

בָּאִסְתָּרָן

BACKGROUNDAZLAH GAVRA The powers of rains. This expression, explained below in the *Ge-mara*, links the mention of rain specifically with the second blessing of the Amidah, which is sometimes called **תְּהִלָּה צְדָקָה** — "the blessing of powers" — because it speaks of the revelation of God's power in many areas, both in the present and in the future. Since rain is a manifestation of God's power, it is appropriate that it should be mentioned in this bles-

asked Rabbi Eliezer: Should one mention rain during Sukkot? Rain that falls while Jews reside in their sukkot might be seen as a sign of a

curse. Rabbi Eliezer an-
swered: I did not suggest
that one should ask for rain
either; rather I wish to ac-
knowledge that God "makes
winds blow and the rains
fall" in the proper season.
Rabbi Yehoshua replied: If
so, then they should always
be acknowledged.

rule is that we only ask for rain immediately prior to the rainy season. Rabbi Yehudah says: On *Shemini Atzeret*, the final day of *Sukkot*, when the prayer leader leads *mu-saf*, he mentions the rains; at *shacharit*, he does not. This is reversed when we stop asking for rain on the first day of *Pesach*. The prayer leader mentions the rains during *shacharit*, but not during *musaf*.

“On what day?” There seems to be an unspoken assumption that the prayer for rain is required, as he asks when it is to be recited. The Tanna bases himself on the *Mishnah* from *Berachot*, the first order of the

these scholars are recorded in the Mishnah. Because of his staunch and unflinching adherence to tradition, Rabbi Eliezer was unwilling to accede to the majority view when his own views were based on tradition. Indeed, Rabbi Eliezer's conduct generated so much tension among the Sages that his own brother-in-law, Rabban Gamliel, eventually

and holy days in the blessing Who Endows with wisdom, all various blessings in the *Amudim*. Based on this *Mishna*, which establishes the obligation to ask for rain, our *Mishna* teaches when we begin to mention "the **might of the rains**."

הַתָּמָם⁵ The *Gemara* asks: If this *Halacha* is found in the tractate *Berachot*, at the beginning of the Order of *Zeraim*, then it should be taught there! Why was it left until tractate *Ta'anit*, at the end of the Order of *Moed*? The *Gemara* answers that our *Tanna* is a continuation of tractate *Rosh Hashana* where we learned: "On *Sukkot* all creatures are **judged for water**." The *Gemara* now teaches when we mention the **might of the rains** because it is auspicious to ask for water alongside its judgment.

הַתָּמָם וְהַמְּנִינָה⁶ Regarding the wording of the *Mishna*, the *Gemara* suggests: Let it teach: "From when do we mention the rains?" What does the specific phrase "the **might of the rains**" indicate? Rabbi Yohanan said: They fall with might

378

and reveal God's strength in the world. As the verse says: "He does great things and there is no comprehension, wonders without number" (Job 5:9), and as is written in the next verse: "who gives rain on the face of the earth, and sends water on the face of the fields."

רְבָבָה נִזְמָן The Gemara asks: How do these verses prove that rainfall is considered might? Raba bar Shilela said: This is learned through a *gezerah Shavah*, or parallel wording, on the words "comprehension" here and "comprehension" at the creation of the world. It is written here regarding rain: "He does great things and there is no comprehension," and it is written there regarding the creation of the world: "Did you not know? Have you not heard? The God of the world, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint and is not weary. There is no comprehension of His wisdom." (Isaiah 40:28) Thus the concepts of creation and rain are connected. Elsewhere it is written regarding the creation of the world: "He sets firm the mountains with His strength; He is girded with power" (Tehillim 65:7) Therefore rain, like the creation of the world, reflects God's power.

בְּרַאֲשָׁנָה וְבְּאַמִּתְּהָרָה The Gemara now asks: From where do we know that the mention of rain is to be inserted

NOTES

רְבָבָה נִזְמָן **The powers of rains.** Many commentators have mentioned the relationship between rain and the resurrection of the dead, the main theme of the second blessing of the Amidah prayer, into which the mention of rain is inserted. Riba writes that rain "resurrects" the seeds, for the seeds lie buried in the ground and begin to sprout after rain. Moreover, those who suffer from famine during times of drought are "resurrected" by God when He sends rain. Causing the rain to fall is also similar to the resurrection of the dead that will take place at the end of days, for they are both revelations of God's might in this world and His ability to alter the laws of Nature.

רְבָבָה נִזְמָן **A sign on the Festival.** Rashi explains that rain on Sukkot is an ominous sign, for it is regarded as a divine rebuke, indicating that God does not wish His people to dwell in the temporary structures they are commanded to inhabit during the seven days of the Sukkot Festival, but wishes them to return to their permanent homes instead. A Mishnah in tractate *Sukkah* (28b) describes such a situation by making the following analogy: "To what may the matter be compared? To a servant who comes to pour a cup of wine for his master, and the master pours a ladle of water in his face." Here, too, the people wish to serve their Master, but He refuses to accept their service.

Metiri explains that rain on Sukkot is an ominous sign, because rain makes it impossible for people to fulfill their obligation to dwell in a sukkah.

HALAKHAH

"רְבָבָה נִזְמָן" **From when do we mention "the powers of rains"?** "We begin to insert the expression רְבָבָה נִזְמָן ("Who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall") during the musaf Amidah on the last day of the Sukkot Festival, and we stop saying it before the musaf Amidah on the first day of the Pesah Festival," following Rabbi Yehudah. (*Shulchan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* 114:1.)

רְבָבָה נִזְמָן **We mention "the powers of rains" in the blessing of the resurrection of the dead.** "We mention rain — by reciting: 'Who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall' — in the second blessing of the Amidah throughout the winter. During the summer there are different customs. The practice of Sephardi communities [and those Ashkenazi communities that follow Hassidic customs] is

specifically in the *Amidah* prayer?

The Gemara responds: We learn this from a *Beraithah* which explains that, in the verse: "You shall love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart," (Devarim 11:13), "serve" refers to prayer. The sages of the Beraithah ask: "What is the service of God that is in the heart? We must say that this is prayer. It is written in the next verse: 'And I will give the rain of your land in its time, the early rain and the late rain'" (Devarim 11:14). From this juxtaposition we learn that when one is engaged in service of the heart, prayer, it is appropriate to pray for rain.

רְבָבָה נִזְמָן Connected to the idea that rain

is found in the hand of God and are not distributed through an intermediary. They are: The key of rain, the key of life (birth), and the key of resurrection of the dead. Since

Rabbi Yohanan said: Scripture states that three keys are

evidence of God's might, the Gemara now comments:

Rabbi Yohanan said: Scripture states that three keys are found in the hand of God and are not distributed through

an intermediary. They are: The key of rain, the key of life

(birth), and the key of resurrection of the dead. Since

we see that this key is in God's hand. We learn this regarding the key of life (birth) from the verse: "And God

remembered Rachel and heard her, and opened her womb." (Bereishit 30:22)

prevented controversy from proliferating. This ban was lifted only after Rabbi Eliezer's death. All the Sages of the next generation were Rabbi Eliezer's students. Most prominent among them was Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Eliezer's son, Hyrcanus, was also a Sage.

SAGES

רְבָבָה נִזְמָן Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananyah the Levi, one of the leading Sages of the generation following the destruction of the Second Temple. Rabbi Yehoshua had served in the Temple as a singer and, after the destruction, he was one of the students who went to Yavneh with their outstanding teacher, Rabbi Eliezer. Rabbi Yehoshua followed the Halakhic viewpoint of his teacher and of Beit Hillel.

Although Rabbi Yehoshua played an important part in the leadership of the people (he was apparently a senior judge), he earned a meager living from hard and unremitting work. After renewing his close ties with the House of the Nasi (the president of the Sanhedrin), he was apparently supported by Rabban Gamliel, who used to give him the tithe for even if rain is not a sign of a curse after the first day of the Festival, it is certainly not a sign of a blessing, for it makes it difficult for a person to eat in the sukkah, even if he desires to do so. (See *Rif*, Riba and others who read in the Mishnah: "Since rains are not a sign of a blessing, etc.")

רְבָבָה נִזְמָן **That were not entrusted to the hand of an agent.** The Rishonim object: Elsewhere (*Sanhedrin* 113a), it is stated that the keys of rain and of resurrection were indeed entrusted to Elijah the Prophet. Rashi (following *Rabbenu Gershom*) explains that Rabbi Yohanan means to say that the three keys — of rain, of a woman giving birth, and of resurrection — were not entrusted together to a single intermediary. *Tosafot* (see also *Ranav*, cited by *Shitah*) explains that these three keys could indeed be entrusted to an intermediary for a limited period of time, but not permanently.

people (he was apparently a senior judge), he earned a meager living from hard and unremitting work. After renewing his close ties with the House of the Nasi (the president of the Sanhedrin), he was apparently supported by Rabban Gamliel, who used to give him the tithe for even if rain is not a sign of a curse after the first day of the Festival, it is certainly not a sign of a blessing, for it makes it difficult for a person to eat in the sukkah, even if he desires to do so. (See *Rif*, Riba and others who read in the Mishnah: "Since rains are not a sign of a blessing, etc.")

רְבָבָה נִזְמָן **That were not entrusted to the hand of an agent.** The Rishonim object: Elsewhere (*Sanhedrin* 113a), it is stated that the keys of rain and of resurrection were indeed entrusted to Elijah the Prophet. Rashi (following *Rabbenu Gershom*) explains that Rabbi Yohanan means to say that the three keys — of rain, of a woman giving birth, and of resurrection — were not entrusted together to a single intermediary. *Tosafot* (see also *Ranav*, cited by *Shitah*) explains that these three keys could indeed be entrusted to an intermediary for a limited period of time, but not permanently.

he had close relations with the imperial court and was highly regarded there, as he had been sent to Rome as a member of several national delegations. Although Rabbi Yehoshua was modest and humble, he was very firm in maintaining his opinions and principles, and did not make concessions even when difficult opened. However, in other matters he accepted authority, and in general had a humorous, realistic