**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

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**Shiur #62: *Birkat Ha-Mazon* (2) - Insertions**

**Introduction**

Last week, we reviewed the obligation to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* after eating bread. We discussed the type and quantity of food that require one to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, the origin of its four blessings, and the relationship between the Biblical obligation to “bless” God after eating and the blessings themselves.

This week, we will continue our discussion of the text of *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, as we learn about the insertions (*Retzei*, *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo*, and *Al Ha-Nissim*) to *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.

**The Relationship Between the Insertions and the Text of the Blessings**

The Talmud teaches that there are numerous passages which are inserted into *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. On Shabbat, *Retzei* is added into the third blessing. On Yom Tov, Chol Ha-Mo’ed, and Rosh Chodesh, *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo* is added into the third blessing. OnChanuka and Purim, *Al Ha-Nissim* is added to the second blessing.

The Talmud (*Shabbat* 24a) distinguishes between these different insertions:

The scholars propounded: Is Chanuka to be mentioned in *Birkat Ha-Mazon*? Since it is a Rabbinical [institution], we do not mention it; or perhaps it is mentioned to give publicity to the miracle (*pirsumei nisa*)? Said Rabba in R. Sechora's name in R. Huna's name: It need not be mentioned; yet if one comes to mention it, he does so in the *Nodeh* [blessing]…

The scholars propounded: Is Rosh Chodesh to be mentioned in *Birkat Ha-Mazon*? Should you say that it is unnecessary in the case of Chanuka, which is only Rabbinical, then on Rosh Chodesh, which is Biblical, it is necessary; or perhaps since the performance of work is not forbidden, it is not mentioned? Rav said: It is mentioned. R. Chanina said: It is not mentioned. R. Zerika said: Hold fast to Rav's [ruling], because R. Oshaia supports him.

The Talmud’s conclusion implies that there are two types of insertions. On Biblical festivals, one must mention the day in the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* (Shabbat, Yom Tov, and Rosh Chodesh). Similarly, on Chanuka and Purim, when one is obligated to publicize the miracle (*pirsumei nisa*), one should also insert *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo* into the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.

How are we to understand the relationship between these insertions and the text of the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*? One might suggest two explanations of the obligation to insert a passage that relates to the sanctity or the nature of the day. On the one hand, there may simply be an obligation to mention the festival, and the Rabbis felt that *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, as well as the *Tefillat Amida*, were appropriate places to relate to the day. On the other hand, the Talmud (*Berakhot* 40a) states that one’s daily prayers must reflect the uniqueness of the day:

“Blessed be the Lord day by day” (*Tehillim* 68:20). Are we then to bless Him by day and not bless Him by night? What it means to tell us is that every day we should give Him the blessing appropriate to the day.

Seemingly, according to the first explanation, one who said *Birkat Ha-Mazon* without mentioning these days has still fulfilled his obligation to bless, even though he did not “mention” the day. However, according to the second approach, since the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* did not reflect the uniqueness of the day, one has not fulfilled his obligation. What is the halakha regarding one who forgets to insert these passages into *Birkat Ha-Mazon*?

The Talmud (*Berakhot* 48b) teaches that there is a difference between the different insertions:

If one by mistake forgot to mention Rosh Chodesh in the *Tefilla*, he is made to begin again; if in the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, he is not made to begin again. Said R. Idi b. Abin to R. Amram: Why this difference between *Tefilla* and *Birkat Ha-Mazon*? He replied: I also had the same difficulty, and I asked R. Nachman, and he said to me: From Mar Samuel personally I have not heard anything on the subject, but let us see for ourselves. [I should say that] in the case of *Tefilla*, which is obligatory, he is made to begin again, but in the case of a meal, which he can eat or not eat as he pleases, he is not made to begin again. [R. Idi b. Abin responded:] But if that is so, in the case of Sabbaths and festivals, on which it is not possible for him to abstain from eating, I should also say that if he makes a mistake he must go back to the beginning? He replied: That is so; for R. Shila said in the name of Rav: If one goes wrong, he goes back to the beginning.

