

Q&A from the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

Foodball

October 26, 2023

Q May one play catch using a grapefruit or a bagel?



A Food provides sustenance, and degrading it shows disregard for the goodness that Hashem bestows upon the world (Rashi, Ta'anis 20b), so Chazal instituted a prohibition against degrading food (*bizui ochlin*). In delineating the parameters of the prohibition, the Mechaber (O.C. 171) says that using food for purposes other than eating is not automatically *bizui ochlin*, unless it renders the food inedible. He gives examples: One may not sit on a container of figs, because they become squashed and unfit for consumption (ibid. 2). One may not wash his hands with wine or any beverage (ibid. 1 and Mishnah Brurah 8). Bread may not be used to prop up a pot of liquid that may spill over and wet the bread (ibid.). Throwing a solid food that would survive a fall is not *bizui ochlin* (Shulchan Aruch ibid. 1). But one may not throw a food that will be ruined if it falls, even if he intends to catch it. If the ground is muddy, even solid foods may not be thrown (Shulchan Aruch ibid. 4). This is true even if the food has a peel or shell, because people may be hesitant to recover it from the ground (Mishnah Brurah ibid. 21). A firm grapefruit may be used as a ball in a clean area, because it won't be ruined if it hits the ground. Bread is the king of foods, so it demands more sensitivity. It may not be thrown, regardless of its survival odds (Mishnah Brurah ibid. 9). Though some treat bread like any other food (see Levush ibid. 1), it is proper to be stringent. Interestingly, even nonkosher food is included in the *bizui ochlin* prohibition, as it, too, represents the goodness that Hashem bestowed upon His creations (Pri Megadim ibid. 1).