



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

Why on Shabbat do we insert a special (Shabbat-themed)paragraph into bentching? What do these two mitzvot have to do with one another? Do we make reference to Shabbat in the blessings we recite upon awakening, or in our recitation of Shma?!

And further, what makes this requirement to insert a paragraph about Shabbat *so* very crucial that if we forgot to insert it, we need to repeat the entire bentching?!

The first question is a broader one, touching also upon the requirement to insert a paragraph (*יעלה ויבא*) into bentching on Yom Tov, Chol HaMo'ed, and Rosh Chodesh. All of these days are occasions on which a Mussaf offering would have been brought in Temple times. As a result they are days on which the absence of the Temple is especially keenly felt, in turn making them days on which bentching's standing paragraph in which we beseech God to "Have mercy upon... Jerusalem Your city ... and upon the great and holy house upon which Your named is called", scream out for explicit reference to the holy occasion being observed. These are days when the petition of "Have mercy" is particularly poignant.

The second question though, is more subtle. For the fact of the matter is that on Rosh Chodesh and Chol HaMo'ed, if we forget the special insertion, we are not required to repeat the bentching. This stringency applies to Shabbat and Yom Tov only. What is the difference, and what light does this shed on our second question?

The answer lies in the fact that generally speaking bentching is an "optional mitzvah", in the sense that if we choose to not eat bread on a given day, we have no obligation to bentch on that day. This is no less true on Chol HaMo'ed or Rosh Chodesh, when there is no obligation to eat bread. Thus, neither of these special days fundamentally transforms the mitzvah of bentching. By contrast, Shabbat and Yom Tov, with their attendant *obligation* to eat bread, effectively *mandate* bentching, in essence appropriating it as one of the required rituals of the day. On Shabbat and Yom Tov then, bentching is not its simple "optional mitzvah" self. It is newly defined as the "obligatory bentching of Shabbat / Yom Tov". The omission of Shabbat / Yom Tov from the text then, would literally undermine the entire exercise.

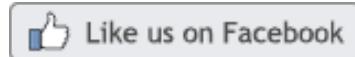
Interestingly, but completely consistent with what we now know, if we were to forget the insertion for Shabbat at Seudah Shlisheet, we would not be required to repeat bentching, as Seudah Shlisheet does not absolutely require the eating of bread. The same is true of a third (or fourth or fifth) meal that we might eat on Yom Tov, a day on which only two meals are required, one at night, and one during the day.

There is, by the way, a short window in which we can recite a substitute for a forgotten Shabbat or Yom Tov insertion, but more on this and other related matters in the next Shabbat Short!

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