

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

What *brocha* or *brochos* should be said when eating fish sticks, schnitzel or breaded chicken with a thick batter? What about a veggie schnitzel, in which the inner part is not usually eaten as a separate food? What about dessert made of pieces of apple or other fruit, fried in a batter and eaten at a meal?

The issues:

- A) The different *brochos*
- B) *Ikar* and *tafeil*, primary and secondary foods eaten together
- C) When the secondary element is a *mezonos* type food

A) *Mezonos, Ha'eitz and Shehakol*

The *birchos hanehenin*, instituted by the Rabbis before benefiting from food, reflect the purpose of Creation of a particular food as a benefit to mankind. While one could theoretically fulfill this with a single general *brocha*, this would not truly reflect full thanksgiving. Therefore, each food is analyzed according to the way it was created. Two foods rise to the level of an individual *brocha*, due to their unusual sustaining powers: bread and wine. Other foods are categorized into semi-general groups. Tree fruits are more sophisticated creations than ground products, so they get a *brocha* of their own, *ha'eitz*.

Zan, sustaining foods, are recognized as a class of their own. Thus, foods that have as their main component one of the grains that produce bread, get their own class of *brocha, mezonos*. These include baked goods that do not form the basis of a meal, such as cakes and cookies, and *maase kedeira*. Literally, this means something made in a pot. It refers to filling or sustaining food that was not baked. This category is usually understood as a reference to cooked or fried foods made of flour or its products. It does not include cooked whole grains. They are classed as regular ground produce, with the *brocha ha'adama*. It includes products of the grains that might not be milled as finely as flour, but are broken up. It also includes products like pasta, that have been dried or baked before they are cooked. Bread that is broken into unrecognizable pieces and cooked is considered *maase kedeira*. Cooking destroys its bread form. Frying is debated by the poskim. This does not refer to greasing a pan with a light coat of oil, but to immersing the food in the oil. If it is immersed in deep oil, it is considered cooked. However, if it is immersed in shallow oil, some poskim consider it baked or 'dry cooked', which is considered the same as baking over an open flame. Due to the debate, it is recommended to eat fried bread products only in the middle of a regular bread meal. As we shall discuss in the next sections, sometimes a food is made up of parts that include a *maase kedeira*, and are considered *maase kedeira* in their own right, according to some poskim.

Borei minei mezonos, is translated as 'He Who creates kinds of sustaining foods'. This general term could work as a *brocha* on foods other than those mentioned in the pre-

ceding paragraph. Indeed, rice and millet, when cooked well, take the same *brocha*. They are considered *zan*, though the majority view in the Talmud is not to consider them bread grains. It could also work in certain other situations. For example, if one recited *mezonos* on foods that should really be considered *hamotzie* type food, many poskim agree that he fulfilled his obligation. If he recited *shehakol* (see below) he definitely fulfills his obligation. This is because it is a *brocha koleless*, general *brocha*. In the same way *mezonos* is considered general for foodstuffs. This is based on the Talmudic dictum that one who bans himself from *mazon*, sustaining foods, is forbidden to consume anything but water and salt. These two minerals are not sustaining foods. Everything else is *mazon*. Accordingly, while it is not the dedicated *brocha* for foods other than those detailed above, it works for them anyhow. Unless one had this in mind specifically, the *brocha* on *mezonos* foods will not exempt one from reciting other *brochos* on other foods eaten at the same time. For example, if one eats two or more tree fruits he need only recite the *brocha* over the first one. If he eats a ground fruit as well, and recites *ha'adama* on it before eating the tree fruits (*the rules of precedence are not being discussed here) he still needs to recite *ha'eitz* on them. In the same way, if one eats foods that have *mezonos* and other *brochos*, the *mezonos* should not be relied on to exempt the other *brochos*.

