



KASHRUS KURRENTS

FALL 5783 - 2022 | VOLUME 45 NO. 4

Shehecheyanu: A TIMELY BLESSING



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Shehecheyanu is part of many occasions and rituals. In the parlance of the Gemara, it is often referred to as *zman*, the blessing of time. This *bracha* expresses appreciation for special occasions in our lives – things that only happen from time to time.

It is especially interesting that the *minhagim* of when *Shehecheyanu* is said are often not in line with the strictest letter of the law. This article will explore some of the common – and uncommon – *halachos* and *minhagim* of this *bracha* relevant to the *Moadim*.

Times of Holiness

Shehecheyanu is said at the onset of every Yom Tov to mark the increased holiness of the day.¹ Although it may be said 'even in the marketplace' once Yom Tov has arrived, the implication of the Gemara

in several places is that the ideal time to say *Shehecheyanu* is during Kiddush and, indeed, it is included in the standard text of Kiddush.² Nevertheless, the common custom is that women say it when they accept Yom Tov at candle lighting.³

Based on the above, it is clear that a woman who has said *Shehecheyanu* at candle lighting should not repeat *Shehecheyanu* if she says Kiddush. If she is being *motzi* others in Kiddush who have not yet said *Shehecheyanu*, she should delay saying *Shehecheyanu* until Kiddush, or they should say it themselves. In any case, a woman who has already said *Shehecheyanu* at candle lighting may still answer *amein* to the *Shehecheyanu* said during Kiddush, even though she is no longer obligated in this *bracha*. Since the person saying

1 Except for *Acharon Shel Pesach*, which is not a separate Yom Tov in its own right.

2 See *Eruvin* 40b, *Pesachim* 102b, *Succah* 47b.

3 There seems to be no early source for this *minhag*. See *Mishnah Berurah* 263:25 and *Shaarei Teshuva* ad loc., 5 (quoting *Sheilas Yaavetz*), who conclude that one "need not protest" against women who say *Shehecheyanu* while lighting candles. On a related note, even lighting Yom Tov candles is not mentioned in the Gemara, Rif and Rambam. It is first mentioned by the early Ashkenazi *poskim*, quoting a Yerushalmi that is no longer extant. In fact, the *Teimani* custom is to light Yom Tov candles without a *bracha*.

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Seeing the Forest From the Bees



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Eretz zavas chalav u'devash was surely music to Moshe Rabbeinu's ears, and no doubt filled his heart with anticipation of a *yeshua*.

When the *Ribono Shel Olam* commissioned Moshe to assume the leadership of Bnei Yisroel at the *Sneh*, He promised that Bnei Yisroel were to be emancipated from their servitude in Egypt and brought to a wonderful land, an *eret zavas chalav u'devash*, a land flowing with milk and honey. This description surely conjured up the glorious image of a land abounding in delicious, sweet milk and heavenly honey, a land of prosperity and, on a deeper level, an exceptional *makom* that exuded *kedusha v'tahara* (sanctity and holiness) and the *Ribono Shel Olam's* special Providence.

The description *eret zavas chalav u'devash* not only serves as a beautiful metaphor to lavish praise on Eretz Yisroel. The *Gemara Bechoros* points out that this *possuk* is actually the *mekor* (source) for permitting milk produced by a kosher mammal, as well as honey made by one of the most remarkable of the *Ribono Shel Olam's* creations – the honeybee.¹

Are All Honeys Created Equal?

The Halacha does not distinguish between bee honey varieties. Addressing the kashrus of honeybee honey, the Halacha clearly states *devash devorim mutar* – honeybee honey is permissible.² A blanket statement, with no exceptions, no distinctions, unchallenged in *Shulchan Aruch*.

1 *Bechoros* (6A).

2 Y.D. 81:8.

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Thoughts For Food and Food For Thought:

Kedushas Ha'achilah



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During the *Yamim Noraim* season, it is important to focus on our potential, who we are now and who we want to be going forward. In that light, I would like to touch on one aspect of the topic of קדש עצמך במותר לך – *sanctifying yourself through that which is permitted to you*.¹ I would like to skim the surface of the topic of *kedushas ha'achilah* – eating in a holy, noble manner.

My intent is to offer a few thoughts to help us eat a little differently in this New Year of 5783. The *Yamim Nora'im* are an auspicious time to start doing so, as it is the *zman* when we tend to be in a more reflective frame of mind and become more receptive to lofty and nuanced ideas, especially in areas of personal and spiritual growth.

