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{ TOPIC }

BIRCHOS HABANIM



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► Halachically Speaking is a monthly publication compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, a former *chaver kollel* of *Yeshiva Torah Vodaath* and a *musmach* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita*. Rabbi Lebovits currently works as the Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K Kosher Supervision.

► Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary *halacha* with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant *shittos* on each topic, as well as the *psak* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita* on current issues.

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BIRCHOS HABANIM

Many have the custom to *bentch* their children on Friday night. Where does this custom come from? Should the blessings be given before or after coming home from shul? Should one use one hand or two hands? How does a left-handed person *bentch* his children? Which child goes first? What is the accepted *nusach*? Is there a problem to *bentch* children, as this is usually reserved for *kohanim* to *bentch* us during *birchas kohanim*? All these questions and others will be discussed in this article.

Bentching Children

When Yaakov wished to *bentch* Ephraim and Menashe,¹ he gave them a *brachah* while placing one hand on each one's head.² Rashi³ says that when we *bentch* our children we use the same *nusach*. The custom to *bentch* children on Friday night is brought down in early sources.⁴ The custom is to bless daughters as well.⁵

Reasons

The *Yaavetz*⁶ says that Friday night is an opportune time because there is abundance in the world then, and we present this abundance to our children. *Maavar Yabek*⁷ explains that there is no *satan* on Shabbos who could prevent the *brachah*.

1. Refer to *Ta'am V'daas Vayechi* page 265.

2. *Bereishis* 48:20. Refer to *Asei Lecha Rav* 8:28:page 354 which struggles to find a custom to *bentch* children on Friday night.

3. *Ibid*.

4. *Siddur Yaavetz* page 153 (old print). *Maver Yabek Sifsei Raninos* 43:page 143, *Kaf Hachaim (Palagi)* 28:30, *Kaf Hachaim* 262:17. See *Chinuch Yisrael* 1:2:12:page 202, *Nishmas Shabbos* 1:546, *Yesodo Yeshurin* 3:204.

5. *Maver Yabek Sifsei Raninos* 43:page 143.

6. *Siddur Yaavetz* page 153 (old print).

7. *Maver Yabek Sifsei Raninos* 43:page 143. See *Matamim Hachodesh* pages 9-10:1.

איך ללמוד להקדיש את הבעלות אליו
אמור של הלקה בלבד... (ברכות ה')

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Others say that the father is not distracted with work, and he can concentrate on the blessing.⁸ Still others say that the father might be upset with his child during the week and make an unpleasant comment. On Shabbos he wishes to annul those remarks with the *brachah* on Friday night.⁹

When to Do It

Some say that one should *bentch* the children after *davening* if they are present in shul, or in the house.¹⁰ Others have the custom to *bentch* the children after Kiddush before washing for *Hamotzi*.¹¹

One or Two Hands

Yaakov Avinu used one hand for Ephraim and Menashe in order to avoid jealousy, as they were both *bentched* at the same time.¹² We *bentch* our children individually, and the custom is to use both hands.¹³

Some are concerned with using both hands, as this action is reserved for the *kohanim* when *bentching* Klal Yisrael.¹⁴ Those who are lenient say that this is not an issue because everyone knows that the goal is not to act like a *kohen*¹⁵ (*see below where we discuss this idea in greater depth*).

8. *Nishmas Shabbos* 1:546.

9. *Likutei Maharich* 2:page 346 (new). Refer to *M'be'er HaShabbos* 1:page 360:3. For additional reasons see *M'Be'er HaShabbos* 1:pages 362-365.

10. *Siddur Yaavetz* page 153 (old print), see *Noheg Katzon Yosef Shabbos* 23:page 157, *Lehoros Nosson* 9:page 207:13.

11. *Keser Shem Tov* 1:page 212:1, *Likras Shabbos* 1:page 274:2:footnote 16. Refer to *ibid* why it is not a concern of *hefsek* between Kiddush and washing.

