Rabbi Yohanan found the young son of Reish Lakish. He said to the boy: Recite to me your verse, i.e., the verse you studied today in school. The boy said to him: “A tithe shall you tithe.” The boy further said to Rabbi Yohanan: But what is the meaning of this phrase: “A tithe shall you tithe?” Rabbi Yohanan said to him: The verse means: Take a tithe so that you will become wealthy. The boy said to Rabbi Yohanan: From where do you derive that this is so? Rabbi Yohanan said to him: Go and test it.

The boy said to him: And is it permitted to test the Holy One, Blessed be He? But isn’t it written: “You shall not test the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 6:16)? Rabbi Yohanan said to the boy that Rabbi Hoshaya said as follows: It is prohibited to test God in any way, except in this case of tithes, as it is stated: “Bring the whole tithe into the storeroom, that there may be food in My house, and test Me now by this, said the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing that there shall be more than sufficiency” (Malachi 3:10).

In relation to the above verse, the Gemara asks: What is the meaning of the phrase: “That there shall be more than sufficiency [ad beli dai]”? Rami bar Ḥama said that Rav said: It means that the abundance will be so great that your lips will be worn out [yivla], similar to the word beli, from saying enough [dat]. Returning to the above incident, the Gemara adds that the boy said to Rabbi Yohanan: Your claim appears explicitly in a verse. If I had arrived there, at this verse, I would not have needed you or Hoshaya your teacher, I could have understood it on my own.

The Gemara relates another story about the precociousness of this child. And furthermore, on a different occasion Rabbi Yohanan found the young son of Reish Lakish, when he was sitting and studying and he was reciting the verse: “The foolishness of man perverts his way, and his heart frets against the Lord” (Proverbs 19:13). This verse means that when someone sins and every manner of mishap befalls him, he complains and wonders why these things are happening to him.

Rabbi Yohanan sat down and wondered aloud about this verse, saying: Is there anything that is written in the Writings that is not alluded to in the Torah at all? I cannot think of any hint of this idea in the Torah itself. The child said to him: Is that to say that this idea is really not alluded to in the Torah? But isn’t it written, with regard to Joseph’s brothers: “And their heart failed them and they turned trembling to one another, saying: What is this that God has done to us?” (Genesis 42:28). This verse exemplifies the notion that when one sins and encounters troubles, he wonders why it is happening to him.

Impressed by the youth’s wisdom, Rabbi Yohanan raised his eyes and stared at the boy. At this point, the boy’s mother came and took him away, saying to him: Come away from Rabbi Yohanan, so that he does not do to you as he did to your father. Reish Lakish, the boy’s father, died during a heated dispute with Rabbi Yohanan over a Torah matter. The argument ended with an offended look from Rabbi Yohanan which caused Reish Lakish’s death, and the boy’s mother was afraid that her son might suffer the same fate.
Sustenance comes only for the sake of many – רַבִּים. According to Rash, when Rabbi Yohanan says that rain falls even for an individual, he is referring to rain that someone requires so that his crops will not fail or produce yields inferior to those of his neighbors. When he says that sustenance is provided only for the sake of many, he means that a state of prosperity is not granted solely for the sake of an individual. Others explain that rain, which naturally leads to prosperity, falls even for the sake of a single worthy individual, whereas sustenance provided by supernatural means, e.g., manna from Heaven, is provided only when an entire community is considered worthy (Maharsha).

It returned in the merit of both Moses and Aaron – בְּנִיסָן וְאַמְרֵה. Some commentators ask: If the miraculous well from which the Jews drew their water was restored to them due to the merit of Moses and Aaron, their merit should have prevented the well from disappearing in the first place. It has been suggested that although the well returned due to the merit of Moses and Aaron, it did not sustain the people after Miriam’s death in the same manner as during Miriam’s lifetime (Aha’avat Eitan). Others state that the well disappeared when Miriam died to demonstrate to the Jews that while she was alive they were blessed with its water primarily due to her merit (Maharsha).

As Reish Lakish taught – רָשִׁי מַלְּמֵד. The commentaries struggle to explain the need to apply Reish Lakish’s principle here. Most agree that Rabbi Abbahu’s interpretation stands on its own but is reinforced by the statement of Reish Lakish (Rosh).

Kl has four meanings – מִסְפָּר אַרְעָא כִּדְדָרֵישׁ: In his Aramaic translation of the Torah, Onkelos consistently translates the Hebrew term kl with the Aramaic word ari. However, it can be argued that ari has the same wide spectrum of meanings as kl itself, so that Onkelos intentionally maintains the ambiguity of the original Hebrew (Arukh; Rash).