Aizeh Hu Ashir: Who is Wealthy?

The Chofetz Chaim offers a *hashkafic* insight related to the *metzora*. The Mishna says, “A wealthy person who brings a poor man’s sacrifice has not fulfilled his obligation.”² He teaches that wealth refers not only to a person with material riches but to anyone who is spiritually rich.³ In addition, the principle applies not only to sacrifices but to any mitzvah.

Ultimately, one who is spiritually wealthy cannot go about his fulfillment of *mitzvos* like any other Jew. His *mitzvos* must be fulfilled with increased diligence and meticulousness. If he makes *brachos* the same way a less learned Jew does, then he has not met Hashem’s expectation of him. If he doesn’t daven with more reverence and focus, he has not fulfilled the mitzvah of *tefilla* as Hashem knows he could. Due to his spiritual gifts, the bar is set higher for him than for others.

Thus, using the Chofetz Chaim’s definition of wealth, it is worth considering that we – who are blessed with great Torah knowledge, beautiful *middos*, and lofty goals in our service of Hashem – should think of ourselves as wealthy! With these spiritual riches at our disposal, I suggest that in this season of *teshuva*, we put some of our energies towards adjusting our perspectives of the way we approach food and drink.

While there is a treasure trove of sources to tap into, I will share a few ideas from Chazal, along with an inspiring story, that can provide *hisorerus* for even small changes during this special season. With *syata d’Shamaya*, any small changes we make will be catalysts for exponential *aliyah*.

Dedicating Times for Eating

About a month after leaving Mitzrayim, Bnei Yisroel depleted their supply of food, causing them to turn to Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon with complaints. When Moshe appealed to Hashem to provide the nation with sustenance, He responded that He would nourish them from the heavens. Moshe davened further that Hashem should provide that sustenance in a manner that would reveal to Bnei Yisroel that He not only physically took them out of Egypt, but also removed them from the Egyptian way of life. What way of life was that?

The Egyptians ate at all hours. The Gemara quotes Rav Acha bar Yaakov: “Originally, [in Egypt], the Jewish people were similar to chickens who peck at garbage all day, until Moshe came and instituted a time for their meals.”⁴ Moshe’s *tefilla* was that Hashem would teach Bnei Yisrael a more elevated way to eat – by setting aside specific times to eat, during what we call *mealtimes*.⁵

Eating to Live

Our tradition also teaches that the Torah gives us guidance regarding how much we should eat each day.

In the desert, Hashem declared that each person would receive one *omer* of *mohn* daily. Every morning, individuals would go out to collect the *mohn* without measuring. Some underestimated an *omer*, while others overestimated. Regardless, upon returning home and measuring, they discovered that, miraculously, the amount they had collected measured exactly one *omer*. Chazal teach, “From here we learn: Someone who eats this amount is healthy and blessed. One who eats more is gluttonous. One who eats less, his intestines will be faulty.”⁶

The lesson for us: Each day there is a set amount of eating that is healthful and brings *bracha*.

1 Yevamos 20a (see Ramban Vayikra 19:2).

2 Negai'im 14:12.

3 Parshas Metzora 14:21.

4 Yoma 75b.

5 Seforno, Shemos (16:6).

6 Eruvin 83b.

Removing Temptation

What can we do to help us limit the frequency and amount of food we consume daily?

The following suggestion is a tool that we ought to apply in many aspects of our lives, but will prove especially powerful in our quest to begin eating in a holier manner: to limit our exposure to – and thus being tempted by – food (e.g., in grocery stores, advertisements, buffets – even peeking into our refrigerators and pantries more than is necessary) The Chovos Halevavos understands this is *pshat* in the words of the *possuk* that we read twice a day in *Kri'as Shema*: ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם – *do not turn after your heart's desires and what your eyes see.*⁷ He understands the *possuk* as encouraging us to rein in our sense of sight by doing our best to avoid looking at

7 Bamidbar 15:39.

8 Chovos Halevavos, *Shaar Haprishus*, Perek 5.

things that distract us from what is truly beneficial: אלא השתמש בחוש הראייה שלך לראיית יצירות הבורא יתברך, כדי שתתבונן בהם ותבחין ותבין מהם – *use your sense of sight to focus on Hashem's creations: to contemplate and ascertain Hashem's capabilities, His wisdom, and His goodness.*⁸

