

TEFILLAS TAL: PRAYER FOR DEW

תפילת טל

Do Not Take Anything for Granted!

We walk into stores and buy almost anything we want, at any time of year, anywhere in the world. But a lot has to “happen” for that to happen! We need rain to fall at the right time, and rain **not** to fall at the right time. Dew has its role, as do all the forces that we call “nature.” And none of that “happens”; rather, it is all orchestrated by Hashem as a gift to us, just like yetzias Mitzrayim “happened” in the spring when the weather was perfect for such an event. Thus, at the start of the winter/rain season, i.e., Sukkos, we daven for rain, and at the end of the rainy season, i.e., Pesach, we daven for dew. But we don’t just daven for random rain or dew, but rain or dew that will produce blessing and life and not, chas v’shalom, bring death and destruction. By taking the time to turn to Hashem and focus on the fact that all of “nature” is in His hands, that itself makes us worthy of His blessings.

The piyut (poem) of Tefillas Tal is made up of various acrostics, many wordplays that get lost in translation, and is very complex with multiple meanings and allusions. The author uses the idea of the freshness of dew both in reference to the constant renewal of “nature” in the spring and the constant spiritual revival of us, Hashem’s nation. Here, we will give a very simple explanation of the basic ideas.

When is it said?

Israel: Generally, Nusach Ashkenaz says it before the silent Mussaf Shemoneh Esrei, and the chazzan begins with טל תן below. Nusach Sefard generally says it as part of the chazzan’s Chazaras Hashatz. Every community should follow its custom.

Chutz La’aretz: Generally, it is said as part of the chazzan’s Chazaras Hashatz of Mussaf.

What do I say in my silent Mussaf Shemoneh Esrei? It depends.

Israel: Assuming Tefillas Tal was said before Shemoneh Esrei—or even if not—if the gabbai announced מוריד הטל, then say it. (Nusach Ashkenaz says מוריד הטל, and Nusach Sefard says either מוריד הטל or משיב הרוח ומוריד הטל.)

Chutz La’aretz: Assuming Tefillas Tal will be said during Chazaras Hashatz, if the gabbai announced מוריד הטל before Shemoneh Esrei, then Nusach Ashkenaz says nothing (i.e., does not say משיב הרוח ומוריד הטל), and Nusach Sefard says either מוריד הטל or משיב הרוח ומוריד הטל. If no announcement was made, then one continues to say משיב הרוח ומוריד הטל as they did in the winter months.

If Tefillas Tal is said before the silent Shemoneh Esrei, the chazzan begins below with טל תן.

The Aron Kodesh is opened.

כִּי שֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא הָבוּ גִדְל לְאַלְהֵינוּ:

אֲדֹנָי, שִׁפְתֵי תִפְתָּח וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאַלְהֵי יַעֲקֹב. הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל, הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֲלִיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הָעוֹלָם, וְזוֹכֵר חֲסָדֵי אֲבוֹת, וּמְבִיא גּוֹאֵל לְבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ, בְּאַהֲבָה. מְלַךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמַגֵּן:

בְּדַעְתּוֹ אֲבִיעָה חַיִּדוֹת, בְּעֵם זֹו בְּזוּ בְּטַל לְהַחְדוֹת, טַל גֵּיא וְדִשְׁאִיָּה לְחַדוֹת, דְּצִים בְּצֵלוֹ לְהַחְדוֹת, אוֹת יְלָדוֹת טַל לְהֵגֵן לְתוֹלָדוֹת: —With Hashem's permission, I will speak (*about our request for dew*) in a hidden way; בְּעֵם זֹו בְּזוּ בְּטַל לְהַחְדוֹת—may this tefillah bring for this people dew that will cause joy; טַל גֵּיא וְדִשְׁאִיָּה לְחַדוֹת—dew that will bring rejuvenation to the valley and its vegetation; דְּצִים בְּצֵלוֹ לְהַחְדוֹת—and we, Bnei Yisrael are taking pleasure in the fact that we are under the direct “shade” providence of Hashem; אוֹת יְלָדוֹת טַל לְהֵגֵן לְתוֹלָדוֹת—dew is the sign of Hashem's promise to Avraham that in the merit of Avraham's good deeds in his youth, Hashem would protect us, his descendants.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה מִגֵּן אַבְרָהָם:
אַתָּה גְּבוּר לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנִי, מְחִיָּה מֵתִים אַתָּה רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ:

