

# Parsha Encounters

28 Adar 5765 / Apr. 8 2005

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Parshas Tazria - Rabbi David Begoun

## A New World Order

**T**his Shabbos, in shuls around the world, we will read *Parshas HaChodesh*. Unfortunately, with all of the pre-Pesach madness, we tend not to properly focus on the *Arba'ah Parshios* in general nor on *Parshas HaChodesh* in particular. On the simplest level, the reason Chazal instituted the reading of "*HaChodesh hazeh lachem*," from Parshas Bo, on the Shabbos prior to Rosh Chodesh Nisan, was to remind the people that Pesach was at hand and that all of the preparations for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and for the Korban Pesach should be accelerated.

In *Parshas HaChodesh*, we learn about the commandment to sanctify the new moon and for the Sanhedrin to declare the Rosh Chodesh based on the testimony of eyewitnesses. Although it may seem insignificant, this commandment is so crucial to us that the Tanna Rabbi Yitzchak states that in reality the entire Torah should begin with these words.

This statement, of course, begs the question: what is really so important about this particular mitzvah? The obvious explanation is that it was the first commandment given to the Jewish People as a whole. This, however, only further solicits the question: why was this the first mitzvah that Hashem chose to deliver to the entire Jewish People?

The 5765 years since the creation of mankind can be divided into the two distinct periods consisting of the 2448 years from creation until the exodus from Egypt, and the 3317 years since then. During the first epoch, from creation until the exodus, the world was managed from top down and was sustained purely by the kindness of the Creator. Hashem's input into the world was constant and not dependent on the actions of mankind. Rosh Chodesh Nisan in Egypt (2448), however, when Klal Yisroel received the commandment of *HaChodesh hazeh lachem*, ushered in a new reality. From this moment on Klal Yisroel that would be in the driver's seat, so to speak, overseeing the management of the universe. A major shift occurred, and the world would now be run from the bottom up. From this point in time, Hashem's level of input into the world would be totally dependent on the thoughts, words and actions of the individuals of Klal Yisroel.

The Midrash, which explains the meaning of the word "*lachem*" in the phrase *HaChodesh hazeh lachem*, reveals a discussion that took place between the ministering angels and Hashem after the giving of this commandment. The angels asked Hashem when He planned to declare the festivals. Hashem replied that both He and they would have to wait to see when the Jewish People would declare the festivals and they would have to accede to their declaration. The Midrash continues that Hashem told the Jewish People that, in the past, the determination of the New Month was solely under His jurisdiction, but from now on

that control is given over to them. "If you declare it, it is declared, if you don't then it is not declared," Hashem told Klal Yisroel regarding the New Month. This is the meaning of the word "*lachem*." It is yours! The power to determine the New Month, and subsequently the exact timing of all of the festivals, is now completely under your jurisdiction.

This commandment signifies a fundamental transformation that took place in how Hashem manages His world. From this moment on, His input of *Elokus*, Divine Energy, would be in direct relation to the choices and actions of Bnei Yisroel. Although there was no fundamental change in the source of all of the energy of existence, the degree to which that energy enters the physical world is now in our control. This can be explained more clearly with a mashal. Imagine a crowded room with large chandeliers connected to a single dimmer in the corner of the room. There is one person who has his hand on the dimmer and is able to turn it up and add light to the room or turn it down and darken the room. In no way, whatsoever, is this individual the source of the energy needed to add or remove light from the room. The energy is being provided by some nearby power plant. But in reality, the individual with his hand on the dimmer is in total control of how much light enters that room. By turning the dimmer up, light floods in, and by turning it down, the room darkens. With the mitzvah of *HaChodesh hazeh lachem*, the way Hashem runs His world resembles the scenario in this large room. Without question, Hashem is the only source of energy and existence to sustain every molecule in the universe. But at that moment He put Klal Yisroel in control of the dimmer. We determine how much *Elokus* the Creator will input into His world and how much G-dly light will penetrate our otherwise dark world. From this moment on, it will be our positive thoughts, words and actions that draw down Divine Energy and our negative thoughts, words and actions that repel it.

It is now clear why this was the first commandment delivered to the Jewish People and why the Torah really should begin with these words. This commandment marks a turning point in history and the onset of a new world order in which the Jewish People are in the driver's seat, in control of a world that would be run from the bottom up. No single commandment highlights this reality more than *HaChodesh hazeh lachem* and no commandment is more appropriate to be the first mitzvah given to Klal Yisroel to usher in this new world order.

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THIS ISSUE OF PARSHA ENCOUNTERS IS DEDICATED BY

The Glenner family

in honor of the recent marriage of David and Aviva Weinschneider.

# Halacha Encounters

## Granola Bars

Rabbi Yisroel Langer

**B**efore one partakes of any food or drink he is obligated to recite a beracha. When beginning to eat, he must be aware of the proper beracha that is required to be made on the food placed in front of him. If one does not know what beracha to make, he may not partake of the food until he is able to verify the correct beracha. In this week's Halacha Encounter we will discuss what beracha one is supposed to make on a granola bar.

If one grinds one of the five grains (wheat, rye, spelt, oats, and barley) into flour and bakes bread from it, the beracha that one makes is Hamotzi. If it is used to bake a cake then one makes a Mezonos. However, if they are not ground into flour and remain whole, the beracha will vary depending on how it was prepared.

