HEKHAL · READER'S EDITION

תוספתא חגיגה פרק ב

Tosefta Chagigah 2: The Four Who Entered the Pardes (no "water, water")

Tosefta Chagigah 2

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	tannaitic; redacted c. 3rd c. CE
ATTRIBUTION	Tosefta, Chagigah ch. 2; the four who entered the pardes (Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Elisha [Aher], Rabbi Akiva), the two parables of safe gazing, and the Ben Zoma upper-and-lower-waters episode. Machon-Mamre edition (public domain).
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LICENCE	CC-BY-SA-4.0
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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 **tannaitic** witness in the four-entered-pardes synopsis, the sibling of the Babylonian Talmud account. Its significance is what it *lacks*: **there is no marble / "water, water" warning here.** Rabbi Akiva gives no such instruction in the Tosefta (the pericope has פרדס and the four sages, but neither מים מים nor אבני שיש). The warning is a Babylonian development; tracing where it enters the tradition, and how the Tosefta's "water" is instead the *cosmological* upper-and-lower-waters of creation, is the contribution.

Drafted by the engine on 2026-05-28 (glossary `heikhalot-merkavah-v0.2`, `merkavah-ascent` frame); status `verified` on editor sign-off 2026-05-29. Its citations inherited the verified manifest from the Bavli sibling (6/6 verified at finalize): the second verified output, and the compounding-wisdom loop in action. The passage already has free English (the Sefaria Community Translation, CC0) and a copyrighted scholarly English (Neusner 1986); what this edition adds is a rendering with a full, open apparatus.

ארבעה נכנסו לפרדס בן עזאי ובן זומא אחר ורבי עקיבה אחד הציץ ומת אחד הציץ ונפגע אחד הציץ וקיצץ בנטיעות ואחד עלה בשלום וירד בשלום בן עזאי הציץ ומת עליו הכתוב אומר (תהילים קטו) יקר בעיני ה' המותה לחסידיו בן זומא הציץ ונפגע עליו הכתוב אומר (משלי כה) דבש מצאת אכול דייך [וגו'] אלישע הציץ וקיצץ בנטיעות עליו הכתוב אומר (קוהלת ה) אל תתן את פיך לחטיא את בשרך וגו' רבי עקיבה עלה בשלום וירד בשלום עליו הכתוב אומר (שיר השירים א) משכני אחריך נרוצה [וגו'] משלו משל למה הדבר דומה לפרדס של מלך ועלייה בנוייה על גביו מה עליו [על אדם] להציץ ובלבד שלא יזוז [את עיניו] ממנו. ועוד משלו משל למה הדבר דומה [לאיסתרא] העוברת בין שני דרכים אחד של אור ואחד של שלג הטה לכאן נכוה [באור] הטה לכאן נכוה משלג מה עליו על אדם להלך באמצע ובלבד שלא יהא נוטה לא לכאן ולא לכאן. מעשה ברבי יהושע [שהיה מהלך באסתרטא והיה בן זומא בא כנגדו] הגיע אצלו ולא נתן לו

The Rabbis taught: Four entered the orchard, Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma, Aher, and Rabbi Akiva. One gazed and died; one gazed and was stricken; one gazed and cut down the shoots; and one ascended in peace and descended in peace.

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 …" Elisha gazed and cut down the shoots, of him Scripture says (Ecclesiastes 5:5), "Do not let your mouth bring your flesh into sin …" Rabbi Akiva ascended in peace and descended in peace, of him Scripture says (Song of Songs 1:4), "Draw me after you, let us run …"

They told a parable: to what may the matter be compared? To a king's orchard with an upper chamber built above it: a person may gaze, provided he does not move his eyes from it. And they told another parable: to what may the matter be compared? To a colonnade passing between two ways, one of fire and one of snow,

turn this way, one is scorched by the fire; turn that way, one is scorched by the snow. A person must walk in the middle, provided he turns aside neither this way nor that.

