

The Gemara cites an incident from which certain rules pertaining to *Bircas HaMazon* can be derived:

על לגביה רבי אבהו – R' Zeira once took ill. רבי זיירא חלש – R' Abahu came in to visit him – קביל עליה – and accepted upon himself the following vow: אי מתפח קטינא חריף שקי – If “the small man of the singed thighs”^[1] will recover, עבידנא יומא – I will make a festival for the Rabbis. [R' Zeira] recovered – אבהו – and [R' Abahu] made a feast for all the Rabbis. בי מטא למשרי – When it came time to start the meal, [R' Abahu] said to R' Zeira: לישרי לן מר – Let master start the meal for us by reciting the *hamotzi* blessing and breaking the bread. אמר ליה – [R' Zeira] replied: לא סבר לה מר להא דרבי יוחנן דאמר בעל – Does master not hold of that ruling of R' Yochanan, who said: בעל הבית בוצע – The host recites the blessing and breaks the bread? אמר ליה – [R' Abahu] conceded and started the meal by reciting the blessing and breaking the bread. בי מטא לברוכי – When it came time to recite *Bircas HaMazon*, אמר ליה – [R' Abahu] said to [R' Zeira]: נברך לן מר – Let master recite *Bircas HaMazon* for us. אמר ליה – [R' Zeira] said to him: לא סבר לה מר להא דרב הונא דמן בבל דאמר בוצע מברך – Does master not hold of that ruling of Rav Huna of Babylonia,^[2] who said: בוצע מברך – The one who breaks the bread recites *Bircas HaMazon*?

The Gemara explains R' Abahu's position: And [R' Abahu] – who does he hold like? – ואיהו במאן סבירא ליה – He holds like that which R' Yochanan said in the name of R' Shimon ben Yochai: בעל הבית בוצע ואורח מברך – The host breaks the

bread and the guest recites *Bircas HaMazon*.^[3]

The Gemara explains the reason for this ruling: כרי שובצע בעין זפה – The host breaks the bread, – so that he should break it generously and give the guests large pieces.^[4] ואורח מברך – And the guest recites *Bircas HaMazon*, – so that he should bless the host.^[5]

The Gemara elaborates: With what blessing does [the guest] bless the host? It is the following: יהי רצון – May it be the will [of God] שלא יבוש בעל הבית בעולם הזה – that the host not be shamed in this world, ולא יקלם לעולם הבא – nor humiliated in the World to Come. And Rebbi would add to [the blessing] the following matters: ורבי מוסיף בה דברים – And may he be very successful with all his possessions, and may his possessions and our possessions be successful and close to the city.^[6] ואל ישלוט שטן – And may no evil impediment reign over his handiwork, nor over our handiwork. ואל ידבר שום דבר הרהור חטא ועבירה ועון – any thought of sin, transgression or iniquity, – from this time and forever.^[7]

The Gemara discusses the parameters of the *zimun* blessing: עד היכן ברכת הזמון – Until where does the *zimun* blessing extend?^[8] רב נחמן אמר – Rav Nachman said: עד נברך – It extends until Let us bless.^[9] ורב ששת אמר – But Rav Sheishess said: עד הין – It extends until the end of the *HaZan* blessing.^[10]

NOTES

1. The Gemara in *Bava Metzia* (85a) relates that every thirty days R' Zeira would seat himself in a burning oven to check whether he was vulnerable to fire, so as to determine whether the fire of Gehinnom would ultimately have an effect on him. Never was he harmed at all by the fire of the oven, except once, when his thighs were singed due to the influence of an evil eye [עין הרע] that had been set upon him. On account of this incident, R' Zeira, who was short, earned the nickname “the small man of the singed thighs.” [Indeed, the name זיירא is a modification of זיירא, Aramaic for “the small one” (*Maharsha* to *Bava Metzia* 85a).]

2. This is the Amora who is known simply as Rav Huna throughout the Talmud. However, since this incident occurred in Eretz Yisrael, where R' Abahu lived, R' Zeira referred to Rav Huna as “Rav Huna of Babylonia” (*Rashi*).

3. One might ask: Since R' Abahu knew of this statement of R' Yochanan, why did he initially ask R' Zeira to break the bread? The answer is that R' Abahu initially considered R' Zeira the host, since the feast was tendered in his honor (*Rashba* et al.; cf. *Maharsha*, *Beurei HaGra*, *Chidushei R' Elazar Moshe Horowitz*; see *Rosh Yosef*).

4. Literally: so that he should break with a good eye. [If the honor of reciting the *hamotzi* blessing and breaking the bread were bestowed upon one of the guests, it would be improper for him to break large portions for himself and the other guests. Therefore, the host himself recites the blessing and distributes the bread to the guests.]

