



A BRACHA ON THE PRIMARY FOOD ALSO COVERS THE SECONDARY FOOD.

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We're now going to learn a very basic and essential concept in Hilchot Brachot called "*ikar v'tafel*" (in Ashkenazi pronunciation, rhymes with "sticker" and "truffle"). Whenever two foods are eaten in combination, one of the foods is defined as the *ikar* – the primary food, and the other as the *tafel* – the secondary food. And here's the rule:

The bracha on the *ikar* food covers the *tafel* food as well, on which no separate bracha is said.¹

Let's take the example of yogurt, whose bracha is Shehakol. So too, the bracha on fruit-filled yogurt is Shehakol. Although this yogurt contains strawberries (whose bracha is Ha'adama), since the strawberries are *tafel* – secondary – to the yogurt, it is covered by the Shehakol on the yogurt. This is because even when enjoying that strawberry flavor, you look at it as an act of "eating yogurt," not as an act of "eating strawberries."

¹ Talmud – Brachot 44a

Defining the Ikar

When you have a mixture of foods, how do you define which is the *ikar*, and which is the *tafel*?

The *ikar* food is defined as the ingredient which is the "logical" reason for eating this food-mixture. This is subjective, as determined by you the eater.² Sometimes the *ikar* is the ingredient that you **most desire**, sometimes it is the **majority ingredient**, and sometimes it is based on the **function** that particular ingredient serves in this mixture. The next three classes will discuss where to apply each of these factors.

The *tafel* (secondary food) enhances the *ikar* because it only adds taste, texture, volume, etc. to the main ingredient, and it is **not the primary reason** for eating the food. However, if this ingredient is **desired for itself**, apart from the main ingredient, then it is **also** considered an *ikar*, and requires its own bracha.³

We'll explore when and how these rules apply. But first, we need to differentiate between different types of food mixtures.

Type #1: Food Enhancers

One category of *ikar v'tafel* is when you are interested in eating two different foods, but one food is being used primarily to **enhance the taste** of the other.⁴ The determining factor is: **What food do you specifically desire?**



Here are a number of examples:

² Magen Avraham (OC 168:30)

³ Orach Chaim 21:1; *Principles of Hilchos Brachos* by Rabbi Daniel Schloss

⁴ Mishnah Berurah 212:5, 6

IKAR	EATEN WITH	TAFEL
crackers		peanut butter
vegetables		dip
ice cream		chocolate sauce
potato latkes		apple sauce
meat		tomatoes and olives
gefilte fish		horseradish

In each of these situations, you are enjoying the taste of two separate foods that normally require separate brachot. However, since one food serves to enhance the other, the bracha on the main food (the *ikar*) covers the enhancer (the *tafel*).⁵

This applies even if the *tafel* ingredient constitutes the majority.⁶

Note that the bracha on the *ikar* **only** covers the *tafel* when actually **eaten in combination**. In other words, if you would eat a separate spoonful of peanut butter, it does not have the status of *tafel*, and a new bracha would be required.⁷

Cereal and Milk

What about a case where you have a little of the *tafel* food left over? For example, you pour yourself a bowl of Cheerios and add milk. You only say the bracha of Mezonot on the Cheerios, because the milk is a *tafel* (enhancer).⁸ Twenty spoonfuls later, you have finished the last Cheerio, and now there's some yummy sugary milk left in the bowl.



In such a case, you can drink that milk **without** saying a separate bracha. As a "bit of leftover," it is still considered part of the Cheerios-and-milk combination, and covered by the original (Mezonot) bracha.⁹

If, however, you then add some more milk to the bowl because you want milk for its own sake, then the milk **does** require its own separate bracha.¹⁰

⁵ Sha'ar Hatziyun 212:21

⁶ Shulchan Aruch HaRav – OC 204:16-17

⁷ Mishnah Berurah 168:46

⁸ Mishnah Berurah 168:46; *Shu"t Igros Moshe* OC 4:43

⁹ Mishnah Berurah 168:46

Sandwich

What about a (non-bread) sandwich of two foods slapped together? The rules are:

- If one food is an “enhancer” for the other, then it is *tafel*.
- If you are interested in each food separately, then two brachot are required.¹¹

So let's say you're eating tuna on a rice cake. The proper bracha depends on how you view each of the foods:

- If your primary intention is to eat a rice cake, and you are simply using the tuna as a “spread” to enhance its taste, then the bracha on the rice cake covers the tuna.
- If you really want the tuna and are simply using the rice cake as an enhancer (or as a way of “holding” the tuna), then the bracha on the tuna covers the rice cake.
- If you look at both the rice cake and the tuna as fully significant, then two separate brachot are required.

