

# Toldot Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

Published Livorno 1776\*

## Chapter IV – Mishnah 18

רבי נהוראי אומר, הני גולה למקום תורה, ואל תאמר שהיא תבא אחריך, שחבריה יקיימוה בידך. "ואל-בינתך אל-תשעו".

**Rabbi Nehorai said: Exile yourself to a place of Torah and don't say that it will come after you, for your fellow students will make it permanent in your hand. "And do not lean upon your [own] understanding."**<sup>1</sup>

-----

**ב' עמק** שנה הוא עמק המלך" פירש רש"י ו"ל, הושוו כל המפרשים, שנה ר' נהוראי הוא ר' אלעזר בן ערף, שהיה מנהיר עיני חכמים בהלכה. וכבר כתבנו לעיל בפרק ב' על "הני שקוד ללמוד תורה", שפשוט רבן יוחנן בן זכאי, הלכו תלמידיו ליבנה, ור' אלעזר בן ערף אצל אשתו, והמתין להם שיבואו אצלו, ולא באו, והיו הם צריכים לו. ואף על פי כן, פשראה שלא באו הנה רוצה לילך אצלם, ולא הניחתו אשתו, ועי"ש.

**In “the Valley of Shaveh, which is the Valley of the King,”<sup>2</sup> Rashi, of blessed memory explained, as did all the commentaries, that this Rabbi Nehorai [נהוראי] is Rabbi Elazar ben Arach, who enlightened [מנהיר] [*manhir*] the eyes of the Sages in halacha. I.e., “Nehorai” is a nickname, related to the word “enlighten.” We already wrote above in Chapter II, Mishnah 16, on his teaching, “Be diligent to learn the Torah,” that:**

**When Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai died, his students went to [learn at] Yavneh, while Rabbi Elazar ben Arach went to his wife [at Emmaus]. He waited for them to come to him, but they did not come. They needed him, but nevertheless, when he saw that they didn't come, he desired to go to them, but his wife did not allow him to go. She said to him: “In the case of a food container and mice, does the food go to the mice or do the mice go to the food?” He listened to her, and remained there until he forgot his learning. After a while they came and asked him, “Which is better to eat along with a ‘relish,’ wheat bread or barley bread?” But he couldn't answer.**

- Midrash Eccl. Rabbah 7:2

\* English translation: Copyright © 2023 by Charles S. Stein. Additional essays available at <http://zstorah.com>

<sup>1</sup> Prov. 3:5.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 14:17: “When he returned from defeating Chedorlaomer and the kings with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh, which is the Valley of the King.”

וכוונתו לומר, אף על פי שתהנה תכם, גדול שיהיו הפל צריכים לה, שאתה מנהיר עיני תכמים בהלכה, וזהו שקראו כאן דנקא רבי "נהוראי". עם כל זה, "הני גולה למקום תורה", יש לה ללכת עמם אל מקום תורה, הפך ממה שעשה הוא עצמו, שנענש בכך, וכנזכר לעיל. שחיה לו מתחלה לילך לנבנה, כמו שהלכו הם, ולא לילך אצל אשתו ולהמתין שיבואו הם אצלו. שהרי נבנה מקום תורה הוא ומקום תכמים, וכדאמרינו בפירוש הניזקין מן לי נבנה ונכמיה, וכבר נתקדש אותו המקום ונטהר אותו האויר מלימוד התורה של התכמים הראשונים, ויש שם סיוע שיש בו ממש מעולם העליון. וכמו שקתב העיון יעקב בפירוש ה' דעירובין, שישתדל אדם לדור בארץ יהודה, שהוא מקום מובהק לתורה יותר מגליל. עכ"ל. נאפילו אם היו מתרצים לבא אצלו, לא היה לו לקבל, כדי לילך לנבנה מקום תורה.

**His intention is to say: Even though you are wise, and it is great that everyone will need you, for you enlighten the eyes of sages in halacha—and this is precisely why he is called here Rabbi Nehorai, for he himself enlightened the eyes of sages—nevertheless, “exile yourself to a place of Torah.” That is, you should go with them to a place of Torah, the opposite of what he himself did, for which he was punished, and as mentioned above. For he should have initially gone to Yavneh, as [the students] did, and not gone to be by his wife and wait for them to come to him. After all, Yavneh is a place of the Torah and a place of the sages, and as they say in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of tractate Gittin, entitled, “Injured parties,” when Vespasian asked Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkei if he could do anything for him, the sage answered, “Give me Yavne and its sages [and do not destroy it],”<sup>3</sup> and this place was already sanctified and the air purified from the learning of the Torah of the first sages, and there is Heavenly assistance there from the supernal world. As the *Iyun Ya’akov* wrote on the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of tractate Eruvin, that a man should strive to dwell in the land of Judah, which is a place that is better choice for Torah than the Galilee.<sup>4</sup> Even if [the students] had wanted to come to [Rabbi Elazar ben Arach], he should not have accepted them, in order for him to instead go to Yavneh, a place of Torah.**

