

“A Taste of Talmud”  
If We Say Blessings After We Eat...  
Parashat Eikev  
August 22/23, 2008

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תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף לה עמוד א

מ/משנה/. כיצד מברכין על הפירות? על פירות האילן הוא אומר: בורא פרי העץ חוץ מן היין, שעל היין הוא אומר: בורא פרי הגפן; ועל פירות הארץ הוא אומר: בורא פרי האדמה, חוץ מן הפת, שעל הפת הוא אומר: המוציא לחם מן הארץ; ועל הירקות הוא אומר: בורא פרי האדמה, רבי יהודה אומר: בורא מיני דשאים.

גמרא. מנא הני מילי? דתנו רבנן: +ויקרא י"ט+ קדש הלולים לה' – מלמד שטעונים ברכה לפנייהם ולאחרייהם, מכאן אמר רבי עקיבא: אסור לאדם שיטעום כלום קודם שיברך – והאי קדש הלולים להכי הוא דאתא? האי מיבעי ליה, חד: דאמר רחמנא – אחליה והדר אכליה; ואידך: דבר הטעון שירה – טעון חלול, ושאינו טעון שירה – אין טעון חלול, וכדרבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן; דאמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן: מנין שאין אומרים שירה אלא על היין – שנאמר +שופטים ט'+ ותאמר להם הגפן החדלתי את תירושי המשמח אלהים ואנשים, אם אנשים משמח – אלהים במה משמח? מכאן, שאין אומרים שירה אלא על היין! הניחא למאן דתני נטע רבעי, אלא למאן דתני כרם רבעי מאי איכא למימר? דאתמר: רבי חייא ורבי שמעון ברבי, חד תני: כרם רבעי, וחד תני: נטע רבעי! ולמאן דתני כרם רבעי – הניחא אי יליף גזרה שוה, דתניא: רבי אומר, נאמר כאן: +ויקרא י"ט+ להוסיף לכם תבואתו, ונאמר להלן: +דברים כ"ב+ ותבואת הכרם – מה להלן כרם אף כאן כרם, אייתר ליה חד הלול לברכה; ואי לא יליף גזרה שוה – ברכה מנא ליה? ואי נמי יליף גזרה שוה – אשכחן לאחריו, לפניו מנין! הא לא קשיא, דאתיא בקל וחומר: כשהוא שבע מברך – כשהוא רעב לא כל שכן? אשכחן כרם, שאר מינין מנין? דיליף מכרם, מה כרם דבר שנהנה וטעון ברכה – אף כל דבר שנהנה טעון ברכה. – איכא למפרך: מה לכרם שכן חייב בעוללות! קמה תוכיח. מה לקמה – שכן חייבת בחלה! כרם יוכיח. וחזר הדין: לא ראי זה כראי זה ולא ראי זה כראי זה, הצד השוה שבהן – דבר שנהנה וטעון ברכה, אף כל דבר שנהנה טעון ברכה. – מה להצד השוה שבהן – שכן יש בו צד מזבח! ואתי נמי זית דאית ביה צד מזבח. – וזית מצד מזבח אתי? והא בהדיא כתיב ביה כרם, דכתיב: +שופטים ט"ו+ ויבער מגדיש ועד קמה ועד כרם זית! אמר רב פפא: כרם זית – אקרי,

כרם סתמא – לא אקרי. מכל מקום קשיא: מה להצד השוה שבהן שכן יש בהן צד מוזבח! אלא: דיליף לה משבעת המינין – מה שבעת המינין דבר שנהנה וטעון ברכה, אף כל דבר שנהנה טעון ברכה. מה לשבעת המינין שכן חייבין בבכורים! ועוד: התינה לאחריו, לפניו מניין? – הא לא קשיא; דאתי בקל וחומר: כשהוא שבע מברך – כשהוא רעב לא כל שכן. ולמאן דתני נטע רבעי – הא תינה כל דבר נטיעה. דלאו בר נטיעה, כגון בשר ביצים ודגים, מנא ליה? – אלא, סברא הוא: אסור לו לאדם שיהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה.

תנו רבנן: אסור לו לאדם שיהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה, וכל הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה – מעל. מאי תקנתיה – ילך אצל חכם. – ילך אצל חכם – מאי עביד ליה? הא עביד ליה איסורא! – אלא אמר רבא: ילך אצל חכם מעיקרא וילמדנו ברכות, כדי שלא יבא לידי מעילה. אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: כל הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה – כאילו נהנה מקדשי שמים, וכתוב: +תהלים כ"ד+ לה' הארץ ומלואה. רבי לוי רמי: כתיב לה' הארץ ומלואה, וכתוב: +תהלים קט"ו+ השמים שמים לה' והארץ נתן לבני אדם! לא קשיא, כאן – קודם ברכה, תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף לה עמוד ב כאן – לאחר ברכה.

