

בס"ד

Skills for Torah Sheb'al Peh

Series 4: *Torat Ha'Amoraim*

Unit 4.1

Background to the Amoraic Period

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Bonayich Educational Services, Ltd., 2011

Bonayich Educational Services
acknowledges with gratitude
the kind assistance of the
American Hebrew Academy
in the funding of this series of booklets,
and the valuable feedback of members of
the Academy's Jewish Studies staff.

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A Introduction

In Series 2 and Series 3, we learned about the *Tannaim*, the *Mishnah* and other Tannaitic literature. We learned that the period of the *Tannaim* – six generations following Hillel *HaZaken* - came to a close with the death of Rabbi Y'hudah *HaNasi* approximately 1800 years ago, and with the passing of his colleagues within several years after him. Following the *Tannaim* are the "*Amoraim*" – meaning "speakers" – who were eight generations of leading scholars and heads of *Y'shivot* in the two hundred and eighty years after the death of Rebbe, concluding in approximately 4260.

The passage from the period of the *Tannaim* to that of the *Amoraim* was not marked by a special event or formal decree – the first *Amoraim* were simply the students and colleagues of the last *Tannaim*, and saw themselves as the direct continuation of the learning and teaching in the *Y'shivot*. In many sources, the statements of the early *Amoraim* follow the teachings of their masters the *Tannaim* in a smooth and seamless continuum. It is only with the passage of several generations that the *Amoraim* begin to look back on the *Tannaim* as a separate period, sacrosanct and elevated from afar.

The entire Talmudic enterprise relied on the brilliance and determination of the *Amoraim* to preserve and develop the *Masorah*. They accomplished this in a period of time fraught with dangers of the most immediate kind, and displayed courage and commitment beyond our imagination. In this Series of booklets, we will learn about the *Amoraim* and their teachings as the next natural stage in the study of *Torah Sheb'al Peh*.

In this booklet, our concentration is on the historical background to the period of the *Amoraim*, while in subsequent booklets of the Series we will study the forms, styles, functions and contents of *Torat Ha'Amoraim*, and how we can learn their teachings most effectively.

B The Amoraic Period in *Eretz Yisrael*

General Historical Background

The Amoraic period in *Eretz Yisrael*, like the Tannaitic period which preceded it, takes place against the backdrop of Roman rule.

1. What languages do you think the *Amoraim* of *Eretz Yisrael* spoke?

2. What cultural and religious challenges may have faced the *Amoraim* in *Eretz Yisrael* during this period?

The last two generations of *Tannaim* saw an unusually good relationship between the family of the *Nasi* and the Roman rulers of the Severan dynasty, typified by the legendary stories about the personal friendship between Antoninus and Rebbe.¹ These stories teach us that the time of Rabbi Y'hudah *NaNasi* was one of remarkable improvement in the relationship with the Roman Empire.

However, the Severan dynasty came to a close shortly after Rebbe's death in approximately 3980, and the Empire deteriorated into fifty years of chaos corresponding to the first two generations of *Amoraim* in *Eretz Yisrael*. This chaos was marked by the breakdown of the central beurocracy of Rome and the increased influence of local Roman rulers and their armies.

3. What might have been the advantages and disadvantages of this rise in local control?

4. What could have been expected implications of this period?

¹ See, for instance: Sanhedrin 91a-b, Avodah Zarah 10a-b, B'rachot 57b. However, it is not clear historically who was the specific Caesar spoken of in these stories.

In addition, there was constant warfare between the eastern sections of the Roman Empire and the new regime in Persia. The Parthians had just been conquered by the Sassanians shortly before the end of the Severans, and the Sassanian rulers were intent on the defeat of Rome. The Sassanians carried on campaigns against Rome time after time, separated by a decade or less one from the other, and they succeeded in conquering significant portions of the eastern Roman Empire such as Antioch in Syria. *Eretz Yisrael* itself did not actually come under Sassanian control, but the constant warfare meant ongoing disturbance to the life of the people in *Eretz Yisrael* as they catered against their will to the needs of Roman armies headed eastward.

5. What specific problems could the Roman armies moving east cause for the Jews in *Eretz Yisrael* at the time, and what would have been the results of these problems for the Jewish life in Israel?

