

A Study Guide for
Birkat Hamazon and Zimmun
For Meals that Do Not Include Bread From the Five Species of Grain
Study Guide Prepared by Rabbi Pamela Barmash
Version 1.2

Tools for teaching this teshuvah (be sure to make sure that everyone at your teaching sessions has the following):

1. Copy of the teshuvah and/or the source sheet (appended to the end of this study guide)
2. Siddur¹ or bencher

Web Address for Teshuvah

<<https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/Birkat%20hamazon%20final%20Oct%202016.pdf>>

The She'eilah (question asked to a rabbi or a panel of rabbis and answered with a teshuvah, a responsum)

1. Do those who have eaten a main meal that includes bread not made from the traditional five species of grain recite Birkat Hamazon (grace after meals)? Do those who have eaten a main meal that does not include bread of any kind recite Birkat Hamazon?
2. Which berakhah is recited before eating non-gluten bread?
3. May those who are refraining from eating gluten products be counted in the quorum needed for zimmun (the communal invitation to Birkat Hamazon)? May they lead zimmun?

Essential questions

1. Why do we recite Birkat Hamazon at all? If we say a berakhah before eating, what reasons are there for reciting Birkat Hamazon after a meal? Why recite a berakhah either before or after a meal at all?
2. What value is there in reciting Birkat Hamazon together with the people with whom we have eaten? What are the spiritual values in praying as an individual and in praying as part of a group?
3. How do the teshuvot of the CJLS express our spiritual values and ethical ideals?

Definitions

teshuvah (plural teshuvot) -- a formal answer written by a rabbi to a question, a responsum

Birkat Hamazon -- Grace After Meals

Zimmun -- the communal invitation to Birkat Hamazon

the five species of grain -- traditionally identified as wheat, oats, barley, spelt, and rye.

berakhah -- blessing

halakhah -- Jewish practice and law

¹Birkat Hamazon is found in *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat, Festivals, and Weekdays*, pp. 754-769, with an abbreviated version, pp. 778-780; *Siddur Sim Shalom for Weekdays*, pp. 230-236, with an abbreviated version, pp. 237-240; *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, pp. 337-343, with an abbreviated version, pp. 344-348; *Siddur Lev Shalem*, pp. 87-93, with an abbreviated version, pp. 94-96.

sugya -- passage in the Talmud
 netilat yadayim -- ritual washing of hands

Setting the Stage/Background

What is a teshuvah?

Why does a rabbi write a teshuvah?

What is the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly?

Introduction: Why Recite Birkat Hamazon?

Study questions:

1. Why do we recite berakhot at all?

Study **Source 1**.

Why does Rabbi Barmash begin with the observation by Rabbi Reiss Medwed?
 (Hint: in order to frame our meals in a spiritual way)

2. Why do we recite Birkat Hamazon?

a. Look at Birkat Hamazon in a siddur or bencher.

b. When do we recite Birkat Hamazon?

c. What are its themes?

d. Why are the berakhot before eating brief, and why is Birkat Hamazon a longer, more developed, set of berakhot?

3. If we recite a berakhah before eating, what reasons are there for reciting Birkat Hamazon after a meal? Why recite a berakhah either before or after a meal at all?

What Prompted This Teshuvah?

1. More people are eating a gluten free diet, either because they have an allergy or intolerance for gluten.

2. Our diets have become more multicultural, and bread is no longer the mainstay of meals.

3. Traditionally, Birkat Hamazon is recited only in meals that have bread with gluten. Is never or rarely reciting Birkat Hamazon just a minor problem?

4. Birkat Hamazon has a theological agenda, dependence upon God in general and our relationship to the spiritual centers of our lives.

First berakhah, bounty of the earth

Second berakhah, Land of Israel

Third berakhah, Jerusalem

Fourth berakhah, divine goodness

plus more liturgy

5. Although there are other liturgical passages said after a meal, only Birkat Hamazon is said after a complete meal, with a complete set of berakhot and in a communal experience. Additions are made if there are three reciting Birkat Hamazon together. Other additions if there are ten and if there are one hundred reciting Birkat Hamazon together.

