

**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH PROJECT(VBM)**

**TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY
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Ve-ten tal u-matar

This week (7 Marcheshvan) in Eretz Yisrael, we will begin reciting "Ve-ten tal u-matar" within the 9th berakha of Shemoneh Esre, known as "Birkat Hashanim." The mishna in Berakhot (33a) asserts: "We mention 'gevurot ha-geshamim' in [the berakha of] techiyat ha-meitim." The source for this addition is adduced by the gemara in Ta'anit (2a). The gemara notes how the second parasha of keriat shema contains both a reference to tefilla ("You shall worship [ule-ovdo] with all your hearts - a reference to prayer, as we know from the equation: "avoda she-balev" = tefilla) as well as a mention of rainfall ("And I [God] shall provide rain for your land in its proper time"). This juxtaposition suggests that requests for rain should be cited within our prayers when relevant.

Intuitively, we consider ve-ten tal u-matar an ADDITION to the autonomous framework of shemoneh esreh. It is a timely request based upon seasonal need, inserted into our tefilla as an independent appeal. In theory, this solicitation could be performed outside the context of tefilla as the request is not intrinsic to the amida. However, halakha generally frowns upon unlimited addition of prayer, and most of our seasonal additions are therefore interposed within tefilla itself. (For a detailed consideration of this halakhic prejudice, see the article entitled "tefilla, viduy ve-teshuva" in "Divrei Hashkafa" - the latest publication of the Rav zt"l's philosophic thought). For ideological and theological reasons, our request for rain had to be included within the boundaries of tefilla: but in fact, it is extrinsic to the amida.

However, we might draw a distinctly different conclusion from a gemara in Berakhot (40a). The gemara analyses the position of Rabbi Yehuda who maintains that vegetables and herbs receive particular berakhot, and aren't categorized under the general berakha of "bore peri ha-adama." The gemara derives his position by expounding the pasuk in Tehillim 68 "baruch Hashem yom yom - be-khol yom va-yom ten lo me'ein birkhotav." This pasuk, according to the gemara, teaches us that every day of the year, we must offer berakhot which are relevant to the historical/halakhic context. (See Rashi, who explains how this principle dictates that we must mention Shabbat on Shabbat, and likewise on Rosh Chodesh.) The gemara extrapolates that according to Rabbi Yehuda, berakhot must be case-specific in the same manner required of tefillot. This gemara serves, then, as a paradigm for the concept of tailoring our tefillot to be as precise and non-generic as possible. Halakha le-ma'aseh, although we reject Rabbi Yehuda's position with regard to bore peri ha-adama, we still accept his general principle: we merely dismiss its application to the world of birkhat ha-nehenin. Hence, according to this concept, we might view the addition of ve-ten tal u-matar not as an incidental and extrinsic addition, but rather as the factor which FORMATS OUR TEFILLOT and converts them from generic prayers to tefilla appropriate for the rainy season. The pasuk of "be-khol yom ve-yom ten lo me'ein birkhotav" is a mandate to orient our tefillot toward the present experience. Thus, during times when rain is necessary, our tefillot must be DEFINED, intrinsically, as "tefillot for rain." The formula of "ve-ten tal u-matar," then, becomes an intrinsic part of the shemoneh esre - because its quality of seasonal relevance gives the entire tefilla its identity.

SUMMARY:

Is the addition of ve-ten tal u-matar an extraneous request for which tefilla is merely the opportunity, or is it an integral part of our tefilla serving our goal of formatting our tefilla to inyana de-yoma?

To consider possible practical applications to this question, let us investigate the case of one who forgets to mention tal u-matar. The gemara in Berakhot (29a) quotes two beraitot: one which says he must repeat shemoneh esre and one which doesn't require repetition. To answer the contradiction, the gemara distinguishes between one who davens privately (must repeat) and one who davens with a minyan, who can listen to the shaliach tzibbur (and doesn't have to repeat.) Even though this solution is

ultimately rejected, the Rishonim accept the concept le-halakha: One who neglects to mention tal u-matar can listen to the shaliach tzibbur and doesn't have to repeat.

However, Tosafot leads the Rishonim in raising a contradiction from a gemara in Rosh Hashana (34), which states that one who knows how to daven personally cannot rely upon the shaliach tzibbur. (In fact, even Rabban Gamliel, who allows this solution, only does so for people who are busy working in the fields and don't have the necessary time to daven personally.) Yet, here, the gemara allows a person to be "yotzei" with the shaliach tzibbur!! Tosafot answers that the gemara in Rosh Hashana does not allow one who hasn't davened to be "yotzei" - here, the person HAS DAVENED. He just hasn't said tal u-matar - and hence, can listen to the Shatz. Ostensibly, Tosafot views tal u-matar as extrinsic - meaning that one who forgets to mention it is still considered as having davened. Alternatively, we might have suggested an option that Tosafot does not choose: that the deletion of tal u-matar undermines the quality of the tefilla itself, as it is intrinsic; if so, we might have to search for alternate answers to the setira (see, for example, the Ritva.)

