

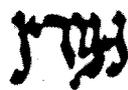
Talmud Ha-Igud

edited by
Shamma Friedman

BT *BERAKHOT*
CHAPTER VI

With Comprehensive Commentary

by
Moshe Benovitz



The Society for the Interpretation of the Talmud
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Shoah Memorial

טוב איש חונן ומלֵוה יבֵלֵל דְבָרָיו בְּמִשְׁפָּט
כי לעולם לא ימוט לזכר עולם יהיה צדיק

This volume commemorates Rabbi Dr. Siegfried Behrens (1876–1942) who was born in Rethem, Germany in 1876. In the beginning of the 20th century, Behrens was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau and in 1901 received his PhD from the University of Breslau. The topic of his dissertation was: "A Critical Edition of Maimonides Commentary on *Mishna* Tractate *Megilla* with Ibn Fawwal's Translation.

Beginning in 1908, Behrens served as rabbi in Göttingen, and in 1922 was appointed as the district rabbi of Fürth. During these years, he helped found the Fürth Historical Society, still active today, and published a series of monographs on the concept of Jewish martyrdom in various German language journals. Behrens also published a series of articles in the German liberal movement's periodical pertaining to the movement's relationship to Orthodoxy (1921), Zionism (1922) and the preservation of Judaism (1928).

In March of 1942, Rabbi Dr. Behrens was sent, together with his wife Ida and his daughter Margot, to the Izbica ghetto, where they were murdered, most likely during November of that year.

יהי זכרו ברוך



This volume is lovingly dedicated to Leah and Harry Cabakoff, may they rest in peace, who lived quiet lives of simplicity, humility and dignity. Though their lives were marked by struggle and hard work, they managed to reserve significant portions for what they held most dear, Torah values and Talmudic scholarship.

These volumes, in which scholars immerse themselves in an ambitious project to apply the disciplines of academic scholarship to the Talmud Bavli, extend and perhaps deepen Talmudic inquiry begun more than 1,000 years ago. Yet, their work springs from the same source that informed the lives of the Cabakoffs: the love of learning.

Thus, it is fitting to dedicate such volumes to the Cabakoffs, born in Russia, who married and started a family there but were forced to flee its persecutions and pogroms. Forced to uproot their lives and seek refuge elsewhere, they arrived on American shores just after the turn of the 20th Century to settle in Columbus, Ohio. There they would remain and there raise their children. There they would join Agudas Achim Synagogue, the city's Orthodox *shul*, and remain active for a lifetime.

Herschel Cabakoff rarely let a day go by without immersing himself in Talmud study. Talmudic study was at the core of his life and his value system. Leah Cabakoff also liked to study about Torah, about Judaism and its practice and pass the lessons she learned to her children.

One of them, daughter Bella, married Harry Wexner, himself a Russian émigré. Late in life they embarked on a business venture, starting a small women's clothing store in Columbus, a family business that would eventually include their children. After years of devotion to their business, enormous perseverance and unrelenting hard work, they achieved late in life their dream of creating one of the major retail conglomerates in the world.

This success made possible the funding to perpetuate the legacies of scholarship, historical inquiry and research that meant so much to both of them and which they hoped to inspire in future generations. In order to carry forth their legacies, a foundation was established to continue the work they had begun in their lifetimes, the Legacy Heritage Fund of New York and Jerusalem. The generous support of Legacy Heritage Fund made this volume possible.

Eventually, these volumes exploring the teachings of ancient scholarship through the lens of modern scholarship, will do more than promote learning. In marrying the ancient and medieval to the modern they will reach farther than their forefathers ever dreamed possible – by arraying their scholarship on the Internet and giving access to it to all the world.

In this way, the old will inspire the young as the old inspires the new, breathing life into the words that drove the Cabakoffs, the Wexners and their forebearers and which drives Legacy Heritage Fund to carry forth their yearnings and aspirations: "The light of the past will illuminate the future."

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Talmud Ha-Igud series

The following books have been published

Berakhot	Chapter One, with commentary by Moshe Benovitz, 2006
Shabbat	Chapter Seven, with commentary by Steven G. Wald, 2007
Eruvin	Chapter Ten, with commentary by Aviad A. Stollman, 2008
Pesahim	Chapter Four, with commentary by Aaron Amit, 2009
Sanhedrin	Chapter Five, with commentary by Netanel Ba'adani, 2012
Sukkah	Chapter Four & Five, with commentary by Moshe Benovitz, 2013

Editor's Preface

This volume is the eighth publication by the Society for the Interpretation of the Talmud. It was preceded by *Five Sugyot*, Jerusalem 2002, and six volumes with commentary on seven chapters of the Babylonian Talmud, as detailed on the preceding page.

Five Sugyot presented samples of the work of five scholars by presenting commentary on one sugya from each of five chapters of the Talmud researched and explicated by these authors, in anticipation of the publication of these works in their entirety by the Society. Three of the above-mentioned volumes represent the fulfillment by those authors of this aim.

It is hoped that this first series will soon be further augmented to include a total of twenty volumes, representing the first phase of the Society's work, namely, original commentary on chapters of the Babylonian Talmud devoted to the methodological goals formulated in the introduction to *Five Sugyot*. Scheduled to appear among these volumes are *Gittin IX* by Shamma Friedman, *Makkot III* by Tamas Turan, *Gittin IV* by Yair Furstenburg, *Sukka III* by Avraham Schiff, *Gittin V* by David Zafrani. *Berakhot VI* by Moshe Benovitz appears in this volume.

At the same time we intend to broaden our horizons to publication of commentary on entire tractates.

The Society for the Interpretation of the Talmud was founded in 1993 with the goal of composing and publishing Talmudic commentary fulfilling the demands of an historical-philological discipline and at the same time authentically integrated with traditional Talmud studies. This determination was a direct outgrowth of earlier work done by the founders of the Society, and their fervent devotion to an intellectual approach which combines academic textual and literary disciplines with their desire to elucidate halakhic institutions and rabbinic thought according to their simple meaning and historical development. Applying this method to each sugya consecutively, we hope to produce the first attempt at a contemporary edition of the Talmud with commentary meeting scholarly standards and addressing the intellectual climate in which we function.

The participants have joined together in this extensive project after several of them had already composed and published commentary on chapters of the Talmud.¹ The first phase of the Society's work included determining procedures and guidelines, and composing the first group of commentaries. Now, as we continue to publish these first fruits, we wish to express our satisfaction and gratitude for what has been achieved, and redouble our dedication to continuing the task.

The Society's unique format includes separating the chapter into discrete *sugyot* which are numbered and named, and assigning distinguishable type-faces to each of the major formal building blocks of the sugya: dicta of Tannaim, Amoraim, and the anonymous editorial voice.

The Society's website www.TalmudHa-Igud.org.il presents updates on progress, information on how to acquire volumes, together with synopses of variant readings, Editor's comments, and background material associated with present and future volumes.

1 S. Friedman, *Talmud Arukh, BT Bava Metzi'a VI: Critical Edition with Comprehensive Commentary*, Commentary Volume, Jerusalem, 1990; Text Volume and Introduction, 1996. S.G. Wald, *BT Pesahim III, Critical Edition with Comprehensive Commentary*, New York and Jerusalem 2000. M. Benovitz, *BT Shevuot III, Critical Edition with Comprehensive Commentary*, New York and Jerusalem 2003.

Our indebtedness to learned scholars of past generations is expressed in our volumes through a page in memory of scholars who perished in the holocaust. May their memory be for a blessing.

Publication of this volume has been made possible through the generous assistance of Legacy Heritage Fund (Keren Morasha) of New York and Jerusalem. By lending its crucial support, and especially through its expression of confidence in our work, the Legacy Heritage Fund has given immeasurable encouragement in our striving to fulfill this historic mission.

The creation of the Igud, and the initial realization of its mission would also not have become a reality without the dedicated friendship and support extended by individuals and institutions, whose participation and partnership in this great vision we hold dear. Full expression of our indebtedness and gratitude are beyond what I can articulate here. None the less, the publication of this significant volume is a most pleasant opportunity to express a small part of our appreciation to the following:

Ethan and Tamar Benovitz

David and Susan Goldsmith

Alex and Vera ל"י Hornstein

The Jeselsohn family: "In memory of Shimon (Sigmund) and Lina Jeselsohn י"ע who lovingly trained us in the heritage of German Jewry, and instilled in us the spiritual values of 'Torah and Derech Eretz'".

Keren Keshet, and its Director, Arthur W. Fried, Esq.

Hartley Koschitzky

Jonathan Koschitzky

Rabbi Benjamin W. and Marion Roth

Samuel ל"י and Evelyn Schechter

David and Ina Tropper

Anonymous

We are grateful to Mordechai Cohen for the production of this volume, and to Dan Halevi for copy-editing.

May they all enjoy the fruits of our combined labors.

S.F.

Jerusalem

Shevat 5775 / February 2015

English Abstract

Sugya 1: "Hillulim"

This *sugya* opens with a tannaitic *midrash*, according to which the obligation to recite a blessing before and after eating is derived from the word *hillulim*, "praises", in Leviticus 19:24. Although this verse concerns the fruits of trees during the fourth year after they are planted, which are deemed "sacred for praises to the Lord", Rabbi Akiva is said to have derived from this verse that no one may taste any food without first praising God. The *sugya* then proceeds with a lengthy dialectic challenging this derivation of the obligation to recite the blessing before food from Scripture. The editor of the *sugya* shows that the word *hillulim* is used to derive other *halakhot*, which would preclude the derivation of an obligation to recite blessings from this same word; moreover, the context refers according to some *tannaim* to grapes of the fourth year only, and according to others to other fruit as well, but even with various exegetical enhancements the context could hardly justify an obligation to recite a blessing before foodstuffs such as meat, eggs and fish. The *sugya* therefore concludes that the obligation to recite a blessing before eating is not derived from Leviticus 19:24 or any other biblical verse, but rather is grounded in the notion that it is forbidden to derive benefit from God's earth without first acknowledging God.