אמר רבי חנינא בר פפא: כל הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה כאילו גוזל להקדוש ברוך הוא וכנסת ישראל, שנאמר: +משלי כ"ח+ גוזל אביו ואמו ואומר אין פשע חבר הוא לאיש משחית; ואין אביו אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא, שנאמר +דברים ל"ב+ הלא הוא אביך קנך; ואין אמו אלא כנסת ישראל, שנאמר: +משלי א'+ שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל תטוש תורת אמך.

**Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot, 35a-35b**

**Mishnah:** What blessings are said over fruit?

Over the fruit of the tree one says: בורא פרי העץ

“who creates the fruit of the tree.”

except for wine, over which one says: בורא פרי הגפן

“who creates the fruit of the vine.”

Over that which grows from the ground one says: בורא פרי האדמה

except for bread, over which one says: המוציא לחם מן הארץ

“who brings forth bread from the earth.”

Over vegetables one says: בורא פרי האדמה

“who creates the fruit of the ground.”

Rabbi Judah, however, says (that we make a distinction between fruits that grow on the ground and vegetables, saying over vegetables):

בורא מיני דשאים. “who creates various kinds of herbs.”

**Gemarah:** From where is this derived

[that a blessing is necessary before eating food]?

[In other words: what is the root, in the Torah, of this rabbinic custom?]

As our Rabbis have taught: קִדְּשׁ הַלוּלָאִים לַיהוָה

(“The fruit thereof shall be holy) for giving praise unto the Eternal.”

(Leviticus 19:24)

Context: This citation refers to the law requiring produce to fall off on its own and remain unused during the first three years after a tree has been planted. Produce of the fourth year is consecrated to God. The issue here in particular is a clever reading of the phrase “giving praise,” which, as we will see, is *plural*. The word *hallel*, meaning “praise,” is interpreted as referring to a blessing; it probably did not mean that originally. We already know (from Deuteronomy 8) that a blessing is required *after* eating food; *that* is explicit in the Torah. The Rabbis of the Talmud are trying to derive a basis *in the Torah* for the by-then well-known practice of blessings before food as well. Here is the full Biblical context:

כג וְכִי־תָבֹאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ וְנִטְעַתֶּם כָּל־עֵץ מֵאֵכֶל וְעֵרְלֹתֶם עֵרְלֹתוֹ אֶת־פְּרִיֹו שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים יִהְיֶה לָכֶם עֵרְלִים לֹא יֵאָכֵל: כד וּבִשְׁנָה הָרְבִיעִת יִהְיֶה כָּל־פְּרִיֹו קִדְּשׁ הַלוּלָאִים לַיהוָה: כה וּבִשְׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁת תֹּאכְלוּ אֶת־פְּרִיֹו לְהוֹסִיף לָכֶם תְּבוּאָתוֹ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

“And when you shall come into the land, and shall have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count its fruit as uncircumcised; three years shall it be uncircumcised to you; it shall not be eaten. But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy for praise giving to the Lord. And in the fifth year shall you eat of its fruit, that it may yield to you its produce; I am the Lord your God.” (Leviticus 19:23-25)

This teaches that they require a blessing both before and after eating them.

On the strength of this Rabbi Akiva said:

“It is forbidden for a person to taste anything  
before saying a blessing over it.”

But is this the lesson to be learned from the words “holy for giving praise”?

Surely they are required for two lessons

[the verse was meant as the basis for two *other* laws, namely]:

first, to teach that the All-Merciful has declared

*Redeem it* [the fruit of the fourth year] and then eat it,

and secondly, that a thing which requires a *song of praise* [a blessing],

requires “*redemption*” [the ritual offering up of an item]

but one that does not require a song of praise does not require redemption,

as has been taught by Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachmani,

in the name of Rabbi Yochanan.

Context: Maybe the plural of the word *hillulim* teaches not that there are blessings before and after, but that there are *two* lessons to be learned here. Of those lessons only one is linked to the concept of blessing, and that is somewhat circumscribed in scope. The Rabbis here rely on a linguistic slight of hand: the link between “redemption” and “blessing” is based on a play of words between *הלולים* *hillulim* and *חלולים* *chillulim* (“profaned,” meaning, in this case, the opposite, i.e., “redeemed.”) In addition, the effect of Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachmani’s lesson here would be to limit the applicability of this law relating to the fruit of the fourth year only to that which requires redemption. What he means by this we will see below.

For Rabbi Shmeul ben Nachmani said, in the name of Rabbi Yochanan:

“How do we know that a song of praise is said only over wine?”

