**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

**Rav David Brofsky**

This shiur is available in the archives at

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This week’s shiurim are dedicated in memory of Henry Lehmann z”l   
by Richard Lehmann

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**Shiur # 42: Interruptions (3)**

***Hesech Ha-Da’at***

**Introduction**

Last week, we continued our discussion of “interruptions” (*hefsekim*). We studied the laws of “blessing coverage” – that is, which foods are covered by the initial *berakha rishona*.

We noted last week that although one must recite a *berakha acharona* before the food is digested (*shi’ur ikul*) – 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.

This week, we will discuss the manner in which a *berakha* “expires” and different types of interruptions that may cause one to have a *hesech ha-da’at*.

**The End of a Meal**

There are two Talmudic passages that relate to this topic. The *gemara* in *Berakhot* (42a) relates:

R. Papa was once at the house of R. Huna b. R. Natan. After they had finished the meal, tables were set before them and R. Papa took some and commenced to eat. They said to him: Does not the Master hold that after the meal is finished, it is forbidden to eat? He replied: “Removed” is the proper term.

Raba and R. Zera once visited the Exilarch. After they had removed the tray from before them, a gift [of fruit] was sent them from the Exilarch. Raba partook, but R. Zera did not partake. Said the latter to him: Does not the Master hold that if the food has been removed it is forbidden to eat? He replied: We can rely on the tray of the Exilarch…

The law is not as stated in all those dicta reported above, but as thus stated by R. Chiya b. Ashi in the name of Rav: Three things should follow immediately one on the other. The killing [of the sacrifice] should follow immediately on the laying on of hands… Grace should follow immediately on the washing of hands.

The *Amora’im* debate whether one who finishes may continue eating or whether he must first recite another *berakha rishona*. According to the household of R. Huna, one who finishes eating and no longer has in mind to keep eating must say another blessing if he does indeed eat again. R. Papa apparently maintains that only after “removing the table,” as was customary in those times, must one say another blessing if he wishes to continue eating. The *gemara* cites Rav, who rules that only the washing one’s hands (*mayim acharonim*) before *Birkat Ha-Mazon* officially “breaks” the efficacy of the first blessing.

Although the household of R. Huna clearly maintains that the end of one’s meal is dependent upon the subjective *da’at* of the person, the views of R. Papa and Rav are less clear. Do they maintain that a blessing’s coverage expires only after an objective end to the meal, or do they hold that it is, in fact, a person’s *da’at* that is the determining factor, and that *da’at* is dependent upon certain objective actions, such as removing the table or performing *mayim acharonim*.

Elsewhere (*Pesachim* 103a), the *gemara* teaches:

R. Yaakov b. Abba visited Rava's home. He saw him recite the blessing *Borei Peri Ha-Gefen* over the first cup, and then he recited a blessing over the cup of *Birkat Ha-Mazon* and drank it. Said he to him [Rava]: Why do you need all this? Surely you have [already] recited a blessing for us once? He [Rava] replied: When we were at the Exilarch’s we did thus. He [R. Yaakov b. Abba] responded: It is well that we did this at the Exilarch's, because there was a doubt whether they would bring us [more wine] or they would not bring us [more]. But here, surely the [second] cup stands before us and we have it in mind? He [Rava] replied: I acted in accordance with Rav's disciples. For R. Beruna and R. Chananel, disciples of Rav, were sitting at a meal, [and] R. Yeba Saba waited on them. They said to him: Give us [wine] and we will say Grace. Subsequently they said: Give us [wine] and we will drink. He said to them: Thus did Rav say: Once you have said, "Give us [wine] and we will say Grace,” it is forbidden for you to drink. What is the reason? Because you let it pass out of your minds.

The *Rishonim* note an apparent contradiction – while the first passage implies that *mayaim acharonim* ends the meal, the second passage implies that merely stating one’s intention to recite *Birkat Ha-Mazon* suffices.

