If you listen to the relatively light commandments, that a person tramples with his heels (בְּפַסַּנֶּה) — that is, does not take seriously enough then Hashem will keep his promise to you. -- Rashi

The Torah describes the plentiful blessings that are promised for proper adherence to the mitzvos. Although the rule is “reward for mitzvos is not given in this world” (Chullin 142a), nevertheless, the effort and toil which a person exerts in pursuit of a mitzvah is rewarded even in this world. If a person has to travel far out of his way in order to fulfill a mitzvah, or if he must work hard for the sake of a mitzvah, it is not the same as if the mitzvah would have been readily and easily accessible.

Sefer Ksav Sofer notes that at the end of last week’s parasha, the verse (7:11) states “And it will be because of your listening to these ordinances, and your observing them and performing them, then God, your Lord, will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers.” Devarim 7:12

The effort and toil which a person exerts in pursuit of a mitzvah is rewarded even in this world.

The Keys to Success

Storno notes that generally, success is perceived in terms of three areas of accomplishment. These are a long and healthy life, children, and financial security. In our parasha, Moshe addressed the people and explained to them that through Torah study and observance a person would be able to succeed in these specific areas.

“So that you may live.” Moshe explained that Hashem commanded us to fulfill the mitzvos, and it is therefore through His will that we achieve life. Every moment of our existence is a gift from Him.

“And you will increase.” This is the promise that we will merit to have children. “And you will come and take possession of the land” — the possession of the land will enable you to be blessed with great material resources.
SAYING A BERACHAH BEFORE AND AFTER

Most berachos are of rabbinical origin. However, there are two exceptions to this rule—two berachos that are derived directly from the Torah itself. The first is Birkas HaMazon, recited after meals. The second (according to many authorities) is the berachah said before learning Torah. The obligation to bless Hashem after eating bread is stated explicitly in our verse: When you eat and are satisfied, you must bless God your Lord. Chazal derived the berachah recited before studying Torah from the verse (Devarim 32:3): “When I proclaim God’s name [or when I read God’s teaching], praise our God for His greatness.”

Sefer Ein Ayah points out that these two berachos differ not only in the source for our feelings of gratitude—one is for physical nourishment, the other for spiritual sustenance— but also in when they are said. Why is Birkas HaMazon recited after the meal, while the blessing for Torah study is recited before studying?

We derive two benefits from food. The first is our enjoyment from the act of eating, especially if the food is tasty. This is a fleeting pleasure, but it nonetheless deserves to be acknowledged. The primary benefit from eating, however, is the sustenance it gives our bodies, enabling us to continue living. This primary benefit reflects the nutritional value of the food, regardless of its taste.

Our recognition of the principal benefit of eating should take place after the meal, when the body digests and absorbs the food. Since Birkas HaMazon expresses our gratitude for physical sustenance, its logical place is at the end of the meal. Thus one may recite Birkas HaMazon as long as the food is not totally digested and one does not feel hungry again.

Incidentally, there are also berachos that are recited before eating. These berachos are in recognition of our pleasure in the act of eating itself. We acknowledge this secondary benefit of eating with rabbinically-ordained berachos.

Torah study also provides us with two benefits. The first is the knowledge acquired in practical areas of halachah, enabling us to live our lives according to the Torah’s wisdom. The second benefit lies in the very act of learning Torah. Torah study in and of itself is a tremendous gift, even if it does not provide any practical applications. When we learn Torah, the soul is elevated as our minds absorb the sublime word of Hashem.

Which benefit is greater? Chazal taught that the unique sanctity of the Torah itself is higher than all deeds that come from its study. “One who studies Torah for its own sake is raised and uplifted above all actions.” (Perek Kinyan Torah, 1) The benefit of practical knowledge is important, but is only a secondary gain. Therefore, we recite the berachah over Torah before studying. If the blessing was meant to acknowledge the practical benefit of how to perform mitzvos, then it would be said afterwards, since this halachic knowledge is gained as a result of Torah study. But the berachah over Torah refers to the principal gift of Torah study. When we bless Hashem before studying, we acknowledge the spiritual elevation that we enjoy in the very act of contemplating Hashem’s Torah.

