

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

At a *sheva brochos seuda*, the *choson* will not be present due to sickness. Is there any way to include him from a distance, to permit reciting the *sheva brochos* at the end?

The issues:

A) *Sheva brochos*

B) Participation of the *choson* and *kallah*

C) What constitutes participation?

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A) *Sheva Brochos*

The wedding ceremony comprises the *erusin* and the *nisuin*. These were originally spaced months apart. The interim was devoted to preparing and grooming the young couple for married life. During this period they are considered married in terms of forbidden relations, but may not yet live together. *Nisuin* concludes the marriage ceremony. Nowadays, both are held together. They are separated under the *chupah* by a ceremonial reading of the *kesuba*, marriage contract.

In the prevailing practice, *erusin* involves the *choson* giving the *kalah* a ring in the presence of witnesses. This is his formal bonding of the two in marriage. At this ceremony, in the presence of a *minyan*, quorum of ten men, *birchas chasanim*, part one, is recited. Four sources are cited for the *brochos*. The Torah makes reference to *brochos* at the time that Eliezer took Rivkah for Yitzchok, and at the time Hashem brought Adam and Chava together. In these instances there was no *minyan*. In the story of Boaz and Rus reference is made to a *minyan* at the time the ceremony took place. A fourth source interprets a *pasuk* in *Tehilim* as a reference to *brochos* for matters of marriage.

At both parts of the ceremony a cup of wine is used. Part one involves the *brocha* for wine and *birchas erusin*. It is common for the *choson* to delegate an agent, usually his Rav, to recite this *brocha*. [One reason suggested by the poskim is to save an ignorant *choson* from embarrassment.] The *choson* and *kalah* drink the wine, rather than the Rav.

Nisuin involves reciting seven *brochos*, the first of which is on wine. Here, too, the ideal person to recite them would be the *choson*. It is customary to honor others with these *brochos*. They are all primarily praises of Hashem and prayers for the restoration of true joy in the reuniting of Hashem with his people and home in this world, the *bais hamikdash*. The *choson* and *kalah* then drink the wine. This is the *chupa*.

When the two parts were held separately, a *seuda*, festive meal, accompanied each part. Nowadays, one *seuda* follows the double ceremony. This *seuda* is itself an intrinsic part of the celebration. It should be a proper bread based meal, in the company of guests. There should be ten men present. The *Shechina*, Divine Presence, is also present in a sense. [There are precedents for these *seudos* in the Torah. Eliezer and his men held a

seudas erusin. (Some consider this a sort of *seudas nisuin*. The same source for *bircas chasanim* is also subject to the same debate. Some say it was *bircas erusin*, while others say it must have been *bircas nisuin*.) Lavan made a *seudas nisuin* for Yaakov. See *Chaye Sara* 24:54 *Malbim*, *Haamek Davar*. *Vayaitzai* 29:22.]

After the *seuda*, when *bircas hamazon* is recited, the seven *brochos* are repeated. This time, *hagafen*, which is always recited when wine is used with *bircas hamazon*, is recited after the other six *brochos*. If either the *choson* or *kalah* is previously unmarried, any *seuda* during the following week is also considered part of the *seudas chasanim*. The same *brochos* would be recited at *bircas hamazon*. Originally, all the seven days of feasting were held in the same place. This was the true *chupa*, or *bais choson*. Nowadays, the people spread out to different locations. However, the poskim maintain that the 'parties' in the new locations are still considered a continuation of the original wedding feast. The provision to make it the same as the original feast is to have new faces at the new meal, except at *seudos* held on a *Shabbos* or *Yomtov*. Even if there are no new faces, some *brochos* may be recited. If there is no *minyan*, fewer may be recited, but there is still a measure of the festivities of the wedding at the *seuda*. There is a source to recite these *brochos* in the *bais choson* morning and evening, as part of the regular service. According to this source, they would be recited before the *seuda*. There was also a *minhag* to recite them after *shacharis* on *Shabbos* morning of the week following the wedding. The congregation would accompany the *choson* to his house and recite them then, without the *seuda*. We do not follow these *minhagim*, apparently because we do not assemble for the festivities except at the *seudos*. This is what we call the *sheva brochos*, and the *sheva brochos* week. We see that the *brochos* are used to define the *seudos* themselves.

