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978-1-107-67695-4 - The Babylonian Talmūd: Tractate B<sup>e</sup>rākōt

Translated into English for the First Time, with Introduction, Commentary, Glossary and Indices by The Rev. A. Cohen

Excerpt

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## CHAPTER I

## MISHNĀH I

*From what time may the Sh<sup>e</sup>ma<sup>1</sup> be read in the evening? From fol. 2 a. the time the priests<sup>2</sup> enter [the Temple] to partake of their T<sup>e</sup>rūmah, until the end of the first watch<sup>3</sup>. These are the words of R. Eliezer; but the Sages<sup>4</sup> say: Until midnight. Rabban Gamaliel says: Until the rise of dawn<sup>5</sup>. It once happened that his sons returned from a feast [after midnight] and said to him, “We have not read the Sh<sup>e</sup>ma<sup>1</sup>!” He told them, “If the dawn has not yet risen, you are still under the obligation of reading it. And not only in this connection do they so decide; but wherever the Sages use the expression ‘Until midnight,’ the obligation continues until the rise of dawn.” The duty of burning the fat and parts of the animal<sup>6</sup> continues until the rise of dawn. Likewise with all offerings which have to be eaten the same day [they are sacrificed]<sup>7</sup>, the duty continues until the rise of dawn. If so, why do the Sages say “Until midnight”? In order to keep a man far from transgression.*

G<sup>e</sup>MĀRĀ

What authority has the *Tannā* [that the *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma<sup>1</sup>* is to be read The on at all] that he raises the question: *From what time?*<sup>8</sup> Further, *Mishnāh criticised.* on what ground does he first deal with the evening? Let him first deal with [the *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma<sup>1</sup>*] of the morning!

<sup>1</sup> For the meaning of Hebrew and Aramaic terms, see Glossary.

<sup>2</sup> Who had become ritually unclean and, after bathing, waited until the evening before they could eat “of the holy things” (cf. Lev. xxii. 4–7).

<sup>3</sup> Whether the night is divisible into three or four watches will be discussed in the *G<sup>e</sup>mārā* below: see pp. 6, 9 f.

<sup>4</sup> The majority of the Rabbis.

<sup>5</sup> According to Maimonides, in his Commentary on the *Mishnāh*, this refers to the first light which becomes visible in the East, about 1½ hours before actual sunrise. Cf. P<sup>e</sup>sāh. 93 b.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Leviticus vi. and vii.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *ibid.* vii. 15 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Lit. Where does the *Tannā* stand that he teaches, *From what time?*

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B<sup>e</sup>RĀKOT I, 1

[fol. 2 a

Alter-  
native  
answers.

The *Tannā* bases his authority on Scripture; for it is written, “When thou liest down and when thou risest up” (Deut. vi. 7)<sup>1</sup>. His statement in the *Mishnāh* is to be understood thus: When is the time for reading the *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma’* which is to be recited when lying down? From the time the priests enter [the Temple] to partake of their *T<sup>e</sup>rūmah*. Or if thou wilt, I can say that he derives [his reason for commencing with the evening] from the account of the Creation; for it is written: “It was evening and it was morning, one day” (Gen. i. 5)<sup>2</sup>.

An objec-  
tion to the  
answer  
removed.

If this be so, in the sequel where he teaches: *In the morning [the reading of the Sh<sup>e</sup>ma’] is preceded by two benedictions and followed by one; in the evening it is preceded by two and followed by two*<sup>3</sup>, let him likewise treat of the evening first! The *Tannā* commenced with the evening and then treats of the morning<sup>4</sup>; but while on the subject of the morning, he explains matters connected with the morning, and afterwards explains matters connected with the evening.

Why the  
*Mishnāh*  
mentions  
criterion  
of priests  
and  
*T<sup>e</sup>rūmah*.

