

# THE AQUARIAN MINYAN

Winter, 1991-2

Geshem

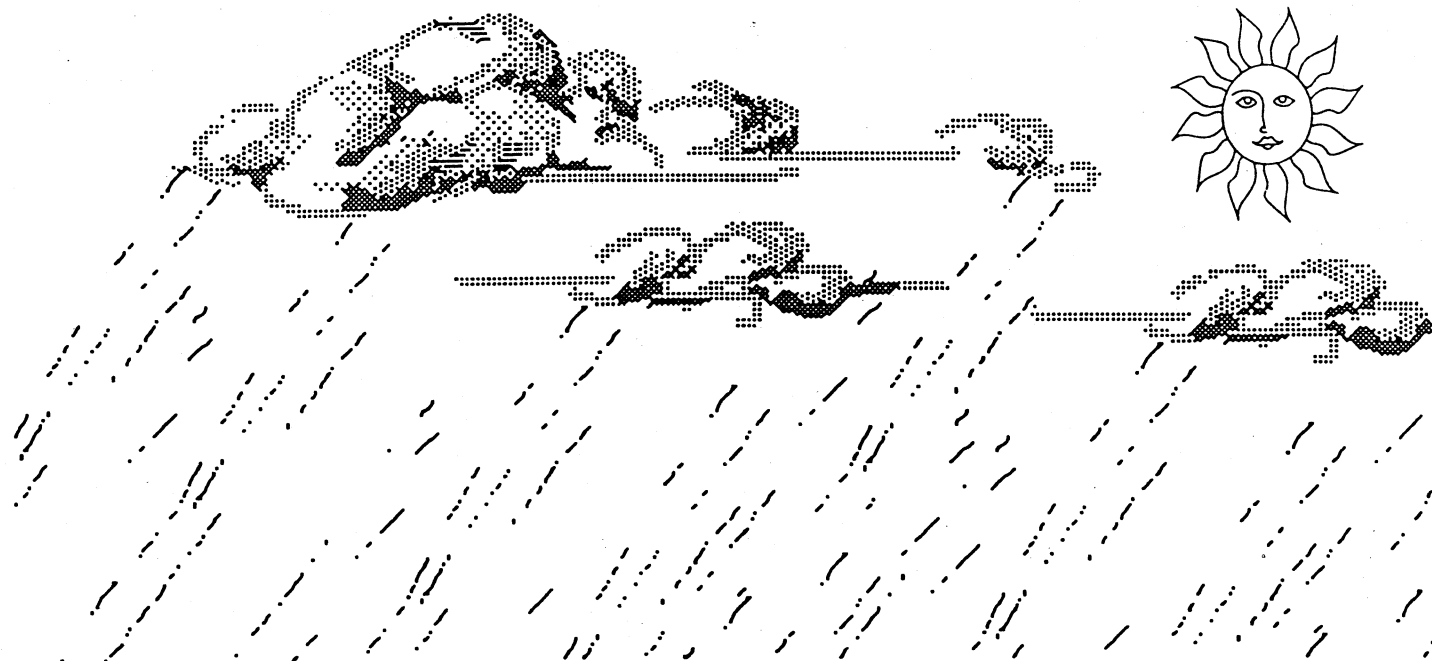
Khoref, 5752

December  
January  
February  
March

גשם

Tevet  
Sh'vat  
Adar I  
Adar II

## Crystallizing Rain



גשם, *Geshem*, is translated as "heavy, continuous rain." *Geshem* is also translated as "substance" or "physical." In the Talmud these two ideas of "rain" and "substance" are associated, because when the earth becomes thickened by rain it becomes more weighty. As the dust becomes wet, it gathers itself together and becomes heavier, thus more substantive. Later, as things grow and fruits of the earth appear, the earth becomes substantive in a different way. In the Midrash, the same word *Geshem*, is used to describe one's body. In English the word body often refers to the substance of a thing, a determinable mass. לגשת, *Lageshet* means to draw physically close. An associated word, גשש, *Gashash*, means to touch something, to bump against. רגש, *Regesh*, is Hebrew for sensitivity, feeling.

The root idea of all these words is to become able to feel something which was previously not quite palpable. Our whole lives are bound up trying to bring forward things which are almost but not quite there. We sense the potential for better life and we work to make it more sensible, to bring it closer, to give substance to our intuition. May our work in the months of rain bring rain in addition to crystallizing our fruitful potential in a clear unity.

