

# HALACHICALLY SPEAKING



► Authored by Rabbi Moische Dovid Lebovits  
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## 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*<sup>1</sup> brings that some are careful<sup>2</sup> 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 Elya Rabbah 5.



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(see below if this applies to the days after Rosh Hashanah as well). This custom seems to be applicable for *Ashkenazim*.<sup>3</sup>

## Reasons

A number of reasons are quoted for this custom. The first reason is quoted in the *Rama*:<sup>4</sup> a nut (*egoz*) has the same numerical value as “*cheit*” (sin).<sup>5</sup> (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.<sup>6</sup> The second reason brought in the *Rama*:<sup>7</sup> a nut increases saliva, which will interfere with one’s concentration during *davening*.<sup>8</sup> The *Mahari<sup>p</sup>* adds that this applies before the *tekios*. The *Chasam Sofer*<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

## 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

3. Hisoreros Teshuva 1:125:3:page 47b.

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).

6. Daas Torah 583:1.

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.

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the entire Rosh Hashanah.<sup>12</sup> However, if nuts are avoided because of concentration during *davening*, it should apply all of the *aseres yemei teshuva*.<sup>13</sup>

- Some say that the *Maharil's* logic applies to any food which increases *salvia*.<sup>14</sup> According to the first reason, the restriction only applies to nuts.<sup>15</sup>
- 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.<sup>16</sup>

## Which Nuts

According to the second reason, one should refrain from eating almonds.<sup>17</sup> Peanuts are not included in this restriction.<sup>18</sup>

## 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.<sup>19</sup>

## 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.<sup>20</sup> However, one should be stringent and not cook with anything that has the *gematria* of *cheit*.<sup>21</sup> This does not apply to almonds, and one is permitted to cook with them.<sup>22</sup>

One should avoid eating a cake which has recognizable nuts.<sup>23</sup>

## Other Foods

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

12. Minhag Avoseinu B'yudeinu 1:pages 24-25.

13. Minhag Avoseinu B'yudeinu 1:page 25:footnote 6. Refer to Aprakasisa D'yana O.C. 2:88.

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.

16. Minhag Avoseinu B'yudeinu ibid:page 26:footnote 13.

17. Magen Avraham 4, Be'er Heitiv 5, Mekor Chaim 583, Kaf Hachaim 27. Refer to Ashri Haish 3:page 85:7.

18. Opinion of Harav Yisrael Belsky Shlita, opinion of Harav Shmuel Felder Shlita quoted in Shiurei Halacha page 13. Refer to Piskei Teshuvos 583:footnote 37.

19. Kaf Hachaim 583:28, see 587:19.

20. Yad Yitzchok 1:208 (end).

21. Refer to Shiurei Halacha ibid.

22. Be'er Moshe 3:97, Miyum Hahalacha 1:93. See Avnei Yoshpei 5:84:2.

23. Sheilas Rav page 380:15.

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vinegar content.<sup>24</sup> Other examples include pickles and some strong mustard. Vinegar may be added to a vegetable salad if the vinegar gives a pleasant taste.<sup>25</sup>

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

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

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

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

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*).<sup>39</sup> Others say that since fish are a *remez* to multiplying and being fruitful, it may be eaten during this

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24. Magen Avraham 583 (beginning), Pri Megadim Eishel Avraham 583, Moreh B'etzvah 9:254, Tov Ayin 18:91, Ben Ish Chai Netzavim 1:5, Matei Ephraim 583:3, Lekutei Maharich 3:page 619 (new), Mishnah Berurah 5, Aruch Hashulchan 3.

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.

27. Mikadesh Yisroel (Yomim Noraim) 111:page 105.

28. Mikadesh Yisroel (Yomim Noraim) 112:page 105.

29. Mikadesh Yisroel (Yomim Noraim) 110:pages 104-105.

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.

35. Machzor Vitrei 323, Oles Yitzchok 1:179:11, Yalkut Yosef 13:page 32:6, Minhag Yisroel Torah 583:pages 89-90. Refer to Orchos Rabbeinu 2:pages 175-176:17, Avnei Yoshpei 5:84:3.

36. Opinion of Harav Elyashiv Shlita quoted in Ashri Haish 3:page 85:6.

37. Matei Ephraim 583:3.

38. Minhag Avosieniu B'yudeinu 1:page 32, Divrei Yatziv (Lekutum V'hashmatos) 53.

39. Matei Ephraim 583:3.

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time.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the custom of most people is not to be concerned with this.<sup>41</sup>

## 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.<sup>42</sup> Some only refrain from these foods on the first night,<sup>43</sup> while others apply it to both days and nights of Rosh Hashanah.<sup>44</sup> Some extend the restriction until after Yom Kippur,<sup>45</sup> and some are stringent until after *Hoshanah Rabbah*.<sup>46</sup> Some say there is no reason to refrain until *Hoshanah Rabbah*, but since *Hoshanah Rabbah* is the end of the days of judgment<sup>47</sup> we abstain from them until then.<sup>48</sup>

