

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
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Torah Wellsprings - Eikev

Turn to Hashem, Alone

Many people have the custom to say the perek (Tehillim 91) יֵשֶׁב בְּסֶתֶר עָלָיו after lighting Chanukah *lecht*. The Birchas Avraham zt'l of Slonim, who had this custom, explained to his *chassidim* the words יִקְרָאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֶהוּ, from this chapter "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him." He said: Why does it occur that people daven, and Hashem doesn't answer them? It is because it wasn't יִקְרָאֵנִי, which means they didn't call Hashem. They davened, they even had kavanah, but it wasn't called יִקְרָאֵנִי, a call to Hashem.

The Birchas Avraham explained this with a mashal:

There was a person who went to a doctor because of a pain in his eye. After checking him, the doctor told him that he needed an urgent operation, which must be done within a month, otherwise, he would go blind r"l.

The doctor said, "The problem is that there are only two doctors in the world who know how to do this operation that will save your eyes. One lives in London and the other lives in New York. If you can get an appointment with either one of them within a month, you can save your eyesight."

He got on the next flight and flew to London. But the doctor told him that the next appointment available is in three months. He pleaded with the doctor to help him, explaining the dire importance of the operation. But do you think he pleaded with all his heart? No, he wasn't pleading with all his heart because he knew that if this doctor didn't help him, there was a doctor in New York who might help him. Afterwards, he flew to New York. The ophthalmologist in New York also told him that the next available appointment is in three months, and he doesn't have a time slot available for him now. However, this time, he pleaded

with all his heart because he knew that this doctor was his only hope.

This is how we should pray to Hashem, with the understanding that no one can help, other than Hashem alone. When one prays to Hashem with such *emunah*, his tefillos will be answered. As it states, יִקְרָאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֶהוּ, "He will call upon Me [with a sincere tefillah, with all his heart], and I will answer him."

Reb Don Segal Shlita tells a story that occurred to one of the gedolim from the city of Tunis. The *gadol* was walking with two of his students when suddenly a mighty Arab thief approached them. The Arab didn't let them pass, saying that he would kill the Rav. The students spoke to the Arab, hoping to convince him otherwise. The Arab callously responded, "If you don't stop bothering me, I will kill both of you, together with the Rav."

The Rav understood that the Arab's threat was real, so he advised his students to leave immediately. They should not be around, since it was a matter of *pikuach nefesh*.

With a broken heart and with tears, they left their Rav. They stood at a distance to see what would happen.

The Arab murderer said to the Rav, "What is your last wish?"

He said he wanted a cup of water. The Arab gave him a cup of water. The Rav then said the brachah over the water with immense *hislahavus*. Just then, even before the Rav had a chance to drink from the water, a sheikh arrived. This sheikh was very well respected among the Arabs, and they all had to listen to what he said. He was also a known anti-Semite. Surprisingly, this time the sheikh said to the Arab, "You can do whatever you want to all Jews, but do not harm this Rav. You must allow him to live."

The Arab obeyed the sheikh and untied the Rav's ropes. Then he quickly ran to capture the two students who were standing from afar. If he couldn't kill the Rav, he would satisfy his desire for murder with the students. But since the students were several yards away, they managed to escape.

The next time the students met with their Rav, they asked him why he requested a cup of water. The Rav replied, "Do you think I wanted water? I didn't want the water. I wanted to say the brachah נהיה בדברו, 'that everything was created by Hashem's word.' I received a kabbalah that when one says the brachah נהיה בדברו with kavanah, it rips up all harsh decrees. No creation can harm him or rule over him when one believes with certainty that אין עוד מלבדו, there is only Hashem, נהיה בדברו, and everything happens according to His decree.

This lesson is also written in the Nefesh HaChaim: "The truth is, that it is a great concept and a wonderful segulah to remove and to annul all dinim from oneself, and no one will be able to harm him. This is when one places in his heart that Hashem is true, ואין עוד מלבדו, there is no one but Hashem."

Friendship

It states in this week's parashah (10:19) וְאַהֲבַתְּם אֶת הַגֵּר כִּי גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, "You shall love the *ger*, because you were *geirim*, strangers, in the land of Mitzrayim." The simple meaning of this pasuk is to love all *geirim*, those who converted to Yiddishkeit. However, the Chinuch (mitzvah 431) says that

included in this mitzvah is to love all people who feel like a גֵּר, a stranger, and to be מקרב them, and to help them feel at home in their new surroundings.

The Chinuch writes, "This teaches us the great obligation to be *mekarev* everyone who feels like a גֵּר בארץ נכריה, a stranger in a foreign land. We must be *mekarev* him with both hands and help him until he feels like he is an equal resident like all the others. We learn from this precious mitzvah to have compassion for a person who is new to a city. When we do so, Hashem will have compassion on us, and Heaven's brachos will come upon us. כִּי גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, "You were *geirim* in Mitzrayim." We have already felt the great pain of being among people we don't know, in a foreign land. Thereby, we can remind ourselves of the great distress foreigners feel... and we should have compassion on them..."

There are many situations where we can perform this mitzvah. If someone new comes to your beis medresh, and he doesn't know the people around him, or the schedule, and he doesn't know precisely what is expected from him, it is a mitzvah to befriend him so that he won't feel alone. Another opportunity to perform this mitzvah is when someone moves into your neighborhood, or the house next door to yours. He wants to feel at home and not feel like a stranger. You will do a great mitzvah if you help him feel welcome. In a yeshiva, every year, new young bachurim join the yeshiva. The bachurim in the grades above should greet the new students with happiness.¹

1. There is an organization in Queens, New York, called Hashiveinu. With devotion and effort, they help bachurim return to the path of Torah and mitzvos.

