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Talmudic, Christian, and Zoroastrian Notions of Sexual Desire

INTRODUCTION

The present chapter, which centers on rabbinic, Christian, and Zoroastrian constructions of sexual desire, constitutes an attempt to broaden the comparative framework in which rabbinic sexuality is typically studied, by negotiating the Zoroastrian context of the Babylonian rabbinic discussions *alongside* the Christian context. By bringing together these cultural worlds and their divergent views on sexuality and sexual desire and by mapping these broader dispositions onto the talmudic discussions, I seek to contribute to a more nuanced and panoramic view of the talmudic discourse on sexuality and to situate the rabbinic assumptions more broadly at the crossroads of late antique culture.

I argue that Babylonian rabbinic culture – as manifested in distinguishable textual strata contained in the BT¹ – is characterized by a distinctively dialectical perception of sexuality, according to which the sexual act, which consists of the indivisible elements of reproduction and sexual gratification, is differentiated from notions of sexual desire.² While legitimate sex is perceived in rabbinic culture (both in Palestine and in Babylonia), not merely as a means to facilitating procreation,³ but also as a religious value in its own right and the embodiment of a divine union,⁴ the Babylonian rabbis accentuated the significance of male and female sexual gratification in the context of marital relationships, and yet expressed at the same time a pessimistic view of sexual desire (at times, even in the context of legitimate marital partnerships). Although this distinction remains somewhat messy, as the categories of desire and gratification tend to overlap, I submit that there is, at the very least,

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a conceptual distinction that facilitated the emergence of a positive attitude to sexual praxis, alongside a pessimistic view of sexual desire.

The talmudic concentration on sexual desire was explained by Ishay Rosen-Zvi as emblematic of a broader process of “interiorization of sexuality” and “the transformation of sexuality from an interpersonal encounter to an inner-personal experience,” which is characteristic of broader cultural trends in late antiquity.⁵ Without denying the applicability of this process to the talmudic discourse, in the present context I shall stress that alongside, and in contradistinction to, the growing emphasis on sexual desire, the Babylonian rabbis attached ongoing significance to the sexual act, a fact which resulted in a complex and bifurcated differentiation between their respective attitudes to sexual praxis and desire.

The tension between sexual praxis and desire did *not*, for the most part, lend itself in Babylonian rabbinic culture to soft forms of asceticism which advocate procreative sex without carnal satisfaction, a disposition attributed to the Palestinian tanna R. Eli‘ezer, who is said according to *b. Ned.* 20a to have “unveiled a hand’s breadth and veil it again” and to appear as if he was “coerced by a demon.”⁶ On the contrary, as we shall see the BT utterly rejects such tendencies, emphasizing that procreation and sexual gratification are joined at the hip and cannot (and should not) be artificially separated. But the sexual urge itself – in contradistinction to sexual gratification – was another matter altogether. Sexual desire was frequently linked in the BT to the demonic sphere and reified as a particular embodiment of the psycho-demonic⁷ *yeṣer*,⁸ an evil entity, from which, the rabbis hoped, humanity will ultimately rid itself in the end of days.⁹

Ishay Rosen-Zvi has convincingly demonstrated that the evil *yeṣer*, which in tannaitic and amoraic sources is typically viewed as an embodied inclination of the desire to sin,¹⁰ was heavily sexualized in the editorial stratum of the BT and essentially equated with sexual desire (although *not* with sexual gratification).¹¹ The sexual *yeṣer* which is the focus of the present investigation differs, therefore, from the two quintessential models of the rabbinic *yeṣer* outlined in scholarship:

1. The “dialectical” model, which assumes that the *yeṣer* is neither evil nor good in itself. In this scheme the *yeṣer* represents a neutral urge that can be channeled in different directions.¹²
2. The “dispositional” model, which assumes that the *yeṣer* is inherently evil, but defines its nature in terms of the desire to sin.¹³

In contradistinction to the “dialectical” model, the sexual *yešer* portrayed in the BT is, for the most part, categorically evil and inherently demonic and, as such, cannot be channeled in a legitimate direction. In contrast to the “dispositional” model, however, the sexual *yešer* represents not the desire to sin (nor even the desire for sexual sin in particular), but rather sexual desire per se.