The views of *tannaim* and *amoraim* cited in the *sugya* are largely unknown from other contexts, and it can be shown that they are in effect creations of the author of our *sugya*, who built upon parallel material and greatly expanded its meaning and significance. For example, although some *tannaim* refer to the law of the fruits of the fourth year as *kerem reva'i*, "the four-year-old vineyard", rather than *neta' reva'i*, "the four-year-old planting", there is no real tannaitic view limiting the law of the fruits of the fourth year to grapes, though this is a central motif in the *sugya*. The author of our *sugya* was troubled by the notion expressed by Rabbi Akiva in the *midrash*, since it challenged the conventional wisdom, based on Mishnah Berakhot 3:7, that the blessings before food have the status of rabbinic legislation rather than scriptural law. In a beautifully designed *sugya* he divides the sages into three camps, based on their supposed views regarding various rulings concerning the fruits of the fourth year (largely his own creations), and proceeds to show how none of these views are compatible with the notion that Leviticus 19:24 is the source of the obligation to recite a blessing before food – both because most sages would have need of the word *hillulim* in that verse to derive other rulings, and because all sages would limit the foodstuffs referred to in that verse to grapes, or grapes and related produce, or produce in general. He thus justifies his conclusion that blessings before food are not mandated by Scripture, but are rather grounded in the rabbinic notion that deriving benefit from God's earth without first acknowledging him is unethical.

Sugya 2: "This World"

The previous *sugya* concluded that blessings before food were ordained by the rabbis in accordance with the notion that the earth belongs to the Lord, and therefore those deriving benefit from the earth must first acknowledge him. This *sugya* opens with a *baraita* that teaches that very lesson: deriving benefit from the earth without acknowledging God is tantamount to sacrilege: deriving illicit benefit from Temple

property. The *baraita* concludes with a curious statement according to which omission of a blessing can be corrected by approaching a sage. Rava reinterprets this to mean that one should study the correct blessings over food with a sage in order to avoid sacrilege. Amoraic statements follow deriving the notion of the divine ownership of the earth from Scripture; the last of these contrasts Hosea 2:11, according to which the grain of the earth belongs to God, with Deuteronomy 11:14, a verse which promises those who obey God: “you will gather in *your* grain”; the former is said to refer to produce before the blessing on it is recited and the latter to food over which a blessing has been pronounced, releasing it to human ownership. This is followed by a *baraita* contrasting the above-cited verse, Deuteronomy 11:14, which assumes that righteous people gather in their grain with Joshua 1:8, according to which the righteous are urged to study Torah day and night. Two approaches are cited and discussed by *amoraim*: that of Rabbi Yishmael, who suggests that there is time for both field work and Torah study, and that of Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai, who believes that when Israel truly obeys God’s will, Torah study is a full-time endeavor and righteous Jews are supported by others, namely Gentiles. It is only when Israel does not truly obey God’s will that Israelites are said to gather in their crops. The *sugya* ends with amoraic statements supporting a pragmatic approach to the question of Torah study and livelihood.

Among the issues discussed in the analysis is the suggestion at the beginning of the *sugya* that a sage could retroactively dissolve the sin of omitting a blessing, just as he can dissolve a vow. It is shown that this suggestion is rooted in an understanding of the dissolution of vows that is also found in the works of the first century Jewish Alexandrian sage Philo, according to which Temple treasurers and their agents, local community leaders, were in fact in a position to release Temple property for human consumption when they deemed it unnecessary for Temple use. Taking seriously the notion of divine ownership of all property, one could conceivably have applied this notion to the retroactive dispensation with the necessity of reciting a blessing before consuming God’s food. However, this notion is rejected by the Talmud; the notion of divine ownership of all property as a rationale for blessing is considered metaphorical, not actual, and the sage’s only role would be to teach one the proper blessings before a sin of omission is incurred.

Another issue discussed at length in the commentary is the dispute between Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai, which is contrasted with a similar dispute in Bavli Menahot 99b, in which the positions of the two sages seem to be reversed: Rabbi Yishmael is said to have urged his nephew to study full time, and Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai is said to have limited the obligation to study Torah to mere recitation of the *Shema* twice daily. It is shown that this reversal is the work of *amoraim*, who attempted to forge a compromise position according to which a cadre of scholars, devoted to full-time study, is to be supported by the common Jews, who work for a living and fulfill their obligation to study by merely reciting the *Shema* twice daily. This position was ascribed to both Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Simeon: Rabbi Yishmael, the vanguard of the notion that Torah study should be combined with a profession, is said to have told his own nephew to study Torah full-time, while Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai, the vanguard of the notion that all of Israel should rely on the miraculous support of others and study full-time, is said to have allowed most Jews to fulfill their obligation to study by reciting the *Shema*.

Sugya 3: “Wine”

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:1, the blessing over wine is unique and distinct from the blessing over grapes and other fruit. This *sugya* asks why wine is different from olive oil in this regard, since both are regarded as an improvement over the fruit from which they are derived in its natural state. Mar Zutra is said to have suggested either that only wine has nutritional value or that only wine is filling; the Talmud’s conclusion is that oil also has nutritional value, and bread, too, is filling, but wine is unique in that it is both filling and gladdening of the heart. After having established that wine has all the qualities of bread and more, the Talmud asks why only bread, and not wine, is followed by the full grace after meals; the Talmud concludes that although wine is filling, it is not generally considered the staple of the meal. In a conversation with Rav Nahman bar Isaac, Rava concludes that even if an individual were to build a meal around wine, rather than bread, until Elijah the Prophet comes and rules on the issue, blessings must be determined by general rather than individual practice.

Analysis indicates that this *sugya* post-dates the next two *sugyot*, which were available to the editor of our *sugya* in their final form and current position in the chapter. Our editor was disturbed by an apparent contradiction between those two *sugyot*: *sugya* 4 concludes that olive oil is unhealthy, and rarely drunk at all in a manner that necessitates a blessing, while according to *sugya* 5 olive oil is the optimal state of the olive, and hence retains the blessing of the olive, *ha’etz*, as opposed to flour, which is merely an interim state on the way from wheat to bread, and is therefore demoted in its blessing from *ha’adamah* to the less distinctive *shehakol*. How can olive oil be considered at one and the same time unhealthy, and on the other hand the optimal state of the olive? Moreover, why do wine and bread, the optimal states of grapes and wheat respectively, merit a more distinctive blessing than the produce from which they are derived, while olive oil merely *retains* the blessing of the olive? These considerations led our editor to the following conclusions: the optimal state of a particular item of produce and the degree of enjoyment derived from its consumption are two different things. Olive oil is unhealthy when drunk in a manner necessitating a blessing, yet financially it is the optimal state of the olive because of other uses; hence it is not demoted in its blessing from *ha’etz* to the less distinctive *shehakol*. On the other hand, it is also not promoted to the level of wine and bread, which merit unique blessings, because unique blessings are bestowed only upon produce in its optimal state which also provides the highest degree of enjoyment – namely, that it is “filling”, in the words of Mar Zutra. It is further shown that in Mar Zutra’s Aramaic the verbs *zayin* and *sa’id* both meant “filling”; by the time the *sugya* was edited, however, *zayin* came to mean nutritious rather than filling, a change attested in a number of Talmudic passages, hence Mar Zutra’s statement was emended.

Analysis further indicates that the *sugya* post-dates Mar Zutra, a late *amora*; the passage at the end recording a conversation between Rav Nahman bar Isaac and Rava originally formed a part of *sugya* 33 below. The editor of our *sugya* transferred the material to the end of our *sugya*, bestowing new meaning on the term *qava’ se’udah al hayayin*. This term originally referred to drinking wine before and after the bread that is usually considered the staple of the meal, but in its new context it refers to building a meal around wine alone, without any bread.

Sugya 4: “Olive Oil”

This *sugya* opens with a statement variously attributed to the *amoraim* Samuel and Rabbi Yohanan, cited in the previous *sugya* as well, according to which the blessing on olive oil is *ha’etz*. The author of the *sugya* is puzzled by the circumstances under which one would drink olive oil, and after considering a number of possibilities, concludes that the statement refers to a case in which a person suffering from sore throat drinks olive oil mixed with chard broth rather than gargling with olive oil, the normal remedy. Although normally no blessing at all is recited over medicine, since the olive oil is ingested in a manner that provides nourishment, one does recite a blessing.

Analysis indicates that this largely anonymous *sugya* is relatively early; it predates the *amora* Rava and the development of the surrounding *sugyot*. The original intention of the *amoraic* statement cited at the beginning of the *sugya* was to contrast olive oil with wine, mentioned in the *mishnah* as the only fruit drink that engenders a blessing of its own – olive oil, by contrast, retains the blessing of the olive itself. This is the role the statement plays in the parallel in Yerushalmi Berakhot 6:1 (10a). The editor of the parallel *sugya* in the Yerushalmi is not bothered by the question raised in our *sugya*, since, as pointed out by Aryeh Leib Yellin in his commentary *Yefeh Einaim*, Palestinian *halakhah* automatically deemed the seven species to be the primary component of a dish in which they are served along with other foods; thus even a vegetable salad dressed with olive oil would engender the blessing *ha’etz* because of the olive oil. The editor of our *sugya*, however, followed the Babylonian position, according to which primary and secondary components of a dish are determined by their actual status, rather than the importance of the blessing made over them, and therefore concluded that the *amoraic* statement referred only to olive oil drunk along with chard broth by those suffering from sore throat.

Sugya 5: “Flour”

This *sugya* opens with a dispute between two Babylonian *amoraim*, Rav Yehudah and Rav Nahman, as to the blessing recited over flour. Some commentators found it hard to believe that the reference is to actual flour which is not usually eaten raw, and interpreted the “flour” in our *sugya* as wheat kernels that are first roasted and then ground into flour. However, the *sugya* is best explained if we assume the reference is to actual flour. Rav Yehudah, in accordance with the plain meaning of Mishnah Berakhot 6:1, assumes that any vegetable product other than bread – including flour – retains the blessing *ha’adamah*. Rav Nahman says that the blessing is *shehakol*. His view is explained by the editor of the *sugya* as follows: since flour is an interim product that has not reached its ultimate state, it represents a temporary reduction of the status of the wheat, with a concomitant demotion of the blessing to *shehakol*.

