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 discernment 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 Yoḥanan 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 28:14), 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 all 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.

Eretz Yisrael and the entire world – אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל הָאָרֶץ: 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 (Rashba).
The Talmud reports dozens of halakhic decisions that Rav Dimi, a student of the Chazal, taught in his youth. He returned to Babylonia several times in his lifetime, when his teacher, Rabbi AvduHa Na/anan, felt he needed new students, and the Sages of Babylonia wanted new students to study under him. Rav Dimi was a great teacher and a great scholar, and his students went on to become great scholars in their own right. He passed away in Babylonia, where he died.

With regard to the handful of the Holy One, Blessed be He – according to the Gemara in Sanhedrin 11a, this verse is considered the equivalent of the letter heh. In the Mishnah, in the context of this verse, the Gemara says that it is permitted to expound verses by substituting one of these letters for the other (see Jerusalem Talmud, Shabbat 22b).

Clouds are bright – the fact that a cloud is dark is a sign that it is vertically thick and rain-bearing. The darker the cloud, the more drops of water and ice particles it contains. Generally speaking, light-colored clouds either do not produce rain or produce very little rain.

Egypt and Cush – this map displays the relative sizes of Egypt and Cush, which covered a large proportion of the continent of Africa, and enables a comparison between the two countries and the rest of the world.

The Master said above: The ocean waters are sweetened in the clouds. The Gemara asks: From where does Rabbi Eliezer derive this? The Gemara answers that Rav Yitzhak bar Yosef said that Rabbi Yohanan said that it is written: “Darkness [haksharat] of waters, thick clouds of the skies” (Psalms 18:12). And it is written, in a similar verse: “Gathering of [bashrat] waters, thick clouds of the skies” (11 Samuel 22:12).

The Gemara explains the significance of this minor variation. These two phrases vary only in one word, which themselves differ by only one letter, a kaf for a reish. If you join the two versions together, and take the letter kaf from the first version and place it with the second version of the word, which has a reish, you can read into the verse a new word meaning rendering fit [haksharat] 4. Accordingly, the verse can be interpreted as: The rendering fit of water is performed in the clouds of the sky.

The Gemara asks: And Rabbi Yehoshua, with regard to these verses, what does he learn from them? The Gemara answers that Rabbi Yehoshua holds in accordance with the opinion of this Sage, Rav Dimi. As when Rav Dimi came from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia, he said that they say in the West, Eretz Yisrael: When clouds are bright, they have little water; when clouds are dark, they have much water. Accordingly, Rabbi Yehoshua explains that when there is “a darkness of waters” in the clouds, there is also “a gathering of waters,” as rain will fall from them.

The Gemara asks: In accordance with whose opinion is that which is taught in a baraita: The upper waters do not stand in any defined place; rather, they are suspended by the word of God, and their fruit is rainwater, as it is stated: “Who waters the mountains from His upper chambers; the earth is full of the fruit of Your works” (Psalms 104:13). In accordance with whose opinion is this statement? It is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua. And Rabbi Eliezer, how does he explain this verse? Rabbi Eliezer could say: That verse from Psalms is written with regard to the handiwork of the Holy One, Blessed be He, 8 not the upper waters.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: The entire world drinks from the runoff of the Garden of Eden, as it is stated: “And a river went out of Eden to water the garden” (Genesis 2:10). It was taught in a baraita: From the runoff of a beit kor, a field in which a kor of seed can be planted, which is approximately seventy-five thousand square cubits, a field in which a half-sea [tarkav], of seed can be sown, i.e. one-sixtieth the size of a beit kor, can be watered. If the runoff from a beit kor is sufficient for a field one-sixtieth its size, it can be inferred that the rest of the world is one-sixtieth the size of the Garden of Eden.

The Sages taught in a baraita: The area of the land of Egypt is four hundred parasangs [parsa] by four hundred parasangs. And this is one sixtieth the size of Cush, 4 and Cush itself is one sixtieth the size of the rest of the world. And the world is one sixtieth of the Garden of Eden, and the Garden of Eden is one sixtieth of Eden itself, and Eden is one sixtieth of Gehenna. You find that the entire world is like a pot cover for Gehenna, as Eden, which is far larger than the rest of the world, is only one sixtieth the size of Gehenna. And some say: Gehenna has no measure. And some say that Eden has no measure.

