Between its fins – מִן מַעֲרָרָיו: When a fish is removed from the water its gills and skin cannot provide the oxygen it requires to live. If it is soon returned to the water, the fish will recover by temporarily increasing its breathing, but if it stays out of its natural habitat for a prolonged period it will die of suffocation.

_one day Rabbi Yosei bar Avin heard Rav Ashi studying and reciting the following statement. Shmuel said: When regard to one who removes a fish from the sea on Shabbat, when an area on the skin of the fish the size of a sela coin has dried up, he is liable for violating the prohibition against slaughtering an animal on Shabbat. A fish in that condition cannot survive, and therefore one who removed it from the water is liable for killing it. Rabbi Yosei bar Avin said to Rav Ashi: And let the Master say that this is the case provided that the skin that dried is between its fins.² Rav Ashi said to him: And doesn’t the Master maintain that Rabbi Yosei ben Rabbi Avin said this ruling? Why didn’t you state it in his name? Rabbi Yosei bar Avin said to him: I am he.

The Gemara asks: What is the incident involving his son? One day Rabbi Yosei from Yokrat hired day laborers to work his field. It grew late and he did not bring them food. The workers were said to the son of Rabbi Yosei from Yokrat: We are starving. They were sitting under a fig tree, so the son said: Fig tree, fig tree. Yield your fruits, so that my father’s workers may eat. The fig tree yielded fruit, and they ate.

In the meantime, his father came and said to the workers: Do not be angry with me for being late, as I was engaged in a mitzva, and until just now I was traveling for that purpose and could not get here any sooner. They said to him: May the Merciful One satisfy you just as your son satisfied us and gave us food. He said to them: From where did he find food to give you? They said: Such-and-such an incident occurred. Rabbi Yosei from Yokrat said to his son: My son, you troubled your Creator to cause the fig to yield its fruit not in its proper time, so too, you will die young. And indeed, his son died before his time.

The Gemara asks: What is the incident involving his daughter? He had a very beautiful daughter. One day Rabbi Yosei from Yokrat saw a certain man piercing a hole in the hedge surrounding his property and looking at his daughter. Rabbi Yosei said to him: What is this? The man said to him: My teacher, if I have not merited taking her in marriage, shall I not at least merit to look at her? Rabbi Yosei said to her: My daughter, you are causing people distress. Return to your dust, and let people no longer stumble into sin due to you.

² The Gemara relates another story involving Rabbi Yosei from Yokrat. He had a certain donkey that people hired each day for work. In the evening they would send it back with the money for its hire on its back, and the animal would go to its owner’s house. But if they added or subtracted from the appropriate sum, the donkey would not go. One day someone forgot a pair of sandals on the donkey, and it did not move until they removed the sandals from its back, after which it went off.
The Gemara cites more stories about miracles that occurred to righteous individuals. Whenever the charity collectors would see Elazar of the village of Birta, they would hide from him, as any money Elazar had with him he would give them, and they did not want to take all his property. One day, Elazar went to the market to purchase what he needed for his daughter’s dowry. The charity collectors saw him and hid from him.

Elazar’s wife came and said to her daughter: What has your father brought? She said to her mother: Whatever he brought he threw into the granary. She went to open the door of the granary, and saw that the granary was full of wheat, so much so that it was coming out through the door-knob, and the door would not open due to the wheat. The granary had miraculously been completely filled. Elazar’s daughter went to the study hall and said to her father: Come and see what your He Who loves You, the Almighty, has performed for you. He said to her: I swear by the Temple service, as far as you are concerned this wheat is consecrated property, and you have a share in it only as one of the poor Jews.

As one of the poor Jews – Rashi and others explain that Elazar of Birta did not want his daughter to purchase her dowry with the grain because he did not want to profit from a miracle. However, this entails a difficulty, for in that case, how did he allow himself to derive any sort of benefit from the grain? Some commentators suggest that Elazar of Birta did not want his daughter to purchase her dowry with the grain because he did not wish to receive a reward for his righteous behavior in this world, as it would diminish his reward in the World-to-Come. Once he dedicated the grain to charity, his daughter, being poor herself, had a right to a portion of it just like any other pauper.

Oshaya, the youngest of the group – This Sage, who is mentioned on a few occasions, is possibly Rav Oshaya from Babylonia. Even the meaning of his title is unclear, as he might be called Oshaya the Young, perhaps to differentiate from another Oshaya, who came from a place called Havaya. Alternatively, as translated here, he is possibly known as Oshaya, the youngest of the group of Sages.

