

In this week's *Parashah*, we are taught the *Mitzvah* of *Birkat Ha'mazon* / "Bentching" after eating. R' Moshe Yechiel Epstein z"l (1889-1971; *Ozharover Rebbe* in New York and Tel Aviv) writes: A blessing, in general, and *Birkat Ha'mazon*, in particular, involves both accepting the yoke of Heaven as well as praying for G-d's continued beneficence. He explains:

Because reciting a blessing involves accepting the yoke of Heaven, our Sages (*Tosefta*, end of *Berachot*) describe reciting blessings as "performing *Mitzvot*." Indeed, the word "*Mitzvah*" means "something we are commanded to do." When one does something he is commanded to do, he, in effect, accepts upon himself the yoke of the one who commanded him to do that thing--in this case, *Hashem*.

He continues: When Pharaoh commanded *Bnei Yisrael* to leave Egypt, he said (*Shmot* 12:32), "You shall bless me." The Aramaic translation *Onkelos* renders this: "You shall pray for me." *Rashi* z"l, as well, explains: "Pharaoh was a firstborn, and he wanted Moshe to pray that he not die in the plague." Thus, we find that the term "*Berachah*" can mean "to pray."

We read (*Shmot* 23:25), "You shall worship *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, and He will bless your bread and your water . . ." The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 48b) states: Do not read, "He will bless," but rather, "You shall bless." At first glance, the *Gemara's* comment seems directly contrary to the *P'shat* of the verse. However, writes the *Ozharover Rebbe*, if we understand that our own recitation of blessings leads *Hashem* to continue providing for us, then there is no contradiction. (*Be'er Moshe* p268)

## Tefilah

This year, we will *iy"H* devote this space to discussing various aspects of our prayers. This week, we continue discussing the thirteen types of prayer identified by the *Midrash Rabbah* and *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni*.

R' Shimshon Dovid Pincus z"l (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel; died 2001) writes: "*Kri'ah*" means "calling" to *Hashem* out of recognition that *Hashem* hears the one who calls Him, calling with a clear understanding that it is *Hashem's* practice to listen to people's prayers and that He has the ability to grant a person's request. This is analogous to calling to a friend when we know that he is close and can hear us. It is man's nature to cry out when he is in trouble even if he does not know that anyone can hear him, but that is called "*Ne'akah*," not "*Kri'ah*." *Kri'ah* means calling to someone specific because the caller knows that that someone can hear him, calling out to establish a connection for the purpose of making a request or delivering a specific piece of information.

R' Pincus continues: This is the foundation of prayer and all service of *Hashem*--simply grasping that *Hashem's* presence is real, no less real than all the inanimate objects, plants, animals, and people that surround us all the time. *Hashem* is a real, "living" Being, plain and simple, to Whom we can speak and call, and Who hears us in the most literal sense of the word. This is what our Sages mean when they say, "If only your reverence of Heaven would be equal to your fear of man." The more that a person lives with the recognition of this reality, the clearer his prayers will be, the more genuine his Divine service will be, and the more he will merit G-d's assistance in all his affairs.

(*She'arim B'tefilah* p.75)

### Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-593-2272

Send e-mail to: [TheTorahSpring@gmail.com](mailto:TheTorahSpring@gmail.com)

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**“Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your *Elokim*, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem . . .” (10:12)**

Our Sages ask: Is fearing *Hashem* so easy that the Torah can say, “What does *Hashem* ask of you? Only to fear Him!”?

R’ Chaim of Volozhin z”l (Belarus; 1749-1821) answers: In any event, we fear many things, usually unpleasant things. Apparently, fearing is easy for us. If we could train ourselves to direct our tendency to fear toward fearing something good--*Hashem*--we would be saved from all our other fears. (Ruach Chaim 4:22)

**“Hashem, your G-d, shall you fear, Him shall you serve, to Him shall you cling . . .” (10:20)**

The *Gemara* (*Bava Kamma* 41b) teaches: Rabbi Akiva explained that this verse instructs us to cling to Torah scholars.

