

דרכים בפרשה עקב

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ואכלת ושבעת וברכת את ה' אלקיך על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך - *"You shall eat, become satisfied, and bless Hashem your G-d for the good Land that He has given you."*

There are moments in life when Hashem reminds us that we are not in control. Sometimes it is through a major nisayon. Other times it is while being pulled over for speeding, waiting for test results, hoping to hear back about a job, or waiting for an answer to a shidduch.

In those moments of hachna'ah, we suddenly recognize what was always true: everything rests in the hands of the Ribbono Shel Olam. Tefillah ceases to be routine and becomes a cry ממעמקים - from the depths of the heart. The siddur is the same, but the person has changed. The challenge is carrying that awareness with us even after the moment of need has passed, and the greater challenge is remaining just as close after the yeshuah comes.

Perhaps that is the message of Parshas Eikev: Before Klal Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael, they lived for forty years with a constant awareness that everything came from Hashem. Every morning, they walked outside and found the mann waiting for them, coming directly from the Aibishter.

Then everything changed. They would enter Eretz Yisrael, build homes, harvest crops, and enjoy a life of shefa and bracha. The blessing itself was not the danger. The danger was that abundance could slowly create the feeling that they no longer needed Hashem in the same way.

It is precisely at that moment that the Torah commands: **ואכלת ושבעת וברכת את ה' אלקיך על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך** *You shall eat, become satisfied, and bless Hashem your G-d for the good Land that He has given you.*

And immediately afterwards: **השמר לך פן תשכח את ה' אלקיך... פן תאכל ושבעת... ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה'** *Be careful lest you forget Hashem... lest you eat and become satisfied... and your heart becomes elevated, and you forget Hashem."*

Interestingly, the Torah does not warn us before we eat. It warns us after we are full. The Torah does not warn us that a person will forget Hashem during difficult moments. Those moments naturally bring a person closer. Rather, it warns us about the moments after the blessing arrives, when hachna'ah is no longer automatic. The Torah does not say that a person's beliefs change. It says: **ורם לבבך**. His heart becomes elevated. The danger is not that a person stops believing in Hashem, but that he stops feeling how much he needs Him.

Perhaps this is why the Torah commands Birchas Hamazon specifically after a meal. The Torah understands that

hachna'ah comes naturally when we feel our dependence upon Hashem. But after we are satisfied, when the blessing is already in our hands, we need a mitzvah to preserve that same awareness.

The Gemara in Berachos (35a) points out an apparent contradiction. One pasuk says: **לה' הארץ ומלואה** - Yet another pasuk says: **והארץ נתן לבני אדם** - Is the world Hashem's or did He give it to mankind? The Gemara answers: **באין קודם ברכה, כאן לאחר ברכה** - Before a brachah, the world belongs to Hashem. After a brachah, it is given to man.

A brachah changes the way we receive the world. Before the brachah, I see what is in front of me. After the brachah, I recognize the Source of that blessing. The brachah ensures that even when the gift is placed in my hands, it never becomes separated from the Giver.

The Sfas Emes develops this idea even further. Commenting on these pesukim (Eikev, תרמ"ב), he writes:

אין זה דווקא באכילה ושתי' גשמיות... רק גם במילא כריסו בתורה ועבודה צריך להיות תמיד אצל הפתח ולחפש לשמוע דבר ה' *This is not speaking only about physical eating and drinking. Even one who has filled himself with Torah and avodah must always remain at the doorway, constantly seeking to hear the word of Hashem.*

The Sfas Emes teaches that the Torah's warning is not limited to physical satisfaction. A person can become full of wealth, accomplishment, and even Torah. The danger begins when he feels he has arrived. That is why the Sfas Emes says: **צריך להיות תמיד אצל הפתח**. A Jew must always remain at the doorway.

The Sfas Emes continues: **כי כפי מה שחסר לאדם ומשתוקק אל השלימות כך משפיעין לו משמים** - *To the extent that a person feels his lack and longs for completion, so is he blessed from Heaven.* He is describing a person who never loses the awareness that everything he possesses is a gift from Hashem.

Perhaps this is also the meaning of the Gemara in Berachos (32a), where Moshe Rabbeinu explains that the abundance of gold and silver given to Klal Yisrael contributed to the sin of the Eigel. The problem was never the blessing itself. The problem was when the blessing became disconnected from the One Who bestowed it.

The Torah is not warning us against success. It is teaching us how to live with success. The generation that ate the mann learned to depend on Hashem because they had no other choice. Our challenge is different. We are asked to enjoy His blessings without ever forgetting the One Who bestowed them.

צריך להיות תמיד אצל הפתח - *We may leave the midbar, but we must never lose the hachna'ah it taught us.*

מרדכי אפפלי, Good Shabbos