

HALOCHOSCOPE



This week's question:

If one has a prominent *nochri* eating at his table, may he be given some bread or wine '*shel brocha*', that had the *brocha* recited on it? What if the *nochri* is his biological father?

The issues:

- A) *Kos shel brocha*, the cup of wine that was used for the *brocha*
- B) *Betzias hapas*, reciting the *brocha* on, and distributing the bread
- C) *Bizuy mitzvah*, disrespecting a *mitzvah*

A) Kos Shel Brocha

Kos shel brocha is usually associated with *bircas hamazon* recited over wine. It also applies to wine used for *kiddush* or other *mitzvos*. There is no direct reference in the Torah to the *kos shel brocha*. This indicates that it is a Rabbinical obligation. However, in terms of obligation, there is also no reference to it in the Mishna. The Talmud derives from terminology used by the Mishna in a number of places, that there seems to be an obligation to use a *kos* of wine when reciting *bircas hamazon*. However, the Talmud does not prove conclusively that there is an obligation. The passage could easily be interpreted to be explaining one opinion, a minority view whom we do not follow. In one passage, the Talmud suggests that the *kos* could be required for another reason. Subsequently, this *mitzvah* was attached to it. Below we will cite the debate on the actual obligation.

The Talmud records many virtues of the *kos shel brocha*, the 'cup-full of blessing'. These include the value of being honored with reciting the *brocha* on this cup of wine on behalf of company eating together. A heavenly voice announced that this is worth forty gold pieces. Reciting it, even for oneself, is rewarded with an unlimited heritage. There are conditions on its size, fullness, the way it is held, how one should be dressed when holding it, and the like. These all indicate that it is a *mitzvah* deserving of high respect. The conditions are derived from *pesukim*, and the Talmud debates whether there are ten conditions, or only four. Consistent with the opinion that there are ten, the Zohar considers *kos shel brocha* a Rabbinical institution linked to the Torah, given in ten *dibros*.

One source links this *mitzvah* to *korbanos*, most of which can only be accompanied by song if they have wine libations. However, this might be a borrowed term, used to indicate the reason only wine should be used for this. Some say that *mitzvos* were instituted over a cup of wine as an honorable way to praise Hashem. *Kos yeshuos esa uveshaim Hashem ekra*, I will raise the cup of salvations and call out in the Name of Hashem (Tehilim 116). *Kabalistically*, wine symbolizes the source of blessing and livelihood.

There are three main opinions on the actual obligation, with variations. In one view, even an individual must always recite *bircas hamazon* over a *kos*. The *kabalists* also follow this view, in accordance with the reason mentioned earlier. [A minority maintains that one may not begin a bread meal unless he has a *kos* for *bircas hamazon*.] The second

view only applies the obligation to a group of three reciting *bircas hamazon* together. The *mezamen*, leader, must have a *kos* and recite the *hagafen* afterwards for the three. In the third view, there is no obligation, but a voluntary *mitzvah*. One who decides to perform it must follow all the conditions. Some consider the *kos* a *hidur*, embellishment of the Scriptural *mitzvah* of *bircas hamazon*. This could apply to an individual or possibly only to a group. Some say that this *hidur* is an obligation but not essential to the fulfillment of *bircas hamazon*. Some interpret the 'obligation' in the first view the same way.

Common practice is not to require a *kos* for an individual. Some try to fulfill it with a group. Usually this is done on *Shabbos* or at other gatherings where wine is present. One excuse for laxity at other times is that we do not have the practice to use wine as the staple drink at meals. Therefore, it is proper to remove the wine from the table if one does not intend to use a *kos* for *bircas hamazon*. Another reason for laxity is the recital of the leader's *brocha* on the wine. We do not rely on him for the rest of *bircas hamazon*, but recite it individually. Therefore, we do not have in mind to participate in his *brocha* on the wine. When a *minyán* is assembled, there is a greater requirement for a communal *brocha*. Therefore, it is also more common to require a *kos*.

