

BERACHAH RISHONAH: PROBLEMATIC FOODS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

The following is a discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Houses filled with every good thing... orchards and olive trees...and you shall eat and be satisfied (6:11)

Many unique halachos pertain specifically to Tishah b'Av that falls on Shabbos, in which case the fast is postponed until Sunday.

The berachah rishonah for many of the foods listed below is problematic, so we have attempted to present a clear decision for each one based on the views of the majority of the contemporary poskim. Most of the decisions follow the rulings of the venerable halachic authority, Harav S.Z. Auerbach Zt"l.

Many facts must be ascertained before determining the correct berachah rishonah for a given food: What is the nature of the plant or tree from which it is derived? What is the exact make-up of each of its components? What manufacturing processes were used? etc. etc. Based on all of the data available, the poskim have rendered the following decisions(1):

Apple kugel: mezonos. [If the flour is added just to "bind" the apple mixture but not to enhance its taste, ha-eitz is recited.]

Apple sauce: Commercially produced apple sauce in which the apples are reduced to a nearly liquid state - shehakol. Home made applesauce which is usually lumpy and contains small pieces of the apple - ha-eitz(2).

Barley soup: mezonos(3).

Blackberry: ha-eitz It grows on a tree which stays alive throughout the winter months and reaches a height of over 10 inches(4).

Blueberry: ha-eitz. See Blackberry.

Bread sticks: mezonos - when eaten as a snack(5). When many breadsticks are eaten at one sitting, or when eaten as part of a meal, netilas yadayim and ha-motzi may be required(6).

Chalah kugel: mezonos(7). If the individual pieces of challah are bigger than a k'zayis (approx. 1 ounce), netilas yadayim and ha-motzi are required.

Cheese cake: Mezonos. If the dough is meant to merely hold the cheese filling together, only a shehakol is recited.

Chocolate covered nut or raisin: This is a "combination food," generally eaten because the two items complement each other's taste. According to some poskim, both a shehakol and ha-eitz(8) are recited(9). [Individuals who regard either the chocolate or the raisin as merely an "enhancer" to the "main" food, should recite the blessing on the main food.] Other poskim maintain that only a shehakol is recited(10).

Chocolate covered orange peels: shehakol(11).

Chicken soup with noodles or croutons: A shehakol is recited over the soup(12) and a mezonos over the noodles, etc.(13) [Even though they merely enhance the soup, a mezonos is still required]. When the noodles or croutons are a majority ingredient [or a very important minority ingredient, i.e. they are the main reason that the soup is being drunk], no shehakol is recited over the soup [unless the soup is drunk separately](14).

Chicken soup with matzah ball or kreplach: The proper method is to eat some soup together with some matzah ball and recite only mezonos(15). Even if a bit of soup is left over, no shehakol is recited(16). [One who chooses, however, to drink the soup separately, must recite shehakol.]

Corn chips: shehakol. Corn chips are produced from corn meal.

Cranberry - ha-adamah(17). Cranberries grow on a bush which does not reach a height of 10 inches.

Falafel balls: Mezonos - since generally they are made from a mixture of flour and chumus. The flour is added for taste(18).

Fruit cocktail(19): Recite the blessing over the fruit which constitutes the majority of the mixture(20).

Fruit salad (large chunks of fruit): Separate blessings of ha-eitz and ha-adamah are required.

Halavah: shehakol(21).

Ice cream cone: If the cone serves as a cup to hold the ice cream, only a shehakol over the ice cream is required. If the cone is eaten for its own taste (e.g., a sugar cone), a separate mezonos is required(22).

Licorice: shehakol. The flour in licorice serves as a binder and does not require a mezonos(23).

Mashed potatoes: ha-adamah. Instant mashed potatoes are also ha-adamah(24).

Meatballs (small) and spaghetti: mezonos - when eaten together in one spoonful.

Onion rings: mezonos. Generally fried in batter made from grain flour(25).

Onion soup (made from saut_ed onions): ha-adamah(26). If it is made from a dehydrated soup mix - shehakol.

Papaya: ha-adamah(27).

Peanut butter (crunchy or plain): shehakol(28) - when eaten alone. When spread on bread or a cracker, no blessing is recited over the peanut butter.

Popcorn: ha-adamah.

