

THE FORMER AND LATTER RAINS

In the past, and especially during the last two centuries, much has been said and written about the former rains and the latter rains. The Pentecostal movement of the previous century borrowed heavily from the Scriptural imagery of the former rains and the latter rains. Spiritual revivals were announced in various locations all over the world and many more were prophesied about - all in the name of the latter rains that were expected to fall in the last days. The name of William Branham has often been connected with the Latter Rain Movement. Branham had a very successful and renowned healing ministry and filled the largest stadiums and meeting halls in the world between the years of 1940 and 1965. He was regarded as a prophet and a special messenger of the Almighty. One of his most famous sermons was a message called "Former and Latter Rain", delivered on the 3rd of March 1960 at the Madison Square Garden in Phoenix, Arizona, U.S.A. Thousands of people came to listen to Branham, not only at this occasion, but wherever and whenever he was asked to preach. But already during his lifetime and especially after his death in 1965, many people were confused and disillusioned about the things he had said and done.

Branham was by no means the only exponent of the so called Latter Rain Movement. Many more names may be added to this list. Many pentecostal and revival movements appeared on the horizon and vanished with the passing of time. It was as though the rains that had been announced did not come the way it was forecasted. And when it did come, it did not truly refresh the people; it did not produce the crop and the fruit that was promised; it did not last long enough to have made a considerable impact on people's lives. I am not trying to discredit someone like Branham or, for that matter, anyone who claims that their messages have something to do with the latter rain. But maybe we should take another look at what Scriptures are telling us about the former and the latter rain. Let us go directly to the straightforward message of Scriptures, without trying to say or imply or accomplish more than what is allowed by Scriptures. We may be surprised by the outcome.

The time that we're in right now (the beginning of March) is the time of the latter rain in the land of Israel. The time of the former rain is more or less the month of October. Before the former rain falls in October, the land had just gone through a period of roughly six months in which practically no rain had fallen - the dry, summer period between the beginning of April and the beginning of October. So, by the month of October, the entire land yearns for rain and eagerly awaits the first showers. The former rain is needed to prepare the soil for the planting of new seeds and for the newly planted seeds to take root and start growing. After the former rain follows the heavy rains of the winter - roughly the months of December, January and February. This is followed by the third rain category, the latter rain, usually in the month of March. The latter rain is extremely important and much needed, because it enables the plants to mature completely before the harvest takes place.

The Hebrew word for "former rain" is "yoreh" which comes from the root "yarah" which means "to flow as water" or "to pour out water" and, figuratively, "to teach" or "to instruct". This is the same root from which the word "torah" is derived. The Hebrew word for "latter rain" is "malqosh" which comes from the root "laqash" which means "to be late" or "to come afterwards". This root is not used often in Scriptures but is synonymous to another root word that appears frequently in various forms throughout the Pre-Messianic Scriptures, the word "achar" (which also means: "to be late" or "to come afterwards"). This word, "achar", is sometimes used to indicate that the set-apart ones will follow after Yahweh (Hoshea 11:10); that they will hear a word behind them saying "This is the way" (YeshaYahu 30:21); that Yahweh has cast their sins behind his back (YeshaYahu 38:17); that Yahweh may leave a blessing behind him, on behalf of his set-apart ones (Yahuel / Joel 2:14); that the esteem of the latter house will be greater than the former (Chaggai / Haggai 2:9); that the set-apart ones may have a great expectancy with regards to the end times (YermeYahu 31:17); that the purposes of Yahweh will only be understood in the latter days (YermeYahu 30:24); that the children of Yahweh will seek and fear Yahweh in the latter days (Hoshea 3:5) and that after the

gloomy events of the Day of Yahweh, his Spirit will be poured out on all flesh and his former and latter rain will be poured out as before (Yahuel / Joel 2:23, 28).

Looking specifically at passages referring to the latter rain, the following additional insights are gained:

Yahweh will give both his former rain and latter rain in the right season if we set our hearts upon diligently obeying Him, loving and serving Him with all our being.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:13-14 And it shall be that if you diligently obey My commands which I command you today, to love Yahweh your Elohim and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your being, then I shall give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, and you shall gather in your grain, and your new wine, and your oil.

Yahweh withholds his showers and his latter rain when his people commit themselves to whoring with many lovers.

YermeYahu 3:1,3 But you have committed whoring with many lovers. And would you return to Me?" declares Yahweh ... Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain. You have had a whore's forehead, you refuse to be ashamed.

Only those with a backsliding and rebellious heart doesn't recognise that Yahweh is in control of the times and the seasons, including the former and the latter rain.

YermeYahu 5:23-24 But this people has a backsliding and rebellious heart, they have turned aside and gone away. And they do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear Yahweh our Elohim, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He guards for us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

When we've been injured and torn to pieces, it is time to turn back to Yahweh and press on to know Him, because He is to us like the latter rain.

Hoshea 6:1-3 Come, and let us turn back to Yahweh. For He has torn but He does heal us, He has stricken but He binds us up. After two days He shall revive us, on the third day He shall raise us up, so that we live before Him. So let us know, let us pursue to know Yahweh. His going forth is as certain as the morning. And He comes to us like the rain, like the latter rain watering the earth.

We can truly look forward and be glad and rejoice in Yahweh for the certainty that there will come a future time when He will give us a Teacher of Righteousness, the former and the latter rains as before.

Yahuel / Joel 2:23 And you children of Tsiyon, be glad and rejoice in Yahweh your Elohim, for He shall give you the Teacher of Righteousness, and cause the rain to come down for you, the former rain and the latter rain, as before.

We may boldly ask Yahweh to send his latter rain. He will answer with compassion and make us feel as though He had never pushed us aside.

ZecharYah / Zechariah 10:1,6 Ask Yahweh for rain in the time of the latter rain, Yahweh who makes storm clouds. And He gives them showers of rain, the plants in the field to everyone ... And I shall make the house of Yehudah mighty, and save the house of Yoseph. And I shall bring them back, because I have compassion on them. And they shall be as though I had not pushed them aside. For I am Yahweh their Elohim, and I answer them.

We should wait patiently for the coming of the Master like a farmer waiting for the latter rains.

Ya'aqov / James 5:7 So, brothers, be patient until the coming of the Master. See, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.