**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

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This week’s shiurim are dedicated in memory of   
Moshe Eliezer Maeir Stillman z”l   
by Isaac Ely Stillman

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**Shiur #39: Blessings Reciting Before and During a Meal**

Last year, we studied the laws of the blessings to be recited before eating, including the blessings of *Ha-Motzi*, *Mezonot*, *She-Hakol*, *Ha-Etz* and *Ha-Adama*, as well as blessings recited over multiple foods. We addressed the question of “*kedimut bi-verakhot*," the proper order of reciting *berakhot* over numerous foods, and the laws of “*ikkar ve-tafel*," cases in which the blessing over one food exempts another. Finally, we questioned whether the *Birkat Ha-Motzi* exempts all food eaten during the meal, or whether there are certain foods that require a blessing even during a meal of bread.

This week, we will discuss *berakhot* recited before the meal and their impact on food eaten during the meal. We will summarize last year’s discussion regarding foods that require a blessing even during a meal.

**“The Blessing over the Wine Exempts all Kinds of Drinks” – Wine and Other Beverages Before and During the Meal**

The Rosh (*Berakhot* 6:32) rules that one who says the blessing over wine and drinks it before a meal does not say another blessing over wine during a meal that begins with bread. Therefore, when one drinks wine for ritual purposes, such as for *Kiddush* or even *Havdala*, before a meal, a blessing is not said over wine during the subsequent meal. The Shulchan Arukh (*Orach Chaim* 174:4) rules accordingly, although he cites two opinions regarding whether this holds true for *Havdala* as well.

The Mishna Berura (174:6, 8) writes that wine before a meal only exempts wine during the meal that one had in mind. Similarly, if one is accustomed to drinking wine during the meal, there is no need for another blessing. Interestingly, the Mishna Berura (174:8) writes that “in our lands, we are not accustomed to drinking during the meal even on Shabbat, and [therefore the blessing on the wine before the meal] does not exempt [other beverages] unless he had them in mind." Nowadays, in homes in which wine is consumed during the meal, the blessing of *Ha-Gefen* before the meal suffices.

In addition, the Talmud (*Berakhot* 41b) cites the view of R. Chiyya, who opines that just as the blessing recited over bread (*Ha-Motzi*) covers ALL food eaten during the meal, the blessing over the wine (*Ha-Gefen*) exempts all other beverages drunk during the meal.

R. Chiyya said: [A blessing said over] bread suffices for all kinds of food [eaten in the meal], and a blessing said over wine for all kinds of drink.

Tosafot (s.v. *ve-yayin*) note that just as the *gemara* (ibid.) concludes that the *halakha* is not in accordance with R. Chiyya regarding bread, and one must therefore say a blessing before eating foods that are not an integral part of the meal (*she-lo machamat ha-se’uda*), the law is similarly not in accordance with R. Chiyya regarding wine, and the blessing said over wine does NOT exempt other beverages. The Rambam and the Tur also omit this ruling. Most *Rishonim*, however, including the Rosh (*Berakhot* 6:26; see also Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona), disagree and rule in accordance with R. Chiyya regarding wine.

One can offer two possible explanations for this law. R. Chiyya may simply be applying the principle of “*ikkar ve-tafel*" (which we discussed in depth last year). Under certain circumstances, other beverages may be deemed “*tafel*” to the wine and therefore no blessing is required. Alternatively, R. Chiyya may maintain that due to the importance of wine (see Or Zaru’a 155), its blessing exempts all beverages.

The reason for R. Chiyya’s rulingmay impact its scope. If R. Chiyya’s ruling is based upon the principle of “*ikkar ve-tafel*," then it would only apply when the wine is considered to be the “*ikkar*," the primary beverage. However, according to the second explanation, the blessing over the wine would most likely always exempt other beverages, as long as the blessing of *Ha-Gefen* relates to the other beverages. This analysis may be the underlying question in numerous debates among the *Rishonim*.

For example, the Mordekhai (*Berakhot* 150) rules that R. Chiyya’s principle only applies when one is “*kove’a*" – that is, he establishes his meal over wine. However, when one simply has a glass of wine, the blessing does not cover other beverages consumed during the meal. Furthermore, the Mordekhai asserts that nowadays, as it is not customary to be “*kove’a*” over wine, R. Chiyya’s ruling applies only when the other beverages were in front of him when he recited the blessing over the wine. The Taz (174:2) cites this Mordekhai. Similarly, the Chayei Adam (55:5 see also Nishmat Adam) writes that the blessing over the wine exempts other drinks only if one drinks numerous cups of wine. The Arukh Ha-Shulchan (174:2) rules accordingly. These authorities seem to maintain that the other beverages are exempted because they are “secondary” to the wine, either because the person was “*kove’a*” over wine or because the other beverages were present when the blessing was said over the wine.

