



Amazing grace

RABBI ELIMELECH ADLER
Parsha Devarim, Deuteronomy 8:10-14

Our forefather Abraham was the first Jewish outreach activist. In an age when the nations of the world worshipped the sun, the moon and the forces of nature, Abraham recognized the existence of a Creator and began to teach the world the truth.

The Midrash discusses one of the methods that Abraham used to introduce people to the Almighty. He would invite people into his home for a delicious meal and feed them well. When the people would finish eating, they would want to thank him for his hospitality. Abraham would answer, "Don't thank me, thank God for the food. Everything is His."

It is interesting to note that although we make blessings before we eat, Abraham felt that grace after meals would be a more appropriate way to lead people toward God.

When we are cold, tired and hungry, it is natural to reach out to God and ask for help. We recognize clearly that we are in trouble, we need help and there is a God who can help us. But when we are full and satisfied, do we remember the hunger pangs of an hour ago?

Consider the following scenario: You're driving west on Interstate 10 at 10:30 at night, on your way home from a long business meeting in Tucson, when suddenly, you have a blowout. Luckily, you are able to maintain control of your car and pull over to the side of the road. You get out of the vehicle and check to see if there is any other damage. You don't find anything. Then you open up the back to take out your spare tire - but it's not there. You stick your head a bit farther into the back, hoping that this will scare the runaway tire into returning, but alas, it is not to be seen. You then check the middle seat, hoping to outsmart the tire, but apparently the tire has vanished without leaving any tracks. With only three weeks left to your AAA membership, you thank yourself for renewing last year and vow not to forget to renew as you dial their number. Halfway through dialing you realize that your phone's buttons aren't making any beeping sounds because it's dead.

Which one of us wouldn't utter a quick prayer at this point? Would you wait until it started raining? They say that there are no atheists in foxholes (or potholes). If, however, the ride went without a hitch, would we thank God for not having any trouble? It's tough to see God when everything is going the way we think it's supposed to go, but we have to realize that the same God who sent some guy out of nowhere on the interstate to lend you his spare tire is the same God that got you through the trip the last time without any trouble.

There is even a danger if we do not acknowledge the Almighty while sailing smoothly through life.

"Lest you will eat and will be satiated and you will build good homes and settle. And your cattle and your flocks will increase, and silver and gold will increase for you, and everything that you have will increase. And your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem your God..."(Devarim 8:12-14). When things aren't going that well, we are quick to acknowledge God's power, but when things are going smoothly, we tend to attribute our success to our own abilities and at most give God the award for best supporting actor.

Thanking God before we eat is one thing. Thanking God after we eat isn't just proper manners. It is a way to affirm God's active participation in our daily lives.

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