The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן קס"ז סעיף י"א-י"ג

Overview

Siman 167 Seif 11:

If two or more people are together one should recite the beracha on behalf of the others. This applies only when they set a place to eat (or the ba'al habayis with the members of his household, which is comparable to reclining) **but if they were sitting without reclining, since they did not set a place to eat together each one should recite the beracha for himself. If they declared that they would eat "here" or in a particular place, since they arranged for themselves a place it is considered a set place even though they did not recline. Nowadays that we are not accustomed to reclining, sitting at a table or even without a table but with a single tablecloth we have set for ourselves a place. Even for a group that gathered together it is considered as though they have set for themselves a place. Even nowadays when people gather to eat together or with the ba'al habayis with his family they must share the same table or tablecloth.**

- Regarding birkas hamazon one person should not l'chatchila recite the beracha on behalf of another but it is acceptable for the beracha of hamotzi. (M.B. 54)
- Even if each person eats from his own loaf they are considered combined. (M.B. 57)
- Since our "sitting" is comparable to their reclining one may have thought that whenever they did not require reclining we should not even require "sitting" therefore Shulchan Aruch emphasizes otherwise. (M.B. 59)

Siman 167 Seif 12:

If people were riding and they decided to eat they constitute a single group even though each person eats from his own loaf as long as they are all standing in a single location. If they were eating as the animals were walking they do not constitute a single group. If they were eating spread out in a field they do not form a single group even if they are eating at the same time and from a single loaf of bread since they did not set themselves in their place.

- Magen Avrohom is uncertain whether people travelling on a wagon combine. The inclination of later authorities is that they do combine. Regarding a boat all opinions agree that they constitute a single group. (M.B. 62)
- Later authorities write that the waiter who pays attention to the one who recites hamotzi has fulfilled his obligation even though he is constantly walking since that is the manner in which he eats. (M.B. 62)
- In other words since they did not settle into a single place the fact that they said they would eat together is irrelevant. (M.B. 64)

Halacha Highlight

Listening to another person recite hamotzi

Shulchan Aruch Siman 167 Seif 13

היכא דלא קבעו מקום

When they did not establish a place

In seifim 11 and 12 Shulchan Aruch discussed how people who are eating together formulate a single group so that one of the people may recite the beracha of hamotzi on behalf of others. The primary circumstance that is needed is קביעות—that the group settles into a place so that they are eating together. As times and the way people gather together to eat changes, so too the halacha changes. In the event that people are together but do not formally combine to eat together, each person must recite the beracha for himself. In seif 13 Shulchan Aruch teaches that even in a circumstance in which the group of people did not form a single group to eat together if one of the people does recite the beracha on behalf of the others and he has intention to recite the beracha on their behalf and they have intent to have that person recite the beracha for them they have fulfilled their obligation. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק ס"ה) explains that b'dieved they have fulfilled their obligation since the obligation for each one of them to recite the beracha for himself is only a l'chatchila obligation and is not essential.

Mishnah Berurah then references Magen Avrohom who is uncertain about Shulchan Aruch's ruling since there are Rishonim who maintain that if the group does not formally combine into a single unit one person may not recite the beracha on behalf of the others. Vilna Gaon, however, asserts that Shulchan Aruch's ruling is correct. Later authorities (פסקי תשובות אות כ"ד הע' 150) write that even in this instance we apply the principle that when there is a doubt whether one should recite a beracha the beracha should not be recited. Therefore, one who had in mind to discharge his obligation with the beracha of another person should not then recite the beracha for himself. If he then wants to remove any doubt he should listen to another person recite the beracha and thereby remove any doubt whatsoever.

Siman 167 Seif 13:

When they did not establish for themselves a place and each one should recite his own beracha if someone recited the beracha with everyone else in mind and they had in mind to discharge their obligation they have fulfilled their obligation.

- Shulchan Aruch means that b'dieved they fulfilled their obligation. Magen Avrohom questions Shulchan Aruch's ruling but Gra maintains that it is the primary opinion in halacha. The same halacha applies for birkas hamazon. (M.B. 65)