

From: “Food for Thought,” by Anna Hannau, published by Hazon (hazon.org):

Rabbi Ba the son of Rav Hiyya bar Abba teaches: If he ate while walking, he must stand and bless. If he ate standing, he must sit and bless. If he ate sitting, he must recline [formally] and bless. If he ate reclining, he must enwrap himself and bless. And if he did this, he is like the angels who serve God.

– *Talmud Yerushalmi, Brachot 7:5*

The D’var Torah

I love that Jews have the tradition of giving a d’var torah at a Shabbat meal. At a dinner party, conversation might flit about, from engaging debate to lighthearted banter, and this is enjoyable. Someone may have important news or an exciting new idea to share. But it’s different than the choreographed set piece of a d’var torah . This is the scene:

You’ve eaten, you’re full. You’re schmoozing. Then someone taps a glass and says, “In this week’s parsha , we learn that...” And we give the person our attention, and for two or five or more minutes we follow an exegetical journey in Torah, contemporary ideas, values, challenges. It could be cute, it could be profound. We hear them say, “and this makes me think of...” and we also are provoked to think, without the complication of conversation to obscure our thinking before we articulate it. And we hear, ‘In conclusion, I bless us all that...’ and the learning ends with the gift of an idea or questions to ponder.

We not only eat, but share pieces of ourselves with others at the table, bringing Torah once again out of history and into the dining room, and creating time and space to enjoy the wisdom of our tradition.

– *Anna Hanau*