

Rain's Spiritual Significance Revealed by Katia Bolotin¹

When will it stop? It's been raining all week. Rain, just *go away!* Come again some other day. How often do we North Americans complain about the rain! Israelis appreciate the rain. **They mean it when they pray for rain three times a day during Israel's rainy season.**

The Hebrew phrase,

מְשִׁיב הָרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם

(*mashiv ha-ruach umorid ha-geshem*)

“who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall” recited by Jews worldwide from the end of Sukkot until Passover offers praise to G-d for the blessing of rain.²

Rain Is Not Random

Rain is mentioned twice in the Torah portion of *Eikev*. First, the Torah tells us, “From the rain of heaven you will drink water” (Deu 11:11). **The Land of Israel depends on rainfall since it has just one large body of fresh water.**

In the second paragraph of the *Shema* prayer, which is also found in this Torah portion, rain is mentioned again. “If you listen to my commandments that I command you today—to love G-d, your G-d, and serve Him with all of your heart and with all your soul, then **I will give you rain for your land in its proper time, the early and the late rains**” (Deu 11:13-14).

The message is clear: **Rainfall is not a random occurrence.** It's a blessing that comes directly from G-d. Rainfall is the result of human prayer, as a verse in Genesis teaches, “And no plant of the field was yet on Earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprouted, for **G-d had not sent rain upon the Earth and there was no man to work the soil**” (Gen 2:5).

Rashi explains that until the creation of the first human, there had been no one to appreciate the benefits of rain. Adam understood the significance of rain and prayed for it. As a result, rain fell, and trees and plants emerged. This emphasizes how great a blessing rain truly is.

Water Symbolizes Torah

The same way humanity cannot survive without water, the Jewish people can't survive without Torah. There are many references to water symbolizing Torah, perhaps none more direct than, “**There is no water other than Torah**” (Bava Kama 17a).

Like the physical rain, the blessings of Torah are drawn down by fulfilling G-d's commandments.

“The day when rain falls is as great as the day on which heaven and earth were created” (Ta'anit 8b), the Talmud tells us. **Perhaps the Torah is likened to rain because it nurtures us to reach our full potential and become the people we were meant to be.**

Balancing Physicality and Spirituality

Just as there must be a balance between rainfall and sunshine for crops to thrive, a person's spiritual and material needs intersect. Most mitzvot involve physical actions. Through using something physical for a Divine purpose, we tangibly integrate spirituality into our lives.

The Rebbe would conclude his personal correspondence with blessings for both material well-being and spiritual attainment. Physicality and spirituality are not mutually exclusive; they are meant to work in conjunction with one another. **If our basic physical needs are not met, we can become preoccupied by what we lack, to the detriment of our spiritual pursuits, as Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah said: “If there is no flour, there is no Torah”** (Avot 3:17).

So, it's another rainy day, but I look at it differently now. The weather forecast predicts scattered showers tomorrow, too, but now I look forward to appreciating that rain for what it truly is: a blessing from G-d.

1. **They mean it when they pray for rain three times a day during Israel's rainy season.**

a. This prayer is:

גְּבוּרַת—GOD'S MIGHT

You are eternally mighty, my Lord, the Resuscitator of the dead; abundantly able to save.

Between *Sukkot* and *Pesach* add:

He makes the wind blow and He makes the rain descend.

He sustains the living with kindness, resuscitates the dead with abundant mercy, supports the fallen, heals the sick, releases the confined and maintains His faith to those asleep in the dust.

Who is like You, O Master of mighty deeds, and Who is comparable to You, O King Who causes death and restores life and makes salvation (*y'shuah*) sprout!

And You are faithful to resuscitate the dead. Blessed are You O LORD Who resuscitates the dead.

2. *Rainfall is the result of human prayer, as a verse in Genesis teaches, “And no plant of the field was yet on Earth, and no herb of the field had*

¹ https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/6029827/jewish/Rains-Spiritual-Significance-Revealed.htm

² Robert R. Gorelik, *Prayer Book*, (Eshav Books), p. 110.

yet sprouted, for **G-d had not sent rain upon the Earth and there was no man to work the soil**" (Gen 2:5).

a. Genesis 2:6

⁶but (*subterranean*) streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.

b. Genesis 7:11-13

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. ¹²**And rain fell** on the earth forty days and forty nights. ¹³On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark.

c. This particular essay goes on to say:

Rashi explains that until the creation of the first human, there had been no one to appreciate the benefits of rain. Adam understood the significance of rain and prayed for it. As a result, rain fell, and trees and plants emerged.

