

# United We Stand

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Parshas Eikev

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## The Parsha's Paths

*You will eat and you will be satisfied, and you will bless H' your G-d for the good land which He gave you (8:10).*

The phrase *You will eat and you will be satisfied* appears twice in this week's Parsha; once in the verse cited above and the second time in the passage of *Vehaya Im Shamo'a*, which we recite every day in *Shema*: *If, then, you listen to the commandments which I command you today, to love H' your G-d and to serve Him with all your hearts and all your souls, I will grant the rain for your land in season...I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle - and you will eat and you will be satisfied (11:13-15).* What's the connection between these verses?

Chazal learn from our verse that there is a Biblical commandment to say *Birkas HaMazon* upon eating to satiation. However, the Rabbis homilectically interpreted this verse to extend the obligation to *bentch* even on one who eats an olive's volume of bread. The Gemara (*Berachos* 20b) recounts the following episode: *Rav Avira taught, sometimes he said it in the name of Rabbi Ami, and sometimes in the name of Rabbi Asi: The ministering angels said before G-d, "Master of the Universe, in Your Torah it is written: (The great, mighty, and awesome G-d) who favors no one and takes no bribe (Devarim 10:17), yet You show favor to Israel, as it's written: G-d shall show favor to you (Bamidbar 6:26)." He replied to them, "And how can I not show favor to Israel, as I wrote for them in the Torah: 'And you shall eat and you shall be satisfied, and bless H' your G-d,' (meaning there's no obligation to bless G-d on a Biblical level unless one is satiated), yet they are exacting with themselves (to bentch on) as much as an olive-bulk or an egg-bulk."*

It's evident from this story that G-d shows the Jewish people favor above and beyond what we deserve because we *bentch* on even an olive-bulk, and not just when we're full. Many commentators wonder what's special about this rule as opposed to other *mitzvos dirabanan*. Why is it specifically *bentching* on a

*kezayis* that causes us to merit Divine favor and not anything else?

Perhaps the answer lies in an idea alluded to by a Rabeinu Bachya on a pasuk later in this week's Parsha. The pasuk reads as follows: *Take care lest your hearts be lured away to serve other gods...and G-d's anger will flare up against you, and He will shut up the heavens and there will be no rain, and the ground will not yield its produce (11:16-17).*

Rabeinu Bachya explains that G-d specifically gave us a land that, unlike other lands like Egypt, is constantly dependent on rain so that our eyes will always be turned to G-d for the "Key of Rain" that is in His hand. This helps us constantly develop and maintain our sense of dependence on G-d.

What is this "Key of Rain"? The Gemara (*Taanis* 2a) relates the following: *Rabbi Yochanan said, "There are three keys in the hand of G-d which are not transmitted to an intermediary, and they are the Key of Rain, the Key of Life (birth), and the Key of the Resurrection of the dead..." In the West (Eretz Yisrael), they say: Also the Key of Livelihood...And what is the reason that Rabbi Yochanan did not consider this? (He could have) said to you: Rain is the same as livelihood.*

Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen points out that the idea of the three keys seems to connect to the idea in *Moed Katan* (28a): *Rava said: Life, children, and sustenance do not depend on one's merit, but rather on their mazal.* Rabbi Tzadok understands these to be life in the World to Come (resurrection of the dead), birth, and rain/sustenance, corresponding to the three keys. He explains that the idea of "merit" is the reward for performing a *mitzvah*. Rabbi Tzadok argues that in the metaphysical world of cause-and-effect, every *mitzvah* activates angels who bring blessings into the world. However, these acts cannot affect the most fundamental aspects of life - birth, rebirth, and sustenance. To affect one's fate in these areas, one must connect to G-d on a much deeper level.

