

**Embody the Divine:  
Tractate *Avot*-  
Teachings of  
the Eminent Forefathers**

**Volume I  
A Critical Edition of  
Mishnah Tractate Avot  
Based on Mishnah Codex Kaufmann  
and Other Ancient Witnesses,  
with an Introduction, Translation,  
and Comprehensive Commentary**

**By Rabbi Dennis Beck-Berman**

# מסכת אבות

## מהדורה מדעית

נוסח קדום על פי כתבי-יד ושרידי הגניזה  
ובראשם כ"י קאופמן למשנה  
עם מבחר חילופי נוסחאות והגהות

ועם מבוא, תרגום, ובאור מקיף בלשון אנגלית  
מאת הרב דוד אברהם ב"ק-באר"מן

להחזיר עטרה ליושנה

(על פי יומא סט:)

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**The chain of Torah transmission from Sinai after the destruction of the Temple  
Continues into the Second (Older) Generation of Tannaites (about 40-120 CE)  
Disciple circle of *Yochanan* son of *Zakkai***

2:10a. They (each) said three things.<sup>279</sup>

2:10b. Rabbi *'Eli'ezer* says:<sup>280</sup>

- ◆ Let the honor of your companion<sup>281</sup> be (as little) cherished by you as your (own) self.<sup>282</sup>
- ◆ And be not easy to anger.<sup>283</sup>
- ◆ And repent one day before your death.<sup>284</sup>

2:10c. (He also was the one saying:)

- ◆ And be (ever) warming up beside the glow of the Sages,<sup>285</sup>
- ◆ but be (ever) careful of their (glowing) coals,<sup>286</sup> that you not be burned.<sup>287</sup>
- ◆ for their bite is the bite of a jackal,<sup>288</sup> and their sting the sting of a scorpion,  
and their hiss the hiss of a snake,<sup>289</sup> and all their words are like coals of fire.<sup>290</sup>

### COMMENTARY

Rabbi *'Eli'ezer*, called by his master the one who retains everything, urges self-restraint as an antidote to pride: control your ego, control your anger, and control your behavior through continual self-examination and the resultant compunction. The correspondence between his characteristic virtue and his teaching suggests that he practices what he preaches.<sup>291</sup>

He advocates a spiritual discipline to cultivate humility: (a) be completely indifferent to the current social obsession with honor and prestige; (b) control your temper; and (c) since it is impossible for all but the perfected master<sup>292</sup> to avoid some show of disrespect or anger during the heat of argument, a sage should continually perform repentance.<sup>293</sup> The first and third admonitions are intended to be taken ironically.

The final teaching on this theme (*Avot* 2:10c) is a later addition, though the attribution to Rabbi *'Eli'ezer* appears authentic.<sup>294</sup> His candid warning is probably based on personal observation of vicious behavior on the part of sages and disciples.<sup>295</sup> It is also satirical: While sages are expected to treat each other with respect, in actuality they act insolently, even maliciously.

## Chapter 2 Mishnah 10

(10) [י'ד'] הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה<sup>296</sup> דְּבָרִים  
רַבִּי אֶלְיָעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר  
יְהִי כְבוֹד<sup>298</sup> חֲבִירְךָ חָבִיב עֲלֶיךָ כְּנִפְשְׁךָ<sup>297</sup>  
וְאַל תְּהִי נוֹחַ לְכַעֵס  
וְשׁוֹב יוֹם אֶחָד לְפָנַי מִיתְתִּיךָ  
וְהִנּוּי<sup>300</sup> מִתְחַמֵּם כְּנֶגֶד אוֹרָן שְׁלַחֲכָמַיִם  
וְהִנּוּי זֹהִיר מְנַחֵלֶתֶן שְׁלֹא<sup>301</sup> תִכְנוּהַ  
שְׁנַשִּׁיכְתֶּן נְשִׁיכַת שׁוּעַל  
וְעִקְצֹתֶן עִקְצַת עֶקֶב  
וְלַחִישְׁתֶּן לַחִישַׁת שָׂרָף  
וְכָל דְּבָרֵיהֶם כְּגִחְלֵי אִשׁ :

### PARALLELS

*Avot de Rabbi Natan* Version A 15.<sup>302</sup> *Avot de Rabbi Natan* Version B 29.<sup>303</sup> *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* Version A 19.<sup>304</sup> *Pesiqta' Rabbati* 3:10 (edition Friedmann, 9b; edition Ulmer, 26). *Derekh Eretz Rabbah* 1:27.<sup>305</sup>

### TIMELESS TORAH

The Chassidic Rebbe Shmuel Shmelke HaLevi Horowitz was invited to Nikolsburg to assume the position as Rabbi. Expecting to be greeted with much honor upon his arrival, he requested a private room where he could relax for a few hours before addressing the public. A person who was very curious to know what the rebbe was up to hid in a closet. To his amazement, he heard the rebbe speaking to himself, saying words of praise such as: “*Sholom aleichem* Rabbi Shmelke!” “*Yasher ko'ach* Rabbi Shmelke!” Afterwards, he went out to greet the public, delivered his lecture, and was accepted as the Rabbi of Nicholsburg. The man approached Rabbi Shmelke and asked him, “Could you please explain to me the meaning of what I heard you say to yourself while secluded?” Rabbi Shmelke replied, “I knew that everyone would be greeting me, praising me, and honoring me, and I was concerned that it might make me become conceited. Therefore, I followed the advice of Rabbi *Eli'ezer* in *Pirkei Avot* that the honor your companion should be as cherished by you as the honor which you give yourself. After continuously greeting myself and extensively praising myself I began to despise it, and fortunately I became immune to all the honors the community bestowed upon me.”<sup>306</sup>

**Second (Younger) Generation of Tannaites (about 60-140 CE)**  
**A Later Addition to *Avot***

4:15b. Rabbi *Matyah*<sup>238</sup> son of *Charash*<sup>239</sup> says:<sup>240</sup>

- ◆ Be (ever) preceding every person with greetings.<sup>241</sup>
- ◆ And be a tail to lions and not a head to jackals.<sup>242</sup>

**COMMENTARY**

This dyadic saying is a later addition to *Avot*, placed here because it relates to the theme of previous teaching: Do not be arrogant and consider yourself overly righteous. It also plays on the fourth clause of the opening teaching: show everyone respect.

According to legend, Rabbi *Matyah* son of *Charash* resided in Rome in the first half of the second century CE.<sup>243</sup> But whether in Rome or in Roman Palestine under imperial power, he readily observed the pernicious behavior of ambitious, conceited people seeking to attain power through force, deception, manipulation, and coercion, and having achieved power, likely to act even more selfishly, impulsively, and aggressively.

Rabbi *Matyah* was undoubtedly familiar with the well-known proverb: Be a head to jackals and not a tail to lions. Similar sayings about ambition abound in ancient and modern sources.<sup>244</sup> It is quite possible he was familiar with the famous saying of Julius Caesar. During his Spanish campaign, Caesar's army passed by a small, rundown barbarian village. "His companions asked laughingly and playfully: Can it be that here too there are those who are ambitious over being chief, who contest over being first, and mutual jealousies of the powerful? Caesar earnestly replied to them: I would prefer to be first among these than second among Romans."<sup>245</sup>

Rabbi *Matyah*, however, cleverly parodies the popular proverb by reversing its thrust: "Be a tail to lions and *not* a head to jackals."<sup>246</sup> He advises a sage that when it comes to interpersonal relations, one should be the first to extend greetings to everyone he meets, even though according to protocol the greeting is initiated by one of lower station;<sup>247</sup> when it comes to intrapersonal behavior, one should be "the tail"—the last, eschewing ambition and arrogance. He suggests a radical reversal of typical Roman values.<sup>248</sup>

Moreover, his listeners would immediately recognize a play on words regarding the well-known metaphor of "lions" and "jackals" used among sages to indicate those considered greater and lesser scholars.<sup>249</sup> "Be a tail to lions," a disciple of great sages whose vast wisdom will safeguard you from becoming pompous, "and not a head to jackals," a master of lesser students, who may reinforce your self-importance and thus tempt you to become haughty and arrogant.<sup>250</sup>

## Chapter 4 Mishnah 15 (continued)

[י"ד/252] רַבִּי מִתִּיבָה<sup>251</sup> בֶּן תָּרַשׁ אָמַר  
הָנוּי<sup>254</sup> מִקְנֵי־לְשׁוֹם כָּל<sup>253</sup> הָאָדָם  
וְהָנוּי זָנַב לְאֲרִיזוֹת וְלֹא<sup>255</sup> רֹאשׁ לְשׁוּעָלִים :

### PARALLELS

*Avot deRabbi Natan* Version A 29, attached (erroneously?) to a group of sayings of Rabbi *Yitzchaq* son of *Pinchas* (edition Schechter, 89). *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B 34 (edition Schechter, 74-75). Palestinian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 4:4 (edition Venice, 22b; edition Sussmann, 1288).<sup>256</sup> Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 37a (following Manuscript Jerusalem [Yad HaRav Herzog]), “*Abbaye* (about 280-339 CE) said: Be a tail to lions and do not be a head to jackals.”

