



Challenging the Establishment: Strategies, Costs, and Consequences

R. Tali Adler – adler@hadar.org

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1. Avot D'Rebbe Natan 26	1. אבות דרבי נתן, כז
Rabbi Eliezer HaKappar would say: Do not be like the upper part of the doorway, which no person's hand can reach. And do not be like the upper beam, which [displays] engraved images, nor like the middle beam, which knocks into the legs. Rather, be like the threshold, which everyone steps on, and which will remain standing even when the rest of the building has been destroyed.	ר"א הקפר אומר אל תהא כמשקוף העליון שאין יד בני אדם יכולה ליגע בה. ולא כאסקופה העליונה שמבלעת פרצופות. ולא כאסקופה האמצעית שמנגפת הרגלים. אלא הוי כאסקופה תחתונה שהכל דשין בה וסוף כל הבנין נסתר והיא במקומה עומדת:

2. Nedarim 50b-51a	2. נדרים נא.
<p>On a day when Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi would laugh, calamity would befall the world, as Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi's sufferings would atone for the sins of the Jewish people. He therefore said to bar Kappara: Do not cause me to laugh, and I will give you forty se'á of wheat in return. Bar Kappara said to him: The Master will see that any se'á I wish I will take. He took a large palm basket, smeared it with tar, and overturned it upon his head, and went, and said to Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi: Let the Master measure for me the forty se'á of wheat that I am owed by you. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi laughed at this and said to him: Did I not warn you not to make me laugh? He said to him: What I am taking from you is simply the wheat that I am owed by you.</p>	<p>יִמָּא דְּמַחֲיָה בִּיהַ רַבִּי אֶתְיָא פּוֹרְעָנוּתָא לְעֵלְמָא אָמַר לִיהַ לְבַר קַפָּרָא לֹא תִבְדִּיחַ וְיִהְיֶבְנָא לָהּ אַרְבַּעִין גִּרְיָו חִטִּי אָמַר לִיהַ לִיחֲזִי מָר דְּכָל גִּרְיָוּא דְּבַעֲיָנָא שְׁקִילְנָא שְׁקֵל דִּיקוּלָא רַבָּה חֲפִיָּה כּוֹפָרָא וְסַחֲפִיהַ עַל רִישֶׁיהַ וְאַזַּל וְאָמַר לִיהַ לִיכִיל לִי מָר אַרְבַּעִין גִּרְיָו חִטִּי דְּרָשִׁינָא בָּהּ אַחוּרָה רַבִּי אָמַר לִיהַ לֹא אֶזְהַרְתֶּךָ דְּלֹא תִבְדִּחַן אָמַר לִיהַ חִטִּי דְּרָשִׁינָא</p>

3. Nedarim 50b-51a	3. נדרים נ:
<p>The Gemara relates: Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi made a party for Rabbi Shimon, his son. Someone wrote on the canopy: 24,000 myriad dinars were expended on this canopy, and nevertheless Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi did not invite bar Kappara to the wedding. The insulted bar Kappara said to Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi: If to those who transgress God's will their reward is such, all the more so those who perform His will are to be rewarded. Upon hearing his</p>	<p>רַבִּי עֲבַד לִיהַ הַלּוּלָא לְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בְּרַבִּי כְּתֹב עַל בֵּית גָּנְנָא עֶשְׂרִין וְאַרְבַּעַה אֲלָפִין רִיבּוּאִין דִּינָרִין נִפְקוּ עַל בֵּית גָּנְנָא דִּין וְלֹא אֶזְמַנְיָה לְבַר קַפָּרָא אָמַר לִיהַ אִם לְעוֹבְרֵי רְצוֹנוֹ כֵּךְ לְעוֹשֵׂי רְצוֹנוֹ עַל אַחַת כֶּמֶה</p>



reaction, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi invited him. Bar Kappara then said: If to those who perform His will their reward is such in this world, all the more so will they be rewarded in the World-to-Come.

Bar Kappara said to the daughter of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, whose husband's name was ben Elasa: Tomorrow I will drink wine at your father's dancing and your mother's singing [*kirekanei*].

Bar Kappara said to Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi at the wedding: What is the meaning of the word *to'eva*, abomination? Whatever it was that Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi said to bar Kappara in explanation, claiming that this is the meaning of *to'eva*, bar Kappara refuted it by proving otherwise. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi said to him: You explain it. Bar Kappara said to him: Let your wife come and pour me a goblet of wine. She came and poured him wine. Bar Kappara then said to Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi: Arise and dance for me, so that I will tell you the meaning of the word: This is what the Merciful One is saying in the Torah in the word *to'eva*: You are straying after it [*to'e ata bah*].

