

CHAPTER II.

CONCERNING THE READING OF THE MEGILLA--BY WHOM, WHERE, AND IN WHAT LANGUAGES.

MISHNA: Anyone who reads the Megilla in an irregular manner does not fulfil his duty; nor if he reads it by heart, or translated in any language which he does not understand. It is lawful, however, to read to those that know no Hebrew in a foreign language which they understand; if they have heard it in (the original language with) Assyrian characters, they have also done their duty (though they have not understood the Hebrew). Should anyone read it so as to make long pauses between the parts and slumber meanwhile, he will have fulfilled his duty. If anyone should read the Megilla while writing, expounding, or correcting it, with the intention of fulfilling his duty, it is fulfilled; but not, if he had no such intention. If the Megilla was written with paint, ruddle, gum, vitriol black, on papyrus, or on rough vellum, the duty is not fulfilled, but it must be written in Assyrian characters, in a book, on good parchment, and with ink.

GEMARA: Whence do we deduce this? Said Rabha: It is written [Esther, ix. 28]: "And these days are remembered and celebrated." The remembering is compared to the celebrating, as the celebration cannot be earlier, because the 15th day cannot precede the 14th; so in remembering, the second chapter cannot be read before the first. We have learned in a Tosephta that the same is the case with the Hallel Prayer, and the saying of Shema. And whence is this deduced? Said Rabba: Because it is written [Ps. cxiii. 3,]: "From the rising of the sun unto his going down, the name of the Lord is praised (as the sun does not go backward, so the praises of the Lord). R. Joseph said: From the following passage [Ps. cxviii. 24]: "This is the day which the Lord has made" (as the day progresses without irregularity, so is to be the prayer). R. Ivia says: From the following passage [ibid. cxiii. 2]: "*Let* the name of the Lord be blessed" (*let* it be as it is). And R. Na'hman

bar Itz'hak, and according to others R. A'ha bar Jacob, says: From [ibid. 2]: "From this time forth and for evermore" (as time progresses regularly, so should the prayer be).

The rabbis taught: Whence do we deduce that we should mention the Patriarchs in the prayer? Because it is written [Ps. xxix. 1]: "Ascribe unto the Lord, ye sons of the mighty" (by mighty are meant the Patriarchs). And whence do we deduce that we should mention in the prayer the power of God? Because it is written [ibid.]: "Ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength." And whence do we deduce that His Holiness must be mentioned? Because it is written [ibid. 2]: "Ascribe unto the Lord the glory of his name; bow down to the Lord in the beauty of holiness." And from what did they see that we should pray for Wisdom after Holiness is mentioned? Because it is written [Is. xxix. 23]: "Then will they sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and the God of Israel will they reverence"; and in the succeeding verse: "They also that were erring in spirit

shall acquire understanding." And why do we mention Repentance after Wisdom? Because it is written [Is. vi. 10]: "Lest his heart understand, and he will repent, and be healed." If so, we ought to mention Healing after Repentance? It would not be proper, because it is written [ibid. Iv. 7]: "And let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Pardon is therefore prayed for after Repentance. But why is preference given to this verse over that verse? There is another passage [Ps. ciii. 3]: "Who forgiveth all thy iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases. Who redeemeth from the pit thy life." Shall we assume that Redemption and Healing come after Forgiveness--in the verse above quoted it is written, "he will repent and be healed"? Not healing from disease is meant, but the forgiveness is a healing. And why did they mention Redemption in the seventh Benediction? Said Rabha: Because it is known they will be redeemed in the seventh year (in Sanhedrin it is said that in the last of the seven years before Messiah they will be redeemed). And why do they pray for Healing in the eighth Benediction? Said R. A'ha, because circumcision takes place on the eighth day, and requires a healing. And why do they pray for the Blessing of the Year in the ninth Benediction? Said R. Alexandri: That is for those who raise the prices, as it is written [Ps. x. 15]: "Break thou the arm of the wicked and of the bad man." And this the ninth psalm. (This whole psalm, Rashi

