



## Beracha Acharona on Cake

לעילוי נשמת  
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

**Question:** How much cake, which has many ingredients besides flour, must I eat in order to make a *beracha acharona* (=ba)?

**Answer:** While any amount of food requires a *beracha rishona* (=br) before it, there is a *ba* only after eating a *k'zayit* (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 210:1). If one eats small amounts of foods with different *berachot acharonot* that combine to form a *k'zayit*, he recites the “lower *beracha*” (usually, *Borei Nefashot*) (Magen Avraham 210:1).

The question is how to view a single food made up of different ingredients. Regarding *br*, when a food significantly contains (not as filler) wheat or other flour of the “five *minim*” (=5*mn*) along with even a majority of foods with other *berachot*, one recites only *Mezonot* (or *Hamotzi*), which covers even the non-*Mezonot* ingredients (Shulchan Aruch, OC 208:2).

Regarding *ba*, in one place, the Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) says that the *ba* for such a food is *Al Hamichya* even if the flour is clearly a minority. In another place (ibid. 9), he writes that if there is not a *k'zayit* of flour within a *pras* (eight *k'zeitim*) of food, one recites only *Al Hamichya* on bread made from it, and if cooked, only *Borei Nefashot* rather than *Al Hamichya*. So, we see that the *ba* can be reduced due to the presence of a predominance of other

ingredients. How much it is affected is disputed, as the Gra (ad loc.) says that without a *k'zayit* within a *pras* worth the *ba* is always *Borei Nefashot*. The Mishna Berura (ad loc. 47) contends that in order to make the higher *beracha*, the Shulchan Aruch requires not only a one eighth concentration but that one needs to eat a *k'zayit* worth of the 5*mn* flour. Conceptually, this means that a minority of flour is central enough to a complex food to control its overall identity and justify a “higher-level” *ba*, but the other foods are not subsumed enough to counts towards the *ba* of the 5*mn* flour.

There is significant *machloket* to what extent to limit the power of flour regarding *ba*. The Magen Avraham (208:15) says that the latter, more limiting Shulchan Aruch refers to the mixing of multiple types of grain but that other non-*Mezonot* ingredients team up with flour to reach the necessary *k'zayit*. The Chayei Adam (I, 50:21) is among those with misgivings over the Magen Avraham's distinction. The Mishna Berura (208:48), in noting that the common practice is to recite *Al Hamichya* after a *k'zayit* of a piece of cake, even though it has less than a *k'zayit* of flour, gives the following explanation. Since “spices” (e.g., sugar, oil) are there to improve the prominent flour base, they are counted toward the *k'zayit*. Another idea is that the minimum amount of liquid needed to turn the flour into dough (but not the extra that makes it loose batter) counts toward the *k'zayit* (V'zot Haberacha, p. 236). The Chazon

Ish (OC 26:8) similarly distinguishes between ingredients that are kneaded along with the flour, which count toward the *k'zayit*, and ingredients that are added after the kneading (e.g., the chocolate in *rugelach*). In the other direction, in cases where ingredients form a very distinct filling, e.g., in apple pie, it is accepted that it does not count toward the *k'zayit* (V'zot Haberacha, p. 47).

In summary, while it is unclear whether a *k'zayit* of flour is needed to call for *Al Hamichya*, common practice is that a *k'zayit* of cake (not including filling) suffices. Other factors give a boost to the practice. First, while the most accepted measure of a *k'zayit* is 27 cc. (appr. 1 fl. oz.), it may be smaller, so that there may be an actual *k'zayit* of flour in a piece that is not that much larger than a “standard *k'zayit*.” Also, Teshuvot V'hanhagot (II:133) posits that the *b'di'aved* situation favors *Al Hamichya*. He claims that since a *k'zayit* of food requires some *ba* and since cake is associated with the flour element, one would be *yotzei* with *Al Hamichya* even if *Borei Nefashot* is preferable. In contrast, if *Al Hamichya* is necessary, *Borei Nefashot* does not suffice. While eating additional cake is a logical halachic solution for the doubt, it may be unwise healthwise. ■

## Having a dispute?



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