

Hail to the Hail

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

While no remnant remained of the previous plagues, we are told that the hail stopped, but wasn't removed. Further, Moshe prayed for the other plagues to end within the city, but for the hail he had to leave the city. Why these differences?

First, our Sages tell us that the plague of hail never fully disappeared. Hashem kept it in abeyance to use in Joshua's battle, and He will again use it at the end of days in the Battle of God and Magog. Second, this plague had a special spiritual component, which first required that Moshe extend his hand above the earth, closer to heaven to bring on this "miracle within a miracle" and then required him to leave the confines of the city to pray for its removal.

This was not your standard hail, but water with a core of fire that rained down from above. As Mizrahi writes, the first miracle was that fire hailed down instead of rising upward. But the second miracle defied nature in that fire and water, which generally destroy each other, made peace. Because this cooperation was a decree from Above, Moshe also had to reach above the confines of this world says the Shem Mishmuel both to bring it

on and to remove it.

The Dorash Mordechai writes that the hail was beloved by Hashem as it was formed by the fiery tears of the *Bnei Yisroel* as they bore their enslavement. Feeling the pain, the fire and water came together to avenge those burning tears. Therefore, this hail was precious to Hashem, and He saved it for future use. The tears of *Bnei Yisroel* are never in a vacuum, for Hashem always responds, even if not immediately, for He bears our pain with us.

The Mishchat Shemen notes that Hashem, in trying to teach us the importance of peace, united *aish* and *mayim* to create the very heavens, *shomayim*. In the plague of hail these two contradictory entities were again united to perform the will of God. If these two entities can join together in peace, writes the Tiv Hatorah, certainly we as human beings should be able to make peace with each other to do Hashem's will.

The Priestly Blessing ends with, "*Vayosem lecha shalom* – May He establish peace with you." "Peace with you" can be extended to read, "Peace within you." Rabi Kofman explains that this refers to the two conflicting

elements, the body and the soul. The plague of hail was to teach us that Hashem exists within physicality, and physical and spiritual must be able to coexist to serve Hashem. The *Torah* commands us, "*Anshei kodesh tihyun le* – be for Me a holy people." Integrate the physical with the spiritual, so that we may come to know Hashem.

Water is often a symbol of love. But unbounded, it can cause untold damage. The unbounded love Egyptians displayed in their culture led to rampant promiscuity. When Hashem brought the hail onto Egypt, He was showing them that their unrestricted lifestyle was totally destructive, just as the hail destroyed everything in its path. But Hashem also supplied a lesson for *Bnei Yisroel*; infuse your love with fire, *gevurah*, with the strength of self discipline to keep it from wreaking havoc on your world.

When man can fear God on such an emotional level, says Rabbi Horovitz as quoted by Rabbi Pliskin, that nothing else exists but God and His will, then he will simultaneously experience great love for his Creator and he will do nothing that takes him away from fulfilling His will.

Keeping the Mind Connected in Prayer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tzipora Heller

Before beginning *Shemone Esrei*, consider these three questions: Who am I? What do I need? Who am I talking to? This should humble a person enough to minimize his distracting thoughts.

The second bracha of *Shemone Esrei* is called *Gevurat Hashem*- Divine Power. When we are young, we usually understand power as the ability to dominate others. As we get older, we begin to associate power with political figures who have the ability to affect many people's lives. They seem to have all the cards stacked on their deck along with money to back it. Yet the fact is no human being retains this very long. Looking back at history, all the great leaders who rose to fame soon dissipated. Napoleon ended his life on a remote desert island off the coast of Africa.

Stalin died a difficult and terrible death. We see that power doesn't stay long with anyone. It's a gift from Hashem. The only Being that could affect every being all of the time is the Almighty.

Sometimes people will use the phrase, "What a strong person," when referring to someone who succeeded in overcoming his inclinations to do what was right. As it says in *Pirkei Avot*, "Who is strong? He who conquers his evil inclination." So, when we talk about Hashem's strength, do we mean He has all the cards or that He rules over himself? In order to understand this better, let's examine the meaning of *dinim*. Literally the word means laws but in *Kabalah* it is used as a simplistic definition of power.

The idea of someone strong making rules is

ideally for the benefit of the person for whom the rules are being made. A major political figure has the power, money, and backing, to institute laws for the good of the people who put him in office. Being a mortal, he may be wrong sometimes. But he at least thinks that what he's doing is beneficial. In contrast, Hashem has eternal power which isn't confined to material reality. He instituted the rules of nature and the *Torah*, for human benefit.