Shehakol is recited on foods that do not grow from the ground. These include animal products and minerals, such as salts and water. Meats, poultry and fish are thus *shehakol* foods. It is also recited on any food for which the other *brochos* would not be appropriate. For example, if a vegetable is ground into an unrecognizable paste, it no longer qualifies for *ha'adama*. If the paste is recognizable, such as due to its color or chunks in it, it retains its *brocha*. Thus, corn chips could be a *shehakol* food, while many poskim would consider potato chips *ha'adama* food. *Shehakol* is also recited when eating a food in an unusual form. Some foods are not normally eaten raw, or are too sharp to be eaten alone. In such cases, one eating them would recite *shehakol*, if anything.

A veggie schnitzel is made of minced vegetables, often soy beans with other fillers, that can not be recognized. The core of the schnitzel without its batter would thus be a *shehakol* food. If the core was mixed with flour, it would raise the issues discussed in section C. *Shehakol* is also the *brocha* one would recite on a food for which the *brocha* is not known. If the *brocha* is totally unknown, one could recite *shehakol* with no reservations. Ideally, one should always try to discover the true *brocha* on a food, but if one does not know the *brocha* personally, he may still recite *shehakol*. In this case, however, it is not ideal to eat this food relying on the default *brocha*. [See Brochos Perk 6-7, Poskim. Tur, B.Y. Sh. Ar. OC 167 (bh.l 10) 202-206, commentaries.]

B) Ikar and tafeil

When eating more than one food at the same time one recites *brochos* appropriate for each food before consuming it. Many foods are eaten together. In many such circumstances, the *brocha* is recited only on one of them. First, one must determine which of the foods is the *ikar*, or primary food. The other is considered *tafeil*, secondary, and a *brocha* is not recited on it. If neither is primary, nor secondary, both *brochos* are recited. If the foods are mixed or joined, this would require separating them to recite the separate *brochos*, or eating other like-*brocha* foods before eating the joined or mixed foods.

Ikar and *tafeil* can occur in various forms. The most simple include a mixture of two

foods in small parts, a dip or coating, a second food to help eat the primary food, a soup or salad, and two distinct dishes usually eaten together. For example, corn chips are often dipped in salsa. The chips are *ikar* and the salsa is *tafeil*. In some locations a food might always be eaten with a salad, such as falafel, with or without a pita. In this case, the question must be raised, is this one food, or are they two foods? Is this a situation of one primary with a secondary food, or are they both primary?

Various rules determine *ikar* and *tafeil* that are applied separately or in combination. Sometimes, one rule will conflict with another. Therefore, the issues must be studied and it might involve consulting a *halachic* authority. Obviously, the most likely way to determine it is by measuring the majority. A second way could be by determining which of the foods is usually considered a staple or primary in most situations. However, neither of these would apply in the following case. Certain foods are very sharp or strong. They are never eaten 'neat'. They are always eaten with a cracker or other neutral food. Even if the neutral food is bread, the *brocha* is recited on the salty food. The bread is not eaten in its own right, but to dilute the salty fish or meat. In this situation, it is conceivable that more bread or cracker is eaten than salty fish. Bread is usually a main staple. Nonetheless, these two foods are always eaten this way, and the salty fish is primary. This is because this food is the reason for eating both.

The poskim debate the meaning of the lack of a *brocha* on the secondary food. In one view, since it is secondary it loses its significance and does not require a *brocha*. In the other view, it requires a *brocha*, but its significance is as an appendage to the primary food. Therefore, its *brocha* is the same as that of the primary food. This can be likened to spices added to a food. The spices might be in recognizable pieces, but are assimilated into the other food, rather than considered a mixture. [See Brochos 41a 44a, Poskim. Tur, Sh. Ar. OC 212, commentaries. Chazon Ish OC 27:9. Igros Moshe OC IV:42-43.]

