

My Favorite Talmudic Stories and What They Say about Life!

Source Sheet by Laurence Rosenthal

How Many Legs Do You Want on Your Table?

Taanit 24b:14

§ 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, due to embarrassment,** to make it appear that she was baking, despite the fact that there was no bread in her house. **She had a certain evil neighbor** who **said** to herself: **Now, I know that they have nothing. What, then, is all this smoke? She went and knocked on the door** to find out what was in the oven. Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa's wife was **embarrassed, and she ascended to**

תענית כ"ד ב:י"ד

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: בכל יום ויום בת קול יוצאת ואומרת: כל העולם כולו ניזון בשביל חנינא בןי, וחנינא בןי דיו בקב חרובים מערב שבת לערב שבת. הוה רגילא דביתהו למיחמא תנורא כל מעלי דשבתא ושדייא אקטרפתא משום כיסופא. הוה לה הך שיבבתא בישתא, אמרה: מכדי ידענא דלית להו ולא מידי, מאי כולי האי? אזלא וטרפא אבבא, איכספא ועיילא לאינדונא, איתעביד לה נסא דחזיא לתנורא מלא לחמא ואגנא מלא לישא, אמרה לה: פלגיתא, פלגיתא! אייתי מסא, דקא חריף לחמיה. אמרה לה: אף אנא להכי עיילי. תנא: אף היא להביא מרדה נכנסה, מפני שמלומדת בנסיים.

an inner room [inderona]. 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.

- Why is poverty seen as an embarrassment?
- How do we reconcile the story's claim that they didn't have enough food BUT they had enough wood or other fuel to stoke and burn the ovens each Shabbat?
- Why does the neighbor treat her neighbor with such contempt?
- Is treating people who are poor with contempt something that we do in our society today? Explain how?

Taanit 25a:3

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**

תענית כ"ה א:ג'

אִמְרָה לִיה דְּבִיתָהּ: עַד אֵימָת נִיזִיל וְנִצְטָעַר כּוֹלֵי הָאֵי? אָמַר לָהּ: מֵאִי נִעְבִּיד? בְּעֵי רַחֲמֵי דְנִיתָבוּ לָהּ מִיָּדִי. בָּעָא רַחֲמֵי, יִצְתָה כְּמִין פִּיסַת יָד וַיִּהְיוּ לִיה חַד כַּרְעָא דְפִתּוּרָא דִדְהָבָא. חֲזָיא בְּחִלְמָא, עֲתִידִי צְדִיקָא דְאֶכְלִי אֶפְתּוּרָא דִדְהָבָא דְאִית לִיה תֵּלַת כַּרְעֵי, וְאִיהוּ — אֶפְתּוּרָא דְתֵרִי כַרְעֵי. אָמַר לָהּ: נִיחָא לָהּ דְמִיכָל

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**.

אֶכְלִי כוּלֵי עֲלָמָא אַפְתוּרָא דְּמִשְׁלָם
וְאַנְן אַפְתוּרָא דְּמַחְסֵר. אָמְרָה לִיה:
וּמַאי נַעֲבִיד? בְּעֵי רַחֲמֵי דְּנִשְׁקָלִינָהוּ
מִינָּה. בְּעֵי רַחֲמֵי וְשִׁקְלוּהוּ. תִּנָּא:
גְּדוֹל הָיָה גַם אַחֲרוֹן יוֹתֵר מִן
הָרֵאשׁוֹן. דְּגַמְרִי, דְּמִיָּהֵב יָהֳבִי
מִשְׁקָל לָא שְׁקָלִי.

- The Table and the Table leg is a metaphor? Explain the metaphor?
- Jewish scripture often expresses the idea that the reward for the righteous might not come in this lifetime but is reserved for some time in the future (Olam HaBah) [See Pirkei Avot 2:16; Psalm 97]. In addition, suffering that happens in this world might lead to greater rewards in the world to come. Is it possible that receiving the table leg as a gift in this world, to relieve their suffering, could be taken from the reward they will experience in the world to come? Does your theology comport with this? Why or why not?

Pirkei Avot 2:16

He [Rabbi Tarfon] used to say: It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it; If you have studied much Torah, you shall be given much reward. Faithful is your employer to pay you the reward of your labor; And know that the grant of reward unto the

משנה אבות ב':ט"ז

הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה
לְגַמֵּר, וְלֹא אֶתָּה בֶּן חוֹרִין לְבָטֹל
מִמֶּנָּה. אִם לָמַדְתָּ תוֹרָה הַרְבֵּה,
נוֹתְנִים לָךְ שָׂכָר הַרְבֵּה. וְנֶאֱמָן הוּא
בְּעַל מְלָאכָתָךְ שִׁישְׁלֶם לָךְ שָׂכָר
פְּעֻלָּתָךְ. וְדַע מִתֵּן שְׂכָרָן שֶׁל צְדִיקִים

righteous is in the age to come.

לְעֵתִיד לְבָא:

Psalms 97

תהילים צ"ז

(11) Light is sown for the righteous,
radiance for the upright. (12) O you
righteous, rejoice in the LORD
and acclaim His holy name!

(יא) אֹר זָרַע לְצַדִּיק וְלִישְׂרֵי-לֵב
שִׁמְחָה: (יב) שִׁמְחוּ צַדִּיקִים בַּה'
וְהוֹדוּ לַזָּכָר קֹדֶשׁ: {פ}

Taanit 25a:5

תענית כ"ה א'ה'

The Gemara relates that **one**
Shabbat **evening**, Rabbi Ḥanina 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*.**

חַד בִּי שָׁמַשׁ חֲזִייה לְבִרְתִּיה דְּהוּוֹת
עֲצִיבָא, אָמַר לָהּ: בְּתִי אֲמַאי
עֲצִיבָתָּ? אָמְרָה לִיה: כָּלִי שֶׁל חוּמָץ
נִתְחַלֵּף לִי בְּכָלִי שֶׁל שֶׁמֶן וְהִדְלַקְתִּי
מִמֶּנּוּ אוֹר לְשַׁבָּת. אָמַר לָהּ: בְּתִי,
מַאי אֲכַפֶּת לָךְ? מִי שָׁאָמַר לְשֶׁמֶן
וַיִּדְלוֹק, הוּא יֹאמַר לְחוּמָץ וַיִּדְלוֹק.
תָּנָא: הָיָה דוֹלֵק וְהוֹלֵךְ כָּל הַיּוֹם
כוֹלּוֹ, עַד שֶׁהִבִּיאוּ מִמֶּנּוּ אוֹר
לְהַבְדֵּלָהּ.

Rabbi Eliyahu Saftan - Times of Israel Blog:

Rav Chanina ben Dosa forewarned his daughter (Taanis 25a) “**He Who said to the oil** that it should **burn can say to the vinegar** that it should **burn**.” We need to be reminded of the great Chanukah miracle, that a mere one day’s supply of oil burned for eight. We also need to remember what we too often forget, that for oil to burn at all is a miracle too. Ramban teaches that it is through a recognition of the great miracles that one can ultimately recognize and praise the miracles hidden in everyday life. By the same token, until we

recognize and embrace life's everyday miracles, we might remain blind to the great miracles. Just as the extraordinary allows us to see the ordinary, it is the ordinary that opens our hearts to the out of the ordinary.

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/chanukah-miracles-the-little-dreidel/>

Bava Batra 74a:8

Rabbi Yohanan relates: Once we were traveling on a ship and we saw a certain crate [*kartalita*] in which precious stones and pearls were set, and a species of fish called sharks encircled it. He descended, i.e., a diver [*bar amoraiei*] went into the water to bring up this chest, and the fish became angry and sought to sever his thigh, but the diver threw upon it a flask of vinegar and they descended and swam away. A Divine Voice emerged and said to us: What right do you have to touch the crate of the wife of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa, as she is destined to insert sky-blue wool in it to be used in the ritual fringes of the righteous in the World-to-Come?

בבא בתרא ע"ד א:ח'

רבי יוחנן משתעי זימנא חדא הוה
קא אזלינן בספינתא וחיזינן ההיא
קרטליתא דהוה קא מקבעי בה
אבנים טובות ומרגליות והדרי לה
מיני דכוורי דמקרי כרשא נחיתבר
אמוראי לאתויה ורגש ובעי
לשמטיה לאטמיה ושדא זיקא
דחלא ונחת נפק בת קלא אמר לן
מאי אית לכו בהדי קרטליתא
דדביתהו דרבי חנינא בן דוסא
דעתידה דשדא תכלתא בה לצדיקי
לעלמא דאתי

Bava Batra 73b:11

That Arab said to me: Come, I will show you the dead of the wilderness, i.e., the Jewish people who left Egypt and died in the wilderness. I went and saw them; and they had the appearance of one who is intoxicated, and they were lying on their backs. And the

בבא בתרא ע"ג ב:י"א

אמר לי תא אחוי לה מתי מדבר
אזלי חזיתינהו ודמו כמאן דמיבסמי
וגנו אפרקיד והוה זקיפא ברפיה
דחד מינייהו ועיל טיעא תותי
ברפיה כי רכיב גמלא וזקיפא
רומחיה ולא נגע ביה פסקי חדא

knee of one of them was elevated, and he was so enormous that the Arab entered under his knee while riding a camel and with his spear upright, and he did not touch him. I cut one corner of the sky-blue garment that contains ritual fringes of one of them, and we were unable to walk. The Arab said to me: Perhaps you took something from them? Return it, as we know by tradition that one who takes something from them cannot walk. I then returned the corner of the garment, and then we were able to walk.

קָרָנָא דְּתַכְלֵתָא דְּחַד מִיִּנְיָהּ וְלֹא
הָוָה מִסְתַּגִּי לֵן אָמַר לִי דְלָמָּא שְׁקֵלְתָּ
מִיַּדִּי מִיִּנְיָהּ אֶהְדִּירֶיהָ דְּגַמְרִי דְּמֵאן
דְּשָׁקִיל מִיַּדִּי מִיִּנְיָהּ לֹא מִסְתַּגִּי לִי
אֲזִלִּי אֶהְדִּירֶתִּיהָ וְהָדָר מִסְתַּגִּי לֵן

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