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Mentioning Rain in *Shemone Esrei*

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Must one always begin Shemone Esrei again if mashiv haruach umorid hageshem was omitted?

For how long must one assume, if unsure, that he omitted mashiv haruach umorid hageshem?

On Shmini Atzeres, Jews across the world began the recitation of *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem*, "He makes the wind blow and brings down the rain," during the second *bracha* of *Shemone Esrei*. This article will examine the origins of this addition during the period between Shmini Atzeres and Pesach and the laws regarding one who omitted this additional phrase.

Origins of Different Customs

The Gemara in Ta'anis (4b) rules, based on the first Mishna in Ta'anis, that beginning at *mussaf* of Shmini Atzeres, rain is mentioned - *morid hageshem* - as part of the second *bracha* of *Shemone Esrei*. This continues through *shacharis* of the first day of Pesach. From *mussaf* of the first day of Pesach, rain is no longer mentioned¹. This is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 114:1). For the duration of this article, these two periods will be referred to as winter and summer, respectively.

The Gemara (ibid. 3a) also teaches that while rain should be mentioned, it is not necessary to mention dew or wind, since they are constant, whereas rain may be withheld by G-d. Nonetheless, says the Gemara, if one wishes, he may mention them. The Gemara (ibid. 3b) further states that if one fails to mention rain during the winter, when it is needed, or mentions rain during the summer, when it is a curse in Eretz Yisrael (as the harvest is drying in the fields), one must repeat *Shemone Esrei*. However, if one merely mentioned wind during the summer, repetition is unnecessary.

The Ran (ibid. dapei Harif 1a s.v. *gemara*) wonders why, if there is no reason to mention wind or dew, wind is customarily mentioned together with rain during the winter and dew is mentioned during the summer². The Ran explains that the Gemara means to say that while wind and dew are not withheld entirely, they can wax and wane; in addition, dews of blessing may be withheld. Therefore, one may mention wind during the rainy season, when it is beneficial, and one may mention dew in the summer, when there is no rain, to encourage an abundance of dew as well as dew of blessing³.

The Tur (Orach Chaim 114:3) says that in Sepharad (Spain), the custom is to mention dew during the summer - this is the source for reciting the words *morid hatal*, "He brings down the dew" - while in Ashkenaz

(Germany), they do not mention anything during the summer⁴. The Ran (ibid. s.v. *vitzarich*), explains the reason for mentioning dew during the summer: The Gemara, as noted earlier, says that one who mentions wind in the summer needn't repeat *Shemone Esrei*. The *bidi'eved* (after the fact) language used indicates that one should not *lechatchila* (initially) mention wind in the summer, since wind is beneficial in tandem with rain. Dew, however, is always beneficial⁵, and is thus mentioned in the summer, as well.

Based on the above, why, indeed, is the Ashkenazic custom to omit any mention of dew in the summer? The Bais Yosef (Orach Chaim 114:3) says that the Ashkenazic custom understands that when the Gemara indicates that one should not *lechatchila* mention wind in the summer, it is referring to dew, as well, as the two go together as optional insertions.

There emerges a significant halachic difference between the Sephardic and Ashkenazic custom. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Ta'anis 1:1) rules that one who is unsure if he mentioned rain during the first thirty days after its recitation begins must assume he said what he has been used to saying until Shmini Atzeres, and that he did not mention rain. However, the Yerushalmi continues that one must repeat *Shemone Esrei* only if neither rain nor dew was mentioned; if dew was mentioned, this suffices *bidi'eved*⁶. Thus, one who follows the Sephardic custom⁷ and mentioned dew throughout the summer and is unsure as to what he said in the first thirty days following Shmini Atzeres can assume that, at worst, he said *morid hatal*, and needn't repeat *Shemone Esrei*. However, one who follows the Ashkenazic custom and says nothing during the summer would be required to repeat *Shemone Esrei* in such circumstances.

What to Do If One Forgot to Mention Rain

As discussed, one who failed to make any mention of rain or dew during the second *bracha* of *Shemone Esrei* must repeat the prayer from the beginning. However, there are several exceptions to this rule.

⁴ It is worthwhile to note that having to repeat *Shemone Esrei* is not merely an inconvenience; it means that the entire prayer recited the first time, including all its blessings, are invalidated. Thus, one ought to strive to avoid this from a halachic standpoint as well as a purely practical one.