C) When a secondary element is Mezonos


To fully understand this subject, we must study a few Talmud passages. First, the Talmud makes reference to *ikar* and *tafeil* when eating bread with other foods. This indicates that a bread meal, for which one recites *hamotzie* and no other *brochos*, is a case of *ikar* and *tafeil*. The reason only one *brocha* is recited is because the bread is always *ikar*, even though it is not necessarily the majority, nor might it even be considered the major component by the eater. A second passage debates the *brocha* on *chavitz kedaira*, a food made by cooking oats, honey and oil. In one view it is *mezonos*, because the oats are *ikar*. In the other view it is *shehakol*, because the honey is *ikar*. The Talmud concludes in favor of the *mezonos* view, because of the rule that anything containing a five-grain type food has the *brocha mezonos*. The Talmud does not indicate whether the oats are in the majority or not. Nor does it say why it is considered *ikar*. However, the language indicates that it is a case of *ikar* and *tafeil*. If so, the debate seems to center on the preference of *ikar*. However, the dictum cited in resolution indicates that the honey could well be an *ikar* here, yet it is overpowered by the *mezonos* food. From here the poskim determine that when one of the parts is a *mezonos* food, it is a more powerful *ikar* than usual.

In a third passage, one opinion says that beets cooked with some flour are a *ha'adama* food, while turnips cooked with more flour are *mezonos*. The second view says for both the *brocha* is *ha'adama*. The flour is added to thicken them.


The poskim debate how to apply these passages *halachically*. One view says that when flour is added to lentils, beans or almonds, 'lis'od' to act as a meal, the *brocha* is *mezonos*. If it is added to stick the parts together (like thickening) *mezonos* need not be recited. However, it is best to eat them in a bread meal. This implies that *mezonos* may be recited, which is problematic. Furthermore, almonds are not usually eaten with bread. A meal should not exempt them from their *brocha*. One answer is that this view believes that *ha'eitz* must be recited anyhow. There is a doubt about *mezonos*. Maybe the flour parts should be separated and a *mezonos* should be said on them. Therefore, eating them in a meal helps for this part. [There is a question whether a real *tafeil* eaten separately takes its own *brocha*. Evidently, if there is a possibility that the flour is *ikar* it may be separated for its own *brocha*.] Another view says that the flour can be considered *ikar* so long as it is not there just to thicken and stick the food, even if it is in the minority. A third view adds that if the flour is there to flavor the other food, it is considered an *ikar*. It is unclear whether this means that it is a second *ikar* or the *ikar*. Another view indicates that the flour must be there to flavor the merged mixture, rather than the other food (in which case it is not an *ikar*). The use of the word *kedaira* for the *chavitz* indicates that it is a type of *maase kedaira*. [See Brochos 35b 36b 39a, Poskim, commentaries.]

In conclusion, the schnitzel is clearly primarily meat or the other core food. However, due to the thickness of the batter, most of the views mentioned would consider it possibly also *mezonos*. One could not recite both *brochos* at once. The second would be considered an interruption. One could scrape off some of the crust to recite *mezonos*. Nonetheless, reciting *mezonos* might still touch on *brocha levatalah*, a *brocha* recited in vain. Theoretically, reciting *mezonos* could satisfy all requirements, being a *brocha koleless*. However, this is not recommended. In the case of the veggie schnitzel, one could say that the core is not normally eaten without the crumb crust, and is *tafeil*. Furthermore, it might have flour ingredients. This would make it even more likely to be a *mezonos* food. Eating them as part of a bread meal would resolve the issue. In the case of the breaded apple, this would not help entirely. One might still need to recite the *ha'eitz*, unless the apple is eaten with the main course.

On the Parsha ... Uveged Kkil'ayim sha'atnez ... [19:19]. The Torah does not explain what is considered kil'ayim in a garment. Elsewhere, the Torah tells us it is a merging of wool and linen. Why does it not say the same here? One could say that in that case both are recognizable. In this case they are mixed such that they can not be distinguished. (*Meshech Chochma*). The question is raised, [YD 299], why is there no rule of *bitul*, neutralizing by the majority, for *sha'atnez*. There are many answers, but perhaps the Torah is telling us that just as when they are recognizable as separate fabrics it is forbidden, so too, when they are merged and mixed, neither loses its significance to the other. Both are still considered *ikar*. Thus, there can be no *bitul*.

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