

ISSUE #47

כ' אב תשפ"ד
24/8/24



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת עקב

כִּי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ מְבִיאֲךָ אֶל אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה וְכוּ'. וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ עַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ.
(דברים ח, ז-י)

For Hashem, your G-d, is bringing you to a good Land... You will eat and you will be satisfied, and bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good Land that He gave you. (Devorim 8:7-10)

In this week's *Sidrah*, Moshe stresses that Klal Yisroel's successful occupation of the Land is contingent upon their remaining faithful to the Torah. Even while earning their own living, they must never forget that just as in the *midbar* it was Hashem Who sustained them, so too, in Eretz Yisroel it is He Who grants them life and the means to sustain it. The obligation to recite a blessing after eating, *Birkas Hamazon*, is derived from the above *possuk*.

The Meforshim question the wording of the *possuk*, *ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ עַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה, and bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good Land*, which implies that we are thanking Hashem for the Land. This suggests a connection between this *mitzvah* and Hashem giving us Eretz Yisroel. However, we know that *Birkas Hamazon* is not specifically related to the land, as one is obligated to recite it wherever one resides. So, what is the connection between Hashem granting us Eretz Yisroel and *bentching*? The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* brings various interpretations from the Meforshim that teach us several fundamental lessons.

The Malbim explains that this *possuk* is a continuation of the earlier *parshah* which refers to how Hashem imposed hardships upon Klal Yisroel in the *midbar* to teach them a crucial message: *לֹא עַל הָאֵדָם יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם, הֵלֶחֶם לְבַדּוֹ יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם, כִּי עַל כָּל מוֹצֵא פִי ה' יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם, Not by bread alone does man live, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of Hashem does man live.* As Klal Yisroel were now entering Eretz Yisroel and would be blessed with prosperity, there was a great risk of them growing haughty and forgetting Hashem, the true source of all bounty. Therefore, this *possuk* teaches that when living in Eretz Yisroel where there may be a danger of feeling: *כֹּחִי וְעֹצְמִי יְדִי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת הַחַיִּל הַזֶּה, My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth*, we must make an extra effort to remember where everything comes from. We must be reminded that all we have is from Hashem, and the way to recognise this is by reciting *Birkas Hamazon*.

The Ramban explains that we are to read the *possuk* as if it says, *וְעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה, וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ, and bless Hashem, your G-d, and for the good Land.* We are to thank Hashem for providing us with sustenance, and *additionally* we must be grateful for the Land. What is the connection? The Rosh Yeshiva explains that when a person thanks Hashem for nourishment and providing the means to continue living, he should reflect on the value of his life. The more one focuses on the goodness he has been granted, the more he will appreciate the sustenance Hashem has given him to survive. Every

time we recite Birkas Hamazon, we must thank Hashem for *all* the kindness He has bestowed on us: taking us out of Mitzrayim, the covenant He sealed with us and giving us the Torah. Furthermore, we must acknowledge the great spiritual kindness of being given the special Land of Eretz Yisroel, as this is what makes our lives, and hence its survival, so meaningful.

There is an interesting anecdote which illustrates this idea. Two Rebbes were once debating which *brochah* should be recited first, Elokai Neshomah or Birkas HaTorah. One said that logic dictates reciting Elokai Neshomah first, since if one were not granted life, he would be unable to learn Torah. The other held the opposite view, claiming that if not for Torah, our lives would not have any worth!

Rav Zalman Sorotskin in *Oznaim LeTorah* explains this *possuk* with a different approach. This commandment is not about giving thanks for Eretz Yisroel, but rather being in Eretz Yisroel causes a special spiritual effect. The holiness of the Land sparks within its residents a yearning for holiness and a longing to draw near to Hashem. Although human instincts usually lead people to attribute all successes to themselves, the *kedushah* of Eretz Yisroel assists its inhabitants to rise above that and acknowledge that everything is governed, directed and dictated by the One Above.

This is what the *possuk* is telling us: there is indeed a connection between Eretz Yisroel and thanking Hashem with *bentching*. Being in the spiritual atmosphere of the Land gives us a higher perspective on life. It helps us realise that everything we have is a gift from Hashem, making it easier to thank Him for all the kindness, for every meal and other constant goodness we receive. The Torah is not just imparting a command, but it is also predicting an outcome, saying “You *will* bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good Land that He gave you.” The “good” Land referred to here is the spiritual goodness of the Land, which influences a person’s perspective and helps them recognise Hashem’s benevolence.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* expands that not only does the *kedushah* of Eretz Yisroel infuse a person with this spiritual gift, but learning Torah and performing *mitzvos* also has a similar effect. *Ruchniyus* has the power to enable us to see life from a different perspective. This viewpoint makes man’s physical and materialistic lifestyle seem insignificant compared to Avodas Hashem, allowing us to feel grateful for all the blessings we have received.

Let us incorporate the lessons above into our lives. Everything we have comes from Hashem and not due to our own efforts, so we must bless Him. Furthermore, it is incumbent on us to not only thank Hashem for providing us with sustenance but also for all the goodness in our lives. Additionally, Eretz Yisroel, Torah and observing *mitzvos* in general, imbue a person with *kedushah*, which enables a person to be content with what they have and to recognise all of Hashem's great kindness. By keeping these lessons in mind, we can ensure a life of joy, appreciating the constant benevolence that Hashem grants us.

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל עה"ת and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to parshasheet@gyalumni.org.