**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

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**Shiur #34:   
*Ikkar Ve-Tafel* (1)**

**Introduction**

Last week, we finished our study of the different *Birkot Ha-Nehenin*. Over the course of numerous *shiurim*, we discussed when one is to say the blessings of *Ha-Motzi*, *Mezonot*, *He-Gefen*, *Ha-Eitz*, *Ha-Adama*, and *She-Hakol*.

In reality, however, foods are often not eaten alone. Often, different foods are eaten with other foods, either in a mixture or separate, but in tandem with other foods. How is one to determine which is the appropriate blessing to say over a mixture of different foods? How does one gauge which is the “dominant” ingredient? Which factors are taken into account?

This week, we will briefly outline the issues relevant to this topic, and attempt to provide guidelines for practical applications.

***Ikkar Ve-Tafel* – Two Separate Foods**

The Talmud teaches that one should recite the blessing over the “*ikkar*,” the primary ingredient, and not over the “*tafel*,” the secondary ingredient. The Talmud (*Berakhot* 44a) teaches:

If salted food is set before him and bread with it, he says a blessing over the salted food and this serves for the bread, since the bread is only subsidiary (*tafel*) to it. This is the general principle: whenever with one kind of food another is taken as subsidiary (*tafel*), a benediction is said over the principal kind (*ikkar*) and this serves for the subsidiary (*tafel*).

According to the *mishna*, even in a case in which the bread is *tafel* to another food, the blessing is recited over the other food.

The *Acharonim* (Chazon Ish OC 27:9, Iggerot Moshe OC 4:42, Reshimot Shiurim [R. Soloveitchik] Berakhot 44a) discuss this case in depth. They question whether the *tafel*, the subsidiary food, is exempt from a blessing or whether it is included in the blessing said over the principal food, the *ikkar*, and they raise possible differences between these understandings.

For example, what if the *tafel* was not present when the blessing was said over the *ikkar*? Tosafot (*Berakhot* 44a, s.v. *be-okhlei*) imply that if the *tafel* was not present when the blessing was said over the *ikkar*, one must say another blessing over the *tafel*. However, others disagree (Ba’al Ha-Ma’or, *Berakhot* 29a). Seemingly, one might suggest that they disagree as to whether fundamentally the *tafel* needs a blessing, but it is ordinarily exempted by the *ikkar*, except when it is not present at the time of the blessing, or whether there is no need for a blessing at all.

What if one eats the *tafel* before eating the *ikkar*? The Terumat Ha-Deshen (31) discusses such a case and concludes that “the Rabbis did not mandate reciting a blessing over eating or drinking if it is subservient (*tafel*).” In other words, regardless of whether or not one eats the *tafel* before or after eating the *ikkar*, the *tafel* is exempt from the requirement a blessing. The Darkhei Moshe (212:2) explains that although one is exempt from the original blessing, he may not benefit from this world without a blessing, and must therefore still say the blessing of *She-Hakol* before eating the *tafel*. The Beit Yosef (212) cites the Terumat Ha-Deshen, but disagrees. In his opinion, if one eats the *tafel* first, one should say the proper blessing over the *tafel*.

Interestingly, R. Soloveitchik insisted, following the Terumat Ha-Deshen, that one is not obligated at all to say a blessing over the *tafel*. He argues that it is inconceivable that the blessing of the *ikkar*, which is a different blessing than the one ordinarily said over the *tafel*, could exempt the *tafel*. Therefore, although he accepted the ruling of the Terumat Ha-Deshen, as did the Rema (212:1; see Mishna Berura 212:10), he explained that even according to Tosafot – who implies that if the blessing is recited before the *tafel* was present, one must say the blessing when he eats the *tafel* – this limitation serves to define the *tafel* as *tafel* to the *ikkar*, and doesn’t necessarily teach us anything about our question.

Finally, what if one eats the *ikkar* first, but without a reciting a blessing? Must he then say a blessing before eating the *tafel*? In an ordinary case, there is no need to say a blessing before eating the *tafel* (i.e. the milk left over after eating cereal). However, in this case, since he did not say a blessing over the *ikkar*, must he say a blessing over the *tafel*?

