YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

**THE LAWS OF THE *BERAKHOT***

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**Shiur #20: *Birkat Ha-Motzi***

**Definition of Bread**

***Pat Ha-Ba’ah Be-Kisanin* (1)**

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**Introduction**

Last year, we began our study of the laws of *berakhot*. We learned about the structure and purpose of *berakhot*, and we then examined the laws of *netilat yadayim* and *betzi’at ha-pat*, both on a weekday and on Shabbat, in great depth. This year, we will study the laws of *birkot ha-nehenin*, including the blessings recited before eating bread (*ha-motzi*), grain snacks (*borei minei* *mezonot*), fruits (*borei peri ha-etz*), vegetables (*borei peri ha-adama*), and others foods and drinks (*she-hakol nehiyah bi-dvaro*).

In the upcoming weeks, we will focus on the blessing recited over bread, “*ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz*” (*birkat ha-motzi*). *Birkat ha-motzi* is recited upon eating *lechem*, which must be made from one of the five species of grain. The Talmud discusses different questions relating to the definition of "bread." For example, where is the line between a baked item upon which one recites *ha-motzi* and an item upon which one recites *borei minei mezonot*? Is it possible for bread to lose its status as bread after being ground up, boiled, or fried?

We will divide our discussion of *birkat ha-motzi* into three parts:

1- *Pat Ha-Ba’ah Be-Kisanin*: According to the Talmud, there are some grain-based baked products upon which one always recites *ha-motzi* (*lechem*), and there are those upon which one generally recites *borei minei* *mezonot* (*pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*) unless they are eaten as a meal (*kove’a alav se’uda*). How does one distinguish between these two categories, and what is considered to be *kevi’at se’uda*?

2- *Hafka’at Shem Lechem*: The *gemara* discusses circumstances in which bread is transformed into a food upon which no longer recites the blessing of *ha-motzi*, but rather the blessing of *borei minei mezonot*. When and how does this happen?

3- Foods upon which one always says *borei minei* *mezonot*, even if eaten as the basis of a meal, and upon which one never recites the *birkat ha-motzi* (pasta, pancakes, etc.).

This week, we will begin our discussion of *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*. We will dedicate the next few lectures to understanding the halakhic foundation and building blocks, and only afterwards will we turn to more practical questions and applications.

***Pat Ha-Ba’ah Be-Kisanin***

The Talmud (*Berakhot* 41b) cites a debate regarding the blessing recited before eating *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*:

R. Yehuda gave a wedding feast for his son in the house of R. Yehuda b. Chabiba. They set before the guests *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*. He came in and heard them saying the benediction *ha-motzi*. He said to them: What is this *TZITZI* that I hear? Are you perhaps saying the blessing "*ha-moTZI lechem min ha-aretz*"? They replied: We are, since it has been taught: R. Muna said in the name of R. Yehuda: Over *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* the benediction *ha-motzi lechem* is said, and Shmuel said that the law is as stated by R. Muna.

He said to them: It has been stated that the law is *not* as stated by R. Muna. They said to him: Is it not the Master himself who has said in the name of Shmuel that bread wafers may be used for an *eruv* and the blessing said over them is *ha-motzi*? [He replied]: There [we speak] of a different case, namely, where they are made the basis of the meal (*kava se’udatei alayhu*); but if they are not the basis of the meal, this does not apply.

While Shmuel, ruling in accordance with R. Muna, maintains that the blessing recited before eating *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* is *ha-motzi*, R. Yehuda maintains that the proper blessing in *borei minei mezonot*, unless one eats it as the basis of a meal (*kava alayhu se’udatei*). The *Rishonim* assume the halakha is in accordance with R. Yehuda and that the proper *berakha* to be recited before *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* is *borei minei mezonot*, unless it is eaten as the basis of a meal.

Regarding the blessing recited after eating *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*, the Talmud (*Berakhot* 42a) relates:

R. Huna ate thirteen rolls of three to a kab without saying a blessing after them. Said R. Nachman to him: This is what [you call] hunger? [R. Nachman is consistent with his own view, for R. Nachman said:] Anything which others make the mainstay of a meal requires a grace to be said after it.

The *Rishonim* explain that R. Huna did not recite a blessing after eating *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*. Similarly, the *gemara* cites R. Sheshet (*Berakhot* 41b), who states: “There is no [food] which requires a blessing before which does not also require a blessing after, except for *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*.” Here too, the *gemara* implies that a blessing is *not* recited after eating *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*.

