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שע"י "הדר הוראה" שכונת מנחת יצחק פעיה"ק ירושלם תובב"א - בראשות הרב חיים אהרן בלייער שליט"א

Halochos compiled by HaRav Chaim Bleier – Translated from the Hebrew edition by R' Zerachya Shicker

Dinim of Conduct during a Meal

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Conduct during a Meal

Nitzavim-Vayeilech 5783

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Kedushah of a Table

Table Is Like the Mizbeich

- In the month of Tishrei, Klal Yisroel sits down to many Shabbos and Yom Tov seudos with their families. There are many halachos pertaining to seudos, but only a few people learn and know them sufficiently well. Thus, we saw a need to explain some halachos, thereby increasing kedushah at our seudos. This will show that we want to get closer to Hashem during these days and sanctify ourselves in our material needs as well. May we be zocheh this way to eat from the korbanos בעוה"שית. כבוד.
- Table is like the Mizbeich.** A table is like the Mizbeich (רמ"א סי' קס"ז) (גמ' ברכות דף נ"ה ע"א) (ס"ה). As Chazal say (גמ' ברכות דף נ"ה ע"א) when the Beis HaMikdash stood, the Mizbeich atoned for a person; now, a person's table atones for him, as the posuk says, "וידבר אלי זה השלחן אשר לפני ה'". This is achieved by giving food to the poor (כסף משנה) hachnosas orchim (שער) (חגיגה דף כ"ז ע"א ד"ה שלחנו שער) and saying words of Torah at the table (הציון שם סק"ה (below, 28), as the Torah atones more than korbanos (שלי"ה שער האותיות אות הק"ף קדושת האכילה את ר"ג).
- Eating is like a korban.** Since a table is like the Mizbeich, eating is like a korban (רמ"א שם). Namely, a person eats to give himself strength, making him healthy and strong to serve Hashem (מ"ב שם סק"א).
- Like the Shulchan.** Some cite the idea that a table must resemble the Shulchan in the Beis HaMikdash. Thus, one should make sure to eat on a table with four legs, like the Shulchan in the Beis HaMikdash (מ"א סי' רס"ב בהקדמה בשם האר"י, א"ר שם סק"א, ערוך השלחן שם ס"ב).

Sitting Respect for a Table

- Killing a louse.** We must show respect for the table and behave at the table accordingly. That is why one may not kill a louse on a table; killing on the table is like killing on the Mizbeich (שער"צ שם) (סק"ז). The same goes for a fly, ant, or the like (כפר"ח סי' קס"א). However, if there is a mosquito on the table and one is afraid it will go into the food and he will not be able to find it, it is likely he may kill it on the table, as he has a need to do so (חשוך חמד מכות יב).
- Something distasteful.** Similarly, one should not do anything distasteful at the table (ערוה"ש סי"ב) or place anything distasteful on it (סידור הרב שער ברהמ"א), e.g., a comb or hairbrush (שלחן הטהור מאמא) (תיקוני והנהגות השלחן דף קל"ג ד"ה ותראה).
- Children on a table.** One should not let children walk on a table. Once, a child walked on the table at which his father learned with his sefarim, and the child fell and was injured (ספר חסידים סי' תקל"ב). Similarly, some write one should not stand or sit on a table because a table is like the Mizbeich. One should also not let his small children stand on a table (שלחן הטהור תיקוני והנהגות השלחן דף קל"ג).
- Passing a child over the table.** For this reason, the minhag in Morocco was not to pass a baby over or under a table, as a table is like the Mizbeich, and they had a tradition that doing so harms the baby (נתיבות המערב - מנהג מרוקו מנהגי הריון ולידה אות ל"ה) not to pass a baby over a table to guard the cleanliness of the table, which is like the Mizbeich; and a baby passed over a table might urinate over the food and ruin it (עמ"ק א'), (שמירת הגוף והנפש מילואים על סי' פ"ז הע' ג).

Covering Knives for Bentsching

- The minhag is to cover the knife during bentsching (ש"ע סי' ק"פ ס"ה). Thus, when one is finished eating and wants to bentsch, he should cover or remove the knife. The poskim give two main reasons for this.
- Iron on the Mizbeich.** The first reason is that iron [as in weapons] shortens people's lives, so it is not fitting to put it on a table, which is like the Mizbeich, which lengthened people's lives. That is why the posuk says (ב"י, הובא במ"ב שם סק"א) "לא תניף עליהם ברזל".

- Potential danger.** Another reason is quoted from Rabbeinu Simcha: There was once someone who, upon reaching the brachah of Bonei Yerushalayim and remembering the sad matter of the Churban Beis HaMikdash, thrust a knife into his stomach. Therefore, the minhag is to remove knives for bentsching (שם).
- Removing or covering?** According to the first reason, it would suffice to cover the knife so that it is not visible. According to the second reason, one would need to completely remove it so he cannot take it and endanger himself (ע"פ דקדוק לשון הבי"ה והמ"ב, חוט שני שבת ד"ג עמ') (רמ"א, כ"ה חיים סק"ז). However, the minhag is to rely on covering the knife in all cases (א"א בוטשאטש מהר"ב).
- Shabbos.** The minhag is not to cover the knife on Shabbos and Yom Tov (ש"ע שם). The first reason for covering knives is that a table is like the Mizbeich, about which it says "לא תניף עליהם ברזל" – but on Shabbos, a time when the Beis HaMikdash is not built, there is no allusion to the Mizbeich (מג"א סק"ד). As far as the second reason, Chazal only made their decree in a case similar to that incident, which happened during the week, not on Shabbos (ט"ז סק"ג).

"Bread with Salt You Shall Eat"

Salt on the Table

- Honor for the brachah.** It used to be that no salt or flavoring was added when baking bread; they would only put salt or another accompaniment onto the bread before they ate it. The poskim therefore wrote one should bring that salt or accompaniment to the table before making Hamotzi so that the first serving of bread would have flavor. This gave honor to the brachah – it would be said on bread eaten with a good flavor (ש"ע סי' קס"ז ס"ה, מ"ב שם). If one chose to eat bread without any salt or accompaniment, there was no need to bring them (ש"ע שם).
- Nowadays that recipes for bread say to add salt and other flavors before it is baked, there is no need to bring salt to the table to add it to the bread. Since it already has its desired flavor, this does not add honor for the brachah (שם).
- Like the Mizbeich.** Nevertheless, the poskim write that there is still a mitzvah to bring salt to every table before making Hamotzi on bread. This is because the table is like the Mizbeich, and the eating, like a korban; and the posuk says "על כל קרבן תקריב מלח".
- Protects from misfortune.** The Rama also mentions that this protects from misfortune (רמ"א שם). When Yidden are sitting and waiting for each other to wash and are without mitzvos, the Satan prosecutes, but the treaty of salt [ברית מלח] protects them (מדור הובא במ"ב סק"ב). According to these two latter reasons, there is no need to dip the bread in salt; it is enough just to have salt on the table.

Dipping Bread in Salt

- However, based on Kabbalah, one should also dip his slice of Hamotzi three times in salt (ש"ע הרב ס"ה, באר היטב, מ"ב סק"ג). The gematria of מל"ח is three times the הוי"ה; dipping three times "sweetens" the three הוי"ה through גבורות (הא) חסדים (הגרי"ש שם כתיב). The Chasam Sofer's minhag was not to dip the Hamotzi slice into salt on leil Shabbos, because dipping in salt was instituted based on the posuk (על כל קרבן תקריב מלח), whereas on leil Shabbos, no fats were burned on the Mizbeich (ד"ד קמ"ד). Some still bring salt so that it is on the table (הגרי"ש וואזנר קובץ מבית לוי ח"ג עמ' מ"ח). However, the minhag of most people is to also dip on Shabbos.

Rosh Hashanah Night

- Bringing to the table.** There are differing minhagim about salt on Rosh Hashanah night, when the minhag is to dip the challah in honey (מ"ב סי' תקפ"ג סק"ג). Some do not bring salt to the table at all (הסטיפלער, ארחות רבינו ח"ב עמ' קע"ג); others bring it to the table but do not dip the challah in it (הגרשו"א, הליכות שלמה ר"ה פ"א ארה"ל הע' 77).

21. **Dipping in salt.** Some write to first dip the challah in salt and then in honey; this “sweetens the judgment” (כף החיים תקפ”ג סק”ד). Others dip one side of the challah in honey, taste it, then dip the second side in salt (ש”ת שלמת חיים ס”ג ש”ו). Others dip one side in salt and the second side in honey, or they do this for two slices, and then eat the challah dipped in salt first (טעמי מנהגים אות תר”ו). Yet others dip in salt and honey and eat it together (מחזור דברי יואל).

Speaking during a Meal

Do Not Speak during a Meal

22. One should not speak during a meal, so that the food does not encounter the windpipe before the esophagus (ש”ע ס” ק”ע ס”א). When one uses his voice, the windpipe’s cover [the epiglottis] opens, allowing the dangerous possibility of food entering (מ”ב סק”א). One should not even speak in Torah while eating (מ”ב שם).
23. **Between spoonfuls.** Technically, this is only dangerous when there is food in the mouth, not when the mouth does not have food in it. However, it is likely one should not even speak between spoonfuls, as that will lead to continuing to speak while there is food in his mouth.
24. **Between servings.** However, one may speak between servings, in the same way the poskim write one may speak between two dishes (מ”ב סק”א).
25. **No reclining today.** Some hold that only back then, when they ate while reclining, was there the danger of food going down the windpipe, but nowadays that we do not lean [besides for on Pesach], it is not dangerous to speak while eating. Thus, we see many people – including great people – are not careful about this (פרישה סק”א, א”ר, ברכי יוסף, שערי תשובה).
26. However, by not specifying otherwise, the other poskim imply that this applies even today, when we do not recline, and we must be careful about it (מ”ב). Nevertheless, the poskim write that since many people do not follow this, we must rely on the concept of “שומר פתאים ה” (שערי תשובה שם).
27. **A few words.** Some hold that the main issue is speaking about a lengthy topic; there we are concerned one will continue speaking while eating and endanger himself. However, there is no issue to respond with a few words, as perhaps the reality is that doing this does not open the epiglottis at the wrong time (ערוך השלחן).

Learning Something at the Table

28. **Individual.** Everyone has a mitzvah to learn Torah at his table, as eating at a table without words of Torah spoken there is like eating from an animal sacrificed for avodah zarah (מ”ב סק”א). The Shelah writes one should learn Mishnah, Halachah, Aggadah, or mussar sefarim (הובא במ”ב שם).
29. However, one should not study the sefer while he is actually eating. He should look at what he is eating so that he does not transgress the issur of eating bugs, which could be in his food (חכמת אדם כלל ל”ח ס”ב).
30. **Three people.** If three people ate at the same table and said words of Torah there, it is like they ate from Hashem’s table, as the posuk says, “וידבר אלי זה השלחן אשר לפני ה” (אבות פ”ג מ”ג). The same is true of two people; the Mishnah only mentioned three because it is common to eat in a group of three to create a chiyuv zimun (פ”ר רשב”ם).
31. Some say that when there are three people, they must speak words of Torah with each other (ש”ת שלמת חיים ס” קס”ו). Others say that even when there are three people, it suffices for each one to learn Torah on his own (הג”ר קניבסקי, שאלת רב עמ”ר ר”ז).

Ways to Fulfill This Halachah

32. **A set topic to learn.** Ideally, one should have a set topic to learn at his table. Especially at the long Shabbos and Yom Tov seudos when the whole family eats together, one should have a set topic to learn from a sefer so that everyone can engage in learning practical halachos, e.g., the sefer Chofetz Chaim and Shemiras HaLashon, a sefer on hilchos Shabbos, halachos pertaining to the current Yom Tov, or the like. [Ever since the Chukai Chaim came out, many families use it as a set topic to learn at the Shabbos table. Many people have found value in this, as it is something that appeals to everyone, with important and interesting halachos. We are fortunate Hashem gave us this zechus.]
33. **Saying a kapitel.** If one cannot learn from a sefer, one option is to say some kapitel Tehillim, thereby fulfilling the mitzvah of saying words of Torah. It is proper to say the kapitel “וכי” after Hamotzi, as it is words of Torah and includes a tefilah for sustenance (מ”ב שם סק”א, ס” קס”ו סק”ג).
34. **“Mayim acharonim is an obligation.”** Some suggest that if one does not have time to say a kapitel Tehillim, he can say the single halachah that “mayim acharonim is an obligation,” a halachah that comes from the Gemara in Chullin (דף קה.. בן איש חי שנה א פ” שלח אות ז).

35. **שיר המעלות, על נהרות.** Some say one can fulfill this halachah by saying שיר המעלות על נהרות בבל during the week and שיר המעלות on Shabbos (ש”ת הובא במ”ב ס” א סק”א).
36. **Birkas HaMazon.** Some write one can fulfill it with Birkas HaMazon itself (ברטנורא שם). However, most poskim argue and say one cannot rely on Birkas HaMazon for this purpose (מ”ב שם).

When to Learn

37. **After eating.** Some say one should learn after he is finished eating; the Mishnah is written in the past tense – “Three people who ate...” – because one may not talk during a meal (above, 22) (מדרש שמואל). Some give a reason for learning after eating: learning requires a clear, settled mind, so it is best to wait until one has finished eating and drinking and is in a positive state of mind (אלשיך “לש”ן” (הק”פ אחר, ש”ת תורה לשמה ס” תע”ו).
38. **Before eating.** However, others understand the Mishnah to be saying that the learning should be before eating. When it says “...and they did not say words of Torah there,” it means they did not say words of Torah prior to eating (הוא במדרש שמואל).
39. **Before and after eating.** Some cite that the Magid told the Beis Yosef to learn one perek of Mishnayos before eating and another perek after Mayim Acharonim but before bentsching (הובא בכף החיים). In other words, one should learn after eating some bread at the beginning of his meal, and then a second time at the end of the meal.

Derech Eretz Conduct

Drinking a Cup All at Once

40. **Wine.** When one drinks from a normal-sized cup for enjoyment and honor, e.g., wine or natural juices, he should not drink the cup all at once, as one who does so is a glutton. Instead, it is derech ertz to drink it in two swigs. I.e., one should put the cup to his mouth and drink, then take the cup away from his mouth and wait a bit, then continue drinking a second time. One who drinks in three swigs is arrogant (ש”ע ס” ק”ע ס”ח).
41. **Water, other drinks.** Some hold that when drinking water or other drinks due to thirst, it does not matter how many swigs he takes. Even if he would drink it all at once, that would be because he is thirsty, not a glutton. Similarly, drinking a carbonated beverage, for example, in three or more swigs is not arrogant, as sometimes it is hard to drink a lot at once (משמעות המג”א הובא).
42. **Kiddush.** One may drink the entire cup of wine from Kiddush, Havdalah, or another mitzvah all at once. In fact, doing this demonstrates love for the mitzvah (כף החיים סק”ז בשם) (תוספת שבת ובית מאיר ס” רד”ע).
43. **Shabbos.** Similarly, one may drink any drink at a Shabbos seudah all at once. One who does this is not a glutton; he is doing it because of his love for the Shabbos seudah (מ”ב ס” קס”ו סק”ב).

Distinguished Person First

44. When the food is brought out, one must honor the most distinguished person present by having him take first (ש”ע ס” ק”ע). Also, when each person is served an individual portion, no one present should eat before the most distinguished person. One who does so is a glutton (מ”ב שם סק”ח).

Biting into Food

45. One should not bite a piece and then put what was in his mouth on the table or onto a dish (ש”ע שם ס”י), as that is repulsive for others (פרישה, מ”ב סק”ו). However, one may put onto the table in front of him the food left in his hand after he bit off a piece. Still, he should not put it in onto a dish or in front of his friend for the friend to eat (מ”ב שם).
46. Some say it is never derech ertz to bite into food. Rather, one should cut or pull off a small piece and eat it that way (מדרש ילקוט).
47. **Shabbos.** Some write that there are people who bite into the Hamotzi slice with their mouth on Shabbos to show that the Shabbos food is dear to them (משמרת שלום ס” כ”ז סק”ה).

Leaving Over Some Food on the Plate

48. Derech ertz dictates that it is proper to leave over some food and not eat it all (גמ’ עירובין דף נ”ג ע”ב). The poskim explain that this is because eating everything makes a person look greedy (ב”ח).
49. **Shabbos, Yom Tov.** There is no need to leave food over on Shabbos and Yom Tov due to the dearness of the mitzvah of oneg Shabbos and Yom Tov (see above, 43).

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