

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

If one interrupted a meal or snack to clean up a mess in the same room, or elsewhere in the same building, must he recite a fresh *brocha rishona*? What if he interrupted to *daven mincha* elsewhere in the building? Does it depend on the duration of the interruption?

The issues:

- A) The 'reach' of a *Brocha Rishona*
 - B) *Hesech Daas*, allowing one's mind to be distracted after having recited a *brocha*
 - C) *Shinuy Makom*, moving from one place to another during a meal
- A) *The Reach of a Brocha Rishona*

A *Brocha Rishona* is to thank Hashem before benefiting from His kindness. We thank Him for the initial creation of the items and what we perceive as the 'intent' in its being created to serve our needs. Thus, we recognize how Hashem created the tree for its fruit, so that we may eat it, and so on. While the obligation is Rabbinical, the concept is Scriptural. Initially, one could make his own version of praise and thanksgiving before benefiting. One had to be aware of the prohibitions involved in using or uttering Hashem's Names. Logically, one should not 'take' food from Hashem without 'asking'. The precedent for this is the concept of *me'ilah*, misappropriation or abuse of sanctified *hekadesh* property. This is considered 'stealing' from Hashem. Once the *brocha* has been recited, one is benefiting from what Hashem intended for him, like a guest eating when told to by his host. There is a precedent for the obligation to recite a *brocha*, in *birchas hamazon*, a Scriptural obligation. Some poskim consider the *brocha* before Torah study a Scriptural obligation as well. Based on the combination of these ideas and precedents, the Rabbis instituted *birchos hanehenin*, *brochos* on benefiting, primarily from foods.

It is possible to recite one *brocha* on many benefits. Theoretically, one should recite a *brocha* before any benefit possible, for each bite! Maybe the entire food item should be considered 'one benefit'! It just can not be appreciated in one bite. In that case, if one eats with long breaks, for example, half an apple one day, and the other half the next day, one *brocha* should suffice! Evidently, the two eatings are considered separate benefits, even though the food is part of one 'intended' benefit. The Rabbis set guidelines on how far a *brocha rishona* can 'reach'.

One must eat the food immediately following his *brocha*. If he interrupts with conversation, he disconnects his *brocha* from his act of eating. If one eats the food in one sitting, he need not recite a fresh *brocha* on each bite, even if he interrupted between the bites with conversation. Once he has begun the benefit, he has attached the *brocha* to a benefit, and can be used for more benefit. In the same way, if one plans to eat various foods that carry the same *brocha*, he may use one *brocha* for all of them. Then he may eat them separately, provided he does not make a *hefsek*. If one plans to eat two foods of

different *brochos* together, one being the *ikar*, primary food, and the second being the *tafeil*, secondary food, he need only recite the *brocha* appropriate for the *ikar*. There is some question whether this means that it is as though the *tafeil* does not exist independently or whether it requires a *brocha*, but that the *brocha* on the *ikar* serves it as well.

Bread has additional qualities, that seem to be included in the purpose of their creation. While other foods are necessary nutritionally or as a supplement, bread is basic for survival. It is the basis for a meal, rather than a snack. People dedicate a time and place for a bread meal, as opposed to eating other foods with or without a meal. By its nature, bread is not eaten alone, but accompanied by meat or vegetables. Bread is considered *ikar*, except in specific circumstances. (E.g., one might eat it to 'dilute' very salty food.)

In addition, bread is a highly processed food, in the sense that it needs more steps to prepare it for consumption. Apart from the manual steps, there is the additional leavening property that it contains. This is all meant to elevate it above other foods. This last quality is the reason that bread is given its very own distinct *brocha*, *hamotzie lechem min ha'aretz*, He Who brings forth bread from the ground. Therein lies the idea that regardless of how much the original wheat changes by the time it is a loaf of bread, it is considered created for this purpose from its inception in the ground. Due to the aforementioned qualities, when one eats other foods with bread he need only recite *hamotzie*. No other *brocha rishona* is needed for the other foods, even if the bread is not the majority.

