

# The Bracha on Snack and Health Bars

Rabbi Ike Sultan

A food that has become increasingly popular in the last few years is snack and health bars. Companies such as Clif, Kind, and Quaker are major producers of these bars and because of the demand the bars come in a plethora of flavors. To properly show gratitude to Hashem for these bars it is a worthwhile task to investigate the accurate bracha.

In the article below we will analyze three subtopics in order to arrive at the correct bracha. 1) What are the factors in determining the bracha of a mixture? 2) One of the major ingredients in many of these bars is granola. What is the bracha on granola? 3) If a clear conclusion can not be drawn as to the bracha, what should one do?

## What are the factors in determining the bracha of a mixture?

Whenever we encounter a mixture of ingredients we first determine whether it deserves one bracha or multiple ones. In our case of a snack or health bar, since it is eaten as one unit it is considered a unit which requires only one bracha.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, even though many of them have identifiable disparate ingredients, we treat the bar as a unit and recite only one bracha.

How do we know which bracha to pick? The most general rule is that we look at the most important ingredient and that exempts all of the other ingredients. Specifically, if a person can consider one ingredient to be primary and the other ones just enhance the taste of the primary one then the bracha is made only on the primary ingredient. However, if a person equally wants multiple ingredients and considered each one of them primary, the bracha is determined by the majority ingredient. For this purpose all foods of the same bracha are combined as though they were one ingredient.<sup>2</sup> If there is no majority, such if there is 33% *mezonot*, 33% *haetz*, and 33% *haadama*, then *Poskim* advise breaking up the mixture if possible and making separate brachot on each of the categories of ingredients.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, a caveat is if there is flour of the five grains cooked or baked into a food the bracha is *mezonot*, even if the five grains aren't subjectively primary and even if they are in the

---

<sup>1</sup> The *Aruch Hashulchan* 212:2 established that any mixture which many of its ingredients are eaten together in one bite or spoonful is considered a mixture that would only require one bracha. This is widely accepted in the *Poskim* including *The Laws of Brachos* p. 208, *Halachos of Brachos* p. 64, and *Vezot Habracha* p. 91. There is a point at which one ingredient is so bulky that it doesn't fit into the mixture and requires an independent bracha such as in the case of a ice cream sandwich. For a discussion of that topic see *Mishnah Berurah* 168:45, *Halachos of Brochos* p. 61, *Vezot Habracha* p. 390, *Shulchan Halevi* 3:14:3, and *Iggerot Moshe* 4:43. Importantly, see the article by Rabbi Mandalbaum, the author of *Vezot Habracha*, in *Yeshurun* v. 33 p. 584 discussing sushi, where he cites Rav Elyashiv in explaining how *Mishnah Berurah* 168:45 and above sources would agree with the *Aruch Hashulchan* if the items are small.

<sup>2</sup> *Mishnah (Brachot 6:7)*, *Rambam (Brachot 3:6)*, *Shulchan Aruch* 212:1, *Mishnah Berurah* 212:1.

<sup>3</sup> *Vezot Habracha* ch. 11 p. 94.

minority. The reason for this exception is that Chazal granted the five grains a unique status since they are used in making bread, classically the staple food of mankind.<sup>4</sup>

To summarize the rules by which the bracha on a mixture is determined, a) if there is flour it is *mezonot*, b) if not, the bracha is made on the subjectively primary ingredient, and c) if two are primary, the bracha is made on the majority ingredient.

## Bracha on Rolled Oats

Before we can properly determine the bracha on the mixture in its entirety we have to dissect its components a bit further. Many of the bars have granola as a primary ingredient and as such it deserves its own subjection. A recently invented word, granola, is defined as a snack or breakfast food that consists of a grain, typically oats, nuts, and other ingredients. While the bracha of most of the ingredients in granola are easy to determine, the bracha on oats, specifically, rolled oats needs clarification. Rolled oats are traditionally made from oats that are dehusked, steamed, pressed flat by heavy rollers, and finally baked.<sup>5</sup> Some companies make rolled oats without steaming them, and yet others make them by cooking them instead of steaming them. Since much of the American granola is made using this traditional method of preparing oats we will focus our discussion on that type of granola.<sup>6</sup>

## Raw vs. Cooked Grains

The *Gemara Brachot 37a* states that someone who eats raw grain should recite a *haadama*. *Rashi* ad loc. explains that since eating raw grain was abnormal<sup>7</sup> it received the bracha for every other raw vegetable or crop and doesn't deserve the special bracha of *mezonot* reserved for cooked grains.<sup>8</sup> Precisely what are the determining factors of a cooked grain?

Intuitively, given that the word *mezonot* - מזונות - means nourishment it follows that whatever is objectively nourishing should a bracha of *mezonot*.<sup>9,10</sup> However, in Chazal's view

---

<sup>4</sup> *Gemara Brachot 36b*, *Rambam (Brachot 3:4-5)*, *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch 208:2*, *Mishnah Berurah 212:7*. The rule that five grains are automatically primary only applies when the flour is used to make the food more substantial and filling, but not if the flour is merely a binding agent.

<sup>5</sup> C.f. Wikipedia entry "Granola" and "Rolled Oats", Merriam Webster Dictionary entry "Granola", Oxford Dictionary entry "Granola" and "Rolled Oats".

<sup>6</sup> *VeZot Habracha* p. 288 regarding Kellogg's and Quaker.

<sup>7</sup> *Piskei Rid (Brachot 37a)* agrees. *Raah (Brachot 44a s.v. lemutei)* clarifies that even though it was uncommon, it was nonetheless edible in its raw form otherwise it would have been considered *shehakol* like a raw gourd which the *Gemara Brachot 36a* states is *shehakol*. *Shitah Mikubeset (Brachot 37a s.v. ein)* indicates the same idea.

<sup>8</sup> *Rashi* repeats this idea in *Megillah 7b s.v. dichasia* and *Yoma 81a s.v. shekoses*. *Piskei Rid Brachot 37a* and *Meiri (Brachot 36b s.v. umah)* share *Rashi's* definition.

<sup>9</sup> The *Meiri 36a s.v. ulinyan* writes that a *haadama* isn't required for raw grains unless it is eaten "*derech mazon*," in a form of nourishment. *Raah (Brachot 37a s.v. lechatchila)* agrees.

