



5776/2015-2016: HILCHOT BRACHOT

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

WEEK 2, LESSONS #3-4: ברכות/קדימה בברכות/PRIORITY OF BRACHOT

Disclaimer: This unit can be both very fun and very technical. We have presented the basic Halachot and tried to simplify as much as possible but please cater the material to your class and skip or modify any parts that you think your students will find too confusing to the point that they will be lost. On the other hand, some classes may enjoy thinking of the varying and numerous Bracha scenarios and applying the Halacha to determine what food/Bracha “wins” in that particular case. Feel free to further develop this and any other aspect of the curriculum that you feel your class in particular may enjoy. Bringing in an assortment of foods that receive different Brachot and cutting/breaking some, while leaving others whole, etc. is another excellent way to visually demonstrate these Halachot and help the students process the practical applications.

This unit will cover the order in which different ברכות are recited. רמב”ם instituted not only the individual ברכות, but a hierarchy of priority as well. The parameters are as follows:

1. The **more specific** the range of foods covered by the ברכה
2. Foods of the **שבעת המינים**
3. Foods that are **whole** or fully intact
4. One’s **preference**

There are many permutations of these qualities and they will be discussed as well.

Most Specific

1. The fewer the amount of foods covered by a ברכה, the more precise and specific the praise involved in making the ברכה. Therefore, the fewer the foods covered by the ברכה, the more חשוב the ברכה is.¹ The hierarchy is as follows:
 - a. המוציא
 - b. מזונות
 - c. הגפן
 - d. העץ
 - e. האדמה
 - f. שהכל²

שבעת המינים

¹ ברכות לט, א ורש”י שם ד”ה ומלגלג ותוס’ שם ד”ה חביב.

² Students might enjoy the mnemonic מ-ג-ע-א-ש (Where “מ” stands for both המוציא and מזונות).

2. The *ארץ ישראל* in *דברים ח:ח* פסוק praises as:

“אֶרֶץ חֹטֶה וְשֹׁעֵרָה, וְגֶפֶן וְתַאֲנָה וְרִמּוֹן; אֶרֶץ-זֵית וְשֶׁמֶן, וְדִבְשׁ”

חז"ל saw in this that there are 7 species that the *תורה* ascribes to and these are relegated in *קדימה* ברכות. The order given, based on proximity to the word “ארץ”³ is:

- a. Wheat (spelt is considered to be of the wheat family)
- b. Barley (oats and rye are members of the barley family)
- c. Olives⁴
- d. Dates
- e. Grapes
- f. Figs
- g. Pomegranates

Whole Items

3. Regardless of size, items that have not been cut or sliced are seen as more *חשוב* than ones that have been broken. An item’s “wholeness” is determined based on how it grew or was baked. An intact slice of bread or a large piece of a brownie would therefore both be considered broken since they were cut after being baked. A muffin or cookie, however, would be considered whole.

- a. This is true even if the broken variety is significantly larger. Therefore, a small challah roll is seen as more *חשוב* than a very large שבע ברכות challah that has had a single slice removed.
- b. Also, a broken variety of greater quality is seen as inferior to a whole food of the same variety. Example: a day-old donut is more *חשוב* than a fresh half donut.

Preference

4. One’s personal preference is considered only after the above factors. Therefore, if one is presented with two foods that are the same ברכה and both are whole or both are broken, הלכה dictates that the ברכה should be made on the preferred food. (There is, however, one instance when preference moves to the “top of the list” and would be the determining factor over the considerations of שבעת המינים and wholeness: when both a העץ and האדמה are being said. See below, #8d, for further explanation and examples).

- a. The majority of Poskim agree that preference is established by one’s *usual* preference, even if *now* one wants the other food. For example, if one is eating tortilla chips and licorice and the usual preference is licorice, even if *now* one wants chips, the ברכה should be made on the licorice since it is the standard preference.
- b. If neither is more preferred under usual circumstances, and only *now* one is preferred, that preference would determine which food gets the ברכה. For example, if you plan on eating an apple and a tangerine and neither is typically preferred, but *now* you want the crunch of an apple, the העץ should be said on the apple.

³ רש"י מא, א ד"ה ופליגא with ברכות מא, ב.

