



A PROJECT OF CHICAGO COMMUNITY KOLLEL

PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

3 Kislev 5770 / Nov. 20, 2009

Parshas Toldos  Rabbi Aaron Rokach

A Good Upbringing

Yitzchok was forty years old when he took Rivkah, the daughter of Besuel and sister of Lavan, to be his wife (Bereishis 25:20).

The *Midrash* explains that *Rivkah's* genealogy is mentioned here in order to highlight her accomplishments. Despite being raised among wicked people such as *Besuel* and *Lavan*, *Rivkah* did not learn from their ways and managed to attain greatness through her own efforts (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63:4).

The following *pasuk* states: *Yitzchok prayed to Hashem opposite his wife because she was barren, and Hashem answered him and Rivkah became pregnant (Bereishis 25:21).*

The *Gemara* notes that both *Yitzchok* and *Rivkah* prayed for children, but *Hashem* responded only to *Yitzchok's* prayers. The *Gemara* explains that *Yitzchok* had greater merit since he was a righteous man himself and also descended from righteous parents. *Rivkah*, on the other hand, was righteous in her own right but did not descend from righteous parents (*Yevamos* 64a).

Several commentators note what appears to be an inconsistency between the *Midrash* and *Gemara* quoted above. The *Midrash* emphasizes the accomplishment of a righteous person who perseveres despite being raised by wicked people. The *Gemara* however, indicates that a righteous person who is also the descendent of righteous people has more merit. Which of the two is actually greater?

Rav Elyahu Dessler, in his sefer *Michtav Mei'eliyahu* (part 3, pg. 124), explains that the *Midrash* and *Gemara* are each focusing on a different type of accomplishment. On a basic level, one who is not raised in proper surroundings faces a greater challenge in choosing the right path than one who was taught the correct way from youth. The former must struggle to reject the wickedness that surrounded them in order to discover the truth.

One who withstands this test deserves credit; therefore, the *Midrash* praises *Rivkah* for becoming a righteous person despite the negative influence of *Besuel* and *Lavan*.

People raised in proper surroundings however, face a particular challenge in developing a deeper understanding of the great concepts of *Avodas Hashem* and reaching true greatness. One who is familiar with these concepts from youth may be inclined to take things for granted and not expend the effort necessary to reach a deeper appreciation. One who is surrounded by wickedness and falsehood, on the other hand, is motivated to search for the truth. Thus, it is a truly great accomplishment when someone raised among righteous people strives to find the deeper meaning of concepts that are familiar from their youth.

When discussing the redemption of *Klal Yisroel* from exile, the *pasuk* states: *I shall remember my covenant with Ya'akov, and also my covenant with Yitzchok and also my covenant with Avraham I shall remember (Vayikra 26:42).* The *Midrash* notes that this *pasuk* indicates that *Avraham*, *Yitzchok* and *Ya'akov* were each worthy of their own personal covenants for the salvation of their descendents (*Vayikra Rabbah* 36:5). *Rav Dessler* explains that like *Avraham*, who discovered *Hashem* on his own, *Yitzchok* and *Ya'akov* also exerted themselves to form their own personal connections with *Hashem* rather than practicing by rote what their fathers had taught them. *Yitzchok* is praised by the *Gemara* for being a righteous man and also the son of righteous people because of this effort. Rather than simply relying on his father's accomplishments, *Yitzchok* utilized the education he received from *Avraham* as a stepping stone to finding his own personal path in *Avodas Hashem*.

Rabbi Rokach learns daily at the kollel.

HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

PAS HABO BIKISNIM

Rabbi Shlomo Francis

There are three basic categories of wheat products pertaining to hilchos brochos. (In the context of this article wheat also refers to any of the following five grains: wheat, spelt, barley, rye, and oats.) The first is any baked wheat product that has bread like properties and is made in a form that would enable it to be used as the mainstay of a meal. This type of food has the status of bread (pas gamur). The appropriate brocha for such a product is hamotzie. A wheat product such as pasta, that is cooked rather than baked, is called a ma'aseh kideirah — a cooked (grain) dish. The appropriate brocha on a ma'aseh kideirah is mezonos, regardless of the amount consumed. The gemarah (Brachos 41b) defines a third category of grain products called pas habo bikisnim. This category includes various pastries that are baked, not cooked and therefore resemble bread. However, due to their taste or texture, these foods are generally eaten as snacks, and not as the mainstay of a meal. The mefarshim explain that these pastries are considered pas. Therefore, in certain instances, the bracha of hamotzie would be recited. However hamotzie was only designated as a brocha on bread to emphasize its status as the mainstay of a meal. It is therefore inappropriate to recite hamotzie on a bread product if it is eaten as a snack food. Thus, if one eats these pastries as a snack, he should recite “mezonos” and “al hamichya”. If, however, one eats these pastries as the mainstay of his meal (kiviyas seuda), he must recite “hamotzie” and “birchas hamazon”.

The poskim indicate three characteristics that define pas habo bikisnim.

1) The food is kneaded with a significant amount of sweetener, oil, or spices. 2) It has a hard, flaky texture. 3) It is filled with a sweet filling such as fruit or cream. A pastry that shares all three characteristics (such as apple pie with a hard crust) can be clearly categorized as pas habo bikisnim. Most pastries do not have all these characteristics and are thus subject to dispute. According to some poskim, they are considered pas gamur. Other poskim consider these pastries pas habo bikisnim. Due to the concept of safek brachos l'hakel, these pastries are usually treated as pas habo bikisnim and do not require birchas hamazon.

WHAT CONSTITUTES KVIUS SEUDA

The Mishna Berurah quoting the Elyah Rabah says that eating an amount equivalent to four beitzim (eggs) constitutes kvius seuda. The Mishna Berura states that many authorities including the Gr"A are of the opinion that kvius seuda is the amount customarily eaten at a typical meal. The Biur Halachah further explains that in different countries and cultures it may be customary to eat different amounts. Additionally, people become satiated differently, depending on their age. One must therefore consider the amount of bread that people his age in his country would normally eat for a meal. The Igr'M (O'Ch 3:32) writes that in America, where there is an abundance of meat and other dishes, it is common for one to base his seuda on a small amount of bread together with generous portions of other dishes. Thus, the amount needed for kvius seudah at a multi course meal would be the equivalent to the amount of bread that would normally be eaten by such a meal, even if this is less than four beitsim. According to this opinion, if one attending a kiddush would eat cake together with a generous helping of chulent, he would be required to recite hamotzie and birchas hamazon. Hagaon R' Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt"l, however understands that even in such a case kvius seudah requires at least four beitsim. Hagaon R' David Feinstein shlita (Shu't Vidibarta Bam) states that if one eats a meal consisting of meat and other dishes and then eats cake for dessert, he need not be concerned about kvius seuda. R' Feinstein reasons, that one establishing a meal on bread will eat the bread at the beginning or middle of the meal. Therefore, in this case,

where the cake is eaten at the end of the meal, it does not resemble a bread meal and does not constitute kvius seuda.

PAS HABO BIKISNIM FOR DESSERT

Most foods that are eaten during a bread meal are considered secondary to the bread and thus do not require their own brocha. Foods eaten only for pleasure and not for satiation (such as most desserts), require a brocha even when eaten during a bread meal. Foods that require the brocha mezonos also require a brocha if they are eaten for dessert. However, in order to recite a brocha one must be certain that the food is actually a mezonos food and not in the category of pas gamur. A baked pastry such as an apple pie with a hard crust that is clearly considered pas habo bikisnim, requires a mezonos if it is eaten for pleasure. However, most pastries do not have all three characteristics of pas habo bikisnim. According to some opinions, these pastries may be considered pas gamur. Since there is a concept of safek brochos lehakel, one eating such pastries for dessert at a bread meal should not recite a brocha. However, since these pastries are pas habo bikisnim, according to many opinions, eating them without a brocha is also not ideal. The Chayei Adam recommends that while reciting hamotzie, one have specific intention to exempt the pastries even if they are actually mezonos. In this case the bracha of hamotzie is effective because pas habo bikisnim is actually bread, and the words hamotzie “lechem” is theoretically correct. Yet, since hamotzie is not the prescribed brocha, it is only extended to include pas habo bikisnim where one has specific intent.

The Shulchan Aruch (188:13) discusses what the correct brocha to say on sufganios (doughnuts) is. Sufganios are usually made with a dough that closely resembles bread dough. They are then deep fried in oil. In this way, they are markedly different than ordinary bread which is baked. According to one opinion in the Shulchan Aruch, since the dough resembled bread before it was cooked, it retains the status of pas gamur and requires a birchas hamotzie. (Some sufganios are kneaded with a significant amount of milk or sweetener, or filled with jelly or custard. They are then pas habo bikisnim even according to this opinion.) According to the second opinion cited in the Shulchan Aruch (ibid), since these sufganios are deep fried, they have the status of maaseh kedaira and do not require hamotzie even if one is koveah seuda. The Biur Halacha concludes that if the dough was kneaded with the intention of creating doughnuts, one may follow the latter opinion and recite mezonos even if he is koveah seuda.

As mentioned previously, most pastries are safek pas gamur. Therefore, according to many poskim, when such pastries are eaten as a dessert, mezonos should be made. Doughnuts are not considered pas according to the ruling of the Mishna Berura, and one may recite mezonos if he eats them as a dessert. However, Hagaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach writes that the doughnuts commonly found today are too large and satisfying to be considered “kinuach”- a dessert eaten only for pleasure. Other poskim do not make this distinction. One should preferably avoid the problem by reciting a mezonos on a small piece (less than a kzayis) of “mezonos food” before washing for bread. If one forgot to do so, he may eat a “shehakol food” for dessert and have specific intention while reciting shehakol to exempt the doughnuts. Shehakol is a general brocha thanking Hashem for all the foods, and it can therefore exempt foods in all specific brocha categories. According to some poskim, doughnuts (unlike pas habo bikisnim), do not resemble bread in any way, and therefore hamotzie can not be extended to include them. Thus, the previously mentioned solution of the Chayei Adam, that one make hamotzie with the intention of including the “mezonos food” eaten for dessert, should only be used with doughnuts as a last resort.

Rabbi Francis is a full-time member of the kollel.