

# V. BIRKAT HAMAZON

## BIRKAT HAMAZON: SOURCE

### Birkat HaMazon: Torah Source

The source of *birkat ha'mazon* is Deuteronomy/Devarim 8:10: You will eat and be satiated and bless Hashem, your God, for the good land that He gave you.

### Birkat HaMazon D'Rabanan: Rabbinic Source

Although the *mitzva d'oraita* is to thank God only when you are satiated from the meal, *chazal* decreed that we say *birkat ha'mazon* even when eating only the volume of a *k'zayit* and even if not satiated. So you must still say *birkat ha'mazon* after eating at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of bread within four minutes--even if you are not full. This is known as *birkat ha'mazon d'rabanan*.

## BIRKAT HAMAZON: HOW MUCH FOOD

### Eating Enough Bread To Say Birkat HaMazon

Say *birkat ha'mazon* if you ate a “meal” as defined by *halacha*—that is, if you ate at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of bread made of the *Five Grains* within four minutes.

**NOTE** If you didn't eat the minimal amounts within four minutes, don't say *birkat ha'mazon* (even if you washed and said *ha'motzi*).

### Eating Enough Mezonot To Say Birkat HaMazon

Say *birkat ha'mazon* after eating *mezonot* if it constituted a meal—that is, if you ate:

- The amount a person would eat for his/her dinner meal, OR
- *Mezonot* in addition to other foods that are normally eaten with bread in a quantity sufficient to be a normal dinner meal.

**NOTE** In either case, you must eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of *mezonot* made of the *Five Grains* within four minutes.

### Birkat HaMazon: If You Planned To Eat Minimum Amount of Bread and Did

Regardless of how much bread you plan to eat, if you eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) within four minutes, say *birkat ha'mazon*.

### Birkat HaMazon: If You Planned To Eat Minimum Amount of Bread and Did Not

If you planned to, but did not, eat a full meal:

- Do not say *al ha'michya* if you did not eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of foods baked from the *Five Grains* within four minutes--even if you had washed your hands and said *ha'motzi*.
- Do say the appropriate *bracha achrona* for any other foods of which you ate the minimum (1.3 fl. oz.--39 ml, or 1/6 cup) quantity within four minutes, even though you did not say an individual *bracha rishona* (since you were planning to

## BIRKAT HAMAZON: TIME LIMIT

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For time limits on *birkat ha'mazon*, see *After-Blessings (Bracha Achrona): Time Limits*.

## BIRKAT HAMAZON: LOCATION

### Birkat HaMazon: Location: Switching Seats

You should sit down for birkat ha'mazon, but you do not need to sit in your original seat. You may sit anywhere in the room in which you ate, even at a different table.

### **Birkat HaMazon: Location: Eating in Two Places--No Prior Intention**

#### **SITUATION**

- You said ha'motzi.
- Ate bread without planning to continue your meal elsewhere.
- Then changed your mind and wanted to eat at a second place.

**WHAT TO DO** The ideal practice is to:

- Say birkat ha'mazon where you are, and then
- Start a new meal--wash, make ha'motzi, and eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup)—of bread in the second place.

B'di'avad, it is OK to say birkat ha'mazon at the second place, but only if you also ate at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of bread at the second place (no additional washing or ha'motzi is needed).

### **Birkat HaMazon: Location: Eating in Two Places--Prior Intention**

Say birkat ha'mazon at either place if:

- You eat in one place, intending to continue your meal in another place, AND
- You ate at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of bread at either place.

**NOTE** If you intend to eat only a snack only at the second place, you do not need to say birkat ha'mazon before you go there; you only need to say whichever fore-blessings are required for the foods you will eat there. You must return to the first place to say birkat ha'mazon.

## **BIRKAT HAMAZON: MAYIM ACHRONIM**

### **Mayim Achronim a Custom?**

Many people have the custom of using mayim achronim (water to wash hands after a meal). But according to some opinions, to do so is not required by Jewish law.

**NOTE** According to most opinions, women do not wash with mayim achronim.

## **BIRKAT HAMAZON: MEZUMAN AND MINYAN**

### **Birkat HaMazon: Reason for Mezuman**

Saying birkat ha'mazon with a mezuman (or a minyan) is important since it gives honor to God.

### **Birkat HaMazon: Seating for Minyan or Mezuman**

You may join with other men to make a minyan or mezuman (a mezuman is any group of 3 or more Jewish men 13 years old or older and so a minyan is also a kind of mezuman) for birkat ha'mazon if, while you are eating:

- You can see any other tables at which the other men are eating, or
- You had the same waiter as the other men, even if you could not see the rest of the group (such as in an L-shaped room).

### **Birkat HaMazon: Eating for Mezuman**

Say birkat ha'mazon as a mezuman if:

- You don't have enough men for a minyan (see above), AND
- Two men wash, said ha'motzi, and ate bread, AND
- One or more other men ate any food other than water and salt.

**NOTE** If the three men's eating overlapped in time with each other, they MAY say birkat ha'mazon with a mezuman.

If the three men began eating at the same time, they MUST say birkat ha'mazon with a mezuman.

### **Birkat HaMazon: Eating for Minyan**

You may say birkat ha'mazon with a minyan if:

- At least seven men washed, said ha'motzi, and ate bread, with
- Enough other men who ate some food (anything other than water or salt) to total 10 men.

