



5776/2015-2016: HILCHOT BRACHOT

*Note: All משנה ברורה סימן רט"ז-רי"ז taught in this course follow the rulings of the פסקי הלכה.

ברכת בשמים - Lesson 1, WEEK 4

Introduction

1. We have thus far been studying ברכות in general and the ברכות said before and after eating food in particular. These ברכות are referred to as "ברכת הנהנין" - blessings made before *benefitting from* this world. This lesson will conclude the study of ברכת הנהנין with a unique application: a benefit to one of the five senses aside from taste.
2. The גמרא in מגא-ב says that just as the body benefits from ingesting food, the נשמה benefits from pleasant smells. It expounds on "כל נשמה תהלל י-ה" (תהלים קנו:) and explains it to mean "על כל נשימה ונשימה תהלל י-ה" - for each and every breath one should praise Hashem. Therefore, חז"ל instituted ברכות over pleasant smells.

הלכות ברכות בשמים

3. There are only ברכות ראשונות on pleasant smells, meaning you only make a bracha *before* smelling something pleasant, not afterwards. On food, however, we make ברכות both before and after we eat. This is because on food one experiences שביעה - a feeling of "fullness" or satiation after eating. The תורה tells us that after eating bread and feeling full, one must Bentch.
 - It is important to remember that Bentching is a מצות עשה just as eating מצה and hearing שופר are! Its source is "ואכלת ושבעת וברכת" - a straight up פסוק in the תורה!
 - This is why you can only Bentch while still feeling "full" - usually calculated as **72 minutes** from when you finished your *meal* (not from when you finished eating bread).Smells, however, do not cause any שביעה/satiation and therefore have no ברכה אחרונה.
4. You would only make a ברכה if you consciously intend on smelling something exclusively to enjoy its pleasant smell. If you are smelling a spice to verify which spice

it is, what it will taste like or to determine whether or not your nose has cleared from the cold you had last week, no ברכה would be made.

5. Just as we find a hierarchy of ברכות over food (remember ש.מ.ג.ע.א.ש!), there is a similar hierarchy regarding smells. **Please see accompanying slideshow to illustrate the many different examples of the various ברכות.**

- If one smells something that grows with a hard stem or branch, such as **הדסים, jasmine or roses**, the ברכה to express this benefit is: **בורא עצי** ... ברוך אתה ה'... **בורא עצי**, that Hashem created pleasant smelling trees.
 - i. The משנה ברורה points out that the Halachic definition of trees is the same as the one used for פרי העץ. בורא פרי העץ. We learned earlier that for a fruit to be considered a פרי העץ the tree must live from year to year. (That's why bananas are האדמה, remember?) Therefore, for עצי בשמים to be said over a pleasant smell that originates from something with a hard stem, the tree or bush must grow from year to year.
 - ii. If the stemmed tree or bush (it does not have to be tall like a fruit tree) does *not* live from year to year, it will receive a בורא מיני בשמים (the more generic ברכה for smells, see below #7).
- The next level down is something that does not have a hard stem, but still grows from the ground. This would be a pleasant smell coming from a grass-like plant, such as **lavender, wild mint and many other herbs**. These get the ברכה of **בורא עשבי בשמים** - that Hashem created pleasant smelling "grasses" (soft plants).
 - i. Therefore, if you are in your friend's garden and wish to smell both the roses and mint, you should smell the roses and say **בורא עצי בשמים** before smelling the mint and saying **בורא עשבי בשמים**.
 - ii. If you mixed up the two ברכות, they do not cover one another and a new ברכה must be made if you continue to smell.
- The final ברכה on בשמים is the most generic and is recited on something that is animal based (such as the *musk* smell found in some perfumes) or on something whose origin is unknown. This is the familiar **בורא מיני בשמים** - that Hashem made varieties of fragrances. (It can be compared to the generic שהכל said before eating many processed, artificial and non plant-based foods).
 - i. Note that most perfumes commercially sold today are created from artificial chemical ingredients. You would *not* recite a ברכה before smelling a perfume or cologne like this.
 - ii. **אשכנזים** have a unique law that during הבדלה no matter what plant or spice is used, בורא מיני בשמים is what is recited. ספרדים do distinguish between the different plants.

6. There is one last relatively uncommon ברכה that is recited on pleasant smelling fruit (even those that receive a פרי האדמה when eaten, as they are still considered to

be ברוך אתה ה'... אשר נתן ריח טוב בפירות (אדמה). The text is פירות of פירות, albeit פירות, פירות - that Hashem gave fruits pleasant smells.

- i. The reason this ברכה is not frequently recited is because it may only be recited when smelling a fruit for the exclusive purpose of deriving benefit from its pleasant smell (see #4 above) and not when merely providing an ancillary benefit. Examples:
 1. No ברכה is recited when you smell the fragrant melon that you are about to eat since the main function is to eat the fruit and you just happen to smell it in the process.
 2. If you enter a grocery store or fruit market to buy fruit and smell the fruit while there you would similarly not recite the ברכה as your primary goal is to shop and you just happened to smell the fruit in the process.
 3. On סוכות, the אתרוג is designated for מצות לולב and should not be used for the non-Mitzvah enjoyment of its pleasant smell. (This would not be the case once סוכות is over).
 4. You *would* recite the ברכה if you really enjoy the smell of a particular fruit, have no intention of eating it (if you have an allergy, fast day, etc.) and picked it up for the exclusive purpose of deriving benefit from its pleasant smell.
 - a. Some have a custom to do this on Yom Kippur in order to be able to recite 100 ברכות per day without any ברכות on food. Fragrant fruits and spices are brought to Shul for the express purpose of deriving benefit from their pleasant aromas.
7. There is a major debate as to whether herbs and spices commonly ingested as food (or as food enhancers) are considered to be פירות or בשמים. The reason they might be considered פירות is because they are consumed as food just like fruits are, although it is in the ground up form of a spice. As we saw, reciting the wrong ברכה for בשמים does not work even בדיעבד. Therefore, the משנה ברורה suggests that one make the more generic ברכה that covers all of the possibilities - בורא מיני בשמים.
 - i. Therefore, even though **cinnamon** (bark of a tree), **cloves** (dried flowers of a tree) **rosemary** (a woody perennial), **vanilla** (a bean that grows on a tree), **nutmeg** (a seed within a fruit on an evergreen tree), and **coffee** (a bean within a cherry like fruit on a tree), might be considered בשמים בורא עצי, and **basil, oregano, parsley, sage, dill** and many other herbs would be considered בשמים בורא עשבי, the משנה ברורה would seem to say that they should all be בורא מיני בשמים since they are regularly consumed with food.

1. Remember that coffee would only get a ברכה if you are only smelling it and have no intention of drinking it (see #4 above). Similarly, if you walk into Starbucks and smell the coffee no ברכה is recited since that was (most likely) not the reason you entered the store.
- ii. Mint, however, is customarily still בורא עשבי בשמים; presumably this is because it is not used commonly enough in cooking.