

פסח ותפילת טל

Are you familiar with the term קידושא רבה – the ‘Big Kiddush’? *Kiddusha Rabba* is the name that we give to the Kiddush that we recite on the mornings of Shabbasos and Yomim Tovim.

Why is it called the ‘Big Kiddush’? We read in Masseches (Pesachim 106 a):

ביום מאי מברך? - אמר רב יהודה: בורא פרי הגפן. רב אשי איקלע למחוזא, אמרו ליה: ליקדיש לן מר קידושא רבה. הבו ליה. סבר: מאי ניהו קידושא רבה? אמר: מכדי כל הברכות כולן בורא פרי הגפן אמרי ברישא, אמר בורא פרי הגפן ואגיד ביה. חזייה ליהוא סבא דגחין ושתי. קרי אנפשיה (קוהלת ב/יד¹) החכם עיניו בראשו.

What comprises the *Kiddush* that is said in the daytime [of Shabbos and Yom Tov]? Rav Yehuda said, ‘[Only the *Bracha of*] *Borei p’ri ha’gofen*’.

Rav Ashi happened to be in the city of Mechoza in Bavel [on a Shabbos]. The people said to him, ‘Sir, please recite for us *Kiddush Rabba*’. They gave him the wine.

Rav Ashi thought to himself, ‘What did they mean by the term *Kiddusha Rabba*? Let’s think about it, all the B’rachos of Kiddush begin with *Borei P’ri Hagafen*’. So he began with *Borei P’ri Hagafen* and stretched it out [to be *Rabba*-long]. Rav Ashi saw an old man who bent over and drank. Rav Ashi said about himself, ‘The wise man’s eyes are in his head’.

Rav Ashi wisely looked for cues as he recited *Borei P’ri Hagafen* in a prolonged fashion and when he saw that the elder drank his wine immediately after Rav Ashi finally finished, he understood that this ‘big Kiddush’ consisted of *Borei P’ri Hagafen* only.

¹ The entire verse reads:

הַחֶכֶם עֵינָיו בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וְהַכֹּסֵל בַּחֹשֶׁךְ הוֹלֵךְ וַיְדַעְתִּי גַם אֲנִי שֶׁמִּקְרָה אֶתְדֹ יִקְרָה אֶת כָּלָם:
The eyes of the wise man are in his head and the fool goes in darkness; I know that also, the same event occurs to all.

Rashi writes:

החכם עיניו בראשו - בתחלת הדבר מסתכל מה יהא בסופה:
The eyes of the wise man are in his head – When something begins, the wise man looks at what will be in the end.

So, if you are not familiar with the term *Kiddusha Rabba*, you are in good company. Rav Ashi, one of the greatest of the *Amoraim*, also was unfamiliar with the term and he thought that the implication was that after *Borei P'ri Hagafen* he had to continue – just like it is done on the nights of Shabbos and Yom Tov when we recite Kiddush – until he saw that wasn't the case².

On Friday nights and Yom Tov Nights our Kiddush has two main components – the Brachos of *Borei P'ri Hagafen* and *Boruch atta...Mekadesh HaShabbos/Mekadesh Yisroel v'ha'Zmanim*.

It is true that on Friday nights we introduce Kiddush with the P'sukim of ויכולו, but those verses are not an essential component of Kiddush and one certainly fulfills the Mitzvah of Kiddush if they are omitted.

Similarly, the P'sukim that we recite prior to the Kiddush of Shabbos and Yom Tov mornings are not essential components and one certainly fulfills the Mitzvah of Kiddush if they are forgotten.

So, then the question begs to be asked, and I assume that subsequently Rav Ashi asked it as well, why is this very abbreviated Shabbos and Yom Tov morning Kiddush, a Kiddush without a Bracha that says *Mekadesh HaShabbos/Mekadesh Yisroel v'haZmanim*, called Kiddusha **Rabbo**? Furthermore, if it is in fact a *Kiddush*, why doesn't it have a Bracha that notes the sanctity of the day?

Mishna Brurah (Siman 289/s'if koton 3) explains:

קידושא רבא - ונקרא בלשון זה שהוא כמו שקורין סגי נהור מפני שזה הקידוש אינו
כלל דאורייתא רק שתקנוהו לכבוד שבת ואסמכוהו אקרא כדאיתא בגמרא:

Kiddusha Rabba – It is called this just like we call [a blind person] 'one with enough light' [i.e. a euphemism]. This is because this Kiddush is not a Torah

² The reader need not ask, what type of Kiddush did Rav Ashi make his entire life until he visited *Mechoza*? He certainly said the Kiddush as we said it. He seems that he thought that in *Mechoza* they had a different practice – as indicated by his unfamiliarity with the term *Kiddusha Rabba*.

obligation. Only that Chazal established it to honor Shabbos and they attached its recitation to a Posuk, as we learn in the Gemara³.