⁴ See ברכות לה, ב.

Permutations

5. While מ-ג-ע-א-ש (see footnote 2) is the usual hierarchy, within the stages there are different possibilities based on circumstance:
- a. **המוציא**: When choosing from breads of different grains to make the ברכה on, we give priority to those two grains written explicitly in the פסוק and then to those “related” to them. Therefore the order is:
 - i. Wheat (חטה)
 - ii. Barley (שעורה)
 - iii. Spelt (wheat category)
 - iv. Oats and Rye (barley category)

Note: Many “breads” like cornbread or rye bread are mostly wheat and are therefore categorized as wheat.

- b. As usual, when choosing between a whole and sliced loaf, one should make a ברכה on the whole loaf. *That means that one should first take a bite out of a whole bagel and only *afterwards* slice it and add the lox and cream cheese.*
- c. Type of grain wins over whole loaf. Therefore, if the choice is between a whole oat loaf and a sliced wheat loaf, the ברכה should be made on the wheat slice.
- d. All other things equal, size matters. Therefore, when eating two challah rolls for lunch, make the ברכה on the larger one.
- e. At the bottom of the totem pole, if everything else is equal but you prefer the better-crust one or the type of seeds on one, preference wins.

Summary for within המוציא: type of Grain>Whole>Size>Preference

6. **מזונות**: Follows the same general rules as המוציא {Grains>Whole>Size>Preference} with one addition: foods similar to bread (פת הבא בכיסנין) such as crackers, cookies, cake and pretzels trump boiled or cooked foods like spaghetti and oatmeal. This is in the place of size, with the new order being: Grains>Whole>כיסנין>Preference.
7. **הגפן**: is quite simple and trumps all fruit and vegetables, including grapes, because it is the most specific and includes only wine and grape juice.
8. **העץ/האדמה**: In dealing with only one of the two ברכות, the order is as follows:
 - a. שבעת המינים over other varieties of fruits and vegetables
 - b. If none are שבעת המינים, determine based on which is whole
 - c. If neither earlier quality is applicable, personal preference determines
 - d. If one is making both בורא פרי האדמה and בורא פרי העץ, the ברכות are seen as equal and personal preference takes priority over all other considerations and will determine the ברכה. *Note: one’s personal preference taking priority is unique to a situation involving העץ and האדמה and is NOT the case in the other scenarios discussed above.*
 - i. Example: If one is eating whole olives and sliced cucumbers, and he or she prefers cucumbers, the ברכה should be recited first on the cucumbers and then on the olives despite the fact that the olives are whole and one of the שבעת המינים. Peanuts would take priority over raisins if you like peanuts better.

9. **שהכל** is the least specific (as it is all inclusive) and therefore is last in the order of ברכות.
- This is true even if the **שהכל** food is most preferred over the other foods.
 - Within different foods that are all **שהכל**, whole items take precedence.
 - If there is no precedence of wholeness (i.e. all are whole or all are broken/sliced), personal preference determines.
10. **Exceptions:**
- Obviously, the laws of קדימה only take place when one intends on eating the two or more fruit. If one has grapes and a coffee on the table and only wants the coffee he/she need not eat a grape first.
 - If the item with the ברכה that should be recited first is not present, you need not wait for it to arrive. Example: if you want to drink water in a restaurant before your salad arrives it is fine to say **שהכל** "before" the האדמה.
 - Unique circumstances where other factors determine the order:
 - The most obvious circumstance that shifts the order of קדימה is קידוש where wine is first and then המוציא. This is obviously because the meal of שבת or a חג begins with a ברכה sanctifying the day and this ברכה is recited over wine. [According to many opinions, this is the source of the custom to cover the חלה as the wine is blessed upon/drank.]
 - Similarly, if one plans on having bread with his מלוח מלכה, the bread should not be placed on the table until after הבדלה is recited so that the wine isn't preempting the bread.
 - If the courses of a meal dictate a change in the סדר. For example, even if one knows he will have מזונות with the main course he may still recite האדמה on a salad served as an appetizer.
11. **Note:** These הלכות are all only לכתחילה and the order is almost never מעכב בדיעבד. So if ברכות were made in the incorrect order they will nevertheless remain valid.