A History of Sukkot in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods

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Sukkot and Rain in the Tannaitic Period

The vision of Zechariah reveals a widespread belief that the observance of Sukkot influenced the supply of rain. Most scholars assume this idea dated back to ancient times; rain festivals are found universally in agricultural societies and stem from the most essential religious urges. Pseudo-Philo makes this conception explicit by interpreting the lulav as a sign for God to send rain. Water libations, circumambulations with willows and other rain-making rituals conducted at the temple indicate that rain was a central, if not the central, focus of the festival.

The destruction of the temple entailed the potential cessation of this orientation of Sukkot. Rain-making rituals, we noted in the previous chapter, rested on the mythic conception of the temple as the seat of fertility and the ability of the cult to stimulate the powers of nature. Apart from this general notion of the power of the temple, the individual Sukkot rituals depended on a mythic structure that no longer obtained. Water libations worked because they stimulated the subterranean waters of the Deep lurking directly beneath the altar. To pour water libations after the destruction of the temple would have been religiously unintelligible. The water could not reach the Deep nor set in motion the hydraulic processes that originated from the flow of the primordial waters. The destruction of the temple required a reconceptualization of the processes of rejuvenation of the natural world in ways that played

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down the role of the cult. No longer could temple rituals be seen as the
central means to restore the earth's fertility. Fortunately mythic-cultic
conceptions coexisted with other religious ideas in both biblical and
rabbinic thought. The lack of any official or systematic theology here
proved to be a great advantage, for the rabbis inherited a plethora of
religious conceptions from which to draw. They possessed ample
theological resources with which to construct a post-temple worldview.
However, nothing guaranteed that the religious ideas that came to the
fore would give Sukkot a function related to rain. Indeed, given the
conspicuous absence of biblical testimony to this relationship, a new
construction of Sukkot without such a component was a distinct
possibility.

In this respect the destruction of the temple presented the
opportunity for a deliberate reinterpretation of the festival. Some have
suggested that the absence of biblical testimonies to the connection
between Sukkot and rain reflects the uneasiness of the biblical authors
toward mythic and magical ideas.² For example, the creation account of
Gen 1 eliminates such myths as YHWH's struggle with other gods or the
ancient sea-monsters (theomachy), the formation of the earth from the
body of the defeated gods, the creation of the primordial temple and so
forth. Fragments of these myths in other biblical passages reveal that
they were widely known yet deliberately suppressed by the authors of
Gen 1.³ Likewise, festival legislation in the Pentateuch is largely purged
of mythic conceptions. For this reason, evidence of the complex of myth
and ritual expressed at the ancient Israelite festivals must be
reconstructed from Psalms.⁴ Even Zech 14, the one biblical passage that
explicitly links observance of Sukkot and rain, involves clearer notions of
divine judgment and reward than myth and cult. Just as biblical authors
may have toned down the association between Sukkot and rain, the
rabbis might have exploited the cessation of the cult to eliminate that
dimension of the festival.

Rabbinic views on the connection between Sukkot and rain thus
provide an excellent opportunity to evaluate the extent of continuity or
discontinuity from second temple to rabbinic times. In this case we find
strong evidence of continuity together with signs of subtle shifts in
thought. Tannaitic sources express the link between Sukkot and rain in

²Licht, *Sukkot*, 174. Licht also proposes there was no need to mention the element
of rain because it was obvious to all. On the general biblical aversion to myth, see
⁴Thus Mowinckel and other proponents of the enthronement festival depend
ultimately on the form-critical analysis of Psalms for their primary evidence.
three ways: by notions of the divine judgment concerning rain, through interpretations of the festival rituals, and through the liturgy.

I. Sukkot, Rain and Divine Judgment

Conceptions of divine judgment and the calendrical position of the festival underlie the tannaitic view of Sukkot and rain. As in Zech 14, the operative factor is not the proper observance of the festival but divine judgment that takes place on the festival. God determines the amount of rain that will fall based on the behavior of the people, and that judgment is assigned to Sukkot on account of its calendrical position.

[A] At four times in the year the world is judged:
[1] at Pesah, on grain;
[2] at Shavuot, on the fruits of the tree;
[3] On Rosh Hashana, all human beings pass before Him like a body of soldiers,5 as it is written, He who fashions the hearts of them all, who discerns all their doings (Ps 33:15);
[4] and on the Festival [of Sukkot] they are judged on water. 
(mRH 1:2)

[B] R. Akiba6 said: The Torah said:
[1] Bring an 'omer of barley on Pesah, since it is the season of barley, in order that grain will be blessed for you.
[2] Bring wheat [and]7 first fruits on Shavuot, since it is the season of trees, in order that the fruits of the trees will be blessed for you.
[3] Bring the libation of water on Sukkot, [since it is the season for rain],8 in order that the rainwaters will be blessed for you.
[4] Say before him verses of kingship (malkhuyot), verses of remembrance (zichronot) and verses of the shofar (shofarot)...
(tRH 1:12)

[A] Everything is judged on Rosh Hashana, and its sentence sealed on Yom Kippur. These are the words of R. Meir.

