

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Eikev

Living Worry-Free

It states (7:15) וְהָסִיר ה' מִמֶּךָ כָּל חָלִי, "Hashem will remove from you all illness."

Which illness is the pasuk referring to? The Yerushalmi (Shabbos 14:3) says זֶה הָרַעִיּוֹן, "This is 'worry'".¹

A person shouldn't say, "What can I do? I didn't receive this brachah from the Torah. I have so many worries. How will I earn my parnassah? I worry about the chinuch of my

children. I am concerned about my family's health. When will the disputes, whether between neighbors or within my own family, finally come to an end? How can I free myself from all the worries that surround me throughout the day?"

There is only one solution: emunah and bitachon. When a person has emunah and bitachon, he is freed from all worries. He trusts that Hashem will take care of his parnassah, health, the chinuch of his children, and all his needs. There is nothing to fear.²

1. It states (7:15) וְהָסִיר ה' מִמֶּךָ כָּל חָלִי "Hashem will remove from you all illness". Immediately after these words, it states, וְכָל מַדּוֹי מִצְרָיִם הָרָעִים אֲשֶׁר יִרְעֶתָ לֹא יִשְׁיִמּוּ בְּךָ וְנִתְּנָם בְּכָל שְׁנָאֶיךָ, "All of the bad diseases of Mitzrayim which you knew, He will not set upon you, but He will lay them upon all your enemies." What is the second half of the pasuk adding that isn't written in the first word?

The answer is that the first half of the pasuk refers to "worry", which is also an illness. וְהָסִיר ה' מִמֶּךָ כָּל חָלִי means "Hashem will remove from you all worries". Unfortunately, there are people who are well, everything is good for them, but they think they are ill, or that they have some other problem, and they worry excessively about it. Sometimes, they become physically ill from their worries. וְהָסִיר ה' מִמֶּךָ כָּל חָלִי, means that Hashem will heal us from these unfounded worries and fantasies.

People asked Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlita how a person can remain young, even in his older years. He replied, "Worries and disappointments make people old. The counsel, therefore, is not to worry. Those who don't worry stay young and live longer.

They asked, "But how can one possibly live without worry?"

Reb Yaakov Meir replied, "For that, we have the primary foundations: emunah and bitachon in Hashem yisbarach."

Reb Yaakov Meir added, "You must know a great rule: Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings on people small worries, nothing serious, but often people sit and analyze the problems from all angles, and rehash the problems in their minds, until the small problem appears very large. It can be compared to a person bitten by a mosquito and scratching the irritated area until it bleeds. He is only hurting himself and doesn't gain anything."

2. Reb Noson Shulman zt'l related that he was once walking in the street, together with the Chazon Ish zt'l, and they witnessed a frightening sight. A child was running around and jumping on the unfenced roof of a tall building. They were both very frightened. The Chazon Ish knew that Reb Noson might shout to the child, to tell him to come down. That would be even more dangerous, for the shouting might startle the child, and the fear could cause him to fall, chalilah. So, the Chazon Ish said to Reb Noson in a loud voice, "There is someOne who is taking care of the child! SomeOne is taking care of him." He meant that Hashem was taking care of the young child. There was nothing to fear. Then the Chazon Ish climbed up onto the roof and gently coaxed the child off the roof.

The Chofetz Chaim gave a Gemara shiur. He was teaching the Gemara (Bava Basra 36a) that tells that in Nehordea, there were many thieves, and therefore, shepherds wouldn't allow their sheep to be out without supervision. They were afraid that if the sheep were alone, someone might steal them. Instead, they would

It states (8:3) וַיַּעֲנֶה וַיַּרְעֵבְךָ וַיַּאֲכִלְךָ אֶת הָאֵל וְהָיָה, "He afflicted you let you hunger, then He fed you the *mann*." What is וַיַּעֲנֶה, "He afflicted you"? In which way did we receive affliction? It obviously isn't referring to hunger because the next word is וַיַּרְעֵבְךָ.

Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l (Darash Moshe) explains that the affliction was their worries. They were very afraid. They were going into the barren desert, and they were worried, "What will we eat?" וַיַּעֲנֶה is written before וַיַּרְעֵבְךָ because their agonizing worry came before their actual hunger.

Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l explains that there really was nothing to fear. It states in the next pasuk (8:4) שְׂמֹלֶתְךָ לֹא בָלְתָה מִעֲלֶיךָ, "Your garments did not wear out." The clothes they wore when they left Mitzrayim remained good for forty years in the desert.³ This is written here as it is a response to their worries. Hashem's initial plan was that just as the nation in the desert never needed new clothes, so, too, if they hadn't complained, they would never need food. When they left Mitzrayim, they had matzos with them, and those few matzos were sufficient for the nation for the first thirty days they were in the desert. When the supply of matzos ended, Hashem's plan was for them to remain full, from that time until they left the desert forty years later. They wouldn't need food, just as they never needed new clothing.

But the nation didn't believe it could survive without food. They panicked (as it states וַיַּעֲנֶה), they became hungry (as it states וַיַּרְעֵבְךָ), and Hashem changed the original plan and sent them the *mann*.

The Bnei Yissaschar (Derech Pikudecha מל"ת ל"ד, חלק הדיבור) discusses the severe aveirah of לֹא תִרְצַח, the prohibition of murder, r'l, and he lists several sub-divisions of this aveirah. He writes, "This aveirah has many branches. Almost the entire Torah is dependent upon this prohibition... A person thinks he is totally clean from this aveirah because he has never killed anyone in his life. Still, when he thinks about the אבירייהו, sub-divisions of this *aveirah*, he realizes that he isn't totally innocent, in several ways."

Among his examples are embarrassing one's fellow man, which Chazal compare to murder. Another example is eating unhealthy foods, which can shorten one's life, and he has other wonderful examples. Then he writes, וכן המצער את עצמו ודואג שלא במקום מצוה, הנה, "Also, when a person is worried, when it isn't a mitzvah, this shortens life..." Who wants to be part of this category, chalilah? For this reason alone, one should seek to avoid worries.

One of the benefits of trusting in Hashem is that in this manner, he will receive his salvation. When one knows that his only salvation is from Hashem alone, he will be saved. But when he thinks he can save himself and his bitachon isn't complete, he

hand the sheep directly into the hands of the shepherd to care for the sheep. The words of the Gemara are מידא לידא משלמי; they gave the sheep over, hand to hand.

The person who ran the bathhouse in Radin was sitting at this shiur, and he commented that with this Gemara, we can explain the pasuk (Tehillim 95:7) יְיָ הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַאֲנִינִי עִם מִרְעִיתוֹ וְצֹאן יְיָ, "For He is our G-d, and we are the people of His pasture and the flocks of His hand". Hashem takes very good care of us and doesn't leave us alone for a moment. We are צֹאן, Hashem's sheep, which are given over מידא לידא from "hand to hand," because we can't be a moment without protection. The Chofetz Chaim praised this pshat and would repeat it from time to time.

3. Rashi writes של ענני כבוד היו שפין בכסותם ומגהצים אותם כמין כלים מגוהצים, ואף קטניהם כמו שהיו גדלים היה גדל לבושן עמהם, כלבוש הזה של "The clouds of glory would scrub their clothes and clean them so that they looked like freshly laundered clothes. And also their children, as they grew, their clothes grew along with them, like a snail's shell, which grows along with it."

will lack Hashem's hashgachah pratis and help.

In the Yam Suf, when Nachshon ben Aminadav's nose reached the water, and he shouted to Hashem באו מים עד נפש, that he was about to drown, he knew that only Hashem can save him. This was when the sea split and the salvation arrived. Before that, the nation came up with ideas on how to save itself. They thought they could be wise and come up with a clever plan. But when it was clear that only Hashem can help them, the sea split. The same is for *parnassah* and for all one's needs. The salvation comes when one knows that no one can help him, other than Hashem.

The Klausenburger Rebbe zt'l (Shefa Chaim, Chumash Rashi, תשנ"ב, בשלח) teaches: "When a person is in a great *tzarah*, and he has a lot of distress, and he understands that he can't save himself... and no one can help him, then he will believe in Hashem alone to save him. When a person reaches this conclusion... he will be saved. Without doing anything other than believing and trusting in Hashem, he will be saved. His *emunah* will help him more than *tefillah*. But if a person thinks he is able to save himself, he won't receive Hashem's hashgachah and salvation. This is what Chazal mean when they say, קשין מזונותיו, של אדם כקריעת ים סוף, 'Parnassah is as hard to attain as the splitting of the sea.' This means when a person thinks that it is *מזונותיו*, his *parnassah*, which he attains on his own, then it will be difficult for him to attain it. As Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l teaches, when one lacks *bitachon*, this holds back the *parnassah* from coming. However, when one believes that *parnassah* comes from Hashem, and all he has to do is a small deed of *hishtadlus*, then he will attain his *parnassah* easily and without toil."