### TIMELESS TORAH

Near the city of Danzig lived a well-to-do Hasidic Rabbi, scion of prominent Hasidic dynasties. Dressed in a tailored black suit, wearing a top hat, and carrying a silver walking cane, the rabbi would take his daily morning stroll, accompanied by his tall, handsome son-in-law. During his morning walk it was the rabbi's custom to greet every man, woman, and child whom he met on his way with a warm smile and a cordial “Good morning.” Over the years the rabbi became acquainted with many of his fellow townspeople this way and would always greet them by their proper title and name. Near the outskirts of town, in the fields, he would exchange greetings with Herr Mueller, a Polish *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic German). “Good morning, Herr Mueller!” the rabbi would hasten to greet the man who worked in the fields. “Good morning, Herr Rabbiner!” would come the response with a good-natured smile. Then the war began. The rabbi's strolls stopped abruptly. Herr Mueller donned an S.S. uniform and disappeared from the fields. The fate of the rabbi was like that of much of the rest of Polish Jewry. He lost his family in the death camp of Treblinka, and, after great suffering, was deported to Auschwitz. One day, during a selection at Auschwitz, the rabbi stood on line with hundreds of other Jews awaiting the moment when their fates would be decided, for life or death. Dressed in a striped camp uniform, head and beard shaven and eyes feverish from starvation and disease, the rabbi looked like a walking skeleton. “Right! Left, left, left!” The voice in the distance drew nearer. Suddenly the rabbi had a great urge to see the face of the man with the snow-white gloves, small baton, and steely voice who played God and decide who should live and who should die. He lifted his eyes and heard his own voice speaking: “Good morning, Herr Mueller!” “Good morning, Herr Rabbiner!” responded a human voice beneath the S.S. cap adorned with skull and bones. “What are you doing here?” A faint smile appeared on the rabbi's lips. The baton moved to the right—to life. The following day, the rabbi was transferred to a safer camp. The rabbi, now in his eighties, told me in his gentle voice, “This is the power of a good-morning greeting. A man must always greet his fellow man.”<sup>257</sup>

**A collection of sayings on the “Awe of Heaven” (continues)**  
**Fourth Generation of Tannaites (about 120-200 CE)**

4:21. Rabbi 'El'azar the Caper man<sup>347</sup> says.<sup>348</sup>

◆ Envy,<sup>349</sup>

◆ craving,<sup>350</sup>

◆ and ambition<sup>351</sup>

—(these) remove a person from (civilized) society.<sup>352</sup>

**COMMENTARY**

After a group of later additions (*Avot* 19-20), *Avot* returns to another saying of a fourth-generation Tannaite. This triadic saying which comes at the end of the chapter is a perfect counterpoint to the opening saying of *Shim'on* son of *Zomah*. It continues the theme of virtues conducive to and a vices inimical to piety and Torah learning: While *Shim'on* son of *Zomah* offers virtues, Rabbi 'El'azar offers vices. It also continues the theme of the “awe of Heaven,” the need to avoid sin, while trusting in divine punishment.

Furthermore, it plays on the themes of the all four clauses in the opening saying of *Shim'on* son of *Zomah*. A wise sage is equitable, unbiased, and learns from all people; a mighty one subdues his passions; a wealthy scholar is content, not greedy; and an honored one does not seek honor. Such a true sage completely rejects “envy, craving, and love of honor.”

Warnings against these three vices are common among Jews, Christians, and pagans in the Greco-Roman world. Such conduct ruins a person's life; it leads to serious neglect of Torah study, diminished capacity in moral, intellectual, social, and cultural refinement, and inevitable exclusion from pious, Rabbinic circles, which for a sage constitute civilized society.

It is probably no coincidence that Rabbi 'El'azar “the Caper man” warns sages about the dangers of unbridled appetites, since in antiquity caperberries were considered a stimulant for the appetite and an aphrodisiac.<sup>353</sup>



## Chapter 4 Mishnah 21

(21) רַבִּי עֲזָרָה לְעֶזְרָה<sup>355</sup> הַקָּפֶר<sup>354</sup> אָמַר  
הַקִּינָאָה וְהַתְּאֵוָה וְהַכְּבוֹד מוֹצִיאִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם:

### PARALLELS

*Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B 34 (edition Schechter, 76). *Pirque deRabbi 'Eli'ezer* 12 (13). 1 John 2:15-16, “Do not love the world or worldly things; whoever loves the world does not have (true) love of the (heavenly) Father, because all that is in the world—the (physical desires:) craving of the body, and craving of the eyes, and pretentious<sup>357</sup> living (pride in worldly things)—is not (love) of the Father, but of the world.” Compare *Avot* 5:19, “A malevolent eye, a greedy temperament, and a haughty spirit—a disciple of Balaam.” *Avot* 2:11, “A malevolent eye, and the Evil Temptation, and hatred of humanity—(these) remove a person from (civilized) society.” *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B 4 (edition Schechter, 17; manuscripts and Genizah fragment agree), “Rabbi *Yehudah* says: On three things the world stands: On envy, on craving, and on compassion.”<sup>358</sup> Compare Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 10:117, “(Self) injuries among people are produced through hatred, through envy, and through contempt, which the sage overcomes by reason.”<sup>359</sup>

### TIMELESS TORAH

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might be a marginal gloss that entered the text of *Avot* fairly early. Alternatively, like *Avot* 1:5b-1:5c, it may be a Tannaic tradition which later oral tradents typically introduced into their recitation of the Mishnah when apposite to the teaching at hand. See note 93 to *Avot* 2:5a.

<sup>275</sup> Literally “an evil heart,” which means a sad, sorrowful disposition. See Muffs, *Love and Joy: Law, Language, and Religion in Ancient Israel*, 123-124, 130, 133 note 17. See also Melamed, *Essays in Talmudic Literature*, 240-242; Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 47. See note 241 above regarding “a joyous/good heart,” that is, “a joyful (virtuous) character” which resides in one who is pious and lives a godly, ideal life. Its opposite is “a wretched (immoral) character,” one burdened with guilt, shame, rage/anger, and/or depression. Note how *ka’as*, “sorrow/stress” or anger/vexation,” parallels *ra’ah*, “sadness, evil,” in Ecclesiastes 11:10, and *banish sorrow/stress from your mind/heart, and remove sadness from your flesh!* See Ben Sira 38:18, “From sorrow may come out adversity, so sadness/evil of heart (*ro’a leivav*) may build up depression.” Compare the expression “burdened with an evil (immoral) heart” in 4 Ezra 3:20-22 (edition Stone, 59), “Yet You (God) did not take away from them (humanity) their evil (immoral) heart so that Your Torah might bring forth fruit (good deeds) in them. For the primordial human (Adam), burdened with an evil (immoral) heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. Thus the disease became permanent; the Torah was in the heart of people along with the evil root, but what was good departed and the evil remained.” See 4 Ezra 3:26, 4:30, 7:92; Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 63-67. Compare also Jeremiah 11:8, *and they all walked in the willfulness/stubbornness of their evil (immoral) hearts* (similarly Jeremiah 16:12; 18:12), which may underlie Community Rule (1QS) 1:6-7, where the neophyte pietist promises “not to walk further in the stubbornness of a shameful/guilty heart and lecherous eyes to do every evil.”

<sup>276</sup> See Goldin, “A Philosophical Session in a Tannaite Academy,” 16-18. See note 86 to *Avot* 1:7; note 63 to *Avot* 2:4a.

<sup>277</sup> Plato gave four virtues canonical status: *dikaïosune*, “justice, righteousness”; *σωφροσύνη*, *sōphrosunē*, “moderation, self-control”; *phronēsis*, “prudence, thoughtfulness”; and *andreia*, “manliness, courage.” See Plato, *Republic* 4:4427E. The Stoics adopt this list and treat all other virtues as subordinate species, or perhaps branches, of the four. The four cardinal virtues were well known to hellenized Jews. Indeed, they are cited verbatim in Wisdom of Solomon 8:7, “And if anyone loves righteousness/justice, the fruits of her labors are virtues, for she teaches self-control and prudence, righteousness/justice and courage; nothing is more useful in life for people than these.” Note that all four are subsumed under the category of righteousness/justice (*dikaïosyne*). Since justice encompasses the four cardinal virtues in popular thought, injustice, symbolized by the deadbeat (see note 179 above), would be an extremely grave vice.

<sup>278</sup> On the variant וְיָנִיחַ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, see Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 130-131.

<sup>279</sup> Hebrew *devarim*, “words, statements, things.” Not three independent statements, but a saying stylistically constructed of three clauses which addresses one subject. See note 3 to *Avot* 1:1; Goldin, “A Philosophical Session in a Tannaite Academy,” 4.

<sup>280</sup> The placing of Rabbi *’Eli’ezer* son of *Horqanos* as first among the five disciples of *Yochanan* son of *Zakkai* here and in *Avot* 2:9a and 2:9b, as well as giving him the top honors in the final evaluation of *Avot* 2:8f, all together suggest that this group of traditions was preserved by the students of Rabbi *’Eli’ezer*, who was one of the pillars of the early Talmudic tradition; through the circle of disciples of his student Rabbi *’Aqivah* he had a decisive influence on the evolution of Jewish law during the Tannaic period and beyond.

<sup>281</sup> On the role of the companion, see note 78 to *Avot* 1:6.

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<sup>282</sup> This clause is traditionally understood in a straightforward manner: Show honor to others in the same way as you would want others to honor yourself. But this saying—just like *Avot* 2:12, “Let the (despicable) money of your companion be (as little) cherished by you as your own”—should more properly be taken ironically: “Let the honor of your companion” and “your honor” be equally “cherished by you”—consider both equally worthless! A sage must renounce pride and eschew the pursuit of prestige: “honor” should not be “cherished” by one totally dedicated to disciplined Torah study. See note 295 to *Avot* 2:12. Such an understanding of Rabbi *’Eli’ezer’s* saying is actually found in what constitutes its oldest commentary, *Avot deRabbi Natan* (see note 278 and 279 below). And note the irony in the third clause and the satire in the fourth. Its ironic meaning even underlies some Chasidic tales. See *Timeless Torah* (note 282 below).

