

ונכפה – כְּמוֹמִין שְׁבִסְתֵּר דְּמִי. וְהִי מִלִּי – דְּקָבִיעַ לִיהָ יָמָן. אֲבָל לֹא קָבִיעַ לִיהָ – כְּמוֹמִין שְׁבִגְלוּי דְּמִי.

מתני' הָאִישׁ שֶׁנִּלְדָּו בּוֹ מוּמִין – אֵין בּוֹפִין אוֹתוֹ לְהוֹצִיא. אָמַר רַבִּין שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אֲמוּרִים – בְּמוּמִין הַקְּטָנִים, אֲבָל בְּמוּמִין הַגְּדוֹלִים – בּוֹפִין אוֹתוֹ לְהוֹצִיא.

גמ' רב יהודה תני: נולדו, חייא בר רב תני: הוּ. מֵאֵן דְּאָמַר נִלְדוּ – כָּל שֶׁנֶּן הָיִי, דְּקָסְבְּרָה וְקִיבְלָה. מֵאֵן דְּאָמַר הָיִי, אֲבָל נִלְדוּ – לֹא.

תני, אמר רבין שמעון בן גמליאל: במה דברים אמורים – במומין קטנים, אבל במומין גדולים – בופין אותו להוציא. בשלמא למאן דאמר נולדו – היינו דשאני בין גדולים לקטנים. אלא למאן דאמר הוּ – מה לי גדולים מה לי קטנים? הא סברה וקיבלה!

בסברה היא שיכולה לקבל, ועכשיו אין יכולה לקבל. ואלו הן מומין גדולים? פירש רבין שמעון בן גמליאל: [בגין] מסמית עינו, נקטעה ידו, ונשברה רגלו.

And an epileptic⁸ is considered like a hidden blemish,^h for it is possible that nobody is aware of her ailment. The Gemara comments: **And this applies only if the sickness comes at regular intervals**, as the woman and her family can conceal her illness. **But if the attacks do not appear at regular intervals and can occur at any time, this is considered like a visible blemish**, as it is impossible that her condition is unknown to others.

MISHNA In the case of a man who developed blemishes^h after marriage, the court does not force him to divorceⁿ his wife. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: **In what case is this statement said?** It is said with regard to minor blemishes. However, with regard to major blemishes, which will be defined later in the Gemara, the court does force him to divorce her.

GEMARA Rav Yehuda teaches the mishna in accordance with the version quoted above: The man developed blemishes after marrying his wife. Conversely, **Hiyya bar Rav teaches:** The man had blemishes prior to the marriage. The Gemara clarifies the difference between the two opinions: **The one who says that the man who developed blemishes after marriage does not have to divorce his wife says that the same halakha applies all the more so to one who had blemishes beforehand, as she was aware of them and accepted them.** However, **the one who says that the mishna is referring to one who had blemishes prior to his marriage would say that only in that case he is not compelled to divorce her, but if they developed after the marriage this is not the halakha**, as she did not marry him under such conditions.

We learned in the mishna: Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: **In what case is this statement said?** This is said with regard to minor blemishes, but with regard to major blemishes the court forces him to divorce her. The Gemara poses a question: **Granted, according to the one who says that the correct version is: Developed blemishes, this is the reason that there is a difference between major and minor blemishes**, as only major blemishes are grounds for divorce. **But according to the one who says that the correct version is: Had blemishes, what difference is it to me whether they were major blemishes, and what difference is it to me whether they were minor ones?** Either way, she was aware of them and accepted them.

The Gemara answers: In the case of major blemishes she can claim that she initially thought that she could acceptⁿ a husband with such blemishes, but now that she is married she realizes that she cannot accept such an arrangement. The Gemara inquires: **And what are these major blemishes of a husband that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel considers grounds for divorce?** Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel explained: For example, if his eye was blinded, or his hand cut off, or his leg broken.

BACKGROUND

Epileptic – נִכְפָּה: An epileptic's attacks are usually sudden, unprovoked, and unpredictable. However, there are situations where seizures may be connected to particular times or events. For example, there are epileptics who experience seizures only while sleeping. It is also possible for seizures to occur in greater frequency during particular points in a female epileptic's menstrual cycle.

HALAKHA

An epileptic is considered like a hidden blemish – נִכְפָּה: With regard to an epileptic woman, if the disease affects her at regular intervals it is like a hidden blemish, but if it happens at unpredictable moments it is considered a visible blemish. Rabbeinu Yeruham contends that concerning an illness such as epilepsy or halitosis, although they are visible blemishes, it makes no difference whether or not the town had a bathhouse (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Ishut* 25:2; *Shulhan Arukh, Even HaEzer* 39:4, and in the comment of Rema; 117:5; 154:5, and in the comment of Rema).

הָאִישׁ שֶׁנִּלְדָּו בּוֹ מוּמִין – If a man developed blemishes after his marriage, even such major ones as the loss of a hand or a leg, he is not forced to divorce his wife, in accordance with the Rabbis in the mishna and as ruled by Rava. The Rema writes that according to the *Tur* and the *Rosh*, this applies only to one hand or foot, but if both hands or feet were cut off, or if he was blinded in both eyes, he is forced to divorce her (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Ishut* 25:11; *Shulhan Arukh, Even HaEzer* 154:4).

NOTES

אין בופין אותו להוציא – The court does not force him to divorce – The *Nimmukei Yosef* cites an opinion that even though the court does not force the man to divorce his wife and pay out the marriage contract, if she wishes to be divorced without payment of the marriage contract, he is forced to comply. This appears to follow the opinion that in general a woman who is repulsed by her husband does not have to stay with him.

