


HALOCHOSCOPE



This week's [and last week's] question:

One has whole grapes and pitted olives or dates before him. He plans to eat all of them. On which of these should he recite the *brocha ha'eitz*? What about a whole dried fig? Is there a difference between a dried whole fruit and a fresh one?

One has two types of cookie, one made with wheat flour and the other made with oatmeal or a blend with the majority oatmeal. He plans on eating both cookies. Is it preferable to recite the *brocha* on the wheat cookie?

The issues:

Last week:

A) *Birchos hanehenin*, the *brocha* on foods

B) *Kedimah*, order of priority when reciting brochos or a *brocha* on many foods

This week:

C) *Shivas haminin*, the seven species that *Eretz Yisroel* is praised about

D) *Chamaishes minei dagan*, the hierarchy of the five cereal grains

C) *Shivas haminin*

The verses in the Torah mandating *birchas hamazon* on bread are juxtaposed to verses praising *Eretz Yisroel* for the seven special species: wheat, barley, grapevines, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. The fact that these species are singled out indicates special recognition in their *brochos*. The juxtaposition to *bircas hamazon* is used by some as an indication that they deserve *bircas hamazon* in their own right. Foods that require *bircas hamazon* are made of the same ingredients as snack foods that also satisfy somewhat. These are known as *mezonos* foods, after their *brocha rishona*. They are a snacking form of breads or of cooked grain-based meals. While the Torah mentions bread specifically, to exclude non-breads, these foods are definitely on a higher level than other foods. They should deserve a special *brocha*.

This special *brocha* is a combined and abridged form of the three *brochos* of *bircas hamazon*. [*Birchas hamazon*, recited after eating a bread meal, comprises three *brochos* that are indicated Scripturally, and a fourth *brocha* added Rabbinically. The first acknowledges Hashem's providing for the needs of every creature. The second thanks Hashem for the Land of Israel and for other great promises He fulfilled for us. The Torah connects the *mitzvos* of circumcision and of Torah study to meriting the Land of Israel. Therefore, in thanking Hashem for the Land we mention the merits of these two *mitzvos*. The third *brocha* refers to the centrality of *Yerushalayim* and the kingship of the house of David, and a prayer that this be restored and fully realized with the advent of *Moshiach*.

After the destruction of the second *Bais Hamikdash*, the Jewish people rebelled and established a kingdom under *Bar Kochba*. After cruelly suppressing the rebellion, the Romans refused to allow the burial of the bodies of the fallen Jews at *Betar*, location of

their last stand. This was a huge number of bodies, and it seems that almost all Jews were connected to these victims in some way. After three years, permission was granted to bury them. This was recognized as a huge divine kindness. In addition, when the bodies were turned over to the Jews, they had not decomposed. In gratitude for these great kindnesses, a *brocha* was added to *birchas hamazon*: *Hatov Vehamaitiv*, He who is good and does good. [The importance of burial as closure for the family and friends of the deceased is explained by the commentaries in *Parshas Chayei Sarah*.] The fourth *brocha* is incorporated at the end, but the name, *me'ain shalosh*, reflects the main three Scriptural *brochos*. The *brocha* was instituted with different language to reflect the different foods on which it is recited. When eating *mezonos* foods one recites *al hamichyah*, 'on the provision of sustenance'. After eating fruits of the remaining five species, one recites *al hapairos*, on the fruits. One who drank wine recites *al hagefen*. Wine has added special qualities, just as it merits a specialized *brocha rishona*. The poskim debate whether this special mention of the vine applies at the ending of the *brocha* as well, or only at the beginning. Though there is no consensus on which view to follow, the *minhag* is to include the special mention at the ending as well. However, if one used the same ending as for fruit, he fulfills his obligation.

