

Rabbi Akiva’s Secret Power – Finding Hope in Dark Times

Sarah Adelman Memorial Fund Lecture - July 28, 2024 – כ"ב תמוז, תשפ"ד

Rabbi Moshe Shulman

Makkot 24b

Once again they were coming up to Jerusalem together, and just as they came to Mount Scopus they saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies. They fell a-weeping and R. Akiba seemed merry. Wherefore, said they to him, are you merry? Said he: Wherefore are you weeping? Said they to him: A place of which it was once said, *And the common man that draweth nigh shall be put to death*, is now become the haunt of foxes, and should we not weep? Said he to them: Therefore am I merry; for it is written, *And I will take to Me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the Son of Jeberechiah*. Scripture linked the [later] prophecy of Zechariah with the [earlier] prophecy of Uriah, In the [earlier] prophecy [in the days] of Uriah it is written, *Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field etc.* In Zechariah it is written, *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, There shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of Jerusalem, so long as Uriah's [threatening] prophecy had not had its fulfilment, I had misgivings lest Zechariah's prophecy might not be fulfilled; now that Uriah's prophecy has been [literally] fulfilled, it is quite certain that Zechariah's prophecy also is to find its literal fulfilment.*

Said they to him: Akiba, you have comforted us! Akiba, you have comforted us!

Yevamot 62b

It was said that R. Akiba had twelve thousand pairs of disciples, from Gabbatha to Antipatris; and all of them died at the same time because they did not treat each other with respect. The world remained desolate until R. Akiba came to our Masters in the South and taught the Torah to them. These were R. Meir, R. Judah, R. Jose, R. Simeon and R. Eleazar b. Shammua; and it was they who revived the Torah at that time.

Rambam, Laws of Kings, 11:3

One should not presume that the Messianic king must work miracles and wonders, bring about new phenomena in the world, resurrect the dead, or perform other similar deeds. This is definitely not true. Proof can be brought from the fact that Rabbi Akiva, one of the greater Sages of the Mishnah, was one of the supporters of King Bar Kozibah and would describe him as the Messianic king. He and all the Sages of his generation considered him to be the Messianic king until he was killed because of sins. Once he was killed, they realized that he was not the Mashiach. The Sages did not ask him for any signs or wonders.

Brachot 60b

Rav Huna said that Rav said that Rabbi Meir said; and so it was taught in a *baraita* in the name of Rabbi Akiva: One must always accustom oneself to say: Everything that God does, He does for the best.

Like this incident, when Rabbi Akiva was walking along the road and came to a certain city, he inquired about lodging and they did not give him any. He said: Everything that God does, He does for the best. He went and slept in a field, and he had with him a rooster, a donkey and a candle. A gust of wind came and extinguished the candle; a cat came and ate the rooster; and a lion came and ate the donkey. He said: Everything that God does, He does for the best. That night, an army came and took the city into captivity. He said

1. מכות כד:

ויבך היתה רבן גמליאל ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי יהושע ורבי עקיבא... היו עולין לירושלים... כיון שהגיעו להר הבית ראו שועל שניצא מבית קדשי הקדשים, התחילו הן בוכין ורבי עקיבא מצחק. אמרו לו: מפני מה אתה מצחק? אמר להם: מפני מה אתם בוכים? אמרו לו: מקום שכתוב בו "והזר הקרב יומת", ועכשיו שועלים הלכו בו, ולא נבכה? אמר להן: לךך אני מצחק, דכתיב: "ויענידה לי עדים נאמנים את אוריה הכהן ואת זכריה בן יברכיהו" ... תלה הפתוב נבואתו של זכריה בנבואתו של אוריה. באוריה פתיב "לכו בגללכם ציון שדה תחרש", בזכריה פתיב "עוד ישבו זקנים וזקנות ברחבות ירושלים". עד שלא נתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה הייתי מתירא שלא תתקיימ נבואתו של זכריה, עכשיו שנתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה – בקדוע שנבואתו של זכריה מתקיימת. בלשון הזה אמרו לו: עקיבא נחמתני, עקיבא נחמתני.