Some *Rishonim* (see Tosafot, *Berakhot* 42a, s.v. *tekef*; Rosh, *Berakhot* 6:31) accept both passages and explain that either *mayim acharonim* or the statement “*hav lan u-nevarech*” end the meal and cancel the first blessing. Rabbeinu Yona (Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona, *Berakhot* 30a, s.v. *ela*), however, explains that the two passages refer to different scenarios. The first passage refers to one who eats bread; in such a situation, only *mayim acharonim* cancels the first blessing. The second passage refers to one who drinks wine; in such a case, even “*hav lan u-nevarekh*” interrupts. One might simply explain that one’s “*da’at*” is different in each scenario. Alternatively, we might suggest that while there is an objective manner in which a bread meal ends, regarding wine and other foods, a clear statement suffices.

In addition, the *Rishonim* debate how to understand the statement “after the meal is finished, it is forbidden to eat.” Tosafot (s.v. *rebbi*; see also Rosh, *Berakhot* 6:31 and *Chullin* 6:5) explains that one may not eat before saying another blessing. Rashi (s.v. *assur*; see also Rambam, *Hilkhot Berakhot* 4:5 and 6:20) explains that one must first say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* before eating again. In other words, they debate whether the end of the meal merely severs the effect of the *berakha rishona*, or also demands that one conclude with the final blessing before eating again.

The Shulchan Arukh (179:1) rules that *mayim acharonim* cancels the coverage of the *Ha-Motzi* blessing, and one must say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* as well. If one says “*hav lan u-nevarekh*,” one may not eat or drink before saying another blessing. He cites a debate regarding whether one may eat with a blessing in such a case.

The Mishna Berura (3) summarizes then when saying *Birkat Ha-Mazon* without a cup of wine, even saying “let’s bentch” would suffice. In his Be’ur Halakha (s.v *ein*), he writes that even thinking that one will no longer eat suffices, and he must say another blessing.

The Shulchan Arukh Ha-Rav (*Seder Birkat Ha-Nehenin* 5:1) notes that when eating a snack (*achilat arai*), as opposed to a meal, if one had in mind not to continue eating and he then decided to eat or drink, he must say another blessing.

In addition to what we learned above, there are other activities that may constitute a “*hefsek*,” requiring a new blessing upon resuming eating. If an activity does not constitute a *hefsek*, one should not recite another *berakha*.

What if one remembers in the middle of one’s meal that he forgot to pray, would his prayer be considered a *hefsek*? Tosafot (*Pesachim* 102a, s.v. *ve-akru*; see also Rosh, *Pesachim* 10:24 and *Chullin* 6:6) rules that one who prays in the middle of a meal should not repeat the *berakha rishona* before resuming his meal. The Beit Yosef (178) notes that although the Rif apparently disagrees and maintains that when one is obligated to interrupt his meal in order to pray, his inability to both eat and pray constitutes a *hefsek*, the halakha follows the view of the Tosafot and Rosh. He rules accordingly in the Shulchan Arukh (178:8) as well.

Interestingly, the Magen Avraham (13) writes that although there is no need to repeat the *berakha rishona* in this case, one should wash his hands (*netilat yadayim*) before eating bread. The Mishna Berura (47) notes that although many *Acharonim* disagree, if one left his home and went to pray in a *Beit Knesset*, he should wash his hands upon returning, but without a blessing.

What if one sleeps, even briefly, during a meal? The Rosh (*Ta’anit* 1:14) cites the Ra’avad, who rules that one who sleeps during a meal is akin to one who finishes his meal and removes the table (see above), who mush say another blessing before eating. The Rosh disagrees and rules that one who takes a nap (*sheinat arai*) during a meal does not need to repeat the blessings, and that is the custom. The Shulchan Arukh (178:7) rules accordingly.

The Mishna Berura (48) writes that even one who sleeps up to an hour does not need to say another blessing, although according to the Peri Megadim, he should wash his hands without a blessing. However, one who sleeps in his bed, a *sheinat keva*, must wash and repeat the blessings.

The Rema adds that even one who goes to the bathroom during the meal does not need to say another blessing upon returning. The *Acharonim* discuss at length whether he should wash *netilat yadayim*, with or without a blessing (see Shulchan Arukh 164:2 and 165:1; Magen Avraham 165:1; Mishna Berura 164:13; et al.). It is customary not to say a blessing over a second *netilat yadayim* during the meal after going to the bathroom, in accordance with the view of the Maharshal (see Piskei Teshuvot 164:5).

Next week, we will conclude our discussion of interruptions, as we study the laws of “*shinuy makom*” – one who travels while he is eating.