



Parshas Naso 5768

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Hilchos Berachos part II

Various laws pertaining to Hamotzi on bread

How must one hold the bread for the b'racha?

Whenever one recites a *b'racha* for food or smelling spices, one must hold the item in one's right hand.¹

The *Levush* explains that 'holding' an item will focus one's mind on what is being said,² and the right hand demonstrates importance of the *b'racha*.³ A left-handed person will hold in his left.⁴

Bread too, must be held during the *b'racha*.⁵ It is correct to place both hands on bread during the *b'racha* (irrespective of whether the bread is a whole loaf, a roll or a slice).

Why should one place both hands on bread?

Two hands have ten fingers, and:

Ten *mitzvos* involve producing bread.

Plowing – do not plow with an ox and donkey harnessed together (*kil'ayim*).

Planting – not to plant *kil'ayim*. **Threshing** – not to muzzle the animal threshing the

grain. לקט, שכחה, פאה, תרומה, מעשר ראשון, מעשר שני וחלה.⁶

The *b'racha hamotzi* has ten words.

There are four *pesukim* that entail sustenance and bread: 'עניי כל אליך; מצמיח חציר לבהמה וגו'; 'ויתן לך וגו'; 'ארץ חטה ושעורה וגו'; 'וגו'.

What is the importance of all of this?

We should internalize *Hashem's* kindness and be aware that everything is a *b'racha* from *Hashem*.

What is the importance of salt?

We dip bread in salt for two reasons, halacha and kabala.

The halachic reason applies to **tasteless bread**. To lend importance to the *b'racha*, one should bite into tasty bread and thus if the bread is tasteless, one should add salt or some other enhancer, such as peanut butter or cream cheese to the piece one eats after the *b'racha*.⁷

Consequently, tasty bread does not require salt or an enhancer.

The kabalistic reason is twofold, salt should be present on the table because our table is like the altar and eating in place of a *korban*, and the *posuk* says that one should salt all *korbanos*.

Salt also protects Yisroel from harm, because people sitting around the table waiting for everyone to wash for bread are

¹ *Siman* 206:4.

² *M"B* 206:17.

³ *M"B* 206:18.

⁴ *M"B* 206:18.

⁵ *Siman* 167:3. The *M"B* 167:22 explains that one recites a *b'racha* close to a mitzvah and not before, which is why one must hold the bread. Does this reason complement the *Levush* or is it a different reason?

⁶ *M"B* 167:24.

⁷ *Siman* 167:5.

not performing *mitzvos* and the presence of salt on the table prevents harm.⁸ The *Mekubalim* say that one should dip bread in salt three times.⁹

Eating and nashing before a bread meal

At least two issues are involved with eating before a bread meal. If for example one sees carrot sticks on the table and one would like to sample one before washing, one will have to make a *p'ri ha'adamah*, even though a few minutes later it will be included in the bread meal. This seems to be a *b'racha she'eina tz'richa* - an unnecessary *b'racha*. Also, the issue of *b'racha acharona* must be taken into account, i.e. a *boreh nefashos* might have to be recited before the meal.

The *poskim* write that one should refrain from eating an item that is included in a meal if one is about to begin the meal,¹⁰ so as not to recite a *b'racha she'eina tz'richa*. In the example mentioned one should not partake of the carrot, since one is about to wash and make *hamotzi* and the carrot is included in a bread meal.
~ You're at home waiting for tardy guests, it is not a problem to eat those carrot sticks because you do not know when the guests will arrive and in the meantime you're hungry.

When may one eat something before a meal?

Appetizers – one may eat appetizers before a meal, such as pickles and sweet items, because eating them **before** the meal enhances appetite. It is not a *b'racha she'eina tz'richa* when there is reason to eat in this manner.¹¹

⁸ *Rama siman* 167:5 and *M"B* 32.

⁹ *M"B* 167:33.

¹⁰ *M"B* 176:2-4. See *Sefer Sha'arei B'racha* 7:1.

¹¹ *M"B* *ibid* and *Sha'ar ha'tsiun* 11.

To avoid a safeik b'racha – if your meal includes an item that is in doubt whether it requires a *b'racha* during a meal, you may eat that item before *hamotzi* so as not to have a *safeik* during the meal.

~ Fruit served at the beginning of a meal might require a *b'racha risbona*, so to avoid the problem, one may recite a *b'racha* on the fruit and eat some before washing.

~ It is not clear which cakes eaten at the end of a meal are included in *hamotzi* and which not, so to avoid the issue one may recite a *mezonos* over cake before washing.

Vort on Shavuot

Upon hearing *B'nei Yisrael* declare *נעשה ונשמע*, *Hashem* remarked, who revealed this secret to My children. Who taught them to place the *נעשה* before *נשמע*? This secret is used by the *mal'ochim* and now My children use it.

The S'lonimer Rebbe explains that this trait is angelic because it depresses the human ego for a loftier purpose. One always wants to understand what one is doing to show that nothing is above one's intellect and one will not do anything without understanding. Doing because you're instructed or commanded requires self suppression and executing out of love or fear. *כאיש אחד בלב אחד – ויחן שם ישראל נגד ההר* also required self control and loving the other person at least like oneself. It was only through this preparation that *B'nei Yisrael* were able to receive the Torah.

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Note: The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.