כה. כשעושה סעודה דרך ארץ להשקות בעצמו למסובים. [מג"א סוף ס"ק כב]

כו. נקיי הדעת שבירושלים לא היו מסובין בסעודה אלא אם כן יודעים מי מיסב עמהם, מפני שגנאי הוא לתלמיד חכם לישב אצל עם הארץ בסעודה. [ש"ע ס"כ]

Serving alcoholic beverage

25) According to halakhic etiquette, a host should personally serve [alcoholic] beverages to his guests if they are offered during the meal.[288]

Know your eating partner

26) The devout residents of Yerushalayim refused to attend a meal unless they knew who would be eating with them, since it is disdainful for a Torah scholar to sit next to unlearned people at a meal.[289]

288. The *Magen Avraham* cited the passage in *Kiddushin* (32b) about Ribbi Eliezer, Ribbi Yehoshua and Ribbi Tzadok who sat together at the wedding celebration of Rabban Gamliel's son, while Rabban Gamliel himself waited on them. He offered a cup of wine to Ribbi Eliezer, but he refused to be served by Rabban Gamliel, both because he was Nasi and because he was a great Torah scholar. Rabban Gamliel then offered a cup to Ribbi Yehoshua and he accepted it. Ribbi Eliezer turned to his colleague and said, "Yehoshua, what is this? Can we allow ourselves to sit while Rabban Gamliel stands and serves us?"

Ribbi Yehoshua replied, "Greater men than he have served as waiters. Avraham Avinu was the greatest person in his generation and yet he served his guests, as the Torah testifies (*Bereshit* 18:8). And don't think that he knew that his guests were angels from Heaven; they appeared to him as lowly Arabs. So, what is wrong with allowing Rabban Gamliel serve us?"

Ribbi Tzadok then interjected, "Why are you ignoring God's honor and dealing with man's honor? The Blessed Holy One Himself serves us all the time, making the wind blow, pushing the clouds across the sky, bringing down rain and causing the ground to grow its produce. Thus, He serves each person all his food. In light of this, what is wrong with allowing Rabban Gamliel serve us?"

289. Our Sages taught this rule in *Sanhedrin* 23a.

At a mitzvah celebration

The *Mishna Berura* (*Bi'ur Halakha*) suggested that if the meal's purpose is to celebrate the fulfillment of a mitzvah, it is permissible for a Torah scholar to attend it. The mitzvah will protect him from harm. The *Aharonim* pointed out, however, that Rama (gloss to *Y.D.* 265:12) ruled clearly that this rule applies even in a meal served to celebrate the fulfillment of a mitzvah.

The *Hesed La'alafim* ruled leniently that if the ignorant people respect Torah learning and wish to listen to a Torah lecture, a Torah scholar is allowed to join them at the meal. In fact, in such a case it is highly commendable for a Torah scholar to attend and to add a Torah atmosphere to the celebration. He then has the merit of giving Torah merit to all those at the meal, making it fit for Hashem to be present as well.

The *Bi'ur Halakha* added that if the meal is sponsored to encourage people to perform charitable acts, it is certainly commendable for a Torah scholar to attend it and bring honor to the Torah and its mitzvot.

On a separate table

The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (170:71) cited the *Ru'ah Hayim* Palachi ruling that even if there are several tables set for the meal and the Torah scholar will not have to sit together with the ignorant people it is still forbidden since he still is participating with their meal. The *Bi'ur Halakha*, however, wrote that if there is a group of Torah scholars at one table and a group of ignorant people at another table, it is permitted.

With non-Jews

The *Be'er Hetev* (170:16b) cited *Pirke deRibbi Eliezer* (#29) teaching that if a Jewish person eats together with a non-Jew it is as if he has eaten insects. This is found as well in the *Halakha Berura* (page 42). The *Midrash Eliyahu Rabba* (chapter 9) states, "Eating at one table with a non-Jew is tantamount to worshipping idols and eating food sacrificed to an idol."

כז. לא יהא אדם קפדן ורגזן בסעודה. [שו"ע סי' קע ס"ו]. ויטיב לבו בסעודתו אם מעט ואם הרבה, יאכל פיתו בשמחה ולא בכעס ודאגה, ויזהר לאכול הטוב והמועיל לו לרפואה, ולא מה שערב לו לפי שעה. וישתדל לכבוש תאותו באכילה ושתיה תמיד, וכתבו חכמי המוסר, דבהיות המאכל או המשקה לפני האדם, והוא מתוק לחיכו וחביב עליו ביותר, וימשוך ידו ממנו בשביל סיגוף לכפרת עונות, הרי זה נחשב תיקון גדול בתיקוני התשובה, ויש בו תועלת כמו התענית. [באו"ח פי' בהר הלכה י'. וע"ע כה"ח ס"ק עב]

Eating in a good mood

27) During a meal, a person must take care not to display anger and impatience.[290] He should place himself in a good mood, whether he has plenty or little to eat. The act of eating should be accompanied by joy, not by anger, sadness or worry.

