

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXVIII: Metzora (Lev. 14:1–15:33)

Essay 4. A generous man should lead the Grace after Meals

פָּרָק ז' דְּסוֹטָה אָמַר ר' יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן לוי אֵין נוֹתְנִין כּוֹס שֶׁל בְּרָכָה לְבָרָךְ אֶלָּא לְטוֹב עֵין שְׁנָאָמַר "טוֹב-עֵין הוּא יְבָרָךְ" אֵל תְּקַרִי "יְבָרָךְ" אֶלָּא "יְבָרָךְ" עכ"ל.

Chapter 7 of tractate Sotah:

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: Give a cup of blessing to recite the blessing [of Grace after Meals] only to [someone with] a generous eye,¹ as it is stated: “One who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor.”² Do not read “will be blessed” [יְבָרָךְ] [yevorakh], rather, “will bless” [יְבָרֵךְ] [yevarekh], i.e., he will lead the blessing of Grace after Meals.

- Sotah 38b

יֵשׁ לְדַקְדָּק מֵהוּ "אֵל תְּקַרִי", וְעוֹד לָמָּה קָרָא לְנוֹתֵן צִדְקָה "טוֹב עֵין" וְלֹא "נָדִיב לֵב". וְאֶמְרִינוּ בְּפָרָק כ"ג דְּשִׁבְתַּת מִנְיָא ר' אֱלֵעָזָר הַסֵּפֶר אוֹמֵר לְעוֹלָם יְבַקֵּשׁ אָדָם רַחֲמִים עַל מִדָּה זוֹ, שְׂאֵם הוּא לֹא בָּא, בָּא בְּנוֹ, וְאֵם בְּנוֹ לֹא בָּא, בָּא בֶּן בְּנוֹ, שְׁנָאָמַר "כִּי בִגְלָל הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה", וְתִנָּא דְּבִי רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעְיֵאל, גִּלְגַּל הוּא שְׁחוּזָר בְּעוֹלָם. אָמַר לֵה רַבִּי חֵיָא לְדְבִיתָהּ: כִּי אֲמִי עֲנָא, אֶקְדִּים לִיָּה רִיפְתָּא, כִּי הִכִּי דְּלִקְדָּמוּ לְבִנְיָךְ. עכ"ל.

One must check what is meant by “do not read.” Also, why is one who gives charity called “generous eye” and not “generous of heart.” It is stated in chapter 23 of tractate Shabbat:

It was taught [in a Baraita that] Rabbi Elazar HaKappar says: A person should always request [Divine] mercy with regard to this condition [of poverty], for if he does not come [to a state of poverty], his son will, and if his son does not come [to such a state], his grandson will, as it is stated: “[You shall surely give him and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him,] for due [בִּגְלָל] [biglal] to this thing [the L-rd your G-d will bless you in all your work and in all that you put your hand toward].”³ A Tanna from the school of Rabbi Yishmael

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¹ Literally, “a good eye.”

² Prov. 22:9.

³ Deut. 15:10.

taught: “It is a wheel [גלגל] [galgal] that turns in the world [upon which people continuously rise and fall].”

Rabbi Chiya said to his wife: When a poor person comes [to the house], be quick to give him bread so that they will be quick [to give bread] to your children.

- Shabbat 151b

והשתא יבואר הפסוק, מי שנותן מלחמו לדל מפני מה נותן לו מפני שרוצה מה שעתיד להיות לדורות הבאים, ומשום הכי קרי ליה טוב עין. ומי שמבין תכלית הדבר הזה נדאי שיקבל רחמים, ומה הם הרחמים, להתפלל לה' שיציל בניו מעניות ולברך אותם שהקב"ה יצילם ממדה זו, ואם כן אל תקרי "וברך" אלא "יברך", דאי לא תימא הכי ה"ה לו לומר הוא יברך בסוף הפסוק לאחר המעשה ד"כ"ינתן מלחמו לדל", אלא נדאי שמוכרח לומר "אל תקרי" וכו'.

Now the verse, “One who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor,” will be explained. Regarding one who gives of his bread to the poor. Why does he give to him? Because he sees what is destined to happen to future generations. Because of this, he is called “generous eye.” One who understands the end of this matter will certainly seek mercy. What is this mercy? To pray to G-d that He save his children from poverty and to bless them, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, save them from this trait.

