

# TRACT TAANITH (FASTING).

## CHAPTER I.

REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE TIME WHEN MENTION IS MADE OF RAIN IN THE DAILY PRAYER, WHEN RAIN IS TO BE PRAYED FOR, WHEN FAST-DAYS ARE ORDERED ON WHICH TO PRAY ESPECIALLY FOR RAIN, AND THE CHARACTER OF SUCH DAYS OF MOURNING.

MISHNA: From what time should the power manifested in the descent of rain be commenced to be mentioned (in the daily prayer)? R. Eliezer said: "From the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles." R. Jehoshua, however, said: "From the last day of that festival." "For," said he to R. Eliezer, "since rain on the Feast of Tabernacles is considered unpropitious, why should it be mentioned in the prayers?" And R. Eliezer answered: "I do not mean to say that rain should be prayed for, but only that it should be mentioned with the words, 'He causeth the wind to blow, and the rain to descend in its proper time.'" "If so," rejoined R. Jehoshua, "such mention might be made at all seasons of the year."

Prayers for rain should not be said sooner than shortly before the commencement of the rainy season. R. Jehudah said: "The last of the ministers of the congregation who on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles officiates at the reading-desk should mention the rain, but not he who officiates first. On the first day of Passover, the minister who officiates first (at the morning prayer) should still mention it, but not he who officiates last (at the Additional Service)."

GEMARA: Whence does the Tana of this Mishna adduce that the rain must be mentioned or prayed for at all (in the daily prayer), that he commences by saying: "From what time should it be mentioned"? He adduces this from the Mishna in Tract Rosh-Hashana (New Year) where he has learned that on the Feast of Tabernacles judgment is passed concerning rain, and

having learned this, he proceeds to inform us when rain must be mentioned and prayed for. If so, let him teach us concerning the rain--why does he mention "the power manifested in the descent of rain"? Said R. Johanan: "Because rain descends with the power of God, as it is written [Job, v. 10]: 'Who giveth rain upon the surface of the earth, and sendeth out waters over the face of the fields'; and further it is written [ibid. ix. 10]: 'Who doeth great things which are quite unsearchable, and wonders which are quite without number (and rain is also included among these "great things").'

Whence do we know, however, that mention must be made of rain in the eighteen benedictions of the daily prayer? Because we have learned in a Boraitha thus: It is written [Deut. xi. 13]: "To

love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." And what service can be performed with the heart? The service of prayer, and immediately following the passage quoted it is said [ibid. 14]: "I will send rain for your land in its due season, the first rain and the latter rain," etc.

R. Johanan said: Three keys are in the hands of the Holy One, blessed be He, which are not intrusted to any messenger, and they are: The key of rain, the key for a woman lying-in, and the key for the resurrection of the dead. The key of rain, as it is written [Deut. xxviii. 12]: "The Lord will open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven, to give the rain of thy land in its season"; the key for a woman lying-in, as it is written [Genesis, xxx. 22]: "And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb"; and the key for the resurrection of the dead, as it is written [Ezekiel, xxxvii. 13]: "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and when I cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people." The sages of the West say, that also the key to a man's earnings are in the hands of God alone, as it is written [Psalms, cxlv. 16]: "Thou openest thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

Why did not R. Johanan mention this also? Because R. Johanan may claim that rain itself is the means of earning a livelihood.

*"R. Eliezer said: 'From the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles.'" The schoolmen propounded a question: Whence does R. Eliezer derive his teaching? Does he derive it from the palm-branch which is brought along for use at the morning service*

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only, or from the pouring of water, which is brought also in the evening, as the Master says: "It is written [Numb. xxix. 24.]: 'Their meat-offerings and their drink-offerings' (in plural), that is to say, that they may be brought even in the evening, and therefore R. Eliezer holds that mention of the rain should be made even on the eve of the Feast of Tabernacles?"

Come and hear: R. Abbahu said: "R. Eliezer derived his teaching from the palm-branch." Some say, that R. Abbahu had a tradition to that effect, while others hold that he takes it from the following Boraitha: From what time is mention made of rain in the daily prayer? R. Eliezer said: "From the time the palm-branch is taken" (*i.e.*, from the time the morning-prayer is said). R. Jehoshua, however, said: "From the time when the palm-branch is laid aside" (*i.e.*, from the time of the Additional Prayer, when the palm-branch is not used). Said R. Eliezer: "Because the four articles 1 of the Feast of Tabernacles are used only for the purpose of favorably inclining the judgment concerning rain; and as those four articles cannot grow without water, neither can the world exist without water, therefore mention of rain must be made even in the morning." And R. Jehoshua replied: "But rain during the festival of Tabernacles is considered an unpropitious event!" (because it prevents the sitting in the booth). Whereupon R. Eliezer rejoined: "I do not mean to say that rain should be prayed for but merely that it should be mentioned, and it is the same as the mention of the resurrection of the dead, which though this can take place only at the appointed time, it is nevertheless mentioned all the year round. Therefore if a man desires to mention rain in the prayer the whole year, he may do so."

Rabbi, however, said: "I say, that when a man ceases to pray for rain, he should also cease mentioning it." And R. Jehudah ben Bathyra said: "Mention of the rain should begin to be made

on the second day of the Feast of Tabernacles." R. Aqiba said: "Even on the sixth day." R. Jehudah in the name of R. Jehoshua said: "The last of the ministers of the congregation who on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles officiates at the reading-desk should mention the rain; but not he who officiates first. On the first day of the Passover, the minister who officiates first should still mention it, but not he who officiates last."

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We have learned in a Boraitha: Our sages did not impose the duty on a man to make mention of the dew and wind in the prayer; but if he desires to do so, he may. Why so? Said R Hanina: Because dew and wind are never withheld. Whence do I know this? Because it is written [I Kings, xvii. 1]: "Then said Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, unto Achab, 'As the Lord the God of Israel liveth, before whom I have stood, there shall not be in these years dew or rain, except according to my word'"; and further, it is written [ibid. xviii. 1]: "Go, show thyself unto Achab; and I will give *rain* upon the face of the earth," but in the latter passage dew is not mentioned, because it was never withheld. It might be asked, however, why Elijah swore that it would not fall? He meant to say merely that no dew which would benefit the soil would fall, for all the dew which should fall would not be productive of any good.

Whence do we know that the wind will not be withheld? Said R. Jehoshua ben Levi: "Because it is written [Zech. ii. 10]: 'For as the four winds of heaven have I spread you abroad,' which signifies, that as the world cannot exist without winds, so it cannot also exist without Israel."

R. Hanina said: From what we have learned so far, we see that if a man said in his prayer during the dry season, "He causeth the wind to blow," he is not obliged to say his prayer over again; but if he said "He causeth the rain to descend," he is bound to say the prayer again. During the rainy season if he omitted in his prayer the words, "He causeth the wind to blow," he need not be made to say the prayer over again, but if he omitted the words, "He causeth the rain to descend," he should be made to say the prayer again. And not only this, but if the man said in his prayer the words, "He causeth the wind to cease and the dew to vanish," he need not repeat the prayer, because those words are of no consequence.

We have learned in another Boraitha: The sages did not impose the duty of mentioning clouds and winds in the prayer; but if a man chooses to do so he may, because they are not withheld.

R. Jehudah said: The wind which comes after the rain does as much good as the rain itself; the sun which comes after the rain does as much good as two rains.

Rabha said: Snow to the mountains is as beneficial as five rains are to the ground, as it is written [Job, xxxvi. 6]: "For

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to the snow he saith, 'Be thou on the earth'; likewise to the pouring rain, and to the pouring rains of his strength." [1](#)

Rabha said again: "Snow is good for the mountains; a light rain is good for the trees; a heavy rain is good for the budding fruit, and a shower is even beneficial to the seed lying dormant in

the ground."

Again Rabha said: "A young scholar is like a seed, lying in the ground, which, once sprouting, will continue to grow." And he said also: "When a young scholar appears excited, it should be known that it is his knowledge that is excited within him, as it is written [Jeremiah, xxiii. 29]: 'Is not thus my word like the fire? saith the Lord.'" And R. Ashi said that a scholar who is not as firm as iron cannot be considered a scholar, because the end of that passage reads: "And like a hammer that shivereth the rock." Said Rabhina: "Still, a man should train himself to speak calmly without anger, as it is written [Ecclesiastes, xi. 10]: 'And remove anger from thy heart.'"

R. Samuel ben Na'hmeni in the name of R. Jonathan said: Three men prayed to God for things that were not suitable (for prayer). Two were answered in a proper manner, but one was answered accordingly. They are: Eliezer the slave of Abraham, Saul the son of Kish, and Jephthah of Gilead. Concerning Eliezer it is written [Genesis, xxiv. 14]: "Be (she) the one thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac." Now, the maiden may have been blind or maimed, but still the Lord ordained it so that Rebekah was the one. Concerning Saul the King it is written [I Samuel, xvii. 25]: "And it shall be that the man who killeth him, him will the king enrich and his daughter will he give him," etc. It might have happened that a slave or an illegitimate son might have accomplished the feat, but still the Lord destined it to be David. Concerning Jephthah it is written [Judges, xi. 3 1]: "Then shall it be, that whatsoever cometh forth out of the doors of my house . . . I will burn it up for a burnt-offering." The prayer was improper, because an unclean thing (such as a swine or a dog) might have come forth which would not be a proper sacrifice, and the answer was also not proper, for his own daughter came forth to meet him. This causes the wrathful query of Jeremiah the prophet, as it is written [Jeremiah, viii. 22]: "Is there no more balm in Gilead? or is no physician there?"

