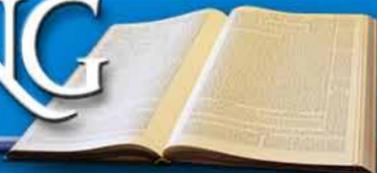


HALACHICALLY SPEAKING

Volume 15 Issue 7



{ TOPIC }

Chewing Gum



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► Halachically Speaking is a monthly publication compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, a former *chaver kollel* of *Yeshiva Torah Vodaath* and a *musmach* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita*. Rabbi Lebovits currently works as the Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K Kosher Supervision.

► Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary *halacha* with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant *shittos* on each topic, as well as the *psak* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita* on current issues.

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slicing onions to avoid crying,⁹ or on an airplane to prevent their ears from popping.¹⁰

Many dentists recommend chewing sugar-free gum. Saliva is your body's natural defense against cavities and it helps neutralize the acids produced by the plaque on your teeth and rinse food particles from the mouth. Chewing gum that is sugar free helps stimulate saliva production. Increased saliva flow also carries more calcium and phosphate to help strengthen tooth enamel. All gums with the ADA seal are sweetened with non-cavity-causing sweeteners such as aspartame, xylitol,¹¹ sorbitol, or mannitol.

Of course, gum with sugar helps with saliva production too, but the sugar in the gum provides food for the acid-producing bacteria that cause tooth decay. In addition, one should be aware that there are many ill effects and disadvantages to chewing gum.¹²

9 Chewing gum diffuses the odors that make one cry and causes one to breathe through his mouth, so the chemicals don't make it to the nasal cavity. By chewing gum, one stops any irritants from going up his nose.

10 Chewing gum can help equalize pressure, relieving discomfort. The actions of chewing and swallowing use muscles around the Eustachian tubes, potentially opening their internal exit at the back of the nasal cavity. Doing this allows air to move into or out of the Eustachian tubes, helping to equalize pressure and easing both the stress on the inner ear and the associated discomfort. As pressure equalizes, a person might feel a "popping" sensation. Gum isn't the only option to relieve the symptoms of airplane ear. Sucking any type of candy will have the same effect. If traveling with small children or infants, encourage them to drink while the plane is ascending or descending, as the action of swallowing might help open the Eustachian tubes.

11 There are many benefits to gum containing xylitol. Xylitol is natural and reduces the bacteria that cause cavities. Studies have also found that xylitol is as effective as fluoride in terms of fighting cavities. Xylitol helps prevent plaque build-up on the teeth. The reaction of the xylitol and the saliva's mineral-rich calcium and fluoride content contribute to the hardening of teeth. However, ingesting too much xylitol can have a mild laxative effect.

12 Such as tooth decay, jaw distress, stomach issues, and kidney problems. Refer to www.chewinggumfacts.com. It is interesting that in Singapore a law forbids chewing gum unless it is for dental or health reasons, such as nicotine gum. In New York there is a law that chewing gum may not be sold in school during school hours (<http://www.cn.nysed.gov/content/smart-snacks-school-all-foods-sold-schools>).

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח להשתדל בן עולם הפא... (מדע עב)

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There are many *halachos* that apply to gum. Does gum require a *hashgachah*? Is a *brachah* recited on gum? Does it make a difference if it is sugar free? Can one take out gum from hair on Shabbos? May one chew gum on a fast day?

Background on Gum

The current gum market is estimated in the nineteen-billion-dollar range. There are hundreds of flavors of gum, from classic to cola. Chewing and bubble gum¹³ are similar but elastic ingredients are added to bubble gum so that one can blow bubbles with it. Bubble gum is also thicker so it will stretch and hold together when bubbles are blown.

The exact composition of gum bases is usually a trade secret, but they generally consist of ingredients from the following categories:

- Elastomers—provide the elasticity or bounce, and can be natural latexes, chicle, or synthetic rubbers (e.g. styrene-butadiene rubber, butyl rubber, polyisobutylene—used in the lining of tires and to make basketballs).
- Resins—provide a cohesive body or strength and are most often glycerol esters of gum, terpene resins, and/or polyvinyl acetate. These can be an issue if not kosher.
- Waxes—act as softening agents; usually paraffin or microcrystalline wax.
- Fats—behave as plasticizers and mainly come from vegetable oils. This can be an issue if they come from animal sources. Some gums actually do use tallow, which is animal fat. This can also be placed in chewing gum to make it softer.
- Emulsifiers—help to hydrate; the most common are

13 Gum is usually pink because that was the color dye that the inventor had on hand at the time.

כל השוהה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הנא... (תדה עב)

lecithin or glycerol monostearate. These can come from non-kosher sources.