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explains, speaks only of people buying up grain to raise its price, and he infers it from the verse: "He lieth in wait to snatch up the poor; he snatcheth up the poor as he draweth him into his net." And why is it considered the ninth psalm? Because they consider the first two psalms as one.) And why do we pray for Return from the Exile after the Benediction of the Year? Because it is written [Ezek. xxxvi. 8]: "But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall send forth your boughs, and your fruit shall ye bear for my people Israel; for they are near at hand to come." And as soon as there will be a Return from Exile, there will be the Punishment of the Wicked, as is written [Is. i. 25]: "I will turn my hand against thee, and purge away as with lye thy dross." And further [26]: "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning." After the Judgment of the Wicked there shall be no sinners, as is written [28]: "But destruction shall come over transgressors and sinners together." And those that forsake the Lord shall perish, and when sinners cease to exist, the horn of the righteous is exalted; as it is written [Ps. lxxv. 11]: "And all the horns of the wicked will I hew off, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted." And righteous proselytes are included among them, as it is written [Lev. xix. 32]: "Before the hoary head shalt thou rise up, and honor the old man." And soon after: "If a stranger sojourn with thee, ye shall not vex him." And where will be exalted their horn? In Jerusalem. As it is written [Ps. cxxii. 6]: "Pray ye for the peace of Jerusalem: may those that love ye prosper. "When Jerusalem will be rebuilt, David will come as it is written [Hosea, iii. 5]: "After that will the children of Israel return and seek for the Lord their God and David their king." And with David will come Prayer, as it is written [Isaiah, lvi. 7]: "Even these will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer." And with Prayer comes Service in the Temple, as it is written further: "Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar." And after service comes a thanksgiving offering, as it is written [Ps. l. 23]: "Whoso offereth thanksgiving glorifieth me." (The order of the separate parts of the Eighteen Benedictions has already been laid down.) And why do they say the Blessing of the Priests after Thanksgiving? Because it is written [Lev. ix. 22]: "And Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and blessed them, and came down after he had offered the sin-offering and burnt-offering and peace-offering."

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[paragraph continues] And perhaps he blessed them *before* the service? Nay, we do not suppose so; for it is written, "he came down *after* he had offered"--not "to offer," but *after* offering. If so, let it be said before the Thanksgiving? It would not be proper, because! it is written: "Whose, offereth the thanksgiving glorifieth me." And why is this verse preferred to that? Because common sense tells that Service and Thanksgiving are the same thing. And why do we pray for Peace after the Blessing of Priests'? Because it is written [Num. vi. 27]: "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." And the blessing of the Holy One, blessed be He, is Peace, as it is written [Ps. xxix. 11]: "The Lord will bless his people with peace."

(Let us see:) If one hundred and twenty elders, and among them many prophets, have arranged the Eighteen Benedictions, why have we learned in another place that Simeon of Peculi had ordered them? They had been forgotten, so he reintroduced the order.

After these Eighteen Benedictions, it is not permitted to bless the name of the Lord more, as R. Elazar said: It is written [Ps. cvi. 2]: "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can publish all his praise?" *i.e.*, who is fit to utter? He who can publish *all* his praise (and as no one can do it, only the prayers that have been ordained should be said).

Rabba bar bar Hana said in the name of R. Johanan: He who speaks too much in praise of God is uprooted from the world, as it is written [Job, xxxvii. 20]: "Can all be related of him when I speak? Or if a man talk even till he be swallowed up?" R. Jehudah of the village Geborah, according to others of Gibor-Hail, lectured: It is written [Ps. lxxv. 2]: "For thee praise is silent." 1 Silence is the cure to everything: when R. Dima came from Palestine, he said that in the West they say: "A word is worth a sela, and silence two."

"*If he reads it by heart.*" Whence is this deduced? Said Rabba: There is an analogy of expression in the word "memorial." Here it is written [Esther, ix. 28]: "These days are remembered"; and there [Ex. xvii. 14]: "Write this for a memorial in a book." As there it is written "in a book" so here it. should be read out of a book. How is it known that loud reading is meant--perhaps only looking through the book?

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[paragraph continues] It would not be reasonable; as a Boraitha states: It is written [Deut. xxv. 17]: "Remember"; and it cannot mean "in thy heart," because it is written again [ibid. 19]: "Thou shalt not forget." That means, certainly, in thy heart. Consequently "remember" must mean orally.

