**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

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**Shiur #25: *Birkat Ha-Motzi***

**When Bread Loses its Status as Bread**

**Introduction**

We dedicated the last two *shiurim* to discussing foods other than *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* over which one recites the blessing of *Borei Minei Mezonot*. In some cases, one recites this blessing regardless of whether one eats these foods as the basis of a meal (*kevi’at se’uda*). We studied the difference between a *teroknin* and a *tarita* and questioned when the process and the appearance of bread (*tzurat ha-pat*) affect the blessing. We also discussed dough that is boiled or deep fried (very relevant this time of year!), and we noted that the Shulchan Arukh (168:13) cites a debate regarding whether one should say the blessing of *Ha-Motzi* or *Borei Minei Mezonot* in such cases. Although the Shulchan Arukh concludes that “a God-fearing [person] should only eat [dough that has been boiled] after first reciting the blessing [of *Ha-Motzi*] over bread,” the Rema records that it is customary to say the *Mezonot* blessing. He adds that one also says the blessing *Borei Minei Mezonot* before eating pasta, as it does not have “an appearance of bread” (*to’ar lechem*).

Finally, we cited a debate among the *Acharonim* regarding whether, according to the lenient opinion, one who eats boiled dough as the basis of his meal (*kevi’at se’uda*) must wash, say *Ha-Motzi*, and then *Birkat Ha-Mazon* after eating, just like one who is *kove’a se’uda* on *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*. It is customary to follow the view of those *Acharonim* (Magen Avraham 168:38; Mishna Berura 168:57) who insist that one always says *Borei* *Minei* *Mezonot* over boiled or deep-fried dough.

Incidentally, doughnuts and *sufganiyot* are made with other ingredients, and the oil significantly contributes to their taste. Some authorities therefore suggest that even Rabbeinu Tam would agree that the proper blessing is *Borei* *Minei* *Mezonot*.

We also discussed dough that is boiled and then baked, like American bagels (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagel>). The Shulchan Arukh (168:14) rules: “Dough that is boiled in water and afterwards baked in an oven is considered to be bread and one say upon [eating it] *Ha-Motzi*.” Accordingly, one says *Ha-Motzi* before eating boiled or fried dough that is then baked. One should therefore say *Ha-Motzi* before and *Birkat Ha-Mazon* after eating American bagels.

This week, we will discuss whether bread can lose its status as bread, and we will relate to the proper blessings for breadcrumbs, *matza brei*, French toast, and *kneidlach*.

***Chavitza* andBoiled Bread**

There are two passages in the Talmud that imply that bread can lose its status as bread, at which point before eating one says *Borei Minei Mezonot*. On the one hand, the *gemara* (*Berakhot* 37a) teaches:

If he grinds [wheat] and bakes it and then cooks it [in liquid], as long as the pieces are still whole, he says before [partaking], “*Ha-Motzi Lechem Min Ha-Aretz*,” and after, *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. If the pieces are no longer whole, he says before partaking, “*Borei Minei Mezonot*,” and after, *Al Ha-Michya*.

According to this passage, cooking bread, in water, changes its status. One therefore recites *Borei Minei Mezonot* before eating if the “pieces are no longer whole.”

Another somewhat more cryptic passage (*Berakhot* 37b) relates:

R. Yosef said: On a *chavitza*, which has pieces of bread as big as an olive, the blessing said before it is *Ha-Motzi Lechem Min Ha-Aretz*, and after it *Birkat Ha-Mazon* is said. If there are no pieces as big as an olive in it, the blessing said before it is *Borei Minei Mezonot*, and after it, *Al Ha-Michya*…

R. Sheshet said: Even if the crumbs of bread in a *chavitza* are less than an olive, the benediction *Ha-Motzi Lechem Min Ha-Aretz* is said over it. Rava added: This is only if they still have the appearance of bread (*torita de-nehama*).

According to this passage, R. Yosef and R. Sheshet disagree as to whether one should recite *Ha-Motzi* on a *chavitza* made from a pieces of bread which are smaller than a *kezayit*.

The *Rishonim* debate whether there is a relationship between these two passages. Rashi (s.v. *chavitza*; see Tosafot, s.v. *chavitza*) explains that the second passage *also* refers to cooked bread, and R. Yosef and R. Sheshet are explaining the first passage, which refers to the pieces being “whole”. R. Yosef defines “whole” as meaning that a *kezayit* of bread is intact, while R. Sheshet maintains that “whole” refers only to the “appearance of bread” (*torita de-nehama*), even if it is smaller than a *kezayit*.

Other *Rishonim*, including the Rosh (*Berakhot* 5:10) and Talmidei Rabbenu Yona (26b, s.v. *hai*) disagree. They understand that the two passages refer to two separate cases. If the bread is cooked in water, then the only factor that determines whether one recites *Ha-Motzi* or *Borei Minei Mezonot* is whether the piece is “whole”. In addition, they accept the assertion of the Yerushalmi (*Berakhot* 6:1) that whether or not the pieces of bread are whole depends on if the piece is the size of a *kezayit* or not. Therefore, before eating pieces of cooked bread under the size of a *kezayit*, *all* agree that one says *Borei Minei Mezonot*. In addition, the second passage discusses a *chavitza*, which refers to bread crumbs held together by soup, milk or honey, **without** being cooked. In this case, R. Yosef maintains that the blessing depends on the size of the pieces of bread, while R. Sheshet believes it depends upon whether it retains the “appearance of bread”. In addition, these *Rishonim* maintain that one says the blessing of *Ha-Motzi* before eating bread crumbs that were not cooked and are not held together by another substance. Incidentally, Rabbeinu Chananel disagrees and claims that whenever there is no appearance of bread, one says *Borei Minei Mezonot*.

