoning of the seventy years was completed. And then Darius arose and completed it. Although seventy years were previously counted according to Belshazzar’s count, from the exile of Jehoiakim, because the years were only partial, there was still one year left in order to complete those seventy years.

⁴⁰⁶ Rava said: Daniel also erred in this calculation, as it is written: “In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, meditated in the books over the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish for the desolations of Jerusalem seventy years” (Daniel 9:2). From the fact that he said “I meditated,” a term indicating recounting and calculating, it can be inferred that he had previously erred.

⁴⁰⁷ The Gemara comments: In any case, the verses contradict each other with regard to how the seventy years should be calculated. In one verse it is written: “After seventy years are accomplished for Babylonia I will remember [efkod] you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10), which indicates that the seventy years should be counted from the Babylonian exile. And in another verse it is written: “That he would accomplish for the desolations of Jerusalem seventy years” (Daniel 9:2), indicating that the seventy years are calculated from the destruction of Jerusalem.

⁴⁰⁸ Rava said in response: The seventy years that “are accomplished for Babylonia” were only for being remembered [lifekida], as mentioned in the verse, allowing the Jews to return to Eretz Yisrael but not to build the Temple. And this is as it is written with regard to Cyrus’s proclamation permitting the Jewish people’s return to Eretz Yisrael, in the seventieth year of the Babylonian exile: “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He has charged [pakad] me to build Him a house in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:2). The verse makes use of the same root, peh-kuf-dalet, heralding the return to Jerusalem to build the Temple, but not its actual completion.

⁴⁰⁹ Apropos its mention of Cyrus, the Gemara states that Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda interpreted homiletically a verse concerning Cyrus: What is the meaning of that which is written: “Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held” (Isaiah 45:1), which seemingly is referring to Cyrus as God’s anointed? Now was Cyrus God’s anointed one, i.e., the Messiah, that the verse should refer to him in this manner? Rather, the verse should be understood as God speaking to the Messiah with regard to Cyrus: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the Messiah: I am complaining to you about Cyrus, who is not acting in accordance with what he is intended to do. I had said: “He shall build My House and gather My exiles” (see Isaiah 45:13), but he did not carry

this out. Rather, he said: “Whoever is among you of all His people...let him go up to Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:3). He gave permission to return to Israel, but he did no more than that.

⁴¹⁰ § The Gemara returns to its interpretations of verses in the Megilla. The Megilla mentions that among those invited to the king’s feast were: “The army of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces” (Esther 1:3), and it is written near the conclusion of the Megilla: “In the book of chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia” (Esther 10:2). Why is Persia mentioned first at the beginning of the Megilla, while later in the Megilla, Media is mentioned first? Rava said in response: These two peoples, the Persians and the Medes, stipulated with each other, saying: If the kings will come from us, the ministers will come from you; and if the kings will come from you, the ministers will come from us. Therefore, in reference to kings, Media is mentioned first, whereas in connection with nobles and princes, Persia is given priority.

⁴¹¹ The verse states: “When he showed the riches of his glorious [kevod] kingdom and the honor of his majestic [tiferet] greatness” (Esther 1:4). Rabbi Yosei bar Ḥanina said: This teaches that Ahasuerus wore the priestly vestments. Proof for this assertion may be adduced from the fact that the same terms are written with regard to the priestly vestments, as it is written here: “The riches of his glorious [kevod] kingdom and the honor of his majestic [tiferet] greatness.” And it is written there, with regard to the priestly garments: “For glory [kavod] and for majesty [tiferet]” (Exodus 28:2).

⁴¹² The verse states: “And when these days were fulfilled, the king made a feast for all the people that were present in Shushan the capital” (Esther 1:5). Rav and Shmuel disagreed as to whether this was a wise decision. One said: Ahasuerus arranged a feast for the residents of Shushan, the capital, after the feast for foreign dignitaries that preceded it, as mentioned in the earlier verses, indicating that he was a clever king. And the other one said: It is precisely this that indicates that he was a foolish king. The one who said that this proves that he was a clever king maintains that he acted well when he first brought close those more distant subjects by inviting them to the earlier celebration, as he could appease the residents of his own city whenever he wished. And the one who said that he was foolish maintains that he should have invited the residents of his city first, so that if those faraway subjects rebelled against him, these who lived close by would have stood with him.

⁴¹³ The students of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai asked him: For what reason were the enemies of Jewish people, a euphemism for the Jewish people themselves when exhibiting behavior that is not in their best interests, in that generation deserving of annihilation? He, Rabbi Shimon, said to them: Say the answer to your question yourselves. They said to him: It is because they partook of the feast of that wicked one, Ahasuerus, and they partook there of forbidden foods. Rabbi Shimon responded: If so, those in Shushan should have been killed as punishment, but those in the rest of the world, who did not participate in the feast, should not have been killed. They said to him: Then you say your response to our question. He said to them: It is because they prostrated before the idol that Nebuchadnezzar had made, as is recorded that the entire world bowed down before it, except for Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

⁴¹⁴ They said to him: But if it is true that they worshipped idols and therefore deserved to be destroyed, why was a miracle performed on their behalf? Is there favoritism expressed by God here? He said to them: They did not really worship the idol, but pretended to do so only for appearance, acting as if they were carrying out the king’s command to bow before the idol. So too, the Holy One, Blessed be He, did not destroy them but did act angry with them only for appearance. He too merely

pretended to desire to destroy them, as all He did was issue a threat, but in the end the decree was annulled. And this is as it is written: “For He does not afflict from His heart willingly” (Lamentations 3:33), but only for appearances’ sake.

⁴¹⁵ The verse states: “In the court of the garden of the king’s palace” (Esther 1:5). Rav and Shmuel disagreed with regard to how to understand the relationship between these three places: Court, garden, and palace: One said: The guests were received in different places. One who, according to his stature, was fit for the courtyard was brought to the courtyard; one who was fit for the garden was brought to the garden; and one who was fit for the palace was brought to the palace. And the other one said: He first sat them in the courtyard, but it did not hold them, as they were too numerous. He then sat them in the garden, but it did not hold them either, until he brought them into the palace and it held them. A third understanding was taught in a baraita: He sat them in the courtyard and opened two entranceways for them, one to the garden and one to the palace.

⁴¹⁶ The verse states: “There were hangings of *ḥur*, karpas, and sky blue” (Esther 1:6). The Gemara asks: What is *ḥur*? Rav said: A fabric fashioned with many holes [*ḥarei ḥarei*], similar to lace. And Shmuel said: He spread out for them carpets of white wool, as the word *ḥavar* means white. And what is karpas? Rabbi Yosei bar Ḥanina said: Cushions [*karim*] of velvet [*pasim*].

⁴¹⁷ The verse states: “On silver rods and pillars of marble; the couches were of gold and silver” (Esther 1:6). It is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Yehuda says: Some couches were of gold and others of silver. One who, according to his stature, was fit for silver sat on a couch of silver, and one who was fit for gold sat on one of gold. Rabbi Neḥemya said to him: This was not done. If so, you would cast jealousy into the feast, for the guests would be envious of each other. Rather, the couches themselves were made of silver, and their feet were made of gold.

⁴¹⁸ The verse continues: “Upon a pavement of *bahat* and marble” (Esther 1:6). Rabbi Asi said with regard to the definition of *bahat*: These are stones that ingratiate themselves with their owners, as they are precious stones that people are willing to spend large amounts of money to acquire. And similarly, it states elsewhere that the Jewish people will be likened to precious stones: “And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as “the stones of a crown, glittering over His land” (Zechariah 9:16).

⁴¹⁹ The verse concludes: “And *dar* and *soḥaret*” (Esther 1:6). Rav said: *Dar* means many rows [*darei darei*] around. Similarly, *soḥaret* is derived from *seḥor seḥor*, around and around, meaning that the floor was surrounded with numerous rows of *bahat* and marble stones. And Shmuel said: There is a precious stone in the seaports, and its name is *dara*, and Ahasuerus placed it in the center of the feast, and it illuminated the festivities for them as the sun illuminates the world at midday. He explains that the word *soḥaret* is derived from *tzohar*, a light. A scholar from the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught a baraita: This means that he proclaimed a remission for all the merchants, absolving them from paying their taxes, understanding that the word *dar* derives from *deror*, freedom, and *soḥaret* from *soḥer*, merchant.

⁴²⁰ The verse states: “And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, the vessels being diverse [*shonim*] from one another” (Esther 1:7). The Gemara asks: Why does the verse use the term *shonim* to express that they are different? It should have said the more proper term *meshunim*. Rava said: A Divine Voice issued forth and said to them: The early ones, referring to Belshazzar and his people, were destroyed because they used these vessels, the vessels of the Temple, and yet you use them

again [shonim]? The verse continues: “And royal wine in abundance [rav]” (Esther 1:7). Rav said: This teaches that each and every guest at the feast was poured well-aged wine that was older [rav] than himself in years.

⁴²¹ The verse states: “And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel” (Esther 1:8). The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of “according to the law”? Rabbi Ḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Meir: The drinking was according to the law of the Torah. Just as, according to the law of the Torah, with regard to offerings, the food sacrificed on the altar is greater in quantity than the drink, for the wine libation is quantitatively much smaller than the sacrificial offerings it accompanies, so too, at the feast of that wicked man, the food was greater in quantity than the drink.

⁴²² The verse states: “None did compel” (Esther 1:8). Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that each and every guest at the feast was poured a drink from wine of his own country, so that he would feel entirely free, as if he were in his home country. The verse continues: “That they should do according to every man’s pleasure” (Esther 1:8). Rava commented on the literal meaning of the verse, which is referring to two men, a man and a man [ish va’ish], and said: The man and man whom they should follow indicates that they should do according to the wishes of Mordecai and Haman. The two of them served as butlers at the feast, and they were in charge of distributing the wine. Why is the verse interpreted in this way? Mordecai is called “man,” as it is written: “There was a certain Jewish man [ish] in Shushan the castle, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair” (Esther 2:5). And Haman is also called man, as it states: “A man [ish] who is an adversary and an enemy, this evil Haman” (Esther 7:6).

⁴²³ The verse states: “Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women, in the royal house, which belonged to King Ahasuerus” (Esther 1:9). The Gemara questions why she held the feast in the royal house, a place of men, rather than in the women’s house, where it should have been. Rava said in response: The two of them had sinful intentions. Ahasuerus wished to fornicate with the women, and Vashti wished to fornicate with the men. This explains the folk saying that people say: He with pumpkins and his wife

⁴²⁴ with zucchinis, indicating that often a man and his wife engage in similar actions.

⁴²⁵ The verse states: “On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine” (Esther 1:10). The Gemara asks: Is that to say that until now his heart was not merry with wine? Did it take seven days for him to achieve merriment? Rava said: The seventh day was Shabbat, when the difference between the Jewish people and the gentiles is most apparent. On Shabbat, when the Jewish people eat and drink, they begin by occupying themselves with words of Torah and words of praise for God. But the nations of the world, when they eat and drink, they begin only with words of licentiousness.

⁴²⁶ The Gemara continues to detail what occurred at the feast. So too, at the feast of that wicked man, Ahasuerus, when the men began to converse, some said: The Median women are the most beautiful, while others said: The Persian women are the most beautiful. Ahasuerus said to them: The vessel that I use, i.e., my wife, is neither Median nor Persian, but rather Chaldean. Do you wish to see her? They said to him: Yes, provided that she be naked, for we wish to see her without any additional adornments.

⁴²⁷ The Gemara comments: Vashti was punished in this humiliating way for it is with the measure that a man measures to others that he himself is measured. In other words, God punishes individuals

in line with their transgressions, measure for measure. This teaches that the wicked Vashti would take the daughters of Israel, and strip them naked, and make them work on Shabbat. Therefore, it was decreed that she be brought before the king naked, on Shabbat. This is as it is written: “After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her” (Esther 2:1). That is to say, just as she had done with the young Jewish women, so it was decreed upon her.

⁴²⁸ The verse states: “But the queen Vashti refused to come” (Esther 1:12). The Gemara asks: Since she was immodest, as the Master said above: The two of them had sinful intentions, what is the reason that she did not come? Rabbi Yosei bar Ḥanina said: This teaches that she broke out in leprosy, and therefore she was embarrassed to expose herself publicly. An alternative reason for her embarrassment was taught in a baraita: The angel Gabriel came and fashioned her a tail.

⁴²⁹ The verse continues: “Therefore the king was very wrathful, and his anger burned in him” (Esther 1:12). The Gemara asks: Why did his anger burn in him so greatly merely because she did not wish to come? Rava said: Vashti not only refused to come, but she also sent him a message by way of a messenger: You, son of my father’s stableman [ahuriyyarei]. Belshazzar, my father, drank wine against a thousand men and did not become inebriated, as the verse in Daniel (5:1) testifies about him: “Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand”; and that man, referring euphemistically to Ahasuerus himself, has become senseless from his wine. Due to her audacity, immediately “his anger burned in him” (Esther 1:12).

⁴³⁰ The following verse states: “Then the king said to the wise men, who knew the times” (Esther 1:13). The Gemara asks: Who are these wise men? These wise men are the Sages of the Jewish people, who are referred to as those “who knew the times,” for they know how to intercalate years and fix the months of the Jewish calendar. Ahasuerus said to them: Judge her for me. The Sages said in their hearts: What should we do? If we say to him: Kill her, tomorrow he will become sober and then come and demand her from us. If we say to him: Let her be, she has scorned royalty, and that cannot be tolerated. Consequently, they decided not to judge the matter, and they said to him as follows: From the day that the Temple was destroyed and we have been exiled from our land, counsel and insight have been removed from us, and we do not know how to judge capital cases, as they are exceptionally difficult. Go to the people of Ammon and Moab, who have remained permanently settled in their places like wine that is settled on its lees, and so their minds are settled as well.

⁴³¹ And they provided a good reason when they spoke to him, as they proved that one who is settled retains his reasoning: For it is written: “Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into exile; therefore his taste has remained in him, and his scent is not changed” (Jeremiah 48:11). Ahasuerus immediately acted on their advice and asked his advisors, as it is written: “And next to him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan” (Esther 1:14).

⁴³² Rabbi Levi said: This entire verse listing the names of the king’s advisors is stated on account of offerings. Each name alludes to an aspect of the sacrificial service that was unique to the Jewish people, which the ministering angels mentioned as merit for the Jewish people.

⁴³³ “Carshena”; the ministering angels said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, did the gentiles ever offer before You lambs [karim] of the first year [shana], as the Jewish people have offered before You? “Shethar”; have they ever offered before You two turtledoves

[shetei torim]? “Admatha”; have they ever built before You an altar of earth [adama]? “Tarshish”; have they ever ministered before You in the priestly vestments, as it is written that on the fourth of the four rows of precious stones contained on the breastplate were: “A beryl [tarshish], an onyx, and a jasper” (Exodus 28:20). “Meres”; have they ever stirred [meirsu] the blood of the offerings before You? “Marsena”; have they ever stirred [meirsu] the meal-offering before You? “Memucan”; have they ever prepared [hekhinu] the table before You, on which the shewbread was placed?

⁴³⁴ The verse states: “And Memucan said” (Esther 1:16). A Sage taught in a baraita: Memucan is Haman. And why is Haman referred to as Memucan? Because he was prepared [mukhan] to bring calamity upon the Jewish people. Rav Kahana said: From here we see that the common man jumps to the front and speaks first, for Memucan was mentioned last of the king’s seven advisors, and nevertheless he expressed his opinion first.

⁴³⁵ The king sent out letters to the people of all his provinces, in which it was written: “That every man shall wield authority in his own house and speak according to the language of his people” (Esther 1:22). Rava said: Were it not for the first letters sent by Ahasuerus, which everybody discounted, there would not have been left among the enemies of the Jewish people, a euphemism for the Jewish people themselves, a remnant or a refugee. Since these first letters were the subject of ridicule, people didn’t take the king seriously and did not immediately act upon the directive of the later letters, calling for the Jewish people’s destruction.

⁴³⁶ The Gemara continues. The reason that the first letters were not taken seriously is that they who received them would say: What is this that he has sent us: “That every man shall wield authority in his own house”? This is obvious; even a lowly weaver is commander [paredashekha] in his house. If so, why then did the king find it necessary to make such a proclamation?

⁴³⁷ The verse describes Ahasuerus’s search for a new wife by stating: “And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the castle” (Esther 2:3). Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “In everything a prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool unfolds his folly” (Proverbs 13:16)? The verse highlights the difference between two kings’ approaches to finding a wife.

⁴³⁸ “In everything a prudent man acts with knowledge”; this statement is referring to David, who also sought a wife for himself, as it is written: “And his servants said to him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin” (I Kings 1:2). Since he sought one maiden, whoever had a daughter brought her to him, for everyone wanted his daughter to be the king’s wife. With regard to the continuation of the verse: “But a fool unfolds his folly” (Proverbs 13:16), this statement is referring to Ahasuerus, as it is written: “And let the king appoint officers” to seek out many maidens. Since it became clear that the king would have relations with all of them, but in the end he would choose only one as his bride, whoever had a daughter hid her from him.

⁴³⁹ The verse that initially describes Mordecai states: “There was a certain Jew in Shushan the castle, whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair the son of Shimei the son of Kish, a Benjamite” (Esther 2:5). The Gemara asks: What is it conveying in the verse by saying the names of Mordecai’s ancestors? If the verse in fact comes to trace his ancestry, it should continue tracing his lineage back all the way to Benjamin, the founder of his tribe. Rather, what is different about these names that they deserve special mention?

⁴⁴⁰ The Gemara answers: A Sage taught the following baraita: All of them are names by which Mordecai was called. He was called “the son of Jair” because he was the son who enlightened [heir] the eyes of all of the Jewish people with his prayers; “the son of Shimei” because he was the son whom God heard [shama] his prayers; “the son of Kish” because he knocked [hikish] on the gates of mercy and they were opened to him.

⁴⁴¹ The Gemara points out a contradiction: Mordecai is referred to as a “Jew [Yehudi],” apparently indicating that he came from the tribe of Judah, but in the continuation of the verse he is called “Benjamite” [Yemini], which indicates that he came from the tribe of Benjamin. Rav Naḥman said: Mordecai was crowned with honorary names. Yehudi is one such honorary epithet, due to its allusion to the royal tribe of Judah, but it is not referring to Mordecai’s tribal affiliation.

⁴⁴² Rabba bar bar Ḥana said that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said an alternative explanation: Mordecai’s father was from the tribe of Benjamin, and his mother was from the tribe of Judah. Therefore, he was both a Yemini, a Benjamite, and a Yehudi, from the tribe of Judah. And the Rabbis say that the dual lineage is due to a dispute: The families competed with each other over which tribe could take credit for Mordecai. The family of Judah would say: I caused the birth of Mordecai, as only because David did not kill Shimei, the son of Gera, when he cursed him (see II Samuel 16) was it possible for Mordecai to be born later from his descendants. And the family of Benjamin said in response: In the end he came from me, as he in fact was from Benjamin’s tribe.

⁴⁴³ Rava said: The Congregation of Israel at the time said this from the opposite perspective, not as a boast, but as a complaint, remarking: See what a Judean has done to me and how a Benjamite has repaid me. What a Judean has done to me is referring to

⁴⁴⁴ the responsibility of Judah, as David did not kill Shimei, although he was liable to the death penalty. The grave consequences of this failure included that Mordecai was born from him, and it was he against whom Haman was jealous, leading Haman to issue a decree against all of the Jewish people. And how a Benjamite has repaid me is referring to the fact that Saul, who was from the tribe of Benjamin, did not kill the Amalekite king Agag immediately, from whom Haman was later born, and he caused suffering to the Jewish people.

⁴⁴⁵ Rabbi Yoḥanan said a different explanation of the verse: Actually, Mordecai came from the tribe of Benjamin. Why, then, was he referred to as Yehudi? On account of the fact that he repudiated idol worship, for anyone who repudiates idolatry is called Yehudi. It is understood here in the sense of yihudi, one who declares the oneness of God, as it is written: “There are certain Jews [Yehuda’in] whom thou hast appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylonia, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not regarded you: They serve not your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up” (Daniel 3:12). These three individuals were in fact Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who were not all from the tribe of Judah but are referred to as Yehuda’in because they repudiated idol worship.

⁴⁴⁶ § Incidental to the exposition of the word Yehudi as one who repudiates idolatry, the Gemara relates that when Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi introduced his exposition of the book of Chronicles, he addressed the book of Chronicles and said as follows: All of your words are one, and we know how to expound them. This introduction made reference to the fact that the book of Chronicles cannot always be interpreted literally but requires exposition, as the same individual might be called by various different names, as in the following verse: “And his wife HaYehudiyya bore Jered the father

of Gedor, and Heber the father of Soco, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. And these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took” (I Chronicles 4:18).

⁴⁴⁷ Why is she, who we are told at the end of the verse was Pharaoh’s daughter Bithiah, referred to as Yehudiyya? Because she repudiated idol worship, as it is written: “And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself in the river” (Exodus 2:5), and Rabbi Yoḥanan said: She went down to wash and purify herself from the idols of her father’s house.

⁴⁴⁸ The Gemara understands that all the names referred to in the verse as children of Pharaoh’s daughter refer to Moses, as it will soon explain. The Gemara asks: Pharaoh’s daughter bore Moses? But didn’t she merely raise him? Rather, it is telling you that with regard to anyone who raises an orphan boy or girl in his house, the verse ascribes him credit as if he gave birth to him.

⁴⁴⁹ The Gemara explains how all the names in fact are referring to Moses: “Jered”; this is Moses, and why was he called Jered? Because manna came down [yarad] for the Jewish people in his days. He was also called “Gedor” because he fenced in [gadar] the breaches of the Jewish people. He was called “Heber” because he connected [ḥibber] the Jewish people to their Father in Heaven. He was called “Soco” because he was for the Jewish people like a shelter [sukka] and shield. He was called “Jekuthiel” because the Jewish people trusted in God [kivu laEl] in his days. Lastly, he was called “Zanoah” because he caused the iniquities of the Jewish people to be disregarded [hizniaḥ].

⁴⁵⁰ The Gemara notes that the words “father of” appear three times in that same verse: “And his wife Hajehudijah bore Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Soco, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah.” This teaches that Moses was a father to all of the Jewish people in three respects: A father in Torah, a father in wisdom, and a father in prophecy.

⁴⁵¹ The aforementioned verse stated: “And these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took.” The Gemara asks: Was Bithiah’s husband’s name Mered? Wasn’t his name Caleb? Rather, the verse alludes to the reason that Caleb married Bithiah. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: Let Caleb, who rebelled [marad] against the advice of the spies, come and marry the daughter of Pharaoh, who rebelled against the idols of her father’s home.

⁴⁵² § The Gemara resumes its explanation of the book of Esther. The verse states with regard to Mordecai: “Who had been exiled from Jerusalem” (Esther 2:6). Rava said: This language indicates that he went into exile on his own, not because he was forced to leave Jerusalem. He knew that he would be needed by those in exile, and therefore he consciously left Jerusalem to attend to the needs of his people.

⁴⁵³ The verse states: “And he had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther” (Esther 2:7). She is referred to as “Hadassah” and she is referred to as “Esther.” What was her real name? It is taught in a baraita that the Sages differed in their opinion as to which was in fact her name and which one was a description: Rabbi Meir says: Esther was her real name. Why then was she called Hadassah? On account of the righteous, who are called myrtles [hadassim], and so it states: “And he stood among the myrtles [hahadassim]” (Zechariah 1:8).

⁴⁵⁴ Rabbi Yehuda differs and says: Hadassah was her real name. Why then was she called Esther? Because she concealed [masteret] the truth about herself, as it is stated: “Esther had not yet made known her kindred nor her people” (Esther 2:20).

⁴⁵⁵ Rabbi Neḥemya concurs and says: Hadassah was her real name. Why then was she called Esther? This was her non-Hebrew name, for owing to her beauty the nations of the world called her after Istahar, Venus. Ben Azzai says: Esther was neither tall nor short, but of average size like a myrtle tree, and therefore she was called Hadassah, the Hebrew name resembling that myrtle tree. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa said: Esther was called Hadassah because she was greenish, having a pale complexion like a myrtle, but a cord of Divine grace was strung around her, endowing her with a beautiful appearance.

⁴⁵⁶ The verse initially states with regard to Esther: “For she had neither father nor mother” (Esther 2:7). Why do I need to be told in the continuation of the verse: “And when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own daughter”? Rav Aḥa said: This repetition indicates that when her mother became pregnant with her, her father died, and when she gave birth to her, her mother died, so that she did not have a mother or a father for even a single day.

⁴⁵⁷ The verse states: “And when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own daughter” (Esther 2:7). A tanna taught a baraita in the name of Rabbi Meir: Do not read the verse literally as for a daughter [bat], but rather read it as for a home [bayit]. This indicates that Mordecai took Esther to be his wife. And so it states: “But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and reared: And it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his bread, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was like a daughter [kevat] to him” (II Samuel 12:3). The Gemara questions: Because it lay in his bosom, it “was like a daughter to him”? Rather, the parable in II Samuel referenced the illicit taking of another’s wife, and the phrase should be read: Like a home [bayit] to him, i.e., a wife. So too, here, Mordecai took her for a home, i.e., a wife.

⁴⁵⁸ The verse states: “And the seven maids chosen to be given her out of the king’s house” (Esther 2:9). Rava said: She would have a separate maid attend her each day, and she would count the days of the week by them, so she was always aware when Shabbat was. The verse continues: “And he advanced her and her maids to the best place in the house of the women.” Rav said: The advancement in the verse signals that he fed her food of Jews, i.e., kosher food.

⁴⁵⁹ And Shmuel said an alternative understanding: The advancement was a well-intentioned act in that he fed her pig hinds, thinking she would view it as a delicacy, although in fact they were not kosher.

⁴⁶⁰ And Rabbi Yoḥanan said a third understanding: He gave her vegetables, which did not pose a problem with regard to the kosher laws. And so it states with regard to the kindness done for Daniel and his associates: “So the steward took away their food and the wine that they should drink; and gave them vegetables” (Daniel 1:16).

⁴⁶¹ The verse states: “Six months with oil of myrrh” (Esther 2:12). The Gemara asks: What is “oil of myrrh”? Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said: It is the aromatic oil called setakt. Rav Huna said: It is a cosmetic oil derived from olives that have not yet reached one-third of their growth. It is similarly taught in a baraita: Rabbi Yehuda says: Anpakinon is the oil of olives that have not reached one-third of their growth. And why is it smeared on the body? Because it removes the hair and softens the skin.

⁴⁶² The verse states: “In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned” (Esther 2:14). Rabbi Yoḥanan said: From the implicit criticism of that wicked man, Ahasuerus, who cohabited with many

women, we have incidentally learned his praise as well, that he would not engage in sexual relations during the day, but in a more modest fashion at night.

⁴⁶³ The verse states: “And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all those who looked upon her” (Esther 2:15). Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that she appeared to each and every one as if she were a member of his own nation, and therefore she obtained favor in the eyes of all. The next verse states: “So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus into his royal house in the tenth month, which is the month Tevet” (Esther 2:16). It was by act of divine providence that Esther was taken to Ahasuerus in a cold winter month, in which the body takes pleasure in the warmth of another body, and therefore she found favor in his eyes.

⁴⁶⁴ The verse states: “And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins” (Esther 2:17). Rav said: This double language indicates that if he wanted to taste in her the taste of a virgin during intercourse, he tasted it, and if he wanted to experience the taste of a non-virgin, he tasted it, and therefore he loved her more than all the other women.

⁴⁶⁵ The verse states: “Then the king made a great feast for all his princes and his servants, even Esther’s feast” (Esther 2:18). The Gemara explains that this was part of an attempt to have Esther reveal her true identity. He made a great feast in her honor, but she did not reveal her identity to him. He lowered the taxes [karga] in her name, but still she did not reveal it to him. He sent gifts [pardishenei] to the ministers in her name, but even so she did not reveal it to him.

⁴⁶⁶ The verse states: “And when the virgins were gathered together the second time and Mordecai sat in the king’s gate” (Esther 2:19). The Gemara explains: The reason Ahasuerus gathered the women together was that he went and took advice from Mordecai as to what he should do to get Esther to reveal her identity. Mordecai said to him: As a rule, a woman is jealous only of the thigh of another woman. Therefore, you should take for yourself additional women. But even so she did not reveal her origins to him, as it is written: “Esther had not yet made known her kindred nor her people” (Esther 2:20).

⁴⁶⁷ § Rabbi Elazar said: What is the meaning of that which is written:

⁴⁶⁸ “He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous; but with kings upon the throne He establishes them forever, and they are exalted” (Job 36:7)? This teaches that in reward for the modesty shown by Rachel she merited that Saul, who was also modest, should descend from her, and in reward for the modesty shown by Saul, he merited that Esther should descend from him.

⁴⁶⁹ The Gemara explains: What was the modesty shown by Rachel? It is as it is written: “And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father’s brother, and that he was Rebecca’s son” (Genesis 29:12). It may be asked: Was he, Jacob, in fact her father’s brother? But wasn’t he the son of her father’s sister?

⁴⁷⁰ Rather, it must be understood that when Jacob met Rachel, he said to her: Will you marry me? She said to him: Yes, but my father, Laban, is a swindler, and you will not be able to outwit him. Jacob alleviated her fears, as he said to her that he is her father’s brother, referring not to their familial affiliation but rather to his ability to deal with her father on his level, as if to say: I am his brother in deception. She said to him: But is it really permitted for the righteous to be involved in deception? He said to her: Yes, it is permitted when dealing with deceptive individuals, as the verse states: “With the pure you will show yourself pure, and with the perverse you will show yourself

subtle” (II Samuel 22:27), indicating that one should deal with others in the manner appropriate for their personality.

⁴⁷¹ Jacob then said to her: What is the deception that he will plan to carry out and I should be prepared for? Rachel said to him: I have a sister who is older than I, and he will not marry me off before her, and will try to give you her in my place. So Jacob gave her certain distinguishing signs that she should use to indicate to him that she was actually Rachel and not her sister.

⁴⁷² When the wedding night arrived, and Laban planned to switch the sisters, Rachel said to herself: Now my sister will be embarrassed, for Jacob will ask her for the signs and she will not know them. So she gave them to her. And this is as it is written: “And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah” (Genesis 29:25). Does this imply by inference that until now she was not Leah? Rather, due to the distinguishing signs that Rachel had given to Leah, he did not know until now, when it was light outside, that she was Leah. Therefore, Rachel merited that Saul should descend from her, due to her act of modesty in not revealing to Jacob that she had shown the signs to Leah.

⁴⁷³ And what was the modesty shown by Saul? As it is written: “But of the matter of the kingdom, of which Samuel spoke, he did not tell him” (I Samuel 10:16). Saul expressed his modesty by not revealing Samuel’s promise that he would be king, and thereby merited that Esther would descend from him. Similarly, Rabbi Elazar said: When the Holy One, Blessed be He, assigns greatness to a person, He assigns it to his sons and to his son’s sons for all generations, as it is stated: “He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous; but with kings upon the throne He establishes them forever, and they are exalted” (Job 36:7). And if he becomes arrogant due to this, the Holy One, Blessed be He, lowers him in order to humble him, as it is stated in the next verse: “And if they are bound in chains, and are held in cords of affliction, then He declares unto them their work, and their transgressions, that they have behaved proudly” (Job 36:8–9).

⁴⁷⁴ § The Gemara returns to its exposition of the Megilla. The verse states: “For Esther adhered to the words of Mordecai, as she did when she was brought up with him” (Esther 2:20). Rabbi Yirmeya said: This teaches that she would show discharges of her menstrual blood to the Sages to inquire whether she was pure or impure. The verse continues: “As she did when she was brought up with him” (Esther 2:20). Rabba bar Lima said in the name of Rav: This means that she maintained a relationship with Mordecai, as she would arise from the lap of Ahasuerus, immerse herself in a ritual bath, and sit in the lap of Mordecai.

⁴⁷⁵ The Megilla continues: “In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king’s gate, two of the king’s chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those that guarded the doors, became angry, and sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus” (Esther 2:21). Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, caused a master to become angry with his servants in order to fulfill the will of a righteous man. And who is this? It is Joseph, as it is stated in the chief butler’s account of how Pharaoh had become angry with him and with the chief baker and sent them to jail: “And there was with us there a young man, a Hebrew” (Genesis 41:12).

⁴⁷⁶ Similarly, the Holy One, Blessed be He, also caused servants to become angry with their master in order to perform a miracle for another righteous man. And who is he? It is Mordecai, as with regard to the plot to kill the king it is written: “And the matter became known to Mordecai” (Esther 2:22).

⁴⁷⁷ The Gemara explains how the matter became known to him. Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Bigthan and Teresh were two Tarsians, and they would talk with one another in the Tarsian language. They said: From the day that Esther arrived we have not slept, as Ahasuerus has been with Esther all night, and he has been busying us with his demands. Come, let us cast poison in the goblet from which he drinks so that he will die. But they did not know that Mordecai was one of those who sat on the Sanhedrin, which convened in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, and that he knew seventy languages, a necessity for members of the Sanhedrin.

⁴⁷⁸ While planning their plot, one of them said to the other: But my post and your post are not identical. How then can one of us leave our position to succeed in our plot to poison the king? The other one said to him: I will guard both my post and your post. And this is as it is written with regard to the king's verifying Mordecai's revelation of the plan to kill the king: "And when inquiry was made of the matter, it was found to be so" (Esther 2:23); it was discovered that they were not both found at their posts.

⁴⁷⁹ The verse describes when the rest of the events of the Megilla occurred: "After these events did King Ahasuerus promote Haman" (Esther 3:1). The Gemara asks: After what particular events? Rava said: Only after the Holy One, Blessed be He, created a remedy for the blow and set in place the chain of events that would lead to the miraculous salvation was Haman appointed, setting the stage for the decree against the Jews to be issued.

⁴⁸⁰ Rava explains: As Reish Lakish said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, does not strike at the Jewish people unless He has already created a remedy for them beforehand, as it is stated: "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered" (Hosea 7:1). But this is not so with regard to the nations of the world. With them, God first strikes them and only afterward does He create a remedy, as it is stated: "And the Lord shall smite Egypt, smiting and healing" (Isaiah 19:22).

⁴⁸¹ The verse states: "But it seemed contemptible in his eyes to lay his hand on Mordecai alone; for they had made known to him the people of Mordecai; wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai" (Esther 3:6). Rava said: At first he wanted to lay his hands on Mordecai alone, and in the end on the people of Mordecai. And who were the people of Mordecai? They were the Sages, i.e., Mordecai's special people. And ultimately he sought to bring harm on all the Jews.

⁴⁸² The verse states: "They cast pur, that is, the lot" (Esther 3:7). A Sage taught the following baraita: Once the lot fell on the month of Adar, he, Haman, greatly rejoiced, for he saw this as a favorable omen for the execution of his plans. He said: The lot has fallen for me in the month that Moses died, which is consequently a time of calamity for the Jewish people. But he did not know that not only did Moses die on the seventh of Adar, but he was also born on the seventh of Adar, and therefore it is also a time of rejoicing for the Jewish people.

⁴⁸³ Haman said to Ahasuerus: "There is [yeshno] one people scattered abroad [mefuzar] and dispersed [meforad] among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; and their laws are diverse from those of every people; nor do they keep the king's laws; therefore it does not profit the king to tolerate them" (Esther 3:8). Rava said: There was none who knew how to slander like Haman, as in his request to the king he included responses to all the reasons Ahasuerus might be reluctant to destroy the Jewish people. He said to Ahasuerus: Let us destroy them. Ahasuerus said to him: I am afraid of their God, lest He do to me as He did to those who stood against them before me.

Haman said to him: They have been asleep [yashnu] with respect to the mitzvot, having ceased to observe the mitzvot, and, therefore there is no reason to fear.

⁴⁸⁴ Ahasuerus said to him: There are the Sages among them who observe the mitzvot. Haman said to him: They are one people, i.e., they are all the same; nobody observes the mitzvot.

⁴⁸⁵ Haman continued with his next response as expressed in the verse: Perhaps you will say that I am making a bald spot in your kingdom, i.e., you fear that if an entire nation is wiped out there will be a desolate area within the kingdom. There is no need to worry, though, as they are scattered [mefuzarin] among the peoples, and eradicating them will not result in the creation of an unpopulated zone in the area where they had once lived. Furthermore, perhaps you will say that there is benefit from them; but this nation is meforad, like this barren mule [pereida] that cannot bear offspring, and there is no benefit to be gained from them. And perhaps you will say that there is at least a province that is filled with them. Therefore the verse states that they are scattered “in all the provinces of your kingdom” (Esther 3:8), and they do not inhabit one place.

⁴⁸⁶ Haman continued: “And their laws are diverse from those of every people” (Esther 3:8), as they do not eat from our food, nor do they marry from our women, nor do they marry off their women to us. “Nor do they keep the king’s laws” (Esther 3:8). They spend the entire year in idleness, as they are constantly saying: Shehi pehi, an acronym for: It is Shabbat today [Shabbat hayom]; it is Passover today [Pesah hayom]. The verse continues: “Therefore it does not profit the king to tolerate them,” as they eat and drink and scorn the throne. And a proof of this is that even if a fly falls into the cup of one of them, he will throw the fly out and drink the wine it fell into, but if my master the king were to touch the glass of one of them, he would throw it to the ground, and would not drink it, since it is prohibited to drink wine that was touched by a gentile.

⁴⁸⁷ Therefore, Haman concluded: “If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed, and I will weigh out ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasuries” (Esther 3:9). Reish Lakish said: It is revealed and known in advance to the One Who spoke and the world came into being, that in the future Haman was going to weigh out shekels against the Jewish people; therefore, He arranged that the Jewish people’s shekels that were given to the Temple preceded Haman’s shekels.

⁴⁸⁸ And this is as we learned in a mishna (Shekalim 2a): On the first of Adar the court makes a public announcement about the contribution to the Temple of half-shekels that will soon be due, and about the need to uproot forbidden mixtures of diverse kinds of seeds from the fields now that they have begun to sprout. Therefore, it turns out that the Jewish people give the shekels on the first of Adar, preceding the date of Haman’s planned destruction of the Jewish people and his own collecting of shekels.

⁴⁸⁹ Ahasuerus responded to Haman’s request: “And the king said to Haman: The silver is given to you; the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you” (Esther 3:11). Rabbi Abba said:

⁴⁹⁰ The actions of Ahasuerus and Haman can be understood with a parable; to what may they be compared? To two individuals, one of whom had a mound in the middle of his field and the other of whom had a ditch in the middle of his field, each one suffering from his own predicament. The owner of the ditch, noticing the other’s mound of dirt, said to himself: Who will give me this mound of dirt suitable for filling in my ditch; I would even be willing to pay for it with money, and the

owner of the mound, noticing the other's ditch, said to himself: Who will give me this ditch for money, so that I may use it to remove the mound of earth from my property?

⁴⁹¹ At a later point, one day, they happened to have met one another. The owner of the ditch said to the owner of the mound: Sell me your mound so I can fill in my ditch. The mound's owner, anxious to rid himself of the excess dirt on his property, said to him: Take it for free; if only you had done so sooner. Similarly, Ahasuerus himself wanted to destroy the Jews. As he was delighted that Haman had similar aspirations and was willing to do the job for him, he demanded no money from him.

⁴⁹² § The verse states: "And the king removed his ring from his hand" (Esther 3:10). Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: The removal of Ahasuerus's ring for the sealing of Haman's decree was more effective than the forty-eight prophets and the seven prophetesses who prophesied on behalf of the Jewish people. As, they were all unable to return the Jewish people to the right way, but the removal of Ahasuerus's ring returned them to the right way, since it brought them to repentance.

⁴⁹³ The Sages taught in a baraita: Forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses prophesied on behalf of the Jewish people, and they neither subtracted from nor added onto what is written in the Torah, introducing no changes or additions to the mitzvot except for the reading of the Megilla, which they added as an obligation for all future generations.

⁴⁹⁴ The Gemara asks: What exposition led them to determine that this was a proper mode of action? On what basis did they add this mitzva? Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Avin said that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa said that they reasoned as follows: If, when recalling the exodus from Egypt, in which the Jews were delivered from slavery to freedom, we recite songs of praise, the Song of the Sea and the hymns of hallel, then, in order to properly recall the miracle of Purim and commemorate God's delivering us from death to life, is it not all the more so the case that we must sing God's praise by reading the story in the Megilla?

⁴⁹⁵ The Gemara asks: If so, our obligation should be at least as great as when we recall the exodus from Egypt, and let us also recite hallel on Purim. The Gemara answers: Hallel is not said on Purim, because hallel is not recited on a miracle that occurred outside Eretz Yisrael. The Gemara asks: If so, with regard to the exodus from Egypt as well, which was a miracle that occurred outside Eretz Yisrael, how are we able to recite songs of praise?

⁴⁹⁶ The Gemara answers: As it is taught in a baraita: Prior to the time when the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael, all lands were deemed fit for songs of praise to be recited for miracles performed within their borders, as all lands were treated equally. But after the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael, that land became endowed with greater sanctity, and all the other lands were no longer deemed fit for songs of praise to be recited for miracles performed within them.

⁴⁹⁷ Rav Naḥman said an alternative answer as to why hallel is not recited on Purim: The reading of the Megilla itself is an act of reciting hallel. Rava said a third reason why hallel is not recited on Purim: Granted that hallel is said there, when recalling the exodus from Egypt, as after the salvation there, they could recite the phrase in hallel: "Give praise, O servants of the Lord" (Psalms 113:1); after their servitude to Pharaoh ended with their salvation, they were truly servants of the Lord and not servants of Pharaoh. But can it be said here, after the limited salvation commemorated on Purim: "Give praise, O servants of the Lord," which would indicate that after the salvation the Jewish people were only servants of the Lord and not servants of Ahasuerus? No, even after the miracle of Purim,

we were still the servants of Ahasuerus, as the Jews remained in exile under Persian rule, and consequently the salvation, which was incomplete, did not merit an obligation to say hallel.

⁴⁹⁸ The Gemara asks: Both according to the opinion of Rava and according to the opinion of Rav Naḥman, this is difficult. Isn't it taught in the baraita cited earlier: After the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael, that land became endowed with greater sanctity, and all the other lands were no longer deemed fit for songs of praise to be recited for miracles performed within them. Therefore, there should be no hallel obligation on Purim for the miracle performed outside of the land of Israel, and Rav Naḥman's and Rava's alternative explanations are incorrect. The Gemara answers: They understood differently, as it can be argued that when the people were exiled from Eretz Yisrael, the other lands returned to their initial suitability, and were once again deemed fit for reciting hallel on miracles performed within them.

⁴⁹⁹ With regard to the statement that forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses prophesied on behalf of the Jewish people, the Gemara asks: Is there no one else? Isn't it written with regard to Samuel's father, Elkanah: "And there was a certain [eḥad] man from Ramathaim-zophim" (I Samuel 1:1), which is expounded as follows to indicate that Elkanah was a prophet: He was one [eḥad] of two hundred [mata'im] prophets [tzofim] who prophesied on behalf of the Jewish people. If so, why was it stated here that there were only forty-eight prophets?

⁵⁰⁰ The Gemara answers: In fact, there were more prophets, as it is taught in a baraita: Many prophets arose for the Jewish people, numbering double the number of Israelites who left Egypt. However, only a portion of the prophecies were recorded, because only prophecy that was needed for future generations was written down in the Bible for posterity, but that which was not needed, as it was not pertinent to later generations, was not written. Therefore, the fifty-five prophets recorded in the Bible, although not the only prophets of the Jewish people, were the only ones recorded, due to their eternal messages.

