**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

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This shiur is available in the archives at

[www.vbm-torah.org/archive/blessings/41berakhot.htm](http://www.vbm-torah.org/archive/blessings/41berakhot.htm)

**Shiur # 41: Interruptions (2)**

**Introduction**

Last week, we began our discussion of “interruptions” (*hefsekim*) that may or may not invalidate a blessing. We investigated three types of interruptions: during a blessing, after a blessing but before eating, and between *netilat yadayim* and eating bread. This week we will discuss a blessing’s “coverage.” How long does the “effect” of the blessing last?

Although one must recite a *berakha acharona* before the food is digested (*shi’ur ikul*) – that is, before one no longer feels full, which we generally assume to be approximately 72 minutes – a lapse of time does not affect a *berakha rishona* (Rambam, *Hilkhot Berakhot* 4:7; see, however, Magen Avraham 184:9 and Chayei Adam 50:23). A blessing is valid for the entire day, unless one decides to stop eating or actively terminates the blessing (through sleep, *shinui makom*, etc.). Nevertheless, if one intends to wait before eating or drinking again, he should preferably say a *berakha acharona* after eating in order to avoid forgetting or missing the opportunity to say a *berakha acharona*, and in deference to the view that maintains that even a *berakha rishona* expires after the *shi’ur ikul*.

Furthermore, a blessing recited at the beginning of a meal generally covers all food eaten until the end of the meal. What is the mechanism of this principle? What determines which foods are covered by the blessing, and when does the blessing “expire” and no longer cover other foods?

**Blessing Coverage**

What determines what is covered by the *berakha rishona*? There seem to be two theoretical possibilities. On the one hand, one might suggest that since it is prohibited to eat even the smallest amount without first saying a blessing, one must have in mind all the food that one intends to eat. On the other hand, we might suggest that the *birkot ha-nehenin* work in a similar manner as *Ha-Motzi*; the blessing is said over a “unit” of eating, and all food considered to be part of the “unit” is covered by the blessing.

This question seems to be debated by Rashi and the Rif. The Talmud (*Pesachim* 103b) discusses the case of one who drinks several cups of wine during a meal:

Amemar, Mar Zutra, and R. Ashi were sitting at a meal, and R. Acha the son of Raba waited on them. Amemar recited a separate blessing for each cup; Mar Zutra recited a blessing over the first cup and over the last cup; [but] R. Ashi recited a blessing over the first cup and no more.

The *gemara* cites three views regarding whether one should say a blessing over each cup of wine, over the first and then again after the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, or only over the first cup. The *gemara* continues to explain that Amemar and Mar Zutra do not fundamentally disagree; they both maintain that the blessing for drinking is sufficient, but Amemer, who would change his mind before each cup of wine, would say a new blessing for each new cup.

The *Rishonim* offer a different explanation for Amemar’s view. Rashi (s.v. *nimlakh*) writes: “I decided to drink the second cup, as I had *hesech ha-da’at* (‘removed my thoughts’) after drinking the first cup.” Rashi implies that the original blessing remains effective unless one decides not to drink anymore. The Rif (*Pesachim* 21a) explains that “if he recited the blessing over the first cup with the intention to drink only that cup, and he then changed his mind and decided to drink another cup, he must say *Borei Peri Ha-Gefen* and then drink.”

One might suggest that Rashi and the Rif do not argue, but rather offer two different scenarios in which one would be required to say another blessing – when one intends to drink only one cup and when one has *hesech ha-da’at* and decides NOT to drink another cup. However, it is possible that they disagree in their interpretations. Rashi may maintain that one does not need to relate the blessing to each drink that one intends to drink; rather, *a berakha rishona* generally covers a “unit” of food or drinks and only expired when one has *hesech ha-da’at*. The Rif, on the other hand, may hold that every food requires its own blessing, and therefore one must have them all in mind when saying the blessing. Food and drinks that one does not have in mind are not covered by the blessing.

