

A Weekly Message of Torah from Rabbi Rheins

Can't Get No Satisfaction?

This week's Torah portion, *Eikev* (Deuteronomy 7:12- 11:25) contains the life-affirming *mitzvah* (Deuteronomy 8:10):

Eat, be satisfied and offer thanksgiving to the Eternal, your God, for the good land which God has given you.

אֲכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ

It is this *mitzvah* that establishes the tradition of reciting *Birkat HaMazon*, the Grace after a Meal. In effect, this *mitzvah* establishes the bracket of blessings that we share: one before we eat and one after we eat. This simple tradition helps to remind us never to take for granted that we have enough to eat. Our *Bubbes and Zaydes*, grandparents and great-grandparents suffered through times of great uncertainty and depravation. They scrimped and saved and stretched a little bit of this and little bit of that into a meal that could calm the pangs of hunger. Though our modern expressions may be more inclined to the complaints of overeating, this ancient prayer of thanksgiving reminds us not to be numb to the struggles others have to find a nutritious meal. Accordingly, *Birkat HaMazon* is joyously sung at homes, camps and synagogues as an expression of appreciation. It turns a meal into a celebration of life!

[You can find a recording of the “long version” of the *Birkat HaMazon* at: <https://reformjudaism.org/practice/prayers-blessings/daily-blessings-birkat-hamazon-grace-after-meals-long-version>]

While the message of offering a Grace, or Thanksgiving, is timeless, our attention is often diverted to the phrase “you shall be satisfied” (*savata*). Obviously, one cannot feel satisfied when underfed, nor is it pleasant to be stuffed and bloated. The Torah guides us to seek a balance. Eat enough to

satiate your hunger, to please the senses, feel content---but don't indulge in harmful gluttony. It is a paradigm for all of life. When we achieve balance in our lives, we feel a greater sense of control. In turn, this balance helps us to better deal with the difficult challenges that life inevitably presents us. Conversely, without balance, even small setbacks can seem overwhelming.

Maimonides extends the metaphor of balance as the enlightened path for a good life:

The right way is the middle-course in each set of human traits... Thus a person should neither be hot-tempered and easily provoked to anger, nor should he be numb and without feeling.--- Furthermore, one should desire only that which the body needs for its sustenance and cannot do without (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Deot 1.4*).

Which brings us to the lament expressed by the Rolling Stones. While I did not have the privilege of seeing them on their recent visit to Denver, their classic song reminds us that satisfaction cannot be achieved by chasing after the hyped prizes of popular culture.

(I can't get no) Satisfaction

I can't get no satisfaction
I can't get no satisfaction
'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try
I can't get no, I can't get no

When I'm drivin' in my car
And that man comes on the radio
He's tellin' me more and more
About some useless information
Supposed to fire my imagination
I can't get no, oh no, no, no
Hey hey hey, that's what I say

When I'm watchin' my T.V.
And that man comes on to tell me
How white my shirts can be
But he can't be a man 'cause he doesn't smoke
The same cigarettes as me
I can't get no, oh no, no, no
Hey hey hey, that's what I say

I can't get no satisfaction
I can't get no satisfaction
'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try
I can't get no, I can't get no

No, satisfaction is not going to be found on the tube, through social media, or by trying to impress others by reflecting the latest fad and fashion. Rather, the blessing of satisfaction is found within. It is found in the feeling of appreciation for what one has. It is found in the relaxed, sweet sigh of comfort. It is found in the hmmm of yum and twinkling smile of good times. Most of all, satisfaction is found when we are surrounded by good people, friends and family and community who affirm and elevate our lives.

You'll find expressions of those feelings of belonging and connection every Shabbat on the faces of those who are with us for services (Friday evening at 6pm and Shabbat morning at 9:00am). Together we lift our hearts in prayer and song and Torah and then gather for a delicious *oneg* dessert. It's a perfect expression of satisfaction!

Shabbat Shalom

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