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פרשת האזינו / Parshas Ha'azinu

"May my teachings fall like the rain" Devarim 32:2

"יערף כמטר לקחיי" דברים לב:

Rashi explains that Moshe Rabbeinu called upon the Heavens and the Earth to be his eternal witnesses and testify that "יערף כמטר לקחיי" – "My Torah falls like rain". Said Moshe, "This is the testimony that you shall attest that I have said before you - the Torah that I have given to Yisrael is eternal life, just like rain which is the source of לעולם חיים - eternal life.

The Baal Haturim points out that the lashon of "יערף" is found twice in our Mesorah. Once here in Parshas Ha'azinu and the second time in Sefer Hoshea. He explains that if one learns Torah like Moshe Rabbeinu, it will act as an elixir of life, a סם החיים for him. However if one does not merit for he learns "שלא לשמה", with ulterior motives, it may take the effect of a סם המות - cyanide. As the pasuk in Hoshea states "יערף מזבחותם", "He will destroy their altars". The word "יערף" in this context is a lashon of "עריפה" as we find by the עגלה ערופה, which has its neck snapped.

However this dichotomy may not be immediately identifiable. R' Bunim from Pshischa brings another reason why the words of Torah are like rain. The immediate effect of rainfall is imperceptible on the crops, only after time as the sun comes out from behind the clouds and shines on the fields causing them to grow, can we see the effect of the rain. The same is true with Divrei Torah. At the time that we hear them and learn them, we may not immediately sense their influence, but with time their powerful effect will be felt, if we have properly prepared ourselves to accept it.

R' Yisrael Salanter adds that just as rain only aids in the production of the crops if the field has been properly plowed and sowed, but a field that has not been planted will not see any results from the rain, to the contrary, it will become ruined, so too is with the Torah; it can only have its powerful cleansing effect and influence a person who has worked on himself and prepared himself to accept it. But for a fool, learning the Torah will be only more detrimental to his already damaged brain.

Just as rain aids in the growth of vegetation, the Torah aids the growth of our Nefesh. Just as rain nourishes the roots of what will be a great tree well before even a sapling is visible above the soil, the Torah implants itself deep within us to begin affecting change while giving no immediately visible signs. Just as rain draws out whatever has been planted in the ground, good and bad seed alike, resulting in both giant redwoods and killer weeds, the Torah draws out whatever we have planted in our hearts, if we have planted the Fear of Hashem inside, our connection to Him will grow, if we have planted negative character traits, that is what the Torah will cause to sprout out of us for all to see. (See *Gra* in אבן שלמה)

There are two points here. The first is that we must prepare ourselves to be a fitting vessel for which to receive the Torah and allow it to infuse us with eternal life and not the opposite. The second point is that although this positive effect that the Torah will inevitably have on us may not be immediately recognizable, have no fear, the Torah is taking root deep inside of us and we will ultimately see the fruits of our labor. Just as a tree takes root deep inside the ground, the Torah takes root deep inside a person. It grows from within and its growth is indiscernible at first. The extent that we have worked to make ourselves fitting to hold and carry this precious gift from Hashem will determine its effect on us. "עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה" - if we are fitting to receive the Torah then it will be for us a Tree of Life. We prefer not to talk about the alternative. We are standing now before Shabbos Shuva and Yom Kippur. Not a bad time to clean up our act and ensure that we are fitting to stand before Hashem on the biggest day of the year. This in turn will allow us to experience the maximum positive influence that the Torah may have on us.