Now we can understand why the source in the Torah for this berachah reads: “And you will eat and you will be satisfied and you will bless God, your Lord, for the good land that He gave you.” Devarim 8:10

“...when you eat and are satisfied, you must bless God your Lord.”

Devarim 10:12

And now, Yisrael, what does God, your Lord, ask of you but to fear God, your Lord.”

Devarim 10:12

The Gemara (Berachos 33b) states that everything is in the hands of Heaven except for fear of Heaven. We see this in our verse.

There is a story of a former student of the Beis HaLevi who came to visit his rebbe and told him that he had recently married and had opened a store in the city of Minsk. The Beis HaLevi proceeded to ask him what he was doing in Minsk. The student repeated that he had opened a store and was doing well financially. The Beis HaLevi asked him the same question a second and a third time, and received the same answer each time from his former student. The student was taken aback, thinking that perhaps his rebbe had not heard his answer. The Beis HaLevi, seeing his student’s surprise, asked him: “Why do you insist on answering the question that I did not ask and not answering the question that I asked three times? We know that all of a person’s success in material things comes from Above. If I were asking you about your financial success I would have phrased the question in a
different way. I would have said, ‘What is Hashem doing to you?’, rather than ‘What are you doing?’ When I ask ‘What are you doing?’, I want to know about those things that depend upon your actions. I want to know about your spiritual growth. I want to know if you are still growing in Torah learning and in fear of Heaven - קָדוֹשׁ בְּעֵרוּתָיו - since you left the yeshiva. Everything else is in the hands of Heaven. Only these things depend upon you.’

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God is called “gracious”; so too should you be gracious. God is called “merciful”; so too should you be merciful. God is called “holy”; so too should you be holy. -- Rambam (Hilchos De’os 1:6)

One of the attributes of God is that He is “a jealous God” (see Shemos 20:5). Yet, this trait is not among those which we are urged to strive to develop. We would have expected to find a guideline reflecting this virtue among the others: “Just as He is jealous, so shall you be jealous.”

**Ray Itzele of Volozhin** points out that in describing the attribute of jealousy, the Mechilta writes, “Said the Holy One, blessed be He, ‘I am in control of this attribute, and it does not rule over Me.’” The Midrash (Shochar Tov, on Tehillim 94:1) also writes: “A man, who is of flesh and blood, is consumed by jealousy. But God conquers jealousy.” Accordingly, man cannot emulate this characteristic of God. We cannot cling to this virtue, because for us it would only be a vice. It is only in reference to the other attributes of God that we are expected to imitate the conduct of God, for in those areas we can be successful and in control.

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WE MUST BEGIN TO PROCESS

Our verse suggests that circumcising one’s heart is the responsibility of each person. Yet, another verse seems to directly place the onus of this task upon Hashem, as we find (Devarim 30:6): “God will remove the barriers from your hearts.” What is the resolution to this puzzling situation?

**Rabbi Shmuel Boruch Eliezrov** explains that the removal of the covering of the heart is, in fact, in the hands of man himself. However, the circumcision of the heart itself is in the hands of Hashem, as the verse specifically states, “God will circumcise the heart.” The verse in Yechezkel (36:26) also describes the process more clearly: “I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” This insight may now help us understand what Hashem says (Shir HaShirim Rabba 5:3): “Open for Me an opening for teshuva the size of a pin, and I will open it for you as big as the opening of a large hallway.” Our responsibility is to begin the removal of the cover which envelops the heart. Once we do our job, we are assured that the goal of total teshuva will be completed, as Hashem will assist by circumcision the heart itself, and its tendency to resist and remain selfish and unwilling to change.

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TWO DEGREES OF INTENT

There are two degrees of intent involved in evaluating the nature of prayer. One is that a person should follow along and understand the translation and meaning of the words that he pronounces. Another is that a person must envision himself as standing before Hashem, and thus fully comprehend the import of his position. As Rambam writes: “One must clear his thoughts from all distractions, as he must view himself as standing before the Shechina.”