5. As mentioned previously, in Talmudic times, when a group joined in *zimun* only the one leading the *zimun* recited *Bircas HaMazon*. The others discharged their obligation by listening to his recitation and answering Amen. When one of the guests recites *Bircas HaMazon*, he can include in his recitation a special prayer on behalf of the host (cited below). However, if the host would be the one to recite *Bircas HaMazon*, the inclusion of such a prayer would be impossible.

6. The possessions mentioned in this clause are real estate holdings [which cannot be moved from place to place to be brought near their owner]. It is advantageous that they be located in proximity to the owner's hometown, so that he may oversee them on a steady basis and keep abreast of their requirements (*Rashi*).

7. *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 201:1) quotes this blessing. See *Mishnah Berurah* there §5, who wonders why we do not recite this version of the blessing, and instead recite a different version.

8. The Talmudic procedure for *Bircas HaMazon* with *zimun* is as follows. The leader calls out: נברך שאכלנו משלו, *Let us bless [He] of Whose we have eaten*; the rest of the group responds: ברוך שאכלנו משלו ובטובו חיינו, *Blessed is [He] of Whose we have eaten and through Whose goodness we live*; and the leader repeats: ברוך שאכלנו משלו ובטובו חיינו, *Blessed is [He] of Whose we have eaten and through Whose goodness we live*. The leader then proceeds to recite all four blessings of *Bircas HaMazon*, and the assembled listen silently to his recitation and answer “Amen” at the conclusion of each blessing.

When there is no *zimun*, the beginning of this procedure is omitted. The Gemara inquires as to where the *zimun* blessing ends and the regular *Bircas HaMazon* begins. That is, which part of this procedure is unique to *zimun* and recited only when three people eat together, and which part constitutes the standard *Bircas HaMazon* which is recited even by one who eats alone (*Rashi*; cf. other opinions cited in note 10).

9. I.e. the *zimun* extends as far as the segment in which the leader says, “*Let us bless [He] of Whose we have eaten*,” and the others respond, “*Blessed is [He] of Whose we have eaten and through Whose goodness we live*.” The standard *Bircas HaMazon* begins with the *HaZan* blessing (see *Rashi* ר"ה וי"ד).

10. Rav Sheishess maintains that the standard *Bircas HaMazon* commences with the Blessing for the Land and does not include the *HaZan* blessing. It is only when three people eat together that the *HaZan* blessing is recited, for this is part of the *zimun* procedure rather than *Bircas HaMazon* (see *Rashi* and *Rosh Yosef*).

Most Rishonim disagree with *Rashi* and maintain that even according to Rav Sheishess the standard *Bircas HaMazon* includes the *HaZan* blessing. Rather, they explain the Gemara's current discussion as pertaining to the case mentioned above, 45b, in which one person interrupts his meal to join in *zimun* with the two members of his group who have finished eating. That person must wait until the end of the *zimun* procedure before resuming his meal. The Gemara inquires as to how long his wait must be. Rav Nachman maintains that he must merely wait until after the segment which begins with “*Let us bless*.” Accordingly, he may return to his meal right after answering, “*Blessed is [He] of Whose we have eaten and through Whose goodness we live*.” Rav Sheishess, however, maintains that he must listen to the recitation of the *HaZan* blessing as well, and may return to his meal only upon its completion. Although, technically, the *zimun* procedure does not include the *HaZan* blessing, the person must wait until the completion

The Gemara attempts to connect the dispute between Rav Nachman and Rav Sheishess with a Tannaic dispute:

גימא בתנאי – Shall we say that this is a matter of Tannaic dispute? – For it was taught in one Baraisa: ברכת BIRKAS HAMAZON can consist of either TWO OR THREE blessings.^[11] ותניא אידך – And it was taught in another Baraisa: שלשה וארבעה – Bircas HaMazon can consist of either THREE OR FOUR blessings.^[12] סבריה דבבלי עלמא הטוב והמטיב לאו – Presumably, all agree that the *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* blessing is not of Biblical origin.^[13] מאי לאו ביה – Is it not presumable that [the Tannaim of these Baraisos] disagree about the following point: מאן דאמר שתים – The one who said, “Two or three blessings,” קסבר עד – holds that the *zimun* procedure extends until the end of the *HaZan* blessing and this blessing is omitted when there is no *zimun*,^[14] ומאן דאמר שלש וארבע – whereas the one who said, “Three or four blessings,” קסבר עד נברך – holds that the *zimun* procedure extends only until “Let us bless [He] of Whose we have eaten,” and therefore, only this is omitted when there is no *zimun*.^[15] Thus, the Tannaim of the Baraisos disagree in the matter disputed by Rav Nachman and Rav Sheishess. – ? –

The Gemara rejects this linkage:

לא – No, this is not the point of dispute between the Baraisos. רב נחמן מתרץ לטעמיה – Rather, Rav Nachman can explain both Baraisos in accordance with his reasoning ורב ששת מתרץ לטעמיה – and Rav Sheishess can explain both Baraisos in accordance with his reasoning.

