

Binyamin Lau

THE SAGES

CHARACTER, CONTEXT & CREATIVITY

VOLUME V: THE YESHIVOT OF BABYLONIA AND ISRAEL

TRANSLATED BY

Ilana Kurshan

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Volume V: The Yeshivot of Babylonia and Israel

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In memory of my father and teacher
Naphtali Lau Lavi
Who can find a trustworthy man? (Prov. 20:6)

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Author's Preface

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.
I have firmly sworn to keep Your just rules.
I am very much afflicted; O Lord preserve me in accordance
with Your word.
(Ps. 119:105–7)

Several years have elapsed since the publication of *The Sages*, volume IV, which dealt with the beginning of the talmudic period. My years of reading talmudic passages slowly and carefully afforded me a deep dive into the world of the sages. My more recent preoccupations, especially 929 – a project to read one chapter of the Bible a day – have led me down interesting paths, but I have been less immersed in the talmudic world. Fortunately, I continued to teach a weekly summer class on the talmudic sages at the Ramban Synagogue. My preparations for this class ensured that I remained deeply connected to the Talmud and those who study it, and to the inner world of the sages. My encounters with the intimate language of the Talmud and its sages generated many conversations with my colleagues and students and so, over the course of several summers, this volume emerged, focusing on the teachings of the second generation of talmudic sages – the founders of the great

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rabbinic academies in Babylonia and the Land of Israel at the end of the third century CE.

Many individuals partnered with me to put together this volume, and I thank them with all my heart for not allowing me to forsake this worthy endeavor.

Talia Cherlow, who taught with me at Beit Morasha in Jerusalem, focused on Rav Yehuda and Rav Naḥman, and her work has enriched these chapters. Tzvi Luboshitz reviewed several of the chapters and added his own insights. Rabbi Dr. Yehuda Brandes, Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, Dr. Shai Secunda, Dr. Yonatan Feintuch, and Rabbi Dr. Baruch Kehat read drafts of the book and offered their comments, each according to his area of expertise. Throughout the entire course of writing and editing this book, I was accompanied on a daily basis – often at rather ungodly hours – by my eldest son, Rav Yedidya, whose insights profoundly shaped my understanding of the world of the sages and their teachings.

Chana Amit joined in the final stages and edited the book with her unique skill and her keen eye. Moshe Gross was responsible for editing the language of the text, and the staff of Tefer – headed by Kuti and aided by the hard work of Keren Setbon-Hamo – labored over the layout of the book and its publication. I offer them all my deepest expressions of gratitude.

It is a particular pleasure to introduce the English edition of *The Sages*, made possible through the generous support of the Jay and Hadasa Pomrenze Foundation, to whom I am extremely grateful.

There is an unfortunate gulf between English and Hebrew readers. Maggid Books, under the leadership of Matthew Miller, has made it its mission to bridge this gap, bringing readers from across the Jewish world into one conversation. The translation was undertaken by Ilana Kurshan. Her masterful work on previous volumes of the series, rendering the text as clear and accessible in English as it is in Hebrew, has earned enthusiastic response from readers. The book was edited by Tali Simon and Yonatan Shai Freedman, who distilled the text into its present shape. Thanks are also due to Ita Olesker, who worked hard to bring this book to its finely tuned finish.

Author's Preface

I dedicate this volume in memory of my father and teacher Naph-tali Lau Lavi, who returned his soul to the Creator in December 2014. My father, may his memory be a blessing, attended all the classes out of which this volume emerged. Every Shabbat afternoon we would walk to synagogue for class along with my mother, may she continue to live long and well. On the way we would pass a large playground in which dozens of children would play, surrounded by elderly men and women sitting on benches, leaning on their canes. We would always stop there for a moment to gaze out at this simple, poignant scene. We referred to this park as “Zechariah’s Garden” after Zechariah’s prophecy:

There shall yet be old men and women in the streets of Jerusa-lem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. And the streets of the city shall be crowded with boys and girls playing in the streets. (Zech. 8:4–5)

Noa and I continue to live near my mother, Joan, who envelops our entire family in her warm embrace. We lovingly accompany through life our children and grandchildren, who are building their homes near ours. The memory of my father, along with the birth and flourishing of the next generation, deepens and elevates our material and spiritual worlds. In the spirit of Zechariah, I too pray to merit to see the goodness of Jerusalem and the Divine Presence once again dwelling in its midst: “I have returned to Zion and I will dwell in Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be called the City of Faithfulness, and the mount of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain” (Zech. 8:3).

