

Avot de Rabbi Natan Nusach A 14

When Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai's son died, his disciples came in to comfort him. R. Eliezer entered, sat down before him, and said, "Master, by your leave, may I say something to you?"

"Speak," he replied.

Eliezer said, "Adam had a son who died, yet he was comforted for the loss of him. How do we know that he was comforted for him? Because it is said, And Adam knew his wife again (Gen. 4:25), and [after she bore a son, Adam said], God has provided me with another offspring in place of Abel (ibid.). You, too, must be comforted."

Rabban Yohanan said to him, "Is it not enough that I grieve over my own? Do you have to remind me of Adam's grief?"

Rabbi Joshua entered and said, "Master, by your leave, may I say something to you?"
"Speak," he replied.

R. Joshua said, "Job had sons and daughters, all of whom died in one day, and he was comforted for the loss of them. You, too, must be comforted. How do we know that Job was comforted? Because Job said, The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Rabban Yohanan said to him, "Is it not enough that I grieve over my own? Do you have to remind me of Job's grief?"

Rabbi Yose entered, sat down before him, and said "Master, by your leave, may I say something to you?"

"Speak," he replied.

R. Yose said, "Aaron had two grown sons, both of whom died in one day, yet he was comforted for the loss of them, as it is said, And Aaron was silent (Lev. 10:3) - his silence implies a willingness to be comforted. You, too, must be comforted."

Rabban Yohanan said to him, "Is it not enough that I grieve over my own? Do you have to remind me of Aaron's grief?"

Rabbi Simeon entered and said, "Master, by your leave, may I say something to you?"

"Speak," he replied.

R. Simeon said, "King David had a son who died, yet he allowed himself to be comforted for the loss of him. How do we know that David was comforted? Because it is said,

David consoled his wife Bathsheba; he went to her and lay with her. She bore a son and she named him Solomon (2 Sam. 12:24).

Rabban Yohanan said to him, "Is it not enough that I grieve over my own? Do you have to remind me of King David's grief?"

Rabbi Eleazar ben Arakh entered. As soon as Rabban Yohanan saw him, he said to his servant, "Take my clothing and follow me to the bathhouse (R. Yohanan realized that R. Eleazar would succeed in consoling him and therefore he prepared to go to the bathhouse, a luxury normally forbidden to a mourner), for he is a great man, and I shall be unable to resist him."

Having entered, [R. Eleazar] sat down before him and said, "May I tell you a parable? To whom may you be likened? To a man with whom the king deposited an object. Each and every day the man would weep and cry out, saying, 'Woe is me! When shall I be safely relieved of this trust?' You too, master, had a son: he studied the Torah, the Prophets, the Writings; he studied Mishnah, Halakhah, and Aggadot, and departed from this world without sin. You should be comforted because you have returned unimpaired what was given you in trust."

Rabban Yohanan said to him, "Eleazar, my son, you have comforted me the way men should give comfort!"