Human food may not be fed to animals – מַאֲכַל אָנָה לָא יְאַסְּרוּ לָא הַנִּכְנָע לַא תְּסַכָּל
It has been pointed out, based on numerous sources, that there is no prohibition against feeding animals food fit for human consumption (RavIad). Some commentaries explain that although one may indeed feed animals food fit for humans, it is prohibited to go out and buy this food with the intention of using it as animal fodder. Others suggest that one may feed animals with a small amount of food fit for humans, but not with large quantities of this food. Alternatively, there is a difference between food that is clearly intended for humans and food that is intended for humans but is also commonly given to animals, e.g., carrots and goards. Lastly, a distinction can be drawn between places where animal fodder is available and places where only food fit for human consumption is available (see Meiri and Mehatzar HaShekel).

The commentaries ask if it is not permitted to use food fit for human consumption as animal fodder, as this is disrespectful to the food, how could Rav Huna have thrown the vegetables into the river? Rashi explains that Rav Huna intended that the vegetables should drift downstream and be eaten by whoever found them. Others suggest that this was not a recognizable show of disrespect, as those who saw the vegetables in the river would assume that they were already rotten (Pehath Einayim, citing Rosh).

Human food may not be fed to animals – מַאֲכַל אָנָה לָא יְאַסְּרוּ לָא הַנִּכְנָע
One may not feed food that is fit for human consumption to animals, as this is a disrespectful use of the food (Magen Avraham; Shultam Avash, Orakh Hayyim 171).

A remedy against Shivta – מֵהָא שִׁבְתָא שֵׁבַט הַמֶּהָא Shivta is mentioned in several places in the Gemara as an evil spirit that rests on the hands of one who neglects to wash his hands at the appropriate times (Yoma 72b; Hullin 21b). In their responsa, the geonim explain that it is a disease that affects young children, causing them to waste away and die.

BACKGROUND
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HALAKHA
The Gemara objects: But if Rav Huna could not use them in any way, he should not purchase the vegetables at all. The Gemara answers: If nothing is done, you would have been found to have caused a stumbling block for them in the future. If the vegetable sellers see that some of their produce is left unsold, then the next week they will not bring enough for Shabbat. Therefore, Rav Huna made sure that the vegetables were all bought, so that the sellers would continue to bring them.

Another custom of Rav Huna was that when he had a new medicine, he would fill a water jug with the medicine and hang it from the doorpost of his house, saying: All who need, let him come and take from this new medicine. And there are those say: He had a remedy against the demon Shivta that he knew by tradition, that one must wash his hands for protection against this evil spirit. And to this end, he would place a water jug and hang it by the door, saying: Anyone who needs, let him come to the house and wash his hands, so that he will not be in danger.

The Gemara further relates: When Rav Huna would eat bread, he would open the doors to his house, saying: Whoever needs, let him come in and eat. Rava said: I can fulfill all these customs of Rav Huna, except for this one, which I cannot do.

Perek III
Daf 21 Amud a

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Mehoza – מֵהוֹזָא A city on the Tigris located near the Malka River. Mehoza was a large commercial city, and most of its inhabitants were Jews. Unlike most other Jewish communities, Mehoza’s Jews generally earned their living from commerce. Jews from different countries of origin lived in Mehoza, and many converts lived there as well. After Neharde’a was destroyed in 259 CE, its yeshiva moved to Mehoza. Mehoza became the Torah center of leading scholars such as Rav Nahman; Rav Shehet; Rava, who later became head of the yeshiva in Mehoza; Ameimar; and Rav Kahana, Rav Ashi’s teacher. After Abaye’s death, c. 338 CE, the yeshiva in Pumbedita, then headed by Rava, also moved to Mehoza for a period of time.
The Gemara relates another story that involves an unstable wall. Ifa and Rabbi Yohanan studied Torah together, and as a result they became very hard-pressed for money. They said: Let us set up a stall and go and engage in commerce, and we will fulfill, with regard to ourselves, the verse: “Although there should be no needy among you” (Deuteronomy 15:4), as we will no longer be complete paupers. They went and sat under a dilapidated wall and were eating bread, when two ministering angels arrived.

