

BACKGROUND

Sunlight that follows after rain – שִׁמְשָׁא דְּבִתְרַּ מִיטְרָא – After a considerable amount of rainfall, the sun’s heat will cause the water to evaporate into the atmosphere and be absorbed by the fine fibers of the roots of plants. This combination of water and bright sunlight hastens the growth of the plant’s leaves.

NOTES

The glow [gilhei] of the evening – גִּילְהֵי דְּלִילְיָא – Some commentaries associate gilhei with gilui, which means to uncover. In other words, the expression is referring to a clear or cloudless evening sky.

For He says to the snow, Fall on the earth – לְשִׁלְגֵי יֵאמֵר – הוּא אָרְץ: Some commentaries explain this verse as follows: And to the snow that falls in the hills, He shall say: Be as on the plains of the earth, i.e., the snow is compared to that which falls on the plains of the earth (Maharsha).

וְאָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה: זִיקָא דְּבִתְרַּ מִיטְרָא – כְּמִיטְרָא, עֵיבָא דְּבִתְרַּ מִיטְרָא – כְּמִיטְרָא. שִׁמְשָׁא דְּבִתְרַּ מִיטְרָא – כְּתֵרֵי מִטְרֵי. לְמַעוּטֵי מַאי? לְמַעוּטֵי גִילְהֵי דְּלִילְיָא, וְשִׁמְשָׁא דְּבֵינֵי קְרַחֵי.

And on a related topic, Rav Yehuda said: Wind that blows after rain is as beneficial to the earth as rain itself. Clouds that appear after rain are as beneficial as rain, while sunlight that follows after rain⁸ is as beneficial as two rainfalls. The Gemara asks: If wind, clouds, and sun are all beneficial after rainfall, what does Rav Yehuda’s statement serve to exclude? The Gemara answers: He comes to exclude the glow of the eveningⁿ and the sun that shines between the clouds, appearing only in patches. These phenomena are harmful after rain.

וְאָמַר רַבָּא: מַעְלֵי תַלְגָּא לְטוּרֵי כַּחֲמֶשֶׁה מִטְרֵי לְאַרְעָא, שְׁנַאֲמַר “כִּי לְשִׁלְגֵי יֵאמֵר הוּא אָרְץ וְגִשְׁם מִטְרֵי וְגִשְׁם מְטָרוֹת עִזִּי.”

On a related note, Rava said: Snow is as beneficial to the mountains as five rainfalls to the earth of the plains, as it is stated: “For He says to the snow: Fall on the earth,ⁿ likewise to the shower of rain, and to the showers of His mighty rain” (Job 37:6). This verse compares snow to rain by means of five allusions to types of rainfall: The word “rain,” which appears twice; the word “shower”; and the plural “showers,” which indicates two rainfalls. This teaches that snow is as beneficial as five rainfalls.

וְאָמַר רַבָּא: תַלְגָּא – לְטוּרֵי, מִטְרָא רוּיָא – לְאַיְלֵינֵי, מִטְרָא נִחָא – לְפִירֵי.

And on the same topic, Rava said: Snow brings benefits to the mountains; strong rain provides benefits to trees; light rain brings benefit to fruit;

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LANGUAGE

Drizzle [urpila] – עוּרְפִילָא: Referring to the finest rain, consisting of drops of mist that have condensed slightly but fall softly and slowly. The earth absorbs this drizzle well. Since this kind of rain fills the air, even places where ordinary rain does not reach are moistened by it.

Seed [partzida] – פִּרְצִידָא: Phonetically similar to the Arabic فرصد, firṣid, which also means seed.

Torah scholar [tzurva] – צוּרְבָא מְרַבֵּן: According to the ge’onim, this may be from the word for fire or heat, meaning hot or one who has caught fire; they also suggest it may mean hardened. The Arabic ضرب, ḍrb, has all these meanings.

עוּרְפִילָא אֶפִּילוּ לְפִרְצִידָא דְּתוּתֵי קְלָא מְהֵנָּא לֵיה. מַאי עוּרְפִילָא – עוּרוּ פִּילֵי. וְאָמַר רַבָּא: הָאֵי צוּרְבָא מְרַבֵּן דְּמִי לְפִרְצִידָא דְּתוּתֵי קְלָא. דְּכִיּוֹן דְּנִבְט – נִבְט.

and drizzle [urpila]^l is even beneficial to a seed [partzida]^l under a clod of earth, as it can reach anywhere without causing any harm. The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of the word drizzle? The Gemara explains: It is a contraction of the phrase: Arise, furrows [uru pilei].ⁿ And the Gemara cites another saying in which Rava uses the same imagery. Rava said: This Torah scholar [tzurva]^l is like a seed under a clod of earth,ⁿ as once he sprouts and begins to develop, he continues to sprout and his greatness increases.

וְאָמַר רַבָּא: הָאֵי צוּרְבָא מְרַבֵּן דְּרַתָּה – אוּרְיִתָּא הוּא דְּקָא מְרַתְחָא לֵיה, שְׁנַאֲמַר “הֲלוֹא כֹה דְּבָרֵי כְּאֵשׁ נֹאֵם ה’.” וְאָמַר רַב אֲשִׁי: כָּל תַלְמִיד חֲכָם שְׂאִינוּ קֶשֶׁה כְּבוּרָל – אִינוּ תַלְמִיד חֲכָם, שְׁנַאֲמַר “וּכְפֹטִישׁ יִפְצֹץ סֶלַע.”

