

ב"ה

Talmud Tour

Berachot 17b-18b

Using the Sefaria text with translation of the elucidation by Rabbi Adin Even Yisrael (Steinsaltz) and also comments drawn from Chassidic teachings

Colour code: blue, Mishnah/Talmud text from this page of Berachot; Black, Chassidic comments; purple, quotations from other Talmudic or classical texts; dark red, general editorial comments; bright red, halachic statements.

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This session concerns: honour due to the dead, honour due to a Torah Scroll, and the question whether or not the dead hear what people are saying

מִתְנִי' מִי שְׁמִתּוֹ מוּטָל לְפָנָיו — פְּטוּר מִקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע וּמִן הַתְּפִלָּה וּמִן הַתְּפִלִּין, וּמִכָּל מִצְוֹת הָאֲמוּרוֹת בַּתּוֹרָה.

MISHNA: One whose deceased relative is laid out unburied before him is exempt from the recitation of *Shema*, from the *Amida* prayer, and from the mitzva to don

phylacteries, as well as all positive mitzvot mentioned in the Torah, until the deceased has been buried.

a) The person whose close relative is deceased, and he has the responsibility to bury that person, is halachically in a state of 'one who is active in one Mitzvah is not obligated by another' – העוסק במצוה פטור ממצוה אחרת.

This is a principle applied in various ways in Jewish law. It originates in the first chapter of this Tractate Berachot 11a, discussing what is meant in the Shema when it says '[you should say the daily Shema] when you sit in your house and you walk on the way'. Summarizing, this is explained as follows: when you sit in your house and are not performing another Mitzva, when you walk on the way - on *your* way, not a way which is a specific Mitzva, then you must say the Shema at the right time. But if you are involved in another Mitzva you do not have to say the Shema. (The Mitzva which the Talmud there discussed was a groom on the first night of his marriage).

b) A Chassidic way of understanding this, is that a Mitzva connects a person to Hashem. The word Mitzva is usually understood as coming from the verb Tziva, 'command'. A command connects the Commander (G-d) and the commanded (the person). There is also another way of understanding the word Mitzva, as coming from the Aramaic verb tzavta, which means 'connect'. When carrying out a Mitzva one is connected with Hashem in a very intense way, and therefore it is not appropriate to do anything else, even if that itself is a Mitzva.

c) Another way to understand this halachah in the Talmud is that it concerns *the honour of the dead* כבוד המת.

Because of this focus on honour of the dead, the Onen, meaning the mourner before his dead close relative is buried, should not do anything else, his or her entire being should be focused on caring for the dead person, and making sure he or she gets buried properly.

Both approaches, 'one who is occupied with a Mitzva is not obligated by another Mitzva', and the concern for honour of the dead, raise the question of the difference between an Onen who is directly involved with arranging the burial, and one who is, for example, sitting at home, waiting (for example) for the Burial Society to state what time the funeral will be. Or someone who is not a relative, but who is sitting with the dead person 'guarding' the corpse. The Talmud shortly discusses this question. The conclusion is that the exemption (or prohibition) from performing other Mitzvot such as the Shema applies to all close relatives wherever they are, they all have the status of Onen. And the person who is next to the corpse, even though he is not a relative, is also exempt.

The Mishnah now continues concerning the bearers of the coffin or corpse for burial:

נושאֵי הַמָּטָה וְחַלּוּפֵיהֶן, וְחַלּוּפֵי חַלּוּפֵיהֶן, אֶת שְׁלֹפְנֵי הַמָּטָה, וְאֶת שְׁלֹאֲחֵי הַמָּטָה. אֶת שְׁלֹפְנֵי הַמָּטָה צוּרָךְ בָּהֶם — פְּטוּרִין, וְאֶת שְׁלֹאֲחֵי הַמָּטָה צוּרָךְ בָּהֶם — חַיִּיבִין. וְאֵלּוּ וְאֵלּוּ פְּטוּרִים מִן הַתְּפִלָּה.