<sup>10</sup> The perspective that the bracha is determined by whether an item is objectively filling is implied by *Gemara Brachot 36b* as it asks that perhaps the *bracha achrona* on wine should be *birkat hamazon* since it is filling. See *Chatom Sofer OC 1:50* who extrapolates this idea from some rishonim. If so, perhaps the bracha depends on what is nourishing and satiating from a scientific perspective. Nutrition researchers

the bracha of *mezonot* doesn't depend on what is considered biologically satiating. Rather it is based on a standard of what society deems filling and is generally eaten for satiation.<sup>11</sup> On this basis, the rishonim ponder what exactly is the factor which makes a grain *mezonot*.

## *Tosfot's Approach*

*Tosfot* 37a s.v. *hakoses* consider the grain to be *mezonot* once it is well cooked whether it was peeled or crushed. *Tosfot*<sup>12</sup> write that the grain needs to be cooked well.<sup>13</sup> What motivated *Tosfot*? Rav Moshe Feinstein in *Iggerot Moshe* O.C. 4:44 explains that the *Tosfot* held that the primary concern is that the grain should be cooked well to achieve the status of *mezonot*. For them the method of the cooking isn't critical rather the bracha depends on the degree to which the food was made easily edible as a meal. Therefore, it follows that *Tosfot* would hold that raw

---

write that several factors are at play in influencing the sensation of feeling full in the short and long term. While the factor of enlarging one's stomach, triggers hormones to the brain to tell the body that it is full, it isn't the only factor. From experimentation and research, scientists showed a positive correlation between fullness and the amount of protein and dietary fiber a food contained, but a negative correlation to the amount of fat it had. Trying to compare white flour and white bread with respect to this scientific understanding of fullness the major difference wasn't in nutritional value but in their calorie density. Practically that means that bread is more filling than flour because bread has fewer calories in a greater amount of volume than there are in flour. Theoretically, that could play a role in explaining why bread has a significant bracha of *hamotzei* in comparison to flour which is *shehakol*. However, when considering another example this theory fails. Raw oats and cooked oatmeal tie in their fullness factor because of similar nutritional value but in terms of density raw oats have a lower density and as such applying our previous rule should predict that raw oats are *mezonot* while cooked ones are *haadama*, an untenable conclusion based on chazal. C.f. [www.nutritiondata.self.com/topics/fullness-factor](http://www.nutritiondata.self.com/topics/fullness-factor).

<sup>11</sup> The *Gemara Brachot* 36b in its conclusion remarks that since people don't drink for a meal the bracha *achrona* isn't *birkat hamazon*, implying that a determining factor is societal significance. Further this seems to be the clear understanding of the rishonim regarding *mezonot*. *Tosfot Brachot* 37a s.v. *hakoses* explains why raw grain is *haadama*; literally translated "eating it isn't considered such a significant eating". Their intention seems to mean that raw grain wasn't considered a food that was eaten for a meal, which could be considered a significant eating. A similar language is found in the *Rosh* (*Brachot* 6:9) and *Rashba* (*Brachot* 36a s.v. *ubebrachot*). Alternatively, the *Tur* 208:2 writes that raw grains aren't significant enough to deserve a special bracha over any other vegetable. While one could explain his intentions similar to that of *Tosfot*, his language could be explained in line with the *Aruch Hashulchan* 208:9 who explains that raw grain isn't special because it was never changed or improved and so it is just like any other vegetable.

<sup>12</sup> *Tosfot Rabbenu Yehuda* (*Brachot* 36a s.v. *kimcha*), *Tosfot Rabbenu Peretz* (*Brachot* 37a s.v. *hakoses*), *Maharam* (*Hilchot Brachot* ch. 6), *Hagahot Maimoniyot* (*Brachot* 3:2), *Tashbetz Katan* (ch. 322), *Agudah* (*Brachot* 6:131), and *Sefer Al Hakol* (ch. 13) citing *Tosfot* agree. The *Bet Yosef* 208:4 explains that the *Rosh* (*Brachot* 6:9) agrees with the definition of *Tosfot*. *Iggerot Moshe* O.C. 4:44 points out that even though the language of the *Rosh* is closer to the *Rambam's* than *Tosfot*, the *Bet Yosef* understood that he meant to express the idea of *Tosfot* with other words. c.f. *Tosfot Harosh* 37a s.v. *hakoses* who has a similar language to the *Rosh* and not *Tosfot*.

<sup>13</sup> The *Gra* (*Chidushim Brachot* 37a s.v. *chilka*) points out that unlike *Tosfot* the *Gemara* implies that the grain only needs to be cooked and not that it needs to be cooked well. Interestingly, the *Mishna Berurah* (*Shaar Hatziyun* 208:18) writes that *Tosfot* might really just mean that it is certainly cooked and it doesn't matter if it is cooked well. However, *Iggerot Moshe* *ibid.* and *Megillat Sefer* 6:2 reject such a possibility.

grain is *haadama* even if it is normally eaten since a raw grain is harder to eat than if it would have been cooked further.<sup>14</sup>

### Rabbenu Yonah's Approach

*Rabbenu Yonah Brachot 25b s.v. chavitz* requires that the grain be so cooked that they stick together.<sup>15, 16</sup> Many *Poskim* explain Rabbenu Yonah as meaning that the grain kernels need to be cooked sufficiently so that they could potentially stick together. Others argue that at least with respect to complete or husked grains the grain needs to stick together to be *mezonot* but for broken grain it would be *mezonot* even if it didn't stick.<sup>17</sup>

One explanation of *Rabbenu Yonah* is that a cooked product is considered important specifically if it sticks together as one unit. The inverse is that a food which is loose wouldn't be *mezonot*. For example, flour cooked in water as a drink is *shehakol* and doesn't deserve a *mezonot* since it doesn't have the consistency of a cooked or baked item. For *Rabbenu Yonah* this Gemara serves as an example how the thickness of grain product impacts its importance.<sup>18</sup>

