אי לאו דדלאי לך חספא כולי –

If I would not have lifted the potsherd for you, etc.

Overview

ר' יוחנן ruled that הטוען אחר מעב"ד לא אמר כלום. So ר"ח ב"א told him this was already stated in the משנה of הוציאה גט וכו'. To this ר"י replied, 'if I would not have lifted the potsherd for you, would you have found the pearl underneath it'.[1] תוספות explains this 'folk saying'.

תוספות asks:

ואם תאמר וכי דרך למצא מרגליות תחת חרסים[2] -

And if you will say; and is it usual to find pearls underneath potsherds?!

תוספות answers:

ומפרש רבינו תם דבקרקעית הים אבנים רחבות ונראות כחרסים ותחתיהן נמצאים המרגליות -

And the ר"ת explained that on the seabed there are broad stones which appear as potsherds, and the pearls are found underneath these אבנים רחבות -

ובהחובל (בבא קמא דף צא,א) נמי אמרינן צללת במים אדירים והעלית בידך[3] חרס:

And in פרק החובל, the גמרא **also states, 'you dove into mighty waters, but** you only **brought up a potsherd** (instead of a מרגלית)'.

Summary

Pearls are found in the seabed under broad stones which look like חרסים.[4]

Thinking it over

The folk saying (אי לאו דדלאי וכו') indicates that once he picks up the חספא it is easy to find the מרגניתא; however the way תוספות portrays it, there is great difficulty in bringing up the pearls from the seabed even if they are uncovered?

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[1] He meant that since I made this ruling you were able to understand the משנה properly based on this ruling.

[2] This saying seems to imply that there are מרגליות underneath חרסים, and ר"י picked up the חרס so others can find the מרגליות. However מרגליות are not found under חרסים.

[3] This supports what the ר"ת said that there are (stones which look like) חרסים on the seabed (which contain pearls), however this individual dove into the depths but only came up with the חרסים but not with the pearls.

[4] [Pearl divers collect pearls from inside oyster shells (which look like חרסים) found on the seabed.]