LANGUAGE

Bleary (terutot) – Possibly from the Greek ὑπερβλεπτός, dinous, meaning long or overly long. Alternatively, it is from the Latin teres or territus, meaning oval, i.e., something elongated with rounded ends. If so, it means very narrow eyes.
He also causes us pain – ַאֵלָה: Some commentators explain the argument as follows: When Oshaya said that if a bride’s eyes are bleary her entire body requires a careful examination, he insulted not only the Nasi but also the rest of the community, i.e., the bride’s body. Just as the rest of the community was ready to indulge Oshaya, as they knew he meant everything for the sake of Heaven, the Nasi’s men should also allow him to continue preaching (Rabbi Elyakim).

The Gemara relates: Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi declared a fast but rain did not come. Ifa descended to lead the service before him, and some say it was Rabbi Ili. He recited: He Who makes the wind blow, and the wind indeed blew. He continued to recite: And Who makes the rain come, and subsequently, the rain came. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said to him: What are your good deeds, in the merit of which your prayers are answered so speedily? He said to him: I live in an impoverished city, in which there is no wine for kiddush or havdala. I go to the effort of bringing the residents wine for kiddush and havdala, and I thereby enable them to fulfill their duty. In reward for this mitzva, my prayers for rain were answered.

The Gemara relates a similar incident. Rav happened to come to a certain place where he decreed a fast but rain did not come. The prayer leader descended to lead the service before him and recited: He Who makes the wind blow, and the wind indeed blew. He continued and said: And Who makes the rain fall, and the rain came. Rav said to him: What are your good deeds? He said to him: I am a teacher of children, and I teach the Bible to the children of the poor as to the children of the rich, and if there is anyone who cannot pay, I do not take anything from him. And I have a fishpond, and any child who neglects his studies, I bribe him with the fish and calm him, and soothe him until he comes and reads.

The Gemara further relates: Rav Nahman decreed a fast, prayed for mercy, but rain did not come. In his misery, he said: Take Nahman and throw him from the wall to the ground, as the fast he decreed has evidently had no effect. He grew upset, and rain came.

The Gemara relates: Rabbia decreed a fast. He prayed for mercy, but rain did not come. They said to him: But when this Rav Yehuda decreed a fast, rain would come. He said to them: What can I do? If the difference between us is due to Torah study, we are superior to the previous generation, as in the years of Rav Yehuda all of their learning.

A woman who pickles – אָניָה: The issue discussed in both mishnayot is the status of what is called the handles of food. Ordinarily, only the edible portions of food can contract ritual impurity but not the inedible portions, e.g., seed coverings or stems. In some cases, however, the inedible part of the food is used for holding onto the edible part. In these cases, the inedible part is called a handle of food, and it too can contract ritual impurity. Sometimes these handles may even increase the food’s volume to the minimum size susceptible to ritual impurity. The leaves of olives and vegetables are generally considered handles that are subject to ritual impurity. If, however, the olives or the vegetables are pickled, their leaves are no longer firm enough to serve as handles, and consequently they are no longer liable to ritual impurity. The complex subject of handles of foods is discussed primarily in tractate Uktzin.
Ifra Hormiz – דְּתַמְרֵי מִשּׁוּם לֵימָא יָפֶה:

Bride Parziy

And we, in contrast, learn tractate Uktzin in thirteen yeshivot, while, with regard to miracles, after declaring a fast to pray for a drought to end, when Rav Yehuda would remove one of his shoes as a sign of distress, the rain would immediately come, before he could remove his second shoe. And yet we cry out all day and no one notices us. Rabba continued: If the difference between the generations is due to inappropriate deeds, if there is anyone who has seen me do anything improper, let him say so. I am not at fault, but what can the great leaders of the generation do when their generation is not worthy, and rain is withheld on account of the people's transgressions?

The Gemara explains the reference to Rav Yehuda's shoe. Rav Yehuda saw two people wasting bread, throwing it back and forth. He said: I can learn from the fact that people are acting like this that there is plenty in the world. He cast his eyes angrily upon the world, and there was a famine. The Sages said to Rav Kahana, son of Rav Nehunya, the attendant of Rav Yehuda: The Master, who is frequently present before Rav Yehuda, should persuade him to leave by way of the door nearest the market, so that he will see the terrible effects of the famine. Rav Kahana persuaded Rav Yehuda, and he went out to the market, where he saw a crowd.

