



## The Blessings of Blessing

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E29)

### Notes about Birkas HaMazon (Part 1)

#### *The focus on ברכת המזון on Shabbos*

In the Friday-night Zemer כל מקדש we read the praise of כלל ישראל that they are סועדים בו לברך – they eat meals on Shabbos in order to Bentch three times. While we are obligated to recite ברכת המזון after any bread meal, the Zemer is highlighting the opportunity for ברכת המזון as a reason to eat the three meals on Shabbos. Clearly, the themes of ברכת המזון are those which are especially relevant to Shabbos. As we look at those themes the connection may become clearer.

#### *The source of the obligation*

ברכת המזון is unique in that the חיוב to recite it is spelled out in the תורה. We read:

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל הָאָרֶץ  
הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ (דברים ח:י)

*Eat, be satisfied, and bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good land that He gave you.*

The uniqueness of a ברכה being obligated by the Torah is highlighted by ר' בחיי who comments:<sup>1</sup>

ויש לך להתעורר כאן כי יש בפסוק זה פתח להבין סוד הברכות ולא תמצא בכל התורה בשום מקום שצוה הקדוש ברוך הוא שנברך לשמו כי אם במקום הזה

Take notice that this פסוק holds the key to understanding the secret of all ברכות, as you will not find another instance where הקב"ה instructs us to bless His Name.

#### *Does Hashem need our blessings?*

Any ברכה, and certainly ברכת המזון, gets its name from the opening words, ברוך אתה ה'. What do we mean when we say those words? We cannot mean that we are blessing ה' as it is not logical to bless ה' who has everything. What *does* make sense, says ר' בחיי, is to acknowledge that ה' is the מקור הברכה and that everything flows from the עליונה – the heavenly spring.<sup>2</sup> The affirmation and acknowledgement that everything comes from הקב"ה is the most basic premise of every ברכה, and is the starting point of ברכת המזון.

*Eating and drinking to satiety is a spiritually high-risk activity.*

#### *And thank you*

Once we acknowledge that everything, and certainly the food that we just ate, comes from ה', it is both logical and compelling to humble ourselves in gratitude to הקב"ה for that which we have eaten. No matter how grateful a person may be, there is always room for more humility and gratitude to הקב"ה for addressing our needs.

Rav Yechezkel (R' Chatzkel) Levenstein זצ"ל cautioned us not to Bentch simply because that

<sup>1</sup> ר' בחיי שם

<sup>2</sup> ר' בחיי שם ובכד הקמח "ברכה"



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is the הלכה; to Bentsh after a bread meal. We must activate our *gratitude* and Bentsh with the הכרת הטוב.<sup>3</sup> We must be grateful not only for the specific benefit we have received, but also for the *opportunity to say thank you*. We say this twice a day (and thrice on Shabbos) in the מודים – thank – מודים אנהנו לך... על שאנחנו מודים לך – דרבנן you...for the opportunity to thank you.

This, adds R' Chatzkel, is also built into the first ברכה of המזון where we acknowledge that הקב"ה sustains us וברחמים. The חן refers to the fact that food is appealing to us; חסד refers to the fact that it tastes good; and רחמים refers to the fact that it nourishes and enables us to do that which we are here for. There is no limit to gratitude if you just stop and think about it.<sup>4</sup>

On Shabbos, when we declare, by keeping שבת, that הקב"ה is the Creator and Master of everything and we sing out His praises and our gratitude, the obligation to recite המזון becomes part of the theme of the day. Indeed, as we say in the מקדש כל, we are eating the meals of Shabbos in order to Bentsh!

### More incentive to Bentsh properly

If the acknowledgment and gratitude were not enough incentive to invest time and focus on המזון, perhaps the סגולה לפרנסה will provide an additional boost. The ספר חינוך writes:

<sup>3</sup> אור יחזקאל עמוד 327

<sup>4</sup> R' Chaim Kanievsky שליט"א explains how we can say when nobody lives forever. He answered that the food that we eat in עוה"ז powers our ability to do the רצון ה' which carries us into eternity – לעולם ועד.

כך מקובל אני מרבותי, ישמרם א-ל, שכל הזהיר בברכת המזון מזונותיו מצויין לו בכבוד כל ימיו.

*I have a tradition from my teachers, May Hashem Protect them, that anyone who is careful regarding ברכת המזון will always have sustenance with dignity.<sup>5</sup>*

[People would come to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach זצ"ל to seek ברכות and סגולות for פרנסה. He would cite this חינוך and wonder why people would look further than this wonderful guarantee.]

This סגולה is mentioned in the טעמי המנהגים as well. He adds that the סגולה applies when one recites ברכת המזון aloud and with joy.<sup>6</sup> Likely these סגולות draw from the פסוק which teaches that בְּרַפְתָּ ה' הִיא תַעֲשִׂיר וְלֹא יוֹסֵף עָצֵב עַמָּה – one should not be saddened or depressed over his פרנסה since wealth comes from Hashem's ברכה alone.<sup>7</sup>

### Bentshing aloud

Having mentioned the סגולה to recite המזון aloud, we note that the title of the סימן that deals with ברכת המזון in Shulchan Aruch<sup>8</sup> is entitled: – לברך בהמ"ז בקול רם, ויתר פרטים בברכת המזון aloud. We might add, if you had time to eat, as we do on שבת, then you have time to focus on your המזון. There have been those, like those of the Telshe Yeshiva, who have said the words with great concentration until they gave the words a melody or a Nusach which can

<sup>5</sup> ספר החינוך סוף מצוה ת"ל

<sup>6</sup> טעמי המנהגים עמוד 566

<sup>7</sup> משלי י: כב

<sup>8</sup> אור"ח סימן קפה



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still be heard in the Yeshivos and homes that those students went on the establish.