Once, a renowned rosh yeshiva brought his youngest son to Hashiveinu. With tears in his eyes, this renowned rosh yeshiva asked the director of Hashiveinu to help his son return to the path of Torah. The director welcomed the bachur and promised to do what he could to help him. Indeed, in a short time, the bachur returned to the path of Torah, to the great relief and joy of his father.

The day the bachur was accepted into Hashiveinu, the director told the rosh yeshiva, "I will help your son, but on condition that you first listen to my personal story. I grew up in an area that didn't have a good cheder. When I became older and went to a yeshiva to study Torah, I was behind all the other bachurim,

It states (Yeshayah 23:18) כִּי לְיֹשְׁבֵימָה יְהִיָּה ה' יְהִיָּה, סְחָרָהּ לְאֹכֵל לְשָׂבָעָה, "for her merchandise will belong to those who sit before Hashem, to eat and be sated and for elegant clothing." Who will earn this reward? The Gemara (Pesach 118a) says, זֶה הַמִּקְבֵּל פָּנֵי חֲבִירוֹ בִּישִׁיבָה, "This

refers to when one greets his fellow man in yeshiva." The Maharsha writes that this means that he learns with others.

Torah always needs chizuk, especially in the new Elul zman. It is proper to be *mekarev* our fellow colleagues and learn with them.²

and I couldn't keep up with the studies. I approached one of the good bachurim and asked him to make time to learn with me, so I could understand what was going on. The bachur responded that he didn't have time for me. He was busy reviewing hilchos Shabbos, and couldn't take on new projects. I went to another bachur, and his response was similar. I was devastated; doesn't anyone have time for me? I decided that I would ask just one more bachur. If he also refuses to help me, I will take that as a sign that yeshiva isn't for me, and I will leave. Do you know who I went to? The person I went to was you! I asked you to learn with me. You smiled welcomingly, and you said you would be glad to learn with me. After learning with you for a short time, I was able to study well in the yeshiva. You did me this favor, and now I will return the favor and do the same for your son."

As the saying goes, what you do for others, you do for yourself. When the bachur in the yeshiva agreed to learn with another struggling bachur, he thought he was helping that bachur, when actually, he was helping himself. Years later, the bachur he helped would become the director of Hashiveinu and be instrumental in bringing his son back to Torah and mitzvos. Had he refused to learn with this new bachur, there would be no Hashiveinu, and then, who knows what would have happened to his son?

2. A Yid from Bnei Brak was niftar, and during the *shivah*, someone came to be *menachem avel*. This man said to the *aveilim*, "Your father saved my life. If it weren't for him, I would have committed suicide years ago."

The *aveilim* were shocked when they heard this. How did their father prevent this person from committing suicide? They knew the visitor a bit from the neighborhood. They knew he was poor, didn't have shalom bayis, nor did he have nachas, and his mental health was fragile, too. They couldn't understand how their father helped him. Their father wasn't a man of means, so he couldn't have helped him with money. Neither was he a shalom bayis counselor, so he couldn't have helped him in that way, either. They asked, "How did our father help you? How did he prevent you from committing suicide? Did he grab you with both hands, to stop you from jumping off a roof?"

He replied, "Every motzei Shabbos, I came to your father's home, and I told him my *tzaros*. He wasn't able to help me with money, but he listened to me, and that was a major relief for me. I felt that I had a place where I could unload my heart from all my *tzaros*, and that saved my life."

We learn from this story that to help a fellow man, one doesn't need to be exceptionally talented, wise, or learned. He doesn't need to have international fame or to be a sought-after orator. He doesn't have to be wealthy, either. Sometimes, just by listening, you can give your fellow man tremendous chizuk.

Every year, before Succos, Reb Aryeh Levine zt'l would spend a lot of time searching for a beautiful esrog. One year, on erev Succos, he came to an esrog merchant, and he chose an esrog quickly. He looked at the esrog briefly, paid for it, and left. Someone approached him and asked, "Why did you buy an esrog so quickly this year?"

Reb Aryeh Levine replied, "The Torah writes the word *הדר* twice. Once it refers to an esrog, *פרי עץ הדר*, and once with regard to honoring the elderly, *והדרת פני זקן*. Some are cautious with the mitzvah of *פרי עץ הדר*, to buy a beautiful esrog. I prefer to keep the mitzvah *והדרת פני זקן*, to honor the elderly. This is no less important than the other mitzvah of *הדר*."

He explained that elderly people were waiting for him in the *בית המצורעים* (The Lepers Hospital. Most people were afraid to go there. Reb Aryeh Levine would go there to help the ill). He preferred to do this mitzvah, to give chizuk to those broken people.

Reb Aryeh Levine used to frequent the Kosel Maaravi, the place that the Shechinah never left. However, in

The Tiferes Shlomo (ר"ה יעל אהרן Masai) explains the song *אומר בשבחו* (that the Arizal wrote and established to say on Friday nights). It states there *נהורא* (without the וי"ו) are the letters of *אהרן*, who was *אוהב שלום ורודף שלום*. Seeking peace results with *ברכאן דנפישין*, many brachos.

Torah and Mitzvos

This parashah begins with the words, *והיה* "This shall be the עקב תשמעון את המשפטים האלה

reward when you hearken to the laws..."¹³ Many *brachos* come by keeping the Torah.⁴

Studying Torah and keeping the mitzvos might seem hard, but there are counsels to consider that make keeping Torah and mitzvos a pleasure.⁵ One, is to remember the many brachos that will be ours just for studying Torah and for keeping the mitzvos.