The teacher stated: *From the time the priests enter [the Temple] to partake of their T<sup>e</sup>rūmah*. Yes, but when do the priests partake of their *T<sup>e</sup>rūmah*? From the time the stars appear. Then let him explicitly teach: “From the time of the appearance of the stars”! He wishes to tell us something incidentally: When do the priests partake of their *T<sup>e</sup>rūmah*? From the time the stars appear<sup>5</sup>. He thereby informs us that [the omission of] the sin-offering does not prevent [the priest from partaking of the *T<sup>e</sup>rūmah*]. This is in agreement with the teaching: “When the sun is down and it is clean” (Lev. xxii. 7)<sup>6</sup>—i.e. the setting of the sun<sup>7</sup> prevents him from partaking of the *T<sup>e</sup>rūmah*, but not [his failure to bring] his sin-offering.

<sup>1</sup> Two deductions are drawn from the verse: (1) The law of reading the *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma’*, since the Israelite is commanded “to talk of them” (viz. “these words which I command thee this day”) on lying down and rising up; (2) The right order is “lying down” and “rising up,” i.e. evening and morning.

<sup>2</sup> Hence the Jews reckon the day as commencing with the evening that precedes. See *T. A. II. p. 418*.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> In *Mishnāh II* of this chapter, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup> By defining the time for reading the evening *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma’* as the time when the priests partake of their *T<sup>e</sup>rūmah*, the *Mishnāh* wishes it to be understood that the priests who have been unclean regain their privilege at sunset (when the *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma’* is read) whether they bring their sin-offering or not.

<sup>6</sup> The *G<sup>e</sup>mārā* requires the translation “it (the day) is clean,” i.e. ended, and not “he (the man) shall be clean” from his impurity.

<sup>7</sup> Meaning, the fact that the sun had not set.

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fol. 2 a, 2 b]

B<sup>e</sup>RĀKŌT I, 1

3

How is it to be known, however, that the phrase “When the sun is down” means the [complete] setting of the sun<sup>1</sup>, and the phrase “It is clean” means the *day* is clean? Perhaps the former signifies the setting of its light<sup>2</sup>, and the latter the *man* shall be clean! Rabbah b. Rab Shela answered: In that case the text should have read *w<sup>e</sup>yithar*<sup>3</sup>; what means *w<sup>e</sup>tāhēr*? The day is clean [of light]; as people commonly say, “When the sun has set, the day is *cleansed*.”

The meaning of Lev. xxii. 7 discussed. fol. 2 b.

In the West<sup>4</sup>, this explanation of Rabbah b. Rab Shela had not been heard by them, and they raised the question: The phrase “When the sun is down” means the [complete] setting of the sun, and the phrase “It is clean” means the day is clean; but perhaps the former signifies the setting of its light, and the latter the man shall be clean! They then solved it from a *Bārāitā*; for it is taught in a *Bārāitā*: The sign for the matter<sup>5</sup> is the appearance of the stars. Conclude from this that the [complete] setting of the sun is intended; and what means “It is clean”? The day is clean.

Its interpretation confirmed in Palestinian Schools.

The teacher stated: *From the time the priests enter [the Temple] to partake of their T<sup>e</sup>rūmāh*. Against this I quote: From what time may the *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma*<sup>6</sup> be read in the evening? From the time when the poor man<sup>6</sup> goes home to eat his bread with salt, until such time as he usually stands up to leave his meal! The latter part of this passage is certainly at variance with our *Mishnāh*<sup>7</sup>; but is it to be said that the first part is also at variance with it? No; the poor man and the priest have the one standard of time.

A *Bārāitā* quoted against the *Mishnāh*.

I quote the following against our *Mishnāh*: From what time may we begin to read the *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma*<sup>6</sup> in the evening? From the time

Another *Bārāitā* contrasted with the *Mishnāh*.

<sup>1</sup> I.e. the appearance of the stars.

<sup>2</sup> I.e. the disappearance of the sun below the horizon, but not the appearance of the stars. So Tōsāfōt; Rashi, less probably, refers Lev. xxii. 7 to the dawn of the eighth day.

<sup>3</sup> I.e. “then he *shall be clean*,” whereas *w<sup>e</sup>tāhēr* means “it (or he) *is clean*.”

<sup>4</sup> The Palestinian Schools, from the geographical standpoint of Babylon.

<sup>5</sup> When the priests may partake of the *T<sup>e</sup>rūmāh*.