- Fillers—impart texture; the most common are calcium carbonate or talc.
- Antioxidants—protect from oxidation and extend shelf life; the most common is BHT.

Kashrus

There are many gums that are kosher, but often a brand of gum will be kosher in one part of the world and not kosher elsewhere. This is especially true in Eretz Yisrael.

In the gum base there are added plasticizers, emulsifiers, and glycerin which, as discussed above, may be non-kosher.¹⁴

Anything flavored requires a *hashgachah*. Gum consists of about 25-30 percent gum base and about 70-75 percent flavorings, so flavors are a very important part of the gum product. In addition to flavors,¹⁵ corn syrup and sugar are added to the gum base.

To produce gum, gum base is melted in large steam-jacketed kettles to about 240°F. At this point it achieves the consistency of a thick maple syrup. It is then filtered through fine mesh. Powdered sugar is added, in addition to corn syrup or glucose to keep the gum moist and pleasant to chew and help the sugar combine easily with the gum base. Also, softeners are added, which further retain moisture to ensure a flexible, resilient chew. Finally, natural or artificial flavors are added. The blended gum passes out of the mixers onto cooling belts and is bathed with currents of cool air. It is then moved to extruders that make it smoother and finer in texture and then to giant rollers that make it thinner, according to what type of gum it is. Stick gum comes from

14 Refer to *Encyclopedia L'kashrus Hamazon*, page 62; *Madrich L'kashrus Hamazon*, page 36; <https://www.kashrut.com/articles/gumzo/>.

15 Many gums are made with artificial flavors that tend to last longer than natural flavors.

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the thinnest sheets, candy-coated gum from a thicker sheet, and gum balls from the thickest. When stick gum emerges from the rollers, powdered sugar is sprinkled on it. The gum is then put aside in an air-conditioned room for one to two days, and then either packaged or sent to be coated in tumblers, which are round machines that turn the gum round and round like a washing machine until the coating sticks.

Some claim that since gum is not swallowed, it may not need a *hashgachah*.¹⁶ However, this is not true; one is swallowing the flavors in the gum and having enjoyment from it. Even a sugar-free gum would require a *hashgachah* since it has flavors and, as mentioned, the gum base can be an issue as well.¹⁷

Some wish to compare gum to toothpaste, which has flavors added to it but does not need a *hechsher*.¹⁸ This is not accepted *l'halachah*.

Researching ingredients of gum to see if it has animal ingredients will not work, since it can be made on non-kosher utensils. Also, ingredients and processes can change at any time, so even if a company testifies about the lack of animal products in their gum it should not be eaten without a reliable *hechsher*.

Nicotine gum is made with glycerin and requires a *hechsher*.¹⁹

Brachah

One is not allowed to have enjoyment from something

16 Refer to *Rivash* 288; *Pri Megadim*, M.Z. 98:2; *Taz* 2; *Chavos Da'as* 2; *Pischei Teshuvah*, 98:1; *Tzemach Tzedek* 47; *Pri Chadash*, Y.D. 108:22; *Tevuas Shor* 42. For a discussion on this, see *Pa'amei Yaakov* 62-63, pages 112-117.

17 *Hakashrus K'halachah* 1, page 167.

18 *Ohr Yitzchak*, Y.D. 1:24, page 293.

19 Harav Yisroel Belsky *zt"l*.

אינן ללוקחין אלא לזכור את שם ה' (ברכות מ)

without making a *brachah* on it first.²⁰ As mentioned above, gum has a taste from the sugar and flavorings added to the base, so a *Shehakol* must be recited. This is derived from the halachah that if one chews on a sweet stick he needs to make a *brachah*.²¹

When the main part of a food item does not get a *brachah*, such as the gum base since it is not flavored, a *brachah* is made on the *tafel*.²² Although one can argue that the flavors etc. in this case are what people enjoy, so perhaps they are the *ikar*.

