

Rain Bulletin Board

By Torah Umesorah Educational Resource Center – Brooklyn, NY



Grade Level:

Middle Elementary (4-5)

Upper Elementary (6-8)

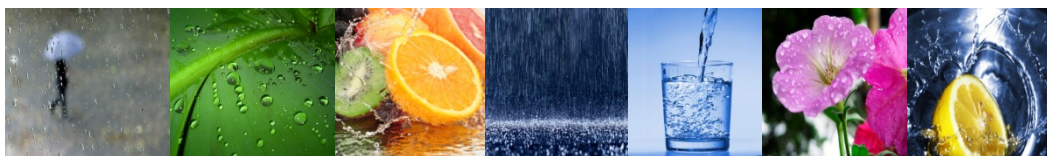
Educational Goals/Objectives:

Students will explain the concept of tefilla and express the importance of forging a connection with Hashem. This beautiful lesson plan, replete with awesome stories and sources from תנ"ך, is sure to transform the way you daven.

Introduction: Tell your students to write the answer to the following question: "What are some benefits we have from rain"?

Their answers will probably include: *We have water to drink, vegetation can grow, replenishes earth, animals have provisions; we can eat animal derivatives etc.*

Motivation: When your students share their answers you can post the following pictures on the board. (See bulletin board)



Aim: What does rain teach me about תפילה?

Lesson:



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Where is rain first mentioned in the תורה?

It is written in (בראשית ב: ה):

וְכָל שֵׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם יְהִי-בָאָרֶץ וְכָל עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם יִצְמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר ה' אֱלֹקִים עַל הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אֵין לְעַבֵּד אֶת הָאֲדָמָה:

Now any tree of the field was not yet on the earth and any herb of the field had not yet sprouted, for Hashem had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to work the soil.

There are two basic questions that arise:

- 1) Why didn't Hashem send rain?
- 2) Hashem created heaven and earth, the planets, the oceans, the mountains and the valleys and Hashem needed Adam to work the soil?

Rashi answers these two questions by saying:

כי לא המטיר. ומה טעם לא המטיר, לפי שאדם אין לעבוד את האדמה ואין מכיר בטובתן של גשמים. וכשבא אדם וידע שהם צורך לעולם התפלל עליהם וירדו, וצמחו האילנות והדשאים(חולין ס:)

What is the reason that Hashem had not sent rain? Because there was no man to work the soil, and there was none to recognize the goodness of rains. When Adam came and realized that they are a necessity for the world, he prayed for rain and it came down, and the trees and types of vegetation sprouted.

The answer is clear:

Hashem wanted Adam to see a need and fill it through prayer.

Why did Hashem need Adam to daven?

Rabbi Yaakov Neiman ztz"l, Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivah Ohr Yisrael in Petach Tikvah, explains the concept of tefilla. Hashem doesn't need anything. It is we who need to serve Hashem through prayer as a means to draw closer to Him.

A poor person, prays for a livelihood, a businessman, prays for success in business and a sick person, prays for a complete recovery.

Wasn't Hashem the One that decreed it? Are we going to ask Hashem to change His will in order to do our will?

The reason why Hashem decreed it is that we should daven to Him.



What we are saying is “Hashem I believe with complete faith that only You exist in the world. Everything that happens to me is from You and for my ultimate best.”

How do we reach this level of faith? By teaching ourselves to turn to Hashem for everything we need. R' Neiman says that our purpose in prayer should not be that Hashem should fulfill our desires, but that we learn to trust in Him to do what is good for us.

For example:

- You are very anxious before taking a test. The first thing you should do is daven for hatzlacha and then study to the best of your ability. Afterwards, the grade that you get is good for you. That is what Hashem wants.
- Suppose you are davening for friends. Know that Hashem is waiting for your tefilah in every step of your life. Even if you see that you're not becoming the most popular girl in your class know that that is the best for you now.

The Chofetz Chaim says we have to pray to Hashem to give us what He thinks is good for us, because what we think is good for us is not always good for us.

The following story illustrates the power of prayer:

Two thousand years ago, when the Beis Hamikdash still stood, every Jew who was able to made the trip up to Yerushalayim three times a year. The journey was often long, the road hot and dusty, and many travelers became thirsty on the way.

One man was responsible for digging the wells along the road to Yerushalyim. He became known far and wide as Nechunya Chofer Shichin (Nechunya, Digger of Wells) for these wells gave clear water to refresh so many.