The Roman chaos finally came to a close with the rise of the emperor Diocletian around 4045, and he re-established a centralized rule which stabilized the area during the third Amoraic generation in *Eretz Yisrael*. However, the new power of Christian authorities began to change the reality in the land. The Christian leaders were rabidly anti-Jewish, and as they grew in power – leading to the conversion to Christianity of the emperor Constantine himself in 4079 – actions and legislation against the Jews and the Rabbinic leadership grew as well.

6. Why would the growing Christian influence be so anti-Jewish?

7. The Romans were pagans – polytheists. Why would they have been more tolerant of the Jews?

The fourth and fifth generations of *Amoraim* attempted to maintain whatever leadership they could, but the regular destruction of synagogues by roaming bands of crazed monks and their followers, and the constant erosion of the powers of the *Sanhedrin* by imperial decrees, made life difficult. By the end of the fifth generation around the year 4130, the *y'shivot* were breaking down and the Amoraic period all but ended. One clear sign of the times was the publication by the *Nasi* at the end of the fourth generation of the formulae for

the calculation of the Jewish calendar. There was a brief period of hope in the rebuilding of the *Bet Mikdash* and the rebuilding of the Jewish community, brought on by the declarations of the pagan emperor Julianus around the end of the fifth generation, but his death after a few short years in power brought these hopes crashing down, and the Jewish community in Israel once again was mercilessly dominated by the Christian state clergy. The closing of the *N'si'ut* and the *Sanhedrin* around 4185 can be seen as the formal end to the Amoraic period in *Eretz Yisrael*.

8. Why would the publication of the formulae for the calendar mark the coming of the end of Jewish leadership in *Eretz Yisrael*?

9. How would the closing of the *Sanhedrin* affect the relationship of the Rabbinic community of *Eretz Yisrael* with Jewish communities of the Diaspora?

In light of the above historical summary, the Amoraic period in *Eretz Yisrael* can be seen overall in three phases: two generations of building in a chaotic environment, one generation of consolidation in a stabilized environment, and two generations of decline in a new Christian environment. This can be seen in the following statistics of the number of *Amoraim* known to us from *Eretz Yisrael*:

Generation	Amoraim
1	78
2	87
3	228
4	135
5	84
6	0
7	0
8	0

10. According to the above statistics, in which generation would you look for the most powerful and successful leaders? Why?

The Y'shivot and Leading Amoraim in Eretz Yisrael

At the close of the Tannaitic period, the *Nasi* and the *Sanhedrin* were in Tzippori, under the strong leadership of Rabbi Y'hudah HaNasi. After his death, both institutions remained in Tzippori, but by the order of Rabbi Y'hudah HaNasi, the *Nasi* who followed him was no longer the head of the *Sanhedrin*:

SOURCE
1

Talmud Bavli, Massechet K'tubot Daf 103a-b

רבי יהודה הנשיא) אָמַר לְהֵן:
לְחַכְמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי צָרִיד, נִכְנָסוּ אֶצְלוֹ חַכְמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
אָמַר לְהֵן:
אֵל תִּסְפְּדוּנִי בְּעִירֹת,
וְהוֹשִׁיבוּ יְשִׁיבָה לְאַחַר שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם.
שְׁמַעוֹן בְּנֵי חָכָם,
גְּמַלְיָאֵל בְּנֵי נָשִׂיא,
חַנִּינָא בַר חַמָּא יֹשֵׁב בְּרֵאשׁ...
לֹא קִיבַל רַבִּי חַנִּינָא,
שֶׁהָיָה רַבִּי אֶפְסֵס גְּדוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים וּמִחֻצָּה.
יְתִיב רַבִּי אֶפְסֵס בְּרִישָׁא וְיְתִיב רַבִּי חַנִּינָא אַבְרָא... (=רבי אפס ישב בראש, ורבי חנינא ישב בחוץ...)
נַח נִפְשִׁיָה דְרַבִּי אֶפְסֵס וְיְתִיב רַבִּי חַנִּינָא בְּרִישָׁא... (=רבי אפס נפטר, וישב רבי חנינא בראש...)