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(meaning was there not Pin'has the high-priest in Gilead, who could have released Jephthah of his vow?). <sup>1</sup> And further, it is written [ibid. xix. 5]: "Which I had not commanded, nor spoken, and which had not come into my mind," which implies, "I had not commanded" refers to the sacrificing of the son of Mesha the King of Moab by his father [II Kings, iii. 27]: "now spoken," refers to the daughter of Jephthah; and "which had not come into my mind," refers to Isaac, whom his father Abraham was willing to sacrifice.

Said R. Berachiah: The congregation of Israel also prayed for an improper thing, but the Holy One, blessed be He, answered it in a proper manner, as it is written [Hosea, vi. 3]: "And let us feel it, that we may strive to know the Lord; bright as the morning dawn is his rising; and may He come as the rain unto us, as the latter rain that maketh fruitful the earth." And the Holy One, blessed be He, said: My daughter, thou askest a thing which at times is necessary and at other times is superfluous, but I will be to thee as a thing which is at all times needed, as it is written [Hosea, xiv. 6]: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." Once again the congregation of Israel prayed improperly, saying: I, Sovereign of the universe! Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm" [Solomon's Song, viii. 6], and the Lord said: Thou askest me to do a thing which at times can be seen and at other times cannot, for sometimes the heart is closed and the arms are covered; but I will set thee as a seal in a place that is always exposed; as it is written [Isaiah, xlix. 16]: "Behold, upon the palms of my hands have I engraved thee."

"*Shortly before the commencement of the rainy season.*" The schoolmen thought that mentioning rain in the prayer and praying for it was one and the same thing, therefore they said that this Mishna is in accordance with the opinion of R. Jehoshua, who said previously that rain must be mentioned from the time that the palm-branch is laid aside. Said Rabha to them: "Nay; this Mishna may even be in accordance with R. Eliezer's opinion, for mentioning rain and praying for it are two different things."

"*R. Jehudah said: 'The last of the ministers,'*" etc. Is this not a contradiction to what we learn in the next Mishna, namely: Until when is rain to be prayed for? R. Jehudah said: "Until

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after the Passover," etc. Said R. Hisda: "This presents no difficulty. Our Mishna refers to the *mention* of the rain, while the Mishna quoted refers to *praying* for rain, and rain may be prayed for during the entire Passover." Said Ula: "This statement of R. Hisda is as vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes. If a man may mention rain even when he should not pray for it, why should he not when praying for it also be allowed to mention it?" Therefore, says Ula, this contradiction can be explained from the fact that two Tanaim differ as to the opinion of R. Jehudah.

R. Assi in the name of R. Johanan said: "The Halakha prevails according to R. Jehudah."

How shall *we* do, however, who have two days as the last days of the festival? (Shall we apply the Halakha to the first of those two days or to the last?) Said Rabh: "The rain should be first mentioned in the Additional Prayer on the first of the two last days, then it should be omitted in all prayers until the Additional Prayer on the second of those days, when it should again be mentioned." Said Samuel to those who repeated Rabh's statement: "Go ye and tell Abba. this: 'Is it proper that after thou hast sanctified the day thou shouldst make it ordinary again? For in the afternoon prayer of that day thou hast omitted the mention of the rain.' Therefore I say that mention should be made first at the Additional Prayer on the first of the two last days, also in the afternoon prayer, then it may be omitted at night and in the morning of the following day; but it should be again mentioned in the Additional Prayer of the last day." Rabha, however, said: "As he once began to mention it, it should not be stopped again." And so also said R. Shesheth, and even Rabh retracted his former statement, for R. Hananel said in his name that twenty-one days should be counted from the New Year day the same as the ten days preceding the Day of Atonement are counted, and on the twenty-first day he should commence to make mention of the rain and should then not omit it in any of the prayers. So the Halakha prevails.

MISHNA: Till what time is the rain to be prayed for? R. Jehudah says until after the Passover; R. Meir says till the month of Nissan is passed, because it is said [Joel, ii. 23]: "And he hath caused to come down for you the rain, the first rain, and the latter rain in the first month."

GEMARA: Said R. Na'hman to R. Itz'hak: "Does the first rain then descend in the month of Nissan, does it not descend in Mar-Cheshvan? As we have learned in a Boraitha, namely:

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[paragraph continues] "The first rains fall in Mar-Cheshvan and the latter rains in Nissan." And R.

Itz'hak answered: R. Johanan said thus: The passage quoted in the Mishna, which states that both the first and the latter rains come down in the first month, refers to the time of Joel the son of Pethuel, when, it is written [Joel, i. 4]: "What the caterpillar left, hath the locust eaten," etc. In that year the month of Adar had already passed, and the first rain descended in the month of Nissan. Said the prophet to Israel: "Go and sow your seed." And they replied: "Should one who has a patch of barley or wheat eat it and live, or sow it and die (until the new grain becomes ripe)?" And he said to them: "Still, see that ye sow as much as ye can." Thereupon a miracle occurred, and the grain which had been hidden in the walls and in the subterranean passages of the ants was discovered. They then went and sowed their grain on the second, third, and fourth days of Nissan. On the fifth of Nissan the second rain fell, and on the sixteenth of that month they already offered up the new grain which had ripened. Thus the grain which should have taken six months to ripen, matured in eleven days; and the offerings which were usually brought of grain that had been growing six months, were that time brought of such as had only been growing eleven days, and concerning this generation it is written [Psalms, cxxvi. 5]: "Those that sow in tears shall reap in joyful song."

R. Na'hman said again to R. Itz'hak: "It is written [II Kings, viii. 1]: 'For the Lord hath called for a famine, and it is also coming on the land for seven years.' What was eaten during these seven years?" And he answered: "So said R. Johanan: In the first year they ate the reserve store that they had in their houses; in the second year they ate the reserve store they had in the fields; in the third they ate the flesh of ritually clean animals; on the fourth, the flesh of ritually unclean animals; in the fifth year they ate reptiles; in the sixth year the famine was so severe that people had to eat their own children; and in the seventh it reached a stage where some had to eat the flesh from off their own arms; and the saying [Isaiah, ix. 19]: 'They shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm,' was verified thereby."

Again, R. Na'hman asked R. Itz'hak: It is written [Hosea, xi. 9]: "The Holy One in the midst of thee, and I will not come into the city." How is this to be understood? Because the inhabitants did so much good in the city that they were called holy, and the Holy One did not wish to enter? And R. Itz'hak

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answered: "Thus said R. Johanan: The Holy One, blessed be He, said that He would not enter the Jerusalem of the heavens until he could enter the Jerusalem below." "Is there then a Jerusalem above?" asked R. Na'hman. "Yea," was the answer, for it is written [Psalms, cxxii. 3]: 'Jerusalem! which art built as a city wherein all associate together (*i.e.*, Jerusalem is built as that Jerusalem which is connected (associated) with it. Hence there is another Jerusalem, and that is above in the heavens).

R. Na'hman again asked R. Itz'hak: 'How is the passage [Jeremiah, x. 8]: 'But at once shall they be shown to be brutish and foolish: it is a doctrine of vanities, it concerneth but wood,' to be understood?' And he replied: "Thus said R. Johanan: One thing will cause men to burn in Gehenna, and that is idolatry; for it is said above, a doctrine of vanities, it concerneth but wood,' and further, we find it written [ibid. 15]: 'They, are vanity, the work of deception; in the time of their punishment shall they vanish.'"

R. Na'hman asked R. Itz'hak again: "What does the passage [Jeremiah, ii. 13], 'For two evils have my people committed,' mean? Are there only two, and the twenty-four which are

subsequently enumerated 1 (in the same chapter) were forgiven them?" And R. Itz'hak answered: Thus said R. Johanan: One evil which is considered as two--namely, idolatry--as it is written further [ibid.]: "Me have they forsaken, the source of living waters, to hew out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that cannot hold water"; and it is also written [ibid. 10 and 11]: "For pass over to the isles of the Kittites, and see; and unto Kedar send, and consider well: and see if anything like this hath happened. Hath a nation exchanged its gods, which are yet no gods? and still my people hath exchanged its glory for that which cannot profit." In a Boraitha we have learned as follows: The Kittites worship fire and the inhabitants of Kedar worship water, and though knowing that water extinguishes fire, they nevertheless did not exchange their god, while my people exchanged their god for "that which cannot profit."

