The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן קצ"ט סעיף ו'-ט'

Overview

Siman 199 Seif 6:

We do not make a zimun with women, slaves or children but they may make a zimun by themselves. A zimun comprised of women, slaves and children should not be formed due to the promiscuity of the slaves; rather women should recite birkas hamazon by themselves and slaves by themselves but they may not use Hashem's Name.

- In other words if there are two men someone from one of these groups may not be the third member of the zimun and even if everyone agrees, a zimun such as this may not be formed. Even a woman with her husband and sons may not form a zimun. (M.B. 12)
- Children may not form a zimun to themselves since they are not obligated in mitzvos. (M.B. 13)

Siman 199 Seif 7:

Women have the option to form a zimun by themselves but when they eat with men they are obligated to answer the zimun and they fulfill their obligation by listening to the men, even though they do not understand lashon kodesh.

- Shulchan Aruch refers to a circumstance in which three men will be forming a zimun and they do not need the women to form the zimun. As such women and slaves must participate in the zimun and there is nothing improper about it. (M.B. 17)
- Shulchan Aruch HaRav maintains that the women may form their own zimun. (M.B. 18)

Siman 199 Seif 8:

An אנגרוגינוס may form a zimun with others who have his same condition but may not join a zimun of men or women.

Siman 199 Seif 9:

A טמטום may not participate in a zimun at all.

- It is obvious that he may join a zimun of three men. (M.B. 22)

Halacha Highlight

Women participating in a zimun

Shulchan Aruch Siman 199 Seif 7
נשים מזמנות לעצמן רשות
Women have the option to form a zimun

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' ז') rules that although women may not be part of a zimun with men, if a group of three women want to form a zimun amongst themselves, they are permitted to do so. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק ט"ז) suggests that Chazal did not want to impose an obligation to form a zimun on women since it was not common for women to be experts in birkas hamazon. In Sha'ar HaTzion, (סק"ו) he suggests another reason why women are not obligated to form a zimun. L'chatchila, when three people form a zimun together the one who leads the zimun must drink a cup of wine, which is not proper behavior for women. According to this explanation, it follows why a woman is obligated to join a zimun once there is a group of at least three men. Since one of the men will be leading birkas hamazon and drink the wine there is reason to exempt the women from joining the zimun. Biur Halacha (ד"ה נשים) references Vilna Gaon who follows the opinion that maintains that women who eat together are obligated to form a zimun but Biur Halacha notes that common custom is not in accordance with this opinion.

Shulchan Aruch also mentions that when women eat with three or more men they are obligated to join the zimun. Since their participation is not necessary for the forming of the zimun, it is not offensive if they join the zimun (מ"ב ס"ק י"ז). Rav Moshe Feinstein (שו"ת אג"מ או"ח ח"ה סי' טו אות י) writes that when a woman leaves the table the others must wait for her to return so that she could participate in the zimun. However, if she is busy cooking food, serving food or attending to the children and she never intended to sit through the entire meal, as is common during the week, she is exempt from joining the zimun.