11. Why do you think the positions were split up?

12. Why did Rabbi Chanina not accept the position at first? What does this teach us about his character?

In the next generation, Rabbi Yochanan ben Napacha became the leading scholar and moved the great *Sanhedrin* to T'veryah where the Romans granted special tax privileges to the scholars. Rabbi Y'hudah HaNasi's grandson, known as Rabbi Y'hudah N'si'a, became the *Nasi* in T'veryah. From this time forward, the *y'shivah* in T'veryah became the lead institution in *Eretz Yisrael* due to the presence of the *Sanhedrin*. Rabbi Yochanan and his colleagues were scholars of enormous depth and breadth, and his personal leadership was powerful, dynamic and irresistibly charismatic. Hundreds of the greatest students from around *Eretz Yisrael* and from the Diaspora came to T'veryah to learn from him. His students included remarkable personalities from all backgrounds and all walks of life. Here, we will give special mention to two – one from *Eretz Yisrael* and one from *Bavel*.

This first source tells the story of Rabbi Yochanan's remarkable relationship with his prize pupil – a highwayman turned Rabbi and scholar.

SOURCE
2

Talmud Bavli, Massechet Bava Metzia Daf 84a

יומא חד הוה קא סחי רבי יוחנן בירדנא.
חזייה ריש לקיש ושׁוור לירדנא אבתריה.
אמר ליה: חילף לאורייתא!
אמר ליה: שופרף לנשי!
אמר ליה: אי הדרת בך יהיבנא לך אחותי, דשפירא מינא.
קביל עליה... אקרייה ואתנייה ושׁנייה גברא רבא.

13. What does such a story tell us about the personality of Rabbi Yochanan, and about the relationship between the *y'shivah* of the *Sanhedrin* and the people?

Also coming to study with Rabbi Yochanan in T'veryah was a large group of fine scholars who left home, family, Rabbis and friends in *Bavel* to make their way west to *Eretz Yisrael*. This was no simple matter – the passage from *Sassanian Bavel* to *Roman Eretz Yisrael* was dangerous and volatile!

SOURCE
3

Talmud Bavli, Massechet Shabbat Daf 41a

רבי זירא הוה קא משתמיט מדרב יהודה, דבעי למיסק לארעא דישׁראל.
דאמר רב יהודה: כל העולה מבבל לארץ ישׁראל עובר בעשה,
שנאמר: "בבלה יובאו ושמה יהיו" (ירמיהו כז כב).
אמר: איזיל ואשמע מיניה מילתא ואיתי ואיסק...

SOURCE
4

Talmud Bavli, Massechet Bava Metzia Daf 85a

רבי זירא – כי סליק לארעא דישׁראל יתיב מאה תעניתא,
דלשתכח גמרא בבלאה מיניה,
כי היכי דלא נטרדיה...

14. Why do you think these great scholars wanted to leave their teachers in *Bavel*?

15. What would be the difficulties of a student coming to *Eretz Yisrael* to learn?

In addition to the *y'shivah* of the *Sanhedrin* in T'veryah, there were at least three other significant *y'shivot* in *Eretz Yisrael*. In Kesarya, the *y'shivah* was founded by Rabbi Oshaya, a student/colleague of Rabbi Y'hudah HaNasi. In the third generation, a student of Rabbi Yochanan named Rabbi Abahu led the way in Kesarya, and there he dealt with a strong local Christian academy led by none other than Origen, the famous Church father. Rabbi Abahu exerted influence in the city, but to protect his community had to carry on unending polemics with the Christians.

In Lod, the *y'shivah* known as the "*Y'shivah of the South*" was founded by Bar Kappara and Rabbi Y'hoshua ben Levi. In the north, in the village of Achb'ra, Rabbi Yanai led a small but significant *y'shivah* – the great Rabbi Yochanan ben Napacha was his student! Of course, learning also continued in Tzippori, the home of the *Nasi*.