Because it says:

גַּג וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַגֶּפֶן הַחֵד לְתִלְ אֶת־תִּירוֹשֵׁי הַמְּשַׁמֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים וְאֲנָשִׁים

“And the vine said unto them: Should I leave my wine,  
which cheers God and man?” (Judges 9:13)

If it cheers man, how does it cheer God?

From this we learn that a song of praise is sung only over the vine.

Now this reasoning

[that we learn the requirement of saying a blessing from the word *הלולים*]

is valid for the one who teaches “the *planting* of the fourth year”

[i.e., that *וּבשנה הרביעית יהיה כל־פרו* refers to *all* fruit of the fourth year].

But for the one who teaches [that it refers to] “the *vineyard* of the fourth year”  
what can be said? [How, then, can we derive the more general commandment

to say a blessing over all produce?]

For it has been stated:

Rabbi Chiyah and Rabbi Simon the son of Rabbi [Yehudah HaNasi]  
[taught differently].

One taught [that this verse is to be read as]: “the vineyard of the fourth year,”  
the other taught “the planting of the fourth year.”

For the one who teaches “vineyard of the fourth year” there is no difficulty  
if one avails oneself of a גזירה שוה *g'zeirah shavah*

[a verbal analogy, whereby if the same word or phrase appears  
in two places in the Torah, and a certain law is explicitly stated in one place,  
we may infer by analogy that the law applies in the other place as well]:

For it has been taught: Rabbi [Yehudah HaNasi] says:

It says there:

וּבִשְׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁית תֹּאכְלוּ אֶת־פְּרִיּוֹ לְהוֹסִיף לָכֶם תְּבוּאָתוֹ:

“And in the fifth year shall you eat of its fruit,  
that it may yield to you *its produce*; (Leviticus 19:25),  
and it says in another place

לֹא־תִזְרַע בְּרִמְךָ בְּלֵאָיִם פֶּן־תִּקְדָּשׁ הַמְּלֵאָה הַזֶּרַע אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע וּתְבוּאֵת הַכֶּרֶם:  
(You shall not sow your vineyard with different seeds; lest the fruit of your seed  
which you have sown,) and the *produce of your vineyard*, (be defiled).”

(Deuteronomy 22:9) [The word linking the two verses is תְּבוּאָת]

Just as in the latter passage “produce” refers to the “vineyard,”  
so, too, here, it refers to the “vineyard.”

Thus one הלול *hillul* is left over here  
to indicate that a blessing is required.

I *think* this means that even if you argue that the phrase “holy for giving praises” refers, in part  
and by analogy, to the “fruit of the vine,” it still says “praises,” not “praise,” which means that  
the plural can be seen as a reference to other kinds of produce -- thus deriving the obligation to  
say a blessing over all kinds of fruits and vegetables from this verse after all.

But if one does not avail oneself of a *g'zeirah shavah*,  
how can one derive the obligation to recite a blessing from this?

And even if one does employ the *g'zeirah shavah*,  
we are satisfied that a blessing is required after [eating]  
[referring to the custom known from Deuteronomy 8:10,  
where we are told that “when we have eaten and are satisfied, we bless the  
Eternal our God for the good land God has given us”].

[Saying a blessing] before hand -- where [does that come from]?

This is no difficulty.

We derive it as an argument קל וחומר

[*kal v'chomeir*; an *a fortiori* inference;

a comparison drawn between two cases, one lenient and the other stringent,  
arguing that if the law is stringent in a case where we are usually lenient  
it will certainly be stringent in a more serious case].

If one says a blessing when one is full,  
how much the more so one ought to do so when one is hungry?

We have found the proof for the case of the [produce of the] vineyard.  
About other produce, where do we derive it [that a blessing is required]?

It can be learned from the “vineyard;”  
just as the vineyard, being something that is enjoyed, requires a blessing,  
so everything that is enjoyed requires a blessing.

But this can be refuted.

How can we learn from the vineyard,  
seeing that it is subject to the obligation of “gleanings”  
[as, for example, in Leviticus 19:10,

וְכַרְמְךָ לֹא תַעֲוֹלֵל וּפְרֵט כְּרַמְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט לְעַנֵּי וְלִגְרֵי תַעֲזֹב אֹתָם

“And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of  
your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and stranger”  
and therefore it may be that only that produce which is subject to gleaning  
may be the reason why it requires a blessing.]

Corn proves it!

[since corn is not subject to gleanings,  
but does require a blessing, as seen in Deuteronomy 8:10].

What’s with corn -- which requires *challah*?

[Corn cannot be a proof, since it requires the heave-offering of dough,  
and therefore *that* may be the reason why it requires a blessing.]

We may then cite the instance of the vineyard,  
and the argument goes round and round in a circle.