Having established that these seven crops are so highly valued, the Talmud debates whether they should always have *kedimah* for the *brocha*. That is, if one has many fruits of the same *brocha*, should he recite the *brocha* on the fruit of the *shivas haminim* and eat it before the others? There are three views cited by the poskim. In the first view, if their *brochos* are all equal, one should recite the *brocha* on the *shivas haminim*, rather than the favorite food. If there is no species of the *shivas haminim* in the variety, he must choose his favorite. If their *brochos* are different, one may choose the favorite if he so wishes, or he may choose the item of *shivas hamnim*. In the second view, in this case, too, he must choose the favorite. [Note: The poskim debate whether one may recite *ha'adamah* before *ha'eitz* out of choice. There is no clear consensus either way.] In the third view, one always chooses his favorite. If they are all equally favored, one chooses the item of *shivas haminim*. The consensus is to follow the second view. However, it is recommended that one use the fruit of the *shivas haminim*.

The question arises whether there is an order of *kedimah* for the *brocha* within the seven. One would think that the Torah lists them in order of their value. Indeed, this is the presumed order of *kedimah* – with one caveat. The *passuk* mentions the word *Eretz*, the holy land, twice. Five crops are listed after the first mention, and the remaining two are listed after the second mention. The order is: wheat, barley, grapevine, fig and pomegranate after the first *eretz*. Olive and date after the second *eretz*.

Accordingly, the Talmud says that the order is according to the proximity to *eretz*. Thus, it is possible that the seventh fruit, a date, takes *kedimah* over the third fruit, a grape. If the two fruits are equally close to *eretz*, such as wheat and olives, one gives *kedimah* to that which is earlier in the *passuk* – in this case, the wheat. These two happen to have different *brochos* as well. If the wheat is made into a cake, its *brocha* is *mezonos*. If the wheat is cooked whole, its *brocha* is *ha'adamah*. If the kernels are toasted, we follow the view that the *brocha* is *shehakol*. This is an abnormal way to eat it, and is only

eaten this way in emergencies.

According to this rule of *kedimah*, if one had barley cake and an olive, the olive should come first. However, the poskim debate this point. The consensus is to give precedence to the item with the *mezonos brocha*, since the *brocha* reflects the superior quality of a more processed food. If the kernels are cooked whole, their *brocha* is *ha'adamah*. Normally, one would recite *ha'eitz* before *ha'adamah*. In this case, the wheat's superior value due to its earlier mention in the *passuk* could take priority. Here, too, the poskim debate the matter. The consensus is to give priority to the superior *brocha*, *ha'eitz*. The same would apply to toasted barley. [See Brochos 41a-b 44a 48b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 187-9 208 211:1-5, commentaries.]

D) Chamaishes minei dagan

The Torah recognizes five bread grains: wheat barley rye oats and spelt. Food produced from these are staples in the diet. Their *brocha* reflects their universality. *Mezonos* connotes a satisfying food, capable of sustaining people. *Hamotzie* extols the praise of bread. Once prepared, bread is ready to eat at all times with no cooking, satisfies in small amounts, does not require utensils, keeps well, is easily transported and can be accompanied by many supplements. Hashem created wheat with its properties specifically to produce bread, including the work entailed in its preparation. Its *brocha* describes how Hashem brings forth the bread from the ground, for this is its purpose. It is, thus, a naturally sophisticated food. Bread is defined as *soaid*, providing a meal. Bread is baked.

The next best staple is *maase kedaira*, food of these grains cooked, including pasta and grits. Its *brocha* is *mezonos*, sustaining. Without the baked bread quality, these grains still sustain. This involves preparation, including some processing. For grains eaten whole, and other starches such as potatoes, the *brocha* is *ha'adamah*. The *zan* aspect is lacking, and they are not considered sustaining. The kernels have the cereal-grain quality, but have not been processed enough. The effort to process raises the stature of the grains, known as *ishtani lemaalyusa*. This is what entitles them to their own special *brocha*. Entirely processing gives them *hamotzie*. Partial processing gives them *mezonos*.