He said to them: What is this gathering? They said to him: We are standing by a container [kuspa] of dates that is for sale. He said: If so many people are crowding around to purchase a single container of dates, I can learn from this that there is a famine in the world. He said to his attendant: I want to fast over this; remove my shoes as a sign of distress. He removed one of his shoes and rain came. When he began to take off the other shoe, Elijah came and said to him: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: If you remove your other shoe, I will destroy the entire world so that you will not be further distressed.

Rav Mari, son of Shmuel's daughter, said: At that moment, I was standing on the bank of the Pappa River. I saw angels who appeared as sailors bringing sand and gravel, and it became fine flour. Everyone came to buy this flour, but I said to them: Do not purchase this flour, as it is the product of miracles. Tomorrow, boats filled with wheat will come from Parzina, and you may purchase that produce.

The Gemara relates another story. Rava happened to come to the city of Hagrunya. He decreed a fast, but rain did not come. He said to the local residents: Everyone, continue your fast and do not eat tonight. The next morning he said to them: Whoever had a dream last night, let him say it. Rabbi Elazar of Hagrunya said to them: The following was recited to me in my dream. Good greetings to a good master from a good Lord, Who in His goodness does good for His people. Rava said: I can learn from this that it is a favorable time to pray for mercy. He prayed for mercy and rain came.

The Gemara relates another story that deals with prayer for rain. There was a certain man who was sentenced to be flogged by Rava's court because he had relations with a gentile woman. Rava flogged the man and he died as a result. When this matter was heard in the house of the Persian King Shapur, he wanted to punish Rava for imposing the death penalty, as he thought, without the king's permission. Ifra Hormiz, mother of King Shapur, said to her son: Do not interfere and quarrel with the Jews, as whatever they request from God, their Master, He gives them.
If the Master swallows another bowl — a ritual act of purifying food, where Rabbi Pappa justified in breaking his fast, as one who takes ill while fasting is permitted to eat. Nevertheless, Rav Nahman reproached Rav Pappa for breaking his fast before praying for rain (Rashi). Others suggest that Rav Nahman mocked Rav Pappa for swallowing a whole bowl of cereal. Rav Pappa should have taken the food in small quantities, so as to violate the fast as little as possible (Mahashia).

And Hanina is comfortable — a legend. Rashi explains that Rabbi Hanina was not troubled with the absence of rain, as he himself did not own any fields. However, other commentaries point out that even those who do not own their own fields should be distressed by a shortage of rain, as they too will feel the results of the drought when food shortages cause prices to rise (Shi'ah Meakubetzet). Rather, the reason Rabbi Hanina was not troubled was because he was accustomed to maintaining himself on a drought would have little e

The Gemara relates: Rav Pappa decreed a fast, but rain did not come. His heart became weak from hunger, so he swallowed a bowl of porridge, and prayed for mercy, but rain still did not come. Rav Nahman bar Ushpetzi said to him: If the Master swallows another bowl of porridge, rain will come. He was mocking Rav Pappa for eating while everyone else was fasting. Rav Pappa was embarrassed and grew upset, and rain came.

The Gemara states that Rav Aha and Ravina are often quoted together, they are

He said to her: What is this that He grants them? She replied: They pray for mercy and rain comes. He said to her: This does not prove that God hears their prayers, as that occurs merely because it is the time for rain, and it just so happens that rain falls after they pray. Rather, if you want to prove that God answers the prayers of the Jews, let them pray for mercy now, in the summer season of Tammuz, and let rain come. Ira Hormiz sent a message to Rava: Direct your attention and pray for mercy that rain may come. He prayed for mercy, but rain did not come.

The Gemara tells another story about prayer for rain. Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa was traveling along a road when it began to rain. He said before God: Master of the Universe, the entire world is comfortable, because they needed rain, but Hanina is suffering, as he is getting wet. The rain ceased. When he arrived at his home, he said before God: Master of the Universe, the entire world is suffering that the rain stopped, and Hanina is comfortable? The rain began to come again.

Rav Yosef said, in reaction to this story: What effect does the prayer of the High Priest have against that of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa? As we learned in a mishna: After leaving the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, the High Priest would recite a brief prayer in the outer chamber. The Gemara asks: What would be the prayer? Ravin bar Adda and Rava bar Adda both say in the name of Rav Yehuda that this was his prayer: May it be Your will, Lord our God, that this year shall be rainy and hot. The Gemara expresses surprise at this request: Is heat a good matter? On the contrary, it is unfavorable. Why should he request that the year be hot?