It would be most reasonable to question how this long introduction is related to Divrei Torah that are titled 'Pesach and *Tal*'.

I will explain. Twice a year, once on the first day of Pesach and once on Sh'mini Atzeres, we have special Tefilos, *Tal* and *Geshem* respectively, which inaugurate and initiate the change in our requests for rain.

The beginning of Masseches Taanis teaches the Halochos of those prayers and their specifics are found in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Simanim 114 and 117.

The need for rain is apparent and Chazal teach us that the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah instituted that prayer:

משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם

Hashem causes the wind to blow and brings down the rain

³ The Gemara in Masseches Pesachim (ibid.) interprets the verse from the *Aseres HaDibros* (Sh'mos Perek 20/Posuk 8):

זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:

Remember the Shabbos day to make it holy.

The Gemara there writes:

הכי קאמר: זכור את יום השבת לקדשו - זוכרהו על היין בכניסתו. אין לי אלא בלילה, ביום מנין - תלמוד לומר זכור את יום השבת. ביום מאי מברך? - אמר רב יהודה: בורא פרי הגפן.

This is what the verse is saying: Remember the Shabbos day to make it holy – remember it over wine upon the day's entry (Friday night). I only know to make Kiddush at night. From where do I know to make Kiddush in the day?

That is what the verse teaches – Remember the Shabbos *day*.

What Bracha is recited during the daytime Kiddush? Rav Yehuda said, 'Borei P'ri Hagafen'.

The daytime Kiddush is, as Mishna Brurah teaches, a Rabbinic obligation and the *drasha* is only an *asmachta* – a Rabbinic enactment that is attached to a verse in order to add authority to the enactment as well as enabling us to remember it through its association with a specific Posuk.

It should be pointed out that if one did not make the Friday/Yom Tov night Kiddush at night, then during the day, before sundown, it must be recited prior to partaking of the first meal of the day. In such a case, ויכולו is not recited.

in the second blessing of the Amida.

That second blessing of the *Amida* is called גבורות, 'G-d's Might' and focusses particularly on *Techiyas HaMeisim*, the restoration of the dead to life and includes our prayer for rain. In fact this prayer for rain is called

גבורות גשמים

The Divine Might of Rain.

Shulchan Aruch teaches us that if one omitted משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם during its season, he has not fulfilled his obligation of prayer and must repeat the *Amida*⁴.

We also learn that the onset of this recitation requires a prior announcement⁵ and the elaborate *Tefilas Geshem* in *Musaf*, with its beautiful nusach and unique *niggun*, recited with an open Aron HaKodesh, serves as this introduction⁶. The custom in most Ashkenazic communities is to say *Tefilas Tal* and *Tefilas Gesher* during *Chazaras HaShatz* of *Musaf*, prior to the recitation of *Kedushah*.

When *Tefilas Geshem* inaugurates משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם during the repetition of *Musaf*, then that phrase is added by the congregation beginning with their *Mincha Amida* because *Tefilas Geshem* was its inauguration.

The contrast between *Tefilas Geshem* and *Tefilas Tal* is great even though *Tefilas Tal* has all of the ceremony and uniqueness that *Tefilas Geshem* has.

However, the function of *Tefilas Tal* is not at all like that of *Tefilas Geshem*. *Tefilas Geshem* is an inaugural moment praising the *Gevurah* of HaKodosh Boruch Hu. *He Yisborach* sustains life with the rain that He provides.

⁴ See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Siman 114 and in particular s'if 5.

⁵ Ibid. S'if 2.

⁶ In Eretz Yisroel, in the *Perushim* communities that follow *Nusach HaGra*, *Tefilas Geshem* [and *Tefilas Tal*] is recited prior to the silent *Amida* and at its conclusion the congregation recites the silent *Amida* followed by *Chazaras HaShatz*.

In many communities, the Gabbai will announce 'Mashiv HaRuach UMorid HaGeshem' prior to the recitation of the *Amida* and in that instance, the congregation is obligated to add משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם in their *Musaf Amida*.