Despite sources cited from the Torah, all *brochos* are Rabbinical institutions, except *bircas hamazon* and, according to some, *bircas hatorah*. The source is *asmachta*, a link to a reference in the Torah. It shows that the Torah acknowledges a precedent for it. As mentioned, there is a view that the requirement of a *minyan* is connected to a kind of special Divine Presence. Whether it is a Rabbinical or Scriptural obligation, the assembling of ten men to specifically praise Hashem this way seems to create a *davar shebikedusha*, a sanctification of Hashem's Name. The reference to the *simcha* in Hashem's 'dwelling place' also connects to that. The poskim actually forbid mentioning these words in *bircas hamazon* if the men and women mingle at the *seuda*, similar to a *shul*.

As mentioned, the week of festivities applies to a couple that has a least one previously unmarried partner. This is a Rabbinical institution. Along with the festivities, the *choson* (and *kalah*) may not go to work. He must gladden his *kalah* during this time. The *brochos* are recited as part of this joy. There is a Scriptural precedent for the seven days of festivities, when Lavan tells Yaakov that he will not be able to marry Rachel before the seven days of festivities of his marriage to Leah are up. [See *Kesubos* 7a-8b, *Psachim* 102b, *Sukah* 25b, *Megilah* 23b, *Poskim*. *Kalah Rabasi* 1. *Pirka dR' Eliezer* 12, 16. *Tur*, *Sh Ar EH* 61-62, commentaries. *Halochoscope* VI:13 VIII:40.]

B) Participation of the choson and kallah

According to the prevailing *minhag*, the recitation of these *brochos* is connected specifically to the *bircas hamazon* of the *seuda*, rather than generally to the seven days of feasting. Accordingly, they may only be recited at a *seuda* that is made specifically in

honor of the couple, and in their presence. The question arises, what if they do not participate personally? As mentioned, the *seuda* should be a bread based meal, in the company of guests, with at least ten men. Some of the *brochos* may be recited in the presence of less than ten men, and at a meal at which only three people are saying *bircas hamazon*. For the full seven *brochos*, seven of the ten must have eaten bread, requiring *bircas hamazon*. To be considered a *seuda* of the *choson*, he should be participating with them.

What if the *choson* and *kallah* do not eat at the *seuda*? A minority view maintains that the *sheva brochos* may be recited. The majority maintain that the *choson* must eat bread at the meal. It appears that the *kallah* must also eat there. What if they ate everything else in the meal, but not the bread? While it is not discussed, it seems that the majority does not accept this participation. It seems that bread is required to connect those present into a company that celebrates together.

Actually, the poskim debate whether these *brochos* are indeed connected to the *seuda* and *bircas hamazon*. In one view, they may be recited at any time there is a gathering in honor of the couple. While we do not follow this view, there is a remnant of this debate in the variant practices. Ashkenazim use two separate cups of wine, one for *bircas hamazon* and one for *sheva brochos*. Sephardim use one cup, although nowadays, many have opted to use two. According to some, this is based on whether the two are really connected. Another possible difference surfaces when the poskim debate whether the requirement of a new guest means that he must partake of the *seuda*, or whether it is sufficient for him to be present. Some hold that if three guests eat the meal and the remaining seven eat no bread, or do not eat at all, *sheva brochos* may still be recited. Apparently, it is possible to consider the gathering in their honor, even if it is not part of a larger meal. Nonetheless, the consensus is that the couple must partake of the bread meal.

To formalize a *zimun*, all participants must be able to share the same food. If two eat meat and one eats dairy, he could clean his mouth and eat meat with them. However, if one may not eat meat, under doctor's orders, and his bread contains some milk, they cannot combine. The first could not eat their meat, for health reasons. The others could not eat his bread. [They would need to give him some of their parev bread.] [See Megilah 23b, Poskim. Tur, Sh Ar OC 196:3, EH 62:6-12, commentaries. Tzitz Eliezer XIII:99. Yabia Omer III:EH:11:9, VI:EH:9.]