Binyamin Lau
Jerusalem, January 2022



Foreword

As If the Sage Were Standing Before You

Rabbi Dr. Yehuda Brandes

My friend and colleague Rabbi Binyamin Lau, with whom I have taught for many years, has given me the honor of writing the foreword to the fifth volume of *The Sages* series. The introductions to the previous four volumes were written by a historian, an archeologist, and a scholar of rabbinic stories, respectively. And so I had to find my own territory to chart. Since my connection to Rabbi Lau is through our work as teachers of Jewish texts, I have elected to consider this volume and the series as a whole from a pedagogical perspective, focusing on a passage from the Jerusalem Talmud.

The sages of the Jerusalem Talmud formulated the injunction that a person who quotes a teaching from a sage should regard that sage as if he were standing before him:

Giddul said: Whoever says a teaching in the name of the one who said it should see himself as if the one who is the authority for the teaching were standing before him.

What is the scriptural basis for that statement?

“Man walks about as a mere shadow; mere futility is his hustle and bustle, amassing and not knowing who gathers in” [Ps. 39:7].

“Many a man proclaims his own kindness; who can find a trustworthy man?” [Prov. 20:6].

This refers to Rabbi Zeira, for Rabbi Zeira said: We pay no attention to the traditions of Rav Sheshet, because he is blind.

And Rabbi Zeira said to Rabbi Yosa: Do you know Bar Pedaya, that you cite teachings in his name?

He said to him: Rabbi Ada bar Ahava said them in his name, and he knew him. (Y. Kiddushin 1:7)¹

The *Korban HaEda* and the *Penei Moshe*, talmudic commentators who seek to explain the straightforward meaning of the text, offer a pragmatic interpretation of this injunction: It is important to ensure that the source is being quoted accurately, and that the statement is being quoted in the name of the one who spoke it. But the verses cited as evidence for Rav Giddul and Rabbi Zeira’s statements suggest that there is a more significant and meaningful justification for this injunction as well. Rav Giddul requires that the individual who is quoting a teaching should regard the authority for that teaching as standing before him any time he quotes him, not just when he originally learned that teaching. The verse from Psalms that is cited as proof for Rav Giddul’s statement suggests that there is little value to merely collecting sources. The point is to know who spoke those words originally, and not how they were amassed.

The verse from Proverbs on which Rabbi Zeira bases his practice distinguishes between one who is kind and one who is trustworthy. Many people are kind and benefit from the kindness of others, but a trustworthy man – a person who can be counted upon in time of need – is far rarer. According to Rabbi Zeira, the injunction to familiarize oneself with the author of a teaching is bound up in matters of trustworthiness and reliability. The authenticity of a teaching is dependent on the student’s personal familiarity with his rabbinic teacher.

1. Also see Y. Shabbat 1:2 and Shekalim 2:5.

Underlying this talmudic passage is the fundamental value of direct transmission from teacher to student, face to face and eye to eye. At several points throughout the Talmud we find statements that valorize the importance of seeing one's teacher while learning from him. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi prided himself on being more sharp-witted than his colleagues because he merited to see Rabbi Meir from the back; had he looked upon his face, he would have been even more sharp-witted (Eiruvin 13b). Rabbi Mesharshia encouraged his sons to try to see their teacher while learning from him (Horayot 12a, Keritot 6a), based on the verse, "And your eyes shall behold your teacher" (Is. 30:20).