6. Otherwise, we never praise God for our bounty in community

7. This teshuvah is a window into how we do halakhah. We will study the sources for Birkat Hamazon and why we recite it.

8. We see halakhic evolution faithful to the past and responsive to our contemporary lives and how this teshuvah is shaped by our spiritual values.

The Practice Until Now

For a meal that includes bread baked from wheat, rye, barley, oat or spelt flour:

1. We begin with netilat yadayim (ritual handwashing).
2. We recite בְּרַכַּת הַלֶּחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ, the blessing over bread, which serves as the master berakhah for meal.
3. We conclude with Birkat Hamazon.

For a meal that does not include bread baked from wheat, rye, barley, oat or spelt flour:

1. We begin with a berakhah over different foods
 - Fruit: בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ, Creator of the fruit of the tree
 - Vegetables: בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה, Creator of the fruit of the earth
 - Dairy or meat שֶׁהַכֹּל נַחִיָּה בְּדַבְּרוֹ that all exists through God's utterance
 - Non-bread (crackers, non-gluten bread) and grains (like rice, quinoa, etc.): בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מְזֻנּוֹת, Creator of a variety of foods.
2. We conclude with berakhah aharonah or berakhah borei nefashot.

The Biblical Source for Birkat Hamazon

Source 2, from Deuteronomy, suggests that the reason for reciting Birkat Hamazon is satiety.

Question #1: *Do those who have eaten a main meal that includes bread not made from the traditional five species of grain recite Birkat Hamazon (grace after meals)? Do those who have eaten a main meal that does not include bread of any kind recite Birkat Hamazon?*

Source 3: Maimonides (Spain, Egypt, 1135-1204), Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Berakhot, 1:1-2

It is a positive mitzvah from the Torah to recite a blessing after eating food, as it says "When you have eaten and are satiated, you will bless the LORD your God..." (Deut 8:10), and one is obligated only if one is satiated. It is only from (the ruling of) the scribes (the religious leaders before the rabbis) that one recites a blessing afterward if one has eaten the equivalent of an olive, and it is only from (the ruling of) the scribes that one recites a blessing before eating any food and then enjoys it...and it is only from (the ruling of) the scribes that one recites a blessing after eating any food or consuming any drink....

What does Maimonides point out as the source for the blessing after food?

What does Maimonides point out as the source for the other blessings.

Does the biblical text specify a quantity of food?

Do the rabbis determine a quantity of food after which one must recite a berakhah?

Source 4: Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Berakhot, 3:11

Any (food) for which one recites the blessing בְּרַכַּת הַלֶּחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ before (eating), one recites Birkat Hamazon afterwards. Any (food) for which one recites the

blessing ברוך מיני מזונות before (eating), one recites berakhah aḥaronah afterwards, except for rice.

What rule does Maimonides offer for reciting Birkat Hamazon?

What other berakhot can be recited after a meal? Berakhah aḥaronah,² and the berakhah borei nefashot³ - how are they different from Birkat Hamazon?

Why does Maimonides mention rice? (Hint: it is the major grain eaten in his time which is not among the five species of grain)

Source 5. Rabbi Joseph Caro (Spain, Israel, 1488-1575), Kesef Mishnah on Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Berakhot, 1:2

Rabbi Caro makes a complex argument, so divide this source in smaller units.

Part 1: One can observe by making fine distinctions that our teacher wrote that it is a mitzvah from the Torah that one must recite Birkat Hamazon after eating food, including all types of food, except for water and salt, as it is taught at the beginning of chapter 3 of tractate Eruvin (27a), and if so, how can he say after this that it is only from (the ruling of) the scribes that one recites a blessing after eating any food or consuming any drink since it would appear that this is already included in what is written in the Torah.

Rabbi Caro points to a passage in the Talmud that seems to rule that one says Birkat Hamazon after any food, except for water and salt. If this is the case, how can Maimonides think that saying Birkat Hamazon was decreed by the scribes?

Part 2: One can say that since the verse “When you have eaten and are satiated, you will bless the LORD your God...” appears after the verse “a land of wheat and barley,” we can argue that the Torah obliges us to bless only (after eating) the seven species of food mentioned specifically in that verse, just as claimed in Sefer Mitzvot Gadol (Rabbi Moshe Coucy) in the name of Halakhot Gedolot (Rav Yehudai Gaon).

