HEKHAL · READER'S EDITION

תלמוד בבלי, חגיגה יד ע"ב

b. Hagigah 14b: The Pardes Account and the "Water, Water" Warning

Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 14b

Hekhal Targum Project (machine-assisted draft; pending scholarly review)

PROVISIONAL EDITION · MACHINE-ASSISTED · NOT YET REVIEWED BY A CREDENTIALED EDITOR

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TRADITION	jewish-mysticism
LANGUAGE	Hebrew
PERIOD	redacted c. 6th-7th c. CE; the pardes tradition tannaitic
ATTRIBUTION	The Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 14b; the baraita of the four who entered the pardes (Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Aher, Rabbi Akiva) and Rabbi Akiva's warning about the stones of pure marble. Vilna Romm edition.
TRANSLATION	Hekhal Targum Project (machine-assisted draft; pending scholarly review)
LICENCE	CC-BY-SA-4.0
ONLINE	https://hekhal.org/texts/bavli-hagigah-14b-pardes-targum/

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> What this is: a machine-assisted, provisional translation. Every rendering choice and every unresolved reading is recorded in the apparatus beside the text. If you read the original and something looks wrong, write to community@hekhal.org; corrections are credited.

This is the Targum-translated form of the **pardes** baraita of **b. Hagigah 14b**, the locus classicus of the merkavah optical-illusion danger and the Talmudic kernel that the Hekhalot palace-ascent literature elaborates into the full sixth-palace water test. It was drafted by the Hekhal Targum Project on 2026-05-28 using glossary revision `heikhalot-merkavah-v0.2` with the `merkavah-ascent` frame controller. The status is `verified` (editor sign-off 2026-05-28), the first output in the Targum catalog cleared through full editor sign-off: drift clean, registry clean, the load-bearing Scholem citation scan-verified verbatim and the remaining scholarship citations signed off as accurate canonical positions (see the Audit Trail tab for the per-citation basis), and the public-domain comparand (Rodkinson) indexed.

The source of record is the public-domain Vilna Romm text. A public-domain English predecessor exists for the baraita, Rodkinson (New Edition, c. 1916), but, notably, Rodkinson *omits* Rabbi Akiva's marble / "water, water" warning entirely, so even the PD predecessor does not render the core of this passage (see the Comparison tab). The Targum value-add here is the controlled-vocabulary discipline, the preserved doubled cry, the preserved marble-as-water ambiguity, and the apparatus situating the Talmudic kernel against its fuller

Hekhalot throne-vision elaboration and the Scholem-Halperin debate. A genuine first-public-domain-English of the Hekhalot *elaboration* (Schäfer §§258-259 / §§407-410) remains a future contribution.

ת"ר ארבעה נכנסו בפרדס ואלו הן בן עזאי ובן זומא אחר ורבי עקיבא אמר להם ר"ע כשאתם מגיעין אצל אבני שיש טהור אל תאמרו מים מים משום שנאמר (תהלים קא, ז) דובר שקרים לא יכון לנגד עיני בן עזאי הציץ ומת עליו הכתוב אומר (תהלים קטז, טו) יקר בעיני ה' המותה לחסידיו בן זומא הציץ ונפגע ועליו הכתוב אומר (משלי כה, טז) דבש מצאת אכול דייך פן תשבענו והקאתו אחר קיצץ בנטיעות רבי עקיבא יצא בשלום

The Rabbis taught: Four entered the orchard, and these are they: Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma, Aher, and Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva said to them: When you reach the stones of pure marble, do not say "water, water," because it is said (Psalms 101:7), "One who speaks falsehoods shall not be established before my eyes."

Ben Azzai gazed and died. Of him Scripture says (Psalms 116:15), "Precious in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his devoted ones." Ben Zoma gazed and was stricken. Of him Scripture says (Proverbs 25:16), "Have you found honey? Eat only your fill, lest you be sated

with it and vomit it." Aher cut down the shoots. Rabbi Akiva departed in peace.





An orientation

This edition sets the verbatim original-language text beside a fresh English rendering and a critical apparatus: a running commentary on the passage, notes on the controlled vocabulary and the rendering chosen for each term, and cross-references to the lexicon and to related

sections. It is a provisional scholarly draft, released openly for correction and not yet reviewed by a credentialed editor.

⁂

pardes

pardes is rendered “orchard,” not “paradise.” In the four-who-entered baraita the word names the perilous domain of merkavah-contemplation the sages entered. Two anachronisms are barred from the body by the merkavah-ascent frame: the eschatological “paradise” (a later semantic field), and the 13th-c. Kabbalistic PaRDeS acronym (peshat / remez / derash / sod), a homonym that systematizes fourfold exegesis a full millennium after this tradition. The interpretive grammar operative here is the visionary-theurgic ascent itself, not PaRDeS hermeneutics.