I once heard my father, zt'l say, יעזור לי הש"ת שתהיה לי אפשרות להשפיע ליהודי פרנסה באותה קלות שאני פוקד עקרות "May Hashem help me that I should be able to bestow upon a Yid *parnassah* just as easily as I can bless the childless to bear children." I never understood

my father's holy intention. But it might be based on what we are discussing. When it comes to *parnassah*, people generally think they can earn it on their own. They think that if they work harder and make wise business decisions, they will have *parnassah*. They don't place trust in Hashem, rather in themselves, and therefore it is harder for them to attain *parnassah*. However, when doctors tell barren couples that they can't help them, they realize that only Hashem can help them. And since they trust in Hashem, Hashem will save them. It is easier for them to be saved than those who need *parnassah*. Perhaps this is the reason my father would say that it is easier to help the barren than those who need *parnassah*.

It states (8:12-14) פן תאכל וישבעת ובהים טובים תבנה ורם לבבך וישכחת את ה' אלקיך, "Lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle... and your heart will become haughty, and you will forget Hashem your G-d." The Meiri (Chibur HaTeshuvah 1:1) writes, "When you have so much goodness, without end, you will become haughty, and you will feel that you aren't lacking anything. You will feel that you don't need Hashem's hashgachah to help you because you have no worries at all... This will certainly cause the person to forget that which he should be remembering." For his own benefit, he is better off feeling that he can't manage on his own. The more he trusts in Hashem, the more he will receive.

The Yesod HaAvodah (vol.2:8) elaborates, "We are commanded to believe that *parnassah* comes through Hashem's providence. Having this awareness is one of the 613 mitzvos. And when one knows this, Hashem will help him. But if he thinks (8:17) כוחי ועוצם ידי עשו לי החיל הזה, that he earned *parnassah* on his own, he won't merit *siyata dishmaya*, and he won't succeed, *chas veshalom*."

The solution is written in the next pasuk (8:18): וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל, "Remember Hashem, your G-d for He gives you strength to make wealth."⁴

The Or HaChaim (8:18) writes, "The Torah tells us that we must pay attention to Hashem's kindness and to know that they are from Hashem. This will always bring us to recognize Hashem and His hashgachah. The yetzer hara's first ploy is to cause people to forget, and this destroys them. This can be the translation of the next pasuk, והיה אם שכח תשכח, 'If you will forget that Hashem does kindness to you, תשכח ה' אלקיך, you will forget Hashem...' ¹⁵

Yiras Hashem

ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם (10:12) "Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d..." If we had only these words, we would understand that Hashem is asking from us only one thing: to fear Him. But when we see the entire pasuk, we find it difficult to understand. It states, ועתה,

ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך ללכת בכל דרכיו ולא הבה אתו ולעבד את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך, לשמור את מצות ה' ואת חקתיו אשר אנכי מצוך לך, "Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, and to worship Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul. To keep the mitzvos of Hashem and His laws, which I command you this day, for your good." It isn't solely one matter that Hashem is asking. He is asking for much more. Hashem is asking that we keep the entire Torah, with all its 613 mitzvos, and with love and fear and with all our heart and soul. We wonder why the beginning of the pasuk gives us the impression that Hashem is asking for only one thing, to fear Him, and that it is easy to do.

Also, Rashi writes אע"פ שעשיתם כל זאת, עודנו רחמיו וחבתו עליכם, ומכל מה שחטאתם לפניו אינו שואל מכם

4. Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l (צמח מנחם) noted that creation consists of two miracles: (1) One miracle is creation itself. Wherever we look in the world, we see fascinating wisdom, beauty, design, and order. One can study the wonders of nature, look out for His Hashgachah pratis, and recognize Hashem's presence.

(2) The second miracle of creation is that people see these wonders all the time and fail to recognize and appreciate them.

Rebbe Bunim says that the second miracle is greater than the miracle of creation itself.

These two miracles are expressed in Tehillim (92:6-7), מאוד עמקו מחשבותיך. איש בער לא ידע וכסיל לא יבין, "How great are Your deeds, Hashem; exceedingly profound are Your thoughts. [This is referring to the wonders of creation. And yet a greater wonder is] איש בער לא ידע וכסיל לא יבין את זאת, "A boor cannot know, nor can a fool understand this." The fools see the world with all its wonders yet do not recognize Hashem! That is the greatest wonder.