The Gemara (Pesachim 68) states that every thirty days Rav Sheshes reviewed everything

the year תש"ח, the city of Yerushalayim was captured by the Arabs, and it was impossible to go to the Kosel. Reb Aryeh Levine sought a new place to daven. Where would be a good place to daven? He chose to daven near the home of the Tchebiner Rav. He explained, "Many broken people came to this home; Holocaust survivors, rabbanim, and simple people – each with his bitter story. They would come to the Tchebiner Rav's home and pour out their bitter hearts before him. Hashem is close to those who have a bitter heart, as it states *קרוב ה' לנשברי לב*, so the Shechinah never leaves this house. Therefore, I will daven there.

Let's learn from this that if we help those who feel broken, the Shechinah will be in our house, and when we daven in our house, it is like davening near the Makom HaMikdash!

3. The reward for keeping Torah and mitzvos is mentioned several times in this week's parashah (8:1, 11:8-9, 11:13-15, 11:20-21, 11:22-25).

4. A visitor to a farm was surprised to see a farmer feeding milk to his cows. He asked the farmer, "What is the purpose of milking cows if you feed it to them afterwards? You aren't gaining anything!"

The farmer explained, "I feed the cows three buckets of milk, and I get fifteen buckets of milk from them, so I'm gaining. Furthermore, I feed them *chalav akum*, and I get from them *chalev Yisrael!*"

The nimshal is that during our time in this world, we study Torah and mitzvos, and the profits are enormous. We must believe in the great reward we are earning with our good deeds. Furthermore, we enter the world like a goy (with solely animalistic drives) and leave as a Yid (having purified ourselves with our good deeds). This makes life worthwhile.

5. Reb Avraham Mordechai Malach Shlita told the following story:

There was a dove that was born without wings. She was jealous of her friends who spent their days flying high in the sky, while she had to remain behind alone in her nest, or, at best, wobbling along on the road.

At nighttime, the birds would return to their nests and describe the beautiful rivers and mountains they saw when they flew in the sky. These conversations made the handicapped dove feel even more brokenhearted.

She prayed and cried to Hashem, and Hashem answered her tefillos. One morning, she woke up with full-grown wings at her side.

The problem was that she didn't realize that the protrusions at the side of her body were wings. So, she continued hopping along on the ground, unaware that she could fly. Now, it was even harder for her because she had two heavy loads on either side. She was even more upset than before.

A bas kol called out and said, "Don't feel bad. You aren't carrying a heavy load. Open your arms wide, and you will see that you can fly."

Nimshal: The heavy load of Torah and mitzvos is our wings. They aren't cumbersome. Their heaviness enhances our lives and sweetens it. Our lives are far more pleasurable, even in this world, because of the "load" we carry. Keep all the mitzvos, embrace them, and you will fly to very high levels.

he had learned (כל תלמודו). Then he would come to the door and say תשמח נפשי, my soul shall rejoice because I had the merit to learn Torah."

The Ben Ish Chai (Ben Yehoyada) discusses the reason he went specifically to the door to express his joy that he studied Torah.

He explains that a door is very heavy. Some doors are large and made of bulky iron or heavy wood. However, wondrously, every person can easily open the door. Even a young child can open the door without difficulty. This is because the door is attached to hinges. One hinge above and one below, and this makes opening and closing a door an easy feat.

Therefore, it states in Mishlei (26:14) הַדֶּלֶת הַזֹּאת, תִּפְסֹב עַל צִירָהּ וְעֵצָהּ עַל מִשְׁתָּו, "The door turns on its hinges, and a lazy person on his bed." What is the connection between a lazy person and a door?

The Ben Ish Chai explains that the reason a lazy person doesn't get out of bed is that he considers studying Torah a weighty and challenging mission, and he doesn't want to carry this heavy load. So, he stays in bed to free himself from this hardship. We tell him to learn a lesson from the door. Although it is made from heavy material, anyone can move it easily, back and forth, because it has two hinges. It is also possible to acquire hinges for Torah study, and then studying Torah will become easy and light for you. The hinges of a door are one above and one

below. Also, the hinges for Torah study are one above (the mind) and one below (the heart). Fill your mind and heart with a desire to serve Hashem, and Torah study won't be hard anymore. Furthermore, understand with your mind and with your heart how precious and dear your Torah and avodas Hashem are before Hashem, and this will give you renewed energy.

Rav Sheshes went to the door because the hinges on the door gave him strength. It reminded him that with a hinge above and below, the desire of the mind and the heart, Torah study becomes easy. "This gave Rav Sheshes renewed strength to study Torah and to review everything he studied."⁶

Pirkei Avos (6:9) states: אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסִי בֶן קִסְמָא, פַּעַם אָחַת הָיִיתִי מְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּפָגַע בִּי אָדָם אֶחָד, וְנָתַן לִי שְׁלוֹם, וְהִתְחַזְרְתִּי לוֹ שְׁלוֹם. אָמַר לִי, רַבִּי, מֵאַיִזָּה מְקוֹם אֵתָּה. אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ, מֵעִיר גְּדוֹלָה שֶׁל חֲכָמִים וְשֶׁל סוֹפְרִים אֲנִי. אָמַר לִי, רַבִּי, רְצוֹנְךָ שֶׁתִּדּוֹר עֲפֹנוּ בְּמִקְוָמוֹ, וְאֲנִי אֵתָּה לֵךְ אֶלֶף אֲלָפִים דִּינָרֵי זָהָב וְאַבְנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמִרְגָּלִיּוֹת. אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ, בְּנִי, אִם אֵתָּה נֹתֵן לִי כָּל פֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וְאַבְנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמִרְגָּלִיּוֹת שֶׁבְּעוֹלָם, אֲנִי דֵר אֶלָּא בְּמִקְוָם תּוֹרָה.