But, prior to the flood, it's more likely that the earth was in some way shielded from the ultraviolet (UV) radiation that constantly bombards it. That "protection" may have been associated with the water which was "in the pre-flood atmosphere." However, it was eliminated as a result of the flood.

There are both beneficial and harmful effects of UV radiation:³

- 1) Vitamin D synthesis—UV-B radiation enables humans and many animals to synthesize vitamin D in the skin, which is essential for calcium absorption and bone health.
- 2) Microbial control—natural UV radiation **helps control microbial populations in surface waters and exposed environments.**
- 3) Plant signaling—some plants use UV radiation as an environmental signal to regulate growth, flowering, and protective mechanisms.
- 4) DNA damage—UV radiation, especially UV-B and UV-C, can damage DNA ... potentially leading to mutations and cancer.
- 5) Skin damage—in humans, excessive UV exposure causes sunburn, **premature aging**, and increases risk of skin cancers (melanoma and non-melanoma).
- 6) Eye damage—UV exposure contributes to cataracts, photokeratitis,⁴ and other eye conditions.

7) Marine ecosystem disruption—excessive UV can damage phytoplankton and coral, affecting marine food webs.

8) Plant growth inhibition—too much UV radiation can inhibit photosynthesis, **damage plant tissues**, and **reduce agricultural yields.**

d. **It may be responsible for the significant decrease in the number of years that pre-flood and post-flood individuals lived.**

3. *The same way humanity cannot survive without water, the Jewish people can't survive without Torah.*

a. Deuteronomy 8:3 (cf. Mat 4:4)

³He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that **man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**

b. Isaiah 55:10-11

¹⁰**As the rain and the snow come down from heaven**, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹**SO IS MY WORD that goes out from my mouth:** It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

c. John 4:13-14

¹³Yeshua answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water **well up to eternal life.**"

d. John 7:37-38

³⁷On the last and greatest day of the festival, Yeshua stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.

³⁸Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them" (Isa 44:3).

e. Ephesians 5:26

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Messiah loved the *k'hilah* and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, **cleansing her by the washing with water through the word ...**

f. Ta'anit 7a

"Just as rain gives life to the world, so do the words of Torah give life **to the world.**"

³ www.notion.com

⁴ Photokeratitis is a painful eye condition caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays, most commonly from the sun. You can compare photokeratitis to sunburn,

but it's a burn that affects parts of your eye instead of your skin. It's generally bilateral (affects both eyes).

g. Sifre Deuteronomy 306

"Just as water sustains life in this world, so Torah sustains life in this world and the next."

h. Bava Kamma 82a

'That the law be read [publicly] on Mondays and Thursdays.' But was this ordained by Ezra? Was this not ordained even before him? For it was taught: 'And **they went three days in the wilderness and found no water**,⁽¹⁵⁾ upon which those who expound verses metaphorically⁽¹⁶⁾ said: **water means nothing but Torah**,⁽¹⁷⁾ as it says: Ho, everyone that thirsteth come ye for water.⁽¹⁸⁾ It thus means that as they went three days without Torah they immediately became exhausted. The prophets among them thereupon rose and enacted that **they should publicly read the law on Sabbath, make a break on Sunday, read again on Monday, make a break again on Tuesday and Wednesday, read again on Thursday and then make a break on Friday so that they should not be kept for three days without Torah**.⁽¹⁹⁾

(15) Ex. XV. 22.

(16) Doresh Reshumoth; v. Sanh. (Sonc. ed.) p. 712. n. 12.

(17) Cf. supra p. 76.

(18) Isa. LV, 1.

(19) [Why then was it necessary for Ezra to enact this?]

i. Genesis Rabbah XLI:9

9. AND I WILL MAKE THY SEED AS THE DUST OF THE EARTH (XIII, 16). Just as the dust of the earth is found from one end of the world to the other, so shall thy children be found from one end of the earth to the other; and **as the dust of the earth can be blessed only through water, so will thy children be blessed only for the sake of the Torah, which is likened to water** (Isa 55:1); and as the dust of the earth wears out even metal utensils yet itself endures for ever, so will Israel exist [for ever] ...

j. Genesis Rabbah LXVI:1

Even so said Jacob: Because I occupied myself with **the study of the Torah, which is compared to water**, (Isa 55:1) I was privileged to be blessed with dew, as it says, SO GOD GIVE THEE OF THE DEW OF HEAVEN (Gen 27:28), etc.

k. Soncino Zohar, Shemoth, Section 2, Page 60a

AND THEY WENT THREE DAYS IN THE WILDERNESS AND FOUND NO WATER. In Scripture "water" stands as a symbol for the Torah: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isa. LV, 1). 'But,' remarked R. Jesse, 'the time for the giving of the Torah was not yet, and how could they expect to find this "water" there?' Said R. Eleazar: 'They went out into the wilderness to see the glory of the Holy One, but could not, for He removed it from there. **We learn**

from this that "water" is the symbol of the Torah, and the Holy One and the Torah are one.'