Type #2: Mixed Together

Until now, we've primarily discussed cases where one food is spread on (or coating) another food.

A second category of *ikar v'tafel* is when separate foods requiring different brachot are mixed together in a way that the ingredients are combined into **one mass**, or when they are cut into small pieces and eaten together.¹² In such a case, even though you desire each of the ingredients and neither is

¹⁰ *Shu"t Igrot Moshe* OC 4:43

¹¹ Mishnah Berurah 168:45

¹² Biur Halacha 212:1 – s.v. “*im ha'ikar*”

there to merely enhance the other, nevertheless only **one bracha** is recited, since the mixture is defined as **“one food.”**

In this type of *ikar v'tafel*, the correct bracha is usually determined by the majority ingredient.¹³

Let's say you're eating a broccoli quiche made of eggs and broccoli baked together. Since the egg-broccoli mixture is now one dish, only one bracha should be said. And the “majority rules”: If the majority is broccoli, then the bracha is Ha'adama; if the majority ingredient is egg, the bracha is Shehakol.¹⁴



Another example is chicken chow mien, consisting of sliced pieces of chicken mixed into sautéed vegetables. If there are more vegetables than chicken, then the bracha is Ha'adama. This is true even though you may be **more interested** in the chicken than the vegetables,¹⁵ and even though the chicken pieces are clearly distinguishable.¹⁶ Since the two foods are combined together, the majority food determines the bracha.

But how is this different than the case of cereal and milk (i.e. Type #1) that we discussed before? The answer is that the purpose of the milk is to **enhance** the cereal; but here, the vegetables have their own important, not just to enhance the chicken.

However, if in fact you regard the vegetables as being eaten **only to enhance** the chicken, this would make the vegetables *tafel* to the chicken, and the bracha would be Shehakol.¹⁷

¹³ Mishnah Berurah 212:1

¹⁴ Orach Chaim 212:1; Biur Halacha – s.v. “*im haikar*” says that it is best to mix the food into one dish

¹⁵ *V'Zot HaBracha (Birur Halacha 20:1:2)*, citing Rabbi Y.S. Elyashiv

¹⁶ Mishnah Berurah 212:1; see Biur Halacha – s.v. “*im haikar*”

¹⁷ Mishnah Berurah 212:1

Fruit Cocktail

This rule applies even when the items are not cooked/baked together, but are merely mixed¹⁸ — for example a fruit cocktail which contains small pieces of bananas, pineapples, pears and apples. Although each piece of fruit remains separate within the mixture, nevertheless only **one bracha** should be said, since they are eaten together. To determine which bracha to say on the fruit cocktail, you need to know whether the majority of ingredients are Ha'aitz (apples and pears) or Ha'adama (bananas and pineapple).

Let's say that your fruit cocktail has a majority of apples and pears, so you said the bracha Ha'aitz. After a few bites, you dig in for another spoonful and by chance you get **only** pieces of bananas and pineapple. Would you then have to say a bracha Ha'adama? The answer is no, because the spoonful of bananas and pineapple was unintentional, and hence inconsequential.¹⁹



Now let's change the case a bit. Let's say that after a few bites, you think to yourself, *I really like the banana pieces. I'm going to spoon one out and eat it by itself.* In such a case, since the banana is no longer being eaten in combination, and it is being eaten specifically for its own sake, you would need to say the bracha Ha'adama.²⁰

¹⁸ *Halachos of Brochos*, pg. 62, citing Rabbi Y.S. Eliyashiv and Rabbi C.P. Scheinberg

¹⁹ see *Shu"t Igros Moshe* OC 4:43

²⁰ *Laws of Brachos*, pg. 214

Additional Points

A. Eaten Together – A mixture is only considered "one food" if the pieces are small enough to be eaten together in one spoonful (or fork-full).²¹ So if you are eating steak together with potatoes, although they are on the same plate and part of the same meal – and even if they were cooked together – each food requires its own bracha, since each is its own separate entity.²²

