and who lends a selo to a pauper⁸ at his time of need, about him the verse states:¹⁰ “Then shall you call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say: Here I am” (Isaiah 58:9).

The Gemara provides a mnemonic device⁹ for a series of statements cited in the name of Rabbi Elazar: Woman; and land; helper; this; two; the blessings; merchants; lowly: The Gemara presents these statements: Rabbi Elazar said: Any man who does not have a wife is not a man,¹¹ as it is stated: “Male and female He created them…and called their name Adam” (Genesis 5:2). And Rabbi Elazar said: Any man who does not have his own land is not a man,¹² as it is stated: “The heavens are the heavens of the Lord; but the earth He has given to the children of men” (Psalms 115:16).

And Rabbi Elazar said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “I will make him a helpmate for him [kenegdo]” (Genesis 2:18)? If one is worthy his wife helps him; if he is not worthy she is against him.¹³ And some say a slightly different version: Rabbi Elazar raised a contradiction: It is written in the Torah with a spelling that allows it to be read: Striking him [kenegdo], and we read it as though it said: For him [kenegdo], if he is worthy she is for him as his helpmate; if he is not worthy she strikes him.

The Gemara relates that Rabbi Yosei encountered Elijah the prophet and said to him: It is written: I will make him a helpmate. In what manner does a woman help a man?¹⁴ Elijah said to him: When a man brings wheat from the field, does he chew raw wheat? When he brings home flax, does he wear unprocessed flax? His wife turns the raw products into bread and clothing. Is his wife not found to be the one who lights up his eyes and stands on his feet?

Who lends a selo to a pauper, etc. – רבקת אלהים ילדה בר י时报. Tosefat raise an apparent contradiction between this statement and the statement in tractate Ḥagiga (5a) that providing money to a pauper at his time of need brings trouble for the pauper. The Rifa explains that he is praised if he lends the pauper money for food. However, if the pauper’s creditors force him to sell his belongings in order to pay his debt, which is not to his benefit, it is improper to provide the pauper with money by purchasing those belongings at reduced rates. Others explain that one is criticized if he covets the pauper’s property and lends him money with the aim of taking something for himself when the loan is due. The Rishonim explains homiletically that the expression: His time of need, is referring to the lender. A lender who himself has fallen on troubled times and yet does not refrain from giving the pauper a loan is praiseworthy.

About him the verse states – י时报. According to many commentaries, an earlier verse: “When you see the naked and you cover him, and you do not hide yourself from your own flesh” (Isaiah 58:7), is an important part of this proof, as it demonstrates that the context of the verse cited in the Gemara is helping the poor and taking responsibility to help one’s relatives and neighbors (see Yad Rama and Maharsha).

Is not a man, etc. – לֹא אִישׁ. The Maharsha explains that in order to be complete, a man must participate in creation, either by raising children or by growing crops from the land. Against him – מַעַן. This is derived from the fact that the term kenegdo is superfluous, as the verse could simply have said: I will make him a helpmate. Alternatively, the MeiRI explains that the word kenegdo itself can be interpreted to mean: Against him, i.e., opposed to him.

In what manner does a woman help a man – מַעַן אֵיבָא אֶלֱﬠָזָר. The commentaries express surprise at both this question and its answer. Was Rabbi Yosei unaware of the assistance a wife provides her husband? And what is the point of such a simple response? The Rifa explains that the question was based upon the fact that although the main purpose of marriage is in order to have children, a woman is not merely man’s helpmate in this regard, and therefore the verse does not refer to this aspect of their relationship. The MeiRI explains that the main thrust of the answer is that the help a man receives from his wife provides him with his basic needs so that he has time for Torah study. Consequently, her assistance is not merely practical but enables him to achieve the ultimate goal of a Jewish man.

Background

Mnemonic device – קְנֶגְדוֹ. Because the Talmud was studied orally for many generations, mnemonic devices were necessary to remember a series of halakhot and the order in which they were taught.

Is not a man – לֹא אִישׁ. The Rema cites this teaching in the name of the Tur, in order to emphasize the importance of marriage (Shulhan Arukh, Even Ha’ザー 11).
Ships sailed back and forth frequently between the ports of France and Spain, especially when these two lands were Roman colonies. Commerce in the western Mediterranean serves here as an example of a matter that would seem to have no direct relevance to the Jewish people.

