



Watering the Soul in Times of Faith and Doubt

Rabbi Mychal B. Springer

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Mychal received her BA in Judaic Studies and Religious Studies from Yale College *magna cum laude*. She was ordained a Conservative rabbi and received her Master's in Judaic Studies and a Doctor of Divinity at JTS. Mychal is a certified Jewish chaplain in *Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains*.

1.) Isaiah 26:19

(19) Oh, let Your dead revive! Let corpses arise!
 Awake and shout for joy, You who dwell in the dust!—
 For Your dew is like the dew on fresh growth; You
 make the land of the shades come to life.

ישעיהו כ"ו:י"ט

(יט) יִחְיוּ מֵתֵיךְ נִבְלָתֵי יְקוּמוּן הַקִּיצוֹ וְנִרְנְנוּ
 עֲלֵי עֵפֶר כִּי טַל אֹרֶת טִלְךָ וְאַרְצְךָ רִפְאִים
 תִּפְיֵל: (ס)

2.) Siddur Ashkenaz, Weekday, Shacharit, Amidah, Divine Might

- (1) You are mighty forever, O Lord, You revive the dead, You are mighty to save.
- (2) (Between Passover and the eighth day of Sukkot include: You bring down dew.)
- (3) (Between the eighth day of Sukkot and Passover include: You cause the wind to blow and the rain to descend.)
- (4) You sustain the living with loving kindness, You revive the dead to life with great mercy, You support the fallen and You heal the sick; You free the captives and preserve Your faith with those asleep in the dust. Who is like You, Master of mighty deeds? Who can be compared to You, O King Who causes death and restores life, and causes Your salvation to sprout.
- (5) (Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur include: Who is like You, Father of mercy, Who in mercy remembers His creatures for life.)
- (6) You are faithful to restore the dead to life. Blessed are You, O Lord, Who brings life to the dead.

סידור אשכנז, ימי חול, תפילת

שחרית, עמידה, גבורות

(א) אַתָּה גִבּוֹר לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנָי. מְחַיֶּה

מֵתִים אַתָּה רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ:

(ב) בְּקִיץ: מוֹרִיד הַטֶּל:

(ג) בַּחֹרֶף: מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד

הַגֶּשֶׁם:

(ד) מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחֶסֶד. מְחַיֶּה מֵתִים

בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים. סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים. וְרוֹפֵא

חֹלִים וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים. וּמְקַיֵּם

אֲמוּנָתוֹ לִישְׁנֵי עֵפֶר. מִי כָמוֹךָ בַּעַל

גְּבוּרֹת וּמִי דוֹמָה לָךְ. מְלֵךְ מֵמִית

וּמְחַיֶּה וּמְצַמֵּחַ יְשׁוּעָה:

(ה) בַּעֲשֵׂי־יָתִ: מִי כָמוֹךָ אֵב הַרְחָמִים.

זוֹכֵר יְצוּרָיו לְחַיִּים בְּרַחֲמִים:

(ו) וְנִצְּמָן אַתָּה לְהַחְיֹת מֵתִים: בְּרוּךְ

אַתָּה ה', מְחַיֶּה הַמֵּתִים:

3.) Geshem: ashkenazic prayer for rain, with matriarchs (excerpted) Siddur Lev Shalem, pp. 377-378

Our God and God of our ancestors:

Remember the patriarch who was drawn to You like water;

You blessed him as a tree planted amid flowing waters;
You protected and saved him when he went through fire and water;
You loved him as he sowed righteousness upon all the world's waters.
For his sake, do not withhold water. *ba-avuro al timna mayim*

Remember the barren woman who had compassion for those who needed a drink of water;
she remained pure in the land fed by flowing waters,
brought countless women to dwell in the shade of the
one who separated the upper and lower waters,
and suckled many babies when her milk flowed like water.
For her sake, do not withhold water. *ba-avurah al timna mayim*

Remember the one whose birth was foretold by those who were offered water;
You instructed his parent to spill his blood like water;
he, too, learned to pour out his heart like water;
later, he dug wells and found springs of water.
For the sake of his righteousness,
grant the gift of flowing water. *b'tzidko hon hashrat mayim*

Remember the child plucked from the reed basket floating in water;
he was asked to draw from the well to give the sheep water.
When Your treasured people thirsted for water,
he struck the rock, which poured forth water.
For the sake of his righteousness,
grant the gift of flowing water. *b'tzidko hon hashrat mayim*

For You are Adonai our God,
who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall—
The congregation responds "Amen" to each of the following lines:
for blessing and not as a curse, amen;
for life and not for death, amen;
for abundance and not for famine, amen.