2. בבלי יבמות סב ע"ב

אמרו: שנים עשר אלף זוגים תלמידים היו לו לרבי עקיבא מגבת עד אנטיפרס, וכולן מתו בפרק אחד, מפני שלא נהגו כבוד זה לזה. והיה העולם שמים, עד שבא רבי עקיבא אצל רבותינו שבדרום ושנאה להם: רבי מאיר, ורבי יהודה, ורבי יוסי, ורבי שמעון, ורבי אלעזר בן שמוע, והם הם העמידו תורה אותה שעה.

3. רמב"ם מלכים יא:

אל יעלה על דעתך שהמלך המשיח, צריך לעשות אותות ומופתים, ומחדש דברים בעולם, או מחיה מתים, וכיוצא בדברים אלו שהטפשים אומרים; אין הדבר כן--שהרי רבי עקיבא חכם גדול מחכמי משנה היה, והוא היה נושא כליו שלבן כוזבא המלך, והוא היה אומר עליו, שהוא המלך המשיח. ודמה הוא וכל חכמי דורו שהוא המלך המשיח, עד שנהרג בעוונות; כיון שנהרג, נודע שאינו משיח, ולא שאלו ממנו חכמים, לא אות ולא מופת.

4. בבלי ברכות ס ע"ב

אמר רב הונא אמר רב משום רבי מאיר, וכו' תנא משמיה דרבי עקיבא: לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר: "כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד". כי הא דרבי עקיבא דהנה קאזיל באורחא. מטא להיא מתא, בעא אושפיזא לא יחבי ליה. אמר: "כל דעביד רחמנא — לטב". אזל ובת בדברא, והנה בהדיה תרנגולא וחקרא ושקרא. אתא זיקא פבייה לשקרא. אתא ושקרא אכליה לתרנגולא. אתא אריה אכליה לחמרא. אמר: "כל

to them: Didn’t I tell you? Everything that God does, He does for the best.

RASHI ibid

If the candle was lit, the soldiers would have seen it. If the donkey had brayed, or the rooster called out – they would have given away his location and captured him.

דְּעִיבֵי דְרַחֲמָנָא — לְטָב. בֵּיהּ בְּלִילָא אֲתָא גְיִיסָא, שְׁבִייה לְמַתָּא. אָמַר לְהוּ: לָאו אָמַרִי לְכוּ כָּל מָה שְׁעוּשָׂה הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא הַכֵּל לְטוֹבָה.

5. רש"י שם

הכל לטובה - אילו היה נר דלוק - היה הגייס רואה אותי, ואילו היה החמור נוער או התרנגול קורא - היה הגייס בא ושובה אותי.

Mishna Yoma 8:9

Rabbi Akiva said: How fortunate are you, Israel; before Whom are you purified, and Who purifies you? It is your Father in Heaven, as it is stated: "And I will sprinkle purifying water upon you, and you shall be purified" (Ezekiel 36:25). And it says: "The ritual bath of Israel is God" (Jeremiah 17:13). Just as a ritual bath purifies the impure, so too, the Holy One, Blessed be He, purifies Israel.

6. משנה יומא (ח:ט)

אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא, אֲשֶׁרִיכֶם? שְׂרָאֵל, לִפְנֵי מִי אַתֶּם מְטַהְרִין, וְמִי מְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם, אֲבִיכֶם שְׁבַשְׁמִים, שְׁנַאֲמַר (יחזקאל לו), וְזִרְקִיתִי עֲלֵיכֶם מִים טְהוֹרִים וְטַהַרְתֶּם. וְאוֹמֵר (ירמיה יז), מִקּוֹה שְׂרָאֵל יֵי, מָה מִקּוֹה מְטַהֵר אֶת הַטְּמֵאִים, אַף הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Mechilta DeRabbi Yishmael, Yitro 10

Rabbi Akiva says: "You shall not do (i.e., deport yourselves) with Me" as others do with their gods. When good befalls them, they honor their gods... And when evil befalls them, they curse their gods...

But, as for you, if I bring good upon you, you give thanks, and when I bring afflictions upon you, you give thanks. And thus did David say (Psalms 116:3) "the cup of salvation shall I raise, and in the name of the L-rd will I call" — (Ibid. 4) "Trouble and sorrow will I find, and in the name of the L-rd shall I call."

7. מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל יתרו פרשה י

רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אוֹמֵר: 'לֹא תַעֲשׂוּן אִתִּי, שְׁלֹא תִנְהַגוּ בִּי כְּדָרְךָ שְׂאֲחָרִים מְנַהֲגִין בְּיִרְאוּתֵיהֶן, שְׁכַשְׁהֵטוּבָה בָּאָה עֲלֵיהֶם, הֵם מְכַבְּדִין אֶת אֱלֹהֵיהֶן... וְכַשְׁהַפְרָעוֹת בָּאָה עֲלֵיהֶן, הֵם מְקַלְלִין אֶת אֱלֹהֵיהֶן... אֲבָל אַתֶּם, אִם הִבֵּאתִי עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת הַטּוֹבָה, תִּנּוּ הוֹדָתָהּ! הִבֵּאתִי עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת הַיְסוּרִין, תִּנּוּ הוֹדָתָהּ! וְכֵן דָּוִד אוֹמֵר: (תהלים קטז, יג, טד) "כּוֹס יִשׁוּעוֹת אֲשָׂא וּבִשֵׁם יי אֶקְרָא" - "צָרָה וְיָגוֹן אֲמַצָּא וּבִשֵׁם יי אֶקְרָא."

Psalms Chapter 116

1. I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications. 2. Because he has inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call upon him as long as I live. 3. The cords of death surrounded me, and the pains of Sheol seized me. **I found trouble and sorrow.** 4. **Then I called upon the name of the Lord;** O Lord, I beseech you, save my soul. 5. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful....

12. How shall I repay the Lord for all his benefits toward me? 13. **I will raise the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.** 14. I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all His people.

8. תהלים פרק קטז

(א) אֶהֱבֵתִי כִּי־יִשְׁמַעַן לִיקוֹךְ אֶת־קוֹלִי תִחַנְנֵנִי: (ב) כִּי־הִטָּה אֲזַנּוֹ לִי וּבִימֵי אֶקְרָא: (ג) אֶפְפוּנִי חֲבַל־מָוֶת וּמִצָּרֵי שְׂאוֹל מִצָּאוּנֵי צָרָה וְיָגוֹן אֲמַצָּא: (ד) וּבִשֵׁם־יְקוֹךְ אֶקְרָא אֲנִי לִיקוֹךְ מִלְטָה נִפְשִׁי: (ה) חֲנוּן יְקוֹךְ וְצַדִּיק וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ מֵרַחֵם: [...] (יב) מִה־אֲשִׁיב לִיקוֹךְ כֶּל־תַּגְמוּלוֹתַי עָלַי: (יג) כּוֹס־יִשׁוּעוֹת אֲשָׂא וּבִשֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא: (יד) גְּדַרִי לִיקוֹךְ אֲשַׁלֵּם נִגְדַת־נַפְשִׁי לְכָל־עַמּוֹ:

Brachot 61b

When they took Rabbi Akiva out to be executed, it was time for the recitation of *Shema*. And they were raking his flesh with iron combs, and he was reciting *Shema*, thereby accepting upon himself the yoke of Heaven. His students said to him: Our teacher, even now? He said to them: All my days I have been troubled by the verse: With all your soul, meaning: Even if God takes your soul. I said to myself: When will the opportunity be afforded me to fulfill this verse? Now that it has been afforded me, shall I not fulfill it? He prolonged uttering "One" until his soul left as he uttered "One" A voice descended from heaven and said: Happy are you, Rabbi Akiva, that your soul left your body as you uttered: One.

9. ברכות סא ע"ב

בְּשַׁעַה שְׁהוּצִיאוּ אֶת רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא לְהַרְיָגָה זְמַן קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע הָיָה, וְהָיוּ סוֹרְקִים אֶת בְּשָׂרוֹ בְּמַסְרָקוֹת שֶׁל בְּרֹזֶל, וְהָיָה מְקַבֵּל עָלָיו עוֹל מַלְכוּת שְׁמַיִם. אָמְרוּ לוֹ תִלְמִידָיו: רַבֵּינוּ, עַד כָּאוּ? אָמַר לָהֶם: כָּל יָמַי הֵייתִי מְצַטְעָר עַל פְּסוּקַת זֶה "בְּכָל נַפְשִׁךָ" אֶפְלוּ נוֹטֵל אֶת נַשְׁמַתְךָ. אָמַרְתִּי: מַתִּי נָבֵא לְגַדִּי וְאֶקְיָיֵמְנוּ, וְעַכְשָׁיו שָׁבָא לְגַדִּי, לֹא אֶקְיָיֵמְנוּ? הָיָה מְאָרִיךְ בִּ"אֲחַד", עַד שֶׁיָּצְתָה נַשְׁמַתוֹ בִּ"אֲחַד" ... יָצְתָה בֵּת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה: "אֲשֶׁרִיךְ רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא שְׂאֲתָה מְזוּמָן לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא."