<sup>6</sup> On account of his poverty, he cannot afford artificial light; therefore he takes his evening meal while there is yet sufficient light. See fol. 3 a (p. 7) for a reference to sleeping in a dark room; and on fol. 5 b (p. 24) it is mentioned that R. Eleazar, who was very poor, was lying in a dark room. According to Lane, p. 145, Orientals have their supper “shortly after sunset.” In *J. T.* it is mentioned that the inhabitants of villages leave the fields before nightfall for fear of wild beasts.

<sup>7</sup> The *terminus ad quem* does not agree with any of the views stated in the *Mishnāh*.

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B<sup>e</sup>RĀKŌT I, 1

[fol. 2 b

that people go home to eat their bread on the Sabbath-eve<sup>1</sup>. These are the words of R. Meir ; but the Sages say : From the time the priests<sup>2</sup> are entitled to partake of their *T<sup>e</sup>rūmāh*. A sign for the matter is the appearance of the stars, and although there is no proof of this<sup>3</sup>, yet is there some indication ; as it is said, “So we wrought in the work : and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared” (Neh. iv. 15), and it continues “That in the night they may be a guard to us, and may labour in the day” (*ibid.* v. 16). What is the meaning of this latter verse? Shouldest thou say that immediately the sun set it was reckoned to be night, but they worked late and started early<sup>4</sup>—come and hear<sup>5</sup>: “That in the night they may be a guard to us, and may labour in the day.”

Conclusion that the poor and the priest have same standard of time.

The thought has occurred to thee that the poor man and people generally have the same standard of time<sup>6</sup>. Shouldest thou, however, maintain that the poor man and the priest have the same standard of time, then the opinion of the Sages and R. Meir would be identical<sup>7</sup>! Is it then to be concluded that the poor man and the priest have each a different standard of time? No ; the poor man and the priest have the same standard of time, but the poor man and people generally have a different standard.

<sup>1</sup> The meal would be earlier on the Sabbath-eve, everything having been prepared before the advent of the Sabbath.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 1 n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Viz. that the day ends with the appearance of the stars.

<sup>4</sup> *M.* reads : but on account of the building of the Temple they started early and worked late.

<sup>5</sup> “Come and hear” introduces a quotation or illustration, often with the object of refuting an argument. Its use in the present instance is as follows : According to Neh. iv. 15, the day-shift of workers laboured from “the rising of the morning” (i.e. dawn) until “the stars appeared.” These two points of time may be regarded as defining the beginning and end of a day. But should it be objected that no such inference can be drawn, inasmuch as the workmen in their enthusiasm may have exceeded the normal hours of the day, the objection is met by v. 16, where it is explicitly stated “and may labour in the day.” The conclusion, therefore, is that a normal day is intended in v. 15.

<sup>6</sup> I.e. the poor man (mentioned in the first *Bārāitā*) who has his evening meal early through lack of artificial light, and people generally (mentioned in the second) on the Sabbath-eve who have their supper early.

The reasoning may be simplified by calling the meal-time of the poor man A, that of people on the Sabbath-eve B, and that of the priest for partaking of the *T<sup>e</sup>rūmāh* C. In this paragraph A is assumed to equal B. If, then, A is said to equal C, then B=C. But R. Meir, who adopts B, is *contrasted* with the Sages who adopt C, so these cannot be identical.

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fol. 2 b]

B<sup>e</sup>RĀKŌT I, 1

5

The poor man and the priest have the same standard of time! <sup>This</sup> <sup>conclusion</sup> <sup>refuted by</sup> <sup>a Bārāitā.</sup> Against this I quote: From what time do we begin to read the *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma'* in the evening? From the time that the day becomes hallowed on the Sabbath-eve. These are the words of R. Eliezer. R. Joshua says: From the time the priests become ritually clean to partake of their *T<sup>e</sup>rūmāh*. R. Meir says: From the time the priests bathe so as to be able to partake of their *T<sup>e</sup>rūmāh*. (R. Judah asked him, "But do not the priests bathe while it is yet day<sup>1</sup>?") R. Hannina says: From the time the poor man goes home to eat his bread with salt. R. Aḥai (another version: R. Aḥa) says: From the time when the majority of people go home to have their evening repast. Shouldest thou maintain that the poor man and the priest have the same standard of time, then R. Hannina and R. Joshua hold the same opinion<sup>2</sup>! Must it not therefore be concluded that each of them has a different standard? Yes, draw that conclusion.

