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Birkath Hamazon Does Not Cover Certain Foods Eaten Before a Meal

We mentioned previously that Birkath Hamazon (Grace after meals) covers wine that was drunk during the Se'udah (meal with bread), as well as wine that was drunk before the commencement of the meal, even if no wine was drunk during the meal itself.

If, however, one ate Mezonoth before the blessing and eating of Hamoši, one must say the final blessing of 'Al Hamihya on account of the Mezonoth that one ate, before one says the blessing of Hamoši on the bread. If one forgot to say the 'Al Hamihya and remembered after saying the blessing of Hamoši, one should not say the 'Al Hamihya, but should have in mind that the Birkath Hamazon includes the Mezonoth also.

With regard to fruits or drinks other than wine, that are consumed before a meal, one must also say their final blessing before Ne'ilath Yadayim (the ritual washing of hands) and the reciting of Hamoši on the bread. However, with these foods, if one only remembered to say their final blessing after one has already said the blessing on the bread, one must still say their final blessing, even in the middle of the meal, because Birkath Hamazon does not cover them.

(See Ben Ish Hai, 1st year,
Parashath Naso, Oth 4.
Kaf Hachayyim 174, Oth 35)



מדרש בן איש חי
Midrash BEN ISH HAI

Bereshith: "By the Sweat of Your Brow" Is a Blessing

וְקוֹץ וְדִרְבָּר תִּצְמַח לָךְ *Thorns and thistles will grow for you* (Bereshith 3:18).

The Gemara of Pesachim (118a) tells us that when G-d said this to Adam, he started crying. But when He told him *בְּזֵיעַת אֶפְיֶךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם* *By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread*, he was assuaged. What was the reason for this? Thorns and thistles just grow by themselves. No effort needs to be put into growing them. One does not need to rely on the rain or anything else for them to sprout. As a result Adam would not need to have any communication with G-d, since they would just appear. This is similar to the punishment of the snake who was told that it would eat the dust of the earth which is found everywhere.

This was a great curse, because G-d wanted to have no contact with the snake and it would have no need to have contact with G-d since the dust would be everywhere it went. When Adam was told that he would only receive his food after perspiration and hard work he was happy. He now had to depend on G-d for his food and would have to pray to him constantly.

This is a major lesson to us. Sometimes we see people, for whom income and livelihood come easily with the minimum of travail. We feel jealous of them because we have to work hard and are never sure what tomorrow may bring. We should not feel jealous about them but, on the contrary, see it as a blessing that we have the opportunity to be close to G-d and talk to Him regularly and ask Him for His help. The one for whom all appears to be going very smoothly, may well be deprived of that opportunity of contact with G-d.

(See Barukh T'a'am, Parashath Bereshith)

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Eating More after Mayim Aḥronim

One who finished his meal and did Mayim Aḥronim may no longer eat or drink. If he wishes to eat or drink further, he must say the blessing before the food or drink again and then do Mayim Aḥronim again when he has finished. The Birkath Hammazon (grace after meals) is then said once and covers both eatings.

If he did not yet do Mayim Aḥronim but said, "Bring the wine for Birkath Hammazon", or, "Let's do Birkath Hammazon", there is a difference of opinion as to what should be done. In view of the differing opinions, it is preferable to avoid eating and drinking after one has said, "Let us say Birkath Hammazon".

If one has a need to eat or drink, however, one should say the blessing before drinking only. Before eating food one should not recite the blessing but should only think it in one's heart (mind). In this case also, the Birkath Hammazon is said only once and covers both eatings.

(See Shulḥan 'Arukh, 179:1. Kaf Haḥayyim ibid, Oth 2. Mishnah Berurah ibid, 2-3)

Reciprocating a Meal May Appear to Be Interest

The Rama states that one should not say to another, "Come and eat my food, just like I ate yours", because it appears that he is repaying a debt. It looks as if the other person had lent it to him and, consequently, we would be concerned that he may feed him more than he received and that would be considered as interest (Ribbith).

Even though this is not actual interest in Halakha, it has the appearance of interest. Similarly, it could also happen that, when the first one feeds the second, the prices are low and when the second feeds the first, the food prices have risen. Even though it was not the first person's intention to feed the second at a lower price, so that he would gain in the future and, as such, there is no question of actual interest, nevertheless, it looks like interest.

However, he can say to him, "Come and eat with me and on another occasion I will eat with you", even if the subsequent meal is larger. This is because it is not his intention to be repaid with a reciprocal meal, but his purpose in mentioning this, is to put his guest at ease so that he will not refuse. It should be noted, however, that the Ṭaz is hesitant to permit this.

(See Rama 170:13. Kaf Haḥayyim ibid, Oth 50. Mishnah Berurah ibid, sq 31, 32)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"ḥ

The Creator (Maker) of a Beautiful Me

How do we react to people whom we consider to be unattractive? What do we think when we see a person whose outer appearance is not appealing or pleasing to us?

Some people may respond that determining whether one is unattractive, depends solely on the inner core of the person and his/her inner qualities. This appears to be the right thing to say! Therefore, we might find the following story rather surprising. Ribbi Shimon ben El'azar met a man who was exceptionally unattractive. The man greeted Ribbi Shimon, who exclaimed: "How ugly you look! Do all the people in your town look as ugly as you?" The man replied: "Complain to the Craftsman Who created all creatures, and ask Him how He could have created something so ugly..." Immediately, Ribbi Shimon realized his grave mistake, prostrated himself before the man and apologized profusely. The man replied: "Ask forgiveness from the One who made me".

Ḥakham Yoseph Ḥayyim, 'a"ḥ brings the above story and pleads with us to never despise or embarrass anyone who looks different. He adds that one should consider the possibility that though one may have been created perfect, at some point in life it may be that we will lose this perfect state.

(To be continued)