

Truth: Elusive or Illusive? An Historical Example

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Introduction

How should one react when "reality," based on observations and scientific proofs, appears to be at odds with the teachings of the Torah? Some critical observers have noted¹ that it is common for people to accept "reality" as fact and attempt to reconcile the Torah with the "facts," regardless of how tortured and convoluted the solution may be. Rather than accepting this apologetic approach, these observers argue that it is "reality," not the Torah, which is amiss.

אבל הצדיקים חכמי התורה יודעים האמת כי אין מציאות בעולם זולת התורה הקדושה. וכל פלאי התבל הם כאין וכאפס נגד תג אחד וקוצו של יו"ד שבתורה. ואם נפגשים בדבר בעולם שהתורה סותרת אותו מוכרחים לומר כי לא ראינו נכונה ועדות העולם בטל ומבוטל נגד המציאות שבתורה.²

In support of their position, they cite Gemaras that offer biblical corroboration of commonly recognized natural and scientific phenomena (e.g., people's mental abilities deteriorate with advanced age,³ and the length of the gestation period for snakes.⁴) Since the Gemara bothers to prove things from the Torah that are independently known, they argue that this demonstrates that there are no definitively verifiable truths outside of Torah. Thus, they conclude that if the Torah disagrees with an independently observed "truth" it merely proves that the accepted "truth" is indeed not correct.⁵

Although this dismissive attitude towards positions that appear to disagree with religious "truths" generally deal with matters relating to the realm of science, social science and psychology, Rav

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Shalom Shvadron, in מאמר שונה הלכות, suggests that the doctrine encompasses contemporary history and politics as well. He bases his contention on a סוגיא in Gemara שבועות that attempts to place a hierarchical rank ordering on the power and prestige of the Roman and Persian Empires, and their respective rulers. Rav Shvadron attempts to demonstrate that the Gemara in שבועות can be understood only if we accept that חז"ל were not persuaded by the observable "reality" of the superiority of the Romans, and felt that only scriptural evidence could be used to determine a rank ordering of the two Empires. The apparent "realities" of the world meant nothing to חז"ל. The truth could only be determined through the Torah.

In this paper we demonstrate that, rather than confirming that חז"ל were unconcerned with observable political "realities," the Gemara in שבועות is best understood if we assume that חז"ל were involved and well-versed in contemporary world affairs. Based on the conflicts between the Romans and Persians of the era discussed in the Gemara, and on the dangers these conflicts held for the Jews of those times, we can better appreciate the issues confronting the חכמי התלמוד. They faced dilemmas for which there were unclear political "realities" and it was in these situations that חז"ל turned to the Torah for guidance in formulating strategic responses.

שבועות ה עמוד ב – ו עמוד ב

אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו שאת או ספחת או בהרת וכו' (ויקרא יג:ב).

The simple reading of this text appears to identify three different types of נגעים, i.e. שאת, ספחת, and בהרת. The Mishna,⁶ however, explains that there are four types, i.e. בהרת and its תולדה, and שאת and its תולדה. The Gemara, שבועות ה ב, offers the following descriptions of each נגע:

1. בהרת - is white as snow,
2. תולדה of בהרת - white like lime on walls,
3. שאת - white like wool, and

4. שאת of תולדה - white like eggshell,

and asserts that everyone agrees that בהרת is the whitest white of all (שבועות ו ב). The Gemara then proceeds to discuss how to conceptually view the relationships between the two אבות, i.e. בהרת and שאת. It concludes with Rava offering an analogy to שבור מלכא וקיסר, i.e., the Persian Emperor and the Roman Caesar. Intrigued by the statement of Rava, Rav Pappa asks:

הי מינייהו עדיף? (רש"י ד"ה הי מינייהו חשיב. שבור או קיסר.)

Rava responds to this question incredulously:

א"ל בחורשיא קא אכיל ליה? פוק חזי טיבעא דמאן סגי בעלמא.

i.e., in which isolated forest had Rav Pappa been that he was so unaware of the obvious answer? Rashi (ד"ה בחורשיא) explains that Rav Pappa, in fact, knew well that Caesar was greater and only asked the question because in Rava's formulation the Persian Emperor was mentioned prior to Caesar. Rava's response in the Gemara does not address this question. However, Rashi offers the answer that Rava lived under the aegis of the Persian Emperor and, therefore, felt obligated to mention him first.