[B] R. Yehuda says:9 Everything is judged on Rosh Hashana, and its sentence is sealed in its time. (1) On Pesah, on grain. (2) On Shavuot, on the fruit of the tree. (3) On Sukkot, on water. (4) And the sentence of human beings is sealed on Yom Kippur.
(tRH 1:13)10

5See MS Kaufmann, MS Vienna of tRH 1:11 and TK, 5:1022.
6bRH 16a reads, "R. Yehuda said in the name of R. Akiba."
7So MS London. MS Vienna omits the "and." MS Erfurt has only "wheat." See TK, 5:1024.
8So MSS London, and Erfurt; MS Vienna omits. In the parallel at tSuk 3:18, MS Erfurt has the phrase; MSS Vienna and London omit. Alfasi to bRH 16a reads "because the Festival is the season of rains of the year." See DQS ad loc, n. 8 and see below, n. 21.
9MS Erfurt adds: "in the name of R. Akiba."
10Cf. bRH 16a; Sifre Num. §150 (196); Sifre Deut. §40 (81-82). yRH 2:3, 57a brings these and other opinions without attributions.
According to the Mishna, God renders judgment at four different times throughout the year. The Mishna itself provides little explanation as to why the respective judgments occur at these times. The reasoning appears in the two Toseftan passages, which point out that these festivals fall at the time of year appropriate for the item judged — "the season of" (barley, trees, etc.), in the words of R. Akiba (tRH 1:12), or "in its time," in the words of R. Yehuda (tRH 1:13B). The judgment that determines the scope of the "grain" crop occurs at Pesah, since spring is the season of the barley harvest, and Pesah is the spring festival. God judges the amount of fruit on Shavuot, the time when fruits begin to ripen. Human beings pass before God on RH. Although judgment of their actions is not specifically mentioned, it is clear from the first line of the Mishna that they come before God for this purpose. The simile of troops standing for inspection before their general paints a graphic picture of judgment, and the verse from Psalms reinforces the image. Here there is no "organic" or natural connection to the time of year; unlike grain and fruit human beings do not ripen at any particular time. In the theological calendar RH and YK are simply designated days of judgment of human behavior. On Sukkot God determines the amount of rain for the coming year. For the first time the calendrical justification is explicit: the rainy season occurs around the time of Sukkot, hence judgment for rain takes place at the festival.

mRH 1:2 does not define the nature of the judgment. Apparently "the world is judged" (ha 'olam nidon) means "all human beings of the world" are judged. That is, God judges the behavior of human beings and rewards or punishes them by means of grain, fruit and rain, either graceing the earth with ample quantities or withholding these blessings. This theology renders Sukkot and its rituals of secondary importance.

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11 The connection between first-fruits and Shavuot is weak. In his commentary to the Mishna, Bertinuro cites tRH 1:12, with which he wishes to prove that these are the appropriate times. But the Tosefta itself requires some explanation (see below). Rashi, bRH 16a, s.v. shtei and other rishonim explain that first-fruits cannot be brought before Shavuot (mBik 1:3). Therefore Shavuot begins the season for first-fruits, although most ripen later. And see TK, 5:1024, l. 42-43.
12 RaN (to Alfasi, bRH 16a) cites PRK 23:1 (333-334) (as do many other commentators), as well as other interesting and tortuous explanations to justify why RH should be the day of judgment. And see previous note.
13 'olam has this meaning in other mishnayot; see mSanh 4:5, mAvot 3:15.
14 See Meiri to bRH 16a (155). According to Lieberman, TK, 5:1025, yRH 1:3, 57a interprets the Mishna that each person is judged as to his share in water, crops and fruit. But see Yafe 'einyaim to mRH 16a and Allon, Filon, 456.
Divine judgment determines rainfall, not proper observance of the festival rites.

The explanation attributed to R. Akiba in t3:12 coheres with the unattributed Mishna as to the times of judgment. He introduces a new element in the equation: the rituals of the seasonal holidays. R. Akiba argues for substantive connections between ritual and reward. He offers a series of reasons for the commandments (*taamei hamisvot*) which addresses both the functions of the rituals and the seasons when they are performed. Festival rituals have the momentous theurgic effect of causing God to bless the rains and sources of food. They must be performed at the festivals because the seasonal festivals and concomitant judgments are linked with agricultural or natural phenomena. Thus the calendrical position of each festival is crucial. While R. Akiba speaks of blessing, not judgment, the theological outlook complements that of the Mishna. The water libation must be carried out on Sukkot since God determines the extent of the rainfall then, and the ritual serves to influence God in a favorable direction. To the Mishna’s idea that God renders judgment of rain on Sukkot R. Akiba adds a ritual that influences the outcome.\(^\text{15}\)

\textit{tRH} 1:13 presents two views that conflict with the Mishna.\(^\text{16}\) Both views distinguish judgment from sentence, a distinction foreign to the Mishna. According to R. Meir, RH is the exclusive time of judgment, and YK that of sentence. R. Yehuda agrees with R. Meir that judgments take place on RH, but claims that sentences are rendered at four separate times, essentially those listed in mRH 1:2 (except for YK.) The theological motivation underlying these opinions is clear. As noted above, crops, fruit and rain ultimately depend on the conduct of human beings, which is judged on RH and YK. How then can it be said that natural phenomena are judged at other times?\(^\text{17}\) Due to this inexorable logic, R. Meir concentrates the judgments and sentences on RH and YK. R. Yehuda attempts to mediate between theological necessity and the idea that natural phenomena are judged in their appropriate season. While he wishes to preserve the connection between the festivals and the seasonal cycle of nature, he cannot ignore the rabbinic belief that RH is the time of

\(^{15}\)The interpretation of the water libation will be discussed presently; here our interest is simply the general importance of Sukkot to rain.

\(^{16}\)See bRH 16a. BT attributes the Mishna to the school of R. Ishmael (or Samuel, according to the version of R. Hananel.) And see yRH 1:3, 57a and TK, 5:1025.

\(^{17}\)See RaN to Alfasi, bRH 16a: “Since a man is judged on RH, certainly he is judged with respect to all his circumstances. He is judged as to his crops and fruit and all his dealings. Since this is the case, all things are judged on RH.” See too bBer 16a, and Kitvei Ramban, ed. C. Chavel (Jerusalem: Rav Kook, 1963), 1:223.
judgment. He compromises by divorcing judgment from sentence, placing the former on RH and the latter at the appropriate festival.

The Mishna's view would thus seem to reflect an older tradition. Zechariah already anticipates the Mishna's idea of connecting to Sukkot a judgment for rain. Based on a baraita, bRH 16a attributes the Mishna to the school of R. Ishmael, and we have seen that it agrees with R. Akiba in tRH 1:3. The generation of R. Akiba and R. Ishmael thus transmit traditions connecting divine judgments to each festival, whereas their students, R. Meir and R. Yehuda, assign the primary role to RH and YK. R. Akiba's position bears some affinity to the "priestly" or cultic world-view whereby rituals performed for specific ends automatically effect results. He avoids a purely mechanical notion of ritual by formulating the effect in terms of the object (crops, fruit, rain) being "blessed for you." No mechanical power over nature inheres in the ritual; rather God is moved to bless the rain, crops or fruit. His explanation combines cultic ideas with the notion of reward and punishment. R. Yehuda compromises between the old tradition that natural and agricultural phenomena are determined at their associated festivals and the developing theology of RH as the day of judgment. R. Meir abandons the older tradition in favor of the emergent theology.

A second tension at work is the tension between post-temple and temple worldviews. Construed strictly, the position of R. Akiba implies that rain and crops can no longer be blessed since water libations, first-fruit offerings and the 'omer ceased with the destruction of the temple. For this reason other tannaim may have avoided any overt link to the cultic rituals prescribed for the festivals. R. Yehuda retains a connection

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18R. Ishmael's opinion is identical to the Mishna, except that human beings are judged on RH and sentenced on YK. This tradition appears in a baraita, bRH 16a.
19Assuming the school of R. Ishmael transmits his opinions.
20It is possible, however, that the two traditions simply express two different perspectives and should not be charted diachronically. Jubilees actually polemicizes against the idea that the determination of rain takes place on RH, a belief in line with R. Meir (Jub 12:16-18). yRH 1:3, 57a brings four unattributed opinions concerning the times of judgment and sentence: 1) All are judged and sentenced on RH; 2) All are judged on RH and sentenced on YK [= R. Meir]; 3) All are judged on RH and sentenced in their time [= R. Yehuda]; 4) All are judged in their time and sentenced in their time. The lack of attestation perhaps indicates that all four opinions coexisted. These two basic outlooks essentially reflect "prophetic" and "priestly" perspectives to varying degrees. The prophetic – that God rewards and punishes on the basis of individual merits and sins: the priestly – that the temple and its rituals ensure the right order of the cosmos and bring blessings to the world. (I use these terms as convenient designations; the relationship between the prophets and the cult is far more complex.) The tension between these two perspectives can be sensed in all four opinions.
to the festivals based on the their calendrical position, while R. Meir eliminates even that connection.

In sum, the unattributed Mishna, R. Akiba, R. Yehuda and the school of R. Ishmael associate Sukkot with rain. The association principally derives from the calendrical position of Sukkot as the festival closest to the rainy season. Divine judgment forms the substance of the connection. Because rain and all divine blessings are granted by God, the determination of the amount of rain is rendered through judgment. Only in the opinion of R. Akiba does a more immediate connection between the rituals of Sukkot and the rain supply appear. Yet even R. Akiba accepts the divine judgment or blessing as the determinative factor; the ritual is primarily symbolic, a means to ensure divine favor. All human beings can do is to try to influence God through the performance of the appropriate rituals. Despite the mythic-cultic legacy of the festival, theology becomes paramount in the rabbinic period. Rain results when God judges his people favorably, not from any automatic, magical ritual, nor from any rejuvenation of creation by the cult. The rabbis thus maintain the conception of Sukkot as the festival that influences the upcoming supply of rain but express that connection in terms of standard rabbinic theology, not through a mythic-cultic worldview.

II. Rabbinic Interpretations of the Festival Rituals

A second link between Sukkot and rain explicit in tannaitic sources stems from interpretations of the water libation and lulav. We noted in tRH 1:12 R. Akiba explained that the Torah prescribes a water libation on Sukkot in order that the rainwaters be blessed. A parallel tradition appears in tSuk 3:18 together with a proofertext:

R. Akiba said: The Torah said...bring a water libation on Sukkot [since it is the season for rains] in order that the rainwaters may be blessed for you. And the Torah states, Any of the earth's communities that does not make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to bow low to the king, Lord of Hosts, shall receive no rain. However if the community of Egypt does not make the pilgrimage it shall not be upon them (Zech 14:18).

