



A collection of
Torah thoughts
produced by the
Kollel

חידוש

אין בית המדרש בלא

Chiddush

KOLLEL UPDATES

Beis Hamikdosh Evening

On Motzai Shabbos Chazon over 150 people; men, women and children, participated in an enthralling evening.

Rabbi Shmuel Lesches delivered an incredible presentation on the gateways of the Azarah. His visual presentation brought the Beis Hamikdosh alive. Peppered with stories, history, midrashim and maamarei Chazal and Rishonim made for a fascinating learning experience.

The annual Beis Hamikdosh evening is a high-light on our calendar and is always well attended and enjoyed.

AVOS UBONIM

A revolution is taking place! Under the leadership of Rabbi Reuven Centner, the Avos Ubonim learning program has reached new heights.

A new series begins this week continuing all the way until Rosh Hashona at the new time of 7:45pm. Having outgrown our previous location, Avos Ubonim will now take place in the Bnai Brith hall.

Join us for great learning, refreshments (for fathers and sons), raffles, prizes and lots of fun!



In this issue

To Your Table from Heaven **P.1**

Answering Amein to our own Brachos **P.2**

To Your Table, From Heaven

Bentching is a fundamental part of Jewish life. After we eat, we thank the One who sustains us all. The source of this Mitzvah is in this week's Parsha: **ואכלת ושבעת וברכת את ה' אלקיך על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך** *And you will eat and be satisfied and you will bless Hashem your G-d for the good land that He has given you.*

Sefer Devorim is supposed to be a recap of the Mitzvos, not the place for new information. So why only now does the Torah teach this Mitzvah as Bnei Yisroel were poised to enter Eretz Yisroel at the end of their 40 years in the Midbor? To answer this question we must first analyse the composition of Birkas Hamazon.

Bentching is made up of 4 blessings. The first 3 blessings - for the food, for Eretz Yisroel and for the city of Yerushalayim - are Min HaTorah (Bilbically required), derived in the Talmud from the Posuk quoted above. The 4th Brocha, referred to as **הטוב ומטיב** is only Rabbinic.

The Talmud also traces the origins of these 4 blessings. The first blessing - *for the food* - was instituted by Moshe when the Mann fell in the desert. The second blessing - *for the Land* - was composed by Yehoshua after leading Bnei Yisroel into Eretz Yisroel. Dovid Hamelech and his son Shlomo composed the blessing for Yerushalayim and the Beis Hamikdosh. The final blessing was instituted by the sages in Yavneh after the miracle of finally being allowed to bury the dead of Beitar*.

Even though the first blessing is the blessing for *"the food"*, the second blessing (for the Land) concludes **על הארץ ועל המזון**, for the Land and for the food. The Talmud explains that this is really one blessing; for the Land which gives forth food.

The first blessing of Bentching is for **לחם מן השמים**, composed by Moshe for the Heavenly bread which fell in the desert. The second blessing is for **לחם מן הארץ**, the land which gives forth earthly bread, composed by Yehoshua as Bnei Yisroel entered the Land which they would now have to work to earn their daily bread.

Immediately after the injunction to Bentch, the Torah gives a foreboding prediction: *Beware lest you forget Hashem.... You will eat, be satisfied and build good houses... and amass gold and silver... Your heart will become arrogant and you will forget Hashem... And you will say in your heart "My power and the might of my hand has made me this wealth"*.

When eating the **לחם מן השמים** in the desert, it was clear and obvious that one's *parnoso* came from Hashem. It would fall daily at their doorstep. One's actions could generate no more or less than what Hashem provided. A clear directive to recognise Hashem as the source of their sustenance and to thank Him was not necessary.

On entering Eretz Yisroel, to work the land, to engage in entrepreneurship and amass wealth, one could lose sight of the true source of his *parnoso*, attributing it to **כחי ועוצם ידי**, the strength of my hand. Now is when the explicit command to Bentch, to declare a recognition of the source of our sustenance was required.

Eating the Mann in the desert was a similar education process; *in order to inform you that not by bread alone does man live, but rather on that which emanates from the mouth of Hashem.* i.e. that our *parnoso* is determined and provided by Hashem's decree.