One day, Nechunya's daughter fell into a well and no one present was able to descend into the well to rescue her. Her heartbreaking cries could be heard from the depths.

Bystanders ran to the nearest tzaddik, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, to tell him that Nechunya's daughter had fallen into the well. Rabbi Chanina said, “All will be well.” They came back a while later saying she was still in the well. Rabbi Chanina said, “All will be well.” The third time they came to the tzaddik, he told them “She is already out!”



Rabbi Chanina asked that the girl be brought to him.

"My daughter," he asked when she arrived, "who brought you out of the well?"

"It was a ram, being led by an old man."

It had been Avraham Avinu who came to rescue her from the well!

The people then said to Rabbi Chanina, "you must be a prophet – you said she would be saved."

"No," he replied, "I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I know one thing: if a tzaddik does a mitzvah, it is impossible for his children to die through that same mitzvah." (Yevamos 121b; see Etz Yosef.)

Sometime later, one of Nechunya's sons died of thirst. How was it possible that the son of the Digger of Wells died, when his sister was saved? Why didn't the merit of their father's great deed save them equally?

Commentators offer an answer- one you should remember your whole life: When Nechunya's daughter was in distress; Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa invoked her father's merits on her behalf. The son of R' Nechunya died because there was no one to pray for him. There was no one to awaken his father's merits in Heaven. Without that, the merit lay dormant and was unable to save him.

Even the prayers of animals can evoke mercy. The midrash states:

"כְּאֵיל תַּעֲרַג עַל אֶפְיֵקֵי מַיִם, כֵּן נַפְשִׁי תַעֲרַג אֵלַיךְ אֱלֹקִים" (תהילים מב:ב)

Just as a deer longs for running water, so my soul thirsts to you Hashem. The deer is considered the most righteous of all animals, and is one of the few wild animals that is kosher. When the other animals are thirsty and have nothing to drink, they go to the deer and beg her to pray, for they know she is righteous. What does she then do? She takes her horns and digs in the earth until they bleed, praying to Hashem to bring up water from the depths. When Hashem sees her praying, he tears the depths open for her and water wells up to meet her. All the little creatures then have water in her merit.

If a deer can invoke such רחמי שמים imagine the power of our prayer.

The Chofetz Chaim said that when we stand in prayer before Hashem, we should feel as if we are talking to our mother, the one who gave birth to us, for a mother will always have mercy on her children and will always forgive. This is the way we should stand and beg from Hashem.



For you are Hashem's beloved child!

Application:

1) Have your students write a situation where they felt helpless or usually feel helpless.

Tell them to write how this lesson will affect the way they react in the situation.

For example: *Before taking a test I feel very nervous and anxious. Now I will know that a) I need to daven for hatzlacha b) I will try my upmost and realize that whatever Hashem does is for the best.*

2) Let your students find where in תפילה tefilla is mentioned.

Some examples are:

א) וַיִּשְׁכַּם אַבְרָהָם בְּבֹקֶר אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַד שָׁם אֶת פְּנֵי ה' - מוֹסֵף רַש"י בַּתְּפִלָּה (בראשית יט וירא כז)

ב) וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוּחַ בְּשָׂדֵה - רַש"י לְשׁוֹן תְּפִלָּה (בראשית כד חיי שרה סג)

ג) וַיַּעֲתֵר יִצְחָק לֵה' - רַש"י הַרְבֵּה וְהַפְצִיר בַּתְּפִילָּה (בראשית כה תולדות כא)

ד) וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם - רַש"י וְלִמְדָנו שֶׁתִּקַּן תְּפִלַּת עֲרֵבִית (בראשית כח ויצא יא)

ה) וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה' - רַש"י תִּפְשׁוּ אֲמוֹנוֹת אֲבוֹתֵם - תְּפִילָּה

(שמות יד בשלח י)

ו) חֲנָה אִם שֶׁל שְׂמוּאֵל הַנְּבִיא: וְהָיָה מָרַת נֶפֶשׁ וְתִתְפַּלֵּל עַל ה' וּבְכֹה תִבְּרָה

(שמואל א א:י)

Summary: Tell your students to answer the aim question "What does rain teach me about tefilla?"

We have to be מתפלל for everything, for this helps us forge a connection with Hashem.

Homework: Students can record how they use tefilla in their everyday lives.

Sefarim/books to use for preparation:

- Women to Women – *Torah thoughts based on the teachings of Rebetzin Esther Greenberg*



