**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

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**Shiur #51: *Kos Shel Birkat Ha-Mazon***

[Last week](http://etzion.org.il/en/shiur-50-mayim-acharonim-and-other-preparations-birkat-ha-mazon), we discussed the preparations for *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, including the customs of leaving bread on the table and covering the knife. We also studied the practice and the laws of *Mayim Acharonim*, washing after the meal and before *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, and discussed its applicability today.

This week, we will discuss the *Kos Shel Birkat Ha-Mazon*. We will discuss if and when one should say the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over a cup of wine.

***Kos Shel Birkat Ha-Mazon***

The *mishna* (*Berakhot* 51) records the following debate between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel:

These are the points [of difference] between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel in relation to a meal… If wine is served to them after the food, and that is the only cup there, Beit Shammai say that a blessing is first said over the wine and then [the grace] over the food, while Beit Hillel say that a blessing is first said over the food and then over the wine.

The *mishna* appears to refer to a case in which a person has one cup of wine and must decide whether to drink the wine during the meal or designate the wine for *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. The *gemara* (ibid. 52a) proves that this *mishna* maintains that Beit Shammai does not believe that *Birkat Ha-Mazon* must be said over a cup of wine. Thus, one may drink the wine during the meal and does not need to leave the wine for the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. What is the view of Beit Hillel?

Many *Rishonim* argue that according to Beit Hillel, *Birkat Ha-Mazon* must be said over wine. The Ba’al Ha-Ma’or (*Pesachim* 39a), for example, insists that one must say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over wine. Tosafot (*Pesachim* 105b, s.v. *shma mina berakha*) and the Rosh (*Pesachim* 10:2) discuss whether even an individual must say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over a cup of wine, or if this is necessary only when the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* is said with a *zimun*. The Rashbam and Rabbeinu Yechiel of Paris maintain that even an individual must say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over a cup of wine. Tosafot record, however, that it was customary to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over wine only when said with a *zimun*. This is the position of the R”i (see Hagahot Maimoniot, *Hilkhot Berakhot* 7:60).

Other *Rishonim* disagree. For example, the Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 7:15) writes explicitly that *Birkat Ha-Mazon* need not be said over wine. The Rashba (*Berakhot* 52a, s.v. *trei*), based on his understanding of a Talmudic passage (*Pesachim* 117b), suggests that this is the view of the Rif (see also Ran, *Pesachim* 26a, s.v. *gemara*), and he rules accordingly that *Birkat Ha-Mazon* does not require wine.

Even those who rule that *Birkat Ha-Mazon* does not require wine acknowledge that numerous sources indicate that that it is a praiseworthy practice to recite it over wine. The Rashba (above) writes that it is “nice [*yafa*] to say it over a cup [of wine].” The Ritva (*Berakhot* 52a, s.v. *u-leinyan*) writes that although one does not need to expend effort in order to find wine, one who has wine should certainly say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over it.

The Shulchan Arukh (182:1) writes:

Some say that *Birkat Ha-Mazon* requires a cup [of wine], even for an individual, and one should search for one and should not eat if he does not have a cup to say the blessing over, if he expects that he will have wine, even if he will thus miss one meal. Therefore, if two people eat together, one of them must take a cup [of wine] for *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.

And some say that [*Birkat Ha-Mazon*] does not need a cup [of wine] unless [*Birkat Ha-Mazon* is said] with three people.

And others say that [*Birkat Ha-Mazon*] does not need a cup [of wine] at all, even when three [say the blessing].

The Rema adds:

It is still a *mitzva min ha-muvchar* to say the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over a cup [of wine].

The Magen Avraham (1) notes that based on the laws of *Havdala*,the Shulchan Arukh extends the prohibition, forbidding even eating if one expects to receive wine at a later point, and he disagrees.

The Mishna Berura (182:4, 17) relates that it is customary to be lenient, although if one has wine in one’s house “it is certainly a *mitzva min ha-muvchar* and all agree that one should say the blessing over the cup [of wine].” He adds that it is customary for an individual, even one who has wine in his home, not to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over wine.

