



Parshas Tzav 5769

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Hilchos B'rachos part XXIX

Hilchos Zimun

Three people who have dined together are obligated to bentch with *zimun*. This obligation is biblically sourced in the possuk גדלו לדי' אתי ונרוממה שמו יחדיו, speak of Hashem's greatness with me, which implicates that one person is talking to at least two people, and together we will appreciate His name's greatness.

Indeed several *poskim* learn that the *chayav* is biblical, while others learn that it is a rabbinical obligation, relying on a possuk for a source. Regardless, it is an important mitzvah and the *Shulchan Aruch*¹ does not mince words stating that one is *chayav* to do *zimun*.

What comprises zimun?

The essence of *zimun* is to say נברך, let us bentch to the One who we ate from and the others respond ברוך, שאכלנו משלו, *boruch* is the One who we ate from and we live because of His goodness.²

So why do we say נברך רבותי?

The *Magan Avraham* cites the *Zohar* saying that one should verbally summon holy actions to embed them with *kedusha*.³ Consequently we say, gentlemen, let us give

praise. After preparing and inviting others to *zimun* we say נברך שאכלנו, which is the actual *zimun*.

What are the prerequisites for zimun?

Several factors must exist to necessitate *zimun*, 1- eating together, 2- type of food, 3 – eating in one place, 4 – place of eating, 5 – who joins the *zimun*.

Eating together

Three people who dined together must do *zimun*. Dining together is defined either by beginning to eat together or ending together.⁴

If two people dined together and a third joined later: if the two finished eating and the third is still busy eating, they need not wait for the third to complete, they can bentch without *zimun*. If however they concluded their meal and have not as yet bentched and are at a point where, if offered more food to eat they would eat it, it is not considered as if they have concluded their meal, but rather as if all concluded simultaneously and are obligated to bentch.⁵

Type of food

Three people who consumed bread are obligated to *zimun*.

What should the third person eat to complete zimun?

¹ *Siman* 192:1.

² *Ibid*.

³ See *M"B* 192:2.

⁴ *Siman* 193:2.

⁵ See *M"B* 193:19.

The *Shulchan Aruch*⁶ cites various opinions. The first opinion – he should consume a *k'zayis* of bread.⁷ Second opinion – a *k'zayis* of *mezonos*, something for which one recites *על המזון*.⁸ Third opinion – a *k'zayis* of any vegetable or food item.⁹

The *Shulchan Aruch* consequently rules that if the third person will not eat bread, it is preferable not to offer him a beverage or any food so as to avoid the *machlokes*. However, the *Mishna Berura* rules¹⁰ that if he does not wish to wash for bread, custom is to offer a drink or any food item.¹¹

Eating in one place

A prerequisite is that all three people dine in one place as a *קביעות* – a get together. The *poskim* define this as eating at the same table or on the same tablecloth (picnic?). The *Vilna Ga'on* holds that members of the same family are called a *קביעות* even when dining on separate tables. Milling around is not a *קביעות*.

People who would like to eat together, but for lack of place are eating on separate tables, are called a *קביעות* and may do *zimun*. Consequently, diners at a wedding even though they are sitting at separate tables are called a *קביעות*, because in essence they share the same *simcha* and are eating together.

A *yeshiva* dining hall is the same. Nobody would object to placing all the tables together and eating at one long table, because it is for sake of keeping order etc. that tables are separate. If however, each shiur wants to specifically sit separately from another shiur, they are not obligated to *zimun*.

On the other hand, diners in a café, restaurant or hotel who are sitting at separate tables prefer to dine alone and not sit with other people, and as such they are not obligated to *zimun*.¹² If the same waiter serves several tables, the diners at those tables are considered eating together.

Are people dining in a car or bus considered a קביעות?

The *Magen Avraham* has his doubts,¹³ because halachically travelers are likened to people walking (*רוכב כמהלך דמי*) and perhaps they are not called a *קביעות*. When in doubt, the *poskim* say one may perform *zimun*, but in presence of ten people, since *Hashem's* name is mentioned, one may not utter *Hashem's* name.

Vort for Pesach

The possuk says *וַאֲשָׁא אֶתְכֶם עַל כְּנָפֵי נְשָׁרִים* – I carried you on eagle wings. *Rashi* explains that the eagle only fears man's arrows, so he places his fledglings on his back. *Hashem's* 'cloud' absorbed the Egyptian's arrows and boulders at the Red sea, similar to the eagle. When *B'nei Yisroel* were in the sea, the cry in Heaven was that both the Egyptians and *B'nei Yisroel* worshipped idols so why is *Hashem* saving them and not the Egyptians. *Hashem* however invoked *ahava* and mercy to save His children, so in essence He absorbed the arrows of *Midas Hadin* to protect His children.

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לזכר נשמת חנה בת ברוך

⁶ 197:3.

⁷ *Rambam* chap. 5 *Hilchos B'rachos*.

⁸ *Rif* and *Rashba*.

⁹ *Tosefos*, *Rosh* and *R' Yonah*.

¹⁰ *M"B siman* 197:22.

¹¹ As for Sephardic custom, see *וזאת הברכה* page 130.

¹² See *וזאת הברכה* page 133.

¹³ See *M"B* 167:62.

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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.