

RECITING SHEVA BERACHOS: WHEN AND WHERE PART 2

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Sheva Berachos are recited only after a meal which requires Birkas ha-Mazon and in which Elokeinu is recited when the zimun takes place.[1] Therefore:

- At least ten adult males, including the chasan, must be present and partake of the meal.
- At least seven people must eat a k'zayis of bread.[2]
- The remaining three men do not have to eat bread but must eat at least a k'zayis of any food, or drink a revi'is[3] (approximately 3 fl. oz.) of any beverage except water.[4] [These three people do not have to be present throughout the meal. As long as they ate or drank at any time during the meal[5], even if they ate or drank when the other seven were no longer eating[6], zimun with Elokeinu and Sheva Berachos are recited.]
- Both the chasan and kallah must be present at the meal. Even if they arrive late and miss much of the meal, they are considered as present for the meal. If they did not eat bread, Sheva Berachos should not be recited.[7] If the chasan and kallah must leave before Birkas ha-Mazon, some poskim hold that Sheva Berachos are omitted, while others require them to be recited[8].
- If there will not be a minyan without him, a mourner may be counted as one of the ten men required for Sheva Berachos[9].

The requirement of panim chadashos

Sheva Berachos cannot take place unless at least one[10] of the adult male participants is a panim chadashos, literally, "a new face"; i.e., he was not present at the wedding dinner or at a previous Sheva Berachos for this couple. If a panim chadashos is not present, Sheva Berachos are not recited, but the final blessing, asher bara, is[11].

Preferably, the panim chadashos should make ha-motzi and remain for the entire meal. If that is difficult to arrange, he may partake of anything served at the meal.[12] According to many poskim, even if he did not eat at all, and even if he came after the meal was over but before the Sheva Berachos were recited, he can still qualify as a panim chadashos[13]. Whether or not the panim chadashos must be present when the Sheva Berachos are recited is a matter of dispute: Some poskim hold that if he partook of the meal but left early the Sheva Berachos are not recited[14], while others are not particular about it[15].

When Sheva Berachos take place at either one of the first two meals of Shabbos or Yom Tov (both days), there is no need for an additional panim chadashos. We consider the Shabbos and Yom Tov

themselves to be eminent "guests" who fulfill the role of panim chadashos[16]. For the third meal[17] (seudah shelishis), panim chadashos are required unless formal divrei Torah will be delivered[18] at the meal.[19]

Who is considered a panim chadashos?

According to some opinions, a panim chadashos is more than just a "new face"; rather, it is a person whose presence adds a new dimension to the celebration.[20] Accordingly, a panim chadashos should be a person who is well-known to the chasan or kallah or their parents, and whose presence adds to the degree of simchah. Alternatively, a panim chadashos could be a dignitary or a respected talmid chacham whose distinguished presence enhances the meal even though he is not a personal friend of the couple or their families.[21] But if such a person is not available, any acquaintance may be called upon to serve as a panim chadashos, provided that he is not a complete stranger[22].

A panim chadashos is a person who did not participate in any part of a previous meal that was held to celebrate this couple's marriage. Therefore:

- If he was present at the chupah but not at the wedding meal, he can still be counted as a panim chadashos.
- If he ate at a previous Sheva Berachos meal but had to leave before Sheva Berachos were recited, he can no longer qualify as a panim chadashos.
- If he heard the Sheva Berachos recited at the wedding meal or at a previous Sheva Berachos meal, even though he did not partake of the meal, he can no longer qualify as a panim chadashos.[23]

Reciting Sheva Berachos

There are three opinions concerning who may recite Sheva Berachos. Some hold that only those who ate bread may do so[24]. Others allow anyone who ate anything at all, even if he ate no bread, to recite Sheva Berachos[25]. Still others hold that even one who ate nothing at all may be honored with reciting a berachah[26].

The chasan should not be honored with any of the Sheva Berachos[27].

Some poskim hold that the fourth, fifth and sixth berachos should be recited by one person and not divided among three people.[28] The custom, however, follows the opinions who hold that all of the berachos may be split up among the participants. It is proper that anyone honored with a berachah pay careful attention [and remain silent] while all of the other berachos are recited[29].

1. While there are various opinions on this issue (some hold that it is sufficient to have just three people eating bread), the common practice today - based on safek berachos l'hakel - is as stated above.

2. Or enough cake that would require Birkas ha-Mazon. See The Weekly Halachah Discussion, pgs. 478-480, for details.
3. B'diavad, even rov revi'is (1.6 fl. oz.) is sufficient.
4. Mishnah Berurah 197:12. Some poskim equate soda and lemonade with water while others hold that they qualify as a "beverage"; see Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 130, who quotes both views.
5. "Any time" means before the participants decide not to eat any more or before they wash for mayim acharonim; Rama O.C. 197:1 and Beur Halachah (s.v. matzu).
6. Many people assume that a zimun necessitates eating together - the participants must actually eat together at least a bit, either in the beginning or at the end of a meal. The halachah is clear, however, that as long as the meal is still in progress and the participants could eat (even a morsel of food; Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 197:2), even though they are no longer actually eating anything, there is a zimun.
7. Tzitz Eliezer 13:99; Yabia Omer 6:9. See dissenting opinion in Sova Semachos 1:19.
8. See the various views in Ha-Nisuin k'Hilchasam 14:87 and in Yismach Lev, pg. 338 and 381.
9. Rav Akiva Eiger (Y.D. 391). He may also qualify as a panim chadashos; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Pnei Baruch, pg. 459).
10. According to some opinions two panim chadashos are required (Ben Ish Chai, Shoftim 15, based on the view of the Rambam). Many Sephardim follow this view (Yabia Omer 3:11).
11. E.H. 62:7.
12. Based on Sova Semachos 1:9.
13. Rama, E.H. 62:7; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 149:5; Rav N. Karelitz (Chut Shani, Ribbis, pg. 185). Sephardim should not rely on this leniency.
14. Sova Semachos 1:12 quoting several poskim.
15. Rav M. Feinstein and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Yismach Lev, pg. 245. 16. According to many poskim, seudas Purim, too, is considered a panim chadashos.
17. Even on Yom Tov (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 56, note 38).
18. Preferably, the divrei Torah should be said by the chasan (Chochmas Adam 129:5), but if he cannot, then any formal drashah of divrei Torah is sufficient (based on Aruch ha-Shulchan 62:30).
19. E.H. 62:8. Note that divrei Torah may be used as a substitute for panim chadashos only for seudah shelishis. During the week, or at any additional meal on Shabbos or Yom Tov (beyond the mandatory three meals), panim chadashos are required.

20. E.H. 62:8.
21. Rav M. Feinstein (Oholei Yeshurun 4:2).
22. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 149:5; Sova Semachos 1:7.
23. Sova Semachos 1:11.
24. Yabia Omer 3:11; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 12:6).
25. Rav M. Feinstein (Oholei Yeshurun 5:9), Rav Y. Teitelbaum (quoted in Be'er Moshe 2:118), and other poskim.
26. Sova Semachos 4, note 74, quoting Rav E.Y. Finkel. Many people conduct themselves according to this lenient view (ibid., note 72). See also Minchas Shlomo 3:103:21 and Nefesh ha-Rav, pg. 257.
27. Minchas Yitzchak 3:114.
28. Sha'arei Efrayim, Pischei She'arim 9:19; Har Tzvi, O.C. 44. This is because the fifth and sixth berachos do not begin with the words Baruch Atah... which makes them a berachah ha-smuchah l'chaverta.
29. Igros Moshe, E.H. 1:94; Tzitz Eliezer 6:2; Sova Semachos 1:44.

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