R. Akiba cites Zech 14 to prove his view that rainfall depends upon the proper celebration of Sukkot. Although the prophecy ostensibly makes no reference to the water libation, R. Akiba appears to have “read in” the ritual. He understands that the punishment of the nations results from

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21The words “since it is the season for rains” are found in MS Erfurt of tSuk 3:18, and MSS London and Erfurt of tRH 1:12. They are omitted in MS Vienna of both tSuk and tRH. See TK, 4:885.
22In this context, their “rain” shall not be upon them, meaning the water supply of Egypt, the Nile, will be reduced commensurately. See Chapter 2, II n. 36.
their having neglected to make the pilgrimage and perform, or at least bow while the priest performs, the water libation. The punishment is the lack of rain, hence the verse demonstrates the water libation ensures the rain supply. What is important here is not whether R. Akiba provides the "correct" interpretation of the water libation, but rather its appearance in tannaitic sources. For R. Akiba, the importance of Sukkot and its rituals inhered in their influence on rain.

According to R. Eliezer the lulav served to entreat God for rain:

R. Eliezer said to him: These four species only come to obtain the favor [of God] about water. Just as it is impossible for these four species [to subsist] without rain, so it is impossible for the world [to subsist] without water.

This source occurs in the context of a debate over the liturgical "mention" of rain and will be discussed in depth below. R. Eliezer explains that the species of the lulav, dependent upon rain for their ability to grow, petition God to supply the necessary precipitation. This explanation essentially coincides with the standard anthropological interpretation of the rite. R. Eliezer would probably not have used the term "rain charm" favored in some anthropological discussions. He offers a more rational theological explanation - that the ritual demonstrates nature's profound need for rain such that God should notice and respond. The PT version of his statement places more emphasis on the symbolic value than on the petitionary function: "Because these four species grow from water, therefore they come [in connection with] matters of water." Indeed, palm trees mark oases in the desert and grow around sources of water in arid lands. Willows cluster around rivers, marshes and fresh-water springs. The Bible often associates the verdant growth of myrtles with rain, as in Isa 41:17-19: "I will open up streams on the bare hills and fountains amid the valleys; I will turn desert into ponds, the arid land into springs of water; I will plant cedars in the wilderness, acacias and myrtles and oleaster." And the rabbis believed that the citron grew exclusively beside sources of water. This interpretation is almost identical to that of Pseudo-Philo, and is undoubtedly of considerable antiquity. While the water libation
ceased with the destruction of the temple, the lulav continued to be practiced. R. Eliezer’s explanation reveals not only the tannaitic understanding of the temple festival celebrations, but also the interpretation of the festival and rituals as practiced in their time. The tannaim believed that when they shook the lulav they entreated, and perhaps influenced, God to bless the earth with rain.

III. Rain and the Liturgy

Tannaitic liturgy also expressed the close association between Sukkot and rain:

[A] From when does one mention the ‘powers of rain’?30
[C] R. Joshua says: from the last Festival-Day.
[D] R. Joshua said to him: since rain is not the sign of a blessing on the Festival,31 why should they make mention of it?
[E] R. Eliezer answered: He only says, ‘Who makes the wind blow and the rain descend’ in its due season.32
[F] He said to him: If so one should always make “mention.”

(mTa 1:1)33

Both R. Eliezer and R. Joshua agree that beginning at some point during Sukkot the tefila (the “Eighteen Blessings,”) the central prayer of the tannaitic liturgy, must include a reference to God as the provider of rain. Henceforth the tefila was to include the phrase “Who makes the wind blow and the rain descend.” The debate centers on that starting point. R. Eliezer rules the phrase must be included starting with the first day of the festival. He argues that the additional line does not amount to a prayer for rain, but only a confession of God’s power over rain.34 One

30I.e., when does one add the phrase, “Who makes the wind blow and the rain descend” to the second paragraph of the tefila, the “Eighteen Blessing?” Cf. mBer 5.2.
31So all manuscripts and early printings. See Diamond, Ta’anit, 93-99 and Rosenthal, Taanit, 261 n. 1 for full apparatus. Printed versions of the Mishna have “since rain is only the sign of a curse.” See DQS ad loc., n. 7. The “curse” is explained in mSuk 2:9.
32אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרָא אֲשֶׁר צֹמר אַלָּמֶר מַעְלָה הָאֱלֹהִים לְמֵאָרָדָם. So most MSS. According to Diamond, Ta’anit, 100-103 and Rosenthal, Ta’anit, 265, n. 9, this is the best text. Contra Albeck, Mishna, 2:331 and Epstein, MLH, 715. See too Malter, Ta’anit, 1 and Heinemann, Tefila, 81, n. 12.
33I have only listed the most important variants. For complete apparatus see Diamond, Ta’anit, 88-111. I doubt whether the actual dialogue should be attributed to R. Eliezer and R. Joshua. See below p. 174.
34Or later tannaim attributed this reasoning to him. The baraitot cited below imply that the original rulings of R. Joshua and R. Eliezer were transmitted in several formulations.
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does not ask for rain by reciting this line, but only mentions God’s mastery of rain at the beginning of the appropriate season. R. Joshua rules the phrase should be added on the last Festival-Day (i.e., on Shmini ‘ašeret). He argues that mentioning God as provider of rain constitutes a prayer. But rain interferes with the actual celebration of Sukkot when people are residing in booths; to pray for rain during Sukkot invites disaster. Only on SA, when people no longer dwell in booths, are prayers for rain appropriate. He rejects R. Eliezer’s claim that the phrase contains only a mention of rain, not an actual prayer. If the phrase but acknowledges God’s mastery over rain, then the phrase should be included throughout the year.

