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

Halacha Highlight

Responses during birkas hamazon

Shulchan Aruch 8 Seif ,183 Siman
יש מי שאומר שדינה כתפלה
There is an opinion that maintains that it is treated the same as tefila

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' ח') cites an opinion that the guidelines for interrupting to greet others or respond to others' greetings during birkas hamazon, follows the parameters of davening. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ל) explains that this means that one may not inquire about or respond to others while reciting birkas hamazon. The reason to equate birkas hamazon with shemone esrei is that in both cases the tefila must be recited in a single location, as opposed to other tefilos, even krias shema, which may be recited while walking. Chazon Ish (או"ח סי' כ"ח סק"ג) writes that the restriction against talking applies to mundane talk but it may be permitted to answer kaddish and kedusha while reciting birkas hamazon, even in the middle of a beracha. Kaf HaChaim (אות מ"ה), however, writes that since Shulchan Aruch equates birkas hamazon with shemone esrei, one may not even answer borchu, kaddish or kedusha. In the event that the tzibbur is answering to one of these tefilos one reciting birkas hamazon should listen silently similar to what one does while reciting shemone esrei. If the tzibbur is saying modim he should merely nod his head in the direction that the tzibbur is bowing.

As far as answering אמן is concerned, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (ותן ברכה עמ' י"ב) rules that one may not answer אמן when one hears another person complete a beracha. This is the same halacha as one who hears someone complete a beracha while he is in the middle of shemone esrei. The only exception to this rule is that when people are reciting birkas hamazon in a zimun they may answer אמן to the beracha of the one leading the zimun even though they are not discharging their obligation with his recitation. Ben Ish Chai (שנה א' פר' חקת אות י"ח) writes that from הרחמן until the end of birkas hamazon there is no restriction against answering devarim she'b'kedusha, but one may not speak about mundane matters.

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ש"ע, ס' קפ"ד, ט': "צריך לישב בשעה שמברך..."

Today's amud continues discussing the halachos of bircas hamazon.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explained why we teach children to recite berachos and bircas hamazon from a very early age. "There is no denying that even very small children are taught to recite blessings. This is not done for reasons of chinuch, since the child is not yet developed enough to really understand what a berachah is about. We teach such small children to make berachos just as when they spend time with an aunt or uncle we introduce them to their aunt or uncle. This is how they build familiarity with blessings, and eventually it sinks in. Similarly, we teach them to recite berachos even from a very early age, to accustom them to holy matters."

שלמי מועד, ע' תק"ב

One child had a health problem which precluded him eating from the five grains. His lunch consisted of rice cakes and similar foods. Naturally, at the end of their meal, the children bentched together, gustily singing the bircas hamazon aloud. This child's parents told him not to bentch with everyone else since he had not eaten bread and was not allowed to bentch because he wanted to be like everyone else.

When a rabbi heard about this, he wondered if the well-meaning parents hadn't erred. "After all, if the child stands out like this it can have a negative effect on him. And the main reason such a young child bentches is to accustom him in holy matters in any case."

When this question reached Rav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, zt"l, he came out firmly on the side of the parents. "Under no circumstances may a child bentch if he did not eat bread!"

וישמע משה, ע' ע"ט

Overview

Siman 183 Seif 7:

It is appropriate if each one of the people present recites each beracha including the conclusion with the one leading birkas hamazon. One should finish the beracha ahead of the one leading birkas hamazon so that he could answer אמן as above in siman 59. One should only give the kos shel beracha to one who is generous.

- ❖ It would be preferred if those assembled would listen to the recitation of birkas hamazon from the one leading birkas hamazon but since there is a concern that they will talk and not pay attention it is more appropriate that those assembled should recite each word with the one leading birkas hamazon and it is still considered birkas hazimun. (M.B. 27)
- ❖ They should at least recite the first beracha with the leader since according to some if they don't it is not considered birkas hazimun. The one leading birkas hazimun should recite at least the first beracha out loud so that those assembled could recite the beracha with him and they should finish slightly ahead of him so that they could answer אמן. If the people will pay attention it is preferable for them to sit silently and pay attention to the recitation of the first beracha. This should be done only if those assembled understand lashon kodesh. (M.B. 28)

Siman 183 Seif 8:

Concerning the question of the permissibility to wish others well out of fear or honor there is an opinion that maintains that the halacha is the same as shemone esrei.

- ❖ One may not inquire or respond about the well-being of others. (M.B. 30)

Siman 183 Seif 9:

One must sit while he recites birkas hamazon. Regardless of whether one was walking in his house as he ate, or was standing or reclining when he is ready to recite birkas hamazon he must sit in order to have proper intent. He should not recline since that is indicative of haughtiness; rather one should sit with awe. It appears to me that this requirement is not limited to the one reciting birkas hamazon; rather even those assembled may not sit a lightheaded manner, they must sit with awe. However, if one did not do this and recited birkas hamazon while walking he has fulfilled his obligation.

- ❖ Since the Poskim don't say otherwise it seems that one is required to sit while reciting the fourth beracha as well. (M.B. 31)

Siman 183 Seif 10:

Some maintain that even al hamichya must be recited while sitting.

- ❖ Biur Hagra connected this halacha to what is discussed below in siman 184:3. (M.B. 35)

Siman 183 Seif 11:

If one was walking and eating he does not need to sit to recite the beracha since his mind will not be settled.

- ❖ One will find it difficult that he is delaying his trip and this will prevent him from properly concentrating; rather he should recite birkas hamazon while walking. (M.B. 36)

Siman 183 Seif 12:

It is prohibited to recite birkas hamazon while engaged in another activity.

- ❖ This is true for all berachos. (M.B. 37)