

THE LIGHT OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE  
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series IV Lecture #9

**THE WISDOM OF SHEMAYA AND AVTALYON:  
THE CHALLENGES OF LIFE IN THE DIASPORA**

I. Choni HaMaagal (the Circle Maker) and the Civil War

A.

תנו רבנן: פעם אחת יצא רוב אדר ולא ירדו גשמים. שלחו לחוני המעגל: התפלל וירדו גשמים התפלל ולא ירדו גשמים. עג עוגה ועמד בתוכה, כדרך שעשה חבקוק הנביא, שנאמר (חבקוק ב') על משמרתי אעמדה ואתיצבה על מצור וגו'. אמר לפניו: רבונו של עולם בניך שמו פניהם עלי שאני כבן בית לפניך, נשבע אני בשמך הגדול שאיני זז מכאן עד שתרחם עלי בניך. התחילו גשמים מנטפין, אמרו לו תלמידיו: רבי, ראינוך ולא נמות. כמדומין אנו שאין גשמים יורדין אלא להתיר שבועתך. אמר: לא כך שאלתי, אלא גשמי בורות שיחין ומערות. ירדו בזעף, עד שכל טפה וטפה כמלא פי חבית. ושיערו חכמים שאין טפה פחותה מלוג. אמרו לו תלמידיו: רבי, ראינוך ולא נמות. כמדומין אנו שאין גשמים יורדין אלא לאבד העולם. אמר לפניו: לא כך שאלתי, אלא גשמי רצון ברכה ונדבה. ירדו כתיקנן, עד שעלו כל העם להר הבית מפני הגשמים. אמרו לו: רבי, כשם שהתפללת שירדו, כך התפלל וילכו להם. אמר להם: כך מקובלני שאין מתפללין על רוב הטובה. אף על פי כן, הביאו לי פר הודאה. הביאו לו פר הודאה. סמך שתי ידיו עליו, ואמר לפניו: רבונו של עולם עמך ישראל שהוצאת ממצרים אינן יכולין לא ברוב טובה ולא ברוב פורענות, כעסת עליהם - אינן יכולין לעמוד, השפעת עליהם טובה - אינן יכולין לעמוד, יהי רצון מלפניך שיפסקו הגשמים ויהא ריוח בעולם. מיד נשבה הרוח ונתפזרו העבים, וזרחה החמה, ויצאו העם לשדה והביאו להם כמהין ופטירות. שלח לו שמעון בן שטח: אלמלא חוני אתה - גוזרני עליך נידוי. שאילו שנים כשני אליהו שמפתחות גשמים בידו של אליהו לא נמצא שם שמים מתחלל על ידך? אבל מה אעשה לך שאתה מתחטא לפני המקום ועושה לך רצונך, כבן שמתחטא על אביו ועושה לו רצונו. ואומר לו: אבא, הוליכני לרחצני בחמין, שטפני בצונן, תן לי אגוזים, שקדים, אפרסקים, ורמונים - ונותן לו. ועליך הכתוב אומר (משלי כ"ג) ישמח אביך ואמך ותגל יולדתיך. תענית כג.

Once it happened that the greater part of the Hebrew month of Adar had passed and yet no rain had fallen. The people sent a message to Choni HaMaagal, the Circle Drawer, "Pray that rain may fall." He prayed and yet no rain fell. He, thereupon, drew a circle and stood within it in the same way as the prophet Habakuk had done, as it is said (Habakuk 2:1), "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower etc." He exclaimed [before G-d], "רבונו של עולם, Master of the Universe, Your children have turned to me because [they believe] me to be an intimate member of Your household. I swear by Your great name that I will not move from here until You show mercy upon your children! Rain began to drizzle and his disciples said to him, "We look to you (we trust you), to save us