R. Na'hman and R. Itz'hak sat together at a meal, and R. Na'hman said to the latter: "Let Master relate something!" And R. Itz'hak said: "So said R. Johanan: 'While eating one should not talk, lest the food enter the windpipe (trachea) before

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the gullet and inflict an injury.'" After having finished their meal, he said: "So said R. Johanan: 'Jacob our father never died.'" And R. Na'hman rejoined: "Then was it in vain that he was mourned and embalmed?" And R. Itz'hak replied: "I make this assertion from the following passage [Jeremiah, xxx. 10]: 'And thou, do not fear, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord, and be not dismayed, O Israel; for, behold, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be at rest, and be secure, with none to terrify him.' And Jacob is compared to his children; as the latter are still living so is he also." 1

When R. Na'hman and R. Itz'hak were about to part, the former said to R. Itz'hak: "Bless me." And he answered: "I shall tell thee a parable to which this can be compared: A man once went into the desert, and when hungry, thirsty, and tired came to a tree bearing luscious fruit and affording plenty of shade, and underneath which there was a spring of water. He ate of the fruit, drank of the water, and rested beneath the shade. When about to leave he turned to the tree and said: 'Tree, tree, wherewith can I bless thee? That thy fruit may be sweet--it is already sweet; that thou shouldst afford plenty of shade--that also thou dost; that a spring may be near thee--even that thou hast. The one thing left me which I can wish for thee is, that all trees planted from thy seed may be as fruitful as thou art.' So it is with thee. Should I bless thee with knowledge--that thou hast; should I bless thee with riches--that thou also hast; should I bless thee with children--even children thou lackest not; hence all I can wish thee is that thy seed be as prosperous as thou art."

The rabbis taught: Why is the first rain called Yorah? 2 Because it teaches the people to paint their roofs, take in the fruit, and otherwise prepare for the winter; and also because it satiates the earth and penetrates into the very depths, as it is written [Psalms, lxxv. 11]: "Watering her furrows abundantly; smoothing down her ridges, thou softenest her with showers; thou blessest her growth." Another thing that is meant by "Yorah" is "a rain that comes without storm"; and as the first rain is intended for a blessing, so also is the latter rain. And whence do we know that the first rain is intended for a blessing?

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[paragraph continues] From the passage [Joel, ii. 23]: "And ye children of Zion, be glad, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he hath given you the first rain in beneficence, and he hath caused to come down for you the rain, the first rain and the latter rain in the first month."

The rabbis taught: The first rain falls in the month of Mar-Cheshvan and the latter rain in Nissan. Whence do we know that the first rain should fall in the month of Mar-Cheshvan, perhaps it would do if it fell in the month of Kislev? Because the first and latter rains are mentioned together and by the latter rain is meant that falling in Nissan; for otherwise it would be of no benefit. Hence by the first rain is meant that falling in Mar-Cheshvan. In another Boraitha it is added that such is the dictum of R. Meir; but the sages say: "The first rain falls in Kislev." Who are those sages? Said R. Hisda: That is R. Jose, who says, in another Boraitha, that the time for the first rain is the third day of Mar-Cheshvan; ordinarily it falls on the 7th of that month, and if it is delayed it falls on the 17th. Such is the dictum of R. Meir. But R. Jehudah says the three dates are the 7th, 17th, and 23d, and R. Jose says they are the 17th, the 23d, and the 1st of Kislev; and he added that fasting for rain is not necessary until the 1st of Kislev has passed without rain having fallen. Said R. Hisda: "The Halakha prevails according to R. Jose."

Ameimar taught the same as R. Hisda with reference to another Boraitha: We have learned: As early as the 3d of Mar-Cheshvan, rain should be prayed for. R. Gamaliel said: "On the 7th of that month is the time when the delayed rain should be prayed for." Said R. Hisda: "The Halakha prevails according to R. Gamaliel."

According to whom will the following Boraitha be? We have learned: R. Simeon ben Gamaliel said: "If there was rain for seven consecutive days it must not be considered as too much rain, but merely that there was a threefold fructification of the earth by the rain." (This will be according to R. Jose, who said that seven days elapse between each fructification, and R. Hisda said the Halakha prevails according to R. Jose.) Said R. Abbahu: "Why is it called fructification? Because it fructifies the earth; for R. Jehudah said that the rain is the husband of the earth, as it is written [Isaiah, Iv. 10]: 'For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither, but water the earth, and render it fruitful, and cause it to bring forth plants.'"

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R. Abbahu said again: "The first fructification takes place if the rain penetrates one span into the ground, and the second fructification is accomplished when the soil is so pliable that it can be used to stop up a barrel without the addition of other water."

R. Hisda said: "If at the first fructification the soil becomes so pliable that it can be used to stop up a barrel, it cannot be considered as if the heavens were closed (and no rain had fallen)." He said again: "If it rained in some cities, but was dry in others, it cannot be said that the heavens are closed." This is not so! For is it not written [Amos, iv. 7]: "And I also had indeed withholden from you the rain, when it was yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and upon another city I caused it not to rain; one piece of land was rained upon, and another piece whereupon it rained not became dried up." And R. Jehudah said, in the name of Rabh, that the entire verse was in the form of a curse? This presents no difficulty. For the verse signifies that in one city it will rain too much and in another it will not rain at all, which is a curse; but if it rain ordinarily in one city and not at all in another (one city can draw its supply from the other). Said R. Ashi: "This very thing may be inferred from the passage itself; for it



says 'one piece of land was rained *upon*,' and that implies that in that piece of land there will be too much rain." [1](#)

R. Abbahu said: "The day of rain is of more importance than the day of resurrection; for on the latter day only the righteous will arise from the dead, but rain falls for all alike, righteous and wicked." And R. Abbahu differs with R. Jose, who declares that the day of rain is just as important as the day of resurrection, and for that reason is mentioned in the prayer at the benediction regarding the resurrection of the dead.

R. Jehudah said: "The day of rain is as important as the day on which the Law was given, because it is written [Deut. xxxii. 2]: 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain,' and by doctrine is meant the Law; for it is written [Proverbs, iv. 2]: 'For good doctrine do I give you: my law must ye not forsake.'" And Rabha said: "The day of rain is even more important than the day on which the Law was given; for it says: 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain,' and surely the thing upon which another is

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dependent, or to which another is compared, is more important than that other."

The same interpreters cite the following contradiction: It is written [Deut. xxxii. 2]: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew." In the first he says "rain," and in the other "dew." (It is said above that dew is always good, but with rain the case is different?) From this it is to be signified that if the scholar is a conscientious man, consider him as dew, which is always useful; but if he is not, turn your neck to him [1](#) as we do to rain.

We have learned: R. Banaha said: "He who studies the Law for the honor of God, his knowledge becomes to him the elixir of life, as it is written [Proverbs, iii. 18]: 'A tree of life is she to those that lay hold on her'; and it is also written [ibid. 8]: 'It will be healing to thy body'; while, further, it is said [ibid. viii. 35]: 'For he who findeth me, findeth life'; but he who studies the Law, not for the honor of God (but in order to injure others or for other purpose), his knowledge becomes to him a deadly poison." As it is written in the passage just quoted, the term *Yaaroph* is to be interpreted as the term *Vearphu* [Deut. xxi. 4]: "And they shall break there the neck of the heifer in the valley."

R. Jeremiah said to R. Zera: 'Let Master go and teach.' And he answered: "My heart is weak, and I cannot." "Then let Master relate some trifling thing from the Haggada," said R. Jeremiah. And R. Zera spoke: "Thus said R. Johanan: 'It is written [Deut. xx. 19]: "The man is a tree of the field.'" Is then a man a tree of the field? The passage says previously: 'For of them mayest thou eat, and thou shalt not cut them down'; and further, it says [ibid. 20]: 'Only those trees of which thou knowest that they are not fruit-trees, thou mayest destroy and cut down.' And this implies that the man is compared to a tree, and that if thou knowest a man to be a scholar and a good man, thou shouldst enjoy his company and derive benefit from him; but if he be a scholar but an evil man, thou shouldst avoid him and cut off thy intercourse with him."

R. Hama bar Hanina said: "It is written [Proverbs, xxvii. 17]: 'Iron is sharpened by iron,' and this applies to two scholars who study together, when one sharpens the intellect of the other."

Rabba bar bar Hana said: Why were the words of the Law compared to fire, as it is written [Jeremiah, xxiii. 29]: "Is not this my word like the fire? saith the Lord." As fire cannot burn without having hold of an object, so the words of the Law cannot remain with one who is alone.

R. Na'hman bar Itz'hak said: Why are the words of the Law compared to a tree, as it is written [Proverbs, iii. 18]: "A tree of life is she to those that lay hold on her." As a small piece of wood kindles a larger, so a lesser scholar brightens the wits of the greater by his queries, and this is as R. Hanina has said: "I have learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, and most of all from my disciples."

R. Hanina bar Papa cited a contradiction: "It is written [Isaiah, xxi. 14]: 'Toward him that is thirsty they *bring* water'; and further, it is written [ibid. lv. 1]: 'Every one of ye that thirsteth, *come* ye to the water'?" (Th is presents no difficulty.) If a man is a diligent disciple and cannot come to the master, the master should go to him; but if he is not a diligent disciple, the master need not go to him, but if he comes to the master he should be taught.

R. Hanina bar Hama cited another contradiction: It is written [Proverbs, v. 16]: "So will thy springs *overflow* abroad"; and further, it is said [ibid. 17]: "They will be *thy own* only"? This means to say, that if a man is a thorough scholar his teachings should be allowed to spread abroad; but if not, they should be for him alone.

