

Kindert Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Shoftim

Birchos HaShachar

"Avi, we are about to begin the *Birchos HaShachar* (morning blessings). Let me give you a little background information about them. The brochos were composed by the *Anshei Kinesses HaGedola* (Men of the Great Assembly). This group of 120 scholars, who are cited at the very beginning of *Pirkei Avos*, lived at the end of the era of the *Neviim* (Prophets). Some of them were indeed prophets themselves. They invested every word of the prayers that they wrote with the spiritual power to affect all of creation. The words that pass our lips, if uttered with the proper *kavannah* (intention), ascend to the highest spiritual heights and make a powerful impact. Therefore, we should do our utmost to understand these blessings and say them correctly."

"What an awesome responsibility. I am ready, Abba."

"Okay, Avi. These *Birchos HaShachar* are words of praise and thanks to Hashem for the wonders of the natural world. The first one thanks Him for giving understanding to the '*sechvi*' to discern the difference between day and night."

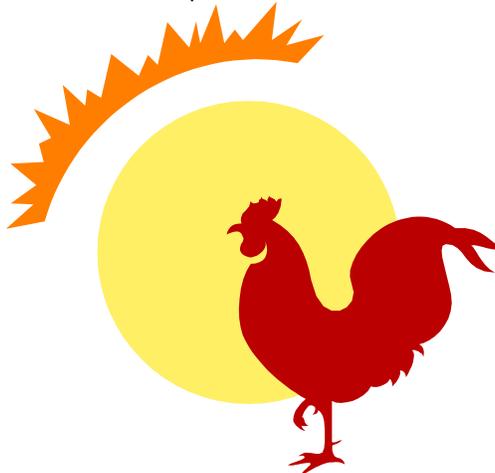
"What is a '*sechvi*' Abba?"

"There are two opinions amongst the *meforshim*. Rashi (Gemora Brachos 60b) explains that '*sechvi*' is rooster. The Rosh's commentary on that same Gemora relates that '*sechvi*' is the Jewish heart, the seat of *binah* (understanding). According to both explanations, we are thanking Hashem for the *binah* to discern between day and night. Tosafos adds that we are thanking Him for the benefit that we receive from the light of day. Avudraham goes one step further and praises the Creator for the wondrous rooster, who has a faculty that man does not have – to sense the coming of day while it is still night. The *siddur Ohr HaChama* sums it up with a fascinating insight. This special understanding comes naturally to the rooster. Hashem gave it to him at the time of creation. Man, on the other hand, has to observe, think, and ponder to come to the conclusion that it is fitting to thank the Almighty for the ability to sense the coming of daybreak. We therefore express our gratitude to Him for this special wisdom that He has given us to perceive His Hand in the wonders of creation."

"Wow, Abba. We cannot take anything in this world for granted, not even the ability to think. It is all a gift from Hashem."

"That is a very astute insight, Avi. Let us now move on to the next group of brochos, thanking Hashem for creating us as He did. These three brochos, '*shelo osani*

goi, eved, isha' (Who has not made me a gentile, slave, woman) thank Hashem for choosing us from amongst all of the nations, and giving us the privilege to serve Him by learning His Torah and fulfilling His mitzvos. Even the smallest mitzvah brings us unfathomable *sechar* (reward). Gentiles have no connection whatsoever to the mitzvos and the *sechar* that they bring. Many of them serve idols and know nothing about the Creator of the universe and His ways. A Canaanite slave, on the other hand, has accepted upon himself the yoke of some mitzvos, namely all negative mitzvos and those positive ones that are not bound to a time period. However, he must serve his master, in addition to serving Hashem. He may not marry a Jewish woman, and his children do not have the benefits and obligations of a normal parent-child relationship. A woman is not commanded to observe the positive mitzvos that are



bound to a time period, and to learn Torah. Therefore she makes the *brocho* '*sheasani kirtzono*' (who has made me according to His will). The *siddur Iyun HaTefillah* cites the *Yeshuos Yaakov* who relates that the Creator consulted with the angels before creating man. For the woman, on the other hand, He sought no advice, rather created her according to His will. The Gemora (Brochos 64a) adds that His original desire was to create both woman and man. He created them, however, as one being. When he separated the woman from the being and made her independent, this fulfilled His original will."

"That is fascinating, Abba. From the moment of our creation, we have to thank the Almighty purely for our existence and the attributes that we were born with. I am so grateful!"

"Wonderful, Avi. May you always make these, and all of your brochos with tremendous *kavannah* and *regesh* (feeling)"
"Amen!"

Kindertlach . . .

The words of our prayers and blessings have the awesome power to affect all of creation. There is one condition, however. They must be said with *kavannah*. Therefore, we must learn the meaning of the words in order to understand what we are saying. There is an additional benefit of spending the time to work on these blessings. When we understand what we are saying, we begin to appreciate Hashem and all that He has done and continues to do for us. From the very beginning, He gives us the priceless gift of thought and understanding. He then gives us the opportunity to become as close to Him as we wish, by fulfilling the mitzvos, each one according to his obligations and abilities. How we love you Hashem, and appreciate everything that You do for us!

What Will Be?

"What will be?"

"I don't know."

"Peace or war? Turmoil or tranquility? Prosperity or depression? Health or sickness? The whole world is hanging in the balance. The news is so unpredictable. Anything can happen. What will be?"

"You shall be whole-hearted (*Tamim*) with Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 18:13). The Malbim elucidates that three names of Hashem are used in this verse. The third name *Elokecha* refers to the trait of Hashem that describes His cleaving to His nation - Israel - and guides them with *hashgacha pratit* (personal supervision). The name *Tamim* refers to Hashem's straight heart (so to speak). If we are straight with Him, and do not look for other sources of information about the future, then He will be straight with us, and personally guide our lives in the manner that suits us perfectly.

This matter requires some thought. Who is running the world? The politicians? The financiers? The generals? The press? The terrorists? Wrong on all counts. Hashem, in His infinite wisdom, would not leave such people in charge of His creation. It doesn't make sense. Rather, He and He alone is running the world. We have no reason to listen to the opinions of these other people. We have a direct connection to the Source of All Life. He wants us to strengthen that connection. Trust Him. Everything is going according to the plan.

Kindertlach . . .

What will be? Hashem's plan is proceeding exactly on schedule. Day by day the events unfold. Our role in this master plan is to trust Him. Accept everything that He does and realize that it is good. Thank Him for everything when you say *Birkas Hamazon* and *Modim*. He will continue to do good. That is what will be.

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