Perhaps we can understand this idea as follows: True connection to G-d comes from humility, recognizing that even one's basic existence depends on G-d. When one submits all credit for one's life completely to G-d, he can attach himself to G-d's will

regarding his life and change his fate even on this fundamental level. This goes beyond ordinary "merit" and also explains why the fundamentals of life are considered G-d's "keys" - only through submitting and thereby attaching one's essence to G-d can one have any influence over these areas.

Now we can appreciate the unique nature of *bentching* and why taking upon ourselves to *bentch* even when we're not satisfied merits G-d's favor. It's one level to have gratitude when one has a lot and is satiated, but to rejoice over whatever one has, even if it's just enough to survive, shows a much deeper level of submission before G-d. This requires one to admit that not only the extras in his life but even the "bread and butter" of his existence is from G-d as well. Thus, our *bentching*, even over a *kezayis*, represents the submission of the essence of our souls before G-d, and the inevitable consequence of such a profound connection is that G-d shows us additional favor.

This Friday, I had the great *zechus* of making a bris for my son, Yechiel Michel, whose namesake, Rabbi Dr. Mitchell Orlian zt"l, epitomized this idea. Besides for being an extraordinary Talmid Chacham and Tanach scholar and renowned for his piety and meticulousness about *minyan*, he was known for his profound humility, kindness, and *simchas hachaim*, all rooted in a deep appreciation of all that H' had bestowed on him. Through this recognition of G-d he could proudly and strongly proclaim "*Yechi-Kel!*" and "*Mi-cha-Kel!*" May our son continue to perpetuate his tremendous legacy, and may this occasion serve as a source of inspiration for all of us to deepen our gratitude to G-d for our continued livelihood and existence.

## Pirkei Avos Paths

*Revised from 5780.*

*Ben Azzai said: Be quick in performing a minor mitzvah as in the case of a major one and flee from transgression; For one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah, and transgression leads to another transgression; For the reward for performing a mitzvah is another mitzvah and the reward for committing a transgression is a transgression. (4:2)*

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Moshe exhorts the people, "*eikev you will obey these rules... and H' your G-d will guard for you the covenant...*" The meaning of the word *eikev* is not entirely clear. While on a simple level, the *pasuk* simply means to say "*if you will obey*", the usage of the word *eikev* seems strange and superfluous. Rashi explains that *eikev*

means ankle, and it refers to the *mitzvos* which people typically trample on, i.e., they don't care about so much. On the other hand, Rambam says *eikev* means immediately, meaning we must run to take advantage of any mitzvah opportunity that presents itself without hesitation.

Based on this *Mishnah* in Pirkei Avos, my father suggested that Rashi and Rambam ultimately allude to the same idea. Moshe is exhorting us to have alacrity in every aspect of our Torah observance. Inevitably, we find that we have a lot of room for improvement in many areas. Whether it's not doing everything we should or doing things we shouldn't, we end up trampling certain mitzvos. The key to overcoming this tendency is to act with the same attitude towards all mitzvos, big and small, by running immediately to follow them. Our mindset follows our actions. The more we run to do a "light" commandment just as we would a "heavy" one, the more we appreciate the importance of every mitzvah and the more we will be able to transform our mindset so that one mitzvah leads to another and not, *chos visholom*, the reverse. Through the power of habit and with G-d's help, we can, before long, completely shift directions: For the reward for performing a mitzvah is another mitzvah, and the reward for committing a transgression is a transgression.

## Goal of the week

If you hear someone c"v saying something not nice about another Jew or Jewish community, speak up. If this may be counterproductive, at least walk away and show your disapproval. Even valid criticism may be *lashon hara* if it's not said for a clearly constructive purpose, and even then, it should be coming from a place of genuine love and concern.

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This week's bulletin is dedicated for a Refuah Sheleima for Shaindel Temma bas Rochel Zlotta, Masha Sarah bas Tzivia Leah, Marina bas Frieda, and Gavriel Margoliot Ben Malka. Please have them in mind in your Tefillos. [Have A Great Shabbos!](#)

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