

“ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך”

## Reciting “ברוך אתה” One Hundred Times Connects Man’s One Hundred Innate Forces with the Creator

We read this week in parshas Eikev (Devarim 10, 12): “ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך ללכת בכל דרכיו **and now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you, but to revere Hashem, your G-d, to follow in His ways, to love Him, and to serve Hashem, your G-d, with all of your heart and all of your soul.** Our sages of blessed memory derive from this passuk that we are obligated to recite one hundred berachos every day. We are taught this in the following Gemara (Menachos 43b), in the name of Rabbi Meir: “חייב אדם לברך מאה ברכות בכל יום, שנאמר ועתה” מה ה' אלקיך, קרי ביה: “ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך”--read the word מה in our passuk as מאה, so that it means “one hundred” instead of “what.” Tosafos clarify the meaning of Rashi’s comment: “ובקונטרס פירש אל תקרי מה אלא מאה, כלומר שחייב ק”--in other words, we derive from this passuk the obligation to recite one hundred berachos.

In its alternate explanation—the “yesh mefarshim”—Tosafos provide us with a very nice allusion apropos this topic. In this passuk beginning with the words “ועתה ישראל”, from the first word to the last word, as it appears in the Torah, there are precisely ninety-nine letters. Yet, if we add the letter “aleph” as Rashi suggests—by transforming מה into מאה—we obtain a total of one hundred letters. This number corresponds to the one hundred berachos a Jew is obligated to recite daily. This is precisely what Rabeinu Bachaye writes here in his commentary:

“וידוע מה שדרשו רבותינו ז”ל מן הכתוב הזה, שחייב אדם לברך מאה ברכות בכל יום, שנאמר מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך, ויש בפסוק זה תשעים ותשע אותיות, ועם אלף שתשים במלת 'מה' ישלומו למאה אותיות, ותחזור המלה 'מאה' כדי לרמוז בדרך אסמכתא, שחייב אדם לברך בכל יום מאה ברכות. וכן יש אסמכתא לזה מפסוק (תהלים קכח-ד) הנה כי כן יבורך גבר ירא ה', כי ירא ה' יש לו לברך מנין כי כן.”

He brings support for the notion of reciting one hundred berachos every day from the following passuk in Tehillim (128, 4): “Behold, for thus is blessed the

man who fears Hashem. He interprets this passuk as stating that a man who fears Hashem is obligated to recite the number of blessings equivalent to the words “כי כן”—namely, one hundred.

### One Hundred Berachos Save Lives

Our blessed sages teach us that David HaMelech instituted the recitation of one hundred daily berachos in order to save the lives of one hundred members of Yisrael who were dying every day. This is taught both in the Midrash Tanchuma (Korach 12) and the Midrash Rabbah (ibid. 18,21) concerning the passuk in Shmuel (II 23, 1):

“נאום דוד בן ישי ונאום הגבר הוקם על - הוקם ע”ל בגימטריא מאה כנגד מאה ברכות, שבכל יום היו מתים מישראל מאה אנשים, בא דוד ותיקנו למאה ברכות, ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך, קרי ביה מאה אלו מאה ברכות, כיון שתיקנום נעצרה המגפה”

--in David’s last words, the word ע”ל appears, which has a numerical value of one hundred; this alludes to the one hundred blessings a day instituted by David HaMelech, which halted the plague of one hundred deaths per day.

An expanded version explaining why these one hundred daily berachos were instituted is found in the Tur (O.C. 46):

“דוד המלך עליו השלום תיקן מאה ברכות, דכתיב הוקם על - ע”ל בגימטריא מאה הו, כי בכל יום היו מתים מאה נפשות מישראל ולא היו יודעין על מה, עד שחקר והבין ברוח הקודש ותיקן להם לישראל מאה ברכות, ועל כן תיקנו חכמים ז”ל אלו הברכות על סדר העולם והנהגתו, להשלים מאה ברכות בכל יום.”

In the times of David HaMelech, one hundred members of Yisrael were dying each and every day--the reason for these deaths was unknown. After investigating the matter, David HaMelech divined the remedy and instituted the recitation of one hundred berachos. Our sages followed suit and instituted the completion of one hundred blessings per day based on the course of daily events.

