

CHAPTER III.

A. An infant a day old must be regarded by his parents as if he would be a bridegroom; [A1](#) and not merely a day old, but even if the head and the greater part of the body came out alive. The expression of "a day" is used by the sages because it is more usual.

B. An infant dying at birth is interred attended by one woman and two men, and is carried in the hand. Abba Saul, however, said: By two women and one man. The sages objected

p. 7

to him that one woman is allowed to be with two men in a separate place, but not *vice versa*. No line of consolers is formed, no mourners' benediction is said, until it is thirty days old. From the age of thirty days till a twelvemonth it may be attended by men and women, and is carried in a case under the arm. From the age of one to three years it is attended by the same, with the addition that it may be carried in a case on the shoulder. R. Jehudah, however, said: If the father desires, a coffin may be brought to the cemetery to bury it in, even if it is not three years old.

C. At the age of three it is carried in a hearse. R. Aqiba, however, said: If it is three years old, but looks like two, it is not carried in a hearse; but a hearse may be used for those who look like three even if they are less. Simeon the son of the brother of Azariah said: Anyone borne in a hearse, his praises may be proclaimed. R. Meir in the name of Elazar b. Azariah said: If when he was alive he used to play on the street and was known to the people, then they are obliged to attend, but not otherwise. R. Jehudah, however, said in the name of the same: Even if he was known only to his neighbors.

D. Regarding lamentations, R. Meir in the name of R. Ishmael said: The poor are lamented from the age of three, and the rich from the age of five; R. Jehudah, however, said in the name of the same: The poor from the age of five, and the rich from the age of six. R. Aqiba said: The poor from the age of six, and the rich from the age of seven. [D1](#) The poor are lamented the same as the rich, the rich as the children of the sages, and they as the princes. [D2](#)

E. A child that was able to act for himself may be lamented for his own virtues; if he has none, for those of his parents; if his parents have no virtues, for those of his other relatives. A bride may be lamented either for the virtues of her father or father-in-law, as honors should be exaggerated and not diminished. No honor is to be invented, but may be added to the original.

F. In Jerusalem they used to say: "Prepare good things, they shall be used *before* thy hearse." In Judah, however, they

p. 8

used to say: "They shall be used *behind* thy hearse." Because in Jerusalem the lamenters used to

walk in front of the hearse, and proclaimed only the virtues which he possessed; and the people who were behind the hearse, even such as he did not. And in Judah the lamenters were behind the hearse, and they spoke only of the virtues which he possessed; and the people who were behind them did not repeat anything. [F1](#) From the age of three to thirty, one is lamented as if he were a bridegroom; [F2](#) from thirty to forty he is lamented as a brother; [F3](#) from forty to fifty as a father. [F4](#)

G. R. Simeon b. Elazar said: From the age of thirty to forty, if he has children, or if most others of his age have grandchildren, he is lamented as a father; otherwise, as a brother. [G1](#)

H. One dying under the age of fifty, it may yet be considered as if he were under the punishment of Kareth (short life). When, however, he reaches the age of fifty-two, this was the death of Samuel the Prophet; at the age of sixty, this is the death mentioned in the Scriptures, as it is written [Job, v. 26]: "Thou wilt go in a ripe age unto the grave." At seventy it is considered old age, as it is written [Psalms, xc. 10]: "The days of our years in this life are seventy years." At eighty it is considered uncommon vigor, as it is written [ibid.]: "And if by uncommon vigor they be eighty." "Above that age it is a life of affliction, and so said Barzillai the Gileadite to David," [II Samuel, xix. 36].

