

## Emotional Eating

“All you need is love.” The popular Beatles song posits that all you need is love, and if you are loved you will learn how to be yourself and save others as you make your way through life. In a certain sense, it’s true; without love it is difficult to move forward, to blossom and grow into a successful, active and productive member of society.

This week’s *parshah*, *Eikev*, teaches this principle in a different light. The text maintains “And if you do obey these rules and observe them carefully, the Lord your God will maintain faithfully for you the covenant that he made on oath with your fathers: He will love you and bless you...” It seems simple at the outset: all you need is love, and so if you follow the *mitzvot* and the path that God has set before you, you will receive this love, and from this love will come abundance of land, crops, blessing and more for your family. Over and over again in the *parshah*, we’re reminded that the Israelites’ relationship with God is not based on fear of punishment or hope of reward, but rather on the fundamental idea that we follow the *mitzvot* because God loves us, and we take pride in doing something for the one that we love.

While this section of texts continues with different references to the history of the Israelites and even contains in it the second paragraph of the *Shema*, it also focuses on this idea of need. While it is a lofty and romantic idea that we can live through love alone, we also know that we have higher order necessities in life. One of these necessities is food, but the text teaches in chapter 8, verse 3 that “He [God] subjected you to the hardship of hunger and then gave you manna to eat, which neither you nor your fathers had ever known, in order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but that man may live on anything that the Lord decrees.”

While love is an emotional need, human beings all require physical sustenance in order to survive. This text is teaching us that perhaps there is more to our physical order, but that our spiritual, emotional and physical needs must all be in sync for us to maintain a life of blessing. We see the Israelites constantly complaining to Moshe and to God about their lack of food and water, and in their cries, the astute reader notices that they are also emotionally malnourished. They cry out because they remember a time in Egypt where it didn’t seem too bad. They have a need for stability and for trust. They are a people that came out from a situation where love was lacking and faith was dwindling. The text in *Parshat Eikev* reminds us that we cannot live on the physical alone, and it is our spiritual appetite that pushes us to search for a deeper meaning in our daily lives.

The text also gives us a formula for ensuring that we take note of the moments when our appetite for love, food, learning or other cravings are satiated. In chapter eight, verse ten the text teaches:

י וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ:

“And when you have eaten and you are satisfied, and you blessed God, your God for the good of the land which He has given you.”

This verse is the basis for *Birkat HaMazon*, the blessing after meals, because it teaches that after we have satiated our hunger for good, it is necessary to thank God. Being able to thank God here requires faith in the land that God has created, faith that the rain will come and the land will continue to produce crops. We are constantly reminding our young ones to remember their “please” and “thank you,” and the *Torah* does the same for all of us. While food sustains our physical needs, it is the blessings of abundance, of thanksgiving and of faith that move us through life.

ללמוד **To Learn:** ללמד **To Teach:** Visit our website [www.levineacademy.org](http://www.levineacademy.org) to learn how to recite *Birkat HaMazon*, the blessing after a meal. Practice makes perfect. Continue working on your please and thank yous. We learn through modeling, this week make an extra effort to thank those who help you. The notion of blessing is a lofty one. Try this week to say thank you as a family for the nourishment you receive in the form of food, shelter and love.

לשמור **To Keep:** לעשות **To Do:** visit a local food pantry and make a delivery of needed supplies so that others can partake of the *Mitzvah* to bless and thank God for sustenance.