

## Class 31: Bracha Achrona – Introduction:

Until now, we've been learning about bracha rishona -- the blessing we say **before** consuming food or drinks. This is not where the story ends, however, because in most cases, we need to say another bracha after we **finish** eating. This is called **bracha achrona** -- literally, the final blessing, or colloquially called the "after-bracha."

Before eating, when you're hungry it's easy to say, "Thank God -- let's eat!" The blessings we say before the meal are an expression of that gratitude. But after the meal, when you're stuffed and have no desire to see food ever again (wishing that your pants had an elastic waistband), that's when you specifically need to be reminded express gratitude to God and deepen that connection. This is one explanation of the verse, "Yeshurun [the Jewish people] grew fat and kicked" (Deut. 32:15); after being satiated, there is a natural tendency to feel a bit of an independent rebellious streak.

In this class, we'll learn that there are different types of bracha achrona, depending on **what type of food** you've eaten. (The prescribed bracha achrona is required even if, for some reason, you ate without saying a bracha rishona.) And we'll need to take into account **how much and how quickly** you ate that food, to determine whether or not you should be saying a *bracha achrona* at all.

### **How much did you consume, and how quickly?**

We learned earlier that a *bracha rishona* is recited before eating even a tiny amount. However, when it comes to a *bracha achrona*, you'll need to have done a halachic "act of eating." This is conditional on:

- (a)** consuming at least a **minimum quantity** (*shiur*)  
and
- (b)** doing so within in a certain amount of **time**

Furthermore, the rules will be different for solids and for liquids, as we'll now see.

### **Solid Foods**

**(a) QUANTITY:** To say a bracha achrona, you have to consume at least a **kezayit** of food (literally: the size of an olive). In today's terms, this is estimated as slightly less than **one fluid ounce, or 30 cc.**

Since different foods vary in density, and are not always rectangular in dimension, it is not always easy to precisely estimate the volume of a *kezayit*. As a reference point, here are some common examples:

- one-third cup of boiled rice

- 4 medium French fries
- 1 large strawberry
- 1 small pickle
- 12 regular size Pringles

In the examples mentioned above, the foods are pretty solid and dense. But it's not always so simple determining the size of a *kezayit*.

To determine how much food is needed to say a *bracha achrona*, let's examine some cases:

1) You have a small piece of dough, which when baked into a brownie, is **exactly** one *kezayit*. This qualifies for a *bracha achrona*, because we measure based on how the item stands at the moment, despite that we know it rose from baking.

2) You ate a piece of cake that is exactly one *kezayit*. Unlike a brownie whose consistency is dense, cake is generally a bit puffy, so in fact part of the *kezayit* consists of air holes. So is that piece of cake considered a *kezayit* to warrant a *bracha achrona*? The answer is: it depends.

If the air holes are small enough to be "intangible" (i.e. not obviously noticeable), then that piece of cake is regarded as a *kezayit* -- the small air holes contribute toward the calculated volume.

However, a piece of "sponge cake" is so puffed up that in measuring the *kezayit* we do **not** count the air holes, but would need to take extra to compensate for the loss.

One more case: You have a piece of cake that is a *kezayit*, but then you **compress it to less than a kezayit**. Even though it still represents the same quantity of food, since this cake is now "smaller than a *kezayit*," you do **not** say a *bracha achrona*.

**(b) TIME:** In order to be called an "act of eating" that requires a *bracha achrona*, the *kezayit* of food must minimally be consumed in ***kiday achilat pras*** (literally, "the time it takes to eat a portion"). Practically speaking:

- **3 minutes** is the standard time period of *kiday achilat pras*.
- **4 minutes** - At a stretch, if you consumed a *kezayit* within 4 minutes, you should still say a *bracha achrona*.
- **More than 4 minutes** - If it took more than 4 minutes to consume the *kezayit*, then you should not say a *bracha achrona*.

Now let's take a practical case. You eat a piece of quiche and want to know if you ate a *kezayit* within *kiday achilat pras*. First, you need to know how big that piece of quiche was in terms of a *kezayit*. An easy way is to measure the item in centimeters, and multiply {length X width X height}. For example, a piece of quiche might measure 8 cm long, 5 cm wide and 3 cm high. Multiplying these measurements together equals 120. That means a piece of quiche has 120 cc, and since one *kezayit* is 30 cc, that means there are approximately 4 *kezayit*-measures in that piece of quiche. So if you ate the quiche within

12-16 minutes, you can be sure that at some point you ate a *kezayit* within *kiday achilat pras*; hence you are obligated to say a *bracha achrona*.

## Liquids

As mentioned earlier, liquids have their own set of rules, since the act of drinking is conceptually different than the act of eating. So when consuming liquids:

**(a) QUANTITY:** The minimum measurement to qualify for a *bracha achrona* is one **revi'it** (lit: "quarter of a loge," a Talmudic measurement). In modern terms, a *revi'it* is measured as **4.5 fluid ounces, or 133 cc.**

Other opinions say that drinking as little as one fluid ounce (30 cc) -- i.e. the same *kezayit* measure that we use for solids also qualifies for saying a *bracha achrona*. Therefore, to avoid getting into a situation of doubt, it is best to drink either less than 1 oz, or more than 4.5 oz.

**(b) TIME:** In order to be called an "act of drinking" that requires a *bracha achrona*, the *revi'it* must be consumed ***kiday shetiyat revi'it*** (literally, the time it takes to drink a *revi'it*). To avoid any halachic doubt, you should drink the 4.5 ounces in two gulps, with only a short pause in between, or at least continuous sipping within 30 seconds. If you did **not** drink that quickly, you would not say a *bracha achrona* on the drink.

A common application of this halacha is when drinking hot coffee or tea. These are usually drunk in small sips, and as such a *revi'it* is not consumed *kiday shetiyat revi'it*. Therefore, according to the prevailing opinion, a *bracha achrona* is not said. In such a case, however, there are two suggested options:

- Once the drink has cooled down, try to drink a *revi'it* in two gulps, and then say a *bracha achrona*.
- Eat or drink a different food requiring the same *bracha achrona*, which will then "cover" the hot drink as well.

## Other Foods

What are the rules for a food that is thicker than a regular liquid, for example yogurt or ice cream? Is it regarded as a solid (that requires a *kezayit* consumed in 3-4 minutes), or is it a liquid that requires a *revi'it* in two gulps? The answer is: It is considered a solid.

Now what about a clear broth soup? Even though it is eaten with a spoon, it follows the rules of a liquid.

## When in Doubt

We just learned that if you consume between 1 and 4.5 ounces of a drink, it is not clear whether or not you need to say a *bracha achrona*. Here are some other cases where your obligation is uncertain:

- **Doubt in amount:** You ate some food, but can't recall if it was enough to be a *kezayit*.
- **Doubt in time:** You lost track of time and don't know if you ate a *kezayit* within 3-4 minutes (*kiday achilat pras*).

How should we approach these situations?

The simple answer is that in case of doubt, you cannot say a *bracha achrona*. This is based on the principle of **safeik brachot l'hakel** -- in cases of doubtful blessings, don't say the blessing.

Of course, it's best to avoid getting into these situations in the first place. So try to eat and drink a measurement (*shiur*) which clearly obligates a *bracha achrona*, and be aware of how much time it takes to consume!

*Mike just ate a cookie, but isn't sure if it was the size of a kezayit. In order to resolve the doubt, Mike should consume **more** cookies (or another mezonot food which requires the same bracha achrona), making sure it is clearly a kezayit in volume, and do so within the proper time of 4 minutes or less (kiday achilat pras).*

What if there are no more cookies (or no other mezonot foods) available? Don't worry, there is still a good option available: Get someone else who is obligated in this particular *bracha achrona* to say the bracha, while having in mind to cover you as well. We will learn about this extensively in class #38.

Sometimes, you may find yourself in doubt as to whether or not you said a *bracha achrona* -- life is busy and it's easy to forget! Again, the best solutions are to have someone else exempt you, or to eat a new food requiring a different *bracha rishona* but the same *bracha achrona*. Failing this, don't say the *bracha achrona* if you are in doubt.