



“You will eat and you will be satisfied and you will bless Hashem”

Reciting Birkas HaMazon Is a Segulah for Making a Dignified Livelihood and It Is a Magnificent Tikun for the Cheit Eitz HaDa’as

This week’s parsha is parshas Eikev. The vital mitzvas asef of Birkas HaMazon appears in this parsha, as it is written (Devarim 8, 10): **“ואכלת ושבעת וברכת את ה' אלקיך על הארץ הטובה: —you will eat and you will be satisfied and you will bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good land that He gave you.** Our blessed sages deduce from this passuk that a person is required by the Torah to recite Birkas HaMazon after he has eaten and is satisfied. As we have learned in the Gemara (Berachos 21a): **“מנין לברכת המזון לאחריה מן התורה, שנאמר: — ואכלת ושבעת וברכת.”** **from where in the Torah do we derive the obligation to recite Birkas HaMazon after meals? For it is written: “And you will eat, and you will be satisfied, and you will bless.”**

In fact, Chazal deduce from this passuk that there is actually a positive commandment to recite four Berachos after eating a meal. The first three are biblically ordained while the fourth was instituted by the sages in Yavneh (ibid. 48b): **“תנו רבנן סדר: ברכת המזון כך היא, ברכה ראשונה ברכת הזן, שניה ברכת הארץ, שלישית ברכת המזון כן היא, ברכה ראשונה ברכת הזן, שניה ברכת הארץ, רביעית הטוב והמטיב.”** The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa the order in which we are to recite the Berachos of Birkas HaMazon. The first berachah is **“hazan,”** the second berachah is **“ha’aretz,”** the third berachah is **“boneh Yerushalayim”** and the fourth berachah is **“hatov v’hameitiv.”**

According to the Gemara (ibid.), the fourth berachah commemorates those slain at Beitar: **“הטוב והמטיב ביבנה תקנוה, דאמר רב מתנא אותו היום שניתנו הרוגי ביתר לקבורה, תיקנו כנגד הרוגי ביתר, הטוב והמטיב, הטוב שלא הסריחו, והמטיב שניתנו לקבורה.”** Rav

Matna states that the day that permission was finally granted to bury those slain at Beitar, the sages in Yavneh instituted the berachah of **“hatov v’hameitiv”;** **“hatov” — He Who is good** — for miraculously not allowing the bodies to decay and smell; **“v’hameitiv” — He Who confers good** — for ensuring that they were ultimately afforded burial.

Although the first three Berachos of Birkas HaMazon are decreed by the Torah, it is worthwhile to point out that they were formulated by Moshe Rabeinu, Yehoshua bin Nun, David HaMelech and Shlomo HaMelech, as explained in the following passage (ibid.): **“משה תיקן לישראל ברכת הזן בשעה שירד להם מן, יהושע: דוד תיקן להם ברכת הארץ כיון שנכנסו לארץ, דוד ושלמה תיקנו בונה ירושלים, דוד תיקן על ישראל עמך ועל ירושלים עירך, ושלמה תיקן על הבית הגדול והקדוש.”** Moshe instituted the berachah of **“hazan”** when the mahn began to fall. Yehoshua instituted the berachah of **“ha’aretz”** when they entered the land. David and Shlomo collaborated on the berachah of **“boneh Yerushalayim.”**

The Rashba questions the Gemara’s statement that these Berachos were formulated by Moshe, Yehoshua, David and Shlomo, seeing as the Gemara states explicitly that they were ordained by the Torah. He suggests that they did not institute these Berachos but merely established the universal formulae to be recited by all Jews at the appropriate times. For, as far as the obligation decreed by the Torah is concerned, a Jew could express his gratitude with any formula that he so chooses.

Reciting Birkas HaMazon Portends Earning a Livelihood with Dignity

We will begin our enlightening journey by entertaining an intriguing question. All of the Berachos associated with earthly pleasures—“Birchos HaNehenin”—were ordained by the Rabbis, with the exception of the first three Berachos of Birkas HaMazon, which were ordained by the Torah. This emphasizes the special significance of Birkas HaMazon and suggests that it is a fundamental and unique practice in our service of Hashem.

In Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 430), one of our early scholars, Rabbi Aharon HaLevi, ztz”l, writes the following: **“כך מקובל אני מרבתי ישמרם אל, שכל הזהיר בברכת המזון מזוגותיו מצויין לו בכבוד כל ימיו”**—thus, I received the tradition from my Rabbis, G-d protect them: That whoever is mindful to observe the obligation of Birkas HaMazon, his sustenance will be available to him with dignity throughout his life. Simply understood, this means that for expressing our gratitude to Hashem and acknowledging that He provides for us and sustains us at all times, we merit receiving ample good from His heavenly stores with dignity. Notwithstanding, we will explore this subject in greater depth.

