



## Taking Our Talmidim Seriously

*By Rabbi Yoni Mandelstam*

The Ramban (Devarim 25:17) famously comments that the Mitzvah of remembering Amalek “includes the obligation on parents to teach their children about the evil attack of Amalek, and explain to them that it is in response to this evil that we are obligated to wipe them out”. What the Ramban seems to be suggesting is that this extreme reaction to Amalek is not only a response to a one time battle. Rather, the Torah obligates us to wipe out Amalek in light of the fact that their wicked attack revealed their innate, dangerously wicked nature. With this Ramban in mind, we can understand that the war against Amalek is not only a fight against one nation but rather a struggle against the evil qualities that this nation represents.

In fact, the Kedushat Levi (Purim) explains that part of the war against Amalek includes the struggle with our own, “personal Amalek qualities.” Specifically, when we let our guard down, it is that “inner Amalek” who wages war with us to entice us to sin, and it is our obligation to remain steadfast in our commitment to Hashem against all temptation to sin.

In addition to Amalek representing a broader theme of evil, Chazal (Tanchuma, Yitro 3) ascribe one particular negative attribute to Amalek – that of “Leitzanut” or laxity. This Midrash highlights Amalek’s ability to take a serious entity, such as Hashem or Bnei Yisrael, and not accord the basic honor that is demanded. When we learn this Midrash with the comment of the Kedushat Levi in mind, we can conclude that an integral part of fighting Amalek is the fight against being overly casual. One important application of this concept is to take the opinions of our Talmidim and children seriously. Specifically, adults should not overlook the perspective of

adolescents even if their view seems immature and short-sighted.

In the Torah reading for Purim morning (Shemot 17:9), we learn that Moshe told Yehoshua, “Choose for us men to fight Amalek.” From the fact that Moshe equated himself with Yehoshua, Chazal (Pirkei Avot 4:12) derive that, “A Rebbe should give his Talmidim as much honor as he gives himself.” Similarly, the Rambam (Hilchot Talmud Torah 5:12) writes that “Just as students must honor their Rabbi, the Rabbi must also honor his students.” One can ask why this Halachah is found specifically in the context of the war with Amalek.

Perhaps, one can suggest that the Torah teaches this Halachah in the context of the war with Amalek because, like Amalek, people are less likely to take their Talmidim seriously. A good Rebbe will take his Talmidim seriously and listen to them talk about a topic which the Rebbe may or may not value. However, the Rebbe cares about the topic precisely because the Talmid cares.

To illustrate this point, I would like to share a personal anecdote. My father grew up in the Boston area, and was a die-hard Red Sox fan. To his disappointment, I became a Yankees fan having grown up in New York. Despite the intense rivalry between the Yankees and Red Sox, I will never forget the day that my father came home with the newly published autobiography of my favorite baseball player, Paul O’Neill. I had not asked my father to pick up the book, but when he saw it, he purchased it on the spot knowing that I would love it. To my father, my favorite baseball player was a serious matter. My needs became his priority.

When we take our students and children seriously, they learn to take themselves seriously. A severe negative consequence of the pandemic is that people learned to take life a bit less seriously. Standards for dress, academic rigor, and shul attendance were lowered in the past two years. It is now the time to fight

the Amalekite quality of not taking life seriously. As we take our Talmidim and children seriously, they will learn how to take themselves more seriously and pave the way for the next generation of Jewish leadership.

## The Merit of Being Salty

*By Ariel Kryzman ('23)*

Adopted from Rav Tanchum Cohen based on Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l.

Parashat VaYikra begins with a list of Korbanot and how to bring them. There are cattle Korbanot, bird Korbanot, and vegetarian Korbanot. There is one shared procedure that happens with all Korbanot: the offering of salt on the Korbanot. When mentioning the salt, the Torah adds in something peculiar: “VeLo Tashbit Melach Berit Elokecha Mei'al Minchatecha,” “Do not leave out the salt of your covenant with Hashem from the meal offerings” (VaYikra 2:13). What is so important about salting the Korbanot? Why is it called a Brit?