Analysis indicates that Rav Nahman’s view is part of an *amoraic* trend to enhance the repertoire of blessings beyond that of the Mishnah. According to the Mishnah, fresh produce and all foods derived from fresh produce – with the exception of wine and bread – engender either the blessing *ha’etz* or the blessing *ha’adamah*. The *amoraim* expanded the use of the *shehakol* and *mezonot* blessings beyond their limited tannaitic usage to include many foods derived from grains and other produce. The roots of this expanded repertoire can be traced to the view of the *tanna* Rabbi Judah, who envisioned a larger repertoire of blessings than that ultimately included in the Mishnah of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch. While the law was formally decided in favor of the limited repertoire in the Mishnah, this was gradually expanded by the *amoraim*.

Sugya 6: “Palm Fiber”

This *sugya* opens with a dispute between two Babylonian *amoraim*, Rav Yehudah and Samuel, as to the blessing recited over edible fibers that grow out of the top of the palm tree, which over time become part of the palm bark. Since they are edible, Rav Yehudah views them as *peri ha'etz*, a type of “fruit” of the palm; Samuel, on the other hand, demotes their blessing to *shehakol* since they will ultimately become inedible bark. Samuel concedes to Rav Yehudah because of the analogy of radish, whose blessing is *ha'adamah* despite the fact that it ultimately hardens to an inedible texture, but a later editor critiques this analogy using the term *velo hi*, since palm fibers, unlike radishes, are a mere incidental by-product of the palm tree, and not the reason for which the tree was planted. This later editor rules in accordance with Samuel's original view, that *shehakol* is recited over palm fiber. In the *sugya's* current form, the later editor's critique of Samuel's concession is interrupted by a *baraita* and a statement of the *amora* Rav Nahman bar Isaac concerning capers. Scholars have noted that this is problematic both in terms of content and in terms of redactional history.

A parallel *sugya* is found in Bavli Eruvin 28b. Analysis indicates that Samuel's change of heart was originally based on the analogy of capers rather than radishes. The *baraita* regarding capers originally followed directly upon Samuel's statement to Rav Yehudah, and was meant to explain Samuel's analogy. Rav Nahman bar Isaac challenged the analogy and ruled in support of Samuel's original view, that the *shehakol* blessing is recited over palm fiber. Rava, unaware of Samuel's change of heart, cited the original dispute between Samuel and Rav Yehudah in the parallel in Bavli Eruvin 28b. A later editor noted the contradiction between the two *sugyot*, and added the *velo hi* critique of Samuel's concession to the Eruvin *sugya*, basing himself on the critique of Rav Nahman bar Isaac in the Berakhot *sugya*. In the final stage, the later editor's critique was transferred to Berakhot, where it was fused with the original *amoraic* ending, engendering the current awkward discussion.

Sugya 7: “Caper”

This lengthy *sugya* concerns the buds and berries of the caper plant, mentioned in the previous *sugya*. It consists of five parts: (1) a statement of Rav, according to which only the berry of the caper plant, and not its bud (the part we now eat pickled), is actually considered the fruit of the plant and is liable to the laws of *orlah* in the diaspora; (2) a challenge to that view based on the *baraita* cited in the previous *sugya*, which equates the bud with the berry, and an ensuing discussion delineating two *tannaitic* views of the caper bud; (3) a discussion between Ravina and Mar bar Rav Ashi, in which the latter acts in accordance with Rav's view and the former challenges him; (4) a further challenge to Rav's view, repeatedly defended by Rava; and (5) a closing statement ruling like Mar bar Rav Ashi, and applying his reasoning to the laws of blessing; *viz.*, that the blessing over the caper bud is *ha'adamah*, not *ha'etz* as the *baraita* would have it.

It has long been suggested that part (5) is a geonic addition to the Talmudic text, and Avraham Weiss argues that part (3) is likewise a later addition. Both of these views are challenged in the commentary, where it is argued that sections (1–3) and (5) are all essential components of the original *sugya*, compiled by students of Mar bar Rav Ashi. Part (4), by contrast, is a remnant of a Babylonian *sugya* to Mishnah Maasrot 4:6, parallel to the *sugya* found in Yerushalmi Maasrot 4:4 (51c). It was incorporated into the *sugya* at a later date by an editor who was troubled by the fact that the

original Berakhot *sugya* did not deal with what he considered the essential question regarding caper buds, *viz.* whether or not they are considered protection for the fruit, and therefore subject to the same laws as fruit in accordance with the rabbinic interpretation of Leviticus 19:23.

Sugya 8: "Peppercorns"

This *sugya* opens with an *amoraic* dispute as to the blessing over peppercorns; according to Rav Sheshet they engender the blessing *shehakol*, while according to Rava they are inedible, and therefore, if eaten, do not require a blessing. Similarly, Rava is said to have exempted one who eats peppercorns or ginger on Yom Kippur from liability. The editor of the *sugya* explains that Rava was referring only to dried peppercorns and ginger; in their fresh forms they are edible, and engender the blessings *ha'etz* and *ha'adamah* respectively.

A parallel *sugya* is found in Bavli Yoma 81b. As Avraham Weiss proved on the basis of textual evidence, the sections of the *sugya* concerning peppercorns are original in Berakhot, while those concerning ginger are original in Yoma. The two *sugyot* were fused at a later date, and not all textual witnesses reflect this final stage of the editorial process.

Sugya 9: "Porridge"

This *sugya* opens with an *amoraic* dispute as to the blessing over two types of porridge, *diyasa* and *havits qederah*, which is *shehakol* according to Rav Yehudah and *mezonot* according to Rav Kahana. The editor of the *sugya* limits the dispute to porridge containing honey (*havits qederah* or *diyasa* that is like *havits qederah*): Rav Kahana considers the grain the main ingredient, while Rav Yehudah considers the honey the main ingredient. Rav Yosef rules in accordance with Rav Kahana, since Rav and Samuel required the *mezonot* blessing for any food containing the five types of grain: wheat, barley, rye, *shibbolet shu'al* – often translated "oats" – and spelt.

Analysis yields new definitions of the types of porridge mentioned in the *sugya*: *havits qederah* refers to boiled breadcrumbs, to which honey was usually added. *Diyasa* is porridge made by boiling *semida*, the biblical *solet*, which is not, as usually translated, fine flour, but coarsely ground wheat groats. If honey is added to this porridge, it becomes "*diyasa* that is like *havits qederah*".

Sugya 10: "Mezonot"

This *sugya* opens with two statements attributed to both Rav and Samuel: according to one, *only* foods containing one of the five types of grain engender the blessing *mezonot*; according to the other, *all* foods containing one of the five types of grain engender the blessing *mezonot* (even if grain is not the main ingredient in terms of quantity). The statement which limits the blessing to the five types of grain is said to exclude rice and millet; and is challenged on the basis of a number of *baraitot*, according to which rice and/or millet are viewed as types of grains and/or engender the blessing *mezonot*. Attempts to attribute these *baraitot* to Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri – who, according to the Bavli, did indeed consider rice and millet grain – are ultimately refuted, and the statement of Rav and Samuel limiting the blessing to the five types of grain is rejected: rice, like grain, is said to engender the blessing *mezonot*.

Analysis yields the following conclusions: (1) the blessing *mezonot* is tannaitic in origin. It was originally limited to boiled bread and boiled rice bread; but was later

interpreted and expanded by Rav and Samuel to include porridge and any cooked foodstuff consisting mostly of grain, in which the grain loses its form. (2) Only the statement limiting the blessing *mezonot* to the five types of grain is correctly presented by the Bavli as a view shared by Rav and Samuel; the statement requiring the blessing over any food containing even a minority portion of grain is the view of Samuel alone – Rav limited the *mezonot* blessing to foodstuffs consisting *mostly* of grain. (3) The similarity between the two statements led to confusion between them on the part of later *amoraim*, who attributed both to both Rav and Samuel. (4) According to Palestinian sources, Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri expanded the list of grains to include a grass known as *qarmit* (mannagrass, *glyceria fluitens*), and this only on the basis of an experiment he conducted which proved that dough made of flour from this grass rises; it is the Bavli that expanded his ruling to include the grain-like substances rice and millet, common in Babylonia.

Sugya 11: “Wheat”

This *sugya* distinguishes between two tannaitic views of the blessing recited before chewing wheat kernels; according to a *baraita* cited in the previous *sugya*, the blessing is *ha'adamah*; according to another *baraita*, it is *bore mine zera'im*. The latter view is attributed to Rabbi Yehudah, another example of whose expanded system of blessings – *bore mine desha'im* on green vegetables – is mentioned in Mishnah Berakhot 6:1.

Analysis indicates that Rabbi Yehudah's view is not his alone. The expanded system of blessings, according to which different types of produce engender different blessings, was standard among *tannaim* of his generation. The simplified system of blessings, according to which the two blessing *ha'etz* and *ha'adamah* are used for all produce, whether eaten in its natural state or processed, was introduced in the following generation by Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, and while these blessings became standard for natural produce, the *amoraim* soon expanded the system by adopting the blessings *mezonot* and *shehakol* for much processed produce.

Sugya 12: “Rice”

This *sugya* opens with contradictory *baraitot* concerning the blessing recited after eating rice: according to one source it is the abridged grace after meals (*berakhah ahat me'ein shalosh*), while according to another no blessing is recited. Rav Sheshet proposes that the first *baraita* reflects the view of Rabban Gamliel, but his solution is refuted, and the *sugya* concludes that the first *baraita* must be emended to read like the second.

Two alternatives to the Bavli's emendation are proposed in the commentary. The first proposal is that the first *baraita* reflects a hitherto unknown *tannaitic* position; the second is that the first *baraita* originally read *berakhah ahat* rather than *berakhah ahat me'ein shalosh*, and this referred not to the abridged grace, but to the *bore nefashot* blessing, recited after rice according to later authorities.

Sugya 13: “Gruel”

According to the version of this *sugya* found in most manuscripts and in the printed editions, Rava at first distinguished between farmer's gruel, consisting mainly of flour, over which he ordained the *mezonot* blessing, and the gruel of Mehoza, consisting mainly of honey, over which he ordained the *shehakol* blessing. Later, in the

wake of the view of Rav and Samuel according to which foodstuffs containing any quantity of grain engender the blessing *mezonot*, he changed his mind and ordained the blessing *mezonot* over both types of gruel.

