

Agudas Yisroel Anshei Kielce



Zmanim

Candle Lighting: 7:45 pm

Mincha/Kabbalas Shabbos: 6:20 pm & 7:45 pm

Shacharis: 8:45 am

Pirkei Avos Shiur: CANCELLED (will resume Rosh Chodesh Elul)

Mincha/**SEUDAS SHLISHIS: 7:30 pm**

Maariv/Motzei Shabbos: 8:51 pm

Motzei Shabbos Rabbeinu Tam: 9:13 pm

Sunday Shacharis: 8:00 am

Parshas Eikev

Adapted from Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein [www.torah.org]

Manna, Updated [1]

You will eat, and you will be satisfied, and you will bless Hashem your G-d

If we had to guess, we would have predicted that the Torah would ask us to thank Hashem after a meal. We are so comfortable with the practice of making berachos before eating, that we don't even realize the difficulty and awkwardness of a commandment to "bless" Hashem, as if we were the ones offering Him something!

Rewind a few pesukim, and we can begin to find a solution to the problem. The Torah spoke of the manner in which HKBH sustained us in the wilderness, feeding us the man, and providing for our other needs. It then transitions us to life in the Land of Israel, where He would insure an abundance of food, albeit of a less overtly miraculous variety. The essential point here is that the two ways in which Hashem sustains us are virtually identical; they are two sides of the same coin. For forty years, Bnei Yisrael saw Providence extended to each and every one of them, miraculously and individually. Every morsel of food they ate was a gift from Heaven, addressed to each person, and inaccessible through any kind of human activity alone. For forty years, they learned about Hashem's care and concern, internalizing a lesson they would need to recall for the rest of history: each measure of bread we eat, although grown, ground and baked by Man, is no different from a portion of man.

According to our mesorah, the antecedent of the command to bless Hashem is the bread mentioned in the pasuk that precedes ours. The mitzvah of birkas ha-mazon, therefore, is limited to meals that include bread. This is counterintuitive to

many people, who find it easier to thank G-d for receiving something special and out of the ordinary, than for the bread that enables our very existence. We cannot live, they argue, without subsistence nutrition. As long as we are alive, He owes us the basic enablers of life. Our effusive praise in birkas ha-mazon should be occasioned by gifts without which we could survive. Those are the blessings that show His Providence. Halacha, however, dictates a very different mindset. We "bentsch" Hashem precisely when we understand that everything comes from Him, that we are entirely powerless to provide ourselves with our most basic needs like bread, and that existence itself is His gift of love for us.

If every bite of bread is like the man, and if it symbolizes existence itself, then birkas ha-mazon is not a simple "thank you," but a reorientation of our lives and our selves towards His service. When we stand in profound realization of our absolute dependence upon Him – no different, really, from the unnatural way our forebears were sustained by Him in the wilderness – and our indebtedness towards Him, we are able to dedicate ourselves completely to His mission and expectations of us. In that dedication we find the "blessing," as it were, of Hashem: it is the pledge to work towards the fulfillment of His Will that is the blessing.

We can now more readily understand the architecture of birkas ha-mazon. It is not about food, but about existence – and Jewish existence is nuanced and complex. Thus, we find within it four berachos, not one.

We begin with the first, the most obvious. We acknowledge that what we ate is a Providential gift of His Goodness. Depending on who we are, we will receive it, "B'Chein, B'Chesed, Brachamim", – either through His grace, His love, or, when

all other arguments in our favor fail, through His compassion. Through one of these approaches, our physical existence is continued and vouchsafed.

It is impossible to separate our individual existence from our place within the Jewish people, and its role in furthering His plan for the world. In the second berachah, we acknowledge the special relationship with Him that supports this role. Nothing indicates the role of the Jewish people as much as the Land of Israel, whose fortunes mirror the spiritual accomplishment of its people. When our actions accord with our mission, we dwell on that land in security. When we fail, we are exiled from it, and it remains desolate.