Looking Ahead to 5783

Like Avi in our story below, we, too, can start making small adjustments to when we eat, how much we eat and which foods we see. We might even lose some weight in the process. More importantly, with proper focus, we could also add more *kedusha* to our lives. By making small but significant changes in our eating habits, we can daven that Hashem will propel us to *aliyah* after *aliyah* in *shnas* 5783 and beyond. ★

Starting Small Can Create Big Change: A Story

Here's a story I heard from Rabbi Avrum Mordechai Malach that took place a few years ago in Eretz Yisroel. It's about someone I don't know but whom nonetheless I consider as one of my heroes. I will call him Avi.

The story begins on Yom Ha'atzma'ut, which is essentially a legal holiday for most people in Eretz Yisroel. Kiruv workers use that opportunity to schedule special learning programs for Jews of all backgrounds. Rabbi Chaim Zaid, a Sephardic kiruv rabbi, gave an introductory *shiur* tailored to a diverse audience that included an assortment of kippot – knitted, colored, black – along with several bare heads. Some of the kippot looked like they had been taken out of a drawer for the special occasion.

He began by reviewing the laws of *Netilas Yadayim*. He followed by discussing eating *b'kedusha*, with holiness, explaining that a Jew is supposed to approach eating and drinking in a refined manner: a Jew sits down, makes a *bracha* before and after eating, and cuts his food into bite-sized pieces. Eating in a refined manner, he assured his audience, is propitious for Divine help in being granted a good living.

When he finished speaking, Avi, a man with a tiny kippah, who had worked in a bakery for years and was now unemployed, approached Rabbi Zaid and exclaimed, "I am accepting always to eat in a refined manner."

Though Rabbi Zaid thought to himself, *first keep Shabbos, wear tefillin, and eat kosher*, he nevertheless encouraged Avi much success with his commitment.

The following Yom Ha'atzma'ut, Rabbi Zaid spoke at the same venue. Afterwards, a very pious looking Jew approached and said, "*Shalom aleichem, Mori v'Rebbe* (my teacher, my rebbe). Do you remember me? I was the non-religious Jew who told you he was only going to eat in refined manner."

Now, Rabbi Zaid remembered the man.

"Do you want to hear my story?" Avi asked.

"Absolutely!" was the reply.

"Last year, I took very seriously what the Rav said about eating with *kedusha*. The Rav mentioned that a Jew eats and cuts his food with a knife into smaller pieces, and then eats. I said to myself, granted I am not Orthodox, but I am not an animal. I can still eat like a refined person. I accepted upon myself to only eat after cutting my food into small pieces, and made my whole family do the same.

"After a while we started making *brachos* on our food. We didn't wear kippot, but we learned when to make a *Shehakol, Mezonot* and *Ha'eitz*.

"One day, I went with my kids to a park. They ran around and played for a while and had a good time. After a while they became hungry but I had nothing to feed them. Then, we saw a delivery truck for one of the big bakeries in Israel. My kids said, 'Aba, there is a bakery truck. Maybe you can buy us something?'"

"I said, 'They only sell wholesale.'"

"They responded, 'We are so hungry. Please ask anyway.'"

"I went to the driver and asked if I could buy something for my children. He confirmed that they don't sell retail. But then he said, 'You asked so nicely ...' He opened the back of the truck and there were these fresh Danishes, oozing with chocolate. I bought a few and we sat down to enjoy.

"As the kids were about to eat, I said, 'One minute, remember, we eat civilized. Let me get a knife and eat like Jews.'"

"Of course," the kids said.

"As I was slicing, I noticed that mixed in with the chocolate were these small green spots. Since I had worked in a bakery, I knew you could have some sugar or chocolate that is not mixed well, but this was different. The color was strange. I pulled off a small piece and sniffed it. It smelled like engine oil!"

"All the Danishes I'd purchased were the same. It was clear, whether by accident or intentionally, a worker had added engine oil to the mix. I ran to the driver and shouted to stop him from pulling away, yelling, 'Everyone is in danger!'"

"He thought I was crazy. I told him I had worked in a bakery for a long time. 'Believe me!' I shouted. 'I know! This is poison!'"

"He checked the rest of the Danishes. They were all adulterated. He called his boss. The boss halted all of the trucks in the fleet."

