

on *Shabbos* and *Yomtov*. There is the requirement for *kiddush* to be said only where the *seuda* is eaten. The *brocha*, *laishaiv basukah*, is only said when one eats a *seuda*. In general, a *seuda* must be based on bread. Sometimes, the requirement is satisfied with other items. In our case, the issue is whether a group *seuda* can be based on items other than bread. Is the issue to eat together, formally, or to eat a bread *seuda*?

What appears to make bread the preferred item to combine a group, is *bircas hamazon* and *zimun*, the addition to the *brocha* that requires a group together. The poskim debate whether *zimun* would apply to those eating fruits of the remaining seven species that Eretz Yisroel is blessed with. While we do not follow the opinion requiring it, there is an opinion that one should avoid eating them in a group. This view maintains that the ruling we follow is not really conclusive. Others maintain that one may gather in a group to 'fix' a meal of such fruits, and need not worry about *zimun*. Another factor in formalizing a group is *hesaiba*, where a group convene in a formal manner of reclining, or nowadays, seating together. This applies only to bread and wine.

To satisfy the requirement of *kiddush bimkom seuda*, bread is required. However, for the daytime *kiddush*, *mezonos* type foods are good enough. Many of these foods could be considered *seuda* when used in place of bread. If necessary, wine may be used for this purpose as well. With regard to *sheva brochos*, if there are enough participants for a *mezuman*, but not the required ten for *sheva brochos*, some say that the others need not eat bread. Assuming they must eat bread, poskim maintain that *mezonos* is really insufficient. According to this, wine would certainly not be good enough. [See Brochos 36a 42a Psachim 106a Sukah 26b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 168:13 272:9 273 639:2 192:1 193:2 213:1-3, commentaries. Yabia Omer III:11:9.]

In conclusion, it would appear that many poskim would recommend that in this case, no *sheva brochos* may be recited. However, various factors can be combined. Everyone else ate bread. There is a view that the *choson* and *kallah* do not need to eat bread. There is a view that the *sheva brochos* are not connected to the *seuda* or to *bircas hamazon*. The *choson* and *kallah* ate everything else but the bread, and they drank wine with the company. There is a view that *zimun* can be made over wine. Wine is the same as bread in terms of *hesaibah*. There is a view that wine can be considered *seuda* for some applications. Therefore, there is some basis to recite the *sheva brochos* in this case. Nonetheless, some way should be found that the couple can eat some kind of bread.

On the parsha ... Land of wheat and barley and wine and figs .. eat and be satisfied and bless ... [8:8 10] The Talmud one only recites full *bircas hamazon* on bread. On all seven species, one recites *m'ain shalosh*, the shortened version of it. This is based on the interruption between these two *pesukim*. You will gather your grain wine and oil ... you will eat and be satisfied .. [11:14-15] The same term for satisfaction, that indicates a meal, is to be used here. While oil is not consumed separately, but with bread, wine seems to be considered satisfying. Thus, it is not quite in the same category as bread, but has some characteristics of a meal. Therefore, it can serve to convene people as a group for *hesaibah*. This *parsha* is written in the plural, except these *pesukim*. Maybe this is reference to the unifying effect of eating and drinking.

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HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

At a *sheva brochos seuda*, the *choson* and *kallah* are allergic to wheat products. Neither of them eat bread with the guests. May the *sheva brochos* still be recited? If wine or grape juice is also served, and the *choson* and *kallah* drink, does this change the situation?

The issues:

A) *The sheva brochos*

B) *Participation of the choson and kallah*

C) *What constitutes a seuda*

A) *Sheva Brochos*

The wedding ceremony includes two parts, the *erusin* and the *nisuin*. These were originally spaced a few months apart. The interim was devoted to preparing and grooming the young couple for married life. During this period they are considered married in terms of forbidden relations, but may not yet live together. *Nisuin* concludes the marriage ceremony. Actually, in former times, they were also held consecutively, but in two separate locations. Nowadays, both are held together. They are separated under the *chupah* by a ceremonial reading of the *kesuba*, marriage contract.

