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Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן קע"ו סעיף א'

Halacha Highlight

Eating foods before the meal

Mishnah Berurah Siman 176 Seif Koton 2
דוקא שאין בדעתו לאכל תכף
Only when he does not intend to eat immediately

Shulchan Aruch discusses the issue of reciting the beracha on bread covering the need to recite the beracha on mezonos type foods and that the beracha on mezonos type foods do not cover the need to recite the beracha on bread. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ב) elaborates on the topic of eating other foods before the meal and whether one is required to recite a beracha acharona on those foods. The second category that he discusses are those foods that do not require a beracha if eaten in the middle of the meal. In the event that one intends to eat these foods during the meal as well one is required to recite the beracha acharona before the meal starts. The reason is that when these foods are eaten during the meal they will be covered by המוציא so what is eaten before the meal has no connection to the meal and thus requires a beracha acharona.

Later the Mishnah Berurah explains that the allowance to eat these foods before the meal applies only when one is not going to eat the meal immediately after partaking of these foods. If, however, the table is set and the bread is ready to be consumed, one should not recite a beracha and eat these foods before the meal since it causes one to recite an unnecessary beracha. Rather, one should recite המוציא, eat an olive's volume of bread and then eat these foods. Some authorities, however, maintain that if one prefers to eat these foods before the meal rather than during the meal it is not considered to be an unnecessary beracha. His conclusion is that if the foods increase one's appetite one may rely upon the lenient ruling. Biur Halacha (סי' רמ"ט סע' ב' ד"ה מותר) comments that it is common custom on Shabbos morning for people to recite the beracha and eat cake after kiddush even though the table is set for the meal. He references Shulchan Aruch HaRav who justifies the practice but notes that there are people who wash and eat bread first and then partake of the cake.

Stories to Share

Avoiding a Mitzvah

ש"ע ס' קע"ו, א': "ברך על הפת פוטר את הפרפרת...ברך על הפרפרת לא פטר הפת"

Today's amud discusses the blessing on bread and mezonos.

Although there are clearly defined halachos of when one must wash, make hamotzi and bentsch on mezonos, one who partakes of bread is usually obligated in all of these. One family did not want to deal with this. Instead, they used a substitute starch for all of their weekday meals.

When the head of the household learned that one should not decline to fulfill a Torah mitzvah that comes his way—for example one who doesn't bother putting on a four-cornered garment with tzitizis is punished in difficult times—he began to have second thoughts. Perhaps refraining from washing to avoid bentsching is no different?

When this question reached Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, shlit"a, he ruled that this may be a valid worry. "There are several examples where we see that one who avoids doing a mitzvah that he could easily fulfill has done spiritual damage. Besides the well-known example of one who doesn't wear tzitizis, the Biur Halachah cites a Torah prohibition forbidding a kohein to leave shul to avoid reciting the priestly blessing. He says that the kohein violates יראת מאלוקיך'—it is a marked lack of fear of heaven. (ביאור הלכה, ס' קכ"ח, ד"ה אינם רוצים) It is certainly plausible that the same holds true in our case."

Rav Zilberstein pointed out that there was a valid reason to avoid bentsching, however. "If one's motivation not to bentsch stems from his inability to focus on the prayer because he is rushed or the like, it is permitted. This is clear from the Biur Halachah there, where we find that if a kohein avoids offering the blessing because he is weak, he has not transgressed."

חשוקי חמד, ע' רכ"ג-רכ"ד

Overview

Siman 176 Seif 1:

If one recited the beracha on bread he is exempt from reciting a beracha on the peripheral dish which is bread crumbs that are attached with soup or honey. If one recited the beracha on the peripheral dish one is not exempt from reciting the beracha on bread. If one recited the beracha on the peripheral dish he is exempt from reciting the beracha on cooked grain which is דיסא and other similar foods. Similarly, if one recited the beracha on cooked grains he is exempt from reciting the beracha on the peripheral dish.

- The pieces are smaller than an olive's volume and have lost their appearance of bread. (M.B. 1)
- It was common to serve these foods before the meal for enjoyment or to increase one's appetite but it does not exempt bread since the beracha on them is only מזונות. (M.B. 2)
- Regarding the beracha acharona if one ate them just for pleasure or to fill one's self a little he must recite a beracha acharona before the meal and if he did not recite the beracha before birkas hamazon then b'dieved he is not required to recite another beracha. According to some if he intends to eat mezonos during the meal it is considered a single eating and may rely even l'chatchila on birkas hamazon that he will recite. It appears that one should specifically have in mind that birkas hamazon applies to what was eaten before the meal. (M.B. 2)
- Regarding foods other than mezonos foods that one eats before a meal the rules are as follows (M.B. 2):
  - א If one will eat before washing foods that require a beracha during the meal, e.g. fruit, and his intent is that the beracha recited before the meal should cover the food that he eats during the meal all of that food is considered part of the meal and one need not recite a separate beracha acharona since birkas hamazon will cover it. If one will not eat these foods during the meal he should recite a beracha acharona before the meal.
  - ב If one eats foods that do not require a beracha during the meal, e.g. relishes, even if one intends to eat them during the meal the beracha recited before the meal does not cover them since המוציא will cover them. Therefore, they are not considered part of the meal and one must recite a beracha acharona on them.
  - ג If one eats before the meal peripheral dishes to increase one's appetite and widen one's stomach one should not recite a beracha acharona afterwards since these foods are part of the meal and will be covered by birkas hamazon.
  - ד Reciting a beracha on foods before a meal that would not require a separate beracha during the meal is allowed only if one does not intend to eat the meal immediately afterwards but if the table is set and the bread is on the table one may not recite a beracha that is not necessary; rather he should recite המוציא which will cover the other foods. Some maintain that if one prefers to eat these foods before the meal it does not constitute an unnecessary beracha and if the foods increase one's appetite one may certainly be lenient and eat them before the meal.