

TEFILLAS GESHEM: PRAYER FOR RAIN

תפילת גשם לשמיני עצרת

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 not to fall at the right time. Dew has its role, as do all the forces 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, death and destruction. By turning to Hashem and focusing on the fact that all of “nature” is in His hands, that itself makes us worthy of His blessings.

So why not say Tefillas Geshem on Sukkos itself? We should! But it would be hard to say it with a full heart because we want to be able to sit in the sukkah! Therefore, Chazal set it up for Shemini Atzeres when we are done with the sukkah.

The piyut (poem) of Tefillas Geshem is made up of various acrostics, many word-plays that get lost in translation, and is very complex with multiple meanings and allusions. The author uses the idea of the power of rain both in reference to the constant renewal of “nature” 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 זְכוּר אָב 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.

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

Israel: Assuming Tefillas Geshem was said before Shemoneh Esrei—or even if not—if the gabbai announced “Morid Ha’geshem,” then we say “Mashiv Ha’ruach U’morid Ha’geshem” in our silent Shemoneh Esrei.

Chutz La’aretz: Assuming Tefillas Geshem will be said during Chazaras Hashatz, if the gabbai announced מוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם before Shemoneh Esrei, then we say מְשִׁיב הָרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם in our silent Shemoneh Esrei. If no announcement was made, then one continues whatever they did during the summer months.

If said before the silent Shemoneh Esrei, the chazzan begins below with זְכוּר אָב.

The Aron Kodesh is opened.

כִּי שֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא הָבוּ גִדְל לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ:

אֲדַנִּי, שְׁפָתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ:

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

אֶף בְּרִי אֶתֶת שֵׁם שׁוֹר מֶטֶר —“Af Bri”
(אֶף—*anger because rain could be de-*
structive, and בְּרִי—health because rain
brings life and blessing to the world)
is the name of the angel appointed

by Hashem to carry out His will regarding rains; שׁוֹר מֶטֶר—his job
is to thicken and bring the rain clouds so they will empty out and rain on earth; מִים
לְהַרְיק וּלְהַמִּטֵּר, מִים אֲבִים בָּם גֵּיא לְעֵטֶר—water to make the vegetation grow and thus beautify the earth; לְבַל
יִוָּעָצְרוּ בְּנִשְׁיוֹן שֵׁטֶר—please, Hashem, may the rains not be held back due to our “debts”
created by our aveiros; שׁוֹאֲלֵי מֶטֶר—*in the merit of the Avos who were*
strong in their faith, protect Bnei Yisrael who are now asking for rain.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מֶגֶן אֲבֹרָהֶם:

אַתָּה גְּבוּר לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנִי, מְחִיָּה מֵתִים אַתָּה רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ:

יִטְרִיחַ לְפָלֵג מִפְּלֵג גֶּשֶׁם, לְמוֹגֵג פְּנֵי נֶשֶׁם —Hashem, ob-
ligate the angel to distribute and
pour down rains from Heaven; לְמוֹגֵג
לְנֶשֶׁם לְנֶפֶשׁ—*to soften the dry*
earth with raindrops that are clear
and pure like the leshem stone; מִים

יִטְרִיחַ לְפָלֵג מִפְּלֵג גֶּשֶׁם, לְמוֹגֵג פְּנֵי נֶשֶׁם, לְמוֹגֵג פְּנֵי נֶשֶׁם,
בְּצִחוֹת לְשֵׁם, מִים לְאַדְרֵךְ כְּנִית בְּרֶשֶׁם,
לְהַרְגִיעַ בְּרַעְפָּם לְנֶפֶשׁ, לְהַחֲיֹת
מִזְכִּירִים גְּבוּרֹת הַגֶּשֶׁם:

מִים—*the Tanach uses rains (for example, מִים אֲדִירִים)* to symbolize
Your strength; לְהַרְגִיעַ בְּרַעְפָּם לְנֶפֶשׁ—*and the drops of rain on earth calm and soothe*
*people; לְהַחֲיֹת מִזְכִּירִים גְּבוּרֹת הַגֶּשֶׁם—*and will bring about Techiyas Hameisim to those
who praise Hashem by saying מְשִׁיב הָרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם in Shemoneh Esrei.