And, incidentally, the Gemara relates that which Rava said: This Torah scholar who grows angry, it can be presumed that it is his Torah study that angers him.ⁿ Therefore, he must be given the benefit of the doubt, as it is stated: “Is not my word like fire, says the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:29). And similarly, Rav Ashi said: Any Torah scholar who is not as hard as iron, but is indecisive and wavers, he is not a Torah scholar, as it is stated in the same verse: “And as a hammer that breaks rock in pieces” (Jeremiah 23:29).

NOTES

Arise, furrows [uru pilei] – עוּרוּ פִּילֵי: Some commentaries explain that uru is related to me’arer, undermines, meaning: Break through the rows (Arukh).

Like a seed under a clod of earth – דְּמִי לְפִרְצִידָא דְּתוּתֵי קְלָא: Most commentaries explain that a Torah scholar is initially unknown and he is as obscure as a seed beneath the ground. However, once he begins to develop, he grows significantly. Some explain that the phrase is referring to a seed that sprouts beneath the earth, where it is protected in its initial stages of growth. So too, a Torah scholar will develop his potential best if he is protected when young (Rabbi Elyakim).

It is his Torah study that angers him – אוּרְיִתָּא הוּא דְּקָא מְרַתְחָא – לֵיה: Many commentaries are puzzled by these statements, as they apparently praise anger, which is generally considered a

problematic trait. One explanation is based on a suggestion of some early commentaries that as the heart of a Sage becomes bound up with the Torah and spiritual matters, he becomes highly sensitive to unseemly and sinful acts and is therefore more susceptible to anger (Meiri; Shita Mekubbetzet). Consequently, this rage does not stem from wickedness but from extra sensitivity. Nevertheless, Ravina says that everyone, Torah scholars included, should train themselves to express rebuke appropriately, in a pleasant manner. The reason for this emotional training is that when one grows angry, even when it is justified and motivated by pure intention, one’s rage can damage one’s own soul. As the Gemara states: When a scholar becomes angry, it causes his studies to be forgotten (Pesahim 66b). Therefore, it is best to avoid this negative behavior (Gevurat Ari; Ya’arot Devash).

Ravina – רבִּינָא: A Babylonian *amora* of the fifth and sixth generations, Ravina apparently came from Mata Mehasya, although some authorities claim that he was from Eretz Yisrael. He was among Rava's students. The Gemara records halakhic discussions between Ravina and Rava, and more frequently records discussions between Ravina and various other students of Rava. Although Ravina was older than Rav Ashi, he accepted him as a teacher and became his disciple-colleague. Apparently, Ravina was also actively involved in editing the Babylonian Talmud, a project that was completed by Rav Ashi. While little information is known about his private life, the Talmud indicates that he had children. Rav Ashi's sons were students of Ravina. Ravina had many other disciples, the most important of whom was Ravina the Younger, his sister's son, who completed the main stages of the final editing of the Talmud.

HALAKHA

Teach himself to act gently – לְמִילָךְ נִפְשִׁיָה בְּנִחוּתָא – Anger is an especially problematic trait, and it is proper for one to distance himself from it and train himself not to get angry. If one must instill fear in the members of his household or the community, he should merely act as if he is angry. The Sages therefore commanded that one should distance himself from anger to the point that he is not even stirred by matters that usually cause rage, as stated by Ravina (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda*, *Hilkhot Deot* 2:3).

NOTES

To one He responded unreasonably – לְאֶחָד הִשְׁבִּיבוּהוּ שְׂלֵא – לְהוֹנֵן: Many commentaries discuss the issue of why Jephthah alone received an unfavorable response. Some explain this by pointing out a difference in the nature of the requests. Eliezer and Saul, as well as Caleb (see Rashi and *Tosafot*), were involved in personal or family commitments and were therefore justified in issuing open-ended statements. By contrast, Jephthah uttered a vow to God and should have taken care to do so in an appropriate matter, rather than making his vow dependent on whatever or whomever happened to emerge from his house (*Kli Yakar*; *Iyyun Ya'akov*).

Is there no balm in Gilead – הֲצִי אֵין בְּגִלְעָד – Some early commentaries understand the reference to Gilead as a double allusion, since it refers both to Jephthah the Gileadite himself as well as to the one who could have annulled the vow, Pinehas, in accordance with the midrashic tradition that notwithstanding the many years separating them, Pinehas was Elijah, another Gileadite. Indeed, the Sages state elsewhere that the mutual pride of Jephthah and Pinehas, in their refusal to consult one another, prevented Jephthah from learning that his vow was invalid (*Beresheet Rabba* 60:3; *Rabbeinu Gershom*).

אָמַר לִיה רַבִּי אַבָּא לְרַב אֲשִׁי: אֲתוֹן מִהֶתֵּם מִתְּמִיתוּ לָהּ, אֲנִן מִהֶכָּא מִתְּנִינְן לָהּ – דְּכְתִיב "אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַבְנֶיהָ בְּרוֹז", אֵל תִּקְרִי "אַבְנֶיהָ" אֶלָּא בּוֹנֵהָ. אָמַר רַבִּינָא: אֲפִילוּ הֵכִי, מִיבִיעֵי לִיה לְאִינִישׁ לְמִילָךְ נִפְשִׁיָה בְּנִחוּתָא. שְׁנַאֲמַר "וְהִסַּר כַּעַס מִלְּבָבְךָ" וְגו'.

Rabbi Abba said to Rav Ashi: You learned the proof for this idea from that verse there; we learned it from here, as it is written: "A land whose stones [*avaneha*] are iron" (Deuteronomy 8:9). Do not read this phrase as "whose stones [*avaneha*]," rather, read it as whose builders [*boneha*], since Torah scholars build the land spiritually and are as tough as iron. With regard to these statements praising the toughness of a Torah scholar, Ravina^p said: And even so, one is required to teach himself to act gently,^h as it is stated: "And remove anger from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh" (Ecclesiastes 11:10).