⁵⁰¹ Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani said another explanation of the verse "And there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim": A man who comes from two heights [ramot] that face [tzofot] one another. Rabbi Ḥanin said an additional interpretation: A man who descends from people who stood at the height of [rumo] the world. The Gemara asks: And who are these people? The Gemara answers: These are the sons of Korah, as it is written: "But the sons of Korah did not die" (Numbers 26:11), and with regard to them it is taught in the name of our teacher, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi: A high place was set aside for them in Gehenna, as the sons of Korah repented in their hearts, and were consequently not propelled very far down in Gehenna when the earth opened to swallow Korah and his followers; and they stood on this high place and sung to the Lord. They alone stood at the height of the lower world.

⁵⁰² § The Gemara asks with regard to the prophetesses recorded in the baraita: Who were the seven prophetesses? The Gemara answers: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, and Esther. The Gemara offers textual support: Sarah, as it is written: "Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah" (Genesis 11:29). And Rabbi Yitzḥak said: Iscah is in fact Sarah. And why was she called Iscah? For she saw [sakhta] by means of divine inspiration, as it is stated: "In all that Sarah has said to you, hearken to her voice" (Genesis 21:12). Alternatively, Sarah was also called Iscah, for all gazed [sokhin] upon her beauty.

⁵⁰³ Miriam was a prophetess, as it is written explicitly: “And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand” (Exodus 15:20). The Gemara asks: Was she the sister only of Aaron, and not the sister of Moses? Why does the verse mention only one of her brothers? Rav Nahman said that Rav said: For she prophesied when she was the sister of Aaron, i.e., she prophesied since her youth, even before Moses was born, and she would say: My mother is destined to bear a son who will deliver the Jewish people to salvation. And at the time when Moses was born the entire house was filled with light, and her father stood and kissed her on the head, and said to her: My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled.

⁵⁰⁴ But once Moses was cast into the river, her father arose and rapped her on the head, saying to her: My daughter, where is your prophecy now, as it looked as though the young Moses would soon meet his end. This is the meaning of that which is written with regard to Miriam’s watching Moses in the river: “And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him” (Exodus 2:4), i.e., to know what would be with the end of her prophecy, as she had prophesied that her brother was destined to be the savior of the Jewish people.

⁵⁰⁵ Deborah was a prophetess, as it is written explicitly: “And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth” (Judges 4:4). The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of “the wife of Lappidoth”? The Gemara answers: For she used to make wicks for the Sanctuary, and due to the flames [lappidot] on these wicks she was called the wife of Lappidoth, literally, a woman of flames.

⁵⁰⁶ With regard to Deborah, it says: “And she sat under a palm tree” (Judges 4:5). The Gemara asks: What is different and unique with regard to her sitting “under a palm tree” that there is a need for it to be written? Rabbi Shimon ben Avshalom said: It is due to the prohibition against being alone together with a man. Since men would come before her for judgment, she established for herself a place out in the open and visible to all, in order to avoid a situation in which she would be secluded with a man behind closed doors. Alternatively, the verse means: Just as a palm tree has only one heart, as a palm tree does not send out separate branches, but rather has only one main trunk, so too, the Jewish people in that generation had only one heart, directed to their Father in Heaven.

⁵⁰⁷ Hannah was a prophetess, as it is written: “And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord” (I Samuel 2:1), and her words were prophecy, in that she said: “My horn is exalted,” and not: My pitcher is exalted. As, with regard to David and Solomon, who were anointed with oil from a horn, their kingship continued, whereas with regard to Saul and Jehu, who were anointed with oil from a pitcher, their kingship did not continue. This demonstrates that Hannah was a prophetess, as she prophesied that only those anointed with oil from a horn will merit that their kingships continue.

⁵⁰⁸ Apropos the song of Hannah, the Gemara further explains her words: “There is none sacred as the Lord; for there is none beside You [biltekha]” (I Samuel 2:2). Rav Yehuda bar Menashya said: Do not read it as biltekha, “beside You,” but rather read it as levalotekha, to outlast You. As the attribute of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is unlike the attribute of flesh and blood. It is an attribute of man that his handiwork outlasts him and continues to exist even after he dies, but the Holy One, Blessed be He, outlasts His handiwork, as He exists eternally.

⁵⁰⁹ Hannah further said: “Neither is there any rock [tzur] like our God” (I Samuel 2:1). This can be understood as saying that there is no artist [tzayyar] like our God. How is He better than all other artists? Man fashions a form upon a wall, but is unable to endow it with breath and a soul, or fill it

with innards and intestines, whereas the Holy One, Blessed be He, fashions a form of a fetus inside the form of its mother, rather than on a flat surface, and endows it with breath and a soul and fills it with innards and intestines.

⁵¹⁰ Abigail was a prophetess, as it is written: “And it was so, as she rode on the donkey, and came down by the covert of the mountain” (I Samuel 25:20). The Gemara asks: Why does it say: “By the covert [beseter] of the mountain”? It should have said: From the mountain.

⁵¹¹ The Gemara answers that in fact this must be understood as an allusion to something else. Rabba bar Shmuel said: Abigail, in her attempt to prevent David from killing her husband Nabal, came to David and questioned him on account of menstrual blood that comes from the hidden parts [setarim] of a body. How so? She took a blood-stained cloth and showed it to him, asking him to rule on her status, whether or not she was ritually impure as a menstruating woman. He said to her: Is blood shown at night? One does not examine blood-stained cloths at night, as it is difficult to distinguish between the different shades by candlelight. She said to him: If so, you should also remember another halakha: Are cases of capital law tried at night? Since one does not try capital cases at night, you cannot condemn Nabal to death at night. David said to her:

⁵¹² Nabal, your husband, is a rebel against the throne, as David had already been anointed as king by the prophet Samuel, and Nabal refused his orders. And therefore there is no need to try him, as a rebel is not accorded the ordinary prescriptions governing judicial proceedings. Abigail said to him: You lack the authority to act in this manner, as Saul is still alive. He is the king in actual practice, and your seal [tivakha] has not yet spread across the world, i.e., your kingship is not yet known to all. Therefore, you are not authorized to try someone for rebelling against the monarchy. David accepted her words and said to her: “And blessed be your discretion and blessed be you who have kept me this day from coming to bloodguiltiness [damim]” (I Samuel 25:33).

⁵¹³ The Gemara asks: The plural term damim, literally, bloods, indicates two. Why did David not use the singular term dam? Rather, this teaches that Abigail revealed her thigh, and he lusted after her, and he went three parasangs by the fire of his desire for her, and said to her: Listen to me, i.e., listen to me and allow me to be intimate with you. Abigail then said to him: “Let this not be a stumbling block for you” (I Samuel 25:31). By inference, from the word “this,” it can be understood that there is someone else who will in fact be a stumbling block for him, and what is this referring to? The incident involving Bathsheba. And in the end this is what was, as indeed he stumbled with Bathsheba. This demonstrates that Abigail was a prophetess, as she knew that this would occur. This also explains why David blessed Abigail for keeping him from being responsible for two incidents involving blood that day: Abigail’s menstrual blood and the shedding of Nabal’s blood.

⁵¹⁴ Apropos Abigail, the Gemara explains additional details in the story. Abigail said to David: “Yet the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bond of life with the Lord your God” (I Samuel 25:29), and when she parted from him she said to him: “And when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, and you shall remember your handmaid” (I Samuel 25:31).

⁵¹⁵ Rav Naḥman said that this explains the folk saying that people say: While a woman is engaged in conversation she also holds the spindle, i.e., while a woman is engaged in one activity she is already taking steps with regard to another. Abigail came to David in order to save her husband Nabal, but at the same time she indicates that if her husband dies, David should remember her and marry her. And indeed, after Nabal’s death David took Abigail for his wife. Some say that Rav Naḥman referred to a

different saying: The goose stoops its head as it goes along, but its eyes look on from afar to find what it is looking for. So too, Abigail acted in similar fashion.

⁵¹⁶ Huldah was a prophetess, as it is written: “So Hilkiah the priest and Ahikam and Achbor and Shaphan and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess” (II Kings 22:14) as emissaries of King Josiah. The Gemara asks: But if Jeremiah was found there, how could she prophesy? Out of respect for Jeremiah, who was her superior, it would have been fitting that she not prophesy in his presence. The Sages of the school of Rav say in the name of Rav: Huldah was a close relative of Jeremiah, and he did not object to her prophesying in his presence.

⁵¹⁷ The Gemara asks: But how could Josiah himself ignore Jeremiah and send emissaries to Huldah? The Sages of the school of Rabbi Sheila say: Because women are more compassionate, and he hoped that what she would tell them would not be overly harsh.

⁵¹⁸ Rabbi Yoḥanan said a different answer: Jeremiah was not there at the time, because he went to bring back the ten tribes from their exile. And from where do we derive that he brought them back? As it is written: “For the seller shall not return to that which he has sold” (Ezekiel 7:13), i.e., Ezekiel prophesied that in the future the Jubilee Year would no longer be in effect. Now is it possible that the Jubilee had already been annulled? The halakhot of the Jubilee Year apply only when all of the tribes of Israel are settled in their respective places, which could not have happened since the exile of the ten tribes more than a century earlier, but the prophet is prophesying that it will cease only in the future. Rather, this teaches that Jeremiah brought back the ten tribes from their exile.

⁵¹⁹ And Josiah the son of Amon ruled over the ten tribes, as it is written: “Then he said: What monument is that which I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things that you have done against the altar of Bethel” (II Kings 23:17). Now what connection did Josiah, king of Judea, have with the altar at Bethel, a city in the kingdom of Israel? Rather, this teaches that Josiah ruled over the ten tribes of Israel. Rav Naḥman said: Proof that the tribes returned may be adduced from the verse here: “Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you, when I would return the captivity of My people” (Hosea 6:11), which indicates that they returned to their places.

⁵²⁰ Esther was also a prophetess, as it is written: “And it came to pass on the third day that Esther clothed herself in royalty” (Esther 5:1). It should have said: Esther clothed herself in royal garments. Rather, this alludes to the fact that she clothed herself with a divine spirit of inspiration. It is written here: “And she clothed herself,” and it is written elsewhere: “And the spirit clothed Amasai” (I Chronicles 12:19). Just as there the reference is to being en clothed by a spirit, so too Esther was en clothed by a spirit of divine inspiration.

⁵²¹ An additional point is mentioned with regard to the prophetesses. Rav Naḥman said: Haughtiness is not befitting a woman. And a proof to this is that there were two haughty women, whose names were identical to the names of loathsome creatures. One, Deborah, was called a hornet, as her Hebrew name, Devorah, means hornet; and one, Huldah, was called a marten, as her name is the Hebrew term for that creature. From where is it known that they were haughty? With regard to Deborah, the hornet, it is written: “And she sent and called Barak” (Judges 4:6), but she herself did not go to him. And with regard to Huldah, the marten, it is written: “Say to the man that sent you to me” (II Kings 22:15), but she did not say: Say to the king.

⁵²² Furthermore, Rav Naḥman said: Huldah was a descendant of Joshua. An allusion to this is written here: “Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas [ḥarḥas]” (II Kings 22:14), and it says elsewhere with regard to Joshua: “And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres [ḥeres]” (Judges 2:9), therefore intimating that there is a certain connection between them.

⁵²³ Rav Eina the Elder raised an objection from a baraita to Rav Naḥman’s teaching. The baraita indicates that Huldah was in fact a descendant of Rahab, and seemingly not of Joshua: Eight prophets, who were also priests, descended from Rahab the prostitute, and they are: Neriah; his son Baruch; Seraiah; Mahseiah; Jeremiah; his father, Hilkiyah; Jeremiah’s cousin Hanamel; and Hanamel’s father, Shallum. Rabbi Yehuda said: So too, Huldah the prophetess was a descendant of Rahab the prostitute, as it is written here with regard to Huldah: “The son of Tikvah,” and it is written elsewhere in reference to Rahab’s escape from the destruction of Jericho: “This cord of [tikvat] scarlet thread” (Joshua 2:18).

⁵²⁴ Rav Naḥman responded to Eina the Elder and said to him: Eina the Elder, and some say that he said to him: Blackened pot, i.e., my colleague in Torah, who has toiled and blackened his face in Torah study, from me and from you the matter may be concluded, i.e., the explanation lies in a combination of our two statements. For Rahab converted and married Joshua, and therefore Huldah descended from both Joshua and Rahab. The Gemara raises a difficulty: But did Joshua have any descendants? But isn’t it written in the genealogical list of the tribe of Ephraim: “Nun his son, Joshua his son” (I Chronicles 7:27)? The listing does not continue any further, implying that Joshua had no sons. The Gemara answers: Indeed, he did not have sons, but he did have daughters.

⁵²⁵ The Gemara asks in reference to the eight prophets descended from Rahab: Granted, with regard to them, it is explicit, i.e., the four sons recorded in the list were certainly prophets, as the Bible states this explicitly: Jeremiah was a prophet, his student Baruch was one of the sons of the prophets, his cousin Hanamel came to him at the word of God (see Jeremiah, chapter 32), and Seraiah was his student. But as for their fathers, Hilkiyah, Neriah, Shallum, and Mahseiah, from where do we derive that they were prophets?

⁵²⁶ The Gemara answers: As taught by Ulla, as Ulla said: Wherever one’s name and his father’s name are mentioned with regard to prophecy, it is known that he was a prophet the son of a prophet, and therefore his father’s name is also mentioned. And wherever his name is mentioned but not his father’s name, it is known that he was a prophet but not the son of a prophet. Similarly, wherever his name and the name of his city are specified, it is known that he was from that particular city, and wherever his name is mentioned but not the name of his city, it is known that he was from Jerusalem.

⁵²⁷ It was taught in a baraita: With regard to anyone whose actions and the actions of his ancestors are obscured and not explained, and the verse mentioned one of them favorably, for example, the way in which Zephaniah the prophet is introduced: “The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah” (Zephaniah 1:1), it is known that not only was he a righteous man, he was also the son of a righteous man. And conversely, whenever the verse mentioned one of them unfavorably, for example, in the verse that introduces Ishmael as the one who killed Gedaliah, which states: “And it came to pass in the seventh month that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama” (Jeremiah 41:1), it is known that not only was he a wicked man, he was also the son of a wicked man.

⁵²⁸ Rav Naḥman said: Malachi the prophet is in fact Mordecai, and why was he called Malachi? To indicate that he was second to the king [melekh], as Mordecai was appointed such, as is recorded at the end of the Megilla. The Gemara raises an objection from the following baraita: Baruch, the son of Neriah; Seraiah, the son of Mahseiah; Daniel; Mordecai; Bilshan; Haggai; Zechariah; and Malachi; all prophesied in the second year of the reign of Darius. The fact that the baraita mentions Mordecai and Malachi separately indicates that they were two different people. The Gemara concludes: This is indeed a conclusive refutation.

⁵²⁹ It is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa said: Malachi is in fact Ezra. And the Rabbis say otherwise: Malachi was his real name, and it was not merely another name for Ezra or another prophet. Rav Naḥman said: It stands to reason that indeed, they are one and the same person, like the opinion of the one who said that Malachi is Ezra, since there is a similarity between them, as it is stated in Malachi's prophecy: "Judah has dealt treacherously, and a disgusting thing has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctity of the Lord which he loved, and has married the daughter of a strange god" (Malachi 2:11).

⁵³⁰ And who was the one that removed the foreign women who were married to Jews? It was Ezra, as it is written: "And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra: We have broken faith with our God, and have married foreign women of the peoples of the land" (Ezra 10:2). It therefore appears that Malachi was one of Ezra's names, as the Bible describes them both as confronting an intermarriage epidemic.

⁵³¹ To complete the discussion about the prophetesses, the Gemara cites a baraita in which the Sages taught: There were four women of extraordinary beauty in the world: Sarah, and Abigail, Rahab, and Esther. And according to the one who said that Esther was greenish in color, lacking natural beauty, only that a cord of divine grace was strung around her, remove Esther from the list and insert Vashti in her place, for she was indeed beautiful.

⁵³² The Sages taught in a baraita: Rahab aroused impure thoughts by her name, i.e., the mere mention of her name would inspire lust for her; Yael, by her voice; Abigail, by remembering her; Michal, the daughter of Saul, by her appearance. Similarly, Rabbi Yitzḥak said: Anyone who says Rahab, Rahab, immediately experiences a seminal emission due to the arousal of desire caused by Rahab's great beauty. Rav Naḥman said to him: I say: Rahab, Rahab, and it does not affect me. Rabbi Yitzchak said to Rav Naḥman: When I said this, I was specifically referring to one who knows her personally and recognizes her beauty. Only for one who has met Rahab in person is the mere mention of her name capable of arousing lust.

⁵³³ § The Gemara returns to its explanation of the verses of the book of Esther. The verse states: "When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry" (Esther 4:1). The Gemara asks: What did Mordecai say when he cried out? Rav said: He said that Haman has risen above Ahasuerus, for he saw that Haman had become even stronger than Ahasuerus himself, and that he controlled all affairs of the empire. And Shmuel said: The upper King has prevailed over the lower king, saying this euphemistically and insinuating just the opposite. In other words, it would appear that Ahasuerus, the lower king, has prevailed over the higher King, God in Heaven, Who desires good for the Jewish people.

⁵³⁴ The verse states: “Then the queen was exceedingly distressed” [vatithalhal] (Esther 4:4). The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of vatithalhal? Rav said: This means that she began to menstruate out of fear, as the cavities, halalim, of her body opened. And Rabbi Yirmeya said: Her bowels were loosened, also understanding the verse as referring to her bodily cavities.

⁵³⁵ The verse states: “Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king’s chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her” (Esther 4:5). Rav said: Hathach is in fact the prophet Daniel. And why was he called Hathach? Because he was cut down [hatakh] from his greatness during Ahasuerus’s reign, as he was demoted from his high position. Previously he had served as a senior minister, and now he had become Esther’s steward. And Shmuel expounded the name Hathach as derived from hatakh in the opposite sense, as he said: Daniel was called Hathach because all the affairs of the kingdom were decided [nehtakhin] by his word.

⁵³⁶ The verse continues to relate that Esther sent Hathach to Mordecai after hearing about the decree: “To know what this [zeh] was, and why it [zeh] was” (Esther 4:5). Rabbi Yitzhak said that Esther sent a message to Mordecai, saying: Perhaps the Jews have transgressed the five books of the Torah, as it is written with regard to the two tablets: “On this [zeh] side and on the other [zeh] side were they written” (Exodus 32:15).

⁵³⁷ The verse states: “And they told Esther’s words to Mordecai” (Esther 4:12), but he, Hathach himself, did not go to tell him directly. The Gemara explains: From here we see that one does not bring back a sad report. If one has nothing positive to say, it is best for him to remain silent. This explains why Hathach himself did not report the information to Mordecai, and Esther’s words had to be delivered by other messengers.

⁵³⁸ Esther sent a message to Mordecai: “Go, gather together all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night and day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go in to the king, not according to the custom” (Esther 4:16). Rabbi Abba said: It will not be according to my usual custom, for every day until now when I submitted myself to Ahasuerus it was under compulsion, but now I will be submitting myself to him of my own free will. And Esther further said: “And if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). What she meant was: Just as I was lost to my father’s house ever since I was brought here, so too, shall I be lost to you, for after voluntarily having relations with Ahasuerus, I shall be forever forbidden to you.

⁵³⁹ There is a dispute with regard to the meaning of the verse: “So Mordecai passed [vaya’avor]” (Esther 4:17). Rav said: This means that he passed the first day of Passover as a fast day, understanding the word vaya’avor in the sense of sin [aveira], as by doing so he transgressed the obligation to rejoice on the Festival. And Shmuel said: It means that he crossed over [avar] a stream in order to bring the message to all.

⁵⁴⁰ The verse states: “And it came to pass on the third day, that Esther clothed herself in royalty” (Esther 5:1). The Gemara asks: It should have said: Esther clothed herself in royal garments. Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Hanina said: This teaches that she clothed herself with a divine spirit of inspiration, as it is written here: “And she clothed herself,” and it is written elsewhere: “And the spirit clothed Amasai” (I Chronicles 12:19). Just as there the reference is to the spirit of divine inspiration, so too here, the term royalty is referring to the spirit of divine inspiration.

⁵⁴¹ Apropos a statement that Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Hanina said, the Gemara records other such statements: And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Hanina said: One should never regard the

blessing of an ordinary person [hedyot] as light in your eyes, as two of the great men of their generations received blessings from ordinary people and those blessings were fulfilled in them. And they were David and Daniel. David, for Araunah blessed him, as it is written: “And Araunah said to the king, May the Lord your God accept you” (II Samuel 24:23), and it was fulfilled. Daniel, for Darius blessed him, as it is written: “Your God Whom you serve continually, He will rescue you” (Daniel 6:17), and this too was fulfilled when Daniel was saved from the lions’ den.

⁵⁴² And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Ḥanina said: One should not regard the curse of an ordinary person as light in your eyes, for Abimelech cursed Sarah, saying: “Behold, it is to you a covering of the eyes to all that are with you” (Genesis 20:16), and indeed this was fulfilled in her descendant, as it is stated: “And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see” (Genesis 27:1). Abimelech’s curse of covered eyes was fulfilled through her son Isaac’s blindness.

⁵⁴³ And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Ḥanina said: Come and see that the attribute of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is unlike the attribute of a man of flesh and blood; for it is the attribute of flesh and blood that a man places the pot on the fire and then puts in the water. However, the Holy One, Blessed be He, first puts in the water and then places the pot on the fire, to fulfill that which is stated: “At the sound of His giving a multitude of waters in the heavens” (Jeremiah 10:13), which he explains as follows: First God set the multitudes of water in place, and afterward He created the heavens to hold the water.

⁵⁴⁴ And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Ḥanina said: Whoever reports a saying in the name of he who said it brings redemption to the world. As it is stated with respect to the incident of Bigthan and Teresh: “And Esther reported it to the king in the name of Mordecai” (Esther 2:22), and this eventually brought redemption, as Mordecai was later rewarded for saving the king’s life, paving the way for the miraculous salvation.

⁵⁴⁵ And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Ḥanina said: When a righteous man passes from this earth and is lost, he is lost only for the rest of his generation, who is now deprived of him, not for the righteous individual himself. This is similar to a man who has lost a pearl. The pearl does not care if it is lost, as wherever it is found, it is still a pearl; it is lost only to its owner.

⁵⁴⁶ Haman said: “Yet all this avails me nothing” (Esther 5:13). Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Ḥanina said: When Haman saw Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate he said: Yet all this avails me nothing. This may be understood as was suggested by Rav Ḥisda, for Rav Ḥisda said: This one, Mordecai, came as one with the heritage of a rich man [perozebuli], whereas that one, Haman, came

⁵⁴⁷ as one with the heritage of a poor man [perozeboti], as Mordecai had been Haman’s slave master and was aware of Haman’s lowly lineage. Rav Pappa said: And he was called: The slave who was sold for a loaf of bread.

⁵⁴⁸ Haman’s previously quoted statement: “Yet all this avails me nothing” (Esther 5:13), teaches that all the treasures of that wicked one were engraved on his heart, and when he saw Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate, he said: As long as Mordecai is around, all this that I wear on my heart avails me nothing.

⁵⁴⁹ And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Ḥanina said: In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will be a crown on the head of each and every righteous man. As it is stated: “In that day shall

the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, to the residue of His people” (Isaiah 28:5). What is the meaning of “for a crown of glory [tzevi], and for a diadem [velitzefirat] of beauty”? A crown for those that do His will [tzivyono] and a diadem for those that await [velamtzapin] His glory. One might have thought that this extends to all such individuals. Therefore, the verse states: “To the residue of his people,” to whoever regards himself as a remainder, i.e., small and unimportant like residue. But whoever holds himself in high esteem will not merit this.

⁵⁵⁰ Apropos the quotation from Isaiah, the Gemara explains the following verse, which states: “And for a spirit of justice to him that sits in judgment and for strength to them that turn back the battle to the gate” (Isaiah 28:6). “And for a spirit of justice”; this is referring to one who brings his evil inclination to trial and forces himself to repent. “To him that sits in judgment”; this is referring to one who judges an absolutely true judgment. “And for strength”; this is referring to one who triumphs over his evil inclination. “Them that turn back the battle”; this is referring to those that give and take in their discussion of halakha in the battle of understanding the Torah. “To the gate”; this is referring to the Torah scholars who arrive early and stay late at the darkened gates of the synagogues and study halls.

⁵⁵¹ The Gemara continues with an episode associated with a verse in Isaiah. The Attribute of Justice said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, how are these, referring to the Jewish people, different from those, the other nations of the world, such that God performs miracles only on behalf of the Jewish people? The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to it: The Jewish people occupied themselves with Torah, whereas the other nations of the world did not occupy themselves with Torah.

⁵⁵² The Attribute of Justice said to Him: “These also reel through wine, and stagger through strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel through strong drink, they are confused because of wine, they stagger because of strong drink; they reel in vision, they stumble [paku] in judgment [peliliyya]” (Isaiah 28:7). The word paku in this context is referring only to Gehenna, as it is stated: “That this shall not be a cause of stumbling [puka] to you” (I Samuel 25:31), and the word peliliyya here is referring only to judges, as it is stated: “And he shall pay as the judges determine [bifelilim]” (Exodus 21:22). The response of the Attribute of Justice was essentially that the Jewish people have also sinned and are consequently liable to receive punishment.

⁵⁵³ § The Gemara returns to its explanation of the verses of the Megilla. The verse states with regard to Esther: “And she stood in the inner court of the king’s house” (Esther 5:1). Rabbi Levi said: Once she reached the chamber of the idols, which was in the inner court, the Divine Presence left her. She immediately said: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (Psalms 22:2). Perhaps it is because You judge an unintentional sin as one performed intentionally, and an action done due to circumstances beyond one’s control as one done willingly.

⁵⁵⁴ Or perhaps You have left me because in my prayers I called Haman a dog, as it is stated: “Deliver my soul from the sword; my only one from the hand of the dog” (Psalms 22:21). She at once retracted and called him in her prayers a lion, as it is stated in the following verse: “Save me from the lion’s mouth” (Psalms 22:22).

⁵⁵⁵ The verse states: “And so it was, that when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favor in his sight; and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand” (Esther 5:2). Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Three ministering angels happened to join her at that time:

One that raised up her neck, so that she could stand erect, free of shame; one that strung a cord of divine grace around her, endowing her with charm and beauty; and one that stretched the king's scepter.

⁵⁵⁶ How much was it stretched? Rabbi Yirmeya said: The scepter was two cubits, and he made it twelve cubits. And some say that he made it sixteen cubits, and yet others say twenty-four cubits. It was taught in a baraita: He made it sixty cubits. And similarly you find with the arm of Pharaoh's daughter, which she stretched out to take Moshe. And so too, you find with the teeth of the wicked, as it is written: "You have broken the teeth of the wicked" (Psalms 3:8), with regard to which Reish Lakish said: Do not read it as "You have broken [shibbarta]," but as: You have enlarged [sheribavta]. Rabba bar Oferan said in the name of Rabbi Elazar, who heard it from his teacher, who in turn heard it from his teacher: The scepter was stretched two hundred cubits.

⁵⁵⁷ The verse states: "Then the king said to her" (Esther 5:3), to Esther the queen, "What is your wish, even to half the kingdom, it shall be performed" (Esther 5:6). The Gemara comments that Ahasuerus intended only a limited offer: Only half the kingdom, but not the whole kingdom, and not something that would serve as a barrier to the kingdom, as there is one thing to which the kingdom will never agree. And what is that? The building of the Temple; if that shall be your wish, realize that it will not be fulfilled.

⁵⁵⁸ The verse states that Esther requested: "If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him" (Esther 5:4). The Sages taught in a baraita: What did Esther see to invite Haman to the banquet? Rabbi Elazar says: She hid a snare for him, as it is stated: "Let their table become a snare before them" (Psalms 69:23), as she assumed that she would be able to trip up Haman during the banquet.

⁵⁵⁹ Rabbi Yehoshua says: She learned to do this from the Jewish teachings of her father's house, as it is stated: "If your enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat" (Proverbs 25:21). Rabbi Meir says: She invited him in order that he be near her at all times, so that he would not take counsel and rebel against Ahasuerus when he discovered that the king was angry with him.

⁵⁶⁰ Rabbi Yehuda says: She invited Haman so that it not be found out that she was a Jew, as had she distanced him, he would have become suspicious. Rabbi Neḥemya says: She did this so that the Jewish people would not say: We have a sister in the king's house, and consequently neglect their prayers for divine mercy. Rabbi Yosei says: She acted in this manner, so that Haman would always be on hand for her, as that would enable her to find an opportunity to cause him to stumble before the king. Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya said that Esther said to herself: Perhaps the Omnipresent will take notice that all are supporting Haman and nobody is supporting the Jewish people, and He will perform for us a miracle.

⁵⁶¹ Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa says: She said to herself: I will act kindly toward him and thereby bring the king to suspect that we are having an affair; she did so in order that both he and she would be killed. Essentially, Esther was willing to be killed with Haman in order that the decree would be annulled. Rabban Gamliel says: Ahasuerus was a fickle king, and Esther hoped that if he saw Haman on multiple occasions, eventually he would change his opinion of him. Rabban Gamliel said: We still need the words of Rabbi Eliezer HaModa'i to understand why Esther invited Haman to her banquet. As it is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Eliezer HaModa'i says: She made the king jealous of him and she made the other ministers jealous of him, and in this way she brought about his downfall.

⁵⁶² Rabba says: Esther invited Haman to her banquet in order to fulfill that which is stated: “Pride goes before destruction” (Proverbs 16:18), which indicates that in order to destroy the wicked, one must first bring them to pride. It can be understood according to Abaye and Rava, who both say that she invited Haman in order to fulfill the verse: “When they are heated, I will make feasts for them, and I will make them drunk, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep” (Jeremiah 51:39). The Gemara relates that Rabba bar Avuh once happened upon Elijah the Prophet and said to him: In accordance with whose understanding did Esther see fit to act in this manner? What was the true reason behind her invitation? He, Elijah, said to him: Esther was motivated by all the reasons previously mentioned and did so for all the reasons previously stated by the tanna'im and all the reasons stated by the amora'im.

⁵⁶³ The verse states: “And Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his sons” (Esther 5:11). The Gemara asks: And how many sons did he in fact have that are referred to as “the multitude of his sons”? Rav said: There were thirty sons; ten of them died in childhood, ten of them were hanged as recorded in the book of Esther, and ten survived and were forced to beg at other people's doors.

⁵⁶⁴ And the Rabbis say: Those that begged at other people's doors numbered seventy, as it is written: “Those that were full, have hired themselves out for bread” (I Samuel 2:5). Do not read it as: “Those that were full” [seve'im]; rather, read it as seventy [shivim], indicating that there were seventy who “hired themselves out for bread.”

⁵⁶⁵ And Rami bar Abba said: All of Haman's sons together numbered two hundred and eight, as it is stated: “And the multitude [verov] of his sons.” The numerical value of the word verov equals two hundred and eight, alluding to the number of his sons. The Gemara comments: But in fact, the numerical value [gimatriyya] of the word verov equals two hundred and fourteen, not two hundred and eight. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: The word verov is written in the Bible without the second vav, and therefore its numerical value equals two hundred and eight.

⁵⁶⁶ The verse states: “On that night the sleep of the king was disturbed” (Esther 6:1). Rabbi Tanhum said: The verse alludes to another king who could not sleep; the sleep of the King of the universe, the Holy One, Blessed be He, was disturbed. And the Sages say: The sleep of the higher ones, the angels, was disturbed, and the sleep of the lower ones, the Jewish people, was disturbed. Rava said: This should be understood literally: The sleep of King Ahasuerus was disturbed.

⁵⁶⁷ And this was the reason Ahasuerus could not sleep: A thought occurred to him and he said to himself: What is this before us that Esther has invited Haman? Perhaps they are conspiring against that man, i.e., against me, to kill him. He then said again to himself: If this is so, is there no man who loves me and would inform me of this conspiracy? He then said again to himself: Perhaps there is some man who has done a favor for me and I have not properly rewarded him, and due to that reason people refrain from revealing to me information regarding such plots, as they see no benefit for themselves. Immediately afterward, the verse states: “And he commanded the book of remembrances of the chronicles to be brought” (Esther 6:1).

⁵⁶⁸ The verse states: “And they were read before the king” (Esther 6:1). The Gemara explains that this passive form: “And they were read,” teaches that they were read miraculously by themselves. It further says: “And it was found written [katuv]” (Esther 6:2). The Gemara asks: Why does the Megilla use the word katuv, which indicates that it was newly written? It should have said: A writing

[ketav] was found, which would indicate that it had been written in the past. The Gemara explains: This teaches

⁵⁶⁹ that Shimshai, the king's scribe who hated the Jews (see Ezra 4:17), was erasing the description of Mordecai's saving the king, and the angel Gavriel was writing it again. Therefore, it was indeed being written in the present. Rabbi Asi said: Rabbi Sheila, a man of the village of Timarta, taught: If something written down below in this world that is for the benefit of the Jewish people cannot be erased, is it not all the more so the case that something written up above in Heaven cannot be erased?

⁵⁷⁰ The verse states that Ahasuerus was told with regard to Mordecai: "Nothing has been done for him" (Esther 6:3). Rava said: It is not because they love Mordecai that the king's servants said this, but rather because they hate Haman.

⁵⁷¹ The verse states: "Now Haman had come into the outer court of the king's house, to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him" (Esther 6:4). A Sage taught in a baraita: This should be understood to mean: On the gallows that he had prepared for himself.

⁵⁷² The verse relates that Ahasuerus ordered Haman to fulfill his idea of the proper way to honor one who the king desires to glorify by parading him around on the king's horse while wearing the royal garments: "And do so to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate, let nothing fail of all that you have spoken" (Esther 6:10). The Gemara explains that when Ahasuerus said to Haman: "And do so to Mordecai," Haman said to him in an attempt to evade the order: Who is Mordecai? Ahasuerus said to him: "The Jew." Haman then said to him: There are several men named Mordecai among the Jews. Ahasuerus then said to him: I refer to the one "who sits at the king's gate."

⁵⁷³ Haman said to him: Why award him such a great honor? It would certainly be enough for him to receive one village [disekarta] as an estate, or one river for the levy of taxes. Ahasuerus said to him: This too you must give him. "Let nothing fail of all that you have spoken," i.e., provide him with all that you proposed and spoke about in addition to what I had said.

⁵⁷⁴ The Gemara describes what occurred as Haman went to follow the king's orders, as the verse states: "Then Haman took the apparel and the horse" (Esther 6:11). When he went, he found Mordecai as the Sages were sitting before him, and he was demonstrating to them the halakhot of the handful, i.e., the scooping out of a handful of flour from the meal-offering in order to burn it on the altar. Once Mordecai saw him coming toward him with his horse's reins held in his hands, he became frightened, and he said to the Sages: This evil man has come to kill me. Go away from him so that you should not get burnt from his coals, i.e., that you should not suffer harm as well. At that moment Mordecai wrapped himself in his prayer shawl and stood up to pray. Haman came over to where they were and sat down before them and waited until Mordecai finished his prayer.

⁵⁷⁵ In the interim, as he waited, Haman said to the other Sages: With what were you occupied? They said to him: When the Temple is standing, one who pledges a meal-offering would bring a handful of fine flour and achieve atonement with it. He said to them: Your handful of fine flour has come and cast aside my ten thousand pieces of silver, which I had pledged toward the destruction of the Jewish people. When Mordecai finished praying, he said to Haman: Wicked man, when a slave buys property, to whom belongs the slave and to whom belongs the property? As I once bought you as a slave, what silver can be yours?

⁵⁷⁶ Haman said to him: Stand up, put on these garments and ride on this horse, for the king wants you to do so. Mordecai said to him: I cannot do so until I enter the bathhouse [bei vanei] and trim my hair, for it is not proper conduct to use the king's garments in this state that I am in now.

⁵⁷⁷ In the meantime, Esther sent messengers and closed all the bathhouses and all the shops of the craftsmen, including the bloodletters and barbers. When Haman saw that there was nobody else to do the work, he himself took Mordecai into the bathhouse and washed him, and then he went and brought scissors [zuza] from his house and trimmed his hair. While he was trimming his hair he injured himself and sighed. Mordecai said to him: Why do you sigh? Haman said to him: The man whom the king had once regarded above all his other ministers is now made a bathhouse attendant [balanei] and a barber. Mordecai said to him: Wicked man, were you not once the barber of the village of Kartzum? If so, why do you sigh? You have merely returned to the occupation of your youth. It was taught in a baraita: Haman was the barber of the village of Kartzum for twenty-two years.

⁵⁷⁸ After Haman trimmed his hair, Haman dressed Mordecai in the royal garments. Haman then said to him: Mount the horse and ride. Mordecai said to him: I am unable, as my strength has waned from the days of fasting that I observed. Haman then stooped down before him and Mordecai ascended on him. As he was ascending the horse, Mordecai gave Haman a kick. Haman said to him: Is it not written for you: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls" (Proverbs 24:17)? Mordecai said to him: This statement applies only to Jews, but with regard to you it is written: "And you shall tread upon their high places" (Deuteronomy 33:29).

⁵⁷⁹ The verse states: "And he proclaimed before him: Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor" (Esther 6:11). As Haman was taking Mordecai along the street of Haman's house, Haman's daughter was standing on the roof and saw the spectacle. She thought to herself that the one who is riding on the horse must be her father, and the one walking before him must be Mordecai. She then took a chamber pot full of feces and cast its contents onto the head of her father, whom she mistakenly took as Mordecai. When Haman raised his eyes in disgust afterward, and looked up at his daughter, she saw that he was her father. In her distress, she fell from the roof to the ground and died.

⁵⁸⁰ And this is as it is written: "And Mordecai returned to the king's gate" (Esther 6:12). Rav Sheshet said: This means that he returned to his sackcloth and his fasting over the troubles of the Jewish people. Simultaneously, "but Haman hastened to his house, mourning, and having his head covered" (Esther 6:12). "Mourning"; over the death of his daughter. "And having his head covered"; due to what had happened to him, as his head was full of filth.

⁵⁸¹ The following verse states: "And Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and to all his friends everything that had befallen him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him: If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, be of the seed of the Jews, then you will not prevail over him, but you shall fall before him" (Esther 6:13). The Gemara comments: At the beginning of the verse it calls them "his friends," and in the continuation of the verse it calls them "his wise men." Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Whoever says something wise, even if he is from the nations of the world, is called a wise man.

⁵⁸² The Gemara explains that their wise remark, which earned them their distinction, is contained in their advice: "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews [Yehudim], then you will not prevail over him"

(Esther 6:13). The word Yehudim can also refer to people from the tribe of Judah. Haman's wise men thereby said to him: If he descends from the other tribes, you can still prevail over him, but if he descends from the tribe of either Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, or Manasseh, you cannot prevail over him. With regard to Judah, the proof of this is as it is written: "Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies" (Genesis 49:8), indicating that Judah will emerge victorious over his enemies. And the proof that Haman cannot prevail over the others that were mentioned is as it is written with regard to them: "Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your might" (Psalms 80:3).

⁵⁸³ The wise men continued: "But you shall fall [nafol tippol] before him" (Esther 6:13). Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai interpreted a verse homiletically: Why are these two fallings, nafol and tippol, mentioned here? The wise men said to Haman: This Jewish nation is compared in the Bible to the dust of the earth and it is also compared to the stars in heaven. This teaches you that when they descend, they descend to the dust, and when they rise, they rise to the stars. Accordingly, when Mordecai is on the rise, you will be utterly incapable of prevailing over him.

⁵⁸⁴ The next verse states: "The king's chamberlains came, and they hastened [vayavhilu] to bring Haman" (Esther 6:14). This teaches that they brought him in disarray [behala], not even giving him a chance to wash himself from the filth.

⁵⁸⁵ During the banquet Esther said to Ahasuerus: "For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to be annihilated. But if we had been sold merely for bondmen and bondwomen, I would have held my tongue, since the affliction [tzar] would not have been worth [eino shoveh] the damage to the king" (Esther 7:4). The Gemara explains that she said to him: This adversary [tzar] is not concerned [eino shoveh] about the damage that he is constantly causing to the king. First he was jealous of Vashti and killed her, as it has been explained that Memucan, who suggesting killing Vashti, was Haman; now he is jealous of me and desires to kill me.

⁵⁸⁶ The verse states: "Then said the king Ahasuerus and said to Esther the queen" (Esther 7:5). The Gemara asks: Why do I need it to say "said" and again "said"? Rabbi Abbahu said: At first he spoke to her through the translator, who would interpret on his behalf, because he thought that she was a common woman of lowly ancestry. Once she told him that she came from the house of Saul, immediately it says: "And said to Esther the queen." Ahasuerus himself spoke to her, as if she had royal lineage, she was a woman befitting his status.

⁵⁸⁷ The next verse states: "And Esther said: An adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman" (Esther 7:6). Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that she was in fact pointing toward Ahasuerus, indicating that in fact he was an adversary and enemy, and an angel came and pushed her hand toward Haman.

⁵⁸⁸ The verse states: "And the king arose from the banquet of wine in his wrath and went into the palace garden" (Esther 7:7), and the next verse states: "Then the king returned out of the palace garden to the place of the wine drinking" (Esther 7:8). The Gemara comments: The verses here compare his returning to his arising: Just as his arising was in wrath, so too, his returning was in wrath. And why did he return in wrath? For when he went out he found ministering angels who appeared to him as people and they were uprooting trees from the garden, and he said to them: What are you doing? They said to him: Haman commanded us to do this.

⁵⁸⁹ And when he entered his house he saw that "Haman was falling upon the bed" (Esther 7:8). The Gemara asks: Why does it say "was falling" [nofel] in the present tense, implying that he was currently falling? It should have said "fell" [nasal] in the past tense. Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches

that an angel came and pushed him down on it, and every time he would try to stand up, the angel would push him down again. Ahasuerus said: Woe unto me in the house and woe unto me outside, as the verse continues: “Then the king said: Will he even force the queen before me in the house?” (Esther 7:8).

⁵⁹⁰ “And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman has made for Mordecai, who spoke good for the king, stands in the house of Haman” (Esther 7:9). Rabbi Elazar said: Harbonah was also wicked and involved in that plot, as he too wanted Mordecai executed. Once he saw that his plot had not succeeded, he immediately fled and joined Mordecai’s side. And this is the meaning of that which is written: “It hurls itself at him, and does not spare; he would fain flee out of its hand” (Job 27:22), indicating that when God sends calamity upon a wicked person, his friends immediately flee from him.

⁵⁹¹ The verse states: “Then the king’s wrath was assuaged [shakhakha]” (Esther 7:10). The Gemara asks: Why are there two assuagings here? The term shakhakha is used rather than shaka and indicates doubled wrath. There was one assuaging of the wrath of the King of the universe, and one of the wrath of Ahasuerus. And some say: Ahasuerus’s wrath burned within him for two reasons; one due to Haman’s involvement with Esther, and one due to his involvement with Vashti, and now they were both assuaged.

⁵⁹² Before continuing its midrashic interpretation of the rest of the book of Esther, the Gemara expounds a verse concerning Joseph that relates to the Megilla: “To all of them he gave each man changes of clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of clothing” (Genesis 45:22). The Gemara asks: Is it possible that in the very thing from which that righteous man Joseph had suffered, as his father’s show of favoritism toward him aroused the enmity of his brothers,

⁵⁹³ he himself should stumble by showing favoritism to Benjamin? As Rava bar Meshayya said that Rav Hama bar Gurya said that Rav said: Due to the weight of two sela of fine wool that Jacob gave to Joseph, which he added to what he gave Joseph beyond what he gave the rest of his brothers, as he made him his special coat, the story progressed and our forefathers went down to Egypt. How then could Joseph have displayed similar favoritism toward Benjamin? Rabbi Binyamin bar Yefet said: He was not showing favoritism. Rather, he intimated to him that a descendant was destined to issue from him who would go out from the presence of the king wearing five royal garments, as it is stated: “And Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of sky blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a wrap of fine linen and purple” (Esther 8:15).