### Rambam's Approach

Lastly, the *Rambam Brachot 3:4* holds that only if the grain is peeled<sup>19</sup> or split before it is cooked is it *mezonot*. At the end of the halacha, the Rambam summarizes "all of the above examples are called cooked dishes and are *mezonot*". Why would the Rambam add this unnecessary phrase? Explains Rav Moshe, the *Rambam* considers the method of the cooking significant. Whether a food is easily edible or a significant unit is irrelevant, what matters is whether it is considered a conventional cooked dish. Consequently, a modern way of cooking

---

<sup>14</sup> *Iggerot Moshe's* explanation is based on explaining that *Tosfot* hold that crushed grain is *haadama* even if it is cooked as long as it isn't cooked well. But why should cooked grain be *haadama* just because it wasn't cooked well? Isn't it edible? *Iggerot Moshe* uses this point to highlight the fact that the bracha doesn't depend on whether it is edible but whether it is fitting for a good meal. However, *Ve'ot Habracha* p. 270 based on *Mishna Berurah* 208:3 and *Megillat Sefer* 6:2 argues that *Tosfot* would agree with the other rishonim that grain which was crushed is *mezonot* once it is cooked normally. Nonetheless, it is possible that they would still come to the same conclusion for the motivation of *Tosfot* as they agree with the *Iggerot Moshe* regarding whole grains that were cooked but not cooked well that they are *haadama*.

<sup>15</sup> *Piskei Riaz (Brachot 6:7)* agrees.

<sup>16</sup> The *Rashba (Brachot 37a s.v. bebrachot)* and *Ritva (Hilchot Brachot 1:26-28)* imply that the grain simply needs to be cooked and make no mention of having the grain stick together or be cooked well.

<sup>17</sup> *Iggerot Moshe ibid.* writes that *Rabbenu Yonah* uses the term sticking just to mean that it needs to be cooked so that it is possible for the grains to stick even if doesn't stick at all. He proves this from the *Kesef Mishna, Bet Yosef,* and *Magen Avraham*. This is in opposition to the *Mishna Berurah* 208:4.

<sup>18</sup> *Iggerot Moshe ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> The *Magen Avraham* 208:2 explains that the *Rambam* believes that even if the grain was just peeled that is considered incomplete and if cooked would be *mezonot*. *Kesef Mishna (Brachot 3:2)* agrees. *Ololot Efraim* ch. 11 argues with the *Magen Avraham* and holds that a grain that was just peeled is still considered whole and *haadama*. Either way the *Magen Avraham* admits that *Rashi* seems to hold that the grain needs to be split and not just peeled. To avoid this dispute the *Mishna Berurah* 208:3-4 holds that it is *mezonot* only if was additionally cooked well or cooked and sticks, which accommodates the opinion of *Tosfot* or *Rabbenu Yonah*, respectively.

which results in a commonly eaten food should be acknowledged as a valid form of cooking according to the *Rambam* but perhaps not according to *Tosfot* or *Rabbenu Yonah*<sup>20</sup>. Another proof of Rav Moshe is that in his understanding the *Tosfot* hold that if grain is cooked well it is *mezonot* even if it is still whole, while the *Rambam* argues. Why would the *Rambam* hold that it is *haadama* if it is cooked well? Rav Moshe suggests that since cooked whole grain is unconventional it is *haadama* even if it is highly edible. However, *Rambam* thought that the bracha depends on what is a conventional cooked dish is *mezonot*. Yet, see *Megillat Sefer* 6:5 who argues that there is nothing compelling us to believe that the *Rambam* wouldn't agree with *Tosfot* even in this case.

The *Poskim* assume that we hold like a combination of these three approaches of the rishonim.<sup>21</sup>

## Application to Granola

Since granola is made of oats, one of the five grains<sup>22</sup>, and is only steamed and rolled and not cooked it would seem that the bracha should be *haadama* according to all of the rishonim. However, at the heart of the discussion of the *Poskim* is whether the definitions of what is considered cooked evolves based on the generation.

A paradigmatic example to consider is puffed wheat cereals such as Kellogg's Honey Smacks or Kashi's 7 Whole Grain Puffs. They are made with puffed wheat which is produced

---

<sup>20</sup> Based on another concept of *Rabbenu Yonah* it is possible to argue that he would hold that the bracha changes over time. *Rabbenu Yonah* (*Brachot* 26a s.v. *vehapat*) asks why the Gemara implies that cooked whole rice is *mezonot* while cooked whole grain is *haadama*. He answers that since it was common to eat rice whole *chazal* gave it the status of *mezonot*. The same concept is echoed by the *Kesef Mishna* *Brachot* 3:2 and *Bet Yosef* 208:7. *Iggerot Moshe* suggests that this would seem to prove that the status of what is considered cooked depends on what is normal which can change. However, the *Megilat Sefer* 6:7 rejects this proof since *Rabbenu Yonah* was only explaining what was common in the days of *chazal* but not that it can change in each generation.

<sup>21</sup> The *Bet Yosef* 208:4 cites all three approaches of the rishonim in one fell swoop and implies that they agree completely. Many achronim including *Iggerot Moshe* are very bothered by that implication. In any event, the implication of the *Bet Yosef* is that we accept all three approaches. The *Shulchan Aruch* 208:2 quotes the language of the *Rambam* according to the emendation of the *Beur Hagra* 208:4 followed by the *Mishna Berurah* 208:3. The language of *Shulchan Aruch* 208:4 follows the *Tosfot* and *Rosh*. The *Mishna Berurah* 208:3 accepts *Tosfot*, while *Mishna Berurah* 208:4 accepts *Rabbenu Yonah*.

