
Tasting in Brochos and Fasts

ברכות י"ד. ושלחן ערוך סימן ר"י סעיף ב' וסימן תקס"ז [עפ"י פסקי מ"ב]

רמב"ם הלכות תעניות פרק א הלכה יד

כל השרוי בתענית, בין שהיה מתענה על צרתו או על חלומו בין שהיה מתענה עם הצבור על צרתם, הרי זה לא ינהוג עידונין בעצמו ולא יקל ראשו ולא יהיה שמח וטוב לב אלא דואג ואונן כענין שנאמר (איכה ג') מה יתאוון אדם חי גבר על חטאיו, ומותר לו לטעום את התבשיל ואפילו בכדי רביעית והוא שלא יבלע אלא טועם ופולט, שכח ואכל משלים תעניתו.

רמב"ם הלכות ברכות פרק א הלכה ב

ומטעמת אינה צריכה ברכה לא לפנייה ולא לאחריה עד רביעית.

בית יוסף אורח חיים סימן תקסז

ובפרק היה קורא (שם) כתבו התוספות או דילמא הנאה קביל עליה האי לישנא משמע דמיירי בתענית יחיד שקיבל עליו אבל בתענית הכתוב לא עד כאן* ומשמע דבכלל תענית הכתוב הם שבעה עשר בתמוז ועשרה בטבת אבל כל שאר תעניות אפילו תענית ציבור מאחר שהוא צריך קבלה משמע דשרי דהא פשט ליה טועם ואין בכך כלום אלמא ס"ל דאכילה ושתייה דוקא קביל עליה והא ליכא וכו'.

Can one taste food on a private fast day?

The גמרא rules that on a private fast, one may taste the food, since he accepted not to *eat* or *drink*; that is, so long as he doesn't taste more than a רביעית [of a לוג, equal to the size of one and a half eggs]. The רשב"א explains that he cannot taste *more* than a רביעית in one go, lest he come to swallow a bit. However, a רביעית, he may taste in one go and, as many times in the day as he wishes, so long as he is sure that he won't swallow some of it. Others say that he cannot even taste a רביעית in one go. Rather, he must taste a little at a time and, over the entire תענית, the amounts he tastes must not accumulate to a total of more than a רביעית. From the שלחן ערוך, it would seem that being a דרבנן, one may be lenient. However, the חיי אדם only cites the more stringent view.

The מגן אברהם writes that even if he intends to actually derive benefit from the taste of the food, it could well be that since he does not swallow anything, it is still permitted. [The אלי"ר רבה is certain that this is the case.]

What about on a public fast?

The רא"ש in תענית cites the opinion of the מברצלוני, that all תעניות, other than יום כיפור and תשעה באב, have the same דינים as the above. The ביאור הלכה, quoting from the ספר האשכול, explains that on these two days, we find that a fraction of a forbidden enjoyment is also prohibited. For example,

washing even a small finger is forbidden, just like washing the entire body. This opinion is cited by the שלחן ערוך.

However, תוספות here, as interpreted by the בית יוסף, rules that *all* four public fasts are more stringent. [In truth, a close examination of the לשון of תוספות would imply that on the contrary, the public fasts are more lenient. The פני יהושע has already raised this point. The words of the בית יוסף would fit better with the רמב"ם.] This שיטה is the one that the רמ"א follows. However, חיי אדם writes the חיי אדם, in the case of one preparing food for a סעודת מצוה on the night following the fast, one could follow the more lenient view of the שלחן ערוך, tasting a bit at a time. [Note, the חיי אדם follows his above mentioned view that it is prohibited to have a רביעית in one go.]

The Vilna Gaon and אלי רבה write that all agree that any other public fast, would have the same leniencies as the private תענית.

May one wash his mouth out on a תענית?

One accustomed to do this, may do so on a תענית יחיד, even if he is using more than a רביעית of water. As for any other mouthwash, if it is fitting to drink [as opposed to vinegar or the alike], perhaps he should not use more than a רביעית.

On the four fasts, the תרומת הדשן writes that it is not advisable to do so. The חיי אדם and אלי רבה are lenient, even on תשעה באב, for one who is in pain. They write that he should be careful to bend his head forward, so that he does not come to swallow the water. On יום כפור, though, one should not do this at all.

Can one swallow his saliva on a fast?

Although the ב"ח is stringent on יום כפור, the משנה ברורה only quotes the opinion of the מגן אברהם who is lenient even on יום כפור.

If one tastes food, must he make a ברכה on it?

The גמרא, as explained by רש"י, writes that if one is tasting the food to see if it could do with more spices, he does not need to make a ברכה; in fact, it is *forbidden* to make a ברכה. Although the מגן אברהם deduces from this that, if it is too late to improve the food, one may have to make a ברכה, even if he only wishes to have a taster, the אלי רבה and פרי מגדים write that the דין is the same. If he has a dual intention – to taste and to benefit – the חיי אדם implies that he would have to make a ברכה.

However, in the understanding of the גמרא, there are two schools of thought. The רמב"ם and the רי"ף hold that when the גמרא talks of a רביעית, it refers to this question too. Hence, as long as a

person does not have more than a רביעית of liquid or a כזית of solid, even if he swallows the food, he need not make a ברכה, since his intention was not for the sake of eating. In fact, rules the מגן אברהם, he can taste from many different pots, each time, up to and including a רביעית, and not make a ברכה. With more than a רביעית, it is automatically considered for the sake of אכילה, and as such, if he swallows it [as explained by the Vilna Gaon and as opposed to others who write that even if he spits it out], he would have to make a ברכה.

However, the רבינו חננאל holds that this has nothing to do with the רביעית. If a person spits out the food, he does not need to make a ברכה, since there is no 'הנאת מעים' - benefit to the stomach - and, twinned with the fact that he intends only to taste the food, he does not have to make a ברכה on the nice taste. A classic example would be in the case of one who chews the food, in order to soften it for a child. However, if he swallows the food, even the smallest amount, he must make a ברכה.

The רמ"א rules that we follow the rule of ספק ברכות להקל and, as such, we follow the first opinion. Although the מגן אברהם contends that the הלכה follows the latter opinion, many אחרונים maintain the decision of the רמ"א. Still though, the חיי אדם advises that if one is planning to swallow any of the food, he should have intention to benefit from it בתורת אכילה and then make the ברכה.

How does this affect the שאלה of making a ברכה on chewing gum?

The majority of פוסקים compare chewing gum to a דין that appears earlier [in ר"י סעיף ט"ו]; namely, one who sucks sugar cane makes a שחכל. They explain that the difference lies in the fact that his intention is for the sake of אכילה.

[We might add that it would seem that, as opposed to the רבינו חננאל who talks of one who spits out the food, here there is also הנאת מעים, since he will swallow some of the sugars, which ultimately gives him energy. This is furthered by the רמ"א who writes that on a תענית, one may chew cinnamon sticks to lubricate his throat, as long as makes sure to spit out the 'juice'. This would imply that if he did not do so, it is considered אכילה and would be forbidden. Thus, it fits the criteria of both אכילה and הנאת מעים and he would make a ברכה on the chewing gum.]

Does one make a ברכה on a cigarette?

Although the מגן אברהם entertains the possibility that one should make a ברכה, based on the fact that it does satiate, the אחרונים confirm that one most definitely does not make a ברכה on it. [See the שיערי תשובה for other הלכות for smoking.]