In the prevailing practice, *erusin* involves the *choson* giving the *kalah* a ring in the presence of witnesses. This is his formal bonding of the two in marriage. At this ceremony, in the presence of a *minyan*, quorum of ten men, *birchas chasanim*, part one, is recited. Four sources are cited for the *brochos*. The Torah makes reference to *brochos* at the time that Eliezer took Rivkah for Yitzchok, and at the time Hashem brought Adam and Chava together. In these instances there was no *minyan*. In the story of Boaz and Rus reference is made to a *minyan* at the time the ceremony took place. A fourth source interprets a *pasuk* in *Tehilim* as a reference to *brochos* for matters of marriage.

At both parts of the ceremony a cup of wine is used. Part one involves the *brocha* for wine and *birchas erusin*. The one reciting the *brocha* need not be the *choson*, though this was indeed the original practice. It has become common for the *choson* to delegate an agent, usually his Rav. [One reason suggested by the poskim is to save an ignorant *choson* from embarrassment. This is based on the laws of *mikra bikurim* and *viduy maaser*, two proclamations required by the Torah in connection with these *mitzvos*, when the *bais hamikdash* stood. Some were not Scripturally eligible for these *mitzvos* or proclamations, sometimes due to their own fault. So as not to discourage people from coming at all because of their shame, measures were taken to change the way it was proclaimed.] The *choson* and *kalah* drink the wine, rather than the Rav.

Nisuin involves reciting seven *brochos*, the first of which is on wine. Here, too, the ideal person to recite them would be the *choson*. It is customary to honor others with these *brochos*. They are all primarily praises of Hashem and prayers for the restoration of

true joy in the reuniting of Hashem with his people and home in this world, the *bais hamikdash*. The *choson* and *kalah* then drink the wine. This is the *chupa*.

When the two parts were held separately, a *seuda*, festive meal, accompanied each part. Nowadays, one *seuda* follows the double ceremony. This *seuda* is itself an intrinsic part of the celebration. It should be a proper bread based meal, in the company of guests. There should be ten men present. The *Shechina*, Divine Presence, is also present in a sense. [There are precedents for these *seudos* in the Torah. Eliezer and his men held a *seudas erusin*. (Some consider this a sort of *seudas nisuin*. The same source for *bircas chasanim* is also subject to the same debate. Some say it was *bircas erusin*, while others say it must have been *bircas nisuin*.) Lavan made a *seudas nisuin* for Yaakov. See *Chaye Sara 24:54 Malbim, Haamek Davar. Vayaitzai 29:22*.]

After the *seuda*, when *bircas hamazon* is recited, the seven *brochos* are repeated. This time *hagafen*, which is always recited when wine is used with *bircas hamazon*, is recited after the other six *brochos*. If either the *choson* or *kalah* is previously unmarried, any *seuda* during the following week is also considered part of the *seudas chasanim*. The same *brochos* would be recited at *bircas hamazon*. Originally, all the seven days of feasting were held in the same place. This was the true *chupa*, or *bais choson*. Nowadays, the people spread out to different locations. However, the poskim maintain that the 'parties' in the new locations are still considered a continuation of the original wedding feast. The provision to make it the same as the original feast is to have new faces at the new meal, except at *seudos* held on a *Shabbos* or *Yomtov*. Even if there are no new faces, some of the *brochos* may be recited. If there is no *minyan*, fewer may be recited, but there is still a measure of the festivities of the wedding at the *seuda*. There is a source to recite these *brochos* in the *bais choson* morning and evening, as part of the regular service. According to this source, they would be recited before the *seuda*. There was also a *minhag* to recite them after *shacharis* on *Shabbos* morning of the week following the wedding. The congregation would accompany the *choson* to his house and recite them then, without the *seuda*. We do not follow these *minhagim*, apparently because we do not assemble for the festivities except at the *seudos*. This is what we call the *sheva brochos*, and the *sheva brochos* week. We see that the *brochos* are used to define the *seudos* themselves.

