

Voice OF THE VAAAD

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SYMBOLIC FOODS A NEW YEAR OF MEANING

On *Rosh HaShanah* we customarily eat various foods with a specific symbolism to start off the new year. The *Gemara*¹ tells us in the name of *Abaye* that on *Rosh HaShanah* there is a principle of *simanah milsah hie* – an omen is significant. Based on this statement, various communities have adopted specific food rituals for *Rosh HaShanah*.

Undisputedly, the most famous of them is the apple with honey². But many other foods have been adapted over the years, including pomegranates, dates, beets, leeks and fish. Various *tefillos* are offered during the meal which correspond to these specific food items expressing our hope for goodness in the upcoming year.

It is notable that three of the foods, (beets, dates and leeks) are associated with obliterating or silencing of our enemies, while the others (apples with honey, pomegranates, dates and fish) are associated with increasing *bracha* in the upcoming year. It is interesting that these are the two themes we are specifically mentioning on the first night of the year. While both of these ideas are important, why should we make these requests specifically on *Rosh HaShana* evening? It seems like all we need to focus on is to rid ourselves of our enemies and we can have a year of goodness. Aren't we supposed to also hope for a year of growth in

our personal service of Hashem?

There are also foods which we refrain from eating on *Rosh HaShanah*. For example, we abstain from sour foods³ because these may be seen as a symbol for a sour or bitter year. The *Rema*⁴ mentions the custom to refrain from consuming nuts, citing two distinct reasons. The first is based on a *gematria*. The Hebrew word for nut is *egoz*, which is the same numeric value (17) as *chet*⁵ (sin). Eating a food with the same numeric value of sin, is considered inappropriate on *Rosh HaShanah*. The *Rema's* second reason is that particles of the nuts will get stuck in one's throat, potentially causing one to cough repeatedly. As the main mitzvah of



the day is hearing of the *Shofar*, we are concerned that this coughing may cause people to miss hearing some of the *Shofar* sounds.

Since many people use various nuts in their food preparation, it is important to clarify which nuts are included in this custom. The common translation of the Hebrew word *egoz* is walnut, so one might think that the custom applies only to eating walnuts on *Rosh HaShanah*. However, the *poskim*⁶ write that since all nuts increase phlegm and saliva and can cause one to cough, all nuts will be included in

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SYMBOLIC FOODS A NEW YEAR OF MEANING *Continued from p. 1*

this custom.⁷ This reason appears to apply only to nuts that are eaten by themselves. Our custom is to be lenient with nuts that are blended into another food item, such as hazelnuts in a cake recipe, and allow them to be eaten on *Rosh HaShanah*.⁸

The first reason of the *Rema* for not eating nuts (nut=sin) is puzzling. Why does the *Rema* codify a custom based on a *gematria*? It is very unusual for *halacha* to be codified based on the numeric value of a word.

Let us explore this *gematria* a little deeper and offer a new explanation into our symbolic food eating on *Rosh HaShana*. The word *egoz* (numeric value of 17) is also the same value as the Hebrew word *tov*, which means good. So why should we refrain from eating nuts if nuts also connote a positive meaning?⁹ Furthermore, the word *egoz* also has the same value as *zvuv*, which in Hebrew means a fly (insect). How does this all connect to refraining from eating nuts on *Rosh HaShana*?

The *Gemara*¹⁰ tells us that the *Yetzer Harah* is compared to a *zvuv* sitting between the two entrances of the heart. What does this represent? The *Kli Yakar*¹¹ explains that a fly is not strong enough to make its own breach and attack, rather it needs to find an area which is already compromised and then wiggle its way in and widen the fissure. The *Yetzer Harah* is similar in this regard. Someone who is completely righteous and properly guarded from sin will not be influenced by their evil inclinations. It is only once there is a “break in the system” that a person can be influenced to sin. The *Gemara* is telling us that the *zvuv/Yetzer Harah* is constantly sitting on a person’s heart waiting for an opportunity to penetrate and wreak spiritual havoc. Perhaps this is also why we find in *Perek Shirah*¹² that the *zvuv* can only sing his praise to *Hashem* “at a time when *Klal Yisroel* is not occupied in Torah study.” This unique restriction is only found by the *zvuv*. All other creatures can sing out their unique praise to *Hashem*

whenever it is appropriate without any special limitations. With our understanding of the connection between the *Yetzer Harah* and the *zvuv*, we see why the *zvuv* has no voice as long as *Torah* is being reverberated. The continuous study of *Torah* protects one from being influenced by the *zvuv/Yetzer Harah*.