Below, the listings of some main *Talmide Chachamim* of the various *y'shivot*, by generation:

Teverya

- דור 2 - רבי יוחנן בן נפחא, רבי שמעון בן לקיש (ריש לקיש), רבי אלעזר בן פדת
- דור 3 - רבי אמי, רבי אסי, רבי אבא, רבי זירא, רבי חייא בר אבא, רבי יצחק נפחא
- דור 4 - רבי ירמיה בר תחליפא, רבי יונה

Lod – also called "*Y'shivat HaDarom*"

- דור 1 - רבי אלעזר הקפר (בר קפרא), רבי יהושע בן לוי (וב')
- דור 2 - רבי תנחום בר חנילאי
- דור 3 - רבי שמעון בן פזי

Kesarya

- דור 1 - רבי הושעיה
- דור 2 - רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא
- דור 3 - רבי אבהו



C The Amoraic Period in Bavel

General Historical Background - the Amoraic Period in Bavel

Jews lived in *Bavel* since ancient times. The destruction of the first *Bet Mikdash*, and the exile of large numbers of Jews to the East, meant the establishment of the single largest Jewish community outside of *Eretz Yisrael*:

SOURCE
5

Talmud Bavli, Massechet M'gillah Daf 29a

תנא:

רבי שמעון בן יוחי אומר: בוא וראה כמה חביבין ישראל לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא,
שבכל מקום שגלו שכינה עמהן...

גלו לבבל שכינה עמהן, שנאמר: "למענכם שלחתי בבבלה" (ישעיהו כג).

בבבל היכא? (=בבבל איפה?)

אמר אביי: בבי כנישתא דהוצל ובבי כנישתא דשף ויתב בנהרדעא.

(... בבית הכנסת של הוצל, ובבית הכנסת ששף וישיב בנהרדעא)

רשיי שם

דשף ויתב - ובנאה יכניה וסיעתו מאבנים ועפר שהביאו עמהן בגלותן,

לקיים מה שנאמר (תהלים קב) "כי רצו עבדיך את אבניה ואת עפרה יחוננו".

This means that for close to eight hundred years before the close of the Tannaitic period, Jews were in *Bavel*, building, developing their community and, of course, learning Torah and establishing their customs and traditions.

16. What would be the concerns of a Jewish community in exile, as opposed to the indigenous Jewish community in *Eretz Yisrael*? How would this affect religious leadership?

17. What languages did the Jews of *Bavel* need to speak? How would this be reflected in their texts?

The Jews in *Bavel* lived under Babylonian rule during the initial exile, Persian and Median rule during the period of the building of the second *Bet Mikdash*, and then under Seleucid Hellenistic rule after the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great. The Parthians from Iran eventually conquered large sections of the Seleucid kingdom, and the Jews of *Bavel* lived under their rule until close to the end of the Tannaitic period. The Parthians ran a feudal kingdom, allowing ethnic minorities self-rule, and the Jews of Babylonia enjoyed relative independence under their "*Resh Galuta*" or "Head of the Exile," who was close to having the status of a Davidic monarch in the independent community. The Parthians gave way to the Sassanids at the beginning of the Amoraic period, and the relationship of the Sassanids with the Rabbis and the Jewish community was one of master and subject. However, things settled down, and relatively peaceful times were enjoyed in *Bavel* from the second Amoraic generation on. As time passed, however, the Sassanid's Zoroastrian leaders asserted influence and made life exceptionally difficult for the Jews of *Bavel*, and small rebellions were seen from time to time.

18. What was the main difference between Judaism and Zoroastrianism? Why was the clash between them so painful?

The Y'shivot and Leading Amoraim in Bavel

During the Tannaitic period, we know of several *Tannaim* from *Bavel*, such as Rabbi Natan, but very little is known of the Torah institutions or traditions there. The curtain rises at the opening of the Amoraic period with the return of the *Bavli* Rabbi Abba Arika (known as Rav) to *Bavel* after a long stay in *Eretz Yisrael*, and we are witness to a well developed community with institutions and leadership. The main center was in N'hardea, where Shmuel was the head of the *y'shivah*. Shmuel was a man of tremendous erudition: a leading Torah scholar, an astronomer and scientist, a physician, and well respected by the non-Jewish population as well. Rav – a prime pupil of Rabbi Y'hudah *HaNasi*, came first to N'hardea, but soon left and established his own *y'shivah* in Sura to the South. As Shmuel's study was based on the customs and traditions of the local community of *Bavel*, and Rav's study was based on the *Mishnah* and customs and traditions of *Eretz Yisrael*, a dichotomy between the two approaches was established that would accompany Torah study in *Bavel* for generations.

