

THE FIVE AFTER-BLESSINGS (BRACHA ACHRONA) GENERAL RULES

I. AL HAMICHYA

AL HAMICHYA: TYPE AND VOLUME OF FOODS

Al HaMichya: Eating Enough

Say al ha'michya after eating at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of non-bread foods baked from the Five Grains (wheat, rye, oats, barley, or spelt) within four minutes.

Al HaMichya: Eating Enough Pie To Say

Say al ha'michya if you ate a total volume of crust + filling of at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) or more within four minutes--even if the total mezonot-based crust you eat is less than 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup).

Al HaMichya: Or Birkat HaMazon

Say birkat ha'mazon instead of al ha'michya if you ate enough bread-like foods (mezonot) or bread-like food combinations (such as crackers with tuna salad) to be the volume of your normal biggest meal of the day. This is true even if:

- You had not planned to have a meal (for example, you planned to eat only one slice of pizza but then ate two more), and
- Did not wash your hands before the meal.

AL HAMICHYA: DOUBT

Al HaMichya: Doubt If You Said

Don't say al ha'michya after eating mezonot if you are not certain whether you said it or not.

Al HaMichya: Doubt If 72 Minutes Have Passed

SITUATION You ate some mezonot. It might be more than 72 minutes since you finished eating but you are not certain.

WHAT TO DO Doubt about a blessing (safek bracha) does not get a blessing.

NOTE You may not eat one of the Five Special Fruits in order to say the after-blessing of al ha'eitz and include al ha'michya. You could eat fruit and say the al ha'eitz blessing, but you may not include mezonot food in the blessing by adding al ha'michya.

AL HAMICHYA: FORGETTING V'ZACHREINU L'TOVA

Al HaMichya: Forgetting To Add V'Zachreinu L'Tova

Don't repeat al ha'michya on Rosh Chodesh if you forget to add v'zachreinu l'tova....

II. AL HAGAFEN

AL HAGAFEN: TYPE AND VOLUME OF DRINK

Al HaGafen: Drinking Enough Wine/Grape Juice To Say After-Blessing

Say al ha'gafen after drinking at least a revi'it (3.3 fl. oz., or 99 ml) of wine (or grape juice) within 30 seconds.

Al HaGafen: Covering SheHakol Drink

If you drank at least 3.3 fl. oz. (99 ml) of grape juice or wine water within 30 seconds and then drank some water or another beverage, saying the after-blessing of al ha'gafen on the wine/grape juice covers the water or other beverage.

AL HAGAFEN: WHICH BLESSING ENDING

Al HaGafen: Al Pri HaGafen or Al Pri Gafna

After drinking wine made from grapes grown in Eretz Yisrael (regardless of where you are physically located when you drink the wine), end the after-blessing with al ha'aretz ve'al pri gafna instead of al ha'aretz ve'al pri ha'gafen.

III. AL HA'EITZ

INTRODUCTION TO AL HA'EITZ

Al Ha'Eitz: Type and Volumes of Fruits

Say the after-blessing of al ha'eitz after eating at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup), within four minutes, of the Five Special Fruits:

- Olive,
- Date,
- Grape,
- Fig,
- Pomegranate.

NOTE The after-blessing of al ha'eitz also covers any non-special fruits that you ate while eating the Five Special Fruits.

SITUATION You ate at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) within four minutes of the Five Special Fruits, such as figs, and any amount of non-special fruits, such as walnuts, at about the same time.

WHAT TO DO Say:

- Fore-blessing of borei pri ha'eitz, and
- After-blessing of al ha'eitz.

AL HA'EITZ: FIGURING VOLUME

Al Ha'Eitz: Figuring Volume: Eating Special and Non-Special Fruits Sequentially

You may not eat non-special fruits sequentially with or even interspersed with the Five Special Fruits in order to make the minimum volume for saying the after-blessing of al ha'eitz.

SITUATION You ate a date and then ate the remainder of 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of cherries.

WHAT TO DO Say:

- Fore-blessing of borei pri ha'eitz over the date (and cherries).
- After-blessing of borei nefashot on all the fruits.

Al Ha'Eitz: Figuring Volume: Eating Special and Non-Special Fruits As a Unit

The volume of special and non-special fruits DO combine for the after-blessing if:

- They are considered to be one food, AND
- The main component is the Special Fruit.

SITUATION You eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) within four minutes of dates stuffed with almonds.

WHAT TO DO

Say the after-blessing of al ha'eitz over both types of fruits.

Al Ha'Eitz: Figuring Volume: Eating Special Fruits Mixed with Other Foods

SITUATION You say borei pri ha'eitz and eat a few olives, but less than 1.3 fl. oz. Then, you say borei pri ha'adama and eat lettuce mixed with enough olives to constitute the minimum volume when combined with the first olives. You eat them all within four minutes. It is time to say the after-blessing.

WHAT TO DO You may not combine all the olives in order to say the after-blessing of al ha'eitz unless the olives remain distinct from the lettuce and you continue to eat them separately. Say borei nefashot after finishing eating as long as the total food eaten was at least 1.3 fl. oz.

AL HA'EITZ: VE'AL HAPEIROT OR VE'AL PEIROTEHA

Al Ha'Eitz Ve'al HaPeirot or Ve'al Peiroteha

SITUATION You ate some of the Five Special Fruits and they were grown in Eretz Yisrael.

WHAT TO DO End the after-blessing al ha'eitz with al ha'aretz ve'al peiroteha instead of ve'al ha'peirot.

IV. BOREI NEFASHOT

BOREI NEFASHOT: TYPE AND VOLUME OF FOODS

Borei Nefashot: Minimum Requirements

Say borei nefashot after:

- Eating at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of non-mezonot food or non-special fruits within four minutes, OR
- Drinking at least 3.3 fl. oz. (99 ml) of non-grape juice drinks or wine within 30 seconds.

Borei Nefashot: Special Cases: Popcorn

To say the after-blessing on popcorn, you only need to eat a few popped kernels as long as in the popped state they fill 1 fl. oz. (30 ml).

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

Birkat HaMazon: Time Limit

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.