

Sukkot: The Land of Israel and Rain **Worksheet**

On *Shemini Atzeret* we begin to pray for rain, adding “*mashiv haruach umorid hageshem*” (“return the wind and rain”) in our prayers. Certain ceremonies and rituals on *Sukkot* seem to build up to this ideal. On *Sukkot*, we dance a circular rain ceremony in the synagogue (the *hoshanot hakafot*) where we ask God to “save us”, and we have tradition of the *simchat beit hashoevah* (the Rejoicing of the Water Drawing), whose origins are based on water praying ceremony performed in the Temple.

In this lesson we will examine the dependence of the Land of Israel on rain and how this dependence encourages our relationship with God. We will also compare the Land of Israel to three other lands that the Bible portrays as lands that are not dependant on rainfall.

Your objectives for this lesson are to:

- a) Examine the Biblical sources that describe the land’s dependency on rain.
- b) Examine Biblical sources that describe other countries’ non-dependency on rain.
- c) Examine geographical maps to ascertain this dependency / non-dependency.
- d) Examine the moral consequences for dependency / non-dependency on rain.

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1. Read the following source and answer the questions below:

“For the land, which you are entering to possess, is not like the land of Egypt, from where you came, where you sowed your seed, and you watered it with your foot, as a garden of herbs; but the land, which you are going over to possess, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinks water as the rain of heaven comes down; a land which the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year unto the end of the year.”
Devarim 11:10-12

How does Moshe describe the land in terms of:

- a) topography?
- b) of the weather?
- c) its relationship with God?

Explain each point.

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

2. How is the Land of Egypt irrigated? Explain.

3. How is the land of Egypt described in the following source? Explain why?

Lot raised his eyes, and saw the whole plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah), like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as one goes towards Tsoar.
Bereshit 13:10

4. Considering all this information, which land do you think is the more attractive in terms of quality of life? Base your answer on the text.

We will now examine why God chose the Land of Israel to be the Promised Land.

5. Read the following verse again. Which three areas are said to be abundant with water?

Lot raised his eyes, and saw the whole plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, (before the Lord destroyed Sedom and Gomorrah), like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as one goes towards Tsoar.

Bereshit 13:10

6. What makes these lands so abundant with water?

A: The Garden of Eden (“The Garden of the Lord”). Read the following source and explain:

“The Lord God made grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food out of the ground; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it parted, and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon; it encompasses the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone. The name of the second river is Gihon. It encompasses the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Tigris; it goes toward the east of Asshur. The fourth river is the Euphrates.”

Bereshit 2: 9-14

B: The Jordan Valley (Sedom): Look at the map on the following page and explain.



Map taken from Israel Science and Technology Homepage (see <http://www.science.co.il/Israel-Topography.asp>)

7. Read the following texts and explain the moral development of the inhabitants of these three regions:

a) The Garden of Eden:

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, did eat; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat. The eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves girdles. ... To Adam He said: 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying: You may not eat of it; cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field. Through the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground; for out of it were you taken; for you are dust, and unto dust you shall return.' ... The Lord God said: 'Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.' Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from where he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way to the tree of life.

Bereshit 3: 6-24

b) Sedom:

And the Lord said: 'Verily, the cry of Sedom and Gomorrah is great, and, verily, their sin is exceeding grievous. I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know.'

Bereshit 18: 20-21

c) Egypt:

And it will come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they will say: This is his wife; and they will kill me, but thee they will keep alive.

Bereshit 12: 12

8. Using this information, what religious and moral advantages does the Land of

Israel have over the other three lands? Explain your answer.

9. Using this information, explain the importance of the following verse, in the context of the *Yamim HaNoraim* and the “*tefillat geshem*” of *Shemini Atzeret*.

but the land, which you are going over to possess, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinks water as the rain of heaven comes down; a land which the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year unto the end of the year. *Devarim* 11: 11-12