<sup>22</sup> The fifth of the five grains in the *Mishnah Pesachim* 35a is "*shibolet shual*". The established definition is oats based on *Rashi* s.v. *shibolet shual*. Even though already the *Aruch* s.v. *shibol* and *Rambam* (Commentary to the *Mishnah*, Kapach edition, *Kilayim* 1:1) offer alternate definitions, the minhag is to accept oats as one of the five grains. *The Halachos of Brochos* by Rabbi Bodner (ch. 27 p. 480), *The Laws of Brochos* by Rabbi Forst (ch. 8, p. 230), *Vezot Habracha* (ch. 12, p. 102), and *Chazon Ovadia* (*Pesachim* p. 76) all rule that oats are considered one of the five grains. Dr. Yehuda Felix (*Kilei Zraim Vharkava* pp. 24-9) argues that scientifically oats can't be one of the five grains. Rav Schachter ("Laws and Customs of Pesach" min 79-82) strongly favors Dr. Felix's argument, however, he considers American oats, which contain gluten, to be *mezonot*. Rav Willig (*Beit Yitzchak* v. 40 p. 58) agrees. For the purpose of this article we assume that oats are one of the five grains.

with modern technology create enough of a moisture differential between the grain and the surface air that the wheat puffs up. Simply applying the rules of Chazal and *Shulchan Aruch* to puffed wheat would yield the conclusion that puffed wheat is considered a raw grain and should be *haadama*. For that reason indeed most *Poskim*<sup>23</sup> consider those cereals *haadama*. However, there is a possibility that considering that today there is an industry of such cereals it is hard to call it abnormal. Similarly, while in the days of Chazal it was abnormal to eat toasted whole grains, today that is very common as is the case with granola.

## The Receptiveness of Brachos to Change

In the world of halacha, a local example can be found in the analysis of the category of baked goods called *pat haba bkisnin*. Everyone agrees that this category are snack foods and not meant as a meal the bracha is *mezonot* and not *hamotzei*. The rishonim offer three definitions of this category including dough filled with sugar or chocolate, a cake that is made with sweet dough, and crackers.<sup>24</sup> The major question in the *Poskim* is whether these definitions are permanent or alterable. For example, is a hot pretzel made from a plain dough *mezonot* because fundamentally it is a snack or it is *hamotzei* because it doesn't fit into any definition of the rishonim? How about the "mezonot" rolls? Should it be *hamotzei* even if even as a snack since it is usually eaten as a meal or perhaps it should be *mezonot* since it fits into the definitions of the rishonim? Many *Poskim* including Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rav Mordechai Willig hold that the definition of *pat haba bkisnin* fundamentally depends on whether it is a snack even if it doesn't fit the regulations of the rishonim.<sup>25</sup> Other *Poskim* hold that it is impossible to change the definitions of chazal.<sup>26</sup>

This discussion seems to be a clear proof how to consider changing the definition of raw grains today.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, it is possible to distinguish. Chazal never established any definitions of *pat haba bkisnin* and in fact they might have meant that as a blanket rule one recites *mezonot* for any snack grain based food and the rishonim simply provided examples but

---

<sup>23</sup> *Iggerot Moshe* O.C. 4:45, *Vezot Habracha* citing Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Elyashiv, and Rav Sheinberg, *Chazon Ovadia* (Brachot p. 183), and Rav Nevinsal in *Teshuvot Avigdor Halevi* 208:27.

<sup>24</sup> *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 168:7

<sup>25</sup> Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach cited by *Vezot Habracha* (*Birur Halacha* 3:2 p. 215) held that the main determination of *pat haba bkisnin* is what is eaten as a snack even if it doesn't fit the definitions of chazal. Fittingly, he held that hot pretzels are *mezonot* since they are eaten as a snack even though they're not made from sweet dough (*The Halachos of Brachos* ch. 26 fnt. 13 p. 466 quoting Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach). Rav Mordechai Willig's opinion is explained at length in *Am Mordechai* (Brachot ch. 24). *The Laws of Brachos* p. 241 fundamentally agrees.

<sup>26</sup> The *Sdei Chemed* (v. 5 p. 246) wrote that a certain small baked product was *mezonot* even though it wasn't actually made with sweet ingredients since it was always eaten as a snack. *Kaf Hachaim* 168:120 argues vehemently that all of the *Poskim* imply the opposite. The definitions of *pat haba bisnin* were established by the rishonim and we can't invent new ones. Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Brachos* p. 57), *Vezot Habracha* (*Birur Halacha* 3:2 p. 215), and *Megilat Sefer* ch. 6 agree.

<sup>27</sup> *Megilat Sefer* 6 compares the two topics. He personally believes that the definitions of *Shulchan Aruch* can never change.

not immutable laws.<sup>28</sup> Regarding raw grains, however, chazal created a distinction between raw and cooked grains and the definition of cooking is already defined by chazal. Even if the distinction between raw and cooked grain was based on the reality of the time that raw grains were abnormal to eat, nonetheless it might not change once it was established by chazal.

## Halachic Definitions Changing

More broadly, halacha is extremely hesitant when it comes to change. One source for this approach is the *Rambam (Mamrim 2:2)* who writes that there is no expiration date on any rabbinic restriction even if its reason no longer applies.<sup>29</sup> Yet, it doesn't end with rabbinic prohibitions; several examples indicate that the same is true of rabbinic mitzvot. The *Rashba (responsa 1:37)*<sup>30</sup> writes that we should still do kiddush in shul on Friday night even though the reason for it is to make kiddush for guests who are eating their meal in shul doesn't apply today. He mentions similar examples where this is relevant such as the repetition of *shemona esrei* in shul to exempt those who can't daven and the additional prayer we add on Friday night called *meeyn sheva*, which was instituted when it was dangerous to leave someone davening longer alone.

## Altering Definitions Within Established Halacha

At this point it might seem clear that we can't alter any rabbinic halacha and if so how could the definitions of what is *mezonot* change? There is a clear distinction to be made between a rabbinic halacha expiring and changing its application. The parameters set out in *Shulchan Aruch* sometimes are merely examples of a larger framework of principles. While the principles don't change the examples can and do change.<sup>31</sup> It is the job of a *Posek* to determine when the examples have changed but that isn't a matter of changing the halachic system, it is merely applying the established halachic principles to new realities.

---

<sup>28</sup> *Maamar Mordechai* 168:14 suggests that all rishonim could agree with one another. This is cited by *Beur Halacha* 168:7 s.v. *halacha*.

<sup>29</sup> One caveat to the rule is that of *Rosh (responsa 2:8)* who explains that if the *gezerah* was made explicitly for a certain reason it continues to apply even when the apparent reason stops applying. This is accepted by the *Rema* 9:6. See the *Torat Chesed* 17:6 and *Kohelet Yakov* CM 2 who elaborate on factors that override the principle of a *gezerah* continuing to apply when the reason expired.

