



## FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



# The Bracha of Satisfaction

There is a word that is found in the Torah a total of four times, three of them in this week's Parsha (8:10, 8:12, 11:15), and once in last week's (6:11). The word is *v'savata*, "and you will be satiated." Three of the four times the word is used in a dire context, warning of the risks of arrogance and complacency that come along with material prosperity. The most familiar of these occurrences is in the second paragraph of the Shema (Devarim 11:15), where we read, "*v'achalta v'savata, hishamru lachem*, you will eat and be satiated, be careful lest your hearts be seduced...." Rashi there shares the concern sharply:

"Once you have eaten and are satiated be careful not to rebel, as a revolt against G-d arises only from a state of material satisfaction, as it is written (Devarim 8:12), 'Lest you eat and be satiated... and your sheep and cattle will increase....' What does it then say?

'Your hearts will swell and you will forget Hashem your G-d....'"

There is however one occurrence that is both familiar and positive, and that is in the verse that teaches us the Mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon (8:10): "*V'achalta v'savata u'beirachta*, you will eat and be satiated, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d." Whereas the other verses present the challenge of prosperity, here the Torah lays out its opportunity. When we have been blessed, we have the chance to turn to the source of that blessing, acknowledging and thanking G-d for His plentiful gifts. In that context our success becomes a source of firm connection to G-d (see Meshech Chochma, Devarim 8:12).

We live in a time of great material blessing, perhaps unprecedented in our Galut history. That prosperity can certainly be cause for concern, leading us to arrogance, complacency, and to forget the source of our blessing and ultimately disconnect from G-d. The Torah's very practical guidance for us - for our time - is to double down on gratitude. We must take every opportunity to recognize His hand in the incredible material gifts that have enabled Klal Yisrael to rebuild after the devastation of the Shoah, including the stunning development of Medinat Yisrael and the remarkable prosperity that has characterized the American Jewish experience. And we



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must be equally expressive of how grateful we are for the personal and familial blessings we have each been granted.

Prosperity and satisfaction can be an unmitigated blessing, bringing us peace of mind and connection to G-d when we respond to it with full-throated gratitude to the source of all blessing. "Thank You, Hashem!" ■

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