Conducting business — אֲמַר אֶל יְאָדָם: "יְהוָה קָרָא לְאַמְּעַרְעָא בְּﬠִיסְקָא לְפוּתְיָא בְּרֵכוֹת מִגַּלְיָא כֹּל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

There is no occupation lowlier, etc. — אַאַר解放军: "All craftsmen are destined, etc. — Rav entered between the sheaves in a field and saw them waving in the wind. He said to them: If you want to wave go ahead and wave, but conducting business is better than farming with you. Rava similarly said: One who has a hundred dinars that are invested in a business is able to eat meat and wine every day, whereas he who has a hundred dinars worth of land eats only salt and vegetables. And what is more, working the land causes him to lie on the ground at night in order to guard it, and it draws quarrels upon him with other people.

All craftsmen are destined, etc. — אַאַר解放军: "And Rabbi Elazar said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “And in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed [nirvēkhū]” (Genesis 12:3)? The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Abraham: I have two good shoots to graft [Ishavrikh] onto you: Ruth the Moabite, the ancestress of the house of David, and Naamah the Ammonite, whose marriage with Solomon led to the ensuing dynasty of the kings of Judea. “All the families of the earth” means: Even families that live in the earth, i.e., who have land of their own, are blessed only due to the Jewish people. Similarly, when the verse states: “All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him” (Genesis 18:18), it indicates that even ships that come from Galia to Hispania are blessed only due to the Jewish people.

And Rabbi Elazar said: All craftsmen are destined to stand upon and work the land, as it is stated: “And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land” (Ezekiel 27:29). And Rabbi Elazar said: There is no occupation lowlier than working the land, as it is stated: “And they shall come down,” implying that one who works the land is of lower stature than even a sailor. The Gemara similarly relates: Rabbi Elazar saw land that was plowed across its width. He said to it: Even if they plow you once more lengthwise, for further improvement, conducting business is better than farming with you, as the potential profits gained by selling merchandise are far greater than those from working the land.

The Gemara relates a similar incident: Rav entered between the sheaves in a field and saw them waving in the wind. He said to them: If you want to wave go ahead and wave, but conducting business is better than farming with you. Rava similarly said: One who has a hundred dinars that are invested in a business is able to eat meat and wine every day, whereas he who has a hundred dinars worth of land eats only salt and vegetables. And what is more, working the land causes him to lie on the ground at night in order to guard it, and it draws quarrels upon him with other people.
Rav Pappa said: Sow your own produce and do not buy it. Even though they are equal to each other in value, these that you sow will be blessed. Conversely, buy your clothes rather than weave [teizul] them yourself. The Gemara comments: ‘This applies only to mats [bistarkei]’, but with regard to the cloak one wears, perhaps he will not find it precisely to his liking, and therefore he should make his own cloak, which fits his measurements.

Rav Pappa further advised: If there is a hole in your house, close it up and do not enlarge it and then plaster it, or at least plaster it and do not knock it down and build it again. As, whoever engages in construction becomes poor. Hurry to buy land so that you do not lose the opportunity. Be patient and marry a woman who is suitable for you. Descend a level to marry a woman of lower social status, and ascend a level to choose a friend [shushlevina].

Rabbi Elazar bar Avina said: Calamity befalls the world only due to the sins of the Jewish people, as it is stated: “I have cut off nations, their corners are desolate; I have made their streets waste” (Zephaniah 3:6), and it is written: “I said: Surely you will fear Me, you will receive correction” (Zephaniah 3:7). This indicates that other nations were punished so that the Jewish people would mend their ways.

The Gemara cites more statements with regard to wives. When Rav was taking leave of his uncle and teacher, Rabbi Hyya, upon his return from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia, Rabbi Hyya said to him: May the Merciful One save you from something that is worse than death. Rav was perplexed: Is there anything that is worse than death? He went, examined the sources, and found the following verse: “And I find more bitter than death the woman, etc.” (Ecclises 7:26). Rabbi Hyya was hinting at this verse, and indeed, Rav’s wife would constantly aggravate him. When he would say to her: Prepare me lentils, she would prepare him peas; if he asked her for peas, she would prepare him lentils.

When Hyya, his son, grew up, he would reverse the requests Rav asked him to convey to her, so that Rav would get what he wanted. Rav said to his son Hyya: Your mother has improved now that you convey my requests. He said to Rav: It is I who reverse your request to her. Rav said to him: This is an example of the well-known adage that people say: ‘He who comes from you shall teach you wisdom; I should have thought of that idea myself. You, however, should not do so’, i.e., reverse my request, as it is stated: “They have taught their tongue to speak lies, they weary themselves to commit iniquity, etc.” (Jeremiah 9:4). If you attribute such a request to me, you will have uttered a falsehood.

