

# BIRCHOS HATORAH

by Joshua Kruger

## The Story

Aryeh was having a difficult morning. The smoke detector went off in his home just after he woke up. He ran outside with his whole family, most still in their pajamas. Thankfully there was no fire - just burnt toast in the kitchen.

By the time he came back into his house he was far behind schedule. Despite his attempts to rush, he arrived at school late. His class was almost finished praying *pesukei d'zimrah*. Hopefully there was still enough time to catch up and join them for the *amidah*. He put on his *tefilin* and just as he bowed to recite *borchu* he remembered that he had forgotten to say the *Birchos HaTorah* after he awoke at home.

"Oh no" he thought. "I know that I am not supposed to read sections of the *Torah* such as the *Shema* without first saying *Birchos HaTorah*, but if I recite the *birchos hatorah* now I don't think I'll be able to catch up in time for the *amidah*."

What should Aryeh do?

## Discussion

Q: What connection does our story have with the *Parasha*?

A: In the first aliyah, we find the pasuk **ה' אקרא הבו גודל לאלקינו** ("When I call out the name of G-d, discuss his greatness."). The Talmud in *Maseches Brachos* (21a) derives from this pasuk that anytime a Jewish person wants to learn Torah, he must first say a blessing. This is why we say *Birchos HaTorah* each morning.

Q: In the siddur, immediately following *Birchos HaTorah* we find the text of the *Birchas Kohanim*, and the section of *Eilu Devarim* (אלו דברים). Why do they come next?

A: When we make a *bracha*, we must perform the action of the *bracha* as quickly as possible. Therefore, after we make the *bracha* of *Birchos HaTorah*, we must study Torah as quickly as possible. When we read the section of *Birchas Kohanim* we are studying Torah because the words

come from the text of the Torah. When we read the section of Eilu Devarim we are reciting sections from *Mishna* and *Gemara*, which is the *Torah shebealpeh*. So within seconds of reciting the *Birchos HaTorah* we have performed the *mitzva* of learning Torah!

Q: What should Aryeh do?

A: *Tefilas Shacharis* includes its own special *Birchos HaTorah*. They are the blessings that we say before Shema: *Ahavat Olam* or *Ahavah Rabah*. Within those blessings we mention the words 'ותן לנו בלבנו בינה להבין ולהשכיל לשמע וללמד וללמד וכו', a special prayer for understanding Torah. If a person intends to be *yotzeh* the blessings over the Torah by reading these passages, there is no need to recite *Birchos HaTorah* again. However, one must actually learn some Torah immediately after finishing *Shacharis*, thereby engaging in the mitzvah with as little an interruption as possible. This indicates that the words were indeed recited as a blessing over the Torah (*Shulchan Aruch, Ohr Hachaim*, 47, with comments of *Mishna Berura* 14-16).

(Written by Josh and Tammy Kruger, in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer of the Institute for Dayanim, based on the following article by Rabbi Aryeh

Citron: [http://m.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/986857/jewish/The-Blessings-on-the-Torah.htm](http://m.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/986857/jewish/The-Blessings-on-the-Torah.htm))