In the Paris and Oxford manuscripts the second view is attributed not to Rava himself after a change of heart, but to a later editor of the *sugya*, who rejects Rava's view in the wake of Rav and Samuel's statement with the formula *velo hi*. Analysis indicates that the reading of the Paris and Oxford manuscripts is original. As we have seen above, the view here attributed to Rav and Samuel is in fact that of Samuel alone, and Rava ruled like Rav. The editor's comment reflects the view of later *amoraim* that Rav actually agreed with Samuel on this point.

***Sugya* 14: "Breadcrumbs"**

In this *sugya amoraim* dispute the blessing over breadcrumbs: Rav Yosef maintains that the blessing is *mezonot* unless the pieces are bigger than an olive, in which case the blessing is *hamotzi*, while Rav Sheshet maintains that the blessing is *hamotzi* in any case. According to Rava, the blessing is *hamotzi* only if the breadcrumbs have the appearance of bread. Rav Yosef's view, presented first, is said to be based on the meal offerings in the temple, which were crumbled into large pieces and engendered the blessing *hamotzi*. This view is subjected to a number of challenges from *baraitot* regarding meal offerings, after which it is determined that even smaller breadcrumbs engender the *hamotzi* blessing if taken from a single, large loaf and/or pressed together into a loaf-like form.

Analysis indicates that the components of the *sugya* have not been preserved in their original order. Rav Sheshet and Rava's views originally followed immediately after that of Rav Yosef, and the challenges to Rav Yosef's position were originally directed against Rava's view, that *hamotzi* is recited only over bread that has "the appearance of bread". While this view is now often interpreted to mean that the breadcrumbs or slices must be big enough to be identifiable as bread, the original meaning was that the bread has the "appearance of a loaf of bread". Two interpretations of this concept are offered in the *sugya*: either it means that the breadcrumbs are now molded into a loaf-like shape, or that the bread from which the crumbs were taken originally had a loaf-like shape (and was not baked in long strips meant to be crumbled; see *sugya* 15 below). While the former explanation is rejected in the Talmud in favor of the latter, it is the former that corresponds with our interpretation of Rava's view in *sugya* 20 below, that *hamotzi* is only recited over a full loaf before it is broken. In this *sugya* he modifies that view slightly, and allows for the recitation of *hamotzi* over a pudding-type loaf reconstructed from breadcrumbs as well, in order to explain the fact that meal offerings were crumbled before being eaten and nonetheless engendered the blessing *hamotzi*.

***Sugya* 15: "Griddle Bread"**

This *sugya* concerns various bread-like foods, whose status is in dispute: some account them bread, and require that the *hallah*-offering be separated from their dough, while others exempt them from *hallah*. The blessing over some of these foods is in dispute: it is either *hamotzi* or *mezonot*. Mar Zutra is said to have "established his meal" on these foods, over which he recited the blessing *hamotzi*, and on Passover all agree that these types of bread can be used as *matzah*.

In addition to the disputes explicit in the *sugya*, divergent readings have been preserved regarding a number of rulings in the *sugya*, engendering some confusion in determining the *halakhah*. Moreover, the Talmud itself cites various views as to the identity of the foods mentioned in the *sugya*; the Talmudic explanations are themselves obscure and subject to various interpretations. These readings and explanations are analyzed in the commentary. On the basis of parallel passages in the Yerushalmi and philological analysis, it is determined that most of the *sugya* is referring to bread “baked” on a griddle held over an open fire, rather than in an oven, and bread baked in the oven in long strips meant to be broken up into breadcrumbs or croutons. Griddle bread, served in the Middle East as a dessert, is variously referred to as *sufganin* (the Moroccan *sfinge*, sponge-bread), *troqnin* or *troqta* or *trita* or *targima* (from the Greek *trokta* or *trogalia* or *trogema*, “dessert”, all of which derive from the Greek word for “chew”, because in the Greek world dessert consisted mainly of dried fruit and nuts). These were sometimes baked on a griddle placed in the hot sun without any fire whatsoever, according to Yerushalmi Hallah 1:5 (57d) and Bavli Pesahim 37a, hence they are also referred to in our *sugya* as *kuka de'ara'a* (earth loaf, so called because it is baked in the open rather than in an oven), and *gubla be'alma*, “mere dough”, i.e. barely-baked dough. According to Yerushalmi Hallah and Bavli Pesahim, the status of sun-baked bread is the subject of an *amoraic* dispute; hence the various views and readings in our *sugya*. Mar Zutra’s view has been interpreted as though he ate a particularly large quantity of this type of bread in order to make the blessing *hamotzi* over it; in fact, however, the Talmud merely noted that Mar Zutra considered this food bread, recited *hamotzi* over it, and often ate it instead of bread.

Sugya 16: “Date Syrup”

This *sugya* contrasts the blessing over date syrup (*devash temarim*) with that over mashed dates (*trimma*); the former is said to be *shehakol*, since it is merely the “sweat” of the date, while the latter is *ha'etz*, since the dates themselves are clearly present.

The commentary deals with the status of date syrup and the etymology of *trimma*. Analysis indicates that date syrup was considered mere “sweat” by those who did not intentionally squeeze the juice out of the dates; they considered the juice that accumulated outside the dates on its own a by-product. However, a significant minority of the population intentionally extracted syrup (“honey”) from dates, and thus Rabbi Eliezer considered date syrup to be a legitimate form of the fruit. *Trimma* is a Greek word, which originally referred to a sauce served with fish; one variety of this sauce was made with cooked-down mulberries, and it later became a general term in Greek for “sweets”; hence its use in our *sugya* to refer to mashed fruit.

Sugya 17: “Shatita”

This *sugya* begins with an *amoraic* dispute over the blessing on *shatita*, a drink consisting of water into which a powder of ground, baked wheat kernels is mixed: Rav says the blessing is *shehakol*; Samuel says it is *mezonot*. According to Rav Hisda, they do not disagree: Rav was referring to a very dilute solution, used as medicine, while Samuel was referring to a dense mixture, eaten as food. Even the dilute solution used as a medicine is said to require some sort of blessing, because it has nutritional value.

Analysis indicates that Rav and Samuel originally disputed the blessing over all types of *shatita*, which consists mostly of water mixed with some wheat powder:

Samuel believed that even a minute quantity of grain is deemed the main component of a food, while Rav believed that even where grain is concerned, the main component is determined by quantity. However, as we have seen in *sugya* 10 above, later *amoraim* reinterpreted Rav's position so that it conformed to that of Samuel, and our *sugya* is one example of this phenomenon. Two reasons for Rav's exception to this rule in the case of very dilute *shatita* are cited in our *sugya*: dilute *shatita* is a drink, not a food, and it is a medicinal remedy, not a food. Commentators are divided as to which of these points is more important; Avraham Weiss sees the references to medicine as later additions to the *sugya*, and cites certain manuscript evidence to this effect. However, without recourse to the notion that dilute *shatita* is medicinal, one would be hard pressed to explain why liquefied grain should not engender the *mezonot* blessing, and thus the view advanced in this commentary is that the medicine motif is an original component of the *sugya*.

***Sugya* 18: "Motzi"**

This *sugya* opens with a *baraita* in which the formulation of the *hamotzi* blessing is disputed: according to the Sages, the blessing over bread is "*hamotzi lehem min ha'aretz*", while according to Rabbi Nehemiah the blessing is "*motzi lehem min ha'aretz*" without the definite article "*ha-*". Rava, who believes the blessing should be formulated in the past tense ("who brought forth bread from the earth") interprets the difference between the two formulations as a question of tense; all agree that *motzi* is past tense, but the Sages believed *hamotzi* to be past tense as well. A guest at Rabbi Zera's house is also said to have preferred the *motzi* blessing, since it is acceptable according to all; however, Rabbi Zera, and the *sugya* itself, conclude that it is better to take a controversial stance, and say *hamotzi*, in order to demonstrate that the *halakhah* is in accordance with the Sages and not Rabbi Nehemiah.

Analysis indicates that there is actually no correlation between these formulations and issues of tense; both refer poetically to the growth of grain as God's bringing forth grain from the earth in the past, in the present, and in the future. Rabbi Nehemiah's blessing is formulated by analogy to the "*bore peri*" blessings; he did not notice, however, that in those blessings "*bore-*" is automatically definite by virtue of its being in a construct state with the definite "*peri ha'etz*". Because of the words "*min ha'aretz*", however, "*lehem*" in the blessing over bread is indefinite, and in order to make the word "*motzi*" definite the article "*ha-*" must be added, as pointed out by the Sages. The Yerushalmi, however, understood the reference to "bringing forth bread from the earth" literally, and believed it referred to a time when God miraculously made bread grow on trees: either at the beginning of time or during the Messianic Era – associating the former with "*hamotzi*" because God is famous as "**the** one who brings forth..." and the latter with "*motzi*", because God is not yet known as "**the** one who brings forth...", though he will indeed do so at some point. Rava preferred the *motzi* formulation and ruled that even the Sages agree that this is acceptable. The editor of the *sugya* interpreted Rava's statement in light of the Yerushalmi and a similar statement of Rava with regard to the blessing over the *havdalah* candle, yielding the grammatically dubious explanations found in our *sugya*.

***Sugya* 19: "Cooked-down Vegetables"**

Mishnah Berakhot 6:1 implies that the blessing *ha'adamah* is recited over vegetables even if they are not in their natural state, and a number of Babylonian

amora'im cited in our *sugya* conclude on the basis of the *mishnah* that the blessing over *shelaqot*, defined in the commentary as vegetables cooked down into an unrecognizable mash, is still *ha'adamah*. Rabbi Yohanan, on the other hand, is said by most tradents to have ruled that the blessing over such vegetables is *shehakol*, although according to an alternate tradition he, too, ruled that the blessing is *ha'adamah*. The *sugya* consists of a number of attempts to mediate between the two views, associate the dispute with similar tannaitic disputes, and ascertain which view is correct on the basis of *tannaitic* sources. In the final analysis, the Babylonian *sugya* upholds the view of Babylonian *amora'im* that the blessing over such vegetables is *ha'adamah*, and the *sugya* concludes with a number of rulings regarding various types of prepared vegetables that assumes that the blessing *ha'adamah* is retained.

