

Sampling of Main Points from Responsa Related to Chocolate, Cocoa or Cacao

A search of the Responsa Project of Bar Ilan University for these terms yielded a number of items, as follows (organized thematically):

Blessings

.a שו"ת שבט הלוי חלק ז סימן כז

Rabbi Shmuel (HaLevi) Wosner (1913-2015), born in Vienna, lived in Israel. *Shevet HaLevi* is the name of his comprehensive series of halachic rulings on Jewish laws. Several of his other books also bear the same name.

Question: What blessing should be said for eating chocolate?

Answer: *Shehakol*.

Reason: A lot has been written about this question. Those rabbis who say that *borei pri ha'etz* is the correct blessing are probably right, but we should not go against the customs of the people. And besides, it is likely that *shehakol* is the more suitable blessing since chocolate is not purely ground cocoa, which is bitter. Rather, it is mixed in with many other ingredients which probably renders it *shehakol*.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם שֶהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבָּרוֹ.

...*Shehakol Nihyah bidvaro*.

...everything was created through God's words.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ.

...*Borei p'ri ha'etz*.

...who creates the fruit of the trees.

Prinz blogs at:

The Huffington Post, The Forward, The Jewish Journal, The Jewish Week, Reform Judaism and On the Chocolate Trail

Rabbi Vosner

Question: Which blessing should be said on an almond covered in chocolate?

Answer: *Borei p'ri ha'etz*, even though you eat through the chocolate or candy first.

Reason: Because clearly, the almond fruit is the essence. But if he plans to spit out the fruit, or he swallows the fruit, but only so that he does not waste it, then he probably should be saying *shehakol* on the chocolate.

Kashrut / Kosher Laws

Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg (1915 – 2006) lived in Jerusalem. Known as the Tzitz Eliezer after his responsa collection, *Tzitz Eliezer*.

Question: May Israel import milk chocolate from Switzerland when all the inspections show that the chocolate is completely kosher even though they cannot have *mashgichim* (supervisors) in every single dairy farm to overlook the milking process?

Answer: Even according to the stricter views, this should be permitted.

Reason: Since the factory is not really using the milk itself, only the powder that is derived from the milk, and given that there are governmental regulations that prevent the milk from being *treif* (not kosher), then it is permitted. But the contract should not be signed with the dairy farms, only with the chocolate factories, so that there is no Jewish involvement or indirect approval of the milking.

Also, since there are *mashgichim* overseeing the process, even if they cannot be present for the whole chocolate-making process, the knowledge that they can show up at any given moment is enough.

Ovadia Yosef (1920-2013) was born in Iraq and lived in Israel. *Yabia Omer* is the name of one of two of his responsa sets.



Question: Can you give a *katan* (a boy who has not yet had his Bar Mitzvah) dairy, even if less than six hours passed since he ate meat?

Answer: Milk chocolate or dairy candy is definitely prohibited within the six hours (or at least the first five and a half hours).

Reason: Some of the considerations in answering this question, are: Is the child at an age where he can understand the law that says you need to wait between eating meat and milk? What kind of dairy is given? Is the dairy chocolate given for health reasons? If so, that is allowed. Is it available and the child chooses to take it or is it actively given to the child?

e. תשובות והנהגות כרך א סימן תלה

Moishe Sternbuch (also spelled Moshe Shternbuch) was born in London in 1926 and lives in Jerusalem.

Question: Which foods should be prohibited because they were made by non-Jews?

Answer: Chocolate is not prohibited, but you should make sure that it has a reliable *hechsher* (certification).

Reason: 1. Chocolate is not an essential part of the meal. It is eaten because of its good flavor. 2. It is made in a factory and not usually by hand. 3. You should still make sure it has a reliable *hechsher* (certification) to make sure that it does not contain some quantity of non-kosher food.

Eating

f. שו"ת הר צבי יורה דעה סימן צז

Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873–1960). Born in Lithuania, he lived in Jerusalem. *Har Tzvi* is the name of his collection of responsa on the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Question: May one take bitter pills that have chocolate sprinkled on them, even though the chocolate does not have a *hechsher* (certification) and contains milk from non-Jews?

Answer: There is not a clear answer and it depends on a bigger *machloket* (argument) that takes us back to the Talmud.



Reason: The discussion centers on whether or not swallowing is really eating (in which case it would still be prohibited) and whether the pills are meant to be chewed or swallowed. If the pill is meant to be swallowed then it is permitted to take it with chocolate; if it is meant to be chewed, than it would be forbidden to take it with this chocolate.

Passover

g. שו"ת חלקת יעקב אורח חיים סימן קצט

Mordechai Yaakov Breisch (1897-1977) lived in Zurich and authored the *Chelkat Yaakov* responsa collection.

Question: What should be done with chocolate that was made kosher for *Pesach*? While kashering generally requires water, water cannot be in the chocolate processing system given the cocoa fats. In this case something incorrect happened with the water and the batch was already sent to America. A lot of money is at stake and the rabbi only found out about this after the fact.

Answer: The chocolate may be eaten.

Reason: The only potential problem is that the kashering water may have had crumbs in it. Since they were “annulled” before *Pesach*, they did not enter into the chocolate. Even though there may be reason to prohibit this chocolate because it may have contained *chalav nochri*, milk from a non-Jewish source, in such a situation of financial loss, there are those who are more lenient and you may go according to them.

Tithing

h. שו"ת ציץ אליעזר חלק ה סימן יטשו"ת ציץ אליעזר חלק ו סימן כט

Rabbi Waldenberg

Question: Do imported cocoa beans need to be tithed?

Answer: True, tithing is sometimes done even when the crop is not completely ripe, but since cocoa beans are like stones before they are roasted, they do not need to be tithed.



Shabbat

i. שו"ת יביע אומר חלק ד - אורח חיים סימן לח

Rabbi Yosef

Question: May one break a piece of chocolate or cookie on Shabbat, for the purpose of eating, if the food has writing on it?

Answer: If the writing is made of cream or food coloring, you may break the cake/chocolate with one's hand, but if you break it with your mouth, that is preferable. When the writing is made of the batter/chocolate itself, you may be lenient, especially if the writing is not in Hebrew.

Reason: This question generates quite a lot of debate and a lengthy responsum of twelve pages.

Questions that are discussed and taken into consideration are: Is eating or breaking the cookie considered erasing even though you are eating it immediately and have no intention of writing? Is the writing "inscribed" while the cake or chocolate is still being made, or added after? These acts would desecrate Shabbat.

j. שו"ת אגרות משה אורח חיים חלק ד סימן עד

Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) was born in Belarus and lived in New York. One of his works is the *Igrot Moshe*, a work of responsa.

Question: Is it permitted to mix lumps of instant cocoa powder into a drink on Shabbat?

Answer: It is permitted, in the same way that sugar may be mixed into drinks.

Reason: This is just like melting snow into water. Helping the snow melt by stirring it in should not be prohibited.