Which of the two<sup>3</sup> is later<sup>4</sup>? It is more probable that the poor man is later; for shouldest thou maintain that he is earlier, then R. Hannina and R. Eliezer would hold the same opinion<sup>5</sup>! Must it not therefore be concluded that the poor man is later? Yes, draw that conclusion.

The teacher stated above: "R. Judah asked him, 'But do not the priests bathe while it is yet day?'" R. Judah's question to R. Meir is a forcible one! But R. Meir answered him thus: Dost thou think that I agree with thy opinion of "twilight<sup>6</sup>"? I agree with R. Josē's opinion. For R. Josē said: The twilight is like a flicker of the eye; the night comes on and the day passes without anyone being able to perceive it<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> And it is agreed by all that the evening *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma'* must not be read in the daytime. This question is dealt with below.

<sup>2</sup> R. Hannina adopts A and R. Joshua adopts C. According to the hypothesis A=C; but that cannot be, since these two Rabbis hold divergent views.

<sup>3</sup> The time-standards of the poor man and the priest.

<sup>4</sup> M. inserts: Rab Nahman b. Isaac said.

<sup>5</sup> There is not sufficient data in the *G<sup>e</sup>mārā* to account for this conclusion. Tōsāfōt note the difficulty.

<sup>6</sup> In Shab. 34 b R. Judah defines "twilight" thus: From the time the sun sets and so long as the sky in the East is coloured red. When the lower horizon is pale but not the upper horizon, it is still twilight; but when the upper horizon is pale like the lower, it is night. Cf. Lane, p. 74 n. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Should, therefore, the priest bathe about the time of twilight (according to R. Josē's view), although it is still day, it is legitimate to read the *Sh<sup>e</sup>ma'* then, since it is practically night.

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fol. 3 a. R. Meir has contradicted himself<sup>1</sup>! There are two *Tannāīm* in the sense of R. Meir<sup>2</sup>. R. Eliezer has contradicted himself<sup>3</sup>! There are two *Tannāīm* in the sense of R. Eliezer. Or if thou wilt, I can say that the first part of the Mishnaic statement is not R. Eliezer's<sup>4</sup>.  
*Until the end of the first watch.*

The night divided into three watches. What is R. Eliezer's view? If he holds that the night is divided into three watches, let him say explicitly [in the *Mishnāh*] "until the end of the fourth hour"<sup>5</sup>. If, on the other hand, he holds that the night is divided into four watches<sup>6</sup>, let him say explicitly "until the end of the third hour." His opinion is certainly that there are three watches in the night; but his intention is to inform us that there are watches in heaven as on earth<sup>7</sup>. For there is a teaching<sup>8</sup>: R. Eliezer says: There are three watches in the night, and at each watch, the Holy One, blessed be He, sits enthroned and roars like a lion; as it is said, "The Lord doth roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He doth mightily roar<sup>9</sup> because of His fold" (Jer. xxv. 30). A sign for the matter [of the three earthly night-watches] is: at the first watch, the ass brays; at the second, dogs bark; and at the third, the babe sucks at the breast of its mother and a woman converses with her husband.

<sup>1</sup> In the first *Bārāitā* quoted, R. Meir's view is that the *Shema'* may be read from the time people go home for their meal on the Sabbath-eve (i.e. after twilight); but in the second *Bārāitā* his view is from the time the priest bathes (i.e. before twilight).

<sup>2</sup> R. Meir's teaching is reported by two later Rabbis; hence the discrepancy.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Mishnāh*, R. Eliezer's time-standard is when the priests enter to eat the *T<sup>e</sup>rūmāh* (i.e. the appearance of the stars); in the *Bārāitā*, it is when the Sabbath is halloved (i.e. sunset).

<sup>4</sup> According to this explanation, only "until the end of the first watch" in the *Mishnāh* are the words of R. Eliezer.

<sup>5</sup> The division of the day was reckoned as follows: From sunrise to sunset consisted of twelve "hours," which would be longer in Summer and shorter in Winter. The sixth hour ended at noon; hence it is convenient to speak of the day as commencing at 6 a.m., and the night (which was similarly divided into twelve hours) at 6 p.m. "Until the end of the fourth hour" would accordingly be 10 p.m.

