**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

**Rav David Brofsky**

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Dedicated in memory of   
Lillian Grossman *z”l* – Devora Leah bat Shlomo   
by Larry and Maureen Eisenberg

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Dedicated *le-zekher nishmot* Amelia Ray and Morris Ray   
on the occasion of their seventh *yahrtzeits*   
by their children Patti Ray and Allen Ray

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**Shiur #32:   
The Blessing before Fruits and Vegetables (4)**

**Sugar and Chocolate**

**Introduction**

In previous *shiurim*, we studied the laws of *birkat ha-peirot*, the blessings recited over fruits and vegetables. After determining which fruits receive the blessing of *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* and which *Borei Peri Ha-Adama*, we discussed the ramifications of changing the form of the fruit. We related to fruits which are crushed and processed, as well as to those which are cooked, and the status of their juice and soup that carries their taste.

This week, we will explore whether the purpose for which something was planted affects its *berakha*. This will lead us to briefly relate to the proper blessing to be recited over sugar and chocolate.

**The Role of Intention in *Birkat Ha-Peirot***

The Talmud (*Berakhot* 36a) cites a debate regarding the proper blessing to be recited before eating a palm-heart, a [vegetable](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vegetable) harvested from the inner core and growing [bud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bud) of certain [palm trees](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palm_tree):

Over the palm-heart, R. Yehuda says that the blessing is *Borei Peri Ha-Adama*, while Shmuel says that it is *She-Hakol.* R. Yehuda says it is *Borei Peri Ha-Adama*, regarding it as fruit, whereas Shmuel says that it is *She-Hakol*, since subsequently it grows hard.

The *gemara* concludes that the halakha is in accordance with Shmuel, who maintains that soft, inner part of the palm tree is not considered to be a “fruit” because it eventually hardens and becomes inedible.

Interestingly, the Talmud assumes that had the tree been planted for the sake of the palm-heart, the blessing would be *Borei Peri Ha-Adama*. However, “palms are not planted for the sake of the heart.”

The *Rishonim* discuss whether one may deduce from this passage a general principle that one says *She-Hakol* before eating something that grows from the ground if it was not planted with this purpose in mind.

The Ra’ah (*Berakhot* 36a, s.v. *ve-hilkhata*) writes that this principle indeed exists, but it does not apply to the fruit of a tree, but rather to other parts of a plant. Similarly, Tosafot (*Berakhot* 36a) applies this principle to grape leaves and almond shells.

The Rosh (*Berakhot* 6:3), however, expands this principle and rules that one says the blessing *She-Hakol* before eating small, bitter almonds, as “they were not planted with the intention of eating them as such, but rather in order to eat them when they are ripe.” The Rosh maintains that this principle applies to the almonds themselves, which were planted with the intention of being eaten ripe.

The Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah (*Berakhot* 25b, s.v. *ve-omrim*) offer a third approach. They explain that almonds are planted with the intention of eating the “fruit,” even when not ripe. One who eats bitter almonds is primarily eating the shell, and therefore he says *She-Hakol*. The Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah imply that if one were to eat the small, bitter almond alone, one would say *Borei* *Peri Ha-Adama*, as the almond itself was planted with the intention to be eaten, even if not in its present state.

This discussion – regarding whether the principle of “it was not planted with this in mind” applies only to other parts of the plant, only to the entire fruit regardless of how it is eaten, or even to the fruit when in certain stages of ripeness – is debated by the *Acharonim* as well. They discuss what blessing should be recited before eating raw beans, which are normally dried and then cooked. The Taz (204:4) writes that “they are not planted which that intention,” and therefore one says *She-Hakol*. The Mishna Berura (204:9), however, notes that some *Acharonim* disagree and claim that since the beans were planted with the intent to be eaten, it does not matter if they are eaten raw or dried and cooked.

The Shulchan Arukh (204:1) rules that one says *She-Hakol* before eating small, bitter almonds before they are ripe.

This discussion may be relevant to sugar and chocolate as well.

