יז. בימות החול, אין לדחות את אכילת הפירות עד לאחר ברכת המזון, שגורם בזה לברכה שאינה צריכה.

אולם בסעודת שבת ויום טוב מותר להניח הפירות שהובאו על השלחן, עד לאחר ברכת המזון, כדי לברך לפניהם ולאחריהם. ואין לחוש בזה לאיסור גורם ברכה שאינה צריכה, כיון שהוא להשלים מנין מאה ברכות. וטוב שיצווה לבני ביתו להביאם לפניו רק לאחר ברכת המזון. [יחו"ד ח"ו סי' כו, יבי"א ח"ט סי' כז אות ה]

וכן מנהג יוצאי מרוקו לברך על הדגים קודם סעודת שבת, אחר הקידוש, ויש להם על מה שיסמוכו. [יחו"ד שם]

Fruit after a meal

17) On weekdays, if someone wishes to eat fruit after a meal he must not postpone eating them until after reciting *Birkat Hamazon* since he will then need to recite a *berakha aharona* after the fruits. If he eats them before reciting *Birkat Hamazon* it will not be necessary to recite that blessing. Thus, by postponing eating them he would become guilty of causing a blessing to be recited unnecessarily.

On Shabbat meals or *Yom Tov* meals, however, if someone is served fruit for dessert it is permissible to postpone eating them until after reciting *Birkat Hamazon*. On these days, the extra blessing is not considered an unnecessary one since it is necessary to recite extra blessings to make sure that one fulfills the obligation of reciting one hundred blessings each day. It is best to instruct one's family members to postpone serving the fruit until after everyone has recited *Birkat Hamazon*.[59]

This principle also justifies the practice of Moroccan Jews to eat fish immediately after kiddush before performing *netillat yadayim*. [They must recite the blessing of *shehakol* before eating the fish.][60]

59. The *Shene Luḥot Haberit* ruled that on Shabbat if someone is served fruit during a meal, he may put it aside and eat it after the meal so that he will be able to recite blessings before and after eating it, adding them toward fulfilling the mitzvah of reciting one hundred blessings each day. The *Magen Avraham* (215:6) challenged this ruling based on a passage in the Talmud (*Yoma* 70). He insisted that it is forbidden even on Shabbat to create a need to recite an otherwise unnecessary blessing. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yeḥave Da'at* Vol. VI, #26) discussed this issue at length and upheld the ruling of the *Shene Luḥot Haberit*. He demonstrated that other *Poskim* concurred with this ruling, including the *Even Ha'ozer*, the *Eliya Rabba* and the *Erekh Hashulḥan*.

60. After proving that it is permissible to make it necessary to recite extra blessings on Shabbat, Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yeḥave Da'at* Vol. VI, #26) explained that this justifies the custom of Moroccan Jews as explained here. In fact, there is more reason to permit this practice than there is to permit postponing eating fruit until after *Birkat Hamazon*. When someone wishes to eat his fish before the meal, he has not yet begun eating. He definitely needs to recite some blessing in order to eat it since he has not yet recited any blessing at all. In the case of the fruit served at the end of the meal, one has the opportunity to eat them before reciting *Birkat Hamazon* and then he will not need to recite a separate *berakha aḥarona*. In that case, by postponing the fruit until later it is more likely considered a case of reciting a blessing that could have been avoided.

Is it permissible to eat *kazayit* of fish before beginning the meal? If someone did, should he recite a *berakha aḥarona*? One's first thought is that this is a matter of debate as explained above in halakha 2. In the footnote there, however, it was explained that if the food eaten before the meal is one that could have been part of the main course there is no question – one must recite a separate *berakha aḥarona*. Since fish is such a food, it follows that it is permissible to eat *kazayit* of fish before the meal and to recite the blessing of *bore nefashot* before continuing with *netillat yadayim*. This matter needs to be researched to ascertain that this is true.