R. Hanina bar Idi said: Why are the words of the Law compared to water, as it is written [Isaiah, xxi. 14]: "Toward him that is thirsty they bring water"? Because as water leaves a higher place for a lower, so the words of the Law cannot be retained by one who does not deport himself in a lowly (humble) manner.

R. Oshiya said: Why are the words of the Law compared to the following three beverages-- water, wine, and milk? "To water," as it's written in the verse just quoted; to "wine and milk," as it is written [Isaiah, Iv. 1]: "Yea, come, buy without money and without price wine and milk." In order to teach us, that as those three beverages can best be kept in common utensils such as wooden or earthen vessels, so the Law can only be retained by those who are humble in their manner. As the daughter of the Cæsar once said to R. Jehoshua b. Hananiah: "Alas for such handsome wisdom, which is in an ugly vessel" (it means that the

rabbi was very homely). And he said to her: "In what does your father keep his best wine?" And she answered: "In earthen vessels." And he rejoined: "Then what is the difference between your father and a commoner?" And she asked: "In what, then, shall it be kept?" And he said: "You, who are wealthy and mighty, ought to keep it in golden and silver vessels!" She then told her father, and he commanded that his wine should be kept in vessels of gold and silver. And it became sour. When the Cæsar was informed of this, he asked his daughter: "Who told you that we should keep our wine in golden vessels?" And she named the above rabbi. He was sent for, and questioned as to the reason of his advice. And he rejoined: "This was only an answer to the question of the princess." "But are there not," the Cæsar said, "men who are handsome and nevertheless are very scholarly?" "Believe me," said the rabbi, "that if they would be homely,

their wisdom would be greater still."

R. Hama bar Hanina said: The day of rain is of equal importance with the day on which heaven and earth were created, as it is written [Isaiah, xlv. 8]: "Drop down, ye heavens, from above and let the skies distil blessing; let the earth open, and let them all be fruitful of prosperity, and let righteousness spring up likewise: I the Lord have created it." And as it is said "created *it*" and *not* "created *them*," it proves that rain is referred to; (and hence the day of rain is equally as important as the day of the creation of the heavens and earth).

R. Oshiya said: The day of rain is so great that, even if a man be blessed with prosperity, the prosperity becomes more fruitful, as it is said in the verse quoted: "Let the earth open, and let them all be fruitful of prosperity."

R. Tanhum bar Hanilai said: "Rain does not descend unless the sins of Israel are forgiven, as it is written [Psalm lxxxv. 2-3]: 'Thou hast been favorable, O Lord, unto thy land; thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered over all their sin. Selah.'" Said Zeiri of Dehabath to Rabina: "Ye learn this from the above passage. We, however, apply to this the following: [I Kings, viii. 34]: 'Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin,'" etc. R. Tanhurn the son of R. Hyya of the village Acco said: "Rain is not withheld unless the enemies of Israel (meaning Israel itself) deserve to be destroyed, as it is written [Job, xxiv. 19]: 'Drought and heat speedily consume the snow-waters:

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so doth the grave those who have sinned.'" Said Zeiri of Dehabath to Rabina: "Ye learn this from the above passage. We, however, apply to this the following [Deut. xi. 17]: 'And he will shut up the heavens . . . and ye shall perish quickly.'"

R. Simeon ben Pazi said: "Rain is not withholden except from such as slander each other, as it is written [Proverbs, xxv. 23]: 'The north wind bringeth forth rain; so doth secret talking, angry countenances.'"

R. Sala said in the name of R. Hamnuna: "Rain is withholden only on account of the impudent, as it is written [Jerem. iii. 3]: 'And though the early showers were withholden, and the latter rain came not: yet hadst thou a forehead of an adulterous wife, thou refusedst to feel shame.'"

R. Sala said again in the name of R. Hamnuna: "The man who is impudent will finally stumble into idolatry." And he derives it from the passage just quoted, "Yet hadst thou a forehead of an adulterous wife." And R. Na'hman said: "An impudent man must be considered as having already stumbled into idolatry; for the passage does not say, 'thou *wilt have* a forehead,' etc., but I thou *hadst*."

Rabba bar Huna said: "An impudent man may be classed with the wicked, as it is written [Proverbs, xxi. 29]: 'A wicked man showeth impudence in his face.'" And R. Na'hman bar Itz'hak said: "He may even be hated, as it is written [Eccles. viii. 1]: 'And the boldness of his face Yesuna (will be lessened)' Do not read 'Yesuna' (will be lessened) but 'Yisonei' (may be hated)."

R. Joseph said: Rain is withholden only for abolishing the Law, as it is written [Job, xxxvii. 21]: "Yet men see not the light which is bright in the skies, when the wind hath passed along and purified them." By *light* is meant the Law, as it is written [Prov. vi. 23]: "For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light"; and *bright*, the disciples of R. Ishmael interpret thus: "Even when the sky was spotted with clouds, the wind of the law clears them away."

R. Ami said: Rain is withholden solely on account of the sin of robbery, as it is written [Job, xxxvi. 32]: "His hands he covereth with light." By "his hands" is meant the hands of robbery, as it is written [Jonah, iii. 8]: "And from the violence which is in their hands"; and by "light" is meant rain, as it is written [Job, xxxvii. 11]: "He scattereth the cloud of his lightning."

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R. Ami said again: It is written [Eccles. x. 10]: "If the iron be blunt and man do not whet the edge, then must he exert more strength; but the advantage of making it properly sharp is wisdom," which signifies, that if the heavens became closed as the "iron is blunt," it was because of the persistent wickedness of the men who "did not whet the edge" (of righteousness). What is the remedy for the evil? Praying for mercy, as it is said: "Then must he exert more strength"; and so much the more, will they be granted mercy if at the beginning their deeds were those of wisdom.

Resh Lakish said: If thou shouldst see a scholar whose mind is blunt as iron, because of unsystematic study, the remedy for him is, that he should devote more time to systematic study in the colleges, as it is said, "Then must he exert more strength." And a better remedy yet is, if he arrange all he had hitherto learned in order, as Resh Lakish would arrange his studies forty times before entering into the presence of R. Johanan [deriving it from the forty days which Moses occupied in receiving the Law on Mount Sinai]. R. Ada bar A'hbah would arrange his studies twenty-four times before entering into the presence of Rabha [deriving it from the twenty-four books of the Scriptures.]

Rabha said: "If thou shouldst see a disciple whose mind is as blunt as iron because his teacher does not thoughtfully explain the teachings to him, the remedy for him is, to request his friends to intercede for him with the teacher in order that the explanations may be more lucid and especially if the disciple's behavior is proper towards the teacher and others." [1](#)

R. Ami said again: It is written [Eccles. x. 11]: "If the serpent do bite because no one uttered a charm, then hath the man that can use his tongue (in charming) no preference," which signifies that if thou shouldst see a generation in whose time the heavens became firm as copper and would not give forth dew and rain, because there was no one to utter a silent prayer for rain, the remedy is to obtain someone who can pray silently for the removal of the curse. And if the one who is able will not pray, what benefit will he derive from it? hence it is more than probable that he will do so. If, however, he persist in refusing, the most pious of that generation should be appealed to. And

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if he did pray and was answered, and because of that he becomes too proud, he brings down wrath upon the world.

Rabha said: Two scholars who reside in one town and are not agreeable to each other in Halakha, they cause wrath and bring the same down as it is written [Job, xxxv. 33].

Resh Lakish said: It is written [Eccl. x. 11]: "If the serpent do bite because no one uttered a charm, then hath the man that can use his tongue (in charming) no preference." In the future all the wild beasts will come to the serpent and question him thus: A lion presses and eats, the wolf tears and eats; but thou, what benefit dost thou derive from killing the creatures? And his answer will be: Do, then, the evil tongues derive any benefit?

Again R. Ami said: The prayer of a man is not answered unless he put his whole soul into it, as it is written [Lamentations, iii. 41]: "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heaven." This is not so! For did not Samuel through an interpreter preach as follows: It is written [Psalms, lxxviii. 36 and 37]: "Nevertheless they prayed insincerely to him with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied unto him. For their heart was not firm with him, and with their tongue they lied unto him"; and further, it says [ibid. 38]: "Still he, being merciful, forgave the iniquity." This presents no difficulty. If a man prays alone, he must put his whole soul into it; but if a congregation is engaged in prayer and one of the members does not happen to be as devout as he should, the prayer is nevertheless heard.

R. Ami said again: "Rain falls only for the sake of those who are truthful, as it is written [Psalms, lxxxv. 12]: "Truth will grow up out of the earth and righteousness will look down from heaven." And he said again: "Come and see how great are the men who have faith, and I know this from the story of the cat and the well; for if a man have faith in a cat and a well so much the firmer should his faith be in God." [1](#)

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R. Johanan said: "He who justifies all his actions here below, is closely scrutinized by the Power above, as it is written [Psalms, lxxxv. 12]: "Truth will grow up out of the earth and righteousness will look down from heaven." R. Hyya bar Abin in the name of R. Huna adduces the same teaching from another passage [Psalms, xc. 11]: "Which is like the fear of thee," implying that as a man endeavors to prove his fear of the Lord here below, so is he scrutinized as to his sincerity from above. Resh Lakish adduces this same teaching from the passage [Isaiah, lxiv. 4]: "Thou acceptest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou wast wroth, for we had sinned on them continually; and can we thus be saved?" which implies that when we accept one who wishes to appear righteous before us, his sins are looked into from above and he is closely observed.