It has been further noted that in fact the term kl bears other meanings in addition to the four suggested by Reish Lakish. For example, it often means when. Consequently, Reish Lakish is not providing a full list of all possible meanings of the word, but is saying that one should not mistakenly think that kl has one uniform meaning.

The Gemara raises an objection from a baraita: Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Yehuda, says: Three good sustainers rose up for the Jewish people during the exodus from Egypt, and they are: Moses, Aaron and Miriam. And three good gifts were given from Heaven through their agency, and these are they: The well of water, the pillar of cloud, and the manna. He elaborates: The well was given to the Jewish people in the merit of Miriam; the pillar of cloud was in the merit of Aaron; and the manna in the merit of Moses. When Miriam died the well disappeared, as it is stated: “And Miriam died there” (Numbers 20:1), and it says thereafter in the next verse: “And there was no water for the congregation” (Numbers 20:3). But the well returned in the merit of both Moses and Aaron.8

When Aaron died the clouds of glory disappeared, as it is stated: “And the Canaanite, the king of Arad heard” (Numbers 33:40). What report did he hear? He heard that Aaron had died and the clouds of glory had disappeared, and he thought that the Jewish people were no longer protected by Heaven and therefore he had been given permission to go to war against the Jewish people. And this disappearance of the clouds is the meaning of that which is written: “And all the congregation saw that [kl] Aaron was dead” (Numbers 20:29).

Rabbi Abbahu said: Do not read the verse as: “And they saw [va’yera’u]”; rather, read it as: And they were seen [va’yera’u], as the clouds which had concealed the Jewish people were temporarily removed. This is as Reish Lakish taught.8 As Reish Lakish said: The term kl actually has at least four distinct meanings:8 If; perhaps; but; because. According to this interpretation, the verse would be rendered: And all the congregation was seen, because [kl] Aaron was dead.

The baraita continues: Both the well and the clouds of glory returned in the merit of Moses. However, when Moses died all of them disappeared. As it is stated: “And I cut off the three shepherds in one month” (Zechariah 11:8). But did the three shepherds really die in one month? Didn’t Miriam die in the month of Nisan, and Aaron in Av and Moses in Adar? Rather, this verse teaches us that with the death of Moses the three good gifts that were given through their agency were annulled, and all three gifts disappeared in one month, which made it seem as though all three leaders had died at the same time.

Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Yehuda – רַבִּי יָסֵיא בֶּן רַבִּי יְהוּדָה. Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Yehuda, from the last generation of tanna’im, was the son of Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai. He was an apparently close disciple of his father, although he occasionally disagreed with him concerning matters of halakha. In his work as a halakhic authority he was closely associated with Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, and his statements are mentioned several times in the Mishna, quite frequently in the Tosafot, and elsewhere. Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Yehuda, was also highly puffed in aggada, and some well-known sayings are transmitted in his name.
The Gemara explains the difficulty from this baraita. Apparently, we find that sustenance can come for the sake of an individual, as the baraita states that sustenance in the form of manna came for the sake of Moses. The Gemara answers: Moses is different, since he requested the manna for many, and therefore he was considered like many, not as an individual.

The Gemara relates a story concerning the aforementioned verse from Zechariah. Rav Huna bar Manoah, Rav Shmuel bar Iddi, and Rav Hyya from Vastanya were often found before Rava, as they were among his most distinguished students. When Rava died, they came before Rav Pappa to learn from him. However, as also they were great Sages, whenever Rav Pappa would say a halakha that did not sound reasonable to them, they would gesture to each other that Rav Pappa was not equal in stature to Rava. Rav Pappa was offended by their behavior.

A verse was read to Rav Pappa in a dream: “And I cut off the three shepherds in one month” (Zechariah 11:8). The next day, when they took their leave from him, Rav Pappa said to them: May the Rabbis go in peace, a hint that this would be their final parting. Rav Pappa thought that the three Sages would die as punishment for their behavior and he would never see them again.

The Gemara relates a similar incident: Rav Shimi bar Ashi was often found before Rav Pappa and would raise many objections against the opinions of Rav Pappa. One day Rav Shimi bar Ashi saw Rav Pappa fall on his face after prayer. He heard him say: May the Merciful One save me from the embarrassment of Shimi, and as a result Rav Shimi bar Ashi resolved to be silent and not to raise any further objections against Rav Pappa, as he saw how greatly they pained his teacher.