### *Coming into Substance*

In Hassidut, the process of becoming substantive is considered a late development in the ongoing process of Creation. According to the Kabbala, this universe of ours is foreshadowed by Godly energy flowing along in infinite waves of fluctuation, in which the power of infinite expansion is balanced by the power of infinite contraction. Although nothing in particular is manifest, nothing is felt to be missing. All is present in a potential form which does not lack actuality, as we say, "Adon olam asher malakh b'terem kol y'tzir nivra," (Master of the universe,

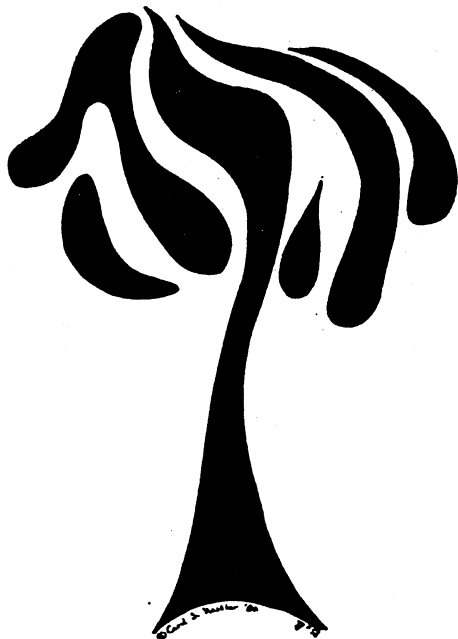
who ruled before anything was created.) Then, the first act of creation takes place.

Although we usually think of "Let there be light," as the first thing that occurs in creation, the Kabbala says that the first event is making a dark place where the light could be noticed. The power of contraction is allowed to contract the expansion giving birth to a womb-dimension, called the cosmic egg within the Divine. Into this darkened place, a teeny tiny surge of the power of expansion shines. The two infinite forces of expansion and contraction (*Hesed* and *Gevura*), like God's two hands, work together (not too much expansion nor too much contraction), cooperating to make patterns. These patterns go through (at least) four stages of filters which result, ultimately, in us. These four stages are symbolized by the four letters of God's name. You might say that the letters of God's name are the map which leads to our creation.

Many of the Divine energies within the cosmic egg become substantive at the very last stages of the last contraction. Our world arises as the *hitgashmut*, substantiation, of patterns of energies coming into mass.

#### *Spiritual Awakening as Coming into Form*

Jacob Neusner in his book *Incarnation of God* describes five stages of spiritual awakening. At first most people usually accept the idea of God as a (1) *Premise*, that is, a basic inference or legend that has only a thin reality in their day to day lives.



Later, much like Moses in front of the burning bush, an individual can begin to sense a (2) *Presence* of the Divine. As a person speaks to and hears responses from the *Presence*, he or she relates to it as if to a (3) *Person*. As its character and idiosyncrasies become more familiar, we may so be blessed as to come to know the presence as a distinct (4) *Personality*. As the *Personality* becomes ever clearer, a transformation of reality occurs; what was once only a thought, now takes on physical substance as an (5) *Incarnation*.

The process of awakening is often considered to be a mirror of the process of creation; we climb back up the ladder upon which we descended in the first place. The process of spiritual awakening described here parallels the way creation happens. Infinite light becomes finite patterns. Patterns begin to take on *Khomer*, material, something without mass but with increasing relation to the physical world. Later they became *M'gusham*, substantive and weighty. In like manner, our premises begin to be felt presences; we speak to them as if to persons, and know them as personalities; and then they appear before us in the world of consensus reality.

#### *Prayers for Geshem Actualize All Other Prayers*

At the end of Sukkot, we pray for rain. Hassidism interprets these prayers for rain as if they were our lobbying attempt for all the blessings and prayers that we have prayed for throughout the High Holydays to physicalize. This idea is hooked onto the word *geshem*, which carries a double meaning of both *rain* and *substance*.

This prayer for *geshem* is considered necessary because sometimes the blessings that we are supposed to receive (ordained for us on the High Holydays) come down to us as insubstantial energies lacking substance. We might get a picture of a new car instead of the car. The Hassidic interpretations of the prayers for *geshem* suggest, "May your blessings really actualize. May you have the blessings promised for you in the real world."

The way rain forms closely parallels how all things come into matter. A drop just happens to come together from the moisture in the cloud when the temperature and pressure are right. When the spiritual temperature and pressure align, things start to happen, magic becomes substance and begins to coalesce, right before our eyes. Our blessings take on body. We are engaged in making *geshem*, the physicalizing of our blessings, all the time. We know how to do this.

We look forward to a winter of *geshem* in all of its meanings. May this be a winter of ample rain which will end the drought both here and in Israel.

*Reb David Wolfe-Blank*