

## PCL on the Go

The Mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon (*Bentching*)

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**Introduction:** *Bentching* is a very important mitzvah, which we likely do a few times a week (and multiple times on Shabbos). Let's take a bit of a deeper look at this mitzvah. The source for *bentching* can be found source #1:

### 1. דברים פרק ה

(י) וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ:  
 And you will eat and be satiated, **and you shall bless** Hashem your G-d for the good land that He gave to you.

### Questions:

1. There are 4 brachot in ברכת המזון - what is the theme of each bracha?
2. ברכת המזון is one of many brachot we say. Do you know how many brachot we are supposed to say every day?
3. Of all the brachot we say, only *two* of them are considered to be דאורייתא (form the Torah). *Bentching* is one. What is the other?
4. What is the difference in the *timing* of these two brachot?
5. Which utensil is there a minhag to remove from the table (or cover) before *bentching*?
6. Why is the Torah (in this pasuk) telling us to thank Hashem for **the land of Israel** in response to eating a satisfying meal? Shouldn't the bracha be focused on thanking Hashem **for the food**?

### Answers:

1. 4 brachot:
  - a. "הזן את הכל" - the food
  - b. "על הארץ ועל המזון" - the land of Israel
  - c. "בונה ברחמיו ירושלים" - rebuilding Yerushalayim
  - d. "על יחסרנו" - G-d's goodness
2. 100- learned from the following pasuk:

### דברים פרק י

(יב) וַעֲתֵהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֶיךָ שְׂאֵל מַעֲמֹדָה כִּי אִם־לִירְאָה אֶת־יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַכֵּת בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ וּלְאַהֲבָה אֹתוֹ וּלְעַבֵּד אֶת־יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ:

3. Birchat HaTorah

4. Birkat Hamazon is said *after* we eat while Birchat HaTorah is said *before* we learn Torah. The Sefer HaChinuch explains that when it comes to physical pleasures, we can only appreciate that after we've experienced it. However, when it comes to spiritual/emotional satisfactions, we can appreciate that before we engage in it.

**תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף כא עמוד א**

אמר רב יהודה: מנין לברכת המזון לאחריה מן התורה - שנאמר: "ואכלת ושבעת וברכת". מנין לברכת התורה לפנייה מן התורה - שנאמר: "כי שם ה' אקרא ה' אלהינו".

**Rav Yehuda said: From where is the mitzva by Torah law to recite Grace after Meals, derived? As it is stated: "And you shall eat and be satisfied and bless the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 8:10).**

And **from where is the mitzva by Torah law to recite the blessing over the Torah before it is read, derived? As it is stated: "When I proclaim the Lord's name, give glory to our God" (Deuteronomy 32:3)**, meaning that before one proclaims the Lord's name by reading the Torah, he must give glory to God.

5. Kinves

6. There are at least 2 answers to this question:

- a. The pesukim there are talking about making it to the land of Israel and eating the delicious food (most notably the 7 species) that come from the land. Since the Torah is talking about eating food from the land of Israel, part of our thanksgiving for the food is thanking Hashem for the special land that the food came from. (Obviously, *bentching* still applies even when we eat food outside of the land of Israel as well).
- b. Rabbi Shimon Schwab (מעייני בעית השואבה) says that after we eat a delicious meal we must remind ourselves that as enjoyable (and necessary) as that was, it should not be the main focus of our lives. As the saying goes "Do you eat to live or live to eat?" The Jewish people certainly don't *live to eat*. We have a higher calling. So, after every meal we remind ourselves that food is just a means to keeping us healthy so that we can continue to serve Hashem. This is why *bentching* focuses not only on the food we just ate, but also on the land of Israel and rebuilding the בית המקדש - that's what it's all about!
  - i. In fact, Rav Kook explains how the four brachot should be viewed as a ladder: 1) First we thank Hashem for taking care of our personal, physical needs (הזן); 2) Then we thank Hashem for taking care of our national physical need- i.e. giving us a home land (על הארץ); 3) Then we ask Hashem to take care of our national spiritual needs- i.e. rebuilding the בית המקדש (בונה ירושלים); 4) Finally, we conclude with our ultimate hope of being a light to the other nations.

*Shabbat Shalom!*