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Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן קצ"ז סעיף א'

Halacha Highlight

A third person joining a group after the first two finished eating

Shulchan Aruch Siman 197 Seif 1
שנים שאכלו כאחד וגמרו
If two people ate together and finished eating

Shulchan Aruch elaborates on the topic of adding people to a group so that they should be able to recite the zimun. In the event that two people eat together and then a third person shows up, their allowance to form a zimun depends upon whether the two people could eat more food. If they are not so full that if they were served additional food they would be able to eat it, the third person could eat and when he finishes they could form their zimun. Even if all they could eat is light dessert-type foods, it is sufficient. Pri Megadim (מ"ז סק"א) adds that there is no minimum that they have to be capable of eating and as long as they could eat something the three people may join together to form a zimun. For this reason it would be difficult nowadays to have a circumstance in which the two people who ate already would be incapable of eating a small amount of some food (פסקי תשובות אות אי הע' 1).

Shulchan Aruch adds that once the two people who ate have declared הב לן ונברך they have formally ended their meal and the third person may no longer join with them to form a zimun. Rema adds that washing mayim acharonim is comparable to a declaration of הב לן ונברך and they may no longer form a zimun. However the recitation of שיר המעלות or the bringing of mayim acharonim to the table does not end their meal and if a third person shows up at that time he may join them to form a zimun. In the event that when the third person arrives the other two are not interested in having him join them, e.g. they don't want to wait for him to eat, they do not form a zimun. However, their behavior is improper since one is supposed to strive to participate in a zimun (פסקי תשובות אות א').

Overview

Siman 197 Seif 1:

If two people finish eating and a third person comes along, if they were to be given additional food they would be able to eat it, they combine for a zimun and they must give him food so that they could combine for a zimun. This assumes that he arrives before they declare הב לן ונברך but if they said הב לן ונברך and then the third person comes he does not combine. Washing mayim acharonim is comparable to הב לן ונברך and see above siman 179.

- Shulchan Aruch refers to where the third person wants to join them to eat. (M.B. 1)
- In other words they are not so full and if they were served dessert they would be able to eat. (M.B. 2)
- It is considered as though they haven't finished their meal. Maamar Mordechai maintains that the same is true if one person ate and two people arrived. He also writes that the same is true for combining for a zimun of ten. (M.B. 3)
- It is a mitzvah to give him food and not really an obligation. (M.B. 4)