

PTDT

PhiloTorah D'var Torah

V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA

See the link in the grid for halachic details and guidelines for V'EIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA, which we begin in Israel on Tuesday night, eve of 7 Marcheshvan (Oct. 12) at Maariv.

 V'TEIN TAL UMATAR 
LIVRACHA - read carefully

Continue here for different issues.

LIVRACHA - a very important word in our request to G-d for beneficial rainfall. TAL & MATAR on their own are just not specific enough when expressing our needs and wants.

Do you know the story of CHONI HA-M'AGEIL? Choni, the Circle Drawer? When I was a kid, I thought it was just a nice story. I remember being surprised that it was a Mishna in Masechet Taanit (3:8).

An incident occurred in which the people said to Choni HaM'ageil: Pray that rain should fall. He said to them: Go out and bring in the clay ovens used to roast the Korban pesach, so that they will not dissolve in the water, as torrential rains are certain to fall.

He prayed, and no rain fell at all.

What did he do? He drew a circle on the ground and stood inside it and said before God: Master of the Universe, Your children have turned their faces toward me, as I am like a member of Your household. Therefore, I take an oath by Your great Name that I will not move from here until You have mercy upon Your children and answer their prayers for rain. Rain began to trickle down, but only in small droplets. He said: I did not ask for this, but for rain to fill the cisterns, ditches, and caves with enough water to last the entire year. Rain began to fall furiously. He said: I did not ask for this damaging rain either, but for rain of benevolence, blessing, and generosity.

Subsequently, the rains fell in their standard manner...

Shimon ben Shetach, the Nasi of the Sanhedrin at the time, relayed to Choni HaM'ageil: Were you not Choni, I would have decreed that you be ostracized, but what can I do to you? You nag [mit-chatei] God and He does your bidding, like a son who nags his father and his father does his bidding without reprimand. After all, rain fell as you requested. About you, the verse states: "Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice" (Proverbs 23:25).

The point? No rain is not good for us during the rainy season. Too much rain, coming down too hard, is not good for us either. We need and ask V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA (VTUL) - blessed rain.

And when we say V'TEIN TAL UMATAR LIVRACHA, three times each week day, 18 times each week, for the next 25+ weeks - we should say it like we mean it. Pause for a moment right before saying VTUL and remind yourself that daven is real. That we are asking something (actually, many things) of HKB"H. And that we believe that He hears our prayers and we hope and pray that He answers our requests favorably.

We need rain and we have the ability to ask that of G-d. And if we ask for it sincerely and meaningfully, we stand a good chance of getting it.

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On another note:

Concerning the various additions to the Amida (and Birkat HaMazon) during the year, the powers that be could have ruled that if we leave anything out when we are supposed to say that anything, then we have to repeat, no matter what. They could have, but they didn't.

They could have said - you forgot

something? Don't worry. Just remember for next time. Doesn't matter what. Avoid B'RACHA L'VATALA. They didn't do that either.

Rather, each addition or change was examined and a decision was made to require repeating... or not.

So when the rules say that if one forgets VTUL, the Amida is invalid, they were making a statement.

What did one say when he forgot Tal Umatar? He said V'TEIN B'RACHA. So what's so bad about that? Give a blessing. That could mean rain. Sorry, not this time. If you neglect to say VTUL, your Amida is invalid, even though you asked HaShem for a blessing. Why? Because each of us has a responsibility to add his/her t'filot to those of all davening Jews. Our requests for rain are a communal, national, and worldwide endeavor - and we need to pull our weight.

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Taking this idea further, rain isn't the only thing we ask for in the weekday Amida. We ask for many things - personal and communal, and we need to take all our requests and petitions seriously.

Davening - like all mitzvot - is not just going through the motions. It is real and we should never forget that.