

Making a Berachah on Dessert

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A common question that arises, about which there is some confusion, is whether one is required to recite a *berachah* on dessert even though one made *hamotzi* at the beginning of the meal. Is it always required? Never required? It may depend on what one is eating for dessert. We will endeavor to summarize and explain some of the relevant principles and clarify the issues.

The Gemara in *Berachos* (41b) addresses the issue of which foods are covered by *hamotzi* and which foods are not. The Tur (O.C. 177) codifies the discussion as follows. Foods eaten primarily as part of a meal do not require an independent *berachah* before eating them. This includes meat, fish, eggs and vegetables. This exemption applies regardless of whether these foods are eaten with bread. The reason is that the *berachah* recited on bread before the meal and *birkas hamazon* after the meal, covers all foods that are viewed as mainstays of a meal. The term for foods in this category is "meal-type foods." On the other hand, foods that are not primarily eaten as part of a meal require an independent *berachah* before eating (but are still covered by *birkas hamazon*). Examples of these foods are, figs, grapes and other fruits. The reason is that since generally they are not eaten as a primary part of the meal, they are not covered by *hamotzi*. The term for foods in this category is "dessert-type foods."

MEAL-TYPE FOODS

Shulchan Aruch¹ writes that foods that fall into the category of meal-type foods are those foods that are commonly eaten with bread. Mishnah Berurah², in the name of the Rosh, expands this definition to include foods that are consumed for satiation, even though they are not eaten together with bread. Examples of foods in this category are kugel, steak and oatmeal. Similarly, cooked vegetables, casseroles and soups are eaten as part of a meal for satiation and are covered

by *hamotzi* and do not require a new *berachah* before eating them during a meal.

BEVERAGES

Generally, beverages are also covered by *hamotzi*. The reason they are considered a meal-type food is that drinking a beverage is commonly part of a meal³. At just about every sit-down meal, some type of beverage is served and thus it is included in the category of meal-type foods⁴.

The noted exception to this rule is wine. Due to the importance that wine has, it is not exempted by *hamotzi* and a separate *berachah* is recited when drinking wine during a meal. Shulchan Aruch⁵ rules that one who recites *kiddush* on wine need not recite a new *berachah* if he drinks additional wine during the meal since the *hagafen* that was said during *kiddush* covers the wine that is consumed during the meal. Mishnah Berurah⁶ notes that nowadays since people do not commonly drink wine as a beverage in a meal, even on Shabbos, the *hagafen* on *kiddush* would not cover wine consumed during the meal unless one specifically had in mind when making *kiddush* to drink additional wine during the meal.

DESSERT-TYPE FOODS

Foods that are eaten as a snack rather than with bread or to satiate are not covered by *hamotzi* and require an independent *berachah*. This is true even if the snack food was on the table when *hamotzi* was recited. One common example is fruit. Generally, when eating fruit during a meal, one must recite the appropriate *berachah* before eating the fruit⁷. This applies whether the fruit is eaten raw, cooked, baked or dried. This includes fruit that grew from a tree, e.g., an apple, as well as from the ground⁸, e.g., watermelon. If one will eat an apple and watermelon, he must recite *hoetz* as well as *hoadamah*. *Sefer V'Zos HeBerachah*⁹ includes in this category Bisli. Although it is made from flour, since it is eaten as a snack rather than to satiate or part of the meal¹⁰.

Some milk byproducts are categorized as meal-type foods while others are categorized as dessert-type foods. Yogurt and Leben, even when sweetened, are eaten as part of a meal to satiate and thus one does not recite *she'hakol* before eating them. In contrast, pudding, YOLO and Milki are eaten as a snack and the *berachah* of *she'hakol* must be recited before eating them.

COOKED FRUIT

Mishnah Berurah¹¹ rules explicitly that cooked fruit that is served for dessert, called compote, is not eaten for satiation and one must recite a *berachah* before eating it. There are those who report¹² that after publishing the Mishnah Berurah, the Chofetz Chaim changed his position and ruled that one need not recite a *berachah* before eating it. Rabbi Yisroel Pinchos Bodner¹³ further reports that he inquired of Rav Elyashiv whether the halacha has changed and perhaps one should not recite a *berachah* before eating compote. Rav Elyashiv answered that one must recite a *berachah* before eating compote and this is the ruling that must be taught and followed. Reports of different *Gedolim* adopting the stringency of reciting a *berachah* on raw fruit before eating compote is just a *chumra* and need not be adopted by the general population. Furthermore, when Rabbi Bodner asked whether he should write in his *sefer* that someone who is G-d fearing – ירא שמים should make sure to first recite a *berachah* on raw fruit, Rav Elyashiv instructed him not to. His reasoning is that when *Poskim* write that a ירא שמים should conduct himself in a particular manner, it constitutes an obligation for someone of that stature to follow that practice. Regarding this matter, even a ירא שמים need not adopt these stringencies.