The Gemara elaborates Rav Nachman's explanation of the Baraisos:

רב נחמן מתרץ לטעמיה – Rav Nachman can explain both Baraisos in accordance with his reasoning, as follows: דבבלי עלמא עד נברך – Actually, all agree that *zimun* extends only until “Let us bless etc.” מאן דאמר שלש וארבע שפיר – Thus, the opinion of the one who says that *Bircas HaMazon* can consist of either three or four blessings is well understood.^[16] ומאן דאמר שתים – And as for the opinion of the one who said that it can consist of either two or three blessings, אמר לך – [Rav Nachman] will tell you: הלא בברכה פועלים עסקינן – Here, we are dealing with the *Bircas HaMazon* blessing of laborers. For the master said:^[17] פותח בהון – When a laborer recites *Bircas HaMazon*, he begins with the *HaZan* blessing and recites it as usual, וכולל בונה וירושלים בברכת הארץ – but he then includes an aspect of the *Boneh Yerushalayim* blessing in the blessing of the Land.^[18] Thus, the standard *Bircas HaMazon* for laborers consists of two blessings and when they have a *zimun* they add a third blessing.

The Gemara now elaborates Rav Sheishess' explanation of the two Baraisos:

רב ששת מתרץ לטעמיה – Rav Sheishess can explain both Baraisos in accordance with his reasoning, as follows: דבבלי עלמא עד הון – Actually, all agree that *zimun* extends until the end of the *HaZan* blessing. מאן דאמר שתים ושלש שפיר – Thus, the opinion of the one who says that *Bircas HaMazon* can consist of either two or three blessings is well understood.^[19] ומאן דאמר שלש וארבע – And as for the opinion of the one who said that it can consist of either three or four blessings, Rav Sheishess will say that קסבר הטוב והמטיב דאורייתא היא – he holds that the *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* blessing is of Biblical origin.^[20]

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of the first full blessing of *Bircas HaMazon* before resuming his meal, in order to demonstrate his participation in *zimun* with the others (see *Tosafos* ער דיבין *Rosh*, *Rabbeinu Yonah* and *Orach Chaim* 200:2; cf. *Rif*).

[Note that our explanation of the following Gemara (notes 11-20) follows *Rashi* and does not conform with the opinion of the other Rishonim cited in this note. Their explanation of the Gemara will be presented in note 20.]

11. When less than three people eat together, only two blessings are recited; when three or more people eat together, three blessings are recited (*Rashi*).

12. [When less than three people eat together, three blessings are recited; when three or more people eat together, four blessings are recited.]

13. I.e. the fourth blessing of *Bircas HaMazon* is not required Biblically, but was instituted by the Sages (see 45b note 31). As such, the Baraisa would not count it together with the other blessings that are of Biblical origin. The number of blessings mentioned in the Baraisos therefore does not include *HaTov VeHaMeitiv*.

14. Thus, when there is no *zimun*, the Biblical part of *Bircas HaMazon* consists only of the blessing for the Land and the Builder of Jerusalem (*Boneh Yerushalayim*) blessing. However, when there is a *zimun*, three Biblical blessings are recited – the *HaZan* blessing (beginning with the introductory statement, “Let us bless etc.”), the blessing for the Land and *Boneh Yerushalayim* (*Rashi*).

15. Thus, the standard *Bircas HaMazon* without *zimun* consists of three Biblical blessings – *HaZan*, the blessing for the Land and *Boneh Yerushalayim*. When three people eat together, a fourth blessing – the introductory *zimun* blessing (“Let us bless etc.”) – is added (*Rashi*).

16. [It consists of three Biblical blessings in the standard case, and four blessings when there is a *zimun*.]

17. A Baraisa containing this teaching is cited above, 16a. Our Gemara quotes an abridged version; see *Bach* for an emendation that reflects the unabridged version.

18. In contrast to the standard practice of reciting separate blessings for the Land and Jerusalem, hired laborers recite an abridged form of *Bircas HaMazon* in which these two similar themes are combined in one blessing. The Rabbis instituted this practice so as to minimize the

amount of time the laborers are idle from their work while reciting *Bircas HaMazon* (see 16a note 46; see also note 22 below).