How does Rabbi Caro answer his own objection? (Hint: since two verses are near each other, they are supposed to explain each other. Here, the verse that is the source for Birkat Hamazon is preceded by a verse that mentions the seven species considered the special bounty of the Land of Israel. Therefore, Birkat Hamazon should be recited after consuming any of the seven species.)

²Berakhah aḥaronah, also known as berakhah aḥat me-ein shalosh, is found in *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat, Festivals, and Weekdays*, pp. 782-784; *Siddur Sim Shalom for Weekdays*, pp. 248-249; *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, pp. 349-350; *Siddur Lev Shalem*, p. 97.

³The berakhah borei nefashot is found in *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat, Festivals, and Weekdays*, p. 784; *Siddur Sim Shalom for Weekdays*, p. 249; *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, p. 350; *Siddur Lev Shalem*, p. 97.

Part 3: Accordingly, what our teacher (Maimonides) wrote that “it is a positive mitzvah from the Torah to recite a blessing after eating food,” he meant it only for the seven species of Land of Israel, but he should have said that the reason is that (those species) yield more nutrition than other foods. In any case, it is problematic that if this is what he meant, our teacher (Maimonides) should have quoted “a land of wheat and barley...When you have eaten and are satiated, you will bless the LORD your God...”

How does Rabbi Caro refute the suggestion he made in Part 3? (Hint: if Maimonides meant only the seven species, he should have pointed it out and quoted the verse mentioning the seven species. Note that Caro is re-writing Maimonides, who never said what Caro claims.)

What new rationale for reciting Birkat Hamazon after eating the seven species does Rabbi Caro mention? (Note that Caro is giving a rationalization for why the seven species might be the reason for saying Birkat Hamazon.)

Part 4: Therefore, it seems to me that our teacher (Maimonides) observed by making fine distinctions in the language of the Tosefta, “Our rabbis taught: Where is the source for Birkat Hamazon in the Torah? (The source is) as it is written, When you have eaten and are satiated, you will bless the LORD your God...,” it was clear to him that this was meant to apply to five species of grain (and not the seven species of the Land of Israel), since he based his ruling on (the words) “and are satiated.” No food satiates like the five species of grain.

What is Caro’s basic reason for Birkat Hamazon?

What lies behind Rabbi Caro’s argument? (Hint: he is extrapolating from the biblical verse that specifically says that one blesses when one is satiated. He is speculating based on his own reasoning. Centuries of rabbis tried to figure out the rationale behind rabbinic sources. He does not bring in a doctor’s opinion. Our reasoning for the concepts behind a mitzvah is crucial. He is rationally determining what satiety is.

Source 6. Rabbi Joseph Karo, Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim, 155:2

Before one goes to the beit midrash (house of study), one should eat morning bread if one is used to doing so, and it is good that this be one’s custom.

What does Karo make this suggestion?

Source 7. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 35b

The fact is that wine does both: it satiates and makes cheerful, whereas bread satiates but does not make cheerful. If that is the case, let us say Birkat Hamazon after it? (The reason why Birkat Hamazon is not said after wine is that) people do not make it the basis of the meal. Rav Nahman bar Isaac asked Rava: Suppose a person makes it the basis of his meal, what then? He replied: When Elijah comes, he will tell us whether it can really serve as a basis. Now, at any rate, no one thinks of such a thing.

What new criterion for Birkat Hamazon is introduced in this source?

Source 8. Mishnah, Berakhot 6:8

If one ate grapes, figs, or pomegranates, one recites Birkat Hamazon, according to Rabban Gamaliel. But the sages say, berakhah aḥaronah.

Rabbi Akiva says: Even if one ate פְּלִקָּה (a boiled vegetable) for one's main food, one must recite Birkat Hamazon afterwards.

Why does Rabbi Akiva stipulate that one says Birkat Hamazon even over a vegetable?
What is his reasoning?

Why does Rabbi Barmash include this source?

Source 9. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 44b

Is there a kind of boiled vegetable from which one can make a meal? Rav Ashi replied: The rule applies to the stalk of cabbage.

Why does Rabbi Barmash include this source?