This lesson applies to the wonders of nature and to Hashem's hashgachah in general. Hashem's hashgachah is present wherever we look. Hashem sends us *parnassah*, arranges *shidduchim*, guards our health, and directs us in all aspects of life; yet we take it for granted. We think we achieve everything by the strength of our hands.

It states in this week's parashah (8:17), ואמרת בלבבך כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה, "You will say in your heart, 'My strength and the might of my arm made me all this wealth.'" This refers to the problem we are discussing. We must open our eyes to the simple and obvious reality. We need to acquire awareness that all our successes are from Hashem.

Tzaddikim said that עוצם עינים hints to the problem, because עצמית עינים hints to the problem, closing the eyes. People close their eyes and don't recognize Hashem's wonders.

5. Reb Shmuel Tchuliner zt'l (a student of Reb Moshe of Kobrin zt'l) once experienced a certain *chesed* from Hashem, and he couldn't stop talking about it. His family asked him why he kept on repeating the same story. Reb Shmuel replied, "The Or HaChaim says 'The yetzer hara's first ploy is to cause a person to forget Hashem's kindness,' therefore I keep on repeating it so that I won't forget."

Even though you have done all of these [aveiros], Hashem's compassion and love is still upon you. From all your sins that you did before Him, He only asks for fear." But once again the question is that after reading the entire pasuk, we understand that Hashem isn't asking only for fear. Behold the Torah writes *לִלְבֹת בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו וּלְאַהֲבָהּ* אתו וְלַעֲבֹד אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ, לְשִׁמּוֹר אֶת מִצְוֹת ה' וְאֶת חֻקֵּי אֱשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְנְךָ הַיּוֹם.⁶ There is so much more!

Shem MiShmuel answers that Hashem asks for fear. After we have fear, He gives us, as a gift, all the other madreigos.

Accordingly, the pasuk states as follows, *וַעֲתָה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שׂאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי אִם לִירָאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ*, "Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d." A person's obligation is to fear Hashem. Hashem doesn't ask for anything else, as Chazal (Brachos 33b) say, "Everything is in Hashem's hands aside from yiras Shamayim."⁷

6. This question is also stated in the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni (רמז תש"ו). It states (Tehillim 27:4) *אֶחָת שְׁאֵלָתִי מֵאֵת ה'* "One thing I ask of Hashem, only that do I seek: To dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of my life, to see the pleasantness of Hashem and to visit His Heichel."

The Midrash states: Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Dovid, "You say *אֶחָת שְׁאֵלָתִי*, that you have one request, and then you ask for many things, *שְׁבֵתִי בְּבֵית ה' כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּי לַחֲזוֹת בְּנֹעַם ה'* and *וּלְבַקֵּשׁ בְּהִיכְלוֹ*!"

Dovid replied, "Ribono Shel Olam, I learned this from You!... First You said *ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שׂאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי אִם לִירָאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ*, that You ask for only one thing, and then You request many mitzvos, as the pasuk continues *וְלַעֲבֹד אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ, לְשִׁמּוֹר אֶת מִצְוֹת ה' וְאֶת חֻקֵּי אֱשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְנְךָ הַיּוֹם*....

Chazal (Shabbos 31a) say that when a person goes up to heaven, the heavenly court will ask him, *קִבַּעַת עֵיתִים*, "Did you set times for studying Torah? Did you bear children? Did you wait for Moshiach? Did you delve into the depths of the wisdom of the Torah? Were you honest in your business dealings?" The Gemara concludes, *ואפילו הכי, אי ראתה ה' אוצרו אין, אי לא לא*, "Even so [even if he performed all the things stated above], if he feared heaven, yes [he deserves reward]. If not, no [without fear of heaven, he won't receive reward]." The Apter Rav (אורח ישראל ד"ה ועתה) says that we understand from this Gemara that yiras Shamayim is most important. With this information, we understand the pasuk, *וַעֲתָה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שׂאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ*, "Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d." This means that at the judgment in heaven, a person will be asked several questions, but the primary question is regarding fear of heaven, because everything depends on that. If he feared heaven, he will be rewarded, and if not, not.

7. One year, at the seder of Rebbe Mordechai Shlomo of Boyan zt'l, a child stole the afikomen. When it was the child's turn to ask for a gift, the child asked the rebbe for yiras Shamayim. (The child's mother advised her son to ask for this.) The rebbe replied, "Why don't you ask for a new bike...? Or for a complete set of Shas? Why do you ask for Yiras Shamayim?"

The child saw his mother hinting to him that he shouldn't back down from his request. He should continue to ask for yiras Shamayim. The child did so. After several moments of thought, Rebbe Mordechai Shlomo of Boyan zt'l said to the child, "I cannot give you a brachah for yiras Shamayim. But what I can do is give you a brachah that if you want to acquire yiras Shamayim, you should attain it easily." The explanation is that yiras Shamayim one must acquire on his own. It isn't a gift given from heaven. However, one can receive a brachah, and one can pray that his efforts to attain yiras Shamayim should succeed, and that he should succeed in acquiring it easily.

Chazal (Bava Metziah 85a) says, *תורה מחזרת על אכסניא שלה*, which means that if a person's parents and grandparents were talmidei chachamim, the child can inherit that trait, and he too will be a talmid chacham. Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l noted that this is solely in regards to Torah knowledge. Torah can be inherited. But we don't find that a child can inherit kedushah and taharah of his ancestors. For these matters, one must toil. We see parents who are holy, and the children don't exactly appear to be so. Vice versa, we know of simple people who have children who fear Hashem. How did this happen? This is because kedushah isn't inherited; it depends on each individual's desire and toil to attain it.

A person must acquire yiras Shamayim on his own. This isn't given from heaven. But after one fears Hashem, he will attain all other levels. This is the meaning of the end of the pasuk, לְלֶכֶת בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו וּלְעֲבֹד אֹתוֹ ה' וְאֶת חֻקָּיו אֲלֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ, לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת מִצְוֹת ה' וְאֶת חֻקָּיו אֲלֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ, to go in Hashem's ways, to love Him, to serve Him with all your heart, to keep the mitzvos and *chukim*, which Hashem commanded. These madreigos will be given to him as a gift because he fears Hashem.

Chazal (Shabbos 31a) say, "Whoever has Torah and doesn't have yiras Shamayim, he is like a treasurer (גִּבְרָה) that has the keys to the inner rooms, but he doesn't have the keys to the outer rooms. How will he get in?" This means all the madreigos of Torah, loving Hashem, serving Him, and all other parts of avodas Hashem begin with fear of heaven. Without yiras Shamayim, he doesn't have the first keys. Fear of heaven is up to a person's free choice, and then Hashem will grant him all the other levels.⁸

It states (Koheles 12:13) סוּף דְּבַר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע אֶת, "The end of the matter, everything having been heard, fear Hashem and keep His commandments, for this is the entire man." Reb Elchanan Wasserman zt'l hy'd (Kobetz He'aros, Yevamos p.150) writes, "The intention is that a person shouldn't think that a person is a quality in man, and someone who doesn't have it is also a person, only he lacks the quality of fear. The pasuk tells us that this isn't so. If a person doesn't fear Hashem, he isn't a person at all! This is the entire man", and without it, he can't even be called a human being. The level of man is according to the extent of his yiras Shamayim. There are greater people and lesser people, but without fear, he is nothing. He is like an animal that appears like a human."

The Meiri (Shabbos 31b) writes, "A person must be cautious to attain yiras Hashem. Even if he reached very high levels... if he doesn't have yiras Shamayim, לֹא הוּעִיל כָּלום, he has nothing."⁹

8. The section of this week's parashah (from 10:12 to 11:9), beginning with the words וְעַתָּה יִשְׁרָאֵל מִדָּה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֹׂאֵל is called פרשת היראה, the parashah of fear of Hashem. Some say it every day to help them attain yiras Shamayim, and it is printed in siddurim after Shacharis. There is a renowned segulah for parnassah from Rebbe Mendel of Rimanov zt'l to read parashas HaMan on the Tuesday before parashas Bishalach. One tzaddik said that there is likewise a segulah to read parashas היראה on the Tuesday before parashas Eikev. It is a segulah for attaining yiras Shamayim.

The truth is that it is always a good time to read parashas HaYirah. Whenever a person desires to increase his yiras Shamayim, it is a good time to read it. It is mesugal to open one's heart to fear Hashem.

