

Amud Insights 46b

Rabbi Shlomo Eisenberg

In this weeks amud (46b), the gemara discusses the fourth blessing of *birchas hamazon*, which is referred to as *hatov vehametiv* - G-d Who is good and does good to all. Although the first three blessings are biblical in nature, the fourth blessing was instituted by the Rabbis in Yavne. The Talmud (*Taanis* 30b) teaches us the background that led to the formation of the fourth blessing. After the destruction of the second Temple, Bar-Kochva led an unsuccessful revolt, and in the city of Beitar, hundreds of thousands were killed. However the Romans did not allow the remaining Jews to bury the dead. After several years, the Rabbis of Yavne prayed until permission was granted for the dead to be buried. Miraculously, though years had passed, the dead bodies were as fresh and whole as the day they had died. Based on this incident, the Rabbis instituted the bracha of *hatov vehametiv*. *Hatov*, praising the goodness of Hashem that the bodies did not rot or decay, and *hametiv*, referring to the fact that they were ultimately buried.

While this was truly an unbelievable miracle and a noteworthy event, why did the great sages find it necessary to add this to the blessings after eating a meal? Additionally, what is the connection between the Jewish bodies not decaying and thanking G-d for a delicious steak sandwich? I would like to suggest the following answer. The main reason why G-d commanded the Jewish nation to *bentch* after eating, is to recognize that everything in the world comes directly from Hashem. When one eats a delicious meal and is completely satisfied it is very easy to forget that all the food is there precisely because Hashem wanted this food enjoyed. A person may easily say "I worked hard for my money, I purchased the food and I prepared the meal. It is all because of my efforts". Therefore one is required to *bentch* to recognize that God is the ultimate provider.

When a person dies, the natural process is for the body to quickly start to rot and decay. When the Jewish fatalities of Beitar were finally able to be buried and the bodies remained fresh, it was clear to all that a great miracle transpired. Hashem went against the natural order of the world in order to allow for them to receive a proper burial. The process of a little kernel of wheat becoming into a delicious piece of bread seems like a natural event that isn't miraculous in the slightest. It is the process of life and there is nothing more "natural" than life itself. However, this is actually incorrect. The wheat kernel turning into bread is just as miraculous as the dead body staying fresh and not decaying. In Hashem's view they are equivalent and just as effortless.

The purpose of the fourth blessing is to teach everyone how everything in the world is miraculous. Just like a dead body staying fresh seems unnatural, so too eating fresh bread is only possible because of Hashem's miracles. One has to recognize Hashem's greatness and how He constantly is doing good to every single human being. Everyone should try to recognize all the good that Hashem consistently gives and thank Hashem for even the seemingly small acts of kindness that He constantly does for the benefit of His precious nation.