



# V'ten Tal U'matar For Those Returning Abroad In The Fall

**Question:** I am in my second year in Israel but have to go back permanently soon, before Dec 4. I started saying “v'ten tal u'matar” (=vtum) on 7 [Mar]Cheshvan. Should I have? Should I stop now, when I get back to chutz la'aretz, or not at all?

**Answer:** The saying of vtum was instituted by the Rabbis according to the needs for rain of their time's major Jewish communities. The whole Diaspora follows Bavel's needs, which comes out on Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>. The Rosh (*Shut* 4:10) felt that regions that require rain at other times should be able to add vtum as appropriate. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 117:2 – see *Beit*

*Yosef* ad loc.) agrees in principle, but not in practice because of *minhag*. Therefore, someone from a place that needs rain earlier should not ask for rain, but if he does, it is unclear if he must repeat *Shemoneh Esrei* (see Shulchan Aruch and Rama *ibid.*). Probably, your home abroad can use rain all year long, in which case saying it is not so bad.

The Mishna Berura (117:5) cites two opinions on the questions of a *ben Eretz Yisrael* visiting abroad and a *ben chutz la'aretz* visiting Israel asking for rain in the interim period. In broad terms, the Birkei Yosef (OC 117:5) says that one follows the practice of the place he is at; the Pri Chadash (OC 117:2) says that one who is returning that year should follow his home. Regarding an Israeli abroad at this time, we wrote (*Living the Halachic Process*, II, A-11; see sources there) that it is, in most cases, safest to ask for rain in *Shomeiah Tefilla* (cited in the name of Rav Auerbach and Rav Elyashiv and recommended in *Yalkut Yosef*). The fundamentally stronger position is to start reciting abroad based on his needs during the year.

Regarding our case, it would follow that while the Birkei Yosef would have you start vtum, the Pri Chadash, as the Pri Megadim (MZ 1) and Mishna Berura (*ibid.*) understand, would not have because you will not feel the effects of the fall's rain at home.

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However, some point out that the Pri Chadash mentioned only an Israeli abroad, and perhaps the Pri Chadash could endorse you starting on 7 Cheshvan. B'tzel Hachochma (I:62) argues that visitors can also benefit from early-season rain, as expectations for a future good crop can lower prices now. The Birkei Yosef (ibid.), in explaining why a *ben chutz la'arezt* in *Eretz Yisrael* should start early, argues there are short-term water needs besides crops. (It is questionable whether this applies nowadays, when there are rarely immediate water shortages affected by November rain.) Furthermore, argues B'tzel Hachochma, if the rainy season in Israel is even a few weeks late, special prayers and fasts can be called; since visitors should take part, *vtum* is appropriate. According to this approach, a variety of combination of needs and connection to Israeli rain make it appropriate to pray for it – a *ben Eretz Yisrael* abroad, due to later benefit; or a *ben chutz la'arezt* presently in Israel, based on minor present benefit. One can suggest that you are a little more fit to say *vtum* than the average visitor since your status quo in regards to rain is like that of a *ben Eretz Yisrael*, based on last year, until you leave. The counter-claim is that this status lapses over the summer.

On the other hand, Be'er Moshe (VII, p. 196-202) argues against someone like you

starting, based on the following factor. The Birkei Yosef (ibid. 6), who usually goes by where one is, says that an Israeli who started asking for rain before his trip should continue because stopping looks ridiculous. Here, since the consensus is that once you leave, you, as a *ben chutz la'arezt* in *chutz la'arezt*, should not recite until Dec. 4. Therefore, you should not have started based on weak need only to distastefully stop. On the other hand, once you did start, with some logic, you should continue.

In short, we would have suggested for you to start saying *vtum* in *Shomeiah Tefilla*, which is safe according to all approaches (as then you ask, but informally). What you did was reasonable, and you can continue until you leave. ■

*Eretz Hemdah has begun a participatory Zoom class - "Behind the Scenes with the Vebbe Rebbe" - an analytical look at the sources, methodology, and considerations behind our rulings, with Rav Daniel Mann. Contact info@eretzhemdah.org to join.*

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