God of Rain and Dew

Torah Study for Parashat Ha'azinu

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Source Sheet by Rabbi Nicole Auerbach

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1. Deuteronomy 32:1-18

(1) Give ear, O heavens, let me speak; Let the earth hear the words I utter! (2) May my discourse come down as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, Like showers on young growth, Like droplets on the grass. (3) For the name of the LORD I proclaim; Give glory to our God! (4) The Rock!—His deeds are perfect, Yea, all His ways are just; A faithful God, never false, True and upright is He. (5) Children unworthy of Him— That crooked, perverse generation— Their baseness has played Him false. (6) Do you thus requite the LORD, O dull and witless people? Is not He the Father who created you, Fashioned you and made you endure! (7) Remember the days of old, Consider the years of ages past; Ask your father, he will inform you, Your elders, they will tell you: (8) When the Most High gave nations their homes And set the divisions of man, He fixed the boundaries of peoples In relation to Israel’s numbers. (9) For the LORD’s portion is His people, Jacob His own allotment. (10) He found him in a desert region, In an empty howling waste. He engirded him, watched over him, Guarded him as the pupil of His eye. (11) Like an eagle who rouses his nestlings, Gliding down to his young, So did He spread His wings and

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take him, Bear him along on His pinions;  
(12) The LORD alone did guide him, No alien god at His side.  
(13) He set him atop the highlands, To feast on the yield of the earth; 
He fed him honey from the crag, And oil from the flinty rock,  
(14) Curd of kine and milk of flocks; With the best of lambs, And rams of Bashan, 
and he-goats; With the very finest wheat — And foaming grape-blood was your drink.  
(15) So Jeshurun grew fat and kicked— You grew fat and gross and coarse— 
He forsook the God who made him And spurned the Rock of his support.  
(16) They incensed Him with alien things, Vexed Him with abominations.  
(17) They sacrificed to demons, no-gods, Gods they had never known, New ones, who came but lately, 
Who stirred not your fathers’ fears.  
(18) You neglected the Rock that begot you, 
Forgot the God who brought you forth.

2. Rabbi S. Z. Ulman

Everyone knows that there can be speaking words, which is hard, and talking, which is soft. Some plants thrive on heavy rainfall while others thrive on occasional showers. And corresponding to them are people who only need compassion while others need stern justice. Some need gentle speaking; others require hard talk. Each one receives what is best according to his or her needs.

3. Hosea 14:2-10

(2) Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, For you have fallen because of your sin.  
(3) Take words with you And return to the LORD. Say to Him: “Forgive all guilt And accept what is good; Instead of bulls we will pay [The offering of] our lips.  
(4) Assyria shall not save us, No more will we ride on steeds; Nor ever again will we call Our handiwork our god, Since in You alone orphans find pity!”  
(5) I will heal their affliction, Generously will I take them back in love; For My anger has turned
away from them. (6) I will be to Israel like dew; He shall blossom like the lily, He shall strike root like a Lebanon tree. (7) His boughs shall spread out far, His beauty shall be like the olive tree’s, His fragrance like that of Lebanon. (8) They who sit in his shade shall be revived: They shall bring to life new grain, They shall blossom like the vine; His scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon. (9) Ephraim [shall say]: “What more have I to do with idols? When I respond and look to Him, I become like a verdant cypress.” Your fruit is provided by Me. (10) He who is wise will consider these words, He who is prudent will take note of them. For the paths of the LORD are smooth; The righteous can walk on them, While sinners stumble on them.

4. **Hosea 6:4**

(4) What can I do for you, Ephraim, What can I do for you, Judah, When your goodness is like morning clouds, Like dew so early gone?

5. **Hosea 13:3**

(3) Assuredly, They shall be like morning clouds, Like dew so early gone; Like chaff whirled away from the threshing floor. And like smoke from a lattice.

6. **Isaiah 26:19**

Oh, let Your dead revive! Let corpses arise! Awake and shout for joy, You who dwell in the dust!— For Your dew is like the dew on fresh growth; You make the land of the shades come to life.

7. **Ibn Ezra on Isaiah 26:19:3**

A dew of light. 19 A. V., The dew of herbs. A dew accompanied by light. Thy dew. God is addressed in these
words. According to others, אורות means herbs; comp. 2 Kings 4:39; it signifies a kind of herb, which turns toward the sun and moon. Comp. Plin. Nat. Hist. Lib. XVIII., cap. 36 (Lupinus) cum sole quotidie circumagitur, horasque agricolis etiam nubilo demonstrat. The lupine makes its daily circuit with the sun, and shows the farmer the time even when the heaven is covered with clouds.

8. Siddur Ashkenaz, Weekday, Shacharit, Amidah, Divine Might 1-6
(1) You are forever mighty, Adonai, You give life to all (revive the dead).
(2) (Summer: You bring down dew.)
(3) (Winter: You cause the wind to shift and the rain to fall.)
(4) You sustain life through love, giving life to all (reviving the dead) through great compassion, supporting the fallen, healing the sick, freeing the captive, keeping faith with those who sleep in the dust. Who is like You, Source of mighty acts? Who resembles You, a Sovereign who takes and gives life, causing deliverance to spring up and faithfully giving life to all (reviving that which is dead)?
(5) (Shabbat Teshuvah: Who is like You, Father of mercy, Who in mercifully remembers His creatures for life.)
(6) Blessed are You, Adonai who gives life to all (who revives the dead)

9. Mishnah Taanit 1:2
(2) They don’t pray for rain except close to the rainy season. Rabbi Judah says: One who goes down before the ark on the last day of Sukkot the last one mentions [rain], the first does not; on the first day of Pesah, the first mentions, the last does not. Up until when do they request rain? Rabbi Judah says: Until Pesah is over. Rabbi Meir says: Until Nissan is over, as
it says, “Now He makes the rain fall in the first month, early rain and late rain” (Joel 2:23).

**Torat Hayyim, III, no. 3**

*Question from Recife, Brazil, in 1640s to R. Hayyim Sabbatai of Salonica*

Sent from a distant country, the Empire of Brazil, a place south of the Equator, where the south zone is up to about 20 degrees and the north zone is hidden under the horizon 20 degrees or more; where the seasons of the year are changed from Summer to Winter so that the rainy season is not between Tishri and Nisan but from Nisan to Tishri. Moreover, the Summer rain is a blessing to the growth of vegetables and fruit, while excessive rain in the Winter causes diseases and epidemics. For this reason they (a faction of Jews at Brazil) are inclined to think that the special benediction “Mashiv ha-Ruah” and “Tal-u-Matar” in the prayer during the Winter season should rather be said during the Summer season, to harmonize with the surrounding conditions.

**Summary of Answer:**
He brings out the fact that the Jewish community in Brazil, as it appears from the question, was small, and confined to a single town. He decides that if such town be even as big as Nineveh, indeed, even an entire island, it is not entitled to a special change in the liturgy. Only numerous congregations scattered in a largely populated country may claim the right to change the order of the Prayers. Nevertheless, no congregation need pray against its want and need, but in such single cases, the regular benediction may be omitted, and when necessary, insert a prayer for rain at the end of the prayer after "Shome'a Tefillah."