

EIKEV 5769

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The Torah states “VE’A’CHALTA VE’SVA’VAHTA U’VEI’RACHTA” (8:10), you will eat, you will be satisfied, and you will bless HaShem. From here we learn the biblical Mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon (benching after eating).

That is the simple pshat of the passuk. However, another level of interpreting the passuk, is that Ve’a’chalta Ve’sva’vata, when you have what you need, when you are satiated with all your comforts- then too, and especially then- U’vei’rachta- shall you bless HaShem, and recognize that your good fortune comes from HaShem.

It is easy to see someone in dire financial need praying fervently. It is easy to find someone in great physical pain being Mitpallel with all heart and might for a bit of relief. But it is difficult to find someone who has health, parnasa, good family and children and yet shedding tears in his Shmone Esrei. I went to see someone in a hospital who had a serious stroke (R”L), and he was just beginning to recuperate. He said to me, “Do you know how many nerves it takes to move a small pinky? Well, I can do it now, but I couldn’t do it a few day ago.” That man is going to thank HaShem for every muscle, for every organ in his body that is functioning. That is – Ve’a’chalta U’vei’rachta. Not an easy Mitzvah to perform, as a matter of fact, it’s one of the most difficult.

Likewise we find by the Mann, that Lechem Min Hashamayim, the food that sustained us in the desert for forty years, that it was sent down to us in order to “afflict us and test us” (8:2). How is the Mann that sustained us without our having to pray for it, without having to work for it, yet referred to as an affliction and a test? Unless we say, the affliction was the difficulty we had with thanking HaShem for something that came regularly and automatically, It became so much part of our daily routine that we found it difficult to adequately give recognition to HaShem. That was not an easy test to pass.

I think the message is quite clear to all of us. Next week we usher in the month of Elul. There is a lot of Cheshbon Hanefesh for each and every one of us to indulge in.