

Talmud Brachot Top Ten Teachings, Daf 41:

- 1. The seven special species.** There is a verse in the Torah that lists seven foods that Israel is known for (Deuteronomy 8:8): “A land of wheat and barley and grapes and figs and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and [date] honey.” Based on this verse, Rabbi Yehuda says that we prioritize these seven species for brachos. In other words, if you have a pomegranate and an apple on your plate, you should make your bracha on the pomegranate and eat that first, because it is one of the seven species and therefore more valuable than the apple. The sages, however, say that you should make the bracha on the food that you enjoy more. If you like apples more than pomegranates, make your bracha on the apple. What is the debate really about? The Torah singles out these seven foods. They are special. And we always want to live by the Torah, following what it tells us is important. But sometimes what we want is also important. We do not need to take ourselves out of the equation. The rabbis are saying that even though according to the Torah, a pomegranate is more valuable than an apple, an individual may prefer apples, and that’s ok. You get to decide what you enjoy, and you get to make decisions based on that. We don’t want to see brachos as a burden, thanking G-d for a food that He says is amazing but that we don’t care about as much. Picking the food that we enjoy more may even enhance the bracha.
- 2. Ha’adama can cover fruit - but not always.** If you accidentally made a *ha’adama* on an apple, it counts. If you weren’t sure if you should be making a *ha’eitz* or a *ha’adama* and so you picked *ha’adama*, it counts. The correct bracha for fruit is *ha’eitz*, but if you made a *ha’adama* by mistake it is good enough. But, Rashi clarifies, this only applies when it actually is a mistake. If you have a plate of fruits and vegetables and you decide to make a *ha’adama* first because one of the vegetables is your favorite food, that *ha’adama* does not cover the fruits on your plate. In this situation, you didn’t make a mistake. You knew the correct bracha for the fruits, you just decided to eat the vegetables first. So the fruits still need a separate *ha’eitz*.
- 3. Order of priority, based on the verse.** We saw that Rabbi Yehuda says we prioritize the seven species when making brachos, and the sages say we prioritize whatever we enjoy more. According to Ula, this debate only applies when we are choosing between foods that are the same bracha; if you have one of the seven species along with a food that gets a different bracha, even Rabbi Yehuda would agree that the first bracha goes to the food you enjoy more. However, this is a *machlokes*. Some say that even if you have two different brachos on your plate, like a date and a potato, Rabbi Yehuda would say to prioritize the seven species. Rabbi Yirmiya says in the name of Rabbi Yosef (or possibly Rabbi Yitzchak) that not only does the verse about the seven species tell us that we should prioritize them over other foods, but it even gives us an order of priority within the seven species. Wheat comes first, then barley, then grapes, etc. See #7 for a slightly revised understanding of the order of the seven.
- 4. Measurements.** Rabbi Chanan says that this verse has nothing to do with an order of priority for blessings. Rather, the point of the verse is to teach us laws of *shurim* (measurements) for different foods. Grapes teach us that a *nazir* can’t have more than a *revi’is* of wine; figs teach us the amount that we are not allowed to carry from one domain to another on Shabbos; a date is the portion size that we cannot eat on Yom Kippur.
- 5. The portion size for Yom Kippur.** Generally, when a mitzvah involves eating we assume that it requires a *kezayis* (an amount of food the size of an olive). On Pesach, there is a mitzvah to eat a *kezayis* of matzah. If you’re not allowed to eat something, less than a *kezayis* doesn’t count as eating. But on Yom Kippur, when we are not allowed to eat, we do not use the *kezayis* measurement. The amount of food that counts as eating on Yom Kippur is the size of a big, juicy date. It’s bigger than a *kezayis* but not quite as big as an egg. This might be because on Yom

Kippur we are supposed to afflict ourselves by fasting. Violating that prohibition requires a level of satisfaction, and something the size of an olive is not big enough to give satisfaction. Only something the size of a date would be satisfying enough to count as a violation of Yom Kippur.

6. **Are measurements Biblical or rabbinic?** Rabbi Chanan says the verse about the seven species is teaching us about measurements rather than brachos. But the sages say that can't be true, because the verse doesn't actually say anything about measurements - in fact, the laws of measurements come from the rabbis. However, the gemara in Yuma says that we punish people for violating the laws of measurements. If they're only rabbinic, how can that be? Usually we say that measurements were given to Moses at Mount Sinai. So how can the sages say here that they are rabbinic? The Rambam sometimes refers to things that were taught to Moses on Mount Sinai as rabbinic, because they are not explicit in the Torah itself. Perhaps that is the point the sages are making here. Measurements are Biblical and were given to Moses at Mount Sinai, but they are not explicit in the verses, and so we can't say that this specific verse is about measurements. Another possibility is that the measurements were given to Moses but then forgotten and brought back by a later court. It is also possible that the laws of *shiurim* are Biblical but the exact measurements were scientifically calculated by the rabbis.
7. **A different way to prioritize.** Rav Chisda and Rav Hamnuna were having a meal together, and there were dates and pomegranates on the table. Rav Hamnuna made a *ha'eitz* on the dates first. Rav Chisda said to him, "What about the opinion of Rabbi Yosef (or possibly Rabbi Yitzchak) that we follow the order of the fruits listed in the verse?" Rav Hamnuna replied that the word *eretz* (land) appears twice in the verse, and dates are the second fruit mentioned after the word *eretz* while pomegranates are the fifth. Rav Chisda praised the brilliance of this understanding of the verse. So is this actually the halacha, that we prioritize the seven species based on how close they are to the word *eretz*? According to the Shulchan Aruch, we do. Based on this gemara, the Shulchan Aruch lists the order of the seven species as 1) wheat, 2) barley, 3) olives, 4) dates, 5) grapes, 6) figs, 7) pomegranates. Why is barley the second most important? Because it can be made into bread or *mezonos*, and that is considered more important than fruit.
8. **Fruit during and after a meal.** Generally a *hamotzi* will cover all the food that is part of the meal and no other blessings are required. But if you're having fruit for dessert, a separate *ha'eitz* is needed. One opinion says you also need to make a separate after-blessing for the fruit, but we do not follow that opinion today. If the fruit is not dessert but is part of the meal, like in a salad, then it doesn't need a separate *ha'eitz*.
9. **Pas haba b'kisnin.** According to Rashi, *pas haba b'kisnin* is something that was eaten after a meal but as an extension of the meal. Since it is still connected to the meal, it does not need a separate after-blessing.
10. **Parts of the meal covered by the hamotzi.** Foods that come "because of the meal" do not require separate blessings; they are covered by the *hamotzi*. Rashi says this refers to foods that are meant to be eaten with the bread, like spreads and salads. They are on the table to help you eat the bread, and therefore they are considered secondary to the bread and can be covered under its bracha. But if you have other foods that are filling and that don't go with the bread, these foods don't count as "because of the meal" and cannot be considered secondary, so they require their own brachos. One opinion says these foods require a bracha before being eaten but do not require a separate after-blessing. Today we don't follow Rashi. We understand "because of the meal" very broadly to include pretty much all food that is eaten in the meal. Even if it's hearty and filling on its own, it doesn't need its own bracha.