**Raw or Roasted:** If one eats the kernels of grain in their raw state or as "*kloyos*" (roasted kernels), the beracha is Borei Pri Hoadama<sup>1</sup>. (This is true if the kernels are edible, however, uncooked barley which is only eaten in extreme situations would require a Shehakol).<sup>2</sup>

**Cooked:** If the kernels of grain are cooked, one must make the beracha of Mezonos provided that one of the following conditions is met:

1. The kernels were cut up prior to being cooked. (e.g. oatmeal or farina)
2. The kernels (even if they are whole) become softened through cooking to the point where they lose their form.
3. The outer shell of the kernels is removed (through a process called milling), and, as a result of the cooking, the kernels partially adhere to each other.<sup>3</sup>

**Steamed:** Many poskim say that if one steams raw kernels of grain for an extended period of time until the kernels become "cooked," the beracha would be Mezonos provided one of the above conditions is met. Steaming in such a fashion is viewed as cooking.

**Baked:** The poskim also say that if one of these grains is baked with other ingredients that bring moisture to the grains, the beracha on the baked product would be a Mezonos. (e.g. On oatmeal cookies made from a batter that contains oats, one would recite a Mezonos even if no flour was added to the batter.<sup>4</sup>)

Based on the above halachos we are able to determine the proper beracha to be made on granola and granola bars. Granola is a snack made from oats (one of the five grains) mixed with honey (or corn syrup), nuts, raisins and other ingredients. The oats may have been slightly steamed (depending on which brand of oats is used) prior to being mixed with the other ingredients. The steaming is done to bring out some of the flavor of the oats and to soften them.<sup>5</sup> This steaming is considered too minimal to be viewed as cooking and would not change the beracha from Hoadama to Mezonos.<sup>6</sup> The oats are then mixed with the other ingredients, spread loosely on a pan and placed into the oven. The heat from the oven toasts the oats, produc-

ing the final product, granola. The primary ingredient is the "*kloyos*," therefore the beracha on the granola would be Borei Pri Hoadama.

With regard to a granola bar the process is very similar. However, instead of heating the granola loosely, the granola is pressed together to form a bar and then baked in the oven. Some poskim hold that since the oats are being baked with other ingredients, and are bound together through baking, one would make a Mezonos. However, most poskim disagree and hold that one should recite a Borei Pri Hoadama on a granola bar. Their reasoning is as follows: If the heat from the baking would moisten the oats, causing them to adhere to each other, then the beracha would be Borei Minei Mezonos. However, the oats in a granola bar stick to each other through corn syrup and other sweeteners. The heat of the oven toasts the oats, and at the same time hardens the sweetener, thereby causing the kernels to adhere to each other more tightly. The result is "*kloyos*" (toasted grain kernels) stuck together because of sweeteners. Therefore, the proper beracha to be made is Borei Pri Hoadama.

If we assume the opinion of most poskim that the proper beracha on a granola bar is Borei Pri Hoadama, there is still a question with regard to the beracha achrona. Tosfos in Brachos questions whether one should make the beracha of Al Hamichya, substituting the words Al Hamichya with the words Al Hoadama V'al Pri Hoadama, after eating one of the five grains. Although we paskin that one should recite a Borei Nefashos, it is preferable for a scrupulous person to avoid this situation and only eat these grains (such as a granola bar) in a bread meal.<sup>9</sup> One can also avoid the beracha achrona issue by not eating a kzayis within the timespan of b'chdei achilas pras (approximately four minutes).

Rabbi Yisroel Langer learns full time at the kollel.

<sup>1</sup> O.C. 208:4 See Aruch Hashuchan 208:10

<sup>2</sup> Rema ibid.

<sup>3</sup> If they don't adhere to each other, the M.B. 208:15 brings a machlokes as to whether the proper beracha is Mezonos or Hoadama. This food should only be eaten in a bread meal or by reciting the beracha of Mezonos and Hoadama on other foods.

<sup>4</sup> Harav Binyomin Forst shlita (author of sefer Piskei Halacha on Hilchos Berochos) and Harav Yisroel Belsky shlita. See also Vsein Beracha p. 505 note 603

<sup>5</sup> Information provided by Quaker

<sup>6</sup> Harav Yisroel Belsky shlita

<sup>7</sup> Harav Moshe Heineman shlita see also Vzos Habracha in Birur Halacha Siman 27:7 in the name of Hagaon R' Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv shlita.

<sup>8</sup> Vsein Beracha (ibid) quoting Hagaon R' Shlomo Zalman Aurbach ZT"l, Harav Yisroel Belsky shlita, Harav Binyomin Forst shlita, Harav Shmuel Fuerst shlita, and Harav Dovid Zucker shlita.

<sup>9</sup> O.C. 208:4 There is a dispute amongst the poskim whether it is sufficient for one who wishes to avoid this sheilah, to eat a kzayis of a food that certainly requires an al hamichya together with a kzayis of food that certainly requires a borei nefashos, see Kitzos Hashulchan siman 48 s.k. 33, Olas Tamid 208:s.k. 3 and haoras of Harav Binyamin Forst shlita at the end of sefer V'zos Habracha #8.