

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."

⁷ *יַמְיָן* 'Miz The Gemara asks: How do these verses prove that rainfall is considered might?

Raba bar Sheila said: This is learned through a *gezera 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.

⁸ *הַגְּמָרָא לֵב מַיָּא* The Gemara now asks: From where do we know that the mention of rain is to be inserted

specifically in the *Amidah* prayer?

The Gemara responds: We learn this from a *Beraita* which explains that, in the verse: "You shall love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart," (*Devarim* 10:13), "serve" refers to prayer. The sages of the *Beraita* 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.

⁹ *מִיָּא מַיָּא* Connected to the idea that rain 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 regarding the key of rain the Bible tells us: "The Lord will open for you His good treasure house, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its time" (*Devarim* 28:12), 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." (*Bereshit* 30:22)

NOTES

מַיָּא מַיָּא 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. *Ritva* 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.

מַיָּא מַיָּא A sign of a curse 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.

Meiri 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

"מַיָּא מַיָּא From when do we mention 'the powers of rains'?" We begin to insert the expression *מַיָּא מַיָּא* ("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. (*Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* 114:1.)

מַיָּא מַיָּא 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

Rabbanu Efrayim (cited by *Ritva* and others) maintains that it is only on the first night of Sukkot that rain is a sign of a curse, for according to the Sages it is only on the first night of Sukkot that one is obligated to eat in the sukkah, whereas during the rest of the week one may eat elsewhere, provided that the eating is limited to casual meals. (See *Sukkah* 25a.) According to Rabbi Eliezer, who maintains that a person is obligated to eat fourteen meals in the sukkah, one meal each day and one meal each night, rain is certainly a sign of a curse all seven days. By contrast, Rabbi Yehoshua argues that rain should not be mentioned throughout the week of Sukkot, 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*, *Ritva* and others who read in the Mishnah: "Since rains are not a sign of a blessing, etc.") *מַיָּא מַיָּא אֵלֶּיךָ That were not entrusted to the hand of an agent.* The Rishonim object. Elsewhere (*Sanhedin* 113a), it is stated that the keys of rain and of resurrection were indeed entrusted to Elijah the Prophet. *Rashi* (following *Rabbeinu 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 *Riv'avad*, cited by *Shitah*) explains that these three keys could indeed be entrusted to an intermediary for a limited period of time, but not permanently.

to recite: "Who causes the dew to come down" *מַיָּא מַיָּא* during the summer. But Ashkenazi communities outside Israel do not recite it." (*Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* 114:1-2.)

מַיָּא מַיָּא And we ask for rain in the blessing of the years. During the winter, a prayer for rain is inserted in the ninth blessing of the *Amidah*. [The date from which we begin to insert this prayer is discussed in the Gemara below.] According to the Ashkenazi custom, the text of the blessing remains essentially the same throughout the year, except that during the summer the text uses the expression "and give a blessing" *מַיָּא מַיָּא*, whereas during the winter it reads: "And give dew and rain for a blessing *מַיָּא מַיָּא*." According to the Sephardic custom, the text of the ninth blessing recited during the winter is significantly different from that recited during the summer (*Tur*). (*Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* 117:1.)

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

מַיָּא מַיָּא Rabbi Yehoshua. This is Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananyah the Levite, 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, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai. Unlike his colleague Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua followed the Halakic 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 unremunerative 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 belonging to the Levites. Rabbi Yehoshua was famous among both Jews and non-Jews as an extraordinary scholar, possessing wide knowledge not only of Torah but also of secular subjects. He was also a celebrated preacher.

Continuing the method of his teacher, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, Rabbi Yehoshua was a moderate person who tried to deter the people from ferment which would lead to rebellion against the Roman regime. For a while 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. However, in other matters he accepted authority, and in general had a humorous, realistic temperament.