PERSONALITIES

Rav Pappa –麝 φηλ δια Ραββί Pappa, from the fifth generation of Babylonian amoraim, was a student of both Abaye and Rava in Pumbedita. After Rava’s death Rav Pappa established an academy in Nerheim, where he was joined by his close friend, Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, who was appointed chief lecturer. Many of Rav’s students came to study under Rav Pappa, who had more than two hundred students attending his lectures.

Rav Pappa’s father was a wealthy merchant and supported him throughout many years of Talmudic study. Rav Pappa became a wealthy businessman in his own right and a successful brewer of date beer. He also prospered in other business ventures. The Talmud records that he engaged in trade with both Jews and gentiles and had a reputation for fairness and generosity in his business dealings. Rav Huna became his partner in many such undertakings and became wealthy as well.

Rav Pappa had great respect for the Sages, and upon entering a city he would immediately call upon the rabbinic head of the community. Once, Rav Pappa felt that he had spoken inappropriately about one of the Sages, and he took upon himself a personal fast as penance for his act. He was reluctant to offer final rulings in various areas of halakha, and he often chose to be stringent in accordance with both opinions in the Talmud rather than rule in accordance with a single opinion.

Rav Pappa was blessed with ten sons, all of whom were Torah scholars. Traditionally, the names of the ten sons of Rav Pappa are recited as part of the ceremony at the completion of the study of a tractate. While the source of this tradition is unclear and the identities of the sons are uncertain as well, the Rema suggests that it commemorates the celebrations made by Rav Pappa with his sons upon completing a course of study.

Rav –אד ביל רע, whose full name was Rabbi Abba ben Ayvu, was the first, and perhaps the greatest, of the Babylonian amoraim. Known as Abba Aricha because of his great height, Rav established the academy in Sura which lasted eight hundred years, through the period of the geonim. In addition to the visiting students who attended the academy only during the kalli months of Adar and Elul, the Gemara reports that twelve hundred full-time students studied in the academy throughout the year.

In his youth, Rav traveled to Eretz Yisrael with his uncle, Rabbi Hyya, where he studied under Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, the editor of the Mishna. He traveled back and forth between Israel and Babylonia until he settled in Babylonia in the year 219 CE. Rav’s greatness is apparent not only in the large number of amoraim who were his students and who quote him throughout the Talmud, but also by the fact that in addition to his status as the first amorah, he is recognized as the last of the tanna’im and consequently was permitted to disagree with tannaitic rulings.

Rav’s teachings are found throughout both the Jerusalem and the Babylonian Talmuds. Among his many rulings are several that concern issues of marriage, such as his ruling that a man should not marry a woman without first meeting her, and that underage girls should not be married until they are old enough to state whom they want to marry. His rulings in the area of ritual halakha were invariably accepted, although the rulings of his colleague Shmuel were accepted in criminal and financial matters. Rav’s son, Rabbi Hyya, followed in his father’s footsteps and became a great scholar; his other son, Ayvu, was a merchant.

NOTES

Close it up and do not enlarge it and plaster it – אַלּוֹ קָפֹּץ וְלָא נִמְרַמְיָא: According to the Meiri this is an injunction to fix things quickly before they get worse, as it is easier to close up a hole than to plaster an entire wall. Similarly, he should replaster the wall in order to ensure that he will not have to build it again from scratch.

Calamity befalls…only, etc. – בִּשְׁעֵר תֵּיזוּל: This complements the previous teaching. Just as the fate of the world depends on the Jewish people with regard to blessing, the same applies with regard to misfortune. Consequently, the Jewish people should know that their own fate as well as that of other nations lies in their hands (see Meiri and Ayun Yosif).

Is there anything that is worse than death – אִם הוּא יֵיסוּד פּוּרְﬠָנוּת: Elsewhere the Sages list numerous problems that are worse than death, including captivity and famine. The Ayun Yosif explains that it was due to these different possibilities that Rav sought to discover the precise nature of his mentor’s blessing. Since he realized that Rabbi Hyya had presumably also been giving him advice along with his blessing, he concluded that Rabbi Hyya was referring to a bad wife. Furthermore, knowing that Rabbi Hyya’s own wife caused him to suffer, Rav realized that this must have been what he meant.

You should not do so – אֵין מִיַּלְדוּ הָעֹסֵק לַשׁוֹנָם: Admittedly, it is permitted to depart from the truth for the sake of peace, but since in this case there is another way of achieving the same result, it is better not to grow accustomed to telling lies (Meiri, Rav Ahavam min Haftar).

LANGUAGE

Weave (teizul) – יישן: The versions of Gemara cited by the geonim and Rabbi Bnei Hananel read teizul or teizul. InSyria this word means weaving, which ties in well with the idea that one should buy an item ready-made.