Rabbi *’Eli’ezer* lived in an age of ambition, where the dominant ideal was the pursuit of public prestige. See note 15 to *Avot* 2:1; note 325 to *Avot* 4:21, where *kavod*, “honor,” is synonymous with “ambition,” the desire for honor. Disregard of reputation (and other social conventions) was a hallmark of the Cynic school of philosophy. See Griffin, “Cynicism and the Romans: Attraction and Repulsion.” Some Cynics were notorious for hurling insults at others and ignoring insults hurled at them. A number of Rabbinic sages appear in sayings and stories that reflect a Cynic influence, including Rabbi *’Eli’ezer*. See Fischel, “Studies in Cynicism and the Ancient Near East”; Henry Albert Fischel, “Cynics and Cynicism,” *Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Edition*, 5:346; Fischel, “Story and History: Observations on Greco-Roman Rhetoric and Pharaism.” Indeed, such behavior dovetails with the bitter relations between Rabbi *’Eli’ezer* and other sages. See note 270 below. It is uncertain whether the later stories grew out of the saying in *Avot* (understood as satirical) or both simply reflect the actual personality of the sage. The discourteous treatment of fellow scholars, and by Rabbi *’Eli’ezer*, possibly under the influence of contemporary Cynic philosophy, was apparently practiced by the Sadducees. See Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18:16, “for they reckon it a virtue to dispute with those teachers of wisdom/philosophy whom they follow”; Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 2:166, “The behavior of the Sadducees to one another, however, is rather vicious, and their intercourse with their companions is as harsh as toward (hostile) strangers”; Daube, “Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric,” 243.

Compare *Avot* 4:12, “Rabbi *’El’azar* says: Let the honor of your disciple be cherished by you as the honor of your companion, and the honor of your companion as the awe of your master, and the awe of your master as the awe of Heaven,” where the sage suggests a radical leveling of the inherent hierarchical nature of the disciple circle. It is unclear whether it is a coincidence that another saying about honor reminiscent of Rabbi *’Eli’ezer’s* is attributed to a sage named Rabbi *’El’azar*. Compare also the story found in several sources (cited in note 280 below) where Rabbi *’Eli’ezer* son of *Horqanos* on his deathbed instructs his disciples: “Be careful (each) man with the honor of his companion—for it is written (Leviticus 19:18), *And you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.*” In this story, a chastened Rabbi *’Eli’ezer*, having suffered estrangement from his colleagues, has abandoned his Cynic advice to be indifferent to the honor of one’s companions.

On the expression “as your (own) self,” compare Deuteronomy 13:7, “your friend who is as your (own) self”; Leviticus 19:18, *Love your neighbor/fellow as yourself*, on which see Beck-Berman, “Love Your Neighbor.”

<sup>283</sup> See note 149 *Avot* 5:11, “Easy to anger and hard to pacify—wicked”; Ecclesiastes 7:9, *Do not let your spirit be hasty to anger, for anger abides in the breast of fools*. Compare *Avot* 3:12, “Be gentle and pleasantly obliging.”

<sup>284</sup> See *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B 29 and parallels cited in note 279 below. See Ben Sira 5:4-7, “Do not say: I sinned and what happened to me?—for God is slow to anger. Do not say: The Lord is compassionate, and He will blot out all my iniquities. Do not trust in (Divine) forgiveness, to add

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iniquity upon iniquity, and say: His compassion is great, He will forgive the majority of my iniquities. For compassion and wrath are with Him, and his fury rests upon the wicked. Do not delay to return to Him, nor postpone it from day to day, for suddenly His rage will break forth, and in the day/time of vengeance you will perish.” On this teaching, see Schofer, *Confronting Vulnerability*, 44-48. See also Cohen, *Jewish and Roman Law*, 36 note 33a. On scholarly disciples who repent after transgression, see Grossman, “On the Deeds of Atonement of the Penitent in Rabbinic Literature.” Of course, repentance is not granted to a sinner after death. See Ginzberg, *Genizah Studies*, 1:192. On repentance, see Urbach, “Redemption and Repentance in Talmudic Judaism,” in *Collected Writings in Jewish Studies*, 264-280.

<sup>285</sup> The early medieval commentators recognized *Avot* 2:10c is a later insertion, since the preamble to this group of sayings explicitly states: “They each said three things,” and in *Avot deRabbi Natan* (both versions!), *Avot* 2:10b begins the chapter while *Avot* 2:10c appears as an addendum at the end of the chapter. See Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avot Through The Ages*, 83; Albeck’s additional note, “Tractate *Avot*,” 495. The lack of the introductory formula “He (also) was the one saying” probably also reflects its being a later insertion. See Excursus A. Compare Finkelstein, “Introductory Study to Pirke Abot,” 39. Compare *Sifrei Deuteronomy* 343 and *Mekhilata’ deRabbi Yishma’ei’l BaChodesh* 4 (cited in Excursus B §5.1.2 and note 201).

<sup>286</sup> Compare *Genesis Rabbah* 52:4 (attributed to the Sages)(edition Theodor-Albeck, 544) and parallels in *Pesikta’ Rabbati* 3:10 (edition Ulmer, 26); *Tanchuma’ Bemidbar* 17 (edition Buber, 4:15); *Tanchuma’* 15 to Numbers 3:1 (edition Vilna, 50b); *Numbers Rabbah* 3:1.

<sup>287</sup> See notes 569 and 570 below. Compare the English “burned,” which can mean harshly insulted, angered, and ruined. Note the Babylonian Aramaic term for a scholarly disciple is *tzurba’ derabbanan*, which may mean “the burned one of the scholars,” though the etymology is uncertain. See Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 956-957. Compare Urbach, *The Sages*, 626 and note 17. Compare also the commentay of Simon ben Tzemach Duran to *Avot* 2:10c (edition Katzenellenbogen, 1:301).

<sup>288</sup> Hebrew *shu’al*, usually translated “fox,” actually refers to a “jackal.” See Feliks, *Plants and Animals of the Mishnah*, 279-280. The cowardly jackal usually avoids humans and is only dangerous to people when rabid. The “bite of a jackal” here refers to a rabid jackal, and thus is quite perilous.

<sup>289</sup> In Antiquity, scholars would sometimes hiss as a form of mockery. See Philostratus the Athenian, *Lives of the Sophists*, 604 (edition Kayser, 1:101), “And to prevent us from hissing (*surittoimen*) or mocking/scoffing at one another, as so often happens in the (schools) of the sophists.” See also Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 49a, where one rabbi “stretched out his neck like a snake” at another when he disagreed with him. Snakes or serpents in the Ancient Near East symbolized many things. In context here, however, two stand out: malevolence and wisdom. See Lowell K. Handy, “Serpent (Religious Symbol),” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5:1113-1116. On snakes as wise/prudent, see Genesis 3:1; Matthew 10:16. On sages as metaphorical snakes, see Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 53-56, 164 note 31. See also Diamond, “Lions, Snakes and Asses,” 256.

<sup>290</sup> Compare note 61 to *Avot* 6:5. The entire third clause (“for their bite...coals of fire”) is found in *Numbers Rabbah* 3:1.

<sup>291</sup> One rabbi might be praised: “lovely preaching and lovely performing,” and another criticized: “lovely preaching but not lovely performing,” similar to “Practice what you preach,” or “Walk the talk.” See *Tosefta’ Chagigah* 2:1; *Yevamot* 8:7; *Genesis Rabbah* 34:14 (edition Theodor and Albeck, 326-327); Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuḥah*, 5:1288; Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 6:64 note 330. Compare Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18:15, referring to the Pharisees’s “so very virtuous...conduct both in their lifestyle and in their words.”

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<sup>292</sup> Thus Hillel is portrayed in legends as impossible to anger. See *Avot de Rabbi Natan* Version A 15 and many parallels. On the other hand, even the holy Prophet Elijah is susceptible to anger. See Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 113a-b.

<sup>293</sup> Through continuous repentance, a sage's sensitivity and awareness of misbehavior sharpen, remorse deepens, restitution and commitment-to-desist become firmer, and confession becomes more profound. See Blumenthal, "Repentance and Forgiveness"; Katz, "Man, Sin, and Redemption in Rabbinic Judaism," 938-943; Hoffman, *The Evolution of the Concept of Repentance in biblical, Second Temple and Rabbinic Sources*. Moreover, a sage must confess his sins before God will inspire him with Torah. See Ben Sira 39:5-6, "And he will appeal (for forgiveness) before the Most High; he will open his mouth in prayer and plead (forgiveness) for his transgressions. If the exalted God is willing, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; he will pour forth words of wisdom and give thanks to the Lord in prayer." Compare the Rabbinic association of Hebrew *teshuqah*, "longing/desire," with *teshuvah*, "repentance," literally "(re)turn," in the sense of longing to return to one's original state, perhaps based on a homiletic play similar to the English "turn on," meaning "longing/arousal." See Kister, "Metamorphoses of Aggadic Traditions," 220-224.

<sup>294</sup> See note 262 above. *Avot* 2:10c is specifically attributed to Rabbi 'Eli'ezer in *Avot de Rabbi Natan* Version A (cited in note 278 below). According to legend, the relations between Rabbi 'Eli'ezer son of *Horqanos* and his fellow sages were quite bitter, and he reacted with violent anger when they put him under a ban; historically, it appears that Rabbi 'Eli'ezer and other sages did engage in some serious disputes and confrontations. See Gilat and Wald, "Eliezer ben Hyrcanus," *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Second Edition*, 6:322-325; Neusner, *Eliezer ben Hyrcanus*; Gilat, *R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: A Scholar Outcast*. It is possible that *Avot* 2:10c reflects his own bitter experience. See Finkelstein, *Introduction to the Treatises Abot and Abot of Rabbi Nathan*, 42. Neusner, *Eliezer ben Hyrcanus*, 1:397 thinks that Rabbi 'Eli'ezer's saying relates to, or has generated, the stories of his troubled relationships with the other sages.