Some read parashas HaMan (on the Tuesday before Bishalach) שְׁתִּים מִקְרָא אֶחָד תַּרְגוּם, twice the pasukim and once targum Onkelos. So, too, it is good to read parashas HaYirah שְׁתִּים מִקְרָא אֶחָד תַּרְגוּם. This means to read these words again and again, and לתרגם, to translate them and to explain them, each person according to his personal situation, in a manner that will increase his fear of heaven.

It states in Avos (3:1) הַסֹּתֵק בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְּבָרִים וְאִי אֵתָּה בֹא לְיָדֶי עֲבִירָה, "Contemplate three things and you won't come to sin." Reb Eliezer of Bikshah zt'l (Shem Eliezer, vol. 1, Avos ch.3) explains that הַסֹּתֵק בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְּבָרִים means we should look at the third parashah of sefer דְּבָרִים, which is parashas Eikev. We should הַסֹּתֵק, look and study this parashah of Yirah, וְאִי אֵתָּה בֹא לְיָדֶי עֲבִירָה, and then you won't come to perform aveiros.

9. The primary setting for yiras Hashem is within the realm of kedushah. Avraham Avinu alluded to that when he said to Avimelech (Bereishis 20:11) בְּיָמֵי רָק אֵין יִרְאַת אֱלֹהִים בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה, "For I said, 'There is no fear of G-d in this place'". They were sinful with matters of kedushah (see Rashi), so Avraham said that there was no fear of Heaven. אֵין יִרְאַת אֱלֹהִים בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה tells us that the primary מָקוֹם for yiras Hashem is with concepts related to kedushah, such as shemiras einayim, and the like.

Reb Meir Premishlaner zt'l said that it is hinted in the name of the parashah, עֵקֶב, which is roshei teivos

אות ברית קדוש, the kedushah of the bris. Reb Moshe Kobriner zt'l (Imros Moshe) explains why the ע' of עקב is exchanged with an א' in this vort. It is because kedushah can only be attained when one gives his עיניו, eyes, to Hashem, who is called אל"ף, the אלוף של עולם, master of the world. As Chazal say, "The eyes see, the heart desires, and the limbs do"; but when one guards his eyes, he won't come to sin.

Ben Ish Chai (Ben Yohayada, Sota 8a, ר"ה אין יצה"ר) writes that ראייה, looking, is gematria גבורה, strength (216) because the strongest weapon against the yetzer hara is when one guards his eyes. "The eyes are the entranceway of the yetzer hara into the person."

He also writes that the letters after עיניו are כס"ף. The translation of כסף is desire. After עיניו, after one doesn't guard his eyes, the result is כספינו, the desires of the yetzer hara.

The following story happened in Yerushalayim decades ago.

A young boy was playing with a rope when it mistakenly got caught around his neck. The child lost consciousness and was brought to the hospital in critical condition.

Reb Dovid Frankel (a close student of the Chazon Ish zt'l), who was a friend of the father, called the father and said, "Last night, I had an extraordinary dream. I was in the heavenly court, and they were deliberating over the fate of several people. Your son's name was mentioned, and they were judging whether your son would live. Suddenly, a pair of blue scissors appeared and cut the paper with your son's name, and the court ruled that he would live."

Before the father had time to process the meaning of this extraordinary dream, he received another phone call. This time it was the hospital. The secretary said, "You and your wife must come to the hospital immediately," without saying why.

They rushed to the hospital. They feared the worst, and they were delighted to find their son awake. "Please give me some water," he requested and fell right back asleep. Miraculously, he was recovering.

As the parents were returning home, the husband told his wife about Reb Dovid's dream and the mysterious blue scissors. She exclaimed, "I know what the blue scissors mean!"

She worked as a seamstress and had gone to a store to buy material that she needed to mend a dress. She had a hard time cutting a piece from the fabric roll, so she asked the storekeeper for help.

According to halachah, she was permitted to hand the scissors to the male storekeeper, but this time, to earn extra merits for her son's refuah sheleimah, she placed the scissors down, and the storekeeper picked up the scissors himself. This is a hiddur in tznius.

As she put down the scissors, she whispered a tefillah that in the merit of this act of kedushah, their son should have a refuah sheleimah. "The scissors were blue," the wife explained. "I'm certain those scissors tore up the document at our son's court case!"