בסברה היא – שיכולה לקבל – This reasoning seems to run counter to the opinion of the Rabbis in the next mishna. This point is addressed in the Jerusalem Talmud, and the conclusion there is that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel follows the opinion of Rabbi Meir in the next mishna. The Rashba and the Ritva maintain that since he did not make an explicit stipulation in this regard, the claim is accepted. Others contend that in practice such a claim from the wife is not accepted (Ramah; *Mishne LaMelekh*).

These are the defects for which we force him to divorce her – אלו שבוֹפִין אוֹתוֹ לְהוֹצִיא: If a husband developed one of these blemishes, namely a bad odor from his mouth or nose, or if he became a gatherer of dog excrement or a miner who hews copper from its source, he is forced to divorce his wife and give her the payment of her marriage contract. He is compelled to divorce his wife only if this is what she wants, but if she wishes to remain with him she can choose to do so. If he had stipulated with her in advance, he is not forced to give her a divorce. The *halakha* follows the opinion of the Rabbis in the mishna, not Rabbi Meir (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Ishut* 25:11; *Shulhan Arukh, Even HaEzer* 154:1).

One afflicted with boils – מוֹבַה שְׁחִין: If a man became afflicted with boils, he is forced to divorce his wife even if she does not request to leave him, as physical contact with his wife makes his flesh rot away (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Ishut* 25:12; *Shulhan Arukh, Even HaEzer* 154:1).

He had a brother who was also a tanner – הָיָה לוֹ אָח – בְּרוֹסִי: If a woman's husband had one of the blemishes for which he is forced to divorce her, and he died and she happened before his brother, who had the very same blemish, for levirate marriage, she can say that she could live with her husband in this manner but not with his brother. He must therefore perform *halitza* with her and pay out her marriage contract (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Ishut* 25:13; *Shulhan Arukh, Even HaEzer* 154:2, 165:4).

BACKGROUND

One who has a polyp – בַּעַל פּוֹלִיפּוֹס: In our days polyps are classified as growths, usually non-malignant, which develop around various mucous membranes of the body. It is possible that the mishna is referring to a chronic infection of the nasal sinuses or the tonsils, which causes a foul odor to emit from the nose or mouth.

Gatherer – מְקַמֵּץ: There is a dispute in the *Tosefta* as to whether this refers to a small-scale tanner, who deals with hides only in small amounts and works alone, or a gatherer of dog excrement. Until very recent times, animal hides were softened by placing animal excrement in the water in which the skins were soaked, as the release of enzymes from the excrement would have a softening effect.

Melder of copper – מְצַרֵּף נְחוֹשֶׁת: Even though clumps of copper are occasionally found in a metallic state, most copper deposits appear in the form of various metal sulfides. It is the job of the melder of copper to separate the sulfur from the copper, a process that creates a foul odor. People involved in this work at regular intervals will find this bad smell absorbed in their clothing and bodies.

אָתָּמָר, רַבִּי אֲבָא בַר יַעֲקֹב אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: הֲלֹכָה כְּרַבָּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל. רַבָּא אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן: הֲלֹכָה כְּדַבְרֵי חֲכָמִים.

וּמִי אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן הֵכִי? וְהָא אָמַר רַבָּה בַר בַּר חֲנָה אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: בְּכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁשָּׁנָה רַבָּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בְּמִשְׁנֵיתוֹ – הֲלֹכָה כְּמוֹתוֹ, חוּץ מֵעֶרְבֵי וְצִדֵּי וְרֹאשֵׁי אֲחֻרוֹנָה! אָמְרָאֵי נִינְהוּ, וְאַלְבִּיאַ דְּרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן.

מתני' ואלו שבוֹפִין אוֹתוֹ לְהוֹצִיא: מוֹבַה שְׁחִין, וְבַעַל פּוֹלִיפּוֹס, וְהַמְצַרֵּף נְחוֹשֶׁת, וְהַבְּרוֹסִי. בֵּין שֶׁהָיוּ עַד שֶׁלֹּא נִישָׂאוּ, וּבֵין מִשְׁנֵי שֶׁאֻוּ נוֹלְדוּ. וְעַל כּוֹלֵן אָמַר רַבִּי מֵאִיר: אִף עַל פִּי שֶׁהִתְנַה עִמָּה, יְכוּלָה הִיא שְׂתֵאמֹר: סְבוּרָה הִייתִי שְׂאֵנִי יְכוּלָה לְקַבֵּל, וְעַכְשָׁיו אֵינִי יְכוּלָה לְקַבֵּל.

וְחֲכָמִים אוֹמְרִים: מְקַבְּלָת הִיא עַל כְּרַחֲהָ, חוּץ מִמוֹבַה שְׁחִין, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁמִּמְקַתּוֹ. מַעֲשֵׂה בְּצִדּוֹן בְּבוֹרוֹסֵי אֲחָד שְׂמֵת וְהָיָה לוֹ אָח בְּרוֹסִי. אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים: יְכוּלָה הִיא שְׂתֵאמֹר: לְאַחֲרַי הִייתִי יְכוּלָה לְקַבֵּל, וְלֶךְ אֵינִי יְכוּלָה לְקַבֵּל.

גמ' מאי "בעל פולפוס"? אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: רִיחַ הַחוֹטֶם. בְּמִתְנִיתָא תְּנָא: רִיחַ הַפֶּה. רַב אַסִּי מִתְנֵי אִיפְכָא, וּמִנַּח בָּהּ סִימָנָא: שְׁמוּאֵל לֹא פָּסִיק פּוֹמִיָּה מִכּוּלֵּיהּ פִּירְקִין.

