

p. 1

EBEL RABBATHI (GREAT MOURNING), OR SEMA'HOTH (JOYS).

CHAPTER I. [1](#)

A. One in the struggle of death is to be regarded as living in all respects. He still binds the dependents to the law of Yibum, [A2](#) and he exempts from the same. [A3](#) He makes his dependents eat of heave-offerings, [A4](#) and prevents them from eating it. [A5](#) He inherits and makes others inherit. [A6](#) When a limb or a piece of flesh is removed from him, it is regarded as of a living man. [A7](#) The blood of his sin-offering and transgression may be sprinkled until he dies. [A8](#)

p. 2

B. His mouth must not be closed, nor his openings stopped. No metal vessel or anything which chills [B1](#) must be put on his navel till he dies, as it is written [Eccl. xii. 6]: "While the silver cord is not yet torn loose."

C. He must not be moved, nor put on sand or salt, until he dies. [C1](#)

D. His eyes must not be closed. Whoever touches or moves him is regarded as a shedder of blood. [D1](#)

E. His relatives may not rend their clothes nor remove their shoes nor lament over him, nor may the coffin be brought into his room, till he dies.

F. His death must not be announced, nor his deeds proclaimed, until he dies; R. Jehudah, however, said: If he was a wise man, the latter may be done. [F1](#)

G. Greetings must not be exchanged when there is a death in a village, but it may be done in a greater city. An infant cut or torn at birth, a miscarriage, or born alive at the eighth month, or born dead at the ninth--all the religious ceremonies do not apply to it.

H. The same is the case with an idolater or bondsman, nevertheless they may exclaim over him: "Woe, lion! lion! Woe, hero!" [H1](#) R. Jehudah said: (It may be said also:) Woe, trusted man, who lived by his labor! They said to him: If so, what is there left to say of the upright? He rejoined: If he was righteous why should this not be said of him? [H2](#) No consolation is needed (on the death of) male and female slaves.

I. It happened when the female slave of R. Eliezer died, his disciples went to console him. When

he saw them he went into

p. 3

the yard, and they followed him; he returned to the house, and they followed him. He then said to them: I thought that you might be scalded with lukewarm water, now I see that you cannot be scalded even with boiling. Have I not taught unto you: No consolation is needed (on the death of) slaves?

J. When Tebbi the slave of Rabban Gamaliel died, the latter accepted consolation. Said his disciples to him: Our master! hast thou not taught unto us that no consolation is needed on slaves? He rejoined: My slave Tebbi cannot be likened to other slaves; he was a righteous one.

K. He also permitted him to lay Tephilin. Said his disciples: Our master! hast thou not taught unto us that slaves are exempt from Tephilin? And he made the same rejoinder.

L. Slaves must not be distinguished as Father so and so, or Mother so and so. [L1](#) The household of Rabban Gamaliel, however, used the distinction of "Father Tebbi" and "Mother Tebbitha" to the above-named and his wife. [L2](#)

M. Ancestors must not be distinguished as the fathers of the nation (or the tribes), except the three Patriarchs; nor mothers of the nation, but the four mothers. [M1](#)

Footnotes

[1:1](#)

EDITOR'S COMMENTARY.

CHAPTER I.

As the chapters are short, their contents will be found in the Synopsis.

[1:A2](#) A. If he is the only brother of him who died childless, the widow cannot marry again until he dies. And if it happened that she did marry in that time, the marriage is considered null and void.

[1:A3](#) If he is the only son of his father who died at that time, he is considered as a living child, and to exempt the widow from Yibum or Halitzah.

[1:A4](#) His wife or slave if he is a priest, also his mother if she was the daughter of a commoner.

[1:A5](#) If his wife was the daughter of a priest, and he a commoner [Lev. xxii. 12-14].

[1:A6](#) For instance, if his mother dies at that time and leaves property to him, it is considered his; so that when he dies his relatives on his mother's side inherit from him, but not those on his father's. See Nidah, 44a.

[1:A7](#) It is not a subject of defilement, to make him who touches it or the tent which contains it unclean, if it has not a certain quantity, as will be explained farther on.

[1:A8](#) The blood of an offering can be sprinkled only when the offerer is alive, and has a substitute in the Temple.

[2:B1](#) *B.* See Sabbath, p. 353.

[2:C1](#) *C.* As was the custom at that time.

[2:D1](#) *D.* For the reason, see *ibid.*, Mishna and Gemara thereon; here, however, this is said in the name of R. Meir.

[2:F1](#) *F.* Not in his presence, but people may say among themselves: "What a great loss we have in the death of the man who did so and so." Some say even in his presence, because he is used to hear his praises, and will not be alarmed; but we do not find any basis for this assertion.

[2:H1](#) *H.* If they were worthy of such a lamentation.

[2:H2](#) It seems to us that this is said of a bondman only, but not of an idolater, as an idolater, even if he was a Gentile, is called a sinner according to the Talmud, which declares that idolatry was prohibited to Noah for all nations.

[3:L1](#) *L.* The word Abba, which means "Father," was a title at that time, as "Reverend" is now, or as the Catholics entitle their superiors of the Church and nunneries "Father" and "Mother."

[3:L2](#) In Midrash Rabbah [Lev. chap. xix.] is to be found Tebbitha, the female slave of Rabban Gamaliel, presumably Tebbi's wife.

[3:M1](#) *M.* Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, the wives of our patriarchs. See Berachoth.

[Next: Chapter II](#)