Death after only one day of sickness is a death of wrath; at two days, it is a death of terror; at three days, a death of pest; at four and five days, a hastened death; at six days, it is the death mentioned in the Torah; at seven, it is a death of favor; [H1](#) more than that, it is a death of suffering.

p. 9

The rabbis taught: [H2](#) One who dies suddenly, he is said to have died an abrupt death; if the death was preceded by one day's sickness, it is a hastened death. R. Hananiah, however, said: The latter case is termed a plague-death, as it is written [Ezek. xxiv. 16]: "Son of man, behold, I will take away from thee the desire of thy eyes by a sudden death (plague)"; and it is stated again [ibid. 18]: "And when I had spoken unto the people in the morning, my wife died at evening." If it was preceded by a two days' sickness, it is a hurried death; if by a three days', it is a reproach; if by a four days', a rebuke; but if preceded by a five days' sickness, it is an ordinary death. [Said R. Hanin: From what biblical passage is this adduced? From (Deut. xxxi. 14): "Hehn korvu yomechu lomuth" (Behold, thy days approach that thou must die). "Hehn" means "one" in Greek; "korvu" (in the plural) is two; "yomechu" (in the plural) is also two; altogether five.] Death at the age of fifty is Kareth (cut off); at fifty-two, the age at which Samuel of Ramah died; at sixty, a death by Heaven. [H3](#) [Said Mar Zutra: Whence is this adduced? From (Job, v. 26): "Thou wilt go in a ripe age, ••• unto the grave," the numerical value of the letters of ••• [H4](#) being sixty.] Seventy is called an old age; eighty, an age of uncommon vigor, as it is written [Psalms, xc. 10]: "And if by uncommon vigor they be eighty." Rabba, however, said: "From fifty to sixty it is Kareth; and the reason why this is not stated in the Boraitha is because of the honor of Samuel." When R. Joseph arrived at the age of sixty, he gave an entertainment to the rabbis, for he said: "I have passed the age of Kareth." Said Abayi to him: "It is true that the Master has passed the *age* of Kareth, but has then the Master already passed the *day* of Kareth?" And he answered him: "Be content for the present with half." R. Huna died suddenly, which caused the rabbis great worry. A couple

of sages of Hadaeb taught them: "It was stated (regarding a sudden death), only when the deceased has not reached the age of eighty; but if he has, it is, on the contrary, considered a death caused by a kiss." Rabha said: Longevity, fertility, and maintenance do not depend on virtue but rather on fate, as is illustrated by the case of Rabba and R. Hisda, both of whom were upright rabbis and both could bring down rain by their prayers, and still R. Hisda died at the age of ninety-two and Rabba at the age of forty. In the house of R. Hisda there were sixty marriages, while in that of Rabba there were sixty deaths. In the house of R. Hisda there was fine white bread in such an abundance that even the dogs did not care for it, while in that of Rabba there was not sufficient barley bread for human beings. Rabha further said: Three things I prayed Heaven to grant me. Two were granted, the third one not: the wisdom of R. Huna and the riches of R. Hisda were granted me, but the modesty of Rabba bar R. Huna was denied to me. R. Seorim (Amram), the brother of Rabha, was sitting at the bedside of Rabha when the latter was in his last agonies. Said Rabha to him: "Let the Master tell him (the angel of death) not to cause me any pain." And he answered him: "Is, then, the Master himself not a friend of him?" Rabha rejoined: "As my fate was already referred to him, he will not care for me any more." R. Seorim then said to the sick: "I would like that the soul of the Master should appear before me." When it was so, R. Seorim asked: "Had the Master felt any pain?" (at the time of the separation of the soul from the body), and he answered: "It was as if pinched with the lancet." Rabha was sitting at the bedside of R. Na'hman when he was in his last agonies, and the latter said: "Let the Master tell him (the angel of death) not to pain me." And he said to him: "Is not the Master a prominent person?" (to tell him so himself). And he answered him: "Who is esteemed, or worthy, or who can contend (at such a moment)?" He then said to the dying: "Let the Master's soul appear before me." When it was so, he asked him: "Had you pain?" And he answered: "It was as easy as to remove a hair from milk; and yet, if the Holy One, blessed be He, would command me to return to the world I was in I would pray permission not to do it, for the fear (of the angel of death) is too great." R. Elazar was eating Trumah (heave-offering) when the death angel appeared before him, and he said to him: "You see that I am now eating Trumah, is it not sacred?" And the appropriate moment passed

