

"May my teaching drop like the rain, may my utterance flow like the dew." (32:2)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* prayed that the words of *Torah* would continue to nurture the Jewish soul just as rain and dew nourish the soil. The various commentators suggest reasons that Moshe used the similes of rain and dew to describe the *Torah's* essence and inspiration. This writer once heard the following: Rain falls from the heavens to give life to the earth. Dew, on the other hand, rises from the ground to provide moisture for the growing vegetation. Rain and dew interact with one another to provide the optimal climate for physical growth. Nature presents us with the model for spiritual development.

Man's religious consciousness is sustained and raised by virtue of instruction from "above," by parents and teachers. This educational instruction, however, endures and has meaning only when it interfaces with a quest for knowledge from "below." Hence, the rain symbolizes those who teach, while the dew is a metaphor for those who are students, who rise from below to absorb the knowledge from above.

It is noteworthy that the increase in assimilation has not resulted from a lack of teachers, but rather as an outcome of a diminishing student population seeking knowledge. The winds of change and the consequent freedom of activity have created within the modern Jew a feeling that he was "missing something" by being confined to his insular environment. He feels that he has been relegated to studying that which he denigrates as archaic and incompatible with his enlightened lifestyle. It is no wonder that so many individuals have fallen by the wayside. The phenomenon of today's return to *Torah* study is the result of a sense of emptiness, a feeling that Judaism without *Torah* is a contradiction in terms. Indeed, the successful emergence of Jewish outreach is due to a receptive mood among the people, their desire to study the real *Torah*, not a diluted version which does not set standards or make reasonable demands.

We may add that another lesson may be derived from the comparison of rain to *Torah* instruction. When it comes down in small, steady consistent drops, rain is most beneficial. In order to penetrate the earth, it must be delivered in a gentle stream. When rain rages in a torrential downpour, it devastates and destroys. *Torah* must be taught in a specific manner if it is to penetrate the soul of the students and be eternally integrated into an individual's Jewish personality.

A student must be made to feel welcome, not intimidated. Our heart must open up to him with warmth and love -- not anger. We must be open-minded, recognizing the origin of the student, and sympathetic to his problems and concerns. Lastly, all of this warmth and sensitivity must be genuine. A student can differentiate between a teacher's display of caring which is authentic and one which is artificial.

One more observation regarding the parallel between *Torah* education and rain is permanence.

One can have a beautiful lawn for months on end, as long as the ground is watered. Likewise, with *Torah*. One never ceases to learn from above. We must always seek to accumulate rare *Torah* knowledge. Just as drought can quickly destroy a blooming field, so, too, can the cessation of *Torah* study destroy one's spiritual essence.