It was stated: Rabbi Abba bar Yaakov said that Rabbi Yohanan said: The *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. Rava said that Rav Nahman said: The *halakha* is in accordance with the statement of the Rabbis that there is no difference between minor and major blemishes.

The Gemara poses a question: **And did Rabbi Yohanan actually say so, that the *halakha* follows Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel? But Rabba bar bar Hanna said that Rabbi Yohanan said: Wherever Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel taught in our Mishna, the *halakha* is in accordance with him, apart from three cases:** The *halakha* of a guarantor (*Bava Batra* 173b); the *halakha* he stated with regard to the divorce case in Sidon (*Gittin* 74a); and the latter of his disputes with the Rabbis with regard to the halakhot of evidence (*Sanhedrin* 31a). Since Rabbi Yohanan issued a statement that the *halakha* is in accordance with Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel in all but three exceptional cases, why would it be necessary for him to issue a special ruling in the present discussion? The Gemara answers: **They are *amora'im*, and they disagree with regard to the opinion of Rabbi Yohanan.** Rabbi Abba bar Yaakov maintains that Rabbi Yohanan did not issue a general directive, but rather provided a separate ruling for each case.

MISHNA And these are the defects for which the court forces him to divorce her:^h One afflicted with boils;^h or one who has a polyp;^b or one who works as a gatherer,^b or one who works as a melder of copper,^b or one who works as a tanner of hides, all of whose work involves handling foul-smelling materials. Whether he had these defects before they got married, or whether they developed after they got married, the court forces them to divorce. **And with regard to all of these, Rabbi Meir said: Even though he stipulated with her ahead of time that he suffers from this particular ailment or this is his line of work, she can nevertheless demand a divorce and say: I thought I could accept this issue but now I realize I cannot accept it.**

And the Rabbis say: If she initially agreed she must accept it against her will, apart from a situation in which her husband is afflicted with boils. In that case the Rabbis concede that he must divorce her, because the disease consumes his fleshⁿ when they engage in marital relations. The mishna relates an additional account: **An incident occurred in Sidon involving a certain tanner who died childless, and he had a brother who was also a tanner.**^h This brother was required to enter into levirate marriage with the widow. **The Sages said: She can say: I could accept living with a tanner for your brother but I cannot accept it for you, and therefore he must perform *halitza* with her.**

GEMARA The Gemara inquires about several unclear terms which appear in the mishna: **What is one who has a polyp?** Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: This is one who has a foul odor of the nose. It was taught in a *baraita*: A polyp is a foul odor of the mouth. Rav Asi teaches the reverse, that Shmuel is the one who said a polyp is odor of the mouth. **And he provided a mnemonic device for his opinion: Shmuel did not close his mouth from our entire chapter,** meaning that he studied it and commented on it extensively. This statement was formulated in a way that contains a hint that Shmuel's opinion involves the mouth.

NOTES

The disease consumes his flesh – מִמְקַתּוֹ: Rabbeinu Yona, cited in the *Shita Mekubbetzet*, explains that the Rabbis concede to Rabbi Meir that in the case of the man afflicted with boils, he is forced to divorce his wife. This case is different from the other defects in that the condition continually worsens, and therefore she can claim that she thought she could accept his condition but now

she realizes that she cannot. He also points out that this case is different from the other defects in that even if the woman does not wish to be divorced, the court forces him to divorce her unless they agree to refrain from being secluded together, because marital relations are dangerous for him, as explained later in the Gemara (77b).

If someone married a woman...and she did not give birth – נשָׂא אִשָּׁה...וְלֹא יָלְדָה: If a man was married to a woman for ten years without her bearing children, he is forced to divorce her and give her payment of the marriage contract, in accordance with Rav Taḥalifa. In places where it is permitted, he may instead marry an additional woman instead of divorcing his present wife. The Rama cites an opinion that this *halakha* applies only if he had no viable offspring. However, if he had a child, even if he has not yet fulfilled the mitzva to be fruitful and multiply, he is not compelled to divorce her (Rivash). Nowadays, the halakhic practice is never to force a man to divorce his wife in such cases (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhhot Ishut 15:7; Shulḥan Arukh, Even HaEzer 154:10*).

וְרַב תַּחְלִיפָא בַר אַבְימי אָמַר שְׂמוּאֵל: אִפְּלוּ נִשְׂאָה וְשָׂדֶה עִמָּה עֶשְׂרֵי שָׁנִים וְלֹא יָלְדָה – בּוֹפִין אוֹתוֹ. הֲנֵן: אֵלּוּ שְׂבוּפִין אוֹתוֹ לְהוֹצִיא: מוֹבָה שְׁחִין, וּבַעַל פּוֹלִיפּוֹס. בְּשִׁלְמָא לְרַב אֶסְי, דְּרַבְנָן – קִתְנֵי דְאֹרֵייתָא – לֹא קִתְנֵי. אֶלְא לְרַב תַּחְלִיפָא בַר אַבְימי – לִיתֵינִי נִשְׂאָה וְשָׂדֶה עִמָּה עֶשְׂרֵי שָׁנִים וְלֹא יָלְדָה בּוֹפִין אוֹתוֹ!