Some suggest there should be no *brachah* made on gum²³ since the stomach does not get enjoyment from it. This premise is false since the flavors are swallowed so the stomach does get enjoyment.²⁴ This cannot be compared to the halachah that if one tastes a food without swallowing, he does not recite a *brachah*²⁵ since in that case one does not have intent to eat at all. When chewing gum, one does intend to swallow the flavoring.²⁶

Based upon our discussion, one should make a *brachah* of *Shehakol* on bubble and chewing gum.²⁷ If one has a gum with no flavor, it may not require a *brachah* if there are no ingredients giving it any taste.²⁸ The fact that chewing on

20 *Yabia Omer*, O.C. 7:33.

21 *Chayei Adam* 49:4. See *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 52:18; *Mishnah Berurah* 202:76.

22 *Yabia Omer*, *ibid.*

23 *Yaskil Avdi*, O.C. 8:20:54; *Yitzchak Yeranen* 2:11; *Orchosecha Lamdeini* 2:14.

24 *Yabia Omer*, *ibid.*

25 *Shulchan Aruch* 210:2.

26 *Yabia Omer* *ibid.*

27 *Yabia Omer*, O.C. 7:33, 9:108:94; *Yalkut Yosef* 204:18; *Ma'adanei Daniel*, page 84; *Ohr L'tzion* 2:14:8; *Luach Brachos*, page 13; *Ohel Moshe* 2:113; *Pnei Hashulchan*, page 403; *Be'er Moshe* 2:12; *Kinyan Torah* 5:17; *Pischei Halachah*, *Brachos* 1, page 154; *Ma'aseh Nissim* 3:51; *Rivevos Ephraim* 6, page 98, 2, 7:219:2; *Ohr Dovid* 2:19; *Shalmei Nissan*, *Brachos* 15; *Schwartz*, *Milei D'brachos*, page 38; *Ohel Moshe* 2:113:2; *Minchas Asher* 2:19:2.

28 *Halachah Berurah* 10, page 520, *Chazon Eliyahu*, O.C. 9; opinion of Harav Yisroel Belsky *zt"l*,

כל השווה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (תדה עב)



sugar-free gum may be good for the teeth does not in itself warrant a *brachah*.²⁹

A *brachah acharonah* is not made on gum, since a full *shiur* is not eaten.³⁰

Chewing Gum in Different Places

It is very common to walk from place to place while chewing gum. One is not supposed to change places while eating,³¹ but some maintain that since one chews gum the whole time without stopping, it is permitted and there is no need to make a new *brachah*.

Chewing Gum before *Davening*

One is not allowed to eat or drink before *davening* Shacharis, since it is considered haughty to do so.³² If gum has no flavor, then it would seem to be permitted before Shacharis. Gum with flavor should be avoided.³³ Others say that gum is permitted before *davening*, since it is not swallowed.³⁴

One should not have candy or chewing gum in his mouth during *davening*.³⁵

Shabbos

There is no concern with chewing gum on Shabbos; it is not considered kneading.³⁶

quoted in *Kesser Dovid*, page 90.

29 Refer to *Yalkut Yosef* 204:18, footnote 18.

30 *Rivevos Ephraim* 7:67.

31 *Piskei Teshuvos* 137, footnote 95.

32 *Brachos* 10b; *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 89:3.

33 Refer to *Chazon Eliyahu*, O.C. 9:2. See *Avnei Yashpei* 5:14:11.

34 Harav Yisroel Belsky *zt"l*; see *Mishnah Berurah* 90:45.

35 *Rivevos V'yovlos* 2:20.

36 *Be'er Sarim* 5:33; *Orchos Shabbos* 1:6:52. For a detailed discussion, see *Palgei Mayim* 1:14-16; *Machazeh Eliyahu* 2:18. In reference to smoothing, see *Shabbos Shlomo*, pages 243-244.

איך ללמוד להלכה של אמת של הלכה בלבד... (ברכות ח')



One may remove gum that became stuck in hair on Shabbos, but he should be careful not to detach any hairs.³⁷

If gum gets on clothing, one can place it in the freezer so it becomes hard and is easier to remove. One should not do this on Shabbos, as it may be considered laundering.³⁸

Chewing gum outside in a place that does not have an *eruv* is forbidden.³⁹

Pesach

The ingredients in gum can be made from *kitniyos*, so those who avoid *kitniyos* on Pesach should make sure gum has a proper *hashgachah* for Pesach.⁴⁰

One is not allowed to eat or drink after the *afikoman*.⁴¹ This includes chewing gum.⁴²

Yom Tov

It would seem that since one makes a *brachah* on gum, it is a food item and one would be allowed to carry and chew it on Yom Tov.⁴³

Fast Days

Based upon our discussion above that one recites a *Shehakol* on flavored gum, one may not chew flavored gum on a fast day.⁴⁴

37 *Yeladim K'halachah*, page 150; *Shabbos K'halachah*, page 27, 37.