"*Or translated,*" etc., *i.e.*, when both the language and the characters are foreign.

"*To those who know no Hebrew,*" etc. But it is just stated that by hearing it read in a foreign language one has not fulfilled his duty. Rabbi and Samuel both said: By this Greek is meant. How is the case? If it was written in Assyrian (characters), and one read it in Greek, then he reads it by heart? Said R. A'ba in the name of R. Elazar: That means, when it is written in Greek, and he reads it in Greek.

The same authority says again: How is it known that God called Jacob "El" (one of the names of God)? Because it is written [Gen. xxx. 20]: "And called it El, the God of Israel," which he interprets, "who called him El, the God of Israel." For if the altar was meant, the verse would say, "and Jacob called *it*." An objection was raised: If one read the Megilla in Coptic, in Old Hebrew, Elamic, Median, or Greek, one has not fulfilled his duty? What is said above, that Greek is lawful, is like another Boraitha which says that if one has read in Coptic to Coptic, Hebrew to Hebrews, Elamic to Elamite, or Greek to Greek Israelites, they have done their duty. If so, why do Rabh and Samuel say the Mishna means only Greek: let them say it means all foreign languages may be read to those who understand them? Rabh and Samuel mean that even to those who do not comprehend it, it may be read in Greek. But in the Boraitha it is said, that only if Greek is read to Greek Israelites it is lawful? Rabh and Samuel are in accordance with Rabban Simeon Gamaliel, who says that even the Pentateuch was allowed to be written only in Greek, not in another tongue. If so, let them say, more briefly, the Halakha prevails according to R. Simeon b. Gamaliel? If they said so, we would think it bears reference only to other books; but as of the Megilla it is written, "according to its writing," we would think only in Assyrian characters it is allowed, and not Greek, therefore they come to teach us that even here Greek is proper.

"*One who has it read to him from Assyrian characters.*" But he does not comprehend it? What is the use? It is like the case of women and common people, who do not understand

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it either, yet they are fulfilling their duty. Rabbina opposed: Why do you compare him to women and common people, and we ourselves, do we understand what is meant by ●●● ●●●●●●●●●●: [viii. 10]? But as it does not matter, provided we understand the proclamation of the miracle, so it also matters not in their case.

"*Long pauses,*" etc. (The term used in the Mishna is "Serugin.") The rabbis did not understand the expression of the Mishna, ●●●●●● until they heard that the servant-maid of Rabbi, when she saw that the rabbis came to Rabbi's house in small detached parties, at intervals, said to them Why do you come--Serugin, Serugin? 1 The rabbis taught If one made pauses in his reading, he has fulfilled his duty; but if he read it irregularly, he has not; R. Muna says in the name of R. Jehudah: Even when one has made pauses he has done his duty, provided they were not long enough for the reading of the whole Megilla, but otherwise he must begin again from the beginning. Said R. Bibbi: Rabh said that the Halakha does not prevail according to R. Muna, and Samuel says that it does. Said R. Joseph: Hold in thy mind what R. Bibbi has said, for Samuel decides more vigorously. When a single authority holds vigorously, even when the majority differ from him (and it is an old rule, that where Samuel and Rabh disagree the Halakha prevails according to Rabh, when the laws are not about pecuniary matters).

The rabbis taught: When the scribe who had written the Megilla had omitted letters or sentences, but the reader read it like an interpreter, and supplied what was missing, the duty was done.

The rabbis taught: If the reader has omitted one verse, he should not say: When I shall have read the entire Megilla I shall then read the omitted verse; but he should commence with that verse, and read further. The same is it when one comes to the house of prayer, and finds the first half of it gone through by the congregation, he should not say: "I will read with the congregation to

the end, and then read the first half"; but he should begin to read from the beginning, and read to the end.

"*And slumber.*" What is meant by slumbering? It means not sleeping, but being drowsy, so that when he is called, he answers;

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but to answer intelligently he is not able before he is called a second time.

"*If anyone should read whilst writing,*" etc. How was the case? If he had arranged the verses beforehand, and first read, then copied them, even if he had the intention, what is it? It is reading by heart. Shall we say, if he was writing verse by verse and reading them, he has not fulfilled his duty either, because by R. Helba in the name of R. Hama bar Guria, quoting Rabh, said: The Halakha prevails according to him who said that legally the whole Megilla must be written and be before him? This is meant: An entire Megilla lay before him, and he read each verse, and copied it.