The poskim debate whether the *brocha* on the wine becomes a part of *bircas hamazon*, or whether idea is to have the a *kos* while *bircas hamazon* is recited. If it is part of *bircas hamazon*, the leader has the right to recite *hagafen* as well. The Talmud says that it would be disrespectful to recite a *brocha*, and then not to drink the wine oneself, but have another drink it. If a child, or anyone else, could both recite and drink, there should be no sign of disrespect. Evidently, the recitation must be by the leader of *bircas hamazon*. The other view is that the wine must be tasted (one cheek full) at some point. Therefore, the *brocha* must be recited. One who cannot drink the wine may still lead. When he is finished, he may send the *kos* to a participant who will recite the *brocha* and drink. A third view maintains that it is really part of the obligation of the leader. However, he may be split off this part to honor a second person, if he wishes.

The poskim also discuss whether each participant must have some of the *kos*. Suffice it to say, the wine of this *kos* is considered exceptionally special. The Talmud says that the house is blessed through this *kos*. A guest who recites the *brocha* should give some of the *kos* to the hostess, and according to some, to the host. This is the concept of *shiyarei mitzvah*, food or drink that remains from the performance of a *mitzvah*. Scripturally, the concept exists when eating *korbanos*. The Midrash interprets a verse, the [Jews leaving Egypt's] *mish'aros* were bundled .., as a reference to the remnants of their *matza* and *maror*. They treasured the *mitzvos*. Though the *mitzvos* had already been performed, the remnants were special as well. The Yerushalmi refers to a sage who went to *shul* the morning after a *seudas mitzvah*, to gather the crumbs. Some say *shiyarei mitzvah* have sanctity. [See Brochos 35a 42a-43a 46a 51a-52a, Shabbos 76b-77a, Eruvin 40b, Pesachim 102b 105b-106a 117b, Chulin 87a, Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 8:2, Yalkut Bo 208, Poskim, Tur Sh Ar OC 182 183 190, commentaries.]

B) Betzias Hapas

The conditions and rules covering *betzias hapas* are varied. Here we will focus on the concept of the *brocha* being recited on specific bread, and the status of the bread. Generally, a *brocha* is recited immediately before the act of either eating or performing a

mitzvah. There should be no extended waiting period, nor should there be any intervening activity. Therefore, ideally, the bread that one will be eating should be fully prepared before the *brocha*. However, unless it is a very small piece, it will need to be cut up. As a matter of decency, one should not bite into bread and place it down on the table. We also show respect for this *brocha* by reciting it over the best bread possible. If there is a choice of a white loaf or a loaf made of a darker or unsifted flour, the white loaf is preferred. Similarly, one should use a complete loaf, rather than a piece. Therefore, one begins cutting the bread to minimize the break between the *brocha* and the eating. The bread is not cut all the way. The sides are left joined such that picking up either side will not let the other side fall off. The bread is cut at the best baked part. One must also hold the bread, ideally with all ten fingers. This symbolic, and shows how the bread, the *brocha*, and the person reciting it [and those listening in] are spiritually linked.

The bread also attains a special value. It actually seems that, since a *brocha* is recited, the *betzia* itself is considered a *mitzvah*. Thus, the *brocha* is needed as a *bircas hanehenin*, *brocha* on benefit from the food, and becomes a *bircas hamitzvah* as well, after the fact. This might be due to the nature of a *botzaia*, one who breaks the bread for the other participants. By discharging the obligation of the others in the *brocha* as well, and by feeding them, he fulfills a *mitzvah*. Preparation and intent are very important before eating. They 'give permission' to mankind to partake of Hashem's bounty.

Accordingly, the bread used for the *brocha* is special. Ideally, all participants relying on the *brocha* should eat from the very bread over which it was recited. The poskim debate which piece of bread this refers to. As mentioned, the *brocha* is recited over the bread about to be eaten. Though one does not break the loaf fully before the *brocha*, he has in mind the piece he will be breaking right after reciting it. When cutting a loaf, one cuts the middle, then makes a second cut to remove a slice. This leaves us with three possible candidates for the *prusas hamotzie* or *habetzia*, piece that the *brocha* was recited on. It could apply to the whole loaf, once it is cut in two. The *brocha* was recited on the entire loaf. It could apply specifically to the first slice, based on the intent. Most follow the view that it applies to the whole piece removed from the loaf, to be sliced and distributed. For a right handed person, this applies to the piece he cuts off to his right.