"Reb Yosi ben Kisma said: 'One time, I was walking on the road and a person came to me and gave me shalom, and I responded shalom. He said, 'Rebbe, where do you live?' I told him, 'I come from a large city of chachamim.' He said, 'Rebbe, do you want to live in our place, and I will give you millions of gold coins, diamonds, and pearls? I told him, 'My son, if you give me all the money in the world, I will live solely in a place of Torah.'"

6. It states (Devarim 4:39) וְיָדַעְתָּ הַיּוֹם וְהָשַׁבְתָּ אֵל לִבְבְּךָ כִּי ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם מִפְּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת אֵין עוֹד "You shall know this day and take to your heart that Hashem, He is the G-d – in the heaven above and on the earth below – there is none other." The pasuk is telling us to have emunah in Hashem in the mind and the heart. When one does so, life becomes easy. It isn't a heavy load to carry, because he has the two hinges that make everything light.

Focusing on these two hinges will help us study Torah with a light, easy heart, and it will also help us endure all hardships of life. This is because sometimes a person doesn't feel like getting out of bed in the morning because he has a lot of tzaros in his life. Life seems too heavy to carry. However, if he has two hinges, the mind and the heart, and he knows with his mind and heart that Hashem is one, and everything is from Him, everything becomes easy. There are no problems, because everything is directed and planned from Above. Just as a heavy door can swing easily on its hinges, he, too, will have a light and happy heart when he understands that everything is from Hashem.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner zt'l (*Ruach Chaim*) asks why this Mishnah begins with the words פעם אחת, "One time"? It could have said simply הָיִיתִי מְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ, I was walking on the way"!

Reb Chaim Volozhiner answers that the Mishnah wants to tell us how important it is to be in beis medresh. פעם אחת, "One time" he left the beis medresh, and he was immediately confronted with a negative influence, someone who tried to take him away from studying Torah.

Obviously, there will be times when a person must leave the beis medresh. He has

to go home, he has to go to work, and so on. But the lesson is that even when one leaves the beis medresh, he should make sure that his influences come from the beis medresh and not from the outside world.

The lesson has two points: 1) Make set times to study Torah every day.⁷

2) Don't stray after the influences of the goyim, chas v'shalom, who seek to draw people out of the beis medresh. Whatever one does, and wherever one goes, it should be according to the ways of the Torah, and under the influence of those who fear Hashem and study Torah.⁸

7. Just as a person wouldn't let a day pass by without davening three times, and without putting on talis and tefillin, so, too, one should consider the need to study Torah each day as an obligation that simply cannot be overlooked. A day shouldn't pass without learning Torah. In this manner, he will be connected to Torah constantly.

Pele Yoetz writes in his sefer Chesed l'Alafim (*Orach Chaim* 155) the benefit of having a קביעות, a set time for Torah. He writes, "Chazal (Pesachim 9b) say כל קבוע כמחצה על מחצה, whatever is set, קבוע, is like a ratio of fifty-fifty. So, too, when one sets a time to study by day and at night, and he never misses, it is like he studied half a day and half a night. And רב חסד מטה כלפי חסד, [which means that Hashem will consider it like he spent most of the day and night studying Torah].

The Mishnah (Avos 1:15) states, אָמַר מְעַט וְעָשָׂה הֶרְבֵּה. שְׁמַאי אוֹמֵר, עָשָׂה תוֹרָתְךָ קָבֹעַ. We can explain that עָשָׂה תוֹרָתְךָ קָבֹעַ when a person has a kviyus to study Torah (at a set time, every day), then אָמַר מְעַט even if he studies just a little, וְעָשָׂה הֶרְבֵּה, it will be considered like he did a lot. This is based on the rule כל קבוע כמחצה על מחצה, that whatever is set, it is like fifty percent.

8. The Skulener Rebbe, Reb Eliezer Zusia zt'l, and the Ribnitzer Rebbe, Reb Chaim Zanzvil zt'l, were friends from their youth, when they were both chasidim in the court of the tzaddik, the Rebbe of Shtefinesht zt'l. With time, they both began to lead their own courts and moved to America.

One morning, the Skulener Rebbe heard that the Ribnitzer Rebbe was coming to visit him. The Skulener Rebbe decided to daven Shacharis quicker than usual, so he would be ready to greet his distinguished guest.

Reb Chaim Zanzvil, the Ribnitzer Rebbe, arrived just as they completed Shacharis. The Skulener Rebbe said, "Chaim Zanzvil, I didn't know that you were coming until this morning, and there was no time to prepare special food and drink to honor you, so I will honor you with a nigun," and he sang the famous Skulener song, זָכַר דָּבָר לְעַבְדְּךָ ... זֹאת נִחְמָתִי ... וְדִים הִלִּיצוּנִי.

When he finished the song, the Ribnitzer Rebbe asked, "Leizer Zusia, did you compose this song on your own?"

"Yes, I did," the Skulener Rebbe replied, and then he sang the song a second time.

When he finished, the Ribnitzer asked again, "Tell me, Leizer Zusia, did you compose this song on your own?"

"Yes, I did."

"Do you not have anything better to do with your time than to compose songs?"

The Skulener Rebbe replied, "Chaim Zanzvil, you didn't understand me. I don't compose songs; I compose

Birkas HaMazon

It states in this week's parashah (8:10), וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, "You will eat and you will be satisfied and bless Hashem, your G-d." This refers to the mitzvah of benching after eating bread.