Rather, say that he recited the following: If the upcoming year is hot, may it also be rainy and moist with dew, lest the heat harm the crops. The High Priest would also pray: And let not the prayer of travelers enter Your presence. Rav Aha, son of Rava, in the name of Rav Yehuda, concluded the wording of this prayer: May the rule of power not depart from the house of Judea. And may Your nation Israel not depend upon each other for sustenance, nor upon another nation. Instead, they should be sustained from the produce of their own land. Evidently, the High Priest's prayer that God should not listen to the prayer of individual travelers was disregarded in the case of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa.

The High Priest's brief prayer — a brief prayer the High Priest recited in the Sanctuary on Yom Kippur, the High Priest recited this short prayer: May it be Your will, Lord our God, that if this year is hot, may it also be rainy. And may the rule of power not depart from the house of Judea, and may Your nation Israel not depend upon each other for sustenance, and let not the prayer of travelers enter Your presence (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Avodat Yom HaKippurim 4.1).
The Gemara continues to discuss the righteous Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa and the wonders he performed. Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: Each and every day a Divine Voice emerges from Mount Horeb and says: The entire world is sustained by the merit of My son Hanina ben Dosa, and yet for Hanina, My son, a kav of carobs, a very small amount of inferior food, is sufficient to sustain him for an entire week, from one Shabbat eve to the next Shabbat eve. The Gemara relates, Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa’s wife would heat the oven every Shabbat eve and create a great amount of smoke.

A miracle was performed for Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa’s wife, as her neighbor saw the oven filled with bread and the kneading basin filled with dough. She said to Rabbi Hanina’s wife, calling her by name: So-and-so, so-and-so, bring a shovel, as your bread is burning. She said to her neighbor: I too went inside for that very purpose. A tanna taught: She too had entered the inner room to bring a shovel, because she was accustomed to miracles and anticipated that one would occur to spare her embarrassment.

The Gemara further relates: Rabbi Hanina’s wife said to him: Until when will we continue to suffer this poverty? He said to her: What can we do? She responded: Pray for mercy that something will be given to you from Heaven. He prayed for mercy and something like the palm of a hand emerged and gave him one leg of a golden table. That night, his wife saw in a dream that in the future, i.e., in the World-to-Come, the righteous will eat at a golden table that has three legs, but she will be eating on a table that has two legs.

When she told her husband this story, he said to her: Are you content that everyone will eat at a complete table and we will eat at a defective table? She said to him: But what can we do? Pray for mercy, that the leg of the golden table should be taken from you. He prayed for mercy, and it was taken from him. A tanna taught in a baraita: The last miracle was greater than the first, as it is learned as a tradition that Heaven gives but does not take back.

The Gemara relates that one Shabbat evening, Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa saw that his daughter was sad. He said to her: My daughter, why are you sad? She said to him: I confused a vessel of vinegar for a vessel of oil and I lit the Shabbat lamp with vinegar. Soon the lamp will be extinguished and we will be left in the dark. He said to her: My daughter, what are you concerned about? He Who said to the oil that it should burn can say to the vinegar that it should burn. A tanna taught: That lamp burned continuously the entire day, until they brought from it light for havdala.

Language

At a golden table that has three legs – אֲנָאָה דִּקְבָּקָא מִן מִי־וּלַק תַּלֶק בְּכָל: The commentaries have suggested various explanations of this dream. Some say that the three legs of the table allude to the reward that the righteous will receive in the World-to-Come for upholding the three foundations upon which this world rests: Torah, service of God, and acts of charity. When Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa asked for an improvement in his financial situation, he was given one of the table legs as a reward for his service of God, i.e., his prayers. When his wife related her dream to him, Rabbi Hanina understood that if he accepted the golden leg in this world, his reward in the World-to-Come would be diminished, so he asked for the table leg to be taken back (Mahrasha).

Notes

At golden table [inderona] – אַבַּרְאָה דִּקְבָּקָא: Apparently derived from the Middle Persian andar, meaning inside or within.

Does not take back – עָזַקְתָה אֵל מַעַל: Some commentaries cite the Jerusalem Talmud, where this passage is explained as follows: The hand of the receiver is at the bottom, while the hand of the giver is on top. In other words, man, who is in this lowly world, can receive a gift from Heaven, but under ordinary circumstances he cannot give it back (Mikraot).