While it is true that *egoz* is the same *gematria* as *tov*, it is also the same value as *chet* and *zvuv*. On *Rosh HaShanah*, as we are beginning the new year, we need to strive for something uniquely *tov*, with no admixture of sin which the *zvuv* is patiently waiting for so that it can penetrate and spoil our spiritual wellbeing. So, despite the element of *tov*, we need to avoid anything associated with sin.

With this idea we can return to our original question of why there seems to be an emphasis on ridding ourselves of our enemies specifically on the first night of the year. The *Pri Megadim*¹³ explains that when we are asking *Hashem* to rid us of our enemies, we do not just mean the various nations of the world that are plotting against us. We are referring to the enemy within. Every time a person succumbs to sin, he has created a prosecutor against himself, one that is constantly reminding him of negative past behaviors. On *Rosh HaShanah* we beseech *Hashem* to give us a new beginning, a fresh start with no admixtures of good and bad. We ask for a year filled with the sweetness of “pure honey” as defined by *Dovid HaMelech* in *Tehillim*¹⁴ when he describes learning *Torah* “as sweeter than honey.” It then follows that the theme of our *Rosh HaShanah* foods is filled with hope and anticipation for real self-growth in the coming year. We want to ensure we will be able to study *Torah* and keep the *mitzvos* properly without any negative character traits intermingled. May we all merit to have a year filled with *mitzvos* and increased wisdom in *Torah*.

1 Talmud Bavli – Horiyus 12a

2 For more on this see *Voice of The Vaad* – Issue #6, available at <https://ovkosh.org/voice-of-the-vaad-6/>. See also <http://torahdownloads.com/shiur-1026947.html>

3 See Aruch HaShulchan OC 583:3

4 OC 583:2

5 Although the numeric value of *chet* is 18 and the values of *egoz* is 17, the rule for *gematrios* is that it can be off by one. See *Sefer Birkas Peretz* – Introduction to second section.

6 See Magen Avraham 583:4 and Shu”t Be’er Moshe 3:97

7 See *Piskei Teshuvos* 583: fn37. This would also mean that on the 2nd day of *Rosh HaShanah*

in the afternoon one would be permitted to partake in these nuts.

8 See *Kovetz Halachos* – Yomim Noraim – 7:20

9 See *Daas Torah* OC 583:1

10 *Brachos* 61a

11 *Parshas Beshalach* 17:8

12 Chapter 4

13 *Mishbetzos Zahav* OC 583:1

14 19:11



FROM THE VAAD INBOX

Question: We purchased a yogurt maker to enjoy homemade yogurts. The challenge for us is that we were only able to procure OU-D *chalav stam* certified yogurt cultures. Our custom is to only use *cholov yisroel* milk products. Is there a way for us to use these cultures with *cholov yisroel* milk and have an end product which is considered *cholov yisroel* yogurt?

Answer: Yes, there is a way it can be done, but first some background information is necessary. Let us discuss the food science of yogurt making. Yogurt is produced by adding bacterial

cultures to milk. The milk is heated to about 200° F for at least 10 to 30 minutes. (The longer you heat the milk, the thicker the yogurt will end up.) Then the temperature is quickly reduced to 110° F. Next comes the bacteria, either *Streptococcus thermophilus* or *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*. These species eat the sugars in milk and as they do so produce lactic acid. The lactic acid makes milk proteins curdle causing it to thicken up into yogurt. The lactic acid also gives yogurt a tart, tangy flavor. The milk/bacteria mixture is stored in a clean container and left to

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PAS YISROEL LIST 5781/2020

The *Shulchan Aruch*¹ states that the custom of Jews is to be strict with Pas Yisroel bread products during the *Aseres Yemi Teshuva*². We therefore provide you with this useful list of Pas Yisroel certified items. Please note, all Gluten-Free (*shehakol*) breads and rolls are not considered pas and do not pose any Pas Yisroel issues.