**HaRav Chaim MiBrisk** explains that this understanding helps us resolve what would otherwise seem to be an inconsistency in the ruling of Rambam. In Hilchos Tefilah (Ch. 4), he rules that having proper intent is critical during the entire reciting of the Amidah. If one does not maintain this mindset, he has not fulfilled his obligation. Yet, in Chapter 10, Rambam writes that one must concentrate at least during the first blessing. If one has done so, he has satisfied his obligation. The resolution of these comments is that one must ideally focus his mind on both aspects of intent throughout the entire tefila. However, if one followed the meaning of the words at least during the first blessing (Avos), but then did not heed or understand what he was reciting, this is adequate. However, one must realize that he is standing before Hashem in prayer throughout the entire Amidah.

If one followed the meaning of the words at least during the first blessing, this is adequate.

This perception is the very
essence of what the Amidah drama is all about, and without it, the person cannot be considered as having stood before Hashem in silent devotion. This would be mere “lip-service” and nothing more, and the Amidah would not be valid.

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

עַלְצָה הָאָדָם לְשָׁדַיָּהוּ עַל הַשָּׂדֶה וּלְשָׂדֶה תַּעֲשֶׂה בְּתֵחֶרֶת.

The Gemara (Brachos 8a) tells us the following story. The talmidim from Bavel told Rabbi Yochanan that there were old people in Bavel. He was puzzled and responded that our verse seems to grant such a reward (of length of days) only in Eretz Yisrael, implying that outside of Eretz Yisrael it would not happen. The talmidim from Bavel responded, saying that these same elderly people awaken early and linger late in order to attend beis hakenesses. Rabbi Yochanan said that this is what helps them. The Gemara is puzzling, as Rabbi Yochanan’s primary question based on the verse had never been dealt with.

Kli Yakar refers to Chazal, who have told us (Megillah 29a) that “in the future, the batei kenesses and batei midrash outside of Eretz Yisrael will be reestablished in Eretz Yisrael”. This means that the actual structure and ground will be relocated. Based on this, we now understand that the location of a shul or beis midrash is actually part of Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, the berachah of longevity is unique to Eretz Yisrael, just as Rabbi Yochanan had pointed out from the verse, but the batei kenesses and batei midrash carry this berachah as being part of Eretz Yisrael in chutz la’Aretz.

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Halachic Corner

In Orchos Chaim, the Rosh writes: “Do not be hasty in your actions.” Tranquility is an offshoot of faith. Whoever believes in Hashem and His Oneness, and believes that all is directed from Above, will have a calm soul, for his soul is supported by and trusts in the Creator in all that he does. The man who lacks faith, however, and assumes that matters depend on his own power and on his own efforts, will tend to act with haste and turbulence. He imagines that if he chases after his heart’s desire, he will catch it. He is disturbed by others; they seem to prevent him from attaining his goals.

The more a person tends toward being tranquil, the more he is prepared to achieve eternal good. Tranquility is an end in and of itself, aside from being a means to achieve other virtues. It is a world in itself—a world of pleasure, wholeness, and eternal life. Rashness and haste are its opposite. Without tranquility, we lack the foundation to build man. The Alter of Kelm would often say that when one acts in a confused and hasty manner, he rustles the “graveyard leaves”, for when one is in a rush, his heart turns aside as if he is dead.

Halachic Corner is dedicated by Benyomin Freeman in memory of his father Gedalia Freeman, z”l. May his memory be for a blessing.

Questions for Thought and Study

1. Which words in Pasuk 7:14 indicating that Bnei Yisrael would be “blessed more than any other nations” ( כי שמעתי כן קריינש קמיס) show us that the blessing is due to the Torah?
   See Ba’al HaTurim 7:14
2. How were the clothing and shoes that Bnei Yisrael had in the wilderness supernatural?
   See Rashi and Ibn Ezra to 8:4
3. Which two delicacies that were promised to Bnei Yisrael did they not have in Egypt?
   See Meshech Chochmah 8:8
4. What important points did Moshe want to transmit to Bnei Yisrael by introducing Pasuk 9:1 with the statement שמע ישראל “(hear, Israel)”?
   See Ohr HaChaim 9:1
5. What alternate name do Bnei Yisrael have that indicates that they did not intermarry while in Egypt?
   See Ba’al HaTurim 10:22
6. How does one “cleave” to Hashem, as indicated by the words כף קהל in Pasuk 11:22?
   See Ibn Ezra and Ramban to 11:22