⁵ See Ran further as he adduces proof to this principle from the Gemara.

⁶ The Bais Yosef (ibid.:5) wonders why mentioning dew suffices, since the Gemara (cited earlier) states that dew is constant and is therefore not an obligatory addition to the prayers, while rain is inconsistent and must be mentioned. The Bais Yosef explains that since one is merely mentioning, not asking for, rain in this blessing, the purpose is to praise Hashem for the rain He provides during this time of year. Mentioning dew thus suffices as a minimum level of praise.

⁷ Nusach Sefard, the version of the prayers generally used by Chassidim, and Nusach Hagra, the version of the prayers based upon the Vilna Gaon, recite *morid hatal* as well.

¹ There is extensive discussion as to whether this begins with the congregation's recitation of *Shemone Esrei* or only with the *shli'ach tzibbur's* repetition. A full discussion of this is beyond the scope of this article.

² Mentioning dew in the summer is the Sephardic custom, as discussed further. The Ran was a Sephardic Torah authority.

³ The Ran (ibid. s.v. *vitzarich*) wonders why dew is not mentioned along with wind and rain during the winter. See there for an approach.

The Ra'avya (also known as the Av Ha'ezri) (Ta'anis 846) states that if while in middle of the second *bracha*, one realized he had omitted mentioning rain, he returns to the proper spot for its recitation, says it and continues from that point, i.e., with the words *mechalkel chaim*. It is unnecessary, he says, to begin the *bracha* from the very beginning. The Rosh (Ta'anis 1:1) cites the Ra'avyah but goes a step further, stating that one may recite the words *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem* at whatever point of the *bracha* he is up to. So long as rain is mentioned during the *bracha*, the requirement has been fulfilled. This is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (ibid.:5). The Mishna Berura (114:29) explains that Chazal did not specify a particular place in the *bracha* to mention rain; it is merely customary to recite it before the words *mechalkel chaim*, which discusses sustenance, and is thus similar to rain, which also provides sustenance. Nonetheless, says the Mishna Berura, if one remembered and recited *geshem* just before the closing blessing (*Baruch Ata Hashem, mechaye hameisim*), he must repeat the final phrase of *vine'eman Ata lihachayos maisim*, as this goes together with the closing blessing.⁸ In addition, one should be sure to complete the phrase he is in middle of saying in the prayer before inserting *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem*, rather than interrupting a phrase to recite it (Bi'ur Halacha 114 s.v. *bamakom*). This ruling is true whether one said *morid hatal* or omitted both *geshem* and *tal*.

If one already completed the *bracha* but did not yet begin the next blessing⁹, the Ra'avya (ibid.) rules that one may recite *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem* at that point. This ruling is cited by the Rosh (ibid.) without argument, indicating that the Rosh agrees with this ruling. The Shulchan Aruch (ibid.:6) rules this way, as well. It would thus seem to be a fairly straightforward option for one who remembers immediately upon completing the *bracha*. Indeed, the Mishna Berura (ibid.:30) says that according to this ruling, if one already said Hashem's Name in the closing blessing of the *bracha*, one should finish the blessing and then say *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem*. (In all cases, says the Mishna Berura [ibid.:31], it should be said as soon as possible, without delay.)

However, the Mishna Berura (ibid.:32) says that there are a number of Rishonim and Acharonim who disagree with this ruling and say that once the blessing is complete, it is considered that one has already begun the next blessing and can no longer make amends. Therefore, says the Mishna Berura, while one may rely upon this leniency if one already completed the blessing¹⁰, if one only got through saying Hashem's Name in the closing blessing – *Baruch Ata Hashem* – he should say the words *lamdeini chukecha*¹¹ and recite *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem* rather than reciting *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem* after completing the blessing. However, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe Orach Chaim 4:93) disagrees with the Mishna Berura and rules in accordance with the Ra'avya and the Shulchan Aruch.

⁸ If one failed to do so, one should continue and not repeat anything. See Dirshu Mishna Berura 114 fn. 27.

⁹ Once one says the first word of the next blessing, i.e., "Ata" of *Ata kadosh*, he has begun the next blessing and must begin *Shemone Esrei* again.