The final answer to the setira between the beraitot that the gemara offers is that if someone remembers his mistake before reaching "shema koleinu," he doesn't repeat - since he may mention tal u-matar in that berakha. However, if he only reminds himself after shema koleinu he must return and repeat. At first glance, this halakha also suggests that tal u-matar is independent of tefilla itself, and that shemoneh esre serves as an OPPORTUNITY to mention this plea. As such, we may select different locations within shemoneh esre for this reference. If we were to view tal u-matar as an unified part of tefilla, it might be defined as being part of birkhat ha-shanim, and thus we might not have the license to mention it somewhere else - for that would constitute an alteration of the essential sequence and syntax of shemoneh esre. It would be equivalent to mentioning "selach lanu avinu" during the berakha of ve-liyrushalayim!! This answer supports the position that tal u'matar is merely additional, as well.

Let us briefly consider a "cousin" of tal u-matar - "mashiv ha-ruach u-morid ha-geshem" - and explore its nature in light of our previous question. Is this extrinsic or intrinsic to tefilla? Indeed, the Bavli distinguishes between tal u-matar and morid ha-geshem with regard to mentioning them during shema koleinu. Whereas tal u-matar may be mentioned later on, mashiv ha-ruach may not. (Tosafot cites the Yerushalmi which argues and allows the later mention of mashiv ha-ruach.) We might then conclude from this halakha that in contrast to tal u-matar, mashiv ha-ruach is intrinsic

and does not allow the same flexibility. If so, we might also conclude that one who forgets mashiv ha-ruach cannot be yotzei with the shatz, since he is considered as having not davened at all - akin to the subject of the gemara in Rosh Hashana. (In this matter see Mishna Berura 124:39). It seems reasonable from the Bavli to assert this distinction and the halakhic differences which arise from it. (See Or Sameach al ha-Rambam Tefilla 10:8 who maintains this position.) I heard in the name of the Rav zt"l that this question fueled the debate as to whether we should say "morid ha-geshEM" or "morid ha-GAshem": if it is not an indigenous part of tefilla, then it should be read as an independent parenthetical statement which ends with the word GASHEM (because the kamatz ends the pasuk!!). However, if it is a constituent part of tefilla, then it should integrate itself within the grammatical flow of the tefilla and not conclude before we reach the next berakha - therefore, it should be pronounced GESHEM.

Finally, we might view an additional question as a function of this broad "chakira". What happens if someone did not omit mashiv ha-ruach, but instead mentioned the wrong type of precipitation - during winter he mentioned tal and during summer, geshem? The Yerushalmi (see Tosafot in Berakhot 29b) invalidates one who asks for geshem in the summer since this is really detrimental. However, it validates saying tal in the winter, even though ideally we should say geshem. This possibility - of minimizing the request and still being yotzei - supports which side of the equation? Does it prove that these additions are intrinsic or extrinsic?

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Methodological issues:

1. Whenever two seemingly independent chiyuvim converge and are performed simultaneously, one MUST question the degree of their integration. On the one hand, they could retain their independence; on the other, they could fuse and become one halakhic entity. For example, to what degree does the bore peri ha-gefen become part of kiddush? Is it an essential component, or is it just a birkhat ha-nehenin recited 'along with,' but not part of, kiddush? So too with birkhat ha-motzi and birkhat al akhilat matza on Pessach. In our case, what level of affinity exists between tal u-matar and tefilla in general? The primary way of exploring this question is by examining the case where

one is omitted, and discovering whether or not it is a deficiency in the other. (In other words, when tal u-matar is deleted, do you still have tefilla?)

2. When a gemara rejects an answer for textual considerations rather than logical ones, the answer might still be acceptable halakha le-maaseh. Such is the case when our gemara (Berakhot 29a) rejects the yachid - tzibbur distinction as an answer to the setira simply because it doesn't fit textually. It still is true le-halakha according to most.

3. Whenever something is either A or B, there is a third option: it can be sometimes A and sometimes B (A and B). First we asked: Is asking for rainfall in our tefillot intrinsic or extrinsic? We answered by saying that it could be that tal u-matar is extrinsic and mashiv ha-ruach is intrinsic.

4. A setira is generally resolved by distinguishing between the circumstances of the case (metziut) or by distinguishing between the different realms of halakha which were compared (different halakhic techumim). In resolving the setira between the gemarot in Rosh Hashana and Berakhot, Tosafot differentiated the halakhic factor - in the Rosh Hashana case, you had to be yotzei the entire tefilla, whereas in Berakhot - tefilla you were already yotzei. All you 'needed' was ve-ten tal u-matar. See Rashba and Ritva for chilukim along the lines of metziut. (More to follow on this in later weeks, l"H).

5. Notice also the tendency within the Rav zt"l's thought that all minhagim (and chilukei minhagim) are based upon halakhic issues.

Machshava:

1. See the midrash in Ki Tavo, which draws a parallel between rain and tehiyat ha-meitim (also Hoshea perek 6).
2. See Ta'anit (2a) for parallels between rainfall and beriyat ha-olam.
3. See above midrash - Hashem retains the key for geshem (doesn't delegate to others) - what does it mean?

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