Notes:

Rendering fit [haksharat] – according to this interpretation, the initial letter het is considered the equivalent of the letter heh, and therefore this term is similar to haksharah, preparation. This change in letters is accepted without argument, as they are similar both in form and in pronunciation, and in talmudic times there were already a great many people who found it difficult to distinguish between the two. The Sages explicitly say that it is permitted to expound verses by substituting one of these letters for the other (see Jerusalem Talmud, Shabbat 72b).

Background:

Clouds are bright – the fact that a cloud is dark is a sign that it is vertically thick and rain-bearing. The darker the cloud, the more drops of water and ice particles it contains. Generally speaking, light-colored clouds either do not produce rain or produce very little rain.

Egypt and Cush – this map displays the relative sizes of Egypt and Cush, which covered a large proportion of the continent of Africa, and enables a comparison between the two countries and the rest of the world.
MISHNA On the third of the month of Marheshvan one starts to request rain by inserting the phrase: And give dew and rain, in the blessing of the years, the ninth blessing of the Amidah. Rabban Gamliel says: One starts to request rain on the seventh of Marheshvan, which is fifteen days after the festival of Sukkot. Rabban Gamliel explains that one waits these extra four days so that the last pilgrim of the Jewish people, who traveled to Jerusalem on foot for the Festival, can reach the Euphrates River without being inconvenienced by rain on his journey home.

Gemara Rabbi Elazar said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Gamliel, that one does not begin to request rain until the seventh of Marheshvan. It is taught in a barai
ta that Hananya says: And in the Diaspora one does not begin to request rain until sixty days into the season, i.e., sixty days after the autumnal equinox. Rav Huna bar Hyya said that Shmuel said: The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Hananya. The Gemara asks: Is that so? But they raised a dilemma before Shmuel: From when does one mention: And give dew and rain? He said to them: From when they bring wood into the house of Tavut, the bird hunter [rishba
ta]. This is apparently a different date than that mentioned by Hananya. The Gemara suggests: Perhaps this and that are one measure of time, i.e., Shmuel merely provided a sign of sixty days after the autumnal equinox.

PERSONALITIES Hananya – חנניה: Hananya, a nephew of Rabbi Yehoshua, was from the fourth generation of tannaim. His principal teacher was his uncle, Rabbi Yehoshua, but he also learned Torah from other important Sages of that generation. He apparently went to live in Babylonia before the bar Kokheva revolt. After the war and the ensuing persecutions he was among the remnants of the chief Sages of that generation. This led him to attempt to regulate the Hebrew calendar in Babylonia, as it was difficult to do so in Eretz Yisrael, due to Hadrian’s decrees. This effort, which was tantamount to challenging the supreme authority of Eretz Yisrael, led to a sharp response from its Sages, who ultimately were able to persuade Hananya to change his mind. However, the results of his action were not entirely undone. The Sages viewed this action in such grave terms that they spoke of a curse upon Hananya’s descendants due to this sin. Hananya lived a long life and died in Babylonia. The great amora Shmuel may have been one of his descendants.

And in the Diaspora until sixty days into the season – וביון: Those who live outside Eretz Yisrael begin to insert the request for rain in the ninth blessing of the Amidah prayer on the night of the sixtieth day after the autumnal equinox. For this purpose, the equinox is determined by the calculations of the amorah Shmuel, following the tradition of the gemona. In an ordinary year the request for rain is first inserted on December fourth, while in a Gregorian leap year the date is December fifth. The later authorities disagree on the halakha of a resident of Eretz Yisrael who travels abroad during this period of the year. Some maintain that one inserts the request for rain starting from the seventh of Marheshvan, in accordance with the custom in Eretz Yisrael (Rav Yaakov Castro). Others claim that one follows the practice observed in the Diaspora and does not request rain until sixty days after the equinox (Mishna Berura). Some argue that the halakha depends on when one intends to return to Eretz Yisrael (Peri Hadash). In practice, various communities follow different customs in this regard (Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 151).

HALAKHA

The bird hunter [rishba
ta] – ריבש: According to Rashi, rishba
ta is identical to the Aramaic rishba
ta, which means a net. Rishba
ta or rishba
ta refers to one who spreads the nets, i.e., one who hunts birds or other animals. However, some

BACKGROUND Babylonia is wealthy – ברוביה. The soil of Babylonia is highly fertile, as it is formed from the sediment of rivers. Although only a small amount of rain fell in Babylonia, the rivers and their channels provided plenty of water for the land to produce crops, despite the lack of rain.

