

Halachos of Daily Living

Laws Related to Brachos

I walk past a coffee shop every day. From outside the store, I can smell the coffee. Should I recite a *bracha* on this aroma?

The Mishnah Berurah (216:16) writes that if one smells hot ground coffee, since it emits a strong aroma, one should recite the *bracha* of "*ha'nosain rei'ach tov b'peiros*." However, it is questionable whether one can recite a *bracha* on a cup of coffee, since there are no coffee grinds in a cup of coffee. The drink is only the residual flavor and aroma that were captured in the hot water (see Shulchan Aruch 216:6). The aroma wafting from a coffee shop is more likely from the brewed coffee and not from coffee grinds. Furthermore, Teshuvos Yaskil Avdi

(vol. 8, *hashmatos* 14)

writes that one who passes a coffee shop is exempt from reciting a *bracha* since they were just walking by and it was not their intent to enjoy the smell. Because coffee in principle is a drink and not an aroma, unless one has specific intent to smell the coffee

beans, it is exempt from a *bracha*. He writes that this is true even though the proprietor uses the coffee's aroma as a method to attract customers.

What *bracha* does one recite on flax seeds?

At first glance, one would say that the *bracha* should be *Ha'adama*, since flax grows from the ground, like a grain. However, the Nishmas Adam (51:7) points out that we find an apparent contradiction in Tanach about the status of flax. In Yehoshua (2:6) flax is described as a tree. Referring to Rachav hiding the spies, the *pasuk* says, "*Va'titmeneim b'pishtei ha'eitz*" (and she hid them among **trees** of flax).

On the other hand, we read in Bereishis (4:3) , "And Kayin brought [an offering] from the fruits of the **ground** [*pri ha'adama*]." Chazal have a tradition that the offering that Kayin brought was flax. This would indicate that flax is

a plant that grows from the ground and not a tree. The Nishmas Adam responds

that in Bereishis the flax was still growing. At that stage, flax is pliable and is not considered a tree. In contrast, in Yehoshua, the flax was harvested.

After it is cut down, flax dries out and hardens. Only once the flax hardens like wood, is it called a tree. Since the flax is not considered a tree at the time the flax seeds grow, the *bracha* on flax seeds is *Ha'adama*, whether eaten raw, roasted or

cooked.

If flax seeds are sprinkled on another food, they would be considered *tafel* (subordinate). One does not make a separate *bracha* on a food that is *tafel*, as it is covered by the *bracha* that is said on the primary food.

What *bracha* is recited on tahini?

Tahini is a spread made of ground sesame seeds and oil.

If one were to eat whole sesame seeds, the *bracha* would undoubtedly be *Ha'adama*. However, once the sesame is finely ground into a liquid paste without any semblance of the seed, the Magen Avrohom

(205:9) writes that the *bracha* changes to *Shehakol*. The Even Ozer (OC 210:7)

disagrees. He argues that since tahini is one of the primary manners in which

sesame seeds are eaten, the *bracha* remains *Ha'adama*. Igros Moshe (OC 1:65) writes that

there is no clear ruling and it is best to avoid eating tahini as a stand-alone food. If one does eat tahini, Igros Moshe writes that because of the doubt, one

should recite *Shehakol*.

According to the approach of Rav Soloveitchik, *zt"l* the *bracha* would remain *Ha'adama*.

This all assumes that the tahini is eaten alone or is the main food that one is eating. However, if one spreads tahini on bread, crackers or vegetables, then all would agree that no additional *bracha* is recited on the tahini

because of the principal of *ikar* and *tafel* (the *bracha* on the main food covers the subordinate).`

What *bracha* do you recite on hearts of palm?

Rav Belsky, *zt"l* ruled that the *bracha* for hearts of palm is *Borei Pri Ha'adama*.

The Gemara (Berachos 36a) cites a disagreement between Rav Yehuda and Shmuel as

to which *bracha* should be recited on *kora*(hearts of palm). According

to Rav Yehuda the *bracha* is *Ha'adama* and according to Shmuel, it is *Shehakol*. The Gemara concludes that

since one does not plant a palm tree having in mind to harvest the hearts of palm, the *halacha* follows

the opinion of Shmuel that the *bracha* is *Shehakol*. Rav Belsky explained that today,

since palm trees are planted with the intent of eating the hearts, the

appropriate *bracha* is *Ha'adama*. Although hearts of palm grow on a tree, the *bracha* is not *Ha'eitz*, but rather *Ha'adama*. This is because hearts of palm are not an actual fruit, but the core of the stem of the tree. Since they are part of the actual tree and not fruit, the *bracha* is downgraded from *Ha'eitz* to *Ha'adama*.