*L'maseh* 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.<sup>49</sup>

## 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.<sup>50</sup> Others say that we *daven* on Rosh Hashanah that the whole world

40. Matei Ephraim 583:3, Minhag Yisroel Torah 3:page 85. Refer to Darchei Moshe Ha'aruch 583:1.

41. Matei Ephraim 583:3, Lekutei Maharich 3:page 619 (new).

42. Yosef Ometz 977:page 217.

43. Aruch Hasshulchan 3. Refer to Eishel Avraham Butchatch 583:1, Matei Ephraim 600:9, Elef Hamugen 583:footnote 15, Bnei Yisoschor Tishrei 2:11:page 5, Aruch Hashulchan 583:3, Moreh B'etzvah 9:266:footnote 15, Mikroei Kodosh Yomim Noraim 7.

44. Opinion of Harav Yisrael Belsky Shlita, see Matei Ephraim 583:3, Kaf Hachaim 583:28, Mechalas Hamechanim 6:page 61 (bottom), Shearim Metzuyanin B'halacha 129:8. Refer to Sharei Teshuva 583:1, Moreh B'etzvah 9:266, Teshuvos V'hanhagos 2:266, Matei Ephraim 583:2. Ben Ish Chai Netzavim 1:8, Moed Lechol Chai 12:15, Yufei L'leiv 2:583:8, Kaf Hachaim 583:4, Siddur Yaavetz 2:page 322, Habayis Hayehudi 3:11. Refer to Ohr Yisroel 13:pages 123-132 in depth, 49:page 140:16, see Leket Yosher page 124.

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).

46. Be'er Moshe 3:97, Bais Hayotzer 43:page 33b, see Katzei Hamatei 583:16, Hisoreros Teshuva O.C. 373.

47. Refer to Rama 664:1, Mishnah Berurah 3, Aruch Hashulchan 11.

48. Yad Yitzchok 1:208 (end).

49. Minhag Avoseinu 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'lifzoa," Aruch Hashulchan 8.

50. Minhag Yisroel Torah 3:page 82

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should recognize *Hashem's* kingdom. This is represented by the round *challahs*.<sup>51</sup>

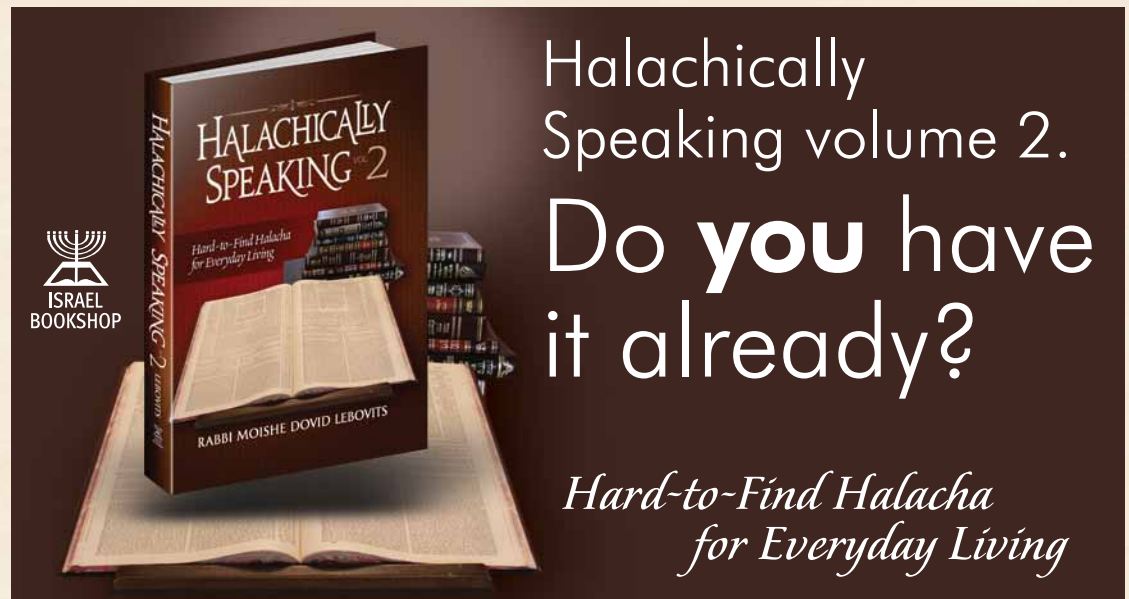
Some offer the following explanation: The word *shana* means both “repeat” and “change”. As the year goes go round and round, repeating the same seasons and holidays as the year before, we are presented with a choice: Do we want this *shana* (year) to be a repetition, or do we want to make a change (*shinui*)? 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.<sup>52</sup>

Some form the *challahs* in the shape of a crown as a *remez* to crown *Hashem*.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup>

### 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.<sup>55</sup>



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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](http://www.aish.com)).

53. Sefer Matamim Hachodesh page 49:13.

54. Matamim page 163:18 (new).

55. Moadim L'Simcha 1:page 111:footnote 51.

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