

”ויברכו את רבקה...”

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In this week’s *parsha*, *Chayei Sarah*, we have the well-known *posuk* which is said by a *chassunah*: ויברכו (בראשית כד, ט) את רבקה ויאמרו לה אחתנו את היי לאלפי רבבה...” (בראשית כד, ט) Before Rivka left her home to be married to Yitzchok, her brother Lavan gave her this *bracha*. Tosafos (כתובות ז:) brings a *drash* which says that ויברכו teaches us that there was a specific *bracha* for Rivka and that was ברכת אירוסין. Whenever someone gets married we say the *bracha* בא”ה מקדש עמו ישראל ע”י חופה וקדושין. This *posuk* is the source for ברכת אירוסין.

Tosafos asks the following question. Nowadays, a *chosson* comes to his *chassunah* to be *mekadesh* his wife, but we know from *Maseches Kiddushin* that one was able to be *mekadesh* a wife via a *shaliach*. What happens in such a case: does the *shaliach* make the *bracha* when he is *mekadesh* on another’s behalf when the *chosson* is not present? Tosafos says that the story of Rivka being *mekudeshes* through Eliezer shows us the answer. Being that Yitzchok was still in Eretz Yisroel at the time, we see that the *shaliach* could make the *bracha* in such a case.

The Rambam (הלי אישות ג, כג) *paskens* this way as well. He says if the *chosson* himself is *mekadesh* her, then he makes the *bracha*. If he sends a *shaliach*, the *shaliach* can make the *bracha*. The Beis Yosef (אה”ע ס”י לד) explains the source for this *din* is the fact that the Gemara discusses this *bracha* (כתובות ז:) in a general type of way, showing it to not be particular for the *chosson* to always make the *bracha*. The Maharsha asks why the Beis Yosef brings a vague reason and doesn’t cite that which Tosafos brings from מס’ כלה—the story by Rivka shows that the *chosson* doesn’t have to be the one to recite the *bracha*?

Birkei Yosef (אה”ע ס”י לד), by the Chida, suggests that the ברייתא which Tosafos brought from מס’ כלה is actually a *machlokes*. Other sources (מס’ דרך ארץ and פד”ר אליעזר פרק טז) understand that the *posuk* of ויברכו refers to שבע ברכות. Being that Tosafos source is a *machlokes*, Beis Yosef used a different *mehalech* to explain the *halacha*.

As an aside, I would like to point out that it would seem the ויברכו must refer to the אירוסין. We all know this means the קדושין, which was accomplished through the gifts Eliezer brought for Rivka. שבע ברכות only happens by the *chuppah*, which didn’t take place until Rivka went back with Eliezer to Yitzchok. How, then, can we say that ויברכו refers to שבע ברכות?

There are two answers to this: Shita Mekubetzes in מס’ כתובות says the way we *darshen* this *posuk* is like an *asmachta*, and the actual *bracha* of ויברכו took place later when she was with Yitzchok. This is the simpler answer. The Hafla’a has a *chiddushdigge* answer. He says in the fourth *perek* of Kesubos there is the scenario of “מסרה לשלוחי הבעל”. When the *kallah* is given into the custody of the *chosson*’s agents, that too has a certain level of נישואין and therefore has different *halachos* comparable to *chuppah*. With this, we can say this is what happened with Rivka. The ויברכו takes place at the same point the Torah says they sent her with Eliezer. Therefore, they could make the שבע ברכות even then. This is still a big *chiddush* because it still does not constitute a full נישואין, and it would seem that a full נישואין is requisite for שבע ברכות.

If it is still possible to explain the source for ברכת אירוסין like Tosafos, why isn’t the Beis Yosef *metzayen* it for the Rambam even though it is a *machlokes*? If Tosafos brings it, why doesn’t Beis Yosef suggest it as source for Rambam as well and then Rambam could align with Tosafos? In fact, the Biur haGR”a there in the Shulchan Aruch does cite this Tosafos as the source for ברכת אירוסין even by *mekadesh b’shaliach*.

I posit the Birkei Yosef holds that the Rambam learns ויברכו as definitively referring to שבע ברכות and not ברכת אירוסין. This is based upon a *yesodosdigge machlokes* in the nature of the ברכת אירוסין itself— what type of *bracha* is it?