One view considers food usually eaten with actual bread, when eaten as part of a meal, secondary to the bread. Even if it happens to be eaten without a bite of bread, it is part of the meal. Foods normally eaten without bread, due to their own satisfying nature snacking nature, would not be part of a meal either. They would require their own *brochos*. The second view considers any food included in the 'meal' to be part of it, even if it is normally not eaten with actual bread. Some foods are always eaten independently. They might be eaten at the same time as the rest of a meal, but do not constitute a part of it. Some food is eaten before, during or after the main foods as sweets, for social reasons, to keep the mouth full or occupied, or for a variety of reasons other than the meal. These require their own *brochos*, concurrent with the meal.

All food requires a *brocha rishona*. Therefore, the *hamotzie* on the bread in a meal must be the *brocha* for the other foods! In one view, the bread is considered the *ikar*. In a second view, the combination is a bread meal. The *brocha* on the bread is the *brocha* on the meal. The difference between these views shows in a meal where very little bread is actually eaten. It would be hard to consider the minor part of bread primary, but it is still a bread meal. It would appear that another difference would show in the case in our question. Assuming that one who interrupted his eating would not be obliged to recite a fresh *brocha* on bread, but would be obliged to do so on other foods, what if he only intended to eat other foods after his interruption? Would the original *hamotzie* carry forward, in the merit of the original bread, because it is all one meal? Or would the original *hamotzie* only attach itself to other foods being eaten together with the bread? They really required their own *brocha* at the time. Since, they were eaten together with bread at the time, their *brocha*, *hamotzie*, worked then. Now, however, they are being eaten independent of the bread! Could they be considered similar to the foods eaten independent of the meal? First, let us discuss the interruption. [See Brochos 35a-b 40b-42b 44a, Poskim. Tur, BY,

Sh. Ar. OC 176 177:1 187 212, commentaries. Refs. To Halochoscope IV:33 VII:42-43.]

B) Hesech Daas after a Brocha

One must connect the *brocha* with the benefit, in his mind. He has in mind the benefit when he recites the *brocha*, immediately before the benefit. One may not interrupt between the *brocha* and the eating with unrelated chatter. After a taste, one may talk, for the *brocha* works for all food eaten after it. However, there is a limit. As long as one can reasonably say he is in the middle of the eating and benefiting, he is not required to recite a fresh *brocha*. He still has the original *brocha* in mind. The Talmud and poskim define *hesech hada'as* for these purposes. Conscious *hesech hada'as* includes breaking up a meal or snack session. Formally closing it includes reciting the *brocha acharona*, announcing *bircas hamazon* or washing one's hands. In Talmudic times it included removing the small individual table that one ate from. Unconscious *hesech hada'as* includes falling asleep and preoccupation with another activity. If the other activity requires full attention, and is not normally done while eating, involvement in it shows that one has finished eating. A long break is *hesech hada'as*. If one waited long enough for the first food to be digested, or until he is hungry again, some require a fresh *brocha rishona*. However, many poskim do not require a new *brocha rishona* in this case.

Snack sessions are not the same as meals. A meal has more formality, and can be considered ongoing even if interrupted. Items more formally eaten are also considered to have more *da'as* to connect them to their *brochos*. Bread meals, and, to an extent foods of the seven species that *Eretz Yisroel* is blessed with, are more formal. They require *bircas hamazon* or a shortened form thereof. In addition, the fact that the bread *brocha* is on an entire meal shows that one can empower it to 'reach' further than an ordinary *brocha*. The location is also more formal. As long as one is sitting in the place he began his meal, he might change his mind to eat more. [See Brochos 40a 42a, Pesachim 101b-102a, Poskim. Tur, B.Y. Sh. Ar. OC 167:6 178-179 206:3 5-6, commentaries.]

