



5776/2015-2016: HILCHOT BRACHOT

**Note: All ספר ותן ברכה taught in this course follow the rulings stipulated in ספר ותן ברכה by Rabbi Yisroel Pinchos Bodner (Feldheim Publishers, 1989).*

בורא פרי העץ & בורא פרי האדמה: WEEK 2, LESSON #1

This unit will cover the following:

- What **defines** a plant as an עץ, thereby changing the ברכה to בורא פרי העץ
- How the **manner of consuming** the food might [further] change its ברכה
- How **processing** the food might change its ברכה
- What the appropriate ברכה is on **food byproducts**
- The unique status of **rice**

Definition

1. All plants and vegetables that grow within 9 inches of the ground are given the ברכה of בורא פרי האדמה. This includes roots, leaves, seeds, and fruits of various plants.
HOWEVER: a plant whose trunk (i.e. whatever grows at least 9 inches above the ground) remains alive and produces fruit from year to year is considered *by halacha* to be a tree, and the fruit gets the unique and more specific ברכה of בורא פרי העץ.¹
 - a. According to this, if the portion of the plant that grows above the ground dies and the roots produce a new plant each year, as is the case with **strawberries** and the **banana**² plant, halacha does not recognize the plant as an עץ and the conventional האדמה is recited.
 - b. **Important**: our conventional categorization of “trees” (based largely on appearance) would not necessarily be accurate in prescribing the correct ברכה. For example, the blueberry bush³ is thin and short, but its “trunk” lives from year to year and produces fruit each year, so it is therefore considered to be an עץ. A

¹ For further research, you can learn the גמרא ברכות דף מ,א-ב with רש"י and תוספות. They argue about the definition of גוואל and whether it is the roots or the trunk that define an “עץ.” See also in Torah Live, (Learn>Courses> Blessings, go to the ORANGE TAB-Teacher Materials, click Classroom Presentation, click Home>Before Blessing>Haetz and Haadma>Definition. CLICK RIGHT to advance the slideshow.) a nice graphic that describes this מחלוקת.

² For teacher or student reference, here is a video on how the banana plant grows:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZL0C2CADU8>

³ Wild blueberries (not commonly eaten) grow on short bushes and are האדמה. T his refers to the commonly eaten cultivated blueberries. See Google Slides presentation.

very tall banana “tree,” however, is not considered a tree by halacha since its trunk dies each year and a new one regenerates next to the dead one.

Furthermore, conventional trunks are not necessary for halacha to define a plant as a tree. Bushes (**blueberries**), vines (**grapes, passion fruit and kiwi**) and cacti (**sabras/prickly pears**) are all considered trees whose fruits receive a העץ.

- c. Certain anomalous plants are a ספק and therefore receive a האדמה - more on this soon. For example, **raspberries** live more than one year but do not produce fruit for the first year (see [here](#) for further explanation), and **papayas** are short-lived⁴ (under 3 years), hollow-trunked trees⁵. Both would therefore receive a האדמה.
2. Although we tend to think of **pineapples** as “fruits” since they are sweet, they actually grow very close to the ground and the correct ברכה is therefore האדמה.
3. **Nuts** are the “fruits” of the trees they grow on and are therefore העץ. **Peanuts** are the one exception as they grow in the ground and are considered to be beans (legumes). They therefore receive the ברכה of האדמה.
4. Fruit and vegetable **seeds** (sunflower, pumpkin, watermelon) are all האדמה.
5. The גמרא states that **hearts of palm** receive a ברכה of שהכל since the palm tree is intended as a fruit tree (it produces dates), while hearts of palm are essentially edible “wood” from within the bark of the tree. Since the hearts are not seen as a “פרי” at all, they are relegated to the more generic שהכל. See [here](#) for a video on their production/
6. Although fruits of trees are given the specific פרי העץ, they *are* also produce of the ground. Therefore if one mistakenly recited a ברכה of פרי האדמה on a fruit, it is acceptable בדיעבד since the ברכה was still true.
7. However, the reverse is NOT the case. If one makes a העץ on a vegetable, since the vegetable *did not* grow from an עץ, the ברכה is invalid and one must recite a האדמה since the initial ברכה did not constitute a true statement.^{6,7}

Manner of Consumption

8. The word “פרי” in the ברכות implies consumption in an optimal state. If a food is normally only eaten cooked and one eats them raw, only a שהכל is said, since this is not the optimal way to eat it. Example: **raw onions** are not האדמה but שהכל since they are (almost) always eaten cooked. Likewise, **chestnuts** are always eaten cooked and will therefore only get a העץ when they are cooked and not if eaten raw. **Raw potatoes or raw beets**, however, are not considered to be edible at all and no ברכה would be said.
 - a. Interestingly enough, **lemons** are *never* eaten alone. One would therefore recite a שהכל on a slice/piece of lemon.⁸

⁴ The (ערלה סי, יב) says that a tree that does not outlive the 3-4 year system of ערלה/רבעי cannot ever be considered a tree.

⁵ For teacher (but probably not student) reference, see the videos: [part 1](#) and [part 2](#).

