

Kindert Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Nitzavim/Vayelech

Birchos HaShachar (4)

How do you feel this morning, Avi?"

"Great, Abba."

"Do you have lots of energy?"

"I sure do, Abba. Last night when I went to sleep, I was exhausted from the whole day's activities. I laid my tired body down in bed, said *Kriyas Shema*, *hamapil* (the blessing before sleep), and Hashem brought sleep upon me. He took my *neshama* (soul) and left my body inanimate and immobile, a semi-deathlike state (Gemora Brachos 57b). This morning He returned it to me refreshed, revitalized, relaxed, and ready for a new day's work."

"Wonderful! This is precisely the reason that we make the *brocho*, 'ha'nosein la'yoeif koach' (who gives strength to the weary.) We thank Hashem for 'recharging our batteries' (so to speak) while we sleep at night. The Tur (Orach Chaim 46) cites the Medrash Shochar Tov (Tehillim 25) which tells a parable of a man leaving his object in the custody of his friend. The way of the world is that the friend returns it to the owner used and tattered. However, when a Jew leaves his *neshama* in the custody of Hashem at night, it is returned to him refreshed and relaxed in the morning. Now, Avi, you should know that waking up is a process that goes in stages. First we open our eyes. Then we emerge from the deep sleep which is called 'sheina'. Thirdly, we come out of the shallow sleep called 'snumah'. The final *brocho* of *birchos hashachar* begins by thanking Hashem for bringing us out of all these stages of sleep into complete consciousness. What do we do with the wonderful gift of *koach* that Hashem has given us?"

"We use it to serve Him always."

Precisely! Therefore, the final *brocho* is followed immediately by a request that we dedicate all of the wonderful gifts that Hashem showers upon us, to always learn His Torah and attach ourselves to His mitzvos. We then ask that He protect us from all types of sins, both accidental and intentional. We should not come to be tested, or humiliated. May the *yetzer hara* not rule over us! Distance us from an evil person and an evil friend; rather attach us to the *yetzer hatov* and good deeds. When a person is attached to the *yetzer hatov*, his thoughts are always focused on the good; therefore, he will surely come to do good deeds. Compel our *yetzer hara* to serve You. Grant us today and every day favor, kindness, and compassion in your eyes, and in the eyes of all who see us, and bestow bountiful kindness upon us. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who bestows beneficent kindness upon

His people Klal Yisrael."

"Amen."

"There is one more request that we make, Avi, at the end of the *Birchos HaShachar*. We ask Hashem to protect us from any type of person or event that can damage us in any way. Whether it is an arrogant person, an evil person, evil friend, evil neighbor, or mishap, we ask for salvation. May we not have to face a difficult trial, or a harsh opponent, whether he is a fellow Jew, or not. With this we sum up the morning blessings. We have expressed our praise and gratitude to the Almighty for all of His wonderful gifts to us, and we request that He remove all obstacles that prevent us from using those gifts to serve Him."

"Abba, all of our heartfelt prayers should be accepted with great favor."

"Amen."



Kinderlach . . .

Hashem is kind to us even when we are sleeping. He revitalizes our tired bodies wakes us up refreshed and relaxed, with new koach for the new day. We thank Him for this and then request that He give us the opportunity to use that koach for Torah and mitzvos. May He remove all of the obstacles, both physical and spiritual that prevent us from coming closer to Him. And so, with the Almighty's blessings and help, we are ready to begin another fantastic day of Avodas Hashem.

The Shadow

Chaim, watch out. Something is following you."

"Uh oh. How big is it, Chaim?"

"It's about your size."

Avi's stomach begins to get queasy. Something that big is following him? What is it?

"What should I do Chaim? Should I try to run away from it?"

"No, you'll never succeed."

"Should I hide?"

"You can. It will not follow you into your hiding place, however, when you come out, it will be waiting for you."

"How can I escape from this thing, Chaim?"

"The truth is that you can't Avi. You will never shake it. However, it is very good for you to have it around. It helps you a lot. More than you'll ever know."

"Now you've really got my curiosity going. What is this thing?"

"It is . . . your shadow."

"My shadow?! I see. It follows me everywhere. I can never escape from it. That makes sense. But please tell me Chaim . . . how is my shadow good for me?"

"That is a deep subject, Avi. The Ha'amek Davar speaks about it in this week's parasha."

"Now you've really got my curiosity going. How is my shadow related to Parashas Vayelech?"

The verse states, '...because Hashem your G-d travels with you...' (Devarim 31:6). The Ha'amek Davar explains that this verse is referring to Hashem's *hashgacha pratit* (personal supervision) of the life of every Jew. He 'travels' with us (so to speak), guiding the events that surround our lives. Just like a shadow always travels with a person, so too He always travels with us."

"That can be a frightening thought. If we do something wrong, Hashem is right there."

"Yes, however this will ultimately bring a person to great success. When he knows that Hashem is watching his every deed, and stands ready to reward or punish him immediately, he will learn to be careful, and not sin."

"I see. Hashem is always 'shadowing' me, so to speak."

"Exactly."

Kinderlach . . .

Now we have a new way to remember Hashem. Walk outside in the bright sun and look at your shadow. It is always with you, following you around wherever you go. So too, Hashem is always "shadowing" you with *hashgacha pratit*. He is taking care of you, rewarding you for every mitzvah that you do, and chas v'shalom (Heaven forbid) the opposite. Don't forget your shadow, *kinderlach*. Moreover, do not forget Hashem. Who can even think of sinning, knowing that Hashem is always "shadowing" him.

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