

You will eat and you will be satisfied, and bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good Land that He gave you. (8:10)

This is the commandment that enjoins us to recite *Bircas Hamazon*, Grace after meals, *Bentch*. Moshe *Rabbeinu* initiated the blessing of *Hazan es hakol kulo b'tuvo*, "Who nourishes the entire world, in His goodness," following the descent of the *manna* to sustain the nation. **Horav Moshe Tzvi Nariyah, zl**, observes that in no other instance does a person become so absorbed with his *ani*, himself, with his existence and personal pleasure, as when he is engaged in eating. Food/eating can have a compelling and almost vulgar effect on a person, often catalyzing his base instincts. Therefore, claims *Rav Nariyah*, the only place in which we are enjoined to recite a *brachah m'd'Oraissa*, Biblically ordained blessing, is *Bircas Hamazon*. This is to heighten our awareness so that we acknowledge that man should never lose sight of the true Source of his sustenance: Hashem.

By reciting the blessing, man affirms that his sustenance is another one of G-d's kindnesses – not just for him – but for the entire world. Furthermore, this sustenance is a critical component of Creation. Prior to the creation of any creature, the food to sustain that creature had already been put in place. *U'meichin mazon l'chol briyosav asher barah*, "And He prepares food for all of His creatures which He created": There is no creature in the world which does not have its source of sustenance available.

We derive this from the Heavenly *Manna* which Hashem provided for the Jews in the Wilderness. The desert neither has food for a nation of this size, nor does it contain anything nourishing for human beings. Hashem saw to it that the food He provided for them was contingent upon neither climate nor fertile soil. This Heavenly bread became part of the *seder haBriah*, order of Creation. Food had to be in place for the Jews as they traveled through the Wilderness.

In *Hallel HaGadol* we recite, *L'molich amo Bamidbar*, "To Him Who led His people through the Wilderness – for His kindness endures forever." We offer our gratitude to Hashem. We do not mention the *manna* or the water from the well of Miriam. These are also miracles for which we should offer gratitude. Apparently, we see from this that these life-sustaining gifts were intrinsic to "being led into the Wilderness." If we were to be subjected to the forty-year journey, Hashem was to provide food. That is a fact of life. Providing food is His responsibility from before Creation. If He creates, He sustains. Therefore, even after we sinned concerning the Golden Calf, we did not lose our source of sustenance. Food is food; punishment is something else.

Having established that food is part of the general foundation of man and connected inextricably to Creation, *Rav Nariyah* explains why *Bircas Hazan*, the first *brachah* of *Bircas Hamazon*, which was emended by Moshe, does not mention *Klal Yisrael*, its Torah, or its land. It relates only to the world as Hashem's Creation. *Hazan es ha'olam*, Who nourishes the world. Yehoshua brought the nation into *Eretz Yisrael*, which would be their home. He added the *Bircas Ha'Aretz*, the blessing for the

Land. Moshe originally alluded to this when he said, “And you should bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good Land that He gave you.” Once it was established that *Bircas Hamazon* was an appropriate place to add a blessing for physical bounty, David *Hamelech* and Shlomo *Hamelech* added the *Bircas Hodaah*, gratitude, for the building of the *Bais Hamikdash* and for Yerushalayim. These blessings were later followed by the blessing initiated by the *Chachmei Yavneh*, who added the *brachah Hatov v’Hameitiv* after they emerged from the destruction of Beitar.