**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

**Rav David Brofsky**

**Shiur #79: The *Shehechiyanu* and *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv* Blessings (3)**

**New House and Vessels**

**Introduction**

In previous *shiurim (*[*shiur #75*](http://etzion.org.il/en/shiur-75-introduction-shehechiyanu-blessing-shehechiyanu-upon-seeing-friend-1) *and* [*shiur #76*](http://etzion.org.il/en/shiur-76-introduction-shehechiyanu-blessing-2-shehechiyanu-new-fruit)*)*, we noted that the Rabbis instituted the blessing of *Shehechiyanu*, “Blessed are You… who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion,” to be said on numerous occasions, such as 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 (*Eiruvin* 40b), and upon hearing good news (*Berakhot* 54a and 59b). We already discussed the recitation of the *Shehechiyanu* blessing upon seeing a friend and upon eating a new fruit.

This week, we will discuss the nature of the *Shehechiyanu* and *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv* blessings said upon building a new house and purchasing new vessels. The *Rishonim* appear to disagree about the nature of these blessings, and to this day there are different approaches regarding the frequency with which these blessings are recited.

As we have seen in previous *shiurim*, there seems to be a broader debate regarding whether we are wary and hesitant about saying these blessings, and minimize therefore the cases in which these blessings or said, or whether these blessings are to be freely and naturally integrated into one’s daily religious routine.

**The Nature of the *Shehechiyanu* Blessing on a New House and Vessels**

The *mishna* (*Berakhot* 54a) teaches that “when one built a new house or purchases new vessels, he recites: Blessed…Who has given us life, sustained us, and brought us to this time.” The Talmud (59b–60a) cites three opinions on this matter. Is the *berakha* recited only by one who never owned these items, even by one who owned but never purchased them (i.e. he received them through an inheritance), or by any person each and every time he purchases these items. The majority of *Rishonim* rule that one says the blessing upon any purchase of a new vessel, regardless of whether one already owns a similar vessel or if one purchased a similar vessel in the past (see Rif 44a; Rambam, *Hilkhot Berakhot* 10:1; *Rosh* 9:16; see Rashba 50a, s.v. *lishna*, who disagrees).

The debate may revolve around a question we have raised before. Did the Rabbis establish an objective criterion for saying the *Shehechiyanu* blessing – apparently, applying it to events that entail a “*chiddush*” (something new) – or did they apply to any purchase that brings about the emotional response of happiness? These opinions may disagree as to the degree of “*chiddush*” that warrants a blessing, the level of happiness, or whether happiness or *chiddush* is the determining factor.

Another important debate among the *Rishonim* relates to the importance of the acquired object. The *Rishonim* debate whether the “*keli*” upon which one says the *Shehechiyanu* blessing must “important” (*chashuv*), or whether one may say the blessing whenever he feels “happy” making the purchase or receiving the gift.

The Ri (*Tosafot* 59b, s.v. *ve-rebbe*) rules that one only says the *Shehechiyanu* blessing upon purchasing a “significant” vessel:

The Ri said that [the blessing is only said] over important garments, similar to a new house… But over garments that are not important, such as shoes and slippers and a “*chaluk*” (undergarments), and other such garments, one does not say the blessing.

The Rosh (*Berakhot* 9:16) cites the Ri, but disagrees. He explains that whether or not one says the blessings “is dependent upon the person, as there may be a poor person who is happier with a [simple] garment then with ten important vessels.” Similarly, the Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 10:1) simply writes that “a person who builds a new house or buys new articles should recite the blessing,” implying that there is no minimum value or importance.

Once again, it seems that the *Rishonim* disagree as to whether the blessing is said upon a “*chidush*,” something new and important, or upon any purchase that brings the person happiness, even a simple acquisition.

While most authorities seem to concur with the Rosh, the *Rishonim* observe that the practice did not develop accordingly. Tosafot (*Sukka* 46a, s.v. *ha-oseh*), for example, cites R. Sherira Gaon, who rules that the *halakha* is not in accordance with this passage, as the Talmud elsewhere (*Eiruvin* 40b) implies that the *Shehechiyanu* blessing is said only over *mitzvot* that come from time to time (*mi-zeman le-zeman*). Furthermore, although the Beit Yosef (OC 223) writes that the majority of *Rishonim*, including the Rif, Rambam and Rosh, disagree with R. Sherira Gaon, he cites the Rashba (*Teshuvot* 1:245), who observes that it is not common to recite the *Shehechiyanu* blessing and that the blessing should be viewed as a “*reshut*,” and not an obligation. The Darkhei Moshe (223) mentions the Rashba, but concludes that one should consider the *Shehechiyanu* blessing to be an obligation, and not a “*reshut*.”

