

Parsha Ponders

Eikev | Aug 23, 2024 | 19 Av 5784

*How can it rain on shabbos?*¹

ונתתי מטר-ארצכם בעתו וגו'

I will give the rain of your lands in its proper time...²

In the second paragraph of *Shema*, we are told of all the things that we will receive if we keep the Torah. The inverse is also true, that if we don't keep the Torah, we will be withheld all of Hashem's good, or worse. One of the blessings promised is that of the rain of the lands falling in its proper time. What's interesting is we find a parallel verse in *parshas Bechukosai*, famous for the curses that could befall the Jews, but also some blessings. There, it says, "I will give **your** rain in its time"³. Why is it that here the verse says, "your **land's** rain", but there it says, "**your** rain"?

A heretic once posed a question to the Sages⁴. There's a concept that G-d observes the Torah that He commanded⁵. If that's so, how could it be that it rains on Shabbos? There's a prohibition of transferring something from one domain to another. By bringing the rain from the heavens to the earth, Hashem is violating Shabbos! The Rabbi responded that the entirety of creation is His. Therefore, there's no transfer of domain when it rains⁶.

However, this answer is insufficient. The second paragraph of *Shema* is discussing if we are listening to Hashem's Torah. When that's the case, we are taught⁷ that the earth is then given over into our hands. This is further indicated by our verse, which says that Hashem will give **our** land's rain in its proper time. We are also taught⁸ that what's the proper time for rain? Shabbos night, when people are home anyways and are not inconvenienced by the rain. If so, the heretic's question is still relevant! How is Hashem observing Shabbos, yet having it rain Friday night⁹?

Tosafos inform¹⁰ us that the second paragraph of *Shema*, where it discusses if we listen to Hashem's words, is actually discussing where we aren't fully committed. Yes, we are following the Torah, but we're not as righteous as we could be. If so, we can say that it's describing when the world is still really in Hashem's domain¹¹. There would thus not be any Shabbos violation for it to rain on Shabbos.

¹ Based on [Chasam Sofer Al HaTorah](#) to [Deuteronomy 11:14](#)

² [Deuteronomy](#) *loc. cit.*

³ [Leviticus 26:4](#)

⁴ [Bereishis Rabbah 11:5](#). It was Turnusrufus asking Rabbi Akiva. See also [Midrash Tanchuma Ki Sisa § 33](#)

⁵ This is a much broader topic that is beyond the scope of this article. There are many sources which indicate as such. Although, the above *Midrash* only mentions that Hashem **honors Shabbos**, and Turnusrufus took this to mean that Hashem has to observe it as well. Rabbi Akiva didn't challenge this understanding

⁶ The more obvious issue of enabling the growth of vegetation on Shabbos is for some reason not addressed by Rabbi Akiva, although Turnusrufus does seem to ask it. See [Yefeh Toar ad. loc. § 6](#)

⁷ [Berachos 35b](#). There it's discussing if grain is considered G-d's, or ours. It depends if we are following His will

⁸ [Ta'anis 23a](#)

⁹ [Panim Yafos](#) to [Deuteronomy 11:14](#) s.v. עוד י"ל, by the teacher of the [Chasam Sofer](#)

¹⁰ [Tosafos](#) to [Berachos 35b](#) s.v. כאן בזמן. The *gemarra* there, as previously cited, says the verse is discussing when we are following Hashem's will. However, the *gemarra* later on that very page says it's discussing when we aren't following Hashem's will. [Tosafos](#) resolve this by saying we are following Hashem's will, but we aren't fully righteous

¹¹ I'm not quite sure how the [Chasam Sofer](#) resolves the earlier proofs of the rain of "your land" and the *gemarra* saying grain is ours and not G-d's,

However, we still have the verse in *Bechukosai*, which is seemingly discussing when we're totally righteous. In that case, the land is considered ours, and causing rain on Shabbos would be a transfer of the heavenly domain to the earthly one! We are forced then to say that just like Hashem transfers ownership of the earth to us, He transfers ownership of the location of the rain's origin¹². Since this is so, the rain falling is simply going from our domain to our domain, which entails zero Shabbos violation¹³. This would explain why in *Bechukosai* it says **your** rain, since the rain was transferred to our domain. This is unlikely the *parsha* of *Shema*, where the rain remains the property of G-d.

Good Shabbos

¹² If a cloud formed on Shabbos, then Hashem would seemingly be transferring ownership on Shabbos, which is still a Rabbinic violation of Shabbos. It's unclear if Hashem only observes the Torah or if He also observes Rabbinic laws

¹³ Once we say this, we can ignore Tosafos' interpretation of the verse and go with the initial thought that *Shema* is also discussing when we fully listen to Hashem. Although, see the next point