And Rav Taḥalifa bar Avimi said that Shmuel said: Even in the case of someone who married a woman and stayed with her for ten years and she did not give birth,¹¹ the court forces him to divorce her, as he is in violation of a positive mitzva. The Gemara poses a question: We learned in the mishna: And these are the defects for which the court forces him to divorce his wife: One afflicted with boils or one who has a polyp. Granted, according to Rav Asi, only cases in which the court compels a divorce by rabbinic law are taught in the mishna, but those that are by Torah law, such as a widow married to a High Priest, are not taught. However, according to Rav Taḥalifa bar Avimi, let the mishna also teach that if he married a woman and stayed with her for ten years and she did not give birth, the court forces him to divorce her, as this is also a rabbinic enactment.

אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן: לֹא קִשְׂיָא: הָא – בְּמִילֵי, הָא – בְּשׁוּטֵי. מִתְקִיף לֵה רַבִּי אַבָּא: “בְּדַבְרִים לֹא יוֹסֵר עֲבָד.” אֶלְא אָמַר רַבִּי אַבָּא: הָא וְהָא בְּשׁוּטֵי.

Rav Naḥman said: This is not difficult, as in this case the mishna discusses someone who is forced to divorce his wife by verbal means alone, but in that case it is referring to compelling him by beating him with rods.¹² Although the court does compel a man to divorce his wife if she has not had children, the court does so only by speaking with him. Rabbi Abba strongly objects to this: Can there be a *halakha* of coercion by verbal means alone? But the verse states: “A servant will not be corrected by words” (Proverbs 29:19). Rather, Rabbi Abba said: Both this and that are referring to coercion by beating him with rods,

HALAKHA

With rods – בְּשׁוּטֵי: Whenever the Sages ruled that the husband must divorce his wife he is forced to do so, even by beating him with rods. Some maintain that if the Gemara does not state: The court forces him to divorce, but merely says: He must divorce, this means he is not compelled by striking him with rods, but the court simply tells him that he is in violation of rabbinic law and is a criminal. The Rema writes, based on the Rosh, that, as this is a matter of dispute among the halakhic authorities, one should be stringent and not use rods, in order to avoid the question of a forced bill of divorce. Physical coercion should be employed only if he married a woman forbidden to him.

When physical coercion is not used, he is not excommunicated either (*Mordekhai*), but the court has the right to apply other measures as a means of coercion, such as prohibiting commercial transactions with him (*Sha'arei Dura*; Maharik), banning the circumcision and burial of his sons (*Teshuvot Binyamin Ze'ev*), and other methods of coercion to which the court has access. The Rivash says that all of these means of coercion apply to coercing a man to give his wife a bill of divorce, but the methods of striking with rods and excommunication may be used in order to force him to fulfill any of his legal obligations (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhhot Ishut 15:7; Shulḥan Arukh, Even HaEzer 154:21*).

Perek VII
Daf 77 Amud b

HALAKHA

I will live with him under the supervision of witnesses – דִּיּוּרְנָא בְּהֵדִיָּה בְּסַהְרֵי – In the case of a man who developed blemishes for which he is forced to divorce his wife, if she prefers to stay with him, she may do so. However, if he is afflicted with boils, the court does not allow them to live together, as the disease consumes his flesh. If the wife still does not want a divorce and offers to set up witnesses to make sure they are not secluded together, her offer is accepted. Conversely, if the wife is childless, and certainly if she is forbidden to him, even if she says she will not be alone with him without witnesses, her proposal is not accepted (Rambam *Sefer Nashim, Hilkhhot Ishut 25:12, 15:7; Shulḥan Arukh, Even HaEzer 154:1, 10*).

הֵתָם, כִּי אָמְרָה “הוֹינָא בְּהֵדִיָּה” – שְׂבָקִינָן לָהּ. הֵקָא, אִף עַל גַּב דְּאָמְרָה “הוֹינָא בְּהֵדִיָּה” – לֹא שְׂבָקִינָן לָהּ. וְהָרִי מוֹבָה שְׁחִין, דְּאִף עַל גַּב דְּאָמְרָה “הוֹינָא בְּהֵדִיָּה” לֹא שְׂבָקִינָן לָהּ, דְּתֵינָן: חוּץ מִמוֹבָה שְׁחִין מִפְּנֵי שְׂמִמְקוֹתוֹ, וְקִתְנֵי!

but there, with regard to the blemishes specified in the mishna, if she says: I want to be with him, we leave her alone with him and do not force a divorce, whereas here, in the case of a woman who has not given birth, even though she says: I want to be with him, we do not leave her alone, as her husband is neglecting the mitzva to be fruitful and multiply. The Gemara raises a difficulty: But there is the case of a husband afflicted with boils, where even though she says: I want to be with him, we do not leave her alone with him. As we learned in the mishna: Apart from a situation where her husband is afflicted with boils, because it consumes his flesh. And yet this *halakha* is taught in the same mishna as the others, which indicates that our above analysis is incorrect.

הֵתָם, כִּי אָמְרָה “דִּיּוּרְנָא בְּהֵדִיָּה בְּסַהְרֵי” – שְׂבָקִינָן לָהּ, הֵקָא, אִף עַל גַּב דְּאָמְרָה “דִּיּוּרְנָא בְּהֵדִיָּה בְּסַהְרֵי” – לֹא שְׂבָקִינָן לָהּ.

The Gemara answers: Even so, there is a difference between these cases, as there, with regard to a man with boils, if she says: I am willing to live with him under the supervision of witnesses; that is, I will not seclude myself with him but I will nevertheless remain his wife, we leave her alone. However, here, even though she says: I will live with him under the supervision of witnesses,¹³ we do not leave her alone, but rather force him to divorce her.