19. [*Bircas HaMazon* consists of two blessings in the standard case, and three blessings when there is a *zimun*.]

20. [This Tanna therefore includes the *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* blessing with the other Biblical blessings in his count of the blessings that comprise *Bircas HaMazon*. Accordingly, the standard *Bircas HaMazon* consists of three Biblical blessings even without the *HaZan* blessing – viz. the Blessing for the Land, *Boneh Yerushalayim* and *HaTov VeHaMeitiv*. When three people eat together, the *zimun* blessing – including *HaZan* – is added, for a total of four blessings.]

We have explained the Gemara in accordance with the approach of *Rashi*, who maintains that according to Rav Sheishess the standard *Bircas HaMazon* begins with the blessing for the Land rather than the *HaZan* blessing. Needless to say, according to those Rishonim (cited in note 10) who maintain that even according to Rav Sheishess the standard *Bircas HaMazon* includes the *HaZan* blessing, the Gemara cannot be explained in this manner.

Due to this and other difficulties, the Rishonim prefer *Rif's* explanation that the Baraisos are referring to the number of people who may participate in the recitation of *Bircas HaMazon*. When a group of people ate together and none of them is capable of reciting the entire *Bircas HaMazon*, they may divide it up so that each person recites one of the blessings on behalf of the group. However, each participant must recite an entire blessing. The recitation of two halves of a blessing by two people is ineffective (see *Mishnah* above, 34a, and *Kehillos Yaakov* §9).

Now, one Baraisa states that *Bircas HaMazon* may be recited by two or three people (but not by four people). The other Baraisa states that *Bircas HaMazon* may be recited by three or even four people. The Gemara initially presumed that the Baraisa which states that *Bircas HaMazon* may be recited even by four people holds like Rav Nachman that the *HaZan* blessing is not part of the *zimun* procedure. Accordingly, one person may recite the *zimun* blessing, another the *HaZan* blessing, yet another the Blessing for the Land and a fourth person the *Boneh Yerushalayim* blessing. The other Baraisa, which states that a maximum of three people may recite *Bircas HaMazon*, appears to hold like Rav Sheishess that *zimun* extends until the end of the *HaZan* blessing, and as such, the *zimun* and *HaZan* blessings must be recited by the same

The Gemara cites a series of proofs that the *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* blessing is not of Biblical origin:^[21]

תדע דהטוב והמטיב לאו דאורייתא – אִמַר רַב יוֹסֵף – **You may know it to be true that the *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* blessing is not of Biblical origin, שְׁהָרִי פּוֹעֲלִים עוֹקְרִים אוֹתָהּ – for laborers delete it.**^[22]

The second proof:

אִמַר רַב יִצְחָק בַּר שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר מַרְתָּא מִשְׁמֵיהּ דְּרַב שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר מַרְתָּא – אִמַר רַב יִצְחָק בַּר שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר מַרְתָּא – **You may know it to be true that the *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* blessing is not of Biblical origin, שְׁהָרִי פּוֹתֵחַ בָּהּ – for one begins it with the phrase, *Blessed are You, Hashem, etc.*, וְאִין חוֹתֵם בָּהּ בְּבִרְוֹךְ – but one does not conclude**

it with the phrase, *Blessed are You, Hashem, etc.*^[23] – **As it was taught in a Baraisa: כָּל הַבְּרָכוֹת כּוֹלֵן פּוֹתֵחַ בְּהֵן בְּבִרְוֹךְ – ALL BLESSINGS BEGIN WITH the clause “BLESSED are You, Hashem, etc.” AND CONCLUDE WITH the clause “BLESSED are You, Hashem, etc.”^[24] חוּץ מִבְּרַכַת הַפְּרִיּוֹת וּבְרַכַת הַמִּצְוֹת – EXCEPT FOR THE BLESSING OVER FRUITS or other foods, AND THE BLESSING OVER MITZVOS,^[25] וּבְרַכָּה הַסְמוּכָה לַחֲבֵרָתָהּ – A BLESSING THAT FOLLOWS ANOTHER [BLESSING] in a series,^[26] וּבְרַכָּה אַחֲרוֹנָה שֶׁבְקִרְיַאת שְׁמַע – AND THE BLESSING THAT FOLLOWS THE RECITATION OF THE *SHEMA*.^[27] יֵשׁ מֵהֵן שֶׁפּוֹתֵחַ בְּהֵן בְּבִרְוֹךְ – SOME OF THESE BEGIN WITH “BLESSED are You, Hashem, etc.” וְאִין חוֹתֵם בְּבִרְוֹךְ – BUT DO NOT CONCLUDE WITH “BLESSED are You, Hashem, etc.”^[28]**

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person. Accordingly, no more than three people may participate in the recitation of *Bircas HaMazon*.

