



Ask The Rabbi...



November 9, 1994 Issue #41

This issue is dedicated in the memory of Nachshon Mordechai ben Yehudah Waxman z"l

This edition contains:

1. One Creator, a Plural Name
2. Cereal and Milk

Stephen from Drexel University wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I read Chayei Sara for my Bar Mitzva. Good memories... Why is the word "Elohim", when it is used as a Name of G-d, written in the plural? I haven't read any convincing religious discourse about this subject.

Dear Stephen,

Note : For the purpose of this column, I will write the word *elohim* as *Elokim* when referring to G-d.

Grammatically, the root word of *Elokim* is "eleh" the demonstrative pronoun "these". In the plural, "these" connotes the binding unity between each of the individual items, e.g.: "These five buildings were all built by a famous architect." Therefore the plural of *eleh*, (*elohim*), represents the unity of many different things combined together.

When G-d's name *Elokim* is used in the Torah, it illustrates the concept that G-d is the "one through whom all the plurality, (by everything being related to him), becomes a unity." Simply said, since G-d is the creator of everything in the universe, everything in the universe is unified through G-d. Thus, the word *Elokim* as a name of G-d in the Torah, expresses that all the individual things in the world, that seem separate and autonomous, are all unified through the Source — G-d — Who is The Ruler of everything. By extension, the Torah also uses the word *elohim* to refer to human rulers, law-givers, and judges of the people, who each rule in their worldly domain.

In the ancient world, the Oneness of G-d, as supreme Ruler and Judge over everything, was unique to Judaism alone. All early civilizations were polytheistic, that is, they all believed in many gods who were each limited in power to their own domain. For a good harvest, one might invoke the god of rain, or the god of fertility, or even both, by worshipping in the prescribed (pagan) manner.

In the Torah understanding of the world, nothing presupposed Creation, except G-d Himself Who created the world and everything in it. Therefore it is not surprising that the first time G-d is referred to in the Torah, the name *Elokim* is used, teaching us that G-d is the unity of all *these things* that are created in the story of Creation.

Source:

- Rabbi S.R. Hirsch - Parshat Bereshit ch. 1.

A reader in Pittsburgh wrote:

If somebody is eating cereal & milk for breakfast, such as corn flakes, and is making the appropriate bracha for the cereal, is there a need to make a bracha of shehakol for the milk also?

After the cereal is finished in the bowl, would he then need to make a bracha of shehakol over the leftover milk? What if he drinks a separate glass of milk with the bowl of cereal?

The general rule is that one makes a *bracha* on the cereal and this includes, or, in Halachic lingo, "covers" the milk. (It is irrelevant whether the milk physically covers the cereal :-) or vice versa). The reason for this is that the milk is there to **enhance** the taste of the cereal. Any milk left over in the bowl will not require a separate bracha since it was included in the *bracha* for the cereal. If one would add more than the normal amount of milk to the cereal, then two *brachot* are required -- first the *bracha* for the cereal, and then *shehakol* for the milk. If in doubt, one should make *shehakol* on something else (such as coffee).

Similarly, if one wants to drink a separate glass of milk, one would need to say a bracha of *shehakol*, since it is not "covered" by the *bracha* on the cereal.

The *bracha* that is appropriate for corn-flakes is dependent on how the cereal is made. The conventional method is to produce it from flattened corn **kernels**, and the cereal would therefore require the *bracha* of *ha'adama*, but if it is produced from corn **flour**, then the correct *bracha* would be *shehakol*.

A story is told of a Rebbe and a *chassid*. The *chassid* asked the Rebbe: "You have an apple, and I have an apple. You make a *bracha* and eat a slice, and I make a *bracha* and I eat a slice. After you eat a bit, then your *chassidim* come running to eat the remainder of your apple (a *Chassidic* custom known as *shirayim*); but no one is interested in the remnants of my apple! What's the difference?"

The Rebbe smiled warmly and replied, " You make a *bracha* in order to eat, whereas I eat in order to make a *bracha*!"

Source:

- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim - 212:1.

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