First, let us refer to a passuk related to Avraham Avinu (Bereishis 21, 33): **“ויטע אשל בבאר שבע ויקרא שם בשם ה' אל: עולם”**—he planted an “eshel” in Be’er Sheva, and there he proclaimed the name of Hashem, G-d of the Universe. Rashi comments: **By means of that “eshel,” the name of HKB”H was proclaimed as G-d for the entire universe. After they would eat and drink, he (Avraham) would say to them, “Bless Him of whose you have eaten. Do you believe that you have eaten of that which is mine? Of that which belongs to Him Who spoke and brought the universe into existence you have eaten.”**

This sheds light on the meaning of the passuk (ibid. 12, 5): **“וזאת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן”**—and the souls that they made in Charan. Rashi comments: **For they took them in under the wings of the Shechinah. Avraham would convert the men and Sarah would convert the women. Scripture considers them as if they made them.** By instructing his guests to recite Birkas HaMazon to Hashem after they finished eating,

Avraham was able to bring them under the wings of the Shechinah—to recognize and accept Hashem.

Now, let us introduce a holy dialogue described in the sefer Emes V’Emunah (page 95) involving the fiery, angelic figures of the Rabbi of Kotzk, zy”a, and his disciple the Chiddushei HaRim, zy”a. The author of the Chiddushei HaRim once asked a chassid named Rabbi Avish what he had learned in Kotzk. He answered: The Rabbi wondered why reciting Birkas HaMazon does not inspire a person to be G-d fearing and upright. After all, it was the primary method utilized by Avraham Avinu, a”h, to bring people closer to G-d. The Chiddushei HaRim responded that he wondered why eating does not inspire a person to be G-d fearing and upright. After all, it says (Yeshayah 1, 3): “An ox knows its owner and a donkey its master’s trough.”

The Amazing Tikun Provided by the “Eshel”

I would like to combine the two recommendations suggested by the Rabbi and his disciple based on a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Vayeira 102b). It asserts that the “eshel” Avraham planted in Be’er Sheva was aimed at rectifying the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as”:

“בא וראה, כשחטא אדם בעץ הדעת טוב ורע חטא, שכתוב (שם ב-יז) ומעץ הדעת וגו’ (טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו), והוא חטא בו וגרם מיתה לעולם. מה כתוב (שם ג-כב) ועתה פן ישלח ידו ולקח גם מעץ החיים וגו’, וכשבא אברהם בעץ אחר התקין את העולם, שהוא עץ החיים, והודיע את האמונה לכל בני העולם.”

As a consequence of sinning by partaking of the Eitz HaDa’as, Adam brought death to the world. He was then banished from Gan Eden, so that he would not partake of the Eitz HaChaim. Avraham came along and began the process of tikun with a different tree. By abiding by the Eitz HaChaim, he taught the inhabitants of the world to believe in Hashem.

To understand the Zohar hakadosh, let us introduce a Midrash (B.R. 14, 15) that says that Avraham Avinu was the first person to begin to rectify the damage caused by Adam HaRishon. The Midrash is associated with the passuk (ibid. 2, 7):

“And Hashem G-d formed man,” in the merit of Avraham. Rabbi Levi said: “The biggest man among the giants” (Yehoshua 14, 15) refers to Avraham. Why does

the passuk call him “big” (“great”)? Because he was worthy to be created before Adam HaRishon. Yet, HKB”H said: “Maybe he will go astray and there won’t be anyone to make amends after him. Instead, I will create Adam first; so that if he blunders, Avraham will come and make amends for him.”

Now, our master, the Arizal, teaches us in Sefer HaGilgulim (Intro. 23) that all of the neshamos were contained within Adam HaRishon when he sinned by partaking of the Eitz HaDa’as. Therefore, the death sentence was imposed on all of creation and not just on Adam and Chava, since they all participated in the sin. Since then, it is incumbent upon every Jew to make amends for his part in the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as.”

This implies that in effect, Adam HaRishon fed all of the future neshamos food that was prohibited. To make amends, Avraham Avinu “planted an eshel in Be’er Sheva.” By so doing, he fed all of his guests food that was permitted for consumption. Furthermore, he taught them to bless HKB”H for the food. In this manner, he drew them closer to HKB”H, rectifying the fact that they had eaten food that was prohibited when they were neshamos within Adam HaRishon.