When they came to drink another cup, bar Kappara said to him: What is the meaning of the word *tevel*, perversion? abbi Yehudah HaNasi said various explanations to him, as he did the previous time, which were all refuted again by bar Kappara. Bar Kappara then said to him: Perform for me as you did before, so that I will tell you. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi did so. Bar Kappara then said to him that the phrase: "It is *tevel*" means: Does it have any spice [*tevalin yesh bah*]?

Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi said to bar Kappara: And what is the meaning of the word *zimma*, lewdness, as in the verse: "They are near kinswomen; it is lewdness [*zimma*]" (Leviticus 18:17), stated with regard to a man who engages in sexual intercourse with a woman and her daughter? He said to him: Perform for me as you did the previous time. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi did so, and bar Kappara said to him that *zimma* means: What is she [*zo ma hi*]?

וְכִמָּה אֲזַמְנִיה אֲמַר לְעוֹשֵׁי
 רְצוֹנוֹ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה כֹּף לְעוֹלָם
 הַבָּא עַל אַחַת כֶּמֶה
 וְכִמָּה... אֲמַר לֵה בַר קַפָּרָא
 לְבִרְתִּיה דְּרַבִּי לְמַחֵר שְׁתִּינָא
 חֲמָרָא בְּרִיקוּדָא דְאָבוּךָ
 וּבְקִירְקִנִי דְאִמְךָ בְּן אֱלֻעָשָׁה
 חֲתֻנִּיה דְּרַבִּי הוּא וְעִשִׂיר גְּדוּל
 הוּא אֲזַמְנִיה לְבִי הִילּוּלָא דְרַבִּי
 שְׁמַעוֹן בְּרַבִּי אֲמַר לֵיה בַר
 קַפָּרָא לְרַבִּי מֵאִי תוֹעֵבָה כָּל
 דְאִמְר לֵיה רַבִּי דְהֵכִין הוּא
 תוֹעֵבָה פְּרֻכָּה בַר קַפָּרָא אֲמַר
 לֵיה פְּרֻשִׁיה אֶתְּ אֲמַר לֵיה תִּיתִי
 דְּבִיתְכִי תִירְמִי לִי נִטְלָא אֶתְּ
 רְמִיָּא לֵיה אֲמַר לֵיה לְרַבִּי קוּם
 רְקוּד לִי דְאִמְר לָךְ הֵכִי אֲמַר
 רַחֲמֵנָא תוֹעֵבָה תוֹעָה אֶתְּה בָּה
 לְכָסָא אַחֲרִינָא אֲמַר לֵיה מֵאִי
 תִּבְל אֲמַר לֵיה כִּי עֲנִינָא
 קַדְמָאָה אֲמַר לֵיה עִיבִיד לִי
 דְאִמְר לָךְ עֲבַד אֲמַר לֵיה תִּבְל
 הוּא תִּבְלִין יֵשׁ בָּהּ מִי שְׁנִיָּא
 הֵדָא בִּיאָה מִן כּוֹלְהוֹן בִּיאוֹת
 אֲמַר לֵיה וּמֵאִי זִימָה אֲמַר לֵיה
 עִיבִיד כִּי עֲנִינָא קַדְמָאָה עֲבַד
 וְאֲמַר לֵיה זֹו מָה הִיא לֹא יָכִיל
 בְּן אֱלֻעָשָׁה לְמִסְבֵּל קָם וּנְפִק
 הוּא וְאִינְתִּיתִיה מִתְּמָן מֵאִי בְּן
 אֱלֻעָשָׁה דְתִנָּא לֹא לְחֻנָּם פִּיזֵר
 בְּן אֱלֻעָשָׁה אֶת מַעוֹתָיו אֱלֹא
 לְהִרְאוֹת בָּהֶן וְתַסְפּוֹרֶת שֶׁל כֹּהֵן
 גָּדוֹל דְּכָתִיב כְּסוּם יִכְסְמוּ אֶת
 רִאשֵׁיהֶם תִּנָּא כְּעִין לוֹלִינִית
 מֵאִי לוֹלִינִית אֲמַר רַב יְהוּדָה



