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Mishna Berura
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סימן רי"ז סעיף ב'-ג'

Halacha Highlight

Reciting a beracha on different good smelling items

Shulchan Aruch Siman 217 Seif 2

אין מברכין על הריח אלא אם כן נעשה להריח

One does not recite a beracha on a smell unless it was generated to produce a smell

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ב') notes that one only recites a beracha on spices if their purpose is to produce an aroma to be enjoyed. If the smell of the spice is to serve another purpose one does not recite the beracha on that spice. For example, if one places spices near a corpse to mask the odor that the corpse produces, one does not recite a beracha on that spice. Similarly, if one places spices in a bathroom to counter the foul odor that is there, one does not recite a beracha. Mishnah Berurah (סק"י) emphasizes that even if the person has the intent to enjoy the aroma one does not recite the beracha since the owner's intent is to counter the foul odor. A third example of this category is one who applies sweet smelling oil to his body in order to mask his body odor. In that circumstance as well, since the intent is not for the smell of the spice but rather to mask the foul odor, a beracha is not recited.

Included in the list of items upon which one does not recite a beracha even though it has a good smell is soap and shampoo. Since they are designed to remove a bad odor one does not recite the beracha even though one enjoys their smell. Furthermore, the source of the smell is often synthetic rather than natural and one does not recite a beracha on the smell of synthetic ingredients. Similarly, one does not recite a beracha on good smelling laundry detergent, dryer sheets or the like since they also are meant to be used as detergent rather than for their smell. Additionally, one does not recite a beracha on any variety of air freshener since their function is primarily to remove bad odors rather than to be used just to enjoy their good smell (פסקי תשובות אות ד').

Overview

Siman 217 Seif 2:

One does not recite a beracha on spices unless they were designated for smell. Therefore, one does not recite a beracha on spices used for a corpse which are placed above the casket to counter the foul smell of the corpse. If it is placed below the bed one does recite the beracha since it is assumed that it is done to honor the living. One also does not recite a beracha on spices in a bathroom and oil used to counter a dirty smell.

- Since the owner designated them to counter a bad smell one does not recite a beracha even if his intent is to enjoy the smell. (M.B. 10)
- For example, a person who perspires a lot and applies sweet smelling oil to counter his foul body odor. (M.B. 11)

Siman 217 Seif 3:

One does not recite a berahca on incense that is used to infuse smell into utensils since the intent is not its own smell but to infuse smell into other articles. Similarly, one who smells utensils that were infused with the smell of incense does not recite a beracha since the smell has no source, just smell.

- It doesn't matter whether it is the one who burned the incense or someone else. (M.B. 13)
- If one's intent is to infuse the incense into the utensil and smell the incense as well, one recites the beracha on the smell since that is part of its function. (M.B. 14)