With regard to **the pallbearers and their replacements and the replacements of their replacements, those located before the bier** who have not yet carried the deceased **and those located after the bier. Those before the bier who are needed to carry the bier are exempt** from reciting *Shema*; **while those after the bier, even if they are still needed to**

carry it, since they have already carried the deceased, they are **obligated** to recite *Shema*. However, both **these and those are exempt from** reciting the *Amida* prayer, since they are preoccupied and are unable to focus and pray with the appropriate intent.

Now the Mishnah deals with the 'row'. Today the consolors form two lines and the mourners pass between them and the consolors give them the blessing said at a Shiva: 'G-d should comfort you together with the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem'. Something similar took place in the times of the Mishnah.

קָבְרוּ אֶת הַמֵּת וְחָזְרוּ, אִם יְכוּלִין לְהַתְחִיל וּלְגַמֹּר עַד שֶׁלֹּא יִגְיעוּ לְשׁוּרָה — יַתְחִילוּ. וְאִם לֹא — לֹא יַתְחִילוּ.

After **they buried the deceased and returned**, if they have sufficient time to **begin** to recite *Shema* and **conclude before they arrive at the row**, formed by those who attended the burial, through which the bereaved family will pass in order to receive consolation, **they should begin**. If they do **not** have sufficient time to conclude reciting the entire *Shema*, then **they should not begin**.

הָעוֹמְדִים בְּשׁוּרָה, הַפְּנִימִיִּים — פְּטוּרִים, וְהַחִיצוֹנִים — חַיִּיבִים. נָשִׁים וְעֶבְדִּים וְקִטְנִים פְּטוּרִים מִקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע וּמִן הַתְּפִלָּין, וְחַיִּיבִין בְּתַפְלָה וּבְמִזְזָה וּבְבִרְכַּת הַמָּזוֹן.

And **those standing in the row**, those in the **interior** row, directly before whom the mourners will pass and who will console them, **are exempt** from reciting *Shema*, while **those** in the **exterior** row, who stand there only to show their respect, **are obligated** to recite *Shema*. **Women, slaves and minors are exempt from the recitation of**

***Shema* and from phylacteries, but are obligated in prayer, *mezuzah* and Grace after Meals.**

More background to the 'row' is seen from this passage from Sanhedrin 19a:

תָּנוּ רַבֵּנָן: בְּרֹאשׁוֹנָה הָיוּ אֲבֵלִים עוֹמְדִין, וְכָל הָעָם עוֹבְרִין. וְהָיוּ שְׁתֵּי מִשְׁפָּחוֹת בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם מִתְגָּרוֹת זוּ בְּזוּ, זֹאת אוֹמֶרֶת: "אֲנִי עוֹבֶרֶת תַּחֲלָה", וְזֹאת אוֹמֶרֶת: "אֲנִי עוֹבֶרֶת תַּחֲלָה". הִתְקִינוּ שֶׁיֵּהָא הָעָם עוֹמְדִין וְאֲבֵלִים עוֹבְרִין.

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: Initially the mourners would stand, and all the people would pass by one after another and console them. And there were two families in Jerusalem who would fight with each other, as this one would say: We pass by first because we are more distinguished and important, and that one would say: We pass by first. Consequently, they decreed that the people should stand and the mourners pass by, and disputes would be avoided.

a) Hearing about the two families in Jerusalem who would fight with each other reminds us that the cause of the destruction of the Second Temple was causeless hatred, as recounted in the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza (Gittin 55b). The Rebbe often said hence the way to rebuild the Temple is through causeless love, love of one's fellow Jew to a limitless degree. It is said about the great Chassid Rabbi Mendel Futerfas that the 'chocolate', ie the luxuries, of another Jew meant more to him than his own 'salt herring', ie bare necessities.

b) the general concern for the Honour of the Dead derives both from concern for the Soul and for the body. The

Zohar states (Zohar III 70b) ‘their bodies are holy, their souls are holy.’. The soul has three aspects, Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah. It is said that the Nefesh remains with the corpse and later at the grave, while Ruach and Neshamah ascend above¹. So concern for the honour of the dead is both a concern for the Nefesh and for the physical body.

c) But the focus is on the body, and in Tanya ch.49 (69b-70a) it speaks of Hashem choosing the *body* of the Jew (because the soul is anyway exalted, while the body looks the same as anyone else’s body); the Rebbe RaShaB² speaks of Atzmut, the Essence, being expressed in the body. Thus it is said that while now the soul is higher than the body, when Moshiach comes we will see the greatness of the body, and the body will give a spiritual input to the soul. Of course, when Moshiach comes there is the concept of the Revival of the Dead, which also stresses the significance of the physical body. Hence we can understand the way Jewish law and custom focus on the significance of the live body and the practical Mitzvot it can achieve, and after death, on the significance of honour for the dead body and the process of burial.

