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Brachos Daf 46

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May the studying of the Daf Notes be a zechus for his neshamah and may his soul find peace in Gan Eden and be bound up in the Bond of life

The *Gemora* relates: Rabbi Zeira once was ill. Rabbi Avahu went to visit him, and made a vow, saying, “If the short one with singed thighs<sup>1</sup> recovers, I will make a festival for the Rabbis.” He did recover, and he made a feast for all the Rabbis. When the time came to begin the meal, he said to Rabbi Zeira: Will the master please commence for us (*the blessing of Ha-motzi and the breaking of the bread*)? He said to him: Doesn’t the master accept the ruling of Rabbi Yochanan that the host should break bread? [*The Rashba explains that R’ Avahu was of the opinion that R’ Zeira was regarded as the host, since the feast was in his honor.*] So Rabbi Avahu (*agreed and*) broke the bread for them. When the time came for saying Grace (*Birchas Hamazon*), he (*R’ Avahu*) said to him (*R’ Zeira*): Will the master please say *Birchas Hamazon* for us? He replied: Does the master not accept the ruling of Rav Huna from Bavel, who said that the one who breaks the bread should be the one to recite *Birchas Hamazon*?

The *Gemora* asks: Whose view then did Ravahu Avahu accept?

The *Gemora* answers: It was that expressed by Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: The host breaks the bread and the guest recites the *Birchas Hamazon*.

The *Gemora* explains: The host breaks the bread, so that he should do so generously, and the guest recites the *Birchas Hamazon*, so that he should bless the host.

<sup>1</sup> The *Gemora* in Bava Metzia 85a relates that when Rabbi Zeira emigrated to Eretz Yisroel, he fasted a hundred fasts to forget the (*style of the*) Babylonian *Gemora* that it should not trouble him. He also fasted a hundred times that Rabbi Elozar might not die in his lifetime, so that the communal matters should not fall upon him. And he fasted yet another hundred fasts that the fire of Gehinnom should not overpower him. Every thirty days he used to examine himself as follows: He would heat the oven and sit inside of it, but the fire had no power against him. One day, however, the Rabbis cast an eye upon him, and his legs were singed. From then on he was called, “Short man and singed thighs.”

The *Gemora* asks: How does he bless him?

The *Gemora* answers: May it be God’s will that the host should never be ashamed in this world, nor disgraced in the World to Come. Rebbe added some further words: May he be very prosperous with all his possessions, and may his possessions and our possessions be successful and near the city (*so that he can visit them on a steady basis, and see to their needs*), and may the Satan not reign over his handiwork or over our handiwork, and may there not appear, neither before him, nor before us, any evil thought of sin, or transgression, or iniquity from now and forever.

[*The procedure for zimun is as follows: The leader begins by calling out: ‘Let us bless He of Whose we have eaten.’ The others respond with: ‘Blessed is He of Whose we have eaten and through Whose goodness we live.’ The leader then says as well: ‘Blessed is He of Whose we have eaten and through Whose goodness we live.’ He then recites all four blessings of Birchas Hamazon, and those assembled answer, ‘Amen.’*] The *Gemora* asks: To what point does the blessing of *zimun* extend? [*Rashi understands the inquiry to mean the following: How much is said by three for zimun, which will be omitted by two or one?*]

Rav Nachman said: It is up to (*the conclusion of*) ‘Let us bless’ (*which means that when there are less than three, they begin by the first blessing of the standard Birchas Hamzon*). Rav Sheishes says: Up to (*the conclusion of*) ‘Who sustains’ (*Hazan, which is the first blessing of the standard Birchas Hamazon; accordingly, when there are less than three, they begin by the second blessing of the standard Birchas Hamzon*).

The *Gemora* suggests that they argue over the same point argued upon by the *Tannaim*; for it was taught in a *braisa*: The *Birchas Hamazon* is either two or three blessings (*for when there are three or more people, three blessings are recited; otherwise, there are only two*) while another *braisa* has taught: Either three or four.



