

BIRKAS HAMAZON - GRACE AFTER MEALS

by Joshua Kruger

The silly person in the following story makes four *halachic* mistakes.

Can you find them?

Can you think of how the story is connected with the *parsha*?

The Story

In the city of Balagan, on a street named Gevalt, lived a boy named Barney Mevulbal. He was nice and funny and very very very mixed up.

One day Barney Mevulbal entered his favorite restaurant to order some dinner. He sat down at his favorite table, and was pleased to see his favorite waiter.

"I'd like to order a super cheese pizza with extra cheese, please"

The waiter frowned. "Umm... this is still a meat restaurant, so there won't be any pizza today...again".

"Oh. In that case, I'll take two hamburgers with everything on them. But please hold the tomatoes, ketchup, mustard, onions, lettuce, pickles and burgers".

The waiter shortly returned with two hamburger buns.

Barney devoured the first hamburger bun, and then decided to eat the second at a slower pace. "These are great! I want to savor every bite," he thought.

Soon the waiter came to check on Barney. "Can I bring you something else?" he asked. "My work shift finishes at 6 o'clock so I'll be leaving soon".

"It's almost 6 o'clock!?" asked Barney. "Oh no! It's getting late. I need to get home and start my homework."

"I'll bring you a *birkon*" said the waiter.

"Thanks but I'm in a rush" said Barney. "I'll say *birkas hamazon* later when I'm back at home". He asked the waiter to place the remaining half of his hamburger bun in a take away bag, paid a very discounted price, and left.

Along the way he bumped into his friend Yehuda at the neighborhood park.

"Hi Yehuda. Sorry, I can't talk. I'm in a rush to get home and start my homework."

Yehuda smiled. "I think you can relax, Barney. The school year finished last week and you won't have to worry about homework for two months. Would you like to play some basketball with me?"

"Absolutely" said Barney.

Forty minutes later, the boys decided to take a break.

"I win again" exclaimed Barney proudly, "I missed the net twenty-five more times that you did, Yehuda!".

"Congratulations" smiled Yehuda, "By the way, what's in that bag?"

"Oh my goodness!" said Barney. "It's the leftovers from my meal. I can't remember if I said *birkas hamazon*. I'm going to go home and call the restaurant to check. Maybe they'll remember. Would you like the rest of my hamburger bun, Yehuda? I guess it's too late to eat it now."

"Thanks for the offer" said Yehuda, "but we're about to start dinner soon at my home. See you tomorrow!"

Barney quickly made his way home, though he accidentally entered four other homes along the way. By the time he had arrived in the right home, he had completely forgot about *birkas hamazon*.

"Better get started on my homework. Now where did I leave my pencil?"

An hour later, after searching every drawer and shelf in the fridge, Barney forgot about doing his homework and started thinking about food.

"I sure could go for a hamburger. Wait a minute - I still haven't said *birkas hamazon*!". He closed the fridge and went to find a *birkon*... in the laundry machine.

Discussion

Q: What are four *halachik* mistakes that Barney makes?

- 1) You should say *birkas hamazon* in the place that you eat your meal (Shulchan Aruch 184:1). If you forgot, then you should try to go back, though it's not absolutely necessary (Mishna Berura 184:5).
- 2) If you're not sure whether you said *birkas hamazon*, then you should say it, provided you ate your fill (Shulchan Aruch 184:4).
- 3) If you are unsure whether you said *birkas hamazon* and you happen to have some bread leftover, then it's best to eat the bread and then say *birkas hamazon* (Shulchan Aruch 184:2). This ensures that you will not say a *beracha levatala*.
- 4) You can only say *birkas hamazon* while you are still full from the meal that you ate. This is learned from the words in our *parsha* **וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשִׂבַּעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ**. It is a requirement that we be full, **ושבעת**, in order to

say *birkas hamazon*. For this reason, most *poskim* rule that *birkas hamazon* should be said within 72 minutes of finishing the meal (*Mishna Berura* 184:20). If you forgot, and more than 72 minutes has passed, then you can still say *birkas hamazon bedieved*, as long as you did not become hungry since the meal and as long as you did not eat anything else in the meantime (*Shulchan Aruch* 184:5). Once six hours has gone by, it has become too late to say *birkas hamazon* even if you still do not feel hungry (*Magen Avraham* 184:9).

Q: How is our story connected to the *parsha*?

A: *Parshas Eikev* discusses the *mitzva* to say *birkas hamzaon* (*Devarim* 8:10).

(Written by Josh and Tammy Kruger, in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer of the Institute for Dayanim)