According to the Maharsha (Rabbi Shmuel Eidels), a student understands his teacher better and more accurately when he apprehends him directly, "because a person's speech changes and can sometimes be ambiguous, but it is possible to discern the speaker's meaning from the curl of his lip or the wink of his eye" (*Hidushei Aggadot* on Horayot 12a). According to the Ran (Rabbi Nissim ben Reuven of Gerona), regarding one's teacher's face also increases the teacher's spiritual sway over the student: "In accordance with the intensity of the abundance that reaches the rabbinical teacher and is reflected in his face – as it is written, 'A man's wisdom lights up his face' (Eccl. 8:1) – is the intensity of the abundance that reaches the student" (*Derashot of the Ran*, eighth sermon). A deep spiritual bond should be forged between teacher and student, as taught by the Radbaz (Rabbi David ben Solomon ibn Zimra): "Because when a person focuses on his teacher and pays attention with all his heart, his soul will become bound up in his teacher's, and his teacher's effluence will extend to him and will furnish him with an additional soul" (Responsa of the Radbaz, part 3, section 472). A person cannot learn Torah in this manner from just anyone, and so the Radbaz instructs that the student must search for a teacher with whom he experiences a sense of connection. Moreover, he need not listen if his parents instruct him to learn from another teacher instead or request that he not travel far from home in order to find a suitable teacher.

Today, in an age when sophisticated technology allows for various forms of distance learning, there is a tendency to regard direct instruction in a classroom setting as a thing of the past. But there is no substitute for learning directly from a rabbinical teacher. Even listening to

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a recorded lecture is different from learning directly from a teacher in class. This is not to say that there is no place for new educational technologies, which are valuable insofar as they broaden the audience of students and improve their access to sources and to instruction. But we must never forget the supreme value of direct dialogue between teacher and student. (See the responsa of the *Mishneh Halakhot* part 9 section 340, which explains why learning directly from a teacher is preferable to listening to recorded lectures.)

This is the reason that most of the commentators on the Jerusalem Talmud understood Rabbi Zeira's statement as an injunction to see one's teacher with one's own eyes. They explained that Rabbi Zeira disparaged the teachings of Rav Sheshet, who was blind, since he could not see the rabbis whose teachings he transmitted. As a result, throughout the entire Talmud, Rabbi Zeira never quotes Rav Sheshet directly, even though they engaged in several scholarly conversations.

Even so, this interpretation of Rabbi Zeira does not accord with the verse that is cited as proof for his stance. Did Rabbi Zeira really think that Rav Sheshet was not trustworthy? This is unlikely, given that Rav Sheshet was regarded by the talmudic sages as one of the greatest transmitters of halakhic teachings (see *Alei Tamar* on Y. Shabbat 1:2.) And so I prefer the interpretation offered by Rabbi Shlomo Sirilo in the parallel source in Shekalim 2:5, who explains that even though Rav Sheshet was blind, there was no reason to doubt the authenticity of his teachings; he was so perspicacious that he knew how to imagine the author of that tradition standing before him even if he'd never seen him with his own eyes. The term used for blind in this source in the Jerusalem Talmud is actually a euphemism that literally means open and advanced, but since this is the only instance in which this term is used, Rabbi Sirilo interprets it according to the simple meaning of the term: Rav Sheshet was a perceptive and sophisticated thinker, and "his heart was as open as a vast hall."

Even if the injunction to regard the original source of a teaching as if he were immediately present cannot be fulfilled literally, it can nonetheless be fulfilled in the mind's eye. As Rabbi Yissachar Tamar puts it in his commentary on the Jerusalem Talmud (Y. Shabbat 1:2):

When possible – by means of visual perception, and when impossible – by imagining the original source of the teaching as if he were standing before him. This way he can adequately prepare himself to understand the depth of what he meant And we too can say that we learn the teachings of the sages and of the early and late medieval commentators even though we never met them. Even though we cannot visualize them standing before our eyes, their spirits and their souls nonetheless stand before us.

The injunction to set the original authority for a teaching before our eyes when studying their teachings is explained in various ways. First, it ensures that the rabbinic authority is accorded the proper respect and is quoted accurately. The consciousness that the student is facing the authority for the teaching he is quoting compels the student to quote the authority accurately, to interpret his words in accordance with their original intent, and to avoid undue criticism. It also requires the student to examine his teacher's words carefully in an effort to comprehend them fully, rather than dismissing anything he does not initially understand. As Rabbi Yissachar Tamar writes in his commentary, "This will enjoin us to penetrate the depths of their words so as to understand what they truly thought, and not to attribute to them ideas that our sages themselves never presupposed."

This prudent practice of visualizing the authority for a teaching when quoting that teaching also ensures that the student is shaped by the moral and spiritual influence of the rabbinical teacher he is invoking. The Zohar (*Mishpatim* 123:2) quotes Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai as saying that when a teaching became clear to him, his father's image appeared before him. Rabbi Yissachar Teichtal follows in the footsteps of the Ran and the Radbaz quoted above: "In this way, the soul of the authority for the teaching cleaves to that of the student who is quoting him, which serves as a corrective to them both."