Scholem, Gershom 1941, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, Lecture II (text verified against the archive.org scan); *Idel, Moshe 1988*

stones-of-pure-marble

The bare baraita warns against crying “water, water” at the stones of pure marble but does not state why. The fuller Hekhalot throne-vision form supplies the optical reading: the entrance of the sixth palace appears as myriad waves of water, yet there is not a drop of water there, only the splendor of the pure marble paving, whose gleam the eye reads as water. To name it “water” is the falsehood that destroys the unworthy descender. This elaboration is preserved in the Hekhalot recensions (characterized via Schäfer Synopse §§258-259 / §§407-410 and Davila 2013, not reproduced) and in Hai Gaon’s responsum on the sixth-palace danger (transmitted in the Arukh and the Otzar ha-Geonim). The reading is scholem-continuity: an experiential test within genuine visionary ascent. *Scholem, Gershom 1941, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, Lecture II, “at the gate of the sixth palace it seemed as though … waves of water … yet there was not a drop of water, only the ethereal glitter of the marble plates” (verified verbatim against the archive.org scan)*; *Davila, James R. 2013*

water-water-cosmic

Halperin reads the water-water motif against its cosmological-exegetical substrate rather than as a record of practice: the doubled “waters” evoke the upper and lower waters of Genesis 1 and the firmament, and the sixth-palace test is an elaboration of that exegesis developed in the synagogal-homiletical milieu around the Ezekiel / Shavuot reading cycle. On this reading the danger is the exegetical-theological one of the cosmic waters, and the descender, the gates, and the marble are literary figures. This is the halperin-literary relation. *Halperin, David J. 1988*

gazed

hetzitz (“gazed, peered”) is the verb governing the fate of each sage: Ben Azzai gazed and died, Ben Zoma gazed and was stricken. The act of looking is not incidental, it is cognate with the tzefiyat-ha-merkavah vocabulary of disciplined visionary gazing. wolfson-visionary: the “seeing” is a constitutive cognitive act within a phenomenology of visionary imagination, not a metaphor for intellectual apprehension; the danger inheres in the gaze itself. (Wolfson’s 1994 study centers on visionary imagination in *medieval* Jewish mysticism; it is applied here as an interpretive lens on the Talmudic gaze, not as a claim that Wolfson comments on this baraita.) *Wolfson, Elliot R. 1994*

merkavah-ascent-frame-active

Active frame controller: merkavah-ascent, in its visionary-ascent and angelic-seal-passage modes. The four-who-entered baraita is the Talmudic kernel that the Hekhalot palace-ascent literature elaborates into the full seven-heikhalot drama (the sixth-palace water test, the gate-guardians who destroy the unworthy yored merkavah, see the companion HR 19 seal-passage). davila-sociological: the tradents who developed this material into the Hekhalot corpus are best read as a specific scribal-mystical class, and the destruction of the unworthy is treated in their juridical-angelic register as actual, not as metaphorical "spiritual danger." The pseudepigraphic Akiva-frame carries martyrological weight (boustan-martyrological, Boustan 2005 treats the martyrology of *Hekhalot Rabbati* specifically; applied here as a lens on the Akiva narrator-frame, a passage it does not directly address). *Davila, James R. 2001*; *Boustan, Ra'anan S. 2005*

Editorial decisions

- **Source-of-record.** Anchored on b. Hagigah 14b (Vilna Romm, public domain) per the STEP-0 source acquisition: Heikhalot Zutarti has no clean pre-1929 PD critical edition, and the project's PD-digital Heikhalot Rabbati source (Wertheimer) does not contain the water-water / pardes passage. The fuller Hekhalot throne-vision elaboration (Schäfer §§258-259 / §§407-410) is surfaced in apparatus pending a future Jellinek Bet ha-Midrash page-image

acquisition pass aimed at a first-public-domain-English of the elaboration.

- **pardes.** Rendered “orchard” in the body; the 13th-c. PaRDeS-exegesis acronym is a homonym disambiguated in apparatus only, never imported into the body, per the merkavah-ascent frame refusal clause.
- **mayim mayim.** The doubled cry “water, water” is preserved verbatim with its doubling intact; the misnaming is precisely the speech-act the test forbids (cf. Ps 101:7), so it is not smoothed to “do not mistake it for water.”
- Status changed to verified on editor sign-off (editor-vincent, 2026-05-28). Scholem 1941 was verified verbatim against the archive.org scan and its page references corrected; the six scholarship citations were signed off as accurate, correctly-attributed canonical positions (no page-specific claims); the public-domain comparand was corrected from Soncino (copyrighted until 2031) to Rodkinson (PD, but omits the warning).

▽ SUGYA · THE MAP OF READINGS

See every scholarly and traditional reading of this passage, each one sourced, sliceable by tradition and by question, with the disagreements preserved rather than resolved.

Open the map of readings →

Colophon

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