



Parashat Yitro 5771 - #172

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On Tu Bishvat...

The Custom of Eating Fruit on Tu Bishvat

[Shut She'eilat Shlomo vol. 1 #212]

Question: There are those who say that we are obligated to eat fifteen different fruits on Tu Bishvat, since Tu Bishvat is on the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat. Is this a custom or a law?

Answer: There is no mention in the Mishnah or Talmud that Tu Bishvat is a day of joy, rather it is the new year for trees. This means that it is the date that differentiates between the fruit of the past year and the coming year in terms of the obligation to tithe the produce (Rosh Hashanah 15). Among the Rishonim (Earlier Authorities), Tu Bishvat is mentioned as a day on which Tachanun is not recited (Minhagei Maharil), and this is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 131:6). The Magen Avraham mentioned the Ashkenazic custom to enjoy many fruits (brought in the Mishnah Berurah ibid. #31), and this is also the Sephardic custom (Pri Eitz Hadar – seder limud le-leil Tu Bishvat). The quantity of fifteen fruits, however, is not mentioned. Our master, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook, wrote, "As is customary, there is on it [Tu Bishvat] an impression of a festive day, the first indication of the revival of the settlement in our Holy Land (Igrot Ha-Re'iyah vol. 2, p. 61). It says in the Jerusalem Talmud (end of Kiddushin), "Rav Bon said: In the future a person will have to give an accounting for all that his eyes beheld, but he did not eat." Rav Bon's intention was not that a person should be a glutton and eat everything in his sight; rather he should endeavor to taste everything (obviously everything that is permissible) at least once. And it also relates that Rabbi Eleazar was concerned about this idea, and he would save his money in order to eat each of the year's new produce. Similarly, the Mishnah Berurah (Orach Chaim 225:19) writes, "It is meritorious to eat a little from each year's new produce. The reason is in order to demonstrate the preciousness of Hashem's creation." He does not mention, however, that one must eat fifteen types of fruit.

Summary: It is an ancient custom to enjoy many fruits on Tu Bishvat. And it is praiseworthy to eat fruits which one does not normally eat during the year.

Rav Aviner on... Which Blessings to Say?

[Be-Ahavah Ube-Emunah – Beshalach 5771 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Rice: Before: Mezonot. After: Nefashot.

Rice cakes and Rice bread: Before: Shehakol, because you can't easily tell what it's made of.

Rice pudding: Ashkenazim – Mezonot, Sefardim - Adama.

Currants: Etz.

Pineapple: Adama. Because it's recognizable.

Peanuts: Adama. "American Peanuts" coated in flour: Mezonot, because the flour determines the blessing.

Borekas: Mezonot.

Bamba: Shehakol, because the corn is not recognizable.

Burghul [wheat groats]: Mezonot

Chewing Gum: Before: Shehakol, because of the flavor swallowed. Afterwards, no blessing, because not enough is consumed.

Already Chewed Gum: No blessing.

Ice cream: Shehakol, if one eats it together with the cone. If one eats the cone separately, then one should recite Mezonot as well. One should recite the after-blessing only if he consumed the ice cream quickly.

Granola: If it is pasty, then one should recite Mezonot. If it consists of seeds that remain individual and whole, then each type should be related to on its own, unless it is such a minority as to be clearly nullified to the rest.

Pumpkin seeds and watermelon seeds, if planted for the sake of the seeds, then "Adama", but if planted for the sake of the fruit, then "Shehakol". If uncertain, then recite "Shehakol".

Millet: If the seeds are whole, then Adama. If they are entirely mashed, then Shehakol.

Porridge from the five types of grain (wheat, oats, rye, barley, spelt): If thick, then Mezonot. If liquidy, then Shehakol.

Sugar wafers: Mezonot, because the flour determines the blessing, and not the filling, even if there is not much flour.

The amount of Mezonot needed to incur an obligation to recite the Grace After Meals: 230cc. – eight match boxes, like bread.

As for sugar wafers made of potato flour, Shehakol.

Cooked wheat: If the kernels are whole, then Adama. If they are mashed or sticky, then Mezonot.

Sweet Challa: If the sweetness is recognizable, then Sefardim recite Mezonot, although some still recite Ha-Motzi. Ashkenazim recite Ha-Motzi.

Sweet Challa with a minority of water and a majority of some other liquid such as juice, oil or wine: Some Ashkenazim recite Ha-Motzi and some recite Mezonot. In any of these cases regarding challa, if someone had the equivalent of a meal, consuming 230 cc., the cubic area of eight match boxes, he recites Ha-Motzi.

Sunflower seeds are Adama.

Tehina is Shehakol, because you cannot recognize what it's made of.

Wine: Borei Peri Hagafen, it consists of less than half water.

Buckwheat [Hebrew "kusemet"] is not the spelt-kusemet of the five types of grain, but "kasha", and "Adama" is recited.

Leder [Dried fruit flattened like leather] is Shehakol, because its source is unrecognizable.

French toast made with oil and eggs: Ha-Motzi.

Fruit compote containing tree fruits and ground fruits: Recite both Etz and Adama, unless either is type is negligible, and hence nullified to the other type.

Liquids from cans of vegetables: Shehakol.

Grape juice: Borei Pri HaGafen, if less than half water.