There was an incident with Rabbi Yehoshua, who was walking on the highway, and Ben Zoma came toward him; he reached him and did not greet him. He said to him: "From where and to where, Ben Zoma?" He said to him: "I was gazing upon the work of creation, and there is not even a handsbreadth between the upper waters and the lower waters, as it is said (Genesis 1:2), 'And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters,' and it says (Deuteronomy 32:11), 'As an eagle stirs up its nest …', just as this eagle flies above its nest, touching and not touching, so there is not even a handsbreadth between the upper waters and the lower waters." Rabbi Yehoshua said to his disciples: "Ben Zoma is already outside." Not many days passed before Ben Zoma departed [this world].

שלום אמר לו [מאין ולאן] בן זומא אמר לו צופה הייתי במעשה בראשית ואין בין מים העליונים למים התחתונים אפילו טפח שנאמר (בראשית א) ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים ואומר (דברים לג) כנשר יעיר קנו [וגו'] מה נשר זה טס על גבי קינו נוגע ואינו נוגע כך אין בין מים העליונים למים התחתונים אפילו טפח אמר להם רבי יהושע לתלמידיו כבר בן זומא מבחוץ לא היו ימים מועטים עד שנסתלק בן זומא.

▽

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.

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no-water-water-warning

The synoptic crux. The tannaitic Tosefta account of the four who entered the pardes has **no** marble / "water, water" warning, Rabbi Akiva gives no such instruction (confirmed: the pericope contains *pardes* and the four sages but neither *mayim mayim* nor *avnei shayish*). The warning is a Babylonian development. halperin-literary: its absence from the earliest witness supports reading it as a later exegetical elaboration rather than an ancient experiential datum. *Halperin, David J. 1988*

upper-and-lower-waters

Where the Tosefta does invoke water it is cosmological: Ben Zoma, gazing upon *maaseh bereshit*, declares there is not a handsbreadth between the upper and lower waters (Gen 1:2). This is precisely the cosmic-waters substrate Halperin reads behind the later Bavli/Hekhalot optical "water, water." *mayim* is rendered "waters" here, not the optical "water" of the warning; the same controlled term shifts register across the

witnesses. *Halperin, David J. 1988*; *Scholem, Gershom 1941, Major Trends, Lecture II*

ascended-and-descended

The Tosefta has Rabbi Akiva "ascended in peace and descended in peace" (*alah be-shalom ve-yarad be-shalom*), where the Bavli has "departed in peace" (*yatza be-shalom*). The ascent-and-descent idiom is the verbal seed of the later *yored-merkavah* (descender-to-the-chariot) paradox. Surfaced here as the term's tannaitic root, not yet the technical Heikhalot usage. *Scholem, Gershom 1941, Major Trends, Lecture II*

elisha-named

The Tosefta names the apostate sage "Elisha" explicitly, where the Bavli uses the by-name "Aher" ("the Other"). "Cut down the shoots" is the idiom for his apostasy. The Tosefta also supplies proof-texts the Bavli lacks, Eccl 5:5 for Elisha, Song of Songs 1:4 for Akiva.

merkavah-ascent-frame-active

Active frame controller: `merkavah-ascent`, visionary-ascent mode. The Tosefta's distinctive contribution is the two parables of *safe* gazing (the king's orchard with an upper chamber, gaze but do not move the eyes; the colonnade between fire and snow,

walk the middle), framing the visionary gaze as a disciplined act. wolfson-visionary supplies a lens on the constitutive gaze (Wolfson 1994 centers on medieval Kabbalah; applied here as a lens, not as commentary on this baraita). *Wolfson, Elliot R. 1994*; *Davila, James R. 2001*

Manuscript / edition note

- The Machon-Mamre edition prints Ben Azzai's proof-text reference as "(תהילים קטו)" = Psalms 115; the verse cited (*yaqar be-einei H' ha-mavtah la-hasidav*) is unambiguously **Psalms 116:15**. The chapter number is editorial, not part of the tannaitic text; the translation gives 116:15 and the printed slip is recorded rather than silently corrected.

Colophon

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