If 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.

זְכוֹר אֵב נִמְשָׁךְ אַחֲרֶיךָ כְּמִים, בְּרַכְתּוֹ כְּעֵץ —Hashem,
remember the merit of Avraham
Avinu who was drawn to follow You
like a stream flowing with water;

זְכוֹר אֵב נִמְשָׁךְ אַחֲרֶיךָ כְּמִים, בְּרַכְתּוֹ כְּעֵץ, בְּרַכְתּוֹ כְּעֵץ
נֶשֶׁתוֹל עַל פְּלִי מִים, גִּנְנָתוֹ הִצֵּלְתוֹ מֵאֵשׁ
וּמִמֵּי, דִּרְשָׁתוֹ בְּזָרְעוֹ עַל כָּל מִים:

בְּרַכְתּוֹ כְּעֵץ שֶׁתוֹל עַל פְּלִי מִים —You blessed him that he would be (*strong and indestructible*)
like a tree firmly planted by a stream of water; גִּנְנָתוֹ הִצֵּלְתוֹ מֵאֵשׁ וּמִמֵּי —You protected
him and saved him from fires (*of Nimrod's furnace*) and from water (*that attempted to*
drown him on his way to the Akeidah); דִּרְשָׁתוֹ בְּזָרְעוֹ עַל כָּל מִים —You tested him when he
planted grains that to grow need a lot of water (*and then you made a drought in Israel*
and he had to go to Egypt).

And we respond:

בְּעִבּוּרוֹ אֵל תִּמְנַע מִים:

For his sake, do not hold back water!

זָכוֹר הַנוֹלָד בְּבִשְׁוֹרֵת יִקַּח נָא מֵעֵט מַיִם, וְשָׁחַתְתָּ
 לְהוֹרוֹ לְשָׁחֲטוֹ לְשִׁפּוֹךְ דָּמוֹ כַּמַּיִם, זֶהָר גַּם הוּא
 לְשִׁפּוֹךְ לֵב כַּמַּיִם, חָפַר וּמָצָא בְּאֵרוֹת מַיִם:
 וְשָׁחַת לְהוֹרוֹ; “please take some water”; and You told his father to slaughter him and pour his blood
 (to You) like water; —and Yitzchak himself was careful to pour
 his heart out to You like water (*when he established tefillas Minchah*); חָפַר וּמָצָא בְּאֵרוֹת
 מַיִם—he dug up the wells (*of his father Avraham that had been filled by the Pelishtim*)
 and he found water.

And we respond:

בַּצֶּדֶקוֹ חֹן חִשְׁרָת מַיִם:

For the sake of his righteousness, grant us an abundance of water!

זְכוֹר טָעַן מִקְלוֹ וְעֵבֶר יִרְדֵּן מַיִם, יַחַד לָב וְגַל
אָבֵן מִפִּי בְּאֵר מַיִם, כְּנָאֲבֶק לוֹ שֹׁר בְּלוֹל מֵאֵשׁ
וּמַמֵּי־מֵי־לָבָן הִבְטַחְתָּ הָיִיתָ עִמּוֹ בְּאֵשׁ וּבַמַּיִם:

And we respond:

בַּעֲבוּרֹו אֶל תִּמְנַע מַיִם:

For his sake, do not hold back water!

זְכוֹר מַשׁוּי בְּתִיבַת גּוֹמָא מִן הַמַּיִם, נָמוּ דָּלָה
 דָּלָה וְהִשְׁקָה צֶאן מַיִם, סְגוּלֶיךָ עֵת צֻמְאוֹ
 לַמַּיִם, עַל הַסֵּלַע הָרַב וַיֵּצְאוּ מַיִם:

Hashem, —זְכוֹר מַשׁוּי בְּתִיבַת גּוֹמָא מִן הַמַּיִם, remember the merit of Moshe Rabbeinu who was in a reed basket and was drawn out of the water; נָמוּ דָּלָה—
 and Yisro's daughters told their father; “Moshe drew water and gave the sheep their water”; סְגוּלֶיךָ עֵת צֻמְאוֹ—when Your treasured nation thirsted for water; עַל הַסֵּלַע הָרַב וַיֵּצְאוּ מַיִם—Moshe hit the rock and out came water!

