

# דרכים בפרשה עקב

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BeParsha



## ואכלת ושבעת וברכת את ה' אלקיך על הארץ הטבה אשר נתן לך (ח:י)

*And you will eat and be sated, and you shall bless the HaShem, your God, for the good land He has given you (8:10)*

In this week's *parsha*, we learn about the mitzvah of *birchas hamazon*. Although one of the basic tenets of humanity is to know how to say thank you, and for the reason of building our character alone it would have been enough to obligate us to say thank you, there needs to be more to *bentching* than this. In fact, there are many opportunities in this world to show *hakaras hatov* to the One who is *meitiv* us. But does HaShem really *need* our thanks? Are we doing this for Him? Does the fact that HaShem commands us to *bentch* lessen what we are doing?

In a monumental discussion of *birchas hamazon*, Rabbeinu Bachye sheds light on this and on the entire concept of making *brochos*. He writes that the purpose of *brochos* was not at all meant for HaShem. HaShem has no need for our *brochos*. HaShem needs nothing; He has everything, and He is the *mekor habrocha*. Rather, the purpose is twofold and it is for us. We are actually the winners when we make *brochos*.

Firstly, we are testifying to the direct involvement of HaShem in this world. We are proclaiming our recognition that it is HaShem that provides all the sustenance in this world, and without HaShem's involvement, we would cease to exist. HaShem wants us to recognize the *chesed* that He does with us, and that He is the Supreme Being.

Furthermore, Rabbeinu Bachye continues, HaShem set up the world in a manner that when one makes a *brocha*, it brings about an equal and counterpart reaction from HaShem. When we make a *brocha* on a fruit, it triggers an outpouring of blessing on that particular item in the world. We are the true beneficiaries of our *brochos*.

The *gemara* in *Masechta Brochos* (35b) tells us that if someone has enjoyment from this world without making a *brocha*, he is actually stealing from HaShem and from *Knesses Yisroel*. He steals from

HaShem by denying Him that necessary recognition that HaShem is involved in every facet of our lives. Furthermore, he steals from the people because he withholds the blessings and bounty that would have been triggered as a result of making the proper *brocha*.

The Dubno Maggid takes this a step further. The *Gemara* (*ibid*) teaches that this person is actually compared to, and is considered a partner of, the terrible Yaravam ben Nevat, who caused Klal Yisroel to do *aveiros* and ruined the relationship between us and HaShem. The Maggid explains this *Gemara* as follows: Assuming that the purpose of the *brocha* is to acknowledge HaShem, why are we particular about which *brocha* is the correct one? If one says the wrong one, he has not fulfilled his obligation. But why should it make a difference, after all, he is still expressing honor to HaShem? Quoting the Shelah HaKadosh, the Maggid explains the same *yesod* that we mentioned above: *brochos* bring down to this world further power of growth. When making a *brocha* on an apple, all the apples of the world are improved. But when making the incorrect *brocha*, the trigger for those foods is not "pulled". Accordingly, we now understand the *gemara*. We are stealing from HaShem the potential of giving further blessing and bounty to the world. We are stealing from *knesses Yisroel* because next year the apples will not grow as well as they could have, lacking the blessings from HaShem. Furthermore, this compares to Yaravam because not only are we not making our own *brocha*, but we are ruining it for everyone else as well. This can be compared to one that borrows and does not pay back. The lender no longer wants to extend credit, to him or to anyone else. So too, when we make *brochos*, HaShem "wants" to give us more in the future. Conversely, when one doesn't make the *brocha*, HaShem won't give to this person or to the others.

No man is an island! We all have a responsibility to one another. With all the emphasis in the world on "*Tikkun Olam*", perhaps one of the greatest, if not "the" greatest, thing that we can do in doing our part is to make a *brocha* on the great bounty that HaShem continuously bestows upon us. By giving HaShem that *brocha*, we are actually giving to ourselves.

**Good Shaabos, מרדכי אפפּעל**