**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**LIFECYCLES – HILKHOT ISHUT**

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**Shiur #25: Laws of the Wedding**

**The *Sheva Berakhot* (2)**

**Introduction**

In the [previous *shiur*](http://etzion.org.il/en/shiur-24-laws-wedding-sheva-berakhot-1), we began our discussion of the birkat chatanim, known as the sheva berakhot, which are recited at the festive meal after the wedding and throughout the seven days after the wedding (the shivat yemei mishteh). The Talmud ([*Ketubot* 7b](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.7b?lang=he-en)) teaches that these blessings are recited in a quorum of ten (a minyan) for seven days, and only in the presence of panim chadashot.

The Rishonim appear to offer two different explanations for this requirement. Some (Tosafot, [*Ketubot* 7b](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.7b?lang=he-en), s.v. ve-hahu) explain that panim chadashot refer to people for whom the simcha is expanded” (marbim be-shvilam ha-simcha yoter). Tosafot adds that on Shabbat, there is no need for panim chadashot, as the festivities are naturally increased in honor of the Shabbat. Others (Ran, [*Ketubot* 3b](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.3b?lang=he-en), s.v. mevarekh), suggest that when there are *panim chadashot*, all of the blessings are recited, as for them “**it is like the beginning of their marriage**.”

We further analyzed the different definitions panim chadashot. The Shulchan Arukh ([EH 62:7](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh,_Even_HaEzer.62.7?lang=he-en)) rules that as long as the person did not participate in a celebratory meal, he may be considered panim chadashot. Furthermore, the Shulchan Arukh rules that Shabbat and Yom Tov are considered to be panim chadashot, except for seuda shelishit.

Finally, the Rishonim discuss whether the *berakha* of asher bara may be recited all seven days even when there are no panim chadashot, as it may be a completely different type of blessing. The Shulchan Arukh ([EH 62:4](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh,_Even_HaEzer.62.4?lang=he-en)) rules in accordance with the Ran (and Rambam) that the asher bara blessing can be said without a quorum when there is a zimun.

This week, we will discuss some questions relevant to the time in which the *sheva berakhot* are recited.

**Where are *Sheva Berakhot* Recited?**

A number of Talmudic sources imply that even during the *shivat yemei mishteh*, the *birkat chatanim* should only be recited at the place of the *chuppa*. For example, one passage (*Ketubot* 7a) teaches, “One recites the benediction of the grooms in the house of the grooms.” Similarly, another passage (*Sukka* 25b) rules that “rejoicing is only found at the *chuppa*.”

Tosafot (ibid. s.v. *ein*) raises the possibility that the *birkat chatanim* may only be recited at the place of the *chuppa* for the entire seven days. Some suggest that this is only if the couple leaves but intends to return to the *beit chatanim*. If, however, they do not plan to return the *beit chatanim*, they may recite the *sheva berakhot* at their new home (See Rosh *Sukka* 2:8 according to Beit Yosef EH 62).

Others (Rosh ibid. according to Taz 62:7) disagree and maintain that wherever the couple celebrates is considered to be the *beit chatanim* and the *sheva berakhot* may be recited there. This is the view of other *Acharonim* (Beit Shmuel 62:13, Kenesset Gedola 62:27). This is the custom of Ashkenazic communities. There are different practices among Sephardim.

**When do we Begin and End Counting the Seven Days?**

The *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* discuss how to calculate the seven days during which one recites the *birkot chatanim*. Theoretically, we might count the seven days from the *kiddushin*, from the *sheva berakhot* recited under the *chuppa*, or from the first meal. If the wedding ceremony occurred during the day, and the *sheva berakhot* or the meal occurred at night, there may be a doubt as to whether to count an additional six or seven days of the *birkot chatanim*.

The Rosh (*Teshuvot* 26:2) writes that it is clear that the seven days of *sheva berakhot* should not begin from the *kiddushin*, but rather from the time that the first *sheva berakhot* are first recited. The position is cited by the Rema (EH 62:6). The Chelkat Mechokek (62:7; see Kenesset Yechezkel 60 who disagrees) explains that this refers to the *sheva berakhot* recited under the *chuppa* are recited.

Although some *Acharonim* cite a view which maintains that the *sheva berakhot* may be recited for seven complete days (i.e. *me-et le-et*) from the *chuppa*, the halakha is in accordance with those who maintain that seven calendaric days are counted.