Along with each participant's privilege of getting a piece from the *prusas hamotzie*, there is a measure of the sanctity mentioned in respect for this piece. Some say that this sanctity applies to the whole loaf, even if from the perspective of the participants, the piece cut off is the main one. Accordingly, when it comes to savoring the special qualities, many poskim say that one should show more respect for the loaf used for *hamotzie* than to other loaves used at the meal. [See Brochos 39a-b Sanhedrin 102b, Poskim, Tur Sh Ar OC 167:1 etc. 168:1-5 171:10, commentaries.]

C) Bizuy Mitzvah

Just as one must show respect for these items used for the *brocha*, because of *chibuv mitzvah*, treasuring the *mitzvah*, one may not show them disrespect. Mistreatment is called *bizuy mitzvah*. The original source for this is the *mitzvah* to cover the blood of a slaughtered bird or undomesticated animal. The blood was spilled in the performance of a *mitzvah*, to slaughter the animal. It has some 'sanctity', and should not be abandoned. In the same way, we are taught not to do overly mundane activities with items used for

mitzvos, or even in their presence.

This raises some debate on the *prusas habetzia* and the *kos shel brocha*. After the participants have been given some of it, the remainder is considered special. Some poskim cite a practice not to give any of it to animals or to *nochrin*, gentiles who do not have the *mitzvah*. Though one is obliged to feed his animals, indeed before he eats himself, he should not give them the food of *brocha*. Others maintain that this practice is not widespread, and is therefore not binding. Some interpret the lenient view to refer to the remainder of the loaf, that touched the *prusas hamotzie*, or to other bread that touched the *prusas hamotzie*. The actual *prusas hamotzie* is indeed holy and should be treated better. Basically, by using the bread for mundane purposes, one shows how little he appreciates the *mitzvah*. He should rather be showing *chibuv mitzvah*.

From some of the examples used by the poskim, it is clear that this restriction applies even to animals or *nochrin* who are dependent on the *botzaita*, such as members of his household. In our case, it seems that the issue of honoring a parent comes into play as well. Though this parent might not have the status of one for whom one is Scripturally obliged to show respect, the issue of decency and *chilul Hashem* arises. In their presence, one may also not incite gentiles. Intentionally ignoring the gentile with the *kiddush* wine or avoiding giving him from the *perusas hamotzie* is liable to incite him. In addition, it is possible that the bread or wine here actually belongs to the gentile parent. In light of the restriction being described as a *minhag*, rather than *halachically* binding, one should be allowed to practice leniency in this situation. One could also make sure that the gentile is given bread from the left half of the loaf, thus avoiding the situation inconspicuously. [See Shabbos 22a, Poskim, Sefer Chasidim 888. Avudraham, betzias hapas. Tur (BY) Sh Ar OC 167:20, commentaries.]

On the Parsha ... Lavan said ... 'I have divined, and Hashem blessed me because of you .. I will give your pay! Hashem blessed you *levagli*, with my arrival .. [30:27-30] Why would Lavan admit that Hashem blessed him due to Yaakov? This would make Yaakov want to increase the pay! [See *Chasam Sofer*] Why did Yaakov need to repeat the fact? [See *Sforno*] Why would Lavan offer wages to Yaakov, if he thought the *brochos* came from Hashem? Perhaps Lavan wanted to make a deal with Yaakov. 'I do business by divining. According to my divination, I gained my own blessings from Hashem, because I took you on as my worker.' He meant that it was his own business acumen, partnering with Yaakov. Yaakov answers: 'No! Your blessing from Hashem are due to my arrival and presence. It has nothing to do with your business or divination. You had little before I came. Where was your divination then? Everything comes from Hashem. I recite *brochos* to Hashem, acknowledging Him for everything. Then He blesses, and everything becomes '*shel brocha*'!

♣ In honor and in memory of my mother, Yittele bas R. Shimon a"t, Henriette Silver. ♣

Sponsored by Noah bass in memory of his father, Martin Bass, Mordechai ben Noach, z"l, whose *yahrzeit* was on the 3rd of Kislev.

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