OVK Certified

1. **Breadsmith** – All items baked in store
2. **Circle Cafe at Crown Center**
- Breads: Honey Oat, French Peasant, New York Rye, Pizza crust, Fruit breads and Focaccia. Bagels: plain, sesame and everything. Coffee cakes.
3. **Dierbergs** - During the Aseres Yemi Teshuva select honey cakes at the following locations: Brentwood Pointe, West Oak, Market Place, Four Seasons and Heritage will be marked as Pas Yisroel. Throughout the year Dierbergs (in the above-mentioned locations) carry Challah, Miami Onion Rolls and various Oberlander bakery products which are pas yisroel.
4. **Elefant Pizza** - All items
5. **Kohn's** - Fresh bakery items only
6. **Schnucks** - During the Aseres Yemi Teshuva select breads and cookies at the following locations: Ladue Crossing and Hilltown Village (Chesterfield) will be marked as Pas Yisroel
7. **Toby's Challah House** - All items

cRc Certified

(select list of items available locally)

1. **Eli's Cheesecake** – All varieties
2. **“Enjoy Life” products** are not made with the “five grains” therefore they are not considered pas.
3. **Kronos Pita** - All varieties
4. **North Shore Bakery** - All products
5. **Pretzilla** - All varieties of pretzel buns

Kof K Certified

(select list of items available locally)

1. **Food For Life** - Ezekiel Sprouted Grain Breads (Not the Pocket Breads)

2. **Gabilla's Knishes** – All varieties
3. **Oberlander Bakery** - All items
4. **Streit's** - All products
5. **Tofutti Cuties** - All varieties

OK Certified

(select list of items available locally)

1. **Green's Bakery** - All products
2. **Konto's** - All pita bread products marked as Pas Yisroel
3. **Matt's Cookie** - Real Peanut Butter Cookies, Chocolate Chip Cookies, Cranberry Walnut Cookies, Chocolate Chip Pecan Cookies, Peanut Butter Chocolate Chip Cookie, Oatmeal Raisin Cookies, Fig Bars, Strawberry Bars, Whole Wheat Fig Bars
4. **Sabra** – Pretzels and Pita Chips that come with the following Hummus: Classic, Roasted Garlic, Roasted Red Pepper, Luscious Lemon, and the Avocado Toast.
5. **Wasa** - Crispbread: Fiber Rye, Flaxseed, Light Rye, Sourdough Rye, Whole Grain.

OU Certified

(select list of items available locally)

1. **Amnon's Pizza** - All varieties
2. **Angel's Bakery** – All products
3. **Bloom's** - All cookies
4. **Damascus** (pita & flatbreads) - Only those items which are marked Pas Yisroel
5. **Dr. Praeger's** - Fishies, Fish Sticks, Fish Cakes, and Pizza Bagels
6. **Gefen** - Crackers, Cookies, Whole Wheat Breadcrumbs, Matzoh, Ice Cream Cones
7. **Golden Fluff** – Pretzels, Cookies, Animal Crackers
8. **Haddar** - All products

9. **Jason** - Breadcrumbs (plain, panko, flavored and coating crumbs)
10. **Kedem** - Cookies, Cereal bars, Tea Biscuits and Crackers
11. **Kemach** – Cookies and Crackers (when marked as Pas Yisroel)
12. **Kitov** - All products
13. **Lily's Bakeshop** - All products
14. **Macabee** - Pizza, Pizza Bagel, Breaded Eggplant, Breaded Mushrooms, Mozzarella Sticks
15. **Manischewitz** - Tam Tams, Italian Coating Crumbs, Cake Mixes, all Matzah products
16. **Meal Mart** – All items
17. **Miami Onion Rolls** – All products
18. **Mishpacha** – All products
19. **Natural Ovens** - 100% Whole Grain Bread, Hunger Filler Bread, Multi-Grain Bread, Oat Nut Crunch Bread, Oatmeal Bread, Organic Whole Grain & Flax Bread, Original Carb Conscious Bread, Right Wheat Bread, Sunny Millet Bread. The Wheat Buns are pas yisroel according to cRc guidelines.
20. **Of Tov** – Chicken Breast Nuggets
21. **Osem** - All products
22. **Ostreicher's** - All products
23. **Reisman Bros. Bakery** – All products
24. **S. Rosen's** - Mary Ann - Breads, Buns & Rolls - according to the cRc guidelines.
25. **Trader Joe's** - Chocolate Babka, Mango Babka, Pumpkin Spice Babka, Half Moon Cookies, Raspberry Rugelach

Star-K Certified

(select list of items available locally)

1. **Benz's** - Kishka
2. **Chopsie's** - All products

¹ OC 603:1

² For a previous Voice of The Vaad article explaining this custom see <https://ovkosher.org/voice-of-the-vaad-1/> <http://torahdownloads.com/shiur-1027269.html>

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incubate for at least four hours. It gets more tart over time. The ratio of milk to culture is approximately 1 quart of milk to 1 teaspoon of yogurt starter cultures. Whole milk and 2% milk will give creamier yogurt, while low-fat and skim will be runnier. In the starter cultures that are sold, the live bacteria are on a milk-based substance.

