# Mafsikim

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They taught us Arvé Pesahim in high school. However, I don’t think we got past the following:

*Rabban Shimon b Gamliel, R. Yehuda and R. Yose were reclining in Acre. The Sabbath arrived. Rabban Shimon b Gamliel said to R Yose: With your permission, let us interrupt [our meal] and respect the words of our colleague Yehuda? R. Yose responded: every day you admire my words more than to Yehuda’s, and now you admire Yehuda's words more than mine, “Will he rape the queen with me at home”* (Esther 7:8). – Pesahim 100a [1]

The showstopper was of course the quote from the book of Esther. No one could figure out how to make the connection between the three sages and Ahasuerus Haman and Esther. I have a feeling that at that time, the administration decided to replace the Gemara class with one on Hashkafa, but I can’t remember exactly.

The other difficulties didn’t bother us No one wondered why the sages were eating a meal late Friday afternoon after sunset, when you’d think they should have been in shul. No one wondered what R. Shimon b Gamliel had done the previous week (or the weeks before that) and why suddenly did he need to ask permission at this time.

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Dr. Daniel Goldschmidt answers the first question [1], by explaining that we’re dealing with a time when the evening prayer was considered to be voluntary [2]. No one went to shul Friday night.

His answer raises an interesting question: R. Gamliel, (R Shimon’s father) is the one who ruled (very emphatically) that the evening prayer is obligatory. You would think that his son, (R. Shimon) would agree and follow his father’s practice. Nevertheless, he apparently didn’t feel the need to agree with his father.

Then again, say they didn’t go to synagogue for the evening prayer, but what about reciting the Shema, and the four blessings that one says before and after reading the Shema. How could they be eating when they should have been reading the Shema. Dr. Goldschmidt hints [3] that the people recited *Shema* and its blessing during the course of the meal.

This idea (reciting *Shema* in the course of a meal), might explain and answer a famous *velt kashya*. The Mishna and *beraitoth*, in the beginning of Berakhot, gives signs so that you can know when to recite the evening Shema. These signs include: when the priests (*kohanim*), go in for their evening meal, when the people go in for their bread on Friday evenings, when the poor person goes in to eat his bread and salt.

The question is when did the kohanim (or the people on Friday evenings, or the poor man) read the shema. The answer might be that they probably paused and read the shema at some point during the meal.

There’s another question

Didn’t R Yehuda normally prepare for Shabbat by donning extra fine linen garments as the Gemara says in shabbas? It sounds like he dressed for shabbas and then waited around. (he didn’t say lecha dodi or boi kalla like the other amoraim, but it still lsounds like he waited and didn’t start eating until shabas and presumably kidush. dMaybe that was only when he was at h ome, but when he ate with the Nassi, he modified his gavev up his humrot)

Ry lived in usha, he probably wasn’t born there although he is called a ben usha ; he was probably born in the south like the other studends of RA.

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Kabbalat Shabbat originated with the Arizal, so we understand why they weren’t singing lech dodi, but doesn’t’ the The Gemara says about R. Yehuda that he would wrap himself put on his white clothes and go out to greet the shabbas. I don’t have an answer for that either.

Shabbat 25b

This was the practice of R. Judah b. Il'ai: On the eve of the Sabbath a basin filled with hot water was brought to him, and he washed his face, hands, and feet, and he wrapped himself and sat in fringed linen robes,[7](http://halakhah.com/shabbath/shabbath_25.html" \l "25b_7)  and was like an angel of the Lord of Hosts.

כך היהמנהגו שלר' יהוד' בר' אלעאי ערב שבתמביאין לו עריבה מליאה מים חמין ורוחץבהן פניו ידיו ורגליו ומתעטף ויושב בסדיניןהמצויינין ודומה למלאך יי צבאות

This story, which appears near the beginning of the chapter Arve Pesahim, is usually understood as follows: Rabban Shimon b Gamliel was accustomed to follow R Yose's ruling and didn't interrupt his meal at the start of the Sabbath. But this time, in the presence of R Yehuda he wished to follow R Yehuda's view. R Yose objected and R Shimon b Gamliel retracted. However, this interpretation leaves many questions unanswered:

Why does R Yose say, "usually you *cherish* my opinion". He should say: "usually you *follow* my opinion"

If Rabban Shimon b Gamliel did usually follow R. Yose's opinion, why did he now wish to follow R Yehuda?

