

# Parsha Ponders

Sheva Berachos | January 16, 2019 | 10 Shevat 5779

## The Week of Sheva Berachos, Day #2 - Beracha<sup>1</sup>

אמר רבי תנחום א"ר חנילאי כל אדם שאין לו אשה שרוי...בלא ברכה...דכתיב להניח ברכה אל ביתך  
Rabbi Tanchum said in the name of Rabbi Chanilai: Any man who doesn't have a wife lives...without  
*beracha*...as it is written<sup>2</sup>: "To leave *beracha* towards your house"<sup>3</sup>

As part of the Jewish wedding ceremony<sup>4</sup>, seven blessings known as *sheva berachos* are recited under the chuppah. As well, our Sages tell us<sup>5</sup> that once a couple gets married, they are to spend the first week of their marriage rejoicing. During these seven days, the *sheva berachos* are again recited, at the end of a festive meal. Some say<sup>6</sup> that these seven blessings correlate to the seven things<sup>7</sup> that a man acquires<sup>8</sup> when he gets married. Our Sages inform us<sup>9</sup> that until a man gets married, he doesn't have joy, blessing, goodness, Torah, fortification, peace, nor is he a complete Man<sup>10</sup>. As such, it would be appropriate during this week to elaborate on each of these seven qualities, and how they relate to marriage.

What does the word *beracha* mean? There are various opinions. Some say<sup>11</sup> that it means praise. Some say<sup>12</sup> that it means source. Others say<sup>13</sup> that it means *ribui*, or increase. Something that has *beracha* merits to increase in quantity and in quality. The Maharal points out<sup>14</sup> that the root for *beracha* ברך itself is indicative of the final explanation. The numerical value of each of the letters is a multiple of two<sup>15</sup>, signifying doubling, or increase<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a discussion I had on this topic with Rav Reuven Stone, a close student of Rav Yonasan David *shlita*, and a longtime *chavrusa* of mine

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel 44:30

<sup>3</sup> Yevamos 62b

<sup>4</sup> Kesubos 7b

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 7a

<sup>6</sup> Nachalas Shiva 12:4:3. See also Levush Even HaEzer 61:1 and Shnei Luchos HaBris *Sha'ar HaOsios* § קדושת הזיווג 384-386

<sup>7</sup> Nachalas Shiva loc. cit. points out that Bereishis Rabbah 17:2 counts more than seven (it adds helpmate, atonement, life, and that he stops diminishing the Divine form), but the Tur Even HaEzer § 1 only lists these seven (although he replaces joy with "a living place", see Beis Yosef ad. loc.)

<sup>8</sup> Interesting to note that according to the Rambam (Mishneh Torah Hilchos Ishus 12:1,2), when a couple gets married, besides the husband's three biblical obligations towards his wife (Cf. Ramban to Exodus 21:10), the Rabbis enacted **seven** additional obligations upon the husband

<sup>9</sup> Yevamos 62b, 63a

<sup>10</sup> Nachalas Shiva loc. cit. brings and explains how they correlate: (1) ברכת היין – Blessing (2) שהכל ברא לכבודו – Torah (4) אשר את האדם – Adam (5) שוש תשיש – Peace (6) שמח תשמח – Joy (7) אשר ברא – Fortification. For some reason he leaves out the third of the *sheva berachos* (יוצר האדם), and it would presumably correlate to the remaining attribute, which is Goodness

<sup>11</sup> Chizkuni to Genesis 24:27

<sup>12</sup> Abudraham p. 33f, brought by Artzos HaChaim § 5; Yad Katana

<sup>13</sup> Teshuvos HaRashba I § 423, V § 51, from the word בריכה, or wellspring; Nefesh HaChaim 2:2; Rashi (Sotah 10a s.v. במה ברכו, Yevamos loc. cit. s.v. ברכה, Bava Metzia 42a s.v. אין ברכה, Exodus 16:5, Proverbs 11:25)

<sup>14</sup> Tiferes Yisroel Chapter 34 s.v. והנה דברים אלו; Netzach Yisroel Chapter 45 s.v. וביאור ענין; Derush al HaTorah p. 26b

<sup>15</sup> ב – 2, ר – 200 and ך – 20

<sup>16</sup> The Maharal loc. cit. explains that this is the reason that the world was created with a ב (meaning, the ב of בראשית, Genesis 1:1)

This explains why Yitzchak was the richest of our three forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. He was the second in the group, signifying his relationship to *beracha*, or increase<sup>17</sup>. Where do we see that he was so rich? Rashi tells us<sup>18</sup> that the fertilizer produced by Yitzchak's donkeys was worth more than all the wealth of the king Avimelech<sup>19</sup>.

Now we can fully understand why a man acquires *beracha* once he is married. When a man is alone, there's no room for *ribui*, or increase<sup>20</sup>. *Beracha* is most found where there is "two". Therefore, the explanation is obvious. Once he gets married, he's no longer by himself. He's now a couple! A pair! Now that there's a couple, G-d willing the *ribui* can begin. Once there's two, there's room for expansion.

Mazel Tov!

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<sup>17</sup> Rav Moshe Shapira *zt"l* explained that *beracha* has a relationship with דין, which is the attribute of Yitzchak (a fact ubiquitous throughout the writings of the Maharal, his source being Zohar II p. 21b), further showing his worthiness for abundant *beracha*

<sup>18</sup> Genesis 26:13, quoting Bereishis Rabbah 64:7

<sup>19</sup> The Netziv also says in many places that Yitzchak's unique attribute was פרנסה. For example, see HaEmek Davar to Genesis 24:6, 28:13, 31:42, 46:1,3, Exodus 3:6,15, and Harchev Davar to Genesis 34:1 and Exodus 1:1. He says in HaEmek Davar to Genesis 24:63 that Yitzchak's attribute of עבודה is the root of פרנסה. For more on that see his commentary to ibid 2:5

<sup>20</sup> See Netzach Yisroel *loc. cit.*