The emphasis placed on the problematic nature of sexual desire is also expressed in the talmudic conceptualization of “sexual thought” (*hirhur* ‘*avera*). While the term *hirhur* appears already in tannaitic literature in sexual contexts,¹⁴ the tannaitic discussion is concerned mainly with the ritual implications of sexual thoughts as indicative of a ritually contaminating seminal emission. Babylonian rabbinic sources, by contrast, exhibit interest also in the sinfulness of the sexual thought, in and of itself.¹⁵ As we shall see, this tendency is brought to the fore in the talmudic discussion of masturbation and “wasted semen,” which stresses the problematic nature of the sexual thought, above and beyond the act of seminal emission and the circumvention of procreation.¹⁶

In this framework, the object of the sexual urge ceases to matter, as even the desire for one’s wife is viewed through the lens of demonic possession by the evil *yešer*.¹⁷ In light of the Babylonian rabbinic aversion to sexual desire, the BT encourages not the *channeling* of sexual desire through permissible forms of sexual praxis, but rather its *extinction* by means of permissible sex. We will see that this difference is not merely semantic, but in fact central to understanding the specific mechanism of sexual desire characteristic of Babylonian rabbinic culture. Again, the demonic nature of the sexual urge was emphatically differentiated from notions of sexual gratification and pleasure, which were perceived as part and parcel of the sexual act.

Another option for dealing with the sexual urge which is rejected in the BT is that of its temporary or permanent *controlling*. Since the sexual *yešer* was believed to be powerful and omnipresent,¹⁸ it cannot be disciplined merely by means of self-control, but must be extinguished by means of marital relationships.¹⁹ This perception naturally lends itself to the endorsement of early marriages²⁰ as well as temporary forms of marriage.²¹ That this issue divided the two rabbinic centers of Palestine and Babylonia, at least conceptually if not in practice, can be gleaned from *b. Qidd.* 29b, which explicitly maps the rabbinic debate concerning early versus late marriages onto the Palestinian/Babylonian divide.²² As we shall see in Chapter 2, it has been argued, moreover, that the diverging marital practices attributed here to the Palestinian and Babylonian

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rabbinic cultures are rooted in their contrasting views concerning one's ability to control the sexual urge: Palestinian rabbis welcomed the opportunity to postpone marriage until they were older, since they held that the sexual urge can essentially be controlled (at least temporarily), while the Babylonian rabbis held that the only way to deal with sexual desire is to do away with it by means of early marriage.²³

In the present context, I will situate certain aspects of this complex talmudic construction of sexual desire in the broader context of Christian and Zoroastrian views.²⁴ In terms of the Christian context, I will focus on the particular significance of the Pauline view of marital sex as a form of therapy for those “afire with passion” (1 Cor. 7:9) and its reception in patristic literature. I submit that the BT shares with 1 Cor. 7:9 – in contrast to a widely attested rabbinic, patristic, and Greco-Roman justification of marriage in terms of its procreative function – the distinctive view that marital sex is intended, first and foremost, to *extinguish* sexual desire. Whether Paul advocated passionless marital sex devoid of carnal gratification (Dale Martin) or merely sex without excessive passion (Will Deming), his position seems to inform the Babylonian rabbinic rhetoric.²⁵ I submit that a focus on sexual desire rather than sexual praxis disturbs and complicates the supposed rabbinic–patristic divide on the issue of marriage versus celibacy,²⁶ as even authors who are situated on opposite ends of the marriage–celibacy spectrum apparently reached, at times, similar conclusions regarding the problematic nature of sexual desire and its proper treatment.

In terms of the Zoroastrian context, I shall endeavor to situate the dialectical mechanism entailing a categorically positive view of the sexual act alongside a pessimistic and demonic portrayal of sexual desire in the context of a similar bifurcation exhibited in Pahlavi literature. We will see that, alongside an overwhelmingly positive view of the sexual act (both in terms of fertility and pleasure) manifest in the Zoroastrian tradition; sexual desire was viewed in certain strands of the Pahlavi tradition as a manifestation of the demonic, from which humanity must ultimately rid itself in the end of days. While the sexual urge is also portrayed in a positive manner and linked to the sexual act, the pervasive demonic context in which sexual desire is presented marks, at the very least, an equivocal, if not altogether negative, rhetoric.