Notably however there is a minority of rishonim who believe in certain cases if the reason of the *gezerah* doesn't apply the entire *gezerah* expires. For example, *Tosfot Beitzah* 30a s.v. *tenan* write that since most people don't have the expertise to fix a musical instrument today it is permitted to clap on Shabbat and there is no concern that one is going to come to fix an instrument because of it. Generally, the approach of *Tosfot* is not accepted and even those who do accept it, they limit it to have few applications. C.f. *Rema* 339:3, *Mishnah Berurah* 339:10. Regarding swimming in a river on Shabbat nowadays see *Nodah BiYehudah* 2:49 and regarding medicine on Shabbat see *Kesot Hashulchan* (ch. 134 fnt. 7 v. 7 p. 19).

<sup>30</sup> *Rambam Or Zaruah* 1:752 and *Maharam Chalavah Pesachim* 101a concur. *Yabia Omer* CM 3:7 cites others who agree.

<sup>31</sup> Rav Hershel Schachter in his introduction to *B'ikvei Hatzon*.

For example, regarding the time when it is permissible to light Chanukah candles the *Gemara Shabbat* 21b explains that one can light until the marketplace empties out. Beginning with the *Rif Shabbat* 9b the *Poskim*<sup>32</sup> approximate that this time was a half hour after the emergence of the stars. If a person is lighting outdoors, the question arises as to whether this time can change nowadays. Explicitly, the *Ritva Shabbat* 21b s.v. *ad d'kalya* writes that obviously the latest time of when one can light Chanukah candles depends on the time and place. In practice this opinion has been accepted by the contemporary *Poskim*.<sup>33, 34</sup>

One counter-example is that of *terefot*, which are health conditions determined by Chazal which if an animal had would die within twelve months. Significantly, the Chazon Ish YD 5:3<sup>35</sup> wrote that if an animal had one of these *terefot* symptoms today even if the doctors today would establish that the animal would live, nonetheless, we would have to treat the animal as *teref*. He explains that even though the concept of *terefot* is a medical one as to whether an animal would live a year, the parameters of that halacha had to be established in the days of Chazal. He adds that within the six thousands of the history of the world the middle two thousand are the one which are called the era of Torah. It is within that era of Torah that all major axioms of halacha were defined. Therefore, even if one of the symptoms of Chazal is no longer medically hazardous it is nonetheless, considered *teref* since when the system of halacha was formulated it was established as *teref*.

## Halacha on Granola

Using these principles, many *Poskim* conclude that granola that is steamed and then rolled as is the common procedure in America is *haadama*. That is the opinion of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Vezot Habracha* p. 284) explaining that the determinations of Chazal about what is considered significant for a *mezonot* don't change over time. This is also the opinion of

---

<sup>32</sup> *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 672:1

<sup>33</sup> *Ashrei Haish* v. 3 p. 252 citing Rav Elyashiv, *Mishneh Halachot* 4:79, *Birkat Yosef* v. 3 p. 30, *Yalkut Yosef Chanukah* p. 262.

<sup>34</sup> Another example discussed by contemporary rabbis is whether the definitions of what is considered equally pleasurable by all people which is the determining factor of melacha on Yom Tov are subject to change. The direct application of that question is showering on Yom Tov. See RJJ article "Changes in Sociology or Technology and Jewish Law Responses to Them: The Cases of Showering or Smoking on Yom Tov" by Avi Wagner and R' Michael Broyde.

One other fascinating example is that Rav Chaim Zonenfeld in *Torat Chaim* 23 held that in fact the time of *kriyat shema* can change depending on the sleep schedule of the world. After the advent of electricity people go to sleep and wake up later the latest time for *shema* could change accordingly. See the *Kohelet Yakov* 2a and *Mishkenaot Yakov* (responsa 79) who entertains a similar logic. Rav Yisrael Dovid Harfanés in *Yisrael Vehazmanim* p. 38 and 79 logically concurs with Rav Zonenfeld but isn't willing to rely on it in practice.

Further examples including the opinion of *Iggerot Moshe* OC 3:52 regarding cooking in a microwave on Shabbat and the *Taz* OC 8:2 regarding the manner in which one should wear a Tallit.

<sup>35</sup> *Iggerot Moshe* CM 2:73:4 and Rav Hershel Schachter (*Brachot Shiur* 3) agree. See Rabbi Mazuz in *Bayit Neeman* v. 1 p. 169's extension of the Chazon Ish to other examples where halacha is static.

Rav Yisrael Belsky and Rav Hershel Schachter.<sup>36</sup> Lastly, it seems evident that Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe ibid.*) would agree with Rav Auerbach. However, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (*Vezot Habracha ibid.*) held that the definition of cooking can change over time but he still required that the grain be sticky in order for the bracha to be *mezonot*. This is accordance with an interpretation in *Rabbenu Yonah* mentioned above.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, since the grain is steamed, it is partially cooked with a water medium. Therefore, Rav Elyashiv held to that one should recite *mezonot*. Rav Moshe Heinemann agrees with Rav Elyashiv.<sup>38</sup>

There is one more opinion to consider. Rav Moshe Shternbuch<sup>39</sup> holds that essentially the processed grains that are edible are *mezonot* even if they're not cooked like Rav Elyashiv. Yet, he requires that they need to be edible and important that they are eaten as a meal and not just a snack. He concluded in regards to puffed wheat cereals that they were *mezonot* in America since they were eaten for breakfast. According to this approach potentially granola would be *mezonot*.<sup>40</sup>

What to do when faced with an unresolved bracha? For the *bracha rishona* either bracha suffices and even though the argument can be made as to which is more appropriate the bottom line is that either one works.<sup>41</sup> However, *bracha achrona* is more complicated. If one assumes that granola is *haadama* then the *bracha achrona* is *boreh nefashot* and if it is *mezonot* then the *bracha achrona* is *al hamichya*. However, these are mutually exclusive options, though a minority opinion holds that *boreh nefashot* can exempt an *al hamichya*.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> An oral communication with Rav Hershel Schachter citing Rav Belsky and his agreeing with him. *Megillat Sefer* ch. 6 agrees.

<sup>37</sup> This corresponds to the understanding in the *Rabbenu Yonah* that the *Mishnah Berurah* 208:4 adopts which is unlike that of the *Magen Avraham* 208:2 and *Bet Yosef* 208:4. See *Iggerot Moshe ibid.* for elaboration of the various interpretations of the *Rabbenu Yonah*.