from death; we believe that this rain came down merely to release you from your oath." Thereupon he exclaimed: It is not for this that I have prayed, but for rain [to fill] cisterns for drinking, laundry and bathing. The rain then began to come down with great force, every drop being as big as the opening of a barrel and the Sages estimated that no one drop was less than a "log" (four kiddush cups). His disciples then said to him: Master, we look to you to save us from death; it seems to us that the rain came down to destroy the world. Thereupon, he exclaimed before [G-d], "It is not for this that I have prayed, but for rain of benevolence, blessing and bounty." Then rain fell normally until the Jews [in Jerusalem] were compelled to go up [for shelter] to the Temple Mount because of the rain. [His disciples] then said to him, "Master, in the same way as you have prayed for the rain to fall, pray for the rain to cease." He replied, "I have it as a tradition that we may not pray on account of an excess of good. Despite this bring unto me a bullock for a thanks-giving-offering.]" They brought unto him a bullock for a thanks-giving-offering and he laid his two hands upon it and said, "Master of the Universe, Your people Israel whom You have brought out from Egypt cannot endure an excess of good nor an excess of punishment; when You were angry with them, they could not endure it; when You showered upon them an excess of good they could not endure it; may it be Your will that the rain may cease and that there be relief for the world." Immediately, the wind began to blow and the clouds were dispersed and the sun shone and the people went out into the fields and gathered for themselves mushrooms and truffles. Thereupon, Shimon b. Shetach sent this message to him, "Were it not that you are Choni, I would have placed you under the ban [of excommunication]; for were the years like the years [of famine in the time] of Eliyahu (in whose hands were the keys of Rain) would not the name of Heaven be profaned through you? But what shall I do unto you? [Although] you act with insolence before the Omnipresent, He grants you your desire, like a son who acts insolently before his father and yet he grants his desires; Even if he says to him, Father, take me to bathe in warm water, wash me in cold water, give me nuts, almonds, peaches, and pomegranates, he gives them to him. Of you, Scripture says (Prov. 23:25), 'Let your father and your mother be happy [with you], and let her that gave birth to you rejoice.'" **Taanis 23a**

B. After these promises had been given to Aretas, he made an expedition against Aristobulus, with an army of fifty thousand horse and foot soldiers and beat him in the battle. And when after that victory many went over to Hyrcanus as deserters, Aristobulus was left desolate, and fled to Jerusalem; upon which the king of Arabia took all his army and made an assault upon the temple, and besieged Aristobulus therein, the people still supporting Hyrcanus, and assisting him in the siege, while none but the priests continued with Aristobulus. So Aretas united the forces of the Arabians and of the Jews together, and pressed on the siege vigorously. As this happened at the time when the feast of unleavened bread was celebrated, which we call the Passover, the principal men among the Jews left the country and fled into Egypt. Now there was one whose name was Onias (Choni HaMaagal), a righteous man he was, and beloved of G-d, who, in a certain drought, had prayed to G-d to put an end to the intense heat and whose prayers G-d heard, and had sent them rain. This man had hid himself, because he saw that this sedition would last a great while. However, they brought him to the Jewish camp, and desired, that as by his prayers he had once put an end to the drought, so he would in like manner make imprecations (curses) on Aristobulus, and those of his faction. And when,

upon his refusal and the excuses that he made, he was still by the multitude compelled to speak, he stood up in the midst of them and said, "O G-d, King of the whole world, since those that stand now with me are Thy people, and those that are besieged are also Thy priests, I beseech Thee, that Thou wilt neither hearken to the prayers of those against these, nor bring to effect what these pray against those." Whereupon such wicked Jews as stood about him, as soon as he had made this prayer, stoned him to death. **Antiquities XIV 2:1**

C.