The commentary deals with the individual components of this lengthy *sugya* and parallel material, as well as general questions concerning the development of the *halakhah* on this issue as a whole. Among the more general conclusions reached in the commentary are the following: (1) the traditions ascribing the Babylonian position to Rabbi Yohanan are based on an erroneous inference from the parallel *sugya* in Yerushalmi Berakhot 6:1 (10a). This *sugya* is analyzed in detail, and it is shown that just as the *sugya* in the Bavli sought by inference to attribute the Babylonian position to Rabbi Yohanan, the Yerushalmi used similar methodology to ascribe the Palestinian position, according to which the blessing over cooked-down vegetables is *shehakol*, to the Babylonian *amora'im* Rav and Samuel. (2) The Babylonian position is based upon Mishnah Berakhot 6:1. The Palestinian position can be explained in two ways: on the one hand, it may be a rejection of the ruling in this *mishnah* in favor of the position of the *tanna* Rabbi Judah as cited in Yerushalmi Berakhot 6:2 (10b), "Anyone who recites an unchanged blessing over a food changed from its natural state has not fulfilled his obligation". Alternatively, it may be an expansion of the ruling in Mishnah Berakhot 6:3 and related *tannaitic* material, according to which *shehakol* is recited over food that has gone bad, if it is still edible – Rabbi Yohanan and his colleagues may have viewed cooked-down vegetables as a deterioration of the vegetables' natural state. (3) Alternate explanations of the word *shelaqot*, according to which the term refers to chopped vegetables in a marinade or steamed vegetables, rather than cooked-down vegetables, are considered and rejected.

***Sugya* 20: "Dried Bread"**

This *sugya* contains a dispute between *amora'im* regarding the blessing recited over dried bread served piecemeal in a cooked dish: Rav says the blessing is *hamotzi*; Rabbi Hiyya limits the *hamotzi* blessing to a full loaf of bread while it is being sliced; and according to Rava, *hamotzi* is only recited over a full loaf of bread before it is sliced. The *sugya* ends with a clear ruling in favor of Rava's position.

Virtually all commentators rejected the implication of our *sugya* that the blessing over sliced bread is not *hamotzi*. They determined that *hamotzi* is recited even over sliced bread, if that is all that is available. The commentators explain that the dispute in the *sugya* only concerns a case in which there is a full loaf of bread on the table. Under these circumstances can the diner recite the *hamotzi* blessing over sliced bread or croutons? A number of reasons for this radical reinterpretation of the *sugya* are offered in the commentary: (1) the parallel in Yerushalmi Berakhot 6:1 (10a) clearly refers only to a case in which a full loaf is available; (2) although the ruling in this *sugya* is clearly in favor of Rava's position, Rav Yosef and Rav Sheshet in *sugya* 14

above, and a number of *amoraim* at the end of our *sugya*, ruled like Rav, that one recites *hamotzi* even over bread served piecemeal. (3) the conclusion of the editor of *sugya* 14 above is that *hamotzi* is recited over any bread that came from a full loaf, whether or not it is still complete. (4) Alfasi seems to suggest that even in our *sugya* the ruling in favor of Rava's view refers not to his dispute with Rav over the blessing on sliced bread, but to his dispute with Rabbi Hiyya over when to recite the *hamotzi* blessing over a full loaf of bread.

***Sugya* 21: "Breaking Bread"**

This *sugya* concerns priority when a number of breads are served at once: all agree that the foremost criterion is quality, and sliced wheat bread takes precedence over a whole loaf of barley bread. As to sliced and whole bread of the same quality, Rav Huna prefers that the blessing be recited over the slice, while Rabbi Yohanan prefers the whole loaf. After an attempt to equate this dispute with a dispute about the relative quality of a whole onion and a half onion available to be given as *terumah* is rejected, it is suggested that the slice be wrapped inside the whole loaf and the blessing be recited over both. Moreover, Rav Papa insists that all agree that this is the correct practice at the Passover seder, and Rabbi Abba insists that two whole loaves be present when *hamotzi* is recited on the Sabbath. There follow a number of statements regarding the twin Sabbath loaves, which are best explained as a dispute over whether both must be sliced and a discussion of this dispute.

Analysis indicates that the original dispute between Rav Huna and Rabbi Yohanan assumed that the blessing on the slice is *mezonot* and the blessing on the whole loaf is *hamotzi*. The question therefore was not only one of priority but also of whether the *mezonot* blessing recited over the slice could exempt the whole loaf from its *hamotzi* blessing. The suggested compromise enabled one to recite the *hamotzi* blessing over a loaf and slice together, but then eat from the slice alone. Rav Papa insists that this be done on Passover, when one would otherwise have recited the blessing over a single broken *matzah* because it is the "bread of affliction" – in order for the blessing to be *hamotzi* rather than *mezonot* the single broken matza should be wrapped in a whole *matzah* (Iraqi *matzot* are soft and pliable to this day).

The implication of our *sugya* is that twin loaves were not used at all on festivals. However, some of the Geonim read our *sugya* as though Rabbi Abba required twin loaves on Passover, and explained that like on the Sabbath the manna did not fall on festivals and a double portion was provided on the eve of the festival, although this is not explicit in Scripture. The Tosafists adopted this view, in part because European *matzot* were in any case too hard to wrap around the broken *matzah*, and two full *matzot* were required in order to fulfil the dictum of Rav Papa. Another Geonic view maintained that Rabbi Abba insisted on two full *matzot* only when the seder was held on Friday night. A third interpretation, adopted in the commentary, is that Rabbi Abba was not referring to the Passover seder at all. Rabbi Abba's ruling referred to Sabbaths throughout the year, but on Passover he agreed with Rav Papa that one and half *matzot* should be used, whether it falls on Friday night or on a weeknight, since *matzah* is "the bread of affliction".

***Sugya* 22: "Take and Bless"**

This rather cryptic *sugya* consists of a list of statements made at a meal, followed by the rulings "he must bless" or "he need not bless". It has been universally

explained as referring to statements made by a householder to those assembled at his table after he recited the *hamotzi* and broke the bread but before he ate his own piece and distributed the rest. “Take the blessed [bread]” is deemed pertinent to the situation at hand and does not constitute an interruption requiring the assembled to recite a second *hamotzi* blessing before eating; the question of whether “bring the salt, bring the condiment” and “feed the cows” are sufficiently pertinent is the subject of two *amoraic* disputes.

The above cited interpretation of the *sugya* is rejected in the commentary on the basis of a number of questions. Instead it is argued that the *sugya* refers to a case in which the householder recited the blessing and ate his piece, and upon distributing the rest to the assembled issued various orders. Do these orders require them to make their own individual blessings? The first case is one in which the host asked the assembled to recite their own individual *hamotzi* blessings; all agree that they need not obey him since his blessing exempted them in any case. In the second case, he asks that salt or condiment be brought before the assembled; *amoraim* dispute the significance of salt and condiment and question whether the assembled must recite their own individual blessings once the salt and condiment are brought. In the third case the householder asks one of the assembled to feed the cows – *amoraim* dispute whether this person must recite *hamotzi* upon returning to the meal. The implications of this interpretation and the traditional interpretation as far as the halakhic concept of “interruption” (*hefseq, heseah hada’at*) is concerned are discussed in the commentary.

Sugya 23: “Rava bar Samuel in the name of Rabbi Hiyya”

This *sugya* consists of two interlocking units. The first is a collection of three statements by Rava bar Samuel in the name of Rabbi Hiyya and discussions thereof. According to the first statement, the householder may not recite *hamotzi* until salt or condiment are served to all; various reasons for this are discussed in the commentary. The last of the three statements concerns the nutritional value of water and salt; this statement and the accompanying *baraita* also form the beginning of the second unit, which is a collection of statements concerning the nutritional properties of various foods.

The material in this *sugya* is found only in the Bavli, although for the most part it is presented in the form of *baraitot* and/or statements by Rabbi Hiyya and other Babylonians who spent time in Eretz Israel toward the end of the *tannaitic* period. It would seem to be a collection of Babylonian folk traditions taught in Eretz Israel, which made their way back to Babylonia in the form of *baraitot* and statements made in Eretz Israel by *amoraim* of Babylonian origin. Each is analyzed independently in the commentary.

Sugya 24: “Bore Mine Desha'im”

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:1, Rabbi Judah proposed the blessing *bore mine desha'im* over vegetables. This *sugya* consists of three statements, attributed by some to Rabbi Zera and by others to Rabbi Hanina bar Papa: the first rules in accordance with (or, according to the printed versions of the Talmud, against) Rabbi Judah, the second offers a proof-text for Rabbi Judah’s view, Psalm 68:20, while the third asserts on the basis of Exodus 15:26 that unlike people, God pours into a filled vessel rather than an empty one: it is the person who hearkens unto God in one instance who has the capacity to do so again.

The same collection is found in Bavli Sukkah 46a–b with reference to a similar position of Rabbi Judah with regard to blessings recited before performing commandments. Rabbi Judah’s position both in our *mishnah* and in the material cited there is shown to be representative of the attitude of his generation to blessings in general, while the position of the Sages or Rabbi Judah the Patriarch in both cases reflects his attempt to simplify the system of blessings. The collection of statements by Rabbi Zera or Rabbi Hanina bar Papa is original in Sukkah and was transferred here by the editor of our chapter.

***Sugya* 25: “Root”**

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:2, if one inadvertently recited the blessing *ha’adamah* over the fruit of a tree instead of the blessing *ha’etz*, he or she has fulfilled the obligation. In our *sugya* Rav Nahman bar Isaac explains that this is the position of the *tanna* Rabbi Judah, who allowed a landowner to bring first fruits from a tree that had been cut down, since the fruit is ultimately the product of the ground, which is still in existence. This view is expressed by Rav Nahman bar Isaac with the words *iqqar ar’a hu*, a phrase preserved in a number of textual variants.

Analysis yields the following conclusions: (1) the original meaning of the phrase *iqqar ar’a hu* is that the root of the fruit is part of the ground; hence the fruit grows from the ground, not only from the trunk and branch of the tree. However, the word *iqqar* was subsequently understood in its usual metaphorical sense, “essence”, by some, yielding variant readings. (2) Rav Nahman bar Isaac’s contention is actually that of Rabbi Hezekiah in the name of Rabbi Jacob bar Aha in the parallel in Yerushalmi Bikkurim 1:6 (64b); Rav Nahman bar Isaac heard this contention, adopted it and expanded it in the next *sugya*, and both the original contention and the expansion were attributed to him in the Bavli. (3) Rabbi Judah’s flexible position in our *sugya* is analyzed in terms of his seemingly contradictory requirement that the blessing reflect the specific type of produce being eaten (see above, *sugyot* 5, 11 and 24), and it is shown that there is in fact no contradiction.

