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Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן קס"ז סעיף ט"ז-כ'

Halacha Highlight

Handing bread to someone

Shulchan Aruch Siman 159 Seif 20

הבוצע נותן פרוסה לפני כל אחד

The one who breaks the bread places the slice in front of each person

Shulchan Aruch (סע' י"ח) writes that the one who broke bread should place down a slice in front of each person who is there and each person lifts the slice for himself. The one who broke bread should not hand the bread to each person unless that person is a mourner. Rema cites a pasuk in Eicha that alludes to the principle that one hands bread to a mourner. The source of this ruling is Rambam (פ"ז מהל' ברכות ה"ה), but there is no source in the Gemara or Midrashim for this concept. Even the exposition cited by Rema is not from a Midrash; rather it is an exposition suggested by Avudraham. Rashba (שו"ת ח"א סי' רע"ח) also notes that this ruling has no definitive source and its origin is from Torah scholars who undoubtedly had a source for the ruling. He then writes that at one point he had a source for the practice but forgot what that source was.

Since there is no source in Chazal for this ruling there are authorities who write that in those places that are not particular about this practice there is no reason to insist that the bread be placed on the table rather than handed to someone (פסקי תשובות אות כ"ו). Nimukei Orach Chaim writes that the Arizal and other tzadikim were not particular about this practice and would regularly distribute shirayim to people directly without placing the bread on the table in front of each person.

Mishnah Berurah implies that when Shulchan Aruch writes that there is an exception for a mourner, the intent was that the mourner was the one who broke the bread and is distributing it to others. Shulchan Aruch HaRav writes that the exception is that one may hand a mourner bread into his hand without placing it on the table in front of him. Sefer Chaye Moshe suggests that there is no dispute and perhaps both statements are true.

Overview

Siman 167 Seif 16:

The one breaking the bread may not do so until most people finished answering אמן.

- This refers to where he is discharging their obligation. (M.B. 84)
- He is not required to delay for the few who extend their אמן. (M.B. 85)

Siman 167 Seif 17:

The one who broke bread takes food first but if he would like to honor someone more prominent he may do so.

- Since he was honored to break the bread and discharge the obligation of others, it is appropriate to honor him by letting him take food first. (M.B. 87)

Siman 167 Seif 18:

The one who breaks bread places down a piece in front of each person and each one takes the piece himself and the one who breaks bread should not hand the piece to someone to eat unless he is a mourner (פרסה ציון בידיה alludes to the piece of hamotzi which given into one's hand while in mourning).

- One should not throw the bread to the guests even if it will not become filthy by throwing it. (M.B. 88)
- On Shabbos the mourner breaks bread as normal so that it should not be a public display of mourning. (M.B. 89)

Siman 167 Seif 19:

One who is not eating may not recite hamotzi to discharge the obligation of others but he may recite the beracha for children even though he is not eating with them in order to train them in mitzvos.

- He may not recite a beracha even if the listener cannot recite the beracha for himself. (M.B. 91)
- One may recite the beracha even for a child for whom one is not responsible for their chinuch if they want to eat and do not know how to recite a beracha. (M.B. 93)

Siman 167 Seif 20:

Even on Shabbos when one is obligated to eat bread one may not recite the beracha on behalf of others if he will not eat. He may not recite the beracha for others when he will not eat except for hamotzi for matzah on the night of Pesach and the beracha on wine for kiddush at night and during the day. One should eat the piece that he broke off before eating other bread so that it is eaten while hungry and this beautifies the mitzvah.

- The same halacha is true if he already ate matzah or already recited kiddush on wine. On the first two nights of Sukkos one may also recite the beracha for others even though he will not eat since there is a mitzvah to eat an olive's volume of bread in the sukkah. (M.B. 95)
- The obligation was enacted for the mitzvah rather than the benefit. (M.B. 96)
- Shelah writes that one should keep some of the hamotzi bread for the end of the meal so that one could retain the taste of hamotzi in his mouth. One should not feed an animal, bird or gentile from the hamotzi piece or the piece that was cut from the hamotzi piece since this does not honor the mitzvah. (M.B. 97)

Stories to Share

Oneg Shabbos

מ"ב, ס' קס"ז, ס"ק צ"ד: "אלא כדי שיהנה מסעודת שבת..."

On today's amud we see that one should have pleasure on Shabbos.

A close student once invited Rav Yisrael Salanter, zt"l, to join him leil Shabbos.

"I never go to anyone for Shabbos until I find out their custom during the meal I shall be attending," answered Rav Yisrael Salanter.

This student proudly recounted that his table was filled with both physical and spiritual oneg shabbos of the very best kind. "We procure our meats b'tachlis ha'hidur. The cook in our house is a G-d-fearing woman, the widow of a renowned talmid chacham. Our table is full with the best foods, yet we are very careful to sing and say an abundance of Torah between each course. We even have a regular seder in Shulchan Aruch. Understandably, we end our meal only very late at night."

Rav Yisrael accepted his student's invitation, but with a surprising condition. "I will come, but only if you cut two hours off the meal."

The student complied with his mentor's strange request and the meal from start to finish took slightly under an hour. At the very end, right when they were preparing to wash mayim achronim, the student could not contain his curiosity, "Please teach me what is wrong with my regular meal that the Rav would not come until I cut it to such an extent."

Instead of replying, Rav Yisrael merely asked that the cook be brought the table. When the modest woman arrived, Rav Yisrael apologized to her. "Please forgive me for rushing you this evening since on my account you were forced to serve course after course without a break."

"Hashem should bless the Rav with all the brochos!" replied the gratified widow. "I only wish that he came to us every Friday night. My boss usually has a very lengthy meal, and after a hard day working on my feet in the kitchen, I am so weak that I can hardly stand. But, thanks to the Rav, I can get some much needed rest."

Rav Yisrael turned his student and said, "It is true that the way you set up your table is very meritorious...but only if your tzidkus isn't attained at the expense of another!"

תנועת המוסר, ח"א, ע' 332-333