Mats (bistarkel) – בִּשְׁעֵר קַסַּר: Apparently a loanword from the Middle Iranian bistarak, meaning bedding, mattress, or cover.

Friend (shushlevina) – בִּשְׁעֵר קַסַּר: This is originally Akkadian, from where it was adapted into both Aramaic and Hebrew. Its primary meaning is the one who accompanies the groom to the wedding canopy and helps with some of the technical arrangements of the wedding, and so forth. Its meaning was broadened to a general term for a close friend.
According to Rashi, Matza her rival is at her side –

The Gemara relates a similar story. Rabbi Hiyya’s wife would constantly aggravate him. Nevertheless, when he would find something she would appreciate, he would wrap it in his shawl and bring it to her. Rav said to him: Doesn’t she constantly aggravate you? Why do you bring her things? Rabbi Hiyya said to him: It is enough for us that our wives raise our children and save us from sin. We should therefore show our gratitude to them. The Gemara cites a related incident: Ray Yehuda was teaching Torah to Ray Yitzhak, his son, and they encountered the verse: “And I find more bitter than death the woman” (Ecclusiates 7:26). His son said to him: For example, whom? His father replied: For example, your mother.

The Gemara asks: Didn’t Ray Yehuda teach Ray Yitzhak, his son, the following baraita: A man finds peace of mind only with his first wife, as it is stated: “Let your fountain be blessed, and have joy from the wife of your youth” (Proverbs 5:18), and his son said to him: For example, whom, and his father responded in this case as well: For example, your mother. This indicates that Ray Yehuda did find peace of mind with his wife. The Gemara answers: She was aggressive and forceful, but she was easily appeased.

The Gemara asks: What are the circumstances when a woman is considered a bad wife? Abaye said: She arranges a table for him and arranges her mouth for him at the same time. In other words, although she prepares food for him, she verbally abuses him while he eats. Rava said: She arranges a table for him and then turns her back to him, displaying her lack of interest in his company.

Rabbi Hama bar Hanina said: Once a man marries a woman his iniquities crumble (mitpakekin), as it is stated: “Whoever finds a wife finds good, and obtains [veyafsek] favor of the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22). In the West, i.e., Eretz Yisrael, when a man married a woman they would say to him as follows: Matza or motze? In other words, they would ask the groom if the appropriate passage for his wife is that verse, which begins with the word matza, as it is written: Whoever finds [matza] a wife finds good, or whether the more appropriate verse is the one beginning with the word motze, as it is written: “And I find [motze] more bitter than death the woman” (Ecclusiates 7:26).

Rava said: It is a mitzva to divorce a bad wife, as it is written: “Cast out the scorners and contention will depart; strife and shame will cease” (Proverbs 22:10). And Rava said: A bad wife whose marriage contract settlement is too large for her husband to pay in the event of a divorce, her rival wife is at her side. In other words, the only way for him to improve matters is to take another wife. As people say in the well-known adage: The way to trouble a woman is with her peer and not with a thorn. And Rava said: A bad wife is as troublesome as a day of heavy rain, as it is stated: “A continual dropping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike” (Proverbs 27:15).
And Rava said: Come and see how good a good wife is and how bad a bad wife is. How good is a good wife? As it is written: Whoever finds a wife finds good. If the verse speaks of her, a wife, this demonstrates how good a good wife is, as the Bible praises her. If the verse speaks metaphorically of the Torah, it nevertheless indicates how good a good wife is, as the Bible is compared to her. Conversely, how bad is a bad wife? As it is written: “And I find more bitter than death the woman.” If the verse speaks of her, this demonstrates how bad a bad wife is, as the Bible condemns her. If the verse speaks metaphorically of Gehenna, it still demonstrates how bad a bad wife is, as Gehenna is compared to her.

The Gemara cites further statements on the same issue. The verse states: “Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape” (Jeremiah 11:11). Rav Nahman said that Rabbi bar Avuh said: This is a bad wife whose marriage contract is large. Similarly, with regard to the verse: “The Lord has given me into the hands of those against whom I cannot stand” (Lamentations 1:14), Rav Hisda said that Mar Ukva bar Hyya said: This is a bad wife whose marriage contract is large. In the West, Eretz Yisrael, they said this verse is referring to one whose food is dependent on his money. He is forced to purchase his food with cash, as he does not possess land of his own.

