



## Talmud Tales – Session 10 – Facing Death

### **BT Sanhedrin 98a**

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to Elijah: When will the Messiah come? Elijah said to him: Go ask him. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked: And where is he sitting? Elijah said to him: At the entrance of the city of Rome.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked him: And what is his identifying sign by means of which I can recognize him? Elijah answered: He sits among the poor who suffer from illnesses. And all of them untie their bandages and tie them all at once, but the Messiah unties one bandage and ties one at a time. He says: Perhaps I will be needed to serve to bring about the redemption.

Therefore, I will never tie more than one bandage, so that I will not be delayed.

### **BT Ketubot 77b**

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi clung to them [the lepers] and studied Torah.

How did he interpret the verse: “A loving doe, a graceful mountain goat” (Proverbs 5:19)? If the Torah graces those who learn it, will it not also protect me?

When he was about to die, the Angel of Death was told: Go and do his [Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s] will [and let him die however he chooses].

The Angel of Death went and appeared before him. He [Rabbi Yehoshua] said to him: Show me my place [in the world to come]. He said to him: “Surely.”

He [Rabbi Yehoshua] said to him: “Give me your knife, lest I be frightened by it along the way.” He gave it to him.

When they got there, to the wall of heaven, he lifted him up and showed him his place in the world to come. He asked him, “Lift me up a bit more,” and he lifted him up.

He jumped and fell to the other side. The Angel of Death grabbed him by the corner of his garment. He [Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi] said to him: I swear I won’t leave this place.

The Holy One Blessed Be He said: If he [Rabbi Yehoshua] ever asked to have one of his vows nullified, he must return; if not, then he need not return.

He [the Angel of Death] said to him: “Return my knife.” He did not return it.

A voice from above called out: “Give it to him because without it people cannot die.”