



Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5769

March 20, '09  
Volume VIII Issue 16

## Hilchos B'rachos part XXVII

### Birkas Hamazon

Before we delve into the complex issues of bentching, we will begin with some general rules and ideas.<sup>1</sup>

**Kavana** Prior to bentching, one should have the *kavana* (intention) to fulfill the biblical mitzvah of *Birkas Hamazon*. One should realize that one is about to thank *Hashem* for all one has, all belongings, *chessed*, food, clothes, health, and bentching is time to appreciate and thank *Hashem* for it all.

**Simcha** R' Chaim Vital in *Sha'arei Kedusha*<sup>2</sup> writes that one should recite *Birkas Hamazon* with the *simcha* associated when one receives a gift. A gift is out of the ordinary. It is exciting and welcoming to receive a gift. The *simcha* one feels when receiving a gift should be transmitted to *Hashem* through bentching.

It might help to remember that appreciating one's source of sustenance is a superb way to ask *Hashem* to continue His benevolence, and the more *simcha* and meaning invested in that request, the more probability of it being accepted.

**Siddur** It is correct to bentch from a *siddur* and not by heart.<sup>3</sup>

**Dress** One should dress for the occasion. The *poskim* mention the merits of wearing a hat and even a jacket for bentching, because it enhances concentration and fear of heaven.

**Sitting** One should sit during *Birkas Hamazon* so as to have more concentration.<sup>4</sup> Leaning against a wall etc. will not solve the problem, because it is not that one should not walk around, it is a matter of being able to sit with *ישוב הדעת* (serenity) and concentrate on bentching.

**What does *ושבעת* (satisfy) mean in the possuk of *ואכלת ושבעת וברכת*?**

There are those that explain *ושבעת* to mean drink, i.e. one ate and drank. According to this opinion, one who ate to one's fill but did not drink (when thirsty<sup>5</sup>) is not satiated and the obligation to bentch is only rabbinical.

Other opinions explain *ושבעת* as it says, i.e. one ate to one's fill. Consequently, it is correct to drink before *Birkas Hamazon* so as to be obligated to bentch *mid'oraisso*.

The *Rama* says<sup>6</sup> that if some diners are satiated and others not and one person will be bentching for everyone else, a person that drank should bentch for the others, because the one obligated to bentch

<sup>1</sup> Most are adapted from *וזהו הברכה פט"ו*.

<sup>2</sup> 1:6.

<sup>3</sup> *Siman* 185:1.

<sup>4</sup> *Siman* 183:9 & 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Rama siman* 197:4 and *M"B* 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.

*mid'oraisso* should be *moitzie* those that are only rabbinically obligated.

**If one ate without drinking (and was thirsty) and bentched, and subsequently drank a cup of tea, must one bentch again?**

The premise of this question is that if one is only obligated to bentch *mid'oraisso* after drinking, and one bentched before drinking, in which case it would seem that his obligation is only rabbinical, if one drank after bentching he is now considered satiated and is obligated to bentch *mid'oraisso*, in which case his previous bentching does not count.

The *S'fas Emes*<sup>7</sup> was asked a similar question: one ate a *k'zayis* of bread, and was not satiated, and after bentching he ate vegetables till he was satisfied, must he bentch again.

The *S'fas Emes* replied that he need not, because if one *bentches* when not satisfied, one is indeed fulfilling a mitzvah *mid'oraisso* to bentch albeit not being obligated to do so. So although if subsequent to eating the vegetables one is satisfied, one's initial bentching is of biblical 'quality'.

However, Hagaon HaRav Sternbuch *shlita* points out that the *Bi'ur Halacha* does not seem to agree with the *S'fas Emes* and that one who *bentches* before being satiated is not fulfilling a biblical mitzvah.

Consequently, if one feels a need to drink before bentching, one should do so.

**But what if one drank after bentching, according to the *Bi'ur Halacha*, is one obligated to bentch again?**

Since not all *poskim* say that satiation means eating and drinking, one will not be required to bentch again after drinking.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> תשובות והנהגות ח"ב סי' קכא.

<sup>8</sup> תשובות והנהגות ibid.

**If one cannot recall if one bentched, must one bentch again?**

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach זצ"ל once commented on an interesting *halacha*. The *halacha* is that if one read *Shema* and when, for example, he said *ובשעריך*, and he did not know if he was at the first *ובשעריך* or the second, he must say *אם והיה אם* again, because it is possible he was at the first.

Rav Shlomo Zalman commented that it is possible for one to recite *Shema* and to be totally oblivious of where he is or what has been said.

The same comment can be applied in this case. It is sad to think that one can recite the entire *Birkas Hamazon* and not be sure whether he recited it or not.

But to the point – if one ate to his full, his obligation to bentch is biblical and when in doubt one must recite *Birkas Hamazon*.<sup>9</sup> If one is not satiated, one will not have to recite *Birkas Hamazon*.

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## Vort on the Parsha

The *Adanim*, the *Mishkan's* "shoes" were omitted from Moshe Rabeinu's count, and until he included them the books did not add up. The *Adanim* were not of equal importance to the other contributions, which included gold and silver as the *adanim* were from the *מחצית השקל* – the half *shekalim*, so one might think that it is not important to mention them. The torah tells us that every effort in the direction of *ruchnius* counts and is reckoned.

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<sup>9</sup> *Siman* 184:4.

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**Note:** The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.