Avot 3:1

Akavyah ben Mahalalel said: mark well three things and you will not come into the power of sin: know from where you come, and where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give an account and reckoning. From where do you come? From a putrid drop. Where are you going? To a place of dust, of worm and of maggot. Before whom you are destined to give an account and reckoning? Before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

Avot 3:14

He used to say: Beloved is man for he was created in the image [of God]. Especially beloved is he for it was made known to him that he had been created in the image [of God], as it is said: “for in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:6). Beloved are Israel in that they were called children to the All-Present. Especially beloved are they for it was made known to them that they are called children of the All-Present, as it is said: “you are children to the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 14:1). Beloved are Israel in that a precious vessel was given to them. Especially beloved are they for it was made known to them that the desirable instrument, with which the world had been created, was given to them, as it is said: “for I give you good instruction; forsake not my teaching” (Proverbs 4:2).

Haggadah - Maggad – Blessing

Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who has redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt, and brought us to this night to eat matza and bitter herbs. So may the LORD our God bring us in peace to other seasons and festivals that are coming to us, happy in the building of Your city and rejoicing in Your service; and there we shall eat of sacrifices and Pesah offerings [On Motzai Shabbat: of Pesah offerings and sacrifices], of which the blood will reach the side of Your altar to be accepted. And we shall thank You in a new song for our redemption and for our lives’ salvation. Blessed are You, LORD, Redeemer of Israel.

Pesachim 116b

Rabbi Tarfon says: ‘Who redeemed us and redeemed our forefathers from Egypt’, but without a concluding blessing.

Rabbi Akiva says: So too, the Lord our God and the God of our forefathers will bring us to future holidays and Festivals in peace, happy over the building of Your city and joyous in Your service. And there we will eat from the Paschal lamb and other offerings, etc., until: Blessed are You, Lord, Who redeemed Israel.

Psalm 107

(1) "O give thanks to Hashem, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever." (2) So let the **redeemed** of Hashem say, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary; (3) and gathered them out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the sea.

10. אבות - ג:

עֲקֵבְיָא בֶן מַהֲלֵלָא אָמַר, הִסְתַּכַּל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְבָרִים וְאֵי אֲתָה בָּא לִיְדֵי עֲבָרָה. דַּע מֵאֵין בָּאתָ, וּלְאֵן אֲתָה הוֹלֵךְ, וְלִפְנֵי מִי אֲתָה עֹתִיד לְתַן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבוֹן.
 מֵאֵין בָּאתָ, מִטֶּפֶת סְרוּחָה
 וּלְאֵן אֲתָה הוֹלֵךְ, לְמָקוֹם עֶפְרָרָה וְתוֹלְעָה.
 וְלִפְנֵי מִי אֲתָה עֹתִיד לְתַן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבוֹן, לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא:

11. אבות ג: יד

הוא [ר' עקיבא] היה אומר:
חביב אדם שנברא בצלם. חבה יתרה נודעת לו שנברא בצלם, שנאמר (בראשית ט) כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם.
חביבין ישראל שנקראו בנים למקום. חבה יתרה נודעת להם שנקראו בנים למקום, שנאמר (דברים יד) בנים אתם לה' אלהיכם.
חביבין ישראל שנתן להם כלי חמדה. חבה יתרה נודעת להם שנתן להם כלי חמדה שבו נברא העולם, שנאמר (משלי ד) כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם, תורתי אל תעזבו:

12. ברכת מגיד – הגדה

בא"י אמ"ה אָשֶׁר גָּאֲלָנוּ וְגָאֵל אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, וְהִגִּיעֵנוּ הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה לְאֶכְלֹת מַצָּה וּמְרוֹר. כֵּן יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ יִגִּיעֵנוּ לְמוֹעֲדִים וְלַרְגְּלִים אַחֲרֵים הַבָּאִים לְקִרְאָתָנוּ לְשִׁלוֹם, שְׂמֵחִים בְּבִנְיָן עֵירָךְ וְשָׂשִׁים בְּעִבּוֹדְךָ. וְנֹאכַל שֶׁם מִן הַזִּבְחִים וּמִן הַפְּסָחִים אֲשֶׁר יִגִּיעַ דָּמָם עַל קִיר מִזְבִּיחְךָ לְרִצּוֹן, וְנוֹדָה לְךָ שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ עַל גְּאֻלְתָּנוּ וְעַל פְּדוּת נַפְשֵׁנוּ. בֵּאִי גֵאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

13. פסחים קטז:

וחותם בגאולה - **רבי טרפון** אומר: אָשֶׁר גָּאֲלָנוּ וְגָאֵל אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, וְלֹא הָיָה חוֹתֵם.
רבי עקיבא אומר: "כֵּן ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ יִגִּיעֵנוּ לְמוֹעֲדִים וְלַרְגְּלִים אַחֲרֵים הַבָּאִים לְקִרְאָתָנוּ לְשִׁלוֹם, שְׂמֵחִים בְּבִנְיָן עֵירָךְ, וְשָׂשִׁים בְּעִבּוֹדְךָ. וְנֹאכַל שֶׁם (מִן הַפְּסָחִים וּמִן הַזִּבְחִים) וְכוּ" עַד "בֵּאִי גֵאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל".

14. תהלים פרק קז

(א) הִדְוִי לִיקְוֶךָ כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדְךָ: (ב) יֹאמְרוּ גְּאוּלַי יִקְוֶךָ אֲשֶׁר גָּאֲלָם מִיַּד־צָר: (ג) וּמֵאֲרָצוֹת קְבָצָם מִמִּזְרַח וּמִמְעַרְבַּי מִצְפּוֹן וּמִמִּיָּם:

15. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Haggadah:

This, a blessing over the past and a prayer for the future, was composed by two great scholars of the mishnaic age. The first part was written by Rabbi Tarfon, the second by Rabbi Akiva. **Rabbi Akiva was the guardian of hope at one of the darkest times of Jewish history.** The Talmud (*Makot* 24b) tells of an occasion when he and other sages were walking on Mount Scopus when they saw a fox walking through the Holy of Holies amid the ruins of the Temple. The others wept, but Rabbi Akiva comforted them, saying, “Since the prophecies of destruction have come true, the prophecies of consolation will also come true. The day will come when, in Zechariah’s words, ‘Once again men and women of a ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem...and the city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there’ [Zech. 8:4].” It took nearly two thousand years, but it has happened in our lifetime. It was Akiva’s hope – expressed here in the vision of “days that are coming to meet us in peace” – that sustained the Jewish people in exile.

16. Time as a Narrative of Hope, The Jonathan Sacks Haggada, p. 102

The deepest difference between linear and covenantal time is that whereas the first gives rise to *optimism*, the later leads to *hope*. These two concepts, often confused, are in fact utterly different. **Optimism** is the belief that things **will** get better. **Hope** is the belief that, **together, we can make things better**. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one. It takes no courage – only a certain naivety – to be an optimist. **It takes great courage to sustain hope.** No Jew – knowing what we do of the past, of hatred, bloodshed, persecution in the name of God, suppression of human rights in the name of freedom – can be an optimist. But Jews have never given up hope. “Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall,” says Isaiah, “but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:30). “Hold back your voice from weeping,” urges Jeremiah, “there is hope for your future” (Jeremiah 31:15). To be a Prophet is to find a vestige of hope in the wreckage of despair. **Jewish time is the secret of the influence of the Pesach story on the Western imagination. It is the supreme narrative of hope.**

Tanit 21a

They said about Nahum of Gam Zu that he was blind in both eyes, both his arms were amputated, both his legs were amputated, and his entire body was covered in boils. And he was lying in a dilapidated house, and legs of his bed were placed in buckets of water so that ants should not climb onto him.