C) What constitutes participation?

We mentioned a source that considers the *brochos* of Eliezer and his men to be *birchas nisuin*. *Erusin* can be accomplished through *shlichus*, agency of a third party, delegated by bride and/or groom, from a distance. *Nisuin* seems to require direct participation. How could Eliezer celebrate *nisuin* in the absence of the *choson*? Apparently, the meal held in honor of *nisuin* is sufficient for the *brocha*! Some suggest that this *brocha* was not that usually recited at the meal. It was the *brocha* recited at the *chupah*. The moment that the *kalah* is handed over to the agents of the *choson* (in the case of a minor) the *brocha* may be recited. However, the language of the *brochos* refer to the celebration of the *choson* **with** the *kallah*. One source indicates that the *brochos* could be recited if either the *choson* or the *kallah* is present. We follow it in part. The *kallah* might be seated with the women in a separate room. She is brought to the section where *sheva brochos* are recited. However, if she is not brought in, we rely on the view that the *choson* is suffi-


cient. By this reasoning, is the *choson* required to be present if the *kallah* is present? He would still participate in the meal, albeit in another room.

Sometimes the party at a *seuda* is too big for one room. Generally, if one party eats in two rooms, they could only recite *bircas hamazon* together if they see each other. Even if a small part of each group is visible to the others, they may join together. Otherwise, they recite separately. However, if a public thoroughfare separates the parties, they may not be considered one group. What about *sheva brochos*?

Some say that they may not combine for *bircas hamazon*, but they may combine for *sheva brochos*. All are partaking of the food prepared in honor of the *choson*. All begin the *seuda* at about the same time. Some say that there must be ten in each group, and that they may always say their own *brochos*. Others say this applies when they are unable to hear the main *brochos*. However, a simple reading of this ruling seems to say that only one set of *brochos* is recited. If ten were present with the *choson*, there would be no question. Evidently, smaller groups are combined in this way. How few need be with the *choson*? What if the *choson* eats food from the *seuda* by himself, in another house? If not, could the *choson* and a few close friends or family members be provided with some of the *seuda* wherever they are, and the *sheva brochos* be recited with the *kallah* in a different location? Is it preferable to recite them with the *choson*? These possibilities are not discussed directly. [See Sukah 25b Kesubos 7b-8a, Poskim. Pirke DR'E 16, Radal 32. Tur Sh Ar OC 195:1 (Taz 3) EH 62:11 (AH 37), commentaries. Hanisuin Kehilchasam 14:44 85-87 note 183.]

In conclusion, the *choson* could eat food from the same *seuda* with his own group of ten, and both groups could recite *sheva brochos*.

On the Parsha ... [Bilaam] saw from there a small part of the people [22:41] .. you will see them from there. However, only a small part will be visible. You will not see all of them. [23:13] .. he saw from there [the entire] Israel dwelling at rest in its tribes .. [24:2]. Why did Balak and Bilaam at first look out on a small part of Israel, and then look out on the entire nation? What is the difference between the first time, when it does not say that Bilaam would not see the entire nation, and the second time? The Talmud says that the people behind the *kohanim* when they bless are included in the blessing. Yet, to be able to participate in *bircas hazimun* it is sufficient to be able to see some of the other participants. For *sheva brochos*, it seems that even those out of sight are included. It is evidently different for different types of *brochos*. Balak and Bilaam wanted to curse the Jews. They thought that they understood the different types of *brocha*, and conversely, curses. At first, they hoped that seeing a part would work. Those seen could see the rest. When this did not work, Balak told Bilaam to be aware that he would not see the entire nation. He might adjust the type of curse for this scenario. When that did not work, they tried the type of curse that requires the entire group to be seen. In the end, it was not for their lack of understanding that the curses did not work. Hashem took care of it!

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whose wedding will be on the 15th of Tamuz. Mazal Tov.

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