ואל תאמר שהיא תבא אחריו, שהרי תבריך התכמים הראשונים שהיו שם והמשיכו שם הקדושה, קיימיה בידך, יגרמו שתתקיים בידך, שתצליח בהוראתה בסיעתא דשמייא.

**“And don’t say that it will come after you, that your fellow students”—the first sages who were there and the holiness that continued there—“will make it permanent in your hand,” i.e., that will cause it to be fulfilled in your hand, that you will succeed in your instruction by Heavenly assistance.**

<sup>3</sup> Gittin 56b.

<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Jacob ben Joseph Reischer (Bechofen) (1661–1733), *Iyun Ya’akov* (Wilmersdorf 1729), on Eruvin 53a.

ואפילו שתהיה נבון, מבין דבר מתוך דבר, דהיינו ששערי הבינה פתוחים לה מעולם העליון, ותדע להמשיך הקדושה, "ואל-בינתה אל-תשען". שכן בסנהדרין של שבעים ואחד אמרינו, "וקמת ועלית אל-המקום", מלמד שהמקום גורם.

**Even if you will be “skillful, understanding something [new] from something [else you have learned],”<sup>5</sup> which means that the gates of understanding are open to you from the supernal world, and you know to bring the holiness, “do not lean upon your [own] understanding.” Thus, for the [Great] Sanhedrin of seventy-one [judges] it is said, “you shall rise and go up to the place that the L-rd your G-d has prepared for you.”<sup>6</sup> [This] teaches that [even if a defiant sage rules against the Sanhedrin, this is only considered rebellion for which he will be liable if the Sanhedrin is meeting in the Hall of Hewn Stones, in the Temple. Otherwise,] the place causes [the *halacha* of the defiant sage to take effect.]<sup>7</sup>**

ונהו הטעם שהתלמידים אף על פי שמנהגם ללמוד בעיר, עם כל זה, יכולים לצאת וללמוד ולבטל עונת נשותיהם, למר כדאית ליה ולמר כדאית ליה, כדאמרינן בכתובות דף ס"ב ע"ב, אף שלא ברשות נשותיהם, כמו שקתבו התוספות שם דף ס"א ע"ב. ואין הנשים יכולות למחות בגדן שילמדו בעירם, היכא שהמקום שיוצאים שם עדיף, או מקמת המקום, או מקמת התלמידים והמלמדים, דאמרינן, "צדק צדק תרדף" הלא אחר בית דין יפה. דאי לא הכי, בנדאי שהנשים יכולות למחות בגדן.

**This was the reason that the students—even though it is their custom to study in the city—with all this, were able to go out and study and overlook the conjugal rights of their wives, “according to [one] sage as he holds, and according to [another] sage as he holds.”<sup>8</sup> This is as it is said in tractate Ketubot, page 62b,<sup>9</sup> even without the permission of their wives, as the Tosafot wrote there, on page 61b.<sup>10</sup> The wives cannot protest that they should learn in their city, since the place they go out to is better, either because of the place, or because of the students and teachers. This is as it is said, “[The verse states:] ‘Justice, justice, shall you pursue.’<sup>11</sup> [This teaches that one should] follow the best, [most prestigious], court [of the generation].”<sup>12</sup> If this is not so, then certainly the wives are able to protest.**

<sup>5</sup> Chagigah 14a; Sanhedrin 93b.

<sup>6</sup> Deut. 17:8.

<sup>7</sup> Sotah 45a.

<sup>8</sup> Sotah 15a.

<sup>9</sup> Ketubot 62b: “Students may leave [their homes] to study Torah [for as long as] two or three years without permission [from their wives].”

<sup>10</sup> Tosafot for Ketubot 61b: “Even though their custom was to learn and work in their city . . .”

<sup>11</sup> Deut. 16:20.

<sup>12</sup> Sanhedrin 32b.

