

# HALOCHOSCOPE

**This week's question:**

The *brocha acharona* on cake and wine, *me'ain shalosh*, is long. Many people do not know it by heart. If one knowledgeable person eats both cake and fruit of the seven special species, and drinks wine, he will be reciting *me'ain shalosh* with the additions for the wine and fruit. Others present might only have eaten cake. Do they fulfill their obligation by listening to the *brocha* with additions that do not apply to them?

**The issues:**

**A) *Al hamichya*, or *me'ain shalosh***

**B) *Kolel*, adding a mention for different types of foods in *me'ain shalosh***

**C) *Lehotzie acherim*, discharging the obligation of others with one's *brocha***

**A) *Me'ain shalosh***

*Birchas hamazon*, recited after eating a bread meal, comprises three *brochos* that are indicated Scripturally, and a fourth *brocha* added Rabbinically. The first acknowledges Hashem's providing for the needs of every creature. The second thanks Hashem for the Land of Israel and for other great promises He fulfilled for us. The Torah connects the *mitzvos* of circumcision and of Torah study to meriting the Land of Israel. Therefore, in thanking Hashem for the Land we mention the merits of these two *mitzvos*. The third *brocha* refers to the centrality of *Yerushalayim* and the kingship of the house of David, and a prayer that this be restored and fully realized with the advent of *Moshiach*.

After the destruction of the second *Bais Hamikdash*, the Jewish people rebelled and established a kingdom under *Bar Kochba*. After cruelly suppressing the rebellion, the Romans refused to allow the burial of the bodies of the fallen Jews at *Betar*, location of their last stand. This was a huge number of bodies, and it seems that almost all Jews were connected to these victims in some way. After three years, permission was granted to bury them. This was recognized as a huge divine kindness. In addition, when the bodies were turned over to the Jews, they had not decomposed. In gratitude for these great kindnesses, a *brocha* was added to *birchas hamazon*: *Hatov Vehamaitiv*, He who is good and does good. [The importance of burial as closure for the family and friends of the deceased is explained by the commentaries in *Parshas Chayei Sarah*.]

Rabbinically, before benefiting from Hashem's bounty we give praise, and after the benefit we show thanks. The praise takes the form of an acknowledgment of the initial creation of the food product, all to serve the needs of mankind. The *brocha acharona* is modeled on the acknowledgments in the first *brocha* of *bircas hamazon*.

The verses in the Torah mandating *birchas hamazon* on bread are juxtaposed to verses praising *Eretz Yisroel* for the seven special species: wheat, barley, grapevines, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. The fact that these species are singled out indicates special recognition in their *brochos*. The juxtaposition to *bircas hamazon* is used by

some as an indication that they deserve *bircas hamazon* in their own right. Foods that require *bircas hamazon* are made of the same ingredients as snack foods that also satisfy somewhat. These are known as *mezonos* foods, after their *brocha rishona*. They are a snacking form of breads or of cooked grain-based meals. While the Torah mentions bread specifically, to exclude non-breads, these foods are definitely on a higher level than other foods. They should deserve a special *brocha*.

This special *brocha* is a combined and abridged form of the three *brochos* of *bircas hamazon*. The fourth *brocha* is incorporated at the end, but the name, *me'ain shalosh*, reflects the main three Scriptural *brochos*. The *brocha* was instituted with different language to reflect the different foods on which it is recited. When eating *mezonos* foods one recites *al hamichyah*, 'on the provision of sustenance'. After eating fruits of the remaining five species, one recites *al hapairos*, on the fruits. One who drank wine recites *al hagefen*. Wine has added special qualities, just as it merits a specialized *brocha rishona*. The poskim debate whether this special mention of the vine applies at the ending of the *brocha* as well, or only at the beginning. Though there is no consensus on which view to follow, the *minhag* is to include the special mention at the ending as well. However, if one used the same ending as for fruit, he fulfills his obligation.

