The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן רט"ו סעיף א'-ב'

Overview

Siman 215 Seif 1:

One does not answer אמן to his own beracha unless it is after two or more that ends a series of berachos. The custom is to answer אמן after יהללוך and ישתבח. Some maintain that one only answers אמן after the beracha of בונה ירושלים in birkas hamazon and this is the common custom in these countries and one should not deviate from this practice. In places where they respond אמן after יהללוך and ישתבח one should also answer אמן after שומר עמו ישראל לעד.

- For example, after שומר עמו ישראל לעד or after הפורס סכת וכו' which are at the end of birchos krias shema or after בונה ירושלים which ends the series of three Biblical berachos of birkas hamazon. (M.B. 2)
- יהללוך is considered the end of a series since it is connected to the beracha before hallel. Similarly, ישתבח is considered connected to ברוך שאמר and proof to both of these connections is that it is prohibited to interrupt between the two berachos. (M.B. 3)
- One does not answer after יראו עינינו since it is not part of birchos krias shema. (M.B. 5)

Siman 215 Seif 2:

If one hears a Jew recite any beracha, even if one did not hear the entire beracha from beginning to end and is not obligated to recite that beracha he must respond אמן. However, if the one who recites the beracha is an apikorus, a Cuthean, a child or even an adult who deviated from the proper wording of the beracha one does not answer אמן. One answers אמן to a gentile if one hears him recite a beracha.

- It is sufficient if one hears Hashem's Name and the end of the beracha. According to some Poskim even if one only heard the end of the beracha one must answer אמן. Chaye Adam asserts that even the first opinion would agree that one should answer אמן if he knows the topic of the beracha. (M.B. 6)
- Certainly when one is obligated to recite that beracha one must answer אמן to affirm what is said in the beracha but in this case one must hear the entire beracha from beginning to end. (M.B. 7)
- The Midrash teaches that when one hears a prayer or a beracha one must answer אמן even if it does not include the Name of Hashem. For that reason we answer אמן after הרחמן in birkas hamazon. (M.B. 9)
- This is true only when he deviates from the proper wording in a manner that renders the beracha a beracha l'vatalah. (M.B.11)

Halacha Highlight

The obligation to answer אמן

Shulchan Aruch Siman 215 Seif 2
חיב לענות אחריו אמן
He is obligated to respond אמן

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ב') rules that one who hears a Jew recite any beracha must answer אמן even if he did not hear the recitation of the entire beracha and even though he is not obligated to recite that beracha. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ח) cites the Gemara in Yoma (37a) that relates that Moshe Rabbeinu taught based on the pasuk כי שם ה' אקרא הבו גודל לא-לוקינו that when one recites a beracha and mentions the Name of Hashem the people assembled should assign greatness to Him by answering אמן. Chazal extolled the value of answering אמן. For example, the Gemara Shabbos (119b) teaches that one who answers אמן with all of his strength (meaning concentration. Rashi) will have the gates of Gan Eden opened for him. Additionally, the Gemara in Berachos (53b) relates that the one who answers אמן is greater than the one who even recited the beracha. Rema (סי' קכ"ד סע' ז') writes that a child that answers אמן has a share in the World-to-Come; therefore, one should teach his young children to answer אמן.

Mishnah Berurah (סק"ט) in the name of Midrash relates that one who hears another Jew recite a beracha or a tefila must (חייב) answer אמן even if the beracha or tefila did not include the name of Hashem. For this reason the custom is to answer אמן after each הרחמן in birkas hamazon. There are authorities who write that one is not obligated to answer אמן; rather the intent is that it is the proper thing to do. Aruch HaShulchan (סע' א') cites as an example answering אמן to a מי שברך that is recited after one performs a mitzvah. Furthermore, he writes that one who answers אמן also fulfills the mitzvah of ואהבת לרעך כמוך. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (הליכות שלמה פי"ב הע' 68) was very particular about this. Sefer V'Zos HaBeracha relates in the name of Rav Auerbach that he instructed mourners to answer אמן after comforters would say המקום ינחם וכו'.

- The reason is that it is uncommon for a gentile to have his idol in mind when he recites the Name of Hashem. Taz asserts that answering אמן to a gentile is optional rather than obligatory. (M.B. 12)