



## **Some Unexpected Stories about Women in the Talmud**

***Dr. Judith Hauptman***

Judith Hauptman is the E. Billi Ivry Professor Emerita of Talmud and Rabbinic Culture at The Jewish Theological Seminary. Dr. Hauptman's scholarly research focuses on two areas. The first is unraveling the mystery of how the Talmud came into being—i.e., how the many strands of rabbinic teachings coalesced into one coherent document. Her second area of research involves investigating women's roles in Judaic thought, bringing an evaluation of the social and ethical norms of the rabbinic period into dialogue with contemporary issues.

Dr. Hauptman has authored several books in the areas of her research. Her book, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice* will soon be available to all for no charge on Sefaria.org. In addition, she recently finished writing a book on halakhic anecdotes in the Babylonian Talmud from which the stories in this session will be drawn. A popular lecturer and writer, Dr. Hauptman has also authored many influential articles.

In 2004, not long after her ordination as a rabbi, she founded Ohel Ayalah, an outreach project to young Jews on the margins, named in memory of her mother. Dr. Hauptman received a degree in Talmud from the Seminary College of Jewish Studies at JTS (now Albert A. List College of Jewish Studies) and a degree in Economics from Barnard College, and earned an MA and a PhD in Talmud from JTS. In May 2003, she was ordained as a rabbi by the Academy for Jewish Religion.

<p><b>1. Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 61a: Women serving wine when <i>niddot</i> (menstruating)</b></p>	<p><b>בבלי כתובות סא.</b></p>
<p>"[If she brought] four [maidservants into the marriage], she may sit in an easy chair."</p> <p>R. Yizhaq bar Hananiah said that R. Huna said: Even though they said [that a woman with four maidservants] may sit in an easy chair, she still must pour him his cup [of wine], make his bed for him, and wash his face, hands and feet for him.</p> <p>R. Yizhaq bar Hananiah said that R. Huna said: All the tasks that a woman performs for her husband, <i>niddah</i> (a menstruant) performs for her husband, except for pouring [his] cup, making [his] bed, and washing his face, hands, and feet. .</p> <p>"And pouring [his] cup."  <b>Samuel's wife switched it to her left hand;  Abaye's wife] set it on the mouth of the cask;  Rava's wife put it] on the pillow;  R. Pappa's wife put it] on the stool.</b></p>	<p>"ארבע, יושבת בקתדרא."</p> <p>אמר רב יצחק בר חנניא אמר רב הונא: אע"פ שאמרו יושבת בקתדרא, אבל מוזגת לו כוס, ומצעת לו את המטה, ומרחצת לו פניו ידיו ורגליו.</p> <p>אמר רב יצחק בר חנניא אמר רב הונא: כל מלאכות שהאשה עושה לבעלה נדה עושה לבעלה, חוץ ממזיגת הכוס, והצעת המטה, והרחצת פניו ידיו ורגליו. . .</p> <p>"ומזיגת הכוס."  <b>שמאל, מחלפא ליה דביתהו בידא דשמאלא.  אביי, מנחא ליה אפומא דכובא.  רבא, אבי סדיא. רב פפא, אשרשיפא.</b></p>
<p><b>2 Babylonian Talmud Besah 32b: Raking out an oven on a festival</b></p>	<p><b>בבלי ביצה לב:</b></p>
<p>Mishnah: One may not break up clay pots [on a festival] . . . nor rake out an oven or a stove. But one may press down [the ashes]. . .</p> <p>Gemara: "Nor rake out an oven or a stove."</p> <p>R. Hiyya bar Yosef taught in the presence of R. Nahman: but if one cannot bake unless he [first] rakes it out, it is permitted [to do so].</p> <p><b>The wife of R. Hiyya—a brick fell down into her oven on a festival. R. Hiyya said to her: Look, I want excellent bread [i.e., rake out the oven and remove the brick].</b></p>	<p>משנה. אין שוברין את החרס. . . <u>ואין גורפין תנור וכירים, אבל מכבשין.</u> . . .</p> <p>גמרא. "ואין גורפין תנור וכירים."</p> <p>תני רב חייא בר יוסף קמיה דרב נחמן: ואם אי אפשר לאפות אלא אם כן גורפו מותר.</p> <p><b>דביתהו דרבי חייא נפל לה אריחא בתנורא ביומא טבא. אמר לה רבי חייא: חזי דאנא רפתא מעלייתא בעינא.</b></p>