So that the last pilgrim can reach… – וילך רבי הרishi
ta עירא. There were several routes from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia. The main path was probably via Damascus, through Thapsacus, all the way along the Euphrates to Babylonia. Although this route, which followed inhabited areas, was very long, more than 500 km to Thapsacus, it was the best journey for large convoys, which occasionally included women and children. At a speed of roughly 30 to 40 km a day, the trip would take about fifteen days. A more direct path via the desert, at a quicker pace, offered the traveler a journey of roughly seven days.

LANGUAGE

Babylonia is wealthy – ברוביה. According to a variant reading, Rav is stating that in the future (atids) Babylonia will be desolate, as its sources of water will dry up and any rainfall will be insufficient to meet its needs (see Arukh).

And in the Diaspora – וביון. When this term is used in the Bible with reference to a specific place, it means the Babylonian exile. See Ezekiel 11, and many other instances in that book. Not only was Babylonia the place where the majority of Jews were exiled at the time, but it also became a national spiritual center in its own right. In discussion concerning relations between Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora, the latter terms refers mainly to the large and important Jewish community in Babylonia.

Sometimes the word has an even more restricted meaning, as it can refer to the city of Pompebida and its surroundings, the places where Jews apparently first settled upon their exile to Babylonia.

Until sixty days into the season – וביון. The early authorities dispute the meaning of Hananya’s statement that in the Diaspora one does not insert the request for rain until sixty days after the autumnal equinox. Was he referring only to Babylonia, the principal community, where the land is watered by rivers and rain is not needed until later in the winter, or was he referring to all Jewish communities outside Eretz Yisrael? Many commentators argue that there is no reason why those living in areas where rain is required immediately after Sukkot or shortly thereafter should wait until sixty days after the autumnal equinox before inserting the prayer for rain into the Amidah (see Rosh and Rittva). In some places it was customary to insert the request for rain immediately after Sukkot, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yohanan (ab), or on the seventh of Marheshvan, as stated by Rabban Gamliel in the mishna. However, in most Diaspora communities the request for rain was not recited until sixty days after the equinox. Some commentaries explain that the Sages instituted two dates on which to begin reciting the request for rain, one for Eretz Yisrael, and one for Babylonia. All other places must follow either the custom of Eretz Yisrael or Babylonia, as there is no third date (Rittva). The gemona ruled that all Diaspora communities wait until sixty days after the equinox before inserting the prayer for rain into the Amidah, as in all matters the Diaspora communities follow the practices of Babylonia. Moreover, it is preferable to have a uniform date throughout the Diaspora to begin requesting rain. In any event, the prayer cannot be inserted immediately after Sukkot, as in many Diaspora communities there is still grain in the fields that must be harvested before the rains.
A dilemma was raised before the Sages: Is the sixtieth day itself treated as part of the period before the sixtieth day or is it included in the period after the sixtieth day? The Gemara answers, Come and hear that there is a dispute in this regard. Rav said: The sixtieth day is part of the period after the sixtieth day, and Shmuel said: The sixtieth day is part of the period before the sixtieth.

Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: And your mnemonic to remember the divergent opinions is: Those above require water; those below do not require water. Since water flows downward, those who live in low places receive their water from above and are generally in less need of additional water. Accordingly, Shmuel, who lived in the lowlands of Babylonia, ruled that one begins to request for rain later, whereas Rav, who studied in Eretz Yisrael, which is higher in elevation and has a greater need for rain, stated an earlier date. Rav Pappa said: The halakha is that the sixtieth day is part of the period after the sixtieth day, as stated by Rav, and therefore one begins to mention the request for rain on the sixtieth day after the autumn equinox.

MISHNA If the seventeenth of Marheshvan arrived and rain has not fallen, individuals, but not the entire community, begin to fast three fasts for rain. How are these fasts conducted? As the fast begins in the morning, one may eat and drink after dark, and one is permitted during the days of the fast themselves to engage in the performance of work, in bathing, in smearing oil on one’s body, in wearing shoes, and in conjugal relations. If the New Moon of Kislev arrived and rain has still not fallen, the court decrees three fasts on the entire community. Similar to the individual fasts, everyone may eat and drink after dark, and they are permitted to engage in the performance of work, in bathing, in smearing one’s body with oil, in wearing shoes, and in conjugal relations.