אָמַר רַבִּי שְׂמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָנִי אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹנָתָן: שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׂאֵלוּ שְׂלֵא בְּהוֹנֵן, לְשֹׁנִים הִשְׁבִּיבוּהוּ בְּהוֹנֵן, לְאֶחָד הִשְׁבִּיבוּהוּ שְׂלֵא בְּהוֹנֵן, וְאֵלוּ הֵן: אֵלִיעֶזֶר עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם, וְשֹׂאֵל בֶּן קִישׁ, וְיִפְתָּח הַגִּלְעָדִי.

As a preamble to the statement of Rabbi Berekhya, below, the Gemara cites that which Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: Three people entreated God in an unreasonable manner, i.e., in situations where their requests might have received an unfavorable answer. To two of them God responded reasonably, with a favorable response to their requests, and to one God responded unreasonably,ⁿ i.e., unfavorably, in a manner befitting the unreasonable request. And they are: Eliezer, servant of Abraham; Saul, son of Kish; and Jephthah the Gileadite.

אֵלִיעֶזֶר עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם – דְּכְתִיב "וְהָיָה הַנְּעִרָה אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלֶיהָ הִטִּי נָא כַּדָּךְ" וְגו' יָכוֹל אֲפִילוּ חִיגַרְתָּ אֲפִילוּ סוּמָא – הִשְׁבִּיבוּ בְּהוֹנֵן, וְנִדְמָנָה לוֹ רַבְקָה.

The Gemara clarifies each of these cases in turn: With regard to Eliezer, servant of Abraham, he made a request when he prayed beside the well, as it is written: "That the maiden to whom I shall say: Please let down your pitcher that I may drink; and she shall say: Drink, and I will also give your camels to drink; that she be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac" (Genesis 24:14). Eliezer entreated God unreasonably, as his request allowed for the possibility that she might even be lame or even blind, and yet he had promised to take her to Isaac. Nevertheless, God responded to him reasonably and the eminently suitable Rebecca happened to come to him.

שְׂאֵל בֶּן קִישׁ – דְּכְתִיב "וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יַבְנֵנּוּ וְעִשְׂרוֹנוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ עֹשֶׂר גְּדוֹל וְאֵת בֵּיתוֹ יִתֵּן לוֹ" יָכוֹל אֲפִילוּ עֶבֶד, אֲפִילוּ מַמְזוּר – הִשְׁבִּיבוּ בְּהוֹנֵן, וְנִדְמָנָה לוֹ דָּוִד.

With regard to Saul, son of Kish, he made an offer when Goliath the Philistine challenged the Jews, as it is written: "And it shall be that the man who kills him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter" (1 Samuel 17:25). The man who killed Goliath might even have been a slave or a *mamzer*, one born from an incestuous or adulterous union, who would be unfit to marry his daughter. Nevertheless, God responded to him reasonably and David happened to come to him.

יִפְתָּח הַגִּלְעָדִי – דְּכְתִיב "וְהָיָה הַיּוֹצֵא אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִדְּלֹתַי בֵּיתִי" וְגו' יָכוֹל אֲפִילוּ דְּבַר טָמֵא הִשְׁבִּיבוּ שְׂלֵא בְּהוֹנֵן – נִדְמָנָה לוֹ בֵּיתוֹ.

By contrast, there is the case of Jephthah the Gileadite. Upon leaving for battle he issued a statement, as it is written: "Then it shall be that whatever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace... it shall be to the Lord and I will bring it up for a burnt-offering" (Judges 11:31). This might even have been an impure, non-kosher animal, which he had committed himself to sacrifice. In this instance, God responded to him unreasonably, and his daughter happened to come to him.

וְהִינֵנוּ דְקָאֲמַר לְהוּ נְבִיא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: "הֲצִי אֵין בְּגִלְעָד אִם רִפָּא אֵין שָׁם."

Regarding the incident of Jephthah, the Gemara remarks: And this is what the prophet said to the Jewish people: "Is there no balm in Gilead?ⁿ Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not recovered?" (Jeremiah 8:22). This verse alludes to the fact that had he sought a means to do so, Jephthah could have had his vow annulled.

וְכְתִיב "אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוִּיתִי וְלֹא דִבַּרְתִּי וְלֹא עֲלָתָהּ עַל לִבִּי."

And it is written, with regard to human sacrifice: "And they have also built the high places of the Ba'al, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt offerings to Ba'al, which I did not command, and I did not speak, nor did it come into My heart" (Jeremiah 19:5).

Sometimes undesired – פְּעָמִים אֵינוֹ מְתַבְקֵשׁ – Some commentaries add that excessive rain, even in its proper season, is undesirable, whereas too much dew is not considered a curse (Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto).

Requesting and mentioning are one and the same thing – שְׁאֵלָה וְהִזְכָּרָה תְּדַא מִיִּלְתָּא הִיא – This assumption is puzzling, as the mishna itself apparently distinguishes between the two concepts. Nevertheless, a closer examination of the mishna reveals that although different terminology is used for mentioning and requesting rain, when the term for requesting appears later in the mishna it is used not only in the narrow sense of the request for rain in the ninth blessing but also in reference to the general mention of rain in the second blessing. The two terms are also equated in the Jerusalem Talmud, as well as in Rambam's Commentary on the Mishna.