Rabbi Yohanan heard that one angel said to the other: Let us knock this wall down upon them and kill them, as they abandon eternal life of Torah study and engage in temporal life for their own sustenance. The other angel said to him: Leave them, as there is one of them whose time of achievement stands before him, i.e., his time has yet to come. Rabbi Yohanan heard all this, but Ifa did not hear the angels’ conversation. Rabbi Yohanan said to Ifa: Did the Master hear anything? Ifa said to him: No. Rabbi Yohanan said to himself: Since I heard the angels and Ifa did not hear, I can learn from this that it is my time of achievement stands before me.

Rabbi Yohanan said to Ifa: I will return home and fulfill with regard to myself the contrary verse: “For the poor shall never cease out of the land” (Deuteronomy 15:11). Rabbi Yohanan returned to the study hall, and Ifa did not return, but went to engage in business instead. By the time that Ifa came back from his business travels, Rabbi Yohanan had been appointed head of the academy, and his financial situation had improved.

His colleagues said to Ifa: If the Master had sat and studied, instead of going off to his business ventures, wouldn’t the Master have been appointed head of the academy? Ifa went and suspended himself from the mast [askarayya] of a ship, saying: If there is anyone who can ask me a question concerning a baraita of Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Oshaya, and I do not resolve his problem from a mishna, I will fall from the mast of this ship and be drowned. Ifa sought to demonstrate that despite the time he had spent in business, he still retained his extensive Torah knowledge.

A certain old man came and taught a baraita before him: If there is a man who, upon his deathbed, says in his will: Give a shekel to my sons every week, but this is a situation where, based on their needs, they are fit for the court to give them a sela, i.e., double the amount, they give them a sela. When the dying man mentioned a shekel, he presumably meant that they should be given a sum in accordance with their actual requirements, not that specific amount. But if he said: Give them only a shekel, the court gives them only a shekel and no more.

The baraita further states that if one said: If my sons die, others should inherit their portion in their stead, regardless of whether he said: Give them a shekel, or whether he said: Give them only a shekel, then the court gives his sons only a shekel per week, as their father clearly stated that he wishes to give his sons only a specific stipend and that he intends to leave the bulk of his property to others. Ifa said to the old man: In accordance with whose opinion is this ruling? It is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir, who said: It is a mitzva to fulfill the statement of the dead. This entire baraita can be explained based on a principle that appears in a mishna: In all cases, one should try to execute the wishes of the deceased.
And why did they call him Naḥum? For he was a perfectly righteous man, and when he arrived there, he said to them: Woe is me if you had not seen me in this house; it is for the good. My sons, enter my treasury and they opened the vessels and all the precious jewels and pearls and he went and spent the night in a certain inn. During the night, these residents of the inn arose and took all of the precious jewels and pearls from the chest, and filled it with earth.

The next day, when he saw what had happened, Naḥum of Gam Zu said: This too is for the good.

When he arrived there, at the ruler’s palace, they opened the chest and saw that it was filled with earth. The king wished to put all the Jewish emissaries to death. He said: The Jews are mocking me. Naḥum of Gam Zu said: This too is for the good. Elijah the Prophet came and appeared before the ruler as one of his ministers. He said to the ruler: Perhaps this earth is from the earth of their father Abraham. As when he threw earth, it turned into swords, and when he threw stubble, it turned into arrows, as it is written in a prophecy that the Sages interpreted this verse as a reference to Abraham: “His sword makes them as the dust, his bow as the driven stubble” (Isaiah 41:12).

There was one province that the Romans were unable to conquer. They took some of this earth, tested it by throwing it at their enemies, and conquered that province. When the ruler saw that this earth indeed had miraculous powers, his servants entered his treasury and filled Naḥum of Gam Zu’s chest with precious jewels and pearls and sent him off with great honor.
When Nahum of Gam Zu came to spend the night at that same inn, the residents said to him: What did you bring with you to the emperor that he bestowed upon you such great honor? He said to them: That which I took from here, I brought there. When they heard this, the residents of the inn thought that the soil upon which their house stood had miraculous powers. They tore down their inn and brought the soil underneath to the king's palace. They said to him: That earth that was brought here was from our property. The miracle had been performed only in the merit of Nahum of Gam Zu. The emperor tested the inn's soil in battle, and it was not found to have miraculous powers, and he had these residents of the inn put to death.

The mishna taught: What is considered a plague of pestilence? If it is a city that sends out five hundred infantrymen, and three dead are removed from it on three consecutive days, one dead per day, this is a plague of pestilence. The Sages taught: If a city that sends out fifteen hundred infantrymen, i.e., one that has a population of at least fifteen hundred men, e.g., the village of Akko, and nine dead are removed from it on three consecutive days, i.e., three dead per day, this is considered a plague of pestilence.

If all nine died on a single day, while none died on the other days, or if the nine died over a period of four days, this is not a plague of pestilence. And a city that sends out five hundred infantrymen, for example, the village of Amiko, and three dead are removed from it on three consecutive days, this is a plague of pestilence.

In explanation of the counterintuitive ruling that many deaths in one day is not indicative of a plague, the Gemara relates: Drokart was a city that sent out five hundred infantrymen, and three dead were removed from it on one day. Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda decreed a fast on account of the plague. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: In accordance with whose opinion did you declare this fast? It must be in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir.

This is related to the definition of a forewarned ox, an animal that has gored enough times to be considered a dangerous beast that requires careful supervision, as Rabbi Meir said: The owner of an ox is liable to pay full damages if its acts of goring were separated, i.e., if it gored three times on three consecutive days, as claimed by the Rabbis. If its acts of goring were near each other, performed on a single day, is it not all the more so that this animal should be classified as a forewarned ox? However, Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak continued, this represents a minority opinion. Just as Rabbi Meir's reasoning is rejected for halakha in the case of an ox, so too it is rejected with regard to a plague.

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**BACKGROUND**

Drokart – The location of Drokart is unclear. Some maintain that it is a city upon which the Arabs later built the city of Wasit in eastern Iraq. Apparently, several important Sages lived inside this city or in the nearby villages, as Rav Huna and Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak, among others, resided there.
Before that mount – אֶל כֶּל הַהוּא בֶּן יִצְחָק אֶלָּא. The maxim that it is the person who bestows honor on the place he occupies, and not vice versa, is derived from the two verses cited here. The word “that” in the expression “that mount” is superfluous, and it teaches that it was prohibited to ascend Mount Sinai only while it remained that mount, i.e., the mount on which the Divine Presence was resting. However, once the Divine Presence withdrew from the mount, it once again became accessible to all, in accordance with the second verse: “When the shofar sounds long they shall come up to the mount” (Exodus 19:13). This indicates that the sanctity was not inherent to the place but was due to the Divine Presence resting there.

And we likewise found with regard to the Tent of Meeting that was in the wilderness, that whenever it was erected, the Torah said: “That they put out of the camp every leper” (Numbers 5:2). Once the curtain was rolled up and the Tent of Meeting was prepared for travel, zavim and lepers were permitted to enter the place where it had stood. The place itself had no intrinsic sanctity; rather, it was sacred only because the Divine Presence was there. Accordingly, Rav Nahman bar Yitzḥak maintained that there is no reason for him to move places to receive honor.

Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda said to Rav Nahman bar Yitzḥak: If so, let me arise and come to the Master, to learn Torah from you. Rav Nahman bar Yitzḥak said to him: It is better that one hundred dinars that is the son of a peras; fifty dinars, should come to one hundred dinars that is the son of one hundred dinars; but one hundred dinars that is the son of one hundred dinars, should not come to one hundred dinars that is the son of a peras.” In other words, although Rav Nahman bar Yitzḥak was a learned scholar, comparable to one hundred dinars, it was nevertheless more appropriate for him to come to Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda. Whereas Rav Nahman bar Yitzḥak was the son of a peras, an ordinary man, Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda was the son of a scholar.

The Gemara relates another story involving a plague: Once there was a plague of pestilence in Sura, but in the neighborhood of Rav there was no pestilence. The people therefore thought that this was due to Rav’s great merit. However, it was revealed to them in a dream that Rav’s merit was too great and this matter too small for the merit of Rav to be involved. Rather, his neighborhood was spared due to the acts of kindness of a certain man, who would lend his hoe [מַרְאָה] and shovel [זְבִילָה] to prepare sites for burial.

To one hundred dinars, son of a peras – שָׁוֵא בֶּן בֶּן קרָסָה. Rashi and Tosafot both note the difference in title between the two scholars featured in this story: whereas one is called Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda, the other is Rav Nahman bar Yitzḥak, and it is not noted that his father was a rabbi. This is because the former scholar was the son of the great Sage Rav Hisda, while the father of the latter scholar was not ordained as a rabbi.

Conversely, some commentators argue that it would have been disrespectful for Rav Nahman bar Yitzḥak to consider himself his father’s superior in Torah knowledge and refer to himself as twice the value of his father in this regard. Rather, Rav Nahman bar Yitzḥak was speaking not of scholarly accomplishment but material wealth. Rav Nahman bar Yitzḥak himself was a wealthy man, whereas his father Yitzḥak was not. Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda, by contrast, was a rich man who was also the son of a rich man (Rav Yaakov Emden).

This matter is too small for the merit of Rav – זֶכָּרָא אֲמַרְתָּא אֲלֵיהוּ בַּר יְמָנוֹ. Some commentators explain that although it is clear that Rav’s great merit contributed to the good fortune of his neighborhood, it was revealed to the people in a dream that they would have been spared even without Rav, by virtue of that righteous man who lent out his grave-digging tools for the benefit of the community. Alternatively, it was not due to Rav’s merit that his community was saved; so that he would not have to pay for the miracle performed on the community’s behalf with the merits he had accumulated through his righteous behavior in the past (Maharsha).
There is pestilence among the pigs — אברים מובילים. If plague has spread among pigs, a fast must be proclaimed. The intestines of pigs are similar to those of human beings, and therefore there is a concern that the disease will spread to humans. All the more so, a fast must be proclaimed if the plague has reached the Jewish community's gentile neighbors (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 576).  

There is pestilence in Bei HaOzai — Bei HaOzai מובילים ב이는 עוזאי. If a plague has spread across a certain area, and caravans travel regularly between that place and other areas, a fast must be proclaimed in all the locations to which the caravans travel, even if they are far away from the stricken area. This ruling is in accordance with the practice of Shmuel. If a plague breaks out in Eretz Yisrael, a fast must be proclaimed throughout the Diaspora, as stated by Rav Naḥman (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 576:2).

**BACKGROUND**

As their intestines are similar to those of humans — אברים של אדם. Although there are parasites that pass from pigs to humans, i.e., trichina, this generally occurs when the flesh of the pig is eaten, which is not a concern here. Nevertheless, the resemblance in internal anatomy between pigs and humans, as well as other similarities, are recognized nowadays. For example, pig intestines are often transplanted into human bodies, due to the relatively low rate of rejection. Consequently, Rav Yehuda was concerned that a disease that affects pigs might well be transferable to people.

Bei HaOzai — Beit HaOzai was a region southeast of the Tigros River, later known as the Euphrates. The Gemara states that Abba the Bloodletter would receive greetings from the yeshiva on High every day, and Abaye would receive greetings every Shabbat eve, and Rava would receive greetings only once a year on Yom Kippur eve. Abaye was distressed due to Abba the Bloodletter, as he did not understand why Abaye received greater honor than he did. They said to him: You are unable to perform what he does, and therefore you do not merit the same honor.

The Gemara asks: And what were these righteous deeds of Abba the Bloodletter? The Gemara explains that when he would perform a matter of bloodletting, he would bring in men separately from women, for reasons of modesty. And he had a special garment that had a slit in the place of the incision; when the bloodletting instrument was inserted. When a woman came to him, he would have her dress in that garment, so that he would not see her exposed. And furthermore, he had a hidden place where he worked, where customers would place the coins that would take as his fee. In this manner, one who had money would throw it there, while one who did not have money was not embarrassed.