GEMARA The Gemara asks: Who are these individuals mentioned in the mishna? Rav Huna said: This is referring to the Sages, who are held to a higher standard and are expected to undertake fasts even when ordinary people do not. And Rav Huna further said: The individuals who fast the three fasts do so on a Monday, and on the next Thursday, and again on the following Monday.

The Gemara asks: What is Rav Huna teaching us? We already learned this (15b). The court may not decree a fast on the community starting from a Thursday, so as not to cause an increase in prices. Rather, the first three fasts are established on Monday, and Thursday, and Monday. What does Rav Huna’s statement add to this ruling?

The Gemara answers: Rav Huna’s comment is necessary, lest you say that this applies only to a community, but that in the case of an individual, no, the series of three fasts does not have to start on a Monday. This opinion is also taught in a baraita with regard to those mentioned in the mishna: When the individuals begin to fast, they fast on a Monday, a Thursday, and a Monday. And if one of the fast days occurs on a day with special observances, they interrupt the sequence for New Moons.
Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar – רבי שמעון בן אלעזר

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar was one of the Sages of the Mishna during the last generation of tanna'im. We know almost nothing about his life or family. Furthermore, as he belonged to the generation in which the Mishna was edited, not many of his teachings appear in the Mishna itself, although they are found in baraitot and in the Gemara. Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar was a friend of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, and several disputes between them appear in the sources. He received most of his Torah knowledge from his teacher, Rabbi Meir, to whom he was devoted and in whose name he cites many rulings.

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar lived in or near Tiberias, and although he apparently did not have an academy of his own, many statements are attributed to him, concerning both halakha and aggada.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel – רבן שמעון בן גמליאל

There were two Sages with this name. The first, who lived at the end of the Second Temple period, was executed by the Romans as a leader of the great Jewish revolt. The second was his grand-

son, son of Rabbab Gamliel of Yavneh. Here, and in general, the Sage cited in the Talmud is the second of the two, the father and teacher of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel the second was apparently appointed nasi of the Sanhedrin after the bar Kokheva revolt, when the situation of the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael was extremely dire and a great deal of political acumen was required to restore Jewish life in the country. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel was one of the youngest of the great Sages of his generation and regarded himself as inferior in status to his contemporaries, the great disciples of Rabbi Akiva: Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Yosei, Rabbi Meir, and Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai. Nevertheless, he sought to strengthen the position of the nasi. This led to a failed effort to remove him from the office; he ultimately retained his post and those who sought to depose him were severely reprimanded. Few halakhot are taught in his name, but the amora'im state that in almost every place where he presents a ruling, even against the opinion of an unattributed mishna, the halakha is in accordance with him. His most prominent disciple was his eminent son, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi.

Who is an individual – הוא אדם

It is stated in the Jerusalem Talmud that when the mishna speaks of individuals, it is referring to those Torah scholars who have already been appointed to positions of leadership in the community and found trustworthy. These people are worthy of fasting and reciting prayers on behalf of the entire community in times of trouble.

And even with the tractate of the kalla month – אף על פי קולא

The early authorities dispute the meaning of this phrase. Some explain that the baraita is referring to the tractate studied at the assemblies held twice a year at the talmudic academies during the months of Adar and Elul (Rabbeinu Hananel, RL cited by Tosafot on Shabbat 11b). During each of these so-called kalla months, one specific tractate was studied, and public lessons were delivered on its topics, which rendered the material familiar even to ordinary people who could not devote their time to Torah study year-round. Accordingly, the baraita is stating that one is considered a student of Torah even if he can answer questions only on the tractate studied in a kalla month.

Others maintain that the baraita is referring to the minor tractate known as tractate Kol, so named because it opens with a discussion of a certain regulation that applies to a bride, a Kol (Rashi and Tosafot on Shabbat 11a). Rabbi Yehudah Yehonatan. This tractate is not a part of the Talmud, but is a collection of baraitot. The material covered in the tractate is considered intellectually demanding. Consequently, the baraita is saying that if someone can analyze those parts of the Talmud he has studied, even if he has learned only tractate Kol, he is regarded as a student.

