

Ekev: Birkas Hamazon and All Brachos:
We should be Aware of Hashem's Goodness
By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In Devarim 8:10 we read, 'You shall eat, be satisfied and bless Hashem your g-d for the good land he gave to you.' As is well-known, this verse is the source for our birkas *hamazon*, grace after meals. This prayer is Min Hatorah, though the exact wording was formulated later in history. According to our tradition, Moshe Rabbeinu formulated the first bracha Yehoshua the Second, Dovid and Shlomo the third and the fourth was formulated by our Rabbis after the miracle of Beitar that those were killed remained whole and the Romans allowed them to be buried. By Torah law one would have to be satiated to recite these brachos. Since this is hard to qualify, our rabbis required *birkas hamazon* to be recited over a *kazayis*, an olive's bulk of bread.

Rabbeinu Bachaya al Hatorah explains that in the context of these verses which stress how Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, this verse is telling us to be thankful to Hashem when we remember the hardships and the slavery we endured in Mitzrayim and realize how fortunate we are to have Eretz Yisroel as our land. For these things alone we are more than obligated to thank and praise Hashem. Rabbeinu Bachaya further explains that these brachos are for us to realize Hashem's goodness. Hashem is the source of all brachos and any brachos and praises we give him fall short of our true debts. But when we make brachos we acknowledge Hashem's love and providential care over us. So it is really for our benefit that we make brachos. Rabbeinu Bachaya also brings the idea that bracha itself means to add or increase. Again, when we praise Hashem, we increase the flow of his brachos into our world. Though Hashem is so above and beyond us, nevertheless, when we give him praise, this flow of brachos is there for us. In the end, there is a two-way relationship between Hakadosh Baruch Hu and Am Yisroel, both on the individual and on the communal level.

My Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Moshe Feinstein, Zt'l, pointed out that since we say *birkas hamazon* on even a *kezayis* of bread, we are taught an important lesson. even a wealthy person who has many times a *kezayis* in his possession and does not need to worry about where his next meal will come from, must still be thankful for every small bit he/she has. We have to thank Hashem not only for the 'big gifts' but for everything we have be it a little or a lot. For all that we have is gift from Hashem alone.