1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

PARSHAS EIKEV – HOW TO MAKE A BERACHA

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Mitzvah of Birchas Hamazon is mentioned in this week's Parsha. It is a Mitzvah Mide'oraysah – mandated by the Torah. "Ve'achalta vesavata uveirachta es Hashem Elokecha – You will eat, and you will be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d" (Devarim 8:10). All the other berachos (with perhaps the exception of Birchas Hatorah) are Miderabanan – mandated by Chazal.

While we are on the topic of berachos, it would be worthwhile to examine the berachos that we recite. Did you ever eat something and a few minutes later ask yourself, "Did I make a beracha rishona before eating it?" or "Did I recite a beracha acharona afterwards?" It happens to most, if not all of us. Don't panic! The Shulchan Aruch has got your back. (Or you could consult the excellent English sefer "Halachos of Brochos" by Rabbi Bodner.) There is an answer for every scenario. Indeed, it is very refreshing to realize that the Shulchan Aruch deals with the foibles of people like us.

However, Rav Yaakov Galinsky finds this scenario rather lamentable. He relates the following story to demonstrate his point. After the Chasam Sofer gave his daily shiur, he would go to his study to look into the halachic questions sent to him from all over the world. His gabbai would place a plate with a piece of cake on the table next to him. Once, the yetzer hara got the best of the gabbai and he decided to eat the cake. He was hoping that the Chasam Sofer, who was so immersed in his learning, would not notice. However, after the Chasam Sofer had finished his deliberations, he looked at the plate and noticed that the cake was gone. He asked the gabbai what happened to the cake. The gabbai, who was caught off guard, suggested that the Chasam Sofer had eaten it. The Chasam Sofer was adamant: "Impossible! It is true that I really cannot remember if I ate the cake, but I definitely would remember if I had recited a beracha."

What is the reason for the difference between the Chasam Sofer and us? Rav Galinsky explains that the Chasam Sofer was cognizant of the fact that we were put in this world for one purpose - to serve Hashem. The food we eat and the other activities we engage in are only to enable us to fulfill our true mission in life. We, however, are focused on the physical world and perform the Mitzvos merely to meet our obligations to Hashem. In the end, it boils down to our true priorities.

However, even if are not on the madreiga of the Chasam Sofer, we must still pay more attention to the way we make berachos. We all believe that the world belongs to Hashem – "Lashem Haaretz umelo'ah – To Hashem belongs the earth and all that it is filled with" (Tehillim 24:1). If we want to partake of His bounty, we must, at the very least, acknowledge Him as the Provider of all the food that we eat, and demonstrate our gratitude. We do this by trying our best to recite the berachos over food with concentration and sincerity. If we do, we probably will not forget if we made a beracha.

You can bring a zechus refuah shelaima for Sandy Bruck - Shalom ben Tila Leah – and for all who need a refuah sheleima by signing up for a weekly erev Shabbos contribution at https://pay.banquest.com/lightuptheworld and by joining the 2-3 minute daily shiur on the writings of the Chofetz Chaim.

THE BEAR ESCAPE

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion discusses the wild animals that were in the desert. This leads us to the following true story:

A zoo in Israel was undergoing some new construction on their animal exhibits. Due to the construction, many of the animals were moved to temporary cages. Among the temporary cages, a bear was placed in a cage next to a cage of rare birds.

One day, a security guard noticed that the lock between the bear's cage and the bird's cage had somehow become loose. The bear managed to break into the bird exhibit. The security guard watched in horror as, one by one, the bear began to eat these extremely rare birds. Instinctively, the guard panicked, fearing that the bear would devour all the birds. He quickly pulled out his gun and, with one shot, killed the bear.

Initially, the guard felt proud of himself, thinking that he had saved these rare birds. However, after the dust settled, the zoo administrator approached him and said, "I know you meant well, but the truth is, you've caused us a significant loss. This bear was extremely rare—there are only a few of its kind left in the entire world. While the birds are rare, they don't cost nearly as much as the bear. All of them together cost only a fraction of what the bear was worth."

The security guard later approached Rabbi Zilberstein: Was he obligated to pay for the damage caused by killing the bear? On one hand, he believed he was saving the zooa lot of money by protecting the birds, but he didn't realize that the birds were worth far less than the bear. On the other hand, practically speaking, he did cause the zoo a great financial loss.

What do you think? Is the security guard obligated to pay for the loss of the bear? See Upiryo Matok Devarim page 272.

Regarding last week's question about taking the parts from the car that was about to be crushed for recy-

cling metal, Rav Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Devarim page 266) concludes with a "tzarich iyun, undecided" but he says that it seems that the owner of the car would not be able to extract the money for the parts because the parts had no market value right before they were going to be crushed.

THE POWER OF SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Rav Yechiel Benedikt, born in 1907 in Europe, emigrated to Eretz Yisroel in 1938. Among his choshuva children was his son in-law, Reb Meir Soloveichik, son of the Brisker Rav. He settled in the area of Tel Aviv and developed a close relationship with the Chazon Ish whom he considered his Rebbi.

It was not easy raising a family in the new fledgling country of Israel so he went to his Rebbi, the Chazon Ish for pointers on what are the most important things he should focus on to insure his children grow in the proper spirit of Torah.

The Chazon Ish recommended that he ask this question to the Belzer Rebbe, Reb Arele Belzer who arrived in Eretz Yisroel after the war. The Chazon Ish then asked Rav Yechiel to please get back to him on what the Belzer Rebbe would advise.

The Belzer Rebbe told Reb Yechiel that the Shabbos table is a critical component in raising children. "If your Shabbos table is filled with joyous zemiros and pleasant Torah talk in a relaxed atmosphere you will have much hatzlacha in raising your children."

As told by his grandson Reb Yosef Tzvi Benedikt. This Sunday, 21 Av, will be the yahrtzeit of Reb Arele Belzer. Reprinted with Permission from Table Talk.

NEW ZMAN / SEMESTER

On Monday August 19th, we began the new Zman. Shiurim in Mishnayos, Gemara, Halacha, Tefilla, Parsha, Tehillim, Mussar and more! M-F 9:20 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. Please join us! To register or if you have any questions please contact Rabbi Uri Greenspan - Rosh Bais Medrash. rabbigreenspan@firstseder.org 732-407-3178

Good Shabbos!