

Let The Feast Begin – In A Minute

written by Ozer Bergman

July 30, 2023



“When you eat and are satisfied, you must bless God ... for the good land He has given you” (Deuteronomy 8:10).

Rebbe Nachman said that if a person doesn’t make it a practice to ask God for his material needs—food, clothing, shelter, income, health—then even if God provides him with everything, he is living like an animal. Even though he doesn’t ask, God provides for him (Psalms 147:9). (The young ravens crying for help at the end of the verse are not calling out to God. Nonetheless, He prepares nourish-ment for them, but not in a way that we would find pleasant. See *Ketubot* 49b.) Sustenance, any material item you own or use without having asked God to provide it, lacks the finishing touch, the human touch. This is prayer—the recognition that God creates everything, cares about everything and wants to interact with His creatures in a tender, loving and beneficial way.

Since children of all ages love stories and learn better from stories, here’s one from the holy *Zohar* (*Miketz* 199b). “The man of faith has many blessings” (Proverbs 28:20). This refers to a person who has faith and trust in the Blessed Holy One, like Rabi Yeiva Saba. Even though he had enough food for the day in his pantry, he would not prepare it until he had

requested nourishment from the Holy King. After he prayed, he would begin to cook. He always used to say, “We won’t prepare our food unless it has been given to us from the King’s palace.”

This idea of having to take care of things and to prepare them—also known as making the world a better place—goes back to the Garden of Eden. Although the Garden was ready to burst forth with bounty, it needed Adam, Mr. and Mrs. Mankind, to come along and pray it into being (see Rashi on Genesis 2:5). See, when God created the world there was no one else around to do it, so He did it all by Himself. But now that you and I are here, He wants us to take initiative—*itaruta d’litata* in Kabbalah-speak—and take the raw materials that He has placed all over and turn them into something better. The classic example is grinding wheat to make into bread, but I’m sure you can think of some on your own.

Just in case you can’t (your favorite *parashah*-writer wouldn’t leave you in a lurch, would he?), Reb Noson writes something that flies in the face of a widespread, mistaken notion. You might find this very shocking, so please stay seated. He writes that just as we human beings were created to correct and perfect the spiritual side of Creation by doing good deeds, we were also created to complete and correct the *material* side of Creation! This is why nothing is created “ready to use” without human intervention (*Likutey Halakhot, Umnin* 4:2). Cooks and artisans score high because they take raw materials and make stuff that people can use to serve God (e.g., making a spoon and bowl to eat soup in honor of Shabbat.)

“OK, Mr. Favorite *Parashah*-Writer. I can use this and start to pray to God for stuff I need, and to turn it into something spiritually and materially useful. But what about all the stuff from the past that I didn’t ask for? What about all the spiritual and material work that I left undone?” The Grace after Meals (*Birkat HaMazon*) is our saving grace. Reb Yitzchak

Breiter (may God avenge his blood) writes that even if a person did not have the awareness to turn to God to ask for His help, protection, etc.—whether because of ignorance, fear, stress or what have you—when he later finds himself still alive and conscious, he can then say *Birkat HaMazon*, “Thank you.”

For all that we’ve left undone, we can also say *Birkat HaMazon*. The Land of Israel is a major theme in this blessing. In fact, our thanks for our food is really thanks for the Land, because all Jewish nourishment comes via our Land. Rebbe Nachman teaches that we can only grow spiritually if we fall first (*Likutey Moharan* I, 22:11). The Land of Israel gives us the patience and desire to move forward despite our mistakes. Thanking God for that turns our undone-past into present-doing.

a gutn Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

—Based on *Sichot HaRan*

(*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom*) #233