<p>This man would be confused about how to refer to his wives; his wife is also his other wife's mother or daughter. Ben Elasa could not tolerate Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi's humiliation, so he and his wife arose and left the wedding.</p> <p>In what other context is ben Elasa mentioned? He is mentioned in a <i>baraita</i>, as it is taught: Ben Elasa did not dispense his money on his special haircut for naught. Rather, he spent it to show others what the haircut of a High Priest looked like.</p>	<p>תַּסְפִּירָתָא יַחֲדָתָא הֵיכִי דָמִי אָמַר רַבָּא רַאשׁוֹ שֶׁל זֶה בָּצַד עִיקְרוֹ שֶׁל זֶה וְהֵינּוּ תַסְפּוֹרֶת שֶׁל כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל</p>
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<p>4. Jerusalem Talmud Moed Katan 3:1</p>	<p>4. תלמוד ירושלמי מועד קטן ג'</p>
<p>...Rebbi honored Ben Elasa. Bar Qappara said to him, everybody is asking Rebbi, only you are not asking Rebbi. He asked him, what to ask? He said to him, ask: "From Heaven she looks down, she is busy in her house; boys see her and hide, <i>old men rise and stand</i>. The one who flees says, ho, ho, and the one caught is caught in his sin." Rebbi turned around and saw him laughing. Rebbi said, I do not know you, old man. He understood that he would not be ordained during his lifetime.</p>	<p>רַבִּי הָוָה מוֹקֵר לְבַר אֶלְעָשָׂה. אָמַר לִיה בַּר קַפָּרָא. כָּל-עַמָּא שְׁאֵלִין לְרַבִּי וְאֵת לִית אֶת שְׁאֵל לִיה. אָמַר לִיה. מַה נִּישְׁאֹל. אָמַר לִיה. שְׁאֹל. מִשְׁמִים נִשְׁקָפָה. הוֹמִיָּה בִּירְכָתִי בֵּיתָה. מִפְּחָדָת כָּל-בְּעָלֵי כְנָפִים. רְאוּהָ נְעָרִים וְנַחְבָּאוּ. אִישִׁישִׁים קָמוּ עֲמָדוּ: הֵנִס יֹאמַר הוּא. וְהַנִּלְכַּד נִלְכַּד בְּעוֹנוֹ. הִפָּךְ רַבִּי וְחִמְתִּיה גָּחִיךְ. אָמַר רַבִּי. אֵינִי מִכִּירָךְ זָקֵן. וַיֵּדַע דְּלִית הוּא מִתְמַנְיָא בְּיוֹמוֹ.</p>



5. Shabbat 88b	5. שבת פ"ח
<p>And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: When Moses ascended on High to receive the Torah, the ministering angels said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, what is one born of a woman doing here among us? The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: He came to receive the Torah. The angels said before Him: The Torah is a hidden treasure that was concealed by you 974 generations before the creation of the world, and you seek to give it to flesh and blood? As it is stated: "The word which He commanded to a thousand generations" (Psalms 105:8). Since the Torah, the word of God, was given to the twenty-sixth generation after Adam, the first man, the remaining 974 generations must have preceded the creation of the world. "What is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You think of him?" (Psalms 8:5). Rather, "God our Lord, how glorious is Your name in all the earth that Your majesty is placed above the heavens" (Psalms 8:2). The rightful place of God's majesty, the Torah, is in the heavens.</p> <p>The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: Provide them with an answer as to why the Torah should be given to the people.</p> <p>Moses said before Him: Master of the Universe, I am afraid lest they burn me with the breath of their mouths. God said to him: Grasp My throne of glory for strength and protection, and provide them with an answer. And from where is this derived? As it is stated: "He causes him to grasp the front of the throne, and spreads His cloud over it" (Job 26:9), and Rabbi Nahum said: This verse teaches that God spread the radiance of His presence and His cloud over Moses.</p> <p>Moses said before Him: Master of the Universe, the Torah that You are giving me, what is written in it?</p>	<p>ואמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: בשעה שעלה משה למרום אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: רבוננו של עולם, מה לילוד אשה בינינו? אמר להן: לקבל תורה בא. אמרו לפניו: חמדה גנוזה שגנוזה לה תשע מאות ושבעים וארבעה דורות קודם שנברא העולם, אתה מבקש ליתנה לבשר ודם? "מה אנוש כי תזכרנו וכן אדם כי תפקדנו?" "ה' אדנינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ אשר תנה הודך על השמים!" אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה: החזיר להן תשובה. אמר לפניו: רבוננו של עולם, מתיירא אני שמא ישפוני בהכל שבפיהם. אמר לו: אחז בכסא כבודי וחזור להן תשובה. שנאמר: "מאחז פני כסא פרשז עליו עננו", ואמר רבי נחום: מלמד שפירש שדי מדיו שכינתו ועננו עליו. אמר לפניו: רבוננו של עולם, תורה שאתה נותן לי מה כתיב</p>