It is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua – רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הִיא: There are two basic explanations of this question and answer. Rashi maintains that the question is referring to the discrepancy in days between the beginning of the mention of rain, which occurs at the beginning of *Sukkot*, according to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, and the time for the request of rain, which starts just before the rainy season. According to this interpretation, there is a dispute among the early commentaries as to whether this is referring to the seventh day of *Sukkot* (Rabbi Aharon HaLevi), the Eighth Day of Assembly (Rashi; Rabbeinu Yehonatan), or the third or seventh of Marheshvan (see Ran and the Ritva). Some explain this question differently: If one says that the mention of rain and the request for rain should begin concurrently, since the request for rain is recited only during weekday services, there must be an opinion that this request begins on a weekday rather than a Festival. See also Rid, who points to textual differences that correspond to the two interpretations (Rabbeinu Hananel; Ran; Rabbi Elyakim).

“אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוִּיתִי” – זֶה בְּנֹו שֶׁל מִישַׁע מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “וַיִּקַּח אֶת בְּנוֹ הַבְּכוֹר אֲשֶׁר יִמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ עֲלֵהּ.” וְלֹא דִבַּרְתִּי” – זֶה יַפְתָּח, “וְלֹא עָלְתָה עָלָיו” – זֶה יַצְחָק בֶּן אֲבֵרָה.

אָמַר רַבִּי בְרֵכְיָה: אִף בְּנִסְתַּי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁאֵלָה שְׁלֵא בְּהוֹגֵן, וְהִקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא הַשְּׂבִיבָה בְּהוֹגֵן, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “וַיִּנְדְּעָה נְרֵדָפָה לְדַעַת אֶת ה' כִּשְׁחֹר נִכּוֹן מִצְאוֹ וַיִּבְאוּ כְּגִשְׁם לָנוּ.”

אָמַר לָהּ הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: בְּתֵי, אֶת שׁוֹאֵלֶת דְּבַר שְׁפָעִמִּים מְתַבְקֵשׁ וּפְעָמִים אֵינוֹ מְתַבְקֵשׁ, אֲבָל אֵינוֹ אֹהֵיה לָךְ דְּבַר הַמְתַבְקֵשׁ לְעוֹלָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “אֹהֵיה כֶּטֶל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל.”

וְעוֹד שְׁאֵלָה שְׁלֵא בְּהוֹגֵן, אֲמָרָה לְפָנָיו: רְבוּנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, “שִׁימֵנִי כְּחוֹתֶם עַל לִבְךָ כְּחוֹתֶם עַל זְרוֹעֶךָ.” אָמַר לָהּ הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: בְּתֵי, אֶת שׁוֹאֵלֶת דְּבַר שְׁפָעִמִּים נְרָאָה וּפְעָמִים אֵינוֹ נְרָאָה, אֲבָל אֵינוֹ אֹעֲשֶׂה לָךְ דְּבַר שְׁנֵרָאָה לְעוֹלָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “הֵן עַל כַּפַּיִם חִקְתִּיךָ.”

“אֵין שׁוֹאֵלִין אֶת הַגְּשָׁמִים” כו'. סְבוּרוֹ: שְׁאֵלָה וְהִזְכָּרָה תְּדַא מִיִּלְתָּא הִיא, מֵאֵן תִּנָּא? אָמַר רַבָּא: רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הִיא, דְּאָמַר: מִשְׁעַת הַנְּחֻתָּו.

אָמַר לִיה אֲבִינִי: אֲפִילוּ תִימָא רַבִּי אֲלִיעֶזֶר, שְׁאֵלָה לְחוּד וְהִזְכָּרָה לְחוּד.

וְאִיכָּא דְּאָמְרִי: לִימָא

The Gemara interprets each phrase of this verse: “Which I did not command,” this is referring to the son of Mesha, king of Moab. King Mesha sacrificed his son, as it is stated: “Then he took his firstborn son, who would reign after him, and he offered him as a burnt-offering” (11 Kings 3:27). “And I did not speak,” this is referring to Jephthah, who sacrificed his daughter as an offering. “Nor did it come into my heart,” this is referring to Isaac, son of Abraham. Although God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, there was no intent in God’s heart that he should actually do so; it was merely a test.

In light of the above statement, the Gemara returns to the issue of rain. Rabbi Berekhya^p said: The Congregation of Israel also entreated God unreasonably, and yet the Holy One, Blessed be He, responded reasonably, as it is stated: “And let us know, eagerly strive to know the Lord. His going forth is sure as the morning, and He will come to us as the rain” (Hosea 6:3). They compared the revelation of God to the rain.

In response, the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the Jewish people: My daughter, you request the manifestation of My Presence by comparing Me to a matter, rain, that is sometimes desired, but is sometimes undesired,ⁿ e.g., during the summer. However, I will be to you like a matter that is always desired, dew, as it is stated: “I will be as the dew to Israel” (Hosea 14:6), since dew appears in all seasons and is invariably a blessing.

And the Congregation of Israel further entreated God unreasonably in another context, saying before Him: Master of the Universe: “Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm” (Song of Songs 8:6). The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to her: My daughter, you ask that I be manifest to you in a matter that is sometimes visible and sometimes not visible, as the heart and arm are not covered. However, I will act so that I manifest Myself for you like a matter that is always visible, as it is stated: “Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands, your walls are continually before me” (Isaiah 49:16).

The Gemara returns to the *halakhot* of the mishna: One requests rain only immediately preceding the rainy season. The Sages assumed that requesting and mentioning are one and the same thing,ⁿ and consequently they asked: Who is the *tanna* who taught this *halakha*? The Gemara answers that Rava said: It is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua,ⁿ who said that one mentions rain from the time of putting down the *lulav*, i.e., the Eighth Day of Assembly, which is indeed near the rainy season.

