יז. כשבא לשתות מים קודם הסעודה יזהר לשתות פחות משיעור רביעית, ויותר טוב שיהיה פחות מכשיעור כזית, כדי שלא יכנס למחלוקת הפוסקים בחיוב ברכה אחרונה. [ראה הליכו"ע ח"ב עמ' כז בהערה] **ואם** טעה ושתה שיעור רביעית בבת אחת, לא יברך ברכה אחרונה, כיון שיש אומרים שברכת המזון פוטרת כל משקים ששותה קודם הסעודה, וספק ברכות להקל. ומכל מקום הרוצה לברך ברכה אחרונה על מים ששתה קודם הסעודה, אין למחות בידו שיש לו על מי שיסמוך, ובלבד שאין בדעתו לשתות עוד בתוך הסעודה. אבל אם יש בדעתו לשתות עוד בתוך הסעודה, אינו רשאי לברך ברכה אחרונה על המים ששתה קודם הסעודה. [הליכו"ע שם עמ' כח]

Drink less than *revi'it* before the meal

17) When drinking water before beginning a meal as described in the previous halakha, one must make sure to drink less than *revi'it*. If one would drink *revi'it* before beginning the meal, he would become entangled in yet another dispute among the *Poskim*, since according to some he must recite *bore nefashot rabot* before performing *netillat yadayim* for the meal. It is best, in fact, to drink less than *kazayit* of water since there are *Poskim* who ruled that one must recite *bore nefashot rabot* after drinking *kazayit* of a beverage.[25]

If someone mistakenly drank *revi'it* of water all at once, he should not recite *bore nefashot rabot* since many *Poskim* ruled that *Birkat Hamazon* will cover the beverages that one drank before the meal. Therefore, we revert to the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*.

If someone drank *revi'it* of water and he chooses to recite the blessing of *bore nefashot rabot* before beginning the meal, he is not to be protested; he has a strong halakhic basis upon which to rely. This is permissible only if this person has decided not to drink any beverages during the meal. If he wishes to drink during the meal it is forbidden for him to recite *bore nefashot rabot* for the water he drank before the meal.[26]

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meal and the table [or at least the tablecloth] has been removed from his presence and he wishes to drink before reciting *Birkat Hamazon*, then not only must he recite a blessing before drinking, he must also recite a blessing after drinking the beverage and he must not rely on *Birkat Hamazon*. All the recommendations offered here would not affect this halakha. Therefore, it is best to postpone this drinking until after reciting *Birkat Hamazon*.

25. The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Naso* halakha 2) ruled that one should avoid drinking *revi'it* since some *Poskim* ruled that one must recite *bore nefashot rabot* before beginning the meal in such a case. According to those *Poskim*, the *Birkat Hamazon* recited after the meal will not cover the water that a person before the meal. To avoid this issue, one should make sure to drink less than *revi'it*.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Halikhot Olam* Vol. II, page 27) pointed out that Maran in the *Shulhan Arukh* (190:3) cited a dispute among the *Rishonim* whether one becomes obligated to recite the blessing of *me'en shalosh* after drinking *revi'it* of wine or after drinking *kazayit* of wine. The *Magen Avraham* commented that the same dispute applies to all other beverages as well, and that a person should always drink less than *kazayit* or more than *revi'it* of any beverage to avoid any doubts. In this case as well, therefore, one should make sure to drink less than *kazayit* of water.

26. The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Naso* halakha 5) ruled that if someone mistakenly drank *revi'it* of water before the meal he should recite *bore nefashot rabot* before proceeding to begin the meal. He testified that this the ruling of the Arizal, who with his Divine Spirit saw a mark written on the forehead of Harav Hayim Vital accusing him of drinking without reciting *bore nefashot rabot*. Rav Hayim admitted to him that he drank *revi'it* of water before a meal and had continued to eat without reciting the blessing after drinking. The Arizal rebuked him for this error.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Halikhot Olam* Vol. II, page 27) took issue with this ruling. He cited the *Magen*

יח. יין שרף (ארק), אין לברך עליו באמצע הסעודה, שאין מברכים על המשקים שבתוך הסעודה מלבד "יין", שקובע ברכה לעצמו. [חזו"ע עמ' עד]. ונכון שכדי שלא יכנס לספק, שיברך על מעט מהיין שרף קודם הנטילה על דעת לפטור מה שישתה בתוך הסעודה. [משנ"ב ס"ק לט, כה"ח ס"ק ט"ל, הליכו"ע ח"ב עמ' ל]. ואם שותה יין פוטר השכר בברכת הגפן שמברך על היין, שיין פוטר שאר משקין. [הליכו"ע שם]