תְּהוֹמוֹת הָדוֹם לְרִסְסוֹ כְּסוּפִים, וְכָל נְאוֹת דִּשְׁא לֹו נִכְסָפִים, טַל זָכְרוּ גְבוּרוֹת מוֹסָפִים, חֲקוּק בְּגִישַׁת מוֹסָפִים, טַל לְהַחְיּוֹת בּוֹ נְקוּקֵי סְעִיפִים: —The depths of the earth yearn for drops of dew; וְכָל נְאוֹת דִּשְׁא לֹו נִכְסָפִים—as well as all the fields of grass; טַל זָכְרוּ—the mentioning of Hashem's power over the dew in (*the gevuros section of*) Shemoneh Esrei increases our praises of Hashem, or: Our turning to Hashem and recognizing His mastery over dew increases our “power” merits to be deserving of dew; חֲקוּק בְּגִישַׁת מוֹסָפִים—therefore, Tefillas Tal has been set in the tefillah of “Mussaf” (*which means “to increase”*); טַל לְהַחְיּוֹת בּוֹ נְקוּקֵי סְעִיפִים—and dew is mentioned specifically in the brachah of Techiyas Hameisim since it will be the טַל שֶׁל תַּחִּיה, reviving dew, that will bring about Techiyas Hameisim of those buried in the ground.

If Tefillas Tal is said before Shemoneh Esrei, the chazzan starts here.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ:

You, Hashem, control everything, and have taken care of Bnei Yisrael throughout our history starting from the time of the Avos:

טַל תֵּן לְרִצּוֹת אֶרֶץ, שִׁיתֵּנוּ בְּרִכָּה בְּדִיצָה, רוֹב דָּגָן וְתִירוֹשׁ בְּהַפְרִיצָה, קוֹמֵם עִיר בָּהּ חֶפְצָה. בְּטַל: Hashem, please give dew to show (*us and the world*) that You favor Your land. Shower us with Your blessings, for that is Your greatest joy, by causing our wine and grain to overflow with abundance. Reestablish Your city (*Yerushalayim*) with the dew of Techiyas Hameisim.

טַל צִוָּה שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמַעֲטָרָת, פְּרִי הָאָרֶץ לְגֵאוֹן וּלְתַפְאָרָת, עִיר כְּסֻכָּה נוֹתֶרֶת, שִׁמָּה בְּיָדָךְ עֲטָרָת. בְּטַל: Hashem, by using dew, make this a good year crowned with wonderful fruit so that the produce of the land (*also alluding to Bnei Yisrael*) become the pride of the world. The city (*Yerushalayim*) that now seems like a deserted hut, please place it in Your “hand” and revive its glory with dew.

Hashem, drop dew gently on Eretz Yisrael, the blessed land. Satisfy us with the rich blessing of Shamayim, to shine the light of Geulah into the dark galus of Bnei Yisrael who are drawn to You like a plant is drawn to the reviving drops of dew.

טל נופת עלי ארץ ברוכה, ממגד שמים שבפנינו
ברכה, להאיר מתוך חשכה, כנה אחרית
משוכה. בטל:

Hashem, let the dew sweeten the sweetness of the mountains. Let Bnei Yisrael, Your chosen nation, taste Your plenty. Free Your beloved ones from the “prison” of galus, and then we will be able to sing sweet praises to You, thanks to the reviving dew.

טל יעסים צוף הרים, טעם במאודך מבחרים,
חנוניך חליץ ממסגרים, זמרה ננעים וקול
נרים. בטל:

Hashem, with dew fill our granaries to overflowing with an abundance of plenty. We wish that now You would renew our days (*like they were when we were in Israel with joy and goodness*). Hashem, our “Beloved one,” let us be established (*by the arrival of Mashiach*) forever, just as You are! And we will be like a well-watered garden that never withers—thanks to the reviving dew.

טל ושובע מלא אסמינו, הכעת תחדש ימינו,
דוד כערבך העמד שמינו, גן רוה שימינו. בטל:

Hashem, with dew bless our food. May there be no shortages in our fertile crops. The nation that you once led (*through the desert*) like a shepherd leads his sheep; please fulfill its request by showering on her the dew of revival.

טל בו תברך מזון, במשמנינו אל יהי רזון, אימה
אשר הסעת כצאן, אנא תפק לה רצון. בטל:

For You, Hashem, Who takes care of us, makes the winds blow, and brings down the dew:

שאתה הוא יהוה אלהינו משיב הרוח ומוריד
הטל:

The congregation followed by the chazzan, responsively:

לברכה ולא לקללה: אמן

For a blessing and not for a curse. Amen!

לחיים ולא למות: אמן

For life and not for death. Amen!

לשובע ולא לרזון: אמן

For plenty and not for scarcity. Amen!

The Aron Kodesh is closed.

If Tefillas Tal is said before Shemoneh Esrei, the chazzan continues with Half-Kaddish; see page 178.

If Tefillas Tal is said in Chazaras Hashatz, the chazzan continues with מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים; see page 180.