אמר רבי יוחנן: כל ימיו של אותו צדיק היה מצטער על מקרא זה (תהלים קכ"ו) שיר המעלות בשוב ד' את שיבת ציון היינו כחולמים. אמר: מי איכא דניים שבעין שנין בחלמא? יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא, חזייה לההוא גברא דהוה נטע חרובא, אמר ליה: האי, עד כמה שנין טעיין? - אמר ליה: עד שבעין שנין. - אמר ליה: פשיטא לך דחיית שבעין שנין? - אמר ליה: האי [גברא] עלמא בחרובא אשכחתי, כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי - שתלי נמי לבראי. יתיב, קא כריך ריפתא, אתא ליה שינתא, נים. אהדרא ליה משוניתא, איכסי מעינא, ונים שבעין שנין. כי קם חזייה לההוא גברא דהוה קא מלקט מינייהו. אמר ליה: את הוא דשתלתיה? - אמר ליה: בר בריה אנא. אמר ליה: שמע מינה דניימי שבעין שנין. חזא לחמריה דאתיילידא ליה רמכי רמכי. אזל לביתי, אמר להו: בריה דחוני המעגל מי קיים? - אמרו ליה: בריה ליתא, בר בריה איתא. אמר להו: אנא חוני המעגל. לא הימנוהו. אזל לבית המדרש, שמעינהו לרבנן דקאמרי: נהירן שמעתתין כבשני חוני המעגל, דכי הוי עייל לבית מדרשא, כל קושיא דהוה להו לרבנן הוה מפרק להו. אמר להו: אנא ניהו, ולא הימנוהו, ולא עבדי ליה יקרא כדמבעי ליה, חלש דעתי, בעי רחמי ומית. אמר רבא, היינו דאמרי אינשי: או חברותא או מיתותא. תענית כג.

R. Yohanan said: This righteous man [Choni] was throughout the whole of his life troubled about the meaning of the verse: A Song of Ascents, When the L-rd brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like unto them that dream. Is it possible for a man to dream continuously for seventy years? One day he was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree; he asked him, "How long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit?" The man replied: Seventy years. He then further asked him: Are you certain that you will live another seventy years? The man replied: I found [ready grown] carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me so I too plant these for my children. Choni sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him. As he slept, a rocky formation enclosed him which hid him from sight and he continued to sleep for seventy years. When he awoke, he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree and he asked him, "Are you the man who planted the tree?" The man replied, "I am his grandson." Thereupon, he exclaimed: It is clear that I slept for seventy years. He then caught sight of his donkey who had given birth to several generations of donkeys; and he returned home. He there inquired, "Is the son of Choni the Circle-Drawer still alive?" The people answered him, "His son is no more, but his grandson is still living." Thereupon, he said to them. "I am Choni HaMaagal, the Circle-Drawer," but no one would believe him. He then repaired to the Beth Hamidrash and there he overheard the scholars say, "The law is as clear to us as in the days of Choni the Circle-Drawer, for whenever he came to the Beth Hamidrash he would settle for the scholars any difficulty that they had." Whereupon he called out, "I am he;" but the scholars would not believe him nor did they give him the honor due to him. This hurt him greatly and he prayed [for death] and he died. Rava said: Hence the saying, "Either companionship or death." **Taanis 23a**

D. But G-d punished them immediately for their barbarity, and took vengeance of them for the murder of Onias, in the manner following: While the priests and Aristobulus were besieged, it happened that the feast called the Passover was come at which it is our custom to offer a great number of sacrifices to G-d: but those that were with Aristobulus wanted sacrifices, and desired that their countrymen without would furnish them with such sacrifices and assured them they should have as much money for them as they should desire; and when they were required to pay a thousand drachmae for each head of cattle, Aristobulus and the priests willingly undertook to pay for them accordingly, and those within let down the money over the walls, and gave it them. But when the others had received it, they did not deliver the sacrifices, but arrived at that height of wickedness as to break the assurances they had given, and to be guilty of impiety towards G-d, by not furnishing those that wanted them with sacrifices. And when the priests found they had been cheated and that the agreements they had made were violated, they prayed to G-d, that he would avenge them on their countrymen. Nor did he delay their punishment, but sent a strong and vehement storm of wind that destroyed the fruits of the whole country, till a modius of wheat was then bought for eleven drachmae. **Antiquities XIV 2:2**

E.

