

אֵלֶּא הָבָא בְּמֵאֵי עֶסְקִינוּ – Rather, since the Baraisa *does* allow even a minor to recite on behalf of his father, it must be that here, with what sort of case are we dealing? כְּגוֹן שֶׁאֵכַל שִׁיעוּרָא דְּרַבָּנָן – Where, for example, the father, master, or husband ate a small amount of food, an amount that creates only a Rabbinic obligation to recite *Bircas HaMazon*.<sup>[29]</sup> דְּאֵתִי דְּרַבָּנָן וּמִפִּיק דְּרַבָּנָן – For indeed, a Rabbinically obligated person can come and discharge the obligation of another Rabbinically obligated person! Hence, it may well be that a woman's obligation to recite *Bircas HaMazon* is no more than Rabbinic in nature.

The Gemara has alluded to the idea that under Biblical law, one is obligated to recite *Bircas HaMazon* only if he has eaten a portion that is truly satisfying, whereas Rabbinically, he must recite *Bircas HaMazon* even if he eats merely the volume of an olive or an egg.<sup>[30]</sup> The Gemara now comments on this:

דְּרַשׁ רַב אַוִּירָא – Rav Avira expounded the following teaching. וְזִמְנִין אָמַר לֵה מִשְׁמִיחָא דְּרַבִּי אָמִי – Sometimes he said it in the name of R' Ami, וְזִמְנִין אָמַר לֵה מִשְׁמִיחָא דְּרַבִּי אָסִי – and sometimes he said it in the name of R' Assi.<sup>[31]</sup> In any case, this was the teaching: אֲמִירוּ מַלְאָכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת לִפְנֵי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא – The ministering angels

said before the Holy One, Blessed is He: רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם – Master of the Universe! כְּתוּב בְּתוֹרָתְךָ – It is written about You in Your Torah “אֲשֶׁר לֹא יוֹשָׁא פָנִים וְלֹא יִקַּח שוֹד” – that You are He Who does not show favor and Who does not accept a bribe;<sup>[32]</sup> וְהִלֵּא אֶתְּהָ נּוֹשָׂא פָנִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל – but do You not, in fact, show favor to the Jewish people? דְּכֵתִיב – For indeed, it is written: “יֵשׂא ה' בְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵי” – May God show you favor!<sup>[33]</sup> – ? –

God replies:

וְכִי לֹא – [The Holy One, Blessed is He], said to them: אֲמַר לָהֶם – And shall I not show favor to Israel? How can I rightly not do so? שֶׁכְּתַבְתִּי לָהֶם בְּתוֹרָה – For I have written as a law for them in the Torah: וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת ה', וְאָכַלְתָּ – And you shall eat, be satisfied, and bless Hashem, your God,<sup>[34]</sup> which requires them to recite *Bircas HaMazon* only if they have eaten enough to be satisfied. וְהֵם מְדַקְדָּקִים [עַל] עֲצֻמָּם – Yet they are especially exacting upon themselves about this law, עַד – and are careful to recite *Bircas HaMazon* for virtually any meal, even down to the size of an olive וְעַד כְּבִירָצָה – or down to the size of an egg! Thus, just as they favor Me, so must I favor them.<sup>[35]</sup>

**Mishnah** One who experiences a seminal discharge is known in Talmudic literature as a *baal keri*.<sup>[36]</sup> Such a person is *tamei* and may not partake of *terumah* or *kodashim* until he immerses in a *mikveh* and waits until nightfall (see *Leviticus* 15:16). Under Torah law, this is the extent of the restrictions placed upon him; nevertheless, Ezra the Scribe decreed that a *baal keri* must also refrain from articulating words of Torah (and prayer) until he immerses.<sup>[37]</sup> In connection with this, our Mishnah discusses how a *baal keri* recites the *Shema* and the various blessings over food:

בְּעַל קְרִי מְהֵרָה בְּלִבּוֹ – When the time arrives to recite the morning or evening *Shema*, a *baal keri* is to contemplate the words of the *Shema* in his heart rather than say them aloud.<sup>[38]</sup> וְאֵינּוּ מְבָרְךְ – And even in his heart, he need not recite the attendant blessings: לֹא לְפָנֶיהָ וְלֹא לְאַחֶיהָ – neither the blessings that precede [the *Shema*] nor those that follow it.<sup>[39]</sup> וְעַל הַמֶּזֶן – Now, with regard to food, מְבָרְךְ לְאֶחָדָיו – he is to recite in his heart those blessings that follow a meal; וְאֵינּוּ מְבָרְךְ לְפָנָיו – but he is not to recite those blessings that precede the meal.<sup>[40]</sup>

A dissenting Tanna:

ר' יְהוּדָה אָמַר – R' Yehudah said: מְבָרְךְ לְפָנֶיהָ וְלְאַחֶיהָ – He recites the blessings that both precede and follow [the *Shema* and a meal].<sup>[41]</sup>

#### NOTES

29. E.g. the person ate an amount about the size of an olive (כְּבִירָצָה) or an egg. [R' Meir and R' Yehudah below debate whether an olive or an egg is the minimum volume one must eat to be Rabbinically obligated in the recitation of *Bircas HaMazon* [see below, 45a; see also 49b with *Tosafos* סבר [ד"ה רבי מאיר סבר]. By contrast, the Biblical obligation to recite *Bircas HaMazon* comes only when one eats a meal that truly satisfies him, as the verse states (*Deuteronomy* 8:10): וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ, and you shall eat, and you shall be satisfied, and you shall bless. Since, then, the husband here has eaten only enough for a Rabbinic obligation to devolve, it follows that another person with a Rabbinic obligation [e.g. a minor, or, perhaps his wife] can recite *Bircas HaMazon* on his behalf (*Rashi*). [With respect to the amount that the one reciting the blessing ate, see *Tosafos* to *Megillah* 19b יְהוּדָה ד"ה ור' יוחנן, *Chidushei R' Akiva Eiger*, *Responsa R' Akiva Eiger* §7, and *Chazon Ish* 29:5.]

30. See previous note.

31. Rav Avira seems to have in fact heard the same teaching from both R' Ami and R' Assi (see *Rashi* to *Shabbos* 108b ד"ה וימין). As for why he alternately quoted only one of these sources, rather than both, *Ben Yehoyada* (to *Chullin* 84b) provides the following theory: R' Ami was known to be a greater scholar than R' Assi (see *Tosafos* to *Bava Basra* 34a ד"ה הוה יתיב); however, Rav Avira happened to be a disciple of R' Assi. Rav Avira was thus unsure as to which one deserved the honor of being mentioned first, and to avoid this dilemma, he simply mentioned each of them on alternate occasions.

32. *Deuteronomy* 10:17.

33. *Numbers* 6:26. See *Tos. HaRosh* and *Tos. R' Yehudah HeChasid*.

34. *Deuteronomy* 8:10.

35. The same contradiction between verses is raised elsewhere (*Rosh Hashanah* 17b and *Niddah* 70b), with different answers given; e.g. when a penitent approaches God, God grants him clemency [shows him favor]

for those sins he committed towards God. As for those sins he committed towards his fellow man, however, God “will not show favor”; rather, he demands that the penitent first go and appease the victim of his misdeed before clemency is granted. For several other interpretations of this Gemara see *Chasam Sofer* [Mechon ed.] and *Cheifetz Hashem*.

36. [The association between the word קְרִי and the emission of semen can be traced to a verse which states: כִּי יִהְיֶה בָּךְ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִהְיֶה טָהוֹר מִקֶּדֶר, If there will be a man among you who is not tahor [on account of] a happening by night (*Deuteronomy* 23:11). In the verse, the term מִקֶּדֶר לֵילָה – from which the word קְרִי derives – refers to the experience of a seminal emission.]

37. *Bava Kamma* 82a,b; see *Rambam*, *Hil. Krias Shema* 4:8 and *Hil. Tefillah* 4:4. [Unlike the Biblical constraints upon a *baal keri*, the Rabbinic strictures imposed by Ezra are released immediately after the *baal keri* immerses; he need not wait for nightfall.]

Based on the Gemara below (22a), however, the consensus of halachic decisors is that this enactment no longer applies.

38. Although Ezra's decree prevents the *baal keri* from actually articulating the words, the Sages still required him to recite the text in his thoughts. Whether one can actually fulfill his obligation in this manner is an issue discussed by the Gemara below.

39. Since the blessings before and after the *Shema* are of Rabbinic origin, the Sages did not require the *baal keri* to mentally recite them (*Rashi*). [The obligation to recite *Shema* itself, however, is of Biblical origin – hence, the *baal keri* was required to at least recite these words mentally.]

40. The recital of *Bircas HaMazon* is Biblically mandated, whereas blessings before consuming food are of Rabbinic origin. Thus, the *baal keri* was required to mentally recite only the former (*Rashi*).

41. R' Yehudah's position is explained by the Gemara below (22a).