Those afflicted with *ra'atan* – בעלי ראטן – This disease, mentioned in the Talmud and various *midrashim*, has not been definitively identified, and there are several theories as to its nature. However, the most likely explanation is that it refers to Hansen's disease, colloquially known as leprosy, which is distinct from the biblical disease commonly translated this way and discussed at length in the Talmud.

Hansen's disease appears in different forms, one of which is in line with the description here in the Talmud. In addition to a severe toughening of the skin which causes a loss of feeling in that area or to the entire limb, the ailment also causes a great deal of mucus to flow from the nose. For various reasons, in later stages this illness causes serious wounds and gangrene, which rots away the external limbs. The disease is infectious but it requires close, prolonged contact for contagion to occur. Nevertheless, due to the severity of this illness and the inability of those in talmudic times to treat it, they were extremely careful about any kind of contact, not only direct contact with the infected patient but even with flies that touched the secretions of those afflicted with the disease, or anything they may have touched.

The matter of the insect in the brain, however, is not at all clear in this context. It might be connected to a different disease brought about by parasites. Various types of parasites, such as hookworms, travel from place to place in the body and can cause serious damage to the afflicted.

LANGUAGE

Weak [vitaykin] – ויתקין: The source of this word and its precise meaning are unclear. According to Rav Binyamin Musafia it comes from the Greek φθισικός, *phthisikos*, meaning one who is sick with a degenerative illness, primarily tuberculosis. Others assert that it is derived from the Greek έκτικός, *hektikos*, which, among its various meanings, refers to one who is sick with a dangerous illness, or tuberculosis.

Pila – פילא: Apparently from the Greek φύλλον, *fullon*, meaning vegetable or grass. In addition to being a general term, it is also the name of specific plants, such as those belonging to the genus *Mercurialis*. Some claim that the Sages were referring to laurel leaves.

Ladanum [Iodana] – לודנא: From the Greek λάδανον, *ladanon*, or the Latin *laudanum*, which refers to the sap extracted from this plant. Some assert that its original derivation is the Hebrew word *lot* (see Genesis 43:11).

NOTES

The ground shell of a nut [de'egoza] – גירדא דאגוזא: Rashi and other commentaries explain this in accordance with our reading of the text. The *Arukh* presents an alternate version of the text which reads *de'azga*, meaning pieces of glass.

And shavings of smoothed hides [de'ashpa] – גירדא דאשפא: According to the alternate version of the text which reads *de'ashpekha*, this refers to the material that cobblers, *ushphakhim*, shave off of the leather.

תנא, אמר רבי יוסי: שח לי זקן אחד מאנשי ירושלים: עשרים וארבעה מובי שחין הן, וכולן – אמרו חכמים: תשמיש קשה להן, ובעלי ראטן קשה מכולן. ממאי הוי? דתנא: הקיז דם ושימש – הויזן לו בנים ויתקין, הקיזו ושימשו – הויזן לו בנים בעלי ראטן. אמר רב פפא: לא אמרן אלא דלא טעים מידי, אכל טעים מידי – לית לן בה.

It is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yosei said: A certain Elder from among the residents of Jerusalem told me that there are twenty-four types of patients afflicted with boils, and with regard to all of them the Sages said that sexual relations are harmful to them, and those afflicted with *ra'atan*,^b a severe skin disease characterized by extreme weakness and trembling, are harmed even more than all of the others. The Gemara asks: From where and how does this disease come about? The Gemara answers: As it is taught in a *baraita*: One who let blood and immediately afterward engaged in sexual relations will have weak [vitaykin]^l children. If both of them let blood and then engaged in sexual relations, he will have children afflicted with *ra'atan*. Rav Pappa said in response: We said this only if he did not taste anything between bloodletting and intercourse, but if he tasted something we have no problem with it, as it is not dangerous.

מאי סימניה? דלפן עיניה, ודיבוי נחיריה, ואייתיה ליה וירא מפומיה, ורמו דידבי עלויה. ומאי אסותיה? אמר אבוי: פילא, ולודנא, גירדא דאגוזא, וגירדא דאשפא וכליל מלכא, ומתחלא דדיקלא סומקא. ושלוק להו בהדי הדדי, ומעייל ליה לביתא דשישא. ואי לא איכא ביתא דשישא – מעייל ליה לביתא דשב לבני ואריחא.

The Gemara inquires: What are the symptoms of *ra'atan*? His eyes water, his nose runs, drool comes out of his mouth, and flies rest upon him. The Gemara further inquires: And what is his cure to remove the insect found in his head, which is associated with this illness? Abaye said: One takes *pila*^l and ladanum [*lodana*],^{bl} which are types of grasses; and the ground shell of a nut;ⁿ and shavings of smoothed hides;ⁿ and artemisia [*kelil malka*];^b and the calyx of a red date palm. And one cooks them together and brings the patient into a marble house,^b i.e., one that is completely sealed. And if there is no marble house available, the one performing the treatment brings the patient into a house whose walls have the thickness of seven bricks and one small brick.

BACKGROUND

Ladanum – לודנא: Apparently this is the sap of a species of the plant called *cistus*. The *cistus* is an evergreen bush with simple, creased flowers that is found all over Israel. *Cistus* flowers are large and white or pink, depending on the particular species, and at the end of the summer the fruits ripen into a uniquely shaped capsule. *Cistus* sap has been widely used since ancient times as a common medicine. Nowadays it is mainly used as an ingredient in cosmetics and perfumes.



Cistus bush with flowers

Artemisia [kelil malka] – כליל מלכא: According to Asaf HaRofeh, *kelil malka* is a plant from the genus *Artemisia*, certain types of which are found in Israel. These plants grow on plains and in sandy areas and bear small flowers. An essential oil extracted from some kinds of artemisia has been widely used as a medicine since ancient times.