***Sugya* 26: “Wheat is a Type of Tree”**

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:2, if one inadvertently recited the blessing *ha’etz* over produce that grows in the ground, instead of the blessing *ha’adamah*, he or she has not fulfilled the obligation. While this should have been obvious, Rav Nahman bar Isaac in this *sugya* says that the *mishnah* had to be explicit about this because of Rabbi Judah, who considered wheat a type of tree – in fact, he identified the tree of knowledge of Genesis chapter 3 as “wheat”. Nonetheless – concludes the editor of the *sugya* – only trees whose branches remain intact after they are harvested can be considered trees for the purpose of the *ha’etz* blessing.

Analysis indicates that the tradition identifying the tree of knowledge as wheat originally referred to a mythical tree on whose branches bread grew (see *sugya* 18 above); it was Rav Nahman bar Isaac who interpreted the tradition to mean that wheat itself is considered a tree. Other traditions with regard to the identification of the tree of knowledge are likewise explored in the commentary in light of parallel material. The distinction between trees and other flora proposed by the editor at the end of our *sugya* is contrasted with the distinctions proposed in Yerushalmi Kilayim 5:8 (30a), and variant readings of the Bavli’s distinction are discussed.

Sugya 27: "Formulation"

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:2, if one inadvertently recited the *shehakol* blessing over produce, he or she has fulfilled the obligation. Discussion of whether this ruling applies to wine and bread as well as produce (Rabbi Yohanan says it does; Rav Huna says it does not) leads to a discussion of deviation from the prescribed blessing in general: Rabbi Meir allows the individual to vary the precise wording of the blessing, while Rabbi Yose does not. Rav is said to have approved of the short Aramaic blessing "Blessed be the Master of this bread" formulated by a shepherd, Benjamin, who did not know the prescribed blessing. After challenging this tradition on a number of counts, the Talmud concludes that Benjamin's blessing must have included the words "the Merciful One", a name of God, since according to Rav himself a blessing must include God's name. Furthermore, Rav is said to have insisted that Benjamin recite the three blessings of the Grace after meals.

Analysis, focusing on comparison of the *sugya* with the parallel in Yerushalmi Berakhot 6:2 (10b), yields the following conclusions: (1) the common material is of Babylonian origin, as the Yerushalmi itself acknowledges. (2) Rabbi Yohanan's position, found only in the Bavli, is not an actual statement of his; it is an expansion of the implication of Mishnah Berakhot 6:7 and the stories cited in *sugya* 42 below, from which the editor of our *sugya* concluded that Rabbi Yohanan and other Palestinian *amoraim* did not necessarily accord bread a special status in the meal. (3) Benjamin the Shepherd's formulation was originally meant as a substitute for *hamotzi*; however, a later editor understood that it was meant as a substitute for the Grace after meals; hence the questions and modifications at the end of the *sugya*. (4) This change in the understanding of the story can be attributed to a change in the usage of the verb *karakh* ("wrap [bread]") when applied to a meal in Babylonian Aramaic. The phrase originally referred to the beginning of a meal, but later was understood in the more general sense of "eat a meal". Hence when Benjamin is said to have "wrapped his bread and blessed", it was originally clear that the reference was to a *hamotzi* substitute. However, later readers assumed that he ate the meal first and then recited his blessing. (5) Benjamin's original blessing, even without the addition of "the Merciful One", was deemed sufficient by Rav, since "Master" can be understood as a name of God.

Sugya 28: "Name and Kingship"

The previous *sugya* mentioned Rav's position that a blessing must mention God's name. Our *sugya* provides the original source for this contention; moreover, Rabbi Yohanan is said to have insisted additionally on mention of God's kingship. Abaye cites a tannaitic *midrash halakhah* as support for Rabbi Yohanan's position.

Yerushalmi Berakhot 9:3 (12d) attributes the requirement to mention "kingship" to Rav, rather than Rabbi Yohanan, and a textual variant of our *sugya* cited in Geonic literature reverses the attributions to Rav and Rabbi Yohanan. Robert Brody has suggested adopting this reading, and seeing the reference to the "Master" in Benjamin the Shepherd's blessing in the previous *sugya* as a reference to the kingship of God, rather than his name as suggested in the commentary to the previous *sugya*. This view is considered and rejected in the commentary, where it is argued that neither Rav nor Rabbi Yohanan required mention of God's kingship in every blessing; this was a later expansion of statements by each of them requiring mention of God's kingship in specific blessings. Rav, however, is the one who first required mentioning the name of

God. In fact, this *sugya* was originally a direct continuation of the beginning of the previous *sugya*, and Rav's position was originally presented as a compromise between the positions of Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Judah in the *baraita* cited there: strict conformity to the rabbinic formulation is not necessary, but nor does the person reciting the blessing have free rein in formulation, but rather the blessing must contain a name of God. If we combine this requirement with another statement of Rav, cited in the Yerushalmi passage mentioned above, requiring the use of the word "attah", Rav's precise position becomes clear: a blessing must begin with the words "Blessed art Thou, O Lord"; after which the individual has freedom in formulating the blessing.

Sugya 29: "Truffles and Mushrooms"

According to a *baraita* cited in our *sugya*, truffles and mushrooms do not grow from the ground; therefore, their blessing is *shehakol*. This assertion is challenged in the *sugya* on the basis of a *baraita* regarding vows, which states that truffles and mushrooms are considered prohibited by a vow renouncing all "growth of the ground". Abaye explains that these fungi grow in the ground, but do not derive nourishment from the ground. However, since both *baraitot* use the word *gidul*, "growth", the editor of the *sugya* feels constrained to emend our *baraita* to read "do not derive nourishment from the ground", rather than "do not grow from the ground".

Analysis focuses on comparison of our *sugya* with a parallel *sugya* in Bavli Nedarim 55b, where the *baraita* regarding vows is preserved in full. It is argued that the original locus of the contradiction posed between the *baraitot* and of Abaye's interpretation is Nedarim. Abaye's interpretation is in keeping with the correct meaning of the *baraitot* (though it does not seem to tally with modern scientific knowledge if taken literally; an issue discussed in the commentary). There is no need to amend the *baraitot*, since the *baraita* regarding vows refers to fungi as "growth of the ground", whereas the *baraita* regarding the blessing maintains that fungi do not grow "from the ground", i.e. are not nourished by it. This distinction is clear in light of the full citation of the *baraita* regarding vows. The suggested emendation originated in our *sugya*, which cited the *baraita* regarding vows in an abridged form; a late editor who had access only to the abridged *baraita* did not understand the distinction between the two formulations with regard to growth and felt the need to emend one of them.

Sugya 30: "Novelot"

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:3, dates known as *novelot* engender the *shehakol* blessing according to the Sages, and engender no blessing at all according to Rabbi Judah, since they are a "type of curse". *Amoraim* argue in our *sugya* about the meaning of *novelot*: some say the reference is to dates that fall off the tree because they are overly ripe, while others say the reference is to unripe dates that are harvested early for drying purposes, but are inedible until they are dried. Others say that this *amoraic* dispute does not concern the word *novelot* in our *mishnah*, which all agree refers to the latter, but to the term *novelot temarah* in Mishnah Demai 1:1. Various proofs are cited for and against each view.

Analysis focuses on the relationship between the *sugya* and the material found in Yerushalmi Demai 1:1 (21c-d). In keeping with a proposal of Avraham Weiss, it is argued that the dispute in the *sugya* originated in connection with Mishnah Demai, as

suggested in the latter half of the *sugya*. An early editor of our *sugya* thought the dispute could apply equally well to our *mishnah*; a later editor disagreed. The term *ikka de'amri*, which occurs frequently in the *sugya*, is used by the second editor to distinguish between the first and second editorial layers.

***Sugya* 31: “Many Species”**

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:4, Rabbi Judah believes blessings recited over the seven species mentioned in Deuteronomy 8:8 take precedence over blessings for other foods served together with them, while the Sages believe one can choose to recite the blessing over any of the foods served. The editor of our *sugya* assumed that if the blessings are different, all agree that each of them must be recited; hence the dispute in the *mishnah* does not concern the choice of blessing but only the order in which the foods are to be eaten and the blessings recited. Amoraic explanations of the *mishnah* are interpreted by the editor of the *sugya* in accordance with this assumption: some *amoraim* believed the seven species must be eaten first whether the other foods have the same blessing or different ones; others believed the seven species take priority only if the other foods have the same blessing, and only one blessing is required altogether. Similarly, *amoraim* dispute the question of whether there is an order of priority in eating two or more species of the seven.

Analysis indicates that Rabbi Judah and the Sages actually disputed the question of how to determine the main component of the meal, in light of the general rule mentioned in Mishnah Berakhot 6:7, that if two or more foods are served together at a meal, one recites a blessing over the primary component of the meal and exempts the secondary component. The Bavli limited this rule to cases in which one food is clearly served as side dish or condiment for the other; in other cases each food requires its own blessing – hence the explanations of the *mishnah* in our *sugya*. The Yerushalmi, however, understood correctly that the *tannaim* required one blessing only over each meal or course; thus a “main component” must be established every time two or more foods are served with different blessings. Rabbi Judah believed the seven species are automatically the main component of any meal or course in which they are served; the Sages, on the other hand, believed that if there is no clear “main component” one can recite the blessing over whatever food one wishes to eat first. This distinction between Babylonian and Palestinian *halakhah* is reflected in a number of *sugyot* in our chapter, and is mentioned in the Geonic compilation of differences between the *halakhot* of the two communities.

