



TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Eikev

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A Taste of Torah Thankful for the Small Things

by Rabbi Nosson Schoss

In this week's parsha, the Torah (Eikev 7:17-18) tells us, "Perhaps You will say in your heart, these nations are more numerous than I; how will I be able to conquer them? Do not fear them; you shall remember what Hashem did to Pharaoh and all of Egypt... so, too, shall Hashem do to all the peoples you fear." The Sefer Akeida (Rabbi Moshe ben Yitzchak Arama; c. 1420-1494) explains that the Torah is teaching us a lesson. If someone is looking for Divine help, the first step is to realize that he is unable to manage on his own, as the Torah says that one will wonder, "... how will I be able to conquer them?" Only after coming to that conclusion will he merit being helped, as the verse continues "Do not fear them;" Hashem will take care of things. Part of the merit for Divine help is the realization that without G-d's help, we would not manage.

Similarly, in Tehillim (Psalms 121:1-2), King David says "From whence will come my help? My help is from Hashem." King David is putting the above concept into practice by first recognizing his need for help, and then hoping to merit that Divine assistance.

Later in the parsha, the commandment to make a blessing after eating a meal, better known as *Birkas Hamazon*, appears. The Torah says (Eikev 8:10), "You will eat and you will be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem, your G-d." This blessing is actually a Torah-level mitzvah, unlike most other blessings, which are a Rabbinic obligation. Why is this blessing of such importance that it requires a special mitzvah in the Torah? Another interesting point is that the Talmud (Brochos 20b) says that although Torah law only requires this

blessing to be made after eating a full meal when a person is fully satiated, the Jewish People accepted upon themselves (as a Rabbinic obligation) to recite *Birkas Hamazon* even after eating an olive's-volume of bread. The Talmud goes on to say that it is in this merit that G-d shows favor to the Jewish People. What is special about this stringency that we merit special Divine attention because of it?

In Hebrew, the word *hoda'a* has two meanings. It can mean to admit as well as to thank. Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980) points out that in the *Shemone Esrei* recited three times a day, we have the paragraph that begins with the words "*Modim anachnu lach*," "We thank You." The prayer continues and repeats this expression of thanks a second time, saying "*nodeh licha*," "we shall thank You." Why is this expression of thanks repeated a second time? Rabbi Hutner explains that the first time, the word "*modim*" is being used to mean "admission;" we must first admit that all is from G-d, as the prayer continues, "... that You are our G-d, Rock of our lives, Shield of our salvation..." After admitting that all is from Him, we now repeat that same root word of *hoda'a* by saying "*nodeh licha*," here referring to the second meaning of "thanks." After admitting that all is from Hashem, we can properly thank Him, as the paragraph continues, "We shall thank You and relate Your praise for our lives... for our souls... for Your miracles that are with us every day; and for your wonders and favors in all times..."

In *Birkas Hamazon*, we are doing the same thing. The first blessing of *Birkas Hamazon* is a proclamation of admission, as we say, "Blessed are you Hashem...

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Stories for the Soul

It's The Little Ones that Count

Rabbi Sholom Eisen (1917-1988) was a *dayan* (judge) in Yerushalayim. In addition, he was a noted expert in the laws of the four *minim* (species) used on Sukkos. It was Erev Sukkos, a very busy time, when a young boy eagerly approached him, asking if the Rov could examine his esrog. Rabbi Eisen was quite busy with other matters, and he replied to the child, "If your father obtained the esrog for you, I'm sure it is kosher." The child, crestfallen at not having his esrog checked by the Rov, went sadly on his way.

The next morning, on the first day of Sukkos, there was a knock on the door of the child's home some time before the prayers were scheduled to begin in the shul. The boy's father answered the door, and was surprised to see Rabbi Eisen standing there!

"I'd like to examine your son's esrog," he explained. The excited child quickly brought his precious esrog to the Rov, who spent several minutes oohing and aahing over the great beauty of the esrog. "Your father has given you a fine esrog!" concluded Rabbi Eisen. The child stood there, beaming, as the boy's father smiled in disbelief at the Rov's sensitivity to the needs of a small child.

Rashi in this week's parsha tells us of the importance of paying attention even to the smaller, seemingly "less important" mitzvos. Great people are the ones who recognize the greatness in even the seemingly small and insignificant.

Kollel Happenings

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SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM CONTINUES THIS SHABBOS

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. Program ends 15 minutes before mincha in Southeast Denver, at mincha in West Denver. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION LIVE & LEARN LEARNING PROGRAM AT THE WEST DENVER KOLLEL TORAH CENTER

The Live & Learn Learning Program for seniors is held most Tuesdays at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center. Coffee and pastries at 10:30 am, two classes of 45 minutes each from 10:40-12:15 (including 5 minute break between classes), and lunch (including take-home option) at 12:15. For more info, email info@denverkollel.org. Program is on break for most of August.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: How could a crack ruin one's *netilas yadayim*?

Answer: Water used for *netilas yadayim* must come from a halachically valid *kli* (vessel). If a vessel has a crack in it (at any point in the vessel, even toward the top) that allows external liquid in which it is immersed to seep in, it loses its *kli* status. (If, however, the crack is only large enough to allow liquid inside to seep out, it is still valid.) Thus, one who washes with such a vessel has

not fulfilled *netilas yadayim* (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 159:1).

The Mishna Berura (ad loc.:7) adds in the name of the Bach and Elya Rabba that if a crack is large enough that liquid inside drips out continuously, this is a sign that it will also allow external liquid to seep in and is invalid.

This week's question: How does standing straight affect the validity of *netilas yadayim*?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra - Part II

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra was born in Tudela, Spain, circa 1089-1092. Some sources say that he was born in Toledo, Spain, but this is an erroneous

corruption of the proper location of Tudela. Tudela was one of the oldest and most important Jewish communities in Spain.

A Taste of Torah

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Who nourishes the entire world, in His goodness, with grace, with kindness, and with mercy. He gives nourishment to all flesh, for His kindness is eternal..." After admitting that all is from G-d, we then go on to the second blessing, which expresses thanks to Hashem. We say, "We thank you Hashem... for life, grace, and the kindness which You have granted us; and for the provision of food with which You nourish and sustain us constantly..."

Success presents a big challenge. When one is successful, he may begin to feel powerful and in control, as it says later in the parsha (ibid.:11-15), "Take care, lest you forget Hashem... lest you eat and be satisfied... and your heart will become haughty, and you will forget Hashem." One has to always remember that all his success is from the hand of Hashem, as the verse continues (ibid.:17-18), "And you may say in your heart, my strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth. Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d; that it was He who gave you strength to make you

successful."

This is what is so important about *Birkas Hamazon*. The Torah itself points out that being able to provide for one's needs and eating to satiation may cause one to be haughty and feel his own power. At this point, we must ensure that we not forget that it is G-d Who provides for us all, and our success is not due to our own power. The Torah therefore issues a commandment to recite the blessing after eating a full meal. As discussed above, when we recognize that all is from Hashem, we are able to merit Divine attention. By creating an obligation to recite this blessing even after consuming a minimal amount of food, we are constantly making this proclamation, and, in return, we merit continuous Divine favor.

May we all merit to properly understand and realize that all we have is a gift from Hashem, and not success of our own making. This appreciation will help ensure that we merit favor and success from Hashem.

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