⁵⁹⁴ The Gemara elaborates on certain elements in the story of Joseph and his brothers. The verse states with regard to Joseph: “And he fell on his brother Benjamin’s neck [tzavarei] and wept” (Genesis 45:14). The wording of the verse gives rise to a question, as the word tzavarei is plural, meaning necks: How many necks did Benjamin have, such that the verse should use the plural tzavarei rather than the singular tzavar? Rabbi Elazar said: This intimates that Joseph cried over the two Temples that were destined to be in the tribal territory of Benjamin and were destined to be destroyed. The same verse continues: “And Benjamin wept on his neck” (Genesis 45:14); he cried over the tabernacle of Shiloh that was destined to be in the tribal territory of Joseph and was destined to be destroyed.

⁵⁹⁵ The verse states: “And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin” (Genesis 45:12). Rabbi Elazar said: Joseph said to his brothers as follows: Just as I certainly harbor no resentment in my heart toward my brother Benjamin, for he was not even present when I was sold, so too, I harbor no resentment toward you. The verse continues: “That it is my mouth [ki fi] that speaks to you” (Genesis 45:12), i.e., As my mouth [kefi] is, so is my heart.

⁵⁹⁶ The verse states: “And to his father he sent after this manner ten donkeys laden with the good things of Egypt” (Genesis 45:23). The Gemara asks: What are “the good things of Egypt” that are mentioned but not specified here? Rabbi Binyamin bar Yefet said that Rabbi Elazar said: He sent him aged wine, which the elderly find pleasing.

⁵⁹⁷ Following Jacob’s death, it states concerning Joseph: “And his brothers even went and fell down before him” (Genesis 50:18). Rabbi Binyamin bar Yefet said that Rabbi Elazar said: This explains the folk saying that people say: When the fox is in its hour, bow down to it, i.e., if a fox is appointed king, one must bow down before and submit oneself to it.

⁵⁹⁸ The Gemara expresses astonishment at the use of this parable: Are you calling Joseph a fox? What, was he inferior to his brothers such that in relation to them you call him a fox? Rather, if such a statement was stated, it was stated as follows, not in connection with this verse, but rather in connection with a different verse. The verse states: “And Israel bowed himself upon the head of the bed” (Genesis 47:31). With regard to this, Rabbi Binyamin bar Yefet said that Rabbi Elazar said: When the fox is in its hour, bow down to it, as Jacob had to bow down before his son Joseph, who had reached greatness.

⁵⁹⁹ It says with regard to Joseph’s remarks to his brothers: “And he comforted them and spoke to their hearts” (Genesis 50:21). Rabbi Binyamin bar Yefet said that Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that he spoke to them words that are acceptable to the heart, and alleviated their fears. This is what he said: If ten lights could not put out one light, as all of you were unable to do me harm, how can one light put out ten lights?

⁶⁰⁰ § The Gemara returns to its explanation of the Megilla. The verse states: “The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor” (Esther 8:16). Rav Yehuda said: “Light”; this is referring to the Torah that they once again studied. And similarly it says: “For the mitzva is a lamp and the Torah is light” (Proverbs 6:23). “Gladness” [simḥa]; this is referring to the Festivals that they once again observed. And similarly it says: “And you shall be glad [vesamakhta] on your Festival” (Deuteronomy 16:14). “Joy” [sasson]; this is referring to circumcision, as they once again circumcised their sons. And similarly it says: “I rejoice [sas] at Your word” (Psalms 119:162), which the Sages understood as referring to David’s rejoicing over the mitzva of circumcision.

⁶⁰¹ “Honor”; this is referring to phylacteries, which they once again donned. And similarly it says: “And all peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord; and they will be afraid of you” (Deuteronomy 28:10). And it was taught in a baraita: Rabbi Eliezer the Great said: This is referring to the phylacteries worn on the head. Haman had banned the fulfillment of all the mitzvot mentioned, but upon Haman’s demise the Jews returned to their observance.

⁶⁰² The verse states: “And in Shushan the capital the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men. And Parshandatha...and Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman” (Esther 9:6–10). Rav Adda from Jaffa said: When reading the Megilla, the names of the ten sons of Haman and the word “ten” must be said in one breath. What is the reason for this? It is that their souls all departed together. Rabbi Yoḥanan

said: The letter vav in the name “Vaizatha” is a lengthened vav and must be elongated as a pole, like a steering oar of a ship [liberot]. What is the reason for this? To indicate that they were all hanged on one pole.

⁶⁰³ Rabbi Ḥanina bar Pappa said that Rabbi Sheila, a man of the village of Timarta, interpreted a verse homiletically: All of the songs in the Bible are written in the form of a half brick arranged upon a whole brick and a whole brick arranged upon a half brick, i.e., each line of the song is divided into a stitch of text, referred to as a half brick, which is separated by a blank space, referred to as a whole brick, from the concluding stitch of that line of text.

⁶⁰⁴ The next line of the song inverts the sequence. This is the principle for all songs in the Bible except for this song, referring to the list of Haman’s sons, and the song listing the kings of Canaan who were defeated by Joshua. These two songs are written in the form of a half brick arranged upon a half brick and a whole brick arranged upon a whole brick, i.e., one stitch of text over another, and one blank space over another. What is the reason that these two songs are written in this anomalous fashion? So that they should never rise from their downfall. Just as a wall that is built in this manner will not stand, so too, these individuals should have no resurgence.

⁶⁰⁵ The verse states: “And the king said to Esther the queen: The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the capital, and also the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? Now what is your petition and it shall be granted to you; and what more do you request, and it shall be done” (Esther 9:12). Rabbi Abbahu said: This teaches that an angel came and slapped him on his mouth, so that he was unable to finish what he was saying; he started with a complaint about what the Jews were doing, but ended on an entirely different note.

⁶⁰⁶ The verse states: “But when she came before the king, he said with a letter” (Esther 9:25). Why does it say: “He said”? It should have said: “She said,” as it was Esther who changed the decree. Rabbi Yoḥanan said: She said to Ahasuerus: Let it be said by word of mouth, indicating that that which is written in the letter should also be ordered verbally.

⁶⁰⁷ With regard to what is stated: “Words of peace and truth” (Esther 9:30), Rabbi Tanḥum said, and some say that Rabbi Asi said: This teaches that a Megilla scroll requires scoring, i.e., that the lines for the text must be scored onto the parchment, as the Torah itself, i.e., as is done in a Torah scroll.

⁶⁰⁸ The verses say: “The matters of the fasts and their cry. And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim” (Esther 9:31–32). The Gemara asks: Should we say that “the decree of Esther” indeed confirmed these matters of Purim, but “the matters of the fasts” did not? But didn’t the fasts also contribute to the miracle? Rabbi Yoḥanan said: These two verses, “The matters of the fasts and their cry. And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim,” should be read as one.

⁶⁰⁹ The verse states: “For Mordecai the Jew was second to the king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted by the majority of his brethren” (Esther 10:3). The Gemara comments: The verse indicates that Mordecai was accepted only “By the majority of his brethren,” but not by all his brethren. This teaches that some members of the Sanhedrin parted from him, because he occupied himself with community needs, and was therefore compelled to neglect his Torah study. They felt that this was a mistake and that he should have remained active on the Sanhedrin.

⁶¹⁰ Rav Yosef said: Studying Torah is greater than saving lives, as initially, when listing the Jewish leaders who came to Eretz Yisrael, Mordecai was mentioned after four other people, but at the end he

was listed after five. This is taken to indicate that his involvement in governmental affairs instead of in Torah study lowered his stature one notch. The Gemara proves this: At first it is written: “Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan” (Ezra 2:2); but in the end in a later list it is written: “Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahmani, Mordecai, Bilshan” (Nehemiah 7:7).

⁶¹¹ Rav said, and some say that Rav Shmuel bar Marta said: Studying Torah is greater and more important than building the Temple. A proof of this is that for as long as Baruch ben Neriah was alive in Babylonia, Ezra, who was his disciple, did not leave him and go up to Eretz Yisrael to build the Temple.

⁶¹² Rabba said that Rav Yitzhak bar Shmuel bar Marta said: Studying Torah is greater and more important than honoring one’s father and mother, and a proof of this is that for all those years that our father Jacob spent in the house of Eber and studied Torah there he was not punished for having neglected to fulfill the mitzva of honoring one’s parents. As the Master said:

⁶¹³ Why were the years of Ishmael mentioned in the Torah? For what purpose were we told the life span of that wicked man? In order to reckon through them the years of Jacob. As it is written: “And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, a hundred and thirty-seven years” (Genesis 25:17). How much older was Ishmael than Isaac? Fourteen years. As it is written: “And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram” (Genesis 16:16). And it is written: “And Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him” (Genesis 21:5). And it is written with regard to Jacob and Esau: “And Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them” (Genesis 25:26). Based on these verses, how old was Ishmael when Jacob was born? Seventy-four. How many of his years remained then until his death? Sixty-three, as Ishmael died at the age of a hundred and thirty-seven.

⁶¹⁴ And it was taught in a baraita: Jacob our father was sixty-three years old at the time he was blessed by his father, and at that same time Ishmael died. How is it known that these two events occurred at the same time? As it is written: “When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob...then Esau went to Ishmael and took for a wife Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebaioth” (Genesis 28:6–9). From the fact that it is stated: “the daughter of Ishmael,” do I not know that she was the sister of Nebaioth? For what purpose then does the verse say this explicitly? This teaches that Ishmael betrothed her to Esau and in the meantime he died, and Nebaioth her brother married her off. Therefore, special mention is made of Nebaioth. Consequently, it is understood that Jacob was sixty-three years old when he received his blessing and left his father’s house.

⁶¹⁵ If we calculate these sixty-three years and the fourteen until Joseph was born, this means that Jacob should have been seventy-seven at the time of Joseph’s birth. And it is written: “And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh” (Genesis 41:46). This indicates that Jacob should have then been at least a hundred and seven years old when Joseph was thirty. Add the seven years of plenty and the two of famine, and this would then indicate that Jacob should have been a hundred and sixteen years old when he arrived in Egypt in the second year of the famine.

⁶¹⁶ But it is written: “And Pharaoh said to Jacob, How many are the days of the years of your life? And Jacob said to Pharaoh, The days of the years of my sojournings are a hundred and thirty years” (Genesis 47:8–9). Jacob indicated that he was a hundred and thirty when he arrived in Egypt, which

is different from the hundred and sixteen years calculated previously. Where are the missing fourteen years from Jacob's lifetime?

⁶¹⁷ Rather, learn from here that the fourteen years that Jacob spent in the house of Eber are not counted here. As it is taught in a baraita: Jacob was studying in the house of Eber for fourteen years while in hiding from his brother Esau. If we were to calculate the life spans recorded in the Torah, we would find that Eber died when Jacob was seventy-nine years old, two years after Jacob our father went down to Aram-naharaim, to the house of Laban. When Jacob left after completing his studying there, he then went immediately to Aram-naharaim. Therefore, when Jacob stood at the well upon his arrival in Aram-naharaim, he was seventy-seven years old.

⁶¹⁸ And from where do we derive that Jacob was not punished for the fourteen years that he was in the house of Eber, during which time he failed to fulfill the mitzva of honoring one's parents? As it is taught in a baraita: It turns out that Joseph was away from his father for twenty-two years, just as Jacob our father was away from his own father for that same period of time. According to the previous calculation, however, the baraita is difficult, as Jacob was absent for thirty-six years. Rather, conclude from here that the fourteen years that he was in the house of Eber are not counted, as he was not punished for them.

⁶¹⁹ The Gemara raises an objection: But ultimately, Jacob was in Laban's house for only twenty years. Why, then, is he faulted for being away from his father for twenty-two years? Rather, he was punished because on his journey back from Aram-naharaim he tarried another two years before returning home to his parents, as it is taught in a baraita: Jacob left Aram-naharaim and came to Sukkot, and spent eighteen months there, as it is stated: "And Jacob journeyed to Sukkot, built himself a house, and made booths [sukkot] for his cattle" (Genesis 33:17). The Gemara understands this verse to mean that first he made booths [Sukkot], to live in during the summer, and then he built a house in the winter, and afterward he again made booths [sukkot] during the next summer, indicating that he must have been there for eighteen months. He then was in Bethel for six months, and he brought offerings, totaling two years in all. In this way, all the various calculations of years are reconciled.

Chapter 2

¹ MISHNA: With regard to one who reads the Megilla out of order, reading a later section first, and then going back to the earlier section, he has not fulfilled his obligation. If he read it by heart, or if he read it in Aramaic translation or in any other language that he does not understand, he has not fulfilled his obligation. However, for those who speak a foreign language, one may read the Megilla in that foreign language. And one who speaks a foreign language who heard the Megilla read in Ashurit, i.e., in Hebrew, has fulfilled his obligation.

² If one read the Megilla at intervals, pausing and resuming, or while he is dozing off, he has fulfilled his obligation. If one was writing a Megilla, or expounding upon it, or correcting it, and he read all its words as he was doing so, the following distinction applies: If he had intent to fulfill his obligation with that reading he has fulfilled his obligation, but if not, he has not fulfilled his obligation.

³ If one reads from a Megilla that was written not with ink but with sam or with sikra or with komos or with kankantom, or from a Megilla that was written not on parchment but on neyar or on diftera, a kind of unprocessed leather, he has not fulfilled his obligation. He does not fulfill his obligation unless he reads from a Megilla that is written in Ashurit, i.e., in the Hebrew language and using the Hebrew script, upon parchment and with ink.

⁴ GEMARA: It was taught in the mishna that one who reads the Megilla out of order has not fulfilled his obligation. The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived? Rava said: The verse states concerning Purim: “That they should unfailingly observe these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed times every year” (Esther 9:27), and the word “times” is referring to the two days of Purim, the fourteenth and the fifteenth of Adar. And we learn by way of analogy: Just as their appointed times cannot be out of order, as the fifteenth of Adar cannot possibly come before the fourteenth, so too, their writing must not be out of order.

⁵ The Gemara rejects this derivation: Is reading written here at all? It is “observing” that is written here in this verse, not reading, as it is written: “That they should unfailingly observe these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed times.” Rather, the proof is from here, as it is written: “And that these days should be remembered and observed throughout every generation” (Esther 9:28). Remembering is juxtaposed to observing, indicating: Just as observing cannot be out of order, as was derived from the words “That they should unfailingly observe these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed times,” so too, remembering, by reading the Megilla, may not be out of order.

⁶ § The Sages taught in a baraita: This halakha of not reading out of order applies also to hallel, and also to the recitation of Shema, and also to the Amida prayer, meaning that to fulfill one’s obligation he must recite the text of each of these in order.

⁷ The Gemara asks: From where do we derive that hallel may not be recited out of order? Rabba said: As it is written in hallel: “From the rising of the sun until its setting the Lord’s name is to be praised” (Psalms 113:3). Just as the sunrise and sunset cannot be reversed, so too, hallel may not be recited out of order. Rav Yosef said: It is derived from the verse in hallel that states: “This is the day that the Lord has made” (Psalms 118:24); just as the day follows a certain order, so too, hallel must be recited in its proper order.

⁸ Rav Avya said: It is derived from the verse in hallel: “Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Psalms 113:2), indicating that the blessing of God must “be” just as it is written. Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak said, and some say that it was Rav Aḥa bar Ya’akov who said: It is derived from here, the end of the aforementioned verse: “From now and for evermore” (Psalms 113:2), i.e., it should be like time, which cannot be reversed.

⁹ From where do we know one has not fulfilled his obligation of reciting the Shema if he recited it out of order? As it is taught in a baraita: The recital of the Shema must be as it is written, i.e., in Hebrew; this is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. But the Rabbis say: It may be recited in any language. The Gemara asks: What is the reason of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi? The verse states:

¹⁰ “And these words...shall be” (Deuteronomy 6:6), teaching that these words, the words of the Shema, always “shall be” as they are, i.e., in the Hebrew language. The Gemara asks: And as for the Sages, what is the reason for their opinion? The verse states: “Hear, O Israel” (Deuteronomy 6:4),

which could also be translated, “Understand, O Israel,” indicating that you may recite these words in any language that you hear, i.e., understand.

¹¹ The Gemara asks: And according to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi as well, isn’t it indeed written, “hear”? What does he learn from this word, if not that the Shema may be recited in any language? The Gemara answers: This word is necessary to teach something else: Make heard to your ears what your mouth is saying, i.e., the Shema must be recited audibly, not merely thought in one’s heart. The Gemara asks: And how do the Sages know this? The Gemara explains: They hold like the one who said that if one recites the Shema but does not make it audible to his ears, he has nevertheless fulfilled his obligation.

¹² The Gemara asks: And according to the Sages as well, isn’t it indeed written, “And these words shall be”? What do they learn from this, if not that the Shema must be recited in Hebrew? The Gemara answers: That word is necessary to teach that one must not recite the words of the Shema out of order, but they “shall be” as they are, in the proper order. The Gemara asks: And from where does Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi learn that one must not recite the Shema out of order? The Gemara answers: He derives it from the fact that the verse does not say just: Words, but “the words,” referring to specific words, which teaches that they must be recited in their proper order without any variation. The Gemara asks: And what do the Sages learn from the phrase “the words”? The difference between words and “the words” is inconsequential according to them.

¹³ The Gemara analyzes the dispute: Shall we say that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi maintains that the entire Torah may be recited in any language? As, if it enters your mind to say that the entire Torah may be recited only in the sacred tongue, Hebrew, and not in any other language, why do I need the Torah to write “and these words shall be” with respect to the Shema? Why would I think that the Shema is different from the rest of the Torah?

¹⁴ The Gemara rejects this argument: There is no proof from here, as even if the Torah must generally be recited in Hebrew it is nevertheless necessary to specify the matter here, since without such specification it might have entered your mind to say that in this context “hear” means understand, as maintained by the Sages, and that the Shema may be recited in any language. Therefore the Merciful One writes in the Torah, “and these words shall be,” to teach us that the Shema may be recited only in the original Hebrew.

¹⁵ The Gemara suggests: Shall we say then that the Sages maintain that the entire Torah must be recited specifically in the sacred tongue, Hebrew? As, if it enters your mind to say that the entire Torah may be recited in any language, why do I need the Torah to write “hear” with respect to the Shema? Why would one think that the Shema is different from the rest of the Torah?

¹⁶ The Gemara rejects this argument: Even if the Torah may generally be recited in any language, it was nevertheless necessary to specify the matter here. Without such specification it could enter your mind to say that the words “and these words shall be” teach that the Shema may be recited only in Hebrew, as asserted by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Therefore the Merciful One writes the word “hear” in the Torah, to teach us that the Shema may be recited in any language.

¹⁷ § The baraita cited previously taught that the halakha against reciting a text out of order applies to the Amida prayer as well. The Gemara asks: From where do we derive this? As it is taught in a baraita: Shimon HaPakuli arranged the eighteen blessings of the Amida prayer before Rabban Gamliel in their fixed order in Yavne, which indicates that there is a specific order to these blessings

that must not be changed. Rabbi Yoḥanan said, and some say that it was taught in a baraita: A hundred and twenty Elders, i.e., the Men of the Great Assembly, and among them several prophets, established the eighteen blessings of the Amida in their fixed order, which also shows that the order of these blessings may not be changed.

¹⁸ The Gemara proceeds to explain this order: The Sages taught in a baraita: From where is it derived that one says the blessing of the Patriarchs, the first blessing of the Amida? As it is stated: “Ascribe to the Lord, mighty ones” (Psalms 29:1), which means that one should mention before the Lord the mighty ones of the world, i.e., the Patriarchs. And from where is it derived that one then says the blessing of mighty deeds? As it is stated in the continuation of that verse: “Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength” (Psalms 29:1). And from where is it derived that one then says the blessing of holiness? As it is stated in the next verse: “Give to the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psalms 29:2).

¹⁹ The Gemara continues: And why did they see fit to institute to say the blessing of understanding after the blessing of holiness? As it is stated: “They shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall revere the God of Israel” (Isaiah 29:23), and adjacent to that verse it is written: “They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding” (Isaiah 29:24). This shows that it is proper for the theme of understanding to follow the theme of God’s holiness. And why did they see fit to institute to say the blessing of repentance after the blessing of understanding? As it is written: “And they will understand with their heart, repent, and be healed” (Isaiah 6:10-11), showing that the theme of repentance properly follows the theme of understanding.

²⁰ The Gemara asks: If so, that the sequence of blessings is based on this verse, let us say that the blessing of healing should be said after the blessing of repentance. Why, then, is the next blessing in the Amida the blessing of forgiveness and not the blessing of healing? The Gemara explains: This cannot enter your mind, as it is written: “And let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7), which shows that the theme of repentance should be followed by that of forgiveness.

²¹ The Gemara poses a question: But what did you see to rely on this verse? Rely on the other verse, which juxtaposes repentance to healing. The Gemara answers: Another verse, in which it is written: “Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from the pit” (Psalms 103:3–4), proves that the theme of healing should follow that of forgiveness. The Gemara asks: Is that verse coming to say that the blessings of redemption and healing should be placed following the blessing of forgiveness? But isn’t it written: “Repent, and be healed” (Isaiah 6:10), which suggests that repentance should be followed by healing? The Gemara answers: That verse is referring not to the literal healing from illness, but rather to the figurative healing of forgiveness, and therefore this verse too supports the sequence of forgiveness following repentance.

²² The Gemara continues: And why did they see fit to institute to say the blessing of redemption as the seventh blessing? Rava said: Since there is a tradition that the Jewish people are destined to be redeemed in the seventh year of the Sabbatical cycle, consequently, they fixed redemption as the seventh blessing. But didn’t the Master say in a baraita: In the sixth year of the Sabbatical cycle in the days of the arrival of the Messiah, heavenly sounds will be heard; in the seventh year there will be wars; and upon the conclusion of the seventh year, in the eighth year, the son of David, the Messiah, will come? The redemption will take place not during the seventh year but after it. The

Gemara answers: Nevertheless, the war that takes place during the seventh year is also the beginning of the redemption process, and it is therefore correct to say that Israel will be redeemed in the seventh year.

²³ The Gemara continues: And why did they see fit to institute that one says the blessing of healing as the eighth blessing? Rabbi Aḥa said: Since circumcision was assigned to the eighth day of life, and circumcision requires healing, consequently, they established healing as the eighth blessing.

²⁴ And why did they see fit to institute that one says the blessing of bountiful years as the ninth blessing? Rabbi Alexandri said: This blessing was instituted in reference to those who raise the prices of food. We pray for rain so that the price of produce will not rise as a result of shortages, as it is written: “Break the arm of the wicked” (Psalms 10:15), referring to the wicked, who practice deception and extort the poor. And when David expressed this request, he expressed it in the ninth psalm. Although today it is considered the tenth psalm, the first and second psalms are actually counted as one, and therefore this is the ninth psalm. Therefore, the blessing of the years was fixed as the ninth blessing.

²⁵ The Gemara asks: And why did they see fit to institute that one says the blessing of the ingathering of the exiles after the blessing of the years? As it is written: “And you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to My people Israel; for they will soon be coming” (Ezekiel 36:8), which indicates that the ingathering of the exiles will follow after Eretz Yisrael is blessed with bountiful produce. And once the exiles have been gathered, judgment will be meted out to the wicked, as it is stated: “And I will turn my hand against you and purge away your dross as with lye” (Isaiah 1:25), and immediately after it is written: “And I will restore your judges as at first” (Isaiah 1:26). For this reason the blessing of the restoration of judges comes after the blessing of the ingathering of the exiles.

²⁶ And once judgment is meted out to the wicked, the transgressors, i.e., the heretics and sectarians, will cease to be. Consequently, the next blessing is that of the heretics, and one includes evildoers with them, as it is stated: “And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall cease to be” (Isaiah 1:28). The “transgressors and sinners” are the evildoers, and “they that forsake the Lord” are the heretics.

²⁷ And once the heretics cease to be, the horn, i.e., the glory, of the righteous will be exalted, as it is written: “All the horns of the wicked will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted” (Psalms 75:11). Therefore, after the blessing of the heretics, one says the blessing about the righteous. And he includes the righteous converts along with the righteous, as it is stated: “You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the elder” (Leviticus 19:32), and adjacent to this it is stated: “And if a stranger sojourns with you” (Leviticus 19:33). An “elder” is one with Torah wisdom and a “stranger” is one who has converted to Judaism.

²⁸ And where will the horns of the righteous be exalted? In Jerusalem, as it is stated: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they who love you shall prosper” (Psalms 122:6). “They who love you” are the righteous. Therefore, the blessing of the rebuilding of Jerusalem is placed after the blessing of the righteous.

²⁹ And once Jerusalem is rebuilt, the Messiah, scion of the house of David, will come, as it is stated:

³⁰ “Afterward the children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God and David their king” (Hosea 3:5), and consequently, the blessing of the kingdom of David follows the blessing of the building of Jerusalem. And once the scion of David comes, the time for prayer will come, as it is stated: “I will bring them to My sacred mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer” (Isaiah 56:7). Therefore, the blessing of hearing prayer is recited after the blessing of the kingdom of David.

³¹ And after prayer comes, the Temple service will arrive, as it is stated in the continuation of that verse: “Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on My altar” (Isaiah 56:7). The blessing of restoration of the Temple service follows the blessing of hearing prayer. And when the Temple service comes, with it will also come thanksgiving, as it is stated: “Whoever sacrifices a thanks-offering honors Me” (Psalms 50:23), which teaches that thanksgiving follows sacrifice. Therefore, the blessing of thanksgiving follows the blessing of restoration of the Temple service.

³² And why did they see fit to institute that one says the Priestly Benediction after the blessing of thanksgiving? As it is written: “And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from sacrificing the sin-offering, and the burnt-offering, and the peace-offerings” (Leviticus 9:22), teaching that the Priestly Benediction follows the sacrificial service, which includes the thanks-offering.

³³ The Gemara asks: But the cited verse indicates that Aaron blessed the people and then sacrificed the offerings. Should we not then say the Priestly Benediction before the blessing of the Temple service? The Gemara answers: It should not enter your mind to say this, as it is written: “And he came down from sacrificing the sin-offering.” Is it written that he came down to sacrifice the offerings, implying that after blessing the people Aaron came down and sacrificed the offerings? No, it is written, “from sacrificing,” indicating that the offerings had already been sacrificed.

³⁴ The Gemara asks: If, as derived from this verse, the Priestly Benediction follows the sacrificial service, the Priestly Benediction should be said immediately after the blessing of restoration of the Temple service, without the interruption of the blessing of thanksgiving. The Gemara rejects this argument: It should not enter your mind to say this, as it is written: “Whoever sacrifices a thanks-offering honors Me,” from which we learn that thanksgiving follows sacrifice, as already explained.

³⁵ The Gemara asks: What did you see to rely on this verse and juxtapose thanksgiving with sacrifice? Rely rather on the other verse, which indicates that it is the Priestly Benediction that should be juxtaposed with the sacrificial service. The Gemara answers: It stands to reason to have the blessing of thanksgiving immediately following the blessing of the sacrificial service, since the sacrificial service and thanksgiving, which are closely related conceptually, are one matter.

³⁶ And why did they see fit to institute that one says the blessing beginning with the words: Grant peace, after the Priestly Benediction? As it is written immediately following the Priestly Benediction: “And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them” (Numbers 6:27). The Priestly Benediction is followed by God’s blessing, and the blessing of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is peace, as it is stated: “The Lord blesses His people with peace” (Psalms 29:11).

³⁷ The Gemara returns to the baraita cited at the beginning of the discussion: Now, since the baraita teaches that a hundred and twenty Elders, including many prophets, established the Amida prayer in its fixed order, what is it that Shimon HaPakuli arranged in a much later period of time, as related by Rabbi Yoḥanan? The Gemara answers: Indeed, the blessings of the Amida prayer were originally

arranged by the hundred and twenty members of the Great Assembly, but over the course of time the people forgot them, and Shimon HaPakuli then arranged them again.

³⁸ The Gemara comments: These nineteen blessings are a fixed number, and beyond this it is prohibited for one to declare the praises of the Holy One, Blessed be He, by adding additional blessings to the Amida. As Rabbi Elazar said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can declare all His praise?” (Psalms 106:2)? It means: For whom is it fitting to utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Only for one who can declare all His praise. And since no one is capable of declaring all of God’s praises, we must suffice with the set formula established by the Sages.

³⁹ Rabba bar bar Ḥana said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: With regard to one who excessively declares the praises of the Holy One, Blessed be He, his fate is to be uprooted from the world, as it appears as if he had exhausted all of God’s praises. As it is stated: “Shall it be told to Him when I speak? If a man says it, he would be swallowed up” (Job 37:20). The Gemara interprets the verse as saying: Can all of God’s praises be expressed when I speak? If a man would say such a thing, he would be “swallowed up” as punishment.

⁴⁰ The Gemara relates: Rabbi Yehuda, a man of Kefar Gibboraya, and some say he was a man of Kefar Gibbor Ḥayil, taught: What is the meaning of that which is written: “For You silence is praise” (Psalms 65:2)? The best remedy of all is silence, i.e., the optimum form of praising God is silence. The Gemara relates: When Rav Dimi came from Eretz Israel to Babylonia, he said: In the West, Eretz Yisrael, they say an adage: If a word is worth one sela, silence is worth two.

⁴¹ § It is taught in the mishna: If one read the Megilla by heart he has not fulfilled his obligation. The Gemara asks: From where do we derive this? Rava said: This is derived by means of a verbal analogy between one instance of the term remembrance and another instance of the term remembrance. It is written here, with regard to the Megilla: “That these days should be remembered” (Esther 9:28), and it is written elsewhere: “And the Lord said to Moses: Write this for a memorial in the book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: That I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens” (Exodus 17:14). Just as there, with regard to Amalek, remembrance is referring specifically to something written in a book, as it is stated, “in the book,” so too here, the Megilla remembrance is through being written in a book.

⁴² The Gemara raises a question: But from where do we know that this remembrance that is stated with regard to Amalek and to the Megilla involves reading it out loud from a book? Perhaps it requires merely looking into the book, reading it silently. The Gemara answers: It should not enter your mind to say this, as it was taught in a baraita: The verse states: “Remember what Amalek did to you” (Deuteronomy 25:17). One might have thought that it suffices for one to remember this silently, in his heart. But this cannot be, since when it says subsequently: “You shall not forget” (Deuteronomy 25:19), it is already referring to forgetting from the heart. How, then, do I uphold the meaning of “remember”? What does this command to remember add to the command to not forget? Therefore, it means that the remembrance must be expressed out loud, with the mouth.

⁴³ § It was taught further in the mishna: If one read the Megilla in Aramaic translation he has not fulfilled his obligation. The Gemara asks: What are the circumstances of this case? If we say that the Megilla was written in the original biblical text, i.e., in Hebrew, and he read it in Aramaic translation, then this is the same as reading it by heart, as he is not reading the words written in the text, and the

mishna has already stated that one does not fulfill his obligation by reading the Megilla by heart. The Gemara answers: No, it is necessary to teach this case as well, as it is referring to a case in which the Megilla was written not in the original Hebrew but in Aramaic translation, and he read it as written, in Aramaic translation.

⁴⁴ § The mishna continues: However, for those who speak a foreign language, one may read the Megilla in that foreign language. The Gemara raises a difficulty: But didn't you say in the mishna: If he read it in any other language he has not fulfilled his obligation? The Gemara cites the answer of Rav and Shmuel, who both say: When the mishna says: A foreign language, it is referring specifically to the Greek foreign language, which has a unique status with regard to biblical translation.

⁴⁵ The Gemara asks: What are the circumstances of the case? If we say that the Megilla was written in Ashurit, i.e., in Hebrew, and he read it in Greek, this is the same as reading it by heart, and the mishna teaches that one does not fulfill his obligation by reading by heart. The Gemara answers: Rabbi Aḥa said that Rabbi Elazar said: The mishna is dealing with a case in which the Megilla was written in the Greek foreign language and was also read in that language.

⁴⁶ Apropos statements in this line of tradition, the Gemara adds: And Rabbi Aḥa further said that Rabbi Elazar said: From where is it derived that the Holy One, Blessed be He, called Jacob El, meaning God? As it is stated: "And he erected there an altar, and he called it El, God of Israel" (Genesis 33:20). It is also possible to translate this as: And He, i.e., the God of Israel, called him, Jacob, El. Indeed, it must be understood this way, as if it enters your mind to say that the verse should be understood as saying that Jacob called the altar El, it should have specified the subject of the verb and written: And Jacob called it El. But since the verse is not written this way, the verse must be understood as follows: He called Jacob El; and who called him El? The God of Israel.

⁴⁷ The Gemara returns to discussing languages for reading the Megilla and raises an objection against Rav and Shmuel, who said that one may read the Megilla in Greek but not in other foreign languages. It is taught in a baraita: If one read the Megilla in Coptic [Giptit], Ivrit, Elamite, Median, or Greek, he has not fulfilled his obligation, indicating that one cannot fulfill his obligation by reading the Megilla in Greek.

⁴⁸ The Gemara answers: The clause in the mishna that teaches that the Megilla may be read in a foreign language to one who speaks that foreign language is comparable only to that which was taught in a different baraita: If one reads the Megilla in Coptic to Copts, in Ivrit to Ivrim, in Elamite to Elamites, or in Greek to Greeks, he has fulfilled his obligation. The Megilla may be read in any language, provided the listener understands that language.

⁴⁹ The Gemara asks: But if so, that one who reads the Megilla in a foreign language that he speaks fulfills his obligation, why did Rav and Shmuel establish the ruling of the mishna as referring specifically to Greek? Let them interpret it as referring to any foreign language that one speaks. The Gemara explains: Rather, the mishna is to be understood like the baraita, that one who reads the Megilla in a language that he speaks fulfills his obligation; and that which was stated in the name of Rav and Shmuel was said as a general statement, not relating to the mishna but as an independent ruling, as follows: Rav and Shmuel both say: The Greek language is acceptable for everyone, i.e., anyone who reads the Megilla in Greek has fulfilled his obligation, even if he does not understand Greek.

⁵⁰ The Gemara raises a difficulty: But doesn't the baraita cited above teach that if one reads the Megilla in Greek to Greeks he has fulfilled his obligation? This implies that reading in Greek, yes, this is acceptable for Greeks, but for everyone else, no, it is not. The Gemara answers: Rav and Shmuel disagree with this statement of the baraita, because they agree with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. As we learned in a mishna (Megilla 8b): Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: Even for books of the Bible, the Sages did not permit them to be written in any foreign language other than Greek, indicating that Greek has a special status, and is treated like the original Hebrew.

⁵¹ The Gemara asks: But if this was the intention of Rav and Shmuel, let them state explicitly: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. Why did Rav and Shmuel formulate their statement as if they were issuing a new ruling? The Gemara answers: Had they said simply that the halakha is in accordance with Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, I would have said that this applies only to the other books of the Bible, but with regard to the Megilla, of which it is written: "According to their writing," I would say that one does not fulfill his obligation if he reads it in Greek. Therefore they stated their own opinion to teach us that even in the case of the Megilla one fulfills his obligation if he reads it in Greek.

⁵² § It was taught in the mishna: And one who speaks a foreign language who heard the Megilla being read in Ashurit, i.e., in Hebrew, has fulfilled his obligation. The Gemara asks: But isn't it so that he does not understand what they are saying? Since he does not understand Hebrew, how does he fulfill his obligation? The Gemara answers: It is just as it is with women and uneducated people; they too understand little Hebrew, but nevertheless they fulfill their obligation when they hear the Megilla read in that language.

⁵³ Ravina strongly objects to the premise of the question raised above, i.e., that someone who does not understand the original, untranslated language of the Megilla cannot fulfill his obligation. Is that to say that even we, the Sages, who are very well acquainted with Hebrew, know for certain the meaning of the obscure words *ha'ahashteranim benei haramakhim* (Esther 8:10), often translated as: "Used in the royal service, bred from the stud"? But nevertheless, we fulfill the mitzva of reading the Megilla and publicizing the miracle of Purim by reading these words as they appear in the original text. Here too, one who speaks a foreign language who hears the Megilla being read in Hebrew fulfills the mitzva of reading the Megilla and publicizing the Purim miracle, even if he does not understand the words themselves.

⁵⁴ § The mishna continues: If one reads the Megilla at intervals [*seirugin*] he has fulfilled his obligation. The Gemara relates that the Sages did not know what is meant by the word *seirugin*. One day they heard the maidservant in Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's house saying to the Sages who were entering the house intermittently rather than in a single group: How long are you going to enter *seirugin seirugin*? As she lived in Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's house and certainly heard the most proper Hebrew being spoken, they understood from this that the word *seirugin* means at intervals.

⁵⁵ It is similarly related that the Sages did not know what is meant by the word *halogelot*, which appears in various mishnayot and baraitot. One day they heard the maidservant in Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's house saying to a certain man who was scattering purslane: How long will you go on scattering your *halogelot*? And from this they understood that *halogelot* is purslane.

⁵⁶ Likewise, the Sages did not know what is meant by *salseleha* in the verse: "Get wisdom... *salseleha* and it will exalt you" (Proverbs 4:7–8). One day they heard the maidservant in Rabbi

Yehuda HaNasi's house talking to a certain man who was twirling his hair, saying to him: How long will you go on twirling [mesalsel] your hair? And from this they understood that the verse is saying: Turn wisdom around and around, and it will exalt you.

⁵⁷ The Gemara relates additional examples: The Sages did not know what is meant by the word yehav in the verse: "Cast upon the Lord your yehav" (Psalms 55:23). Rabba bar bar Hana said: One time I was traveling with a certain Arab [Tayya'a] and I was carrying a load, and he said to me: Take your yehav and throw it on my camel, and I understood that yehav means a load or burden.

⁵⁸ And similarly, the Sages did not know what is meant by the word matatei in the verse: "And I will tatei it with the matatei of destruction" (Isaiah 14:23). One day they heard the maidservant in Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's house saying to her friend: Take a tateita and tati the house, from which they understood that a matatei is a broom, and the verb tati means to sweep.

⁵⁹ On the matter of reading the Megilla with interruptions, the Sages taught the following baraita: If one reads the Megilla at intervals, pausing and resuming at intervals, he has fulfilled his obligation.

⁶⁰ But if he reads it out of order, i.e., if he changes the order of the words or verses of the Megilla, he has not fulfilled his obligation. Rabbi Mona said in the name of Rabbi Yehuda: Even when he reads it at intervals, if he pauses and interrupts his reading long enough for one to finish reading the whole Megilla during that time, he must go back to the beginning and start again. Rav Yosef said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Mona, who stated his opinion in the name of Rabbi Yehuda.

⁶¹ Abaye said to Rav Yosef: When Rabbi Mona said: Long enough for one to finish reading the whole Megilla, did he mean from the verse where he is now until the end? Or perhaps he meant long enough to read the entire Megilla from the beginning until the end. He said to him: Rabbi Mona meant from the beginning until the end, as if it were so that he meant from where he paused until the end of the Megilla, you would be subjecting your statement to the varying circumstances of each case. There would be no standard principle to determine the length of a permitted pause; in each case, depending on where one stopped, it would take a different amount of time to finish the Megilla until the end. And the Sages did not institute measures that are not standardized.

⁶² Rabbi Abba said that Rabbi Yirmeya bar Abba said: Rav said that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Mona, but Shmuel said that the halakha is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Mona. The Gemara elaborates: This is how they taught the opinions of the Sages in Sura. However, in Pumbedita they taught it slightly differently, like this: Rav Kahana said that Rav said that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Mona, but Shmuel said that the halakha is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Mona. Rav Beivai taught the opposite: Rav said that the halakha is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Mona, but Shmuel said that the halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Mona.

⁶³ Rav Yosef said: Grasp the version of Rav Beivai in your hand, i.e., accept it as the most authoritative one. It appears to be correct, as we know that Shmuel takes into consideration even an individual dissenting opinion when it is more stringent than the majority opinion. The Gemara proves its assertion about Shmuel: As we learned in a mishna (Yevamot 41a) with regard to a different matter, the case of a widow whose husband died childless and who was waiting for one of his surviving brothers to perform the required levirate marriage with her or, alternatively, to release her with the ḥalitza ceremony: In a case where a woman was waiting for her brother-in-law and in the

meantime one of her deceased husband's brothers betrothed this woman's sister, they said in the name of Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira: We say to this brother: Wait before marrying your betrothed until your older brother acts, performing the levirate marriage or ḥalitza. The reason for this is that before levirate marriage or ḥalitza is performed, all the brothers are considered, by rabbinic decree, to have a quasi-marital connection with the widow. Consequently, just as one may not marry his wife's sister, he may not marry the sister of a woman who is waiting for him to perform levirate marriage. The Sages, however, disagree with Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira and maintain that only the oldest of the brothers is considered bound to the widow, as he is the primary candidate to perform these acts. Consequently, the widow has no connection at all with the other brothers.

⁶⁴ And Shmuel said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira. This demonstrates that Shmuel takes into consideration the opinion of a single Sage against the majority when that minority opinion is more stringent than the majority opinion.

⁶⁵ § The Sages taught in a baraita: If the scribe who wrote the Megilla omitted letters or even complete verses when he wrote it, and the reader read these missing items as a translator would do when translating, i.e., he recited the missing parts by heart, he has fulfilled his obligation. Missing material in a Megilla and reading words or verses by heart do not invalidate the reading.

⁶⁶ The Gemara raises an objection from another baraita: If a Megilla contains letters that are blurred or torn, the following distinction applies: If their imprint is still visible, the Megilla is fit for reading, but if not, it is unfit. This baraita indicates that even the omission of several letters invalidates the Megilla. The Gemara resolves the contradiction between the two baraitot: This is not difficult. This second baraita, which says that a Megilla with blurred or torn letters is unfit, is referring to a case where this is so throughout the whole of the Megilla; whereas this first baraita, which says that a Megilla is fit even if whole verses are missing, is referring to a case where the missing material is in only part of it.

⁶⁷ The Sages taught in a baraita: If the reader of the Megilla omitted one verse, he may not say: I will continue to read the whole of the Megilla in order, and afterward I will go back and read that verse that I omitted. Rather, he must go back and read from that verse that he omitted and continue from there to the end of the Megilla. Similarly, if one enters a synagogue and encounters a congregation that has already read half of the Megilla, he may not say: I will read the second half of the Megilla with the congregation, and afterward I will go back and read the first half. Rather, he must go back and read it in its proper order from the beginning until the end.

⁶⁸ § It is taught in the mishna: If one read the Megilla while he is dozing off, he has fulfilled his obligation. The Gemara asks: What are the circumstances of the case of dozing off? Rav Ashi said: It is referring to a situation in which one is asleep yet not fully asleep, awake yet not fully awake. If someone calls him he answers. And he is in a mental state in which he does not know how to provide an answer that requires logical reasoning, but when people remind him about something that has happened, he remembers it.

⁶⁹ § The mishna continues: If one was writing a Megilla, or expounding upon it, or correcting it, and he read all its words as he was doing so, if he had intent to fulfill his obligation with that reading he has fulfilled his obligation. The Gemara asks: What are the circumstances of this case? If he was articulating each verse of the Megilla and then writing it down, what of it that he intended to fulfill

his obligation with that reading, since he recited those words by heart? Rather, it must be that he first wrote each verse in the Megilla and then read it out.

⁷⁰ The Gemara asks: But does one really fulfill his obligation in this way? Didn't Rabbi Ḥelbo say that Rav Ḥama bar Gurya said that Rav said: The halakha is in accordance with the statement of the one who says that the Megilla must be read in its entirety in order to fulfill one's obligation. And moreover, he said that even according to the one who said that one need not read the entire Megilla, but only from "There was a certain Jew" (Esther 2:5) and onward, the Megilla itself must nevertheless be written in its entirety. How, then, can it be suggested that one who is reading each verse as he writes it can fulfill his obligation by reading from a Megilla that is not yet written to the end?

⁷¹ The Gemara answers: Rather, this is a case in which a complete Megilla is lying before him and he is copying from it, and he was reading from that complete Megilla verse by verse and then writing each verse in his new copy. The Gemara proposes: Let us say that this supports the opinion of Rabba bar bar Ḥana, as Rabba bar bar Ḥana said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: It is prohibited to write even a single letter of the Bible when not copying from a written text. Since it was necessary to explain the mishna as addressing a case in which one was copying a Megilla out of a written text lying before him, this supports Rabbi Yoḥanan's ruling. The Gemara rejects this: This is not a proof, as perhaps the mishna is merely dealing with a case where this is what happened to be what occurred, that one happened to be copying the text from an existing Megilla, but it is not a requirement to do this.

⁷² The Gemara examines Rabba bar bar Ḥana's statement. With regard to the matter itself, Rabba bar bar Ḥana said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: It is prohibited to write even a single letter of the Bible when not copying from a written text. The Gemara raises an objection from a baraita: Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: One Adar there was an incident involving Rabbi Meir, who went to intercalate the year in Asia Minor, as, owing to persecutory decrees, he could not do this in Eretz Yisrael. And there was no Megilla there when Purim arrived, so he wrote a Megilla by heart and read from it.

⁷³ Rabbi Abbahu said: Rabbi Meir is different, as in him is fulfilled the verse: "And let your eyelids look straight before you" (Proverbs 4:25), and with regard to this verse, Rami bar Ḥama said to Rabbi Yirmeya of Difti: What is the meaning of the phrase "and let your eyelids [afapekha]," from the root a-p-p, "look straight [yaishiru] before you"? He said to him: This is referring to the words of the Torah, which are difficult to remember exactly, and with regard to which it is written: "Will you glance upon it fleetingly [hata'if], from the root a-p-p, with your eyes? It is already gone" (Proverbs 23:5), but nevertheless they remain exact [meyusharin] in the memory of Rabbi Meir, since he knows them all by heart.

⁷⁴ It was related that Rav Ḥisda once found Rav Ḥananel writing Torah scrolls, but he was not copying them from a written text, as he knew it all by heart. He said to him: It is fitting for the entire Torah to be written by your mouth, i.e., relying on your memory, but this is what the Sages said: It is prohibited to write even a single letter of the Bible when not copying from a written text. The Gemara asks: Since Rav Ḥisda said to him: The entire Torah is fitting to be written by your mouth, it may be concluded by inference that the words of the Torah were exact in his memory, i.e., that Rav Ḥananel enjoyed total mastery of the text. But didn't we say that Rabbi Meir wrote a Megilla without copying from a text due to similar proficiency? The Gemara answers: A time of exigent

circumstances is different; since there was no other option available, he was permitted to rely on his expertise, but otherwise this must not be done.

⁷⁵ It was further related that Abaye permitted the scribes of the house of ben Ḥavu to write phylacteries and mezuzot when they were not copying from a pre-existing text. The Gemara asks: In accordance with whose opinion did he issue this allowance? The Gemara explains: In accordance with the opinion of the following tanna, as it is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Yirmeya said in the name of our master, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi: Phylacteries and mezuzot may be written when they are not copied from a written text, and they do not require scoring, i.e., the parchment is not required to have lines etched in it.

⁷⁶ The Gemara concludes: And the halakha is as follows: Phylacteries do not require scoring, whereas mezuzot require scoring. And unlike biblical books, both these and those, phylacteries and mezuzot, may be written when the scribe is not copying from a written text. What is the reason for this exception? These short texts are well known to all scribes, and therefore it is permitted to write them by heart.

⁷⁷ § The mishna teaches: If one reads from a Megilla that was written with sam or with sikra or with komos or with kankantom, he has not fulfilled his obligation. The Gemara identifies these writing materials: Sam is what is called in Aramaic samma. With regard to sikra, Rabba bar bar Ḥana said: Its name in Aramaic is sikreta, a type of red paint. Komos is what is called koma, a tree resin.

⁷⁸ Kankantom is what is called in Aramaic ḥarta de'ushkafei, a black dye used by shoemakers. Diftera is hide that was processed with salt and flour, but not with gallnuts. Neyar is known in Aramaic as maḥaka, paper made from reeds.

⁷⁹ § It was taught in the mishna: He does not fulfill his obligation unless the Megilla is written in Ashurit. The Gemara explains the reason for this: As it is written concerning the Megilla: "According to their writing and according to their time" (Esther 9:27), i.e., the way it was originally written.

⁸⁰ The mishna concludes: He does not fulfill his obligation unless the Megilla is written "upon parchment and with ink." The Gemara asks: From where do we derive this? The Gemara answers: It is derived by way of a verbal analogy between one instance of writing and another instance of writing. It is written here in the book of Esther: "Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote all the acts of power, to confirm this second letter of Purim" (Esther 9:29), and it is written there: "Then Baruch answered them: He pronounced all these words to me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink on the parchment" (Jeremiah 36:18). Just as there the writing was with ink on parchment, so too here, a Megilla must be written with ink on parchment.

⁸¹ MISHNA: With regard to a resident of an unwallled town who went to a walled city, where the Megilla is read on the fifteenth of Adar, and conversely, a resident of a walled city who went to an unwallled town where it is read on the fourteenth, the following distinction applies: If he is destined to return to his original place, he reads it according to the halakha governing his own place, and if not, i.e., if he is not destined to return to his place, he reads with them, the residents of his current location.

⁸² Beginning from where must a person read the Megilla in order to fulfill his obligation? Rabbi Meir says: He must read all of it. Rabbi Yehuda says: He need read only from "There was a certain Jew" (Esther 2:5). Rabbi Yosei says: From "After these things" (Esther 3:1).

⁸³ GEMARA: Rava said: They taught the mishna that one who is destined to return to his own place reads according to the halakha governing his own place only with regard to one who is destined to return to his own place on the night of the fourteenth of Adar. But if he is not destined to return on the night of the fourteenth, although he does intend to return to his own place eventually, he reads with the residents of his current location. Rava said: From where do I say this? As it is written: “Therefore the Jews of unwalled towns, who dwell in the unwalled towns, make the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting” (Esther 9:19). Since it is already written: “The Jews of unwalled towns,” why do I need it to write further, “who dwell in the unwalled towns”? It comes to teach us this: That one who is in an unwalled town even for the day is also called one who lives in an unwalled town.

⁸⁴ The Gemara asks: We have found proof for a resident of a walled city who is temporarily located in an unwalled town. But from where do we derive the opposite case, that one from an unwalled town who is temporarily in a walled city is governed by a similar halakha? The Gemara answers: It is based on logical reasoning: Since one who is in an unwalled town for the day is called someone from an unwalled town, so too conversely, one who is in a walled city for a day is called someone from a walled city.

⁸⁵ And Rava said further: Someone from a village, where the Megilla is read on the Monday or Thursday prior to Purim (2a), who went to a town, reads the Megilla with the residents of the town, even if he had already read it in his own place. He does so in all circumstances, whether or not he will be returning to his own village. The Gemara explains: What is the reason for this ruling? This villager should actually have read at the same time as the residents of the towns, but the Sages showed leniency toward the people of the villages and allowed them to advance their reading of the Megilla to the previous day of assembly so that they would be free to supply water and food to their brethren in the cities on the day of Purim. This, however, applies only when the villager is in his place, in the village, but when he is in a town, he is required to read like the residents of the town, and not like the villagers.

⁸⁶ Abaye raised an objection to Rava from a baraita: A resident of a walled city who went to an unwalled town, in all circumstances, whether or not he will be returning to his own city, reads the Megilla according to the halakha governing his permanent place. The Gemara first questions the text of the baraita as it is currently worded: Can it enter your mind that the resident of a walled city always reads in accordance with the halakha governing his own place, even if he is currently situated in an unwalled town? But doesn't the matter depend on whether or not he will be returning on Purim to his hometown, as stated in the mishna? Therefore, it is clear that the baraita must be emended. Rather, is it not to be changed to: A resident of a village who went to an unwalled town? The baraita therefore teaches that a resident of a village who is visiting in a town must read the Megilla according to the halakha governing his own place, the village, unlike Rava's teaching.

⁸⁷ The Gemara rejects this: But did you not emend the reading in the baraita? Since you admit that the baraita in any event requires revision, change it further and teach: He reads the Megilla with the residents of the town. This wording in the baraita would then support the opinion of Rava.

⁸⁸ § The mishna teaches that three Sages disagree about the question: Beginning from where must a person read the Megilla in order to fulfill his obligation? It is taught in a baraita that there is a fourth

opinion as well: Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai says: One must start to read from “On that night” (Esther 6:1).

⁸⁹ Rabbi Yoḥanan said: And all of these tanna'im, in arriving at their respective opinions, were expounding the same verse. As it is stated: “Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote about all the acts of power to confirm this second letter of Purim” (Esther 9:29). The one who said that the Megilla must be read in its entirety interprets “acts of power” as referring to the power of Ahasuerus, and so the Megilla must be read from the beginning, where the power of Ahasuerus is recounted.

⁹⁰ And the one who said that it needs to be read from “There was a certain Jew” explains that “acts of power” is referring to the power of Mordecai. And the one who said that it needs to be read from “After these things” maintains that “acts of power” is referring to the power of Haman. And the one who said that it needs to be read from “On that night” understands that the expression is referring to the power of the miracle, which began on that night when Ahasuerus could not sleep, and therefore one must begin reading the Megilla from there.

⁹¹ Rav Huna said: The four Sages derived their respective opinions from here: “Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, and of that which they saw concerning this matter, and that which had befallen them, the Jews ordained...that they would keep these two days” (Esther 9:26–27).

⁹² Rav Huna continued: The one who said that the Megilla must be read in its entirety explains the verse as follows: “They saw” refers to what Ahasuerus saw, in that he used the vessels of the Temple. “Concerning this matter” was because he had calculated seventy years from the Babylonian exile and the Jews were still not redeemed, and he consequently thought that they would never enjoy deliverance. “And that which had befallen them” is referring to the fact that he had killed Vashti. Since the Megilla was written and continues to be read in order to inform future generations of all these events and what had happened to the people who were involved, and these are detailed at the beginning of the Megilla, it must be read in its entirety.

⁹³ And the one who said that the Megilla needs to be read from “There was a certain Jew” interprets this verse as follows: That which Mordecai “saw” in that he acted so zealously concerning Haman. “Concerning this matter” was because Haman had made himself an object of idol worship. “And that which had befallen them” is referring to the fact that a miracle took place. Therefore one must read the Megilla from “There was a certain man,” where all this is recounted.

⁹⁴ And the one who said that it needs to be read from “After these things” interprets the verse in this way: That which Haman “saw” in that he became incensed with all the Jews. “Concerning this matter” was because “Mordecai did not bow down, nor prostrate himself before him” (Esther 3:2). “And that which had befallen them” is referring to the fact that “he and his sons were hanged on the gallows” (Esther 9:25). Accordingly, the Megilla must be read from the first mention of Haman.

⁹⁵ And the one who said that the Megilla must be read from “On that night” offers the following explanation: That which Ahasuerus “saw” in that he commanded to bring the book of chronicles before him. “Concerning this matter” was because Esther had invited Haman along with him to the banquet she made. “And that which had befallen them” is referring to the fact that a miracle took place. And therefore one must read the Megilla from “On that night the king could not sleep and he commanded to bring the book of chronicles.”

⁹⁶ Rabbi Ḥelbo said that Rav Ḥama bar Gurya said that Rav said: The halakha is in accordance with the statement of the one who says that the Megilla must be read in its entirety. And moreover, even according to the one who said that it need be read only from “There was a certain Jew” and onward, the Megilla itself must nevertheless be written in its entirety.

⁹⁷ And Rabbi Ḥelbo said further that Rav Ḥama bar Gurya said that Rav said: The Megilla is referred to as a “book” (Esther 9:32), and it is also referred to as a “letter” (Esther 9:29). It is called a book, indicating a comparison to the book of the Torah, i.e., to a Torah scroll, to teach us that if one sewed its parchment sheets together with flax threads the Megilla is unfit, just as a Torah scroll sewn in this manner is unfit. And it is called a letter to teach us that if one stitched the Megilla sheets together with only three threads of sinew, in the manner of a letter, the Megilla is fit for use, as it does not have to be completely stitched like a Torah scroll. Rav Naḥman said: This is true provided that the stitches are made in three parts.

⁹⁸ Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: If one reads from a Megilla that was written together with the rest of the Writings he has not fulfilled his obligation, as it must be evident that one is reading specifically from the Megilla rather than simply reading ordinary passages from the Bible. Rava said: We said this only in a case where the parchment of the Megilla is not a little shorter or longer than the parchment of the other biblical books on the scroll and are consequently not plainly discernible among them. But if it is a little shorter or longer than the other sheets of parchment of the other biblical books, we have no problem with it, and one may read from such a scroll.

⁹⁹ It was related that Levi bar Shmuel was once reading before Rav Yehuda from a Megilla

¹⁰⁰ that was written together with the rest of the Writings. Rav Yehuda said to him: The Sages have said: If one reads from a Megilla that was written together with the rest of the Writings he has not fulfilled his obligation.

¹⁰¹ Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: If one reads from a Megilla that was written together with the rest of the Writings he has not fulfilled his obligation. But they hit this halakha on its head, i.e., immediately after reporting this ruling they added a qualification that removed much of its force: They taught this halakha only with respect to reading the Megilla for a congregation. An individual who reads the Megilla in private fulfills his obligation even if the Megilla was written together with the rest of the Writings. Only when it is read in public must it be from a Megilla that is a separate scroll.

¹⁰² Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba also said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The halakha of leaving a space without stitches, i.e., that the parchment sheets of a Torah scroll must not be sewn all the way to the edge, but rather a small margin must be left at the top and at the bottom, is a halakha transmitted to Moses from Sinai, i.e., it was not written in the Torah but was received in the framework of the Oral Law. But they immediately hit this halakha on its head, explaining that this halakha is not due to the special sanctity of a Torah scroll; rather, they said that it is only so that it not rip. If the scroll is wound too forcefully, the sheets of parchment will begin to spread apart since they are not sewn together at their extremities, and the one who is winding will cease to wind it so forcefully. If the stitching went all the way to the end there would be no such warning and the stitches would cause the parchment to rip.

¹⁰³ And Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba also said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Had there been left open a crack so much as the size of small sewing needle in the cave in which Moses and Elijah stood when God’s

glory was revealed to them, as it is written: “And it shall come to pass, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in a cleft of the rock” (Exodus 33:22), and: “And he came there to a cave...and, behold, the Lord passed by” (I Kings 19:9–11), they would not have been able to endure due to the intense light that would have entered that crack, as it is stated: “For no man shall see Me and live” (Exodus 33:20).

¹⁰⁴ And Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba further said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “And the Lord delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words which the Lord spoke with you in the mountain” (Deuteronomy 9:10)? This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, showed Moses on the mountain all the inferences that can be derived from the words of the Torah; and all the inferences that can be derived from the words of the Scribes, the early Sages; and also all the new halakhot that the Scribes were destined to introduce in the future in addition to the laws of the Torah. And what is it specifically that the Scribes would introduce in addition to the laws of the Torah? The reading of the Megilla.

¹⁰⁵ MISHNA: Everyone is fit to read the Megilla, except for a deaf person, an imbecile, and a minor. Rabbi Yehuda disagrees and says that a minor is fit to read the Megilla.

¹⁰⁶ GEMARA: The Gemara asks: Who is the tanna that taught that the reading of a deaf person, even after the fact, no, it is not valid? Rav Mattana said: It is Rabbi Yosei, as we learned in a mishna elsewhere (Berakhot 15a): If one recites the Shema but does not make it audible to his ears, he has nevertheless fulfilled his obligation. This is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda. Rabbi Yosei said: He has not fulfilled his obligation. Rabbi Yosei’s statement implies that one who does not hear what he is saying does not fulfill his obligation. Presumably the halakhot for Shema recitation and Megilla reading are equivalent.

¹⁰⁷ The Gemara questions the assumption on which the previous discussion is based: But from where do you know that the mishna, which states that a deaf person may not read the Megilla, reflects the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, and that it means to say that even after the fact, no, one does not fulfill his obligation if the Megilla is read by a deaf person? Perhaps the mishna was taught in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, and it should be understood as saying that a deaf person may not read *ab initio*, but after the fact his reading is valid.

¹⁰⁸ The Gemara rejects this proposal: This should not enter your mind, as the mishna teaches the halakha of a deaf person, an imbecile, and a minor together, implying that a deaf person is similar to an imbecile or a minor. Therefore, it may be inferred that just as the readings of an imbecile and a minor are not valid even after the fact, so too, even after the fact, no, the reading of a deaf person is not valid.

¹⁰⁹ The Gemara asks: But perhaps it is not so that all three cases are equivalent. Perhaps with regard to the imbecile and the minor, this halakha is as it is, and with regard to a deaf person, that halakha is as it is. Although all three cases are taught together, this may be merely because in all three cases he may not read *ab initio*; there may be a difference between them with regard to their status after the fact. It is possible that the mishna means that the reading of a deaf person is valid after the fact, and is citing the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda. The Gemara rejects this: It is impossible to say that the anonymous first tanna of the mishna is Rabbi Yehuda, as from the fact that the latter clause teaches:

Rabbi Yehuda says that a minor is fit, it may be inferred that the first clause of the mishna was not taught by Rabbi Yehuda.

¹¹⁰ The Gemara continues to ask: But perhaps the mishna in its entirety was taught by Rabbi Yehuda after all, but the first clause of the mishna was taught anonymously, whereas the latter clause was taught explicitly in the name of Rabbi Yehuda. The Gemara rejects this argument: Are the two parts of the mishna comparable, that they can be associated with a single Sage? The first clause of the mishna comes to disqualify the reading of a minor, whereas the latter clause comes to declare a minor fit. These two contradictory opinions therefore cannot be understood as the statement of a single Sage.

¹¹¹ The Gemara asks: But perhaps the mishna in its entirety expresses the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda after all. And it is teaching the halakha concerning two different types of minors, and the mishna is incomplete, lacking some words of elaboration, and is teaching the following: Everyone is fit to read the Megilla except for a deaf person, an imbecile, and a minor. In what case is this statement said? Only with regard to a minor who has not reached the age of training in mitzvot. But a minor who has reached the age of training in mitzvot may read the Megilla even *ab initio*, as Rabbi Yehuda says that a minor who has reached that requisite age is fit to read the Megilla.

¹¹² The Gemara raises a difficulty with this interpretation of the mishna: In what manner did you establish the mishna? You established it as being in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, and you understand the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda to be that a deaf person is disqualified from reading the Megilla *ab initio*, but after the fact his reading is valid.

¹¹³ But then that which Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, taught will present a difficulty, as he taught a baraita: A deaf person who can speak but cannot hear may set aside teruma even *ab initio*, although he cannot hear himself reciting the blessing that is recited before setting aside teruma. Upon whose opinion is this baraita based? If you say it is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, that cannot be, as you have established that Rabbi Yehuda maintains that if one recites something and does not hear it, after the fact, yes, his action is valid, but he should not do so *ab initio*. And if you say it is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, this is even more difficult, as he maintains that even after the fact, no, his action is not valid. Who, then, is the Sage who would say that a deaf person may set aside teruma even *ab initio*?

¹¹⁴ The Gemara rejects this reasoning: Rather, what then do you propose to say, that this baraita is in accordance with Rabbi Yehuda and that Rabbi Yehuda permits a deaf person to read even *ab initio*, whereas Rabbi Yosei would disqualify him even after the fact? But then whose is the opinion that is represented in that which is taught in a baraita: A person should not recite the Grace after Meals in his heart, i.e., inaudibly, but if he recited it in this manner, he has fulfilled his obligation. It is the opinion of neither Rabbi Yehuda nor Rabbi Yosei. As, if it follows the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, it should be permitted even *ab initio*, and if it follows the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, then even after the fact, no, this should not be valid.

¹¹⁵ The Gemara answers: Actually, you can indeed say that the baraita about teruma was taught in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, and that Rabbi Yehuda permits a deaf person to read even *ab initio*, while Rabbi Yosei disqualifies a deaf person even after the fact. And the baraita that teaches that one should not recite the Grace after Meals in his heart, but if he did he has fulfilled his obligation, is not difficult, as that baraita was taught by Rabbi Yehuda as well. The explanation for

this is that in this baraita, about teruma, he was teaching his own opinion, that it is permitted even ab initio, whereas in that baraita, concerning the Grace after Meals, he was teaching the opinion of his master, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, that one is required to hear what he is saying when he recites blessings.

¹¹⁶ As it is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya: One who recites the Shema must make it audible to his ears, as it is stated: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God; the Lord is One” (Deuteronomy 6:4), the word “hear” indicating that you should allow your ears to hear the words you are expressing with your mouth. Rabbi Meir disagrees and says: This is not necessary, as it is also stated there: “And these words, which I command you this day shall be in your heart” (Deuteronomy 6:6), indicating that “these words,” the words of the Shema, go after the intent of the heart, as it is unnecessary to pronounce them out loud. We see that according to Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, as cited by Rabbi Yehuda, the words must be audible to one’s ears ab initio.

¹¹⁷ The Gemara proposes a second solution: Now that you have arrived at this point and cited this baraita, you can even say that Rabbi Yehuda holds in accordance with his teacher, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, that a deaf person is disqualified ab initio, and it is only after the fact that his reading is valid. And as for that baraita that Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, taught stating that a deaf person may set aside teruma even ab initio, this was taught in accordance with the other opinion cited in the baraita, i.e., that of Rabbi Meir, who maintains that everything depends on the intent of one’s heart, and that it is not necessary to pronounce words audibly, even ab initio.

¹¹⁸ § It was taught in the mishna: Rabbi Yehuda says that a minor is fit to read the Megilla. It is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Yehuda said: I can offer proof to my opinion, as when I was a minor I myself read the Megilla before Rabbi Tarfon and the other Elders in Lod. They said to him in response: One cannot bring a proof from the testimony of a minor. Since at the time of the supposed incident you were a minor, you are not qualified now to testify about it.

¹¹⁹ It is taught in a different baraita: Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said: When I was a minor I read the Megilla before Rabbi Yehuda. They said to him: One cannot bring a proof that an act is permitted from the behavior of the very one who permits it. We know that Rabbi Yehuda maintains that a minor is fit to read the Megilla, and the fact that he acted in accordance with his own opinion does not prove that this is the accepted halakha.

¹²⁰ The Gemara asks: And let them say to him, as the Sages said to Rabbi Yehuda in the previous baraita, that one cannot bring a proof from the testimony of a minor. The Gemara answers: They said one thing to him and then another; i.e., they rejected him with a twofold argument: One objection is that you were a minor at that time, and therefore your testimony is disqualified. And furthermore, even if you had been an adult at that time and you had testified that you saw some other minor read the Megilla before Rabbi Yehuda, one cannot bring a proof that an act is permitted from the behavior of the very one who permits it.

¹²¹ MISHNA: One may not read the Megilla, nor perform a circumcision, nor immerse himself in a ritual bath, nor sprinkle water of purification to purify people and objects that had contracted ritual impurity through contact with a corpse until after sunrise. And also a woman who observes a clean day for each day she experiences a discharge, i.e., a woman who experienced one or two days of non-menstrual bleeding, and must now wait until a day has passed without any discharge of blood before regaining ritual purity, she too may not immerse herself until the sun has risen. And with regard to all

these activities that are supposed to be performed during the day, if one did them after daybreak, i.e., after the appearance of the first light of the sun, even before sunrise, they are valid, as at this point it is already considered daytime.

¹²² GEMARA: The Gemara asks: From where do we derive the halakha taught in the mishna that the Megilla may be read only during the day? The Gemara answers: As the verse states: “And that these days should be remembered and kept” (Esther 9:28). The word “days” indicates during the day, yes, but at night, no. The Gemara asks: Let us say that this is a conclusive refutation of the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, as Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: A person is obligated to read the Megilla at night and then repeat it during the day. The Gemara rejects this: There is no proof from here, as when the mishna teaches that the Megilla may be read only during the day, it was referring to the daytime reading, but the nighttime reading is not considered here at all.

¹²³ § The mishna continues: And one may not perform a circumcision until after sunrise, as it is written: “And on the eighth day he shall be circumcised” (Leviticus 12:3). This indicates that the circumcision must be during the day, not at night.

¹²⁴ § It is further taught in the mishna: And one may not immerse himself in a ritual bath, or sprinkle waters of purification until after sunrise. This too is derived from a verse, as it is written: “And the pure person shall sprinkle upon the impure on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be pure at evening” (Numbers 19:19), which teaches that the sprinkling must take place during the day and not at night. And immersion is likened to sprinkling, as it too is mentioned in the verse, “and bathe himself in water,” so that whatever is invalid with respect to sprinkling is also invalid with respect to immersion.

¹²⁵ § The mishna states: And also a woman who observes a day for a day may not immerse herself until the sun has risen. The Gemara asks: This is obvious. What is different about a woman who observes a day for a day, who must immerse herself in a ritual bath, from all the others who are obligated to immerse themselves, as it was already taught that one may not immerse himself in a ritual bath until it is day?

¹²⁶ The Gemara answers: It is nevertheless necessary to mention separately the case of a woman who observes a day for a day. As, it might enter your mind to say that this woman’s bleeding should be treated like the first emission of a zav, a man who experiences a gonorrhea-like secretion, in that just as a man attains the status of a full-fledged zav once he has three such emissions, so too, a woman attains the status of a full-fledged zava once she experiences three days of bleeding. And the first emission of a zav is likened to one who experienced a seminal discharge, as it is written: “This is the halakha of him that has an issue and of him whose semen goes from him” (Leviticus 15:32). From this it is learned: Just as one who experienced a seminal discharge immerses on the same day that he had the discharge, so too, that one, the zav, may immerse himself on the same day that he had the emission.

¹²⁷ And although this one, i.e., a woman who observes a day for a day, cannot immerse on the same day that she experienced the bleeding, as it is written: “All the days of her issue shall be to her as the bed of her menstruation” (Leviticus 15:26), which teaches that she remains the entire day of her issue in her impure state and must wait until the day is over before she can immerse herself, nevertheless, one might have said that at least during the night following the day of her issue she should be able to

perform a partial observation, i.e., she should verify that part of the night has gone by without bleeding, and then immerse herself at night, without waiting until morning. Therefore, the mishna teaches us that since she is required to count one day of purity after her day of impurity,

¹²⁸ and counting can only be done during the day and not at night, as it says: “And she shall count for herself seven days” (Leviticus 15:28), she cannot immerse herself until after sunrise, although here she has to count only one day.

¹²⁹ § The mishna concludes: And with regard to all these things, if one did them after daybreak they are valid. The Gemara asks: From where is this matter derived, that from daybreak it is already considered daytime? Rava said: As the verse states: “And God called the light [or] day” (Genesis 1:5), meaning: To that which was becoming lighter and lighter he called day. The Hebrew word or is not to be understood in its usual sense of light, but as a verbal noun: that which is becoming lighter and lighter. It teaches that as soon as light begins to appear in the sky it is called daytime.

¹³⁰ The Gemara raises a difficulty with this interpretation: However, if it is so that Rava’s interpretation of this phrase is correct, the following phrase: “And the darkness [ḥoshekh] He called night” (Genesis 1:5), should be interpreted in a similar fashion: That which was becoming darker and darker He called night, so that immediately after sunset it would be considered nighttime. But don’t we maintain that until the stars come out it is not nighttime? We are forced to say that ḥoshekh literally means darkness, and similarly, or in the first part of the verse literally means light.

¹³¹ Rather, Rabbi Zeira said: We derive this halakha from here, as it is stated: “So we labored in the work; and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared” (Nehemiah 4:15), where “rising of the morning” means daybreak, and the next verse states: “So that in the night they may be a guard to us; and labor in the day” (Nehemiah 4:16). This demonstrates that the day begins with the dawn.

¹³² The Gemara clarifies Rabbi Zeira’s statement: What need is there for the additional verse introduced by the words “and it states”? Why does the first proof-text not suffice? The Gemara explains: The second verse comes to deflect the following possible objection: You might say that even after “the rising of the morning” it is not yet considered day, and that from the time when the sun sets it is already considered night, and in this particular incident it happened that they began their work early, before the official beginning of daytime, and remained working late, after the official end of daytime. Therefore, Rabbi Zeira continued and said: Come and hear that which is stated in the next verse: “So that in the night they may be a guard to us; and labor in the day.” The entire time during which they worked is referred to as “day,” which proves that the day begins at daybreak.

¹³³ MISHNA: Although it is preferable to fulfill a particular day’s mitzva at the earliest possible hour, the entire day is a valid time for reading the Megilla; for reciting hallel; for sounding the shofar on Rosh HaShana; for taking the lulav and the other species on Sukkot; for the additional prayer recited on Shabbat and other occasions; and for the additional offerings sacrificed in the Temple on these occasions.

¹³⁴ And the entire day is also a valid time for the confession over the bulls brought by the Sanhedrin or by the High Priest to atone for mistakes they had made in their instruction to the people; for the declaration made on the last day of Passover in the fourth and seventh year of the Sabbatical cycle, stating that one’s obligations with regard to tithes have been properly fulfilled (see Deuteronomy

26:12–15); and for the confession of sins made by the High Priest on Yom Kippur over the special offerings brought on that day.

¹³⁵ The entire day is also a valid time for placing hands on the head of an offering; for slaughtering an offering; for waving those offerings that require waving in the Temple; for bringing meal-offerings near to the altar; for scooping out a fistful of flour from a meal-offering in order to burn it on the altar; and for burning the fistful of flour on the altar; for pinching the necks of the turtledoves and young pigeons sacrificed as offerings in the Temple; and for receiving the blood of an offering in a vessel; and for sprinkling blood on the altar and on the curtain separating between the Holy and the Holy of Holies.

¹³⁶ And the entire day is also a valid time for giving a woman suspected by her husband of having been unfaithful [sota] to drink from the bitter waters (see Numbers 5:11–31); for breaking the neck of the heifer as part of the procedure followed when a corpse is found outside a town and it is not known who caused his death (see Deuteronomy 21:1–9); and for all the steps in the purification process of the leper (see Leviticus 14:1–20).

¹³⁷ Correspondingly, all the mitzvot that must be performed at night may be performed anytime during the night: The entire night is a valid time for reaping the omer of barley on the night following the first day of Passover, for burning the fats of offerings that had been brought during the preceding day, and for burning the limbs of burnt-offerings. This is the principle: Something that it is a mitzva to perform during the day is valid if performed anytime during the entire day; something that it is a mitzva to perform at night is valid if performed anytime during the entire night.

¹³⁸ GEMARA: The Gemara asks: From where do we derive that these mitzvot were commanded to be performed specifically during the day? With regard to reading the Megilla, the verse states: “That these days should be remembered and kept” (Esther 9:28). For reciting the hallel, the proof is from that which is written in hallel: “From the rising of the sun to its setting, the Lord’s name is to be praised” (Psalms 113:3). Rabbi Yosei said: The proof is from another verse in hallel: “This is the day that the Lord has made” (Psalms 118:24), implying that it is to be recited during the day and not at night.

¹³⁹ And daytime is the time for taking the lulav, as it is written: “And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a beautiful tree, branches of a date palm, and boughs of a dense-leaved tree, and willows of the brook” (Leviticus 23:40). Daytime is also the time for sounding the shofar, as it is written: “It is a day of sounding the shofar to you” (Numbers 29:1). Likewise, the time for the additional offerings is day, as it is written with regard to these offerings: “To sacrifice an offering made by fire to the Lord, a burnt-offering, and a meal-offering, a sacrifice, and libations, each on its own day” (Leviticus 23:37). And this is also so for the additional prayer, because the Sages made it equivalent to those additional offerings.

¹⁴⁰ And daytime is the time for the confession over the bulls, as this is derived by way of a verbal analogy between one instance of atonement in this context and another instance of atonement in the context of Yom Kippur. As it is taught in a baraita with regard to Yom Kippur, the verse states: “And Aaron shall present the bull of the sin-offering that is his, and atone for himself and for his household” (Leviticus 16:11). The verse speaks of atonement achieved through words, i.e., the atonement here is not referring to the sacrifice of offerings and the sprinkling of blood, but rather to atonement achieved through confession. And the atonement of Yom Kippur is only during the day, as

it is written: “For on that day will He atone for you” (Leviticus 16:30). Just as the atonement on Yom Kippur must take place during the day, so must the other cases of atonement, over other bulls brought as sin-offerings, take place during the day.

¹⁴¹ And daytime is the time for the declaration with regard to tithes, as it is written in the formula of this declaration: “And you shall say before the Lord your God, I have removed the sacred things out of my house” (Deuteronomy 26:13–15); and juxtaposed to that passage it is written: “This day the Lord your God has commanded you to do” (Deuteronomy 26:16), implying during the day and not at night.

¹⁴² For placing hands on the head of an offering and for slaughtering an offering, it is derived as it is written: “And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and slaughter it” (Leviticus 3:8), comparing the laying of hands to slaughtering. And it is written with regard to slaughtering: “On the day that you slaughter” (Leviticus 19:6), meaning during the day and not at night. And for waving the offerings that require waving, it is derived as it is written: “And on the day you wave the omer” (Leviticus 23:12).

¹⁴³ And with regard to bringing the meal-offerings near the altar, it is likened to waving, as it is written: “And the priest shall take the meal-offering of jealousy from the woman’s hand, and shall wave the offering before the Lord, and sacrifice it upon the altar” (Numbers 5:25). The words “sacrifice it” are referring to bringing the offering near the altar. And for scooping out a fistful of flour, and for pinching the necks of the bird-offerings, and for burning the fistful of flour on the altar, and for sprinkling the blood, these are derived as it is written: “This is the law of the burnt-offering, of the meal-offering, and of the sin-offering, and of the guilt-offering, and of the consecration-offering, and of the sacrifice of the peace-offering; which the Lord commanded Moses on Mount Sinai on the day that he commanded the children of Israel to present their offerings” (Leviticus 7:37–38).

¹⁴⁴ And with regard to giving the sota to drink from the bitter waters, this is derived from a verbal analogy between one instance of the word “Torah” and another instance of the word “Torah.” It is written here with respect to a sota: “And the priest shall execute upon her all this Torah” (Numbers 5:30), and it is written there with regard to judgment: “According to the Torah, which they shall teach you, and according to the judgment, which they shall tell you” (Deuteronomy 17:11).

¹⁴⁵ Just as judgment may be done only by day, so too here, the sota is given the bitter waters to drink only by day.

¹⁴⁶ And daytime is the time for breaking the neck of the heifer, as the Sages of the school of Rabbi Yannai said: Atonement is written with regard to the heifer, teaching that it is treated like sacred offerings, and it has already been established that all actions relating to offerings must be performed during the day. And for purifying the leper, it is derived as it is written: “This shall be the law of the leper on the day of his cleansing” (Leviticus 14:2).

¹⁴⁷ It was taught in the mishna: “The entire night is a valid time for reaping the omer,” as the Master said in tractate Menaḥot: The reaping of the omer and the counting of the omer must be performed at night, whereas bringing the omer offering to the Temple must be done during the day. And for burning the fats and limbs of the offerings, it is derived as it is written with regard to them: “Which shall be burning upon the altar all night until the morning” (Leviticus 6:2).

¹⁴⁸ § The mishna states: This is the principle: Something that it is a mitzva to perform during the day is valid if performed any time during the entire day. The Gemara asks: As the mishna has seemingly mentioned all daytime mitzvot explicitly, the words: This is the principle, are to add what? The Gemara answers: This principle comes to include the arranging of the vessels of frankincense alongside the shewbread in the Temple, and the removal of those vessels at the end of the week, as the verse does not specify the time when these procedures should be performed.

¹⁴⁹ And this mishna would consequently be in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, as it is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yosei said: If one removed the old shewbread and frankincense in the morning and arranged the new ones toward the evening, i.e., at the end of the day, there is nothing wrong with this, as it suffices if the changeover is made any time over the course of the same day. The Sages, however, maintain that the new ones must be set in place immediately after the old ones have been removed.

¹⁵⁰ And, according to Rabbi Yosei, how do I uphold that which is written with regard to the shewbread: “He shall set it in order before the Lord continually” (Leviticus 24:8), implying that the bread must be on the table at all times? It means only that the table should not be an entire day without the bread, but if there is bread on the table for even a part of the day, it is considered as being there “continually.”

¹⁵¹ § The mishna concludes: Something that it is a mitzva to perform at night may be performed the entire night. The Gemara asks: What does this principle come to add that has not already been mentioned explicitly?

¹⁵² The Gemara answers: It comes to include the eating of the Paschal offering, and consequently this mishna is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, as it is taught in a baraita that it is written: “And they shall eat the meat on that night” (Exodus 12:8). Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya said: It is stated here: “On that night,” and it is stated further on: “And I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night” (Exodus 12:12). Just as there, when God passed through the land of Egypt, it was until midnight, so too here, the Paschal offering may be eaten only until midnight. The mishna, which asserts that the Paschal offering may be eaten all night, is not in accordance with Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya.

Chapter 3

¹ MISHNA: One who reads the Megilla may position himself as he wishes, either standing or sitting. Whether one person reads the Megilla or two people read it together, they have fulfilled their obligation. In a place where the people are accustomed to recite a blessing over the reading, one should recite a blessing. And in a place where it is customary not to recite a blessing, one should not recite a blessing.

² The mishna records several laws governing public Torah readings. On Mondays and Thursdays during the morning service and on Shabbat during the afternoon service, three people read from the Torah; one may neither decrease the number of readers nor add to them. And one does not conclude with a reading from the Prophets [haftara] on these occasions. Both the one who begins the reading and the one who concludes the reading from the Torah recite a blessing; one recites before the

beginning of the reading and one recites after its conclusion, but the middle reader does not recite a blessing.

³ On the days of the New Moon and on the intermediate days of a Festival, four people read from the Torah; one may neither decrease the number of readers nor add to them. And one does not conclude with a reading from the Prophets. Both the one who begins the reading and the one who concludes the reading from the Torah recite a blessing. The first reader recites a blessing before the beginning of the reading, and the last reader recites a blessing after its conclusion, but the middle readers do not recite a blessing.

⁴ The mishna formulates a general principle with regard to the number of people who read from the Torah on different occasions. This is the principle: Any day on which there is an additional offering sacrificed in the Temple and that is not a Festival, i.e., the New Moon and the intermediate days of a Festival, four people read from the Torah; on a Festival, five people read; on Yom Kippur, six people read; and on Shabbat, seven people read. One may not decrease the number of readers, but one may add to them. And on these days one concludes with a reading from the Prophets. Both the one who begins the reading and the one who concludes the reading from the Torah recite a blessing; one recites before the beginning of the reading and one recites after its conclusion, but the middle readers do not recite a blessing.

⁵ GEMARA: We learned in the mishna that one may read the Megilla while sitting. It was taught in a baraita: This is not the case with regard to reading the Torah, as one must stand when reading the Torah. The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived? Rabbi Abbahu said: It is as the verse states: “But as for you, stand here with Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments and the statutes” (Deuteronomy 5:28), which indicates that the Torah must be received while standing. And Rabbi Abbahu said: Were the verse not written in this manner, it would be impossible to utter it, in deference to God. The phrase “with Me” indicates that, as it were, even the Holy One, Blessed be He, was standing at the giving of the Torah.

⁶ And Rabbi Abbahu also said: From where is it derived that the teacher should not sit on a couch and teach his disciple while he is sitting on the ground? It is as it is stated: “But as for you, stand here with Me,” which indicates that the teacher and his disciples should be in the same position.

⁷ With regard to Torah study while standing, the Sages taught: From the days of Moses until the time of Rabban Gamliel, they would study Torah only while standing, as learning from one’s teacher is comparable to receiving the Torah at Sinai, during which the Jewish people stood. When Rabban Gamliel died, weakness descended to the world, and they would study Torah while sitting. And this is as we learned in a mishna (Sota 49a): When Rabban Gamliel died, honor for the Torah ceased, as standing while learning is an expression of honor for the Torah.

⁸ The Gemara points out an apparent contradiction with regard to this very issue. One verse says: “And I sat [va’eshev] on the mount” (Deuteronomy 9:9), and another verse says: “And I stood on the mount” (Deuteronomy 10:10). The Gemara cites several possible resolutions. Rav said: Moses would stand and learn the Torah from God, and then sit and review what he had learned. Rabbi Ḥanina said: Moses was not standing or sitting, but rather bowing. Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The term yeshiva is nothing more than an expression of remaining in one place, as it is stated: “And you dwelled [vateshvu] in Kadesh for many days” (Deuteronomy 1:46). Rava said: Moses studied easy material while standing and difficult material while sitting.

⁹ We learned in the mishna: If one person reads the Megilla or two people read it together, they have fulfilled their obligation.

¹⁰ It was taught: This is not the case with regard to reading the Torah, which may be read only by a single person. The Sages taught (Tosefta, Megilla 3:20): When reading from the Torah, one person reads and one may translate the reading into Aramaic for the congregation, provided that there are not one person reading and two people translating, because two voices cannot be heard simultaneously. And when reading from the Prophets, one person reads and two may translate, as there is less of a need to ensure that everyone hears the precise translation, as the Prophets do not teach halakha. This is the case provided that there are not two people reading and two translating. And when reciting hallel and reading the Megilla, even ten people may read and ten may translate.

¹¹ The Gemara asks: What is the reason that the Megilla may be read by several people at once? Since the Megilla is cherished by the congregation, they will pay close attention and hear it, and they will not become distracted by the different voices.

¹² § We learned in the mishna: In a place where the people are accustomed to recite a blessing over the reading, one should recite a blessing. Abaye said: They taught that the matter depends upon local custom only with regard to the blessing that is recited after the reading of the Megilla. But as for the blessing that is recited before the reading, it is a mitzva to recite the blessing according to all opinions, as Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: With regard to all the mitzvot, one recites a blessing over them prior to [over] their performance.

¹³ The Gemara asks: From where may it be inferred that the word over is the language of precedence? Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said that the verse states: “And Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran [vaya’avor] the Cushite” (II Samuel 18:23), i.e., Ahimaaz overtook the Cushite. Abaye said: It is derived from here: “And he passed [avar] before them” (Genesis 33:3). And if you wish, say instead that the proof is from here: “And their king passed [vaya’avor] before them and the Lord at their head” (Micah 2:13).

¹⁴ The Gemara asks: What blessing is recited before the reading of the Megilla? The Gemara relates that Rav Sheshet from Katrazya once happened to come before Rav Ashi, and he recited three blessings, alluded to by the letters mem, nun, het: Concerning the reading [mikra] of the Megilla; Who has performed miracles [nissim] for our fathers; and Who has given us life [sheheḥeyanu].

¹⁵ The Gemara asks: What blessing is recited after the reading of the Megilla in places where it is customary to recite such a blessing? The Gemara answers that the following blessing is recited: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, the God Who pleads our cause, and Who judges our claim, and Who avenges our vengeance, and Who punishes our foes, and Who brings retribution to our enemies. Blessed are You, Lord, Who, on behalf of Israel, exacts punishment from all of their foes. Rava said: The conclusion of the blessing is as follows: Blessed are you, Lord, the God who brings salvation. Rav Pappa said: Therefore, since there are two opinions on the matter, we should say both of them: Blessed are you, Lord, Who, on behalf of Israel, exacts punishment from all their foes; the God Who brings salvation.

¹⁶ We learned in the mishna: On Mondays and on Thursdays during the morning service and on Shabbat during the afternoon service, three people read from the Torah. The Gemara asks: Corresponding to what were these three readers instituted? Rav Asi said: They correspond to the

three sections of the Bible: Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings. Rava said: They correspond to the three components of the Jewish people: Priests, Levites, and Israelites.

¹⁷ The Gemara raises a question: But with regard to this baraita that Rav Shimi taught: One may not decrease to fewer than ten the number of verses read during a public Torah reading in the synagogue, and a generic verse, e.g., “And God spoke to Moses saying,” is included in the count, to what do these ten verses correspond? Why specifically the number ten?

¹⁸ Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: They correspond to the ten idlers that are in the synagogue, i.e., ten men who have the leisure not to work, and instead sit in the synagogue and are available to attend to communal needs. Rav Yosef said: They correspond to the Ten Commandments that were spoken to Moses at Sinai. Rabbi Levi said: They correspond to the ten psalms of praise that David said in the book of Psalms. And Rabbi Yoḥanan said: They correspond to the ten utterances with which the world was created.

¹⁹ The Gemara asks: What are these ten utterances? Presumably, they are the utterances introduced by the words “and God said” in the story of Creation in the first chapter of Genesis. However, there are only nine of these utterances and not ten. The Gemara answers: The expression: “In the beginning” (Genesis 1:1) is also considered an utterance, as it is written: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psalms 33:6), which indicates that the first utterance of Creation was the general creation of the entire universe.

²⁰ Rava said: Since ten verses must be read, if the first of the three readers called to the Torah read four verses, he is praiseworthy; if the second one read four verses, he is praiseworthy; and if the third one read four verses, he is praiseworthy.

²¹ Rava explains: If the first of the three readers called to the Torah read four verses, he is praiseworthy because the first in a series is privileged, as we learned in a mishna (Shekalim 8a): One removes the funds from the Temple treasury chamber, in order to use them for purchasing communal offerings and attending to other needs of the Temple, with three large baskets, each measuring three se’a. On the baskets is written, respectively, ales, beit, gimmel, in order to know which of them was removed first, in order to sacrifice offerings purchased with money from that basket first, as it is a mitzva to use the money collected with the first basket before the money collected with the others.

²² If the middle one read four verses, he is also praiseworthy, as the middle position is also dignified, as it is taught in a baraita: “The seven lamps shall give light in front of the candelabrum” (Numbers 8:2); this teaches that the priest turns the front of each lamp toward the western lamp of the candelabrum, i.e., the middle lamp, and the western lamp faces toward the Divine Presence. And Rabbi Yoḥanan said: It is derived from here that the middle one is especially praiseworthy.

²³ And if the last one called to the Torah read four verses, he too is praiseworthy, due to the principle that one elevates to a higher level of sanctity and does not downgrade. If the last reader reads more verses than did the first two, this is an elevation in sanctity. The Gemara relates that Rav Pappa happened to come to the synagogue of the place called Avi Gover, and the first person called to the Torah read four verses, and Rav Pappa praised him.

²⁴ We learned in the mishna that one may neither decrease the number of readers nor add to them. The one who begins the reading and the one who concludes the reading from the Torah each recite a

blessing. It is taught in a baraita: The one who begins the reading recites a blessing before reading from the Torah, and the one who concludes the reading recites a blessing after the reading.

²⁵ The Gemara comments: And now that all who read from the Torah recite blessings both before and after reading from the Torah, this is the reason that the Sages instituted this policy: It is a decree due to both those who enter the synagogue in middle of the reading and do not hear the first reader's initial blessing and due to those who leave the synagogue early and do not hear the final reader's concluding blessing, lest they come to the erroneous conclusion that one blessing suffices.

²⁶ We learned in the mishna: On the days of the New Moon and on the intermediate days of a Festival, four people read from the Torah. Ulla bar Rav raised a dilemma before Rava: The Torah portion read on the New Moon consists of three short consecutive paragraphs (Numbers 28:1–8, 9–10, 11–15). How does one read it in order to divide it among four readers? With regard to the first paragraph, which includes the verse: “Command the children of Israel and say to them, My offering, the provision of My sacrifices made by fire” (Numbers 28:2), and which is eight verses, what shall we do?

²⁷ If you say that the first two readers should read three verses each, there will remain only two more verses until the end of the paragraph, and one may not leave fewer than three verses before the end of a paragraph at the conclusion of a reading. If you say that the first two readers should read four verses each and complete the first paragraph, then seven verses will be left until the end of entire portion; the second paragraph of “And on Shabbat day” (Numbers 28:9) is two verses, and the third paragraph of “And on the beginnings of your months” (Numbers 28:11) is five verses. What shall we do with them? If the third reader reads the two verses from this paragraph and one of those verses in the following paragraph, this is improper due to the principle that

²⁸ one may not begin a new paragraph and read fewer than three verses from it. And if you say he should read two verses from this paragraph, i.e., the entire second paragraph, and then three verses from that final paragraph, only two verses will remain from the final paragraph. This is problematic because one may not conclude a reading with fewer than three verses left until the end of a paragraph and because the fourth reader will not have a sufficient number of verses to read.

²⁹ Rava said to him: I have not heard a solution for this problem from my teachers. However, with regard to a similar problem I heard a solution from them, as we learned in a mishna (Ta'anit 26a): On Sunday, the non-priestly watches would read two paragraphs from the Torah: “In the beginning” (Genesis 1:1–5) and “Let there be a firmament” (Genesis 1:6–8). And it is taught in that regard that the paragraph “In the beginning” was read by two readers and the paragraph “Let there be a firmament” by one reader.

³⁰ And we discussed this ruling and raised difficulties with it: Granted, the paragraph “Let there be a firmament” was read by one reader, as it consists of three verses. But how was the paragraph “In the beginning” read by two? It consists of only five verses, and it was taught in a mishna (23b): One who reads from the Torah should not read fewer than three verses.

³¹ And it was stated with regard to that mishna that the amora'im disagreed about how to divide the verses. Rav said: The second reader repeats the last verse that the first reader had recited, so that each of them reads three verses. And Shmuel said: The first reader divides the third verse and reads half of it, and the second reader begins with the second half of that verse, as though each half were its own verse.

³² The Gemara explains the opinions of Rav and Shmuel. Rav said that the second reader repeats the last verse that the first reader recited. What is the reason that he did not state that the first reader divides the third verse, in accordance with the opinion of Shmuel? The Gemara answers: He holds that any verse that Moses did not divide, we may not divide.

³³ The Gemara asks: Does Shmuel say that we may divide a verse into two parts? Didn't Rabbi Ḥananya Kara, the Bible expert, say: I had great distress with Rabbi Ḥanina the Great; there were many times I had to ask his permission to divide a verse, and he permitted me to divide it only for the benefit of schoolchildren, since they need to be taught in this manner, as it is difficult for children to learn long verses all at once? In other cases, however it is prohibited to divide a verse.

³⁴ The Gemara answers: There, in the case of schoolchildren, what is the reason that it is permitted to divide a verse? Because it is not possible to teach the children without doing so. Here, too, when a paragraph of five verses must be divided between two readers, it is not possible to divide them without dividing the middle verse.

³⁵ The Gemara now examines the opinion of Shmuel. And Shmuel said: The first reader divides the third verse and reads half of it. The Gemara asks: What is the reason that he did not state that the second reader repeats the last verse recited by the first reader, in accordance with the opinion of Rav? The Gemara answers: It is because of a rabbinic decree that was instituted due to those who enter and those who leave the synagogue between the readings. These individuals might erroneously conclude that since the reading they heard consisted of three verses, the reading they missed consisted of only two verses. Therefore, the middle verse is divided into two parts, so that all will realize that no reader recites only two verses.

³⁶ The Gemara raises an objection to the opinions of Rav and Shmuel from the following baraita: Two people may read a paragraph of six verses, but a paragraph of five verses may be read only by a single reader. If the first one read three verses, the second one reads the remaining two verses from this paragraph and then one verse from another, i.e., the following, paragraph. And some say that it does not suffice to read one verse from the next paragraph; rather, he must read three verses, as one may not begin a new paragraph and read fewer than three verses from it.

³⁷ And if it is so, if it is permissible to do as Rav and Shmuel suggested, according to the one who said that the second reader repeats a verse that the previous reader recited, i.e., Rav, let him repeat the verse in this case as well. And according to the one who said that the second reader divides the verse, i.e., Shmuel, let him divide the verse in this case as well.

³⁸ The Gemara answers: There, in the case of the baraita, it is different, as it is possible to solve the problem in this manner by reading additional verses. On the New Moon, however, the next paragraph deals with an entirely different subject, and consequently it cannot be included in the Torah reading. Therefore, Rav and Shmuel presented alternate solutions.

³⁹ With regard to the dispute cited in the baraita, Rabbi Tanḥum said that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion introduced by the phrase: Some say, which maintains that at least three verses must be read from the next paragraph. And furthermore, Rabbi Tanḥum said that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Just as one may not begin a new paragraph and read fewer than three verses from it, so too, one may not leave fewer than three verses before the end of a paragraph at the conclusion of a reading.

⁴⁰ The Gemara challenges this statement: This is obvious. Now, if with regard to the beginning of a paragraph, where the first tanna is lenient and holds that it is sufficient to read one verse from the next paragraph, the opinion introduced with the phrase: Some say, is stringent, then with regard to leaving verses at the end of a paragraph, where even the first tanna is stringent and holds that one may not conclude a reading with fewer than three verses remaining until the end of a paragraph, is it not all the more so obvious that the opinion introduced with: Some say, is stringent?

⁴¹ The Gemara answers: Lest you say: Entering in the middle of the Torah reading is common, and therefore one should not conclude a reading after having read fewer than three verses of a paragraph, but leaving in the middle of the Torah reading, whereby one abandons a Torah scroll and leaves, is not common, and therefore one may conclude a reading with fewer than three verses left in the paragraph, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi teaches us that the second opinion cited in the baraita is also concerned that people may leave in the middle of the Torah reading, and consequently one may not conclude a reading with fewer than three verses left in the paragraph.

⁴² The Gemara asks: And according to the first tanna, what is different about leaving fewer than three verses at the end of a paragraph, which is not permitted due to concern about those who leave the synagogue in the middle of the Torah reading? In the case of beginning a paragraph without reading at least three verses, he should also hold that there is a rabbinic decree due to those who enter, lest the latecomer think that the previous reader read fewer than three verses. The Gemara responds: Say in answer to this question that one who enters in the middle of the Torah reading asks how the Torah was read until then, and those present will explain to him that the reader started in the previous paragraph. Therefore, he will not erroneously think that the reader recited fewer than three verses.

⁴³ Rabba, son of Rava, sent a messenger to ask Rav Yosef: What is the halakha with regard to dividing a small Torah portion? Rav Yosef sent him the following answer: The halakha is that one repeats a verse, in accordance with the opinion of Rav, and it is the middle reader who repeats it, and not the last reader, so that it will not be necessary to leave fewer than three verses until the end of the paragraph.

⁴⁴ § We learned in the mishna: This is the principle: Any day on which there is an additional offering sacrificed in the Temple and that is not a Festival, four people read from the Torah. A dilemma was raised before the Sages: On a public fast, how many people read from the Torah? Does the mishna mean to say that only on the New Moon and the intermediate days of a Festival, when there is an additional offering, four people read; but here, on a public fast day, when there is no additional offering, no, only three people read? Or perhaps here, too, there is an additional prayer, as on public fast days the prayer: Aneinu, is inserted into the Amida prayer, and so too an additional reader is called to read from the Torah.

⁴⁵ The Gemara attempts to adduce a proof: Come and hear that which we learned in the mishna: On the days of the New Moon and on the intermediate days of a Festival, four people read from the Torah. Doesn't this indicate that on a public fast, only three people read? The Gemara responds: Say the first clause of the mishna: On Mondays and Thursdays during the morning service and on Shabbat during the afternoon service, three people read from the Torah. Doesn't this indicate that on a public fast, four people read from the Torah? Rather, it must be concluded that nothing can be

derived from this mishna with regard to a public fast day, as the mishna does not mean to indicate the halakha in every possible case.

⁴⁶ A different proof is now suggested. Come and hear the following incident: Rav once happened to come to Babylonia on a public fast. He stood and read from a Torah scroll. When he began to read, he recited a blessing, but when he concluded, he did not recite a blessing. Everyone else fell on their faces, i.e., bowed down on the floor, during the Taḥanun supplication, as was the custom, but Rav did not fall on his face.

⁴⁷ The Gemara attempts to clarify the halakha based upon Rav's conduct. Now, Rav must have read the portion that is designated for an Israelite, as he was neither a priest nor a Levite, and therefore he was the third person to read from the Torah. What, then, is the reason that when he concluded his reading he did not recite a blessing? Was it not because another person was to read after him, and since only the last reader recites a blessing, Rav did not recite a blessing upon completion of his portion? This would indicate that four readers are called to the Torah on public fasts.

⁴⁸ The Gemara rejects this proof: No, Rav read the first reading, which is generally designated for priests. He was the leading Torah authority of his generation, and one who holds this position is called to read from the Torah even before a priest, as Rav Huna would read the first reading, which is generally designated for priests, and Rav would do the same.

⁴⁹ The Gemara raises a difficulty: Granted, Rav Huna read the portion designated for priests, as even Rav Ami and Rav Asi, who were the most esteemed priests in Eretz Yisrael, were subordinate to Rav Huna, and he was considered the undisputed rabbinic leader of the Jewish people. However, in the case of Rav, there was Shmuel, who was a priest, and Rav had elevated him above himself, showing Shmuel deference in all matters of honor. Consequently, Rav was not the singular leader of his generation and would not have read the first reading in place of a priest.

⁵⁰ The Gemara answers: In fact, Shmuel was also subordinate to Rav, as Rav was indeed the leading authority in Babylonia, and it was Rav who showed Shmuel honor of his own volition, in order to appease him for having cursed him. And he did this only when Shmuel was in his presence, but when he was not in his presence, Rav did not do this, and therefore Rav would read first from the Torah when Shmuel was not present.

⁵¹ The Gemara comments: So too, it is reasonable to assume that Rav read first from the portion that is generally designated for priests, because if it enters your mind to say that he read third, from the portion designated for an ordinary Israelite, what is the reason he recited a blessing before reading his portion? Only the first reader recites a blessing before reading from the Torah. The Gemara rejects this argument: This incident took place after it was instituted that all those called to read from the Torah recite a blessing.

⁵² The Gemara asks: If so, he should also have recited a blessing after his reading, as the rabbinic enactment requires those who read from the Torah to recite blessings both before and after their reading. The Gemara answers: The reason that the Sages required all the readers to recite blessings both before and after their readings was to prevent misunderstandings on the part of both those who enter the synagogue in the middle of the reading and those who leave early. But it was different where Rav was present, as people would enter the synagogue in the middle of the reading,

⁵³ but they would not leave early, out of deference to Rav, and therefore it was not necessary for him to recite a blessing after he finished his portion. In any event, the incident with Rav does not provide conclusive proof as to the number of readers on a public fast day.

⁵⁴ The Gemara tries to adduce another proof: Come and hear the following baraita: This is the general principle: Any day on which labor is permitted and prolonging the prayer service would constitute a deprivation of labor for the masses, for example, a public fast day and the Ninth of Av, only three people read from the Torah, so as not to lengthen the prayer service unnecessarily.

⁵⁵ But any day on which prolonging the prayer service would not constitute a deprivation of labor for the masses, for example, the days of the New Moon, when it is customary for women to refrain from work, and on the intermediate days of a Festival, when one may not perform labor unless refraining from labor will cause him to lose money, four people read from the Torah. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, learn from here that on a public fast day three people read from the Torah.

⁵⁶ Rav Ashi said: Didn't we learn in the mishna as follows: This is the principle: Any day on which there is an additional offering sacrificed in the Temple and it is not a Festival, four people read from the Torah? What is added by the formulation of this principle? Does it not come to add a public fast and the Ninth of Av, when there is an addition to the prayer service, and therefore four people read from the Torah?

⁵⁷ The Gemara asks: But according to Rav Ashi, who is the tanna of the mishna? It is not the first tanna of the following baraita and not Rabbi Yosei. As it is taught in a baraita: If the Ninth of Av occurs on a Monday or a Thursday, days on which there is always a Torah reading, three people read from the Torah. And the last one of them concludes with a reading from the Prophets [haftara]. If it falls on a Tuesday or a Wednesday, one person reads from the Torah, and the same one concludes with a reading from the Prophets. Rabbi Yosei said: Three people always read from the Torah on the Ninth of Av, and the last one concludes with a reading from the Prophets. All agree that no more than three people read from the Torah on the Ninth of Av and other public fast days.

⁵⁸ The Gemara responds: However, if only three people read from the Torah on these days, the statement: This is the principle, is difficult, as the mishna has already specifically mentioned every case included in the principle. The Gemara explains: No, it is not difficult; it comes to add the New Moon and the intermediate days of a Festival.

⁵⁹ The Gemara challenges this explanation: Aren't these days taught explicitly in the mishna: On the New Moon and on the intermediate days of a Festival, four people read from the Torah?

⁶⁰ The Gemara answers: The principle was not intended to add to what is stated explicitly in the mishna. The mishna merely gives a mnemonic by which to remember the number of readers on each day. It expresses the following: Do not say that a Festival and the intermediate days of the Festival are the same with regard to their sanctity, and therefore the same numbers of readers are called to the Torah on these days. Rather, hold this rule firmly in your hand: On any day when there is an additional element of the laws of the day, an extra person is added to the number of those who read from the Torah.

⁶¹ Therefore, on the New Moon and the intermediate days of a Festival, when there is an additional offering, four people read from the Torah. On a Festival, when it is prohibited to perform labor, five people read from the Torah. On Yom Kippur, when performance of prohibited labor is punishable by

karet, six people read from the Torah. On Shabbat, when there is a prohibition to perform labor that is punishable by stoning, seven people read.

⁶² The Gemara cited an incident involving Rav, and now it returns to examine the matter itself. Rav once happened to come to Babylonia on a public fast. He stood and read from a Torah scroll. When he began to read, he recited a blessing, but when he concluded, he did not recite a blessing. Everyone else fell on their faces, i.e., bowed down on the floor, during the *taḥanun* supplication, as was the custom, but Rav did not fall on his face. The Gemara asks: What is the reason that Rav did not fall on his face?

⁶³ The Gemara answers: It was a stone floor, and it was taught in a baraita with regard to the verse: “Nor shall you install any figured stone in your land, to bow down upon it” (Leviticus 26:1), that, upon it, i.e., any type of figured stone, you shall not bow down in your land, i.e., anywhere in your land other than in the Temple; but you shall bow down upon the stones of the Temple. This is in accordance with the opinion of Ulla, as Ulla said: The Torah prohibited bowing down only upon a stone floor.

⁶⁴ The Gemara asks: If so, why was it specifically Rav who did not bow down? All of the other people present were also prohibited from bowing down on the stone floor. The Gemara answers: The stone section of the floor was only in front of Rav, as the rest of the floor was not paved.

⁶⁵ The Gemara comments: If so, Rav should have gone to where the rest of the congregation was standing and fallen on his face there. The Gemara responds: He did not want to trouble the congregation to make room for him. And if you wish, say the following: Rav would stretch out his arms and legs and fully prostrate himself on the ground, whereas the others would merely bend their bodies as a symbolic gesture but would not prostrate themselves on the ground. And this is in accordance with the opinion of Ulla, as Ulla said: The Torah prohibited bowing down upon a stone floor only when it is done with outstretched arms and legs.

⁶⁶ The Gemara challenges this response: Rav should have fallen on his face without stretching out his arms and legs. The Gemara answers: He did not want to change his usual custom of full prostration, and where he was standing he could not fully prostrate himself in his usual manner because there the floor was of stone.

⁶⁷ And if you wish, say a different reason as to why Rav did not fall on his face: An important person is different, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Elazar, as Rabbi Elazar said: An important person is not permitted to fall on his face in public unless he knows that he will be answered like Joshua bin Nun in his time, as it is written: “And the Lord said to Joshua: Get up; why do you lie upon your face?” (Joshua 7:10). It is a disgrace for a distinguished person to fall on his face and have his prayers unanswered. Consequently, Rav did not prostrate himself in public.

⁶⁸ Apropos Rav’s practice of prostrating himself, the Gemara continues with a discussion of different forms of bowing. The Sages taught in a baraita: The term *kidda* indicates falling upon one’s face, with one’s face toward the ground, as it is stated: “Then Bathsheba bowed [*vatikod*] with her face to the ground” (I Kings 1:31). *Keria* means bowing upon one’s knees, as it is stated with regard to Solomon: He finished praying and “he rose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling [*mikkeroa*] upon his knees” (I Kings 8:54). Finally, *hishtaḥava’a*, that is bowing with one’s arms and legs spread in total submission, as it is stated that Jacob asked, in response to Joseph’s dream: “Shall

I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down [lehishtaḥavot] to you to the ground?” (Genesis 37:10).

⁶⁹ The Gemara relates that Levi once demonstrated the form of kidda that was performed by the High Priest before Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. This bowing was especially difficult, as it involved bending from the waist until his head reached the ground, supporting his body with his thumbs, and then rising at once. In the course of his demonstration, Levi dislocated his hip and became lame.

⁷⁰ The Gemara asks: Was it this that caused Levi to become lame? Didn't Rabbi Elazar say: A person should never speak impertinently toward God on High, as a great man once spoke impertinently toward God on High and he became lame? And who was he? Levi. The reason Levi became lame was because of the way he spoke to God (see Ta'anit 25a), not due to having performed kidda. The Gemara answers: Both this and that caused Levi to become lame. Since he spoke impertinently toward God, he was worthy of punishment, and he therefore suffered an injury while exerting himself to perform kidda.

⁷¹ On the topic of bowing, Rav Ḥiyya bar Avin said: I saw Abaye

⁷² and Rava, who would bend their heads and not actually prostrate themselves on the ground.

⁷³ We learned in the mishna: On a Festival, five people read; on Yom Kippur, six people read; and on Shabbat, seven people read. One may not decrease the number of readers, but one may add to them. The Gemara asks: Who is the tanna of the mishna? It is not Rabbi Yishmael and not Rabbi Akiva, as it is taught in a baraita: On a Festival, five people read from the Torah; and on Yom Kippur, six people read; and on Shabbat, seven people read. One may not decrease or add to the required number of readers. This is the statement of Rabbi Yishmael. Rabbi Akiva disagrees and says: On a Festival, five people read from the Torah; and on Yom Kippur, seven people read; and on Shabbat, six people read. One may not decrease these numbers, but one may add to them.

⁷⁴ Who is the tanna of the mishna? If you say it is Rabbi Yishmael, it is difficult due to the ruling with regard to adding, as the mishna states that one may add additional readers but Rabbi Yishmael holds that one may not do so. If you say it is Rabbi Akiva, it is difficult due to the ruling concerning the days on which there are six and seven readers.

⁷⁵ Rava said: It is the tanna of the school of Rabbi Yishmael, as it was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael: On a Festival, five people read from the Torah; on Yom Kippur, six people read; on Shabbat, seven people read. One may not decrease these numbers but one may add to them. This is the statement of Rabbi Yishmael.

⁷⁶ The Gemara comments: If so, there is a contradiction between the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael, as expressed in the mishna, and the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael himself, as recorded in the baraita. The Gemara responds: Two tanna'im, students of Rabbi Yishmael, expressed different opinions in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael.

⁷⁷ The Gemara asks: Who is the tanna who taught that which is taught in a baraita: On a Festival, one is slow to arrive at the synagogue because one is busy preparing for the festive meal, and one is quick to leave in order to eat; on Yom Kippur, one is quick to arrive at the synagogue and slow to leave; and on Shabbat, one is quick to arrive, as the meal has been prepared before Shabbat, and quick to leave in order to eat the Shabbat meal? Let us say it is Rabbi Akiva, who holds that an additional man reads from the Torah on Yom Kippur, which prolongs the service on that day. The

Gemara rejects this suggestion: Even if you say it is Rabbi Yishmael, one leaves the synagogue late because the order of the day, i.e., the prayer service, is very long, as it includes many supplications and confessions.

⁷⁸ A question is raised with regard to the number of readers on different days. Corresponding to what were these three, five, and seven, readers instituted? Rabbi Yitzhak bar Nahmani and one other Sage who was with him disagree about this. And who was that other scholar? Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi. And some say that this was a matter of dispute between Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi and one other scholar who was with him. And who was that other scholar? Rabbi Yitzhak bar Nahmani, and some say it was Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani. One said: These numbers correspond to the number of Hebrew words in the three verses of the Priestly Benediction. And one said: These numbers correspond to the three guards of the door (II Kings 25:18), five of the officers who saw the king's face (II Kings 25:19), and the seven officers who saw the king's face (Esther 1:14).

⁷⁹ Similarly, Rav Yosef taught a baraita: The three, five, and seven people who read from the Torah correspond to the three guards of the door, five of the officers who saw the king's face, and the seven officers who saw the king's face. When Rav Yosef taught this, Abaye said to him: What is the reason that until now the Master did not explain the matter to us in this way? Rav Yosef said to him: I did not know that you needed this information, as I thought that you were already familiar with the baraita. Have you ever asked me something and I did not tell you?

⁸⁰ Ya'akov of Mina said to Rav Yehuda: Corresponding to whom were these six readers on Yom Kippur instituted? Rav Yehuda said to him: The number six corresponds to the six people who stood to Ezra's right and the six people who stood to his left, as it is stated: "And Ezra the Scribe stood upon a platform of wood, which they had made for the purpose, and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Uriah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand, and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadanah, Zechariah, Meshullam" (Nehemiah 8:4).

⁸¹ The Gemara challenges this answer: Those that stood to his left were seven and not six. The Gemara responds: Zechariah is the same as Meshullam, that is to say, they are not two separate people, but rather one person with two names. And why was he called Meshullam? Because he was perfect [mishlam] in his actions.

⁸² § The Sages taught in a Tosefta (Megilla 3:11): All people count toward the quorum of seven readers, even a minor and even a woman. However, the Sages said that a woman should not read the Torah, out of respect for the congregation.

⁸³ A dilemma was raised before the Sages: With regard to the reader who concludes [maftir] the Torah reading and reads from the Prophets [haftara], what is the halakha; does he count toward the quorum of seven readers? Rav Huna and Rabbi Yirmeya bar Abba disagreed about this matter. One said: He counts, and one said: He does not count. The one who said that he counts toward the seven readers holds that opinion because he reads from the Torah.

⁸⁴ And the one who said that he does not count holds in accordance with the opinion of Ulla, as Ulla said: For what reason must the one who concludes with a reading from the Prophets read from the Torah first? It is due to respect for the Torah, so that those present should not conclude that he was called up only to read from the Prophets because the honor due the Torah and the honor due the

Prophets are equal. And since he reads only out of respect for the Torah, he is not included in the quorum of seven readers.

⁸⁵ The Gemara raises an objection based upon the following baraita: The one who concludes with a reading from the Prophets may not read fewer than twenty-one verses, corresponding to the seven who read from the Torah. Each one who reads from the Torah must read at least three verses, for a total of at least twenty-one verses. And if it is so, that the one who reads the haftara does not count toward the quorum of seven readers, and he is an eighth reader, the minimum number of verses that must be read from the Torah is twenty-four and not twenty-one. The Gemara answers: Since the one who reads the haftara reads from the Torah first only due to respect for the Torah,

⁸⁶ it is not necessary to also add corresponding verses in the haftara.

⁸⁷ Rava strongly objects to this baraita: But there is the haftara that begins with the words: “Add your burnt offerings” (Jeremiah 7:21–28), which does not have twenty-one verses, and nevertheless we read it. The Gemara answers: There it is different, as the topic is completed in fewer than twenty-one verses, and it is not necessary to begin another topic merely to complete the number of verses.

⁸⁸ The Gemara asks: But is it true that where the topic is not completed, we do not read fewer than twenty-one verses? Didn’t Rav Shmuel bar Abba say: Many times I stood before Rabbi Yoḥanan as a translator, and when we had read ten verses he would say to us: Stop. This indicates that a haftara need not be twenty-one verses. The Gemara answers: In a place where there is a translator, who translates each verse into Aramaic and adds additional explanation, it is different. In that case, it is not necessary for the haftara to consist of twenty-one verses, so as not to overburden the congregation, as Rav Taḥalisa bar Shmuel taught: They taught that twenty-one verses must be read from the haftara only in a place where there is no translator; but in a place where there is a translator, one may stop even before that.

⁸⁹ MISHNA: One does not recite the introductory prayers and blessing [poresin] before Shema; nor does one pass before the ark to repeat the Amida prayer; nor do the priests lift their hands to recite the Priestly Benediction; nor is the Torah read in public; nor does one conclude with a reading from the Prophets [haftara] in the presence of fewer than ten men.

⁹⁰ And one does not observe the practice of standing up and sitting down for the delivery of eulogies at a funeral service; nor does one recite the mourners’ blessing or comfort mourners in two lines after the funeral; or recite the bridegrooms’ blessing; and one does not invite others to recite Grace after Meals, i.e., conduct a zimmun, with the name of God, with fewer than ten men present. If one consecrated land and now wishes to redeem it, the land must be assessed by nine men and one priest, for a total of ten. And similarly, assessing the value of a person who has pledged his own value to the Temple must be undertaken by ten people, one of whom must be a priest.

⁹¹ GEMARA: The Gemara asks: From where are these matters, i.e., that ten people are needed in each of these cases, derived? Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: It is as the verse states: “And I shall be hallowed among the children of Israel” (Leviticus 22:32), which indicates that any expression of sanctity may not be recited in a quorum of fewer than ten men.

⁹² The Gemara asks: From where in the verse may this be inferred? The Gemara responds that it must be understood as Rabbi Ḥiyya taught: It is inferred by means of a verbal analogy [gezera shava] between the words “among,” “among.” Here, it is written: “And I shall be hallowed among the

children of Israel,” and there, with regard to Korah’s congregation, it is written “Separate yourselves from among this congregation” (Numbers 16:21). Just as with regard to Korah the reference is to ten men, so too, the name of God is to be hallowed in a quorum of ten men.

⁹³ The connotation of ten associated with the word “among” in the portion of Korah is, in turn, inferred by means of another verbal analogy between the word “congregation” written there and the word “congregation” written in reference to the ten spies who slandered Eretz Yisrael, as it is written there: “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation?” (Numbers 14:27). Consequently, just as there, in the case of the spies, it was a congregation of ten people, as there were twelve spies altogether, and Joshua and Caleb were not included in the evil congregation, so too, here, in the case of Korah, the reference is to a congregation of ten people. The first several items mentioned in the mishna are expressions of sanctity, and they consequently require a quorum of ten.

⁹⁴ § We learned in the mishna: And one does not observe the practice of standing up and sitting down for the delivery of eulogies at a funeral service with fewer than ten men present. As this is not an expression of sanctity, it is therefore necessary to explain why a quorum is required. The Gemara explains: Since the leader of the funeral procession is required to say: Stand, dear friends, stand; sit down, dear friends, sit down, when there are fewer than ten it is not proper conduct to speak in such a dignified style.

⁹⁵ We also learned in the mishna that one does not recite the mourners’ blessing and the bridegrooms’ blessing with fewer than ten men present. The Gemara asks: What is the mourners’ blessing? The blessing recited in the square next to the cemetery. Following the burial, those who participated in the funeral would assemble in the square and bless the mourners that God should comfort them, as Rabbi Yitzḥak said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The mourners’ blessing is recited only with ten men present, and mourners themselves are not included in the count. The bridegrooms’ blessing is also recited only with ten men present, and bridegrooms themselves are included in the count. Consequently, only nine other men are needed.

⁹⁶ We learned further in the mishna: And one does not invite others to recite Grace after Meals, i.e., conduct a zimmun, in order to thank God for one’s nourishment, with the name of God, with fewer than ten men present. Since one is required to say: Let us bless our Lord, in the presence of fewer than ten it is not proper conduct to mention the name of God.

⁹⁷ § If one consecrated land and now wishes to redeem it, the land must be assessed by nine Israelites and one priest, for a total of ten. And similarly, assessing the value of a person who has pledged his own value to the Temple must be undertaken by ten people, one of whom must be a priest. The Gemara asks: From where are these matters, that consecrated land must be assessed by ten people, one of whom is a priest, derived?

⁹⁸ Shmuel said: The word priest is written ten times in the Torah portion that addresses the redemption of consecrated property, indicating that ten people are required to assess the value of such property (Leviticus, chapter 27). One instance of the word is needed for itself, to indicate that a priest must participate in the assessment. And one instance is needed to exclude all non-priests from fulfilling that role. And all the other instances of the word are restrictions following other restrictions, and there is a general hermeneutical principle that one restriction after another serves only to amplify. Therefore, each additional time the word priest is repeated, it extends the criteria applied to

appraisers, so as to allow non-priests to participate. Consequently, the assessment may be carried out by nine ordinary Israelites and one priest.

⁹⁹ The Gemara asks: And on the basis of this principle, say that the first usage of the term is restrictive and requires a priest for the assessment; the second usage amplifies and allows for a non-priest; the third usage again requires a priest; the fourth usage allows for a non-priest; and so on. Consequently, the assessment must be carried out by five priests and five ordinary Israelites. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, it is difficult, as the derivation has not been sufficiently explained.

¹⁰⁰ We learned in the mishna: And similarly, assessing the value of a person who has pledged his own value to the Temple must be undertaken by ten people, one of whom must be a priest. The Gemara asks: Can a person become consecrated and thereby require redemption?

¹⁰¹ Rabbi Abbahu said: The mishna is referring to one who says: My assessment is incumbent upon me, and thereby pledges to donate a sum of money equivalent to his own monetary value to the Temple treasury, as it is taught in a baraita: With regard to one who says: My assessment is incumbent upon me, the court assesses him as though he were a slave in order to determine the amount he is obligated to donate to the Temple treasury. And a slave is compared to land, as it is written with regard to slaves: “And you shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession” (Leviticus 25:46). Consequently, the same criteria that apply to assessing consecrated land apply to assessing the monetary value of an individual.

¹⁰² MISHNA: One who reads from the Torah in the synagogue should not read fewer than three verses. And when it is being translated, he should not read to the translator more than one verse at a time, so that the translator will not become confused.

¹⁰³ And with regard to the Prophets, one may read to the translator three verses at a time. With respect to the Torah, an incorrect translation might lead to an error in practice, but this concern does not apply to the Prophets. If the three verses constitute three separate paragraphs, that is to say, if each verse is a paragraph in itself, one must read them to the translator one by one.

¹⁰⁴ One may skip from one place to another while reading the Prophets, but one may not skip from one place to another while reading the Torah. How far may he skip? As far as he can, provided that the translator will not conclude his translation while the reader is still rolling the scroll to the new location. The reader may not cause the congregation to wait for him after the translator has finished, as that would be disrespectful to the congregation.

¹⁰⁵ GEMARA: The Gemara asks: Corresponding to what were these three verses, i.e., the minimal Torah reading, instituted? Rav Asi said: They correspond to the Torah, Prophets, and Writings.

¹⁰⁶ We learned in the mishna: And when it is being translated, one should not read to the translator more than one verse at a time. And with regard to the Prophets, he may read to the translator three verses at a time. If the three verses constitute three separate paragraphs, he must read them to the translator separately, for example, the verses: “For thus says the Lord, You were sold for naught” (Isaiah 52:3); “For thus says the Lord God, at first My people went down to Egypt” (Isaiah 52:4); “Now therefore what have I here, says the Lord” (Isaiah 52:5). These are three adjacent verses, each one constituting an independent paragraph.

¹⁰⁷ § We learned further in the mishna: One may skip from one place to another while reading the Prophets, but one may not skip from one place to another while reading the Torah. The Gemara raises

a contradiction from a mishna (Yoma 68b): On Yom Kippur, the High Priest reads the section beginning with the verse: “After the death” (Leviticus 16:1), and then he reads the section beginning with the verse: “Only on the tenth day” (Leviticus 23:27). Doesn’t he skip from the first section to the second section?

¹⁰⁸ Abaye said: This is not difficult. Here, where it says that one may not skip in the Torah, the translator will conclude his translation before the reader is ready to continue reading. There, where it is permitted to skip, the translator will not conclude his translation before the reader is ready to continue reading.

¹⁰⁹ The Gemara asks: Wasn’t it taught in the mishna with regard to that issue: One may skip while reading the Prophets, but one may not skip while reading the Torah. How far may he skip? As far as he can, provided that the translator will not conclude his translation before the reader is ready to continue reading. This applies to reading the Prophets; it therefore proves by inference that while reading the Torah one may not skip at all.

¹¹⁰ Rather, Abaye said it is not difficult for a different reason: Here, where it says that the High Priest skipped from one section to another, it was permitted because the two sections address one topic. There, where the mishna says one may not skip while reading the Torah, it is where the two sections address two distinct topics. And so it is explicitly taught in a baraita: One may skip from one section to another while reading the Torah if the two sections address one topic, and in the Prophets one may skip even if the two sections address two distinct topics. Both here and there, with regard to the Torah and the Prophets, one may skip only if the translator will not conclude his translation before the reader is ready to continue reading.

¹¹¹ It is taught in another baraita: One may not skip from prophet to prophet, i.e., from one book of Prophets to another, even if the selections address the same topic. However, one may skip from one prophet to another among the twelve books of Prophets, which are grouped together, provided that he does not skip from the end of the book to the beginning, i.e., that he does not read a later section and then an earlier section.

¹¹² MISHNA: The one who concludes with a reading from the Prophets [haftara] is also the one who is honored to recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema, and he passes before the ark to repeat the Amida prayer, and if he is a priest he lifts his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. And if the one who reads the haftara is a minor, who may read the haftara but is not qualified to lead the congregation in prayer, his father or teacher is honored to pass before the ark in his place.

¹¹³ A minor may read the Torah in public and also translate the text for the congregation into Aramaic, but he may not recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema, and he may not pass before the ark to lead the congregation in prayer, and he may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction.

¹¹⁴ One whose limbs are exposed [poḥe’aḥ] may recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema and translate the Torah reading into Aramaic, but he may not read from the Torah out of respect for the Torah; he may not pass before the ark to lead the congregation in prayer; and he may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction out of respect for the congregation.

¹¹⁵ One who is blind may recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema, and he may also translate the Torah reading into Aramaic. Rabbi Yehuda says: Anyone who has not seen the

luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars, in his life, i.e., he was blind from birth, may not recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema. The first of the blessings before Shema is the blessing over the luminaries, and one who has never seen them cannot recite the blessing at all.

¹¹⁶ GEMARA: The Gemara asks: What is the reason that the one who reads the haftara is honored with these other roles? Rav Pappa said: It is due to a desire to grant him honor. Since even minors are qualified to read the haftara, it was considered an insult for a person to be called up to read the haftara rather than be called up as one of those needed to read the Torah. Since he was willing to serve in this role, he is granted other, more honorable roles in the synagogue. Rabba bar Shimi said a different reason: It is due to a concern that they will come to quarrel, as the individual who read the haftara will quarrel with the individual honored to lead the congregation in prayer.

¹¹⁷ The Gemara asks: What is the practical difference between them? The Gemara explains: There is a practical difference between them where the one who passes before the ark does so free of charge. In that case, there is still a need to grant the one who read the haftara honor, but it is not likely that they will quarrel.

¹¹⁸ We learned in the mishna: And if the one who reads the haftara is a minor, his father or teacher is honored to pass before the ark in his place. If you say that the reason the reader of the haftara passes before the ark is due to a concern that they will quarrel, will a minor engage in quarreling? He has no valid claim to the right to pass before the ark. Consequently, the concern for strife must not be the reason for the halakha stated in the mishna.

¹¹⁹ The Gemara rejects this argument: Rather, what is the reason; is it due to honor? Does a minor have honor that is slighted when he reads the haftara and therefore must be assuaged? Rather, according to Rav Pappa it is a display of honor to his father and his teacher.

¹²⁰ Here, also, according to Rabba bar Shimi, it is to prevent his father or teacher from quarreling.

¹²¹ § We learned in the mishna: One whose limbs are exposed [poḥe'aḥ] may recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema and translate the Torah reading into Aramaic, but he may not read from the Torah. Ulla bar Rav raised a dilemma before Abaye: What is the halakha with regard to whether a minor whose limbs are exposed may read from the Torah? Can it be argued that a minor's bare limbs do not fall under the category of nakedness, and therefore it is permitted for him to read the Torah despite the fact that parts of his body are exposed?

¹²² Abaye said to him: And according to this reasoning, raise the dilemma with regard to a minor who is totally naked. What is the reason that a minor who is naked may not read the Torah? It is due to respect for the public. Here, too, a poḥe'aḥ may not read from the Torah due to respect for the public.

¹²³ The mishna continues: One who is blind may recite the introductory prayers and blessing before Shema, and he may also translate the Torah reading into Aramaic. Rabbi Yehuda says: Anyone who has not seen the luminaries in his life may not recite the first of the blessings before Shema, which is the blessing over the luminaries. It is taught in a baraita that they said to Rabbi Yehuda: Many have seen enough with their mind to expound upon the Divine Chariot, although they have never actually seen it. Similarly, even one who has never seen the luminaries may recite the blessing.

¹²⁴ And how does Rabbi Yehuda counter this argument? He can say that there, with regard to the Chariot, the matter depends upon the heart's comprehension, and one can concentrate his mind and

understand the Chariot even if he has never actually seen it. But here, with regard to the luminaries, the blessing is recited due to the benefit one derives from them, and one who is blind does not derive any benefit from them, and therefore he may not recite a blessing over them.

¹²⁵ And the Rabbis maintain that even a blind man derives benefit from the luminaries, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, as it is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yosei said: All of my life I was troubled by this verse, which I did not understand: “And you shall grope at noon as the blind man gropes in the darkness” (Deuteronomy 28:29). I was perplexed: What does it matter to a blind person whether it is dark or light? He cannot see in any event, so why does the verse speak about a blind man in the darkness?

¹²⁶ I continued to ponder the matter until the following incident occurred to me. I was once walking in the absolute darkness of the night, and I saw a blind man who was walking on his way with a torch in his hands. I said to him: My son, why do you need this torch if you are blind? He said to me: As long as I have a torch in my hand, people see me and save me from the pits and the thorns and the thistles. Even a blind man derives at least indirect benefit from the light, and therefore he may recite the blessing over the heavenly luminaries.

¹²⁷ MISHNA: A priest who has blemishes on his hands may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. Because of his blemish, people will look at his hands, and it is prohibited to look at the hands of the priests during the Priestly Benediction. Rabbi Yehuda says: Even one whose hands were colored with *satis*, a blue dye, may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction because the congregation will look at him.

¹²⁸ GEMARA: It is taught in a baraita: The blemishes that the Sages said disqualify a priest from reciting the Priestly Benediction include any blemishes found on his face, hands, and feet, but not blemishes that are not visible to others. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: If his hands are spotted with white blotches, he may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. The Gemara notes that this is also taught in a baraita: If a priest’s hands are spotted, he may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. Similarly, if his hands are curved inward or bent sideways, he may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction.

¹²⁹ Apropos the previous discussion, Rav Asi said: A priest from Haifa or Beit She’an may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction, as he does not know how to properly pronounce the guttural letters. This is also taught in a baraita: One may not allow the people of Beit She’an, nor the people of Beit Haifa, nor the people of Tivonin to pass before the ark in order to lead the service because they pronounce *ales* as *ayin* and *ayin* as *ales*, and they thereby distort the meaning of the prayers.

¹³⁰ The Gemara relates that Rabbi Ḥiyya once said to Rabbi Shimon, son of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi: If you were a Levite, you would be disqualified from singing on the platform in the Temple courtyard because your voice is thick. Offended by this remark, Rabbi Shimon went and told his father, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, what Rabbi Ḥiyya had said. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said to him: Go and say to him: When you study and reach the verse: “And I will wait upon [veḥikkiti] the Lord” (Isaiah 8:17), will you not be a maligner and a blasphemer? Rabbi Ḥiyya, who was from Babylonia, was unable to differentiate between the letters *het* and *heh*, and he would therefore pronounce the word *veḥikkiti* as *vehikkiti*, which means: And I will strike.

¹³¹ Rav Huna said: A priest whose eyes constantly run with tears may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. The Gemara asks: Wasn't there a certain priest with this condition in the neighborhood of Rav Huna, and he would spread his hands and recite the Priestly Benediction? The Gemara answers: That priest was a familiar figure in his town. Since the other residents were accustomed to seeing him, he would not draw their attention during the Priestly Benediction. This is also taught in a baraita: One whose eyes run should not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction, but if he is a familiar figure in his town, he is permitted to do so.

¹³² Rabbi Yoḥanan said: One who is blind in one eye may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction because people will gaze at him. The Gemara asks: Wasn't there a certain priest who was blind in one eye in the neighborhood of Rabbi Yoḥanan, and he would lift his hands and recite the Priestly Benediction? The Gemara answers: That priest was a familiar figure in his town, and therefore he would not attract attention during the Priestly Benediction. This is also taught in a baraita: One who is blind in one eye may not lift his hands and recite the Priestly Benediction, but if he is a familiar figure in his town, he is permitted to do so.

¹³³ We learned in the mishna that Rabbi Yehuda said: One whose hands are colored should not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction. It was taught in a baraita: If most of the townspeople are engaged in this occupation, dyeing, he is permitted to recite the Priestly Benediction, as the congregation will not pay attention to his stained hands.

¹³⁴ MISHNA: One who says: I will not pass before the ark to lead the prayer service in colored garments, may not pass before the ark to lead the prayer service even in white garments. There is concern that one who insists on wearing clothing of a specific color during his prayers is a heretic and therefore unfit to lead the service. Similarly, if one says: I will not pass before the ark wearing sandals, he may not pass before it even barefoot, as he is not acting in accordance with the teachings of the Sages.

¹³⁵ One who constructs his phylacteries in a round shape exposes himself to danger during times of persecution, when foreign governments impose a ban on the mitzva of phylacteries, and yet he does not fulfill the mitzva to don phylacteries, as phylacteries must be square. If one placed the phylacteries worn on the head on his forehead, and not in its proper place above his hairline, or if he placed the phylacteries worn on the arm on his palm, and not on his biceps, this is the way of the heretics, i.e., those who reject the tradition of the Sages with regard to the proper placement of the phylacteries. If one plated his phylacteries with gold or placed the phylacteries worn on the arm on the outside of his sleeve [unkeli], this is the way of the outsiders, i.e., those who do not take part in the traditions of the Jewish people.

¹³⁶ GEMARA: What is the reason that one who wishes to pray only with white clothes or barefoot is not permitted to lead the prayer? We are concerned that perhaps he has been imbued with heresy, as these are the practices of idolaters. He is therefore barred from leading the service.

¹³⁷ We learned in the mishna: One who constructs his phylacteries in a round shape exposes himself to danger and does not fulfill the mitzva to don phylacteries. The Gemara comments: Let us say that we already learned in this mishna that which the Sages taught in a baraita: The requirement that phylacteries must be square is a halakha transmitted to Moses from Sinai. And Rava said about this: Square means along their seams and their diagonals [alakhsonan], i.e., they must be perfectly square.

It would seem that all this was already stated in the mishna, which says that round phylacteries are disqualified.

¹³⁸ Rav Pappa said: It is possible to understand that the mishna is referring to phylacteries that one constructed to be round like a nut, i.e., in the shape of a ball. However, the mishna does not indicate that the phylacteries must be square, as it does not address the case of phylacteries that are rounded but not a true sphere.

¹³⁹ MISHNA: If one says in his prayers:

¹⁴⁰ May the good bless You, this is a path of heresy, as heretics divide the world into two domains, good and evil. If one says the following in his prayers: Just as Your mercy is extended to a bird's nest, as You have commanded us to send away the mother before taking her chicks or eggs (see Deuteronomy 22:6–7), so too extend Your mercy to us; or: May Your name be mentioned with the good; or: We give thanks, we give thanks, twice, he is suspected of heretical beliefs and they silence him.

¹⁴¹ If one modifies the text while reading the laws of forbidden sexual relations, i.e., he introduces euphemisms out of a sense of propriety, they silence him. Similarly, if one says while translating the verse: “And you shall not give any of your seed to set them apart to Molekh” (Leviticus 18:21): And you shall not give any of your seed to impregnate an Aramean woman, he is silenced with rebuke.

¹⁴² GEMARA: The mishna cites three instances where the communal prayer leader is silenced. The Gemara clarifies: Granted, they silence one who repeats: We give thanks, we give thanks, as it appears like he is acknowledging and praying to two authorities. And, granted, they also silence one who says: May Your name be mentioned with the good, as this formulation indicates one is thanking God only for the good and not for the bad, and we learned in a mishna (Berakhot 54a): One is obligated to bless God for the bad just as he blesses Him for the good. However, in the case of one who recites: Just as Your mercy is extended to a bird's nest, what is the reason that they silence him?

¹⁴³ Two amora'im in the West, Eretz Yisrael, disagree about this question, Rabbi Yosei bar Avin and Rabbi Yosei bar Zevida. One said that this was because one who says this engenders jealousy among God's creations, as it appears as though he is indicating that God favored one creature over all others. And one said that saying this is prohibited because one transforms the attributes of the Holy One, Blessed be He, into expressions of mercy, and they are nothing but decrees of the King that must be fulfilled without inquiring into the reasons behind them.

¹⁴⁴ The Gemara relates that a particular individual descended before the ark as prayer leader in the presence of Rabba, and said in his prayers: You have shown mercy to birds, as expressed through the mitzva to chase away the mother bird before taking eggs from its nest; have mercy and pity upon us. You have shown mercy to animals, as expressed through the prohibition against slaughtering an animal and its offspring on the same day; have mercy and pity upon us. Rabba said: How much does this rabbi know to appease the Lord, his Master! Abaye said to him: Didn't we learn in the mishna that they silence him?

¹⁴⁵ The Gemara explains: And Rabba, too, held in accordance with this mishna but merely acted this way because he wanted to hone Abaye's intellect. Rabba did not make his statement to praise the rabbi, but simply to test his nephew and student, Abaye, and to encourage him to articulate what he knows about the mishna.

¹⁴⁶ With regard to additions to prayers formulated by the Sages, the Gemara relates that a particular individual descended before the ark as prayer leader in the presence of Rabbi Ḥanina. He extended his prayer and said: God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome, the powerful, and the strong, and the fearless.

¹⁴⁷ When he finished, Rabbi Ḥanina said to him: Have you concluded all of the praises of your Master? Even these three praises that we recite: The great, the mighty, and the awesome, had Moses our teacher not written them in the Torah (Deuteronomy 10:17), and had the members of the Great Assembly not come and incorporated them into the Amida prayer (see Nehemiah 9:32), we would not be permitted to recite them. And you went on and recited all of these. It is comparable to a man who possessed many thousands of golden dinars, yet they were praising him for owning a thousand silver ones. Isn't that deprecatory toward him? All of the praises one can lavish upon the Lord are nothing but a few silver dinars relative to many thousands of gold dinars. Reciting a litany of praise does not enhance God's honor.

¹⁴⁸ Tangentially, the Gemara cites an additional statement by Rabbi Ḥanina, concerning principles of faith. Rabbi Ḥanina said: Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for fear of Heaven. Man has free will to serve God or not, as it is stated: "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you other than to fear the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 10:12). The fact that God asks man to fear Him indicates that it is in man's ability to do so.

¹⁴⁹ The Gemara notes: This proves by inference that fear of Heaven is a minor matter, as the verse is formulated as though God is not asking anything significant. Can it in fact be maintained that fear of Heaven is a minor matter? The Gemara responds: Indeed, for Moses our teacher, fear of Heaven is a minor matter. It is comparable to one who is asked for a large vessel and he has one; it seems to him like a small vessel because he owns it. However, one who is asked for just a small vessel and he does not have one, it seems to him like a large vessel. Therefore, Moses could say: What does the Lord your God ask of you other than to fear, because in his eyes it was a minor matter.

¹⁵⁰ Rabbi Zeira said: One who repeats himself while reciting Shema and says: Listen Israel, listen Israel, is like one who says: We give thanks, we give thanks.

¹⁵¹ The Gemara raises an objection: It was taught in a baraita: One who recites Shema and repeats it, it is reprehensible. One may infer: It is reprehensible, but they do not silence him. The Gemara answers: This is not difficult. This case, where one repeats Shema and it is reprehensible but they do not silence him, is referring to one who recites and repeats each individual word. In so doing, he ruins the recitation of Shema. However, that case, where Rabbi Zeira holds that they silence one who repeats Shema, is referring to one who recites and repeats an entire verse, as it appears that he is worshipping separate authorities.

¹⁵² Rav Pappa said to Rava with regard to this halakha: And perhaps initially he did not focus his attention on the recitation of Shema and therefore had to repeat it, and now he focused his attention. Rava said to him: Can one have that degree of familiarity with Heaven, to the extent that he can take his words lightly and say them however he likes? If he did not focus his attention, we beat him with a blacksmith's hammer until he focuses his attention, as conduct of that sort is unacceptable.

¹⁵³ We learned in the mishna: If one modifies the text while reading the laws of forbidden sexual relations, they silence him. Rav Yosef taught that this is referring to one who says: The shame of his

father and the shame of his mother, instead of: “The nakedness of your father and the nakedness of your mother you shall not uncover” (Leviticus 18:7).

¹⁵⁴ We learned in the mishna: If one says, while translating the verse: “And you shall not give any of your seed to set them apart to Molekh” (Leviticus 18:21): And you shall not give any of your seed to impregnate an Aramean woman, he is silenced with rebuke. A Sage from the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: One who translates the verse in this manner maintains that the verse speaks of a Jew who has relations with a gentile woman and fathered from her a son who will be raised to engage in idol worship.

¹⁵⁵ MISHNA: The incident of Reuben, about which it says: “And Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father’s concubine” (Genesis 35:22), is read from the Torah in public but not translated, so that the uneducated not come to denigrate Reuben. The incident of Tamar (Genesis, chapter 38) is read in public and also translated. The first report of the incident of the Golden Calf, i.e., the Torah’s account of the incident itself (Exodus 32:1–20), is read and translated, but the second narrative, i.e., Aaron’s report to Moses of what had taken place (Exodus 32:21–24) is read but not translated. The verses constituting the Priestly Benediction (Numbers 6:24–26) and the incident of David and Amnon (II Samuel, chapter 13) are read, but not translated.

¹⁵⁶ One may not conclude the Torah reading with by reading from the Prophets the account of the Divine Chariot (Ezekiel, chapter 1), so as not to publicize that which was meant to remain hidden. And Rabbi Yehuda permits it. Rabbi Eliezer says: One may not conclude with section from the Prophets beginning with: “Make known to Jerusalem her abominations” (Ezekiel 16:2), because it speaks derogatively of the Jewish people.

¹⁵⁷ GEMARA: The Sages taught in the Tosefta (3:31): There are portions of the Bible that are read and translated; there are portions that are read but not translated; and there are portions that are neither read nor translated. The following are read and translated: The Hebrew acronym bet, lamed, tav; ayin, kuf, nun; nun, shin, peh, heh comprise a mnemonic for the sections included in this category, as the Gemara will explain.

¹⁵⁸ The Gemara enumerates the sections indicated by the letters of the mnemonic. The section of the act of Creation [bereshit], alluded to by the letter bet, is read and translated. The Gemara comments: This is obvious. Why might one think otherwise? The Gemara answers: Lest you say that if the story of the Creation is read in public people will come to ask questions that should not be asked, for instance: What is above and what is below,

¹⁵⁹ what was before Creation and what is after, i.e., what will be at the end of time, therefore the Tosefta teaches us that the act of Creation is read in public.

¹⁶⁰ The Tosefta continues: The incident of Lot and his two daughters is read and translated. The name Lot begins with a lamed, the second letter of the mnemonic. The Gemara comments: This is obvious. Why might one think otherwise? The Gemara answers: Lest you say that one should be concerned for the honor of Abraham, as Lot was his nephew, and therefore the incident casts shame upon Abraham as well, therefore the baraita teaches us that this is not a concern.

¹⁶¹ The Tosefta continues: The incident of Tamar, beginning with a tav, and Judah is read and translated. The Gemara comments: This is obvious. The Gemara answers: Lest you say that one

should be concerned for the honor of Judah, therefore the Tosefta teaches us that there is no such concern. On the contrary, the story is to his credit, as he confessed to his sin.

¹⁶² The Tosefta continues: The first report of the incident of the Golden Calf [egel] is read and translated. Egel begins with the letter ayin, the next letter of the mnemonic. The Gemara comments: This is obvious. The Gemara answers: Lest you say that one should be concerned for the honor of the Jewish people, therefore the Tosefta teaches us that all the more so is it amenable to them that the matter be publicized, so that they will achieve atonement through their shame.

¹⁶³ The Tosefta states: The curses [kelalot] and blessings are read and translated. The Gemara comments: This is obvious. The Gemara answers: Lest you say that one should be concerned that perhaps the congregation will become dismayed by the many curses, therefore the Tosefta teaches us that this is not a concern.

¹⁶⁴ The Tosefta continues: The warnings and punishments [onashin], alluded to in the first nun of the mnemonic mentioned above, are read and translated. The Gemara comments: This is obvious. The Gemara answers: Lest you say that if this section is read aloud, people will come to act out of fear and keep the mitzvot due to the fear of punishment rather than love of God, therefore the Tosefta teaches us that this is not a concern.

¹⁶⁵ It is further taught: The incident of Amnon and Tamar, alluded to in the second nun in the mnemonic mentioned above, is read and translated. Additionally, the incident of Absalom is read and translated, alluded to in the shin of the mnemonic, the third letter of his name. The Gemara comments: This is obvious. The Gemara explains: Lest you say that one should be concerned for the honor of David, therefore the Tosefta teaches us that this section is read and translated.

¹⁶⁶ The Tosefta continues: The incident of the concubine [pilegish] in Gibeah is read and translated. The Gemara comments: This is obvious. The Gemara explains: Lest you say that one should be concerned for the honor of the tribe of Benjamin, therefore the Tosefta teaches us that this section is read and translated.

¹⁶⁷ The Tosefta continues: The section of: “Make known [hoda] to Jerusalem her abominations” (Ezekiel 16:2) is read and translated. The Gemara comments: This is obvious. The Gemara answers: This is needed to exclude the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, who held that this chapter may not be read as a haftara, as it is taught in a baraita: There was an incident with regard to a certain man who was reading the haftara in the presence of Rabbi Eliezer, and he read the section of: “Make known to Jerusalem her abominations.” Rabbi Eliezer said to him: Before you examine the abominations of Jerusalem, go and examine the abominations of your own mother. The Gemara relates that they examined his lineage and found him to have a stain of illegitimacy. His mother had engaged in illicit sexual relations, and therefore he was of questionable lineage.

¹⁶⁸ The Tosefta also states: And these sections are read but are not translated. The acrostic composed of the letters reish, ayin, bet, dalet, nun is a mnemonic for the sections included in this category, as the Gemara will explain. The Tosefta states that the incident of Reuben is read but not translated. The name Reuben begins with a reish, the first letter of the mnemonic. And there was an incident involving Rabbi Ḥanina ben Gamliel, who went to the village of Kavul, and the sexton of the synagogue was reading: “And it came to pass, while Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father’s concubine; and Israel heard of it” (Genesis 35:22). Rabbi Ḥanina said to the translator: Stop, translate only the end of the verse. And the Sages praised him for this.

¹⁶⁹ The Tosefta continues: The second narrative of the incident of the Golden Calf is read but not translated. Egel, the Hebrew word for calf, begins with an ayin, the second letter in the mnemonic. The Gemara explains: What is the second narrative of the incident of the Golden Calf? Aaron's account of what had taken place, from "And Moses said to Aaron" (Exodus 32:21) until "And Moses saw" (Exodus 32:25).

¹⁷⁰ With regard to Aaron's account, the Gemara cites that which is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: A person should always be careful in the way he formulates his responses, as sometimes the explanation that a person provides for his actions is worse than the original action itself, as, for example, based on Aaron's response to Moses, the skeptics renounced their religious beliefs. It is stated in Aaron's response: "And I cast it into the fire and this calf came forth" (Exodus 32:24). This formulation implies that the calf came from the fire by itself, suggesting that it had divine power and substance.

¹⁷¹ We learned in the mishna: The verses constituting the Priestly Benediction [birkat kohanim] are read but not translated. The Gemara asks: What is the reason for this? The Gemara explains that it is because it is written: "May the Lord lift up His countenance to you" (Numbers 6:26). Listeners may understand this to mean that God shows unfair favoritism to the Jewish people.

¹⁷² We also learned in the mishna: The incident of David and Amnon is neither read nor translated. David's name begins with a dalet, the next letter in the mnemonic; nun, the last letter of the mnemonic, is the third letter in Amnon's name. The Gemara asks: Didn't you say in the Tosefta that the incident of Amnon and Tamar is both read and translated? The Gemara explains that this is not difficult. This statement of the mishna applies where Amnon's name is written: Amnon, son of David. That statement of the Tosefta applies where it is written simply as Amnon.

¹⁷³ § The Sages taught in a baraita: All of the verses that are written in the Torah in a coarse manner are read in a refined manner. For example, the term "shall lie with her [yishgalena]" (Deuteronomy 28:30) is read as though it said yishkavena, which is a more refined term. The term "with hemorrhoids [bafolim]" (Deuteronomy 28:27) is read batehorim. The term "doves' dung [hiryonim]" (II Kings 6:25) is read divyonim. The phrase "to eat their own excrement [horeihem] and drink their own urine [meimei shineihem]" (II Kings 18:27) is read with more delicate terms: To eat their own excrement [tzo'atam] and drink their own urine [meimei ragleihem].

¹⁷⁴ The term "into latrines [lemohra'ot]" (II Kings 10:27) is read as the more refined lemotza'ot. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korha says: Lemohara'ot is read as it is written because it is used here as an expression of contempt for idol worship, and it is therefore permissible to use an indelicate term.

¹⁷⁵ Similarly, Rav Nahman said: All mockery and obscenity is forbidden except for mockery of idol worship, which is permitted, as it is written: "Bel bows down, Nevo stoops" (Isaiah 46:1). The prophet mocks these idols by describing them as crouching in order to defecate. Additionally, it is written: "They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden" (Isaiah 46:2). Rabbi Yannai said: This principle that one is permitted to mock idol worship is derived from here: "The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in dread for the calves of Beth-aven; for its people shall mourn over it, and its priests shall tremble for it, for its glory, because it is departed from it" (Hosea 10:5). Do not read it as "its glory [kevodo]," rather read it as its burden [keveido], meaning that it is unable to restrain itself from defecating.

¹⁷⁶ Rav Huna bar Manoah said in the name of Rav Aha, son of Rav Ika: It is permitted for a Jew to say to a gentile: Take your idol and put it in your shin tav, i.e., shet, buttocks. Rav Ashi said: One whose reputation is tarnished, i.e., he is known as a philanderer, it is permitted to humiliate him by calling him gimmel sin, an acronym for girta sarya, son of a putrid harlot. One whose reputation is commendable, it is permitted to publicly praise him, and one who praises him, blessings will rest upon his head.

Chapter 4

¹ MISHNA: Residents of a town who sold the town square, which was at times used for public prayer and therefore attained a certain degree of sanctity, may use the proceeds of the sale only to purchase something of a greater degree of sanctity. They may therefore purchase a synagogue with the proceeds of the sale. If they sold a synagogue, they may purchase an ark in which to house sacred scrolls. If they sold an ark, they may purchase wrapping cloths for the sacred scrolls. If they sold wrapping cloths,

² they may purchase scrolls of the Prophets and the Writings. If they sold scrolls of the Prophets and Writings, they may purchase a Torah scroll.

³ However, the proceeds of a sale of a sacred item may not be used to purchase an item of a lesser degree of sanctity. Therefore, if they sold a Torah scroll, they may not use the proceeds to purchase scrolls of the Prophets and the Writings. If they sold scrolls of the Prophets and Writings, they may not purchase wrapping cloths. If they sold wrapping cloths, they may not purchase an ark. If they sold an ark, they may not purchase a synagogue. If they sold a synagogue, they may not purchase a town square.

⁴ And similarly, the same limitation applies to any surplus funds from the sale of sacred items, i.e., if after selling an item and purchasing something of a greater degree of sanctity there remain additional, unused funds, the leftover funds are subject to the same principle and may be used to purchase only something of a degree of sanctity greater than that of the original item.

⁵ GEMARA: The mishna states: Residents of a town who sold the town square may purchase a synagogue with the proceeds. Concerning this mishna, Rabba bar bar Hana said that Rabbi Yohanan said: This is the statement of Rabbi Menahem bar Yosei, cited unattributed. However, the Rabbis say: The town square does not have any sanctity. Therefore, if it is sold, the residents may use the money from the sale for any purpose.

⁶ And Rabbi Menahem bar Yosei, what is his reason for claiming that the town square has sanctity? Since the people pray in the town square on communal fast days and on non-priestly watches, it is defined as a place of prayer and as such has sanctity. And the Rabbis, why do they disagree? They maintain that use of the town square is merely an irregular occurrence. Consequently, the town square is not to be defined as a place of prayer, and so it has no sanctity.

⁷ § The mishna states: If they sold a synagogue, they may purchase an ark. The Gemara cites a qualification to this halakha: Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: They taught this only with regard to a synagogue of a village, which is considered the property of the residents of that village. However, with regard to a synagogue of a city, since people come to it from the outside

world, the residents of the city are not able to sell it, because it is considered to be the property of the public at large and does not belong exclusively to the residents of the city.

⁸ Rav Ashi said: This synagogue of Mata Meḥasya, although people from the outside world come to it, since they come at my discretion, as I established it, and everything is done there in accordance with my directives, if I wish, I can sell it.

⁹ The Gemara raises an objection to Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani's statement, from a baraita: Rabbi Yehuda said: There was an incident involving a synagogue of bronze workers [tursiyyim] that was in Jerusalem, which they sold to Rabbi Eliezer, and he used it for all his own needs. The Gemara asks: But wasn't the synagogue there one of cities, as Jerusalem is certainly classified as a city; why were they permitted to sell it? The Gemara explains: That one was a small synagogue, and it was the bronze workers themselves who built it. Therefore, it was considered exclusively theirs, and they were permitted to sell it.

¹⁰ The Gemara raises an objection from another baraita: The verse states with regard to leprosy of houses: "And I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession" (Leviticus 14:34), from which it may be inferred: "Your possession," i.e., a privately owned house, can become ritually impure with leprosy, but a house in Jerusalem cannot become ritually impure with leprosy, as property there belongs collectively to the Jewish people and is not privately owned. Rabbi Yehuda said: I heard this distinction stated only with regard to the site of the Temple alone, but not with regard to the entire city of Jerusalem.

¹¹ The Gemara explains: From Rabbi Yehuda's statement, it is apparent that only the site of the Temple cannot become ritually impure, but synagogues and study halls in Jerusalem can become ritually impure. Why should this be true given that they are owned by the city? The Gemara answers: Emend the baraita and say as follows: Rabbi Yehuda said: I heard this distinction stated only with regard to a sacred site, which includes the Temple, synagogues, and study halls.

¹² With regard to what principle do the first tanna and Rabbi Yehuda disagree? The first tanna holds that Jerusalem was not apportioned to the tribes, i.e., it was never assigned to any particular tribe, but rather it belongs collectively to the entire nation. And Rabbi Yehuda holds: Jerusalem was apportioned to the tribes, and it is only the site of the Temple itself that belongs collectively to the entire nation.

¹³ The Gemara notes: They each follow a different opinion in the dispute between these tanna'im:

¹⁴ One tanna holds that Jerusalem was apportioned to the tribes, as it is taught in a baraita: What part of the Temple was in the tribal portion of Judah? The Temple mount, the Temple chambers, and the Temple courtyards. And what was in the tribal portion of Benjamin? The Entrance Hall, the Sanctuary, and the Holy of Holies.

¹⁵ And a strip of land issued forth from the portion of Judah and entered into the portion of Benjamin, and upon that strip the altar was built, and the tribe of Benjamin, the righteous, would agonize over it every day desiring to absorb it into its portion, due to its unique sanctity, as it is stated in Moses' blessing to Benjamin: "He covers it throughout the day, and he dwells between his shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12). The phrase "covers it" is understood to mean that Benjamin is continually focused upon that site. Therefore, Benjamin was privileged by becoming the host [ushpizekhan] of the Divine Presence, as the Holy of Holies was built in his portion.

¹⁶ And this other tanna holds that Jerusalem was not apportioned to the tribes, as it is taught in a baraita: One may not rent out houses in Jerusalem, due to the fact that the houses do not belong to those occupying them. Rather, as is true for the entire city, they are owned collectively by the nation. Rabbi Elazar bar Tzadok says: Even beds may not be hired out. Therefore, in the case of the hides of the renter's offerings that the innkeepers take in lieu of payment, the innkeepers are considered to be taking them by force, as they did not have a right to demand payment.

¹⁷ Apropos the topic of inns, the Gemara reports: Abaye said: Learn from this baraita that it is proper etiquette for a person to leave his wine flask and the hide of the animal that he slaughtered at his inn, i.e., the inn where he stayed, as a gift for the service he received.

¹⁸ § The Gemara returns its discussion of the mishna: Rava said: They taught that there is a limitation on what may be purchased with the proceeds of the sale of a synagogue only when the seven representatives of the town who were appointed to administer the town's affairs had not sold the synagogue in an assembly of the residents of the town. However, if the seven representatives of the town had sold it in an assembly of the residents of the town, then even

¹⁹ to drink beer with the proceeds seems well and is permitted. The seven representatives have the authority to annul the sanctity of the synagogue, and therefore the proceeds of its sale do not retain any sanctity.

²⁰ The Gemara relates: Ravina had a certain piece of land on which stood a mound of the ruins of a synagogue. He came before Rav Ashi and said to him: What is the halakha with regard to sowing the land? He said to him: Go, purchase it from the seven representatives of the town in an assembly of the residents of the town, and then you may sow it.

²¹ Rami bar Abba was once building a synagogue. There was a certain old synagogue that he wished to demolish, and bring bricks and beams from it, and bring them to there, to construct a new synagogue. He sat and considered that which Rav Hisda said, as Rav Hisda said: One should not demolish a synagogue until one has built another synagogue. Rami bar Abba reasoned that Rav Hisda's ruling there is due to a concern of negligence, as perhaps after the first synagogue is demolished, people will be negligent and a new one will never be built. However, in a case like this, where the new synagogue is to be built directly from the materials of the old one, what is the halakha? He came before Rav Pappa to ask his opinion, and he prohibited him from doing so. He then came before Rav Huna, and he also prohibited him from doing so.

²² Rava said: With regard to this synagogue, exchanging it for a different building or selling it for money is permitted, but renting it out or mortgaging it is prohibited. What is the reason for this? When a synagogue is rented out or mortgaged, it remains in its sacred state. Therefore, it is prohibited to rent it out or mortgage it, because it will then be used for a non-sacred purpose. However, if it is exchanged or sold, its sanctity is transferred to the other building or to the proceeds of the sale, and therefore the old synagogue building may be used for any purpose.

²³ The same halakha is also true of the bricks of a synagogue; exchanging them or selling them is permitted, but renting them out is prohibited. The Gemara comments: This applies to old bricks that have already been part of a synagogue, but as for new bricks that have only been designated to be used in a synagogue, we have no problem with it if they are rented out for a non-sacred purpose.

²⁴ And even according to the one who said that mere designation is significant, i.e., although a certain object was not yet used for the designated purpose, the halakhic ramifications of using it for that purpose already take hold, this applies only in a case where it was created from the outset for that purpose, for example, one who weaves a garment to be used as shrouds for a corpse. However, here the bricks are comparable to already spun thread that was then designated to be used to weave burial shrouds. Concerning such designation, where nothing was specifically created for the designated purpose, there is no one who said that the designation is significant.

²⁵ Rav Aḥa and Ravina disagree about whether it is permitted to give away a synagogue as a gift to then be used for a non-sacred purpose. One of them prohibited it, and the other one permitted it. The one who prohibits it says: Is it possible that with this act of giving alone its sanctity is removed? This cannot be the case. Since the synagogue was not exchanged for anything else, there is nothing to which the sanctity may be transferred. Consequently, the synagogue remains sacred. And the one who permitted it does so because he reasons that if the donor did not receive any benefit from giving the synagogue, he would not have given it. Therefore, the gift has reverted to being like a sale, and the sanctity is transferred to the benefit received.

²⁶ § The Sages taught in a baraita: Articles used in the performance of a mitzva may be thrown out after use. Although these items were used in the performance of a mitzva, they are not thereby sanctified. However, articles associated with the sanctity of God's name, i.e. articles on which God's name is written, and articles that serve an article that has God's name written on it, even after they are no longer used, must be interred in a respectful manner. And these items are considered articles of a mitzva: A sukka; a lulav; a shofar; and ritual fringes. And these items are considered articles of sanctity: Cases of scrolls, i.e. of Torah scrolls; phylacteries; and mezuzot; and a container for a Torah scroll; and a cover for phylacteries; and their straps.

²⁷ Rava said: Initially, I used to say that this lectern in the synagogue upon which the Torah is read is only an article of an article of sanctity, as the Torah scroll does not rest directly upon the lectern but rather upon the cloth that covers it. And the halakha is that once an article of an article of sanctity is no longer used, it is permitted to throw it out. However, once I saw that the Torah scroll is sometimes placed directly upon the lectern without an intervening cloth. I said that it is an article used directly for items of sanctity, and as such it is prohibited to simply discard it after use.

²⁸ And Rava similarly said: Initially, I used to say that this curtain, which is placed at the opening to the ark as a decoration, is only an article of an article of sanctity, as it serves to beautify the ark but is not directly used for the Torah scroll. However, once I saw that sometimes the curtain is folded over and a Torah scroll is placed upon it. I said that it is an article used directly for items of sanctity and as such it is prohibited to simply discard it after use.

²⁹ And Rava further said: With regard to this ark that has fallen apart, constructing a smaller ark from its materials is permitted, as both have the same level of sanctity, but to use the materials to construct a lectern is prohibited because the lectern has a lesser degree of sanctity. And Rava similarly said: With regard to this curtain used to decorate an ark that has become worn out, to fashion it into a wrapping cloth for Torah scrolls is permitted, but to fashion it into a wrapping cloth for a scroll of one of the five books of the Torah is prohibited.

³⁰ And Rava also said: With regard to these cases for storing scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah and sacks for storing Torah scrolls, they are classified as articles of sanctity. Therefore, they

are to be interred when they are no longer in use. The Gemara asks: Isn't that obvious? The Gemara answers: Lest you say that since these items are not made for the honor of the scrolls but rather are made merely to provide protection, they should not be classified as articles of sanctity, Rava therefore teaches us that although they are indeed made to protect the scrolls, they also provide honor and are therefore to be classified as articles of sanctity.

³¹ The Gemara relates: There was a certain synagogue of the Jews of Rome that opened out into a room in which a corpse was lying, thereby spreading the ritual impurity of the corpse throughout the synagogue. And the priests wished to enter the synagogue in order to pray there. However, it was prohibited for them to do so because a priest may not come in contact with ritual impurity of a corpse. They came and spoke to Rava, about what to do. He said to them: Lift up the ark and put it down in the opening between the two rooms, as it is a wooden utensil that is designated to rest in one place and not be moved from there, and the halakha is that a wooden utensil that is designated to rest is not susceptible to ritual impurity, and therefore it serves as a barrier to prevent ritual impurity from spreading.

³² The Rabbis said to Rava: But isn't the ark sometimes moved when a Torah scroll is still resting inside it, and therefore it is a utensil that is moved both when it is full and when it is empty; such a utensil is susceptible to ritual impurity and cannot prevent ritual impurity from spreading. He said to them: If so, if it is as you claim, then it is not possible to remedy the situation.

³³ Mar Zutra said: With regard to wrapping cloths of Torah scrolls that have become worn out, they may be made into shrouds for a corpse with no one to bury it [met mitzva], and this is their most appropriate manner for being interred.

³⁴ And Rava said: A Torah scroll that became worn out is interred and buried next to a Torah scholar, and in this regard, a Torah scholar is defined even as one who only studies the halakhot in the Mishna and the baraitot but is not proficient in their analysis. Rav Aḥa bar Ya'akov said: And when it is buried, it is first placed in an earthenware vessel, as it is stated: "And put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for many days" (Jeremiah 32:14).

³⁵ § And Rav Pappi said in the name of Rava: To convert a building from a synagogue into a study hall is permitted, but from a study hall into a synagogue is prohibited, as he holds that a study hall has a higher degree of sanctity than a synagogue. And Rav Pappa in the name of Rava teaches the opposite, as he holds that a synagogue has a higher degree of sanctity than a study hall. Rav Aḥa said:

³⁶ It stands to reason to rule in accordance with the opinion of Rav Pappi, as Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: It is permitted for a synagogue to be made into a study hall. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, learn from it that the opinion of Rav Pappi is correct.

³⁷ § Bar Kappara interpreted a verse homiletically: What is the meaning of that which is written: "And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great house he burnt with fire" (II Kings 25:9)? He explained: "The house of the Lord"; this is the Holy Temple. "The king's house"; these are the king's palaces [palterin]. "And all the houses of Jerusalem"; as understood in its literal sense. With regard to the final phrase: "And every great house he burnt with fire," Rabbi Yoḥanan and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi disagree about the meaning of "great house": One of them said: It is referring to a place where the Torah is made great, i.e., the

study hall; and the other one said: It is referring to a place where prayer is made great, i.e., the synagogue.

³⁸ The Gemara explains their respective opinions: The one who said that the reference is to where the Torah is made great bases his opinion on a verse that describes Torah study as great, as it is written: “The Lord was pleased, for His righteousness’ sake, to make Torah great and glorious” (Isaiah 42:21). And the one who said that the reference is to where prayer is made great bases his opinion on a verse that describes prayer as great, as it is written: “Tell me, I pray you, all the great things that Elisha has done” (II Kings 8:4), and that which Elisha did, i.e., restored a boy to life, he did through prayer.

³⁹ The Gemara comments: Conclude that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi is the one who said that “great house” is referring to a place where the Torah is made great, as Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said elsewhere: It is permitted for a synagogue to be made into a study hall. This ruling indicates that he holds that a study hall has a higher degree of sanctity than a synagogue. It is therefore reasonable that he assumes that “great house” is referring specifically to a study hall. The Gemara concludes: Indeed, learn from it that he was the one who said the term is referring to a place where the Torah is made great.

⁴⁰ § The mishna states: However, if they sold a Torah scroll, they may not use the proceeds to purchase scrolls of the Prophets and the Writings. Similarly, the proceeds of the sale of any sacred item may not be used to purchase an item of a lesser degree of sanctity. A dilemma was raised before the Sages: What is the halakha with regard to whether it is permitted to sell an old Torah scroll in order to purchase a new one? The Gemara explains the sides of the dilemma: On the one hand, since the proceeds are not raised to a higher degree of sanctity by doing so, maybe it is prohibited; or, perhaps in this case, since there is no possibility of raising it to another, higher degree of sanctity, it seems well and should be permitted?

⁴¹ Come and hear a resolution to this dilemma from the mishna: However, if they sold a Torah scroll, they may not use the proceeds to purchase scrolls of the Prophets and the Writings. One may infer: It is only scrolls of the Prophets and the Writings that may not be purchased with the proceeds, but to purchase a new Torah scroll with the proceeds of an old Torah scroll seems well and is permitted. The Gemara rejects this proof: The mishna discusses the halakha that applies only after the fact that a Torah scroll was sold. Perhaps it is only in that case where the proceeds may be used to purchase another Torah scroll. When the dilemma was raised to us, it was with respect to permitting the sale of one Torah scroll in order to purchase another *ab initio*.

⁴² Come and hear a resolution to this dilemma from a baraita: A Torah scroll may be rolled up in wrapping cloths that are used for scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah. And scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah may be rolled up in wrapping cloths that are used for scrolls of the Prophets or Writings, since in each case the wrapping cloths are being used for something with a greater degree of sanctity. However, a scroll of the Prophets or Writings may not be rolled up in wrapping cloths that are used for scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah, and scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah may not be rolled up in wrapping cloths that are used for a Torah scroll.

⁴³ The Gemara explains the proof: In any event, the baraita is teaching: A Torah scroll may be rolled up in wrapping cloths that are used for scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah. One may infer: A Torah scroll may be rolled up only in wrapping cloths that are used for scrolls of one of the five

books of the Torah; but to roll it up in wrapping cloths of another Torah scroll, no, it is not permitted. By extension, one Torah scroll may certainly not be sold in order to purchase another.

⁴⁴ The Gemara rejects the proof: If this inference is valid, one should be able to say the latter clause and make a similar inference from it. The latter clause teaches: And scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah may not be rolled up in wrapping cloths that are used for a Torah scroll. It may be inferred from this that it is prohibited only to roll up scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah in wrapping cloths that are used for a Torah scroll, but to roll up one Torah scroll in the wrapping cloths of another Torah scroll seems well. By extension, one should be permitted to sell a Torah scroll to purchase another. Rather, perforce one must conclude that no inference beyond its basic meaning can be deduced from the baraita, as the inferences are contradictory.

⁴⁵ Come and hear a resolution to this dilemma from the Tosefta (Megilla 3:12): A Torah scroll may be placed upon another Torah scroll, and a Torah scroll may be placed upon scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah, and scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah may be placed upon scrolls of the Prophets or Writings. However, scrolls of the Prophets or Writings may not be placed upon scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah, and scrolls of one of the five books of the Torah may not be placed upon a Torah scroll. From the first clause, it is apparent that one Torah scroll may be used for the sake of another. By extension, it should be permitted to sell one Torah scroll to purchase another.

⁴⁶ The Gemara rejects this proof: Can you say a proof from the halakha of placing one Torah scroll upon another? The halakha of placing scrolls upon one another is different, because it is impossible to place them in any other way, as they must be laid one atop the other when placed in the ark. As, if you do not say so, that it is indeed permitted when in an unavoidable situation, how could we furl a Torah scroll at all? Does one sheet of parchment not rest upon another? Rather, since it is impossible to furl the scroll in any other way, it is permitted. Here too, since it is impossible to place the scrolls in the ark in any other way, it is permitted.

⁴⁷ Come and hear a resolution to this dilemma from a baraita: As Rabba bar bar Ḥana said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel: A person may not sell an old Torah scroll in order to purchase a new one.

⁴⁸ The Gemara rejects this proof. There, in the case of the baraita, it is prohibited because of a concern for negligence. The old one might be sold and a new one never bought. However, when we speak, it is of a case where the new scroll is already written and waiting to be redeemed immediately with the proceeds of the sale. Therefore, the question remains: What is the halakha in this case?

⁴⁹ Come and hear a resolution to this dilemma from a baraita: As Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Meir: A Torah scroll may be sold only if the seller needs the money in order to study Torah or to marry a woman.

⁵⁰ Learn from this baraita that exchanging one entity of Torah, i.e., a Torah scroll, for another entity of Torah, i.e., Torah study, seems well, and by extension, it should be permitted to sell one Torah scroll to purchase another. The Gemara rejects the proof: Perhaps Torah study is different, as the study of Torah leads to action, i.e., the fulfillment of the mitzvot, and perhaps it is only due to its great importance of Torah study that it is permitted to sell a Torah scroll for it. Similarly, marrying a woman is also of utmost importance, as it is stated with regard to Creation: “He created it not a waste; He formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18). This indicates that marrying and having children

fulfills a primary goal of Creation. But selling an old Torah in order to buy a new Torah might not be permitted.

⁵¹ On the same topic, the Sages taught in a baraita: A person may not sell a Torah scroll, even if he does not need it. Furthermore, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: Even if a person has nothing to eat, and out of his need he sold a Torah scroll or he sold his daughter to be a maidservant, he never sees a sign of blessing from the proceeds of either sale. Clearly, it is never appropriate to sell a Torah scroll for any purpose.

⁵² The mishna states: And similarly, the same limitation applies to any surplus funds from the sale of sacred items. Rava said: They taught that the surplus funds have sanctity only in a case where the community sold a sacred object and then used the proceeds to purchase something with a greater degree of sanctity, and there was money left over. However, if the community collected money from its members in order to purchase a sacred object, and there was extra money left over beyond the price of the object, that extra money is permitted to be used for any purpose, as the money was never sanctified.

⁵³ Abaye raised an objection to Rava from a baraita: In what case is this statement of the mishna said? When they did not explicitly stipulate that they would do with the surplus funds as they see fit. However, if they made such a stipulation, then even to use the money for a dukhsusya is permitted. The Gemara will explain the meaning of the term dukhsusya.

⁵⁴ Abaye explains the challenge: What are the circumstances of this stipulation? If we say that they sold a sacred object and after using the proceeds to purchase another sacred object there was money left over, then even when they made a stipulation, of what avail is it? How can a stipulation desanctify the money? Rather, the mishna must be referring to a case where they collected money to purchase a sacred object and there was money left over after they made the purchase. In such a case, the reason that it is permitted to use the extra money for any purpose is that they made an explicit stipulation. However, if they did not make a stipulation, no, it would not be permitted.

⁵⁵ Rava rejects this argument: Actually, you can explain that the mishna is referring to a case where they sold a sacred object and there was money left over after purchasing a new one, and this is what the baraita is saying: In what case is this statement of the mishna said? In a case where the seven representatives of the town did not explicitly stipulate that they could use the money as they see fit, in an assembly of the residents of the town. However, if the seven representatives of the town made such a stipulation in an assembly of the residents of the town, then even to use the money for a dukhsusya would also be permitted.

⁵⁶ Abaye said to one of the Sages who would arrange the Mishna before Rav Sheshet: Did you hear anything from Rav Sheshet with regard to what the meaning of the term dukhsusya is? He said to him: This is what Rav Sheshet said: It is the town horseman who would serve the townspeople as a sentry and for public dispatches.

⁵⁷ The Gemara introduces a parenthetical comment: Abaye said: Accordingly, one can learn from this incident that with regard to this young Torah scholar who has heard something and does not know the meaning of it, he should inquire of its meaning before somebody who is frequently before the Sages, as it is impossible that such a person did not hear something about it from some great man.

⁵⁸ § Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Meir: In the case of residents of a town who collectively went to another town and, while there, the charity collectors in that town made them pledge a certain sum for charity, they must give the promised sum to the town's charity collector, so as not to be suspected of reneging. But when they go home, their money is returned to them, and they bring it back with them, and with it they finance the poor of their own town.

⁵⁹ The Gemara comments: That is also taught in a baraita: In the case of residents of a town who collectively went to another town and, while there, the local charity collectors made them pledge a certain sum for charity, they must give the promised sum to the town's charity collector. But when they go home, their money is returned to them, and they bring it back with them. But in the case of an individual who went from his hometown to another town and, while there, the local charity collectors made him pledge a certain sum for charity, he should give it to the poor of that town.

⁶⁰ The Gemara relates: Rav Huna once decreed a fast day. On the day of the fast, Rav Ḥana bar Ḥanilai and all the people of his town came to Rav Huna. A certain sum of charity was imposed upon them and they gave it. When they wanted to go home, they said to Rav Huna: May our Master give to us the charity that we gave, and we will go back, and with it we will finance the poor of our own town.

⁶¹ He said to them: It was taught in a baraita: In what case is this statement, that the money is returned when the people leave, said? When there is no

⁶² town scholar supervising the handling of the community's needs, in the town in which the charity was collected. However, if there is a town scholar there, the money should be given to the town scholar, and he may use it as he sees fit. Since, in this case, the money had been given to Rav Huna, the use of the money should be up to his discretion. Rav Huna added: And all the more so in this instance, as both my poor in my town and your poor in your town rely upon me and my collections of charity. Rav Huna was also in charge of distributing charity for the surrounding area. It was certainly proper to leave the money with him, so that he could distribute it among all those in need.

⁶³ MISHNA: They may not sell a sacred object belonging to the community to an individual, even if the object will still be used for the same purpose, due to the fact that by doing so they downgrade its degree of sanctity, as an item used by fewer people is considered to have a lower degree of sanctity than one used by many; this is the statement of Rabbi Meir. The Rabbis said to him: If so, by your logic, it should also not be permitted to sell a sacred object from a large town to a small town. However, such a sale is certainly permitted, and therefore it must also be permitted to sell such an object to an individual.

⁶⁴ GEMARA: The Gemara asks: The Rabbis are saying well to Rabbi Meir, as they provided a rational argument for their opinion. How could Rabbi Meir counter their claim? The Gemara answers: Rabbi Meir holds that when a sacred object is transferred from a large town to a small town, there is no significant downgrade in the degree of sanctity, as at the outset it was sacred for a community and now too it is sacred for a community. But when it is transferred from a community to an individual, there is a significant downgrade in the degree of sanctity, as there is no longer the degree of sanctity that existed beforehand.

⁶⁵ And the Rabbis, how could they respond to Rabbi Meir's claim? If there is cause to be concerned about the decrease in the number of people who will use the object when it is transferred from a community to an individual, then in a case like this as well, where the object is transferred to a

smaller community, there should be cause to be concerned about this due to the principle expressed in the verse: “In the multitude of people is the king’s glory” (Proverbs 14:28). The verse teaches that the larger the assembly involved in a mitzva, the greater the honor to God. However, it is apparent that this principle does not prevent the sale of a synagogue to a smaller community, and therefore it should not prevent the selling of a synagogue to an individual.

⁶⁶ MISHNA: They may sell a synagogue only with a stipulation that if the sellers so desire it, the buyers will return it to them; this is the statement of Rabbi Meir. And the Rabbis say: They may sell a synagogue with a permanent sale for any usage, except the following four things, which would be an affront to the synagogue’s previous sanctity: For a bathhouse, where people stand undressed; or for a tannery [burseki], due to the foul smell; for immersion, i.e., to be used as a ritual bath, where people also stand undressed; or for a lavatory. Rabbi Yehuda says: They may sell a synagogue for the generic purpose of serving as a courtyard, and then the buyer may then do with it as he wishes, even if that is one of the above four purposes.

⁶⁷ GEMARA: The Gemara asks: But according to Rabbi Meir, how may those who purchased the synagogue live in it? Isn’t living there tantamount to taking interest? If the sellers demand the synagogue’s return, the payment given for it would be returned to the buyers. Accordingly, in a broad view of things, that sum of money may be considered as a loan that was given from the buyers to the sellers, until the synagogue was demanded back. The buyers benefited from giving that loan by being able to live in the synagogue building. However, gaining any benefit from a loan is prohibited as interest.

⁶⁸ Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Rabbi Meir stated his opinion in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, who said: Uncertain interest, i.e., a transaction that will not certainly result in a situation of interest, is permitted.

⁶⁹ In the case of the mishna, the sale might never be undone, and then there would be no loan to speak of. It should therefore be permitted as a case of uncertain interest, as it is taught in a baraita: If one had a debt of one hundred dinars against his fellow, and the borrower made a conditional sale of his field because he did not have any money to repay the loan, stipulating that if he later comes into the possession of money with which to repay the loan, the field reverts back to his ownership, then as long as the seller of the field consumes the produce of that field, such an arrangement is permitted. If the buyer consumes the produce, the arrangement is prohibited, as if the sale were to be reverted, then the money given for it would be considered a loan from the buyer to the seller, and therefore any benefit the buyer gains due to that loan should be prohibited as interest.

⁷⁰ Rabbi Yehuda says: Even if the buyer consumes the produce, it is permitted. Since it is possible that the sale might never be undone, in which case there would be no loan to speak of, it is a case of uncertain interest, which is permitted. And Rabbi Yehuda said: There was an incident involving Baitos ben Zunen, who made a conditional sale of his field in a similar arrangement under the direction of Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, and the buyer was consuming the produce in accordance with Rabbi Yehuda’s ruling. The Rabbis said to him: Do you seek to bring a proof from there? In that case, it was actually the seller who was consuming the produce and not the buyer.

⁷¹ The Gemara analyses the dispute: What is the practical difference between them? The permissibility of an uncertain interest agreement is the practical difference between them. One Sage,

Rabbi Yehuda, holds that uncertain interest is permitted and one Sage, i.e., the Rabbis, holds that uncertain interest is prohibited.

⁷² Rava said a different explanation of the dispute: According to everyone, uncertain interest is prohibited, and here it is the question of the permissibility of interest given on the condition that it will be returned that is the practical difference between them. In addition to the arrangement described in the baraita, the parties in this case agreed that the buyer would consume the produce; if the sale would later be reverted, then the buyer would reimburse the seller for the value of the produce. One Sage, Rabbi Yehuda, holds that interest that is given on condition that it will be returned is permitted; this is because even if the sale is reverted and the sale becomes a loan retroactively, the buyer-lender will not benefit from that loan since he reimbursed the seller-borrower for the value of the produce. And one Sage, i.e., the Rabbis, holds that it is prohibited.

⁷³ § The mishna states: And the Rabbis say: They may sell a synagogue with a permanent sale. However, it may not be sold if it will be used for activities that would be an affront to the synagogue's previous sanctity. The Gemara considers a related halakha: Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: It is permitted for a person to urinate within four cubits of where one has just offered a prayer, i.e., one may urinate even in the same place as he prays.

⁷⁴ Rav Yosef said: What is he teaching us? We already learned this in the mishna: Rabbi Yehuda says: They may sell a synagogue for the generic purpose of serving as a courtyard, and the buyer may then do with it as he wishes, even if he wishes to make it into a lavatory. And even the Rabbis, who disagree with Rabbi Yehuda, say their ruling only with regard to a synagogue whose sanctity is permanent. However, with regard to the four cubits of where one happened to stand in prayer, whose sanctity is not permanent, no, even the Rabbis would be lenient.

⁷⁵ A tanna taught a baraita before Rav Nahman: One who prayed should distance himself four cubits from where he was standing, and only then may he urinate. And one who urinated should distance himself four cubits, and only then may he pray.

⁷⁶ Rav Nahman said to him: Granted, the second clause of the baraita, that one who urinated should distance himself four cubits and only then may he pray, makes sense, as we already learned in a mishna (Berakhot 22b): How far must one distance oneself from urine and excrement? Four cubits.

⁷⁷ But the first clause of the baraita, that one who prayed should distance himself four cubits from where he was standing and only then may he urinate, why should I require this? How could there be such a halakha? If that is so, you have sanctified all the streets of the city of Neharde'a, for people have certainly prayed on every one of its streets. According to this halakha, it should be prohibited to urinate everywhere. The Gemara answers: Emend and teach the baraita as saying not that one should distance himself four cubits, but that one should wait the time it takes to walk four cubits.

⁷⁸ The Gemara addresses the emended version of the baraita: Granted, its second clause, that one who urinated waits the time it takes to walk four cubits and only then may he pray, makes sense. This is due to the droplets of urine that may still be issuing from him; he should wait until they cease entirely. However, with regard to the first clause, that one who prayed should wait the time it takes to walk four cubits and only then may he urinate, why should I require this? Rav Ashi said: Because for all the time it takes to walk four cubits, his prayer is still arranged in his mouth, and his lips are still articulating them.

⁷⁹ § The Gemara cites a series of Sages who explained the reasons they were blessed with longevity and provides a mnemonic device, indicating the order in which the Sages are cited: Zayin, lamed, peh, nun. Zayin for Rabbi Zakkai; lamed for Rabbi Elazar; peh for Rabbi Perida; nun for Rabbi Nehunya.

⁸⁰ The Gemara presents the first incident: Rabbi Zakkai was once asked by his disciples: In the merit of which virtue were you blessed with longevity? He said to them: In all my days, I never urinated within four cubits of a place that had been used for prayer. Nor did I ever call my fellow by a nickname. And I never neglected the mitzva of sanctifying the day of Shabbat over wine. I was meticulous about this mitzva to the extent that I had an elderly mother, and once, when I did not have wine, she sold the kerchief that was on her head, and from the proceeds she brought me wine upon which to do the mitzva of sanctifying the day.

⁸¹ It was taught concerning Rabbi Zakkai: When his mother died, she left him three hundred barrels of wine. When he died, he left his sons three thousand barrels of wine. Since they were so meticulous in the mitzva of sanctifying the day of Shabbat with wine, God rewarded them with wealth and an abundance of wine.

⁸² In a related incident, it once happened that Rav Huna was girded with a piece of straw [rita] and was standing before Rav. Rav said to him: What is this? Why are you dressed in this way? He said to him: I had no wine for sanctifying the day of Shabbat, so I pawned my belt [hemyanai], and with the proceeds I brought wine for sanctifying the day. Rav said to him: May it be God's will that you be enveloped in silk [shira'ei] in reward for such dedication.

⁸³ When Rabba, his son, was married, Rav Huna, who was a short man, was lying on his bed, and owing to his diminutive size he went unnoticed. His daughters and daughters-in-law came into the room and removed and threw their silk garments upon him until he was entirely enveloped in silk. With this, Rav's blessing was fulfilled to the letter. When Rav heard about this, he became angry with Rav Huna, and said: What is the reason that when I blessed you, you did not respond in kind and say to me: And likewise to the Master? Had you done so, I would have also benefitted from the blessing.

⁸⁴ The Gemara discusses the second occasion where a Sage explained his longevity: Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua was once asked by his disciples: In the merit of which virtue were you blessed with longevity? He said to them: In all my days, I never made a shortcut through a synagogue. Nor did I ever stride over the heads of the sacred people, i.e., I never stepped over people sitting in the study hall in order to reach my place, so as not to appear scornful of them. And I never raised my hands in the Priestly Benediction without reciting a blessing beforehand.

⁸⁵ On the third occasion, Rabbi Perida was once asked by his disciples: In the merit of which virtue were you blessed with longevity? He said to them: In all my days, no person ever arrived before me to the study hall, as I was always the first to arrive.

⁸⁶ And I never recited Grace after Meals in the presence of a priest, but rather I gave him the privilege to lead. And I never ate from an animal whose priestly portions, i.e., the foreleg, the jaw, and the maw, had not already been set aside.

⁸⁷ Another example of Rabbi Perida's meticulous behavior is based on that which Rabbi Yitzhak said that Rabbi Yohanan said: It is prohibited to eat meat from an animal whose priestly portions have not been set aside. And Rabbi Yitzhak said: Anyone who eats meat from an animal whose priestly

portions have not been set aside is regarded as if he were eating untithed produce. The Gemara comments: And the halakha is not in accordance with his opinion. Rather, it is permitted to eat meat from such an animal. Nevertheless, Rabbi Perida acted stringently and did not eat from it.

⁸⁸ The Gemara considers another of Rabbi Perida's actions: He said: And I never blessed Grace after Meals in the presence of a priest, but rather I gave him the privilege to lead.

⁸⁹ Is this to say that doing so is especially virtuous? But hasn't Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Any Torah scholar who allows someone else to bless Grace after Meals in his presence, i.e., to lead for him, even if that person is a High Priest who is an ignoramus, then that Torah scholar is liable to receive the death penalty for belittling his own honor? This is as it is stated: "All those who hate me, love death" (Proverbs 8:36). Do not read it as "those who hate Me [mesan'ai]," rather read it as though it said: Those who make Me hated [masni'ai]. The honor due to a Torah scholar is representative of the honor of God in the world. Therefore, by belittling his own honor, he causes others to fail to respect God, which can ultimately develop into hate. If so, why did Rabbi Perida consider his behavior to be so deserving of praise?

⁹⁰ The Gemara answers: When Rabbi Perida says this, he was speaking of people of equal stature. He was particular to honor the priesthood only when the priest was also a Torah scholar.

⁹¹ The Gemara discusses the fourth Sage who was blessed with longevity: Rabbi Neḥunya ben HaKana was once asked by his disciples: In the merit of which virtue were you blessed with longevity? He said to them: In all my days, I never attained veneration at the expense of my fellow's degradation. Nor did my fellow's curse ever go up with me upon my bed. If ever I offended someone, I made sure to appease him that day. Therefore, when I went to bed I knew that no one had any grievances against me. And I was always openhanded with my money.

⁹² The Gemara clarifies the meaning of his statement: Rabbi Neḥunya said: I never attained veneration at the expense of my fellow's denigration. This is referring to conduct such as that of Rav Huna, who was carrying a hoe over his shoulder as he returned from his work. Rav Ḥana bar Ḥanilai came and, out of respect for his teacher, took the hoe from him to carry it for him. Rav Huna said to him: If you are accustomed to carry such objects in your own city, you may carry it; but if not, then for me to be venerated through your denigration is not pleasing for me.

⁹³ Rabbi Neḥunya also said: Nor did I ever allow the resentment caused by my fellow's curse to go up with me upon my bed. This is referring to conduct such as that of Mar Zutra. When he would go to bed at night, he would first say: I forgive anyone who has vexed me.

⁹⁴ Lastly, Rabbi Neḥunya said: And I was always openhanded with my money. This is referring to conduct such as that which the Master said: Job was openhanded with his money, as he would always leave at least a peruta of his money with the shopkeeper. He never demanded the change from his transactions.

⁹⁵ On a similar occasion, Rabbi Akiva asked Rabbi Neḥunya the Great; he said to him: In the merit of which virtue were you blessed with longevity? Rabbi Neḥunya's attendants [gavzei] came and started beating Rabbi Akiva, for they felt that he was acting disrespectfully by highlighting Rabbi Neḥunya's old age. Rabbi Akiva ran away from them, and he climbed up and sat upon the top of a date palm. From there, he said to Rabbi Neḥunya: My teacher, I have a question about the verse concerning the daily offering that states "one lamb" (Numbers 28:4). If it is stated "lamb" in the

singular, why is it also stated “one”; isn’t this superfluous? Upon hearing Rabbi Akiva’s scholarly question, Rabbi Neḥunya said to his attendants: He is clearly a young Torah scholar, let him be.

⁹⁶ Rabbi Neḥunya then addressed Rabbi Akiva’s questions. With regard to the second question, he said to him: The word “one” teaches that the lamb should be the unique one of its flock, i.e., only the best quality lamb should be used.

⁹⁷ With regard to the original question, Rabbi Neḥunya said to him: In all my days I never accepted gifts. Nor was I ever inflexible by exacting a measure of retribution against those who wronged me. And I was always openhanded with my money.

⁹⁸ The Gemara explains: I never accepted gifts; this is referring to conduct such as that of Rabbi Elazar. When they would send him gifts from the house of the Nasi, he would not take them, and when they would invite him, he would not go there, as he considered hospitality to be a type of gift. He would say to them: Is it not pleasing to you that I should live, as it is written: “He that hates gifts shall live” (Proverbs 15:27)? In contrast, it was reported about Rabbi Zeira that when they would send him gifts from the house of the Nasi, he would not accept them, but when they would invite him, he would go there. He said: They are honored by my presence; therefore my visiting is not considered like I am taking a gift from them.

⁹⁹ He also said: Nor was I ever inflexible in exacting a measure of retribution against those who wronged me. This is referring to conduct such as that which Rava said: Anyone who overlooks exacting a measure of retribution against those who wronged him, all his transgressions are removed from him, as it is stated: “He pardons iniquity and overlooks transgression” (Micah 7:18), which is homiletically read as saying: For whom does He pardon iniquity? For he who overlooks transgressions that others have committed against him.

¹⁰⁰ In a similar incident, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi once asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa: In the merit of which virtue were you blessed with longevity? He said to him: Why do you ask me, are you wearied of my long life? Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said to him: My teacher, it is Torah and so I must learn it. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa said to him: In all my days I never gazed at the likeness of a wicked man, as Rabbi Yoḥanan said: It is prohibited for a person to gaze in the image of the likeness of a wicked man, as it is stated that the prophet Elisha said to Jehoram king of Israel: “Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judea, I would not look toward you, nor see you” (II Kings 3:14).

¹⁰¹ Rabbi Elazar said: One who gazes at the likeness of an evil man, his eyes become dim, as it is stated: “And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim so that he could not see” (Genesis 27:1). This happened because he gazed at the wicked Esau.

¹⁰² The Gemara asks: Did this cause Isaac’s blindness? Didn’t Rabbi Yitzḥak say: A curse of an ordinary person should not be lightly regarded in your eyes, because Abimelech cursed Sarah, and although he was not a righteous man, his curse was nevertheless fulfilled, albeit in her descendant. As it is stated that Abimelech said to Sarah with regard to the gift that he gave to Abraham: “Behold, it is for you a covering of the eyes” (Genesis 20:16). Do not read it as “a covering [kesut] of the eyes,” but rather read it as: A blindness [kesiat] of the eyes. Abimelech’s words were a veiled curse for Sarah to suffer from blindness. While she herself did not suffer, the curse was apparently fulfilled in the blindness of her son, Isaac.

¹⁰³ According to Rabbi Yitzḥak, Abimelech's curse was the cause of Isaac's blindness, and it was not, as Rabbi Elazar suggested, the fact he gazed at Esau. The Gemara explains: Both this and that jointly caused it. Rava said: The prohibition against gazing at the likeness of a wicked person is derived from here: "It is not good to raise the face of the wicked" (Proverbs 18:5).

¹⁰⁴ At the time of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa's departure from this world, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said to him: My teacher, bless me. He said to him: May it be God's will that you live to reach to half of my days. When Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi heard this, he asked in astonishment: Are you saying that to the entirety of your days I should not reach? Why? Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa said to him: Shall those who come after you just tend cattle? If you live as long as me, your sons will never be able to succeed you in the position of Nasi. As such, they will never achieve greatness in Torah, and it will be as if they just tended cattle throughout their lives. It is therefore better that your life not be so prolonged, so that they have the opportunity to rise to eminence.

¹⁰⁵ Avuh bar Ihi and Minyamin bar Ihi both spoke on this topic: One of them said: May a blessing come to me for I never gazed at a wicked gentile. And the other one said: May a blessing come to me for I never formed a partnership with a wicked gentile, so as not to have any association with a wicked person.

¹⁰⁶ The Gemara presents a similar incident: Rabbi Zeira was once asked by his disciples: In the merit of which virtue were you blessed with longevity? He said to them: In all my days, I was never angry inside my house with members of my household who acted against my wishes. Nor did I ever walk ahead of someone who was a greater Torah scholar than me. Nor did I ever meditate upon words of Torah in filthy alleyways, as doing so is a disgrace to the Torah. Nor did I ever walk four cubits without meditating on words of Torah or without wearing phylacteries. Nor did I ever sleep in a study hall, neither a deep sleep or a brief nap. Nor did I ever rejoice when my fellow stumbled. Nor did I ever call my fellow by his derogatory nickname [ḥanikhato]. And some say that he said: I never called my fellow by his nickname [ḥakhinato], i.e., even one that is not derogatory.

¹⁰⁷ MISHNA: And Rabbi Yehuda said further: A synagogue that fell into ruin still may not be used for a mundane purpose. Therefore, one may not eulogize in it. And nor may one stretch out and repair ropes in it. The wide expanse of the synagogue would have been particularly suitable for this. And nor may one spread animal traps within it. And nor may one spread out produce upon its roof to dry. And nor may one make it into a shortcut.

¹⁰⁸ The halakha that a synagogue in disrepair still may not be used for mundane purposes is derived from a verse, as it is stated: "And I will bring desolation to your sanctuaries" (Leviticus 26:31). The fact that the word "sanctuaries" appears after the word "desolation" indicates that their sanctity remains upon them even when they are desolate.

¹⁰⁹ However, if grass sprang up of its own accord in the ruined synagogue, although it is not befitting its sanctity, one should not pick it, due to the anguish that it will bring to those who see it. It will remind them of the disrepair of the synagogue and the need to rebuild it.

¹¹⁰ GEMARA: The Sages taught in a baraita: With regard to synagogues: One may not act inside them with frivolity. Therefore, one may not eat in them; nor may one drink in them;

¹¹¹ and one may not adorn oneself inside them; nor may one wander about inside them; nor may one enter them in the sun for protection from the sun, or in the rain to find shelter from the rain; nor may

one offer a eulogy inside them for an individual, which is a private event. However, one may read the Bible inside them, and one may study halakhot inside them, and one may offer a eulogy inside them for a Torah scholar, if the public attends the eulogy.

¹¹² Rabbi Yehuda said: When does this apply? When the synagogues are occupied by the people using them. But when they are in a state of ruin, they should be left alone so that grass will sprout up inside them. And that grass should not be picked and removed, due to the anguish that it will bring to those who see it. It will remind them of the disrepair of the synagogue and the need to rebuild it.

¹¹³ The Gemara asks: Why did Rabbi Yehuda discuss the halakha about grass? Who mentioned anything about it? The Gemara explains: The text of the baraita is incomplete and is teaching the following: And among the other things that may be done in synagogues, they should also be sure to sweep them and to sprinkle their floors with water, in order that grass not sprout up in them. Rabbi Yehuda said: When does this apply? When the synagogues are occupied by the people using them, but when they are in a state of ruin, they should be left alone so that grass will sprout up inside them. If grass did sprout up, it should not be removed, due to the anguish that this will bring to those who see it.

¹¹⁴ Rav Asi said: Synagogues in Babylonia are built from the outset with a stipulation that they not have the full sanctity of a synagogue, in order that it be permitted to use them for the community's general needs. But nevertheless, one should not act inside them with frivolity. The Gemara explains: What is meant by this? One should not make business calculations in a synagogue.

¹¹⁵ Rav Asi said: With regard to a synagogue in which people make business calculations, they will eventually keep a corpse inside it overnight. The Gemara questions the wording of this dictum: Can it really enter your mind to say that they will ever actually keep a corpse inside it overnight? Could it really be that there will not be any other alternative? Rather, Rav Asi means that as a punishment for acting with frivolity people in the community will die, including those who have no family, and so ultimately they will have to keep a corpse with no one to bury it [met mitzva] overnight in the synagogue.

¹¹⁶ § The baraita taught: And one may not adorn oneself inside them. Rava said: The prohibition applies only to laypeople, but Torah scholars and their disciples are permitted to do so, as Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: What is the meaning of the term: Bei of the Sages, which is used to describe a study hall? It is a shortened form of house [beita] of the Sages. In order to facilitate the constant presence of the Torah scholars in the study hall, it is permitted for them to use the hall as though it were their home.

¹¹⁷ The baraita continued: And nor may one enter them in the sun for protection from the sun, or in the rain to find shelter from the rain. The Gemara explains: This is similar to that case of Ravina and Rav Adda bar Mattana. They were standing and asking a question of Rava, when a shower [zillha] of rain began to fall upon them. They all entered the synagogue, saying: Our having entered the synagogue is not due to the rain, that we stay dry; rather, it is due to the fact that the halakha we were discussing requires clarity like the day the north wind [istena] blows and the sky is perfectly clear. Therefore, we are entering the synagogue for the sake of studying Torah, which is certainly permitted.

¹¹⁸ Rav Aha, son of Rava, said to Rav Ashi: If a person needs to summon an individual from inside a synagogue, what should he do, since it is not permitted to enter a synagogue just for that purpose?

Rav Ashi said to him: If he is a young Torah scholar, let him recite a halakha upon entering the synagogue; and if he is a tanna who memorizes large numbers of mishnayot, let him recite various mishnayot; and if he is an expert in the Bible, let him recite a verse; and if he is not able to do even this, let him say to a child: Recite for me a verse that you have learned today. Alternatively, he should remain in the synagogue for a short time and only afterward stand up and leave.

¹¹⁹ The baraita continues: And one may offer a eulogy inside them for a Torah scholar if the public attends the eulogy. The Gemara asks: What are the circumstances of a eulogy for the public? Rav Ḥisda depicted a case: For example, a eulogy for a Torah scholar at which Rav Sheshet is present. Owing to his presence, many people will come. Rav Sheshet himself depicted another case: For example, a eulogy at which Rav Ḥisda is present.

¹²⁰ The Gemara offers another example: Rafram once eulogized his daughter-in-law inside a synagogue. He said: Due to my honor and the honor of the deceased, everyone will come to the eulogy. It will consequently be a public event, and it is therefore permitted to hold it in a synagogue. Similarly, Rabbi Zeira once eulogized a certain Sage inside a synagogue. He said: Whether due to my honor, or whether due to the honor of the deceased, everyone will come to the eulogy.

¹²¹ Reish Lakish once eulogized a certain young Torah scholar who was frequently present in Eretz Yisrael and who used to study halakha in the twenty-fourth row of the study hall. He sat so far back because he was not one of the principal scholars. Nevertheless, when he died, Reish Lakish said: Alas, Eretz Yisrael has lost a great man.

¹²² In contrast, there was a certain man who used to study halakha, the Sifra, and the Sifrei, and the Tosefta, and he died. People came and said to Rav Naḥman: Let the Master eulogize him. He said to them: How can I eulogize him? Should I say: Alas, a basket filled with books is lost? This would not be true. Although the man studied many areas of Torah, he was not proficient in them.

¹²³ The Gemara compares the conduct of Reish Lakish in Eretz Yisrael to that of Rav Naḥman in Babylonia. Come and see what the difference is between the harsh scholars of Eretz Yisrael and the saintly ones of Babylonia. Although Reish Lakish was known for his harsh nature, he was still more respectful than Rav Naḥman, who was known for his saintliness.

¹²⁴ We learned in a mishna there (Avot 1:13): And one who makes use of the crown [taga] of Torah learning will perish from the world. Reish Lakish taught: This is referring to one who allows himself to be served by one who studies halakhot, which is the crown of the Torah.

¹²⁵ And Ulla said: It is better that a person should be served by one who studies four orders of the Mishna, and he should not allow himself to be served by one who teaches to others four orders of the Mishna, as in that case of Reish Lakish. He was traveling along the road when he reached a deep puddle of water. A certain man came and placed him upon his shoulders and began transferring him to the other side. Reish Lakish said to him: Have you read the Bible? He said to him: I have read it. He then asked: Have you studied the Mishna? He answered him: I have studied four orders of the Mishna. Reish Lakish then said to him: You have hewn these four mountains and yet you bear the weight of the son of Lakish upon your shoulders? It is inappropriate for you to carry me; throw the son of Lakish into the water.

¹²⁶ The man said to Reish Lakish: It is pleasing for me to serve the Master in this way. Reish Lakish said to him: If so, learn from me this matter that Rabbi Zeira said. In this way you will be considered

my disciple, and it will then be appropriate for you to serve me. Jewish women were strict upon themselves in that even if they see a spot of menstrual blood that is only the size of a mustard seed they wait on its account seven clean days before immersing themselves in a ritual bath to purify themselves.

¹²⁷ The school of Eliyahu taught: Anyone who studies halakhot every day, he is guaranteed that he is destined for the World-to-Come, as it is stated: “His ways [halikhot] are eternal” (Habakkuk 3:6): Do not read the verse as halikhot [ways]; rather, read it as halakhot. Consequently, the verse indicates that the study of the halakhot brings one to eternal life.

¹²⁸ The Sages taught in a baraita:

¹²⁹ One interrupts his Torah study to carry out the dead for burial and to escort a bride to her wedding. They said about Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Elai, that he would interrupt his Torah study to carry out the dead for burial and to escort a bride to her wedding. The Gemara qualifies this ruling: In what case is this statement said? Only where there are not sufficient numbers of other people available to perform these mitzvot and honor the deceased or the bride appropriately. However, when there are sufficient numbers, additional people should not interrupt their Torah study to participate.

¹³⁰ The Gemara asks: And how many people are considered sufficient? Rav Shmuel bar Inya said in the name of Rav: Twelve thousand men and another six thousand men to blow horns as a sign of mourning. And some say a different version: Twelve thousand men, among whom are six thousand men with horns. Ulla said: For example, enough to make a procession of people all the way from the town gate [abbula] to the place of burial.

¹³¹ Rav Sheshet said: As the Torah was given, so it should be taken away, i.e., the same honor that was provided when the Torah was given at Mount Sinai should be provided when the Torah is taken through the passing away of a Torah scholar. Just as the Torah was given in the presence of six hundred thousand men, so too its taking should be done in the presence of six hundred thousand men. The Gemara comments: This applies to someone who read the Bible and studied halakhot for himself. But for someone who taught others, there is no limit to the honor that should be shown to him.

¹³² § It is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai says: Come and see how beloved the Jewish people are before the Holy One, Blessed be He. As every place they were exiled, the Divine Presence went with them. They were exiled to Egypt, and the Divine Presence went with them, as it is stated: “Did I reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt?” (I Samuel 2:27). They were exiled to Babylonia, and the Divine Presence went with them, as it is stated: “For your sake I have sent to Babylonia” (Isaiah 43:14). So too, when, in the future, they will be redeemed, the Divine Presence will be with them, as it is stated: “Then the Lord your God will return with your captivity” (Deuteronomy 30:3). It does not state: He will bring back, i.e., He will cause the Jewish people to return, but rather it says: “He will return,” which teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will return together with them from among the various exiles.

¹³³ The Gemara asks: Where in Babylonia does the Divine Presence reside? Abaye said: In the ancient synagogue of Huzal and in the synagogue that was destroyed and rebuilt in Neharde’a. And do not say that the Divine Presence resided here and there, i.e., in both places simultaneously. Rather, at times it resided here in Huzal and at times there in Neharde’a. Abaye said: I have a blessing coming to me, for whenever I am within a distance of a parasang from one of those synagogues, I go

in and pray there, due to the special honor and sanctity attached to them. It was related that the father of Shmuel and Levi were once sitting in the synagogue that was destroyed and rebuilt in Neharde'a. The Divine Presence came and they heard a loud sound, so they arose and left.

¹³⁴ It was further related that Rav Sheshet was once sitting in the synagogue that was destroyed and rebuilt in Neharde'a, and the Divine Presence came but he did not go out. The ministering angels came and were frightening him in order to force him to leave. Rav Sheshet turned to God and said before Him: Master of the Universe, if one is wretched and the other is not wretched, who should defer to whom? Shouldn't the one who is not wretched give way to the one who is? Now I am blind and wretched; why then do you expect me to defer to the angels? God then turned to the angels and said to them: Leave him.

¹³⁵ The verse states: "Yet I have been to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they have come" (Ezekiel 11:16). Rabbi Yitzhak said: This is referring to the synagogues and study halls in Babylonia. And Rabbi Elazar said: This is referring to the house of our master, i.e., Rav, in Babylonia, from which Torah issues forth to the entire world.

¹³⁶ Rava interpreted a verse homiletically: What is the meaning of that which is written: "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations" (Psalms 90:1)? This is referring to the synagogues and study halls. Abaye said: Initially, I used to study Torah in my home and pray in the synagogue. Once I heard and understood that which King David says: "Lord, I love the habitation of Your house" (Psalms 26:8), I would always study Torah in the synagogue, to express my love for the place in which the Divine Presence resides.

¹³⁷ It is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Elazar HaKappar says: In the future, the synagogues and the study halls in Babylonia will be transported and reestablished in Eretz Yisrael, as it is stated: "Surely, like Tabor among the mountains, and like Carmel by the sea, so shall he come" (Jeremiah 46:18). There is a tradition that these mountains came to Sinai at the giving of the Torah and demanded that the Torah should be given upon them. And are these matters not inferred through an a fortiori argument: Just as Tabor and Carmel, which came only momentarily to study Torah, were relocated and established in Eretz Yisrael in reward for their actions, all the more so should the synagogues and study halls in Babylonia, in which the Torah is read and disseminated, be relocated to Eretz Yisrael.

¹³⁸ Bar Kappara interpreted a verse homiletically: What is the meaning of that which is written: "Why do you look askance [teratzdun], O high-peaked mountains, at the mountain that God has desired for His abode" (Psalms 68:17)? A Divine Voice issued forth and said to all the mountains that came and demanded that the Torah be given upon them: Why do you seek [tirtzu] to enter into a legal dispute [din] with Mount Sinai? You are all blemished in comparison to Mount Sinai, as it is written here: "High-peaked [gavunnim]" and it is written there, with regard to the blemishes that disqualify a priest: "Or crookbacked [gibben] or a dwarf" (Leviticus 21:20). Rav Ashi said: Learn from this that one who is arrogant is considered blemished. The other mountains arrogantly insisted that the Torah should be given upon them, and they were therefore described as blemished.

¹³⁹ § The mishna teaches that even if a synagogue fell into ruin, it may not be made into a kappendarya. The Gemara asks: What is meant by kappendarya? Rava said: A shortcut, as implied by its name. The Gemara clarifies: What do you mean by adding: As implied by its name? It is like one who said: Instead of going around the entire row of houses [makkifna addari] to get to the other side, thereby lengthening my journey, I will enter this house and walk through it to the other side. The

word kappendarya sounds like a contraction of makkifna addari. This is what Rava meant by saying: As implied by its name.

¹⁴⁰ Rabbi Abbahu said: If a public path had initially passed through that location, before the synagogue was built, it is permitted to continue to use it as a shortcut, for the honor due to a synagogue cannot annul the public's right of access to the path.

¹⁴¹ Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak said: With regard to one who enters a synagogue without intending to make it into a shortcut, when he leaves he is permitted to make it into a shortcut for himself, by leaving through the exit on the other side of the building. And Rabbi Ḥelbo said that Rav Huna said: With regard to one who enters a synagogue to pray, he is permitted to make it into a shortcut for himself by leaving through a different exit, and it is fitting to do so, as it is stated: "And when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the appointed seasons, he that enters by way of the north gate to bow down shall go forth by the way of the south gate" (Ezekiel 46:9). This indicates that it is a show of respect not to leave through the same entrance through which one came in; it is better to leave through the other side.

¹⁴² § The mishna teaches: If grass sprang up in a ruined synagogue, although it is not befitting its sanctity, one should not pick it, due to the anguish that it will cause to those who see it. It will remind them of the disrepair of the synagogue and the need to rebuild it. The Gemara asks: But isn't it taught in a baraita: One may not pick the grass and feed it to one's animals, but he may pick it and leave it there? The Gemara answers: When we learned the prohibition against picking the grass in the mishna as well, we learned only that it is prohibited to pick it and feed it to one's animals, but it is permitted to leave it there.

¹⁴³ The Sages taught in a baraita: In a cemetery, one may not act with frivolity; one may not graze an animal on the grass growing inside it; and one may not direct a water channel to pass through it; and one may not gather grass inside it to use the grass as feed for one's animals; and if one gathered grass for that purpose, it should be burnt on the spot, out of respect for the dead.

¹⁴⁴ The Gemara clarifies: With regard to the phrase: Out of respect for the dead, to which clause of the baraita does it refer? If we say it is referring to the last clause, that if one gathered grass that it should be burnt out of respect for the dead, then one could ask: Since the grass is burnt on the spot, and not publicly, what respect for the dead is there in this act? Rather, the phrase must be referring to the first clause of the baraita, and it explains why it is prohibited to act with frivolity.

¹⁴⁵ MISHNA: On four Shabbatot during and surrounding the month of Adar, a Torah portion of seasonal significance is read. When the New Moon of Adar occurs on Shabbat, the congregation reads the portion of Shekalim on that Shabbat. If the New Moon occurs during the middle of the week, they advance the reading of that portion to the previous Shabbat, and, in such a case, they interrupt the reading of the four portions on the following Shabbat, which would be the first Shabbat of the month of Adar, and no additional portion is read on it.

¹⁴⁶ On the second Shabbat, the Shabbat prior to Purim, they read the portion: "Remember what Amalek did" (Deuteronomy 25:17–19), which details the mitzva to remember and destroy the nation of Amalek. On the third Shabbat, they read the portion of the Red Heifer [Para] (Numbers 19:1–22), which details the purification process for one who became ritually impure through contact with a corpse. On the fourth Shabbat, they read the portion: "This month [haḥodesh] shall be for you"

(Exodus 12:1–20), which describes the offering of the Paschal lamb. On the fifth Shabbat, they resume the regular weekly order of readings and no special portion is read.

¹⁴⁷ For all special days, the congregation interrupts the regular weekly order of readings, and a special portion relating to the character of the day is read. This applies on the New Moons, on Hanukkah, and on Purim, on fast days, and on the non-priestly watches, and on Yom Kippur.

¹⁴⁸ GEMARA: We learned in a mishna there (Shekalim 1:1): On the first of Adar they make a public announcement concerning the forthcoming collection of half-shekels. The money is used for the communal offerings in the Temple in the coming year.

¹⁴⁹ And a public announcement is made concerning the need to uproot any instances of diverse kinds that have grown in the fields.

¹⁵⁰ The Gemara asks: Granted, an announcement is made concerning the need to uproot diverse kinds, as the beginning of the month of Adar is a time of sowing. Instances of diverse kinds are already noticeable, and therefore it is a fitting time to deal with the matter. But with regard to the announcement concerning the half-shekels, from where do we derive that it should be made at this point in the year?

¹⁵¹ Rabbi Tavi said that Rabbi Yoshiyya said: It is as the verse states: “This is the burnt-offering of each New Moon in its renewal throughout the months of the year” (Numbers 28:14). The Torah says: There is a month in which you must begin to renew and bring the daily and additional offering from animals purchased with the new collections of half-shekels collected that year. Each year a collection is made with which to finance the purchase of communal offerings for the following year. Offerings during that year may be purchased only from collections made for that year.

¹⁵² Elsewhere it is derived through a verbal analogy that the yearly cycle begins with the month of Nisan. And since starting from and during the month of Nisan the offerings must be brought from the new collections of half-shekels, it is necessary to make the collection in the preceding month, i.e., in Adar. Therefore, they advance the reading of Shekalim, and they read it on the first of Adar, in order that the people will be reminded to bring the half-shekels to the Temple in good time.

¹⁵³ The Gemara asks: In accordance with whose opinion is the mishna taught? It is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, for if someone would suggest that it is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, one could counter: Didn’t he say that two weeks is a sufficient period of preparation? As it is taught in a baraita: We begin to inquire into the halakhot of Passover thirty days before Passover. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: We begin to inquire only two weeks before Passover. As such, it should be sufficient to announce the collection of half-shekels from two weeks before Nisan, and there should be no need to advance the announcement to the beginning of Adar, as stated in the mishna.

¹⁵⁴ Even if you say that the mishna is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, it is possible that even he agrees that the announcement concerning the collection of the half-shekels should be made on the first of Adar, since the Master said: On the fifteenth of Adar money-changing tables for collecting the half-shekels are set up throughout the country, and on the twenty-fifth of Adar they are set up in the Temple. Because of the possibility to donate the half-shekels at the tables already from the fifteenth, they advance the reading of Shekalim to inform people of that possibility and read it two weeks earlier, on the first of Adar.

¹⁵⁵ § The Gemara clarifies which passage is read: What is this portion of Shekalim? Rav said: It is the portion of “Command the children of Israel, and say to them: My offering, the provision of My offerings made by fire” (Numbers 28), which details the daily and additional offerings. And Shmuel said: It is the portion of “When you take the count” (Exodus 30:11–16).

¹⁵⁶ Granted, according to the one who said that it is the portion of “When you take the count,” this is the reason that it is called the portion of Shekalim, for the obligation to give half-shekels is written in that portion. However, according to one who said that it is the portion of “My offering, the provision of My offerings,” why should that portion be read? Is there anything written about the half-shekels here? The Gemara answers: Yes. What is the reason that they are collected in Adar? As per the explanation of Rabbi Tavi, the half-shekels are collected to be used for the coming year’s daily and additional offerings. Therefore, reading the portion concerning those offerings will serve well as a reminder for people to donate.

¹⁵⁷ Granted, according to the one who said that it is the portion of “Command the children of Israel: My offering, the provision of My offerings,” it is logical to read that portion, because the offerings that will be purchased with the half-shekels are written there, as per the explanation of Rabbi Tavi. However, according to one who said that it is the portion of “When you take the count,” why should that portion be read? Is anything about the offerings written in that portion? The collection of half-shekels for use in the construction of the sockets of the Tabernacle are the only thing written in that portion. What does that have to do with the collection of half-shekels for the purchase of offerings that is held in the month of Adar?

¹⁵⁸ The Gemara answers: The selection of that portion is in accordance with the explanation of the portion that Rav Yosef taught: The three instances of the word: Contribution, in that portion teach that there were three contributions of half-shekels: The contribution of the altar is for the purchase of communal offerings to be sacrificed on the altar; and the contribution of the sockets is for constructing the sockets; and the contribution of the Temple maintenance is for the Temple maintenance. Therefore, according to Rav Yosef, it is understandable why the portion of “When you take the count” is read. It deals explicitly with the collection of half-shekels.

¹⁵⁹ The Gemara asks further: Granted, according to the one who said that it is the portion of “When you take the count,” this is what is different about this New Moon of Adar and other New Moons when they occur on Shabbat. On the New Moon of Adar, “When you take the count” is read because it describes the collection of half-shekels. On other New Moons, when they occur on Shabbat, the portion of “Command the children of Israel” is read because it mentions the additional offerings brought on Shabbat and the New Moon.

¹⁶⁰ However, according to the one who said that “Command the children of Israel, and say to them: My offering,” what is different about the portion read on the New Moon of Adar and the portion read on other New Moons when they occur on Shabbat, for the same portion is read in all cases? The Gemara answers: They are different: For on other New Moons, when they occur on Shabbat, six people read from the regular weekly portion of the matter of the day and one reads from the portion for the New Moon, whereas now, on the New Moon of Adar, if it occurs on Shabbat, all seven read from the portion of the New Moon.

¹⁶¹ The Gemara asks: This answer works out well according to the one who said that when the mishna states that on the fifth Shabbat, we resume the regular order of readings. The intention is that

one resumes the regular weekly order of Torah portions. This implies that on the previous four Shabbatot, the regular portion was not read at all. Rather, only the special portions delineated in the mishna were read. Therefore, it makes sense to say that all seven people read from the special portion.

¹⁶² However, according to the one who says that the mishna's intention is that one resumes the regular order of concluding readings from the Prophets [haftarot], and on the previous Shabbatot one also reads from the regular portion of the matter of the day, then the original question stands: What is different about the portion read on the New Moon of Adar and the portion read on other New Moons when they occur on Shabbat?

¹⁶³ The Gemara answers: They are different: For whereas on other New Moons, when they occur on Shabbat, six people read from the regular weekly portion of the matter of the day and one reads from the portion for the New Moon, now, on the New Moon of Adar, if it occurs on Shabbat, three people read from the regular weekly portion of the matter of the day and four read from the portion for the New Moon.

¹⁶⁴ The Gemara raises an objection from the Tosefta (Megilla 3:1): When the New Moon of Adar occurs on Shabbat, they read the Torah portion of Shekalim, and they read as the haftara the story involving Jehoiada the priest (II Kings 12:1–17). Granted, according to the one who said that Shekalim is the portion of “When you take the count,” this is the reason that they read as the haftara the story involving Jehoiada the priest: Because it is comparable in content to the Torah reading, as it is written in the story of Jehoiada: “The money of his assessment of persons” (II Kings 12:5), which is referring to his collection of the half-shekels, and the haftara should always contain a theme similar to the Torah reading.