**How Many People Need to Eat in Order to Recite the *Sheva Berakhot***

As we discussed previously, the Talmud (see *Ketubot* 7b) teaches that the *birkot chatanim* (*sheva berakhot*) must be recited in the presence of a *minyan*. According to the *gemara* (*Megilla* 23b), the *chatan* may be included in the *minyan*. We have also discussed the relationship between the *sheva* *berakhot* following the wedding and the festive meals.

According to our practice, which we will relate to in greater depth next week, the *sheva berakhot* are recited following the meal. The *Acharonim* ask a number of questions on this practice. First, how many members of the *minyan* must actually eat in order to be able to recite the *sheva berakhot*? Second, must those who recite the *sheva berakhot* have participated in the festive meal?

The Pitchei Teshuva (EH 62:8) cites the *Sefer Zekhor Le-Avraham* (EH 2), authored by R. Avraham Alkalai (1749 – 1811). R. Alkalai questions whether the “ten” people mentioned by the Talmud must have eaten bread or at least enough to be able to join the *zimun*, or if, since the *birkot chatanim* are not related to the meal per se, even those who are merely present in the house may participate in and recite the *sheva berakhot*.

On the one hand, one might suggest that the entire quorum, including the *panim chadashot* (the guests who had not previously participated in the wedding or a festive meal) must eat bread. R. Yosef Chaim of Bagdad (1835 –1909), in his Ben Ish Chai (*Parashat Shoftim*), writes that the *sheva berakhot* are only recited if the *zimun* is said “*beShem*” (i.e. with the name of God), which is only done when at least seven participants, the majority of the *minyan*, ate bread.

On the other hand, R. Alkalai himself cites a scholar who insisted that as long as a majority of the people, possibly six, ate, the *sheva berakhot* may be recited. Furthermore, some *Acharonim* (including R. Shlomo Kluger, *Ha-Elef* *Lekha Shelomo*, OC 93, and the *Minchat Pitim*, EH 62) suggest that even if three or four of the participants ate bread, as long as a majority of the quorum ate other foods, the *sheva berakhot* may be recited. R. Kluger writes that it is even sufficient for the *panim chadashot* to eat a bit and rejoice with the *chatan* and *kalla*; they do not need to eat bread. R. Shlomo Eliezer Alfandari (1826 – 1930), known as the Saba Kadisha (*Saba Kadisha*, EH 28) also rules that even if a majority of the quorum did not partake of the meal, the *sheva berakhot* may be recited.

A number of *Acharonim* suggest that due to the principle of *safek berakhot* *le-hakel*, it is best if the *sheva berakhot* are recited only if at least seven members of the quorum ate bread and at least three others ate other foods. This is also the opinion of R. Ovadia Yosef (*Yabi’a Omer*, EH 3:11), who insists that the *sheva* *berakhot* are inherently connected to the meal, and therefore, he relates, according to Sephardic practice, the *sheva berakhot* at the *zimun* may be said over one cup of wine, as they are two aspects of the same obligation. Although he acknowledges that the Ashkenazic practice is to say the *zimun* and the *sheva* *berakhot* on two separate cups of wine, implying that the *sheva berakhot* are not intrinsically connected to the meal, he still insists that the *berakhot* may only be said when a majority of the quorum (seven) ate bread and the rest ate other foods, in which case the special *zimun* with the *shem Hashem* is recited. This seems to be the common practice (see *Nisuin* *Ke-Hilkhata* 14:41).

Some *Acharonim* (see *Tzitz Eliezer* 13:99, citing *Ha-Elef* *Lekha* *Shelomo* 93; R. Ovadia Yosef, *Yabi’a Omer*, EH 6:9, etc.) write that if the *chatan* and *kalla* don’t eat bread, the *sheva berakhot* should not be recited at all. The *Sova Semachot* (1:100) disagrees and rules that even if the *chatan* did not eat, the *sheva berakhot* are recited.

May one who has not eaten bread say the *sheva berakhot*? Some *Acharonim* (see *Zekhor* *Le-Avraham* 2:2; *Yaskil Avdi* 8:20:28; see also *Rivevot* *Ephraim* 4:267) rule that even one who did not eat can say the *sheva berakhot*. This was apparently the custom of Brisk. Some maintain, however, that only one who ate bread should say the *sheva berakhot* (*China Ve-Chisda Ketubot* 1:112; *Cheshev Ha-Efod* 1:9; *Yabi’a Omer*, EH 3:11:7). Others maintain that even one who ate foods other than bread at the meal may say the *sheva berakhot*.

**Is There an Obligation to Hear the *Sheva Berakhot*?**

The *Acharonim* question whether every person who participates in the festive wedding meal must stay until the end of the meal and hear the *sheva berakhot*. If so, is there a way to avoid becoming obligated to hear the *sheva berakhot*?

Some relate a passage from the Tur (EH 62), who discusses a case in which the guests eat in different locations; in addition to the “*beit* *chatanim*,” there are other houses in which the festive meal is eaten. He first asserts that while the special *birkat ha-zimun* (*she-hasimcha be-me’ono*) is only recited in the *beit chatanim*, if the same waiter serves the guests in the different houses, the meal is considered to be one large meal, and *sheva berakhot* should be recited in each and every place. He then cites R. Yechiel, who maintains that even if the houses are not connected through this waiter, since they all began the meal in honor of the wedding, *sheva berakhot* are recited in each place. The *Shulchan Arukh* (EH 62:11) rules in accordance with R. Yechiel.

Why, according to this source, are the *sheva beakhot* recited separately in each house?

On the one hand, R. Yonatan Shteif (1877-1958) (*She’elot U-Teshuvot Mahari Shteif* 7) explains that while there is an obligation to say the *sheva* *berakhot* in each place that a festive meal is held in honor of the *chatan* and *kalla*, there is no individual obligation upon each and every guest to stay and to hear the *sheva berakhot*. If so, one might still ask whether each room or hall becomes obligated to say the *sheva berakhot* or whether every group of ten people may be obligated. For example, the *Cheshev Ha-Efod* (9) relates that he remembers attending a wedding when he was a young child and R. Aryeh Tzvi Frumer, known as the Kozhiglover Rav, ruled that even a group of ten people who wished to leave a wedding meal early should say their own *sheva berakhot*. According to this approach, individuals who wish to leave a wedding early would not become personally obligated to hear the *sheva berakhot*.

R. Eliezer Waldenberg (*Tzitz Eliezer* 11:84) disagrees with R. Shteif and maintains that each and every participant of the *seuda* must hear the *sheva berakhot*. Similarly, some quote R. Chaim Soloveitchik as explaining that when the *gemara* says (*Berakhot* 6b), “One who benefits from a feast made in honor of a *chatan* and does not rejoice with him violate five *kolot* (voices),” it implies that each and every person is obligated in all aspects of the festive meal, including *sheva berakhot*.

Other *Acharonim* search for other reasons to exempt the guests at a festive wedding meal from hearing the *sheva berakhot*. R. Shelomo Kluger (*Ha-Elef Lekha Shelomo*, EH 107), for example, insists that the obligation of *sheva* *berakhot* is only created when *birkat ha-mazon* is recited, at the end of the meal. Therefore, one who leaves a festive meal early never became obligated in the communal recitation of the *sheva berakhot*.

R. Moshe Feinstein (OC 1:56) clearly maintains that each individual is obligated to say the *sheva berakhot*. However, he insists that not every guest must stay until late at night until the end of the festive wedding. First, he suggests that a person may simply refrain from eating bread. He warns, however, that even if one merely eats *pat ha-ba’ah be-kisanin*, that may be considered to be a *kevi’at se’uda* that would also obligate him to wash *netilat yadayim* and say *birkat ha-mazon*. R. Feinstein further suggests that a person have in mind, when he begins the meal, not to become obligated in a *zimun,* and he therefore would not be obligated in the *sheva berakhot*. He cites the Rema (YD 193:3), who writes that individuals do not become obligated in a *zimun* in the house of non-Jews, as due to fear, he is not really sitting in a relaxed manner and joining with others. Similarly, the Rema writes (OC 552) that on Erev Tisha Be-Av, there is no obligation of *zimun* for those who eat together. However, one may certainly distinguish between these extenuating circumstances and one who sits at a table socializing with others at a wedding.

R. Moshe Feinstein not only assumes that every individual is obligated to hear the *sheva berakhot*, but he also assumed that fundamentally the obligation is linked to the meal. Next week we will discuss this issue, i.e. the relationship between the *sheva berakhot*, the festive meal, and the *zimun* in greater depth.