



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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Parashat Ekev

The Power and Segula of a Bracha

The *parasha* begins, "Ve'haya **ekev** tishma'un eis ha'mishpatim ...," And if you will hearken to the statutes..." Rashi comments that the word *ekev*, which literally means "heel," comes to hint to those mitzvot that man tramples upon with his heel; mitzvot that man considers to be "minor." The *pasuk* teaches us that man incurs blessing because of observing these mitzvot. It is similarly stated in the Midrash that Avraham received the *berachot* because (*Bereishit* 26:5) "*Ekev asher shama Avraham be'koli*, because Avraham hearkened to My voice." The fact that the *pasuk* uses the word *ekev* teaches that Avraham received the blessings because he observed even the mitzvot that people trample upon with their heels.

Questions:

- 1- How did our Sages know that Hashem's promise is dependent on *mitzvot* that people normally trample upon?
- 2- What is considered a mitzva that people trample upon?

The Way of the World

If we think about our lives, we will find that although we make many *berachot* every day, we do not properly appreciate them and treat them with the respect they deserve. A person makes approximately 100 *berachot* every day, 3000 *berachot* a month, and 36,000 *berachot* a year. In the course of 70 years, a person will make close to 2.5 million *berachot*! And how do most people approach all of these *berachot*? Most people swallow the food right away, and barely knows that he even made a *beracha* at all. There is no need to mention that most people do not make great efforts and invest time into making *berachot* with great concentration and proper intent. And so a person goes through his life and makes millions of *berachot* but at the end finds that very few of his *berachot* were said with *kavana* (proper concentration and intent). If a person would only know the power and *segulot* of a *beracha*, there is no doubt that his *berachot* would be completely different. Surely, *berachot* are one of the mitzvot that people trample upon.

An allusion from the *parasha* that we need to have *kavana* when we say the name of Hashem

The commentators say that the word "*ekev*" is unnecessary, and the Torah could have simply written, "*ve'haya im tishma'un*." Our Sages understood that the extra word "*ekev*" (heel) is coming to teach us that the guarantee of success mentioned in the *parasha* is dependent upon *mitzvot* that a person usually tramples with his feet. Such sins, although each one may be considered relatively small, when repeated numerous times, they add up. This is similar to a thin string which in and of itself is insignificant, but when combined and interwoven with many other strings becomes a strong thick cord. In my opinion, there is a specific hint in the *parasha* to *berachot* and being careful when saying the name of Hashem: the first word of the *parasha* "*vehaya*," has the same letters as the Name of Hashem. Therefore, "*Vehaya ekev*," hints that if we say the name of Hashem with proper *kavana* in our *berachot* and do not trample upon this mitzva as if so often the case, we will merit great success.

The words of the *Zohar* regarding one who has *kavana* when reciting *berachot*



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I found that the *Zohar* indicates this idea (*Raya Mehemna* 3:270b), "*Vehaya ekev tishmaun ...*," this refers to one who makes a *beracha* to Hashem on everything that he eats and drinks and on all the pleasure he has from this world. But if one does not make a *beracha*, he is called a thief who has stolen from Hashem, as it states in *Mishlei* 28, 'You have stolen from your father and mother...' People must know the secret of *berachot*, that one who makes a *beracha* to Hashem, he himself will be blessed. The *beracha* that he makes precedes him in this world and goes up to the heavens. It is announced in the seven heavens, 'Here is a gift for the King that so and so has sent...' *Rashbi* teaches us that somebody that does not make a *beracha* is considered a thief. On the other hand, somebody who makes a *beracha* with *kavana*, he will be blessed, and in Heaven they bring his *beracha* and announce his gift to all. It would seem to be that since the *Zohar* introduces its discussion about the importance of *berachot* with the opening line of this week's *parasha*, it agrees with our explanation that *berachot* are the things that people trample upon. Therefore blessing for success in this week's *parasha* is dependent upon making proper *berachot*.

The primary way of attaining Divine inspiration is dependent upon making *berachot* with *kavana*

Rav Chaim Vital writes in the *Shaar Ruach Hakodesh* (8b), "My master, my teacher [the Arizal], has told me that the primary way a person reaches Divine inspiration is through the *kavana* he has and the care he takes in making *berachot* when he derives pleasure from this world. For this is the way that one negates the power of the impure forces that are attached to all physical food. These forces cling to the person who eats the food. But through proper *berachot* these forces are removed, a person is purified by eating, and thereby becomes ready to accept holiness. He [the Arizal] warned me very much about this matter."

The words of the *Ben Ish Chai* – through proper *berachot* we fix the souls that are locked inside of food

Our master, the *Ben Ish Chai* writes (*Ben Ish Chai* 3, *Teshuva* 1) that a person must be careful that his prayers and *berachot* should be said with great *kavana*. We are required to make *berachot* on all food, as every food has a holy spark mixed in with it. Through the *beracha*, we elevate this holy spark. Therefore, anyone who does not make a *beracha* is considered as if he has stolen from Hashem, because this holy spark has not received its proper rectification. A person must make his *beracha* with *kavana* so that it will have the power to take out this spark, fix it, and raise it to its proper level. This is also the basis of the explanation that the commentators give for the passage in *Tehillim* 117, "They are hungry and they are thirsty; their souls are wrapped up." The intent of the passage is that Hashem created people to be hungry and thirsty so that they should be able to elevate the holy sparks that are contained in the food. This also seems to be the explanation of why a *nazir*, who prohibits himself from drinking wine, is considered to have been "*chata al ha'nefesh*." *Nefesh* means "soul," and this alludes to the fact that since a *nazir* cannot drink wine, he cannot fix the holy sparks inside it.