R’ Yaakov Moshe Charlap z”l (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; died 1952) observes: Rabbi Akiva doesn’t mean that clinging to a Torah scholar is the next best thing to clinging to *Hashem*. A true Torah scholar nullifies himself completely before G-d; his ultimate goal is to feel as if he has no existence independent of G-d. Thus, when one clings to a Torah scholar, he is actually clinging to G-d Himself.

In addition, R’ Charlap writes, Rabbi Akiva is teaching another lesson. The only way to cling to Hashem is by clinging to a Torah scholar. This is demonstrated by the fact that as soon as *Bnei Yisrael* loosened their connection to Moshe (thinking that he was not returning from *Har Sinai*) they immediately fell to the level of making the Golden Calf.

(Mei Marom V p.272)

**“In order to prolong your days and the days of your children upon the Land that Hashem has sworn to your forefathers to give them, like the days of the heaven over the earth.” (11:21)**

The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 90b) cites this verse as one of the allusions in the Torah to *Techiyat Ha’metim* / resurrection of the dead. The *Gemara* explains: It is not written, “The Land that *Hashem* has sworn to your forefathers to give you,” but rather, “To give them.” This indicates that the Patriarchs will one day receive *Eretz Yisrael*, which necessarily indicates that there will be *Techiyat Ha’metim*.

R’ Yehuda Gruenwald z”l (1845-1920; rabbi of Szatmar, Hungary) writes: In light of this, we may interpret the end of the verse (“like the days of the heaven over the earth”) as follows: Just as a person receives reward in “heaven”--i.e., in the World of the Souls--after his death, so he will receive reward on “earth” after his death, i.e., when his body and soul are reunited at the time of *Techiyat Ha’metim*. (Shevet Mi’Yehuda)

**“He afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you the *Mahn* that you did not know, nor did your forefathers know, in order to make you know that not by bread alone does man live, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of Hashem does man live.” (8:3)**

We read that when King Chizkiyah was deathly ill, he prayed (*Yeshayah* 38:3), “Please, *Hashem*, remember now that I have always walked before You faithfully and wholeheartedly, and I have done what is good in Your eyes.” The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 10b) explains: What did he mean by, “I have done what is good in Your eyes”? It refers to his hiding the “Book of Cures.” *Rashi* z”l explains that Chizkiyah hid the Book of Cures so that people would pray for mercy instead of relying on the ready cures that were at their disposal. [Until here from the *Gemara* and *Rashi*]

R’ Yerachmiel Shulman z”l Hy”d (*Menahel Ruchani* of the Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva in Pinsk, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) writes: The way of the world is to memorialize great innovators and inventors, not those who turn the state of knowledge back in time by concealing what is already known. Why then is Chizkiyah’s action praiseworthy? R’ Shulman explains: Though all forms of wisdom are beneficial to the world--especially medicine, which brings “light” to the world--when knowledge reduces man’s *Bitachon* / trust in *Hashem*, it is bad. The moon is a source of light, but when it gets in front of the sun and causes an eclipse, it brings darkness to the world. So, too, wisdom that eclipses the “sun” of *Bitachon* is a source of darkness.

R’ Shulman continues: There are those who ask rhetorically, “In that case, let us hide the world’s bread, for the ready supply of bread causes man to not place his trust in *Hashem*!” In fact, answers R’ Shulman, when *Hashem* thought that hiding the world’s bread would be beneficial to us, He did so. Thus the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 76a) teaches: “Why did the *Mahn* fall every day, instead of once a year, enough for the whole year? So that *Bnei Yisrael* would turn their hearts toward Heaven.” (*Peninei Ha’chochmah* 1:34)



**“You will eat and you will be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem, your *Elokim*, for the good Land that He gave you.” (8:10)**

R’ Yitzchak Arieli z”l (1896-1974; *Mashgiach* of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; author of *Enayim La’mishpat*) writes: Many wonder why, in the second blessing of *Birkat Ha’mazon*, we mention the gift of the Land before we mention the Exodus, seemingly out of chronological order. The answer is that the Land was promised to us before we were enslaved in Egypt, as it is *Hashem*’s practice to “create the cure before the plague.” Indeed, the fact that He promised us the Land was our guarantee that the redemption would indeed come. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Shirat Ha’geulah* p.79)