**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

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**Shiur #36:   
*Kedimut Bi-Verakhot***

**The Proper Order of the *Berakhot***

**Introduction**

In previous *shiurim*, we discussed the importance of *birkot ha-nehenin* and their centrality in the daily religious experience. In order to maintain and emphasize the integrity and honor of a blessing, the Halakha teaches that blessings must be recited with dignity and respect. Among the numerous rules that ensure that these standards are maintained, the Halakha also relates to the order in which blessings are recited. Reciting the blessings in their proper sequence may be a *hiddur mitzva*, affording the *mevarekh* the opportunity to recite the *berakhot* in a more meaningful manner.

The Talmud raises a number of considerations, including whether the food belongs to the “*shiv’at ha-minim*” (the seven species), whether it is preferred (“*chaviv*”), and whether the blessing over one food is more “specific” than the other. It also relates to different scenarios, such as when one is served several foods that receive the same blessing and several foods that receive different blessings. The question of *kedimut bi-verkhot* is addressed in two separate places, and the *Rishonim* disagree regarding the implications of these discussions. This is indeed a complicated *sugya*; we will attempt to present it in a clear and concise manner.

***Shiv’at Ha-Minim* or *Chaviv***

The *mishna* (*Berakhot* 40b) teaches:

If one has several varieties before him, R. Yehuda says that if there is among them something of the seven species, he makes the blessing over that, but the Sages say that he may make the blessing over any kind that he pleases.

The *mishna* raises two considerations in determining which blessing to say: *min shiv’a* (i.e. one of the seven agricultural products – two grains and five fruits – that are listed in *Devarim* 8:8 as being special products of *Eretz Yisrael*) and *chaviv* (that which is “preferred”). Seemingly, R. Yehuda and the *Chakhamim* disagree as to whether is it a greater form of praise to say the blessing over the more “important” food, one which expresses the uniqueness of the Land of Israel, or to praise God before eating that food which one prefers and therefore feels the greatest amount of gratitude for.

Regarding the seven species, the *gemara* relates:

R. Chisda and R. Hamnuna were seated at a meal, and dates and pomegranates were set before them. R. Hamnuna took some dates and said a blessing over them. Said R. Chisda to him: Does not the Master agree with what R. Yosef, or as some say R. Yitzchak, said: Whatever is mentioned earlier in this verse has precedence in the matter of benediction? He replied: This [the date] comes second after the word “land,” and this [the pomegranate] comes fifth. He replied: Would that we had feet of iron so that we could always [run and] listen to you!

According to this passage, when one is served different fruits of the seven species, the blessing should be recited over the one which appears earlier in the verse (*Devarim* 8:8): “A **land** of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a **land** of olives which produce oil and [dates which produce] honey.” Furthermore, the *gemara* assumes that when the word “*eretz*” (land) is repeated, it begins a new sequence. Therefore, the proper order is wheat, barley, olives, dates, grapes (raisins/wine), figs, and pomegranates.

The Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 8:13) and the Ra’ah (*Berakhot* 40b, s.v. *divrei ha-kol*) rule is accordance with the *Chakhamim*, as they represent the majority view. The Rosh (*Berakhot* 6:25) and Rabbeinu Yona (*Berakhot* 28b, s.v. *u-le-inyan*, citing the *Geonim*) rule in accordance with R. Yehuda.

The *Rishonim* also debate how to understand the preference for “*chaviv*.” The Rosh (*Berakhot* 6:25) explains that “*chaviv*” refers to the food which one generally prefers, even if one currently prefers the other food. The Rambam (ibid.), however, writes that over the “[the food] that he prefers to eat first he should eat first,” implying that “*chaviv*” refers to the food he currently prefers (see Kesef Mishneh).

**Scope of the Debate: One or More *Berakhot***

The Talmud questions the scope of the *shivat ha-minim* vs. *chaviv* debate. Theoretically, there are two scenarios to which this debate might apply. In one case, a person is served a number of foods that all which receive the same blessing, and he is therefore instructed to recite only one blessing over all of the foods; reciting the same blessing multiple times would be considered a “*berakha she-eina tzerikha*,” an unnecessary blessing (see <http://www.vbm-torah.org/archive/blessings/04berakhot.htm>). In this case, one must determine which food will receive the *berakha* which exempts of all the other foods. In a second scenario, one has many foods before him that receive different blessings. In this case, one must determine whether or not there is a preferred sequence in which the blessings should be recited.