over. To R. Shesheth he presented himself in the market, and he said to him: "Do you wish to take me when I am in the market, as if I were an animal? Come to my house." When he presented himself to R. Ashi in the market, the latter said to him: "Extend my time thirty days, so as to enable me to review my studies, as ye say: 'Happy is the person who comes here possessed of his studies.'" On the thirtieth day he appeared again, and R. Ashi said to him: "Why such punctuality?" And he answered him: "You interfere with Bar Nathan, as no regency must interfere with another, even as much as a hair (*i.e.*, R. Nathan cannot become the head of the college so long as you are alive)." R. Hisda could not be overpowered (by the angel of death), for he kept on studying all the time, and the death angel climbed up and hid himself in a cedar in front of Rabha's house. When the cedar broke down, R. Hisda discontinued his study for a moment and he was overpowered at that moment. R. Hyya was inaccessible (to the angel of death). One day he transformed himself into a mendicant, and knocked on the door and asked for a slice of bread. When R. Hyya handed him what he asked for, the angel said to him: "Does not the Master have mercy with a poor man? Why does the Master have no mercy with me? I am the angel of death." And as proof, he showed him the fire-rod. R. Hyya then delivered up his soul to him.

I. Said R. Hanina b. Antigonos: If an old man has eaten forbidden things, or intentionally violated the Sabbath, the punishment of which is Kareth, [11](#) and he is over the age that short life should be applied to him, what will signify to us that his death was that of Kareth? Therefore we must consider that he who died after only three days of sickness, it is a death of Kareth; at four days, it is a hastened death, etc. Said R. Jehudah: The pious of ancient times have suffered of the sickness of the intestines two or three days before their death, [12](#) for the purpose of cleaning their bodies of all food and drink, that they should enter clean in the world to come, as it is written [Proverbs, xxvii. 21]: "(As) the fining-pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man (proved) according to his praise."

Footnotes

[6:A1](#)

CHAPTER III.

A. See Nidah, 44*b*, where it is explained that an infant even a day old must be regarded as a bridegroom, if someone kills it, and the same language is used here.

[7:D1](#) D. Rashi explains this: Because the pain of the poor on the death of their children is much greater than that of the rich, as their children are their only joy, having no others.

[7:D2](#) It means that no distinction must be made from the rank of the parents, but from the corpse itself, as all Israel is alike in pedigree.

[8:F1](#) F. We have translated according to the corrections of Elias Wilna, and as Rashi explains it in Sabbath, 153*a*, old edition.

[8:F2](#) It means to say, as he was in the best vigor of his life, the lamentations were as great as if it had happened to a bridegroom standing under the canopy.

[8:F3](#) It means that he was an active member of society, and his loss is felt by everybody.

[8:F4](#) Who was active so long that he was considered as a father.

[8:G1](#) G. One of the commentators supposes that at that time there were separate customs for a father, brother, etc. It seems to us, however, that our interpretation is right.

[8:H1](#) H. As six days are enough for one to reconsider all he has done in his life and to make his will, leaving the seventh for the purpose [p. 9](#) of taking his leave from his family. Where, however, six days of sickness are mentioned in the Torah we cannot imagine, nor do we find it in any of the commentators.

[9:H2](#) All paragraphs beginning with, "The rabbis taught," or with italics, are transferred from Moed Katan (see there note, p. 27). The paragraphs not so beginning will be marked in the Commentary *Gemara*.

[9:H3](#) There are different penalties for crimes: Kareth; death by Heaven; and death by the court, which latter was in four different forms.

[9:H4](#) This Hebrew word aggregates sixty; namely, the first letter (from right to left) counts two, the second twenty, the third thirty, and the last eight.

[11:I1](#) *I.* Leviticus, vii. 25.

[11:I2](#) According to Elias Wilna's corrections, and according to him, it is to be understood that R. Jehudah opposes R. Hanina b. Antigonus, and maintains that even a pious man may die in two or three days. The text, however, reads twenty days.

[Next: Chapter IV](#)