



**“If you will follow My decrees . . . I will provide your rains in their time”**

## **The Amazing Connection between the Peace that Exists among Those Who Study Torah and the Drops of Rain that Do Not Touch One Another**

On the upcoming, auspicious Shabbas Kodesh, we will read the double parshiyos of Behar and Bechukosai. Hence, it is fitting that we focus on the opening pesukim of parshas Bechukosai. Here we find the wonderful Berachos HKB”H promises to those who devote themselves to the study of Torah (Vayikra 26, 3):

“אם בחוקותי תלכו ואת מצוותי תשמרו ועשיתם אותם, ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם ונתנה הארץ יבולה ועץ השדה יתן פרו, והשיג לכם דיש את בציר ובציר ישיג את זרע, ואכלתם לחמכם לשובע וישבתם לבטח בארצכם, ונתתי שלום בארץ ושכבתם ואין מחריד.”

**If you will follow My decrees and observe My mitzvos and perform them; then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will yield its produce and the tree of the field will bear its fruit. Threshing will overtake vintage for you, and the vintage will last until the sowing; you will eat bread to satiety, and you will dwell securely in your land. I will provide peace in the land, and you will lie down with none to frighten you . . .**

Rashi comments based on the Toras Kohanim: **“If you will follow My decrees”**: One might think that this is a reference to the fulfillment of mitzvos when it says “and you will observe My mitzvos.” But that is already stated in the verse. What then is meant by the phrase “if you will follow My decrees”? That you should occupy yourselves in the labor of Torah; “and observe My mitzvos” signifies that you should labor in the study of Torah in order to observe and to fulfill that which you learn . . .

Additionally, Rashi comments on the words **“and I will provide your rains in their time”**: At times when it is not customary for people to go out, such as Shabbas nights.

In this essay, we will endeavor to find the common thread connecting these three things mentioned in these opening pesukim: (1) Those who devote themselves to the study of Torah, (2) the berachah of rainfall on Shabbas nights that supply

the world with abundant food, and (3) the “shalom”—peace—that will prevail in the world.

### **In the Merit of the Dust of Torah of the Scholars in Bavel Rains of Berachah Fell in Eretz Yisrael**

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by focusing on a fascinating passage in the Talmud Bavli. It describes the intriguing relationship between the Torah scholars located in galus in Bavel and the Torah scholars in Eretz Yisrael. Here is what we learn in the Gemara (Kesubos 106a):

“רב הונא הוה דריש בתליסר אמוראי” — **Rav Huna would lecture with the help of thirteen spokesmen (translators).** Let us explain. Rav Huna was the Rosh Yeshivah in Bavel; he had thousands of students. Due to this large number of students, his shiurim were transmitted via thirteen assistants, who divided up the students into smaller groups and taught in the local vernacular.

Our blessed sages report an amazing phenomenon: **כי הווי קיימי רבנן מומתיבתא דרב הונא ונפצי גלימיהו, הוה סליק אבקא וכסי ליה ליומא, ואמרי במערבא, קמו ליה מומתיבתא דרב הונא בבלאי.”** During the shiur, the students would spread their garments out on the ground and sit on them. After Rav Huna concluded the shiur, they would rise from their places and shake off the dust that had accumulated on their garments. The dust would rise to the heavens and obscure the light of the sun. The effect was so profound that even the residents of Eretz Yisrael recognized what was happening. This prompted them to announce: “The students from Rav Huna’s yeshivah in Bavel are standing up now.”

In Ben Yehoyada, the commentary of the great Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Bavel, zt”l, on the allegorical passages in the Talmud, he writes (Kesubos 106a): **The dust would rise and obscure the light of the day. Rashi, z”l, explains that it would darken**

the sun; and this would be apparent in Eretz Yisrael. Hence, we must conclude that this was a miraculous event that transpired in honor of Rav Huna and in honor of the large congregation that gathered to hear his lecture. For, based on the laws of nature, such a thing could not happen—that that dust would be seen in Eretz Yisrael, which was located several days journey away from Bavel—even if those gathered numbered four million. Instead, we must conclude that this occurred as the result of a miracle.