דין סילוק שלחן

יח. כפי שנתבאר לעיל האוכל פירות אחר הסעודה קודם ברכת המזון, אינו מברך לאחריהם ברכה אחרונה, מפני שברכת המזון פוטרתם. אמנם אם סילקו השלחן מלפניהם והביאו שלחן אחר, או שהסירו המפה והביאו מפה אחרת, ועליה פירות לקינוח, צריכים לברך על הפירות בין לפניהם ובין לאחריהם, שהרי בכיוצא בזה ברור שהסיחו דעתם ומשכו ידיהם מן הפת. [הליכו"ע ח"ב עמ' לז]

Removing the Table

Eating fruit after the table is removed

18) As explained above, it is unnecessary to recite a separate blessing for fruit after eating it as dessert. *Birkat Hamazon* covers the fruit dessert although *hamotzi* does not cover it. There are exceptions to this rule. If the table on which the meal was eaten is removed and another table is brought for the fruit, separate blessings are necessary both before eating the fruit and afterward.

If the tablecloth is removed

Even if the table is not removed but the tablecloth used for the meal is removed and another tablecloth is brought for the fruit, separate blessings are necessary. The act of removing the table or tablecloth signifies a total removal from the meal that was eaten.[61]

61. Source in the Talmud

Our Sages taught (*Berakhot* 41b) that it is necessary to recite a blessing before and after eating foods that are unrelated to one's meal even if one eats them during the meal. This is the ruling of Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 4:11). The Tosafot commented that this halakha is rarely applicable in our times. They explained that during the Talmudic era, the custom was to have the table removed after someone finished his meal and then fruits and beverages would be served. Therefore, those foods that were meant only as dessert and had nothing to do with the meal itself were not covered by the original blessing of *hamotzi*, nor would they be covered by the *Birkat Hamazon* recited afterward. In our cultures, Tosafot explained, we keep the bread available throughout the meal until after we recite *Birkat Hamazon*, so the halakhot pertaining to what must be done after the table is removed are no longer practical. Maran stated the same in the *Shulḥan Arukh* (177:2).

Banquet meals

The *Levush* commented that this is the case with regular meals but at banquets the original halakha has practical implications. Often the waiters remove the bread and the dishes before the participants have recited *Birkat Hamazon*. In case they are served dessert foods after that, they will need to recite blessings both before and after eating them.

The *Bayit Ḥadash* and the *Magen Avraham* disagreed with this. They explained that it is not enough to remove the bread and dishes so long as the table has not been removed. Since we do not remove the table until after the entire meal even at banquets, the Talmud's rules do not apply in our times. Maran did not differentiate between regular meals and banquets. The *Mishna Berura* (*Bi'ur Halakha*) and the *Halikhot Olam* (Vol. II, pages 36 and 37) stated that the custom follows the opinion of the *Bayit Ḥadash*.

Removing the table

Even today, if it happens that the table on which the meal was eaten is removed and another table is brought forward with fruits and desserts, all the *Poskim* agree that it is necessary to recite blessings both before eating and after eating, as stated in the Talmud. In fact, Harav Shelomo Algazi, chief justice of Egypt, testified (as cited by Harav ḤIDA in the *Birke Yosef*) that in Egypt it was common to remove the dining table and to replace it [before *Birkat Hamazon*] with a dessert table piled high with fruits and treats. Therefore, after they recited *Birkat Hamazon* they still needed to recite another blessing to cover the fruits that they had eaten at that time. This ruling originated with Harav Yaakov Castro, and several *Aḥaronim* concurred with it.

The *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer (177:14), however, argued that it does not appear that Maran agreed with this, being that he wrote in the *Shulḥan Arukh* that the Talmud's rule does not apply in practice nowadays in any situation, even if the table and all the food are removed. Maran the Rishon

ואף אם מחליף המפת ניילון, נראה שנחשב הדבר לסילוק שלחן. ומכל מקום עדיף שיברך ברכת המזון תחילה, ואחר כך יחליף המפה הזו, ויברך על הפירות ברכה ראשונה ואחרונה.

