

BS'D

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The Proper Art of Eating and Seeing

A. Eating in Order to Serve

Rebbe Moshe-Mordechai of Lelov would say, "I am able to pray without first going to the *mikveh*, but I am unable to eat, without going to the *mikveh*. Serving G-d through eating is an extremely elevated form of serving the Creator."

'Serving G-d through eating' doesn't mean that a person can't enjoy his food. He can eat well, but he should strive to have the right intention and mannerism, and say a sincere blessing. It's doable, matters like these, which make a world of difference. It turns eating into an act of holiness.

When the Lelover said that proper eating can be a very high path for connecting to G-d, he did not mean that we are discussing planes that are beyond us. One can eat well and enjoy his meals, but it is the details -- the intention, the blessing recitations, the manner of eating -- which makes all the difference.

There are definitely hardships involved; it isn't easy to break old habits. Someone accustomed to eating hastily will have a hard time learning how to eat properly. Someone who isn't accustomed to saying blessings with focused attention will find it challenging to begin doing so. But G-d doesn't expect from a person something that is beyond his level. Still, everyone is expected to take a step forward from wherever he is, and work towards eating more properly.

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One Friday night, *Stoliner* chasidim were at a *zits* (chasidic sit-together) and the topic of discussion was the virtue of eating properly. Some were declaring that one shouldn't eat hastily; that one should train himself to eat the food slowly and patiently.

The following morning, there was a *kiddush* (wine and refreshments) after the Shabbat morning prayers, and hot *kugel* was being served. The *Zitomir Rav* was present, and remembering the conversation from the previous night, didn't rush to eat it. Instead, he began cutting his portion of *kugel* into small pieces, and before he finished he found a pin inside. Had he eaten more quickly, he probably would have swallowed the pin and his life would

have been in danger. He used to say that since that time, he always attends the *zits*. He saw that doing so saved his life.

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The Rebbe of Machnovka, Avraham-Yehoshua-Heschel Twersky, was once a guest in the home of Reb Chaim-Yitzchak Cohen. After the soup, the rebbe thanked his host and said, "It was very tasty."

Reb Chaim Yitzchok was surprised. The Machnovka Rebbe was from the great *tzadikim* of the generation, and Reb Chaim Yitzchak couldn't imagine that the rebbe actually tasted the food.

The Rebbe sensed his astonishment and answered wittily, "What do you think? That I'm like a snake, upon which it was decreed that whatever it eats tastes like earth?"¹

When Reb Chaim Yitzchak realized that the Rebbe tastes food, he wanted to serve the Rebbe something that he thought the rebbe would certainly enjoy. So what did he do? He brought the Rebbe some ice cream.

The Rebbe didn't know what it was. "Its blessing is *shahakol* ("That all is brought into being through His word"-- a general blessing²)," Reb Chaim Yitzchak told him.

After the meal, Reb Chaim Yitzchak asked the Rebbe what he thought of the ice-cream.

"It's very good," the Rebbe said, "but why was it served so cold?"

B. Looking in Order to See

One day after praying, an elderly chasid approached the Machnovka Rebbe. With great respect he inquired about the Rebbe's custom of during the *minyans*, sitting with his back to the east, facing all the other participants.

"I know that this is the *custom* of German rabbis and Lithuanian *Yeshiva* heads," the chasid said. "But Rebbes generally sit facing the eastern wall, like everyone else. May I turn the Rebbe's chair around?"

The Machnovka Rebbe looked at the chasid and replied, "May you be *gezunt* (healthy)! For twenty years I was in that country [Russia] and they prevented me from seeing other Jews; now I can look at Jews and you want to take this away from me?"

¹ See Gen. 3:14 and commentaries.

² In contrast to the specific blessings available for bread, wine, fruit and vegetables.

When Rabbi Chaim Twersky, the *Chernobyler Rav*, would retell this anecdote of the Machnovka Rebbe, he would add that simply looking at another Jew is not enough.

“One has to know *how* to look,” the Rav said. “It isn’t enough just to look at another Jew — simply to see his face, two eyes and a mouth. One must look at another Jew and see what he needs, and how you can help him!”

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*Source:*

**A.** Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the Parshas Noach 5777 email of “Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from **Rabbi Elimelech Biderman**,” as compiled by *Boruch Twersky*.

**B.** Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from // **Hamodia.com**, Feb. 20, 2014

*Connection – Weekly Reading of Baha’alotecha:*

**A.** In it we learn about the proper eating of the Manna and the improper eating of the quail.

**B.** Near the end, in the episode with Miriam-Aharon-Moshe, we gain a lesson about humility and the importance of seeing others favorably.

*Biographical note:*

**Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel Twersky** (24 Adar 1895 - Yom Kippur 1987), **the Machnovka Rebbe**, was a descendant of the first two Rebbes of Chernobyl, Skver and Machnovka. He lived in Russia for nearly two decades after WWII, constantly risking his life as he defied the Communists in order to help fellow Jews and the survival of Torah & Mitzvah observance. He suffered many tribulations, including years in Siberia and exile in Tashkent, before finally emigrating and settling in Israel, in Bnei Brak. The fourth and current Machnovka Rebbe, Rabbi Yehoshua Twersky (see photo from // *Matzav.com* on right), is his great-nephew.

