

I Have Only These Festivals

Source Sheet by Benjamin Sigal

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 2:8

(8) **Rabban Gamliel** had a diagram of the different **forms of the moon** drawn **on a tablet** that hung **on the wall of his attic, which he would show to the laymen** who came to testify about the new moon but were unable to describe adequately what they had seen. **And he** would **say** to them: **Did you see** a form **like this or like this?** There was **an incident** in **which two** witnesses **came** to testify about the new moon, **and they said: We saw** the waning moon **in the morning in the east,** **and** that same day we saw the new moon **in the evening in the west.** **Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri said:** **They are false witnesses,** as it is impossible to see the new moon so soon after the last sighting of the waning moon. However, **when they arrived in Yavne, Rabban Gamliel accepted them** as witnesses without concern. **And** there was **another** incident in which **two** witnesses **came and said: We saw** the new moon **at its** anticipated **time,** i.e., on the night of the thirtieth day of the previous month; however, **on the** following **night,**

משנה ראש השנה ב'ח'

(ח) דמוות צורות לבנות היו לו לרבן גמליאל בטבלא ובכתל בעליתו, שבהן מראה את ההדיוטות ואומר, הכזה ראית או כזה. מעשה שפאו שנים ואמרו, ראינוהו שחרית במזרח וערבית במערב. אמר רבי יוחנן בן נורי, עדי שקר הם. כשפאו ליבנה קבלן רבן גמליאל. ועוד פאו שנים ואמרו, ראינוהו בזמנו, ובליל עבירו לא נראה, וקבלן רבן גמליאל. אמר רבי דוסא בן הרפינס, עדי שקר הו, היאך מעידין על האשה שילדה, ולמחר כרסה בין שניה. אמר לו רבי יהושע, רואה אני את דבריך:

i.e., the start of the thirty-first, which is often the determinant of a **full**, thirty-day month, **it was not seen. And nevertheless Rabban Gamliel accepted their** testimony and established the New Moon on the thirtieth day. **Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas** disagreed and **said: They are false witnesses; how can witnesses testify that a woman gave birth and the next day her belly is between her teeth**, i.e., she is obviously still pregnant? If the new moon was already visible at its anticipated time, how could it not be seen a day later? **Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: I see the logic of your statement;** the New Moon must be established a day later.

- What's going on here?

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 2:9

(9) Upon hearing that Rabbi Yehoshua had challenged his ruling, **Rabban Gamliel sent a message to him: I decree against you that you must appear before me with your staff and with your money on the day on which Yom Kippur occurs according to your calculation;** according to my calculation, that day is the eleventh of Tishrei, the day after Yom Kippur. **Rabbi Akiva**

משנה ראש השנה ב':ט'

(ט) שָׁלַח לוֹ רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל, גּוֹזְרִנִּי עֲלֶיךָ שֶׁתָּבֹא אֵצְלִי בַּמָּקֹלָה וּבַמַּעוֹתֶיךָ בְּיוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים שֶׁחָל לַהֲיוֹת בְּחֻשְׁבוֹנָה. הֲלֹךְ וּמֵצְאוּ רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא מִצָּר, אָמַר לוֹ, יֵשׁ לִי לְלִמּוּד שָׁכַל מָה שֶׁעָשָׂה רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל עָשׂוּי, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (וַיִּקְרָא כג), אֱלֹה מוֹעֲדֵי יְיָ מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ, אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם,

went and found Rabbi Yehoshua **distressed** that the head of the Great Sanhedrin was forcing him to desecrate the day that he maintained was Yom Kippur. In an attempt to console him, Rabbi Akiva **said to** Rabbi Yehoshua: **I can learn** from a verse **that everything that Rabban Gamliel did** in sanctifying the month **is done**, i.e., it is valid. **As it is stated:** “**These are the appointed seasons of the Lord, sacred convocations, which you shall proclaim** in their season” (Leviticus 23:4). This verse indicates that **whether** you have proclaimed them **at their** proper **time** or **whether** you have declared them **not at their** proper **time**, **I have only these Festivals** as established by the representatives of the Jewish people. Rabbi Yehoshua then **came to Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas**, who **said to him:** **If we come to debate** and question the rulings of **the court of Rabban Gamliel, we must debate** and question the rulings of **every court that has stood from the days of Moses until now. As it is stated:** “**Then Moses went up, and Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy of the Elders of Israel**” (Exodus 24:9). **But why were the names of these seventy Elders not specified? Rather, this comes to teach that every set of three judges**

בין בזמן בין שלא בזמן, אין לי מועדות אלא אלו. בא לו אצל רבי דוסא בן הרפינס, אמר לו, אם באין אנו לדון אחר בית דינו של רבן גמליאל, צריכין אנו לדון אחר כל בית דין ובית דין שעמד מימות משה ועד עכשיו, שנאמר (שמות כד), ויעל משה ואהרן נדב ואביהוא ושבעים מזקני ישראל. ולמה לא נתפרשו שמותן של זקנים, אלא ללמד, שכל שלשה ושלשה שעמדו בית דין על ישראל, הרי הוא כבית דינו של משה.

that stands as a court over the Jewish people has the same status **as the court of Moses**. Since it is not revealed who sat on that court, apparently it is enough that they were official judges in a Jewish court.

- What was Rabbi Yehoshua asked to do? What are the stakes involved?
- What advice is Rabbi Yehoshua given?
- What would you do in this case?

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 2:9

When Rabbi Yehoshua heard that even Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas maintained that they must submit to Rabban Gamliel's decision, **he took his staff and his money in his hand, and went to Yavne to Rabban Gamliel on the day on which Yom Kippur occurred according to his own calculation.** Upon seeing him, **Rabban Gamliel stood up and kissed him on his head. He said to him: Come in peace, my teacher and my student.** You are **my teacher in wisdom**, as Rabbi Yehoshua was wiser than anyone else in his generation, **and you are my student, as you accepted my statement**, despite your disagreement.

משנה ראש השנה ב':ט'

נָטַל מִקְלוֹ וּמַעוֹתָיו בְּיָדוֹ, וְהָלַךְ לִיבְנֵה אֶצֶל רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בְּיוֹם שְׁחַל יוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים לְהִיּוֹת בְּחֶשְׁבוֹנוֹ. עָמַד רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל וּנְשָׁקוֹ עַל רֹאשׁוֹ, אָמַר לוֹ, בֵּא בְּשָׁלוֹם, רַבִּי וְתִלְמִידִי, רַבִּי בְּחֶכְמָה, וְתִלְמִידִי שֶׁקִּבַּלְתָּ דְּבָרַי:

- What do you get out of this story?
- What does it teach us about apologies?

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