

רב חלבו באיש. לא איבא דקא אתי. אמר להו: לא כד היה מעשה בתלמיד אחד מתלמידי רבי עקיבא שחלה. לא נכנסו חכמים לבקרו, ונכנס רבי עקיבא לבקרו, ובשביל שבידו וריבצו לפניו חיה. אמר לו: רבי, החייתני, יצא רבי עקיבא ודרש: כל מי שאין מבקר חולים – כאילו שופך דמים.

כי אתא רב דימי אמר: כל המבקר את החולה – גורם לו שיחיה, וכל שאינו מבקר את החולה – גורם לו שימות. מאי גרמא? אילימא כל המבקר את החולה מבקש עליו רחמים שיחיה, וכל שאין מבקר את החולה מבקש עליו רחמים שימות – שימות סלקא דעתך? אלא: כל שאין מבקר חולה – אין מבקש עליו רחמים לא שיחיה ולא שימות.

רבא, יומא קדמא דחליש אמר להו: לא תגלו לאיניש, דלא לתרע מזליה. מכאן ואילך אמר להו: פוקו ואכרזו בשוקא. דכל דסני לי ליחדי לי, ובתיב "בגבל אויבך אל תשמח" וגו', ודרחים לי ליבעי עלי רחמי.

Rav Helbo fell ill. There was no one who came to visit him. Rav Kahana said to the Sages: Didn't the incident involving one of the students of Rabbi Akiva who became sick transpire in that manner? In that case, the Sages did not enter to visit him, and Rabbi Akiva entered to visit him and instructed his students to care for him. And since they swept and sprinkled water on the dirt floor before the sick student,<sup>8</sup> he recovered. The student said to Rabbi Akiva: My teacher, you revived me. Rabbi Akiva went out and taught: With regard to anyone who does not visit the ill, it is as though he is spilling blood, as it could be that the sick person has no one to care for him. If there are no visitors, no one will know his situation and therefore no one will come to his aid.

When Rav Dimi came from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia he said: Anyone who visits the ill causes that he will live, and anyone who does not visit the ill<sup>11</sup> causes that he will die. The Gemara asks: In what way are his actions the cause of that result?<sup>12</sup> If we say that anyone who visits the ill pleads for mercy from God that he will live, and anyone who does not visit the ill pleads for mercy that he will die, does it enter your mind that he would pray that the sick person will die? Rather, anyone who does not visit the ill does not plead for mercy for him, neither that he will live nor that he will die.<sup>13</sup> Since he might have saved the sick person with prayers had he visited, his failure to visit is tantamount to causing his death.

The Gemara relates with regard to Rava: On the first day that he was ill, he would say to his family: Do not reveal to any person<sup>14</sup> that I am ill, so that his luck not suffer.<sup>15</sup> From this point forward, when his situation deteriorated he would say to them: Go and proclaim in the marketplace that I am ill, as thereby let all who hate me rejoice over my distress, and it is written: "Rejoice not when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him" (Proverbs 24:17–18). And let all who love me pray that God have mercy upon me.

BACKGROUND

And since they swept and sprinkled water on the dirt floor before the sick student – ובשביל שבידו וריבצו לפניו: It is understood from the narrative that the sick student was in a small and airless bedroom. Dust gathers in a place like this and the air becomes stifling. The dust was cleared and the room was ventilated when they swept and sprinkled water on the floor. Removal of other polluting factors that had certainly exacerbated the condition of the ill student also contributed to his recovery.

HALAKHA

וכל שאינו מבקר – וכל שאינו מבקר – אֵת החולה: One who fails to visit the ill is like one who spills blood (Rambam *Sefer Shofetim*, *Hilkhot Evel* 14:4).

NOTES

**מאי גרמא – In what way are his actions the cause of that result** – This question is difficult, as it is clear from the incident involving Rabbi Akiva that visiting the ill causes the sick person to live; it follows that one who fails to visit him facilitates his death. Rav Dimi may have sought to introduce an additional aspect of visiting the ill beyond what was stated previously: Rabbi Akiva spoke of the benefit provided by the visitor by his tending to the sick person and Rav Dimi spoke of the benefit provided by the visitor by his praying for the sick person.

**לא שיחיה ולא – Neither that he will live nor that he will die** – שימות: The Rosh explains that one who fails to visit the ill does not pray for him to live or to die, and this leads to others failing to pray for him to live. The Maharsha supports that interpretation. The Ran explains that in some situations the suffering of the sick person is so great that it is appropriate to pray for his death. By failing to visit him and pray for him, he neither causes him to recover nor does he cause him to die.

**Do not reveal to any person – לא תגלו לאיניש** – Self-reliance is one of the most valuable and significant qualities of the human psyche. For many people, dependence upon others or an inability to fend for oneself is a source of embarrassment and an

indication of personal failure. Even when suffering from an illness that saps one's strength, it is psychologically deleterious to turn to others for help in resolving the issue before attempting to cope alone. Therefore, the Gemara recommends waiting a day before publicizing one's distress. This important quality, however, should be tempered by a realistic assessment of one's capabilities. Society exists to enable people to rely on one other. Once it becomes clear that outside assistance is required, accepting help from others forges societal bonds and leads to close relationships between people that facilitate formation of a community (Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, *Ein Aya*).

**So that his luck not suffer – דלא לתרע מזליה** – Some commentaries explain that this means that as long as others are unaware of his illness and it is not discussed explicitly, he can recover immediately. However, once his illness is discussed, its mere mention opens the door for Satan, based on the principle: A covenant exists with the lips (Maharsha). Others explain that when one's illness becomes public knowledge, some people speak derogatorily about the sick person. This can lead to his public condemnation, which could lead in turn to his condemnation in the heavenly court as well (*Shita Mekubbetzet*).

Let one not visit a sick person, neither during the first three hours of the day – לא יסעוד איניש קצירא – לא בתלת שעי קדמייתא One should not visit the ill during the first three or last three hours of the day; rather, he should visit only between those hours, as that is the time to pray for the sick person. The Rema, citing the Ramban, writes that anyone who visits a sick person and fails to pray for him does not fulfill the mitzva of visiting the ill (Rambam *Sefer Shofetim, Hilkhot Evel* 14:5; *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 335:4).

אמר רב: כל המבקר את החולה ניצול מדינה של גיהנם, שנאמר "אשרי משכיל אל דל ביום רעה ימלטהו ה'", אין דל אלא חולה, שנאמר "מדלה יבצעני", אי נמי מן הדין קרא – "מדוע אתה ככה דל בן המלך בבקר בבקר" וגו'. אין רעה אלא גיהנם, שנאמר "כל פעל ה' למענהו וגם רשע ליום רעה".

Rav said: Anyone who visits the ill is spared from the judgment of Gehenna, as it is stated: "Happy is he that considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the day of evil" (Psalms 41:2). In this verse, the term poor [*dal*] means nothing other than ill, as it is stated in the prayer of Hezekiah when he was ill: "He will cut me off from the illness [*middalla*]" (Isaiah 38:12). Alternatively, it may be derived from this verse in which Jonadab asked his sick friend Amnon, son of King David: "Why, son of the king, are you so sick [*dal*] from morning to morning?" (II Samuel 13:4). And the term evil means nothing other than Gehenna, as it is stated: "The Lord made everything for His own purpose, and even the wicked for the day of evil" (Proverbs 16:4), and the ultimate punishment of the evildoer is Gehenna.

ואם ביקר מה שכרו? מה שכרו? בדאמר: ניצול מדינה של גיהנם! אלא מה שכרו בעולם הזה?

And if one visited the ill, what is his reward? The Gemara wonders at that question: What is his reward? It is as Rav said: He is spared from the judgment of Gehenna. Rather, the question is: What is his reward in this world?

"ה' ישמרהו ויחיהו ואשר בארץ ואל תתנהו בנפש איביו". "ה' ישמרהו" – מיצר הרע: "ויחיהו" – מן היסורין: "ואשר בארץ" – שיהו הכל מתכבדין בו: "ואל תתנהו בנפש איביו" – שיודמנו לו ריעים כנעמן שריפו את צרעתו, ואל יודמנו לו ריעים כרחבעם שחילקו את מלכותו.

Rav continues: His reward is as it is written: "The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, let him be called happy in the land; and deliver not You him unto the greed of his enemies" (Psalms 41:3). He elaborates: "The Lord will preserve him" from the evil inclination; "and keep him alive" and spare him from suffering; "let him be called happy in the land" means that everyone will be honored from their association with him; "and deliver not You him unto the greed of his enemies," so that companions like those who counseled Naaman to seek a cure for his leprosy from Elisha (II Kings 5:3) will happen to associate with him, and companions like those who counseled Rehoboam with advice that resulted in the schism in his kingdom (I Kings 12:6–19) will not happen to associate with him.

תנא. רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: אם יאמרו לך ילדים "בנה" וזקנים "סתור" – שמע לזקנים, ואל תשמע לילדים. שבגין ילדים סתירה, וסתירת זקנים בגין וסימן לדבר רחבעם בן שלמה.

On a similar note, it is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: If youths would say to you: Construct, and Elders would say to you: Demolish, heed the Elders and do not heed the youths, as the construction of youths is demolition, and the demolition of Elders is construction. And a mnemonic device for this matter is "Rehoboam, son of Solomon" (I Kings 12:21). Had he heeded the advice of the Elders and yielded at that time, there would have been no schism.

אמר רב שישא בריה דרב אידי: לא ליסעוד איניש קצירא לא בתלת שעי קדמייתא ולא בתלת שעי בתרייתא דיומא, כי היכי דלא ליסח דעתיה מן רחמי. תלת שעי קדמייתא – רווחא דעתיה, בתרייתא – תקיף חולשיה.

Rav Sheisha, son of Rav Idi, said: Let one not visit a sick person, neither during the first three hours of the day,<sup>HB</sup> nor in the last three hours of the day, so that he will not be diverted from praying for mercy. Rav Sheisha elaborates: During the first three hours the sick person is relieved, as after a night's sleep his suffering is somewhat alleviated and the visitor will conclude that there is no need for prayer. In the last three hours of the day his weakness is exacerbated, and the visitor will despair of ameliorating his suffering and will conclude that prayer is futile.

אמר רבין אמר רב: מניין שהקדוש ברוך הוא זן את החולה – שנאמר "ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי" וגו'. ואמר רבין אמר רב: מניין שהשכינה שרויה למעלה ממטותו של החולה – שנאמר "ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי".

§ Ravin said that Rav said: From where is it derived that the Holy One, Blessed be He Himself sustains the sick person? It is as it is stated: "The Lord will support him upon the bed of suffering" (Psalms 41:4). Support in this context is understood to mean that He will feed him. And Ravin said that Rav said: From where is it derived that the Divine Presence is resting above the bed of the sick person? It is also as it is stated: "The Lord will support him upon the bed of suffering," which indicates that God is actually over his bed.

## BACKGROUND

The first three hours of the day – תלת שעי קדמייתא: Body temperature fluctuates throughout the course of the day, and is usually lower in the morning and higher toward evening. These fluctuations are often more acute during illness, particularly when there is an infectious disease, and fever sometimes spikes in the evening. Fluctuation in body temperature is often related to fluctuation in

the severity of the illness. After a good night's sleep, the patient's condition is often better in the morning and gradually deteriorates throughout the day. Ultimately, during the first three hours of the day, his general condition is good; in the evening hours, his situation is dire.

On a chair – על גבי כסא – One who visits a sick person should not sit on a bed, chair, or bench, and not behind his head. He should wrap himself and sit before his head. The Ramah, citing the Ran, writes that this *halakha* is referring to a case where the sick person is lying on the floor, as the visitor is prohibited from sitting above him. However, if he is lying in bed, it is permitted for the visitor to sit on a chair, and that is the custom (Rambam *Sefer Shofetim, Hilkhot Evel* 14:6; *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 335:3).

תניא נמי הכי: הנכנס לבקר את החולה לא ישב לא על גבי מטה, ולא על גבי ספסל, ולא על גבי כסא. אלא מתעטף ויושב על גבי קרקע, מפני שהשכינה שרויה למעלה ממטתו של חולה, שנאמר "ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוד".

The Gemara notes that this is also taught in a *baraita*: One who enters to visit a sick person may neither sit on the bed nor sit on a bench or on a chair<sup>4</sup> that is higher than the bed upon which the sick person is lying. Rather, he deferentially wraps himself in his garment and sits on the ground,<sup>N</sup> because the Divine Presence is resting above the bed of the sick person, as it is stated: "The Lord will support him upon the bed of suffering," and it is inappropriate for one to sit above the place where the Divine Presence rests.

ואמר רבין אמר רב: מטרא במערבא – סהדא רבה פרת. ופליגא דשמואל, דאמר שמואל: נהרא מביפיה מתברין. ופליגא דשמואל אדשמואל, דאמר שמואל: אין המים מטהרין בוחלין

And apropos statements of Rav cited by Ravin, the Gemara cites an additional statement that Ravin said that Rav said: When there is rain in the West, Eretz Yisrael,<sup>B</sup> a great witness to that rainfall is the Euphrates River, as ultimately that rainwater increases the water flow in the Euphrates River. And this statement of Rav disagrees with a statement of Shmuel, as Shmuel said: A river is blessed from its banks,<sup>NB</sup> i.e., the increase in its water flow is attributable to its tributaries and not to rain. The Gemara comments: And this statement of Shmuel disagrees with another statement of Shmuel, as Shmuel said: The water purifies when flowing<sup>N</sup>

## NOTES

Rather, he wraps himself and sits on the ground – אלא מתעטף – ויושב על גבי קרקע: The Meiri writes that if the visitor sits comfortably and above the sick person, the latter will become despondent and will fail even to pray for himself. However, if the visitor sits below him in a serious and reverent manner, the sick person is strengthened to pray.

Is blessed from its banks [*mikeifei*] – מביפיה מתברין: The commentaries write that this means that even when one sees that the water originates elsewhere, e.g., from rain or melting snow, a rise in the river should not be attributed to those sources but rather to its tributaries. Some say the term *keifei* means its rocks, referring to the rocks located at the river's source (Ran; Rosh).

However, the *ge'onim*, based on *Targum Yonatan*, explain *keifei* as the river's banks.

The water purifies when flowing – המים מטהרין בוחלין: The Torah mentions purification through immersion in two water sources, a spring and a cistern. Halakhically, there are several differences between spring water and water pooled in a cistern. Spring water purifies both when it is pooled in one place and when it is flowing, whereas the legal status of immersion in a cistern is that of a ritual bath and one is purified only when the water is pooled. The halakhic issue here is how much water from rain and snow can be added to spring water and have it maintain its capacity to purify when flowing.

## BACKGROUND

Rain in the West, Eretz Yisrael – מטרא במערבא: Recent research has shown that there is a correlation between the amount of rainfall in Eretz Yisrael and the precipitation in the drainage basin of the Euphrates River. Therefore, there is a correlation between that rainfall and the water flow in the river.

A river is blessed from its banks – נהרא מביפיה מתברין: Water levels in rivers rise markedly during the rainy season. However, it is clear that not all the additional water is from the drainage of rainwater into the rivers. The water in springs that flow into the rivers also increases due to rainwater that seeps through the ground and eventually flows through the springs. Therefore, it is impossible to accurately estimate the amount of additional water that flows from the springs and the amount that comes directly from rainwater.

NOTES

And placed mats during the days of Tishrei – ומפצי ביומי תשרי: Some say that he placed mats for his daughters to stand upon, to prevent the mud in the river from seeping between their toes and acting as an interposition that would invalidate their immersion (Rashi). Others write that the mats were placed on the banks of the river so that they would not enter the river with muddy feet (Rabbi Avraham min HaHar). Another interpretation is that he erected mats around the place where they immersed for purposes of modesty, as others would be present at the river (Rosh; Ran; Ritva). The Rambam explains that Shmuel's father had concerns even after the summer in Tishrei that the rainwater exceeded the river water and in that case, the water does not purify while flowing. Therefore, he erected mats to pool the water so that immersion would be effective (Rabbi Avraham min HaHar).

PERSONALITIES

Shmuel's father – אביו דשמואל: This is the prominent Sage Abba bar Abba, to whom the Gemara generally refers as the father of Shmuel, the great *amora*, who was his son. Abba bar Abba, who traveled extensively as a silk merchant, spent some time in Eretz Yisrael and developed close ties with Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi and his sons.

HALAKHA

Ritual baths for his daughters during the days of Nisan – מקוואות לבנותיה ביומי ניסן: If the amount of rainwater in a river or spring exceeds that of river or springwater, the water purifies only when pooled, not while flowing. Therefore, it was necessary to use mats to construct an enclosure in which the water would pool and be rendered suitable for immersion. That is how the Rambam and the Rosh understand the actions of Shmuel's father, and they based their halakhic ruling on that understanding. The Rema, citing the Maharik, writes that one must rule stringently *ab initio*. However, others hold that immersion in a river is effective even if the amount of rain and melting snow exceeds that of the river water, provided that there is water in the river other than the rainwater (*Tur*, citing Rabbeinu Hananel; *Beit Yosef*, citing Rashi; *Sefer HaTeruma*; *Smag*). This is the custom in places where there is no ritual bath, and those who act according to the lenient opinion should not be reprimanded (Maharik and Mahari Weil; Rambam *Sefer Tahara, Hilkhot Mikvaot* 9:13; *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 201:2).