Artemisia capsules



Artemisia flowers

Marble house – ביתא דשישא: The Gemara here and other sources imply that this was a building designated for surgical procedures. It is possible that a structure of this kind was used because it was closed off and relatively free of external contamination.

Attach himself to them – מִיִּכְרַךְ בָּהֶם: According to Rashi and the Rivan this means that he would cling to them when he studied without concern, as he relied on the merit of the Torah to protect him from illness. Rabbi Yaakov Emden and the author of *Ahavat Eitan* state that as he was occupied with the public mitzva of teaching Torah he was not worried that he might be harmed. Although there is a principle that one may not rely on a miracle in an obviously dangerous situation, there is an exception for one engaged in the performance of a public mitzva. In contrast, the Ritva maintains that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi would stay close to them at all times, not only when learning Torah, in accordance with the principle discussed in tractate *Sota* (21a) that the Torah protects those who occupy themselves with it even when they are not involved in its study.

If it bestows grace – אִם חֵן מַעֲלָה: The Maharam Schiff explains that if the Torah actively provides grace, it will certainly not cause people to lose their grace. Since those afflicted with *ra'atan* are extremely repulsive, as explained earlier, God will certainly ensure that those who study Torah will not end up in such a state.

וְנָטִיל לִיהָ תְּלַת מֵאוֹת בְּסֵי עַל רִישָׁיהָ, עַד דְּרַפִּיא אַרְעֵיטָא דְמוֹחֶיהָ, וְקָרַע לְמוֹחֶיהָ. וּמֵיִיתֵי אַרְבַּע טַרְפֵי דְאָסָא, וּמַדְלִי בְּלַחַד כְּרַעַא וּמוֹתֵיב חַד. וְשָׁקִיל בְּצַבְתָּא, וְקָלִי לִיהָ. דְּאֵי לָא – הֲדַר עֵילוּיָהּ.

מְכַרְיו רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: הִזְהָרוּ מִזִּבְבֵי שָׁל בְּעֵלֵי רָאֲתָן. רַבִּי זֵירָא לָא הוּוּ יָתִיב בְּזִיכְיָהּ, רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר לָא עֵיִיל בְּאַהֲלֵיהָ, רַבִּי אַמִּי וְרַבִּי אֲסִי לָא הוּוּ אֹכְלֵי מִבֵּיעֵי דְהֵיאֵא מִבּוֹאָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי מִיִּכְרַךְ בָּהֶם וְעָסִיק בְּתוֹרָה, אָמַר: "אֵילַת אֲהָבִים וְיַעֲלֶת חֵן" אִם חֵן מַעֲלָה עַל לִוְמָדֶיהָ – אֲגוּנֵי לָא מַגְנָא?

כִּי הוּוּ שָׁכִיב, אָמַר לִיהָ לְמַלְאֲךְ הַמּוֹת: זֵיל עֲבִיד לִיהָ רְעוּתֵיהָ. אֲוֹל אֵיתְחִזִּי לִיהָ, אָמַר לִיהָ: אֲחֹזִי לִי דּוֹכְתָא! אָמַר לִיהָ: לְחִי. אָמַר לִיהָ: הֵב לִי סַבִּינָךְ, דְּלִמָּא מְבַעֲתָ לִי בְּאוֹרְחָא – יְהִבָּה נִיהָלִיהָ. כִּי מָטָא לְהַתָּם, דְּלִיָּהּ, קָא מַחֲזִי לִיהָ. שְׁוֹר נָפַל לְהֵהוּא גִיסָא.

נִקְטִיָּה בְּקֶרְנָא דְגִלְמִיָּה. אָמַר לִיהָ: בְּשָׁבוּעָתָא דְלָא אֲתִינָא. אָמַר קוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּוּ: אֵי אֵיתְשִׁיל אֲשָׁבוּעָתָא – מִהֲדַר, אֵי לָא – לָא מִהֲדַר. אָמַר לִיהָ: הֵב לִי סַבִּינָא! לָא הוּוּ קָא יְהִיב לִיהָ. נִפְקָא בֵּת קָלָא וְאִמְרָה לִיהָ: הֵב נִיהָלִיהָ, דְּמִיתְבָּעָא לְבְרִיָּתָא. מְכַרְיו אֵלֵיהּ קַמִּיָּה: פְּנֵי מְקוּם לְבָר לִיּוֹאֵי, פְּנֵי מְקוּם לְבָר לִיּוֹאֵי!

And the one performing the treatment pours three hundred cups of this mixture on the patient's head until his skull is soft, and then he tears open the patient's skull to expose his brain, and brings four myrtle leaves and lifts up each time one foot of the insect that is found on the patient's brain, and places one leaf under each foot of the insect so as to prevent it from attempting to cling to his brain when it is forcibly removed, and subsequently takes it with tweezers. And he then burns the insect, because if he does not burn it, it will return to him.

Rabbi Yohanan would announce: Be careful of the flies found on those afflicted with *ra'atan*, as they are carriers of the disease. Rabbi Zeira would not sit in a spot where the wind blew from the direction of someone afflicted with *ra'atan*. Rabbi Elazar would not enter the tent of one afflicted with *ra'atan*, and Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi would not eat eggs from an alley in which someone afflicted with *ra'atan* lived. Conversely, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi^p would attach himself to themⁿ and study Torah, saying as justification the verse: "The Torah is a loving hind and a graceful doe" (Proverbs 5:19). If it bestows graceⁿ on those who learn it, does it not protect them from illness?

When Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi was on the verge of dying, they said to the Angel of Death: Go and perform his bidding, as he is a righteous man and deserves to die in the manner he sees fit. The Angel of Death went and appeared to him. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to him: Show me my place in paradise. He said to him: Very well. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to him: Give me your knife that you use to kill mortals, lest you frighten me on the way. He gave it to him. When he arrived there, in paradise, he lifted Rabbi Yehoshua so he could see his place, and he showed it to him. Rabbi Yehoshua jumped and fell into that other side, thereby escaping into paradise.

The Angel of Death grabbed him by the corner of his cloak. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to him: I swear that I will not come with you. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: If he ever in his life requested dissolution concerning an oath he had taken, he must return to this world with the Angel of Death, as he can have his oath dissolved this time also. If he did not ever request dissolution of an oath, he need not return. Since Rabbi Yehoshua had in fact never requested dissolution of an oath, he was allowed to stay in paradise. The Angel of Death said to him: At least give me my knife back. However, he did not give it to him, as he did not want any more people to die. A Divine Voice emerged and said to him: Give it to him, as it is necessary to kill the created beings; death is the way of the world. Elijah the Prophet announced before him: Make way for the son of Levi, make way for the son of Levi.

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi – רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי: One of the greatest *amora'im* of the first generation in Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi was, according to some opinions, the son of Levi ben Sisi, one of the outstanding students of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Apparently, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi himself was one of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's younger students. Many halakhic disputes are recorded between him and Rabbi Yohanan, who was apparently his younger disciple-colleague. In general, the *halakha* is ruled in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, even against Rabbi Yohanan, who was the leading authority at that time.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi was also a renowned teacher of

aggada. Because of the great esteem in which he was held, aggadic statements in his name are cited at the end of the six orders of the Mishna.

A great deal is told of his piety and sanctity; he is regarded as one of the most righteous men who ever lived. He was famous as a worker of miracles, as one to whom Elijah the Prophet appeared, and as one whose prayers were always answered.

He taught many students. All of the Sages of the succeeding generation were Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's students to some degree and all cite Torah pronouncements in his name. His son, Rabbi Yosef, was also a Torah scholar and married into the family of the *Nasi*.

אָזל אַשְׁכַּחִיה לְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי דְהוּדָה יְתִיב עַל תְּלַת עֶשְׂרֵי תַכְתֵּקִי פְּיּוּא. אָמַר לִיה: אַתָּה הוּא בְר לִיּוֹאִי? אָמַר לִיה: הֵן. נִרְאָתָה קִשְׁתַּת בְּיָמַיךָ? אָמַר לִיה: הֵן. אִם כֵּן, אֵי אַתָּה בְר לִיּוֹאִי. וְלֹא הִיא, דְלֵא הוּאִי מִיָּדִי. אֲלֵא סָבַר: לֹא אַחֲזִיק טִיבוֹתָא לְנַפְשָׁאִי.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi went and found in paradise Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai^p sitting on thirteen golden stools [*takhtekei*].¹ Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai said to him: Are you the son of Levi? He said to him: Yes. Rabbi Shimon said to him: Was a rainbow ever seen in your days? He said: Yes. Rabbi Shimon retorted: If so, you are not the son of Levi, as he is a completely righteous man. During the lifetimes of completely righteous people no rainbows are visible, as they are a sign that the world deserves to be destroyed by a flood; whereas the merit of the righteous protects the world from such things. The Gemara comments: **And that is not so, for there was no rainbow seen at all during the lifetime of Rabbi Yehoshua, but he thought: I do not want to take credit for myself by presenting myself as such a righteous person.**

רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בְר פַּפָּא שׁוֹשְׁבֵינִיה הָוָה. כִּי הוּוּ קָא נִחָא נַפְשֵׁיהּ, אָמְרוּ לִיה לְמַלְאָךְ הַמָּוֹת: זִיל עֲבִיד לִיה רְעוּתִיהָ. אָזל לְגַבִּיּה וְאִיתְחַזִּי לִיה. אָמַר לִיה: שְׁבִקִי תְּלַתִּין יוֹם עַד דְּנַהְדֵּר תְּלַמּוּדֵי דְאַמְרֵי אֲשֵׁרִי מִי שְׁבָא לְכָאן וְתַלְמוּדוֹ בְּיָדוֹ. שְׁבִקִיהָ. לְבַתֵּר תְּלַתִּין יוֹמִין אָזל אִיתְחַזִּי לִיה. אָמַר לִיה: אַחֲזִי לִי דוֹכְתָאִי. אָמַר לִיה: לְחַיִּי. אָמַר לִיה: הֵב לִי סַבִּינָךְ, דְלֵמָא מְבַעֲתַת לִי בְּאוֹרְחָא. אָמַר לִיה: כְּחַבְרֵךְ בְּעֵית לְמִיעָבַד לִי?