The *gemara* rules that one who omits *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo* in *Birkat Ha-Mazon* on Rosh Chodesh does not “return,” but one who forgets to insert *Retzei* or *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo* on Shabbat or Yom Tov must repeat the blessing. The *gemara* understands that since one is obligated to eat meals on Shabbat and Yom Tov, if one forgets to insert *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo*, one must repeat the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. However, one who forgets on Rosh Chodesh does not need to repeat, as he is not obligated to eat on those days.

Why does is matter if one is obligated or not to eat? One might suggest that if one is obligated to eat, then the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* MUST reflect the nature of the day, and therefore one who forgets must repeat the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. However, since one is not obligated to eat on Rosh Chodesh, the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* does not need to reflect the nature of the day, and if one forgot to insert *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo*, he has still fulfilled his obligation.

This distinction may appear in the words of the Rambam as well:

On Sabbaths and on the festivals, one should begin with the concept of comfort and conclude with the concept of comfort, and in the midst of the blessing, he should mention the sacred quality of the day…. On the Sabbath, in the midst [of the blessing], one should SAY: Our God, and God of our fathers, may it please You, God, our Lord, to strengthen us through Your *mitzvot* and through the mitzva of this great and holy seventh day … On the festivals, one should SAY the prayer *Ya'aleh Ve-Yavo* in this blessing. Similarly, on Rosh Chodesh and on *Chol Ha-Mo’ed*, one should ADD the prayer *Ya'aleh Ve-Yavo* in the third blessing.

The difference between SAY and ADD may reflect different functions of the insertion. Does it become and inherent part of the blessing or is it only an addition?

The Shulchan Arukh (188:6) rules that one who omits *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo* on Yom Tov should repeat. Some *Acharonim* (see, for example, Yechaveh Da’at 5:36) note that according to some *Rishonim* (Tosafot, *Sukka* 27a, for example) there is no obligation to eat meals on Yom Tov, except for the first night of Pesach and Sukkot, and therefore one who omits *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo* should not repeat. Ashkenazim certainly follow the ruling of the Shulchan Arukh and one who omits *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo* repeats the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. On Chol Ha-Mo’ed and Rosh Chodesh, however, one does not repeat.

Interestingly, there may be cases in which despite there being no formal obligation to eat, the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* must nonetheless express the nature of the day. For example, the *Rishonim* debate whether or not one who forgets to add *Retzei* to *Birkat Ha-Mazon* at *se’uda shlishit*, the third Shabbat meal, must repeat the entire *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. Although there may be no obligation to eat a third meal, since the meal is a fulfillment of the mitzva of *oneg* *Shabbat*, the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* may have to express the nature of the day at that meal. The Shulchan Arukh (188:6) rules that one does not repeat in this case.

Similarly, the *Rishonim* debate whether one who left out *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo* on Rosh Chodesh that coincides with Shabbat must repeat. In this case, one is obligated to eat a meal, but not due to the uniqueness of Rosh Chodesh. In this case, one might suggest that the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* should reflect all aspects of the day (i.e. Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh). Here, too, the Shulchan Arukh (188:7) rules that one should not repeat.

**One Who Forgets an Insertion**

Regarding one who forgets to add one of the insertions, the Talmud teaches:

R. Zera was once sitting behind R. Giddal, and R. Giddal was sitting facing R. Huna, and as he [R. Giddal] sat, he said: If one forgot and did not mention in the grace Sabbath, he says, “Blessed be He who gave Sabbaths for rest to His people Israel in love for a sign and a covenant; blessed is He who sanctifies the Sabbath!” He [R. Huna] said to him: Who made this statement? He replied: Rav. He then continued: If one forgot and did not mention the festival, he says, “Blessed is He who gave holy days to His people Israel for joy and for remembrance; blessed is He who sanctifies Israel and the festivals.” He again asked him who made the statement, and he answered: Rav. He then continued: If one forgot and did not mention Rosh Chodesh, he says, “Blessed is He who gave Rosh Chodesh to His people Israel for a remembrance“ ….