On the other hand, *Tefilas Tal* does not inaugurate anything. All that *Tefilas Tal* announces is the cessation of the recitation of משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם as well as ברכת השנים in ותן טל ומטר לברכה, שאלת גשמים, *Boreich o'leinu* in the weekday *Sh'mone Esrei*.⁷

The substitute for ותן טל ומטר לברכה which is ותן ברכה is not a particular request whatsoever; its request is one that is general, in keeping with the requests made in that bracha of the weekday amida.

The community that davens *Nusach Ashkenaz* in *Chul La'aretz* offers no replacement for משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם in the summer months. It is true that *Nusach Sefard*, *Nusach Eidot HaMizrach* and the *minhag* in Eretz Yisroel, even for Ashkenazim, is to say מוריד הטל, Hashem brings down dew, in the summer months. However that substitution is not basic to the requirements of the recitation of the *Amida*⁸ and thus its omission does not invalidate the fulfilment of the Mitzvah of Tefilah⁹.

⁷ The Halachos of שאלת גשמים are in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Siman 117. Unlike the cessation of משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם and ותן טל ומטר לברכה which coincide on the first day of Pesach, their onset is differentiated.

משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם begins on *Sh'mini Atzeres* whereas ותן טל ומטר לברכה begins on 7 Marcheshvan in Eretz Yisroel and December 4th or 5th in *Chutz La'aretz*. The reason why the date of the onset of ותן טל ומטר לברכה in *Chutz La'aretz* is associated with a non-Jewish date is because its onset is based on a solar event – 60 days after the Halachic *Tekufas Tishrei*, which is related to the vernal equinox.

⁸ The reason why mentioning *tal*-dew is not a basic requirement is because Chazal (Masseches Ta'anis 3 a) teach us:

טל לא..לא מיעצר. - וכי מאחר דלא מיעצר, אליהו אשתבועי למה ליה? - הכי קאמר ליה: אפילו טל דברכה נמי לא אתי. - וליהדריה לטל דברכה! - משום דלא מינכרא מילתא.

Tal never ceases. If dew never ceases, why did Eliyahu HaNovi make an oath about stopping *tal* [to Achav as we read in Melachim I/Perek 17/Posuk 1]? This is what Eliyahu said to Achav, '[Not only will rain not fall, but even] dew that brings *bracha* will also not be found.' If so [that there is dew which is not blessed] let us add the prayer for [blessed] dew as a requirement? [The reason why the prayer for [blessed] dew is not a requirement is] that the difference between blessed dew and that which isn't blessed cannot be distinguished.

Thus, it would appear that since *Tefilas Tal* has nothing to add, nothing special to request from HaKodosh Boruch Hu; it is really unnecessary. It is quite different from *Tefilas Geshem* which inaugurates our prayers for the Divine blessings of rain. *Tefilas Tal* seems like it could be called *Tefila Rabba*, just like *Kiddusha Rabba*, because it doesn't seem to represent any special idea or to have any special significance whatsoever. It just marks the end of the era of משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם; what does it inaugurate?

Is *Tefilas Tal* only a euphemism?

In fact, we find in the *Sefarim Kedoshim*¹⁰ that a great deal of attention is paid to this question, even if it is not portrayed as starkly as we have presented it here. We

There are many implications to this Gemara. First, when one is obligated to recite ותן טל ומטר, if he recites טל ותן only, he has not fulfilled his requirement. If one errs and says only ותן מטר, he has fulfilled his requirement.

Similarly, when announcing משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם prior to Musaf on Sh'mini Atzeres, if the Gabbai only says משיב הרוח and omits מוריד הגשם, his announcement is worthless and the result is that the congregation does not say משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם in their Amida. That is because winds never cease and therefore mention the *ruach* is not an essential addition.

⁹ If one recites משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם in the summer months or omits it in the winter months, that recitation of the *Amida* is invalidated and it must be repeated. The same is true regarding ותן טל ומטר לברכה in the summer and winter months. Its

will see what we may learn about the inherent importance of *Tefilas Tal* and how it relates to Pesach.

The first source that we shall learn is from *S'fas Emes* (Pesach 5636) and the reference is to the Mishnah in Masseches Rosh Hashanah (16 a). We read there:

בארבעה פרקים העולם נידון: בפסח על התבואה, בעצרת על פירות האילן, בראש השנה - כל באי עולם עוברין לפניו כבני מרון...ובחג נידונין על המים.

