

# **BIG DEAL!**

*by Shlomo Katz*

## **Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz**

### **Eikev**

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**Today's Learning Mikvaot 2:7-8  
Kitzur 191:1-5  
Eruvin 103  
Yerushalmi Eruvin 32**

We read in this parashah, "He afflicted you and let you hunger and He fed you the mahn that you did not know . . ." This verse, R' Yehuda Leib Chasman z"l comments, teaches us G-d's great love for the Jewish people. Imagine a child who refuses to eat the delicious and healthful food which has been prepared for him. The parent may coax the child, "I know it's hard for you, but I will be so proud of you if you eat everything."

Should it be hard for a child to eat his mother's delicious cooking? Should it have been hard for Bnei Yisrael to eat the mahn, which could taste like any delicacy and which enhanced the spirituality of those who ate it? Nevertheless, just as a loving parent may make a "big deal" when a child does what should come naturally, so Hashem makes a "big deal" over the smallest things that the Jewish people do.

The prophet Yirmiyah quotes Hashem, "So said Hashem, 'I remember for your sake the kindness [which you showed] in your youth, when you followed Me into the desert, into the land which was

not planted'." Did we really do a kindness for Hashem? In the first place, even the lowliest of the Jews attained prophecy at the Red Sea, so it is hardly surprising that they followed Hashem. Secondly, does it matter whether the "desert" is "planted" when one's traveling companion - Hashem - can bring the ten plagues and split the sea? Surely He can provide!

Again, what Hashem's words to Yirmiyah reflect is His great love for the Jewish people such that He makes a "big deal" over nothing. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Knesset Yisrael Chevron p.169)

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*"You will eat and you will be satiated, and you shall bless Hashem, your G-d . . ." (8:10)*

The gemara (Berachot 45a) states that three men who have eaten together should begin their bentching with special introductory phrases that one person does not recite when he has eaten alone (or with a second person). One of these phrases is, "Let us bless He of Whose we have eaten." If ten have eaten together, they modify this phrase and recite, "Let us bless Elokenu (i.e., our Elokim) of Whose we have eaten."

Why was the Divine Name "Elokim" chosen as opposed to some other Name? R' Natan Shapira of Horodna z"l (died 1577) offers the following insights:

The halachah is that G-d's Name is to be mentioned in this part of bentching only if ten males over thirteen years old have eaten together. Ten men form a "kahal"/"congregation," and the gematria of "kahal" is 135. This is also the gematria of "Elokenu" in the form of gematria where each letter is substituted for the letter next to it, as follows:

aleph -> bet = 2  
lamed -> mem = 40  
heh -> vav = 6  
yud -> kaf = 20  
nun -> samech = 60  
vav -> zayin = 7

(2+40+6+20+60+7=135.)

The requirement that each of the ten men have attained the age of 13 also is alluded to in this Divine Name. The root of "Elokenu" is "Elokim." If each letter of that Name is spelled out (for example, "aleph" = "aleph, lamed, feh"; "lamed" = "lamed, mem, dalet"), the word will have 13 letters in all.

The combined gematria of those 13 letters is 295, which is the gematria of the words: retzeh/desire, tzarah/trouble, and tzohar/light. We thus pray that even though eating often brings trouble/tzarah, Hashem should desire/retzeh our bentching and brings us "light"/tzohar.

Also, this Name alludes to the fact that a group that has eaten together is obligated to share Torah thoughts at their meal. The gematria of "Elokim" is 86, which can be represented by the letters peh-vav. The letters which correspond to those two letters if one begins at the end of the aleph-bet and counts back are the two very same letters: vav-peh. If one takes the "hidden" gematria of the letters peh-vav-vav-peh, the result is 22. This is calculated as follows:

"Peh" is spelled peh-heh. The "hidden" part is the heh, which equals 5.

"Vav" is spelled vav-vav. The hidden part is the vav, which equals 6.

This alludes to the 22 letters of the aleph-bet which are the building blocks of the whole Torah.

Finally, the Name "Elokim" alludes to G-d's attribute of Strict Justice. By using that Name in our bentching, we remind ourselves that, were G-d to measure us using that attribute, we would not be deserving of the food which we have just eaten.

