



Eikev

Make a Bracha Before Eating?

Did you know that there is no mitzvah in the Torah for us to recite a blessing before we eat? In Parshat Eikev, we are given a mitzvah which we're all familiar with:

”וְאַכַּלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ”

“And you shall eat, and you shall be satisfied, and you shall bless.”

The mitzvah of blessing is only mentioned *after* we eat; to recite the grace after meals. Only later did the rabbis say: “If you're thanking God after you eat, how much more so should you thank Him before you eat?”

The Talmud, in Masechet Brachot דף קא דף קא ע”א, actually states that this is the opposite of what happens when we study Torah. There is a mitzvah to first say a blessing before we study Torah. After we study Torah, the rabbis said: “If you're making the blessing before, how much more so should you bless Hashem afterwards?”

This makes a lot of sense, because before I eat, nobody needs to tell me that I'm going to appreciate the food I'm about to eat. After all, I'm hungry. I cannot wait to imbibe in a delicious meal. And that's why it's obvious that I should be reciting a blessing.

However, it's after the meal that the Torah needs to come and say: Now show your appreciation. Now declare how thankful you are to God, because that might have skipped my mind.

With regard to Torah study, it is after I study that nobody needs reminding to appreciate it, because I will have just had a most inspirational shiur, or the most wonderful chavruta, so it's obvious that I need to bless afterwards.

However, Hashem needs to come along and tell us before we study, we should recite the blessing. And that's because sometimes we might lack a bit of motivation. We might not be in the mood, and therefore we need to be inspired to appreciate what's going to happen before it starts. In Parshat Eikev, the Torah tells us:

”כִּי לֹא עַל־הַלֶּחֶם לְבַדּוֹ יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם”

“People do not only exist through bread alone.”

And continues:

”כִּי עַל־כָּל־מוֹצֵא פִי־יְהוָה יִחְיֶה”

“We live far more thanks to the words of Hashem.”

Having something to eat, engaging in material delights - that's absolutely terrific. But that's nothing close to the benefits and the amount of pleasure one can receive, thanks to the spiritual delights that Hashem gives us in our world.

Shabbat Shalom.