The Megaleh Amukos Explains the Klipos of the Nachash

With this introduction, we will continue to elaborate on this subject. We learn in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 59b) that after trapping Adam and Chava in his deceitful web, HKB”H punished the “nachash hakadmoni”—the primeval serpent—by amputating its legs:

“תניא רבי שמעון בן מנסיא אומר, חבל על שמש גדול שאבד מן העולם, שאלמלא נתקלל נחש, כל אחד ואחד מישראל היו מזדמנין לו שני נחשים טובים, אחד משגרו לצפון ואחד משגרו לדרום להביא לו סנדלבונים טובים ואבנים טובות ומרגליות, ולא עוד אלא שמפשילין רצועה תחת זנבו ומוציא בה עפר לגינתו ולחורבתו.”

It was taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya says: It is unfortunate that a great servant was lost from the world. For, had the serpent not been cursed, each and every one of Yisrael would have had two good serpents as servants; one he would send to the north and one he would send to the south to bring him gems, precious

stones and pearls. Furthermore, it would have been possible to attach a strap beneath its tail and have it take out soil to his garden and to his ruin.

The Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (71) explains the nature and significance of the two serpents. He asserts that the “nachash hakadmoni” was the root and embodiment of all the forces of tumah. Hence, it contained the two major klipos of Yishmael and Eisav. This fact is alluded to by the name נחש, which is an abbreviation for נחש ה'מור ש'ור—the serpent, the donkey (Yishmael) and the ox (Eisav). By combining these two formidable forces of tumah, the nachash succeeded in trapping Adam and Chava, causing them to stumble and sin with the Eitz HaDa’as.

Now, had Adam HaRishon not succumbed to the nachash’s persuasive ruse, he would have successfully overcome these two forces of tumah—the donkey and the ox—embodied by the nachash. Not only would he have subdued the impure forces of the nachash, but he would have transformed them into forces for good, in keeping with the notion (Shabbas 119b): “זמלאך רע עונה אמן בעל כרחו”—and the bad angel is forced to answer “amen” against its will.

Had he accomplished this feat, HKB”H would not have prohibited us from plowing with an ox and a donkey together (Devarim 22, 10). On the contrary, we would employ the nachash, containing these two major forces, for the sake of kedushah. The nachash, which would still possess its two legs, would run to serve us. The force of the donkey, we would send to the south—the right side representing the attribute of chesed—to perform acts of kindness on behalf of Hashem. Whereas the force of the ox, we would deploy to the north—the left side representing the attribute of gevurah—to perform acts of severity and restraint in the service of Hashem.

This then is the significance of the divine Tanna, Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya’s, statement: “חבל על שמש גדול שאבד מן העולם, שאלמלא נתקלל נחש” —had the nachash continued to exist with both its legs; “כל אחד ואחד מישראל היו מזדמנין לו שני נחשים טובים” —every Jew would have had two good servants at his beck and call, namely the donkey and the ox contained within the nachash; “אחד משגרו לצפון”—the ox would be available for tasks involving gevurah, to the left; “ואחד משגרו לדרום”—while the donkey would be available for tasks related to chesed, to the right; “להביא לו סנדלבונים טובים ואבנים טובות ומרגליות, ולא

—עוד אלא שמפשיילין רצועה תחת זנבו ומוציא בה עפר לגנתו ולחורבתו—
furthermore, he would have been allowed to work his field with the ox and the donkey in tandem.

As we know, however, Adam and Chava failed to overcome the nachash; they fell into its trap facilitated by the forces of the donkey and the ox. Not only were these two forces not transformed into forces for good, serving the realm of kedushah, but they fell into the depths of tumah, combating the forces of kedushah. They became the roots of evil and perversion, leading the ministering angels of the seventy nations of the world. As a consequence, the prohibition not to plow with an ox and a donkey together was reinstated. For, it is essential not to allow these two formidable powers of tumah to join forces due to the inherent danger they pose. Rather, it is crucial to keep this evil pair separated and to destroy them forevermore.

“An ox knows its owner and a donkey its master’s trough”

It is with immense pleasure that we will now explore together the significance of these two dangerous klipos—the ox and the donkey—embodied by the “nachash hakadmoni,” which Adam HaRishon failed to transform. We have learned in the Gemara (Eiruvim 100b): „אמר רבי יוחנן, אילמלא לא ניתנה תורה, דרך ארץ מתרנגול” —
Rabbi Yochanan said: If the Torah had not been given, we would have learned modesty from the cat, that theft is wrong from the ant and that adultery is wrong from the dove. Thus, even prior to Matan Torah, we could have learned how to properly serve Hashem by observing the behavior of various animals and living creatures.