In Chiddushei Aggados (Kesubos 106a), however, the Maharal of Prague, takes a different approach, in his own inimitable, sacred way, to explain this Gemara. When Rav Huna's students in Bavel rose after his lecture and shook the dust off of their clothes, the dust generated clouds in the heavens that obscured the light of the sun. Those clouds then travelled to Eretz Yisrael to provide rains of berachah.

He goes on to explain magnificently how the people in Eretz Yisrael were able to recognize that those rains fell in the merit of the Torah studied by the students in Bavel. He refers to the following Gemara (Ta'anis 25a): "רבי חייא בר לולייני שמעיניהו להגך ענני" Rabbi Chiya bar Lulyani heard the clouds in Eretz Yisrael saying: "Let us go and deliver our water to Amon and Moav." So, he would pray to HKB"Y: "רבונן של עולם, כשנתת תורה לעמך ישראל, חזרת על כל אומות העולם ולא קיבלוהו, ועכשיו אתה נותן להם מטר, שדו הכא, שדוה אדוכתייהו" Master of the Universe, when you gave Your Torah to Your people, Yisrael, you visited all the nations of the world, and they refused to accept it. And now You are going to give them rain? Let them release their rain here (in Eretz Yisrael); the clouds released the rains where they were.

It is evident from this passage that the sages could identify where a particular group of clouds came from. Thus, we can interpret the Gemara concerning the students of Rav Huna as follows: When the people of Eretz Yisrael discerned that these particular rain clouds had originated in Bavel, in the merit of the Torah studied by Rav Huna's students, they exclaimed: "The students from Rav Huna's yeshivah in Bavel are standing up now."

Notwithstanding, this still deserves further clarification. After all, we have a well-established principle (B.B. 158b): "אוריא דארץ" —the air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wiser. We find a similar teaching in the Midrash (B.R. 16, 4) related to the passuk (Bereishis 2, 12): "The gold of that land is good." This passuk teaches us that there is no Torah like the Torah of Eretz Yisrael, and there is no wisdom (chochmah) like the wisdom of Eretz Yisrael. If that is so, then why did those learning Torah in Eretz

Yisrael require rainfall in the merit of those learning Torah in Bavel? Their own learning should have been more than sufficient!

### The Incredible Shalom among the Drops of Rain

I would like to propose a wonderful explanation concerning these puzzling teachings. We learned that the dust Rav Huna's students shook off of their clothes blocked the light of the sun. According to the enlightening words of the Maharal, this generated clouds that travelled and provided rainfall in Eretz Yisrael. Now, the Mishnah (Ta'anis 2a) teaches us that rainfall is called "גבורות גשמים"—the powers of rain. The Gemara inquires (ibid.): "מאי גבורות גשמים, אמר רבי יוחנן מפני שיורדין בגבורה"—what is meant by "the powers of rain"? Rabbi Yochanan said: The insertion about rain is referred to in this manner, because it falls with the power of G-d. The commentaries strive to make sense of the phrase "גבורות גשמים".

I believe that we can interpret this description based on an exposition in the Midrash Shochar Tov related to the passuk (Tehillim 18, 12): "חשכת מים עבי שחקים"—the darkness of water, the clouds of heaven. "אמר רבי יוחנן, מעשה ניסים יש בגשמים, אדם נוטל כברה, חושר שתים ושלש אצבעות, ואינו מספיק לירד עד שמתערבין זה בזה, ומהלך חמש מאות שנה גשמים יורדין ואין טיפה מתערבת בחברתה... רב יהודה בר יחזקאל אמר, כך היה אבא מברך, יתברך ויתגדל שמייה דקודשא בריך הוא, שהן אלף אלפים" Rabbi Yochanan said: The process of rain is miraculous. If a person takes a sieve and drips two or three fingers worth, they (the drops of water) mix with each other instantaneously. The rains travel a distance of 500 years (from the heavens to the earth) and yet, one drop does not comingle with its neighbor . . . Rabbi Yehudah bar Yechezkel said: This is the blessing my father recited (regarding rain): May the name of the Holy One, blessed is He, be exalted and sanctified. Even though they are a thousand thousands and a myriad myriads, one drop does not touch its neighbor even a hairsbreadth (to the smallest degree).