At four set times the world is judged: on Pesach for grain, on Shavuot for fruit, on Rosh Hashanah all pass before Hashem like a shepherd counting sheep and on Sukkos they are judge regarding water.

S'fas Emes writes:

בפסח על התבואה. דכתיב (שמות יג/ד) היום אתם יוצאים בחודש האביב כי הגאולה אינה באדם דוקא וכל הנבראים צריכין גאולה כי יש לכל דבר קליפה הסובבת הפרי. לכן הגאולה בעת גמר בישול התבואה לכן התבואה נגאלת ממוץ ותבן שלה. ויש

omission in the winter invalidates that recitation of the *Amida* and its recitation in the summer does the same.

There are two advantages, however, to the recitation of מוריד הטל, for those for whom such is their *minhag*.

The first advantage is that בדי עבד, after the fact, if one recited מוריד הטל in the winter instead of משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם, his *Amida* is not invalidated.

The second advantage is in regards to *Tefilas Tal* on the first day of Pesach. Without a prior announcement, the congregation does say משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם in their Musaf Amida. The reason is that until the congregation hears the Chazzan omitting that part of the prayer, they are still obligated to say it. It would have been improper for the Gabbai to announce 'stop saying משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם' prior to the silent Musaf Amida because we don't renounce G-d's blessings of rain.

However, where the custom is to say מוריד הטל, the Gabbai may announce 'מוריד הטל' because there is no direct utterance of renunciation of G-d's blessings of rain.

¹⁰ We have limited ourselves here to two selections from *S'fas Emes* which we have attempted to explain and to elucidate.

Two more selections that may interest the reader, with different emphases as to the message of *Tefilas Tal*, may be found in *Shem Mi'Shmuel*.

לפרש דשלשה מועדות משפיעין שפע לבני חיי ומזוני. ובפסח מתברך המזון. לכן מברכין טל. כי הטל דק ורוחני יותר מהמטר שהוא בגשמיות יותר. והוא לרמוז על גאולת המזון כנכתב לעיל. לכן איתא בזהר הקדוש כי על ידי שנשמרין באלה הימים מאכילת חמץ ושאור שוב אין החמץ מזיק כל השנה עיין שם:

On Pesach for grain – As it is written ‘Today you are going out in the month of Spring’¹¹. That is because the Redemption is not for Man only. Rather, all creations need redemption because every article has a shell surrounding the fruit [and that shell must be removed in order to take out the fruit so that it can serve its purpose].

Therefore the Redemption for fruit and grain comes when the grain [and fruit] are completely ripe [and ready for consumption]. Therefore their redemption is when the grain is ‘redeemed’ from its chaff and straw.

Thus we can explain that the three holidays provide G-d’s gift for children, life and food.

In *Shem Mi’Shmuel* ‘Pesach 5672’, the *Sochachover Rebbe ZT”L* discusses why the Bracha of Yitzchak Ovinu that was intended for *Eisav* emphasizes *tal*-dew. That is as we read there (B’reishis Perek 27/Posuk 28):

וַיִּתֵּן לָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים...לִיקִים מִטַּל הַשָּׁמַיִם וּמִשְׁמֵנֵי הָאָרֶץ וְרֹב דָּגָן וְתִירֹשׁ:

G-d should give you from the dew of the heavens and from the fats of the earth and an abundance of grain and wine.

In a passage from the following year, 5673, *Shem Mi’Shmuel* adds on to his discussion regarding the *Birkas Yitzchak* by interpreting the implication of the verse in Shir HaShirim, which is read on Pesach, which mentions *Tal*. The verse (Perek 5/Posuk 2) reads:

אֲנִי יְשֻׁנָּה וְלִבִּי עֵר קוֹל דָּוִדִּי דוֹפֵק פֶּתַחַי לִי אֲחֹתִי רֵעִיתִי יוֹנָתִי תַמְתִּי שְׂרָאשִׁי נִמְלֵא טַל קְנֻצוֹתַי רִסִּיטִי לִלְהָ:

I [Israel] am sleeping but My [Rashi – Hashem] heart is awake, the voice of my Beloved [Hashem] knocks, ‘Open for Me My sister, My companion, My dove, My unblemished one; My head is full with dew; my hair is streams of water.

¹¹ It seems that *S’fas Emes* is asking why does the Torah associate ‘going out’ with the month of Spring. There is nothing inherent is ‘spring’ that is related to the Exodus.