R. Jehoshua ben Levi said: "One who rejoiceth in his affliction brings prosperity to the whole world, because the last two words of the above-cited verse are 'Aulom Venosha,' which should be interpreted, 'the world will be helped.'"

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Resh Lakish said: It is written [Deut. xi. 17]: "And he will shut up the heaven." When the heaven is shut up from giving rain, it is compared to a woman lying-in, who has all the pain of travail but cannot bear the child; and this is what Resh Lakish said in the name of Bar Qappara:

The expression "shut up" is said about rain, as quoted above, and the same expression is used of a woman [Gen. xx. 17]: "For the Lord had fast closed up 1 every womb." It is said "birth" of a woman [ibid. xxx. 23]: "And she conceived, and bore a son"; and the same expression is used for rain [Isaiah, Iv. 10]: "And render it fruitful," 2 etc. It is said "visiting" of a woman [Gen. xxi. 1]: "And the Lord visited Sarah"; and the same expression is used for rain [Psalms, lxv. 10]: "Thou hast visited 3 the earth and waterest her abundantly; thou greatly enrichest her; the brook of God is full of water."

In the days of R. Samuel ben Na'hmeni there were two evils in the land--famine and pestilence--and the sages said: What shall we pray for? We must not pray for two things, and we do not know which to pray for--the cessation of famine or of pestilence. Let us pray, then, for the abatement of the pestilence and we shall suffer with the famine. Said R. Samuel ben Na'hmeni to them: "Nay, let us pray for relief of the famine; for if the Merciful One will give bread he will give it to the living, surely not to the dead, and thus the pestilence will cease of itself, as it is written [Psalms, cxlv. 16]: 'Thou openest thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every *living* thing.'" Whence do we know that two things must not be prayed for? From the passage [Ezra, viii. 23]: "So we fasted and besought our God for this." Whence we see that if they besought God for *this*, there must have been something else besides, and only one thing was prayed for.

In the days of R. Zera the government issued proclamations detrimental to the interests of the Jews, and remarked that no fast-days were to be kept. Said R. Zera to the people: "Let us take a fast-day upon ourselves *now*, and when the government shall have rescinded its decree, we will then fast." And they asked him: "Whence dost thou know that this would be beneficial?" And he answered: "I know it, because it is written [Daniel, x. 12]: 'And he said unto me: Fear not, Daniel! for

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from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to obtain understanding, and to fast before thy God, were thy words heard: and I am come in consequence of thy words.'"

R. Itz'hak said: "Even if the years be years of drought, as were the days of Elijah, and rain fall on the eve of Sabbaths, it cannot be considered as a sign of blessing." Again, R. Itz'hak said: "The day of rain is such a blessed day, that even the coin in one's pocket is blessed; for it is written [Deut. xxviii. 12]: 'To give the rain of thy land in its season, and to bless all the work of thy hand.'" 1

R. Johanan said: "Rain is not withholden only on account of such men as promise publicly to give charity and then do not carry out their promise, as it is written [Proverbs, xxv. 14]: 'Like clouds and wind without rain, so is a man that vaunteth falsely of a gift.'"

R. Johanan said again: "The passage 'thou shalt truly tithe' signifies that a man should give tithes in order that he may himself become rich. 2 R. Johanan met a child of Resh Lakish (after the latter's demise) and he asked him: "How far along art thou in thy studies?" And the child answered: "I am at the passage [Deut. xiv. 22]: 'Thou shalt truly tithe,'" and then asked, "What does that passage mean?" R. Johanan replied: "It means: Give tithe in order that thou mayest become rich." The child then said: "Whence dost thou know this?" And he replied: "Go and try it, and see if it is not so." But the child rejoined: "But is it then allowed to try God--is it not

written [Deut. vi. 16]: 'Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" And R. Johanan said: "Thus said R. Hosea: 'In all things except tithes, for it is said [Malachi, iii. 10]: 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be provision in my house, and prove me but herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing, until it be more than enough.'"" Replied the child: "If I had already come to that verse (in my studies) I would not have needed thee nor Hosea thy rabbi."

Once more R. Johanan met the child of Resh Lakish, learning the passage [Proverbs, xix. 3]: "The folly of man perverteth his way and against the Lord will his heart rage." R. Johanan sat

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and pondered, saying: "Is there then anything written in the Hagiographa, of which there should not even be a hint in the Pentateuch?" Said the child of Resh Lakish to him: "Is there not a hint of this in the Pentateuch? Is it not written, [Genesis, xlii. 28]: 'And their heart failed them and they were afraid, saying one unto another, What is this that God hath done unto us?'" (and was it not their own folly in selling their brother, that brought the sons of Jacob into their position)? R. Johanan (who had very large eyebrows--so large, in fact, that he had to lift them with silver pincers before he could see well) raised his eyes and wished to gaze at the child, when the mother of the child immediately took him away, saying: "Go away from him, or he may do unto thee what he did unto thy father." (What R. Johanan did to Resh Lakish is explained in Tract Baba Metziya.)

R. Johanan said: Rain may descend even for the sake of the merits of one man, but general prosperity comes only for the sake of the public, as it is written [Deut. xxviii. 12]: "The Lord will open unto *thee* his good treasure, the heaven, to give rain," etc.; and it is written [Exod. xvi. 4]: "I will rain for *you* bread from heaven."

An objection was raised: R. Jose the son of R. Jehudah said: Three good leaders were given to Israel, and they are: Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; and three good gifts were given through them, namely: the well of water which the Israelites had along with them in the desert was given them for the sake of Miriam; the 'pillar of cloud which led them by day was given them on account of Aaron, and the Manna was given them for Moses' sake. When Miriam died, the well vanished, as it is written [Numbers, xxi. 1]: "Miriam died there, and was buried there"; and immediately afterwards it says: "And there was no water for the congregation." Still, the well was again given to the children of Israel through the prayers of Moses and Aaron.

When Aaron died, the pillar of cloud left. 1 Still, both the well and the pillar of cloud were returned for the sake of Moses; but when Moses died, everything vanished, as it is written [Zechariah, xi. 8]: "And I removed the three shepherds in one month." Did then Moses, Aaron, and Miriam die in the same month? Did not Moses die in Adar, Aaron in Abh, and Miriam in Nissan? Therefore infer from that passage that the three gifts which were given to Israel vanished in the same month that Moses died.

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[paragraph continues] Does all this not prove that the Manna was given solely on Moses' account? Nay; Moses prayed for the whole congregation, and thus he was equal to the whole

congregation.

R. Huna bar Manoah, R. Samuel bar Idi, and R. Hyya of Vastania were disciples of Rabha. When Rabha died, they came to R. Papa. When R. Papa would say something that was not quite pleasing to them, they would wink at one another; and he became downhearted. At one time in a dream the passage just quoted: "And I removed the three shepherds in one month," was read to him. On the morrow before they left him he blessed the three disciples, saying: "The rabbis may go in peace" (not wishing that any harm might befall them).

R. Shimi bar Ashi was also a visitor at the college of R. Papa, and would put so many questions to him that it happened at times that R. Papa could not answer them. One day R. Shimi noticed R. Papa, who was reciting the prayer at which the face was generally hidden in the arm, and overheard him pray: "May the Merciful One save me from the disgrace which I suffer at the hands of that Shimi." So at that time he resolved to be silent and not trouble R. Papa any more with questions.

We have learned in a Boraitha: R. Eliezer said: The whole world drinks of the water of the ocean, as it is written [Gen. ii. 6]: "But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground." Said R. Jehoshua to him: "How can that be? Are not the waters of the ocean salty?" And he replied: "They become sweet in the mist (when evaporating)." R. Jehoshua, however, says: The whole world drinks of the waters above, as it is written [Deut. xi. 11]: "From the rain of heaven doth it drink water." Thus the significance of the first-quoted verse is, that the mists rise unto heaven, open their mouths like bags, and drink in the water, as it is written [Job, xxxvi. 27.]: "For he taketh away drops of water, which are purified into rain in the mist"; and the mist is porous like a sieve, through which the rain descends to the earth, as it is written [II Samuel, xxii. 12]: "Heavy masses of water, thick clouds of the skies," and the space from one drop to another is only the width of a hair. All this teaches us that the day of rain is as great as the day of the creation of heaven and earth.

The rabbis taught: The land of Israel was created first of all and the rest of the world afterwards, as it is written [Proverbs, viii. 26]: "While as yet he had not made the land and open fields," and the land of Israel was already made.

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The land of Israel is watered by the Lord himself, while the rest of the world is watered by a messenger, as it is written [Job, v. 10]: "Who giveth rain upon the surface of the earth, and sendeth out waters over the face of the fields."

The land of Israel is watered by rain, while the rest of the world is watered by the residue remaining in the clouds, and this is inferred from the same passage [Job, v. 10], which also implies that the land of Israel is watered before the rest of the world.

R. Jehoshua ben Levi, however, said that the whole world is watered with the residue remaining after the garden of Eden had been watered, as it is written [Gen. ii. 10]: "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden"; and in a Boraitha we have learned that with the residue of water left over from a quantity necessary to water a Kur of land, a Tharqabh (one-sixtieth of a Kur) of land can be watered.



The rabbis taught: Egypt measures four hundred square Parsah, and that is only one-sixtieth of Mesopotamia; [Mesopotamia](#) is a sixtieth of the whole earth; the earth is one-sixtieth of the garden of Eden; the garden is one-sixtieth of Eden, and Eden is in turn only one-sixtieth of Gehenna. Thus it follows that the whole world is but a lid to the pot. Others say again that Gehenna is immeasurable, while still others maintain that Eden is immeasurable.

R. Oshiya said: "It is written [Jeremiah, li. 13]: 'O thou that dwellest upon many waters, great in treasures,' etc., which implies that the reason, why Babylon is great in treasures is because it dwelleth upon many waters." Rabh said: "Rich indeed is Babylon, that reapeth her grain without rain." Abayi said: "I know of a tradition which tells me that swampy ground is better than dry." [1](#)

MISHNA: On the third of Mar-Cheshvan prayers for rain should be said; but according to Rabban Gamaliel, on the seventh of the same month--namely, fifteen days after the Feast of Tabernacles--in order to give the last of the Israelites (returning to their homes from the city of Jerusalem, where they had been during the festivals) an opportunity to reach the River Euphrates (the northern boundary line of Palestine).

GEMARA: Said R. Elazar: "The Halakha prevails according to R. Gamaliel." We have learned in a Boraitha: Hananiah said: In exile, prayers for rain should be said sixty days after

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the equinox of Tishri"; and Huna bar Hyya said in the name of Samuel that the Halakha prevails according to Hananiah.

The schoolmen propounded a question: "What about the sixtieth day after the equinox? Is it included in the sixty days, or is it counted as one of the days on which the prayers are already to be recited?" Said R. Papa: "The Halakha prevails: The sixtieth is considered as the day after the sixty days."

MISHNA: If the seventeenth of Mar-Cheshvan have passed without the rain having yet descended, private individuals commence to keep three fast-days. As soon as it becomes dark on the fast-days, however, it is allowed to eat and to drink; and on the fast-days themselves it is permitted to work, to bathe, to anoint the body, to wear shoes, and to perform the duty of cohabitation.

If the new moon of Kislev has arrived without rain having yet descended, the supreme court shall order three public and general fast-days. As soon as it becomes dark on those fast-days, however, it is lawful to eat and drink; and on the fast-days themselves it is permissible to work, to bathe, to anoint the body, to wear shoes, and to perform the duty of cohabitation.

GEMARA: Who are meant by private individuals (in this Mishna)? Said R. Huna: "The rabbis." We have learned in a Boraitha that if private individuals commenced to keep the fast-days, they should fast on Monday, Thursday, and the following Monday; and they may interrupt their fast-days if a Monday or a Thursday fall on the day of the new moon or on such days as are mentioned in the Roll of Fasts.

The rabbis taught: "A man should not say: 'I am too young a scholar to be counted in among the rabbis, and thus be included in the meaning of the term "private individuals," hence I need not keep the fast-days'; but every young scholar should consider himself a rabbi for that purpose."

Who is called a private individual? One who is worthy of being elected Parnass (president) of the congregation. And who is called a young scholar? One who is asked concerning passages in his studies even in Tract Kalah and can make satisfactory answer.

The rabbis taught: Not every one who would count himself among the private individuals may do so, and not every one who would count himself among the young scholars may do so. Such is the dictum of R. Simeon ben Elazar. Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel, however, said: "This only applies to those who do so

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for the glory thereof, but not to such as only incur an inconvenience by so doing; and the latter, when counting themselves among such persons, should be favorably remembered therefor."

The rabbis taught: One who fasted on account of some trouble, or for the recovery of a sick person, even though the trouble had passed away during the day of his fasting, or the sick person had recovered during that day, should nevertheless continue to fast until nightfall. One who came from a place where there was no fast-day to a place where there was a fast-day must keep that fast-day; but if a man came from a place where there was fasting to a place where there was none, he must nevertheless quietly end his fast. If he forgot that the day was a fast-day, and ate and drank, he should not at least make it apparent to others, and should also not participate in any pleasures on that day, as it is written [Gen. xlii. 1]: "Why do ye look at one another?" which signifies, that Jacob said to his sons: Why do ye make it appear that ye are satisfied when the other races of Esau and Ishmael around you are starving?

R. Jehudah said in the name of R. Hyya: One who travels on the road should not eat much--no more, in fact, than is eaten in a year of famine. Why so? Here in Babylon they say: "In order that the stomach be not filled and thus make walking difficult"; but in Palestine they say: "In order that the supply of food which is carried along be not too quickly exhausted." The difference in the two opinions is therefore concerning a man on board of a ship. There is fear of the supply of food being exhausted, but not that walking will be hindered. On the other hand, the difference of opinion also concerns a man travelling from village to village. There is no fear of the supply of food becoming exhausted, but there is fear of overloading the stomach and thus impeding further progress.

R. Papa when travelling would eat a small loaf after traversing a Parsah, because he thought that eating too much would be injurious to the stomach.

R. Jehudah said in the name of Rabh: A man who has plenty in years of famine and still eats sparingly because others have but a small supply will be saved from sudden death, as it is written [Job, v. 20]: "In famine he redeemeth thee from death." Why is it said "in famine," it should say "from famine he redeemeth thee"? Therefore the passage means to imply that because one ate sparingly in times of famine, he will be redeemed from sudden death.

Resh Lakish said: "A man should not cohabit with his wife in years of famine, as it is written [Gen. xli. 50]: 'And unto Joseph were born two sons *before* the years of famine came.'" A Boraitha, however, teaches that a man who is childless may do so even in times of famine.

The rabbis taught: When Israelites are in trouble and one of them leaves them for the purpose of avoiding the trouble, the two angels who accompany each man lay their hands upon his head and say: "The man who secludes himself from the community which is in distress shall not see the prosperity of the community." Therefore a man should share the common distress of the community, as we see in the case of Moses, who always shared the troubles of the congregation, as it is written [Exod. xvii. 12]: "But when the hands of Moses became heavy, they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon." Did not Moses possess a pillow or bolster upon which he could have sate down? Yea; but Moses said thus: "Because the community is in distress I shall not use a pillow, but sit on a stone and share their woes." Thus everyone who shares the misery of the community shall also see the prosperity, and lest a man say: "Who will testify that I took no part in the woe of the community?" he should know that the stones and beams of his house will bear testimony to the fact, as it is written [Habakkuk, ii. 11]: "For the stone will cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the woodwork will answer it." The disciples of R. Shila say, that the two angels who accompany a man will testify against him, as it is written [Psalms, xci. 11]: "For his angels will be given charge concerning thee." R. 'Hidka said: "The soul of man will testify against him," as it is written [Micah, vii. 4]: "From her that lieth in thy bosom guard the doors of thy mouth." Others say that the members of a man's body will testify against him, as it is written [Isaiah, xliii. 10]: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord."

It is written [Deut. xxxii. 4]: "The God of truth, and without iniquity." By the "God of truth" is meant, that as retribution is meted out above to the wicked for every transgression which they commit, so are the righteous also held to account in this world for every transgression committed; and as the righteous are rewarded in the world to come for every little good act, so are the wicked rewarded in this world for every fulfilment of a religious duty, be it ever so insignificant. It says further [ibid.]: "just and upright is He." Infer therefrom that when a man

comes into the world beyond, all his deeds are laid before him in detail, and he is told where and on what day he committed them. The man then answers: "Yea, I did so"; and he is told to subscribe his name, which he does, as it is written [Job, xxxvii. 7]: "He sealeth it on the hand of every man." And not alone this, but the man also exclaims: "I have been justly judged," as it is said [Psalms, li. 6]: "In order that thou mightest be righteous when thou speakest, be justified when thou judgest."

Samuel said: "A man who fasteth is called a sinner." R. Shesheth said: "If a young scholar sitteth and fasteth, may a dog eat his meal." Said R. Jeremiah bar Abba: "In the community in Babylon there is no fast-day except the 9th of Abh"; and in the name of Resh Lakish he said: "It is not lawful for a scholar to fast, because by fasting he diminishes the work in the heavenly cause."

"As soon as it becomes dark," etc. R. Zera said in the name of R. Huna: "If an individual took it upon himself to fast the next day, even if he had eaten and drunk the entire night, he may on the

morrow recite the fasting-prayer in the Min'hah (afternoon prayer). If a man, however, fasted a day and a night, he must not on the following morning recite the fasting-prayer." Asked R. Joseph: "What does R. Huna hold? That fasting at night is not considered and for that reason the fasting-prayer must not be recited on the following morning, or that fasting at night is considered the same as fasting for a few hours, but for fasting of the latter kind no prayer should be said?" Abayi answered: "R. Huna holds, that fasting at night is considered as fasting for a few hours, and for such a fast the prayer may be said; but the reason that he disallows the fasting-prayer on the morning following the night is because the man originally intended to fast only during the day and did not take upon himself previously to fast the night through also."

Said R. Hisda: "A fast of hours is considered only if the man had not tasted food until night." Said Abayi: "This would not be a fast of hours! it would be a regular fast-day?" R. Hisda means to say that if a man had not eaten before noon through lack of time, and then resolved to fast the remaining half of the day so as to have a fast-day to his credit--although he had only taken it upon himself to fast a half of a day, still it is considered as a regular fast-day.

R. Hisda said again: "A fast-day which was not kept until sunset cannot be called a fast-day." An objection was made:

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[paragraph continues] We have learned in a Mishna: "The priests who had the weekly watch of the Temple fasted, but not the whole day." (This presents no difficulty.) In that case the men of the watch did not intend to fast, but merely to share the trouble of the rest of the community.

Samuel said: "A man who had fasted without having previously taken it upon himself to do so is not considered to have fasted at all." But what if a man did fast without having previously resolved to do so? Said Rabba bar Shila: "That is considered the same as inflating a bag with air." When must a man resolve to fast? Said Rabh: "On the preceding day during the time of the afternoon-prayer." And Samuel said: "On the preceding day at the afternoon-prayer."

Said R. Joseph: "It seems to me that the opinion of Samuel is correct."

The rabbis taught: "Until what time may a man eat on the night preceding a fast-day?" "Until the advent of the morning star." Such is the dictum of Rabbi; but R. Eliezer bar R. Simeon said: "Until the cock crows." Said Rabha: "This applies to one who had not slept; but if he had once retired and slept, he must not eat at all."

Abayi objected: "Did we not learn that if the man slept and arose again, he may eat?" That teaching does not mean if the man had slept, but had only slumbered.

R. Jehudah said in the name of Rabh: "A man, after taking it upon himself to fast on a certain day, may postpone that day and fast on another day; and," continued R. Jehudah, "when I told this to Samuel, he said: 'This is self-evident, for cannot a man vow to do a certain thing and postpone it to some other time?'"

R. Jehoshua the son of R. Idi was a guest of R. Assi; and a calf, the third of its mother, was

prepared for him. And they said to him "Let Master partake of something." Whereupon he replied: I am fasting this day." And they rejoined: "Why not postpone this fast-day? Does not Master hold with R. Jehudah's decree in the name of Rabh, that a fast-day may be postponed?" And he said: "This is a fast-day to me on account of a dream, and Rabba bar Mahassia in the name of R. Hama bar Guria, quoting Rabh, said: 'A fast-day is to a bad dream what fire is to flax'; and R. Hisda said that the fast-day should be kept only on the same day, and R. Joseph said that even on Sabbath such a fast should be kept, and for the violation of the

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[paragraph continues] Sabbath caused thereby he should keep an additional fast-day later on."

MISHNA: If these (three fast-days) have passed without their prayers having been favorably answered, the supreme court shall decree three more public and general fasts; on the nights preceding these it is not permitted to eat or drink, and on the fast-days it is prohibited to work, to bathe, to anoint the body, to wear shoes or to perform the duty of cohabitation, and the public bathing places are to be closed. Should even these fast-days have passed without their prayers having been favorably answered, then shall the Beth Din decree seven more fast-days, which altogether will make thirteen public and general fasts. These last seven fast-days differ from the preceding six, in that on them the alarm is sounded; the shops remain closed, excepting that on Mondays, towards evening, the shop-shutters (of the dealers in articles of food) may be loosely fastened (*i.e.*, not entirely closed, but in a slanting position), and on Thursday they may be taken off entirely in honor of the Sabbath.

Should even these seven fast-days have passed without a favorable answer to the prayers, the people are to avoid and withdraw from engaging in any joyous occupation, and also to diminish their business; from the erection of buildings and from the planting of pleasure-gardens; from betrothals, weddings, and mutual greetings, like men who are rebuked by the Omnipotent; (pious) private individuals recommence fasting till the end of the month of Nissan. If Nissan had passed and then rain descended, it must be considered a curse, for it is written [I Samuel, xii. 17]: "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" etc.

GEMARA: It would be right to prohibit bathing, anointing the body, etc., on the fast-day, because those things are luxuries; but why should working be prohibited? Surely working cannot be considered a luxury! Said R. Hisda in the name of R. Jeremiah bar Abba: It is written [Joel, i. 14]: "Sanctify ye a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, gather the elders," etc. Thus we see that it says, "Proclaim a solemn assembly"; and as certain festivals on which no work may be done are also called "assembly" (Atzereth), it follows that no work may be done on a fast-day also. We might assume then that, as on those other festivals no work may be done from the time of dusk on the preceding eve, such should also be the case with these fast-days. Said R. Zera: It was explained by R. Jeremiah bar Abba that as it is written, "Gather the elders," this might be compared to them,

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and as the elders assemble only during the day, so work should not be done only during the day. If that be so, then let it be prohibited to work only from midday on; for the elders generally assemble about midday. Said R. Shesha the son of R. Idi: This bears out the opinion of R. Huna, who said that in olden times the assemblies of elders would take place from the morning on.

What would the elders do when they assembled in the morning? Said Abayi: From morn until midday they would occupy themselves with municipal affairs; and the first part of the afternoon would be consumed in the reading of the scrolls and of the Hapthorah, while the other part would be devoted to the recital of prayers, as it is written [Nehemiah, ix. 3]: "And they stood up in their standing-place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God the fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they made confession, and prostrated themselves before the Lord their God." Perhaps the contrary was the case; *i.e.*, they read the Law and prayed in the forenoon and occupied themselves with the municipal affairs in the afternoon? This would not be consistent; for it is written [Ezra, ix. 4]: "And then assembled themselves unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the trespass of the exiles: and I sat astounded until the evening sacrifice; [ibid. 5] And at the evening sacrifice I rose up from my fasting, and while rending my garment and my mantle, I knelt down upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God."

Raphram bar Papa said in the name of R. Hisda: "On days when one is fasting on account of a mournful occurrence, as the 9th of Abh, or when is mourning the loss of a near relative, bathing in either cold or warm water is prohibited; but where bathing is not allowed as a luxury, as on ordinary communal fast-days, warm water must not be used but cold water may be." Said R. Idi bar Abin: "This we have learned also in our Mishna, for it says 'that the bathing places are closed,' which signifies that bathing in warm water is prohibited." Said Abayi to him: "What proof is that? If then cold water was prohibited, would the Mishna say that all rivers and lakes should be drained or stopped up?" And R. Shesha the son of R. Idi replied: "My father meant to say that the following was the difficulty in the Mishna: It says that bathing is not allowed, why then should it add that the bathing places were closed? Therefore the Mishna evidently meant to imply that the bathing places were closed in

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order to prevent the use of warm-water, but cold water may be used."

Where should the fasting-prayer be mentioned? R. Jehudah led his son R. Itz'hak to the desk, and the latter proclaimed: "If an individual takes it upon himself to fast, he must recite the fasting-prayer and insert it among the eighteen benedictions, between the benediction of redemption and healing."

R. Itz'hak (of a later generation) opposed this: May, then, an individual say an additional benediction? Therefore, according to his opinion, he should say it in the prayer commencing: "Hear our voice, O Lord," etc. And so also said R. Shesheth. What is the final decision? Said R. Samuel bar Sassartai, and so also said R. Hyya bar Ashi in the name of Rabh: "It should be said between the benedictions of redemption and healing." R. Ashi, however, said in the name of R. Janai the son of Ishmael: "In the prayer commencing, 'Hear our voice,'" etc. And thus the Halakha prevails.

We have learned in one Boraitha that pregnant women and those suckling infants should fast only during the first fast-days ordained by the community, but not during the subsequent fast-days. In another Boraitha we have learned that they should fast in the last fast-days, but not in the first; and in a third Boraitha we have learned that they should fast neither in the first nor in

the last. Said R. Ashi: Hold firm to the middle Boraitha and the others will be readily explained (*i.e.*, the first Boraitha means to say that they should fast on the three days between the first three days and the last seven, but not on the last seven days; the second Boraitha calls the three middle days the last because they, were preceded by three others, hence it says that they should fast only on the last three days, *i.e.*, the three days mentioned above; and the last Boraitha means to say that they need not fast on the first three days or on the last seven, but only on the three middle--thus all three Boraithoth mean one and the same thing).

"*The alarm is sounded.*" Wherewith was the alarm sounded? Said R. Jehudah: "With the cornets." And R. Jehudah the son of R. Samuel bar Shilas, quoting Rabh, said: "With the shout, 'Answer us, O Lord!'" All agree that where cornets are used it is referred to as "sounding an alarm," but they differ concerning the prayer, "Answer us, O Lord!" One says that that is also called sounding the alarm, while the other says that it is not. He who says that the alarm was sounded by reciting the prayer mentioned, also admits that the cornets were used; but

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the one who says that the cornets were blown, does not hold that the prayer was also said.

Did we not learn in a Boraitha that on account of other kinds of plagues, such as the itch, locusts, flies, wasps and gnats, and snakes the alarm, was not sounded, but the prayers were merely shouted; and as shouting signifies that the prayer, "Answer us," was merely said, it must be assumed that where it says that the alarm was sounded it means that the alarm was sounded with cornets? This constitutes a difference of opinion among Tanaim, as we learn in a subsequent Mishna (Chap. III. of this Tract), which says: "For the following calamities an alarm is to be sounded even on Sabbath," etc.; and as on the Sabbath it is not permitted to sound an alarm with cornets, we must assume that the prayer, "Answer us," etc., is also called an alarm. Such is the conclusion.

