



## Talmud Tales – Session 5 – Oven of Akhnai: Part 2

### **BT Baba Metzia 59b**

They said: On that day they brought all of the objects that R. Eliezer had declared insusceptible to uncleanness and burned them in fire [as though they were unclean beyond all purification]. They furthermore took a vote against him and cursed him.

They said, “Who will go and inform him?” Said to them R. Akiba, “I shall go and tell him, lest someone unworthy go and tell him, and he turn out to destroy the entire world [with his curse].” What did R. Akiba do? He put on black garments and cloaked himself in a black cloak and took his seat before him at a distance of four cubits. Said to him R. Eliezer, “Akiba, why is today different from all other days?” He said to him, “My lord, it appears to me that your colleagues are keeping distance from you.” Then he too tore his garments and removed his shoes, moved his stool and sat down on the ground, with tears streaming from his eyes.

The world was blighted: a third olives, a third wheat, a third barley. And some say, also the dough in women’s hands swelled up.

A Tannaite authority taught: There was a great disaster that day, for every place upon which R. Eliezer set his eyes was burned up. And also Rabban Gamaliel was coming by

ship. A big wave arose to drown him. He said, “It appears to me that this is on account only of R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus.” He stood upon his feet and said, “Lord of the world, it is perfectly obvious to you that it was not for my own honor that I have acted, nor for the honor of the house of my father have I acted, but it was for the honor owing to you, specifically, so that dissension should not become rife in Israel.” The sea subsided.

Imma Shalom, the wife of R. Eliezer, was the sister of Rabban Gamaliel. From that time onward she never left R. Eliezer to fall on his face [in prayer]. [So great was the power of his prayer that if he were to recite certain prayers because of the injury done him, God would listen and destroy her brother.]

One day, which was the day of the New Moon, she mistook, assuming that the month was a defective one; and others say, she was distracted by a poor man who came and stood at her door, and to whom she took out a piece of bread. She found that her husband had fallen on his face, and she said to him, ‘Get up, for you have killed my brother.’ Meanwhile the word came from the house of Rabban Gamaliel that he had died. He said to her, “Then how did you know?”

She said to him, “So do I have as a tradition from the household of the father of my father: ‘All gates are locked, except for the gates of wounded feelings.’”