**NOTE** If the 10 men's eating overlapped in time with each other, they MAY say birkat ha'mazon with a minyan.

If the 10 men began eating at the same time, they MUST say birkat ha'mazon with a minyan.

### **Birkat HaMazon: Women's Mezuman and Minyan**

Women (even if 10 or more) do not make a minyan, only a mezuman. So do not say the birkat ha'mazon's minyan introduction but simply say the mezuman introduction if:

- 10 or more women ate together, without men present;
- At least two women washed, said ha'motzi, and ate bread; AND
- At least one more woman ate some type of food.

**NOTE** Women are never required to make a mezuman. So when three women are eating together and no men are present, they may say birkat ha'mazon as a mezuman but they are not required to do so.

### **Birkat HaMazon: Until When To Join Mezuman**

You may join a mezuman by eating any food (except water and salt) up until the leader says "rabotai nevareich."

### **Birkat HaMazon: How To Join Mezuman and Continue Eating**

To join a mezuman and continue eating:

- 1) Reply to "rabotai nevareich," etc.,
- 2) Say amen after the leader says the first paragraph's final blessing, and then
- 3) Finish eating and say birkat ha'mazon on your own.

### **Birkat HaMazon: How Many Men Needed for Baruch Hu U'Varuch Shemo**

Say baruch hu u'varuch shemo before birkat ha'mazon even if only three men are present; you don't need a minyan.

**NOTE** Only the leader (mezamein) says this, not the other two men.

### **Birkat HaMazon: Standing Up to Honor God**

Stand up a little to honor God when you say God's name in the introduction (nevareich eloheinu) if you ate with 10 men. This is a non-binding custom, not a halacha.

## **BIRKAT HAMAZON: TABLE**

## **BIRKAT HAMAZON: KNIVES ON TABLE**

### **Birkat HaMazon: Covering Knife on Shabbat**

You do not need to cover or remove a knife on the table before saying birkat ha'mazon on Shabbat.

### **Birkat HaMazon: Covering Knife on Weekdays**

Cover or remove a sharp knife from the table on weekdays before saying birkat ha'mazon. This is a non-binding custom, not a halacha.

## **BIRKAT HAMAZON: BREAD ON TABLE**

### **Birkat HaMazon: Replacing Bread**

Place the bread back onto the table before saying birkat ha'mazon if the bread had been removed during the meal. This is a non-binding custom, not a halacha.

NOTE This is true for any meal, not just for Shabbat.

## **BIRKAT HAMAZON: WHEN TO REPEAT**

### **Birkat HaMazon: When To Repeat If Forgot Additions**

When saying birkat ha'mazon, you must repeat birkat ha'mazon if you forgot:

- Retzei on the first two meals of Shabbat.
- Ya'aleh v'yavo on the first two meals of any Jewish festival day (women only repeat if they forgot it at the Passover seder).

Never repeat birkat ha'mazon if you forgot additions for:

- Rosh Hashana (during the daytime) or
- Rosh Chodesh.

## **BIRKAT HAMAZON: ALTERNATE WORDINGS**

### **BA'ALAT HABAYIT HAZEH**

#### **Ba'alat HaBayit HaZeh: Woman Head of Household**

Say ba'alat ha'bayit ha'zeh if the head of the household is a woman.

### **BRACHA MERUBA BABAYIT HAZEH**

#### **Bracha Meruba BaBayit HaZeh: Inside Jewish Home**

Say bracha meruba ba'bayit ha'zeh only when eating in a house or apartment that is occupied by a Jewish family or a Jewish owned public building.

#### **Bracha Meruba BaBayit HaZeh: Outside Jewish Home**

If eating outside a Jewish home, including when eating outdoors, say (instead of bracha meruba...):  
Ha'rachaman hu yishlach lanu bracha meruba b'halichateinu uv'yeshivateinu ad olam.

## **MIGDOL OR MAGDIL**

### **Birkat HaMazon on Musaf Days: Migdol or Magdil**

Say migdol (yeshuot) on days when we say musaf (on other days, say magdil).

### **Birkat HaMazon Once Shabbat Ends: Migdol or Magdil**

When saying birkat ha'mazon after Shabbat until halachic midnight (chatzot), say migdol, not magdil.

NOTE This also applies to birkat ha'mazon after Jewish festivals or Rosh Chodesh--all days when we say musaf.

## **VE'AL SHULCHAN ZEH SHEACHALNU ALAV**

### **Ve'al Shulchan Zeh SheAchalnu Alav When Alone**

Say she'achalnu (in the plural) even if you are alone.

### **Ve'al Shulchan Zeh SheAchalnu Alav If No Table**

Skip ve'al shulchan zeh she'achalnu alav if there is no table.

## **YA'ALEH V'YAVO**

### **If You Forgot Ya'aleh V'Yavo**

#### **SITUATION**

You forgot to say *ya'aleh v'yavo* in *birkat ha'mazon* for a meal that you were required to eat on a Jewish festival.

#### **WHAT TO DO**

If you have already begun the fourth blessing, you must repeat the entire *birkat ha'mazon*. If you have not yet said the fourth blessing, you may say a special addition that appears in many *siddurim*.