The Gemara asks: What blessing does one recite over rain? Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: We thank you, O Lord our God, for each and every drop that You have made fall for us. And Rabbi Yoḥanan concludes the blessing as follows: If our mouth were as full of song as the sea, and our tongue with singing like the multitude of its waves, etc. And one continues with the formula of the nishmat prayer recited on Shabbat morning, until: May Your mercy not forsake us, O Lord our God, and You have not forsaken us. Blessed are You, O Lord, to Whom abundant thanksgivings are offered.

Similarly, Rav Yehuda said: The day of the rains is as great as the day on which the Torah was given, as it is stated: “My doctrine [likḥi] shall drop as the rain” (Deuteronomy 32:2). And lekaḥ means nothing other than Torah, as it is stated: “For I give you good doctrine [lekaḥ]; do not forsake My Torah” (Proverbs 4:2). Rav said: Rainfall is even greater than the day on which the Torah was given, as it is stated: “My doctrine shall drop as the rain,” and when one makes a comparison, which object is made dependent upon which? You must say that the lesser object is dependent upon the greater one. If Torah is compared to rain, it follows that rain is greater than Torah.

The Gemara cites another interpretation of the verse from Deuteronomy. Rava raised a contradiction: At the beginning of the verse it is written: “My doctrine shall drop [ya’araḥ] as the rain,” in a harsh manner, and yet later in the verse, it is written: “My speech shall distill as the dew,” in a gentle tone. He resolves this apparent contradiction as follows: If he is a worthy Torah scholar, the Torah flows through him like the dew, but if he is not worthy, it snaps his neck [orefhu] like the powerful rain.

We will recite them both: Abundant thanksgivings, and: Abundant thanksgivings.

The Gemara asks: Why does the blessing specify abundant thanksgivings? and not all thanksgivings? Rava said: Emend the formula of the blessing and say: God of thanksgivings. Rav Pappa said: Therefore, as there are differences of opinion on this,
It is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Ben'a said: Anyone who engages in Torah for its own sake, his Torah study will be an elixir of life for him, as it is stated: “It is a tree of life to them who lay hold upon it” (Proverbs 3:18), and it says: “It shall be health to your navel” (Proverbs 3:8), and it says: “For whoever finds Me finds life” (Proverbs 8:35). And anyone who engages in Torah for its own sake, e.g., for self-aggrandizement, his Torah will be an elixir of death for him, as it is stated: “My doctrine shall drop [ya'arif] as the rain,” and arifa means nothing other than killing, as it is stated: “And they shall break the heifer’s neck [arifa] there in the valley” (Deuteronomy 21:4).

Rabbi Yirmeya once said to Rabbi Zeira: Let the Master come and teach a halakhic discourse. Rabbi Zeira said to him: My heart is weak and I cannot strain myself over a halakhic discourse. Rabbi Yirmeya replied to him: In that case, let the Master tell us a matter of aggada, which does not require as much effort. Rabbi Zeira said to him that Rabbi Yoḥanan said as follows: What is the meaning of that which is written: “For man is a tree of the field” (Deuteronomy 20:19)? And is man actually a tree of the field?

Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hānina, said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17)? This verse comes to tell you that just as with these implements, one sharpens the other when they are rubbed against each other, so too, when Torah scholars study together, they sharpen one another in halakha.

The Gemara cites other explications that deal with Torah study. Rabbi Yoṣe bar Rabbi Ḥanina said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “For man is a tree of the field” (Deuteronomy 20:19)? And is man actually a tree of the field? And not only that, but they sin, as it is written: “And they shall break the heifer’s neck [arifa] there in the valley” (Deuteronomy 21:4).

Rav Nahman bar Yitzḥak said: Why are Torah matters likened to a tree, as it is stated: “It is a tree of life to them who lay hold upon it” (Proverbs 3:18)? This verse comes to tell you that just as a small piece of wood can ignite a large piece, so too, minor Torah scholars can sharpen great Torah scholars and enable them to advance in their studies. And this is what Rabbi Ḥanina said: I have learned much from my teachers and even more from my friends, but from my students I have learned more than from all of them.
Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa – A third-generation amorah of Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa was a colleague of the students of Rabbi Yohanan. It is frequently related in the Talmud that Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa and his colleagues would sit together and discuss innovative Torah teachings. He was, apparently, a judge in his city, as several halakhic decisions of his are recorded as judgments in civil suits. He was also proficient in aggada, and has more aggadic statements than exclusively halakhic statements. He transmitted many aggadic statements in the name of Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani.

Rabbi Hanina bar Pappas was famous for his both his great righteousness in interpersonal matters and his religious piety. It is related that, upon his death, a pillar of fire stood behind his bier.

