Deployment of Aggadah and Parable – Study Questions

1. Read the story of Honi Hame'agel in M. Taanit 3:8 ([here](#)).

    a. By what means does Honi try to persuade God to provide rain?

    b. How does God respond?

    c. Why does Shimon ben Shetach view Honi's actions in a negative light?

    d. The Honi narrative, together with the following mishnah, conclude three chapters of Massekhet Taanit (see [here, here](#), and [here](#)) devoted to fasts designed to end drought and bring rain. How does Honi's activity compare with the way to bring rain outlined in these chapters?

2. The first two chapters of Massekhet Sukkah discuss the laws of construction of and dwelling in a sukkah. The last mishnah of chapter 2 (see [here](#)) opens with a directive to treat the sukkah during Sukkot as one's "fixed" (קבע) dwelling, continues with a ruling that permits vacating the sukkah if rain begins to ruin the food, and concludes with a parable comparing rain in the sukkah to a slave whose master dashes water on his face.

    a. Explain the parable – in what way is dwelling in the sukkah comparable to a slave mixing his master's wine, and how is rain in the sukkah comparable to the master dashing water on his face?

    b. What is the point of this parable?

    c. What does the parable leave unexplained?

    d. At the beginning of chapter 2, there is a narrative about Tevi, the slave of Rabban Gamliel, who is praised by his master for sleeping under a bed in the sukkah.

        1) Why does Rabban Gamliel find this behavior praisworthy?

        2) How does this narrative compare with the parable at the end of the chapter?

    e. The last three chapters of Sukkah are devoted to other commandments related to this festival – the four species (especially *lulav*), the water libation, and the *simhat beit hasho'eva*. In the course of discussing the water libation, there is a narrative (m. 4:9 – [here](#)) about a kohen who poured the water on his feet instead of on the altar and the people stoned him with their *etrogim*. How does this narrative compare with the parable of the slave?