1) John 1:1-14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and **the Word was with God, and the Word was God**. ²He was with God in the beginning.

³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it ...

¹⁴**The Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us.

2) Philippians 2:6-7

⁶Who, being in very **nature** God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, **he made himself nothing** by taking the very nature of a servant, **being made in human likeness**.

a) μορφή (*morphe*)—*the form (by which a person or thing strikes the vision), external appearance*.

b) σχῆμα (*schema*)—*the way something appears/looks to an observer, appearance, form*.

l. Soncino Zohar, Devarim, Section 3, Page 270a

R. Simeon ... said: 'Behold, the Shekinah is here; of a truth we must show gratitude to the Shekinah.' He then discoursed on the verse: 'Lo, it is yet high day', etc. (Gen. XXIX, 7). 'This verse,' he said, 'has been expounded to signify that when Israel shall turn in repentance before the Holy One, blessed be He, through the merit of the Torah they shall return to the Holy Land and be gathered from exile. For the captivity of Israel is only one day and no more. If, therefore, they do not repent, God says: Behold it is still high day, it is not time that the cattle should be gathered together—without merits or good deeds to their credit. You have, however, a remedy: **'Water the sheep': study the Torah and drink of its waters**, 'and go and feed' in a restful spot, the desirable place of your inheritance.

1) Psalms 23:1-3

¹A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. **He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.**

2) Revelation 7:13-17

¹³Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵Therefore, "they are before the

throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them,' nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷For **the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.'** 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

a) Are there "springs of living water" in heaven?

4. ***"The day when rain falls is as great as the day on which heaven and earth were created"*** (*Ta'anit 8b*), the Talmud tells us. ***Perhaps the Torah is likened to rain because it nurtures us to reach our full potential and become the people we were meant to be.***

a. Ta'anit 7a

Rab Judah said: The day when rain falls is as great as the day when the Torah was given, as it is said, **My doctrine shall drop as the rain⁽²⁾ and by 'doctrine' surely, Torah is meant** as it is said, For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my Torah.⁽³⁾ Raba said: It is even greater than the day when the Torah was given, as it is said, **My doctrine shall drop as the rain.**⁽⁴⁾ Who is dependent upon whom? You must needs say, the lesser upon the greater.⁽⁵⁾

(2) Deut. XXXII, 2.

(3) Prov. IV, 2.

(4) E. V. 'my teaching.' Deut. XXXII, 2.

(5) **Hence the Torah, which is compared to rain, is the less important.**

1) The statement (from *Ta'anit*) deals with fasts called during droughts, emphasizing rain's critical importance for survival.

2) 1Timothy 4:16

¹⁶Watch your life and **doctrine** closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

a) διδασκαλία (*didaskalia*)—*teaching, instruction, that which is taught, doctrine, precepts.*

Roman Catholic and Orthodox doctrine **generally comes from the writings of the Church Fathers**, which has been clarified in various Ecumenical councils. Short versions can be found in brief statements of Christian doctrine, in prayer books. Longer versions take the form of catechisms. **Protestants generally reject Christian tradition and instead derive their doctrine solely from the Bible.**

—Protestant theology is no more based "solely from the Bible" than is "Roman Catholic and Orthodox doctrine."

3) 2Timothy 4:3

³For the time will come **when people will not put up with sound doctrine.** Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

4) Titus 1:9

⁹(An elder) must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others **by sound doctrine** and refute those who oppose it.

5) Titus 2:1

¹You, however, must teach what is appropriate **to sound doctrine.**

b. Leviticus 26:3-5

³"**If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, 'I will send you rain in its season,** and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit. ⁵Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.

c. Isaiah 30:23

²³**He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground,** and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows.

d. Ezekiel 34:26-27

²⁶I will make them and the places surrounding my hill a blessing. **I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing.** ²⁷The trees will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them.

e. Joel 2:23

²³Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you **the autumn rains because he is faithful.** He sends you abundant showers, **both autumn and spring rains,** as before.

f. Zechariah 8:12

¹²"The seed will grow well, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and **the heavens will drop their dew.** I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people.

g. Psalms 68:9

⁹**You gave abundant showers,** O God; you refreshed your weary inheritance.