Thus, *S’fas Emes* explains that the ‘going out’ is one that is related to spring and that it is referring to the grain that emerges from the ground and ripens and is ready to be eaten.

On Pesach, food is blessed. And that is the reason for saying *Tefilas Tal* because dew is more spiritual than rain, because rain is particularly materialistic. And this comes to hint at the redemption of food, as was written above.

Therefore the Holy Zohar writes that since during the days of Pesach we guard against eating *chometz* and yeast, after Pesach and for the duration of the year, *chometz* no longer has the ability to damage us. See the Zohar there.

It is not surprise when we read that **גשמי** is **גשמי**, rain is materialistic. It is the source of our ability to live a natural life. Without rain people starve and die of thirst and there are no artificial means of replenishing the absence of rain.

In comparison to rain, dew is more **קד**, fine and delicate, and thus is less materialistic and, in that sense, dew is in opposition to what *chametz* represents; the dew corresponds to Matzah.

Chametz, a material which leavens, is more substantive and more materialistic than *Matzah* that does not leaven.

Tefilas Tal refers to the grain that is judged on Pesach and to Man who will consume that grain.

Tefilas Tal speaks to grain which is surrounded by its shell and chaff. Certainly the shell and chaff have a purpose; they protect the grain-kernel until it comes to fruition. Until it comes to fruition, the kernel of grain, is too fragile and requires protection. That is the purpose of the shell – to protect that which is fragile until it can be self-sufficient.

Once the grain becomes self-sufficient, the shell and the chaff are no longer necessary and, in fact, their presence is injurious since they block the grain from its intended use. When the proper time of the grain comes, the *raison d'être* of the shell and the chaff have come to their end.

And in relationship to man, the *chometz* has a purpose as well. Man requires the sustenance that *chometz* provides but, at the same time, its nature can overcome the spiritual side of man. But removing the materialistic nature of bread when we

eat Matzah during Pesach, the deleterious effect of *chometz* is neutralized, not only during that Chag, but for the rest of the year as well.

And therefore we recite *Tefilas Tal* because *tal* is symbolic of the mystical way that Matzah protects us.

A decade later, *S'fas Emes* (Pesach 5646) again relates to the connection between *Tefilas Tal* and the Yom Tov of Pesach, this time referring us to another Gemara in Masseches Rosh Hashanah, among other sources.

An initial view of some of those sources will make our study of this passage easier.

We read in Midrash Vayikro Rabba to Parshas Emor (Parshata 28/6):

אמר רבי אבון... לעולם אל תהי מצות העומר קלה בעיניך שעל ידי מצות העומר זכה
אברהם לירש את ארץ כנען הדא הוא דתימא (בראשית יז/ח¹²) ונתתי לך ולזרעך
אחריך על מנת ואתה את בריתי תשמור ואיזה זה מצות העומר...

Rabi Avun said, 'Never should the Mitzvah of [bringing the *Omer* Korban on the second day of Pesach be unimportant in your eyes. It is because of the Mitzvah of *Omer* that Avraham Ovinu merited to inherit the Land of Canaan. This is as it is written, 'I Hashem will give to you and to your seed after you'. [Hashem said that He would give Eretz Yisroel to Avraham and his descendants] on condition that you [Avraham] guard My covenant. Which covenant is that? The Mitzvah of *Omer*.

Of course, we need to understand how the Mitzvah of *Omer* is suggested by this verse and why is it that Mitzvah is the basis of the covenant for the gift of Eretz Yisroel to us.

Before we see what *S'fas Emes* says about that Midrash, we will see the Gemara that he quotes as well.

We read in Masseches Rosh Hashanah (16 a):

¹² The entire verse reads:

וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ אֶת אֶרֶץ מְגֻרְיֶיךָ אֵת כָּל אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְאֶחְזֶזֶת עוֹלָם וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים:
I Hashem will give to you and to your seed after you the land of your sojourning, all of the Land of Canaan for an eternal possession and I will be G-d for you.