4.) Taanit 2a-2b

Rabbi Yoḥanan said: There are **three keys** maintained in the hand of the Holy One, Blessed be He, which were not transmitted to an intermediary, and they are: **The key of rain, the key of birthing, and the key of the resurrection of the dead.** The key of rain, as it is stated: **“The Lord will open for you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its due time”** (Deuteronomy 28:12). From where is it derived that the key of birthing is maintained by God? As it is written: **“And God remembered Rachel and listened to her, and He opened her womb”** (Genesis 30:22). From where is it derived that the key of the resurrection of the dead is maintained by God? As it is written: **“And you shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves”** (Ezekiel 37:13). In the West, Eretz Yisrael, they say: **The key of livelihood is also in God’s hand, as it is written: “You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor”** (Psalms 145:16). The Gemara asks: **And what is the reason that Rabbi Yoḥanan did not consider this key of livelihood in his list?** The Gemara answers that Rabbi Yoḥanan could have said to you: **Rain is the same as livelihood.**

תענית ב' א-ב' ב

אמר ר' יוחנן ג' מפתחות בידו של הקב"ה שלא נמסרו ביד שליח ואלו הן מפתח של גשמים מפתח של חיה מפתח של תחיית המתים מפתח של גשמים דכתיב (דברים כח, יב) יפתח ה' לך את אוצרו הטוב את השמים לתת מטר ארצך בעתו מפתח של חיה מנין דכתיב ויזכור אלהים את רחל וישמע אליה אלהים ויפתח את רחמה מפתח של תחיית המתים מנין דכתיב (יהזקאל לו, יג) וידעתם כי אני ה' בפתחי את קברותיכם במערבא אמרי אף מפתח של פרנסה דכתיב (תהלים קמה, טז) פותח את ירך וגו' ור' יוחנן מאי טעמא לא קא חשיב להא אמר לך גשמים היינו פרנסה:

5.) (Honi) Taanit 23a:4-13

The mishna taught: **An incident** occurred in **which** the people sent a message to **Ḥoni HaMe'aggel**. This event is related in greater detail in the following *baraita*. **The Sages taught: Once, most of the month of Adar had passed but rain had still not fallen. They sent this message to Ḥoni HaMe'aggel: Pray, and rain will fall. He prayed, but no rain fell. He drew a circle in the dust and stood inside it, in the manner that the prophet Habakkuk did, as it is stated: “And I will stand upon my watch and set myself upon the tower, and I will look out to see what He will say to me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved”** (Habakkuk 2:1). This verse is taken to mean that Habakkuk fashioned a kind of prison for himself where he sat. **Ḥoni said before God: Master of the Universe, Your children have turned their faces toward me, as I am like a member of**

תענית כ"ג א:ד'-י"ג

מעשה ששלחו לחוני המעגל וכו': ת"ר פעם אחת יצא רוב אדר ולא ירדו גשמים שלחו לחוני המעגל התפלל וירדו גשמים התפלל ולא ירדו גשמים עג עוגה ועמד בתוכה כדרך שעשה חבקוק הנביא שנאמר (חבקוק ב, א) על משמרתי אעמדה ואתיצבה על מצור וגו' אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם בניך שמו פניהם עלי שאני כבן בית לפניך נשבע אני בשמך הגדול שאיני זו מכאן עד שתרחם