The *Rishonim* interpret these passages in different ways. Rashi (*Berakhot* 41b, s.v. *pat*), for example, implies that after eating *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*, one recites the blessing of *borei nefashot* (see also Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona 29a, s.v. *she-ein*). Accordingly, R. Sheshet means that the blessing of *al ha-michya*, which is generally recited after eating a grain based baked food, is not recited in this case; *borei nefashot*, however, is said. Alternatively, Tosafot (*Berakhot* 41b, s.v. *ela*) explains that after eating *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*, one says the blessing of *al ha-michya*. Accordingly, the Talmud refers to a case in which one eats *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* at the end of a meal (with bread), in which case one must recite the blessing before eating, but *birkat ha-mazon* fulfills one’s obligation to recite a blessing following the eating.

Similarly, some maintain that R. Huna did not say *al ha-michya* after eating *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*, but did recite a *borei nefashot* (Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona 29b, s.v. *terisar*). Others (Rosh 6:30; Rambam, *Hilkhot Berakhot* 3:9, 11) explain that although he recited an *al ha-michya*, he did not recite *birkat ha-mazon*.

The halakha is in accordance with those who maintain that before eating *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*, one recites *borei minei mezonot*, and afterwards *al ha-michya*. However, a number of crucial and fundamental questions remain:

1- What is the definition of *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* as opposed to *lechem*? Are these differences merely physical, or do they reflect a different function of the bread? Are there different types of *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*?

2- What is the definition of *kava alayhu se’udatei* (it is eaten as the basis of a meal), in which case one washes one’s hands, recites *ha-motzi*, and afterwards recites *birkat ha-mazon*?

We will begin by discussing the definition of *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*.

***Pat Ha-Ba’ah Be-Kisanin* – Three Opinions Cited by the Beit Yosef**

The Beit Yosef (168) cites three definitions of *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* suggested by the *Rishonim*.

1- The Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 3:9) writes:

Similar [laws apply to] dough that was kneaded with honey, oil, or milk, or mixed together with different condiments and baked. It is referred to as *pat haba'ah be-kisanin*. Although it [resembles] bread, the blessing *borei minei mezonot* is recited over it. If, however, one uses it as the basis of a meal, one should recite the blessing *ha-motzi*.

Interestingly, the Beit Yosef explains:

The Rabbis only established that one should recite *ha-motzi* and *birkat ha-mazon* [before eating] bread upon that which it is customary to base a meal – in other words, dough which was kneaded with water. However, as long as there is a mixture of fruit juices or condiments, since people are not accustomed to basing their meals upon it, the Rabbis did not mandate reciting *ha-motzi* and *birkat ha-mazon* unless he ate the amount upon which one generally bases a meal.

The Beit Yosef implies that the since dough made with juice is not ordinarily used as the basis of a meal, one does not recite *ha-motzi* upon it.

While the Beit Yosef writes that even if the dough is made from a mixture of water and fruit juice, the dough in no longer considered to be bread, R. Moshe Isserlis writes in the Darkhei Moshe (168) that “it has not been removed from the category of bread if it was mixed with a small amount of condiments or juices, unless the majority of the dough was kneaded with these things.” In other words, the condiments or juice must be the primary ingredients, significantly changing the dough. We will return to this debate in a future *shiur*.

Seemingly, the Rambam would rules that the proper blessing for cakes and cookies would be *borei minei mezonot*.

2- Rabbeinu Chananel (cited by Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona, *Berakhot* 29a s.v. *ve-ein*) offers a different interpretation. He explains that *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* refers to “pockets made from dough … and one puts nuts, honey and other sweet things into them.” The Rashba (*Berakhot* 41b, s.v. *nimtza*) also describes *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* as “pockets which are filled with honey, nuts and different condiments.”

Seemingly, Rabbeinu Chananel would maintain that one recites *borei minei mezonot* before eating pies and certain pastries, strudels, and *rugelach*. As we will see next week, the *Acharonim* suggest that certain pastries are generally eaten as a meal and may therefore warrant that one recite the blessing of *ha-motzi*.

3- Rashi (*Berakhot* 41b, s.v. *pat*) cites R. Hai Gaon, who explains that *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* refers to “[breads]… which are made dry and one chews on them at a wedding… and it is customary to eat only a bit.” According to this view, bread which is dry and brittle, like hard pretzels, crackers, and even dry “breadsticks,” would be considered to be *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*, and the appropriate blessing would be *borei minei mezonot*.