<sup>6</sup> The Romans divided the night into four *vigiliae*. So also Matt. xiv. 25, Mark vi. 48.

<sup>7</sup> The ministering angels are formed into three bands, each doing duty a part of the night.

<sup>8</sup> See Glossary, s.v. *Bārāitā*.

<sup>9</sup> "Mightily roar" is literally in the Hebrew "roaring He doth roar." Hence the word "roar" occurs three times in the verse, and is referred to the three night-watches.

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fol. 3 a]

B<sup>ē</sup>RĀKŌT I, 1

7

Of what is R. Eliezer thinking? If he is thinking of the commencement of the watches, what need is there for a sign of the beginning of the first watch, since it is dusk? Should he be thinking of the end of the watches, what need is there for a sign of the end of the last watch, since it is day? Nay, he must be thinking of the end of the first watch, the beginning of the last watch, and the middle of the central watch. Or if thou wilt, I can say that in every case he is thinking of the end of the watches; and shouldest thou urge that a sign of the end of the last watch is unnecessary, and ask what is its purpose? It is for the reading of the *Shema* on the part of one who sleeps in a dark room<sup>1</sup> and does not know when is the time for reading the *Shema*. Therefore, when the woman converses with her husband and the child sucks at the breast of its mother, let him get up and read it.

R. Isaac b. Samuel<sup>2</sup> said in the name of Rab<sup>3</sup>: The night is divided into three watches<sup>4</sup>, and at each watch the Holy One, blessed be He, sits enthroned, roars like a lion and exclaims, "Alas for My children, for whose iniquities I destroyed My house, burnt My Temple, and exiled them among the nations of the world!"

There is a teaching: R. Josē said: Once I was journeying by the way, and I entered one of the ruins of Jerusalem to pray. Elijah<sup>5</sup>—may he be remembered for good!—came, waited at the entrance for me, and stayed until I had concluded my prayer<sup>6</sup>. After I had finished my prayer he said to me, "Peace be to thee, my master." I responded, "Peace be to thee, my master and teacher." Then he said to me, "My son, why didst thou enter this ruin?" I answered, "To pray." He said to me, "Thou shouldest have prayed by the roadside." I said, "I feared lest passers-by interrupt me." Then said he to me, "Thou shouldest

<sup>1</sup> Windows were rare in houses, especially of the poor. Cf. *T. A. i.* p. 42, and p. 347 n. 539.

<sup>2</sup> *M.*: Rab Isaac b. R. Samuel b. Marta.

<sup>3</sup> It will be noted that the Talmūd is careful to trace a teaching to its source; hence the frequent occurrence of the phrase "in the name of." Cf. *Ābōt vi.* 6: "Whoever reports a thing in the name of him that said it brings deliverance into the world; as it is said, 'And Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai' (*Esth. ii.* 22)" (Singer, p. 207).

<sup>4</sup> The Greeks divided the night into three *φύλακαί*.

<sup>5</sup> Elijah is frequently represented in Rabbinic Literature as appearing on earth. See *A. T. ii.* p. 163 n. 1, and the article in *J. E. v.* pp. 122 ff.

<sup>6</sup> By "prayer" is usually, as here, meant the Eighteen Benedictions (see Glossary, s.v. *T<sup>ē</sup>fillāh*). This prayer must be said with the feet in a fixed position (see fol. 10 b, p. 65 n. 6) and without interruption.

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have offered an abbreviated prayer<sup>1</sup>." On that occasion I learnt three things from him : first, one should not enter ruins ; second, it is permissible to pray by the roadside ; third, one who prays by the roadside should offer an abbreviated prayer.

Then he said to me, "My son, what sound didst thou hear in that ruin?" I answered, "I heard a *Bat Kōl* moaning like a dove<sup>2</sup>, crying, 'Alas for My children for whose iniquities I destroyed My house<sup>3</sup>, burnt My Temple, and exiled them among the nations!'" He said to me, "By thy life and the life of thy head, not only at this hour does it so cry, but thrice daily it exclaims thus. Moreover, whenever the Children of Israel enter their Synagogues and Houses of Study and respond 'Let His great Name be blessed<sup>4</sup>,' the Holy One, blessed be He, shakes His head<sup>5</sup> and exclaims, 'Happy the King Who is so praised in His house! Alas<sup>6</sup> for the Father Who has banished His children! And alas for the children who have been banished from their Father's table!'"