This is the source of the hasidic instruction to draw a mental image of the talmudic sage being invoked, as quoted in the second holy epistle at the end of the *Noam Elimelech*, attributed to Rabbi Zecharia Mandel, a disciple of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk:

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When the name of the *Tanna* or the authority for the tradition is invoked, they sketch them in their mind's eye as if that sage were standing alive before them in full mystical splendor. This accords with the interpretation of the Jerusalem Talmud that one needs to sketch for oneself an image of the author of the teaching when quoting it, so that the fear and reverence for God falls completely and totally upon them.

Rabbi Elimelech's son quotes from his father who heard from his own teacher, presumably the Maggid of Mezritch, that "so said my master, my father and teacher, may his light shine, who heard from his teacher, may his memory be a blessing: One who invokes a *Tanna* but does not see him – this is highly questionable."

These are not recondite, wondrous matters, but tried and true pedagogical guidelines. A student who studies a particular teaching, whether in a religious or secular setting, will be considerably enriched if he first furnishes himself with background on the author of that teaching and the context in which it was formulated. When the subject of study is Torah, this is not merely a matter of providing contextual background but of transforming a scholar's teachings into the words of the living God.

And so it is clear why *The Sages* series is so important. To my mind, the main purpose of this series is to set the various sages of the Mishna and Talmud before the eyes of students who study their teachings. All too often, teachers of rabbinic literature do not bother to introduce their students to the various sages mentioned in the text. Even if they do, they offer just a brief account of where they lived and the generation to which they belonged. They provide only the information necessary to understand the formal relationships among the sages, which affects who has the authority to disagree with whom and with whom the halakha accords.

This is also the case in most yeshiva settings. As seen through the eyes of most rank-and-file yeshiva students, including even the strongest scholars, there is no real difference if one is learning a statement in the Talmud by Rav Yehuda bar Yehezkel which is attributed to "Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav" or just to "Rav Yehuda" or to "Rav Yehuda in the name of Shmuel." After reading the chapter about Rabbi Yehuda in this

book, it is impossible to skip over these attributions without first pausing to think about who is being quoted, and in whose name.

Students in yeshiva settings today generally pay attention to the authority for a tradition only insofar as it relates to the dialectical arguments on the talmudic page. That is, they note the authority for a teaching only if his words are contradicted by another sage, or if he contradicts something he himself says elsewhere, or if an attempt is being made to rule on halakhic matters in accordance with the hierarchy of halakhic adjudication among the sages. Even the general principles of halakhic adjudication, such as “the law follows Rav Nahman in civil matters,” are treated as rules of thumb; students do not bother to familiarize themselves with judicial proceedings among the second generation of Babylonian talmudic sages or with the unique role that Rav Nahman occupied and his impact on subsequent generations. Anyone who reads the chapter on Rav Nahman in this book will understand the basis and the significance of this principle, which will be transformed from a rule of thumb to a fundamental value.

Rabbi Benny Lau, a distinguished teacher of Torah to diverse audiences, appreciates the value of setting the image of the authority for a tradition before those who hear his teachings and read his books. This is not merely a matter of historical research, even though Rabbi Lau invokes historical sources extensively, as Professor Daniel Schwartz attested in volume I and Professor Hanan Eshel reinforced in volume II. It is also not merely a matter of surveying the aggadic literature, though he interprets countless aggadic sources with creativity and sophistication, as Professor Avigdor Shinan commented in his introduction to volume III. It is rather a matter of setting the authors of various teachings before students of the Mishna and Talmud. This is an art in its own right, which is in many ways similar to the art of writing biography. It is necessary to amass the historical facts with creative and exegetical license so as to construct a story that brings each particular sage to life for the reader and student. The sages who authored the aggadic narratives of the Talmud have already done this for us: They formulated aggadic stories based on kernels of historical truth, adding plot, tension, and a diversity of literary styles. Above all, they invested the historical facts with meaning and value. Working with the aggadic stories scattered throughout rabbinic

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literature, Rabbi Benny Lau has taken this enterprise one step further and fashioned a coherent narrative about each sage, the network of relationships around him, and the nature of the historical period as a whole.

