

Review Sheet #25 – Birchas Hamazon – Part 2:

1. If you ate a kezayit of bread and still feel **satiated** from the meal, and you cannot recall whether or not you *bentched*, you are required to *bentch*.
2. If you cannot recall if you *bentched* and you do **not feel satiated** from the meal (or are uncertain whether you are satiated), then you should not *bentch*.
3. However, the best solution is to remove yourself from the doubtful situation by either saying Hamotzee again and eating another *kezayit* of bread within *kiday achilat pras*, or asking someone, who has a certain obligation to *bentch*, to exempt you by saying the entire Birchas Hamazon out loud, while having you in mind.
4. Before *benching*, there is a special mitzvah to wash one's fingers; this is called *Mayim Achronim* (literally, "after-waters"). This washing differs in its details from *Netilat Yadayim* done at the beginning of a bread meal:
 - There is no bracha said on *Mayim Achronim*.
 - Unlike *Netilat Yadayim* which must be poured from a vessel, *Mayim Achronim* can be done at a faucet.
 - Unlike *Netilat Yadayim* which covers the entire hand, *Mayim Achronim* is sufficient to wash just the fingers.
5. Once you have washed *Mayim Achronim*, you should not speak or make any other interruption; rather begin *benching* right away -- within about 15 seconds.
6. Before starting to *bench*, many have a custom to either remove from the table or cover the used *Mayim Achronim* water.
7. When three (or more) men (above the age of 13) have eaten a bread meal together, we add a special introduction before Birchas Hamazon, called **zimmun** (literally "invitation").
8. The procedure for a *zimmun* is that one person "leads the *zimmun*," while the others answer responsively, according to the text written in the prayer book. The "leader" then recites the first blessing of Birkat Hamazon out loud, while everyone else recites it quietly to themselves. They then answer "amen" upon the completion of the leader's blessing.
9. It is customary to honor a Kohen or a Torah scholar. If the honor is given to an important person (e.g. a groom or Bar Mitzvah boy), they should ask permission from the Kohen or Torah scholar that is present.
10. In determining a *zimmun*, "eating together" is defined as either starting the meal together or finishing together. This does not apply at a restaurant or cafeteria where you "just happen" to be sitting in the same room as other people. However, a wedding meal does obligate a *zimmun*, because all the people are coming together for the same purpose.
11. Once you have eaten together with two other people, you are obligated to join in the *zimmun*. If one member of the group wants to *bentch* and **leave before the others** have finished eating, it is permitted for that first person to lead the *zimmun*, while the others answer -- and then *bentch* later by themselves.
12. If only two people have eaten bread together, a third person can "complete the *zimmun*" by preferably eating bread. If he does not want to eat bread, he may consume with them anything that requires a *bracha achrona* (except water).
13. Women are not counted in a *zimmun* with men. However:
 - If women have eaten together with men who are making a *zimmun* (e.g. at a Shabbat table), the women are also obligated to answer the *zimmun*.
 - If three (or more) women have eaten together, they can form their own *zimmun*, though the prevailing custom today is not to.
14. When 10 or more men have eaten together, there is a special form of *zimmun*. As well, the leader should hold a cup of wine, which he drinks at the conclusion of *benching*. It is preferable to use wine also with a *zimmun* of 3 people.

15. A special form of *zimmun* is recited by Ashkenazim at a Bris Milah and at a Sheva brachot meal.