Interestingly, while the Rambam, especially according to the Beit Yosef, does not believe that *pat ha-ba’ah bekisanin* must be significantly different that regularly bread, but rather different enough that people would not ordinarily eat it for a meal, Rabbeinu Chananel and R. Hai Gaon imply that the food must be significantly and even physically distinct from regular bread.

**The Halakhic Conclusion**

R. Yosef Karo, both in his Beit Yosef and in the Shulchan Arukh (168:7), rules in accordance with all three opinions. In the Beit Yosef, he explains that since the question at hand is only *mi-derabannan*, we rule leniently and accept all three opinions; we recite *borei minei mezonot* on all three types of bread. However, fundamentally, the Beit Yosef believes that each of these three opinions remains a halakhic “*safek*,” and we only recite *borei minei mezonot* upon them out of doubt.

Some *Acharonim* (Ma’amar Mordekhai 168:14, Arukh Ha-Shulchan 168:23), however, disagree and explain that all three views are actually in agreement. These descriptions do not determine what is not considered to be bread, but rather reflect the types of foods that one generally eats as a meal and those which one eats as a snack. Accordingly, as we shall see in the coming weeks, there may be foods that do not necessarily conform to one of these three descriptions but which are certainly eaten as a snack (and the reverse, as in the case of *matzot*).

The *Acharonim* raise numerous halakhic differences between these positions. For example, R. Yosef Sirkis, in his commentary to the Tur, the Bach, asks how one is permitted to recite *borei minei mezonot* on these foods out of doubt. If the proper *berakha* is really *ha-motzi*, by recited the incorrect blessing, one has violated the prohibition of *berakha le-vatala* (taking God’s name in vain). In response, his son-in-law, the Taz (168:6) explains that the blessing of *borei minei mezonot* may cover bread as well *be-di’avad*. Both *borei minei mezonot* and *ha-motzi* thank God for food that “sustains” us; bread, due to its importance, is accorded its own blessing.

The *Acharonim* also ask how, in this case, one may recite the final blessing of *al ha-michya* if one should possibly recite the Biblical blessing of *birkat ha-mazon*. Here too, some answer that since these foods are only eaten as snacks, even the obligation of *birkat ha-mazon* would only be *mi-derabannan*, as one did not fulfill the requirement of “*ve-savata*,” and *al* *ha-michya* therefore suffices. Clearly, according to the second approach to the three views, these questions are not relevant.

Others suggest another possible ramification. As we will learn later this year, one must generally recite a blessing upon food eaten at the end of the meal which is not eaten as part of the meal. Therefore, as mentioned above, one should say *borei minei mezonot* upon eating a dessert at the end of the meal. However, since the Beit Yosef implies that many of these foods are not necessarily considered to be *mezonot* according to all, but it is rather due to the principle of *safek de-rabannan le-kula* (we are lenient with regard to Rabbinic matters) that they are assigned the blessing of *borei minei mezonot*, it is not clear if they should be considered to be a form of bread in this situation. Perhaps, therefore, in the context of a meal which began with bread, it would not be necessary to recite a new *berakha* on these foods when eaten as a snack at the end. If, however, these foods are indeed viewed as *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*, i.e. snack food, without any doubt, then one must certainly recite a blessing before eaten them as dessert.

Due to this doubt, the Bi’ur Halakha (168, s.v. *te’unin*) and others rule that one should not recite a blessing before eating these foods at the end of a meal. R. Yaakov Chaim Sofer (1870 – 1939), in his Kaf Ha-Chaim (168:71), writes that one should preferable have in these desserts in mind when reciting the *birkat ha-motzi*, and if not, one should refrain from eating these foods at the end of a meal altogether! Others insist that one should still recite the blessing of *borei minei mezonot* before eating these desserts (Mekor Chaim II, p. 117; see also *Ve-alehu Lo Yibol* [pg. 105], who reports that R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach insisted that since it one recites *borei minei mezonot* on these foods, then one may certainly say a blessing before eating them for dessert). Those desserts that fulfill all three requirements listed by the Shulchan Arukh, and even those that all might agree would be considered to be *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin* – such as a chocolate cake – warrant a blessing even during the meal. We will revisit this issue when we discuss the question of reciting blessings during the meal.

Next week, we will continue our study of *pat ha-ba’ah bekisanin* and discuss the definition and parameters of *kevi’at se’uda*.