Now the Gemara begins discussing this Mishnah with the question about if the corpse is actually there in front of the person or not:

גמ' מוטל לפניו — אין, ושאינו מוטל לפניו — לא.

GEMARA: We learned in the mishna that one whose deceased relative is laid out before him is exempt from the

¹ Source needed

² Torat Shalom p.120ff.

recitation of *Shema* and other positive mitzvot. The Gemara deduces: When the corpse is **laid out before him, yes**, he is exempt, but when the corpse is **not** physically **laid out before him, no**, he is not exempt from these mitzvot.

וּרְמִינָהּ: מִי שֶׁמֵּתוּ מוּטָל לְפָנָיו — אוֹכֵל בְּבֵית אַחֵר, וְאִם אֵין לוֹ בֵּית אַחֵר — אוֹכֵל בְּבֵית חֲבִירוֹ, וְאִם אֵין לוֹ בֵּית חֲבִירוֹ — עוֹשֶׂה מְחִיצָה וְאוֹכֵל, וְאִם אֵין לוֹ דָּבָר לַעֲשׂוֹת מְחִיצָה — מַחְזִיר פָּנָיו וְאוֹכֵל. וְאִינוּ מֵיֹסֵב וְאוֹכֵל. וְאִינוּ אוֹכֵל בָּשָׂר וְאִינוּ שׁוֹתֶה יַיִן, וְאִינוּ מְבָרֵךְ, וְאִינוּ מְזַמֵּן.

The Gemara **raises a contradiction** from a *baraita*: **One whose deceased relative is laid out before him eats in another room. If he does not have another room, he eats in the house of a friend. If he does not have a friend's house available, he makes a partition** between him and the deceased **and eats. If he does not have material with which to make a partition, he averts his face** from the dead **and eats. And** in any case, **he does not recline while he eats**, as reclining is characteristic of a festive meal.

Furthermore, he neither eats meat nor drinks wine, and does not recite a blessing before eating, **and does not** recite the formula to **invite** the participants in the meal to join together in the Grace after Meals [*zimmun*], i.e., he is exempt from the obligation of Grace after Meals.

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וְאֵין מְבָרֵכִין עָלָיו, וְאֵין מְזַמְּנִין עָלָיו, וּפְטוּר מִקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע וּמִן הַתַּפִּלָּה וּמִן הַתַּפִּילִין וּמִכָּל מִצְוֹת הָאֲמִוּרוֹת בִּתְּוָרָה. וּבִשְׁבֶּת מֵיֹסֵב וְאוֹכֵל בָּשָׂר וְשׁוֹתֶה יַיִן, וּמְבָרֵךְ וּמְזַמֵּן, וּמְבָרֵכִין עָלָיו וּמְזַמְּנִין עָלָיו, וְחַיִּיב בְּכָל הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֲמִוּרוֹת בִּתְּוָרָה. רַבֵּן שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר: מִתּוֹךְ שְׁנֵת־חַיִּיב בְּאֵלּוּ — נִתְּחַיֵּב בְּכוּלָן.

And there is no need for others **to recite a blessing** beforehand **on his behalf, nor do others invite him** to join in Grace after Meals, as he cannot be a member of the quorum of three required to recite the formula. **He is exempt from the recitation of *Shema*, from the *Amida* prayer and from phylacteries, and from all mitzvot mentioned in the Torah. On Shabbat, however, he reclines at the meal as per his custom, and eats meat and drinks wine, and recites blessings and recites the formula to invite the participants in the meal to join together in the Grace after Meals, and others may recite blessings on his behalf and invite him to join in Grace after Meals, and he is obligated in all mitzvot mentioned in the Torah. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: Just as he is obligated on Shabbat to fulfill these mitzvot associated with Shabbat meals, he is obligated to fulfill all mitzvot.**

וְאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: מֵאֵי בִּינְיָיָהּ — תִּשְׁמִישׁ הַמָּטָה אֵיכָּא בִּינְיָיָהּ.