Now, let us introduce a passuk from the Navi (Yirmiyah 5, 22): "האותי לא תיראו נאום ה' אם מפני לא תחילו, אשר שמתי חול גבול לים חק עולם ולא Will you not fear Me— the word of Hashem—will you not tremble before Me?" For I have set sand as boundary against the sea, as a permanent law that cannot be broken. Its waves rage forth but cannot succeed, they roar but cannot cross it." They expounded in the Midrash Shochar Tov (Tehillim 2): "הים הזה הגל שלו עולה ומתגבר כאילו: "this sea, its wave rises and intensifies as if it will flood the world; yet, when it reaches the seashore, it flattens out before the sand.

This suggests that the sea wants to inundate the entire world; however, it is afraid to trespass the boundary HKB”H set for it, marked by the sand. To explain why the sea wants to inundate the entire world, we will refer to the words of David HaMelech, a”h, (ibid. 143, 2): “ואל תבוא במשפט את עבדך כי לא יצדק לפניך כל חי”—**and do not enter into strict judgment with Your servant, for no living creature would be vindicated before You.** The sea zealously wants to defend the honor of Hashem. It is angry that the earth and its inhabitants neglect to serve Hashem properly; hence, it wants to wipe them out. Yet, HKB”H, in His infinite mercy and kindness, prohibits the sea from trespassing the boundary marked by the sand.

We can now suggest that the same applies to the rain contained in the clouds. Just as the sea down below is angry with the inhabitants of earth for their failure to fulfill the will of Hashem; the same is true of the rain in the clouds, which is formed by sea water that evaporates and rises to the heavens. As the passuk says (Bereishis 2, 6): “ואד יעלה מן הארץ והשקה את כל פני האדמה”—**a mist ascended from the earth and watered the whole surface of the soil.** Hence, they are described as “גבורות גשמים”, because all the drops of rain want to join together, and they also want to inundate and wipe out the entire world. Yet, in His infinite mercy and kindness, HKB”H mitigates their force by prohibiting them from trespassing the boundary He has set for them.

This explains magnificently the extreme punishment HKB”H imposed on the generation of the “mabul”; He opened up the windows of the heavens and flooded the entire world. Now, the Torah states explicitly (ibid. 6, 13): “ויאמר אלקים לנח קץ כל בשר בא”—**G-d said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with robbery through them.”** Rashi explains: **Their sentence was not sealed except on account of robbery.** This concurs with our current premise as follows: A robber does not respect boundaries; he invades the territory of others. Therefore, “midah k’neged midah” the drops of rain also intermingled and fell into the spaces of the other drops to inundate the entire world.

### The Connection between Those Who Study Torah and Rainfall

Continue on this pilgrimage into the wonders of the Torah, we will now proceed to explain the connection between the words “אם בחוקותי תלכו”—referring to those who devote themselves to Torah-study (Rashi)—and the reward promised them by HKB”H: **“I will provide your rains in their (most beneficial and convenient) time.”** We will refer to a passage in the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b) expounding on the passuk (Tehillim 127, 5):

“לא יבושו כי ידברו את אויבים בשער. מאי את אויבים בשער, אמר רבי חייא בר אבא. אמילו האב ובנו, הרב ותלמידו, שעוסקין בתורה בשער אחד, נעשים אויבים זה את זה, ואינם זזים משם עד שנעשים אוהבים זה את זה...”

