

TU BISHVAT FRUIT

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

The proper blessing over some of the fruits eaten on Tu Bishvat is unclear: The following is a short review:

Applesauce: Commercially produced applesauce in which the apples are reduced to a nearly liquid state - shehakol. Homemade applesauce which is usually lumpy and contains small pieces of the apple - ha-eitz[1].

Blueberry: Ha-eitz. It grows on a tree which stays alive throughout the winter months and reaches a height of well over ten inches[2].

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 shehakol and ha-eitz[3] are recited[4]. [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 the blessing over the majority ingredient is recited[5]. Still other poskim suggest that only ha-eitz should be said[6].

Chocolate-covered orange peels: Shehakol[7].

Cranberry: Ha-adamah[8]. Cranberries grow on a bush which does not reach a height of ten inches.

Fruit cocktail[9] : Recite the blessing over the fruit that constitutes the majority of the mixture[10].

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

Halavah: Shehakol[11].

Papaya: Ha-adamah[12].

Popcorn: Ha-adamah[13].

Potato chips: Ha-adamah[14].

Pringles: Ha-adamah[15]. Some poskim maintain that a shehakol is recited[16].

Raspberry: The poskim debate whether its blessing is ha-eitz[17] or ha-adamah[18]. Because of the doubt, ha-adamah is preferable[19].

Rhubarb: Ha-adamah[20].

Tomato juice: Shehakol[21].

Sabra: Ha-eitz[22].

Strawberry: Ha-adamah[23].

Question: When one wishes to eat several different foods at one sitting, each requiring a different blessing, in what order must he recite the blessings over the different foods?

Discussion: In addition to mandating a specific blessing for each of the foods that we eat, Chazal also established a hierarchy of "more important" and "less important" blessings. A blessing considered "more important" takes precedence over a blessing considered "less important." There are various criteria that Chazal employed to determine the "importance" of a blessings. The more exclusive and specific a particular blessing is, e.g. ha-motzi, which is recited for bread only, the more "important" it is. In addition a blessing is considered more "important" if it is recited over fruits of shivas ha-minim, if it is recited over foods which are whole (as opposed to foods which have been cut up), and if it is recited over foods which one enjoys and prefers.

The following, in order of preference, is the correct[24] order for blessings when eating several different kinds of foods, each of which requires a different blessing[25]:

1. Ha-motzi over bread.
2. Mezonos over cake, cookies and other "cake family" products, such as pretzels.
3. Mezonos over pasta, cooked grain or cereal and other non-"cake family" products.
4. Mezonos over rice[26] and rice products.
5. Ha-gafen over wine or grape juice.
6. Ha-eitz over shivas ha-minim.
7. Ha-eitz over other fruits.
8. Ha-adamah. When eating a ha-eitz item and a ha-adamah item, and the ha-adamah item is the preferred[27] food, ha-adamah is said first, even if the ha-eitz is from shivas ha-minim[28].
9. Shehakol[29].
10. The blessing over a pleasant fragrance.

Question: When one wishes to eat several different foods at one sitting, each requiring the same blessing, does it matter which item one eats first[30]?

Discussion: Yes. When faced with a variety of foods requiring the same blessing, one recites a blessing first on the most "important" and best food. The following is the correct order in which the foods should be eaten:

1. If the several foods are different types of bread, or different types of cake, or different types of non-"cake family" mezonos, priority is given to products made out of wheat; then barley, spelt, rye[31] and oats in descending order. [Note, however, that the hierarchal order of the grains (wheat

precedes barley, etc.), does not override the hierarchal order of the blessings (ha-motzi precedes mezonos, etc.). Thus a ha-motzi on oat bread (ha-motzi) will precede a mezonos on wheat cake (mezonos). Similarly, within the mezonos category, a cake made out of oat flour (baked mezonos) will take precedence over macaroni (boiled or cooked mezonos), even though macaroni is made out of wheat flour and the cake was made out of oat flour.]

2. If the several foods are fruits of the shivas ha-minim, ha-eitz is recited over olives first, then dates, grapes, figs and pomegranates in descending order.
3. If the several foods are non-shivas ha-minim fruits (or if the several foods are shehakol type foods) priority is given to whichever fruit (or food) is whole. If all the fruits (or foods) are whole or all are cut up, then priority is given to the fruit (or food) that is usually preferred by the eater [even if it is not necessarily his preference just then].