The specialness of the Land presupposes the Bris Avraham, in which each Jewish male pledges his entire body to the service of Hashem. That service, in turn, is a fulfillment of the dictates of the Torah. Thus, the three elements of the second berachah – Land, bris, and Torah – form a relational set that moves us from the fact of our existence to its goal.

In the third berachah the purpose-driven national existence of our people moves from the theoretical to its manifestation. The Jewish national goals are best expressed through the rich symbolism structured into the Torah's sanctuary in Yerushalayim. Dovid ha-Melech's reign turned Torah goals into reality like no other period; the dynasty he founded expresses the idea of continuity to the rule of Torah law. The third berachah by right ought to be a prayer for the continuity of mikdosh and malchus. With the destruction of the Temple, however, it took a new form – a prayer for the restoration of the old Yerushalayim.

The ill-fated revolt against Rome decades after the churban left in shambles Jewish hopes for rebuilding Yerushalayim through their own devices and efforts. When the Romans consented to allow the dead of Betar to be buried after many years, Chazal saw fit to add a fourth berachah to the three required by Torah law. It would fix in our minds the memory of Betar, and the inexplicable change of heart of the Roman authorities. We

are expected to learn though it that Hashem's closeness to us in galus would continue to show itself according to His timetable, and that we were to turn to Him to seek an end to galus, but not to our own plots and plans.

In the hands of Chazal, birkas ha-mazon became the raw material out of which they would construct the entire institution of berachos. Through them, we would learn to look beyond what we were about to enjoy, and focus upon the One Who gives us that enjoyment. Chazal would ordain for us a set of berachos not only after eating, but before benefiting from many earthly pleasures. Through these berachos, we hope to become worthy of those pleasures, and to pledge to turn them into greater vigor and energy in turning His Will into reality.

A different berachah – the one recited before Torah study – may also be required by Torah law. It, too, would become a model – in this case, for berachos before mitzvos. While berachos before eating would ready us for proper consumption, this second set of berachos would orient our mitzvah performance towards its proper goal. We emphasize "Asher Kidshanu Bmitzvosav" – we seek nothing less than holiness when we happily respond to His commands.

Between the berachos before enjoying physical pleasures, and those before performance of mitzvos, Chazal punctuate our day with numerous statements and restatements of what is really the core of our fixed tefillah-periods: our dedication to turning our lives and everything in them towards His service. Twice a day in the beis ha-mikdosh, we offered the korban olah on behalf of the entire nation, stating our determined struggle to elevate our lives ever higher towards its lofty goal. In the absence of our Temple, that articulation moves to a different place – to the berachos we recite throughout the day.

Good Shabbos

Mazal Tov to the Neger family on the recent engagement of Yehuda to Leah Baker.

This week's kiddush is sponsored by Shelley & Laurel Salcman.

The kids' program will take place downstairs beginning at 9:30 am.

**The guest speaker for Seudas Shlishis is Mr. Avraham Rzepkowitz.
Seudas Shlishis is sponsored by the shul.**

The cholim list is being updated for Chodesh Elul. If you would like to submit a name to the cholim list please email gabbai@agudahsouth.com or contact one of the gabbaim.

Shacharis	<u>Weekday Schedule</u>	Mincha
Sunday: 8:00 am		7:40 pm
Monday & Thursday: 7:00 am & 7:55 am		Maariv
Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday: 7:00 am & 8:00 am		8:00 pm
	Daf Yomi with Rabbi Kaufman: 8:00 am (Shabbos), 7:15 am (Sun), 7:40 am (Mon-Fri)	
	Amud Yomi with Rabbi Rafi Greenspan: 7:20 am (Mon-Fri)	

To sponsor Kiddush/Seudas Shlishis contact Baruch Klein (kiddush@agudahsouth.com.)
All those wish to submit names to the cholim list can email gabbai@agudahsouth.com or contact one the gabbaim.
Have a Simcha to announce? Email announcements to mailings@agudahsouth.com.
To subscribe or unsubscribe to the email bulletin please email mailings@agudahsouth.com.