**“They shall not be shamed when they speak with enemies in public places (literally: at the gate).” Who are the “enemies at the gate” referred to by the passuk? Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said: Even a father and his son, a Rav and his pupil, who are engaged in Torah-study at the same gate (in the same place of study); they become each other’s adversaries; and they do not vacate their positions until they make loving peace with one another ...**

This implies that to clarify a halachah thoroughly, talmidei-chachamim—Torah scholars—must debate each other fervently and tirelessly to the point that even a Rav and his pupil appear to be real, earnest enemies. Clearly, this is not the desired result. Therefore, after combatting each other on the battlefield of Torah to arrive at the true meaning of a halachah, they enjoy a peaceful resolution. This is the nature of Torah, as it is written (Mishlei 3, 17): “דרכיה דרכי נועם וכל נתיבותיה שלום”—**her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are shalom.** Therefore, they do not vacate their positions until they achieve a peaceful, amicable resolution.

This explains beautifully why the Gemara (Succah 52a) compares the Torah both to fire and to water. As it is written (Yirmiyah 23, 29): “הלא כה דברי כאש נאום ה’”—**Behold, My word is like fire, says Hashem.** And it also states (Yeshayah 55, 1): “הוי”—**ho, everyone who is thirsty, go to the water.** In other words, the Torah acts like fire to incite the enthusiasm of Torah-scholars to debate each other like mortal enemies until they clarify and arrive at the true meaning of a Torah precept. But it is also acts like water to cool off and quench the fires of those heated debates. For, the ultimate aim of the Torah is to establish shalom among those who study it and live by it.

With great delight, we have successfully shed light on the connection between the three things mentioned in the opening pesukim of parshas Bechukosai: (1) **“If you follow My decrees”**—referring to those who devote themselves to the study of Torah, (2) **“I will provide your rain in their time”**—the reward HKB”H promises them, and (3) **“I will provide peace in the land.”** For, in the merit of initially debating issues of Torah with fiery, fervent enthusiasm—consistent with the midah of “gevurah”—but subsequently making sincere peace, like calm waters—consistent with the midos of “chesed” and “ahavah”—they deserve the reward of rains of berachah. Initially, however, the rains are characterized as “גבורות גשמים”—because they intend to inundate the entire world with their power and fury until HKB”H intervenes and establishes peace among the raindrops.

As a result, each one remains in its own designated space and does not invade the space of its neighbor. In that merit: **“I will provide peace in the land, and you will lie down with none to frighten you”**—“shalom” will prevail in the world.

Let us embellish this thought. Regarding the passuk: **“And I will provide your rain in its time,”** Rashi asserts that this means that it will fall on Shabbas nights. Now, we conclude the berachah of Hashkiveinu in Arvis on Friday night with the words: **“הפורש—סוכת שלום עלינו—Who spreads a shelter (“succah”) of shalom over us.”** This is in contrast to the other nights of the week, when we conclude: **“שומר עמו ישראל לעד—Who protects His people Yisrael forever.** The Zohar hakadosh explains the rationale for this distinction (Bereishis 48a): **Come and see, when the day is sanctified on Shabbas night, a shelter of shalom rests and spreads out across the world . . . It is no longer necessary to pray for protection.** For this reason, Shabbas night is the perfect time for the rainfall of berachah, when the drops fall in a manner consistent with shalom, each one respecting the other’s space.

### The Torah of Bavel as Opposed to the Torah of Eretz Yisrael

Following this line of reasoning, we will now address the fact that rain fell in Eretz Yisrael as a result of the dust the multitude of those attending Rav Huna’s shiur shook off of their garments. Now, we learn that Abayei extolled the virtues of the sages of Eretz Yisrael as opposed to the sages of Bavel (Kesubos 75a): **“אמר אביי—Abayei said: One of theirs is better than two of ours.** But then Rava counters: **“אמר רבא, וחד מינן כי סליק—Rava said: But when one of us goes up there, he is better than two of them.** Both Abayei and Rava were Torah scholars in Bavel. The Shitah Mekubetzet brings down a fascinating interpretation in the name of the Rivash:

**It appears to me that the natural attributes of the land assist them (the scholars of Eretz Yisrael); because the air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wiser; however, they are not used to learning with as much sharpness as the Babylonians. Therefore, the (learning) habits of the Babylonians assist them, whereas the nature of the land assists the residents of Eretz Yisrael. Now, the natural tendency of the land is superior to the other’s good habits. Nevertheless, when a Babylonian scholar goes up to Eretz Yisrael, both his good habits and the beneficial nature of the land assist him. As a result, he is superior to two of them.**

Let us elaborate on the explanation of the Rivash based on the praise of Torah scholars of Eretz Yisrael lauded by our blessed

sages (Sanhedrin 24a): **“מאי דכתיב ואקח לי שני מקלות, לאחד קראתי נועם ולאחד קראתי חובלים, נועם אלו תלמידי חכמים שבארץ ישראל שמונעימין זה לזה בהלכה, חובלים אלו תלמידי חכמים שבבבל שמוחבלים זה לזה בהלכה.”** **What is the meaning of the passuk (Zechariah 11, 7): “And I took for myself two staffs, one I called ‘gracious’ and one I called ‘assaulters’?” ‘Gracious’ represents the Torah scholars of Eretz Yisrael, who are gracious towards one another in matters of halachah. ‘Assaulters’ represents the Torah scholars of Bavel, who assault each other in matters of halachah.**

Furthermore, regarding the Talmud Bavli, the Gemara (ibid.) expounds on the following passuk (Eichah 3, 6): **“במחשכים הושיבני—He has placed me in darkness like the eternally dead.”** **Rabbi Yirmiyah said: This alludes to the Talmud of Bavel.** Rashi explains: **“במחשכים—due to their rivalry, their analysis remains inconclusive and in doubt; they remain confused as if they are shrouded in darkness. Thus, it seems as if Chazal were speaking ill of the Babylonian scholars; they are described as assaulting each other; their Talmud is compared to darkness.**

### The Halachah Accords with the Talmud Bavli rather than the Talmud Yerushalmi

Notwithstanding, we find a fundamental principle in the writings of the Rishonim concerning the esteemed status of the Talmud Bavli. Whenever there is a difference of opinion between the Talmud Bavli and the Talmud Yerushalmi, the halachah always accords with the ruling of the Talmud Bavli. This is evident from Rashi’s ruling (Chullin 50a) regarding the consumption of a particular abdominal fat. He rules stringently in keeping with the Babylonian tradition prohibiting it, rather than in keeping with the lenient tradition of Eretz Yisrael permitting it. He states: **“דכתר בני בבל גריינן דאנן בני גולה אנן—we follow the Babylonian traditions, because we are from the diaspora.**

This principle to follow the opinion of the sages of Bavel does not apply solely to minhagim but also to practical halachah. As a rule, we follow the ruling of the Talmud Bavli when it disputes the Talmud Yerushalmi even when it rules leniently. This is evident from the writings of the Rif (end of Maseches Eiruvim) and the Rosh (ibid.):

**“דכיון דסוגיין דגמרא דילן להיתרא, לא איכפת לן במאי דאסרי בגמרא דבני מערבא, דעל גמרא דילן סמכינן דכתרא הוא, ואינהו הוי בקיאי בגמרא דבני מערבא טפי מינן, ואי לאו דקים להו דהאי גמרא דבני מערבא לאו דסמכא הוא, לא קא שרו ליה אינהו.”**

Although this passage of ours rules leniently, it does not matter to us that the scholars in Eretz Yisrael prohibited it in their Gemara. We rely on ours, since it was established at a later

date; and we are more proficient than the Talmudic sages of the west (Eretz Yisrael).