Rava follows up his exhortation to Rav Pappa to open his eyes and look around, with the citation:

ותאכל כל ארעא ותדושנה ותדקנה (דניאל ז:כג).

and an explanation of the verse offered by Rebbi Yochanan,

זו רומי חייבת שטיבעה יצא בכל העולם כולו.

Thus, Rava agrees with Rav Pappa and explicitly confirms the superiority of Caesar.⁷ Rav Shvadron points out that even after Rava told Rav Pappa to observe the relative positions of both empires in the world, he still found it necessary to conclude his response with a scriptural proof. Rav Shvadron contends that the need for this corroborating proof demonstrates that **all** true knowledge must be derived from scriptures and that Rava's amazement at Rav Pappa was not based on the latter's lack of political acumen but on his not knowing the relevant verse and the explanation of Rebbi Yochanan. Thus, what went on in the supposed "real world" was never at issue. It was only the Torah that could guarantee truth. He concludes, that

Rava never meant for Rav Pappa to go out in the world to observe the answer to his question. What he suggested was that Rav Pappa go and learn the relevant verses in **דניאל** and their explanation. According to Rav Shvadron's understanding of Rashi's explanation, it would appear that Rava never understood the thrust of Rav Pappa's question and it is Rashi, on his own, who offers the appropriate answer.

Rashi's interpretation of the Gemara and Rav Shvadron's explanation, appear to have several difficulties. Firstly, everyone agrees **בהרה** is the whitest of all **נגעים** yet it is listed in the **פסוק** after **שאת**.⁸ Whatever the reason for the sequencing,⁹ it is clear that the scriptural sequencing of the **נגעים** is not in descending order of whiteness. Accordingly, it is quite appropriate for Rava to list **שבור** **מלכא** before **קיסר**. He too put the lesser power first. What then is Rav Pappa asking?

Secondly, why would Rava answer Rav Pappa with such vehemence, i.e. **בהורשיא קא אכיל ליה**? Thirdly, even conceding Rav Shvadron's point on the nature of true knowledge, if Rava indeed feared the Persian monarch, he should have dropped the issue after his opening response to Rav Pappa and made no reference to the entire scriptural phrase. A simple indirect confirmation of Roman superiority, even if it was meant for Rav Pappa to visually observe what was happening in the real world, would have sufficed. An explicit enunciation of the status of the Romans seems superfluous. After all, his opening response did not definitively say that the Romans were superior. Why bring the verse and the explanation of Rabbi Yochanan which definitively state Roman superiority?

Finally, Rav Shvadron's tacit assumption that it was patently evident to everyone that Rome was vastly superior to Persia, is incorrect. In Rava's time, Persia was far removed from its glory days at the beginning of the second Temple, but so, too, was Rome only a shadow of its former self. Rome was being seriously challenged at this time in its every move by its Persian neighbor. Rather than confirming Rav Shvadron's contention that non-Torah-derived knowledge is unreliable, we will show in the next section that this example demonstrates the danger of misinterpreting the Gemara because of a lack of historical knowledge.

An Historical Explanation

We begin this section with some short historical notes concerning the Romans, Persians and Jews in the period of the **אמוראים** cited in this Gemara, i.e. Rabbi Yochanan (around the year 250), and Rava and Rav Pappa (around the year 350). The following two quotes discuss some background history in the period of Rabbi Yochanan:

In the days of Shmuel, as during the 3rd century generally, Persia, which included Babylonia, was the scene of particularly animated religious ferment... Under such circumstances the Jews appealed to the authorities {Shappur I- **שבור מלכא**} for protection, these contacts providing an occasion for discussion of religious topics. In any event, talmudic literature records no complaints against Shappur I. ([Encyclopedia Judaica: Shappur](#)).

Two military events of political importance that occurred in the 3rd century confronted the Orient, including the Jews in the Land of Israel, with a choice between keeping faith with Rome or lending support to internal or external elements seeking to destroy and supplant Roman rule. First there were the long and savage wars between Rome and Persia for control of the East following the rise of the Sassanid dynasty in Persia... Rome's fortunes reached their nadir with the capture of the Emperor Valerian by King Shappur in 260.