For this same reason at the end of our meal of earthly bread, we recite the blessing composed by Moshe. We may not have eaten Mann, but the **לחם מן הארץ** which we work to earn, just like the Mann comes only as Hashem's gift. Our work is but a receptacle for His blessings. Bentching, and specifically reciting the words which Moshe used to thank Hashem for the Mann forces us to reflect and recognise this truth.

Hashem instructed Moshe to place some of the Mann in a jar in the Holy of Holies. Hundreds of years later, when the Jewish people told the *novi* Yirmiyahu that they could not learn Torah because they were busy earning a living, he showed them this jar. His message was clear. It is Hashem who provides our *parnoso*, and so *parnoso* cannot be the reason or cause for not learning. We must make the appropriate vessel for our livelihood, but as the Rebbe teaches (Hayom Yom Av 4) *The main thing is Hashem's blessing, and that blessing is earned by being observant in G-d's commands.*

Through Bentching we recognise that what we have is like the Mann. It is not **כחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה** *My strength and the might of my hand* but rather **הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל** *He is the one who gives us the strength to make wealth.*

*The Rashb"a asks the obvious question: If the first 3 blessings are Biblically mandated, how could they have only been composed in later generations? His answer, which is brought by the Alter Rebbe in Shulchan Oruch, is that to fulfill the Mitzvah of Bentching Min HaTorah, there is no set text that the 3 Biblical blessings needs to take. The contribution of Moshe, Yehoshua, Dovid and Shlomo was that they composed a set text (nusach) for the blessings.



Shiurim Schedule

CHOF AV

Likkutei Levi Yitzchak Shiur

In honour of the Hillula of the Rebbe's father, the Gaon and Mekubal Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneersohn, the Kollel presents a unique Chasidus shiur.

All men are invited to join Rabbi Johnson this Shabbos morning from 8:45-9:30pm in the lunchroom as we study the Rebbe's father's writings on the Zohar for Parshas Eikev.

The Zohar describes the Divine effects of our Brachos. See how the Rebbe's father analyses the nuances of the Zohar text and how the Rebbe explains his father's teachings.

ELUL/TISHREI

We are in the middle of finalising a comprehensive program of shiurim and lectures to help you prepare for Tishrei.

Stay tuned for full details of our shiurim for men and for women, covering the Yomim Tovim in Halocha, Chasidus, Machzor and more.

TAHARAS HAMISHPOCHO

The 4-week Taharas Hamishpocho series for men was an amazing success. Over 30 Yungeleit from the Kehillah joined us at each of the sessions to refresh on the halachos.

Due to high interest, a regular ongoing shiur in the halachos of Taharas Hamishpocho will be commencing soon.



Q. I've noticed that generally we don't answer Amein to our own Brachos. I've even heard that it is not an appropriate thing to do. So why in Bentching do we conclude the blessing *Boneh Yerushalayim* by saying Amein - אמן בונה ברחמינו ירושלים אמן?

A. The Talmud¹ brings 2 seemingly contradictory statements. One says that it is improper to answer Amein to their own Brocha. The other says that it is praiseworthy to do so.

The Talmud reconciles these contradictory statements by explaining that they refer to different blessings. When is it praiseworthy? At the end of the Brocha *Boneh Yerushalayim* in Bentching. When is it improper? For all other Brachos.

There is a Machlokes amongst the Rishonim whether answering Amein is only permissible after *Boneh Yerushalayim* or could apply to other blessings which are similar in nature.

Rashi, the Rif and the Rosh do not limit... *Boneh Yerushalayim* is brought by the Talmud as an example of a category of blessings. It marks the end of a series of linked Brachos. Similarly, one would answer Amein to their own Brocha for any Brocha which comes at the end of a series of Brachos. So for example, *Yishtabach* which is the end Brocha of *Pesukei Dezimra* or *Shomer Es Amo Yisroel Laad* which is the end of the blessings of the Shema one would recite Amein even to their own Brocha.

The problematic Amein would be to answer Amein after each individual Brocha in a series of Brachos (or after a solitary Brocha such as a blessing before eating). This is because saying Amein would imply that one has finished the blessings and has nothing further to add.

This is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch and the practise of Sefardim.

The alternate view (held by Tosfos, Rabbeinu Chananel and others) is

Answering Amein To Our Own Brachos

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

that *Boneh Yerushalayim* is a unique case, and that we would not answer Amein to any other Brocha even if it marks the end of a series of Brachos.

The reason *Boneh Yerushalayim* is unique is that it marks the end of the 3 Biblically required blessings of Bentching. The fourth and final blessing is only Rabbinic in nature. We are required to distinguish between them². This would be the only situation where this would apply since all other Brachos are only Rabbinic. The first 3 Brachos of Bentching being the only Biblical Brachos.

The Ram"o³ rules that this is the custom for Ashkenazim and that one should not deviate from it. This ruling is brought by the Alter Rebbe⁴ as the accepted minhag.

For any other Brocha we do not answer Amein to our own blessing. The Talmud's meaning that it would be reprehensible is that it is a display of haughtiness or arrogance⁵. We are so particular concerning this that even if a person concludes his Brocha at the same time as the chazzan in Shule is concluding the same Brocha, he should not respond Amein to the chazzan since this would appear as though he were answering Amein to his own Brocha⁶.

Since in Bentching, we say אמן בונה ברחמינו ירושלים אמן for the reason described above, it does not appear as arrogant.

One should actually pause between the words אמן and ירושלים, since the Brocha actually ends with the word *Yerushalayim*, Amein being only an affirmation and not part of the *nusach* of the Brocha⁷. However one should not pause too long otherwise this would be an *Amein Yesoma* (literally an orphaned Amein), since it is separated from its Brocha (like an orphaned child ר"ל from their parents.)

Additionally, the Shulchan Aruch rules that the אמן at the end of the Brocha *Boneh Yerushalayim* should be recited quietly. The reason is that since it highlights the fact that the 4th blessing is only Rabbinic, people may come to treat it lightly by thinking that "it is only Rabbinic and the *real* Bentching is finished". Of course this would be

erroneous because we keep the Rabbinic Mitzvos equally to the Torah obligations.

Nonetheless popular practise is to say the אמן out loud⁸. The Poskim offer the following justification:

According to strict halocha, a labourer (פועל) who is paid for a day's work would not recite the 4th blessing⁹. Since it would be coming at the expense of his employer, the Rabbis waived the requirement to recite it. (This alone is a fascinating degree of the Torah's concern for theft and business ethics since we are talking about a minute of lost labour time).

When this was the practise there was a concern that others (or even the labourers themselves) may take the 4th blessing lightly even when there would be no situation of loss to the employer. If Amein would be recited this would further suggest that one could be lenient. This concern would also apply to Sefardim and is their practise still today.

Nowadays however it is accepted and standard practice that employers are not concerned for such minimal loss of time and accept it upon themselves. This is especially true today with labour laws etc. which allow for allotted paid breaks. Since there is now no case where the final blessing is not recited, there is no concern of treating it lightly and as such Amein may be recited aloud.

Nonetheless, some Poskim¹⁰ advise that the Amein should still be recited silently. The Bach recommends that at least it should not be said louder than the rest of Bentching for emphasis.

¹ Berachos 45b

² Shulchan Aruch Harav OC 188:1

³ OC 215:1

⁴ Shulchan Aruch Harav OC 51:3

⁵ See Aruch Hashulchan 215:4

⁶ שם. This is actually subject to Machlokes and the Alter Rebbe rules stringently. Interestingly, if this situation happened at the end of the Brocha which is at the end of a series of Brachos, one does answer Amein to the Chazzan, relying on the opinion of the Mechaber (that one even answers Amein to one's own blessing in such a case) combined with those who allow answering the Chazzan's blessing in any event.

⁷ Mishna Berura 188:2

⁸ Ram"o 188:2

⁹ Shulchan Aruch OC 191:1

¹⁰ Aruch Hashulchan 188:3