**Yadayim, Chapter Four, Mishnah Four**

**Introduction**

Deuteronomy 23:4 states that an Ammonite or Moabite "cannot enter the assembly of the Lord." The rabbis interpret this to mean that even if an Ammonite or Moabite convert, they still cannot marry a regular Israelite.

Our mishnah, whose discussion also occurred "on that day," deals with an Ammonite convert who comes before the sages asking if he is part of this prohibition. It sounds like the story was probably placed in this chapter because the previous mishnah also discussed Ammon and Moab.

**Mishnah Four**

1. On that day Judah, an Ammonite convert, came and stood before them in the house of study.
   1. He said to them: Do I have the right to enter into the assembly?
   2. Rabban Gamaliel said to him: you are forbidden.
   3. Rabbi Joshua said to him: you are permitted.
2. Rabban Gamaliel said to him: the verse says, "An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord: even to the tenth generation" (Deuteronomy 23:4).
3. R. Joshua said to him: But are the Ammonites and Moabites still in their own territory? Sanheriv, the king of Assyria, has long since come up and mingled all the nations, as it is said: "In that I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and have brought down as one mighty the inhabitants" (Isaiah 10:13).
4. Rabban Gamaliel said to him: the verse says, "But afterward I will bring back the captivity of the children of Ammon," (Jeremiah 49:6) they have already returned.
5. Rabbi Joshua said to him: [another] verse says, "I will return the captivity of my people Israel and Judah" (Amos 9:14). Yet they have not yet returned.
6. So they permitted him to enter the assembly.

***Explanation***

**Section one**: Judah the Ammonite, who seems to have already converted to Judaism, comes in front of Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Joshua asking to be allowed to marry an Israelite woman (not another Ammonite convert).

**Section two**: Rabban Gamaliel refuses to allow him to do so based on the verse from Deuteronomy. This would seem to be an open and shut case. Deuteronomy prohibits Ammonites from marrying into the assembly, so Judah should have to go marry someone else.

**Section three**: However, Rabbi Joshua responds by saying that those who identify today (i.e. in his day) as Ammonites are no longer the same Ammonites of yore. King Sanheriv, the same Assyrian king who destroyed the northern kingdom, came and mixed up all of the peoples, forcibly transferring them from one place to another, as he did with the 10 northern tribes. Therefore, the rules of the Torah that applied to the Ammonites back then, no longer apply now.

**Section four**: Rabban Gamaliel actually accepts Rabbi Joshua's argument but responds that there is another verse that shows that God brought back the Ammonites from their exile. According to Rabban Gamaliel the verse from Jeremiah does not refer to the "end of days" as do the verses regarding the Moabites (Jeremiah 48:47) and Elam (49:39). Rather, God has already restored the Ammonites, so the prohibition from Deuteronomy applies again.

**Section five**: The argument now turns on the meaning of a verse that says, "And I have returned" a certain people to their place. The prophet Amos uses the same language with regard to Israel and nevertheless Israel has not returned to its homeland, at least not all of Israel. So too, when it comes to Ammon, just because someone is currently an "Ammonite" does not mean that they are prohibited by the verse in Deuternomy.

**Section six**: The mishnah concludes with good news for our friend Judah. He is allowed into the community, meaning he can go find himself a good Yiddishe mamma! Sign the boy up for JDate!