and eat a forbidden food or [perform] a similar [transgression]. When there is no religious persecution, [in instances] where [the sages] have said one should transgress rather than be killed; still, if one transgresses, one deserves the death sentence: This is the opinion of Rambam.

[R. Hanina b. Teradion’s] wife was also martyred because she did not object when he was teaching the Name to his disciples in public. His daughter who was the sister of Beruriah, the wife of R. Meir, was thrown into a brothel but the Blessed Name saved her for the sake of R. Meir. R. Hanina was punished because he was teaching his disciples the Name in public. Rashi comments that he would use the Name of 42 letters. There was a mighty tempest around him. He was the treasurer for the funds for charity and the monies for Purim were [somehow] mixed with [other] monies for charity. He gave his own money for the sake of Heaven. For this good deed he would merit the life of the World-to-Come, the sage told him, and even more so because he spent all his days engaged in Torah.

It says in the Midrash that when Lupinus the Caesar burned R. Hanina b. Teradion; that Lupinus the Caesar looked like R. Nehunia b. Hakaneh and [the Romans] cut off his head. Afterwards he was revived by the Court of Heaven but in the form of R. Hanina b. Teradion and they burned him just as he had burned R. Hanina b. Teradion. A miracle happened, and R. Nehunia b. Hakaneh looked like Lupinus the Caesar and he reigned over the Roman Empire for six months and killed six thousand hegemons. On the 21st of Sivan, they burned R. Hanina b. Teradion and after him, they executed R. Jeshebab the Scribe.

Abba Saul was of the house of Marmasha. He was the only one of his generation and was like a disciple-colleague of Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai. Abba Saul speaks in his name, but R. Zemach Gaon comments that in his name means in his spirit. Abba is a title of respect, such as Rabbi. In Semachoth, he commanded his sons to bury him at his father’s feet, that they should bury him and remove the blue fringes’ from his pallium. In the Ch. Hamapeleth it says that he was a gravedigger and that he saw [the bones of] Og the King of Bashan and Absalom. It seems that his disciple, R. Tarfon was of a large physique, although this statement seems strange, it certainly has to do with [the fact that] he was also burying the dead, etc. This is what is meant when they said there: Abba Saul is the tallest in his generation and R. Tarfon reaches his shoulders. R. Tarfon is the tallest in his generation and R. Meir reaches his shoulders. R. Meir is the tallest in his generation and
R. Hiyya reaches his shoulders. R. Hiyya is the tallest in his
generation and Rab reaches his shoulders. Rab is tallest in
his generation and R. Judah reaches his shoulders. R. Judah
is tallest in his generation and Ada Dayala reaches his
shoulders. (Dayala means an attendant of sages and Ada
was his name.) Parshathbina of Pumbeditha reaches
Dayala’s shoulders and the entire world reaches
Parshathbina’s waist.  

R. Zemach comments that
[Parshathbina] was a man of valour and the tallest of all the
people. The Tosafoth [there] remarks: Rashi comments that
it is a man’s name and the same [is written] in the
Aruch and it is not so. If this were the case, he should have said from
Pumbeditha. The Rashbam comments that it is a figure of
speech referring to leadership and hegemony.

This passage calls for interpretation, though its plain
reading – that they were men of stature, is also true, as
Rashi and the Aruch expound. There is a proof, the refer-
ce to Rab who was called Abba Arika [the Tall one]. The
real meaning is that wisdom had decreased from one gen-
eration to the next generation for it all comes from a mas-
ter to his disciple. To enhance wisdom, Abba Saul would
bury the erroneous explanations, which are dead, just as
certainly as they said of Jonathan b. Uzziel who had such
vision that any bird flying above him would immediately be
burnt [to cinders] for he was entirely true. But Abba Saul b.
Botnith was before Abba Saul’s time. At the end of
Shabbath, it is explained that Abba Saul was at the time of
R. Zadok’s father, etc. In Ch. Hakotev, it says in the
Baraita, that Abba Saul was the son of Imma Miriam and
the halacha is according to him. [But] this is not Abba Saul
but Abba Gebal of the School of Rabbi [quoted] in the Ch.
Two, Pesachim.

R. Eleazar ha-Modai was a disciple of Rabban
Johanan b. Zakkai, the colleague of R. Tarfon, although he
calls R. Tarfon Rabbi and R. Tarfon calls him ‘ha-Modai’
in the last Ch. of Yoma. R. Eleazar b. Parta quotes him,
as does R. Eleazar b. Azariah in Ch. Shevuoth Haeduth:
R. Hananiah the nephew of R. Joshua quotes R. Eleazar ha-
Modai. King Ben KoziZba’ killed him in Bethar. He was praying
that Hadrian would not conquer it and he could not
conquer it. Then a Cuthean came and told Ben KoziZba a
[false] rumour about R. Eleazar ha-Modai that he wanted to
make peace with Hadrian the Caesar. When [Ben KoziZba]
killed him, a Divine Voice said, Woe to the worthless shep-
herd who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and its
right eye! He was the strong arm of Israel and its
right eye. On that day, Bethar was captured. This was 52
years after the Destruction of the Second Temple. In the