Abaye said to him: Even if you say that it is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, who holds that one mentions rain from the first day of the festival of *Sukkot*, this ruling of the mishna can be explained by distinguishing between the two terms: Requesting is a discrete concept and mentioning is another discrete concept. In other words, even according to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, one begins to request rain just before the rainy season, on the Eighth Day of Assembly, whereas one starts to mention rain already on the first day of *Sukkot*.

And some say a different version of this discussion: Let us say

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Berekhya – רַבִּי בְרֵכְיָה: An *amora* of Eretz Yisrael from the fourth generation, Rabbi Berekhya received and transmitted teachings in the names of Sages of previous generations; in particular, he was a student of Rabbi H̄elbo. He is seldom quoted in the Babylonian Talmud, but his teachings often appear in the Jerusalem Talmud and the *midrashim*. Although there are few

halakhic rulings in his name, many of his aggadic statements are recorded. The collections of aggadic midrash from Eretz Yisrael present many of his homiletic interpretations.

We possess almost no information about his personal life. It is stated in the Jerusalem Talmud that his daughter’s son, Rabbi Hiyya, was also a Torah Sage.

רבי יהושע היא, דאמר משעת הנחתו?
אמר רבא: אפילו תימא רבי אליעזר,
שאלה לחוד והזברה לחוד.

“רבי יהודה אומר העובר לפני התיבה”
כו’.

ורמינהו: עד מתי שואלין את הגשמים?
רבי יהודה אומר: עד שיעבור הפסח,
רבי מאיר אומר: עד שיעבור ניסן!

אמר רב חסדא: לא קשיא, כן –
לשואל, כן – להזכיר. מישאל שאיל
ואזיל, להזכיר – ביום טוב הראשון
פסיק.

אמר עולא: הא דרב חסדא קשיא
“בחמץ לשנים וכעשן לעינים”. ומה
במקום שאינו שואל – מזכיר, במקום
ששואל – אינו דין שיהא מזכיר?!

אלא אמר עולא: תרי תנאי אליבא
דרבי יהודה.

רב יוסף אומר: מאי “עד שיעבור
הפסח” – עד שיעבור שליח צבור
ראשון היורד ביום טוב ראשון של
פסח.

אמר ליה אביי: שאלה ביום טוב מי
איכא?

that our mishna is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua, who said that one mentions rain from the time of putting the lulav down, from the Eighth Day of Assembly, and it is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer. Rava said: Even if you say that the ruling of the mishna is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, one can explain this by distinguishing between the terms: **Requesting is a distinct notion and mentioning is another distinct notion**, even according to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer.

§ The mishna stated that **Rabbi Yehuda says**: With regard to the one who passes before the ark as prayer leader on the concluding Festival day of *Sukkot*, the Eighth Day of Assembly, the prayer leader of the additional prayer mentions rain, while the leader of the morning prayer does not. The reverse is the case at the conclusion of the period of mentioning rain, as the leader of the morning prayer mentions rain, while the one who leads the additional prayer^N does not.

And the Gemara raises a contradiction from a *baraita* (5a): **Until when does one request rain? Rabbi Yehuda says: Until Passover has passed. Rabbi Meir says: Until the month of Nisan has passed.** According to the *baraita*, Rabbi Yehuda holds that one prays for rain until the end of Passover, whereas the mishna states that Rabbi Yehuda’s opinion is that one prays for rain only until the beginning of the Festival.

Rav Ḥisda said: This is **not difficult**. The *baraita* here is referring to the **request** for rain, which continues until the end of Passover, whereas the mishna **there** rules that one is to **mention** rain only until the first Festival day. In other words, Rabbi Yehuda holds that one **continues requesting rain** until the end of Passover, but with regard to the **mention** of rain, already on the first day of the Festival one ceases to do so.

The Gemara raises a difficulty against this answer. Ulla said: **That which Rav Ḥisda said is as difficult to accept “as vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes”** (Proverbs 10:26).^B He elaborates: **If when one does not yet request rain, at the beginning of the rainy season, one nevertheless mentions rain; in a case when one requests rain, i.e., during Passover, according to this explanation, is it not right that one should also mention rain?**

Rather, Ulla said an alternative resolution: In fact, **two *tanna'im*** expressed different rulings in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda.^N According to one *tanna*, Rabbi Yehuda holds that one both mentions and requests rain during Passover, whereas according to the other *tanna*, Rabbi Yehuda holds that one neither mentions nor requests rain after the morning prayer of the first day of Passover.

The Gemara cites an additional resolution of the apparent contradiction. Rav Yosef said: **What is the meaning of the phrase: Until Passover has passed [*ya’avor*]? It means: Until the first prayer leader who descends to pray has passed before the ark for the morning prayers on the first Festival day of Passover.** According to this explanation, the mishna and *baraita* specify the same time period for the end of the mention and request for rain.

Abaye said to Rav Yosef: **Is there a request for rain on a Festival?** The request for rain is included in the ninth blessing of the *Amida*, the blessing of the years, which is not recited on Shabbat and Festivals. If the term Passover in the *baraita* is referring to the entire Festival, this includes the intermediate Festival days, during which the ninth blessing of the *Amida* is recited. However, according to your interpretation, the *baraita* refers only to the first day of the Festival, and yet the request for rain is not recited on this date.