Why ruins should be avoided.

fol. 3 b.

Our Rabbis have taught: For three reasons one should not enter ruins: on account of suspicion<sup>7</sup>, of falling fabric and evil spirits<sup>8</sup>. [Why mention] on account of suspicion, since thou canst derive [a sufficient reason] from the danger of falling fabric? They might be new ruins<sup>9</sup>. Then derive it from the danger of evil spirits! This would not apply when two men entered a ruin. But should there be two men, there would likewise be no ground for suspicion<sup>10</sup>! There would be in the case of two men of ill-repute. [Why mention] on account of falling fabric, since thou canst derive

<sup>1</sup> I.e. the prayer "Give us understanding" (Singer, p. 55); see below fol. 29 a, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> For the bearing of this passage on Matt. iii. 16, see Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism* (First Series), p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> The original reading was probably, "Woe to Me that I have destroyed," etc. See *D. S. ad loc.* The alteration was made for the purpose of euphemism.

<sup>4</sup> This is the response in the important feature of the Synagogue Service, known as the *Ḳaddish*. Cf., e.g., Singer, p. 37, and p. 86 for the form used in the House of Study. On the *Ḳaddish*, see *J. E.* vii. pp. 401 ff.

<sup>5</sup> To denote regret or meditation; cf. *T. A.* iii. p. 245 n. 65.

<sup>6</sup> Reading **יִנ**; see *D. S. ad loc.* The text has **יִנ** which means "What is there for the Father?"

<sup>7</sup> Of immoral intent.

<sup>8</sup> The Evil Spirits of Jewish Folklore correspond to the *Jinn* of the Arabs. Among the places they are supposed to frequent are "ruined houses" (Lane, p. 229). On Jewish Demonology, see *J. E.* iv. pp. 514 ff.

<sup>9</sup> In which this danger is not so great.

<sup>10</sup> According to *Mishnāh Ḳiddūshin* iv. 12, a woman may be accompanied by two men.



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fol. 3 b]

B<sup>ē</sup>RĀKŌT I, 1

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[a sufficient reason] from the grounds of suspicion and evil spirits? No, not in the case of two men of good repute. [Why mention] on account of evil spirits, since thou canst derive [a sufficient reason] from the grounds of suspicion and falling fabric? No, not in the case of new ruins and two men of good repute. Is there no fear of evil spirits also when there are two men? In such places where evil spirits resort there is occasion for fear. Or if thou wilt, I can say that even in the case of a person alone and new ruins situated in a wild place<sup>1</sup> there is no ground for suspicion, because a woman does not frequent such a spot; but the fear of evil spirits remains.

Our Rabbis have taught: The night is divided into four watches. On the These are the words of Rabbi<sup>2</sup>. R. Nathan says: Three. What number of night-watches. is R. Nathan's reason? Because it is written, "So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outermost Argument in favour of three. part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch" (Judges vii. 19). Hence he teaches that there cannot be a "middle watch" unless one precedes and follows. How does Rabbi explain the phrase "middle watch"? He takes it to mean one of the middle watches. What reply does R. Nathan make to this? He asks, Does Scripture state "one of the two middle watches"? No; the "middle watch" is explicitly mentioned<sup>3</sup>.

What is Rabbi's reason [for declaring there are four watches]? Argument in favour of four. R. Z<sup>ē</sup>riḳa stated that R. Ammi said in the name of<sup>4</sup> R. Joshua b. Levi: One verse states, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous ordinances" (Ps. cxix. 62) and another verse states, "Mine eyes forestalled the night-watches" (*ibid.* v. 148). How is this? There must be four watches in the night<sup>5</sup>. How does R. Nathan answer this argument? He agrees Its with the opinion of R. Joshua; for there is a Mishnaic teaching<sup>6</sup>: refutation. R. Joshua says: *Until the third hour* [in the day may the morning *Shema'* be read], *for so is the custom of kings to rise at the third hour*. Six hours of the night and two of the day make two

<sup>1</sup> Rashi "field" and it is so usually rendered; but cf. *T. A.* ii. p. 470 n. 382.

