



TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Eikev

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A Taste of Torah Fearless!

by Rabbi Yisrael Kellner

Being fearless is not just a mindset or good advice. It's a mitzvah in the Torah.

"Perhaps you will say in your heart, 'These nations are more numerous than I; how will I be able to drive them out?' Do not fear them! You shall remember what Hashem, your G-d, did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt... so shall Hashem, your G-d, do to all the peoples before whom you fear." (Eikev 7:17-19)

The Torah prohibits the Jewish People from fearing the other nations against whom they will go to war. At first glance, this appears to be a prohibition that was applicable back when the Jewish People were about to engage in battle against the nations of Canaan. Fascinatingly, though, Rabbeinu Yonah (d. 1263) in his classic work *Sha'arei Teshuva* writes that this prohibition does not only apply to the Jews of that era as they went to war. Rather, this prohibition also applies to Jews in future generations and to all situations. The Torah teaches that if some fear crops up in one's mind, be it a big medical issue, financial difficulty, feeling threatened by another, or anything else, one is obligated to remove this fear from his heart by trusting in Hashem. The question is, how is it possible to remove a big fear which is so real and tangible from one's heart; what tools can we use to eradicate a powerful terror that seems impossible to overcome?

To answer this question, we must first cite the Vilna Gaon's (Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna; 1720-1797) explanation of the concept of having *bitachon* (trust) in Hashem. The Vilna Ga'on writes that the definition of *bitachon* can be found in the words of King David in Tehillim (Psalms 131:2), "I calmed and quieted my soul, like a nursing child upon its mother." An infant feels so calm and secure that its mother will provide for it that it never worries where its next meal will come from. So, too, one is obligated to have complete trust in Hashem to the degree that he simply feels secure that Hashem, his loving, caring Father, will provide for him, and so there is no need to worry!

To further understand this idea, we must examine what the Torah says in next week's

parsha. "If there will arise in your midst a prophet or a dreamer of a dream, and he will give you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder of which he spoke to you happens, [and he] says, 'Let us go after other gods which you have not known, and let us worship them.' You shall not heed the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of a dream; for Hashem, your G-d, is testing you, to know whether you really love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul." (Devarim 13:2-4)

The Torah teaches that when one has a fiery love for Hashem, he will not be fooled by some false prophet, and he will not be fazed and convinced by any sort of miracle to leave the ways of Hashem. It is that solid bond and love for Hashem that ensures that nothing in the world will deter him from serving Hashem!

When one has a strong, loving relationship with Hashem, the secure feeling that Hashem will care for him will be unaffected by any frightening events that may come his way. Realizing that Hashem is so much stronger than all of his fears, the person feels like a child in its mother's arms, secure and cared for. When a person feels an intense love and bond with Hashem, then no fear will faze him. He knows and feels that he's in the best hands, and that gives him the courage to stand up against his fears and not lose his calm and peaceful state of mind!

I heard a powerful story that happened not long ago from a rebbi of mine that illustrates this concept. Around three years ago, a young father came down with a complex disease that was difficult to treat. He went from doctor to doctor, trying to obtain a cure. At the same time, through all of this upheaval in his life, he had racked up a large debt. The man now had two enormous fears, a medical-related worry of his complex disease and a financial worry due to his huge debt. The man was overcome with fear, wondering, "How will I manage to pay my debts? And it seems I will never recover from my illness!"

After learning and working on the concepts of *bitachon*, the man decided to do two things. First, he took out a notebook where he had

Stories for the Soul

Protective Blessing

Young Shimon lived in Lublin, Poland in the years before World War II. One day, Rabbi Meir Shapiro (1887-1933) visited his *cheder* (school) and tested the students. After the test, Rabbi Shapiro said to the students, "Generally, I give gifts or sweets to the children after a test, but this time, I don't have anything with me to give you. So, I will tell you about a *segulah* (protective charm), and that will be my gift to you." Rabbi Shapiro told the boys to be careful with reciting *Birkas Hamazon* (Grace After Meals). He explained that the sources say that *Birkas Hamazon* is a *segulah* for protection and for *parnassa* (sustenance). He added that one source states that those who are careful will always say *Birkas Hamazon* from a *siddur* (prayer book) and not by heart.

Shimon decided right then and there that he would always be careful with *Birkas Hamazon*. In *cheder*, his friends would *bench* (recite *Birkas Hamazon*) quickly and go out to play, while he lingered, because it was important to him to *bench* properly.

A few years later, the Nazis invaded Poland. Soon, Shimon found himself standing in line for a dreaded selection at a concentration camp. He noticed that those who were short was being sent to the left for execution, and he himself was short! He prayed that he be saved from in the merit of *Birkas Hamazon*. When it was his turn, he stood on his toes to appear higher. The Nazi signaled to the right.

Soon, Reb Shimon found himself standing in line once again. This time, each person had to tell the Nazi guard what type of work he could do; if one could do productive work, he'd be kept alive. Shimon didn't know what

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Kollel Happenings

DEDICATION EVENT/ CHANUKAS HABAYIS ON AUG. 15

The Kollel will hold a Celebration of Torah with a Kollel Torah Center Dedication Event/Chanukas Habayis on Sunday, August 15. Harav Malkiel Kotler shlita, Rosh Yeshiva of Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood, will grace the event and present the keynote address. Musical inspiration by Eitan Katz. Visit www.denverkollel.org for more details.

SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON

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

MILE HIGH TORAH PODCAST FROM THE KOLLEL

A wide variety of Kollel classes and short, inspiring Torah thoughts are now available on many podcast platforms such as Spotify, Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts and Amazon Music. You can also access the latest podcasts at the Kollel's website, www.denverkollel.org.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: When would the need to repeat a blessing depend on whether one erred at the beginning or at the end?

Answer: The blessing known as *Me'ein Shalosh* is recited after consuming food made from the Five Grains (wheat, barley, spelt, oats, rye) upon which one recited *mezonos*, after consuming one of the fruits of the *Shivas Haminim* (Seven Species of Eretz Yisrael), or after drinking wine or grape juice.

Each one of these three categories has its own unique text (i.e., *al hamichya...*, *al ha'eitz/al hapeiros...*, *al hagefen...*) inserted in the blessing three times, once at the

start, once in the middle, and once in the closing of the blessing. In many (but not all) cases, if one inserted the text for the wrong category, the blessing must be repeated. However, if one recited the wrong text at the start or the middle of the blessing, but recited the correct text at the close of the blessing, it needn't be repeated. Conversely, if one recited the wrong text at the close of the blessing, the blessing must be repeated even though the correct text was inserted at the start and middle (Halachos of Brachos [Rabbi Pinchas Bodner] pg. 359).

This week's question: When would one fulfill his obligation after reciting just the first blessing of *Birkas Hamazon*?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part X

The nascent Agudath Israel was supported by many key Torah leaders of the time, including Rabbi Yisrael

Meir Kagan, better known as the Chofetz Chaim, and Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, the Rebbe of Ger.

A Taste of Torah

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written down all the kindness Hashem had done for him all his life. He would review it and add in all the little positive things that were happening in his life. He also started to thank Hashem for all the little things he realized were being given to him. For example, when walking outside, he would think about the beautiful world, the weather, the grass and trees, and then he would thank Hashem for everything. By doing this, he created a strong loving bond between himself and Hashem, and this is what kept him calm, even in the face of these two

terrifying fears. Eventually, his disease was cured, and money suddenly came to him out of nowhere, allowing him to repay his debts!

This story illustrates this amazing concept of how powerful one's relationship with Hashem can be and how strong one can be in face of terrifying situations. When one works on his connection with Hashem and builds a strong, loving bond with Hashem, then absolutely nothing in this world will faze him one bit, and he will never be afraid of any circumstance, place, or thing!

Stories for the Soul

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to say; he was only a teenager, taken away from yeshiva to this cursed place. As he waited in line, he prayed, "In the merit of *Birkas Hamazon*, which is a *segulah* for *parnassa*, Hashem, please support me..."

Suddenly, the person behind him tapped him on the shoulder. "Say you're a cook and that I'm your helper." Shimon said this, and they were both sent to work in the kitchen, where he had ample food. He

had survived, and he had *parnassa*!

Shimon ultimately survived the war and eventually settled in Jerusalem, where he shared his story and the wonderful *segulah* of *Birkas Hamazon*.

The mitzvah of *Birkas Hamazon* is discussed in this week's parsha. While most blessings are of Rabbinic origin, *Birkas Hamazon* is one of two blessings actually sourced in the Torah itself.

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