



PRAISING HASHEM

The Importance of a Bracha

Chazal teach us that if a person eats or drinks without making a *bracha*, it is as if he had wrongly benefited from something holy that belongs to *HaShem*, for every single thing in this world belongs to Him, so only after acknowledging this by saying the *bracha* can one use it.

How did Avraham Avinu motivate the people around him to call to *HaShem*? Chazal relate that after he had generously served his guests food and drink, they would stand up to thank and bless him, but he would point out, "Did you eat my food?! You ate *HaShem's* food, so praise and *bensch* 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 when one does not say a *bracha*, he places himself under the control of nature, not allowing for any additional *brachos*, whose Source is above nature.

The author of *Sefer HaChinuch* quotes the assurance that he received from his Rebbeim – that whoever is scrupulous about *bensching* will have a good and easy livelihood throughout all his days.

(זהר ח"א ע' רנ ע"א, רבינו בחיי פ' עקב)

The *Ritva* writes that a person should first and foremost learn and teach his children and his students the *halachos* of *brachos*. Otherwise one might transgress by deriving benefit from something that had been "consecrated to *HaShem*," for everything in the world is His.

According to the teachings of our Rebbeim, children from age three should become accustomed to saying *Birchos HaShachar* and *Birkas HaMazon*. Before that age, once a child can speak, it is commendable to be *mehader* in this.

הלכות ברכות להריטב"א פ"א ס"א, תו"מ תשמ"ב ח"ב עמ' 708

At the end of every *farbrengen*, the Rebbe would announce, "All those who need to make a *bracha acharona* will no doubt make a *bracha acharona*," thus reminding his listeners of this obligation. The Rebbe once remarked that unfortunately the *bracha acharona* 'doesn't have much *mazal*,' meaning that it is often forgotten even by people

who are very careful with regard to the *bracha rishona*.

(שיחור"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 a hundred people died every day. Inspired by *Ruach HaKodesh*, Dovid HaMelech instructed everyone to recite a hundred *brachos* every day, and the plague came to an end. The goal of this *takana* was to strengthen our love and fear of *HaShem*, and to aid us to remember Him constantly.

On *Shabbos*, when we do not have as many *brachos* to recite in davening as we have during the weekdays, we complete the 100 *brachos* by eating fruit and smelling *besamim*. On fast days, one should listen with particular *kavana* to all the *brachos* of *chazaras hashatz*, so that they too will be included in the sum of 100 *brachos*.

(מנחות מג ע"ב, שוע"ר או"ח סי' ס"א)

The Rebbe Rashab would constantly make *brachos*, at least once an hour, or once in two hours, at the very minimum. When he did not have a *bracha* to recite, he would say the *possuk*, "*Boruch Ata HaShem, lamdeini chukecha*."

(סה"ש תש"ד ע' 117)

The Rebbe taught that not only should we make sure that a child never eat without making a *bracha*, but we should also give him snacks to increase his opportunities for making *brachos*.

(שיחור"ק תשל"ז ח"א עמ' 460)

Singing Praise

A person should accustom himself and his family not to forget to say *brachos*, and to say them audibly and carefully, because *voicing* words arouses one's devout concentration.

(של"ה הובא במשנ"ב סימן תרמ"ג סק"ה)

Bunim was an elderly *shammes* in the city of Worms, and also served on the local *Chevra Kaddisha*. One day he came to *shul* earlier than usual and right in front of him he saw a man with a crown of grass on his head. At first he was alarmed, thinking that this was a *sheid*, but then he recognized the man and asked him, "Aren't you so-and-so whom 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 particularly righteous, the *shammes* wanted to know, "What special merit do you have for yourself?"

The man told him, "Only in the *zechus* of my having said my *brachos* loudly and sweetly, was I ushered into *Gan Eden* with great honor."

(ס' הגן יום שני בשם אור זרוע)

In the days when the *tzaddik*, the author of *Or HaMeir*, supported himself as a liquor merchant, a simple Yid once came to buy a cup of strong spirits. He made a hasty *bracha*, gulped it down, and turned to leave.

The *tzaddik* called him back and said: "You believe, of course, in the concept of *gilgulim*, reincarnation. Sometimes it is decreed that a person should be reincarnated in a growing object (rather than in a person), and this causes the *nesheama* intense pain. As the plant grows, the *nesheama* cries out and *davens* to *HaShem* that its seed should remain on its stem and not get lost. Later, during harvest and transport, many seeds fall and are lost, so again the *nesheama davens* to *HaShem*, begging that it should remain together with the other seeds, which will later be used for food. Finally, the *nesheama* implores *HaShem* that it should end up as part of a beverage that will one day be consumed by a Yid who will make *bracha* over it with *kavana*, so that that *nesheama* will be elevated.

The *tzaddik* concluded, "And perhaps what you drank just now was the *nesheama* of your departed father..."

The Yid suddenly realized that that very day was his father's *yahrzeit*. Gripped by fright, he fell in a faint, and in due course he became a whole-hearted *baal teshuva*.

(שלחן הטהור מאמר פתח עינינו פ"ח)

CONSIDER THIS!

- How does a *bracha* allow us to benefit from the world?
- What is the benefit in reciting a *bracha* loudly? Can't *HaShem* hear us regardless?