<sup>38</sup> Rabbi Dovid Heber ([https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/577/brochos-for-breakfast/#\\_ftn2](https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/577/brochos-for-breakfast/#_ftn2)) quotes Rav Moshe Heinemann as holding that for General Mills Nature Valley Granola Bars and Quaker Granola Bars the granola are cooked sufficiently to be *mezonot*. Rabbi Heber (written communication, Nov. 2017) clarified to me that Rabbi Heinemann held that the *mezonot* is recited on a *maaseh kedeirah*, a cooked dish, which is defined as one in which the grain is heated sufficiently to be eaten normally. Notably, the *Shaar Hatziyun* 208:21 quotes the *Divrei Chaim* who partially accepts the approach that chazal's definition of cooking could change but the *Mishna Berurah* doesn't completely rely upon it.

<sup>39</sup> Rav Moshe Shternbuch in *HaGra Veminhagav* p. 168 and *Birchat Hanehenin* p. 118. The same approach is taken by Rav Mordechai Eliyahu (cited by *Vezot Habracha* p. 384 n. 22).

<sup>40</sup> Rav Mordechai Willig (oral communication) originally held like Rav Elyashiv but later became unsure of this ruling because he held that based on the idea of Rav Shternbuch perhaps granola is only *mezonot* if it is eaten as a real meal such as breakfast and not just a snack bar which it is commonly eaten as.

<sup>41</sup> The *Chayei Adam* 58:3 holds that *mezonot* covers all foods after the fact. *Mishnah Berurah* (*Beiur Halacha* 167:10 s.v. *bmakom*) and *Iggerot Moshe* OC 4:40 accepted the *Chayei Adam* unlike the *Aruch Hashulchan* 167:19. The *Taz* 208:8 holds that a food which is in doubt whether it is *haadama* or *mezonot* it is judged as a *haadama* since there is a *chazaka*, halachic presumption, that it remained *haadama*. Therefore, *Iggerot Moshe* OC 4:45 writes that either *bracha rishona* suffices for a case of doubt.

<sup>42</sup> The *Beiur Halacha* 202:11 s.v. *bracha* notes that the opinion of the *Knesset Hagedola* who held that *Boreh nefashot* exempts an *al hamichya* was not accepted by the other *Poskim*. Additionally, *Shulchan Aruch* 208:13 rules that an *al hamichya* doesn't exempt a *boreh nefashot*.

One caveat of holding that the granola is *haadama* is that while majority of rishonim hold that the *bracha achrona* is *boreh nefashot* there is a minority opinion that it should require a *mein shalosh*, an abridged version of *birchat hamazon* the most familiar version of which is *al hamichya*. Rabbenu Tam proposed that each of the seven species with which Eretz Yisrael was praised with deserve a *mein shalosh*. Therefore, similar to reciting a *bracha achrona* of *al haetz* for the seven species with which Israel was praised if the *bracha rishona* is *boreh pri haetz*, Rabbenu Tam coined the *bracha achrona* of *al haadama* for raw grains since their *bracha rishona* is *boreh pri haadama*. However, this position runs into the obvious difficulty that the Gemara explains all the versions of *mein shalosh* besides this one. In any event, Rabbenu Tam later retracted but his original theory made a sufficient impact on his student, the Ri, to the point that he recommended avoiding eating raw grains outside of a meal altogether. The opinion of the Ri is cited as an opinion in the *Shulchan Aruch*. However, the majority of rishonim hold the *bracha achrona* is a certain *boreh nefashot* and raw grains isn't included in the seven species; the grains referred to in the *pasuk* are those that are in a state that they are meant to be eaten.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, most rishonim<sup>44</sup> held that the *bracha achrona* is *boreh nefashot* and that is the primary opinion of *Shulchan Aruch*.

The conclusion of some *Poskim* is that one doesn't have to be overly concerned for the Rabbenu Tam, though it is a pious act to do so.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, some *Poskim* do weigh the opinion of the Rabbenu Tam very seriously and recommend generally not eating them outside of a meal.<sup>46</sup> The good news is that usually you can have your granola and eat it too. There is only a dispute of the *bracha achrona* if one ate a kezayit of raw grains. However, since raw grains only compose the minority of the granola bars, and usually closer to a third, it is only a question of the *bracha achrona* if one eats between 54cc and 81cc of a granola bar, which is more than most granola bars.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> *Rosh Brachot* 6:9.

<sup>44</sup> *Rambam Brachot* 3:2, *Rosh Brachot* 6:9, *Sefer Hapardes* (*Shaar Hadagan s.v. koses*), *Sefer Kolbo* ch. 146 s.v. *al kisni*, *Sefer Hamanhig* ch. 224, *Raah 36a Brachot s.v. kimcha*, *Rashba 36a s.v. ubebrachot* citing the Raavad, *Ritva Hilchot Brachot* 1:27, *Shitah Mikubeshet Brachot 37a s.v. ein*. See *Chazon Ovadia* p. 183 who additionally cites the *Bahag*, Rav Sadya Goan, *Eshkol*, *Ravyah*, *Rashbetz*, *Smag*, *Hashlama*, *Meorot*, and *Meiri 36a s.v. ulinyan* who agree with the *Rambam*.

<sup>45</sup> Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited by *Birchat Hanehenin* p. 147), Rav Schachter (oral communication), Rav Ovadia Yosef in *Chazon Ovadia* p. 183.

<sup>46</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 208:18, *Vezot Habracha* ch. 12 p. 103.

