



מדרש פרקי דרבי אליעזר – פרק ב'
PIRQEI D'RABBI ELIEZER – CHAPTER 2
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The sons of Hyrkanos said to their father: Get thee up to Jerusalem and vow that thy son Eliezer should not enjoy any of thy possessions. He went up to Jerusalem to disinherit him, and it happened that a festival was being celebrated there by R. Jochanan ben Zakkai. All the magnates of the district were dining with him; (such as) Ben Zizith Hakkeseth, Nicodemus ben Gorion, and Ben Kalba S'bu'a.

Why was his name called Ben Zizith Hakkeseth? Because he reclined at table in a higher position than the other magnates of Jerusalem. Concerning Nicodemus ben Gorion, people said that he had (stored) provisions containing Seah of fine flour for every inhabitant of Jerusalem. When the zealots arose and burnt all the storehouses, they measured and found that he had had provisions for three years for every inhabitant in Jerusalem. Concerning Ben Kalba S'bu'a it was told that he had a house measuring Kors with roofs covered with gold.

The people said (to R. Jochanan): Behold, the father of R. Eliezer has arrived. He bade them saying: Prepare a place for him, and seat him next to us. (R. Jochanan) fixed his gaze on R. Eliezer, saying to him, Tell us some words of the Torah. (R. Eliezer) answered him saying: Rabbi! I will tell thee a parable. To what is the matter like? To this well which cannot yield more water than the amount which it has drawn (from the earth); likewise

am I unable to speak words of the Torah in excess of what I have received from thee. (R. Jochanan) said to him, I will (also) tell thee a parable. To what is the matter like? To this fountain which is bubbling and sending forth its water, and it is able to effect a discharge more powerful than what it secretes; in like manner art thou able to speak words of the Torah in excess of what Moses received at Sinai. (R. Jochanan) continued: Lest thou shouldst feel ashamed on my account, behold I will arise and go away from thee. Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai arose and went outside. (Thereupon) R. Eliezer sat down and expounded. His face shone like the light of the sun and his effulgence beamed forth like that of Moses, so that no one knew whether it was day or night. They went and said to Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai: Come and see R. Eliezer sitting and expounding, his face shining like the light of the sun and his effulgence beaming like that of Moses, so that no one knows whether it be day or night. He came from (his place) behind him and kissed him on his head, saying to him: Happy are ye, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because this one has come forth from your loins.

Hyrqanos his father said: To whom does (R. Jochanan) speak thus? The people answered: To Eliezer thy son. He said to them: (R. Jochanan) should not have spoken in that manner, but (in this wise), "Happy am I because he has come forth from my loins." Whilst R. Eliezer was sitting and expounding, his father was standing upon his feet. When (Eliezer) saw his father standing upon his feet, he became agitated and said to him: My father! be seated, for I cannot utter the words of the Torah when thou art standing on thy feet. (Hyrqanos) replied to him: My son, it was not for this reason that I came, but my intention was to

disinherit thee. Now that I have come and I have witnessed all this praise; behold thy brothers are disinherited and their portion is given to thee as a gift.

(Eliezer) replied: Verily I am not equal to one of them. If I had asked the Holy One, blessed be He, for land, it would be possible for Him to give this to me, as it is said, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Ps. xxiv.). Had I asked the Holy One, blessed be He, for silver and gold, He could have given them to me, as it is said, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (Hag. ii.). But I asked the Holy One, blessed be He, that I might be worthy (to learn the) Torah only, as it is said, "Therefore I esteem all precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Ps. cxix.).