

A New Yavneh Publication

11 Iyar 5768 // 16 May 2008

Obscure Halacha

How Frum are You?

By Zahava Stadler

For some reason, it's been a recurring topic of conversation recently at dinner in the CJL what brachot one should say on dessert. I figured it would be the kind of thing I could look up and have a definitive answer to relay. Four hours later, I'd realized it was slightly more complicated, but here's what I found.

The Shulchan Aruch 177:1 explains that if you wash your hands for bread, then during the meal, all food that you would normally have as part of a meal (meat, veggies, etc.) is included in the initial *hamotzi* and the final *birkat hamazon*. Any foods that you wouldn't include in a normal meal, like fruit, should get their own *bracha rishona*, but they don't need a separate *bracha acharona*; they're covered by bentching.

Now the good part of any obscure halacha column: dessert. SA 177:2 says that food eaten after the meal but before bentching that is not part of the meal, should get its own *bracha rishona* and *bracha acharona*, because both *hamotzi* and *birkat hamazon* only cover food eaten during the meal itself. It explains that this was the practice in the time of the Gemara, when they would clear everything from the meal and then have fruit and drinks. Now, though, when we don't stop our meal until bentching, dessert is considered to be eaten in the normal mealtime, so it's just like any fruit you eat in the middle of your meal: You need a *bracha rishona*, but bentching covers you afterwards.

Apparently, though, not everyone agrees with the Shulchan Aruch. The Beur Halacha goes through several competing opinions. Ultimately, the majority seem to agree with the Shulchan Aruch that dessert today falls within a normal meal time span and should therefore be covered by *birkat hamazon*. The Beur Halacha posits that the real difference is that in the time of the Amoraim, each person had his own little table, and the tables were removed before the fruit course a clear separation. Today, when we all eat at one table and don't mess with it between courses, there's no real demarcation between meal and dessert.

A question remains about desserts that are mezonot, and on this I can safely say it's a machloket. One side says that mezonot desserts are apart from the meal and require their own *bracha rishona*. The other side holds that mezonot desserts are enough like

bread that they're considered part of the main meal and are included in *hamotzi*. Resolution? The Beur Halacha reminds us: *Safek brachot lehakel*. When in doubt about saying a bracha, don't. While I'd advise looking into this one a bit more closely, hopefully this is enough to get you through your next meal.

Announcements

- This Friday evening around 9:30 PM, there will be an oneg at the home of Jake Solomon. It's in honor of the graduating seniors and also there will be home made cake. Yum!
- This Wednesday night, from 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM upstairs in the CJL, Yavneh will have a farewell party for the Rosses. There'll be pizza and there'll be the Rosses.

Minyan Times

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| Saturday Shacharit | 8:45 AM |
| Saturday Mincha | 7:40 PM |
| Saturday Maariv | 8:52 PM |

A Quick Thought

By Rabbi Josh Ross

Looking over the Torah I would say that Bereshit is the story of the individual relationship to God while Shemot, some of Vayikra, and Bamidbar are the story of the nation. We see everything from the perspective of the nation. How they do things, why they do things. How they feel about things, why they act the way they act with the information they have. Which makes sense - of course we need to see the side of the Jewish nation if we are to learn anything from it. What I want to look at is Devarim. I think that Devarim is really the opportunity for us to see Moshe Rabbeinu's side of the story. There is the famous pasuk in the Torah, when Moshe commands us to perform the mitzvot and tells us they are easy. The gemmarah asks how he could possibly suggest they are easy. After all, they aren't. The answer is Moshe refers to the mitzvot as easy because he was not commanding us in anything per se, rather he was sharing his outlook.

I think it is critical to recognize that the Torah felt the need to share the perspective of Moshe. It is what I want to bring to your attention today. It is only through Devarim we learn that Moshe fasted an additional 40 days for us. It is only through Devarim that we see Moshe's side of the story with the spies. Again and again, if you are paying attention Devarim is a very different side to the story that in many ways we think we already know. It is equally vital to consider not only the import of having a glimpse into how Moshe felt about things; it is also significant to see that the Torah cares about showing us both sides. That the Torah - which doesn't waste a single letter - takes the time to show us another perspective. A perspective about events we already knew about, but perhaps did not fully grasp.

I think, as these are MY senior words of advice to all of you that there is a great deal to take from this. While I think no one would confuse me with Moshe Rabbeinu (for many, many reasons) I have still been the Rabbi here for three years. I know students you don't from previous years. I know students you don't who are here currently. I have learned quite a bit about Princeton over the years. Some of you like me and some of you don't. I like many of you and dislike some of you. It is the nature of the beast. We see that even Moshe was plagued by his own sense of things. It is imperative to realize that in life there are always two perspectives. Always. Even when you are right - I mean 100% right - it doesn't change the fact that there is another side. Aaron realized that and was known for going and trying to make sure that each side thought of the other. He needed to exaggerate a little on each side before there could be peace. The midrash does not tell us that he went to one side and said, I am Aaron you were wrong go apologize! Nope - he went to both sides to assure peace. Aaron recognized that you needed to bring both sides to the table. In any discussion, argument, political situation, psak - there are always two sides. What I hope is that you - each of you - will try to remember that. I feel that it is something that really needs to be considered more often in the Princeton community. When the new Rabbi comes, or a new student comes, or a new community member - don't judge on the old, and don't judge on what YOU think should be. And remember just as you have your opinion of someone, they have their opinion of you too. And also, please remember a person doesn't just have a relationship with you - they also have a relationship with the community. One thing I finally understood in my second year at

Cornell was the idea we see the Rambam bring down so clearly in Hilchot Tshuva of being judged as individuals and as a nation. I always felt like the two were so separate while I was in Yeshiva (how could you not separate them!), until I became a leader (of sorts) of a community. What you do reflects on you AND on your community - even if you aren't a leader. Kindness will be remembered. So will a lack of kindness. Individual actions reverberate and reflect on everyone else you identify with. Remember that. At any moment when you are fueled with self-righteous indignation over anything - the other person or side or political party feels EXACTLY the same way. If someone does something you don't like or disagree with, hold off on judging them until you understand why they did it. It is a simple thing to suggest but something that everyone has trouble dealing with. I believe it is so hard that God devotes no small part of Devarim to tell us this. It's not easy.

I will conclude on a personal level with another insight I gained about Moshe from Devarim. We also learn from the viewpoint of Moshe that he blamed the Nation for his situation. Moshe continuously says that it is the fault of the nation that he cannot enter Israel. Moshe never forgives, nor does he do tshuvah for whatever his sin was - he blames the nation. I would say that from the perspective of Moshe he wasn't wrong. Not really. We were, and are, a tough people who continually mess up. But I want to take this opportunity to say that I am trying to learn from the Torah. I do not blame anyone here for anything. I take responsibility for my own actions over the last three years. For those of you who were (from my perspective) a light to the community and to us, I thank you. For those of you who I feel were not I am trying to see your side and I truly don't blame you. You may not feel you need my forgiveness, but I forgive you because I see it my way. For those who felt I wronged them or wronged the community, let me say now publicly that even if I don't know who you are I am sorry, and I hope you can forgive me. Because even though I think I'm right I know you think you are right too. And I would sooner be truly and sincerely forgiven than be right. Remember the powerfully deep midrash which says God cast Truth down to the earth because there can only be Peace with the Absence of Truth. Please think about that. Consider it. Consider both sides. You will only become a better person for trying to do so. The community will only become stronger for trying to do so.

Shabbat Shalom Princeton, and good luck!