NOTES

Conclusion of the period in the additional prayers – הפסקה בתפלת המוספים: In the Jerusalem Talmud, it is asked why the beginning and cessation of mentioning rain occur specifically in the additional prayers. The answer given there is that in this manner one prays for dew in the morning prayer of the first day of Passover and in the additional prayer and afternoon prayers of *Sukkot*. In this manner a prayer for dew is recited on all of the Festivals, which is fitting, as dew signifies a blessing (Rif). Another reason cited in the Jerusalem Talmud is that the additional prayers are attended even by those who arrive late to the service, and therefore this is the best time to inform the congregation of the change. The transition should not occur in the morning service as some might think that the change was introduced the night before, leading to error in subsequent years. This is particularly true given that there is an opinion that one should not implement this change until after it has been publicly announced by the prayer leader.

Another explanation is that the change is made in the additional service because one’s mind is not fully at ease in prayer until that point (Rabbi Zerahya HaLevi citing *Pesikta DeRav Kahana*; Ritva).

Two *tanna'im* in accordance with Rabbi Yehuda – תרי תנאי אליבא דרבי יהודה: This expression means that there are two *tanna'im* who dispute the nature of Rabbi Yehuda’s opinion. In this case, however, some commentaries explain that one of the two rulings was uttered by Rabbi Yehuda in the name of his teacher, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Beteira, whereas the other statement reflects his own opinion (see *Gevurat Ari* and *Sefat Emet*; Ritva).

BACKGROUND

As vinegar to the teeth and as smoke to the eyes – בחמץ לשנים וכעשן לעינים: These images refer to an unpleasant, even painful, sensation. In both cases, the sensation becomes harder to bear the longer it continues. Ulla is saying that Rav Ḥisda’s explanation aroused similar reactions in him, as the longer he thinks about it the more difficult and less understandable it becomes.

NOTES

The disseminator would recite a request – שואל מתורגמן – Most commentaries explain that in the course of his explanation and elaboration of the communal prayers, the disseminator would speak of rain. Some hold that it is referring to a specific liturgical poem added to the service (*Shita Mekubbetzet*).

Until after the time for the slaughter of the Paschal lamb has passed – עד שיעבור זמן שחיטת הפסח – The commentaries dispute the meaning of this opinion. Some say that one recites the request for rain until the evening service of the first night of Passover. In other words, the recitation continues until the afternoon service of Passover eve, as that is when the Paschal lamb is slaughtered (Rabbeinu Hananel; Rabbeinu Gershon). Others explain that the recitation ceases at the time of the slaughter of the Paschal lamb in the afternoon, i.e., one does not recite the request in the afternoon prayer of Passover eve (Rashi; Rabbeinu Yehonatan).

The *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Gamliel – הלכה כרבן גמליאל – Based on this statement and the subsequent conclusion of the Gemara, it would appear that when the Temple is not standing in Eretz Yisrael the request for rain is recited starting immediately after *Sukkot*, while in Babylonia it should be first recited on the seventh of Marḥeshvan, and elsewhere in the Diaspora it is recited starting sixty days after the equinox (Rid the Younger; Meiri).

According to the Rambam, in Eretz Yisrael one begins to recite the request for rain on the seventh of Marḥeshvan (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefilla UVirkat Kohanim* 2:16). This ruling is followed in practice today. It is possible that the Rambam's reasoning is that since Rabbi Yohanan's opinion that one begins to mention and request rain on the same day is rejected, the two recitations need not commence together and each can start on the most appropriate date. Consequently, the mention of rain begins on the Eighth Day of Assembly, while the request for rain begins on the seventh of Marḥeshvan in Eretz Yisrael and sixty days after the autumnal equinox in the Diaspora (*Lehem Mishne*).

BACKGROUND

An appeasement in advance of the request – ריעוי שאלה – This is describing the proper manner of asking a favor from someone. One does not immediately issue a request. Rather, one first prepares the ground by touching on the subject in a general way, by mentioning it but not yet making the request explicit. Similarly, the mention of rain is similar to a polite beginning, a preamble, later followed by the explicit request for rain.

HALAKHA

From when does one begin to request rain – ממתן שואל – ריעוי שאלה: In Eretz Yisrael, one begins to recite the request for rain on the night of the seventh of Marḥeshvan, in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Gamliel (*Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Hayyim* 117:1).

אמר ליה: אין, שואל מתורגמן. וכי מתורגמן שואל דבר שאינו צריך לצבור אלא, מתוורתא כדעולא.

רבה אמר: מאי "עד שיעבור הפסח" – עד שיעבור זמן שחיטת הפסח, וכתחילתו כן סופו, מה תחילתו מוכיר אף על פי שאינו שואל – אף סופו מוכיר אף על פי שאינו שואל.

אמר ליה אביי: בשלמא תחילתו מוכיר – הוכרה נמי ריעוי שאלה היא, אלא סופו מאי ריעוי שאלה איכא? אלא מתוורתא כדעולא.

אמר רבי אסי אמר רבי יוחנן: הלכה כרבי יהודה. אמר ליה רבי זירא לרבי אסי: ומי אמר רבי יוחנן הכי והתנן: בשלשה במרחשוון שואלין את הגשמים, רבן גמליאל אומר: בשבעה בו. ואמר רבי אלעזר: הלכה כרבן גמליאל!

The Gemara cites the response: Rav Yosef said to Abaye: Yes, the *baraita* is speaking of the first day of Passover. However, it does not refer to the request for rain recited in the *Amida*. Rather, the disseminator and translator of the Torah portion would recite a request^N for rain after the Festival prayers. The Gemara asks: But would a disseminator request a matter that the community does not need? As there is no need for rain on Passover, why would the disseminator recite a request for it? Rather, it is clear, as Ulla explained, there are two tannaic versions of Rabbi Yehuda's opinion.

Rabba said another explanation: What is the meaning of the phrase: Until Passover has passed? It means until after the time for the slaughter of the Paschal lamb has passed,^N the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nisan, i.e., until the beginning of Passover. And according to this opinion, the practice at the beginning of the time for praying for rain is like that of the end: Just as at the beginning of the rainy season one mentions rain although one does not request it, so too, at the end, on the first day of Passover, one mentions rain although one does not request it. The request for rain ends on the eve of Passover, while the mention of rain continues until the morning service the following day.

Abaye said to Rabba: Granted, at the beginning of the rainy season one mentions rain before requesting it, as mentioning rain is also an appeasement to God in advance of the forthcoming request.^B However, at the end of the season, what appeasement toward a request is there that would necessitate the mention of rain after one has ceased requesting it? The Gemara again concludes: Rather, it is clear as Ulla explained.

Rabbi Asi said that Rabbi Yohanan said: The *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda. Rabbi Zeira^P said to Rabbi Asi: And did Rabbi Yohanan actually say that? But didn't we learn in a mishna (6a): On the third of Marḥeshvan one starts to request rain.^H Rabban Gamliel^P says: One starts on the seventh of Marḥeshvan. And with regard to this mishna, Rabbi Elazar, Rabbi Yohanan's preeminent student, said: The *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Gamliel.^N

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Zeira – רבי זירא – One of the greatest of the third generation of Babylonian *amora'im*, Rabbi Zeira was educated in the Babylonian tradition and studied mainly with the disciples of Rav and Shmuel. He emigrated to Eretz Yisrael, where he studied under Rabbi Yohanan and was a colleague of Rabbi Yohanan's foremost disciples. When Rabbi Zeira reached Eretz Yisrael he was extremely impressed by the method of learning he found there, which he adopted in full. Accordingly, he undertook one hundred fasts to help him forget the Babylonian method of learning. He also fasted so that the fires of Gehenna should not rule over him. When he performed tests to see if fire would affect him, the calves of his legs were burned. For this reason he became known as the short man with the scorched calves (*Bava Metzia* 85a). Rabbi Zeira was famous for his great piety, his modesty, and his affable and accommodating nature. He was greatly loved and honored by his peers. Rabbi Zeira had many disciples throughout Eretz Yisrael, and his teachings are widely quoted in both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud. He had a son who was also a Sage, Rabbi Ahava.

Rabban Gamliel II of Yavne – רבן גמליאל – Rabban Gamliel was the *Nasi* of the Great Sanhedrin and one of the most important *tanna'im* in the period following the destruction of the Second Temple. Rabban Gamliel moved with the Great Sanhedrin to Yavne at the initiative of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai after the

destruction of the Temple, which is why he is known as Rabban Gamliel of Yavne. After Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai's death, Rabban Gamliel presided over the Great Sanhedrin as *Nasi*.

Rabban Gamliel sought to create a spiritual center for the Jews that would unite the entire people as the Temple had done until that time. For this reason, he strove to enhance the honor and the central authority of the Great Sanhedrin and its *Nasi*. His strict and vigorous leadership eventually led his colleagues to remove him from his post for a short period, replacing him with Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya (*Berakhot* 27b–28a). However, as everyone knew that his motives and actions were for the good of the people and were not based on personal ambition, they soon restored him to his position.

Although there are not many halakhic rulings in the name of Rabban Gamliel, numerous important decisions were made in his time and under his influence. These included the broad principle that the *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Beit Hillel; the rejection of the halakhic system of Rabbi Eliezer; and the establishment of a fixed formulae for prayers. In all decisions attributed to Rabban Gamliel there is an uncompromising approach to *halakha*; he remained faithful to his principles in reaching his conclusions. It is known that two of his sons were Sages: Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, who served as *Nasi* of the Great Sanhedrin after him, and Rabbi Hanina ben Gamliel.

Are you raising a contradiction from the statement of one man against the statement of another man – **גְּבֵרָא אֶגְבְּרָא קָא רְמִית**: This objection is so obvious that it is difficult to understand the basis of the question in the first place. Indeed, as indicated in the commentary to the text, the question can be understood only in light of the close connection between Rabbi Yoḥanan and Rabbi Elazar. Although Rabbi Elazar studied with many of the leading Babylonian scholars, it is said of him that his rulings were invariably based on the statements of Rabbi Yoḥanan. If it is assumed that Rabbi Elazar's ruling reflects the opinion of Rabbi Yoḥanan, a difference between a ruling issued by Rabbi Yoḥanan and that of his disciple Rabbi Elazar is indeed a contradiction. Consequently, some commentaries explain that the Gemara answers by saying that there is a dispute among *amora'im* with regard to Rabbi Yoḥanan's opinion (Rabbi Elyakim).

BACKGROUND

And tell Abba – **אָמְרוּ לִיה לְאַבָּא**: According to a geonic tradition, Rav's given name was Abba. Usually people called him by his title, Rav, but since Shmuel was his colleague he referred to him by his given name. Moreover, the name Abba means father, and was used as an honorable epithet for elderly men. Consequently, Shmuel could call Rav by name even in the presence of strangers without appearing disrespectful.

אָמַר לִיה: גְּבֵרָא אֶגְבְּרָא קָא רְמִית!
אִיבְעִית אִימָא: לָא קְשִׁיָּא. כָּאן – לְשִׂאוּל,
כָּאן – לְהִזְבִּיר.

