



# Timely Torah Insights

## Lech Lecha

Accomplishing the Spiritual by Satisfying the Physical by **Rabbi Baruch Bodenheim**  
Associate Rosh Yeshiva

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**Hagaon Harav Nossan Zvi Finkel zt"l** (Yahrzeit, 11<sup>th</sup> of Cheshvan)

When I was learning in the Mir Yeshiva in Yerushalayim 25 five years ago, the main meal was lunch, which consisted of either roasted chicken or schnitzel. Supper was very light - some bread, soup and a boiled vegetable. The American boys were used to dinner being the main meal of the day, so many would go out of yeshiva to a falafel or pizza store to buy supper. This resulted in many boys being late for night seder, since there were no eating places close to the Mir at that time. I approached the Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Nossan Tzvi Finkel, and told him the situation and I assured the Rosh Yeshiva that if the yeshiva would serve a full course meal, most of the boys would stay and would arrive on time or even early to night seder. Rabbi Finkel said, "I will think about it." I got my answer the next night, as the Mir served chicken and potatoes for supper. From that night onward, dinner was a filling meal which the boys enjoyed and facilitated their arriving on time for night seder.

The Mir yeshiva still follows this strategy. Last year, the health ministry had many health regulations for yeshivos with foreign students regarding Covid. The boys who arrived needed to be in "capsules" - isolated groups of a maximum of six people. How would the boys be able to learn from their respective Rebbeim in much larger groups? The Mir came up with an ingenious solution. When they arrived at the airport, there was a coach bus waiting for the students with a package of food on each seat for each bachur. The bus drove them to a resort hotel in beautiful Ein Gedi which the Yeshiva rented. Each room housed 4-6 boys and had a porch facing a center courtyard. Each day, Rebbeim came from Yeshiva to the resort and each Rebbe would stand in the open courtyard to give shiur at the appointed time, with all the boys listening from their respective balconies. Meals were delivered to each room's door and on Thursday night after night seder, cholent was delivered to each student's door. No detail or expense was spared to ensure the students' physical needs were met.

Why did Rav Finkel and the Mir Yeshiva invest so much to satisfy the physical needs of the boys? Isn't yeshiva primarily for the mind and the soul? Rav Finkel understood that attending to the physical comfort and nourishment of the students is in fact a *spiritual* endeavor, which also nourishes the mind and soul. When students feel loved and cared for, they can focus and concentrate better on their learning.

We can also see Rav Finkel's philosophy in Parshas Lech Lecha. After Avraham defeated the four mighty kings, the king of Sodom came out to greet Avraham...empty handed. Soon after, Malki Tzedek, king of Yerushalayim<sup>1</sup>, also came to greet Avraham and his students. But Malki Tzedek presented Avraham and his group with food and wine. Rashi<sup>2</sup> explains that Malki Tzedek understood it was appropriate to serve them food and drink, since they were exhausted and hungry from fighting the war. Rashi also quotes the Midrash with an alternate explanation. Since Malki Tzedek was a Kohen, his serving of bread and wine was akin to offering a korban (sacrifice), since bread is the staple offered as a *korban mincha* and wine is used for *nesachim* (libations) on the *mizbeach* (altar.)

I believe the two explanations can be understood as the deeper dimension of one another. The Gemara<sup>3</sup> says someone who hosts a *talmid chacham* (Torah scholar) gains the merit of offering a korban in the Beis HaMikdash. Another Gemara<sup>4</sup> says providing wine to a *talmid chacham* is akin to pouring wine libations. By Malki Tzedek feeding Avraham and his students, he accomplished both.

Rav Finkel understood that investing in the students' physical needs is also a spiritual endeavor. While meeting the physical needs of any person is a great *chesed*, as is *hachnosas orchim* (hosting guests), the Gemara is teaching us there is an additional *zechus* (merit) to meeting the needs of *talmidei chachamim* and yeshiva students. This has merit similar to offering a *korban* and bringing libations, since they have dedicated their life to the study of Torah.

Look around you- a shul rav; your child's rebbi; a couple of guys regularly learning in your local beis medrash. These are people dedicated to a higher purpose. Any favor or service you can offer them...is like offering a sacrifice in the Beis HaMikdash!

<sup>1</sup> Onkelos

<sup>2</sup> Lech Lecha 14:18

<sup>3</sup> Brachos 10b

<sup>4</sup> Yoma 71a

## Halacha in the Parsha – Lech Lecha

by **Rabbi Moshe Silverstein**  
Maggid Shiur

We have been discussing the *Talmud Yerushalmi*<sup>i</sup> that rules that one is not allowed to beseech *Hashem* for his needs on *Shabbos*. As discussed, the *gemara* asks if we can include the phrase רעינו פרנסינו on *Shabbos* during *Bircas Hamazon* in which we ask *Hashem* to tend to us, nourish us, and sustain us. The *gemara* answers that requests and supplications that are טופס ברכות, part and parcel of the fixed text of a *bracha*, are allowed to be recited even on *Shabbos*.

