

# Everyday Life in Mishnaic Times

## Case Study #1: Bar Kokhba Revolt

To be sure, they did not dare try conclusions with the Romans in the open field but they occupied the advantageous positions in the country and strengthened them with mines and walls, in order that they might have places of refuge whenever they should be hard pressed and might meet together unobserved underground; and they pierced these subterranean passages from above at intervals to let in air and light. (Dio Cassius)

Rav Idi bar Avin said that Rabbi Yitzḥak bar Ashyan said: If there is a single hideaway there in the city, where the women could hide from the soldiers, it saves all the women married to priests. (Ketubot 27a)

## The House

Once a man came to Rabbi Joshua's house. He fed him and gave him the attic room to sleep in, removing the ladder afterwards. . . In the middle of the night [the guest] took the dishes and put them in his cloak and when he tried to go down he fell from the attic and broke his neck . . . Derekh Eretz Rabba 5b

A man may protest against [another that opens] a shop within the courtyard and say to him, "I cannot sleep because of the noise of them that go in and out." One who makes utensils, should go outside and sell them in the market. But none may protest and say to him, "I cannot sleep because of the noise of the hammer" or "because of the noise of the mill-stones" or "because of the noise of children." (Mishnah Bava Batra 2:3)

Rabbi Johanan said in the name of Rabbi Bana'ah: Joint owners of a courtyard can stop one another from using the courtyard for any purpose except that of washing clothes, since it is not fitting that the daughters of Israel should expose themselves to the public gaze while washing clothes. Bava Batra 57b

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa's wife would heat the oven every Shabbat eve and create a great amount of smoke, due to embarrassment, to make it appear that she was baking, despite the fact that there was no bread in her house. She had a certain evil neighbor who said to herself: Now, I know that they have nothing. What, then, is all this smoke? She went and knocked on the door to find out what was in the oven. Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa's wife was embarrassed, and she ascended to an inner room.

A miracle was performed for Rabbi Ḥanina ben Dosa's wife, as her neighbor saw the oven filled with bread and the kneading basin filled with dough. She said to

Rabbi Ḥanina's wife, calling her by name: So-and-so, so-and-so, bring a shovel, as your bread is burning. (Taanit 24b)

## Purity

One who left an am ha'aretz in his house to guard him, if he can see those that enter and leave, only food and liquids and uncovered earthenware are unclean, but couches and seats and earthenware that have tightly fitting covers remain clean. Mishnah Toharot 7:5

Come and see how far purity has spread in Israel! Shabbat 13a

The way down to the place of immersion, they are impure; the way up, they are pure, since the way down is not the same as the way up. Shekalim 21

Regarding a [impure] needle on the steps of a cavern [which houses a *mikveh*], if one was moving the waters back and forth [by stirring the waters around with one's hands or feet], once a wave passes over it [the needle], it is pure. Mishnah M'kvaot 7:7

## Documents

If he found documents in a satchel or bag, or a bundle of documents he should return them. (Mishnah Bava Metzia 1:8)