Of all the gifts Hashem gave us, free choice, the ability to affect ourselves and the world around us, is the greatest gift. Physical pleasures are transient. But the pleasure one gets from building oneself, from choosing love over limitations and selfishness, and making the world a better place, is eternal. Following

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the rules of *Torah*, choosing to do Hashem's will over one's own will, maximizes a person. In *Tehilim* it says, "Hashem is the sun and the shield." Nature is like a Japanese theater mask. Paper mache is applied over the actor's face and allowed to dry so that the mask both looks like the actor and conceals him at the same time. So too, nature reveals and conceals Hashem. The Almighty created rules within nature such as gravity and velocity which can be logically explained but in reality are incredible forces.

Of all the laws of nature, the law that's the most important is life and death. Nobody can choose never to die or attempt to force life into a being. The second *bracha* of *Shemone Esrei* which is the blessing of divine force refers to the theme of life and death. In accordance with the laws of nature, death seem permanent but in reality it is only operative as long as Hashem wills it.

The blessing contains three different

references to life and death. First is the kind of life and death you see in nature. In the winter, the trees and flowers appear bare and lifeless. In the Spring it all bursts into bloom. We all die but we know there will be an eventual revival. So too, there is a possibility of spiritual renewal. When a person sins, he creates blockages between himself and Hashem, the source of all life. A person can as if he has ruined his life. But Hashem gave us the gift of teshuva which enables us to revive that which appeared dead.

Shir Shel Yom Shlishi Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

This chapter of *Tehilim* speaks about judges and how they should conduct themselves. It tells us that Hashem is with the judges when they sit in judgment. Hashem wants *dinim* (justice) to govern the world. In fact, it's one of the *Seven Mitzvot Bnei Noach*. The gentile nations are obligated to appoint judges and create a code of law. The commentaries explain that within every human being there is an inner compass that tells us what is right. Everybody will agree that murder and stealing is wrong and that those that are more well off should be taxed to support the needy. However, this chapter speaks about *eidah* which refers to the Jewish people. Chazal tell us that when the judges sit together in a Jewish court, the Divine Presence rests among them. Judges carry a responsibility to protect the people from damage and ensure that there is no anarchy.

The Malbim teaches that if the court of law judges according to how Hashem demands them to judge, there is great reward and if they don't it will bring destruction. In *Pirkei Avot* we learn that corrupt judgement brings war to the world. We see that Hashem demands justice and He is with the judges, if they are honest and want to do Hashem's will, guiding them and ensuring that the outcome will be correct.

If a person committed a sin and as a result is put into jail or is asked to pay an astronomical fine, five times the amount he stole, this will affect his family who we might think are innocent. Hashem knows how the judgement will affect others and takes it into consideration. If it will impact the family, it means that Hashem in his infinite judgement knows that they must go through this. It's all around justified. This is not the case with humans. We don't know if the family deserves to suffer. Therefore it says, "*Elokim nitav b'adat Kel*." If the judges try to render a proper judgement according to the *Torah*, Hashem will be with them.

If they don't judge correctly, they will be punished. If a judge takes away money from someone because he is dishonest or didn't put in enough time and effort to judge properly, the repercussions can be very serious. It says, "*B'kerev Elokim tishpot*." *Elokim* signifies midat hadin because the higher the level a person reaches, the more is demands of him. Hashem expects more from a leader and this is a warning for them to be very careful with the way they judge.

Rav Chisda and Rabba Bar Huna were sitting and judging for many hours and they suddenly felt weak. Rav Chiya told them, its written,

"*Vayamod ha'am im Moshe min haboker ad erev*- Moshe stood and judged the Jewish people from morning to night." The Midrash says this comes to teach us that every judge that judges the way the *Torah* commands, is considered a partner with Hashem in creating the world. We learn this from the *Torah* which adds this verse to every day of creation, "*Vayehi erev vayehi boker*..." -And it was night and it was morning..." Chazal learn that judging for even one hour with full integrity according to the laws of *Torah* is like creating the world. This is so because if there would be no justice, anarchy would reign and the world would cease to exist.

Hashem says, "*Ad matai tishpatu avei*." If judges don't judge correctly, Hashem will demand justice from them. Just because the poor don't have money, doesn't permit a judge to steal from the wealthy so that the needy will have what they need. Judges are partners with Hashem. They need to consult with Him before acting. If Hashem made someone rich, it means these are the tools he needs to accomplish his mission. A judge cannot unjustly take that away for the sake of helping the poor. Hashem wants us to be involved in judgement, but we must follow His parameters in order to fulfill our mission in the proper way.