ומכל שכן דמאי דתני "התלמידים" יוצאים שלא ברשות, לאו דוקא תלמידים הצריכים ללמוד, דאיכא למימר בהו טעמא דלא מן הכל אדם זוכה ללמוד. אלא בתקמים גדולים נמי איירי מתניתין, דשם תלמידים משמע נמי תקמים גדולים, כדאמרינו בפרק ב' דקדושין, על מנת שאני תלמיד, אין אומרים לשמעון בן עזאי וכן זומא, אלא כל ששואלים אותו בכל מקום דבר אהד מלימודו וכו'.

**After all, it was taught that “the students” go out without permission. This is not particularly speaking of students who need to learn, as it can be said the reason is “because a person does not merit to learn from every colleague.”<sup>13</sup> Rather, it is also speaking of sages, for the name “students” also means sages, as it is said in the second chapter of tractate Kiddushin:**

[If a man says to a woman: Be betrothed to me] **on the condition that I am a student** [of Torah], **one does not say** [that he must be a student who is scholarly] **like Shimon ben Azzai or like Shimon ben Zoma** [who were called students despite their great knowledge, as they were never ordained]. **Rather**, [it means] **anyone who**, when he is asked one matter in any topic of his studies [responds appropriately] and can say [what he has learned].

- Kiddushin 49b

ולשון השלחן ערוך באגב העור סימן ע"ו, התלמידי תקמים יוצאים לתלמוד תורה וכו'. ופירש שם, בתלמידי תקמים שתורתם אומנותם איירי. ועוד, ששם "תלמיד" שייך נמי בתקם גדול.

**The language of the Shulchan Aruch, Even haEzer, siman 76, se'if 5, “And scholars can leave to learn Torah without their wives permission, [even] for two and three years.” It is explained there, that it’s talking about scholars whose Torah is their trade. Furthermore, the name “student” relates also to a sage.**

וענין בתוספות יום טוב פרק קמא דתענית משנה ד' ד"ה היחידים וכו', ומה שהשיג עליו שם הקול הרמ"ז, ועי"ש באורח. ובמה שעולה מדברייהם, מצאנו בפרק ט' דברכות דף נ"ז ע"ב, דקאמר הש"ס, שלוש תקמים הם, רבי נרבי ישמעאל וכו'. ואחר כך אמר, שלוש תלמידי תקמים הם, בן עזאי, בן זומא וכו'. ופירש מהרש"א, משום שאלו לא זכו לסמיכה, משום הכי קרי להו "תלמידי" תקמים, וצריך עיון. ושם יש לומר, דלענין התקמה הם שונים, התקמים והתלמידי תקמים. והוה הו דברי הרמ"ז וצ"ל.

**See the *Tosafot Yom Tov*,<sup>14</sup> the first chapter of Ta’anit, Mishnah 4, the text beginning “individuals.”** The Mishnah states, “[If the] seventeenth of Marcheshvan arrived and rain has not fallen, individuals, [but not the entire community,] begin to fast three fasts [for rain].” *Tosafot Yom Tov* relates different views of what the term “individuals” means here, such as sages who are

<sup>13</sup> Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, Mourning 3:14.

<sup>14</sup> Rabbi Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller (1579–1654), *Tosafot Yom Tov* (1614–17).

particular in their actions, or rabbis, or students of wisdom, etc. **Also, what the *Kol haReMeZ*<sup>15</sup> perceived there, and see at length. In what emerges from their words, we found in chapter 9 of tractate *Berachot*, that the Shas is saying:**

**There are three Sages** [whose appearance in a dream is significant]: One who sees **Rabbi** [Yehuda HaNasi] in a dream should anticipate wisdom; [one who sees] Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya should anticipate wealth [as he was particularly wealthy;] **and** [one who sees] **Rabbi Yishmael** ben Elisha should be concerned about calamity [as he was one of the ten martyrs executed by the Romans].

[There are] **three Torah scholars** [who, despite their greatness in Torah, were never given the title Rabbi, and whose appearance in a dream is significant]: One who sees **Ben Azzai** in a dream should anticipate piety; [one who sees] **Ben Zoma** should anticipate wisdom; [and one who sees] *Acher*, [Elisha ben Avuya,] should be concerned about calamity [as he strayed from the path of righteousness.]

-Berachot 57b

**The Maharsha explained, because these didn't receive ordination, because of this they were called "students of" the sages. This requires investigation. Perhaps it can be said that when it came to wisdom, they were equal, the sages and the students of the sages.**

**These are all the words of Rabbi Moshe ben Mordechai Zakut, may the remembrance of the righteous man be a blessing.**

\* \* \*

---

<sup>15</sup> Rabbi Moshe ben Mordechai Zakut (c. 1625–97), *Kol haReMeZ* (Amsterdam 1719).