If so, do not read “he will be blessed,” but “he will bless.” For if this were not so, it should have said “he will be blessed” at the end of the verse, after the act of “for he gives of his bread to the poor.” I.e., one may ask why the verse doesn't read, “One who has a generous eye gives of his bread to the poor, and he will be blessed.” **Rather,** the order of the verse suggests it wants to teach us something else, and **it must be that we are meant to say, do not read “he will be blessed,” but “he will bless.”** A generous person should be selected to lead the blessing of the Grace after Meals, and in doing so, he will request mercy that we be saved from poverty.⁴

ולפי דרך זה אתי שפיר נמי קרא ד"נבקהל-להון איש רע עין ולא ידע כי-חסר יבאנו", כלומר למה נקרא שמו "רע עין", משום ד"לא ידע כי-חסר יבאנו", שאם הוא לא בא, בא כן בנו. וקרי ליה "נבקהל-להון" דאמרין בירושלמי דשפת "האזינו כל-ישיבי חלד", למה הוא מושל כל באי עולם לחולדה, מה חולדה זו גוררת ומנחת ואינה יודעת למי היא מנחת, כך כל בני עולם גוררין ואוספין ואינם יודעין למי אוספין, ועל זה קרי ליה "נבקהל-להון", שהוא טרוד ונבהל, שאינו יודע מי יזכה לכל עמלו.

According to this explanation, the verse is also fine: “One who hastens after wealth is a stingy man,⁵ and he doesn't not know that want will come upon him.”⁶ That is to say, why

⁴ E.g., in the first blessing, “Through His great goodness to us continuously we do not lack [food], and may we never lack food, for the sake of His great Name.” In the fourth blessing, “He does good for us, and He will do good for us; He has bestowed, He bestows, and He will forever bestow upon us grace, kindness, and mercy; relief, salvation and success; blessing and deliverance; consolation, livelihood and sustenance; compassion, life, peace, and all goodness; and may He never cause us to lack any good. . . . May the Merciful One provide our livelihood with honor.”

⁵ Literally, “a man with an evil eye.”

⁶ Prov. 28:22.

is he called “stingy”? Because “he doesn’t know that want will come upon him,” that if he does not come [to a state of poverty], his son will, and if his son does not come [to such a state], his grandson will. He is called “one who hastens after wealth,” as it is said in the Jerusalem Talmud of tractate Shabbat, chapter 14, halacha 1, “give ear, all inhabitants of the world [חלדה] [chuldah],”⁷ why does Scripture compare all people to a weasel [חלדה] [chuldah]?⁸ Just as a weasel drags and stores without knowing for whom she stores, so too all people drag and gather possessions without knowing for whom they gather. This is why he is called “hastens after wealth,” because he is agitated and anxious, not knowing who will benefit from all his labor.

וְעוֹד שֶׁם מִנּוּן שֶׁאֵפִילוּ עוֹפוֹת שָׁמַיִם מִפִּירִין בְּצָרֵי הָעֵינָן דְּכִתִּיב "כִּי־חֲנָם מִזְרָה הָרִשֶׁת בְּעֵינֵי כָל־בֶּעַל כֶּנֶף". וַיֵּשׁ לְדַקְדָּק הִיכָא רְמִיז בְּפִסּוּק זֶה שֶׁהָעוֹפוֹת יִפְּרוּ אֶת צָרֵי עֵינָן, וְיִמָּה דַעַת יֵשׁ לָהֶם לְהִפְרִיזָהּ, וְיִמָּה אֵיכָפֶת לָהֶם.

Also there:

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: **From where** [is it derived] **that even birds of the Heavens recognize the stingy** [who set out food for birds not out of kindness, but to trap them]? **As it is stated: “For in vain does he place seed in the net, before the eyes of every winged creature.”**⁹

- Sotah 38b

We need to check: Where is the hint in this verse that the birds recognize the stingy? Why is it relevant to them to recognize this? What difference does it make to them?