The Rambam (ה'ל' אישות פ"ג) holds that ברכת אירוסין is a regular מצוה. This means that it must be made immediately before performance of the mitzvah itself (עובר לעשייתו), just as we do by taking a lulav or lighting Chanuka candles, etc. However, the Rosh and Ritva hold that ברכת שבת והודאה is actually a מצוה because there is no such mitzvah as "קידושין". Rather, the Torah just mentions it in an optional way, "when a man takes a woman..." This *bracha* is really to thank HaKadosh Boruch Hu for elevating us by giving us deeper levels of family purity and making us holier through higher standards of marriage that other peoples do not have. The Ritva compares it to Kiddush we recite on Shabbos. There too we are thanking HaKadosh Boruch Hu for choosing us and giving us our elevated status of *kedusha*. Rambam still maintains it to be a mitzvah, and lists it as מצות עשה #213.

The Ritva lists two *nafka minas* between his *shita* and that of the Rambam: 1) The Order- According to the Rambam, the *bracha* must be recited before giving the *kallah* the ring. In fact, Rambam even holds that if one gave the ring first, it would be too late to make the *bracha*. However, according to the Ritva/Rosh, the *bracha* should be made after the *kiddushin* is executed, because one only thanks Hashem for something after it is achieved or received. [Just like Kiddush- Shabbos begins and then we thank Hashem.] 2) Who Makes the *Bracha*- Rambam writes explicitly that the *chosson* makes the *bracha* because it is he who performs the mitzvah for which the *bracha* is recited. As well, the *shaliach* could make the *bracha* on behalf of the *chosson* because he is also performing the *ma'aseh mitzvah* for the *chosson*. Ritva says that the *minhag* in his community was for the *chazzan* to make the *bracha*, not the *chosson*. (Today, we would say either the *Rov* or the *mesader kiddushin* makes the *bracha*.) We are *noheig* like the Ritva/Rosh *shita* and that is why our *chassanim* do not recite the ברכת אירוסין.

If we look at the *pesukim* in *Parshas Chayei Sarah*, we see that early on in Eliezer's arrival to *Charan*, he gives the gifts and *kiddushin* to Rivka. Only later on does the Torah mention the *bracha* which Lavan made for her. The *Netziv* makes this point, that the *kiddushin* came before the *bracha*. Who made the *bracha*? In *Shulchan Aruch*, by the *din* of other people making the ברכת אירוסין, the GR"a brings our story of "ויברכו" as the source for this *din* because the brother of the *kallah* [Lavan] made the *bracha*, (as the *posuk* says "...אחתנו את היי לאלפי רבבה...") and not Eliezer the *shaliach*. We have two *rayos* from our *parsha* to the *tzad* of the Ritva and Rosh, which are also questions on the Rambam.

To answer for the Rambam, we must say that he holds "ויברכו" refers to שבע ברכות. This aligns with the fact that the *kiddushin* came before the *bracha* [in either *mehalech* of the *Shita* or *Hafla'a*]. As well, anyone is able to recite the שבע ברכות so it fits well that Lavan made the *bracha* for everyone. Rambam in הל' ברכות explains the *inyan* of פנים חדשות is that there needs to be a new person *mechuyav* in reciting שבע ברכות for the *chosson* and *kallah*. He understands the שבע ברכות to be a function of those celebrating with the *chosson* and *kallah*. According to this, the *posuk* reads very well because the *lashon* is in the plural, "ויברכו", indicating that the whole *tzibbur* was connected to the *bracha*.

It comes out that we must learn Rambam as holding "ויברכו" means שבע ברכות. We can now explain the *Birkei Yosef* as follows. *Beis Yosef* could not quote "ויברכו" as source for ברכת אירוסין for Rambam because Rambam himself doesn't hold that it refers to that *bracha* at all. *Tosafos*, on the other hand, must hold like Ritva/Rosh that it actually does refer to ברכת אירוסין.

I would like to end off with a *rayuh* that *Tosafos* holds this way. The Rosh mentions a *machlokes Rishonim* whether ברכת אירוסין requires a *minyan* to be recited. We know that שבע ברכות needs a *minyan*. The idea is from "במקהלות ברכו ה'" - we only praise Hashem as such with a *minyan*. *HaRav Shmuel Rozovsky* explains the *machlokes* as being whether ברכת אירוסין is deemed a השבח, and needs a *minyan*, or a ברכת המצוה which would not. If we look at *Tosafos* on מס' כתובות ז: we see that he clearly states that one needs a *minyan* for ברכת אירוסין. We see that *Tosafos* learns it is a ברכת השבח, just like the Rosh/Ritva, in contradistinction from Rambam.

Lemaskana, we have *Tosafos/Rosh/Ritva* learning ברכת אירוסין is a ברכת השבח, whereas Rambam learns it to be a ברכת המצוה. This leads to their *machlokes* whether "ויברכו" refers to ברכת אירוסין or שבע ברכות.