**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).

# Preface The Blessing of *Hatov Vehametiv* for Wine

**Historical background**

Our Sages instituted a mitzvah to recite a special blessing – *hatov vehametiv* – upon drinking a second type of wine after reciting the regular blessing of *bore peri hagefen* to drink one type. The Talmud states (*Berakhot* 59b): Rav said, "Even though it is not necessary to repeat the blessing of *bore peri hagefen* when changing from one wine to another, he does have to recite the blessing of *hatov vehametiv* if he is drinking with friends." Rabbenu Asher (*Berakhot* 9:15) wrote that people asked Rabbenu Yitzhak Halevi why it is that we must recite a special blessing when we change to a second type of wine, whereas there is no need for reciting a special blessing when changing to a second type of bread. He answered that in several (three) aspects wine is more exalted than bread: one being that wine brings joy to one's heart and also satisfies one's appetite whereas bread satisfies one's appetite but it does not bring joy. Furthermore, the *Levi'im* sang in the *Bet Hamikdash* only while the wine libation was poured onto the Altar. Another thing is that wine demands its own blessing even when drinking it during a meal, and therefore it makes sense that it would require the blessing of *hatov vehametiv* when a second type is served.

Harav Zalman apparently felt that the first reason is paramount, for he wrote that wine is superior to other foods in that it brings joy to God and to people. When people celebrate, they bring out extra wines to express their joy. Therefore it warrants a new blessing.

Rabbenu Asher then wrote an alternative answer to the main question. Our Sages instituted this blessing during the era when the Sanhedrin was based in Yavne. After the unsuccessful rebellion led by Bar Kokhba, the wicked Hadrian punished the Jews by not allowing them to bury the citizens of Biter who withstood the Romans' siege for so long and took such a heavy toll on the Roman armies. He had all the bodies piled up, forming a wall around a large vineyard, and he used the blood that flowed from their bodies to fertilize his grapevines. When Hadrian died the Jews were permitted to collect the bodies' remains and bury them. The people found that a miracle had occurred; the bodies had not decomposed throughout this period, which

according to one opinion was six years. In memory of this miracle, our Sages instituted the blessing of *hatov vehametiv* on wine since it is blood-colored and reminiscent of that episode. [The halakha applies to white wine as well, the *Ma'adane Yom Tov* explained. Once our Sages instituted this rule, it applies to all wines.]

Harav Akiva Eiger (gloss to *Siman* 175) cited Rabbenu Bahyai (*Kad Hakemah*, *samekh*) suggesting that our Sages purposely associated this blessing with the terrible tragedy of Biter. When people get too involved in a celebration and an assortment of wines are called for, they are forced to recite this blessing and think about the background of the blessing. This will hopefully dampen their spirits a bit so that their levity will not get out of hand. The responsa *Binyamin Ze'ev* (#351) offered a similar explanation for this blessing, saying that by reciting it one will remember the martyrs of Biter and one's own eventual passing from this Earth.

This blessing was instituted to be recited on other occasions as well, such as a rainfall that ends a drought (below in *Siman* 221), on hearing good tidings (below in *Siman* 222), on the birth of a son (below in *Siman* 223:1-3) and upon purchasing home furnishings (below in *Siman* 223:5-11). The fourth blessing of *Birkat Hamazon* is likewise part of this institution; it is likewise known as the blessing of *hatov vehametiv*.

**The criteria for reciting *hatov vehametiv***



The blessing of *hatov vehametiv* can be recited on a second type of wine only in certain situations. One must make sure that all the conditions have been fulfilled before reciting this blessing. The conditions are:

**a)** The people drinking the first wine must be still interested in drinking when they turn to the second wine. If they had decided to cease drinking and then decided to start again when the second wine was served, this blessing may not be recited. Likewise, if they have recited *Birkat Hamazon* between the first and second wines, this blessing may not be recited. (halakha 11)

**b)** There is still some of the first wine available to drink. (halakha 5)

**c)** The second wine is superior to the first wine or at least equal to its quality, as far as the people drinking it know. (halakha 12)

**d)** The second wine must be a different type than the first wine. (halakha 13)

**e)** At least two people are drinking the wine together (halakha 6), and they are both drinking the two wines in the same order. (halakha 8)

**f)** The people drinking the wines own them together, either through the host declaring them all part-owners of the wine or by him serving the wine to them all collectively. (halakha 7)