



גשם וטל

On *שמני עצרת* and the first day of *פסח* at *Musaf*,
the chanting of the *עמידה* begins here.

The *ארון הקודש* is opened.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹדוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאַלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגְּבוּר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֲלִיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל, וְזוֹכֵר חֲסָדֵי אֲבוֹת, וּמְבִיא גּוֹאֵל לְבָנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוּ בְּאַהֲבָה. מְלַךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמְגַן. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹדוּ מְגֵן אַבְרָהָם.

אַתָּה גְּבוּר לְעוֹלָם יְהוּדָה, מְחַיֶּה מֵתִים אַתָּה, רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ.

On *שמני עצרת*, continue with *גשם*, next page.

On *פסח*, continue with *טל*, page 219.

גשם וטל (כולל אמהות)

On *שמני עצרת* and the first day of *פסח* at *Musaf*,
the chanting of the *עמידה* begins here.

The *ארון הקודש* is opened.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹדוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאַלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרָה אֱלֹהֵי רַבְּקָה אֱלֹהֵי רְחֵל וְאַלֹהֵי לָאָה, הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגְּבוּר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֲלִיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל, וְזוֹכֵר חֲסָדֵי אֲבוֹת, וּמְבִיא גּוֹאֵל לְבָנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוּ בְּאַהֲבָה. מְלַךְ עוֹזֵר וּפּוֹקֵד וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמְגַן. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹדוּ מְגֵן אַבְרָהָם וּפְקֵד שָׂרָה.

אַתָּה גְּבוּר לְעוֹלָם יְהוּדָה, מְחַיֶּה מֵתִים אַתָּה, רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ.

On *שמני עצרת*, continue with *גשם*, next page.

On *פסח*, continue with *טל*, page 219.

GESHEM, the prayer for rain, requests that God, in the name of our most worthy ancestors, grant ample rain and a productive winter season to the Land of Israel. It is recited on *Sh'mini Atzeret* since it would be inappropriate to ask for rain while we still dwell outdoors in the *sukkah*.

Geshem & Tal

The special attention given to rain and dew in our liturgy can easily be understood when we recognize that in the Land of Israel, where most of our prayers originated, the presence or absence of water in these forms is critical to the continuation of life. Israel is a land largely devoid of water resources. It does not abound in streams and lakes, but is greatly dependent upon the rain and — to a lesser extent, the dew — for water to make the land fertile. See Deuteronomy 11:10–11. Furthermore, rain in Israel is seasonal. It falls in the winter months, seldom starting before the end of Sukkot or continuing beyond Pesah. Thus there are special insertions in the Amidah concerning rain and dew that change with the seasons. One, which is found only in the weekday Amidah, is a prayer for rain and for dew. The other, found in the second Amidah blessing and recited in every Amidah, recognizes the existence of these natural phenomena as evidence of God's powers as manifest in nature.

In order to mark the beginning of the recitation of each of these references in the second blessing and to impress upon the congregation the need to begin to recite them, special liturgical poems, *piyyutim*, were written and inserted into the Amidah. (In the Land of Israel they are recited separately, prior to the repetition of the Amidah.)

Although these ancient poems have been retained in their entirety, our approach to them today may differ from that of our ancestors. For many of us it is difficult to believe that the presence or absence of rain or dew is a sign of God's favor or displeasure. Rather we see these phenomena as part of the order of nature, which is not about to change because of our words or in response to our moral conduct.

We are more inclined to accept what is said in the Talmud: "If a man stole a measure of wheat and then sowed it in the ground, it is only right that it should not grow — but the world pursues its natural course" (*Avodah Zarah* 54b). We would extend this to other natural phenomena as well, such as rain and dew. They come because of the natural order that exists in the world and governs nature, an order that is part of the divine creation.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, whose devotion to prayer could not be questioned, nevertheless felt this ambiguity regarding prayer and natural phenomena. He wrote:

In the dimension of the holy the spiritual is a bridge flung across a frightful abyss, while in the realm of nature the spiritual hovers like the wafted clouds, too tenuous to bear man across the abyss. When a vessel sails into a typhoon and the maw of the boiling maelstrom opens to engulf the tottering prey, it is not the pious man, engrossed in supplication, but the helmsman who intervenes in the proper sphere with proper means, fighting with physical powers. What sense is there in imploring the mercy of God? Words do not stem the flood, nor does meditation banish the storm. Prayer never entwines directly with the chain of physical cause and effect; the spiritual does not interfere with the natural order of things. The fact that man with undaunted sincerity pours into prayer the best of his soul springs from the conviction that there is a realm in which the acts of faith are puissant and potent, that there is an order in which things of spirit can be of momentous consequence. (*Man Is Not Alone*, pages 239–240)

These prayers, then, are reflections of our desire to express our hopes, our needs, our desires, and of our deep faith that in some way, all that we have depends upon God. We pray for God to help sustain us and the world God has created for us and for all creatures.