The power of *Asher Yatzar* and *Borei Nefashot*

A lady who is very far from Judaism was on a bus returning from the *Kotel*. A terrorist detonated a bomb on the bus, killing and injuring many people. This lady was one of the people hurt by the bomb, and by the time she got to the hospital, she was considered clinically dead. While she was clinically dead, the Belzer Rebbe came to her and told her that there are two *berachot* that people are negligent about - *Borei Nefashot Rabot* and *Asher*



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Yatzar. These two *berachot* parallel the creation of the body and the creation of the soul. The Rebbe informed her that if she takes upon herself to make these *berachot* with proper intent, she will see salvations. After he finished speaking, she woke up and returned to life. However, her situation was still critical, and she was scheduled to undergo a serious operation. The night before the surgery, she took upon herself to say these two *berachot* with proper intent. The next day, during the examination before the surgery, a miracle occurred. After examining the X-Rays, the surgeon walked out and said, "I don't know who said you need surgery. With the help of Hashem, you will recover without any surgery." And so it was.

How the Slonimer Rebbe was saved by a *beracha* of *She'hakol*

During the First World War, enemy soldiers entered Slonim and soon were in the Slonimer Rebbe's house. They gathered up the Rebbe and his family and lined them up against a wall, ready to shoot them. Before they shot them, they granted the Rebbe a final request. The Rebbe asked his son to bring him a cup of water. The Rebbe took the cup and slowly began to make the *beracha* of *She'hakol*. Before he had finished the *beracha*, a loud voice was heard from the street announcing that all the soldiers should gather outside immediately. The soldiers quickly ran out, and the Rebbe and his family were saved in the merit of carefully reciting the *She'hakol beracha*.

How a tank unit was saved during the Yom Kippur War in the merit of *She'hakol Neheya Be'Dvaro*

A recent returnee to Judaism wanted to tell his friends about what he had found. He invited a group of them to his house one evening and served them watermelon. The group wanted to show their respect for their host and make a *beracha* on the watermelon. Not knowing very much *halacha*, a lively discussion broke out as to what *beracha* one makes on a watermelon. The host settled the issue by asserting that the *beracha* for watermelon is *Borei Pri Ha'adama* (the Creator of the Fruit of the Earth). However, one member of the group remained unconvinced. He confidently asserted that *She'hakol* was the most powerful *beracha* in existence, and therefore it should be recited. He knew the power of this blessing from personal experience: He was part of a tank unit during the Yom Kippur war. His unit was assigned a mission in the Sinai Desert. The mission seemed easy, but Hashem had declared otherwise. They were met by an opposing tank unit from Egypt, whose deadly aim proceeded to knock out one Israeli tank after another. Sitting in their tank, they were all ready to despair, and the commander asked if any of them knew any prayers; maybe if they prayed to Hashem, He would save them. No one knew a single prayer except one hesitant soldier, who said he knew a *beracha*, but he was not sure that it was appropriate for them. The commander told him to teach it to them, and he dutifully taught them the *beracha* of *Shehakol Neheya Be'Dvaro*. Before they fired their shot against the Egyptian tanks, they all screamed out the *beracha* in unison. To their surprise, they scored a direct hit on the tank's fuel storage area and completely destroyed an Egyptian tank. They proceeded to say the *beracha* together before every shot and knocked out one Egyptian tank after another until they successfully completed their mission.

Words of Mussar

We have learned how in man's hand is an easy but awesome *segula* to protect and save him from every harsh decree. It can also cure him from every illness and merit him successful children. This is as the Stepler (R' Yaakov Yisrael Kanievky zt"l) wrote in his letter to mothers, that when a mother recites each *bracha* slowly and calmly,



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the children have better *middot* and less *chutzpa*. When she recites a *beracha* out loud, it is more effective than any educational tape in the world. For every *beracha* has a tremendous effect in Heaven. Furthermore, every *beracha* with *kavana* can heal and prevent any illness, Heaven forbid. But not only that, rather, it is also a known *segula* for blessing in one's livelihood, as the *pasuk* states (*Mishlei* 19:22), "The blessing of Hashem makes one wealthy." Therefore one should take to heart to have *kavana* for at least these three *berachot*: 1) *Asher Yatzar* – physical wellbeing; 2) *Borei Nefashot* – wellbeing of the soul; *She'hakol* – the *beracha* which exempts one from all other *berachot* over food and heals all illnesses. By doing so, we will merit all of the bounty and blessings for good health and good fortune. *Amen ve'amen*.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rav Mordechai Malka