Many brachos come from being careful with *birchas hamazon*. The Chinuch (*Mitzvah* 430) writes, "I learned from my teachers that

whoever is careful with *birchas hamazon* will have *parnassah* in an honorable manner his entire life."⁹

The Zohar (vol.2 218.) writes, "*Birchas hamazon* is precious to Hakadosh Baruch Hu... When one eats and is satisfied, and benches with joy, Hashem will bestow blessings on him with joy and generously. Therefore, don't bench with sadness, only joyfully."¹⁰

explanations. I compose peirushim. This song explains the pesukim that I'm singing," and then he sang the song a third time.

The Ribnitzer Rebbe said, "Leizer Zusya! You told me you are explaining the pesukim, but I didn't hear any pirush! I heard a song, not an explanation!"

The Skulener Rebbe said, "Chaim Zanvil, I will explain it to you. וְדִים are the reshaim. הַלִּיצוּנִי, they make leitzonus of me. They mock my religious piety. They say, 'Why do you serve Hashem עַד מְאוֹד, to the extreme. They ask me why I am cautious with every detail of Jewish law. They say, 'Why don't you compromise and cut corners here and there?' But the answer is מִתּוֹרַתְךָ לֹא נִטִּיתִי, I don't want to abandon the Torah, and the only way to do that is to be cautious with every law, without compromise. When you begin to compromise, you don't know where you will end up."

The Ribnitzer Rebbe replied, "Leizer Zusia, you're right. Now I understand pshat!"

9. The Maharsha (Nazir 26b) explains, "A person's *parnassah* is hard to attain, like kriyas Yam Suf. Therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded that we eat, be satisfied, and bless Hashem. Thereby, Hashem will bestow His blessings upon us, and we will have *parnassah* in abundance. This is because there are mikatrigim (prosecuting angels) that claim that a person doesn't deserve to receive *parnassah* in abundance, but these brachos are מַלְאֲכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, malachim who plead in our favor, to counter those mikatrigim."

One of the halachos of *birchas hamazon* is that one must *bench* where he ate. If he leaves the house where he had eaten bread, he must return to *bench* where he ate. This is Beis Shamai's view, and this is one of the few times that the halachah follows Beis Shamai (see Orach Chaim 184:1).

Beis Hillel said to Beis Shamai, "If someone ate on top of a tower and he went down without benching, would you obligate him to climb up to the top of the tower to bench?"

Beis Shamai replied, "If someone forgot his wallet on top of the tower, wouldn't he climb up to fetch it? If he would do so for his benefit, then he should certainly do so for Hashem's honor."

The Gemara continues, "There were two students: One did like Beis Shamai [he returned to *bench*] and he found a wallet filled with silver coins. The other did like Beis Hillel [he didn't return to *bench*], and was devoured by a lion." (Brachos 53:)

The Gemara relates another episode:

Rabba bar Bar Chana was traveling in a caravan, and they stopped to eat. When everyone finished eating, the caravan began moving again. Suddenly, Rabba bar bar Chana remembered that he forgot to *bench*. He told himself, "If I tell my travel companions that I forgot to bench, they will tell me to bench here. They will say, 'Hashem is everywhere. *Bench* where you are.'" Wanted to go back to bench, he told them, "Wait for me. I forgot a golden dove." He returned, benched, and found a יוֹנָה זָהָבָה, a golden dove.

The *meforshim* tell us that these stories teach us that when one is careful with *birchas hamazon*, he merits wealth.

10. The Chida writes that since it is important to say *birchas hamazon* with joy, therefore, One should eat

The Be'er Heitev writes (in the name of the Bach) that there is no *ח* in *birchas hamazon* because *ח* represents *שנא קצף* and *חרון אף* (wrath

and punishment). Whoever is careful with *birchas hamazon* will be protected from those matters.¹¹

something that brings him joy so that he will bless Hashem with joy. Blessing Hashem with joy and with a loud voice is a segulah for wealth. This is alluded to in the pasuk (Mishlei 10:22) *ברכת ה' היא תעשיר ולא יוסף עָצֹב*, "The blessing of Hashem brings riches..."

ברכת ה' refers to *birchas hamazon* because that is the only brachah that is a d'Oraysa, from the Torah. This is the reason it is called *ברכת ה'*, "Hashem's brachah". All other brachos are d'Rabbanan. *היא תעשיר*, this brings wealth. The condition is *ולא יוסף עָצֹב עָמָה*, that he should bench with simchah because this removes the Sitra Achara."

Pele Yoetz (Achilah) writes, "A person must say *birchas hamazon* בנחת (pleasantly, without rushing), in a loud voice, and with a happy heart. If a person thinks about the words he is saying, it is impossible that he won't be happy. It appears from the Zohar that a person must do everything to get himself to bench with simchah, as it states (Rus 3:7) *ויאכל בעו וישת וייטב לבו*, and this means that Boaz benched *birchas hamazon* (with a happy heart)."

The Chareidim (ch.12) writes, "Mitzvas asei to bench *birchas hamazon* as it states (Devarim 8:10) *ואכלת ושבעת* בנחת, "You will eat and you will be satisfied and bless Hashem, your G-d." One must benech בנחת, *ויאכל בעו וישת וייטב לבו*, pleasantly, in a loud voice, with joy in his heart, as it states (Rus 3:7) *ויאכל בעו וישת וייטב לבו*, "Boaz ate and drank, and his heart was happy," which means he benched Hashem with joy.

Rabbeinu Sadyah Gaon, when he counts the mitzvah of *birchas hamazon* (רס"ג מצוה ל'), he writes *ואכלת ושבעת* (רס"ג מצוה ל'), he writes *ואכלת ושבעת* - which means to bench with joy.