This question may impact another important question: does a *berakha rishona* cover food that was not in front of a person at the time of the blessing?

R. Shimon bar Tzadok (13th-14th century), a student of the Maharam of Rothenburg, writes in his Tashbetz Katan (310) that “when one eats two or three types of fruits, or even one type, and they are not all in from of him when he says the blessing, he must say a blessing on each one because his mind was removed from each of them.” The Kolbo (24; cited by Beit Yosef 177) concurs. Apparently, these authorities maintain that since one must say a blessing over each food and drink, if they are not in from of him when he says the blessing, they are not covered by the *berakha*.

The Tur (206), however, disagrees. He writes:

One who said the blessing over fruit and then they brought more [fruit] of the same species does not need to say another blessing, even though they were not before him when he said the blessing.

One might simply explain that the Tur agrees with the Tashbetz Katan and the Kolbo, but believes that one also have in mind food which has not yet been brought to the table. Alternatively, one may suggest that the Tur maintains that the blessing is said over a “unit” of food. Therefore, as long as one is sitting at the same meal, the blessing covers all food that is subsequently brought to the table.

We should note that regarding blessings recited before performing *mitzvot* (*birkot ha-mitzvot*), the Tur seems to offer a different approach (*Yoreh De’ah* 19). The Tur cites the Semak (109), who maintains that if one says a blessing before slaughtering a number of animals and then additional animals are brought before him, he must say another blessing if he had finished slaughtering the original animals. If, however, he is still slaughtering the original animals and has not had *hesech ha-da’at* from slaughtering, he need not recite another blessing. The Tur himself disagrees with the Semak and rules that unless one had the additional animals in mind when saying the original blessing, one must say another blessing, whether or not he is still sacrificing the original animals. This ruling seems to differ from the one cited above, where the Tur rules that the initial blessing covers food that was not in from of him during the meal.

The Bach (206, s.v. *aval*) notes this apparent contradiction and explains that while one generally has in mind all food that will be brought to the table, one does not generally think about additional animals appearing to be slaughtered. The Bach apparently maintains that both passages of the Tur can be explained as emphasizing one’s original intention. Alternatively, the Derisha (*Yoreh De’ah* 19:2) explains that “there is permanence (*keva*) to eating… and permanence is more applicable [to food] than to slaughtering.” The Derisha apparently maintains that while the blessing said before food can be said over a “unit” of eating, including even fruits that were not yet brought to the table, this notion does not apply to *shechita*, nor to *mitzvot* in general. Thus, the Bach and Derisha reflect the two explanations of the Tur we cited above.

The Beit Yosef adds that if food is brought from a different house, one must say another blessing. This may imply that he maintains that the blessing only exempts that which one had in mind, like the Bach; and one certainly could not have had in mind food that was in a different house.

The Shulchan Arukh (206:5) rules in accordance with the Tur – one who says a blessing over fruits and then more fruits are brought does not need to say another blessing. Although the Magen Avraham (206:7) assumes that this only applies when he had the other fruits in mind when he said the blessing, the Sha’ar Ha-Tzion (206:20) insists that most *Acharonim* disagree. He explains in the Mishna Berura (206:20) that even when one ate “*stam*” (that is, he did not have in mind only to eat the fruits in front of him, but he also did not have other fruits in mind) does not need to say a blessing. The Mishna Berura (21-22) adds that this only applies to similar foods of the same species. However, if one brought a completely different species, then one must say another *berakha*, unless he is still eating the original food.

Elsewhere, the Shulchan Arukh (177:5) rules that one must say another blessing if food is brought from another house. A guest, however, has in mind to eat whatever his host brings him, and therefore does not say another blessing.

The Rema (206:5) adds that when reciting a blessing, one should preferably have in mind all food that will be brought to him. The *Acharonim* explain that one should have in mind all food that one eats until he says a *berakha acharona*, due to the *safek* (doubt) outlined above.

Next week, we will discuss different forms of *hesech ha-da’at* and when another blessing must be recited.