19. What do you think happened when customs of *Bavel* and *Eretz Yisrael* clashed?

20. Do you think the two traditions could be integrated? How?

It is said that in Rav's time, hundreds of full time students learned in the *y'shivah*!² However, this was not the sum total of Rav's influence in *Bavel*. In Sura, the custom of *Yarche Kallah* was established. During the months of Adar and Elul, when agriculture was dormant, thousands of common people would pour into Sura to hear lessons in Torah, as Rav spread the *Torat Eretz Yisrael* he brought with him from T'verya.

Near the end of the first generation of *Amoraim*, N'hardea was invaded and destroyed by the army of Tadmor, and the Rabbis re-established their center in a more northerly location, in Pumbedita. During the second and third generations, the Sura and Pumbedita *y'shivot* operated concurrently:

Gen.	Sura	N'hardea/Pumbedita
1	Rav	Shmuel
2	Rav Huna	Rav Y'hudah
3	Rav Chisda	Rabba/Rav Yosef

² See Talmud Bavli, Massechet K'tubot, 106a

In the fourth generation, Sura almost ceased functioning, and did not revive until the sixth generation around 4130. Pumbedita continued to thrive through the fourth generation under the leadership of Abaye, Rabba's nephew and adopted son. When he died, the *y'shivah* was moved temporarily to M'choza on the Tigris River, under the leadership of Rava. This was a pivotal time for Amoraic traditions, as Rava had learned in both Sura under Rav Chisda, and under Rav Yosef and Abaye in Pumbedita. Together with local M'chozan Torah traditions he learned in his youth and throughout his life from his own personal master, Rav Nachman bar Ya'akov, he attempted to integrate and synthesize the teachings of the various *y'shivot* into a coherent whole.

When he died, the *y'shivah* was returned to Pumbedita, and functioned there until the end of the eighth generation. The students of Rava from M'choza also led *y'shivot* in other locations, such as Neresh, and contributed to the re-invigoration of Sura in the late fifth and early sixth generation.

In a suburb of Sura, known as M'ta M'chasia, the southern *y'shivah* was revived in the sixth generation by a remarkable personality named Rav Ashi. He was a student of Rava's students, and his *y'shivah* functioned as the second most significant *y'shivah* of Bavel until the end of the eighth generation.

In short, the history of the *y'shivot* in Bavel can be summarized as the flow of four main centers:

1. Sura: Generations 1-3 – Mostly learning method from *Eretz Yisrael*
2. N'hardea/Pumbedita: Generations 1-4 - Mostly *Bavli* learning method and customs
3. M'choza: Generations 4-5 – Integration of Sura and Pumbeditan traditions
4. Sura/M'ta M'chasia and Pumbedita: of Generations 6-8 – Summarizes and closes Amoraic discussions

Below, the main leaders of these four centers by their generations:

Nehardea

דור 1 - שמואל, קרנא, רב שילא

דור 2 - רב יהודה בר יחזקאל, רמי בר יחזקאל, רב חייא בר אשי

דור 3 - רב נחמן בר יעקב

Pumbedita

דור 2 - רב יהודה בר יחזקאל, רב אדא בר אהבה

דור 3 - רב יוסף, רבה בר נחמני

דור 4 - אבוי, רב דימי מנהרדעא

דור 5 - רב ביבי בר אבוי, רב זביד, רב חמא

Sura/Kafri

- דור 1 - רב (רבי אבא בר איבו), רבה בר חנה, רב אסי, רב ירמיה בר אבא, רב כהנא א'
- דור 2 - רב אדא בר אהבה, רבי אלעזר בן פדת, רב הונא, רב המנונא, רב חייא בר אשי, רב חייא בר רב, רב יהודה בר יחזקאל, רב חייא בר אבא
- דור 3 - רב חסדא, רב ששת, רב אושעיא, רבה בר רב הונא, רבה בר נחמני, רמי בר חמא