Through the phenomena of nature, we sense the reality of the Divine. As partners with God, we reaffirm our responsibility to protect the world God has given us and to learn to share it with all.

 **GESHEM & TAL**

On Sh'mini Atzeret and the first day of Pesah at Musaf, the chanting of the Amidah begins here.

The Ark is opened.

Praised are You Adonai, our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, great, mighty, awesome, exalted God who bestows lovingkindness, Creator of all. You remember the pious deeds of our ancestors and will send a redeemer to their children's children because of Your loving nature. You are the Sovereign who helps and saves and shields. Praised are You Adonai, Shield of Abraham.

Your might, Adonai, is boundless.

You give life to the dead; great is Your saving power.

On Sh'mini Atzeret, continue with Geshem, next page.

On Pesah, continue with Tal, page 219.

 **GESHEM & TAL (with Matriarchs)**

On Sh'mini Atzeret and the first day of Pesah at Musaf, the chanting of the Amidah begins here.

The Ark is opened.

Praised are You Adonai, our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, great, mighty, awesome, exalted God who bestows lovingkindness, Creator of all. You remember the pious deeds of our ancestors and will send a redeemer to their children's children because of Your loving nature. You are the Sovereign who helps and guards, saves and shields. Praised are You Adonai, Shield of Abraham and Guardian of Sarah.

Your might, Adonai, is boundless.

You give life to the dead; great is Your saving power.

On Sh'mini Atzeret, continue with Geshem, next page.

On Pesah, continue with Tal, page 219.

TAL, the prayer for dew, beseeches God to provide sufficient springtime dew in Israel to assure a year of prosperity. According to the Midrash, it was on the first day of Pesah that Isaac blessed Jacob, asking God to grant him the "dew of heaven." Both Geshem and Tal were composed by Rabbi Eleazar Ha-Kallir in eighth-century Palestine.

גשם

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,

זְכוֹר אֵב נִמְשָׁךְ אַחֲרֶיךָ בְּמַיִם,
 בְּרַכְתּוֹ כְּעֵץ שְׂתוּל עַל פְּלִיגֵי מַיִם,
 גִּנְנָתוֹ הִצְלִתוֹ מֵאֵשׁ וּמַמַּיִם,
 דְּרַשְׁתּוֹ בְּזָרְעוֹ עַל כָּל-מַיִם. בְּעַבּוּרוֹ אֶל תִּמְנַע מַיִם.

זְכוֹר הַנוֹלָד בְּבִשְׁוֹרֵת יִקַּח נֶאֱמַעַט מַיִם,
 וְשָׁחַת לְהוֹרוֹ לְשַׁחֲטוֹ לְשַׁפֵּךְ דָּמוֹ בְּמַיִם,
 זֶהָר גַּם הוּא לְשַׁפֵּךְ לֵב בְּמַיִם,
 חִפְּרָה וּמִצָּא בְּאֵרוֹת מַיִם. בְּצַדְקוֹ חוֹן חֲשֵׁרֵת מַיִם.

זְכוֹר טָעַן מִקְלוֹ וְעָבַר יָרְדֵן מַיִם,
 יָחַד לֵב וְגַל אָבֵן מִפִּי בְּאֵר מַיִם,
 כְּנִיבָבֶק לוֹ שֶׁר בְּלוּל מֵאֵשׁ וּמַמַּיִם,
 לָכֵן הִבְטַחְתּוֹ הָיִית עֲמוֹ בְּאֵשׁ וּבְמַיִם. בְּעַבּוּרוֹ אֶל תִּמְנַע מַיִם.

זְכוֹר מְשׁוּי בְּתַבַּת גְּמָא מִן הַמַּיִם,
 נִמְּו דְּלָה דְּלָה וְהִשְׁקָה צֵאֵן מַיִם,
 סְגוּלֶיךָ עֵת צְמָאוֹ לְמַיִם,
 עַל הַסֵּלַע הָרָה וַיִּצְאוּ מַיִם. בְּצַדְקוֹ חוֹן חֲשֵׁרֵת מַיִם.