Once his students sought to remove his bed from the house and afterward remove his other vessels. He said to them: My sons, remove the vessels first, and afterward remove my bed, as I can guarantee you that as long as I am in the house, the house will not fall. Indeed they removed the vessels and afterward they removed his bed, and immediately the house collapsed. His students said to him: Rabbi, since you are evidently a wholly righteous man, why has this suffering befallen you? He said to them: My sons, I brought it upon myself. As once I was traveling along the road to my father-in-law’s house, and I had with me a load distributed among three donkeys, one of food, one of drink, and one of delicacies. A poor person came and stood before me in the road, saying: My rabbi, sustain me. I said to him: Wait until I unload the donkey. I had not managed to unload the donkey before his soul left his body. I went and fell upon his face and said: May my eyes, which had no compassion on your eyes, be blinded; may my hands, which had no compassion on your hands, be amputated; may my legs, which had no compassion on your legs, be amputated. And my mind did not rest until I said: May my whole body be covered in boils. His students said to him: woe to us that we have seen you in this state. He said to them: Woe is me if you had not seen me in this state.

And why did they call him Nahum of Gam Zu? The reason is that with regard to any matter that occurred to him, he would say: This too is for the good [gam zu letova].

Once, the Jews wished to send a gift [*doron*] to the house of the emperor. They said: Who should go and present this gift? Let Nahum of Gam Zu go, as he is accustomed to miracles. They sent with him a chest [*sifta*] full of jewels and pearls, and he went and

17. גמ' תענית כא ע"א

אָמְרוּ עָלָיו עַל נַחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זֶה שֶׁהָיָה סוּמָא מִשְׁתֵּי עֵינָיו, גַּדָּם מִשְׁתֵּי יָדָיו, קִיטַע מִשְׁתֵּי רַגְלָיו, וְכָל גּוּפוֹ מְלֵא שָׁחִין. וְהָיָה מוּטָל בְּבֵית רְעוּעַ, וְרַגְלָיו מִטָּתוֹ מוּנָחִין בְּסִפְלִין שֶׁל מִים כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא יַעֲלוּ עָלָיו נְמָלִים.

פַּעַם אַחַת בִּקְשׂוּ וּתְלַמִּידָיו לְפָנוּת מִטָּתוֹ, וְאַחַר כֵּן לְפָנוּת אֶת הַכֵּלִים. אָמַר לָהֶם: בְּנֵי, פָּנוּ אֶת הַכֵּלִים, וְאַחַר כֵּן פָּנוּ אֶת מִטָּתִי, שְׁמוּבִטָּח לָכֶם שֶׁכָּל זְמַן שֶׁאֲנִי בְּבֵית אֵין הַבַּיִת נוֹפֵל. פִּינוּ אֶת הַכֵּלִים וְאַחַר כֵּן פִּינוּ אֶת מִטָּתוֹ, וְנִפְל הַבַּיִת. אָמְרוּ לוֹ וּתְלַמִּידָיו: רַבִּי, וְכִי מֵאַחַר שֶׁצָּדִיק גָּמֹר אֶתָּה, לָמָּה עָלְתָה לָךְ כֵּן? אָמַר לָהֶם: בְּנֵי, אֲנִי גֵרַמְתִּי לְעַצְמִי. שֶׁפַּעַם אַחַת הֵייתִי מֵהַלֵּךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ לְבֵית חַמִּי, וְהָיָה עִמִּי מִשׁוּי שְׁלֹשָׁה חֲמוּרִים, אֶחָד שֶׁל מֵאֲכָל, וְאֶחָד שֶׁל מִשְׁתֵּה, וְאֶחָד שֶׁל מִינֵי מְגָדִים. בָּא עָנִי אֶחָד וְעָמַד לִי בְּדֶרֶךְ, וְאָמַר לִי: רַבִּי, פְּרָנְסֵנִי. אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: הִמָּתוֹ עַד שֶׁאֲפָרוֹק מִן הַחֲמוּר. לֹא הִסְפַּקְתִּי לְפָרוֹק מִן הַחֲמוּר עַד שֶׁיִּצְתָּה נִשְׁמָתוֹ. הִלַּכְתִּי וְנִפְלַתִּי עַל פָּנָיו, וְאָמַרְתִּי: עֵינֵי שֶׁלֹּא חָסוּ עַל עֵינֶיךָ — יְסוּמוּ, יָדַי שֶׁלֹּא חָסוּ עַל יָדֶיךָ — תִּגְדָּמוּ, רַגְלֵי שֶׁלֹּא חָסוּ עַל רַגְלֶיךָ — תִּקְטָעוּ. וְלֹא נִתְקַרְרָה דַּעְתִּי עַד שֶׁאֲמַרְתִּי: כָּל גּוֹפִי יִהְיֶה מְלֵא שָׁחִין. אָמְרוּ לוֹ: אוֹי לָנוּ שֶׁרְאִינוּךָ בְּכֵן! אָמַר לָהֶם: אוֹי לִי אִם לֹא רְאִיתוּנִי בְּכֵן.

