Refraining From Nuts and Other Foods During the Yomim Noraim

We are all familiar with the simonim that are eaten on Rosh Hashanah. However, some foods are avoided from Rosh Hashanah until as late as Hoshanah Rabbah. What are these foods? Why do we refrain from them? Is cooking with these foods permitted? Does the custom really extend until Hashanah Rabbah? These questions as well as others will be addressed in this issue.

Source

The Rama\(^1\) brings that some are careful\(^2\) not to eat “nuts” during Rosh Hashanah

1. 583:2, Darchei Moshe 1, Aruch Hashulchan 3. Refer to Mecholas Hamachanim 6:pages 61-61b, see Kol Bo Hilchos Shofar 64 who quotes the Maharam as being lenient. See Bais Hayotzer 43:page 33b.
2. Refer to Kaf Hachaim 583:26. See Elyya Rabbah 5.
(see below if this applies to the days after Rosh Hashanah as well). This custom seems to be applicable for Ashkenazim.3

**Reasons**

A number of reasons are quoted for this custom. The first reason is quoted in the Rama:4 a nut (egoz) has the same numerical value as “cheit” (sin).5 (The numerical value of a nut in Hebrew equals seventeen, and cheit in Hebrew without the alef equals seventeen). In addition, just as the roots of a nut should not be covered during planting, so too we should not cover up our sins.6 The second reason brought in the Rama:7 a nut increases saliva, which will interfere with one’s concentration during davening.8 The Maharil9 adds that this applies before the tekios. The Chasam Sofer10 suggests an additional reason: A nut does not get dirty when it is rolled in dirt, as it is protected by the shell. So too, klal yisroel are among the non-Jews, but make sure that their insides (nishama) does not get dirty. Since nuts remind us of the galus, it is not proper to eat them during this time.

The custom follows both reasons.11

**Differences Between the Reasons**

There are some practical differences between the two basic reasons mentioned above.

- According to the Maharil, the prohibition only applies before the tekios and not during

4. Ibid.
5. Matei Ephraim 583:3, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 129:9, Lekutei Maharich 3:page 169 (new), Sefer Matamim page 163:17 (new), Aruch Hashulchan 3. Refer to Minhag Yisroel Torah 583:page 88. See Ginzei Yosef 102:page 234 regarding nuts and the numerical value. See Minhagei Yisroel 4:pages 41-49, L’osher Omar page 5. It is also the numerical value of tov (good). Refer to Kapei Aron 57, Daas Torah 583:1. Although egoz (in Hebrew) is 17 and cheit (in Hebrew) is 18 if you spell cheit without a alef it is 17, or one can say that you can be off by one regarding gematrias (Gam Ani Odeicha page 40).
7. Ibid.
8. Maharil Hilchos Shofar 2, Darchei Moshe 583:1, Rama 583:2, Yosef Ometz 977, Chayei Adam 139:6, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 129:9, Matei Ephraim 583:3, Lekutei Maharich ibid, Aruch Hashulchan 3.
9. Ibid.
10. Notes on Shulchan Aruch 583. Refer to Machtzis Hashekel 583:4. See Divrei Yisroel notes on Shemiras Haguf 2:pages 67-68
11. Refer to Noheg Katzon Yosef pages 270-271:18, see Shulchan Aruch Harav 583:6 who only brings the second reason. Refer to Yalkut Hagershoni O.C. 583 for an additional reason. Also see V’ein Lamo Michshal 2:pages 176-177, and Tlalei Oros Rosh Hashanah pages 297-298.
Refraining From Nuts and Other Foods During the Yomim Noraim

the entire Rosh Hashanah. However, if nuts are avoided because of concentration during davening, it should apply all of the aseres yemei teshuva.

Some say that the Maharil’s logic applies to any food which increases salvia. According to the first reason, the restriction only applies to nuts.

According to the second reason, a child who does not daven would be permitted to eat these foods. If the reason is because of a bad siman (cheit), then it would apply to children as well.

Which Nuts

According to the second reason, one should refrain from eating almonds. Peanuts are not included in this restriction.

Each to His Own

If one knows that these foods will not cause him to have additional salvia, then he may eat them according to the second reason.

Cooking with Nuts

One may cook with nuts if they are not recognizable in the dish and it will not add salvia. Some say that since it is mixed with other things it is not called a nut anymore. However, one should be stringent and not cook with anything that has the gematria of cheit. This does not apply to almonds, and one is permitted to cook with them.

One should avoid eating a cake which has recognizable nuts.

