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תלמוד ירושלמי חגיגה ב:א

Yerushalmi Chagigah 2:1: The Four Who Entered the Pardes (Palestinian; fates swapped, no "water, water")

Talmud Yerushalmi, Chagigah 2:1

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	Palestinian amoraic; redacted c. 4th-5th c. CE
ATTRIBUTION	Jerusalem Talmud, Chagigah 2:1; the Palestinian account of the four who entered the pardes and the Ben Zoma upper-and-lower-waters episode. Venice (Bomberg) editio princeps, 1523. The extended Elisha-ben-Abuya persecutor narrative is elided (marked […]).
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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.

The **Palestinian** witness in the four-entered-pardes synopsis, and it carries the cluster's sharpest divergence. Like the Tosefta, it has **no "water, water" warning** (the warning is a Babylonian feature). But it also **swaps the fates of Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma**: here Ben Azzai is *stricken* (Prov 25:16) and Ben Zoma *dies* (Ps 116:15), the reverse of the Bavli and Tosefta, with the proof-texts traveling with the fate rather than the sage.

Drafted 2026-05-28 (glossary `heikhalot-merkavah-v0.2`, `merkavah-ascent` frame); status `verified` on editor sign-off 2026-05-29, citations 6/6 verified at finalize (inherited from the cluster), completing the rabbinic synopsis as a 3-of-3 verified set. The pericope already has an openly licensed English: Guggenheimer's (de Gruyter, 1999-2015), published on Sefaria under CC BY; Schwab 1878 is public domain but French. What this edition adds is a rendering with a full, open apparatus. The extended Elisha-ben-Abuya persecutor narrative is elided here (marked `[…]`) to keep the focus on the synopsis.

שוב מעש' בי ר' יהושע שהי'
מהלך בדרך ובן זומא בא כנגדו
שאל בשלומו ולא השיבו אמ' לו
מאיין ולאיין בן זומא אמר לו
מסתכל הייתי במעשה בראשית
ואין בין מים העליונים למים
התחתונים אלא כמלא פותח טפח
נאמר כאן ריחוף ונאמר להלן
כנשר יעיר קינו על גוזליו ירחף
מה ריחוף שנ' להלן נוגע ואינו
נוגע אף ריחוף שנ' כאן נוגע ואינו
נוגע א"ר יהושע לתלמידיו הרי בן
זומא מבחוץ ולא היו ימים קלים
עד שנפטר בן זומא ארבעה נכנסו
לפרדס אחד הציץ ומת אחד הציץ
ונפגע אחד הציץ וקיצץ בנטיעו'
אחד נכנס בשלום ויצא בשלום בן
עזאי הציץ ונפגע עליו הכתוב או'
דבש מצאת אכול דייך בן זומא
הציץ ומת עליו הכתוב או' יקר
בעיני יי' המותה לחסידיו אחר
הציץ וקיצץ בנטיעות מני אחר
אלישע בן אבויה שהיה הורג רבי
תורה [...] ר' עקיבה נכנס בשלום
ויצא בשלו' עליו הכתוב או'
משכני אחריך נרוצה וגו'

Again, an incident with Rabbi Yehoshua, who was walking on the road, and Ben Zoma came toward him; he [Rabbi Yehoshua] greeted him, and he [Ben Zoma] did not answer 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 between the upper waters and the lower waters but a handsbreadth's span. 'Hovering' is said here (Genesis 1:2), and 'hovering' is said there (Deuteronomy 32:11, 'as an eagle stirs up its nest, over its young it hovers'), just as the 'hovering' said there is touching and not touching, so the 'hovering' said here is touching and not touching." Rabbi Yehoshua said to his disciples: "Behold, Ben Zoma is outside." And not many days passed before Ben Zoma departed.

Four entered the orchard: one gazed and died; one gazed and was stricken; one gazed and cut down the shoots; one entered in peace and went out in peace. Ben Azzai gazed and was stricken, of him Scripture says (Proverbs 25:16), "Have you found honey? Eat only your fill." Ben Zoma gazed and died, of him Scripture says (Psalms

116:15), “Precious in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his devoted ones.” Aher gazed and cut down the shoots. Who is Aher? Elisha ben Abuya, who would kill the masters of Torah … [the extended Elisha persecutor narrative is elided here] … Rabbi Akiva entered in peace and went out in peace, of him Scripture says (Song of Songs 1:4), “Draw me after you, let us run.”





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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fate-swap

The synoptic jewel of this witness: the Yerushalmi swaps the fates of Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma relative to the Bavli and Tosefta. Here Ben Azzai “gazed and was stricken” (Prov 25:16, the honey-surfeit verse) and Ben Zoma “gazed and died” (Ps 116:15, the precious-death verse), the exact reverse of the

Babylonian/tannaitic assignment. The proof-texts travel with the FATE, not with the named sage. A textbook cross-witness divergence; the body follows the Yerushalmi, the reversal is held in apparatus. *Halperin, David J. 1988*

no-water-water-warning

Like the Tosefta, the Palestinian account has no marble / "water, water" warning (פרדס and the four sages, but neither מים מים nor אבני שיש). With two independent pre-Babylonian witnesses lacking it, the warning stands out as a Babylonian development. halperin-literary. *Halperin, David J. 1988*

upper-and-lower-waters

The Yerushalmi's water is cosmological: Ben Zoma holds the upper and lower waters a handsbreadth apart, argued by a gezerah shavah on רחף ("hover") between Gen 1:2 and Deut 32:11 (the eagle "touching and not touching"). This is the cosmic-waters substrate Halperin reads behind the later optical "water, water." *Halperin, David J. 1988*; *Scholem, Gershom 1941, Major Trends, Lecture II*

elisha-persecutor-elided

The Yerushalmi identifies Aher as Elisha ben Abuya "who would kill the masters of Torah," then develops an extended

persecutor / shmada narrative. That dense Galilean-Aramaic expansion is elided from this chunk (marked […]) to keep the synopsis in focus; it is a distinct tradition and a candidate for its own future translation. *Davila, James R. 2001*

entered-and-went-out

Akiva "entered in peace and went out in peace" (נכנס בשלום ויצא בשלום), cf. the Tosefta's "ascended and descended in peace" and the Bavli's "departed in peace." Three witnesses, three idioms for the one safe passage. *Scholem, Gershom 1941, Major Trends, Lecture II*

Colophon

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