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Brachos Daf 35

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**Tzvi Gershon Ben Yoel (Harvey Felsen) o”h**

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## Mishna

In what manner are blessings recited over fruit? On the fruits of the tree one says: [Baruch atah Hashem etc.] *Borei peri ha'eitz* -- 'the One Who creates the fruit of the tree,' except for wine, for on wine one says: *Borei peri ha-gafen* -- 'the One Who creates the fruit of the vine.' On the fruits of the ground one says: *Borei peri ha'adamah* -- 'the One Who creates the fruit of the ground,' except for bread, for on bread one says: *Ha-motzi lechem min ha'aretz* -- 'the One Who brings forth bread from the ground.' And on vegetables one says: *Borei peri ha'adamah* -- 'the One Who creates the fruit of the ground.' Rabbi Yehudah, however, says: 'the One Who creates species of herbage.' (35a)

## Source for Blessings on Food

The Gemora asks: From where is this derived (*that one must recite a blessing before eating*)?

The Gemora cites a braisa: It is written: [And in the fourth year all its fruit] shall be holy, for giving praise to Hashem. This teaches that they require a blessing both before and after (*eating them*). From here Rabbi Akiva said: A man is forbidden to taste anything before reciting a blessing over it.

The Gemora asks: But is this the lesson to be derived from these words 'shall be holy, for giving praise'? Surely they (*the double expression of praise – hilulim*) are required for the following [*orlah - the fruit that grows from a tree; the first three years of its life, they are forbidden for all benefit*]: One (of these expressions) is to teach that the Merciful One has declared (*regarding the fruits of the fourth year*): Redeem it (*by replacing the "hey" in hilulim with a "ches," which now states "chilul," meaning redemption*) and then eat it, and the other one teaches that something which requires song requires redemption (*this refers to grapes of the fourth year, for wine is something that the Levites sing songs of praise over in the Temple, when the wine libations which accompanied the sacrifices were poured on the Altar*), but

something that does not require song does not require redemption, as has been taught by Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini in the name of Rabbi Yonasan, for Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini said in the name of Rabbi Yonasan: From where do we know that a song of praise is sung only over wine? It is because it is written: And the vine said to them (*as a parable*): Should I withhold my wine which gladdens God and men? If it gladdens men, how does it gladden God? From this we learn that a song of praise is sung only over wine.

The Gemora qualifies its question: Now, the challenge can be answered according to the one who teaches (*the text of the Mishnayos, as saying*): the (*fruits of*) saplings of the fourth year (*for if he holds that the laws of orlah apply to the fruits of all trees – not only grapes from a vine, obviously, he does not expound the 'hilulim' verse to be referring to wine, and therefore it is available to teach the requirement of blessings on food*), but for he who teaches (*the text of the Mishnayos, as saying*): the (*fruits of a*) vineyard of the fourth year (*and these laws only apply to grapes*), what is there to be said (*for he obviously derives that from this verse*)? For it has been stated: Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Shimon the son of Rebbe taught (*the text of the Mishna*) differently: One taught: the (*fruits of a*) vineyard of the fourth year, whereas the other taught: the (*fruits of*) saplings of the fourth year.

The Gemora qualifies further: And even according to the one who teaches the (*fruits of a*) vineyard of the fourth year, the challenge can be answered if he avails himself of the following *gezeirah shavah*<sup>1</sup>, for it has been taught in a braisa: Rebbe says: It says there (*by the fruits of the fourth year*): that it may increase for you its produce (*tevu'aso*), and it says elsewhere (*regarding kilayim – the prohibition of mixed species in a vineyard*): the produce (*u'sevu'as*) of the vineyard. Just as there (*regarding kilayim*), 'produce' refers to the vineyard, so too here, it refers to the vineyard. Accordingly, one 'hillul' is now leftover to teach us that a blessing is required (*on food*). But if he does not avail

<sup>1</sup> one of the thirteen principles of Biblical hermeneutics; it links two similar words from dissimilar verses in the Torah



himself of this *gezeirah shavah* (and yet he maintains that the fruits of the fourth year apply only to a vineyard), how can he derive the requirement to recite a blessing on food (for he, evidently, uses the word 'hillul' for that)?

The *Gemora* counters: And even if he does avail himself of this *gezeirah shavah*, while we have found that a blessing is required after eating (using the word 'hillul'), from where would we learn that a blessing is required before eating? [Rashi explains that with only one source available, we would use it for the blessing after eating (rather than before), for we do find that there is a Biblical requirement for a blessing after one eats bread.]

The *Gemora* answers: This is not difficult, for we can derive it by using a *kal vachomer*<sup>2</sup> argument: If one recites a blessing when he is satiated, how much more so ought he to do so when he is hungry? [So, even if we would have only one 'hillul' available, we can derive the blessing after and before from there; for once we know that there is an obligation to bless after the food is eaten, there is certainly one beforehand as well!]

The *Gemora* asks: We have found a proof for the requirement of a blessing (before and after the eating of) the produce of the vineyard; from where do we know that a blessing is required for other species as well?

The *Gemora* answers: It can be derived from the vineyard. Just as the vineyard, which is something that one enjoys, and it requires a blessing, so too everything that is enjoyed requires a blessing.

The *Gemora* asks: But this may be refuted, for how can we derive from a vineyard, seeing that it is subject to the obligation of the *oleilos* (a small, underdeveloped cluster of grapes, which must go to the poor)!? [Perhaps other foods that are not subject to this law do not have the requirements of blessings either?]

The *Gemora* answers: The instance of standing grain (which is not subject to the *oleilos* obligation, but yet, one recites a blessing before eating bread) will prove otherwise!

The *Gemora* asks: How can you cite the instance of standing grain, seeing that it is subject to the obligation of *challah* (a portion of dough which is separated and then given to a Kohen; has halachos like *terumah*)?

<sup>2</sup> literally translated as light and heavy, or lenient and stringent; an a fortiori argument; it is one of the thirteen principles of biblical hermeneutics; it employs the following reasoning: if a specific stringency applies in a usually lenient case, it must certainly apply in a more serious case

The *Gemora* answers: The instance of the vineyard (which is not subject to the *challah* obligation, but yet, one recites a blessing before eating grapes) will prove otherwise! And the argument repeats itself! The distinguishing feature of the first instance is not like that of the second, and the distinguishing feature of the second instance is not like that of the first. The feature common to both is that both are things that one enjoys, and they require a blessing; similarly, everything that is enjoyed requires a blessing.

The *Gemora* asks: But this (derivation from a) common feature cannot be compared to other instances, because there is with them the common feature that they are offered on the Altar (the wine as libations, and the standing grain in a *minchah* offering)!? We may then derive also the olive from the fact that it too is offered on the Altar (for it is mixed into a *minchah* offering). [However, we will not be able to derive the blessing requirement for any other food that does not have an Altar aspect!?!]

The *Gemora* interjects: But is the requirement of a blessing for olives derived from the fact that it is offered on the Altar? It is explicitly designated *kerem* – vineyard, as it is written: And he burned up from the piles of produce to the standing grain to the olive *kerem*? [Accordingly, olives should be included in the exposition of 'hillul' that they require a blessing, for there, it states 'kerem' as well!?!]

Rav Pappa replied: An olive grove can be called a *kerem zayis*, but it cannot be called simply *kerem*.

The *Gemora* returns to the issue at hand, and states that at any event, the difficulty remains: How can you learn other foods from this (derivation from a) common feature, for it cannot be compared to other instances, because there is with them the common feature that they are offered on the Altar (the wine as libations, and the standing grain in a *minchah* offering)!?

Rather, it is derived from the seven species. Just as each one of the seven species are something that one enjoys, and it requires a blessing, so too everything that is enjoyed requires a blessing.

The *Gemora* asks: How can you derive it from the seven species, seeing that they are subject to the obligation of *bikkurim* (the first ripe fruits of any of the seven species with which the Torah praises Eretz Yisroel, which had to be brought to the Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim)? [Perhaps other foods that are not subject to this law do not have the requirements of blessings either?] And furthermore, granted that we may derive from them that a blessing is to be recited after one eats (for that is what is written in the Torah), how do we know that there is a requirement to recite a blessing even beforehand?



The Gemora answers: This (*second question*) is not difficult, for we can derive it by using a *kal vachomer* argument: If one recites a blessing when he is satiated, how much more so ought he to do so when he is hungry?

The Gemora asks: And even according to the one who teaches (*the text of the Mishnayos, as saying*): the (fruits of) **saplings** of the fourth year (*and therefore the 'hillul' verse is available to teach the requirement of blessings on food*), we may grant that it is a valid source (*to require a blessing*) with regard to anything planted, but from where does he derive it with regard to things that are not planted, such as meat, eggs and fish?

Rather, the Gemora concludes, it is based upon the logic that it is forbidden for a man to enjoy anything from this world without reciting a blessing beforehand.

The Gemora cites a *braisa*: It is forbidden for a man to enjoy anything from this world without reciting a blessing beforehand, and if anyone does enjoy anything from this world without reciting a blessing beforehand, he has committed *me'ilah* (*the prohibition of deriving benefit from consecrated Temple property*). What is his remedy? He should consult a sage.

The Gemora asks: What will a sage do for him – after he has already committed the transgression?

Rather, Rava said: The *braisa* means that he should consult a sage beforehand, so that he should teach him the proper blessings, and therefore, he will not come to commit *me'ilah*.

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: Whoever enjoys anything from this world without reciting a blessing beforehand is considered as if he derived benefit from consecrated property belonging to God in Heaven, since it is written: *The earth and its fullness belong to Hashem*.

Rabbi Levi contrasted two verses. It is written: *The earth and its fullness belong to Hashem*, and it is also written: *The heavens are the heavens of Hashem, but the earth He has given to mankind!*? He explained that there is no difficulty, for one verse (*that states that the earth belongs to Hashem*) is referring to before a blessing has been recited, and the other verse (*which states that the earth belongs to mankind*) is referring to after a blessing has been recited.

Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa said: Whoever enjoys anything from this world without reciting a blessing beforehand is considered as if he is robbing the Holy One, Blessed be He (*for he is stealing the blessing which is due to God*), and the Assembly of Israel, as it is written: *He who robs his father and his mother and says, "It is no transgression," is the same as a companion to a destroying man*; and 'father' is none

other but the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is written: *Is He not your father, your master? And 'mother' is none other than the Assembly of Israel, as it is written: Heed, my son, the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the teachings of your mother*. What is the meaning of 'he is the same as a companion to a destroying man'? Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa answered: He is the companion of Yeravam son of Nevat, who destroyed Israel's loyalty to their Father in Heaven. (35a – 35b)

## Doing the Will of God

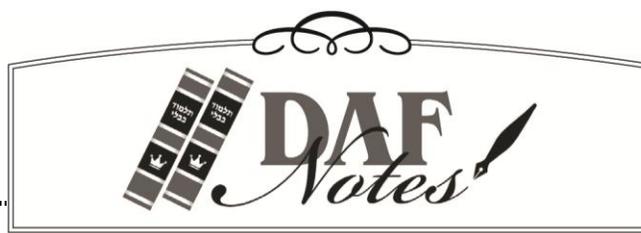
Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa pointed out a contradiction. It is written: *I will take back My grain in its time* etc., and it is written elsewhere: *And you shall gather in your grain* etc.!? [*Is it God's grain, or is it man's grain?*]

The Gemora answers: There is no difficulty, for the one verse refers to a time when Israel does the will of the Omnipresent (*and that is when the verse refers to it as "your" grain*), and the other verse refers to a time when Israel does not perform the will of the Omnipresent (*and therefore, the grain belongs to God*).

The Gemora cites a *braisa*: *And you shall gather in your grain*. What is to be derived from these (*seemingly superfluous*) words? Since it is written: *This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth*, I might have thought that these words are to be taken literally (*that one should be occupied with Torah study every single second, and one would not have any time whatsoever to earn a livelihood*); therefore it is written: *And you shall gather in your grain*, which implies that you are to combine the study of Torah with the way of the world (*earning a livelihood*); these are the words of Rabbi Yishmael. Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: Can that really be? If a man plows in the plowing season, and sows in the sowing season, and harvests in the harvesting season, and threshes in the threshing season, and winnows at the time that the wind is blowing, what is to become of the Torah? [*There is very little time left to study Torah!?*] Rather, when Israel does the will of the Omnipresent, their work is performed by others (*and then they will have time to study Torah*), as it is written: *And strangers shall arise and shepherd your flocks* etc., and when Israel does not perform the will of the Omnipresent, their work is done by themselves, as it is written: *And you shall gather in your grain*. And this is not all, but the work of others is also done by them, as it is written: *And you shall serve your enemies* etc.

Abaye said: Many have followed the advice of Rabbi Yishmael, and they were successful; others have followed Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, and they were not successful.

Raba said to the Rabbis (*his students*): I would ask you not to appear before me during *Nissan* and *Tishrei*, so that you may not be worried about your food supply during the rest of the year. [*Nissan was the*



time that they harvested the grain, and Tishrei was the time that they pressed the grapes and olives.]

Rabbah bar bar Chanah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, who said it in the name of Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Il'ai: Come and see the difference between the earlier generations and the later generations, for the earlier generations made the study of the Torah their primary concern and their work was subsidiary to it, and both (their Torah knowledge and their livelihood) prospered in their hands. The later generations made their work their primary concern and their study of the Torah was subsidiary to it, and neither prospered in their hands.

And Rabbah bar bar Chanah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, who said it in the name of Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Il'ai: Come and see the difference between the earlier generations (who searched out ways to obligate themselves in mitzvos) and the later generations (who looked for ways to become exempt), for the earlier generations would bring their produce (from the field) in the normal manner (through the gates of the courtyard and the doors of the house) in order to make them subject to the laws of *ma'aser*, whereas the later generations would bring their produce through the roofs, through the courtyards, and through storage yards in order to exempt them from the laws of *ma'aser*, for Rabbi Yannai said: *Tevel* (untithed produce) is not subject to the laws of *ma'aser* until they "see" the face of the house, as it is written: *I have removed that which is holy from the house*. Rabbi Yochanan, however, says: Even the courtyard (in front of the house) can render the produce subject to the laws of *ma'aser*, as it is written: *and they shall eat within your gates and be sated*. (35b)

## Blessing on Wine and Oil

The *Mishna* had stated: except for wine (for on wine one says: *Borei peri ha-gafen* -- 'the One Who creates the fruit of the vine.')

The *Gemora* asks: Why is there a difference made for wine? If you will say that it is because it has changed for the better (from grapes to wine) and therefore the blessing is changed as well; but in the case of (olive) oil as well, it has changed for the better (from olives to oil), and yet the blessing is not different, as Rav Yehudah has said in the name of Shmuel, and so Rabbi Yitzchak stated in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: the blessing said over olive oil is *Borei peri ha'eitz* -- 'the One Who creates the fruit of the tree.'

The *Gemora* answers: They said that in the case of oil it is not possible to change the blessing; for what shall be the text of the blessing? Shall we say: 'the One Who creates the fruit of the olive'? We cannot, for the fruit itself is called olive (and it is man who created the oil from the olive, not God).

The *Gemora* asks: But why can't we say over it, 'the One Who creates the fruit of the olive tree'?

Rather (the reason is), said Mar Zutra, that wine (besides that it is changed for the better, it also) provides sustenance, but oil does not.

The *Gemora* asks: But oil does not provide sustenance? Have we not learned in a *Mishna* that one who vows to abstain from sustenance is allowed to partake of water and salt, and we asked on this as follows: Water and salt alone are not called sustenance, but all other foods are called sustenance? May we not say that this then is a refutation of Rav and Shmuel, for they say that the blessing *Borei minei mezonos* -- 'the One Who creates various kinds of sustenance is recited only over the five species of grain. And Rav Huna solved the problem by saying that the *Mishna* refers to one who says, "Anything which sustains is prohibited to me," (for all foods besides for water and salt do provide some sustenance; it is the five grains which provide the primary sustenance for man), which indicates that oil does provide some sustenance (so why doesn't it have its own blessing)?

Rather, the *Gemora* answers, the difference is that wine satiates, and oil does not.

The *Gemora* asks: But does wine satiate? Didn't Rava use to drink wine (the entire day) on the Eve of the Passover in order that he might whet his appetite and eat *matzah* with a great desire?

The *Gemora* answers: A large quantity (of wine) whets an appetite, whereas a small quantity satiates.

The *Gemora* asks: But does it in fact satiate at all? Is it not written: *And wine gladdens the heart of man ... and bread, man's heart it does satiate*. This shows that it is bread which satiates, not wine?

The *Gemora* answers: The fact is that wine does both; it satiates and gladdens, whereas bread satiates but does not gladden.

The *Gemora* asks: If that is the case (that wine satiates), let us recite the three blessings (of *Birchas Hamazon*) after it?

The *Gemora* answers: People do not make it the basis of their meal.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak asked Rava: Suppose a man would make it the basis of his meal, what then?

He replied: When Eliyahu comes, he will tell us whether it can really serve as a basis of a meal; at present, at any rate, such a thought is considered abnormal by all other men (and therefore *birchas Hamazon* is not recited).

It was stated above: Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel, and so Rabbi Yitzchak stated in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: the blessing said over olive oil is *Borei peri ha'eitz* -- 'the One Who creates the fruit of the tree.'

The *Gemora* asks: How are we to understand this? If you will say that he was drinking it, but surely, it injures him, as it has been taught in a *braisa*: If one drinks oil of *terumah*, he repays the principal, but does not add the fifth (*which is the halachah for consuming terumah*). If one anoints himself with oil of *terumah*, he repays the principal and also a fifth in addition. [Evidently, the drinking is not referred to as eating, for it injures him, and that is why he does not pay the additional fifth!]? Rather, perhaps he consumed it together with bread (*and that is why a blessing is recited*)? The *Gemora* disagrees, for in that case, the bread would be the primary ingredient and the oil would be subsidiary to it, and we have learned in a *Mishna*: This is the general rule: If one food is primary and another food is eaten as a subsidiary to it, a blessing is recited over the primary food, and this suffices also for the subordinate one!? Rather, we must suggest that he was drinking it with *anigaron*, for Rabbah bar Shmuel has stated: *Anigaron* is a soup made from cooked beets; *oxygaron* is a soup made from the water of cooked vegetables (*so perhaps he mixed the oil into the anigaron*)? The *Gemora* counters that In that case the *anigaron* would be the primary and the oil subsidiary to it, and we have learned in a *Mishna* that this is the general rule: If one food is primary and another food is eaten as a subsidiary to it, a blessing is recited over the primary food, and this suffices also for the subordinate one!? Rather, we must be referring to a case where a man felt pain in his throat (*and he was drinking this mixture to sooth his throat*), since it has been taught in a *braisa*: If one feels a pain in his throat, he should not ease it directly with oil on *Shabbos* (*by sipping the oil and keeping it there for a short while until he spits it out; this is forbidden, for the Rabbis decreed against performing a therapeutic procedure on Shabbos, lest one will come to grind herbs, which is a Biblical prohibition*), but he should pour plenty of oil into the *anigaron* and swallow it (*for it is not apparent that he is doing it for healing or soothing*).

The *Gemora* asks: This is obvious (*that in this case, ha'eitz is recited, for the oil is the primary ingredient*)!?

The *Gemora* answers: You might have thought that since he intended it as a remedy, he should not recite any blessing over it at all; therefore we are told that since he has derived pleasure from it, he is required to recite a blessing. (35b – 36a)

## INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

### *Who Brings Forth Bread from Heaven*

By: Meoros HaDaf HaYomi

Since bread is made from grains that grow from the ground, its appropriate *brachah* is *hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz* – Who brings forth bread from the earth. What *brachah* did our forefathers recite over the manna, which fell from Heaven? Many commentaries and *poskim* have discussed this issue, and have even found implications that are relevant to us.

Later in our *masechta*, Rav Nachman states that Moshe Rabbeinu enacted the first *brachah* of Birkas HaMazon when the manna descended from Heaven (Berachos 48b). It is therefore clear that the Children of Israel recited Birkas HaMazon after eating manna.

Rav Yosef Engel raises the question that Birkas HaMazon is only recited over bread made from the five species of grain: wheat, barley, oats, spelt and rye. The manna was not made from any of these species, nor did it necessarily even taste like them. Our Sages tell us that it would miraculously taste like whatever one would desire. Even if a person would eat manna with the intention that it taste like whole-wheat bread, it is questionable whether Birkas HaMazon should be recited, since the manna was not intrinsically bread. Taste should not be the factor that decides a *brachah*, but rather substance. If a strawberry were to taste like bread, would we recite Birkas HaMazon over it?

Rav Engel concludes that Rav Nachman's opinion that Birkas HaMazon was recited over manna is based on the assumption that the manna did not only taste like whatever food one would want, it actually transformed into that food (There is such an opinion in *Maseches Yoma* 75a). After the manna was transformed into bread, clearly Birkas HaMazon was recited over it. (Gilyonei HaShas, 48b)

This conclusion seems to be supported by the *Mirkeves HaMishnah* (Commentary on *Mechilta*, parshas Beshalach), who writes that the *brachah* recited before eating manna depended on the taste desired, because the manna did not just assume the taste, but essentially changed into that substance. For this same reason, some argue that **no** *brachah* should be recited before eating manna. If a person would make a *brachah* of *hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz* with the intention of eating bread, he might well then decide that he would prefer a juicy peach; the manna would transform into a peach and his *brachah* would be *le'vatalah*... (Pardes Yosef, Beshalach 16b. See also Rabbeinu Bachaye, Shemos 16:12)



Other opinions hold that the manna was specifically bread (Rabbeinu Chaim Falaji in his *Nefesh HaChaim*, *Mem*, 106). This would seem to be supported by the verses, "Behold I will make rain for you bread from the Heavens" (Shemos 16:4); "and bread of Heaven he satiated them" (Tehillim 105:40), and "He gave them grain from the Heavens" (Tehillim 78:24). Rabeinu Ephraim writes that the manna had the appearance of wheat grains mixed together like dough with much water (*Chomas Anach* by the Chida, Tehillim 78)

**Manna will be served in the Feast of the Leviathan:** Some *Acharonim* question whether the standard *berachos* of *borei pri ha'eitz* or *hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz* are applicable to manna. Regardless of its taste or substance, the manna did not grow from the ground nor from a tree, but rather it descended from Heaven (Chaye Adam 152, in *Nishmas Adam*). Indeed, the *Sefer Chassidim* writes (1640 in *Mekitzei Nirdamim* edition) that the *brachah* recited over manna was *Hamotzi lechem min hashamayim* – Who brings forth bread from the Heavens. The Rama' of Pano writes that we will once again recite this *brachah* - when the manna put away in the jar is served at the Feast of the Leviathan. (Cited in *Bnei Yissaschar*, *Maamarei haShabbasos* 3)

In the course of his discussion of the *brachah* recited over the manna, Chaye Adam (*ibid*) questions whether *hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz* may be recited over bread made from grain grown in non-perforated pots. Since the grain was not grown in the ground, perhaps this *brachah* would be inappropriate.

**Manna completed its growth on the ground:** *Sifsei Tzaddik* (parshas Beshalach) writes that he had once thought that *hamotzi lechem min hashamayim* was recited over manna, until he discovered the Seforno's statement that one who gathered manna on Shabbos transgressed the prohibition against harvesting. This prohibition applies to any case where someone detaches something from its place of growth. It would therefore seem from the Seforno that although the manna descended from Heaven, it completed its growth on the ground. Therefore, *hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz* is the appropriate *brachah*. (See *Avnei Nezer*, O.C. 130; *Piskei Teshuva* 280, 281)

## DAILY MASHAL

### *Wishes to be Devout*

Rav Yehudah says: If someone wants to be pious he should fulfill the laws discussed in Tractate *Nezikin*. Rava says: He should fulfill that which is written in *Pirkei Avos* (*Ethics of our Fathers*). Some say: He should fulfill the laws of Tractate *Brochos*.

The Orach Yesharim explains: The *Mishna* in *Avos* (1:2) states: Shimon HaTzadik was from the remnant of the Men of the Great Assembly and he used to say: On three things the world stands on Torah, Service (*Avodah*), and Acts of Kindliness (*Gemilas Chassadim*).

Two of these are matters that are between man and Hashem. They are: Torah and *Tefillah*. Acts of kindness is a matter that is between one man and his fellow. Rav Yehudah is teaching us that in order to be regarded as a devout person, it is not sufficient to be pious in matters that are between man and Hashem. One must be scrupulously ethical in matters that are between his fellow man as well. And quite possibly, he is telling us that a person must first be heedful of respecting his fellow man, and only then can he elevate himself further by fulfilling those laws that govern the relationship between man and Hashem.

In his sefer, *Boruch She'amar*, Harav Boruch Epstein asks: Why is it that by observing these three areas, one is regarded as devout? *Pirkei Avos* deals with common sense, practical, and intelligent behavior. Observing the laws of *Brochos* is also not an issue of piety, since our *Gemora* states: One who eats without a *brachah* is robbing from the Almighty." And finally, civil laws that relate to *Nezikin*, damages, are certainly not issues of piety, but rather of civil obedience!?

He answers, as explained by Reb Hershel Solnica that the *Gemora* has a deeper and more subtle meaning. In *Pirkei Avos*, we are taught: A fence to wisdom is silence. This seems to be a matter of common sense. However, a Jew with a soul understands this to mean that not only is silence golden, but words must be measured and be dignified. Too many pious, religious, and fine Jews lose control of their mouth and lavish its use with *Lashon Hara*, idle talk, and abusive and vulgar language. *Brochos* is not simply thanking God for what we eat and what we have, but saying that we appreciate these gifts, for were it not for the grace of God, we wouldn't be able to survive an hour.

Observing civil law – *Nezikin* - implies more than merely not damaging another's possessions. It implies that we should consider the money or property of your neighbor as if it were yours. We don't merely avoid breaking another's objects. Rather, we care and respect it as we respect our own. These attitudes constitute the core of the soul of a Jew. They do not constitute *halachah* and they are difficult to concretize, but they are clear to the sensitive eye and heart.