Mechoza/Neresh

- דור 2 - רבה בר אבוה, רב עמרם
- דור 3 - רב נחמן בר יעקב, רב יוסף בר חמא
- דור 4 - רבא, רב נחמן בר יצחק, רב רחומי
- דור 5 - רבינא א', רב כהנא ה', רב פפא, רב הונא בריה דרב יהושע

Sura/Meta Mechasia

- דור 6 - רב אשי, רבינא ב', רב יימר, מרימר
- דור 7 - רבינא ג', מר בר רב אשי, רב אחא מדיפתי
- דור 8 - רבה תוספאה, רבינא בר רב הונא



D Connections between the *Y'shivot* in *Eretz Yisrael* and *Bavel*

The two centers of learning – *Eretz Yisrael* and *Bavel* – were not isolated one from the other. First of all, the *Talmide Chachamim* of *Bavel* saw themselves as subordinate to the *Sanhedrin* in *Eretz Yisrael* and operating in their agency³, and they were therefore in constant contact to verify their decisions and approaches to various issues.

Even more significantly, there was a regular flow of students who travelled back and forth from *Eretz Yisrael* to *Bavel* and back, cross-pollinating the centers with the Torah from all *y'shivot*. These itinerants were called **נחותאי** – “descenders” – and they made a critical contribution to the development of learning in the Amoraic period.

25. What were the advantages and disadvantages of Torah transmission through the **נחותאי**?

26. From what we have learned above, can you predict in which generations the **נחותאי** would have been most active? Why?

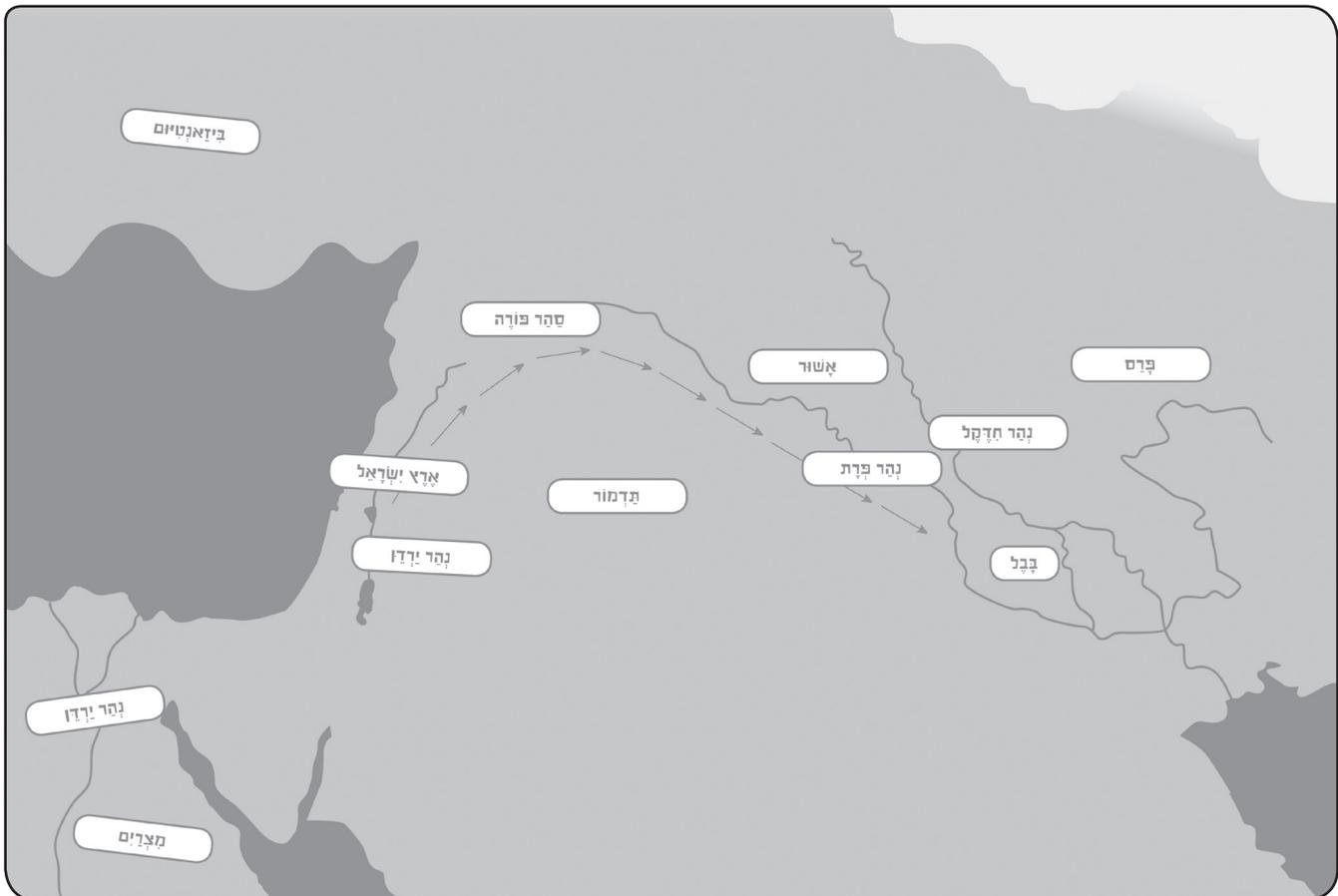
The **נחותאי** would generally travel from T'veryah to *Bavel* through the Fertile Crescent – north from T'veryah into Lebanon and Syria, to the headwaters of the Euphrates, and then float south down the river into Mesopotamia and the region of the *y'shivot*.