Rashi comments on this that the Brit goes back to the 6 days of creation. Rashi explains that on the 2nd day of creation, so as not to “offend” the Mayim Tachtanim, the lower waters, for being put down below, Hashem made a Brit with the Mayim Tachtanim that they would be used for Nisuch HaMayim (sprinkling water on the Mizbei'ach on Sukkot) and offering salt on the Korbanot (ibid. s.v. Melach Berit). Rashi's answer leads to more questions! Why would the Mayim Tachtanim feel bad? If Hashem wants to give the lower waters a role in the Beit HaMikdash, why use salt? Why not perform Nisuch HaMayim year-round with every Korban?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky suggests that, to understand this Rashi, one must first understand how salt is extracted from the sea. To obtain sea salt, people would place sea water in a shallow area and leave it out to evaporate and eventually be left with salt. The lowest part of the sea water is the salt.

Hashem specifically wants the salt. One would have thought that Hashem wants the upper, lighter part of the water, not the lower, earthier, salt. No, Hashem shows that even the lower, denser, earthier part of the water has a specific use for Avodat Hashem.

Rav Yaakov relates this back to the Brit with the Mayim Tachtanim. One might think that only the Mayim Elyonim, the upper waters, are holy, while the Mayim

Tachtanim, which were brought down to earth, lacking spirituality and useless. The Brit Melach, the covenant of the salt, teaches us that we should not make the mistake of assuming that only the spiritual parts of our lives can be used for Avodat Hashem, but the things that are more earthly have no Avodat Hashem potential. The opposite is true; salt is used for all Korbanot, which are some of the holiest ways of connecting to Hashem. This captures the idea that specifically through finding Hashem in the physical parts of our lives do we achieve our greatest gains in Avodat Hashem. May we all try to find Hashem in every aspect of our lives, especially the physical ones.

## The Berachah on Partially Cooked Grains Part 3

*By Nachi Scheiner ('22)*

### Berachah Acharonah

Even if we could resolve the Berachah Rishonah dilemma, one still needs to resolve which Berachah Acharonah to make. Tosafot<sup>1</sup> ask what Berachah Acharonah do we make in the case of HaKoseit Et HaChita? They raise the possibility of making an Al Ha'Adamah - the same text as Al Hamichyah with the language of Al Ha'Adamah instead. Tosafot rejects this possibility considering that this text has no roots in our Mesorah, tradition, and is therefore illegitimate. Tosafot concludes that one should make a Borei Nefashot. The Ri, however, argues that there remains a lingering doubt about what Berachah Acharonah one should make.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, he concludes that it is proper for one should be stringent and only eat raw, whole grains in the context of a meal. Rambam<sup>3</sup> writes that one who eats scalded grain<sup>4</sup> in the grains original form,<sup>5</sup> makes a Ha'Adamah and Borei Nefashot. The Tur<sup>6</sup> cites the aforementioned Rambam and Tosafot and concludes that one should be careful to eat whole grains in the context of a meal.

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<sup>1</sup> Berachot 37a s.v. *Hakoses*

<sup>2</sup> Tosafot traces this disagreement to the Yerushalmi.

<sup>3</sup> *Hilchot Brachot* 3:2. The Tur cites the Behag as agreeing with Rambam.

<sup>4</sup> Scalding refers to the process of soaking milled grain in near-boiling water and letting it stand for a period of time in either a heated or unheated environment.

<sup>5</sup> The *Kesef Mishnah* (below) explains this to mean in the form of the grain brought from the stockpile.

<sup>6</sup> 208:4

The Beit Yosef<sup>7</sup> adds that the Rashba and the Rosh agree and is the accepted view in practice<sup>8 9</sup>.

### Strategies on How to Avoid the Berachah Acharonah issue

#### Approach I - the OU's Solution

Although one could solve the Berachah Acharonah problem by eating the granola in the context of a meal, to establish a meal for a quick snack seems a bit excessive. Therefore, according to the OU (following Rav Belsky and Rav Schachter), one can eat less than a Kezayit, 27cc according to the opinion<sup>10</sup> of Rav Chayim Na'eh, of oats and would be exempt from making a Berachah Acharonah. The Mishnah Berurah<sup>11</sup> writes that if one ate less than a Kezayit of the main ingredient, but a Kezayit of the whole mixture one makes a Borei Nefashot. Therefore, if one eats less than 27cc, around 1½ nature valley bars, of granola bars then one can make a Borei Nefashot. That being said, these laws apply only if one ate the said amount within Kedei Achilat Pras, the time it takes to eat six or eight Kezaysim of the said food. Rav Schachter rules that Kedei Achilat Pras for granola bars is 2 minutes, but Rav Belsky is sure that it is less than 5 minutes. Rav Heinemann rules that it is ideally within a two minute span, BeDi'eved within a four minute span. However, if it took one longer than 2-5 minutes (depending on how one would Pasken) one would not make a Berachah Acharonah.

