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

ובשבת ויום טוב לכל הדעות אינו מברך על הקפה והתה, מכיון שנפטרו בקידוש כשבירך על היין. [כה"ח ס"ק מ]. [משנ"ב סוף ס"ק לט]

כ. המנהג שקודם שהמברך על היין ויש עמו אנשים, אומר קודם לכן "סברי מרנן", והם עונים "לחיים". [ראה כה"ח סי' קסז ס"ק קח]

During Shabbat meals or *Yom Tov* meals when kiddush is recited, this is not an issue at all. Once a person has tasted the wine used for kiddush, he does not have to recite a blessing over any other beverage he might drink throughout the meal. [Likewise, if someone follows the recommended procedure of reciting the blessing of *shehakol* on a bit of water before the meal to cover any beverage he drinks afterward, it covers a cup of coffee or tea as well.]

Savri maranan – lehayim

20) According to custom, when someone is in the company of others and he wishes to recite the blessing of *bore peri hagefen* over wine, he first announces to his colleagues, "*Savri maranan* – take heed, my masters." They respond, "*Lehayim* – to life!"[29]

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the problem one should recite the blessing of *shehakol nihya bidvaro* over some sugar having the coffee in mind.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. V, #17:2) commented that all this applies to drinking tea at the end of a meal as well. The *Arukh Hashulhan* (174:14), however, distinguished between coffee and tea. It is not necessary to recite a blessing for coffee, he ruled, but it is necessary to recite a blessing for tea. Tea, he argued, cannot be considered part of the meal. Maran the Rishon Letziyon disagreed with this and ruled that one does not recite a blessing in either case, but he recommended reciting *Birkat Hamazon* first and drinking the coffee or tea afterward, thus avoiding the controversy. This is also the ruling of *sefer Nehar Mitzrayim*. The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (174:40) testified that the custom is to recite the blessing of *shehakol nihya bidvaro* on some snack food.

29. Harav Shelomo Luria explained that the custom is to announce, "take heed," before drinking wine because when a Sanhedrin sentenced a sinner to be executed, they gave him wine to drink before carrying out the sentence, based on the verse, "Give strong drink to the lost soul and wine to the bitter of spirit." Likewise, mourners were traditionally given wine to drink to help alleviate the pain of their loss, based on our Sages' statement, "Wine was created only to comfort mourners. Therefore, whenever someone wished to drink wine casually he summoned his colleagues' attention and they would respond, "To life," meaning that this drinking should not be associated with either of those occasions.

Mahara"m Metz explained that a person announces, *"Savri maranan"*, when drinking wine but not when eating bread or drinking beer since wine historically is associated with tragic events, such as when Noah became drunk on wine and and as a result cursed his grandson Canaan. Therefore, when someone wishes to drink casually he announces to his colleagues, "Pay attention to my drinking so that no harm befalls anyone because of it." This explains the traditional response of *lehayim* – to life.

Rabbenu David Abudarham (cited by the *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola*) explained that according to one opinion, the Tree of Knowing Good and Evil is a grapevine. When Adam and Eve ate its fruit, they brought death to this world. Therefore, when someone drinks he announces, "I am about to drink wine. Will it bring me life or death?" His colleagues respond, "To life!"

The *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola* suggested another reason as well: Wine can make people drunk and drunkenness can cause tragic events. For example, he cited the incident of Rabba and Ribbi Zira who drank together on Purim, and as a result Rabba slit Ribbi Zira's throat and killed him. Therefore, before we drink we declare our hope and prayer that this drink will bring only life to people and not any harm.

According to the Midrash Tanhuma, the reason is based on the suspicion that one's wine might be laced with poison. When one's colleagues respond, "To life," they reassure him that it is safe to drink his wine.

כא. יש נוהגים שבשעת שתיית היין מברכים איש רעהו בברכת "לחיים" או "בשמחתכם". ונכון יותר שתחילה יברכו "בורא פרי הגפן" ויטעמו מן היין, ואחר כך יאמרו "לחיים", שאין ראוי להקדים כבוד בשר ודם וברכתו לכבוד שמים. [ראה יחו"ד ח"א סי' נא]

Toasting one another

21) When people drink together, it is common to toast one another, saying, "*Lehayim*," or, "*Besimhatkhem* – may it be at your celebration." Whenever offering a toast, it is best to first recite *bore peri hagefen*, taste the wine, and then announce one's toast for good wishes. It is improper to give honor to people before blessing God and honoring Him.[30]

After citing all these reasons, the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer added a reason based on Kabbalah found in the *Sha'ar Hakavanot*.

The Talmud (*Shabbat* 67b) relates that Ribbi Akiva hosted his son's wedding celebration and whenever he was served a cup of wine he announced, "Wine and life should be granted to the rabbis, wine and life should be granted to the rabbis and their disciples." See the comments of Maharsh"a and *Ben Yehoyada*.

Nowadays, the response of *lehayim* is generally used during kiddush. Harav Hayim Palachi (*sefer Par Ehad* on *Pirke deRibbi Eliezer* chapter 18) says that this might be based on the passage stating that "whoever recites a blessing over wine on Friday nights will be granted a long life in this world and a greater life in the World to Come." He admits, however, that the Talmud's passage about announcing *savri maranan* is not discussing kiddush.

30. The holy *Zohar* (*parashat Vayehi*, page 227b) states that one must always praise God before offering a blessing to others or praying on their behalf. If someone blesses his colleague before blessing God, his blessing will not be fulfilled. Therefore, before Yaakov our Forefather blessed Yosef's sons he expressed his praise to God, as the Torah states (*Bereshit* 48:15, 16). A similar teaching is found in *Nedarim* (32b).

The *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola* (*O.H.* 174, gloss 2 on the *Arba'a Turim*) testified that Harav Ashtruk ben Shanji would first recite the blessing of *bore peri hagefen*, taste a bit of the wine and then tell those assembled, "May it be at your celebration." Then he would continue drinking. He explained that it is improper to bless the people and afterward to recite the blessing over the wine and drink.

The *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola* took issue with this, stating that there is nothing wrong with blessing the people first. On the contrary, there is reason to bless the people first since people's honor is so important that it sometimes overrides Torah prohibitions. He brought proof to this from Harav Shelomo Luria, who wrote that when one person sneezes and the others bless him to have a good life, he should first respond to them, saying, "May He lengthen your lives," and then recite the verse of, "I place my hopes in Your salvation."

Nevertheless, the *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola* admitted that he conducts himself according to Rav Ashtruk's instructions whenever he remembers them.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yehave Da'at* Vol. I, #51) defended Rav Ashtruk, explaining that Rav Shelomo Luria's case is where the other people have already blessed the person who sneezed, telling him, "May it be for a good life." In that case it is important to respond to them first and then to recite the verse of, "I place my hopes in Your salvation." Otherwise, it seems as if he is ignoring those who blessed him. In the case of someone who wishes to toast his friends over a cup of wine, there is nothing pressing him to bless the people first. Therefore, it is better to bless God first and then to bless the people. He demonstrated that this is the opinion of the *Eliya Rabba* (*Siman* 174). See more on this discussion in the *Yalkut Yosef Yamim Nora'im English Edition* (footnote on page 142).