The Gemara rejects this linkage by saying, according to Rav Nachman, that the Baraisa which states that only three and not four people may recite *Bircas HaMazon* is discussing the laborers' *Bircas HaMazon*, in which the Blessing for the Land and *Boneh Yerushalayim* are combined. According to Rav Sheishess, the Gemara states that the Baraisa which states that *Bircas HaMazon* may be recited by four people holds that the *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* blessing is of Biblical origin and therefore includes this blessing in its count (see *Tosafos* וְיָדָה וְלִמָּאן דְּרַבִּי אֲמַר, et al.).

21. These proofs do not refute Rav Sheishess' answer, for the issue of whether *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* is of Biblical origin is certainly a matter of Tannaic dispute (see Baraisos cited below, 48b-49a). Accordingly, it may very well be that the second Baraisa cited above takes the position that *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* is of Biblical origin. Our Gemara merely intends to establish the halachah in accordance with the opinion that *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* is not of Biblical origin (cf. *Meromei Sadeh*).

22. See 45b notes 29 and 31. If this blessing were required Biblically, laborers would not be allowed to delete it. [Although we have learned that laborers recite an abridged version of even the Biblically ordained *Bircas HaMazon* and combine the second and third blessings as one (see note 18), they do not delete any of the Biblical blessings entirely. Since they are allowed to delete the *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* blessing entirely, it is evidently not of Biblical origin (*Rashba, Ritva*.)]

23. [Of the four blessings that constitute *Bircas HaMazon*, the first blessing (*HaZan*) begins, *Blessed are You, Hashem, etc. Who nourishes the entire world*, and concludes, *Blessed are You, Hashem, Who nourishes all*. The second blessing (The Blessing for the Land) does not begin with *Blessed are You etc.*, but with the phrase לָךְ נוֹדָה, *We thank You*, and it concludes, *Blessed are You, Hashem, for the Land and for the nourishment*. Similarly, the third blessing (*Boneh Yerushalayim*) does not begin with *Blessed are You etc.*, but with רַחֵם נָא, *Have mercy, please*, and it concludes, *Blessed are You, Hashem, Who rebuilds Jerusalem in His mercy*. The fourth blessing (*HaTov VeHaMeitiv*) is different than the previous two, as it *does* begin with *Blessed are You, Hashem, etc.*, and does *not* conclude with *Blessed are You, Hashem, etc.*

Rather, it concludes with the words וְיִסְתְּרוּנוּ אֵל לְעוֹלָם אֵל יִסְתְּרוּנוּ, *and of all good things may He never deprive us.*]

Now, if the *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* blessing would be part of the Biblical series, it would be similar to the second and third blessings, which conclude with the clause *Blessed are You, Hashem*, but do not begin with such a clause, for the reason stated in the following Baraisa (see *Rashi*). [Since it differs from the second and third blessing and does begin with the clause *Blessed are You, Hashem*, it is evidently not part of the Biblical series.]

The Gemara now cites a Baraisa which sets forth the rules for the construction of blessings, and teaches that the *HaTov VeHaMeitiv* blessing has the unusual structure just mentioned. See 46b note 2.

24. [It is for this reason that the first blessing of *Bircas HaMazon* begins and concludes with the clause *Blessed are You, Hashem*. The same applies to the first blessing of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, the Kiddush blessing and many others.]

25. The reason for this exception, and the ones that follow, will be explained shortly.

26. [Such as the second and third blessings of *Bircas HaMazon*, and all the blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei* after the first one.]

27. I.e. the blessing of *Emes VeYatziv* which is recited after the *Shema* in the morning, and the blessing of *Emes VeEmunah* which is recited after the *Shema* in the evening (*Rashi* to 46b; see *Tosafos* for a discussion of many other blessings which seem to be exceptions to the Baraisa's rule).

28. This refers to the blessings recited on foods and on mitzvos. The Gemara in *Pesachim* (105a) explains that since these blessings contain only one short sentence of thanks [for creating the food or for granting the specific mitzvah], it is unnecessary to repeat the clause *Blessed are You, Hashem, etc.* after the brief praise. The rule that a blessing requires the clause *Blessed are You, Hashem, etc.* at both its beginning and its end pertains only to lengthy blessings which include a prayer or another matter in addition to the essential praise. One such example is the Sabbath Kiddush blessing, in which we insert the statement, [כִּי הוּא, *for it is the prologue to the holy convocations* (see *Rashi* here and *Pesachim* *ibid.*).