

Literary techniques in Ta'anit chapter 1

1. Read the chapter and give it a general title
2. Divide the chapter into two parts and give a title to each one of the parts
3. Notice key words and phrases.
4. How is the chapter structured?

[א] מאימתי מזכירין גבורות גשמים.
רבי אליעזר אומר, מיום טוב הראשון של חג. רבי יהושע אומר, מיום טוב האחרון של חג.
אמר לו רבי יהושע. הואיל ואין הגשמים אלא סימן קללה בחג, למה מזכיר.
אמר לו רבי אליעזר, אף אני לא אמרתי לשאול, אלא להזכיר משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם בעונתו.
אמר לו, אם כן, לעולם יהא מזכיר:

From when, i.e., from which date, **does one** begin to **mention the might of the rains** by inserting the phrase: He makes the wind blow and rain fall, in the second blessing of the *Amida* prayer? **Rabbi Eliezer says:** The phrase is inserted **from the first Festival day of the festival** of *Sukkot*. **Rabbi Yehoshua says: From the last Festival day of the festival of Sukkot.** **Rabbi Yehoshua said to** Rabbi Eliezer: **Since rain is nothing other** than a **sign of a curse during the festival** of *Sukkot*, as rainfall forces Jews to leave their *sukkot*, **why** should **one mention** the might of rain during this period? **Rabbi Eliezer said to him: I too did not say** that it is proper **to request** rain at this time, **but** it is proper only **to mention** the phrase: **He makes the wind blow and rain fall, in its due time.** **Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: If so**, i.e., if reciting the phrase does not constitute a request for rain, **one should always mention** rain, even in the summer.

[ב] אין שואלין את הגשמים אלא סמוך לגשמים.
רבי יהודה אומר, העובר לפני התבה ביום טוב האחרון של חג, האחרון מזכיר, הראשון אינו מזכיר.
ביום טוב הראשון של פסח, הראשון מזכיר, האחרון אינו מזכיר.
עד אימתי שואלין את הגשמים?
רבי יהודה אומר, עד שיעבר הפסח.
רבי מאיר אומר, עד שיצא ניסן, שנאמר (יואל ב) ויורד לכם גשם, מורה ומלקוש בראשון:

The mishna states a general principle: **One requests rain only** immediately **preceding the rainy season.** **Rabbi Yehuda says:** With regard to **the one who passes before the ark** as prayer leader **on the concluding Festival day of the festival** of *Sukkot*, the Eighth Day of Assembly: **The last** prayer leader, who leads the additional prayer, **mentions** rain, whereas **the first** prayer leader, for the morning prayer, **does not mention** rain. The opposite is the case at the conclusion of the period for mentioning rain **on the first Festival day of Passover:** Here, **the first** prayer leader, who leads the morning prayer, **mentions** rain, while **the last** prayer leader, who leads the additional prayer, **does not mention** rain. **Until when does one request rain?** **Rabbi Yehuda says:** We request rain **until Passover has passed.** **Rabbi Meir says: Until** the month of **Nisan has ended, as it is stated: "And He causes to come down for you the rain, the first**

rain and the last rain, in the first month” (Joel 2:23). Since the verse states that it rains in Nisan, the first month, this indicates that the entire month is considered part of the rainy season.

[ג] בשלשה במרחשון שואלין את הגשמים.
רבן גמליאל אומר, בשבעה בו, חמשה עשר יום אחר החג, כדי שיגיע אחרון שבישראל לנהר פרת:

On the third of the month of Marḥeshvan one starts to **request rain** by inserting the phrase: And give dew and rain, in the blessing of the years, the ninth blessing of the *Amida*. **Rabban Gamliel says:** One starts to request rain **on the seventh of Marḥeshvan**, which is **fifteen days after the festival of Sukkot**. Rabban Gamliel explains that one waits these extra four days **so that the last pilgrim of the Jewish people**, who traveled to Jerusalem on foot for the Festival, **can reach the Euphrates River** without being inconvenienced by rain on his journey home.