And we respond:

בַּצֶּדֶקוֹ חוֹן חֲשֵׁרֶת מַיִם:

For the sake of his righteousness, grant us an abundance of water!

זְכוֹר פְּקִיד שְׁתוֹת טוֹבֵל חֲמֵשׁ טְבִילוֹת בַּמַּיִם, צוֹעָה וּמִרְחִיץ כַּפָּיו בְּקִדּוּשׁ מַיִם, קוֹרֵא וּמַזְהֵ טְהָרֵת מַיִם, רֹחֵק יָמֵעַם פָּחוּז בַּמַּיִם: — זְכוֹר פְּקִיד שְׁתוֹת טוֹבֵל חֲמֵשׁ טְבִילוֹת בַּמַּיִם: Hashem, remember the merit of Aharon, whose descendant was appointed the Kohen Gadol in the Beis

Hamikdash, the place of the Even Shesiyah and who, on Yom Kippur, would immerse himself five times in water; צוֹעָה וּמִרְחִיץ בְּפָיו בְּקֹדֶשׁ מַיִם—who cleansed himself (*from sin*) by washing his hands (*and feet*—קְדוּשׁ יָדַיִם וְרַגְלָיו) with water; קוֹרֵא וּמִזֶּה טֹהַר מַיִם—and who, before the *avodah* on Yom Kippur, learned all the laws and was sprinkled with the ashes of the Parah Adumah mixed into water; רַחֵק מֵעַם פָּחוּז בַּמַּיִם—and for seven days before Yom Kippur he was separated from the people who act with haste like flowing water.

And we respond:

בְּעִבּוּרוֹ אַל תִּמְנַע מַיִם:

For his sake, do not hold back water!

זְכוֹר שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר שְׁבָטִים שֶׁהֶעֱבַרְתָּ בְּגִזְרֹת מַיִם, שֶׁהִמַּתְקַתָּ לָמוֹ מִרֵּירוֹת מַיִם, תוֹלְדוֹתָם נִשְׁפָּךְ דָּמָם עָלֶיךָ בַּמַּיִם, תִּפְּנֵן כִּי נִפְשָׁנוּ אֶפְפוּ מַיִם: זְכוֹר שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר שְׁבָטִים שֶׁהֶעֱבַרְתָּ בְּגִזְרֹת מַיִם—Hashem, remember the merit of the twelve shevatim who crossed Yam Suf when You split the water; שֶׁהִמַּתְקַתָּ לָמוֹ מִרֵּירוֹת מַיִם—and for whom (*in Marah*) you sweetened the bitter waters; תוֹלְדוֹתָם נִשְׁפָּךְ דָּמָם עָלֶיךָ בַּמַּיִם—their descendants have their blood spilled for You (*al kiddush Hashem*) like water! תִּפְּנֵן כִּי נִפְשָׁנוּ אֶפְפוּ מַיִם—Hashem, turn to us and accept our tefillos, for we are surrounded with tragedies and troubles like water!

And we respond:

בְּצִדְקָם חוֹן חֲשֵׁרֶת מַיִם:

For the sake of their righteousness, grant us an abundance of water!

The chazzan continues:

שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְשִׁיב הָרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם:

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

The congregation followed by the chazzan, responsively:

לְבִרְכָּהּ וְלֹא לְקָלָלָהּ: אָמֵן

For a blessing and not for a curse. Amen!

לְחַיִּים וְלֹא לְמוֹת: אָמֵן

For life and not for death. Amen!

לְשׁוֹבַע וְלֹא לְרִיזוֹן: אָמֵן

For plenty and not for scarcity. Amen!

The Aron Kodesh is closed.

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

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