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*By Gedalia Freeman, z”l - Hebrew Theological College wishing mazal tov to HTC Board of Regents member Shael Bellows and his wife Joan on the engagement of their granddaughter Emma Bellows to Noah Best; and extending heartfelt condolences to HTC Board of Regents member Arnold Gassel on the loss of his brother, Seymour Gassel, z”l.
• Hebrew Theological College wishes mezal tov to Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand upon the publishing of “Birkas Moadecha - A Yom Tov Digest” published by Feldheim. We wish Rabbi Rand a bikra hatzlacha and “ברכה על雷达ך מיום טוב וברוכה ברכה על לך” with this latest sefer, a treasure of fascinating divrei Torah for the holidays of the Jewish calendar year. Please contact Rabbi Rand at btrand@gmail.com to obtain a copy. Also available in your local Hebrew book store.

• Hebrew Theological College’s Gourmet Torah at Shallotts Bistro will take place this Thursday, August 29, 12:35-1:15. Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand will speak on “Moshe’s Message For Us: A Leader’s Farewell”. Complimentary appetizers as well as a discounted menu available for shiur participants. Men & women invited to attend. For more info: Rabbi Joshua Zissook at 847-982-2500 or zissook@htc.edu.

• Attention recent High School & Seminary graduates: Get an outstanding education with expert faculty & interaction with friends for a year in an environment of spiritual growth. Get credits for your classes that are accepted at prestigious schools across the country. Get a real degree, real fast, that is accepted by top tier employers. Gain knowledge you will use for life. Blitstein Institute for Women: It’s the Real Thing. Fall semester begins Sept. 3. Call Mrs. Mann for an appointment with Dr. Tessler: 773-973-0241.

• Blitstein Institute presents Rabbi Moshe Francis וֹאָשָׁר, who will be speaking at The Edith Tessler Rosh Chodesh Project for Women, “Chodesh Elul: The Year in Review”, Thursday, August 29th, at 1:30 PM, at Shallotts Bistro, 7016 Carpenter Road, Skokie, IL. This stimulating and thought-provoking lecture is provided to women of the community, free to women. Coffee, Tea and Treats will be served. Come before the lecture and receive 10% off your lunch order.

• Are you downtown? Got 5, 15, 30 or 45 minutes? Learn and daven at M. Geller, Ltd, 29 E. Madison, Ste. 1805. 1:05 PM, 30 minute shiur; 1:35 Mincha; 1:47, 5 minute dvar Torah. Shiurim led by: Monday- TBD; Tuesday- Rabbi Simkovich; Wednesday- Veitzener Cheder- Rabbi Don Dubovich; Thursday- Chabad- Rabbi Yoichanan Posner. Info: 312-984-1041.

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• Guess who’s coming back to town? The one and only original Uncle Moishy at the 6th annual “Taste of Kosher” event at your Jewel-Osco on Howard St.! Dozens of kosher companies sampling delicious products plus live cooking presentation by Chef Adam of Mieke Sauces and a special appearance by world-renowned kosher food maven, The Kosher Guru, plus free face painting, caricatures and balloon sculptures. A fun event for all! Sun., Sept. 8, 12-5. Don’t miss the free Customer Appreciation Kosher BBQ!

• Orit Esther Riter, internationally acclaimed Emunah speaker, teacher, and author of www.dailydoseofemuna.com is coming to Chicago! She will speak on the very much loved & important topic of “Turning Around Your Emotions Through Emuna and Positive Energy”, during which time you can order your copy. Also available in your local Hebrew book store.

• The Ezra Multi Service Center is now hiring a Program Associate (PT) to assist in programming & planning for the JUF Uptown Café and Chevrah program, which aims to create, foster, & grow an inclusive Jewish community by creating opportunities to stay connected to their heritage and enrich their Jewish identities. Degree in social work or related field with a desire to work for an agency with an urban Jewish social justice agenda highly preferred. Learn more: apply: https://www.jccchicago.org/about/careers/.

