



Tefillah - 081 Eating With Holiness

Asking Hashem To Be 'Satisfied'

In the blessing of **ברך עלינו** we ask Hashem, **שבעינו מטובה** - "Satisfy us, from its goodness." The simple meaning of this is that we want a good year and to be satisfied from the blessed year as a result.

But upon deeper reflection, the meaning of this prayer is as follows.

The Difference Between How A Tzaddik Eats With How A Wicked Person Eats

It is written, "A righteous person eats to satisfy his soul, while the stomachs of the wicked are always empty". We can understand why the stomachs of the wicked are always empty, because they are never satisfied, for Chazal say that "He who wants one hundred wants two hundred", and "A person does not die with even half of his desires fulfilled." Therefore, no matter how much the wicked indulge in their desires, they are never satisfied, and thus their stomachs are always considered to be empty.

But what does it mean that the *tzaddikim* eat only in order to satisfy their soul? A *tzaddik* is not eating to satisfy his body, but to satisfy his soul, as the *possuk* says. He is eating only to keep healthy so that he can serve Hashem properly. Why then does the *possuk* say that he eats in order to satisfy his soul? Shouldn't the understanding rather be that he is feeding his body properly, so that his soul can be healthy to serve Hashem? The *possuk* should instead say that he eats in order to keep his body healthy, as opposed to keeping his soul healthy.

It is apparent from the *possuk* of how to define the purpose of eating. A *tzaddik* eats "to satisfy his soul" because he eats the "good" that is in the food - and that is what keeps his soul alive. Now we can understand why the *possuk* stresses that a *tzaddik* eats in order to satisfy his soul.

The Mixture of Good and Evil Contained In Food

Chazal say that a blind person is not satisfied by his food, because he can't see and thus he can't enjoy the food. From here we see that feeling satisfied is dependent on the sense of sight. If a person can't see, he doesn't enjoy the food, and thus he can't be really satisfied from it. This is a matter that needs understanding.

Creation was entirely good at its start, but as soon as Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, which was called the Tree of Knowledge of "Good and Evil", everything in Creation became a mixture of good and evil. There is now evil mixed in with everything. Thus, our food contains both good and evil. This is also the deeper reason why a person has to excrete all his food; it is because the body takes the good from the food and is sustained by it, and it expels the bad in the food as waste. All of our food is a mixture of good and evil which enters us.

Thus, the wicked person, whose stomach is always considered to be empty, is eating solely to fulfill his *yetzer hora*. It is written, "The inclination of man is evil since his youth." The wicked person has never worked to purify himself, thus he remains throughout life with his *yetzer hora* he was born with.

He has an undeveloped, “evil heart” that causes him to have an “evil eye”. The kidneys can advise a person, as Chazal say; the wicked person listens to the advice which his kidneys give him, which is evil. His food that he consumes continues to feed the evil inside him. The food gets digested and absorbed into his body, where it increases his evil.

A righteous person, however, is eating from an inner place in his soul. Of course, he digests it as well; but it's not the same kind of eating as when a wicked person eats. He is eating the “good” in the food - he's eating from a “good heart”, from his “good eye”. This is the deeper meaning of why a person has to “see” his food in order to be satisfied from it.

Thus, the way you “see” the food is the way it affects you when you eat it. The blind person can't see his food, thus he can't enjoy it; only when a person sees his food does he enjoy it. When a wicked person sees his food, he sees the food through an “evil eye”, and thus the food goes into him from that evil perspective, and it increases his evil when he eats the food. It resembles a blind person, who is not satiated by the food.

This is the meaning of “*A righteous person eats to satisfy his soul, while the stomachs of the wicked are empty.*” A *tzaddik's* soul is satisfied from the food because he eats it with a “good eye”. His act of eating comes from a deeper place in his soul, thus it satisfies his soul.

This is the meaning of what we are asking for in *Shemoneh Esrei* here in the words **שבעינו מטובה** - we are asking to be satisfied from the goodness of the year, to be truly satisfied in our souls when we eat in the right manner.

Bringing Holiness Into How You Eat

Now we will try to make this concept more practical to us, with the help of Hashem.

