**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

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**Shiur #55: *Zimun* (4)**

Last week, we began studying the first *mishna* of the seventh chapter of *Massekhet* *Berakhot* (45a), which enumerates those who may be included in a *zimun* and those who may not be included. Those discussed include one who ate prohibited food, a servant, a non-Jew, women, children, and slaves. We focused upon whether or not women join or participate in a *zimun* and if they have any obligation to do so.

We noted that although women are clearly obligated in *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, either Biblically or Rabbinically (as we shall discuss in a future *shiur*), the Talmud teaches and most *Rishonim* rule that they do not join with two men in order to form a *zimun*. The *Rishonim* disagree as to whether this is due to the possibility that men and women carry different levels of obligation or recite different texts of *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, or due to the fear of a breach of modesty.

In addition, the Talmud (*Berakhot* 45b) rules that women may form their own *zimun*. We saw that the *Rishonim* disagree as to whether they are obligated to do so or whether this is a “*reshut*” (voluntary action). We noted that the Shulchan Arukh (199:7) rules that “*nashim mezamnot le-atzman reshut*” – women may, but are not obligated, to join together to form a *zimun*. We further noted that although the Arukh Ha-Shulchan (199:2) relates that “we have never heard that women say the *zimun* amongst themselves,” there are testimonies to this practice, and nowadays, it has become rather popular in Modern Orthodox and Religious Zionist communities. One or two men who are present for such a *zimun* should answer as well (R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *z”l*, cited in *Halikhot Beita*, p. 94).

Finally, the Semag (Aseh 27) writes that when women eat with three or more men, “they are obligated and fulfill their obligation with them, and they do not say the blessings for themselves.” The Shulchan Arukh (199:7) rules accordingly. Women who participate in a meal with more than three men should be careful to be present for and respond to the *zimun* (see Iggerot Moshe, OC 5:9, and Shevet Ha-Levi 1:38).

This week, we will discuss the participation of children in a *zimun*.

**Children and *Zimun***

The *mishna* (*Berakhot* 49b) teaches that there are two types of *zimun*:

What is the formula for *zimun*? If there are three, he [the one saying grace] says, “Let us bless [Him of whose bounty we have eaten].” If there are three beside himself, he says, “Bless.” If there are ten, he says, “Let us bless our God.”

There are two types of *zimun*: the *zimun* of three and the *zimun* of ten, during which the name of God is added to the *Birkat Ha-Zimun* (“*nevarekh Elokeinu she-akhanu mi-shelo*”). The *mishna* does not indicate whether there is also a qualitative difference between these two forms of *zimun*.

In addition, although the *mishna* states that “women, slaves, and minors cannot be counted for a *zimun*,” the Talmud cites numerous opinions regarding whether or not a child can join a *zimun*. What child is being referred to, and which type of *zimun*? The *gemara* (*Berakhot* 47b – 48a) states:

Women, children, and slaves may not be counted in the three. R. Yehoshua b. Levi said: Although it was laid down that an infant in a cradle cannot be counted for *zimun*, he can be counted to make up ten…

R. Huna said: Nine and the Ark join together [to be counted as ten]. Said R. Nachman to him: Is the Ark a man? I mean, said R. Huna, that when nine look like ten, they may be joined together. Some say [this means] when they are all close together; others say when they are scattered.

R. Ammi said: Two and the Sabbath may be joined together. Said R. Nachman to him: Is the Sabbath a man? What R. Ammi really said was that two scholars who sharpen one another in the knowledge of the Halakhah may count as three [for *zimun*]…

R. Yochanan said: A boy [who has reached puberty] before his years may be counted for *zimun*. It has been taught similarly: A boy who has grown two hairs may be counted for *zimun*, but if he has not grown two hairs he may not be counted…

The law, however, is not as laid down in all these statements, but as in this statement of R. Nachman: A boy who knows to whom the benediction is addressed may be counted for *zimun*. Abbaye and Rava [when boys] were once sitting in the presence of Rabba. Said Rabba to them: To whom do we address the benedictions? They replied: To the All-Merciful. And where does the All-Merciful abide? Rava pointed to the roof; Abaye went outside and pointed to the sky. Said Rabba to them: Both of you will become Rabbis. This accords with the popular saying: Every pumpkin can be told from its stalk.

This passage cites numerous opinions regarding the composition of a quorum in which prayers that generally require the presence of ten men may be said. Regarding children, while R. Yehoshua b. Levi counts an infant for a *zimun* of ten and R. Yochanan counts a boy who reaches puberty before the age of bar mitzvah, R. Nachaman concludes that a child “who knows to whom the benediction is addressed” (*ha-yode’a le-mi* *mevarkhin*) may be counted towards a *zimun*.

