

Meritocracy vs. Inclusiveness

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Major Mahlokot

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1. Pirkei Avot 4:13

Rabbi Shimon said: There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royalty, but the crown of a good name supersedes them all.

ורבי שמעון אומר, שלשה כתר־ים הם, כתר תורה וכתר כהונה וכתר מלכות, וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן:

2. Avot D'Rabbi Natan Chapter 3

For the House of Shammai, say: One should teach only a person who is wise, humble, of good pedigree, and rich. But the House of Hillel say: Teach everyone, for there were many sinners in Israel, and they were brought close to Torah study, and they came out righteous, kind, and proper.

[והעמידו תלמידים הרבה] שבית שמאי אומרים אל ישנה אדם אלא למי שהוא חכם ועניו ובן אבות ועשיר ובית הלל אומרים לכל אדם ישנה שהרבה פושעים היו בהם בישראל ונתקרבו לתלמוד תורה ויצאו מהם צדיקים חסידים וכשרים:

3. Tractate Moed Katan 16b

Once again, on another occasion, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi decreed that students not be taught in the marketplace. What verse did he expound to serve as the basis for this decree? The verse states: "Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of an artist" (Song of Songs 7:2). Just as a thigh is hidden so too, the words of Torah Rabbi Hiyya went out and taught his two nephews, Rav and Rabba bar bar Hana, in the marketplace. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi heard what he had done and became angry. When Rabbi Hiyya came at some later date to visit him, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi mockingly said to him: Iyya, who is calling you outside. Rabbi Hiyya understood that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi had taken the matter to heart and was insulted, and so he conducted himself as if he had been admonished, for thirty days. On the thirtieth day, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi sent him a message, saying: Come. He later sent him another message, telling him not to come...In the end Rabbi

שוב פעם אחד גזר רבי שלא ישנו לתלמידים בשוק, מאי דרש — "חמוקי ירכיך כמו חלאים". מה ירך בסתר, אף דברי תורה בסתר. יצא רבי חייא וישנה לשני בני אחיו בשוק, לרב ולרבה בר (בר) חנה. שמע רבי, איקפד. אתא רבי חייא לאיתחזווי ליה, אמר ליה: עיאי, מי קורא לך בחוץ! ידע דנקט מילתא בדעתיה, נהג נדיפותא בנפשיה תלתין יומין. ביום תלתין שלח ליה: תא. הדר שלח ליה דלא ליתי. לסוף אתא. אמר ליה: אמאי אתית? אמר ליה: דשלח לי מר דליתי. והא

Ḥiyya came on that same day. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi asked Rabbi Ḥiyya: What is the reason that you, the Master, acted as you did? Rabbi Ḥiyya said to him: As it is written: "Wisdom cries aloud in the streets" (Proverbs 1:20). Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said to him: If you read this verse once, you certainly did not read it a second time in greater depth; and if you read it a second time, you certainly did not read it a third time; and if you read it a third time, then it was not adequately explained to you, as it is clear that you do not understand it properly. The words: "Wisdom cries aloud in the streets," should be understood in accordance with the opinion of Rava. As Rava said: With regard to everyone who occupies himself with Torah study inside the privacy of his home, his Torah knowledge will proclaim his greatness outside. The Gemara asks: But isn't it written: "From the beginning I have not spoken in secret" (Isaiah 48:16)? The Gemara answers: That verse is referring to the days of the *kalla*. And what did Rabbi Ḥiyya do with this verse: "Your rounded thighs are like jewels: He interprets it not as a reference to Torah, but as referring to acts of charity and loving-kindness.