### *Caution, Satiety Ahead*

Unfortunately, there is a part of each human being that does not handle satiety well. When a person is full, teaches the Gemara<sup>9</sup>, he is at great spiritual risk of rebelling against, instead of humbling himself before הקב"ה. מלי כריסיה זני בישי. הקב"ה – a full stomach leads to trouble. That can explain the sequence of the פסוקים regarding ברכת המזון. “Eat, be satisfied, and thank Hashem for the wonderful Land...lest you forget Hashem and not keep His Mitzvos...”<sup>10</sup> ברכת המזון is critically important to protect our רוחניות and humility.

Indeed, ר' בהיי says that the brothers could only have sold יוסף הצדיק because they had just eaten a full meal (בראשית לז:כה).<sup>11</sup> Eating and drinking to satiety is a spiritually high-risk activity.

[It is said that פדיון הבן is meant to be a כפרה for the חטא of מכירת יוסף. Note that it is the only occasion where we wash *before* the מצוה. At every other occasion (Bris, Chuppah, etc.) we wash *after* performing the Mitzvah. But when reenacting the מכירת יוסף we wash *first* and then do the *right* thing to counter the effect of their *right* thing to counter the effect of their להם and then doing the *wrong* thing.]

### *Who wrote ברכת המזון?*

<sup>9</sup> ברכות לב.

<sup>10</sup> דברים ח:י-יא

<sup>11</sup> כד הקמה שלחן של ארבע שער ב' ד"ה וצריך שתדע

<sup>12</sup> ברכות מח:

<sup>13</sup> R' Dovid שליט"א also quoted his son, Ami, who noted that Hashem is referred to as אלקינו in each of

The Gemara<sup>12</sup> teaches the משה רבנו ע"ה instituted the first Brocha, ברכת הזן, to be recited upon eating the מן. My Rebbi Rav Dovid Cohen שליט"א pointed out that the content of the ברכה has been passed down as a קבלה through the generations.<sup>13</sup>

Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss שליט"א, in his wonderful book Power Bentching, cites the פאר אהרן who points out that תורת משה begins with a 'ב' and ends with a 'ל' and so does the ברכת הזן which משה רבנו ע"ה also composed.

### *ברכת הארץ*

The Gemara teaches that the second Brocha, נודה, called ברכת הארץ, was composed by יהושע, who led us to take possession of the Great Land. Rav Weiss also writes that the reference to בריה in ברכת הארץ may relate to the great Bris that יהושע performed on Klal Yisroel before entering ארץ ישראל.<sup>14</sup> This was a prerequisite for entering the Land, hence יהושע included it in ברכת הארץ.

### *ברכה*

The third ברכה, known as בונה ירושלים, starting with רחם, is the only ברכה which contains requests. Any requests, such as יעלה ויבא and רצה, can only be said in this ברכה (for example, one is not יוצא if one said רצה where we insert the praise of על הניסים in ברכת הארץ).

the ברכות of ברכת המזון, echoing the פסוק of 'אלקינו על הארץ הטובה

<sup>14</sup> See יהושע ה:ב. Klal Yisroel had not circumcised their sons during their sojourn through the desert and only did so under Yehoshua's direction before entering ארץ ישראל.



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The Gemara teaches that this ברכה is the combined efforts of דוד המלך ע"ה (reference to (ירושלים) and his son, שלמה המלך ע"ה (reference to the המקדש (בית המקדש)).

Note the descriptions and praises of Hashem's Hand towards the end of רחם. Nusach Ashkenaz is לקידך המלאכה והרחקבה. The Sephardic custom is to say לקידך המלאכה והרחקבה. It would seem likely, points out the ערוך השלחן,<sup>15</sup> that the Ashkenazi custom was to say הגדושה – overflowing, instead of הקדושה – holy, continuing the description of Hashem's Hand. And while we do not alter our מנהג based on such assertions, the idea helps us focus our concentration on Hashem's limitless gifts.

In רחם we ask Hashem that we should not need to rely on gifts nor loans, but on His Hand alone. We refer to those gifts and loans as מתנת בשר ודם.

תלמיד חכם הרב משה מרדכי הלוי שולזינגר זצ"ל and biographer, told me that his Rebbi, Rav Yechezkel Abramsky, understood these words as also requesting that one not need a transplant nor a transfusion, drawing on the literal translations of the words מתנת בשר ודם. My Rebbi Rav Dovid Cohen שליט"א explained that when we are dealing with the perfect wording instituted by the הגדולה then even nuances like these can be drawn from the holy words.

### רצה והחלצנו

One of the requests that we insert in the ברכה of שבת קודש refers to בונה ירושלים. There חז"ל use the expression רצה והחלצנו. The term החלצנו has four distinct implications as described in the מדרש.<sup>16</sup> It is part of the genius of חז"ל that all four meanings were intended by the הגדולה.<sup>17</sup>

**Takeaway: I will try to clear my head to focus on ברכת המזון, especially on שבת קודש.**

<sup>15</sup> ערוך השלחן סימן קפח סעיף ו'

<sup>16</sup> ויקרא רבה לד: טו

<sup>17</sup> In the ArtScroll Siddur the four translations of רצה והחלצנו are rendered as 1. Help us avoid [all

suffering]; 2. Strengthen or fortify us; 3. Save us [from troubles that have engulfed us]; and 4. Allow us to rest [from the travail of seeking a livelihood].