Kindly take a moment to study <u>MISHNAS CHAYIM</u> in the merit of Esther *bas* Yehudah Zev *a*"*h* a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

Borei Nefashos and the Giants PARSHAS EIKEV 5776

The Mishnah in Berachos (6:8) outlines the blessings associated with drinking water:

ַהַשּׁוֹתֶה מַיִם לִצְמָאוֹ, אוֹמֵר שֶׁהַכּּל נִהְיָה בִּדְבָרוֹ... בּוֹרֵא נְפָשׁוֹת רַבּוֹת וְחֶסְרוֹנָן.

"One who drinks water to quench his thirst recites '*Shehakol niheyeh bidvaro*' (That all came into being through His word) (and) '*Borei nefashos rabos v'chesronan*' (He creates many souls and their deficiencies)."

Unlikely Neighbors

It seems straightforward enough, on the surface of it. What is somewhat less simple, however, is the reappearance of this *halachah* elsewhere in the teachings of Chazal. Puzzlingly, the *medrash* juxtaposes this ruling with a *passuk* from this week's *parshah* that seems completely unrelated: שָׁמַע יִשְׁרָאֵל אַתָּה עְבֵר הַיוֹם אֶת־הַיָּרְדֵּו הַלָּכָה אָדָם מִישְׁרָאֵל שָׁשׁוֹתָה מַיִם לְצְמָאוֹ אוֹמֵר שֶׁהַכּל "Hear Yisrael, you are crossing the Yarden River this day' (*Devarim 9:1*). (There is) a *halachah*: An individual from Yisrael who **drinks water to quench his thirst recites** '*Shehakol niheyeh bidvaro*'... (and) 'Borei nefashos rabos v'chesronam''' (Devarim Rabbah 3:8).

One might have imagined that viewing the *passuk* in its full context would have clarified the issue. At first glance, however, this does not seem to be the case. Moshe was apprising the people that they would encounter some formidable enemies upon entering the land. Nonetheless, he exhorted them to maintain strong faith and trust in Hashem: שָׁמַע יִשְׁרָאֵל אַתָּה שָׁמַע יִשְׁרָאֵל אַתָּה וָבָאָרָת בָּשָׁמִים, עֵם־גָּדוֹל וָרָם בְּנֵי שְׁמַע יִשְׁרָאֵל אַתָּה וָבָאָרָת בָּשָׁמָם, עֵם־גָּדוֹל וָרָם בְנֵאַמִים מִמֶדָ עָרִים גְּדֹלֹת וּבְאָרָת בְּשָׁמִים, עֵם־גָּדוֹל וָרָם בְּנֵי שְׁמַע יִשְׁרָאֵל אַתָּה יִשְׁרָאֵל אַתָּה וָשָׁמַע יִשְׁרָאֵל אַתָּה וָבָאַרָת בַּשָׁמָים, עֵם־גָּדוֹל וָרָם בְּנֵי שְׁמַע יִשְׁרָאֵל אַתָּה יָדְעָת גָישָׁר אַתָּה יָדְעָת גוים אָת־הַיָּרְדֵן לָבָא לְרָשָׁת גוים וּמַצְבָּר לְפְנֵיף הוּאיהָעְבַר לְפְנֵיף אֲשׁ עִבָּר הַיוֹם אָת־הַיָּרְדֵן לָבָא לְרָשָׁת גוים בְּיַרִשָּלָת וּבְאָרָת בָּשָׁמָם, וְיָצָבָים לְפְנֵיף אַשׁ עִבָּר הַיום אָער הַיָּום אָעָר אַתָּה יָדָשָׁר אַתָּה יָדָעָת וּמָעָי הוּביּגַיָּקוּ הוּאיהָעָבר לְפָנֵיף אָשׁ איַר היום אָער הַיָּום ווּאיד ווּא זיַר אַבָּר הייָום בָּיוֹם אָעָרָים הַיָּצָים לְפָנֵיף בָּאַלָּת הוּאיה יַבְעָים לְפָנֵיף הוּאי יַרָעָים אָפָניים מִמָּדָם וְהוּא יַרָיָיעָם לְפָנֵיף בָּאַרָר היום אָער הַיָּהום בָּיוֹם אָעָר אַתָּה היַאַקָּים הַאַי דִשָּרָ מִיוֹם בּי הי אַכָּר אַבָּר היָאָי שָׁמַע יוּשָרָם הוּאי יַבָּעָים לְפָנֵיף בָּאַי שִׁרָים ווּארי זין האַירָם וּאיז הַעָּרָים לָפָניים בָּיוֹם אָעָי גם היי הַיָּה הַיָּה שָּיַר היוּא יַכָּיים בּיַיָּים בּיוּא יַרָר היוּא זיין הַיָּגיים וּשָּים בּיי היי אַכָּר היי היים אָי היי אַרָר הייַין בָּיים בּיוּשָר בָיוּשָר הייוּ איז הַעָר הייים אָעָים אַי היי אַכָּר הייוּ אַייַרָים לְפָנייף אַי שִירָם בָּיי היי אָרָבָיים אָעָיי הַיָין אַיָר הייָר הַיָּין בָין בָיין בָיָיים אַיין הוּשַי בּיי היי אַרָבין בָייָין בּיַין בָיין אַיי הַי הַיין בּיין בָיין בָיין בּיין בּיין בָיין אַיין אַיין בָיין בָיי היי אַרָים בּייים בּיי היי אַכָּיין בּייין בּייים בּייין בּייים בּייים בייים בּייים בייים בייי היי אַכָר בייין בּיייין בּיייי