With regard to the verse: “Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people” (Deuteronomy 28:32), Rav Hanan bar Rava said that Rav said: This is a reference to the children’s father’s wife, their stepmother. With regard to the verse: “I will provoke them with a vile nation” (Deuteronomy 32:21), Rav Hanan bar Rava said that Rav said: This is a bad wife whose marriage contract is large. Rabbi Eliezer says that these are apostates, and so too the verse states: “The vile man has said in his heart: There is no God, they have dealt corruptly” (Psalms 14:1), which proves that an apostate is called vile.

It was taught in a baraita with regard to the verse: “I will provoke them with a vile nation,” that these are the inhabitants of Barbarya and the inhabitants of Martenai, who walk naked in the marketplace, as none is more despised and abominable before the Omnipresent than one who walks naked in the marketplace. Rabbi Johanan said: These are the Habbarim, a sect of Persian priests. The Gemara relates: When they said to Rabbi Johanan: The Habbarim have come to Babylonia, he shuddered and fell of his chair, out of concern for the Jews living there. They said to him: There is a way to deal with their persecution, as they accept bribes. Upon hearing that not all was lost, he straightened himself and sat in his place once again.

BACKGROUND

Barbarya and Martenai – Barbarya and Martenai are lands in northern Africa, called Paphlagonia in Greek, meaning foreign place. Their language sounded to the Greeks as though they were saying barbarian, and consequently, the Greeks considered them to be uncivilized and primitive. The term has been used in various forms through the generations in different languages, and it is still used today as the name for the local tribe, the Berbers as well as in the term barbarian, referring to uncivilized people.

Martenai is a version of the Roman province Mauritania, also in northern Africa, roughly corresponding to modern-day Morocco.

The Gemara is apparently referring to members of tribes from those two areas who were unaccustomed to wearing clothing, or who wore merely loin cloths.

NOTES

Whose food is dependent on his money (kaspa) – Kaspa, the version of the text cited by the Meiři reads: Whose food is dependent on his palm (kappo). In other words, although manual labor is laudable, if it is one’s only source of income, he will not earn a comfortable living.

Habbarim – The designation for Zoroastrian priests comes from the term “tover haver” (Deuteronomy 18:10), referring to acts of sorcery. It implies that these priests were seen as involved in various magic rituals.
The book of Ben Sira was extensive and popular. The author's grandson, who lived in Alexandria, translated it into Greek in 132 BCE, making it available to those who could not read the original Hebrew. In the Septuagint, and consequently in many other translations, Ecclesiasticus is one of the books of the Bible. The Sages considered it apocryphal and even criticized those who read it, both because its council is uneven in value and due to the fact that people confused it with the Alphabet of Sira, a book of folk wisdom of dubious worth. In any case, the Sages quotes the book of Ben Sira on many occasions, and sometimes even treated it as one of the sacred writings. They certainly did not refrain from citing its good advice in their sermons, or from making use of its wisdom.

For centuries, the book was known only through translations, but recent discoveries on Masada, among other places, have unearthed large portions of the work in Hebrew. As it was not a sacred book, copyists apparently allowed themselves certain liberties, which accounts for the different versions of the text. Moreover, it seems that the Sages of the Talmud were able to cite it from memory.
The souls of the body – קבוצת״ מייצונים Many early commentators explain that the body is referring to the place where the souls are kept. The <i>Arukh</i> states that it is a curtain before the Divine Presence with the images of all people destined to be born. Rabbi Avraham min HaHar cites a homiletic explanation that the final redemption will not arrive until all mankind’s physical powers are worn out, and he is ready to become a receptacle for the spiritual.

As my soul years for Torah – הַדוֹרֶשׁ שֶׁרֶדְשֵׁקֶם The mitzva of marriage – <i>תּוֹפָאָה</i> A man who does not marry is considered like one who sheds blood, diminishes the Divine Image, and causes the Divine Presence to depart from the Jewish people. Upon his marriage, his transgressions vanish, as per the Gemara (Shulchan Arukh, Even HaEzer 1:1).

My soul years for Torah – הַדוֹרֶשׁ שֶׁרֶדְשֵׁקֶם It is stated in a<sup>1</sup> baraita that Rabbi Eliezer says: Anyone who does not engage in the mitzva to be fruitful and multiply is considered as though he sheds blood, as it is stated: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed” (Genesis 9:6), and it is written immediately afterward: “And you, be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 9:7).

The mitzva of marriage – קבוצת״ מייצונים: Many early commentators explain that the body is referring to the place where the souls are kept. The <i>Arukh</i> states that it is a curtain before the Divine Presence with the images of all people destined to be born. Rabbi Avraham min HaHar cites a homiletic explanation that the final redemption will not arrive until all mankind’s physical powers are worn out, and he is ready to become a receptacle for the spiritual.

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