Neither Ardashir nor Shappur extended his campaign to the borders of Palestine, but the great Jewish communities in Asia and Syria were highly conscious of being caught between the two rival realms, and in the Land of Israel itself the upheavals had strong repercussions. The nations of the East were divided in their attitude towards the central authorities. Among the lower class everywhere, there was great bitterness against Roman rule because of the heavy taxes and compulsory services and because of the preferential treatment extended to the urban moneyed... Some classes actually collaborated with the Persians but there is nothing to show that the Jews- who in earlier times had set their hopes on the Persian wars and supported the invaders and were later to do so again- actually joined the Persian side in the third century. On the

contrary, the Jews of Mezigath-Kaysari in Cappadocia put up a strong resistance when Shappur captured the town in 252/3 and 12,000 of them were put to the sword. (A History of the Jewish People- Edited by H.H. Ben-Sasson, 1976, pp. 347-348.)

Against this background, a review of the Gemara ע"ז ב ב, where the exposition of Rabbi Yochanan¹⁰ on the verse in דניאל is first presented, is quite illuminating. The Gemara discusses events that will take place in the future when Hashem will sit in judgment on all the nations of the world.

מיד נכנסה לפניו מלכות רומי תחילה. מ"ט? משום דחשיבה.
ומגלן דחשיבא? דכתיב ותאכל כל ארעא ותדושינה ותדרוקינה.
אמר ר"י זו רומי חייבת שטיבעה יצא בכל העולם כולו.

Considering the Roman-Persian conflicts of the time, it was not evident to the **חכמים who had** the greatest power, and it was certainly not evident who would ultimately prevail in the future. It was only because of the verse in דניאל that Rabbi Yochanan was able to state definitively that Rome was the most prestigious nation. His proof is not from the state of then current affairs. His proof is that the verse describes the greatest nation as the one who is unique in his destruction of the land of his enemies. This, Rabbi Yochanan says, could only be referring to **רומי חייבת** which was known for its brutality and inhumanity.¹¹

The Gemara goes on to say that after Hashem rejected the arguments of the Romans, the second most prestigious nation, the Persians, enter. The Gemara's proof of the positioning of the Persians is similarly based on the same chapter in דניאל where the verse describes characteristics that are specific to Persia. Interestingly enough, the Gemara asks: how do the Persians dare come before Hashem after seeing that Rome was rejected? The Gemara answers:

אמרי אינהו סתרי בית המקדש ואנן בנינן.

After the Persians, in turn, are dismissed by Hashem the other lesser nations follow. Again the Gemara asks how they dare enter after the Persians have been rejected. The Gemara answers:

סברי הנך אישתעבדו בהו בישראל ואנן לא שעבדנו בישראל.

The hatred towards the Romans and the ambivalence towards the Persians seem evident in the Gemara. Although in some ways the Persians are better for the Jews, over all they, too, are found lacking.¹²

By Rava's time, one hundred years later, some interesting changes have taken place in the world arena. The following two quotes discuss pertinent background history.

In his lengthy reign {Shappur II} two periods may be distinguished. The first concluded in 363 with the defeat of the emperor Julian in his campaign against the Persian empire, ushering in the second period during which the political position of the Jews of Persia improved in recognition of their unexpected loyalty to the empire. It had been feared that they would revolt against Shappur II and assist Julian, who had promised the Jews of Eretz Israel that he would rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem on his return from the Persian War... To finance his protracted wars against Rome, Shappur II demanded considerable sums of money from the Jews, of which Rava complained in the 30's and 40's of the fourth century {the Gemara in ב ה הגיגה which Rashi quotes}. (Encyclopedia Judaica: Shappur).

The short reign of the Emperor Julian (360-363) was a time of great hope for the Jews of Palestine and the Diaspora. He adhered to the old Greek religion and sought to restore it by reducing the stature of Christianity in the empire. Moreover, he intended to reestablish the Jewish sacrificial cult, the element of Jewish religion that he prized most. Julian's attitude towards the Jews was not merely a matter of religious policy; his letters reflect personal sympathy and compassion for the Jewish people. ... His cordiality towards the Jews, his activities on their behalf and his promises for the future far exceeded anything said or done by earlier foreign potentates who wished the Jews well.¹³ ... In Jewish tradition the entire episode is reserved only fragmentarily and in indirect references. There are hints in the saying of certain sages indicating that they were in favour of Julian's enterprise and thought it the beginning of the redemption. What attitude the central

Jewish authorities- the Sanhedrin and the nasi- adopted towards the emperor's proclamations we do not know. They would hardly have opposed the offers of a gentile emperor who proposed to rebuild the Temple, but they may well have been cautious about a project that depended largely on the goodwill of a single man, a childless widower, whose court and administration included many Christians, some of whom were- openly or secretly- fanatically religious. Christian and Persian sources speak of a great revival and excitement among the Jews, of a rush to Jerusalem and of fund-raising activities from Italy to Babylonia and Persia. There is a record of thousands of Jews from Persian districts making their way to Jerusalem to take part in the building of the Temple during Julian's Persian campaign. and being killed on their way by the Persians. The Persian King, Shappur II, remained suspicious of the Jews ever after. (A History of the Jewish People- pp. 352-353.)