Potato chips: ha-adamah

Potato kugel or latke: ha-adamah. If the potatoes are blended into a liquid state and are no longer recognizable as potatoes, several poskim maintain that a shehakol is recited(29).

Pringles: ha-adamah(30).

Raspberry: The poskim debate whether its blessing is ha-eitz(31) or ha-adamah(32). Because of the doubt, ha-adamah is preferable(33).

Rhubarb: ha-adamah.

Rice cakes: The majority of contemporary poskim agree that the correct blessing is ha-adamah(34), while a minority tends to rule that the correct blessing is mezonos(35).

Stuffed cabbage: The cabbage, meat and rice are usually eaten together in one spoonful. Only one blessing is recited - over the majority ingredient(36).

Vegetable salad with croutons: mezonos and ha-adamah are required, even though the croutons are merely "enhancers" for the salad(37).

Vegetable soup: ha-adamah. No shehakol is required on the liquid part of the soup(38).

FOOTNOTES

1. Previous columns have dealt with the proper berachos for breakfast cereals - see The Weekly Halachah Discussion, pg. 159-169, and cholent, ibid. pg. 140-142.
2. Based on Mishnah Berurah 202:40 and 42. One who recites ha-eitz on all kinds of applesauce, has valid sources upon which to rely - see Pischei Halachah, pg. 136.

3. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 436).
4. Igros Moshe O.C. 1:85. Wild blackberries or blueberries, which grow on bushes that do not reach a height of 10 inches, require an ha-adamah. But often, these berries are infested with worms and require a careful inspection. Commercially available berries are grown on trees, not on low bushes.
5. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Vesain Berachah, pg. 468 and Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 21). Same rule applies to Melba Toast, bagel and pita chips - ibid.
6. See details in The Weekly Halachah Discussion, page 479-481.
7. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Vesein Berachah, pg. 474).
8. First the shehakol on a bit of chocolate, with specific intention not to exempt the fruit, then the ha-eitz over the fruit.
9. Igros Moshe O.C. 3:31.
10. Mekor ha-Berachah 65; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesain Berachah, pg. 417); Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 97).
11. Mishnah Berurah 202:39.
12. Or on another shehakol item, while intending to exempt the soup - Chayei Adam quoted in Mishnah Berurah 208:23.
13. Although normally mezonos is recited before shehakol, in this case the order is reversed; Mishnah Berurah 208:23. Igros Moshe O.C. 1:68, however, maintains that even in this case the mezonos is recited before the shehakol.
14. Mishnah Berurah 205:11; Igros Moshe O.C. 4:43.
15. Igros Moshe O.C. 4:43.
16. Based on Mishnah Berurah 168:46.
17. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 294).
18. Ohr L'tziyon 14:19; Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 283, note 58.
19. Or a fruit salad in which the fruit is cut up into small pieces and eaten together in one spoonful.
20. Mishnah Berurah 212:1. Different kinds of ha-eitz fruits (e.g., apples and oranges) combine to form a majority of ha-eitz, and vice versa (Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 94, quoting Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv).
21. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesain Berachah, pg. 415).
22. Igros Moshe O.C. 4:43; Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 234.

23. Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 110.
24. Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 407). Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 207, however, questions this ruling.
25. Vesein Berachah, pg. 79.
26. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 441); Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 120 (when onions are consumed together with the liquid).
27. Vesein Berachah, pg. 395 and 422.
28. Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 410 and in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 207 and pg. 280, note 10).
29. See Vesein Berachah, pg. 407 and Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 207.
30. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 407; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 207).
31. Mishnah Berurah 303:1; Aruch ha-Shulchan 303:5.
32. Taz 304:8; Ketzos ha-Shulchan 49:6.
33. Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 396).
34. Ohr L'tziyon 14:21; Harav S.Z. Auerbach, Harav C.P. Scheinberg, Harav M. Shternbuch, quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 108 and in Vesein Berachah, pg. 520).
35. Harav S.Y. Elyashiv, *ibid*.
36. Vesein Berachah, pg. 69; Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 274. The same rule applies to a goulash made from meat and vegetables.
37. Mishnah Berurah 212:5; Vesein Berachah, pg. 60.
38. See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 202:66; Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 119; Vesein Berachah, pg. 432-434.

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