Rabbi Barmash integrates two criteria, the principle of satiety from the Torah and Rabbi Akiva's principle that a main meal can consist of foods other than the five grains. Does this make her position stronger?

Rabbi Barmash's rule based on satiety means that the quantity of food varies for each person. Is this a clear enough rule?

Question #2: What Berakhah Should be Recited Before Eating Non-Gluten Bread?

What berakhah is recited over bread from the five species of grain?

What berakhah is recited for bread made from rice flour? בורא מיני מזונות

What berakhah is recited for bread made from potato starch? בורא פרי האדמה.

Why does Rabbi Barmash write "Some may wish follow to another line of reasoning." rather than argue unequivocally?

Source 10. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 42a

*Rav Judah gave a wedding feast for his son in the house of Rabbi Judah bar Haviva. They set before the guests פת הבאה בכיסנין. He came in and heard them saying the berakhah מן הארץ לחם. He said to them: What is this chirping that I hear? Are you perhaps saying the berakhah מן הארץ לחם? They replied: Yes, we are, since it has been taught: Rabbi Muna said in the name of Rabbi Judah: Over פת הבאה בכיסנין, the berakhah מן הארץ לחם is said; and Samuel said that the halakhah is as stated by Rabbi Muna. He said to them: (You have misspoken. In fact, what was taught was) the halakhah is **not** as stated by Rabbi Muna. They said to him: Is it not the Master himself who has said in the name of Samuel that bread rolls may be used for an eruv, and the berakhah said over them is מן הארץ לחם? [He replied]: There [we speak] of a different case, namely, where they (the bread rolls) designate a main meal (i.e. serve as the*

basis of a main meal); but if they do not designate a main meal, this does not apply.

What story is narrated here?

Why does Rav Judah object to the guests' practice?

How do the guests object to Rav Judah's correction?

How does Rav Judah correct them a second time?

How is this significant for which berakhah should be recited over non-gluten bread?

Question #3: *May a person who has not eaten bread with gluten be counted in the requisite number needed for zimmun? May that person serve as the prayer-leader for zimmun (and Birkat Hamazon)?*

What is Zimmun, the formal invitation to recite Birkat Hamazon together?

Source 11: Rabbi Yosef Caro, Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 197:3

There are those who say that an olive's worth of grain is sufficient (for zimmun), even if it is not bread. And there are those who say that even with vegetable or any foodstuff, it is sufficient. Therefore if two ate, and a third comes along, if they want to force him to eat an olive's worth of bread, it is better. But if he does not want to, they should not give him to drink or to eat a different food. And if it happens that they gave him drink or a different food, they should do zimmun with him even if he didn't want to eat bread.

What does this source demonstrate?

If we expect a person to recite Birkat Hamazon even if she or he has not eaten bread with gluten, what is the logical consequence of that expectation for whether that person can serve as prayer-leader for Zimmun (and Birkat Hamazon)?

Additional Question: *Would a person eating a main meal according to the definition of a main meal advocated in this teshuvah also have to perform netilat yadayim?*

What is netilat yadayim?

Source 12. Rabbi Yehiel Michel Halevi Epstein, Arukh Hashulhan, Orah Hayyim, 158:1

The sages ordained that the hands must be rinsed when one wants to eat bread, as we learn in Hagigah 18b: "The hands are to be rinsed for unconsecrated food, the tithe, and terumah." It is explained in the Gemara that this applies to eating unconsecrated food and to touching terumah because hands can cause impurity at two removes, while terumah can cause impurity at three removes, and the (sages) required hand washing when eating unconsecrated food in order to acquire the habit of washing for terumah, as Hullin 106a: "If they do not habituate themselves to wash their hands before eating unconsecrated food, they will come

to follow the habit of not washing their hands for terumah.” They were not stringent (in requiring it) for touching unconsecrated food because it seemed sufficient to acquire the habit when eating unconsecrated food (and not necessary when touching unconsecrated food)....

When is netilat yadayim (ritual washing) required?

What is terumah? Who had the right to eat it?