<sup>295</sup> An excellent analysis of the toxic effects of discipleship is found in Wach, "Master and Disciple," 7, who writes: "Discipleship is different: being one of a group of disciples under a master is no basis for mutual love; rather it is often the basis for hate. From the beginning it seems impossible that someone else should have a part in the relationship that ties the disciple to his master (it is a condition which has its foundation in the incomparability and uniqueness of individuality), so, in principle, no way leads from one of them to another. Convinced that he is devoted to and open to the master as no other is, the disciple feels a passionate conviction to claim his master's love in preference to all else and all others. Thus, the human, the all-too-human emotions of envy and jealousy arise. Of course such emotions are also known among students, but they are not intrinsic to scholarly activity. The sinister act of the disciple, who from jealousy betrays the master, is the most shattering expression of this impulse, and it is conceivable only in such a relationship." Compare Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 402-403. See Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 22b-23a (following Manuscript Munich 6), "Rabbi *Yochanan* said in the name of Rabbi Shim'on son of *Yochai*: Every scholarly disciple who does not bear a grudge and take vengeance (for an insult) like a serpent is not a (real) scholarly disciple." See also *Avot de Rabbi Natan* Version A 16 (cited in Excursus I §??), "A person should not think of saying: Love the sages, but hate the disciples; love the disciples, but hate the (ignorant, religiously lax) common folk." See also Babylonian Talmud *Qiddushin* 30b (following Manuscript Vatican 111), "And it (further) states (Psalm 127:5), *Content is the (real) man* (the Torah scholar) *who has filled his quiver with them* (words of Torah); *they shall not be ashamed when they speak* (heatedly) *with their enemies* (adversaries) *at the tempestuous* (debate) (reading *sha'ar*, "gate," as *sa'ar*, "tempest/storm"). Rabbi *Chiyya*' son of *'Abba*' said: Even a father and his son, a master and his disciple, who are busy with Torah (study) may become mutual enemies in a single moment, but in a

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single moment they may become mutual friends, for it is stated (Numbers 21:14), *Therefore he* (a scholar) *will state* (his arguments) *about the Book* (of Torah), (namely) *the wars of the Lord* (heated scholarly Torah debate)—(but suddenly) *Waheb be-Sufah*. Do not read (*Waheb be-*) *Sufah* but rather (*ve-’ahev be-*) *sofah*, but love (each other) in the end.” Note that in all other witnesses the word *שעה*, *sha’ah*, “moment,” was corrupted into the nearly identical word *שער*, *sha’ar*, “gate,” under the influence of the word “gate” at the end of the previous statement by scribes who did not understand the homiletical play involved.

Compare *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version A 1 (edition Schechter, 1; edition Becker, 6-7; manuscripts generally agree), “And (people) said: The whole time that they were sitting (diligently learning) and (were) busy with Torah, they acted jealous of each other; but when they parted, they seemed like they were (dear old) friends from their youth.” On Torah debate as combat, see Excursus B §§13.6.1-13.6.5; note 170 to Excursus B §4.3.5.

<sup>296</sup> The Hebrew text follows Manuscripts Kaufmann, Cambridge, a Genizah fragment, and a few early textual witnesses. Manuscripts Parma, Oxford (Maimonides), many Genizah fragments, several early textual witnesses, and the printed editions read: *שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׁלֹשָׁה*, “three (statements) each, by threes,” literally “three three.” See Sharvit, *Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 101. Compare the commentary of Rashi (edition Katzenellenbogen, 1:294). Perhaps “by threes” here means “They each said things (on one issue) in groups of three.” See note 107 above.

<sup>297</sup> The Hebrew text follows Codex Kaufmann and a Genizah fragment. This idiom, which appears less than twenty times in classical Rabbinic literature, preserves an authentic ancient tradition. Manuscripts Parma, Cambridge, Oxford (Maimonides), six Genizah fragments, and most other witnesses read: *כְּשֵׁלְךָ*, “as your own.” While this version may have been influenced by *Avot* 2:12, it probably preserves an alternate (more popular) oral tradition. See note 227 above. Compare Melamed, *Essays in Talmudic Literature*, 214-215.

<sup>298</sup> Manuscript Munich 95 reads: *mamon*, “money.” See note 253 to *Avot* 2:12. In Manuscript New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Rabbinic 16 (*Aggadot ha-Talmud*) of *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version A (edition Becker, 312), the forms *כְּבוֹד* and *כִּיבוֹד* appear. Compare Bar-Asher, “The Study of Mishnaic Hebrew Grammar Based on Written Sources, 23 §16.

<sup>299</sup> On the use of the jussive, see note 115 to *Avot* 2:4b.

<sup>300</sup> On the variant *יְהוּי*, an Aramaicism, and other forms of the verb “to be” in *Avot*, see Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 35-41.

<sup>301</sup> On the variant *שְׁמִינִי/שְׁמִינִי*, “lest (you be),” see Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 131-132.

<sup>302</sup> *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version A 15 (edition Schechter, 59; edition Becker, 154-155; following Manuscript Oxford, Oppenheimer Collection 95), “They (each) said three things. Rabbi ‘Eli‘ezer says: Let the honor of your companion be (as little) cherished by you as your own. Be not easy to anger. Repent one day before your death. ‘Let the honor of your companion be (as little) cherished by you as your own.’ How is this so? It teaches that just as (a person) views (with indifference) his (own) honor, so let a person view (with indifference) the honor of his companion. But just as a person does not wish that malicious/evil speech should be promulgated regarding his (own) honor, so let a person wish not to promulgate malicious/evil speech regarding the honor of his companion. (Another teaching (interpretation) of) ‘Let the honor/money of your companion be (as little) cherished by you as your own.’ How is this so? In the event that a person has a million (golden *denarii*) and they (Heaven) take away all his money, let him not discredit himself (*yifgom ’et ’atzmo*) by a penny’s worth.” Manuscript New York (Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbinic 25) reads: “a million

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*denarii*.” The original reading was probably “a million golden *denarii*,” a stereotypical vast sum. See note 45 to *Avot* 6:9. The opposite, a stereotypical small sum, is “a penny,” a bronze *perutah*, one of the smallest denominations of coinage. On the expression “impair/discredit by a penny’s worth,” meaning here “discredit in the slightest bit,” compare Mishnah *Me’ilah* 5:2. On defamation and slander in Rabbinic literature, see Passamanek, “The Talmudic Concept of Defamation.”

The first interpretation begins by clarifying Rabbi *’Eli’ezer’s* satiric saying: To “cherish” the honor of your companion as your own means to “view” with indifference the honor of your companion just as you “view” your own honor. But indifference does not mean cruelty. Aware of Cynics noted for their rude and insulting manner, the second clause rejects such extreme behavior and condemns making malicious remarks about his companion. The second interpretation has long puzzled scholars. It seems to be a rather strange interpretation of *Avot* 2:10 as it is traditionally understood. See Kister, *Studies in Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, 165-166, 257. Goldin, *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, 192 note 5, simply remarks: “This is not clear.” The second interpretation, however, is rooted in a word play on the Hebrew *kavod*, “honor,” which also means “wealth, possessions.” See note 294 to *Avot* 2:12. Compare Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 73-74, 145-146, for examples of implicit play on ambiguity of a Hebrew word; such interpretations are commonplace. On parodies in Rabbinic literature, see Diamond, “King David of the Sages: Rabbinic Rehabilitation or Ironic Parody?”; Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature*. Moreover, the author and transmitters of the second interpretation (correctly, in my opinion) understand the irony in Rabbi *’Eli’ezer’s* saying: “Let the honor/wealth of your companion be (as little) cherished by you as your own.” A true sage should be completely indifferent even to vast wealth and the attendant great prestige, whether his own or his companion’s. In the event that a sage loses all his vast wealth and the concomitant honor, he should not disparage himself or derogate his own honor in the slightest bit, but be completely indifferent to his change of fortune (as should his companions).

See also the end of the chapter in *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version A 15 (edition Schechter, 62; edition Becker, 160-161; following Manuscript Oxford, Oppenheimer Collection 95), “Rabbi *Yose* son of *Yehudah* says in the name of Rabbi *Yehudah* son of *’Ila’i* who said in the name of Rabbi *’Ila’i* his father, who said in the name of Rabbi *’Eli’ezer* the Great: Repent one day before your death. And be (ever) warming up beside the glow of the Sages. Be (ever) careful of their (glowing) coals, lest you be burned: for their bite is the bite of a jackal, and their sting the sting of a scorpion; so all their words are like coals of fire.”

<sup>303</sup> *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B 29 (edition Schechter, 59; following Manuscript Parma), “And they (each) said three more things. ‘Rabbi *’Eli’ezer* says: Let the honor of your companion be (as little) cherished by you as your own. And be not easy to anger. And repent one day before your death.’ (Commenting on the first clause: One should) be (ever) compassionate (considerate) regarding the honor of his sons and his daughters. If you wish that a person should not take away yours (ruin your reputation), so you should not take away your companion’s (honor). (Similarly,) if you wish that a person should not say a (slandorous/defamatory) word behind you(r back), so you should not say a (slandorous/defamatory) word behind his (back).” The three interpretations offered here have some similarity to those in *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version A (cited in note 278 above). Aware of the sometimes extreme behavior of Cynics, these three clauses delimit a sage’s indifference: indifference does not mean cruelty. It is psychologically harmful for a sage to effect complete indifference toward his young children. Nor should one take indifference to an extreme and make remarks in public that ruin a companion’s reputation or say malicious things about one’s companion behind his back in private.

See also *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B 29 (edition Schechter, 62; following Manuscript Parma), “‘And repent one day before your death.’ An incident about Rabbi *’Eli’ezer* son of *Horqanos*, who

would say to his disciples: My (dear) companions, repent one day before your death. They said: Rabbi, does a person know when he will die, so that he may perform repentance? Rather, a person should say every day: I will perform repentance today, lest I die tomorrow. (Thus) all his days found (themselves) entering into repentance. And what is the explanation of this teaching/thing? (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 8, *Since the living know they will die...*) *Every day/season let your treacheries/sins (begadim) become unblemished/white* (by repentance).” The version in *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version A 15 (edition Schechter, 62) is very similar. See parallels in Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 153a; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 9:8; *Midrash Psalms* 90:21 (on Psalms 90:11). On the rhetorical function of the disciples, see Lapidus, “Idiomatics in the Aggadic Literature.”

Note the rare expression with which the sage addresses his disciples: *chaveireinu*, “my (dear) companions,” literally, “our companions.” The first person plural is apparently a plural of excellence or majesty. While the disciples—not the master-teacher—normally refer to each other as “companions,” in context it seems to be intended as a term of endearment for the entire group of companions who constituted his disciples. It also appears in *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B 8 (edition Schechter, 22; following Manuscript Parma), “An incident about the disciples of Rabbi *Yehudah* who were sitting (in study) and rehearsing (*mishnah*) and a bride passed by. Said to them Rabbi *Yehudah*: My (dear) companions, get up and busy yourselves with (cheering) this bride.” Also see *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B 28 (edition Schechter, 58; edition Becker, 360; following Manuscript Parma), “Five things would Rabban *Yochanan* son of *Zakkai* say to his disciples: My (dear) companions, learn Torah, and busy yourselves (with dialectical analysis) of it!” Saldarini, *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan (Abot deRabbi Nathan) Version B*, 75, 166, renders *chaveireinu*, “colleagues.” If so, the master-teacher would seem to be addressing his disciples as equals. I think it improbable, despite a few egalitarian statements in Rabbinic literature. See note 176 to *Avot* 4:12. The expression *chaveireinu* appears in several passages in the Babylonian Talmud (albeit in only a few witnesses) where it clearly refers to fellow sages, not disciples. This is also true of the similar expression *chaveiray*, “my colleagues.”

And see the end of chapter in *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B 29 (edition Schechter, 62; following Manuscript Parma), “And be (ever) careful of their (glowing) coals, that you not be burned, for their bite is the bite of a jackal, and their hiss the hiss of a snake, and their sting the sting of a scorpion.” On the expression “say a (slandering/defamatory) word behind his (back),” see note ?? to Excursus D §?? See the parallels in *Genesis Rabbah* 52:4 (edition Theodor and Albeck, 544; and see notes); *Pesiqta R* 3:3; *Midrash Psalms* 92: ; *Tanchuma’ Bemidbar* 15; *Numbers Rabbah* 3:1.

<sup>304</sup> See *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* Version A 19 (cited in Excursus ?? § ??), “And at the time that you are praying, know before Whom you are rising up to pray. For out of of this thing/teaching you will merit the (eternal) life of the Coming Age.”

<sup>305</sup> *Derekh Eretz Rabbah* 1:27 (edition Higger, 79), “Let your companion be your mirror. And let the honor of your companion be (as little) cherished by you as your own. And be (ever) esteeming every person. But do not say: I will flatter this (wealthy patron) and he will feed me (at his lavish banquets); I will flatter this (wealthy patron) and he will kiss me (in a public embrace); I will flatter this (wealthy patron) and he will clothe me (in fine apparel). Better that you are ashamed of yourself, but do not be ashamed of others. But do not let (the words coming out of) your lips embarrass you, and do not let (the words coming out of) your mouth disgrace you, and do not let (the words coming out of) your tongue dishonor you, and do not let (the words coming out of) your teeth shame you, and do not stretch your words.” Perhaps the first clause refers to a form of empathic mirroring and feedback similar to modern techniques such as those developed by Carl Rogers.



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<sup>306</sup> Adapted from *Pirkei Avot: 'im bei'ur nechmad veyaqar Midrash Chakhamim* (editon Kleinman, ??). Compare the story of the Maggid of Mezritch in Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: Early Masters*, 176. This story was suggested to me by Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi.

<sup>307</sup> See note 131 to *Avot* 2:9b.

<sup>308</sup> Hebrew *yetzer ha-ra'*, “the Evil Temptation,” literally “the Evil Design(er),” often translated “evil impulse” or “evil inclination.” The term *yetzer* is related to Genesis 6:5, *And every design/desire (yetzer) of the thoughts of his heart are only evil (ra') all the time*. There are also infrequent references to *yetzer ha-tov*, “the Good Temptation,” literally “the Good Design(er).” In certain Rabbinic circles the term *yetzer ha-ra'* refers to the temperament or character trait of unbridled desire or craving, the embodiment of human passion, which leads one to design or scheme to attain the objects of desire. This is apparently its meaning here. See Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 29. On *yetzer*, see note 2 to *Avot* 4:1. On the form *yetzer ha-ra'*, see Sarfatti, “Definiteness in Noun-Adjective Phrases in Rabbinic Hebrew,” 161-165. On the idea of an inner evil temperament in Second Temple Judaism, see Capelli, “The Outer and the Inner Devil: On Representing the Evil One in Second Temple Judaism.” Rosen-Zvi has demonstrated that in many Rabbinic texts the *yetzer ha-ra'* is a reified antinomian entity residing inside a person, the seat of transgressive tendencies, possessing a cognitive dimension that rationalizes sinful behavior and incites one against the Torah. It is a malicious, self-destructive element that cannot be changed or eliminated, dragging one down to perish in sin. In these texts I render it “the Evil Tempter.” See the penetrating studies by Rosen-Zvi, “Refuting the Yetzer,” “Two Rabbinic Inclinations?,” “Sexualizing the Evil Inclination,” and *Demonic Desires*. See also Schofer, *The Making of a Sage*, 84-115. Compare the dominating demonic force found in earlier Jewish literature. See Cairo Genizah Damascus Document 12:2, “spirit of Belial”; Qumran Rule of the Community (1QS) 3:21, “Angel of Darkness”; Jubilees 19:28, “spirit of Beliar”; Testament of Dan 1:7, “spirit of Mastema”; *Tosefta' Avodah Zarah* 1:18, “angels of Satan.” On these personifications of Evil in Second Temple Judaism, see also Capelli, “The Outer and the Inner Devil.” The *yetzer ha-ra'* is similar to the term *logismos* in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* literature. See note 31 to Excursus J Addendum 2 §2.6.3.

<sup>309</sup> Compare *Avot* 1:12b, “Be...one who loves humanity”; note 265 to Excursus B.

<sup>310</sup> Literally “from the world.” Compare *Avot* 3:10b, “Morning sleep, and midday wine, and children’s chatter, and sitting (around) the congregations of the (ignorant, religiously lax) common folk—(these) remove a person from (civilized Jewish) society”; *Avot* 4:21, “Envy, craving, and ambition—(these) remove a person from (civilized) society.” Lieberman demonstrates that Tannaitic sources—indeed all Palestinian Rabbinic sources—prefer the term *tzibor*, “(Jewish) community/public,” whereas Babylonian Rabbinic sources prefer *'olam*, “world,” in the sense of “(Jewish) community.” For exceptions see notes 663, 680, and 681 to *Avot* 3:15. Compare the English expression “the Jewish world.” See Lieberman, *Ha-Yerushalmi Ki-fshuto*, 503-504; Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshutah*, 4:582-583 note 5; 6:370; 8:928-929. Hebrew *'olam* in the sense of civilized human “society” does appear in Tannaitic literature. See the expression *tiqqun 'olam*, “the reform of society.” See Mishnah *Gittin* 4:2-9, 5:3, 9:4; *Eduyot* 1:13; *Tosefta' Terumot* 1:12-13; *Ketubbot* 12:2; *Gittin* 3:5-6, 8-9; *Gittin* 6:9; *Bava' Batra'* 6:6; *Mekhilata' deRabbi Yishma'ei'l Kaspa'* 2. See also Mor, “*Tiqqun 'Olam* (repairing the world) in the Mishnah: From Populating the World to Building a Community.” Compare *Seder 'Eliyahu Rabbah* 11 (edition Friedmann, 53-54), “this is the Sanhedrin, upon which the (Jewish) society/world (*'olam*) depends.” Similarly *Pesiqta' Rabbati* 41:1 (edition Friedmann, 172b; edition Ulmer, 908-909) in Manuscript New York (Jewish Theological Society, Rabbinic 8195), “The Holy One—Be Praised!—said: Zion is the meeting-house (for calculating the Jewish calendar) of the whole (Jewish) world, for it is stated (Isaiah 2:3), *For Torah shall come forth*

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<sup>232</sup> This is the only saying in *Avot* which addresses the reader in the first person plural: “we,” that is, Israel, the Jewish people. Hebrew (*‘ein*) *be-yadeinu*, “We (do not) have in hand,” occurs 5 times in the Mishnah.

<sup>233</sup> This interpretation is also reflected in *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B (see *Pralles*). Most traditional and many modern commentators have understood this teaching “We do not have in hand (the power to explain)...” the paradox of theodicy. See Schofer, “Protest or Pedagogy,” 253-254. However, in all other occurrences in classical Rabbinic literature the expression “have in hand” means simply: “we do not possess.” For similar interpretations, see Shinan, *Pirke Avot*, 156; Goldin and Hammer, “Pirkei Avot,” 270; Albeck, “Tractate *Avot*,” 372; Herford, *Pirke Aboth, The Ethics of the Talmud*, 114; Schechter, “The Doctrine of Divine Retribution in Rabbinical Literature,” 226.

