

G*D in Your Body: Kabbalah, Mindfulness & Embodied Spiritual Practice

by Rabbi Jay Michaelson

SOURCE SHEET for Chapter 1: Eating

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1. The foundational text (Deut/Dev 8:10)

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

V'achalta v'savata uveyrachta et Ad-o-nai elohecha al ha-aretz hatova asher natan lach.

And you shall eat, and be satisfied, and bless YHVH your G*d for the good earth.

2. Foundational text: abridged version (Deut/Dev 8:10)

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ

V'achalta v'savata uveyrachta

And you shall eat, and be satisfied, and bless

3. Seeing it as if for the first time (Bernard Glassman z"l, Instructions to the Cook)

Because we eat two, three or four times every day, it's easy to forget how wondrous that is. It's like the sunrise or sunset. The sun rises and sets every day. If it's an especially beautiful sunrise, we may notice it. But if it's not "special" then we may not even see it. But if we can see it as if for the first time, each sunrise becomes very special and very beautiful. And so with each meal we create.

4. Eating as an everyday miracle (Jay Michaelson, G*d in Your Body)

Eating is an everyday miracle. You don't need a special feeling in order to be spiritual - just more attention paid to the ordinary ones. And your own experiences can be a stronger basis for your religious or contemplative practice than any dogma or expectation.

5. Listen! Pay attention! (Isaiah 55:2)

שִׁמְעוּ שְׂמוֹעַ אֵלַי וְאָכְלוּ־טוֹב וְתִתְעַנְגַּב בְּדִשְׁוֹן נַפְשְׁכֶם:

Shim'u shamo'a eli v'ichlu-tov v'titanag ba-deshen nafsh'chem.

Pay attention to Me (listen carefully, listen diligently), and you will eat that which is good, and enjoys the delights of your soul.

6. Pause to reflect (Food for Thought: Hazon's Curriculum on Jews, Food & Contemporary Life, Nigel Savage & Anna Stevenson)

Being alive and being human means not only that we experience but also that we can reflect on our experiences. And the more we do so, the more we notice our world, the details, the hundred different types of apples, the countless florets in a head of cauliflower. Simply by requiring that we pause a moment to reflect on our food and ourselves before we eat, we can become more mindful of the food we put into our bodies. We think that there is great value for this, for ourselves and for the planet.

7. Blessings after eating / Birkat hamazon

Brich rachamana

The "emergency blessing" according to the Talmud (Berachot 40b) – for extenuating circumstances when you really have to rush:

בריך רחמנא מלכא דעלמא מריה דהאי פיתא

Brich rachamana malka d'alma marei d'hai pita

You are the Source of Life for all that is and your blessing flows through me
[Blessed is the Merciful One, ruler of the universe, provider of this food]

Poteach et yadecha (Psalm 145:16)

A second one-line grace after meals comes from Psalm 145. Rabbi Shefa Gold has written a beautiful arrangement of this.

פּוֹתֵחַ אֶת־יָדְךָ וּמִשְׁבִּיעַ לְכֹל־חַי רָצוֹן

Poteyach et yadecha umasbia l'chol chai ratzon

You open Your hand, I open my heart to this abundance, and all life, all will is satisfied
[You open Your hand, and satisfy all life according to Your will]

V'achalta v'savata uveyrachta (Deut/Dev 8:10)

Listen to Rabbi Hanna Tiferet Siegel's rendering of *V'achalta v'savata uveyrachta*, the source text for today's session:

וְאָכַלְתָּ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ

V'achalta v'savata uveyrachta

And you shall eat, and be satisfied, and bless