[ד] הגיע שבעה עשר במרחשון ולא ירדו גשמים, התחילו היחידים מתעניין שלש תעניות. אוכלין ושותין משחשכה, ומתירין במלאכה וברחיצה ובסיכה ובנעילת הסנדל ובתשמיש המטה:

If the **seventeenth of Marḥeshvan arrived and rain has not fallen, individuals**, but not the entire community, **begin to fast three fasts** for rain. How are these fasts conducted? As the fast begins in the morning, one **may eat and drink after dark, and one is permitted** during the days of the fasts themselves to engage in the performance of **work, in bathing, in smearing oil** on one's body, **in wearing shoes, and in conjugal relations**.

[ה] הגיע ראש חדש כסלו ולא ירדו גשמים, בית דין גוזרין שלש תעניות על הצבור. אוכלין ושותין משחשכה, ומתירין במלאכה וברחיצה ובסיכה ובנעילת הסנדל ובתשמיש המטה:

If the **New Moon of Kislev arrived and rain has still not fallen, the court decrees three fasts on the entire community**. Similar to the individual fasts, everyone **may eat and drink after dark, and they are permitted to** engage in the performance of **work, in bathing, in smearing one's body with oil, in wearing shoes, and in conjugal relations**.

[ו] עברו אלו ולא נענו, בית דין גוזרין שלש תעניות אחרות על הצבור.
אוכלין ושותין מבעוד יום,
ואסורין במלאכה וברחיצה ובסיכה ובנעילת הסנדל ובתשמיש המטה, ונועלין את המרחצאות.
עברו אלו ולא נענו, בית דין גוזרין עליהם עוד שבע, שהן שלש עשרה תעניות על הצבור.
הרי אלו יתרות על הראשונות,
שבאלו מתריעין ונועלין את החנויות, בשני מטין עם חשכה, ובחמישי מתירין מפני כבוד השבת:

If these three regular fasts have **passed and they have not been answered** with rain, the **court decrees three other fasts upon the community**. These are severe fasts, in which one **may eat and drink only while it is still day**, before the beginning of the night of the fast, **and on the day of the fast itself they are prohibited** to engage in the performance of **work, in bathing, in smearing with oil, in wearing shoes, and in marital relations; and they lock the bathhouses** so that no one should come to bathe on that day.

If these three fasts have passed and they still have not been answered, the court decrees on them another seven fasts, which are a total of thirteen fasts, upon the community, not including the first three fasts observed by individuals. These seven fast days are more severe than the first ones, as on these days, in addition to all the earlier stringencies, they sound the alarm, as will be explained in the Gemara, and they lock the stores. Although shops must remain closed most of the time on these days, on Monday they open them a little at nightfall to allow people to purchase food for breaking their fast, and on Thursday they are permitted to open the stores all day in deference to Shabbat, so that people may purchase food for the sacred day.

[ז] עָבְרוּ אֵלָיו וְלֹא נִעְנוּ, מִמַּעֲטֵין בְּמִשְׁאָא וּמִתֵּן, בְּבִבְנִין וּבְנִטְיֵעָה, בְּאַרוּסִין וּבְנִשׁוּאִין וּבְשִׂאֵלַת שְׁלוֹם בֵּין אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ, כְּבִנְיָ אָדָם הַנְּזוּפִין לְמִקּוֹם.
הַיְחִידִים חוֹזְרִים וּמִתְעַנִּים עַד שְׂיֵצָא נִסָּן.
יֵצֵא נִסָּן וְלֹא יֵרְדוּ גְשָׁמִים, סִימֵן קָלְלָהּ, שְׁנֶאֱמַר (שְׁמוּאֵל א יב) הֲלוֹא קִצִּיר חֲטִיִּים הַיּוֹם, וְגו'.

If these fasts have passed and they have not been answered the court does not decree additional fasts, but the entire community observes the customs of mourning. They decrease their engagement in business transactions, in building and planting, in betrothals and marriages, and in greetings between each person and his fellow, like people who have been rebuked by God. The individuals, i.e., Torah scholars, resume fasting every Monday and Thursday until the month of Nisan ends. After this date they no longer pray for rain, since if Nisan has ended and rains subsequently fall, they are a sign of a curse, as it is stated: “Is not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the Lord that He may send thunder and rain, and you will know and see that your wickedness is great” (I Samuel 12:17). The wheat harvest is around the time of *Shavuot*, well after Nisan.