12. See *Maver Yabek Sifsei Raninos* 43:page 143b.

13. *Siddur Yaavetz* page 153 (old print), *Kaf Hachaim (Palagi)* 28:30, *Noheg Katzon Yosef Shabbos* 23:page 157, *Yesodo Yeshurin* 3:204, *Be'er Moshe* 4:25, *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 5:72, *Lehoros Nosson* 9:page 207:13. Refer to *V'darasha V'chakarta O.C.* 1-2:39 which brings the opinions on this issue. Also see *Nishmas Shabbos* 1:54, and *Bais Hillel* (journal) 38:pages 104-105.

14. *Torah Temimah Bamidbar* 6:23:133, *Tosfos Brachah Naso* page 30.

15. *Yechaveh Da'as* 5:14, *Be'er Moshe* 4:25. See *Siddur Yaavetz* page 153 (old print).

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (גדה עב)

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Left-Handed Person

According to the opinion that one uses one hand, the correct hand to use is the right hand.¹⁶ A left-handed person would also use his right hand.¹⁷ However, as mentioned above, the custom is to use two hands.¹⁸

The Nusach

One should say, “*Yisimcha Elokim k'Ephraim v'chiMenashe.*” He can then add additional blessings if he wishes.¹⁹

Those Who Do Not Have the Custom

There are many people who do not have the custom to *bentch* their children on Friday night.²⁰

Older First or No Concern

It is not addressed in the *poskim* whether or not the older child should be *bentched* first.²¹

Avel

One who is an *avel R"l* may not *bentch* his child during *shivah*.²²

Bentching a Daughter

When *bentching* a daughter, the custom is to say, “Like Sarah, Rivkah, Rochel and Leah.” The source of this custom

16. *Ben Ish Yemini* pages 27-28. See opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievsky *shlit"u* quoted *ibid*:footnote 108.

17. *ibid* page 28.

18. *Ibid* page 28.

19. *Siddur Yaavetz* page 153 (old print).

20. *Mibo'o V'ad Tzeiso* 24:footnote 3. See *Nishmas Shabbos* 1:546.

21. *Likras Shabbos* 2:page 276:footnote 25.

22. *Pnei Baruch* page 246:12.

אינן ללחמיהן אלא י"א אמות של הלכה בליל (ברכות מ)



is obscure,²³ as we do not mention the *Avos* when *bentching* a son.²⁴ The explanation is that logically, we would *bentch* our children with the names of the *Avos*, as we do with our daughters. Regarding sons, the Torah clearly says to use Ephraim and Menashe.²⁵

Bentching* and Issue to Be Like a *Kohen

Earlier, we mentioned the fact that only a *kohen* may use two hands to *bentch* Klal Yisrael.²⁶ Therefore, why is it permitted for a non-*kohen* to *bentch* his child with two hands?²⁷ Many answers are offered:²⁸

Some suggest that the prohibition is because he looks like a *kohen bentching*. However, when a father *bentches* his son it is obvious that he is not trying to imitate a *kohen*.²⁹ Others say if the hands are not spread out like a *kohen* there is no issue.³⁰ The *Darchoi Moshe*³¹ says that there is only a problem if one blesses the *tzibbur* with the *kohanim*; otherwise there is no concern. The *Bach*³² says that saying the *nusach* without a *brachah* is not an issue. The *Mishnah Berurah*³³ says that if one has no intention of doing the *mitzvah* of *birchas kohanim*, then there is no problem.³⁴

23. Refer to *Gam Ani Odeicha* 1:85.

24. *Rivevos Ephraim* 6:pages 168-169. See *Tzohar* 12:page 163:6.

25. *Gam Ani Odeicha* 1:85:pages 174-175.

26. *Maseches Kesubos* 24b, Rama 128:1. See *Maseches Shabbos* 118b.

27. Refer to *Rivevos Ephraim* 7:92:1. See *Maasei Rav Hachodesh* 10.

28. Refer to *HaShabbos V'hilchoseha* 8:26:footnote 52.

29. *Be'er Moshe* 4:25. Refer to *Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 5:72, *Nishmas Shabbos* 1:546, *Tzitz Eliezer* 11:8.

30. *Nishmas Shabbos* 1:546.

31. O.C. 128:1. Refer to *Magen Avraham* 128:1.

32. 128.

33. 128:3, *Biur Halachah* 128 "zor." See *Kaf Hachaim* 128:8. Refer to *Mishnah Berurah* 128:6.