This final objection is left unanswered; the Mishna stops short of providing a complete justification of R. Eliezer’s position. R. Eliezer concedes to R. Joshua that rain is not desirable on Sukkot, but only in its “due season,” after the festival. So why indeed begin to mention the “power of rain” specifically on Sukkot? His opinion, however, is easily understood even without the explicit justification found in baraitot and the talmud.35 Rain is the central focus of the festival. As mRH 1:2 affirms, God determines the rainfall on Sukkot.36 It is most appropriate, then, that from the outset of the festival the liturgy reflect this major concern.37

A different version of the disagreement between R. Eliezer and R. Joshua appears in a baraita found in both bTa 2b and yTa 1:1, 63a.

35See below, and see yTa 1:1, 63a.
36Cf. bTa 2a where this Mishna is considered a “continuation” of mRH 1:2.
37Gilat, Eliezer, 312 refers to MG 3:657 to Lev 23:35: “The first day’ (Lev 23:35). But is it not the fifteenth day? Yet you say the first day. R. Eliezer said: The first day for rainfall. This teaches that it is fit [to pray] for rain from the beginning of the festival just as we stop from the beginning of Pesah. But out of respect for Israel, so as not to cause them inconvenience by it raining in the temple during the festival [of Sukkot], and also because it would prevent dwelling in the sukka, therefore we do not mention rain until the end of the festival.” The conclusion contradicts R. Eliezer’s opinion in the Mishna, that one mentions rain on the first festival day. Thus it is likely that R. Eliezer’s statement here consists only of “The first day for rainfall,” and the rest of the midrash reflects a different opinion. The attribution to R. Eliezer is suspect given that the source is so late, but it provides a plausible exegetical basis for his opinion. Gilat also refers to fragments of an unknown midrash published by L. Ginzberg, “Three Incomplete Homilies from an Unknown Midrash,” Tarbiz 4 (1933), 328 (Hebrew). The version of the “unknown midrash” is difficult, but seems to confirm that R. Eliezer only stated the first sentence.
bTa 2b

[A] It was taught: From when does one mention the ‘powers of rain’?

[B] R. Eliezer says: From the time the lulav is taken.

[C] R. Joshua says: From the time it is put away.

[D] R. Eliezer said to him: These four species only come to obtain the favor [of God] about water. Just as it is impossible for these four species [to subsist] without rain, so it is impossible for the world [to subsist] without water.

[E] R. Joshua said to him: Is not rain during the festival only a sign of a curse?

[F] R. Eliezer said: I did not say ‘to ask’ [for rain] but ‘to mention’.40

[G] R. Akiba says: On the sixth day of the festival he ‘mentions’.

[H] R. Yehuda ben Betera says: On the second day of the festival he ‘mentions’.

[I] R. Yehuda [says] in the name of R. Joshua: The one who passes before the ark on the last day of the festival – the second [to pass before the ark, to lead the musaf service] mentions, the first [to pass before the ark, to lead the morning service] does not mention. On the first festival day of Pesah, the first mentions, the second does not mention.

yTa 1:1, 63c

[A] It was taught:

[B] R. Eliezer says: From the time when the lulav is taken.

[C] R. Joshua says: From the time he sets it down.

[D] What is the reason of R. Eliezer: Because these four species grow from water, therefore they come [in connection with] matters of water.43

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38 See Diamond, Ta'anit, 256-66 for variants.
39 These two paragraphs occur at different points in PT. I have lined them up in parallel with the BT material.
40 The commentaries debate whether R. Eliezer means one must mention, or only that one may mention. See Rashi, bTa 2b, s.v. kakh; Tosafot, bTa 2a, s.v. ‘im. The sense of the passage, as well as the Mishna, suggest that we should follow the Tosafot and understand that the mention is obligatory on the first day.
41 The next section of the baraita is interpreted by the stam and all rishonim as a continuation of the dialogue. But see Halivni, Megorot, 4:428-29 who argues that
Although the first section of the baraita [A-C] does not appear in tannaitic documents, the fact that it appears in both talmuds strongly suggests that it is an authentic tannaitic tradition. In this section the definitions provided by R. Eliezer and R. Joshua for the time to begin mentioning the 'power of rain' differ from those in the Mishna. Here they define the starting point in relation to the lulav.\(^{44}\) The explanation that R. Eliezer provides for linking the 'mention' of rain to the lulav [D] seems to be authentic as well. It appears in both talmuds with but minor changes in the wording. The main difference is that the explanation appears as a self-contained baraita in PT while in BT that baraita has been incorporated into a longer baraita. This is not an uncommon phenomenon, and only suggests that originally the two BT baraitot were independent, not that they are pseudepigraphic.\(^{45}\) The baraita supplies R. Eliezer's reasoning which the Mishna omitted. R. Eliezer rules that "mention" begin on the first day of the festival, when the lulav is taken,

\(^{42}\)On the authenticity of these baraitot, see Diamond, Ta'anit, 319-22, 335.