¹⁶⁵ However, according to the one who said that “My offering, the provision of My offerings” is read as the portion of Shekalim, is the haftara comparable to that portion? It is comparable, as per the explanation of Rabbi Tavi: It is appropriate to read the portion about offerings because the collection of half-shekels is for that purpose.

¹⁶⁶ The Gemara raises an objection from a baraita: If the New Moon of Adar occurs on the Shabbat on which the portion to be read for the regular weekly reading is adjacent to the portion read as Shekalim, whether on the Shabbat preceding the Shabbat on which Shekalim will be read as part of the weekly reading or following it, then they read and repeat Shekalim on both Shabbatot, one time as the special portion Shekalim and the other as part of the regular order.

¹⁶⁷ Granted, according to the one who said that the portion of “When you take the count” is read as Shekalim, this is how it is possible: That portion could occur at that time in the yearlong cycle of the order of readings. In the regular order of reading, “When you take the count” is often read during the beginning of Adar.

¹⁶⁸ However, according to the one who said that the portion of “Command the children of Israel, and say to them, My offering” is read as Shekalim, does that portion ever occur at that time of the year? That portion usually occurs much later in the year, in the summer. The Gemara answers: Yes, it sometimes occurs that this portion is read during the beginning of Adar, for the people of the West, i.e., Eretz Yisrael, who complete the cycle of reading the Torah not in one year but in three years.

¹⁶⁹ It is taught in a baraita in accordance with the opinion of Shmuel: When the New Moon of Adar occurs on Shabbat, they read the portion of “When you take the count,” and they read as the haftara the story involving Jehoiada the priest.

¹⁷⁰ § Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa said: When the New Moon of Adar occurs on Shabbat, the congregation takes out three Torah scrolls from the ark and reads from them. From the first one, they read the portion of the regular weekly reading of the matter of the day; and from the second one they read the portion for the New Moon; and from the third one they read Shekalim, which begins with “When you take the count.” And Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa further said: When the New Moon of Tevet, which always falls during Hanukkah, occurs on Shabbat, they bring three Torah scrolls and read from them. From the first one, they read the portion of the regular cycle of reading of the matter of the day; and from the second one, they read the portion for the New Moon; and from the third one, they read the portion for Hanukkah.

¹⁷¹ The Gemara comments: And it is necessary for Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa to state the halakha in both cases, as, if it had been stated only with regard to the New Moon of Tevet, one could have mistakenly thought that only with regard to that case does Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa state that three Torah scrolls are used. But with regard to the New Moon of Adar, one might think that he holds in accordance with the opinion of Rav, who said that the portion of Shekalim is the portion of “My offering, the provision of My offerings,” and two Torah scrolls will therefore suffice, since the same portion is used both for the portion for the New Moon and for the portion of Shekalim. Therefore, he teaches us that three Torah scrolls are used even on the New Moon of Adar.

¹⁷² The Gemara asks: But, based on that logic, let Rabbi Yitzḥak just say the halakha with respect to this case of the New Moon of Adar, and there would be no need to state that case of the New Moon of Tevet. The Gemara answers: Indeed, one was stated from the other by inference, i.e., Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa stated the halakha explicitly only with regard to the New Moon of Adar, and it was inferred that the same is true of the New Moon of Tevet.

¹⁷³ § An amoraic dispute was stated: When the New Moon of Tevet occurs on a weekday, what Torah portion is read? Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa said: Three people read from the portion for the New Moon, and one reads from the portion for Hanukkah. And Rav Dimi of Haifa said: Three read from the portion for Hanukkah, and one reads from the portion for the New Moon.

¹⁷⁴ Rabbi Mani said: It stands to reason to rule in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa, for it is already an established principle that when a frequent practice and an infrequent practice conflict, the frequent practice takes precedence over the infrequent practice. Since the portion for the New Moon is read more frequently than the portion for Hanukkah, it should be given greater prominence.

¹⁷⁵ Rabbi Avin said: It stands to reason to rule in accordance with the opinion of Rav Dimi, for the following reason: What caused the fourth person to come and read from the Torah? The New Moon, as on the other days of Hanukkah only three people read from the Torah. Therefore, it is only logical that the fourth person should read from the portion for the New Moon.

¹⁷⁶ The Gemara asks: What halakhic conclusion was reached about this matter? Rav Yosef said: We do not concern ourselves with making the portion for the New Moon the primary reading. Rather, three people read from the portion for Hanukkah, and only the fourth reads the portion for the New Moon. And Rabba said: We do not concern ourselves with making the portion for Hanukkah the

primary reading. Rather, three people read from the portion for the New Moon, and only the fourth reads the portion for Hanukkah. The Gemara concludes: And the halakha is that we do not concern ourselves with making the portion for Hanukkah the primary reading, and therefore the portion for the New Moon is primary.

¹⁷⁷ § An amoraic dispute was stated: If the Shabbat on which the portion of Shekalim is to be read occurs on the Shabbat in which the regular weekly portion is “And you shall command” (Exodus 27:20–30:10), what should be done? Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa said: Six people read from the portion “And you shall command,” until but not including the weekly portion of “When you take the count” (Exodus 27:20–30:10), and one person reads the portion of Shekalim from “When you take the count,” until but not including the verse: “And you shall make a copper laver” (Exodus 30:11–16). Abaye said:

¹⁷⁸ Since Shekalim is read from the portion in the Torah immediately following the regular weekly Torah reading, people will mistakenly say that they merely extended the regular reading and then halted there, and they will not realize that the last reading was actually for the sake of Shekalim.

¹⁷⁹ Rather, Abaye said: Six people read from “And you shall command” until but not including “And you shall make a copper laver,” which concludes with the portion used for Shekalim. And then one person repeats and reads Shekalim from “When you take the count” until but not including “And you shall make a copper laver.” The repetition of this portion serves to highlight the fact it was read for the sake of Shekalim.

¹⁸⁰ The Gemara raises an objection from a baraita: If the Shabbat on which Shekalim is to be read occurs on the Shabbat on which the portion to be read for the regular weekly reading is adjacent to Shekalim, whether on the Shabbat preceding that Shabbat or following it, then they read and repeat Shekalim.

¹⁸¹ Granted, according to the opinion of Abaye, it works out well, for the conclusion of the baraita, that we repeat Shekalim, supports his opinion. But according to the opinion of Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa, it is difficult.

¹⁸² The Gemara answers: Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa could have said to you: And according to Abaye, does it really work out well? The reference of the baraita to a case where the Shabbat on which Shekalim is read precedes the Shabbat on which that portion will be read as part of the weekly reading works out well, since it can indeed occur. However, with regard to the reference to that Shabbat following the Shabbat on which that portion is read as part of the weekly reading, under what circumstances can this case be found? It never occurs like that.

¹⁸³ Rather, perforce, what have you to say? That when the baraita refers to repeating Shekalim when the Shabbat on which Shekalim is read follows the Shabbat on which it is read as the regular weekly reading, it means that one repeats it by reading it on two successive Shabbatot. Similarly, here too, when the baraita refers to repeating Shekalim when the Shabbat on which Shekalim is read precedes the Shabbat on which it is read as the regular weekly reading, it means that one repeats it by reading it on two successive Shabbatot.

¹⁸⁴ The Gemara considers a similar case: If the Shabbat on which Shekalim is to be read occurs on the Shabbat on which the regular portion itself begins with “When you take the count,” what should be done? Rabbi Yitzḥak Nappaḥa said: Six people read from “And you shall make a copper laver”

until but not including the portion of “And he assembled” (Exodus 30:17–34:35). This is the entire regular weekly portion of “When you take the count” without the opening passage, which is also the portion of Shekalim. And then one person goes back and reads the portion of Shekalim from “When you take the count” until but not including “And you shall make a copper laver.”

¹⁸⁵ Abaye strongly objects to this: Now people will mistakenly say that they are reading the regular weekly portion out of sequence, and they will not realize that the last reading was actually for the sake of the portion of Shekalim. Rather, Abaye said: Six people read the entire portion of “When you take the count” until but not including the portion of “And he assembled” (Exodus 30:11–34:35), and then one person repeats and reads the portion of Shekalim from “When you take the count” until but not including “And you shall make a copper laver.”

¹⁸⁶ The Gemara notes: It is taught in a baraita in accordance with the opinion of Abaye: If the Shabbat on which Shekalim is to be read occurs on the Shabbat on which the regular portion itself is “When you take the count,” the first part of that portion is read once as part of the weekly reading and then repeated as the portion of Shekalim.

¹⁸⁷ § The mishna states: If the New Moon of Adar occurs during the middle of the week, the congregation advances the reading of Shekalim to the previous week. With regard to this, an amoraic dispute was stated: With regard to when the New Moon of Adar occurs on Friday, Rav said: The congregation advances the reading of the portion to the previous week. And Shmuel said: They defer the reading of the portion to the following day, and it is read on the coming Shabbat.

¹⁸⁸ The Gemara explains the two opinions: Rav said: They advance the reading to the previous week, as, if one would read the portion only on the following day, there will be less than the required number of days, i.e., two weeks, that the announcement needs to precede the setting up of the money-changing tables on the fifteenth. And Shmuel said: They defer the reading of the portion to the following day. As for Rav’s argument, Shmuel could have said to you: Ultimately, in such a year the fifteenth of Adar also occurs on a Friday, and therefore the money-changing tables will not be brought out until Sunday. Consequently, there will still be a full two weeks between the announcement and the setting of the tables. Therefore, they can defer the reading to the following day.

¹⁸⁹ The Gemara offers various proofs for Rav’s opinion: We learned in the mishna: If the New Moon occurs during the middle of the week, they advance the reading of that portion to the previous Shabbat, and in such a case they interrupt the reading of the four portions on the following Shabbat. The Gemara explains the proof: What; is it not that this is referring even to a case when the New Moon occurs on Friday? This would prove Rav’s opinion. No; it is referring specifically to a case where it occurs during the middle of the week.

¹⁹⁰ Come and hear another proof from a baraita: Which is the first Shabbat of the four Shabbatot on which the special portions are read? The Shabbat of whichever week during which the New Moon of Adar occurs, and this is the case even if it occurs on Friday. The Gemara explains the proof: What, is it not that the baraita teaches that the case when it occurs even on Friday is similar to the case where it occurs during the middle of the week, and just as when it occurs during the middle of the week, they advance the reading to the previous Shabbat, so too, when it occurs on Friday, they advance the reading to the previous Shabbat? This would therefore prove Rav’s opinion.

¹⁹¹ Shmuel said: The baraita should be emended, and instead of saying: During which the New Moon occurs, it should say: On which the New Moon occurs, i.e., on Shabbat itself. And so the school of Shmuel taught: On which the New Moon occurs.

¹⁹² The Gemara suggests: This dispute between the amora'im is like a dispute between tanna'im, as it is taught in a baraita: With regard to the reading of the four special portions, they interrupt the flow of Shabbatot, i.e., there is a Shabbat in which no special portion is read; this is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: They do not interrupt the flow of Shabbatot. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: When do I say that they do not interrupt the flow of Shabbatot? When the New Moon of Adar occurs on Friday, since I hold that in that case Shekalim is read on the following day, and therefore the four portions are read on four consecutive weeks. However, when the New Moon of Adar occurs during the week, one advances and reads Shekalim on the previous Shabbat, although it is still the month of Shevat, and therefore on one of the Shabbatot in Adar there will be no reading. It would appear, then, that Shmuel holds in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar, whereas Rav holds in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi.

¹⁹³ § The mishna states: On the second Shabbat of Adar, the Shabbat prior to Purim, they read the portion of "Remember [zakhor] what Amalek did" (Deuteronomy 25:17–19). The portion of Zakhor is associated with Purim because according to tradition, Haman was a descendant of Amalek, and so the victory over him and his supporters was a victory against Amalek. With regard to this, an amoraic dispute was stated: With regard to when Purim occurs on a Friday, Rav said: The congregation advances the reading of the portion of Zakhor to the previous Shabbat. And Shmuel said: They defer it to the Shabbat following Purim.

¹⁹⁴ The Gemara explains the two opinions: Rav said: They advance it to the previous Shabbat, in order that the observance of Purim should not precede the remembrance of the destruction of Amalek, which is achieved through reading the portion of Zakhor. And Shmuel said: They defer its reading. And as for Rav's argument, Shmuel could have said to you: Since there are the walled cities that observe Purim on the fifteenth, at least with regard to them, the observance and the remembrance come together on the same day, and that is sufficient.

¹⁹⁵ The Gemara offers various proofs for Rav's opinion: We learned in the mishna: On the second Shabbat they read the portion of Zakhor. The Gemara suggests: Is it not the case that when the New Moon of Adar occurs on Shabbat, Purim occurs on Friday, and yet the mishna teaches: On the second Shabbat they read the portion of Zakhor? This supports Rav's opinion that in all cases the portion is read before Purim. Rav Pappa said: There is no proof, because one could argue as follows: What is the intention of the mishna when it is referring to the second Shabbat? It could mean the second Shabbat on which a special portion is read, which, if Purim occurs on Friday, occurs only after the interruption of the previous Shabbat, during which no portion was read.

¹⁹⁶ Come and hear another proof from a baraita: Which is the second Shabbat on which a special portion is read? The Shabbat of whichever week during which Purim occurs, and this is the case even if it occurs on Friday. The Gemara explains the proof: What, is it not that the baraita teaches that even if Purim occurs on Friday, the case is similar to the case when it occurs during the middle of the week, and therefore, just as when it occurs during the middle of the week we advance the reading to the previous Shabbat, so too, when it occurs on Friday, we should advance the reading to the previous Shabbat? This baraita would therefore prove Rav's opinion.

¹⁹⁷ Shmuel said: The baraita should be emended, and instead of saying: During which Purim occurs, it should say: On which Purim occurs, i.e., on Shabbat itself. And so the school of Shmuel taught: On which Purim occurs.

¹⁹⁸ With regard to when Purim occurs on Shabbat itself, Rav Huna said: Everyone agrees, i.e., both Rav and Shmuel, that they do not advance the reading of the portion of Zakhor to the previous Shabbat, but it is read on that Shabbat. And Rav Nahman said: Even in this case there is still a dispute, for Rav maintains that in all cases the remembrance of the destruction of Amalek, which is achieved through reading the portion of Zakhor, must always precede the observance of Purim. It was also stated that Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Abba said that Rav said: If Purim occurs on Shabbat, one advances and reads the portion of Zakhor on the previous Shabbat, as Rav Nahman understood Rav's opinion.

¹⁹⁹ § The mishna states: On the third Shabbat, they read the portion of the Red Heifer [Para] (Numbers 19:1–22). The Sages taught in a baraita: Which is the third Shabbat? Whichever Shabbat occurs immediately after Purim. It was also stated: Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: The Shabbat that is immediately before the New Moon of Nisan.

²⁰⁰ The Gemara comments: And these two statements do not disagree, as they refer to different cases: This statement of Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, is referring to a case where the New Moon of Nisan occurs on Shabbat itself. In that case, the portion of HaḤodesh is read then, and therefore the portion of Para is read on the preceding Shabbat. And that statement of the baraita is referring to a case where the New Moon of Nisan occurs during the middle of the week. Therefore, HaḤodesh is read on the Shabbat immediately preceding the New Moon, and Para is read on the Shabbat before that one, which is the Shabbat that is adjacent to Purim and after it.

²⁰¹ § The mishna states: On the fourth Shabbat, they read the portion of “This month [haḥodesh] shall be for you” (Exodus 12:1–20). The Sages taught in a baraita: When the New Moon of Adar occurs on Shabbat, they read “When you take the count” as the portion of Shekalim. And they read as the haftara the story involving Jehoiada the priest (II Kings 12:1–27). And which is the first Shabbat? The Shabbat of whichever week during which the New Moon of Adar occurs, and this is the case even if it occurs on Friday. On the second Shabbat, they read the portion of Zakhor, and they read as the haftara of “I remembered that which Amalek did” (I Samuel 15:1–34). And which is the second Shabbat? The Shabbat of whichever week during which Purim occurs, and this is the case even if it occurs on Friday.

²⁰² On the third Shabbat, they read the portion of the Red Heifer [Para], and they read as the haftara the portion of “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you” (Ezekiel 36:25–38). And which is the third Shabbat? That which is adjacent to Purim and after it. On the fourth Shabbat, they read the portion of “This month [haḥodesh] shall be for you,” and they read as the haftara the portion of “Thus says the Lord God: In the first month, on the first day of the month” (Ezekiel 45:18–46:18).

²⁰³ And which is the fourth Shabbat? The Shabbat of whichever week during which the New Moon of Nisan occurs, and this is the case even if it occurs on Friday.

²⁰⁴ § The mishna states: On the fifth Shabbat, we resume the regular weekly order. The Gemara clarifies the mishna's intent: To the order of what does one resume? Rabbi Ami said: One resumes the regular weekly order of Torah portions. Rabbi Ami holds that on the weeks on which the special portions are read, the regular weekly Torah portion is not read at all, and therefore the cycle is

resumed only on the fifth Shabbat. Rabbi Yirmeya said: One resumes the regular weekly order of the haftarot. Rabbi Yirmeya holds that even on the Shabbatot on which the special portions are read, the regular weekly portion is still read; the special portion is read by the last reader as the maftir. However, the haftara of the regular cycle is entirely replaced with a portion from the Prophets that parallels the special portion. As such, it is the cycle of haftarot that is resumed on the fifth Shabbat.

²⁰⁵ Abaye said: It stands to reason that one should rule in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Ami, as we learned in the mishna: For all special days, we interrupt the regular order of readings, and a special portion relating to the character of the day is read. This applies to the New Moons, to Hanukkah, and to Purim, to fast days, and to non-priestly watches, and to Yom Kippur.

²⁰⁶ Abaye explains his proof: Granted, according to the one who said that one resumes the regular weekly order of Torah portions, this statement in the mishna is referring to the fact that there is a reading of the weekly Torah portion on weekdays. If one of the special days listed in the mishna occurs on Monday or Thursday, the weekly Torah reading is replaced by the special portion for that day. However, according to one who said that one resumes the regular weekly order of haftarot, what could the mishna mean when it says that the regular cycle is interrupted? Is there a haftara on weekdays? The mishna therefore supports Rabbi Ami's opinion.

²⁰⁷ And the other one, Rabbi Yirmeya, would counter: This case is as it is, and that case is as it is. On days when there is a haftara, the reference in the mishna is to the order of the haftarot. On weekdays, when there is no haftara, the reference is to the order of the Torah readings. Therefore, no proof can be deduced from the mishna.

²⁰⁸ The Gemara asks: But on fast days, why do I need to have any interruption of the regular order of Torah readings? Let us read in the morning the regular weekly portion of the matter of the day, and in the afternoon service let us read the portion of a fast day. The Gemara comments: This supports the statement of Rav Huna, for Rav Huna said: From the morning of communal fasts, a gathering is held in the synagogue. The community leaders examine the conduct of the townspeople and admonish those whose behavior is found wanting. Therefore, there is no time in the morning to read the Torah portion for fast days.

²⁰⁹ The Gemara asks: What does the community do on a public fast day? Abaye said: From the morning until the middle of the day, the community gathers in the synagogue, and the leaders examine the affairs of the town to determine whether and how the people's conduct needs to be improved. From the middle of the day until the evening, a quarter of the day is spent reading from the Torah and reading the haftara, and a quarter of the day is spent praying, as it is stated: "And they read in the book of the Torah of the Lord their God one quarter of the day, and a quarter of the day they confessed, and they prostrated themselves before the Lord their God" (Nehemiah 9:3).

²¹⁰ The Gemara objects: But perhaps I should reverse the order, and the first half of the day should be spent reading from the Torah and praying, and the second half of the day should be spent examining the affairs of the townspeople. The Gemara answers: It should not enter your mind to say this, as it is written: "Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel due to the transgression of the exiles gathered around me, and I sat appalled until the evening offering" (Ezra 9:4), and it is written in the next verse: "And at the evening offering I arose from my fast, and having rent my garment and my mantle; I fell on my knees, and I spread out my hands to the Lord my God"

(Ezra 9:5). This indicates that the first half of a public fast should be dedicated to an inspection of the community's behavior, and the rest of the day should be devoted to prayer.

²¹¹ MISHNA: On the first day of Passover, the congregation reads from the portion of the Festivals of Leviticus (Leviticus 22:26–23:44). On Shavuot they read the portion of “Seven weeks” (Deuteronomy 16:9–12). On Rosh HaShana they read the portion of “And on the seventh month on the first of the month” (Leviticus 23:23–25). On Yom Kippur they read the portion of “After the death” (Leviticus 16). On the first Festival day of Sukkot they read from the portion of the Festivals of Leviticus (Leviticus 22:26–23:44), and on the other days of Sukkot they read selections from the portion of the offerings of Sukkot (Numbers 29:12–39).

²¹² On each day of Hanukkah they read selections from the portion of the dedication of the altar by the tribal princes (Numbers 7). On Purim they read the portion of “And Amalek came” (Exodus 17:8–16). On the New Moon they read the portion of “And in the beginnings of your months” (Numbers 28:11–15). And in the non-priestly watches they read the act of Creation (Genesis 1:1–2:3). The Jewish people were divided into twenty-four watches. Each week, it would be the turn of a different watch to send representatives to Jerusalem to be present in the Temple to witness the sacrificial service. Those remaining behind would fast during the week, from Monday to Thursday, offer special prayers, and read the account of Creation from the Torah. On fast days,

²¹³ they read the portion of blessings and curses (Leviticus, chapter 26). One should not interrupt the reading of the curses by having two different people read them. Rather, one person reads all of them.

²¹⁴ On Mondays, and on Thursdays, and on Shabbat during the afternoon service, they read in accordance with the regular weekly order, i.e., they proceed to read the first section of the Torah portion that follows the portion that was read on the previous Shabbat morning. However, these readings are not counted as a progression in the reckoning of reading the Torah portions, i.e., they do not proceed on Monday to read the section that immediately follows the section read on Shabbat during the afternoon, and then the following section on Thursday. Rather, until the reading on the following Shabbat morning, they return to and read the same first section of the Torah portion that follows the portion that was read on the previous Shabbat morning.

²¹⁵ On Festivals and holidays, they read a portion relating to the character of the day, as it is stated: “And Moses declared to the children of Israel the appointed seasons of the Lord” (Leviticus 23:44), which indicates that part of the mitzva of the Festivals is that the people should read the portion relating to them, each one in its appointed time.

²¹⁶ GEMARA: The Sages taught in a baraita: On the first day of Passover, the congregation reads from the portion of the Festivals (Leviticus 22:26–23:44), and they read as the haftara the account of the Passover celebrated at Gilgal (Joshua 5:2–14). The Gemara comments: And nowadays, in the Diaspora, when there are two Festival days of Passover, on the first day they read as the haftara the account of the Passover celebrated at Gilgal, and on the next day they read from the account of the Passover observed by Josiah (II Kings 23).

²¹⁷ The baraita continues: And on the other days of Passover, one collects and reads from various Torah portions of matters relating to Passover. The Gemara asks: What are these portions? Rav Pappa said: A mnemonic for them is mem, ales, peh vav. Each letter stands for a different reading: Mem for the portion of: “Draw out [mishkhu] and take your lambs” (Exodus 12:21–51); ales for the portion of “If [im] you lend money to any of My people” (Exodus 22:24–23:19); peh for the portion of “Hew

[pesol] for yourself” (Exodus 34:1–26); and vav for the portion “And the Lord spoke [vaydabber]” (Numbers 9:1–14).

²¹⁸ The baraita continues: On the last Festival day of Passover, they read the portion of “And it came to pass, when Pharaoh let the people go” (Exodus 13:17–15:26), because it includes the account of the splitting of the Red Sea, and they read as the haftara the portion “And David spoke” (II Samuel 22), which is the song of David. And in the Diaspora, on the next day, the eighth day of Passover, they read the portion “All the firstborns” (Deuteronomy 15:19–16:17), and they read as the haftara the portion of “This very day” (Isaiah 10:32–12:6), because it discusses the downfall of Sennacherib, which occurred on the night of Passover.

²¹⁹ Abaye said: And nowadays, on the eight days of Passover in the Diaspora, everyone is accustomed to read portions that are indicated by the mnemonic phrase: Draw the bull, sanctify with money, hew in the wilderness, send the firstborn. This alludes to the following portions: “Draw out and take your lambs” (Exodus 12:21–51) and “A bull or a sheep” (Leviticus 22:26–23:44); “Sanctify to Me all the firstborn” (Exodus 13:1–16) and “If you lend money to any of My people” (Exodus 22:24–23:19); “Hew for yourself” (Exodus 34:1–26) and “And the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai” (Numbers 9:1–14); “And it came to pass, when Pharaoh let the people go” (Exodus 13:17–15:26) and “All the firstborns” (Deuteronomy 15:19–16:17).

²²⁰ The baraita continues: On Shavuot they read the portion of “Seven weeks,” and they read as the haftara from Habakkuk, chapter 2, since it mentions the giving of the Torah at Sinai. Others say: They read the portion of “In the third month” (Exodus 19:1–20:23), which describes the giving of the Torah, and they read as the haftara from the account of the Divine Chariot (Ezekiel 1). The Gemara comments: And nowadays, in the Diaspora, when there are two days of Shavuot, we act in accordance with both opinions, but in the reverse order. On the first day they read the portion of “In the third month,” and on the second day they read the portion of “Seven weeks.”

²²¹ The baraita continues: On Rosh HaShana they read the portion of “On the seventh month on the first of the month” (Numbers 29:1–6) and they read as the haftara “Is Ephraim My dear son?” (Jeremiah 31:1–20), as it contains the verse: “I earnestly remember him still,” which recalls God’s love for His people. And some say that they read “And the Lord visited Sarah” (Genesis 21), which describes how God blessed her that she should have a child, and, according to tradition, God blessed her on Rosh HaShana. And they read as the haftara from the account of Hannah (I Samuel 1:1–2:10), who, according to tradition, was also blessed on Rosh HaShana that she should have a child.

²²² The Gemara comments: And nowadays, when there are two days of Rosh HaShana, on the first day they read Genesis 21 in accordance with the opinion cited as: Some say. And on the next day they read “And God tested Abraham” (Genesis 22), in order to mention the merit of the binding of Isaac on the day of God’s judgment, and they read as the haftara “Is Ephraim My dear son?”

²²³ The baraita continues: On Yom Kippur they read the portion of “After the death” (Leviticus 16), and they read as the haftara the portion of “For thus says the High and Lofty One” (Isaiah 57:14–58:14), which deals with fasting and repentance. And during the afternoon service they read from the portion detailing forbidden sexual relations (Leviticus 18) to convey the severity of these transgressions, so that if anyone transgressed any of these prohibitions he will repent on Yom Kippur. And they read as the haftara the book of Jonah, which mentions the repentance of the people of Nineveh.

²²⁴ Having mentioned the haftara read on Yom Kippur, the Gemara cites that which Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Wherever you find a reference in the Bible to the might of the Holy One, Blessed be He, you also find a reference to His humility adjacent to it. Evidence of this fact is written in the Torah, repeated in the Prophets, and stated a third time in the Writings.

²²⁵ It is written in the Torah: “For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords” (Deuteronomy 10:17), and it is written immediately afterward: “He executes the judgment of the fatherless and widow” (Deuteronomy 10:18), displaying his humility in caring for even the weakest parts of society. It is repeated in the Prophets: “For thus says the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, Whose name is sacred” (Isaiah 57:15), and it is written immediately afterward: “In the high and holy place I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:15). It is stated a third time in the Writings, as it is written: “Extol Him Who rides upon the clouds, Whose name is the Lord” (Psalms 68:5), and it is written immediately afterward: “A father of the fatherless, and a judge of widows” (Psalms 68:6).

²²⁶ The baraita continues: On the first Festival day of Sukkot, they read from the portion of the Festivals found in Leviticus (Leviticus 22:26–23:44), and they read as the haftara the portion of “Behold the day of the Lord comes” (Zechariah 14), which mentions the festival of Sukkot. The Gemara comments: And nowadays, in the Diaspora, when there are two Festival days of Sukkot, on the next day, they read the same Torah portion. But what do they read as the haftara? They read the portion of “And all the men of Israel assembled themselves to King Solomon” (I Kings 8:2–21), which describes events that took place on the festival of Sukkot.

²²⁷ The baraita continues: And on all the other days of Sukkot, they read selections from the portion of the offerings of Sukkot found in the book of Numbers, chapter 29. On the last Festival day of Sukkot, i.e., the Eighth Day of Assembly, they read the portion of “All the firstborns,” starting with the portion of “You shall tithe,” since it includes many mitzvot and statutes relating to gifts for the poor, who should be helped during this period of rejoicing, and it concludes with the halakhot governing firstborns (Deuteronomy 14:22–16:17). And they read as the haftara the portion of “And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying” (I Kings 8:54–9:1), which occurred on that day. On the next day, the second day of the Eighth Day of Assembly in the Diaspora, they read the portion of “And this is the blessing” (Deuteronomy, chapters 33–34) until the end of the Torah, and they read as the haftara “And Solomon stood” (I Kings 8:22–53).

²²⁸ Rav Huna said that Rav said: When Shabbat occurs on one of the intermediate days of a Festival, whether on Passover or on Sukkot, they read the Torah portion of “See, You say to me” (Exodus 33:12–34:26), as it includes the halakhot of the Festivals and the intermediate days. They read as the haftara, on Passover, from the portion of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1–14), which portrays redemption from servitude, and on Sukkot they read “And it shall come to pass on that day when Gog shall come” (Ezekiel 38:18–39:16), which speaks of the future redemption.

²²⁹ The baraita continues: On each day of Hanukkah they read a selection from the portion of the dedication of the altar by the tribal princes (Numbers 7), and they read as the haftara from the portion of the lamps of Zechariah (Zechariah 2:14–4:7). The Gemara comments: And if it occurs that there are two Shabbatot during Hanukkah, on the first Shabbat they read from the portion of the lamps of

Zechariah, and on the latter one they read from the portion of the lamps of Solomon (I Kings 7:40–50), which discusses the lamps in the Temple.

²³⁰ The baraita continues: On Purim they read the portion of “And Amalek came” (Exodus 17:8–16). On the New Moon they read the portion of “And in the beginnings of your month” (Numbers 28:11–15). When the New Moon occurs on Shabbat, they read as the haftara the portion that concludes with “And it shall come to pass that every New Moon, and every Shabbat, shall all flesh come to bow down on the ground before Me” (Isaiah 66), as it mentions both Shabbat and the New Moon. When the New Moon occurs on Sunday, on the previous day, i.e., Shabbat, they read as the haftara the portion of “And Jonathan said to him: Tomorrow is the New Moon” (I Samuel 20:18–42), which describes events that took place on the eve of the New Moon.

²³¹ Rav Huna said:

²³² When the New Moon of Av occurs on Shabbat, they read as the haftara the portion that includes the verse “Your New Moons and your Festivals, My soul hated; they were a burden to Me” (Isaiah 1:14). The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of: “They were a burden to Me”? The Gemara explains: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: It is not enough for the Jewish people that they sin before Me, but in addition, they burden Me to reconsider what harsh decree I shall bring upon them, for they are petitioning Me to annul those decrees.

²³³ The Gemara asks: On the Ninth of Av itself, what do we read as the haftara? Rav said: The portion containing the verse “How did the faithful city become a harlot?” (Isaiah 1:21). The Gemara asks: What Torah portion do they read? It is taught in a baraita that others say: They read the portion containing the verse “But if you will not hearken to me” (Leviticus 26:14). Rabbi Natan bar Yosef said: They read the portion containing the verse: “How long will this people provoke me?” (Numbers 14:11). And some say: They read the portion containing the verse: “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation?” (Numbers 14:27). The Gemara comments that Abaye said: Nowadays, everyone is accustomed to read the portion of “When you shall beget children” (Deuteronomy 4:25–40), and they read as the haftara the portion of “I will utterly consume them” (Jeremiah 8:13–9:23).

²³⁴ § The mishna states: In the non-priestly watches they read the act of Creation. The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived, i.e., why do they read the account of Creation? Rabbi Ami said: To allude to the fact that were it not for the non-priestly watches, heaven and earth would not endure, as it is stated: “Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would not have set the statutes of heaven and earth” (Jeremiah 33:25). God’s covenant is referring to the offerings sacrificed in the Temple, which sustain the world.

²³⁵ And with regard to Abraham it is written: “And he said, O Lord God, by what shall I know that I shall inherit it?” (Genesis 15:8). Abraham said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, perhaps, Heaven forbid, the Jewish people will sin before You, and You will do to them as You did to the generation of the Flood and as You did to the generation of the Dispersion, i.e., You will completely destroy them? God said to him: No, I will not do that.

²³⁶ Abraham then said before Him: Master of the Universe: “By what shall I know this?” God said to him: “Take Me a heifer of three years old” (Genesis 15:9). With this, God intimated to Abraham that even if his descendants will sin, they will be able to achieve atonement through sacrificing offerings. Abraham said before Him: Master of the Universe, this works out well when the Temple is standing and offerings can be brought to achieve atonement, but when the Temple will no longer be standing,

what will become of them? God said to him: I have already established for them the order of offerings, i.e., the verses of the Torah pertaining to the halakhot of the offerings. Whenever they read those portions, I will deem it as if they sacrificed an offering before Me, and I will pardon them for all of their iniquities.

²³⁷ § The mishna states: On fast days the congregation reads the portion of blessings and curses (Leviticus, chapter 16), and one may not interrupt the reading of the curses by having two different people read them. Rather, one person reads all of them. The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived? Why does one not interrupt the reading of the curses? Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Gamda said that Rabbi Asi said: For the verse states: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be weary of His correction” (Proverbs 3:11). If one makes a break in the middle of the curses, it appears as if he loathes rebuke.

²³⁸ Reish Lakish said a different answer: It is because one does not say a blessing over a calamity. If a second person were to begin to read in the middle of the portion of the curses, the blessing upon his reading would be considered a blessing over a calamity. Rather, what does one do? It is taught in a baraita: When one begins the reading, one begins with the verse before the curses, and when one concludes the reading, one concludes with the verse after them. In this way, neither the blessing before the reading nor after it relates directly to verses of calamity.

²³⁹ Abaye said: They taught this only with regard to the curses that are recorded in Leviticus, but with regard to the curses that are recorded in Deuteronomy, one may interrupt them by having two different people read them. What is the reason for this distinction? These curses in Leviticus are stated in the plural, and Moses pronounced them from the mouth of the Almighty. As such, they are more severe. However, these curses in Deuteronomy are stated in the singular, and Moses said them on his own, like the rest of the book of Deuteronomy. They are therefore less harsh and may be interrupted.

²⁴⁰ It was related that Levi bar Buti was once reading the portion of the curses before Rav Huna, and he was stammering in his reading, as it was difficult for him to utter such harsh pronouncements. Rav Huna said to him: If you wish, you may stop where you are and a different reader will continue, for they taught one may not have two people read the curses only with regard to the curses that are recorded in Leviticus. But with regard to the curses that are recorded in Deuteronomy, one may interrupt them by having two different people read them.

²⁴¹ It is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: Ezra enacted for the Jewish people that they should read the portion of the curses that are recorded in Leviticus before Shavuot and the portion of the curses that are recorded in Deuteronomy before Rosh HaShana. The Gemara asks: What is the reason for this? Abaye said, and some say that it was Reish Lakish who said: In order that the year may conclude together with its curses, and the new year may begin without the ominous reading of the curses.

²⁴² The Gemara asks: Granted, with regard to the curses that are recorded in Deuteronomy, there is relevance to the reason: In order that the year may conclude together with its curses, for Rosh HaShana is clearly the beginning of a new year. However, with regard to the curses that are recorded in Leviticus, what relevance does that reason have? Is that to say Shavuot is a new year? The Gemara answers: Yes, indeed, Shavuot is also a new year, as we learned in a mishna (Rosh HaShana 16a):

And on Shavuot, divine judgment is made concerning the fruit of the trees, which indicates that Shavuot also has the status of a new year.

²⁴³ It is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: If old men say to you: Demolish, and children say to you: Build, then demolish and do not build, because the demolishing of old men is ultimately as constructive as building, despite the fact that it appears destructive, and the building of children is as destructive as demolishing. An indication of this matter is Rehoboam, son of Solomon. He ignored the advice of the Elders and did not lower himself before his people, which ultimately led to the people rebelling against him.

²⁴⁴ The Sages taught in a baraita: With regard to the place in the Torah where the congregation concludes the reading on Shabbat morning, it is from there that they continue to read in the afternoon service on Shabbat. Where they conclude in the afternoon service on Shabbat, from there they continue to read on Monday morning. Where they conclude on Monday, from there they continue to read on Thursday morning. Where they conclude on Thursday, from there they continue to read on the coming Shabbat. This is the statement of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yehuda says: With regard to the place in the Torah where they conclude the reading on Shabbat morning, it is from there that they continue to read in the afternoon service on Shabbat. And from that same place they continue to read on Monday morning, and on Thursday morning, and on the coming Shabbat.

²⁴⁵ The Gemara notes that Rabbi Zeira said: The halakha is that with regard to the place where they conclude the reading on Shabbat morning, it is from there that they continue to read in the afternoon service on Shabbat. And from that same place they continue to read on Monday morning, and on Thursday morning, and on the coming Shabbat. The Gemara asks: If so, let him simply say: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda. Why did he have to explicitly state the whole halakha?

²⁴⁶ The Gemara answers: Because there are those who reversed the names in the baraita and attributed the position of Rabbi Yehuda to Rabbi Meir, and vice versa. Therefore, in order to avoid any lack of clarity, Rabbi Zeira stated the halakha explicitly.

²⁴⁷ The Sages taught in a baraita: When a person reads from the Torah, he should open the scroll and see the place from where he will read, furl it so that it is closed, and recite the blessing, and then he should again open the scroll, and read. This is the statement of Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yehuda said: He should open the scroll, and see the place from where he will read, and, without closing it again, he should recite the blessing, and read.

²⁴⁸ The Gemara asks: What is the reason for Rabbi Meir's opinion that the blessing is not recited over an open scroll? The Gemara answers: His reasoning is in accordance with the statement of Ulla, as Ulla said: For what reason did the Sages say that one who reads from the Torah should not assist the translator, but rather the translation should be exclusively said by the translator? In order that people should not say that the translation is written in the Torah. Here too, the scroll should be closed when reciting the blessings, in order that people should not say that the blessings are written in the Torah.

²⁴⁹ And Rabbi Yehuda is not concerned about this, as he claims that with regard to the translation, there is the possibility of people erring in this way, but with regard to the blessings, there is no concern about people erring. People will realize the blessings are not actually part of the Torah's text because they are recited by each person who reads.

²⁵⁰ Rabbi Zeira said that Rav Mattana said: The halakha is that he should open the scroll, see the place from which he will read, and, without closing it again, he should recite the blessing and read. The Gemara asks: If so, let him simply say: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda. Why did he have to explicitly state the whole halakha? The Gemara answers: Because there are those who reversed the names in the baraita and attributed the position of Rabbi Yehuda to Rabbi Meir and vice versa. In order to avoid any lack of clarity, Rabbi Zeira stated the halakha explicitly.

²⁵¹ Rabbi Zeira said that Rav Mattana said: The boards, i.e., the empty margins of a Torah scroll, and the platforms from which the Torah is read do not have any sanctity.

²⁵² § Rabbi Shefatya said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: When one furls a Torah scroll, he needs to position it so that it closes on the seam between two sheets of parchment. Once closed, the seam should be between the two rolls of the scroll, so that if it is mishandled or overly tightened, it will come apart along the seam and not be torn across the writing.

²⁵³ And Rabbi Shefatya said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: When one rolls a Torah scroll from one section to another, he should roll it from the outside, i.e., he should position the scroll so the two rollers are parallel to him and then roll the scroll by rotating the roller farthest away from him by rotating it toward himself, and he should not roll it from the inside, by rotating the roller nearest to him away from himself. If one does this and loses control, the scroll could roll away from him onto the floor.

²⁵⁴ And when one tightens the scroll, after he has found the new section, he should tighten it from the inside, by rotating the roller nearest to him, and not from the outside, by rotating the roller furthest away from him, in order not to extend his arms over the text of the Torah and obscure the view of the community, for it is a mitzva for them to be able to see the text.

²⁵⁵ And Rabbi Shefatya said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: If ten people read from the Torah, the greatest among them should furl the Torah scroll, for this is the most distinguished honor. And the one who furls it takes the reward of all of them, as Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: If ten people read from the Torah, the one who furls it receives the reward of all of them. The Gemara asks: Can it enter your mind to say that he actually receives the reward of all of them? Why should all the others forfeit their reward? Rather, say instead: He receives a reward equivalent to that of all of them.

²⁵⁶ And Rabbi Shefatya said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: If one was deliberating about whether to do a certain action, and a Divine Voice indicated what he should do, from where is it derived that one may make use of a Divine Voice and rely upon it? As it is stated: “And your ears shall hear a word behind you saying: This is the way, walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21). The Gemara comments: This applies only when one heard a male voice in the city, which is unusual, for men are usually found in the fields, or when one heard a female voice in the fields, for women are generally not found there. Since the voice is unusual, one need not doubt it and may rely upon it. And that applies when the voice repeated its message and said: Yes, yes. And that also applies when the voice said: No, no.

²⁵⁷ And Rabbi Shefatya said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Concerning anyone who reads from the Torah without a melody or studies the Mishna without a song, the verse states: “So too I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live” (Ezekiel 20:25), as one who studies Torah through song demonstrates that he is fond of his learning. Furthermore, the tune helps him remember what he has learned.

²⁵⁸ Abaye strongly objects to this: Just because one does not know how to make his voice pleasant, you read concerning him: “And judgments whereby they should not live”? Rather, the verse should be understood in accordance with the statement of Rav Mesharshiyya, who said: Concerning two Torah scholars who dwell in the same city and are not pleasant to one other in matters of halakha, and they quarrel and stir up controversy, the verse states: “So too I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live.”

²⁵⁹ Rabbi Parnakh said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Anyone who holds onto an uncovered Torah scroll, i.e., holds the parchment directly without anything intervening, will be punished by being buried uncovered. The Gemara asks: Can it enter your mind to say that he will actually be buried uncovered? Why should he be buried in such a disgraceful manner? Rather, say that he will be buried metaphorically uncovered, i.e., without the merit of having performed mitzvot.

²⁶⁰ The Gemara again asks: Can it enter your mind to say that he will be buried without the merit of having performed mitzvot? Why should he forfeit the merit of all the mitzvot that he performed during his lifetime? Rather, Abaye said: He will be buried metaphorically uncovered, i.e., without the merit of that mitzva. He forfeits the reward of the mitzva he performed while holding directly onto the parchment.

²⁶¹ Rabbi Yannai, son of Rabbi Yannai the Elder, said in the name of Rabbi Yannai the Great: It is proper that the cloth cover of a Torah scroll be rolled around the scroll, while holding the scroll stationary, and one should not roll the Torah scroll itself in the cloth in order to cover it.

²⁶² § The mishna states: The verse “And Moses declared to the children of Israel the appointed seasons of the Lord” (Leviticus 23:44) indicates that part of the mitzva of the Festivals is that they should read the portion relating to them, each one in its appointed time. The Sages taught in a baraita: Moses enacted for the Jewish people that they should make halakhic inquiries and expound upon the matter of the day. They should occupy themselves with the halakhot of Passover on Passover, with the halakhot of Shavuot on Shavuot, and with the halakhot of Sukkot on Sukkot.