<sup>234</sup> On the Rabbinic attitudes toward suffering and theodicy, see Urbach, *The Sages*, 444-448; Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature*; Elman, “The Suffering of the Righteous in Palestinian and Babylonian Sources.”

<sup>235</sup> See note 43 to *Avot* 3:3.

<sup>236</sup> On the variant הַצְדִּיקִים הַיְסוּדִים, see Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 147, 164-165. On the interpretation of the Hebrew, see Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 101.

<sup>237</sup> The Hebrew text follows Manuscripts Parma, Cambridge, London, Oxford (Maimonides), several Genizah fragments and early textual witnesses. Codex Kaufmann reads: אַלְלֵךְ [ךְ]א (the ךְ is partially visible and אַלְלֵךְ is written over an erasure). See Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 175.; Sharvit, *Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 164.

<sup>238</sup> On his name, compare note 120 to *Avot* 1:6.

<sup>239</sup> The familiar form is חֶרֶשׁ, *Cheresh*, also found in 1 Chronicles 9:15. Compare Septuagint, Ἀρης, *Ares*.

<sup>240</sup> Sharvit rightly considers *Avot* 4:15b a *barraita* that entered the text. See Sharvit, *Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 271. This probably occurred at an oral stage of transmission. It is missing in five Genizah fragments, one early textual witness (fourteenth-century Sephardic prayer book), and the Commentary of Nathan ben Abraham (late eleventh century). It appears after *Avot* 3:3 in one Italian prayer book (dated about 1300) and in *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version A a much expanded version of this saying appears in a group of sayings attributed to Rabbi *Yitzchaq* son of *Pinchas*. See the commentary of Simon ben Tzemach Duran to *Avot* 4:15b (edition Katzenellenbogen, 2:208).

<sup>241</sup> Hebrew *shalom*, “peace, well-being,” commonly used as a salutation like Greetings. Compare the similar English expression for offering greetings “ask about someone’s well-being.” Since inquiring about one’s well-being and exchanging greetings is a sign of friendship, the expression “one who asks (about another’s) well-being” means a friend or acquaintance. See Kister, “Some Notes on biblical Expressions and Allusions and the Lexicography of Ben Sira,” 173-175; Kister, “Words and Formulae in the Gospels in the Light of Hebrew and Aramaic Sources,” 130-131. And see *Avot* 1:15, “But be (ever) greeting/receiving every person with a smile on (your) face”; note 178 to *Avot* 3:12, “be (ever) greeting/receiving every person with joy.” Compare Ben Sira 4:8, “Incline your ear (pay attention) to the poor, and return his greeting courteously/graciously (or: humbly).” Hebrew *ba-‘anavah* is usually translated “humbly” (so the Syriac), but what would it mean to respond to a greeting “humbly”? To respond without arrogance is not “humbly.” Nor is it likely that Ben Sira would advise one to respond “meekly.” It probably means here “gently/cordially.” The Greek renders *en prautēti*, “with courtesy/humility/gentleness.” If Ben Sira meant for one to greet others (even inferiors) “humbly,” he would probably advise one to initiate greetings, like Rabbi *Matyah*. See note 226 below. Compare

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Ben Sira 41:20 (edition Segal, 279; see notes and parallels, 281-282), “Be ashamed...of being silent before one who asks (about your) well-being,” that is, failing to return a greeting is disgraceful. While the sages in *Avot* 1:15 and 3:12 focus on the *manner* of greeting everyone, Rabbi *Matyah* emphasizes being *first* to greet everyone as a valuable spiritual exercise in humility. See Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 6b (following Manuscript Oxford [Oppenheimer Collection, Additional Folio 23]), “Rabbi *Chelbo* said (that) *Rav* said: Any person who knows that his companion regularly gives him greetings should precede him with greetings, for it is stated (Psalm 34:15), *seek peace and pursue it.*” See also Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 17a (following Manuscript Oxford [Oppenheimer Collection, Additional Folio 23]), “They said regarding Rabban *Yochanan* son of *Zakkai* that a person never preceded him with greetings, (not) even a Gentile in the marketplace!”; *Derekh ’Eretz* 11, “one who precedes with greetings.” And see *Tosefta’ Bava’ Metzi’a’* 6:17 (edition Lieberman, 5:96-97), “Even asking about his well-being (offering greetings) is (considered forbidden) interest! How is this so? (If he never before offered greetings until he borrowed from him, (then feeling obliged) he preceded him with greetings, (you should) be (saying): Even offering greetings is (forbidden) interest!” See Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuḥah*, 9:245; Kahana, *Sifre Zuta on Deuteronomy*, 237-239; Urbach, “Halakha and Religion,” in *Collected Writings in Jewish Studies*, 5-6. Similarly, Babylonian Talmud *Bava Metzi’a’* 75b, “It is forbidden for one who loans his companion a *maneh* (small coin) to precede him with greetings if he is not regular/accustomed to precede him with greetings.” On Rabbinic concern over the protocol of deferential honors, see note 226 below; Sperber, *A Commentary on Derech Erez Zuta*, 58-61. Compare Matthew 23:6-7, “They (scribes and Pharisees) love the first places (of honor) at banquets, and the first seats (of honor) in the synagogues, and being greeted (first) in the marketplaces, and to be called Master (*rabbi*) by people.” Perhaps there is a similar play on words here in *Avot*: An arrogant sage wants to always be “first,” including being greeted first by others, rather than being the first to greet others. See Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 319-320. On letting elders speak “first” in scholarly debate, see note 79 to *Avot* 5:7.

<sup>242</sup> On *shu’alim*, “jackals,” see note 562 to *Avot* 2:10c. Compare Deuteronomy 28:13, *The Lord will make you the head, not the tail; you will always be at the top and never at the bottom.* On “head and tail” as metaphors for “great and lowly,” see also Isaiah 19:15. Compare also Ecclesiastes 9:4, *Since there is hope for one who is reckoned among all the living: even a live dog is better than a dead lion.*

<sup>243</sup> Ilan has argued that the assertion in later Babylonian sources that Rabbi *Matyah* son of *Charash* resided in Rome clearly has no strong historical, or even literary, foundation. See Ilan, “The Torah of the Jews of Ancient Rome,” 389-390. On the other hand, see Segal, “R. Matiah ben Heresh of Rome on Religious Duties and Redemption: Reaction to Sectarian Teaching”; Lieberman, “Response to the Introduction by Professor Alexander Marx,” 128-131. Compare Noy, “Rabbi Aqiba Comes to Rome: A Jewish Pilgrimage in Reverse?”; Hezser, “Travel to Sages As a Replacement of Travel to the Temple in Post-Destruction Times”; Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans*. It should be pointed out that the Jewish community of Rome was less romanized and more traditional than would be expected. See Williams, “The Structure of the Jewish Community in Rome.”

<sup>244</sup> See note 201 below; Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, 147 note 14. Note that in Palestinian Talmud *Sanhedrin* the sages contrast “the proverb” with “the Mishnah,” that is, the saying in Mishnah *Avot* 4:15b. Presumably the saying in *Avot* was not regarded as simply a different unrelated proverb.

<sup>245</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, 11:4. See Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, 146-148.

<sup>246</sup> Compare Segal, “R. Matiah ben Heresh of Rome on Religious Duties and Redemption,” 222 note 3; Alon, *Mechqarim be-Toldot Yisrael*, 2:269-270. On Rabbinic proverbs, see Arie Strikovsky. “Proverbs, Talmudic.” *Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Edition*, 16:646-648, who notes the contradiction

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here between the “ethical dictum” and the “popular saying.” Cohen considers both as examples of a common rhetorical form he terms a paradoxical bi-polar antithetical comparison. See Cohen, “Judaism without Circumcision and ‘Judaism’ without ‘Circumcision’ in Ignatius,” 407-413, especially 411-412.

<sup>247</sup> See Palestinian Talmud *Berakhot* 2:1, 4b (edition Venice, ; edition Sussmann, 13), “It is learned (in a Tannaitic tradition): (In the case of) the one who (initiates greetings and) asks about the well-being of his Master-Teacher or of (any)one who is greater than himself in Torah (learning), he has in hand authority (to do so even if it means interrupting the recitation of the *Shema*). This (teaching) states/implies that a person needs (to be the first) to ask (about the well-being) of (any)one who is greater than himself in Torah (learning).” Compare Mark 12:38; Matthew 23:7. On showing deference to an inferior, see note 159 to *Avot* 4:12. Compare Mishnah *Berakhot* 2:1.

<sup>248</sup> Note the similar thrust of the sayings of *Shim'on* son of *Zomah* in *Avot* 4:1, Rabbi *'Ele'azar* in *Avot* 4:12, and Rabbi *Ya'akov* in *Avot* 4:16. Compare Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 63a (following Manuscript Oxford [Oppenheimer Collection, Additional Folio 23]), “In a place where there is no (real) man, be a (real) man. (A superior scholar may displace an inferior one.) *'Abbaye* (about 270-339 CE) said: Learn from it: In a place where there is a (real) man, you should not be a (real) man. (An inferior scholar may not displace a superior one.) But *Rava*' (about 270-352) said: It is not necessary (to state this) except (in a case) when the two of them are equal. (A scholar may not displace another scholar who is his equal.)” See Frankel, *Introduction to the Mishnah*, 138. In Babylonian Rabbinic circles, collegial relationships are generally hierarchical. See note 147 to *Avot* 4:12.