***Sugya* 32: “The Meal”**

This *sugya* deals with the status of fruit and other foods served during or at the end of a bread-based meal (a meal that begins with *hamotzi* and ends with the grace after meals), which are neither an essential component of the meal nor a secondary component accompanying the essential component. A number of Babylonian *amoraim* required a separate blessing before fruit eaten during a meal, but not after it; Rav Sheshet required separate blessings both before and after the fruit, and Rabbi Hiyya required no blessing at all. Rav Papa distinguished between three cases: (1) essential and secondary components of the meal are covered by the blessings before and after the bread; (2) fruit, such as that mentioned above served during the meal, requires a blessing beforehand but not afterwards; (3) desserts require separate blessings before and afterwards, unless the dessert itself is bread (*pat haba'ah bekissanin*), in which case

it requires an additional *hamotzi* blessing beforehand, but the grace recited after the meal as a whole covers the dessert bread as well. The *sugya* effectively does away with both aspects of Rav Papa's ruling regarding desserts: First of all, his requirement to recite an additional *hamotzi* blessing over dessert bread is said to be the opinion of Rabbi Mona, but Samuel and Rav Huna exempted dessert bread both from an additional *hamotzi* blessing and an additional grace after meals; Rav Nahman offers a compromise, distinguishing between quantities of dessert bread eaten. Secondly, Rav Papa's requirement to recite blessings before and/or after eating desserts is said to refer only to desserts eaten after the table is cleared away, or after the hands are washed and/or perfumed for recitation of the grace; in other circumstances desserts are considered an integral component of the meal itself, and are "covered" by the *hamotzi* blessing and the grace after meals.

Analysis indicates that this last view of dessert is actually that of Rabbi Yohanan and the Palestinian *halakhah*; the editor of our *sugya* skillfully modified the original Babylonian *halakhot* to conform to those of the land of Israel. This may also reflect a change in the manner in which dessert was served in Babylonia. In any case, the discrepancy between the laws regarding dessert as summarized by Rav Papa and those at the end of the *sugya* yielded a number of positions among the commentators and halakhic authorities as to the distinction between dessert and the main course. These are surveyed in the commentary.

The summary of the *sugya* provided above assumes the definition of *pat haba'ah bekissanin* suggested in the commentary – it is regular bread served with dessert, usually in small loaves. This explanation (which seems to accord with that of the Tosafist Rabbi Samson of Sens), assumes that this term has nothing to do with the griddle cakes of *sugya* 15 above or other sweet breads, cakes and crackers. Thus the commonly held notion, suggested by many authorities on the basis of Rav Nahman's position in our *sugya*, that such cakes occupy a middle ground between *hamotzi* and *mezonot*, and their blessing depends upon the quantity eaten, is unfounded. Rav Nahman was not dealing with cake or crackers eaten instead of bread, but rather with a large quantity of plain bread eaten at dessert, during a meal which in any case began with bread and ended with grace after meals.

***Sugya* 33: "Wine before the Meal"**

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:5, the blessing over wine drunk before the meal covers wine drunk after the meal as well. In the first part of our *sugya*, this ruling is limited to Sabbaths, holidays and meals held after bathing and bloodletting, at which it is customary to begin and end the meal with wine. Regular weekday meals, however, normally opened with bread, and at such meals even if one were to drink before the meal the blessing over such wine would not cover the wine drunk after the meal. A dispute with regard to wine drunk *during* the weekday meal is brought in the second part of the *sugya*; some *amoraim* believed that it did cover wine drunk after the meal, while others believed it did not.

While traditionally commentators explained that the wine drunk after the meal in question is dessert wine drunk before the recitation of grace, Joseph Tabory has shown that the reference is actually to the cup of wine over which grace itself is recited, which is drunk after grace. Our analysis adduces additional evidence for Tabory's position, and reconstructs the relationship between our *sugya* and the parallel in Yerushalmi Berakhot 6:5 (10c). In Eretz Israel, where the grace was recited

over a cup of wine as a matter of course, no blessing was recited over that wine if wine was drunk before or during the meal. In Babylonia, where wine was less common and recitation of grace was not always accompanied by wine, grace was deemed a distraction necessitating an additional blessing over the wine, unless one could be certain in advance that wine would be brought for grace and one had in mind the grace wine while drinking the aperitif. This was true in Babylonia on Sabbaths and holidays only, at which time the mishnaic law was deemed applicable. Moreover, in Babylonia much wine was served during meals following bathing and bloodletting, including dessert wine preceding grace; this dessert wine, too, is covered by the blessing over the aperitif according to our *sugya* and according to the views of Babylonian *amoraim* cited in the Yerushalmi parallel.

***Sugya* 34: “Cooked Grain”**

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:5, the dominant view, attributed in the *sugya* to the house of Hillel, is that the blessing over bread covers all other food served alongside the bread, including cooked grain, but no blessing over other food covers the bread. The house of Shammai disputes this, but its view is ambiguous, and two interpretations are brought in our *sugya*. According to the first, the house of Shammai did not believe the blessing over bread covered cooked grain or any other foodstuffs. According to the second, the house of Shammai did not believe a blessing over foodstuffs other than bread and cooked grain could cover cooked grain. In the Bavli neither interpretation is deemed authoritative, but in the parallel in Yerushalmi Berakhot 5:5 (10c), the first interpretation is preferred and the second is rejected. Analysis indicates that the second interpretation is to be preferred, but both had pervasive influence on a number of halakhic questions discussed in our chapter.

***Sugya* 35: “Let us Go and Eat”**

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:6, when a group of people recline together at dinner, one recites the *hamotzi* blessing for all; if they eat sitting, each recites his own blessing. This *sugya* contrasts the *mishnah’s* ruling with that of a *baraita*, according to which each member of a group walking together recites his or her own *hamotzi* blessing, while if they decide to sit down and eat one recites the blessing for all. Rav Nahman bar Isaac equates a situation in which a group of people say “let’s go eat” to a situation in which they recline, and the same resolution of the contradiction is provided by “a certain old man” to Rav’s students, who faced this issue when they stopped to eat on their walk home from Rav’s funeral.

In the commentary it is suggested that according to the tannaitic sources, the blessing is recited by one person on behalf of all only if they are reclining at a formal meal or stopping for a picnic while walking on the road together. Rav Nahman bar Isaac expanded this ruling to include those who decide to eat together sitting down indoors as well, because reclining at a formal meal was less common in amoraic times. Analysis indicates that while the story of Rav’s pupils originally referred to the *hamotzi* blessing, as described above, it was interpreted by some as referring to grace after meals; hence Rav Nahman bar Isaac and the editor of our *sugya* felt the need to repeat the ruling of the old man with explicit reference to the *hamotzi* blessing.

***Sugya* 36: “Reclining”**

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:6, when a group of people recline together at dinner, one recites the *hamotzi* blessing for all; if they eat sitting, each recites his own blessing. In our *sugya*, Rabbi Yohanan extends this ruling to include the blessing over wine drunk before the meal as well. Rav disagrees. Two traditions regarding Rav’s position are cited in the *sugya*: according to the first, one may recite the *hagefen* blessing for all even if they are not reclining, while according to the second, no blessing other than *hamotzi* can be recited on behalf of others under any circumstances. A *baraita* is cited in support of Rabbi Yohanan, according to which each diner recites his own blessing over wine served as an aperitif before entering the dining room; but once reclining in the dining room one recites the blessing for all. The Talmud provides somewhat forced explanations of the *baraita* according to each of the traditions attributed to Rav.

Analysis indicates that the second version of Rav’s statement is the correct one; moreover, it accurately reflects the original implication of the *mishnah* and our reconstruction, on the basis of parallel material, of the original form of the *baraita* quoted in our *sugya* as well: each individual must recite his own blessings over food, with the exception of *hamotzi*, which, under certain circumstances, one blesses for all. According to Rav’s original view as expressed in Pesahim 100b each individual must recite his own *hagefen* blessing over *qiddush* wine as well. This position differed with Second Temple practice, the view of the *tanna* Ben Zoma, the view of Rabbi Yohanan in our *sugya*, and the view of later Babylonian *amoraim* influenced by Rabbi Yohanan, cited in Bavli Rosh Hashanah 29 a–b. Under the influence of this alternate conception the first version of Rav’s statement was formulated in our *sugya*, the *baraita* quoted in our *sugya* was emended, and Rav’s position in Pesahim was reinterpreted.

***Sugya* 37: “Wine in the Course of the Meal”**

This *sugya* consists of a single *baraita*, according to which Ben Zoma explained that the individual recites his or her own blessing over wine served in the course of the meal because of the danger of answering “amen” with a throat full of food. Analysis indicates that Ben Zoma was asked about a widespread practice, not about our *mishnah*, which was formulated later. Moreover, Ben Zoma’s explanation of the practice is not the only possibility: as we have seen in the analysis of the last *sugya*, Rabbi Judah the Patriarch and his student Rav believed that one can recite the blessing for all only in the case of *hamotzi*, and only under certain circumstances.

***Sugya* 38: “Called upon to Recite Grace”**

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:6, “the aforementioned says [the blessing] on the incense”, referring according to most commentators to the one who recites the grace and the blessing over the cup of wine accompanying the grace. Our *sugya* infers from this that this person is not the most respected person present at the meal, for if he was, it would be obvious that he should receive these honors – not merely because he received a previous honor, but because he is the most respected person at the meal. This is said to accord with a statement of Rav, according to which he who washes his hands first after the meal is called upon to recite grace, and it is told that Rabbi Judah the Patriarch once asked the young Rav, in the presence of his teacher and mentor Rabbi Hiyya, to wash his hands first, and Rabbi Hiyya explained to Rav that he had been called upon to recite grace.

Analysis indicates that the proof of the *sugya's* contention is the story, not the statement of Rav, which could equally well prove that the most respected person at the table recites Grace. Our *sugya* has been conflated with a similar *sugya* in Bavli Berakhot 46b, where Rav's statement is original and the story is secondary, and which – in direct contrast to our *sugya* – proves that the most respected person at the table washes his hands first and recites grace. The two positions on this matter in fact reflect the difference between Babylonian and Palestinian practice. According to Yerushalmi Berakhot 8:2 (11d), in Babylonia the host or the most respected person at the table recited both *hamotzi* and grace, while in Eretz Israel the latter honor was given to guests, especially young guests who needed to brush up on the grace.

***Sugya* 39: “Spices”**

Mishnah Berakhot 6:6 mentions a blessing recited over incense, but does not elaborate. Our *sugya* consists of a series of *amoraic* rulings regarding the blessing to be recited over each type of scent, and when exactly the blessing is recited.