Halahaka

Only by one whose spirit is lowly –  חָלָב

Matters of Torah are retained only by people who are humble in spirit, who have no concern for their own honor, and who sit in the dust of the feet of Sages, as stated by Rabbi Hanina (Rambam Sefer HaMadda, Hilkhot Talmud Torah 3:9).

Notes

To water, wine, and milk –  מוֹדֵעַ, פַּרְשָׁא, בֶּן. The midrash explains that these three drinks correspond to the Bible, the Mishna, and the Talmud (see Yyun Ysidok).

Background

Storing wine in metal vessels –  מְכוֹﬠָר. Wine cannot be stored in metal vessels because the acid contained in the wine has a somewhat corrosive effect on most metals, including copper and silver. Furthermore, many compounds of these metals are poisonous, which not only spoils the taste of the wine but also places the drinker’s health at risk.
The Gemara returns to the issue of rain. Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: The day of the rains is as great as the day on which the heavens and earth were created, as it is stated: “Drop down, heavens, from above, let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open that they may bring forth salvation, and let it cause righteousness to spring up together; I, the Lord, have created it” (Isaiah 45:8). The Gemara explains that the verse does not say: I have created them, in the plural, but: I have created it. In other words, the verse is referring to rain, rather than to the heavens and the earth, which indicates that rainfall is as important as the creation of the world.

Rabbi Oshaya likewise said: The day of rain is great, as rain even facilitates salvation, which is fruitful and multiplies on that day. It is a time of God’s favor, when salvation is brought forth into the world, as it is stated: “Let the earth open that they may bring forth salvation” (Isaiah 45:8). Rabbi Tanhum bar Hanilai said: Rain falls only if the Jewish people’s transgressions have been forgiven, as it is stated: “Lord, You have been favorable to Your land; You have turned the captivity of Jacob; You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have pardoned all their sin. Selah” (Psalms 85:2–3). This chapter proceeds to discuss rainfall: “And righteousness has looked down from Heaven” (Psalms 85:12), in the form of rain.

The Sage Ze’iri from the town of Dihavat said to Ravina: You learned this idea from here, whereas we learned it from here, a different verse: “When heaven is closed up, and there is no rain, when they sin against You, if they pray toward this place and confess Your name and turn from their sin, when You afflict them, then You, hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel, when You teach them the good way in which they should walk, and send rain upon Your land, which You have given to Your people as an inheritance” (1 Kings 8:35–36).

Rabbi Tanhum, son of Rabbi Hyya of village of Akko, said: The rains are withheld only if the enemies of the Jewish people, a euphemism for the Jewish people, have been sentenced to destruction for their sins, as it is stated: “Drought and heat will steal the snow waters; to the grave those who have sinned” (Job 24:19). According to this interpretation, snow water will be stolen by drought, i.e., there will be none available, when people have sinned to the point that they deserve the grave. Ze’iri from Dihavat said to Ravina: You learned this idea from here; we learned it from here: “And the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will close up the heavens, and there will be no rain, and the earth will not give its fruit, and you will perish quickly” (Deuteronomy 11:17).

Rav Hisda said: The rains are withheld only due to the sin of the nullification of teruma and tithes, as it is stated: “Drought and heat will steal the snow waters” (Job 24:19). The Gemara asks: From where in the verse may this idea be inferred from the verse? The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: Due to matters that I have commanded you to do in the summer, e.g., take teruma and tithes from the summer produce, and that you did not do, the snow waters will be stolen from you in the rainy season.
Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi said: The rains are withheld only due to the sin of those who speak slander, as it is stated: “The north wind brings forth rain, but a backbiting tongue, an angry countenance” (Proverbs 25:23). This verse indicates that if the countenance of the heavens is angry, with neither clouds nor rain, it is due to slanderous speech.

Rav Salla said that Rav Hamnuna said: The rains are withheld only due to impudent people, as it is stated: “Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no last rain, yet you had a harlot’s forehead, you refused to be ashamed” (Jeremiah 3:3). And Rav Salla said that Rav Hamnuna said, with regard to the same verse: Any man who is insolvent will ultimately stumble over the transgression of prostitution, as it is stated: “Yet you had a prostitute’s forehead.” Rav Nahman said: The verse does not mean that he will commit a sexual transgression in the future; rather, it is known that he has already stumbled over this transgression, as it is stated: “You had,” in the past tense, and it is not stated: You will.