11. Reb Meir Shapiro (rosh yeshiva of Chachmei Lublin), *zt'l*, once tested the students of a *cheder*. Generally, after conducting such a test, Reb Meir Shapiro would give the students a small gift. This time he said, "I wanted to give you a present, only I don't have anything with me. So, I will teach you a segulah instead. If you follow this advice, you will be successful and you will have a peaceful life. Revealing this segulah is my gift to you."

He told them the segulah to say *birchas hamazon* with *kavanah*. He quoted the Ba'ch, who says, "Whoever recites *birchas hamazon* with *kavanah*, neither wrath nor destruction will ever befall him." And he shared with them the words of the *Chinuch*, that "Whoever is careful with *birchas hamazon* will have *parnassah b'kavod* his entire life."

He advised them to bench from a siddur and not by heart.

Shimon, one of the students of that cheder, immediately made a kabbalah always to be careful with *birchas hamazon*.

His friends benched quickly and ran out to play while he stayed behind to bench properly. It was challenging, but he didn't want to lose out on the wonderful gift Reb Meir Shapiro gave them – a segulah for a prosperous and peaceful life.

Some years later, the Nazis invaded Poland, and Reb Shimon stood in line for the 'selektzia.' Whoever was short was sent to the left, to the gas chambers and crematoriums. As Reb Shimon stood in line, he prayed the entire time that in the merit of *birchas hamazon*, he should be saved from 'wrath and destruction (*שנא קצף* and *חרון אף*). When it was his turn, he stood on his toes to appear taller, and the Nazi signaled him to the right. He understood that his life was saved in the merit of *birchas hamazon*.

Soon afterward, Reb Shimon found himself standing in line again. This time, each person had to tell the Nazi at the head of the line what his trade was. Reb Shimon didn't know what he could say. He was only a teenager, and he had never worked before.

Again, he prayed, "In the merit of *birchas hamazon*, which is *mesugal* for *parnassah*, Hashem, please help me and support him."

It says in *Shach al HaTorah* (a student of the Arizal) that whoever is careful to say *birchas hamazon*, with *kavanah*, will not be eaten by worms and insects in the grave. ברוך he writes, is *gematriya* ברוך (announcement). An announcement goes forth from heaven, warning the worms not to eat this person who was careful with *birchas hamazon*—the blessings (ברכות) of *birchas hamazon* counter the curse of worms.

Sefer Chasidim (46) writes, "Someone died young, several years before his time. More

than a year after his *petirah*, he appeared to his relative in a dream. The relative asked him, 'How are things for you in the next world?'

"I am being judged daily because I wasn't careful to recite *birchas hamazon* and *brachos* over foods with *kavanah*. They tell me that I was eating for my own pleasure."

"But doesn't the judgment in heaven last only twelve months? You were *niftar* more than a year ago."

Immediately after he finished his tefillah, the person behind him tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Say that you are a cook and that I'm your helper."

When it was Reb Shimon's turn, he said this, and they were both sent to work in the kitchen. Reb Shimon understood that he was being rewarded once again for being cautious with *birchas hamazon*, which is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. Now he was working in the kitchen, where, naturally, there was more food to eat.

Reb Shimon continued to be extremely careful with *birchas hamazon*. If he felt he wouldn't have enough time to say *birchas hamazon* properly, he wouldn't eat his bread (indeed, a great *mesirus nefesh* during the Holocaust, even in his improved position).

Once, a Nazi officer saw Shimon working in the kitchen and asked, "What are you doing here? You look like a young child."

"I work here," Shimon explained. "I'm the cook."

The officer took Shimon outside, behind the kitchen, gave him a shovel and said, "Dig a ditch here, two meters deep. If it isn't finished in two hours, you will be shot." At that time, the Nazis were building trenches to hide in, in case the Russians would attack them.

However, the task the Nazi gave Shimon was impossible. The ground was covered with heavy rocks, and he was given a small shovel to work with! Furthermore, he only had two hours to finish the job!

Reb Shimon raised his eyes to heaven and said, "I say *birchas hamazon* with *kavanah*, which is *mesugal* to save me from 'wrath and destruction' (שני קצף and חרון אף). You saved me before, please save me again."

A few moments later, a jeep drove by, filled with Nazis. They saw Shimon trying to dig a ditch with a small shovel. To tease him, they threw vegetables at him. Reb Shimon thought wryly, "I see that in the merit of *birchas hamazon*, I once again received the blessing of abundance. Now I need the blessings for protection from wrath and destruction as well."

Immediately after this prayer, a jeep with Russian Prisoners of War (POWs) showed up. When they saw all the vegetables scattered around Shimon, they stopped and asked for some. (They were hungry because the Nazis barely fed these prisoners.) With an authoritative voice, Shimon told the Russians, "This is for the kitchen, and not for you. But if you will help me dig a trench here, two meters deep, I will give you the vegetables."

The Russians were strong, and they had the right tools for digging. They finished the job in half an hour.

The Nazi returned and saw that the task was completed. He said, "I always knew that your G-d takes care of you. I just didn't realize to what extent." Reb Shimon knew that he was saved once again in the merit of *birchas hamazon*.

When Reb Shimon came to Eretz Yisrael after the war, he always had *parnassah*, and he married off all his children honorably. He attributes it to the merit of *birchas hamazon*.

He replied, "The punishments of the first twelve months were more severe."

Counsels for Benching with Kavanah

The Magid of Mezritz *zy'a* (quoted in Toldos Aharon, Zitomer, Shoftim ד"ה ראשית) said that we should be more cautious with *birchas hamazon* than with *Shemonah Esrei* because *Shemonah Esrei* is *d'Rabanan*, while saying *birkas hamazon* is a mitzvah from the Torah.¹²

The following are some counsels to bench with kavanah.

