

natural processes of agriculture and human effort. Birkat HaMazon reminds us that although we are privileged to partner with Hashem in bringing bread from the field to our table, every seed, every drop of rain, every ray of sunshine, every ounce of strength, and every successful harvest remain His gifts.

The Torah thus teaches us to recognize the Divine Source not only of miraculous food that falls from heaven, but especially of the ordinary bread that appears to be the product of our own hands. Precisely because bread most powerfully reflects human effort, the Torah uniquely commands us to bless Hashem after eating bread.

Why Do We Thank Hashem for the Land When We Recite Grace After Meals?

After describing the goodness and abundance of Eretz Yisrael, the Torah commands:

סַפֵּר דְּבָרִים פְּרוּקִים חַפְּסֻקִים! וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־הָשֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לָךְ:

“You shall eat and be satisfied and bless Hashem your G-d for the good land that He has given you” (*Devarim* 8:10).

The Torah could simply have commanded us to bless Hashem for the food we have eaten. Why, then, does it specifically instruct us to thank Him for the good land?

Our Sages teach that Moshe instituted the first blessing of Birkat HaMazon, *HaZan*, when the manna first descended from heaven (*Babylonian Talmud, Berachot* 48b). Rabbeinu Bachya explains that the roots of Birkat HaMazon reach back to the manna, a concept alluded to in the verse, “In the morning you shall be satisfied with bread, and you shall know that I am Hashem your G-d” (*Shemot* 16:12). When the Jewish people were nourished directly from heaven, they learned to thank Hashem as the Source of their sustenance. The Torah later established this practice as a mitzvah when the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael and began eating bread produced through their own labor (*Rabbeinu Bachya, Shemot* 16:12).

The Zohar reveals a deeper layer to why Birkat HaMazon specifically thanks Hashem for the Land. It explains that all nourishment for the inhabited world first descends to Eretz Yisrael. The Holy Land is the spiritual center of creation, with Jerusalem at its center and the Holy of Holies at the center of Jerusalem. From there, Divine blessing flows outward to sustain the entire world (*Zohar, Terumah*, 561).

Every meal, whether eaten in Israel or elsewhere, is therefore connected to the holiness of the Land. When we recite Birkat HaMazon, we acknowledge not only the food before us, but also the sacred source from which all nourishment ultimately flows. Every loaf of bread thus carries within it the blessing of Eretz Yisrael and the loving kindness of Hashem.

What Makes Birkat HaMazon the Only Blessing Commanded Explicitly by the Torah?

Throughout the Torah, we are commanded to bring holiness into every area of life, yet only one blessing is explicitly required by the Torah itself – the blessing after eating bread. In *Parashat Ekev*, Moshe reminds the people that as they prepare to enter the Land of Israel, they will enjoy a life of abundance unlike the years they spent in the wilderness. At precisely that moment, when they are about to experience material prosperity, he gives them a remarkable command:

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Why does the Torah single out Birkat HaMazon as the only blessing it explicitly commands? We recite blessings before eating, before performing mitzvot, and on many other occasions, yet these obligations were instituted by our Sages. Why did the Torah itself choose to command a blessing specifically after we have

eaten and are satisfied?

Perhaps the answer lies in the unique spiritual challenge that follows a satisfying meal. Hunger naturally reminds us of our dependence upon Hashem, but fullness can easily create the illusion that we are self-sufficient. The Torah therefore teaches that the moment we feel most content physically is precisely the moment we must consciously acknowledge the true Source of our nourishment. Rather than allowing satisfaction to distance us from Hashem, Birkat HaMazon transforms it into an opportunity for gratitude, humility, and deeper connection.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook adds another dimension. The greatest gift of food is not the momentary pleasure it gives our palate, but the lasting nourishment that strengthens and sustains our lives. Only after we have eaten to satisfaction can we fully appreciate this enduring gift. Birkat HaMazon therefore directs our gratitude beyond the enjoyment of the meal to the life and strength that Hashem continually grants us through it. In this way, the Torah transforms the simple act of eating into an encounter with the One who nourishes both our bodies and our souls (Rav Kook, *Olat HaRa'ya*, *Birkat HaMazon*).

How Does Reciting Birkat HaMazon Become a Channel of Blessing for All Creation?

Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Weiss raises a profound question based on the teaching of our Sages:

“Our Sages teach that whoever benefits from this world without a blessing is considered as though he has robbed the Holy One, blessed be He, and the Congregation of Israel” (*Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 102a*).

How can it be said that a person “robs” Hashem? Can the Infinite Creator be deprived of anything? And in what sense does failing to recite a blessing rob the Jewish people?

Rabbi Weiss explains that just as Hashem established physical laws through which the natural world functions, He also established spiritual laws through which His blessing flows into the world. According to these spiritual laws, the blessings recited by the Jewish people become channels through which Divine abundance is drawn into the world. When a person neglects to bless Hashem, he interrupts that flow, withholding blessing not only from himself but from all of Israel and, ultimately, from the entire world (*Sod HaChashmal Part 1, Parashat Emor, The Cup of Blessing*).

The Zohar expresses this idea even more deeply. Every blessing we recite draws life from the Source of Life above and pours Divine abundance into all the spiritual worlds. From there, that blessing continues to flow into our world, bringing life and nourishment to all creation (*Zohar, Ekev 270b*, cited by *Sod HaChashmal*).

Birkat HaMazon is therefore far more than a personal expression of gratitude for the meal that has satisfied us. Through this mitzvah, we are invited to join Hashem’s ongoing work of sustaining creation by consciously drawing His blessing into the world. Every time we *bentch* with sincerity, gratitude, and focused awareness, we not only acknowledge Hashem as the Source of all nourishment, but also help awaken the channels through which His life-giving abundance continues to flow to every living being.

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