The Talmud relates that one *Amora* (R. Ami or R. Yitzchak Nafcha) maintains that the debate between R. Yehuda and the *Chakhamim* applies to both cases – that is, whether “*birkoteihen shavot*” or “*birkoteihen einan shavot.*”

However, the Talmud (ibid. 41a) also cites the view of Ulla regarding this question:

Ulla said: Opinions differ only in the case where the blessings [over the several varieties] are the same; in such a case, R. Yehuda holds that belonging to the seven species is of more importance, while the Rabbis held that being preferred is of more importance. But where they do not all have the same benediction, all agree that a blessing is to be said first on one variety and then on another…

The *Rishonim* who rule in accordance with R. Yehuda accept the view of Ulla. But what is Ulla’s view?

The gemara relates that Ulla believed that this debate only referred to a situation in which a person was about to eat multiple foods that all receive the same blessing, but if the foods each receive different blessings, then this debate does not apply. What does Ulla instruct in a case in which one is served numerous foods that receive different blessings? The Mordekhai (*Berakhot* 132) assumes that in such a case, all agree that one should first say the blessing over one of the seven species; if none of the foods are from the seven species, he should say the blessing over the preferred (“*chaviv*”) food. However, most *Rishonim* disagree with this view. The Rif (*Berakhot* 28b; see Rabbeinu Yona), for example, implies that in this case, all agree that one should say the blessing over the preferred (“*chaviv*”) food. This is also the view of Tosafot (*Berakhot* 41a, s.v. *aval*). The Rosh (ibid.), in contrast, implies that it simply does not matter which blessing is recited first in this case.

**Specificity of the Blessings**

The Talmud (*Berakhot* 39a) seems to mention a third factor in determining the proper sequence of the blessings: the specificity of the *berakhot*.

For once two disciples were sitting before Bar Kappara, and cabbage, Damascene plums, and poultry were set before him. Bar Kappara gave permission to one of them to say a blessing, and he at once said the blessing over the poultry. The other laughed at him, and Bar Kappara was angry, He said: I am not angry with the one who said the blessing, but with the one who laughed. If your companion acts like one who has never tasted meat in his life, is that any reason for you to laugh? Then he corrected himself and said: I am not angry with the one who laughed, but with the one who said the blessing. If there is no wisdom here, is there not old age here? A *Tanna* taught: Neither of them saw the year out. Now did not their difference lie in this, that the one who said the blessing held that the benediction over both boiled vegetables and poultry is *She-Hakol Niheyeh Bi-Dvaro*, and therefore the dish he liked best had the preference, while the one who laughed held that the blessing over boiled vegetables is *Borei Peri Ha-Adama* and that over poultry is *She-Hakol Niheyeh Bi-Dvaro*, and therefore the vegetables should have had the preference…

This passage implies that one must take into account the specificity of the blessing as well. Therefore, for example, the blessing of *Borei Peri Ha-Adama* precedes *She-Hakol*, the most general blessing.

The *Rishonim* disagree as to how to understand the relationship between this passage and the previously cited passages. Some *Rishonim*, including the Rif and the Rambam, omit this passage in their codes, implying that it contradicts the previous *sugyot* and is therefore rejected. Others, however, attempt to resolve this contradiction. The Ra’ah (ibid.), for example, maintains that this passage refers to a case in which a person is about to eat different foods which receive different blessings. It teaches us that in this case, one should say the more specific blessing before the more general blessing. Others (Tosafot ibid.; Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona, *Berakhot* 28b, s.v. *u-ve-feirush*; Rosh ibid.) maintain that Bar Kappara refers to a case in which one must choose between *She-Hakol* and *Borei Peri Ha-Adama*, while the previous passage referred to a fruit (*Borei Peri Ha-Etz*) and a vegetable (*Borei Peri Ha-Adama*); in the latter case, one may decide which blessing to say first, either based upon preference (Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona) or randomly (Rosh).

**Summary**

The Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 8:13) rules:

[The following rules apply when] several types of food are placed before a person [at the same time]: If the same blessing applies to all of them, one should recite the blessing on one, and thereby fulfill his obligation regarding the others. If the same blessing does not apply to all of them, one should recite the blessing that is appropriate for each one individually. The order of precedence depends on one's desires (*chaviv*).

When there is no one type of food that one desires more than the others, [the order of precedence is as follows:] If among the foods there are foods from the seven species, the blessing should be recited over them first. The species that are mentioned first in the verse receive precedence with regard to the blessing.

The seven species are those mentioned in the following verse, ([*Devarim* 8:8](http://www.chabad.org/9972#v8):) "A land of wheat, barley, vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olives that produce oil, and honey." Honey refers to date-honey.