Actually, the *pessukim* themselves seem to present a bit of an issue. Yisrael is encouraged to enter the Land with confidence despite the presence of strong and formidable inhabitants, for Hashem is fighting on their behalf and will dispatch them accordingly. But the question can be raised: Why, indeed, was such an arrangement necessary? Why *were* the original inhabitants indeed comprised of such mighty and intimidating warriors, to the extent that it was necessary to banish them through miraculous means? Seemingly, it would have been more prudent if the denizens of Cana'an had been weak and incompetent and could be cleared out from the land with ease!

The Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe*) clarifies this matter in a most interesting way: by elucidating the blessing of *Borei Nefashos*.

Best of Both Worlds

As familiar as we may be with the text of the blessing, its actual meaning may be somewhat elusive. A cursory glance – supplied here by a mere literal translation – reveals a message whose meaning may not be altogether clear: אָרָה הי אֶלֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא נְפָשׁוֹת רַבּוֹת - יָשָׁבָּרָא לְהַחִיוֹת בָּהֶם וֶנָשָׁ כָּל חָי. בָּרוּךָ חֵי הָעוֹלָמִים. "Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, King of the Universe, who creates many souls and their deficiencies, for all that was created to sustain thereby every living soul. Blessed is the Life-Source of the Worlds."

The Chasam Sofer elucidates the blessing by addressing a fundamental question. Of course we are grateful to Hashem for providing our sustenance; once a person is thirsty, it is truly a relief to obtain a drink of water. But why is this necessary? Wouldn't it have been preferable for a person to have been created in total fullness, without any need for external provisions? If he would never be hungry or thirsty, he wouldn't need food or water in the first place!

But of course, this was a most purposeful arrangement, intended for man's ultimate and maximum benefit. If a person automatically had all of his needs, he would be complacent. But since beings were created "v'chesronan" – in a state of wanting and dependent on other factors "to sustain thereby every living soul" – they will perforce turn their eyes to the Almighty, beseeching Him to supply these needs. What emerges, then, is that they receive both worlds – Hashem delivers their physical needs, and they merit the World to Come for their reliance on and devotion to Hashem. The blessing concludes in the plural form to underscore this point: "Baruch Chei Ha'olamim – Blessed is the Life-Source of the Worlds" – this one and the Next.

This, the Chasam Sofer continues, accounts for the connection forged by the *medrash*. The blessing's meaning is also the key to understanding the issue raised above regarding the Land's inhabitants: Why were strong ones placed there instead of weaklings? The truth is, however, that the alternate arrangement would have opened the door to some other tremendous problems. Had the inhabitants been inherently easy to overcome, the people could have been led to adopt the mistaken (and heretical) attitude that this great achievement was eqn't yee "It is through the strength and might of my own hand that this great achievement was wrought for me" (*Devarim 8:17*). Thus, to protect them from this spiritual trap and help foster a reliance on the Almighty instead, Hashem implanted mighty and formidable inhabitants in the Land. Now, Yisrael would not only inherit the Land in This World, but they would also accrue great merit in the World to Come.