The Gemara relates a similar incident: **Rabbi Ḥanina bar Pappa was a friend of the Angel of Death and would see him frequently. When Rabbi Ḥanina was on the verge of dying, they said to the Angel of Death: Go and perform his bidding. He went before him and appeared to him. He said to the angel: Leave me for thirty days until I have reviewed my studies, for they say: Happy is he who comes here, to paradise, with his learning in his hand. He left him, and after thirty days he again went and appeared to him. He said to the Angel of Death: Show me my place in paradise. He said to him: Very well. Rabbi Ḥanina said to him: Give me your knife, lest you frighten me on the way. The Angel of Death said to him: Do you wish to do to me as your friend Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi did, and escape?**

אָמַר לִיה: אֵייתִי סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה, וְחַזִּי מִי אֵיכָא מִיָּדִי דְכַתִּיב בֵּיה דְלֵא קִיִּימְתִּיהָ. אָמַר לִיה: מִי אֵיכָרְכַת בְּבַעְלֵי רְאִתָּן וְאֵיִסְקַת בְּתוֹרָה? וְאֵפִילוּ הָכִי, כִּי נַח נַפְשֵׁיהָ – אֲפִסִּיק לִיה עֲמוּדָא דְנוּרָא בֵּין דִּידֵיהָ לְעֵלְמָא, וְגַמְרֵי דְלֵא מִפְסִיק עֲמוּדָא דְנוּרָא אֲלֵא לְחַד בְּדָרָא, אוֹ לְתֵרִין בְּדָרָא.

He said to him: Bring a Torah scroll and see: Is there anything written in it that I have not fulfilled? I am therefore worthy of entering Paradise alive, as did Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. He said to him: But did you attach yourself to those afflicted with *ra'atan* and study Torah, as he did? The Gemara comments: And even so, despite the fact that he was not equal to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, when he passed away a pillar of fire separated him from everyone. And it is learned as a tradition that a pillar of fire separates in this manner only for one in a generation or for two in a generation.

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai – רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי: Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai is among the greatest *tanna'im* of the generation prior to the redaction of the Mishna. Rabbi Shimon was the preeminent student of Rabbi Akiva and he considered himself Rabbi Akiva's spiritual heir. Rabbi Shimon's greatness was manifest in his mastery of both *halakha* and *aggada*, and his statements can be found on all topics in every tractate of the Talmud. Although *halakha* is not always ruled in accordance with Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai's opinion, especially in disputes with Rabbi Yosei and Rabbi Yehuda, with regard to several core issues, the *halakha* is in accordance with his opinion. Rabbi Shimon had his own, unique method of deriving *halakha* from the Torah: He factored in the rationale of the verse and inferred halakhic conclusions from the Bible based on the spirit and purpose of the *halakha*.

Rabbi Shimon traveled to Rome as an emissary of the Jewish people but he harbored profound enmity toward the Romans. Because he made no attempt to conceal his feelings, he was sentenced to death in absentia by the Romans and forced into hiding for many years. He was an ascetic by nature who was very exacting, and was famous in his generation for his righteousness and his performance of miracles. There are many anecdotes related in the Talmud about miraculous acts that he performed.

The *Sifrei*, a collection of halakhic derivations from the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, was developed in his study hall. He is also the primary figure in the fundamental book of kabbala, the *Zohar*. His greatest students were Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi; Rabbi Shimon ben Yehuda; and his son, Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon, who was also among the most prominent *tanna'im*.

BACKGROUND

Beets [*teradin*] – תרדין: *Teradin* in this context refers to beets, *Beta vulgaris cicla*, which are generally called *silka* in the Talmud. This plant is an annual garden vegetable from the Chenopodiaceae family. Its large, fleshy leaves grow up to 15–30 cm in length and are edible when cooked. Their taste is similar to that of spinach. Nowadays, the leaves are also used as bird food.

Hizmei – היזמי: This is probably the bush *Ononis antiquorum* L. from the Papilionaceae family, more commonly known at the tall spiny rest-harrow. It is a small, thorny bush whose height is 25–70 cm and is commonly found in fields and riverbeds. The leaves of the plant are usually clover-shaped and its side branches are thorny and tend to branch out.



Tall spiny rest-harrow

קרב לגביה רבי אלכסנדר, אמר: עשה בשביל כבוד חכמים. לא אשגת. עשה בשביל כבוד אביך! לא אשגת. עשה בשביל כבוד עצמך! איסתלק. אמר אבי: לאפוקי ממאן דלא קיים (אפילו אות אחת). אמר ליה רב אדא בר מתנא: לאפוקי ממך, דלא אית ליה מעקה לאיגריה. ולא היא, מיהודה הוה, וההיא שעתא הוא דשדייה זיקא.

אמר רבי חנינא: מפני מה אין בעלי ראתו בבבל – מפני שאוכלין תרדין, ושותין שכר של היזמי. אמר רבי יוחנן: מפני מה אין מצורעין בבבל – מפני שאוכלין תרדין, ושותין שכר, ורוחצין במי פרת.

הדרן עלך המדיר את אשתו

Due to the pillar of fire they could not go near Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa to attend to his burial. **Rabbi Alexandri approached him and said: Make the pillar of fire disappear in honor of the Sages.** He did not pay attention to him. He said: **Make it go away in honor of your father.** Again he did not pay attention to him. Finally he said: **Make it go away in your own honor,** at which point the pillar disappeared. **Abaye said:** The purpose of the pillar of fire is to exclude him from the company of those who have not fulfilled even one letter of the Torah. **Rav Adda bar Mattana said to him:** It comes to exclude him from the Master himself, who does not have a guardrail for his roof. Rav Adda bar Mattana took this opportunity to rebuke Abaye. The Gemara comments: **And that is not so** as he in fact did have a guardrail, but the wind had just blown it off at that time.

Rabbi Hanina said: For what reason are there no people afflicted with *ra'atan* in Babylonia? Because the Babylonians eat beets [*teradin*]^b and drink beer made from the *hizmei*^b plant. Rabbi Yoḥanan said: For what reason are there no lepers in Babylonia? Because they eat beets, drink beer, and bathe in the waters of the Euphrates, all of which are good for the body.