

PRAISING HASHEM

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לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי ש"י בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

THE IMPORTANCE OF A BRACHA

Chazal say that one who eats or drinks without making a bracha, it is as if they have had wrongly benefited from something holy which belongs to Hashem, for everything in this world belongs to Hashem and only after saying the bracha, can one use it.

Chazal relate how Avraham Avinu caused others to call out in Hashem's name. After giving his guests a full meal of food and drink, they would stand up to thank and bless Avraham, but he would point out, "Did you eat from my food? You ate from Hashem's food, so praise and bentsh Him!"

(ברכות לה ע"א, סוטה י" ע"א)

The Zohar writes that only by saying a bracha does one receive brachos. Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that without a bracha, one places themselves under the control of nature, not allowing for any additional brachos. The author of the Sefer Hachinuch quotes what he has received from his Rebbes that one who is scrupulous in bentshing will have a good and easy livelihood throughout all his days.

Chassidus explains that the idea of a bracha is to bring אלקות into the person saying who is saying the bracha and to the world around him.

(זהר ח"א ע' רנ ע"א, רבינו בחיי פ' עקב, חינוך תל, תו"א בראשית ו, א)

A Yid once came to the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, crying about his parnassa difficulties. He told the tzaddik about his garden in which people would come to enjoy the shade of his trees. He would serve them food and water from his well and as such was provided with a livelihood. Now, however, his garden trees and waters have dried up, and his parnassa was in danger. The Ohr Hachaim first gave the Yid a drink, and then listened to him hastily recite the Bracha Rishona and when he done, the Bracha Acharona. "Now I understand why your source of livelihood had dried up," said the tzaddik. "It is because you are not careful with your brachos." The Ohr Hachaim advised him to begin saying brachos properly, and assured that Hashem will then help him.

(סיפורים למעשה ח"ב ע' פח)

According to the teachings of our Rebbeim, children from age three should become accustomed to saying Birchos Hashachar and Birchas Hamazon. Before three years, once the child can speak, it is worthy to be mehader in this, though it is not required.

(תורת מנחם תשמ"ב ח"ב עמ' 708)

At the end of all Farbrengens, the Rebbe would announce, "All

those who need to make a Bracha Acharona will certainly make a Bracha Acharona," reminding the crowd of this obligation. The Rebbe explained that unfortunately the Bracha Acharona has a 'bad mazal' and is often forgotten even by those who are extremely careful with the Bracha Rishona.

(שיח"ק תשל"ז ח"א ע' 354, ושם ע' 450)

ALWAYS PRAISING

In the days of Dovid Hamelech, a plague came upon the Yidden and one hundred people died each day. Dovid Hamelech with his Ruach Hakodesh instructed everyone to recite one hundred brachos every day, and then the plague was brought to an end. This takono was made to strengthen our fear of Hashem, our love for Him and to aid us in constantly remembering Hashem.

On Shabbos, when we do not have as many brachos to recite as during the weekdays, we complete the 100 brachos by eating fruit and smelling b'samim. On fast days, one should have kavana during Chazoras HaShatz, so that those brachos also be included in the sum of 100 brachos.

(מנחות מג ע"ב, שוע"ר או"ח סי' מו ס"א)

The Rebbe spoke that the emphasis in reciting one hundred brachos daily should be on their essence, bringing one to fear, love and remembering Hashem. When the recitation of the one hundred brachos are done properly, then these feeling permeate the entire day.

(ספר השיחות תנש"א עמ' 134)

The Rebbe Rashab would constantly make brachos, at least once an hour (or once in two hours, at the minimum). When he did not have a bracha to recite, he would say the possuk "ברוך אתה ה' למדני חוקיך".

(סה"ש תש"ד ע' 117)

As young boys, Rava and Abayei learnt with the Amora Rabbah. Once Rabbah asked his young talmidim, "To Whom do we make Brachos?" "To Hashem" they replied. Rabba further questioned them, "Where is Hashem?" He wanted to ascertain that they truly understood to Whom they were making the brachos, and not just repeating what they were told. Rava then pointed upward, while Abayei went outside and pointed toward shamayim.

The Rebbe explains that this recognition and appreciation of Hashem is greater by children, for their understanding of Hashem is simple and straightforward.

(ברכות מ"ח ע"ב, סה"ש תשנ"ב עמ' 88)

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לע"נ שרה רבקה בת ר' יוסף ע"ה

THE WAY TO PRAISE

Throughout his entire lifetime, when the great chossid R' Dovid Tzvi Chein (also known as the Radatz) would make a bracha over food or drink, he would place his right hand over his forehead (as is done when deep in thought) and then make the bracha. The Frierdiker Rebbe related, "When I was a young boy, I asked him the reason for this, and he told me that when he was twelve years old, his father Reb Peretz brought him to Lubavitch to see the Tzemach Tzedek. When he went in to the Rebbe's room, the Rebbe showed him closeness and affection, and amongst other things he told him, "Listen to me. Do not behave as a child any longer. When you have to make a bracha on food or drink, and must say 'Boruch Ata', you should remember before whom you are going to say Boruch Ata."

(סד"ש תש"ג ע' 143)

When one makes a bracha, he should contemplate what he is doing, that he is thanking Hashem for the food or the mitzvos which He has given us, and the bracha should not be recited out of habit. Hashem sent Yeshayahu Hanavi to reprimand the Yidden who were making brachos for washing their hands or eating without thinking of Hashem. As a result, Hashem removed wisdom from those who behaved this way.

There was once a man who revealed himself in a dream to one of his relatives, several years after his passing. The relative asked him, "How are you doing in the other world?" The deceased replied, "Every day I am judged for not having been careful to think about Hashem when making Brachos." The man explained that though years had passed, he was still being cleansed from this fault.

(ס' חסידים אות מ"ו)

One should be very meticulous with having the proper kavana when saying brachos and recognize the basic idea of the bracha, that he is bentching Hashem. One should also have in mind about what he is now bentching. He should see to it his mind should not think about anything else.

When one says Hashem's name, he must concentrate on their meaning: י-ה-ו-ה – that Hashem is the master of everything and that Hashem always existed, exists and will always exist, and אלקים – that Hashem is all powerful, above and below.

It is forbidden to do anything while saying a bracha, for it then appears that one is careless and that the bracha is unimportant. Therefore, even an action which does not require concentration is also prohibited.

(סדר ברכת הנהנין פ"ט ה"ג, שוע"ר סי' ה, סי' קפ"ג ע"ד)

When saying brachos properly, with kavono and happiness, one draws upon himself Hashem's kindness. Brachos should be recited audibly and carefully, because "קול מעורר הכוונה", the voice arouses the intent.

(ראשית חכמה שער האהבה פ"י, של"ה)

Reb Chaim Vital writes, "My Rebbe the Arizal warned me to be very careful to have kavana when reciting brachos, for it refines a person, enabling them to receive kedusha, and is the primary cause for Ruach Hakodesh."

(כף החיים סי' קצ"א סק"ו)

In previous times, even the simplest Yidden had a natural Yiras Shomayim which caused them to have great respect for the words of Torah. When a bracha had to be said, they would wash their hands, or at least cleanse them. Regarding this the Frierdiker Rebbe related: "Once

while playing, I overheard the gardener reciting a bracha Shehakol, and I began to tremble from hearing how the bracha was being recited. Today, however, people do not appreciate the brachos they are saying, and the brachos do not sense the person's dedication."

(סד"ש תש"ג ע' 119)

Bunim was an elderly shammes in the city of Worms, and served on the Chevra Kadisha as well. One day, he came to Shul earlier than usual and saw a man with a crown of grass on his head, standing in front of the shul building. At first he was frightened, thinking that it was a שד, but then, he recognized the man and asked him, "Aren't you so-and-so who we buried yesterday?" "Yes," the man replied. "How is it in shamayim for you?" the shammes inquired. "Good" the man replied. Not knowing him to have been especially righteous, the shammes wanted to know, "What special merit do you have for yourself?" The man told him, "Only in the zechus of my saying Brachos in a loud sweet voice, was I brought into Gan Eden with great honor."

(ס' הגן יום שני בשם אור זרוע)

The Alter Rebbe held a number of debates with the Geonim of Lithuania over the truth of Chassidus. At these debates the Alter Rebbe would discuss concepts in halacha (generally the halachos of Birchas Hanehenin), and would conclude with a ruchniyus'dike lesson.

At the second debate, which took place in Minsk, everyone recognized the Alter Rebbe's great גאונות, and it deeply impacted the Geonim of Lithuania. At the conclusion, the Alter Rebbe taught a lesson from the Mishna, "שהכל נהי' בדברו" He explained that water symbolizes Torah, and the test whether one is truly learning Torah properly, is when he recognizes that everything (שהכל) is being created by the word of Hashem (נהי' בדברו). Among those present were many diligent students, who would learn for eighteen to twenty-one hours every day, and hearing this explanation, tens of them were attracted to become followers of the Alter Rebbe.

(ספר השיחות תש"ד ע' 139)

It happened once in Tunisia that a Rov was walking with two talmidim, when Arabs suddenly confronted them, intending to kill the Rov. They chased away the talmidim and allowed the Rov one last wish. The Rov asked for a cup of water, and with great kavana, he said the bracha 'שהכל נהי' בדברו'. Just as he finished drinking, an Arab Sheik passed by and ordered that the Rov be let free, so without much choice, the Arabs let him go. Later, when the Talmidim met their Rov, they asked about his last request, and he explained, "I have learned by my Rebbes, that by saying the bracha of Shehakol with kavana, bad decrees can be torn apart. No one can harm one who truly believes that everything comes from Hashem."

(סיפורים למעשה ח"ב ע' פד)

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