<sup>2</sup> "Rabbi," without any name following, refers to R. Judah the Prince, the redactor of the *Mishnāh*.

<sup>3</sup> In *J. T.*, R. Nathan is answered: There are four watches, but the first is not counted because people are generally still awake.

<sup>4</sup> *M.*: R. Simeon b. Laḳish. Bacher adopts this as correct; see *A. P. A. I.* p. 131 n. 5.

<sup>5</sup> If by rising "at midnight" David forestalled "night-watches" (the plural signifying two), there must be four watches in the night.

<sup>6</sup> See below fol. 9 b, p. 55.

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Excerpt

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B<sup>ᵉ</sup>RĀKŌT I, 1

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watches<sup>1</sup>. Rab Ashē said: A watch and a half are also referred to as “watches<sup>2</sup>.”

Another teaching reported by R. Z<sup>ᵉ</sup>rika.

R. Z<sup>ᵉ</sup>rika also stated that R. Ammi said in the name of<sup>3</sup> R. Joshua b. Levi: In the presence of the dead, we should only speak of matters relating to the dead. R. Abba b. Kah<sup>a</sup>na said: This applies only to words of *Tōrāh*; but as for worldly matters we can have no objection<sup>4</sup>. Another version is: R. Abba b. Kah<sup>a</sup>na said: This applies even to words of *Tōrāh*; how much more so to worldly matters!

How David passed the night.

David rose at midnight! He rose at eventide; as it is written, “I arose early *b<sup>ᵉ</sup>nēshef*<sup>5</sup> and cried” (Ps. cxix. 147). Whence is it learnt that *nēshef* means evening? Because it is written, “In the twilight [*b<sup>ᵉ</sup>nēshef*], in the evening of the day, in the blackness of night and the darkness” (Prov. vii. 9). R. Osha‘ya said in the name of R. Aḥa<sup>6</sup>: Thus declared David, “Midnight never passed me by in my sleep<sup>7</sup>.” R. Zera said: Until midnight David used to slumber like a horse<sup>8</sup>, but from thence he grew strong like a lion<sup>9</sup>. Rab Ashē said: Until midnight he was occupied with words of *Tōrāh*, but from thence with psalms and praises.

The meaning of *nēshef*.

*Nēshef* means evening! Lo, it means the morning; for it is written, “And David smote them from the *nēshef* even unto the

<sup>1</sup> If the day of royal personages commences with the beginning of the third hour (i.e. 8 a.m.), by rising at midnight David forestalled them by eight hours. Therefore a “watch” consists of four hours and there are three in the night.

<sup>2</sup> This is an alternative answer to uphold R. Nathan’s view. By “watches” is not necessarily to be understood two *complete* periods of time.

<sup>3</sup> *M.*: R. Simeon b. Laḳish. Bacher adopts this as correct; see *A. P. A. I.* p. 131 n. 5.

<sup>4</sup> To be an auditor of a discussion on *Tōrāh* and not take part in it was a mark of ignorance and one incurred shame thereby. The dead, being unable to participate, although for other reasons, would thus be disgraced. The idea will not seem so fantastic in view of the belief that the corpse was conscious of what transpired in its presence. Cf. the discussion on pp. 120 ff.

<sup>5</sup> R.V. “at dawn”; but the Talmūd wishes to give it the meaning of “evening.” See the discussion in this and the following paragraphs.

<sup>6</sup> In place of “in the name of R. Aḥa,” *M.* reads: Another version: R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Osha‘ya.

<sup>7</sup> This is taken to be the meaning of Ps. cxix. 62, and therefore David rose before midnight.

<sup>8</sup> The horse was known to be a light sleeper. According to Sukkāh 26 b its sleep consisted of only 60 respirations.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Ābōt v. 23*: “Judah b. Tema said: Be strong as a leopard, light as an eagle, fleet as a hart, and strong as a lion, to do the will of thy Father Who is in heaven” (Singer, p. 203).