זְכוֹר פְּקִיד שְׂתוֹת טוֹבֵל הַמֵּשׁ טְבִילוֹת בְּמַיִם,
 צוּעָה וּמְרַחֵץ כְּפִיו בְּקִדּוּשׁ מַיִם,
 קוֹרֵא וּמְזַהֵ טְהַרְת־מַיִם,
 רְחֹק מַעַם פָּחוּז בְּמַיִם. בְּעַבּוּרוֹ אֶל תִּמְנַע מַיִם.

זְכוֹר שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר שְׂבָטִים שֶׁהֶעֱבַרְתָּ בְּגִזְרַת מַיִם,
 שֶׁהִמְתַּקְתָּ לָמוֹ מְרִירוֹת מַיִם,
 תּוֹלְדוֹתֵם נִשְׁפָּךְ דָּמִם עֲלֶיךָ בְּמַיִם,
 תִּפְּן, כִּי נִפְשָׁנוּ אֶפְפוּ מַיִם. בְּצַדְקָם חוֹן חֲשֵׁרֵת מַיִם.

שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא יְהוּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם

Congregation: Congregation, then Hazzan, line by line:

אָמֵן.	לְבָרְכָהּ וְלֹא לְקַלְלָהּ,
אָמֵן.	לְחַיִּים וְלֹא לְמוֹת,
אָמֵן.	לְשִׁבְעָה וְלֹא לְרִוּוּן,

The Hazzan continues with "אֵלֵינוּ מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם".

The Hazzan continues with "מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם", page 166a or b.

זְכוֹר אֵב — Remember Abraham. Throughout this poem the poet does not actually give the names of the people referred to. This would be too obvious. Rather he describes them, assuming that it will be clear to the reader. Abraham, for example, is referred to as *av*, "Father." When his name was enlarged from Avram to Avraham, God said to him: "for I make you the *father* of a multitude of nations" (Genesis 17:5). The reference to fire and water is to midrashic legends that Abraham was thrown into a fiery furnace when he refused to worship Nimrod, and that he went through a mighty stream created by Satan to try to prevent him from fulfilling God's command concerning the binding of Isaac. In each stanza, references are made to the connection between the individuals alluded to and water. Each line concludes with the word "water," *mayim*. Note the similarities between this and the poem on page 210 recited on Hoshana Rabbah, which is also connected to the idea of rain and water.

זְכוֹר אֵב נִמְשָׁךְ מַיִם — while angels drank cool water. In Hebrew this is a quotation from Genesis 18:4: "Let a little water be brought." Three angels, disguised as wanderers, appeared to Abraham. He offered them water and bread, but in the end gave them a full meal. This is taken as an example of Abraham's fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *hakhnasat or'him*, caring for guests. Later on in the paragraph, there is a reference to spilling Isaac's blood like water. According to the midrash, Abraham actually went so far as to shed Isaac's blood. Some legends even have it that Isaac was slaughtered and came back to life only later.

זְכוֹר אֵב בְּלוּל מֵאֵשׁ וּמַמַּיִם — with a creature of fire and water. The reference is to the story of the wrestling match between Jacob and a "man," when Jacob was returning from his exile and was about to meet his brother Esau (Genesis 32:25). According to the midrash, the man was an angel, "Esau's guardian angel," who was made of water and fire (Genesis Rabbah 77:2-3 and Pesikta D'Rav Kahana 6).

על הפקלע הך — **He struck the rock.** At Massah and Meribah, when there was no water, Moses smote the rock at God's command and water issued forth (Exodus 17:6–7). As this paragraph makes clear, water played a central role in Moses' life. He was found by Pharaoh's daughter floating in a basket in the waters of the Nile (Exodus 2:5). His very name is understood to mean "I drew him from the water" (Exodus 2:10). He rescued Jethro's daughters at the well and drew water for them (Exodus 2:16–17). The poet could have added Moses' act of splitting the Sea of Reeds (Exodus 14:21), but preferred to ascribe that to the power of God (below: "You brought them through water") and not to Moses. This is similar to the way in which the Pesah Haggadah avoids mentioning Moses in order to glorify the role of God in the Exodus. And, of course, Moses' death was decreed because of his act of lack of faith in God, when he said: "Listen, you rebels, shall we get water for you out of the rock?" (Numbers 20:10). This would not be mentioned here, since only positive references are included.