C) Shinuy Makom

In general, one stops what he is doing to eat, usually setting aside a place to sit. The Talmud discusses one who begins eating in one location, then moves to another in the middle of eating. Whether he continues in the new location or returns to the first location, the issue is whether a fresh *brocha* is needed. Clearly, he is still in the middle of eating. May he consider the eating in the second location connected to that in the first, in regard to his *brocha*? The Talmud debates whether this applies to all foods equally. One view maintains that it does not apply to foods that require a more prominent *brocha acharona* in the location where they are eaten. For foods that do not require such a *brocha*, getting up and leaving indicates that one has finished. Foods that require such a *brocha* require a formal ending to the session. We assume that when one resumes eating, his *da'as* is still connected to the first eating and *brocha*. The other view makes no distinction.

The poskim debate which view to follow. In addition, the commentators debate what is included in the special foods category. Some include anything with the longer *brocha acharona*, i.e., the seven species. Others include only bread, and if they were intended as a major snack, *mezonos*-type foods. If one was eating with a group, and some of the group did not leave, the initial session is considered intact.

One version of the Talmud passage distinguishes between moving from house to

house or from place to place; another, from house to house or from corner to corner. The latter version seems to consider 'house' to mean 'room'. Some relate this issue to another, where one consideration is whether the two locations are in sight of each other. Another reference discusses two sides of a fig tree (presumably, its shade). This might refer to the outdoors, where a location is harder to define. There is also a reference made to being *maflig*. This usually means that the person leaves to go a long distance, implying that if one did not mean to go a long way he has not really 'left'. On the other hand, there is a reference to being called out to the door, which is not a long distance. *Maflig* is interpreted by some as leaving for a while, as opposed to a short time. It could mean that one got involved in a protracted conversation. There is also a debate on whether one who really did move must recite a *brocha acharona* or *bircas hamazon* on the first eating, or only a fresh *brocha rishona* on the second eating.

In practice, *ashkenazim* follow the more lenient set of rulings. For bread or the like, *shimuy makom* does not matter, provided there was no other *hesech hada'as*. For other foods, the prevailing practice is to consider one house a single location. Ideally, one should not leave a meal before *bircas hamazon*. However, if one did so, then returned, he has not automatically been *maisiach da'as*. For a *mitzvah*, such as to catch *mincha* before it is too late, one may even leave intentionally.

Part of our question deals with involvement in another activity. The Talmud discusses those who leave to attend a wedding. According to the prevailing practice, this is not an automatic *hesech da'as*, but could become one. The presumption is that if some people stay behind, those leaving have the intent to resume when they return. This is the critical point. If one has to interrupt suddenly, he usually means to resume when his interruption is over. If one decides to divert his attention from the meal to a totally different activity, then decides to resume his meal, he seems to have been *maisiach da'as*. Accordingly, in our case, if one interrupts a meal to clean an unexpected mess, even in the yard outside, he may resume without a fresh *brocha*. If he did not keep in mind the cleanliness of his hands required for a meal, he must wash again. If he is in the middle of a snack, he may only resume if he did not leave the house. The same rule applies to *mincha*. If he stays away for so long that he is hungry again, he must recite new *brochos*. [See Pesachim 101b-102a, Yuma 30a, Chulin 86b, Poskim. Tur, Sh. Ar. OC 178, commentaries.]

On the Parsha ... *The [worshippers of the golden calf] arose early the next day and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings; the people sat down to eat and to drink, and got up to have fun. [32:6].* Why mention that they *sat down* to eat and drink, and that they *got up* to have fun? *Ramban* comments, the entire group gathered to eat together to their fill and to drink themselves drunk, as people do on their festivals. Then they got up to revel. They did separate, distinct acts: the feasting, presumably eating their peace offerings, and the reveling. Had they not eaten their fill, or drunk until they were inebriated, the Torah would not use the word *they got up*. They would be in the middle of a meal, with *da'as* to resume. The incomplete meal might not have been as great a sin. Their complete gluttony and drunkenness made it so much worse!

☆ Sponsored by 'your name here'. ☆

© Rabbi Shimon Silver, March 2007.

Subscriptions and Sponsorships available. (412) 421-0508. halochoscope@hotmail.com