

Laws of Brachos (Blessings) – Review Sheet #3

The Brochos on Produce:

1. The brachot recited on produce are "borei pri ha'aitz" ("Creator of the fruit of the tree") and "borei pri ha'adama" (Creator of the fruit of the ground"). Generally speaking, Ha'aitz is said on fruits, while Ha'adama is said on vegetables, grains, and legumes.
2. Although for most fruits the appropriate bracha is Ha'aitz, not everything commonly referred to as a "fruit" falls in the halachic category of "pri ha'aitz" -- literally "fruit of the tree." In terms of blessings, the key definitions are:
 - **Ha'aitz -- the product of a plant whose trunk remains alive and produces fruit year after year**
 - **Ha'adama -- the product of a plant whose trunk withers after one year**
3. The banana plant, for example, which can grow to great heights, is not regarded as a "tree." Since its shoots produce fruit only once, and then become part of the central stem and no longer bear fruit, the bracha on a banana is Ha'adama. The same is true for pineapple.
4. Similarly, many "wild" plants, even though they produce fruit from year to year, are not considered trees. If only their **roots** remain and their **trunk** (or stem) dies out, they do not qualify for the bracha Ha'aitz. The bracha on strawberries and wild berries, therefore, is Ha'adama.
5. Conversely, many bushes and vines, even though they do not resemble a tree, are considered "trees." As long as their branches remain alive year round, the product of these plants receive the bracha Ha'aitz. This includes fruits such as blueberries and grapes.
6. If, however, a bush grows very close to the ground (within nine inches), common practice is to say Ha'adama on its fruit, even though it qualifies as a "tree." For this reason, the bracha on cranberries and wild blueberries is Ha'adama.
7. There are some fruits whose bracha is subject to dispute because it is unclear whether the plant qualifies as a "tree." The papaya, which grows on a tree that resembles a vegetable plant in numerous ways, is one such example. In such a case, you should say Ha'adama, since this bracha is a catch-all that covers tree-fruits as well.
8. Similarly, if you are unsure whether a particular fruit falls into the category of "pri ha'aitz" or not, and you are unable to find out, you should say Ha'adama on that fruit. The reason is because every fruit, even if it grows on a tree, is also a product of the ground. Therefore, the bracha "pri ha'adama" is an appropriate catch-all.
9. However, if you don't know which bracha to say because you didn't learn the halachot, you may not rely on this. Rather, you should go and learn the halacha (or ask an authority) and then say the proper bracha.
10. If you accidentally said Ha'adama on a fruit whose bracha is Ha'aitz, you may continue eating without correcting your mistake, so that the bracha will not have been in vain.
11. If, however, you said Ha'aitz on a vegetable (or even a banana), your bracha is invalid. Since vegetables don't grow on trees, "borei pri ha'aitz" is inappropriate and you must say a new bracha.

The Shehakol Blessing:

12. The brocha recited on all foods that **don't grow** from the ground is "shehakol nih-yeh bid-varo."
13. This includes foods such as : meat, fish, eggs, dairy products ,sugar and salt ,water, tea, beer ,bee honey and even hydroponic vegetables (e.g. alfalfa sprouts)

14. Mushrooms primary sustenance is taken from moisture in the air, not from the ground -- and therefore the bracha is Shehakol.
15. If you said Shehakol on **any food**, even foods that have their own prescribed bracha, the bracha is still valid. Of course, you should not rely on this and substitute Shehakol for the appropriate bracha when it can be determined. In certain cases of doubt, however, you may say Shehakol even though you're not certain that it is the correct bracha, since Shehakol covers everything. However, when possible, it is best to avoid the doubt by eating the food within a bread meal, where the bracha Hamotzee on the bread covers the entire meal.