The Shulchan Arukh (212:1) rules in accordance with the principle set down by the *mishna* that the blessing said before eating the *ikkar* exempts the *tafel*, but the *Poskim* discuss the definition of *ikkar* and *tafel*. When *tafel* serves the *ikkar* by adding color or smell, one says the blessing over the *ikkar*. Similarly, when the *tafel* adds flavor to the *ikkar*, such as a frosting to a cake or a spread on a cracker, one says the blessing over the crackers. If the cracker is being used merely to carry the spread, than one should say the blessing over the spread. The Rema (121:1) writes that although the *tafel* is “serving” the *ikkar*, the blessing said over the *ikkar* does not exempt the *tafel* if it is “*chaviv.*” The Magen Avraham (212:3; see also Gra 212:5 and Mishna Berura 202:29) disagrees and rules that one does not say a blessing in such a case. However, when meat is served with rice or vegetables, since one is not “serving” the others, one should say individual *berakhot.*

***Ikkar* and *Tafel* – Mixtures**

The Talmud teaches that this principle applies to mixtures of different foods as well. The *gemara* says that the proper blessing to be recited over olive oil is *Borei Peri Ha-Etz*. The *gemara* is unsure, however, when one would actually drink olive oil and recite the blessing. If one were to drink the oil alone, it would be injurious, and one would therefore certainly not say a blessing. If one consumes the olive oil with bread, the bread is the “*ikkar*” and the oil is “*tafel*,” and therefore one only recites the blessing over the bread. The *gemara* concludes:

Do we suppose then that he drinks it with elaiogaron? (Rabbah b. Shmuel has stated: Elaiogaron is juice of beetroots; oxygaron is juice of all other boiled vegetables.) In that case, the elaiogaron would be the *ikkar* and the oil *tafel*, and we have learnt: This is the general rule: If with one article of food another is taken as accessory (*tafel*), a blessing is said over the main article (*ikkar*), and this suffices for the accessory (*tafel*)! What case have we here in mind? The case of a man with a sore throat … This is obvious! You might think that since he intends it as a medicine he should not say any blessing over it. Therefore, we are told that since he has some enjoyment from it he has to say a blessing.

Aside from teaching that if one enjoys a medicine one should recite a blessing, the *gemara* describes a case in which the olive oil is mixed with a type of juice, and when the oil is viewed as the *ikkar*, the proper blessing over both is *Borei Peri Ha-Etz*. The *Rishonim* discuss why, in this case, the blessing is recited over the olive oil. Which factors determine which ingredient is considered to be the *ikkar* and which the *tafel*?

The Tur (202) cites a debate between the Ba’al Halakhot Gedolot (Behag) and R. Yosef. R. Yosef (see also Ra’ah, *Berakhot* 35, s.v. *amar*) maintains that the proper blessing is *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* since the olive oil must be a significant quantity of the mixture, while the Behag (see also Talmidei Rabbinu Yona, *Berakhot* 25a, s.v. *ve-davka*) says that since he intends to drink the olive oil for medicinal purposes, he says the blessing over the olive oil.

One might suggest that these *Rishonim* disagree regarding the relationship between these types of *ikkar* and *tafel*. When two separate foods are eaten together, the Talmud clearly maintains that one’s subjective “*da’at*” determines which food is the *ikkar* and which the *tafel*. Therefore, although bread is objectively deemed a more important food, if eaten in order to offset the taste of another food, it is deemed to be *tafel*. It is therefore reasonable that the Behag and others maintain that the same method of determining *ikkar* and *tafel* of two foods eaten together applies to a mixture of different ingredients.

The other *Rishonim*, however, disagree and distinguish between these two categories. They insist that in the case of food with many ingredients, we are not concerned with the preferred ingredient, but rather with the ingredient which will determine the identity of the mixture.

The Tur relates to different cases in which two ingredients are merged in order to form a new product. In one place (204), he discusses flowers or herbs that are coated with honey. The Tur opines that one says *She-Hakol*, as “the honey is the *ikkar.*” He notes that his colleagues disagree with him (*chaveirai* *chalukin alai*) and insist that the honey is the *tafel*; it is only added to enhance that which it coats. He concludes that he defers to their opinion. The Tur himself notes that elsewhere (202) he rules that one says *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* before eating honey covered nuts. He explains that in that case, the nut is “whole” (*shalem u-mamasho kayyam*) and therefore is considered to be the *ikkar*.

What emerges is that according to the Tur, when one of the ingredients is whole and noticeable, it is viewed as the *ikkar*. If, however, the ingredients are ground up, the ingredient whose taste is most noticeable (honey) is considered to be the *ikkar*. The Tur’s colleagues disagree and rule that in both cases, the ingredient that is meant to enhance or add taste to another ingredient is considered to be the *tafel*. Therefore, the blessing should be recited over the nut and over the ground herbs/flowers.

Seemingly, one could suggest that the Tur and his colleagues disagree as to the definition of *ikkar* and *tafel*. While his colleagues believe that the function that each ingredient plays in the mixture should determine the blessing and the honey merely adds taste to the fruit, the Tur maintains that the foods with the most dominant taste should be considered to be the *ikkar*.

Next week, we will discuss practical examples of *ikkar* and *tafel*.