27. At which *Bavli y'shivah* would the **נחותאי** coming from *Eretz Yisrael* appear first? Explain!

The **נחותאי** began their important work in the late second and early third generation, with

³ See Talmud Bavli, Massechet Gittin 88b, Massechet Bava Kamma 84b.

the *Amora Ulla*, a student of Rabbi Elazar ben P'dat and Rabbi Yochanan ben Napacha. Following Ulla, other **נחותאי** of the third and fourth generations developed the transmission process to a science. Especially well known are two **נחותאי** – Rav Dimi and Rabbi Avin (=Ravin), who were active in the fourth generation, as students of Rabbi Yochanan's students. It is important to keep in mind that these itinerant *Amoraim* regularly risked their lives to fulfill their mission. Their travel path took them through the lines of the Roman legions, and through the enemy lines of the Sassanid armies, through unsettled areas and without access to Jewish communities for food and accommodation – all to ensure that *y'shivot* in *Bavel* would remain connected to the fountains of Torah knowledge in the Sanhedrin.



Naturally, the **נחותאי** did not always transmit exactly the same thing in the same formulation – there were often disagreements between them as to what Rabbi Yochanan or Resh Lakish said, or how they said it. In cases like this, a real problem could be created.

28. In cases of varying transmissions, how do you think the *Bavli Talmide Chachamim* solved the problem?

29. No doubt, when the נחוצאי returned to *Eretz Yisrael*, they brought *Bavli* teachings back with them. How do you think the *Talmide Chachamim* of *Eretz Yisrael* related to them?

The connection between *Torat Eretz Yisrael* and *Torat Bavel* was even greater than the amazing work of the נחוצאי. In the *Bavli*, there are thousands of teachings from *Eretz Yisrael*, and only a fraction of them are explicitly marked as having been transmitted by the נחוצאי. In the same way, there are hundreds of *Bavli* traditions in the *Talmud* of *Eretz Yisrael*! From this fact we can learn that even though the authority of the *Sanhedrin* was stronger than that of the *Amoraim* in *Bavel*, the *Amoraim* of *Eretz Yisrael* still studied the statements of *Amoraim* from *Bavel*, and their tradition⁴. It is still a matter of research to determine how all these teachings made it back and forth, and how they were integrated into the traditions passed down from one generation to the other in each center. One of the most significant puzzles in this area of research is that among the transmitted traditions, there are many, many teachings that are found transmitted to the opposite *Talmud*, but are not to be found in the *Talmud* of their home country!

30. Based on the above, how can we be sure that we are getting the most complete picture of *Torat Ha'Amoraim* when we learn *Talmud*?