Rabbi Yohanan said: What is the practical difference between the apparently identical statements of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel and the first *tanna*? The practical difference between them is with regard to conjugal relations. The first *tanna* holds that although there is no mourning on Shabbat, since refraining from addressing his wife's conjugal rights would not be a public display of mourning, conjugal relations are prohibited. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel holds that since there is no mourning on Shabbat, he must fulfill the mitzva of addressing his wife's conjugal rights.

קִתְּנֵי מִיֵּהָת פָּטוּר מִקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע וּמִן הַתַּפְּלָה וּמִן הַתַּפְּלִין וּמִכָּל מִצְוֹת
הָאֲמֻרוֹת בַּתּוֹרָה! אָמַר רַב פָּפָא: תִּרְגְּמָא אֲמַחְזִיר פְּנֵיו וְאוֹכֵל. רַב אֲשִׁי

אמר: כיון שמוטל עליו לקבורו, כמוטל לפניו דמי. שנאמר: "ויקם אברהם מעל פני מתו", ונאמר: "ואקברה מתי מלפני", כל זמן שמוטל עליו לקבורו כמוטל לפניו דמי.

In any event, the *baraita* teaches that **one is exempt from the recitation of *Shema*, from the *Amida* prayer and from phylacteries, and from all mitzvot mentioned in the Torah.** This is an apparent contradiction of our mishna which states that one is exempt only when the deceased is laid before him. To resolve this contradiction, **Rav Pappa said: Explain the *baraita* as applicable only to the particular case when one turns his face away and eats, with the deceased laid out before him.** In the other cases, when he is in a different room, he is obligated in all mitzvot. **Rav Ashi says:** The phrase: The deceased is laid out before him, is not to be taken literally, but rather, **since it is incumbent upon him to bury the deceased**, and he is not yet buried, it is **as if he is laid out before him, as it is stated: "And Abraham rose up from before his dead"** (Genesis 23:3), **and when Abraham speaks with the Hittites, it is stated: "So that I may bury my dead from before me"** (Genesis 23:4). **As long as it is incumbent upon him to bury him, it is as he is laid out before him.**

מתו — אין, אבל משמרו — לא.

From the mishna one can infer that when **his deceased** relative is laid out before him, **yes**, he is exempt from mitzvot. **But**, if it is not his relative and he is only **watching over** the deceased, **no**, he is not exempt.

והתנא: המשמר את המת, אף על פי שאינו מתו — פטור מקריאת שמע ומן התפלה ומן התפילין ומכל מצות האמורות בתורה! משמרו, אף על פי שאינו מתו, מתו אף על פי שאינו משמרו.

The Gemara challenges: **Wasn't it taught** in a *baraita*: **One who watches over the deceased, even if it is not his deceased relative, is exempt from the recitation of *Shema*, from prayer and from phylacteries, and from all mitzvot mentioned in the Torah?** The Gemara responds that these two sources should not be understood as contradictory, but as complementary. In both the cases, he is exempt; where **one watches over** the deceased, **but it is not his deceased** relative, as well as the case where **it is his deceased** relative, **but he is not watching over** the deceased.

מתו ומשמרו — אין, אבל מהלך בבית הקברות — לא. והתנא: לא יהלך אדם בבית הקברות ותפילין בראשו וספר תורה בזרועו וקורא. ואם עושה כן — עובר משום "לועג לרש חרף עושהו".

The Gemara further challenges: We concluded that, in both cases, if it is **his deceased** relative or if he was **watching over** the unrelated deceased, **he is** exempt from mitzvot. **However, one walking in a cemetery is not** exempt. **Wasn't it taught** explicitly in a *baraita*: **One may not walk in a cemetery with phylacteries on his head and a Torah scroll in his arm and read from it? If one does so he commits a transgression due to the verse: "He who mocks the poor blasphemes his Creator"** (Proverbs 17:5). As the deceased is incapable of fulfilling mitzvot, fulfilling a mitzva in his presence is seen as mocking him.

התם, תוך ארבע אמות הוא דאסור, חוץ לארבע אמות — חייב. דאמר מר מת תופס ארבע אמות לקריאת שמע. הכא, חוץ לארבע אמות נמי פטור.

The Gemara answers: **There**, when one walks in a cemetery, **within four cubits** of a grave, **that is prohibited**.

However, **beyond four cubits** from a grave, **one is obligated** in prayer and phylacteries. **As the Master said: The deceased occupies four cubits** with regard to the exemption from the **recitation of *Shema***. One who walks within four cubits of the deceased is exempt. **Here**, however, in the case where it is either his deceased relative or he is watching over an unrelated deceased, **beyond four cubits he is also exempt**.

The parallel passage in the Talmud Yerushalmi is helpful, from Berachot, chapter 3, Halachah 1:

אָמַר רַבִּי בּוֹן כְּתִיב לִמְעַן תִּזְכּוֹר אֶת יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ. יָמִים שָׂאתָ עוֹסֵק בָּהֶן בְּחַיִּים. וְלֹא יָמִים שָׂאתָ עוֹסֵק בָּהֶן בַּמֵּתִים.

Rabbi Bun said: It is written (*Deut.* 16:3) “So that you should remember the day of your exodus from Egypt the totality of the days of your living;” the days when you are occupied with the living, not the days that you are occupied with the dead.

This verse is about remembering going out of Egypt, which the Talmud understands by implication as regarding saying the Shema and other Mitzvot. Hence when one is involved with the dead one focuses on that, and one does not carry out other Mitzvot.

The commentary ‘Charedim³’ states that this idea could have been learnt from the concept ‘one who is busy with one Mitzva is not liable to perform another’. So why is this verse needed? For the case of the person who is *not* actively busy with preparing the dead for burial, but his

³ by Rabbi Elazar Azkiri (16th cent.) who wrote a famous book *Sefer Charedim*, hence his commentary on Tractate Berachot of the Talmud Yerushalmi is also called Chareidim.

general mental and emotional concern for burying the dead makes him not liable for other Mitzvot.

תני אם רצה להחמיר על עצמו אין שומעין לו. למה מפני כבודו של מת. או משום שאין לו מי שישא משואו. מה [נפיק] מביניהן ה'יה לו מי שישא משואו. ואין תימר מפני כבודו של מת אסור. ואם תאמר מפני... שאין לו מי שישא משואו הרי יש לו מי שישא משואו

It was stated: If he wants to be more stringent with himself one does not listen to him. Why? Because of the honour of the deceased or because he has nobody to carry his load [ie – see to the burial]? What is the difference between them? If he has someone who is carrying his load; if you say because of the honour of the deceased it is forbidden, but if you say because he has nobody to carry his load, here he has somebody to carry his load [and might be permitted or obliged to say the Shema and keep other Mitzvot].

The Talmud Yerushalmi discusses this topic at length and ends with the idea that the main reason why the Onen cannot say the Shema or carry out other Mitzvot is because of honour for the dead.

The Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah sec. 341 rules that an Onen who is not involved with the preparations for the burial is also forbidden to carry out Mitzvot such as saying the Shema, prayer and blessings. Also, relating to another discussion on this page of Berachot, on the Sabbath the mourner cannot engage in marital relations even though in other public ways one behaves normally, such as eating meat and drinking wine.

One might say that marital relations express an exalted level of holiness and come from a profound aspect of one's being, turning away from everything else. If one is in the week of mourning, focusing on the departed one, this 'turning away' is not appropriate, even on Shabbat.

The Gemara now discusses someone who is caring for a dead person who is not his close relative:

גופא. המשמר את המת אף על פי שאינו מתו — פטור מקריאת שמע ומן התפלה ומן התפילין ומכל מצות האמורות בתורה. היו שנים — זה משמר וזה קורא, וזה משמר וזה קורא. בן עזאי אומר: היו באים בספינה — מניחו בזוית זו, ומתפללין שניהם בזוית אחרת.