Most *Acharonim*, however, disagree and rule that one can be “*kove’a*”  
 over wine nowadays (see Dagul Me-Revava, for example). Moreover, one who drinks a small amount, even not during a meal (see Sha’ar Ha-Tziun 174::5 and Shulchan Arukh Ha-Rav 174:4) and even for *Kiddush* or *Havdala* (Shulchan Arukh 174:4), need not say a blessing over other beverages that he drinks afterward. As long as the other beverages were in from of him when he said the *Birkat* *Ha-Gefen* or he had them in mind (Shulchan Arukh Ha-Rav ibid.; Mishna Berura 174:3), they are covered by the blessing. Therefore, one who drinks from the *Kiddush* wine before the meal is exempt from saying a blessing over wine and other beverages during the meal (Magen Avraham 174:11).

Furthermore, most *Acharonim* (see Shulchan Arukh Ha-Rav 174:4; R. Ovadia Yosef, Yechaveh Da’at 5:20) rule that even one who just “tastes” wine is exempt from saying the blessing over other beverages. The Bi’ur Halakha (174, s.v. *yayin*), however, rules that one should drink at least a *melo lugmav*, a cheekful of wine. The *sefer* *Ve-Zot Ha-Berakha* (pg. 100) insists that the custom of Ashkenazim is to say a blessing on other drinks if one tasted less than a *melo lugmav* of wine, but others (see *Peninei Halakha*, *Berakhot*, p. 157, for example) disagree.

Interestingly, some *Acharonim* (see *Ve-Zot Ha-Berakha*, *Berur Halakha* 26:2; *Dover Meisharim* 15) question whether this principle applies to grape juice as well. One might suggest that this should depend upon whether this *halakha* is a function of the principle of *ikkar ve-tafel*, in which case it may not apply to grape juice, or whether the blessing of *Ha-Gefen* is such an important blessing that it exempts all other drinks, regardless of what it was recited on. R. Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited by the above sources) reportedly maintained that one should not rely upon the blessing over grape juice to exempt other beverages. He therefore recommended that one have in mind that the blessing should NOT cover other drinks. It appears, however, that it is customary not to differentiate between wine and grape juice.

Finally, most *Acharonim* assume that this *halakha* only applies if one drinks from the wine. However, if one hears another person say *Kiddush*, he must still say a blessing before drinking other beverages. Interestingly, especially in light of his identification with the position of the Mordekhai, the Arukh Ha-Shulchan (174:3) questions this ruling.

**Foods Eaten Before a Meal**

The Shulchan Arukh (174:5) rules that *Birkat Ha-Mazon* covers wine consumed before and during the meal (based on Rosh, *Pesachim* 10:24; see Machzor Vitri 72, who disagrees). Similarly, when the blessing of *Ha-Gefen* exempts others beverages, there is also no need for an addition *berakha acharona* on those beverages, as they are included in the *Al Ha-Gefen* or *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.

The Mishna Berura (174:25; see also Bi’ur Halakha 174, s.v. *ve-afilu*) rules that *Birkat Ha-Mazon* does NOT cover beverages that one drank before the meal. For this reason, the Shulchan Arukh Ha-Rav (174:6) rules that one should say a *berakha acharona* (*Borei Nefashot*) even during the meal. The Magen Avraham (174:14) questions whether this is also true if one continues to drink during the meal, but the Shulchan Arukh Ha-Rav (ibid.) rules that even in this case, one should say the *berakaha acharona* even during the meal. R. Ovadia Yosef (Yalkut Yosef 174:6) disagrees and rules that one should not say a *berakha acharona* in these cases.

The Mishna Berura (176:2) offers the following guidelines regarding fruits and vegetables. If one eats before the meal food that requires a blessing during the meal, such as fruits, then one views the fruit eaten before the meal at connected to the fruit eaten during the meal, and *Birkat Ha-Mazon* covers them both. However, if one eats vegetables before the meal, over which one would NOT have to say a *berakha* during the meal, *Birkat Ha-Mazon* does not cover that which is eaten before the meal.

Similarly, *Birkat Ha-Mazon* covers foods and drinks consumed before the meal for the sake of the meal – for example, to arouse one’s appetite Therefore, the Mishna Berura (174:25) adds that one who drinks alcoholic beverages before a meal in order to arouse his appetite does not need to say a *berakha acharona*, as it is considered to be part of the meal. This is true regarding other drinks and foods that are eaten for a similar purpose.