The Gemara returns to the issue of rain. And Reish Lakish also maintains that rain can fall for the sake of an individual, as Reish Lakish said: From where is it derived that rain falls even for the sake of an individual? As it is written: “Ask of the Lord rain at the time of the last rain; even of the Lord who makes thunderclouds, and He will give them showers of rain; for a man grass in the field” (Zechariah 10:1).

One might have thought that rain falls for the sake of all the Jewish people. The verse therefore states: “For a man,” i.e., for the needs of an individual. And it was further taught in a baraita: If rain falls “for a man,” one might have thought that the rain is for all his fields. Therefore the verse states: “Field,” which indicates that at times it rains on only one field. If it rains on one field, one might have thought that the rain is for the entire field. This is why the verse states: “Grass”; rain can fall for the sake of even a single plant in the field.

This is like the practice of Rav Daniel bar Ketina, who had a certain garden. Every day he would go and inspect it, to see what it needed. He would say: This bed requires water and this bed does not require water, and rain would come and water everywhere that required water, but nowhere else.
Although rainfall is a common occurrence, it is very di

ranean Sea.


background

Flying clouds – ○לוכדת: For clouds to produce rain they must possess a significant vertical thickness. Towering clouds of this kind are called cumulonimbus. These clouds can produce thunderstorms and heavy downpours that can even result in flooding.

Camulonimbus clouds

Between each and every drop – ○ 마음ה לולא אהיי: The details of the process of rain production are an important area of current scientific study. The systems that produce rain, which include the presence of water vapor in sufficient concentration, the temperature at which tiny ice crystals are formed, and the formation and structure of drops, are highly complex and have led to the discipline of a physics of chaos, which investigates the combination of many factors, large and small, into the production of a single event.

The formation of drops, the inner cohesion of the water molecules that form each drop, and the fact that these drops receive a characteristic shape and do not fall in a continuous flow, are all extremely complex matters.

In light of the complexity of rain production, one can understand why the Gemara speaks of the miracle of rain. Although rainfall is a common occurrence, it is very difficult to understand, like other miracles. In its own way, the creation of rainfall can be considered as elaborate and complicated as the creation of the entire universe.

Language

The ocean [οκεανός] – ○אוקייאנוס: From the Greek ὀκεανός, okeanos, one of whose meanings is the Great Sea, or the outer ocean surrounding the world, as opposed to the Mediterranean Sea.

With regard to the aforementioned verse, the Gemara asks: What is the meaning of the phrase: “The Lord Who makes thunderclouds?” Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: This teaches that for every righteous person, the Holy One, Blessed be He, prepares a separate thundercloud. The Gemara asks: What is the precise meaning of “thunderclouds”? Rav Yehuda said: Flying clouds. Rabbi Yohanan said: A sign of approaching rain is flying clouds. The Gemara asks: What are flying clouds? Rav Pappa said: A flying cloud is a thin cloud under a thick cloud.

Rav Yehuda said that there is another sign of imminent rain: Drizzle before rain means that rain is coming. However, drizzle that falls after rain is a sign that the rain is stopping. Rav Yehuda provides an analogy by way of explanation: Drizzle before rain means that rain is coming, and your mnemonic is a sieve: Just as small quantities of flour drop from the sieve even before one begins to actively sift it, so too drizzle falls before rain. Conversely, drizzle that falls after rain signifies that the rain is stopping, and your mnemonic is goat dung. 4 A goat’s initial droppings are large, whereas its latter droppings are small.

The Gemara relates that when Ulla happened to come to Babylonia, he saw flying clouds. He said to the local residents: Put away your vessels, as the rain is coming now. Ultimately, despite the presence of flying clouds, rain did not fall. He said: Just as Babylonians are liars, so too, their rains are liars, as flying clouds are a reliable sign of rain in Eretz Yisrael, but not in Babylonia.

The Gemara recounts another incident that occurred when Ulla happened to come to Babylonia. He saw a basket full of dates on sale for one dinar, and he said: One can buy a basket full of honey dates for a dinar, and yet these Babylonians do not occupy themselves with Torah. In a place where excellent food is so inexpensive, and where there is no need to engage in hard labor for one’s material needs, the inhabitants should be able to occupy themselves with Torah. Ulla himself ate many dates, but during the night they caused him pain and diarrhea. He subsequently said: A basket full of knives for a dinar, and yet somehow these Babylonians are able to occupy themselves with Torah, despite the trouble these dates cause.

The Gemara discusses the source of rain. It is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Eliezer says: The entire world drinks from the waters of the ocean [οκεανός], i.e., evaporated ocean water is the source of rain. As it is stated: “And there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground” (Genesis 2:6). Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: But the waters of the ocean are salty, whereas rainwater is sweet. Rabbi Eliezer said to Rabbi Yehoshua: The waters are sweetened in the clouds, before they fall to the earth.

In contrast, Rabbi Yehoshua says: The entire world drinks from the upper waters, as it is stated: “And it drinks water as the rain of heaven comes down” (Deuteronomy 11:11). The baraita asks: But according to the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua, how do I uphold the verse: “And there went up a mist from the earth”? Rabbi Yehoshua could answer that this verse teaches that the clouds grow stronger, and rise to the firmament, and open their mouths like a leather bottle, and receive the rain waters from above, as it is stated: “For He draws away the drops of water, which distill rain from His vapor” (Job 36:27).

And the clouds are perforated like a sieve, and they come and sprinkle water onto the ground, as it is stated: “Gathering of waters, thick clouds of the skies” (1 Samuel 22:12). And between each and every drop there is only a hairbreadth, and yet each drop emerges individually. This serves to teach you that the day of rains is as great as the day on which Heaven and Earth were created, i.e., rainfall is as miraculous as creation.
As it is stated, with regard to the creation of the world: “Who does great things past finding out” (Job 9:10), and as an example of this it is written: “Who gives rain upon the earth” (Job 5:9–10). And it is written below: “Have you not known? Have you not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint and is not weary; His discerument is past finding out” (Isaiah 40:28). The repetition of “past finding out” indicates that rainfall is as wondrous as the creation of the world. The Gemara adds: And it is written in a psalm that deals with rainfall: “Who by Your strength sets fast the mountains; Who is girded about with might” (Psalms 65:7).

The Gemara asks: In accordance with whose opinion is that verse which is written: “Who waters the mountains from His upper chambers” (Psalms 104:13)? And Rabbi Yohanan said: This phrase indicates that the water comes from the upper chambers of the Holy One, Blessed be He. In accordance with whose opinion is this statement? It is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua, who maintains that rain falls from above the sky.

The Gemara asks: And Rabbi Eliezer, how does he explain this verse? The Gemara answers: According to Rabbi Eliezer, since the clouds ascend there, to the heavens, the verse “who waters the mountains from His upper chambers” calls and describes rainfall as descending from the heavens. As, if you do not say so, with regard to the verse: “Powder and dust from the heavens” (Deuteronomy 28:24), where do you find this phenomenon? Is there powder and dust in Heaven? Rather, you must say that since dust rises up there, they are called dust: “From the heavens.” So too, as the clouds ascend there, they are called and described: “Who waters the mountains from His upper chambers.”

The Gemara asks: In accordance with whose opinion is that which Rabbi Hanina said, concerning the verse: “He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; he lays up the deep in storerooms” (Psalms 33:7): What caused the storerooms to be filled with produce? It was the deep, which is the source of the water that nourishes the produce. The Gemara answers: This explanation is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer. And Rabbi Yehoshua, how does he explain this verse? Rabbi Yehoshua would say: That verse deals with the creation of the world, when all the water was contained in the deep.

The Sages taught in a baraita: Eretz Yisrael was created first and the rest of the entire world was created afterward, as it is stated: “While as yet He had not made the land, nor the fields” (Proverbs 8:26). Here, and in the following statements, the term “land” is understood as a reference to the Land of Israel, while “the fields” means all the fields in other lands. Furthermore, Eretz Yisrael is watered by the Holy One, Blessed be He, Himself, and the rest of the entire world is watered through an intermediary, as it is stated: “Who gives rain upon the land, and sends water upon the fields” (Job 5:10).

Additionally, Eretz Yisrael drinks rainwater and the rest of the entire world drinks from the remaining residue of rainwater left in the clouds, as it is stated that God is He “who gives rain upon the land” and only afterward takes what is left “and sends water upon the fields.” Eretz Yisrael drinks first, and the rest of the entire world afterward, as it is stated: “Who gives rain upon the land and sends water upon the fields.” There is a parable that illustrates this: A person who kneads his cheese after it has curdled takes the food and leaves the refuse.

NOTES

Eretz Yisrael and the entire world – אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶוֶלֶּם: Some commentators write that the comparisons and distinctions drawn here between Eretz Yisrael and the rest of the world are expressions of the idea that the entire world was created for the sake of Eretz Yisrael. Consequently, the most significant events take place in Eretz Yisrael, while the rest of the world plays a secondary role, as the other lands benefit from the divine bounty that is intended primarily for Eretz Yisrael (Rashi).