Rabbi Barmash writes: *Ritual washing was limited to those eating bread and was not extended to touching any other unconsecrated food product. There is no reason to extend the practice prompted by hand impurity to other foods beyond bread made from the five species of grain when terumah no longer exists.* What is her reason for not requiring hand washing for foods other than bread (with gluten)?

Source Sheet for the Study Guide for
Birkat Hamazon and Zimmun
For Meals that Do Not Include Bread From the Five Species of Grain

<https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/Birkat%20hamazon%20final%20Oct%20202016.pdf>

The She'eilah (question asked to a rabbi or a panel of rabbis and answered with a teshuvah, a responsum)

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2. Which berakhah is recited before eating non-gluten bread?
3. May those who are refraining from eating gluten products be counted in the quorum needed for zimmun (the communal invitation to Birkat Hamazon)? May they lead zimmun?

Source 1. Rabbi Karen G. Reiss Medwed, "Prayer," *The Observant Life: The Wisdom of Conservative Judaism for Contemporary Jews* (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2012), p. 53.

"By framing the physical act of eating with blessings, eating becomes a religious act that brings physical craving for nourishment into the realm of the spiritual. By acknowledging God in a moment of physical need, we transcend those needs and, ideally, develop a sense of control over the desires and cravings that motivate so much of human activity."

Source 2. Deuteronomy 8:10

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־יְיָ־הוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ...

"When you have eaten and are satiated, you will bless the LORD your God..."

Source 3. Maimonides (Spain, Egypt, 1135-1204), *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Berakhot*, 1:1-2

מצות עשה מן התורה לברך אחר אכילת מזון שנאמר ואכלת ושבעת וברכת את יי' אלהיך, ואינו חייב מן התורה אלא אם כן שבע שנאמר ואכלת ושבעת וברכת, ומדברי סופרים אכל אפילו כזית מברך אחריו. ומדברי סופרים לברך על כל מאכל תחלה ואח"כ יהנה ממנו...

It is a positive mitzvah from the Torah to recite a blessing after eating food, as it says "When you have eaten and are satiated, you will bless the LORD your God..." (Deut 8:10), and one is obligated only if one is satiated. It is only from (the ruling of) the scribes (the religious leaders before the rabbis) that one recites a blessing afterward if one has eaten the equivalent of an olive, and it is only from (the ruling

of) the scribes that one recites a blessing before eating any food and then enjoys it...and it is only from (the ruling of) the scribes that one recites a blessing after eating any food or consuming any drink....

Source 4. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Berakhot, 3:11

כל שמברכין עליו בתחלה המוציא מברכין לאחריו בסוף ברכת המזון כסדרה ארבע ברכות, וכל שמברכין עליו בתחלה בורא מיני מזונות מברכין בסוף לאחריו ברכה אחת מעין שלש חוץ מן האורז.

Any (food) for which one recites the blessing before (eating), one recites Birkat Hamazon afterwards. Any (food) for which one recites the blessing afterwards (before (eating)), one recites berakhah aḥaronah afterwards, except for rice.

Source 5. Rabbi Joseph Caro (Spain, Israel, 1488-1575), Kesef Mishnah on Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Berakhot, 1:2

ואיכא למידק שרבינו כתב מ"ע מן התורה לברך אחר אכילת מזון וכל הדברים בכלל מזון חוץ מן המים ומן המלח כדתנן בר"פ בכל מערבין וא"כ היכי קאמר בתר הכי דמד"ס לברך אחר כל מה שיאכל. וי"ל דכיון דקרא דואכלת ושבעת וברכת כתיב בתר קרא דארץ חטה ושעורה וכו' אית לן למימר דלא חייבה תורה לברך אלא על שבעת המינים הכתובים באותו פסוק וכמ"ש סמ"ג בשם ה"ג, ולפי זה מ"ש רבינו דמן התורה לברך אחר אכילת מזון אחר שבעת מינים קאמר וצ"ל דזייני טפי מדברים אחרים. ומיהו קשה דא"כ הו"ל לרבינו לומר שנאמר ארץ חטה ושעורה וכו' ואכלת ושבעת וברכת. ולכן נ"ל דרבינו דייק לישנא דתוספתא (ברכות מ"ח:): דקתני ברכת מזון מן התורה שנאמר ואכלת ושבעת ומשמע ליה דאחמשת מיני דגן דוקא קאמר מדנקט ושבעת ואין לך דבר שמשביע אלא ה' מיני דגן:

Part 1: One can observe by making fine distinctions that our teacher wrote that it is a mitzvah from the Torah that one must recite Birkat Hamazon after eating food, including all types of food, except for water and salt, as it is taught at the beginning of chapter 3 of tractate Eruvin (27a), and if so, how can he say after this that it is only from (the ruling of) the scribes that one recites a blessing after eating any food or consuming any drink since it would appear that this is already included in what it written in the Torah.