Rabbi Asi said to Rabbi Zeira: Are you raising a contradiction from the statement of one man against the statement of another man?^N Although Rabbi Elazar was Rabbi Yoḥanan's student, their opinions need not be consistent with one another. If you wish, say instead that this is not difficult, as Rabbi Elazar's ruling here is referring to the request for rain, which begins on the seventh of Marḥeshvan, whereas Rabbi Yoḥanan's ruling there is referring to the mention of rain, which begins on the Eighth Day of Assembly.

וְהָאֵמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: בְּמָקוֹם שְׂשׂוּאֵל מְזַבִּיר!
הֵוּא לְהַפְסְקָה אִיתְמַר. וְהָאֵמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן:
הַתְּחִיל לְהִזְבִּיר – מִתְּחִיל לְשִׂאוּל, פְּסֻק
מִלְשִׂאוּל – פְּסֻק מִלְהִזְבִּיר!

The Gemara asks: But didn't Rabbi Yoḥanan say: At the same time when one requests rain, one mentions it. The Gemara answers: That ruling was stated only with regard to ceasing the request and mention of rain. Although Rabbi Yoḥanan maintains that one stops requesting and mentioning rain on the same date, he does not hold that one begins to do both at the same time. The Gemara objects: But didn't Rabbi Yoḥanan explicitly say: When one begins to mention rain, one begins to request it; and when one ceases to request rain, one ceases to mention it. This clearly indicates that, in his opinion, there is no discrepancy between the dates when one begins reciting the two formulations.

אֵלָּא לָא קְשִׁיָּא: הָא – לָן, הָא – לְהוּ.
מֵאִי שְׂנָא לְדִידֵן – דְּאִית לָן פִּירֵי בְּדְבָרָא,
לְדִידְהוּ נַמִּי – אִית לְהוּ עוּלֵי רְגָלִים!

The Gemara answers: Rather, it is not difficult. This statement, where Rabbi Yoḥanan ruled in accordance with the opinion of Rabban Gamliel, is for us, who live in Babylonia and start to pray for rain later, whereas that statement of the mishna is for them, the residents of Eretz Yisrael. The Gemara asks: What is different with regard to us in Babylonia that we do not request rain immediately after *Sukkot*? The reason is that we still have fruit in the field. Therefore, we do not want rain to fall. However, they, the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael, also have pilgrims who need to travel for a significant time to reach their homes after the Festival, and they do not want it to rain on them.

כִּי קָאֵמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בְּזִמְנֵי שְׂאִין בֵּית
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קַיָּים. הִשְׁתַּא דְּאִתִּית לְהַכִּי הָא
וְהָא לְדִידְהוּ, וְלָא קְשִׁיָּא: כָּאן – בְּזִמְנֵי
שְׂבִית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קַיָּים, כָּאן – בְּזִמְנֵי שְׂאִין
בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קַיָּים.

The Gemara answers: When Rabbi Yoḥanan said this ruling in the mishna, he was referring to the period when the Temple is not standing; therefore, in Eretz Yisrael, one can immediately request rain. The Gemara comments: Now that you have arrived at this answer, one can say that both this statement and that statement are for them, i.e., those in Eretz Yisrael. And yet, it is not difficult, as this statement here, that one waits before requesting rain, applies at the time when the Temple is standing, while the ruling there, that one requests rain right after the Festival, is referring to the time when the Temple is not standing.

וְאַנְּן דְּאִית לָן תְּרֵי יוֹמֵי, הִכִּי עָבְדִּינָן?
אָמַר רַב: מִתְּחִיל בְּמוֹסְפֵין, וּפְסֻק בְּמִנְחָה
עֶרְבֵית וְשַׁחֲרִית, וְחֹזֵר בְּמוֹסְפֵין.

The Gemara asks: And we in the Diaspora who have two Festival days, how do we act with regard to beginning the mention of rain, given the uncertainty concerning the Eighth Day of Assembly, which might in reality be the seventh day of *Sukkot*? The Gemara answers that Rav said: One begins to mention rain in the additional prayers of the eighth day, the first day of the Eighth Day of Assembly. And one temporarily ceases this practice on the afternoon prayer of the eighth day, continuing through the evening and morning prayers of the ninth day, the second day of the Eighth Day of Assembly. And finally one again resumes mentioning rain in the additional prayers of the ninth day, *Simḥat Torah*.

אָמַר לְהוּ שְׂמוּאֵל: פּוֹקוּ וְאִמְרוּ לִיה לְאַבָּא:
אַחַר שְׁעִשִׁיתוּ קוֹדֵשׁ תַּעֲשִׂהוּ חוּל? אֵלָּא
אָמַר שְׂמוּאֵל: מִתְּחִיל בְּמוֹסְפֵין וּבְמִנְחָה,
וּפְסֻק עֶרְבֵית וְשַׁחֲרִית, וְחֹזֵר וּמִתְּחִיל
בְּמוֹסְפֵין.

Shmuel said to those who reported Rav's explanation to him: Go out and tell Abba,^B referring to Rav by his name, the following objection: After you have rendered the first day of the Eighth Day of Assembly sanctified, shall you defile it by treating it as though it is not a Festival day? Rather, Shmuel said (10a): One begins to mention rain in the additional prayers and also mentions it in the afternoon prayer of the eighth day, the first day of the Eighth Day of Assembly, and temporarily ceases this practice on the afternoon prayer of the eighth day, continuing through the evening and morning prayers of the ninth day, *Simḥat Torah*. And finally, one again resumes mentioning rain in the additional prayers of the ninth day, *Simḥat Torah*.