- 1) Don't rush through the benching.¹³

2) The Mishnah Berurah (185:3, quoting Eliyahu Rabba) writes, "It is good to bench in a loud voice because הקול מעורר הכוונה, a loud voice rouses concentration."¹⁴

3) Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, 183:9) teaches: "One must sit when he benches. Even if he ate while walking about his house, or he was standing or lying down, when it is time to bench he must sit so that he can have more kavanah. He shouldn't say *birchas hamazon* lying down or leaning, as this is a way of *gaavah*. Rather, he should sit with awe."¹⁵

4) The Be'er Heitev, quoting the Bach, writes, "Those who are careful will always say the *birchas hamazon* from a siddur and not by heart."¹⁶

12. The Yaavatz (Chasdei Hashem, מאמר אשרי האיש פ"ג, *belashon tzachus*) writes that each mitzvah has its mazal. Everyone is careful with the prohibitions of *chametz* on Pesach and *basar be'chalav*, and the mitzvos of Purim. These mitzvos have a good mazal, and no one even considers transgressing them. But when it comes to *birkas hamazon*, people become lax. They mumble the words, sometimes they don't say the words correctly, and they say it without *kavanah*, although it is a mitzvah from the Torah.

13. Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l said that he doesn't understand why there is a long break in yeshivos from after Shacharis until first seder begins. He said, "All you need is five minutes to eat some bread and fifteen minutes to bench."

14. Someone came to the Yismach Yisrael of Alexander, *zy'a*, and complained that his son wasn't *benching*.

"Don't worry about it," the Rebbe replied. "If you will say *birchas hamazon* out-loud, your son will do the same."

15. The meforshim (Rabbeinu b'Chaya, Yisro 19:3, quoted in Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim 263:1) say that after a woman lights Shabbos lecht, "She should daven for children who will shine in Torah because tefillos said when one performs a mitzvah are heard more." The Chofetz Chaim zt'l says that this is the point of the Harachamans after *birchas hamazon*. After doing the mitzvah of *birchas hamazon*, it is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah.

Kaf HaChaim writes that just as we don't move from our spot when we daven *Shemonah Esrei* until we reach the words עושה שלום במרומיו, and we take three steps back, so, too, we shouldn't move from our place when we say the Harachamans. We should remain seated until we reach the words עושה שלום במרומיו.

16. Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zy'a* taught that saying *birchas hamazon* with *kavanah* and from a siddur or *bencher* is *mesugal* for having children and grandchildren who are *yirei shamayim* and *talmidei chachamim*.

One of the people who were niftar in the tragedy in Miron, a few years ago, was Reb Menachem Zekbach zt'l. From the age of 16, Reb Menachem Zekbach zt'l made a *kabbalah* only to bench from a *bencher*. Sometimes he was at a chasunah, or a family simchah, but he wouldn't eat bread if he didn't have a *bencher* handy. One day, his extended family went on a trip to *ktivrei tzaddikim*. At the end of a tiring day, when they finally washed for a meal, Reb Menachem was busy searching for a *bencher*. He wouldn't eat bread without it.

During the *shivah*, the family printed thousands of *benchers*, *l'iluy nishmoso*, and urged people to make the same *kabbalah* as Reb Menachem Zekbach had made, to always bench from a *bencher*. We know of a sofer who made this *kabbalah*, and had a great yeshuah for his parnassah. This isn't surprising because being

Kedushah

A wonderous story happened with the daughter of the Nesivos. The Nesivos (Reb Yaakov Lorberbaum) zt'l was the rav of Lisa, one of the primary poskim, and wrote the Nesivos HaMishpat on Choshen Mishpat, Chavas Daas on Yoreh Deiah, and other sefarim. This story occurred with his daughter, an *almanah*, who was traveling with *her* daughter, a *kallah*, to buy clothes and other items for her chasunah. They hired a wagon driver to bring them to Lisa, where they would make their purchases.

The problem was that the wagon driver understood that they were traveling with a lot of money to make all their purchases, so when they arrived in Lisa, he brought them to his house, called a friend, bound them, and took away their money.

The goyim heated the oven, getting it ready to burn them. In the meantime, the money was on a table, and they were debating how to divide it.

Suddenly, a German soldier came in. The wagon driver and his friend fled from the house. The soldier untied the women, returned the money to them, and walked with them until they came to an *achsanya* (inn) where they were able to stay.

That night, the Nesivos (who was no longer alive) appeared to his daughter in a dream and said, "When I heard what was happening to you, I went up to a high place in heaven to daven for you, but my requests weren't accepted because you had transgressed the prohibition of yichud (traveling with a goy). I went up to a higher place, and I requested that you be saved in the merit of the sefarim I wrote, which increased Torah in Yisrael. This time, my tefillos were accepted, and you were saved. But from now on, you must be cautious with the issur of yichud."

The daughter of the Nesivos told this dream to the people of Lisa, and they wrote it in the city ledger (*pinkus*). The story was repeated by the Rav of Aliska zt'l, who saw the ledger. (Lev Eliyahu, p.284).

In this story, the *issur yichud* was an *issur d'Rabbanan*, because two women are forbidden according to the *Rabbanim* to be alone with a goy. In our times, Reb Wosner zt'l revealed that being alone with the internet is also forbidden according to halachah. It is a type of yichud. In this story, the *almanah* and the *kallah* were about to be burned, and the Nesivos's tefillos, at first, weren't answered because they transgressed the issur of yichud. Let this be a reminder of how careful we have to be with all types of

careful with birchas hamazon is mesugal for parnassah.