The *Rishonim* discuss the relationship between the various opinions cited in this passage and whether, according to the final law, a child may be counted towards a *zimun*.

Some *Rishonim* maintain that an infant may be counted towards a quorum of ten for both a *zimun* and for *tefilla*. The Rosh (*Berakhot* 7:20), for example, cites R. Hai Gaon, explaining that “wherever there are ten, the *Shekhina* dwells, as we derive from the verse ‘and I will be sanctified among the children of Israel’ that the *Kedusha* is said among ten, and regardless of whether they are adults are children, they are considered ‘among the children of Israel.’” Tosafot (*Berakhot* 48a, s.v. *ve-let*) records that this is also the view of Rabbeinu Tam. However, Rabbeinu Tam did not actually act in accordance with this view. The Ba’al Ha-Ma’or (*Berakhot* 35b) adds that one may even count up to four children for a *minyan*.

The Shulchan Arukh (55:4) rejects this view and does not allow a child to join others in forming a *minyan*. The Rema adds that one should not include a minor even if he is holding a “*chumash*” (*sefer Torah*). He adds that “some are accustomed to be lenient in extenuating circumstances”. The Magen Avraham explains that this refers to using a child to form the *minyan*. The Levush disagrees, but testifies that it is customary to include a child holding a *sefer Torah*, but only in order to say the *Kaddish* and *Barkhu*, not for the *Kaddish* after *Aleinu*. Although both the Mishna Berura (55:24) and the Arukh Ha-Shulchan (55:10) discourage this practice, other Acharonim discuss the propriety of counting a minor towards a *minyan*, with or without a sefer Torah, in extenuating circumstances. See, for example, Iggerot Moshe OC 2:18, Yabi’a Omer OC 4:9; see also Peninei Ha-Rav pg. 27 which relates R. Soloveitchik’s practice.

Although other *Rishonim* reject this view regarding a *minyan*, some do allow a child to join a *zimun*. For example, Tosafot (ibid.) allows a twelve year old boy who has reached puberty and who known for whom the blessings are said to join a *zimun*. The Ramban (*Milchamot Hashem* 35b) suggest that even if this child does not know for whom these blessings are said, he may be counted. On the other hand, many *Rishonim* (see Rif 35b; Rambam, *Hilkhot Berakhot* 5:7) accept the conclusion of the passage, citing the view of R. Nachman, who counts any child who knows for whom the blessings are said.

Interestingly, while the Rambam allows a seven or eight year old boy join a *zimun* of three or ten, he does not count a child towards a *minyan* of ten men needed for the repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei* (*Hilkhot Tefilla* 8:4). The Shulchan Arukh (55:4 and 199:10) rules similarly. This is someone curious, given that R. Yehoshua b. Levi says that “an infant in a cradle cannot be counted for *zimun*, yet he can be counted to make up ten,” apparently ruling in an opposite manner! R. Soloveitchik (*Reshimot Shiurim*, *Berakhot*, p. 509) suggests that while a child may join to create a group that represents “*Adat* *Yisrael*,” he may not count for the repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, as he himself cannot serve as the *shaliach tzibbur* due to his age. In other words, the *minyan* of *tefilla* is not only a group representative of *Adat Yisrael*; it is a group of people who are all obligated in *tefilla* and can all serve as the *sheliach tzibbur*, which naturally excludes a child.

Some *Rishonim* categorically reject the notion that a child may join a *zimun*. The Rosh (ibid., see also Mordekhai, *Berakhot* 172, who cites the Ra’avya), for example, rules that although a child may not join to form a *zimun*, once a child has turned thirteen, he may join a *zimun* regardless of whether he has reached puberty and physical maturation.

The Shulchan Arukh (199:10) rules in accordance with the Rif and Rambam. Accordingly, a child may be counted towards a *zimun*. This is indeed the practice of Sephardic Jews. Some *Acharonim* assume that this child must be at least nine years old (Magen Avraham 199:6 and Kaf Ha-Chaim 199:29), but others (*Mishna Berura* 199:24) rule that even a six year old child who knows whom he blesses may join a *zimun*. *Mishna Berura* (27) notes that according to this view, the child should not lead the *zimun*. The Rema (ibid) disagrees and rules in accordance with the Rosh, who does not allow a child to join to form a *zimun*. This is the practice of Ashkenazic Jews.

Next week, we will conclude our discussion of *zimun*.