Though sources are cited for *bircas chasanim* in the Torah, all *brochos* are Rabbinical institutions, except *bircas hamazon* and, according to some, *bircas hatorah*. The source is *asmachta*, a link to a reference in the Torah, that is used to prove that the Torah acknowledges a precedent for it. As mentioned, there is a view that the requirement of a *minyan* is connected to a kind of special Divine Presence. Whether it is a Rabbinical or Scriptural obligation, the assembling of ten men to specifically praise Hashem this way seems to create a *davar shebikedusha*, a sanctification of Hashem's Name. The reference to the *simcha* in Hashem's 'dwelling place' also connects to that. The poskim actually forbid mentioning these words in *bircas hamazon* if the men and women mingle at the *seuda*, similar to a *shul*.

As mentioned, the week of festivities applies to a couple that has a least one previously unmarried partner. This is a Rabbinical institution. Along with the festivities, the *choson* (and *kalah*) may not go to work. He must gladden his *kalah* during this time. The *brochos* are recited as part of this joy. There is a Scriptural precedent for the seven days

of festivities, when Lavan tells Yaakov that he will not be able to marry Rachel before the seven days of festivities of his marriage to Leah are up. [See Kesubos 7a-8b, Psachim 102b, Sukah 25b, Megilah 23b, Poskim. Kalah Rabasi 1. Pirka dR' Eliezer 12, 16. Tur, Sh Ar EH 61-62, commentaries. Halochoscope VI:13 VIII:40.]

B) Participation of the choson and kallah

According to the prevailing *minhag*, the recitation of these *brochos* is connected specifically to the *bircas hamazon* of the *seuda*, rather than generally to the seven days of feasting. Accordingly, they may only be recited at a *seuda* that is made specifically in honor of the couple, and in their presence. The question arises, what if they do not participate personally? As mentioned, the *seuda* should be a bread based meal, in the company of guests, with at least ten men. Some of the *brochos* may be recited in the presence of less than ten men, and at a meal at which only three people are saying *bircas hamazon*. For the full seven *brochos*, seven of the ten must have eaten bread, requiring *bircas hamazon*. To be considered a *seuda* of the *choson*, he should be participating with them.

What if the *choson* and *kallah* do not eat at the *seuda*? A minority view maintains that the *sheva brochos* may be recited. The majority maintain that the *choson* must eat bread at the meal. It appears that the *kallah* must also eat there. What if they ate everything else in the meal, but not the bread? While it is not discussed, it seems that the majority does not accept this participation. It seems that bread is required to connect those present into a company that celebrates together. Perhaps one person reciting the introduction to *bircas hamazon* for them all is *kovai'a*, fixes all participants together at one meal.

Actually, the poskim debate whether these *brochos* are indeed connected to the *seuda* and *bircas hamazon*. In one view, they may be recited at any time there is a gathering in honor of the couple. While we do not follow this view, there is a remnant of this debate in the variant practices. Ashkenazim use two separate cups of wine, one for *bircas hamazon* and one for *sheva brochos*. Sephardim use one cup, although nowadays, many have opted to use two. According to some, this is based on whether the two are really connected. Another possible difference surfaces when the poskim debate whether the requirement of a new guest means that he must partake of the *seuda*, or whether it is sufficient for him to be present. Some hold that if three guests eat the meal and the remaining seven eat no bread, or do not eat at all, *sheva brochos* may still be recited. Apparently, it is possible to consider the gathering in their honor, even if it is not part of a larger meal. Nonetheless, the consensus is that the couple must partake of the bread meal.

To formalize a *zimun*, all participants must be able to share the same food. If one is eating dairy, and two are eating meat, he could clean his mouth and eat meat with them. However, if one may not eat meat, under doctor's orders, and his bread contains some milk, they cannot combine. The first could not eat their meat, for health reasons. The others could not eat his bread. [They would need to give him some of their parev bread.] In our case, for health reasons, the bride and groom could not participate by eating the bread at the *seuda*. This seems to make further complications, if bread is essential. [See Megilah 23b, Poskim. Tur, Sh Ar OC 196:3, EH 62:6-12, commentaries. Tzitz Eliezer XIII:99. Yabia Omer III:EH:11:9, VI:EH:9.]

C) Formalizing a seuda

A number of *mitzvos* require *seuda*. For example, there is the *mitzvah* to eat meals