There are some exceptions to the above rules. The hierarchy of blessings applies only if:

- One wishes to eat two or more foods at one sitting. If he wants to eat only one food, for instance an apple, but there are also grapes on the table before him, he need not be concerned that grapes take priority over apples. He may make the blessing over the apple and eat only the apple[32].
- One's preference for a given food does not violate normal eating patterns or mealtime routines[33]. Thus one need not eat the fruit intended for dessert before the meat of the main course, even though ha-eitz usually has priority over shehakol. Also, if one is thirsty, he need not eat his vegetables before drinking, even though ha-adamah is generally said before shehakol.
- If preferring one food over the other will not result in a questionable blessing being said. Some examples[34]:

1. Shehakol on chocolate should be said before ha-eitz over fruit, since some poskim[35] hold that b'diavad the blessing of ha-eitz covers chocolate as well.
2. Shehakol on pure (not from concentrate) orange juice should be said before ha-eitz over fruit, since some poskim[36] hold that b'diavad the blessing of ha-eitz covers pure orange juice as well.
3. Shehakol on a soy-based product should be said before ha-adamah on vegetables, since b'diavad some poskim[37] hold that the blessing of ha-adamah covers soy products as well.

[1] Based on Mishnah Berurah 202:40 and 42 and Minchas Shlomo 1:91-3. One who recites ha-eitz on all kinds of applesauce has valid sources upon which to rely; see Yabia Omer 7:29 and Pischei Halachah, pgs. 170-171.

[2] Igros Moshe O.C. 1:85; Vesein Berachah, pg. 396; Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 372. Wild blueberries,

which grow on bushes that do not reach a height of ten inches, require a ha-adamah, but often, these berries are infested with worms and require careful inspection.

[3] First the shehakol on a bit of chocolate, with specific intention not to exempt the fruit, then the ha-eitz over the fruit.

[4] Igros Moshe O.C. 3:31.

[5] Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 417); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 97). When in doubt which ingredient is the majority, recite a shehakol; ibid.

[6] Mekor ha-Berachah 22. [7] Mishnah Berurah 202:39.

[8] Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 394).

[9] Or a fruit salad in which the fruit is cut up into small pieces and eaten together in one spoonful.

[10] 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 Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv).

[11] Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 415).

[12] Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 375, note 66); Yechaveh Da'as 4:52; Vesein Berachah, pgs. 395 and 422; Pischei Halachah, pg. 155.

[13] Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 102, quoting several poskim.

[14] Igros Moshe Y.D. 4:48-5.

[15] Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 407); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 239).

[16] Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 365.

[17] Mishnah Berurah 303:1; Aruch ha-Shulchan 303:5; Pischei Halachah, pg. 154.

[18] Taz 304:8; Ketzos ha-Shulchan 49:6.

[19] Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Vesein Berachah, pg. 396).

[20] Vesein Berachah, pg. 396; Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 370.

[21] Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Vesein Berachah, pg. 429); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 374, note 45).

[22] Yechaveh Da'as 2:21. [23] Igros Moshe O.C. 1:86.

[24] L'chatchilah; b'diavad the order does not invalidate the blessings.

[25] Based on O.C. 211, according to Mishnah Berurah. There are other opinions as well.

[26] Whether or not rice comes before wine or shivas ha-minim is questionable — there is no clear-cut custom or decision; see Vezos ha-berachah, pg. 124. If the rice is the preferred food, then all poskim agree that it has priority over ha-gafen and shivas ha-minim; see Piskei Teshuvos 211:6.

[27] "Preferred" means that this fruit is usually preferred by him and it is also preferred by him now. If the ha-eitz is preferred by him now — even though usually he would prefer the ha-adamah — ha-eitz is recited.

[28] If neither fruit is preferred, some poskim hold that a shivas ha-minim fruit is first while others hold that the whole one is first.

[29] Aruch ha-Shulchan 211:17 rules that shehakol over food should be said before shehakol over a drink. But the Mishnah Berurah does not mention this, and the Peri Megadim (Mishbetzos, 211:6) specifically says that neither has priority; the blessing should be recited on the preferred item.

[30] In this case, there are situations when the wrong order could result in a berachah levatalah, an unnecessary blessing, since a blessing specifically recited on a "less important" item would not automatically include a "more important" item, even if both items are of the same blessing and both are on the table; see Mishnah Berurah 211:32-33.

[31] Rye bread sold in today's bakeries is made (mostly) from wheat. The same holds true for oatmeal cookies.

[32] Rama, O.C. 211:5.

[33] See Kaf ha-Chayim 211:5.

[34] See Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 126, quoting Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and other poskim.

[35] See Minchas Shlomo 1:91-2 and Shevet ha-Levi 8:27 for the halachic debate concerning the proper blessing over chocolate.

[36] See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 202:54 and 205:21, Chazon Ish 33:5 and Shevet ha-Levi 4:19.

[37] See Piskei Teshuvos 202, note 118.

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