

Kinder Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Ki Seitze

Mighty Acts of Chessed

“Abba, we are now about to begin the second *bracha* of the Amida. I think I see a connection between the end of the first *bracha*, ‘Avos’, and the beginning of this *bracha*, ‘Gevuros’.”

“Yes, what is it, Avi?”

“‘Avos’ ends with the phrase, ‘Magen Avraham,’ the shield of Avraham. The *Shechina* (Divine Presence) protected Avraham Avinu, and continues to guard us to this very day. How does the Almighty shield us? With His *gevura* (might).”

“Excellent, Avi! Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch zt”l makes this connection. If Hashem is our shield, then we need fear nothing, not even death. For He is mightier than death -- He is ‘*mechaye mesim*’ (giver of life to the dead).”¹

“That is a very interesting point, Abba. We normally define a *gibbor* (mighty person) as someone who can wield destructive power. A strong king or general lays siege to a city, starving out its inhabitants. He then injures, maims, and even kills to conquer the city and enslave its captives. Hashem’s *gevura* is exactly the opposite – total kindness. He provides food for all living beings. He gives life to the dead, supports the fallen, heals the sick, and releases the imprisoned. He uses His awesome power to perform mighty acts of *cheded*.”²

“What a deep insight, Avi! You have put your finger on the theme of this *bracha*. ‘Gevuros’ describes Hashem’s almighty might to exercise His will at all times under all circumstances. He set up the world to run with apparent regularity according to the ‘laws of nature.’ When necessary, He overturns those laws to show that He is in control of them and indeed everything in the universe. This *bracha* cites several examples of this, the most prominent being ‘*techiyas hamesim*’ – giving life to the deceased.”

“Abba, ‘*techiyas hamesim*’ is mentioned five times in this *bracha*!”

“What an astute observation, Avi. The Siddur Kavannas HaLev explains that this corresponds to the five components of the *neshama* (soul) of a person. It also corresponds to the five senses through which the *neshama* perceives the world. The *neshama* and its senses are removed from the *guf* (body) at the time of death, and will be returned, b’ezeras Hashem, at ‘*techiyas hamesim*.’”

“Speedily in our days!”

“Amen. Let us now proceed step-by-step through the *bracha*, Avi. It begins with

the phrase, ‘You are eternally mighty, Hashem.’ A flesh and blood ruler’s strength weakens as he grows older. However, the Blessed One’s might is forever.³ The next *gevura* that we praise is the rain (or dew). Hashem is the One Who brings rain down upon the earth. The Gemora⁴ refers to the phrase, ‘*Mashiv ha’ruach u’morid ha’geshem*’ (He makes the wind blow and He makes the rain descend) as ‘*gevuros geshamim*’ – the might of rain.”

“What does that mean, Abba?”

“The Gemora asks the very same question Avi! Rebbe Yochanan draws a connection between verses comparing the might necessary to create the world, and the power required to bring rain. Both require strength that is beyond our comprehension.⁵ In fact, the Gemora⁶ equates the might of rain to ‘*techiyas hamesim*!’”

“Why is that, Abba?”

“Each drop of rain has its own unique form. Formation of all the raindrops that have fallen on the earth since the beginning of time is mind-boggling.⁵ Similarly, every drop of rain goes to exactly the place that the Almighty desires. What can match such *gevura*?⁷ Additionally, rainfall totally defies the regularity of the laws of nature.⁸ Nature dictates that the heavenly bodies rise and set every day at their appointed times. So too, the tides and the seasons follow their regular schedules. The rain, however, follows no such plan. It may not rain for a long period, and then rain several days or weeks in succession. For this reason, we refer to it as ‘*gevuros geshamim*,’ for the might of Hashem is apparent in the rain. In the same way, His *gevura* is demonstrated in ‘*techiyas hamesim*,’ which also goes completely against the laws of nature. Burying the *guf* in the ground is metaphorically compared to planting the seed in the earth.⁹ Just as the rain makes it sprout and grow, so too ‘*techiyas hamesim*’ will make the deceased sprout and grow again.”

“What a great day that will be, Abba.”

“Indeed, Avi. Now, let us move on in the *bracha*. The Gemora⁴ relates that there are four ‘keys’ that HaKadosh Boruch Hu does not turn over to a *shaliach* (agent) – the keys to rain, birth, *techiyas hamesim*, and *parnassa* (livelihood). The Gemora cites a verse proving each one.¹⁰ The Tur¹¹ explains that the 51 words in the *bracha* of *Gevuros* correspond to the 51 words in those four verses cited by the Gemora. The first letters of each key – ‘*mem*’ (*mottur*), ‘*fey*’ (*parnassa*), ‘*tuf*’ (*techiyas hamesim*), ‘*ches*’ (*chaya*) form the word ‘*mafteach*’ – key. Those four keys are highlighted in our *bracha*. *Mottur* is the phrase ‘*Mashiv ha’ruach u’morid ha’geshem*.’ *Parnassa* is

the phrase ‘*Mechalkei chaim b’cheded*’ (He sustains the living with kindness). *Techiyas hamesim* is the phrase ‘*Mechaye mesim*.’ *Chaya* (birth) is the phrase ‘*Mattir asurim*’ (releases the confined), for the fetus is confined in the mother’s womb until the birth releases it. Additionally, the Almighty supports the fallen and heals the sick. Any one of these acts requires power so mighty that we cannot begin to fathom it. How great is the Almighty, who performs them all! ‘Who is like You, O Master of Mighty deeds, and who is comparable to you?’”

“No being in existence.”

“Precisely, Avi. That is the point of this *bracha*. Hashem is the only power! He controls everything. How does He use His power? To perform mighty acts of *cheded*. By contemplating this, we can come to appreciate Him and what He does for us. Ultimately, we can attempt to emulate Him, by performing our own acts of *cheded*, to the best of our abilities.”

“B’ezeras Hashem, Abba.”

“Amen.”

Kinderlach . . .

*The Amida prayer is nothing less than standing before Hashem. It is worthwhile for us to contemplate Who we are addressing. In this second blessing, our sages gave us the words to describe the Creator’s incomparable might. He created the world and runs it according to the laws of nature. However, He over-rides those laws when necessary to reveal His power. There are four events that are not subject to natural laws at all – rain, livelihood, *techiyas hamesim*, and birth. These, as well as other mighty acts of kindness – healing the sick and supporting the fallen – all serve to demonstrate that Hashem is The Only Power in the universe, and that He uses His power for kindness. Know Him *kinderlach*, appreciate Him, and emulate Him. You *tefillos* and your life will be enriched immeasurably by your closeness to the Almighty Master of Kindness.*

¹ Hirsch Siddur pp. 132-133

² Maharsha Chiddushe Aggados on Taanis 2a

³ Shaar HaRachamim, Maggid Tsedek p. 254

⁴ Taanis 2a

⁵ Maharsha Chiddushei Aggados on Taanis 2a, Gemora Bava Basra 16a

⁶ Brachos 33a

⁷ Abudarham

⁸ Siddur Otzer HaTefillos, p. דק quotes Besamim Rosh who cites the Vilna Gaon.

⁹ Siddur Otzer HaTefillos, p. 322, Dover Shalom

¹⁰ Devarim 28:12, Tehillim 145:16, Yechezkel 37:13, Bereshis 30:22

¹¹ Orach Chaim 114