

HALOCHOSCOPE TOI PE

In the next two issues we will discuss two somewhat related questions. The question for this issue:

Someone is a guest in someone's home. For desert, fruit is served. Being *Tu Bishvat*, a few different items are served in succession. They are not all brought to the table at once. Some of them are provided by the host, while others are provided by the guest, as a surprise. Must those partaking of this meal recite a fresh *Brocha* each time a new fruit is brought in?

The issues:

(A) Reciting one *Brocha* to discharge the obligation on many foods, particularly in a bread based meal; *Brochos* on desert

(B) *Hesech Hadaas* on this or other *Brochos*; at the close of a meal; *Daas Baal Habayis*, the menu planned by the host

(C) *Tu Bishvat*, the *Minhag* to eat many fruits

[D] If *Tu Bishvat* falls on *Shabbos*, a guest may still bring a food gift to his host, provided the issue of carrying is otherwise addressed. Since the food will be consumed on *Shabbos*, the issue of gift giving on *Shabbos* is not involved. For a full discussion, see *Halochoscope* Volume I issue 7.]

(A) *One Brocha for many foods*

Every food requires a *Brocha* before eating it. The Talmud debates whether the source for this Rabbinical Mitzvah can be traced to the Torah. The logic is that partaking of Hashem's bounty without "asking" or thanking first, is tantamount to stealing from Him. Thus, it called a *Birchas Hanehenin*, blessing for benefit. It is linked to the Scriptural requirement for *Birchas Hamazon*, the Mitzvah to thank Hashem after eating. The nature of the *Brocha* is a blessing praising Hashem for creating this food, usually mentioning its source.

There are basically two ways that many foods are exempted with one *Brocha*. The simple case is where the foods all share the same *Brocha*. The type of *Brocha* is determined by the origin of the food, or by the purpose of its creation. There is a hierarchy of precedence based on the complexity of the food or of its source. The *Brocha Shehakol* is generic, referring to the creation in general. This *Brocha* is recited on minerals and foods that do not grow on the

ground. Fruits, vegetables, roots, leafs and greens growing on the ground have the Brocha *Ha'adama*, and those growing on trees *Ha'eitz*. Two types of food are singled out for their higher function and process. Wine, which is a sophisticated creation and also satisfies more than other foods, has its own Brocha, *Hagofen*. Bread or other grain products (from the five bread grains; wheat, barley rye, oats and spelt) are the staples of one's diet. If they are processed their Brocha reflects this status. On Bread itself the Brocha is *Hamotzie Lechem Min Ha'aretz*, and on snacks or cooked (as opposed to baked) foods *Mezonos*.

The second way to include many foods in a single Brocha is called *Ikar Vetafeil*. This means that when two or more foods are eaten together often one is the primary and the other or others are secondary to it. One need only recite the Brocha on the primary food. Some question whether this means that the secondary food does not require a Brocha at all, as though it does not exist independently, or whether its existence is acknowledged but that its required Brocha is that of the primary food.

Bread has the most distinguished status. Reciting its Brocha at a meal, one automatically exempts all foods eaten as part of the meal. There are two views on what is included in this exemption. One view includes those foods usually eaten in meal and often eaten with the bread itself. Foods never eaten with the bread itself would not be included. The second view includes foods eaten in a fixed meal (rather than as a snack) even if they are not eaten together with bread. *Daisa*, pudding or porridge, has similar ingredients to bread, yet is included in a meal according to the Talmud. The first view would maintain that it is eaten with the bread, while the second view says that it would never be eaten with bread.

One explanation for the rule about a meal is that bread has a special status in that it is almost always considered the *Ikar*, primary food. (The situation where it is considered *Tafeil* is when one wishes to "dilute" the strength of a salty food by eating a little bread with it.) Another way to view this is that when eating bread one is considered eating a meal. The Brocha on the bread is considered the Brocha on the entire meal, thus exempting any food meant to be eaten as part of the meal from its own Brocha. If hardly any bread is eaten it would be hard to consider it *Ikar* but it could be considered the staple for the meal.