As he recounted his story, Avi reflected on what had happened. "If I hadn't cut them up, because of all of the chocolate and sugar, we wouldn't have noticed until it was too late."

Due to a seemingly small commitment regarding *kedushas ha'achila*, Avi and his family changed their lives forever. (The icing on the cake: the boss offered Avi to be his general manager. The *segula* for eating *b'kedusha* was realized!)

This story illustrates what can happen when we are careful with something seemingly small – we allow special Divine influences to affect our lives and usher in significant growth.

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Kiddush is obligated in it, it is not considered a *hefseik* for her to answer his *bracha*.⁴

A man who is lighting Yom Tov candles should not say *Shehecheyanu* at candle lighting, since he will say it as part of Kiddush. Some suggest that he recite Kiddush immediately in order that *Shehecheyanu* apply to the candle lighting as well.⁵ Should one omit this *bracha*, it may be said anytime throughout the course of Yom Tov, including Chol Hamoed.⁶

• Yom Kippur

On Yom Kippur, women who light candles say *Shehecheyanu* at candle lighting. Men, and women who do not light candles, say it following *Kol Nidrei*. In the absence of Kiddush, one accepts the *kedusha* of Yom Kippur with this *bracha* (if said before nightfall), and all the prohibitions of the day take effect. Therefore, a woman who is not accepting the fast at candle lighting should not say *Shehecheyanu* at that time.

• The Second Night of Yom Tov and of Rosh Hashana

In *chutz la'aretz*, *Shehecheyanu* is recited during Kiddush on the second night of Yom Tov just as on the first night. This is based on the principle of *sfeika d'yoma*, that we treat the second night (and day) of Yom Tov as if it were the first in every way. However, on Rosh Hashana, it is a matter of dispute whether the second day is a repetition of the first day due to *sfeika d'yoma*, or an extension of the first day (*yoma arichta*), in which case *Shehecheyanu* would not be repeated. Therefore, one should set a new fruit on the table or wear a new garment in deference to the opinion that *Shehecheyanu* is not necessary on the second night. However, even if these items are not available, one should still recite *Shehecheyanu* on the second night.⁷

Timely Mitzvos

In addition to the holiness of the *Yamim Tovim*, we recite *Shehecheyanu* on *mitzvos* that are only done from time to time, such as shofar and *lulav*. When possible, these *brachos* are incorporated into a single *bracha*, often with *Shehecheyanu* of Kiddush.

• Shofar

As with Kiddush, it is questionable if *Shehecheyanu* should be said before blowing the shofar on the second day of Rosh Hashana. Ashkenazim do say it on both days, while Sephardim do not say it on the second day. In deference to the opinions that it should not be said, it is preferable for the *baal tokeah* to wear a new garment when reciting *Shehecheyanu* on the second day.⁸

• Sukkah

Building the sukkah is itself a *mitzvah*, and technically *Shehecheyanu* can be said from when construction is completed.⁹ However, we delay this *Shehecheyanu* until the first night of Sukkos, to include it in the *Shehecheyanu* said at Kiddush.¹⁰ Thus, the *Shehecheyanu* on the first night of Sukkos incorporates two separate points: the *zman* of the Yom Tov and the sukkah itself.¹¹

For that reason, the order of Kiddush changes from the first night of Sukkos to the second. On the first night, *Shehecheyanu* includes the sukkah and should be said after *leisheiv basukkah*. On the second night, it does not include the sukkah and is only said as part of Kiddush. Thus, it is said immediately after Kiddush, before *leisheiv basukkah*.¹²

Since this *Shehecheyanu* covers both the *zman* and the sukkah, if Kiddush must be said outside of the sukkah, *Shehecheyanu* should be said as part of Kiddush, on the *zman*, and again when one first

4 Some contemporary *poskim* (*Har Tzvi* O.C. 1:154, *Yechave Daat* 3:34, *Shevet Levi* 3:69, *Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasa* 44, 4) suggest that answering *amein* to *Shehecheyanu* is indeed an interruption and should be avoided. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe* O.C. 4:21.9) and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasa* 47 note 215) both point out that this concern was not mentioned by any of the earlier authorities, and the custom is to answer *amein*. See also *Halichos Shlomo, Moadim* (Chapter 9, note 37), who points out that on Sukkos (and Pesach), the *Shehecheyanu* at Kiddush includes the *mitzvos* of the night as well, which are not yet relevant during candle lighting.

5 *Mateh Efraim* 599:9.