וְאֵמָאֵי קְרוּ לֵיהּ נַחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זֶה — דְּכָל מִילְתָּא דְּהוּהוּ סְלָקָא לֵיהּ, אָמַר: גַּם זֶה לְטוֹבָה.

זִמְנָא חָדָא בְּעוּ לְשַׁדְרֵי שְׂרָאֵל דּוֹרוֹן לְבֵי קִיסָר, אָמְרוּ: מֵאֵן יִיזִיל — יִיזִיל נַחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זֶה, דְּמְלוּמָד בְּנִיסִין הוּא. שְׁדָרוּ בִּידְיָהּ מְלֵא סִפְטָא דְּאַבְנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמְרַגְלִיוֹת. אֲזַל,

spent the night in a certain inn. During the night, these residents of the inn arose and took all of the precious jewels and pearls from the chest, and filled it with earth. The next day, when he saw what had happened, Nahum of Gam Zu said: **This too is for the good**. When he arrived there, at the ruler’s palace, they opened the chest and saw that it was filled with earth. The king wished to put all the Jewish emissaries to death. He said: The Jews are mocking me. Nahum of Gam Zu said: **This too is for the good**. Elijah the Prophet came and appeared before the ruler as one of his ministers. He said to the ruler: Perhaps this earth is from the earth of their father Abraham. As when he threw earth, it turned into swords, and when he threw stubble, it turned into arrows, as it is written in a prophecy that the Sages interpreted this verse as a reference to Abraham: “His sword makes them as the dust, his bow as the driven stubble” (Isaiah 41:2). There was one province that the Romans were unable to conquer. They took some of this earth, tested it and conquered. His servants entered his treasury and filled Nahum of Gam Zu’s chest with precious jewels and pearls and sent him off with great honor.

בַּת בַּהֲהוּא דִּירָא. בְּלִילָא קָמוּ הֶנֶד דְּיוֹרְאֵי וְשִׁקְלִינְהוּ לְסִיפְטִיָּה וּמְלוֹנְהוּ עֶפְרָא. (למחר כי חזנהו אמר: **גם זו לטובה**). כִּי מָטָא הֶתָם, שְׁרִינְהוּ לְסִיפְטִי, חֲזָנְהוּ דְמְלו עֶפְרָא. בַּעַא מְלָכָא לְמַקְטִילִינְהוּ לְכוּלְהוּ, אָמַר: קָא מְחִיכוּ בֵי הַיּוֹדָאֵי. אָמַר: **גם זו לטובה**. אֶתְאָ אֵלִיָּהוּ אֲדָמִי לִיה כְּחַד מִינְיָהוּ, אָמַר לִיה: דְלָמָא הָא עֶפְרָא מַעֲפָרָא דְאַבְרָהָם אָבוּהוֹן הוּא, דְכִי הוּא שְׂדֵי עֶפְרָא — הוּו סִיפִי, גִּילִי — הוּו גִּירִי, דְכֶתִיב: (ישעי' מא) "יִתֵּן כַּעֲפָר חֲרָבוֹ כְּקֶשׁ נֶדְף קִשְׁתּוֹ". הוּוּא חֲדָא מְדִינְתָא דְלָא מְצוּ לְמִיכְבָּשָׁה, בְּדִקּוּ מִינְיָה וְכַבְּשׁוּהָ. עֵינִלוּ לְבֵי גִנְזִיָּה וּמְלוּהוּ לְסִיפְטִיָּה אֲבָנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמְרַגְלִיּוֹת, וְשִׁדְרוּהוּ בִיקְרָא רַבָּה.

Mishnah Maaser Sheni 5:9

The other tithe which I shall measure out in the future is given to Akiva ben Joseph that he may hold it for the poor, and the place which it is in is leased to him.”

