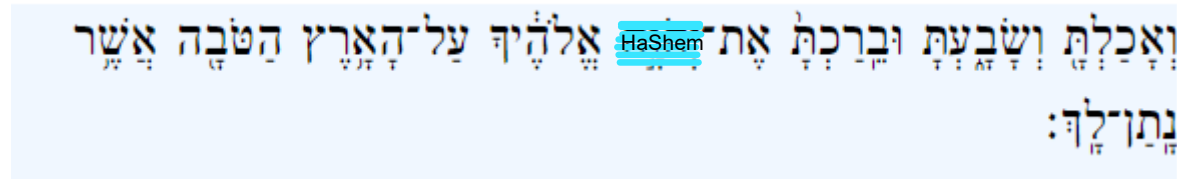


The Torah gives us the obligation to *bentch* (say Grace after Meals).

Deuteronomy 8:10



“And you will eat and be satisfied. And you will bless the Lord your Gd over the Good Land that he has given to you.”

The Gemara Berachos 21a and 48b says that “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” (our verse).

How much food and what food give one the requirement? We will learn it’s as small as an olive volume of bread. How is that satiety?

The Torah says the phrase “ואכלת ושבעת” three times. Once in our verse. It says it previously, “Houses full of all good things that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and you eat and be satisfied.”

(Deuteronomy 6:11). It also says it later, “I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle—and thus you shall eat and be satisfied.” (ibid 11:15).

Now, it also says earlier, when the Bnei Yisrael wanted meat with their muhn, HaShem says, “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Speak to them and say: ‘By evening you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be satisfied with bread; and you shall know that I the Lord am your Gd.’” (Exodus 16:12).

The prior verses leading up to our verse, say, “A land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey; a land where there is no scarcity and you may eat bread, where you will lack nothing; a land whose rocks are iron and from whose hills you can mine copper.” (ibid 8:8-9). From the plain meaning of all these verses, it appears the “satisfied” part to obligate one to Bless is anything from meat, to figs, bread, pomegranates, and the like. A full meal, one is satisfied, so he is obligated to Bless.

We cannot say that a full stomach is the same as satisfaction. Satisfaction can come from enjoying the meal, without being belly-aching full. A person who eats in moderation can be satisfied. So the amount cannot be a large amount, but it must be that a person is satisfied with the meal. A glutton, of course, will never be satisfied with the meal, as his eyes want more even if his belly cannot hold more.

The Gemara Arakhin 4a says that the obligation is to be satisfied, like the Kohanim are when they eat sacrificial meat. Gemara Brochos 20b says that eating an egg volume of bread is enough to obligate oneself to bentsh. How can that be satisfaction? The Gemara answers that the requirement is to eat to satisfaction. However, Jews go further than the letter of the law and they obligate themselves even when eating only an egg volume.

On the converse, the Gemara in Chullin 107a suggests that less than an egg volume is inconsequential. The Gemara says “Come and hear proof from a mishna (*Sukka* 26b): And when they gave Rabbi Tzadok on the festival of *Sukkos* less than an egg-bulk of food, he took the food in a cloth, and he ate it outside the *sukka*, as he held one is not obligated to eat food of this amount in a *sukka*. And he did not recite a blessing after eating it, since less than an egg-bulk does not satisfy.” We understand the Jews want to do extra good, but how can a *mitvah deoreisa* be fulfilled on an egg volume as “satiety” when less than an egg volume is inconsequential? One

can want to bless HaShem but to use HaShem's name and make brochos when there is no obligation is not allowed.

As far as what foods, Gemara Pesachim 49b says in explaining our verse, “And you shall eat,” that is eating; “and be satisfied,” that is drinking. The standard halachic principle to require eating (i.e. matzoh) is that eating is defined as the consumption of an olive-bulk. And Rabbi Yehuda holds: “And you shall eat and you shall be satisfied” refers to eating that includes satisfaction. And what is considered eating with satisfaction? It is consumption of an egg-bulk.’ Thus, usually Halacha says olive volume, but clearly the obligation of “satisfaction” requires bumping it up to egg volume.

What can we learn from satisfaction from such a small volume, as is egg volume really much greater than olive volume? How does the Gemara derive that egg volume is enough to be satisfied, and is the obligation on all foods of that size?

Ramban learns that for the good of the Land you are to Bless for all the food that gives you satisfaction. Seemingly, any food, as long as one is satisfied.

The Alshich says that really a person should eat to satiety. However, this is part of the praise for Eretz Yisrael that even the fruits, a little eaten gives satisfaction. One can eat a little and still be satisfied, and be obligated under the verse. Accordingly, it seems that satisfaction is not tied to large amounts of food.

Rabbainu Bechaya says, “you will bless the Lord your Gd.” According to the plain meaning of the text Moshe means that when you reflect on the painful periods of your history, the sufferings you experienced in the land of Egypt, and you also look back on the discomforts experienced during your long trek through the desert, you will be inspired to bless the Lord as

soon as you will enjoy eating the produce of this land. You will include the food of the land in your blessing of HaShem.”

Curiously, based on the verses preceding our verse, and the other verses that mention satiety in Deuteronomy, they all seem to indicate the satiety and eating are tied to the Land. Rabbainu Bechaya, Alshich, and Ramban all explain this verse tying it to the food in the Land. Is there, then, an obligation to bensch if eating food outside of the Eretz Yisrael?

Tur Haaruch learns the end of our verse differently. “At all times, and in every location whenever you will feel sated, you are to bless Him in acknowledgment of both the nourishing food and the land on which it grows. You are to especially express gratitude that the land is ours as an inheritance to be passed on to your children. This commandment is not dependent on our owning or living in the land during any particular period.” It means “land” as in earth. Not in Eretz Yisrael, specifically, and Land as in Eretz Yisrael, as in when we eat we long to taste again from Eretz Yisrael.