Yalku Ma'am Loez (Bereishis vol.1 p.123) writes, "Say the tefillah from a siddur, because if he says it by heart, his mind will wander to other topics. But if he tries to say it from a siddur and doesn't raise his eyes, he will certainly not have foreign thoughts. If he will toil with all his strength to daven with good kavanah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will certainly have compassion on him, and Hashem will save him from the yetzer hara. We heard about Reb Yitzchak Luria, the Arizal, that he would even say birchas hamazon from a siddur, although this is something that even children know by heart." Reb Eliezer ben Makir (Seder HaYom, Birkas HaMazon) writes, "If he has a sefer before him to look into so he can have kavanah, this is better, and then he won't be sidetracked to think about other matters. *מה טוב ומה נעים*, this is certainly the best option. He will perform the mitzvah d'Oraysa according to halachah, and this will bring brachos to himself and his family."

A story happened in Yerushalayim, where a woman came to Reb Yehoshua Leib Diskin zt'l and expressed her tzaar that her children are niftar when they are still young, r'l. She asked Reb Yehoshua Leib to give her a brachah. Reb Yehoshua Leib advised her to be cautious to say birchas hamazon from a siddur. The woman listened to this advice, and her children survived, and she was able to build a family. (Written in Amud Eish, תודלות הגאון מהר"ל דיסקין, p.161).

yichud, including the yichud of being alone with the internet.

beginning or the end of the pasuk. Why is it placed in the middle?

It states (Zecharyah 2:9) וְאֵשׁ אֶהְיֶה לָּהּ נֹאֵם ה' חוֹמַת אֵשׁ קָבִיב, "I will be for it - says Hashem - a wall of fire around..."

He answered that the pasuk is saying that Hashem's words should be חוֹמַת אֵשׁ קָבִיב, like a wall of fire, where you can't turn right or left. A decree that must be kept, under all circumstances.¹⁷

The Imrei Emes zt'l asks that נֹאֵם ה' "says Hashem," should be written either at the

17. The baal hamaaseh tells the following story, which happened last year. "I underwent a complex heart surgery. It began at 6:00 am and was completed by 10:00 am. Then they brought me to the ICU, and following standard procedure, they kept me sedated for seven hours, hooked up to a breathing machine. After seven hours had passed, they tried to wake me up, but I didn't wake up. All other patients who had similar operations as I did were already awake, but I was still sleeping. My wife and the doctors were worried. One doctor sat next to my bed for several hours, because it was a dangerous situation.

All this time, my wife's phone rang several times, but she didn't answer the phone. She was very worried about me.

At 8:10 pm, I awoke. Relieved, my wife called back her sister right away, who had called so many times that day. She wanted to know why she called so many times. Her sister told her that the entire family had decided to make a conference call, to say Tehillim together for my health. She had called to tell her about it. The time for this conference call, to say Tehillim, was scheduled for 8:10 pm., the time I awoke.

We learn from this story that not only do actual tefillos help, but even setting a time for tefillah is powerful, and can bring yeshuos. Precisely at the time when they planned to daven, that is when I woke up.

Now that the surgery was successful, the rehabilitation phase began, a long road to get to complete health.

The man says that the hospital sent him to a clinic in Tel Aviv, which specializes in the rehabilitation of the heart.

"I had already gone there several times to take tests, to prepare myself for being there. Around this time, I met a friend who learns with me in Kollel Chazon Ish. He told me that he needed heart surgery to insert a stent. His doctor advised him to go to the hospital in Bnei Brak, Mei'einey Hayeshuah. An askan, however, suggested that he would be better off going to a hospital in Tel Aviv, as he **assumes** there are better doctors there for this procedure. Nevertheless, my friend told me that he decided to go to Mei'einey HaYeshuah in Bnei Brak. He explained that Bnei Brak is better for *shemiras einayim*. I asked him whether he was comfortable with his decision, because it was a complicated operation, and there are supposedly better doctors in Tel Aviv. He responded, "To go to Tel Aviv is a shaalah of d'Oraysahs, Torah prohibitions (of לא תתור, not to stray after the eyes). I won't go for "supposedly better" to Tel Aviv." When I heard his holy response, I decided to cancel my reservation at the Tel Aviv rehab center and go to a place where there are fewer tests for the eyes.

I said to my friend, "In your merit, I cancelled my appointments in Tel Aviv."

The friend replied, "Perhaps you want to know where I take the strength to make this decision? Sixty years ago, I learned in Kfar Chasidim, where Reb Eliyahu Lopian zt'l was the mashgiach. Once, Reb Eliyahu began the vaad (shiur of mussar), requesting that they bring him a Gemara (Bava Basra 57b). The Gemara discusses the pasuk עוֹצֵם עֵינָיו מִרְאוֹת בָּרַע. The Gemara says there that if a person has an option to go to a place where there is more tznius, and he doesn't do so, he is called a rasha. Reb Elyah Lopian began to shout. 'Rasha! He is a rasha!'. From then on, the call echoes in my ears, and it doesn't give me respite. I will not go to a place where I can't guard my eyes."

(Here we must mention that when it comes to health considerations, a person must do what he must, because pikuach nefesh is רְחוּצָה כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלֵה, and a person should go where he must, and guard his eyes. However, this time it was permitted to go to a place

Ben Yohoyada (Sotah 8a) states "ראיה is gematria גבורה, to hint that the primary strength of man with his war against the yetzer hara is with his

looking, to be cautious where he looks. The eyes are where the yetzer hara rules, and that is how the yetzer hara comes into a person."