Regarding one who eats grain based products (*mezonot*) as a snack, the Mishna Berura (176:2) cites two opinions regarding whether should recite a *berakha acharona* (*Al Ha-Michya*) before the meal. However, he writes that if one did not, the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* said at the end of the meal suffices (especially if one has these cakes in mind). The Mishna Berura adds that even according to the first view, one who eats cakes (*lekach* and *kichlech*) that are traditionally eaten at *Kiddush* should not say an *Al Ha-Michya* and should rely upon the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, as they are may possibly considered to be bread according to some opinions. R. Ovadia Yosef (Yalkut Yosef 177:11) rules that one should never say a *berakha acharona* over foods eaten right before a meal.

Many *Acharonim* advise the one should not eat immediately before washing one’s hands (*netilat yadayim*) before a meal in order to avoid these halakhic questions of *berakha she-eina tzerikha* (unnecessary *berakhot*).

**Summary of Blessings Recited During the Meal**

We concluded out previous discussion with the assertion that if one eats before a meal a food that requires a blessing when eaten during a meal, *Birkat Ha-Mazon* will cover that food and one should not say a *berakha acharona*. In this context, I would like to summarize last year’s discussion regarding this issue.

The *gemara* (*Berakhot* 41b) teaches that foods eaten during the meal that are considered to be “*machamat ha-se’uda*," a part of the meal, do not require a blessing, while those eaten “*she-lo machamat ha-se’uda*," not as part of the meal, require a blessing.

The *Rishonim* debate the definition of “*machamat ha-se’uda*." Some (Behag, *Hilkhot Berakhot*, chapter 6; Rashi, *Berakhot* 41a-b) explain that “*devarim ha-ba’im machmat ha-se’uda*” only includes foods eaten with bread, such as meat and fish. Others (see Ri, Tosafot, *Berakhot* 41b, s.v. *hilkhata*) explain that “*devarim ha-ba’im machmat ha-se’uda*” refers to all foods that are generally eaten with bread as the main part of the meal.

The *Rishonim* assume that fundamentally, fruits are considered to be foods that are NOT eaten “*machmat ha-se’uda*," unless possibly if one washes his hands and eats bread with the intention of eating fruit as a main course of the meal, or if one began eating fruit with bread and was therefore exempt from the blessing over the fruit due to the laws of *ikkar* and *tafel*, and then afterwards ate fruit alone.

Interestingly, the *Rishonim* also debate whether one must recite a blessing before drinking water during the meal. Tosafot (*Berakhot* 41b, s.v. *i hakhi*) and others write that drinking is an integral part of the meal and therefore no additional blessing is recited. The Behag (see Rosh, *Berakhot* 6:29) and Machzor Vitri (see Tosafot, ibid.) disagree and insist that one should say a blessing before drinking even during the meal. Although the Rosh rules in accordance with Tosafot, he suggests saying a blessing over a drink before *netilat yadayim* and *Ha-Motzi*, with the intent that it should cover drinking during the meal as well.

These debates are resolved by the Shulchan Arukh (177:1-2), who rules that all foods eaten as part of the main course, even if not eaten with the bread, are exempt from the blessing, as the blessing of *Ha-Motzi* was established to be said before eating the “meal” – i.e. the foods that make up the meal – and not necessarily just the bread. He further rules that when one begins a meal with fruit and then continues to eat fruit without bread, a *berakha* is not recited. Finally, regarding the case in which one washes and begins his meal with bread, but intends to eat fruit as his meal without bread, the Shulchan Arukh cites both views and concludes that “it is proper to eat first from the fruit with bread, and therefore even if afterwards he eats fruit without bread, they do not require a blessing.” The Rema adds that even if he does not eat bread with the fruit later in the meal, since he began eating fruit with bread, the blessing of *Ha-Motzi* suffices.

However, if one eats fruits for their taste, and not necessarily in order to be satiated (such as grapes, watermelon, fruit, dates and figs), he must say a blessing before eating, even during the meal. One should say a blessing before eating melon or grapefruit at the beginning of a meal, as this is not an integral part of the meal. Similarly, if one eats ice cream for dessert, one should say the blessing of *She-Hakol*. However, fruits that are eaten as part of the main meal, such as fruits cooked with meat and salads (including carrot, lettuce, and even Waldorf salad), do not require a separate blessing, nor does *tzimmes* or raisins found in rice.

