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Rain of Blessing

In the blessing of **ברך עלינו**, we ask Hashem **ותן טל ומטר לברכה**, “And give dew and rain of blessing.”

The question is asked: Why do we ask for dew in the winter, when dew also falls in the summer? Also, why do we daven for “blessing” during the summer, and we don’t ask for rain and dew of “blessing” when we are in the winter?

The Gemara explains that the dew is never withheld from the world; it comes to the world regardless of our deeds. The rain, however, only comes to the world if we are deserving in our deeds.

Based upon this, we can now understand deeper what we are asking for when we ask for dew and rain. We are not just asking for rain to come in its time – we want it come to us unconditionally, just as the dew always come to us unconditionally. Thus, we ask for dew and rain together, and that they should both come with blessing.

Rain - The Sustenance That Comes From Heaven Onto This Earth

Let us reflect into the concept of rain.

Why is rain sometimes withheld from the world? The Gemara list many reasons, including negligence in keeping *maaser*, for speaking *lashon hora*, and other reasons. But is there a way for us to know why there is no rain for each time that it doesn’t fall? Do we know, for example, why we aren’t seeing rain this year? This we do not know from Chazal’s words. On a more subtle note, the reason why each person doesn’t see rain is due to a personal reason that depends on his level, therefore, there is no one single reason why all of us aren’t seeing rain.

In Creation, the upper realms stay above us, and they do not descend to this world. Rain is the only creation which comes from Above down onto this physical world. Rain is called *geshem*, from the word *gashmiyus*, physicality. The sun, moon, and stars are found in the Heavens; they are above us. To illustrate, the sunlight we receive from the sun is coming from the sun, which stays above in Heaven; we enjoy the sun’s rays, but the sun’s rays aren’t actually coming onto this world. We enjoy the sun because we are below it - it is above us, and we can enjoy the rays down here on this earth, but the actual sun never comes down here. Rain, however, comes down from Heaven onto this earth. Thus, rain is a novelty.

We are used to rain ever since we are young, but the rain is actually a phenomenon according to

Chazal. Chazal even say on the day it rains, it is greater than the day the Torah was given; another opinion in the Sages is that it is greater than the day of the future resurrection. The Sages additional praises about a day of rain. What is the big deal about the day that it rains? How can it be greater than the resurrection?! It is because rain is the only Heavenly creation which comes down onto this physical world.

Until now we explained the concept of rain. Now we will see how this applies to our soul.

Rain Comes From 'Hagshamah' - Revealing The Light of the Neshamah

Rain is *geshem*, because it comes down to earth, which is *gashmiyus* (physicality, or materialism). Every person has *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus* in himself. Any sustenance which our body receives from our *neshamah* is also a kind of *geshem*; when the soul's light is shined upon the body, it is called the phenomenon of ***hagshamah*** - when spirituality is brought into the physical.

If the soul would leave the body, our body would cease; we thank Hashem for this in the *Asher Yotzar* blessing when we say "*Mafli Laasos*". Our existence is a wonder in which our body and soul co-exist, even though they are two opposing forces. The very fact that our *neshamah* came into our body is a kind of *hagshamah*. The level of this *hagshamah* depends on one's spiritual level. In the future, with the resurrection of the dead, the *neshamah* will return to the body, thus, and thus it will be a "rain" that will descend upon the body and revive it, because rain is *geshem*, and it represents *hagshamah*, which is when spirituality is shined upon the physical body.

The more a person reveals his soul's light, the more *hagshamah* from the soul comes upon his body, whereupon his body is sustained.

Rain Is Personal

Now we can better understand the meaning of **ותן טל ומטר לברכה**.

The manna in the desert differed according to each person's level. We are not on the level of the Jewish people in the desert, who merited to have bread descend from Heaven. Today we eat from grain produced from the earth; our bread does not come directly from Heaven. However, our water always comes from Heaven, no matter what generation we are in. And dew always descends upon the world regardless of our spiritual level, thus, to a certain extent, the dew which we enjoy is like the manna of the desert.

But just as the manna in the desert fell according to each person's level, so does the rain in each generation fall according to a person's level - there is different *hagshamah* (revelation of the soul's light upon the body) with each person, depending on how much the person has revealed his *neshamah*.

The Drought In Eretz Yisrael (5774)

We are currently going through a drought, and we do not have a clear reason why. There can be many reasons, according to Chazal, as we have brought earlier. But in our generation - besides for the fact that "there is no day that is not more cursed than the day before it", there is another reason why there is less rain. Since there is less *hagshamah*, therefore there is less *geshem* being channeled down from Heaven.

Without getting into all the details of what's going on in the world right now, we all know that this year became a much more materialistic world than in the year before it. This is true both with regards to the **physical extravagance of today's lifestyle**, as well as on materialism on an **inner level** -

the fact that there is much strife in the hearts between people now; there is so much *machlokes* (strife) going on, a *machlokes* that resembles Korach which swallows up everyone.

Even if there will eventually be rain – and indeed it should be Hashem’s will that rain should come – we must realize that Hashem is sending us a message. He is holding back the rain and concealing His abundance from us because He wants the world to realize the truth, that our increase of materialism is preventing the rain.

Of course, you can give all sorts of explanations how the drought is due to certain conditions in the weather, but ultimately it is Hashem who is running the world; He can change His ways in one moment and decide to bring rain, no matter what the weather conditions are. So if it’s already towards the end of the month of Adar and there’s no rain yet, we need to realize that Hashem is talking to us and sending us a message, because this is a longer period of drought than usual.

Either we can just look at this like a curse, or we can listen to the messages and ask ourselves what Hashem is telling us. If there is such an extreme drought going on, it is because there has been an extreme change in our lifestyle since a year ago. The **materialism** of the world a year ago – from last winter to this winter – pales in comparison to the extravagance of the current year! It’s as if 1000 years has gone by since a year ago.

These words are *not* an exaggeration. It will ring true to anyone who is in touch with reality. There is a **new world** today of materialism which wasn’t here a year ago – *especially* in Eretz Yisrael.

The Self-Introspection We Need To Make

This is the reflection we need to make now. We must see the blessing of rain, but at the same time, we must wonder why there is a drought and make a self-introspection of what Hashem wants from us. There are additional reasons why there is a drought, which are also true, and here we have only said one of the reasons: We need to understand that if the world gets so materialistic, rain cannot come, and even if it does come, it won’t come from the same blessed source as the dew comes from.

Thus, each person should ask himself what changed this year in regards to last year, “Did I perhaps get more materialistic since last year?” We need to make boundaries for ourselves so that materialism doesn’t control us. Understandably, we should go about this in a sensible way and only make changes we can handle.

In Conclusion

May we merit to have proper *geshem* (rain) that our soul shine onto our body, but that we should merit *gishmei berachah*, “rain of blessing” – for a proper *hagshamah* to come to the world, which we merit according to how much spirituality we reveal.

This is the meaning of **וְתֵן טַל וּמָטָר**.

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