\(^{43}\)This explanation appears as the first statement in the talmud, which suggests it comments on the Mishna directly. But the Mishna makes no mention of the lulav. It must be understood in connection with the disagreement in the baraita [I], which occurs a few lines below.

\(^{44}\)The two definitions of R. Eliezer are equivalent, for 'the time of taking up the lulav' is 'the first Festival-Day.' It is not clear whether the time of 'setting down the lulav,' R. Joshua's definition in the Mishna, is equivalent to the 'last Festival-Day,' R. Joshua's definition in the baraita. Generally the lulav is not needed after the morning of the seventh day, and is 'put away' then. By this interpretation the 'mention' should begin immediately thereafter, still on the seventh day. (So Rabenu Gershom [printed as Rashi to the first three pages in bTa; see Halivni, Megorot, 4:428, n. 2], bTa 2b, s.v. misha'at and 3a s.v. 'ela). But technically the entire day is fit for taking the lulav, so the time of "setting down" the lulav may designate the time after the seventh day, at the evening prayer of the eighth day. In this case R. Joshua's definitions in the Mishna and baraita would coincide. (So Rav Mani in yTa 1:1, 63a; Rashi, bTa 4a s.v. rabbi; Tosafot, bTa 2b, s.v. misha'at.) See too Rosenthal, Ta'anit, 268-69 n. 32.

\(^{45}\)Or, alternatively, it is possible that the BT preserves the original form of the baraita. The long baraita was broken into sections, as is wont to happen, and the PT transmits but one section. Even if the second baraita cannot be attributed to R. Eliezer, the first baraita, in which he defines the time for "mention" in relation to the taking of the lulav remains. While it is possible that this formulation simply serves as a convenient shorthand for "the morning of the first day," I think it unlikely. The definition suggests that R. Eliezer indeed connected the lulav to rain in a substantive way. He refers to the lulav not merely as a designation of the time, but because he understood the lulav to be connected to rain. See too Diamond, Ta'anit, 307.
because the lulav itself entreats for rain. It is appropriate that the liturgy acknowledge rain at this time.

The third section of the baraita [G-H] presents two further opinions of the starting point of the liturgical addition. R. Akiba places it on the sixth day, R. Yehuda b. Betera on the second. The BT connects these seemingly arbitrary opinions to the tannaitic midrashim concerning the Pentateuchal source of the water libation. These halakhic midrashim build on irregularities in the otherwise identical formulation of the sacrificial instructions for the days of Sukkot (Num 29:12-28), by which the second and sixth days are distinguished.46 Eliezer Diamond argues that these are the authentic tannaitic midrashim grounding their opinions.47 He suggests that R. Akiba and R. Yehuda ben Betera derived the starting point for “mention” of rain from the day of Sukkot on which the Torah “mentioned” the water libation. They connected the liturgical reference to rain to the libation, the temple ritual directed to this end – although they linked the liturgy not to the day of its performance but to the Pentateuchal source. R. Eliezer had understood the lulav to entreat for rain, and linked the liturgical mention of rain to the first performance of the ritual. R. Akiba and Ben Betera interpreted the water-libation as a rain ritual, and connected the liturgical mention to the scriptural source of the rite.48

46Sifre Num. §150 (196): “R. Yehuda b. Betera says: It is written on the second [day of Sukkot], and their libations (Num 29:19; WNSKYHM), and on the sixth day and its libations (29:31; WNSKYH), and on the seventh day according to their laws (29:35; KMSPTM). Behold, [the three extra letters], M, Y, M – here is mayim, water. From this there is a hint of the water libation from the Torah. R. Akiba says: On the sixth day of the festival he ‘mentions’. For it says [in the sacrificial instructions] on the sixth day, and its libations (29:31). The verse speaks of two libations. One is the water libation and one is the wine libation.”

47Diamond, Ta’anit, 319-24. It is interesting to note that TN to Num 29:31, which lists the sacrifices for the sixth day, adds: “and a flask of water which is offered on the sixth day upon the altar as a good memorial of the fructification of the rain (its minhah) and its libations, and the libation of water.” The text is somewhat confused, but clearly prescribes the water libation for the sixth day. This view appears to derive from R. Akiba’s exegesis that “mention” of rain should begin on the sixth day. Perhaps the targum reasoned that since R. Akiba derived “mention” of rain from the “mention” of the libation on the sixth day, then the libation itself must have taken place on the sixth day alone. TY has a similar reading. See B.J. Bamberger, “Halakic Elements in the Neofiti Targum: A Preliminary Statement,” JQR 65 (1975), 33.

48If the baraitos are later attempts to provide a justification for R. Akiba and R. Yehuda b. Betera, and even if their opinions that “mention” begins on the second or sixth day are pseudopigraphic, it does not vitiate, but only delay, this conclusion. Then it is not the tannaim who connect “mention” to the scriptural source of the water libation, but the amoraim or stammaim.
In the final portion of the baraita [I] R. Yehuda cites an alternative version of R. Joshua’s statement, according to which the precentor of the additional service on the “last day” (= SA) initiates the addition. In mTa 1:1 R. Joshua ruled the addition occurs on “the last day” without specifying whether the precentor of the morning or additional service made the addition. If the morning service is meant (as we assume when no specification is given), then we have two traditions concerning R. Joshua’s opinion. All in all there are five formulations for the time when “mention” should begin: R. Eliezer, R. Joshua, R. Yehuda in the name of R. Joshua, R. Akiba and R. Yehuda b. Betera.