Now for the halachic backdrop. We are all familiar with the concept of *bitul*, that an item can be become subsumed and nullified in a larger quantity. Typically, with cases of mixtures of *issur v'heter* we apply a concept of *bitul b'shishim*¹. That is, we need 60x the amount of permitted item against the prohibited item to deem the end product permissible. At first glance, it would seem that in our case the starter culture should be *batel* in the *cholov yisroel* milk. However, upon further study we find this is not necessarily so. The *Gemara*² teaches us the concept of *davar hamamid*, in which an agent used that has substantive effects in food production is not *batel* even in extremely large quantities. Its effect is continuously felt in the product at any amount. This would seem to lead us to the following halachic ruling: if one uses a non-*cholov yisroel* starter culture to make yogurt, the end result, no matter how much milk is used, would result in a yogurt that cannot be classified as *cholov yisroel*.

However, there is still an option to use the starter. The *Beis Yosef*³ writes that if a *davar hamamid* is used three times it loses its original "name" and is now considered a new active agent. It would therefore come out as follows. If one uses the original non-*cholov yisroel* starter with *cholov yisroel* milk and makes yogurt (#1), and from that yogurt makes a new strain of yogurt (#2), and from yogurt (#2) makes a new yogurt (#3), cultures from yogurt #3 can now be used to produce an end product which can be called *cholov Yisroel* yogurt.⁵

Question: *I recently decided to plant some vegetables in our backyard. I planted seeds for cucumbers, peppers, carrots and more. After I finished up for the day and felt a sense*



accomplishment in my hard work, a friend mentioned to me that I might have violated the prohibition of kilyaim, mixing vegetables together in such a small area. Did I do something wrong? Do I need to uproot the seedlings?

Answer: No, you do not. Let's explain this unique *halacha* with some background. The prohibitions that fall under the category of *kilayim* in the Torah are a broad category. There is a well-known prohibition of wearing clothing that contain *shatnez* a mixture of wool and linen, the Torah calls this prohibition *kilayim*⁶. The same *pasuk* which instructs us about this prohibition also tells us that it is prohibited to crossbreed animals and lastly

not to sow our fields with two types of seed. These prohibitions are repeated in *Sefer Devorim*⁷. The *pasuk* refers to these *mitzvos* as a *chok*. *Rashi* explains this to mean, that these commandments are a decree without a specific reason given down in tradition as to why it is prohibited. Interestingly, although there are multiple prohibitions related to the subject of planting different species together, some apply only in *Eretz Yisroel* and some apply to both *Eretz Yisroel* and *Chutz L'aretz*. The parameters are as follows. What falls under the category of *kilayei hakerem* – the prohibition of mixing

various fruit/vegetable seeds with grape seeds, is twofold; not to plant them and not to derive any benefit from such a mixture. Therefore, the *Chachamim* implemented a *takanah* that even in *Chutz L'aretz* the prohibition applies, albeit as a *mitzvah m'drabanan*.

However, with the prohibition of *kilayei zerayim* – the prohibition of mixing different vegetables/fruits together, the Torah only prohibits one from planting them; it is permissible to derive benefit from them. Since the Torah does not prohibit getting benefit from them, the *Chachamim* did not forbid planting them at all in *Chutz L'aretz*.⁸

As in your case, since you are in *Chutz L'aretz*, it is permissible to plant various vegetables close to each other and not be concerned with any violation of *kilayim*.

1 There are numerous halachic details, however for the sake of this article the basic concept is sufficient.

2 Avodah Zarah 35a, codified in Shulchan Aruch YD 87:11

3 YD 115 (last paragraph) in the name of Rabbeinu Yeruchem. The Magen Avraham OC 442:9 disagrees with this leniency. However, his argument could be limited to cases of *chametz*.

4 Of course, every time using *cholov yisroel* milk. It is also preferable to make sure that there is 60x the amount of starter in each batch.

5 See Darchei Teshuva YD 115:49 for a discussion of why we do not apply the principle here of *ain mvatlin issur*, as well as quoting some who are lenient completely to use a non-*cholov yisroel* starter.

6 Vayikra 19:19

7 Devarim 22:9-11

8 Meshechta Kidushin 39a, Shulchan Aruch YD 297:2

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