**9. Blessing for the Year**

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| בָּרֵךְ עָלֵינוּ ה' אֱלהֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזּאת וְאֶת כָּל מִינֵי תְבוּאָתָהּ לְטובָה.  וְתֵן (בקיץ - בְּרָכָה)  (בחורף - טַל וּמָטָר לִבְרָכָה)  עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וְשבְּעֵנוּ מִטּוּבָהּ.  וּבָרֵךְ שְׁנָתֵנוּ כַּשָּׁנִים הַטּובות.  בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מְבָרֵךְ הַשָּׁנִים: | Bless for us this year, Adonai our God, and all of its produce for goodness.  *[From Pesah to December say]*  And give a blessing,  *[From December to Pesah say]*  And give dew and rain for a blessing  Upon the land and nourish us with its goodness.  And bless this year like the good years.  Blessed are You, Adonai, who blesses the years. |

This blessing focuses on agriculture, on God blessing the land so that it produces enough food for people to eat. This prayer was understood generally not just as a prayer for rain but as a prayer for people to be able to make a livelihood.

* How does the amount of rain that falls connect with a person's livelihood? What do we mean when we say the word, "livelihood"?
* How does this blessing connect with the previous blessing, concerning healing the body?
* Today, what kinds of natural things are necessary for people's livelihoods? What are the things that we all depend upon and what are those that only some of us depend upon?

**The Land of Israel and the Diaspora**

In the land of Israel it doesn't rain during the summer months, basically from Pesah through Sukkot. Therefore, during those months we don't ask for rain, we ask simply for a blessing.

* Why should the blessing of the land tie into the weather found in Israel?
* Do you think that Jews living in parts of the world where it rains all year round should ask for rain all year?

There are two customs as to when we begin to ask for rain. In Israel we begin to ask for rain two weeks after Sukkot. This is when the rainy season begins. We don't ask for rain on Sukkot because when the Temple still stood it would take people up to two weeks to travel home after being in Jerusalem. Since we don't want it to rain on them during their journey, we wait.

Outside of Israel, the custom is based on Babylonia, where many Jews lived during the first thousand years of the common era. In Babylonia rain wasn't needed until later in the year. Therefore, they waited until 60 days after the autumnal equinox. This leads to the calculation being December 4 (or 5th during a leap year). Interestingly, this is the only case where a secular date, one that doesn't follow the Jewish calendar, has meaning in Jewish law.

**Judaism and Rain**

In modern thought, especially in America and even more especially at camp, we tend to think of rain as unwanted. A children's song begins, "Rain, rain, go away, come again another day." A "rainy day" does not usually bring up good connotations. On rainy days at camp, we can't swim or play sports.

In contrast, in traditional Jewish thought, rain is the greatest blessing. Consider a few of the following sources:

**Midrash Psalms 117**

Rabbi Tanchum ben Chiyya taught: The sending of rain is an event greater than the giving of the Torah.  The Torah was a joy for Israel only, but rain gives joy to the whole world, including birds and animals, as it is said:  You take care of the earth and irrigate it. (Psalm 65:10) (Middrash Psalms117).

**Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 13:4**

The power involved in making rain is as formidable as that of all of the works of creation.

* How should praying for rain impact the way we treat the world?
* When we ask God for something, does that mean we don't need to help to make our wish into a reality?
* How is praying for rain different from praying for "health" or "understanding"? How is it similar?
* What power do we have to bring rain?
* Do we have other abilities that do aid in providing safe water for the world to use?
* Are there other things in life that we may not want ourselves but may be for the greater good? How do and should we act in such situations?