טז. אף שמעיקר הדין אין חיוב ללבוש כובע וחליפה בעת שמברך, מכל מקום ירא שמים לא יברך על הכוס בכיפה לבד, אלא ישים הכובע על ראשו, ויתעטף בבגד עליון. [ב"ח ומג"א]. ונכון לדקדק בזה בכל ברכת המזון אף כשאינו מברך על הכוס, שיניח הכובע בראשו, ויתעטף בבגד עליון, כדי שיהא מורא שמים עליו ויעורר הכוונה. [באר היטב ס"ק יא, קצוש"ע, חסד לאלפים, אור לציון]

Wearing hat and jacket

16) Technically, it is permissible to recite *Birkat Hamazon* without wearing a hat and jacket. Someone who possesses genuine fear of Heaven will make sure to wear them while reciting *Birkat Hamazon* over a cup of wine. He will not suffice with a simple yarmulke. It is best to observe these practices whenever reciting *Birkat Hamazon*, whether or not one recites it over *kos shel berakha*. By donning a hat and suit jacket, he enhances his awareness of God's Presence and he will concentrate better on the words of *Birkat Hamazon*.[185]

Wine from the bottle

We can learn from the incident of Rav Nahman and Yalta that any of the wine in the bottle on the table can bring the blessing to a woman. This is the ruling of the *Roke'ah*, cited by the *Eliya Rabba* (182:9). The *sefer Orhot Rabbenu* (Vol. I, page 85) likewise states that the entire bottle from which the *kos shel berakha* is filled has the status of *kos shel berakha*.

It could be, however, that the wine in the bottle does not have the same status as the wine of the *kos shel berakha* and for this reason Yalta was not appeased with a second cup. Rabbenu Menahem Hame'iri (commentary to *Berakhot* 51a) stated that the host should give his wife to drink from the cup over which he recited *Birkat Hamazon*, adding, "In case he drank the entire cupful, he should refill the cup from the barrel and give it to her." Apparently, the first cupful, over which *Birkat Hamazon* was recited, is more beneficial.

A guest giving the *kos shel berakha*

The *Mishna Berura* (*Sha'ar Hatziyun* 183:19) debated whether or not a guest who was honored with leading the *zimun* is supposed to send the *kos shel berakha* to his host's wife. Although Ula did not send the cup directly to Yalta, this was because he was of the opinion that Yalta would receive the same blessing if Rav Nahman would drink the wine himself. In any event, our Sages taught (*Kalla*, chapter 1) that a guest may not offer wine to the host's wife without the host's permission. If he does, he is liable to receive the death penalty. Maran cited this passage in the *Bet Yosef* (*Y.D,* 195).

185. *Ituf*

As explained in the preface to this *Siman*, Maran ruled according to the opinion of Tosafot, requiring eight of the ten halakhot pertaining to *kos shel berakha*. The two that are not required are *itur* and *ituf*. Regarding *ituf*, the Talmud testifies that Rav Papa always wrapped himself in his *tallit* before sitting down to recite *Birkat Hamazon*, while Rav Ashi covered his head with his headdress.

The *Bayit Hadash* commented that since the Tosafot, Rabbenu Asher, the *Arba'a Turim* and Rabbenu Yeruham all commented that they personally wore a headdress in honor of *Birkat Hamazon*, it is fitting for anyone who is truly God-fearing to make sure to wear a [suit] jacket and hat while reciting it. He should not recite it while wearing only a small yarmulke on his head, even when reciting *Birkat Hamazon* by himself.

The *Aharonim* (*Shiyure Kenesset Hagedola* 183:5, *Magen Avraham* 183:5, *Mishna Berura* 183:10, *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer 183:2) cited this passage of the *Bayit Hadash*.

Since Maran did not mention the rules of *itur* or *ituf* in the *Shulhan Arukh*, it seems that it is unnecessary to wear a hat or suit jacket when reciting *Birkat Hamazon* even when using *kos shel berakha*. Since all the *Aharonim* mentioned the value of these practices, however, it is highly recommended to observe them and wear a hat and suit jacket. The *Bayit Hadash* considered a hat to be equal to the headdress worn in the Talmudic era, as explained by the *Levushe Serad* (183:3).

Is it obligatory?

The *Bayit Hadash* recommended these practices in honor of *kos shel berakha*. If someone recites *Birkat Hamazon* without a cup of wine, he did not insist on them. The *Mishna Berura* (183:11) states that the custom in our time is to always wear a hat when reciting *Birkat Hamazon*, even when reciting it alone without *kos shel berakha*. He did not say that it is an obligation, only that this is the common custom.

This is actually a well-established practice. The *Shene Luhot Haberit* (Unit *Ha'otiyot*, entry *Kedusha*) stated that those who are careful to perform mitzvot correctly make

sure to wear a suit jacket when reciting *Birkat Hamazon*, just like they do during the daily prayers. This is a commendable practice, especially when there is *zimun*. When someone puts on his suit jacket in honor of the mitzvah he becomes infused with a measure of fear for God. He will not grow haughty although he has eaten a full meal.

The *Be'er Hetev* as well wrote that this practice applies every time one recites *Birkat Hamazon*. The *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh* Ganzfried (46:6) wrote that "one must not sit in a haughty manner. Instead, one must sit while wearing a suit jacket and hat, to induce the fear of God and so that one will recite *Birkat Hamazon* with full concentration and in awe of the Creator. The *Hesed La'alafim* wrote likewise.

The *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, page 110) commented that although the *Magen Avraham* mentioned the practice of wearing a suit jacket only when reciting *Birkat Hamazon* over a cup of wine [meaning when there are at least three people forming a *zimun*], one should wear a suit jacket even when reciting it alone, following the instructions of the *Shene Luhot Haberit*. One should wear a hat as well, not only a yarmulke, besides a suit jacket to recite it. Nevertheless, this is the recommended practice but it is not an absolute obligation.

Between *ituf* and *itur*

The *Mishna Berura* (183:11) wrote: "Anyone who possesses the fear of Heaven will wear a hat. Some people have the custom of wearing a suit jacket as well to fulfill the halakha of *ituf*." Notice that he drew a line between these two practices, unlike the *Bayit Hadash* and *Magen Avraham* who equated the two halakhot.

Harav Zalman wrote: "*Ituf* means, according to some, to wrap oneself in a *tallit*. Others interpreted it as wearing a headdress. We do not observe the halakha of *ituf*, but anyone who possesses the fear of Heaven will make sure not to recite *Birkat Hamazon* without donning a hat. Some people wear a suit jacket as well. There are those who claim that the halakha of *ituf* applies only in the Land of Yisrael in honor of God's Presence." This likewise demonstrates a difference in attitude between donning a hat and donning a jacket. There is apparently more significance in wearing a hat than in wearing a suit jacket.

The *Arukh Hashulhan* (183:4) sheds some light on this, writing that the custom is to wear a hat while reciting *Birkat Hamazon*, following the *Magen Avraham*. He then added that some people have the custom of wearing a suit jacket, but this custom is not practiced at all.

Apparently, the halakha of *ituf* means covering the head with a headdress or hat, but the practice of wearing a suit jacket is simply a way to display honor for the mitzvah. It is not part of the halakha of *ituf*. Therefore, both Harav Zalman and the *Mishna Berura* referred to it separately, not as part of the halakha of *ituf*.

Furthermore, all these *Poskim* mentioned these practices in reference to reciting *Birkat Hamazon* with a cup of wine. When reciting it without a cup of wine, there is no obligation. Nevertheless, the *Mishna Berura* concluded that the custom nowadays is to always don a hat to recite *Birkat Hamazon*. Apparently, this custom is based on the halakha of *ituf*, which applies to covering the head, not the body.

The *sefer Orhot Rabbenu* (page 83) testifies that Harav Yaakov Yisrael Kanyevski always donned his hat to recite *Birkat Hamazon*, but he did not always wear his suit jacket. He once saw his brother-in-law, the *Hazon Ish*, reciting *Birkat Hamazon* while wearing a large yarmulke but without a hat. He questioned the *Hazon Ish* about this, and the latter explained that he deduced from the Talmud that it is unnecessary to wear a hat. Harav Hayim Kanyevski commented that he has no doubt that the *Hazon Ish* held that one must always wear a hat to recite *Birkat Hamazon*. In that instance, however, he was wearing an oversized yarmulke and he felt that such a yarmulke was sufficient regarding reciting *Birkat Hamazon*.

Harav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach, cited in *sefer Veten Berakha* (page 12), ruled that the halakha is more stringent about wearing a hat but the common custom is to always wear a suit jacket as well, even when reciting *Birkat Hamazon* without a cup of wine. See *sefer Dole Umashke* (page 111).

Pajamas and robes

The *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, page 110) highly recommended that no one recite *Birkat Hamazon* while wearing pajamas, just as one should not pray without befitting garments. One should get fully dressed to recite *Birkat Hamazon*.

Harav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halikhot Shelomo*, Unit *Tefilla* page 18, footnote 73) wrote as well that one should get dressed for *Birkat Hamazon* and not recite it while wearing a bathrobe unless one is sick and bedridden. In that case, one should put a robe over one's pajamas and then recite it.

At the beach

The *Or Letziyon* added that when people go for a day at the beach, they must be dressed in regular clothes when reciting *Birkat Hamazon*, not their bathing suits. In fact, this applies even when reciting the blessing of *me'en shalosh* since some *Poskim* ruled that this is also a Torah obligation. The *Halikhot Shelomo* ruled likewise.

The blessing of *me'en shalosh*

The responsa *Salmat Hayim* (#178) was asked whether the rules of dress recommended by the *Be'er Hetev* apply only to *Birkat Hamazon* or to other blessings as well. He replied that whenever possible one should don a hat to recite a blessing, but it is an absolute obligation when reciting *Birkat Hamazon*.

This reply reflects the author's pious attitude but it is not the halakha. Even when reciting *Birkat Hamazon* one is not actually obligated to wear a hat; it is the recommended practice for those who possess the fear of Heaven. Certainly, the intention of the *Salmat Hayim* was to say that wearing a hat for *Birkat Hamazon* is an obligation in comparison to wearing one for other blessings.