

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

KRAKOW · MAOR VASHEMESH, NOACH

Why some generations never saw a rainbow

Maor VaShemesh

The rainbow in the cloud serves as a sign of the nullification of decree, but a tzaddik (righteous person) can himself nullify evil decrees just as the Holy One, blessed be He, does, rendering the rainbow unnecessary in his generation — as happened in the days of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi.

Though the midrash's comparison of the tzaddik (righteous person) to G-d might seem startling, it is qualified: like a stalk secondary to its produce, the tzaddik (righteous person) remains secondary to the Holy One, blessed be He, even while sharing this singular power to annul harsh decrees. AI SUMMARY



In the midrash: "I have set My bow (keshet) in the cloud" — "et keshiyoti," meaning something that is "mukshesh" (comparable/equated) to Me — is that possible? Rather, it means "kashin de-peira," the stalks/straw of the produce. End of the words of the midrash; see Matnat Kehunah.

This midrash is very puzzling. It seems the simple explanation is as follows. It is stated in the midrash: "Ein ka-Eloheinu" — "mi ka-Eloheinu," meaning: there is none like our G-d. But the tzaddik (righteous person) is called "mi" — "who is like our G-d" — in that the Holy One, blessed be He, decrees, and the tzaddik (righteous person) nullifies the decree, as is explained in all the sefarim (books). Now, the essential purpose of the rainbow in the cloud is a sign of the nullification of decree. But when there is a tzaddik (righteous person) in the generation, the rainbow is not needed, as is explained in the Gemara, Ketubot, in the story of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, in whose days no rainbow was seen, for they nullified evil decrees and had no need for the rainbow. This is what the

midrash means: "I have set My bow (keshet) in the cloud" — "et keshiyoti" — this refers to the tzaddik (righteous person), who is equated, as it were, with the Holy One, blessed be He, in that he nullifies evil decrees just as the Holy One, blessed be He, does. This is the meaning of "mukshesh li" — he resembles Me, so to speak, in nullifying evil decrees just as We do.

The midrash then asks: "Is that possible?" — meaning, is it possible that the tzaddik (righteous person) is truly comparable to the Holy One, blessed be He? And it answers: "Rather, kashin de-peira" — meaning, just as the stalk of the produce is secondary to the produce, so too the tzaddik (righteous person) is secondary to the Holy One, blessed be He. Nevertheless, in this matter he resembles the Holy One, blessed be He — in nullifying evil decrees — and there is no need for the rainbow in his days.

And this is readily understood.

