

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

What is the *brocha* on coated or plain matzo crackers, less than a *kezayis*? Is it different if they are eaten as a breakfast? May unflavored matzo crackers be used for the *seder*?

The issues:

A) *Pas*, bread, *pas haba'ah bekisnin*, snack'bread'; *Hamotzie* and *mezonos*

B) *Tzuras hapas* – defining 'bread'

C) *Matzo*

A) *Pas, pas haba'ah bekisnin*

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 main differences between regular bread and *pas kisnin* are that bread always requires *hamotzie* and *bircas hamazon*. It also requires *netilas yadayim* if a *kezayis*, olive size will be eaten. If twice this amount will be eaten, the *netila* requires a *brocha*. *Pas kisnin* does not usually require these. Its *brochos* are *mezonos* and *al hamichyah*. Howev-

er, if *pas kisnin* are used as a staple in a meal, known as *kvius seuda*, they are treated like bread. At any meal where bread is served, it becomes the mainstay, regardless of how many other foods are eaten with it. In the same way, one who substitutes crackers for the bread must consider them *pas*. *Kvius seuda* is the subject of debate. Clearly a full meal counts. *Shabbos* morning *kiddush* does not count. Some maintain that even breakfast does not count. A wedding dinner is a meal. One wishing to avoid washing and *bentching* should also avoid the cakes and crackers. Otherwise, he will have simply substituted them for bread. One who eats a large amount of cake has made it into his meal. Some say this is four egg-sizes in volume. Others say it depends what the rest of the meal is like. If he eats the equivalent amount that he would otherwise eat as bread, this becomes his *pas*. As a rule, any time he substitutes with this for his bread, including a '*mezonos*'-roll, it is considered *pas*. [*Mezonos*-rolls are especially problematic. They are made specifically to be used as bread.] One in doubt about the amount or status, may consciously be *kovaia seuda*, by mentally deciding to use this as his bread in the meal. Then he may wash and *bentch*. [See *Brochos* 31b- 32a 35a-38a, *Poskim*. *Tur Sh Ar OC* 168:(esp 7) 208:2-9, commentaries. *Igros Moshe OC* I:56, etc.]

B) Defining bread

To bear the *brocha hamotzie*, the food must fit the definition of bread. *Maase kedaira* can never be considered *pas*, even if one is *kovaia seuda* on it. *Pas*, or *lechem*, can be determined by its status with regard to the *mitzvah* of *chalah*, the tithe separated from dough or bread. The Torah applies *chalah* to *lechem ha'aretz*. We assume that anything not qualifying for *chalah* is not *hamotzie* food. The determining factors include the *tzuras hapas*, form of the baked product, the *belilah*, consistency of the dough or batter, and the manner of baking. [In some cases the *chalah* obligation is Rabbinical. These obligations have no bearing on the *brocha*. Some types of dough are suitable to be baked as bread, but are cooked instead. The dough might require *chalah*, but the cooked food is *maase kedairah*. Therefore, we see that one must bear in mind all factors before relying on one of them. Nonetheless, the *chalah* obligation is the starting point.]

The Talmud mentions *tzuras hapas* (or *toar lechem*, *turisa denahama*) regarding bread that was cooked after it was baked. Has it lost its status due to the change in its appearance? If the pieces retain the appearance of bread, their *brocha* remains *hamotzie*. Usually, this means that the piece is a *kezayis*. This passage is referenced to explain other phenomena mentioned by the Talmud. *Truknin*, also known as *kuva de'ar'a*, does not require *hamotzie* unless used for *kvius seuda*. In one view, this is bread baked in a hole in the ground, that lacks *tzuras hapas*. It looks close enough to require *hamotzie* when used for *kvius seuda*. This indicates a partial *tzuras hapas* concept. Others translate it as batter baked in a hole in the oven. Some say this is loose batter. Firm batter is always considered bread if baked. Some small baked snacks, such as pretzels, are not considered *tzuras hapas* by the *poskim*. It appears that these do not qualify as partial bread for *kvius seuda*.

Blilah is referenced on two counts. Some say that a thin batter is never made to be used for a staple meal, but as a snack or *maase kedaira*. Some *blilos* are too thin and crude to qualify for the *chalah* obligation. Their *brocha* will always be *mezonos*, no matter how much is eaten or whether with a meal. A *blilah* enough to require *chalah*, baked in some fashion, is considered real *lechem* by many *poskim*.

The manner of baking determines whether it was intended as serious bread or as a snack or *maase kedaira*. The Talmud debates *maase ilfas*, pan-baked bread. This is not placed on a flat sheet, but in a pot with no water. Most follow the view considering it pas.

Lechem he'asuy lekutach, bread baked in the sun, made to be broken up and eaten with a sauce, is not considered serious bread. In modern times, breakfast cereals are 'dried' in a dryer, rather than baked. This means that they do not have *tzuras hapas*, apart from their size and their intended manner of eating. If the loaves were carefully shaped before being sun-baked, there is at least a Rabbinical *chalah* obligation. This raises a question with regard to modern cases. Bagel chips are baked in large enough loaves, but with the intention of breaking them into snack bits. Unlike the *kutach* bread, these are not sun baked. *Knuvkaos*, bread baked for crumbs, is considered *lechem*, apparently Scripturally for *chalah*, and presumably so for *hamotzie*. Contemporary poskim discuss breakfast cereals, but make no mention of washing and reciting *hamotzie*. Presumably, it lacks *tzuras hapas* due to its size, is considered *asuy lekutach*, or the meal is not significant.

Usually, a *kezayis* is necessary for *tzuras hapas*, but it is possible on a smaller piece. This refers to whether a piece taken from a loaf retains its original *tzuras hapas*. A cracker that was always smaller than a *kezayis* might never attain *tzuras hapas*. The Talmud makes reference to a loaf used for an *eruv* – an '*isar*.' This is a coin, and some commentaries say this refers to the volume of the loaf, which is smaller than a *kezayis*. This might be an extreme. Nonetheless, it seems that this would still be considered *hamotzie* bread.

Some consider the overall guiding principle on *hamotzie* to be the normal use for *kvius seuda*, based on '*soaid*'. Thus, though *pas haba'ah bekisnin* has at least three translations, we may follow all of them leniently. Bread's advantages are its use as a staple and the effort in its process. Cake is not naturally a staple, but is carefully prepared. If used as a staple, it becomes 'bread'. Crudely prepared breads are occasionally used as a staple. Foods prepared carefully, but specifically as snacks were never meant for *kvius seuda*. Thus, the definition of *tzuras hapas* has something to do with the use of the item in a *seuda*. Though the Talmud only mentions this with regard to losing its status when cooked, changing from pas to *maase kedaira*, the poskim use it to determine the *brocha*. Consequently, some snacks will always be considered *maase kedaira*, or its equivalent.

The determining factor seems to be: if it is basically a bread, such as a matzo dough, but baked as a snack, such as a cracker, its *brocha* is *mezonos*, unless one is *kovaia seuda* with it. If it is basically a non-bread food snack, with bread ingredients, such as a hard small pretzel, it never requires *hamotzie*. [See Brochos 37b-38a 41b-42a Eruvin 80b Psachim 37a-38a Chalah 1:5, Poskim. Rambam Brochos 3:9. Tur Sh Ar OC 168, commentaries. Sdei Chemed Brochos 1:10. Ig'M EH I:114. Minchas Yitzchok I:71. Tz'E II:2 III:6 XI:19. Moadim Uzmanim 323. Mekor Habracha 14 15 26. Brochos, Forst, p. 239.]

C) Matzo

The Torah mentions different types of 'bread' used for *korbanos*. Almost all were non-*chametz*. One type is called *rekikin*, translated by some as wafers. It seems to resemble the dry thin matzos that we use nowadays. In former times, unleavened bread was made like Afghan bread, without letting it rise. Wafers were not used for regular meals. Furthermore, the Talmud refers to brittle cracker-type baked dough being *mezonos*. This is made from the same ingredients as bread, but is not made as the staple. There are vari-

ous interpretations, including one that seems to explain it as modern day matzo.

Accordingly, modern matzos are the source of a major difference in *minhag* between Ashkenazim and Sepharadim. Many Sepharadim maintain that during the year they are not considered normal bread. Unless one is *kovaia seuda* on them, he does not recite *hamotzie*. On *Pesach*, when this is the only bread (with the exception of certain communities who still have the tradition to use thicker softer matzos), it becomes real bread with the *brocha hamotzie*. Ashkenazim consider them bread year-round. Some poskim distinguish between matzos baked for *Pesach* and those baked for year-round.

This is complicated when *Pesach* matzos are baked specifically as cracker snacks. This is evident from their size, and from flavors or coatings added afterwards. [Flavoring the dough raises concerns that it will leaven too quickly. Ashkenazim do not use matzo *ashira*, in which fruit juice or other liquids are used in place of water.] In this case, many poskim invoke the rule that it is not considered fit for *kvius seuda*, or that it was never intended for it. Due to the combination of factors, the poskim seem to agree that one who does not use such crackers for *kvius seuda* should not say *hamotzie*. Some suggest washing, but reciting *mezonos*. Eating them only as a *kvius* (with *hamotzie*) is commended.

As for using them for the *seder*, firstly, matzo for the *mitzvah* must be *shemurah*, guarded for the sake of the *mitzvah*. It must be guarded from possibilities of *chametz* and also prepared with intent to use for the *mitzvah*. Normally, matzo may be presumed to be made for the *mitzvah*. Why else would one bake 'bread' like this? In our case, however, it was never meant as 'bread', or to be used for the *seder*. Secondly, the unadulterated taste of the matzo is vital for the proper fulfillment of the *mitzvah*. The only accompaniment allowed is water, and in the case of *korech*, the *maror*. Indeed the *korech* raises its own questions due to this. If one can be sure that unflavored crackers are *shemura*, they may be used for the *seder*. Thirdly, the product must fully qualify as *lechem*. In light of our earlier discussion, crackers might only qualify as *lechem* when used for *kvius seuda*. While this might not disqualify it for the *seder*, it raises concerns. [See refs to section B, especially Sdei Chemed Broshos 1:10. Tzitz Eliezer XI:19. Chalah 1:2 8 Psachim 35a-38b 115a-b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 453:1 2 4 454:1-2 455:5-6, commentaries.]

In conclusion, the *brocha* on all crackers is *mezonos*, unless one is *kovaia seuda*. Some say one should still wash *netilas yadayim*. They should not be used for the *seder*.
On the Parsha ... *Chalos matzos .. rekikai matzos .. On chalos lechem chametz .. [6:12-13]*
The commentaries say that *chalos* and *rekikin* were the same, except that oil was mixed into *chalos*, but spread over *rekikin* after baking. The *chametz* seems to have no oil. Further, the commentaries point out that this *korban todah* was mainly the *chametz*, with the other types of loaves as a supplement. Perhaps one reason is: the purpose of the *korban todah* is to supply a *seuda* for one's friends in celebration of thanksgiving. For a *seuda*, one requires substantial bread. The usual matzo was not substantial enough.

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