That said, we must be conscious that the way in which the various sages are depicted is not unequivocal and absolute, both when it comes to the use of historical sources and when it comes to the interpretation of the aggadic stories. It is possible, and perhaps even necessary, to suggest other interpretations and to offer other descriptions. Others should come forth and offer students of Talmud alternative understandings of these figures, and this endeavor should be as enlightening and engaging as every other aspect of Torah learning.

Rabbi Benny Lau depicts the sages in the way that the sages depicted themselves, warts and all. He does not write hagiography, and he does not fall prey to the modern tendency to overlook any character flaws in the great leaders and sages of the Jewish people. The sages, as is well known, never hesitated to show us both light and shadow, both in their biblical exegesis and in their descriptions of their world.

The student who wishes to understand his teacher intimately must peer into the depths of his teacher's inner world and into his most private chambers. The aggadic literature relates that Rabbi Akiva followed his teacher Rabbi Yehoshua into the bathroom to learn how he conducted himself there. Ben Azzai, a student of Rabbi Akiva, was astonished to discover this, and asked Rabbi Akiva, "You were so bold in the presence of your rabbinic master?" Rabbi Akiva responded that "it is Torah and I must learn it." Then Ben Azzai imitated Rabbi Akiva and also followed his teacher into the bathroom. But it doesn't stop there. Rav Kahana even followed his teacher Rav into the bedroom (Berakhot 62a). Whether we take this aggadic account at face value or regard it as merely a metaphor, it speaks to the extent to which students must try to understand intimately the sages whose Torah they study, including all aspects of their lives and personalities. Even the most mundane conversation of the sages is worthy of study, so we should pay special attention to their way of life and their manner of conduct.

As this series continues to unfold, we are introduced to more and more generations of sages and thus we can increasingly heed the injunction to set the images of the authors of various teachings before us when

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we study Talmud. This is already possible when it comes to the sages of the Mishna and the first generation of talmudic sages. When the entire series is complete, it will become more and more possible to demand that teachers of Mishna and Talmud and their students develop a regular practice of preceding their learning of every rabbinic statement with an introduction to the sage who spoke it.

May God bless Rabbi Benny Lau so that he may continue this series at least until the end of the amoraic period and the closing of the Talmud, and then on into the generations of the *Geonim* and the early and late medieval commentators.



Part One
Southern Babylonia



Preface

The Yeshiva in Sura After Rav

Rav's death had a tremendous impact on the Jewish world. The Talmud offers a vivid description of the sense of emptiness that his students experienced after his passing:

When Rav died, his students followed his casket. When they returned, they said: Let us go and eat bread by the Danak River. After they ate, they sat and raised a question: Did we learn that it is considered a joint meal specifically if they reclined; however, if they merely sat together, then it is not? Or perhaps, since they said: Let us go and eat in such-and-such a place, it is considered as if they reclined? It was not within their capability to resolve this matter. Rav Adda bar Ahava stood and reversed his cloak, so that the tear that he had rent in mourning Rav was behind him, and he rent another tear. He said: Rav is dead, and we have not yet learned about the Grace After Meals. (Berakhot 42b)

Rav's students experience a deep sense of loss. When they sit down to eat immediately after Rav's funeral, they discover the hole that has been

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rent in the fabric of their lives. They remember the mishna that states that when people sit down to eat together, one individual can bless on behalf of all the others. But they don't know how to interpret it. Rav was the master of halakha and tradition, and all their learning came from him. The sages of the south imbibed Rav's Torah, and in his absence, they were left utterly at a loss.

Throughout Rav's entire lifetime he eclipsed everyone around him. The beit midrash that he established was centered around and sustained by the force of his personality.¹ According to Rav Sherira Gaon, Rav surrounded himself with "many students and he established a court there" (The Epistle of Rav Sherira Gaon, Savoraim, section 85). Rav's circle of disciples imbibed his teachings and shaped their worldview in the spirit of their great master.