Against this background, the Gemara *שבועות* can be understood very simply. Note that our Gemara text cites Rav Pappa as asking *הי מינייהו עדיף*, while Rashi's *הי מינייהו השיב* is *הי ד"ה*. We suggest that Rav Pappa was well aware of the Gemara in *ע"ז* and knew that Rome was the more *חשוב* of the two. Rav Pappa, however, was not concerned with some hypothetical question with respect to the end of days. Rav Pappa had a more pragmatic question. Which current monarch, Shappur II or the Roman Emperor, should the Jews support? *הי מינייהו עדיף* - i.e., which one is better for us now? One hundred years earlier the Rabbis had the Persians saying they deserved better treatment from Hashem because: *אינהו סתרי בית המקדש ואנן בנינן*. The same could not be said anymore. It was now the Romans who were considering offering the Jews an opportunity to rebuild the Temple.¹⁴

Rava's response is swift, indignant and vehement.¹⁵ His concern is that the Persian monarch should not have any doubts about the loyalty of his Jewish subjects. He answers:

א"ל בחורשיא קא אכיל ליה? פוק חזי טיבעא דמאן סגי בעלמא.

The first half of the phrase is simple, i.e.: What is wrong with you? Where have you been? The second half of the answer is, however, somewhat cryptic. What does *טיבעא* mean? Rashi in *ע"ז*

translates *טיבעא* as *שמעה*. The *מהרשא* explains that it refers to a coin *מטבע*, i.e., check whose currency is universally accepted. As a third alternative, perhaps *טיבעא* means nature, i.e. which nation is more benign and acceptable by universal standards, and hence more likely to accommodate the needs of the Jews?¹⁶ In conjunction with this answer, Rava cites the verse in *דניאל* which Rabbi Yochanan interprets as: *זו רומי חייבת שטיבעא יצא בכל העולם כולו*, i.e., Rome is universally known for her evil. As opposed to Rashi's explanation, the dialogue presented here has Rava extolling the Persians both in his original parable and in his answer. The Romans are mentioned only derogatorily.

Conclusion

The explanation of the Gemara given in the previous section is one of several plausible possibilities based on the cited historical records. The purpose of this paper is not necessarily to derive the definitive *פישט*. It is, rather, to demonstrate that ignoring relevant information, be it even from non-Torah sources, can just as easily lead to tortured explanations and conclusions, as blind acceptance of all secularly accepted "facts" and "realities". Whether the conclusions are the result of Talmudic analyses or scientific proofs, they are only as correct as the data and the analytical methodology.

Although the Gemara in *שבועות* involves a conversation between two *אמוראים* and has no *halakhic* relevance, the historical events discussed in this paper may very well have *halakhic* implications in other areas. For example, in *סנהדרין ה א*, Rav and Shmuel suggest that Judges who wish to be indemnified against an incorrect verdict should get permission from the *ריש גלותא* to be judges. The Gemara then concludes that these Judges can not be held responsible even for incorrect decisions rendered in Eretz Yisrael, while Judges who serve with the permission of the *נשיא* from Eretz Yisrael are responsible to pay for incorrect decisions that they render in *בבל*.

Rashi, *ד"ה משוררים*, explains that the reason for the exoneration of *דייני בבל* is that the *ריש גלותא* derives his authority directly from the Persian monarch. Tosfos, *ד"ה דהכא*, says that the difference between the Babylonian and Eretz Yisrael Judges is that the *ריש גלותא* is of Davidian descent from the male side of the family,

while the נשיאים were of Davidian descent from the female side of the family.

Based on this Gemara, טור חו"מ סימן ג discusses whether Judges who serve with governmental permission during any period of history should likewise be exempt from payment for incorrect decisions. תומים אורים rejects Rashi's explanation in the Gemara as being implausible because the ריש גלותא had no authority of any kind in Eretz Yisrael, while the Romans who ruled Eretz Yisrael also ruled the world and would have had influence even in בבבל. He, therefore, agrees with Tosfos that the exoneration of the Judges is related to Davidian descent, not governmental approval. Hence, he concludes that no Judges today would be exonerated for an incorrect decision.