Whiskey or arack during a meal

18) If someone drinks an alcoholic beverage such as whiskey or arack during a meal, he must not recite any blessing on it. A separate blessing is recited only when drinking wine during a meal.[27] As mentioned above regarding water, it is recommended to recite *shehakol nihya bidvaro* on a bit of [water or] the alcoholic beverage before performing *netillat yadayim*, having in mind for the blessing to cover the beverages one will drink during the meal. This is not necessary if someone drinks wine during the meal [before drinking the other beverage] since the blessing of *bore peri hagefen* covers all beverages he might drink at that session.

Avraham (174:14) who demonstrated that the *Rishonim* disputed this halakha. The *Eliya Rabba* (174:13) ruled, based on this, that it must be no different than someone who drank wine before the meal, and in that case *Birkat Hamazon* does cover the beverage drunk before the meal. Although it is true that the Arizal personally ruled in favor of those *Poskim* who taught that one must recite *bore nefashot rabot* before the meal, his opinion carries no more weight than that of any other *Posek*. Despite the fact that he was endowed with the Divine Spirit, the Torah is no longer in Heaven. Therefore, the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel* applies even though the Arizal ruled that one must recite the blessing.

The *Ben Ish Hai* followed a principle that wherever the Arizal ruled that a blessing must be recited we do not apply the rule of *safek berakhot lehakel*. Many *Poskim* disagreed with that principle, arguing that the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel* overrides the rulings of the Arizal just as it overrides the rulings of Maran. This is likewise the position of *sefer Tahorat Hamayim* (*Shiyure Tahora*, *ma'arekhet alef* #72), Harav Yosef Yedid (*sefer Birkat Yosef* Vol. I, page 101) and Kabbalist Harav Sha'ul Kassin (*sefer Peri Tzaddik*, *Dine Berakhot* #24). In light of this, if someone today mistakenly drinks *revi'it* of water before a meal, he must not recite the blessing of *bore nefashot rabot* in deference of the *Poskim* who ruled that *Birkat Hamazon* recited after the meal covers this water as well.

Even so, Maran the Rishon Letziyon added that if someone wishes to follow the ruling of the *Ben Ish Hai* and recite *bore nefashot rabot* before the meal, he may do so, relying on a *safek sefeka* that permits him to recite it. First, there are *Poskim* (cited in the *Bi'ur Halakha* to *Siman* 174:6) who ruled that even when someone drinks wine before a meal he must recite the blessing of *me'en shalosh* and he cannot rely on the *Birkat Hamazon* he recites after the meal. Even though the *Shulhan Arukh* ruled that *Birkat Hamazon* does cover the wine that a person drank before his meal, as stated above in halakha 5, it could be that water is different than wine. Wine can be considered essential to the meal since it whets the appetite, but water has no such properties and therefore it may be that *Birkat Hamazon* will not cover it. See the *Mishna Berura* (174:25).

27. The *Ture Zahav* (174:10) ruled that if someone wishes to drink hard liquor during a meal he must recite the blessing of *shehakol nihya bidvaro*. Although the blessing of *hamotzi* covers other beverages, it does not cover hard liquor since it is not considered part of one's meal. The *Magen Avraham* disagreed, arguing that people drink hard liquor during a meal to renew their waning appetites and therefore it is considered part of the meal. If someone wishes to drink hard liquor at the very beginning of a meal, however, the *Magen Avraham* agreed that it is necessary to recite the blessing of *shehakol nihya bidvaro* since people do not drink hard liquor to whet the appetite before a meal. The main purpose of drinking these beverages, he explained, is "to strengthen the heart." The *Nishmat Adam* (cited in the *Sha'ar Hatziyun* 174:42) argued that it is not possible to make this a blanket rule since different individuals have different constitutions and natures, and some people use hard liquor to whet their appetites before eating. The *Mishna Berura* (*Sha'ar Hatziyun* 174:45) likewise cast his doubts on the position of the *Magen Avraham*. Nevertheless, the common custom is never to recite a blessing for any beverage during a meal [except wine], as testified by the *Mishna Berura* (174:39). Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Hazon Ovadya Berakhot*, page 74) discussed this topic at length and

יט. השותה קפה או תה באמצע הסעודה, או בסוף הסעודה, אין לו לברך עליהם, דספק ברכות להקל. ומכל מקום כדי לצאת ידי חובת הפוסקים המחייבים ברכה עליהם, טוב שיניח התה והקפה לאחר ברכת המזון ויברך לכל הדעות. [יביע"א ח"ה סי' יז אות ב], או שיברך על מין מתיקה ויכוין לפטור הקפה והתה.

Coffee or tea during a meal

19) It is not necessary to recite any blessing over a cup of coffee or tea, whether one drinks it during the meal or at its end. This is because of the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*.

Nevertheless, since there are *Poskim* who ruled that it is necessary to recite a blessing in these cases, it is best to postpone drinking these beverages until after reciting *Birkat Hamazon*. Then one is definitely obligated to recite the blessing of *shehakol nihya bidvaro*.[28] Alternatively, one can recite the blessing of *shehakol nihya bidvaro* over some snack food during the meal, having in mind for the blessing to cover the coffee or tea.

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he cited the responsa *Yehuda Ya'ale* Kubo ruling that one does not recite a blessing over whiskey drunk during a meal.

The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Naso* halakha 6) ruled that since the *Poskim* debated this halakha one should not recite any blessing over hard liquor one drinks during a meal. He related that his father, Harav Eliyahu Hayim, would recite the blessing of *shehakol nihya bidvaro* on a bit of sugar whenever he wished to drink hard liquor during a meal. The *Mishna Berura* (*Sha'ar Hatziyun* 174:45) recommended this practice. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Hazon Ovadya Berakhot* page 74, cited above in the footnote to halakha 16) disapproved of using sugar for this purpose since the *Poskim* debated which blessing is the proper one to recite over sugar. It is best to use some other food that definitely calls for the blessing of *shehakol nihya bidvaro* or to recite the blessing over a bit [less than *revi'it*] of hard liquor before the meal.

The *Ben Ish Hai* and the *Mishna Berura* (174:39) pointed out that all this is not an issue during the first two Shabbat meals, since one recites or listens to kiddush and tastes the wine, thereby covering any beverage one will drink during the meal.

Whiskey at the end of a meal

All the above discussion is about drinking alcoholic beverages during a meal. The *Mishna Berura* (ibid.) and the *Halakha Berura* (page 121) pointed out that if someone did not drink them during the meal but he wishes to drink after he has finished eating and before reciting *Birkat Hamazon*, all the *Poskim* agreed that he must recite a blessing over his drink. It appears that the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Naso* halakha 6) concurred with this distinction. He cited Harav Zalman who ruled that if someone drinks an alcoholic beverage in order to aid him in digesting his meal, he must recite a blessing over it, but if he drinks it in order to whet his appetite he does not recite any blessing. He then commented that in practice it is often difficult to determine a person's intentions in drinking the alcohol – the person drinking does not ponder whether he wants to drink it for this reason, that reason or both. Therefore, whenever someone drinks an alcoholic beverage during a meal he should not recite a blessing, following the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*. If he drinks it after he finishes eating, however, then obviously he is not drinking it in order to whet his appetite and he definitely must recite the blessing.

Notice that Maran the Rishon Letziyon, cited in this halakha, wrote that one does not recite a blessing when drinking alcohol "during a meal," implying that if one drinks it after he has finished eating he does recite the proper blessing. A close examination of his discussion of this halakha, however, reveals that he did not make such a distinction. The *sefer Birkat Hashem* (Vol. III, page 360) wrote that even when someone drinks specifically in order to aid his digestion after his meal, the halakhic debate remains whether or not he needs to recite a blessing. He recommended drinking a bit of the alcoholic beverage before the meal, having in mind to cover whatever one will drink "during the meal or after the meal before reciting *Birkat Hamazon*." This matter needs more research.

28. The responsa *Ginat Veradim* (Unit I, #2) ruled that no blessing is necessary when drinking coffee at the end of a meal just before *Birkat Hamazon*; it is considered as part of the meal. The *Haye Adam* (cited in *Mishna Berura* 174:39) ruled that it is necessary to recite a blessing if one drinks the coffee after one finishes eating, since the purpose of drinking coffee at this time, unlike other beverages, is only to aid the meal's digestion. The *Mishna Berura* commented that this is not necessarily correct, but to avoid