טובל חמש טבילות במקום — **immersed himself in water.** Immersion in water is the method of attaining ritual purity. Aaron, the High Priest, had to immerse himself often as part of the rituals. See especially Leviticus 16, the description of his many immersions on Yom Kippur.

נשפך דמים עליך במקום — **blood was spilled like water.** The final paragraph concerns the Jewish people. Twice they went through water, once at the Sea of Reeds (Exodus 14) and once at the Jordan River (Joshua 3). Here, however, the reference is to martyrdom. During the period of the Hadrianic persecution (second century C.E.), when the practice of Judaism was forbidden, many Jews chose to be martyred rather than give up their religion. In the centuries following the writing of this poem, thousands more were added to this list during the Crusades in Europe and the Inquisition in Spain. In more recent times, millions more perished because they were Jews in the most terrible persecution of all, the Shoah.

GESHEM

Our God and God of our ancestors:

Remember Abraham, his heart poured out to You like water.
You blessed him, as a tree planted near water;
You saved him when he went through fire and water.
For Abraham's sake, do not withhold water.

Remember Isaac, his birth foretold
while angels drank cool water.
At Moriah his blood was almost spilled like water;
In the desert he dug deep to find springs of water.
For Isaac's sake, grant the gift of water.

Remember Jacob who, with his staff, forded Jordan's water.
Gallantly he showed his love beside a well of water;
He struggled, victoriously, **with a creature of fire and water.**
For Jacob's sake, do not withhold water.

Remember Moses, whose basket rocked in reeds and water.
In Midian he gave his sheep ample grass and water.
He struck the rock; then the people drank sweet water.
For Moses' sake, grant the gift of water.

Remember Aaron the priest who **immersed himself in water.**
On Yom Kippur he kept the rites with water;
He read from the Torah and bathed himself in water.
For Aaron's sake, do not withhold water.

Remember Israel's tribes; You brought them through water.
Brackish marsh became, for their sake, sweet water.
For You their descendants' **blood was spilled like water.**
For all Israel's sake, grant the gift of water.

You are Adonai our God
who causes the wind to blow
and the rain to fall.

Congregation, then Reader, line by line:
For a blessing, not for a curse,
For life, not for death,
For abundance, not for famine,

Congregation:
Amen.
Amen.
Amen.

*The Ark is closed.
The Reader continues with "Your love..."
page 166a or b.*

טל 

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,

טל תֵּן לְרִצּוֹת אֶרְצֶךָ,
שִׁיתֵנוּ בְּרָכָה בְּדִיצְךָ,
רֹב דָּגָן וְתִירוֹשׁ בְּהַפְרִיצְךָ,
קוֹמֵם עִיר בְּהַפְצֶךָ. בְּטַל.

טל צִוֵּה שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמַעֲטָרְתָּ,
פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ לְגֵאוֹן וּלְתַפְאֲרָתָּהּ,
עִיר בְּסֻכָּה נוֹתְרָתָּהּ,
שִׁמְיָהּ בְּיָדְךָ עֲטָרְתָּ. בְּטַל.

טל נוֹפֵף עָלַי אֶרֶץ בְּרוּכָה,
מִמְגֵד שָׁמַיִם שֶׁבַענוּ בְּרָכָה
לְהָאִיר מִתּוֹךְ חֹשֶׁכָה,
בְּנֵה אַחֲרָיִךָ מִשׁוֹכָה. בְּטַל.

טל וַיַּעֲסִיב צוֹף הָרִים,
טַעַם בְּמֵאוֹדֶיךָ מִבְּחָרִים,
חֲנוּנֶיךָ חֲלִץ מִמִּסְגָּרִים,
זְמֶרְךָ גִּנְעִים וְקוֹל גְּרִים. בְּטַל.

טל וְשָׁבַע מֵלֵא אֶסְמִינוּ,
הִכְעֵת תְּחַדֵּשׁ יְמֵינוּ,
דוֹד, כְּעֶרְכֶּךָ הַעֲמֵד שְׁמֵנוּ,
גֵּן רוּחַ שִׁמְנוּ. בְּטַל.

טל בּוֹ תִבְרַךְ מְזוֹן,
בְּמִשְׁמַנֵּינוּ אֵל יְהִי רוּזוֹן,
אֵימָה אֲשֶׁר הִסְעֵתָּ בְּצֵאֵן
אֲנָא תִפַּק לָהּ רְצוֹן. בְּטַל.

שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְשִׁיב הָרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַטַּל.