⁶ For a nice illustration of this last set of הלכות, see Torah Live, Teacher Materials> Classroom Presentation> (click left) Before Blessing>Haetz and Haadama>Mistake.

⁷ In unique situations where the האדמה is recited only מספק, if one accidentally said העץ it *might* be valid. The parameters of this discussion are complex and will not be covered in this course.

⁸ There is a very interesting debate as to whether lemonade is שהכל or העץ since this is the only way to consume the fruit. Also, candied lemon would be העץ since it is a normal, albeit not that usual, way of eating the fruit.

9. Similarly, if the פרי is usually eaten raw and one were to cook it, the correct ברכה would be שהכל. Example: cooked melons or oranges (ugh!)
 - a. Exception: if the פרי is not usually eaten this way, but it is enhanced by the process, the ברכה is retained. Example: walnuts are always eaten raw and receive a פרי העץ. Boiled walnuts would therefore lose this status and receive a שהכל. However, **candied walnuts** which are prepared by cooking in honey are enhanced through this cooking and would therefore retain their status and keep the ברכה of פרי העץ.
 - b. Normal forms of consumption may vary from place to place. For example, if one were to live in a place where string beans are not usually eaten raw (such as in Israel), they would be שהכל when eaten raw. However, in American culture they are often eaten raw and the correct ברכה in America would therefore be האדמה.
 - i. If one *visits* a foreign country where normal consumption is different than his own, he should follow his own custom. If he were to *permanently move* to the new location, however, he should accept the halachot of the new country. Example: If one spends a gap year in Israel and eats raw string beans which is unlike the Israeli custom, he makes a האדמה as Americans often eat them raw. If he were to make עליה, however, he would accept the normal custom of ארץ ישראל and make a שהכל.
 - c. If one made the wrong ברכה when it is determined based on locale, it is nonetheless valid בדיעבד.
10. If the food is typically eaten both raw and cooked, both retain the usual ברכה (e.g. raw and cooked apples, raw and cooked carrots).
11. Applications:
 - a. Onions are only eaten cooked (at least on their own). Therefore **only fried or cooked onions** are האדמה. As noted above, raw onions would be שהכל.
 - b. Lettuce, cucumber etc. are only eaten raw. Therefore raw lettuce and cucumbers are האדמה, but if they were to be cooked they would be reduced to a שהכל.
 - c. If zucchini is commonly eaten raw, both cooked and raw zucchini would be האדמה. If where you live it is only eaten cooked, it would be שהכל if eaten raw.

Processing

12. The words “פרי האדמה” and “פרי העץ” require that the food be recognizable as a פרי. If the food is processed beyond recognition it reverts to a שהכל.
 - a. Fruits or vegetables that are ground, pureed, strained etc. into a form which does not retain any of the food’s original form or state renders it שהכל. Therefore, **pureed butternut squash soup**, if totally liquified, would be שהכל. Similarly, if eaten on its own, **creamy peanut butter** would get a שהכל. **Chunky peanut butter**, however, would get a האדמה.
 - b. If the food is pureed but there are still pieces of recognizable fruit or vegetables in the new food, it would retain the original ברכה. Example: homemade mashed potatoes are seldom completely smooth and the chunks of potato retain the “פרי” status and would render it a האדמה. This is why **potato chips**, which are thinly

sliced potatoes, are האדמה while **Pringles**, which are made from dried potato flakes, are שהכל. Click [here](#) to see the following fascinating video that explains how Pringles are made!

- c. *Exception:* If a food is intact, but processed beyond recognition, the original ברכה does remain. For example, corn flakes produced by the Israeli brand Telma™ are processed out of cornmeal and are therefore שהכל. **Kellogg's™ Cornflakes**, however, are processed out of an actual kernel of corn that is cooked and rolled. Therefore the original האדמה is said on Kellogg's™ Cornflakes, even though one might argue that it is unrecognizable. Similarly, **popcorn** is unrecognizable as a kernel of corn but retains the האדמה since the kernel of corn remains intact and was never crushed or ground. **Corn/tortilla chips** however, are made from ground corn and would therefore be שהכל.
13. If one accidentally made a שהכל on food that was still recognizable, the ברכה is nonetheless valid as שהכל always works as a last resort. The converse is true as well and if one made a פרי האדמה or בורא פרי האדמה on something processed beyond recognition, the ברכה is nonetheless valid בדיעבד.

Rice

14. הלכה only acknowledges the “5 grains” (wheat, barley, oat, spelt and rye) as true grains. However, rice is recognized as a unique vegetable (yes a vegetable, since it is not a grain) in that it is especially nourishing and provides sustenance similar to grain.
- a. Therefore, the ברכה ראשונה on rice is מזונות - this means it provides sustenance.
 - b. Nonetheless, because rice is NOT one of the 5 grains it does not receive the ברכה אחרונה of על המחיה as that is unique to the 5 grains. Therefore the ברכה אחרונה on rice is the בורא נפשות like any vegetable would receive. (Helpful mnemonic: א.מ.נ. - אורז מזונות נפשות)