Just as *bircas hamazon* includes special mention of *Shabbos*, *Yomtov* or *Rosh Chodesh*, so does *me'ain shalosh*. Some maintain that foods over which *me'ain shalosh* is recited require a *brocha* Scripturally. However, it is unclear whether they require all three *brochos* that are satisfied with the condensed form. Some suggest that this opinion would only require one *brocha*, Scripturally. Therefore, the concept of a three-in-one *brocha* to reflect *bircas hamazon* is a Rabbinical institution. Though the Talmud cites a view that *bircas hamazon* works for these other foods, we do not rule this way. However, for two of them, *bircas hamazon* would work if one forgot and recited it already. Wine and dates are *zan*, satisfy as a meal. Even the first *brocha* alone works for them, so that if one remembered after the first *brocha* that he was saying the wrong thing, he should stop there. He may not recite *me'ain shalosh* later, nor should he recite the second and third *brochos* of *bircas hamazon*. Otherwise, one may not switch the *brochos* of bread or the other foods. [See Brochos 44a 48b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 187-9 208, commentaries.]

### **B) Kolel, adding different types of food in one me'ain shalosh**

The main text is the same for all of the various types of food. If one ate more than one of the types of food, he recites one *brocha* with both types of beginning and ending. There is some question as to how this works. Some *brochos* are all inclusive, known as *brocha hakoleles*. For example, one could recite *shehakol* on any food and satisfy his basic obligation. This is not the ideal, but it works. *Bircas hamazon* works on all foods eaten in the meal. This is either because the other foods are secondary to the bread, thus either not requiring any *brocha* or using the *brocha* on the primary bread food, or because *bircas hamazon* is on the meal, applying to each food. *Me'ain shalosh* has a similar characteristic. If one drinks wine and other fluids, he recites *hagafen* on the wine, and exempts the other fluids. In the same way, *al hagefen* exempts the other fluids from *borei nefashos*. Furthermore, if one eats the five species of tree fruits and other fruits, he recites *al hapairos* and exempts the *borei nefashos* on the other fruits. Some even maintain that *ha'adama* fruits are also exempted, though we do not follow this view.

How does the inclusion of more than one type of *me'ain shalosh* work? Is it two *brochos* combined in one, or is it one *brocha* that exempts the other food as an inclusion? One demonstration of the difference between these two would be whether to include the extra phrase when less than the minimum of the other food was consumed. For example, if one ate a piece of cake and a shot glass of wine, he has consumed enough cake for a *brocha acharona*, but not enough wine. Should he include the words *ve'al hagefen* .. ? Taken further, if one does indeed include *al hagefen*, does this mean that it is now considered a primary food enough to exempt a *brocha acharona* on other beverages, such as beer or pop, drunk in a larger quantity?

There is a debate on how the *brocha rishona* on wine exempts other beverages. All agree that wine must be consumed. If one hears *kiddush* on wine, then drinks no wine but drinks some beer, he must recite *shehakol*. If he drinks a sip of wine, some say that he need not recite *shehakol*. Others maintain that he must drink wine as the main beverage, such as two or three cups, with a little beer as well. A middle view requires drinking at least a cheek-full of the wine to be able to rely on the *hagafen*. The basis of this debate is whether it is reasonable to consider wine the primary when so little of it is consumed.

There is a difference between the *brocha rishona* and the *brocha acharona*. If one consumes wine or fruit in the middle of a meal, he must recite the *brocha rishona*. They do not automatically attach themselves to the bread. Yet, *bircas hamazon* at the end of the meal satisfies their need for a *brocha acharona*. [There is a debate on whether *bircas hamazon* works across the board, that was alluded to earlier. We follow the view that it generally works.] This does not work for *me'ain shalosh*. It does not exempt regular *shehakol* foods, such as meat. It does exempt some other foods as mentioned. Thus, even if one consumes two *ikarim*, *al hamichya* could satisfy both. Nonetheless, it does not automatically include both. They must be included in the language used. Fruits are all called *pairos*. Therefore, dates and apples can be included in *al hapairos*. Even wine could be included according to some poskim. Cake is not called *pairos*. It requires *al hamichya*.