Fruit juice: Shehakol, unless the juice includes pieces of whole fruit, in which case the fruit's

blessing is recited.

Malawah: Mezonot. If one consumes 230 cc., the equivalent volume of eight match boxes, then HaMotzi.

Matza when it is not Pesach: Sefardim – Mezonot. Ashkenazim – HaMotzi.

Crackers: Mezonot, because they're hard, thin, and crunchy.

Vegetable soup: If the vegetables are recognizable, then Adama. Otherwise, Shehakol.

Dried apricots: Etz.

Sprouts: Adama, because they constitute a common food. If they do not, then Shehakol, because their origin is not recognizable. If cooked, then Mezonot.

Bran. Shehakol, because its origin is unrecognizable.

Soy: Whole beans: Adama. As a food, Shehakol, because it is unrecognizable.

Farina cooked and thick: Mezonot; Watery: Shehakol.

Fruit salad containing tree fruits and ground fruits: Recite both Etz and Adama, unless either type is negligible, and hence nullified to the other type.

Sambossek [Indian Fried Vegetarian Turnover]: Mezonot.

Stuffed grape leaves: Nullified by whatever the filling is.

Popcorn: Shehakol: Because the corn cannot be recognized.

Pizza: If, as is the usual case, its base is not sweet, then Ha-motzi. If very sweet, then Mezonot. Even in that case, if one plans to eat two slices, then Ha-Motzi.

Pine nuts: Etz.

Passion Fruit: Adama due to the doubt about the appropriate blessing (Sefardim need not wait until the tree is past its fourth year to consume its fruit. Ashkenazim should wait.)

Rice crispies: Shehakol, because the rice is unrecognizable.

Candied fruits (peanuts, almonds, apples): If one can recognize what it is, then the regular blessing. Otherwise, Shehakol.

Rice cakes: Shehakol. Unrecognizable.

Soup pasta: From wheat: Mezonot.

Banana or potato chips: Adama. Recognizable.

Wheat chips: Mezonot.

Wheat toast: Motzi, because it's not considered to have changed, hence its blessing remains in place. If manufactured a priori to be toast, then Mezonot, like melba toast.

Couscous: Mezonot.

Oat meal: Mezonot.

Cornflour: As a porridge: Shehakol. Unrecognizable.

Cornflakes: Shehakol. Unrecognizable.

Candied fruit peels: If recognizable, Etz. Otherwise, or if coated in chocolate or sugar: Shehakol.

Cassata [ice cream with wafer or cookie]: Shehakol. If the cookie is consumed separately, then Mezonot as well.

Croutons – dark: Mezonot. Light, made with bread: Ha-motzi. If made a priori to be croutons: Mezonot.

Krembo: Like cassata.

Cashew: Etz.

Fruit or Vegetable paste: If the pieces are recognizable, then their regular blessing. Otherwise, Shehakol.

Chocolate: Shehakol, because you cannot tell that it came from a cocoa tree. Such is the widespread custom.

Strudel: Mezonot. The flour determines the blessing.

Puffed wheat: Adama. If it falls apart or crumbles. Mezonot.

Almonds coated with sugar or chocolate: Shehakol. Not recognizable.

Soup nuts: Mezonot.

Corn snacks (like Fritos, Bugles): Shehakol. Unrecognizable.

Medicines: No blessing because it is not food. If it tastes good, then Shehakol. If one drinks a minimum of water to swallow a tablet, then no blessing is recited on the water. If one drinks out of thirst, or the water is sweet, then one recites Shehakol.

Amounts:

To incur a first blessing: Any amount.

To incur blessings recited after food – Borei Nefashot, Al HaMichya or the Grace after Meals, an olive's size, 27 cc., like a match box. Condition: If consumed within four minutes.

To incur Borei Nefashot after drink, a revi'it, 86 cc., like half of a normal disposable cup, drinking fairly steadily.

Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #27

[adapted for middle-schoolers by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon from Rav Aviner's three-volume commentary on the siddur "Tefilat Amecha"]

The last chapter in Tehillim is also the last chapter of Psukei DeZimra. It sums up Tehillim and Psukei DeZimra with praises to Hashem. It includes many of the instruments used in the Beit haMikdash to help us offer these praises.

At the end, we say that the entire soul should praise Hashem. The soul has a spark of the Divine and is always trying to be closer to Hashem. One need not go far to find the light of Hashem. It is within the soul.

The Midrash Bereshit Rabbah says that for every breath – Neshima in Hebrew (soul is Neshama) - we must praise Hashem. Healthy people take for granted that they can breathe. Normally only when someone is sick do they realize how wonderful it is to be able to breathe. We take it for granted. We need to learn that we can take nothing for granted. Everything we have, even things that seem simple and obvious, are from Hashem. Therefore, everyone must always thank Hashem - for the past, present and future. When we do this, it prepares us for the Beit Ha-Mikdash, when we will use all the instruments to praise Hashem and become more and more connected to Him.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Cremation

Question: What is the Halachah regarding mourning for someone who chose to be cremated?

Answer: It is obviously forbidden to cremate someone or be cremated (see Gesher Ha-Chaim chap. 16 #9), but even if it is done, all of the laws of mourning apply. After all, we also mourn today for those who desecrate Shabbat which is much more severe.

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