YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

**THE LAWS OF THE *BERAKHOT***

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**Shiur #23: *Birkat Ha-Motzi***

***Troknin* and *Tarita***

***Birkat Ha-Motzi* and *Mezonot***

**Rav David Brofsky**

**Introduction**

In previous *shiurim*, we discussed what differentiates bread-like products upon which one says the blessing of *Ha-Motzi* from those which warrant the blessing *Borei Minei Mezonot*. One example of these products is *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*. Although prepared in a similar manner to bread, one does not say *Ha-Motzi* before eating *pat ha-ba’ah bekisanin* unless it is eaten as the basis of one’s meal (*kevi’at se’uda*). We studied in great depth the definition of *pat ha-ba’ah bekisanin*, as well as what constitutes *kevi’at se’uda*.

The upcoming *shiurim* will focus on other foods that are not considered to be bread, whose appropriate blessing is therefore *Borei Minei Mezonot*. Furthermore, as we shall see, some of these foods are so dissimilar to bread that even if they are eaten as the basis of a meal, one still says *Borei Minei Mezonot* upon eating.

***Teroknin* and *Tarita***

The Talmud (*Berakhot* 37b – 38a) discusses two foods, *terokin* and *tarita*, and questions whether or not they are considered to be “bread” regarding the laws of *challah*, *birkat Ha-Motzi/Birkat Ha-Mazon* and *matza*. This *sugya* is complex and challenging due to both textual and conceptual difficulties. We will focus on the conclusions relevant to the *birkat ha-pat*.

Regarding the *teroknin*, the *gemara* teaches:

*Troknin* is subject to the law of *challah*. When Ravin came, he said in the name of R. Yochanan: *Troknin* is not subject to the law of *challah*. What is *troknin*? Abbaye said: [Dough baked] in a cavity made in the ground…

Abbaye said to R. Yosef: What blessing is said over dough baked in a cavity in the ground? He replied: Do you think it is bread? It is merely a thick mass, and the blessing said over it is *Borei Minei Mezonot*. Mar Zutra made it the basis of his meal and said over it the blessing *Ha-Motzi Lechem Min Ha-Aretz* and three blessings after it. Mar son of R. Ashi said: The obligation of Passover can be fulfilled with it. What is the reason? We apply to it the term “bread of affliction.”

What is a *troknin* and why does it not warrant the blessing of *Ha-Motzi*?

Rashi (s.v. *kova d-ar’a*) explains: “He makes a hollow cavity in the oven and he places water and flour into it as one does in a pot.” A *troknin* is not baked in the normal manner and its dough is not typical. It is not clear which of these factors, according to Rashi, differentiates *troknin* from bread.

The Me’iri is somewhat clearer:

One who put flour into water and mixes them into a very thin batter, similar to cloudy water, which is known in their language as a “*troknin*”… if the batter was thin but [the cake] was thick because it was baked … one says *Ha-Motzi*.

The Me’iri implies that the usual consistency of the batter determines that one says *Borei Minei Mezonot* on a *troknin*. However, if it is baked in a manner in which the final product is not thin and soft, one says *Ha-Motzi*. In other words, if a thin batter is made into a soft, bread-like product, one recites *Borei Minei Mezonot*. The Rashba (*Berakhot* 38a, s.v. *hai kova*) explains that Tosafot (*Berakhot* 38b, s.v. *lechem*) also maintain that a soft and thin batter determines the appropriate blessing.

Finally, the Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 3:0) writes:

Before partaking of dough baked over the ground, as is baked by the Arabs living in the desert, one should recite the blessing *Borei Minei Mezonot*, **because it does not have the shape of bread.** If, however, one uses it as the basis of a meal, one should recite the blessing *Ha-Motzi*.

According to the Rambam, *troknin* does not have “*tzurat ha-pat,*” the shape or appearance of bread, and therefore one only says the *birkat Ha-Motzi* if it is eaten as the basis of the meal.

In summary, while the Rambam maintains that *troknin* does not have a “*tzurat ha-pat*,” the shape of bread, others assert that the process in which the bread is made – either the thin dough and/or the manner in which it is baked – distinguish a *troknin* from ordinary bread.

Interestingly, the Tur (168) writes:

*Troknin*, when one makes a hole in which one puts flour and water, mixes and bakes it, is obligated in *challah* and one says *Ha-Motzi* … since it is in a hole, and it is gathered together it becomes like regular bread.

The Shulchan Arukh (168:15), however, rules like the Rambam and most *Rishonim* that one recites *Borei Minei Mezonot* before eating a *teroknin*:

Upon *teroknin*, when one makes a hole in which one puts flour and water, mixes and bakes it, one says *Borei Minei Mezonot* … and if he makes it the basis of his meal he says *Ha-Motzi* and *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.

The Shulchan Arukh cites the language of Rashi, implying that the difference between *troknin* and bread lies in the process, and not the *tzurat ha-pat*. Indeed the Magen Avraham (168:40) attributes this to the viscosity of the dough (*belila raka*).

Regarding the *tarita*, the Talmud teaches:

Abbaye also said: *Tarita* is exempt from the obligation of *challa*. What is *tarita*? Some say, *gvil meratach*; others say, *nehama dehindaka*, and others say it is bread used for *kuttach*.

Rashi explains that “*gavil meratach*” is a very loose batter. He interprets “*nehama dehindaka*”as dough coated with oil that is baked on a stake. Finally, he explains that bread used for *kuttach* is cooked in the sun.

The Tur, and afterwards the Shulchan Arukh (168:15-16), cites all three examples as explained by Rashi. Regarding the first example, the Shulchan Arukh (15) rules:

*Tarita*, which is [made when] one takes flour and water and mixes them and pours it onto a stove and it spreads out and is baked, does not have *torat lechem* at all, and one recites upon it only *Borei Minei Mezonot* and *mei’ein shalosh* (*Al Ha-Michya*), even if one makes it the basis of his meal.

Interestingly, according to the Shulchan Arukh, a *tarita* does not even have any *torat lechem*. Therefore, the appropriate blessing is *Borei Minei Mezonot* and one never says *Ha-Motzi* and *Birkat Ha-Mazon* for a *tarita*, even if eaten as the basis of his meal. Although some *Acharonim* disagree (see Magen Avraham 41), this position is generally accepted by the *Acharonim*.

**Practical Ramifications**

The Shulchan Arukh, as we learned above, lists different categories of bread products. *Pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* physically differs from bread, and is therefore generally eaten as a snack and not a meal. However, when eaten as a meal, one treats *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* like bread and recites *Ha-Motzi* and *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. *Troknin* also differs from bread, as its dough is soft and liquidy (*belila raka*) and, according to some, it is baked in a different manner than bread. This product, however, apparently does have a “*torat lechem*” (even if it does not have the “*tzurat ha-pat*”), and it therefore warrants the *birkat Ha-Motzi* when eaten as the basis of a meal. *Tarita*, in contrast, at least the first example, is so watery that one always says *Borei Minei Mezonot* before eating it, as it does not have a *torah lechem* at all!

Let us mention two possible ramifications of this distinction.

First, cakes made from very loose batter most likely fit into the category of *troknin*. Therefore, according to all opinions, one must say a blessing before eating it in the middle of a meal when it is not eaten as part of the meal. Second, some suggest that blintzes, thin pancakes, and even wafers fit into the category of *tarita*. Therefore, not only must one say a blessing before eating them during a meal, even if they are eaten as the basis of one’s meal, one does not say the *birkat Ha-Motzi* and *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.

Next week, we will continue our study of those foods upon which one recites the blessing of *Borei Minei Mezonot*, and not *Ha-Motzi*.