Based on the previous historical presentation, one could easily disagree with the תומים. Recall that the Gemara begins by quoting Rav and Shmuel and that the latter was a confidant of the Persian Emperor. The dominance of the Romans alluded to by the תומים had ended long before the period of Rav and Shmuel. Who better than these well placed אמוראים could judge which monarch held the greatest sway during their turbulent times? ❧

NOTES

¹ E.g., אור יחל ח"ב פ' ויהי and מדרגת האדם in מהרי"ל חסמין.

² From מאמר שונה הלכות by Rav Shalom Shvadron as printed in the preface to דעת תורה on ש"ע אורח חיים by the מהרש"ם (Moriah Offset Co. (חשמ"ב).

³ שבת קנב א – (שמואל ב יט:לז) בן שמונים שנה אנכי היום היודע בין טוב לרע? מכאן שדעותן של זקנים משתנות.

It is not our intent in this paper to refute every example offered by the proponents of this position. We note here, however, that the succeeding dialogue in the Gemara asserts that this change does not take place in elderly תלמידי חכמים and suggests that ברזילי הגלעדי, the octogenarian in this story, was intentionally not telling the truth.

⁴ E.g., בראשית that it is seven years. and בראשית רבה כ:ד.

⁵ The case of the gestation period of a snake is an interesting example of how this extended doctrine might work. While the presentation in the Gemara has the seven year gestation period confirming the scientific knowledge of those times, today's science tells us that a snake's gestation period is considerably less than one year.

⁶ נגעים א"א and שבועות ב א

⁷ According to Rashi's interpretation, that Rava was reluctant to antagonize the Persian monarch, how do we explain Rava's response that the Roman Emperor was indeed superior? Presumably, while Rava was willing to pay his respects to the Persian monarch by subtly mentioning him first, when faced with a direct question of who is greater he would have appeared to be pandering if he had given supremacy to the Persians. Moreover, even in confirming the superiority of Rome, Rava quotes Rabbi Yochanan condemning Rome, רומי הייבת, thereby still giving proper homage to the Persians.

⁸ While it is true that in subsequent verses that elaborate the laws of נגעים, בהרת is explained first, nevertheless, every time the triplet of names appears together the sequence is always שאת followed by ספחה and ending with בהרת.

⁹ The commentators offer a number of possible reasons for the particular sequencing, e.g.:

* Although בהרת was whiter, שאת was more prevalent. Rather than listing the נגעים in sequence of whiteness, they are listed in sequence of prevalence (תורה תמימה אות ה).

* To convey the concept of שהן ארבע שתיים in three words it was necessary to place ספחת in the middle **after** שאת and **before** בהרת. Had בהרת been placed first, it would have taken four words to convey the necessary message (אור החיים and תיו"ט נגעים א:א).

¹⁰ Rabbi Yochanan lived in Eretz Yisrael.

¹¹ רשע and חייבת שבועות in רשי ד"ה רומי and ע"ז in תוס ד"ה רומי

¹² After discussing the differences between the other nations and Rome and Persia, the Gemara concludes:

מאי שנא הני דחשיבי בהו ומאי שנא הני דלא חשיבי להו? משום דהנך משכי.

In the Gemara's view, the kingdoms of Rome and Persia will last until the end of days. No matter how great the Greeks were, the Gemara discounts them because they had been completely vanquished from the world arena. In light of 1,700 years of post-talmudic history, given the opportunity today, would the Gemara alter its assessment of the longevity of Rome and Persia? In this vein, the מדרש רבא (the last one in (תזריע) is quite illuminating.

שאת זו בבל על שום ונשאת המשל הזה על מלך בבל...
ספחת זו מדי שהעמידה המן הרשע ששף בנחש...
בהרת זו יון שהיתה מבהרת בגורותיה על ישראל
נגע צרעת זו אדום שבאתה מכוחה של זקן.

This appears to be an early מדרש, that was formulated when Rome had not yet emerged as a world power; Greece was in its heyday; and Persia had been eclipsed and had not yet begun to recapture its earlier historical prominence. Evidently, the Rabbis had, from antiquity, related נגעים to nations of the world based on the current world reality. Accordingly, if given the opportunity today, it is not implausible that the Rabbis would reinterpret the references.

