

“MOUNTAINS HANGING ON A STRING”: ON THE TWOTORAHS (ORAL & WRITTEN)

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Mishnah Hagiga 1:8

התר נדרים פורחים באויר ואין להם על מה שיסמכו. הלכות שבת וחגיגות ומעילות כהררים* תלויים בסערה.
מקרא ממועט והלכות [מרובות]. הדינים והעבדות והטהרות והטמאות והעריות יש להם על מה שייסמכו. הן
הן גופי תורה

The dissolution of vows flies in the air and has nothing to lean on. The laws of Shabbat, Festal-offerings, and acts of sancta violation are as mountains hanging by a strand, since they are little Scripture and many laws. Civil cases, temple services, purities and impurities, and forbidden relations, have upon what to lean, and it is they that are the bodies of the Torah.

Manuscript Parma: *Ḥararim*

Jeremiah 17:5-8

Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the one who trusts in mere mortals and makes mere flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He shall be like a shrub in the desert (=Arar ba-Arava), and shall not see when relief comes. He shall live *ḥararim* in the desert, in an uninhabited salt land. Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord whose trust is the Lord. He shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit

Mishnah Avot 3:17

He used to say: one whose wisdom is more abundant than his works, to what is he likened? To a tree whose branches are abundant but whose roots are few; and the wind comes and uproots it and overturns it, as it is written “He shall be like a shrub in the desert (=Arar ba-Arava), and shall not see when relief comes; He shall live *Hararim* in the desert” (Jer. 17:6). But one whose works are more abundant than his wisdom, to what is he likened? To a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are many; so that even if all the winds in the world come and blow against it, it cannot be stirred from its place, as it is written “He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, that spreads out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, and his leaf shall be green; and it shall not be anxious in the year of drought, neither shall it cease from yielding fruit” (Jer. 17:8).

Avot de-Rabbi Natan 1:22

He used to say: one in whom there are good works, and who has studied much Torah, to what may he be likened? To a tree which stands by the waters, whose branches are few but whose roots are numerous: even if the four winds of the world come along, they cannot stir it from its place, as it is said, “And he shall be like a tree planted by streams of water, etc.” (Ps. 1:3). One in whom there are no good works, though he has studied much Torah, to what may he be likened? To a tree which stands in the desert, whose branches are numerous but whose roots are few: when the wind blows, it uproots it and sweeps it down, as it is said, “For he shall be like a tamarisk in the desert, etc.” (Jer. 17:6).

Hodayot (Thanksgiving Hymns) 1QH viii 22-25

בהנפי יד ?ל?עזוק, פלגיו יכו שרשיו בצור חלמיש ו...>..<ו בארץ גזעם ובעת חום יעצור, מעוז. ואם אשיב יד
יהיה כער>ער ... ו<גזעו כחרלים במלחה. ופלגיו, יעל קוץ ודרדר לשמיר ושית ?>?<היה>

When I lift my hand to dig its ditches its roots shall run deep into the rock of silex and its stem ... in the earth; in the season of heat it shall keep its vitality. But if I take away my hand it shall be like a this[tle (*arar*) in the wilderness and] its stem shall be like nettles (*harulim*) in a salty land, and thistles and thorns shall grow from its ditches, and brambles and briars.

Mishna Sota 5:2

That same day R. Akiba expounded, “And every earthen vessel where-into any of them falleth, whatsoever is in it conveys uncleanness” (Lev. 11:33). It does not say “is unclean” but “shall render unclean,” so that it makes other things unclean. This teaches that a loaf suffering second-grade uncleanness renders another unclean in the third grade. R. Joshua said: Who will take away the dust from off thine eyes, O Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai!—for thou didst say that another generation would declare the third loaf clean, for there is no verse in the Law to prove that it is unclean; and now does not thy pupil Akiba bring a verse from the Law to prove that it is unclean! for it is written, “Whatsoever is in it shall render unclean.”

Palestinian Talmud Hagiga 77d

Rabbi Ze'ira said in the name of R. Yohanan, “If you come across a halakhah and you do not know its nature [=its Scriptural basis?], do not set it aside, for many laws were dictated to Moses from Sinai, and all of these are embodied in the Mishnah.”

Mishnah Sanhedrin 11:3

Greater stringency applies to the words of the Scribes than to the words of Scripture. If one says, ‘There is no obligation to wear phylacteries’ so that he transgresses the words of Scripture, he is not culpable; [but if he said], ‘There should be in them five partitions’, so that he adds to the words of the Scribes, he is culpable.”