With this in mind, consider the passuk: „ידע שור קוניהו” —
an ox knows its owner and a donkey its master’s trough; but Yisrael does not know, My people does not comprehend. Now, when Adam HaRishon was created, it is written (Bereishis 2, 16): „ויצו ה' אלקים על האדם לאמר מכל עץ הגן אכול תאכל, ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע” —
and Hashem Elokim commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may eat freely; but of the Eitz HaDa’as Tov VaRa, you must not eat thereof, for on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.” Rabeinu Bachaye points out that Adam HaRishon

was issued two mitzvos here—an aseh and a lo-ta’aseh. He was commanded to eat from every tree in the garden; he was prohibited from eating from the Eitz HaDa’as Tov VaRa.

Let us suggest a rationale for the mitzvas aseh to partake of all the trees in the garden. Man was to learn from the examples of the ox and the donkey to recognize and appreciate that HKB”H prepared a world for him full of a vast variety of delicacies. In the words of the Gemara (Sanhedrin 38a): „תנו רבנן, אדם נברא בערב שבת, ומפני מה... כדי שיכנס לסעודה מיד, משל למלך.”
The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: Adam was created on Erev Shabbas (Friday). And why? . . . So that he would enter the banquet immediately. It is analogous to a king of flesh and blood who built a palace, decorated it, prepared a banquet and only afterwards brought in guests.

Hence, HKB”H chastised Yisrael: „ידע שור קוניהו וחמור אבוס” —
even animals recognize the hand that feeds them. Yet, Adam HaRishon and all the Jewish neshamos contained within him failed to learn this basic, critical lesson from the animals—to recognize and appreciate that HKB”H feeds them and sustains them. „ישראל לא ידע עמי לא התבונן”—by partaking of the Eitz HaDa’as, Yisrael failed to appreciate the fact that HKB”H created them and prepared all sorts of delights and tasty morsels for them.

This clarifies for us the teaching of the Megaleh Amukos. As alluded to by its name which is an acronym for נחש חמור ש”ר, the primeval serpent that caused Adam and Chava to sin was the embodiment of the klipos of the ox and the donkey. Instead of teaching Adam HaRishon and all of the neshamos within him to recognize their Creator, Who sustains them, they did the exact opposite; they encouraged them to blaspheme, chas v’shalom, by denying Hashem’s authority.

This is evident from the argument the nachash used to seduce Chava (ibid. 3, 4): „ויאמר הנחש אל האשה לא מות תמותן, כי יודע אלקים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם והייתם כאלקים יודעי טוב ורע.”
The nachash said to the woman, “You will not surely die; for G-d knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like G-d, knowing good and bad.” Rashi explains: The nachash argued: „Every craftsman hates others of his craft; G-d ate from the tree and created the world. So, by eating from the tree, you will be like G-d, fashioners of the world.”

Clearly, the nachash chose to persuade and influence them with the blasphemous claim that HKB”H had eaten from the tree and then created the world. It was deliberately suggesting that the tree existed before HKB”H. Thus, it intended to activate the klipos of the ox and the donkey, so that Adam and Chava would not emulate the ox and donkey of kedushah: **ידע**—“**ידע שור קונהו וחמור אבוס בעליו**”—who recognize and appreciate the hand that feeds them.

I would now like to present an incredible allusion from the sefer Vayitzbar Yosef authored by the esteemed Rabbi Yosef of Kasani, ztz”l. He writes that the gematria of these three klipos--**ר המור**—**נח”ש שור**—is exactly equivalent to the gematria of the passuk: **”שמע ישראל הויה אלהינו הויה אחד”**—the ultimate declaration of unity. This emphasizes the great danger posed by these klipos; it requires Krias Shema to negate them.

The Segulah of Birkas HaMazon

Continuing along this majestic path, let us now elaborate on the vital importance of Birkas HaMazon with its three biblically ordained Berachos. We will refer to the commentary of the Meshech Chochmah who focuses on the juxtaposition of the mitzvah of Birkas HaMazon with the text that follows: **”השמר לך פן תשכח את ה’ אלקיך... פן תאכל ושבעת ובתים טובים תבנה וישבת, ובקרך וצאנך ירביון וכסף ירבה לך וכל אשר לך ירבה, ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה’ אלקיך... ואמרת בלבבך כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה, וזכרת את ה’ אלקיך כי הוא הגותן לך כח לעשות חיל.”** **“Take care lest you forget Hashem, your G-d, by not observing His commandments . . . lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle, and your cattle and sheep increase, and you increase silver and gold for yourselves, and everything that you have will increase—and your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of slavery . . . And you may say in your heart, ‘My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!’ Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth.”**

He explains that HKB”H gave us the mitzvah of Birkas HaMazon to protect us from the klipah and false, misguided belief of: **“My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!”**

Therefore, the Torah does not instruct us to recite the Birkas HaMazon until after we have finished eating. For, at that time, the concern arises **lest you eat and be satisfied, and your heart will become haughty, and you will forget Hashem, your G-d.** Before eating, this concern does not exist.

Now, in keeping with our current discussion, we can expand on this notion. The “cheit Eitz HaDa’as” stemmed from the malevolent influence of the “nachash hakadmoni,” who embodied the three klipos of **נח”ש שור המור**. Its malice was intended to prevent Adam and Chava from learning from the examples of the ox and donkey: **ידע שור קונהו וחמור אבוס בעליו**—to acknowledge and express gratitude to Hashem for feeding them and providing for them. Hence, HKB”H gave us this mitzvas asech to recite three Berachos after the meal to negate the three klipos of the “nachash hakadmoni.”

At this point, we can better appreciate the profound wisdom of Avraham Avinu. To begin the tikun for the sin of Adam HaRishon: **“He planted an ‘eshel’ in Be’er Sheva, and there he proclaimed the name of Hashem, G-d of the Universe.”** Let us also recall Rashi’s comment: **By means of that “eshel,” the name of HKB”H was proclaimed as G-d for the entire universe. After they would eat and drink, he (Avraham) would say to them, “Bless Him of whose you have eaten. Do you believe that you have eaten of that which is mine? Of that which belongs to Him Who spoke and brought the universe into existence you have eaten.”**

In keeping with this discussion, Avraham prevailed upon his guests to recite Birkas HaMazon after their meals to negate the klipah of the nachash who caused the downfall of Adam and Chava by enticing them to eat from Eitz HaDa’as. As explained above, the nachash influenced them with blasphemy, questioning the primacy of HKB”H. In this manner, Avraham Avinu began the tikun for the “cheit” of Adam HaRishon.

Now, according to one opinion in the Gemara (Berachos 40a): **”אילו שאכל ממנו אדם הראשון... היטה היתה”**—**the tree Adam HaRishon ate from was wheat.** Therefore, to make amends for his eating grains, HKB”H commanded us to recite Birkas HaMazon after consuming the bread of the earth: **“You will eat and you will be satisfied and you will bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good land that He gave you.”** Thus, we demonstrate that we have dismissed the blasphemous claims of

the nachash—that the tree existed before HKB”H, and by eating from the tree, He became G-d. On the contrary, we express our gratitude to Hashem and praise him, acknowledging that He created the universe and gave us the good land.

The Sacred Insights of the Rabbi of Kotzk and the Chiddushei HaRim

It gives me great pleasure to provide a better understanding of the sacred, heavenly dialogue mentioned above between the great Rabbi of Kotzk and his famous disciple the Chiddushei HaRim, zy”a. The Rabbi of Kotzk pondered why people are not moved to fear, reverence, and proper behavior by observing the mitzvah of Birkas HaMazon. After all, that was the ploy successfully used by Avraham Avinu to draw people closer to Hashem.

His disciple, the Chiddushei HaRim, however, wondered why the mere act of eating did not accomplish this feat. After all, even **“an ox knows its owner and a donkey its master’s trough.”** In reality, based on what we have learned, the two things go hand in hand magnificently. By reciting the three original Berachos of Birkas HaMazon, a person successfully subdues the three klipos of the nachash. This enables him to learn the lesson from the ox and donkey without interference.

This also illuminates for us the words of the Sefer HaChinuch: **Thus, I received the tradition from my Rabbis, G-d protect them: That whoever is mindful to observe**

the obligation of Birkas HaMazon, his sustenance will be available to him with dignity throughout his life.

Let us explain. The difficulty and hardships of earning a living stem from the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as,” as it is written (Bereishis 3, 17): **“ארורה האדמה בעבורך בעצבון תאכלנה כל ימי חיידך, בקוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך ואכלת את עשב השדה, בזיעת אפך תאכל לחם עד שובך אל האדמה—accursed is the ground because of you; through suffering shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread until you return to the ground.”**

However, in the merit of the three Berachos of Birkas HaMazon, we rectify and negate the three klipos of the nachash. As a result, we acknowledge and are grateful in the sense of: **“An ox knows its owner and a donkey its master’s trough.”** In this merit, we are entitled and deserving to earn a livelihood with dignity. For, there is no longer a concern that a person will entertain the false, misguided belief of: **“My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!”** In fact, quite the opposite is true. By reciting Birkas HaMazon, we demonstrate that we recognize and appreciate what HKB”H does for us, fulfilling the words of the passuk: **“Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth.”**



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