We will see that in the *andarz* (wisdom) literature the focus is on the excessiveness of desire (both in sexual and non-sexual contexts), which stands in contrast to the Zoroastrian ethical principle of moderation. The wisdom texts thus carefully define the proper emotional attitude to

one's wife in terms of love and friendship, while instructing the faithful not to be excessively or immoderately desirous (*a-paymān waranīg*) even in the context of legitimate marital relationships. Beyond the ethical underpinnings of moderation, however, I shall demonstrate that sexual desire is explicitly and unequivocally linked to the demonic sphere, whether by arguing that it is a product of the original demonic attack on the good creation (via the myth of Jeh, the Primal Evil Woman) or by arguing that certain demons are embodiments of sexual desire (as in the case of Āz [Desire] and Waran [Lust]).

The objective of this comparison, to be sure, is not to posit the existence of genealogical connections between Babylonian rabbinic, Christian, and Zoroastrian views of sexuality. When broad cultural categories are at stake – and “desire” is no different at that – it is often difficult to discern particular channels of cultural impact. Before delving into more intimate forms of cultural exchange in the next chapters, I presently seek to stress the existence of shared constructions of sexuality common to Babylonian rabbinic culture and certain strands in Christian and Zoroastrian thought, which significantly differ from what is often thought of as the “mainstream” views of the rabbinic, Christian, and Zoroastrian traditions. The purpose of the ensuing discussion is thus not simply to compare and contrast, but also to disturb and complicate commonly held assumptions about rabbinic, Christian, and Iranian views of sexuality.

SEXUAL GRATIFICATION IN BABYLONIAN RABBINIC CULTURE

While ambivalence toward sex characterizes perhaps certain aspects of the rabbinic discourse more broadly, the bifurcation of praxis and desire is pronounced mainly in the context of Babylonian rabbinic culture, as it is primarily in the BT that a positive ethos toward sexual gratification is fostered,²⁷ above and beyond the requirement of procreation, and it is mainly in this work that sexual passion and temptation are reified as an omnipresent demonic threat, from which humanity will ultimately rid itself at the end of days.

That sexual gratification and the fulfilment of carnal satisfaction were perceived as an essential component of marital sex in Babylonian rabbinic culture (beyond the facilitation of procreation) is most vividly expressed in the conscious talmudic rejection of “soft” ascetic tendencies within the context of marital sex aimed at reducing pleasure in the course of the sexual act. Thus, for example, Rav Yosef, a third-century Babylonian rabbi, rejects a purportedly Persian custom to have sex while clothed,

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based on the assumption that a husband is obligated to satisfy his wife sexually via “closeness of flesh.”

תני רב יוסף שארה זה קירוב בשר שלא ינהג בה מנהג פרסיי' שמשמשין מיטותיהן בלבושיהן מסייע ליה לרב הונא דא' כל האומ' אי איפשי אלא אני בבגדי והיא בבגדה יוציא ויתן כתובה.

Rav Yosef taught: [“If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish] her food [clothing, or marital rights”] (Exod. 21:10) – this means closeness of flesh; that he should not treat her in the manner of the Persians who have sexual intercourse while clothed. This supports the position of Rav Huna, who said: if one says, “I do not desire it unless I am [clothed] in my cloth and she is in hers” – he must divorce her and pay her *ketubah*.²⁸

Rav Yosef's insistence on bodily intimacy and nudity during sex should be read, not only against the backdrop of the alleged Persian custom to have sex while clothed,²⁹ but also in the light of competing rabbinic practices, such as the sexual customs attributed to the Palestinian tanna R. Eli'ezer (*b. Ned.* 20a),³⁰ who was said to “unveil a hand's breadth and veil it again” (מגלה טפה ומכסה טפחיים) and to appear as if he was “coerced by a demon” (ודומה עליו כמי שכפאו שד).³¹ Whether the custom attributed to R. Eli'ezer was motivated by ascetic concerns linked to the attempt to reduce carnal pleasure during sex or by a eugenic agenda,³² his view of marital sex solely in the framework of procreation is clearly contested by Rav Yosef and the redactors of the BT.³³

Another illustration of the positive Babylonian rabbinic attitude to sexual gratification centers on male pleasure. In contrast to the eugenic restrictions placed on marital sex by R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabai in the name of the ministering angels, which limit marital sex in effect to the missionary position, the BT contends in the name of the third century Palestinian amora, R. Yoḥanan:

א"ר יוחנן זו דברי ר' יוחנן בן דהבאי אבל חכמ' אומ' אין הלכה כר' יוחנן בן דהבאי אלא כל מה שאדם רוצה לעשות באשתו עושה משל לבשר הבא מבית הטבח רצה לאוכלו במלח אוכלו צלי אוכלו מבושל אוכלו וכן דג הבא מבית הצייד . . . ההיא דאתאי לקמי' דר' אמ' ל' ר' ערכתי לו שולחן והפכו אמ' לה ר' התורה היתרתיך לו אנא מה אעביד לך ההיא דאת' לקמיה דר' אמרה לי' ר' ערכתי לו שולחן והפכו אמר ל' מאי שנא מן ביניתא.³⁴

R. Yoḥanan said: “This is the view of R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabai.” The sages, however, said that the *halakhah* is not in accordance with R. Yoḥanan b. Dahabai. Rather, whatever a man wishes to do with his wife he may do. [This can be explained through] the parable of meat that comes from the butchery. If one wishes, he may eat it salted, roasted, or cooked. And the same goes for fish that comes from the fisherman . . . A certain woman came before Rabbi. She said to him: “Rabbi, I set him a table and he turned it over [a euphemism either for anal intercourse or for a non-missionary position].” Rabbi said to her: “The Torah has

permitted you to him and I, what can I do for you?” A certain woman came before Rabbi. She said to him: “Rabbi, I set him a table and he turned it over.” He said to her: “How is this any different from a fish [which can be prepared in any way a man desires]?”

While the gender asymmetry reflected in this passage falls beyond the scope of the present investigation, the examples adduced here should suffice to demonstrate the significance attached in Babylonian rabbinic culture to both male and female sexual gratification as an integral part of the sexual act, above and beyond the realization of procreation and the eugenic agenda connected with it. This view is contrasted by the BT, moreover, with other reported rabbinic practices, which consciously avoid sexual gratification in the context of marital relationships.

THE DEMONIC REIFICATION OF SEXUAL DESIRE

Alongside the positive view of the sexual act, the BT displays a heightened sense of anxiety about sexual desire, which is linked – explicitly or implicitly – to the evil *yeṣer* and the demonic sphere. As we have seen, the evil *yeṣer*, which in tannaitic and amoraic sources is typically viewed as a psycho-demonic manifestation of the inclination to sin, was heavily sexualized in the editorial stratum of the BT and, for all intents and purposes, equated with sexual desire (although *not* with sexual gratification). In what follows I shall provide a few examples to illustrate the rhetorical aversion to sexual desire and its inherently demonic perception in Babylonian rabbinic culture.

In the context of the mishnaic laws of *yihud* (lit. “seclusion,” the laws governing prohibited interaction of men and women),³⁵ the BT (*b. Qidd.* 80b–82a) presents a set of legal and narrative traditions centered on the ubiquity of sexual temptation. In this context all women, including relatives and underage girls³⁶ (and according to certain rabbis even males and animals), are perceived as sources of sexual temptation,³⁷ while all men (including the greatest of sages) are subject to its overwhelming power. In contrast to the tannaitic treatment of the prohibitions governing the interaction of men and women, Ishay Rosen-Zvi has convincingly demonstrated that the BT shifts the focal point of the discussion from the fear of actual sin (i.e. prohibited sexual intercourse) to the internal struggle (of males) against the *yeṣer*. In this context, the evil *yeṣer*, as a psycho-demonic embodiment of sexual desire, becomes the main protagonist of the talmudic drama.³⁸ In some of these traditions the presence of the *yeṣer*

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is explicit, while in others it is only alluded to, as in the following story about Rav 'Amram the pious.

הנך שבויתא דאתא' לנהרדעא, אסקינהו לבי רב עמרם חסידא, אשקולו דרגא מקמיהו, בהדי דקא חלפה חדא מנייהו נפל נהורא באיפומא, שקליה רב עמרם לדרגא דלא הוה יכלין בי עשרה למדלייא, דלייא לחודיה. סליק ואזיל, כי מטא לפלגא דרגא איפשח, רמא קלא: נורא בי עמרם! אתו רבנן, אמרו ליה: כסיפתנן! אמר להו: מוטב תיכספו בי עמרם בעלמא הדין, ולא תיכספו מיניה לעלמא דאתי. אשבעיה דינפק מיניה, נפק מיניה כי עמודא דנורא, אמר ליה: חזי, דאת נורא ואנא בישרא ואנא עדיפנא מינך.

