

# HALOCHOSCOPE TOI OPE

Ten people eat together and decide to say *Zimun* with *Elokainu* before *Birchas Hamazon*. After beginning the *Zimun*, one of the ten walks out. May they complete the *Zimun* using the *Elokainu*? If three people making a *Zimun* experienced a similar defection, would there be any point to the two remaining people finishing the *Zimun*?

The issues:

(A) *Bircas Hazimun*

(B) Uttering a *Shem*, Name of Hashem, when in doubt

(C) When one of a quorum leaves in the middle

(A) *Birchas Hazimun*

If three people participate in a bread meal together, they are required to add *Birchas Hazimun* to *Birchas Hamazon*. This is considered a separate Brocha by the Talmud, according to the majority of commentators. Some say that one Talmudic opinion considers it an addition to the first Brocha. If ten people participate, the Name of Hashem is added to the Brocha. If three people eat together, they must wait for *Zimun*, and may not recite *Birchas Hamazon* separately. If there are six of them, they could split up into two groups of three. The same rule applies to groups of ten or more, until twenty. *Zimun* means inviting or convening. When the three are about to praise Hashem, one of them "invites" the others to join him. Or the three formally convene to join in praise. Without the *Zimun*, three individuals would be praising Hashem at the same time and place. *Zimun* makes them into a group.

The Poskim debate whether the Mitzvah of *Zimun* is Scriptural or Rabbinical. The source for this Brocha is also a matter of debate. In one passage, the Talmud debates whether it is derived from a verse in the Torah or a verse in Tehilim. Neither Passuk refers directly to *Birchas Hazimun*, but to the general idea that when three people participate in praising Hashem together they should do so in the form of a responsive dialogue. Two of them "answer" the third one. If the Mitzvah is considered Scriptural it would seem strange to derive it from a Passuk in Tehilim. In another passage, the Talmud debates sources for the Brochos of *Birchas Hamazon*. One opinion evidently considers *Birchas Hazimun* an essential part of *Birchas Hamazon*. The Passuk, according to this view, specifies it as one of the Brochos.

The Talmud seems to debate whether or not the Mitzvah is Scriptural. There are four views stated by the Poskim. In one view the entire Mitzvah is Scriptural, in the

second, entirely Rabbinical. In a third view, when recited in the presence of ten people with the Name of Hashem, it is considered Scriptural, but in the presence of three it is Rabbinical. A fourth view considers the basic Mitzvah Scriptural even in the presence of three, but the addition of the Name of Hashem, Rabbinical. It is possible that the view considering it Scriptural agrees to this point, leaving three main views.

The differences cited by the Poskim are mainly: (i) *Safeik*, a doubt. When in doubt about a Scriptural obligation, one must tend to stringency, while when in a doubt about a Rabbinical obligation one tends to leniency. (ii) Employees should minimize the time they take off to tend to personal needs. The Talmud debates whether they are required to recite the full Birchas Hamazon. The Halachic conclusion is to require them to recite the Scriptural parts. Depending on which view is followed, they might not be required to recite the Zimun. (iii) According to those who maintain that fruits of the seven species require Scriptural Birchas Hamazon in one single Brocha, there should also be a requirement of Zimun. [There is such an opinion, not accepted by the Poskim.] The consensus is to consider it Rabbinical, and therefore it is suspended in these cases.

In former times leading Zimun included reciting the whole Birchas Hamazon for the entire assembly. Participants must join for the entire Zimun. Ideally, this includes the whole of Birchas Hamazon. The leader would recite it aloud while the others listen. In practice we are accustomed to reciting it individually for various reasons. According to Ashkenazi practice, most Poskim maintain that one does not fulfil his obligation unless he hears the entire first Brocha from the leader. Therefore, we recite it silently with him, finishing a few words sooner so that we may also respond *Amein*.

If one member of the group has not finished eating, the others can force him to interrupt his eating to respond. He must then wait until the end of the first Brocha. Unless he does not eat any more, nor interrupts with unnecessary talk before Birchas Hamazon, he must still recite the first Brocha when he finishes eating and recites the rest of Birchas Hamazon. If one wishes to end before the other two, he may not force them to interrupt, but may ask them to. If they wish to, they may respond to his Zimun and continue eating after he finishes the first Brocha. [See Brochos 20b 45a 46a (Tosafos, Rashba) 48b 60a (Rashba) Poskim. Rambam Hil. Brochos 5, Kiryas Sefer. Tur, Bais Yosef, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 187, 188 (citing Raavad), 189 191 (Bais Yosef citing Mordechai, Magen Avraham 1, Eshel Avraham), 192:1 (Mishbetzos Zahav 1, Mishneh Berurah 1, Kaf Hachayim 1.), 193:1 (Eshel Avraham 2) 100 (Levush Hagaha, Eliyahu Raba), commentaries. Chazon Ish O.C. 31:1.]