תניא, אמר רבי יהודה משום רבי עקיבא: מפני מה אמרה תורה הביאו עומר בפסח - מפני שהפסח זמן תבואה הוא; אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: הביאו לפני עומר בפסח, כדי שתתברך לכם תבואה שבשדות. ומפני מה אמרה תורה הביאו שתי הלחם בעצרת - מפני שעצרת זמן פירות האילן הוא; אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: הביאו לפני שתי הלחם בעצרת, כדי שיתברכו לכם פירות האילן. ומפני מה אמרה תורה נסכו מים בחג - אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: נסכו לפני מים בחג, כדי שיתברכו לכם גשמי שנה,

The B'raisa taught: Rabi Yehuda said in the name of Rabi Akiva, 'Why did the Torah say to bring the *Omer* on Pesach? Because Pesach is the season of grain. Hashem said, "Bring before Me the *Omer* on Pesach so that the grain in your fields will be blessed.' Why did the Torah say, 'bring before Me the Two Loaves on Shavuos – since Shavuos is the season of the ripening of the fruits of the trees, Hashem said, 'Bring before Me the Two Loaves so that the fruit of the trees will be blessed for you.' Why did the Torah say pour water on Sukkos? Hashem said, 'Pour before Me water on Sukkos so that the rain during the year will be blessed for you.'

What new aspects regarding Tal can we learn from this passage of *S'fas Emes*? Because it is a long and involved section with many aspects, we will divide it and intersperse comments along the way.

בפרשת העומר (ויקרא כג/י-יא¹³) כי תבואו אל הארץ כו'. ובמדרש ואתה את בריתי תשמור זו מצות העומר. פירוש שיקשרו בני ישראל תבואות הארץ בשורשה למעלה.

¹³ The verses read in their entirety:

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְקָצַרְתֶּם אֶת קְצִירָהּ וְהֵבֵאתֶם אֶת עֹמֶר הָאִשִּׁית קְצִירְכֶם אֶל הַכֹּהֵן: וְהִגִּיף אֶת הָעֹמֶר לִפְנֵי ה' לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת יְבִיפוּ הַכֹּהֵן: Speak to B'nei Yisroel and you shall say to them, 'When you come to the land that I Hashem give to you, you shall harvest its harvest and you shall bring an *Omer*, the first of your harvest to the Kohen. The Kohen shall wave the *Omer* before G-d, according to your will; on the morrow of the Shabbos the Kohen shall wave it.

Although we use the word *Omer* to refer to the *Korban HaOmer* of the first barley harvest that is brought on Pesach, the literal translation of the word refers to a specific measurement. That is what we read in Parshas B'shalach (Sh'mos Perek 16/Posuk 36):

וְהָעֹמֶר עֶשְׂרִית הָאִיפָה הוּא:

The *Omer* is one-tenth of the *Seah*-measurement.

שלכך ניתן להם הארץ שיהיה נדבק בארץ העליונה. וזה נקרא ברית ואמרו חז"ל אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא הביאו לפני עומר בפסח כדי שיתברך לכם תבואה שבשדות. שתי הלחם בעצרת כו'. נסכו לפני מים בחג כדי שיתברכו לכם גשמי שנה.

In the section regarding the *Omer* [in Parshas Emor] we read, 'When you come to the land, etc.' The Midrash teaches that the verse, 'And you, keep My covenant' – 'this refers to the Mitzvah of the *Omer*'. That is that B'nei Yisroel were commanded to connect the grains of the land with their source above. Because that is why they were given the land – that it should be attached to the 'land above'. And this is called a covenant. And Chazal teach that Hashem said, 'Bring before Me the *Omer* on Pesach so that your grain in the fields will be blessed, the *Sh'tei Lechem* on Shavuos, etc., the water libation on Sukkos so that the rains of the year will be blessed for you.'

The covenant with the Jewish People for its peoplehood was established by G-d's promises to the *Ovos* and with *Bris Milah*. It was a covenant to demonstrate the holiness of the Jewish People, how they could rise above the *gashmi*-material world.

The covenant with the Jewish People with its land, Eretz Yisroel, is established by demonstrating the holiness of the land through its heavenly connection, to 'their source above'.

That is why the natural resources of grain, fruit and water are part of the Divine service of the *Shlosh Regolim*, with a special emphasis on the *Omer* that is brought on Pesach. All of those resources are to be viewed with the aspiration of raising their nature to the meta-natural.

S'fas Emes continues:

כי הנה ביציאת מצרים נתעלו בני ישראל למעלה מן הטבע כאשר במדבר ניזונו מלחם מן השמים ממש. וכשנכנסו לארץ ישראל היתה הכוונה שיהיה להלחם מן הארץ עליה לשמים על ידי העלאת הראשית והניף העומר. ויתכן לומר שזה שצוה הקדוש ברוך הוא להניח עומר מן לפני העדות כו'¹⁴ שנשאר עומר אחד ובכח זה העומר היו מניפין בכל שנה עומר ראשית מתבואות הארץ. ונתקשר הכל באחדות אחד.