Certain female captives came to Neharde'a. They were taken to the house of Rav 'Amram the pious, and the ladder was removed from under them. As one of them passed by, a light fell³⁹ through the opening; Rav 'Amram seized the ladder, which even ten men could not lift, lifted it alone, and began to ascend. When he had gone half way up the ladder, he stayed his feet and cried out, "A fire at the house of 'Amram!" The rabbis came and said, "You have shamed us!" He said to them: "Better you be shamed by 'Amram in this world than in the world to come." He then adjured it (=the *yešer*) to go forth from him, and it issued from him in the shape of a fiery column.⁴⁰ He said to it: "See, you are fire and I am flesh, yet I am stronger than you."

Interestingly, the captive women, who were initially the source and object of Rav 'Amram's desire, disappear in the course of the story and instead Rav 'Amram struggles with the sexual *yešer*, which is portrayed as both an internal drive and a reified demonic entity possessing his body. The object of Rav 'Amram's temptation is of little interest to the story-tellers compared to his internal struggle with sexual desire. In fact, in the adjacent talmudic story of Ḥeruta (*b. Qidd.* 82b),⁴¹ in which the object of R. Hiyya b. 'Ashi's desire turns out to be his own wife (disguised as a whore), the aversion to sexual desire is similarly stressed, as it is the sexual urge itself (and not the desire to sin) that becomes the focal problem in the story.

Another illustration of Babylonian rabbinic anxiety of, and aversion to, sexual desire can be gleaned from a talmudic record of a statement made by Rav accompanied by a brief anonymous clarification, situated in the broader talmudic discussion of masturbation and the "wasting of semen" (*b. Nid.* 13b).

אמר רב המקשה עצמו לדעת יהא בנידוי. ולימא אסור? משום דקא מגרה יצר הרע בנפשיה.

Rav said: "One who willfully causes himself to have an erection should be placed under a ban." Why would he not say "It is prohibited"? Because he incites the *yešer* against himself [thus, a harsher statement is necessary].⁴²

This brief anonymous comment on Rav's statement illustrates the anxiety of the redactors about the state of sexual desire (=possession by

the *yeṣer*), above and beyond the concern for actual masturbation. In this context, the anonymous redactors concentrate, not on the sinful act of masturbation, the lack of self-control, or the circumvention of procreation, so much as the problematic nature of sexual desire and its demonic nature.⁴³ Needless to say, if solitary sexual arousal and sexual thoughts are regarded as a sin, in and of itself, it hardly matters if the object of a man's desire is a woman who happens to be permissible to him sexually.

Perhaps the clearest example of a categorically negative rhetoric of sexual desire comes from a legendary talmudic account (*b. Yoma* 69b; *b. Sanh.* 64a), which reflects the longing of the rabbis for its final obliteration.

אמרי הואיל ועת רצון היא נבעי רחמי איצרא דעבירא בעו רחמי אימסר בידיהו חבשוה תלתא יומי איבעי
 ביעתא לחולה ולא אשתכח אמרי הוכי נעביד נבעי רחמי לפלגא פלגא מרקיעא ליכא כחלונהו לעיניה אהנו
 ביה דלא מיגרי איניש בקרובתיה.⁴⁴

They said: since the time is propitious, let us pray regarding the *yeṣer* for sex.⁴⁵ So, they prayed and it was delivered into their hands. They imprisoned it for three days; after that they sought an egg for the ill⁴⁶ and could not find one. They said: what shall we do? Shall we pray for half [=that its power be partially destroyed]? Heaven will not grant that. So, they blinded its eyes. This was effective insofar that one does not lust after one's relatives.

In this story, the rabbis imagine a reality devoid of sexual desire, by projecting back onto the early Second Temple period a failed attempt by the returnees to rid themselves of the sexual *yeṣer*. The individualized sexual *yeṣer* informs the returnees that, in its absence, the ability to procreate will be undermined and, indeed, following its imprisonment for three days, not even a single egg (representing fertility) can be found. Eventually, the returnees decide to blind its eyes and set it free, so as to achieve, at the very least, the elimination of sexual desire for one's relatives.