Other Foods

Some say that one should refrain from eating foods like borscht because of their

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14. Minhag Avoseinu B’yudeinu ibid:page 25. This is the opinion of the Pri Megadim Eishel Avraham 583:4.
15. Minhag Avoseinu B’yudeinu ibid:page 27.
20. Yad Yitzchok 1:208 (end).
21. Refer to Shiurei Halacha ibid.
v vinegar content.²⁴ Other examples include pickles and some strong mustard. Vinegar may be added to a vegetable salad if the vinegar gives a pleasant taste.²⁵

The custom of many is that this restriction requires refraining from lemons.²⁶ A lemon may be added to tea if its taste is indiscernible.²⁷ Due to its sour taste, grapefruit should be avoided unless one adds sugar to it.²⁸

Others say that one should refrain from chrein during these times.²⁹ One should also refrain from bitter tasting foods.³⁰ Spices and seasonings are permitted.³¹ There is a custom of a few not to eat sharp foods the entire aseres yemei teshuva.³²

Some avoid grapes during this time,³³ while others limit the custom to black grapes.³⁴ The custom is that grapes, especially green ones, are eaten during this time.³⁵ Eating raisins are included in grapes but if the raisins are mixed into a dish it is permitted.³⁶

There are those who opine that one should not eat beans or other kitniyos during this time because they increase saliva.³⁷ Chickpeas may be eaten since they do not increase salvia.³⁸

There are those who refrain from eating fish during this time, since the Hebrew word for fish (dag) is very similar to the Hebrew word for worry (da'aga).³⁹ Others say that since fish are a remez to multiplying and being fruitful, it may be eaten during this

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²⁵. Mikadesh Yisroel (Yomim Noraim) 113:page 106. There are those who maintain that one should avoid pomegranates and pineapples (Ben Ish Chai Netzavim 1:5).
²⁶. Tov Ayin 18:91:page 41b.
²⁸. Mikadesh Yisroel (Yomim Noraim) 112:page 105.
³⁰. Matei Ephraim 583:3, Aruch Ha'shulchan 3.
³¹. Aruch Hashulchan 3.
³². Leket Yosher page 124.
³³. Massei Rav (Gra) 210, Ben Ish Chai Netzavim 1:5. See Aleh B'tamar pages 61-62.
³⁴. Refer to Kaf Hachaim 583:21, Oles Yitzchok 1:179:11.
³⁷. Matei Ephraim 583:3.
³⁹. Matei Ephraim 583:3.
REFRAINING FROM NUTS AND OTHER FOODS DURING THE YOMIM NORAIM

From When

Based on the opinion of the Maharil that the main point is not to disturb others from hearing the tekios, the restrictions end after the tekios are over. Some only refrain from these foods on the first night, while others apply it to both days and nights of Rosh Hashanah. Some extend the restriction until after Yom Kippur, and some are stringent until after Hoshanah Rabbah. Some say there is no reason to refrain until Hoshanah Rabbah, but since Hoshanah Rabbah is the end of the days of judgment we abstain from them until then.

L’masah one who does not have the custom to refrain from these foods until after Hoshanah Rabbah does not have to accept this as his custom.

Round Challahs

There is a custom which is found among all of klal yisroel that applies from Rosh Hashanah until after Hoshanah Rabbah, the custom of making of round challahs. What is the reason for this?

Some explain that just as a circle has no beginning or end, we too should have no end and a long life. Others say that we daven on Rosh Hashanah that the whole world

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42. Yosef Ometz 977:page 217.
45. Leket Yosher page 124. Refer to Beer Moshe 3:97. Some say both reasons apply here. Salvia is increased by these nuts and it may interfere with davening and it is the numerical value of cheit (Minhag Avoseinu B’yudeinu 1:page 33:footnote 45).
47. Refer to Rama 664:1, Mishnah Berurah 3, Aruch Hashulchan 11.
48. Yad Yitzchok 1:208 (end).
49. Minhag Yavoseinu B’yudeinu 1:page 42. Refer to Minhag Yisroel Torah 583:page 89 who has a reason why the custom of some is to wait until Hoshanah Rabbah. Refer to Rama 611:2, Mishnah Berurah 7-8, Biur Halacha “u’liftzoa,” Aruch Hashulchan 8.
50. Minhag Yisroel Torah 3:page 82.
should recognize Hashem’s kingdom. This is represented by the round challahs.\(^51\)

Some offer the following explanation: The word shana means both “repeat” and “change”. As the year goes round and round, repeating the same seasons and holidays as the year before, we are presented with a choice: Do we want this shana (year) to be a repetition, or do we want to make a change (shinui)? Hopefully, each year we make choices for change that are positive, and each year we will climb higher and higher, creating a spiritual spiral.

The shape of the Rosh Hashanah challah reminds us that this is the time of year to make those decisions. This is the time to engage in the creative spiritual process that lifts us out of the repetitive cycle, and directs our energies toward a higher end.\(^52\)

Some form the challahs in the shape of a crown as a remez to crown Hashem.\(^53\) Others have the custom of making challahs in the shape of a ladder. The reason is that we mention in Mussaf on the Yomim Noraim, “Who will become poor, and who will become rich.” The ladder represents this idea, as Hashem says that this one will go up and this one will go down.\(^54\)

**After Note**

All these issues are to avoid a remez to cheit (sin). One should remember that cheit also equals the numerical value of cheit, and one should be careful about sinning during these days.\(^55\)

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51. Taamei Haminhagim (lekutim) 183, Minhag Yisroel Torah ibid, see Yehuda Yaaleh 1:157 regarding round matzahs. Refer to Minhag Yisroel 3:page 83 for a reason why some make challahs in the shape of birds.

52. Refer to the Aish Hatorah website (www.aish.com).


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- Halachically Speaking is a monthly publication compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, a former chaver kollel of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and a musmach of Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita. Rabbi Lebovits currently works as the Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K Kosher Supervision.

- Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary halacha with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant shittos on each topic, as well as the psak of Harav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita on current issues.

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