The Rambam rules like the *Chakhamim* and maintains that one should always say the blessing over the “preferred” food. When neither food is preferred and one of the foods is one of the seven species, he should say the blessing of that food first. The Ra’ah agrees with this ruling, but adds that when confronted with foods that receive different blessings, one should eat the food with the most specific blessing first.

Alternatively, other *Rishonim* (Rosh, Rabbeinu Yona) rule that when presented with foods which receive the same blessing, one should first say the blessing of those foods from the seven species (R. Yehuda). If neither food is from the seven species, one should say the blessing over the preferred food. If one is served foods that receive different blessings, one should first recite the more specific blessing (Bar Kappara). When one is served a fruit and a vegetable, the Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona say that one should say the blessing over the food that is generally preferred, while the Rosh maintains that there is no preference in this case.

In response to the confusion of this topic, the Taz (211:1) sharply comments:

As for the halakha, there is no concern, as no matter which path one takes he has upon whom to rely. If the blessings are the same and there is a food from the seven species, one who wishes to take the food of the seven species and exempt the other foods acts in accordance with R. Yehuda and the ruling of the Rosh. And if he wishes to choose the food which he prefers and exempt the other food [of the seven species], then he acts in according with the Sages and the ruling of the Rambam. And if neither food is of the seven species, he obviously takes the food he prefers. And similarly, if all the foods receive different blessings and one must recite the blessing of one before the others, there is an advantage to the food of the seven species and there is an advantage to the preferred food, and one should do as he wishes. And [even] regarding preference, there are two ways – if he generally prefers the food, like the Rosh, or if he prefers it now, like the Rambam – and it seems to me that there is no halakhic resolution in deciding like whom the halakha follows.

**The Halakha**

Despite the Taz’s observation, the Shulchan Arukh (211) cites the view of the Rosh, Rabbeinu Yona, and the Rambam:

If one has before him many different fruits, if their blessings are the same and there is a fruit of the seven species, one should [say the blessing over] this first, even if it is not preferred like the second fruit; if there is no fruit from the seven species, then one should [say the blessing] first over the preferred one. If their blessings are not the same, even if there is a fruit from the seven species, like a radish and an olive, one may say the blessing over either one that he wants, even if it is not the preferred fruit (Rosh).

Some say that even in this case, one should say the blessing first over the preferred fruit, and “preferred” refers to the fruit which he generally prefers, even if now he prefers the other (Rabbeinu Yona).

According to the Rambam, [however,] if one of the fruits is preferred, whether the fruits receive the same or different blessings, regardless of whether one of them is one of the seven species, he should first [say the blessing over the] preferred food at that moment. If he does not prefer either of them and one of the fruits is one of the seven species, he should say the blessing over that first (Rambam).

If they brought before him a fruit whose blessing is *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* and another whose blessing is *She-Hakol*, the fruit precedes, as it is important, and it does not exempt another food. Similarly, if there is a [vegetable which receives] a *Borei Beri Ha-Adama* and a food which receives a *She-Hakol*, the *Borei Peri Ha-Adama* precedes. If they bring before him a *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* [fruit] and a *Borei Peri Ha-Adama* [vegetable], he may say the blessing on whichever he prefers. Some say that the *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* takes precedence.

The Mishna Berura (211:13) writes that although the Shulchan Arukh seems to rule in accordance with the Rosh, the first view that he cites, one should act in accordance with Rabbeinu Yona, as the majority of *Rishonim* rule according to his view. Therefore, when one is served fruits which receive *different* blessings, one should say the blessing over the preferred fruit first. However, this ruling is very limited, as it only applies when the two foods receive a *Borei Peri Ha-Adama* and a *Borei Peri Ha-Etz*; if one of the foods receives a *She-Hakol*, it certainly is not eaten first. Furthermore, the Shulchan Arukh cites another opinion, that of the Behag, who insists that *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* should always precede *Borei Peri Ha-Adama*. Although the Taz (211:2) and Magen Avraham (211:4) reject this view and rule that the preferred food should take precedence, the Mishna Berura (211:18) rules that one should always give precedence to the more specific blessing, even between a *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* and *Borei Peri Ha-Adama*. The custom is in accordance with the Mishna Berura.

In summary, when recited a *berakha* over foods which receive different blessings and one has no clear preference for one food over the other, the proper order is *Mezonot*, *Borei Peri Ha-Gafen, Borei Peri Ha-Etz* (and then according the their order in the verse: olives, dates, grapes/raisins, figs and pomegranates), *Borei Peri Ha-Adama, She-Hakol*. This is often remembered through the pneumonic “*maga eish*.”