The Sefer Chareidim (פס"ו אות קנ"ה) writes, "If a person likes someone and gives him as a gift one thousand servants, and then says, 'Give me back two servants,' if he refuses, is there a more ungrateful person than him in the world?! Behold, Hashem Yisbarach gives each person 248 limbs to use, and He asks for two of them, the heart and the eyes. As it states (Mishlei 23:26) תנה בני לבך ועיניך דרכי תצורנה, 'My child, give your heart to Me, and your eyes will desire My ways,' won't he give them to Me?"

The Yerushalmi (Brachos 1:5) says, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'If you give Me your heart and your eyes, I know that you are Mine.'"

In contrast, Chazal (Bereishis Rabba 22) say, "When the yetzer hara sees someone beautifying his eyes and fixing his hair, he says, 'This man is mine.'"

In the Akdamos we say למחזי באנפא עין כות גירי קשתא. The Beis Avraham (Shavuot) writes in the name of his father that one should consider למחזי, looking where one shouldn't, as if גירי קשתא, an arrow was shot, and the arrow is heading towards him. Just as one would try to escape from the arrow, that is how one should escape from forbidden sights.

A bachur asked the Beis Yisrael for advice on improving in areas of kedushah. The Beis Yisrael zt'l told

Birchas HaMazon

It states in this week's parashah (8:10), ואכלת, "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 cautious 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."¹⁰

him to guard his eyes because this would protect him from all aveiros. The Beis Yisrael proved this from the Parasha of Eglah Arufah. The elders had to establish and declare that they weren't responsible for the murder that occurred, so they say (Devarim 21:7) ודינו לא שפכו את הדם הזה ועינו לא ראו, "Our hands didn't shed this blood, and our eyes didn't see." They implied that they didn't sin with their eyes, thus enabling them to proclaim ודינו לא שפכו את הדם הזה, that they aren't guilty of the murder. Sinning with the eyes can lead to all aveiros, and being cautious with one's eyes is to be careful with all 248 limbs of the body, which protects from all aveiros.

The Beis Yisrael added (Shemos 21:28) ובעל השור נקי - שור means looking (see Bamidbar 24:17, בעל השור, אשורו ולא קרוב). refers to one who rules over his eyes; he doesn't look where he shouldn't. If so, נקי, he will be deemed innocent in the judgment.

Chazal (Vayikra Rabba 23:13) say, "Whoever sees an ervah [a woman who isn't properly covered] and doesn't permit his eyes to enjoy it, he will merit to receive the face of the Shechinah. As it states (Yeshayah 33:15, 17) ועוצם עיניו מראות ברע... מלך בפיץ תחזינה עיניך, 'The one who shuts his eyes from seeing bad... Your eyes will behold the King in His splendor.'" (Careful reading of the Midrash (stated above) implies that the person saw something improper, but he was cautious to turn his eyes away immediately. This is enough to be rewarded immensely. He will merit greeting the face of the שכינה.)

The Klausenburger Rebbe zt'l gave the following counsel to a bachur who wanted to guard his eyes: "Before you leave your home, imagine that you had lost a gold coin somewhere between your home and the place you are going. With that thought in mind, your eyes will be glued to the ground the entire way, and you will guard your eyes properly."

10. One of the halachos of *birkas hamazon* is that one must *bench* at the place where he ate. If he leaves the house where he ate and goes elsewhere, he should return to bench where he ate.

This is Beis Shamai's view, and it is one of the few times that the halachah follows Beis Shamai, and not Beis Hillel (see Orach Chaim 184:1).

The Gemara (Brachos 53:) relates that Beis Hillel said to Beis Shamai, "If someone ate on top of a tower and came down without benching, would you obligate him to climb back up all the way to the top to bench?"

Beis Shamai replied, "If someone forgot his wallet on top of the tower, would he not climb up to fetch it? If he would do so for his own honor, certainly he should 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 eaten by a lion."

The Gemara relates another episode:

Rabba bar bar Chana was traveling with a caravan. They stopped to eat, and when everyone finished eating, the caravan began moving again. Suddenly, Rabba bar bar Chana remembered that he had forgotten to *bench*. He thought to himself, "If I tell my travel companions that I forgot to bench, they will tell me to *bench* right here. They will say, 'Hashem is everywhere. *Bench* where you are.'" He wanted to go back, so he told them, "Wait for me. I forgot a golden dove."

He returned, *benched*, and found a יונה דהבא, a dove of gold.

These stories demonstrate that when one is cautious with *birkas hamazon*, he merits wealth.

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

When people are happy, they become generous. We are urged to bench with joy because then Hashem will bestow His blessings on us with happiness and in abundance.

