

<1> Once R. Hiyya Rabbah and R. Simeon b. Halafta were sitting studying the law in the Great College of Tiberias on the eve of Passover (some say on the eve of the Great Fast), and they heard the sound of people murmuring. Said one to the other, 'What are these people doing?' He answered: 'He who has [money] is purchasing [his needs for the Festival] and he who has not is going to his employer that he may give it to him.' He said: 'If so, I will also go to my Master that he should give me.' He went out and prayed in the Iltis of Tiberias, and he beheld a hand holding out to him a pearl. He went and took it to our teacher [=R. Judah the Patriarch] who said to him: 'Whence have you this? It is priceless. Take these three dinars and go and make preparations in honour of the day, and after the Festival we shall advertise it, and whatever price we obtain for it, you shall have.' He took the three dinars and went and made his purchases and went home. Said his wife to him: 'Simeon! Have you turned thief? All your possessions do not amount to a hundred manehs, and whence then have you all these purchases?' He immediately related to her the incident, whereupon she said: 'Do you then desire that your canopy should contain one pearl less than that of your fellow in the World to Come?' He said to her: 'What then is to be done?' She said to him, 'Go and return your purchases to their owners and the dinars to their owner and the pearl to its owner.' When our teacher heard of it, he was grieved, and he sent and brought her to him, and said to her, 'How much anguish have you caused this righteous man?' She retorted, 'Do you then desire that his canopy should have one pearl less than yours in the world to come?' He said to her, 'And even if it does lack it, cannot we make it up?' She answered him, 'Rabbi, in this world we are vouchsafed to see thy face, but [in the World to Come] did not Resh Lakish say: Every righteous man has his own chamber?'' And he admitted that she was right. And not only so, but it is the custom of celestial beings to give but not to take back. [Nevertheless, the pearl was returned] and this latter miracle was greater than the former. When [R. Simeon] took it his hand was below and when he gave it back his hand was above, as a man who lends to his fellow.

<2> R. Johanan and Resh Lakish went down to bathe in the public baths of Tiberias, and a poor man accosted them. He said to them, 'Give me something.' They answered, 'When we come out we will give it.' When they came out they found him dead. They said: 'Since we did not assist him during his life, let us attend to him after his death.' When they arose from

washing his body, they found a purse of dinars by him, and they said: ' It is well.'

Whereupon R. Abbahu said: 'We should be grateful even to the impostors among them, for were it not for the impostors among them, were a man to see a beggar begging alms and refuse him, he would be punished with death immediately. as it is said, 'And he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin in thee' (Deut. XV, 9). R. Abun said: The poor man stands at your door, and the Holy One, blessed be He, stands at his right hand. If you give unto him, He who stands at his right hand will bless you, but if not, He will exact punishment from you, as it is said, Because He standeth at the right hand of the needy (Ps. CIX, 31).

<3> WASH THYSELF THEREFORE, AND ANOINT THEE (Ruth 3: 3). WASH THY SELF clean of thine idolatry. AND ANNOINT THEE refers to good deeds and righteous conduct. AND PUT THY RAIMENT UPON THEE. Was she then naked? It must refer to Sabbath garments. It was from this verse that R. Hanina said: A man should have two sets of garments, one for weekdays and one for Sabbath. And so did R. Simlai expound publicly, whereupon the scholars wept and said: As our raiment on weekdays, so is our raiment on the Sabbath. He said to them: It is nevertheless necessary to make a change in your appearance.