¹⁰ Or said the word *mechaye* after Hashem's Name, in which case he should conclude *hameisim* and then say *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem*.

¹¹ This is a mechanism for one who said the words *Baruch Ata Hashem* and then realizes he should not be saying the blessing he is about to say. *Baruch Ata Hashem lamdeini chukecha* is a verse in Tehillim (119:12), and thus one is permitted to recite it. Normally, one would not be permitted to recite verses of Tehillim during *Shemone Esrei*, but due to the extenuating circumstances, it is permitted.

Rabbi Chaim Kanievski (cited in *Ishei Yisrael* Ch. 23 fn. 117) rules that once one has begun the closing blessing - even if he has not yet said Hashem's Name - one continues from *mechalkel chaim* after saying *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem*¹².

It seems that since reciting *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem* after completing the *bracha*, or even saying *lamdeini chukecha* and then saying *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem*, is not ideal and is utilized only to avoid having to start *Shemone Esrei* again, it should only be utilized when that is indeed the alternative. If, however, one already said *morid hatal*, obviating any repetition, one should continue with the *Shemone Esrei*.¹³

Until When Must *Shemone Esrei* Be Repeated in a Case of Doubt?

As mentioned, the Talmud Yerushalmi says that it takes thirty days for one to become accustomed to the change in the text of the prayer. Thus, once thirty days have elapsed from Shmini Atzeres, one may assume he said the correct words during *Shemone Esrei*. The Tur (ibid.:9) says that Rabbi Meir miRottenburg would recite the beginning of the second *bracha* of *Ata gibor*, through the words *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem*, ninety times on Shmini Atzeres. Since thirty days of thrice daily prayers equals ninety prayers total, reciting the new text ninety times accustomed him to the new text and avoided any subsequent issues. While some Rishonim agree with this approach, there are others who argue. Nonetheless, the Shulchan Aruch (ibid.:9) rules in accordance with the Maharam's practice, and one may rely upon it. The Chasam Sofer (Shu"t Chasam Sofer Orach Chaim 20) rules that one should recite the new text 101 times in total¹⁴. While the Mishna Berura says that one should follow the Chasam Sofer's directive, he concludes that if one repeated it only ninety times, no repetition is necessary.

The Rema in his Darchei Moshe commentary to the Tur (Orach Chaim 114:2) raises a basic question upon the ninety times mentioned. During the course of thirty days, there are more than ninety prayers, since Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and Yom Tov have an additional *mussaf* prayer. He concludes (after some discussion of different possibilities) that the Maharam understood that the Talmud Yerushalmi's calculation of thirty days refers to thirty average weekdays, without *mussaf*. Based upon this, the Mishna Berura (ibid.:37) rules that if one (who did not utilize the Maharam's device) has already recited *Shemone Esrei* ninety times, although thirty days have not yet elapsed, one needn't repeat *Shemone Esrei* in a case of uncertainty. Conversely, continues the Mishna Berura, since there are other authorities who say that the main issue is the thirty-day period, not the ninety times, if one has been reciting *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem* for thirty days but has not yet recited ninety prayers, one may also be lenient in such a case, as well.

In conclusion, while it is certainly best for one to pay attention while davening at all times of year, and certainly during those times when one may forget an addition to *Shemone Esrei* and have to repeat it, there are many situations where one who is in uncertain if he recited *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem* needn't repeat *Shemone Esrei*.

¹² See *Ishei Yisrael* ibid. for other possible opinions.

¹³ However, if one only said *Baruch Ata* but did not say Hashem's Name, one should say *mashiv haru'ach umorid hageshem* even if he has already recited *morid hatal*.

¹⁴ The Chasam Sofer explains the Talmud Yerushalmi's calculation of 30 days as equaling a total of 101 recitations of the new text (see there for details). He says that the number 101 is based upon the Gemara's statement (Chagiga 9b) that one cannot compare having reviewed something 100 times to having reviewed it 101 times, which shows that 101 is what cements a new idea in a person's mind!

Points to Ponder:

If someone skipped an entire day of prayers during the thirty-day period, must that day be made up?

If one feels that reciting mashiv haruach umorid hageshem ninety times does not change his previous habit, may he still rely upon it?

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