The distinguishing feature of this [gleaning]  
is not the same as the distinguishing feature of that [*challah*],  
and the distinguishing feature of that  
is not the same as the distinguishing feature of this.

What is equivalent between them  
is that a thing which is enjoyed requires a blessing;  
so everything which is enjoyed requires a blessing.

What’s this with the equivalence between them --

[This argument from a common feature is not conclusive],  
since there is with them the common feature that they are offered on the altar  
[in the form of drink-offering and meal-offering].

We may then adduce also the olive,  
from the fact that it is offered on the altar!

But is [the blessing over] the olive  
derived from the fact that it is offered on the altar?

The olive is explicitly referred to as a “vineyard” crop  
[and therefore on the same footing as wine], as it is written:

וַיִּבְעֹר מִגְדֵּי־שֵׁשׁ וְעַד־קִמָּה וְעַד־כַּרְם זֵית:

(“And when he had set the torches on fire, he let them go into the standing grain of the Philistines,) and burned up both the shocks, and also the standing grain, as well as the olive trees.” (Judges 15”5)

Rav Pappa replied:

It is called כַּרְם זֵית “an *olive vine*”  
and not, simply, “a vineyard.”

In any event it’s a problem. [The difficulty remains.]

How can you learn [other produce] from the argument of equivalence, seeing that [wine and corn] have in common being offered on the altar?

Rather it is learned from the seven species [mentioned in Deuteronomy 8:8]. Just as the seven species are something which, being enjoyed, require blessing, so everything which is enjoyed requires a blessing.

What’s with [how can you argue from] the seven species,  
which are subject to the obligation of first fruits?

Further: so it’s proven for afterwards.

Before hand -- from where?

This is not a difficulty --  
employing the *kal vachomeir*.

If one says a blessing when one is satisfied [sated, full],  
how much the more so should one do so when one is hungry?

Now as for the one who reads “planting of the fourth year,”  
we may grant the point is proven with regard to anything planted.

But what of that which is not produce,  
such as meat, egg and fish?

אלא, סברא הוא:

אסור לו לאדם שיהנה מן העולם הזה

בלא ברכה.

**The fact is that it is a reasonable supposition  
that it is forbidden for a person to enjoy anything from this world  
without saying a blessing.**

Our rabbis have taught:

It is forbidden for a person to enjoy anything of this world without a blessing,  
and if anyone enjoys anything of this world without a blessing -- מַעַל!

[*Ma'al* -- a technical term for personal use by a lay person of things which were consecrated for use in the sacred service in the Sanctuary by priests].

What is one’s remedy?

He should consult a sage!  
What will the sage do for him?  
He has already violated the prohibition!  
Rather, Rabba said:  
he should go to the sage before hand,  
so as to teach him the blessings  
in order to not come to the point of *m'ilah*.

Rab Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel:  
To enjoy anything of this world without a blessing  
is like making personal use of things consecrated to heaven, since it says:

לְיִהוָה הָאֲרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהָ  
(תִּבְלַל וַיִּשְׁבֵּי בָהּ);

“The earth is the Eternal’s, and all that fills it;  
(the world, and those who dwell in it.)” (Psalm 24:1)

Rabbi Levi raised [a point of contradiction between two texts]:

It is written: לְיִהוָה הָאֲרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהָ

“The earth is the Eternal’s, and all that fills it,”  
and it is also written:

הַשָּׁמַיִם שָׁמַיִם לַיהוָה  
וְהָאָרֶץ נָתַן לַבְּנֵי-אָדָם;

“The heavens are the heavens of the Eternal,  
but the Earth God gave to human beings.” (Psalm 115:16)

No problem!

Here [in the first case, claiming that the earth belongs to God],  
it is before a blessing.

**(35b)** Here [claiming that the earth belongs to human beings],  
it is after a blessing!

Rabbi Chaninah ben Papa said:

**“To enjoy the world without [saying] a blessing  
is like robbing the Holy One, Blessed be God,  
and the community of Israel,**

as it says:

גוֹזֵל | אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ וְאָמַר אֵין-פָּשַׁע חֵבֵר הוּא לְאִישׁ מִשְׁחִית׃

“He who robs his father or his mother, and says, This is no transgression; he is  
the companion of a destroyer.” (Proverbs 28:24);

“father” is none other than the Holy One, blessed be God,  
as it says:



הֲלוֹא־הוּא אָבִיךָ קָנָךְ הוּא עָשָׂךְ וַיִּכְנְנֶךָ:

Is He not your father, who has gotten you” (Deuteronomy 32:6)  
and “mother” is none other than the community of Israel,  
as it says

שְׁמַע בְּנִי מִוְסַר אָבִיךָ וְאַל־תִּטֹּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמֶּךָ:

“Hear, my son, the instruction of your father,  
and forsake not the teaching of your mother.” (Proverbs 1:8)