

## Q&A From the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

*Bentch* Warrant  
Rav Aryeh Finkel  
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**Q** When attending a *simcha*, I usually eat bread. If I'm short on time, must I wait for the *zimun*?

**A** Chazal instituted *birkas hazimun*, and one who eats a meal together with two or more people is obligated to participate. He may not *bentch* privately and miss the *birkas hazimun* (Shulchan Aruch O.C 193:1).



The Bach (O.C. 200:2), against virtually all other *poskim*, maintains that the *zimun* obligation is incurred only when the group meal ends, so one may recite *birkas hamazon* privately so long as the others' meal is still in session. The Mishnah Brurah (ibid. 5) writes that one may not rely on this lenient ruling except in circumstances like a great financial loss, not just for convenience.

The Mishnah Brurah (193:19) also says that one who arrived late and did not begin the meal with the others may rely on the Bach, but he notes in Sha'ar Hatziyun (ibid. 17) that *lechatchilah* he should wait for the *zimun*. Igros Moshe (O.C. 1:56) infers from a ruling of the Rama that if one stipulates before a meal that he does not intend to join with the other participants, he may *bentch* early, even if he is fully engaged with the others during the meal. But R' Moshe says that this device should only be employed in case of need.