38 *Chashukei Chemed*, *Shabbos* 74b. For discussions on this in depth, see *Zecher L'Avraham* (Cholon) 5751, pages 390-395; *Kovetz Beis Aharon V'Yisrael* 105, pages 431-434.

39 *Yalkut Yosef* (Otzer Dinim L'ishah U'bas) 21:9; *Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah* 18:2.

40 *Kashrus Pesach*, page 286.

41 *Pesachim* 119b; *Shulchan Aruch* 478:1.

42 *Chashukei Chemed*, *Pesachim*, pages 649-650.

43 *Rivevos Ephraim* 3:323:1.

44 *Aveilus Hachurban*, page 113; *Yalkut Yosef* (*Kitzur*) 550:24. In reference to a woman chewing unflavored gum during childbirth on Yom Kippur, see *Toras Hayoledes*, page 264, footnote 15:4.

The opinion of the Rema⁴⁵ is that one may not place food in his mouth on a fast day even if he will immediately spit it out. This is common when one is preparing food for after the fast and wants to taste it to see if it needs more spices etc.⁴⁶ The opinion of the *Shulchan Aruch*⁴⁷ is that tasting is permitted, except on Tishah B'Av or Yom Kippur.⁴⁸ In practice, Ashkenazim may only taste food if it is being prepared for a *seudas mitzvah* after the fast, and even then, one should only taste a little bit and then spit it out.⁴⁹

Based on the above comments, even though gum may not be considered eating, one still gets enjoyment from it and it may not be chewed on a fast day.⁵⁰

We now turn our discussion to gum that is not flavored. This can be comparable to swallowing one's saliva on a fast day (even on Yom Kippur). The reason why it is permitted is because one does not have any intention for it to be food.

Furthermore, the Rema says one is allowed to chew on cinnamon sticks or other spices on Yom Kippur and then spit it out. Others argue with this, but the *Aruch Hashulchan*⁵¹ says the reason why it is permitted is because it has no moisture.

Based on the above discussion, gum that does not have a flavor would be permitted on a fast day.⁵² Others do mention

45 567:1.

46 *Magen Avraham* 567:1; *Elyah Rabbah* 1; *Mishnah Berurah* 1.

47 *Ibid.*, *Levush* 1.

48 See *Toras Hamoadim* 12:7.

49 *Chayei Adam* 132:19; *Mishnah Berurah* 567:6; *Kaf Hachaim* 10.

50 *Nechamas Yisrael* 29:16; *Ohel Moshe* 2:113:2; *Piskei Teshuvos* 567, footnote 1; *Miyam Hahalachah* 1:81. See *Hillel Omer* 278.

51 612:7.

52 *Yalkut Yosef (Kitzur)* 550:24; *Miyam Hahalachah* 1:81.

איז עיל להקצי"ה בעולמו אלא יד אמות של הלכה בלביד... (ברכות ח')



that one should still avoid it, since one may forget and come to chew flavored gum on a fast day.⁵³

Chewing Gum in the Bathroom

Even according to the above opinion that no *brachah* is recited on gum (which would mean it is not a food), one should not chew gum in the bathroom.⁵⁴

Ben Torah Chewing Gum

Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky *zt"l*⁵⁵ did not approve of *bnei Torah* chewing gum.⁵⁶

כל השווה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הנא... (מדה עב)

53 *Miyam Hahalachah* 1:50.

54 *Peninei Haparshah* 11, page 116, 5.

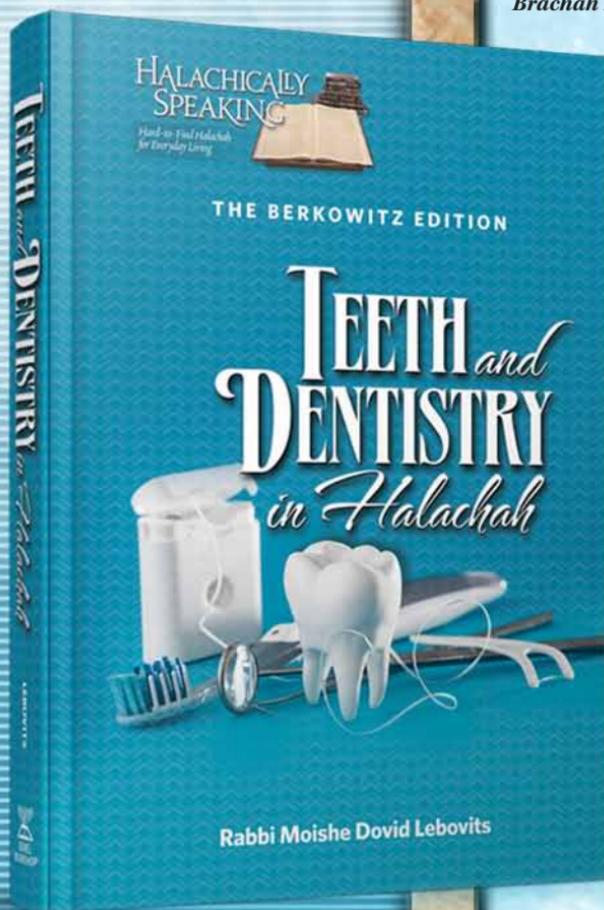
55 *Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky* (Hebrew), page 244.

56 This is the opinion of Harav Tuvia Goldstein *zt"l* as related by Harav Yisroel Dov Webster *shlit"l*.

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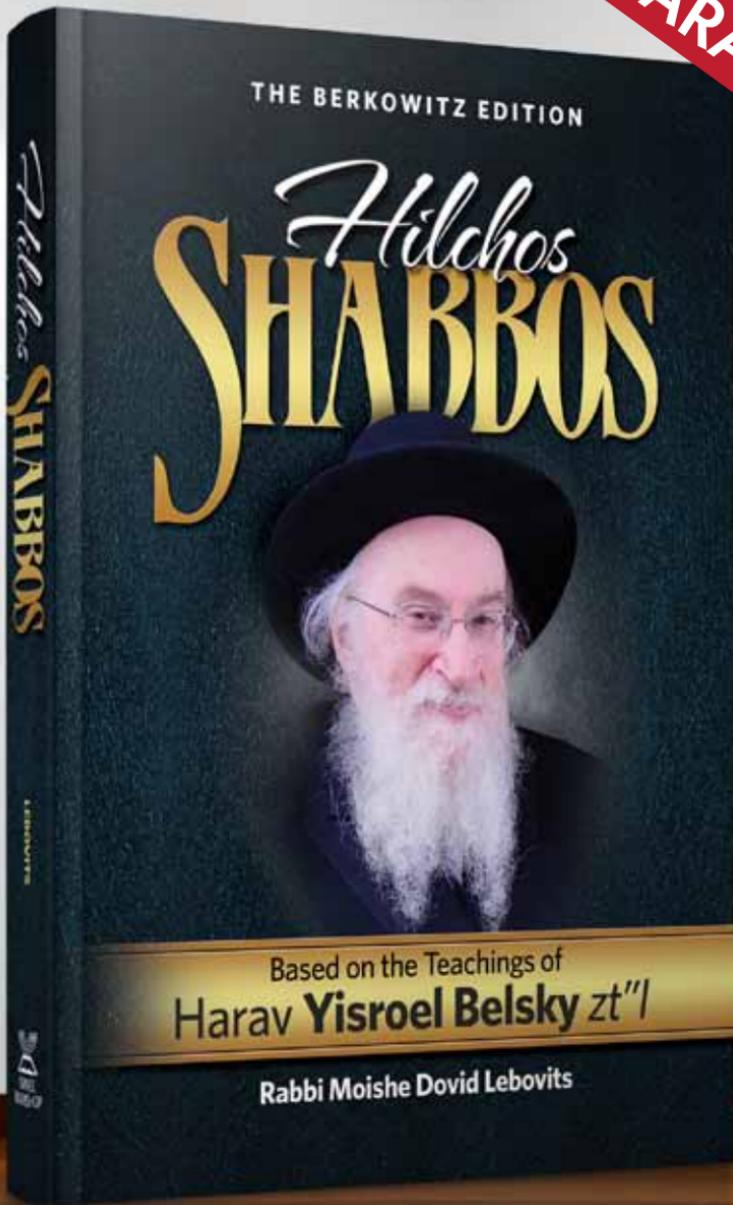
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