The remarks of the Rif and the Rosh are based on the following teaching in the Gemara (B.M.): "רב אשי ורבינא סוף הוראה"—**Rav Ashi and Ravina shall be the last of the Amoraim.** Rav Ashi and Ravina arranged all of the statements and teachings we have in the Talmud Bavli and placed them in their proper order (in association with the respective Mishnah). First, they clarified and edited all of the halachos established by the sages of Bavel and the sages of Eretz Yisrael. Rashi explains:

**Until their time, the Gemara did not exist in an orderly or organized form. Rather, when a question was asked in the Beis Midrash regarding the rationale of a Mishnah, or a question was raised concerning a particular incident involving monetary issues or issues of prohibition and permissibility (ritual law), every Amora would state his own opinion. Then Rav Ashi and Ravina organized the statements of the Amoraim that preceded them and arranged them based on the order of the masechtos; every group (of related teachings and statements) was appended to its appropriate and corresponding Mishnah. Additionally, they, together with the Amoraim that joined them, posed the difficulties that needed to be resolved and the questions that needed to be answered. This was all formalized in the Gemara.**

This is indeed perplexing. If this is true, then how do we reconcile the statements extolling the virtues of Toras Eretz Yisrael: "The air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wiser" and "there is no Torah like the Torah of Eretz Yisrael, and there is no wisdom like the wisdom of Eretz Yisrael"?

### The Scholars in Bavel Had to Exert Themselves More than the Scholars of Eretz Yisrael

We will endeavor to explain. Indeed, it is true that the Torah of Eretz Yisrael is dearer, since it is studied on the holy land that HKB"H chose as the dwelling-place for His Shechinah; and this is the implication of that which is written (Yeshayah 2, 3): "כי מציון—**for Torah will come forth from Tziyon and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim.** Nevertheless, it is precisely for this reason that those who study Torah outside of Eretz Yisrael are cherished so dearly. For, on account of the spiritual darkness in the lands of the nations, they have to work much harder and be more diligent in their Torah-study than their counterparts in Eretz Yisrael. Hence, the dictum we have learned in the Gemara (Megillah 6b) applies all the more so to them: **אם יאמר לך אדם, יגעתי ולא מצאתי אל תאמן, לא יגעתי ומצאתי אל תאמן, יגעתי ומצאתי**

**תאמן—if a person claims: "I labored and did not succeed," do not believe him; "I did not labor and I succeeded," do not believe him; "I labored and I succeeded," believe him.**

With this understanding, we can better appreciate the following elucidation of Chazal related to the passuk: **במחשכים הושיבני כמותי עולם—He has placed me in darkness like the eternally dead.** They interpret this passuk as referring to the sages of Talmud Bavli, who had to reveal the light of Torah from amidst the darkness of galus; hence, they merited the tremendous, exalted light of the Torah. As the Zohar hakadosh explains (Tetzaveh 184a): **דלית נהורא אלא ההוא דנפיק מגו חשוכא**—there is no light comparable to the light that emerges from the darkness.

This concurs magnificently with a teaching in the Midrash Tanchuma (Noach 3) concerning Torah she'b'al peh based on the passuk (Yeshayah 9, 1): **העם ההולכים בחושך ראו אור גדול, אלו בעלי התלמוד שראו אור גדול, שהקב"ה מאיר עיניהם באיסור והיתר בטמא ובטהור... לפיכך מתן שכרה לעולם הבא, שנאמר העם ההולכים בחושך ראו אור גדול, אור גדול - "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." This refers to the scholars of the Talmud who saw a magnificent light; for HKB"H illuminated their eyes regarding what is prohibited and what is permissible, what is tamei and what is tahor . . . Therefore, its reward is in Olam HaBa . . . for the magnificent light they saw is the light that was created on the first day that HKB"H stored for those who labor in the study of Torah she'b'al peh day and night.**

This explains very nicely the teaching in the Gemara cited above comparing the Torah-scholars of Bavel to the Torah-scholars of Eretz Yisrael: **"No'am"** ("gracious") depicts the Torah scholars of Eretz Yisrael, who are gracious towards one another in matters of halachah. **"Chovlim"** ("assaulters") depicts the Torah scholars of Bavel, who assault each other in matters of halachah. The sages of Eretz Yisrael did not have to argue with each other extensively in order to clarify the halachah based on the tenets of the Torah, because the kedushah and the very air of Eretz Yisrael assisted them and contributed to their success. The sages of Bavel, however, learning in an environment characterized as darkness--**"במחשכים הושיבני"**--did not have it as easy. They had to dispute one another and become adversarial in order to reach a correct and true halachic decision. In the words of the Gemara cited above: **אפילו האב ובנו הרב ותלמידו שעוסקין בתורה בשער אחד, נעשים אויבים זה את זה, ואינם זדים משם עד שנעשים אהבים זה את זה**—even a father and son, a Rabbi and his pupil, they fought relentlessly like enemies until arriving at a satisfactory, harmonious conclusion.

