**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

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**Shiur #77: Blessings on Purim**

***Shehechiyanu***

In previous *shiurim*, we mentioned that the *Shehechiyanu* blessing is said on Festivals, upon fulfilling a *mitzva* that is only performed at fixed times (*shofar*, *lulav*, *matza*, and *ner Chanuka*), upon building (or purchasing) a new house or new *keilim* (clothing and utensils), upon seeing a friend, upon seeing a new fruit, and upon hearing good news.

The *Rishonim* discuss when *Shehechiyanu* should be said on Purim. While they assume that *Shehechiyanu* is certainly recited at night before reading the *Megilla*, they question whether the daytime reading, as well as the *mitzvot* that can only be fulfilled during the day, receive the *Shehechiyanu* blessing as well.

The Rambam (*Hilkhot Megilla* 1:3) and others (see *Yere’im* 268; Rashbam, cited by Mordekhai, *Megilla* 781) rule that *Shehechiyanu* is not said during the day. Apparently, they maintain that the obligations of night and day are either identical or similar enough not to warrant a separate blessing during the day.

On the other hand, Rabbeinu Tam (cited by the Rosh 1:6) and the Ri (in Tosafot, *s.v.* *chayav*) rule that *Shehechiyanu* should indeed be repeated during the day. According to this view of Rabbeinu Tam and the Ri, why and how does the daytime reading differ from the nighttime reading?

Some suggest that the daytime reading contains an additional dimension that is lacking in the nighttime reading. Tosafot, for example, writes:

Even though one has recited *zeman* [the *berakha* of *Shehechiyanu*] at night, he repeats the *berakha* during the day because the primary expression of *pirsumei nisa* (the publicizing of the miracle) occurs at the daytime reading. The verse implies this as well, as it says, "By night, but have no respite" – in other words, even though one reads during the day, he must still read at night. The primary reading is during the day, as the main festive meal is during the day…

According to Tosafot, the additional focus upon *pirsumei nisa* adds a special dimension to the daytime reading. The Rosh adds that "the primary *pirsumei nisa* occurs during the day, during the time of the festive meal, as well as the *matanot la-evyonim* and *mishlo’ach manot*." Apparently, since the distribution of the *matanot la-evyonim* and *mishlo’ach manot*, as well as the festive meal, all occur by day, the *pirsumei nisa* is most effectively expressed during the day of Purim, and this lends its character to the daytime reading of the *Megilla*.

Others note that the nighttime and daytime readings of the *Megilla* may originate from different sources. R. Yechezkel Landau, for example, in his *Noda Bi-Yehuda* (*Mahadura Kama*, O.C. 41), suggests that while the morning reading was established by the prophets and is therefore categorized as *divrei kabbala* (originating from prophetic revelation), the nighttime reading was enacted later by the Sages.

There may be another reason to say *Shehechiyanu* during the morning. Regarding the *Shehechiyanu* blessing, the Talmud (*Eiruvin* 40b) teaches:

Rabba said: When I was in the house of study of R. Huna, we raised the following dilemma: What is the *halakha* with regard to saying the blessing for time [i.e. *Shehechiyanu*] on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur? Do we say that since these Festivals come at fixed times of the year, we recite the blessing of *Shehechiyanu*, just as we would for any other joyous event that occurs at fixed intervals? Or do we say, perhaps, that since these Festivals are not called pilgrimage Festivals [*regalim*], we do not recite it? R. Huna did not have an answer at hand…

The *gemara* concludes that the *halakha* is that one recites the blessing of *Shehechiyanu* on Rosh Hashana and on Yom Kippur, and one may recite the blessing even in the market, as it does not require a cup of wine.

While the gemara raises a doubt regarding whether *Shehechiyanu* is said only on the Festivals (Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot) or also on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, it does not seem to entertain the possibility that one should say *Shehechiyanu* on Purim (and Chanuka).

The Meiri (*Megilla* 4b) suggests that while at night, the *Shehechiyanu* blessing is said over the *Megilla*, during the day, there is another reason to say *Shehechiyanu*:

Some attribute the obligation to say *Shehechiyanu* during the day to another factor, and that is because [Purim] is a Yom Tov. At night it is said only over the *Megilla*, unlike other days, during which the blessing is said at night only to recall the [significance of the] day, and not for another reason… However, on Purim, if one eats the meal at night, one has not fulfilled his obligation.

The Meiri seems to suggest that although the *Shehechiyanu* blessing was instituted for Purim as well, only the DAY of Purim is viewed as a Yom Tov.

