# Mafsikim

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We studied Arvé Pesahim in high school. However, we didn’t get very far; I don’t think we ever got past the following, which occurs right at the beginning of the chapter:

*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 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 for us was of course the quote from the book of Esther. No one could figure out how it was relevant or how to make the connection between the three sages and Ahasuerus Haman and Esther.

A bit of background: According to the Talmud, there is a difference of opinion about when to say Kiddush if a meal starts late Friday afternoon and continues into Shabbat. R. Yehuda’s opinion is to say Kiddush in the middle of the meal and R. Yose holds that you finish the meal first and then say Kiddush afterwards. [2]

The Gemarah is usually explained this way: Rabban Shimon b Gamliel normally followed the view of R. Yose and made Kiddush after the meal. Since R. Yehuda was now present, R Shimon b Gamliel asked R. Yose’s permission to follow the stricter practice of R. Yehuda. R. Yose emphatically refused because the students will then conclude that R. Yehuda’s opinion coincides with the Halakha.

The explanation is a bit difficult. Prior to this Shabbat, they always saw Rabban Shimon b Gamliel always follow the view of R. Yose. Next week they will see him revert back to the view o f R. Yose. This week, they might exceptionally follow Why assume that the students will make a mistake about the Halakha if they exceptionally follow R. Yehuda’s view one week? [3]

Then again, why were the sages and their students at home at the start of Shabbat. Why weren’t they in Shul like me and you.

Dr. Daniel Goldschmidt writes [4], with regard to the last question, that we’re dealing with a time when the evening prayer was voluntary tfilas arvis reshus. Therefore (at least in that place) no one attended synagogue on Friday nights.

Interestingly, Rabban Gamliel, (Rabban Shimon’s father) is the one who ruled very dramatically that the evening prayer is obligatory. [5] You would think that his son, (R. Shimon) would agree with his father and follow his father’s practice. Apparently, the son didn’t have to agree with his father.

There is another conclusion that one can draw from Dr. Goldschmidt’s presentation (and maybe it’s included in his words). During the meal, everyone must have paused to recite the Shema and the four accompanying blessings (to themselves).

If this was actually the practice, we can answer a well-known question asked on the first Mishna in Berakhot. The time that you recite the evening shema is the time that the kohanim go in to eat their evening meal. Question: when do the kohanim recite shema? They paused and recited shema and its blessings at some point during the meal.

A baraita quoted there (Berakoth 2b) also seems to describe a time when people didn’t go to shul Friday night but read shema during the course of the meal. The baraita reads:

From when may we begin to recite the *Shema'* in the evening? From the time that people come in to eat their meal on Sabbath evenings.

Rabbi Yehua lived in Usha.[6 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. See R Aaron Hyman]

רבי יהודה מוריינא דבי נשיאה  
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R.

Judah was the Master [in regard to all matters of religious law] in the house of the Nasi,3

There it’s referring to R. Yehuda Hanasi

Sc. Rabbi, in whose house the above incident about the mule occurred. Chronologically it is very difficult to accept

that R. Judah b. Ila'i held a position in the household of R. Judah the prince (or Rabbi). V. however Tosaf. s.v.

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.

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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.