These generations of *Amoraim* – five in *Eretz Yisrael* and eight in *Bavel* – constitute direct and uninterrupted tradition from the six generations of *Tannaim*. Together, they form a chain of fourteen generations, and their Torah is the bedrock of what was going to become the two *Talmudim* – the *Talmud Bavli* and the *Talmud* of *Eretz Yisrael*, about which we will learn in the coming booklets of Series 4 and in Series 5.

⁴ There is a great deal to discuss regarding the relationship of the *Amoraim* of *Eretz Yisrael* to the *Amoraim* of *Bavel*. For instance, see *Massechet Chullin* 95b, where Rabbi Yochanan related to Rav and Sh'muel as his teachers, because they were older than him. In distinction to this, there are a number of places in the *Talmud* that we see that the *Amoraim* of *Eretz Yisrael* related less respectfully to the Sages of *Bavel*. See, for instance, *Massechet P'sachim* 34b, *Massechet Yoma* 57a, *Massechet Z'vachim* 60b, and elsewhere, that Rabbi Yirmiyah said things like "since they (*Amoraim* of *Bavel*) live in a dark land, they say things that are less than worthy." That is, since they live in the Exile, their Torah is less worthy. However, from the fact mentioned in the body of the text we learn that the respectful approach was more prevalent.

E Summary

In this unit, we have learned about the historical background to the Amoraic period in *Eretz Yisrael* and *Bavel*. We have studied the general historical backdrop to the period in the two centers, the various *Y'shivot* in the two centers over the generations of the period, and how the learning of Torah proceeded during this time.

In the coming booklets, we will learn how to learn *Torat Ha'Amoraim*, in its varying styles and formats, and we will come to appreciate the tremendous contribution of the *Amoraim* to the ongoing adventure of *Torah Sheb'al Peh*!

Source Translations

Source #1 -

(Rabbi Y'hudah *HaNasi*) said to them:
"I need the scholars of Israel!" The scholars of Israel came to him.
He said to them:
"Do not eulogize me in the villages,
and reconvene the *Yeshivah* after thirty days (of mourning).
My son Shimon will be chief scholar,
my son Gamaliel *Nasi*,
Chanina bar Chama shall sit at the head..."
Rabbi Chanina refused to accept it,
since Rabbi Appes was older by two and a half years.
Rabbi Appes sat at the head, and Rabbi Chanina sat outside...
Rabbi Appes passed away and Rabbi Chanina sat at the head...

Source #2

One day, Rabbi Yochanan was bathing in the Jordan river.
R"Sh (Rabbi Shimon) Lakish saw him and went into the river after him.
He said to him: "Your strength should be for Torah!"
He said to him: "Your beauty should be for women!"
He said to him: "If you become a ba'al t'shuvah,
I'll give you my sister, who is more beautiful than me!"
He agree... he taught him Mikra and Mishnah, and made him a great man.

Source #3

Rabbi Zera wanted to avoid Rav Y'hudah,
because he wanted to go up to *Eretz Yisrael*,
and Rav Y'hudah used to say: anyone who goes up from *Bavel* to *Eretz Yisrael*
is transgressing a positive commandment, as it says:
(*Yirmiyahu* 27) "They shall be brought to *Bavel* and there shall they be."
He said: I will go and hear a word from him, and then I will go up..."

Source #4

Rabbi Zera – when he went up to *Eretz Yisrael* he fasted for a hundred days
inorder to forget the learning traditions of *Bavel*
so they wouldn't disturb him...

Source #5

It is taught:
Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: Come and see how dear Israel is to the Holy One, Blessed
be He. Everywhere they are in exile, the Divine Presence is with them...
When they were exiled to *Bavel*, the Divine Presence was with them, as it says:
(*Y'shayahu* 43) ... "For your sake I was sent to *Bavel*..."
Where in *Bavel*?
Abaye said:
the synagogue of Hutzal, and the synagogue that "flew and landed" in N'hardea.

Rashi (ibid):
"that flew and landed" - and Y'chanyah and his party built it from the stones and earth they
brought with them, to fulfill what it says: (Psalms 102)
"...for your servants have desired its stones, and built from its earth..."

