



Code-switching

Elana Stein Hain and Yonah Hain

March 11, 2024

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Dr. Elana Stein Hain is the Rosh Beit Midrash and a senior research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, where she serves as lead faculty, engages in research and curriculum development and consults on the content of lay and professional leadership programs. A widely well-regarded teacher and scholar, Elana is passionate about bringing rabbinic thought into conversation with contemporary life. To this end, she hosts [TEXTing](#) a bi-weekly podcast that considers issues relevant to Jewish life through the lens of classical and modern Torah texts; she also teaches [Talmud from the Balcony](#), an occasional learning seminar exposing the big ideas, questions, and issues motivating rabbinic discussions. She is the author of [Circumventing the Law: Rabbinic Perspectives on Legal Loopholes and Integrity](#) (Penn Press, 2024) which uses loopholes as a lens for understanding rabbinic views on law and ethics. Elana also contributes to [For Heaven's Sake](#), a bi-weekly podcast with Donniel Hartman and Yossi Klein Halevi, exploring contemporary issues related to Israel and the Jewish world. She earned her doctorate in Religion at Columbia University and is an alumna of the Yeshiva University Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS) as well as the Consortium in Jewish Studies and Legal Theory Graduate Fellowship at Cardozo School of Law. She also served for eight years as a clergy member on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, at both Lincoln Square Synagogue and the Jewish Center, has taught at the Wagner School at NYU, and sits on the board of Sefaria: A Living Library of Jewish Texts.

Rabbi Yonah Hain is a faculty member at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America. He is the Campus Rabbi of Columbia University, where he leads the educational and religious initiatives of Columbia/Barnard Hillel's robust pluralistic Jewish community. Yonah is an adjunct faculty member at YCT Rabbinical School, and he has begun coursework towards a doctorate in Talmud and Rabbinics. With his previous work at the Bronfman Center at NYU, Yonah has been a New York City campus rabbi for fifteen years.

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Shalom Hartman Institute of North America
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1450
New York, NY 10115
212-268-0300
info@shalomhartman.org | www.shalomhartman.org

I. The Red Heifer

1. Pesikta DeRav Kahana 4:7

[ז] ויקחו אליך פרה (שם). לולינס בר טיבריס בשם ר' יצחק קאטריקו, ר' עזריה א' לה ר' יצחק ור' יוסה בר חנינה, א' לו הקב"ה, משה לך אני מגלה עסקי פרה אבל לאחרים חוקה...

And they shall bring you a red cow...(Bamidbar/Numbers 19:2) Lulinas son of Tivris said in the name of Rabbi Yitzchak Katriko, R. Azariah, R. Yitzchak, R. Yosa bar Hanina: God said to Moshe: Moshe, I'm revealing to you the aspects of the cow, but for others it will remain a hok.

II. Ritual and Witchcraft

2. Pesikta DeRav Kahana 4:7, cont.

גוי אחד שאל את רבן יוחנן בן זכיי א' ליה, אילין מיליא דאתון עבדין נראין כמן כשפים, מביאין פרה ושוחטין אותה ושורפין אותה וכותשין אותה ונוטלין את אפרה ואחד מכם מטמא למת ומזין עליו שתים שלש טיפים ואומרין לו טהרתה.

A gentile asked Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, "These rituals you do, they seem like witchcraft! You bring a heifer, burn it, crush it up, and take its ashes. [If] one of you is impure by the dead [the highest type impurity], 2 or 3 drops are sprinkled on him, and you declare him pure?!"

א' לו לא נכנסה רוח תזזית באותו האיש מימיו, א' לו לאו, אמ' לו ולא ראיתיה אחר שנכנסה בו רוח תזזית, א' לו הין. א' לו ומה אתם עושין, א' לו מביאין עיקרין ומעשנן תחתיו ומרבצים עליה מים והיא בורחת.

He said to him, "Has a restless spirit ever entered you?"

He said to him, "No!" "Have you ever seen a man where a restless spirit entered him?" He said to him, "Yes!" [Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai] said to him, "And what did you do for him?" He said to him, "We brought roots and made them smoke beneath him, and pour water and it flees."

א' לו ולא ישמעו אזניך מה שפיך מדבר, כך הרוח הזה רוח טומאה היא, דכת' וגם את הנביאים ואת רוח הטומאה וגי' (זכריה יג:ב)

He said to him, "Your ears should hear what leaves from your mouth! The same thing is true for this spirit, the spirit of impurity, as it is written, (Zachariah 13:2) "Even the prophets and the spirit of impurity will I remove from the land." They sprinkle upon him purifying waters, and it [the spirit of impurity] flees."

III. The Insiders

3. Pesikta DeRav Kahana 4:7-8

וכיון שיצא אמרו לו תלמידיו ר' לזה דחיתיה בקנה לנו מה אתה משיב, אי להם חייכם לא המת מטמא ולא המים מטהרים אלא גזירתו של הקב"ה הוא, אי הקב"ה חוקה חקקתי גזירה גזרתי ואין אתה רשאי לעבור על גזירתי זאת חוקת התורה (במדבר יט:ב).

After he left, our rabbi's students said, "You pushed him off with a reed. What will you say to us?" He said to them, "By your lives, a dead person doesn't make things impure, and the water doesn't make things pure. Rather, God said, 'I have engraved a rule, I have decreed a decree (chukah chakakti, gezeira gazarti), and you have no permission to transgress what I decreed, as it says "This is a chok (rule) of the Torah."

[ח] מפני מה כל הקרבנות באין זכרים וזו באה נקיבה, אי"ר אייבו לבן שפחה שטינף בפלטין של מלך, אי המלך תבוא אמו ותקנח את הצואה בחיקה, כך אמי הקב"ה תבוא פרה ותכפר על מעשה העגל.

And why are all the sacrifices male and this one is female? R. Iyvo said: this is like the son of a maid who soiled the king's palace. The king said: let his mother come and clean up the excrement. So God said: Let a cow come and atone for the golden calf.