**NOTES**

There is pestilence among the pigs — אברים מובילים. Do not infer from this incident that if a plague is spreading among the gentle inhabitants of a particular community, their Jewish neighbors must proclaim a fast. If there is concern that a disease affecting pigs will spread to human beings, as the intestines of a pig are anatomically similar to those of a human being, there is certainly cause for concern that a disease will spread from gentiles to Jews. Others cite a view according to which the Jewish community is not required to proclaim a fast if its gentile neighbors have been struck by disease, because the divine decrees issued against the one group do not necessarily apply to the other (Ritva).

You are unable to perform what he does — ואת לא יוכדו עשה. Some commentaries note that although Abaye certainly engaged in charitable activities, he was first and foremost the head of the academy at Pumbedita. Consequently, he was unable to devote as much of his time and money to charity as did Abba the Bloodletter (Maharsha).
Mats [bistarkel] – Apparently a loanword from the Middle Iranian bistarak, which means bedding, a mattress, or a cover.

When a Torah scholar came to him for bloodletting, he would take no pay from him, and after the scholar arose, Abba would give him money and say to him: Go and purchase food with this money to heal yourself, as it is important to eat healthy food after bloodletting. One day, Abaye sent a pair of Sages to investigate the extent of Abba the Bloodletter's righteousness. Abba the Bloodletter sat them down, and gave them food to eat, and gave them something to drink. And at night he spread out mats [bistarkel] for them to sleep on.

In the morning, the Sages rolled up these rugs and took them, and they arose and went out to the market with them. And when Abba found them, the Sages said to him: Let the Master appraise these rugs, how much they are worth. He said to them: Their value is such and such. They said to him: But perhaps they are worth more. He said to them: This is what I paid for them. They said to him: The rugs are yours and we took them from you.

After explaining the reason for their actions, the Sages said to him: Please tell us, what did you suspect of us? You knew that we had taken your rugs, and yet you did not say anything. He said to them: I said to myself, certainly an unexpected opportunity for a ransom of prisoners became available for the Sages, and they required immediate funds, but they were too embarrassed to say so to me or to ask for money. Instead, they took the rugs. The Sages said to him: Now that we have explained the situation, let the Master take back the rugs. He said to them: From that moment when I realized they were missing, I put them out of my mind and consigned them for charity. As far as I am concerned, they are already designated for that purpose, and I cannot take them back.

Rava was distressed due to the fact that Abaye received greetings from Heaven even Shabbat eve, while Rava received such greetings only once a year, on Yom Kippur eve, as stated above. They said to him: Be content that through your merit you protect your entire city.

The Gemara relates another story about the righteousness of common people. Rabbi Beroka Hoza’s was often found in the market of Bei Lefet, and Elijah the Prophet would often appear to him. Once Rabbi Beroka said to Elijah: Of all the people who come here, is there anyone in this market worthy of the World-to-Come? He said to him: No. In the meantime, Rabbi Beroka saw a man who was wearing black shoes, contrary to Jewish custom, and who did not place the sky-blue, dyed thread of ritual fringes on his garment. Elijah said to Rabbi Beroka: That man is worthy of the World-to-Come.

Bei Lefet – עַלְפָּת: This city, which was probably known as Bel-apat, the city of Bel, was a large commercial city in the north of Bei Hoza. King Shapur, whom the Sages called Shavor Maika, rebuilt Bei Lefet and named it Gunde-sabur after himself. Nevertheless, the name Bei Lefet remained in use for many generations.

Black shoes – בִּטְרָקַן: This was a typical shoe, although there were differences in the number of straps and laces on various shoes. Each social class had shoes of a specific form with straps of a distinctive color, and there were apparently corresponding differences between the shoes worn by Jews and gentiles. Jews wore shoes with white straps, while gentiles’ shoes had black straps. This enabled people to distinguish immediately between Jews and gentiles, and the Sages were very strict with people who changed the color of their shoes in an effort to resemble gentiles.