• Kick off the new year with the YU Torah Mitzion Kollel's Annual Summer Event, A Taste of the World! September 8th at Noah’s of Lincolnshire (200 Barclay Blvd., Lincolnshire 60069), 6:00 PM Reception, 7:00 PM Dinner. (Under 30? Redeem your discount!) Register at www.torahchicago.org or call the office at 773-973-6557.

• The YU Torah Mitzion Kollel is excited to welcome the new Kollel fellows and their families to our community! Rabbi Yossi and Mrs. Emma Katz (also our new NLI Community Scholar) and Rabbi Yehuda and Mrs. Shira Fensterheim (Shlichim). Join us at our first Shabbaton of the year, August 25th, at Or Torah, to meet the fellows and kick off a great new year of community learning!

• New Sport Leagues & Clinics starting now! Bernard Horwich JCC’s athletic programs focus on skills, teamwork, self-confidence and fun. We are proud to partner with Hot Shot Sports, a leader in youth sports development and coaching. Register now for flag football, baseball and basketball clinics and leagues and more. Evaluations for flag football and girls basketball on Sunday, August 25, jccchicago.org/sports.

• Looking for a fun and fulfilling opportunity? Lev Chicago Respite is hiring! We are seeking enthusiastic, dedicated staff for our after-school program, serving children with special needs. Monday-Thursday, from 3:30-7:30. Will train. Background check required. Send resume to rivka@libenu.org.

• We’re looking forward to a wonderful year of inclusive programming at Yachad! We have planned a fun opening bbq activity with a surprise and special dessert. Registration and additional info: Yachad.org/Chicago #BecauseEveryoneBelongs.

• Madraigos Midwest is hosting a community event for all women, mothers & daughters, with Momentum Trip Leader Adrienne Gold. Sunday, 9/1, 10:30 AM, at Northbrook Hilton. Adrienne will speak on “Beauty & Self-Esteem in the Glare of the Media”. Brunch served. It’s the concluding event for our High School Girls Retreat. RSVP to info@madraigosmidwest.org. Make donations for women, or teens (reduced donation) on our website. No charge for girls attending the retreat. We hope for girls throughout the country to come too!

• Join Madraigos Midwest for a Morning of Dancing Out the Stigma of Mental Health with Frumba Chicago. In memory of Bat sheva Chaya Stadlan ภ. Sponsored by Noam Stadlan and Marianne Novak. September 22, 2019, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, at the Ida Crown Jewish Academy. Register at www.madraigosmidwest.org/zumba.
LKUTEI PESHATIM HAS TORAH CONTENT - PLEASE TREAT IT RESPECTFULLY

Max and Mary Sutker and Louis and Lillian Klein. May their memory be for a blessing.

Answers:
1. Pasuk 7:14 starts with the letter "א" and ends with the letter "א". This indicates that Bnei Yisrael would be blessed due to the twenty-two (numerical value of 22) letters that comprise the Torah.
2. Rashi says that their clothing and shoes grew with them and were kept clean by the Clouds of Glory. Ibn Ezra says that they were not supernatural but that Bnei Yisrael brought a lot of clothing from Egypt. Ibn Ezra says that the manna was supernatural and caused no waste or perspiration, so the clothes did last longer. Ibn Ezra also says that the clothes did not wear out with Ibn Ezra.
3. Bnei Yisrael were promised oil-olives and date honey in Eretz Yisrael. By repeating the word "лен" ("land"), this indicates that they did not have these delicacies in Egypt.
4. Moshe wanted Bnei Yisrael to understand on a deeper level that when he says that "you" will enter, it implied that Moshe himself would not enter Eretz Yisrael. Also, by saying "today" ("היום"), Moshe was indicating that he would not enter now, but he will enter Eretz Yisrael when Mashiach comes.
5. Pasuk 10:22 begins and ends with the letter "א", indicating that Yaakov warned Bnei Yisrael that everyone was to remain within his own house, meaning not to intermarry with the Egyptians in order to become a great nation. Because Bnei Yisrael listened, they were called "Beis Yaakov".
6. Ibn Ezra says that it is a future promise that one will "cleave" to Hashem in the World to Come if one follows Hashem's commandments. Ramban says that it is a constant command for one to always have Hashem in mind and to "cleave" to Hashem in that way.

Prepared by Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand, Editor, and Mrs. Naomi Samber, Managing Editor

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