



## REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES

FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

# Beautiful Blessing

“*Ve’achalta ve’savata u’veirachta et Hashem Elokecha al ha’aretz hatovah asher natan lach*—And you will eat and be sated, and you shall bless Hashem, your God, for the good land He has given you.” (*Devarim* 8:10) This is the source for *Birkat Hamazon* in the Torah. (*Berachot* 48b)

Let us examine the beginning of the second brachah that begins with, “*Nodeh lecha*—We give thanks to you Hashem,” to learn powerful, inspiring insights and meaning.

Rav Moshe Meir Weiss points out that Yehoshua composed this brachah in the plural form to represent *Am Yisrael*, thanking Hashem for facilitating the conquest and settlement of the land. The brachah continues, “*Hashem Elokeinu*,” which,

as Rav Dovid Cohen notes, echoes the Torah commandment, “...*u’veirachta et Hashem Elokecha*.” The Beis Aharon *zt”l* teaches that the greatest thanks comes from the feeling that we have a personal relationship with Hashem.

R Chaim Kanievsky *zt”l* notes that like the “Shema,” each section of *Birkat Hamazon* follow a pattern, two words succeeded by the name of Hashem, “*Nodeh lecha Hashem*,” “*V’al hakol Hashem*,” “*Rachem na Hashem*,” “*Yiru et Hashem*.” This parallel draws our attention to the importance and primacy of *Birkat Hamazon*. Just as the Shema declares the oneness of God, the brachah we say after a meal testifies to the omnipotence of Hashem as the source of everything in this world.



Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt”l

Eretz Yisrael is described here as an “*eretz chemdah*,” a desirable land. The Midrash points out, and we have seen with our own eyes, that every king in the world desires the land of Israel. The *Levush* adds that Yehoshua characterized the land as such, seeing how passionately his rebbe, Moshe Rabbeinu, prayed to enter the land. Additionally, according to the Midrash, this land is so treasured and coveted since it is the place where Hashem desired to dwell.

The brachah further describes Eretz Yisrael as, “*tovah u’rechavah*,” good, and spacious. The Talmud teaches that one only fulfills his obligation for *Birkat Hamazon* if he mentions all three words of praise. The *Meiri* notes that

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using these descriptions follow the known principle to praise something when mentioning it, as Hashem did when He described the land to Moshe Rabbeinu at the scene of the burning bush, using the same three words. The *Avudraham* zt”l adds that speaking its praise fuels one’s desire to connect and bond with the land.

Accordingly, the *Olat Tamid* explains that this brachah is meant to elicit feelings of gratitude for the gift of Eretz Yisrael, and appreciation for the opportunity to live in the land where one can fulfill a mitzvah at every moment. He further comments that one should only leave the land under extenuating circumstances, and even then, only for a short time, so as not to forgo the chance to observe this important mitzvah.

It is significant that this brachah expresses thanks to Hashem first for the land and only afterward for taking us out of Egypt, when in fact the events were reversed — we only came to the land after leaving Egypt! *Aish Tamid* explains that we can only appreciate a process in retrospect. So often we are consumed by a challenge that it is difficult to fully recognize the goodness that occurs along the way. Rav Avraham Schorr shares in *Halekach Ve’halebuv*, that expressing gratitude must include not only appreciation for salvation but for the difficulties and troubles as well. By acknowledging the complete picture, we can then realize the kindness and generosity of Hashem in everything we experience. ■



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