The Chida (Nitzotzei Oros) explains the pasuk (Mishlei 10:22) בִּרְכַּת ה' הִיא תַעֲשִׂיר וְלֹא תוֹסִיף עֲצָב בָּהּ, that *birchas hamazon* makes people wealthy, but there is a condition: וְלֹא תוֹסִיף עֲצָב בָּהּ, we must bench without sadness.

Birchas hamazon is also a protection.

The Be'er Heitev writes (in the name of the Bach) that there is no ך in *birchas hamazon* because ך represents שַׁעַף קֶצֶף and חֲרוֹן אַף (wrath and punishment), and whoever is careful with *birchas hamazon* will be protected from those matters.¹¹

The *Rosh Yeshiva* of Chachmei Lublin, Reb Meir Shapiro zt'l, came once to a *cheder*

and tested the students. After the test, Reb Meir Shapiro said, "I want to give you a gift, but I don't have anything with me, so I will teach you a *segulah* instead. If you follow my counsel, you will be successful and lead a peaceful life."

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 told them the *Chinuch*, who says, "Whoever is careful with *birchas hamazon* will have *parnassah bekavod* his entire life." He advised them to *bench* from a *siddur* and not by heart.

Shimon, one of the students of that *cheder*, took the lesson to heart and decided right then and there that he would always be careful with *birchas hamazon*.

His friends would *bench* quickly and go out to play while he lingered behind to *bench* properly. It was challenging, but he didn't want to abandon the wonderful gift Reb Meir Shapiro gave him.

11. *Birchas hamazon* saves us from punishment in the grave, too.

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

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

He replied, "The punishment of the first twelve months was even more severe."

When we say *al hamichyah*, we say בקדושה ובטהרה, "We will bless You... in holiness and purity." However, we don't mention *kedushah* and *taharah* when we say *birchas hamazon*. What's the difference?

Rebbe Aharon of Belz zy'a explains that when one eats bread, he eats with holiness and purity because he washes his hands before he eats, he sits, and says the *brachos* with *kavanah*. However, cake and other forms of *mezonos* are eaten when one is hungry and in a rush. One grabs a piece of cake to satisfy his hunger and eats it on the go. Therefore, in *al hamichyah*, it is necessary to remind people to eat and to bless Hashem בקדושה ובטהרה, with holiness and purity.

Some years later, the Nazis invaded Poland, and Reb Shimon stood in line for a '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 would be saved from 'wrath and destruction' (חרון אף and שנף קצף). 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 would say. He was only a teenager, and he had never worked before.

As he waited in line, he prayed, "In the merit of *birchas hamazon*, which is *mesugal* for *parnassah*, Hashem, please support me."

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

Reb Shimon did, and they were both sent to work in the kitchen. He was careful with *birchas hamazon*, so he was sent to the kitchen, where there was more food to eat.

In the camps, 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 (a great *mesirus nefesh* during the holocaust).

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, and gave him a shovel. "Dig a ditch here, two meters deep. It must be ready in two hours, or I'll shoot you." (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 only had two hours to dig with a small shovel.

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.' 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 afterward, a jeep with Russian 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, "When there's a pit two meters deep here, I will give you the vegetables."

The Russians had the right tools for digging. They took them out of their jeep and dug the trench. There were several of them, and they were able to finish the job in a half-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 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*.

The Magid of Mezritch *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 from the Torah.¹²

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."

1] A counsel to bench with kavanah is to bench out loud.

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."¹³

2] Another way to have kavanah is to bench while seated and not while walking around or standing. This is written in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, 183:9).

After *birchas hamazon*, most people have the custom of saying the הרהצמן. These are

wonderful tefillos, and we are fortunate to be able to say them. The 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 במרומיו¹⁴.

3] Yet another counsel for kavanah during *birchas hamazon* is to read it from a siddur or a bencher and not to say it by heart. This counsel comes from the Bach. 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."

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

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 *birchas hamazon*, people become lax. They mumble the words, sometimes saying the words incorrectly and without kavanah, even though it is a mitzvah from the Torah.

13. 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 follow suit and do the same."

14. 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 to bear children who will shine in Torah, because tefillos said when one performs a mitzvah are very effective." The Chofetz Chaim zt'l says that this is why people have the custom to say *Harachamans* after *birchas hamazon*. After performing the mitzvah of *birchas hamazon*, it is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah.