

Unpaid debts: violent robbery and oppression, a den of thieves, and the prayer for rain
Bibliographical note follows. Unformatted, text-only version also available at songeveryday.org

Rabbi Ammi said: Rain is **withheld** only due to the sin of **gezel**, as it is said: "He covered His **hands** [**kapayim**] with lightening..." (Job 36:32a)

Due to the sin of hands -- God covered light.

And "**hands**" [**kapayim**] signifies **chamas**, as it is said:

"...and from the violence that is in their hands" (Jonah 3:8).

And "**light**" [**ohr**] signifies **rain**, as it is said:

"...He spreads the cloud of His light" (Job 37:11b).

Mai takkanta? Increase (make more numerous) prayers [*t'filah*], as it is said: (Job 36:32b; returning to verse above) "...and commands it where to **strike** [**bemafgi'ah**; root: *pey-gimmel-ayin*]."

And **pegi'ah** signifies prayer [*t'filah*], as it is said:

"Neither pray for this people...nor **plead** [*tifga*]" (Jeremiah 7:16).

-- B. Taanit 7b

Tifga is also from root: *pey-gimmel-ayin*

Before the above pronouncement addressed to Jeremiah (7:16), God shares dire warnings for the people, interspersed with hopeful instruction:

7:5) If you really mend your ways and your actions; if you execute justice between one party and another; 6) if you do not oppress the stranger, the orphan, and the widow; if you do not shed the blood of the innocent in this place; if you do not follow other gods, to your own hurt ... 9) Will you **steal*** and murder and commit adultery and swear falsely, and sacrifice to Baal, and follow other gods whom you have not experienced – 10) and then come and stand before Me in this House that bears My name and say, "We are safe"?—[Safe] to do all these abhorrent things! 11) Do you consider this House, which bears My name, to be a **den of thieves***? As for Me, I have been watching—declares GOD...13)...and because you do all these things.... 15) And I will cast you out of My presence as I cast out your kinsfolk, the whole brood of Ephraim. 16) As for you, don't pray for this people, do not raise a cry of prayer on their behalf, do not plead with Me; for I will not listen to you.

*two more expressions for stealing and thieving but similar theme of violent oppression as **gezel**

gezel.

Robbery, Wrong, Oppression.

Jastrow dictionary example: "what has been illegitimately taken from a gentile, is forbidden (must be restored)" -- Jerusalem Talmud (Baba Metzia II, 8c)

Steinsaltz: "robbery."

Soncino: "violent robbery."

chamas.

Violence, Robbery, Extortion.

Jastrow examples intertwine **chamas** and **gezel**.

takkanta = takkana

Remedy. Improvement. Reform for public welfare

Mai takkanta? = "What should he do?" Literally: What is his remedy?

pegi'ah.

Meeting. Striking against. Entreaty. Prayer (Jastrow)

Encounter. Entreat. Strike. Meet, with kindness or with hostility. Accident (BDB)

Job 36:32

על־כַּפַּיִם כֹּסֶה־אוֹר
וַיִּצוּ עָלֶיהָ בְּמַפְגִּיעַ:

a) He covers His **hands** [*al kapayim* *kisah*] with **lightning** [*ohr*]...

Al kapayim can also mean "because of hands."

Ohr = lightning; dawn, lamp, source of Enlightenment.

b) ...and commands it where to **strike** [*bemafgi'ah*].

Jonah 3:8

וּמִן־הַחַמָּס אֲשֶׁר בְּכַפֵּיהֶם...

[Let everyone turn back...from the evil ways] and the **violence** [*he-chamas*] that is in **their hands** [*b'kapeiheim*].

Job 37:11

אֶף־בְּרִי יִטְרִיחַ עָב
יִפִּיץ עָנָן אוֹרוֹ:

a) Also with moisture [*af-bri*] He loads dark clouds [*av*]

b) and spreads the cloud [*anan*] of **His light** [*ohro*].

af.

I. Nostril, Anger, Face.

II. Also, More, In addition

bri. Watered. With moisture.

רִי = hapax legomenon. BDB links to slightly more common word: Saturated, Refreshed [רָוִי, רָוָה]

Af-Bri. Rashi cites this as the name of "the angel appointed over the clouds," and notes that rain can be an expression of divine anger or a healing blessing. This personified (angelified?) view is also found in Tefilat Geshem, the prayer for rain, for Shemini Atzeret. Not sure of history.

אֶף בְּרִי אֶתֵּת שֵׁם שֶׁר מְטֵר.
לְהַעֲבִיב וּלְהַעֲנִין לְהַרְקֵי וּלְהַמְטֵר.
מִיָּם אֲבִים בָּם גִּיָּא לְעֵטֵר;
לְבַל יוֹעֲצָרוּ בְּנִשְׁיוֹן שֹׁטֵר.

Af-Bri is the designated name of the rain angel who overcasts, makes clouds, and empties them, making rain

Water to crown the valley;

let it not be **withheld** because of unpaid debts.

The prayer beginning "Af-Bri" is first paragraph of Shemini Atzeret insert
for Musaf Amidah for Festivals

Translation is adaptation from Sefaria's community translation and Koren-Sacks siddur (Koren, 2006)
Rashi-note comes from Sefaria and a footnote from Rabbi Sacks, z"l

Translation of passage from Babylonian Talmud Taanit 7b
is mash-up and adaptation of Koren/Steinsalz version on Sefaria and Soncino version on Halakhah.com

Tanakh translations are mashed up from the Talmud pages and from translations
on Sefaria, Mechon-Mamre, and my own stumbling through dictionaries.

BDB = Brown Driver Briggs, bilingual Hebrew/English Lexicon of biblical Hebrew
Samuel Rolles Driver, Francis Brown, Charles Augustus Briggs. Early 20th Century.
Available in interactive form free via Sefaria.org and BibleHub.com

Jastrow = Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature,
Compiled by Marcus Jastrow. early 20th Century.
Available for free, interactive form via Sefaria.org