*Beis Yosefi*<sup>ii</sup> proves from the question of the *gemara* that the correct *nusach*, at least on a weekday, is רעינו, a verb in the imperative tense, (please) tend to us, rather than רוענו, our *Shepard*, an adjective describing the One whom we are addressing. Otherwise, there would be no question of its appropriateness on *Shabbos*. Furthermore, based on the answer of the *gemara*, he rules that we should not change the wording on *Shabbos*. Indeed, *Mishneh Berurah*<sup>iii</sup> writes to say רעינו, and *Aruch Hashulchan*<sup>iv</sup> writes that the same text should be recited on *Shabbos* as well.

However, *Rema*<sup>v</sup> quotes the opinion of *Ohr Zaruah* to always say רוענו, and surprisingly, *Nusach Arizal*<sup>vi</sup> has רעינו during the week and רוענו on *Shabbos*. Similarly, others<sup>vii</sup> change the text of the next word from רזנו, nourish us, to רזנו, our *Nourisher*. Yet, it seems clear from the *gemara* that the text should be רעינו even on *Shabbos*. Why would it need to be changed?

Perhaps we can justify the change for *Shabbos* based on the *Ramban*<sup>viii</sup> who seems to understand the question of the *gemara* differently. He writes that we see from the wording of the question of the *gemara* that the general practice was indeed to change the text on *Shabbos*. Otherwise, the *gemara* would not have asked IF it is permissible to say רעינו but rather WHY is it permissible to say רעינו. If that is the case, then the *gemara* itself seems to indicate a change in the *nusach* for *Shabbos* while the very same *gemara* explains why there should be no need. Perhaps we can suggest an explanation based on the commentary of the *Korban Ho'edah*<sup>ix</sup>. As we explained last week, he understands the *gemara's* allowance to be a special dispensation to permit the fixed text to remain unchanged even on *Shabbos* to avoid confusion between the weekday version and *Shabbos* version. Whereas this could be understood to mean that when determining what the

correct text should be on *Shabbos*, the *Rabbanan* left the text unchanged, it seems that *Ramban* understood the answer to mean that if one has difficulty changing the text then it is acceptable to use the weekday version to avoid confusion. However, ideally, the text should indeed be changed, and that, according to the *Ramban* was the general practice. Accordingly, we can understand the *Nusach Arizal* that changes the text to say רוענו on *Shabbos* instead of רעינו.

There is yet another possible change to the text of the *bracha* of רחם on *Shabbos*:

The *gemara*<sup>x</sup>, in discussing the inclusion of רצה on *Shabbos*, says that on *Shabbos* the *bracha* should start and end with נחמה, consolation, and include *Shabbos* in the middle. *Rif*<sup>xi</sup> understands this to mean that on *Shabbos* the focus should change from our prayers for mercy on *Yerushalayim* and its rebuilding to the consolation of *Tziyon*. *GRA*<sup>xii</sup> followed the *Rif* and altered the text of the *bracha* on *Shabbos* to start with נחמנו, console us, rather than רחם, have mercy on us. *Tosfos*<sup>xiii</sup> understands that this is to avoid supplication on *Shabbos*. *Tosfos* argues that based on the conclusion of the *Yerushalmi* that allows requests on *Shabbos* if they are part of the fixed text of a *bracha*, the text need not be altered. Perhaps the above understanding of the *Ramban* would explain this change as well. However, *Tosfos* adds that asking for consolation is no less of a problem than asking for mercy and the rebuilding of *Yerushalayim*, and therefore, the change of text from one language of supplication to another would not be a viable solution if there were a problem.

Therefore, *Tosfos*, based on their understanding of *Rashi*<sup>xiv</sup> explain the *gemara* to simply mean that the body of the *bracha* should remain unchanged with just the insertion of *Shabbos* in the middle. The *gemara* says to begin with "nechama", not to indicate a change on *Shabbos*, but because the *bracha* itself is referred to as the *bracha* of consolation, perhaps as *Rabbeinu Yonah*<sup>xv</sup> explains because there can be no greater consolation than the rebuilding of *Yerushalayim* or because the actual text is נחמנו rather than רחם. Indeed, *Rambam*<sup>xvi</sup> writes that both רחם and נחמנו are acceptable versions. *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>xvii</sup> rules like the *Rambam* but writes that whichever version is used should not be changed for *Shabbos*. This seems to be the common practice.

<sup>i</sup> תלמוד ירושלמי שבת פרק ט"ז הלכה ג

<sup>ii</sup> בית יוסף או"ח ס' קפ"ה

<sup>iii</sup> משנה ברורה או"ח ס' קפ"ז ס"ק ב

<sup>iv</sup> ערוך השולחן או"ח ס' קפ"ה סע' י'

<sup>v</sup> דרכי משה או"ח ס' קפ"ה סע' י'

<sup>vi</sup> סודר תהלת ה' ברכת המזון

<sup>vii</sup> ע' שו"ת תשובות והנהגות ח"ו ס' צ"ו אות ל

<sup>viii</sup> ח' הרמב"ן שבת קי"ג ע"ב

<sup>ix</sup> קרבן העדה שם

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Yeshiva Ner Boruch-PTI 441 Passaic Avenue, Passaic, NJ 07055 [ptitorah@gmail.com](mailto:ptitorah@gmail.com) [pti.shulcloud.com](http://pti.shulcloud.com) 973-594-4774