ת"ר: כשצרו מלכי בית חשמונאי זה על זה, היה הורקנוס מבחוץ ואריסטובלוס מבפנים. בכל יום ויום היו משלשלין דינרים בקופה ומעלין להן תמידים. היה שם זקן אחד שהיה מכיר בחכמת יונית, לעז להם בחכמת יונית, אמר להן: כל זמן שעוסקים בעבודה אין נמסרין בידכם. למחר שלשלו להם דינרים בקופה והעלו להם חזיר, כיון שהגיע לחצי חומה, נעץ צפרניו נודעצה א"י ארבע מאות פרסה. אותה שעה אמרו: ארור אדם שיגדל חזירים, וארור אדם שילמד לבנו חכמת יונית ועל אותה שנה שנינו: מעשה ובא עומר מגגות צריפים, ושתי הלחם מבקעת עין סוכר. סוטה מט:

Our Rabbis taught: When the kings of the Hasmonean house fought one another, Hyrcanus was outside and Aristobulus within. Each day they used to let down denarii in a basket, and haul up for them [animals for] the continual offerings. An old man there, who was learned in Greek wisdom, spoke with them in Greek, saying: 'As long as they carry on the Temple-service, they will never surrender to you'. On the morrow, they let down denarii in a basket, and hauled up a pig. When it reached half way up the wall, it stuck its claws [into the wall] and the land of Israel was shaken over a distance of four hundred parasangs. At that time they declared, - 'Cursed be a man who rears pigs and cursed be a man who teaches his son Greek wisdom!' Concerning that year we learnt that it happened that the *Omer* had to be supplied from the gardens of Zarifim and the two loaves from the valley of En-Soker. **Sotah 49b**

F. Now there was a sedition of the men that were within the city, who did not agree what was to be done in their present circumstances, while some thought it best to deliver up the city to Pompey; but Aristobulus' party exhorted them to shut the gates, because he was kept in prison. Now these prevented the others and seized upon the temple, and cut off the bridge which reached from it to the city, and prepared themselves to abide a siege; but the others admitted Pompey's army in, and delivered up both the city and the king's palace to him. But now all was full of slaughter; some of the Jews being slain by the

Romans, and some by one another; nay, some there were who threw themselves down the precipices, or put fire to their houses and burnt them, as they were not able to bear the miseries they were under. Of the Jews, there fell twelve thousand, but of the Romans very few. Absalom, who was at once both uncle and father-in-law to Aristobulus, was taken captive. And no small enormities were committed about the temple itself, which, in former ages, had been inaccessible and seen by none; for Pompey went into it, and not a few of those that were with him also, and saw all that which it was unlawful for any other men to see but only for the high priests. **Antiq. Book XIV 4:2,4**

G. Now the occasions of this misery which came upon Jerusalem, were Hyrcanus and Aristobulus by raising a sedition one against the other; for now we lost our liberty, and became subject to the Romans, and were deprived of that country which we had gained by our arms from the Syrians, and were compelled to restore it to the Syrians. Moreover, the Romans exacted of us, in a little time, above ten thousand talents. And the royal authority, which was a dignity formerly bestowed on those that were high priests, by the right of their family, became the property of private men. But of these matters, we shall treat in their proper places. Now Pompey committed Coelesyria, as far as the river Euphrates and Egypt, to Scaurus, with two Roman legions, and then went away to Cilicia, and made haste to Rome. He also carried bound along with him Aristobulus and his children; for he had two daughters, and as many sons; the one of which ran away, but the younger Antigonus, was carried to Rome, together with his sisters. **Antiq. Book XIV 4:5**