Once when R. Giddal b. Manyumi was in the presence of R. Nachman, R. Nachman made a mistake [in the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*], and he went back to the beginning. He said to him: What is the reason that your honor does this? He replied: Because R. Shila said in the name of Rav: If one makes a mistake, he goes back to the beginning. But R. Huna has said in the name of Rav: If he goes wrong, he says, “Blessed be He who gave [etc.]”? He replied: Has it not been stated in reference to this that R. Menashia b. Tahalifa said in the name of Rav: This is the case only where he has not commenced, “Who is good and bestows good.” But if he has commenced “Who is good and bestows good,” he goes back to the beginning.

Ideally, if one forgets to say one of these insertions, there is a blessing to recited after concluding the blessing but before beginning the next. If one does not say this blessing, only then should he “return to the beginning.” Unfortunately, most *Birkonim* do not include these blessings.

It is noteworthy that while on Shabbat and Yom Tov the blessing is a “long” blessing – that is, it begins and ends with the “*barukh*” formula – the blessing for Rosh Chodesh and Chol Ha-Mo’ed (see Shulchan Arukh 188:z) is short. Furthermore, while Ashkenazim say the full formula, including the “*shem u-malkhut*” (Mishna Berura 25), many Sephardim merely say “*barukh*” (see Yabi’a Omer 6:28).

What is considered the “beginning” to which one must return if an insertion is omitted? The *Rishonim* offer different interpretations. Most *Rishonim* (Rashi, s.v. *hadar*; Rambam, *Hilkhot Berakhot* 2:13, etc.) assume that one must repeat the entire *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. Others (see Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona 36a and Rashba, s.v. *lo*) assume that one may return to the beginning of the third blessing, “*Rachem*.” The Shulchan Arukh (188:6, 9) rules that one who forgets these insertions repeats the entire *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.

**Does the Beginning or the End of the Meal Determine?**

The *Rishonim* discuss an interesting question. When one begins a meal on one day and says the blessing on the next, which day determines whether or not one adds the proper insertion? For example, if one began eating on Yom Tov and wishes to say the blessing after the Yom Tov, should he say *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo*?

The Rosh (Teshuvot 22:6) rules that the time of the blessing determines its content. Thus, in this case, one should not add *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo*. The Hagahot Maimoniot (*Hilkhot Megilla* 2:14:1; see also Maharil 56) disagrees and rules that one who ate his Purim meal during the day but wishes to say the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* with *Al Ha-Nissim* after it is dark may do so. These *Rishonim* may debate whether the insertion relates to the nature of day or to the meal.

The Shulchan Arukh (188:10) rules that we generally follow the beginning of the meal. However, the Mishna Berura (32) notes that if one said the *Tefillat Arvit* or *Havdala* with wine before saying *Bikat Ha-Mazon*, he should no longer insert *Retzei*. The *Acharonim* discuss whether one who only said “*barukh ha-mavdil*” should still insert *Retzei* (see Chayye Adam 47:24, Mishna Berura 173:77, and Arukh Ha-Shulchan 188:23).

What if one’s *se’uda shlishit* concludes after dark, and it is now Rosh Chodesh? Should one insert *Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo*? The *Acharonim* debate this issue. Some believe that even one who ate bread after dark (i.e. *tzeit ha-kokhavim*) should only mention Shabbat and not Rosh Chodesh (Bach 188). Others maintain that if one ate bread after dark, he should only mention Rosh Chodesh (Mishna Berura 33; Magen Avraham 271:14), as mentioning both Shabbat (*Retzei*) and Rosh Chodesh (*Ya’aleh Ve-Yavo*) would constitute a “*tartei de-satrei*,” an internal contradiction. The Taz (188:7) disagrees with his father-in-law, the Bach, and rules that if one ate bread after dark, he should mention both Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh.

Due to this doubt, some do not eat bread in the period after sunset and then mention only *Retzei* in *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. Others are careful to specifically eat bread after dark so that they can mention both *Shabbat* and Rosh Chodesh, and some make sure to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* before dark.

Next week, we will discuss further aspects of *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.