Daniel Boyarin has suggested that this story conveys the idea that procreation and sexual desire are inseparable, since the returnees seem to realize that they cannot do away with desire without undermining fertility. According to this interpretation, the story reflects a dialectical model of a neutral sexual urge, which can be channeled in either legitimate or non-legitimate directions.⁴⁷ Note, however, that the very motive of the talmudic storytellers to depict an attempt (however failed) to eradicate sexual desire reflects an unrealized fantasy of the rabbis.⁴⁸ While the returnees are forced to tolerate the temporary presence of the sexual *yeṣer* among them, their hope for the complete obliteration of the *yeṣer*

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in the end of days can hardly be missed here. Although this story is set in the early Second Temple period, its eschatological undertones come to the fore when juxtaposed with another talmudic description of the slaughtering of the *yeṣer* in the end of days (*b. Sukkah* 52a):

"וספדה הארץ משפחות משפחות לבד משפחת בית דוד לבד ונשיהם לבד משפחת בית נתן לבד ונשיהם לבד" . . . האי ספידא מאי עבדיתה פליגי בה ר' יוסי ורבנן חד אמר' על משיח בן יוסף שנהרג וחד אמר' על יצר הרע שנהרג . . . למאן דאמר' על יצר הרע שנהרג אמאי כי דדריש רב יהודה בר מערבא לעתיד לבוא הקב"ה מביא ליצר הרע ושוחטו בפני צדיקים ובפני רשעים

"The land shall mourn, each family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves" (Zech. 12:12) . . . What is the cause of this mourning? – R. Yose and the Rabbis differed on this point. One said: "[They mourned] over the Messiah son of Joseph who was slain," and the other said: "[They mourned] over the *yeṣer* which was slain." . . . According to him who said that they mourned over the *yeṣer* which was slain, why is this [is this an occasion for mourning? Is it not an occasion for rejoicing?] – [The explanation is] as Rav Yehudah of the West expounded: "In a time to come, the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring the *yeṣer* and slaughter it in the presence of the righteous and the wicked."⁴⁹

EXTINGUISHING DESIRE WITH SEX

While many talmudic sources, Palestinian and Babylonian alike, discuss the merits and value of marital sex, it is mainly in rabbinic Babylonia that we find an emphasis on the notion that marital sex is intended to extinguish or sublimate sexual desire⁵⁰ and that an unmarried (and celibate) person will be constantly occupied with sexual thoughts. A fascinating illustration of this Babylonian rabbinic rhetoric is found in *b. Qidd.* 29b–30a:⁵¹

משתבח ליה רב חסדא לרב הונ' ברב המנונא דאדם גדול הוא א' ל' כשיבא לידך הביאהו לי כי אתא חזייה דלא פריש סודרא א' ל' מאי טעמא לא פריסת סודרא אמר' ליה דלא נסיבנא אהדרינהו לאפיה מיניה א' ל' לא חזית להו לאפאי עד דנסבת רב המנונא לטעמי' דא' בן עשרים שנה שלא נשא אשה כל ימיו בעביר' בעבירה סלק' דעת' אלא אימא כל ימיו בהרהור עבירה אמר' רבא וכן תנא דבי ר' ישמעאל כל ימיו של אדם עד עשרים שנה יושב הק' ומצפה עד מתי ישא אשה כיון שהגיע לעשרים ולא נשא אשה א' תיפח נפשו א' רב חסדא הא דעדיפנא מחבריא דנסיבנא בשית סרי ואי נסיבנא בארברסר הוה אמינא לשטן גירא בעיניה.⁵²

Rav Ḥisda praised Rav Hamnuna in the presence of Rav Huna as a great man. He said to him: "When he visits you, bring him to me." When he arrived, he saw that he is not wearing a *sudra*.⁵³ He said to him: "Why are you not wearing a *sudra*?" He answered: "Because I am not married." Thereupon he [Rav Huna] turned his face away from him. He said to him: "See to it that you do not appear before me again before you are married." Rav Hamnuna [should be Huna] [ruled in accordance with] his own