In the Shulchan Arukh (223:6), R. Yosef Karo cites the view of the Ri, according to which *Shehechiyanu* is only said over an important garment. He then cites the Rosh and rules that “if he is poor and is happy because of them, he should say the blessing.” R. Moshe Isserlis adds that “some say that even a poor person does not say the [*Shehechiyanu*] blessing over a garment and shoes, and that is the custom.”

The *Acharonim* debate whether in practice one says the *Shehechiyanu* blessing. Some record that while the blessing should be said upon purchasing important articles of clothing, it is customary not to say the blessing over vessels and household appliances (see *Piskei Teshuvot* 223:6). Others insist that when purchasing important household items, such as a car, air-conditioner, important electric appliances, furniture and jewelry, the blessing should be said (see. R. Eliezer Melamed, *Peninei Halakha*, *Hilkhot Berakhot*, ch. 17, and his *harchavot*).

In addition to the *Shehechiyanu* blessing, the Talmud Yerushalmi (*Berakhot* 9:3; see also Tosafot ibid.) teaches that before wearing new clothing, one should say the blessing “*Malbish Arumim*” (He Who clothes the naked) and then *Shehechiyanu*. This practice is cited by the Shulchan Arukh (223:4). The *Acharonim* note that it is not customary to say this blessing. Some wear the clothing in the morning and have the clothing in mind when saying the morning blessing of “*Malbish Arumim*.”

***Birkat Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv***

The Talmud (ibid. 59b) teaches that at times, the blessing of *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv* is said in place of *Shehechiyanu*:

The Gemara asks: One who owns land recites: “Who is good and does good”? Didn’t we learn in the *mishna*: One who built a new house or purchased new vessels recites: “Blessed…Who has given us life…and brought us to this time.” However, if the land belonged to him and others in partnership, he recites: “Who is good and does good.” For rain falling onto land that one owns exclusively, he recites: “Who has given us life,” and not: “Who is good and does good.”

The Gemara answers: This is not difficult. The *mishna* where we learned that one recites “Who is good and does good” refers to a case in which one owns his land in partnership with another; R. Abbahu’s statement that one recites “Who has given us life” refers to a case in which one owns the land exclusively and does not have a partnership.

And indeed, this *halakha* was taught in a *baraita*: The gist of the matter is, for that which is exclusively his, he recites: “Blessed…Who has given us life and sustained us;” for that which belongs to him and to another in partnership, he recites: “Who is good and does good.”

The *gemara* teaches that when other people derive pleasure from the new object, the proper blessing is *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv*.

Although the Talmud implies that these two blessings, *Shehechiyanu* and *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv* are similar and differ in terms of the number of people who benefit from the object, others disagree. The Rashba (*Teshuvot* 4:77), for example, explains that while all who derive pleasure say the *Shehechiyanu* blessing, *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv* is only said when the other person derives actual benefit. Therefore, the *gemara* lists specific examples, including inheritance, building a house, and purchasing new utensils, from which others generally derive benefit. Tosafot (59b, s.v. *hatam*) implies the opposite approach: *Shehechiyanu* is only said over something new (“*chadta*”), while *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv* is said whenever a group derives pleasure.

The Yerushalmi (*Berakhot* 9:3; see Tosafot, ibid.) teaches that if one purchases a vessel, he says the *Shehechiyanu* blessing, but if one is given a gift, he says *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv*. The Rosh (ibid.) explains that both the recipient and the person who gave the gift benefit, and therefore *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv* is appropriate. The Beit Yosef (223) notes that this halakha is not cited by other *Rishonim*, although he assumes they would agree to its rationale. In the Shulchan Arukh (223:5), he rules that “one who buys vessels which he and his family uses says the *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv* blessing, as it is good for him and for the giver.”

The Be’ur Halakha (s.v. *she-hi*) cites *Acharonim* who disagree with this ruling and insist that the Talmud Bavli does not maintain that one says *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv* upon receiving a gift. He concludes that the proper blessing to recite is *Shehechiyanu*.

Next week, we will discuss when the blessing is recited, as well as the different scenarios in which one might say the *Shehechiyanu* or *Ha-Tov Ve-Hameitiv* blessing.