<p>God said to him: “I am the Lord your God Who brought you out of Egypt from the house of bondage” (Exodus 20:2).</p> <p>Moses said to the angels: Did you descend to Egypt? Were you enslaved to Pharaoh? Why should the Torah be yours?</p> <p>Again Moses asked: What else is written in it? God said to him: “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3).</p> <p>Moses said to the angels: Do you dwell among the nations who worship idols that you require this special warning?</p> <p>Again Moses asked: What else is written in it?</p> <p>The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: “Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it” (Exodus 20:8).</p> <p>Moses asked the angels: Do you perform labor that you require rest from it?</p> <p>Again Moses asked: What else is written in it?</p> <p>“Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain” (Exodus 20:7), meaning that it is prohibited to swear falsely.</p> <p>Moses asked the angels: Do you conduct business with one another that may lead you to swear falsely?</p> <p>Again Moses asked: What else is written in it?</p> <p>The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12).</p> <p>Moses asked the angels: Do you have a father or a mother that would render the commandment to honor them relevant to you?</p>	<p>בָּהֶ? “אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.” אָמַר לָהֶן: לְמִצְרַיִם יֵרֶדְתֶּם? לְפָרְעָה הִשְׁתַּעַבְדֶּתֶם? תּוֹרָה לָמָּה תִּהְיֶה לָכֶם! שׁוּב: מָה כְּתִיב בָּהֶ? “לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים.” בֵּין הַגּוֹיִם אַתֶּם שְׂרָוִיִן, שְׁעוּבֵדִין עֲבוּדָה זָרָה? שׁוּב: מָה כְּתִיב בָּהֶ? “זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ” — כָּלוּם אַתֶּם עוֹשִׂים מְלָאכָה, שְׂאֵתֶם צָרִיכִין שְׁבוּת? שׁוּב: מָה כְּתִיב בָּהֶ? “לֹא תִשָּׂא” — מִשָּׂא וּמִתֵּן יֵשׁ בֵּינֵיכֶם? שׁוּב: מָה כְּתִיב בָּהֶ? “כִּבֹּד אֶת אָבִיךָ וְאֶת אִמְךָ” — אָב וָאִם יֵשׁ לָכֶם? שׁוּב: מָה כְּתִיב בָּהֶ? “לֹא תִרְצַח,” “לֹא תִנָּאֵף,” “לֹא תִגְנֹב.” קִנְיָה יֵשׁ בֵּינֵיכֶם? יֵצֵר הָרָע יֵשׁ בֵּינֵיכֶם? מִיָּד הוֹדוּ לוֹ לְהַקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוא, שְׂנֵאָמַר: “ה' אֱדֹנֵינוּ מָה אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ וְגו'”, וְאֵילוּ “תִּנְה הוֹדֵךְ עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם” לֹא כְּתִיב. מִיָּד כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד נִעְשָׂה לוֹ אוֹהֵב וּמִסֵּר לוֹ דָּבָר, שְׂנֵאָמַר: “עֲלִית לְמִרוֹם שְׁבִית שְׁבִי לְקַחַת מִתְּנוֹת בָּאָדָם” — בְּשִׁכָר שֶׁקִּרְאוּ “אָדָם”, לְקַחַת מִתְּנוֹת. אֵף מִלֵּאךְ</p>
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<p>Again Moses asked: What else is written in it? God said to him: “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal” (Exodus 20:13)</p> <p>Moses asked the angels: Is there jealousy among you, or is there an evil inclination within you that would render these commandments relevant?</p> <p>Immediately they agreed with the Holy One, Blessed be He, that He made the right decision to give the Torah to the people, and as it is stated: “God our Lord, how glorious is Your name in all the earth” (Psalms 8:10), while “that Your majesty is placed above the heavens” is not written because the angels agreed with God that it is appropriate to give the Torah to the people on earth.</p>	<p>הַמְּוֹת מָסַר לוֹ דְּבָר, שְׁנֵאמַר: “וַיִּתֵּן אֶת הַקְּטָרֶת וַיִּכְפֹּר עַל הָעָם,” וְאֹמֵר: “וַיַּעֲמֵד בֵּין הַיָּמִתִּים וּבֵין הַחַיִּים וְגו’” – אֵי לֹא דֹאמַר לִיה מִי הוּא יָדַע?</p>
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