



Talmud Tales – Session 2 - The Cave

BT Shabbat 33b

R. Yehuda and R. Yose and R. Shimon bar Yochai were sitting, and Yehuda b. Gerim was sitting beside them.

R. Yehuda opened and said: How pleasant are the acts of this (Roman) nation: They established markets! They established bathhouses! They established bridges!

R. Yose was silent.

R. Shimon bar Yochai answered and said, "Everything they established, they established only for their own needs: They established markets - to place prostitutes there; bathhouses - to pamper themselves; bridges - to take tolls."

Yehuda b. Gerim went and retold their words, and it became known to the Roman government. They said: "Yehuda who extolled - let him be extolled. Yose who was silent - let him be exiled to [Zippori](#). Shimon who disparaged - let him be killed."

He (R. Shimon) went with his son and hid in the Beit Midrash. Each day his wife brought him bread and a jug of water and they ate. When the decree became more severe he said to his son: "Women are easy-minded. They may abuse her and she will reveal us."

They went and hid in a cave. A miracle happened – a [carob tree](#) and a spring of water were created for them. They took off their clothes and sat up to their necks in sand.

All day they sat and studied, and when the time came to pray they got out of the sand, dressed [their bodies], covered [their heads] and prayed and again took off their clothes – all in order that they not wear out.

They dwelled in the cave for twelve years.

[Elijah](#) came to the opening of the cave, saying: "Who will inform Bar Yochai that the emperor died and the decree is annulled?" They went out.

They saw men plowing and sowing. R. Shimon said, "They forsake eternal life (olam) and busy themselves with temporal life?!" Every place they turned their eyes to – was immediately burned. A heavenly voice (*bat kol*) came out and said to them: "Did you go out to destroy my world? Return to your cave!" They returned.

They dwelled for twelve months, saying: "The sentence of the wicked in Hell is twelve months." A heavenly voice went out and said, "Go out from your cave."

They went out. Wherever his son, R. Elazar smote – R. Shimon healed. He said, "My son, you and I are sufficient for the world."

When the eve of the Sabbath arrived, they saw a certain old man who was holding two bunches of myrtle running at twilight. They said to him, "Why do you need these?" He said to them, "To honor the Sabbath." They said "Would not one suffice for you?" He said, "One for "Remember [the Sabbath]" (Exodus 20:8) and one for "Observe the Sabbath" (Deut. 5:12). R. Shimon said to him (his son), "See how dear is a commandment (mitvzah) to Israel." R. Elazar's mind was set at ease.