Rabba bar Rav Huna said: With regard to any man who is insolvent, it is permitted to call him wicked to his face, as it is stated: “A wicked man makes his face insolent” (Proverbs 21:29). Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: It is permitted to hate him, as it is stated: “And the insolence of his face is changed” (Ecclesiastes 10:18). Do not read it as: “Is changed [yeshunne]”; rather, read it as: Hated [yissane], as the two words are spelled the same way in Hebrew, albeit with different vocalization and pronunciation.

Rav Ketina said: The rains are withheld only due to the sin of dereliction in the study of Torah, as it is stated: “By slothfulness the rafters [hamekare] will sink in [yimakhk], and through idleness of the hands the house leaks” (Ecclesiastes 10:18). Due to slothfulness that was present amongst the Jewish people, that they did not occupy themselves with Torah, the enemy of the Holy One, Blessed be He, a euphemism for God Himself, has sunk. Any man who is insolent will ultimately stumble over the transgression of prostitution, as it is stated: “Yet you had a prostitute’s forehead.” Rav Yosef said that this idea is derived from here: “And now that men do not see the light, it is bright in the skies, but the wind passes and cleanses them” (Job 37:21). And “light” means nothing other than the Torah, as it is stated: “For a mitzva is a lamp and Torah is a light” (Proverbs 6:23). According to this interpretation, the verse means that when men do not see the light,” i.e., when they are not occupied with Torah, “it is bright in the skies,” as there are no rainclouds. With regard to this verse, the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: Even when the sky is comprised of bright clouds that serve to bring down dew and rain, no rain will fall, as “the wind passes and cleanses them.”

Rabbi Ami said: The rains are withheld only due to the sin of robbery, as it is stated: “He covers His hands with the light, and He has commanded it due to imploiring” (Job 36:32). This means that due to the sin of stealing hands, God has covered the light and no rain will fall. And Rabbi Ami adds that the term “hand” means nothing other than a sin of violence, as it is stated: “And from the violence that is in their hands” (Jonah 3:8). And “light” means nothing other than rain, as it is stated: “He spreads abroad the cloud of His light” (Job 37:11).
What is the remedy of one who has caused the rain to be withheld? He should increase his prayers, as it is stated in the same chapter: “And He has commanded it due to imploring” (Job 37:12), and “imploring” means nothing other than prayer, as it is stated: “Therefore, do not pray you for this nation, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither implore Me” (Jeremiah 7:16).

And Rabbi Ami said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “If the iron is blunt, and does not whet the edge” (Ecclesiastes 10:10)? If you see a sky that is blunt as iron, in that it does not bring down dew and rain, this is due to the deeds of the generation, which are corrupt, as it is stated: “And does not whet [kilkal] the edge [panim]?” Panim, which also means face, is often used in reference to the leaders of a generation, while the term kidnal is similar to the word for corrupt, mekilkal.

What is their remedy? They must increase their prayers for mercy, as it is stated in the same verse: “Then must he increase his strength, but wisdom is profitable to direct” (Ecclesiastes 10:10). This verse hints that rain will fall if one increases his strength, i.e., his prayers for mercy. The last part of the verse means that, all the more so, if their deeds had been righteous and direct from the beginning, the rains would not have been withheld.

The Gemara cites a different interpretation of the same verse. Reish Lakish said: If you see a student whose studies are hard as iron for him, i.e., difficult to understand, this is due to his lack of familiarity with the Mishna, which is not organized for him. If the Mishna is unclear, any further study of Gemara is rendered all the more difficult, as it is stated: “And does not whet [kilkal] the edge [panim]?” (Ecclesiastes 10:10). As panim can also mean surface, this indicates that the surface, i.e., the basic statements of the Mishna, is corrupted. As stated previously, kidnal can also mean corrupted.

Rashi explains that a student who finds his studies hard should spend a great deal of time with other students and review with them the material that he has not fully mastered on his own. Others suggest that the student who is struggling with his studies should sit by himself and review the difficult material in an organized manner until he is confident that he knows it thoroughly (Meiri).

Perek I
Daf 8  Amud a

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He must increase the time he sits – רבי בר אבהו

That is like this practice of Reish Lakish, who would review his studies forty times, corresponding to the forty days in which the Torah was given to Moses at Sinai, and only afterward would he go before Rabbi Yoḥanan to study from his teacher. Similarly, Rav Adda bar Ahava would review his learning twenty-four times, corresponding to the twenty-four books in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings, i.e., the Bible, and only afterward go before Rava to study with him.

With regard to the aforementioned verse from Ecclesiastes, Rava said: If you see a student whose studies are as difficult for him as iron, this is due to his teacher, who does not show him a friendly countenance, but is overly strict with him. This practice inhibits the student’s learning, as it is stated: “And it has not whetted the surface [panim]” (Ecclesiastes 10:10). As explained previously, panim can also mean countenance.