Now, we presume that all agree that *'Ha-tov v'hameitiv'* -- 'the One Who is good and does good' (the fourth blessing in *Birchas Hamazon*) is not Biblical. Isn't then the difference (between the two *Tanna'im* cited) as follows: The one who says two or three holds that the *zimun* blessing extends up to (the conclusion of) *Hazan* (which is the first blessing of the standard *Birchas Hamazon*), while the one who says three or four holds that it extends up to (the conclusion of) 'Let us bless' (which means that when there are less than three, they begin by the first blessing of the standard *Birchas Hamazon*).

The *Gemora* disagrees, and says: No! Rav Nachman explains these two *braisos* according to his view and Rav Sheishes explains them according to his view.

Rav Nachman explains them according to his view, as follows: All agree that the *zimun* blessing extends up to (the conclusion of) 'Let us bless.' The *braisa* that states 'three or four' is not difficult at all (for if *Birchas Hamazon* is said with *zimun*, there are four blessings, and if it is said without *zimun*, there are three). The *braisa* which states 'two or three' can say that here we are dealing with a *Birchas Hamazon* recited by workers, regarding which a master has said: [Workers working for an employer... eat their bread without saying a blessing (*ha'motzi*) before it (for it is not a Biblical requirement), but they say two blessings after it, namely] they say *Hazan* (the first blessing) in its correct (complete) form, and the second blessing -- they begin with the blessing for the land (*nodeh lecha*; the second blessing), including in it 'builder of Yerushalayim' (*u'veneih*; the third blessing).

Rav Sheishes can also explain them according to his view: All agree that the *zimun* blessing extends up to (the conclusion of) *Hazan*. The *braisa* that states 'two or three' is not difficult at all (for if *Birchas Hamazon* is said with *zimun*, there are three blessings, and if it is said without *zimun*, there are two). The *braisa* which states 'three or four' holds that the blessing of *'Ha-tov v'hameitiv'* -- 'the One Who is good and does good' is Biblical.

Rav Yosef said: Proof that the blessing of *'Ha-tov v'hameitiv'* is not Biblical can be brought from the fact that the workers omit it.

Rav Yitzchak bar Shmuel bar Marta said in the name of Rav: Proof that the blessing of *'Ha-tov v'hameitiv'* is not Biblical can be brought from the fact that it commences with 'Blessed (are You, Hashem)' but does not conclude with 'Blessed (are You, Hashem),' for it has been taught in a *braisa*: All blessings commence with 'Blessed' and conclude with 'Blessed,' except the blessing over fruits (or any other foods), the blessings said over the performance

of *mitzvos*, one blessing which follows another (when they are part of a group, such as the blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei*, or the middle blessings of *Birchas Hamazon*), and the last blessing alter the recital of the *Shema*. Some of these commence with 'Blessed' but do not conclude with 'Blessed' (such as blessings on fruit or on the performance of *mitzvos*), and there are some which conclude with 'Blessed' but do not open with 'Blessed' (such as a blessing which follows another; for the concluding portion of the first blessing suffices for all the blessings that follow it), and *'Ha-tov v'hameitiv'* -- 'the One Who is good and Who does good' opens with 'Blessed' but does not close with 'Blessed.' This demonstrates that it is a separate blessing (and not connected to the others, for if it would be a Biblical obligation like the others, it should not commence with 'Blessed' either). [The Rabbis instituted this blessing to thank Hashem for His kindness, at the time when the Jews who were murdered in *Beitar* were finally allowed to be buried.]

And Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: Proof that the blessing of *'Ha-tov v'hameitiv'* is not Biblical can be brought from the fact that it is omitted in the house of a mourner, as it has been taught in a *braisa*: What blessing is said in the house of a mourner? 'Blessed ... Who is good and Who does good.' Rabbi Akiva says: 'Blessed ... the true Judge.'

The *Gemora* asks: But does one only say 'Blessed be He Who is good and Who does good,' and not 'Blessed be the true Judge' (which is the standard blessing recited in the house of a mourner)?

The *Gemora* answers: Rather, it should say that he also says 'Blessed be He Who is good and Who does good.'