An inkling of how a new system relating nations of the world to נגעים might look can perhaps be found in the Rambam. Rambam, with the benefit of perhaps another one thousand years of history after the Midrash, in "Letter to Yemen," views the antagonists of the Jewish people throughout time not as individual nations, but as thematic groups driven by the same underlying objective. In one category he places nations who:

“... tried to overturn our religion by force, by violence and by the sword.”

Rambam includes in this group: Amalek, Sisra, Sancheriv, Nebuchadnezzar, Titus and Hadrian. Rambam's second group includes:

“... the brightest and most educated amongst the nations ... They also attempt to tear down our religion and wipe out our Torah by means of arguments they offer and questions they dream up”.

Nations he includes in this group are the Syrians, Persians and Greeks. Finally, Rambam introduces a third group which represents:

“... a new sect arose which made our lives miserable by combining the approaches of the two groups: brute force and persuasion...It, therefore, conceived a plan to claim divine revelation and establish a new religion.”

In this group Rambam places first Christianity and then Islam.

In summation, Rambam's categories place nations of disparate geographical and historical periods together. It is the common underlying motivation of the subjugators that identify them. Rambam's classification could easily be used to develop a system that related thematic groups with the נגעים mentioned in the Torah. Later, in “Letter to Yemen,” Rambam himself comments that Shir Hashirim

“...alludes to the four empires that will try to force us to abandon our faith. Incidentally, we are living today under the domination of the fourth and last empire.”

(The authors would like to thank the reviewers for bringing this citation to our attention.)

¹³ The editor has brought to the attention of the authors, material indicating that Julian apparently held a diametrically opposite opinion of the Jews to the one expressed by Ben-Sasson. In Julian's *Against the Galileans* (see Feldman, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, pp. 388-392) Julian assesses Jewish military and medical prowess as inferior to that of Rome; their legal and administrative systems “harsh and barbarous and consequently inferior to the laws of the pagans”; and their wise men not on a caliber with the great Greek thinkers. Be that as it may, Julian's chauvinistic view of Roman superiority to everything Jewish, simply means that he thought more highly of Romans than Jews. That is understandable. It does not, however, necessarily follow that he found Jewish military ability, medicine, law, administration and thinking inferior to that of other non-

Romans. While making alliances against his Persian enemies, the Jews still apparently seemed to him to have the potential for being a good ally.

¹⁴ Though the actual offer from Julian came between 360 and 363 and the incident between Rava and Rav Pappa took place before Rava's death in 353, Roman efforts to entice the Jews to their side with the possibility of allowing them to rebuild the Temple would probably have surfaced earlier. Despite Constantine the Great becoming the first emperor to adopt Christianity (306-337) and trying to have Christianity replace Judaism, pagan sympathizers like Julian obviously still flourished amongst the Roman leadership.

¹⁵ Based on the previous citations which tie Shmuel to Shappur I and Rava with Shappur II, it is natural to suggest that the kingly references in the following Gemara (פסחים נד א):

אמר רבא אמינא מילתא דשבור מלכא לא אמרה ומנו שמואל. א"ד אמר ר"פ אמינא מילתא דשבור מלכא לא אמרה ומנו רבא.

need not be explained as Rashi does:

רשי ד"ה שמואל. קרי ליה רבא שבור מלכא משום דבקי היה בדינין והלכתא כוותיה בדיני כדין היוצא מפי המלך שמתקיים, ושבור ממלך פרסיים היה בימי רבא.

but rather as enunciating the prominent position of each אמורא in the respective governments of Shappur I and Shappur II. See מלא הרועים as to why רשבם in ב"ב קטו ב needlessly changed רבא to רבה throughout this Gemara.

¹⁶ This interpretation of טיבעא is supported by the following phrase in רשי in explanation of why Avram is asked to leave his land and home: שאודיע טבעך בעולם.

Rashi is quoting from a תחומא which says in full:

ויאמר ה' אל אברהם לך לך. אמר רב אבין משל לצלוחית של פלייטון הנתונה בבית הקברות ולא היה אדם יודע ריחה. מה עשה? נטלוה ונטלוה ממקום למקום והודיעה ריחה בעולם. כך היה אברהם דר בתוך עובדי כוכבים. א"ל לך לך מארצך ואני אודיע טבעך בעולם.

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Note: טיבעא also appears in the same context with respect to דוד המלך in מגילה יד ב.