



Work-Life Balance in Ancient Times: Why the Rabbis Left Their Homes to Study Torah

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BT Ketubot 62b	תלמוד בבלי מסכת כתובות דף סב עמוד ב
<p>I. R. Rehumi, who studied in [the school] of Rava at Machoza, used to return home on every Erev Yom Kippur. On one occasion he was highly absorbed by his learning. His wife was expecting him, saying 'He is coming soon, he is coming soon.' When he did not arrive she became depressed and tears began to flow from her eyes. He was [at that moment] sitting on a roof. The roof collapsed under him and he died.</p>	<p>I. כי הא דרב רחומי הוה שכיח קמיה דרבא במחוזא, הוה רגיל דהוה אתי לביתיה כל מעלי יומא דכיפורי. יומא חד משכתייה שמעתא, הוה מסכיא דביתהו השתא אתי השתא אתי, לא אתא, חלש דעתה אחית דמעטא מעינה, הוה יתיב באיגרא, אפחית איגרא מתותיה ונח נפשיה.</p>
<p>II. How often are scholars to have sex with their wives? — Rav Yehuda in the name of Shmuel replied: Every Friday night. “That brings forth its fruit in its season” [Psalms 1]: Rav Yehuda, and some say R. Huna, or some say, R. Nahman, stated: This is the one who performs his marital duty every Friday night.</p>	<p>II. עונה שלתלמידי חכמים אימת? אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: מע"ש לע"ש. +תהלים א' + אשר פריו יתן בעתו - אמר רב יהודה, ואיתימא רב הונא, ואיתימא רב נחמן: זה המשמש מטתו מע"ש לע"ש.</p>
<p>III. Yehuda the son of R. Hiyya and son-in-law of R. Yannai was always spending his time in the House of Rav, but every erev Shabbat, he came home. Whenever he arrived the people saw a pillar of light moving before him. One day, he was absorbed in his learning. Not seeing that sign, R. Yannai said to those [around him], 'Lower his bed, for had Yehuda been alive he would not have neglected the performance of his marital duties'. “Like an error that came from the ruler,” [Kohelet], and he died.</p>	<p>III. יהודה בריה דר' חייא חתניה דר' ינאי הוה, אזיל ויתיב בבי רב, וכל בי שמשו הוה אתי לביתהו, וכי הוה אתי הוה קא חזי קמיה עמודא דנורא. יומא חד משכתייה שמעתא, כיון דלא חזי ההוא סימנא, אמר להו רבי ינאי: כפו מטתו, שאילמלי יהודה קיים לא ביטל עונתו. הואי +קהלת י' + כשגגה שיוצא מלפני השליט ונח נפשיה.</p>
<p>IV. Rebi was busy with the arrangements for the marriage of his son into the family of R. Hiyya. When the ketubah was about to be written the bride died. 'Is there, God forbid', said Rabbi, 'any</p>	<p>IV. רבי איעסק ליה לבריה בי רבי חייא, כי מטא למיכתב כתובה נח נפשה דרביתא. אמר רבי: ה"ו פסולא איכא? יתיבו ועיינו במשפחות, רבי אתי</p>

