

## The Oven of Akhnai – Bava Metzia 59a-b

We learned there: If he cut [an oven] into pieces and placed sand between each piece, Rabbi Eliezer declared it pure, and the Sages declared it impure. This is the oven of Akhnai. Why Akhnai? Rabbi Yehudah said that Shmuel said: They surrounded it with words [arguments], as a snake [akhna'] does, and declared it impure.

It was taught: On that day, Rabbi Eliezer brought every response in the world, but they did not accept from him.

He said to them: If the Halakhah is according to me, let the carob tree prove it! The carob tree uprooted itself from its place [and moved] one hundred cubits. And some say four hundred cubits.

They said to him: We do not bring proof from the carob tree.

He came back and said: If the Halakhah is according to me, let a stream of water prove it! The stream of water changed directions and [flowed] backwards.

They said to him: We do not bring proof from a stream of water.

He came back and said to them: If the Halakhah is according to me, let the walls of the Bet Midrash prove it! The walls of the Bet Midrash leaned in to collapse.

Rabbi Yehoshua rebuked them, and said to them: If Torah scholars are dueling one another in Halakhah, are you as good as them? [what right do you have to interfere?] [The walls] did not fall because of the honor of Rabbi Yehoshua, and they did not stand upright because of the honor of Rabbi Eliezer, and they are still leaning and standing.

He came back and said to them: If the Halakhah is according to me, let Heaven prove it! A Bat Qol [divine voice] said: What is to you [what are you doing] regarding Rabbi Eliezer that the Halakhah is according to him in any case!?

Rabbi Yehoshua stood on his feet and said: "It is not in heaven!" (Deuteronomy 30:12)

What is "it is not in heaven?" Rabbi Yirmiyah said: Torah has already been given from Mount Sinai, and we do not pay attention to the Bat Qol, because you wrote in the Torah at Mount Sinai, "to incline after the majority." (Exodus 23:2)

Rabbi Natan happened upon Elijah the prophet, and said to him: What did the Holy Blessed One do at that time? He said to him: God smiled and said: My children have defeated me, my children have defeated me.