

Baffled by the Berachah: The Matzolah Mystery

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Last year Kof-K certified two products from Foodman, LLC, called Matzolah; Maple Nut and Whole Wheat Maple Nut. These products combine matzoh, nuts, coconut, raisins, vanilla, maple syrup, and evaporated cane juice, baked to a tasty crispiness. For all those who are hooked on their daily breakfast of crunchy granola, and yogurt toppings, this fills an important void. What *berachah* do we make on this creative concoction? *Hamotzi*? *Mezonos*?

We first need to clarify the *berachah* for *matzoh*. “The *berachah* for *matzoh*?!” you may ask. “Everyone knows that we say ‘*hamotzi*.’” Not so simple!

According to Rav Hai Gaon, *matzoh* falls into the category of *pas haba b'kisnin* (food which is not bread but in the bread family). Crackers and breadsticks fall into this category. Due to their appearance and texture they are not eaten as bread during a meal, and therefore, the *berachah* is *mezonos*. The reason the *berachah* for *matzoh* is *hamotzi*, according to Rav Hai Gaon, is because on Pesach it is considered a substitute for bread.

Halachah related to bread which has been altered in status takes four factors into consideration in determining when it loses its status as bread for purposes of the *berachah*: size; appearance; mode of preparation; and intended use.

Cooking bread products or soaking them until they lose their original appearance, effectively changes the status of the item to a *mezonos*, but this is contingent on the pieces being smaller than a *k'zayis* (the size of an average olive) and the new product losing the appearance of bread. If a bread item is smaller than a *k'zayis* and is cooked, the *berachah* is *mezonos*, because it is considered a cooked dish, not a bread product.

Now that we have a view of the complex *mezonos/hamotzi* issue, we can apply these insights to the kosher granola, Matzolah. In manufacturing Matzolah, whole matzoh is ground into smaller pieces which are smaller than a *k'zayis*. This satisfies the first determinant—size.

The ground matzoh and dry ingredients are mixed with hot liquids and baked in the oven. Thus, the product loses its bread appearance and which would change the *berachah* to *mezonos*.

This year, a third variety of Matzolah was introduced for which a different *berachah* is recited. Since Gluten Free Cranberry Orange Matzolah uses potato-based matzoh-style squares instead of wheat, and contains fruit, the appropriate *beracha* would be *shehakol*. This version of Matzolah is non-gebrochts. All three varieties of this product are kosher every day and for Pesach. Foodman sells Matzolah directly from its website, and it is distributed by Aron Streit, Inc. through some national grocery stores.

The shelves may be transformed by new, innovative Pesach items, but the classic halachic issues remain unchanged. With each carefully recited *berachah*, we will count our blessings and have the Torah, Talmud, and Shulchan Aruch to guide our steps.