The Gemara discusses the **matter** of the *baraita* **itself**. It was taught in the *baraita*: **One who watches over the deceased, even though it is not his dead relative, is exempt from the recitation of *Shema*, from the *Amida* prayer and from phylacteries, and from all mitzvot mentioned in the Torah.** The *baraita* continues: If **two** individuals **were** watching over the deceased, **this** one **watches** and **that** one **recites *Shema***, and then **that** one **watches** and **this** one **recites *Shema***. **Ben Azzai says:** If **they were traveling** with the deceased **on a boat**, **they** are permitted **to set** the deceased **down in this corner** of the boat **and both pray in another corner** of the boat.

מאי בינייהו? אמר רבינא: חוששין לעכברים איכא בינייהו. מר סבר: חיישינן. ומר סבר: לא חיישינן.

The Gemara asks: **What is** the practical difference **between these** two opinions? **Ravina said:** The practical difference **between them** is whether or not one need be

concerned about mice even inside the boat. **The first Sage holds that we are concerned** about mice everywhere, and it is therefore inappropriate to leave the deceased unguarded, even on a boat, lest he be eaten by mice. **The other Sage, ben Azzai, maintains that we are not concerned about mice** on a boat.

תנו רבנן: המוליך עצמות ממקום למקום, הרי זה לא יתנם בדסקיא ויתנם על גבי חמור וירכב עליהם, מפני שנוהג בהם מנהג בזיון. ואם היה מתירא מפני גוים ומפני לסטים — מותר. וכדרך שאמרו בעצמות, כך אמרו בספר תורה.

The Gemara discusses other issues concerning the dignity of the deceased. **The Sages taught: One who transports bones from place to place may not place them in a saddlebag [*disakaya*] and place them on the donkey's back and ride on them, as in doing so he treats the remains disgracefully. However, if he is afraid of gentiles or highwaymen and therefore must move quickly, he is permitted to do so. And just as they said with regard to bones, so they said with regard to a Torah scroll.**

אֵיחָא? אֵילִימָא אַרִישָׁא — פְּשִׁיטָא! מִי גָרַע סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה מִעֲצָמוֹת? אֵלָא אֲסִיפָא.

With regard to this last statement, the Gemara asks: **To what** section of the *baraita* does the parallel to a Torah scroll refer? **If you say** that this refers to **the first clause** of the *baraita*, this is **obvious. Is a Torah scroll less important than bones** of the dead? Certainly one may not treat a Torah disgracefully. Rather, this statement must refer to

the latter clause of the *baraita*, that in a dangerous situation, one is permitted to ride on a Torah scroll as well.

אָמַר רַחֲבָה אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה: כָּל הָרוֹאֶה הַמֵּת וְאִינוּ מְלִיָּהּ עוֹבֵר מִשּׁוּם
 "לַעַג לְרֹשׁ חֲרֹף עֲשֵׂהוּ". וְאִם הִלָּוהוּ מֶה שְּׁכָרוֹ? אָמַר רַב אֲסִי, עָלָיו
 הַכְּתוּב אוֹמֵר: "מְלִיָּהּ ה' חוֹנֵן דָּל" וּמִכְבָּדוֹ חֹנֵן אֲבִיוֹן.

Rahava said that Rav Yehuda said: One who sees the deceased taken to burial and does not escort him has committed a transgression due to the verse: "He who mocks the poor blasphemes his Creator." (Proverbs 17:5) And if he does escort him, what is his reward? Rav Asi said: The verse says about him: "He who gives to the poor gives a loan to the Lord, and the Lord will repay him" (Proverbs 19:17), and: "He who oppresses the poor blasphemes his Creator, but he who is gracious to the poor honors Him" (Proverbs 14:31).

רַבִּי חִיָּיא וְרַבִּי יוֹנָתָן הָיוּ שֹׁקְלִי וְאֶזְלִי בְּבֵית הַקְּבָרוֹת. הָיָה קֶשֶׁדָּיָא
 תְּכַלְתָּא דְּרַבִּי יוֹנָתָן. אָמַר לֵיהּ רַבִּי חִיָּיא: דְּלִיָּהּ, כְּדִי שְׁלָא יֵאמְרוּ: לְמַחֵר
 בָּאִין אֶצְלָנוּ, וְעַכְשָׁיו מְחַרְפִּין אוֹתָנוּ.

The Gemara relates that **Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Yonatan were walking in a cemetery and the sky-blue string of Rabbi Yonatan's ritual fringes was cast to the ground and dragging across the graves. Rabbi Hiyya said to him: Lift it, so the dead will not say: Tomorrow, when their day comes, they will come to be buried with us, and now they are insulting us.**

אָמַר לֵיהּ: וּמִי יָדְעִי כּוּלִי הָאִי? וְהָא כְּתִיב: "וְהַמֵּתִים אֵינָם יוֹדְעִים
 מֵאוּמָּה!" אָמַר לֵיהּ: אִם קָרִית — לֹא שָׁנִית. אִם שָׁנִית — לֹא שְׁלִשְׁתָּ.
 אִם שְׁלִשְׁתָּ — לֹא פִּרְשׁוּ לָהּ. "כִּי הַחַיִּים יוֹדְעִים שְׁיִמּוּתוֹ" — אֵלּוּ
 צְדִיקִים שְׁבִמִיתָתָן נִקְרְאוּ חַיִּים, שְׁנֵאמַר: "וּבִנְיָהוּ בֶן יְהוֹיָדָע בֶּן אִישׁ חַי"

רַב פְּעָלִים מִקְבָּצָאֵל הוּא הִכָּה אֶת שְׁנֵי אֲרָאֵל מוֹאֵב וְהוּא יָרַד וְהִכָּה אֶת
הָאָרִי בְּתוֹךְ הַבּוֹר בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלֵג.

Rabbi Yonatan said to him: **Do the dead know so much? Isn't it stated: "And the dead know nothing"** (Ecclesiastes 9:5)? Rabbi Hiyya said to him: **If you read the verse, you did not read it a second time, and if you read it a second time, you did not read it a third time, and if you read it a third time, they did not explain it to you properly.** The meaning of the verse: **"For the living know that they will die, and the dead know nothing and have no more reward, for their memory has been forgotten"** (Ecclesiastes 9:5): **For the living know that they will die, these are the righteous, who even in their death are called living.** An allusion to this is **as it is stated: "And Benayahu, son of Yehoyada, son of a valiant man of Kabze'el, who had done mighty deeds, he smote the two altar-hearths of Moab; he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow"** (II Samuel 23:20).

18b

"בֶּן אִישׁ חַי": אָטוּ כּוֹלֵי עֲלָמָא בְּנֵי מֵתֵי נִינְהוּ? אֵלָּא: "בֶּן אִישׁ חַי" — שְׁאֵפִילוּ בְּמִיתָתוֹ קְרוּי חַי. "רַב פְּעָלִים מִקְבָּצָאֵל" — שְׁרִיבָה וְקִבְץ פּוֹעָלִים לַתּוֹרָה. "וְהוּא הִכָּה אֶת שְׁנֵי אֲרָאֵל מוֹאֵב" — שְׁלֹא הִנִּיחַ כְּמוֹתוֹ לֹא בְּמִקְדָּשׁ רִאשׁוֹן וְלֹא בְּמִקְדָּשׁ שְׁנִי.

He was referred to in the verse as **son of a living man**. The Gemara wonders: **Is that to say**, the fact that the Bible referred to him with that appellation, **that all others are children of the dead? Rather**, the verse should be explained as follows: **The son of a living man** who lives forever, **who even in death is referred to as living**. **Man of Kabze'el** who had done mighty deeds, as he accumulated

and gathered many workers for the sake of the Torah. Who killed the two lion-hearted men [*Ariel*] of Moab, as after his death he left no one his equal, in either the First Temple or the Second Temple periods, as the Temple is called *Ariel* (see Isaiah 29:1), and the two *Ariel* refers to the two Temples.

