



Finding Strength

YESHAYAHU 40:29

תַּן לַיְגָף כֹּחַ וּלְאִין אוֹנִים עֲצָמָה יִרְבֶּה

He gives strength to the weary and to the powerless, He increases strength.

If you examine the morning blessings closely, a discernible thematic structure emerges, unfolding in a coherent sequence. One bracha that stands out as an anomaly is the “הַנּוֹתֵן לַיְגָף כֹּחַ,” He who gives strength to the weary. Interestingly, this particular bracha is not found in the Gemara and was introduced by the Savoraim, a group of rabbis who lived between the periods of the Amoraim and Geonim, around 500-600 CE.

The core message of this bracha is to acknowledge Hashem as the restorer of strength to the weary. It is a valuable and practical message as we are fortunate to be created with bodies which have the capacity to replenish their strength with sleep. However, the placement of this blessing seems incongruous. The preceding two blessings focus on the strength and glory of the Jewish people, offering a broader perspective on our collective destiny. In contrast, this bracha lacks a direct reference to the Jewish people. On a personal level, we have already acknowledged our ability to see, stand, walk, and get dressed, making it seem somewhat out of place to address weariness at this point. So,

why do we recite this blessing now?

The source of this bracha lies in a verse from this week’s Haftorah, “נָתַן לַיְגָף כֹּחַ וּלְאִין אוֹנִים עֲצָמָה, יִרְבֶּה” which translates to “He gives strength to the weary, and to the powerless, He increases strength” (Yeshayahu 40:29). The commentaries explain that it is the Jewish people who are the subject of this verse, referring to those who have endured weariness and oppression throughout centuries of exile. Notably, the use of the term “יְגָף” (weary) rather than “עֵיף” (tired) in the verse underscores the profound exhaustion that is being described, as observed by Rav Schwab.

While the placement of the bracha of הַנּוֹתֵן לַיְגָף כֹּחַ, “He who gives strength to the weary,” may seem out of order with the progressive, thematic flow of the other Birkot HaShachar, when we delve deeper into its origins and purpose, we discover a profound lesson in faith and resilience. This bracha’s unique position invites us to ponder the extraordinary strength that is bestowed upon us, not only physically but also spiritually, especially when we, the Jewish people, have faced times of weariness and adversity throughout our history. As we recite this bracha each morning during these most challenging times, we are reminded of our enduring spirit and the Divine fortitude that has sustained us through the ages. In essence, it is a powerful testament to our unwavering faith and the remarkable ability to find strength even in the most trying of circumstances, reaffirming our connection with אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא who continually restores our resolve. ■