



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Raindrops Keep Falling on Your Succah
2. Post Post
3. Yiddle Riddle



Eliyahu Shear <alshear@global.co.za> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

The Talmud says rain during Succot is considered a curse. I am aware of the analogy of the servant and his master asking for a jug of water etc. My question is this: The fact that it rains on Succot — is this considered a curse no matter which country one lives in, or does it only apply in Israel, being that at that time it is NOT yet the rainy season?

Dear Eliyahu,

Yes, rain during the Succot is not a good 'omen.' The Sages compare it to a servant who comes to pour a drink for his master, but instead of accepting the cup, the master splashes water in the servant's face. Likewise, we desire to perform the mitzva of sitting in the succah, but instead, Hashem pours water on our heads.

So if it rains in Cleveland or Miami, is that a bad omen during Succot? It normally rains in those places during Succot. Or is it a bad omen only in Israel, where rain is highly unusual at that time of year? (I've lived in Israel seven years and remember only once feeling a few drops of rain on Succot.)

Logically, the bad omen should apply only in a land where it's not yet the rainy season. This would include not only Israel, but the whole Middle East and anywhere that isn't yet the rainy season.

However Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein writes that the 'bad omen' applies **only in Israel**. This can be explained as follows:

The mitzvot were chiefly intended for the Land of Israel. Even mitzvot having no obvious connection to the land — mitzvot such as Shabbat and Kashrut — were intended mainly for performance in Israel. Although mitzvot certainly apply wherever you are; nevertheless, the mitzvot are "laws of the G-d of the Land" and are performed ideally in 'The Land.'

Hence, the analogy of the servant and the master can be seen as applying specifically to Israel.

Sources:

- Aruch Hashulchan 639:20
- Ramban, Leviticus 18:25

[Name withheld] wrote via the Internet:

Is it permissible to re-use U. S. postage stamps that came through un-cancelled? What if the use is for sending charity?

Dear [Name Withheld],

A postage stamp can be thought of as proof that delivery of the letter has been paid for. If so, reusing a stamp is tricking the Postal Service into thinking the letter has been paid for, which in fact is not the case. This would be called '*genevat daat*'— fraud — something that's certainly forbidden.

You suggested that perhaps the stamp could be used for sending money to charity. Sorry, but giving charity is not a proper way to launder stolen money.

I once heard this idea expressed by my teacher, Rabbi Shmuel Feivelson, *shlita*. He asked, "Why does the section of the Torah dealing with monetary laws (*Parshat Mishpatim*) precede the commandment to donate to the building of the Holy Sanctuary (*Parshat Terumah*)? Because, before you donate money to charity, you have to make sure it's rightfully yours."

Source:

- Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 348:2.

Yiddle Riddle

If a tree falls in a forest and there's nobody around to hear it, does it make a noise?

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