Shehecheyanu: A TIMELY BLESSING

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. 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. Nevertheless, the common custom is that women say it when they accept Yom Tov at candle lighting.

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 amen 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 Eruv 40b, Pesachim 102b, Succah 47b.
3 There seems to be no early source for this minhag. See Mishnah Berurah 263:25 and Shaarei Teshuvah 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.

RABBI CHANAYA JACOBSON
STAR-K KASHRUS ADMINISTRATOR

1 Bechoros (6A).
2 Y.D. 81:8.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4
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 קדוש עצמך במותר לך – sanctifying yourself through that which is permitted to you.

I would like to skim the surface of the topic of קדושה האכיל – 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 Noraim are an auspicious time to start doing so, as it is the zaman 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.” He teaches that wealth refers not only to a person with material riches but to anyone who is spiritually rich. In addition, the principle applies not only to sacrifices but to any mitzvos.

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 teshuvah, 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 tzva d’Shamaya, any small changes we make will be catalysts for exponential aliya.

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 Yisrael 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.” 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.

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.”

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 Erurin 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 phat in the words of the passuk that we read twice a day in Ki'ras Shema: והי תחרתו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם — do not turn after your heart's desires and what your eyes see. 7 He understands the passuk as encouraging us to rein in our sense of sight by doing our best to avoid looking at things that distract us from what is truly beneficial: 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. 9

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 shirur 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, Mari 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.

7 Bamidbar 15:39.
8 Chovos Halevavos, Shaar Haprisus, Perek 5.
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Kiddush is obligated in it, it is not considered a beheik 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, who do not light candles, say it following Kol Nidre. 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 ents laaretz, 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’yo’ma, 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’yo’ma, or an extension of the first day (yo’ma 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 sukka 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 sukka and should be said after leisheiv basukkah. On the second night, it does not include the sukka 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 sukka, if Kiddush must be said outside of the sukka, Shehecheyanu should be said as part of Kiddush, on the zman, and again when one first

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4 Some contemporary poskim (Har Tevi O.C. 1:154, Yechave Daaz 3:34, Shevet Levi 3:69, Shimru Shabbos Kehilchasas 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 (Shimru Shabbos Kehilchasas 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 Halachos Shlomo, Maadim (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 Shavuos, 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 Shavuos. (For this reason, many shuls have the custom not to recite Tachanun for the week after Shavuos.) His is a lone voice among the poskim, and one should not say Shehecheyanu past the end of Shavuos.

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 sukka, 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 Sukkos Chain, Sukkos vol. 1, pp. 501–506.

12 O.C. 661. Even though the rule of sfeika d’yo’ma would dictate that the second night be an exact repeat of the first, since one can say Shehecheyanu on the sukka 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’yo’ma does not require repeating it on the second day (M.B. 662:2).
• Chanukah
As Rabbincally-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. 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.

• Purim
On Purim, Shehecheyanu is recited primarily on the mitzvah of reading the Megillah, although one should have the mitzvos of suadas Purim and mishloach manos in mind as well. 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.

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 Shaarri 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 l’eyyunim in mind.
18 O.C. 692:1. See Biur Halachah s.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 See, 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 Minhogim 16 (printed at the end of Levush Hashomer on O.C.).
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.

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 shlita, Rabbinic Administrator of STAR-K, was asked to pasken whether forest honey or honeydew poses any kashrus concerns. The Rav maintained that the Mecheret 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.

A Halachic ‘Wanna Bee’

Following the unchallenged ‘devash devorim’ halacha, the Mecheret continues and states that wasp and hornet honey (devash tzirin v’gizin) are also permissible,1 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 klat.

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 kutsa 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’mesukah! 🎈

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1 Y.D. 81:9.
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CHOCOLATE PRODUCTS

RONNOCO COFFEE
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COFFEE

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS
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Westerly, RI
CHOCOLATE PRODUCTS

Correction: In Rabbi Rosen’s profile of the Yerushalmi Otzar Beis Din (page 6, Summer 5782-2022), we mistakenly wrote that according to minhag Yerushalayim, yivul nochri is not vested with kedushas shevi'is and requires special handling. It does not.
STAR-K wishes our friends

Shana Tova

STAR-K wishes our friends

Shana Tova