וְאִמְרִינוּ עַל פִּסּוּק "לֹא־יִחְרֹף רִמְיָה צִידוֹ", מִשָּׁל לְצִיד שְׂצָד צְפוּרִים, אִם רֹאשׁוֹן רֹאשׁוֹן מִשְׁבֵּר כֶּנָּפָיו מִתְקַיֵּם בְּיָדוֹ וְאִם לֹא אֵינוֹ מִתְקַיֵּם בְּיָדוֹ עַכ"ל. וְהִנֵּה מִי שֶׁהוּא סֹמֵךְ שֶׁחֹמֶד מִמּוֹן הִרְבֵּה כְּמוֹ שֶׁעֵינָיו רֹאוֹת, מִיָּד שְׂצָד צְפוּר אֶחָד לֹא יִרְצֶה לְאַבֵּד זְמָנוֹ לְשִׁבּוֹר כֶּנָּפָיו, אֲלֵא אִם בֵּין כָּף רֹאֵה צְפוּר אַחֵר הוּא מִשְׁתַּדֵּל לְצוּד אֶף הַשָּׁנִי וּבֵין כָּף הָרִאשׁוֹן שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ כֶּנָּפִים הוּא עָף וְהוֹלֵךְ לוֹ. אֲמָנָם מִי שֶׁאֵין לוֹ חֲמוּד וּמִסְתַּפֵּק בְּמָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ, בֵּינוֹ שְׂצָד הָרִאשׁוֹן אֵינוֹ חֹמֶד לְצוּד יוֹתֵר מִכְּדֵי צָרְכּוֹ וְאֵינוֹ רוֹדֵף אַחֵר הַשָּׁנִי עַד שֶׁמִּשְׁבֵּר כֶּנָּפָיו שֶׁל רֹאשׁוֹן. וְלָכֵן אָמַר שֶׁהָעוֹפוֹת מִפִּירִין וְכו', מִכְּנֵי שֶׁמִּנְחִין לָהֶם הַכֶּנָּפִים, וְזֶה שֶׁאָמַר הַכָּתוּב "בְּעֵינֵי כָל־בֶּעַל כֶּנֶף", בֶּעַל כֶּנֶף דּוֹקָא. וְהָעֵינָן הוּא שֶׁהַצִּיּוּרִים נִלְכָּדִים בְּרִשָּׁת לִפִּי שְׂרֹאִים שֶׁם אוֹכֵל וְאֵינָם יוֹדְעִים שֶׁרִשָּׁת זוֹ טִמְנָה לָהֶם, אֲבָל כְּשֶׁנִּפְּלוּ שֶׁם פַּעַם אַחֵת וְנִיצְלוּ הֵם זֵהִירִים בְּעַצְמָם שֶׁלֹּא לְחַזֵּר שֶׁם פַּעַם אַחֶרֶת אֶף עַל פִּי שְׂרֹאִים שֶׁם אוֹכֵל. וְאִסּוּר לִיהְנוֹת מִמִּי שֶׁהוּא רַע עֵין כְּדִקְדָּתוֹ "אֶל־תִּלְחֶם אֶת־לָחֶם רַע עֵין וְאֶל־תִּתְּנוּ לְמִטְעַמְתּוֹ".

It is said on the verse, “A negligent man never has game to roast,”¹⁰ that “this is a parable of a hunter who hunts birds. If he initially breaks the wings [of the bird as he captures it], it remains in his hand, but if not, it does not remain in his hand.”¹¹

⁷ Prov. 49:2.

⁸ I.e., *chaled* means “earth,” and a weasel, *chuldah*, hunts his prey in burrows in the earth.

⁹ Prov. 1:17.

¹⁰ Prov. 12:27.

¹¹ Eruvin 54b; Avodah Zarah 19a.

Now, one who is greedy and covets much money, as his eyes desire, when he traps one bird, he does not want to waste time breaking its wings. Rather, if he meanwhile sees another bird, he tries to trap that one too, and in the meantime the first one, which still has its wings intact, flies away.

However, one who is not covetous and is satisfied with what he has, when he traps the first bird, he does not desire to trap more than he needs, and he does not chase the second until he breaks the wings of the first.

Therefore, it says that the birds recognize [the stingy], because by coveting many birds, he leaves them their wings intact, and thereby increases the chance that they can grab some food, and even if they are captured, that they have a chance to escape as he hunts another bird. This is what Scripture says, “Before the eyes of every winged creature,” specifically winged creatures.

The matter is that birds are caught in a net because they see food there and do not know that the net has been set for them. But when they fall in once and are saved, they become cautious and do not return there again, even if they see food. It is forbidden to benefit from one who is stingy,¹² as it is written, “Do not eat the bread of a stingy man, and do not crave his delicacies.”¹³

וְנִשְׁלַח לְבִקְדֹק לָמָּה שֶׁנָּה סִלְשׁוֹן דְּמַעֲקָרָא קְאָמַר "אֶל־תִּלְחֶם" וְהִדָּר אָמַר "אֶל־תִּתְּאוּ". אֵלֶּא לִפִּי שֶׁהִרַע עֵינַי בְּנִדְאֵי שְׁלֹא יִתֵּן לִי כִּי אִם דְּבָר קַל דְּסִינְנוּ סִלְחָם, וְזֶה אֲנִי אוֹמֵר לִי "אֶל־תִּלְחֶם", וְעוֹד אֵל תִּתְּאוּנָה שְׂיִתֵּן לִי מִתְּנָה מְרוּבָּה שְׂאֵז לֹא יִהְיֶה נִיפֹר שֶׁהוּא רַע עֵינַי הוֹאִיל שְׁנוּמֵן לִי מִתְּנָה מְרוּבָּה.

We need to check: Why did [the verse] change the wording? Initially, it says “do not eat,” and then it says “do not crave”? Rather, because the stingy man will certainly give you only a small thing, that is, bread. This is what I tell you: do not eat it. Also, do not crave it, that he should give you a generous gift, because then it won’t be recognized that he is stingy, since he gives you a large gift.

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¹² Sotah 38b.

¹³ Prov. 23:6.