Elsewhere¹⁴ Rav Elyashiv was asked whether compote has become so common that it is now considered part of the meal and covered by hamotzi. Similarly, it is common to serve ice cream at the end of a *sheva berachos* or *bar-mitzvah* and is considered a standard part of the meal. Does practice change so that nowadays one need not recite a *beracha* before eating compote or ice cream as dessert? Rav Elyashiv responded that the rationale makes sense but added that the preferred practice is to eat the compote or ice cream with some bread to avoid any uncertainty about whether to recite a *berachah* or not.

CAKE

Since cake and cookies are eaten as dessert, it would make sense for one to make a separate *berachah* before eating them. However, in practice, people generally do not recite a *berachah* before eating them. Cake and cookies fall into the category of *pas haba'ah b'kisinin*. *Pas haba'ah b'kisinin* is the term used for bakery products that are not exactly bread. There is a debate concerning the exact definition of *pas haba'ah b'kisinin* and the three opinions are: (1) Dough that contains sugar, honey, chocolate or oil and thereby changing the taste of the baked product; (2) Hard, crunchy baked products, such as pretzels and

crackers or (3) Dough that is made into a pocket and contains fruits or nuts. Generally, due to the debate whether one recites hamotzi or *mezonos* on *pas haba'ah b'kisinin*, we follow the rule *safek berachos l'hakel*, meaning, when in doubt whether a *berachah* is recited we adopt a lenient view and do not recite the *berachah*. This means that when eating *pas haba'ah b'kisinin* outside of a meal, one recites *mezonos* on such foods since that involves reciting fewer *berachos*. When eaten as dessert, we should adopt a similar approach and refrain from reciting *mezonos* since these bakery products may be categorized as bread.

In practice, some people recite *birkas hamazon* before eating cake or cookies. Other *Poskim* advise having intent while reciting hamotzi to include any cake eaten for dessert. If neither one of those options is practical, the Biur Halacha¹⁴ writes that most cakes are similar enough to bread that one does not recite *mezonos*. The one exception is category (3), i.e., dough made into a pocket and filled with fruit or nuts. In contrast, Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, ruled that as long as flour and water are not the majority ingredients, a *mezonos* is recited when eaten as dessert.

APPETIZER

When fruit is eaten as an appetizer, there is a debate whether a *berachah* is recited¹⁵. Common practice is not to recite a *berachah* on fruit that is eaten as an appetizer. Other fruit, such as melon or fruit cocktail, is commonly served as a first course but is not meant to whet the appetite. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach¹⁶ maintains that even though it is eaten as a first course and is called "appetizer," it remains a dessert-type food and a *berachah* is required. Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv¹⁷, however, ruled that a *berachah* is not recited. Although such fruits do not whet the appetite, since they do prepare for the meal, they are considered part of the meal and covered by hamotzi.

1 O.C. 177:1

2 M.B. 177:1

3 M.B. 174:39 and Aruch HaShulchan 174:14 discuss whether coffee and tea served at the end of a meal is covered by hamotzi. Sefer V'Zos HaBerachah pg. 73 follows Mishnah Berurah's guidance to recite shehakol on some other food before drinking tea or coffee but if that is not an option, due to the debate about whether a *berachah* is warranted, a *berachah* is not recited.

4 M.B. 174:39. Although *Poskim* (See Shulchan Aruch 174:7, Biur Halachah והמנהג) offer suggestions to avoid the dispute whether beverages require a *berachah* during the meal, common custom is that a *berachah* is not recited.

5 O.C. 174:4

6 M.B. 174:8

7 See M.B. 177:4 for a discussion about reciting hoetz on the fruit in tzimis. His conclusion is that a *berachah* is not recited since tzimis is eaten to satiate and thus is a meal-type food that does not require an independent *berachah*.

8 M.B. 177:5 and Piskei Teshuvos 177:3.

9 Chapter 8 דברי מתיקה וקינוח סעודה Page 74

10 The reason he does not categorize Bisli as a cake or cookie is because Bisli is deep-fried in oil and thus does not have the appearance of bread – לחם.

11 M.B. 177:4

12 Hilchos Berachos pg. 87 note 11 and others

13 ibid

14 Vayishama Moshe vol. 2

15 168:8

16 Magen Avrohom 174:11 cites numerous Rishonim who maintain that fruit eaten as an appetizer does not require a *berachah*. The reasoning is that when eaten as an appetizer the intent is to whet the appetite and is part of the meal. Cf. Shaar HaTziyun 174:45 who infers from the Rashba (Berachos 41a והביאו לפנינו) that even when eaten as an appetizer one must recite a *berachah* on fruit.

17 Quoted in Halachos of Berachos page 93 note 25.1

18 Quoted in Halachos of Berachos page 93 note 25.2



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