However, Rav Ovadia Yosef<sup>12</sup> notes many Acharonim, including R. Akiva Eiger<sup>13</sup> and the Beit Meir<sup>14</sup> who question the ruling of the Magen Avraham upon which the Mishnah Berurah bases his ruling. Moreover, the Mishnah Berurah's ruling emerges from (as he explains in Sha'ar HaTziyun 210:2) a S'feik S'feika, (double doubt). Yet the Mishnah Berurah in 215:20 rules that one should not recite a Berachah even if case of a S'feik S'feika due to the principle of Safeik Berachot LeKulah (one should omit a Berachah if he is unsure as to whether he must recite that Berachah).. Rav Yosef compellingly concludes that

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<sup>7</sup> 208:4 s.v. V'HaTosafot

<sup>8</sup> Although the *Beit Yosef* typically follows Rambam, here since the Yerushalmi discusses only eating whole grain within a meal and since there are other major Rishonim who say it is a Safeik as to which Berachah to make, it is correct to rule strictly.

<sup>9</sup> The Shulchan Aruch 208:4 codifies this point as Halacha.

<sup>10</sup>Whom Rav Schachter and Rav Belsky said one could rely on in this case. Although this is a leniency here as it is the larger size of the debate and thus allows one to eat more granola, this would be the stricter opinion in cases where we want to eat as little as possible such as by Matzah and someone who doesn't stomach it so well. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yechave Da'at 1:16) rules in accordance with Rav Na'eh).

<sup>11</sup> 210:1

<sup>12</sup> Yabia Omer O"C 1:12

<sup>13</sup> O"C 210:1

<sup>14</sup> O"C 210

one should not deliberately enter into a situation where according to many Acharonim one is reciting a Berachah LeVatalah. Therefore the OU's recommendation to deliberately design a situation to rely on the ruling of the Mishnah Berurah in 210:1 is highly questionable even for Ashkenazic Jews.

#### Approach II - Borei Nefashot

Additionally, one could argue that a Borei Nefashot BeDi'eved covers an Al Hamichyah just like a SheHakol covers a Mezonot. The Eirech Hashulchan<sup>15</sup>, Kaf HaChayim<sup>16</sup>, Knesset HaGedolah, along with others hold that a Borei Nefashot can take the place of an Al Hamichyah. However, the majority of the Achronim, including the Mishnah Berura<sup>17</sup> (202:55) hold that a Borei Nefashot is ineffective even BeDi'eved for a food that requires a Berachah Achat Mei'ein Shalaosh. Rav Ovadia Yosef concludes that if one made a Borei Nefashot on a Mezonot food he should not repeat, since the general principle is Safeik Berachot LeKulah (one should omit a Berachah if he is unsure as to whether he must recite that Berachah). Ideally, one should never make a Borei Nefashot on a Mezonot food as there are those who say it may not be effective.

#### Approach III - Eating Two Separate Foods

The Aruch Hashulchan<sup>18</sup> offers another possibility by eating two separate foods one requiring Borei Nefashot and one requiring an Al Hamichyah. Rav Forst<sup>19</sup>, however, believes that eating other foods would not help remove the doubt. Rav Forst reasons that since it is one of the five grains it is too significant to warrant a Borei Nefashot. However, since it is not made into a dish, it is not sufficiently significant to merit an Al Hamichyah. The last possible option is to make an Al HaAdamah but as Tosafot said this Berachah is not extant. Since none of these options work, it is proper to eat whole grains only in the context of a meal<sup>20</sup>.

#### Summary

Mishnah Berurah (208:18) notes that if one ate whole grains (such as granola) outside the framework of a meal a Borei Nefashot should be recited. He explains that the Ikkar HaDin (baseline Halacha) requires only a Borei Nefashot on such food. Yalkut Yosef (Orach Chayim 208:9) indicates his agreement. Thus, it seems best to rely on the Ikkar HaDin in the case of oat

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<sup>15</sup> 202:6

<sup>16</sup> 202:79; 208:92

<sup>17</sup> This ruling of the Mishnah Berura is what Rav Ovadia Yosef points out is inconsistent with his ruling that one may recite a Borei Nefashot on a half a Kezayit of Chameishes Minei Dagan and a half a Kezayit of an item that requires a Borei Nefashot.