In Talmudic times, a meal included some snacking before and after the main courses. These were specifically snacks, not eaten to satisfy hunger but as a social (cocktail) or as a sweet. The benefit of these foods was considered a separate item, requiring its own Brocha before, and often after it, independent of the Brocha on the bread and of *Birchas Hamazon*. The Poskim maintain that nowadays we do not

eat meals in the same way. We eat at one collective table, while they would eat at individual tables which were brought in with the main meal and removed afterwards. However, the issue must be examined in similar situations, the main issue being *Ba Machmas Haseuda*, whether they are included because of the meal or not. Even in the main course, a fruit might be served as a separate item. Thus, deserts become a point for concern about their Brocha. The Poskim debate this based on whether deserts can be considered a part of a normal meal eaten to satisfy or to aid digestion. Many Poskim maintain that on fruit type deserts one should recite a Brocha while on other types of food which are more satisfying, one need not. We do not recite a Brocha Acharona on deserts, but *Birchas Hamazon* exempts them. [See Brochos 35a 40b-42b 44a, Poskim Tur Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 176 177:1 187 212, commentaries. references to *Halochoscope* IV:33.]

On Shabbos another issue is raised. One must recite one hundred Brochos every day. These include the *Shemone Esrei*, which is drastically shortened on Shabbos. To make up for the shortfall, one eats snacks on Shabbos after the meal. Therefore, it is likely that the snacks at desert are being eaten separately. [See O.C. 290:1.]

On *Tu Bishvat* the issue is more interesting. The Torah designates a seven year agricultural cycle for tithes. The point at which the new agricultural year for fruits begins is the Fifteenth of Shevat. To celebrate this various *Minhagim* are practiced: praying for nice *Esrog* in the coming year; eating the seven species for which *Eretz Yisroel* is praised; and eating fifteen fruits interspersed with *Mishnayos* or *Shir Hamaalos*. Since one wishes to eat the fruits in their own right, he does not mean them to be a part of his regular meal. In fact, one would not normally eat these fruits at his meal on any other day. They are being served as desert today simply to make it more convenient, rather than set up a separate table with them.

(B) Hesech Hadaas

A Brocha must be recited immediately before benefitting from the food. This is to connect it to the food over which it is recited. For this reason, one may not interrupt after reciting the Brocha with unrelated chatter, before eating the food. Once one has eaten a little bit of the food he may talk. The original Brocha works for all the food that will be eaten after it. However, there is obviously a limit to this. As long as one may claim that he is still in the middle of eating the same food over which he recited his Brocha, he need not recite a second Brocha. The Talmud and Poskim define the types of interruptions that may be termed *Hesech Hadaas*, and disconnect the initial Brocha from food to be eaten later.

Conscious Hesech Hadaas includes breaking the meal up, either by moving away from its location or by formally closing it. Formally closing the meal in Talmudic times meant removing the individual table. Changing one's location can count as a Hesech Hadaas. A food that requires a Brocha Acharona to be recited in the same place must be finished there. Therefore, if one left the place to go somewhere else he could not continue eating there and claim that he was in the middle of eating. Ideally, one recites Birchas Hamazon on a cup of wine. Once he has taken it in his hands he has been Masiach Daas from the meal. Washing *Mayim Acharonim*, cleaning one's fingers in preparation for Birchas Hamazon, is Hesech Hadaas. The Talmud says that even if one did not actually recite Birchas Hamazon but announced it, he is restricted from continuing.

While formal removal of the individual table means that one no longer intends to eat at this meal, a guest does not know whether the meal has ended. There might still be another course. Therefore, if the host offers different fruits in succession no fresh Brocha is necessary.

In our case, were all the fruits provided by the host, the single Brocha on the desert would satisfy all the fruits. The interruptions would not constitute Hesech Daas. However, some fruits are provided by the guest. If the host knew of them beforehand, his first Brocha would be good for all the fruits following, since they were present (though he did not see them.) However, they were kept from him as a surprise. Usually, food brought in from the outside after the beginning of the meal requires a fresh Brocha. Our guest may rely on his first Brocha, even for his own food. Relying on the *Daas Baal Habayis* does not disadvantage him. The host, however, does not rely on his guests. There seems to be no precedent to say that if a guest regularly contributes to a meal his host may rely on his Daas as well. If there is no host, but a group of independent people, each offering food to one man, he must recite a fresh Brocha on the food from each one. [See Brochos 42a, Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. O.C. 178 179, commentaries.]

Accordingly, the host in our question, and anyone else partaking in this meal except for the guest, must recite his own Brocha for the new fruits provided by the guest. Tu Bishvat does not affect this. Unless he was told about it earlier, the host can not assume that his guest will provide fruit as a gift.