Part 2: One can say that since the verse “When you have eaten and are satiated, you will bless the LORD your God...” appears after the verse “a land of wheat and barley,” we can argue that the Torah obliges us to bless only (after eating) the seven species of food mentioned specifically in that verse, just as claimed in Sefer Mitzvot Gadol (Rabbi Moshe Coucy) in the name of Halakhot Gedolot (Rav Yehudai Gaon).

Part 3: Accordingly, what our teacher (Maimonides) wrote that “it is a positive mitzvah from the Torah to recite a blessing after eating food,” he meant it only for the seven species of Land of Israel, but he should have said that the reason is that (those species) yield more nutrition than other foods. In any case, it is problematic that if this is what he meant, our teacher (Maimonides) should have quoted “a land of wheat and barley... When you have eaten and are satiated, you will bless the LORD your God...”

Part 4: Therefore, it seems to me that our teacher (Maimonides) observed by making fine distinctions in the language of the Tosefta, “Our rabbis taught: Where is the source for

Birkat Hamazon in the Torah? (The source is) as it is written, When you have eaten and are satiated, you will bless the LORD your God...," it was clear to him that this was meant to apply to five species of grain (and not the seven species of the Land of Israel), since he based his ruling on (the words) "and are satiated." No food satiates like the five species of grain.

Source 6. Rabbi Joseph Caro, Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim, 155:2

קודם שילך לבה"ם יוכל לאכול פת שחרית אם הוא רגיל בו, וטוב שירגיל בו.

Before one goes to the beit midrash (house of study), one should eat morning bread if one is used to doing so, and it is good that this be one's custom.

Source 7. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 35b

חמרא אית ביה תרתי - סעיד ומשמח, נהמא - מסעד סעיד, שמוחי לא משמח. אי הכי נבריך עליה שלש ברכות! לא קבעי אינשי סעודתייהו עלויה. אמר ליה רב נחמן בר יצחק לרבא: אי קבע עלויה סעודתיה מאי? אמר ליה: לכשיבא אליהו ויאמר אי הויא קביעותא, השתא מיהא בטלה דעתו אצל כל אדם.

The fact is that wine does both: it satiates and makes cheerful, whereas bread satiates but does not make cheerful. If that is the case, let us say Birkat Hamazon after it? (The reason why Birkat Hamazon is not said after wine is that) people do not make it the basis of the meal. Rav Nahman bar Isaac asked Rava: Suppose a person makes it the basis of his meal, what then? He replied: When Elijah comes, he will tell us whether it can really serve as a basis. Now, at any rate, no one thinks of such a thing.

Source 8. Mishnah, Berakhot 6:8

אכל תאנים וענבים ורמונים מברך אחריהן שלש ברכות דברי רבן גמליאל וחכמים אומרים ברכה אחת מעין שלש ר"ע אומר אפי' אכל שלק והוא מזונו מברך אחרי ג' ברכות:

If one ate grapes, figs, or pomegranates, one recites Birkat Hamazon, according to Rabban Gamaliel. But the sages say, berakhah aḥaronah. Rabbi Akiva says: Even if one ate שלק (a boiled vegetable) for one's main food, one must recite Birkat Hamazon afterwards.

Source 9. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 44b

ומי איכא מידי דהוה שלק מזוני? אמר רב אשי: בקלח של כרוב שנו.

Is there a kind of boiled vegetable from which one can make a meal? Rav Ashi replied: The rule applies to the stalk of cabbage.