One who ate cake and figs, then recited only *al hamichyah*, must recite a second *brocha al hapairos*. If one ate cake but did not eat figs, he should recite only *al hamichya*. What if he added *al hapairos*? Is this a harmless addition, or is it as though he recited a second *brocha* together with the first, which he was not obliged to do? It would then render his entire *brocha* in vain. He would need to repeat the correct *brocha*.

To resolve most of these issues, the poskim cite a debate. If one ate cake and consumed something that might require *al hagefen*, may he add it anyhow to *al hamichya*? Those who permit it say that there is no issue of *hefsek*, an interruption, nor of a *brocha levatalah*. One may derive from here that if one added the wrong thing, it is indeed invalid. Some derive from here that one may add even if he did not drink enough wine. Others disagree with this, insisting that this only works when one drank an amount that raises some doubt. Applying this in our case, one could not rely on a *brocha* recited by another if the other adds something that the listener does not need to say. [See Brochos 37a-b 44a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 174:2 208:12-18, commentaries. Igros Moshe OC II:109. Chasan Sofer 1. Vezos Habracha p. 48.]

### **C) Lehotzie acherim**

*Mitzvos* performed by saying something can be fulfilled by listening to another say-

ing it, known as *shomaia ke'oneh*. This is based on the concept that the person saying it has personal responsibility to ensure the performance of every other Jew. Thus, any person can do this, even if he is not obliged himself at that moment. However *brochos* have different rules. *Brocha rishona* is on benefit, rather than a *mitzvah* in its own right. One who does not benefit has no personal obligation, and cannot say it for his fellow. *Bircas hamazon* is a *mitzvah*, but the poskim maintain that Rabbinically, one may only exempt others if he also ate at least a minimum amount. *Brocha acharona* is considered the same as all *birchos hanehenin* in this regard.

Ideally, one should make an effort to recite anything publicly. This beautifies the *mitzvah*. However, in cases of *brochos*, there are situations when the *brocha* is better recited individually. The poskim debate when to apply these rules. In general, we prefer that people make their own *brochos*, unless they are in a unified group setting. Since it is hard for people to concentrate on a long *brocha* to listen to each word carefully, it is advisable to recite one's own *me'ain shalosh*, even in a group setting. However, since people at a gathering often do not have a *sidur* and do not know the words by heart, it is common to recite it for the group. Also, when one is unsure about his obligation, he listens to the *brocha* of one who is sure about his own obligation.

This is applied in a similar case to ours: One person ate both kinds of food and is reciting a *brocha acharona* with the additions. Another person only ate cake, but is unsure whether he ate enough for his own *brocha*. He may rely on the *brocha* of the one who ate both. He should have in mind to fulfill the parts that apply to him. The extra words do not count as a *hefsek*. This is derived from the case of a *shliach tzibur* who includes something for the benefit of the congregation, though it is a *hefsek* for his personal needs. He may have intent that it should not count towards his personal obligation. [In fact, from this case, it would even seem that in our situation, one could exempt others in this way even if he did not eat the additional food. One is relying anyhow on the view that the additions do not count as a separate *brocha* in vain.] [See Brochos 37a-b Rosh Hashana 29a-b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 213:1-3, Birkai Yosef 1, commentaries. Shut Radvaz 361. Vezos Habracha p. 48.]

In conclusion, in a gathering, one person may, and probably should, recite *me'ain shalosh* with the additions, to exempt the others. However, the one reciting it should eat those additional foods as well. Those listening fulfill their obligation for any of the foods.

**On the Parsha ...** *Oil for the lights; spices for the the oil of anointing and for the incense ..* [25:6] Why are these materials mentioned in the construction of the *Mishkan*? All other materials were needed for the construction itself. These materials were used on a daily basis in the service. [See *Daas Zekainim*, *Haamek Davar*.] One explanation is that since the oil for anointing was needed in the preparation of the utensils, it is considered a part of the construction. However, this does not explain why the oil for lighting and spices for incense are included. Since these materials, oil and spices, are needed anyhow for the oil of anointing, the Torah mentions their other uses. Apparently, this is not considered an interruption of the flow.

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