Rambam says in Mishna Torah 1:1 “It is a positive mitzvah of the Torah to Bensch, as it is said, "And you shall eat and be satisfied and shall bless the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8:10). The Torah only imposes the obligation on a person when he is satisfied; for it is said, "When you have eaten and are satisfied." According to the ordinances of the chachomim, however, even if one has eaten only as much food as the size of an olive, he recites Grace after the Meal.” The Gemara says several places an egg-volume. However, Rambam seems to rule as long as it's the minimum volume there is the obligation.

How can the Rabanan mandate satiety in just a small volume for all people in all situations?

Tur and Shulchan Aruch say siman 184. “Until when can one bless? Until the meal is digested in one's stomach. And how much is that measurement? The entirety of the time that one is not hungry on account of that eating. And from the time that one begins being hungry, even though the food hasn't been fully digested, we consider it to be as if it is fully digested. And, similarly, for the matter of eating fruits or drinking wine - if one is neither hungry nor thirsty, and they desire those fruits, they should bless [upon those fruits] if they do not know how much is left for their digesting.” This presupposes that one is full. An egg-volume, however, hardly makes anyone full. So one would eat an egg volume and five minutes later cannot even bentsch because he no longer feels the food (if he ever did in the first place).

The Shulchan Aruch ends off that the minimum amount that obligates is an olive-volume. This is derived from Gemara Brochos 45a that says “How much must one eat to obligate those with whom he ate in a *zimmin*? An olive-bulk of food suffices. Rabbi Yehuda says: An egg-bulk is the minimum measure to obligate those with whom they ate in a *zimmin*.” The Shulchan Aruch and Rambam are taking the more stringent position, even a minority position of the Gemara that the volume is olive-volume. This is more perplexing to make the volume of “satisfaction” to be even smaller.

The Mishna Berura in Orach Chaim 184:6 explains this small amount. This Mitzvah obligation of an olive (or egg) volume is only Rabanan. According to the Torah one must eat to satiety. However, it is impossible for the Rabbis to know the volume of everyone to be satisfied so they made a minimum amount.

Accordingly, it comes out, that perhaps according to the Torah any food in Eretz Yisrael that gives one satisfaction, any of the seven species including dates, pomegranates, grapes, will require one to bentsch. There is a reason to say only bread, as the verse preceding ours talks

specifically about there will be no lacking of bread. The verse in Exodus that says meat will be eaten at night and satiety from bread in the morning can be interpreted that meat gives the satiety at night and bread is enough to satisfy daytime. However, a strict reading of that verse is that “By evening you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be satisfied with bread.” (Exodus 16:12). Perhaps the satiety is only tied to bread. To the contrary, though, we learned it says, “I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle—and thus you shall eat and be satisfied.” (Deuteronomy 11:15). How do we connect the grass for cattle to our being satisfied? Meat!

The clue in all this is the other verse we mentioned, earlier in Davrain. “Houses full of all good things that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and you eat and be satisfied.” (ibid 6:11). We can clearly derive from this verse that we will have food that we did not work for and yet it will satisfy us.

Now we can answer how the Rabanan can mandate a blessing obligation, with HaShem’s name, if there is no real Torah obligation to do so. Going back to the Gemara Brochos 20b says, “Rav Avira taught, sometimes he said it in the name of Rabbi Ami, and sometimes he said it in the name of Rabbi Ashi: The ministering angels said before the Hakadush Barachu, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, in Your Torah it is written: “The great, mighty and awesome God who favors no one and takes no bribe” (Deuteronomy 10:17), yet You, nevertheless, show favor to Israel, as it is written: “The Lord shall show favor to you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:26). He replied to them: And how can I not show favor to Israel, as I wrote for them in the Torah: “And you shall eat and be satisfied, and bless the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 8:10), meaning that there is no obligation to bless the Lord until one is satisfied yet they are exacting with themselves to recite Grace after Meals even if they have eaten as much as an olive-bulk or an egg-bulk. Since they go beyond the requirements of the law, they are worthy of favor.”

Accordingly, certainly the requirement in the Torah is to be satisfied. Given the view of the Ramban, that we eat and think of the Land and it is for the good of the Land that we bless HaShem, what the Gerama really means is that a good Jew satisfies himself with little. It's not that the real obligation is to be satisfied but the Rabanan made an obligation on a small volume. It's that the small volume satisfies. Again, one need not be 'full' or be unable to eat more to be satisfied. Moderation is healthy and a small meal can satisfy. We see the good in the Land the good in the food we have, the good that HaShem provides for us. We may sweat with our brow to work for our bread (Genesis 3:19) but what we do have is as if it was unearned, all a gift from HaShem. It is like cisterns we didn't dig and vineyards we didn't planted. Our success is from HaShem, our food is from HaShem. As Rabbainu Bechaya says, we must put our lives in perspective and be grateful to HaShem. Even a small egg-volume of bread, will satisfy, and we have to bentch.

(I would add, certainly for meat and heartier foods than bread. However, given all Jews in all circumstances, and bread being the staple, the Rabbis mandated and the custom became we only bentch over bread. And there is certainly biblical source for this as "satiety" is usually connected to eating bread, like we saw).

May we always find the hakoras hatov for the good we have, may we appreciate the good Land that HaShem has given us, even if we do not fully possess it. May we merit to eat of its fruits, produce, and bread, and be satisfied, speedily in our days.