Source 10. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 42a

רב יהודה הוה עסיק ליה לבריה בי רב יהודה בר חביבא, אייתו לקמייהו פת הבאה בכסנין. כי אתא, שמעינהו דקא מברכי המוציא. אמר להו: מאי ציצי דקא שמענא? דילמא המוציא לחם מן הארץ קא מברכיתו? - אמרי ליה: אין; דתניא רבי מונא אמר משום רבי יהודה: פת הבאה בכסנין מברכין עליה המוציא, ואמר שמואל: הלכה כרבי מונא. אמר להו: אין הלכה כרבי מונא אתמר. אמרי ליה: והאמר הוא דאמר משמיה דשמואל, לחמניות - מערבין בהן ומברכין עליהן המוציא! - שאני התם דקבע סעודתיה עלייהו, אבל היכא דלא קבע סעודתיה עלייהו - לא.

Rav Judah gave a wedding feast for his son in the house of Rabbi Judah bar Haviva. They set before the guests פת הבאה בכיסנין. He came in and heard them saying the berakhah המוציא לחם מן הארץ. He said to them: What is this chirping that I hear? Are you perhaps saying the berakhah לחם מן הארץ? They replied: Yes, we are, since it has been taught: Rabbi Muna said in the name of Rabbi Judah: Over פת הבאה בכיסנין, the berakhah לחם מן הארץ is said; and Samuel said that the halakhah is as stated by Rabbi Muna. He said to them: (You have misspoken. In fact, what was taught was) the halakhah is *not* as stated by Rabbi Muna. They said to him: Is it not the Master himself who has said in the name of Samuel that bread rolls may be used for an eruv, and the berakhah said over them is המוציא לחם מן הארץ? [He replied]: There [we speak] of a different case, namely, where they (the bread rolls) designate a main meal (i.e. serve as the basis of a main meal); but if they do not designate a main meal, this does not apply.

Source 11: Rabbi Yosef Caro, Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 197:3

ויש אומרים דבכזית דגן מהני אפילו אינו פת ויש אומרים דבירק ובכל מאכל מהני הלכך שנים שאכלו ובא שלישי אם יכולים להזקיפו שיאכל כזית פת מוטב ואם אינו רוצה לא יתנו לו לשתות ולא מאכל אחר ואם אירע שנתנו לו לשתות או מאכל אחר יזמנו עמו אף על פי שאינו רוצה לאכול פת.

There are those who say that an olive's worth of grain is sufficient (for zimmun), even if it is not bread. And there are those who say that even with vegetable or any foodstuff, it is sufficient. Therefore if two ate, and a third comes along, if they want to force him to eat an olive's worth of bread, it is better. But if he does not want to, they should not give him to drink or to eat a different food. And if it happens that they gave him drink or a different food, they should do zimmun with him even if he didn't want to eat bread.

Source 12. Rabbi Yehiel Michel Halevi Epstein, Arukh Hashulhan, Orah Hayyim, 158:1

חכמים תקנו ליטול הידים במים כשרוצה לאכול לחם כדתנן בהגיגה י"ח: נוטלין לידים לחולין ולמעשר ולתרומה ומפרש בגמ' לחולין באכילה ולתרומה אף בנגיעה משום דסתם ידים הוי שניות לטומאה ושני עושה שלישי בתרומה וגזרו על אכילה דחולין משום סרך תרומה [חולין ק"ו]. דאם לא ירגילו ליטול ידים בחולין אתו למיסרך גם בתרומה לבלי ליטול ידים ולא החמירו בנגיעה דחולין דדיינו אם נרגיל עצמינו באכילה דחולין...

The sages ordained that the hands must be rinsed when one wants to eat bread, as we learn in Hagigah 18b: “The hands are to be rinsed for unconsecrated food, the tithe, and terumah.” It is explained in the Gemara that this applies to eating unconsecrated food and to touching terumah because hands can cause impurity at two removes, while terumah can cause impurity at three removes, and the (sages) required hand washing when eating unconsecrated food in order to acquire the habit of washing for terumah, as Hullin 106a: “If they do not habituate themselves to wash their hands before eating unconsecrated food, they will come to follow the habit of not washing their hands for terumah.” They were not stringent (in requiring it) for touching unconsecrated food because it seemed sufficient to acquire the habit when *eating* unconsecrated food (and not necessary when *touching* unconsecrated food)....