The same foods can be made into convenient snacks. Not a real staple, these snacks are endowed with bread-grain qualities, and are more filling than regular snacks. They also have the *brocha mezonos*. The common term for such snacks is *pas haba'ah bekisnin*. There are various translations of the term. Some say it means 'bread eaten with *kisnin*,' a toasted barley snack, a desert consisting of sweetened dough like our cake. Another meaning is a bread made into a *kis*, pocket filled with fruits, like pie. A third meaning is bread made to be eaten *kis-kis* or *kus-kus* (not the food cous-cous), in nibbles. This refers to a crispy thin bread, not meant as a staple, but as a snack at the end of a meal.

The *passuk* mentions wheat before barley. Therefore, in a situation where one has both of them, the *brocha* should be recited on the wheat item. The other grains are not mentioned in this *passuk*. They are known to be considered bread grains, in part due to their leavening quality. Since the Torah only mentions wheat and barley, the other three are categorized as sub-species of those two in the context of *kedimah*. Spelt is considered a sub-species of wheat. Oats and rye are a sub-species of barley. Therefore, if one has various types of bread, the order would be wheat, barley, spelt and rye/oats. Since barley

is mentioned in the *passuk*, and is one of the actual *shivas haminim*, it comes before spelt. Bread comes before *kisnin*, and *kisnin* come before *maase kedairah*. Though the latter three species are not mentioned as *shivas haminim*, many poskim maintain that they should have their *brocha* recited and be eaten before the fruits of the *shivas haminim*, for two reasons. They are sub-species of the first two, that are *shivas haminim*. And the *brocha mezonos* is recited before *ha'eitz* or *hagafen*.

In our case, there are two types of cookie. One is made of wheat flour and the other is an oatmeal cookie. The questioner plans to eat both types. The general rule of *kedimah* would be to recite the *brocha* on the wheat cookie, for two reasons. Wheat is superior to begin with, and it is mentioned as one of the *shivas haminim*. However, our case is slightly more complicated. The oatmeal cookie has some wheat flour in it. Is the proportion of wheat flour important? If, for example, the oatmeal cookie has more wheat flour than oatmeal in it, does that make it equal to the wheat cookie? Or do we say that the wheat cookie is entirely wheat, so it is superior? What if the wheat is the minority? In other mixtures, a minority of flour mixed with a majority of non-flour ingredients can make the *brocha mezonos*. What if the wheat flour is only added for texture, rather than taste? Other such mixtures are not *mezonos*. Does the name and taste of the cookie, 'oatmeal', have any bearing, even though it has a wheat ingredient?

The concept of a minority component being the most prominent is based on the idea that the mixture was made with this in mind. The grain ingredient was added for its satisfying quality and flavor. In this case, that is the main factor. It was not meant as an additive. Therefore, we follow even a minority. In mixtures where all components have equally satisfying qualities, we would follow the majority. This would mean that if the oatmeal cookie has a majority of wheat flour, it is equal to the wheat-only cookie. However, the reason the oatmeal is used as a major ingredient, even in the minority, is due to its oaty texture. The issue here is *kedimah* based on perceived prominence. If they were kinds of bread, a white bread would take *kedimah* over a multi-grain bread, even if the majority ingredient was wheat. It is called multi-grain specifically to distinguish it from pure wheat. The multi-grain gives it its distinct flavor. [See Brochos 35a-38a 39a-b 41a-42a 44a-b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 168:4-7 208:2-9 211:4-6, commentaries.]

In conclusion, dried fruit may be considered whole, as opposed to pitted fruit. A wheat cookie appears more prominent than an oat cookie, even with wheat ingredients.

On the parsha *Yisro brought offerings .. and Aharon came .. to eat bread .. [18:12]* If Yisro was eating the meat of the offerings anyhow, this would be considered the most special food. Why, does the Torah mention that they came to eat bread? Bread and even cake has *kedimah* for the *brocha*, even if it is not one of the stated *shivas haminim*. For example oat cakes would come before wine. Although it might not be of the same quality as another food, bread is always considered the most prominent. Indeed, some say that the word is used here as a reference to the offering meat. [See *Ibn Ezra*]

Sponsored by 'your name here' 

© Rabbi Shimon Silver, January 2013.

Subscriptions and Sponsorships available. (412) 421-0508. halochoscope@hotmail.com