Now, we can also better appreciate the Rivash's explanation of the statements made by the two prominent Babylonian scholars—Abayei and Rava. Abayei claimed that one scholar from Eretz Yisrael was the equal of two from Bavel due to the kedushah of his location: "אױרא דארץ ישראל מחכים". Then Rava added that one scholar from Bavel who went up to Eretz Yisrael became as great as two of their scholars.

Seeing as this scholar was nurtured on the Torah of Bavel—a place akin to darkness—he had to labor and debate Torah issues extensively and perseveringly in order to reveal the light of the Torah concealed within the darkness of galus. Upon going up to Eretz Yisrael, he benefitted from the divine assistance associated with the kedushah of the land. Hence, he now had two advantages on his side working together—the kedushah of Eretz Yisrael and the intense, relentless methodology he had acquired in Bavel. As we know, two working in concert are superior to one alone; thus, this scholar from Bavel was now considered the equal of two from Eretz Yisrael.

### The Torah Scholars in Bavel Rid Themselves of Their Anger and Hatred

We can now shed some light on the enigmatic words of our sages concerning the multitude of Rav Huna's students: **When the rabbinic students rose** after attending the lecture **at the Academy of Rav Huna, and they brushed off their cloaks** to remove the dust, **a cloud of dust would rise and obscure the light of day. They would say in the West** (Eretz Yisrael), **"They have risen from the yeshivah of Rav Huna the Babylonian."** The dust that clung to their clothing alludes to the animosity that developed among the Torah-scholars of Bavel. This is why they are described above as **"chovlim"**—they assault each other as if they are real enemies. In the words of the Gemara: **"These are the Torah scholars of Bavel, who assault each other in matters of halachah."** Hence, the dust was only on their external clothing, because their apparent hatred was merely external—to help them clarify and arrive at a proper understanding of the halachah.

Yet, we are reassured that **"they did not not vacate their positions until they made loving peace with one another."** Therefore, at the conclusion of their studies, the Torah-scholars of Bavel rose from their places. In other words, they rose to another level of friendship; they abandoned the external hatred and hostility that had developed between them in the course of their vehement halachic debates; and they brushed away the dust—the hatred and hostility that had stuck to their garments during their heated debates—becoming loving friends once again.

Then our blessed sages teach us the importance of this dust that clung to their clothing in the eyes of Hashem. It was so important and cherished that it rose and obscured the light of the sun. After all, without these heated debates, they never would have arrived at the true intent of the Torah. Hence, even the Torah-scholars in Eretz Yisrael, who were pleasant to one another while learning, were so moved and impressed by the dust raised from the Torah-learning of the scholars in Bavel that they exclaimed: **"They have risen from the yeshivah of Rav Huna the Babylonian."** In other words, they acknowledged that in the merit of their heated, fierce debates, the scholars of Bavel had risen to another level.

At this point, we have also achieved a greater understanding of the explanation proposed by the Maharal of Prague, zy"a—that the dust that rose from the garments of the Torah-scholars in Bavel generated clouds that ultimately provided rainfall in Eretz Yisrael. The Torah-scholars in Bavel assaulted each other while learning Torah, because that was the nature of their locale and surroundings. Nevertheless, at the conclusion of their studies, they shook off all negative, hostile feelings and made peace with one another. It was specifically in their merit that clouds formed that dropped rains of berachah in Eretz Yisrael—rain whose raindrops were at peace with one another and did not invade their neighbor's space.

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