

Could You Pass the Conversion Test - Section #1 - Weekday Living:

Section #1 - Weekday Living - Class #20 Brocha Acharona - Part 3

Zimun:

1. 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").
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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 acharona* (except water).
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. A special form of *zimmun* is recited by Ashkenazim at a Bris Milah and at a Sheva brachot meal.

Time & Space for Brocha Acharona:

1. You may recite an after-bracha as long as you still feel the effect of the food or drink in your stomach; i.e. you are not as hungry as before eating the food. (In halacha, this is a specific point in the digestion process called *z'man ikul*.)
2. Regarding drinks, the moment you no longer feel the effect of the drink (i.e. you're as thirsty as before, which can occur rather quickly on a hot day), the after-bracha has been "lost" and you may not recite it until a new *revi'it* is drunk.
3. If you ate a fairly light snack -- whether of bread or other foods -- the amount of time you have to say a *bracha acharona* depends on when you ate your last bite of food:

- **Within 30 minutes** of finishing, you can say a *bracha achrona*.
 - **Within 30-72 minutes** -- If your snack involved only **non-bread foods**, then you should eat another food requiring a **different** *bracha rishona* but the **same** *bracha achrona* -- and have the first food in mind when saying the *bracha achrona*.
 - If, for some reason, this option is not available, you can still say a *bracha achrona* for **up to 72 minutes** after the last bite.
 - **After 72 minutes** -- time is up and you have lost the chance to fulfill this important mitzvah.
4. If you ate a large quantity of food -- i.e. to the point of satiation -- then the rules are as follows:
- **Within 72 minutes** of finishing the last bite, you can still say a *bracha achrona*.
 - **After 72 minutes**, it depends on whether you are now hungry or still feel satiated:
 - a. If you still **feel satiated**, you should preferably eat another *kezayit* of the food that requires the *bracha achrona* in question (assuming that your *bracha rishona* is still valid). For example, if you finished eating a bread meal more than 72 minutes ago, you should eat another *kezayit* of bread (without saying Hamotzee) and then *bentch*. If for some reason you cannot eat more food that requires the same *bracha achrona*, you can still say the *bracha achrona* -- providing that you feel satiated.
 - b. If you now **feel hungry**, then time is up and you have missed the chance to say a *bracha achrona*.
5. It is always preferable to say a *bracha achrona* before leaving the place where you ate. Even if you plan to remain in the **same place**, it is a good habit to say the *bracha achrona* immediately after eating, before becoming involved in other activities. What happens if you did change locations?
6. **Borei Nefashos** does **not** need to be recited in the same location as your original *bracha rishona*. However, remember that by being in a rush, you are in danger of forgetting to say it altogether. So it's always best to say it right away where you ate.
7. As a general rule, you should never leave without saying a *bracha achrona*., Exceptions to this are:
- Leaving for only a moment, in which case you won't forget to return
 - leaving for the sake of a mitzvah -- e.g. to go to synagogue for the afternoon service, Mincha
8. **Birchas Hamazon and the Three-Faceted Blessing** (*Al Ha'michya*, *Al Ha'gefen* or *Al Ha'aitz*) must be recited in the location where you ate your meal. Even if you left that spot, you are obligated to **go back** and say the *bracha achrona* in the location where you ate.
9. What happens in the event that you did not say *Al Ha'michya* or Birchas Hamazon, as the case may be) at the location where you ate the meal?
- **Best option:** You should eat some mezonot (without saying a new *bracha rishona*) in your new location (the office). It is sufficient to eat less than a *kezayit*. Then say *Al Ha'michya*.
 - **Next best:** If you don't have any mezonot (or bread, as the case may require), then you should return to that original location to say the proper *bracha achrona*. This assumes, of course, that the time limit (e.g. 72 minutes) will not meanwhile pass.

- **Least acceptable option:** Say the *bracha achrona* at the office.
10. The Halacha is a bit more lenient with regard to *Al Ha'aitz* and *Al Ha'gefen*, the *bracha achrona* if you had dates or wine. In this case, if you mistakenly left, you can go ahead and say a *bracha achrona* without eating any more fruit or drinking wine.
 11. If you **originally intend** to finish your meal in a different location, then as long as you have some bread (even less than a *kezayit*) in the second location, it's 100% fine to *bentch* there. This "stipulation" only works with bread, but not any other foods.
 12. If you are eating outside, you need to *bentch* within 4 cubits (approximately 7 feet) of where you ate.

Mistaken Brocha Achrona:

1. If a person says the wrong *bracha achrona*, is this considered a *bracha levatala* -- a bracha said in vain, in which case you will now have to say the correct *bracha achrona*; or perhaps, post facto, this "incorrect" *bracha achrona* is effective? The rules are complex, and there is no easily discernible pattern. Here are some examples:
2. You ate a few carrots, and then for a *bracha achrona* said *Al Ha'gefen*. This does not work, since carrots are in no way related to wine.
3. You ate an apple, and for a *bracha achrona* said *Al Ha'aitz*. Post facto, this works, since apples are certainly fruits, albeit not one of the five special fruits.
4. You ate a bowl of rice, and for a *bracha achrona* said *Al Ha'michya*. Post facto, this works, since rice is indeed related to mezonot foods in that the *bracha rishona* for rice is Mezonot.
5. You ate pretzels, and for your *bracha achrona* mistakenly said Birkat Hamazon. Post facto, this works, because pretzels are *Pat Haba B'Kisnin* -- a satiating mezonot food that would actually require Birkat Hamazon if you ate a large enough quantity (*shiur keviyat seudah*).
6. You ate a large meal of fish, potatoes, salad, and ice cream for dessert. You are so stuffed to the gills that instead of a simple *Borei Nefashot*, you mistakenly said the entire Birkat Hamazon. In this case, this is no good and you will still have to say *Borei Nefashot*.
7. You ate a sandwich and then said *Al Ha'michya*. Post facto, this works, as the Three-Faceted Blessing is thematically related to Birkat Hamazon.
8. Refer to the chart below outlining which mistaken brachot are effective "after the fact":

MISTAKENLY SAID SUPPOSED TO SAY	Birchas Hamazon	Al Hamichya	Al Ha'gefen	Al Ha'aitz	Borei Nefashos
Birchas Hamazon	N/A	Effective	Ineffective	Ineffective	Questionable
Al Ha'michya	Effective	N/A	Ineffective	Ineffective	Questionable
Al Ha'gefen	Effective	Effective	N/A	Effective	Questionable
Al Ha'aitz	Ineffective	Ineffective	Ineffective	N/A	Questionable
Borei Nefashos	Ineffective	Ineffective	Ineffective	Ineffective	N/A

9. In cases where the *bracha achrona* was ineffective, you will now have to say the correct *bracha achrona*. It is proper to show remorse for having said the original *bracha achrona* in vain (*bracha levatala*).
10. When faced with one of the "questionable" rulings, the best advice is to:
 - Have someone else who is obligated in the same *bracha achrona* to have in mind to be *motzi* you.
 - Eat more food that requires a **different** *bracha rishona*, but the same *bracha achrona*. When you say the *bracha achrona*, have in mind to "cover" the original food as well.

Being Motzi Others:

1. If you can find someone else who needs to say the same bracha as you, he can "have you in mind" while he says the bracha. Then, if you listen carefully to every word of his bracha -- and answer "amen" at the bracha's conclusion -- you have fulfilled your obligation, too. This is based on the principle of ***Shomeya K'oneh -- literally, "hearing is like answering."***
2. In such a case, we say that he has been "***motzi***" you (literally: "took you out") of your bracha obligation. As the listener, you are now "***yotzei***" (literally "out of") your obligation.
3. In order for one person to be *motzi* another in a bracha, many conditions must be fulfilled:
4. As the bracha is about to be said, the person saying the bracha **and** the listener both need to **have in mind** that the bracha is being said on behalf of the listener.
5. Additionally, to be *yotzei*, you must **hear every word** of the bracha, just as you would have needed to pronounce every word if you were saying the bracha yourself. Therefore, someone being *motzi* others -- e.g. saying Kiddush for his family, or a chazan in the synagogue -- has a great responsibility to pronounce each word loudly and clearly.
6. Post facto, if the listener failed to hear a **non-essential word**, it is okay. As we learned in class #2, the "essential" words are: 1) the word "**Baruch**," blessed; 2) **Shem** - mentioning a name of God; 3) **Malchut** - reference to God's kingship over the world; and 4) the **message** (theme) of the particular bracha
7. Certainly, one may not speak during the bracha.
8. In general, to be *motzi* someone else, you need to be obligated in the **same bracha**. For example, you cannot say *borei pri ha'aitz* for your friend if you are not going to eat some fruit yourself. So too with a *bracha achrona* -- you can't be *motzi* someone else in *Al Ha'gefen* if you haven't just drunk some grape juice or wine. Even post facto, these attempts would be ineffective.
9. There is one exception: If the blessing in question is a being done for the sake of a **mitzvah**, and -- this is an important factor -- the listener is **unable** to say the bracha his or herself. In such a case, you can be *motzi* someone else, even if you don't consume any of the food yourself. For example, you can make Kiddush or Havdallah for someone who is unable to read Hebrew, even if you don't drink the wine (although the person being *motzi* would need to drink it).
10. **Men** and **Women** (over the age of 13, 12 respectively) can be *motzi* other adults, as well as children.
11. **Children** (i.e. boys under age 13 and girls under age 12) can be only be *motzi* other children.

12. Ideally, the person being *motzi* and the one being *yotzei* should be **eating together** at the same table.
13. It is also preferable that everyone be seated at the time of the bracha, or at least to be standing in place.
14. When someone is being *motzi* you, you should answer "amen." However, if you forgot to say amen, the bracha is still effective for you.
15. As a general rule, it is preferable to say your own bracha rather than to rely on *Shomeya K'oneh*. This is because it is often difficult for people to concentrate on someone else saying a bracha. However, there are certain situations where it is **preferable** to have someone be *motzi* you, as in the following:
16. In cases where you are **not sure** whether you need to say a *bracha rishona* or *bracha achrona*, an elegant solution is to employ *Shomeya K'oneh*. For example, you are halfway through your piece of cake when you suddenly can't remember if you said *borei minei mezonot* before you started. In this case, it is best to find someone else who needs to say their own Mezonot blessing, and ask them to be *motzi* you.
17. In the context of performing a public mitzvah, *Shomeya K'oneh* is often considered the best course of action. For example, on Shabbat, the custom is that one person says Kiddush and Hamotzee, as well as Havdallah at the conclusion of Shabbat. Likewise, in the synagogue, one person says the blessing on blowing the shofar and reading the Megillah.
18. If someone cannot say a bracha properly (either due to health reasons or lack of knowledge), it is best to be *yotzei* through another person's bracha [even if he did not eat anything himself, based on the principle of "every Jew is responsible one for another."]. For example, when there is no Siddur at hand to say Birkat Hamazon or the Three-Faceted Blessing (which are long and difficult to memorize), you can use *Shomeya K'oneh* to help you out.