<p><b>Jerusalem Talmud parallel, Besah 4:5, 62c</b></p>	<p><b>ירושלמי ביצה ד:ה, סב:</b></p>
<p>The daughter of R. Hiyya Rabbah came to bake in an oven [on a Festival] and found a rock in it. She came and asked her father [what to do]. He said: go and rake it out. She said to him: I am not able to do so. He said to her: go and press down [the ashes]. She knew [this rule] but wanted to hear it from her father.</p>	<p>ברתי דר' חייה רבה אתת מיפה גו תנור' אשכח' כיפה בגויה. <b>אתת שאלת לאבוה.</b> א"ל איזלין גרפין. <b>אמרה לינה יכלה.</b> א"ל איזלין כבשין. ידעה הוות אלא דהוות בעיא מישמע מן אבוה.</p>
<p><b>3 Babylonian Talmud Besah 13b: Women hulling barley on the Sabbath</b></p>	<p><b>בבלי ביצה יג:</b></p>
<p>A Mishnah elsewhere (Ma'aserot 4:5) teaches: If one hulls barley, he should peel one [kernel] at a time and eat it [and in this way be exempt from tithing because this is not a meal]. But if one hulls and [fills] his hand, he is liable [to tithe].</p> <p>Said R. Eleazar: the same [rule] applies to the Sabbath [i.e., one may hull one kernel at a time. But hulling into one's hand is a forbidden Sabbath labor, like threshing].</p> <p>[Stam asks:] Is that so? <b>But did not Rav's wife hull for him cupfuls [of barley on the Sabbath], and didn't R. Hiyya's wife hull for him cupfuls</b> [on the Sabbath and in this way violate the Sabbath according to R. Eleazar]? [A cupful is like hulling into the hand, collecting a significant amount.]</p> <p>[Stam answers:] R. Eleazar's statement was made in conjunction with the second clause [of the Mishnah], which states: if one rubs ears of wheat he may winnow a little at a time and eat [without</p>	<p>תנן התם: המקלף שעורין מקלף אחת אחת ואוכל, ואם קלף ונתן לתוך ידו חייב.</p> <p>אמר רבי אלעזר: וכן לשבת.</p> <p>איני?! והא רב מקלפא ליה דביתהו כסי כסי ורבי חייא מקלפא ליה דביתהו כסי כסי!</p> <p>אלא אי אתמר אסיפא אתמר: המולל מלילות של חטים מנפח על יד, על יד, ואוכל, ואם נפח ונתן לתוך חיקו חייב.</p>

<p>tithing]. But if he winnows into his lap, he is liable [to tithe].</p> <p>R. Eleazar says, the same applies to the Sabbath [i.e., that if one rubs ears of wheat and winnows them into his hand on the Sabbath, this is allowed. But if he winnows into his lap, it is like threshing and it is forbidden on the Sabbath. The women, therefore, who hulled cupfuls of barley on the Sabbath, were not violating the Sabbath].</p>	<p>אמר רבי אלעזר: וכן לשבת.</p>
<p><b>4 Babylonian Talmud Baba Qamma 119a: Women and giving charity</b></p>	<p><b>בבא קמא קיט:</b></p>
<p>“But one may purchase from women.”</p> <p>A tannaitic teaching: One may purchase woolen garments in Judea from women . . . but not wine or oil or fine flour [because the women would likely be selling off their husbands’ goods without his consent]. Abba Shaul says: a woman may sell for four or five dinarii, enough to make herself a <i>kippah</i> . . . . <u>Charity collectors may accept small donations from them [i.e., women] but not large ones . . . .</u></p> <p>R. Simon b. Gamliel says: one may purchase olives from a woman on a festival’s intermediate days in the Upper Galilee because some men are embarrassed to sell [produce] from the doorway of their homes and [instead] give [the olives] to their wives to do so [in their place and so there is no issue of stealing from a husband in such a case].</p> <p>Ravina (BA 7) visited the town of Bei Mehoza. <b>The women of Bei Mehoza came and threw chains and bracelets before him.</b> He accepted these [expensive] items from them.</p> <p>Rabbah Tosfa’ah (BA 7/8) said to him: Have we not learned in a Baraita that charity collectors may accept a small donation from a woman but not a large one?!</p> <p>Ravina responded: For the people of Mehoza, these are small [donations].</p>	<p>"אבל לוקחין מן הנשים."</p> <p>ת"ר: לוקחין מן הנשים כלי צמר ביהודה . . . , אבל לא יינות ושמינים וסלתות, . . . . אבא שאול אומר: מוכרת אשה בארבעה וחמשה דינר, כדי לעשות כפה לראשה. . . . <u>גבאי צדקה לוקחין מהן דבר מועט, אבל לא דבר מרובה</u>; . . . רשב"ג אומר: לוקחין מנשים זיתים במועד בגליל העליון, שפעמים אדם בוש למכור על פתח ביתו, ונותן לאשתו ומוכרת.</p> <p>רבינא איקלע לבי מחוזא, אתו נשי דבי מחוזא רמו קמיה כבלי ושירי, קביל מינייהו.</p> <p>א"ל רבה תוספאה לרבינא, והתניא: גבאי צדקה מקבלין מהן דבר מועט, אבל לא דבר מרובה!</p> <p>א"ל: הני לבני מחוזא דבר מועט נינהו.</p>