H. Some time after this, when Alexander, the son of Aristobulus, made an incursion into Judea, Gabinius came from Rome to Syria, as commander of the Roman forces. He did many considerable actions: and particularly made war with Alexander, since Hyrcanus was not yet able to oppose his power, but was already attempting to build the walls of Jerusalem, which Pompey had overthrown, although the Romans, which were there, restrained him from that design. However, Alexander went over all the country round about, and armed many of the Jews, and suddenly got together ten thousand armed footmen, and fifteen hundred horsemen, and fortified Alexandrium, a fortress near to Corae and Macherus, near the mountains of Arabia. . . . Alexander sent an embassy to him, desiring that he would pardon his former offenses; he also delivered up the fortresses, Hyrcania, and Macherus and at last Alexandrium itself, which fortresses Gabinius demolished. But when Alexander's mother, who was of the side of the Romans, as having her husband and other children at Rome, came to him, he granted her whatsoever she asked; and when he had settled matters with her, he brought Hyrcanus to Jerusalem, and committed the care of the Temple to him: and when he had ordained five councils, he distributed the same nation into the same number of parts so these councils governed the people; the first was at Jerusalem, the second at Gadara, the third at Amathus, the fourth at Jericho, and the fifth in Sepphoris in Galilee; so the Jews were now freed from monarchic authority, and were governed by an aristocracy. **Antiquities Book XIV 5:2,4**

## II. Shemaya and Avtalion

## A.

תנו רבנן: מעשה בכהן גדול אחד שיצא מבית המקדש, והווי אזלי כולי עלמא בתריה. כיון דחזיונהו לשמעיה ואבטליון - שבקוהו לדידיה ואזלי בתר שמעיה ואבטליון. לסוף אתו שמעיה ואבטליון לאיפטורי מיניה דכהן גדול אמר להן: ייתון בני עממין לשלם - אמרו ליה: ייתון בני עממין לשלם - דעבדין עובדא דאהרן, ולא ייתי בר אהרן לשלם - דלא עביד עובדא דאהרן. יומא עא:

Our Rabbis taught: It happened with a high priest that as he came forth from the Sanctuary, all the people followed him, but when they saw Shemayah and Avtalyon, they forsook him and went after Shemayah and Avtalyon. Eventually Shemayah and Avtalyon visited him, to take their leave of the high priest. He said to them: May the descendants of the heathen come in peace! — They answered him: May the descendants of the heathen, who do the work of Aaron, arrive in peace, but the descendant of Aaron, who does not do the work of Aaron, he shall not come in peace! **Yoma 71b**

## B.

שמעיה ואבטליון קבלו מהם שמעיה אומר אהוב את המלאכה ושנא את הרבנות ואל תתודע לרשות: אבות א:

Shemaya and Avtalyon received the oral tradition from them (Yehudah ben Tabbar and Shimon ben Shetach). Shemaya said: Love work and despise lordliness and don't make yourself overly familiar with the government. **Avos 1:10**

## C.

אהוב את המלאכה כיצד מלמד שיהא אדם אוהב את המלאכה ואל יהיה [אדם] שונא את מלאכה שכשם שהתורה נתנה בברית כך המלאכה נתנה בברית שנאמר ששת ימים תעבוד ועשית כל מלאכתך ויום השביעי שבת לד' א-להיך (שמות כ' ט') : רבי עקיבא אומר עתים שאדם עושה מלאכה ומתנצל מן המיתה ועתים שאין אדם עושה מלאכה ומתחייב מיתה לשמים. כיצד ישב אדם כל השבוע ולא עשה מלאכה. לערב שבת אין לו מה יאכל היו לו מעות של הקדש בתוך ביתו ונטל מהם ואכל מתחייב מיתה לשמים. אבל אם היה פועל והולך בבנין בית המקדש אף על פי שנתנו לו מעות של הקדש בשכרו ונטל מהם ואכל מתנצל מן המיתה: רבי דוסתאי אומר מנין שאם לא עשה מלאכה כל ששה שיעשה כל שבעה הרי שישב כל ימות השבת ולא עשה מלאכה ולערב שבת אין לו מה שיאכל הלך ונפל בין הגייסות ותפשוהו ואחזו אותו בקולר ועשו בו מלאכה בשבת. כל זאת שלא עשה כל ששה: רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר אף אדם הראשון לא טעם כלום עד שעשה מלאכה שנאמר ויניחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה [וגו'] מכל עץ הגן אכול תאכל (בראשית ב' ט"ו וט"ז) : רבי טרפון אומר אף הקב"ה לא השרה שכינתו על ישראל עד שעשו מלאכה שנאמר ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם (שמות כ"ה ח') : רבי יהודה בן בתירא אומר [אדם] שאין לו מלאכה לעשות מה יעשה אם יש לו חצר חרבה או שדה חרבה ילך ויתעסק בהן: רבי יוסי אומר אין אדם מת אלא מתוך הבטלה שנאמר ויגוע ויאסף אל עמיו (בראשית מ"ט ל"ג) הרי שנכפה ונפל על אומן שלו ומת הא אינו מת אלא מתוך הבטלה היה עומד על ראש הגג ועל שפת הנהר ונפל ומת אינו מת אלא מתוך הבטלה: שכן שמענו לאנשים. ולנשים מנין שנאמר איש ואשה אל יעשו עוד מלאכה לתרומת הקודש (שמות ל"ו ו'). לטפלים מנין שנאמר ויכלא העם מהביא (שם) : אמר רבי נתן בשעה שנתעסק משה במלאכת המשכן לא רצה ליטול עצה

מנשיאי ישראל והיו נשיאי ישראל יושבין ושותקין ואומרין עכשיו יצטרך לנו משה. כיון ששמעו שהעבירו קול במחנה שנאמר והמלאכה היתה דים אמרו אוי לנו שלא היה לנו שותפות במלאכת המשכן. עמדו והוסיפו דבר גדול מעצמם שנאמר והנשיאים הביאו את אבני השהם (שם ל"ה כ"ז) : אבות דרבי נתן פרק יא

What is the meaning of the dictum, "Love work"? It teaches you that a person should love work and not detest it, for just as Torah was given through a covenant, so too work was given through a covenant as is stated in Scripture (Exodus 20: 9), "Six days shall you toil and do all of your work and the seventh day shall be dedicated as a day of rest in honor of the L-rd, your G-d." Rabbi Akiva says: There are times that a person does work and thereby saves himself from death and there are times that a person does work and he is condemned by Heaven to die. How so? If someone decides to sit idly by the whole week and on the eve of Shabbos, because he has [depleted his reserves and now has] nothing to eat, takes sacred money which has been dedicated to the Temple (*Bais HaMikdash*), which was laying in his home, and purchases some food with it, such a person is condemned by Heaven to die. If, however, he was working on the construction of the Temple (*Bais HaMikdash*), even though they gave him sacred money as his wages and he uses it to purchase food, he is saved from death. Rabbi Dostai said: What is the source of the aphorism that if one does not work the six days of the week he will eventually have to work all seven? Behold, the case of someone who was sitting the entire week without doing work and on the eve of Shabbos, [out of desperation,] went walking [outside the safe confines of the city,] and was caught by a marauding gang, and was subsequently imprisoned and chained and forced to work on Shabbos. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: Even Adam didn't taste anything until he did work, as is stated in Scripture (Gen. 2:15,16), "And He put him into the Garden to work and guard it . . . [And He told him,] 'You may eat from any of the trees of the Garden.'" Rabbi Tarphon said: Even the Holy One, blessed be He, didn't rest His Divine Presence (*Shechina*) upon Israel until they did work as is stated in Scripture (Exodus 25:8), "And make for me a Sanctuary that I dwell amongst you." Rabbi Yehudah ben Besaira said: If a person has no work, what should he do? If he has a courtyard or a field which is in ruins, let him go and busy himself with it as it is stated in Scripture (Exodus 20:8), "Six days shall you toil and do all of your work." What is the meaning of the phrase, "And do *all* of your work"? This is meant to include a person who has courtyards or fields that are in a ruined state that he should go and busy himself with it. Rabbi Yosei said: Death only occurs in the midst of idleness, as it is stated in Scripture (Gen. 49:33), "And he expired and was gathered unto his people." Behold if someone had an epileptic fit and fell upon his [fellow worker?] and died, he only died in the midst of idleness. If he was standing on the top of a roof or on the bank of a river and then fell to his death, it was only in the midst of idleness. From the above we have a source for men [working]. What is the source for women? It is stated in Scripture (Ex. 36:6), "Neither man nor woman shall do any more work towards the bringing of donations to the Sanctuary." What is the source that children [should work]? It is stated in Scripture (Ibid.), "And the [entire] nation (including the children) stopped bringing [donations]." Rabbi Nassan stated: While Moshe was busy with the work [of collecting] for the Sanctuary, he did not want to take advice from the princes of Israel. The princes sat and were quiet and said (felt) that he would soon be in need of them. When they heard the public announcement, as it is stated (Ibid.), "And the work was sufficient", they said, "Woe to us that we had no part in the work of the Sanctuary." They then got up and added a precious thing on their own, as it is stated (Ex. 35:27), "And the princes brought the onyx stones." **Avos D'Rabbi Nassan Chapter 11**

D.

ושנא את הרבנות כיצד מלמד שלא יניח אדם עטרה מעצמו בראשו אבל אחרים יניחו לו שנאמר יהללך זר ולא פיך נכרי ואל שפתיך (משלי כ"ז ב') : אמר רבי עקיבא כל המגביה עצמו על דברי תורה למה הוא דומה לנבלה מושלכת בדרך כל עובר ושב מניח ידו על חוטמו ומתרחק ממנה והולך שנאמר אם נבלת בהתנשא אם זמות יד לפה (שם ל' ל"ב) . [א"ל בן עזאי דרשהו מענינו] אם מנבל אדם עצמו על דברי תורה ואוכל תמרים חרובים ולובש בגדים צואים ויושב ומשמר על פתח של חכמים כל עובר ושב אומר שמא שוטה הוא זה לסוף אתה מוצא כל התורה כולה עמו: רבי יוסי אומר רד מטה למעלה ולמעלה למטה כל המגביה עצמו על דברי תורה סוף שמשפילין אותו וכל המשפיל עצמו על דברי תורה סוף שמגביהין אותו:

What is the meaning of the dictum, "Despise lordliness." It teaches you that a person should not place the crown [of leadership] on his own head but rather let others put it on for him as is stated in Scripture (Prov. 27:2), "Let a stranger praise you and not your own mouth, a foreigner [should sing your praises] but it should not come of your own lips." Rabbi Akiva said: To what is a person who is prideful of his [scholarship in] Torah compared? To a carcass of a dead animal that is lying on the road. Anyone who passes by puts his hand over his nose [from the stench] and distances himself from it, as it is stated in Scripture (Prov. 30:32), "If you have likened yourself to a carrion by becoming prideful, if you have [caused to] cover a mouth with a hand. . . . Rabbi Yosei stated: . . . All those that raise themselves up due to their Torah knowledge will eventually be lowered and all those that humble themselves for the sake of Torah will eventually be lifted up. **Avos D'Rabbi Nassan Chapter 11**

E.

