



5776/2015-2016: HILCHOT BRACHOT

**Note: All פסקי הלכה taught in this course follow the rulings stipulated in ספר ותן ברכה by Rabbi Yisroel Pinchos Bodner (Feldheim Publishers, 1989).*

WEEK #1, LESSON #2: PREREQUISITES FOR RECITING A BRACHA

(Note: All Halachot apply to Davening and studying Torah as well)

- I. On the Person Reciting the Bracha (13 minutes)
 - A. You must be properly dressed! The main criteria are to cover the private areas **and** to have some kind of separation between the heart and lower body. This can be accomplished with pants, a skirt, undergarments, a belt, a blanket or even your arms acting as a belt. A towel or bathrobe with no belt would present a problem unless the material is held firmly against your body to create a separation. (4 minutes)
 - B. A male must cover his head with a Kippah, cap or shirt sleeve. His own hand would not suffice, although another person's hand would. (1 minute)
 - C. Your mouth should be free of food. This includes chewing gum and cough drops as well. *Bdieved*, the food may be moved to the side of the mouth. (2 minutes)
 - D. Your hands need to be clean of major dirt. So make sure to wash your hands before sampling the cookie dough if you've been mixing with your hands. (Let's hope you're the only one eating the cookies). (4 minutes)
 1. You would further be required to ritually wash your hands (using a cup, once on each hand) prior to making a Bracha after cutting your hair or nails (or someone else's), scratching your scalp, touching the bottom of your shoe, or touching body parts that are normally covered (such as after showering).
 - E. No one may ever recite a Bracha while intoxicated (of course this would never apply to any of you...). The Bracha would be valid *Bdieved* provided the individual was aware of what he was doing. (1 minute)
 - F. You may not recite a Bracha if you really need to use the bathroom. The Bracha would be valid *Bdieved*. (1 minute)
- II. Environmental Factors (18 minutes)
 - A. You may not recite a Bracha in the presence of a foul odor that is the result of rotting food or waste substances. This would include a smelly garbage can, animal waste (e.g. walking the dog, your cat's litter box) or a child with a dirty diaper that is within seven feet of you **and** in the same room. A soiled diaper that is enclosed in a plastic bag and emitting no smell would not present a problem. A chemical odor (e.g. gasoline, paint, nail polish, permanent marker) is also not a problem. (3 minutes)
 - B. A bathroom is an inherently unclean place and you may therefore not recite a Bracha in a restroom even if the bathroom is completely clean and there is no odor. (7 minutes)
 1. A brand new bathroom that had just been built and never once used has the same status just by virtue of the fact that it had been designated as a בית הכסא.

- a) Rav Moshe Twersky, Hy"d, Maggid Shiur in ישיבת תורת משה (TOMO), who was killed in last year's Har Nof massacre, was excited by something as simple as the Yeshiva putting in a new bathroom as part of its renovations because it was an opportunity to see this Halachic sugya in "real life." That's a man who lived and breathed Torah.
- 2. A bathroom stall door that does not extend all the way to the floor (the majority do not) would not be an adequate separation and you would not be allowed to make a Bracha (even על נטילת ידים or אשר יצר) in the sink area of a public restroom where the stalls and sinks are in one large room - such as in the bathrooms at school.
- 3. Some restrooms are designed in such a way where the stalls and sink area are separated by a wall and located in two separate rooms (as you sometimes find in upscale hotels or roadside rest stops). It is technically permitted to recite Brachot in a restroom with such a set up but the Minhag is to leave the bathroom area entirely.
- C. You may recite a Bracha in a cemetery, but should stand 4 Amot (approximately 6 feet) away from any graves when doing so. (1 minute)
- D. It is also prohibited to make a Bracha in the presence of a person who is unclothed. The Halachic age for when this presents a problem differs with regard to men and women and applies to any male over the age of **nine** and any female over the age of **three** whose private areas are exposed. It makes no difference if the individual is Jewish or non-Jewish, your family member or whether or not he or she is married. (7 minutes)
 - a) You may not make the Bracha while facing the unclothed person even if the room is completely dark or if you close your eyes.
 - b) You may, however, recite the Bracha if you turn your entire body so that are no longer facing the unclad person.
 - c) If you did recite a Bracha while facing an unclad person it is valid *Bdieved*.
 - d) It should be noted that there are some Poskim who rule that it is **preferable** not to make a Bracha in front of the nakedness of any person *of any age*. According to this view a Bracha should not be recited even while facing the nakedness of a newborn baby, male or female. So according to this, you would have to turn around during bath time while your sister bathes your adorable baby nephew 🧒.

III. The Bracha Itself (3 minutes)

- A. Before beginning to recite the Bracha you should first determine the appropriate Bracha for the item you wish to eat. So if you're not sure what Bracha to make on that strawberry, hold off until you have it clarified (it's האדמה). (1.5 minutes)
- B. You should also have in mind any additional items to be covered by the Bracha. For example, if you are about to eat a bag of pretzels and know that afterwards you will want to eat a pack of Oreos as well, have the cookies in mind as you make the Bracha on the pretzels. (This will be covered in greater detail in subsequent lessons). (1.5 minutes)

*Note: The material here only amounts to 34 minutes but the content here also lends itself to a tremendous amount of "what if" scenario questions by the students. The material is largely unfamiliar to them, will likely surprise them and will (hopefully) pique their curiosity as they immediately begin to think of the relevant and practical applications to their lives. The spare few minutes can also be used to role play various scenarios utilizing class participation and various props including: a bathrobe, shoe, garbage can, baby doll wearing a diaper, etc.