

Class 9 – Introduction to Mezonos:

We have learned previously that the Sages prescribed specific brachot for different categories of foods. Since grains are the most satiating and nutritious, a special bracha was formulated: "*borei minei mezonot*" -- "He Who created varieties of nutritious foods."

Mezonot is said on products of the following six grains:

- wheat
- barley
- spelt
- oats
- rye
- rice

Only Processed Grains

When eaten raw, the bracha on these grains is Ha'adama, since they grow from the ground. In order to be "upgraded" to the bracha Mezonot, these grains must be **processed** in a way that defines them as a "satiating baked or cooked food," rather than grains.

The procedure for preparing foods from grains is typically a few-step process:

1. the grains are removed from their protective outer shells
2. the kernels are broken, crushed or ground
3. the kernels are cooked, or made into flour which is baked

Since this is how grain-foods are generally prepared, the bracha Mezonot was prescribed only for food that has undergone these processes.

Therefore, if you were to take some fresh oats from the field and cook them up, the bracha would be Ha'adama, since they have not been processed before cooking -- i.e. the outer shell has not been removed, and the oats are not broken up.

If, however, the oats are **cooked** to the point where they completely lose their form, it is considered equivalent to **mashing** the kernels before cooking, and they do become "mezonot." Additionally, even if only the **outer shell** is removed and the oats are cooked without being broken or

crushed, they become "mezonot" if they stick together as a result of the cooking.

Mike took whole barley grains and cooked them as a cereal. If the kernels stick to each other after cooking, the bracha is Mezonot. If the kernels remain separate, however, the bracha is Ha'adama.

To summarize: In order for a grain to become "mezonot," the kernels must either:

1. be broken (even partially) and then cooked
2. lose their form completely as a result of cooking
3. have the outer shell (bran) removed, and the grains stick together a little as a result of cooking

Practical Applications

Barley: The barley available in stores today is generally milled, which means that the outer shell is removed. It is common that in the process of milling, the kernels are broken -- i.e. pieces of the barley itself are removed as well. Therefore, the bracha on cooked barley (for example, a thick, delicious barley soup) is Mezonot.

Granola and Puffed Cereals: Granola consists mainly of oats that are steamed and then baked. This process does **not** have the effect of cooking. Since the grains are considered still in their original form, the bracha on granola is Ha'adama. (If the oat particles adhere to one another, then the bracha would be Mezonot.) The same is true for puffed cereals (e.g. Honey Smacks and Golden Crisp), which are made by applying steam and/or pressure to whole grains. Note, however, that most granola bars are produced from **cooked** oats, and thus the bracha is Mezonot.

Hot Cereal: Hot cereal (e.g. farina) is made of ground-up grains that are cooked. The bracha is therefore Mezonot.

Rice: Both white rice and whole-grain rice are sold without the outer shell in which they grow. Since rice is normally cooked whole (without further processing, unlike other grains), the bracha is Mezonot, even though the rice kernels are not broken or ground before cooking. The same is true for rice cereals (e.g. Rice Krispies) which are processed by first cooking the rice.

If the rice is simply "puffed" -- as are rice cakes -- then the bracha is Ha'adama.

Raw Flour: If you want to eat flour or dough, the bracha is Shehakol. The reason is that when grains become flour they have not been improved. On the contrary, in their present state they are less edible and satiating than before. Therefore, the bracha is "downgraded" to Shehakol. So the next time you make a cake and want to lick the batter from the bowl, say Shehakol.