<sup>47</sup> Unlike a *mezonot* food in which the grain combines with the other ingredients for a kezayit as the *Mishnah Berurah* 208:48 writes, raw grains are treated as a vegetable and not a grain. As such there would only be a concern for Rabbenu Tam if one ate a kezayit of the raw grain itself. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz (“Ten Minute Halacha - The Beracha on Granola Bars”) quoting Rabbi Eli Gersten (Rabbinic Coordinator and Halachic Recording at the OU) pointed this out. Therefore, using a kezayit of 27 cc, which is the opinion of Rav Chaim Noeh in *Shiurei Tzion* (p. 70, 5709) and Rabbi Bodner in *Halachos of K'zayis* (p. 24), if oats are only a third of the bar then 81cc of the bar would be a kezayit of the oats. If there are more oats such as potentially up to half of the bar then only 54cc of the bar should be consumed. For example, Nature Valley Granola Bars are comprised of 38% oats (<https://www.naturevalley.com/product/crunchy-bars-oats-n-honey/>) and measure 3.5”x1.5”x0.375”

## Conclusion

Therefore, our conclusion is that one should ask one's rabbi as to which approach one follows and either recite a *haadama* and *boreh nefashot*, *mezonot* and *al hamichya*, *mezonot* and no *bracha achrona*.<sup>48</sup> Alternatively, one can avoid the issue by eating less than 27cc of the granola in 4 minutes,<sup>49</sup> by having it in a meal,<sup>50</sup> or by having the granola together with a *mezonot* and *haadama* food.<sup>51</sup>

## Application to Specific Companies and Bars

Note: This section is meant to show the reader that there is a practical application to this topic and provide some clarification about the facts. It isn't to be used as a practical guide or bottom line rulings.

### Balance Bars

Balance Bars<sup>52</sup> are primarily made from protein blends and sugar which are *shehakol*.

### Clif Bars, Builder Bars, and Luna Bars

The bulk of Clif Bars<sup>53</sup> have rolled oats as the main ingredient excluding the rice syrups, soy, and protein ingredients most of which enhance the flavor of the primary ingredient. Even

---

leading to a conclusion of each bar being a total of 32.3cc and 12.3cc of oats. In order to have a kezayit of oats one would need to eat 2.2 bars which is more than comes in the package.

<sup>48</sup> Rabbi Yisrael Bittan (*English Yalkut Yosef* 208:19:3 v. 6 p. 194) writes that since there is a doubt regarding the *bracha achrona* one should avoid eating the granola but if one did eat it then he shouldn't recite a *bracha achrona*. This is also the opinion of two Sephardic *Poskim*, *Or Letzion* v. 2 p. 127 and *Birkat Hashem* v. 2 pp. 112-117.

<sup>49</sup> See Rav Chaim Noeh in *Shiurei Torah* 3:15 as well as *Vezot Habracha* p. 6 and 103 for the opinions of the length of time for which a kezayit of food isn't considered to be eaten in the same time frame and won't combine to require a *bracha achrona* range from four minutes to nine minutes.

<sup>50</sup> Potentially it can be argued that it isn't necessary to eat granola in a meal to avoid the doubt because granola is very common and it is practically impossible to always have it in a meal unless one avoids the food altogether. This is one of the arguments the *Maamar Mordechai* 168:14 offers to explain why the *Shulchan Aruch* didn't advise only having *pat haba bkisnin* in a meal to avoid a doubt.

<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, if someone were to do such they would also be satisfying the opinion of the Rabbenu Tam according to the *Aruch Hashulchan* 208:9 and *Kaf Hachaim* 208:30. This idea seems to be rejected by the *Mishnah Berurah* 208:18, though seems to be supported by the *Raavan* (Brachot n. 190).

<sup>52</sup> Balance Bar Cookie Dough, Balance Bar Peanut Butter, Balance Yogurt Honey Peanut, Balance Bar Honey Peanut, Balance Bar Chocolate Mint Cookie Crunch.

<sup>53</sup> Specifically: Apricot, Banana Chocolate Peanut Butter, Berry Pomegranate Chia, Blueberry Almond Butter, Blueberry Crisp, Caramel Chocolate Peanut Butter, Carrot Cake, Chocolate Almond Fudge, Chocolate Brownie, Chocolate Chip, Chocolate Chip Peanut Crunch, Clif Nut Butter Filler (Chocolate Peanut Butter, Clif Zprotein (All Flavors), Coconut Chocolate Chip, Cool Mint Chocolate, Crunchy Peanut Butter, Luna 5g Sugar (All Flavors), Luna Chocolate Dipped Coconut, Luna Chocolate Peppermint Stick, Luna Lemonzest, Luna Nutz Over Chocolate, Luna S'mores, Luna White Chocolate

those<sup>54</sup> which have grain flour as an ingredient they are very insignificant amounts used for a crunch and as such that wouldn't affect the bracha.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, those who hold rolled oats are *haadama* would recite *haadama* and the those who hold rolled oats are *mezonot* would recite *mezonot*.

The Clif Mojo Bars don't include rolled oats and as such should be *haetz*<sup>56</sup> or *haadama*<sup>57</sup> according to the majority ingredient. The Clif Fruit Smoothie Filled Bars and Zbars<sup>58</sup> are *mezonot* because they contain oat flour as a primary ingredient. Lastly, Builders Bars (all flavors) as well as Luna Protein and Luna Rica don't have any rolled oats and are *shehakol*.<sup>59</sup>

#### Kashi

Kashi Chewy Granola Bars<sup>60</sup> are primarily oats, Golean Bars don't have oats and are *haadama*<sup>61</sup> or *shehakol*,<sup>62</sup> while Kashi Breakfast Bars<sup>63</sup> are *mezonot*.

#### Kellogg's NutriGrain Cereal Bars

Kellogg's NutriGrain Cereal Bars<sup>64</sup> are made with flour as a primary ingredient and as such are *mezonot*.

#### Kind

Many Kind Bars<sup>65</sup> are nut bars which are primarily comprised of almonds and other *haetz* ingredients and therefore are *haetz*. Some<sup>66</sup>, however, such as the Fruit and Nut Delight which

---

Macadamia, Nut And Seeds, Oatmeal Raisin Walnut, Peanut Toffee Buzz, Sierra Trail Mix, White Chocolate Macadamia Nut.

<sup>54</sup> Clif Cool Mint Chocolate, Clif Mojo Mountain Mix, Clif Nut Butter Filled Coconut Almond Butter.

<sup>55</sup> See *Vezot Habracha Birur Halacha* 19 at length. Rabbi Daniel Nosenchuk (Rabbinic Coordinator at the OU, written communication, May 16 2018) confirmed that the oats in most Clif bars were not for substance.

<sup>56</sup> Mojo Dark Chocolate Coconut Almond, Clif Organic Trail Mix Bar Wild Blueberry Almond.

<sup>57</sup> Mojo Mountain Mix.

<sup>58</sup> Fruit Smoothie Filled (All Flavors). Note that Clif Mojo Peanut Butter Pretzel and Clif Nut Butter Filled Peanut Butter are also *mezonot*.

<sup>59</sup> Builders (All Flavors), Clif Mojo Mountain Mix, Clif Nut Butter Filled Chocolate Hazelnut Butter, Clif Nut Butter Filled Coconut Almond Butter, Clif Peanut Butter Banana With Dark Chocolate, Luna Blueberry Bliss, Luna Caramel Walnut Brownie, Luna Chocolate Cupcake, Luna Protein (All Flavors), Luna Rica (All Flavors), Whey Protein (All Flavors). Rabbi Eli Gersten (written communication, February 10 2012) explained that Builder Bars would be *shehakol* since they are primarily soy, sugar, and chocolate and the rolled oats are secondary added for a crunch.

<sup>60</sup> Trail Mix, Honey Almond Flax, Chocolate Almond Seat Salt With Chia, Salted Chocolate Chunk Chewy Nut Butter Bar.

<sup>61</sup> Salted Dark Chocolate Nuts, Dark Chocolate Cashew Chia, Peanut Hemp Crunch.

<sup>62</sup> Honey Pecan Baklava.

<sup>63</sup> Ripe Strawberry, Blackberry Graham. The reasoning is that the grain is cooked to be *mezonot* according to everyone as the consistency is that of a cookie. See below regarding Kind Breakfast Bars.

<sup>64</sup> Apple Cinnamon, Blueberry, Cherry, Mixed Berry, Raspberry, Strawberry.

has peanuts as a major ingredient and can potentially be the majority and as such is *haadama*.<sup>67</sup> Kind Breakfast Bars<sup>68</sup> are made with oats that are sufficiently cooked to be considered *mezonot* according to everyone.<sup>69</sup> Lastly, the Kind Healthy Grain Bars<sup>70</sup> are primarily rolled oats.

#### Nature Valley

Nature Valley Oats and Honey is primarily rolled oats and subject to the same dispute.

#### NuGo

NuGo Dark Chocolate Bars are made from chocolate, soy, and sugar and are *shehakol*.<sup>71</sup>

#### Oola Bars

Oola Granola Bars<sup>72</sup> are primarily oats and subject to the dispute described in the article.

#### Perfect

Most Perfect Bars<sup>73</sup> are made primarily with peanut or almond butter and contain none of the five grains. Therefore, the bracha is *shehakol* besides for one<sup>74</sup> which is primarily made from dates and is *haetz*.

---

<sup>65</sup> Almond & Coconut, Almond Coconut Cashew Chai, Almonds & Apricots In Yogurt, Apple Cinnamon & Pecan, Blueberry Pecan + Fiber, Blueberry Vanilla & Cashew, Caramel Almond & Sea Salt, Cashew & Ginger Spice, Cranberry Almond + Antioxidants, Dark Chocolate Cherry Cashew + Antioxidants, Dark Chocolate Chili Almond, Dark Chocolate Nuts & Sea Salt, Hickory Smoked, Honey Mustard, Honey Smoked Bbq, Madagascar Vanilla Almond, Maple Glazed Pecan & Sea Salt, Pomegranate Blueberry Pistachio + Antioxidants, Roasted Jalapeno, Thai Sweet Chili.

<sup>66</sup> Almond Walnut Macadamia With Peanuts, Dark Chocolate Cinnamon Pecan, Dark Chocolate Mocha Almond, Fruit & Nut Delight, Fruit & Nuts In Yogurt, Nut Delight, Peanut Butter & Strawberry, Peanut Butter Dark Chocolate, Salted Caramel & Dark Chocolate Nut.

<sup>67</sup> Rabbi Eli Gersten (oral communication) quoting Rabbi Belsky.

<sup>68</sup> Blueberry Almond, Dark Chocolate Cocoa, Honey Oat, Peanut Butter, Raspberry Chia.

<sup>69</sup> Rabbi Ei Gersten (oral communication, November 11 2016, May 15 2018).

<sup>70</sup> Blueberry, Caramel Macchiato, Dark Chocolate Chunk, Dark Chocolate Mocha, Maple Pumpkin Seeds With Sea Salt, Oats & Honey With Toasted Coconut, Peanut Butter Berry, Peanut Butter Dark Chocolate, Popped Dark Chocolate With Sea Salt, Popped Salted Caramel.

<sup>71</sup> Dark Chocolate Chocolate Chip, Dark Chocolate Coconut, Dark Chocolate Pretzel, Dark Mint Chocolate Chip, Dark Mocha Chocolate, Dark Peanut Butter Cup, Dark Spicy Chocolate with Chili Peppers. Rabbi Eli Gersten (oral communication February 15 2018) explained that Nugo Vanilla Yogurt bar is *shehakol* since the since the main ingredients are *shehakol*. The rice crisp and rolled oats are secondary to the rest of the ingredients since they are in the minority and its entirety it is considered a snack bar and not a granola or rice bar.

<sup>72</sup> Chocolate Chip, Marshmallow, Oats Honey, Peanut Butter, White Chocolate.

<sup>73</sup> Almond Butter, Carob Chip, Cranberry Crunch: Lite, Fruit and Nut, Peanut Butter.

<sup>74</sup> Almond Coconut.

Trader Joes Granola Bars

Trader Joe Granola Bars<sup>75</sup> are primarily oats. But their fruit bars<sup>76</sup> depend on the majority which is *haetz*.

Weight Watchers

Chocolate Caramel and Mint Cookie Crisp are *shehakol*<sup>77</sup>, while Chocolate Pretzel Blast is *mezonot*.

---

<sup>75</sup> Chocolate Chip Chewy, Crunch Oats & Honey, Peanut Butter Chewy.

<sup>76</sup> Apple and Mango, Apple Apricot, Apple Raspberry, Apple Strawberry.

<sup>77</sup> Rabbi Eli Gersten (oral communication February 15 2018) explained that the Mint Cookie Crisp is *shehakol* although it has rice flour as the third ingredient since it is primarily a snack bar and not a rice bar. Also, the flour as the eighth ingredient is for texture and not substance.