ואל תתודע לרשות כיצד מלמד שלא יצא לו לאדם שם ברשות כיון שיצא לו שם ברשות סוף נותנין בו עיניהם והורגים אותו ונוטלין הימנו כל ממונו. כיצד היה חבירו [יושב] בשוק ואומר הקב"ה יחננו לפלוני היום יצאו מתוך ביתו מאה שוורים מאה רחלים ומאה עזים ושמע הימנו סרדיוט אחר והלך ואמר להגמון עמד והקיף את כל ביתו ונטל ממנו כל ממונו עליו הכתוב אומר מברך רעהו בקול גדול קללה תחשב לו (שם כ"ז י"ד) : דבר אחר אל תתודע לרשות היה חבירו יושב בשוק ואמר הקב"ה יחננו לפלוני היום הכניס לתוך ביתו כמה כורין של חטים כמה כורין של שעורים שמעו ממנו לסטים ובאו והקיפו את כל ביתו נטלו ממנו כל ממונו לשחרית אין לו כלום עליו הכתוב אומר מברך רעהו בקול גדול וגו': דבר אחר אל תתודע לרשות כיצד מלמד שלא יכוין אדם לומר אני הוא שר העיר ואני הוא המשנה מפני שגוזלין לישראל: דבר אחר אל יכוין אדם ליטול את הרשות שאף על פי שבראשונה פותחין לו פתח ומלויים לו באחרונה קשה לו:

What is the meaning of the dictum, "And don't make yourself overly familiar with the government"? This teaches us that a person should see to it that he does not make a name for himself within the government. When a person is well known to the government the end will be that they will eventually make him the subject of their attention and kill him and take away all of his money. For instance, if his friend is sitting in the marketplace and says, "May G-d continue to grace that person. Today, a hundred oxen, a hundred ewes, and a hundred goats came out of his house," and a [Roman] officer hears of it and tells the governor, they will surround the entire house and take away all of his money.



Regarding such a thing does Scripture state (Prov. 27:14), "He who blesses his friend in a loud voice is really cursing him." The following is an alternate explanation of, "And don't make yourself overly familiar with the government or powers": For instance, if his friend is sitting in the marketplace and says, "May G-d continue to grace that person. The other day he stored within his house so many *kurin* (thirty bushels (*seah*) in a *kur*) of wheat, so many *kurin* of barley!", and robbers would hear him, they would go and surround the entire house and take away all of his money. By the morning the man would be penniless. Regarding such a thing does Scripture state (Prov. 27:14), "He who blesses his friend in a loud voice is really cursing him." The following is yet another alternate explanation of, "And don't make yourself overly familiar with the government or powers that be": This teaches that a person should not intentionally say, "I want to become [close to] the leading city official or the vice mayor, " because such persons steal from the Jewish people. The following is yet another alternate explanation of, "And don't make yourself overly familiar with the government or the powers that be": Don't intentionally take office. Although they initially offer him opportunity and lend him money, the end will be difficult for him. **Avos D'Rabbi Nassan Chapter 11**

E.

(1) אבטליון אומר חכמים הזהרו בדבריכם שמא תורו דבר שלא כתלמוד תורה ותחובו חובת גלות ותגלו למקום מים הרעים ואף התלמידים הבאים אחריכם שמא יורו דבר משמכם שלא כתלמוד תורה ויחובו חובת גלות ויגלו למקום מים הרעים: אבות א:יא

Abyalion used to say: You Sages be careful with your words, lest you be condemned to exile, and you be exiled to a place of evil waters, and the disciples who follow you drink and die, with the result that the name of Heaven becomes profaned. **Avos 1:11**

(2) איזהו מים הרעים הוי אומר ויתערבו בגוים וילמדו מעשיהם (תהלים ק"ו ל"ה): דבר אחר מים הרעים כמשמעו (אפיקורסין): וי"א שמא יגלו לעבודה קשה:

What is the definition of evil waters? This means that they will [be forced to] mix amongst the nations and learn from their actions. (See Psalms 106:35) Another explanation: Evil waters is referring to heresy. Others say it is referring to harsh labor. **Avos D'Rabbi Nassan Chapter 11**