(Seder Birkat Hamazon Im Peirush R' Natan Shapira Me'Horodna)

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*"Hear, O Israel, today you cross the Jordan . . ." (9:1)*

The midrash on this verse comments: "The halachah is that one who drinks water recites the blessing, 'That all was created by His word'." What does this halachah have to do with the quoted verse? R' Meir Margulies of Lvov z"l (died 1790) explains as follows:

How could Moshe say, "Today you cross the Jordan"? Bnei Yisrael were not destined to cross the Jordan that day! The answer is that had Bnei Yisrael been worthy, they could have crossed the Jordan that very day.

How so? Didn't more than a month remain in the 40 years that Bnei Yisrael were sentenced to remain in the desert? Those 40 years would not be over until Pesach time, which was about six weeks away.

The answer is that the halachah sometimes allows part of a year - even one day - to count as a year. Thus, because Bnei Yisrael now stood in the calendar year in which they were to enter Eretz Yisrael, they might have entered the Land at any time.

However, this is true only according to the opinion of the Talmudic sage (R' Eliezer) who holds the world was created, and the year begins, in the month of Tishrei. According to the sage (R' Yehoshua) who holds that the world was created in the month of Nissan, it was not now the same calendar year as when Bnei Yisrael would be permitted to enter the Land.

Which berachah is the correct blessing for water might depend upon this same dispute. When the Torah says, "Bereishit"/"In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth," does the Torah mean, "The first things that G-d created were the heavens and the earth," or does the Torah mean,

"In the first month [i.e., Tishrei], G-d created the heavens and the earth"? Arguably, it would thus be easier to say that "Bereishit" means "In Tishrei" because Bereishit 1:2 implies that water already existed when the heavens and earth were created!

Chazal teach that the world was created through ten "utterances" (of which "Bereishit" was the first), but that some things were created even beforehand in G-d's "thought." Was water one of these things? One who holds that the heavens and earth were the first physical creations, i.e., that "Bereishit" means "First," would answer negatively. According to that view, water must have been created through one of the ten "utterances," and the blessing on water surely can be, "That all was created by His word." However, if one holds that "Bereishit" means "In Tishrei," - which is consistent with the view that Bnei Yisrael could have entered Eretz Yisrael early because the 40th year already had begun in Tishrei - then maybe water was created first in G-d's "thought" (not by an "utterance") and the blessing on water is not, "That all was created by His word."

This is why it is necessary for the midrash on our verse to teach that the blessing on water is, nevertheless, "That all was created by His word." [The midrash does not explain why.]

(She'eilot Uteshuvot Meir Netivim, Vol. II)

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## An Astonishing Midrash

*"He afflicted you and let you hunger and He fed you the mahn that you did not know . . ."* (8:3) - This suggests that women should light candles on Friday evening.

Chazal say: A person who cannot see his food does not enjoy it as much as does someone who can see what he is eating. This is why Bnei Yisrael did not appreciate the mahn. Although the mahn could taste like almost anything that one desired, one could not see the thing that he desired and therefore did not attain the enjoyment which he sought.

This is one reason why candles are lit on Friday evening, so that we can see our food and enjoy it fully.

(Binat Nevonim)

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R' Yosef Kimchi z"l born approx. 4865/1105 - died approx. 4930/1170

R' Yosef ben Yitzchak Kimchi was a Tanach/Bible commentator and grammarian. He was born in Spain, but persecutions by the Almohad Moslem sect forced him to flee. He resettled in Narbonne, Provence (France), where he earned his livelihood as a teacher.

R' Yosef wrote Tanach commentaries explaining the plain meaning of the text and stressing

grammar and punctuation. Some of his works remain in manuscript and others are lost, known only through citations in the works of others. Only Sefer Chukah on Mishlei/Proverbs and a commentary on Iyov/Job have been published.

R' Yosef also wrote other works. In Sefer Ha'berit, R' Yosef refutes the arguments of non-Jews against Judaism and the misinterpretations of Biblical verses by missionaries. Sefer Ha'zikaron and Sefer Ha'gilui are grammatical works. At least one halachic opinion of R' Yosef is quoted in R' Yosef Karo's Bet Yosef.

R' Yosef was the father of R' Moshe Kimchi and of the well-known Tanach commentator and grammarian, R' David Kimchi ("Radak"). R' Yosef died when the latter was only about ten years old and he is quoted only rarely in his son's works. R' Moshe Kimchi was the primary teacher of his younger brother and is referred to in Radak's works as, "My teacher, my brother Rabbi Moshe." (Sources: The ArtScroll Rishonim, p. 162; Bet Yosef, Orach Chaim 127)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.

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