This interpretation is somewhat problematic, as the Gemara elsewhere (Shabbat 11a) states that a talmidic scholar is deemed worthy of public office only if he can answer halakhot on any part of the Talmud, even tractate Kol, which indicates that this was a particularly difficult tractate. The early authorities explain that although this tractate was considered relatively easy, it was not studied regularly in the academies, and therefore one's mastery of it was considered a sign of great erudition.

HALAKHA

Who is a student – הוא תלמיד

If one can successfully answer a single question about his studies, even concerning the halakhot of a Festival that are taught publicly, one is considered a student. This applies both to the status of an individual for the facts mentioned in the mishna (Magen Avraham), and also with regard to the halakha of a man who betroths a woman on condition that he is a Torah student (Shulhan Arukh, Even HaEzer 327).

And he is remembered for good – הוא זכר

If one takes upon himself stringencies that are not required of everyone, this should not be seen as an act of vanity. On the contrary, one is regarded as acting beyond the letter of the law. Throughout the generations the Sages debated the level of stringency an ordinary person may take upon himself and the honors one is permitted to assume if these do not conform to one's general status, one's knowledge of Torah, and one's scrupulousness in the observance of mitzvot.
The Sages taught in a baraita: With regard to one who was fasting for a certain trouble and the trouble passed, or if one was fasting for the recovery of a sick person and that person was healed, one may not cease his fast merely because its cause has been removed; rather, he completes his fast. The baraita continues: With regard to one who goes from a place where they are not fasting to a place where they are fasting, he fasts with them. Conversely, with regard to one who goes from a place where they are fasting to a place where they are not fasting, he completes his fast as a resident of his hometown.

With regard to one who forgot the fast and ate and drank, he should not show himself before the community while satiated, and he should not indulge in luxuries. One should not think that because one has already eaten, his fast is completely nullified, and one may conduct himself as if he were not a fast day at all. Rather, one should minimize one’s eating, as it is stated: “And Jacob said to his sons: Why do you show yourselves?” (Genesis 42:1). Jacob said to his sons: Do not show yourselves when you are satiated, not before the members of the house of Esau, nor before those of Ishmael, so that they not be jealous of you, as they suffer from hunger. This teaches that one should not show he is full when others are hungry.

The Gemara presents another piece of advice related to the story of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph said to them: “See that you not fall out by the way” (Genesis 45:14). Rabbi Elazar said that Joseph said to his brothers: Do not become occupied in a matter of halakha, lest you fall out on the way. If you discuss a halakha while traveling you might get into an argument, and it is important for travelers to remain on good terms.

The Gemara asks: Is that so? But didn’t Rabbi Elai bar Berekhya say: With regard to two Torah scholars who are walking along the road and there are no Torah matters discussed between them, they are worthy of being burned, as it is stated: “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder” (I Kings 2:11). The reason that the chariot of fire did not harm Elisha is because there was a Torah matter between them, from which it may be inferred that had they not been discussing a Torah matter, they would have been worthy of being burned.

The Gemara answers: This is not difficult. This opinion of Rabbi Elai bar Berekhya is referring to studying by rote, by reviewing material one has already learned, which is permitted and even appropriate while traveling, whereas that opinion of Rabbi Elazar is referring to examining a halakha in depth, in which case it is likely that the scholars will come into conflict.

**NOTES**

One who goes from a place where they are not fasting to a place where they are fasting – the baraita: The general principle is that one who intends to return home at the end of his journey is not required to adopt the stringencies of the places he is visiting (see Pesahim 50a). However, the baraita obligates the traveler to observe the fast together with the community he is visiting. Some commentators explain that one must observe this fast even if he plans to return home, as it is prohibited to separate oneself from the distress experienced by the community where he is residing, even if his stay is only temporary (Rabbeinu Yehonatan).

He completes his fast – whether in the presence of people who are fasting: A mishna (Rab) states that if a fast is observed on account of drought and it begins to rain before noon, the fast need not be completed. Some commentators distinguish between a fast observed on account of a drought and all other fasts. If it rains on the day of a fast for a drought, there is no longer any reason to continue the fast, as the community is no longer facing danger. However, if the purpose of the fast is to avert some other calamity, the fast must be completed even if the danger has passed, as it may not have been entirely forestalled (Rambam, in his note on Ramban, Sefer Zemanim, Hilkhot Taanit 1:15–16). Most other early authorities distinguish between an individual fast and a communal fast (Rambam; Ramban). The baraita is concerned with an individual fast, which must be completed even if the calamity has passed, whereas the mishna below speaks of a communal fast, which does not have to be completed if the danger has been averted, so as not to cause the community unnecessary hardship. A communal fast is always considered to have been decreed with the stipulation that it will not have to be completed if the calamity in question is removed.