## Before He Sinned Adam HaRishon Extended from the Earth to the Heavens

Let us begin to shed some light on the matter of this daily institution by examining a statement by Chazal that appears in the Gemara both in Sanhedrin (38b) and in Chagigah (12a): “אדם--הראשון מן הארץ עד לרקיע... וכיון שסרחה הגיח הקב”ה ידיו עליו ומיעטו”-- **Adam HaRishon extended from the earth to the heavens; after sinning, HKB”H placed His hands upon him and reduced him in stature.** Regarding the fact that Adam HaRishon was initially created with immense stature, which was later minimized, the Gemara quotes the passuk (Tehillim 139, 5): “אחור וקדם צרתני ותשת” “עלי כפכה”. Rashi provides the following clarification; this passuk refers to the fact that Adam was fashioned twice--once with imposing height and once lowly.

The version recorded in the Ein Yaakov reads: “וכיון שסרחה הגיח” וכיון שסרחה הגיח”--after his transgression, HKB”H reduced him to a height of one hundred cubits. The source for this version is the Yalkut Shimoni (Vaeschanan 827) and is apparently the version Rashi had in his Gemara, based on his comment there (Sanhedrin 100.): “כדאמרינן בחגיגה שמיעטו הקב”ה והעמידו על מאה אמה, ה”ה” Rashi draws an allusion from the fact that it states that HKB”H reduced Adam’s stature with the palm of his hand, His כ”ה; the numerical value of the word כ”ה is one hundred--signifying that his new, reduced height was one hundred cubits. This allusion is also presented by the Maharsha in Chiddushei Aggados (Chagigah 12a).

The Ramah writes in his commentary on the Gemara (Sanhedrin 38:) that when it states that Adam’s height extended from the earth to the heavens, it was not meant literally, but it was meant as a hyperbole. If so, what is the significance of our sages’ enigmatic statement: “אדם הראשון מן הארץ עד לרקיע” — **Adam HaRishon extended from the earth to the heavens?** Additionally, if these statements are not to be taken literally, what is the message conveyed by the fact that Adam’s height after the sin was set specifically at one hundred cubits?

It appears that we can provide an explanation based on the writings of the Ohr HaMeir (Shir HaShirim), brought in the name of his teacher and master, the holy Maggid, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritsch, zy”a. He says that when our sages describe Adam HaRishon as reaching from the earth to the heavens, they mean that before the sin, his body was incredibly holy and flawless. He possessed the uncanny, natural ability to perceive how all material matters are directly related to Hashem. It is as if he was standing with both feet on the ground, occupied with earthly

concerns, and his head extended to the heavens--having in mind that these earthly concerns were being performed for the sake of Heaven—“I’shem shamayim.” This is the ideal expressed by the Mishnah (Avos 2, 12): “וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים” — **all of your deeds should be performed for the sake of Heaven.** Thus, his being connected the two distant poles of heaven and earth.

Unfortunately, after being enticed by the primeval serpent to sin, he was reduced in stature; for, his body and soul were damaged by the serpent’s contamination and corruption. As the Gemara (Yevamot 103b) explains, the nachash succeeded in introducing its venomous corruption into Adam and Chava and all of their subsequent generations. This is the significance of the fact that the yetzer hara only entered man’s being in the aftermath of the sin. We learn this from Rashi’s comment (Bereishis 2, 25): “אף על פי שנתנה בו דעה לקרות לו שמות, לא נתן בו יצר” —although he was endowed with the unique acumen to assign names, he was not given a yetzer hara until he ate from the tree; at that time, the yetzer hara entered his being and then he knew the difference between good and bad.

For this reason, it was decreed that man and all living creatures must die—as the passuk states (Bereishis 2, 17): “ומעץ הדעת טוב” -- **but from the Tree of Knowledge Good and Bad you must not eat; for, on the day you eat of it, you will surely die.** By burying the body in the ground, the serpent’s contamination is absorbed entirely by the soil and dust, which is the serpent’s source of nourishment. As the passuk states (Yeshayah 65, 25): “ונחש עפר לחמו” —**a snake’s food will be dust.** The Arizal enlightens us with regard to the secret of burial in Ta’amei HaMitzvot (Vayechi): “...סוד קבורת מת...” צריך שיכוונו הקוברים, שתתעכל כל אותה הזוהמא שנתערבה בנפשו בחטא אדם” —“הראשון, שתתעכל בקרקע וישאר נקי” —those who bury the deceased should have in mind that all of the contamination and perversion that became an integral part of man’s being as a result of Adam HaRishon’s sin should be soaked up into the ground—leaving the body untainted.

This is the significance of Adam HaRishon’s reduced stature in the aftermath of the sin. He no longer extended from the earth to the heavens—devoting all earthly matters “I’shem shamayim,” by his very nature. He became susceptible to the nachash’s intrigues, chas v’shalom—making him liable to utilize all matters of this world to satisfy his own lusts and cravings. His thoughts no longer reached the heavens—desiring to dedicate his every action “I’shem shamayim.”

## A Ladder Fixed on the Ground and Reaching Heavenward

We can conclude from all of this that it is our obligation, as descendants of Adam HaRishon, and as a holy people, to rectify this matter. We must strive to overcome the nachash's contamination—which is the yetzer hara lurking inside us. It persuades us to chase after material matters, satisfying our every craving. Rather, we must dedicate all of our earthly activities to Hashem. This lesson is conveyed by the following Mishnah (Avos 2, 12): **“וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים”**—**let all of your deeds be for the sake of Heaven.** If we accomplish this noble feat, it will be considered as if we restored the situation to the way it was originally, before the sin involving the Eitz HaDa'at. We will enhance our stature to extend from the earth to the heavens, once again—devoting all earthly activities “I'shem shamayim.”

Applying this concept, we can provide a very nice explanation for the vision HKB”H showed Yaakov Avinu in his dream (Bereishis 28, 12): **“יחלום והנה סולם מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה, והנה מלאכי אלקים עולים ויורדים בו, והנה ה' נצב עליו ויאמר אני ה' אלקי אברהם אביך ואלקי יצחק, ויבאך אתה שוכב עליה לך אתננה ולזרעך”**—**and he dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward; and behold--G-d's malachim ascending and descending on it. And behold! Hashem was standing over him, and He said, “I am Hashem, G-d of Avraham your father and G-d of Yitzchak; the ground upon which you are lying, to you will I give it and to your descendants.**

Let us introduce an explanation from the Arizal in Sha'ar HaPesukim (Vayigash). He teaches us that Yaakov Avinu was a reincarnation of Adam HaRishon; and he made amends for his wrongdoings. The source for this idea is found in the Zohar hakadosh (Bereishis 35b): **“דהא יעקב דוגמא דאדם הראשון הוה, דיעקב”**—**Yaakov resembled Adam HaRishon; the radiance of Yaakov Avinu resembled the radiance of Adam HaRishon.**

We can now suggest that it was for this reason that HKB”H showed Yaakov the ladder set on earth and extending heavenward. This was His way of revealing to Yaakov that he was meant to rectify the deeds of Adam HaRishon. Consequently, he merited returning himself to the spiritual level of Adam HaRishon prior to the sin. He achieved the stature of extending from the earth to the heavens, as symbolized by the ladder in Yaakov's nocturnal vision. Although living on the earth, he mentally dedicated all of his actions “I'shem shamayim.”

This is the significance of the conclusion of the passuk above: **“אני ה' אלקי אברהם אביך ואלקי יצחק”**—I am the G-d of Avraham and Yitzchak, who also succeeded in devoting all of their actions “I'shem shamayim.”

## One Hundred Cubits Corresponding to One Hundred Berachos

In this manner, let us continue our ascent and address the significance of HKB”H's choice to reduce Adam's stature to precisely one hundred cubits. Let us refer to what the Ramchal writes in the sefer Adir Ba'Marom. In his own characteristic way, he explains that man's stature stems from one hundred cubits, which are one hundred potential forces. These correspond to the ten Midos which man encompasses—each of which is comprised of ten.

Prior to the sin of the Eitz HaDa'at, man's stature expanded to its full potential and glory—comparable to an expanse that would take 500 years to traverse by foot. Thus, we find the description: **“אדם הראשון מן הארץ עד לרקיע היה”**—**Adam HaRishon extended from the earth to the heavens.** After he sinned, however, HKB”H limited the expanse of his stature, returning it to its roots of one hundred cubits. Consequently, it is necessary to recite one hundred berachos to Hashem daily in order to draw the force of life from HKB”H into man's being, which is comprised of one hundred innate forces corresponding to one hundred cubits.

Let us explain this in practical terms which we can all relate to. Let us recall what we learned from the teachings of the Maggid of Mezritsch, zy”a, concerning the notion that man's stature extended from the earth up to the heavens. This implied that due to the extreme sanctity of his body, we was capable of connecting the two extremes of heaven and earth, by devoting all earthly matters “I'shem shamayim.” After the sin, however, his stature was diminished; for, by his nature, it became difficult for man to unite matters of heaven and earth.

With this understanding, we can better appreciate why the decree of death was imposed upon mankind. The attachment and closeness to Hashem is the source of man's existence (Devarim 4, 4): **“ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום”**—**you who cling to Hashem, your G-d, you are all alive today.** On the other hand, when people separate themselves from HKB”H, the source of life, death ensues, chas v'shalom—the opposite of life. Therefore, when his stature was reduced, and he no longer related all earthly matters “I'shem shamayim,” he was condemned to die. This

decree serves the purpose of ridding man of all of the nachash's contamination that has invaded his body—which caused the separation between man and HKB”H.

It was for this reason that HKB”H introduced the remedy prior to the injury. He reduced man’s stature to one hundred cubits. This serves as a reminder that it is necessary to recite one hundred berachos to Hashem daily, thanking Him for all one hundred potential forces encompassing man’s physical and spiritual existence. In this manner, we connect all one hundred forces with HKB”H, the source of life. In this merit, we draw from Him one hundred conduits supplying life to man’s being. Thus, we make amends for the sin of Adam HaRishon, returning ourselves to the original state of affairs that existed prior to the fateful sin. It is our goal to rebuild our stature to extend once again from earth to the heavens—dedicating all earthly concerns ‘l’shem shamayim.”

### One Hundred Berachos Contain the Phrase “ברוך אתה” One Hundred Times

Let us add another fascinating detail to enhance our understanding of the matter of one hundred berachos. The holy Maggid of Koznitsch, zy”a, writes in Avodat Yisrael (Vaeschanan), in the name of his teacher the holy Maggid, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritsch, zy”a:

“שמעתי בשם אדומ” הרב הקדוש מוהר”ב זצ”ל, מה שאמרו בזהר הקדוש (פרשת עקב רעא): אתה תמן גחין רישא [אתה שם מרכין ראשו], רצונו לומר שזה הוא מחסדו יתברך, כי מלת את”ה מורה על חסד כמו (תהלים קי-ד) אתה כהן לעולם, שיהא באפשרי וכח האנושי לעמוד לפניו יתברך, ולדבר אתו לנוכח כמדבר אל רעהו, כמו בנוסח כל הברכות ברוך אתה, והוא מרוב ענוותנותו והארתו המשתלשל אל האדם להאיר אל עבר פניו.”

The word את”ה connotes chesed, an act of kindness. As an act of kindness, the Almighty bends down, so to speak, so that mankind can communicate with Him, as one would in the presence of a friend. Thus, all berachos contain the formula ברוך אתה, indicating the great humility and illumination with which He interacts with mankind and influences them.

It is for this reason that our blessed sages instituted the recitation of one hundred daily berachos. For, with every berachah, we utter: “ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם.” We specifically employ the term “אתה”, as if we are addressing someone in our presence. This is designed to teach us that the purpose of the one hundred berachos is to connect man’s one hundred innate forces irreversibly with HKB”H. In this manner, we permeate

the one hundred human forces with the force of life from HKB”H, the source of life.

### David HaMelech A Reincarnation of Adam HaRishon Instituted the Recitation of One Hundred Berachos

We can now better comprehend the statement in the Midrash cited by the Tur:

“דוד המלך עליו השלום תיקן מאה ברכות, דכתיב הוקם על - ע”ל בגימטריא מאה הו, כי בכל יום היו מתים מאה נפשות מישראל ולא היו יודעין על מה, עד שחקר והבין ברוח הקודש ותיקן להם לישראל מאה ברכות.”

In the times of David HaMelech, one hundred members of Yisrael were dying each and every day — the reason for these deaths was unknown. After investigating the matter, David HaMelech divined the remedy and instituted the recitation of one hundred berachos. He realized that these men were dying because they were not connected to Hashem, the source of life. The aim of the one hundred daily berachos is to restore the proper and intimate relationship with HKB”H. In the merit of this institution, they reconnected with the source of life fulfilling the words of the passuk: “**you who cling to Hashem, your G-d, you are all alive today.**”

Let us add the following noteworthy idea. It is known that David HaMelech was a reincarnation of Adam HaRishon, who donated seventy years of his life to David. We learn this from the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 14, 12): “ע’ שנה שחיסר אדם משנותיו”: “ונתן לדוד בן ישי”. Now, the reason man’s stature was diminished to one hundred cubits and he no longer spanned from earth to the heavens, was because of the sin of Adam HaRishon. It was fitting, therefore, for David HaMelech, a reincarnation of Adam HaRishon to rectify the matter. By instituting the recitation of one hundred berachos daily, he reestablished our intimate connection with HKB”H with all of our one hundred forces.

This explains why David HaMelech, a reincarnation of Adam HaRishon, remarks to HKB”H (Tehillim 139, 5): “אחור וקדם צרתני”. According to Rashi (Chagigah 12a), this indicates that HKB”H formed man twice—initially tall, with an imposing stature, and finally short, with a lowly stature. David HaMelech says to HKB”H: Initially, You formed me to span from earth to the heavens, and then after the sin, You formed me anew, measuring a mere one hundred cubits. “**ותשת עלי כנכה.**”—You placed the palm of Your hand, as it were, Your כ”ף, upon me, to minimize my dimensions to one hundred cubits—the numerical equivalent of כ”ף. You did

so, so that I would bless Hashem with one hundred berachos for all of my daily needs. By doing so, I will always remember: “ותשת” —“עלי כפכה”—that everything I receive in this world comes from the כ”ב, the hand of HKB”H.

### The Beis HaMikdash Stood One Hundred Cubits High Corresponding to the One Hundred Berachos

Amazingly, we can add a tremendous chiddush concerning this topic from Yisrael’s teacher, the Chasam Sofer, in Torat Moshe HaShalem (Megillat Esther, page 176a). He explains why one hundred members of Yisrael died every day during the times of David, until David instituted the recitation of one hundred berachos on a daily basis. He refers to the following Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Shmuel II 24, 18; Remez 165):

”כל אותם אוכלוסיין שנפלו [בימי דוד] על ידי שלא תבעו את בנין בית המקדש, והלא דברים קל וחומר, ומה אלו שלא ראו את בית המקדש כך [שהרי בימי דוד עדיין לא נבנה בית המקדש], אנו על אחת כמה וכמה, לכך התקינו נביאים הראשונים שיהיו ישראל מתפללין בכל יום שלשה פעמים אגא השב שכינתך לציון“.

According to the Midrash, those people died in the times of David, because they did not demand the building of the Beis HaMikdash. The Chasam Sofer explains that the Midrash is referring to the one hundred men that were dying on a daily basis. Now, Rashi (Pesachim 26a) teaches us that the height of the Beis HaMikdash was one hundred cubits; it cast a distant shadow upon the street passing before the holy mount. The source for this fact is the Mishnah (Midos 4, 6): “והיכל מאה על” —the Heichal measured one hundred by one hundred, with a height of one hundred.

This is why one hundred men died every day. For, they neglected to demand the building of the Beis HaMikdash, which stood one hundred cubits high. Ultimately, David came and instituted the recitation of one hundred berachos corresponding to the height of the Beis HaMikdash.

### The Height of the Beis HaMikdash Was One Hundred Cubits to Sanctify Man’s One Hundred Innate Forces

As a servant before his master, I have grabbed onto the coattails of the Chasam Sofer and would like to add a spicy

tidbit to his marvelous explanation. What is the significance of the height of the Beis HaMikdash as it relates to the deaths of one hundred men a day for not demanding that the Beis HaMikdash be built? Based on what we have learned, we can propose an explanation. We have explained that HKB”H reduced the stature of Adam HaRishon to one hundred cubits, so that he would understand that he must sanctify his one hundred innate forces and connect them to HKB”H. Nevertheless, we find it stated explicitly in a passuk (Bereishis 8, 21): “כי יצר לב” —“האדם רע מנעוריו”—since the design of man’s heart is evil from his youth.

Therefore, HKB”H commanded the building of the Beis HaMikdash; so that His Shechinah would dwell therein, as it is written: (Shemos 25, 8): “ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם” —they shall make Me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them. The purpose was so that Yisrael would come to be sanctified in this holy place. Consequently, they were commanded to go up to the Beis HaMikdash three times a year, on the three festivals—to see the manifestations of Hashem in the Beis HaMikdash. Additionally, the sinner had to bring his offerings to Hashem in the Beis HaMikdash. All of these requirements were mandated so that the people would be sanctified by the kedushah of the Beis HaMikdash.

It was precisely for this reason that the height of the Beis HaMikdash was one hundred cubits corresponding to the altered height of Adam HaRishon. The people could go to the Beis HaMikdash and sanctify all of their one hundred innate forces with the kedushah of the Beis HaMikdash. Accordingly, when the people failed to demand the building of the Beis HaMikdash—with the intent of sanctifying their one hundred innate forces—they were punished. One hundred men died every day until David HaMelech instituted the recitation of one hundred daily berachos. This institution served to sanctify man’s one hundred innate forces corresponding to the height of the Beis HaMikdash—which was also designed to sanctify man. In this merit, may we have the privilege of witnessing the building of the third Beis HaMikdash. There, we will be able to ascend and be thoroughly sanctified—swiftly, in our times. Amen.

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