



Talmud Tales – Session 20 – The Shabbat Pearl

BT Shabbat 119a

Joseph-who-honors-the-Sabbath had in his neighborhood a certain gentile who owned a lot of property. Soothsayers told him: “All the property you have, Joseph-who-honors-the-Sabbath will eventually enjoy.”

So the gentile went and sold his property. With the proceeds he bought a pearl, which he secured in his headdress. When he was crossing a bridge the wind blew off the headdress. It carried it out to sea and a fish swallowed it.

The fish was caught and brought to the marketplace on the eve of the Sabbath at twilight. They asked, “Who will buy a fish at this late hour?”

They were told, “Go, take it to Joseph-who-honors-the-Sabbath. He is always eager to buy [fine food in the Sabbath’s honor].”

So the fish was brought to him and he bought it.

When he cut it open he found the pearl in it.

He sold it for enough gold denars to fill thirteen upper chambers.

A certain venerable elder met him and said, “He who lends to the Sabbath, the Sabbath will repay him.”