In the days of R. Jehudah the Third there was a calamity. He ordained thirteen fast-days, but no favorable answer was received. He accordingly desired to ordain more fast-days; but R. Ami said to him: "It was said that the community must not be troubled to too great an extent." Said R. Abba, the son of R. Hyya bar Abba: "R. Ami said that from a selfish motive (*i.e.*, he did not care to fast any more), for my father said in the name of R. Johanan that only when rain is withholden thirteen fast-days should be kept, and no more; but on account of other calamities the people should fast until their prayers are answered, and thus we have also learned in a Boraitha.

The inhabitants of Nineveh sent a query to Rabbi: "Should we, whose soil is unusually dry and in need of rain already in the month of Tamuz (June-July) be considered as a community and when praying for rain insert the prayer in the benediction of years, or should we be regarded as individuals and insert the prayer in that commencing, 'Hear us, O Lord!'" He answered them: "Ye are regarded as individuals and must insert the prayer for rain in that commencing, 'Hear us, O Lord.'"

An objection was raised from the following Boraitha. R. Jehudah said: "All this applied to the time when the Israelites were in their own land and Palestine was the principal place, but in the present time the prayers are said according to the place, time, and year?" And he answered him:

Thou askest concerning a contradiction of Rabbi to a Boraitha? Rabbi is a Tana, and consequently may, have his own opinion and differ with the teaching of a Boraitha. How does the Halakha prevail.

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however? R. Na'hman said: "The prayer for rain must be inserted in the benediction of the years," and R. Shesheth said: "It must be inserted in 'hear our voice,'" etc. And the Halakha prevails according to R. Shesheth.

"*But on Thursday they may be taken off entirely,*" etc. We have learned in a Boraitha: On Monday towards evening, the shop-shutters were only partly closed; on the Thursday they were entirely opened in honor of the Sabbath; but if there were two doors to the shop, one of them could be opened even on Monday; and if there was a bench against the door, it was allowed to open the door on Monday as usual.

"*From the erection of buildings and from the planting of pleasure-gardens,*" etc. We have learned in a Boraitha: What is called a building of pleasure? A house which was built especially for a son about to be married; and what is meant by a pleasure-garden? A bower for princes.

"*And mutual greetings.*" The rabbis taught: The scholars would not greet each other at all; but the common people when greeting the scholars would be answered very feebly and with a faint nod. Amongst themselves the scholars would sit wrapped in their cloaks, silent and morose, the same as mourners and as men who were rebuked by the Omnipotent, until the Lord would have mercy upon them.

R. Elazar said: "A prominent man must not clothe himself in sackcloth unless he knows positively that his prayers will be answered, as was the case with King Jehoram the son of Achab, concerning whom it is written [II Kings, vi. 30]: "And it came to pass when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes, as he was passing along upon the wall; and the people looked, and behold he had sackcloth beneath upon his flesh," etc.

R. Elazar said again: "Not everyone has a right to rend his clothes, nor is it proper for everyone to fall upon his face (in prayer). Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces [Numbers, xiv. 5], and Joshua and Caleb rent their garments" [ibid., ibid.].

R. Zera, and according to others R. Samuel ben Na'hmeni, opposed this: "If it said, 'Joshua and Caleb rent their garments,' the statement of R. Elazar would be correct, but as it says '*And Joshua and Caleb rent,*' etc., it signifies that they did *both*--fell upon their faces and rent their garments."

R. Elazar said again: Not to everyone is it allowed to praise God by rising or by bowing. Kings may do so by rising, as it is

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written [Isaiah, xlix. 7]: "Thus hath said the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One, to him



who is despised by men, to him who is abhorred by nations, to the servant of rulers, kings shall see it and rise up." Princes may do so by prostrating themselves, as it is written [ibid.] Princes, and they shall prostrate themselves."

R. Zera, others say R. Samuel ben Na'hmeni, opposed this: "If the verse read, 'and princes shall prostrate themselves,' it would imply that they would not rise *and* prostrate themselves; but as it reads 'princes, and they shall prostrate,' etc., it implies that they did both."

Said R. Na'hman bar Itz'hak: "I would also remark that not everyone is worthy of obtaining light, and not everyone is worthy to have joy. The righteous are deserving of light and the upright of joy, as it is written [Psalms, xcvi. 11]: 'Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.'"

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## Footnotes

[3:1](#) See Leviticus, xxiii. 40.

[5:1](#) This is signified because in the Hebrew rain is mentioned five times in this passage--including snow.

[6:1](#) Elsewhere the Talmud rebukes both Jephthah and Pin'has; Jephthah would not go to Pin'has because he, being a prince, considered himself the superior of Pin'has, while Pin'has, being high-priest, thought it below his dignity to go to Jephthah, and on account of this pride a human life was sacrificed.

[9:1](#) According to the commentary of Rabbenu Hananel there are altogether twenty-six evils, committed by the Israelites, enumerated in Jeremiah ii.

[10:1](#) The commentary of Tospath says that it is a noteworthy fact that while the Scriptures state that Abraham and Isaac died, they say that Jacob "departed this life" [Gen. xlix. 33].

[10:2](#) In addition to Yorah, meaning the first rain, it also means to show or to teach.

[12:1](#) The benediction on rain is transferred from here to Tract Berachoth, as the proper place.

[13:1](#) The Hebrew term for this is *arpehu*, the term in the beginning of the passage quoted is *yaaroph*, the term for "neck" in Hebrew is *aroph*; hence the explanation according to Samuel Eidlis, which is more proper here than Rashi's.

[17:1](#) The above teachings of R. Ami, Resh Lakish, and Rabha are all based upon the one passage--Ecclesiastes, x. 10; but the interpretations of several of the words contained therein are so diversified that we have deemed it advisable merely to reader their teachings alone, without reference to the literal text of the verse.

[18:1](#) The legend of the cat and the well is not to be found in the Talmud proper, but the Aruch and Rashi relate it as follows: A youth of a patrician family while strolling through a forest chanced to meet a beautiful maiden with whom he fell violently in love. The maiden received his advances favorably; and he plighted his troth to her, calling upon a well standing near by and upon a cat which at that moment rushed past them as witnesses of his undying affection. Returning to his home, the young man in the midst of festivities forgot about his adventure with the maid of the forest and became betrothed to another maiden of a prominent family. He married her and in due course the union was blessed with a child. Not long after the child was born, its nurse accidentally let it fall into a well. Another child was born to then, [p. 19](#) and one day, when the child was left alone for a moment, a wild cat carried it off and devoured it. Thus was retribution meted out to the youth who had violated his promise.

In Vol. VI., p. 64, of the periodical *Hakol* (the Voice) we published in an article an explanation of the above passage in the Gemara, as follows: "It is entirely unreasonable to assume that one could believe in a cat or a well otherwise than as a means by which God would punish an iniquity, and therefore it is highly probable that the words 'Huldah and Bor, meaning *cat* and *well*, originally were intended for 'Huldah and Deborah, the prophetesses of the Scriptures, and that simply a Daled and a Heh were omitted in the manuscript. The Talmud generally treats prophetesses with but little consideration and regards their prophecy as of small value, for it says in Tract Megilla, p. 37, 'Greatness is not seemly for women. Two prophetesses we had and one was called Deborah (a bee) and the other 'Huldah (a cat).' It then continues to criticise their behavior in general; but still the King Yoshiyahu (Josiah) believed in 'Huldah the prophetess (see II Kings, xxii. 13 to 20) and Barak the son of Abino'am believed in Deborah (see Judges, iv. 8). Thus it would be far more reasonable to explain the above passage in the Gemara, not with reference to the cat and the well, but rather as referring to Deborah and 'Huldah, and say: If a man have faith in the prophetesses 'Huldah and Deborah, he should be so much the firmer in his faith in God." This explanation met with the approval of a number of the most Orthodox scholars, but the well-known Rev. Dr. At. Mielziner, in a letter addressed to us, called our attention to the fact "that, were it so, Deborah would stand before 'Huldah in the above passage, having preceded 'Huldah in the chronological order of the Scriptures." In Tract Megilla Deborah really does precede 'Huldah, but we forestalled this query in that article by stating that in all probability Huldah was mentioned first in the above passage from the fact that a King Josiah) believed in her, while a commoner (Barak) was the man who placed his faith in the prophetess Deborah.

[20:1](#) The Hebrew term for both is *Otzar*.

[20:2](#) The Hebrew term for both is *Holid*.

[20:3](#) Leeser translates in the first *visited*, and in the second *thought of*. The Hebrew term, however, for both is *Pokad*.

[21:1](#) The other sayings of the same authority are transferred to tract Baba Metziya as the proper place, and some of them are repeated there.

[21:2](#) *Vide* Tract Sabbath, p. 252.

[22:1](#) *Vide* Tract Rosh-Hashana, p. 3.

[24:1](#) This passage is in accordance with the explanation of the Aruch.

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[Next: Chapter II](#)