The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן רט"ו סעיף ג'-ד'

Overview

Siman 215 Seif 3:

The halacha that one does not answer אמן to the beracha of a child is limited to when he is learning to recite berachos with his rebbi since it is permitted to teach children to properly recite berachos even though they are recited l'vatalah while they are learning. When they recite a beracha to discharge their obligation, one answers אמן since they have reached the age of chinuch. The same is true when they read the haftorah on Shabbos.

- In other words, the rebbi is studying with them at a time that they are not obligated to recite the beracha but it is nevertheless permitted to mention Hashem's Name and even the rebbi is permitted to mention Hashem's Name to teach them to properly recite berachos. When an adult studies a beracha in the Gemara he does not mention Hashem's Name. It is only when reciting pesukim that are cited in the Gemara is it permitted to read it as it is written in Tanach. (M.B. 14)
- The implication is that one does not answer אמן to the beracha of a child before he reaches the age of chinuch. (M.B. 16)

Siman 215 Seif 4:

One who recites an unnecessary beracha takes Hashem's Name in vain and it is comparable to swearing in vain and it is prohibited to answer אמן to such a beracha.

- For example, one recites a beracha on food in the middle of a meal that is already covered by המוציא. Poskim also write that even if it is not a beracha l'vatalah it may be an unnecessary beracha. For example, if the table is set and one will eat a meal and before washing he recites a beracha on one of the foods that he intends to eat during the meal. (M.B. 18)
- This is true even though it was recited properly since it was unnecessary and certainly when one recites Hashem's Name in vain altogether. This prohibition applies to any of the Names of Hashem even if it was said in a foreign language. (M.B. 19)
- Shulchan Aruch is echoing Rambam's opinion but many Rishonim maintain that the prohibition is only Rabbinic when it is mentioned in the context of praise of Hashem. When one mentions Hashem's Name completely in vain all opinions agree that it constitutes a violation of the Biblical command את ה' א-לוקיך תירא. According to all opinions if one is uncertain whether he recited a beracha that he is Biblically obligated to recite he must repeat the beracha but if the beracha is Rabbinic he may not repeat the beracha. Later authorities add that even when there is a sfeik sfeika one should not repeat the beracha. (M.B. 20)

Halacha Highlight

Answering אמן to the beracha of a child

Shulchan Aruch Siman 215 Seif 3

כיון דבני חנוך הם עונים אחריהם אמן

Since they are chinuch age one answers after them אמן

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ג') clarifies that when he ruled that one does not answer אמן to the beracha of a child he was referring to the beracha a child recites when he is learning how to recite berachos with his rebbi. In such a circumstance it is permitted for the child to repeat a beracha numerous times, but one does not answer אמן since it is not a real beracha. However, when a child recites a beracha that he is obligated to recite, for example, before eating food, since the child has reached the age of chinuch, one answers אמן to his beracha. The developmental stage of chinuch for the recitation of berachos is when the child is old enough to know who he is addressing when he recites a beracha or davens. This occurs when a child is approximately five years old depending on his level of understanding and maturity.

Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק ט"ז) notes that the implication is that if a child recites a beracha before he reaches the age of chinuch one does not answer אמן to his beracha. The common custom, however, is to answer אמן to the beracha of a child even younger than five years old. Rav Yosef Chaim Zonenfeld (שו"ת שלמת חיים סי' קל"ד) suggests that once a child is accustomed to recite a beracha on his own it is considered as though he has reached that age of chinuch and one answers אמן to his beracha. The Steipler Gaon would answer אמן to the beracha of a child once he was three years old in order to train the child to answer אמן (אורחות רבינו ח"ג עמ' רכ"ג). Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach would answer אמן but would leave out the "י". By doing so he was not actually answering אמן since all he said was "אמ" but since children at that age will not realize that he left out the "י" they receive proper training to answer אמן (אורחות רבינו שם בשמו).