Different liturgical customs apparently were practiced in the tannaitic period. Perhaps R. Eliezer, known for his allegiance to older traditions, transmits the older custom. If so, we again detect a conflict between a hard “liturgical logic” and a temple-centered tradition. Logically, petition or even acknowledgment of rain should follow the festival, upon which rain is an annoyance at best and an indication of divine displeasure at worst. But during temple times the whole festival of Sukkot, and especially the libation performed each day, was associated with the rainfall of the upcoming season. R. Eliezer’s opinion reflects this legacy and begins “mention” of God as master of rain on the first day of Sukkot. R. Akiba and R. Yehuda b. Betera represent intermediate positions. R. Joshua, in view of the fact that rain was not actually desired on the festival, defers mention to the last festival day. Here he almost severs the connection between Sukkot and rain, for SA is technically a separate festival.

Even R. Joshua’s opinion precedes the times the tannaim actually expected rain. tTa 1:3 brings three opinions as to when the first rain should fall – the third, seventh or seventeenth of Heshvan. Reflecting these opinions, mTa 1:3 rules that the “request” for rain proper (she’elat geshamim), added to the ninth blessing of the tefila, enters the liturgy on

49 mTa 1:2 attributes this opinion to R. Yehuda (without mention of R. Joshua) according to most variants. See Diamond, Ta’anit, 110-11. Some Palestinian amora'im apparently read R. Yehuda in the name of Ben Betera. See Malter, Ta’anit, 2-3; Halivni, Meqorot, 4:437-38; Epstein, MLH, 251, 825 n. 1, 1183; Albeck, Mishna, 2:492.
50 So R. Yehuda in mTa 1:2. See n. 49.
51 The five formulations may translate into but three different times, depending on the interpretation of [A]; see n. 44. R. Nahman b. Isaac, bTa 3a, determines that the R. Joshua here is R. Joshua b. Betera.
52 See Gilat, Eliezer, 312; Heinemann, Tefila, 81.
53 So Gilat, Eliezer, 311-12.
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the third or seventh.\textsuperscript{54} The reason given is that "they 'request' rain only near the time for rain."\textsuperscript{55} Thus the tannaim did not expect or pray for rain until this time.\textsuperscript{56} Why then add "mention" of God as master of rain at any point close to Sukkot? Why not wait until rain was actually

\textsuperscript{54}See, however, mBM 8:6 which seems to define Sukkot itself as the beginning of the rainy season (in the context of leases). tToh 7:8 claims the rainy season begins whenever the "second rain" falls.

\textsuperscript{55}mTa 1:2. This mishna speaks of "requesting rain," sho'alim et hageshanim. bTa 4b gives two interpretations of this term. The first explains that the clause refers to the ninth blessing of the tefila. A second interpretation suggests the clause also pertains to the "mention" of the rains. This unattributed Mishna would therefore rule like R. Joshua in mTa 1:1. But in mTa 1:3 "requesting rain" clearly pertains to the ninth blessing, and that is undoubtedly the meaning here too, the second interpretation notwithstanding. We must therefore explain either that the clause has simply been misplaced, and belongs after mTa 1:2 and before mTa 1:3 (Malter, \textit{Tdanit}, 3, n. 4 and 40-41, n. 48), or that the clause points out that although R. Eliezer and R. Joshua disagree about "mention," they agree that one only asks for rain later (Heinemann, \textit{Tefila}, 82, n. 17; Albeck, \textit{Mishna}, 2:331). See too Halivni, \textit{Meqorot}, 4:435 n. 7. Rosenthal's reconstruction is too hypothetical; \textit{Tdanit}, 265-70.

\textsuperscript{56}I am reading the Mishna as do the Babylonian amoraim. Heinemann, \textit{Tefila}, 79-85 claims that the Palestinian amoraim interpreted mTa 1:1-3 such that "mention" and "request" for rain entered and left the liturgy at the same time. When the Mishna refers to one or the other, it means both. Only R. Eliezer distinguishes the two, beginning the "mention" on the festival itself. So the Palestinian amoraim rule that one begins to "mention" and "request" rain simultaneously. Heinemann follows R. Tanhum bar Hiyya, yTa 1:2, 64a, and assigns mTa 1:3 to temple times in order to avoid a contradiction with the opinions in mTa 1:1: in temple times the request for rain was delayed in deference to pilgrims so they could return home without being rained upon. But rain was really expected and/or desired as soon as mention of rain was added to the liturgy. After the destruction, with pilgrims no longer an issue, they changed the practice and added the "request" at the same time as the "mention." (According to the Babylonian reading, mTa 1:3 deals with the "request" for rain and mTa 1:1 with "mention," so there is no contradiction). While Heinemann focuses on the way the amoraim read the Mishna, and does not propose to analyze its original meaning, he does suggest that "perhaps the Palestinian interpretation is superior and more satisfactory" (p. 83). I disagree with Heinemann for two reasons. First, it is difficult to accept that the two terms, mazkirin and sho'alin, are used interchangeably. These are technical terms and clearly pertain to different liturgical elements. Second, Heinemann follows R. Tanhum bar Hiyya, who assigns mTa 1:3 to temple times. Yet tannaitic sources themselves give no reason mTa 1:3 pertains exclusively to the pre-destruction practice. R. Tanhum's consideration is external, not internal. Indeed, mTa 1:1 would seem to be the earlier Mishna, since R. Joshua and R. Eliezer predate R. Gamaliel, and since R. Eliezer is known for his affinity to the old halakha. It is more plausible that the liturgy requested rain on or immediately after Sukkot in temple times, when the water libation was performed, than that the liturgy specifically avoided mention of rain in deference to pilgrims.
expected? Moreover the Babylonian communities delayed their "request" for rain (she'ielat geshamim) until sixty days after the equinox on account of the agricultural circumstances that prevailed there.  