6 Regarding Shavuot, the Chok Yaakov (473:1) writes that *Shehecheyanu* can be recited for the seven days after Yom Tov, since the *korban chagigah*, which is brought on every Yom Tov, can be brought for seven days after Shavuot. (For this reason, many shuls have the custom not to recite *Tachanun* for the week after Shavuot.) His is a lone voice among the *poskim*, and one should not say *Shehecheyanu* past the end of Shavuot.

7 O.C. 600, 2, *M.B. ad loc.*, 2 and 5.

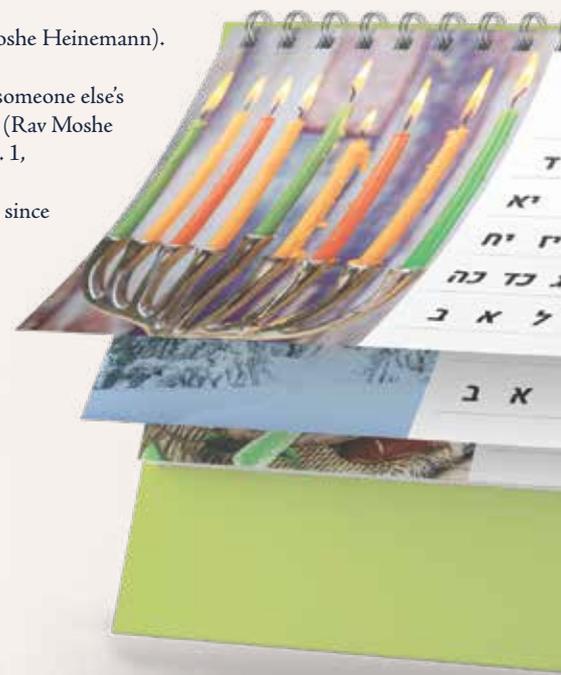
8 O.C. 600, 3 *M.B.* 7.

9 This is similar to one who purchases a new object; *Shehecheyanu* is not said until the item is ready for use (Rav Moshe Heinemann).

10 O.C. 641 and 643, 1.

11 However, *Shehecheyanu* is not said on the *mitzvah* of sitting in the sukkah. Thus, if one first says *Shehecheyanu* in someone else's sukkah, and then enters his own, or if one builds a sukkah on Chol Hamoed, he will need to say *Shehecheyanu* again (Rav Moshe Heinemann). For a survey of the relevant literature and many contemporary opinions, see *Sukkas Chaim, Sukkos* vol. 1, pp. 501-506.

12 O.C. 661. Even though the rule of *sfeika d'yoma* would dictate that the second night be an exact repeat of the first, since one can say *Shehecheyanu* on the sukkah even before Sukkos, the obligation to say it is fully discharged on the first night (*M.B.* 661:1). A similar reasoning applies to *lulav* as well. Since *Shehecheyanu* may be said on the *lulav* from when the *arba minim* are assembled even before Yom Tov, (since, as with Sukkah, the *bracha* is not on the *mitzvah* but on the *lulav* itself) *sfeika d'yoma* does not require repeating it on the second day (*M.B.* 662:2).



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eats in the sukkah.¹³ If one is unable to eat in the sukkah the entire first day of Sukkos, then *Shehecheyanu* should be said after *leisheiv basukkah* during Kiddush of the second night, as is usually done on the first night.¹⁴

• Chanukah

As Rabbinically-ordained holidays, Chanukah and Purim do not have the same intrinsic holiness as the other *Yamim Tovim*. As such, *Shehecheyanu* is primarily recited on the *mitzvos* of the day and not on the day itself, although one should have the day in mind as well, since it is a time of miracles.¹⁵ Therefore, on Chanukah it is said on lighting and seeing the Chanukah candles. If *Shehecheyanu* is omitted at the first candle lighting, it should only be recited at the time of the next candle lighting, and not during the course of the day.¹⁶

• Purim

On Purim, *Shehecheyanu* is recited primarily on the mitzvah of reading the Megillah, although one should have the *mitzvos* of *seudas Purim* and *mishloach manos* in mind as well.¹⁷ Here again, customs differ. Sephardim say *Shehecheyanu* once, at the reading of the Megillah at night, and have in mind to include the daytime reading and the other *mitzvos* of the day, whereas Ashkenazim repeat it at the daytime Megillah reading, and only then have in mind the other *mitzvos* of the day.¹⁸

• The Mitzvos of Pesach

The night of the Seder is replete with *mitzvos*. The Rambam counts eight that are relevant nowadays, and the Vilna Gaon is reported to have said that there are sixty-four different *mitzvos* at the Seder. Primary among them are the *arbah kosos*, eating matzah and *maror*, and the recitation of the Haggadah. These *mitzvos* are done once a year and should require a *Shehecheyanu*. Practically, *Shehecheyanu* is said only once, as part of Kiddush at the beginning of the Seder. The Abudraham¹⁹ suggests that this *Shehecheyanu* includes the other *mitzvos* of the night as well.²⁰

In other cases where one *Shehecheyanu* includes several *mitzvos*, the *Mishnah Berurah* makes a point of mentioning that one should have all the *mitzvos* in mind when saying the *bracha*.²¹ Regarding this, he is strangely silent. It seems that the Seder is considered one unit, and all its component *mitzvos* are automatically included in the initial *Shehecheyanu*, so there is no need to have specific intent for each mitzvah.

All the Good Times

The Levush notes that there are seventeen mandated recitations of *Shehecheyanu* throughout the year, corresponding to the *gematria* of 'tov'. A *siman* for this is: "Ki lekach 'tov' nasati lachem, for I have given you a good acquisition."²² This *siman* highlights the essence of *Shehecheyanu*: Hashem has given us so many days and ways to connect with Him. On each *Moed*, with each special mitzvah, we say *Shehecheyanu* to thank Hashem that we have merited to draw closer to Him at this time. ☆

13 Rema O.C. 641.

14 *Mishnah Berurah* 661:1. Other authorities hold that *Shehecheyanu* should follow *leisheiv basukkah* in all circumstances (*M.B.* 661:2).

15 *Mishnah Berurah* 692:1. See Rabbi Dovid Heber's *Shaarei Zmanim* (Chapter 17) for a discussion of the opinions that *Shehecheyanu* is on the day itself, even on Chanukah and Purim.

16 O.C. 676:1 and *M.B.* 2. See *Shaar Hatziyun* 676:3 regarding whether one who omits *Shehecheyanu* for all eight nights of Chanukah may say it during the course of the day.

17 *M.B.* 692:1. See *Pri Megadim* (ad loc., A.A. 1), *Chayei Adam* (155:27) and *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (141:12) that one should also have *matanos levyonim* in mind.

18 O.C. 692:1. See *Biur Halacha s.v. v'Shehecheyanu* regarding a person who does not have a Megillah. On Rosh Hashana and Sukkos, the daytime *mitzvos* are not included in the nighttime *Shehecheyanu* since it is not yet the appropriate time to perform those *mitzvos*. It is therefore unclear to this author how *Shehecheyanu* at night can include the daytime mitzvos of Purim according to the Sephardic custom.

19 Sec. 3, *Birkas Hamitzvos*.

20 The *poskim* discuss whether *biur chametz* warrants a *Shehecheyanu*. While a full treatment of the topic is beyond the scope of this article, it is noteworthy that the Rosh (*Pesachim* 1:10, quoted in *Tur* O.C. 432) and the Rashba (*Teshuvos* 1:223) both write that this, too, is included in the *Shehecheyanu* said at the Seder.

21 See the discussion above regarding Sukkah and Purim.

22 *Minhagim* 16 (printed at the end of *Levush Hachur* on O.C.).



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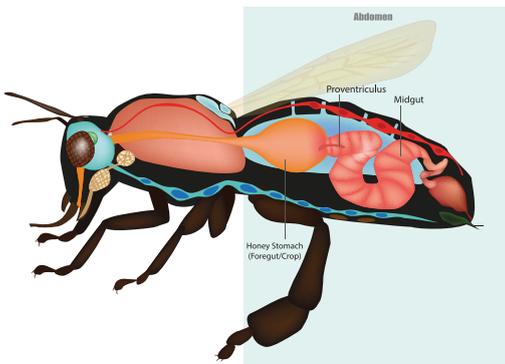
But are all honeys created equal? While we are familiar with clover honey or orange blossom honey, easily found on our supermarket shelves, there are countless exotic varieties, each with its own unique color, flavor, and viscosity.

Regardless of the diversity of honeys available for purchase, every one of them originates from the identical producer and production facility: the honeybee and the hive. For instance, acacia honey comes from the nectar of a black locust tree. Manuka honey comes from the nectar of the New Zealand manuka tree.