34. See *Yehudah Yaleh* O.C. 41.

כל השווה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (מדה עב)

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Placing Your Hands like the *Kohanim*

It is stated in the name of the *Zohar* that one is not allowed to form his hands in the manner in which the *kohanim* place them when giving the *brachah* to the *kahal*.³⁵ Some say that it is permitted if it is not done when the *kohanim* do it.³⁶ Practically speaking, one should not place his hands in this fashion except for learning purposes.³⁷

Erev Yom Kippur

The widespread custom in Klal Yisrael is to *bentch* one's child on Erev Yom Kippur.³⁸ This is done close to the beginning of Yom Kippur.³⁹ When the father *bentches* his child it inspires the child to do *teshuvah* and he enters Yom Kippur humbled. Some suggest that Yaakov Avinu *bentched* Ephraim and Menashe on Erev Yom Kippur and we commemorate this by *bentching* our children on every Erev Yom Kippur.⁴⁰

Bentching a Son before the *Chuppah*

The custom is that the father (and others) *bentches* the *chassan* before the *chuppah*. Some maintain that the custom is to use one hand;⁴¹ however, this is not the overwhelming opinion.

Potential Issue with *Nusach*

As mentioned above, we say “*Yisimcha Elokim*” for *birchos habanim*. The rule is that one may not recite a fragment

35. See *Ateres Zekeinim* on the side of the *Shulchan Aruch* 128:12.

36. *Rivevos Ephraim* 1:93:2.

37. Harav Yisroel Belsky *shlit”a*.

38. Matei Ephraim 619:2, *Shulchan Aruch Hamekutzar* 3:page 297:17, *Hilchos Chag B’chag (Yamim Nora’im)* page 329:71. ‘

39. *Chayei Adam* 144:19, *Kitzur* 131:16, *Mekadesh Yisrael (Yamim Nora’im)* 269:2.

40. Refer to *B’shvilei Haminhag* (Shabbos and Moadim) 1:page 109.

41. Refer to *B’shvilei Haminhag* (Shabbos and Moadim) 1:page 110.

כל השונה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (מדה עב)

of a *pasuk*.⁴² If so, how can we use this *nusach* for *birchos habanim* by starting in the middle of the *pasuk*?⁴³

Some maintain that the restriction does not apply to a *brachah* or *tefillah*.⁴⁴ Others explain that the Torah clearly instructs us to use this formula for the blessing. Therefore, there is no issue with starting from the middle of a *pasuk*.⁴⁵

42. Refer to *Maseches Brachos* 12b, *Maseches Megillah* 22a, *Tosfos Maseches Sukkah* 38a, *Rashba Maseches Brachos* 14b, *Pnei Yehoshua Maseches Kesubos* 24b “b’Gemara,” *Yachin U’boaz* 2:2, *Magen Avraham* 51:9, 428:8, *Kaf Hachaim Palagi* 36:38, *Maharam Shik O.C.* 124, *Maharsham* 3:359, *Mishnah Berurah* 289:2, *Aruch Hashulchan O.C.* 271:25, 289:3, *Chasam Sofer O.C.* 10, *Rav Poalim* 1:11, *Kaf Hachaim* 271:66, *Divrei Chachamim O.C.* 20:228:footnote 228.

43. This is applicable to other areas as well. For a detailed discussion on this see *Birurei Chaim* 1:8:pages 162-173. Also see *Hakattan V’hilchosav* 2:pages 202:208 in great depth.

44. *Taam V’daas Vayechi* page 265, see *Nishmas Adam* 5:2.

45. *Hakattan V’hilchosav* 2:page 207.

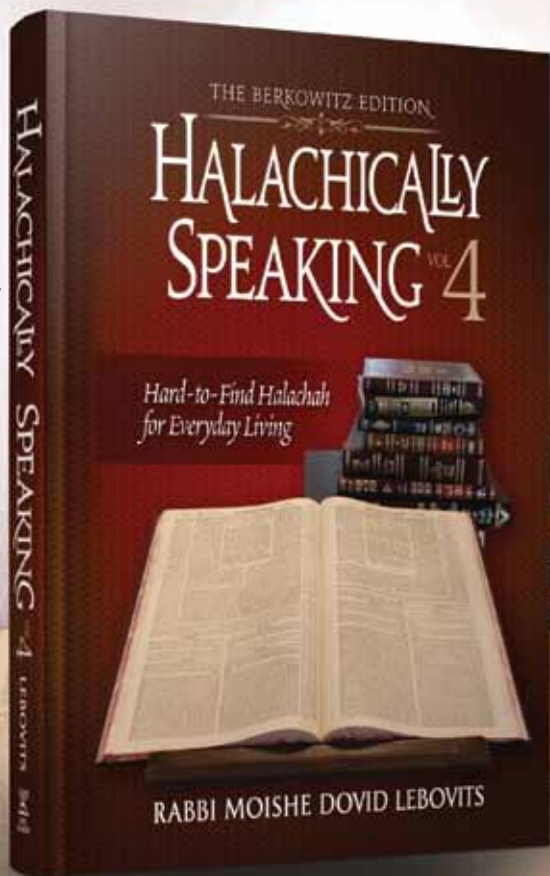
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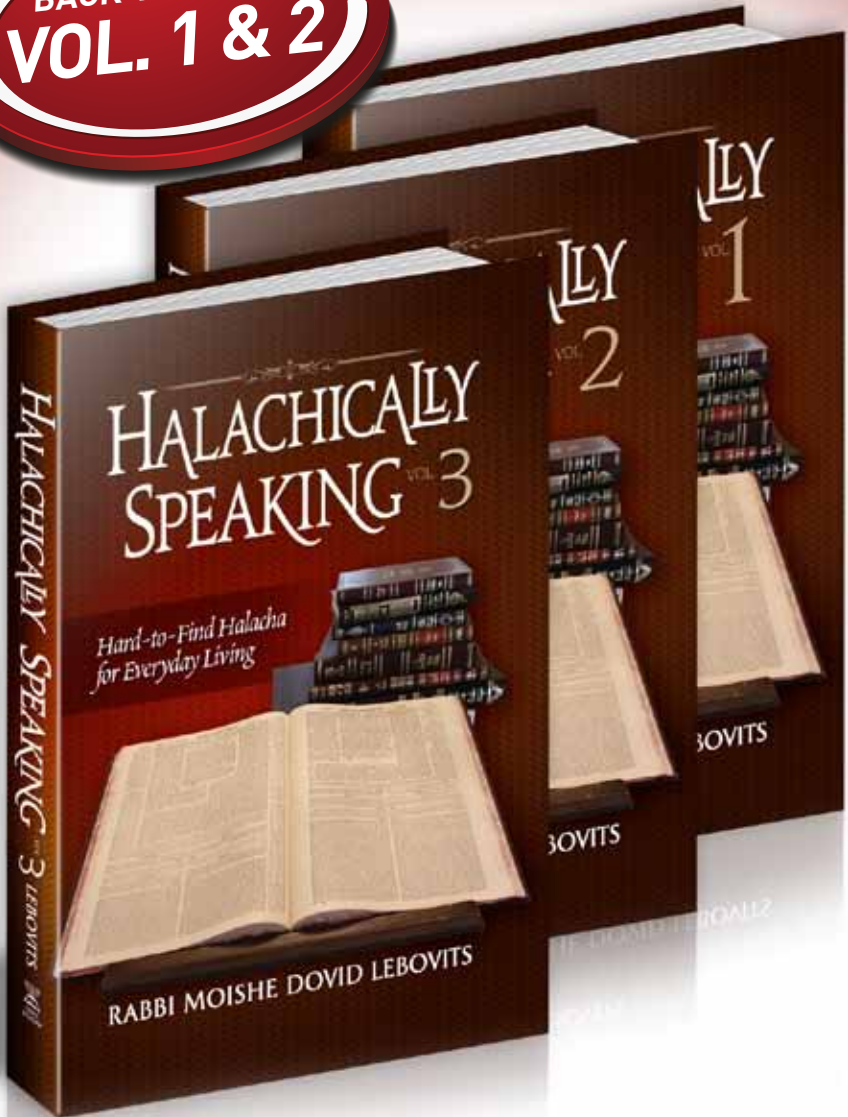
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