Rabba bar bar Hana said in the name of R. Johanan: Even one letter must not be written, unless copied from a Megilla. An objection was raised: R. Simeon b. Elazar said: It happened to R. Meir, that he went to make the year intercalary in Asia, and there was not any Megilla; so he wrote it down from memory, and then read it to the community. Said R. Abahu: With R. Meir it is different: Of R. Meir was said the 25th verse of chap. iv. of Proverbs: "Thy eyelids see straight out before thee" (he saw the Megilla in his mind as clearly as with his eyes). Ramai bar Hama asked R. Jeremiah of Diphthi: What is meant by this? He answered him: The words of the Law, of which it is said [Prov. xxiii. 5]: "When thou lettest merely thy eyes fly over it, it is no more." But in the case of R. Meir it was as if he saw it with his eyes, so was it engraved in his memory.

R. Hisda found R. Hananal writing Scripture, not from a copy, and he said to him: It is true, thou art fit to write the entire Bible from memory; but the sages have said, nevertheless, that it is unlawful to write even one letter thus. From what we hear that he was fit for writing it all by heart, and we see that he knew it also by heart, yet he was not allowed to do so (how then could R. Meir do it?). In the time of necessity, when there was no other Megilla, it was different.

"*If the Megilla was written with . . . vitriol black.*" Said Rabba bar bar Hana: This means that which is used by shoemakers for blackening new shoes.

"*Rough vellum,*" when the hide has been already salted, but not polished.

"*But it must be written in Assyrian characters.*" Why? Because it is said, "according to their writing."

"*In a book and with ink.*" Whence do we deduce this?

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[paragraph continues] From an analogy of expression. It is written [Esther, ix. 29]: "Then wrote Esther"; and [Jer. xxxvi. 18]: "Then said Baruch unto them, With his mouth did he utter clearly all these words unto me, and I *wrote* them in the book with ink."

MISHNA: If an inhabitant of an open town had gone to an anciently walled town, or *vice versa*, if he intends to return to his place, he shall read it at the same time they read in his place; if not, he may read with the inhabitants of the place in which he is. From where is it necessary to commence the reading of the Megilla, so as to fulfil one's duty? R. Meir says: It is obligatory to read the whole. R. Jehudah says: It suffices if he commence at "a Jewish man" [Esther, ii. 5]. R. Jose says: Even if from "after these events" [ibid. iii. 1].

GEMARA: Said Rabha: "If he intends to return." That means, to return on the night of the 14th; but if he does not purpose to return on that night, he may read with the inhabitants of the place where he is. And he said again: Whence do I deduce this? Because it is written [Esther, ix. 19]: "Therefore do the Jews of the open towns, that dwell in open towns." Let us see. It is stated already, "The Jews of the open towns." Why is it repeated, "that dwell in open towns"? He comes to teach us, that if one dwells even one day there, he is considered as an inhabitant of an open town. This is right about open towns, but how do we know that the same applies to walled towns? That is common sense: If one who dwells a day in an open town is considered an inhabitant thereof, the same must be in the case of a walled town.

And Rabha says again: If a countryman has gone into a town, he must read with the inhabitants, for why was he permitted to read on the Assembly-day? That he should not trouble himself to come to the town; but if he is there, he must read in any case, whether he intends to stay there or not.

"*From where is it necessary to commence*," etc. We have learned in a Boraitha: R. Simeon b. Jechayi said: He may begin from, "in that night" [chap. vi. 1].

Said R. Johanan: All these different opinions have been deduced from the following verse: It is written [ix. 29]: "Then wrote Esther the queen. . . . with Mordecai the Jew, with all due strength." Those who say the entire Megilla should be read, mean the whole might (strength) of Ahasuerus; he who says it should be begun from "a Jewish man," means the whole power of Mordecai; and he who says from "after these events," thinks

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the power of Haman; and he who says from "in that night," means the whole power of the miracle should be related. Said R. Helba in the name of R. Hama bar Guria, quoting Rabh: The Halakha prevails according to him who says: The whole Megilla must be read. And even he who says from "a Jewish man" also means it should be *written* wholly, if not read. The same says again: The Megilla is called "a book," also "a letter." That means, it is called a book because if it is stitched together with threads of flax it is invalid, as the Holy Scrolls are; and it is called a letter because if only three veins are used it is yet valid (unlike the Holy Scrolls). Said R. Na'hman: This is when every vein is triple (triple stitched).

R. Jehudah said in the name of Samuel: If one has read the Megilla from the Bible, in which it is among other books, he has not fulfilled his duty, as the Megilla should be separated. Said

Rabha: This is when the scroll of the Megilla was like the other scrolls; but if it was a little longer or shorter and distinguishable from them, it does not matter.

R. Hyya bar Abba said in the name of R. Johanan: If one reads the Megilla bound with other books, he has not done his duty. Those who heard him repudiated him, saying: This is only the case when it is read in public; but an individual may do so. The same says again in the name of the same authority: The law that, when the Holy Scrolls are stitched together, margins must be left at the top and at the bottom is a Halakha from Moses on Sinai. And those who heard him repudiated him, 1 saying: It is not a Halakha from Moses on Sinai, but it has been ordered only that the parchment may not be torn. The same says again in the name of the same authority: If in the case where Moses and Elijah were, there had been a chink as narrow as a needle, they would not have remained alive when the Lord passed, as it is written [Ex. xxxiii. 20]: "For no man can see me and live." The same says again in the name of the same authority: It is written [Deut. ix. 10]: "And on them was written according to all the words which the Lord had spoken with you on the mount." We infer from this that God revealed to Moses

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all the particulars of the Bible (*i.e.*, what words signify that something is to be included or to be excluded), and of the particulars the Gemara deduces from the Mishna, and what the scribes will discover later. And what is it? The reading of the Megilla.

MISHNA: All are qualified to read the Megilla, except a deaf person, fool, or a minor. R. Jehudah, however, allows it to be read by a minor.

GEMARA: Who is the Tana that holds that even when a deaf man has already read it the duty is not fulfilled? Said R. Mathna: The Tana is R. Jose of the following Mishna in Berachoth: "He who read Shema, and did not himself hear what he read, he has done his duty. R. Jose, however, said, he has not." How do we know that our Mishna is in accordance with R. Jose, who says that even if he has done it already, he has not fulfilled his duty. Perhaps it is in accordance with R. Jehudah, who says that he must not commence; but if he has done it already, he has done his duty? It would not be reasonable; because the deaf person is mentioned together with the fool and the minor, and as when the last two have done it the duty has not been fulfilled, so it must be with the deaf.

"*R. Jehudah allows a minor.*" We have learned in a Boraitha: R. Jehudah said: When I was a minor I read the Megilla in the presence of R. Tarphon and the elders in the city of Lud. The sages answered: One adduces no proof from a minor. We have learned in another Boraitha: Rabbi said: When I was a minor I read the Megilla in the presence of R. Jehudah. The sages said to him: One cannot adduce a proof from a man who permitted it (because the majority differed from him). Why have they not answered here also. One brings no proof from a minor? They meant it; firstly, he was a minor, but even if he were not, they would not recognize it as a proof, because R. Jehudah was an individual exception.

MISHNA: The following religious acts may not be done before sunrise on the day on which they are obligatory: To read the Megilla, to circumcise, to bathe (on the seventh day of the purification of an unclean or defiled person), to sprinkle (the unclean as a purification); nor may a woman (who had experienced her menses beyond the usual time, and who was to) wait a day

(before she might bathe) do so before the sunrise of that day. But if any of these acts has been done at any period after daybreak, it is valid.

GEMARA: Whence do we deduce this? It is written

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[paragraph continues] [Esther, ix. 28]: "And these days are remembered and celebrated." The days, and not the nights. Shall we assume that this is in contradiction to R. Joshua b. Levi, who said above (p. 7.) that one must read the Megilla in the evening, and repeat it on the day? What this Mishna teaches, that before sunrise the Megilla must not be read, refers to the second time, *i.e.*, the reading by day.

"*To circumcise.*" Because it is written [Lev. xii. 3]: "On the eighth day shall the flesh of his foreskin be circumcised."

"*To bathe, to sprinkle.*" Because it is written [Num. xix. 19]: "And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the seventh day"; and bathing is equal to sprinkling.

"*After daybreak.*" Whence is this deduced? Said Rabha: Because it is written [Gen. i. 5]: "And God called the light day"; and the beginning of the light is called day. If so, then, as it is written, "and the darkness he called night," let the time when it begins to be dark be called "night"; and we have a tradition that until the stars appear it is not reckoned to be night. Therefore, says R. Zera, infer it from the following passage [Nehemiah, iv. 15]: "So we labored at the work, while the half of them were holding the spears from the rising of the morning dawn till the stars appeared,

MISHNA: The following religious acts may be done during the whole of the day (on which they are obligatory): The reading of the Megilla, of the Hallel; the sounding of the cornet; the handling of the Lulab; the prayer at the additional offering; the additional offering; the confession of sin on sacrificing the bulls, the confession to be made on bringing the second tithe, the confession of sin by the high-priest on the Day of Atonement; the imposition of hands (on the sacrifice); the slaughtering of a sacrifice; the waving of the offering; the bringing it to the altar; the taking of the handful of flour [Lev. ii. 2]; the burning with incense of the fat of a sacrifice on the altar; the pinching or wringing off of the head of fowls brought at sacrifices [Lev. i. 15]; the receiving of the blood of a sacrifice; the sprinkling thereof on the altar; the giving the bitter water to drink to a woman suspected of adultery; the striking off of the heifer's neck [Deut. xxi. 4], and the purification of a leprous person. The following acts may be done during the whole of the night: The cutting of the sheaves for the "omer," and the burning of the fat and members of a burnt-offering on the altar [Lev. vi. 9]. This is the rule: Whatever is commanded to

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be done by day may legally be done during the whole of the day; and whatever is commanded to be done by night, it is lawful to do during the whole of the night.

GEMARA: Whence do we deduce this? Because it is written: "Those days are remembered and celebrated." The reading of Hallel, as is written [Ps. cxiii. 3]: "From the rising of the sun unto the going down." R. Joseph says: As it is written [ibid. cxviii. 24]: "This is the day which the Lord hath made." "The use of the Lulab," because it is written [Lev. xxiii. 40]: "And ye shall take unto yourselves on the first *day*." "The sounding of the cornet," because it is written [Num. xxix. 7]: "A day of blowing of the cornet shall it be unto you." "And the additional offering," as it is written [Lev. xxiii. 3 7]: "Everything upon its day." And the prayer at the additional offering is like the offering itself. [1](#)

"*This is the rule*," etc. What is it meant to include? The putting away of the spoon of frankincense, and the taking it away (because the old must be taken away at the same time that the new is brought, as will be explained in Tract Mena'hoth).

"*By night*," etc. What is it meant to include? The eating of the Paschal lamb, which is only before sunrise; and the Mishna is not in accordance with Elazar b. Azariah (as will be explained in Tract Mena'hoth).

Footnotes

[48:1](#) So the Talmud translates.

[50:1](#) See Rosh-Hashana for other cases where the rabbis did not understand till they heard the explanation by Rabbi's maid.

[53:1](#) Rashi explained this, that not others objected, but he himself retracted his assertion. But this seems to us incorrect: firstly, as the word "repudiated," in the original, is in the plural; and secondly, when R. Hyya bar Abba said in R. Johanan's name he no longer lived, how could he contradict himself at that time? Therefore we translate it as it seems to us right. See our "Ursprung und Entwicklung des Philacterien-Ritus beiden Tuden," p. 140, where this passage is explained.

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APPENDIX TO FOOTNOTE ON PAGE 53.

Jastrow's Dictionary has just reached us, and we are surprised not to find under sub. ••• the quotation •••, repeated twice on page 19b, old ed., mentioned by us in our note, which means they struck the Halakha on its head. We fail to find any reason for this omission, as it seems to us very important that the quotation should occur.

[56:1](#) The remaining laws of the Mishna are also deduced here from verses or from analogies of expression; but they are found in other and more proper places, and are therefore here omitted.

[Next: Chapter III](#)