The Shul
at the Lubavitch Center
6701 Old Pimlico Road
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www.chabadshul.org

August 1, 2026 **Eikev** **18 Av, 5786**

Bread From Earth, Blessings From Heaven

Almost all the blessings in the Jewish prayer book were instituted by our sages and are not Biblically mandated. The only exception is the commandment to bless G-d after eating bread, as Moses tells us in this week's Torah portion:

> And you will eat and be sated, and you shall bless the L-rd, your G-d, for the good land He has given you.

Art by Rivka Korf Studio

Over time, the blessing (often called Grace After Meals) evolved, and is now a series of four blessings composed over more than a millennium. The Talmud explains who composed each blessing and when. We will focus on the first two:

> With regard to the origins of the four blessings of Grace after Meals, Rav Nachman said: Moses instituted for Israel the first blessing of "Who feeds all," when the manna descended for them and they needed to thank G-d. Joshua instituted the blessing of the land when they entered Eretz Yisrael.

Why on earth do we thank G-d with a blessing about bread from the heavens? The bread we eat, bread grown from the ground with great investment of toil and time, is categorically different from the manna in the desert, which miraculously descended from the heavens each morning of their 40-year sojourn. Why then do we say the first blessing, composed by Moses for the miraculous manna, and not begin directly with the blessing composed by Joshua as he and the Jews entered Israel and ate natural bread grown from the land?

Perhaps the sages included the blessing composed by Moses because it captures the essence of the purpose for the blessing.

While much of the previous Torah portion is dedicated to reminding the Jewish people never to forget the awesome experience at Sinai, this week's portion focuses on the spiritual dangers of entering the land of Israel. The miracles of the Exodus from Egypt and the journey through the wilderness were about to end. Moses cautioned the people that in the Land of Israel there would be great temptation to attribute success to their own power and wisdom. Now that they would be growing bread by the sweat of their own brows, they might forget about G-d and attribute a successful harvest to their own ability to navigate and channel nature's force. Moses therefore reminds us that when we eat natural bread, when we are satiated, when we enjoy blessing, we must recognize G-d as its source.

Perhaps this is why the Sages included Moses's blessings for the manna—the bread from the heavens—together with Joshua's blessings for the bread of the land of Israel, the bread of the earth. For the purpose of the Grace After Meals is to recognize that the natural bread is a blessing from G-d no less than the bread from the heavens. Both Moses and Joshua teach us to recognize the truth: that G-d is manifest not only in miracles but also in nature; not only in the bread from the heavens but also in the bread from the earth.

(by Rabbi Menachem Feldman from www.chabad.org)

The Spice Of Life

In the second portion of the Krias Shema, we find the instruction to constantly contemplate and internalize the Torah and its precepts. The Talmud interprets the word "vesamtem" – "you shall place" as "vesam tam" – "a perfect elixir"; the Torah is the ideal cure for the "yetzer hara" – "evil inclination". The following analogy is offered by the Talmud: A father educating his child finds it necessary to strike him. The father then instructs his child to place a compress on the inflicted wound, saying to his son "As long as the compress is in place, you may eat and drink what you desire, you may bathe with hot or cold water, and you need not fear that your wounds will become infected. However, if you remove the compress, your health is at risk." Similarly, Hashem says "My son, I created the evil inclination and I created the Torah as its 'tavlin' – 'antidote'".

(continued on the other side)

We generally understand that Hashem created the Torah for man to follow, with the yetzer hara as the obstacle which man must overcome in his pursuit of Torah study and adherence. However, from the aforementioned passage in the Talmud, we see that this perception is not entirely correct. The Sages of the Talmud describe the Torah as a "tavlin" – literally, "condiment" or "spice" used to enhance the flavor of the main course. It would appear that the primary creation is the yetzer hara, with the Torah being the necessary but secondary creation. This notion is substantiated by the parable given in the Talmud; the child's punishment, which is analogous to the yetzer hara, is a necessary facet of his education, while the compress serves as the counterbalance or antidote which prevents the beating from having a negative consequence. How do we understand the idea that the Torah is merely the spice that enhances the yetzer hara's natural flavors?

The Talmud states that the yetzer hara threatens to overpower a person every day and kill him. What function of the yetzer hara makes its existence necessary?

Hashem created man with an enormous potential for accomplishment. Man's overwhelming awareness of his capabilities, coupled with the fear that he may not be able to live up to his potential, leads him on a path of self-destruction. Man indulges in behaviors which either block out the awareness of his capabilities, or demean him to the extent that he can rationalize that the expectations of him are unfounded.

The part within us which makes us aware of our potential is the yetzer hara. Left unharnessed, this awareness develops into man's most destructive force, the destruction he wreaks upon himself. The Torah is the tool through which we can actualize and develop our potential. Without the yetzer hara making us aware of our potential, the Torah's capacity to actualize and develop that potential would not be utilized. Our Sages therefore confer upon the yetzer hara the significance of being Hashem's primary creation for without the aspirations of what he can become man's potential would be wasted.

(by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Weekly Ladies Shabbat Afternoon Parsha Shiur
given by Rebbitzen Leah Kaplan.

5:30 p.m. at her home – 6509 Deancroft Road.
Come and enjoy refreshments and social time.

Yahrzeits This Week:

Major Michael Young	24 Av - Thursday night / Friday	for father	Yehuda ben Mordechi HaLevi

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 7/31 — 17 Av
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 8/1 —18 Av
Shacharit 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:37 a.m.
Minchah — 7:50 p.m.
Shiur — after Minchah
Shkiah — 8:19 p.m.
Ma'ariv — 9:04 p.m.

Sunday, 8/2 — 19 Av
Shacharit —8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:00 p.m.

Monday, 8/3 — 20 Av
Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, 8/4 — 21 Av
Shacharit— 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, 8/5 — 22 Av
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, 8/6 — 23 Av
Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:00 p.m.

Friday, 8/7 — 24 Av
Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Shabbat Candles — 7:53 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.