<sup>249</sup> See Palestinian Talmud *Shabbat* 10:5 (edition Venice, 12c; edition Sussmann, 423), “This is a lion son of a lion, but you are a lion son of a jackal”; *Pesiqta' deRav Kahana*' 11:24 (edition Mandelbaum, 200). See also Palestinian Talmud *Shevi'it* 9:5 (edition Venice, 39a; edition Sussmann, 211); *Shabbat* 1:5 (edition Venice, 4a; edition Sussmann, 373); *Lamentations Rabbah* 1:9 (edition Buber, 73); *Semachot* 1:9 (edition Zlotnick, 234). Compare *Avot deRabbi Natan* Version B 27 (edition Schechter, 54), where the righteous Patriarchs are compared to lions. And compare the English “to lionize.” See also Sperber, *A Commentary on Derech Erez Zuta*, 129-130, 157. This is probably also the meaning in the saying in *Derekh 'Eretz* 6:3 (edition Higger, 123), “A scholarly disciple needs to be...(ever) pursuing...after the lion and not after the wife.” On the Rabbinic discourse over the conflicting demands of disciplined study and conjugal relations, see Excursus B. Compare also Homer, *Iliad*, 22:262, where Hector proposes to Achilles that they make a sworn agreement and Achilles replies that there are no pacts deserving of faith between lions and human beings.

<sup>250</sup> See the commentaries of Rashi, Jacob ben Samson, Maimonides, Jonah ben Abraham of Gerona, Menachem ben Solomon Meiri, Bachya ben Asher, and Simon ben Tzemach Duran here (edition Katzenellenbogen, 2:206-207); Maimonides (edition Shilat, 80).

<sup>251</sup> On the variant spellings of *Matyah*, see Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 250. See also note 120 to *Avot* 1:6.

<sup>252</sup> The scribe of Codex Kaufmann confused the numeration here; it should be 77.

<sup>253</sup> Codex Kaufmann reads: לְשָׁלוֹם לְכָל. On the variants לְשָׁלוֹם, בְּשָׁלוֹם and לְכָל, see Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 137. On the interchange between the prefixes כ and ל, see also note 254 to *Avot* 1:17.

<sup>254</sup> On the variant הוּוּ, an Aramaicism, and other forms of the verb “to be” in *Avot*, see Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 35-41.

<sup>255</sup> See Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 137.

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<sup>256</sup> Palestinian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 4:4, 22b (edition Venice, ; edition Sussmann, 1288), “The proverb is superior to the Mishnah. The Mishnah says (*Avot* 4:15b): ‘And be a tail to lions and not a head to jackals.’ The proverb says: And be head to jackals and not a tail to lions. For we learned (Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 4:4): ‘(If) they needed to ordain (a disciple to serve on the court), they ordained one of (the “head” students sitting) in the first (row).’” See Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, 146.

<sup>257</sup> Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, 129-30.

<sup>258</sup> On Rabbi *Ya‘aqov* son of *Qorshay*, see note 44 to *Avot* 3:7b.

<sup>259</sup> On the terms “This Age” and “the Coming Age,” see note 136 to *Avot* 3:11.

<sup>260</sup> Hebrew פְּרוֹסְדוֹר, *perosdod*, from Greek *prostada* (a variant of *prostas*), “forecourt,” literally “standing in front”; in Latin *vestibulum*, “vestibule.” See note 265 below. In Roman architecture, the front door was normally set in from the road, creating a partially enclosed courtyard between the two wings of the house walls that extended to the street and the front door. This forecourt or vestibule separated the entrance from the public thoroughfare. Rich patricians often started their day by taking visits from their numerous clients who would congregate in the forecourt early in the morning. A servant would escort guests inside through a long, narrow hallway that led from the front door to the atrium, the formal entrance hall. The forecourt might be only a few feet in a small house, while in great houses and monumental public buildings it would be quite large and highly decorated. The homes of the poor did not have a forecourt; the door opened up to the street.

Other Greek words exist for “forecourt,” notably *prothuros* (or *prothuraios*), literally “before the door,” which appears in a nearly identical usage in Epictetus. See note 174 below. Some have thought *prothuros* lies behind the Hebrew variant פְּרוֹזְדוֹר, *perozdor*, but even if the Greek *theta* (θ=th) might have been phonetically transformed into the Hebrew *zayin-dalet* (זד), nearly all the best witnesses of all the occurrences of this word have a final *dalet* (ד) rather than a *resh* (ר). See Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avoth Through The Ages*, 250-251. This is also true of the Rabbinic passages which use *perosdod/perozdod*, “forecourt, antechamber,” metaphorically for a component of a woman’s reproductive organs. See Mishnah *Niddah* 2:5; *Tosefta’ Niddah* 3:9; Palestinian Talmud *Niddah* 2:5, 50a (edition Venice, ; edition Sussmann, 1439-1440); Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 86b; *Yevamot* 71b; *Bava’ Batra’* 24a; *Chullin* 68a, 72a; *Bekhorot* 46b; *Niddah* 17b, 18a, 42b (all of these are essentially based on the Mishnah passage). Some commentators see the reference here to the vagina, and presumably understand *perosdod* in the sense of “entrance hall, passageway,” like the Latin *fauces* or *ostium*, the public entrance to the home, usually a narrow, dark corridor, similar in design and function to the forecourt, which led from the front door to the main part of the house. However, the usual Greek term for this is *prodomus*. The specific anatomical referent in those passages is uncertain. See Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 49-52; Labovitz, *Marriage and Metaphor*, 123-125.

Aside from *Avot* (and the few parallels) and and Mishnah *Niddah* (and the many parallels), *perosdod/perozdor* does not appear elsewhere in classical Rabbinic literature except for *Song of Songs Rabbah* 4:12 (edition Dunsky, 120).

<sup>261</sup> This first clause appears in an unrelated context in *Tosefta’ Berakhot* 6:21 (see Parallels), which suggests that it was a well-known Rabbinic saying employed by Rabbi *Ya‘aqov*. A similar example is found in Palestinian Talmud *Shevi’it* 4:10, 35c (edition Venice, ; edition Sussmann, 192), “The one who dies in the seven years of Gog, he does not have a share at the Future to Come. The sign: One who eats at the prenuptial party, eats at the wedding feast.” The proof (“sign”) is a well-known saying which also uses a Greek loanword: פְּרוֹטוֹגַמְיָא, *protogamia*, “prenuptial party,” from Greek *prôtogamia*, literally “first marriage.” Compare Greek *prôtogenesia*, “first birthday party.” Saadia explains: “for among them (Palestinian Jewry) is observed a custom of inviting (guests to a banquet) that precedes the wedding feast.” See Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 7:7 (edition

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In the Mishnah and other Rabbinic texts, scribes sometimes confuse *Rebbi* and Rabbi *Me'ir*. See Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, 1203-1204. The confusion is probably due to the conjoining of רב into רב, since the two are orthographically nearly identical when the ך is written closely to the ב. A scribe would readily assume רב is an abbreviation of רבי מ׳. It is far less likely that the name *Me'ir* would drop out entirely from so many reliable witnesses. If so, when attributions to both sages appear in manuscripts, and the better manuscripts read *Rebbi*, then that should generally be presumed the original reading. A good example of this appears in *Midrash Proverbs 7* (edition Visotzky, 56). Another might be *Sifrei Deuteronomy 306* (edition Finkelstein, 338), see apparatus to line 14, and compare Naeh, “The Art of Memory: Constructions of Memory and Patterns of Text in Rabbinic Literature,” 546 note 17.

<sup>345</sup> The scribe of Codex Kaufmann confused the numeration here; it should be רב.

<sup>346</sup> The Palestinan pronunciation is *qingen*, the Babylonian *qanqan* (as in Akkadian). See Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*, 216.

<sup>347</sup> This is the only reference in the Mishnah to Rabbi *El'azar ha-qappar*, “the Caper man.” See note 295 below. He was a fourth-generation Tannaite who resided in Lydda and often appears with the honorific title *beirebbi*, “the Eminent.” See note 126 to *Avot 6:8*.

<sup>348</sup> Sharvit suspects *Avot 4:21* may be a *barraita* that entered the text. See Sharvit, *Tractate Avot Through The Ages*, 173, 273. It is missing in a Sephardic prayer book (dated 1350) and the Commentary of Nathan ben Abraham (late eleventh century); it does not appear in *Avot de Rabbi Natan* Version A. It may be an addition, but the evidence is inconclusive. If so, it must have occurred at a very early stage of oral transmission.

<sup>349</sup> Compare Proverbs 14:30, *A healing heart* (calm mood) (effects) *bodily liveliness, but envy* (effects) *rotteness of the bones*. See also Ecclesiastes 4:4, 9:6.

<sup>350</sup> Hebrew *ta'avah*, “(unbridled) desire, craving, covetousness.” Though it often means “(sexual) lust,” the context suggests a more generic sense. See Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 148 note 70. On the terms “envy” (not “jealousy”) and “craving,” see Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avot Through The Ages*, 53.

<sup>351</sup> Hebrew *kavod*, literally “honor,” which in context must be understood as “(love of) honor” or “honor (seeking),” ambition to achieve fame, glory, power. Compare Greek *philotimia*, “love of honor,” equivalent to Latin *ambitio*, ambition. See note 14 to *Avot 2:1*; Urbach, “Humanistic Aspects of Jewish Law,” in Urbach, *Collected Writings in Jewish Studies*, 30. See commentaries to *Avot 4:21* of Rashi (Solomon ben Isaac), Jacob ben Samson, Maimonides, Jonah ben Abraham of Gerona, Menachem ben Solomon Meiri, Bachya ben Asher, Simon ben Tzemach Duran, and Obadiah ben Jacob Seforno (edition Katzenellenbogen, 2:227-230). While *kavod* can also mean “wealth,” for “(love of) money/wealth” Hebrew uses *betza'* or *mamon*. See note 207 to *Avot 2:12*. Compare James 3:16, “For where there is envy/jealousy (*zēlos*) and (ambitious) scheming (*eritheia*), there is disorder and every foul action.”