Mats – מפצי: A woman should not immerse in a port. The concern is that due to the embarrassment involved in immersion in the presence of the passersby, she will not immerse properly. However, if an enclosure of mats is constructed to ensure her privacy, it is permitted (Rambam). This *halakha* is based on one interpretation of the incident involving mats. A woman should not immerse in a place with mud on its floor *ab initio*, unless branches or mats that are not susceptible to ritual impurity are placed there, as otherwise the mud will act as an interposition. Some say that not only is it prohibited to immerse in a place with a muddy floor, but the immersion is invalid even after the fact (*Ra'avad*). However, most commentaries rule that it is effective after the fact. This *halakha* is based on another interpretation of the incident involving mats (Rambam *Sefer Tahara, Hilkhot Mikvaot* 1:11; *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'a* 198:33–34).

אלא פרת ביומי תשרי בלבד.

in the Euphrates River only during the days of Tishrei<sup>b</sup> alone, as after the summer, when no rain falls, it is clear that the water in the river flows from the source of the river. During the rest of the year, rain and snow are mingled with the river water, and water from rain and snow purify one who immerses in them only when the water is standing.

אביו דשמואל עבד להון מקוואות לבנותיה ביומי ניסן, ומפצי ביומי תשרי.

The Gemara relates: Shmuel's father<sup>p</sup> fashioned ritual baths for his daughters during the days of Nisan<sup>h</sup> and placed mats<sup>hb</sup> in the Euphrates River during the days of Tishrei.<sup>n</sup> He fashioned ritual baths during Nisan due to the concern that the rainwater and snow water that accumulated in the river exceeded the amount of water that originated in the river's sources. Since immersion in the flowing water would be ineffective, he fashioned ritual baths of standing water elsewhere for them. He placed mats during the days of Tishrei, when they immersed in the river itself, to prevent the mud on the riverbed from acting as an interposition that would invalidate the immersion.

אמר רבי אמי אמר רב: מאי דכתיב "ואתה בן אדם עשה לך כלי גולה" – זו נר וקערה

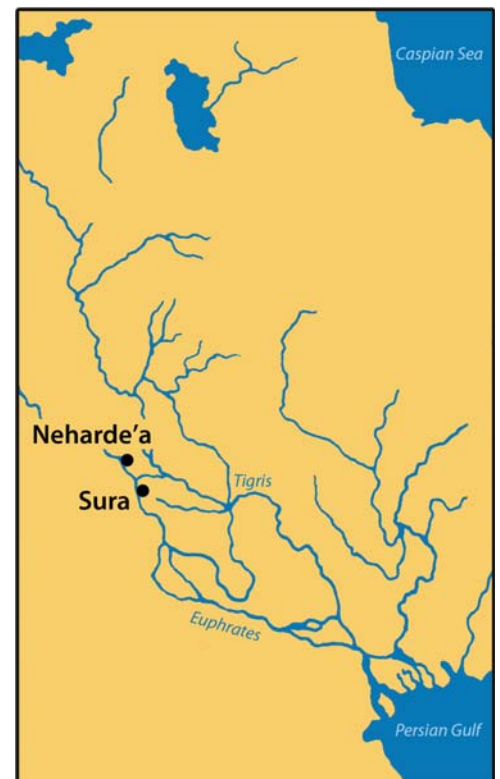
Rabbi Ami said that Rav said: What is the meaning of that which is written: "And you, son of man, make for yourself implements of exile" (Ezekiel 12:3)? That is referring to a lamp, and a bowl,

BACKGROUND

The Euphrates River... during the days of Tishrei – פרת ביומי תשרי: The primary sources of the Euphrates River are in Turkey, near Mount Ararat, but there are several other tributaries as well. There are very marked differences between periods when the current flows powerfully, during the winter due to the rain and during the spring because of the melting snow, and periods when the water in the river lessens and is limited to the water that flows from the river's sources, in the summer and autumn.



Above: Section of the Euphrates in Turkey during the summer  
Right: Euphrates river



Mats [*mapetzei*] – מפצי: These mats were made of a weave of reeds and the like. A standard mat, *mahtzelet*, was woven from whole reeds, while the *mapatz*, which was much softer, was woven from parts of reeds, perhaps the soft interior part.