Entomologically speaking, how does this incredibly fascinating *briya* actually create honey? Let's take a closer look at the unique anatomy of honeybees.

The Honey Sac: Hashem's Special Gift to Honeybees

The Ribono Shel Olam created a honeybee with two stomachs. One stomach forms a part of the bee's digestive system; the other, also called the *honey sac*, is entirely independent of the digestive system. When honeybees drink nectar from flowering plants or trees, they deposit the nectar into their honey sac. The honey sac could hold the nectar of a thousand flowers.



A honey bee stores flower nectar in its honey stomach (or honey sac) which, despite its name, is completely separate from the bee's digestive system. Nectar in the sac is deposited into the hive for processing by house bees into honey.

The honey sac contains natural enzymes called *invertase* which help break down the sweet nectar, sucrose, into simple sugars: fructose and glucose. Once the sac is full, the honeybee brings the honey to the hive and passes off the nectar to 'house bees' that apply additional enzymes to the nectar. The water content of the nectar is reduced, and converted nectar is placed into cells in the hive, capped with wax, and left to ripen.

Depending on the nectar supply, the nectar can be converted into honey in two to three days in peak season or in one to two weeks as the season wanes. In a small hive with fewer worker bees, it can take as long as 45 days.

Forest Honey

As mentioned previously, the Halacha does not make distinctions between bee honey varieties, yet there is an intriguing *halachically* challenging source of a raw material from the forest that is collected by honeybees to create a delightful and healthful product called forest, or honeydew, honey.

Forest honey is not produced from blossom nectar, but from 'honeydew,' a sugary solution that is excreted from plant-sucking insects and deposited on the leaves of an oak tree. The honeybee collects the sugary honeydew from the leaves and produces honey with the same equipment, enzymes, and honey production protocols as honey sourced from blossom and tree nectar.

Due to the unusual source of forest honey, Rav Moshe Heinemann *sblita*, Rabbinic Administrator of STAR-K, was asked to *pasken* whether forest honey or honeydew poses any *kashrus* concerns. The Rav maintained that the Mechaber doesn't differentiate between nectar sources. *Devash* is a *halachic* anomaly: an edible item is produced in or by a non-kosher insect and yet is considered 100% kosher. All the sugars and nectars in the production of forest honey are converted exactly the same. Thus, forest honey is acceptable.

Bee Aware: Your Guide to Honey Labels

Natural Honey: 100% honey, filtered, with no additional color or flavor

Pure Honey: 100% honey, pasteurized and filtered

Honey Blend: honey processed with corn syrup

Organic Honey: 100% honey produced from the pollen of organically grown plants without chemical pesticides – filtration required*

Raw Honey: 100% honey produced by extracting honey from the hive, pouring it over a nylon cloth (a 'thrip cloth') to separate the honey from beeswax and bee parts – filtration required*

*(filtration clarifies the honey)

A Halachic 'Wanna Bee'

Following the unchallenged '*devash devorim*' *halacha*, the Mechaber continues and states that wasp and hornet honey (*devash tzirin v'gizin*) are also permissible,³ though there are those who forbid these honeys. The Rema weighs in and says not to worry, since this type of honey is not prevalent – *ainenu motzui beineinu klal*.

Obviously, the Halacha is not as generous permitting wasp honey as its honeybee counterpart, and for good reason, as bees are not created anatomically identical! True, like honeybees, wasps collect nectar, but wasps do not have a separate nectar collection sac. A rare exception is the Mexican Honey Wasp, whose anatomy mirrors the honeybee's and includes a separate honey sac. However, experts describe its honey as second rate and tasting 'skunky'!

To Bee or Not To Bee: The Bottom Line

It is absolutely incredible how clearly Chazal understood the *briya* and all of the Ribono Shel Olam's creations. They were so clear, down to the *kutzo shel yad* – the fine point of the letter *yud* – or, in this instance, the *kotz* of the bee!

Wishing you and your family a *shana tova u'mesuka!* ☆

3 Y.D. 81:9.



A colorful array of honeys produced by the same hive. The color and viscosity of honey depends entirely on the source of the nectar the bee ingests.



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This publication is dedicated to the memory of
Mr. and Mrs. M. Leo Storch
of blessed memory, through a grant from the Storch Family.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$10 (USD) annually for 4 issues - USA & Canada

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