Mar Zutra once visited Rav Ashi when the latter had suffered an unfortunate event (that one of Rav Ashi's close relatives passed away, and he was in mourning), and in the *Birchas Hamazon*, he began and recited the following blessing: 'Who is good and Who does good, God of truth, A True Judge, Who judges in righteousness and takes away in righteousness, and who rules in His universe to do as He pleases in it, for all His ways are just, for all is His, and we are His nation and His servants, -- and for everything, it is incumbent upon us to thank Him and to bless Him. He who closes up the breaches within Israel should close up this breach in Israel, granting life.'

The *Gemora* inquires: Where does he (one who has interrupted his meal to join with two others in *zimun*) resume his grace (when it is time for him to recite *Birchas Hamazon*)? [This is a question according to Rav Sheishes, who maintains that the blessing of



'Hazan' is part of the zimun; accordingly, perhaps he should begin his own Birchas Hamazon with the second blessing – *nodeh lecha*!]

Rav Zevid says in the name of Abaye: At the beginning (of *Birchas Hamazon*). The Rabbis, however, say: At the place where he left off.

The *Gemora* rules that the *halachah* is he resumes at the place where he left off.

The Exilarch said to Rav Sheishes: Although you are elderly Rabbis, yet the Persians are more proficient than you in the etiquette of a meal. When there are two couches (and only two people eating), the more prominent person takes his place first and then the next one above him. When there are three couches, the more prominent person occupies the middle one, the next to him in prominence takes the place above him, and the third one takes the one below him.

Rav Sheishes said to him: So when he (the most prominent one) wants to talk to him (the one second to him, who is seated above him), he has to sit upright to do so!?

He replied: This does not matter to the Persians, because they signal to each other using hand gestures.

Rav Sheishes asked the Exilarch: With whom do they commence the washing of the hands before the meal? He replied: With the more prominent one.

Rav Sheishes asked him: Is then the more prominent one to sit still and watch his hands (from getting dirty) until they have all washed? He replied: They bring a table (with food) before him immediately.

Rav Sheishes asked the Exilarch: With whom do they begin the washing after the meal? He replied: With the least prominent one present.

Rav Sheishes asked him: And is the most prominent one to sit with soiled hands until they all have washed? He replied: They do not remove the table from before him until water is brought to him.

Rav Sheishes then said: I only know a *braisa*, in which it is taught: What is the arrangement of reclining (for a meal)? When there are two couches (and only two people eating), the more prominent person takes his place first and then the next one below him. When there are three couches, the more prominent person takes

his place first, the next to him in prominence takes the place above him, and the third one takes the one below him. Washing before the meal commences with the most prominent one. Washing after the meal, if there are five, commences with the most prominent one, and if there are a hundred, it commences with the least prominent one until five are left, and then they start from the most prominent one. The saying of the *Birchas Hamazon* is assigned to the one to whom the washing thus reverts.

The *Gemora* notes that this supports Rav, for Rabbi Chiya bar Ashi said in the name of Rav: Whoever washes his hands first at the end of the meal has the right to say the *Birchas Hamazon*.

The *Gemora* relates: Rav and Rabbi Chiya were once sitting before Rebbe at a meal. Rebbe said to Rav: Get up and wash your hands. Rabbi Chiya saw that Rav was upset (for Rav thought that Rebbe was telling him that hands are dirty, or that he is taking too long to eat). Rabbi Chiya said to him: Son of Princes! He is telling you to think over the *Birchas Hamazon* (Grace; for the one who washes his hands first is the one who is designated to recite the blessing for all of them).

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: We do not give precedence to a more prominent person - either on the road (while traveling), or on a bridge, or in the washing of the soiled hands (at the conclusion of a meal).

The *Gemora* relates: Rabin and Abaye were on the road and the donkey of Ravin went in front of Abaye's donkey, and Ravin did not say to him, "Will the master proceed." Abaye said: Since this student has come up from the West, he has become haughty. When he arrived at the door of the synagogue, he said, "Will the master please enter first." He said to him: Was I not 'the master' up until now? He replied: Rabbi Yochanan has said: One gives precedence only in a doorway in which there is a *mezuzah*.

The *Gemora* asks: You say only where there is a *mezuzah*, but not where there is no *mezuzah*! If that is so, then in the case of a synagogue and study hall as well, where there is no *mezuzah*, we do not give precedence! Rather, what you must say is, in a doorway which is suitable for a *mezuzah*. (46a – 47a)