The Meiri realizes that this understanding may lead one to conclude that even if one does not read the *Megilla* during the day, he should still say the *Shehechiyanu* blessing. Although he rejects this possibility, elsewhere (*Shabbat* 23a, s.v. *mi she-ein*, cited by Sha’ar Ha-Tziyun 676:3) he writes that one who does not light Chanuka lights should still say *Shehechiyanu* over the day itself.

The *Acharonim* debate this question as well. The Magen Avraham (692:1) writes that one who does not have a *Megilla* to read should not say *Shehechiyanu*. Others, such as the *Mor U-Ketzi’a* (692), insist that “it is appropriate to say the *Shehechiyanu* blessing over the day … especially since the miracle happened on that day.” The *Acharonim* seem to conclude that due to this doubt, one should refrain from saying this blessing (Bi’ur Halakha 692, s.v. *ve-shehechiyanu*; Iggerot Moshe, OC 5:20:2).

In practice, while the Shulchan Arukh (682:1) rules that one should not say the blessing again in the morning, the Rema rules that the blessing should be said. Some *Acharonim* (see Magen Avraham 692:1; Mishna Berura 692:1) write that when saying *Shehechiyanu*, one should have in mind the other *mitzvot* of the day, such as *mishlochei manot* and the *se’udat Purim*. The Kaf Ha-Chaim (692:4) suggests that Sephardim should have this in mind when saying *Shehechiyanu* at night.

**The *Berakhot* Recited Before and After *Megilla* Reading**

The *Megilla* reading is preceded by three *berakhot*: the *birkat ha-mitzva* (“*al mikra megilla*”), the *birkat ha-nissim* (“*she-asa nissim*”), and the *birkat ha-zman* (“*shehechiyanu*”). The *gemara* (*Megilla* 21a) relates that the recitation of the *berakha* of *ha-rav et riveinu* after the reading of the *Megilla* is dependent upon communal custom.

What is the nature of this *berakha*? Some assert that *ha-rav et riveinu* was instituted not for the *Megilla* reading, but rather as a *birkat ha-shevach* – a *berakha* of praise – for the Purim miracle. The Ran (12a in Rif) explains that for this reason, the *berakha* begins with "*Barukh*," despite the fact that it is a "*berakha ha-semukha le-chaverata*," a *berakha* adjacent to another – i.e. to the blessings which precede the *Megilla* reading – and this type of *berakha* generally does not open with "*Barukh*." Fundamentally, the *berakha* of *ha-rav et riveinu* stands on its own and was not instituted to be recited specifically after the *Megilla* reading, and it therefore requires its own introductory “*barukh*.”

The Ritva (*Megilla* 21b) cites this view, but subsequently rejects it. The Avudraham (*Hilkhot Birkat Ha-Mitzvot*) similarly dismisses the Ran’s theory and advances another one:

The reason why they established a *berakha* after all *mitzvot* fulfilled through reading – both readings that are required by Torah law, such as the *Shema* reading, and readings ordained by the Sages, such as reading the *Megilla*, reading *Hallel*, the *haftara*, and *Pesukei De-Zimra* – more so than other *mitzvot*, is because we learned that the public reading of the Torah must be followed by a *berakha* through a *kal ve-chomer* [a fortiori deduction] from *birkat ha-mazon*, and they therefore established that ALL *mitzvot* fulfilled through reading should be followed by a *berakha*, like the public Torah reading.

According to the Avudraham, *ha-rav et riveinu* indeed relates to the *Megilla* reading, as the Sages specifically instituted that this *berakha* be recited at the conclusion of the reading.

The Arukh Ha-Shulchan (5) explains that this *berakha* is not inherently related to the reading of the *Megilla* per se, but rather is a *berakha* of *pirsumei nisa*, which should therefore be recited publicly.

We have thus identified two approaches to the *berakha* of *ha-rav et riveinu*. Some view it as an independent *berakha* commemorating the miraculous events of Purim, while others explain that it was instituted to conclude the reading of the *Megilla*, just as we conclude *Hallel*, *haftarot*, and *Pesukei De-Zimra* with a *berakha*. These two approaches may yield some interesting practical ramifications.