B. Unclear Majority - If you are unable to determine which food is the majority, then you should:

1. Add more of one ingredient to make it the majority.²³
2. Alternatively, say brachot on other foods that require the same brachot, having in mind to cover the other foods.²⁴
3. If neither of these is feasible, then separate a piece of each food and say two separate brachot.²⁵

C. Ikar First - When eating an *ikar v'tafel* combination, you should be careful that the **first bite** after the bracha includes some of the *ikar* food, and not the *tafel* alone.²⁶

The first bite does **not** need to include some of the *tafel* food, as long as you are intending to eat the *tafel* food, too.²⁷

If for some reason you eat only the *tafel* food first, then it cannot be regarded as "*tafel*," and you would need to say the bracha that is appropriate for that food.²⁸ However, this should be avoided, as it may constitute a problematic "unnecessary bracha," as we will see in class #23.

²¹ Mishnah Berurah 212:1, with Sha'ar Hatziyun 21, and Biur Halacha – s.v. "*im ha'ikar*"; Aruch HaShulchan 212:2

²² Aruch HaShulchan 212:1, 2. The same applies to a coffee and donut – each gets its own bracha. But if the coffee is only used to "dunk your donut," then the items are "combined" and the preferred method is to first say Shehakol on the coffee and then Mezonot on the donut; better yet, first say Mezonot and eat a bit of the cake, then say Shehakol on the sugar and drink the coffee (Mishnah Berurah 168:65).

²³ Mishbezot Zahav 208:7

²⁴ *V'Zot HaBracha*, pg. 94

²⁵ Rabbi Y.S. Elyashiv, cited in *V'Zot HaBracha*, pg. 94

²⁶ Rema – Orach Chaim 212:1, with Mishnah Berurah 10

²⁷ Mishnah Berurah 212:4

²⁸ Mishnah Berurah 212:10, with Sha'ar Hatziyun 24

Chocolate-covered Raisins

Finally, let's consider the tricky case of chocolate-covered raisins. If you have a clear preference for either the chocolate or the raisins, then you would say that bracha. Unfortunately, it's often hard to decide which you really desire. And since neither the chocolate nor the raisins can be considered *tafel*, you should say two brachot – Ha'aitz on the raisins and Shehakol on the chocolate.²⁹

[This raises a slight problem: We learned in class #17 that the bracha Ha'aitz is said **before** the bracha Shehakol. But when eating a chocolate-covered raisin, you will necessarily eat have to say a bracha on the chocolate before reaching the raisin! To avoid this problem, you should first say Ha'aitz on a regular raisin, and then



Shehakol on the chocolate. If this option does not exist, you should simply say Shehakol on the chocolate, followed by Ha'aitz on the raisin.^{30]}

But not so fast. It turns out that the issue of chocolate-covered raisins is a dispute amongst contemporary authorities, with a range of opinions:

- The raisin is the *ikar*, and therefore say one bracha, Ha'aitz.³¹
- The chocolate is the *ikar*, and therefore say one bracha, Shehakol.³²
- The bracha is determined by whichever is in greater quantity.³³

²⁹ *Shu"t Igros Moshe* OC 3:31. Interesting, there is a general discussion regarding what bracha to say on chocolate, since it does grow from a tree. The accepted opinion is to say Shehakol (*Sha'arey Teshuva* – OC 202:19; *Sha'arey HaBracha*, pg. 693; *Makor HaBracha*, pg. 52-61). But see Rabbi S.Z. Auerbach who suggests saying Ha'aitz on chocolate (*Minchat Shlomo* 1:91:2).

³⁰ *Pischei Halacha* 7:41

³¹ Mishnah Berurah 204:51. An added factor in favor of saying Ha'aitz is that the raisin has the important status of being "whole" (*Tur* – *Orach Chaim* 204).

³² *V'Zot HaBracha*, pg. 96

³³ *V'Zot HaBracha*, pg. 97

In actual practice, you should speak with your rabbi, or you could always say the brachot Ha'aitz and Shehakol on other foods – having in mind the chocolate-covered raisins. Enjoy!

Review

- When two foods are eaten together (but not “mixed”), the *ikar* is defined as the food that you particularly **desire**.
- When two foods are **mixed together**, the majority food is considered the *ikar*.

This concludes class #20 on Hilchot Brachot. In the next class, we'll continue to explore the guidelines of *ikar v'tafel*.