If the table had been covered with a plastic disposable tablecloth, once that tablecloth is removed it is considered as if the table had been removed. Nevertheless, it is recommended to first recite *Birkat Hamazon* and then remove the tablecloth. After that, one may eat fruit or any other dessert, reciting blessings before and after eating it.[62]

Letziyon (*Halikhot Olam* Vol. II, page 37) countered that this is incorrect and runs against the grain of the halakha.

Wedding meals

Nowadays it is common at weddings for the waiters to remove the tables after the main course has been served and eaten to make room for dancing. The desserts and snacks are then served on buffet tables on the side. In this case, it should be necessary to recite blessings both before and after eating the snacks. This is in fact the ruling of the *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, page 104), Harav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited in *Vezot Haberakha* chapter 8) and the *Halakha Berura* (page 189). Harav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach and Harav Hayim Pinehas Scheinberg (both cited in *Vezot Haberakha*), however, ruled that since the tables are not moved to mark the end of the meal, this is not considered a case of the Talmud's "removal of the table." In any case, this debate is whether blessings are necessary when eating fruit or ice cream at the end of the wedding. If eating cake, kugel or meats at the end of the wedding, certainly no separate blessings are necessary, as will be explained in the following halakha.

Placing bread on the second table

The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (177:14) suggested avoiding all doubt by placing bread on the new table after the first table is removed. In that way, the people demonstrate that they have not ended their meal even though the table has been removed. This suggestion is taken from the *Levush* (177:2).

The *Hesed La'alafim* (177:3) stated that it will not help to place bread on the second table if the truth is that the people have no intention of eating any more bread. Perhaps this is the reason that the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Naso* halakha 10) states that a God-fearing person will make sure to eat a bit of the bread just before performing *mayim aharonim*, thus establishing that he has not ended his meal until now.

Removing the tablecloth

The *sefer Nehar Mitzrayim* (page 13b) stated that once the tablecloth used for the meal has been removed, even though the people intend to continue eating fruits as dessert it is as if the table has been removed and it is necessary to recite separate blessings before eating the fruit and afterward. Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Halikhot Olam* Vol. II, page 37) concurred with this ruling, but the *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, footnote on page 104) insisted that we cannot equate the removal of the tablecloth with the Talmud's removal of the table. Therefore he ruled that it is not necessary to recite a separate blessing after eating the fruit. Maran the Rishon Letziyon countered that just as removing the table demonstrates that one has ended the meal, removing the tablecloth accomplishes the same.

62. Removing a disposable tablecloth

The *Halakha Berura* (page 188) ruled that although we consider the removal of the tablecloth to be equal to removing the table, that is only when the cloth cover is removed leaving the table bare. Nowadays, it is common to set a table by spreading a tablecloth made of material on it and then covering that cloth with a clear plastic disposable tablecloth. This protects the material tablecloth from spills and stains. If people eat a meal and then remove the plastic table cover before dessert is served and before reciting *Birkat Hamazon*, it is not necessary to recite separate blessings after the dessert is eaten. Removing the disposable table cover does not signify the end of the meal as long as the real tablecloth remains on the table. If the table was covered with the disposable cover only, then when it is removed it is considered as if the table has been removed.

Upon researching this topic, however, it seems difficult to agree with this ruling. The Talmud's rule has nothing to do with tablecloths; it deals with the removal of the table itself. The *Nehar Mitzrayim*, cited in the previous footnote, decided that if someone removes the tablecloth, that act symbolizes the end of the meal just as much as removing the table does, and therefore it is equal to it in the eyes of halakha. If so, then the act of removing a disposable plastic tablecloth also symbolizes the end of the meal even if the cloth table cover is kept on the table. It makes more sense, therefore, to apply the ruling of the *Nehar Mitzrayim* to disposable tablecloths as well.

It may be that the *Halakha Berura* described the halakha for people who customarily remove the cloth cover from the table after the meal is over. For them, removing the