One should also say the blessing of *Borei Minei Mezonot* before eating cakes and crackers for dessert. As we learned, some *Acharonim* maintain that since there is a doubt as the definition of *pat* *ha*-*ba’ah* *be*-*kisanin* and many baked products are thus viewed as a “*safek Ha-Motzi*,” and one should therefore NOT say *Mezonot* over these products (such as yeast cakes). However, it seems that soft cakes, waffles, and pancakes, as well as boiled or fried dough, certainly require the blessing of *Mezonot*. Some *Acharonim* suggest that when one is in doubt, he should have these desserts in mind when saying *Ha-Motzi* (Chayye Adam 43:9).

Regarding beverages, although the Behag (see Rosh, *Berakhot* 6:29) and Machzor Vitri (see Tosafot, ibid.) maintain that one should say a blessing before drinking even during the meal, Tosafot (*Berakhot* 41b, s.v. *i hakhi*) and others write that drinking is an integral part of the meal, and therefore no additional blessing is recited. The Rema (174:7) records that it is customary not to say a blessing before drinking before or during the meal.

**Wine and Alcohol During the Meal**

The Talmud (*Berakhot* 41b) rules explicitly that one must recite a blessing over wine that one drinks during the meal, as “wine is different… because it is itself a motive for benediction.” As for other alcoholic beverages, some *Acharonim* (see Taz 174:10; Eliya Rabba 173:11) claim that although water and other drinks are considered to be an integral part of the meal (*be-khlal devarim ha-ba’im machmat ha-se’uda*), alcoholic beverages are not, and one must therefore recite a blessing before drinking them during a meal. The Magen Avraham (174:11) also cites those who maintain that one should say a blessing before drinking alcoholic beverages during a meal, as these drinks are not considered to be an integral part of the meal (*machmat ha-se’uda*). He notes however, that some *Acharonim* disagree and do not require one to say a blessing before eating foods that “arouse one’s appetite.” He therefore suggests that we must distinguish between different cases. One must say a blessing upon drinking alcoholic beverages before or after eating, but one who drinks during the meat does not need to say a blessing. He concludes by noting that on Shabbat, one who drank wine for *Kiddush* is exempt from saying a blessing before drinking other beverages, as we learned above.

Since these questions are subject to cultural norms, and eating practices are often perceived differently by different authorities, there is a broad range of opinions among the *Poskim*.

Many *Acharonim* rule that one should NOT say a blessing upon drinking BEFORE eating, as people often drink before eating in order to arouse their appetites. However, regarding drinking alcoholic beverages DURING the meal, although this seems to be subject to a debate between the Taz and the Magen Avraham, some *Acharonim* maintain that the custom is not to recite a blessing. At times, one may drink in order to separate between fish and meat or after eating certain foods, in which case one should not say a blessing, as the drinking becomes an integral part of the meal. Furthermore, some perceive drinking during a meal an “appetite stimulant” (see Chayei Adam 43:6 and Nishmat Adam 41:1; see also Mishna Berura). Therefore, one who drinks in order to arouse his appetite should NOT say a blessing before drinking. Some even view a “toast” (*le-chaim*) as part of the meal (see, for example, *Ve-Zot Ha-Berakha*, chapter 8). Since the guiding principle in the laws of *berakhot* is “*safek berakhot le-hakel*,” one does not say a blessing in cases of doubt, the blessing should not be recited. (See Arukh Ha-Shulchan 174:12, who writes that it is customary NOT to say a blessing over alcoholic beverages during the meal; see also Yalkut Yosef 174:8.)

Others view drinking during the meal, especially “toasts,” as extraneous to the meal, and one should therefore say a blessing. It seems that most often, drinking alcoholic beverages is not related to the meal, and therefore one should recite the proper blessing. It appears that one who drinks AFTER eating must certainly say the blessing (Mishna Berura 174:39), as drinking to help one’s digestion is NOT considered to be an integral part of the meal.

Interestingly, the Chayei Adam (43:11) writes that one should say a blessing before drinking tea or coffee served at the end of a meal. The Mishna Berura (174:39) challenges this ruling and suggests that one should say the blessing of *She-Hakol* over a bit of sugar, thus exempting the beverage. (It should be noted that the Mishna Berura most likely refers to sugar cubes, which are eaten but not considered to be part of the meal.) The Arukh Ha-Shulchan (174:14) even suggests that one should distinguish between tea, which deserves it own blessing, and coffee, which does not. In this case as well, many *Acharonim* apply the principle “*safek berachot le-hakel*,” although one who is certain that the beverage is not “part of the meal” should say the blessing of *She-Hakol*.

As noted above, all agree that one who already said the blessing of *Borei Peri Ha-Gafen* before drinking wine does not need to say another blessing before drinking other beverages.