The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן רט"ז סעיף א'-ב'

Overview

Siman 216 Seif 1:

It is prohibited to benefit from a good smell until one recites a beracha but afterwards there is no beracha to recite.

- Later authorities write that if one benefitted from the smell without reciting the beracha and didn't realize until after he finished smelling he lost the beracha. (M.B. 3)
- Chazal did not institute a beracha acharona for such a minimal benefit. Poskim write that if one has two berachos to recite, one for eating and one for smell, one should recite the beracha on the food first since it is more important being that it enters a person's body and then recite the beracha on the smell. (M.B. 4)

Siman 216 Seif 2:

If the object that produces the smell is wood or similar to wood one recites: בורא עצי בשמים. If it is an herb one recites: בורא עשבי בשמים. If it is neither wood nor an herb, e.g. musk, one recites: בורא מיני בשמים. If it is a fruit one recites: הנותן ריח טוב בפרות. This applies when it was taken to smell or to eat it and smell it but if it was taken to eat without intent to smell it one does not recite a beracha even though it produces a good smell. In all cases if one recited: בורא מיני בשמים he has satisfied his obligation, therefore, if one has an item about which he is uncertain he should recite: בורא מיני בשמים. On nutmeg, cinnamon, clove and other spices that are eaten one recites: שנתן ריח טוב בפרות.

- Even if the branch is soft as long as it produces leaves one recites: בורא עצי בשמים. (M.B. 6)
- This besamim is taken from an animal and that is why the beracha is: בורא מיני בשמים. According to some it is the sweat of the animal and according to others blood from the neck is collected, dried and then used as besamim. (M.B. 7)
- This applies even if it is edible only when mixed with other ingredients. (M.B. 8)
- From the Gemara and Poskim it seems that one should recite: אשר נתן which is past tense. (M.B. 9)
- Elya Rabba maintains that one should recite the beracha on the smell first since the benefit comes faster. Pri Megadim suggests reciting the beracha on eating first with the intent not to smell it and then recite the beracha on the smell. (M.B. 10)
- In the opinion of some later authorities if one recited שהכל on a smell he discharged his obligation. Magen Giborim asserts that even b'dieved one does not discharge his obligation. (M.B. 13)
- Later authorities write that one who smells crushed coffee which is hot and generates a smell must recite אשר נתן וכו'. (M.B. 16)

Halacha Highlight

The beracha on smelling spices

Shulchan Aruch Siman 216 Seif 1
אסור להנות מריח טוב עד שיברך
It is prohibited to smell something good until one first recites a beracha

Shulchan Aruch (סע' א') introduces the obligation to recite a beracha before one benefits from a good smell. Mishnah Berurah (סק"א) explains that this is similar to the obligation to recite a beracha before eating or drinking. The Gemara Berachos (43b) derives this obligation from the pasuk (Tehillim 150:6) that states: כל הנשמה תהלל י-ה which implies that even one's soul should praise Hashem when it derives benefit. What type of benefit does the soul experience as opposed to the rest of the body? The Gemara answers that it is smells. After one is finished smelling the spices one does not recite a beracha acharona. The reason, explains Mishnah Berurah (סק"ד) is that Chazal enacted a beracha acharona only for food and beverages that provide significant benefit as opposed to smells whose benefit is minimal. Sha'ar HaTziyun (סק"ג) adds another reason which is that once one is done smelling the spices the benefit dissipates and is comparable to food that has already been digested for which one does not recite a beracha. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ד) also writes that Chazal did not enact a beracha for hearing a pleasant voice since it has no substance nor is there is a beracha for bathing or anointing since it does not enter the body.

Poskim write that although generally, it is prohibited to benefit from a smell without first reciting a beracha, if one needs to determine whether something has a smell that warrants the recitation of a beracha, it is permitted to smell it without first reciting a beracha. Similarly, one who has a cold and wants to determine whether he can smell besamim may smell the besamim without first reciting the beracha. The rationale is that it is similar to tasting food for which one is not required to first recite a beracha. Others disagree since there are authorities who maintain that if one will swallow the food that he is tasting is required to first recite a beracha (פסקי תשובות אות א').