The Arukh Ha-Shulchan (182:1) relates that although it is not common practice to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over wine, as wine was generally not a common beverage where he lived (Russia, 19th century), some meticulous individuals try to attain wine for *Birkat Ha-Mazon* on Shabbat on Yom Tov. Interestingly, there may be another motivation to insist saying *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over wine on Shabbat. Although the Shulchan Arukh (OC 174:4) rules that one is not required to say *Al Ha-Gefen*, in addition to *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, to cover the Kiddush wine which one drank before the meal, by drinking wine after the meal and then saying *Al Ha-Gefen* one fulfills the opinion of the Ramban (*Milchamot Ha-Shem* *Pesachim* 24a s.v. *u-le-inyan*) who maintains that one must say an additional blessing.

It is also customary to said *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over wine at joyous occasions or when there is a *minyan*, although there does not seem to be a halakhic distinction between a simple *zimun* at larger events.

Whether or not one views the recitation of *Birkat Ha-Mazon* as obligatory, or even customary, may yield an interesting, and practical ramification. It is generally not permitted to eat or drink after dark before reciting *Havdala*. One may continue eating a meal (*Se’uda Shelishit*) which one began before dark, until *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. May one drink from the cup of wine used for *Birkat Ha-Mazon* after dark?

The Rambam (Hilkhot Shabbat 29:12) writes:

A person who is in the midst of eating [a meal] on the Sabbath when the Sabbath departs should complete his meal, wash his hands, recite grace over a cup of wine, and afterwards recite *Havdalah* over [this cup]. If he is sitting and drinking, he should interrupt his drinking, recite *Havdalah*, and begin drinking again.

This ruling raises two questions.

Does using the same cup of wine for both *Birkat Ha-Mazon* and *Havdala* violate the Talmudic principle “*ein osin mitzvot chavilot chavilot*” - “we do not observe *mitzvot* in bundles” (*Pesachim* 102b)? The Ra’avad (ibid.) writes that one should only use the same cup if he does not have another cup of wine. The Maggid Mishna (ibid.) adds that apparently the Rambam believes that since *Havdala* and *Brikat Ha-Mazon* are both relating to the past (i.e. *Havdala* ends Shabbat, it does not begin the new week), one cup may be used for both mitzvoth. The Maggid Mishna concludes that one should preferably use two cups- one for *Birkat Ha-Mazon* and another for *Havdala*. The Shulchan Arukh (OC 299:4) rules accordingly.

The Magen Avraham (299:7) notes that the ruling of the Maggid Mishna, and Shulchan Arukh, implies that one may drink for the cup of wine used for *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, as the wine is viewed as an integral part of the meal. However, those who are not accustomed to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over wine, and follow the opinion which does not mandate saying *Birkat Ha-Mazon* over wine, should not drink from the wine, as it is not seen as an integral part of the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. The Mishna Berura (299:14) concurs. The Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilkhata (59:16) writes that it is preferable to use a different cup of wine for *Havdala*, although he acknowledges that the custom is to use the same cup which was used for *Birkat* *Ha-Mazon*.

A similar question arises when saying the *Sheva Berakhot* on Shabbat. It is customary to say the *Sheva Berakhot* over two cups of wine: One cup designated as the cup for *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, upon which the leader of the *zimun* says *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, the second cup is designated for the *Sheva Berakhot*, which are said over this cup (see Tosafot *Pesachim* 102b s.v. *she-ein*, Rema EH 62:9). It is also customary to mix the wine of the two cups together, and two give to the person leading the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, and then to the bride and groom.

The Acharonim debate whether, when saying *Sheva Berakhot* at *Seu’da Shelishit* after dark, one drink from the wine. R. Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe* OC 4:69; see also *Mo’adim U-Zemanim* 3:46 and *Tzitz Eliezer* 10:45 who offer different opinions) rules, according to the above rational, that although the leader of *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, and the bride and groom, should drink for the cup designated for *Sheva Berakhot*, as that cup is an integral part of the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, according to our custom not to insist upon a wine whenever saying *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, the second cup should be used for *Havdala*.

Next week, we will study the laws of *zimun*.