Analysis of the *sugya* and comparison with the parallel in Yerushalmi Berakhot 6:6 (10d) and tannaitic sources indicate that the blessing over scent developed gradually. In Temple times it was limited to the *havdalah* service on Saturday night. By the end of the tannaitic period, blessings were recited over balsam oil and myrtle, plants with which the land of Israel was associated, any time one smelled these substances. Rav (in the next *sugya*) required a blessing over all scents by analogy to foodstuffs, and his view was adopted in Babylonia, where the limited repertoire of blessings over scent from Eretz Israel was expanded and adapted. This expansion can be traced to the centrality of the perfume industry in Babylonia.

***Sugya* 40: “Rav Zutra bar Tuviah in the name of Rav”**

At the heart of this *sugya* lies a collection of five statements of Rav Zutra bar Tuviah in the name of Rav, the third and fourth of which engender short discussions. The first three concern scent: Rav requires a blessing over all scent on the basis of a homily on Psalm 150:6; he asserts that Israelite men will give forth fragrance in the future on the basis of a homily on Hosea 14:7; and he maintains that God made each individual love his trade (presumably including the tanner, despite the odor involved), on the basis of Ecclesiastes 3:11. On this Rav Papa comments with a popular metaphor, a number of possible interpretations of which are offered in the commentary. The last two statements of Rav have peripheral relevance to the next *sugya*, and presumably were included in the collection to link this *sugya* to the next. The first of these is rather obscure, and its context is missing. A number of possible contexts and meanings are proposed in the commentary.

***Sugya* 41: “Perfuming”**

At the heart of this *sugya* lie three sources presented as *baraitot*, to the first and third of which are appended *amoraic* discussions. The first and second *baraitot* are similar in form and content; both contain disputes between the houses of Shammai and Hillel as to how to hold the wine and spices – in the commentary it is argued that the reference is to *havdalah*. The dispute in the first *baraita* is uncharacteristically decided in favor of the house of Shammai by the *tanna* Rabban Gamliel, and in the ensuing discussion this decision is upheld by a number of *amoraim* and a late editor of the *sugya*, who rejects Rav Papa's attempt to uphold the view of the house of Hillel.

The second *baraita* mentions the possibility of smearing the fragrant oil after *havdalah* on the hair of a servant, unless he is a scholar, for whom the use of fragrant oil in this manner is unseemly; the third *baraita* lists six acts that are inappropriate to a scholar, including the use of perfume. The *amoraic* discussion of this *baraita* explains why each example of behavior is inappropriate to a scholar, and cites parallel sources condemning such behavior.

The first *baraita* is found only in the Bavli; nonetheless, its authenticity can be corroborated on the basis of indirect evidence. The second *baraita* is a variant version of Mishnah Berakhot 8:5, which contains a similar dispute between the houses of Shammai and Hillel as presented by Rabbi Meir; it is shown that the *mishnah* refers to *havdalah* when it is recited at the end of the final Sabbath meal, while our *baraita* refers to *havdalah* when it is recited on its own, without a meal. The third source, concerning behavior inappropriate to a scholar, is presented like the others with the formula *teno rabbanan*, indicating a *baraita*. However, this is only because most of the *items* on the list are of tannaitic origin; analysis indicates that the list itself was compiled in amoraic times and contains amoraic supplements.

***Sugya* 42: “The Fruits of the Sea of Galilee”**

Mishnah Berakhot 6:7 speaks of a case in which bread served with salted fish is deemed secondary to the fish, since it is brought only to temper the salty taste. Our *sugya* interprets this as a reference to “the fruits of the Sea of Galilee”. Various traditions are cited according to which *amoraim* consumed large quantities of these “fruits”; these are followed by traditions regarding abundance in the land of Israel during Temple times, the first of which refers to an abundance of fish paste. Finally two *amoraic* statements are brought concerning the centrality of salt or salted fish and resin – explained in this commentary as balsam oil used to perfume the hands or as incense – at a formal meal.

Medieval commentators are puzzled by the switch from a discussion of salted fish to fruit and back to salted fish, and suggest either that both bread and sweet fruit were eaten to temper the saltiness of the fish, or that bread can be brought to temper the sweetness of fruit just as it is brought to temper the saltiness of fish. Both of these views are rejected in the commentary in favor of a new interpretation, according to which “the fruits of the Sea of Galilee” is a metaphor for fish. These fish were consumed in such great quantity that the bread accompanying them was deemed a secondary component of the meal. A statement in the parallel *sugya* in Yerushalmi Berakhot 6:7 (10d), suggesting that the Mishnah harks back to a period before the Jews of the land of Israel learned to eat like kings, is explained as follows: salted fish was once considered the main component of a simple, one-course Galilean meal, and the bread was then deemed secondary. The Mishnah is referring to this type of meal, which is not to be confused with the [Roman] “royal/imperial” custom, adopted subsequently in amoraic Eretz Israel, of beginning a meal with an appetizer of salted fish. In the latter case, even if the fish is served before the bread, the *hamotzi* blessing must be recited over the bread, since, while it may in fact temper the salty taste of the fish, it also serves as the main component of the main course.

***Sugya* 43: “A Single Blessing as an Abridgement of Three”**

Mishnah Berakhot 6:8 records a dispute between Rabban Gamliel and the Sages with regard to the blessing after food: Rabban Gamliel required recitation of the full

three-blessing grace after eating any of the seven species mentioned in Deuteronomy 8:8; the Sages limited the full grace after meals to meals that included bread, requiring a single blessing after the seven species. Our *sugya* explains that the positions are rooted in differing exegeses of Deuteronomy chapter 8, and provides *amoraic* versions of the single blessing recited after eating from the seven species, which the *amoraim* deem “a single blessing as an abridgement of three”.

Following the view of Avraham Weiss, it is demonstrated in the commentary that the *tannaitic* “single blessing” was not an abridgement of the three blessings of the full grace, but a blessing akin to the *bore nefashot* blessing current after foods other than those included in the seven species (see next *sugya*). This blessing was gradually expanded in Eretz Israel to include elements of the three-blessing grace during the *amoraic* period, and our *sugya* tells of the introduction of the newly expanded versions of the blessing in Babylonia.

Sugya 44: “Bore Nefashot”

The Sages required no blessing at all after eating foods other than those of the seven species according to Tosefta Berakhot 4:15. Palestinian *amoraim* did recite short blessings after foods other than the seven species, but according to Yerushalmi Berakhot 6:1 (10b), they were following the view of Rabban Gamliel, not the sages. The Bavli, however, believed that Rabban Gamliel required a lengthy blessing after these foods, and reinterpreted these short blessings, which it conflated into a single formula, *bore nefashot*, as a negligible blessing required, or suggested, even by the Sages. Babylonian *amoraim* differed as to which foods exactly engendered this blessing: some limited it to meat and eggs, others expanded it to include vegetables, and still others included water. Mishnah Niddah 6:10, which states explicitly that certain things require a blessing beforehand but not afterward is interpreted as referring to blessings over commandments or scents, rather than food. The *sugya* concludes with a discussion of the nutritional value of eggs.

Analysis ties the Babylonian insistence on a concluding blessing for all foods, including vegetables and water, with Zoroastrian practice, which strictly forbade eating a meal or vegetables or drinking water unless ritual formulae are uttered beforehand and afterward, delineating the eating period as a sacred time during which discourse is forbidden.

Sugya 45: “Vegetable”

According to Mishnah Berakhot 6:8, Rabbi Akiva required recitation of the full three-blessing grace even after vegetables, if these constituted a person’s meal. The *sugya* opens with a statement of Rav Ashi, limiting this ruling to cabbage stalks, which are deemed sufficiently filling to substitute for bread. Mention of the nutritional value of cabbage leads to a long series of *tannaitic* and *amoraic* statements and stories regarding the nutritional value of vegetables and other foods.

In the commentary various reasons for Rav Ashi’s insistence on limiting the scope of Rabbi Akiva’s statement are suggested, and alternate interpretations of Rabbi Akiva’s position are provided. Each tradition regarding the nutritional value of various foods is analyzed in light of parallel material, and various interpretative cruxes are explained.

Sugya 46: “Thirst”

Mishnah Berakhot 6:8 requires that a blessing be recited over water drunk “for one’s thirst”. The Talmud explains that this comes to exclude a person who drinks water because he is choking on a piece of meat. Analysis traces this notion to Mishnah Shabbat 14:3, which implies that ingesting medicine is not considered “drinking”.

Sugya 47: “Rabbi Tarfon”

Mishnah Berakhot 6:8 records a *tannaitic* dispute as to the blessing before drinking water: according to the Sages it is *shehakol*, according to Rabbi Tarfon it is *bore nefashot*. According to the *sugya*, Rava bar Rav Hanan asked Abaye for a ruling in this dispute, and Abaye told him to “go out and see what the people do”.

Three interpretations of the *tannaitic* dispute and its adjudication by Abaye have been suggested: (1) According to an opinion cited by Rashi in Eruvin 14b, the Sages recited *shehakol* before drinking water and no blessing afterward; Rabbi Tarfon recited *bore nefashot* after drinking water, and no blessing beforehand, and Abaye ruled that the popular custom of reciting both blessings should be followed. (2) According to Saul Lieberman, the Sages recited *shehakol* before drinking water; Rabbi Tarfon recited a short blessing “Blessed art Thou... creator of many souls and their lackings” before drinking water, and Abaye ruled like the Sages, in accordance with Babylonian custom. (3) According to Rashi and most others, the Sages recited *shehakol* before drinking water; Rabbi Tarfon recited the full *bore nefashot* before drinking water, and Abaye ruled, in accordance with the popular compromise, that the view of the Sages be followed beforehand, and Rabbi Tarfon’s blessing be delayed until after drinking.

Analysis indicates that the last interpretation of the *tannaitic* dispute is correct; however, Abaye did not rule in favor of a compromise. “Go out and see what the people do” indicates that some Babylonians followed the Sages and others followed Rabbi Tarfon and recited *bore nefashot* before drinking water. This is corroborated by a *sugya* in Bavli Berakhot 12a, which is best explained if we assume that for some Babylonians, the blessing before drinking water and beer was *bore nefashot*, not *shehakol*.