The Shulkhan Arukh (168:10) rules in accordance with the second view and cites all three scenarios:

A *chavitza*, i.e. bread crumbs that are held together by a broth, which are cooked – if they are the size of a *kezayit*, **even if they** **do not** have the appearance of bread, one recites *Ha-Motzi* and *Birkat Ha-Mazon*; if there is not a *kezayit*, even if it has the appearance of bread, one only says *Borei Minei Mezonot* and *Al Ha-Michya*.

If it is **not** cooked, but rather held together by honey or broth – if the pieces are larger than a *kezayit*, one says *Ha-Motzi*, even if they do not have the appearance of bread. And if they are not a *kezayit* – if they have the appearance of bread, which means that it is clear and apparent that it is bread, then one says *Ha-Motzi* and *Birkat* *Ha-Mazon*. [But] if they do not have the appearance of bread, one says *Borei Minei Mezonot* and *Al Ha-Michya*.

If [the pieces] are not cooked or held together, but rather finely ground, even though they are smaller than a *kezayit* and they do not have the appearance of bread, one says *Ha-Motzi* and *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.

Again, the Shulchan Arukh relates to a case in which the bread was cooked, and in which the bread was not cooked. If pieces are cooked, then the *berakha* is dependent upon whether or not the pieces are the size of a *kezayit*. If they are *not* cooked, but kneaded together, then one recite *Ha-Motzi* before eating pieces larger than a *kezayit*, or pieces smaller than a *kezayit* which have the appearance of bread. If they do *not* have the appearance of bread, then one recites *Borei Minei Mezonot*. When bread is ground into bread crumbs, one still says the blessing of *Ha-Motzi* before eating them, unless they are cooked are kneaded together with other ingredients, as discussed above.

**Practical Ramifications**

Although deep-frying is viewed as similar to cooking, the *Poskim* disagree as to whether frying in a frying pan with oil should be considered an act of cooking or baking. This debate does not affect FrenchToast, pieces of bread soaked in egg, milk, and oil, and then fried. Since these pieces are larger than a *kezayit* and they retain the appearance of bread, the blessing remains *Ha-Motzi*. However, contemporary *Poskim* do discuss the proper blessing to say before eating “*matza brei*”.

*Matza brei* is made by crushing *matza* into small pieces, mixing it with oil, milk, eggs, etc., and then frying the mixture into flat patties. *Matza brei* is made from somewhat large and distinctive pieces of *matza*, which are generally smaller than a *kezayit*. The Arukh Ha-Shulkhan (168:37) assumes that the proper blessing is certainly *Borei Minei Mezonot*. However, many *Acharonim* question whether frying the mixture in a frying pan with a bit of butter or oil should be considered to be a form of “baking,” in which case the blessing would remain *Ha-Motzi*. Therefore, some (see Mishna Berura 168:56) recommend saying *Ha-Motzi* over a piece of bread or *matza* before eating *matza brei*. If one uses very little oil or butter, then the proper blessing is most likely *Ha-Motzi*.

We saw above that one recites the blessing of *Ha-Motzi* over breadcrumbs or *matza* meal that was not cooked. What about bread or *matza* that has been ground into flour (bread crumbs or *matza* meal), kneaded together into pieces larger than a *kezayit*, and then re-baked or fried in oil? The Magen Avraham (168:28) rules that in this case, one must say the blessing of *Ha-Motzi*. According to the Magen Avraham, one must say the blessing of *Ha-Motzi* before eating *kneidlach*! Other *Acharonim* disagree and maintain that if one kneads together *matza* meal with oil, juice, and/or eggs, even if it is later boiled or fried, one recites *Borei Minei Mezonot* if the food does not have the appearance of bread, even if each piece is larger than a *kezayit*. Therefore, before *kneidelach* and *matza* balls, which are made by mixing *matza* meal with eggs, water, and oil, one says the blessing of *Borei Minei Mezonot* (Mishna Berura 168:59), even if they are eaten as the basis of one’s meal (ibid. 56).

Although the custom is clearly to rely upon the Mishna Berura, R. Mayer Lichtenstein [records](http://www.etzion.org.il/vbm/update_views.php?num=9534&file=/vbm/archive/17-nehenin/29nehenin.doc) that his father, R. Aharon Lichtenstein, is careful to eat Pesach foods made from *matza* meal and held together, such as *kneidlach* and similar foods, in the context of a meal, in deference to the view of the Magen Avraham.

What if *matza* meal is used for baking? The Mishna Berura (168:59) rules that they if one kneads with water alone and then bakes the mixture, the proper blessing will be *Ha-Motzi*. However, if one uses a majority of oil or honey, then one says *Borei Minei Mezonot*, like any *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*. Therefore, if one kneads *matza* meal together with eggs, oil, and juice and then bakes a “Pesach cake”, one says *Borei Minei Mezonot*.

The proper blessing recited over croutons would depend on how the croutons are made. If the croutons are deep-fried in oil, then they are considered to have been cooked. If they are smaller than the size of an olive, as in most cases, the proper blessing is *Borei Minei Mezonot*. (Most commercially sold croutons are deep fried, and therefore not only is the proper blessing *Borei Minei Mezonot*, but one can also put them into a hot soup on Shabbat, in accordance with the principle *ein bishul achar bishul*.) At times, croutons are made from old bread, which is then baked a second time. In this case, the proper blessing is *Ha-Motzi*. If the dough is intentionally baked until crispy in order to produce croutons, the proper blessing is also *Borei Minei Mezonot*, as they are considered to be *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*.

Next week, we will conclude our study of the definition of bread. We will summarize what we have learned and apply the principles to commonly eaten foods.