In *The Sages IV*, I focused on the style of learning at Sura, which emphasized biblical exegesis more than creativity and originality. According to the sages in Sura, proof texts from the Bible serve as a stronger basis for halakhic ruling than an endless series of logical inferences, which are liable to go in and out of fashion. In Rav's academy they would recite texts from the Mishna and inquire about the source of each teaching ("Who taught this?"). This approach did not result in original exegesis, but it allowed for the development of conceptual categories which provided the foundation on which halakha was later constructed. Thus, mishnayot were classified as "the mishna of Rabbi Meir" or "the mishna of Rabbi Yehuda," etc. Rav brought to Sura a sense of continuity with the wisdom of the past. He instructed his students to close themselves off inside the beit midrash and to keep their involvement in the outside world to a minimum.² When it came to politics and culture, Rav chose tradition over change. Brilliant dialectic and novel exegesis had their place farther north among the disciples of Shmuel at his academy in Pumbedita.³

There is evidence that during the period between Rav's death in 247 CE and Shmuel's death in 254 CE, some of Rav's disciples relocated

1. *The Sages IV* (Jerusalem: Maggid, 2015), Part Two.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

to Nehardea, leaving behind a scantily populated beit midrash in Sura.⁴ The major shift that subsequently unfolded in the world of learning following Shmuel's death was the shift from beit midrash to yeshiva, that is, from study house to rabbinic academy. The academy, unlike the yeshiva, was independent of the rabbi who stood at its helm, and thus the death of the rabbi did not signify the demise of the institution. This shift can be credited to Rav's three major disciples: Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat, who moved to the Land of Israel and went on to succeed Rabbi Yoḥanan in Tiberias; Rav Yehuda bar Yeḥezkel, who went north after Rav's death, studied with Shmuel, and became one of the founders of the academy at Pumbedita; and Rav Huna, who remained in his master's beit midrash and became a founder of the academy at Sura, which he headed for forty years.

This is the picture that emerges from the *Geonim*, who describe the development of the academies in Babylonia:⁵

In the beginning, during Rav's time, which was the end of the tannaitic period and the beginning of the amoraic period, there was not yet an academy in Babylonia. After Rav passed away they established an academy in Babylonia modeled after those in the Land of Israel. This was the academy at Sura. Rav Huna presided over it for forty years; he was the first leader of a rabbinic academy in Babylonia. Then Rav Ḥisda succeeded him, and his tenure lasted ten years.

4. M. D. Gross, *The Elders of the Generations* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: 5733), 282. Scholars of rabbinic biography accept this as a given, and date Rav Huna's appointment as head of the academy at Sura to only after Shmuel's death. See, for instance, H. Albeck, *Introduction to the Talmuds* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: 5729), 195.
5. This source is from the introduction that was ostensibly added to the story of Rav Natan the Babylonian in A. Neubauer, *Seder Olam Zuta* (Jerusalem: 5766), 77. The author of *Seder Tanna'im VeAmora'im* describes the period of Rav and Shmuel as a time of authoritarian rule, whereas it was only Rav Huna and Rav Ḥisda who "established two academies." For an academic study of the origin of the Babylonian academies, see Y. Gafni, *The Jews of Babylonia During the Talmudic Period* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: 5751), 183–85. Gafni finds evidence for this contention in his research.

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Rav Huna and Rav Hisda were well-known sages of the second generation at Sura. Following the death of Rav Huna in 296, Rav Hisda succeeded him and presided for ten years. Many sources describe Rav Huna and Rav Hisda as a pair of scholars.⁶ The two of them are known as “the pious ones of Babylonia” (Taanit 23b) and “the elders of Sura” (Sanhedrin 17b). The shift in Rav Huna and Rav Hisda’s economic status, like that of other sages, teaches about social mobility among the Babylonian sages. This is a fascinating phenomenon, and it may distinguish the Jewish community in Babylonia from the surrounding Persian-Sasanian society. According to the evidence we have, social class was fixed and deeply entrenched in the surrounding culture, and individuals had strictly defined political and economic rights. But in the Jewish community, the sages had more opportunities for social mobility on account of their Torah knowledge.⁷

Part One of this book is devoted to the academy at Sura following Rav’s death.

6. “Rav Hisda was a colleague of Rav Huna,” *The Epistle of Rav Sherira Gaon*, Levine edition, facsimile (Jerusalem: 5732), 84.
7. M. Bar, *The Babylonian Amora'im: Issues in Economic Life* [Hebrew] (Ramat Gan: 5735), 258–61. In note 1, he references the academic literature on Sasanian social norms.