Your household. Therefore, I take an oath by Your great name that I will not move from here until you have mercy upon Your children and answer their prayers for rain. **Rain began to trickle down, but only in small droplets. His students said to him: Rabbi, we have seen that you can perform great wonders, but this quantity of rain is not enough to ensure that we will not die. It appears to us that a small amount of rain is falling only to enable you to dissolve your oath, but it is not nearly enough to save us. Honi said to God: I did not ask for this, but for rain to fill the cisterns, ditches, and caves. Rain began to fall furiously, until each and every drop was as big as the mouth of a barrel, and the Sages estimated that no drop was less than a log in size. His students said to him: Rabbi, we have seen that you can call on God to perform miracles and we will not die, but now it appears to us that rain is falling only to destroy the world. Honi again said before God: I did not ask for this harmful rain either, but for rain of benevolence, blessing, and generosity. Subsequently, the rains fell in their standard manner, until all of the people sought higher ground and ascended to the Temple Mount due to the rain. They said to him: Rabbi, just as you prayed that the rains should fall, so too, pray that they should stop. He said to them: This is the tradition that I received, that one does not pray over an excess of good. Honi continued: Nevertheless, bring me a bull. I will sacrifice it as a thanks-offering and pray at the same time. They brought him a bull for a thanks-offering. He placed his two hands on its head and said before God: Master of the Universe, Your nation Israel, whom You brought out of Egypt, cannot bear either an excess of good or an excess of punishment. You grew angry with them and withheld rain, and they are unable to bear it. You bestowed upon them too much good, and they were also unable to bear it. May it be Your will that the rain stop and that there be relief for the world. Immediately, the wind blew, the clouds dispersed, the sun shone, and everyone went out to the fields and gathered for themselves truffles and mushrooms that had sprouted in the strong rain. Shimon ben Shetaḥ relayed to Honi HaMe'aggel: If you were not Honi, I would have decreed ostracism upon you. For were these years like the years of Elijah, when the keys of rain were entrusted in Elijah's hands, and he swore it would not rain, wouldn't the name of Heaven have been desecrated by your oath not to leave the circle until it rained? Once you have pronounced this oath, either yours or Elijah's must be falsified. However, what can I do to you, as you nag God and He does your bidding, like a son who nags his father and his father does his bidding. And the son says to his father: Father, take**

על בניך התחילו גשמים מנטפין אמרו לו תלמידי רבי ראינוך ולא נמות כמדומין אנו שאין גשמים יורדין אלא להתיר שבועתך אמר לא כך שאלתי אלא גשמי בורות שיחין ומערות ירדו בזעף עד שכל טפה וטפה כמלא פי חבית ושיערו חכמים שאין טפה פחותה מלוג אמרו לו תלמידי רבי ראינוך ולא נמות כמדומין אנו שאין גשמים יורדין אלא לאבד העולם אמר לפניו לא כך שאלתי אלא גשמי רצון ברכה ונדבה ירדו כתיקנן עד שעלו כל העם להר הבית מפני הגשמים אמרו לו רבי כשם שהתפללת שירדו כך התפלל וילכו להם אמר להם כך מקובלני שאין מתפללין על רוב הטובה אעפ"כ הביאו לי פר הודאה הביאו לו פר הודאה סמך שתי ידיו עליו ואמר לפניו רבש"ע עמך ישראל שהוצאת ממצרים אינן יכולין לא ברוב טובה ולא ברוב פורענות כעסת עליהם אינן יכולין לעמוד השפעת עליהם טובה אינן יכולין לעמוד יהי רצון מלפניך שיפסקו הגשמים ויהא ריוח בעולם מיד נשבה הרוח ונתפזרו העבים וזרחה החמה ויצאו העם לשדה והביאו להם כמהין ופטריות שלח לו שמעון בן שטח אלמלא חוני אתה גוזרני עליך נידוי שאילו שנים כשני אליהו שמפתחות גשמים בידו של אליהו לא נמצא שם שמים מתחלל על ידך אבל מה אעשה לך שאתה מתחטא לפני המקום ועושה לך רצונך כבן שמתחטא על אביו ועושה לו רצונו ואומר לו אבא הוליכני לרחצני בחמין שטפני בצונן תן לי

me to be bathed in hot water; wash me with cold water; give me nuts, almonds, peaches, and pomegranates. And his father gives him. About you, the verse states: “Your father and mother will be glad and she who bore you will rejoice” (Proverbs 23:25).