<sup>18</sup> Orach Chayim 208:9, see also Ohr Letzion (2:14:21).

<sup>19</sup> The Laws of B'rachos page 273

<sup>20</sup> See Halachapedia's article on this topic for a possible distinction between raw and cooked whole grains ([https://halachapedia.com/index.php?title=Raw\\_or\\_Roasted\\_Grains](https://halachapedia.com/index.php?title=Raw_or_Roasted_Grains)).

based granola bars a recite a Borei Nefashot, rather than relying on the OU's solution. In the attempt to satisfy a stringency, the OU is advising to deliberately set up a situation where one will risk reciting a Berachah LeVatalah according to many Acharonim including R. Akiva Eiger, the Beit Meir and Rav Ovadia Yosef.

### **Puffed Grains**

Another challenging Berachah question arises by puffed grains. There are two main ways of puffing grains that are common in various breakfast cereals<sup>21</sup>. The first way is known as gun puffing: the process of pressure popping grains in heated chambers. Cereals such as Sugar Crisps are puffed via gun puffing. Alternatively, grains can be puffed through a process known as oven puffing. Oven puffing refers to the process where whole rice is cooked (in a water medium) with sugar and flavorings. The kernels are then dried and slightly crushed. The grains (which seemingly are no longer whole; see Mishnah Berurah 208:3) are then placed in an extremely hot oven for puffing. Another way of oven puffing grains is to ground the rice and make it into a batter which is then cooked and puffed. Cereals such as Fruity Pebbles, Rice Krispies and Cocoa Pebbles are puffed through oven puffing.

### **What Berachah Does one Recite?**

For puffed grains that have not had their bran removed, such as Kashi's 7 Whole Grain Puff's, one would make a Ha'Adamah. For most other puffed grains, the grains go through a process known as pearling<sup>22</sup>. Pearling refers to the process where the bran is removed. During the pearling process, some of the endosperm may incidentally be removed. According to many poskim<sup>23</sup> if the bran along with some of the endosperm is removed it is no longer considered whole. However, gun puffed grains are not necessarily halachically cooked and may not be fit for a Mezonot. Due to the complex nature of the cooking process in gun puffed grains, Rav Moshe Feinstein<sup>24</sup> writes that one can make either a Mezonot or a Ha'Adamah. For the Berachah Acharonah Rav Moshe Feinstein says that one should make a Borei Nefashot. Although one can make a Mezonot, like rice, the Berachah Acharonah is still a Borei Nefashot. Rav Binyamin Forst<sup>25</sup> and Rav Bodner<sup>26</sup> recommend reciting a Ha'Adamah despite the possibility of making a Mezonot. Yalkut Yosef (O"C 208:9) similarly rules that Haadamah should be recited on the Israeli cereal "Shalva" (which is puffed wheat).

<sup>21</sup> (Vsein Berachah page 526).

<sup>22</sup> As per Rav Dovid Heber in his article on breakfast cereals: [Brochos for Breakfast | STAR-K Kosher Certification](#)

<sup>23</sup> Mishnah Berurah 208:15, Rav Binyamin Forst, The Laws of Berachot page 270.

<sup>24</sup> Igros Moshe Orach Chayim 4:45

<sup>25</sup> The Laws of Berachot page 272

<sup>26</sup> Vsein Berachah page 526.

For oven puffed grains one recites a Mezonot (since they are cooked) and Borei Nefashot (if the said grain is rice) or Al Hamichyah (If the said grain is wheat or oats).

### **Conclusion**

Eilu Va'Eilu Divrei Elokim Chayim,<sup>27</sup> both this opinion and that are the words of Hashem. When taking a step back, all of the approaches laid out above come from extremely reputable and knowledgeable sources and can be relied upon without worry. One must choose an approach based on what his Rav tells him. This article is merely meant to bring clarity regarding the fascinating discussion and the Ruchniut (Torah spirituality) behind a mundane food.

In R. Jachter's opinion, one should recite a Borei Pri HaAdama on oat based granola bars and gunned puffed grains, and afterwards recite a Borei Nefashot since no other viable option (other than eating them in the context of a bread meal, which in this case is impractical) exists.

**Editors-In-Chief Emeritus:** The Noam Barenholtz  
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Questions, comments? Contact us at:  
Phone: (201) 837-7696  
[webmasters@koltorah.org](mailto:webmasters@koltorah.org)

<sup>27</sup> Eruvin 13b, Gittin 6b