

hand over a single Israelite.

But if the gentiles singled out [someone by name], such as once happened with Sheva ben Bichri, then let them give him to them, that they not all be killed.

Rabbi Shimon ben Laqish said: This applies only if the man is subject to execution, as was Sheva ben Bichri. But Rabbi Yohanan said: It also applies even if he were not subject to execution.

[One time] Ulla bar Qushav was wanted by the government [which had sentenced him to die]. He fled and went for safety to Lod, to be near Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. Government agents came and surrounded the town. They said: If you do not give Ulla to us, we will destroy the town. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi went to Ulla and convinced him to surrender. [Yehoshua] then turned him over to the agents.

Up until that time, the prophet Elijah, remembered fondly, had been accustomed to appear to Yehoshua ben Levi. When Elijah stopped coming, Rabbi Yehoshua fasted several times. As a result, Elijah appeared, and said to Rabbi Yehoshua: Should I reveal myself to

הרי אנו הורגים את
כולכם אפי' בולן
נהרגים לא ימסרו נפש
אחת מישראל יחדו
לקח אחר כגון שבע בן
בקרי ימסרו אותו ואל
ייהרגו א"ר שמעון בן
לקיש והוא שיהא חייב
מיתה בשבע בן בקרי
ורבי יוחנן אמר אע"פ
שאינו חייב מיתה
כשבע בן בקרי עולא
בר קושב תבעתיה
מלכותא ערק ואזיל
ליה ללוד גבי ריב"ל
אתון ואקפון מדינתא
אמרו לקח אין לית
אתון יתבון ליה לן אנן
מחרבין מדינתא סלק
גביה ריב"ל ופייסיה
ויסהיה לון וקנה
אליהו זכור לטוב וליף
מתגלי עלוי ולא
אתגלי וצם כמה צומין
ואיתגלי עלוי אמר
ליה ולמטורות אני
נגלה אל ולא משנה
עשיתי אל וזו משנת
החסידים.

informers, [who hand over Jews to the enemy government!]

Yehoshua answered: I am no traitor. Did I not carry out the law? Elijah said to him: Is this truly a law for pious ones?! [No!]

Comment: The principle expressed in the *mishnah* above, that one may not cooperate with the enemy, and that no distinctions of any kind should be drawn, is repeated here when the issue is a life-and-death choice.

But then a question is raised: What if a specific person has been chosen by the enemy? May one agree to hand over that person so designated? As an illustration, the story of Sheva ben Bichri is mentioned, about whom we read in II Samuel 20:1-22.

Sheva ben Bichri spoke out against the authority of King David. Infuriated by the threat that Sheva represented, David dispatched his loyal general Yoav to capture the rebel. Sheva ran for hiding to his kinsmen who rallied to his support, and they took refuge in Avel. Yoav and his men besieged the city, ready to see the city destroyed until they had captured Sheva.

A "wise woman" appeared on the city ramparts and asked to speak to Yoav. She asked him if he was prepared to destroy the entire city in pursuit of only one man, and he answered that he would be satisfied if Sheva alone were surrendered. The woman retired to the city and appealed to the city elders to turn over Sheva ben Bichri. Convinced by her words, Sheva was seized, his head cut off and thrown over the wall, thereby appeasing Yoav and ending the siege.