1. The Shulchan Arukh (690:17) writes that upon completing the *Megilla* reading, one should roll the *Megilla* and then recite the *berakha* of *ha-rav et riveinu.* The Maharil (56) explains that it is disrespectful to leave the *Megilla* open unnecessarily, and he even criticized a reader who began reciting the *berakha* before rolling the *Megilla*. The Magen Avraham (690:19) distinguishes between this *berakha* and the *berakhot* recited after the *haftara* reading, which one should specifically recite while the *haftara* scroll is still open (Shulchan Arukh 284:6). He explains that since the *berakha* of *ha-rav et riveinu* was not instituted upon the reading of the *Megilla*, one may, or even should, roll up the *Megilla* before reciting it. He concludes (20) that one may, if he wishes, recite the *berakha* first and then afterwards roll the *Megilla*.

Interestingly, the Eshel Avraham (Butshash) writes that only the reader should roll the *Megilla* before reciting *ha-rav et riveinu*, while the listeners may recite the *berakha* and then roll their scrolls. Of course, this assumes that even the listeners recited *ha-rav et riveinu* individually (as opposed to the common practice that only the reader recites this *berakha*). In any event, theEshel Avraham comments that it may be preferable for the listeners to recite the *berakha* before rolling their scrolls so that the *berakha* immediately follows the reading.

These *Acharonim* may disagree as to whether the *berakha* relates to the *Megilla* reading or if it functions as an independent *berakha* praising God for the miracles of Purim (Magen Avraham).

2. Similarly, the authorities debate the question of whether one may speak between the reading of the *Megilla* and the recitation of *ha-rav et riveinu*. The Tur cites the Ba'al Ha-Ittur’s comment that "since the final *berakha* is dependent upon local custom, one should not criticize one who talks between the reading [and the *berakha*]…" The Beit Yosef and Bach explain that since the *berakha* was instituted over the miracle of Purim, and not the reading of the *Megilla*, interruptions are allowed in between the reading and the *berakha*.

The Tur (692), however, disagrees, arguing that if one indeed recites *ha-rav et riveinu*, then he should not interrupt between the reading and the *berakha*. The Bach explains that Tur viewed *ha-rav et riveinu* as a *berakha* that concludes the reading of the *Megilla*, similar to the *berakha* of *Yishtabach,* which concludes *Pesukei De-Zimra*. Therefore, one should not interrupt between the *Megilla* reading and the *berakha*.

3. May one recite the *berakha* of *ha-rav et riveinu* without a *minyan*? The Beit Yosef (692) cites the Orchot Chayim (*Hilkhot Megilla* 7), who asserts that according to the Talmud Yerushalmi (4:1), one should recite this *berakha* only "*be-tzibbur*” – in the presence of a quorum. The Rema (692:1) cites this view as well.

One might suggest that if the *berakha* merely concludes the reading of the *Megilla*, than just as the *Megilla* may be read without a quorum (when it is read in the proper time), *ha-rav et riveinu* may similarly be recited privately. Conversely, if the *berakha* was instituted in order to publicize the miracle, then we should likely limit its recitation to public forums, where the miracle is properly publicized. The Arukh Ha-Shulchan (692:5) indeed explains the Rema in this manner.

In truth, however, one might dispute this reasoning. One might suggest that the *berakha* was instituted specifically as the conclusion of a public *Megilla* reading, which may differ qualitatively from a private reading. Conversely, even if the *berakha* was instituted to publicize the miracle and to offer thanksgiving, one might still be able to recite it privately.

The Eliya Rabba (692:8) cites numerous authorities who disagree with the Orchot Chayim’s position, and he rules that even an individual may recite *ha-rav et riveinu*. The Bi’ur Ha-Gra also implies that the *berakha* may be recited without a quorum. The Bi’ur Halakha, however, concludes that since reciting the *berakha* is in any event only a custom, and generally we follow the rule of *safek berakhot le-hakel* (we refrain from reciting *berakhot* in situations of doubt), an individual should not recite this *berakha*. The Arukh Ha-Shulchan (ibid.), by contrast, allows reciting the *berakha* even privately. For one thing, he writes, he was unable to locate the passage in the Yerushalmi that was cited as the source for this *halakha* (possibly because the Yerushalmi may not have referred to *ha-rav et riveinu* at all, as noted by the Vilna Gaon). Additionally, the requirement of a quorum for the *berakha* of *ha-rav et riveinu* does not appear in the writings of any other *Rishonim*. Finally, the custom was to recite the *berakha* even without a quorum.

The Shulchan Arukh (692:1) records that nowadays it is customary for all communities to recite this *berakha*.

Next week, we will return to our study of the *Shehechiyanu* blessing. *Purim sameach*!