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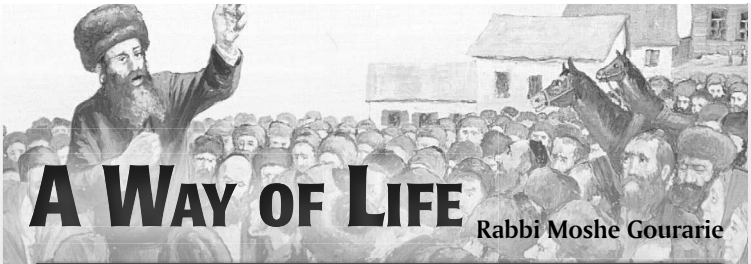
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A WAY OF LIFE

Rabbi Moshe Gourarie

OUR HEROES

Reb Yaakov of Lisa



Known by his *sefer* called the "Nesivos", Reb Yaakov of Lisa was a great *gaon* and *Rov*. Reb Yaakov learned under the tutelage of the *gaon* Reb Meshulam Igra and later became the *Rov* in Lisa. His *seforim* are learned in all *yeshivos*, including the works called "Nesivos Hamishpat", "Chavas Daas", "Mekor Chaim", and "Toras Gittin". Reb Yaakov also wrote a *sefer* "Derech Hachaim", dealing with basic *halachos* of day-to-day life. The *sefer* was printed many times and became very popular. Reb Avraham Dovid Lavut noted where the Alter Rebbe argues and printed it with his Shaar Hakolel. The *Nesivos* passed away 25 Iyar, תקצ"ב (1832).



The Gerrer Rebbe, the *Chidushei Harim*, had tremendous respect for the *Nesivos*. He related that when Reb Yaakov traveled to Lisa to accept the position as *Rov* the townspeople greeted him at the city limits. Among the people was a man who sold tar. The man approached Reb Yaakov and commented about a point in the *pilpul* he had delivered to the *lomdim* of the town. It took no time to notice that this pitch-selling man was a very big *talmid chocham*.

To everyone's surprise, Reb Yaakov asked his wagon driver to turn the wagon around; he was leaving Lisa. Reb Yaakov explained that if even the pitch-seller was such a *lamdan*, it was obvious to him that he was not worthy of being the *Rov* in such a place. Only after the townspeople made it clear to the *Rov* that this man was an exception did he agree to stay.

When telling the story, Gerrer Rebbe concluded with the lesson that there is no shame in one's type of work, as *Chazal* tell us.



In Reb Yaakov's later years, his son-in-law, Reb Elazar Paltusker, asked him a *halachic* question. After giving his *psak*, Reb Yaakov remembered that in one of his *seforim* he had ruled otherwise. Immediately made a public announcement that since his memory seemed to be dulled he will no longer make any *halachic* rulings. Such was the honesty and truthfulness of the *Nesivos*.

ליכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה

Learning in Kollel

Is it permitted to take money for learning Torah?

- The *Rambam* strongly rules against taking money from *tzedaka* for the learning of Torah.¹ One who derives benefit from the words of Torah in this world "desecrates *HaShem's* name, dishonors the Torah, extinguishes the light of faith, brings evil upon himself, and forfeits the life of *Olam Haba*".
- The *Shulchan Aruch* writes² that the *Rambam's* view has not been accepted and most *chachomim* throughout the generations did not follow his approach. Had the *Rambam's* view been followed, "Torah would have ceased to exist", because the *chachomim* would not have been able to learn Torah undisturbed.³ It is thus a communal benefit to support individuals who will perpetuate the knowledge of Torah.
- *Rishonim*⁴ prove this from the *Gemara*⁵: There is a *mitzvah* upon the community to make the *Kohen Gadol* rich. *Halacha* says that if one finds a lost object of a *talmid chochom* of simple lineage, and one of an unlearned *Kohen Gadol*, he should first return that of the *talmid chochom*. We can thus derive that it is certainly the responsibility of the community to supply *talmidei chachomim* with their needs.
- *Poskim*⁶ add that although in general one should try to avoid taking *tzedaka* from others, accepting money for learning Torah is not included since he is doing the community a service with his Torah study, not vice versa. Nevertheless, if one has the ability to learn Torah without taking from others, this is considered "*Middas Chassidus*"⁷.
- The Rebbe strongly encouraged newly married *yungerlait* to spend the period after their *chassuna* learning full-time in *kollel*⁸. The Rebbe explained that spending the first period of one's married life in an environment of Torah study is a necessary preparation for entering the world of business or *shlichus*⁹. While the Rebbe did not encourage staying in *kollel* for an extended periods of time, primarily since those sitting in *kollel* are urgently needed to save *yiddische neshomos* from spiritual death¹⁰, the Rebbe nevertheless maintained that a few select *yungerlait* capable of becoming *rabbonim* or *roshei yeshiva* should continue in *kollel* for many years¹¹.

Please note that the above may not be applicable for your situation. Consult your *Rov* for a final *psak*.

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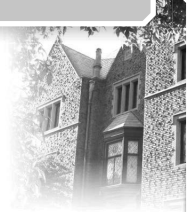
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A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

Such Criticism!



When the Rebbe began speaking with increasing urgency about the imminent arrival of *Moshiach*, some people from other *frum* communities were disturbed by it.

In 5742, the future Gerrer Rebbe, Reb Pinchas Menachem Alter, merited a *yechidus* with the Rebbe.

The Rebbe addressed the burning issue of the *geula*. "This is the fervent wish and hope of *klal Yisroel*, to leave *golus* and to come to *Eretz Yisroel* with *Moshiach Tzidkeinu*. Indeed, as of late, I stress that *Moshiach* must come 'now'."

Here the Rebbe made a rare reference to himself:

"Some have criticized my approach. How fortunate I am, that the criticism leveled against me is that I talk too much about *Moshiach*!"

ליכות השליח שלום דובער בן לובה



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