שְׁלַחֵי לָהּ דָּלָא תִּיתִי! אָמַר לִיה: זֶה רְאִיתִי, וְזֶה לֹא רְאִיתִי. קָרִי עָלֶיהָ: "בְּרָצוֹת ה' דְּרָכֶי אִישׁ גַּם אוֹיְבָיו יִשְׁלֹם אֹתוֹ". מֵאִי טַעְמָא עֲבַד מֶר הָכִי? אָמַר לִיה, דְּכָתִיב: "חֲכָמוֹת בַּחוּץ תִּרְוֶנָּה". אָמַר לִיה: אִם קָרִית — לֹא שְׁנִית, וְאִם שְׁנִית — לֹא שִׁילֶשֶׁת, וְאִם שִׁילֶשֶׁת — לֹא פִּירְשׁוּ לָהּ. "חֲכָמוֹת בַּחוּץ תִּרְוֶנָּה", כְּדָרְבָּא. דְּאָמַר רַבָּא: כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה מִבְּפָנִים, תוֹרָתוֹ מִקְרָצָת עָלָיו מִבְּחוּץ. וְהָא כְּתִיב: "לֹא מֵרֹאשׁ בִּסְתֵּר דְּבִרְתִּי!" הֲוֵא בְיוֹמֵי דְכָלָּה. וְרַבִּי חֲזִיא, הָאִי "חֲמוּקֵי יִרְכִי" מֵאִי עֲבִיד לָהּ? מוֹקֵי לָהּ בְּצִדְקָה וּבְגִמְלוֹת חֲסִידִים.

4. Tractate Berachot 28b

It was taught: On that day they dismissed the guard at the door and permission was granted to the students to enter. As Rabban Gamliel would proclaim and say: Any student whose inside are not like his outside, will not enter the study hall. On that day several benches were added to the study hall to accommodate the numerous students. Rabbi Yohanan said: Abba Yosef ben Dostai and the Rabbis disputed this matter. One said: Four hundred benches were added to the study hall. And one said: Seven hundred benches were added Rabban Gamliel was disheartened. He said: Perhaps, Heaven forbid, I prevented Israel from engaging in Torah study. They showed him in his dream white jugs filled with ashes. That is not the case, but that dream was shown to him to ease his mind. It was taught: *Eduyyot* was taught that day. And everywhere in the Mishna or in a *baraita* that they say: On that day, it is referring to that day. There was no *halakha* whose ruling was pending in the study hall that they did not explain.

תָּנָא אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם, סְלִקוּהוּ לְשׁוּמֵר הַפֶּתַח וְנִתְּנָה לָהֶם רְשׁוּת לְתַלְמִידִים לִיכְנֹס. שְׁהִיה רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל מְכַרִּיז וְאֹמֵר: כָּל תַּלְמִיד שֶׁאֵין תּוֹכוֹ כְּבָרוֹ, לֹא יִכְנֹס לְבֵית הַמִּדְרָשׁ. הֲוֵא יוֹמָא אֲתוּסְפוּ כַּמָּה סִפְסָלִי. אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: פְּלִיגִי בֵּה אַבָּא יוֹסֵף בֶּן דּוֹסְתָאי וְרַבְּנָן. חֵד אָמַר: אֲתוּסְפוּ אַרְבַּע מָאָה סִפְסָלִי. וְחֵד אָמַר: שִׁבְעַת מָאָה סִפְסָלִי. הָוֵה קָא חֲלָשָׁה דְּעֵתִיָּה דְרַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל, אָמַר: דְּלָמָּא חֹס וְשִׁלּוּם מִנְעַתִּי תוֹרָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. אֲחִזּוּ לִיה בְּחִלְמִיהָ חֲצָבִי חִינּוּרֵי דְמַלְיִין קִטְמָא. וְלֹא הָיָא, הֲוֵא לִיתוּבֵי דְעֵתִיָּה, הוּא דְאֲחִזּוּ לִיה. תָּנָא: עֲדֵיוֹת בּוֹ בְיוֹם נִשְׁנִית. וְכָל הֵיכָא דְאֲמַרִּין "בּוֹ בְיוֹם", הֲוֵא יוֹמָא הָוֵה. וְלֹא הָיְתָה הַלָּכָה שְׁהִיתָה תַּלְמִיד בְּבֵית הַמִּדְרָשׁ שֶׁלֹּא פִּירְשׁוּהָ.

5. Tractate Shabbat 31a

The Sages taught: There was an incident involving one gentile who came before Shammai. The gentile said to Shammai: How many Torahs do you have? He said to him: Two, the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. The gentile said to him: With regard to the Written Torah, I believe you, but with regard to the Oral Torah, I do not believe you. Convert me on condition that you will teach me only the Written Torah. Shammai scolded him and cast him out with reprimand. The same gentile came before Hillel, who converted him and began teaching him Torah. On the first day, he showed him the letters of the alphabet and said to him: *Alef, bet, gimmel, dalet*. The next day he reversed the order of the letters and told him that an *alef* is a *tav* and so on. The convert said to him: But yesterday you did not tell me that. Hillel said to him: You see that it is impossible to learn what is written without relying on an oral tradition. Didn't you rely on me? Therefore, you should also rely on me with regard to the matter of the Oral Torah, and accept the interpretations that it contains. There was another incident involving one gentile who came before Shammai and said to Shammai: Convert me on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot. Shammai pushed him away with the builder's cubit in his hand. This was a common measuring stick and Shammai was a builder by trade. The same gentile came before Hillel. He converted him and said to him: That which is hateful to you do not do to another; that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation. Go study. There was another incident involving one gentile who was passing behind the study hall and heard the voice of a teacher who was teaching Torah to his students and saying the verse: "And these are the garments which they shall make: A breastplate, and an *efod*, and a robe, and a tunic of checkered work, a mitre, and a girdle" (Exodus 28:4). The gentile said: These garments, for whom are they designated? The students said to him: For the High Priest. The gentile said to himself: I will go and convert so that they will install me as High Priest. He came before Shammai and said to him: Convert me on condition that you install me as High Priest. Shammai pushed him with the builder's cubit in his hand. He came before Hillel; he converted him. Hillel said to him, to the convert: Is it not the way of the world that only one who knows the protocols [*takhsisei*] of royalty is appointed king? Go and learn the royal protocols by engaging in Torah study. He went and read the Bible. When he reached the verse which says: "And the common man that draws near shall be put to death" (Numbers 1:51), the convert said to Hillel: With regard to whom is the verse speaking? Hillel said to him: Even with regard to David, king of Israel. The convert reasoned an *a fortiori* inference himself: If the Jewish people are called God's children, and due to the love that God loved them he called them:

תנו רבנן: מעשה בגוי אחד שָׁבָא לִפְנֵי שַׁמַּי. אָמַר לוֹ: כַּמָּה תּוֹרוֹת יֵשׁ לָכֶם? אָמַר לוֹ: שְׁתֵּים, תּוֹרָה שֶׁבְּכָתֹב וְתוֹרָה שֶׁבְּעַל פֶּה. אָמַר לוֹ: שֶׁבְּכָתֹב אֲנִי מֵאֲמִינָה, וְשֶׁבְּעַל פֶּה — אֲנִי מֵאֲמִינָה. גִּיּוֹרִנִי עַל מִנֵּת שֶׁתִּלְמִדִנִי תּוֹרָה שֶׁבְּכָתֹב. גָּעַר בּוֹ וְהוֹצִיאוֹ בְּנִזְיָפָה. בָּא לִפְנֵי הִלֵּל, גִּיּוֹרִיָּה. יוֹמָא קָמָא אָמַר לִיה: א"ב ג"ד. לְמַחֵר אָפִיךָ לִיה. אָמַר לִיה: וְהָא אֲתִמּוּל לָא אֲמַרְתָּ לִי הֵכִי! אָמַר לִיה: לָא עָלִי דִּידִי קָא סְמַכְתָּ? דַּעַל פֶּה נָמִי סְמוּךְ עָלִי. שׁוּב מֵעֲשֶׂה בְּגוֹי אֶחָד שֶׁבָּא לִפְנֵי שַׁמַּי. אָמַר לוֹ: גִּיּוֹרִנִי עַל מִנֵּת שֶׁתִּלְמִדִנִי כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָה כְּשֶׁאֲנִי עוֹמֵד עַל רֶגֶל אַחַת! דַּחְפוּ בְּאַמַּת הַבִּנְיָן שֶׁבִּידּוֹ. בָּא לִפְנֵי הִלֵּל, גִּיּוֹרִיָּה. אָמַר לוֹ: דַּעַלְךָ סָנִי לְחִבְרָךְ לָא תַעֲבִיד — זֶה הִיא כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָה, וְאִידֵךְ פִּירוּשָׁהּ הוּא, זֵיל גָּמֹר. שׁוּב מֵעֲשֶׂה בְּגוֹי אֶחָד שֶׁהִיָּה עוֹבֵר אַחֲרֵי בֵּית הַמִּדְרָשׁ, וְשִׁמְעַע קוֹל סוֹפֵר שֶׁהִיָּה אוֹמֵר: "וְאֵלֶּה הַבְּגָדִים אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּ חוֹשֵׁן וְאַפֻּד". אָמַר: הִלָּלוּ לִמִּי? אָמְרוּ לוֹ: לָכֵן גָּדוֹל. אָמַר אוֹתוֹ גּוֹי בְּעֶצְמוֹ: אֵלֶךְ וְאֶתְגַּיֵּר בְּשִׁבְלִי שְׂיִשְׁמַחֵנִי כֵּהֵן גָּדוֹל. בָּא לִפְנֵי שַׁמַּי, אָמַר לוֹ: גִּיּוֹרִנִי עַל מִנֵּת שֶׁתִּשְׁמַחֵנִי כֵּהֵן גָּדוֹל. דַּחְפוּ בְּאַמַּת הַבִּנְיָן שֶׁבִּידּוֹ. בָּא לִפְנֵי הִלֵּל, גִּיּוֹרִיָּה. אָמַר לוֹ: כָּלוּם מֵעַמִּידִין מֶלֶךְ אֵלָּא מִי שִׂידַע טַכְסִיסֵי מַלְכוּת, לָךְ לְמוֹד טַכְסִיסֵי מַלְכוּת. הֵלֶךְ וְקָרָא. כִּיּוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ "וְהִזָּר הִקְרַב יוֹמָת", אָמַר לִיה: מִקְרָא זֶה עַל מִי נֶאֱמַר? אָמַר לוֹ: אֲפִילוֹ עַל דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל. נִשָּׂא אוֹתוֹ גֵּר קַל וְחוֹמֶר בְּעֶצְמוֹ: וְנָמָה יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנִּקְרָאוּ בָּנִים לְמִקּוֹם וּמִתּוֹךְ אֲהַבָּה שֶׁאֲהַבְּם קָרָא לָהֶם: "בְּנֵי בְכוֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל", כְּתִיב עֲלֵיהֶם "וְהִזָּר הִקְרַב יוֹמָת" — גֵּר הִקְלָ שֶׁבָּא בְּמִקְלוֹ וּבְתַרְמִילוֹ, עַל

"Israel is My son, My firstborn" (Exodus 4:22), and nevertheless it is written about them: And the common man that draws near shall be put to death; a mere convert who came without merit, with nothing more than his staff and traveling bag, all the more so that this applies to him, as well. The convert came before Shammai and told: Am I at all worthy to be High Priest? Is it not written in the Torah: And the common man that draws near shall be put to death? He came before Hillel and said to him: Hillel the patient, may blessings rest upon your head as you brought me under the wings of the Divine Presence. The Gemara relates: Eventually, the three converts gathered together in one place, and they said: Shammai's impatience sought to drive us from the world; Hillel's patience brought us beneath the wings of the Divine Presence.

אחת כמה וכמה. בא לפני שמאי, אמר לו: כלום ראוי אני להיות כהן גדול? והלא כתיב בתורה: "והזר הקרוב יומת". בא לפני הלל, אמר לו: ענותן הלל, ינחני לך ברכות על ראשי, שקרבתי תחת כנפי השכינה. לימים נדדו וישלשנו למקום אחד, אמרו: קפדנותו של שמאי בקשה לטורדנו מן העולם, ענותנותו של הלל קרבתנו תחת כנפי השכינה.

6. Tractate Berachot 51b

Mishnah

One who ate and forgot and did not recite a blessing; Beit Shammai say: He returns to the place where he ate and recites the blessing.

Beit Hillel say: He recites the blessing at the place where he remembered.

Gemara

It was taught in a *baraita* that Beit Hillel said to Beit Shammai: According to your statement, one who ate atop a mountain, , and forgot and descended without reciting a blessing, must he return to the top to recite a blessing? Beit Shammai said to Beit Hillel: Why not? And according to your statement, one who forgot his purse atop a mountain, would he not ascend to retrieve it? If one ascends in deference to his own needs, all the more so in deference to Heaven.

מי שאכל, ושכח ולא בירך. בית שמאי אומרים: יחזור למקומו ויברך. ובית הלל אומרים: יברך במקום שנזכר.

תניא, אמרו להם בית הלל לבית שמאי: לדבריכם, מי שאכל בראש הבירה ושכח וירד ולא בירך, יחזור לראש הבירה ויברך? אמרו להן בית שמאי לבית הלל: לדבריכם מי ששכח ארנקי בראש הבירה לא יעלה ויטלנה? לכבוד עצמו הוא עולה, לכבוד שמים לא כל שכן?