Because they wished to retain the connection between the festival and rain, they made no such adjustment with the "mention" of rain. The fact that the date of the festival did not tally strictly with climatic conditions was of lesser importance.

This liturgical addition also reflects the transition from temple religion to rabbinic piety. The temple had been the focus of rain-oriented ceremonies, both through the Sukkot rituals and throughout the rest of the year. Hence the classic biblical rain ceremonies – even when they include prayer – are set in a cultic context. Samuel's prayer for rain at Gilgal (1 Sam 12:17-18), Elijah's performance on Mt Carmel (1 Kgs 18) and Zechariah's vision reflect a cult setting. Parallel to the temple ceremonies there may have been prayers for rain, either in the official priestly liturgy or later among proto-rabbinic or Pharisaic groups. That R. Eliezer connects "mention" of rain with the lulav and R. Akiba and R. Yehuda b. Betera connect it with the water libation reveals the nexus of prayer and cult. Even if the liturgical "mention" of rain developed after the destruction, this connection to Sukkot rituals represents a desire for continuity with temple practices.

IV. Conclusions

In the tannaitic period Sukkot retained its significance as the critical time for ensuring the rain supply for the coming year. Ironically, rabbinic traditions express the link between the festival and rain more

57 Hananya, the nephew of R. Joshua transmits the tradition, bTa 10a. On Hananya, see Hyman, Toledo, 503. He was a tanna, and spent time in Babylonia, so the practice appears to have prevailed in Babylonia in tannaitic times.

58 Cf. Heinemann, Tefila, 83.

59 Thus the three rabbinic worship services correspond to the times of sacrifices (according to one explanation), bBer 26b. The same is true of the ma'amadot; see mTa 4:2-3. See too mRH 1:1-4.

60 The importance of rain is repeatedly stressed in tannaitic literature. The series of fasts and mourning practices instituted if rain does not fall soon after Sukkot dramatizes this fact. See too bTa 7a, "The day of rain is more important than the day of resurrection;" bTa 7b, "The day of rain is as important as the day on which heaven and earth were related." And see bTa 2b, 6b, 8a; bBM 85a. The tannaim claimed that the prayer the high priest recited in the Holy of Holies included a prayer for rain, yYom 5:3, 42c.
clearly than does the Bible. The temple was destroyed, water libations had ceased, and SBH no longer celebrated. Yet with the lulav and through prayer the tannaim sought to influence God to send abundant rain. The motif of divine judgment becomes a factor in the equation. This element, visible to some extent in Zech 14, recurs repeatedly in amoraic midrashim. Sukkot is the appropriate time to propitiate God, but the mere performance of the rituals is no guarantee. Only if God judges the people favorably will rain descend.

Thus taken together, biblical and rabbinic literature manifest a remarkable continuity in the significance of the festival. In ancient Israel, throughout the second temple period, and even after the destruction of the temple, the connection of Sukkot to rain remained in force. The forms changed from libations and temple rites to prayers – although the lulav continued to be practiced. And to some extent the connection weakened as certain tannaim shifted the judgment of rain to RH and others deferred liturgical additions to SA. But despite these minor adjustments the overall conception of Sukkot as the time to ensure the rain supply for the coming year endured. This continuity reveals that the absence of the cult and the destruction of the temple did not undermine the mythic worldview of the temple as the source of blessing and the key to the hydraulic structure. Mythic conceptions lived on without their original ritual underpinnings and despite the loss of its sacred space.

Indeed, rabbinic literature is indispensable for understanding the nature of the biblical autumnal festival. Biblical passages, ancient Near Eastern parallels and anthropological insights are wholly inadequate to demonstrate a relationship between Sukkot and rain. Only when these obscure hints are examined against the explicit testimony of rabbinic sources can they be adduced with any measure of confidence. Were it not for rabbinic literature, this aspect of the festival would be completely lost. On the other hand, the biblical evidence, weak as it is, simultaneously confirms the rabbinic traditions of water libations and SBH. Viewed together with biblical material, the larger context of the ceremonies described in rabbinic texts can be seen and their existence confirmed.

Rain and judgment are linked in biblical sources independent of Sukkot. Thus Deut 11:13-17, which comprises part of the Shema, a cornerstone of rabbinic liturgy, states: “If you obey the commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, loving the Lord your God and serving Him with all your heart and soul, I will grant the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the late...Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods and bow to them. For the Lord's anger will flare up against you and he will shut up the skies so that there will be more rain, and the ground will yield no produce; and you will soon perish from the good land that the Lord is giving you.”