אגוזים שקדים אפרסקים ורמונים
ונותן לו ועליך הכתוב אומר
(משלי כג, כה) ישמח אביך ואמך
ותגל יולדתך

6.) Taanit 23b:10

By contrast, the powerful men of Eretz Yisrael, such as Rabbi Yona, the father of Rabbi Mani, acted differently. When the world was in need of rain, he enters his house and say to his household: Give me my sack [gevalki] and I will go and buy myself a dinar of grain. When he went outside, he went and stood in a low place, as it is written: “Out of the depths I have called You, O Lord” (Psalms 130:1). And he would stand in a secluded place, and cover himself with sackcloth, and pray for mercy, and rain would come. When he would come home, they would say to him: Did the Master bring grain? He said to them: I said to myself, since rain has now come, there will be relief in the world

תענית כ"ג ב"י

תקיפי דארעא דישראל כגון ר' יונה
אבוה דרבי מני כי הוה מצטריך עלמא
למיטרא הוה עייל לביתה ואמר להו
הבו לי גואלקי ואיזיל ואייתי לי בזוזא
עיבורא כי הוה נפיק לברא אזיל וקאי
בדוכתא עמיקתא דכתיב (תהלים קל, א)
ממעמקים קראתיך ה' וקאי בדוכתא
צניעא ומכסי בשקא ובעי רחמי ואתי
מיטרא כי הוה אתי לביתה אמרי ליה
אייתי מר עיבורא אמר להו אמינא
הואיל ואתא מיטרא השתא רווח עלמא

7.) Pesikta D'Rav Kahanna 1

Who is it whose prayer goes up to heaven and brings down rain? The person who distributes tithes with his fistfuls, he causes the dew and rain to come down to the world. Who is it whose prayer does not go up to heaven and does not bring down the rain? The one who does not distribute tithes with his fistfuls, he stops the heaven from bringing down dew and rain to the world.

פסיקתא דרב כהנא א'

ד"א מי עלה שמים (משלי שם)
מי הוא זה שתפילתו עולה
לשמים ומורידה גשמים זה
שהוא מחלק מעשרותיו בחפניו
שהוא מוריד טל ומטר לעולם.

8.) Prayers for the Protection and Opening of the Heart

BY YA'AKOV HAKOHEN; TRANSLATED BY PETER COLE

i

May the Name send its hidden radiance
to open the gates of deliverance
to His servants—and shine in their hearts,
which now are shut in silent darkness.
May the great King be moved
to act in perfection and righteousness—
to open the gates of wisdom for us

and waken the love of old, the love of ancient days.

ii

By the power of the hidden Name *I-am-that-I-am*,
and by the dew of Desire and Blessing, the dead will live again...

iii

I-am is the power of your Name in concealment,
and one who knows its mystery dwells in eternity's instant.
Over the world, it pours forth abundance and favor,
and on it all worlds hang, like grapes in a cluster.
Send the dew of blessing, the dew of grace;
renew my dispensation, and grant me length of days.

Bring light to my eyes with your teaching, and let not the husks
that surround your hosts obstruct me.
May Heaven and Adam's children judge me with mercy.
Sustain me with their strength and fortune—
but do not leave me in need of the gifts of men.

9.) *Twilight: After Haying* By Jane Kenyon

Yes, long shadows go out from the bales; and yes, the soul must part from the body: what else could it do?

The men sprawl near the baler, too tired to leave the field. They talk and smoke, and the tips of their cigarettes blaze like small roses in the night air. (It arrived and settled among them before they were aware.)

The moon comes to count the bales, and the dispossessed-- Whip-poor-will, Whip-poor-will -- sings from the dusty stubble.

These things happen. . .the soul's bliss and suffering are bound together like the grasses. . .

The last, sweet exhalations of timothy and vetch go out with the song of the bird; the ravaged field grows wet with dew.