MASHIB HARUAH: More on rain

As we have previously explained, our rabbis introduced two prayers for the rain in the ‘amida. One is barekh ‘alenu (the ninth berakha of the ‘amida), which is the blessing for our livelihood (parnasa). We ask God for “rain” and not for “customers” or “money” because in ancient times, when Israel was an agricultural society, everyone’s economy depended entirely on rain. We ask HaShem to bless us with dew and rain which should come in a way of blessing (librakha). We request HaShem to give us rain in its time and in its proper measure. As it is written in the Shema’ Israel *be’ito yore umalqosh*, give us “in its proper time the strong rainfall (the first rain, which is very strong and helps to soften the land we need to plow) and then the soft rain, which is needed once the vegetation starts to grow (if we would get the mild rain at the beginning of the season, it will not be enough to soften the land. And if we get the strong rainfall when the vegetation is growing, the rain will destroy the plants).

Now, the first time rain is mentioned in the ‘amida, is during the second berakha we don’t ask or request rain or anything else from God. We praise Him. We state that God is Omnipotent (=infinitely powerful) and that He uses His powers to sustain, maintain, support, cure, deliver, nurture, and revive His creatures.
This is the context in which we say “the prayer of praise for the rain” *mashib haruah, umorid haGeshem,* “[HaShem, You are the One] who makes the wind to blow, and the rain to fall”. In this context we are not asking for rain, we are expressing our appreciation for the fact that HaShem created rain. We perceive rain as part of *tehiyat hametim*, “God’s power to restore life” , because only thanks to the rain the dry-land revives, the plants grow again and the living creatures of the world stay alive.

Rain is critically important for our survival. And praising

God for “rain” should be nothing short of natural and spontaneous. In our days, however, we do not really appreciate rain. This morning, for example, is raining in New York city, and you don’t see people are excited and thankful to HaShem about it. On the contrary. I would say that 99% of people are actually annoyed by the rain.

What kind of praise then, would one say for something that feels an annoyance more than a blessing?

Tomorrow, BH we will explore some of the wonders of the mechanism of precipitation which should help us to gaining a more positive outlook at the miracle of rain, and hopefully be able to praise HaShem for one of His main blessings to mankind.