”וְהוּא יָרַד וְהִכָּה אֶת הָאֲרִי בְּתוֹךְ הַבּוֹר בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלֵג”, אִיכָּא דְאָמְרִי: דְּתַבַּר גְּזִיזֵי דְּבִרְדָּא, וּנְחַת וּטְבַל. אִיכָּא דְאָמְרִי: דְּתִנָּא סִיפָּרָא דְּבִי רַב. בְּיוֹמָא דְּסִיתָּוָא.

The Sages disagreed over the interpretation of the rest of the verse: **“And who descended and slew the lion in the pit on the snowy day.”** Some say that this means that he broke blocks of hail and descended and immersed himself in the water to purify himself. Others say that he learned all of the *Sifra*, the *halakhic* midrash on the book of Leviticus of the school of Rav, on a winter’s day.

”וְהַמֵּתִים אֵינָם יוֹדְעִים מְאוּמָּה” — אֵלּוּ רָשָׁעִים, שְׂבַחֲיֵיהֶן קְרוּיִין “מֵתִים”, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וְאַתָּה חָלַל רָשָׁע נָשִׂיא יִשְׂרָאֵל”. וְאִי בְּעִית אֵימָא, מִהֲקָא: “עַל פִּי שְׁנַיִם עֵדִים א֥וּ עַל פִּי שְׁלֹשָׁה עֵדִים יוֹמֵת הַמֵּת”, חֵי הוּא! אֵלּא, הַמֵּת מַעֲיָקָרָא.

In contrast to the righteous, who are referred to as living even after their death, the verse states explicitly: **“The dead know nothing.”** These are the wicked, who even during their lives are called dead, as the prophet Ezekiel said in reference to a king of Israel who was alive: **“And you are a slain, wicked prince of Israel”** (Ezekiel 21:30). And if you wish, say instead that the proof is from here: **“At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses the dead shall be put to death”** (Deuteronomy 17:6). This is puzzling. As long as the accused has not been sentenced

to death, he **is alive**. **Rather**, this person who is wicked is considered **dead from the outset**.

בְּנֵי רַבִּי חִיָּיא נִפְוּק לְקִרְיָתָא. אֵיזְקֵר לְהוּ תִלְמוּדֵיהוּ. הוּוּ קָא מַצְעָרִי
לְאִדְכוּרִיה. אָמַר לִיה חַד לְחִבְרִיה: יָדַע אָבוֹן בְּהֵאִי צַעֲרָא? אָמַר לִיה
אִידָה: מָנָא יָדַע? וְהָא כְּתִיב: "יִכְבְּדוּ בָנָיו וְלֹא יָדַע"

The Gemara relates a story on this topic: **The sons of Rabbi Hiyya went out to the villages** to oversee the laborers. **They forgot what they had learned and were struggling to recall it**. One of them **said to the other**: Does our deceased father know of our anguish? The other said to him: **From where would he know? Isn't it written: "His sons are honored yet he shall not know it, they come to sorrow and he shall not understand them" (Job 14:21)?** The dead do not know.

אָמַר לִיה אִידָה: וְלֹא יָדַע? וְהָא כְּתִיב: "אֶךָ בְּשָׂרוֹ עָלָיו יִכָּאֵב וְנִפְשׁוֹ עָלָיו
!תִּתְאַבֵּל". וְאָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק: קִשָּׁה רַמָּה לִמֵּת כִּמְחַט בַּבֶּשֶׂר הַחַי

The other said back to him: **And do the dead truly not know? Isn't it written: "Only in his flesh does he feel pain, in his soul does he mourn" (Job 14:22)?** Based on this verse **Rabbi Yitzhak said: Gnawing maggots are as excruciating to the dead as the stab of a needle to the flesh of the living**. The dead must have the capacity to feel and know.

אָמְרִי: בַּצַּעֲרָא דִידָהוּ — יָדַעִי, בַּצַּעֲרָא דְאַחֲרִינָא — לֹא יָדַעִי.

In order to reconcile this contradiction **they said**: They know of their own pain but do not know of the pain of others.