**Sugar**

The Geonic work *Halakhot Pesukot* (pg. 474) states:

Sugar – Its cane it certainly a tree, and it was planted with the intention of becoming sugar, and one recites on it *Borei Peri Ha-Etz*. One says *Borei* *Peri Ha-Etz* over sugar as well. The opinion which disagrees and says that one says *Borei Peri Ha-Adama* does not deny that the cane is a tree, but rather maintains that despite it being a tree, since it does not produce fruit, and one does not eat a fruit, we do not say over it *Borei Peri Ha-Etz*, as we are not eating a fruit.

The Behag rules this way as well.

The Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 8:5) disagrees:

Regarding sugar cane, whose sap is extracted and cooked until it crystallizes like salt: The overwhelming majority of the *Geonim* require that the blessing *Borei Peri Ha-Adama* is recited upon it. Others say that the blessing *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* should be recited upon it. Similarly, they say that one who sucks sugar cane should recite the blessing *Borei Peri Ha-Adama*.

I say that this is not a fruit, and the blessing *She-Hakol* should be recited upon it. The "honey" produced by these canes that have been altered by fire should not be given greater prominence than date honey, which is not changed by fire, and yet the blessing *She-Hakol* is recited upon it.

The Rambam apparently maintains that sugar is different and distinct from the cane, just as honey is different from the date, and therefore it does not retain the original blessing of *Borei Peri Ha-Etz*. Furthermore, sugar is cooked and altered, and therefore certainly does not retain its original blessing.

The Tur (202) disagrees and claims that while dates are planted for the fruit, and their honey is therefore viewed as a separate product, “these sugar canes are not fit to be eaten and the primary purpose in planting them is for their honey, and therefore the [canes] are their fruit and one says on them *Borei Peri* *Ha-Etz*.” The Beit Yosef (202) praises the Tur’s explanation, but concludes that since the question is subject to debate, one should say *She-Hakol*.

Although the Shulchan Arukh (102:15) rules that one recites *She-Hakol* when sucking a sugar cane and upon eating sugar, the Taz (102:13) sides with the Tur and therefore suggests that if one is eating fruit with the sugar, one should say the blessing over the fruit and exempt the sugar.

Incidentally, from this ruling we can also deduce that one should say *She-Hakol* before chewing gum (see Chayei Adam 49:4). R. Ovadia Yosef (*Yabi’a Omer,* OC 7:33) defends this view against the position of R. Ovadia Hedaya, who rules that one does not recite a blessing at all before chewing gum.

**Chocolate**

The *Acharonim* discuss what blessing should be recited before eating chocolate. On the one hand, the Shulchan Arukh (2-3:7) rules that ground spices retain their original blessing, as we discussed in a previous *shiur*. The Shulchan Arukh (204:11) even rules that one says *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* before eating ground spices mixed with honey. Although the Magen Avraham (204:22) rules that if the spices are crushed until dissolved one says *She-Hakol*, since spices are grown to be eaten while crushed, one says *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* under other circumstances (202:18). Accordingly, one should similarly say *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* before eating chocolate, as the cocoa bean is grown in order that it may be eaten in the form of chocolate.

On the other hand, chocolate may be similar to sugar in that it is processed. Thus, although it is the normal manner to consume the product of the cocoa bean after it is crushed and cooked, since it is no longer recognizable, as in the case of sugar, one says *She-Hakol*.

Interestingly, R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Minchat Shlomo 91:2) further notes that the appearance of chocolate is similar to the cocoa bean, and therefore one should say *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* before eating chocolate. Some explain, however, that chocolate often contains a majority of other ingredients, including sugar and milk. R. Auerbach concludes by acknowledging that it is customary to say *She-Hakol* before eating chocolate. If one accidentally said *Borei Peri Ha-Etz* before eating chocolate, he has fulfilled his obligation.

When eating chocolate covered raisins, R. Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe*, OC 3:31) rules that one should say two blessings: *She*-*Hakol* and *Borei Peri Ha-Etz*. Some suggest that one should first say a blessing over the chocolate, and then over the raisin, as if one makes a blessing over the raisin first, that may *be-di’avad* include the chocolate. Others (see *Ve-Tein* *Berakha*) maintain that one should only say one blessing, *Borei Peri Ha-Etz*.

Next week, we will discuss the blessing of *She-Hakol*.