18. משנה מעשר שני ה:ט
עשור אחר שֶׁאֲנִי עֹתִיד לְמַד, נִתּוֹן לְעֻקֵּיבָא בֶן יוֹסֵף שְׁיִזְכָּה בּוֹ לְעֻנְיִים, וּמְקוֹמוֹ מְשֻׁכָּר לוֹ.

Bartenura ibid

He was the treasurer/manager of the Poor.

19. ר' עובדיה מברטנורא שם
נתון לעקיבא בן יוסף - גבאי של עניים היה :

Kiddushin 27a

What is the meaning of: Rented? Rented [only] for tithe. Or you could say: Rabbi Akiva is different, as he was a charity collector, his was the hand of the poor.

20. גמ' קידושין כז ע"א
"ומקומו משֻׁכָּר לוֹ" - מאי "מושֻׁכָּר" - מושֻׁכָּר לְמַעֲשֵׂר. וְאֵי בְעִיַת אֵימָא: שְׂאֵנִי רַבִּי עֻקֵּיבָא, דִּיד עֻנְיִים הוּוּ.

Brachot 22a

Our Rabbis taught: A ba'al keri on whom nine kabs of water have been thrown is clean. **Nahum of Gam Zo whispered this halakha to Rabbi Akiva**, and Rabbi Akiva whispered it to his student ben Azzai, and ben Azzai went out and taught it to his students publicly in the marketplace.

21. גמ' ברכות כב ע"א
תַּנּוּ רַבָּנָן: בַּעַל קֶרִי שֶׁנִּתְּנוּ עָלָיו תְּשַׁעָּה קַבִּין מִיַּם — טְהוֹר. נְחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זֶה לְחֻשָׁה לְרַבִּי עֻקֵּיבָא, וְרַבִּי עֻקֵּיבָא לְחֻשָׁה לְבֶן עֲזַאי, וּבֶן עֲזַאי יִצְאָ וְשִׁנְאָה לְתַלְמִידָיו בְּשׁוּק.

Shavuot 26a

Rabbi Yohanan said: Rabbi Yishmael served as a disciple of Rabbi Nehunya ben HaKana, who would interpret the entire Torah with the hermeneutical principle of a generalization and a detail so he also interprets the Torah with the method of a generalization and a detail. **Rabbi Akiva served as a disciple of Nahum of Gam Zo**, who would interpret the entire Torah with the hermeneutical principle of amplification and restriction. Therefore, Rabbi Akiva also interprets the Torah by amplification and restriction.

22. גמ' שבוות כו ע"א
א"ר יוחנן: ר' ישמעאל ששימש את רבי נחוניא בן הקנה שהיה דורש את כל התורה כולה בכלל ופרט, איהו נמי דורש בכלל ופרט, רבי עקיבא ששימש את נחום איש גם זו שהיה דורש את כל התורה כולה בריבה ומיעט, איהו נמי דורש ריבה ומיעט.

Chagiga 12a

Rabbi Yishmael asked Rabbi Akiva when they were walking along the way: You who served Nahum of Gam Zu for twenty-two years, who would expound and learn that every appearance of the word et in the Torah is meant to teach something...

23. גמ' חגיגה יב ע"א
שְׂאֵל רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעְאֵל אֶת רַבִּי עֻקֵּיבָא כְּשֶׁהָיוּ מְהַלְכִין בְּדֶרֶךְ, אָמַר לִיה: אֵתָהּ שְׁשִׁימְשֵׁתָּ אֶת נְחוּם אִישׁ גַּם זֶה עֹשְׂרִים וְשִׁתִּים שָׁנָה, שְׁהֵי דוֹרֵשׁ כָּל "אֶתִּין" שֶׁבַתּוֹרָה...

Zecharia 8:4-5

Thus said GOD of Hosts: There shall yet be elderly men and women in the squares of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. And the squares of the city shall be crowded with boys and girls playing in the squares.

24. זכריה ח:ד-ה
כֹּה אָמַר יְקֻוֹק צְבָאוֹת עַד יִשְׁבוּ זְקֵנִים וְזִקְנוֹת בְּרַחְבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאִישׁ מְשַׁעֲנֵתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ מֵרֵב יָמִים: וּרְחֻבוֹת הָעִיר יִמְלְאוּ יְלָדִים וְיִלְדוֹת מְשַׁחֲקִים בְּרַחְבֵּיהָ: