

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

Which *brocha* is said on candied *esrog* peel? If one eats some candied *esrog* peel, may he recite the *brocha* on the smell of a dried *esrog*? May he recite it on the candied *esrog*?

The issues:

- A) *Brochos* recited on peels
- B) *Brochos* on candied fruit
- C) *Brochos* on scents

A) *Brochos* on fruit rinds

Brochos are based on a Scriptural concept, though most are Rabbinically ordained. *Bircas hamazon*, the grace after a bread meal, is a Scriptural obligation. Many maintain that *bircas hatorah*, recited before fulfilling the *mitzvah* of Torah study, is also Scripturally mandated. Based on this, the Rabbis instituted *brochos* of three types. *Birchos hamitzvah* recited before performing a *mitzvah*. *Birchos hashevach* recited as praise on the existence of Hashem's Creation, His control and monitoring of nature, and other kindnesses. *Birchos hanehenin* are recited before benefiting from the bounty of the Creation.

The principal benefit referred to is eating and drinking. The logic for instituting *birchos hanehenin* is that before benefiting from this world one should acknowledge Hashem Who created it. Taking it without a *brocha* is akin to stealing. The *brocha* is to 'ask permission' before benefiting from the item in the way Hashem intended it. Hashem created types of foods, used in their intended way to benefit mankind. When using something in an unintended way, one still feels benefit. However, the *brocha* recited would need to reflect this usage.

Accordingly, products of a plant other than its main fruit do not take the standard *brocha*. Vine leaves, for example, are considered *pri ha'adamah*, fruit of the ground. The classic Talmudic example of a multiple fruit plant is the caper bush. It has four edible parts. Certain products are not even really meant for regular consumption, but can be altered to make them edible. Thus, if one manages to turn wood into something edible, it would take the *brocha shehakol*. The Talmud compares the laws of rinds, shells and pits of *orlah*, fruit grown on a young tree less than three years old, to the *brocha* laws. Based on this, the poskim maintain that one should recite *ha'aitz* on edible pits. The shells or rinds are sometimes an integral part of the fruit, sometimes a protective cover, and sometimes they are not critical to the protection of the inner fruit. This raises some question about how much they can be considered a part of the fruit.

In terms of edibility, rinds could fall into either category. Some fruits are eaten with their peel. One who desires to eat the peel should recite *ha'aitz*. Other rinds are edible but not usually eaten. These should take the *brocha ha'adamah*. Nut-shells are not edible. Softer shells made edible by processing could take the *brocha shehakol*.

However, the poskim debate the status of rinds. It seems that all are in agreement that if the tree is planted with the intent to eat the rinds of the fruit, the *brocha* on the rind would be *ha'aitz*. On other rinds, some maintain that one would recite *ha'aitz* when eating them separately, cooked in sugar or honey. They consider them a part of the fruit itself, like the pits. Others maintain that the pits are inside the main body of the fruit. The rinds are outside, and are like leaves. Their *brocha* is *ha'adama*. A third opinion maintains that the *brocha* on the rinds cooked in sugar is *shehakol*. This is partly based on the *minhag*, prevailing practice in many communities. As a result some poskim suggest that since there are three opinions, and one is anyhow decidedly *shehakol*, one should always recite *shehakol*. *Esrog* [and *tznon*] rinds are different. They are very thick and are considered the main fruit. One eating them without the meat of the fruit recites *ha'aitz*. This refers to the thick middle rind. The thin outer peel is not considered *ha'aitz* when eaten by itself. [See Brochos 35a, Poskim. Tur, Sh Ar OC 202:3 5-6 18 Rema. MA 17 Kaf Hachaim 55-56, 203:AR 2, 204:11-12 TZ 15, commentaries.]

B) Candied fruit

Sometimes, two foods with different *brochos* are combined. In such situations, the question arises, which *brocha* should be recited, or should both of their *brochos* be recited? A third possibility would be to recite *shehakol*. A fourth possibility would be to avoid the problem. One could either eat the combination in a meal, or eat other foods of both *brocha* type before eating the combination. Generally, the rule is to recite the *brocha* of the major component, known as the *ikar*. This becomes the only food requiring its own *brocha*. The *tafel*, secondary food, is exempted by the *brocha* on the *ikar*.

When a food is cooked in sugar, the issue is whether sugar is a separate entity, or is simply used to sweeten the other food. In some cases, it certainly looks as though the other food functions as a flavoring for the sugar. In others, the sugar enhances the main food. In some cases, there is very much sugar, but the main food is very distinct. In these situations, it is hard to decide which food is primary and which is *tafel*.

Sugar is the main product of a plant. Some consider sugar cane *aitz*, while others maintain that it is *ha'adamah*. Others say that the juice of any plant other than grape vines and olive trees cannot be considered fruit. Although the only way to eat sugar-cane or sugar beets is by extracting the sugar, it does not merit a specific *brocha* based on the plant. This is the view we follow nowadays, and we recite *shehakol*. However, the other views are taken into account, especially in cases such as ours. A second matter of debate is whether a food that needs to be candied in order to be edible could be considered fruit. One way to view this is that this is the intended use of the fruit in Creation. The other way is to consider it a non-fruit because it cannot be eaten by itself. In practice, it depends on how the item appears raw. If it is the main fruit, or if it can be eaten at some point raw, it retains its main *brocha*. Spices can be of two types. Those usually added to season other foods do not retain their own *brocha* when they are mixed in to a lot of sugar. Those usually eaten as a delicacy in their own right retain their *brocha*. Candied *esrog* rinds, or *esrog* preserves, where the pieces are recognizable, retain the *brocha ha'aitz*. [See Tur Sh Ar OC 202:7-8 12 15-18 203:6-7 204:11-12, commentaries.]

C) Brochos on scents

The *brochos* recited over good smells are *birchos hanehenin*. Just as *brochos* are re-

cited before eating food, this *brocha* should be recited before the first whiff. That is the most beneficial. The Talmud bases the reason that special *brochos* were instituted for smells on the last verse in *Tehilim*, that the soul praises Hashem, and is compelled to praise. Which benefit is exclusive to the soul? It must be smell. The commentators explain the choice of smell over other senses. One reason is that smell is closer to the tangible than, for example, music. Apparently small smell particles penetrate the body but do not remain permanently. This is soul-benefit.

As for foods, there are various different *birchos harei'ach*. On spice-scents that grow on a tree as fruit, flower, bark, wood, leaves, gummy or crystalline saps, or roots the *brocha* is *borei atzei besamim*, Who creates scented trees; on scents from plants that do not survive all seasons, *borei isbei besamim*, Who creates scented herbs; on scents from animals or minerals, *borei minei besamim*, Who creates species of scents; on certain fragrant oils, *borei shemen araiv*, Who creates fragrant oils; on fruit that smells good, *hanosain rai'ach tov lapairos*, Who gives good scent to fruits. The consensus is not to recite this *brocha* if one is planning on eating it and reciting the other *bircas hanehenin* on it. However, this applies to one who is really not planning on smelling it, but that while eating it he also benefits from the scent. If one wants to both smell and eat it, he recites both *brochos*. The poskim debate which *brocha* should be recited first.

There is some debate about scent items that are made edible by mixing, such as flower petals. They are not eaten alone, but can be used to flavor and scent water. Is it *pairos*, a food, or an *aitz*? Do we focus on its primary beneficial purpose in Creation? Some suggest *borei minei besamim*. Just as *shehakol* works for all foods, and is resorted to in doubt, so too, this *brocha* is all inclusive. The poskim debate smelling hot bread. Some suggest *borei minei besamim*. Others maintain that it is not a spice-scent of any kind. Yet others suggest *hanosain rai'ach tov*. [Perhaps this is short for ... *lapairos*, or perhaps it deliberately omits this word because bread is not fruit. If so, we have another *brocha* on something that is not specifically a spice scent but smells good anyhow. It is noteworthy that the Yerushalmi substitutes '*borei ..*' with '*asher nasan raiach tov ..*' for all these *brochos*. In fact, the poskim debate the language of the *brocha*. Some maintain it is *hanosain*. Others maintain it is *asher nasan*. As a result, some practice stringency and try to avoid this *brocha* totally. The prevailing practice, however, is to recite *hanosain*.] Some rule the *brocha* to be *hanosain rai'ach tov bapas*. to bread. Some encourage smelling the bread hot to be able to say the *brocha*, while others are hesitant about ruling on the *brocha*. Some even recommend avoiding smelling hot bread to avoid the dilemma.

Our case has a few peculiarities. The *esrog* that will be smelled is not the same as the piece that will be eaten. The *esrog* to be smelled is very dry. It is unfit to be eaten in its present state, but would need to be soaked and cooked. Possibly, it could be sucked on. It could also be ground and used to flavor something, including water or syrup. Nonetheless, it is a fruit. [People eat carob that is often more dried out than this *esrog*!] As for the eating *esrog*, in its candied [and possibly chocolate dipped] state, it does not have the same smell that one would otherwise recite the *brocha* over. Thus, on the one hand, the smelling *esrog* has advantages over the eating *esrog* in terms of the *brocha* on its smell. Could one recite the *brocha* on the candied *esrog*? If so, could one also smell the wood-hard *esrog* with the same *brocha*? Could one recite the *brocha*, *hanosain* on

the wood-hard *esrog*, or should it be *borai minei* or *atzai*? Could one recite *hanosain* on the hard *esrog* and have in mind to smell the candied *esrog* as well?

The ruling is cited, if one ate a piece of candied lemon, and recited *shehakol*, he may rely on this *brocha* for the smell as well. Clearly, one could recite the *birchas haraiach* on candied lemon. This should apply to candied *esrog*. In addition, the poskim distinguish between smelling blossoms and under-ripe fruits. Blossoms are not considered *pairos*, but once the fruit forms, one could recite *hanosain* even though it is not yet edible. The dry *esrog* should be the same. Furthermore, cloves are considered a fruit, and one recites *hanosain* even on a hard clove. One could argue that a clove will eventually be used to season food, as opposed to a hard *esrog*. In fact, *tznun*, a type of hard radish whose peel is compared to that of an *esrog* [see above], is also cooked before eating. It retains its *brocha*, *ha'adamah*. However, if it hardened too much, the cooked product gets the *brocha shehakol*. The same would seem to be the rule for a hardened *esrog*. Cloves were created for their use as seasoning. *Esrogim* were not created to be dried hard and ground up or chewed. [See Eikev 8:8-10, Brochos 35a, 43a-b, Yer. 6:6, Poskim. Chinuch 430. Avudraham, Bir. Hareiach. Tur Sh. Ar. O.C. 203:8 Shaarei Teshuva, 216 [Kaf Hachaim 33], 217:1, commentaries.]

One could hold both types of *esrog* at the time of the *brocha*, *hanosain*. The *brocha* works on the candied *esrog* as it would on candied lemon. Just in case one cannot smell it so strongly, the dried *esrog* will augment it. The dried *esrog* will also demonstrate clearly that one wishes to smell as well as eat, and is obliged in both *brochos*.

In conclusion, it would seem most prudent to recite the *brocha hanosain* on both types of *esrog* at the same time, and then smell both of them. Note: On *Tu BiShevat* it is customary to eat many fruits, in recognition of Hashem's Creation of these sweets. It would seem appropriate to use the opportunity to recite *brochos* on the scents of fruits as well. This is also one of the benefits intended in their Creation.

On the Parsha ... For the [waters] were bitter ... Hashem taught him about a wood. He threw it into the waters and the waters became sweetened ... [15:23 25]. The commentaries debate the nature of this wood. *Chaza"l* say that this was actually a bitter wood. The sweetening of the waters was a double miracle: bitter wood sweetened bitter water. In one view, it was actually a wood that is considered poisonous for certain animals. [See, e.g., *Targum Yonasan/Yerushalmi, Ibn Ezra*] *Ramban* suggests that this wood was able to sweeten the water naturally. Moshe did not know this until Hashem taught him about it. According to this reasoning, the entire episode was a test. It is entirely possible, according to this view, that the wood was sugar-cane. If so, this would be a source to consider it *aitz*. Nonetheless, the Bnai Yisroel drank the water due to thirst, rather than to benefit from the sweetness of the wood. The *brocha* would then be *shehakol*. One can also speculate whether the water turned sweeter than regular water. Perhaps the *Ramban* means that this wood was able to remove the bitterness, rather than to sweeten it, similar to sweetening coffee or tea. However, as a test, it seems that Hashem showed how what seemed to be bitter at first turned out to be a treat. Those who consider sugar *ha'aitz* would certainly recommend eating some sugar on *Tu BiShevat* together with other fruits!

 **Sponsored by John and Lisa Earnest in gratitude for the recovery of Chanah bas Keturah.**

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