<sup>352</sup> See note 209 to *Avot 2:11*. See note 160 to *Avot 3:11*, note 188 to Excursus E, on *Sifrei Numbers 112*, “he deserves to be expelled from the age/world.”

<sup>353</sup> If the buds are not picked but allowed to ripen, the caper flower produces a fruit. The caperberry, Hebrew *aviyyonah*, mentioned in Ecclesiastes 12:5, where it appears as a stimulant for the appetite. The ancient translations in Syriac (Peshitta: *qafar*), Greek (Septuagint, Aquila: *kapparis*), and Latin (Vulgate: *capparis*) all render it “caperberry” (while the word is ambiguous, “caperbush” and “capers” are less likely). The Aramaic Targum understand *aviyyonah* as an aphrodisiac and metaphorically renders the biblical phrase “the caperberry fails” by *titmena' min mashkena'* (read: *mashkeva'*), “he

refrains from the couch,” a euphemism for being unable to engage in sexual relations. The same is true of the Greek version of Symmachus. The caperberry was considered an aphrodisiac in Roman and Jewish sources. See Moore, “The Caper-Plant and Its Edible Products”; Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 363, 380; Jehuda Feliks, “Caper,” *Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Edition* 4:442-443; note 208 to *Avot* 4:16. On the association of caperberries with *ta'avah* and *chemdah*, “desire, appetite, craving,” see *Leviticus Rabbah* 18:1 (edition Margulies, 395); Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 152a; and *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 12:5, on which see Schofer, *Confronting Vulnerability*, 35-37. The homiletic interpretation of *'aviyyonah* as *zekhut 'avot*, “merit of (distinguished fore)fathers,” possibly refers to “pride, ambition.” See *Lamentations Rabbah* Proem 23 (edition Buber, 22), *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 12:5, *Midrash Zuta' Ecclesiastes* 12:5 (edition Buber, 154). Compare notes 41 and 42 to *Avot* 2:2; note 3 to Introduction. On the biblical name *Tzalaf*, possibly from *tzalaf*, “caperbush,” see Nehemiah 3:30. Also see the story of *Rebbi* and *Shim'on* son of the Caper man in Palestinian Talmud *Mo'ed Qatan* 3:1 (edition Venice, 81c-81d; edition Sussmann, 810), who suffers for his pride and envy! See Tur-Sinai (Torczyner), *The Language and the Book*, 3:309-312. Note also Palestinian Talmud *Pesachim* 8:7 (edition Venice, 36a; edition Sussmann, 548-549), “(Rabbi 'Eli'ezer) son of (Rabbi 'El'azer) the Caper man taught (a Tannaitic tradition): (This rule was enacted) so that the Holy Things should not come to desecration”—that is, in case the festivities turned into an orgy! On the connection between a sage's name or appellation and his teaching, see note 205 to *Avot* 2:9a.

<sup>354</sup> Codex Kaufmann reads: *הַכַּפָּר*, *ha-kappar*. This spelling is extremely rare, though it is also attested in *Sifrei Numbers* 23 (edition Horowitz, 27; edition Kahana, 1:62, see his apparatus to line 29) in Manuscript Oxford 151 and the first edition (Constantinople, 1512) of *Numbers Rabbah* 10:8. Otherwise, in virtually all other occurrences elsewhere in classical Rabbinic literature his appellation is spelled *הַקָּפָר*, *ha-qappar*. It is also found in a contemporary inscription. See note 328 below. Compare the name *Yose* son of *קיפר* (or *כיפר*); see Hyman, *Toldoth Tannaim ve'Amoraim*, 732-733. On the occasional interchange between *ק* (*qof*) and *כ* (*kaf*) in the Mishnah, see Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, 1227. Compare Milikowsky, *Seder 'Olam: Critical Edition*, 2:20-21; Kutscher, *Studies in Galilean Aramaic*, 17. Here it may reflect a less common alternate transcription of the Greek or Latin word for caper (see note 311 above). In addition to his well-known son Rabbi 'Eli'ezer son of Rabbi 'El'azer the Caper man, who in Rabbinic sources is distinguished from his father by the Aramaic appellation *בַּר קַפְרָה*, *Bar Qapparab*, “Caper man's boy,” literally “son of the Caper man.” Another rabbi with this designation appears in an Aramaic inscription: “Rabbi *Yehoshu'a bar Levi* the Caper man (*qapparab*).” See Aviam and Amitai, “Cemeteries of Sepphoris,” 21-22. Compare Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*, 258 note 34. On *Shim'on* son of the Caper man, see note 311 above.

This form of the noun (*קַפָּר*) is commonly used for occupations, so it probably means one who produces and sells capers. The caperbush was widely cultivated and almost every part (roots, stalk, leaves, buds, and fruit) was used in some fashion. So Mishnah *Ma'asrot* 4:6 (following Codex Kaufmann), “The caperbush (*tzelef*) is tithed (on its) stalks, berries (*'aviyyonot*), and (pickled) bud (*qafris*).” The unripened caperbuds are edible after pickling in salt or vinegar, and used as a pungent condiment in sauces, relishes, and various other dishes. See Mishnah *Dema'i* 1:1; 4Q386 1 ii:5, “For from the impure no seed shall survive, (just as) from the caperbud there cannot be new wine, and a hornet cannot make honey.” Both sources refer to *נְצַפָּה*, *netzafah*, presumably a metathesis of *נְלָף*, *tzalaf*, with the common interchange of *ל* (*lamed*) and *מ* (*mem*), apparently meaning “(unripened) caperbud.” Hebrew *קַפְרִים*, *qafris* (or *qafras*), “(pickled) bud, capers,” from Greek *kapparis*, Latin *capparis*. Compare Aramaic *qafri* and Syriac *qafar*. See Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 500; Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon*, 1395. Compare also Aramaic *parcha'*, “caperbud,” and by synecdoche “caperbush.” See Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 931. Possibly, the

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original vocalization of קפריסין, קפרס was *qapparīs*. See Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 36a-b, קפריסין, *qafrisin* (*qapparisin*?). The extended use of *kapparīs* for “caperberry” as well as “caperbush” and “capers” occurs in Greek and Aramaic, and seemingly also in Hebrew.

<sup>355</sup> Following Manuscripts Parma, Oxford (Maimonides), London 442, Munich 95, and most other witnesses. Manuscripts Kaufmann (the original scribe), Cambridge, several Genizah fragments and early textual witnesses read: *’Eli’ezer*. The confusion of the two names is quite common, and in this case exacerbated by the fact that the son of Rabbi *’El’azar* the Caper man is Rabbi *’Eli’ezer* son of the Caper man (see note 311 above). There is little doubt, however, that his true name is *’El’azar*. See Kahana, *Sifre on Numbers*, 212 note 57; 330-332; Naeh, “Two Timeworn Topics in Rabbinic Hebrew,” 367; Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, 1162-1182. Compare Basser, *In the Margins of the Midrash*, 27. Note the inscription found in the Golan: “This is the study house of Rabbi *’Eli’ezer ha-qappar*” (אליעזר הקפר).” If the later dating of this inscription to the fourth century is correct, it probably marks a study house named after Rabbi *’El’azar*’s son Rabbi *’Eli’ezer*. See Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*, 158; Millar, “Inscriptions, Synagogues and Rabbis in Late Antique Palestine,” 263-264. See also Sharvit, *Language and Style of Tractate Avot Through The Ages*, 254-255; Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 88-89; Lapin, “Epigraphical Rabbis: A Reconsideration,” 317, 321, 331-332; Miller, “‘This is the Beit Midrash of Rabbi Eliezer ha-Qappar’ (Dabbura Inscription) – Were Epigraphical Rabbis Real Sages, or Nothing More Than Donors and Honored Deceased?” On the longer and shorter forms of the names *’El’azar* and *’Eli’ezer*, see note 208 to *Avot* 2:8c.

<sup>356</sup> The title “Rabbi” is found all other witnesses. It was inadvertently omitted by the original scribe of Codex Kaufmann but was later added by the hand of the vocalizer.

<sup>357</sup> Greek *aladzoneia*, “pretentious pride, arrogance.” Compare Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 2:3.

<sup>358</sup> Without these three qualities humans would not pursue a livelihood, rear children, or live in friendship. On this saying, see edition Schechter, 17 note 9; edition Okolica, 30 note 18; Saldarini, *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan*, 53-54 and notes 14-15. See also *Avot* 1:2, 1:18. See *Avot de Rabbi Natan* Version B 34 (edition Schechter, 76; following Manuscript Parma), “He (also) was the one saying: Envy, craving, and ambition tear away a person from the life of (civilized) society and from (eternal) life of the Coming Age.” This saying follows one attributed to Rabbi *’El’azar* son of Rabbi *’El’azar* the Caper man. See Excursus C §16.

<sup>359</sup> Presented as the view of Epicurus and his school. The sage must overcome harmful passions to avoid harm to his soul.

<sup>360</sup> A reference to the belief in the resurrection of the dead. See Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 10:1. Compare the similar paradox cited in note 61 to *Avot* 2:4a, “Is it your will that you do not die? Die (having done God’s will), so that you will not (truly) die (at the Coming Age). Is it your will that you will live? Do not live (a sinful life), so that you may (truly) live (at the Coming Age).” See note 95 to *Avot* 2:4a.

<sup>361</sup> The plural subject and the chronological sequence of events described indicates that the saying is not speaking about the judgment of the individual’s immortal souls after death, but the future collective judgment of the People Israel, which is to take place after the resurrection of all the dead, so that body and soul can be judged together. See Rosen-Zvi, “Refuting the Yetzer,” 127; Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 91. See also Excursion E.

<sup>362</sup> The soul will have a deep understanding. Compare Jeremiah 31:33-34, *I will put My Torah into their inmost being and inscribe it upon their hearts. Then I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*