What did R Yose say that made R Shimon b Gamliel change his mind?

How is R Yose's quote from the book of Esther relevant and how far does the parallel between the current meal and the story in Esther go?

Finally why is it important for us to know that the story occurred in Acco?

Some (later) sages considered R Yose a greater authority than R Yehuda. See for example, (Eruvin 46b), R. Yakob and R. Zriqa both said: the law follows ... R Yose (when he argues) with his colleagues...R Yaakov b Idi said in the name of R Yohanan... (in a dispute between) R Yehuda and R Yose the law is according to R Yose. See also (Gittin 67a) where Rabbi answers his son, "hush, you have never seen R Yose. Had you seen him, (you would have seen) that reason is with him." Nevertheless, when it comes to practice there are often other considerations.

Rabban Shimon b Gamliel was the Nasi (president) of the Sanhedrin. The seat of the Sanhedrin was in Usha. Usha was also the home of R Yehuda. In fact (according to Menahot 104a) R Yehuda was "moryana debe nesia", the halachic authority in the house of the Nasi (all their practices followed his decisions - Rashi). Thus, in the Nasi's home, and in R Yehuda's territory (Usha), one followed R Yehuda's opinions. Elsewhere one followed the generally agreed upon opinion which may not accord with R Yehuda.

The talmud mentions similar examples: (Shabbat 130a) In **R Eliezer's place** they chopped trees to make charcoal to make an iron (circumcision knife) on the Sabbath (for a Sabbath circumcision). In **R Yose Ha Galili's place** they ate fowl with dairy.

R Yose lived in Tzipori. In fact, (Sabbath 33) R Yose was exiled by the Romans to his home town of Tzipori (for 12 years?). If he ever did come to Usha he never objected there, since Usha was the place of R Yehuda.

But our story takes place in Acco (Acre). The Nasi asked R Yose if they could follow the opinion of R Yehuda, which was the opinion that the Nasi himself usually followed. (And R Yehuda was present.) In other words, R Shimon b Gamliel saw the meal in Acco as some sort of extension of a meal in the house of the Nasi. R Yose, however, refused. He explained his position this way: Rabban Shimon b Gamliel *cherishes* his words over the words of R Yehuda. The Nasi doesn't usually have the opportunity to *follow* his words but now that they are in Acco, there's no reason to follow R Yehuda. R Yose quotes from the book of Esther to support his argument.

Dr. Amos Hakham (p47) Daat Mikra esther summary of the end of chapter 7 writes:

We usually think that the drunk (foolish) king attributed an intent to haman that Haman didn’t have . . . But even if the king understood and knew that Haman was begging for his life from Queen Esther, he still had the right to punish Haman. In falling on the Queen’s couch, and holding on to her legs, Haman acted against the self-respect of the Queen.

Dr. Hakham continues, Odysseus faced a similar situation (in Book IV). He debated whether to clasp the knees of the princess as a suppliant, or whether to keep his distance and speak with courteous words . . . Odysseus finally decided to keep his distance from her.

We can argue along the lines of Dr. Hakham’s explanation (and maybe this is included in Dr. Hakham’s words), that Haman's mistake consisted of begging for his life from the queen instead of pleading from the king. The sense of the king's words is something like "If I'm not here, I understand that you'll go and petition the queen for your life, but since I am here you should petition me because I'm the real authority."

R Yosi's argument is similar. "In Usha where I'm not present, it’s correct that you follow R Yehuda’s view. However since you admit that you cherish my words over R. Yehuda’s, then everywhere else it is I that is the authority and you should follow my ruling.

R Yosi is in playing the role of Asheverus. Esther is R. Yehuda. R. Shimon b Gamliel is identified with Haman since he is putting more weight on R. Yehuda’s ruling rather than R. Yosi’s.

This was a good argument and R Shimon b Gamliel accepted it.