

This week's issue is dedicated *L'iluy Nishmas Binyamin Yisrael ben Shlomo Halevi (Gonsber) ז"ל, 5th Yabrzeit 10 Tamuz* &
L'iluy Nishmas Shlomo Zalman ben Harav Mordechai Yisrael Tzvi (Rindenow) ז"ל, 10th Yabrzeit 11 Tamuz

Parshas Chukas-Balak

by **Rabbi Baruch Bodenheim**
Rosh Yeshiva

The Source of Bracha

My older brother's bar mitzvah was on Parshas Balak, and it was unforgettable. The bar mitzvah Shabbos was scheduled to be in a small hotel in upstate New York, for immediate family. That week, my mother received a call that the hotel had been shut down by the FDA due to health risks. The shul we normally davened in was in its early fledgling stage, housed in someone's living room – not so kiddush-friendly. My mother had to scramble to figure out where we would have the bar mitzvah. My parents ordered a tent that was set up on our own driveway to host a beautiful outdoor kiddush. Great! Still, that Shabbos was the hottest day of the summer – 105 degrees!

My younger brother's bar mitzvah was on Parshas Ki Sisa, in the middle of the winter. On that Shabbos the blizzard of the century occurred! There was three feet of snow! I remember walking to shul with the snow sometimes up to my waist! The bar mitzvah seudah for family and friends scheduled for Sunday was canceled. No one could safely travel; even the caterer could not make it.

Often, we make plans and they just don't work out. In the bigger picture, however, they *do* work out...for the best! Although my brothers' bar mitzvahs did not go as planned, they were certainly memorable – everyone remembers them!

In Parshas Balak, Bilam attempted multiple times to curse the Jewish nation. Hashem turned all his attempted curses...into blessings! The Gemara¹ notes that from Bilam's brachos one can infer the areas that he was attempting to curse. Bilam focused on the Patriarchs² and the Jewish homes.³

Rabbi Simcha Bunim Alter⁴ (one of the Gerrer Rebbes) points out that there is one area that Bilam never references: Shabbos. He explains that the reason Bilam never even attempted to curse Shabbos is because Shabbos, as we say on Friday night in Lechah Dodi, is "Mekor HaBracha", the source of blessing. As such, it is invulnerable to curses.

At the creation of the world the Torah says, "Vayvarech Elokim es yom hashevi'i - Hashem blessed the seventh day."⁵ The Ramban says this bracha of Shabbos is that it's the source of blessing; the Zohar says that the other six days of the week receive their blessing from Shabbos.

This idea that Shabbos is impervious to curse explains why Shabbos is impervious even to sin. When Moshe came down with the Luchos and saw the Jewish Nation dancing around the golden calf, he took the Luchos and smashed them. The Midrash⁶ tells us that the letters that were carved into the Luchos flew off. The Chiddushei HaRim says that although the letters flew off, the letters of the commandment of Shabbos never flew off! This is alluded to in the words of Shabbos morning Shemoneh Esrei: "The observance of Shabbos was written on *them*", in plural. In effect, the words of the mitzvah of Shabbos remained written on both the first and second Luchos.

The Gemara⁷ says that if Klal Yisrael would have merited to keep the first set of Luchos, all the Torah they learned would be remembered by them forever. When the first Luchos were smashed, that brought about the ability to forget the words of the Torah that they already learned. The Chiddushei HaRim says that since the words of the mitzvah of Shabbos remained on the first Luchos, one does not forget the Torah he learns on Shabbos.

With this concept, we have a new understanding of the Torah's words which we say multiple times every Shabbos: "Bnei Yisrael will make the Shabbos."⁸ The day of Shabbos is consecrated by Hashem, independent of our making. What does it mean that we "make the Shabbos"?

Quite simply, every action we take to prepare for Shabbos and to make Shabbos special is rewarded. These attempts connect us to the "source of blessing". The more we connect to Shabbos, the more we draw from its spring of bracha. Such blessing spills over into the rest of our week!

Wishing everyone a Shabbos filled with bracha.

- 1 Sanhedrin 105b
- 2 Rashi Balak 23:9
- 3 Balak 24:5
- 4 Lev Simcha, Balak year 5743
- 5 Bereishis 2:3
- 6 Midrash Tanchuma Ki Sisa 26
- 7 Eruvin 54a
- 8 Ki Sisa 31:16

Sunday Morning

Bava Metzia

- 10:20 am – 11:00 am, Bekius with Rabbi Mordechai Moshe Goldberg
- 11:00 am – 12:00 pm, with R' Alex Novichenok

Great Time to Join,
Starting 2nd Perek Eilu Metzios this Sunday, June 28

Last week we discussed whether the bran included in whole wheat flour counts towards the minimum measurement of flour to require separation of the חלה, the portion that must be separated from dough, and we learned the *Mishnah*¹ that distinguishes between methods of milling such that if the bran was never separated from the kernel, it is included but once the bran has been removed, it no longer is counted even if reintroduced into the mix. As mentioned, since it is common practice for contemporary mills to separate the bran from all their flour and then add back the bran for their production of whole wheat flour, it is possible that the bran portion of the new mix, cannot be included in the measurement, and consequently the measurement of whole wheat flour to require separation of חלה is larger than that of white flour.

This discussion is also relevant in determining the minimum measurement of flour required to achieve the requisite כזית, size of a biblical olive, to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *matzah* and to obligate one in *birkas hamazon* when using whole wheat flour:

*Shulchan Aruch*² rules that although one cannot fulfill the *mitzvah* of *matzah* with pure bran flour, one can use *matzah* made from whole wheat flour. *Magen Avraham*³ comments that he is in doubt if the bran can be counted towards the minimum measurement of flour needed for the *mitzvah* if the bran was first removed and then returned. *Pri Megadim*⁴ suggests that this same doubt would apply regarding *birkas hamazon* as well. *S'fas Emes*⁵ notes that *Magen Avraham* seems to take for granted that if the bran was never removed it certainly is counted towards the measurement. Although *S'fas Emes* questions this premise, as perhaps only regarding the *mitzvah* of חלה does the bran count, he defers to the opinion of the *Magen Avraham*. Indeed, *Shulchan Aruch Harav*⁶ writes explicitly that the *halachos* of *matzah* follow the same *halachos* as חלה regarding this issue.⁷ If so, *Chok Ya'akov*⁸ wonders why the *Magen Avraham* was only doubtful but not certain that the bran cannot be included in the minimum measurement once it had initially been removed. Considering that the *Mishnah* is explicit regarding the *mitzvah* of חלה that the bran is not counted in such a scenario, the same qualification should apply to *matzah*. Indeed, *Chok Ya'akov* writes with certainty that if the bran was removed and then reintroduced into the flour mix, the כזית measurement only takes into consideration the “white flour” alone.

*Machatzis Hashekel*⁹ defends *Magen Avraham* and explains that, as we mentioned last week, bran that was removed and returned is only not counted towards the minimum measurement for the *mitzvah* of חלה because it is not the normal way to produce dough in that manner¹⁰, a technicality only applicable to the *mitzvah* of חלה, concerning which the *pasuk*¹¹ says עריסתכם, *your dough*, and whose obligation is set at the time that it is in the dough stage, but does not affect its status as *matzah* (or bread). Alternatively, *Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank*¹² suggests that regarding the

mitzvah of חלה once the potential obligation is withdrawn from the bran when it is removed from the flour, the bran remains exempt from the *mitzvah* and cannot count towards the measurement even if subsequently returned to the flour mixture. On the other hand, regarding the status of the baked mixture, since the resulting baked item can be considered as *matzah* (or bread) even though bran is present in the ingredients, it doesn't matter that the bran had initially been removed. Hence, since there is reason to distinguish between the *mitzvah* of חלה and the *mitzvah* of *matzah*, *Magen Avraham* was not certain that the *Mishnah's* qualification regarding חלה would apply to *matzah* as well. In fact, *Pri Chadash*¹³ quotes *Beis Moed* that although regarding the *mitzvah* of חלה the bran does not count towards the measurement if initially removed and then returned to the mix, the bran does count towards the כזית of flour for the *mitzvah* of *matzah*. However, *Pri Chadash* writes that *poskim* rule otherwise, and bran is not included in the minimum measurement if it was previously removed. *Mishnah Berurah*¹⁴ rules accordingly. Similarly, Rav Yehuda Aryeh Leib (*Maharil Batlan*)¹⁵ assumes that the same *halachos* that apply in measuring the flour for the *mitzvah* of חלה also apply to measuring the כזית for the *mitzvah* of *matzah* and the obligation for *birkas hamazon* as well, and therefore if the bran was never removed from the mixture it is included in the measurement of the כזית, but if the bran was removed first and then returned, it does not count towards the כזית.

Notwithstanding, Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank writes that perhaps if the bran was temporarily removed with intent to be returned to the flour, it possibly can be counted towards the minimum measurement as if had never been removed. Although, it is unclear if his comment made in the context of removing the bran to facilitate checking for bugs and returning the bran to its own “white flour” would also apply in the same manner to the production of our whole wheat flour where the portion of the bran that is subsequently returned is not necessarily reunited with the same flour from which it originated. However, as we mentioned last week, Rav Moshe Shternbuch¹⁶ would seem to apply this distinction to the contemporary production of whole wheat flour as well. Additionally, as we mentioned, nowadays that it is common to eat bran, even the bran itself may have the status of flour, and the measurement of whole wheat flour would be the same as white flour.

Nonetheless, as we also mentioned last week, Rav Pesach Eliyahu Falk¹⁷ dismissed those considerations, and he ruled that the bran should not be counted in the measurement of the כזית for the *mitzvah* of *matzah* and obligation of *birkas hamazon* if the bran was removed and returned just as it is not counted regarding the *mitzvah* of חלה. Therefore, he advises that if one uses whole wheat *matzah*, he should ascertain that the bran was not removed in the process. Otherwise, he will have to eat a larger portion of *matzah* to attain the כזית measurement. In fact, he writes that it is advisable for the *matzah* bakeries to use flour from which the bran was never removed for their whole wheat *matzah* production as not everyone knows that whole wheat *matzah* may require a larger measurement. Indeed, he writes that he was happy to learn that the flour under the *Badatz* supervision in *Yerushalayim* for baking *matzah* is produced without removing the bran, and he hopes all *matzah* bakeries do the same.

1 משנה חלה ב:ו
2 שלחן ערוך או"ח סי' תני"ד סעי' א
3 מגן אברהם או"ח סי' תני"ד ס"ק ב
4 אשל אברהם או"ח סי' ק"ח ס"ק א
5 שפת אמת שבת ע"ו ד"ה בגמי אמר
6 שלחן ערוך הרב או"ח סי' תני"ד סעי' ב
7 עי' תוסי' רי"ד שבת ע"ו ע"ב
8 חק יעקב או"ח סי' תני"ד ס"ק ב
9 מחצית השקל או"ח סי' תני"ד ס"ק ב
10 תלמוד ירושלמי חלה ב:ג
11 במדבר ט"ו:כ
12 ספר מקראי קודש פסח סי' קכ"ה

13 פרי חדש או"ח סי' תני"ד ס"ק א
14 משנה ברורה סי' תני"ד ס"ק ג
15 ספר זכר יהודה שו"ת מהרי"ל בטלן סי' ב
16 שו"ת תשובות והנהגות ח"ג סי' ע"א
17 שו"ת מחזה אליהו ח"ג סי' ע"ח, פ, פ"א ע"ו

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May All of Klal Yisrael Have a Good Shabbos!

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