<p>taint [in the proposed union]?' An inquiry was instituted into families [and it was discovered that] Rabbi descended from Shephathiah the son of Avital, while R. Hiyya descended from Shimei a brother of David.</p>	<p>משפטיה בןאביטל, ורבי חייא אתי משמע אחי דוד.</p>
<p>V. Later he was busy with preparations for the marriage of his son into the family of R. Yossi b. Zimra. It was agreed that he should spend twelve years in the Beit Midrash. The girl passed before him and he said to them, 'Let it be six years'. She passed before him [a second time] and he said, 'I would rather marry [her first] and then proceed [to the academy]'. He felt embarrassed before his father, but he said to him, 'My son, you have the mind of your creator; for it is written first, "You bring them in and plant them" and later it is written, "And let them make Me a sanctuary. that I may dwell among them." [After the marriage] he departed and spent twelve years at the academy. By the time he returned his wife had become barren. Rebi said, 'What shall we do? Should we order him to divorce her, it would be said: This poor soul waited in vain! Were he to marry another woman, it would be said: This his wife and this his whore!' He prayed for mercy for her, and she recovered.</p>	<p>V. אזיל איעסק ליה לבריה בי ר' יוסי בן זימרא, פסקו ליה תרתי סרי שנין למיזל בבי רב. אחלפיה קמיה, אמר להו: ניהוו שית שנין. אחלפיה קמיה, אמר להו: איכניס והדר איזיל. הוה קא מכסיף מאבוה א"ל: בני, דעת קונך יש בך, מעיקרא כתיב: +שמות ט"ו+ תביאמו ותטעמו, ולבסוף כתיב: +שמות כ"ה+ ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם. אזיל יתיב תרתי סרי שני בבי רב. עד דאתא איעקרא דביתהו. אמר רבי: היכי נעביד? נגרשה, יאמרו ענייה זו לשוא שימרה! נינסיב איתתא אחריתי, יאמרו זו אשתו וזה זונתו! בעי עלה רחמי ואיתסיאת.</p>
<p>VI. R. Chananya b. Chakhinai was about to go away to the Beit Midrash towards the end of R. Shimon b. Yochai's wedding. [R. Shimon] said to him, 'Wait for me until I am able to join you,' but [R. Chananya] did not wait for him. He went and spent 12 years in the Beit Midrash. When he returned the streets of the town were altered and he was unable to find the way to his home. He went and sat on the riverbank. He heard a girl being addressed: 'Daughter of Chakhinai, O, daughter of Chakhinai, fill up your pitcher and let us go!' He said, 'It is clear from this that the girl is ours', and he followed her. His wife was sitting and sifting flour. She lifted up her eyes and seeing him, her heart seized up and the spirit went out</p>	<p>VI. רבי חנניה בן חכיןאי הוה קאזיל לבי רב בשילהי הלוליה דר"ש בן יוחאי, א"ל: איעכב לי עד דאתי בהדך, לא איעכבא ליה. אזל יתיב תרי סרי שני בבי רב. עד דאתי אישתנו שבילי דמתא ולא ידע למיזל לביתה. אזל יתיב אגודא דנהרא, שמע לההיא רביתא דהוו קרו לה: בת חכיןאי, בת חכיןאי, מלי קולתך ותא ניזיל. אמר: ש"מ, האי רביתא דידין, אזל בתרה. הוה יתיבא דביתהו קא נהלה קמחא, דל עינה חזיתיה, סוי לבה פרח רוחה. אמר לפניו: רבש"ע, ענייה זו זה שכרה? בעא רחמי עלה וחייה.</p>

<p>of her. He said before [God], 'Master of the universe, this poor soul; is this her reward?' And so he prayed for mercy to be visited upon her and she came back to life.</p>	
<p>VII. R. Hama b. Bisa went and spent 12 years in the Beit Midrash. When he returned he said, 'I will not act as did bar Chakhinai. He entered the [local] house of study and sent word to his house. His son, R. Oshaia entered, sat down before him and addressed to him a question on [one of the] subjects of study. He became depressed and said, If I had been here, I also could have had such a child'. [When] he entered his house his son came in, and [the father] rose before him, because he thought that he wished to ask him some halakhic questions. His wife said to him, 'What father stands up before a son!' Rami b. Hama applied to him [the following pasuk:] "A threefold cord is not quickly broken," This is R. Oshaia, son of R. Chama, son of Bisa.</p>	<p>VII. רבי חמא בר ביסא אזיל יתיב תרי סרי שני בבי מדרשא. כי אתא, אמר: לא איעביד כדעביד בן חכינאי, עייל יתיב במדרשא, שלח לביתיה. אתא ר' אושעיא בריה יתיב קמיה, הוה קא משאיל ליה שמעתא, חזא דקא מתחדדי שמעתיה, חלש דעתיה, אמר: אי הואי הכא הוה לי זרע כי האי. על לביתיה, על בריה, קם קמיה. הוא סבר, למשאליה שמעתתא קא בעי, אמרה ליה דביתהו: מי איכא אבא דקאים מקמי ברא? קרי עליה רמי בר חמא: +קהלת ד'+ החוט המשולש לא במהרה ינתק - זה ר' אושעיא בנו שלרבי חמא בר ביסא.</p>