For everything that we eat or drink, we have to recite a *berachah* (benediction\ blessing) over the food, before we eat\drink and after we eat\drink. There is a verse, “*A good eye is blessed.*” When we make a blessing over food, we need to “eat” the good in it, and then it is “blessed.” Everything in creation is a mix of good and evil, and our *avodah* is to sift out the good from the evil. All of our food too is a mix of good and evil. Either we can see the “good” in it and eat it with a “good eye”, or we are seeing it from the “evil eye” and we are eating the food out of an evil desire for the food. Ever since Chavah saw the fruit of the *Eitz HaDaas* and she desired us, there is a part in us which desires food as soon as we see food, and this desire is coming from evil. It is the desire to simply eat the food and satisfy the desire.

In everything we encounter, we must see the good and evil in each thing [as we began to mention in the previous chapter]. We must first see the “good” in everything, Hashem has placed “good” into everything in Creation. But if a person just eats without doing any thinking at all before he eats, he eats without any *yishuv hadaas* (settled mind), and by default, he will eat simply to satisfy the desire for the food. And if a person goes further with this and he indulges in the food, this is an even more evil part of the desire.

The ideal way to eat is to eat with *yishuv hadaas* - to eat it calmly. For example, when you look at food, think about the following. First of all, there is “good” in this food here. That is why you are making the blessing over it. The food is a creation of Hashem. “*Borei pri ha'etz*”, “*Borei pri ha'adamah*” - we need to recognize how Hashem is the Creator, in each food we eat. This is the “good” we can find in each food. The “good” in each food is how we connect to the good in each food, and this is how we have an *ayin tovah*, “good eye”. Having a “good eye” in this way connects us to the food in the right way: to feel thankful to Hashem for the food right before we it.

When a person pauses for **just half a minute** before he eats the food and he thinks that Hashem created it, he lives a whole different kind of life! Right before you are about to eat, pause a second and remember that Hashem bestows good upon us, and that we are thanking Him for it. Hashem is giving you something **good** – remember that, and thank Him for it. In order to connect to the good in a food, you need a “good heart”. Your soul is then truly satisfied inside from this “good” in the food that you have connected yourself, which is achieved by attributing the food to Hashem’s goodness.

Hashem keeps giving us all kinds of things every day. A large part of this is food. We all know in our brains that Hashem gave these foods to us, but we don’t always remember. We have to remind ourselves before we eat that Hashem gives it to us. We need to sense it right before we eat, and it is not enough just to know about this intellectually. Even if we sense that Hashem gives us so much, we must be able to sense it right before we eat.

For example, if a person takes an apple to eat, remind yourself of how good it is that Hashem is giving it to you. Think about how Hashem’s good is contained in this fruit. This is a deeper kind of awareness than just knowing that Hashem gives you the fruit. Think that it is **good**, for Hashem has placed His good in everything in Creation, and He is now giving it to you.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* writes in *Shaar HaBechinah* that every day, a person has to find something new to thank Hashem for. This doesn’t just mean that each day we receive something else from Hashem. Rather, it is that each day we need to see how each thing is good, and this is a new thing to thank Hashem for each day.

Don’t just think that this food is good because it gives you strength to serve Hashem better; that is true, but it is not yet the deeper awareness. The deeper awareness is to realize that the food in your hands is good, because Hashem gives you good each day.

Superficial Holiness Vs. Real, Inner Holiness

We all need to eat, and sometimes we even have a *mitzvah* to eat certain foods. There is no way for us to avoid eating; eating is inevitable. The question is *how* we eat. We can choose to eat in a deeper way. In order for us to receive Hashem’s blessing of a good year, we need to make ourselves into a “container” that will hold His blessings, as we explained earlier.

The Rambam says that a person needs to eat a little less than feeling full, which shows us that eating is not about satisfying our body; it is about satisfying the soul. We eat several times a day. How should we go about eating? One kind of person will understand that this means overcoming physical desires and not to indulge in eating. That is wonderful and praiseworthy to do, but it is not yet the depth of how we improve our eating. It is only the outer part of the job. The inner way of how we approach eating is, to eat with the proper awareness; and in this way, we infuse holiness into eating.

This does not mean that a person should not think about the food he’s eating and only think about Torah or *mitzvah*-related thoughts as he eats – if he does, he is actually being superficial with this *avodah*. A person’s entire *Avodas Hashem* might all be done superficially when a person has the wrong perspective about things.

The inner way is to clarify right before we eat that this food is from Hashem, and that it is good. In all our *Avodas Hashem*, we must not remain satisfied with the superficial level of the act. With regards to how we eat, this is the way of how we can sanctify our eating.

This is not to say that it is the only inner method; it is but one of the ways. We need to eat in an inner way, which is how “a *tzaddik* eats in order to satisfy his soul”.

Seeing “The Good” In Everything

In addition to this, we need to approach everything as a mix of good and evil. There is evil contained in everything, but there is also good in everything, so even when we are aware that something is evil, we need to be aware that there is good in it also, somehow.

For example, Esther pointed her finger at Haman and told Achashveirosh, “*This terrible man and enemy, this Haman.*” Was Haman entirely bad? The Sages say that his grandchildren ended up learning Torah in Bnei Brak! So even Haman, who is evil, still contains some good.

This is not to condone evil of course, for as we know, an impure *sheretz* insect cannot be purified. But the point is, when you think about Achashveirosh and Haman, you immediately think of the epitome of evil, but really you need to approach it with the understanding that since everything is ultimately a mix of good and evil, therefore you need to be aware that there is good in it too.

Don’t Either Get Carried Away With The Good You Discover

However, if you find that there is some good in something, this doesn’t mean that it becomes good. Rather, the point is to see what each thing is made up of, to see how each thing has a good part and a bad part to it.

Our Rabbis have already written that we must not try to see how total evil can contain some good; only Hashem knows how to do that. But we must live life in an inner way and try to see how there is good in everything. This is how you gain the trait called *ayin tovah* (the “good eye”).

You can’t be naïve and see this world as being an entirely good place; that is being delusional. Rather, the point is to be aware that each thing contains both good and evil, so nothing is totally good, and nothing is totally evil either.

Gaining A “Good Eye”

Thus, besides for we must be aware that each thing in Creation is a mixture of good and evil, we also need to learn how to see the “good” in everything. When a person knows how to see good in everything, he can then view his food through a “good eye”.

However, if his heart still hasn’t been purified yet - if his *yetzer hora* is still very in control over his heart - then even if he is aware intellectually about this concept of *ayin tovah* (having a ‘good eye’), his heart is still unaffected by this knowledge, and he will still eat only to satisfy his body; the drives of his *yetzer hora*. But if a person has tried to purify his heart as much as he can, and he also acquires the perspective of *ayin tovah* - at least on an intellectual level - then his heart can connect to his perspective of *ayin tovah* that he knows about, and of him it can be said that “a *tzaddik* eats in order to satisfy his soul”.

The more a person eats in this inner way, the calmer his soul feels when he eats. This is besides for the fact that he will be eating only to keep healthy, and not out of indulgence. It is more than that. It is a deeper act of eating, emanating from his soul.

In Conclusion

These words are very far from those who are living superficially. We can’t live like this 24\7 and always eat with such holy intentions beforehand. But one thing we can all do is that **once a week**, before you are about to eat a food, think about this inner method of how to eat that was described here [to think about Hashem before you eat it].

May we merit with Hashem's help to be truly satisfied, as we say in the words **שבעינו מטובה** - to see the good in all that Hashem has placed into everything, and though that to connect to the "good" in everything, through the depths of the soul; and that all evil should be removed from the world, when it will be revealed that Hashem only bestows good upon His creation.[\[1\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) For more on how to sanctify eating, refer to ***Tu B'Shevat #001_Depth of the Seven Species*** and ***Rosh Chodesh Avodah_011_Shevat_Elevated Eating***

For more on how to acquire the ability of *ayin tovah*, see ***Rosh Chodesh Avodah_05_Tamuz - Seeing the Good***.

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