Lest you fall out on the way – the baraita: Rashi explains: In case you become lost on the way. Others similarly explain that the focus on halakha might cause them to become distracted and lose their bearings (Meiri). Yet others maintain that people observing them might suspect them of being quarrelsome (Rabbeinu Gershon).
It is taught in a baraita that Joseph said to his brothers: Do not take long strides and bring the sun into the city, i.e., you should enter the city to spend the night there before the sun has set. The Gemara elaborates: Do not take long strides, as the Master said: A long stride takes away one five-hundredth of a person’s eyesight, and this loss is not worth the time saved.

The Gemara further explains: And bring the sun into the city, this is in accordance with a statement that Rav Yehuda said that Rav said. As Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: A person should always leave the place where he has spent the night with “it is good” (Genesis 1:4), i.e., after sunrise, as the Torah uses the expression “it is good” with regard to the creation of light. This goodness is manifest in the sense of security one feels when it is light. And likewise, when one comes into an unfamiliar city he should enter with “it is good,” before sunset, as it is stated: “As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away” (Genesis 44:3).

Similarly, Rav Yehuda said that Rabbi Hyya said: One who is walking along the road should not eat more each day than he would normally eat each day in a year of famine. The Gemara asks: What is the reason for this? Here in Babylonia they interpreted that the reason is due to one’s bowels. Since the exertion of traveling can damage full bowels, it is preferable to eat less than the normal amount. In the West, Eretz Yisrael, they say that the reason is due to food, i.e., if one eats too much, his food may not last the entire journey, and therefore he should ration his meals. The Gemara asks: What is the practical difference between these two opinions? The Gemara answers: The practical difference between them is in a case where he is sitting in a boat. The traveler must be concerned about his food supply, but he need not worry that the jostling of the road might force him to exert himself, which has a tendency to cause digestive problems. Alternatively, the practical difference is in a case where he is traveling from station [avna] to station. Here the exertion of the road might cause digestive problems, but one need not be concerned about running out of food, as he can resupply along the way.

The Gemara relates that when Rav Pappa traveled, along each and every parasang he would eat one loaf of bread. Rav Pappa did so because he maintained that the prohibition was due to the bowels, and as he was healthy he was not concerned that travel by road would irritate his digestion.

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: Anyone who has food for himself but nevertheless starves himself in years of famine will be saved from an unusual death, as it is stated: “In famine, He will redeem you from death” (Job 5:29). This is derived from the precise wording of the verse. According to its straightforward meaning, instead of “in famine,” it should have said: From famine, as one is delivered from famine. Rather, this is what the verse is saying: As a reward for starving himself in years of famine, Job will be saved from an unusual death.

HALAKHA

Eating while traveling – בֵּיתְךָ בְּרָכֵךְ: One who is traveling should not eat more than he would during a time of famine, in order to prevent intestinal disease (Magen Avraham; Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 514:10).

NOTES

Bowels – מַﬠֲיָינָא: The commentary on the text follows Rabbeinu Hananel, who explains that this is a reference to diarrhea. If a traveler eats in his customary way, he is likely to suffer from stomach problems, which might prevent him from continuing his journey. Others suggest that if one who wishes to set out on a journey eats too much, his full stomach will weigh him down and make it difficult for him to travel as planned (Rabbeinu Gershon).

LANGUAGE

Station [avna] – אֲבָנָא: From the Syriac word for station or inn, although some associate it with the Greek εὔνοια, eunè, meaning bed.

NOTES

Each and every parasang – בֵּרֵיעַ תָּרוֹן: Some commentators suggest that Rav Pappa maintains that the advice to a traveler to eat sparingly was to help him avoid digestive problems that might result from the consumption of a heavy meal. He therefore divided his rations into small quantities that he ate every parasang, roughly every 4 km. In this way he ate a large number of small meals, rather than a single heavy meal (Sofar Emet).

In famine, He will redeem you from death – יְבֵרֵיעַ תָּרוֹן: The fact that the verse does not state: He will redeem you from famine, but rather: He will redeem you from death, is an indication that you will be spared all types of unusual deaths (Maharsha).