¹⁴ We read in Parshas B'shalach (Sh'mos Perek 16/P'sukim 32-34) in regards to the *mon*:

This is because at the Exodus, B'nei Yisroel were raised above the force of nature so that in the wilderness they could be sustained by actual heavenly bread, the *mon*. And so they learned from the nature of the *mon* that when they would enter into Eretz Yisroel their earthly bread should itself be raised to the heavens through the raising and the waving of the *Omer*.

And it is possible to say that this is why Hashem commanded to place an *Omer* of *mon* before the Aron HaKodesh etc. One *Omer* of *mon* remained and it was within the power of that one *Omer* of *mon* to enable them to annually wave the *Omer* that was from the first of the grains of the land. In that way all, [the earthy and the Divine], becomes tied together in a single unity.

The goal of the *mon*, which was objectively Divine bread, was to raise the aspirations of Israel so that their *לחם מן הארץ*, their earthly bread, would ascend to a level of divinity as well. The commandment that was given to preserve a jar of *mon* in the Mishkan and the Beis HaMikdosh could have had that same purpose – to fulfil the covenant of the People Israel and its Land, raising the *גשמי*, the physical, above its mundane level.

And now, S'fas Emes takes us to the meaning of *Tefilas Tal* that we will recite this coming Shabbos.

ובמדרש (רבה ויקרא רבה כה/ג;תהילים סח/י¹⁵) גשם נדבות תניף. אם גשם היא צריכה נדבות. ואם טל היא צריכה תניף אלקים. ויש לפרש כאשר כן הטבע כי הגשם

ויאמר משה זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' מלא העמר ממנו למשמרת לדורותיכם למען יראו את הלחם אשר האכלתי אתכם במדבר בהוציא אתכם מארץ מצרים: ויאמר משה אל אהרן קח צנצנת אחת ותן שמה מלא העמר מן והנח אתו לפני ה' למשמרת לדורותיכם: כאשר צוה ה' אל משה ויניחהו אהרן לפני העדת למשמרת:

Moshe said, 'This is the matter that Hashem commanded: fill an *omer* measurement of the *mon* to be preserved for your generations in order that they will see the bread that I Hashem bed you in the wilderness when I took you out from the Land of Egypt.' Moshe said to Aharon, 'Take one jar and place there a full *omer* of *mon* and place it before Hashem to be a preservation for your generations.' As Hashem commanded to Moshe, Aharon placed it before the Aron HaKodesh as a preservation.

¹⁵ The entire verse reads:

גשם נדבות תניף א...לקים נחלתך ונלאה אתה כוננתה:

יורד מן השמים והיינו בתשרי שהוא השגחה עליונה על התחתונים וצריכה נדבות וחסד ה'. ולכן צריכין להכניע עצמנו בתשובה ולשפוך לב כמים שזה רמז ניסוך המים הרי אנו כמים הנשפכין. ובניסין שהוא זמן גידול התבואה והצמיחה מן הארץ הוא עבודת התחתונים כדאיתא החודש הזה לכם. שבניסין העבודה בבחינת אתערותא דלתתא. ובימים אלו עולה עבודת בני ישראל יש לריח ניחוח לשמים כמו שכתוב (ירמיהו ב/ב-ג¹⁶) זכרתי לך חסד נעורייך. וזה תנופת העומר:

And the Midrash interprets the verse, 'generous rains You wave': If the land needs rain, it is out of generosity; if the land needs *tal*-dew, G-d waves it. This can be explained that such is nature. Rains comes down from the sky and that occurs in Tishrei when there is particular Divine Providence from above upon that which is below and G-d's generosity and *chesed* are necessary on the Day of Judgement. Therefore in Tishrei we need to humble ourselves before G-d with repentance and to pour out our heart like water – that is a hint to the water libations of Sukkos, i.e. we are like the water that can be poured out.

In the month of Nissan which is the time that the grain grows and flourishes from the land, then the *avoda*-service before G-d is that which is done below, on earth. And that is the meaning of 'this verse is for *you*'. In Nissan the labor that is done is 'an arousal from below'. In these days the service of B'nei Yisroel is to ascend and to provide pleasant fragrance that will ascend above for heaven, as the verse says, 'I remember for you the kindness of your youth'- that refers to the waving of the *Omer*.

You Hashem should wave for us generous rain; when Your inheritance is weary, You prepare it.

¹⁶ The verses read in their entirety:

הֲלֹךְ וְקִרְאתָ בְּאָזְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר ה' זָכַרְתִּי לְךָ חֶסֶד נְעוּרַיִךְ אֲהַבְתָּ כָּל־לִילְתֶיךָ לְכַתֵּךְ אַחֲרַי
בַּמִּדְבָּר בְּאַרְץ לֹא זָרוּעָה: קִדְּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְה' רֵאשִׁית תְּבוּאָתָה כֹּל אֲכָלְיוּ יִאֲשָׁמוּ הָעַם תָּבֵא אֲלֵיהֶם
נָאֻם ה':

Go and proclaim in the ears of Yerushalayim, 'So said Hashem, "I remembered for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your matrimony, your following after Me in the wilderness, in the unsown land. Israel is holy to G-d, the first of His grain; all who devour Israel will be held guilty, evil will befall them, said G-d.

If the responsibility to raise the mundane, to aspire to the Divine, was placed upon Israel both in terms of its Peoplehood and its land, then *Tefilas Tal* is a most worthy symbol of that aspiration.

Unlike *geshem*-material rain that is brought down from Heaven by G-d, *tal*-dew that appears on the ground is representative of man's ability to inspire and aspire to reach the Heavens. *Tal* rises¹⁷ and man can as well.

That inspiration and aspiration were the hallmark of our ancestors in the *Midbar* when G-d praises them for their unswerving dedication to Him. He terms them 'the first of his grain' – and that is, of course, the *Omer* that is brought at the onset of the Yom Tov of Pesach. The *Omer* of barley is the first grain harvested in the new year.

And the month of Nissan, the month of Pesach, the month of *Tefilas Tal* is the ideal host for this prayer.

Tishrei is the month of Divine judgement and thus, only G-d's largess provides us with our sustenance and life. And thus we recite *Tefilas Geshem* in Tishrei on Sh'mini Atzeres. We need G-d to rain down the *geshem* from above for us.

Nissan is the month of Redemption – we can redeem ourselves from our earthly bonds and ascend to the spiritual height of which we are capable. And thus we recite *Tefilas Tal* in Nissan, on Pesach, so that we should raise ourselves towards heaven, just like the dew rises in the morning.

¹⁷ We read in Parshas B'shalach in regards to the *mon* (Sh'mos Perek 16/Posuk 14):

וַתַּעַל שִׁכְבַּת הַטַּל וְהָיָה עַל פְּנֵי הַמִּדְבָּר דֶּק מִחֹסֶפֶס דֶּק כִּכְפֹר עַל הָאָרֶץ:

The layer of dew arose and behold on the face of the wilderness there was a thin object, uncovered, thin like frost on the ground.

Rashi writes there:

וַתַּעַל שִׁכְבַּת הַטַּל וְגו' - כְּשֶׁהַחֲמָה זֹרַחַת עוֹלָה הַטַּל שֶׁעַל הַמֵּן לִקְרַאת הַחֲמָה, כְּדֶרֶךְ טַל עוֹלָה לִקְרַאת הַחֲמָה, אִךְ אִם תִּמְלֵא שְׁפוּפֶרֶת שֶׁל בֵּיצָה טַל, וְתִסְתּוּם אֶת פִּיהָ וְתִנְיַחָ בַּחֲמָה, הִיא עוֹלָה מֵאֵלֶיהָ בְּאוֹיֵר.

The layer of dew arose – When the sun shines, the dew which is upon the *mon* arises towards the sun, like dew rises towards the sun [always].

If you will fill an egg shell with dew and close its aperture and place it in the sun, it will arise on its own into the air.

Tefilas Tal is an essential aspect of the month of Nissan, of the Yom Tov of Pesach; it is not extraneous whatsoever. It is a yearly reminder of our potential and our strength and the influence that we are able to wield upon ourselves and before the Divine One.

When we recite *Tefilas Tal* this first day of Pesach, we must remind ourselves that it is not with *geshem*-materialism alone that we exist – but like the power of the dew that arises to the sky each morning so can we raise ourselves, with our self-motivation and determination to forge the bond of Israel, its People and its Land, with HaKodosh Boruch Hu for all eternity.

Shabbat Shalom

Chag Kosher V'sameach

Rabbi Pollock