The procedure for Zimun is that the leader invites the others to recite Birchas Hamazon. They respond by reciting the Passuk beginning "Yehi Shem ..." The leader repeats the Passuk, then continues with a formal declaration that "we shall bless He

from Whose [bounty] we have partaken. If a Minyan is present, at this point mention is made of Hashem's Name as well. The others respond by repeating this sentence and adding "and by Whose goodness we live." The leader then repeats the entire last sentence. Thus, with a Minyan, the word Elokainu is repeated three times. If it was said for the first time and then one member left, the actual Brocha had not yet begun. The first time is a command of sorts to begin. If it was said the second time and then one member of the Minyan left, may it be said for the remainder? If the first part of the Zimun was recited with three people, then one left, is there any point in continuing it?

### **(B) Uttering a Shem when in doubt**

Normally, it is forbidden to recite Hashem's Name in vain, i.e. when there is no obligation to do so. The Rabbis have authority to institute a Brocha, despite the use of Hashem's Name. When there is no obligation it is forbidden to recite the Brocha. Some consider it an outright violation of the Scriptural negative Mitzvah, *Lo Sisa*, forbidding taking the Name in vain. Others maintain that this does not apply to a Brocha. Rather, it is a violation of the positive Mitzvah, *Es Hashem Elokecha Tira*, to revere Hashem. A third view maintains that a Brocha also involves praising Hashem. Though unwarranted, it can not be forbidden Scripturally. However it is forbidden Rabbinically. Thus, according to many Poskim reciting a Brocha when in doubt raises the issue of a *Safeik Deoraisa*, questionable violation of a Scriptural prohibition. We rule stringently on such doubts, to refrain from doing the act. A Brocha is also an obligation, but is a Rabbinical one. The doubt makes it a *Safeik Derabanan*, questionable Rabbinical obligation, where the rule is leniency. Thus, stringency in the Rabbinical obligation leads to leniency in a Scriptural prohibition, and one must refrain from reciting the Brocha.

In our case, the issue is whether the Shem added in is in the same category. It appears from some commentaries that the fact that the Talmud calls this a Brocha (Birchas Zimun) shows that it is like any other Brocha. When only three people are present it does not require the usually mandatory *Shaim Umalchus* because it is also an introduction to regular full-size Brochos. If so, a Shem added with no Minyan would seem to raise the issue of an uncalled for Shem. [See Brochos 33a 39a (Rosh) Sanhedrin 66a Rosh Hashana 33a (Tosafos) Temura 4a Rambam Hil. Brochos 1:15 Shevuos 12:9-11. Minchas Chinuch 30. Teshuvos R. Akiva Eger I:25 Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 206:6 Mishneh Berurah 215:20. Aruch Hashulchan 192:1.]

### **(C) When one member of a quorum leaves**

The usual requirement for *Minyan* is for a *Davar Shebikedusha*. Certain parts of davening constitute a sanctification of Hashem's Name. The Torah says that Hashem's Name must be sanctified *Betoch*, in the midst of the Jewish people. The Talmud derives from here that a quorum of ten is required. The typical example is the repetition of

*Shemone Esrei*, including *Kedusha* etc., or *Kaddish*. There is a rule that if a Minyan was present for the beginning of a Davar Shebikedusha, then one person left, the recitation is to be completed without the full Minyan.

Regular Zimun with a quorum of three is evidently not a Davar Shebikedusha. When a Minyan recites the Shem, one could debate whether it is a Davar Shebikedusha. [Some say that, depending on how we rule on this, maybe one should stand when saying the Shem.] When the Talmud gives reasons for the requirement of ten for the various recitals, the reason given for Zimun is that since the Shem is recited, it is not Orach Ar'a, etiquette, with less than ten. This implies that it is not due to Davar Shebikedusha. Even three could have recited a Shem, but due to Orach Ar'a we require ten. When the Talmud gives the sources for saying the Shem, it implies that it is due to the sanctity of the Divine Presence that a Shem is added. However, this is also not the same as a regular Davar Shebikedusha. In those cases, the ten are assembled specifically in order to recite the words. In our case, the words are recited as a consequence of the assembly. Therefore, while the Davar Shebikedusha might only require ten people present to begin, the Shem of Zimun might require the ten people present whenever it is actually said. [See Megilah 23b (Yerushalmi 4:4) Brachos 49b-50a, Poskim. Eshel Avraham 192:1.]

This does not necessarily end our discussion. It is possible that the entire idea of a quorum is to initiate a communal recital. Once it has begun, if anyone leaves the rest may continue with it. This would even apply to a quorum of three. Thus, if the two respondents said their part, and then one ran out, the leader would still finish his part, without which the Brocha is incomplete. On the other hand, it is possible that this rule only applies when a Davar Shebikedusha is recited. Once it has been started one does not stop when one member of the quorum leaves. The Shechina is still present, and He must be sanctified. Zimun is not of the same nature. The quorum is to emphasize the value of reciting Birchas Hamazon in a group. If the group has already broken up, the Brocha will not be a complete group Brocha either way. It is not like interrupting the Brocha, because the person who left interrupted it anyhow.

Since the Yerushalmi [which is the source of the rule] does not mention the rule in cases of Birchas Zimun, and the Poskim do not seem to discuss it, it would appear that the rule does not apply to Zimun. In the case of ten, one should not recite the Shem if one leaves early. In the case of a threesome, there would be no point in finishing the Brocha if one left before the final response.