Congregation:

Congregation, then Hazzan, line by line:

אָמֵן.	לְבָרְכָה וְלֹא לְקַלְלָהּ,
אָמֵן.	לְחַיִּים וְלֹא לְמוֹת,
אָמֵן.	לְשָׁבַע וְלֹא לְרוּזוֹן,

The *Shema* is closed.

The Hazzan continues with "מכלכל חיים," page 166a or b.

Tal

The *piyyut* concerning dew is very different from the one about rain. This is not only because it is a reverse alphabetical acrostic — it begins with the last letter of the alphabet and proceeds to the first — but also because it is written on two levels. On one level it asks for the blessing of dew; on a second level it is a prayer concerning the end of exile and the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. It is not accidental that this plea for redemption is found in a prayer recited on Pesah. Not only is Pesah the feast of our freedom and redemption, but, according to tradition, it is also the time of the future redemption.

Each paragraph begins with the Hebrew word for “dew” and ends with “with dew.”

קוֹמֵם עִיר בְּהַפְצֶךָ — And give Your chosen city safe foundation. The first lines of this paragraph are concerned with the need for dew in order for agriculture to prosper in the Land of Israel. This last line, however, speaks not of dew at all but of the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. This is the general pattern of each stanza: beginning with agricultural needs and concluding with a plea for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the end of exile.

עִיר בְּסֻכָּה נוֹתְרָתָּהּ — the city once so desolate. In the Hebrew text the city is compared to a *sukkah*, a desolate, deserted hut. This is based upon the verse in Isaiah 1:8: “Fair Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field.”

לְהָאִיר מִתּוֹךְ חֹשֶׁכָה — the darkness. Literally, “to give light from amidst the darkness.” Another messianic reference, asking God to turn the darkness of exile into the light of redemption. For example: “Arise, shine, for your light has dawned. The Presence of Adonai has shone upon you! Behold! Darkness shall cover the earth, and thick clouds the peoples; but upon you Adonai will shine” (Isaiah 60:1–2).

תְּחַדֵּשׁ יָמֵינוּ — **youthful excesses**. Literally, “renew our days.” A quotation from Lamentations 5:21: “Take us back, Adonai, to Yourself, and let us come back; renew our days as of old!” The Book of Lamentations is a series of dirges concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. It concludes with a heartfelt plea to God to restore Israel to its previous status.

דָּוֵד — **Beloved God**. The word “beloved” (*dod*) is taken from the Song of Songs. The rabbinic tradition gave this collection of love poetry a symbolic interpretation as a love song between Israel and God, the Beloved.

מְשַׁיֵּב הַקָּרוֹחַ — **who causes the wind to blow**. This phrase is used in connection with rain, but is not part of the proclamation of the dew. It is therefore not clear why the poet uses it here.

וּמִזְרִיד הַטֶּל — **the dew to fall**. These words are added to the Amidah from Pesah until the end of Sukkot, the dry season in the Land of Israel. This custom is followed throughout the Land of Israel, in all Sephardic congregations and, increasingly, in Ashkenazic congregations, strengthening Diaspora ties with Israel.

 **TAL**

Our God and God of our ancestors:

Dew, precious dew, unto Your land forlorn,
Pour out our blessing in Your exultation,
To strengthen us with ample wine and corn,
And give Your chosen city safe foundation
In dew.

Dew, precious dew, the good year's crown, we await,
That earth in pride and glory may be fruited,
And that **the city once so desolate**
Into a gleaming crown may be transmuted
By dew.

Dew, precious dew, let fall upon the land;
From heaven's treasury be this accorded;
So shall **the darkness** by a beam be spanned,
The faithful of Your vineyard be rewarded
With dew.

Dew, precious dew, to make the mountains sweet,
The savor of Your excellence recalling.
Deliver us from exile, we entreat,
So we may sing Your praises, softly falling
As dew.

Dew, precious dew, our granaries to fill,
And all our **youthful excesses** pardon.
Beloved God, uplift us at Your will
And make us as a richly watered garden
With dew.

Dew, precious dew, that we our harvest reap,
And guard our fatted flocks and herds from leanness.
Behold our people follow You like sheep,
And look to You to give the earth her greenness
With dew.

You are Adonai our God
who causes the wind to blow and the dew to fall.

<i>Congregation, then Reader, line by line:</i>	<i>Congregation:</i>
For a blessing, not for a curse,	Amen.
For life, not for death,	Amen.
For abundance, not for famine,	Amen.

The Ark is closed.

*The Reader continues with “Your love...”
page 166a or b.*