Eating healthful foods

One should take care to eat healthful, beneficial foods, not those that happen to taste good at the moment.[291] One should always tame one's desire for food and beverages. In the works of Torah ethics, we are taught that if someone wishes to receive atonement for his sins, he should stop eating or drinking while the food or beverage is in front of him and while he still is hungry for more. Such behavior is at least as beneficial spiritually as a full day's fast.[292]

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290. If someone displays anger during a meal, his guests and even his family members will be afraid to eat their fill at the meal. See the comment of the *Mishna Berura* (170:18) and the *Sha'ar Hatziyun* (170:17).

The *Levush* added that since the family sees this anger, they will be afraid to offer any of the food to poor people who might knock at the door. He cited a passage in tractate *Derekh Eretz* relating the story of Hillel the Elder who once prepared food for a guest. In the meantime a poor man came to the door and told Hillel's wife that he was scheduled to get married that day and he has nothing with which to pay for the meal. She then took all the food she had prepared and gave it to that man. She then kneaded another batch of dough and cooked another pot of stew and served it to Hillel and his guest. Hillel asked softly, "Dear, why didn't you serve the meal when we first came in?"

She told him what had happened and he reassured her, saying, "Dear, I never for a moment thought that you had done anything wrong. I know that everything you do is for the sake of Heaven."

Obviously, Hillel had to wait quite a while until his wife prepared a second meal from scratch. He and his guest must have been hungry. Despite this, Hillel did not bother to go and investigate why the meal was being delayed. He asked about it only after it was served. This is an example of Hillel's exemplary humility and self-control.

Our Sages taught (*Gittin* 6b) that if a person casts his fear upon his household members, it is likely to bring tragic results. One terrible example, recorded in the Book of Judges, is the incident of the *pilegesh beGiv'a*, that caused a civil war and tens of thousands of deaths. Our Sages taught that such behavior can cause the transgression of the worst crimes, including immoral acts, murder and Shabbat desecration.

291. The preface to this *Siman* discusses the importance of behaving with sanctity while eating.

292. Our Sages taught (*Gittin* 70a): "If you are enjoying a meal exceedingly, stop yourself while in the middle of eating." The *Shene Luhot Haberit* (cited by the *Eliya Rabba* 170:23) states: "I wish to teach you an effective way to do *teshuva*. It is easy but it can have tremendous results. When you are served a very tasty food or beverage, stop yourself from eating it. This form of *teshuva* is available at all times and it is very pleasing to God." The *Mishna Berura* (571:2) states: "In the works of Torah ethics it is stated that if someone stops himself in the middle of a meal while he still feels hungry, it is considered an act of self-imposed punishment and it atones for his sins.

The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (157:15), citing *sefer Maggid Mesharim*, related that Maran learned Torah regularly with an angel. One of the things the angel taught him was that

כח. לא יאכל אדם עד שתתמלא כריסו אלא יפחות כמו רביע משבעתו. [רמב"ם דעות פ"ד ה"ב]. ואכילה גסה לגוף כל אדם כמו סם המות, והוא עיקר לכל החלאים, ורוב החלאים שבאים על האדם אינם אלא או מפני מאכלים רעים, או מפני שהוא ממלא בטנו ואוכל אכילה גסה אפילו ממאכלים טובים, הוא ששלמה אמר בחכמתו שומר פיו ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו, כלומר שומר פיו מלאכול מאכל רע או מלשבוע ולשונו מלדבר אלא בצרכיו. [שם הט"ו]

Overeating

28) To preserve one's health, one should never eat until one is completely full. Instead, one should eat twenty-five percent less than the amount one imagines is enough to make one full. Overeating is as damaging as eating poison, and it is the source of every illness. Most illnesses are the direct result of eating unhealthful foods or of overeating even if a person eats only healthful foods. This is the meaning of King Shelomo's warning (*Mishle* 21:23), "Someone who guards his mouth and tongue protects himself from problems." If he guards his mouth so that he does not eat harmful foods or too much food, and he guards his tongue from speaking about anything unnecessary, he will almost certainly have a worry-free life.

while eating, he should stop when he feels the greatest desire to eat or drink. "If you will do this in every meal," the angel told him, "it will be as if you had offered a sacrifice to God at every meal. Your table will literally become an altar, upon which you will slaughter your inclination for evil."

The *sefer Shulhan Hatahor* (Unit Advice for Eating, chapter 11) states: "Another excellent idea is to slice no more than the amount of bread you need to maintain your health and strength before you begin to eat. Then, make up in your mind that you will eat no more than this during your meal." Actually, this is exactly the advice the angel gave to Maran: "At the beginning of the meal cut three slices of bread and then eat no more than that," as cited in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer.